

Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development: BLS data: Wisconsin unemployment rate drops to 3.4% in March, lowest since April 2000

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MADISON – The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) today released the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) revisions for February and preliminary estimates for March 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 3.4 percent in March 2017, down a significant 0.3 percent from February and at its lowest rate since April 2000. The rate remains lower than the national unemployment rate, which was 4.5 percent in March 2017. Wisconsin's labor force participation rate increased to 68.4 percent and continues to outpace the U.S. rate of 63.0 percent in March. Both total labor force and employment in Wisconsin remained at an all-time high in March, while the number of unemployed individuals was its lowest since June 2000.
- Place of work data: Based on preliminary data, the state added 25,100 total non-farm jobs and 22,100 private-sector jobs from March 2016 to March 2017. Other significant year-over-year gains include 6,100 jobs in Health Care and Social Assistance.

DWD Secretary Ray Allen issued the following statement: "Today's release shows

Wisconsin continuing to experience positive workforce and economic growth under the vision and leadership of Governor Scott Walker. Not only are both total labor force and employment at all-time highs, but our unemployment rate is down to 3.4 percent, its lowest point in 16 years.”

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 in their last 30 years. 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.