

# The Monthly Employment Report

Washington 5.3%

United States 5.8%

Seasonally adjusted

May 2021



Employment Security Department  
WASHINGTON STATE



**For workers and businesses affected by COVID-19, Employment Security has programs that may help. Please see ESD's website for more information. For labor market information questions, please send your emails to [lmea@esd.wa.gov](mailto:lmea@esd.wa.gov).**

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 8,300 in May 2021.<sup>1</sup> BLS estimates the private sector gained 7,000 jobs during the month and the public sector gained 1,300 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for May 2020 through May 2021 indicate an increase in employment of 248,900 for the state. The private sector gained 229,500 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 19,400 jobs over the year.

Washington's preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for May 2021 is 5.3 percent. The revised estimated April 2021 unemployment rate is at 5.4 percent. The May 2020 unemployment rate was 12.5 percent.

BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. The April 2021 preliminary estimated gain of 11,200 jobs was revised to a gain of 13,200 jobs.

For more information, call Paul Turek, labor economist at 360-706-3044.

## 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, April and May 2020 and 2021  
Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

	May 2021 (Preliminary)	April 2021 (Revised)	May 2020 (Revised)	April 2020 (Revised)
<b>United States</b>				
Unemployment rate				
Seasonally adjusted	5.8%	6.1%	13.3%	14.8%
<b>Washington</b>				
Unemployment rate	5.3%	5.4%	12.5%	16.3%
Resident labor force	3,875,600	3,861,200	3,904,900	3,988,400
Unemployed	205,200	209,400	487,300	652,100
<b>Seattle/Bellevue/Everett</b>				
Unemployment rate	5.1%	5.3%	12.4%	16.6%
Resident labor force	1,748,400	1,750,200	1,712,300	1,705,300
Unemployed	90,000	93,500	211,700	283,200

<sup>1</sup>Most of the employment numbers discussed in this report refers to jobs, not people. 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 May 2021 is 5.3 percent. The revised estimated April 2021 unemployment rate is 5.4 percent.

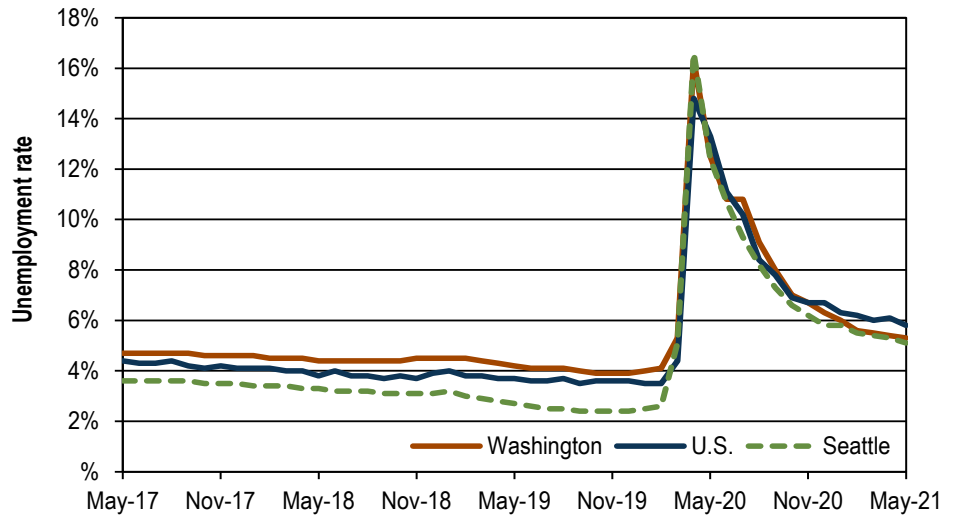
According to BLS estimates, the number of unemployed people fell by 4,200 in May 2021 compared to April 2021. At the same time, the number of employed people rose by an estimated 18,600. Overall, this amounted to an increase of 14,400 people in the labor force.

The preliminary May 2021 unemployment rate is 7.2 percentage points lower than the May 2020 rate of 12.5 percent.

### Unemployment rates, seasonally adjusted

U.S., Washington and Seattle, May 2017 through May 2021

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



### May 2021 preliminary unemployment rates:

U.S. (preliminary) 5.8%  
 Washington (preliminary) 5.3%  
 Seattle area (preliminary) 5.1%

## Employment change, seasonally adjusted

Based on BLS estimates, Washington state nonfarm employment increased by 8,300 jobs from April 2021 to May 2021.

