



# Montana Economic Update

April 21, 2015

## Summary

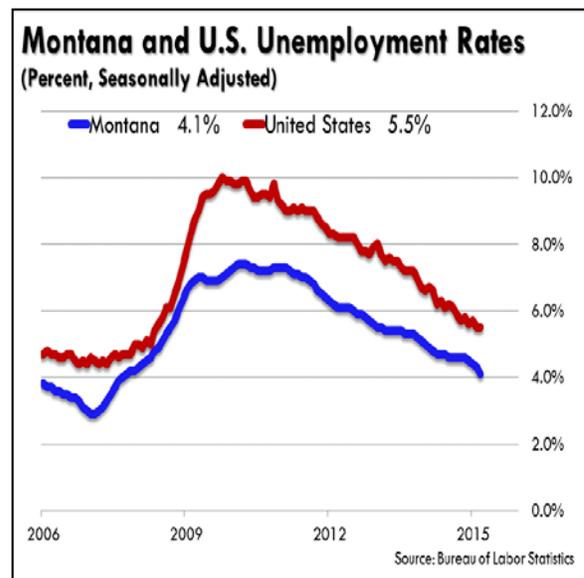
Nonfarm payroll employment in Montana declined by 500 jobs and the unemployment rate fell to 4.1 percent in March according to data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

## Montana Unemployment Rate

During March, the unemployment rate in Montana declined by 0.2 percentage point to 4.1 percent. The number of people counted as unemployed fell by 738 in March to 21,656, while the labor force grew by 1,987 to 523,022. Among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, 10 posted lower unemployment rates for the month than Montana. A year earlier, the unemployment rate in Montana stood at 4.8 percent.

The 10 year peak for the unemployment rate in Montana was 7.4 percent in April 2010. The series high for the unemployment rate in Montana occurred in May 1983 when the unemployment rate reached 8.8 percent. The 10 year low for the unemployment rate was 2.9 percent in February 2007. This also represents the series low for the unemployment rate in Montana. BLS began publishing the state unemployment rate series in 1976.

The national unemployment rate was unchanged at 5.5 percent in March. March's unemployment rate was 1.1 percentage points lower than a year earlier when the rate stood at 6.6 percent. The ten year high for the national unemployment rate was 10.0 percent in October 2009. The ten year low was 4.4 percent in May 2007.



## Montana Payroll Employment

Montana nonfarm payrolls declined by 500 jobs, or 0.11 percent, on a seasonally adjusted basis during March. In the prior month, nonfarm payrolls increased by 1,800. Over the past 12 months nonfarm payrolls in Montana increased by 3,700, or 0.82 percent. Montana nonfarm payroll employment has increased in 7 of the past 12 months.

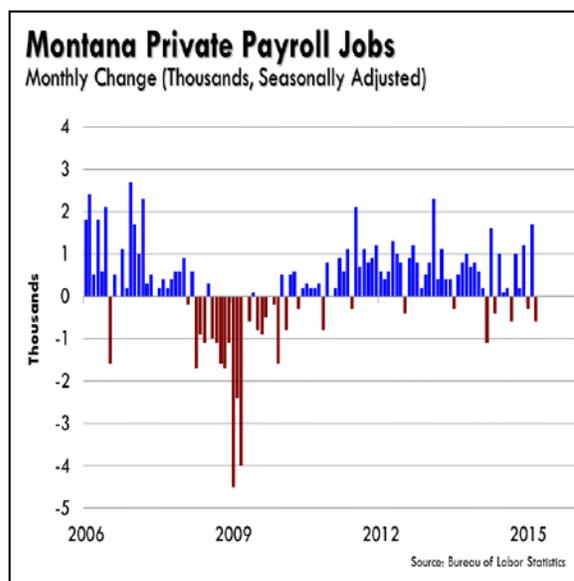
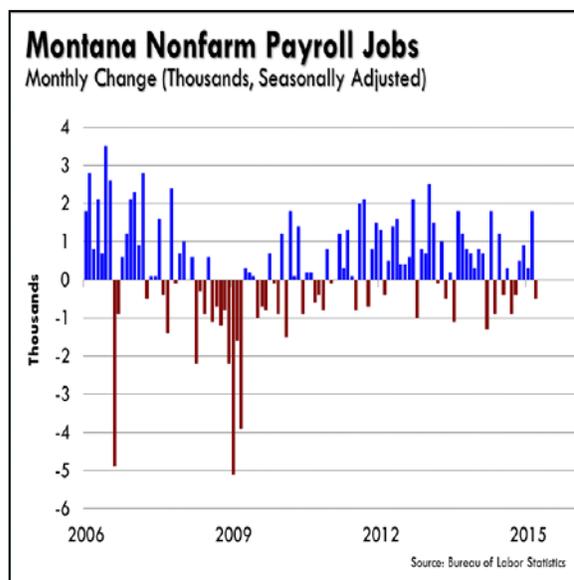
Nationally nonfarm payrolls increased by 126,000 jobs in March, or 0.09 percent. Over the 12 month period ending in March 2015, nonfarm payrolls grew by 3,128,000 jobs, or 2.27 percent. Montana ranks 45th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia for percentage gain in nonfarm payroll employment over the past 12 months.

