



Employment estimates in this report are generated by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

Monthly employment estimates are subject to revision in subsequent months when more sample data become available.

BLS data in this report are rounded to the nearest 100.

On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington rose by 10,900 in December 2019.<sup>1</sup> BLS estimates the private sector gained 9,800 jobs during the month and the public sector gained 1,100 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for December 2018 through December 2019 indicate an increase in employment of 77,800 for the state. The private sector added 74,000 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 3,800 jobs over the year.

Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for December 2019 is 4.3 percent. The revised estimated November 2019 unemployment rate is at 4.4 percent. The December 2018 unemployment rate was 4.5 percent.

BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. November’s preliminary estimated gain of 12,200 jobs was revised to a gain of 12,800 jobs.

For more information, call Paul Turek, labor economist at 360-507-9599.

## Resident civilian labor force and unemployment, seasonally adjusted

The resident civilian labor force is the total number of people in the workforce, employed and unemployed, ages 16 and up.

The number of unemployed is the estimated number of people who currently do not have a job, are available for work and have actively looked for work in the last four weeks.

The unemployment rate is the ratio of the estimated number of unemployed divided by the civilian labor force.

Resident civilian labor force and unemployment, seasonally adjusted  
United States and Washington state, November and December 2018 and 2019  
Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

	December 2019 (Preliminary)	November 2019 (Revised)	December 2018 (Revised)	November 2018 (Revised)
<b>United States</b>				
Unemployment rate				
Seasonally adjusted	3.5%	3.5%	3.9%	3.7%
<b>Washington</b>				
Unemployment rate	4.3%	4.4%	4.5%	4.5%
Resident labor force	3,956,800	3,940,100	3,823,000	3,823,800
Unemployed	169,000	174,900	170,400	170,300
<b>Seattle/Bellevue/Everett</b>				
Unemployment rate	2.7%	2.8%	3.3%	3.3%
Resident labor force	1,749,500	1,743,600	1,695,900	1,696,200
Unemployed	46,800	48,900	56,000	56,000

<sup>1</sup>Most of the employment numbers discussed in this report refers to jobs, not persons. For example, if a person holds two positions, these positions are counted as two jobs in the employment series. In the section titled “Unemployment,” these positions refer to individuals, not jobs. In this case, a person holding two jobs is counted only once.



## Unemployment, seasonally adjusted

The BLS estimates Washington's preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for December 2019 is 4.3 percent. The revised estimated November 2019 unemployment rate is 4.4 percent.

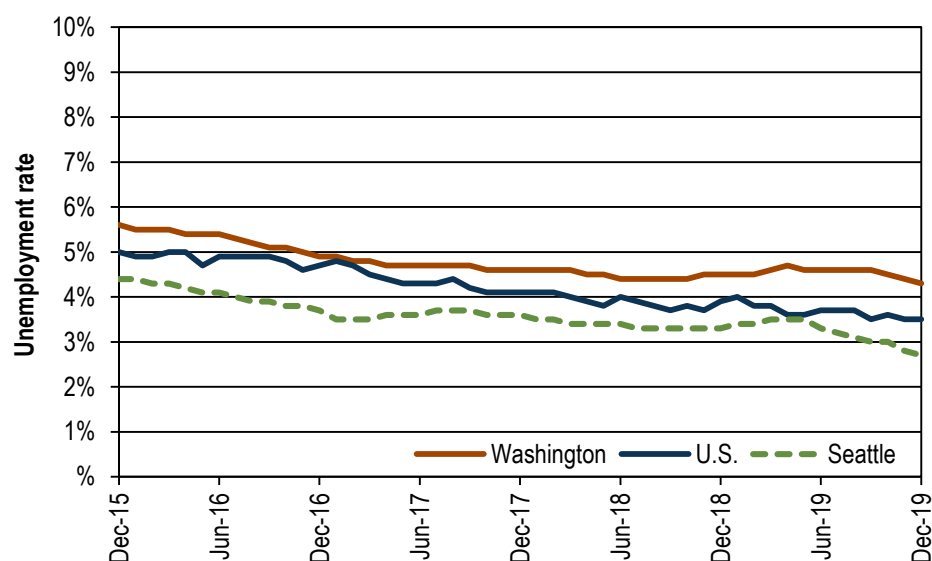
According to BLS estimates, the number of unemployed people fell by 5,900 in December 2019 compared to November 2019. At the same time, the number of employed people rose by an estimated 22,600. Overall, this amounted to an increase of 16,700 people in the labor force.

