

Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

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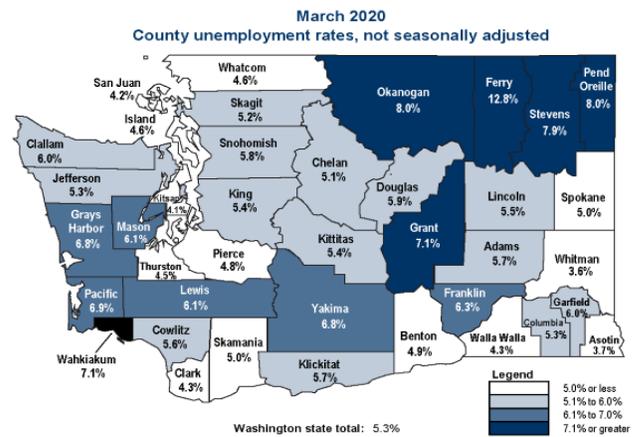
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The impacts of COVID-19 may not be fully captured in the March report and are more likely to be evident in the April Report.

To be counted on payroll as part of the jobs survey for March, an individual must have worked or received pay during the payroll period that includes March 12th. Although we have seen widespread closings of schools, restaurants, and theaters, these actions largely took effect starting the week of March 16th, after most workers would have been counted. As a result, even if some firms started laying off workers as early as the 2nd week of March, many still would have worked or received pay for at least part of the payroll period including the 12th, and thus their loss of employment will not be reflected in the jobs release for the March report.



Employment estimates in this report are generated by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Monthly employment estimates are subject to revision in subsequent months when more sample data become available. BLS data in this report are rounded to the nearest 100.

On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington fell by 11,100 in March 2020.¹ BLS estimates the private sector lost 11,700 jobs during the month and the public sector gained 600 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for March 2019 through March 2020 indicate an increase in employment of 64,400 for the state. The private sector added 56,400 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 8,000 jobs over the year.

Washington's preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for March 2020 is 5.1 percent. The revised estimated February 2020 unemployment rate is at 3.8 percent. The March 2019 unemployment rate was 4.5 percent.

BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. February's preliminary estimated gain of 3,500 jobs was revised to a gain of 3,900 jobs.

Whatcom County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 4.6 percent in March 2020 (preliminary), down from 5.0 percent reported in February 2020 (revised). The unemployment rate in March 2019 was 5.2 percent.

- Compared to 12 months ago, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 395 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 656, nudging the unemployment rate down over the year. The labor force decreased by 0.2 percent. Whatcom County’s labor force was estimated at 115,302 in March 2020.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Whatcom County increased from 649 in February to 14,672. Altogether, 6,185 Whatcom County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in March; up from 1,986 in February.

Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

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

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Mar-20	Revised Feb-20	Revised Mar-19	Change		
				Feb-20 Mar-20	Mar-19 Mar-20	Mar-19 Mar-20
Total Nonfarm	96,000	96,200	96,100	-200	-100	-0.1%
Total Private	76,800	76,700	77,100	100	-300	-0.4%
Goods Producing	18,600	18,300	19,200	300	-600	-3.1%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	8,100	7,700	8,600	400	-500	-5.8%
Manufacturing	10,500	10,600	10,600	-100	-100	-0.9%
Service Providing	77,400	77,900	76,900	-500	500	0.7%
Private Services Providing	58,200	58,400	57,900	-200	300	0.5%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	16,300	16,400	16,300	-100	0	0.0%
Retail Trade	11,000	11,000	11,000	0	0	0.0%
Financial Activities	4,000	4,000	3,800	0	200	5.3%
Professional and Business Services	8,600	8,500	8,400	100	200	2.4%
Leisure and Hospitality	10,400	10,500	10,500	-100	-100	-1.0%
Government	19,200	19,500	19,000	-300	200	1.1%
Federal Government	1,400	1,400	1,400	0	0	0.0%
Total State Government	6,700	7,100	7,100	-400	-400	-5.6%
Total Local Government	11,100	11,000	10,500	100	600	5.7%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Total nonfarm payroll in Whatcom County (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by 200 from February to March 2020. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs decreased by 100.

- In March, net employment contracted, with a mix of industry gains and losses. The deepest losses were observed in government (-300) and the largest gains were observed in construction (+400).

- Over the year, the largest decreases came from goods producers; construction was down 500 and manufacturing shed 100. Financial activities, professional and business services and government each added 200.

Skagit County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 5.2 percent in March 2020 (preliminary), down from 5.7 percent in February (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 5.7 percent.

- Compared to March 2019, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 179 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ decreased by 330. Skagit County’s resident labor force was estimated at 62,216, decreasing by 0.2 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Skagit County increased from 479 in February to 7,609 in March. Altogether, 3,672 Skagit County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in March; up from 1,370 in February.

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted
Mount Vernon-Anacortes Metropolitan Statistical Area (Skagit County)

Data benchmarked through September 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Mar-20	Revised Feb-20	Revised Mar-19	Change		
				Feb-20 Mar-20	Mar-19 Mar-20	Mar-19 Mar-20
Total Nonfarm	51,700	51,300	51,900	400	-200	-0.4%
Total Private	39,400	39,400	39,800	0	-400	-1.0%
Goods Producing	10,300	10,300	11,200	0	-900	-8.0%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	4,600	4,600	5,100	0	-500	-9.8%
Manufacturing	5,700	5,700	6,100	0	-400	-6.6%
Service Providing	41,400	41,000	40,700	400	700	1.7%
Private Services Providing	29,100	29,100	28,600	0	500	1.7%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	9,900	10,000	9,700	-100	200	2.1%
Retail Trade	7,200	7,300	7,000	-100	200	2.9%
Leisure and Hospitality	5,300	5,300	5,000	0	300	6.0%
Government	12,300	11,900	12,100	400	200	1.7%
Federal Government	400	300	400	100	0	0.0%
State Government	1,500	1,400	1,500	100	0	0.0%
Local Government	10,400	10,200	10,200	200	200	2.0%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Total nonfarm employment in Skagit County increased by 400 from February to March 2020. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs contracted by 200 or 0.4 percent.

