

# Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

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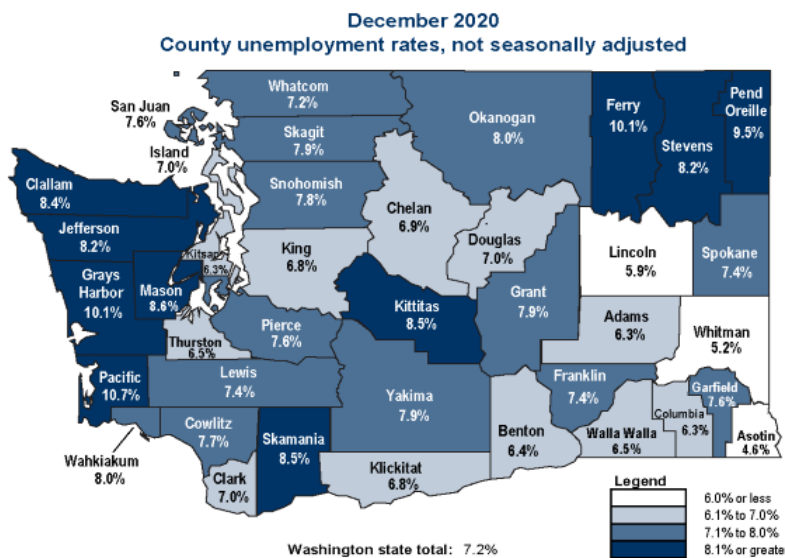
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[www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo](http://www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo)

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

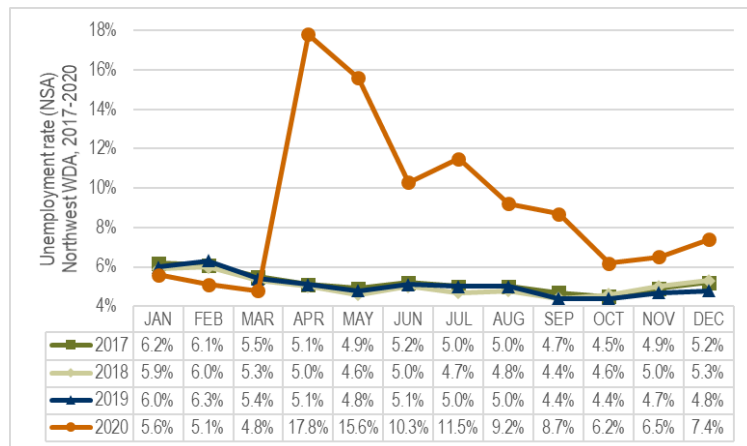
On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington fell by 9,900 in December 2020. BLS estimates the private sector lost 10,600 jobs during the month and the public sector gained 700 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for December 2019 through December 2020 indicate a decrease in employment of 189,000 for the state. The private sector lost 147,100 jobs while the public sector lost an estimated 41,900 jobs over the year.



Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for December 2020 is 7.1

percent. The revised estimated November 2020 unemployment rate is at 5.7 percent. The December 2019 unemployment rate was 4.0 percent.



BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. November’s preliminary estimated gain of 100 jobs was revised to a gain of 23,200 jobs.

# Whatcom County

## Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 7.2 percent in December 2020 (preliminary), up from 6.5 percent reported in November (revised). The unemployment rate in December 2019 was 4.7 percent.

- Compared to 12 months ago, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 4,608 (down 4.1 percent) and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 2,785 (up 50.8 percent). The labor force as a whole contracted by 1.6 percent. Whatcom County’s labor force was estimated at 115,221 in December 2020.

## Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted  
**Bellingham Metropolitan Statistical Area (Whatcom County)**  
 Data benchmarked through June 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Dec-20	Revised Nov-20	Revised Dec-19	Change		
				Nov-20 Dec-20	Dec-19 Dec-20	Dec-19 Dec-20
Total Nonfarm	90,800	90,900	96,100	-100	-5,300	-5.5%
Total Private	74,000	74,300	77,000	-300	-3,000	-3.9%
Goods Producing	17,200	17,400	18,300	-200	-1,100	-6.0%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	7,500	7,700	7,600	-200	-100	-1.3%
Manufacturing	9,700	9,700	10,700	0	-1,000	-9.3%
Service Providing	73,600	73,500	77,800	100	-4,200	-5.4%
Private Services Providing	56,800	56,900	58,700	-100	-1,900	-3.2%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	16,000	15,500	16,900	500	-900	-5.3%
Retail Trade	11,400	11,100	11,500	300	-100	-0.9%
Financial Activities	4,200	4,200	3,800	0	400	10.5%
Professional and Business Services	8,400	8,300	8,400	100	0	0.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	8,200	9,000	10,500	-800	-2,300	-21.9%
Government	16,800	16,600	19,100	200	-2,300	-12.0%
Federal Government	1,600	1,600	1,400	0	200	14.3%
Total State Government	5,400	5,600	6,900	-200	-1,500	-21.7%
Total Local Government	9,800	9,400	10,800	400	-1,000	-9.3%

Total nonfarm payroll in Whatcom County (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by 100 from November to December 2020. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs decreased by 5,300 (5.5 percent).

