



Alabama Department of Labor

News Release

For Immediate Release: January 20, 2017

Alabama's December Unemployment Rate is 6.2%

More People Working Since April 2008; Largest Labor Force in More Than Five Years

MONTGOMERY – Alabama Department of Labor Secretary Fitzgerald Washington announced today that Alabama's preliminary, seasonally adjusted December unemployment rate is 6.2%, up from November's revised rate of 5.9%, and below December 2015's rate of 6.3%. December's rate represents 136,409 unemployed persons, compared to 128,651 in November and 134,403 in December 2015. 2,066,842 people were employed in December, up from 2,066,012 in November and 2,011,475 in December 2015.

“Our unemployment rate rose in December because the labor force grew by nearly 9,000 in one month,” said Washington. “This represents the largest labor force Alabama has seen in more than five years and indicates confidence in the job market. We also surpassed last month's employment numbers, making December the month to beat. More people were working in December than at any time during 2016! We actually haven't seen this many people working since April 2008.”

2,203,251 people were counted in December's labor force, up 8,588 from the number recorded in November. The last time the labor force measured 2,203,251 or more was in May 2011, when it measured 2,204,321.

“As far as wage and salary employment goes, we continue to experience record numbers,” said Washington. “The economy supported the second highest number of jobs for the entire year, and this December marks our third best December over the past 12 years.”

Over the year, wage and salary employment increased 18,600, with gains in the manufacturing sector (+8,300), the government sector (+6,600), and the financial activities sector (+4,200), among others. December's wage and salary employment measured 1,983,600, which was lower than only November's count of 1,991,000 for all of 2016.

“Manufacturing is leading our job growth for 2016,” continued Washington. “Manufacturing employment is at its highest level since December 2008. With wages averaging around \$20 per hour, these are jobs that are certainly bolstering our economy.”

Counties with the lowest unemployment rates are: Shelby County at 4.3%, Elmore County at 4.8%, and Cullman County at 4.9%. Counties with the highest unemployment rates are: Wilcox County at 15.6%, Clarke County at 11.1%, and Green and Perry Counties at 10.5%.

Major cities with the lowest unemployment rates are: Vestavia Hills at 3.7%, Homewood at 3.8%, and Hoover at 4.1%. Major cities with the highest unemployment rates are: Selma at 10.0%, Prichard at 9.9%, and Bessemer at 9.8%.

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Members of the media seeking more information should contact Communications Director Tara Hutchison at (334) 242-8616.

“Seasonal adjustment” refers to BLS’s practice of anticipating certain trends in the labor force, such as hiring during the holidays or the surge in the labor force when students graduate in the spring, and removing their effects to the civilian labor force.

The Current Population (CPS), or the household survey, is conducted by the Census Bureau and identifies members of the work force and measures how many people are working or looking for work.

The establishment survey, which is conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), a division of the U.S. Department of Labor, surveys employers to measure how many jobs are in the economy. This is also referred to as wage and salary employment.

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