

News

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NEW ENGLAND UNEMPLOYMENT RATE RISES TO 5.4 PERCENT IN 2003

The unemployment rate in New England rose 0.6 percentage points over the year to 5.4 percent in 2003, the third consecutive annual increase following an eight-year period of decline. Regional Commissioner Denis M. McSweeney noted that the rise in New England's jobless rate was one of the largest among the nation's nine geographic divisions, and well above the 0.2-percentage point increase for the U.S. Still, New England had the third lowest divisional rate in the country in 2003. Just three years earlier, before the start of the last recession, the New England unemployment rate reached a record low of 2.8 percent; its rapid rise reflected the national trend, which saw the overall rate increase from 4.0 percent in 2000 to 6.0 percent in 2003. The last time New England's jobless rate was as high as 5.4 percent was 1995.

Each of the six New England states posted an unemployment rate below the national in 2003. Over the year, the gap between the state rates and the U.S. average narrowed in all but two—New Hampshire and Rhode Island—as increases in the other four outpaced the national gain. In 2003, 13 states, two of which were in New England, had jobless rates below 5.0 percent; one year earlier, four New England states had rates below this mark. New Hampshire's unemployment rate, 4.3 percent, was the lowest in New England and tied for the fifth lowest nationally, while Vermont's rate, 4.6 percent, was second lowest in the division and ranked eleventh in the U.S. Jobless rates in Maine, Rhode Island, and Connecticut were 5.1, 5.3, and 5.5 percent, respectively. Massachusetts posted the highest rate in New England in 2003, 5.8 percent; this was also the highest rate in any New England state since Vermont registered 7.0 percent in 1995.

Connecticut's unemployment rate was up 1.2 percentage points over the year, matching Oklahoma's gain for the largest increase among all states nationally. This was the third year in a row that the rate in Connecticut rose 1.0 percentage point or more. Vermont's rate increased 0.9 percentage point in 2003 after essentially no change in 2002. Jobless rates in Maine and Massachusetts were up 0.7 and 0.5 percentage point, respectively, while Rhode Island's rate was little changed in 2003. New Hampshire was the only New England state to see its unemployment rate decline, as it edged down 0.4 percentage point.

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New England's jobless rate has not surpassed the national average since 1992, when it stood at 8.1 percent compared with 7.5 percent for the U.S. Over the next eight years, New England enjoyed an improving economy as its unemployment rate fell to 2.8 percent in 2000, well below the 4.0 percent reached nationally. During this period, New England's rate declined 5.3 percentage points compared with 3.5 percentage points for the nation. With the start of the recession in 2001, rates again began to climb for both New England and the United States. By 2003, New England's unemployment rate was up 2.6 percentage points from 2000 compared to the national increase of 2.0 percentage points.

New England was not the only area of the country with a large increase in its jobless rate over the last three years. Among the nine geographic divisions in the U.S., the East North Central and the West South Central also recorded sizeable increases (up 2.5 percentage points to 6.3 percent, and 2.3 percentage points to 6.6 percent, respectively). These two divisions had among the highest rates in the country; they were exceeded only by the Pacific division, at 6.9 percent. The West North Central, on the other hand, had the lowest divisional rate in the nation, 5.0 percent, in 2003, followed by the South Atlantic and New England, at 5.2 and 5.4 percent, respectively.

Technical Note

All estimates presented in this release were derived from the Current Population Survey, a sample survey of about 60,000 households conducted monthly for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau. A description of the survey and information about the reliability of the state estimates appear in *Geographic Profile of Employment and Unemployment, 2002*, Bulletin 2564, available on the Internet at <http://stats.bls.gov/opub/gp/laugp.htm>. Data reflect updated Census 2000-based population controls.

The sums of individual items may not always equal the totals shown in the same tables because of rounding. Also, unemployment rates are computed, in most instances, from unrounded data rather than from data that may be displayed in the tables; differences, however, are generally insignificant.

More complete information on the technical procedures used to develop these estimates, as well as additional data for regions, divisions and states, appear in *Employment and Earnings*, a BLS monthly periodical. Data by region and division begin in 1976; however, state data series vary in length, starting in 1970 for some, but 1976 for the others.

