

Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

Volume 2019, Number 9

September 2019

Compiled by **Anneliese Vance-Sherman, Ph.D., Regional Labor Economist**

Phone: (425)258-6315 avancesherman@esd.wa.gov

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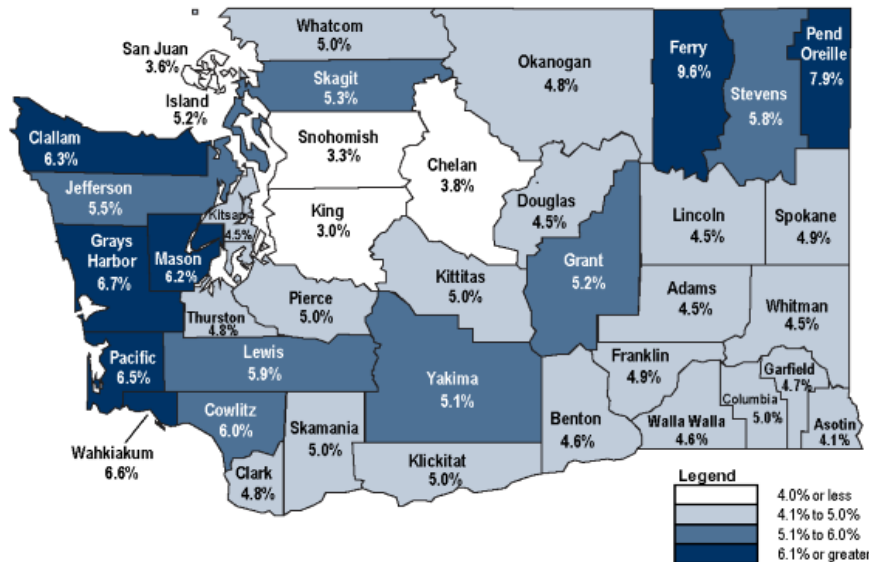
On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington fell by 3,100 in September 2019.

BLS estimates the private sector gained 3,800 jobs during the month and the public sector lost 6,900 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for September 2018 through September 2019 indicate an increase in employment of 66,000 for the state. The private sector added 63,200 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 2,800 jobs over the year.

Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for September 2019 is 4.6 percent. The revised estimated August 2019 unemployment rate is at 4.6 percent. The September 2018 unemployment rate was 4.4 percent.

September 2019
County unemployment rates, not seasonally adjusted



Unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted)

Area	(Prelim.) Sep-19	Aug-19	Sep-18	Year-to- Year Change
USA	3.3%	3.8%	3.6%	-0.3%
Washington state	4.2%	4.5%	4.0%	0.2%
Northwest Workforce Development Area	5.1%	5.6%	4.2%	0.9%
Whatcom County	5.0%	5.5%	4.1%	0.9%
Skagit County	5.3%	5.9%	4.4%	0.9%
Island County	5.2%	5.8%	4.7%	0.5%
San Juan County	3.6%	3.6%	3.2%	0.4%

BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. August’s preliminary estimated gain of 2,300 jobs was revised to a gain of 8,800 jobs.

Whatcom County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 5.0 percent in September 2019 (preliminary), down from 5.5 percent reported in August (revised). The unemployment rate in September 2018 was 4.1 percent.

- Compared to 12 months ago, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 3,468 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 1,251, nudging the unemployment rate down over the year. The labor force increased by 4.3 percent. Whatcom County’s labor force was estimated at 114,900 in September 2019.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Whatcom County increased from 668 in August to 694. Altogether, 1,566 Whatcom County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in September; up from 1,502 in August.

Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted
Bellingham Metropolitan Statistical Area (Whatcom County)
 Data benchmarked through March 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Sep-19	Revised Aug-19	Revised Sep-18	Change		
				Aug-19 Sep-19	Sep-18 Sep-19	Sep-18 Sep-19
Total Nonfarm	94,600	94,100	95,300	500	-700	-0.7%
Total Private	77,500	78,400	77,700	-900	-200	-0.3%
Goods Producing	19,100	19,200	19,100	-100	0	0.0%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	8,400	8,400	8,500	0	-100	-1.2%
Manufacturing	10,700	10,800	10,600	-100	100	0.9%
Service Providing	75,500	74,900	76,200	600	-700	-0.9%
Private Services Providing	58,400	59,200	58,600	-800	-200	-0.3%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	16,800	17,000	16,800	-200	0	0.0%
Retail Trade	11,100	11,300	11,200	-200	-100	-0.9%
Financial Activities	3,800	3,800	3,900	0	-100	-2.6%
Professional and Business Services	8,600	8,600	8,500	0	100	1.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	10,900	11,200	11,100	-300	-200	-1.8%
Government	17,100	15,700	17,600	1,400	-500	-2.8%
Federal Government	1,500	1,500	1,500	0	0	0.0%
Total State Government	5,800	4,800	6,300	1,000	-500	-7.9%
Total Local Government	9,800	9,400	9,800	400	0	0.0%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Total nonfarm payroll in Whatcom County (not seasonally adjusted) increased by 500 from August to September 2019. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs was down 700 or 0.7 percent.

- In September, private sector employers collectively contracted by 900 but government employers expanded employment by 1,400—a reflection of the school year. The deepest one-month losses were observed in leisure and hospitality.

- Over the year, two major industries detailed in this report added jobs; manufacturing and professional and business services each added 100 jobs. Government, leisure and hospitality and construction each shed jobs.

Holiday hiring

Every year, the Employment Security Department projects seasonal hiring for the retail industry by metropolitan area. For 2019, we predict that retailers in Whatcom County will add 314 temporary payroll jobs during the 4th quarter. Last year, ESD counted the addition of 249 holiday jobs.

Skagit County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 5.3 percent in September 2019 (preliminary), down from 5.9 percent in August (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.4 percent.

- Compared to September 2018, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 1,548 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ increased by 631. Skagit County’s labor force was estimated at 62,753, increasing by 3.6 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Skagit County increased from 436 in August to 480 in September. Altogether, 1,013 Skagit County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in September; up from 966 in August.

Skagit County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

Mount Vernon-Anacortes Metropolitan Statistical Area (Skagit County)

Data benchmarked through March 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Sep-19	Revised Aug-19	Revised Sep-18	Change		
				Aug-19 Sep-19	Sep-18 Sep-19	Sep-18 Sep-19
Total Nonfarm	52,100	52,400	52,000	-300	100	0.2%
Total Private	40,900	41,300	40,700	-400	200	0.5%
Goods Producing	11,200	11,300	10,900	-100	300	2.8%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	5,200	5,200	4,700	0	500	10.6%
Manufacturing	6,000	6,100	6,200	-100	-200	-3.2%
Service Providing	40,900	41,100	41,100	-200	-200	-0.5%
Private Services Providing	29,700	30,000	29,800	-300	-100	-0.3%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	9,900	10,000	10,500	-100	-600	-5.7%
Retail Trade	7,000	7,200	7,300	-200	-300	-4.1%
Leisure and Hospitality	5,300	5,400	5,400	-100	-100	-1.9%
Government	11,200	11,100	11,300	100	-100	-0.9%
Federal Government	500	500	400	0	100	25.0%
State Government	1,400	1,200	1,400	200	0	0.0%
Local Government	9,300	9,400	9,500	-100	-200	-2.1%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Total nonfarm employment in Skagit County (not seasonally adjusted) dropped by 300 from August to September 2019. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 100 or 0.2 percent.

- Over the month, private industry shed an estimated 400 jobs. The deepest losses were observed in retail trade (-200). Government employment expanded by 100, with growth observed in state government.
- Over the year, the only industry detailed in this report that added jobs was construction (+500). Manufacturing, trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities (including retail trade), leisure and hospitality, and government each shed jobs over the year. The deepest one-year losses were observed in retail trade.

Holiday hiring

September marks the start of the holiday hiring season for retailers. This year, the Employment Security Department predicts the addition of 202 jobs in Skagit County. Last year, there were an estimated 71 temporary jobs added in the 4th quarter.

Island County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 5.2 percent (preliminary) in September 2019. This is down from 5.8 percent in August (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.7 percent.

- Compared to September 2018, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 986 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 258, pushing the unemployment rate up over the year. Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 35,556, an increase of 3.6 percent over the year.
- There were 161 initial claims for unemployment benefits in Island County in September, up from 144 in August. Altogether, 391 Island County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in September. This is up from 366 in August.

