

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF
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NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

New Jersey Unemployment Rate Dips to 4.3 Percent, Lowest Level Since August 2007

Resident Employment Reaches All-Time High

TRENTON, N.J., March 24, 2016 – New Jersey's unemployment rate moved lower for the 13th consecutive month, down by 0.2 percentage points from the January rate of 4.5 percent to 4.3 percent in February, according to preliminary data released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The rate has fallen dramatically, lower by 2.0 percentage points over the year (February 2015 – February 2016) and down 5.5 points from a recessionary high of 9.8 percent in January 2010.

The Garden State's unemployment rate is now 0.6 percentage points lower than the national rate of 4.9 percent.

The long-term employment trend remains positive, with private sector employment up by 60,500 jobs over the past year (February 2015 – February 2016). The preliminary report for February was mixed, with the BLS employer survey showing total nonfarm employment down by 8,600 jobs over the month (-10,200 private; +1,600 public), while the BLS household survey showed resident employment up by 12,300. The number of residents reporting to have jobs in New Jersey reached an all-time high of 4,367,100 in February, following 28 consecutive months of growth, according to the BLS household survey, which also showed 106,000 more people reporting to be employed than a year ago (February 2015 – February 2016).

"We haven't seen an unemployment rate of 4.3 percent since August of 2007 and that is only part of the good news," said James Wooster, Chief Economist for the New Jersey Department of Treasury. "The reduction in the unemployment rate is accompanied by an increase in the number of people seeking work, by steady improvements in the New Jersey housing market and by improvements in the manufacturing and business outlook. It seems like yesterday that everyone was concerned about the New Jersey economic recovery lagging that of the nation, but those days are over."

The number of people employed or actively seeking work in New Jersey, as measured by the labor force participation rate, grew by 0.1 percent to 64.2 percent and continues to exceed the national rate of 62.9 percent.

Industries that experienced employment gains in February included financial activities (+1,900), trade, transportation and utilities (+1,500) and manufacturing (+500). Sectors that experienced contraction were professional and business services (-5,600), leisure and hospitality (-2,500), education and health services (-2,200), other services (-1,900), information (-1,300) and construction (-600). The public sector recorded a gain of 1,600 jobs.

Based on additional reporting from employers, estimates for January were revised to an over-the-month total nonfarm loss of 15,700 jobs. Monthly employment estimates will be revised again in the BLS annual benchmark report released in March 2017.

PRESS TABLES

Technical Notes: Estimates of industry employment and unemployment levels are arrived at through the use of two different monthly surveys.

Industry employment data are derived through the Current Employment Statistics (CES) survey, a monthly survey of approximately 5,000 business establishments conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) of the U.S. Department of Labor, which provides estimates of employment, hours, and earnings data broken down by industry for the nation as a whole, all states and most major metropolitan areas (often referred to as the “establishment” survey).

Resident employment and unemployment data are mainly derived from the New Jersey portion of the national Current Population Survey (CPS), a household survey conducted each month by the U.S. Census Bureau under contract with BLS, which provides input to the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) program (often referred to as the “household” survey).

Both industry and household estimates are revised each month based on additional information from updated survey reports compiled by BLS. In addition, these estimates are benchmarked (revised) annually based on actual counts from New Jersey’s Unemployment Compensation Law administrative records and more complete data from all New Jersey employers.

The benchmark data, which presents a more complete picture of the New Jersey economy for the entire calendar year of 2016, will be released in March 2017.

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