

Northwest Washington Labor Area Summary

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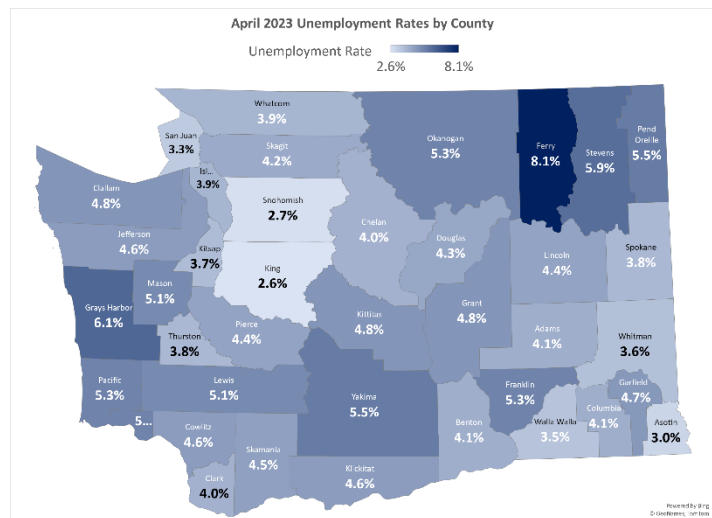
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Pandemic-related employment effects began to show up in Washington state as early as March 2020, and swiftly led to unprecedented levels of unemployment in April 2020. Many jobs have recovered in the meantime, with significant variation by location 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 6,100 in April 2023. BLS estimates the private sector gained 7,200 jobs during the month and the public sector lost 1,100 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for April 2022 through April 2023 indicate an increase in employment of 116,700 for the state. The private sector gained 98,300 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 18,400 jobs over the year.

Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for April 2023 is 4.3 percent. The revised estimated March 2023 unemployment rate is at 4.5 percent. The April 2022 unemployment rate was 4.1 percent.



Unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted)

Area	(Prelim.) Apr-23	Mar-23	Apr-22	Year-to-Year Change
USA	3.1%	3.6%	3.3%	-0.2%
Washington state	3.5%	4.2%	3.7%	-0.2%
Northwest Workforce Development Area	3.9%	4.9%	4.6%	-0.7%
Whatcom County	3.9%	4.8%	4.5%	-0.6%
Skagit County	4.2%	5.1%	5.0%	-0.8%
Island County	3.9%	4.9%	4.6%	-0.7%
San Juan County	3.3%	4.4%	4.2%	-0.9%

BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. The March 2023 preliminary estimated gain of 1,500 jobs was revised to a gain of 4,300 jobs.

Whatcom County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Whatcom County was 3.9% in April 2023 (preliminary), below 4.8% reported in March and below 4.5% in April 2022 (revised). The unemployment rate reached a record high of 17.3% in April 2020.

- Compared to April 2022, the labor force expanded by 1,737 workers (1.5%). Within that estimate, the number of employed workers increased by 2,347 and the number of unemployed workers decreased by 610. Whatcom County’s estimated labor force was 116,294 in April 2023.

Whatcom County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted
Bellingham Metropolitan Statistical Area (Whatcom County)
 Data benchmarked through September 2022

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Apr-23	Revised Mar-23	Revised Apr-22	Change		
				Mar-23 Apr-23	Apr-22 Apr-23	Apr-22 Apr-23
Total Nonfarm	97,700	97,000	95,500	700	2,200	2.3%
Total Private	78,700	78,100	77,400	600	1,300	1.7%
Goods Producing	18,000	17,600	18,000	400	0	0.0%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	8,900	8,500	8,800	400	100	1.1%
Manufacturing	9,100	9,100	9,200	0	-100	-1.1%
Service Providing	79,700	79,400	77,500	300	2,200	2.8%
Private Services Providing	60,700	60,500	59,400	200	1,300	2.2%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	15,900	16,200	16,200	-300	-300	-1.9%
Retail Trade	11,000	11,300	10,900	-300	100	0.9%
Financial Activities	4,200	4,200	4,100	0	100	2.4%
Professional and Business Services	9,000	8,800	9,100	200	-100	-1.1%
Leisure and Hospitality	10,300	10,300	10,600	0	-300	-2.8%
Government	19,000	18,900	18,100	100	900	5.0%
Federal Government	1,500	1,500	1,400	0	100	7.1%
Total State Government	6,200	6,200	6,200	0	0	0.0%
Total Local Government	11,300	11,200	10,500	100	800	7.6%