The preliminary December 2019 unemployment rate is a 0.2 percentage point lower than the December 2018 rate of 4.5 percent.

### Unemployment rates, seasonally adjusted

U.S., Washington and Seattle, December 2015 through December 2019

Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics



**December 2019 preliminary unemployment rates:**

U.S. (preliminary) 3.5%  
 Washington (preliminary) 4.3%  
 Seattle area (preliminary) 2.7%

## Employment change and moving average, seasonally adjusted

Based on BLS estimates, Washington state nonfarm employment increased by 10,900 jobs from November 2019 to December 2019.

### Recent employment change:

**October 2019:** down 800 jobs (revised)

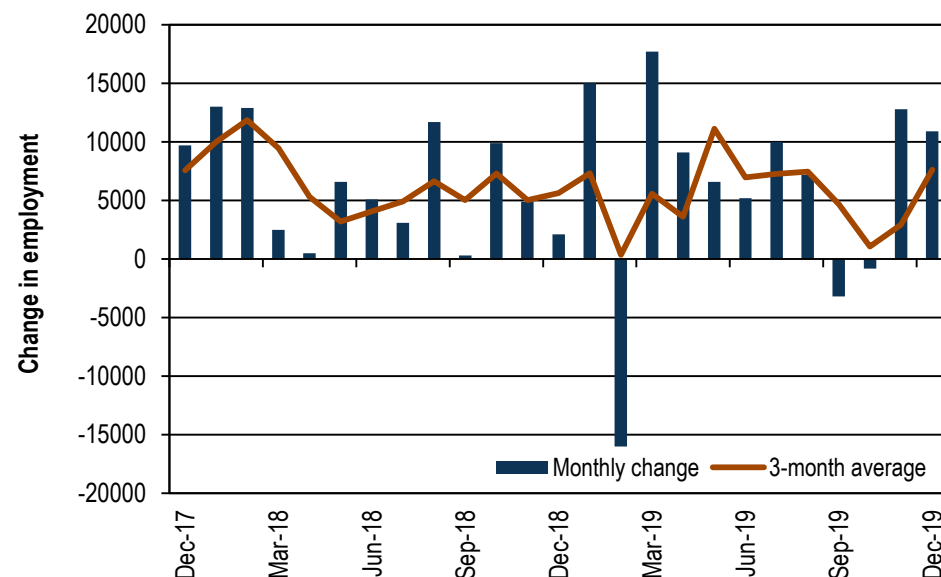
**November 2019:** up 12,800 jobs (revised)

**December 2019:** up 10,900 jobs (preliminary)

### Monthly employment change and three-month moving average, seasonally adjusted

Washington state, December 2017 through December 2019

Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics



## Employment and unemployment, seasonally adjusted

### March 2008

(start of recent employment recession in Washington)

Nonfarm employment: 3,008,000

Unemployment rate: 4.8%

### February 2010

(end of recent employment recession in Washington)

