

# Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

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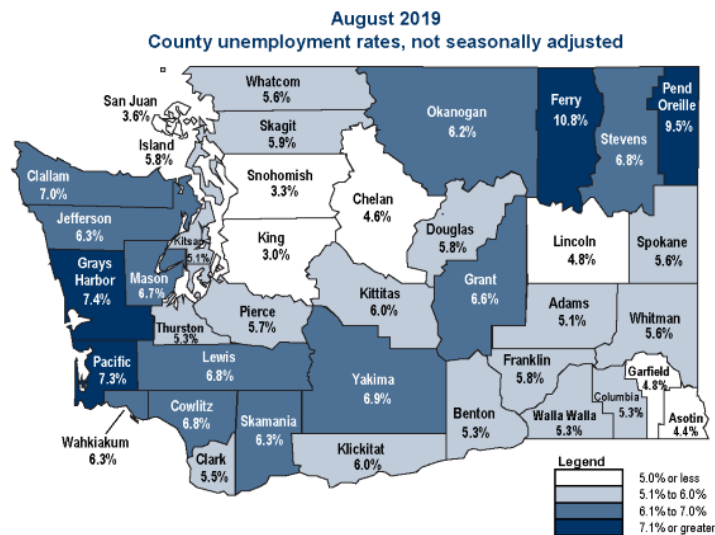
[www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo](http://www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo)

On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics

(BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington rose by 2,300 in August 2019.<sup>1</sup> BLS estimates the private sector gained 2,800 jobs during the month and the public sector lost 500 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for August 2018 through August 2019 indicate an increase in employment of 65,200 for the state. The private sector added 61,800 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 3,400 jobs over the year.

Washington's preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for August 2019 is 4.6 percent. The revised estimated July 2019 unemployment rate is at 4.6 percent. The August 2018 unemployment rate was 4.4 percent.



Unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted)

Area	(Prelim.) Aug-19	Jul-19	Aug-18	Year-to- Year Change
USA	3.8%	4.0%	3.9%	-0.1%
Washington state	4.6%	4.5%	4.2%	0.4%
Northwest Workforce Development Area	5.6%	5.4%	4.6%	1.0%
Whatcom County	5.6%	5.3%	4.5%	1.1%
Skagit County	5.9%	5.7%	4.8%	1.1%
Island County	5.8%	5.7%	4.9%	0.9%
San Juan County	3.6%	3.8%	3.0%	0.6%

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 13,400 jobs was revised to a gain of 5,900 jobs.

## Whatcom County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 5.6 percent in August 2019 (preliminary), up from 5.3 percent reported in July (revised). The unemployment rate in August 2018 was 4.5 percent.

- Compared to 12 months ago, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 4,364 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 1,468, nudging the unemployment rate up over the year. The labor force increased by 5.3 percent. Whatcom County’s labor force was estimated at 116,109 in August 2019.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Whatcom County decreased from 710 in July to 668. Altogether, 1,502 Whatcom County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in August; down from 1,552 in July.

### Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

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

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Aug-19	Revised Jul-19	Revised Aug-18	Change		
				Jul-19 Aug-19	Aug-18 Aug-19	Aug-18 Aug-19
Total Nonfarm	93,600	95,100	93,900	-1,500	-300	-0.3%
Total Private	78,200	78,200	78,200	0	0	0.0%
Goods Producing	19,000	19,000	19,200	0	-200	-1.0%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	8,300	8,200	8,500	100	-200	-2.4%
Manufacturing	10,700	10,800	10,700	-100	0	0.0%
Service Providing	74,600	76,100	74,700	-1,500	-100	-0.1%
Private Services Providing	59,200	59,200	59,000	0	200	0.3%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	17,000	17,100	16,900	-100	100	0.6%
Retail Trade	11,200	11,200	11,300	0	-100	-0.9%
Financial Activities	3,800	3,800	3,900	0	-100	-2.6%
Professional and Business Services	8,600	8,600	8,500	0	100	1.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	11,200	11,100	11,300	100	-100	-0.9%
Government	15,400	16,900	15,700	-1,500	-300	-1.9%
Federal Government	1,500	1,500	1,500	0	0	0.0%
Total State Government	4,500	4,900	4,700	-400	-200	-4.3%
Total Local Government	9,400	10,500	9,500	-1,100	-100	-1.1%

Total nonfarm payroll in Whatcom County decreased by 1,500 from July to August 2019. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs was down 300 or 0.3 percent.

- In August, private sector employers collectively neither expanded nor contracted. The large one-month losses were a result of summer vacation for state and local education institutions.
- Over the year, two major industries detailed in this report added jobs; trade, transportation, warehousing (except retail trade) and utilities and professional and business services each

added 100 jobs. Government, construction, financial activities and leisure and hospitality each shed jobs.

## Skagit County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 5.8 percent in August 2019 (preliminary), up from 5.7 percent in July (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.8 percent.

- Compared to August 2018, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 2,155 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ increased by 900. Skagit County’s labor force was estimated at 63,554, increasing by 5.0 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Skagit County decreased from 487 in July to 436 in August. Altogether, 966 Skagit County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in August; down from 1,009 in July.

