



Washington State
Employment Security

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Washington Labor Market Quarterly Review

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INDICATORS

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Washington

(Seasonally Adjusted)

December (prel)	2003	6.8%
November (rev)	2003	6.9%
October	2003	7.0%
Annual Average ¹	2002	6.8%

United States

(Seasonally Adjusted)

December (prel)	2003	5.7%
November (rev)	2003	5.9%
October	2003	6.0%
Annual Average ¹	2002	5.4%

¹ Not Seasonally Adjusted

Nonagricultural Employment

(in thousands)

October	2003	2,682.9
November	2003	2,682.0
December	2003	2,686.4

Nonagricultural Employment % Change

(over-the-year)

October	2002-2003	0.1%
November	2002-2003	-0.1%
December	2002-2003	-0.6%

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Fourth Quarter 2003 Sees Modest Improvement Current State Economic Conditions

The fourth quarter puts a slightly positive face on a disappointing year. In retrospect, 2002 looks good. The unemployment rate had stabilized and even declined a bit after having climbed steadily in 2001. Then in 2003, just when all were expecting the unemployment rate



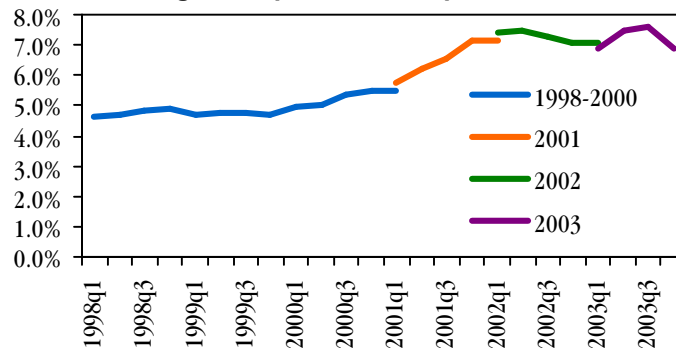
to resume its slow, but steady decline, the rate jumped in the second quarter and then in the third quarter reached a quarterly peak of 7.6 percent, the highest since the start of the recession. In this case, the fourth quarter's decline

to the first quarter's rate, 6.9 percent, was good news.

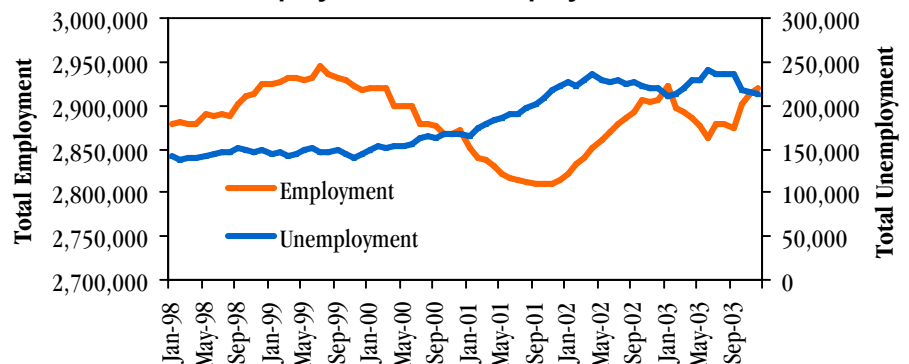
Total employment and total unemployment figures reinforce the malaise that set into the recovery in mid-2003. The two series both worsened over the recession and then improved in 2002.

Employment began its decline in December 1999 while unemployment soon after began to rise in early 2000. That trend was not reversed until the first quarter of 2002 for employment and until the third quarter for unemployment.

2003 confusing year—quarterly unemployment rate peaked during third quarter but improved in fourth



The 2003 lapse in the recovery is obvious in employment and unemployment data





Goods sector employment declined steadily, starting in the fourth quarter of 1998, until the fourth quarter of 2003. The second, third, and fourth quarters of 2003, though, have been fairly stable and may indicate a stabilization of employment. Within the goods sector manufacturing continues to lose jobs while construction continues to gain jobs.

The turn-around was short-lived. Employment reached a local peak at the first quarter of 2003 just as unemployment reached a trough. While the fourth quarter of 2003 has seen renewed movement in the right direction for a recovery, still a

trend cannot be identified in one quarter of data. There are also often large revisions of both the unemployment and total employment series at year end. For the 2003 data, these revisions should be completed by March 2004.

Nonagricultural Wage and Salary Data

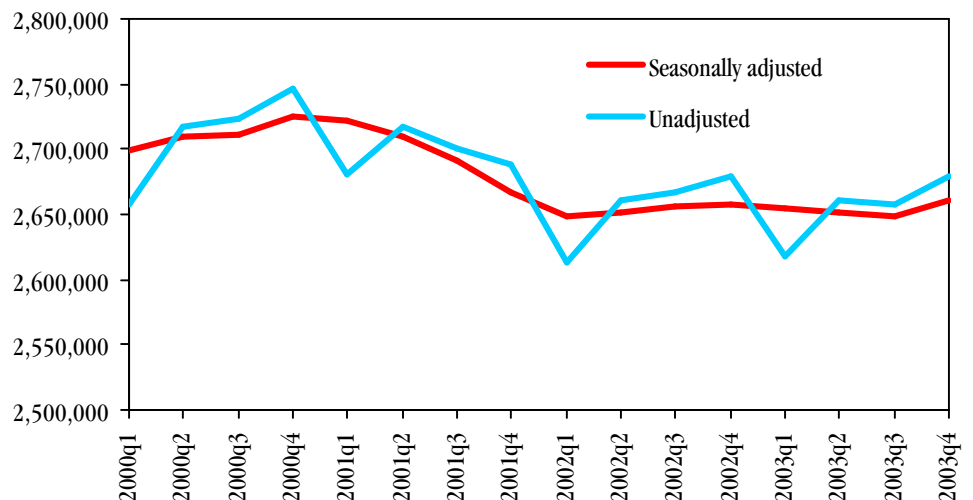
Nonagricultural wage and salary employment provides a slightly different view of the labor market than total employment estimates. Besides not including agricultural employment, nonagricultural data measure jobs rather than workers and from place of work rather than place of residence. The nonagricultural data include seasonal activity with peaks in employment typically occurring during the fourth quarter and troughs in the first quarter. Still, even with the seasonal variation, the recession and recovery are evident. Nonagricultural employment fell from a peak in the fourth quarter of 2000 to a trough in the first quarter of 2002. There was then a stabilization of employment in 2002. However, 2003 once again identifies itself as disappointing. Still, in contrast to the total employment estimates, the nonagricultural numbers show much less of a recovery in 2002 and less of a setback in 2003. In fact, in 2003 only the small decline during the third quarter was unusual.

Seasonally adjusted nonagricultural employment shows a slight improvement in the labor market in early 2002 as employment increases from the first quarter through the fourth quarter. Employment then begins to decline in the first quarter of 2003 and continues through the third quarter.

Since the beginning of the recession, employment loss has occurred both in sectors that produce goods, the largest being manufacturing, and those that produce services. Goods sector employment declined steadily, starting in the fourth quarter of 1998, until the fourth quarter of 2003. The second, third, and fourth quarters of 2003, though, have been fairly stable and may indicate a stabilization of employment. Within the goods sector manufacturing continues to lose jobs while construction continues to gain jobs.

Private services account for about two-thirds of total nonagricultural employment. The largest sectors are education

Job declines in early 2003 are also evident in seasonally adjusted nonagricultural employment



and health services (312,200), retail trade (306,100), and professional and business services (290,000). Within private services, education and health services and financial services have been strongest, but there has been modest recovery in retail trade, professional and business services, leisure and hospitality, and other services. Even the high tech area, information, had employment gains from the third to fourth quarter of 2003. Transportation, warehousing, and utilities and wholesale trade remain weak.

