

Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

Volume 2017, Number 3

March 2017

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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 10,700 from February 2017 to March 2017. BLS estimates the private sector gained 11,400 jobs during the month and the public sector lost 700 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for March 2016 through March 2017 indicate an increase in employment of 92,000 for the state. The private sector added 80,200 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 11,800 jobs over the year.

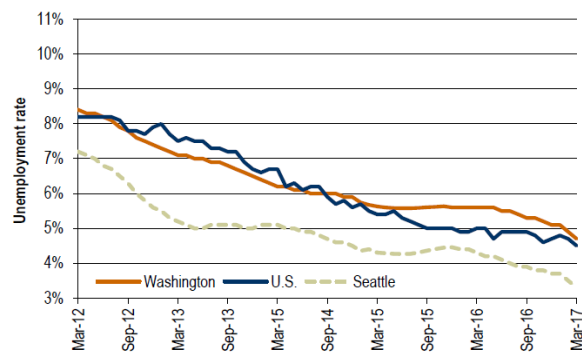
Washington's preliminary seasonally adjusted

unemployment rate for March 2017 is 4.7 percent. The revised estimated February 2017 unemployment rate was at 4.9 percent. The March 2016 unemployment rate was 5.6 percent.

Unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted)

Area	(Prelim.) Mar-17	Feb-17	Mar-16	Year-to- Year Change
USA	4.6%	4.9%	5.1%	-0.5%
Washington state	4.9%	5.2%	5.8%	-0.9%
Whatcom	5.4%	5.8%	6.4%	-1.0%
Skagit	6.1%	6.7%	7.3%	-1.2%
Island	5.3%	5.6%	6.2%	-0.9%
San Juan	4.6%	5.3%	5.4%	-0.8%

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



The revised estimated February 2017 unemployment rate was at 4.9 percent. The March 2016 unemployment rate was 5.6 percent.

BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. February's preliminary estimated gain of 6,100 jobs was revised to a gain of 6,500 jobs.

Whatcom County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 5.4 percent in March 2017 (preliminary), down from 5.8 percent in February (revised). For comparison, the unemployment rate in March 2016 was 6.4 percent.

- Compared to March 2016, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 2,171 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 1,035, resulting in a 1.1 percent increase in the size of the labor force and a drop in the unemployment rate. Whatcom County’s labor force was about 108,846 in March 2017.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Whatcom County decreased from 969 in February to 724. Altogether, 1,681 Whatcom County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in March; down from 1,985 in February.

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 Mar-17	Revised Feb-17	Revised Mar-16	Change		
				Feb-17 Mar-17	Mar-16 Mar-17	Mar-16 Mar-17
Total Nonfarm	92,300	91,500	90,200	800	2,100	2.3%
Total Private	73,400	72,400	71,600	1,000	1,800	2.5%
Goods Producing	17,300	16,500	16,400	800	900	5.5%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	7,400	6,600	6,600	800	800	12.1%
Manufacturing	9,900	9,900	9,800	0	100	1.0%
Service Providing	75,000	75,000	73,800	0	1,200	1.6%
Private Services Providing	56,100	55,900	55,200	200	900	1.6%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	16,500	16,400	16,000	100	500	3.1%
Retail Trade	11,200	11,100	10,900	100	300	2.8%
Financial Activities	3,300	3,300	3,200	0	100	3.1%
Professional and Business Services	8,000	7,900	8,000	100	0	0.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	10,600	10,500	10,200	100	400	3.9%
Government	18,900	19,100	18,600	-200	300	1.6%
Federal Government	1,400	1,400	1,400	0	0	0.0%
Total State Government	7,300	7,500	7,200	-200	100	1.4%
Total Local Government	10,200	10,200	10,000	0	200	2.0%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Nonfarm payroll jobs in Whatcom County expanded by 800 from February to March 2017. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs is up 2,100 or 2.3 percent.

- In March, goods producing industries collectively added 800 jobs. Private service providers added 200 jobs and government employers shed 200 over the month. Most private sector industries detailed in this report added jobs over the month, with the exception of financial activities and manufacturing which remained unchanged. The largest month-to-month gains were attributable to hiring in construction.
- Altogether, Whatcom County employers added 2,100 jobs over the past 12 months, marking a 2.3 percent increase in employment. The largest private sector gains were attributed to hiring in construction (+800). Jobs were added by employers in all industries detailed in this report, except for professional and business services which remained unchanged.

Skagit County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 6.1 percent in March 2017 (preliminary), down from 6.7 percent in February (revised). The unemployment rate in March 2016 was 7.3 percent. Skagit County's unemployment rate has been on a slow but steady decline (with predictable seasonal bumps) since 2010.

- Compared to March 2016, the number of people counted as 'employed' increased by 1,383 and the number of people counted as 'unemployed' or actively seeking work decreased by 643. Skagit County's labor force was estimated as 58,331, having increased by 1.3 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Skagit County decreased from 570 in February to 491. Altogether, 1,162 Skagit County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in March. This is down from 1,335 in February.

