

Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

Volume 2016, Number 1, 2

January – February
2016

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

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

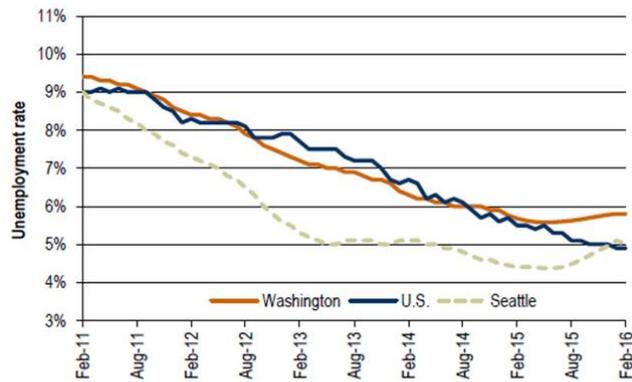
www.esd.wa.gov/employmentdata

On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington rose by 10,600 from January 2016 to February 2016.¹ BLS estimates the private sector gained 10,000 jobs during the month and the public sector gained 600 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for February 2015 through February 2016 indicate an increase in employment of 96,200 for the state. The private sector added 85,800 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 10,400 jobs over the year.

Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for February 2016 is 5.8 percent. The revised estimated January 2016 unemployment rate was also at 5.8 percent. The February 2015 unemployment rate was 5.7 percent.

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



February 2016 preliminary unemployment rates:
U.S. (preliminary) 4.9%
Washington (preliminary) 5.8%
Seattle area (preliminary) 5.0%

| Unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) | | | | |
|---|------------------|--------|--------|---------------------|
| Area | (Prelim.) Feb-16 | Jan-16 | Feb-15 | Year-to-Year Change |
| USA | 5.2% | 5.3% | 5.8% | -0.6% |
| Washington state | 6.3% | 6.5% | 6.3% | 0.0% |
| Whatcom | 6.8% | 6.8% | 6.9% | -0.1% |
| Skagit | 7.6% | 7.7% | 7.8% | -0.2% |
| Island | 6.5% | 6.7% | 7.0% | -0.5% |
| San Juan | 6.0% | 6.9% | 6.2% | -0.2% |

BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. January’s preliminary estimated gain of 12,800 jobs was revised to a gain of 14,000 jobs.

Whatcom County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 6.8 percent in January (revised) and February (preliminary) 2016. For comparison, the unemployment rate in February 2015 was 6.9 percent.

- Compared to February 2015, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 2,144 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 30, resulting in an overall increase in the total labor force. Whatcom County’s labor force was estimated as 105,452 in February 2016.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Whatcom County decreased from 1,173 in January to 1,054. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in construction-related occupations. Altogether, 2,197 Whatcom County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in February; down from 2,447 in January.

Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

| Total nonfarm employment, not seasonally adjusted, in Whatcom County (Bellingham MSA) | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| NAICS industry title (place of work) | Preliminary Feb-16 | Revised Jan -16 | Revised Feb -15 | Change | | |
| | | | | Jan-16 Feb -16 | Feb-15 Feb-16 | Feb-15 Feb- 16 % |
| Total Nonfarm | 87,500 | 87,200 | 86,200 | 300 | 1,300 | 1.5% |
| Total Private | 69,100 | 69,000 | 68,400 | 100 | 700 | 1.0% |
| Goods Producing | 15,400 | 15,300 | 15,300 | 100 | 100 | 0.7% |
| Mining, Logging, and Construction | 5,900 | 5,900 | 6,300 | 0 | -400 | -6.3% |
| Manufacturing | 9,500 | 9,400 | 9,000 | 100 | 500 | 5.6% |
| Service-Providing | 72,100 | 71,900 | 70,900 | 200 | 1,200 | 1.7% |
| Private Service Providing | 53,700 | 53,700 | 53,100 | 0 | 600 | 1.1% |
| Trade, Transportation, and Utilities | 15,700 | 15,800 | 15,900 | -100 | -200 | -1.3% |
| Retail Trade | 10,800 | 11,100 | 10,900 | -300 | -100 | -0.9% |
| Financial Activities | 3,400 | 3,400 | 3,200 | 0 | 200 | 6.3% |
| Professional and Business Services | 7,900 | 7,800 | 8,000 | 100 | -100 | -1.3% |
| Leisure and Hospitality | 9,600 | 9,500 | 9,800 | 100 | -200 | -2.0% |
| Government | 18,400 | 18,200 | 17,800 | 200 | 600 | 3.4% |
| Federal | 1,400 | 1,400 | 1,400 | 0 | 0 | |
| State government | 7,000 | 6,900 | 6,600 | 100 | 400 | 6.1% |
| Local government | 10,000 | 9,900 | 9,800 | 100 | 200 | 2.0% |
| 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 expanded by 300 from January to February 2016. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs is up 1.5 percent or 1,300.