Summary

There are still few signs of a sustained recovery in the labor market. Industries adding jobs are those that have added jobs throughout the recession, such as healthcare services and financial activities, or are support industries¹, such as construction, retail trade, and leisure and hospitality. Support industries are unlikely to kick-start a recovery in such key driver industries as manufacturing, information, and business services. The increase in business investment at the national level should eventually trickle down and cause an increase in output and jobs at the local level. The good news of the 7E7 coming to Washington is unlikely to cause an immediate increase in aerospace jobs. Most analysts are predicting only a leveling off of the employment declines in aerospace over the next two years. With Washington's largest employer not adding jobs, the local labor market will remain very dependent on a national recovery for job creation.

National Outlook

Where Are the Jobs?

Most economists were predicting modest job growth of about 150,000 for the nation in December. This would have been about the number needed to keep up with normal labor force growth. In fact the nation only added about 1,000 nonagricultural jobs in December. The labor force data, which include all workers but which are based on a much smaller survey, also were disappointing in December. Although the unemployment rate edged down two-tenths of a percentage point in December, this was due to declines in both employment and unemployment, indicating a drop in the labor force. At this point in the recovery the labor force would normally be increasing as previously discouraged workers start looking for work and re-enter the labor force.

Where then are the jobs at the national level? Most of indicators of the national economy have been positive. Real GDP grew at an astonishing 8.2 percent in the third quarter producing productivity growth of 9.4 percent. Fourth quarter GDP growth was somewhat below expectations at 4.0 percent, but is still well above trend. Productivity grew at a much more modest, but still decent rate of 2.7 percent. The stock market ended the year up (its first up year since 1999), business profits are stronger, and monetary and fiscal policy remains accommodating. The University of

Michigan measure of consumer confidence also rose to 103.8 in January just beating expectations and up from 92.6 in December.

Now, only job creation seems to be missing from a general recovery. The lack of job growth has been attributed to many causes, two of which will be examined here: a lack of business investment and an over-valued dollar leading U.S. firms to shift production abroad, to intense foreign competition, and to the creation of a large U.S. trade deficit.

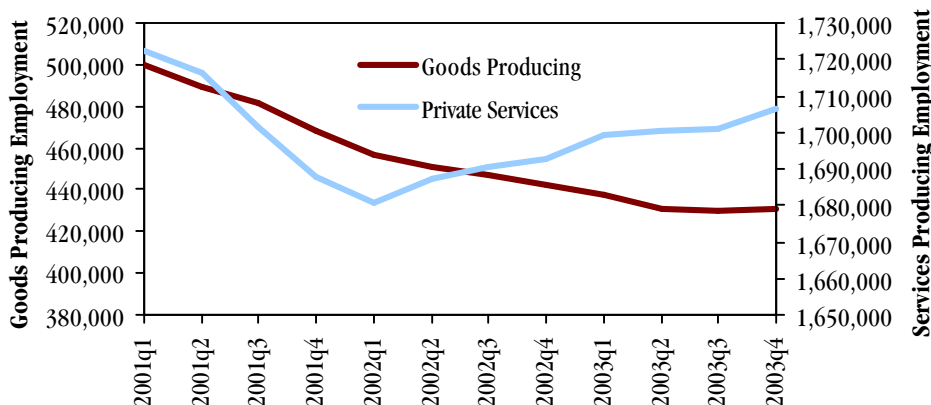
The rise in the stock market may provide enough capital to encourage business investment and new hiring. Nonresidential investment declined by 5.2 percent in 2001, by 5.7 percent in 2002, but increased by 2.7 percent in 2003 and is expected to grow by 10.2 percent in 2004². The growth in 2003 can be attributed to investment in information processing equipment which showed the strongest growth in the second (18.9 percent) and third (22.5 percent) quarters, but still had above average growth of 13.9 percent in the fourth quarter³.

¹ Support industries here refer to those that are a derivative of other economic activity in an area. For example, a vibrant business community will expand facilities leading to an increase in construction spending, but we wouldn't expect construction spending to pull out a lagging business community. An increase in a driver sector like manufacturing would spur retail spending in a local community, but local retail spending is unlikely to spur manufacturing.

² Global Insights, December 2003 forecast.

³ The average growth rate of information processing investment since 1996 is 13.4 percent.

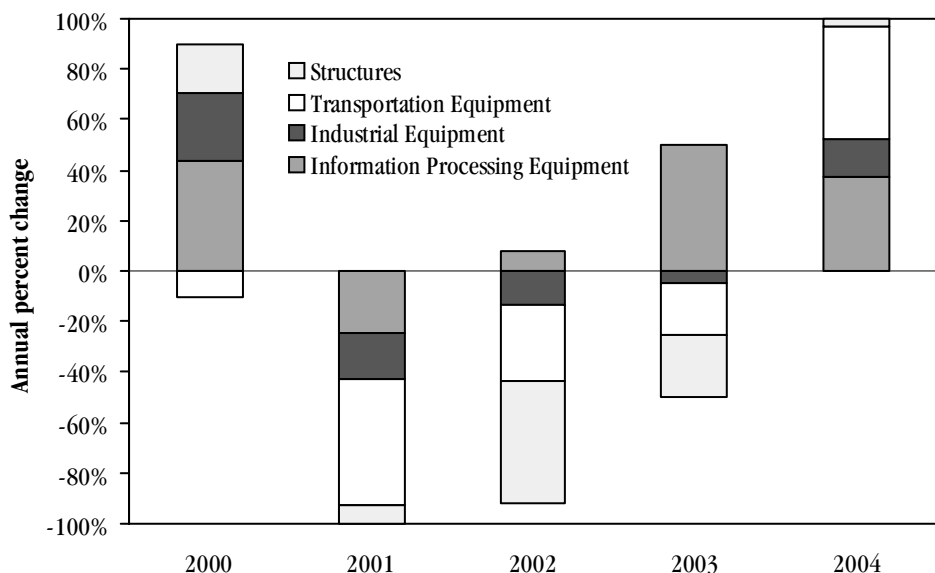
Private services shows turning point in employment starting in the second quarter of 2002



Now, only job creation seems to be missing from a general recovery.



**Information processing equipment
accounted for most of the increase in 2003**



The United States ran its largest trade deficit in goods with China amounting to \$34,830 million in the third quarter.

Transportation equipment saw the largest declines in 2001 (-12.3 percent) but declined by less in each subsequent year and is expected to grow by 18 percent in 2004. Investment in structures also has yet to increase and even saw declines as early as 2000. Substantial over capacity still exists especially in factories leading to the expectation that even in 2004 investment in structures will only increase by 1.3 percent. Higher investment in 2003, thus, may not yet have positive implications for the job market. Investment in information processing equipment often increases productivity and actually reduces the need to hire additional workers, while investment in structures and equipment indicates that firms are reaching the limits of their current capacity and often is accompanied by an increase in hiring.

The current account deficit was around five percent of GDP in 2003 which is up from about 1.5 percent in the mid-1990s. The dollar, however, has declined in value against many currencies, although not China, and this produced a slight improvement of the record trade deficit by \$4.4 billion from the second to third quarter. Generally a fall in the value of the

currency is followed in about a year by an improvement in the trade balance. The U.S. may just be seeing this improvement.

Both exports and imports increased in the third quarter, but the increase in exports was greater than the increase in imports. The United States ran its largest trade deficit in goods with China amounting to \$34,830 million in the third quarter. The U.S. also ran large trade deficits in goods with about all its trading partners—the deficit with European Union countries was \$25,021 million, with Asia excluding China was a further \$23,767 million, and with Latin America was \$15,797 million. The Chinese *yuan* is pegged to the U.S. dollar and so the fall in the value of the dollar is unlikely to improve the trade balance there. From China's perspective, the huge trade surplus with the U.S. runs the risk of producing excess liquidity in the Chinese economy. The Chinese government has attempted to buy up excess U.S. currency and has had to put into place measures to control a financial boom. China's net trade surplus with all countries, however, has been shrinking over the past several years as it complies with the openness criteria of the World Trade Organization.

