



# Southwest Washington Labor Market News Volume 2013, Number 1

**Scott Bailey, Regional Economist**

5411E. Mill Plain Boulevard, Suite 15, Vancouver WA 98661-7046

Voice: (360) 735-4995

[scott.bailey@esd.wa.gov](mailto:scott.bailey@esd.wa.gov), <https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata>

## Monthly Review

“Tell me, where are we going?  
Oh, what’s the future showin’?  
Oh, where are we headed?  
With all that’s going on where are we gettin’?”

*Marvin Gaye*

## State of the Nation

**Where are we going?** Where ever it is we’re headed, we’re not getting there very fast. More on that when February numbers are released in two weeks—this newsletter will be short, wish it were sweeter.

## State of the States—and PDX

According to preliminary estimates, Washington state added 24,100 jobs in January, which would qualify as the biggest one-month gain in employment since 1996, when the end of a Boeing strike produced an artificial jump in the statistics. Before breaking out the champagne, however, it is worth noting that January preliminary estimates have been revised downward by 10,000 to 12,000 over the past few years.

Oregon chalked up a much more realistic 4,200 increase, continuing that state’s slow recovery. Employment growth remained at 1.1 percent over the year. Most (3,900) of the increase came in the Portland metro area. Portland’s growth was pegged at close to 2 percent through the benchmarked September numbers. Preliminary estimates show a weakening since then—we’ll know in three months if that holds up.

January 2013 Unemployment Rates			
	Jan. 2013	Dec. 2012	Jan. 2012
<b>Seasonally Adjusted:</b>			
U.S.	7.9	7.8	8.3
U.S. U-6	14.4	14.4	15.1
Washington	7.5	7.5	8.5
Oregon	8.4	8.3	9.0
Portland Metro	7.9	7.8	8.3
<b>Unadjusted:</b>			
U.S.	8.5	7.6	8.8
Washington	8.5	7.6	9.3
Oregon	9.5	8.2	9.8
Clark	9.9	8.3	11.5
Cowlitz	11.9	10.2	12.0
Wahkiakum	12.9	12.1	13.2
Portland Metro	8.5	7.4	8.9
*See text. Data will likely be revised upward.			

## Regional Roundup

### Clark County

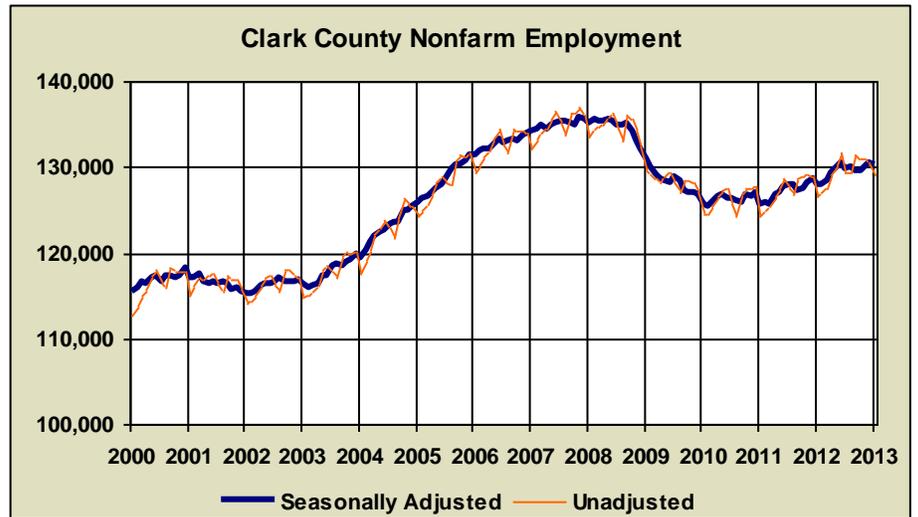
The county's labor market did not exactly start the year off on the right foot. Nonfarm employment, after seasonal adjustment, fell by 300 jobs. Despite taking a step back, the county remains on the slow train to recovery.

Unadjusted employment fell by 1,800 jobs over the month. There were the usual seasonal layoffs in construction (-300), retail trade (-600), transportation (-200) and business services (-300). What was unexpected was a sharp drop in health care (-300).

