

**Table 10: Big Horn County Housing Unit by Occupancy**

Characteristic	2000	2010	# Change	% Change
Total Occupied Housing Units (Owner or Rental)	3,924	4,004	80	2.0
Owner - occupied housing units	2,534	2,560	26	1.0
Renter - occupied housing units	1,389	1,444	55	3.9
Total Vacant housing units	731	691	40	-5.4
Vacant - Seasonal	296	319	23	7.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Demographic Profile Data

**Table 11: Vacancy Rates for Homeowners and Rental Units, 2010**

	MT	Big Horn	Hardin	Lodge Grass	Muddy	Crow Agency	Pryor	Busby
Homeowner	2.1	2.2	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Rental	7.1	6.3	6.2	5.6	3.0	3.2	6.2	4.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Demographic Profile Data

As previously noted, with the increase in population disproportionate to the increase in housing units it appears there's a need for additional housing, particularly rental housing.

Big Horn County has issues with both quality and quantity of housing. Average household size can be dramatically higher in Big Horn County than is the average for the state or the nation. Although population gain was modest for the county between 2000 and 2010 the increase in housing did not keep up, which means that more people are likely living in less than standard housing.

Poor housing condition has been an issue in the county for decades. The [2005 Montana Housing Condition Study](#) showed that 41% of all housing units in Big Horn County had an effective age of 65 years or more (effectively built prior to 1940). Nearly half of all the housing units (48%) were in "fair" condition described as usable but "rather unattractive and undesirable. Much repair is needed and many items need refinishing or overhauling. Deferred maintenance is obvious." Another 7% were "poor" condition described as "undesirable and barely usable." An additional 5% were in "very poor" or "unsound" condition, "structurally unsound and practically unfit for use." In Lodge Grass, abandoned houses have been the source of arson, which has contributed to the decline of housing units since 2000.



Abandoned house in Lodge Grass; Photo by Cossitt (2005)

The city-county planning board developed the [City of Hardin Housing Study 2012](#) that recommended more affordable housing and housing for the elderly. The city enacted a housing authority in 2013 to address the housing issues.

Sources:

Hardin-Big Horn City-County Planning Board. "City of Hardin Housing Study 2012."

[http://www.hardinmt.com/Housing\\_Study.htm](http://www.hardinmt.com/Housing_Study.htm)

Montana Department of Commerce. Montana Housing Condition Study 2005.

<http://housing.mt.gov/CP/housingconditionstudy.mcp>

U.S. Census Bureau. American FactFinder2. <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

## 5.4 ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

### Overview

In Big Horn County, the major factors in the private sector economy are agriculture, coal mining, and tourism, which is generally similar to Montana’s overall economy. Agriculture is the number one economic producer in Montana, with a value of \$4.7 billion in 2012, according to the USDA’s [Montana 2013 Agricultural Statistics](#). In the state, travel-related industries have the second highest value at \$2.6 billion, followed by gas and oil at \$2.3 billion, and mining with \$1.7 billion.

In Big Horn County, the market value of agricultural products in 2007 was \$94.9 million, according to the [2007 Census of Agriculture](#). The values of mining, gas and oil, and travel-related industries aren’t as readily available at the county level. With approximately 22.6 million tons of coal produced in Big Horn County in 2012 (as reported by the Bureau of Mines and Geology in

“[Montana Mines and Exploration – 2012](#)”, it is the largest coal producer in the state. The county also has considerable tourism economy, with the blue-ribbon trout fishery on the Big Horn River and with the historic sites.

