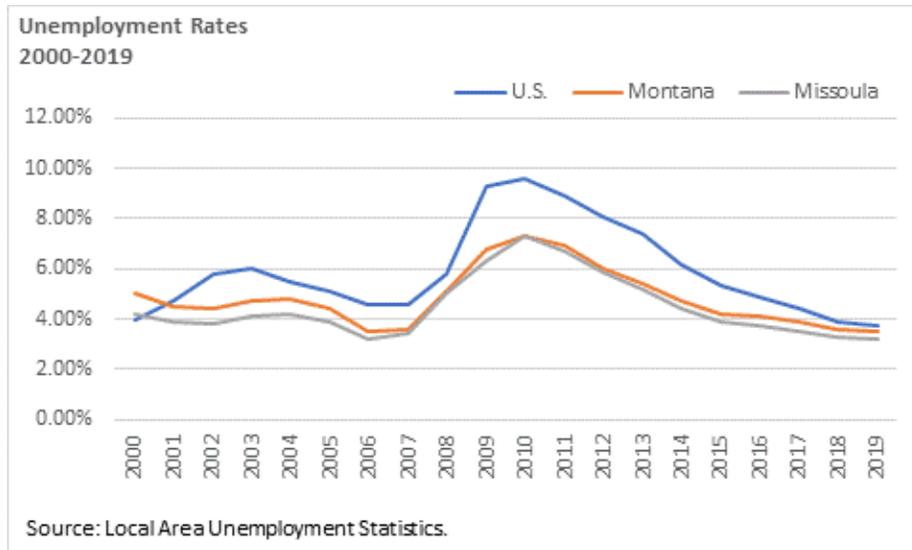
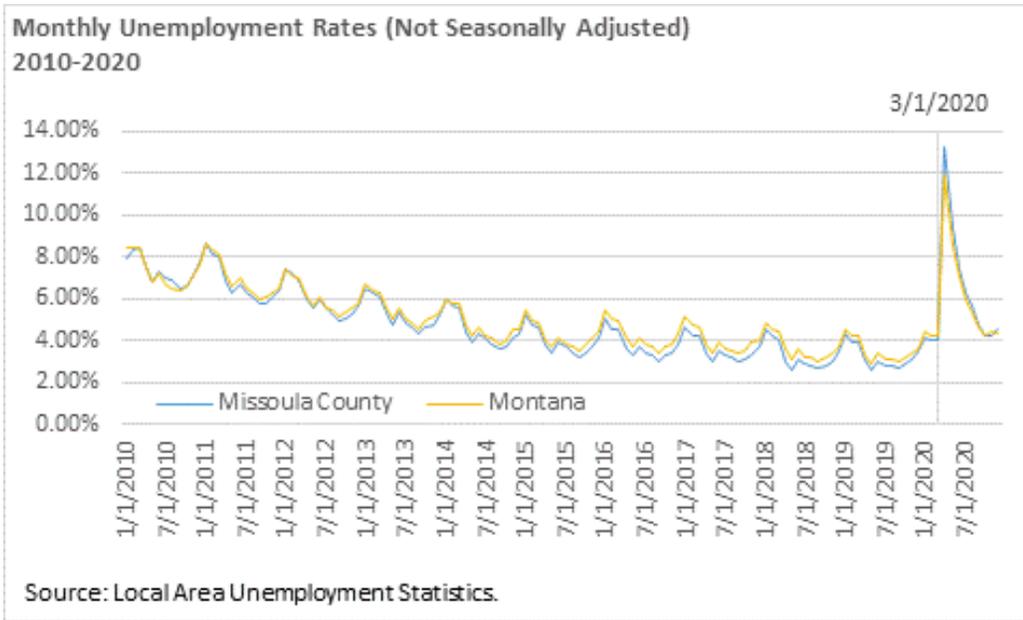


Labor Market Information for Montana/Missoula County

- Prior to March 2020 Montana had a tight labor market, characterized by few workers available to fill job vacancies. One sign of the tight labor market was the low unemployment rate, at 3.5% in Montana and 3.2% in Missoula County in 2019. These rates were slightly lower than the U.S. average at 3.7%.
- Montana and Missoula County had lower unemployment rates than the U.S. for several years. Montana's rate fell below 4% starting in 2017. Missoula County's rate was less than 4% starting in 2015.