Table 1. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population, New England, and New England states, 1993-2003 annual averages

| Area | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | Error range of rate, 2003 ¹ |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--|
| Connecticut | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Employed | 1,682,712 | 1,654,707 | 1,636,006 | 1,645,450 | 1,663,724 | 1,680,173 | 1,688,971 | 1,748,342 | 1,709,839 | 1,714,485 | 1,703,961 | |
| Unemployed | 112,464 | 97,584 | 95,422 | 100,269 | 89,408 | 58,353 | 55,104 | 40,194 | 57,791 | 77,601 | 99,147 | |
| Unemployment rate | 6.3 | 5.6 | 5.5 | 5.7 | 5.1 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 2.2 | 3.3 | 4.3 | 5.5 | 5.0-6.0 |
| Maine | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Employed | 580,170 | 566,614 | 601,757 | 630,576 | 622,203 | 619,645 | 640,706 | 662,066 | 653,489 | 650,436 | 658,068 | |
| Unemployed | 49,998 | 45,022 | 36,572 | 33,862 | 35,456 | 28,579 | 27,386 | 23,715 | 26,835 | 29,836 | 35,015 | |
| Unemployment rate | 7.9 | 7.4 | 5.7 | 5.1 | 5.4 | 4.4 | 4.1 | 3.5 | 3.9 | 4.4 | 5.1 | 4.6-5.6 |
| Massachusetts | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Employed | 2,969,228 | 3,007,529 | 3,035,372 | 3,087,512 | 3,191,548 | 3,234,221 | 3,254,475 | 3,225,025 | 3,261,599 | 3,282,952 | 3,217,207 | |
| Unemployed | 220,516 | 192,214 | 172,033 | 138,961 | 133,366 | 111,513 | 107,461 | 87,591 | 124,642 | 184,058 | 198,311 | |
| Unemployment rate | 6.9 | 6.0 | 5.4 | 4.3 | 4.0 | 3.3 | 3.2 | 2.6 | 3.7 | 5.3 | 5.8 | 5.3-6.3 |
| New Hampshire | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Employed | 577,711 | 597,144 | 611,766 | 602,313 | 631,765 | 640,668 | 657,738 | 672,676 | 675,188 | 672,963 | 688,151 | |
| Unemployed | 40,708 | 28,861 | 25,323 | 26,106 | 20,375 | 19,174 | 18,340 | 19,199 | 24,637 | 33,300 | 30,734 | |
| Unemployment rate | 6.6 | 4.6 | 4.0 | 4.2 | 3.1 | 2.9 | 2.7 | 2.8 | 3.5 | 4.7 | 4.3 | 3.9-4.7 |
| Rhode Island | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Employed | 484,145 | 478,718 | 470,985 | 491,551 | 503,885 | 505,132 | 519,216 | 520,273 | 520,337 | 525,157 | 542,798 | |
| Unemployed | 41,204 | 36,392 | 35,237 | 26,609 | 28,180 | 25,978 | 22,456 | 22,230 | 25,948 | 28,053 | 30,158 | |
| Unemployment rate | 7.8 | 7.1 | 7.0 | 5.1 | 5.3 | 4.9 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 4.7 | 5.1 | 5.3 | 4.8-5.8 |
| Vermont | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Employed | 297,810 | 300,106 | 306,065 | 309,910 | 315,283 | 320,875 | 327,299 | 323,512 | 327,346 | 335,669 | 334,671 | |
| Unemployed | 17,216 | 14,857 | 13,565 | 14,804 | 13,021 | 11,211 | 10,246 | 9,679 | 12,087 | 13,060 | 16,013 | |
| Unemployment rate | 5.5 | 4.7 | 4.2 | 4.6 | 4.0 | 3.4 | 3.0 | 2.9 | 3.6 | 3.7 | 4.6 | 4.2-5.0 |
| New England | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Employed | 6,591,776 | 6,604,818 | 6,661,951 | 6,767,312 | 6,928,408 | 7,000,714 | 7,088,405 | 7,151,894 | 7,147,798 | 7,181,662 | 7,144,856 | |
| Unemployed | 482,106 | 414,930 | 378,152 | 340,611 | 319,806 | 254,808 | 240,993 | 202,608 | 271,940 | 365,908 | 409,378 | |
| Unemployment rate | 6.8 | 5.9 | 5.4 | 4.8 | 4.4 | 3.5 | 3.3 | 2.8 | 3.7 | 4.8 | 5.4 | 5.1-5.7 |
| United States² | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Employed | 120,259,000 | 123,060,000 | 124,900,000 | 126,708,000 | 129,558,000 | 131,463,000 | 133,488,000 | 136,891,000 | 136,933,000 | 136,485,000 | 137,736,000 | |
| Unemployed | 8,940,000 | 7,996,000 | 7,404,000 | 7,236,000 | 6,739,000 | 6,210,000 | 5,880,000 | 5,692,000 | 6,801,000 | 8,378,000 | 8,774,000 | |
| Unemployment rate | 6.9 | 6.1 | 5.6 | 5.4 | 4.9 | 4.5 | 4.2 | 4.0 | 4.7 | 5.8 | 6.0 | 5.9-6.1 |

