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REGIONAL AND STATE UNEMPLOYMENT — 2023 ANNUAL AVERAGES

In 2023, annual average unemployment rates decreased in 6 states, increased in 2 states, and were little changed in 42 states and the District of Columbia, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Employment-population ratios increased in 10 states and were little changed in 40 states and the District. The U.S. jobless rate was unchanged over the year at 3.6 percent, while the national employment-population ratio rose by 0.3 percentage point to 60.3 percent.

Regional Unemployment

In 2023, the West was the only census region to post a change in its annual average unemployment rate from 2022 (+0.2 percentage point). The Midwest, 3.4 percent, and South, 3.3 percent, registered jobless rates lower than the U.S. rate in 2023, while the West, 4.2 percent, had a rate higher than the national figure. The unemployment rates in the Midwest and South were the lowest in their annual average series. All region, division, and state series begin in 1976. (See table 1.)

The Pacific was the only census division that had an over-the-year unemployment rate change in 2023 (+0.3 percentage point). The West North Central had the lowest jobless rate, 2.8 percent. The highest jobless rates among the divisions were in the Pacific, 4.5 percent, and Middle Atlantic, 4.0 percent. The East South Central, New England, South Atlantic, and West North Central divisions had rates below the national figure, while the Middle Atlantic and Pacific divisions had rates above it. The rates in the East South Central (3.3 percent) and South Atlantic (3.0 percent) set new annual average series lows.

Changes to Local Area Unemployment Statistics Data

Effective with this news release, data for regions, divisions, states, the District of Columbia, and modeled substate areas have been re-estimated from 2019 through 2023. The annual average data shown in tables 1 and 2 were affected, as were monthly seasonally adjusted and not seasonally adjusted data. Information on these data revisions is available at www.bls.gov/lau/launews1.htm.

State Unemployment

Six states had unemployment rate decreases in 2023, the largest of which were in Maryland (-0.9 percentage point) and Pennsylvania (-0.7 point). The only two states with over-the-year rate increases were California and New Jersey (+0.5 percentage point each). The remaining 42 states and the District of Columbia had annual average jobless rates in 2023 that were not appreciably different from those of the previous year, though some had changes that were at least as large numerically as the significant changes. (See table A and map 1.)

North Dakota had the lowest jobless rate among the states in 2023, 1.9 percent. Nevada had the highest unemployment rate, 5.1 percent. Overall, 23 states had unemployment rates lower than the U.S. figure of 3.6 percent, 6 states and the District of Columbia had higher rates, and 21 states had rates that were not appreciably different from that of the nation. Six states set new annual average series low unemployment rates in 2023: Maryland (2.1 percent), Mississippi (3.2 percent), North Dakota (1.9 percent), Ohio (3.5 percent), Pennsylvania (3.4 percent), and Vermont (2.0 percent). (See table B and map 2.)

Regional Employment-Population Ratios

In 2023, three census regions had increases in their employment-population ratios—the proportion of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years of age and over who are employed. The Northeast had the largest ratio increase (+0.6 percentage point), followed by the Midwest (+0.4 point) and South (+0.3 point). The Midwest had the highest employment-population ratio, 62.1 percent, while the South had the lowest ratio, 59.3 percent. (See table 2.)

Five census divisions had over-the-year increases in their employment-population ratios in 2023, the largest of which was in the Middle Atlantic (+0.8 percentage point). Three divisions had ratios notably higher than the U.S. ratio of 60.3 percent: the West North Central, 64.8 percent; New England, 62.1 percent; and Mountain, 62.0 percent. Three divisions had ratios that were lower than the national average: the East South Central, 55.8 percent; South Atlantic, 59.5 percent; and Pacific, 59.6 percent.

State Employment-Population Ratios

In 2023, the largest employment-population ratio increase among the states occurred in Michigan (+1.6 percentage points), followed by Vermont and Virginia (+1.3 points each). Seven other states also had significant increases in their ratios. The remaining 40 states and the District of Columbia had ratios that were not notably different from those of the previous year, though some had changes that were at least as large numerically as the significant changes. (See table C.)