### Skagit County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted  
**Mount Vernon-Anacortes Metropolitan Statistical Area (Skagit County)**  
 Data benchmarked through March 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Aug-19	Revised Jul-19	Revised Aug-18	Change		
				Jul-19 Aug-19	Aug-18 Aug-19	Aug-18 Aug-19
Total Nonfarm	52,500	53,400	51,700	-900	800	1.5%
Total Private	41,400	41,600	40,600	-200	800	2.0%
Goods Producing	11,300	11,500	10,900	-200	400	3.7%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	5,200	5,200	4,500	0	700	15.6%
Manufacturing	6,100	6,300	6,400	-200	-300	-4.7%
Service Providing	41,200	41,900	40,800	-700	400	1.0%
Private Services Providing	30,100	30,100	29,700	0	400	1.3%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	10,000	9,900	10,200	100	-200	-2.0%
Retail Trade	7,100	7,000	7,300	100	-200	-2.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	5,400	5,400	5,600	0	-200	-3.6%
Government	11,100	11,800	11,100	-700	0	0.0%
Federal Government	500	500	400	0	100	25.0%
State Government	1,200	1,200	1,200	0	0	0.0%
Local Government	9,400	10,100	9,500	-700	-100	-1.1%

Total nonfarm employment in Skagit County dropped by 900 from July to August 2019. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 800 or 1.5 percent.

- Over the month, trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities expanded by 100. The expansion was attributable to hiring in retail. Government shed 700 jobs and manufacturing shed 200.

- The only major industry sector adding jobs over the year was construction (+700). Manufacturing, trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities (including retail trade), and leisure and hospitality each shed jobs over the year.

## Island County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 5.8 percent (preliminary) in August 2019. This is up from 5.7 percent in July (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.9 percent.

- Compared to August 2018, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 857 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 389, pushing the unemployment rate up over the year. Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 35,602, an increase of 3.6 percent over the year.
- There were 144 initial claims for unemployment benefits in Island County in August, down from 174 in July. Altogether, 366 Island County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in August. This is down from 372 in July.

### Island County local area payroll jobs

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

Data benchmarked through March 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Aug-19	Revised Jul-19	Revised Aug-18	Change		
				Jul-19 Aug-19	Aug-18 Aug-19	Aug-18 Aug-19
Total Nonfarm	17,070	17,120	17,070	-50	0	0.0%
Total Private	12,670	12,530	12,660	140	10	0.1%
Goods Producing	1,970	1,940	1,940	30	30	1.5%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	1,210	1,180	1,130	30	80	7.1%
Manufacturing	760	760	810	0	-50	-6.2%
Service Providing	15,100	15,180	15,130	-80	-30	-0.2%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,720	2,700	2,710	20	10	0.4%
Retail Trade	2,110	2,110	2,160	0	-50	-2.3%
Information and Financial Activities	790	780	820	10	-30	-3.7%
Professional and Business Services	1,240	1,240	1,270	0	-30	-2.4%
Education and Health Services	2,550	2,540	2,360	10	190	8.1%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,540	2,460	2,660	80	-120	-4.5%
Government	4,400	4,590	4,410	-190	-10	-0.2%
Federal Government	1,310	1,300	1,300	10	10	0.8%
State and Local Government	3,090	3,290	3,110	-200	-20	-0.6%
State and Local Government Education	1,260	1,460	1,260	-200	0	0.0%

Total nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County contracted by 50 from July to August 2019. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs was unchanged.

- From July to August, five industries expanded and one contracted. The largest increases were attributable to hiring by businesses in leisure and hospitality (+80). One-month government losses were likely related to the annual rhythm of the school year.
- Year-over-year, 3 major industries added jobs and 5 shed jobs. The largest gains were attributable to hiring in the education and health services sector (+190) and the deepest losses were observed in leisure and hospitality (-120).

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 3.8 percent in July (revised) to 3.6 percent (preliminary) in August. The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 3.0 percent.

- Compared to August 2018, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 180 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 54. Altogether, the San Juan County labor force consisted of an estimated 8,916 workers and diminished by 1.4 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in San Juan County totaled 14 in August, up from 13 initial claims filed in July. Altogether, 26 San Juan County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in August. This is down from 28 in July.

### San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

#### San Juan County

Data benchmarked through December 2018

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Aug-19	Revised Jul-19	Revised Aug-18	Change		
				Jul-19 Aug-19	Aug-18 Aug-19	Aug-18 Aug-19
Total Nonfarm	6,360	6,190	6,760	170	-400	-5.9%
Total Private	5,620	5,480	5,950	140	-330	-5.5%
Goods Producing	940	910	1,000	30	-60	-6.0%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	720	700	720	20	0	0.0%
Manufacturing	220	210	280	10	-60	-21.4%
Service Providing	5,420	5,280	5,760	140	-340	-5.9%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	1,040	990	1,210	50	-170	-14.0%
Information and Financial Activities	350	340	440	10	-90	-20.5%
Professional and Business Services	390	380	380	10	10	2.6%
Education and Health Services	640	640	600	0	40	6.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,080	2,030	2,130	50	-50	-2.3%
Government	740	710	810	30	-70	-8.6%

Net nonfarm payroll in San Juan County increased by 170 from July to August. Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was down 400 jobs or 5.9 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. In August, the largest one-month gains were reported from leisure and hospitality and trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities (+50 each).
- Over the year, there was a net loss of employment. The largest one-year gains were attributable to hiring in education and health services (+40) and the deepest losses came from trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities.

### **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).

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