

Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

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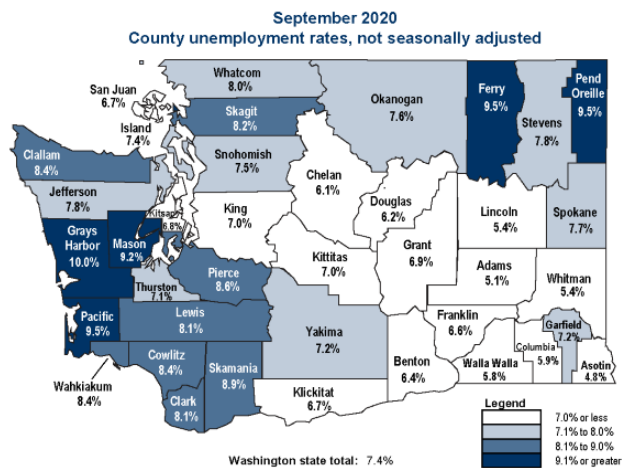
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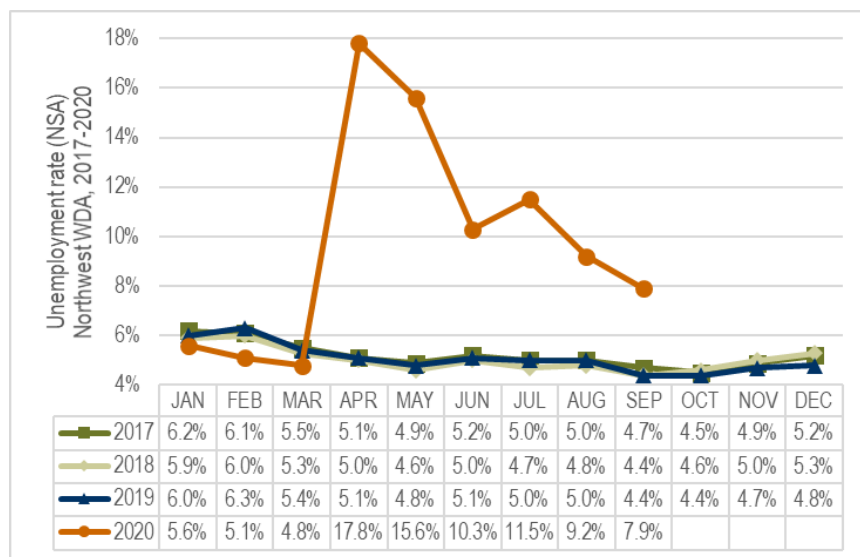
For all intents and purposes, this is the sixth report to record the effects of the Covid-19 economic situation in Northwest Washington.

On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington rose by 2,400 in September 2020. BLS estimates the private sector gained 12,100 jobs during the month and the public sector lost 9,700 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for September 2019 through September 2020 indicate a decrease in employment of 203,900 for the state. The private sector lost 179,100 jobs while the public sector lost an estimated 24,800 jobs over the year.



Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for September 2020 is 7.8 percent.



The revised estimated August 2020 unemployment rate is at 8.4 percent. The September 2019 unemployment rate was 4.1 percent.

BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. August’s preliminary estimated gain of 19,800 jobs was revised to a gain of 69,000 jobs.

The unemployment rate for the Northwest Workforce Development was 7.9 percent in September 2020.

Whatcom County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 8.0 percent in September 2020 (preliminary), down from 9.3 percent reported in August (revised). The unemployment rate in September 2019 was 4.4 percent.

- Compared to 12 months ago, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 2,196 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 4,354. The labor force as a whole expanded by 1.9 percent. Whatcom County’s labor force was estimated at 116,057 in September 2020.

Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

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

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Sep-20	Revised Aug-20	Revised Sep-19	Change		
				Aug-20 Sep-20	Sep-19 Sep-20	Sep-19 Sep-20
Total Nonfarm	92,400	92,000	95,500	400	-3,100	-3.2%
Total Private	77,200	77,100	77,500	100	-300	-0.4%
Goods Producing	17,700	17,900	18,800	-200	-1,100	-5.9%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	7,300	7,400	8,100	-100	-800	-9.9%
Manufacturing	10,400	10,500	10,700	-100	-300	-2.8%
Service Providing	74,700	74,100	76,700	600	-2,000	-2.6%
Private Services Providing	59,500	59,200	58,700	300	800	1.4%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	17,900	17,800	16,400	100	1,500	9.1%
Retail Trade	13,700	13,700	11,000	0	2,700	24.5%
Financial Activities	4,100	4,100	4,000	0	100	2.5%
Professional and Business Services	8,500	8,500	8,600	0	-100	-1.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	8,400	8,300	10,700	100	-2,300	-21.5%
Government	15,200	14,900	18,000	300	-2,800	-15.6%
Federal Government	1,700	1,900	1,500	-200	200	13.3%
Total State Government	4,500	3,600	6,600	900	-2,100	-31.8%
Total Local Government	9,000	9,400	9,900	-400	-900	-9.1%

