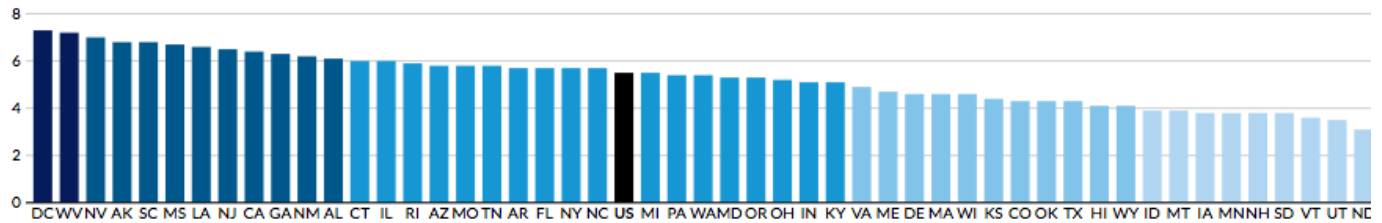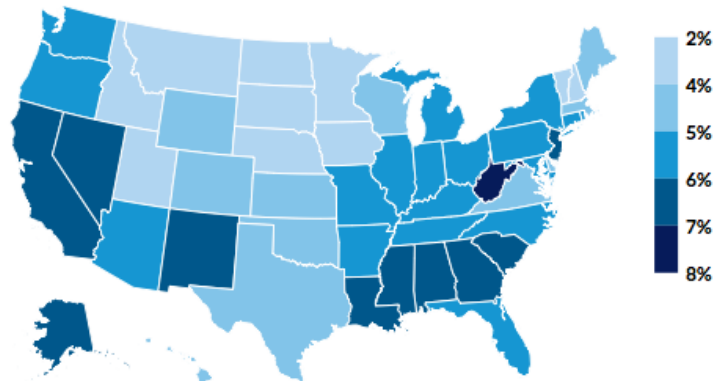# EMPLOYMENT

Breaking down state data on unemployment rates, total (nonfarm) payroll employment, and government employment.

Unemployment Rate (percent, seasonally adjusted)

The national unemployment rate was 5.5 percent as of May 2015.

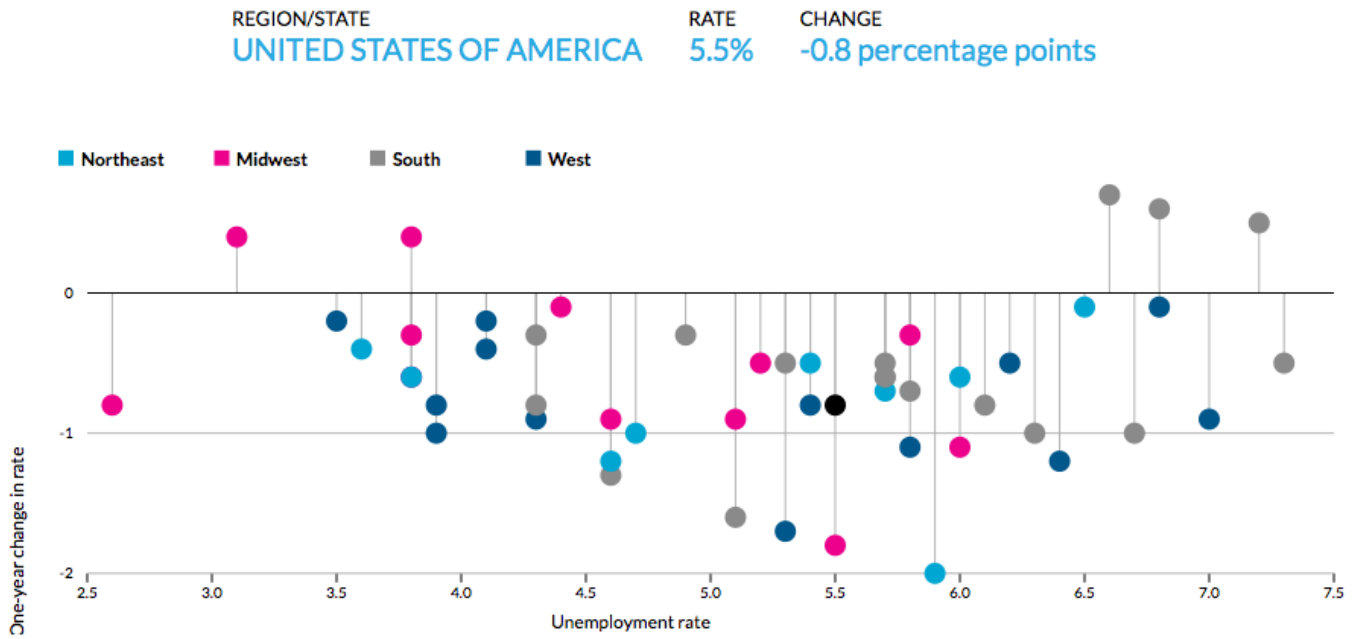| REGION/STATE	RATE	MONTH	YEAR
Washington	5.4%	May	2015

