

## Vermont's labor force hits a 15-year low

In July Vermont's labor force dropped to its lowest level in 15 years. The labor force comprises people who are employed, including self-employed, and those who are unemployed but actively job hunting. Vermont's labor force fell to 343,850 last month—the lowest level since July 2002, when it numbered 343,835. The unemployment rate also dropped in July, to 3.1 percent. The decline in the labor force tells us that unemployment shrank not because people found jobs, but

LATEST BLS DATA - AUGUST 18, 2017			
	JUL 2017	JUN 2017	JUL 2016
Labor Force	343,850	344,821	345,179
Employment	333,213	333,920	333,882
Unemployment	10,637	10,901	11,297
Unemployment Rate	3.1%	3.2%	3.3%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

because they stopped looking.

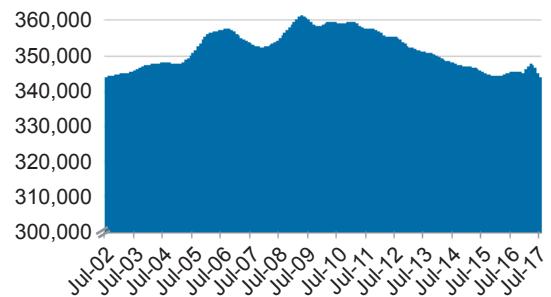
### New jobs

Even while the workforce shrank, employers added 2,800 jobs in the first seven months of this year. The latest annual data show Vermont among the three New England states—behind Massachusetts and New Hampshire—with more non-farm payroll jobs in 2016 than in 2007, before the Great Recession. Connecticut, Maine, and Rhode Island still have not recovered all the jobs they lost.

### Unlivable

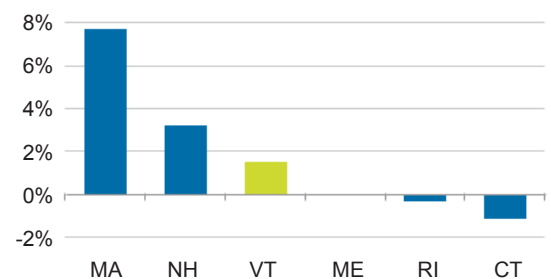
Bills pending in Montpelier would increase Vermont's minimum wage to \$15 an hour between 2022 and 2026. But that may not be soon enough. Since 2004 the state's minimum wage has averaged about two-thirds of the livable wage, as calculated by the Joint Fiscal Office. The livable wage is the hourly pay required for a full-time worker to afford one-half the basic needs—like housing, food, and transportation—of a two-person household with no children and employer-sponsored health insurance.

**The workforce keeps shrinking** Monthly labor force, seasonally adjusted, July 2002-2017



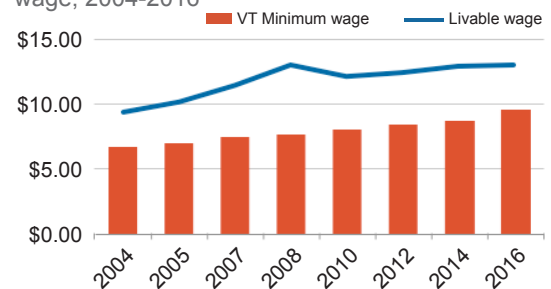
Data source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

**Vermont is in the middle on job growth** Change in total non-farm jobs, annual average, 2007-2016



Data source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

**Minimum wage falls short of livable wage** Vermont minimum wage and livable wage, 2004-2016



Data source: Vermont Joint Fiscal Office, Vermont Department of Labor