### Recent employment change:

**March 2021:** up 27,00 jobs (revised)

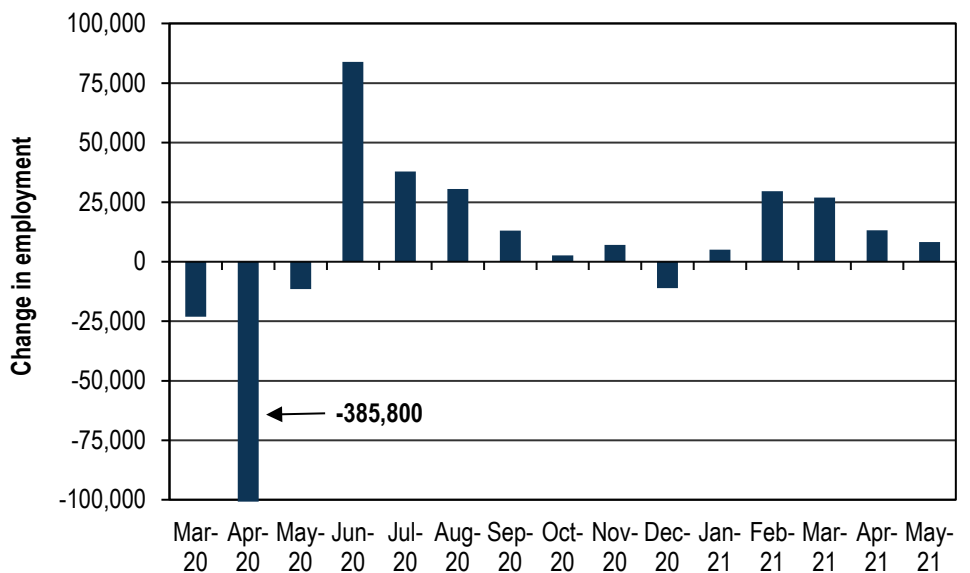
**April 2021:** up 13,200 jobs (revised)

**May 2021:** up 8,300 jobs (preliminary)

### Monthly employment change, seasonally adjusted

Washington state, March 2020 through May 2021

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



## Employment and unemployment, seasonally adjusted

### February 2020

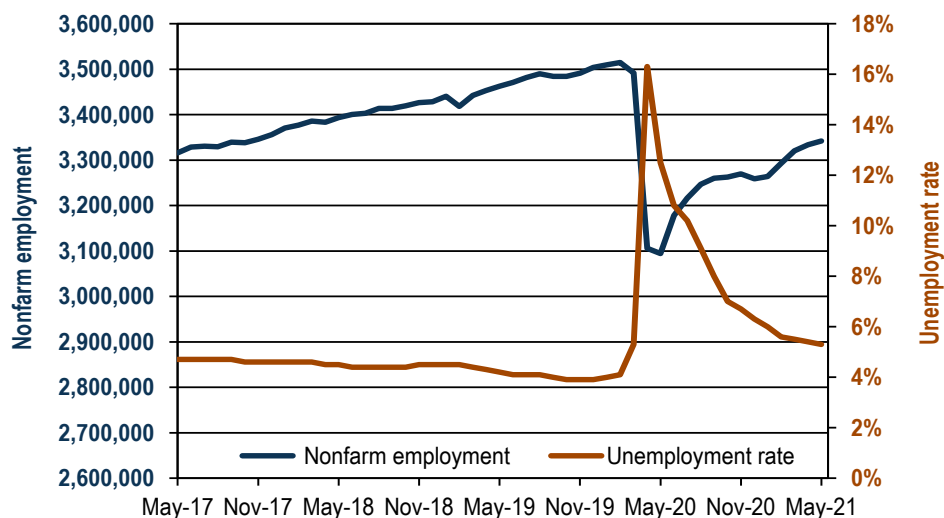
(Start of 2020 employment recession in Washington)

Nonfarm employment: 3,514,800  
Unemployment rate: 4.1%

### May 2021 (preliminary)

Nonfarm employment: 3,341,700  
Unemployment rate: 5.3%

Nonfarm employment and unemployment rate, seasonally adjusted  
Washington state, May 2017 through May 2021  
Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics,  
Current Employment Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics



## Workers and businesses affected by COVID-19

Employment Security's **COVID-19 online information page** covers topics for businesses and workers impacted by COVID-19. Topics include:

- Subscribing for updates
- Frequently asked questions
- Workers Q&A
- Business Q&A
- CARES ACT
- Federal stimulus updates
- Eligibility checker
- COVID-19 rulemaking
- Action alerts and updates

We are all in this together. The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented demand for services, but we are building capacity, updating technology, and we thank you for your patience while we work to serve you better.

