



# Washington Economic Update

April 21, 2015

## Summary

Nonfarm payroll employment in Washington increased by 10,500 jobs and the unemployment rate fell to 5.9 percent in March according to data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

## Washington Unemployment Rate

During March, the unemployment rate in Washington declined by 0.4 percentage point to 5.9 percent. The number of people counted as unemployed fell by 12,399 in March to 209,480, while the labor force grew by 3,361 to 3,549,444. Among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, 34 posted lower unemployment rates for the month than Washington. A year earlier, the unemployment rate in Washington stood at 6.3 percent.

The 10 year peak for the unemployment rate in Washington was 10.4 percent in January 2010. The series high for the unemployment rate in Washington occurred in November 1982 when the unemployment rate reached 12.2 percent. The 10 year low for the unemployment rate was 4.6 percent in June 2007. This also represents the series low for the unemployment rate in Washington. BLS began publishing the state unemployment rate series in 1976.

The national unemployment rate was unchanged at 5.5 percent in March. March's unemployment rate was 1.1 percentage points lower than a year earlier when the rate stood at 6.6 percent. The ten year high for the national unemployment rate was 10.0 percent in October 2009. The ten year low was 4.4 percent in May 2007.



## Washington Payroll Employment

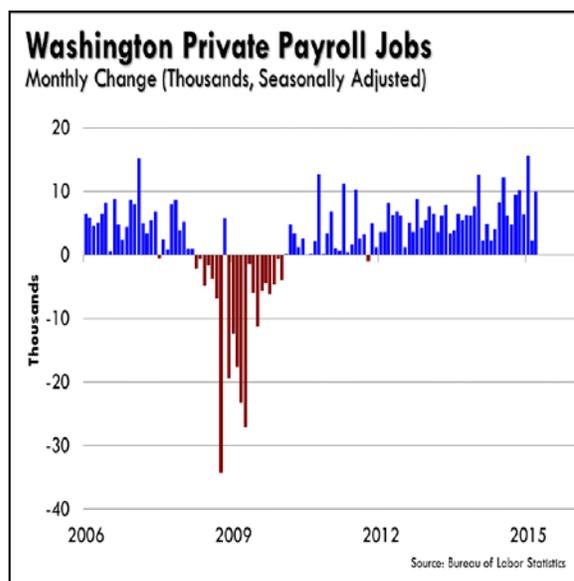
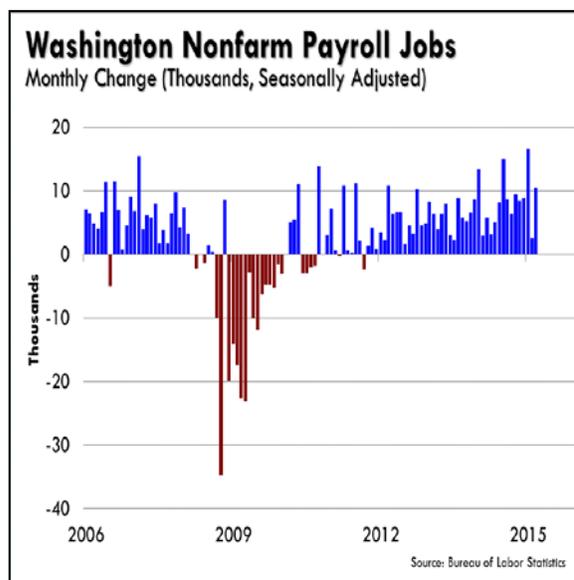
Washington nonfarm payrolls increased by 10,500 jobs, or 0.33 percent, on a seasonally adjusted basis during March. In the prior month, nonfarm payrolls increased by 2,600. Over the past 12 months nonfarm payrolls in Washington increased by 102,800, or 3.37 percent. Washington nonfarm payroll employment has increased in each of the past 36 months.

Nationally nonfarm payrolls increased by 126,000 jobs in March, or 0.09 percent. Over the 12 month period ending in March 2015, nonfarm payrolls grew by 3,128,000 jobs, or 2.27 percent. Washington posted the third highest percentage gain in nonfarm payroll employment among the 50 states and the District of Columbia over the past 12 months.

During March, Washington private sector payrolls increased by 10,000, or 0.39 percent. Private sector payrolls increased by 2,200 jobs in the prior month. Over the past 12 months, private sector payrolls in Washington increased by 91,100, or 3.64 percent. Washington private sector payroll employment has increased in each of the past 36 months.

Nationally, private sector payroll jobs increased by 129,000 in March, or 0.11 percent. Over past 12 months, the nation's economy has added 3,056,000 private sector payroll jobs, an increase of 2.63 percent. Washington posted the third highest percentage gain in private sector payroll employment among the 50 states and the District of Columbia over the past 12 months.

During March, total government payroll employment in Washington increased by 500, or 0.09 percent. Federal government payroll employment was unchanged. State government payroll employment declined by 500, or 0.32 percent, while local government payroll employment increased by 1,000, or 0.30 percent.



