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Iowa's Unemployment Rate Remains at 3.4 Percent in December

DES MOINES, IOWA – Iowa's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate remained at 3.4 percent in December. The state's jobless rate was 4.3 percent one year ago. The U.S. unemployment rate remained at 5.0 percent in December.

"Iowa's economy ended on a high note in December, maintaining the growth we have seen since the beginning of the year," said Beth Townsend, director of Iowa Workforce Development. "Iowa's nonfarm employment gained jobs for the ninth time this year, expanding by 1,100 jobs in December. More importantly, the state's unemployment rate held at 3.4 percent this month which continued the downward trend from the high of 4.2% established in January 2015."

The number of unemployed Iowans fell to 58,300 in December from 58,800 in November. The current estimate is 15,300 lower than the year ago level of 73,600.

The total number of working Iowans increased to 1,650,500 in December. This figure was 3,200 higher than November and 8,500 higher than one year ago.

Seasonally Adjusted Nonfarm Employment

Iowa's nonfarm employment added 1,100 jobs in December, expanding Iowa's total nonfarm employment to 1,584,700 jobs. The monthly gain was the second-consecutive and helped cement a year that was generally positive for nonfarm employment. Overall, the state averaged 2,100 jobs added per month during the year. Private sectors fueled the job growth this month with government paring jobs (-1,100) due to early release of local government workers. With this loss, government is down slightly compared to last year (-1,400). Since last year, the state is now up 25,600 jobs—a gain of 1.6 percent versus last December.

Job gains in December were led by gains in construction (+2,400), and may be partially attributed to fair weather to end the year allowing firms to continue working late into the year. Other services also had a large gain (+1,400). The growth was an expansion on an already prosperous year that saw 4,500 jobs added. The education and health services sector increased in December (+1,100) due primarily to hiring in private education (+900). Smaller gains this month included manufacturing (+300), financial activities (+200), and mining (+100). Alternatively, trade and transportation led all sectors in jobs lost this month (-2,500). Much of this loss stemmed from a disappointing retail season (-2,000). Professional and business services shed jobs (-800) with losses being fueled by administrative support and waste management occupations.

Annually, construction has added 10,000 jobs since last December—the most of any sector in terms of jobs gained and percentage (+12.9 percent). However, some of these gains may wane some in 2016 as large-scale projects come to an end. Education and health services are markedly up (+6,700), followed by other services (+4,500) then financial activities (+3,200). Annual losses were slight in those industries that are down annually with the exception of manufacturing (-1,700) and information services (-700).

MEDIA ALERT: An audio cut of comments about Iowa's labor market situation is available by calling (515) 281-6057. Statewide and local data for January 2016 will be released on Monday, March 14, 2016.

Employment and Unemployment in Iowa, Seasonally Adjusted Data

	December 2015	November 2015	December 2014	Change from November 2015	December 2014
Civilian labor force	1,708,700	1,706,100	1,715,600	2,600	-6,900
Unemployment	58,300	58,800	73,600	-500	-15,300
Unemployment rate	3.4%	3.4%	4.3%	0.0	-0.9
Employment	1,650,500	1,647,300	1,642,000	3,200	8,500
U.S. unemployment rate	5.0%	5.0%	5.6%	0.0	-0.6

Nonfarm Employment in Iowa, Seasonally Adjusted Data

Total Nonfarm Employment	1,584,700	1,583,600	1,559,100	1,100	25,600
Mining	2,200	2,100	2,300	100	-100
Construction	87,500	85,100	77,500	2,400	10,000
Manufacturing	215,000	214,700	216,700	300	-1,700
Trade, transportation and utilities	315,000	317,500	315,200	-2,500	-200
Information	24,600	24,600	25,300	0	-700
Financial activities	107,800	107,600	104,600	200	3,200
Professional and business services	139,500	140,300	137,100	-800	2,400
Education and health services	230,400	229,300	223,700	1,100	6,700
Leisure and hospitality	142,600	142,600	139,700	0	2,900
Other services	63,800	62,400	59,300	1,400	4,500
Government	256,300	257,400	257,700	-1,100	-1,400

Unemployment Insurance Claims for Iowa

	December 2015	November 2015	December 2014	% Change from November 2015	December 2014
Initial claims	32,900	15,891	29,285	107.0%	12.3%
Continued claims					
Number of claimants	36,286	21,858	35,632	66.0%	1.8%
Weeks paid	130,153	67,398	131,110	93.1%	-0.7%
Amount paid	\$46,324,187	\$23,716,577	\$44,375,647	95.3%	4.4%

Visit www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/labor-market-information-division for more information about current and historical data, labor force data, nonfarm employment, hours and earnings, and jobless benefits by county.