

Dept. of Workforce Development: Wisconsin local employment & unemployment estimates released

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MADISON – The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) today released the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates of unemployment and employment statistics for metro areas, major cities, and counties in Wisconsin. The estimates include updates for November 2017 and preliminary estimates for December 2017. These numbers are not seasonally adjusted. In brief, the estimates showed:

- **Metropolitan Statistical Areas:** Preliminary December 2017 unemployment rates decreased in all areas when compared over the year to December 2016. Half of Wisconsin's 12 metro areas tied or reached their lowest December unemployment rates on current record (since 1990). Janesville-Beloit's unemployment rate of 2.8 percent was a record low for any month on current record. The rates ranged from 1.9 percent in Madison to 3.2 percent in Racine.
- **Municipalities:** Preliminary December 2017 rates decreased in the state's 32 largest municipalities when compared over the year to December 2016. Eighteen (18) of the 32 largest municipalities reached or tied their lowest December unemployment rates on current record, and 15 of the municipalities reached record lows for any month on current record. Local rates for Franklin and Oak Creek are not available before 1995; rates for Caledonia, Mount Pleasant, Neenah, Stevens Point and Sun Prairie are not available before 2000; and rates for Fitchburg are not available before 2010. December 2017 rates ranged from 1.8 percent in Fitchburg and Madison to 3.8 percent in Racine.
- **Counties:** Preliminary December 2017 rates decreased in all 72 counties when compared over the year to December 2016. The largest over-the-year decline

was 2.5 percentage points in Menominee County. Forty-eight (48) of Wisconsin's 72 counties tied or reached their lowest December unemployment rates on current record. Seven counties reached record lows for any month on current record. The rates ranged from 1.9 percent in Dane and Lafayette Counties to 5.6 percent in Iron County.

The release of December 2017 local rates follows last week's release of BLS monthly estimates showing a preliminary seasonally adjusted statewide unemployment rate of 3 percent in December 2017, down from 3.2 percent in November 2017. The December 2017 rate matches the state's record low, and set a new record for lowest December rate. The data also showed the state added 43,500 private sector jobs from December 2016 to December 2017, including a significant 11,500 manufacturing jobs.

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

- Initial UI claims ended 2017 at their lowest level in the last 30 years.
- Continuing unemployment claims ended 2017 at their lowest level since 1973.
- Moody's Investors Service has upgraded the state's credit rating, noting that "(T)he stable outlook reflects the expectation that the state will experience moderate economic growth and will continue its prudent fiscal management practices."