

# Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

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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 6,100 from January 2017 to February 2017.<sup>1</sup> BLS estimates the private sector gained 4,100 jobs during the month and the public sector gained 2,000 jobs.

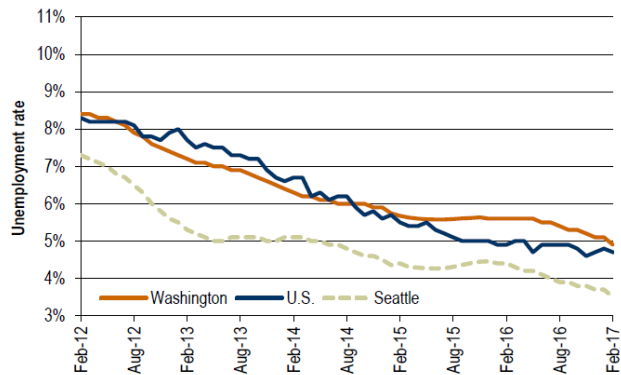
On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for February 2016 through February 2017 indicate an increase in employment of 85,100 for the state. The private sector added 73,100 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 12,000 jobs over the year.

Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for February 2017 is 4.9 percent. The revised estimated January 2017 unemployment rate was at 5.1 percent. The February 2016 unemployment rate was 5.6 percent.

Unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted)

Area	(Prelim.) Feb-17	Jan-17	Feb-16	Year-to- Year Change
USA	4.9%	5.1%	5.2%	-0.3%
Washington state	5.3%	5.7%	6.1%	-0.8%
Whatcom	5.9%	6.3%	6.7%	-0.8%
Skagit	6.7%	7.2%	7.7%	-1.0%
Island	5.7%	6.2%	6.6%	-0.9%
San Juan	5.3%	6.3%	6.0%	-0.7%

Unemployment rates, seasonally adjusted  
U.S., Washington and Seattle, February 2012 through February 2017  
Source: Employment Security Department/LMPA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics,  
Local Area Unemployment Statistics



BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. January’s preliminary estimated loss of 7,200 jobs was revised to a loss of 3,100 jobs.

## Whatcom County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 5.9 percent in February 2017 (preliminary), down from 6.3 percent in January (revised). For comparison, the unemployment rate in February 2016 was 6.7 percent. In the past year the downward-trending unemployment rate has slowed in its descent.

- Compared to February 2016, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 2,357 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 776, resulting in a 1.5 percent increase in the size of the labor force and a drop in the unemployment rate. Whatcom County’s labor force was about 108,853 in February 2017.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Whatcom County increased from 929 in January to 969. Altogether, 1,985 Whatcom County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in February; down from 2,139 in January.

### Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

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

Data benchmarked through September 2016

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Feb-17	Revised Jan-17	Revised Feb-16	Change		
				Jan-17 Feb-17	Feb-16 Feb-17	Feb-16 Feb-17
Total Nonfarm	91,600	90,900	89,700	700	1,900	2.1%
Total Private	72,400	72,000	71,400	400	1,000	1.4%
Goods Producing	16,500	16,300	16,200	200	300	1.9%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	6,600	6,500	6,400	100	200	3.1%
Manufacturing	9,900	9,800	9,800	100	100	1.0%
Service Providing	75,100	74,600	73,500	500	1,600	2.2%
Private Services Providing	55,900	55,700	55,200	200	700	1.3%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	16,400	16,500	16,000	-100	400	2.5%
Retail Trade	11,100	11,400	10,900	-300	200	1.8%
Financial Activities	3,300	3,300	3,200	0	100	3.1%
Professional and Business Services	7,900	7,800	8,000	100	-100	-1.3%
Leisure and Hospitality	10,500	10,400	10,300	100	200	1.9%
Government	19,200	18,900	18,300	300	900	4.9%
Federal Government	1,400	1,400	1,400	0	0	0.0%
Total State Government	7,600	7,500	7,100	100	500	7.0%
Total Local Government	10,200	10,000	9,800	200	400	4.1%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Nonfarm payroll jobs in Whatcom County expanded by 700 from January to February 2017. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs is up 1,900 or 2.1 percent.

- In February, goods producing industries collectively gained 200 jobs. Private service providers added 200 jobs and government employers added 300 over the month. Most industries detailed in this report added jobs over the month, with the exception of retail

trade (a subset of trade transportation and utilities) which shed 300. The largest month-to-month gains were attributable to hiring in government.

- Altogether, Whatcom County employers added 1,900 jobs over the past 12 months. The largest private sector gains were attributed to hiring in trade transportation and utilities (+400) with half of the jobs observed in the retail trade industries. Construction and leisure and hospitality each added 200. Only one industry shed employment over the year; professional and business services industries collectively shed 100 jobs.

## Skagit County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 6.7 percent in February 2017 (preliminary), down from 7.2 percent in January (revised). The unemployment rate in February 2016 was 7.7 percent. Skagit County's unemployment rate has been on a slow but steady decline (with predictable seasonal bumps) since 2010.

- Compared to February 2016, the number of people counted as 'employed' increased by 1,131 and the number of people counted as 'unemployed' or actively seeking work decreased by 527. Skagit County's labor force was estimated as 58,187, having increased by 1.0 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Skagit County decreased from 618 in January to 570. Altogether, 1,335 Skagit County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in February. This is down from 1,628 in January.

