

# Kittitas County Labor Area Summary April 2024



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## Overview

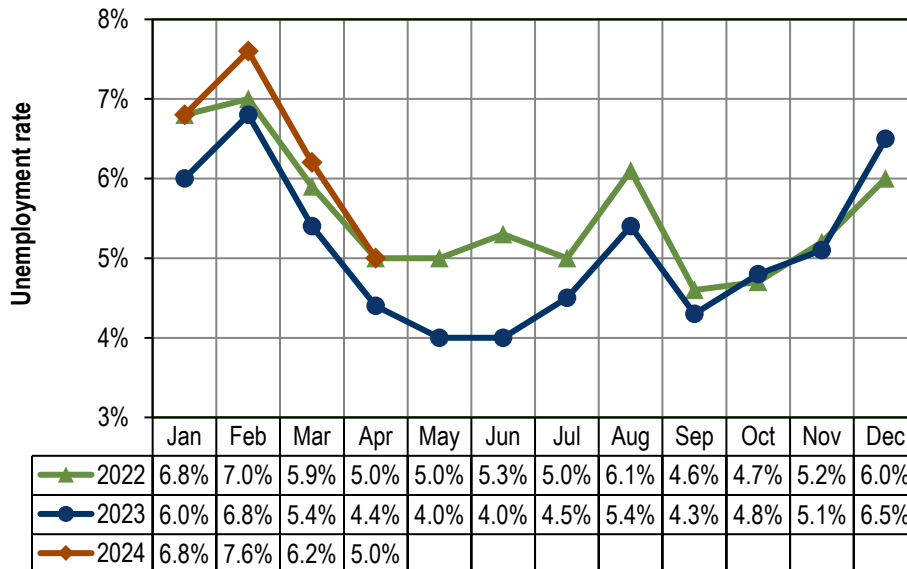
This report provides an update on the Kittitas County economy incorporating non-seasonally adjusted nonfarm employment and civilian labor force data. Analysis focuses on year-over-year (between April 2023 and April 2024) and average annual changes (between 2022 and 2023) in the local labor market.

## Unemployment rates

Preliminary estimates indicate that Washington’s not seasonally adjusted average annual unemployment rate stabilized at 4.1% in 2022 and 2023. However, the monthly unemployment rate rose from 3.5% in April 2023 to 4.4% in April 2024, a nine-tenths percentage point increase.

In Kittitas County, the average annual unemployment rate declined from 5.5% to 5.1% between 2022 and 2023. The current 5.0% unemployment rate in April 2024 was six-tenths of a percentage point above the April 2023 reading of 4.4% (*Figure 1*). However, this 4.4% rate in April 2023 was the lowest unemployment rate for April since data began to be recorded electronically in 1990.

**Figure 1.** Kittitas County unemployment rates, not seasonally adjusted  
 Washington state, January 2022 through April 2024  
 Source: Employment Security Department/DATA; Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)



The Kittitas County unemployment rate rose by six-tenths of a percentage point between April 2023 and April 2024.

