

Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

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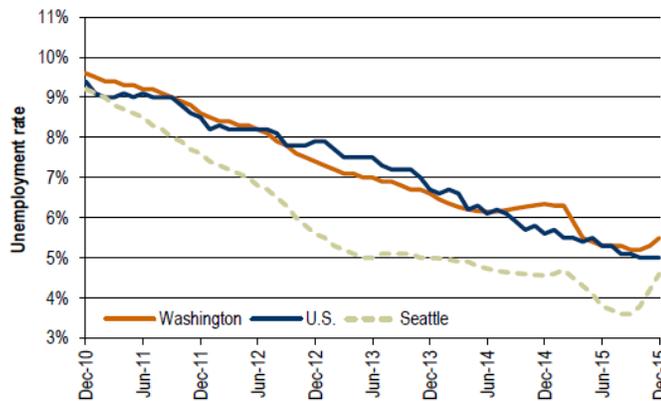
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On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington rose by 7,200 from November 2015 to December 2015. BLS estimates the private sector gained 5,600 jobs during the month and the public sector gained 1,600 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for December 2014 through December 2015 indicate an increase in employment of 68,000 for the state. The private sector added 58,600 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 9,400 jobs over the year.

Unemployment rates, seasonally adjusted
U.S., Washington and Seattle, December 2010 through December 2015
Source: Employment Security Department/LMPA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics



Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for December 2015 is 5.5 percent. The revised estimated November 2015 unemployment rate was at 5.3 percent. The December 2014

unemployment rate was 6.3 percent.

Unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted)				
Area	(Prelim.) Dec-15	Nov-15	Dec-14	Year-to- Year Change
USA	4.8%	4.8%	5.4%	-0.6%
Washington state	5.9%	5.4%	6.3%	-0.4%
Whatcom	5.9%	5.3%	6.6%	-0.7%
Skagit	7.0%	6.3%	7.7%	-0.7%
Island	6.1%	5.5%	7.2%	-1.1%
San Juan	5.7%	4.7%	6.1%	-0.4%

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 10,100 jobs was revised to a gain of 10,400 jobs.

Whatcom County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County rose from 5.3 percent in November (revised) to 5.9 percent in December (preliminary). The unemployment rate in December 2014 was 6.6 percent.

- Compared to December 2014, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 1,851 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 702, resulting in an overall increase in the total labor force. Whatcom County’s labor force was estimated as 105,466 in December 2015.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Whatcom County increased from 1,168 in November to 1,567. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in construction-related occupations. Altogether, 2,131 Whatcom County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in December; up from 1,835 in November.
- The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) for Alcoa Intalco Works (Ferndale) was retracted by the company. The current operational plan, according to the Bellingham Herald, is to idle the smelter at the end of June and keep the casthouse open.

Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

Total nonfarm employment, not seasonally adjusted, in Whatcom County (Bellingham MSA)						
NAICS industry title (place of work)	Preliminary Dec-15	Revised Nov-15	Revised Dec -14	Change		
				Nov-15 Dec-15	Dec-14 Dec-15	Dec-14 Dec-15 %
Total Nonfarm	89,300	89,600	86,800	-300	2,500	2.9%
Total Private	71,400	71,300	69,100	100	2,300	3.3%
Goods Producing	15,900	16,000	15,400	-100	500	3.2%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	6,500	6,600	6,200	-100	300	4.8%
Manufacturing	9,400	9,400	9,200	0	200	2.2%
Service-Providing	73,400	73,600	71,400	-200	2,000	2.8%
Private Service Providing	55,500	55,300	53,700	200	1,800	3.4%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	16,400	16,600	16,900	-200	-500	-3.0%
Retail Trade	11,300	11,500	11,600	-200	-300	-2.6%
Financial Activities	3,200	3,200	3,400	0	-200	-5.9%
Professional and Business Services	8,000	8,100	7,900	-100	100	1.3%
Leisure and Hospitality	9,900	10,000	9,800	-100	100	1.0%
Government	17,900	18,300	17,700	-400	200	1.1%
Federal	1,400	1,400	1,400	0	0	
State government	6,400	6,700	6,500	-300	-100	-1.5%
Local government	10,100	10,200	9,800	-100	300	3.1%
Workers in Labor Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Source: Washington State Employment Security Department, Labor Market and Performance Analysis Branch

Nonfarm payroll jobs in Whatcom County contracted by 300 from November to December 2015. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs is up 2.9 percent or 2,500.

