



Alabama Department of Labor

News Release

For Immediate Release: March 13, 2017

Alabama's January Unemployment Rate is 6.4% *Number of People Working Continues to Rise; Wages Up*

MONTGOMERY – Alabama Department of Labor Secretary Fitzgerald Washington announced today that Alabama's preliminary, seasonally adjusted January unemployment rate is 6.4%, up from December's revised rate of 6.3%, and above January 2016's rate of 6.1%. January's rate represents 141,268 unemployed persons, compared to 137,875 in December and 131,483 in January 2016. There were 2,054,204 people working in January, up from December's count of 2,047,753, and significantly higher than January 2016's count of 2,034,498.

“Our unemployment rate rose because nearly 10,000 more people entered the labor force last month, and about 6,500 of them found work. The others remain unemployed. When you have an increase in the labor force, and all of those people aren't able to find work, you will see up an uptick in the rate,” said Washington.

“However, there is good news in this month's economic report,” continued Washington. “We continue to surpass our employment numbers each month, and once again, I can say that we currently have more people working in Alabama than there have been in more than eight years. Our labor force is larger than it has been in more than five years. Average weekly earnings for our workers are up both over the month and the year. These are positive indicators for our economy.”

Average weekly earnings measured \$789.66 in January, up from \$783.13 in December, and \$768.58 in January 2016. Average hourly earnings followed suit, with January measuring \$22.37 per hour, up from \$22.06 in December and \$21.65 in January 2016.

Wage and salary employment increased over the year by 26,700. Gains were seen in the education and health services sector (+7,200), the leisure and hospitality sector (+6,000), and the manufacturing sector (+4,800), among others.

Counties with the lowest unemployment rates are: Shelby County at 5.0%, Elmore County at 5.6%, and Cullman County at 5.7%. Counties with the highest unemployment rates are: Wilcox County at 17.1%, Clarke County at 12.8%, and Lowndes County at 12.6%.

Major cities with the lowest unemployment rates are: Vestavia Hills at 4.2%, Homewood at 4.4%, and Hoover at 4.6%. Major cities with the highest unemployment rates are: Prichard at 11.9%, Selma at 11.5%, and Bessemer at 9.9%.

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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.