

Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

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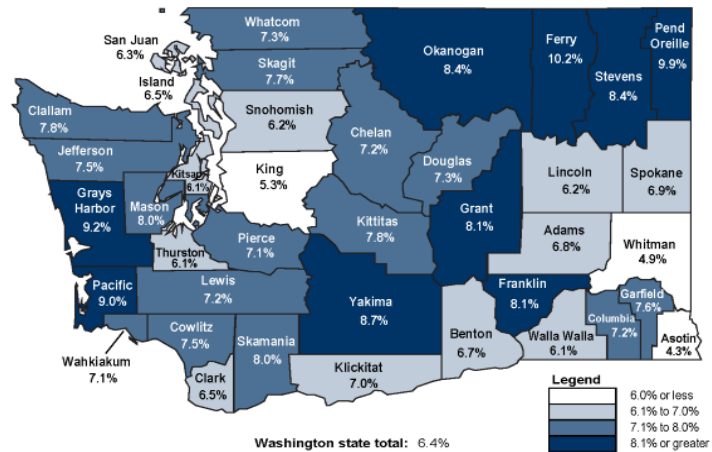
www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo

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

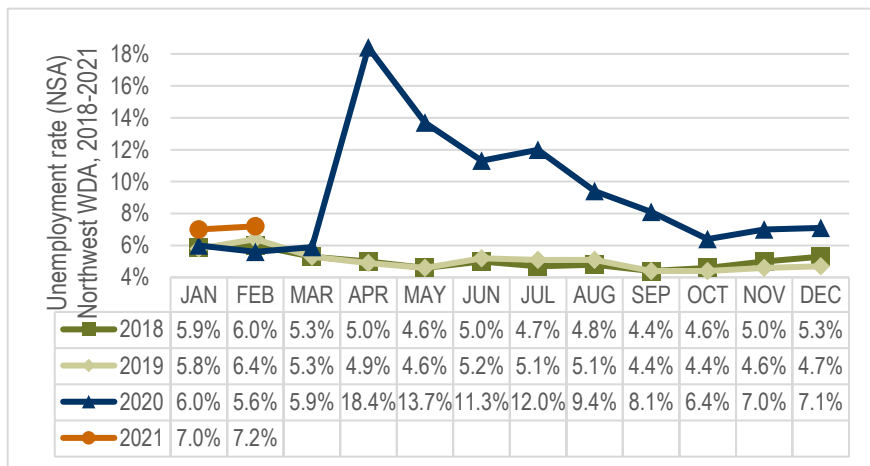
On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington rose by 24,500 in February 2021.¹ BLS estimates the private sector gained 23,600 jobs during the month and the public sector gained 900 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for February 2020 through February 2021 indicate a decrease in employment of 213,800 for the state. The private sector lost 162,500 jobs while the public sector lost an estimated 51,300 jobs over the year.

February 2021
County unemployment rates, not seasonally adjusted



Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for February 2021 is 5.6 percent. The revised estimated January 2021 unemployment rate is at 6.0 percent. The February 2020 unemployment rate was 4.1 percent.



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BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. The January 2021 preliminary estimated gain of 4,400 jobs was revised to a gain of 10,100 jobs.

Whatcom County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 7.3 percent in February 2021 (preliminary), up slightly compared to the January estimate of 7.1 percent (revised). For comparison, the unemployment rate 12 months ago was 5.4 percent. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the highest observed unemployment rate for Whatcom County was 18.4 percent in April 2020.

- Over the course of the pandemic, the size of the labor force has dropped, as many people are no longer employed and are not actively employment. Compared to February 2020, the labor force dropped by 8,521 or 7.2 percent. Within that estimate, the number of employed workers dropped by 10,122 (9.0 percent) and the number of unemployed workers expanded by 1,601 (25.1 percent). Whatcom County's estimated labor force was 109,825 in February.

Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

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

Data benchmarked through September 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Feb-21	Revised Jan-21	Revised Feb-20	Change		
				Jan-21 Feb-21	Feb-20 Feb-21	Feb-20 Feb-21
Total Nonfarm	88,800	87,800	96,500	1,000	-7,700	-8.0%
Total Private	71,500	70,700	77,300	800	-5,800	-7.5%
Goods Producing	17,100	17,000	18,300	100	-1,200	-6.6%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	8,000	7,800	7,800	200	200	2.6%
Manufacturing	9,100	9,200	10,500	-100	-1,400	-13.3%
Service Providing	71,700	70,800	78,200	900	-6,500	-8.3%
Private Services Providing	54,400	53,700	59,000	700	-4,600	-7.8%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	15,600	15,500	16,300	100	-700	-4.3%
Retail Trade	10,600	10,600	11,000	0	-400	-3.6%
Financial Activities	4,300	4,300	4,000	0	300	7.5%
Professional and Business Services	8,000	7,900	8,500	100	-500	-5.9%
Leisure and Hospitality	7,600	7,100	10,800	500	-3,200	-29.6%
Government	17,300	17,100	19,200	200	-1,900	-9.9%
Federal Government	1,500	1,400	1,400	100	100	7.1%
Total State Government	6,300	6,300	7,100	0	-800	-11.3%
Total Local Government	9,500	9,400	10,700	100	-1,200	-11.2%