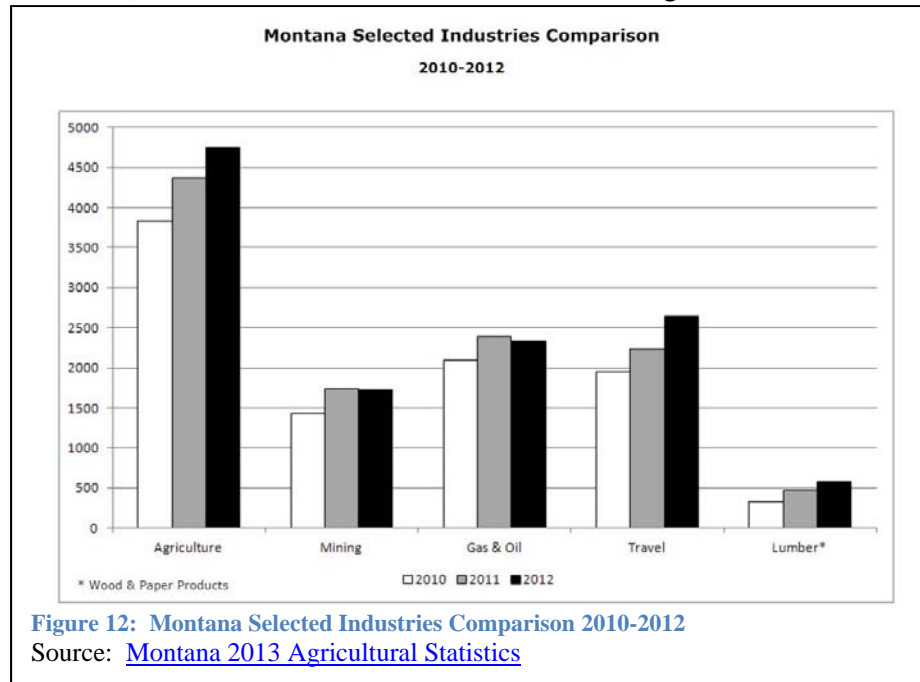


Figure 12: Montana Selected Industries Comparison 2010-2012  
Source: [Montana 2013 Agricultural Statistics](#)

**Big Horn County  
Economy Quick Facts**

**Mining:** 22.6m tons in 2012 - largest coal producer in Montana

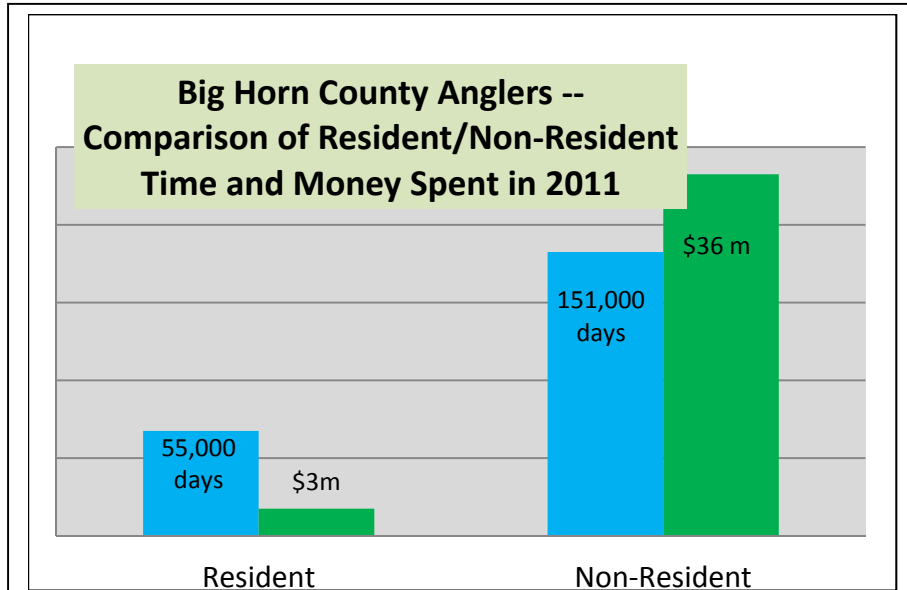
**Agriculture:** \$94.9m in value in 2007

**Tourism:** >\$30m estimated annual

In its report, “[Expenditure Profiles and Marketing Responsiveness of Nonresident Visitor Groups to Montana](#),” the Montana Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITTR) found that groups visiting Montana for recreation or pleasure spent on average \$195 per day. In 2010, there were 320,959 visitors to the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, according to [National Parks Traveler](#). If each visitor was part of a 3-person group and if each group stayed in Big Horn County one day, this would account for approximately \$20.9 million in value from travel in Big Horn County.