Nonfarm employment: 2,824,000

Unemployment rate: 10.4%

### December 2019 (preliminary)

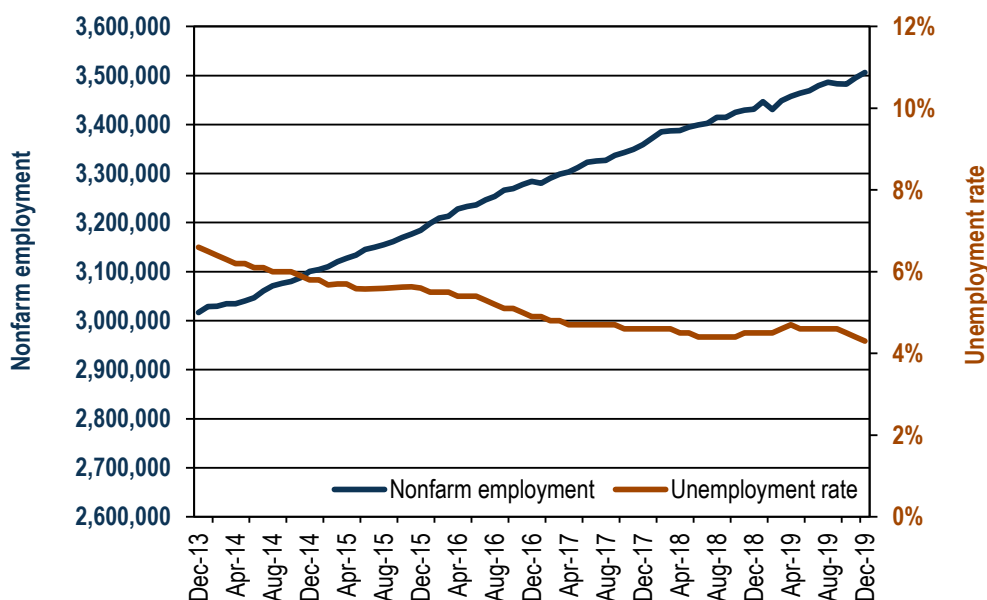
Nonfarm employment: 3,506,100

Unemployment rate: 4.3%

Nonfarm employment and unemployment rate, seasonally adjusted

Washington state, December 2013 through December 2019

Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics



## Understanding what seasonally adjusted means

Over the course of a year, the size of the state's labor force and the levels of employment and unemployment undergo sharp fluctuations due to such seasonal events as changes in weather, reduced or expanded production, harvest, major holidays and the opening and closing of schools. The effect of such seasonal variation can be very large; seasonal fluctuations may account for as much as 95 percent of the month-to-month changes in unemployment at the national level.

Because these seasonal events follow a more or less regular pattern each year, their influence on statistical trends can be eliminated by adjusting the statistics from one month to the next. These adjustments make non-seasonal developments, such as declines in economic activity, easier to spot. For example, the large number of youth entering the labor force each June is likely to obscure any other changes that have taken place relative to May, making it

difficult to determine if the level of economic activity has risen or declined. However, because the effect of students finishing school in previous years is known, the statistics for the current year can be adjusted to allow for a comparable change. The adjusted figure provides a more useful tool with which to analyze changes in economic activity.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

## U-6 unemployment rate

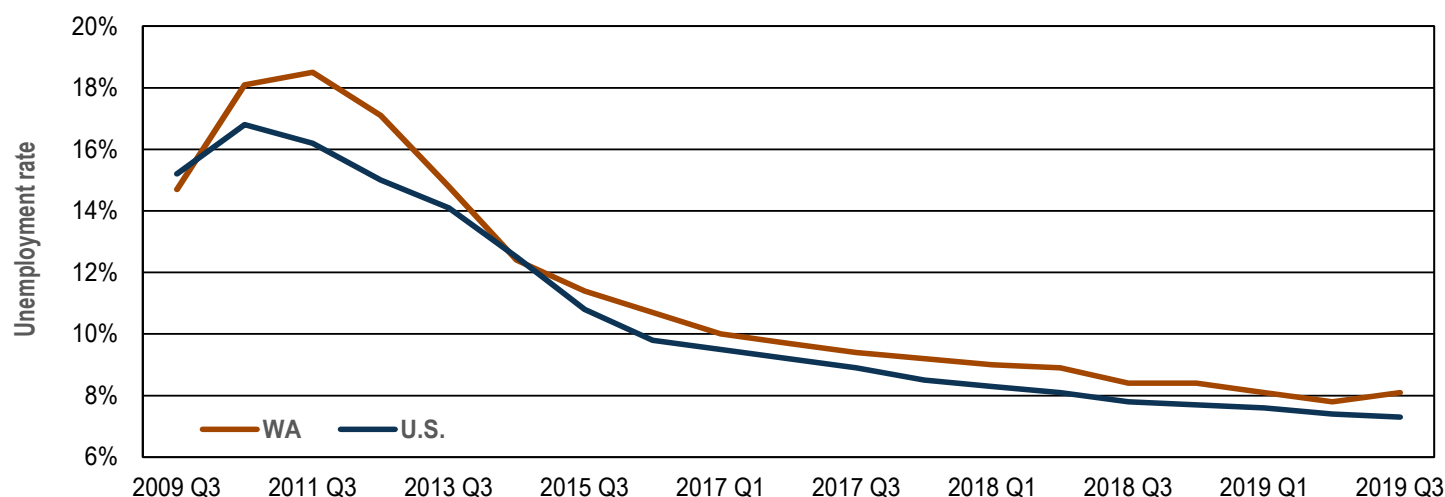
### U-6: Broader unemployment measure declined in the four quarter period ending September 2019