¹ Error ranges are shown at the 90-percent confidence level.

² Because of the separate processing and weighting procedures, totals for the United States differ from the results obtained by aggregating data for regions, divisions, or states.

Note: Region and division data are derived from summing the component states. Subnational data incorporate updated 2000 census-based population controls.

Table 2. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years of age and over by region and division, 2002-2003 annual averages
(Numbers in thousands)

| Census region and division | Civilian labor force | | Employed | | Unemployed | | Unemployment rate | | Error range of rate, 2003 ¹ |
|----------------------------|----------------------|--------|----------|--------|------------|-------|-------------------|------|--|
| | 2002 | 2003 | 2002 | 2003 | 2002 | 2003 | 2002 | 2003 | |
| Northeast | 27,531 | 27,415 | 25,984 | 25,815 | 1,547 | 1,599 | 5.6 | 5.8 | 5.6 - 6.0 |
| New England | 7,548 | 7,554 | 7,182 | 7,145 | 366 | 409 | 4.8 | 5.4 | 5.1 - 5.7 |
| Middle Atlantic | 19,984 | 19,860 | 18,803 | 18,671 | 1,181 | 1,190 | 5.9 | 6.0 | 5.8 - 6.2 |
| South | 50,551 | 51,228 | 47,711 | 48,277 | 2,840 | 2,951 | 5.6 | 5.8 | 5.6 - 6.0 |
| South Atlantic | 26,642 | 26,995 | 25,218 | 25,586 | 1,424 | 1,409 | 5.3 | 5.2 | 5.0 - 5.4 |
| East South Central | 8,248 | 8,325 | 7,778 | 7,828 | 470 | 497 | 5.7 | 6.0 | 5.7 - 6.3 |
| West South Central | 15,661 | 15,908 | 14,715 | 14,863 | 946 | 1,045 | 6.0 | 6.6 | 6.3 - 6.9 |
| Midwest | 34,099 | 34,291 | 32,222 | 32,267 | 1,878 | 2,024 | 5.5 | 5.9 | 5.7 - 6.1 |
| East North Central | 23,411 | 23,553 | 22,025 | 22,063 | 1,386 | 1,491 | 5.9 | 6.3 | 6.1 - 6.5 |
| West North Central | 10,689 | 10,737 | 10,196 | 10,204 | 492 | 533 | 4.6 | 5.0 | 4.7 - 5.3 |
| West | 32,948 | 33,245 | 30,813 | 31,070 | 2,135 | 2,176 | 6.5 | 6.5 | 6.3 - 6.7 |
| Mountain | 9,693 | 9,837 | 9,135 | 9,281 | 558 | 556 | 5.8 | 5.7 | 5.4 - 6.0 |
| Pacific | 23,256 | 23,409 | 21,678 | 21,789 | 1,577 | 1,620 | 6.8 | 6.9 | 6.6 - 7.2 |

¹ Error ranges are shown at the 90-percent confidence level.

Note: Region and division data are derived from summing the component states. Data incorporate updated 2000 census-based population controls.

Regions are defined as the four Census regions, comprised as follows:

Northeast Region includes the New England Division - Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont; and the Middle Atlantic Division - New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania.

South Region includes the South Atlantic Division - Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia; East South Central Division - Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee; and West South Central Division - Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Midwest Region includes the East North Central Division - Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin; and the West North Central Division - Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

West Region includes the Mountain Division - Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming; and the Pacific Division - Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington.