
Advance copies of this statement are made available to the press under lock-up conditions with the explicit understanding that the data are embargoed until 8:30 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time.

Statement of

Erica L. Groshen
Commissioner
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Friday, April 1, 2016

Nonfarm payroll employment increased by 215,000 in March, and the unemployment rate was little changed at 5.0 percent. Job growth occurred in retail trade, construction, and health care. Employment fell in manufacturing and mining.

Incorporating revisions for January and February, which reduced nonfarm payroll employment by 1,000 on net, monthly job gains have averaged 209,000 over the past 3 months. In the 12 months prior to March, employment growth averaged 223,000 per month.

In March, retail trade employment rose by 48,000. Job growth occurred in general merchandise stores (+12,000), health and personal care stores (+10,000), building material and garden supply stores (+10,000), and auto dealers (+5,000). Over the year, retail trade has added 378,000 jobs.

Employment in construction rose by 37,000 over the month and is up by 301,000 over the year. Residential specialty trade contractors continued to add jobs in March (+12,000). Employment in this industry has risen by 135,000 over the year, representing almost half of the job growth in construction. Elsewhere in construction, employment in heavy and civil engineering construction increased by 11,000 over the month.

Health care employment rose by 37,000 in March. Both ambulatory health care services (+27,000) and hospitals (+10,000) added jobs. Over the year, health care employment has increased by 503,000.

Over the month, employment continued to trend up in food services and drinking places (+25,000) and in financial activities (+15,000).

In March, employment in professional and business services changed little for the third month in a row. In 2015, the industry added an average of 52,000 jobs per month. Within the industry, employment in professional and technical services continued to trend up over the month (+14,000). Temporary help services employment has shown little change in recent months.

Manufacturing employment fell by 29,000 in March. Job losses were concentrated in durable goods manufacturing industries, including machinery (-7,000), primary metals (-3,000), and semiconductors and electronic components (-3,000).

Since reaching a recent employment peak in March 2015, durable goods manufacturing has lost 68,000 jobs.

Employment in mining declined by 12,000 in March, primarily in support activities for mining (-10,000). Since a recent peak in September 2014, mining employment has fallen by 185,000. More than three-fourths of the job losses over this period have been in support activities for mining.

Average hourly earnings of all employees on private nonfarm payrolls rose by 7 cents in March to \$25.43. Over the past 12 months, average hourly earnings have risen by 2.3 percent. From February 2015 to February 2016, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) increased by 1.0 percent (on a seasonally adjusted basis).

Turning now to data from the survey of households, both the unemployment rate, at 5.0 percent, and the number of unemployed, at 8.0 million, changed little in March. These measures have shown little movement since August. Among the unemployed in March, 2.2 million, or 27.6 percent, had been jobless for 27 weeks or more.

The labor force participation rate, at 63.0 percent, and the employment-population ratio, at 59.9 percent, were little changed in March. Both measures are up by 0.6 percentage point since September.

Among those employed, the number working part time for economic reasons, also referred to as involuntary part-time workers, was 6.1 million in March. This measure has shown little movement since November. (Involuntary part-time workers are those who would have preferred full-time employment but were working part time because their hours had been cut back or because they were unable to find full-time work.)

Among people who were neither working nor looking for work in March, 1.7 million were classified as marginally attached to the labor force, down from 2.1 million a year earlier. The number of discouraged workers, a subset of the marginally attached who believed that no jobs were available for them, was 585,000 in March, down from 738,000 a year earlier. (The marginally attached are individuals who had not looked for work in the 4 weeks prior to the survey but wanted a job, were available for work, and had looked for a job within the last 12 months.)

In summary, nonfarm payroll employment increased by 215,000 in March, and the unemployment rate was little changed at 5.0 percent.