

# Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

Volume 2016, Number 3

March 2016

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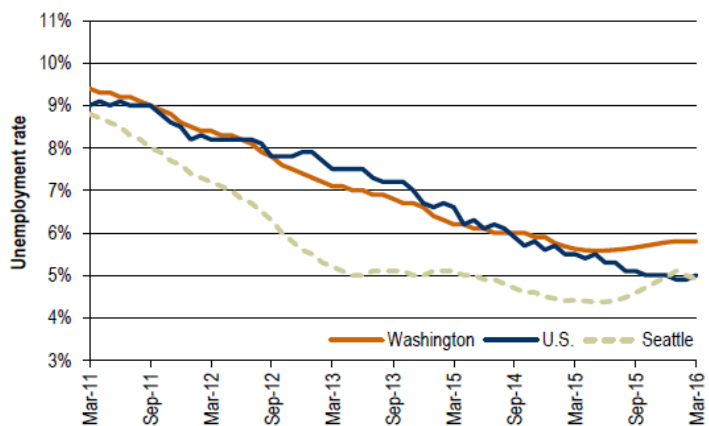
[www.esd.wa.gov/employmentdata](http://www.esd.wa.gov/employmentdata)

On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington rose by 9,000 from February 2016 to March 2016.<sup>1</sup> BLS estimates the private sector gained 8,400 jobs during the month and the public sector gained 600 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for March 2015 through March 2016 indicate an increase in employment of 98,200 for the state.

The private sector added 87,600 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 10,600 jobs over the year.

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



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

unemployment rate was 5.6 percent.

| Unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) |                     |        |        |                            |
|---|---------------------|--------|--------|----------------------------|
| Area  | (Prelim.)<br>Mar-16 | Feb-16 | Mar-15 | Year-to-<br>Year<br>Change |
| USA   | 5.1%                | 5.2%   | 5.6%   | -0.5%                      |
| Washington state                            | 6.0%                | 6.3%   | 5.8%   | 0.2%                       |
| Whatcom                                     | 6.4%                | 6.7%   | 6.0%   | 0.4%                       |
| Skagit                                      | 7.2%                | 7.6%   | 7.0%   | 0.2%                       |
| Island                                      | 6.2%                | 6.5%   | 6.1%   | 0.1%                       |
| San Juan                                    | 5.4%                | 6.0%   | 5.5%   | -0.1%                      |

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 gain of 10,600 jobs was revised to a gain of 13,400 jobs.

## Whatcom County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 6.4 percent in March 2016 (preliminary), down from 6.7 percent in February (revised). For comparison, the unemployment rate in March 2015 was 6.0 percent.

- Compared to March 2015, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 2,860 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 652, resulting in an overall increase in the total labor force. Whatcom County’s labor force was estimated as 106,409 in March 2016.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Whatcom County decreased from 1,013 in February to 885. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in construction-related occupations. Altogether, 2,000 Whatcom County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in March; down from 2,179 in February.

### Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

| Total nonfarm employment, not seasonally adjusted, in<br>Whatcom County (Bellingham MSA) |                       |                    |                   |                  |                  |                    |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| NAICS industry title<br>(place of work)  | Preliminary<br>Mar-16 | Revised Feb<br>-16 | Revised<br>Mar-15 | Change           |                  |                    |
|  |                       |                    |                   | Feb-16<br>Mar-16 | Mar-15<br>Mar-16 | Mar-15<br>Mar-16 % |
| Total Nonfarm  | 88,900                | 87,800             | 86,800            | 1,100            | 2,100            | 2.4%               |
| Total Private  | 70,100                | 69,300             | 68,800            | 800              | 1,300            | 1.9%               |
| Goods Producing  | 15,900                | 15,500             | 15,600            | 400              | 300              | 1.9%               |
| Mining, Logging, and Construction  | 6,400                 | 6,100              | 6,500             | 300              | -100             | -1.5%              |
| Manufacturing  | 9,500                 | 9,400              | 9,100             | 100              | 400              | 4.4%               |
| Service-Providing  | 73,000                | 72,300             | 71,200            | 700              | 1,800            | 2.5%               |
| Private Service Providing  | 54,200                | 53,800             | 53,200            | 400              | 1,000            | 1.9%               |
| Trade, Transportation, and Utilities   | 15,900                | 15,700             | 15,900            | 200              | 0                |                    |
| Retail Trade   | 10,900                | 10,800             | 11,000            | 100              | -100             | -0.9%              |
| Financial Activities   | 3,400                 | 3,400              | 3,200             | 0                | 200              | 6.3%               |
| Professional and Business Services   | 8,000                 | 7,900              | 8,000             | 100              | 0                |                    |
| Leisure and Hospitality  | 9,700                 | 9,600              | 9,800             | 100              | -100             | -1.0%              |
| Government   | 18,800                | 18,500             | 18,000            | 300              | 800              | 4.4%               |
| Federal  | 1,400                 | 1,400              | 1,300             | 0                | 100              | 7.7%               |
| State government   | 7,300                 | 7,100              | 6,800             | 200              | 500              | 7.4%               |
| Local government   | 10,100                | 10,000             | 9,900             | 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 1,100 from February to March 2016. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs is up 2.4 percent or 2,100.