Chinese authorities are, thus, unlikely to bow to U.S. pressure to revalue the *yuan*.

The decline in the value of the dollar over the past two years will help the U.S. trade position over time and may even give a boost to industrial production. Still, it is unlikely to solve the problem of large trade deficits in general and won't improve the U.S. position with China. A danger over the next few years is the possibility of a too rapid fall in the value of the U.S. dollar which would destabilize financial markets.

Joining investment and exports, consumer demand and government spending, at least at the federal level, are likely to remain strong in 2004. Barring more terrorist attacks or other major shocks to the national economy, modest growth in jobs in 2004 is still expected. There seems to be few systemic problems in the U.S. labor market that would prevent job creation. Still, many more months of tepid job growth will lead many economists to re-examine their assumptions. The next few months will be a crucial time to watch for a turn-around in the U.S. job market.



Washington's largest deployment of its Army National Guard since World War II will take place this winter, as the 81st Armor Brigade ships out to Iraq.



Business Briefs

81st Armor Brigade Deploys Thousands

Washington's largest deployment of its Army National Guard since World War II will take place this winter, as the 81st Armor Brigade ships out to Iraq. Of the Brigade's 4,200 members, some 3,200 are from Washington (the balance of troops come from California and Minnesota). The 81st Brigade reported for active duty in November 2003, and is currently receiving pre-deployment training at Fort Lewis. The deployment is expected to last 18 months, 12 of which will be spent in Iraq.

Troops in the Brigade come from units across Washington—from Anacortes to Yakima, Bellingham to Walla Walla. As members of the National Guard, troops in the 81st perform armed service work on top of full-time careers in the private sector. According to a media spokesman for the Guard, the vast majority of employers of troops have been "very supportive" when they've had employees called to active duty. The Guard is a diverse group, with the majority in their mid 20s and employed at hourly wage jobs. Officers are typically employed in executive positions, but the Guard also has its share of members who are retirees, housewives, and students.

Congress provided job protection for members of the armed services (including National Guard and Reserve members) in October 1994 with passage of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. The law includes protections about a worker's right to be absent from work for armed service, maintain service credit for retirement purposes, continue health insurance, and return to work after completing service.

757 Workers

WARNed in Fourth Quarter

According to records filed with the Employment Security Department under the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act, 757 Washington workers were warned of pending or potential layoffs in the fourth quarter of 2003. Of the notices sent out in the fourth quarter, expected layoff dates ranged from November 26, 2003 (Weyerhaeuser, Longview) to June 1, 2004 (Simonds Industries, Kirkland). The Home Depot posted the largest WARN notice of the quarter, telling 129 workers at its Tukwila facility to expect layoffs in late January 2004. The number of Washington workers warned a year ago (fourth quarter 2002) amounted to 1,194, including 750 notified at Weyerhaeuser's headquarters in Federal Way, the largest WARN of the quarter.

For the 2003 calendar year, 68 firms filed WARN notices for Washington locations, potentially impacting up to 13,587 workers. Due to a tally of 58 WARN notices impacting up to 17,308 workers, 2002 was a harsher year. The Boeing Company issued the most WARN notices—5,919 in 2003, down considerably from 2002 when some 10,462 Boeing workers were warned.

The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN) was enacted on August 4, 1988. WARN helps workers, their families, and communities by requiring employers to provide notice 60 days in advance of covered plant closings and covered mass layoffs. In general, WARN applies if employers have 100 or more full-time employees. WARN allows early intervention in the form of Rapid Response from the State's Dislocated Worker Unit. Rapid Response assures newly dislocated workers receive help and are aware of all their reemployment options as quickly as possible.

Industry Focus: Educational Services, 4th Quarter 2003

By Rick Lockhart, Economic Analyst

For the 4th quarter 2003 the industry focus will briefly explore the wages, employment level, and a few interesting facts about the Washington educational services industry. It is also known as North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 61, which includes public and private education, primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools. For 2002 there were 232,871¹ workers with an average annual wage of \$32,695. While the state location quotient² for education employment is average at 1.01, Washington is above average in the percentage of its population that has completed training beyond a high school diploma. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Washington ranked 11th in the nation with 30 percent of adults aged 25-64 with a bachelor degree or higher.

Increasing from 1990 employment of 164,612 to the 2002 level of 232,871, educational services outpaced the average employment growth for Washington by 17 percent. Its employment growth is projected to continue at a rate higher than that of the average for all



industries through 2012. The table below lists the projections for the three different sectors of the education industry as well as total nonfarm employment. From 2002 to 2007 education is projected to grow at a rate of 2.1 percent per year, 0.5 percent higher than what is projected for all employment in the state. Then in the 2007 to 2012 period, education growth is projected to slow a bit to 1.9 percent per year, but still higher than the 1.6 percent projected for all nonfarm industries. This somewhat illustrates how education employment levels are not so much reliant on other industry trends but on population trends.

The wage picture is a little different than the employment picture in terms of

averages and growth relative to the state as a whole. For 2002 the average wage for all industries in Washington was \$38,249, and educational services came in 15 percent lower at \$32,695. Twelve-year wage growth for all industries was 68.6 percent; for the same time frame, educational services wages grew by 47 percent. Part of the wage growth difference can be attributed to new high-paying industries that have emerged in Washington since the beginning of the 1990s. To add some context, if we look at wage growth after the economic boom of the 90s, comparing wage growth from 2000 to 2002, education wages grew faster than the average for all industries. For that time frame, educational services wages grew by 9.23 percent, three times the all industries average of 3.1 percent.

With past and projected employment growth showing positive numbers, educational services is an industry that has proven itself to be fairly stable during unstable economic times. Combine that with the recent above average wage growth and the resulting conclusion is that educational services industry is one of Washington's healthy industries that weathered the recession well and is showing positive trends for the next decade.

Educational Employment Projections 2002 to 2012

NAICS INDUSTRY TITLE	Projected Employment		Growth Rates	
	2007	2012	2002-2007	2007-2012
Private Education Services	45.8	49.7	2.8%	1.6%
State Government Educational Services	85.2	93.0	1.8%	1.8%
Local Government Educational Services	164.9	182.0	2.2%	2.0%
Total Education	295.9	324.7	2.1%	1.9%
Total Nonfarm (thousands)	2,872.8	3,104.3	1.6%	1.6%

¹Sourced from covered employment file. Projections data include covered as well as noncovered employment.

²Location Quotient: The ratio of a given industry's share of local employment to the same industry's share of statewide or national employment.

Increasing from 1990 employment of 164,612 to the 2002 level of 232,871, educational services outpaced the average employment growth for Washington by 17 percent.



Occupational Focus: Educational Field Beckons

By David Wallace, Economic Analyst

For those considering a Teacher Assistant career the data suggest a bright future. From 2002 to 2007, Washington State is projected to have over 1,450 annual openings for Teacher Assistants, or Para-professional, as many prefer to be titled. In fact there are only 13 occupations with higher forecasted openings. This figure is then expected to rise to over 1,500 each year from 2007 to 2012.

What is causing this rising demand for Teacher Assistants? Education in general is a growing field as we seek to improve education for our children and face changing demographics. Teacher Assistants are particularly important when addressing special needs students and student to teacher ratios. In addition, the "No Child Left Behind Act" requires that most Teacher Assistants achieve higher qualification standards. This currently applies to new hires and all affected workers by 2006. Setting the

qualifications bar higher will to some extent decrease the pool of eligible employees.