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) recently updated its “alternative measures of labor underutilization” for states to include annual averages for 2019. One such alternative measure is the U-6 rate, which considers not only the unemployed population in the official “U-3” unemployment rate, but also marginally attached

workers and those employed part time for economic reasons. The U-6 rate is defined by BLS as the “total unemployed, plus all marginally attached workers, plus total employed part time for economic reasons, as a percent of the civilian labor force plus all marginally attached workers.” This U-6 measure measures the “unemployed, underemployed, and those who are not looking but who want a job.”

The U-6 unemployment rate for the third quarter of 2018 through the third quarter of 2019 for Washington state was 8.1 percent. This was lower compared to the 8.4 percent U-6 unemployment rate one year prior. The U.S. U-6 unemployment rate was 7.3 percent over the same time period.

Alternate measures of labor underutilization, four-quarter moving average  
Washington state versus U.S. U-6 unemployment rate



Year	WA/U.S.	Q1	Q2	Q3	Annual average
2019	WA	8.1%	7.8%	8.1%	
	U.S.	7.6%	7.4%	7.3%	
2018	WA	9.0%	8.9%	8.4%	8.4%
	U.S.	8.3%	8.1%	7.8%	7.7%
2017	WA	10.0%	9.7%	9.4%	9.2%
	U.S.	9.5%	9.2%	8.9%	8.5%
2016	WA	10.9%	10.7%	10.7%	10.3%
	U.S.	10.1%	9.9%	9.8%	9.6%
2015	WA	12.0%	11.7%	11.4%	11.0%
	U.S.	11.6%	11.3%	10.8%	10.4%
2014	WA	13.3%	12.8%	12.4%	12.5%
	U.S.	13.4%	12.9%	12.5%	12.0%
2013	WA	16.4%	15.7%	14.8%	14.0%
	U.S.	14.5%	14.3%	14.1%	13.8%
2012	WA	17.6%	17.0%	17.1%	16.9%
	U.S.	15.6%	15.3%	15.0%	14.7%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov/lau/stalt.htm>.

## Industry employment in Washington, seasonally adjusted

### One-month employment change by industry

Based on a BLS survey of businesses and governments, Washington gained an estimated 10,900 jobs during the month, on a seasonally adjusted basis:

- Overall, ten industries expanded employment in December and three contracted.
- Private sector employment is estimated to have increased by 9,800 and government employment increased by 1,100.
- Retail trade employment rose by 3,300, with 1,700 jobs gained in other retail trade.
- Employment in professional and business services increased by 2,600 overall, with 1,300 jobs added in employment services.
- The number of jobs in other services increased by 1,600, with an increase of 500 each in repair and maintenance, and personal and laundry services.
- Employment in construction increased by 1,200 led by a gain of 700 jobs added by specialty trade contractors.
- Manufacturing employment grew by 1,100, with 700 jobs added in durable goods manufacturing and 400 jobs added in nondurable goods manufacturing.

Estimated one-month employment change by industry, seasonally adjusted  
Washington state, November 2019 to December 2019

Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics

<b>Total nonfarm</b>	<b>10,900</b>
Retail trade	3,300
Professional and business services	2,600
Other services	1,600
Construction	1,200
Government	1,100
Manufacturing	1,100
Education and health services	600
Information	400
Leisure and hospitality	300
Transportation, warehousing and utilities	100
Mining and logging	-100
Financial activities	-600
Wholesale trade	-700

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## Industry employment in Washington, not seasonally adjusted

### Change by industry over the year

Based on a BLS survey of businesses and governments, Washington added an estimated 77,800 jobs from December 2018 through December 2019.