- In March 2016, goods producing industries added a net 400 jobs and private sector service providers added 400. Government employment expanded by 300 over the month. The largest industry gains in March were observed in construction.
- Altogether, Whatcom County employers added 2,100 jobs over the past 12 months. The largest private sector gains were attributed to hiring in manufacturing (+400) and financial

activities (+200). Construction, retail trade and leisure and hospitality reported losses over the year. Public sector employment expanded by 800.

## Skagit County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County decreased from 7.6 percent in February (revised) to 7.2 percent in March (preliminary). The unemployment rate last March was 7.0 percent.

- Compared to March 2015, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 1,177 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 217. Skagit County’s labor force increased by an estimated 1,394 workers over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Skagit County decreased from 723 in February to 664. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in construction-related occupations. Altogether, 1,387 Skagit County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in March. This is down from 1,495 in February.

### Skagit County local area payroll jobs

| Total nonfarm employment, not seasonally adjusted, in Skagit County (Mt. Vernon-Anacortes MSA) |                       |                    |                   |                  |                  |                    |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| NAICS industry title<br>(place of work)  | Preliminary<br>Mar-16 | Revised Feb<br>-16 | Revised<br>Mar-15 | Change           |                  |                    |
|  |                       |                    |                   | Feb-16<br>Mar-16 | Mar-15<br>Mar-16 | Mar-15<br>Mar-16 % |
| Total Nonfarm  | 48,300                | 47,900             | 47,300            | 400              | 1,000            | 2.1%               |
| Total Private  | 36,900                | 36,500             | 36,200            | 400              | 700              | 1.9%               |
| Goods Producing  | 9,500                 | 9,400              | 9,000             | 100              | 500              | 5.6%               |
| Mining, Logging, and Construction  | 3,600                 | 3,500              | 3,400             | 100              | 200              | 5.9%               |
| Manufacturing  | 5,900                 | 5,900              | 5,600             | 0                | 300              | 5.4%               |
| Service-Providing  | 38,800                | 38,500             | 38,300            | 300              | 500              | 1.3%               |
| Private Service Providing  | 27,400                | 27,100             | 27,200            | 300              | 200              | 0.7%               |
| Trade, Transportation, and Utilities   | 10,100                | 9,800              | 9,700             | 300              | 400              | 4.1%               |
| Retail Trade   | 6,900                 | 6,700              | 6,800             | 200              | 100              | 1.5%               |
| Leisure and Hospitality  | 4,900                 | 4,800              | 4,600             | 100              | 300              | 6.5%               |
| Government   | 11,400                | 11,400             | 11,100            | 0                | 300              | 2.7%               |
| Federal  | 300                   | 300                | 300               | 0                | 0                |                    |
| State government   | 1,500                 | 1,500              | 1,500             | 0                | 0                |                    |
| Local government   | 9,600                 | 9,600              | 9,300             | 0                | 300              | 3.2%               |
| Workers in Labor Management Disputes   | 0                     | 0                  | 0                 | 0                | 0                |                    |

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

In March, Skagit County nonfarm payrolls rose by 400. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 1,000 or 2.1 percent.

- Month-to-month, industry-specific gains were attributable to hiring in trade transportation and utilities (including retail trade), construction and leisure and hospitality.
- Over the year, total nonfarm employment expanded by 1,000 or 2.1 percent. All major industries detailed in this report posted gains with the largest gains attributable to hiring in trade transportation and utilities, leisure and hospitality, government and construction.

# Island County

## Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County dropped from 6.5 percent in February (revised) to 6.2 percent in March (preliminary). The unemployment rate in March 2015 was 6.1 percent.

- Compared to March 2015, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 837 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 87. Island County’s civilian labor force increased by 924 resident civilians over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Island County increased from 192 in February to 200. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in construction-related occupations. Altogether, 397 Island County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in March. This is down from 408 the previous month.

