



N.H. Jobless Rate Dips to 14.5% as Economy Reopens Some More

By [TODD BOOKMAN](#) · June 17, 2020 (21 HOURS AGO)

CREDIT TONY WEBSTER, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The state's official stay-at-home order expired at midnight.

Nearly every corner of the New Hampshire economy, from [bowling alleys](#) to [libraries](#) to [museums](#), has been given the greenlight to reopen.

But normal remains a long way off, as new unemployment numbers show that 100,000 residents remain unemployed following a months-long mandated shutdown.

The unemployment rate dropped to 14.5% in May, according to N.H. Employment Security. While that would have been an unfathomable figure just a few months ago, when the rate stood at 2.4%, it is down from its peak in April, when the rate hit 17.1%.

More than 7,000 food service employees returned to the payrolls last month. There were also job gains in the retail and construction sectors, as

businesses began to reopen amidst a wave of new guidelines and continued community spread of the coronavirus.

discuss the latest jobs report.

“The state’s 14.5% May unemployment rate depicts continuing pain,” said Russ Thibeault, an economist with the Laconia-based firm Applied Economic Research. “It is neither as good as some hoped, nor as bad as some feared. I expect we will see gradual improvement in the coming months as more businesses return to near-normal operations, unless the virus forces a re-evaluation of the state’s opening policies.”

Those opening guidelines took a step forward at midnight, when the "stay-at-home" order enacted by Gov. Chris Sununu in late March was allowed to expire. In its place, Sununu implemented a set of "[safer-at-home](#)" guidelines. As the name suggests, public health officials are encouraging residents to continue limiting their trips outside of the home, and socially distance and wear masks when venturing out.

Residents over 65, and those with underlying health conditions, are also still advised to stay home under the new order.

But gradually, Main Streets are starting to return to normal. Over the weekend, Hampton Beach saw large crowds, and outdoor patios at many restaurants are filling up on warm evenings.

It isn’t hard, however, to find businesses that remain mired in a stalled economy.

Contract Support Group, a small manufacturer in Belmont, reopened in May following a one-month shut-down, but it is only operating two days a week as orders trickle in.

“Until demand increases or we get some new business coming in, that’s an operating level that’s comfortable for us right now,” said CEO Sharon Eng, who NHPR has [been checking in with](#) occasionally during the pandemic.

Eng said her business has been able to pay its bills with the assistance of federal PPP loans, and has also applied for state grants. Her 16 employees continue to receive enhanced unemployment benefits through the state and federal government, though that program expires at the end of July.

It isn’t clear if demand for her products will return to normal by then, or if she will be back to full capacity.

“It’s funny, I used to know six weeks ahead of time very clearly. Now it seems like long-term planning,” she said. “So, I think right now, I take things, basically, day by day.”

Updated June 20, 2020 at 4:05 p.m. EST

- Stock prices rebounded Friday, one day after a punishing drop triggered by fears that the coronavirus cases are increasing in the Sunbelt.
- The Dow Jones Industrial Average closed up 477 points, a gain of 1.9%. The broader S&P 500 index climbed 1.3%.
- A day earlier, the Dow lost 1,861 points, or about 7%, and the S&P 500 dove nearly 6%.

Another 1.5 Million File For Unemployment As States Continue To Reopen Economies