

# Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

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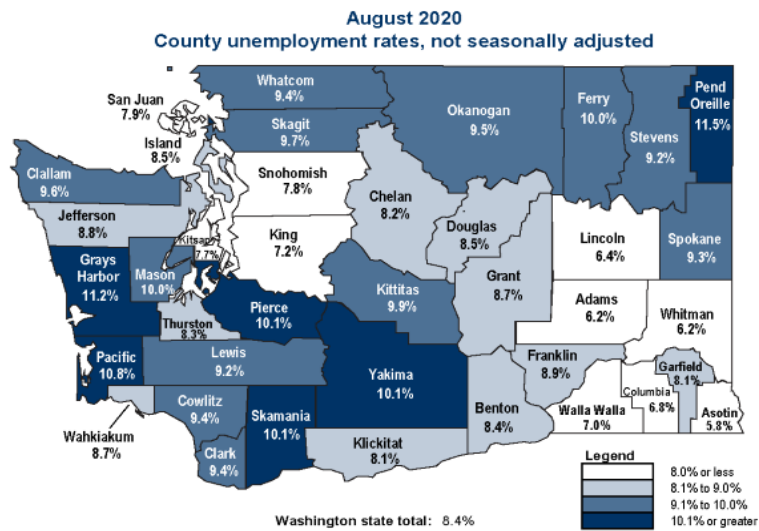
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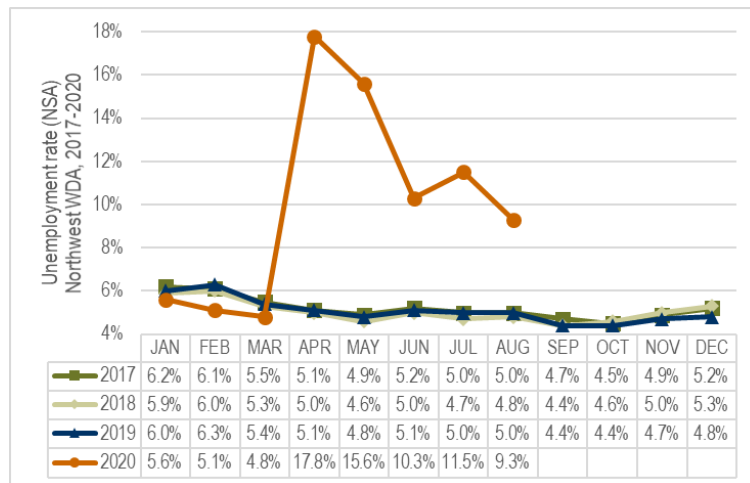
For all intents and purposes, this is the fifth report to record the effects of the Covid-19 economic situation in Northwest Washington.

On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington rose by 19,800 in August 2020.<sup>1</sup> BLS estimates the private sector gained 6,700 jobs during the month and the public sector gained 13,100 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for August 2019 through August 2020 indicate a decrease in employment of 216,100 for the state. The private sector lost 203,200 jobs while the public sector lost an estimated 12,900 jobs over the year.



Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for August 2020 is 8.5 percent. The revised estimated July 2020 unemployment rate is at 10.2 percent. The August 2019 unemployment rate was 4.2 percent.



BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. July’s preliminary estimated gain of 44,500 jobs was revised to a gain of 102,800 jobs.

*The unemployment rate for the Northwest Workforce Development Area jumped to 17.8 percent in April. In August, the four-county area had an unemployment rate of 9.3 percent.*

# Whatcom County

## Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 9.4 percent in August 2020 (preliminary), down from 11.6 percent reported in July (revised). The unemployment rate in August 2019 was 5.0 percent.

- Compared to 12 months ago, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 703 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 5,527. The labor force as a whole expanded by 4.2 percent. Whatcom County’s labor force was estimated at 119,202 in August 2020.

## Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted  
**Bellingham Metropolitan Statistical Area (Whatcom County)**

Data benchmarked through March 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Aug-20	Revised Jul-20	Revised Aug-19	Change		
				Jul-20 Aug-20	Aug-19 Aug-20	Aug-19 Aug-20
Total Nonfarm	92,000	90,900	94,300	1,100	-2,300	-2.4%
Total Private	77,300	76,200	78,400	1,100	-1,100	-1.4%
Goods Producing	18,000	17,700	19,000	300	-1,000	-5.3%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	7,400	7,300	8,100	100	-700	-8.6%
Manufacturing	10,600	10,400	10,900	200	-300	-2.8%
Service Providing	74,000	73,200	75,300	800	-1,300	-1.7%
Private Services Providing	59,300	58,500	59,400	800	-100	-0.2%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	17,800	17,400	16,500	400	1,300	7.9%
Retail Trade	13,700	13,400	11,100	300	2,600	23.4%
Financial Activities	4,100	4,100	4,100	0	0	0.0%
Professional and Business Services	8,400	8,300	8,800	100	-400	-4.5%
Leisure and Hospitality	8,100	8,000	11,000	100	-2,900	-26.4%
Government	14,700	14,700	15,900	0	-1,200	-7.5%
Federal Government	1,900	1,500	1,500	400	400	26.7%
Total State Government	3,400	3,800	4,700	-400	-1,300	-27.7%
Total Local Government	9,400	9,400	9,700	0	-300	-3.1%

Total nonfarm payroll in Whatcom County (not seasonally adjusted) increased by 1,100 from July to August 2020. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs decreased by 2,300 (2.4 percent).

- In August, net employment expanded, with most industries included in this report reporting employment increases. The largest increases were observed in retail trade (up 300). Government as a whole remained unchanged, with losses at the state level and expanded federal employment.
- Most major industries detailed in this report shed jobs over the year. The largest decreases came from leisure and hospitality (down 2,900). Retail trade was up 2,600 jobs over the year.

## Skagit County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 9.7 percent in August 2020 (preliminary); this is down from 12.0 percent in July (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 5.3 percent.

- Compared to August 2019, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ dropped by 2,167 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ expanded by 2,908. Skagit County’s resident labor force was estimated at 64,465 increasing by 1.2 percent over the year.

### Skagit County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted  
**Mount Vernon-Anacortes Metropolitan Statistical Area (Skagit County)**  
 Data benchmarked through March 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Aug-20	Revised Jul-20	Revised Aug-19	Change		
				Jul-20 Aug-20	Aug-19 Aug-20	Aug-19 Aug-20
Total Nonfarm	49,200	48,600	52,900	600	-3,700	-7.0%
Total Private	38,100	37,500	41,500	600	-3,400	-8.2%
Goods Producing	10,000	10,000	11,200	0	-1,200	-10.7%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	4,100	4,100	5,100	0	-1,000	-19.6%
Manufacturing	5,900	5,900	6,100	0	-200	-3.3%
Service Providing	39,200	38,600	41,700	600	-2,500	-6.0%
Private Services Providing	28,100	27,500	30,300	600	-2,200	-7.3%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	10,500	10,200	10,200	300	300	2.9%
Retail Trade	8,200	8,000	7,200	200	1,000	13.9%
Leisure and Hospitality	3,700	3,700	5,800	0	-2,100	-36.2%
Government	11,100	11,100	11,400	0	-300	-2.6%
Federal Government	400	400	500	0	-100	-20.0%
State Government	1,100	1,100	1,200	0	-100	-8.3%
Local Government	9,600	9,600	9,700	0	-100	-1.0%

Total nonfarm employment in Skagit County increased by 600 from July to August 2020. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs contracted by 3,700 or 7.0 percent.

- Over the month, all major industries in this report added jobs or remained unchanged. Trade transportation warehousing and utilities, including retail trade added the most jobs over the month (up 300).
- Covid-19 related losses reverberated throughout the economy, showing up in the year over year estimates for all industries. The deepest losses were observed in leisure and hospitality (down 2,100) and construction (-1,000). Retail trade added 1,000 jobs over the year.

# Island County

## Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 8.5 percent (preliminary) in August 2020. This is down from 10.3 (revised) reported in July. The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 5.1 percent.

- Compared to August 2019, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 790 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work expanded by 1,271. Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 36,496 in August 2020.

