



An Employment Snapshot: The Florence Area

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In the Florence area, total covered employment in 2004 reached 4,354 – about 3 percent of employment in Lane County. Covered employment includes employees protected by unemployment insurance, and does not include the self-employed. The Florence area includes the communities of Mapleton, Dunes City, and Westlake.

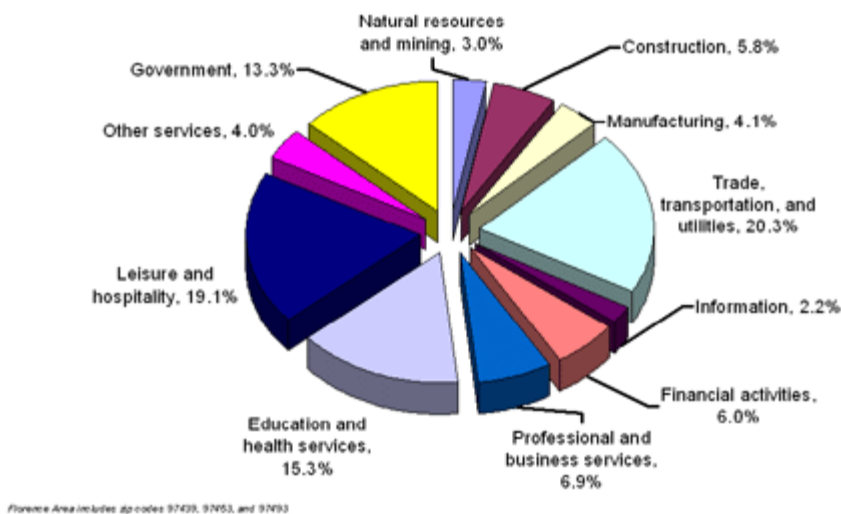
Employment in the area is dominated by two industries: retail trade and leisure and hospitality. Combined, they employ nearly 40 percent of the workforce (Graph 1). This is not unusual for Oregon coast communities. Many depend on tourism for the bulk of their employment. Since these industries typically pay low wages, average earnings in the area are much lower than the countywide average.

The average 2004 wage in the Florence area was only \$24,943, compared with the countywide average of \$31,338 (Graph 2). This is not surprising, since the latter reflects the larger, more diverse, and higher-paying economies of Eugene and Springfield. But even compared with some of its coastal neighbors, the Florence area has a low average wage. For example, Coos Bay and Newport had higher average 2004 wages of \$28,407 and \$26,067, respectively. The disparity can be explained by industry employment differences among the three areas. Newport and Coos Bay have larger wood products and fishing industries than the Florence area, where employment in those two sectors has all but dried up. These industries pay higher than average wages. In addition, Newport and Coos Bay have more government employment than Florence, which also pays higher than average wages. Local government employment has increased in the Florence area, though, since the opening of the Three Rivers Casino because tribal employment is included in local government.

Despite low wages, the area's population is growing rapidly. Most of the growth is from retirees, the majority of whom are from Oregon and California according to IRS migration data. The Florence area is attractive to retirees for its natural beauty, affordability, recreational opportunities, ambience, and quality health services. The population of the City of Florence has grown to 8,185, an increase of 58 percent from 1990. By contrast, Lane County grew by 19 percent.

Graph 1

Florence Area Covered Employment 2004



Graph 2

2004 Average Annual Wage

