

Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

Volume 2015, Number 3

March 2015

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 10,500 from February 2015 to March 2015.

BLS estimates the private sector gained 10,000 jobs during the month and the public sector gained 500 jobs.

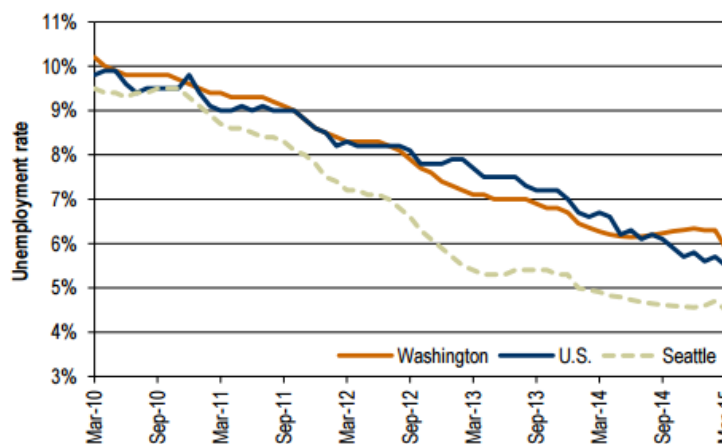
On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for March 2014 through March 2015

indicate an increase in employment of 100,900 for the state. The private sector added 88,900 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 12,000 jobs over the year.

Washington's preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for March 2015 is 5.9 percent. The revised estimated February 2015 unemployment rate was at 6.3 percent. The March 2014 unemployment rate was 6.3 percent.

Unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted)				
Area	(Prelim.) Mar-15	Feb-15	Mar-14	Year-to- Year Change
USA	5.6%	5.8%	6.8%	-1.2%
Washington state	5.7%	6.8%	6.8%	-1.1%
Whatcom	5.9%	7.1%	7.2%	-1.3%
Skagit	7.0%	8.2%	7.9%	-0.9%
Island	6.1%	7.4%	7.2%	-1.1%
San Juan	5.3%	6.5%	6.2%	-0.9%

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



BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses.

Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. February's preliminary estimated loss of 600 jobs was revised to a gain of 2,600 jobs.

Whatcom County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County dropped from 7.1 percent in February (revised) to 5.9 percent in March (preliminary). The unemployment rate in March 2014 was 7.2 percent.

- Compared to March 2014, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 4,170 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 1,210. Whatcom County’s labor force expanded by 2,960 over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Whatcom County decreased from 1,061 in February to 966. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in construction-related occupations. Altogether, 1,997 Whatcom County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in March; down from 2,151 the previous month.

Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted
Bellingham Metropolitan Statistical Area (Whatcom County)
 Data benchmarked through September 2014

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Mar-15	Revised Feb-15	Revised Mar-14	Change		
				Feb-15 Mar-15	Mar-14 Mar-15	Mar-14 Mar-15
Total Nonfarm	89,300	88,300	85,200	1,000	4,100	4.8%
Total Private	71,200	70,200	68,200	1,000	3,000	4.4%
Goods Producing	16,000	15,200	15,000	800	1,000	6.7%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	6,600	5,900	6,000	700	600	10.0%
Manufacturing	9,400	9,300	9,000	100	400	4.4%
Service Providing	73,300	73,100	70,200	200	3,100	4.4%
Private Services Providing	55,200	55,000	53,200	200	2,000	3.8%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	16,600	16,500	15,800	100	800	5.1%
Retail Trade	11,300	11,100	10,900	200	400	3.7%
Financial Activities	3,600	3,600	3,400	0	200	5.9%
Professional and Business Services	7,900	7,700	7,400	200	500	6.8%
Leisure and Hospitality	9,400	9,300	9,700	100	-300	-3.1%
Government	18,100	18,100	17,000	0	1,100	6.5%
Federal Government	1,400	1,400	1,300	0	100	7.7%
Total State Government	6,600	6,600	5,900	0	700	11.9%
Total Local Government	10,100	10,100	9,800	0	300	3.1%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Nonfarm payroll jobs in Whatcom County expanded by 1,000 from February to March 2015. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs is up 4.8 percent or 4,100.

- In March 2015, all major sectors in this report either expanded employment or remained at February levels. Construction grew more than any other industry in March, adding 700 jobs.
- Private sector employers collectively reported a gain of 3,000 jobs over the year. The largest private sector gains were attributed to hiring in trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities (+800) construction (+600) and professional and business services (+500). The only

major industry group reporting losses over the year was leisure and hospitality (-300). Public sector employment expanded by 1,100 over the year.

Skagit County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County declined from 8.2 percent in February (revised) to 7.0 percent (preliminary) in March 2015. The unemployment rate last March was 7.9 percent.

- Compared to March 2014, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 500 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 520. Skagit County’s labor force declined by an estimated 20 over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Skagit County decreased from 748 in February to 689. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in construction-related occupations. Altogether, 1,418 Skagit County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in March. This is down from 1,451 the previous month.