**Did you know** that you can subscribe for email updates on a number of Employment Security Department topics all at once? Go to [esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo](https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo) and select the email icon at the top of the page.



Enter your email address and subscribe by checking the boxes for topics such as:

COVID-19  
Labor market information  
News releases  
Employer news and resources  
Paid Family and Medical Leave  
Employer information  
Shared work  
WorkSource system  
Unemployment insurance  
Training

Many more to come, so sign up today for your email updates!

## U-6 unemployment rate

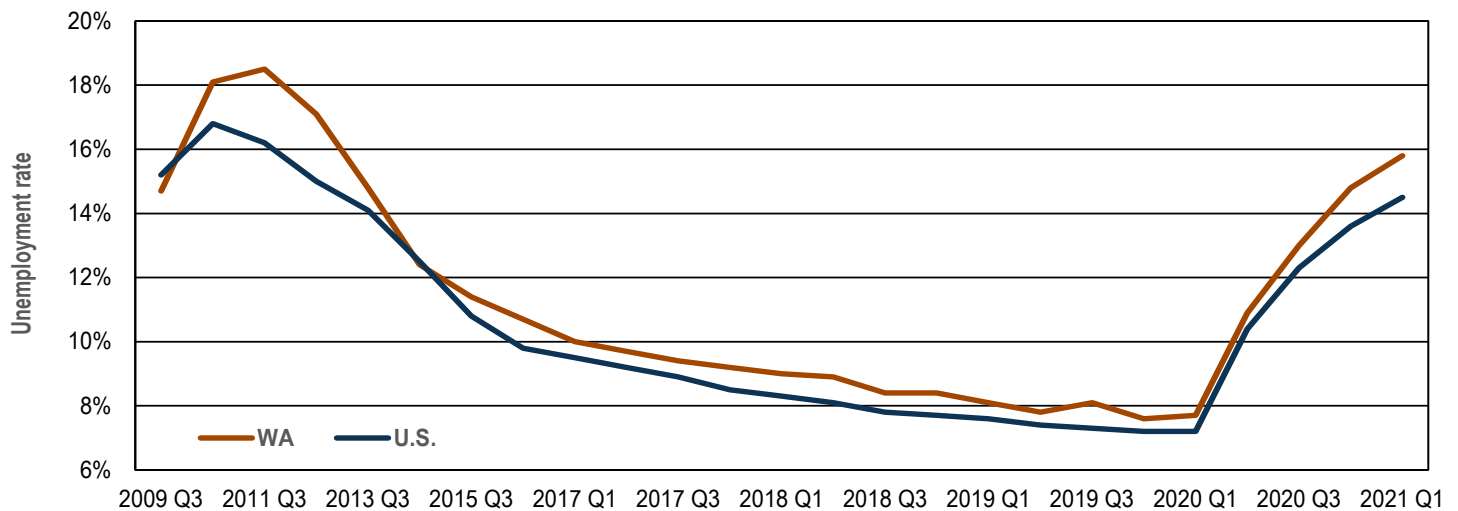
### U-6: Broader unemployment measure increased in the four-quarter period ending first quarter 2021

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) recently updated its “alternative measures of labor underutilization” for states to include annual averages for first quarter 2020. 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 second quarter 2020 through the first quarter 2021 for Washington state was 15.8 percent. This was higher compared to the 14.8 percent U-6 unemployment annual 2020 rate. The U.S. U-6 unemployment rate for the second quarter 2020 through the first quarter 2021 was 14.5 percent.

**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
2021	WA	15.8%			
	U.S.	14.5%			
2020	WA	8.1%	10.9%	13.0%	14.8%
	U.S.	7.7%	10.4%	12.3%	13.6%
2019	WA	8.1%	7.8%	8.1%	7.6%
	U.S.	7.6%	7.4%	7.3%	7.2%
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%

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 8,300 jobs during the month, on a seasonally adjusted basis:

- Overall, employment increased in seven major industries, decreased in five, and was unchanged in one in May.
- Private sector employment is estimated to have increased by 7,000 and government employment increased by 1,300.
- Employment in leisure and hospitality increased by 6,300, led by 2,100 jobs gained in food services and drinking places.
- Employment in professional and business services increased by 3,500, with 2,800 jobs gained in accounting and bookkeeping services.
- Government employment rose by 1,300 overall, led by 2,400 jobs added in local government educational services.
- The number of jobs in financial activities increased by 1,100 overall, with 1,300 jobs added in real estate, rental and leasing.
- Education and health services employment rose by 1,100 overall, with 400 jobs gained in social assistance.