Total nonfarm payroll in Whatcom County (not seasonally adjusted) increased by 400 from August to September 2020. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs decreased by 3,100 (3.2 percent).

- In September, net employment expanded, with a mix of increases and decreases by industry. The largest increases were observed in government (up 300). Goods producing industries (manufacturing and construction) shed jobs, while service providing industries collectively expanded employment.
- Most major industries detailed in this report shed jobs over the year. The largest decreases came from government (down 2,800). Employment in retail trade was up over the year.

Skagit County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 8.2 percent in September 2020 (preliminary); this is down from 9.6 percent in August (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.6 percent.

- Compared to September 2019, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ dropped by 2,758 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ expanded by 2,230. Skagit County’s resident labor force was estimated at 62,287 decreasing by 0.8 percent.

Skagit County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted
Mount Vernon-Anacortes Metropolitan Statistical Area (Skagit County)
 Data benchmarked through March 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Sep-20	Revised Aug-20	Revised Sep-19	Change		
				Aug-20 Sep-20	Sep-19 Sep-20	Sep-19 Sep-20
Total Nonfarm	49,100	49,300	52,300	-200	-3,200	-6.1%
Total Private	38,000	38,200	40,800	-200	-2,800	-6.9%
Goods Producing	9,900	10,000	10,900	-100	-1,000	-9.2%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	4,100	4,100	5,000	0	-900	-18.0%
Manufacturing	5,800	5,900	5,900	-100	-100	-1.7%
Service Providing	39,200	39,300	41,400	-100	-2,200	-5.3%
Private Services Providing	28,100	28,200	29,900	-100	-1,800	-6.0%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	10,500	10,600	10,200	-100	300	2.9%
Retail Trade	8,100	8,200	7,100	-100	1,000	14.1%
Leisure and Hospitality	3,800	3,800	5,600	0	-1,800	-32.1%
Government	11,100	11,100	11,500	0	-400	-3.5%
Federal Government	400	400	500	0	-100	-20.0%
State Government	1,300	1,100	1,400	200	-100	-7.1%
Local Government	9,400	9,600	9,600	-200	-200	-2.1%

Total nonfarm employment in Skagit County decreased by 200 from August to September 2020. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs contracted by 3,200 or 6.1 percent.

- Over the month, manufacturing and retail trade each reported job losses. Other industries remained unchanged.
- Covid-19 related losses reverberated throughout the economy, showing up in the year over year estimates for most industries. The deepest losses were observed in leisure and hospitality (down 1,800) and construction (-900). Retail trade added 1,000 jobs over the year.

Island County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 7.4 percent (preliminary) in September 2020. This is down from 8.4 (revised) reported in August. The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.4 percent.

- Compared to September 2019, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 1,785 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work expanded by 1,022. Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 35,133 in September 2020.

Island County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

Oak Harbor Micropolitan Statistical Area (Island County)

Data benchmarked through March 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Sep-20	Revised Aug-20	Revised Sep-19	Change		
				Aug-20 Sep-20	Sep-19 Sep-20	Sep-19 Sep-20
Total Nonfarm	16,210	16,370	17,470	-160	-1,260	-7.2%
Total Private	11,600	11,710	12,910	-110	-1,310	-10.1%
Goods Producing	1,580	1,560	2,000	20	-420	-21.0%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	710	700	1,190	10	-480	-40.3%
Manufacturing	870	860	810	10	60	7.4%
Service Providing	14,630	14,810	15,470	-180	-840	-5.4%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,500	2,540	2,760	-40	-260	-9.4%
Retail Trade	2,020	2,060	2,130	-40	-110	-5.2%
Information and Financial Activities	800	820	840	-20	-40	-4.8%
Professional and Business Services	1,380	1,410	1,320	-30	60	4.5%
Education and Health Services	2,420	2,370	2,440	50	-20	-0.8%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,030	2,120	2,670	-90	-640	-24.0%
Government	4,610	4,660	4,560	-50	50	1.1%
Federal Government	1,390	1,470	1,320	-80	70	5.3%
State and Local Government	3,220	3,190	3,240	30	-20	-0.6%
State and Local Government Education	1,390	1,310	1,380	80	10	0.7%

Total nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County contracted by 160 from August to September 2020. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs plunged by 1,260 or 7.2 percent.