During March, Montana private sector payrolls declined by 600, or 0.16 percent. Private sector payrolls increased by 1,700 jobs in the prior month. Over the past 12 months, private sector payrolls in Montana increased by 5,100, or 1.41 percent. Montana private sector payroll employment has increased in 8 of the past 12 months.

Nationally, private sector payroll jobs increased by 129,000 in March, or 0.11 percent. Over past 12 months, the nation's economy has added 3,056,000 private sector payroll jobs, an increase of 2.63 percent.

Montana ranks 39th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia for percentage gain in private sector payroll employment over the past 12 months.

During March, total government payroll employment in Montana increased by 100, or 0.11 percent. Federal government payroll employment was unchanged. State government payroll employment increased by 200, or 0.75 percent, while local government payroll employment declined by 100, or 0.21 percent.



Over the past year, total government payroll employment declined by 1,400, or 1.56 percent. State government payroll employment declined by 1,300, or 4.61 percent. Local government payroll employment declined by 100, or 0.21 percent.

The best performing sectors on a seasonally adjusted basis during March were Trade, Transportation & Utilities (+300) and Other Services (+200). The poorest performing sectors during the month were Financial Activities (-500) and Leisure & Hospitality (-400).

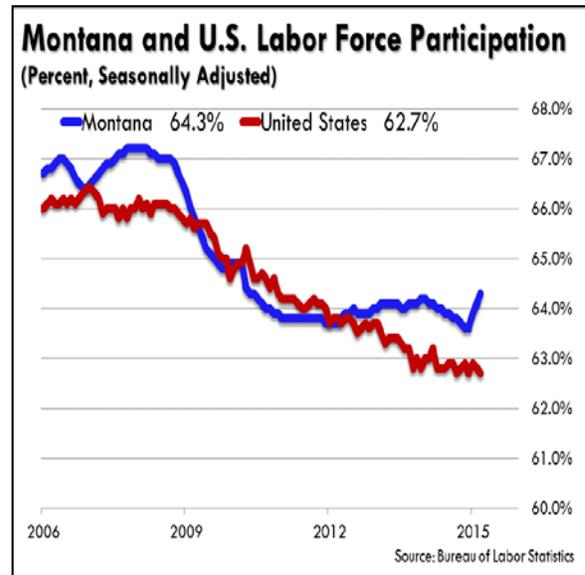
The best performing sectors during the last twelve months were Trade, Transportation & Utilities (+2,200) and Professional & Business Services (+1,600). The poorest performing sectors for the year were Total Government (-1,400) and Educational & Health Services (-600).

#### Other Montana Labor Force Statistics

The labor force participation rate in Montana rose to 64.3 percent in March from 64.1 percent the prior month. Among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, 22 have a higher labor force participation rate than Montana. The labor force participation rate in Montana is unchanged from a year earlier. The labor force participation rate is the percentage of the civilian noninstitutionalized population age 16 and older who are employed or actively looking for work.

The 10 year high for the labor force participation rate in Montana was 67.2 percent in March 2008. The series high for the labor force participation rate in Montana occurred in April 1990 when the labor force participation rate hit 69.4 percent. The 10 year low for the labor force participation rate was 63.6 percent in December 2014. The series low for the labor force participation rate occurred in July 1976 when the labor force participation rate hit 61.2 percent.

The national labor force participation rate declined by 0.1 percentage point to 62.7 percent in March, equaling the ten year low last reached in December 2014. That rate is 0.5 percentage point below the March 2014 level of 63.2 percent.



The employment-to-population ratio, or the percentage of the Montana civilian noninstitutionalized population 16 years and older counted as employed, rose to 61.7 percent in March from 61.4 percent the prior month. Among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, 20 have higher employment-to-population ratios than Montana. The employment-to-population ratio in Montana is 0.7 percentage point higher than a year earlier.

The 10 year high for the employment-to-population ratio in Montana was 64.7 percent in May 2007. The series high for the employment-to-population ratio in Montana occurred in April 1990 when the employment-to-population ratio hit 65.6 percent. The 10 year low for the employment-to-population ratio was 59.1 percent in February 2011. The series low for the employment-to-population ratio occurred in August 1976 when the employment-to-population ratio hit 57.5 percent.

The national employment-to-population ratio was unchanged at 59.3 percent in March. At 59.3 percent, the national employment-to-population ratio is still below the level of 59.4 percent when the recession ended in June 2009. The all-time high for the employment-to-population ratio was 64.7 percent in April 2000. The 10 year high for the employment-to-population ratio was 63.4 percent in December 2006. The recent low occurred in October 2013 when the employment-to-population ratio dipped to 58.2 percent. The last time the employment-to-population posted a reading lower than 58.2 percent was July 1983.

State employment and unemployment data for April is scheduled for release on Wednesday, May 27. The national employment situation report for April is scheduled for release on Friday, May 8.