- In December, net employment contracted, with a mix of increases and decreases by industry. As a whole, goods producers (construction and manufacturing) shed jobs and service providers added jobs in aggregate, with industry specific variation. Retail and government posted the highest increases over the month and construction represented the largest decreases.

- Most major industries detailed in this report shed jobs over the year. The largest decreases came from government and leisure and hospitality (each down 2,300). Employment in financial activities was up 400 over the year.

## Skagit County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 7.9 percent in December 2020 (preliminary); this is up from 6.9 percent in November (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 5.3 percent.

- Compared to December 2019, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 4,418 (7.3 percent) and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ expanded by 1,443 (42.8 percent). Skagit County’s resident labor force was estimated at 61,071 decreasing by 4.6 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 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Dec-20	Revised Nov-20	Revised Dec-19	Change		
				Nov-20 Dec-20	Dec-19 Dec-20	Dec-19 Dec-20
Total Nonfarm	48,300	48,400	51,600	-100	-3,300	-6.4%
Total Private	37,600	37,600	39,700	0	-2,100	-5.3%
Goods Producing	10,100	10,100	10,500	0	-400	-3.8%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	4,100	4,100	4,700	0	-600	-12.8%
Manufacturing	6,000	6,000	5,800	0	200	3.4%
Service Providing	38,200	38,300	41,100	-100	-2,900	-7.1%
Private Services Providing	27,500	27,500	29,200	0	-1,700	-5.8%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	10,100	10,000	10,100	100	0	0.0%
Retail Trade	7,000	7,000	7,300	0	-300	-4.1%
Leisure and Hospitality	4,000	4,400	5,100	-400	-1,100	-21.6%
Government	10,700	10,800	11,900	-100	-1,200	-10.1%
Federal Government	300	300	400	0	-100	-25.0%
State Government	1,200	1,300	1,300	-100	-100	-7.7%
Local Government	9,200	9,200	10,200	0	-1,000	-9.8%

Total nonfarm employment in Skagit County decreased by 100 from November to December 2020. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs contracted by 3,300 or 6.4 percent.

- Over the month, employment levels held steady for goods producing industries and contracted modestly for most service sector detailed in this report. Leisure and hospitality posted a loss of 400 jobs over the month.

- 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 government, leisure and hospitality and construction. Manufacturing employment was up over the year.

## Island County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 7.0 percent (preliminary) in December 2020, up from 6.2 (revised) reported in November. The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.4 percent.

- Compared to December 2019, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 3,256 (9.1 percent) and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work expanded by 787 (47.2 percent). Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 35,048 in December 2020 – 6.6 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 June 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Dec-20	Revised Nov-20	Revised Dec-19	Change		
				Nov-20 Dec-20	Dec-19 Dec-20	Dec-19 Dec-20
Total Nonfarm	16,510	16,750	17,340	-240	-830	-4.8%
Total Private	12,000	12,240	12,600	-240	-600	-4.8%
Goods Producing	1,930	2,000	2,030	-70	-100	-4.9%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	1,090	1,160	1,220	-70	-130	-10.7%
Manufacturing	840	840	810	0	30	3.7%
Service Providing	14,580	14,750	15,310	-170	-730	-4.8%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,540	2,550	2,680	-10	-140	-5.2%
Retail Trade	2,060	2,070	2,060	-10	0	0.0%
Information and Financial Activities	800	810	820	-10	-20	-2.4%
Professional and Business Services	1,490	1,500	1,300	-10	190	14.6%
Education and Health Services	2,220	2,200	2,410	20	-190	-7.9%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,210	2,360	2,470	-150	-260	-10.5%
Government	4,510	4,510	4,740	0	-230	-4.9%
Federal Government	1,350	1,360	1,310	-10	40	3.1%
State and Local Government	3,160	3,150	3,430	10	-270	-7.9%
State and Local Government Education	1,400	1,390	1,590	10	-190	-11.9%

Total nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County contracted by 240 from November to December 2020. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs dropped by 830 or 4.8 percent.

- From November to December, most industries included in this report saw declining employment levels. The largest one-month decreases were observed in leisure and

hospitality. The only industry that expanded employment over the month was education and health services.