Estimated one-month employment change by industry, seasonally adjusted  
Washington state, April 2021 to May 2021

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

<b>Total nonfarm</b>	<b>8,300</b>
Leisure and hospitality	6,300
Professional and business services	3,500
Government	1,300
Financial activities	1,100
Education and health services	1,100
Information	600
Transportation, warehousing and utilities	100
Mining and logging	0
Other services	-200
Wholesale trade	-700
Manufacturing	-900
Retail trade	-1,300
Construction	-2,600

### As we navigate the COVID-19 developments

in Washington state and beyond, we know Washington state businesses, nonprofits, city and county municipalities, educational institutions, as well as economic and workforce development professionals, are looking for sound data about the short and long term economic and workforce impacts to their individual businesses, industries and regions.

If you have specific questions regarding labor market information, please send your emails to [lmea@esd.wa.gov](mailto:lmea@esd.wa.gov).

## Industry employment in Washington, not seasonally adjusted

### Change by industry over the year

Based on a BLS survey of businesses and governments, Washington gained an estimated 248,900 jobs from May 2020 through May 2021.

- Overall, twelve major industries expanded and one contracted.
- Private sector employment rose 9.0 percent, up an estimated 229,500 jobs.
- Public sector employment rose 3.5 percent, up an estimated 19,400 jobs.
- Employment in leisure and hospitality is up by 69,900, with food services and drinking places adding 47,600 jobs.
- Retail trade employment rose 49,100 overall, with 24,500 jobs gained in other retail trade.
- Education and health services employment increased by 48,300, with 20,000 jobs added in social assistance.
- Construction employment increased by 20,000, with 15,400 jobs added by specialty trade contractors.
- Employment in manufacturing is down 9,900, led by a decrease of 12,800 in aerospace product and parts manufacturing.

Estimated employment change by industry over the year, not seasonally adjusted  
Washington state, May 2020 through May 2021

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

<b>Total nonfarm</b>	<b>248,900</b>
Leisure and hospitality	69,900
Retail trade	49,100
Education and health services	48,300
Professional and business services	22,700
Construction	20,000
Government	19,400
Other services	10,800
Wholesale trade	9,100
Information	5,500
Transportation, warehousing and utilities	2,600
Financial activities	1,100
Mining and logging	300
Manufacturing	-9,900

## 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, May 2021

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>18,700</b>	<b>27,000</b>	<b>8,300</b>
Leisure and hospitality	5,200	11,500	6,300
Retail trade	4,400	3,100	-1,300
Government	3,900	5,200	1,300
Manufacturing	1,800	900	-900
Construction	1,800	-800	-2,600
Financial activities	900	2,000	1,100
Wholesale trade	900	200	-700
Other services	800	600	-200
Information	600	1,200	600
Professional and business services	300	3,800	3,500
Mining and logging	200	200	0
Transportation, warehousing and utilities	-600	-500	100
Education and health services	-1,500	-400	1,100

Based on historical patterns, Washington employment typically increases by 18,700 from April to May. This year the state gained an estimated 27,000 jobs, amounting to a seasonally adjusted increase of 8,300 jobs.

- The normal seasonal gain in leisure and hospitality employment is 5,200 in May. The estimated gain was 11,500, so employment increased by 6,300 on a seasonally adjusted basis.
- Employment in retail trade normally rises by 4,400. It is estimated to have increased by 3,100 this May so it decreased by 1,300 on a seasonally adjusted basis.
- Typically, manufacturing employment increases by 1,800 in May. On a seasonally adjusted basis, manufacturing employment decreased by 900 as the estimated increase was 900.
- The estimated employment decrease in construction was 800. The normal seasonal increase is 1,800, so on a seasonally adjusted basis, construction employment fell by 2,600.
- The employment increase on a seasonally adjusted basis was 3,500 in professional and business services in May. The normal seasonal increase is 300. It is estimated to have increased this May by 3,800.

## Media inquiries and contact information

Due to the high volume of requests for information, please send your emails to [media@esd.wa.gov](mailto:media@esd.wa.gov) so that we can forward your requests to the appropriate staff.

For labor market information questions, please send your emails to [lmea@esd.wa.gov](mailto:lmea@esd.wa.gov).

