

Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

Volume 2021, Number 9

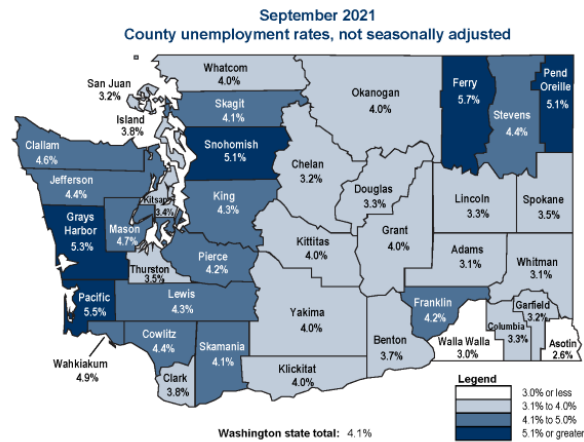
September 2021

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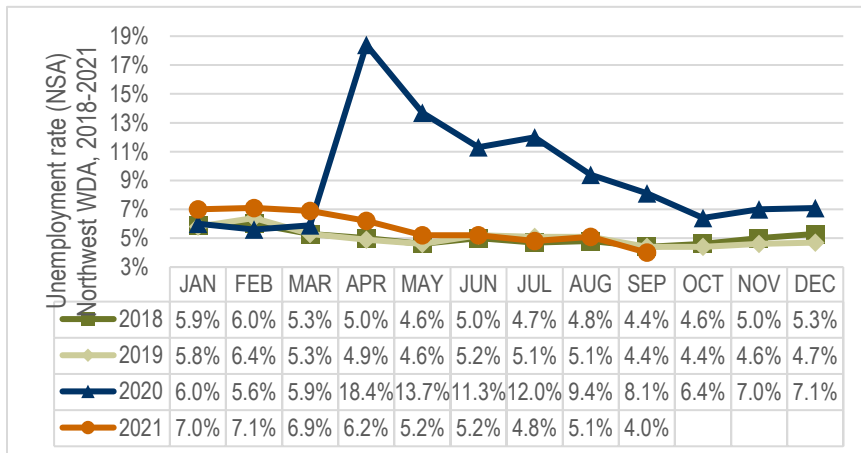
This report marks the sixth report whereby the year-over-year narrative shifts from pandemic-related losses to recovery since the start of the economic crisis. Pandemic-related employment effects began to show up in March last year, and swiftly led to unprecedented levels of unemployment in April 2020. Many jobs have recovered in the meantime, with significant variation by location and industry. This report tracks a moment in that recovery.

On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington rose by 17,600 in September 2021. BLS estimates the private sector gained 18,100 jobs during the month and the public sector lost 500 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for September 2020 through September 2021 indicate an increase in employment of 167,200 for the state. The private sector gained 159,200 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 8,000 jobs over the year.



Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for September 2021 is 4.9 percent. The revised estimated August 2021 unemployment rate is at 5.1 percent. The September 2020 unemployment rate was 8.0 percent.



BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. The August 2021 preliminary estimated gain of 16,800 jobs was revised to a gain of 16,400 jobs.

Whatcom County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 4.0 percent in September 2021 (preliminary), below the August estimate of 5.2 percent (revised). For comparison, the unemployment rate 12 months ago was 8.4 percent.

- Compared to September 2020, the labor force expanded by 3,843 workers. Within that estimate, the number of employed workers expanded by 8,455 (8.4 percent) and the number of unemployed workers contracted by 4,612 (50.1 percent). Whatcom County's estimated labor force was 113,837 in September 2021.

Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted
Bellingham Metropolitan Statistical Area (Whatcom County)
 Data benchmarked through March 2021

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Sep-21	Revised Aug-21	Revised Sep-20	Change		
				Aug-21 Sep-21	Sep-20 Sep-21	Sep-20 Sep-21
Total Nonfarm	90,700	89,000	87,600	1,700	3,100	3.5%
Total Private	74,600	74,300	71,400	300	3,200	4.5%
Goods Producing	17,900	17,700	17,000	200	900	5.3%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	8,500	8,300	7,800	200	700	9.0%
Manufacturing	9,400	9,400	9,200	0	200	2.2%
Service Providing	72,800	71,300	70,600	1,500	2,200	3.1%
Private Services Providing	56,700	56,600	54,400	100	2,300	4.2%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	16,100	15,900	15,600	200	500	3.2%
Retail Trade	10,800	10,700	10,600	100	200	1.9%
Financial Activities	4,000	4,000	4,300	0	-300	-7.0%
Professional and Business Services	8,400	8,500	8,100	-100	300	3.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	9,800	10,000	8,100	-200	1,700	21.0%
Government	16,100	14,700	16,200	1,400	-100	-0.6%
Federal Government	1,500	1,500	1,700	0	-200	-11.8%
Total State Government	5,000	3,900	5,400	1,100	-400	-7.4%
Total Local Government	9,600	9,300	9,100	300	500	5.5%

Total nonfarm payroll in Whatcom County (not seasonally adjusted) increased by 1,700 from August to September 2021 Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs increased by 3,100 (3.5 percent).

