

2003 Benchmarked Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

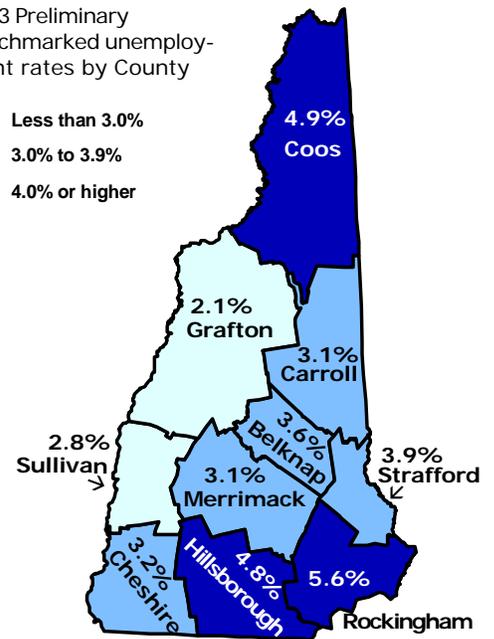
The Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) program uses Current Employment Statistics (CES) numbers, combined with the most recent population estimates for the state and substate areas. The benchmark process revises the monthly estimates and calculates the annual averages for the labor force, employment and unemployment rate.

New Hampshire's 2003 preliminary benchmark of the state's annual average unemployment rate was 4.3 percent. This was a 0.4 percentage point decline from the revised 2002 benchmark level of 4.7 percent. The 2003 annual average unemployment rate ranked fifth lowest in the nation and lowest among the New England states.

The preliminary benchmark for annual average employment in New Hampshire was 688,150 for 2003. This was an increase of 15,188 over the revised 2002 benchmark.* Unemployment was at a preliminary 2003 benchmark level of

2003 Preliminary Benchmarked unemployment rates by County

- Less than 3.0%
- 3.0% to 3.9%
- 4.0% or higher



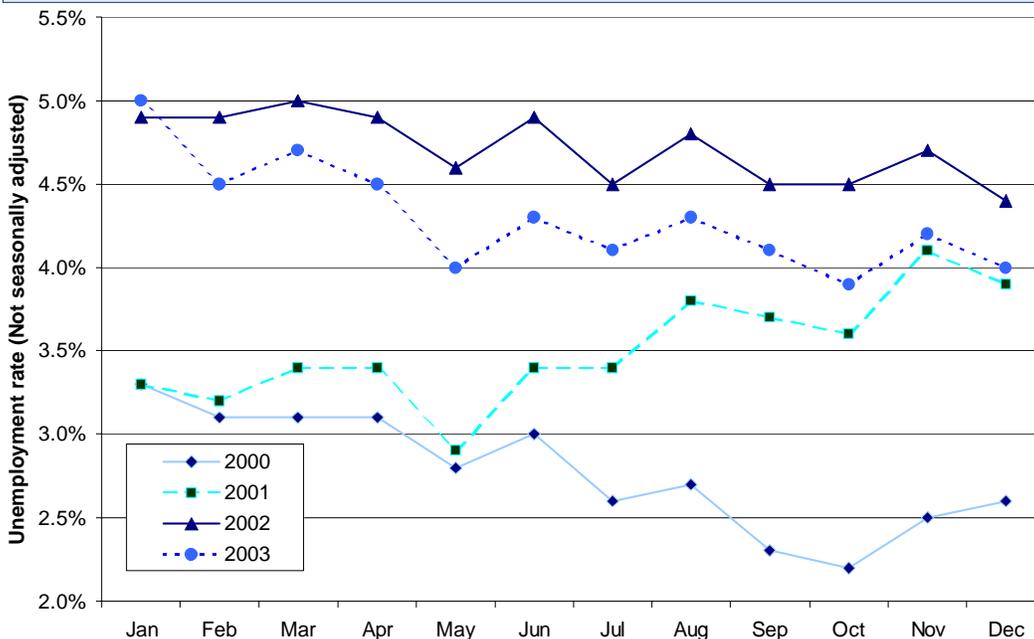
30,730, a decline of 2,556 from the revised 2002 benchmark.* The benchmarked annual average labor force was 718,880 for 2003, up 12,622 from the revised 2002 level.*

With the exception of January, the 2003 monthly unemployment rates (not seasonally adjusted) were lower than the revised 2002 monthly estimates. These rates ranged from 0.3 to 0.6 percentage points lower in the months of 2003 than in the months of 2002.

January, the one month that showed an increase in the number of unemployed over-the-year, grew by 827 unemployed. The over-the-year decreases in the remaining months ranged from 1,858 in July to 4,020 in May.

The preliminary 2003 benchmark showed an increase in the labor force of 8,600 to 15,300 per month and an increase of 9,300 to

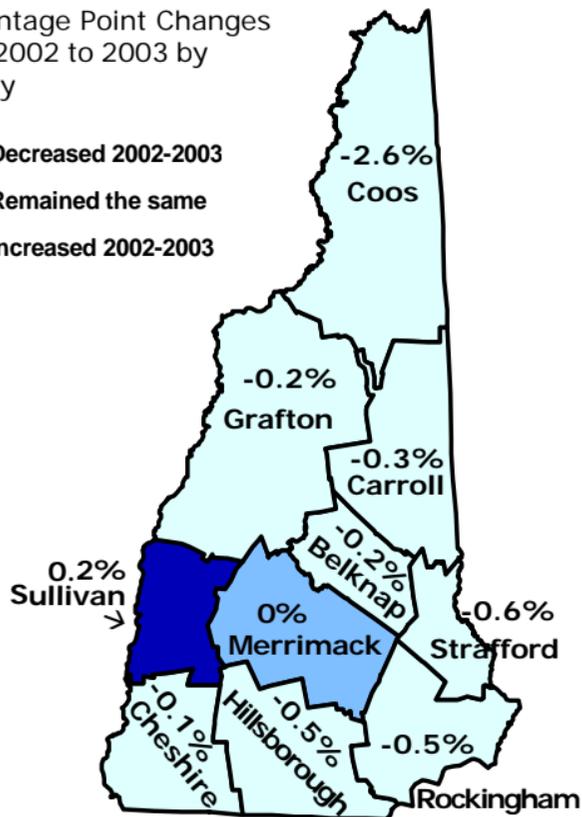
The preliminary 2003 benchmarked monthly unemployment rates were lower than the revised 2002 unemployment rates, but still higher than the 2000 and 2001 final estimated unemployment rates.



* 2002 revised and 2003 preliminary benchmark figures are pending final review by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, D.C. and are subject to change.

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Percentage Point Changes
from 2002 to 2003 by
County



18,800 in the employment estimates over 2002 revised benchmark numbers. Employment peaked in July and August with an historical high of more than 700,000 employed in the state each of those months.

The preliminary 2003 benchmarked unemployment rates by county show a higher concentration of unemployed in the southeastern and northern tiers of the state. Sullivan and Merrimack were the only two counties in New Hampshire where the unemployment rate didn't decrease from 2002 to 2003. With the exception of Coos County, changes in the unemployment rates from 2002 to 2003 stayed within close to half a percentage point.

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