The District of Columbia had the highest proportion of employed people in 2023, 68.2 percent, which also set a new high in its annual average series. The next highest ratios were in North Dakota, 67.9 percent, and Utah, 67.7 percent. Mississippi and West Virginia had the lowest employment-population ratios among the states, 52.3 percent and 52.8 percent, respectively. Overall, 21 states and the District had employment-population ratios higher than the U.S. ratio of 60.3 percent, 16 states had lower ratios, and 13 states had ratios that were not appreciably different from that of the nation. (See table D and map 3.)

The State Employment and Unemployment news release for January 2024 is scheduled to be released on Monday, March 11, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. (ET). The Metropolitan Area Employment and Unemployment news release for January 2024 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, March 13, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. (ET).

Table A. States with statistically significant unemployment rate changes, 2022–23 annual averages

State	Rate		Over-the-year rate change
	2022	2023	
California	4.3	4.8	0.5
Maryland	3.0	2.1	-.9
Mississippi	3.8	3.2	-.6
New Jersey	3.9	4.4	.5
Ohio	4.0	3.5	-.5
Pennsylvania	4.1	3.4	-.7
Vermont	2.3	2.0	-.3
Wyoming	3.4	2.9	-.5

Table B. States with unemployment rates significantly different from that of the U.S., 2023 annual averages

State	Rate
United States	3.6
Alabama	2.5
California	4.8
District of Columbia	4.9
Florida	2.9
Georgia	3.2
Hawaii	3.0
Idaho	3.1
Illinois	4.5
Iowa	2.9
Kansas	2.7
Maine	2.9
Maryland	2.1
Minnesota	2.8
Missouri	3.0
Montana	2.9
Nebraska	2.3
Nevada	5.1
New Hampshire	2.2
New Jersey	4.4
New York	4.2
North Dakota	1.9
Rhode Island	3.0
South Carolina	3.0
South Dakota	2.0
Texas	3.9
Utah	2.6
Vermont	2.0
Virginia	2.9
Wisconsin	3.0
Wyoming	2.9

Table C. States with statistically significant employment-population ratio changes, 2022–23 annual averages

State	Ratio		Over-the-year ratio change
	2022	2023	
Florida	57.3	57.9	0.6
Maryland	62.8	63.7	.9
Michigan	57.9	59.5	1.6
Nevada	58.4	59.5	1.1
New Mexico	54.2	55.1	.9
New York	57.6	58.6	1.0
Oklahoma	59.9	60.9	1.0
Pennsylvania	59.3	60.1	.8
Vermont	62.1	63.4	1.3
Virginia	63.2	64.5	1.3

Table D. States with employment-population ratios significantly different from that of the U.S., 2023 annual averages

State	Ratio
United States	60.3
Alabama	55.8
Alaska	62.4
Arkansas	55.6
California	59.1
Colorado	66.2
Connecticut	61.8
Delaware	58.5
District of Columbia	68.2
Florida	57.9
Hawaii	58.4
Illinois	61.4
Iowa	65.8
Kansas	64.8
Kentucky	54.8
Louisiana	56.5
Maine	57.5
Maryland	63.7
Massachusetts	62.9
Minnesota	66.4
Mississippi	52.3
Nebraska	67.5
New Hampshire	63.6
New Jersey	62.0
New Mexico	55.1
New York	58.6
North Carolina	58.9
North Dakota	67.9
South Carolina	55.7
South Dakota	66.8
Tennessee	57.9
Texas	61.9
Utah	67.7
Vermont	63.4
Virginia	64.5
Washington	61.7
West Virginia	52.8
Wisconsin	63.8
Wyoming	62.1

Technical Note

This release presents labor force and unemployment data for census regions and divisions and states from the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) program. The LAUS program is a federal-state cooperative endeavor.

Concepts

Definitions. The labor force and unemployment data are based on the same concepts and definitions as those used for the official national estimates obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS), a sample survey of households that is conducted for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) by the U.S. Census Bureau. The LAUS program measures employed and unemployed people on a place-of-residence basis. The universe for each is the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years of age and older. *Employed* people are those who did any work at all for pay or profit in the reference week (the week including the 12th of the month) or worked 15 hours or more without pay in a family business or farm, plus those not working who had a job from which they were temporarily absent, whether or not paid, for such reasons as labor management dispute, illness, or vacation. *Unemployed* people are those who were not employed during the reference week (based on the definition above), had actively looked for a job sometime in the 4-week period ending with the reference week, and were currently available for work; people on layoff expecting recall need not be looking for work to be counted as unemployed. The *labor force* is the sum of employed and unemployed people. The *unemployment rate* is the number of unemployed people expressed as a percent of the labor force. The *employment-population ratio* is the proportion of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years of age and older that is employed.

