

Prospects improve for some—not all—Vermont workers

The Vermont labor force grew for the sixth straight month in May. This followed declines during almost all of 2018. The growing labor force has helped push down Vermont's unemployment rate to 2.1 percent, the lowest in the country now and the record low for Vermont since state-specific data began being tracked in 1976.

LATEST BLS DATA - JUNE 21, 2019			
	MAY 2019	APR 2019	MAY 2018
Labor Force	347,024	346,349	346,307
Employment	339,696	338,770	336,987
Unemployment	7,328	7,579	9,320
Unemployment Rate	2.1%	2.2%	2.7%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Uneven job growth

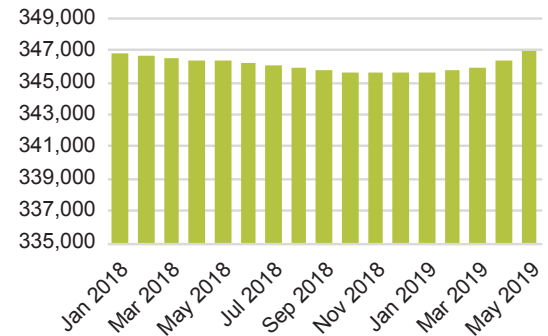
Vermont saw a net gain of only about 500 private sector jobs in 2018—a 0.2 percent increase. The growth was uneven, according to 2018 jobs-by-county numbers released this month by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Private employers in Chittenden and surrounding counties added more than 500 positions last year. But in Windham County, in the southeast corner of the state, the private sector lost 467 jobs. The BLS counts jobs based on where the employers are, not where the employees live.

Lagging wages

A third of Vermont's private sector jobs are located in Chittenden County, which also has the highest wages. Chittenden, therefore, has a big influence on the state's average annual wage. Still, workers in 11 of Vermont's 14 counties earned an annual wage below the state average last year. And the gap between Chittenden and most other counties grew. Chittenden's average annual private sector wage increased by almost \$2,000, or 3.8 percent, in 2018. Only Lamoille and Addison recorded higher growth rates.

Vermont's labor force is on the upswing

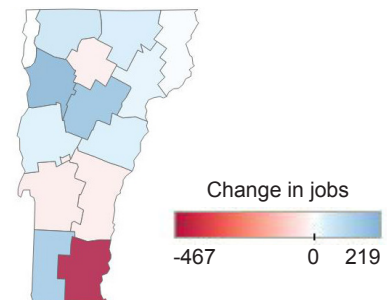
Monthly labor force, seasonally adjusted, Jan. 2018-May 2019



Data source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Most counties saw small job gains

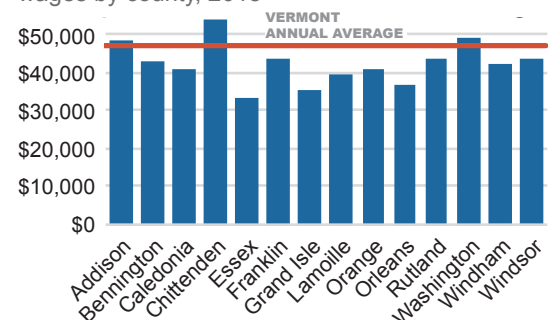
Change in private sector jobs by county, 2017-2018



Data source: Vermont Department of Labor

Pay stayed below average almost everywhere

Average annual private sector wages by county, 2018



Data source: Vermont Department of Labor