

# Dept. of Workforce Development: BLS data- state unemployment rate declines to 3.7 percent, lowest since November 2000

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MADISON - The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) today released the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) revisions for January and preliminary estimates for February covering employment and job statistics for the state of Wisconsin. In brief, the seasonally adjusted estimates show:

- Place of residence data: A preliminary seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 3.7 percent in February 2017, down 0.2 percent from January and at its lowest rate since November 2000. The rate remains lower than the national unemployment rate, which decreased to 4.7 percent in February 2017. Wisconsin's labor force participation rate increased to 68.3 percent and continues to outpace the U.S. rate of 63.0 percent in February. Both total labor force and employment in Wisconsin remained at an all-time high in February, while the number of unemployed individuals was its lowest since January 2001.
- Place of work data: Based on preliminary data, the state added 28,200 total non-farm jobs and 21,500 private-sector jobs from February 2016 to February 2017, with a statistically significant gain of 11,100 total non-farm jobs as well as 7,600 private-sector jobs over the month. January 2017 total non-farm jobs were revised up 5,200 and private-sector jobs were revised up 4,600.

“Wisconsin is working,” Governor Scott Walker said. “More people are working than ever before in our history, wages are up, and the last time our unemployment rate was this low Tommy Thompson was governor and Bill Clinton was president. This is outstanding news for people all across our state, but there is more work to be done.”

DWD Secretary Ray Allen issued the following statement: “Revised numbers show Wisconsin gained 10,400 private-sector jobs in January and preliminary numbers show we added 7,600 private-sector jobs in February, pointing to an excellent start to 2017. Building on this economic progress, Governor Walker’s recent budget proposal reinforces Wisconsin’s economic and workforce development strategy, which has supported the state’s economic growth.”

The BLS uses three data sets to measure employment and unemployment:

- **Current Employment Statistics (CES):** compiled from a monthly survey sent to about 5,500 employers (3.5 percent of Wisconsin employers). CES data has been shown to be volatile and subject to revision.
- **Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS):** compiled from a monthly survey of 985 households and unemployment insurance claims. Measures the labor force, employment, unemployment, and the unemployment rate.
- **Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW):** compiled quarterly based on Unemployment Insurance records from some 96% of Wisconsin business establishments. Considered by most economists to be the most accurate measure of jobs, the QCEW includes data from almost all employers in Wisconsin.

Other indicators of the state of Wisconsin’s economy include:

- Initial UI claims ended 2016 at their lowest level since 1988. Year 2017 initial UI claims are running at their lowest levels since 1989.
- Continuing unemployment claims ended 2016 at their lowest level since 1973. Continuing unemployment claims in Wisconsin are running the lowest in at least the past 30 years.