



# King County Labor Area Summary November 2019



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\*Data used in this report available at the web address listed above.

## Overview

- In November 2019, the not seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in King County was 2.3 percent. This is down from 2.7 percent reported in October. Twelve months ago, the unemployment rate was 3.6 percent. This is noteworthy, as it is the lowest reported unemployment rate for King County in the current series for King County (dating back to 1990).
- The King County labor force expanded by 3.3 percent over the year.
- Nonfarm employment expanded by 3,600 from October to November 2019. There were an estimated 1,493,500 total nonfarm jobs in King County.
- Seven of the major industries detailed in this report added jobs and five shed jobs from October to November on a not seasonally adjusted basis. The largest one-month gains were attributable to education and health services, and the deepest losses were observed in leisure and hospitality.
- Total nonfarm employment in November 2019 was 44,500 above the level observed 12 months earlier. This represents a 3.1 percent increase in employment over the year.
- Year-to-year growth was observed in almost every major industry detailed in this report. The largest gains were observed in information, education and health services, and professional and business services. The only major industry reporting annual employment losses was wholesale trade.

## Unemployment rates and labor force information

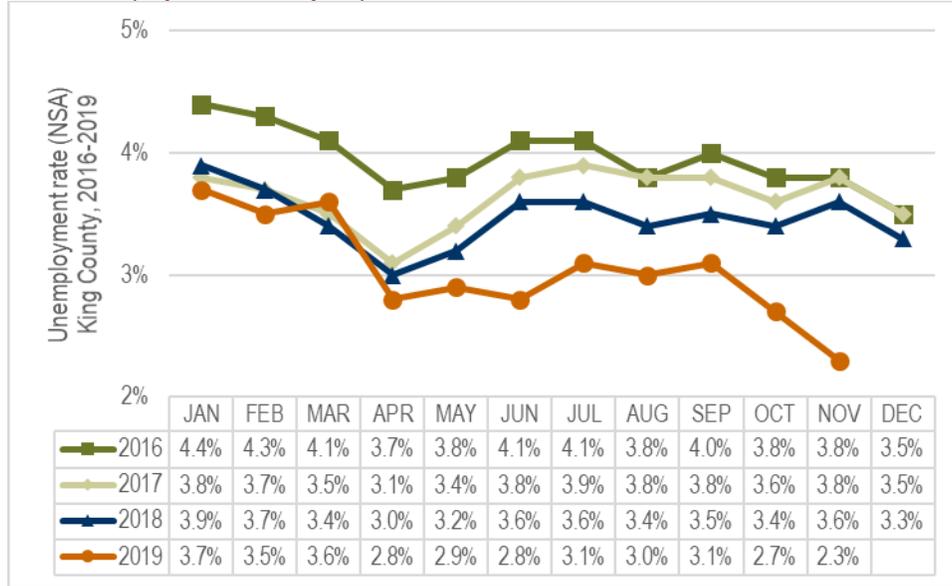
The not seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for King County was 2.3 percent (preliminary) in November 2019. This is below 2.7 percent, as reported in October (revised). For reference, the unemployment rate in November 2018 was 3.6 percent.

The ‘Great Recession’ gripped Washington in mid-2008. Through the course of 2008 and 2009, the unemployment rate rapidly increased, reaching a peak rate of 9.5 percent in the beginning of 2010. Since then, the elevated rate has diminished. November 2019 figures are:

- King County labor force: 1,304,360
- Total employed: 1,274,758
- Total unemployed: 29,602
- Unemployment rate: 2.3%

Month-to-month, King County’s labor force expanded by 8,542 people. The number of employed people grew by 14,135 and the number of active job seekers contracted by 5,593. Over-the-year, the labor force expanded by 42,194 people or 3.3 percent.

**Figure 1. Unemployment rates, not seasonally adjusted**  
 King County, January 2016 through November 2019  
 Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA



*The unemployment rate peaked at 9.5% in early 2010. In November 2019, the unemployment rate was 2.3 percent.*

**Washington state**

The not seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for Washington State was reported as 4.0 percent (preliminary), unchanged from the rate reported in October (revised). The statewide labor force increased by 143,457 (3.7 percent) over the year. For comparison, the statewide unemployment rate 12 months ago was 4.4 percent.

The November forecast by Washington’s Economic and Revenue Forecast Council predicts that the statewide unemployment rate will average 4.52 percent in 2019 and will rise to 4.53 percent in 2020. This is only slightly changed relative to the June forecast. See [www.erfc.wa.gov](http://www.erfc.wa.gov) for more information.

