

# Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

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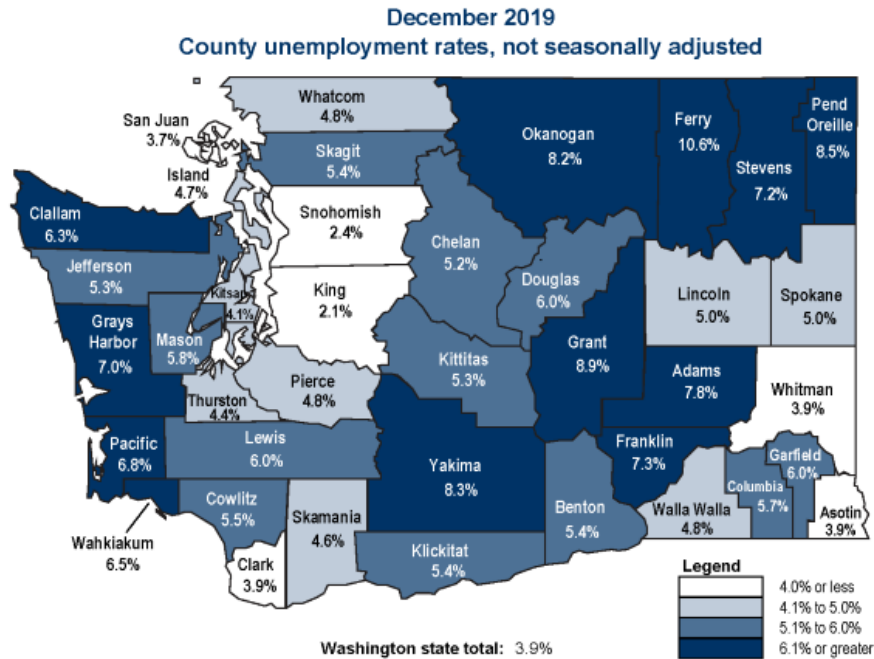
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On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington rose by 10,900 in December 2019.<sup>1</sup> BLS estimates the private sector gained 9,800 jobs during the month and the public sector gained 1,100 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for December 2018 through December 2019 indicate an increase in employment of 77,800 for the state. The private sector added 74,000 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 3,800 jobs over the year.

Washington's preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for December 2019 is 4.3 percent. The revised estimated November 2019 unemployment rate is at 4.4 percent. The December 2018 unemployment rate was 4.5 percent.



Unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted)

Area	(Prelim.) Dec-19	Nov-19	Dec-18	Year-to- Year Change
USA	3.4%	3.3%	3.7%	-0.3%
Washington state	3.9%	4.0%	4.8%	-0.9%
Northwest Workforce Development Area	4.9%	5.1%	5.3%	-0.4%
Whatcom County	4.8%	4.9%	5.1%	-0.3%
Skagit County	5.4%	5.5%	5.6%	-0.2%
Island County	4.7%	5.0%	5.5%	-0.8%
San Juan County	3.7%	4.0%	4.5%	-0.8%

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 12,200 jobs was revised to a gain of 12,800 jobs.

## Whatcom County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 4.8 percent in December 2019 (preliminary), down slightly from 4.9 percent reported in November (revised). The unemployment rate in December 2018 was 5.1 percent.

- Compared to 12 months ago, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 4,802 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 131, nudging the unemployment rate down over the year. The labor force increased by 4.1 percent. Whatcom County’s labor force was estimated at 119,412 in December 2019.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Whatcom County increased from 836 in November to 1,227. Altogether, 2,074 Whatcom County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in December; up from 1,592 in November.

### Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

#### Bellingham Metropolitan Statistical Area (Whatcom County)

Data benchmarked through September 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Dec-19	Revised Nov-19	Revised Dec-18	Change		
				Nov-19 Dec-19	Dec-18 Dec-19	Dec-18 Dec-19
Total Nonfarm	95,800	96,600	95,800	-800	0	0.0%
Total Private	76,800	77,100	77,200	-300	-400	-0.5%
Goods Producing	17,900	18,100	18,800	-200	-900	-4.8%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	7,400	7,600	8,200	-200	-800	-9.8%
Manufacturing	10,500	10,500	10,600	0	-100	-0.9%
Service Providing	77,900	78,500	77,000	-600	900	1.2%
Private Services Providing	58,900	59,000	58,400	-100	500	0.9%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	17,000	16,800	17,100	200	-100	-0.6%
Retail Trade	11,600	11,600	11,500	0	100	0.9%
Financial Activities	3,900	3,900	3,700	0	200	5.4%
Professional and Business Services	8,500	8,600	8,300	-100	200	2.4%
Leisure and Hospitality	10,700	10,600	10,700	100	0	0.0%
Government	19,000	19,500	18,600	-500	400	2.2%
Federal Government	1,400	1,400	1,400	0	0	0.0%
Total State Government	6,600	7,100	6,700	-500	-100	-1.5%
Total Local Government	11,000	11,000	10,500	0	500	4.8%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Total nonfarm payroll in Whatcom County (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by 800 from November to December 2019. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs was unchanged.

- In December, net employment declined; the only two industries adding jobs were trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities (+200) and leisure and hospitality (+100). The deepest one-month losses were observed in government (-500) and construction (-200).
- Over the year, the largest increases detailed in this report were observed in government (+400) and professional and business services and financial activities (+200 each); the deepest losses came from construction (-800).

## Skagit County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 5.4 percent in December 2019 (preliminary), down slightly from 5.5 percent in November (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 5.6 percent.

- Compared to December 2018, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 2,471 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ increased by 7. Skagit County’s resident labor force was estimated at 64,106, increasing by 4.0 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Skagit County increased from 623 in November to 848 in December. Altogether, 1,427 Skagit County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in December; up from 1,090 in November.

