

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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STATE OF ALABAMA

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Alabama's March Unemployment Rate Holds Steady at 6.2%

State Experiences Continued Growth in Labor Force and Employment

MONTGOMERY – Governor Robert Bentley on Friday announced that Alabama's preliminary, seasonally adjusted March unemployment rate remained steady at 6.2%.

"Alabama's unemployment rate continues to hold steady, all the while showing labor force and employment growth," Governor Bentley said. "The growth is very encouraging, as we continue to see higher numbers of people working than we have in nearly eight years. Employers are hiring in Alabama, and we have a workforce ready for a job. Our efforts will continue to put Alabamians back to work."

The Civilian Labor Force, which represents those persons 16 and older who are working or actively seeking work, increased to 2,176,457 in March, representing both a monthly and a yearly increase.

The number of people counted as employed in March was 2,042,177, also representing a monthly and yearly increase. The last time the number of people working was equal to or above 2,042,177 was in August 2008, when the number registered 2,042,834.

"The number of jobs our economy is currently supporting is extremely encouraging – we're less than 8,000 jobs away from meeting economists' predictions for job growth in 2016, and we're only three months into the year!" Alabama Department of Labor Commissioner Fitzgerald Washington said.

From January 2016 to March 2016, Alabama's wage and salary employment grew by 21,500. In January, economists at the University of Alabama's College of Business and Economic Research predicted wage and salary growth of 29,450. (Center for Business and Economic Research. *Alabama Economic Outlook 2016*. Tuscaloosa: Culverhouse College of Commerce, Center for Business and Economic Research, 2016.)

Over the year (March 2015 to March 2016), wage and salary employment increased by 23,900, with gains in the education and health services sector (+6,700), the professional and business services sector (+5,100), and the leisure and hospitality sector (+4,600), among others.

Wage and salary employment increased in March by 10,200. Monthly gains were seen in the leisure and hospitality sector (+4,200), the trade, transportation, and utilities sector (+1,800), and the professional and business services sector (+1,500), among others.

Of Alabama's 67 counties, 64 counties experienced a unemployment rate decrease in March. The other three counties' rates remained the same. The three counties that saw no change in the unemployment rates are: Lee, Macon, and Tuscaloosa counties.

Counties with the lowest unemployment rates are: Shelby County at 4.6%, Elmore County at 5.2%, and Cherokee County at 5.3%. Major Alabama cities with the lowest unemployment rates are: Vestavia Hills at 3.9%, Homewood and Hoover at 4.4%, and Alabaster at 4.6%.

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Members of the media seeking more information should contact Communications Director Tara Hutchison at (334) 242-8616.

“Seasonal adjustment” refers to BLS’s practice of anticipating certain trends in the labor force, such as hiring during the holidays or the surge in the labor force when students graduate in the spring, and removing their effects to the civilian labor force.

The Current Population (CPS), or the household survey, is conducted by the Census Bureau and identifies members of the work force and measures how many people are working or looking for work.

The establishment survey, which is conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), a division of the U.S. Department of Labor, surveys employers to measure how many jobs are in the economy. This is also referred to as wage and salary employment.