Method of estimation. Estimates for 48 of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Glendale metropolitan division, New York City, and the balances of California and New York State are produced using estimating equations based on regression techniques. This method uses data from several sources, including the CPS, the Current Employment Statistics (CES) survey of nonfarm payroll employment, and state unemployment insurance (UI) programs. Estimates for the state of California are derived by summing the estimates for the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Glendale metropolitan division and the balance of California. Similarly, estimates for New York State are derived by summing

the estimates for New York City and the balance of New York State. Estimates for all nine census divisions are based on a similar regression approach that does not incorporate CES or UI data. Estimates for census regions are obtained by summing the model-based estimates for the component divisions and then calculating the unemployment rate. Each month, census division estimates are controlled to national totals; state estimates are then controlled to their respective division totals. A detailed description of the estimation procedures is available from BLS upon request.

Annual revisions. Labor force and unemployment data for prior years reflect adjustments made at the beginning of each year. The adjusted estimates incorporate updated population controls from the U.S. Census Bureau, any revisions in the other data sources, and model re-estimation. Historical data for the most recent 5 years (both seasonally adjusted and not seasonally adjusted) are revised near the beginning of each calendar year, prior to the release of January estimates.

The population controls for April 2020 forward reflect a “blended base,” using population totals from the 2020 Census but demographic distributions still based on the 2010 Census. Typically, population estimates are revised back to the decennial estimates base. However, due to notable discontinuities between the final, 2010-extrapolated recontrol series and the new blended base series that coincide with the peak pandemic months of March–April 2020, BLS implemented a temporary wedged population series for the 2010s through March 2020. For more information on these population controls, see www.bls.gov/lau/important-information-on-revisions-to-data-for-model-based-areas-in-2022.htm.

Reliability of the estimates

The estimates presented in this release are based on sample surveys, administrative data, and modeling and, thus, are subject to sampling and other types of errors. *Sampling error* is a measure of sampling variability—that is, variation that occurs by chance because a sample rather than the entire population is surveyed. Survey data also are subject to *nonsampling errors*, such as those which can be introduced into the data collection and processing operations. Estimates not directly derived from sample surveys are subject to additional errors resulting from the specific estimation processes used. In table 1, level estimates for states may not sum to level estimates for regions and divisions because of rounding. Unemployment rates and employment-population ratios are computed from unrounded levels and, thus, may differ slightly

from rates and ratios computed using the rounded level estimates displayed in table 1.

Use of error measures. Changes in unemployment rates and employment-population ratios are cited in the analysis of this release only if they have been determined to be statistically significant. Furthermore, unemployment rates and employment-population ratios for the latest year generally are cited only if they have been determined to be significantly different from the corresponding U.S. measure. The underlying model-based error measures are available online at www.bls.gov/lau/lastderr.htm. BLS uses 90-percent confidence levels in determining whether changes in LAUS unemployment rates and employment-population ratios are statistically significant. The

average magnitude of the over-the-year change in an annual state unemployment rate that is required in order to be statistically significant at the 90-percent confidence level is about 0.4 percentage point. The average magnitude of the over-the-year change in an annual state employment-population ratio that is required in order to be statistically significant at the 90-percent confidence level is about 0.8 percentage point. Measures of nonsampling error are not available.

Additional information

If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, please dial 7-1-1 to access telecommunications relay services.