Over the past year, total government payroll employment increased by 11,700, or 2.14 percent. State government payroll employment increased by 3,200, or 2.11 percent. Local government payroll employment increased by 7,500, or 2.31 percent.

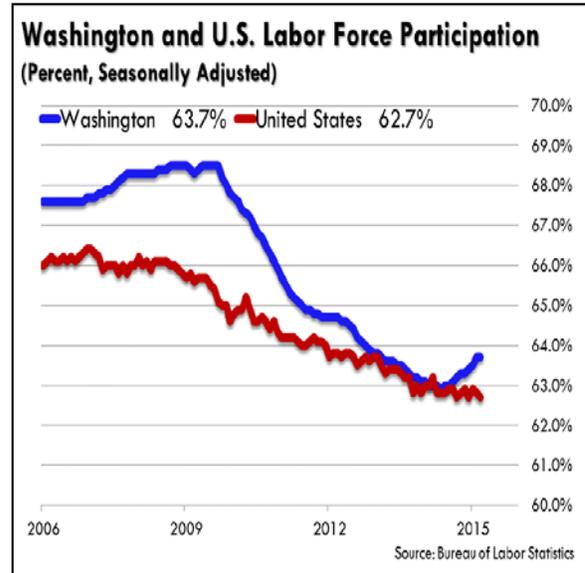
The best performing sectors on a seasonally adjusted basis during March were Professional & Business Services (+4,700) and Educational & Health Services (+3,300). The poorest performing sectors during the month were Leisure & Hospitality (-1,900) and Manufacturing (-700).



The best performing sectors during the last twelve months were Construction (+18,900) and Trade, Transportation & Utilities (+18,300). The poorest performing sectors for the year were Mining & Logging (-400) and Information (+2,200).

### Other Washington Labor Force Statistics

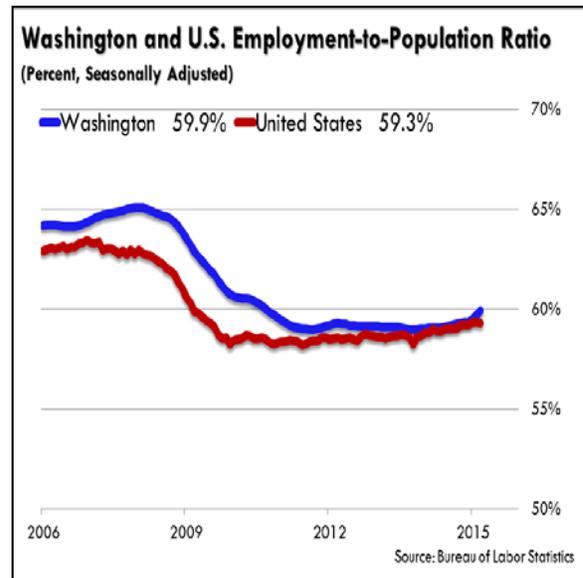
The labor force participation rate in Washington was unchanged at 63.7 percent in March. Among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, 24 have a higher labor force participation rate than Washington. The labor force participation rate in Washington is unchanged from a year earlier. The labor force participation rate is the percentage of the civilian noninstitutionalized population age 16 and older who are employed or actively looking for work.



The 10 year high for the labor force participation rate in Washington was 68.5 percent in September 2009. The series high for the labor force participation rate in Washington occurred in January 1999 when the labor force participation rate hit 70.4 percent. The 10 year low for the labor force participation rate was 62.9 percent in May 2014. The series low for the labor force participation rate occurred in March 1976 when the labor force participation rate hit 60.6 percent.

The national labor force participation rate declined by 0.1 percentage point to 62.7 percent in March, equaling the ten year low last reached in December 2014. That rate is 0.5 percentage point below the March 2014 level of 63.2 percent.

The employment-to-population ratio, or the percentage of the Washington civilian noninstitutionalized population 16 years and older counted as employed, rose to 59.9 percent in March from 59.7 percent the prior month. Among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, 26 have higher employment-to-population ratios than Washington. The employment-to-population ratio in Washington is 0.9 percentage point higher than a year earlier.



The 10 year high for the employment-to-population ratio in Washington was 65.1 percent in February 2008. The series high for the employment-to-population ratio in Washington occurred in January 1999 when the employment-to-population ratio hit 67.0 percent. The 10 year low for the employment-to-population ratio was 59.0 percent in April 2014. The series low for the employment-to-population ratio occurred in April 1976 when the employment-to-population ratio hit 55.3 percent.

The national employment-to-population ratio was unchanged at 59.3 percent in March. At 59.3 percent, the national employment-to-population ratio is still below the level of 59.4 percent when the recession ended in June 2009. The all-time high for the employment-to-population ratio was 64.7 percent in April 2000. The 10 year high for the employment-to-population ratio was 63.4 percent in December 2006. The recent low occurred in October 2013 when the employment-to-population ratio dipped to 58.2 percent. The last time the employment-to-population posted a reading lower than 58.2 percent was July 1983.

State employment and unemployment data for April is scheduled for release on Wednesday, May 27. The national employment situation report for April is scheduled for release on Friday, May 8.