

Northwest Washington Labor Area Summary

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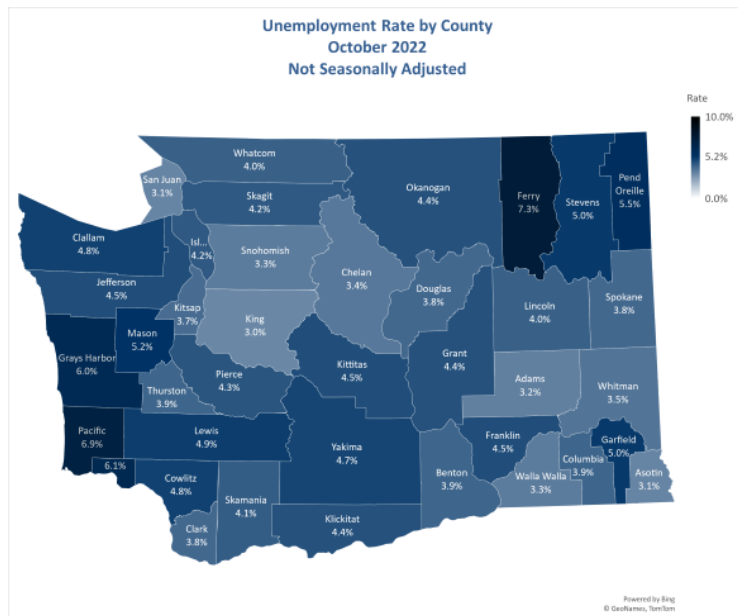
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Pandemic-related employment effects began to show up in Washington state as early as March 2020, and swiftly led to unprecedented levels of unemployment in April 2020. Many jobs have recovered in the meantime, with significant variation by location and industry. This report describes a moment in that recovery.

On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington rose by 5,400 in October 2022.¹ BLS estimates the private sector gained 3,800 jobs during the month and the public sector gained 1,600 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for October 2021 through October 2022 indicate an increase in employment of 130,300 for the state. The private sector gained 119,100 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 11,200 jobs over the year.



Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for October 2022 is 3.8 percent. The revised estimated September 2022 unemployment rate is at 3.7 percent. The October 2021 unemployment rate was 4.6 percent.

Unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted)

Area	(Prelim.) Oct-22	Sep-22	Oct-21	Year-to-Year Change
USA	3.4%	3.3%	4.3%	-0.9%
Washington state	3.7%	3.6%	4.2%	-0.5%
Northwest Workforce Development Area	4.1%	3.9%	4.7%	-0.6%
Whatcom County	4.0%	3.9%	4.7%	-0.7%
Skagit County	4.2%	4.1%	5.0%	-0.8%
Island County	4.2%	4.0%	4.5%	-0.3%
San Juan County	3.1%	2.9%	4.0%	-0.9%

BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. The September 2022 preliminary estimated gain of 1,500 jobs was revised to a gain of 7,900 jobs.

Whatcom County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 4.0 percent in October 2022 (preliminary), just above 3.9 percent reported in September (revised). For comparison, the unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.7 percent. The unemployment rate reached 17.4 percent in April 2020.

- Compared to October 2021, the labor force expanded by 445 workers (0.4 percent). Within that estimate, the number of employed workers expanded by 1,183 and the number of unemployed workers contracted by 738. Whatcom County's estimated labor force was 116,524 in October 2022.

Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted
Bellingham Metropolitan Statistical Area (Whatcom County)
 Data benchmarked through December 2021

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Oct-22	Revised Sep-22	Revised Oct-21	Change		
				Sep-22 Oct-22	Oct-21 Oct-22	Oct-21 Oct-22
Total Nonfarm	96,500	95,500	92,900	1,000	3,600	3.9%
Total Private	78,600	78,500	75,000	100	3,600	4.8%
Goods Producing	18,100	18,300	17,300	-200	800	4.6%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	8,300	8,400	8,200	-100	100	1.2%
Manufacturing	9,800	9,900	9,100	-100	700	7.7%
Service Providing	78,400	77,200	75,600	1,200	2,800	3.7%
Private Services Providing	60,500	60,200	57,700	300	2,800	4.9%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	16,700	16,500	16,300	200	400	2.5%
Retail Trade	10,700	10,500	11,000	200	-300	-2.7%
Financial Activities	4,000	4,000	3,900	0	100	2.6%
Professional and Business Services	9,000	9,100	8,500	-100	500	5.9%
Leisure and Hospitality	10,700	10,700	10,000	0	700	7.0%
Government	17,900	17,000	17,900	900	0	0.0%
Federal Government	1,400	1,400	1,500	0	-100	-6.7%
Total State Government	5,900	5,800	6,300	100	-400	-6.3%
Total Local Government	10,600	9,800	10,100	800	500	5.0%

