



PRESS RELEASE

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Record employment in Arkansas as unemployment drops to 4.3% in March

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (May 6, 2026) Today, the Arkansas Department of Commerce, in conjunction with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, announced Arkansas' seasonally adjusted unemployment rate declined one-tenth of a percentage point, from 4.4% in February to 4.3% in March. The United States' jobless rate also decreased to 4.3% in March, down from 4.4% in February.

Arkansas Civilian Labor Force Summary:

- The civilian labor force in Arkansas rose by 801 in March, a result of 1,118 more employed and 317 fewer unemployed Arkansans actively seeking work. Both the civilian labor force and employment reached record high levels. The unemployment rate declined between February and March, while the labor force participation rate was stable.
- Compared to March 2025, there are 19,997 more employed in the state. With 7,619 more unemployed actively seeking work, the unemployment rate is up four-tenths of a percentage point over the year. At 59.2%, Arkansas' labor force participation rate is up seven-tenths of a percentage point.

Arkansas Nonfarm Payroll Job Summary:

- Nonfarm payroll jobs in Arkansas increased 4,100 in March to total 1,341,200. Six major industry sectors posted job gains, which were largely seasonal. Notable increases occurred in Leisure and Hospitality (+3,000), Government (+1,000), and Construction (+800).
- Compared to March 2025, Arkansas' nonfarm payroll jobs are up 2,800. Leisure and Hospitality (+3,600), Private Education and Health Services (+2,800), and Trade-Transportation-Utilities (+2,300) posted the largest annual growth. Declines occurred in Manufacturing (-2,100), Government (-1,700), and Financial Activities (-1,000).

Arkansas Civilian Labor Force (Seasonally Adjusted)

	March 2026	February 2026	March 2025	Change from February 2026	Change from March 2025
Civilian Labor Force	1,455,362	1,454,561	1,427,746	801	27,616
Employment	1,392,317	1,391,199	1,372,320	1,118	19,997
Unemployment	63,045	63,362	55,426	-317	7,619
Unemployment Rate	4.3%	4.4%	3.9%	-0.1%	0.4%
Labor Force Participation Rate	59.2%	59.2%	58.5%	0.0%	0.7%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. More information about the data is available at <https://www.bls.gov/cps/definitions.htm>

Arkansas Nonfarm Payroll Jobs (Not Seasonally Adjusted, In Thousands)

