

# Northwest Washington Labor Market Review

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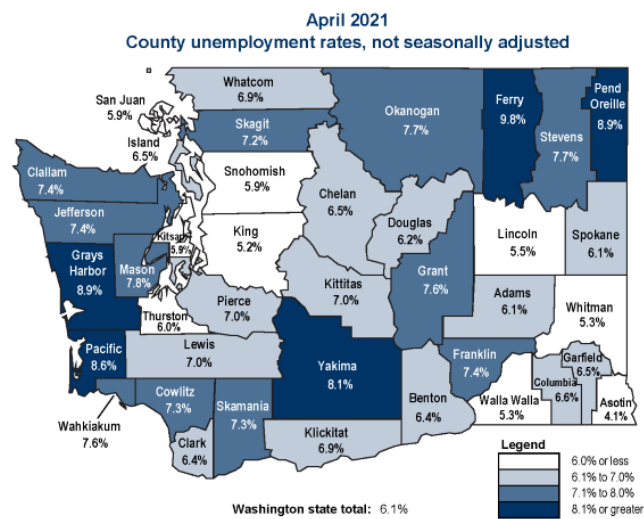
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[www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo](http://www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo)

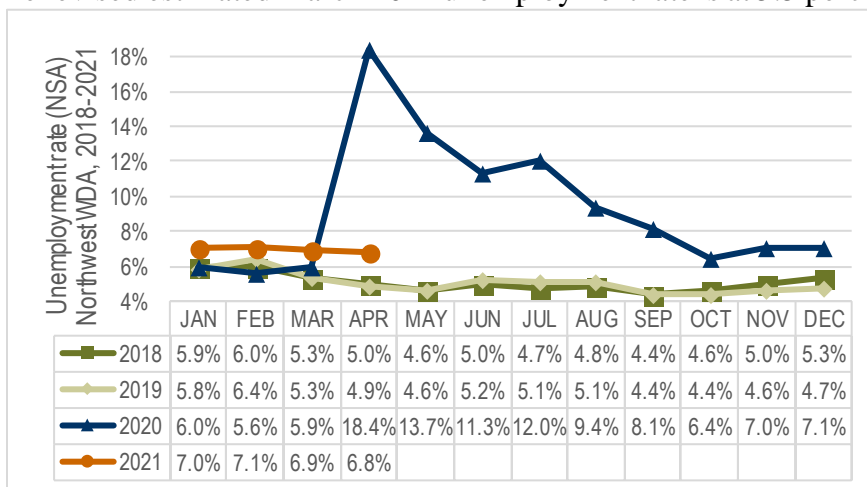
This report marks a turning point in the narrative surrounding the Covid-19 related employment situation. Pandemic-related employment effects began to show up in March last year, and swiftly led to unprecedented levels of unemployment in April 2020. Year-over-year accounts of the employment situation until now documented and described an unfolding crisis. Beginning with this report, the 12-month narrative shifts to document recovery.

On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington rose by 11,200 in April 2021. BLS estimates the private sector gained 7,600 jobs during the month and the public sector gained 3,600 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for March 2020 through March 2021 indicate an increase in employment of 230,700 for the state. The private sector gained 238,700 jobs while the public sector lost an estimated 8,000 jobs over the year.



Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for April 2021 is 5.5 percent. The revised estimated March 2021 unemployment rate is at 5.5 percent. The April 2020 unemployment rate was 16.3 percent.



BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. The March 2021 preliminary estimated gain of 23,100 jobs was revised to a gain of 28,100 jobs.

# Whatcom County

## Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 6.9 percent in April 2021 (preliminary), just above the March estimate of 6.8 percent (revised). For comparison, the unemployment rate 12 months ago was 18.4 percent—the highest unemployment rate on record for Whatcom County.

- Compared to April 2020, the labor force dropped by 5,305 or 4.4 percent. Within that estimate, the number of employed workers expanded by 8,778 (9.0 percent) and the number of unemployed workers contracted by 14,083 (64.3 percent). Whatcom County’s estimated labor force was 114,039 in April.

## Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

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

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Apr-21	Revised Mar-21	Revised Apr-20	Change		
				Mar-21 Apr-21	Apr-20 Apr-21	Apr-20 Apr-21
Total Nonfarm	89,400	88,600	82,700	800	6,700	8.1%
Total Private	72,700	71,900	65,600	800	7,100	10.8%
Goods Producing	17,400	17,200	16,000	200	1,400	8.8%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	8,100	8,000	6,500	100	1,600	24.6%
Manufacturing	9,300	9,200	9,500	100	-200	-2.1%
Service Providing	72,000	71,400	66,700	600	5,300	7.9%
Private Services Providing	55,300	54,700	49,600	600	5,700	11.5%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	15,900	16,100	14,200	-200	1,700	12.0%
Retail Trade	11,100	11,100	9,400	0	1,700	18.1%
Financial Activities	3,900	3,900	3,900	0	0	0.0%
Professional and Business Services	8,200	8,100	7,700	100	500	6.5%
Leisure and Hospitality	9,000	8,400	6,600	600	2,400	36.4%
Government	16,700	16,700	17,100	0	-400	-2.3%
Federal Government	1,500	1,400	1,400	100	100	7.1%
Total State Government	5,600	5,800	5,900	-200	-300	-5.1%
Total Local Government	9,600	9,500	9,800	100	-200	-2.0%

Total nonfarm payroll in Whatcom County (not seasonally adjusted) increased by 800 from March to April 2021 Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs increased by 6,700 (8.1 percent).

- In April, most industries added jobs. The largest one-month gains were observed in leisure and hospitality (+600). Employment in trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities was down (-200) over the month.
- Most major industries added jobs over the year. Leisure and hospitality added the largest number of jobs over the year (+2,400). Government and manufacturing are the only two sectors to have shed jobs over the year.

# Skagit County

## Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 7.2 percent (preliminary) in April—this is unchanged from March, as the unemployment rate seems to be stabilizing in recent months. The unemployment rate 12 months ago was an unprecedented 19.6 percent.

- Compared to April 2020, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 4,538 (8.6 percent) and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ contracted by 8,449 (65.6 percent). Skagit County’s resident labor force was estimated at 61,841, decreasing by 5.9 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 September 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Apr-21	Revised Mar-21	Revised Apr-20	Change		
				Mar-21 Apr-21	Apr-20 Apr-21	Apr-20 Apr-21
Total Nonfarm	48,700	48,000	45,100	700	3,600	8.0%
Total Private	37,600	37,100	34,200	500	3,400	9.9%
Goods Producing	10,300	10,100	9,400	200	900	9.6%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	4,200	4,100	3,600	100	600	16.7%
Manufacturing	6,100	6,000	5,800	100	300	5.2%
Service Providing	38,400	37,900	35,700	500	2,700	7.6%
Private Services Providing	27,300	27,000	24,800	300	2,500	10.1%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	9,300	9,300	8,600	0	700	8.1%
Retail Trade	6,800	6,800	6,000	0	800	13.3%
Leisure and Hospitality	4,100	3,800	3,600	300	500	13.9%
Government	11,100	10,900	10,900	200	200	1.8%
Federal Government	400	400	400	0	0	0.0%
State Government	1,100	1,100	1,400	0	-300	-21.4%
Local Government	9,600	9,400	9,100	200	500	5.5%

Total nonfarm employment in Skagit County increased by 700 from March to April 2021. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 3,600 or 8.0 percent.

- Over the month, all industries included in this report added jobs or maintained employment levels. The largest increases were observed in leisure and hospitality (+300).
- Most industries have added jobs over the year. The largest 12-month increases were attributable to retail trade (+800), within trade, transportation warehousing and utilities, and construction (+600).

## Island County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 6.5 percent (preliminary) in April 2021, one tenth of a percentage point below the (revised) unemployment reported in March. The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 16.3 percent—the highest unemployment rate on record for Island County.

- Compared to April 2020, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 2,260 (7.2 percent) and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work contracted by 3,766 (61.6 percent). Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 36,058 in April 2021 – 4.0 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 September 2020

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Apr-21	Revised Mar-21	Revised Apr-20	Change		
				Mar-21 Apr-21	Apr-20 Apr-21	Apr-20 Apr-21
Total Nonfarm	16,880	16,740	15,500	140	1,380	8.9%
Total Private	12,410	12,310	10,780	100	1,630	15.1%
Goods Producing	1,940	1,940	1,730	0	210	12.1%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	1,210	1,210	950	0	260	27.4%
Manufacturing	730	730	780	0	-50	-6.4%
Service Providing	14,940	14,800	13,770	140	1,170	8.5%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,730	2,720	2,420	10	310	12.8%
Retail Trade	2,140	2,140	1,880	0	260	13.8%
Information and Financial Activities	840	850	790	-10	50	6.3%
Professional and Business Services	1,470	1,490	1,320	-20	150	11.4%
Education and Health Services	2,370	2,320	2,120	50	250	11.8%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,160	2,080	1,580	80	580	36.7%
Government	4,470	4,430	4,720	40	-250	-5.3%
Federal Government	1,260	1,270	1,330	-10	-70	-5.3%
State and Local Government	3,210	3,160	3,390	50	-180	-5.3%
State and Local Government Education	1,380	1,330	1,530	50	-150	-9.8%

Total nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County expanded by 140 from March to April 2021. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 1,380 or 8.9 percent.