Total nonfarm payroll in Whatcom County (not seasonally adjusted) increased by 1,000 from September (revised) to October (preliminary) 2022. Over the year, nonfarm employment increased by 3,600 (3.9 percent). As of this report, the employment tally has finally caught up with pre-pandemic levels. The total number of nonfarm jobs in October 2022 (96,500) was the same as the level reported in October 2019.

- In October, goods producers (construction and manufacturing) recorded employment losses. Most service-providing industries expanded over the month, with the largest gains attributable to government.

- Over the year, most sectors detailed in this report expanded employment, with the largest gains attributable to manufacturing and leisure and hospitality (each added 700 jobs). Employment in retail trade (an industry found within trade, transportation, warehousing, and utilities) dropped by 300.

Skagit County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 4.2 percent (preliminary) in October 2022—up slightly over the month from 4.1 percent (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 5.0 percent. The unemployment rate in April 2020 reached a record 18.8 percent.

- Compared to October 2021, the labor force contracted by 471 (0.7 percent). Within that, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 30 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ contracted by 501, bringing the unemployment rate down. Skagit County’s resident labor force was estimated at 62,682 in October.

Skagit County local area payroll jobs

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

Data benchmarked through December 2021

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Oct-22	Revised Sep-22	Revised Oct-21	Change		
				Sep-22 Oct-22	Oct-21 Oct-22	Oct-21 Oct-22
Total Nonfarm	50,800	50,900	50,200	-100	600	1.2%
Total Private	39,300	39,500	38,600	-200	700	1.8%
Goods Producing	10,600	10,700	10,300	-100	300	2.9%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	4,200	4,300	4,300	-100	-100	-2.3%
Manufacturing	6,400	6,400	6,000	0	400	6.7%
Service Providing	40,200	40,200	39,900	0	300	0.8%
Private Services Providing	28,700	28,800	28,300	-100	400	1.4%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	9,600	9,600	10,000	0	-400	-4.0%
Retail Trade	6,500	6,500	7,000	0	-500	-7.1%
Leisure and Hospitality	4,900	5,100	4,800	-200	100	2.1%
Government	11,500	11,400	11,600	100	-100	-0.9%
Federal Government	300	400	400	-100	-100	-25.0%
State Government	1,300	1,300	1,200	0	100	8.3%
Local Government	9,900	9,700	10,000	200	-100	-1.0%

Total nonfarm employment in Skagit County decreased by 100 jobs over the month. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 600 or 1.2 percent. For context, the current level of employment (50,800) is 2,600 (5.4 percent) higher than October 2020 but still 1,800 jobs (3.4 percent) shy of the last October reading prior to the pandemic.

- In October 2022, each major private sector industry covered in this report either shed jobs or remained unchanged over the month. The deepest losses were observed in the leisure and

Northwest Washington labor market review for October, 2022

Report available at <http://nwboard.org/impact/laborareasummaries.html>

hospitality sector (-200). Government employment expanded as a result of local government employment gains – likely a reflection of the start of the 2022-2023 school year.

- Over the year, manufacturing and leisure and hospitality each added jobs (+400 and +100 respectively). The deepest 12-month losses were observed in trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities (-400), and were attributed to retail trade (-500).

Island County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was 4.2 percent (preliminary) in October 2022, up from 4.0 percent (revised) over the month. The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.5 percent. In April 2020, the unemployment rate for Island County was a record 16.5 percent.

- Compared to October 2021, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 311 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work contracted by 136. Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 37,084, up 0.5 percent over the year.