- In February 2016, goods producing industries added a net 100 jobs and private sector service providers added 200. Government employment expanded by 200 over the month. The only industry sector that shed jobs over the month was trade transportation and utilities (losses were concentrated in retail trade), following the usual seasonal pattern.
- Altogether, Whatcom County employers added 1,300 jobs over the past 12 months. The largest private sector gains were attributed to hiring in manufacturing (+500) and financial activities (+200). Construction, trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities (including retail trade) and professional and business services reported losses over the year. Public sector employment expanded by 600.

Skagit County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County decreased from 7.7 percent in January (revised) to 7.6 percent in February (preliminary). The unemployment rate last February was 7.8 percent.

- Compared to February 2015, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 986 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 25. Skagit County’s labor force increased by an estimated 961 workers over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Skagit County increased from 711 in January to 755. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in construction-related occupations. Altogether, 1,501 Skagit County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in February. This is down from 1,713 in January.

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 Feb-16 | Revised Jan-16 | Revised Feb-15 | Change | | |
| | | | | Jan-16 Feb-16 | Feb-15 Feb-16 | Feb-15 Feb-16 % |
| Total Nonfarm | 47,800 | 47,500 | 46,700 | 300 | 1,100 | 2.4% |
| Total Private | 36,400 | 36,200 | 35,700 | 200 | 700 | 2.0% |
| Goods Producing | 9,400 | 9,300 | 8,900 | 100 | 500 | 5.6% |
| Mining, Logging, and Construction | 3,500 | 3,500 | 3,300 | 0 | 200 | 6.1% |
| Manufacturing | 5,900 | 5,800 | 5,600 | 100 | 300 | 5.4% |
| Service-Providing | 38,400 | 38,200 | 37,800 | 200 | 600 | 1.6% |
| Private Service Providing | 27,000 | 26,900 | 26,800 | 100 | 200 | 0.7% |
| Trade, Transportation, and Utilities | 9,900 | 9,900 | 9,500 | 0 | 400 | 4.2% |
| Retail Trade | 6,900 | 7,000 | 6,700 | -100 | 200 | 3.0% |
| Leisure and Hospitality | 4,800 | 4,700 | 4,500 | 100 | 300 | 6.7% |
| Government | 11,400 | 11,300 | 11,000 | 100 | 400 | 3.6% |
| Federal | 300 | 300 | 300 | 0 | 0 | |
| State government | 1,500 | 1,500 | 1,500 | 0 | 0 | |
| Local government | 9,600 | 9,500 | 9,200 | 100 | 400 | 4.3% |
| Workers in Labor Management Disputes | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |

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

In February, Skagit County nonfarm payrolls rose by 300. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 1,100 or 2.4 percent.

- Month-to-month, industry-specific gains were attributable to hiring in manufacturing, leisure and hospitality and government; losses were observed in retail trade following the holiday season.
- Over the year, total nonfarm employment expanded by 1,100 or 2.4 percent. All major industries detailed in this report posted gains with the largest gains attributable to hiring in trade transportation and utilities and government.

Island County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County dropped from 6.7 percent in January (revised) to 6.5 percent in February (preliminary). The unemployment rate in February 2015 was 7.0 percent.

