

# Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

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November 2020

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

Phone: (425)258-6315 (Mobile: 360-630-1232) [avancesherman@esd.wa.gov](mailto:avancesherman@esd.wa.gov)

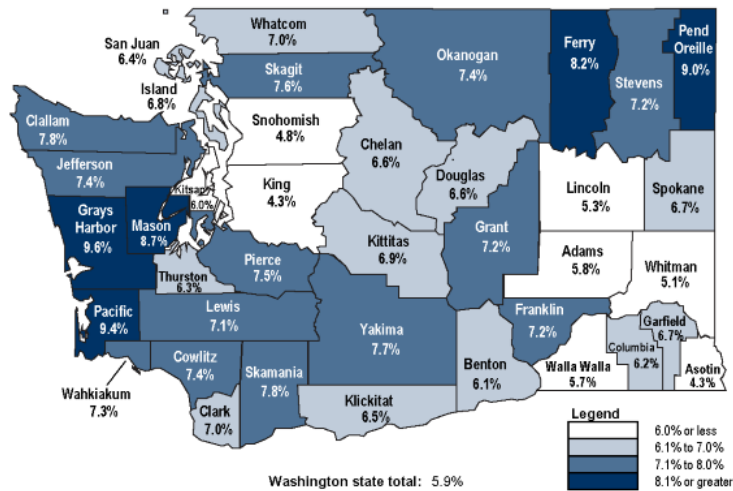
[www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo](http://www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo)

For all intents and purposes, this is the eighth report to record the effects of the Covid-19 economic situation in Northwest Washington.

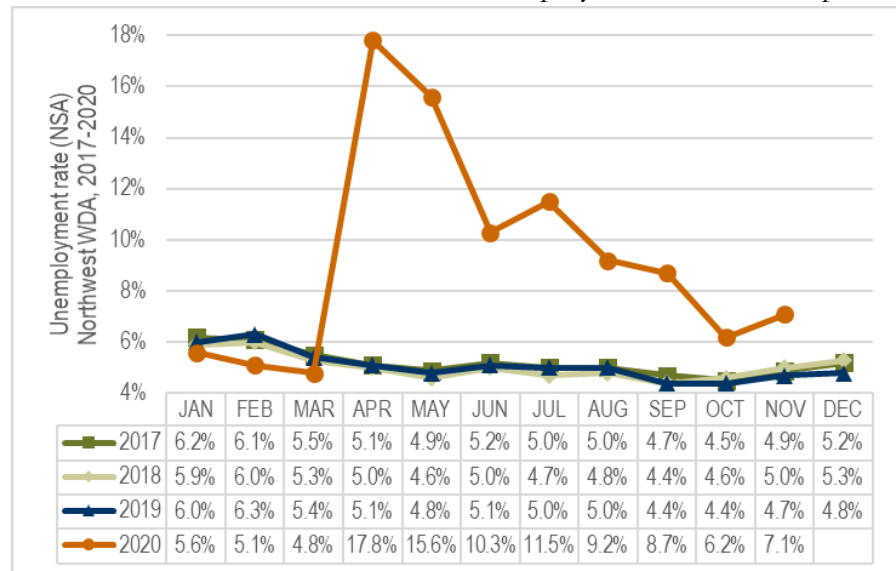
On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington rose by 100 in November 2020. BLS estimates the private sector gained 2,600 jobs during the month and the public sector lost 2,500 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for November 2019 through November 2020 indicate a decrease in employment of 170,300 for the state. The private sector lost 127,200 jobs while the public sector lost an estimated 43,100 jobs over the year.

November 2020  
County unemployment rates, not seasonally adjusted



Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for November 2020 is 6.0 percent. The revised estimated October 2020 unemployment rate is at 6.0 percent. The November 2019 unemployment rate was 4.0 percent.



BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. October’s preliminary estimated gain of 1,000 jobs was revised to a gain of 22,800 jobs.

# Whatcom County

## Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 7.0 percent in November 2020 (preliminary), up from 6.3 percent reported in October (revised). The unemployment rate in November 2019 was 4.6 percent.

- Compared to 12 months ago, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 3,891 (3.5 percent) and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 2,768 (51.6 percent). The labor force as a whole contracted by 1.0 percent. Whatcom County’s labor force was estimated at 115,516 in November 2020.

## Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted  
**Bellingham Metropolitan Statistical Area (Whatcom County)**  
 Data benchmarked through June 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Nov-20	Revised Oct-20	Revised Nov-19	Change		
				Oct-20 Nov-20	Nov-19 Nov-20	Nov-19 Nov-20
Total Nonfarm	90,600	90,300	96,800	300	-6,200	-6.4%
Total Private	74,100	73,900	77,500	200	-3,400	-4.4%
Goods Producing	17,000	17,500	18,400	-500	-1,400	-7.6%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	7,500	7,700	7,800	-200	-300	-3.8%
Manufacturing	9,500	9,800	10,600	-300	-1,100	-10.4%
Service Providing	73,600	72,800	78,400	800	-4,800	-6.1%
Private Services Providing	57,100	56,400	59,100	700	-2,000	-3.4%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	15,500	15,700	16,800	-200	-1,300	-7.7%
Retail Trade	11,300	11,000	11,400	300	-100	-0.9%
Financial Activities	4,200	4,200	3,800	0	400	10.5%
Professional and Business Services	8,300	8,200	8,400	100	-100	-1.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	9,000	9,000	10,900	0	-1,900	-17.4%
Government	16,500	16,400	19,300	100	-2,800	-14.5%
Federal Government	1,500	1,500	1,400	0	100	7.1%
Total State Government	5,500	5,600	7,100	-100	-1,600	-22.5%
Total Local Government	9,500	9,300	10,800	200	-1,300	-12.0%

Total nonfarm payroll in Whatcom County (not seasonally adjusted) increased by 300 from October to November 2020. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs decreased by 6,200 (6.4 percent).

- In November, net employment expanded, with a mix of increases and decreases by industry. As a whole, goods producers (construction and manufacturing) shed jobs and service providers added jobs in aggregate, with industry specific variation. Retail and government posted the highest increases over the month.

- Most major industries detailed in this report shed jobs over the year. The largest decreases came from government (down 2,800) and leisure and hospitality (down 1,900). Employment in financial activities was up 400 over the year.

## Skagit County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 7.6 percent in November 2020 (preliminary); this is up from 6.5 percent in October (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 5.1 percent.

- Compared to November 2019, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 3,671 (6.1 percent) and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ expanded by 1,413 (43.9 percent). Skagit County’s resident labor force was estimated at 61,267 decreasing by 3.6 percent over the year.

### Skagit County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted  
Mount Vernon-Anacortes Metropolitan Statistical Area (Skagit County)

Data benchmarked through June 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Nov-20	Revised Oct-20	Revised Nov-19	Change		
				Oct-20 Nov-20	Nov-19 Nov-20	Nov-19 Nov-20
Total Nonfarm	48,600	48,300	52,000	300	-3,400	-6.5%
Total Private	37,800	37,600	39,900	200	-2,100	-5.3%
Goods Producing	10,200	10,200	10,700	0	-500	-4.7%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	4,200	4,200	4,800	0	-600	-12.5%
Manufacturing	6,000	6,000	5,900	0	100	1.7%
Service Providing	38,400	38,100	41,300	300	-2,900	-7.0%
Private Services Providing	27,600	27,400	29,200	200	-1,600	-5.5%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	10,000	9,800	10,000	200	0	0.0%
Retail Trade	7,000	6,900	7,300	100	-300	-4.1%
Leisure and Hospitality	4,400	4,400	5,200	0	-800	-15.4%
Government	10,800	10,700	12,100	100	-1,300	-10.7%
Federal Government	300	400	400	-100	-100	-25.0%
State Government	1,300	1,300	1,400	0	-100	-7.1%
Local Government	9,200	9,000	10,300	200	-1,100	-10.7%

Total nonfarm employment in Skagit County increased by 300 from October to November 2020. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs contracted by 3,400 or 6.5 percent.

- Over the month, employment levels held steady for goods producing industries and expanded modestly for most service sector detailed in this report.
- Covid-19 related losses reverberated throughout the economy, showing up in the year over year estimates for most industries. The deepest losses reported on a monthly basis were

observed in government, leisure and hospitality and construction. Manufacturing employment was up 1.7 percent over the year.

## Island County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 6.8 percent (preliminary) in November 2020, up from 5.8 (revised) reported in October. The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.5 percent.

- Compared to November 2019, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 2,397 (6.7 percent) and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work expanded by 749 (45.1 percent). Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 35,590 in November 2020 – 4.4 percent below last year.

### Island County local area payroll jobs

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

Data benchmarked through June 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Nov-20	Revised Oct-20	Revised Nov-19	Change		
				Oct-20 Nov-20	Nov-19 Nov-20	Nov-19 Nov-20
Total Nonfarm	16,660	16,770	17,390	-110	-730	-4.2%
Total Private	12,190	12,340	12,610	-150	-420	-3.3%
Goods Producing	2,000	2,050	2,000	-50	0	0.0%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	1,160	1,210	1,210	-50	-50	-4.1%
Manufacturing	840	840	790	0	50	6.3%
Service Providing	14,660	14,720	15,390	-60	-730	-4.7%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,510	2,530	2,700	-20	-190	-7.0%
Retail Trade	2,030	2,040	2,080	-10	-50	-2.4%
Information and Financial Activities	810	820	810	-10	0	0.0%
Professional and Business Services	1,500	1,520	1,300	-20	200	15.4%
Education and Health Services	2,200	2,160	2,440	40	-240	-9.8%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,360	2,420	2,490	-60	-130	-5.2%
Government	4,470	4,430	4,780	40	-310	-6.5%
Federal Government	1,360	1,350	1,320	10	40	3.0%
State and Local Government	3,110	3,080	3,460	30	-350	-10.1%
State and Local Government Education	1,350	1,330	1,620	20	-270	-16.7%

Total nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County contracted by 110 from October to November 2020. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs dropped by 730 or 4.2 percent.

