

Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

Volume 2016, Number 12

December 2016

Compiled by **Anneliese Vance-Sherman, Ph.D., Regional Labor Economist**

Phone: (425)258-6315 avancesherman@esd.wa.gov

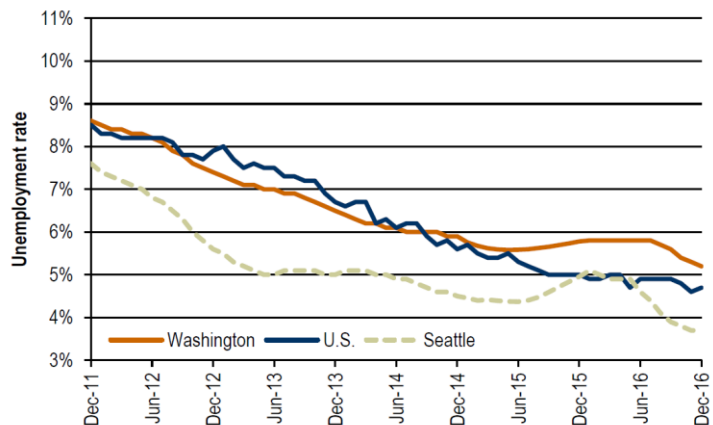
www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo

On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington rose by 6,700 from November 2016 to December 2016.1 BLS estimates the private sector gained 7,400 jobs during the month and the public sector lost 700 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for December 2015 through December 2016 indicate an increase in employment of 82,300 for the state. The private sector added 68,300 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 14,000 jobs over the year.

Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for December 2016 is 5.2 percent. The revised estimated November 2016 unemployment rate was at 5.3 percent. The December 2015 unemployment rate was 5.8 percent.

Unemployment rates, seasonally adjusted
U.S., Washington and Seattle, December 2011 through December 2016
Source: Employment Security Department/LMPA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics



Unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted)

Area	(Prelim.) Dec-16	Nov-16	Dec-15	Year-to- Year Change
USA	4.5%	4.4%	4.8%	-0.3%
Washington state	5.3%	5.2%	5.9%	-0.6%
Whatcom	6.0%	5.7%	6.1%	-0.1%
Skagit	6.8%	6.5%	7.0%	-0.2%
Island	5.8%	5.7%	6.2%	-0.4%
San Juan	5.3%	4.7%	5.7%	-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 3,600 jobs was revised to a gain of 4,000 jobs.

Whatcom County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 6.0 percent in December 2016 (preliminary), up from 5.7 percent in November (revised). For comparison, the unemployment rate in December 2015 was 6.1 percent.

- Compared to December 2015, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 2,166 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 72, resulting in a 2.1 percent increase in the size of the labor force and an increase in the unemployment rate. Whatcom County’s labor force was about 106,763 in December 2016.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Whatcom County increased from 934 in November to 1,327. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in construction-related occupations. Altogether, 1,848 Whatcom County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in December; up from 1,467 in November.

Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted
Bellingham Metropolitan Statistical Area (Whatcom County)

Data benchmarked through June 2016

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Dec-16	Revised Nov-16	Revised Dec-15	Change		
				Nov-16 Dec-16	Dec-15 Dec-16	Dec-15 Dec-16
Total Nonfarm	89,900	90,600	89,100	-700	800	0.9%
Total Private	71,600	72,000	71,200	-400	400	0.6%
Goods Producing	16,000	16,600	15,700	-600	300	1.9%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	6,000	6,600	6,300	-600	-300	-4.8%
Manufacturing	10,000	10,000	9,400	0	600	6.4%
Service Providing	73,900	74,000	73,400	-100	500	0.7%
Private Services Providing	55,600	55,400	55,500	200	100	0.2%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	15,800	16,000	16,500	-200	-700	-4.2%
Retail Trade	11,000	11,000	11,300	0	-300	-2.7%
Financial Activities	3,200	3,100	3,200	100	0	0.0%
Professional and Business Services	8,000	8,100	8,000	-100	0	0.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	10,500	10,500	10,300	0	200	1.9%
Government	18,300	18,600	17,900	-300	400	2.2%
Federal Government	1,400	1,400	1,400	0	0	0.0%
Total State Government	6,800	7,100	6,500	-300	300	4.6%
Total Local Government	10,100	10,100	10,000	0	100	1.0%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Nonfarm payroll jobs in Whatcom County contracted by 700 from November to December 2016. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs is up 0.9 percent or 800.

- In December 2016, goods producing industries shed 600 jobs and private sector service providers added 200. Government employment declined by 300 over the month. The deepest job losses in December were observed in the seasonally-sensitive construction industry (-600). The only industry detailed in this report that gained jobs in December was financial activities (+100).
- Altogether, Whatcom County employers added 800 jobs over the past 12 months. The largest private sector gains were attributed to hiring in manufacturing (+600) and the deepest losses and losses observed in trade transportation warehousing and utilities (-700 including retail). Government employment was up 400 over the year.

Skagit County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 6.8 percent in December 2016 (preliminary), up from 6.5 percent in November (revised). The unemployment rate last December was 7.0 percent.