- From March to April, two major industries included in this report saw declining employment levels, with the deepest drops observed in professional and business services. Three industries added jobs, with the largest increases attributable to leisure and hospitality.
- Year-over-year, the largest employment gains were attributable to leisure and hospitality and trade, transportation, and utilities. Government and manufacturing each shed jobs.

*Employment statistics for Island County do not include military employment.*

## San Juan County

### Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in San Juan County was 5.9 percent in April 2021 (preliminary), down from 6.3 percent (revised) in March. For comparison, the unemployment rate 12 months ago was 18.7 percent.

- Compared to April 2020, the number of residents counted as ‘employed’ increased by 1,185 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 1,032. Altogether, the San Juan County labor force consisted of an estimated 8,242 resident workers and expanded by 1.9 percent over the year.

### San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

#### San Juan County

Data benchmarked through September 2020

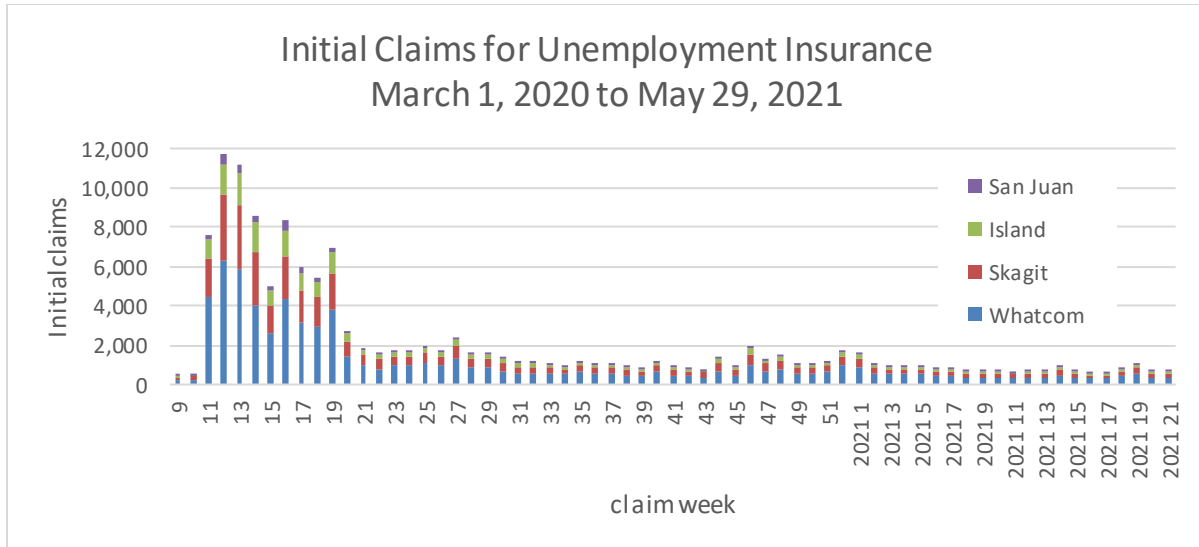
NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Apr-21	Revised Mar-21	Revised Apr-20	Change		
				Mar-21 Apr-21	Apr-20 Apr-21	Apr-20 Apr-21
Total Nonfarm	5,410	5,560	4,450	-150	960	21.6%
Total Private	4,600	4,770	3,660	-170	940	25.7%
Goods Producing	1,030	1,040	720	-10	310	43.1%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	770	780	560	-10	210	37.5%
Manufacturing	260	260	160	0	100	62.5%
Service Providing	4,380	4,520	3,730	-140	650	17.4%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	1,000	1,000	900	0	100	11.1%
Information and Financial Activities	380	370	310	10	70	22.6%
Professional and Business Services	470	480	360	-10	110	30.6%
Education and Health Services	550	540	550	10	0	0.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	990	1,150	660	-160	330	50.0%
Government	810	790	790	20	20	2.5%

Net nonfarm payroll in San Juan County contracted over the month (-150). Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was up 960 or 21.6 percent.

- From March to April, most industries detailed in this report shed jobs. The largest drop was observed in leisure and hospitality.
- According to preliminary estimates, all industries except education and health services expanded employment over the year. The largest increase was attributable to leisure and hospitality.

## Weekly Unemployment Insurance Claims information:

In March 2020, 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.



New claims for unemployment insurance have stabilized but are still higher than pre-pandemic levels.

*\*Labor force and payroll reporting reflects employment during 2021 the week of April 11-17.*

### Forecast information for Washington state:

The Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council issues quarterly forecasts that address Washington's projected economic health. The preliminary June forecast is currently online 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.*