- In September, 3 major industries detailed in this report added jobs and 2 shed jobs. The largest one-month gains were observed in government and were attributable to the start of the academic year. The deepest one-month losses were observed in leisure and hospitality.
- Most major industries added jobs over the year. Leisure and hospitality added the largest number of jobs over the year (+1,700). Employment in government and financial activities were down over the year.

Skagit County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 4.1 percent (preliminary) in September—this is down from 5.2 percent in August (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 8.2 percent.

- Compared to September 2020, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 4,140 (7.4 percent) and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ contracted by 2,421 (48.3 percent). Skagit County’s resident labor force was estimated at 62,655, increasing by 2.8 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 2021

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Sep-21	Revised Aug-21	Revised Sep-20	Change		
				Aug-21 Sep-21	Sep-20 Sep-21	Sep-20 Sep-21
Total Nonfarm	50,000	50,200	48,600	-200	1,400	2.9%
Total Private	38,700	38,900	37,900	-200	800	2.1%
Goods Producing	10,600	10,500	10,500	100	100	1.0%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	4,400	4,200	4,300	200	100	2.3%
Manufacturing	6,200	6,300	6,200	-100	0	0.0%
Service Providing	39,400	39,700	38,100	-300	1,300	3.4%
Private Services Providing	28,100	28,400	27,400	-300	700	2.6%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	10,000	10,000	9,700	0	300	3.1%
Retail Trade	7,300	7,400	6,800	-100	500	7.4%
Leisure and Hospitality	4,900	5,000	4,300	-100	600	14.0%
Government	11,300	11,300	10,700	0	600	5.6%
Federal Government	400	400	500	0	-100	-20.0%
State Government	1,300	1,200	1,200	100	100	8.3%
Local Government	9,600	9,700	9,000	-100	600	6.7%

Total nonfarm employment in Skagit County decreased by 200 jobs over the month. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 1,400 or 2.9 percent.

- Over the month, construction was the only major industry to have added jobs. Leisure and hospitality and manufacturing each shed jobs over the month.
- Most major industries have recovered jobs over the year. The largest 12-month increases were attributable to leisure and hospitality and government (+600 each). Manufacturing employment neither expanded nor contracted over the year.

Island County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 3.8 percent (preliminary) in September 2021, more than a full percentage point below the (revised) unemployment rate (4.9 percent) reported in August. The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 7.2 percent.

- Compared to September 2020, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 2,194 (6.6 percent) and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work contracted by 1,196 (46.3 percent). Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 36,613 in September 2021, up 2.8 percent over the year.

Island County local area payroll jobs

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

Data benchmarked through March 2021

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Sep-21	Revised Aug-21	Revised Sep-20	Change		
				Aug-21 Sep-21	Sep-20 Sep-21	Sep-20 Sep-21
Total Nonfarm	17,310	17,110	16,580	200	730	4.4%
Total Private	12,850	12,700	12,180	150	670	5.5%
Goods Producing	1,980	1,950	1,940	30	40	2.1%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	1,280	1,250	1,180	30	100	8.5%
Manufacturing	700	700	760	0	-60	-7.9%
Service Providing	15,330	15,160	14,640	170	690	4.7%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,820	2,780	2,680	40	140	5.2%
Retail Trade	2,250	2,220	2,130	30	120	5.6%
Information and Financial Activities	880	880	810	0	70	8.6%
Professional and Business Services	1,600	1,590	1,470	10	130	8.8%
Education and Health Services	2,400	2,390	2,290	10	110	4.8%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,280	2,210	2,110	70	170	8.1%
Government	4,460	4,410	4,400	50	60	1.4%
Federal Government	1,270	1,260	1,330	10	-60	-4.5%
State and Local Government	3,190	3,150	3,070	40	120	3.9%
State and Local Government Education	1,350	1,280	1,240	70	110	8.9%

Total nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County expanded by 200 from August to September 2021. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 730 or 4.4 percent.

- From August to September, all industries estimated in this dataset either expanded employment or remained unchanged. Leisure and hospitality added the largest number of jobs.
- Year-over-year, the largest employment gains were attributable to leisure and hospitality and trade, transportation, and utilities. Manufacturing shed 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 3.2 percent in September 2021 (preliminary), down from 4.2 percent (revised) over the month. For comparison, the unemployment rate 12 months ago was 6.5 percent.