Skagit County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted
Mount Vernon-Anacortes Metropolitan Statistical Area (Skagit County)
 Data benchmarked through September 2014

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Mar-15	Revised Feb-15	Revised Mar-14	Change		
				Feb-15 Mar-15	Mar-14 Mar-15	Mar-14 Mar-15
Total Nonfarm	46,700	47,000	47,000	-300	-300	-0.6%
Total Private	35,400	35,900	35,800	-500	-400	-1.1%
Goods Producing	9,500	9,500	9,100	0	400	4.4%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	3,500	3,500	3,300	0	200	6.1%
Manufacturing	6,000	6,000	5,800	0	200	3.4%
Service Providing	37,200	37,500	37,900	-300	-700	-1.8%
Private Services Providing	25,900	26,400	26,700	-500	-800	-3.0%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	9,700	10,000	9,400	-300	300	3.2%
Retail Trade	6,900	7,000	6,700	-100	200	3.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	4,900	4,800	4,500	100	400	8.9%
Government	11,300	11,100	11,200	200	100	0.9%
Federal Government	300	300	300	0	0	0.0%
State Government	1,600	1,500	1,500	100	100	6.7%
Local Government	9,400	9,300	9,400	100	0	0.0%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

In March, Skagit County nonfarm payrolls dropped by 300. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs also dropped by 300 or 0.6 percent.

- Month-to-month, trade transportation warehousing and utilities (which includes retail trade) shed 300 jobs. Gains were observed in government (+200) and leisure and hospitality (+100). Employment in all other major industries captured in this report held steady at February levels.

- Over the year, total nonfarm employment declined by 300 or 0.6 percent, however each major industry detailed in the table reported employment gains. The largest gains were attributed to leisure and hospitality (+400) and trade transportation warehousing and utilities (+300). To understand where the losses occurred, read between the lines. Losses were likely observed in other industries such as education and health services, financial services and information.

Island County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County decreased from 7.4 percent (revised) in February to 6.1 percent in March (preliminary). The unemployment rate in March 2014 was 7.2 percent.

- Compared to March 2014, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 500 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 330. Island County’s civilian labor force increased by 170 residents over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Island County decreased from 182 in February to 178. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in construction-related occupations. Altogether, 463 Island County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in March. This is down from 501 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 2014

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Mar-15	Revised Feb-15	Revised Mar-14	Change		
				Feb-15 Mar-15	Mar-14 Mar-15	Mar-14 Mar-15
Total Nonfarm	15,550	15,450	15,370	100	180	1.2%
Total Private	10,950	10,870	10,840	80	110	1.0%
Goods Producing	1,290	1,270	1,340	20	-50	-3.7%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	650	630	660	20	-10	-1.5%
Manufacturing	640	640	680	0	-40	-5.9%
Service Providing	14,260	14,180	14,030	80	230	1.6%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,460	2,440	2,470	20	-10	-0.4%
Retail Trade	1,990	1,980	2,040	10	-50	-2.5%
Information and Financial Activities	780	780	790	0	-10	-1.3%
Professional and Business Services	1,140	1,140	1,240	0	-100	-8.1%
Education and Health Services	2,330	2,310	2,270	20	60	2.6%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,280	2,260	2,070	20	210	10.1%
Government	4,600	4,580	4,530	20	70	1.5%
Federal Government	1,310	1,320	1,360	-10	-50	-3.7%
State and Local Government	3,290	3,260	3,170	30	120	3.8%
State and Local Government Education	1,540	1,520	1,440	20	100	6.9%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County increased by 100 in March. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs was up 1.2 percent or 180.

- From February to March, all major industries detailed in this report either added jobs or maintained February levels of employment. The only exception was the federal government which shed 10 jobs.
- Year-over-year, Island County added 180 jobs. The largest gains were observed in leisure and hospitality (210), government (70) and education and health services (60). The deepest losses were from professional and business services (-100) retail trade (-50) and manufacturing (-40).

San Juan County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in San Juan County decreased from 6.5 percent (revised) in February to 5.3 percent (preliminary) in March. The unemployment rate observed in March 2014 was 6.2 percent.

- Compared to March 2014, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 240 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 50. All together, the San Juan County labor force increased by 190 over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in San Juan County increased from 36 in February to 45. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in food preparation and serving related occupations. Altogether, 118 San Juan County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in March. This is down from 145 the previous month.

San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

San Juan County

Data benchmarked through September 2014

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Mar-15	Revised Feb-15	Revised Mar-14	Change		
				Feb-15 Mar-15	Mar-14 Mar-15	Mar-14 Mar-15
Total Nonfarm	5,070	5,000	4,850	70	220	4.5%
Total Private	4,220	4,140	4,040	80	180	4.5%
Goods Producing	710	710	750	0	-40	-5.3%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	520	520	580	0	-60	-10.3%
Manufacturing	190	190	170	0	20	11.8%
Service Providing	4,360	4,290	4,100	70	260	6.3%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	830	820	810	10	20	2.5%
Information and Financial Activities	330	330	310	0	20	6.5%
Professional and Business Services	370	360	360	10	10	2.8%
Education and Health Services	620	620	590	0	30	5.1%
Leisure and Hospitality	1,140	1,090	1,020	50	120	11.8%
Government	850	860	810	-10	40	4.9%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Nonfarm payroll jobs in San Juan County in March expanded by 70. Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was up 220 jobs or 4.5 percent.

- San Juan County has a highly-seasonal economy, due to its orientation toward tourism. Large downward shifts in employment are characteristic of autumn and winter months, with growth during the spring and summer months. The largest month-to-month shift in March was a gain of 50 jobs in leisure and hospitality.
- Over the year, San Juan County added 220 jobs. Leisure and hospitality was up 120 over the year (11.8 percent over last year). All major industries added jobs over the year, except for construction which shed 60.