## Skagit County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

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

Data benchmarked through September 2016

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Feb-17	Revised Jan-17	Revised Feb-16	Change		
				Jan-17 Feb-17	Feb-16 Feb-17	Feb-16 Feb-17
Total Nonfarm	48,700	48,600	47,700	100	1,000	2.1%
Total Private	37,100	37,000	36,400	100	700	1.9%
Goods Producing	9,300	9,300	9,200	0	100	1.1%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	3,800	3,700	3,400	100	400	11.8%
Manufacturing	5,500	5,600	5,800	-100	-300	-5.2%
Service Providing	39,400	39,300	38,500	100	900	2.3%
Private Services Providing	27,800	27,700	27,200	100	600	2.2%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	10,100	10,200	9,600	-100	500	5.2%
Retail Trade	7,100	7,200	6,900	-100	200	2.9%
Leisure and Hospitality	5,000	5,000	4,800	0	200	4.2%
Government	11,600	11,600	11,300	0	300	2.7%
Federal Government	400	400	300	0	100	33.3%
State Government	1,500	1,500	1,500	0	0	0.0%
Local Government	9,700	9,700	9,500	0	200	2.1%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

In February 2017, Skagit County nonfarm payrolls expanded by 100. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 1,000 or 2.1 percent.

- In February, construction added 100 new jobs but manufacturing and retail trade each shed 100. January and February tend to be slow months in terms of hiring. Expect hiring to pick up over the spring months.
- Over the year, total nonfarm employment expanded by 1,000 or 2.1 percent, with most industries adding jobs. The largest employment gains were observed in trade transportation warehousing and utilities (+500) - including retail trade (+200) – and in construction (+400). Year over year losses were observed in manufacturing (-300).

## Island County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 5.7 percent (preliminary) in February 2017. This is down from 6.2 percent (revised) in January. For comparison, the unemployment rate in February 2016 was 6.6 percent. The unemployment rate in Island County has been slowly but steadily declining since 2010.

- Compared to February 2016, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 1,566 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 231. Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 33,630, having increased by 4.1 percent over the year.

- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Island County decreased from 217 in January to 162. Altogether, 415 Island County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in February. This is down from 510 the previous month.

## Island County local area payroll jobs

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

Data benchmarked through September 2016

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Feb-17	Revised Jan-17	Revised Feb-16	Change		
				Jan-17 Feb-17	Feb-16 Feb-17	Feb-16 Feb-17
Total Nonfarm	16,360	16,320	15,450	40	910	5.9%
Total Private	11,500	11,470	10,800	30	700	6.5%
Goods Producing	1,660	1,640	1,610	20	50	3.1%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	860	840	830	20	30	3.6%
Manufacturing	800	800	780	0	20	2.6%
Service Providing	14,700	14,680	13,840	20	860	6.2%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,530	2,550	2,530	-20	0	0.0%
Retail Trade	2,090	2,110	2,080	-20	10	0.5%
Information and Financial Activities	820	830	660	-10	160	24.2%
Professional and Business Services	1,240	1,240	1,170	0	70	6.0%
Education and Health Services	2,140	2,120	2,120	20	20	0.9%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,340	2,310	2,020	30	320	15.8%
Government	4,860	4,850	4,650	10	210	4.5%
Federal Government	1,460	1,460	1,340	0	120	9.0%
State and Local Government	3,400	3,390	3,310	10	90	2.7%
State and Local Government Education	1,560	1,540	1,510	20	50	3.3%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County increased by 40 in February 2017. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs was up 5.9 percent or 910.

- From January to February, the largest job gains were observed in leisure and hospitality (+30) and in construction and education and health services (+20 each). Losses came from retail trade (-20) and information and financial activities (-10).
- Year-over-year, Island County employment expanded by 910, with growth observed in most industry sectors detailed in this report. The largest gains were attributable to hiring in leisure and hospitality (+320), government (+210) and information and financial activities (+160).

## San Juan County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in San Juan County fell from 6.3 percent in January (revised) to 5.3 percent (preliminary) in February. For reference, the unemployment rate 12 months earlier was 6.0 percent. The unemployment rate in San Juan County is highly-seasonal as a result of an orientation toward

tourism. When seasonality is ironed out, average annual unemployment rates reveal that the unemployment rate has basically plateaued at about 5 percent since 2014.

- Compared to February 2016, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 239 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 43. Altogether, the San Juan County labor force increased by 2.7 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in San Juan County decreased from 53 in January to 21. Altogether, 95 San Juan County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in February. This is down from 107 in January.

## San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

### San Juan County

Data benchmarked through September 2016

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Feb-17	Revised Jan-17	Revised Feb-16	Change		
				Jan-17 Feb-17	Feb-16 Feb-17	Feb-16 Feb-17
Total Nonfarm	5,070	4,970	4,910	100	160	3.3%
Total Private	4,240	4,150	4,080	90	160	3.9%
Goods Producing	800	760	790	40	10	1.3%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	610	600	620	10	-10	-1.6%
Manufacturing	190	160	170	30	20	11.8%
Service Providing	4,270	4,210	4,120	60	150	3.6%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	900	900	810	0	90	11.1%
Information and Financial Activities	310	310	290	0	20	6.9%
Professional and Business Services	400	400	390	0	10	2.6%
Education and Health Services	620	610	570	10	50	8.8%
Leisure and Hospitality	1,020	990	1,050	30	-30	-2.9%
Government	830	820	830	10	0	0.0%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Nonfarm payroll jobs in San Juan County expanded by 100 in February. Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was up 160 jobs or 3.3 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 February, employment gains were observed in most industries. The largest month-to-month gains were attributable to hiring in manufacturing and leisure and hospitality (+30 each).
- Over the year, employers in San Juan County collectively added 160 jobs. The largest gains were observed in trade transportation and utilities (+90) and education and health services (+50). The deepest losses were observed in leisure and hospitality (-30).