- Compared to September 2020, the number of residents counted as ‘employed’ increased by 618 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 245. Altogether, the San Juan County labor force consisted of an estimated 8,150 resident workers and expanded by 4.8 percent over the year.

San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

San Juan County

Data benchmarked through March 2021

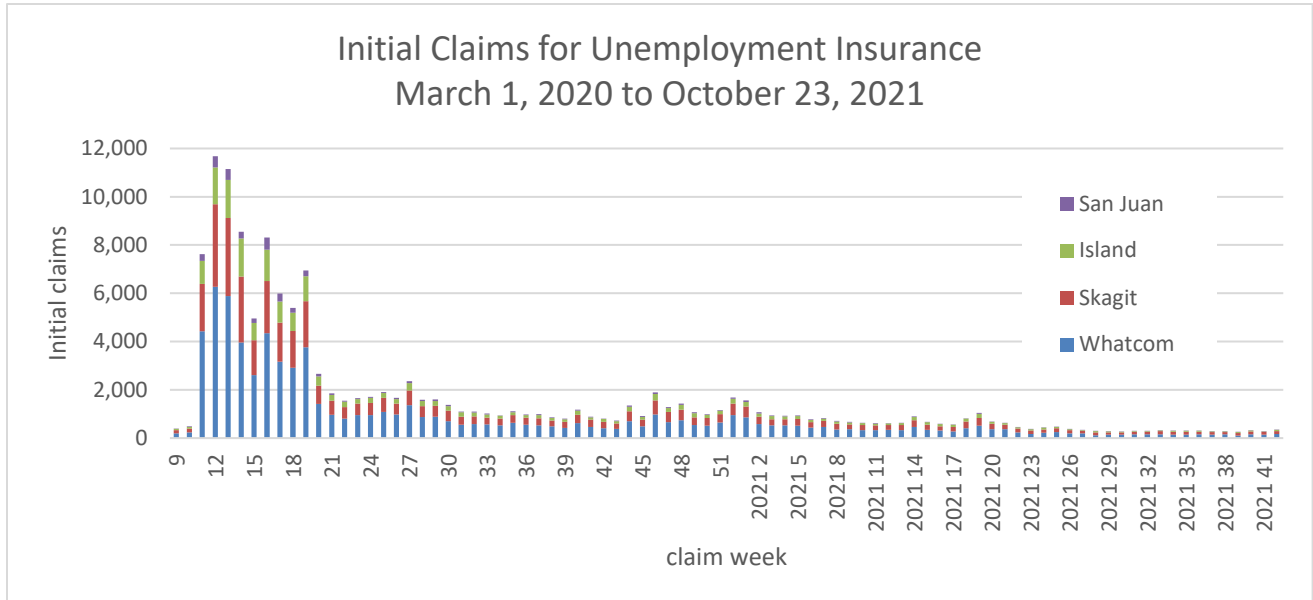
NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Sep-21	Revised Aug-21	Revised Sep-20	Change		
				Aug-21 Sep-21	Sep-20 Sep-21	Sep-20 Sep-21
Total Nonfarm	5,240	5,250	5,550	-10	-310	-5.6%
Total Private	4,440	4,440	4,770	0	-330	-6.9%
Goods Producing	900	870	980	30	-80	-8.2%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	740	710	750	30	-10	-1.3%
Manufacturing	160	160	230	0	-70	-30.4%
Service Providing	4,340	4,380	4,570	-40	-230	-5.0%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	1,100	1,080	1,040	20	60	5.8%
Information and Financial Activities	350	340	400	10	-50	-12.5%
Professional and Business Services	460	450	450	10	10	2.2%
Education and Health Services	530	530	550	0	-20	-3.6%
Leisure and Hospitality	900	980	1,180	-80	-280	-23.7%
Government	800	810	780	-10	20	2.6%

Net nonfarm payroll in San Juan County contracted by 10 jobs over the month. Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was down 310 or 5.6 percent.

- From August to September, 4 industries detailed in this report expanded employment and 2 remained unchanged. Employment losses were documented in leisure and hospitality and government.
- According to preliminary estimates, most industries continued to shed jobs late into the pandemic. The deepest 12-month losses were observed in leisure and hospitality (-280). Three industries (trade, transportation, and utilities, government, and professional and business services) expanded employment over the year.

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 finally reached pre-pandemic levels. There were 344 new claims for unemployment insurance filed in the Northwest WDA during the week of October 17-23, 2021.

**Labor force and payroll reporting reflects employment during the week of September 12-18.*

Forecast information for Washington state:

The Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council issues quarterly forecasts that address Washington's projected economic health. The September forecast is currently online 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.