- Overall, twelve major industries expanded and one contracted.
- Private sector employment rose 2.6 percent, up an estimated 74,000 jobs.
- Public sector employment rose 0.7 percent, up an estimated 3,800 jobs.
- Employment in information is up 12,300 with the number employed as software publishers up 5,300.
- Education and health services employment increased by 12,200 overall, with 13,900 jobs added in health services and social assistance.
- Professional and business services employment increased by 12,000, led by an 8,100 increase in professional, scientific and technical services.
- Retail trade added 7,700 jobs, with 7,600 jobs added in other retail trade.
- Employment in construction is up by 6,500, led by a gain of 6,000 jobs by specialty trade contractors.

Estimated employment change by industry over the year, not seasonally adjusted  
Washington state, December 2018 through December 2019

Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics

<b>Total nonfarm</b>	<b>77,800</b>
Information	12,300
Education and health services	12,200
Professional and business services	12,000
Retail trade	7,700
Construction	6,500
Other services	6,500
Leisure and hospitality	6,300
Financial activities	4,800
Government	3,800
Transportation, warehousing and utilities	3,100
Manufacturing	2,100
Wholesale trade	1,200
Mining and logging	-700

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The Labor Market and Economic Analysis (LMEA) Division is pleased to announce our new Labor Market Information Director, Mr. Steven Ross. Steven presides over the LMEA team and their products, services and publications.

Steven can be reached by phone at: 360-507-9615 and email at: [SRoss@esd.wa.gov](mailto:SRoss@esd.wa.gov)

#### Monthly unemployment rates

##### December 2019

Washington state:  
4.3% seasonally adjusted

Nationwide:  
3.5% seasonally adjusted

[Labor force by county snapshot](#)  
not seasonally adjusted

## Seasonally adjusted employment

Seasonally adjusted numbers account for normal seasonal patterns that occur year after year, such as strong seasonal hiring in retail trade around the holidays. Taking into account normal seasonal variations makes it possible to see unusual changes in employment levels.

**Normal seasonal change** is the expected monthly change in employment based on history.

**Estimated change** is the employment change over the month based on BLS survey data.

**Seasonally adjusted change** is change in employment accounting for normal seasonal patterns.

Normal seasonal change, estimated change and seasonally adjusted change  
Washington state, December 2019

Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics

	Normal seasonal change	Estimated change	Seasonally adjusted change
<b>Total nonfarm</b>	<b>-13,300</b>	<b>-2,400</b>	<b>10,900</b>
Leisure and hospitality	2,500	2,800	300
Transportation, warehousing and utilities	1,500	1,600	100
Retail trade	1,100	4,400	3,300
Information	200	600	400
Manufacturing	200	1,300	1,100
Mining and logging	-100	-200	-100
Other services	-400	1,200	1,600
Financial activities	-500	-1,100	-600
Wholesale trade	-1,400	-2,100	-700
Education and health services	-1,500	-900	600
Construction	-3,000	-1,800	1,200
Professional and business services	-4,600	-2,000	2,600
Government	-7,300	-6,200	1,100

Based on historical patterns, Washington employment typically decreases by 13,300 from November to December. This year the state lost an estimated 2,400 jobs, amounting to a seasonally adjusted increase of 10,900 jobs.

- The normal seasonal gain in leisure and hospitality employment is 2,500 in December. The estimated gain was 2,800, so employment increased by 300 on a seasonally adjusted basis.
- Employment in retail trade normally rises by 1,100. It is estimated to have increased by 4,400 this December, so it increased by 3,300 on a seasonally adjusted basis.
- The employment increase on a seasonally adjusted basis was 2,600 in professional and business services in December. The normal seasonal decrease is 4,600. It is estimated to have decreased this December by 2,000.
- Typically, manufacturing increases by 200 in December. On a seasonally adjusted basis, manufacturing employment increased by 1,100 as the estimated increase was 1,300.
- The estimated employment decrease in construction was 1,800. The normal seasonal decrease is 3,000, so on a seasonally adjusted basis, construction employment rose by 1,200.
- The employment increase on a seasonally adjusted basis was 2,600 in professional and business services in December. The normal seasonal decrease is 4,600. It is estimated to have decreased this December by 2,000.

