

Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

Volume 2020, Number 1

January 2020

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

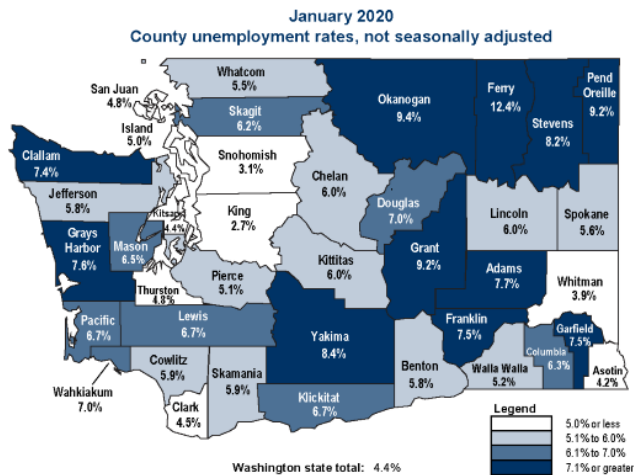
Phone: (425)258-6315 avancesherman@esd.wa.gov

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 6,800 in January 2020.¹ BLS estimates the private sector gained 5,700 jobs during the month and the public sector gained 1,100 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for January 2019 through January 2020 indicate an increase in employment of 79,400 for the state. The private sector added 74,000 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 5,400 jobs over the year.

Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for January 2020 is 3.9 percent. The revised estimated December 2019 unemployment rate is at 4.3 percent. The January 2019 unemployment rate was 4.5 percent.



Unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted)

Area	(Prelim.) Jan-20	Dec-19	Jan-19	Year-to-Year Change
USA	4.0%	3.4%	4.4%	-0.4%
Washington state	4.4%	3.9%	5.3%	-0.9%
Northwest Workforce Development Area	5.6%	4.9%	5.8%	-0.2%
Whatcom County	5.5%	4.8%	5.5%	0.0%
Skagit County	6.2%	5.4%	6.3%	-0.1%
Island County	5.0%	4.7%	5.9%	-0.9%
San Juan County	4.8%	3.7%	5.3%	-0.5%

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 10,900 jobs was revised to a gain of 12,300 jobs.

Whatcom County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 5.5 percent in January 2020 (preliminary), up from 4.8 percent reported in December 2019(revised). The unemployment rate in January 2020 was 5.5 percent.

- Compared to 12 months ago, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 3,222 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 268, nudging the unemployment rate down over the year. The labor force increased by 3.0 percent. Whatcom County’s labor force was estimated at 118,434 in January 2020.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Whatcom County increased from 1,227 in December to 1,361. Altogether, 2,545 Whatcom County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in January; up from 2,074 in December.

Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

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

Data benchmarked through September 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Jan-20	Revised Dec-19	Revised Jan-19	Change		
				Dec-19 Jan-20	Jan-19 Jan-20	Jan-19 Jan-20
Total Nonfarm	95,800	96,200	94,900	-400	900	0.9%
Total Private	76,500	77,000	76,200	-500	300	0.4%
Goods Producing	18,100	18,200	18,700	-100	-600	-3.2%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	7,600	7,600	8,100	0	-500	-6.2%
Manufacturing	10,500	10,600	10,600	-100	-100	-0.9%
Service Providing	77,700	78,000	76,200	-300	1,500	2.0%
Private Services Providing	58,400	58,800	57,500	-400	900	1.6%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	16,400	17,000	16,400	-600	0	0.0%
Retail Trade	11,000	11,500	11,100	-500	-100	-0.9%
Financial Activities	4,000	4,000	3,800	0	200	5.3%
Professional and Business Services	8,400	8,500	8,100	-100	300	3.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	10,500	10,600	10,400	-100	100	1.0%
Government	19,300	19,200	18,700	100	600	3.2%
Federal Government	1,500	1,500	1,400	0	100	7.1%
Total State Government	6,900	6,600	7,000	300	-100	-1.4%
Total Local Government	10,900	11,100	10,300	-200	600	5.8%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Total nonfarm payroll in Whatcom County (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by 400 from December 2019 to January 2020. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs increased by 900.

- In January, net employment declined; the only industry reporting job expansion was government (+100). The deepest one-month losses were observed in trade, transportation and warehousing (-600), which includes a seasonal decline in retail (-500).
- Over the year, the largest increases detailed in this report were observed in government (+600), although it is worth noting that private service providing industries collectively added 900 jobs. The deepest losses came from construction (-500).

Skagit County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 6.2 percent in January 2020 (preliminary), up from 5.4 percent in December 2019 (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 6.3 percent.

- Compared to January 2019, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 2,622 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ increased by 105. Skagit County’s resident labor force was estimated at 63,960, increasing by 4.5 percent over the year.
- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in Skagit County increased from 848 in December to 924 in January. Altogether, 1,701 Skagit County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in January; up from 1,427 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 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Jan-20	Revised Dec-19	Revised Jan-19	Change		
				Dec-19 Jan-20	Jan-19 Jan-20	Jan-19 Jan-20
Total Nonfarm	51,700	52,500	51,000	-800	700	1.4%
Total Private	39,600	40,400	39,300	-800	300	0.8%
Goods Producing	10,300	10,700	10,800	-400	-500	-4.6%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	4,600	4,900	4,700	-300	-100	-2.1%
Manufacturing	5,700	5,800	6,100	-100	-400	-6.6%
Service Providing	41,400	41,800	40,200	-400	1,200	3.0%
Private Services Providing	29,300	29,700	28,500	-400	800	2.8%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	10,400	10,500	9,800	-100	600	6.1%
Retail Trade	7,400	7,500	7,100	-100	300	4.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	5,300	5,400	4,900	-100	400	8.2%
Government	12,100	12,100	11,700	0	400	3.4%
Federal Government	300	400	300	-100	0	0.0%
State Government	1,500	1,300	1,400	200	100	7.1%
Local Government	10,300	10,400	10,000	-100	300	3.0%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Total nonfarm employment in Skagit County decreased by 800 from December 2019 to January 2020. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 700 or 1.4 percent.