US average: 5.5%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The national unemployment rate was 5.5 percent in May 2015. The District of Columbia's unemployment rate was 7.3 percent. Among the states, West Virginia (7.2 percent) had the highest employment rate, followed by Nevada (7.0 percent), South Carolina (6.8 percent), Alaska (6.8 percent), and Mississippi (6.7 percent). The lowest May unemployment rate was in Nebraska (2.6 percent), the only state with a rate below 3 percent. Nine other states had rates below 4 percent: North Dakota (3.1 percent); Utah (3.5 percent); Vermont (3.6 percent); New Hampshire, Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota (all 3.8 percent); and Idaho and Montana (both 3.9 percent).

Unemployment Rate: Level vs. One-Year-Change

The national unemployment rate decreased 0.8 percentage points to a value of 5.5 percent between May 2014 and May 2015.
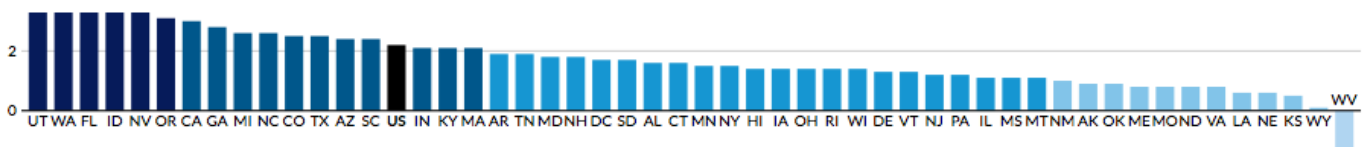
Source: Both datasets from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
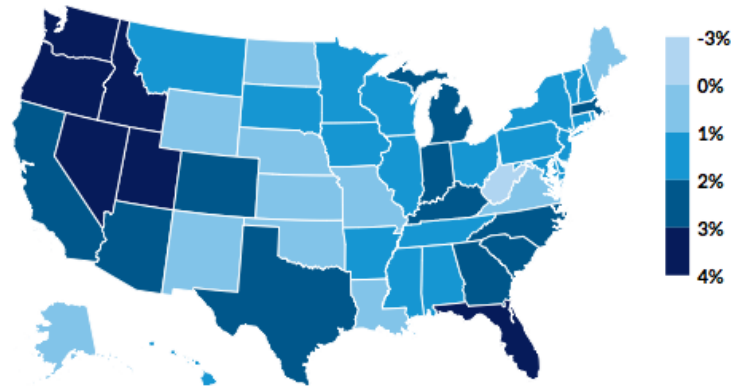
May 2014 and May 2015. The largest unemployment rate decline over the year was in Rhode Island (-2.0 points). Twelve other states saw the unemployment rate drop by a point or more, with the biggest drops in Michigan (-1.8 points), Oregon (-1.7 points), and Kentucky (-1.6 points). California, Georgia, and Mississippi saw unemployment fall 1 point or more but still had May unemployment rates above 6 percent. Five states had unemployment increases over the year: Louisiana (0.7 points), South Carolina (0.6 points), West Virginia (0.5 points), and North Dakota and South Dakota (both 0.4 points). The May unemployment rate was below 4 percent in the Dakotas but 6.6 percent or higher in the other three poor-performing states.