## Total nonfarm employment

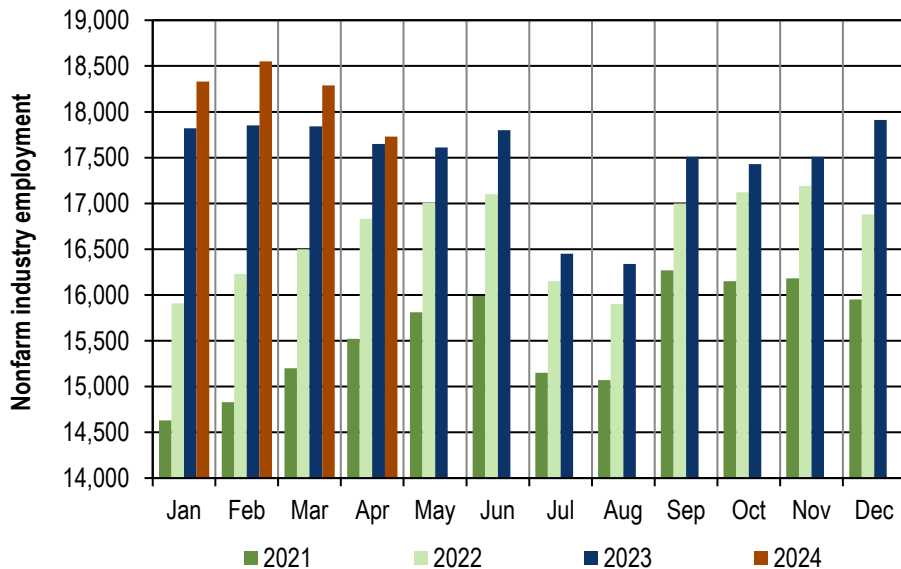
Between 2022 and 2023, Washington’s labor market netted 69,700 new nonfarm jobs, an average annual increase of 2.0%. Although this 2.0% growth rate in 2023 is good news for Washington’s labor market, it should be noted that the average annual increase in 2022 was a more robust 4.7%. Year over year, Washington's nonfarm market has expanded for 37 consecutive months (April 2021 through April 2024). In April 2024, business and government organizations across the state tallied 3,635,100 jobs (not seasonally adjusted) compared with 3,584,500 in April 2023, up by 50,600 jobs and by 1.4% (*Figure 4*).

Kittitas County’s labor economy increased by 830 jobs in 2023 (up 5.0%) over 2022. Year over year, nonfarm employment in Kittitas County has expanded for 33 months (August 2021 through April 2024) as partially shown in *Figures 2* and *4*. In April 2024, Kittitas County’s nonfarm economy tallied 80 more jobs than in April 2023 (up 0.5%) advancing from 17,650 jobs to 17,730 (*Figures 2* and *3*).

**Figure 2.** Kittitas County nonfarm industry employment, not seasonally adjusted

Washington state, January 2021 through April 2024

Source: Employment Security Department/DATA; Current Employment Statistics (CES)



Nonfarm employment in Kittitas County increased by 80 jobs between April 2023 and April 2024.

## Employment and unemployment

Washington’s Civilian Labor Force (CLF) increased by 55,795 residents (a 1.4% upturn) between 2022 and 2023. Year over year, Washington's CLF expanded for 32 months (June 2021 through January 2024), stagnated in February 2024, and retrenched in March and April 2024. Specifically, this April there were 4,006,523 Washington residents in the CLF versus 4,010,290 in April 2023, a -0.1% contraction. Hence, year over year, Washington’s labor force has been dwindling in the first four months of 2024.

Preliminary estimates indicate that Kittitas County averaged 22,422 residents in the Civilian Labor Force (CLF) in 2022 versus 23,170 in 2023, a 3.3% expansion. Year over year, Kittitas County's labor force rose for 26 months (September 2022 through October 2023) but vacillated in the past six months (November 2023 through March 2024). Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) estimates indicate there were 79 more residents in the CLF in April 2024 than in April 2023, a 0.3% upturn. However, the number of unemployed increased by 14.1%, from 1,034 residents in April 2023 to 1,180 in April 2024 (*Figure 3*). This increase in the number of unemployed overpowered the labor force expansion and caused the unemployment rate to elevate six-tenths of a point, from 4.4% in April 2023 to 5.0% in April 2024.

Despite this modest 0.3 percent year-over-year labor force upturn this April (*Figure 3*), it should be noted that the Kittitas County labor force was smaller this April (23,499 residents) than it was in the corresponding pre-COVID month of April 2019 (24,512 residents), a -4.1% downturn. Pandemic related layoffs hit the local labor market hard starting in April 2020, depressing both the CLF (place of residence data) and nonfarm employment (place of work data) starting in that month.

