

# Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

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This report marks the eighth 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 12,800 in November 2021.<sup>1</sup> BLS estimates the private sector gained 8,100 jobs during the month, and the public sector gained 4,700 jobs. On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for November 2020 through November 2021 indicate an increase in employment of 147,200 for the state. The private sector gained 127,100 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 20,100 jobs over the year. Washington's preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for November 2021 is 4.7 percent. The revised estimated October 2021 unemployment rate is at 5.0 percent. The November 2020 unemployment rate was 6.7 percent. BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. The October 2021 preliminary estimated gain of 6,300 jobs was revised to a loss of 500 jobs.

## Whatcom County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 3.6 percent in November 2021 (preliminary), down from 4.3 percent in October (revised). For comparison, the unemployment rate 12 months ago was 7.0 percent.

- Compared to November 2020, the labor force expanded by 5,064 workers. Within that estimate, the number of employed workers expanded by 8,723 (8.4 percent) and the number of unemployed workers contracted by 3,659 (46.7 percent). Whatcom County's estimated labor force was 116,692 in November 2021.

### Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

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

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Nov-21	Revised Oct-21	Revised Nov-20	Change		
				Oct-21 Nov-21	Nov-20 Nov-21	Nov-20 Nov-21
Total Nonfarm	93,800	93,500	88,200	300	5,600	6.3%
Total Private	75,900	75,400	72,100	500	3,800	5.3%
Goods Producing	17,000	17,100	17,000	-100	0	0.0%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	7,900	8,100	7,900	-200	0	0.0%
Manufacturing	9,100	9,000	9,100	100	0	0.0%
Service Providing	76,800	76,400	71,200	400	5,600	7.9%
Private Services Providing	58,900	58,300	55,100	600	3,800	6.9%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	16,400	16,300	16,200	100	200	1.2%
Retail Trade	11,300	10,900	11,000	400	300	2.7%
Financial Activities	3,900	3,900	3,900	0	0	0.0%
Professional and Business Services	8,400	8,400	8,000	0	400	5.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	9,600	9,500	8,300	100	1,300	15.7%
Government	17,900	18,100	16,100	-200	1,800	11.2%
Federal Government	1,500	1,500	1,400	0	100	7.1%
Total State Government	6,100	6,500	5,600	-400	500	8.9%
Total Local Government	10,300	10,100	9,100	200	1,200	13.2%

Total nonfarm payroll in Whatcom County (not seasonally adjusted) increased by 300 from October to November 2021. Over the year, nonfarm employment increased by 5,600 (6.3 percent).

- In November, 3 major sectors detailed in this report added jobs and 2 shed jobs. The largest one-month gains were in retail trade (+400). State government shed 400.
- Most service-providing sectors added jobs over the year. Government and leisure and hospitality added the largest number of jobs over the year (+1,800 and 1,300 jobs respectively). Employment in construction, manufacturing and financial activities neither expanded nor contracted over the year.

# Skagit County

## Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 4.0 percent (preliminary) in November—down from 4.6 percent (revised) in October. The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 7.3 percent.

- Compared to November 2020, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 4,453 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ contracted by 1,889 (42.6 percent). Skagit County’s resident labor force was estimated at 63,009, increasing by 4.2 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 June 2021

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Nov-21	Revised Oct-21	Revised Nov-20	Change		
				Oct-21 Nov-21	Nov-20 Nov-21	Nov-20 Nov-21
Total Nonfarm	50,100	49,600	48,100	500	2,000	4.2%
Total Private	38,600	38,400	37,300	200	1,300	3.5%
Goods Producing	10,100	10,200	10,300	-100	-200	-1.9%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	4,200	4,300	4,100	-100	100	2.4%
Manufacturing	5,900	5,900	6,200	0	-300	-4.8%
Service Providing	40,000	39,400	37,800	600	2,200	5.8%
Private Services Providing	28,500	28,200	27,000	300	1,500	5.6%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	10,000	9,800	9,600	200	400	4.2%
Retail Trade	7,000	6,900	6,900	100	100	1.4%
Leisure and Hospitality	4,900	4,800	4,100	100	800	19.5%
Government	11,500	11,200	10,800	300	700	6.5%
Federal Government	400	400	400	0	0	0.0%
State Government	1,300	1,200	1,200	100	100	8.3%
Local Government	9,800	9,600	9,200	200	600	6.5%

Total nonfarm employment in Skagit County increased by 500 jobs over the month. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 2,000 or 4.2 percent.

- Over the month, most industries added jobs, with the largest one-month increases attributed to government. Construction is the only industry that shed jobs in November.
- Most major industries have recovered jobs over the year. The largest 12-month increases were attributable to leisure and hospitality and government (+800 and 700 respectively). Manufacturing employment dropped by 300 over the year.

## Island County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 3.3 percent (preliminary) in November 2021, below the (revised) unemployment rate (4.2 percent) reported in October. The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 6.4 percent.