Estimates by the Employment Security Department put employment in this occupation at just over 33,000 persons in 2002. This is projected to grow to over 40,000 by 2012. In 2001 estimated wages ranged from \$18,581 for inexperienced workers to \$24,736 for those most experienced. A glance at unemployment insurance claims gives us a picture of the 2003 demographic make-up of Teacher Assistants in Washington. It is primarily female (92 percent) and mostly white (62 percent). The largest minority group is Hispanics, which made up 21 percent of claims.

Clearly this represents an opportunity for persons interested in getting into this field. Is this occupation right for you? Teacher Assistants primarily serve to promote learning, to reinforce



lessons, and encourage further achievement. In addition to assisting in the classroom, they may supervise students in the cafeteria, school yard, or on field trips. Nearly half of the Teacher Assistants work less than an eight-hour day, and most work the traditional 9-10 month school year. The work may at times be physically and emotionally challenging, particularly when working with special needs populations. If you are excited about these types of challenges, you should consider being a Teachers Assistant.

Across the State

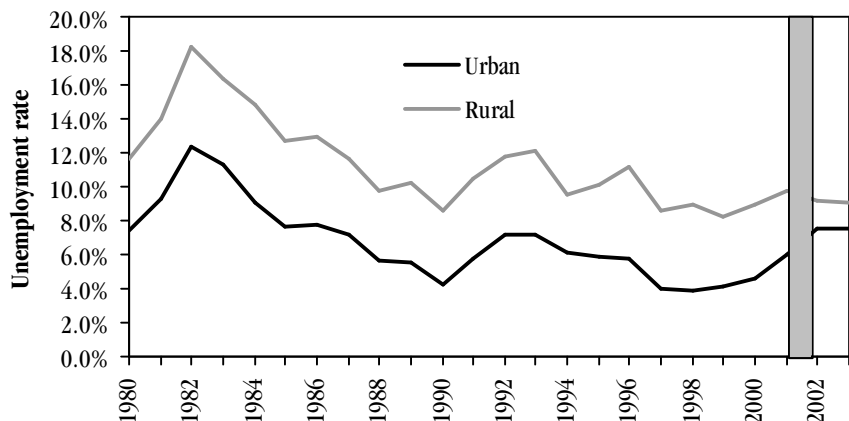
Rural Counties See Improvement in Unemployment Rate

Although rural unemployment rates remained above urban rates on average in 2003, the gap between the two has narrowed to its lowest level in the past 23 years. Most of this gap disappeared in 2002 as the difference went from 3.7 percent in 2001 to 1.6 percent in 2002. In 2003, the narrow gap remained at just 1.5 percent.

The narrowing of the rural, urban divide as far as the unemployment rate is concerned is based more on negative rather than positive trends. Although the rural unemployment rate has fallen on average since 1980, so has the urban rate, doing little to affect the gap.

The 2001 recession though hit urban areas much more severely than rural areas, and there has not been a recovery in urban unemployment rates since the end of the recession. This rise in the average urban rate has brought it up to near rural levels.

Individual counties have seen their unemployment rates rise and fall over 2003. Still, on average, these movements have cancelled each other out leaving the average urban rate unchanged (at 7.5 percent) and bringing down the rural rate only slightly to 9.0 percent.



Vacancies for RNs alone accounted for 6 percent of an estimated 47,357 job vacancies across the state in October.



Survey Says: Demand for Health Care Workers Persists

By Carolyn Cummins, Economic Analyst

Calling all RNs!

Washington firms were looking for some 2,963 registered nurses to fill vacancies last October. This is but one of the major findings of the Employment Security Department's *October 2003 Washington Job Vacancy Survey*.

Vacancies for RNs alone accounted for 6 percent of an estimated 47,357 job vacancies across the state in October. At that time firms were offering RNs a median starting wage of \$20.36 per hour. More than one out of every three nursing vacancies was in King County, where 12 percent of vacancies for these highly in-demand workers had lasted sixty or more days and firms offered a median of \$21.07 to start.

Health care demand wasn't limited to RNs. Firms were looking to fill some 5,797 *professional and technical health care* openings in our state in October. This occupation group includes the more highly skilled (and highly paid) health workers—including physicians and surgeons (203 vacancies), radiological technicians and technologists (220 vacancies), physical therapists (238 vacancies), and licensed practical nurses (780 vacancies). On top of that, employers also needed 1,841 *health care support* workers, including medical assistants (222 vacancies) and nursing aides (1,145 vacancies).

Why such a demand for health care workers? First off, this isn't a new phenomenon. Similar levels of demand were observed in previous job vacancy surveys (for example, 5,136 health care professional and technical vacancies in May 2003, including 2,511 openings for RNs), and other regional reports document workforce demand in hospitals, nursing facilities, and private practices¹. Demand for health care workers is driven by, among other

things, an aging population (think baby-boom generation) and broadened access to health care services. But it is also stirred by worker turnover, a supply-side condition. Health care worker turnover is increasingly under scrutiny—for example, as malpractice insurance premiums increase for medical doctors, nurses are becoming more cost-effective care providers. But as the role of nurses increases, working hours and conditions become more trying, and turnover thus increases.

Sales Positions Also Hot

The *October 2003 Job Vacancy Survey* found that job vacancies were highest in sales and related occupations (6,517) in October, whereas office and administrative vacancies led the way in the May 2003 survey (6,769). Twenty-two percent (1,145) of sales vacancies were newly created positions—the highest among any occupation group. Showing clear seasonality in hiring, farming, fishing, and forestry occupations dropped from second-most-in-demand in May 2003 to ninth, with just 1,665 vacancies in October. Among the other occupation groups, farming and related vacancies stand out as having the smallest share of permanent job openings, low wages, and minimal educational requirements. In terms of individual occupations, the top 25 occupations with the most vacancies comprised 48 percent of all job vacancies in Washington. A total of 519 different occupations had vacancies in Washington in October 2003.

¹ For example, see the Washington State Hospital Association's *Who Will Care For You? WA Hospitals Face a Personnel Crisis*, at http://www.wsha.org/Publications/PS_Report.pdf and Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council's *In Critical Condition* at http://www.seekingwdc.org/pdf/Reports/Sector/HealthcareCrisis_12.pdf.

Top 25 Occupations with the Highest Number of Vacancies

Occupation	October 2003 Job Vacancies	May 2003 Job Vacancies	October 2003		
			Share of Total Vacancies	Median Wage Offered	Vacant 60+ Days
Registered nurses	2,963	2,511	6%	\$20.36	11%
Retail salespersons	2,056	1,251	4%	\$7.25	0%
Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	1,824	986	4%	\$7.01	0%
Miscellaneous Agricultural Workers	1,584	1,808	3%	\$7.25	14%
Cashiers, except gaming	1,562	2,058	3%	\$7.25	4%
Nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants	1,145	980	2%	\$10.00	5%
Telemarketers	1,046	332	2%	\$7.50	0%
Computer software engineers, systems software	1,041	834	2%	\$33.65	3%
Computer software engineers, applications	906	359	2%	\$21.63	2%
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	780	711	2%	\$15.00	3%
Waiters and waitresses	746	1,095	2%	\$7.01	0%
Office clerks, general	712	734	2%	\$11.32	5%
Counter attendants, cafeteria/concession/coffee shop	701	72	1%	\$7.40	5%
Computer programmers	697	134	1%	\$26.44	2%
Combined food prep/serving workers, including fast food	649	515	1%	\$7.01	4%
Stock clerks and order fillers	513	438	1%	\$8.75	4%
Security guards	505	613	1%	\$9.25	4%
Coaches and scouts	473	262	1%	\$7.40	8%
Janitors and cleaners, except maids and housekeeping	466	520	1%	\$9.00	3%
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	444	744	1%	\$7.50	0%
First-line supervisors of food prep/serving workers	408	474	1%	\$9.00	4%
Truck drivers, heavy and tractor-trailer	408	554	1%	\$14.42	32%
Teacher assistants	404	306	1%	\$10.96	7%
Marketing managers	387	48	1%	\$43.27	4%
Accountants and auditors	381	425	1%	\$19.52	9%
Total	47,357	54,939	100%	\$10.00	7%

About the Washington Job Vacancy Survey

By measuring the number of vacant positions for which employers are hiring, the *Washington Job Vacancy Survey* provides valuable insights into employment conditions in our state.

