

The Monthly Employment Report

March 2024

Prepared by Anneliese Vance-Sherman, chief labor economist

On a seasonally adjusted basis, preliminary estimates from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicate nonfarm employment in Washington increased by 5,300 in March 2024.¹ BLS estimates that employment in the private sector expanded by 2,900 jobs over the month and employers in the public sector added 2,400 jobs.

On a not seasonally adjusted basis, estimates for March 2023 through March 2024 indicate an increase in employment of 57,800 for the state. The private sector added 34,200 jobs while the public sector gained an estimated 23,600 jobs over the year.

Washington's preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for March 2024 was 4.8%. The revised estimated unemployment rate for February 2024 was 4.7%. The unemployment rate in March 2023 was 4.5%.

BLS estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. Preliminary estimates are subject to revision. The February 2024 preliminary estimated addition of 2,600 jobs was revised up to a gain of 3,900 jobs.

For more information, call Anneliese Vance-Sherman at 564-900-0748.

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.

¹ Most of the employment numbers discussed in this report refer 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.

Figure 1: Resident civilian labor force and unemployment, seasonally adjusted

United States and Washington, February and March 2023, and February and March 2024. Source: Employment Security Department/DATA Division; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

	March 2024 (Preliminary)	February 2024 (Revised)	March 2023 (Revised)	February 2023 (Revised)
United States				
Unemployment rate	3.8%	3.9%	3.5%	3.6%
Washington				
Unemployment rate	4.8%	4.7%	4.5%	4.6%
Resident labor force	4,019,937	4,027,298	4,047,314	4,035,637
Unemployed	193,580	190,070	180,382	185,457
Seattle/Bellevue/Everett				
Unemployment rate	4.1%	4.0%	3.0%	3.1%
Resident labor force	1,804,165	1,809,015	1,787,758	1,783,642
Unemployed	73,417	71,629	53,162	54,874

Unemployment, seasonally adjusted

The BLS estimates Washington’s preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for March 2024 was 4.8%. The revised estimate for February 2024 was 4.7%.

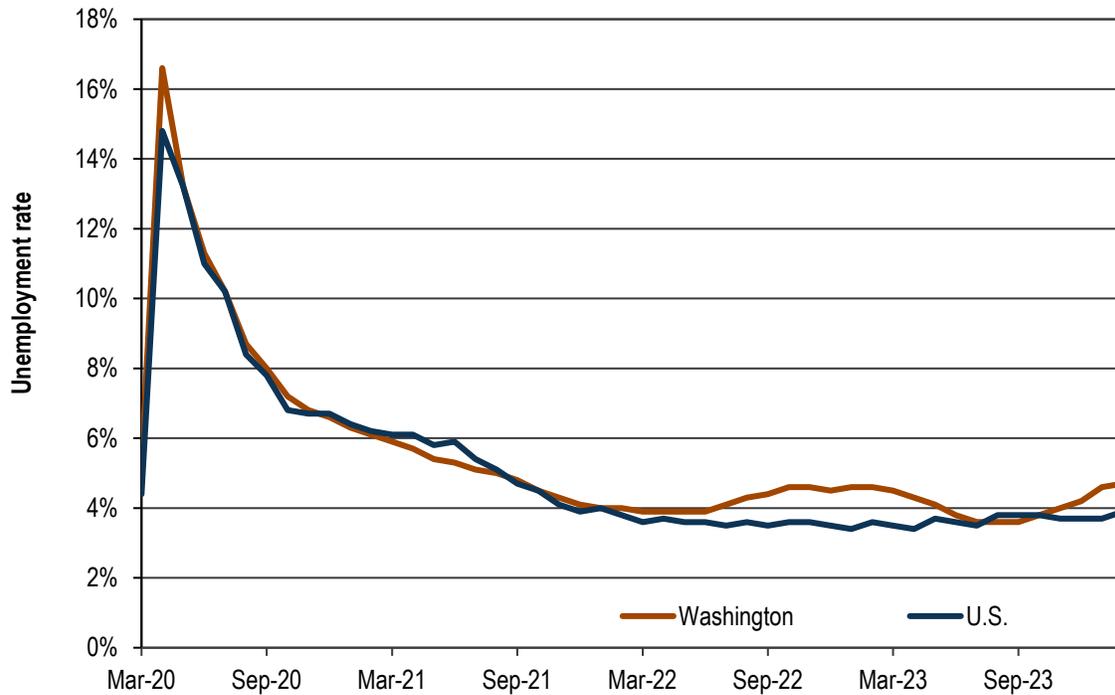
According to BLS estimates, the number of unemployed Washington residents increased by 3,510 over the month. At the same time, the estimated number of employed Washington residents dropped by 10,871. Overall, this amounted to a decrease of 7,361 workers in the labor force in March.