- Compared to December 2015, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 1,355 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 40. Skagit County’s labor force was estimated as 58,679, having increased by 2.3 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Skagit County increased from 768 in November to 1,044. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in construction-related occupations. Altogether, 1,307 Skagit County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in December. This is up from 1,202 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 June 2016

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Dec-16	Revised Nov-16	Revised Dec-15	Change		
				Nov-16 Dec-16	Dec-15 Dec-16	Dec-15 Dec-16
Total Nonfarm	48,500	49,000	48,100	-500	400	0.8%
Total Private	36,700	37,000	36,800	-300	-100	-0.3%
Goods Producing	9,100	9,300	9,200	-200	-100	-1.1%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	3,600	3,800	3,400	-200	200	5.9%
Manufacturing	5,500	5,500	5,800	0	-300	-5.2%
Service Providing	39,400	39,700	38,900	-300	500	1.3%
Private Services Providing	27,600	27,700	27,600	-100	0	0.0%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	9,900	9,900	10,100	0	-200	-2.0%
Retail Trade	6,900	7,000	7,200	-100	-300	-4.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	5,300	5,300	4,800	0	500	10.4%
Government	11,800	12,000	11,300	-200	500	4.4%
Federal Government	500	500	400	0	100	25.0%
State Government	1,300	1,500	1,400	-200	-100	-7.1%
Local Government	10,000	10,000	9,500	0	500	5.3%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

In December, Skagit County nonfarm payrolls contracted by 500. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 400 or 0.8 percent.

- In December, all industries detailed in this report either shed net jobs or remained unchanged. The deepest one month losses were observed in the highly-seasonal construction industry and government (-200 each).
- Over the year, total nonfarm employment expanded by 400 or 0.8 percent. Employment gains were observed in leisure and hospitality and government (+500 each), and construction. Year over year losses were observed in manufacturing (-300) and trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities (including retail trade) down 200.

Island County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 5.8 percent (preliminary) in December. This is up from 5.7 percent (revised) in November. The unemployment rate in December 2015 was 6.2 percent.

- Compared to December 2015, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 1,055 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 64. Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 33,483, having increased by 2.7 percent over the year.

- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Island County increased from 225 in November to 303. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in construction-related occupations. Altogether, 397 Island County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in December. This is up from 339 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 June 2016

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Dec-16	Revised Nov-16	Revised Dec-15	Change		
				Nov-16 Dec-16	Dec-15 Dec-16	Dec-15 Dec-16
Total Nonfarm	16,230	16,270	15,540	-40	690	4.4%
Total Private	11,570	11,560	10,950	10	620	5.7%
Goods Producing	1,690	1,700	1,590	-10	100	6.3%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	890	900	810	-10	80	9.9%
Manufacturing	800	800	780	0	20	2.6%
Service Providing	14,540	14,570	13,950	-30	590	4.2%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,710	2,710	2,600	0	110	4.2%
Retail Trade	2,250	2,250	2,150	0	100	4.7%
Information and Financial Activities	800	810	670	-10	130	19.4%
Professional and Business Services	1,190	1,190	1,210	0	-20	-1.7%
Education and Health Services	2,160	2,150	2,090	10	70	3.3%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,240	2,250	2,090	-10	150	7.2%
Government	4,660	4,710	4,590	-50	70	1.5%
Federal Government	1,360	1,350	1,350	10	10	0.7%
State and Local Government	3,300	3,360	3,240	-60	60	1.9%
State and Local Government Education	1,450	1,500	1,430	-50	20	1.4%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County decreased by 40 in December. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs was up 4.4 percent or 690.

- From November to December, most industries shed jobs. The deepest losses came from government employers (-50). Other industries shedding jobs include construction, information and financial activities and leisure and hospitality (-10 each). Employment gains were observed in education and health services (+10).
- Year-over-year, Island County employment expanded by 690. The largest gains were attributable to hiring in leisure and hospitality (+150), and information and financial activities (+130). Professional and business services is the only industry that shed jobs over the year (-20).

San Juan County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in San Juan County rose from 4.7 percent in November (revised) to 5.3 percent (preliminary) in December. The unemployment rate 12 months earlier was 5.7 percent.

- Compared to December 2015, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 447 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 10. All together, the San Juan County labor force increased by 6.1 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in San Juan County increased from 53 in November to 56. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in food preparation and serving related occupations. Altogether, 91 San Juan County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in December. This is up from 56 in November.

San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

San Juan County

Data benchmarked through June 2016

NAICS Industry Title2	Prelim Dec-16	Revised Nov-16	Revised Dec-15	Change		
				Nov-16 Dec-16	Dec-15 Dec-16	Dec-15 Dec-16
Total Nonfarm 3	5,200	5,280	5,140	-80	60	1.2%
Total Private	4,340	4,400	4,330	-60	10	0.2%
Goods Producing	800	810	780	-10	20	2.6%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	620	630	600	-10	20	3.3%
Manufacturing	180	180	180	0	0	0.0%
Service Providing	4,400	4,470	4,360	-70	40	0.9%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	900	890	870	10	30	3.4%
Information and Financial Activities	330	320	320	10	10	3.1%
Professional and Business Services	400	400	380	0	20	5.3%
Education and Health Services	620	620	600	0	20	3.3%
Leisure and Hospitality	1,110	1,170	1,200	-60	-90	-7.5%
Government	860	880	810	-20	50	6.2%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Nonfarm payroll jobs in San Juan County contracted by 80 in December. Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was up 60 jobs or 1.2 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, employment losses were observed in most industries. Leisure and hospitality logged the deepest losses (-60).
- Over the year, employers in San Juan County collectively added 60 jobs. The largest gains were observed in government (+50) and trade transportation and utilities (+30). The deepest losses were observed in leisure and hospitality (-90).