**Seattle-Bellevue-Everett Metropolitan Division (MD)**

The Seattle-Bellevue-Everett MD combines labor force information for Snohomish and King Counties. During the current economic downturn, King County’s unemployment rate has consistently run below that of Snohomish County. The not seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the combined MD dropped to 2.3 percent in November 2019, the lowest rate observed in the series (dating back to 1990). Twelve months ago, the unemployment rate was 3.7 percent. Over the year, the civilian labor force expanded by 56,203 or 3.3 percent.

**City level estimates**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics and Employment Security Department publish labor force information for cities with a population of 25,000 or more. Unemployment rates for selected cities can be found at [www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/labor-force](http://www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/labor-force).

## Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claims

UI claims activity peaked in May 2009 (49,117 continued claims were counted that month) and has been on a downward trend ever since. In November 2019, 4,881 new claims were filed by King County residents and a total of 11,740 King County residents collected benefits from the state UI system.

## Total nonfarm employment

Total nonfarm employment (not seasonally adjusted) expanded by 3,600 from October to November 2019. Over the year, employers in King County added 44,500 jobs or 3.1 percent. The tally of nonfarm jobs in King County was more than 1.49 million.

**Figure 2. Nonfarm industry employment**  
King County, January 2016 through November 2019  
Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA



*King County job growth continues to climb. From November 2018 to November 2019, King County employment expanded by 44,500.*

King County employment levels peaked in 2008 and reached their lowest levels since the start of the economic downturn in early 2010. Average annual total nonfarm employment fell by 6.4 percent from 2008 to 2010. In 2010, employment levels were roughly equivalent to 2005 levels. Employment since 2010 has expanded for all of King County's major private sector industries and has exceeded the 2008 level since 2012.

**Figure 3. Total nonfarm industry employment, not seasonally adjusted**  
**King County, November 2018, October and November 2019**  
 Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA

Nonfarm Employment Estimates, Not Seasonally Adjusted

**King County**

Data benchmarked through June 2019

NAICS Industry Title	Prelim Nov-19	Revised Oct-19	Revised Nov-18	Change		
				Oct-19 Nov- 19	Nov-18 Nov-19	Nov-18 Nov-19
Total Nonfarm	1,493,500	1,489,900	1,449,000	3,600	44,500	3.1%
Total Private	1,313,000	1,310,200	1,270,200	2,800	42,800	3.4%
Goods Producing	191,700	191,900	185,400	-200	6,300	3.4%
Mining and Logging	500	500	500	0	0	0.0%
Construction	82,700	83,600	80,000	-900	2,700	3.4%
Construction of Buildings	24,400	24,300	22,800	100	1,600	7.0%
Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction	7,000	7,800	6,500	-800	500	7.7%
Specialty Trade Contractors	51,300	51,500	50,700	-200	600	1.2%
Manufacturing	108,500	107,800	104,900	700	3,600	3.4%
Durable Goods	81,400	81,100	79,100	300	2,300	2.9%
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	7,700	7,700	7,100	0	600	8.5%
Computer and Electronic Product Mfg.	8,300	8,400	8,300	-100	0	0.0%
Navgtnl., Measuring, Electromed., & Control	4,800	4,900	4,800	-100	0	0.0%
Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	44,800	44,800	44,000	0	800	1.8%
Aerospace Product and Parts Mfg.	41,600	41,500	40,800	100	800	2.0%
Nondurable Goods	27,100	26,700	25,800	400	1,300	5.0%
Food Manufacturing	13,000	12,900	12,500	100	500	4.0%
Service Providing	1,301,800	1,298,000	1,263,600	3,800	38,200	3.0%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	283,000	279,600	279,200	3,400	3,800	1.4%
Wholesale Trade	65,000	64,400	65,500	600	-500	-0.8%
Retail Trade	163,500	161,300	159,400	2,200	4,100	2.6%
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	11,400	11,300	11,600	100	-200	-1.7%
Food and Beverage Stores	23,900	23,800	24,000	100	-100	-0.4%
General Merchandise Stores	20,400	18,500	19,800	1,900	600	3.0%
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	54,500	53,900	54,300	600	200	0.4%
Transportation and Warehousing	52,500	51,900	52,300	600	200	0.4%
Air Transportation	14,900	14,900	14,600	0	300	2.1%
Truck Transportation	6,900	7,000	6,600	-100	300	4.5%
Support Activities for Transportation	12,900	13,000	12,800	-100	100	0.8%
Warehousing and Storage	2,900	2,900	3,500	0	-600	-17.1%
Information	125,300	126,100	114,000	-800	11,300	9.9%
Software Publishers	69,000	69,500	64,000	-500	5,000	7.8%
Financial Activities	75,500	77,000	73,400	-1,500	2,100	2.9%
Finance and Insurance	44,200	44,600	43,100	-400	1,100	2.6%
Credit Intermediation and Related	16,300	16,400	16,100	-100	200	1.2%
Insurance Carriers and Related	19,000	19,100	18,400	-100	600	3.3%

Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	31,300	32,400	30,300	-1,100	1,000	3.3%
Professional and Business Services	243,200	242,100	237,000	1,100	6,200	2.6%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	137,200	135,200	131,100	2,000	6,100	4.7%
Legal Services	11,900	11,900	11,800	0	100	0.8%
Accounting, Tax Prep., Bookkpg., and Payroll	9,300	9,100	9,200	200	100	1.1%
Architectural, Engineering, and Related	20,000	19,700	19,200	300	800	4.2%
Computer Systems Design and Related	45,900	46,100	43,900	-200	2,000	4.6%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	31,300	31,100	31,800	200	-500	-1.6%
Admin., Support, Waste Mgmt., and Remediation	74,700	75,900	74,100	-1,200	600	0.8%
Administrative and Support Services	70,300	71,900	70,700	-1,600	-400	-0.6%
Employment Services	27,700	29,600	28,400	-1,900	-700	-2.5%
Educational and Health Services	196,300	193,500	188,300	2,800	8,000	4.2%
Educational Services	34,000	33,200	31,200	800	2,800	9.0%
Ambulatory Health Care Services	65,300	63,700	62,000	1,600	3,300	5.3%
Hospitals	32,700	32,400	31,800	300	900	2.8%
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	19,400	19,300	20,000	100	-600	-3.0%
Social Assistance	44,900	44,800	43,200	100	1,700	3.9%
Leisure and Hospitality	147,000	148,700	143,600	-1,700	3,400	2.4%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	26,800	28,100	25,600	-1,300	1,200	4.7%
Accommodation	16,000	16,400	16,000	-400	0	0.0%
Food Services and Drinking Places	104,200	104,200	102,000	0	2,200	2.2%
Other Services	51,000	51,300	49,300	-300	1,700	3.4%
Repair and Maintenance	8,800	8,800	9,200	0	-400	-4.3%
Personal and Laundry Services	17,600	17,500	17,500	100	100	0.6%
Religious, Grantmkg., Civic, Professional, & Similar	24,600	25,000	22,600	-400	2,000	8.8%
Government	180,500	179,700	178,800	800	1,700	1.0%
Federal Government	19,100	19,100	19,400	0	-300	-1.5%
State Government	52,500	52,400	55,300	100	-2,800	-5.1%
State Government Educational Services	37,300	37,600	40,500	-300	-3,200	-7.9%
Local Government	108,900	108,200	104,100	700	4,800	4.6%
Local Government Educational Services	46,300	45,500	45,000	800	1,300	2.9%
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

*King County nonfarm employment increased by 3.1% over the year. Over the past few years, the rate of growth has generally hovered in the 3 percent range.*

## Nonfarm industry employment

### Goods-producing Industries

From October to November 2019, total employment in goods-producing industries declined by 200, with losses attributable to the seasonal rhythm of construction. Year-over-year, goods-producing employment was up 6,300 or 3.4 percent.

Employment levels in **construction**-related industries diminished by 900 from October to November on a not seasonally adjusted basis. The tally of jobs was estimated at 82,700. Year-to-year, employment in construction was up 2,700 or 3.4 percent.

- Employment in construction is highly-seasonal. Expect to see employment drop with the temperature over the fall and winter months.

- Workers and employers in construction suffered losses above and beyond most. Based on annual average employment levels, construction declined an estimated 35 percent from peak levels in 2007 by the time it reached its low point in 2011. Recovery in this industry started off slowly, but has taken off in response to pent-up demand during the economic slowdown.

In November, King County-located **manufacturing** employers collectively added 700 jobs. Over the year, total manufacturing employment was up 3,600 or 3.4 percent. Aerospace products and parts manufacturing added an estimated 100 jobs over the month and added 800 jobs over the year.

- Manufacturing as a whole represents a variety of activities in King County, with products ranging from aircraft, marine and electronic products manufacturing to food manufacturing.
- Manufacturing led early economic recovery locally and statewide. In 2016 and 2017, manufacturing employment fell, but has been building up over the past several months.
- The count of aerospace products and parts manufacturing *only* catches those employers that are directly and primarily responsible for manufacturing aerospace products. Other products and services in the supply chain are counted under their best fit industries.
- Employment in nondurable goods increased by 400 over the month and by 1,300 (5.0 percent) over the year.