**Figure 3. Kittitas County labor force and industry employment, not seasonally adjusted**  
Washington state, April 2024

Source: Employment Security Department/DATA; Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), Current Employment Statistics (CES)

Kittitas County	Preliminary Apr-24	Revised Mar-24	Revised Apr-23	Change (in #)		Change (in %)
				Mar-24	Apr-23	Apr-23
				Apr-24	Apr-24	Apr-24
<b>Labor force and unemployment</b>						
Civilian labor force	23,499	23,763	23,420	-264	79	0.3%
Resident employment	22,319	22,290	22,386	29	-67	-0.3%
Unemployment	1,180	1,473	1,034	-293	146	14.1%
Unemployment rate	5.0	6.2	4.4	-1.2	0.6	
<b>Industry employment</b>						
Total nonfarm <sup>1</sup>	17,730	18,290	17,650	-560	80	0.5%
Total private	11,270	11,560	11,390	-290	-120	-1.1%
Goods producing	1,960	1,940	1,980	20	-20	-1.0%
Mining, logging and construction	1,330	1,300	1,350	30	-20	-1.5%
Manufacturing	630	640	630	-10	0	0.0%
Service providing	15,770	16,350	15,670	-580	100	0.6%
Trade, transportation and utilities	2,760	2,720	2,790	40	-30	-1.1%
Wholesale trade	590	560	590	30	0	0.0%
Retail trade	1,850	1,840	1,870	10	-20	-1.1%
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	320	320	330	0	-10	-3.0%
Information and financial activities	690	670	740	20	-50	-6.8%
Professional and business services	780	770	770	10	10	1.3%
Education and health services	1,580	1,640	1,620	-60	-40	-2.5%
Leisure and hospitality	3,050	3,380	3,060	-330	-10	-0.3%
Government	6,460	6,730	6,260	-270	200	3.2%
Federal government	160	160	160	0	0	0.0%
State and local government	6,300	6,570	6,100	-270	200	3.3%
State & local government education	4,320	4,460	4,090	-140	230	5.6%
Workers in labor/management disputes	0	0	0	0	0	

<sup>1</sup> Excludes proprietors, self-employed, members of the armed services, workers in private households and agriculture. Includes all full- and part-time wage and salary workers receiving pay during the pay period including the 12th of the month. Columns may not be added due to rounding.

*The Kittitas County nonfarm market provided 17,730 jobs in April 2024, a 0.5% upturn since April 2023*