- In December 2015, goods producing industries shed a net 100 jobs and private sector service providers added 200. Government employment contracted by 400 over the month, reflecting winter break at local public colleges and universities. December tends to be a slow month—this year, slow growth slipped into the territory of modest job losses for most industries.

- Altogether, Whatcom County employers added 2,500 jobs over the past 12 months. The largest private sector gains were attributed to hiring in construction (+300) and manufacturing (+200). Trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities (including retail trade) and financial activities reported losses over the year. Public sector employment expanded by 200.

Skagit County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County increased from 6.3 percent in November (revised) to 7.0 percent in December (preliminary). The unemployment rate last December was 7.7 percent.

- Compared to December 2014, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 362 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 442. Skagit County’s labor force decreased by an estimated 804 workers over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Skagit County increased from 935 in November to 1,057. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in construction-related occupations. Altogether, 1,578 Skagit County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in December. This is up from 1,437 in November.
- Management & Training Corporation (Job Corps) filed a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN). Up to 90 workers could be affected beginning 1/31/2016

Skagit County local area payroll jobs

Total nonfarm employment, not seasonally adjusted, in Skagit County (Mt. Vernon-Anacortes MSA)						
NAICS industry title (place of work)	Preliminary Dec-15	Revised Nov-15	Revised Dec -14	Change		
				Nov-15 Dec-15	Dec-14 Dec-15	Dec-14 Dec- 15 %
Total Nonfarm	48,100	48,600	47,500	-500	600	1.3%
Total Private	37,000	37,300	36,500	-300	500	1.4%
Goods Producing	9,600	9,700	9,600	-100	0	
Mining, Logging, and Construction	3,800	3,900	3,600	-100	200	5.6%
Manufacturing	5,800	5,800	6,000	0	-200	-3.3%
Service-Providing	38,500	38,900	37,900	-400	600	1.6%
Private Service Providing	27,400	27,600	26,900	-200	500	1.9%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	10,300	10,100	10,000	200	300	3.0%
Retail Trade	7,300	7,200	7,100	100	200	2.8%
Leisure and Hospitality	4,800	4,800	4,500	0	300	6.7%
Government	11,100	11,300	11,000	-200	100	0.9%
Federal	400	400	300	0	100	33.3%
State government	1,400	1,500	1,400	-100	0	
Local government	9,300	9,400	9,300	-100	0	
Workers in Labor Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Source: Washington State Employment Security Department, Labor Market and Performance Analysis Branch

In December, Skagit County nonfarm payrolls decreased by 500. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 600 or 1.3 percent.

- Month-to-month, industry-specific gains were attributable to hiring in trade transportation and utilities (including retail trade); losses were observed in most industries. Last year, December was a month of modest growth; this year, county businesses generally reported declining employment.
- Over the year, total nonfarm employment expanded by 600 or 1.3 percent. All major industries detailed in this report posted gains with the exception of manufacturing, which shed 200 jobs. Gains in construction offset losses in manufacturing, leading to a net change of zero for goods producers over the year; private service providers added 500 jobs and government added 100.

Island County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County rose from 5.5 percent in November (revised) to 6.1 percent in December (preliminary). The unemployment rate in December 2014 was 7.2 percent.

- Compared to December 2014, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 255 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 340. Island County’s civilian labor force decreased by 85 resident civilians over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Island County increased from 260 in November to 265. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in construction-related occupations. Altogether, 440 Island County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in December. This is up from 415 the previous month.

