



For Release: Tuesday, May 18, 2021

21-918-SAN

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County Employment and Wages in Washington – Third Quarter 2020

Employment decreased in Washington's 10 large counties from September 2019 to September 2020, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (Large counties are those with annual average employment levels of 75,000 or more in 2019.) Regional Commissioner Chris Rosenlund noted that employment decreases ranged from 7.6 percent in Snohomish and Whatcom Counties to 5.4 percent in Yakima County. (See [chart 1](#) and [table 1.](#))

Chart 1. Over-the-year percent change in covered employment among the largest counties in Washington, September 2020

County	Percent change, September 2020
Snohomish	-7.6
Whatcom	-7.6
King	-6.9
Pierce	-6.4
Spokane	-6.2
Clark	-5.7
Benton	-5.6
Kitsap	-5.6
Thurston	-5.6
Yakima	-5.4

National employment decreased 6.8 percent over the year, with 355 of the 357 largest U.S. counties reporting declines. Maui + Kalawao, HI, had the largest over-the-year decrease in employment with a loss of 35.4 percent. Utah, UT, experienced the largest over-the-year percentage increase in employment with a gain of 1.9 percent.

Among the 10 largest counties in Washington, employment was highest in King County (1,340,000) in September 2020. Pierce and Snohomish Counties had employment levels of 300,200 and 271,500, respectively. Together, the 10 largest Washington counties accounted for 85.1 percent of total employment within the state. Nationwide, the 357 largest counties made up 72.9 percent of total U.S. employment.

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 29 counties in Washington with employment below 75,000. Wage levels in all 29 smaller counties were below the national average in the third quarter of 2020. (See [table 2.](#))

Large county wage changes

The 10 large Washington counties reported average weekly wage gains from the third quarter of 2019 to the third quarter of 2020. (See [chart 2.](#)) Four counties had rates of wage gains above the national rate of 7.4 percent. King County had the largest gain (+14.3 percent), followed by Kitsap County (+9.8 percent), Clark County (+8.5 percent), and Whatcom County (+7.9 percent). Over-the-year wage gains among Washington's other six large counties ranged from 7.2 percent to 6.2 percent.

Among the 357 largest counties in the United States, 350 had over-the-year wage increases. Nationally, the increases in average weekly wages largely reflect substantial employment loss among lower-paid industries. Employment declines occurring in some higher-paid industries also feature significant wage increases. San Mateo, CA, had the largest percentage wage increase (+23.2 percent). Seven large counties had wage declines during the period. Ector, TX, had the largest over-the-year percentage decrease (-11.0 percent).

Chart 2. Over-the-year percent change in covered average weekly wages among the largest counties in Washington, third quarter 2020

County	Percent change, third quarter 2020
King	14.3
Kitsap	9.8
Clark	8.5
Whatcom	7.9
Thurston	7.2
Pierce	7.1
Spokane	7.0
Yakima	6.4
Benton	6.3
Snohomish	6.2

Large county average weekly wages

Average weekly wages in three of Washington's large counties placed in the top third of the national ranking. King County (\$2,077, 5th), Snohomish County (\$1,243, 73rd), and Benton County (\$1,175, 95th) had weekly wages that exceeded the national average of \$1,173 in the third quarter of 2020. Yakima County (\$843, 341st) had the lowest average weekly wage among the state's large counties and placed in the bottom third of the largest U.S. counties.

Among the largest U.S. counties, 96 reported average weekly wages above the U.S. average in the third quarter of 2020. San Mateo, CA, had the highest average weekly wage at \$2,922. Average weekly wages were at or below the national average in 261 counties. At \$697 a week, Cameron, TX, had the lowest average weekly wage.

Average weekly wages in Washington's smaller counties

All 29 counties in Washington with employment below 75,000 had average weekly wages lower than the national average of \$1,173. Among these counties, Cowlitz County had the highest average weekly wage at \$1,086. Wahkiakum County reported the lowest weekly wage among all counties in the state, averaging \$711 in the third quarter of 2020.

When all 39 counties in Washington were considered, 2 had wages below \$800. Fifteen counties had average weekly wages ranging from \$800 to \$899, 8 had wages from \$900 to \$999, and 14 had wages at or above \$1,000. (See [chart 3.](#))

Additional statistics and other information

QCEW data for states have been included in this release in [table 3](#). For additional information about quarterly employment and wages data, please read the [Technical Note](#) or visit www.bls.gov/cew.

Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. The 2019 edition of this publication was published in September 2020. Tables and additional content from the 2019 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* are available at www.bls.gov/cew/publications/employment-and-wages-annual-averages/2019/home.htm. The 2020 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* will be available in September 2021.

The County Employment and Wages release for fourth quarter 2020 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, May 19, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. (ET). The County Employment and Wages full data update for fourth quarter 2020 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, June 2, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. (ET) .

QCEW Imputation Issue Caused by Pandemic-Related Challenges

In the spring of 2020, BLS modified its imputation process for QCEW to be more responsive to current economic conditions. While continuing work to improve this process, BLS made an unintended data processing error. This error affected data for the second, third, and fourth quarters of 2020. BLS has analyzed this issue and has determined that the impact on QCEW employment was negligible at the statewide level. In smaller areas and industries revisions may be larger than usual. Wage data were not affected. Following the usual QCEW practice these data will be revised and corrected with the full data update on September 1, 2021.

For more information on QCEW imputation methodology, see www.bls.gov/cew/additional-resources/imputation-methodology.htm.

Technical Note

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from summaries of employment and total pay of workers covered by state and federal unemployment insurance (UI) legislation and provided by State Workforce Agencies (SWAs). The average weekly wage values are calculated by dividing quarterly total wages by the average of the three monthly employment levels of those covered by UI programs. The result is then divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or states for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), counties, and the nation are available on the BLS web site at www.bls.gov/cew. However, data in QCEW press releases have been revised and may not match the data contained on the Bureau's web site.

QCEW data are not designed as a time series. QCEW data are simply the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. Establishments can move in or out of a county or industry for a number of reasons—some reflecting economic events, others reflecting administrative changes.

The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS web site. These potential differences result from the states' continuing receipt, review and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (noneconomic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

Information in this release will be made available to individuals with sensory impairments upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Service: (800) 877-8339.

Table 1. Covered employment and wages in the United States and the 10 largest counties in Washington, third quarter 2020

Area	Establishments, third quarter 2020 (thousands)	Employment			Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
		September 2020 (thousands)	Percent change, September 2019–20 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾	Third quarter 2020	National ranking by level ⁽³⁾	Percent change, third quarter 2019–20 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾
United States ⁽⁴⁾	10,561.3	138,549.5	-6.8	--	\$1,173	--	7.4	--
Washington.....	256.6	3,266.2	-6.3	--	1,482	3	11.0	2
Benton	6.2	88.6	-5.6	127	1,175	95	6.3	233
Clark	16.1	156.1	-5.7	136	1,148	112	8.5	95
King	91.7	1,340.0	-6.9	200	2,077	5	14.3	11
Kitsap	7.1	87.1	-5.6	127	1,117	134	9.8	49
Pierce	24.1	300.2	-6.4	178	1,114	141	7.1	181
Snohomish	22.4	271.5	-7.6	220	1,243	73	6.2	240
Spokane	17.2	218.1	-6.2	169	1,018	208	7.0	190
Thurston	8.9	113.2	-5.6	127	1,117	134	7.2	175
Whatcom	7.6	84.5	-7.6	220	1,007	221	7.9	131
Yakima.....	8.2	119.7	-5.4	120	843	341	6.4	227

Footnotes:

(1) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(2) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

(3) Ranking does not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(4) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

Note: Data are preliminary. Covered employment and wages includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

Table 2. Covered employment and wages in the United States and all counties in Washington, third quarter 2020

Area	Employment September 2020	Average Weekly Wage(1)
United States(2)	138,549,503	\$1,173
Washington.....	3,266,168	1,482
Adams	9,224	848
Asotin	6,482	817
Benton	88,640	1,175
Chelan	43,097	867
Clallam	22,871	890
Clark	156,076	1,148
Columbia	1,396	966
Cowlitz.....	38,634	1,086
Douglas	12,766	814
Ferry	1,736	864
Franklin.....	34,821	913
Garfield.....	678	1,046
Grant	41,885	945
Grays Harbor.....	21,859	912
Island	16,134	896
Jefferson.....	9,005	846
King	1,340,019	2,077
Kitsap	87,081	1,117
Kittitas.....	15,076	880
Klickitat.....	7,038	1,028
Lewis	26,391	922
Lincoln	2,866	828
Mason.....	13,798	903
Okanogan.....	17,299	776
Pacific.....	6,252	807
Pend Oreille.....	2,791	914
Pierce	300,194	1,114
San Juan	5,633	838
Skagit	49,546	1,037
Skamania	1,944	831
Snohomish	271,526	1,243
Spokane	218,081	1,018
Stevens	10,885	837
Thurston	113,222	1,117
Wahkiakum.....	844	711
Walla Walla.....	28,517	922
Whatcom	84,474	1,007
Whitman	17,597	1,040
Yakima.....	119,714	843

Footnotes

(1) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(2) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

NOTE: Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs. Data are preliminary.