- Compared to November 2020, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 2,127 (6.3 percent) and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work contracted by 1,066 (46.4 percent). Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 36,911 in November 2021, up 3.0 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 Nov-21	Revised Oct-21	Revised Nov-20	Change		
				Oct-21 Nov-21	Nov-20 Nov-21	Nov-20 Nov-21
Total Nonfarm	17,260	17,060	16,670	200	590	3.5%
Total Private	12,880	12,740	12,260	140	620	5.1%
Goods Producing	1,960	1,950	1,930	10	30	1.6%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	1,320	1,320	1,200	0	120	10.0%
Manufacturing	640	630	730	10	-90	-12.3%
Service Providing	15,300	15,110	14,740	190	560	3.8%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,600	2,580	2,740	20	-140	-5.1%
Retail Trade	2,260	2,240	2,180	20	80	3.7%
Information and Financial Activities	920	910	860	10	60	7.0%
Professional and Business Services	1,680	1,670	1,470	10	210	14.3%
Education and Health Services	2,410	2,400	2,350	10	60	2.6%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,390	2,310	2,050	80	340	16.6%
Government	4,380	4,320	4,410	60	-30	-0.7%
Federal Government	1,230	1,230	1,290	0	-60	-4.7%
State and Local Government	3,150	3,090	3,120	60	30	1.0%
State and Local Government Education	1,420	1,370	1,280	50	140	10.9%

Total nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County expanded by 200 from October to November 2021. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 590 or 3.5 percent.

- From October to November, all industries detailed in this report either expanded or maintained employment. The largest increase was attributable to leisure and hospitality.
- Year-over-year, the largest employment gains were attributable to leisure and hospitality and professional and business services. Trade, transportation and utilities, manufacturing and government all 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 2.9 percent in November 2021 (preliminary), down from 3.6 percent (revised) over the month. For comparison, the unemployment rate 12 months ago was 6.2 percent.

- Compared to November 2020, the number of residents counted as ‘employed’ increased by 1,310 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 220. Altogether, the San Juan County labor force consisted of an estimated 8,643 resident workers and expanded by 14.4 percent over the year.

### San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

#### San Juan County

Data benchmarked through June 2021

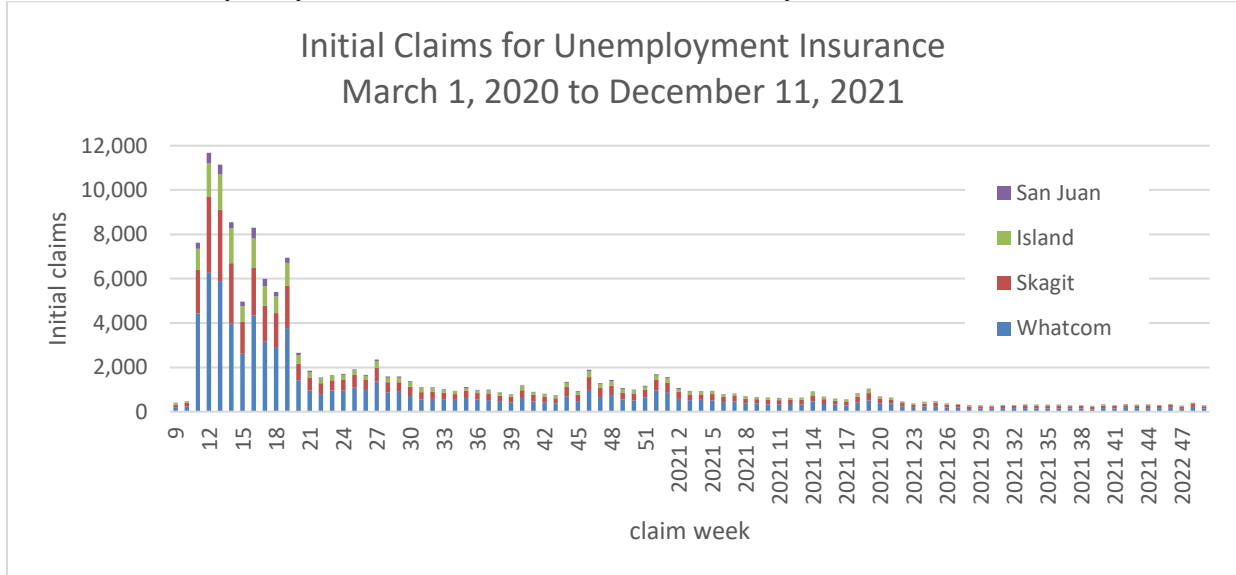
NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Nov-21	Revised Oct-21	Revised Nov-20	Change		
				Oct-21 Nov-21	Nov-20 Nov-21	Nov-20 Nov-21
Total Nonfarm	5,570	5,490	5,110	80	460	9.0%
Total Private	4,740	4,630	4,340	110	400	9.2%
Goods Producing	1,010	970	960	40	50	5.2%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	780	750	740	30	40	5.4%
Manufacturing	230	220	220	10	10	4.5%
Service Providing	4,560	4,520	4,150	40	410	9.9%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	1,120	1,070	980	50	140	14.3%
Information and Financial Activities	390	390	370	0	20	5.4%
Professional and Business Services	490	480	450	10	40	8.9%
Education and Health Services	540	540	530	0	10	1.9%
Leisure and Hospitality	980	980	870	0	110	12.6%
Government	830	860	770	-30	60	7.8%

Net nonfarm payroll in San Juan County expanded by 80 over the month. Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was up 460 or 9.0 percent.

- From October to November 2021, most industries detailed in this report expanded employment. Only government shed jobs over the month. The largest one month change was documented in trade, transportation and utilities. (+50).
- Over the year, the employment situation in San Juan County is showing substantial improvements in general. All industry sectors detailed in this report expanded employment over the year, with the largest employment gains attributable to trade, transportation and utilities (+140).

## 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 277 new claims for unemployment insurance filed in the Northwest WDA during the week of December 5-11, 2021.

*\*Labor force and payroll reporting reflects employment during the week of November 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 September forecast is currently online 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.*