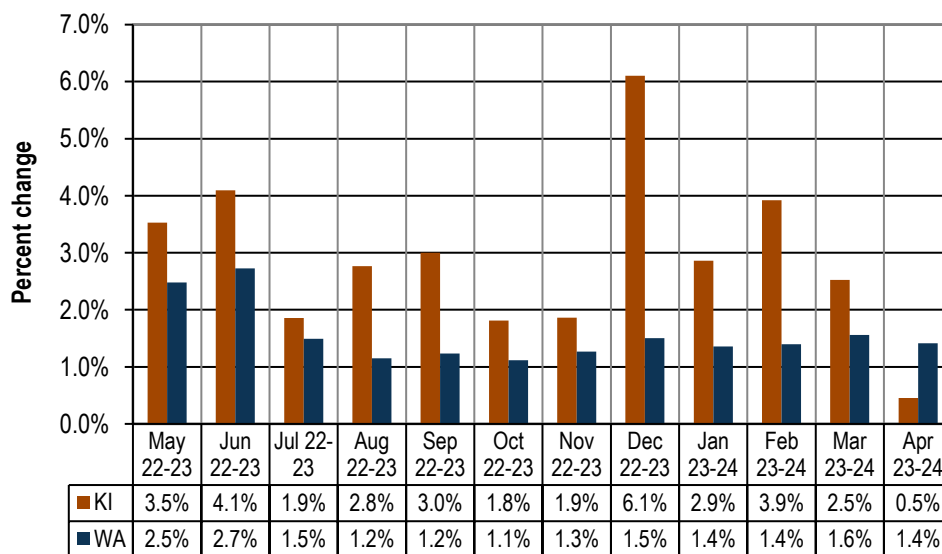
## Nonfarm industry employment

In 2023 total nonfarm employment in Kittitas County averaged 17,480 jobs versus 17,020 in 2019 (the pre-COVID era), a 460-job and 2.7% upturn. Hence by 2023, average annual total nonfarm employment had returned to the pre-COVID level with strong job growth in construction (up 25.5%); manufacturing (up 12.3%); transportation, warehousing, and utilities (up 47.8%); information and financial activities (up 20.0%); professional and business services (up 15.4%); leisure and hospitality (up 12.5%); and federal government (up 21.4%) versus employment averages in 2019. But on the negative side, average annual employment in wholesale trade (especially the wholesale trade of nondurable/agricultural goods) was down by -13.6% and state and local government education shrank -15.6% below 2023 averages. Especially noteworthy was this decline in state and local government education which tallied an average of 4,590 jobs in 2019 versus 3,800 jobs in 2023, a loss of 700 jobs (-15.6%).

Between the Aprils of 2023 and 2024 construction; retail trade; transportation, warehousing, and utilities; information and financial activities; (private) education and health services; and leisure and hospitality saw employment contract while professional and business services and state and local government education expanded. In aggregate, total nonfarm employment in Kittitas County elevated from 17,650 jobs in April 2023 to 17,730 in April 2024, an 80-job and a 0.5% expansion (*Figures 3 and 4*).

**Figure 4.** Kittitas County and Washington state, total nonfarm employment changes Washington state, May 2023 through April 2024

Source: Employment Security Department/DATA; Current Employment Statistics (CES)



*Year over year, nonfarm employment in Kittitas County expanded for 33 months (August 2021 through April 2024). Washington's nonfarm job market has increased in each of the past 37 months (April 2021 through April 2024).*

Summaries of employment changes between April 2023 and April 2024 in construction, leisure and hospitality, and state and local government education, follow:

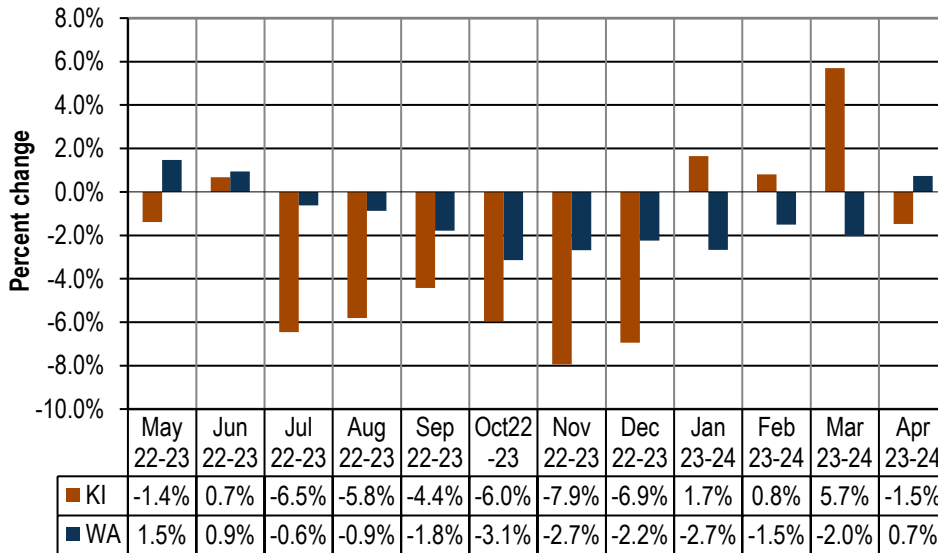
- In the mining, logging, and construction category in Kittitas County (*Figure 3*), most jobs are in construction. On an average annual basis, employment in Kittitas County's construction industry had expanded annually from 2013-2022 (i.e. for 10 consecutive years, inclusive). Even during 2020, when COVID pandemic layoffs were shortening payrolls in many industries, construction netted an average of 20 new jobs countywide, a 1.8% increase. But this employment growth trend

ended in 2023 when Kittitas County’s labor market averaged only 1,380 construction jobs, down by 60 jobs and -4.2% from the 1,440 jobs tallied in 2022. Estimates indicate a slight year-over-year resurgence in construction employment from January through March 2024 followed by a -1.5% abatement this April (Figure 5). Specifically, preliminary Current Employment Statistics (CES) estimates indicate there were 1,330 construction jobs across Kittitas County in April 2024 versus 1,350 in April 2023, a 20-job and -1.5% downturn (Figure 3).