Survey results show not just the number of vacant positions, but also a number of job characteristics to reveal the reality of employers' immediate workforce needs.

The survey was distributed to a sample of 20,407 employers representative of size class (number of employees), region (workforce development areas), and industry. The response rate was 54 percent.

For each vacant position, the survey gathers basic information about the following requirements and characteristics:

- Wage offered
- Full-time/part-time status
- Permanent/temporary status
- Number of weeks vacant
- Newly created positions and replacement openings
- Education requirements
- Licensing/certification requirements
- Experience requirements

Get All of the Details

Complete results from the *October 2003 Washington Job Vacancy Survey* are online at www.workforceexplorer.com.

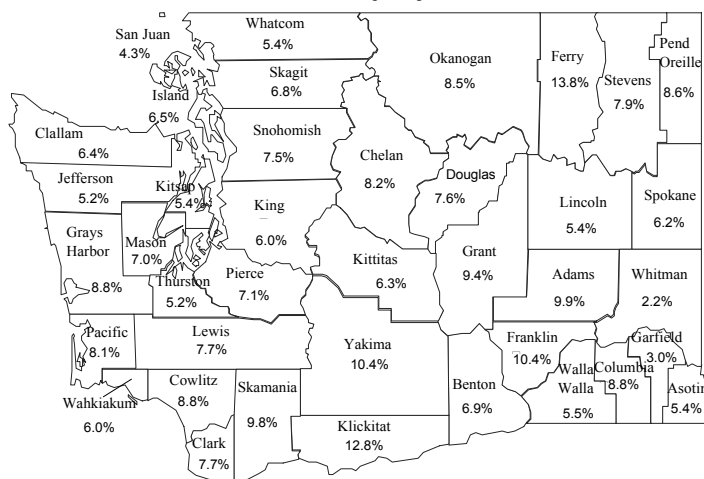
Link to the "Economy" page and look for the box titled "Job Vacancy/Benefits Survey."

Fourth Quarter Stats-At-A-Glance

Average Unemployment Rates by County
October, November, and December 2003
Washington State = 6.7%
United States = 5.5%
Not Seasonally Adjusted

Monthly Resident Civilian Labor Force and Employment in Washington State

(In Thousands)	October	November	December
	2003 (Rev)	2003 (Rev)	2003 (Prel)
Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment:			
Washington State	7.0%	6.9%	6.8%
United States	6.0%	5.9%	5.7%
Not Seasonally Adjusted:			
Resident Civilian Labor Force	3,142.0	3,112.2	3,130.8
Employment	2,933.9	2,898.9	2,916.8
Unemployment	208.1	213.3	214.0
Percent of Labor Force	6.6%	6.9%	6.8%



Washington State
 Employment Security Department
 Labor Market and Economic Analysis

Civilian Labor Force Estimates for Washington State Counties and MSAs

Benchmark: 2002

Not Seasonally Adjusted	October 2003 Revised				November 2003 Revised				December 2003 Preliminary			
	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
Washington State Total	3,142,000	2,933,900	208,100	6.6	3,112,200	2,898,900	213,300	6.9	3,130,800	2,916,800	214,000	6.8
Bellingham MSA	90,000	85,100	4,900	5.4	90,100	85,300	4,800	5.4	90,600	85,700	4,900	5.4
Bremerton PMSA	101,800	96,200	5,600	5.5	102,200	96,700	5,600	5.4	103,000	97,600	5,400	5.3
Olympia PMSA	108,000	102,200	5,800	5.4	109,700	104,000	5,700	5.2	111,200	105,600	5,600	5.1
Seattle-Bellevue-Everett PMSA	1,390,100	1,299,700	90,400	6.5	1,394,600	1,305,900	88,700	6.4	1,407,300	1,320,600	86,700	6.2
King County 2/	1,017,200	954,900	62,300	6.1	1,020,500	959,400	61,100	6.0	1,029,500	970,200	59,300	5.8
Snohomish County 2/	344,700	318,500	26,200	7.6	345,700	320,000	25,700	7.4	349,200	323,600	25,600	7.3
Island County 2/	28,200	26,400	1,800	6.5	28,500	26,500	1,900	6.8	28,700	26,800	1,900	6.5
Spokane MSA	213,500	200,700	12,800	6.0	214,100	201,100	13,000	6.1	215,600	201,600	14,000	6.5
Tacoma PMSA	353,900	328,500	25,500	7.2	354,900	329,900	25,100	7.1	358,900	334,100	24,800	6.9
Tri-Cities MSA	106,200	99,100	7,100	6.7	101,700	93,400	8,400	8.2	101,400	93,000	8,400	8.3
Benton County 2/	80,700	75,500	5,200	6.4	76,500	71,100	5,400	7.0	76,300	70,900	5,400	7.1
Franklin County 2/	25,500	23,600	1,900	7.5	25,200	22,200	3,000	11.9	25,200	22,200	3,000	11.9
Yakima MSA	118,700	109,900	8,700	7.3	106,100	94,400	11,800	11.1	106,000	92,900	13,100	12.4
Adams	8,770	8,280	480	5.5	7,650	6,780	870	11.4	7,240	6,320	920	12.8
Asotin 2/	12,050	11,460	600	5.0	12,080	11,550	530	4.4	12,230	11,690	540	4.4
Chelan-Douglas LMA	56,680	53,200	3,480	6.1	49,270	45,020	4,250	8.6	49,120	44,540	4,580	9.3
Chelan County 2/	37,980	35,550	2,430	6.4	33,010	30,080	2,930	8.9	32,890	29,760	3,130	9.5
Douglas County 2/	18,700	17,650	1,050	5.6	16,260	14,940	1,320	8.1	16,230	14,780	1,450	8.9
Clallam	25,570	24,000	1,570	6.1	25,390	23,720	1,670	6.6	25,310	23,640	1,670	6.6
Clark 2/	183,000	167,100	15,900	8.7	182,700	167,400	15,200	8.3	185,000	170,700	14,300	7.7
Columbia	1,120	1,030	90	8.2	1,110	1,000	110	9.9	1,130	1,020	110	9.8
Cowlitz	40,090	36,460	3,630	9.1	39,820	36,270	3,550	8.9	39,830	36,320	3,510	8.8
Ferry	2,420	2,120	300	12.5	2,390	2,060	330	13.8	2,400	2,040	360	15.1
Garfield	1,120	1,080	40	3.2	1,100	1,060	40	3.4	1,100	1,060	40	3.6
Grant	41,800	39,070	2,730	6.5	37,150	33,430	3,720	10.0	35,100	31,030	4,070	11.6
Grays Harbor	26,480	24,060	2,420	9.2	26,470	24,080	2,380	9.0	26,630	24,360	2,270	8.5
Jefferson	12,070	11,430	640	5.3	11,870	11,240	630	5.3	11,970	11,330	640	5.3
Kittitas	16,980	16,070	910	5.3	16,660	15,610	1,050	6.3	16,090	14,910	1,180	7.3
Klickitat	9,020	7,990	1,030	11.4	8,350	7,250	1,100	13.2	8,020	6,830	1,190	14.8
Lewis	29,980	27,690	2,280	7.6	30,630	28,270	2,360	7.7	30,620	28,200	2,420	7.9
Lincoln	4,710	4,500	210	4.5	4,640	4,380	260	5.5	4,600	4,310	290	6.3
Mason	21,630	20,090	1,540	7.1	22,590	21,100	1,500	6.6	21,580	20,010	1,570	7.3
Okanogan	22,370	21,060	1,320	5.9	17,320	15,700	1,620	9.3	17,040	15,260	1,780	10.4
Pacific	7,740	7,120	630	8.1	7,790	7,100	690	8.9	7,850	7,230	620	7.9
Pend Oreille	4,530	4,150	380	8.4	4,520	4,130	390	8.6	4,580	4,150	430	9.5
San Juan	6,640	6,380	260	3.9	6,370	6,080	290	4.5	6,270	5,960	310	5.0
Skagit	53,990	50,310	3,690	6.8	53,120	49,330	3,790	7.1	53,180	49,240	3,940	7.4
Skamania	3,870	3,500	370	9.5	3,830	3,430	400	10.4	3,770	3,370	400	10.6
Stevens	16,840	15,670	1,170	6.9	16,580	15,240	1,340	8.1	16,990	15,520	1,470	8.7
Wahkiakum	1,620	1,520	100	6.4	1,590	1,490	100	6.5	1,590	1,500	90	5.8
Walla Walla	28,600	27,390	1,210	4.2	27,710	26,060	1,660	6.0	27,530	25,710	1,820	6.6
Whitman	20,110	19,690	430	2.1	19,990	19,510	480	2.4	19,950	19,450	500	2.5