Island County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

Oak Harbor Micropolitan Statistical Area (Island County)

Data benchmarked through December 2021

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Oct-22	Revised Sep-22	Revised Oct-21	Change		
				Sep-22 Oct-22	Oct-21 Oct-22	Oct-21 Oct-22
Total Nonfarm	17,470	17,280	17,170	190	300	1.7%
Total Private	12,970	12,990	12,740	-20	230	1.8%
Goods Producing	2,050	2,010	1,900	40	150	7.9%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	1,400	1,400	1,280	0	120	9.4%
Manufacturing	650	610	620	40	30	4.8%
Service Providing	15,420	15,270	15,270	150	150	1.0%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,710	2,690	2,650	20	60	2.3%
Retail Trade	2,230	2,200	2,180	30	50	2.3%
Information and Financial Activities	870	880	900	-10	-30	-3.3%
Professional and Business Services	1,580	1,570	1,560	10	20	1.3%
Education and Health Services	2,480	2,460	2,420	20	60	2.5%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,420	2,580	2,440	-160	-20	-0.8%
Government	4,500	4,290	4,430	210	70	1.6%
Federal Government	1,250	1,240	1,250	10	0	0.0%
State and Local Government	3,250	3,050	3,180	200	70	2.2%
State and Local Government Education	1,460	1,240	1,430	220	30	2.1%

Total nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County expanded by 190 from September (revised) to October (preliminary) 2022. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 300 or 1.7 percent. As of this report, the tally of Island County jobs has reached pre-recession levels. The number of jobs in October 2022 was 17,470. This is 140 jobs higher than the tally observed in October 2019.

- From September to August, the largest employment gains were observed in government (+210) and the deepest losses were attributable to leisure and hospitality (-160). Both sectors are highly seasonal, and these shifts align with seasonal expectations.
- Year-over-year, most industries detailed in this report added jobs. The largest observed employment gains were attributable to the construction sector (+120). Information and financial activities and leisure and hospitality each shed jobs (-30 and -20 respectively).

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

San Juan County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in San Juan County was 3.1 percent in October 2022 (preliminary), up from 2.9 percent (revised) in September. The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.0 percent. San Juan’s unemployment rate in April 2020 (the height of the pandemic recession) was 19.2 percent.

- Compared to October 2021, the number of residents counted as ‘employed’ increased by 312 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 67. Altogether, the San Juan County labor force consisted of an estimated 8,782 resident workers and expanded by 2.9 percent over the year.

San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

San Juan County

Data benchmarked through December 2021

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Oct-22	Revised Sep-22	Revised Oct-21	Change		
				Sep-22 Oct-22	Oct-21 Oct-22	Oct-21 Oct-22
Total Nonfarm	5,860	5,980	5,670	-120	190	3.4%
Total Private	5,040	5,160	4,830	-120	210	4.3%
Goods Producing	1,020	1,040	1,010	-20	10	1.0%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	770	770	760	0	10	1.3%
Manufacturing	250	270	250	-20	0	0.0%
Service Providing	4,840	4,940	4,660	-100	180	3.9%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	990	1,000	1,000	-10	-10	-1.0%
Information and Financial Activities	410	400	400	10	10	2.5%
Professional and Business Services	510	510	490	0	20	4.1%
Education and Health Services	570	560	560	10	10	1.8%
Leisure and Hospitality	1,340	1,440	1,160	-100	180	15.5%
Government	820	820	840	0	-20	-2.4%

Net nonfarm payroll in San Juan County contracted by 120 in October (preliminary). Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was up 190 or 3.4 percent. Employment in San Juan County is highly seasonal. The small sampling size for this small county also means that routine revisions can be substantial.

- From September (revised) to October (preliminary) 2022, only two sectors—information and financial activities and education and health services—added jobs (10 each). The deepest one-month losses were attributable to leisure and hospitality (-100) and is unsurprising when considering seasonality.
- Over the year, the payroll tally in San Juan County expanded by 190. The county's largest sector, leisure and hospitality, was responsible for the lions' share of growth, adding 180 jobs over the year. All other sector level gains and losses detailed in this report involved a shift of 20 jobs or less.

Forecast information for Washington state:

The Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council issues quarterly forecasts that address Washington's projected economic health. ERFC estimates indicate that Washington state employment will have expanded by 5.5 percent from 2021 to 2022, and will expand by 3.0 percent in 2023. The September forecast and November revised forecast are published online at www.erfc.wa.gov.

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