### Statewide labor economist:

Paul Turek, Ph.D.  
[pturek@esd.wa.gov](mailto:pturek@esd.wa.gov)  
 360-706-3044

Ajsa Suljic  
[asuljic@esd.wa.gov](mailto:asuljic@esd.wa.gov)  
 509-734-5928

Doug Tweedy  
[dtweedy@esd.wa.gov](mailto:dtweedy@esd.wa.gov)  
 509-434-5278

### Regional labor economists:

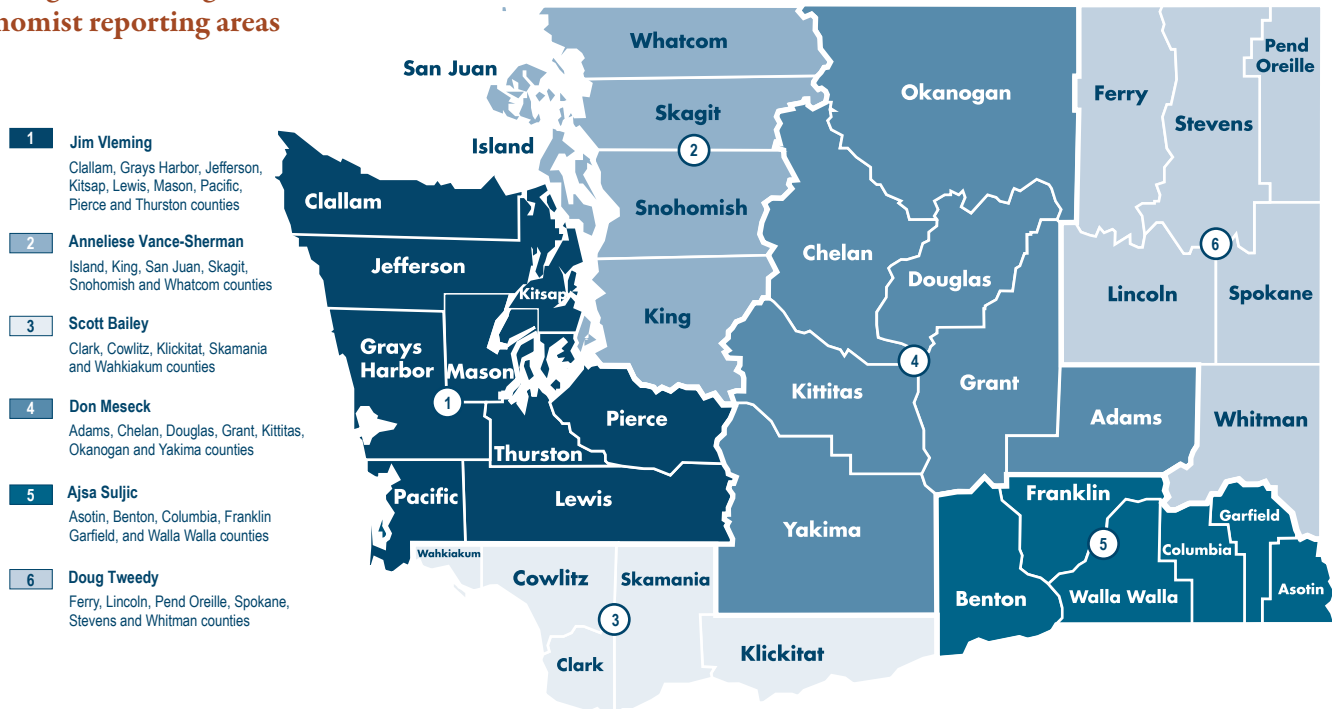
Scott Bailey  
[scott.bailey@esd.wa.gov](mailto:scott.bailey@esd.wa.gov)  
 360-810-0048

Anneliese Vance-Sherman, Ph.D.  
[avancesherman@esd.wa.gov](mailto:avancesherman@esd.wa.gov)  
 425-258-6315

Don Meseck  
[dmeseck@esd.wa.gov](mailto:dmeseck@esd.wa.gov)  
 509-574-0176

Jim Vleming  
[jvleming@esd.wa.gov](mailto:jvleming@esd.wa.gov)  
 360-819-3427

## Washington state regional labor economist reporting areas



The county level information will be available at 10 a.m., June 22, 2021.

The publication schedule for 2021 is posted at: <https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/monthly-employment-report>.

Employment Security Department is an equal opportunity employer/programs. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Language assistance services for limited English proficient individuals are available free of charge. Washington Relay Service: 711.

This workforce product was funded by a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. The product was created by the recipient and does not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S. Department of Labor. The Department of Labor makes no guarantees, warranties, or assurances of any kind, expressed or implied, with respect to such information, including any information on linked sites and including, but not limited to, accuracy of the information or its completeness, timeliness, usefulness, adequacy, continued availability, or ownership. This product is copyrighted by the institution that created it. Internal use by an organization and/or personal use by an individual for non-commercial purposes is permissible. All other uses require the prior authorization of the copyright owner.