

## How States' Job Growth Compares So Far This Year

***While job growth mostly got off to a slow start, some states have fared well in recent months.***

by Mike Maciag | May 27, 2015

By most accounts, the U.S. economy got off to a slow start this year as overseas markets struggled and a harsh winter held back some employers from hiring.

At the state level, updated job estimates published by the Labor Department Wednesday depict sizable variation in how economies have fared so far this year. A few states out West enjoyed particularly strong growth, even though the economy sputtered earlier, while others have changed little in recent months.

Average monthly job totals for January through April, when compared with the last four months of 2014, rose in all but three states. In seven states, the increase was greater than 1 percent. (See totals below)

Idaho recorded the largest percentage increase over the four-month period (+2.2 percent), followed by Utah (+1.8 percent). Washington state also enjoyed steady job gains, with average monthly employment up by about 40,000 positions (+1.3 percent).

A handful of other states experienced very meager growth to start the year. In West Virginia, Louisiana and Maine, average monthly employment declined slightly. April unemployment rates were highest in Nevada (7.1 percent) and West Virginia (7.0 percent).

Much of how state economies are performing is due to the individual sectors making up their employment base, as several industries experienced weak growth to start the year. Nationally, construction and manufacturing employment expanded little over the first four months. The same is true of government employment (local, state and federal), which similarly remained essentially unchanged since January. Meanwhile, employment estimates for professional and business services, along with education and health services, are both up about 150,000 since January.

The national recovery slowed in March with exceptionally weak job gains. Revised estimates indicate an addition of just 85,000 jobs, the lowest monthly tally in nearly three years. Some economists attributed the slowdown to harsh winter weather that may have hit construction and other sectors particularly hard. The latest figures, though, suggest the economy added 223,000 in April, indicating the weak showing for March have only been a temporary blip.

State Jobs Data

The following table shows how states' average monthly nonfarm employment for 2015 compares to the last four months of 2014:

State	% Change	9/2014-12/2014 Average Employment	1/2015-4/2015 Average Employment
Idaho	2.17	658,075	672,325
Utah	1.79	1,343,625	1,367,700
Washington	1.28	3,109,350	3,149,200
Oregon	1.26	1,740,900	1,762,800
Michigan	1.11	4,202,400	4,248,875
South Carolina	1.08	1,966,650	1,987,850
Florida	1.04	7,924,850	8,007,325
Nevada	0.99	1,227,575	1,239,725
California	0.97	15,811,600	15,964,225
North Carolina	0.97	4,179,350	4,219,700
Arizona	0.93	2,592,725	2,616,850
Vermont	0.86	311,300	313,975
Wisconsin	0.84	2,861,475	2,885,575
South Dakota	0.82	424,475	427,950
Connecticut	0.81	1,671,875	1,685,375
Colorado	0.80	2,485,100	2,505,100
Nebraska	0.76	995,850	1,003,400

State	% Change	9/2014-12/2014 Average Employment	1/2015-4/2015 Average Employment
Hawaii	0.76	625,850	630,625
Indiana	0.75	3,000,025	3,022,550
Arkansas	0.75	1,197,800	1,206,800
Wyoming	0.74	293,650	295,825
Georgia	0.72	4,208,400	4,238,525
Texas	0.66	11,684,625	11,762,300
Iowa	0.64	1,555,200	1,565,150
Missouri	0.64	2,741,275	2,758,825
Massachusetts	0.63	3,434,100	3,455,625
Alaska	0.57	338,050	339,975
Montana	0.57	453,875	456,475
Kentucky	0.54	1,873,700	1,883,800
Ohio	0.53	5,359,775	5,388,125
New Mexico	0.51	825,625	829,825
Delaware	0.48	441,025	443,125
New Jersey	0.48	3,977,100	3,996,375
Minnesota	0.44	2,827,700	2,840,025
New York	0.44	9,139,475	9,179,550

State	% Change	9/2014-12/2014 Average Employment	1/2015-4/2015 Average Employment
Maryland	0.38	2,634,000	2,643,900
Rhode Island	0.38	478,750	480,575
Illinois	0.37	5,891,875	5,913,475
North Dakota	0.34	468,300	469,900
Tennessee	0.31	2,840,100	2,848,850
Alabama	0.31	1,937,100	1,943,075
Pennsylvania	0.25	5,813,375	5,828,125
Kansas	0.24	1,398,975	1,402,375
District of Columbia	0.21	759,525	761,100
Mississippi	0.21	1,122,450	1,124,850
Oklahoma	0.19	1,663,625	1,666,800
Virginia	0.13	3,787,425	3,792,375
New Hampshire	0.10	651,525	652,200
Maine	-0.03	605,300	605,100
Louisiana	-0.33	1,992,575	1,985,900
West Virginia	-0.43	762,875	759,625

SOURCE: Governing calculations of BLS seasonally-adjusted nonfarm employment data