- Over the month, most private sector industries detailed in this report held steady, with 100 jobs lost from retail trade. Government employment expanded by 400.

- Over the year, losses were concentrated in goods providing industries. Construction shed 500 jobs and manufacturing was down 400. Leisure and hospitality posted the largest gains (300).

Island County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 4.6 percent (preliminary) in March 2020. This is down from 4.9 percent reported in February (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 5.5 percent.

- Compared to March 2019, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 843 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 285. Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 36,124, an increase of 1.6 percent over the year.
- There were 3,592 initial claims for unemployment benefits in Island County in March, up from 157 in February. Altogether, 1,424 Island County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in March. This is up from 420 in February.

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

Data benchmarked through September 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Mar-20	Revised Feb-20	Revised Mar-19	Change		
				Feb-20 Mar-20	Mar-19 Mar-20	Mar-19 Mar-20
Total Nonfarm	17,290	17,350	16,980	-60	310	1.8%
Total Private	12,550	12,600	12,200	-50	350	2.9%
Goods Producing	1,970	1,980	1,920	-10	50	2.6%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	1,160	1,170	1,140	-10	20	1.8%
Manufacturing	810	810	780	0	30	3.8%
Service Providing	15,320	15,370	15,060	-50	260	1.7%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,760	2,750	2,690	10	70	2.6%
Retail Trade	2,110	2,110	2,100	0	10	0.5%
Information and Financial Activities	820	820	770	0	50	6.5%
Professional and Business Services	1,250	1,250	1,240	0	10	0.8%
Education and Health Services	2,470	2,470	2,380	0	90	3.8%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,430	2,460	2,380	-30	50	2.1%
Government	4,740	4,750	4,780	-10	-40	-0.8%
Federal Government	1,340	1,330	1,340	10	0	0.0%
State and Local Government	3,400	3,420	3,440	-20	-40	-1.2%
State and Local Government Education	1,560	1,590	1,600	-30	-40	-2.5%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Total nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County dipped by 60 from February to March 2020 on a not seasonally adjusted basis. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 310.

- From February to March, three major industries detailed in this report contracted and none expanded. The largest decreases were attributable to leisure and hospitality (-30).
- Year-over-year, all major private industries added jobs, with the largest gains attributable to hiring by employers in education and health services (+90). Government shed 40 jobs over the year.

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 decreased from 4.3 percent in February (revised) to 4.2 percent in March (preliminary). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.8 percent.

- Compared to March 2019, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 227 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 38. Altogether, the San Juan County labor force consisted of an estimated 8,152 resident workers and expanded by 2.4 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in San Juan County totaled 1,070 in March, up from 17 initial claims filed in February. Altogether, 409 San Juan County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in March. This is down from 113 in February.

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

San Juan County

Data benchmarked through September 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Mar-20	Revised Feb-20	Revised Mar-19	Change		
				Feb-20 Mar-20	Mar-19 Mar-20	Mar-19 Mar-20
Total Nonfarm	5,560	5,650	5,300	-90	260	4.9%
Total Private	4,760	4,840	4,510	-80	250	5.5%
Goods Producing	950	970	900	-20	50	5.6%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	730	740	700	-10	30	4.3%
Manufacturing	220	230	200	-10	20	10.0%
Service Providing	4,610	4,680	4,400	-70	210	4.8%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	1,030	1,040	950	-10	80	8.4%
Information and Financial Activities	370	370	320	0	50	15.6%
Professional and Business Services	440	440	380	0	60	15.8%
Education and Health Services	630	630	610	0	20	3.3%
Leisure and Hospitality	1,150	1,200	1,170	-50	-20	-1.7%
Government	800	810	790	-10	10	1.3%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Net nonfarm payroll in San Juan County decreased over the month (-90). Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was up 260 or 4.9 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. The deepest one-month losses were observed in leisure and hospitality (-50).
- Over the year, there was a net employment gain, with most industries reporting 12-month gains. The largest one-year gains were observed in trade transportation and utilities (+80).

Weekly Unemployment Insurance Claims information:

In March, the Employment Security Department began publishing weekly counts of initial claims for Unemployment Insurance. Initial claims provide an indicator of layoffs. Because they are entered weekly, they are a bit more nimble than our survey-based datasets.

Northwest weekly initial claims for March and April 2020:

Claim week	Whatcom	Skagit	Island	San Juan
Week 9 (March 1-7)	198	127	63	8
Week 10 (March 8-14)	238	163	66	17
Week 11 (March 15-21)	4,428	1,966	949	279
Week 12 (March 22-28)	6,268	3,425	1,520	465
Week 13 (March 29-April 4)	5,885	3,230	1,584	443
Week 14 (April 5-11)	3,968	2,731	1,577	271
Week 15 (April 12-18)	2,612	1,445	713	191

Weekly initial claims information is published every Thursday.

Weekly claims data can be found here: <https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/unemployment-insurance-data>

Additional information can be found here: <https://esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19>

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 February and updated in April. 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.