The preliminary March 2024 unemployment rate was 4.8% compared to 4.5% 12 months ago. **March 2024 preliminary unemployment rates:**

- United States (preliminary) 3.8%
- Washington (preliminary) 4.8%
- Seattle area (preliminary) 4.1%

Figure 2: Unemployment rates, seasonally adjusted

U.S., Washington and Seattle, March 2020 through March 2024. Source: Employment Security Department/DATA Division; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics



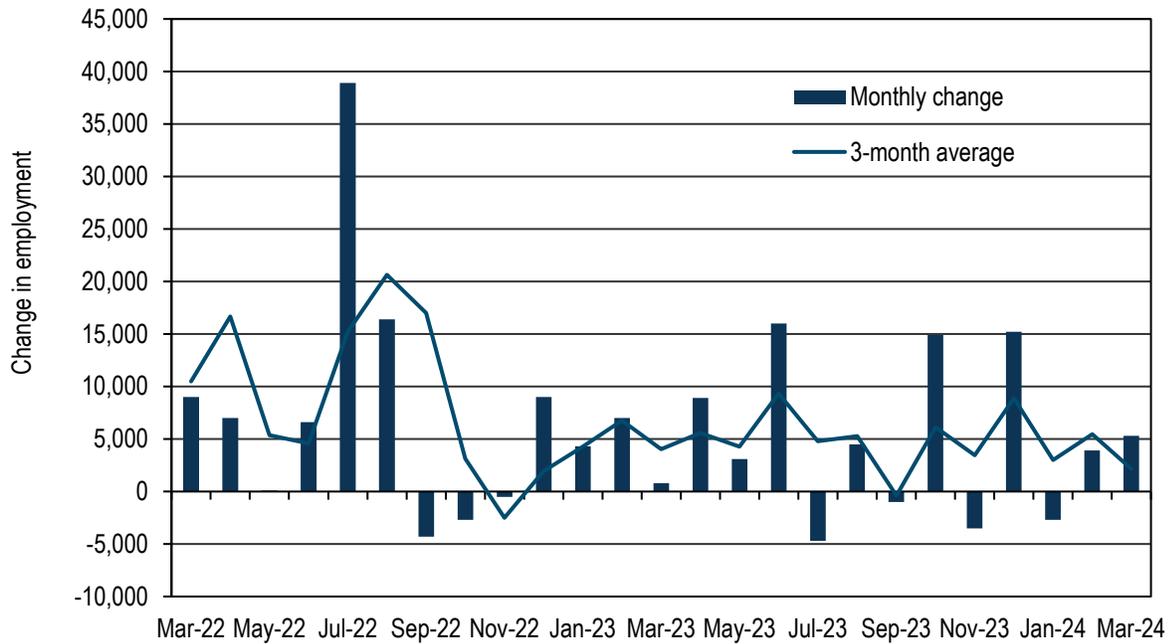
Employment change, seasonally adjusted

Based on BLS estimates, Washington state nonfarm employment increased by 5,300 from February to March 2024. Recent employment change:

- January 2024: down 2,700 jobs (revised)
- February 2024: up 3,900 (revised)
- March 2024: up 5,300 (preliminary)

Figure 3: Monthly employment change, seasonally adjusted

Washington state, March 2022 through March 2024. Source: Employment Security Department/DATA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics



Employment and unemployment, seasonally adjusted

February 2020 (start of 2020 employment recession in Washington)

