



Ohio loses jobs for first time in over a year

Losses could be seasonal, or a deeper problem the household survey warned of

The takeaway: Ohio employers cut 5,300 jobs in November. The figure marks the first jobs loss reported by the business survey since October of last year, but the separate household survey has been signaling job losses since September. This dip is in light of 700 new manufacturing jobs as UAW workers returned from the picket line after a successful contract negotiation. Future months will tell whether November is a seasonal fluke or the start of a new trend. Inflation dipped to 3.1% in November and the Federal Reserve has announced plans to begin winding down interest rates in 2024. The unemployment rate held steady at 3.6%.

The numbers: Seasonally adjusted data released today by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) show that Ohio employers shed 5,300 jobs last month, from an upwardly revised 5,658,600 jobs in October to an estimated 5,653,300 jobs in November. Monthly data are preliminary and subject to revision.

“Today’s job losses could have two possible explanations,” said Michael Shields, economist with Policy Matters Ohio. “One is that the seasonal adjustment could be throwing off our numbers a little and we’re still on a growth trend. On the other hand, we could be seeing real job losses. The other survey we look at on jobs day has been pointing to losses for three months.”

The details: These numbers may be the result of both seasonal job losses and possible distortions by the seasonal adjustment. For example, construction jobs fell 3,900 over the month, which is typical of fall season. As for the adjustment, researchers use it to attempt to normalize the data to account for seasonal swings, but it relies heavily on what was normal for the same month in past years, so even if companies *add jobs*, but add fewer than they have in the past, it can show a loss. Because retail employment undergoes a major seasonal shift leading to the holidays, it’s a good example of how that can work. Ohio retailers reported shedding 1,700 jobs last month and staffing 5,500 fewer workers than in November 2022. In this case, when data are [not seasonally adjusted](#), Ohio added 10,800 retail jobs last month and 3,500 jobs overall.

The household survey: The separate household survey showed that 5,000 Ohioans lost or left jobs, as the number working fell from 5,602,000 in October to 5,597,000 in November. The workforce – comprised of workers and active job seekers – remained the same size with 5,809,000 people, so the number unemployed rose by 5,000. The increase was not enough to change Ohio’s unemployment rate, which held at 3.6%.

The household survey, which gives us the unemployment rate, asks Ohioans about their work; it differs from the business survey, which gives us the total number of jobs. This is the third month in a row that the household survey has shown a decrease in the number of Ohioans working. In September and October, the business survey still showed job gains. When the surveys diverge, the business survey is generally considered more reliable because it has a larger sample size, but the household survey can pick up new trends more quickly, so it adds weight to the possibility that November job losses could be real and lasting.

“Though it’s too soon to know whether job losses will be a fluke or a new trend, today’s jobs report should raise concern for policymakers,” said Shields. “The Fed has wisely signaled it will begin reversing recent interest rate hikes in the coming year. Ohio policymakers should reverse recent changes that have kicked some Ohioans off their unemployment benefits when they failed to upload resumes under a shortened timeline. These job numbers are a flag that policymakers must safeguard Ohioans by making it easier to access unemployment compensation when Ohioans need it.”