

NEWS RELEASE

For Statewide Distribution



Iowa Workforce Development

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Iowa's Unemployment Rate Decreases Slightly to 3.3 Percent in March

DES MOINES, IOWA – Iowa's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased slightly to 3.3 percent in March from 3.4 percent in February. The state's jobless rate was 3.6 percent one year ago. The U.S. unemployment rate fell to 4.3 percent in March.

The total number of unemployed Iowans decreased to 58,100 in March from 58,700 in February.

The total number of working Iowans dropped to 1,680,700 in March. This figure is 2,200 lower than in February and 7,200 higher than one year ago. The labor force participation rate decreased slightly from 67.8 percent in February to 67.7 percent in March.

"Not surprisingly, one of Iowa's two largest industries provides a bright spot in the March report," said Beth Townsend, Executive Director of Iowa Workforce Development. "While other sectors have had ups and downs in recent months, health care and social assistance added 1,100 jobs in March and is now up 4,300 workers over the past year, continuing to build upon an all-time high. With more than 54,000 open positions on iowaWORKS.gov, Iowa continues to have numerous opportunities for anyone interested in careers in health care or any other field of interest."

Seasonally Adjusted Nonfarm Employment

Total nonfarm employment was little changed since February (-500), lowering total nonfarm employment to 1,575,800 jobs. This loss, however small, marks the third monthly drop in the last four months with 5,800 jobs lost since November. Additionally, this loss stemmed entirely from private service industries, namely professional and business services along with financial services. Goods-producing firms have gained 800 jobs since November thanks to construction sector hiring. In the wake of this monthly loss, Iowa establishments have shed 20,700 jobs versus one year ago. Private industry is down 18,900 jobs and government is down 1,800 jobs.

Health care and social assistance added 1,100 jobs in March to lead all sectors. It was social assistance that fueled most of the monthly gain; specifically, those firms involved in the care of the elderly and disabled. Retail gained jobs for the first time since November (+400). Firms involved in motor vehicle and parts along with sporting goods, hobby, and other miscellaneous retailers fueled this increase. Smaller gains included transportation and warehousing (+300) and management of companies and enterprises (+200). As far as losses go, administrative support and waste management industries shed the most jobs in March (-1,000). Within this sector, landscaping and janitorial services shed the most jobs since February. Finance and insurance shed 500 jobs over the month. The loss was due primarily to layoffs among insurance agents and related activities. Smaller losses include wholesale trade (-500) and manufacturing (-300).

Manufacturing continues to lead all sectors in annual jobs shed (-3,800). Durable goods factories producing heavy equipment have been responsible for most of this loss (-3,100). Retail trade trails last March by 3,200 jobs and wholesale trade is down by 3,000 jobs. Transportation and warehousing trails last year's mark by 2,600 jobs. This sector has trended downward since June of last year. Conversely, health care and social assistance continues to advance and now rests up 4,300 jobs since last March. This sector continues to trend upward and expand upon an all-time high. All segments of this sector have shown evidence of hiring, although social assistance has gained the most jobs during that span. Construction is another bright spot in the state's economy and is up 1,200 jobs annually. Heavy and civil engineering construction projects fueled this gain.

Employment and Unemployment in Iowa, Seasonally Adjusted Data

				Change from	
	March	February	March	February	March
	2026	2026	2025	2026	2025
Civilian labor force	1,738,900	1,741,600	1,735,200	-2,700	3,700
Unemployment	58,100	58,700	61,800	-600	-3,700
Unemployment rate	3.3%	3.4%	3.6%	-0.1	-0.3
Employment	1,680,700	1,682,900	1,673,500	-2,200	7,200
Labor Force Participation Rate	67.7%	67.8%	67.8%	-0.1	-0.1
U.S. unemployment rate	4.3%	4.4%	4.2%	-0.1	0.1

Nonfarm Employment in Iowa, Seasonally Adjusted Data

				Change from	
	March	February	March	February	March
	2026	2026	2025	2026	2025
Total Nonfarm Employment	1,575,800	1,576,300	1,596,500	-500	-20,700
Mining	2,300	2,400	2,200	-100	100
Construction	85,800	85,700	84,600	100	1,200
Manufacturing	214,200	214,500	218,000	-300	-3,800
Trade, transportation and utilities	303,300	303,100	312,100	200	-8,800
Information	17,300	17,300	18,000	0	-700
Financial activities	103,700	104,300	105,500	-600	-1,800
Professional and business services	141,900	142,700	144,000	-800	-2,100
Education and health services (private)	245,900	244,900	243,200	1,000	2,700
Leisure and hospitality	139,300	139,300	144,200	0	-4,900
Other services	54,500	54,300	55,300	200	-800
Government*	267,600	267,800	269,400	-200	-1,800
<i>* includes publicly owned education and health services</i>					
<i>Data Above Subject to Change</i>					

Unemployment Insurance Claims for Iowa

				% Change from	
	March	February	March	February	March
	2026	2026	2025	2026	2025
Initial claims	7,665	7,491	8,502	2.3%	-9.8%
Continued claims					
Benefit recipients	23,129	25,477	27,209	-9.2%	-15.0%
Weeks paid	76,582	81,146	79,773	-5.6%	-4.0%
Amount paid	\$42,223,024	\$44,638,791	\$43,186,419	-5.4%	-2.2%

Local Data and Next Data Release

Media Alert: Local data for March 2026 is available on the IWD website. Statewide data for April 2026 will be released on May 21, 2026.

Visit iowalmi.gov for more information about current and historical data, labor force data, nonfarm employment, hours and earnings, and jobless benefits by county.

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