Total nonfarm payroll in Whatcom County (not seasonally adjusted) increased by 1,000 from January to February 2021 Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs decreased by 7,700 (down 8.0 percent).

- In February, most industries covered in this report added jobs. The largest one-month gains were observed in leisure and hospitality (+500). Manufacturing was down (-100) over the month.

- Most major industries detailed in this report shed jobs over the year. The largest decreases came from leisure and hospitality (-3,200) and government (-1,900). Employment in construction and financial activities each expanded over the year.

Skagit County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 7.7 percent in February 2021 (preliminary); this is up from 7.4 percent in January (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 6.2 percent. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Skagit County unemployment rate reached a peak of 19.6 percent in April 2020.

- Compared to February 2020, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 4,700 (7.9 percent) and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ expanded by 662 (16.9 percent). Skagit County’s resident labor force was estimated at 59,474 decreasing by 6.4 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 September 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Feb-21	Revised Jan-21	Revised Feb-20	Change		
				Jan-21 Feb-21	Feb-20 Feb-21	Feb-20 Feb-21
Total Nonfarm	47,900	47,500	51,600	400	-3,700	-7.2%
Total Private	37,200	36,900	39,600	300	-2,400	-6.1%
Goods Producing	10,100	10,200	10,900	-100	-800	-7.3%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	4,000	4,100	4,500	-100	-500	-11.1%
Manufacturing	6,100	6,100	6,400	0	-300	-4.7%
Service Providing	37,800	37,300	40,700	500	-2,900	-7.1%
Private Services Providing	27,100	26,700	28,700	400	-1,600	-5.6%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	9,900	10,000	9,800	-100	100	1.0%
Retail Trade	6,700	6,800	7,000	-100	-300	-4.3%
Leisure and Hospitality	3,800	3,600	5,000	200	-1,200	-24.0%
Government	10,700	10,600	12,000	100	-1,300	-10.8%
Federal Government	300	400	400	-100	-100	-25.0%
State Government	1,200	1,100	1,400	100	-200	-14.3%
Local Government	9,200	9,100	10,200	100	-1,000	-9.8%

Total nonfarm employment in Skagit County increased by 400 from January to February 2021. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs contracted by 3,700 or 7.2 percent.

- Over the month, construction and trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities (including retail) shed jobs, while gains were observed in leisure and hospitality and government.

- Covid-19 related losses reverberated throughout the economy, showing up in the year over year estimates for most industries. The deepest losses reported on a yearly basis were observed in leisure and hospitality and government. Employment in transportation, warehousing and utilities was up over the year.

Island County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 6.5 percent (preliminary) in February 2021, up from 6.2 (revised) reported in January. The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 5.3 percent. The highest observed unemployment rate was 16.3 percent in April 2020.

- Compared to February 2020, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 2,089 (6.0 percent) and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work expanded by 351 (18.0 percent). Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 35,122 in February 2021 – 4.7 percent below last year.

Island County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

Oak Harbor Micropolitan Statistical Area (Island County)

Data benchmarked through September 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Feb-21	Revised Jan-21	Revised Feb-20	Change		
				Jan-21 Feb-21	Feb-20 Feb-21	Feb-20 Feb-21
Total Nonfarm	16,680	16,830	17,320	-150	-640	-3.7%
Total Private	12,260	12,410	12,530	-150	-270	-2.2%
Goods Producing	1,940	1,940	1,970	0	-30	-1.5%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	1,170	1,170	1,140	0	30	2.6%
Manufacturing	770	770	830	0	-60	-7.2%
Service Providing	14,740	14,890	15,350	-150	-610	-4.0%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,590	2,660	2,590	-70	0	0.0%
Retail Trade	2,030	2,100	2,020	-70	10	0.5%
Information and Financial Activities	820	830	840	-10	-20	-2.4%
Professional and Business Services	1,450	1,470	1,400	-20	50	3.6%
Education and Health Services	2,300	2,260	2,440	40	-140	-5.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,270	2,330	2,380	-60	-110	-4.6%
Government	4,420	4,420	4,790	0	-370	-7.7%
Federal Government	1,290	1,290	1,310	0	-20	-1.5%
State and Local Government	3,130	3,130	3,480	0	-350	-10.1%
State and Local Government Education	1,310	1,320	1,600	-10	-290	-18.1%

Total nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County contracted by 150 from January to February 2021. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs contracted by 640 or 3.7 percent.