### Skagit County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

#### Mount Vernon-Anacortes Metropolitan Statistical Area (Skagit County)

Data benchmarked through September 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Dec-19	Revised Nov-19	Revised Dec-18	Change		
				Nov-19 Dec-19	Dec-18 Dec-19	Dec-18 Dec-19
Total Nonfarm	52,400	52,700	51,700	-300	700	1.4%
Total Private	40,300	40,400	39,900	-100	400	1.0%
Goods Producing	10,700	10,800	10,900	-100	-200	-1.8%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	4,900	5,000	4,700	-100	200	4.3%
Manufacturing	5,800	5,800	6,200	0	-400	-6.5%
Service Providing	41,700	41,900	40,800	-200	900	2.2%
Private Services Providing	29,600	29,600	29,000	0	600	2.1%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	10,800	10,600	10,200	200	600	5.9%
Retail Trade	7,600	7,500	7,400	100	200	2.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	5,400	5,300	5,000	100	400	8.0%
Government	12,100	12,300	11,800	-200	300	2.5%
Federal Government	400	400	400	0	0	0.0%
State Government	1,300	1,500	1,300	-200	0	0.0%
Local Government	10,400	10,400	10,100	0	300	3.0%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Total nonfarm employment in Skagit County decreased by 300 from November to December 2019. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 700 or 1.4 percent.

- Over the month, private industry shed an estimated 100 jobs in aggregate. The largest gains were observed in trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities (+200); within this, retail trade accounted for half of the new jobs. Construction and government each shed jobs.
- Over the year, four major industries detailed in this report added jobs; the largest net increase was observed in trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities (+600). Manufacturing shed 400 jobs over the year.

## Island County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 4.7 percent (preliminary) in December 2019. This is down from 5.0 percent reported in November (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 5.5 percent.

- Compared to December 2018, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 1,626 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 216. Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 36,997, an increase of 4.0 percent over the year.
- There were 202 initial claims for unemployment benefits in Island County in December, up from 197 in November. Altogether, 446 Island County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in December. This is up from 365 in November.

## Island County local area payroll jobs

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

Data benchmarked through June 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Dec-19	Revised Nov-19	Revised Dec-18	Change		
				Nov-19 Dec-19	Dec-18 Dec-19	Dec-18 Dec-19
Total Nonfarm	17,190	17,070	16,870	120	320	1.9%
Total Private	12,470	12,320	12,170	150	300	2.5%
Goods Producing	1,930	1,910	1,860	20	70	3.8%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	1,100	1,080	1,080	20	20	1.9%
Manufacturing	830	830	780	0	50	6.4%
Service Providing	15,260	15,160	15,010	100	250	1.7%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,730	2,710	2,710	20	20	0.7%
Retail Trade	2,160	2,140	2,130	20	30	1.4%
Information and Financial Activities	790	790	780	0	10	1.3%
Professional and Business Services	1,330	1,330	1,200	0	130	10.8%
Education and Health Services	2,410	2,420	2,400	-10	10	0.4%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,390	2,300	2,380	90	10	0.4%
Government	4,720	4,750	4,700	-30	20	0.4%
Federal Government	1,310	1,320	1,330	-10	-20	-1.5%
State and Local Government	3,410	3,430	3,370	-20	40	1.2%
State and Local Government Education	1,590	1,610	1,550	-20	40	2.6%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Total nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County expanded by 120 from November to December 2019 on a not seasonally adjusted basis. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 320.

- From November to December, most major industries detailed in this report expanded and two contracted. The largest increases were attributable to hiring by businesses in leisure and hospitality (+90). The deepest losses were in observed in government.
- Year-over-year, all major industries added jobs. The largest gains were attributable to hiring by employers in professional and business services (+130).

*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 4.0 percent in November (revised) to 3.7 percent in December (preliminary). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.5 percent.

- Compared to December 2018, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 417 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 47.

Altogether, the San Juan County labor force consisted of an estimated 8,288 resident workers and expanded by 4.7 percent over the year.

- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in San Juan County totaled 75 in December, up from 36 initial claims filed in November. Altogether, 87 San Juan County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in December. This is up from 61 in November.

## San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

### San Juan County

Data benchmarked through June 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Dec-19	Revised Nov-19	Revised Dec-18	Change		
				Nov-19 Dec-19	Dec-18 Dec-19	Dec-18 Dec-19
Total Nonfarm	5,390	5,390	5,350	0	40	0.7%
Total Private	4,620	4,630	4,600	-10	20	0.4%
Goods Producing	1,010	980	930	30	80	8.6%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	780	770	720	10	60	8.3%
Manufacturing	230	210	210	20	20	9.5%
Service Providing	4,380	4,410	4,420	-30	-40	-0.9%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	1,080	1,010	1,000	70	80	8.0%
Information and Financial Activities	370	390	330	-20	40	12.1%
Professional and Business Services	380	370	380	10	0	0.0%
Education and Health Services	630	630	620	0	10	1.6%
Leisure and Hospitality	960	1,050	1,160	-90	-200	-17.2%
Government	770	760	750	10	20	2.7%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Net nonfarm payroll in San Juan County neither increased nor decreased over the month. Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was up 40 or 0.7 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 December, the largest increases were observed in trade, transportation and utilities (+70). The deepest one-month losses were observed in the county's largest sector; leisure and hospitality (-90).
- Over the year, there was a net loss of employment, with a mix of gains and losses by industry. The largest one-year gains were observed in trade, transportation, and utilities (+80) and the deepest losses came from leisure and hospitality (-200).

### **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 updated in January. Forecast information is available at [www.erfc.wa.gov](http://www.erfc.wa.gov).

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