Table 3. Covered employment and wages by state, third quarter 2020

State	Establishments, third quarter 2020 (thousands)	Employment		Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
		September 2020 (thousands)	Percent change, September 2019–20	Third quarter 2020	National ranking by level	Percent change, third quarter 2019–20	National ranking by percent change
United States ⁽²⁾	10,561.3	138,549.5	-6.8	\$1,173	--	7.4	--
Alabama	132.2	1,902.4	-4.5	978	33	6.4	27
Alaska	22.9	302.6	-10.7	1,165	14	5.4	42
Arizona	174.1	2,797.1	-4.2	1,091	22	7.3	17
Arkansas	93.6	1,180.1	-3.4	892	49	6.1	31
California	1,643.8	16,096.8	-9.2	1,466	4	12.0	1
Colorado	220.1	2,597.2	-5.6	1,235	9	5.6	38
Connecticut	125.4	1,555.6	-7.3	1,328	7	7.4	15
Delaware	34.9	428.8	-5.6	1,150	15	6.8	21
District of Columbia	43.3	713.7	-8.1	1,962	1	6.1	31
Florida	749.1	8,329.7	-5.8	1,029	27	8.0	11
Georgia	313.0	4,282.1	-5.2	1,084	23	5.8	35
Hawaii	46.5	507.5	-22.9	1,114	18	10.3	4
Idaho	70.7	763.7	-0.2	884	50	5.5	41
Illinois	385.9	5,558.5	-7.8	1,199	11	6.8	21
Indiana	172.4	2,941.8	-4.7	961	39	5.3	43
Iowa	105.1	1,475.0	-5.2	969	36	6.0	34
Kansas	89.2	1,325.4	-5.0	952	40	6.6	24
Kentucky	128.0	1,807.1	-5.5	935	43	5.8	35
Louisiana	139.5	1,734.6	-9.6	970	35	5.2	45
Maine	54.4	597.3	-5.9	966	37	9.0	9
Maryland	172.4	2,496.6	-7.6	1,277	8	9.5	7
Massachusetts	265.1	3,314.8	-9.4	1,488	2	9.7	6
Michigan	266.9	4,035.9	-7.9	1,096	20	7.5	14
Minnesota	183.1	2,703.3	-7.4	1,178	12	6.4	27
Mississippi	74.9	1,092.4	-4.0	810	51	5.6	38
Missouri	218.8	2,681.7	-5.1	995	32	5.6	38
Montana	53.0	466.9	-2.5	904	48	6.6	24
Nebraska	73.7	949.9	-3.8	964	38	6.4	27
Nevada	87.9	1,251.0	-11.6	1,048	24	7.8	13
New Hampshire	56.1	634.2	-5.2	1,171	13	8.9	10
New Jersey	289.3	3,778.4	-8.0	1,331	6	9.5	7
New Mexico	63.1	771.9	-8.6	944	41	5.1	46
New York	657.6	8,547.7	-10.8	1,446	5	10.0	5
North Carolina	301.4	4,308.2	-4.4	1,039	26	6.9	20
North Dakota	32.5	398.2	-7.0	1,025	28	-0.3	50
Ohio	305.7	5,136.8	-5.6	1,040	25	6.6	24
Oklahoma	112.4	1,538.5	-5.7	917	46	2.3	48
Oregon	164.6	1,837.3	-7.0	1,113	19	7.4	15
Pennsylvania	366.5	5,501.0	-7.6	1,139	17	7.0	19
Rhode Island	40.1	452.5	-8.0	1,092	21	10.4	3
South Carolina	146.6	2,022.9	-5.2	924	44	6.7	23
South Dakota	35.2	422.3	-2.6	918	45	7.2	18
Tennessee	173.6	2,918.1	-4.6	1,022	29	5.8	35
Texas	733.1	11,926.8	-5.5	1,150	15	3.8	47
Utah	114.3	1,518.2	-1.0	1,015	30	6.1	31
Vermont	26.4	283.9	-8.6	1,001	31	7.9	12
Virginia	285.7	3,737.0	-5.0	1,201	10	6.4	27
Washington	256.6	3,266.2	-6.3	1,482	3	11.0	2
West Virginia	51.7	649.1	-6.7	913	47	1.8	49
Wisconsin	181.2	2,746.6	-5.2	977	34	5.3	43
Wyoming	27.5	264.0	-6.8	939	42	-0.4	51
Puerto Rico	45.7	831.6	-5.3	547	(3)	3.4	(3)
Virgin Islands	3.4	33.9	-13.0	1,019	(3)	-0.5	(3)