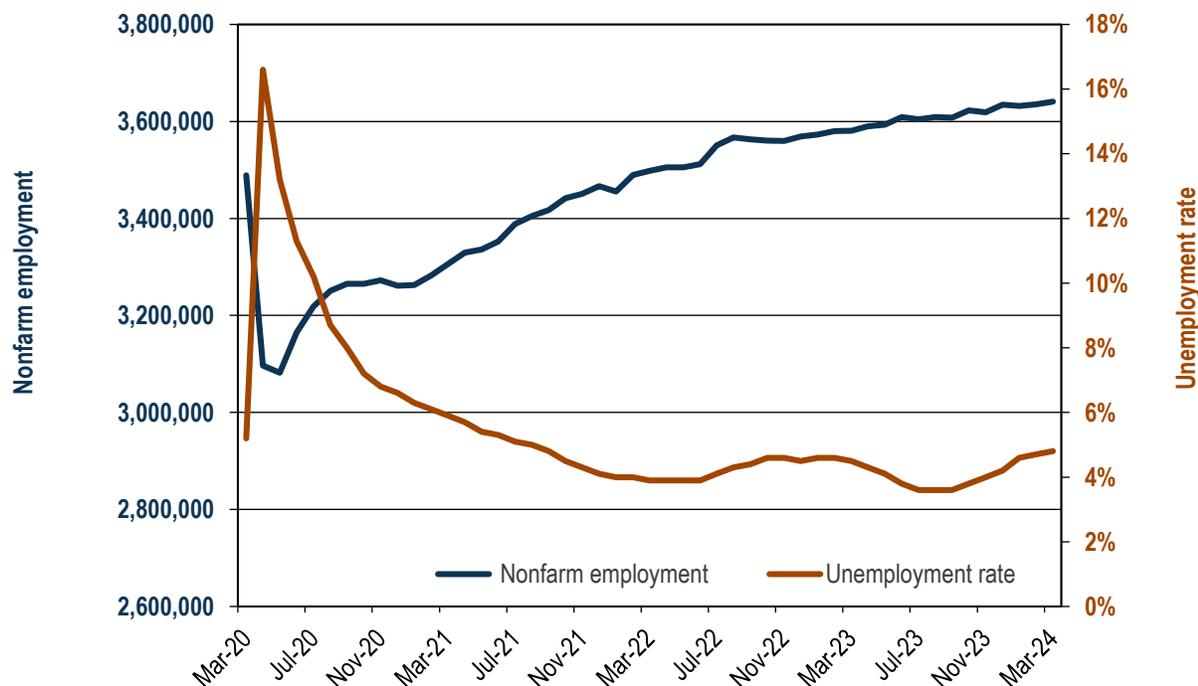
- Nonfarm employment: 3,511,900
- Unemployment rate: 3.8%

March 2024 (preliminary)

- Nonfarm employment: 3,640,800
- Unemployment rate: 4.8%

Figure 4: Nonfarm employment and unemployment rate, seasonally adjusted

Washington, March 2020 through March 2024. Source: Employment Security Department/DATA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics



U-6: Broader annual average unemployment measure increased in the four-quarter period through fourth quarter 2023

BLS recently updated its “alternative measures of labor underutilization” for states to include four-quarter rates through the third quarter of 2023. 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 annual average unemployment rate for the four-quarter period through fourth quarter 2023 for Washington state was 8.1%. This is above the 7.5% average for the four-quarter period through third quarter 2023. The U.S. U-6 average for the four-quarter period through fourth quarter 2023 was 6.9%.

Figure 5: Alternative measures of labor underutilization, four-quarter moving average

Washington state and U.S. U-6 unemployment rate. Source: Employment Security Department/DATA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey and Local Area Unemployment Statistics

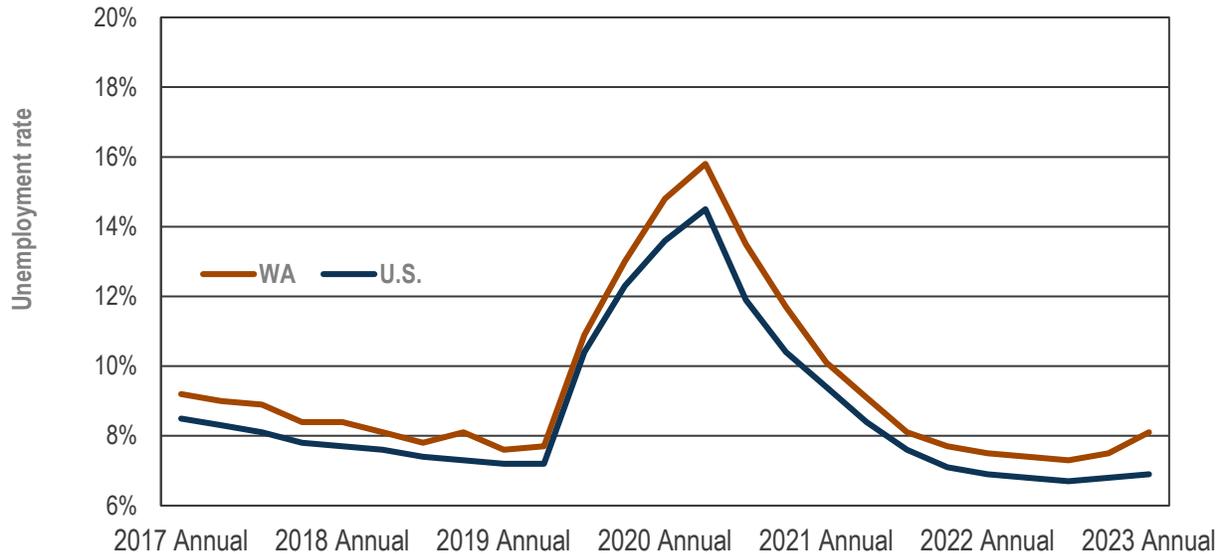


Figure 6: Alternate measures of labor underutilization, four quarter moving average

Washington state versus U.S. U-6 unemployment rate for 2009 through 2023. Source: Employment Security Department/DATA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey and Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Year	Location	Q1	Q2	Q3	Annual average
2023	Washington	7.4%	7.3%	7.5%	8.1%
	U.S.	6.8%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
2022	Washington	9.1%	8.1%	5.0%	7.5%
	U.S.	8.4%	7.6%	7.1%	6.9%
2021	Washington	15.8%	13.5%	11.7%	10.1%
	U.S.	14.5%	11.9%	10.4%	9.4%
2020	Washington	8.1%	10.9%	13.0%	14.8%
	U.S.	7.7%	10.4%	12.3%	13.6%
2019	Washington	8.1%	7.8%	8.1%	7.6%
	U.S.	7.6%	7.4%	7.3%	7.2%
2018	Washington	9.0%	8.9%	8.4%	8.4%
	U.S.	8.3%	8.1%	7.8%	7.7%
2017	Washington	10.0%	9.7%	9.4%	9.2%
	U.S.	9.5%	9.2%	8.9%	8.5%

Year	Location	Q1	Q2	Q3	Annual average
2016	Washington	10.9%	10.7%	10.7%	10.3%
	U.S.	10.1%	9.9%	9.8%	9.6%
2015	Washington	12.0%	11.7%	11.4%	11.0%
	U.S.	11.6%	11.3%	10.8%	10.4%
2014	Washington	13.3%	12.8%	12.4%	12.5%
	U.S.	13.4%	12.9%	12.5%	12.0%
2013	Washington	16.4%	15.7%	14.8%	14.0%
	U.S.	14.5%	14.3%	14.1%	13.8%
2012	Washington	17.6%	17.0%	17.1%	16.9%
	U.S.	15.6%	15.3%	15.0%	14.7%
2011	Washington	18.4%	18.7%	18.5%	17.8%
	U.S.	16.5%	16.3%	16.2%	15.9%
2010	Washington	17.2%	17.4%	18.1%	18.4%
	U.S.	16.7%	16.8%	16.8%	16.7%
2009	Washington	11.9%	13.5%	14.7%	16.2%
	U.S.	12.1%	13.7%	15.2%	16.2%