- From October to November, there was a mix of industries reporting growth and decline. The largest one-month increases were observed in government and educational and health services (up 40 each) and the deepest losses came from leisure and hospitality (down 60).

- Year-over-year, the deepest losses were observed in government (down 310) and education and health services (down 240). Professional and business services gained the most ground over the year, adding 200 jobs.

*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 4.9 percent (revised) in October to 6.4 percent (preliminary) in November 2020. For comparison, the unemployment rate 12 months ago was 3.5 percent.

- Compared to November 2019, the number of residents counted as ‘employed’ decreased by 1,238 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work increased by 182. Altogether, the San Juan County labor force consisted of an estimated 7,477 resident workers and contracted by 12.4 percent over the year.

### San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

#### San Juan County

Data benchmarked through March 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Nov-20	Revised Oct-20	Revised Nov-19	Change		
				Oct-20 Nov-20	Nov-19 Nov-20	Nov-19 Nov-20
Total Nonfarm	4,610	4,910	5,580	-300	-970	-17.4%
Total Private	3,890	4,190	4,750	-300	-860	-18.1%
Goods Producing	880	910	970	-30	-90	-9.3%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	700	710	740	-10	-40	-5.4%
Manufacturing	180	200	230	-20	-50	-21.7%
Service Providing	3,730	4,000	4,610	-270	-880	-19.1%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	940	1,020	1,010	-80	-70	-6.9%
Information and Financial Activities	300	320	330	-20	-30	-9.1%
Professional and Business Services	420	440	430	-20	-10	-2.3%
Education and Health Services	550	530	630	20	-80	-12.7%
Leisure and Hospitality	610	790	1,200	-180	-590	-49.2%
Government	720	720	830	0	-110	-13.3%

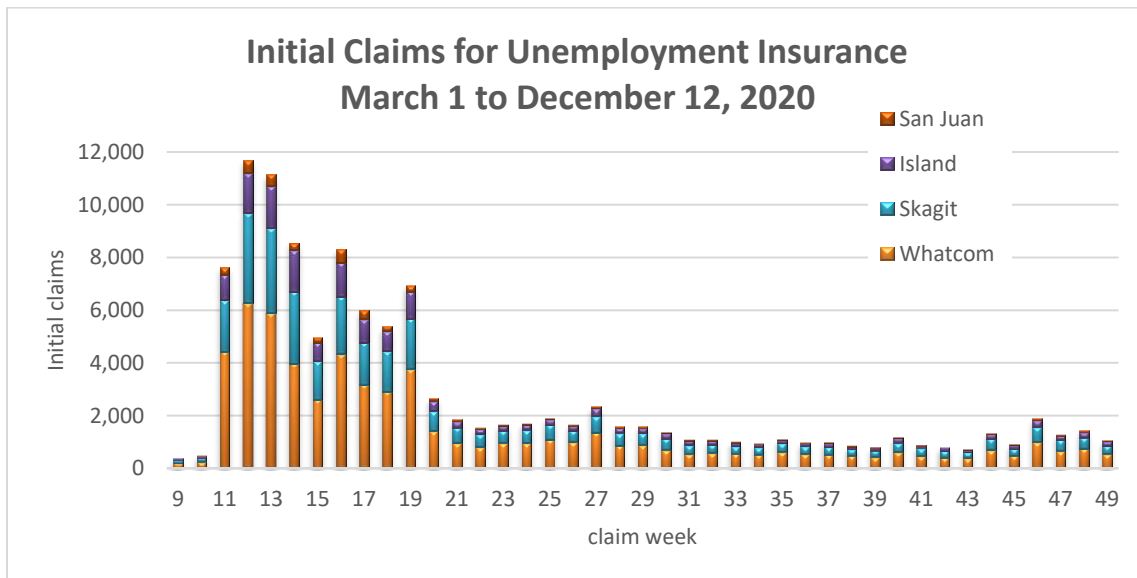
Net nonfarm payroll in San Juan County contracted over the month (down 300). Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was down 970 or 17.4 percent.

- 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. Economically speaking, summer never arrived at the San Juan Islands this year, but seasonal declines continue to affect the local labor market. The deepest one-month declines were observed in leisure and hospitality (down 180 jobs).

- Over the year, there was a large net employment loss, with all industries reporting 12-month losses. The largest one-year losses were observed in leisure and hospitality (down 590 or 49.2 percent).

## Weekly Unemployment Insurance Claims information:

In March, the Employment Security Department began publishing weekly counts of initial claims for Unemployment Insurance. Initial claims provide an indicator of layoffs. Because they are entered weekly, they are a bit more nimble than our survey-based datasets.



*\*Labor force and payroll reporting reflects employment during week 41 (November 8-14)*

## 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 revised in December. Forecast information is available at [www.erfc.wa.gov](http://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.*