Table 2. Employment-population ratios of persons 16 years of age and over by region, division, and state, 2022–23 annual averages

(Percent)

Region, division, and state	Employment-population ratio ¹		Over-the-year change	Error range of ratio, 2023 ²
	2022	2023		
United States	60.0	60.3	0.3	60.2 – 60.5
Northeast	59.8	60.4	.6	60.0 – 60.9
New England	62.2	62.1	-.1	61.5 – 62.8
Connecticut	62.5	61.8	-.7	60.4 – 63.3
Maine	57.4	57.5	.1	55.8 – 59.1
Massachusetts	62.8	62.9	.1	61.8 – 63.9
New Hampshire	64.1	63.6	-.5	62.4 – 64.9
Rhode Island	61.6	61.7	.1	60.1 – 63.3
Vermont	62.1	63.4	1.3	62.1 – 64.7
Middle Atlantic	59.0	59.8	.8	59.2 – 60.4
New Jersey	61.5	62.0	.5	60.9 – 63.2
New York	57.6	58.6	1.0	57.8 – 59.3
Pennsylvania	59.3	60.1	.8	59.2 – 61.0
Midwest	61.7	62.1	.4	61.6 – 62.5
East North Central	60.3	60.8	.5	60.3 – 61.4
Illinois	61.2	61.4	.2	60.4 – 62.4
Indiana	61.3	61.2	-.1	59.9 – 62.4
Michigan	57.9	59.5	1.6	58.4 – 60.6
Ohio	59.1	59.7	.6	58.6 – 60.7
Wisconsin	63.6	63.8	.2	62.5 – 65.2
West North Central	64.7	64.8	.1	64.1 – 65.5
Iowa	66.1	65.8	-.3	64.3 – 67.2
Kansas	64.7	64.8	.1	63.4 – 66.1
Minnesota	66.4	66.4	.0	65.1 – 67.8
Missouri	60.8	61.2	.4	59.9 – 62.4
Nebraska	67.9	67.5	-.4	66.3 – 68.8
North Dakota	67.6	67.9	.3	66.1 – 69.7
South Dakota	67.0	66.8	-.2	65.2 – 68.5
South	59.0	59.3	.3	59.0 – 59.7
South Atlantic	59.0	59.5	.5	59.0 – 59.9
Delaware	58.1	58.5	.4	57.1 – 59.9
District of Columbia	67.5	68.2	.7	66.8 – 69.6
Florida	57.3	57.9	.6	57.1 – 58.6
Georgia	59.6	59.6	.0	58.6 – 60.7
Maryland	62.8	63.7	.9	62.3 – 65.2
North Carolina	58.9	58.9	.0	57.9 – 59.9
South Carolina	55.3	55.7	.4	54.5 – 56.8
Virginia	63.2	64.5	1.3	63.3 – 65.6
West Virginia	52.3	52.8	.5	51.2 – 54.3
East South Central	56.1	55.8	-.3	55.0 – 56.6
Alabama	55.5	55.8	.3	54.4 – 57.2
Kentucky	55.2	54.8	-.4	53.2 – 56.3
Mississippi	52.8	52.3	-.5	50.9 – 53.6
Tennessee	58.3	57.9	-.4	56.6 – 59.1
West South Central	60.3	60.8	.5	60.2 – 61.3
Arkansas	55.5	55.6	.1	54.4 – 56.9
Louisiana	56.2	56.5	.3	55.3 – 57.7
Oklahoma	59.9	60.9	1.0	59.6 – 62.3
Texas	61.5	61.9	.4	61.3 – 62.6
West	60.2	60.4	.2	60.0 – 60.7
Mountain	61.6	62.0	.4	61.4 – 62.6
Arizona	59.1	59.7	.6	58.3 – 61.0
Colorado	66.1	66.2	.1	64.9 – 67.6
Idaho	61.2	60.9	-.3	59.6 – 62.2
Montana	61.2	61.3	.1	60.1 – 62.5
Nevada	58.4	59.5	1.1	58.1 – 60.9
New Mexico	54.2	55.1	.9	54.0 – 56.2
Utah	67.1	67.7	.6	66.3 – 69.1
Wyoming	61.8	62.1	.3	60.5 – 63.7
Pacific	59.5	59.6	.1	59.1 – 60.0
Alaska	62.0	62.4	.4	60.8 – 63.9
California	59.1	59.1	.0	58.5 – 59.6
Hawaii	57.9	58.4	.5	57.1 – 59.7
Oregon	60.0	60.0	.0	58.6 – 61.5
Washington	61.4	61.7	.3	60.5 – 62.9
Puerto Rico	40.8	41.3	.5	NA

¹ Employment as a percent of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years of age and over.