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 Mar-17	Revised Feb-17	Revised Mar-16	Change		
				Feb-17 Mar-17	Mar-16 Mar-17	Mar-16 Mar-17
Total Nonfarm	49,200	48,700	47,900	500	1,300	2.7%
Total Private	37,500	37,100	36,500	400	1,000	2.7%
Goods Producing	9,400	9,300	9,100	100	300	3.3%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	3,700	3,800	3,400	-100	300	8.8%
Manufacturing	5,700	5,500	5,700	200	0	0.0%
Service Providing	39,800	39,400	38,800	400	1,000	2.6%
Private Services Providing	28,100	27,800	27,400	300	700	2.6%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	10,200	10,100	9,700	100	500	5.2%
Retail Trade	7,200	7,100	6,900	100	300	4.3%
Leisure and Hospitality	5,200	5,100	4,800	100	400	8.3%
Government	11,700	11,600	11,400	100	300	2.6%
Federal Government	400	400	400	0	0	0.0%
State Government	1,500	1,500	1,400	0	100	7.1%
Local Government	9,800	9,700	9,600	100	200	2.1%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

In March 2017, Skagit County nonfarm payrolls expanded by 500. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 1,300 or 2.7 percent.

- Over the month, most industries added jobs, with the largest increases observed in manufacturing (+200). Construction is the only industry detailed in this report that shed jobs over the month.
- Over the year, total nonfarm employment expanded by 1,300 or 2.7 percent, with most industries adding jobs. The largest employment gains were observed in trade transportation warehousing and utilities (+500) - including retail trade (+300) and in leisure and hospitality (+400). Manufacturing is the only industry that did not expand over the year, with a net employment change of 0 jobs over the year.

Island County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 5.3 percent (preliminary) in March 2017. This is down from 5.6 percent (revised) in February. For comparison, the unemployment rate in March 2016 was 6.2 percent. The unemployment rate in Island County has been slowly but steadily declining since 2010.

- Compared to March 2016, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 1,189 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 271. Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 33,497, having increased by 2.8 percent over the year.

- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Island County increased from 162 in February to 165. Altogether, 386 Island County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in March. This is down from 415 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 Mar-17	Revised Feb-17	Revised Mar-16	Change		
				Feb-17 Mar-17	Mar-16 Mar-17	Mar-16 Mar-17
Total Nonfarm	16,480	16,350	15,710	130	770	4.9%
Total Private	11,630	11,490	11,080	140	550	5.0%
Goods Producing	1,690	1,660	1,630	30	60	3.7%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	890	860	860	30	30	3.5%
Manufacturing	800	800	770	0	30	3.9%
Service Providing	14,790	14,690	14,080	100	710	5.0%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,550	2,530	2,580	20	-30	-1.2%
Retail Trade	2,110	2,090	2,130	20	-20	-0.9%
Information and Financial Activities	830	820	750	10	80	10.7%
Professional and Business Services	1,240	1,240	1,180	0	60	5.1%
Education and Health Services	2,170	2,140	2,140	30	30	1.4%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,370	2,330	2,080	40	290	13.9%
Government	4,850	4,860	4,630	-10	220	4.8%
Federal Government	1,450	1,460	1,340	-10	110	8.2%
State and Local Government	3,400	3,400	3,290	0	110	3.3%
State and Local Government Education	1,550	1,560	1,480	-10	70	4.7%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County increased by 130 in March 2017. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs was up 4.9 percent or 770.

- From February to March, the largest job gains were observed in leisure and hospitality (+40) and in construction and education and health services (+30 each). Government employment dropped by 10.
- Year-over-year, Island County employment expanded by 770, with growth observed in most industry sectors detailed in this report. The largest gains were attributable to hiring in leisure and hospitality (+290), government (+220) and information and financial activities (+80). Employment in trade transportation and utilities (including retail trade) dropped by 30.

San Juan County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in San Juan County fell from 5.3 percent in February (revised) to 4.6 percent (preliminary) in March. For reference, the unemployment rate 12 months earlier was 5.4 percent. The unemployment rate in San Juan County is highly-seasonal as a result of an orientation

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Report available at <http://nwboard.org/impact/laborareasummaries.html>

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 March 2016, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 125 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 57. Altogether, the San Juan County labor force increased by 1.3 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in San Juan County decreased from 21 in February to 16. Altogether, 81 San Juan County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in March. This is down from 95 in February.

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 Mar-17	Revised Feb-17	Revised Mar-16	Change		
				Feb-17 Mar-17	Mar-16 Mar-17	Mar-16 Mar-17
Total Nonfarm	5,140	5,050	5,020	90	120	2.4%
Total Private	4,290	4,210	4,200	80	90	2.1%
Goods Producing	800	800	810	0	-10	-1.2%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	610	610	640	0	-30	-4.7%
Manufacturing	190	190	170	0	20	11.8%
Service Providing	4,340	4,250	4,210	90	130	3.1%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	910	890	830	20	80	9.6%
Information and Financial Activities	310	310	290	0	20	6.9%
Professional and Business Services	410	400	400	10	10	2.5%
Education and Health Services	610	620	570	-10	40	7.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	1,060	990	1,130	70	-70	-6.2%
Government	850	840	820	10	30	3.7%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Nonfarm payroll jobs in San Juan County expanded by 90 in March. Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was up 120 jobs or 2.4 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 March, goods producing employment did not change. The largest month to month changes in services were attributable to hiring in leisure and hospitality.
- Over the year, employers in San Juan County collectively added 120 jobs. The largest gains were observed in trade transportation and utilities (+80) and education and health services (+40). The deepest losses were observed in leisure and hospitality (-70).