1/ Official U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

2/ Estimates are determined by using the Population/Claims Share disaggregation methodology.

Note: Detail may not add due to rounding.

Nonagricultural Wage & Salary Workers in Washington State, Place of Work¹

In Thousands, Not Seasonally Adjusted	Numeric Change					
	October	September	October	September	Sept. 2003	Oct. 2002
	2003 (Prel)	2003 (Rev)	2002 (Rev)	2002 (Rev)	to Oct. 2003	to Oct. 2003
Total Nonagricultural Wage & Salary Workers	2,687.3	2,673.3	2,679.3	2,679.5	14.0	8.0
Natural Resources and Mining	9.0	8.9	9.6	9.7	0.1	-0.6
Logging	5.9	5.9	6.5	6.5	0.0	-0.6
Construction	165.6	167.3	162.4	164.9	-1.7	3.2
Construction of Buildings	44.1	43.9	42.4	42.9	0.2	1.7
Heavy and Civil Engineering	21.8	22.1	21.4	22.0	-0.3	0.4
Specialty Trade Contractors	99.7	101.3	98.6	100.0	-1.6	1.1
Manufacturing	267.8	270.7	282.7	284.8	-2.9	-14.9
Durable Goods	180.7	182.1	194.7	196.2	-1.4	-14.0
Wood Product Manufacturing	17.5	17.7	18.1	18.2	-0.2	-0.6
Fabricated Metal Products	16.6	16.7	17.0	17.3	-0.1	-0.4
Computer and Electronic Products	22.8	23.1	25.1	25.5	-0.3	-2.3
Transportation Equipment	74.2	74.7	83.3	83.8	-0.5	-9.1
Aerospace Products and Parts	62.8	63.0	72.3	72.9	-0.2	-9.5
Nondurable Goods	87.1	88.6	88.0	88.6	-1.5	-0.9
Food Manufacturing	38.2	39.2	37.5	37.7	-1.0	0.7
Wholesale Trade	115.9	116.1	116.1	116.4	-0.2	-0.2
Retail Trade	309.4	308.8	306.9	307.2	0.6	2.5
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	41.6	41.4	41.3	41.5	0.2	0.3
Food and Beverage Stores	60.0	60.3	62.7	62.9	-0.3	-2.7
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	24.1	24.3	23.9	24.3	-0.2	0.2
General Merchandise Stores	54.6	53.6	50.1	49.1	1.0	4.5
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	89.8	89.1	90.5	90.3	0.7	-0.7
Utilities	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.5	0.0	0.1
Transportation and Warehousing	85.2	84.5	86.0	85.8	0.7	-0.8
Air Transportation	13.1	12.9	13.7	13.9	0.2	-0.6
Water Transportation	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.2	0.0	0.1
Truck Transportation	22.4	22.6	22.4	22.9	-0.2	0.0
Support Activities for Transportation	15.8	15.8	15.8	15.8	0.0	0.0
Support Activities for Water Transportation	5.0	5.0	4.9	4.5	0.0	0.1
Warehousing and Storage	8.7	8.4	8.6	8.7	0.3	0.1
Information	92.3	92.3	93.2	93.1	0.0	-0.9
Software Publishers	37.5	37.5	36.4	36.2	0.0	1.1
Telecommunications	27.2	26.9	28.4	28.6	0.3	-1.2
Financial Activities	153.5	154.0	146.1	147.0	-0.5	7.4
Finance and Insurance	103.9	104.0	99.1	99.0	-0.1	4.8
Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	53.1	53.2	47.8	47.6	-0.1	5.3
Insurance Carriers and Related Activities	39.9	40.0	39.6	39.5	-0.1	0.3
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	49.6	50.0	47.0	48.0	-0.4	2.6
Professional and Business Services	296.8	296.4	294.6	296.5	0.4	2.2
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	137.2	137.1	136.9	137.0	0.1	0.3
Legal Services	20.8	21.0	20.5	20.6	-0.2	0.3
Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	31.6	31.7	31.6	31.9	-0.1	0.0
Computer Systems Design and Related Services	21.1	21.3	23.2	23.1	-0.2	-2.1
Management of Companies and Enterprises	32.2	32.4	30.3	30.4	-0.2	1.9
Admin., Suppt. Svcs., Waste Mgmt., and Remediation	127.4	126.9	127.4	129.1	0.5	0.0
Employment Services	44.7	43.8	44.4	45.5	0.9	0.3
Education and Health Services	316.2	312.6	310.9	306.6	3.6	5.3
Educational Services	43.2	40.2	43.0	38.8	3.0	0.2
Hospitals	63.0	62.9	62.5	62.5	0.1	0.5
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	53.7	53.5	52.7	52.7	0.2	1.0
Social Assistance	45.4	45.2	45.1	44.9	0.2	0.3
Leisure and Hospitality	246.4	257.0	244.7	256.5	-10.6	1.7
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	38.1	44.7	40.1	45.4	-6.6	-2.0
Accommodation	28.1	29.0	27.3	29.1	-0.9	0.8
Food Services and Drinking Places	180.2	183.3	177.3	182.0	-3.1	2.9
Government	525.5	500.0	523.6	507.5	25.5	1.9
Federal	69.7	70.5	70.4	70.3	-0.8	-0.7
State	152.3	138.7	151.3	137.8	13.6	1.0
State Educational Services	87.6	72.9	84.8	71.0	14.7	2.8
Local	303.5	290.8	301.9	299.4	12.7	1.6
Local Educational Services	152.1	137.5	151.0	136.9	14.6	1.1
Workers in Labor-Management Disputes	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	-0.2	0.0

¹Excludes proprietors, self-employed, members of armed forces, & private household employees. Includes all full- & part-time wage & salary workers receiving pay during the pay period including the 12th of the month. ²Workers excluded because of involvement in labor-management dispute.