Statewide, construction employment had contracted for nine consecutive months (July 2023 through March 2024) before rising by 0.7% this April (Figure 5) – an encouraging sign, after such a long “dry spell.” Specifically, between the Aprils of 2023 and 2024, the number of construction jobs across Washington elevated from 232,000 to 233,700, a 1,700-job upturn. Two of the main drivers of this statewide expansion between the Aprils of 2023 and 2024 were residential building construction and heavy and civil engineering construction. Residential building construction rose from 38,400 jobs to 40,500, a 2,100-job and 5.5% increase. Heavy and civil engineering construction advanced from 20,900 jobs to 22,600, a 1,700-job and 8.1% increase. Unfortunately, specialty trade contractors (a subsector which includes concrete, masonry, roofing, electrical, plumbing, drywall, and painting contractors, etc.) provided 1,700 fewer jobs this April (147,300 jobs) than in April 2023 (149,000 jobs), a -1.1% contraction.

**Figure 5: Washington state and Kittitas County, construction employment changes**  
Washington state, May 2023 through April 2024

Source: Employment Security Department/DATA, Current Employment Statistics (CES)



Year over year, estimates indicate a retrenchment in construction employment in Kittitas County this April following a three-month rebound from January through March 2024. Statewide, construction employment had contracted for nine consecutive months (July 2023 through March 2024) before rising by 0.7% this April.

- Year over year, employment in Kittitas County's leisure and hospitality industry (primarily at hotels, eating and drinking places, and in amusement and recreation services) decreased in March and April 2024. But prior to these two recent months of backsliding, this industry had posted year-over-year job growth in each of the 35 months from April 2021 through February 2024. Between April 2023 and April 2024, the number of jobs in leisure and hospitality dipped from 3,060 to 3,050, a marginal 10-job and -0.3% decrease (Figure 3).

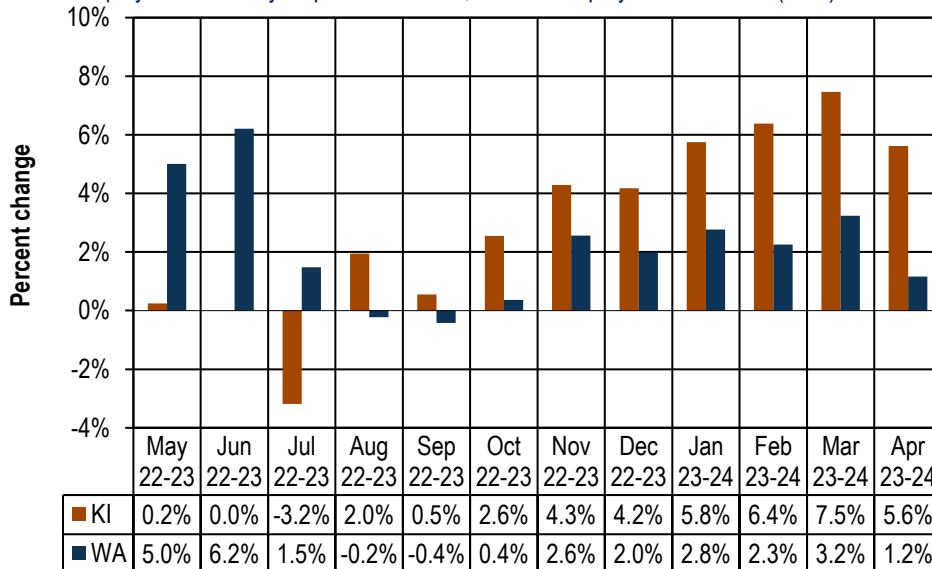
Employment in Washington's leisure and hospitality sector has been expanding for 37 months (from April 2021 through April 2024) - although growth rates are slowing. Current Employment Statistics (CES) estimates indicate that Washington's leisure and hospitality employers tallied 339,800 jobs in April 2023 versus 342,000 in April 2024, a 2,200-job and 0.6% upturn. On the downside, the number of jobs in food services and drinking places contracted from 253,100 in April 2023 to 252,500 jobs in April 2024, a 600-job and -0.2% loss rate. On the positive side, arts, entertainment, and recreation (NAICS 71), a subsector within Washington's broader leisure and hospitality industry, moved upwards from 54,200 jobs in April 2023 to 56,500 jobs in April 2024, a 2,300-job and 4.2% growth rate. Arts, entertainment, and recreation includes businesses/organizations such as movie theaters, museums, golf courses, fitness centers, etc.