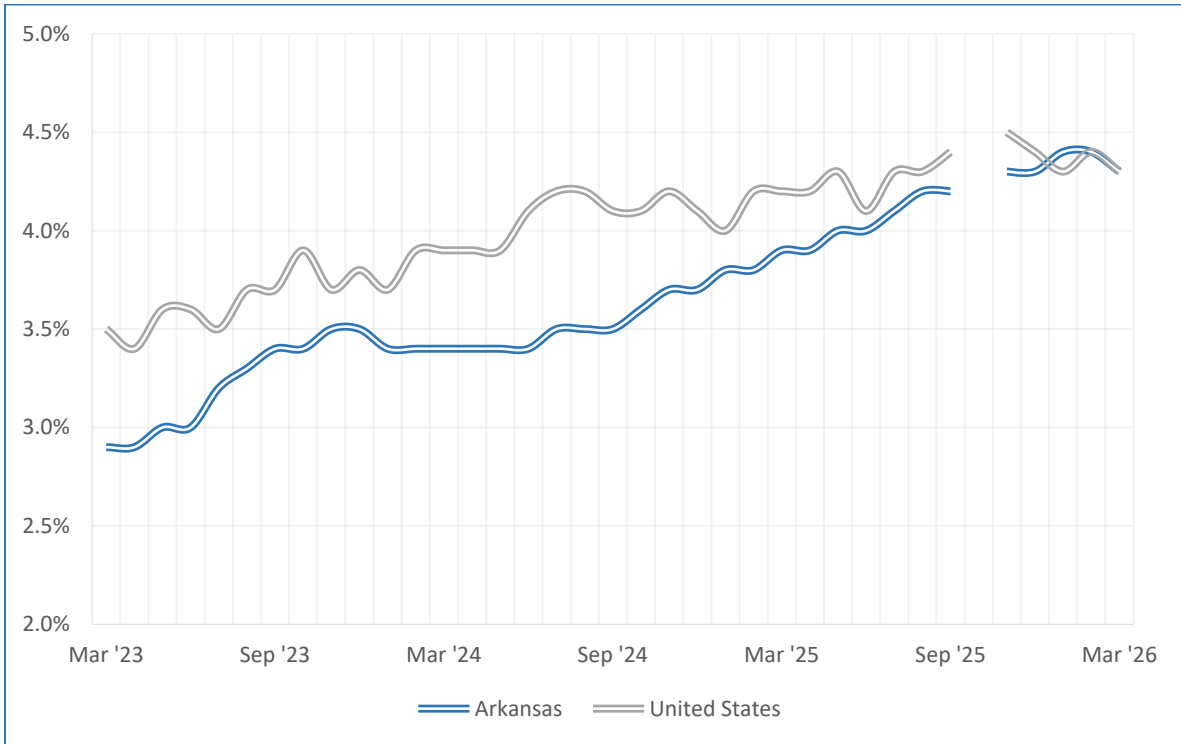
Industry Sector based on 2022 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)	March 2026	February 2026	March 2025	Change from February 2026	Change from March 2025
Total Nonfarm Payroll Jobs	1341.2	1337.1	1338.4	4.1	2.8
Goods Producing	229.0	228.2	231.7	0.8	-2.7
Mining, Logging, & Construction	70.5	69.8	71.1	0.7	-0.6
Mining & Logging	4.7	4.8	4.9	-0.1	-0.2
Construction	65.8	65.0	66.2	0.8	-0.4
Specialty Trade Contractors	41.1	40.6	41.9	0.5	-0.8
Manufacturing	158.5	158.4	160.6	0.1	-2.1
Durable Goods	74.4	74.2	75.6	0.2	-1.2
Nondurable Goods	84.1	84.2	85.0	-0.1	-0.9
Service Providing	1112.2	1108.9	1106.7	3.3	5.5
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	271.4	272.1	269.1	-0.7	2.3
Wholesale Trade	53.7	54.1	53.7	-0.4	0.0
Retail Trade	143.5	143.2	142.3	0.3	1.2
Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities	74.2	74.8	73.1	-0.6	1.1
Information	11.6	11.7	12.3	-0.1	-0.7
Financial Activities	58.5	58.8	59.5	-0.3	-1.0
Finance & Insurance	43.4	43.6	44.4	-0.2	-1.0
Real Estate, Rental, & Leasing	15.1	15.2	15.1	-0.1	0.0
Professional & Business Services	165.2	165.0	164.6	0.2	0.6
Professional, Scientific, & Technical	53.4	53.9	52.8	-0.5	0.6
Management of Companies	43.0	43.1	41.9	-0.1	1.1
Administrative & Support Services	68.8	68.0	69.9	0.8	-1.1
Private Education & Health Services	213.0	212.8	210.2	0.2	2.8
Educational Services	21.1	21.2	20.6	-0.1	0.5
Health Care & Social Assistance	191.9	191.6	189.6	0.3	2.3
Ambulatory Health Care	70.1	69.8	68.6	0.3	1.5
Social Assistance	40.8	41.0	40.6	-0.2	0.2
Leisure & Hospitality	132.8	129.8	129.2	3.0	3.6
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	14.3	13.6	13.6	0.7	0.7
Accommodation & Food Services	118.5	116.2	115.6	2.3	2.9
Accommodation Services	10.7	10.4	10.6	0.3	0.1
Food Services	107.8	105.8	105.0	2.0	2.8
Other Services	52.2	52.2	52.6	0.0	-0.4
Government	207.5	206.5	209.2	1.0	-1.7
Federal Government	20.3	20.4	21.8	-0.1	-1.5
State Government	71.5	70.7	72.1	0.8	-0.6
State Government, Educational Services	27.3	26.6	27.3	0.7	0.0
State Government, Excluding Education	44.2	44.1	44.8	0.1	-0.6
Local Government	115.7	115.4	115.3	0.3	0.4
Local Government, Educational Services	70.3	70.3	70.4	0.0	-0.1
Local Government, Excluding Education	45.4	45.1	44.9	0.3	0.5

Source: Monthly Survey of Employers, based on 1st Quarter 2025 benchmark.

