

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 fell by 7,200 from December 2016 to January 2017.¹ BLS estimates the private sector lost 3,600 jobs during the month and the public sector lost 3,600 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for January 2016 through January 2017 indicate an increase in employment of 84,600 for the state. The private sector added 73,800 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 10,800 jobs over the year.

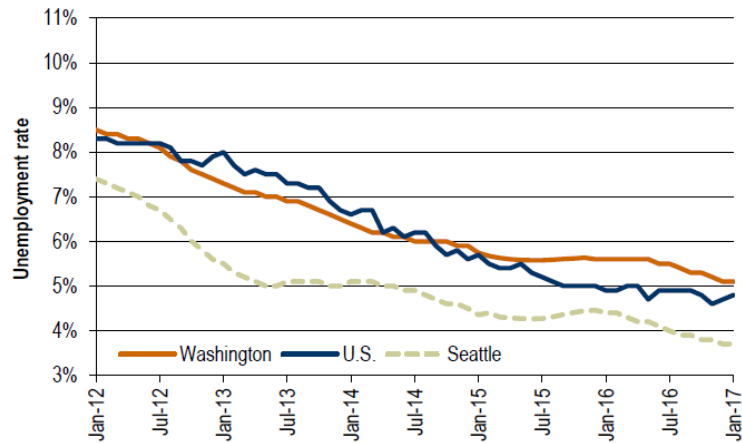
Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for January 2017 is 5.1 percent. The revised estimated December 2016 unemployment rate was at 5.1 percent. The January 2016 unemployment rate was 5.6 percent.

Unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted)

Area	(Prelim.) Jan-17	Dec-16	Jan-16	Year-to- Year Change
USA	5.1%	4.5%	5.3%	-0.2%
Washington state	5.8%	5.3%	6.2%	-0.4%
Whatcom	6.4%	5.8%	6.6%	-0.2%
Skagit	7.3%	6.7%	7.7%	-0.4%
Island	6.3%	5.7%	6.7%	-0.4%
San Juan	6.3%	5.1%	6.7%	-0.4%

BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. December’s preliminary estimated gain of 3,600 jobs was revised to a gain of 8,000 jobs.

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



Whatcom County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 6.4 percent in January 2017 (preliminary), up from 5.8 percent in December 2016 (revised). For comparison, the unemployment rate in January 2016 was 6.6 percent. In the past year the downward-trending unemployment rate has slowed in its descent.

- Compared to January 2016, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 1,046 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 204, resulting in a 0.8 percent increase in the size of the labor force and a drop in the unemployment rate. Whatcom County’s labor force was about 108,622 in January 2017.
- The increase over the month was seasonal, and is observed every year in the aftermath of holiday-related hiring and subsequent layoffs. Expect the unemployment rate to begin to drop once again in March.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Whatcom County decreased from 1,327 in December to 929. Altogether, 2,462 Whatcom County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in January; up from 1,848 in December.

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 Jan-17	Revised Dec-16	Revised Jan-16	Change		
				Dec-16 Jan-17	Jan-16 Jan-17	Jan-16 Jan-17
Total Nonfarm	90,300	92,300	89,200	-2,000	1,100	1.2%
Total Private	71,900	73,600	71,100	-1,700	800	1.1%
Goods Producing	16,300	16,300	16,100	0	200	1.2%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	6,500	6,500	6,400	0	100	1.6%
Manufacturing	9,800	9,800	9,700	0	100	1.0%
Service Providing	74,000	76,000	73,100	-2,000	900	1.2%
Private Services Providing	55,600	57,300	55,000	-1,700	600	1.1%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	16,400	16,900	16,100	-500	300	1.9%
Retail Trade	11,400	11,800	11,000	-400	400	3.6%
Financial Activities	3,300	3,300	3,200	0	100	3.1%
Professional and Business Services	7,800	8,000	7,900	-200	-100	-1.3%
Leisure and Hospitality	10,400	10,700	10,100	-300	300	3.0%
Government	18,400	18,700	18,100	-300	300	1.7%
Federal Government	1,400	1,400	1,400	0	0	0.0%
Total State Government	7,000	7,000	6,900	0	100	1.4%
Total Local Government	10,000	10,300	9,800	-300	200	2.0%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Nonfarm payroll jobs in Whatcom County contracted by 2,000 from December 2016 to January 2017. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs is up 1.2 percent or 1,100.

- In January 2017, goods producing industries collectively maintained the employment levels observed in December. Service providers shed 2,000 jobs. Government employment declined by 300 over the month. The deepest job losses in January were observed in the collection of trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities (-500), with losses specifically observed in retail trade (-400), and reflects the aftermath of holiday hiring.
- Altogether, Whatcom County employers added 1,100 jobs over the past 12 months. The largest private sector gains were attributed to hiring in retail trade (+400) and leisure and hospitality and government (+300 each). 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 7.3 percent in January 2017 (preliminary), up from 6.7 percent in December 2016(revised). The unemployment rate in January 2016 was 7.7 percent. Skagit County's unemployment rate has been on a slow but steady decline (with predictable seasonal bumps) since 2010. In the past year, the rate has more-or-less stabilized.

- Compared to January 2016, the number of people counted as 'employed' increased by 1,040 and the number of people counted as 'unemployed' or actively seeking work decreased by 163. Skagit County's labor force was estimated as 58,453, having increased by 1.5 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Skagit County decreased from 1,044 in December to 618. Altogether, 1,866 Skagit County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in January. This is up from 1,307 in December.