- CES estimates indicate that, year over year, state and local government education employment in Kittitas County expanded for the past nine months (August 2023 through April 2024) as shown in *Figure 6*. In April 2024, there were 4,320 state and local government education jobs countywide, a 230-job and 5.6% increase from the 4,090 jobs provided in April 2023. On an average annual basis state and local government education organizations tallied 50 more jobs in 2023 (3,800 jobs) than in 2022 (3,750 jobs), a 1.3% upturn. Nevertheless, as mentioned in the *Nonfarm industry employment* section of this report, state and local government education has not recovered all jobs lost during the COVID-19 pandemic. Payrolls shortened from an average of 4,500 jobs in 2019 to 3,800 in 2023, a substantial loss of 700 jobs and a -15.6% decline.

Washington's state and local government education sector has grown, year over year, in each of the past seven months (October 2023 through April 2024). State and local government education across Washington state rose from 258,600 jobs in April 2023 to 261,600 in April 2024, a 3,000-job and 1.2% upturn (*Figure 6*).

**Figure 6:** Washington state and Kittitas County, state and local government education employment changes Washington state, May 2023 through April 2024

Source: Employment Security Department/DATA, Current Employment Statistics (CES)



Year over year, state and local government education employment in Kittitas County expanded for the past nine months (August 2023 through April 2024). Washington's state and local government education sector has grown in each of the past seven months (October 2023 through April 2024).



## Agricultural employment/production

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wage (QCEW) program, conducted by the Washington State Employment Security Department, provides agricultural and nonagricultural employment and wages for firms, organizations, and individuals whose employees are covered by the Washington State Employment Security Act. Frequently termed "covered" or "QCEW" data, this information provides a reliable data set for comparing employment and wage trends in major industries at the county level. In September 2023 revised average annual QCEW data for calendar year 2022 became available. An analysis of employment changes from 2012 through 2022 (the most recent 10-year period) shows that in Kittitas County:

- Total covered employment rose from 13,594 in 2012 to 15,943 in 2022, a 2,349-job increase and a 17.3% upturn, with annualized employment growth between 2012 and 2022 of 1.6%. The number of agricultural jobs (a subset of total covered employment) increased from 865 in 2012 to 972 in 2022, a 107-job increase and a 12.4% uptrend, with annualized employment growth of 1.2%. In 2012, Kittitas County's agricultural industry accounted for 6.4% of total covered employment. In 2022, agricultural employment accounted for 6.1% of total covered employment countywide. Hence, the share of agricultural employment dipped by three-tenths of a percentage point (from 6.4 to 6.1%) in Kittitas County during this 10-year period.
- Total covered wages rose from \$453.2 million in 2012 to \$799.7 million in 2022 (not adjusted for inflation), a \$346.5 million increase and a 76.5% upturn, with annualized payroll growth between 2012 and 2022 of 5.8%. The agricultural payroll (a subset of total covered wages) advanced from \$24.7 million in 2012 to \$38.0 million in 2022, a \$13.3 million increase and a 53.8% uptrend, with annualized payroll growth of 4.4%. In 2012, the agricultural industry accounted for 5.4% of total covered wages in Kittitas County. In 2022, agricultural wages accounted for 4.7% of total covered payroll countywide. Hence, the share of agricultural payroll to total covered payroll slipped by seven-tenths of a percentage point (from 5.4 to 4.7%) across Kittitas County during this 10-year period.

## Web link to Monthly Employment Report (MER) for Washington state

<https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/monthly-employment-report>