## Island County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

**Oak Harbor Micropolitan Statistical Area (Island County)**

Data benchmarked through March 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Aug-20	Revised Jul-20	Revised Aug-19	Change		
				Jul-20 Aug-20	Aug-19 Aug-20	Aug-19 Aug-20
Total Nonfarm	16,420	16,060	17,550	360	-1,130	-6.4%
Total Private	11,760	11,560	13,030	200	-1,270	-9.7%
Goods Producing	1,560	1,540	2,000	20	-440	-22.0%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	700	680	1,190	20	-490	-41.2%
Manufacturing	860	860	810	0	50	6.2%
Service Providing	14,860	14,520	15,550	340	-690	-4.4%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,580	2,440	2,780	140	-200	-7.2%
Retail Trade	2,100	1,960	2,130	140	-30	-1.4%
Information and Financial Activities	820	820	850	0	-30	-3.5%
Professional and Business Services	1,400	1,400	1,340	0	60	4.5%
Education and Health Services	2,380	2,380	2,400	0	-20	-0.8%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,110	2,080	2,780	30	-670	-24.1%
Government	4,660	4,500	4,520	160	140	3.1%
Federal Government	1,470	1,280	1,330	190	140	10.5%
State and Local Government	3,190	3,220	3,190	-30	0	0.0%
State and Local Government Education	1,310	1,330	1,320	-20	-10	-0.8%

Total nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County expanded by 360 from July to August 2020. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs plunged by 1,130 or 6.4 percent.

- From July to August, most industries detailed in this report either expanded employment or remained unchanged. The largest increases were attributable to government (up 160).
- Year-over-year, the deepest losses were observed in leisure and hospitality (down 670). Government, professional and business services and manufacturing expanded employment 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 remained dropped from 9.8 percent (revised) in July to 7.9 percent (preliminary) in August 2020. For comparison, the unemployment rate 12 months ago was 3.0 percent.

- Compared to August 2019, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 2,382 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 320. Altogether, the San Juan County labor force consisted of an estimated 7,652 resident workers and contracted by 21.2 percent over the year.

### San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

#### San Juan County

Data benchmarked through March 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Aug-20	Revised Jul-20	Revised Aug-19	Change		
				Jul-20 Aug-20	Aug-19 Aug-20	Aug-19 Aug-20
Total Nonfarm	4,740	4,690	7,020	50	-2,280	-32.5%
Total Private	3,960	3,910	6,200	50	-2,240	-36.1%
Goods Producing	910	890	1,060	20	-150	-14.2%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	710	700	770	10	-60	-7.8%
Manufacturing	200	190	290	10	-90	-31.0%
Service Providing	3,830	3,800	5,960	30	-2,130	-35.7%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	1,010	1,000	1,240	10	-230	-18.5%
Information and Financial Activities	330	320	430	10	-100	-23.3%
Professional and Business Services	410	420	470	-10	-60	-12.8%
Education and Health Services	450	460	590	-10	-140	-23.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	660	640	2,220	20	-1,560	-70.3%
Government	780	780	820	0	-40	-4.9%

Net nonfarm payroll in San Juan County expanded over the month (up 50). Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was down 2,280 or 32.5 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. There was little movement over the month, with the largest observed increases attributable to leisure and hospitality (up 20). Given the timing of Covid-19, the tourism-reliant San Juan Islands have essentially lost their summer-oriented economy.
- Over the year, there was a net employment loss, with all industries reporting 12-month losses. The largest one-year losses were observed in leisure and hospitality (down 1,560 or 70.3 percent).

## 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 from March 1 to September 12, 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
Week 16 (April 19-25)	4,343	2,164	1,297	503
Week 17 (April 26-May 2)	3,170	1,609	882	336
Week 18 (May 3-9)	2,914	1,529	755	195
Week 19 (May 10-16)	3,768	1,902	1,037	233
Week 20 (May 17-23)	1,418	753	386	104
Week 21 (May 24-30)	959	590	238	64
Week 22 (May 31-June 6)	801	487	215	47
Week 23 (June 7-13)	955	468	192	37
Week 24 (June 14-20)	952	502	208	43
Week 25 (June 21-27)	1,091	573	201	39
Week 26 (June 28-July 4)	982	449	188	43
Week 27 (July 5-11)	1,361	616	304	75
Week 28 (July 12-18)	870	460	201	59
Week 29 (July 19-25)	891	443	204	58
Week 30 (July 26-August 1)	702	431	191	46
Week 31 (August 2-8)	550	336	180	36
Week 32 (August 9-15)*	579	320	159	35
Week 33 (August 16-22)	562	289	126	35
Week 34 (August 23-29)	532	270	118	23
Week 35 (August 30-September 5)	629	321	124	34
Week 36 (September 6-12)	549	292	111	24

\*Labor force and payroll reporting reflects employment during week 32 (August 9-15)

Weekly initial claims information is updated every Thursday, and is published at [www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo](http://www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo)

## 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 June and updated in September. Forecast information is available at [www.erfc.wa.gov](http://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.*