- From January to February, most industries included in this report saw declining employment levels, with the deepest drops observed in retail trade. Education and health services added jobs over the month.
- Year-over-year, the deepest losses were observed in government and education and health services. Construction, retail, and professional and business services added jobs over the year.

Employment statistics for Island County do not include military employment.

San Juan County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in San Juan County was 6.3 percent in February 2021 (preliminary), up from 6.1, reported in January (revised). For comparison, the unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.9 percent. The peak unemployment rate reported during the pandemic was 18.7 percent in April.

- Compared to February 2020, the number of residents counted as ‘employed’ increased by 137 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 128. Altogether, the San Juan County labor force consisted of an estimated 8,320 resident workers and expanded by 3.3 percent over the year.

San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

San Juan County

Data benchmarked through September 2020

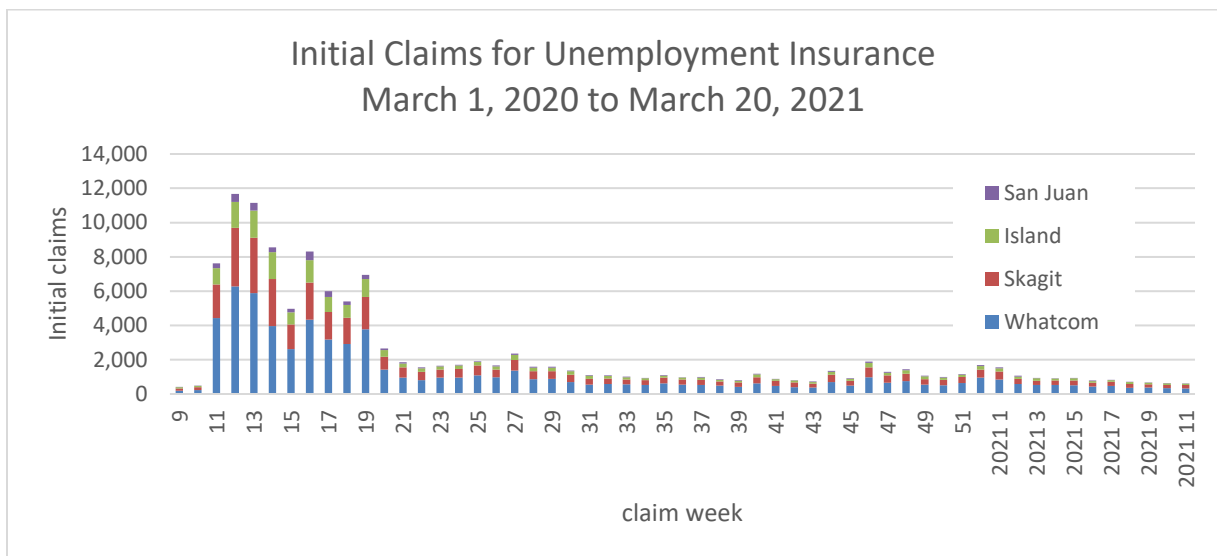
NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Feb-21	Revised Jan-21	Revised Feb-20	Change		
				Jan-21 Feb-21	Feb-20 Feb-21	Feb-20 Feb-21
Total Nonfarm	5,570	5,730	5,260	-160	310	5.9%
Total Private	4,770	4,950	4,450	-180	320	7.2%
Goods Producing	1,060	1,080	900	-20	160	17.8%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	810	820	700	-10	110	15.7%
Manufacturing	250	260	200	-10	50	25.0%
Service Providing	4,510	4,650	4,360	-140	150	3.4%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	1,150	1,240	930	-90	220	23.7%
Information and Financial Activities	440	460	320	-20	120	37.5%
Professional and Business Services	470	480	420	-10	50	11.9%
Education and Health Services	570	560	630	10	-60	-9.5%
Leisure and Hospitality	880	930	1,050	-50	-170	-16.2%
Government	800	780	810	20	-10	-1.2%

Net nonfarm payroll in San Juan County contracted over the month (-160). Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was up 310 or 5.9 percent.

- According to preliminary estimates, all industries except leisure and hospitality and education and health services expanded employment over the year. (Note: I expect to see significant revisions in the next release. AVS)

Weekly Unemployment Insurance Claims information:

In March 2020, 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.



New claims for unemployment insurance have stabilized, but are still higher than pre-pandemic levels.

**Labor force and payroll reporting reflects employment during 2021 the week of February 7-13.*

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 November and revised in March. 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.