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Footnotes:

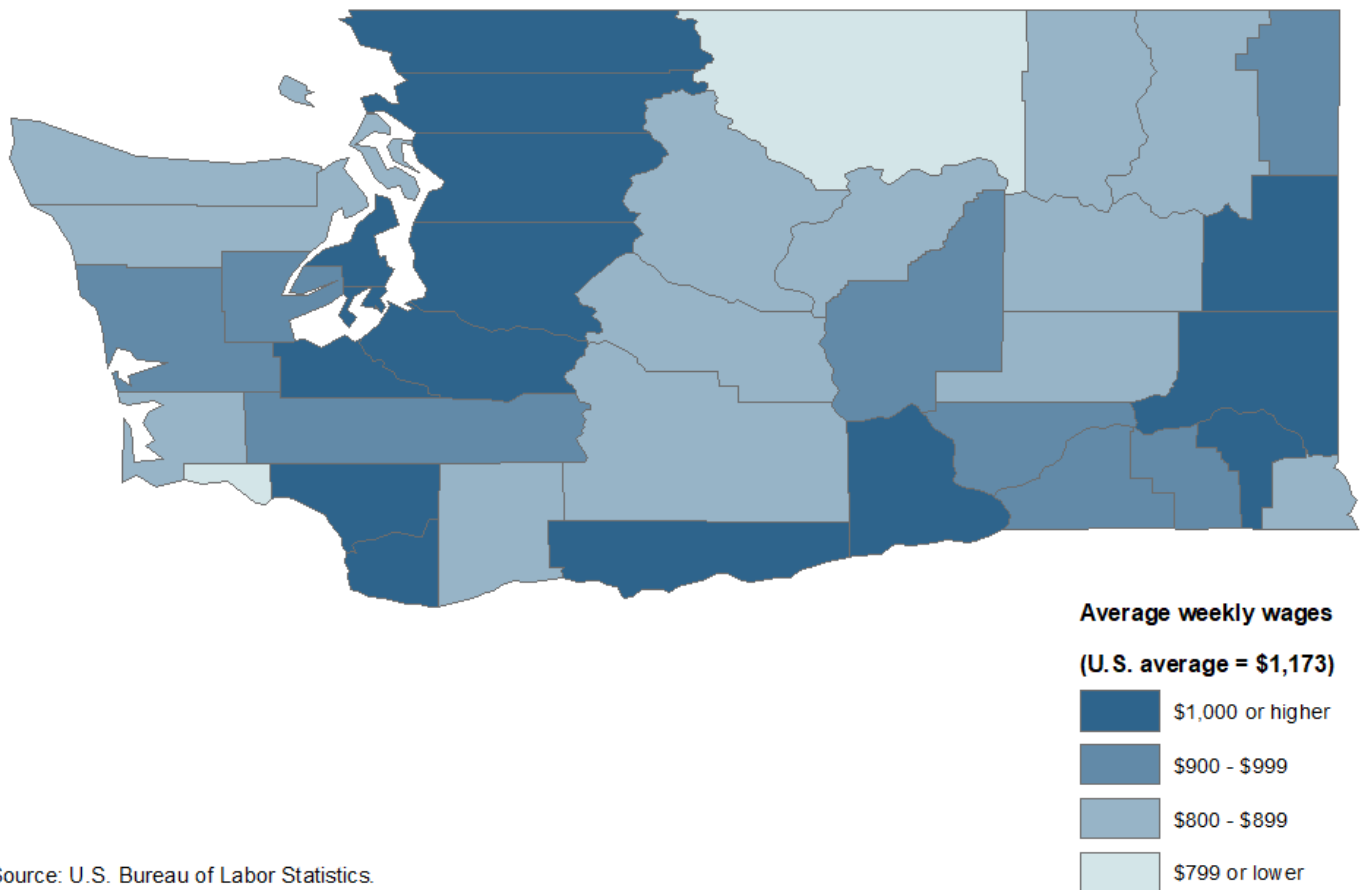
(1) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(2) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(3) Data not included in the national ranking.

Note: Data are preliminary. Covered employment and wages includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

Chart 3. Average weekly wages by county in Washington, third quarter 2020



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.