- Compared to February 2015, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 1,018 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 94. Island County’s civilian labor force increased by 924 resident civilians over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Island County decreased from 199 in January to 176. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in construction-related occupations. Altogether, 411 Island County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in February. This is down from 489 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 Feb-16 | Revised Jan -16 | Revised Feb -15 | Change | | | |
| | | | | Jan-16 Feb-16 | Feb-15 Feb-16 | Feb-15 Feb-16 | Feb-15 Feb-16 |
| Total Nonfarm | 15,680 | 15,640 | 15,250 | 40 | 430 | 2.8% | |
| Total Private | 11,020 | 10,980 | 10,660 | 40 | 360 | 3.4% | |
| Goods Producing | 1,540 | 1,530 | 1,430 | 10 | 110 | 7.7% | |
| Mining, Logging, and Construction | 780 | 770 | 730 | 10 | 50 | 6.8% | |
| Manufacturing | 760 | 760 | 700 | 0 | 60 | 8.6% | |
| Service-Providing | 14,140 | 14,110 | 13,820 | 30 | 320 | 2.3% | |
| Trade, Transportation, and Utilities | 2,500 | 2,510 | 2,380 | -10 | 120 | 5.0% | |
| Retail Trade | 2,040 | 2,060 | 1,960 | -20 | 80 | 4.1% | |
| Information and Financial Activities | 740 | 740 | 740 | 0 | 0 | | |
| Professional and Business Services | 1,120 | 1,120 | 1,070 | 0 | 50 | 4.7% | |
| Education and Health Services | 2,250 | 2,230 | 2,240 | 20 | 10 | 0.4% | |
| Leisure and Hospitality | 2,150 | 2,140 | 2,080 | 10 | 70 | 3.4% | |
| Government | 4,660 | 4,660 | 4,590 | 0 | 70 | 1.5% | |
| Federal | 1,360 | 1,370 | 1,330 | -10 | 30 | 2.3% | |
| State and Local Government | 3,300 | 3,290 | 3,260 | 10 | 40 | 1.2% | |
| State and Local Government Education | 1,480 | 1,460 | 1,490 | 20 | -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 increased by 40 in February. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs was up 2.8 percent or 430.

- From January to February, gains were observed in educational and health services, construction and leisure and hospitality. Losses were observed in trade transportation and utilities (specifically in retail trade) following the holiday hiring season.
- Year-over-year, Island County employment expanded by 430. Almost all industries posted employment gains, except for information and financial activities which remained unchanged over the year. The largest gains were attributable to hiring in trade, transportation and utilities (120), with 80 of the new jobs in Island County’s retail sector.

San Juan County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in San Juan County decreased from 6.9 percent (revised) in January to 6.0 percent (preliminary) in February. The unemployment rate observed in February 2015 was 6.2 percent.

- Compared to February 2015, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 99 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 12. All together, the San Juan County labor force increased by 87 over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in San Juan County decreased from 50 in January to 43. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in construction-related occupations. Altogether, 139 San Juan County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in February. This is down from 155 in January.

San Juan County local area payroll jobs

| Total nonfarm employment, not seasonally adjusted, in San Juan County | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
| NAICS industry title (place of work) | Preliminary Feb-16 | Revised Jan-16 | Revised Feb-15 | Jan-16 Feb-16 | Change | |
| | | | | | Feb-15 Feb-16 | Feb-15 Feb-16 % |
| Total Nonfarm | 4,880 | 4,680 | 4,840 | 200 | 40 | 0.8% |
| Total Private | 4,070 | 3,880 | 4,070 | 190 | 0 | |
| Goods Producing | 730 | 700 | 720 | 30 | 10 | 1.4% |
| Mining, Logging, and Construction | 550 | 540 | 570 | 10 | -20 | -3.5% |
| Manufacturing | 180 | 160 | 150 | 20 | 30 | 20.0% |
| Service-Providing | 4,150 | 3,980 | 4,120 | 170 | 30 | 0.7% |
| Trade, Transportation, and Utilities | 850 | 860 | 830 | -10 | 20 | 2.4% |
| Information and Financial Activities | 370 | 370 | 340 | 0 | 30 | 8.8% |
| Professional and Business Services | 350 | 340 | 330 | 10 | 20 | 6.1% |
| Education and Health Services | 560 | 560 | 620 | 0 | -60 | -9.7% |
| Leisure and Hospitality | 1,010 | 860 | 1,020 | 150 | -10 | -1.0% |
| Government | 810 | 800 | 770 | 10 | 40 | 5.2% |
| 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 expanded by 200 in February. Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was up 40 jobs or 0.8 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 in the winter and begin to return with the sun. Most industries expanded or remained unchanged in February. The largest gains were in leisure and hospitality (up 150). Trade transportation and utilities (which includes retail) shed 10 jobs in the aftermath of holiday hiring.
- Over the year, employers in San Juan County collectively created 40 jobs. The largest gains were observed in government (+40) manufacturing and information and financial activities (+30 each). Construction and leisure and hospitality each shed jobs over the year.