- From August to September, goods producing industries (construction and manufacturing) each expanded employment, but most industries in the service providing industries shed jobs.
- Year-over-year, the deepest losses were observed in leisure and hospitality (down 640). And trade, transportation and utilities (down 260). Government, professional and business services and manufacturing each expanded employment over the year.

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 remained dropped from 7.8 percent (revised) in August to 6.7 percent (preliminary) in September 2020. For comparison, the unemployment rate 12 months ago was 3.0 percent.

- Compared to September 2019, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 2,080 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 222. Altogether, the San Juan County labor force consisted of an estimated 7,368 resident workers and contracted by 20.1 percent over the year.

San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

San Juan County

Data benchmarked through March 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Sep-20	Revised Aug-20	Revised Sep-19	Change		
				Aug-20 Sep-20	Sep-19 Sep-20	Sep-19 Sep-20
Total Nonfarm	4,600	4,790	6,470	-190	-1,870	-28.9%
Total Private	3,820	4,000	5,660	-180	-1,840	-32.5%
Goods Producing	900	910	1,010	-10	-110	-10.9%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	700	710	750	-10	-50	-6.7%
Manufacturing	200	200	260	0	-60	-23.1%
Service Providing	3,700	3,880	5,460	-180	-1,760	-32.2%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	930	1,010	1,160	-80	-230	-19.8%
Information and Financial Activities	310	330	410	-20	-100	-24.4%
Professional and Business Services	400	410	460	-10	-60	-13.0%
Education and Health Services	510	500	620	10	-110	-17.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	590	650	1,800	-60	-1,210	-67.2%
Government	780	790	810	-10	-30	-3.7%

Net nonfarm payroll in San Juan County contracted over the month (down 190). Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was down 1,870 or 28.9 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. Economically speaking, summer never arrived at the San Juan Islands this year, but September brought seasonal employment declines anyway. The deepest one-month declines were observed in trade transportation and utilities and leisure and hospitality (down 80 and 60 jobs respectively).
- 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 1,210 or 67.2 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.

Northwest weekly initial claims from March 1 to October 10, 2020:

Claim week	Whatcom	Skagit	Island	San Juan
Week 9 (March 1-7)	198	127	63	8
Week 10 (March 8-14)	238	163	66	17
Week 11 (March 15-21)	4,428	1,966	949	279
Week 12 (March 22-28)	6,268	3,425	1,520	465
Week 13 (March 29-April 4)	5,885	3,230	1,584	443
Week 14 (April 5-11)	3,968	2,731	1,577	271
Week 15 (April 12-18)	2,612	1,445	713	191
Week 16 (April 19-25)	4,343	2,164	1,297	503
Week 17 (April 26-May 2)	3,170	1,609	882	336
Week 18 (May 3-9)	2,914	1,529	755	195
Week 19 (May 10-16)	3,768	1,902	1,037	233
Week 20 (May 17-23)	1,418	753	386	104
Week 21 (May 24-30)	959	590	238	64
Week 22 (May 31-June 6)	801	487	215	47
Week 23 (June 7-13)	955	468	192	37
Week 24 (June 14-20)	952	502	208	43
Week 25 (June 21-27)	1,091	573	201	39
Week 26 (June 28-July 4)	982	449	188	43
Week 27 (July 5-11)	1,361	616	304	75
Week 28 (July 12-18)	870	460	201	59
Week 29 (July 19-25)	891	443	204	58
Week 30 (July 26-August 1)	702	431	191	46
Week 31 (August 2-8)	550	336	180	36
Week 32 (August 9-15)	579	320	159	35
Week 33 (August 16-22)	562	289	126	35
Week 34 (August 23-29)	532	270	118	23
Week 35 (August 30-September 5)	629	321	124	34
Week 36 (September 6-12)	549	292	111	24
Week 37 (September 13-19)	524	302	131	35
Week 38 (September 20-26)	482	245	107	31
Week 39 (September 27-October 3)	421	256	100	24
Week 40 (October 4-10)	616	353	171	41

**Labor force and payroll reporting reflects employment during week 32 (September 6-12)*

Weekly initial claims information is updated every Thursday, and is published at www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo

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 September. Forecast information is available at 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.