A separate analysis of revenue from sport-fishing in Big Horn County was conducted in 2013, using a standardized methodology that was also used to track revenues from the Big Hole River in Madison County. Sport

fishing in Big Horn County generates approximately \$39 million per year, although some is spent elsewhere (e.g., travel to/from the county, etc.). Of the total \$39 million, 92% is generated from the Big Horn River, and 6% from Tongue River Reservoir. In addition recent improvements at Tongue River Reservoir campgrounds could increase indirect revenues to the county in the future.



**Figure 13: Big Horn County Anglers - Time and Money Spent**

Notes:

1. Data are estimates by Montana FWP. Primary data source is the 2011 Montana Statewide Angling Pressure Report, at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishing/anglingPressureSurveys/2011.html>  
Additional source is: 2012 Statewide and Regional Hunter & Angler Use and Expenditures Sheet, accessible at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/doingBusiness/reference/surveys/socialEconomic/hunting.html>
2. The spending reported by Big Horn County anglers was not confined to Big Horn County.

## Income and Employment

Big Horn tracked at nearly the same rate of growth in areas such as personal income and earnings as Montana and the nation in the last decade, based on census data. However, [Montana Department of Labor and Industry](#) data show the county had an unemployment rate of 12% in 2011, approximately 3-4% higher than in 2000 and nearly twice as high as the state. In addition, transfer payments accounted for a greater percentage of personal income in the county than in the state (see Table 12).

The average earnings per job in 2011 were \$41,982 in Big Horn. Of the approximate 2,293 private sector jobs in Big Horn, approximately 500 of those were in the mining industry, or 22% of all jobs. From 1998 to 2010, mining employment grew from 347 to 500 jobs, a 44.1% increase. Agriculture accounted for 11.5% of all jobs; travel and tourism accounted for 22% of all jobs, with 12% of those in accommodations and food service, according to [Headwaters Economics](#) (using economic census and other federal data).

**Table 13: Average Annual Wages**

	2000 <sup>a</sup>	2010 <sup>b</sup>
Big Horn	25,852	35,552
Montana	24,272	34,589
U.S.	35,320	46,742

Source:

<sup>a</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

<sup>b</sup> Montana Department of Labor and Industry, Quarterly Census of Employment of Wages (QCEW) Program.

**Table 12: Personal Income by Component - 2011**

	MT	Big Horn
Dividends, Interest, & Rent	20.4	12.2%
Transfer Payments	19.2	27.4%
Labor Earnings	60.3	60.4%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

**Table 14: Top 10 Private Employers (2011)**

Business Name	Size Class
Awe Kualawaache Care Center	4
Big Horn/Little Horn IGA	5
Big Horn Hospital Association	6
Colorado Energy Mgmt/Hardin Generating Station	4
Decker Coal Company	6
Kennecott Energy Co. Spring Creek Mine	7
Little Horn State Bank	4
McDonald's	4
St. Charles Mission School & Pretty Eagle Catholic School	5
Westmoreland Resources Inc.	6
<i>Employment Size Class Coding: Class 7 = 250 to 499 employees, Class 6 = 100 to 249, Class 5 = 50 to 99, Class 4 = 20 to 49.</i>	

Source: Montana Department of Labor and Industry, Quarterly Census of Employment of Wages (QCEW) Program. This list ONLY includes industry employers subject to unemployment insurance. Railroads, tribal entities, and government agencies are excluded.