- Over the month, losses were concentrated in the private sector. The deepest losses were observed in construction (-300) and the only industry not reporting losses was government (no change over the month).
- Over the year, losses were concentrated in goods providing industries. Manufacturing had the deepest losses (-400); the largest net increase was observed in trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities (+600).

Island County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 5.0 percent (preliminary) in January 2020. This is up from 4.7 percent reported in December 2019 (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 5.9 percent.

- Compared to January 2019, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 2,267 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 191. Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 37,483, an increase of 5.9 percent over the year.
- There were 288 initial claims for unemployment benefits in Island County in January, up from 202 in December. Altogether, 490 Island County residents collected unemployment insurance benefits in January. This is up from 446 in December.

Island County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted
Oak Harbor Micropolitan Statistical Area (Island County)

Data benchmarked through September 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Jan-20	Revised Dec-19	Revised Jan-19	Change		
				Dec-19 Jan-20	Jan-19 Jan-20	Jan-19 Jan-20
Total Nonfarm	17,510	17,400	16,660	110	850	5.1%
Total Private	12,720	12,630	11,960	90	760	6.4%
Goods Producing	2,020	2,010	1,850	10	170	9.2%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	1,180	1,160	1,090	20	90	8.3%
Manufacturing	840	850	760	-10	80	10.5%
Service Providing	15,490	15,390	14,810	100	680	4.6%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,660	2,700	2,640	-40	20	0.8%
Retail Trade	2,020	2,060	2,070	-40	-50	-2.4%
Information and Financial Activities	820	820	760	0	60	7.9%
Professional and Business Services	1,360	1,320	1,220	40	140	11.5%
Education and Health Services	2,480	2,500	2,350	-20	130	5.5%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,530	2,420	2,320	110	210	9.1%
Government	4,790	4,770	4,700	20	90	1.9%
Federal Government	1,330	1,340	1,310	-10	20	1.5%
State and Local Government	3,460	3,430	3,390	30	70	2.1%
State and Local Government Education	1,630	1,610	1,570	20	60	3.8%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Total nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County expanded by 110 from December 2019 to January 2020 on a not seasonally adjusted basis. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 850.

- From December to January, four major industries detailed in this report expanded and three contracted. The largest increases were attributable to hiring by businesses in leisure and hospitality (+110). The deepest losses were in observed in trade, transportation and utilities – an industry that includes retail trade (-40).
- Year-over-year, all major industries added jobs, although retail trade decreased by 50. The largest gains were attributable to hiring by employers in leisure and hospitality (+210).

Note that employment statistics for Island County do not include military employment.

San Juan County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in San Juan County increased from 3.7 percent in December (revised) to 4.8 percent in January (preliminary). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 5.3 percent.

- Compared to January 2019, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 701 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 1.

Altogether, the San Juan County labor force consisted of an estimated 8,418 resident workers and expanded by 9.1 percent over the year.

- Initial claims for unemployment benefits in San Juan County totaled 72 in January, down from 75 initial claims filed in December. Altogether, 123 San Juan County residents received unemployment insurance benefits in January. This is up from 87 in December.

San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

San Juan County

Data benchmarked through June 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Jan-20	Revised Dec-19	Revised Jan-19	Change		
				Dec-19 Jan-20	Jan-19 Jan-20	Jan-19 Jan-20
Total Nonfarm	5,490	5,510	5,120	-20	370	7.2%
Total Private	4,680	4,710	4,350	-30	330	7.6%
Goods Producing	970	1,010	880	-40	90	10.2%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	750	790	700	-40	50	7.1%
Manufacturing	220	220	180	0	40	22.2%
Service Providing	4,520	4,500	4,240	20	280	6.6%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	1,080	1,050	930	30	150	16.1%
Information and Financial Activities	380	370	320	10	60	18.8%
Professional and Business Services	440	440	370	0	70	18.9%
Education and Health Services	630	630	610	0	20	3.3%
Leisure and Hospitality	970	1,000	1,050	-30	-80	-7.6%
Government	810	800	770	10	40	5.2%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

Net nonfarm payroll in San Juan County decreased over the month (-20). Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was up 370 or 7.2 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 January, the largest increases were observed in trade, transportation and utilities (+30). The deepest one-month losses were observed in construction (-40).
- Over the year, there was a net employment gain, with industries reporting 12-month gains. The largest one-year gains were observed in trade, transportation, and utilities (+150) and the deepest losses came from leisure and hospitality (-80).

Forecast information for Washington state:

The Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council issues quarterly forecasts that address Washington's projected economic health. The most recent forecast was issued in November and updated in February. Forecast information is available at www.erfc.wa.gov.

The Employment Security Department is an equal-opportunity employer and provider of programs and services. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to people with disabilities. Washington Relay Service 711.