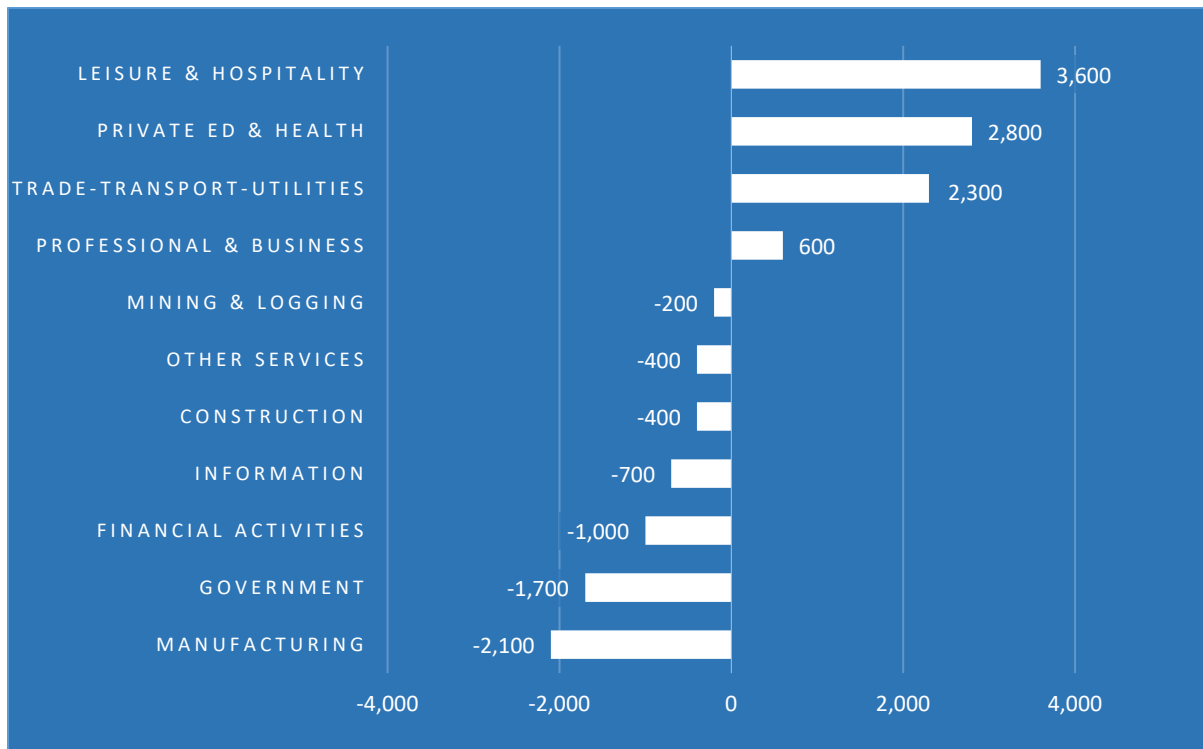
Notes: Current month's data are preliminary; previous month's data are revised.

Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rates Arkansas vs. United States (3-Year Comparison)

Data for October 2025 is not available due to a lapse in Federal appropriations



Job Gains/Losses by Major Industry Sectors March 2025 to March 2026 (Not Seasonally Adjusted)



For more Labor Market Data, visit our website at www.discover.arkansas.gov



About the Arkansas Department of Commerce

The mission of the Arkansas Department of Commerce is to champion the economic health of every Arkansas citizen and business. Its divisions and regulatory boards include the Waterways Commission, Economic Development Commission, Division of Aeronautics, Workforce Connections, Division of Reemployment, State Bank Department, Insurance Department, Securities Department, and Development Finance Authority.



U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

About Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

The Bureau of Labor Statistics measures labor market activity, working conditions, price changes, and productivity in the U.S. economy to support public and private decision making.

About Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

The LAUS program produces monthly and annual employment, unemployment, and labor force data for Census regions and divisions, States, counties, metropolitan areas, and many cities, by place of residence.

About Current Employment Statistics (CES)

The CES program produces detailed industry estimates of employment, hours, and earnings of workers on nonfarm payrolls. CES State and Metro Area produces data for all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and about 450 metropolitan areas and divisions.