Total Employment (percent change year over year)

Total (public and private) nonfarm payroll employment increased 2.2 percent from May 2014 to May 2015.
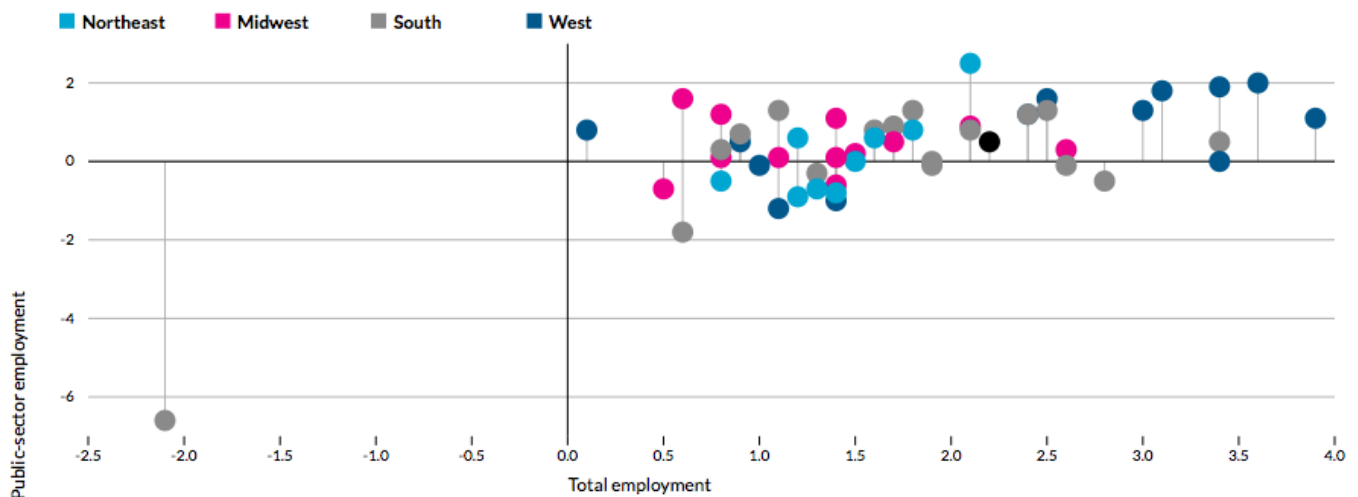
-3%
0%
1%
2%
3%
4%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Total national (public and private) nonfarm payroll employment increased 2.2 percent from May 2014 to May 2015. Total employment increased in all but one state. The largest increase in employment was in Utah (3.9 percent). Employment grew 3 percent or more over the past 12 months in six additional states: Washington (3.6 percent); Florida, Nevada, and Idaho (all 3.4 percent); Oregon (3.1 percent); and California (3.0 percent). The states with the smallest increases in employment were Wyoming (0.1 percent), Kansas (0.5 percent), and Nebraska and Louisiana (both 0.6 percent). West Virginia, the only state without an employment increase, saw total employment fall 2.1 percent over the past 12 months. The relative decline was in part caused by temporary government employment last May (see next section).

Total Employment vs. Public Employment

Total public-sector employment increased 0.5 percent from May 2014 to May 2015, staying well below the 2.2 percent increase in total employment.

REGION/STATE | TOTAL | PUBLIC
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA | 2.2% | 0.5%

■ Northeast ■ Midwest ■ South ■ West

Public-sector employment

Total employment

Source: Both datasets from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Total public-sector employment increased 0.5 percent from May 2014 to May 2015. Public-sector employment increased 2 percent or more in Massachusetts (2.5 percent) and Washington (2.0 percent). Public-sector employment increased more than 1 percent in 13 additional states. In four of these states—Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nebraska, and North Dakota—the increase in public employment was greater than the increase in total employment. Public-sector employment declined in 15 states and was unchanged in New York, Nevada, and Tennessee. The largest decline was in West Virginia (-6.6 percent), where election-related employment temporarily spiked public employment in May 2014. Three other states had public employment drops larger than 1 percent: Louisiana (-1.8 percent), Montana (-1.2 percent), and Hawaii (-1.0 percent).