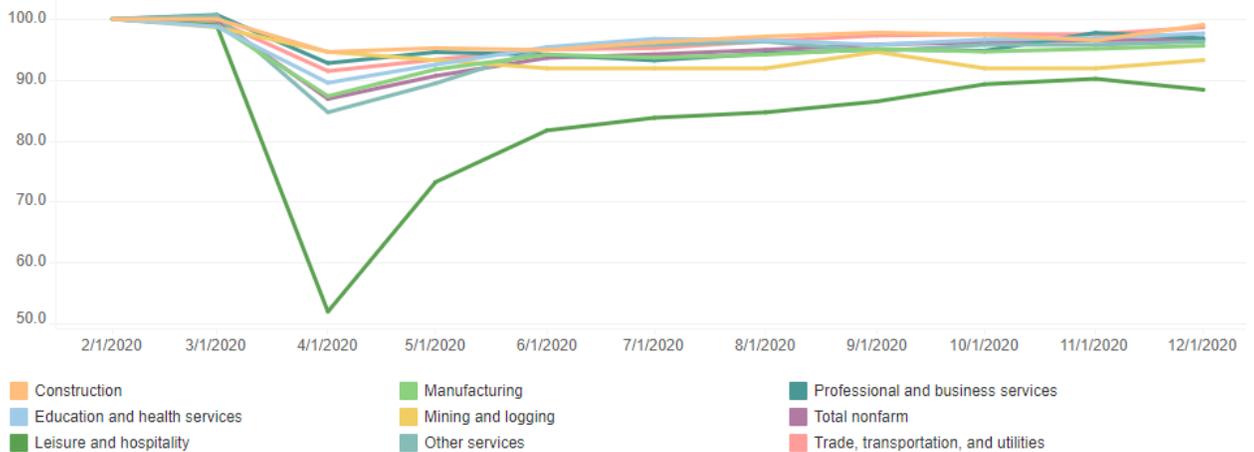


- Another sign of a tight labor market is fast wage increases as businesses compete for workers. Montana's average wage grew at an annual rate of 2.9% from 2009 to 2019, seventh fastest of all 50 states. Missoula County's wages grew at a rate of 2.5% during this time.
- Montana's tight labor markets were disrupted in 2020 due to the economic impacts of COVID-19. Unemployment insurance claims spiked – going from about 12,000 people filing claims each week in February to over 80,000 people during the peak weeks in April. Economic conditions are the primary reason for this increase. Expansion of the UI program also played a role.
- Employment decreased, and the unemployment rate increased quickly during this time.



- The leisure industry had the most significant job loss across Montana – losing 32,300 jobs from February to April, nearly half of all jobs in this industry. In December, there were about 7,800 fewer jobs in this industry than the pre-recession peak (February 2020).

Industry Employment Indexed to Peak Month (Feb 2020)
Employment level in February 2020 = 100



- Montana’s labor market is returning to normal unemployment levels, but still isn’t at its pre-recession peak. For example, Montana’s December 2020 unemployment rate was 4.4%, down significantly from the April trough of 11.9%. However, Montana still has about 7,700 fewer jobs than in February 2020 (Montana’s peak month before the recession).
- Another example is that Missoula County’s December 2020 unemployment rate was 4.5%, up from the 2019 December rate of 3.5%. Missoula County has about 150 fewer jobs in December 2020 compared with one year prior.

- Reasons for businesses having a difficult time recruiting workers right now may be: consequences of the pandemic (lack of childcare or school closures, health concerns, etc.); uncompetitive job postings (low wages, benefits, or job flexibility compared with other jobs, opportunities, or locations); or a mismatch between the skills of available workers and the skills required of current job postings.

*The LMI jobs tracking site is another useful resource, found here: <http://lmi.mt.gov/home/job-tracking#Comparative-Performance-3066>