Overall, the county maintained its moderate growth path, adding 2,200 jobs over the year (+1.7 percent). Two notable changes in the big picture: first, government employment finally appears to have hit bottom and turned upward, although more cuts in state government later this year are possible. K-12 education is up 300 over the year. Second, health care is showing a loss over the year. Some caution here, as these are preliminary estimates based upon a sample of employers, and will be revised over the next six months as we get employment data from all employers—but an over-the-year loss in health care is a rare event.

The preliminary unemployment rate was reportedly 9.9 percent. It remains to be seen whether the rate will be revised upward next month along the lines of what has been happening over the past several years. Stay tuned.

Both initial and continued unemployment claims declined slightly over the month after seasonal adjustment. Initial claims are back to normal levels, while continued claims are still about 25 percent higher than before the recession. Along with the 3,700 continued claimants, another 1,800 received Emergency Unemployment Compensation. These numbers don't include county residents filing claims in Oregon; including those claimants would likely boost the totals in the neighborhood of 40 percent.



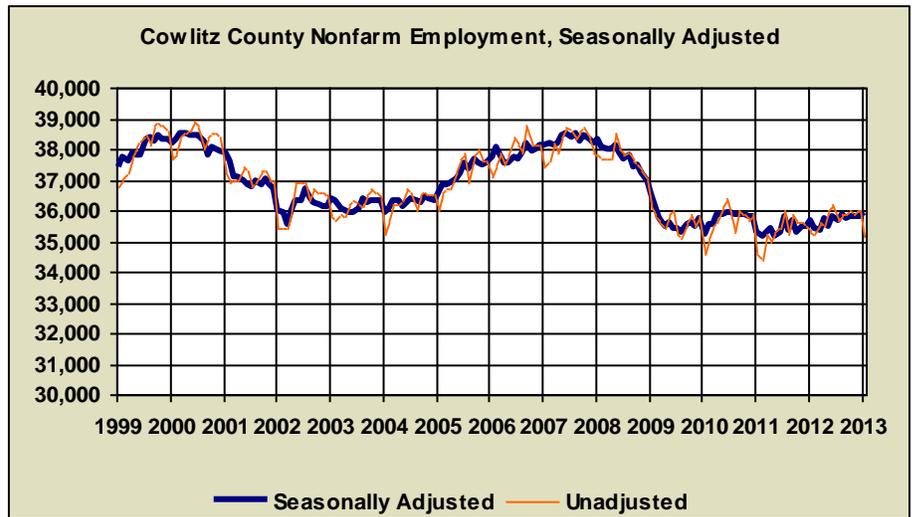
## Cowlitz County

The Cowlitz County labor market crawled another inch upward in January, but still has a lot of ground to make up. Seasonally-adjusted nonfarm employment rose by 100 jobs, due to a pickup in hiring in business services. The county has added about 700 jobs since hitting bottom two years ago, and remains about 2,500 jobs below its mid-2007 peak.

Unadjusted employment fell by 600 jobs due to seasonal layoffs in retail trade and construction

The unemployment rate rose to 11.9 percent over the month—January and February are typically the months with the highest unemployment rates. The rate was statistically indistinguishable from the 12.0 percent posted for January 2012. Just over 5,000 county residents were jobless.

Initial unemployment claims increased slightly over the month, while continued claims inched downward. Over the past year, both have drifted lower, moving closer to pre-recession levels. There were over 1,200 county residents filing continued claims, and over 600 receiving Emergency Unemployment Compensation.



## Wahkiakum County

Preliminary estimates indicated that Wahkiakum County's labor market continued its slow descent in January.

There was a small downward trickle in nonfarm employment—nothing big in and of itself, but a pebble here, and a pebble there... Total nonfarm employment dropped by 10 to 630 jobs, which was 50 jobs below January of last year. On a seasonally adjusted basis, the county was 220 jobs below its peak five years ago.

Unemployment remained high at 12.9 percent—no real improvement over the previous January. An estimated 190 county residents were unemployed. Initial unemployment claims continued to trend at about 25 a month, as they have for more than a year. Continued claims declined for the fourth month in a row, also back on the trend of 40 per month. Another 18 county residents received Emergency Unemployment Compensation.