Industry employment in Washington, seasonally adjusted

One-month employment change by industry

- Based on a BLS survey of businesses and governments, Washington employers added an estimated 5,300 jobs during the month, on a seasonally adjusted basis:
- February 2024 estimates were revised up by 1,300 jobs.
- Overall, employment increased in eight major industry sectors and decreased in four.
- Private sector employment is estimated to have increased by 2,900; government employment increased by 2,400 in March.
- The largest sector level gains in private industry were observed in professional and business services (up 2,700) and wholesale trade (up 1,800). Financial activities added 1,400 jobs and employment in educational and health services expanded by 1,200.
- The largest gains in the diverse professional and business services sector were attributable to hiring in professional, scientific and technical services (up 2,300), especially within computer systems design and related services (up 800).
- One-month losses were observed in other services (down 2,300), leisure and hospitality (-1,400), construction (down 1,200) and information (down 1,000).
- Within other services, membership associations and organizations took the largest hit (-1000). Losses in leisure and hospitality were concentrated in accommodation and food services (-1,300) and construction employment losses were most pronounced among specialty trade contractors (-3,000).

Figure 7: Estimated one-month employment change by industry, seasonally adjusted

Washington state, February 2024 to March 2024. Source: Employment Security Department/DATA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics

Total nonfarm	5,300
Professional and Business Services	2,700
Government	2,400
Wholesale Trade	1,800
Financial Activities	1,400
Education and Health Services	1,200
Retail Trade	800
Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities	600
Manufacturing	300
Mining and logging	0
Information	-1,000
Construction	-1,200
Leisure and hospitality	-1,400
Other Services	-2,300

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 57,800 jobs from March 2023 to March 2024. This is a 1.6% increase in employment over the year.

- Overall, employment in ten major industries expanded and three decreased.
- Private sector employment rose 1.2%, up an estimated 34,200 jobs.
- Public sector employment rose 4.1%, up an estimated 23,600 jobs. The largest number of public sector jobs was added in local government.
- The largest private sector gains were attributable to hiring in education and health services (up 23,000) and leisure and hospitality (up 10,400); the deepest one-year losses were observed in information (down 8,300) and construction (down 7,500).
- Education and health services employment gains were primarily attributable to ambulatory health care services (up 8,200).
- The largest employment gains in leisure and hospitality were observed in accommodation and food services. (up 7,700).
- Employment in information dropped by 8,300 overall; within that, the software publishing industry shed an estimated 3,300 jobs.
- Construction sector employment dropped by 7,500 over the year. The deepest losses were observed in specialty trade contractors (down 6,900).

Figure 8: Estimated employment change by industry over the year, not seasonally adjusted

Washington state, March 2023 through March 2024. Source: Employment Security Department/DATA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics

Total nonfarm	57,800
Government	23,600
Education and health services	23,000
Leisure and hospitality	10,400
Manufacturing	8,600
Transportation, warehousing and utilities	5,300
Wholesale trade	3,300
Professional and business services	2,500
Other services	500
Financial activities	400
Mining and logging	300
Retail trade	-4,300
Construction	-7,500
Information	-8,300

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. Considering 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.

Figure 9: Normal seasonal change, estimated change and seasonally adjusted change

Washington state, March 2024. Source: Employment Security Department/DATA; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics

	Normal seasonal change	Estimated change	Seasonally adjusted change
Total Nonfarm	14,500	19,800	5,300
Professional and Business Services	1,100	3,800	2,700
Government	1,800	4,200	2,400
Wholesale Trade	500	2,300	1,800
Financial Activities	700	2,100	1,400
Education and Health Services	300	1,500	1,200
Retail Trade	1,100	1,900	800
Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities	200	800	600
Manufacturing	-100	200	300
Mining and logging	0	0	0
Information	600	-400	-1,000
Construction	3,400	2,200	-1,200
Leisure and hospitality	3,600	2,200	-1,400
Other Services	1,300	-1,000	-2,300

Contact us

For more Washington Labor Market Information, visit us at www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo.

Contact us at data@esd.wa.gov with any questions. County level information will be available at 10 a.m., April 23, 2024. The publication schedule for 2024 can be found at:

<https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/monthly-employment-report>.

Employment Security Department is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to people 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 U.S. 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.