Nonagricultural Wage & Salary Workers in Washington State, Place of Work ¹

In Thousands, Not Seasonally Adjusted	November		October		Numeric Change	
	2003	2003	2002	2002	Oct. 2003	Nov. 2002
	(Prel)	(Rev)	(Rev)	(Rev)	to Nov. 2003	to Nov. 2003
Total Nonagricultural Wage & Salary Workers	2,686.5	2,682.9	2,684.5	2,679.3	3.6	2.0
Natural Resources and Mining	8.7	9.0	9.4	9.6	-0.3	-0.7
Logging	5.7	5.8	6.4	6.5	-0.1	-0.7
Construction	162.4	166.2	157.6	162.4	-3.8	4.8
Construction of Buildings	43.4	44.1	41.5	42.4	-0.7	1.9
Heavy and Civil Engineering	20.7	21.9	19.7	21.4	-1.2	1.0
Specialty Trade Contractors	98.3	100.2	96.4	98.6	-1.9	1.9
Manufacturing	264.4	268.3	278.8	282.7	-3.9	-14.4
Durable Goods	180.0	181.2	193.0	194.7	-1.2	-13.0
Wood Product Manufacturing	17.5	17.4	18.0	18.1	0.1	-0.5
Fabricated Metal Products	16.3	16.5	16.8	17.0	-0.2	-0.5
Computer and Electronic Products	23.1	23.3	24.8	25.1	-0.2	-1.7
Transportation Equipment	74.0	74.2	82.7	83.3	-0.2	-8.7
Aerospace Products and Parts	62.3	62.6	72.1	72.3	-0.3	-9.8
Nondurable Goods	84.4	87.1	85.8	88.0	-2.7	-1.4
Food Manufacturing	35.8	38.2	35.8	37.5	-2.4	0.0
Wholesale Trade	115.3	116.2	115.5	116.1	-0.9	-0.2
Retail Trade	317.2	308.9	315.0	306.9	8.3	2.2
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	41.2	41.6	41.2	41.3	-0.4	0.0
Food and Beverage Stores	60.5	60.1	62.8	62.7	0.4	-2.3
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	25.5	23.9	25.6	23.9	1.6	-0.1
General Merchandise Stores	60.6	54.6	54.4	50.1	6.0	6.2
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	88.0	88.7	88.9	90.5	-0.7	-0.9
Utilities	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.5	0.0	-0.1
Transportation and Warehousing	83.6	84.3	84.4	86.0	-0.7	-0.8
Air Transportation	12.7	12.8	13.6	13.7	-0.1	-0.9
Water Transportation	3.1	3.2	3.0	3.1	-0.1	0.1
Truck Transportation	21.8	22.2	22.1	22.4	-0.4	-0.3
Support Activities for Transportation	15.8	15.9	15.1	15.8	-0.1	0.7
Support Activities for Water Transportation	5.1	4.9	4.8	4.9	0.2	0.3
Warehousing and Storage	8.4	8.6	7.9	8.6	-0.2	0.5
Information	92.2	92.3	93.3	93.2	-0.1	-1.1
Software Publishers	37.3	37.4	36.4	36.4	-0.1	0.9
Telecommunications	27.2	27.1	28.5	28.4	0.1	-1.3
Financial Activities	153.2	153.1	147.1	146.1	0.1	6.1
Finance and Insurance	104.1	104.0	100.3	99.1	0.1	3.8
Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	53.4	53.1	48.6	47.8	0.3	4.8
Insurance Carriers and Related Activities	39.5	39.7	39.9	39.6	-0.2	-0.4
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	49.1	49.1	46.8	47.0	0.0	2.3
Professional and Business Services	294.1	294.7	294.0	294.6	-0.6	0.1
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	136.7	136.3	137.4	136.9	0.4	-0.7
Legal Services	21.0	20.9	20.6	20.5	0.1	0.4
Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	31.3	31.5	31.2	31.6	-0.2	0.1
Computer Systems Design and Related Services	21.1	20.9	23.5	23.2	0.2	-2.4
Management of Companies and Enterprises	32.2	32.2	30.4	30.3	0.0	1.8
Admin., Suppt. Svcs., Waste Mgmt., and Remediation	125.2	126.2	126.2	127.4	-1.0	-1.0
Employment Services	44.5	44.1	44.2	44.4	0.4	0.3
Education and Health Services	317.0	315.6	312.7	310.9	1.4	4.3
Educational Services	44.2	43.3	44.2	43.0	0.9	0.0
Hospitals	63.1	63.0	62.7	62.5	0.1	0.4
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	53.6	53.5	52.6	52.7	0.1	1.0
Social Assistance	45.2	45.3	45.0	45.1	-0.1	0.2
Leisure and Hospitality	241.8	247.3	241.2	244.7	-5.5	0.6
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	36.5	38.3	38.9	40.1	-1.8	-2.4
Accommodation	27.7	28.2	26.5	27.3	-0.5	1.2
Food Services and Drinking Places	177.6	180.8	175.8	177.3	-3.2	1.8
Government	533.0	523.4	532.9	523.6	9.6	0.1
Federal	70.3	70.0	70.8	70.4	0.3	-0.5
State	151.8	150.3	152.6	151.3	1.5	-0.8
State Educational Services	85.6	84.1	86.4	84.8	1.5	-0.8
Local	310.9	303.1	309.5	301.9	7.8	1.4
Local Educational Services	154.6	150.5	154.9	151.0	4.1	-0.3
Workers in Labor-Management Disputes	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

¹Excludes proprietors, self-employed, members of armed forces, & private household employees. Includes all full- & part-time wage & salary workers receiving pay during the pay period including the 12th of the month. ²Workers excluded because of involvement in labor-management dispute.

Nonagricultural Wage & Salary Workers in Washington State, Place of Work ¹

In Thousands, Not Seasonally Adjusted	Numeric Change					
	December 2003 (Prel)	November 2003 (Rev)	December 2002 (Rev)	November 2002 (Rev)	Nov. 2003 to Dec. 2003	Dec. 2002 to Dec. 2003
Total Nonagricultural Wage & Salary Workers	2,672.7	2,682.0	2,669.6	2,683.7	-9.3	3.1
Natural Resources and Mining	8.5	8.6	9.3	9.4	-0.1	-0.8
Logging	5.6	5.6	6.4	6.4	0.0	-0.8
Construction	156.7	160.6	152.4	157.2	-3.9	4.3
Construction of Buildings	42.6	43.4	41.1	41.8	-0.8	1.5
Heavy and Civil Engineering	19.1	20.6	18.4	19.8	-1.5	0.7
Specialty Trade Contractors	95.0	96.6	92.9	95.6	-1.6	2.1
Manufacturing	261.0	263.9	275.9	278.6	-2.9	-14.9
Durable Goods	179.4	180.0	192.0	192.8	-0.6	-12.6
Wood Product Manufacturing	17.2	17.4	18.0	18.0	-0.2	-0.8
Fabricated Metal Products	16.5	16.5	16.8	16.8	0.0	-0.3
Computer and Electronic Products	23.1	23.2	24.7	24.8	-0.1	-1.6
Transportation Equipment	74.0	73.9	82.5	82.6	0.1	-8.5
Aerospace Products and Parts	62.3	62.3	71.8	72.0	0.0	-9.5
Nondurable Goods	81.6	83.9	83.9	85.8	-2.3	-2.3
Food Manufacturing	33.1	35.2	34.4	35.8	-2.1	-1.3
Wholesale Trade	114.8	115.4	114.6	115.6	-0.6	0.2
Retail Trade	320.6	316.8	320.2	314.8	3.8	0.4
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	40.8	41.2	40.8	41.2	-0.4	0.0
Food and Beverage Stores	60.5	60.5	62.4	62.8	0.0	-1.9
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	27.0	25.8	27.0	25.5	1.2	0.0
General Merchandise Stores	59.7	59.0	56.4	54.4	0.7	3.3
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	88.4	88.2	88.4	88.9	0.2	0.0
Utilities	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.5	0.0	-0.1
Transportation and Warehousing	84.0	83.8	83.9	84.4	0.2	0.1
Air Transportation	12.7	12.8	13.6	13.6	-0.1	-0.9
Water Transportation	3.2	3.1	3.0	3.0	0.1	0.2
Truck Transportation	21.4	21.7	21.8	22.1	-0.3	-0.4
Support Activities for Transportation	15.8	15.9	14.9	15.1	-0.1	0.9
Support Activities for Water Transportation	4.9	5.0	4.7	4.8	-0.1	0.2
Warehousing and Storage	8.5	8.6	8.0	7.9	-0.1	0.5
Information	93.1	92.2	93.1	93.2	0.9	0.0
Software Publishers	37.8	37.2	36.3	36.4	0.6	1.5
Telecommunications	27.4	27.5	28.3	28.6	-0.1	-0.9
Financial Activities	153.4	153.1	147.4	147.0	0.3	6.0
Finance and Insurance	104.4	104.1	100.8	100.3	0.3	3.6
Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	53.6	53.5	49.0	48.7	0.1	4.6
Insurance Carriers and Related Activities	39.6	39.5	40.1	39.9	0.1	-0.5
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	49.0	49.0	46.6	46.7	0.0	2.4
Professional and Business Services	292.7	293.9	290.2	293.9	-1.2	2.5
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	137.3	136.5	138.4	137.2	0.8	-1.1
Legal Services	21.2	21.0	20.8	20.6	0.2	0.4
Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	31.2	31.3	31.0	31.1	-0.1	0.2
Computer Systems Design and Related Services	21.0	21.0	23.3	23.3	0.0	-2.3
Management of Companies and Enterprises	32.4	32.3	30.5	30.4	0.1	1.9
Admin., Suppt. Svcs., Waste Mgmt., and Remediation	123.0	125.1	121.3	126.3	-2.1	1.7
Employment Services	43.1	44.4	41.7	44.3	-1.3	1.4
Education and Health Services	316.7	317.1	312.2	313.0	-0.4	4.5
Educational Services	43.8	44.3	43.2	44.2	-0.5	0.6
Hospitals	63.0	63.1	62.8	62.7	-0.1	0.2
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	53.6	53.5	52.8	52.6	0.1	0.8
Social Assistance	44.8	45.1	44.7	45.0	-0.3	0.1
Leisure and Hospitality	241.1	241.7	241.3	241.2	-0.6	-0.2
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	37.3	36.5	39.8	38.9	0.8	-2.5
Accommodation	26.9	27.5	26.0	26.5	-0.6	0.9
Food Services and Drinking Places	176.9	177.7	175.5	175.8	-0.8	1.4
Government	526.5	531.3	526.6	532.9	-4.8	-0.1
Federal	71.4	69.5	71.6	70.8	1.9	-0.2
State	149.2	151.4	150.7	152.6	-2.2	-1.5
State Educational Services	83.4	85.5	84.4	86.4	-2.1	-1.0
Local	305.9	310.4	304.3	309.5	-4.5	1.6
Local Educational Services	153.4	154.1	153.8	154.9	-0.7	-0.4
Workers in Labor-Management Disputes	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2