- Year-over-year, the deepest losses were observed in leisure and hospitality and government (down 260 and 230 respectively). Professional and business services gained the most ground over the year, adding 190 jobs.

*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 increased from 6.0 percent (revised) in November to 7.6 percent (preliminary) in December 2020. For comparison, the unemployment rate 12 months ago was 3.6 percent.

- Compared to December 2019, the number of residents counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 1,296 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 258. Altogether, the San Juan County labor force consisted of an estimated 7,358 resident workers and contracted by 12.4 percent over the year.

### San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

#### San Juan County

Data benchmarked through June 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Dec-20	Revised Nov-20	Revised Dec-19	Change		
				Nov-20 Dec-20	Dec-19 Dec-20	Dec-19 Dec-20
Total Nonfarm	4,500	4,610	5,460	-110	-960	-17.6%
Total Private	3,720	3,890	4,650	-170	-930	-20.0%
Goods Producing	870	880	960	-10	-90	-9.4%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	690	700	730	-10	-40	-5.5%
Manufacturing	180	180	230	0	-50	-21.7%
Service Providing	3,630	3,730	4,500	-100	-870	-19.3%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	870	940	1,010	-70	-140	-13.9%
Information and Financial Activities	280	300	320	-20	-40	-12.5%
Professional and Business Services	410	420	430	-10	-20	-4.7%
Education and Health Services	570	550	630	20	-60	-9.5%
Leisure and Hospitality	550	620	1,110	-70	-560	-50.5%
Government	780	720	810	60	-30	-3.7%

Net nonfarm payroll in San Juan County contracted over the month (down 110). Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was down 960 or 17.6 percent.

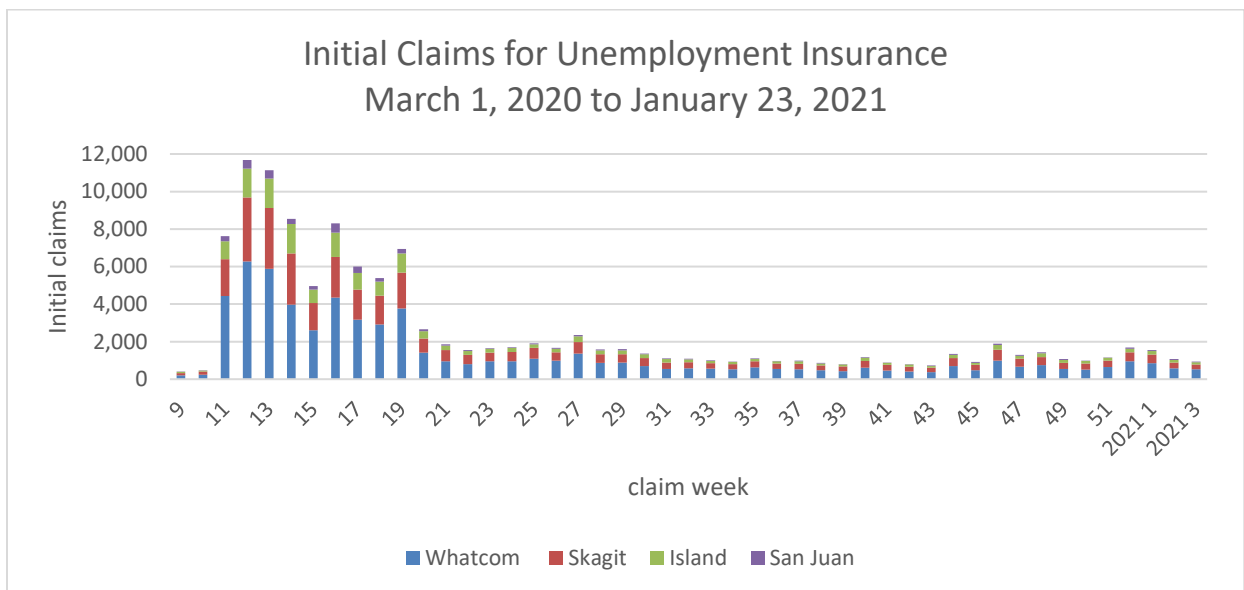
- San Juan County has a highly seasonal economy, due to its orientation toward tourism. Most industries shed jobs in the winter and return with the sun. Economically speaking, summer never arrived at the San Juan Islands this year, but seasonal declines continue to affect the local labor market. The deepest one-month declines were observed in leisure and hospitality

and trade transportation and utilities (down 70 jobs each). Education and health services added 20 jobs over the month.

- Over the year, there was a large net employment loss, with all industries reporting 12-month losses. The largest one-year losses were observed in leisure and hospitality (down 560 or 50.5 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.



*\*Labor force and payroll reporting reflects employment during week 49 (December 6-12)*

## 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 January. 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.*