### Service-providing industries

Service providers represent an extremely diverse collection of sectors. Taken as a whole, service-providing employers added 3,800 jobs in November on a not seasonally adjusted basis. Over the year, service providers added 38,200 new jobs to the King County economy, with gains observed in most industry breakouts. The largest year-over-year gains among service-providing industries were attributable to hiring in information (up 11,300) and education and health services (up 8,000).

**Wholesale trade** was the only broad industry reporting annual employment losses. Employers added an estimated 600 jobs in November but shed 500 jobs over the year. Wholesale trade accounted for 65,000 King County-based jobs in November.

Net employment in **retail trade** increased by 2,200 over the month and expanded by 4,100 (2.6 percent) over the year.

- Every year, ESD publishes a forecast for 4<sup>th</sup> quarter holiday hiring by retailers. Last year, Seattle-area retailers in King and Snohomish Counties added 4,290 seasonal jobs in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. This year, we predict that retailers in the Seattle MSA will add 5,650 jobs over the holidays.
- Over the year, general merchandise stores added 600 jobs, however motor vehicle and parts dealers and food and beverage stores both reported employment losses.
- Over the past several years, most retail growth statewide has been observed in “other retail trade”; a category that includes non-store retailers. However, employment seems to be slowing in recent months; from November 2018 to November 2019, retailers captured under “other retail trade” added 1,500 jobs statewide. Many of these jobs are located in King County.

Net employment in **transportation, warehousing and utilities** expanded by 600 over the month and by 200 over the year. This set of industries accounted for an estimated 54,500 jobs.

- The largest annual increases were attributable to air transportation and truck transportation; each added 300 jobs.
- Warehousing and storage shed 600 jobs over the year.

Employment in the **information** sector contracted by 800 over the month but expanded by 11,300 jobs or 9.9 percent over the year. This sector, which includes everything from software publishers to radio stations and newspapers had a tally of 125,300 jobs in November.

- The information sector includes software publishing activities. Employment in software publishing contracted by 500 over the month but added 5,000 jobs (7.8 percent) over the year.

The **financial activities** sector includes the finance, insurance, real estate and rental and leasing industries. The overall employment level declined by 1,500 over the month but expanded by 2,100 or 2.9 percent over the year.

- Employment over the year in finance and insurance was up 1,100 (2.6 percent) and hiring in the real estate component was up 1,000 jobs (3.3 percent)

**Professional and business services** includes a variety of professional and technical services such as accounting and engineering services. It also includes administrative support and management services and supports day to day business operations with services such as housekeeping and temporary employment services. In short, these are the businesses that provide operational support to others in the business community. In November, this diverse sector added 1,100 jobs. Over the year, professional and business services as a whole expanded by 6,200 jobs (2.6 percent).

- From November 2018 to November 2019, professional, scientific and technical services added 6,100 jobs (4.7 percent), management of companies and enterprises shed 500 (-1.6 percent), and administrative support, waste management and remediation added 600 jobs (0.8 percent). Employment services was down 700 jobs over the year.

Employers in the **educational and health services** industries added 2,800 jobs over the month and added 8,000 jobs (4.2 percent) over the year. Educational and health services accounted for an estimated 196,300 King County-based jobs in November.

- Most education and health industries detailed in this report added jobs over the year. The largest gains were attributable to hiring in ambulatory health care services (up 3,300). Nursing and residential care facilities is the only industry reporting over-the-year losses (down 600).
- Educational and health services weathered the economic storm relatively well compared to other industries. Employment in this sector is generally dependent on population growth and stability.

**Leisure and hospitality** employment contracted following its usual mid-summer peak. Employment was down 1,700 from October to November. Over the year, the industries that entertain residents and visitors alike added 3,400 jobs or 2.4 percent.

- The largest year-over-year changes were observed in food services and drinking places, which added 2,200 jobs or 2.2 percent.

**Other services** represents a diverse collection of industries that do not fit elsewhere and include employers ranging from religious and grant-making organizations to auto mechanics and dry cleaners to membership clubs. Overall employment levels contracted by 300 over the month but expanded by 1,700 (3.4 percent) over the year. Other services represented 51,000 King County jobs in November 2019. The largest one-year increases were observed among religious, grant making, civic, professional and similar employers (up 2,000 or 8.8 percent).

**Government** employers collectively added 800 jobs in November and added an estimated 1,700 jobs over the year.

- The largest one-month gains were attributable to the hiring by local public school districts (local educational services were up 800). State government educational services jobs declined by 300 over the month.
- Over the year, gains were concentrated in local government services – particularly local educational services. Both state and federal government employment levels were down over the year.

### **Forecast information for Washington state:**

The Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council issues quarterly forecasts that address Washington's projected economic health. The most recent forecast was issued in November and updated in December. Forecast information is available at [www.erfc.wa.gov](http://www.erfc.wa.gov).

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