## Contact an economist

Our statewide economist and six regional economists serve customers in their areas for WorkSource offices, workforce development councils, non-profit organizations, higher education, businesses and the news media. They can help you find and use labor market data, fulfill special data requests and answer questions about the state and local labor markets. Get in touch with your regional economist to get the local information you need.

### Statewide labor economist:

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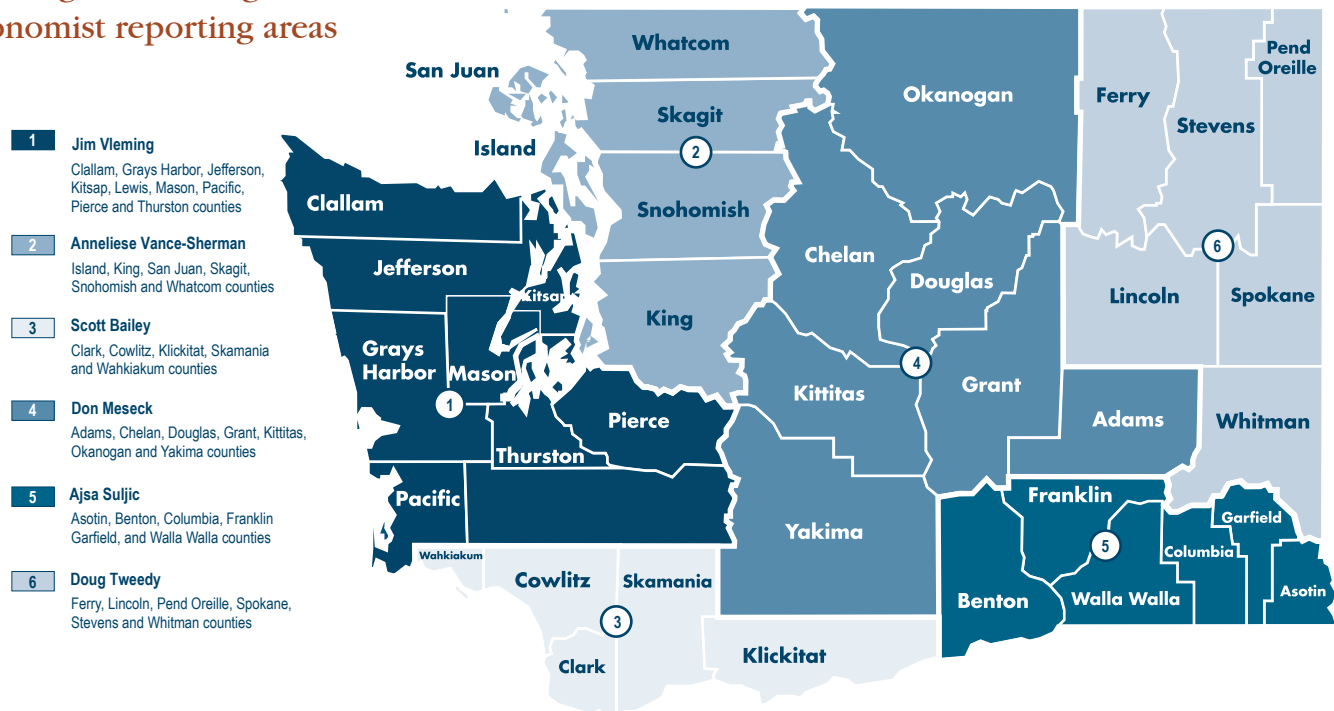
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## Washington state regional labor economist reporting areas



The county level information will be available at 10 a.m., January 28, 2020. The publication schedule for 2020 is posted at: <https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/monthly-employment-report>.

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