¹Excludes proprietors, self-employed, members of armed forces, & private household employees. Includes all full- & part-time wage & salary workers receiving pay during the pay period including the 12th of the month. ²Workers excluded because of involvement in labor-management dispute.

Ask An Economist

Question:

Where can I find cost of living indices for North Central Washington (Chelan, Douglas, Grant counties) versus King County and/or Pierce County?

Is there a site where I can compare the average cost of living indices for various counties and/or cities in the state of Washington?

Answer:

Cost of living comparisons are some of the most sought after and least available economic data around. The short answer to your question is to check two web sites for the information you're seeking. Those are:

The American Chamber of Commerce Research Association - <http://www.coli.org/> (ACCRA) administers the Cost of Living Index and provides cost of living comparisons for participating cities for a small fee.

Thurston Regional Planning Council - <http://www.trpc.org/> provides a summary table of ACCRA Cost of Living Indices for selected cities. They typically list all participating cities in Washington and adjacent states and there is no charge for the information. But before you follow those links you may save some time and exasperation by reading on...

First, let's clarify the difference between *cost of living comparisons*, which are what the writer seeks, and *localized consumer costs*.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a popular cost index produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The CPI's main job is to track changes in consumer costs over time in a given location. For example, the CPI can tell me that from December 2002 to December 2003 consumer prices increased by 0.5 percent in the Seattle-Tacoma-Bremerton area (which includes King, Pierce, Snohomish, Island, Kitsap, and Thurston counties). The CPI also tells me that nationwide prices increased 1.9 percent in the same period. The CPI, thus, allows a comparison of *inflation* between areas and can also be used to judge the change in the purchasing power of income over time in a given place.

But the writer wants to compare consumer costs in many places at one point in time. The CPI won't work for that. The most widespread cost of living index out there is produced by the American Chamber of Commerce Research Association (ACCRA), known as the ACCRA Cost of Living Index. It compares consumer costs in the neighborhood of over 300 cities at a given point in time. The hitch is that the ACCRA index is a voluntary program, where organizations in local areas, say, your local chamber of commerce or economic development council, choose to participate in a survey at their own cost. Further, local areas that choose to participate must meet a certain population threshold set by ACCRA.

The ACCRA index can be used to compare local cost of living index values to the average of all cities participating in the survey in a given quarter. The national average is always set to 100, so you can consider the difference between your city and the nation in percent terms. For example, in the third quarter of 2003 the index for Olympia-Lacey-Tumwater was 99.1, so the cost of living in Olympia was about 1 percent lower than the nation as a whole. My neighbor was considering a job offer in Portland, Oregon last fall. Were she to move to Portland, her income would need to be about 13 percent higher to maintain the same purchasing power that she enjoys in Olympia, as the Portland index was 111.9.

Monthly Unemployment Rates by Geographic Area for the State of Washington



Area	Oct. 03	Sept. 03	Oct. 02	Sept. 02
Washington State Total	6.6%	7.1%	6.7%	6.7%
Metropolitan Areas	6.5%	7.0%	6.5%	6.5%
All Western Wa Areas	6.7%	7.3%	6.9%	6.9%
All Eastern Wa Areas	6.3%	6.5%	5.9%	6.0%



Area	Nov. 03	Oct. 03	Nov. 02	Oct. 02
Washington State Total	6.8%	6.6%	7.0%	6.7%
Metropolitan Areas	6.6%	6.5%	6.7%	6.5%
All Western Wa Areas	6.5%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
All Eastern Wa Areas	7.9%	6.3%	7.8%	5.9%



Area	Dec. 03	Nov. 03	Dec. 02	Nov. 02
Washington State Total	6.8%	6.8%	7.0%	7.0%
Metropolitan Areas	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.7%
All Western Wa Areas	6.4%	6.5%	6.6%	6.8%
All Eastern Wa Areas	8.5%	7.9%	8.6%	7.8%

What's New?

Washington Labor Market Now Quarterly; Monthly Updates Online

Beginning with the 4th quarter of 2003, the *Washington Labor Market* switches to a quarterly schedule. If you're on the mailing list you'll receive printed copies of the publication on the new quarterly schedule. In the interim, monthly updates will be posted to the Internet on the "Economy" page of www.workforceexplorer.com.

2003 Labor and Economic Report Now Online

According to the *2003 Washington State Labor Market and Economic Report*, manufacturing has been the largest job loser in Washington's economy, having dropped 14,100 jobs from September 2002 to September 2003. This is but one of the hundreds of useful facts and figures published in the report, which presents a comprehensive picture of labor market and economic activity in Washington in 2003.

The *2003 Washington State Labor Market and Economic Report* was published in December 2003 and is available on both the "Home" and "Economy" pages of www.workforceexplorer.com.

Washington Wage Report

If you want to gain an overview of wage dynamics in Washington, you'll want to read the *Washington Wage Report 2002*. The report covers wage trends from 1990 to 2002. Among the trends observed in the report is that the state's median hourly wage, adjusted for inflation, increased from \$14.63 per hour in 1990 to \$16.95 in 2002, a change of 16 percent. There are, however, large wage differentials—for example, Okanogan County's median wage was \$10.01 when King County's was \$18.99 in 2002. The entire wage report can be downloaded from the home page of www.workforceexplorer.com.



Washington Labor Market



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