



JobWatch  
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## Ohio has recovered all jobs lost to COVID-19 State reached record low unemployment rate of 3.6%

**The takeaway:** Ohio fully recovered the jobs lost to COVID-19 last month, reaching 5,614,600 jobs, 800 more than in February 2020, the month before the COVID-19 shutdown. The milestone recovers 881,600 jobs lost between February and April 2020. Ohio's unemployment rate dipped to 3.6% in May, the lowest rate on record since the data series started in 1976, breaking a previous record low of 3.7% in April. Inflation dropped 0.9 points to 4.0% in May, and the Federal Reserve paused interest rate hikes for the first time in over a year in June.

"This rapid recovery is welcome news and a testament to the success of a federal policy response scaled to the size of the problem," said Policy Matters Ohio Senior Researcher Michael Shields. "This jobs recovery has taken 37 months since it began in May 2020, less than half the time it took Ohio to recover jobs lost to the Great Recession, when we were bogged down by austerity policies that prioritized tax cuts and restrictions to government spending over the recovery of most Ohioans."

**The jobs numbers:** Seasonally adjusted data also released today by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) show that Ohio employers added 6,600 jobs over the month, from a downwardly revised 5,608,000 in April to 5,614,600 in May.

**The details:** Though Ohio has fully recovered the *number* of jobs lost to COVID-19, the *makeup* of those jobs has changed. Construction jobs are the only goods-producers to make a full recovery, adding 800 jobs in May and up 8,700 since pre-COVID. In the service sector, growth in trade, transportation and utilities — up 3,800 jobs in May and 25,900 jobs since pre-COVID — has made up for a persistent shortfall of 14,300 jobs in the leisure and hospitality industry, which pays some of the lowest wages in the state. The private sector jobs shift could indicate a positive trend in which workers are finding and switching to better-paying jobs. State (-8,400) and local government jobs (-19,500) still had a combined shortfall of 27,900 jobs.

"Most of those unfilled state and local government jobs are for teachers," said Shields. "Low pay and high stress have made Ohio's teacher shortage [an entrenched problem made worse by COVID-19](#) — one that policymakers must act quickly to solve. State lawmakers should raise the paltry \$30,000 minimum teacher base pay to the \$40,000 included in the House (but not the Senate) budget, or better still, the \$50,000 recommended by Ohio Education Association; and [drop their attacks on professors' right to strike](#)."

**The household survey:** The separate household survey showed Ohio's unemployment rate at a record low 3.6%, besting last month's previous record of 3.7%. A substantial 33,000 Ohioans found jobs in May, including 4,000 already active job-seekers and 29,000 drawn back into the labor force.

"This is a great jobs report with just a few attention spots," said Shields. "Now we've got to turn our focus to getting the teachers we need in our classrooms and passing a state budget that doesn't reverse course by prioritizing tax cuts for the wealthy over people."