

Illinois Unemployment Rate Up, Payroll Jobs Down in March at COVID-19 Outbreak Start

April 16 2020 1:08 PM



SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) announced today that the unemployment rate rose +1.2 percentage points to 4.6 percent, while nonfarm payrolls lost -34,100 jobs in March. This reflects the initial impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on Illinois businesses and households, based on preliminary data provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and released by IDES. The February monthly change in payrolls was revised from the preliminary report from -200 to -11,400 jobs.

The March payroll jobs estimate and unemployment rate reflects activity for the week including the 12th. The payroll periods of some employers in the establishment survey may have extended beyond the week including the 12th. Also, those classified as unemployed included persons who reported they were away from work during the week including the 12th due to COVID-19 even if they were paid for that week. BLS has published FAQs for March payroll jobs and the unemployment rate.

The state's unemployment rate was +0.2 percentage point higher than the national unemployment rate reported for March, which was 4.4 percent, up +0.9 percentage point from the previous month. The Illinois unemployment rate was up +0.3 percentage point from a year ago when it was 4.3 percent.

The three-month average Illinois payroll employment estimate, which provides a more stable measure of payroll employment change, was down -9,900 jobs during the January to March three-month period, compared to the December to February three-month period. The largest average declines were found in Leisure and Hospitality (-5,300), Professional and Business Services (-3,700) and Financial Activities (-900).

“As the COVID-19 outbreak unfolded, this administration moved quickly to overhaul our systems, expand access to benefits, and implement new programs providing working families with the support they need,” said Deputy Governor Dan Hynes. “We will continue using every tool available to help workers, families, and small businesses face these unprecedented challenges as we keep our communities safe.”

“As Illinois moves to confront this crisis, we are encouraged Governor Pritzker moved boldly to lay an economic foundation for future growth,” said Erin Guthrie, Acting Director of the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. “This administration's focus on workforce development, rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure, and creating new industries will help us emerge from this crisis and rebuild.”

Compared to a year ago, nonfarm payroll employment decreased by -29,900 jobs with the biggest losses in: Professional and Business Services (-21,700), Manufacturing (-14,700) and Leisure and Hospitality (-13,000). The industry sectors with the largest over-the-year increases were: Educational and Health Services (+12,800), Government (+12,800), and Other Services (+2,200). Illinois nonfarm payrolls were down -0.5 percentage point over-the-year as compared to the nation's +1.0 percent over-the-year gain in March.

The number of unemployed workers increased sharply from the prior month, +33.6 percent to 292,300 and was up +5.6 percent over the same month for the prior year. The labor force was down -1.1 percent over-the-month and -2.0 percent over-the-year. The

unemployment rate identifies those individuals who are out of work and seeking employment.

An individual who exhausts or is ineligible for benefits is still reflected in the unemployment rate if they actively seek work. IDES maintains the state's largest job search engine, Illinois Job Link (IJL), to help connect jobseekers to employers who are hiring, which recently showed 147,823 posted resumes with 70,881 jobs available.

Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rates

Illinois Seasonally Adjusted Nonfarm Jobs – by Major Industry

- 2015-2019 seasonally adjusted labor force data for Illinois, and all other states, have been revised as required by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The monthly historical revisions to state labor force estimates reflect new national benchmark controls, state working-age population controls, seasonal factors, as well as updated total nonfarm jobs and unemployment benefits claims inputs. Illinois labor force data were also smoothed to eliminate large monthly changes as a result of volatility in the monthly Census Population Survey (CPS) and national benchmarking. For these reasons, the comments and tables citing unemployment rates in previous news releases/materials may no longer be valid.
- Monthly seasonally adjusted unemployment rates for Illinois and the Chicago-Naperville-Arlington Heights Metropolitan Division are available [here](#).
- Monthly 2011-2019 seasonally adjusted nonfarm payroll employment data for Illinois have been revised. To control for potential survey error, the estimates are benchmarked annually to universal counts derived primarily from unemployment insurance tax reports.
- Not seasonally adjusted jobs data with industry detail are available [here](#). “Other Services” include activities in three broad categories: personal and laundry; repair and maintenance; and religious, grant making, civic and professional organizations. Seasonally adjusted data for subsectors within industries are not available.

About the Department of Employment Security

The Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) provides vital employment services to Illinois workers, employers, and job seekers with resources including Job Fairs and Illinois Job Link, analyzes and disseminates actionable Labor Market Information, and administers the Unemployment Insurance Program. To see the full range of services provided by IDES, and for the latest news concerning the department, visit IDES.Illinois.gov.