Total nonfarm payroll in Whatcom County (not seasonally adjusted) increased from 97,000 in March (revised) to 97,700 in April 2023 (preliminary). Over the year, nonfarm employment increased by 2,200 (2.3%). Whatcom County has exceeded pre-pandemic levels of employment.

- The largest one-month gains were observed in construction (+400). In April, the only sector reporting one-month losses was trade, transportation, warehousing, and utilities (-300), with losses attributable to retail trade.
- Over the year, most sectors detailed in this report expanded employment, with the largest gains attributable to government (+900, concentrated in local government) and retail trade

(+200). Professional and businesses and leisure and hospitality each shed 300 jobs over the year and manufacturing employment was down by 100.

Skagit County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Skagit County was 4.2% (preliminary) in April 2023—down over the month from 5.1% (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 5.0%. The unemployment rate in April 2020 reached a record 18.6%.

- Compared to April 2022, the labor force expanded by 871 (1.4%). Within that, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 1,316 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ decreased by 445. Skagit County’s resident labor force was estimated at 61,980 in April 2023.

Skagit County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted
Mount Vernon-Anacortes Metropolitan Statistical Area (Skagit County)
 Data benchmarked through September 2022

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Apr-23	Revised Mar-23	Revised Apr-22	Change		
				Mar-23 Apr-23	Apr-22 Apr-23	Apr-22 Apr-23
Total Nonfarm	52,000	51,500	50,700	500	1,300	2.6%
Total Private	39,800	39,500	38,800	300	1,000	2.6%
Goods Producing	10,700	10,400	10,200	300	500	4.9%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	4,600	4,400	4,300	200	300	7.0%
Manufacturing	6,100	6,000	5,900	100	200	3.4%
Service Providing	41,300	41,100	40,500	200	800	2.0%
Private Services Providing	29,100	29,100	28,600	0	500	1.7%
Trade, Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	10,200	10,300	9,900	-100	300	3.0%
Retail Trade	7,100	7,100	7,000	0	100	1.4%
Leisure and Hospitality	5,000	4,900	5,000	100	0	0.0%
Government	12,200	12,000	11,900	200	300	2.5%
Federal Government	400	400	400	0	0	0.0%
State Government	1,300	1,200	1,200	100	100	8.3%
Local Government	10,500	10,400	10,300	100	200	1.9%

Total nonfarm employment in Skagit County increased by 500 jobs over the month. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 1,300 or 2.6%. For context, the current level of employment (52,000) is still 900 jobs shy of the level observed in April 2019 – before the pandemic.

- April was generally characterized by growth in Skagit County. Construction and government posted the largest one-month gains (+200 each); Trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities was the only sector reporting net losses in April (-100).

- Over the year, all industries detailed in this report either added jobs or remained unchanged. The largest increases were observed in construction, trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities, and government; Each added 300 jobs over 12 months.

Island County

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

The unemployment rate in Island County was estimated at 3.9% (preliminary) in April 2023, down from 4.9% in March (revised). The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.6%. In April 2020, the unemployment rate for Island County was a record 16.3%.

- Compared to April 2022, the Island County labor force expanded by 762. Within that estimate, the number of people counted as ‘employed’ increased by 978 and the number of people counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 216. Island County’s civilian labor force was estimated as 36,854, up 2.1% 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 September 2022

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Apr-23	Revised Mar-23	Revised Apr-22	Change		
				Mar-23 Apr-23	Apr-22 Apr-23	Apr-22 Apr-23
Total Nonfarm	17,880	17,800	17,570	80	310	1.8%
Total Private	13,260	13,180	13,020	80	240	1.8%
Goods Producing	2,030	2,030	1,960	0	70	3.6%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	1,320	1,320	1,300	0	20	1.5%
Manufacturing	710	710	660	0	50	7.6%
Service Providing	15,850	15,770	15,610	80	240	1.5%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,680	2,680	2,710	0	-30	-1.1%
Retail Trade	2,170	2,170	2,190	0	-20	-0.9%
Information and Financial Activities	890	940	920	-50	-30	-3.3%
Professional and Business Services	1,720	1,580	1,710	140	10	0.6%
Education and Health Services	2,580	2,590	2,530	-10	50	2.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	2,380	2,360	2,260	20	120	5.3%
Government	4,620	4,620	4,550	0	70	1.5%
Federal Government	1,300	1,310	1,250	-10	50	4.0%
State and Local Government	3,320	3,310	3,300	10	20	0.6%
State and Local Government Education	1,520	1,530	1,520	-10	0	0.0%

Total nonfarm payroll jobs in Island County increased by 80 from March (revised) to April (preliminary) 2023. Year-over-year, the tally of nonfarm jobs expanded by 310 or 1.8%. The tally of Island County jobs reached pre-recession levels in early 2022.

- From March to April, most gains and losses were relatively small. The largest one-month increase was 140 jobs attributable to professional and business services. The deepest losses were observed in information and financial activities (-50).
- Year-over-year, most sectors detailed in this report added jobs. The largest observed employment gains were attributable to leisure and hospitality (+120) and government (+70). Trade, transportation, and utilities (including retail trade) and information and financial activities each shed jobs over the year.

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 3.3% in April 2023 (preliminary), down from 4.4% (revised) in March. The unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.2%. San Juan’s unemployment rate in April 2020 (the height of the pandemic recession) was 19.0%.

- Compared to April 2022, the number of residents counted as ‘employed’ increased by 440 and the number counted as ‘unemployed’ or actively seeking work decreased by 58. Altogether, the San Juan County labor force consisted of an estimated 8,361 resident workers and expanded by 4.8% over the year.

San Juan County local area payroll jobs

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

San Juan County

Data benchmarked through September 2022

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Apr-23	Revised Mar-23	Revised Apr-22	Change		
				Mar-23 Apr-23	Apr-22 Apr-23	Apr-22 Apr-23
Total Nonfarm	5,780	5,760	5,710	20	70	1.2%
Total Private	4,920	4,900	4,800	20	120	2.5%
Goods Producing	1,080	1,110	1,020	-30	60	5.9%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	820	840	780	-20	40	5.1%
Manufacturing	260	270	240	-10	20	8.3%
Service Providing	4,700	4,650	4,690	50	10	0.2%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	980	1,000	1,010	-20	-30	-3.0%
Information and Financial Activities	410	410	410	0	0	0.0%
Professional and Business Services	620	630	550	-10	70	12.7%
Education and Health Services	580	590	520	-10	60	11.5%
Leisure and Hospitality	1,020	940	1,080	80	-60	-5.6%
Government	860	860	910	0	-50	-5.5%

Net nonfarm payroll in San Juan County increased by 20 in April (preliminary). Year-over-year, total nonfarm employment was up 70 or 1.2%. 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 March (revised) to April 2023 (preliminary), leisure and hospitality – the largest industry sector in San Juan County – expanded employment. All other sectors detailed in this report experienced net losses.
- Over the year, the total nonfarm payroll tally in San Juan County expanded by 70. The largest 12-month increases were attributable to hiring in the professional and business services sector and education and health services (up 70 and 60 respectively). Employment in leisure and hospitality, government, and trade, transportation, and utilities was down over the year.

Forecast information for Washington state:

The Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council issues quarterly forecasts that address Washington's projected economic health. ERFEC estimates indicate that Washington state employment expanded by 5.5% from 2021 to 2022 but forecasts a slowdown in 2023; employment is expected to expand by 3.6% this year. This forecast is up slightly compared to the previous report. The average annual unemployment rate is expected to remain in the 4% range for the next few years. The March forecast and May revisions are published online 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.