Island County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted
Oak Harbor Micropolitan Statistical Area (Island County)

Data benchmarked through March 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Sep-19	Revised Aug-19	Revised Sep-18	Change		
				Aug-19 Sep-19	Sep-18 Sep-19	Sep-18 Sep-19
Total Nonfarm	17,050	17,100	16,950	-50	100	0.6%
Total Private	12,600	12,700	12,440	-100	160	1.3%
Goods Producing	2,010	1,990	1,930	20	80	4.1%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	1,230	1,210	1,130	20	100	8.8%
Manufacturing	780	780	800	0	-20	-2.5%
Service Providing	15,040	15,110	15,020	-70	20	0.1%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,770	2,740	2,680	30	90	3.4%
Retail Trade	2,160	2,140	2,130	20	30	1.4%
Information and Financial Activities	790	790	810	0	-20	-2.5%
Professional and Business Services	1,250	1,240	1,230	10	20	1.6%
Education and Health Services	2,540	2,550	2,370	-10	170	7.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,400	2,510	2,580	-110	-180	-7.0%
Government	4,450	4,400	4,510	50	-60	-1.3%
Federal Government	1,300	1,300	1,300	0	0	0.0%
State and Local Government	3,150	3,100	3,210	50	-60	-1.9%
State and Local Government Education	1,320	1,270	1,360	50	-40	-2.9%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Total nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County contracted by 50 from August to September 2019 on a not seasonally adjusted basis. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 100.

- From August to September, four industries expanded and two contracted. The largest increases were attributable to hiring by government and the deepest losses came from leisure and hospitality.

- Year-over-year, 4 major industries added jobs and 4 shed jobs. The largest gains were attributable to hiring in the education and health services sector (+170) and the deepest losses were observed in leisure and hospitality (-180).

Note that employment statistics for Island County do not include military employment.

San Juan County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in San Juan County remained unchanged from August (revised) to September (preliminary) 2019, resting at 3.6 percent. The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 3.2 percent.

- Compared to September 2018, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 195 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 39. Altogether, the San Juan County labor force consisted of an estimated 8,838 workers and expanded by 2.7 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in San Juan County totaled 19 in September, up from 14 initial claims filed in August. Altogether, 36 San Juan County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in September. This is up from 26 in August.

San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

San Juan County

Data benchmarked through March 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Sep-19	Revised Aug-19	Revised Sep-18	Change		
				Aug-19 Sep-19	Sep-18 Sep-19	Sep-18 Sep-19
Total Nonfarm	6,190	6,360	6,280	-170	-90	-1.4%
Total Private	5,440	5,610	5,490	-170	-50	-0.9%
Goods Producing	970	940	980	30	-10	-1.0%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	730	720	720	10	10	1.4%
Manufacturing	240	220	260	20	-20	-7.7%
Service Providing	5,220	5,420	5,300	-200	-80	-1.5%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	1,110	1,040	1,120	70	-10	-0.9%
Information and Financial Activities	370	350	410	20	-40	-9.8%
Professional and Business Services	400	390	370	10	30	8.1%
Education and Health Services	640	640	600	0	40	6.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	1,760	2,060	1,830	-300	-70	-3.8%
Government	750	750	790	0	-40	-5.1%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Net nonfarm payroll in San Juan County decreased by 170 from August to September on a not seasonally adjusted basis. Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was down 90 or 1.4 percent.

- San Juan County has a highly-seasonal economy, due to its orientation toward tourism. Most industries shed jobs in the winter and return with the sun. In September, the largest one-month gains were reported from trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities (+70 each). The deepest one-month losses were observed in leisure and hospitality (-300).
- Over the year, there was a net loss of employment. Three industries added jobs over the year and five industries contracted. The largest one-year gains were attributable to hiring in education and health services (+40) and the deepest losses came from leisure and hospitality (-70).

Forecast information for Washington state:

The Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council issues quarterly forecasts that address Washington's projected economic health. The most recent forecast was issued in September and updated in October. Forecast information is available at www.erfc.wa.gov.

The Employment Security Department is an equal-opportunity employer and provider of programs and services. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to people with disabilities. Washington Relay Service 711.