## Island County local area payroll jobs

| Total nonfarm employment, not seasonally adjusted, in<br>Island County (Oak Harbor MSA) |                       |                    |                   |                  |                  |                    |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| NAICS industry title<br>(place of work)   | Preliminary<br>Mar-16 | Revised Feb<br>-16 | Revised<br>Mar-15 | Change           |                  |                    |
|   |                       |                    |                   | Feb-16<br>Mar-16 | Mar-15<br>Mar-16 | Mar-15<br>Mar-16 % |
| Total Nonfarm   | 15,790                | 15,680             | 15,470            | 110              | 320              | 2.1%               |
| Total Private   | 11,130                | 11,020             | 10,870            | 110              | 260              | 2.4%               |
| Goods Producing   | 1,570                 | 1,540              | 1,460             | 30               | 110              | 7.5%               |
| Mining, Logging, and Construction   | 810                   | 780                | 750               | 30               | 60               | 8.0%               |
| Manufacturing   | 760                   | 760                | 710               | 0                | 50               | 7.0%               |
| Service-Providing   | 14,220                | 14,140             | 14,010            | 80               | 210              | 1.5%               |
| Trade, Transportation, and Utilities  | 2,540                 | 2,510              | 2,440             | 30               | 100              | 4.1%               |
| Retail Trade  | 2,090                 | 2,050              | 2,020             | 40               | 70               | 3.5%               |
| Information and Financial Activities  | 740                   | 740                | 760               | 0                | -20              | -2.6%              |
| Professional and Business Services  | 1,120                 | 1,120              | 1,100             | 0                | 20               | 1.8%               |
| Education and Health Services   | 2,260                 | 2,240              | 2,280             | 20               | -20              | -0.9%              |
| Leisure and Hospitality   | 2,180                 | 2,150              | 2,130             | 30               | 50               | 2.3%               |
| Government  | 4,660                 | 4,660              | 4,600             | 0                | 60               | 1.3%               |
| Federal   | 1,360                 | 1,360              | 1,320             | 0                | 40               | 3.0%               |
| State and Local Government  | 3,300                 | 3,300              | 3,280             | 0                | 20               | 0.6%               |
| State and Local Government Education  | 1,460                 | 1,480              | 1,500             | -20              | -40              | -2.7%              |
| 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 110 in March. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs was up 2.1 percent or 320.

- From February to March, gains were observed in a number of industries. No major industry sectors reported employment losses over the month.
- Year-over-year, Island County employment expanded by 320. Almost all industries posted employment gains, with the exception of information and financial activities and education and health services which each shed 20. The largest gains were attributable to hiring in retail trade (70).

## San Juan County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in San Juan County decreased from 6.0 percent (revised) in February to 5.4 percent (preliminary) in March. The unemployment rate observed in March 2015 was 5.5 percent.

- Compared to March 2015, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 56 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 1. All together, the San Juan County labor force increased by 57 over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in San Juan County decreased from 41 in February to 25. The largest number of new claims was filed by persons in food preparation and serving-related occupations. Altogether, 104 San Juan County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in March. This is down from 139 in February.

### San Juan County local area payroll jobs

| Total nonfarm employment, not seasonally adjusted, in<br>San Juan County |                       |                    |                   |                  |                  |                    |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| NAICS industry title<br>(place of work)                                  | Preliminary<br>Mar-16 | Revised Feb<br>-16 | Revised<br>Mar-15 | Change           |                  |                    |
|  |                       |                    |                   | Feb-16<br>Mar-16 | Mar-15<br>Mar-16 | Mar-15<br>Mar-16 % |
| Total Nonfarm  | 4,920                 | 4,870              | 4,910             | 50               | 10               | 0.2%               |
| Total Private  | 4,120                 | 4,070              | 4,130             | 50               | -10              | -0.2%              |
| Goods Producing  | 740                   | 730                | 730               | 10               | 10               | 1.4%               |
| Mining, Logging, and Construction  | 560                   | 550                | 570               | 10               | -10              | -1.8%              |
| Manufacturing  | 180                   | 180                | 160               | 0                | 20               | 12.5%              |
| Service-Providing  | 4,180                 | 4,140              | 4,180             | 40               | 0                |                    |
| Trade, Transportation, and Utilities                                     | 870                   | 850                | 850               | 20               | 20               | 2.4%               |
| Information and Financial Activities                                     | 380                   | 370                | 330               | 10               | 50               | 15.2%              |
| Professional and Business Services                                       | 360                   | 350                | 340               | 10               | 20               | 5.9%               |
| Education and Health Services  | 550                   | 560                | 610               | -10              | -60              | -9.8%              |
| Leisure and Hospitality  | 1,040                 | 1,010              | 1,070             | 30               | -30              | -2.8%              |
| Government   | 800                   | 800                | 780               | 0                | 20               | 2.6%               |
| 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 50 in March. Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was up 10 jobs or 0.2 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 in March. The largest gains were in leisure and hospitality (up 30). Education and health services shed 10 jobs over the month.
- Over the year, employers in San Juan County collectively created 10 jobs. The largest gains were observed in information and financial activities (+50). The deepest losses were observed in education and health services (-60).