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 Jan-17	Revised Dec-16	Revised Jan-16	Change		
				Dec-16 Jan-17	Jan-16 Jan-17	Jan-16 Jan-17
Total Nonfarm	48,500	49,200	47,700	-700	800	1.7%
Total Private	37,100	37,800	36,300	-700	800	2.2%
Goods Producing	9,300	9,500	9,200	-200	100	1.1%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	3,700	3,800	3,400	-100	300	8.8%
Manufacturing	5,600	5,700	5,800	-100	-200	-3.4%
Service Providing	39,200	39,700	38,500	-500	700	1.8%
Private Services Providing	27,800	28,300	27,100	-500	700	2.6%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	10,200	10,600	9,700	-400	500	5.2%
Retail Trade	7,200	7,300	6,900	-100	300	4.3%
Leisure and Hospitality	5,000	5,200	4,700	-200	300	6.4%
Government	11,400	11,400	11,400	0	0	0.0%
Federal Government	400	400	400	0	0	0.0%
State Government	1,400	1,300	1,500	100	-100	-6.7%
Local Government	9,600	9,700	9,500	-100	100	1.1%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

In January 2017, Skagit County nonfarm payrolls contracted by 700. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 800 or 1.7 percent.

- In January, all industries detailed in this report either shed net jobs or remained unchanged, with the exception of state government which added 100 jobs. The deepest one month losses were observed in the collection of industries that include trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities (-400). January job losses are expected and are largely a product of seasonal employment cycles.
- Over the year, total nonfarm employment expanded by 800 or 1.7 percent, with most industries adding jobs. The largest employment gains were observed in trade transportation and warehousing (+500) - including retail trade (+300) – and in leisure and hospitality and construction (+300 each). Year over year losses were observed in manufacturing (-200) and state government (-100).

Island County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 6.3 percent (preliminary) in January 2017. This is up from 5.7 percent (revised) in December 2016. For comparison, the unemployment rate in January 2016 was 6.7 percent. The unemployment rate in Island County has been slowly but steadily declining since 2010.

- Compared to January 2016, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 1,567 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 46. Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 33,951, having increased by 4.7 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Island County decreased from 303 in December to 217. Altogether, 600 Island County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in January. This is up from 397 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 Jan-17	Revised Dec-16	Revised Jan-16	Change		
				Dec-16 Jan-17	Jan-16 Jan-17	Jan-16 Jan-17
Total Nonfarm	16,290	16,560	15,300	-270	990	6.5%
Total Private	11,450	11,710	10,680	-260	770	7.2%
Goods Producing	1,640	1,720	1,550	-80	90	5.8%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	840	920	790	-80	50	6.3%
Manufacturing	800	800	760	0	40	5.3%
Service Providing	14,650	14,840	13,750	-190	900	6.5%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,550	2,640	2,530	-90	20	0.8%
Retail Trade	2,110	2,190	2,080	-80	30	1.4%
Information and Financial Activities	830	830	640	0	190	29.7%
Professional and Business Services	1,230	1,260	1,150	-30	80	7.0%
Education and Health Services	2,120	2,110	2,090	10	30	1.4%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,310	2,380	2,010	-70	300	14.9%
Government	4,840	4,850	4,620	-10	220	4.8%
Federal Government	1,460	1,490	1,330	-30	130	9.8%
State and Local Government	3,380	3,360	3,290	20	90	2.7%
State and Local Government Education	1,530	1,500	1,490	30	40	2.7%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County decreased by 270 in January 2017. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs was up 6.5 percent or 990.

- From December 2016 to January 2017, most industries shed jobs. The deepest losses were observed in trade transportation and utilities (-90), particularly in retail trade (-80). Construction also shed 80 jobs over the month. Employment gains were observed in education and health services (+10).
- Year-over-year, Island County employment expanded by 990, with growth observed in all industry sectors detailed in this report. The largest gains were attributable to hiring in leisure and hospitality (+300), government (+220) and information and financial activities (+190).

San Juan County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in San Juan County rose from 5.1 percent in December 2016 (revised) to 6.3 percent (preliminary) in January 2017. For reference, the unemployment rate 12 months earlier was 6.7 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 January 2016, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 233 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 14. All together, the San Juan County labor force increased by 3.0 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in San Juan County decreased from 56 in December to 53. Altogether, 124 San Juan County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in January. This is up from 91 in December.

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 Jan-17	Revised Dec-16	Revised Jan-16	Change		
				Dec-16 Jan-17	Jan-16 Jan-17	Jan-16 Jan-17
Total Nonfarm	4,980	5,240	4,810	-260	170	3.5%
Total Private	4,140	4,400	3,990	-260	150	3.8%
Goods Producing	760	840	770	-80	-10	-1.3%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	600	640	630	-40	-30	-4.8%
Manufacturing	160	200	140	-40	20	14.3%
Service Providing	4,220	4,400	4,040	-180	180	4.5%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	900	930	840	-30	60	7.1%
Information and Financial Activities	310	320	300	-10	10	3.3%
Professional and Business Services	400	420	380	-20	20	5.3%
Education and Health Services	600	600	560	0	40	7.1%
Leisure and Hospitality	990	1,120	970	-130	20	2.1%
Government	840	840	820	0	20	2.4%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Nonfarm payroll jobs in San Juan County contracted by 260 in January. Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was up 170 jobs or 3.5 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 January, employment losses were observed in most industries. Leisure and hospitality logged the deepest losses (-130).
- Over the year, employers in San Juan County collectively added 170 jobs. The largest gains were observed in trade transportation and utilities (+60) and education and health services (+40). The deepest losses were observed in construction (-30).