Island County local area payroll jobs

Total nonfarm employment, not seasonally adjusted, in Island County (Oak Harbor MSA)						
NAICS industry title (place of work)	Preliminary Dec-15	Revised Nov-15	Revised Dec -14	Change		
				Nov-15 Dec-15	Dec-14 Dec-15	Dec-14 Dec- 15 %
Total Nonfarm	15,790	15,870	15,560	-80	230	1.5%
Total Private	11,180	11,200	11,020	-20	160	1.5%
Goods Producing	1,580	1,590	1,440	-10	140	9.7%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	820	820	750	0	70	9.3%
Manufacturing	760	770	690	-10	70	10.1%
Service-Providing	14,210	14,280	14,120	-70	90	0.6%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,600	2,580	2,520	20	80	3.2%
Retail Trade	2,150	2,130	2,070	20	80	3.9%
Information and Financial Activities	740	740	750	0	-10	-1.3%
Professional and Business Services	1,120	1,120	1,150	0	-30	-2.6%
Education and Health Services	2,220	2,250	2,290	-30	-70	-3.1%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,190	2,210	2,180	-20	10	0.5%
Government	4,610	4,670	4,540	-60	70	1.5%
Federal	1,360	1,360	1,340	0	20	1.5%
State and Local Government	3,250	3,310	3,200	-60	50	1.6%
State and Local Government Education	1,410	1,480	1,420	-70	-10	-0.7%
Workers in Labor Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Source: Washington State Employment Security Department, Labor Market and Performance Analysis Branch

Nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County decreased by 80 in December. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs was up 1.5 percent or 230.

- From November to December, gains were observed in retail trade, transportation and utilities – particularly in retail trade. The deepest losses were observed in government.
- Year-over-year, Island County employment expanded by 230. The largest gains were observed in retail trade (80); construction, manufacturing and government all added 70. The deepest losses came from education and health services (-70).

San Juan County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in San Juan County increased from 4.7 percent (revised) in November to 5.7 percent (preliminary) in December. The unemployment rate observed in December 2014 was 6.1 percent.

- Compared to December 2014, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 230 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 48. All together, the San Juan County labor force decreased by 278 over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in San Juan County decreased from 69 in November to 60. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in food preparation and serving related occupations. Altogether, 117 San Juan County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in December. This is up from 100 in November.

San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Total nonfarm employment, not seasonally adjusted, in San Juan County						
NAICS industry title (place of work)	Preliminary Dec-15	Revised Nov-15	Revised Dec -14	Change		
				Nov-15 Dec-15	Dec-14 Dec-15	Dec-14 Dec- 15 %
Total Nonfarm	4,940	5,070	5,120	-130	-180	-3.5%
Total Private	4,130	4,250	4,330	-120	-200	-4.6%
Goods Producing	770	790	790	-20	-20	-2.5%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	590	600	610	-10	-20	-3.3%
Manufacturing	180	190	180	-10	0	
Service-Providing	4,170	4,280	4,330	-110	-160	-3.7%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	900	900	880	0	20	2.3%
Information and Financial Activities	380	370	340	10	40	11.8%
Professional and Business Services	370	380	360	-10	10	2.8%
Education and Health Services	580	590	620	-10	-40	-6.5%
Leisure and Hospitality	950	1,040	1,140	-90	-190	-16.7%
Government	810	820	790	-10	20	2.5%
Workers in Labor Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Source: Washington State Employment Security Department, Labor Market and Performance Analysis Branch

Nonfarm payroll jobs in San Juan County contracted by 130 in December. Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was down 180 jobs or 3.5 percent.

- San Juan County has a highly-seasonal economy, due to its orientation toward tourism. July and August tend to be the months with the highest levels of employment for the year. Most industries shed jobs as the days get shorter and colder, with the deepest losses typically observed in leisure and hospitality (-90 in December).
- Over the year, employers in San Juan County collectively subtracted 180 jobs. Year over year gains were observed in information and financial activities, trade, transportation and utilities (which includes retail trade) and professional and business services. The deepest losses were observed in leisure and hospitality (-190).