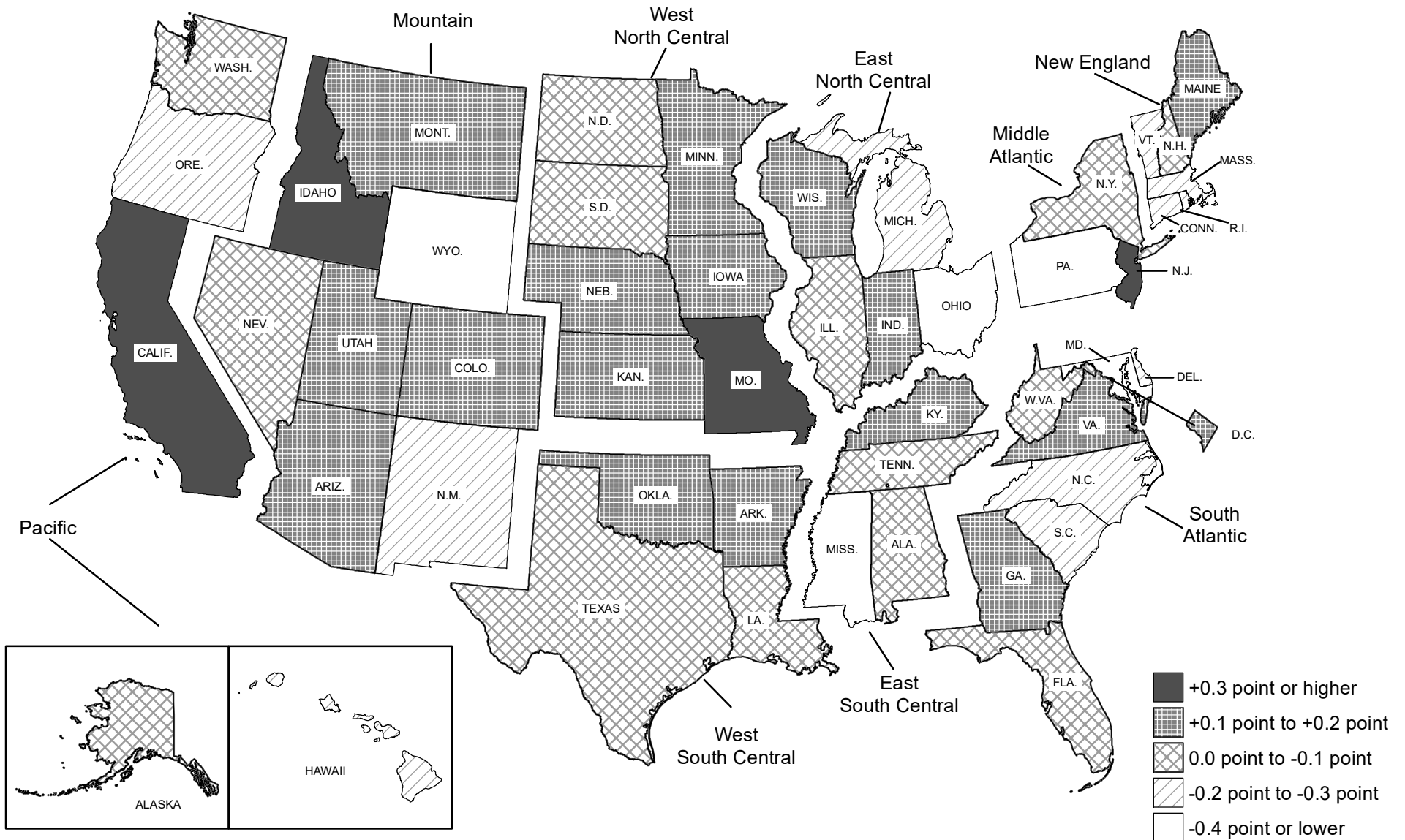
² Error ranges are shown at the 90-percent confidence level and are based on unrounded data.

NA = Data not available.

NOTE: Data refer to place of residence. Employment-population ratios are based on unrounded levels. Data for subnational areas reflect revised population controls and model re-estimation. Data for Puerto Rico are derived from a monthly household survey similar to the Current Population Survey.

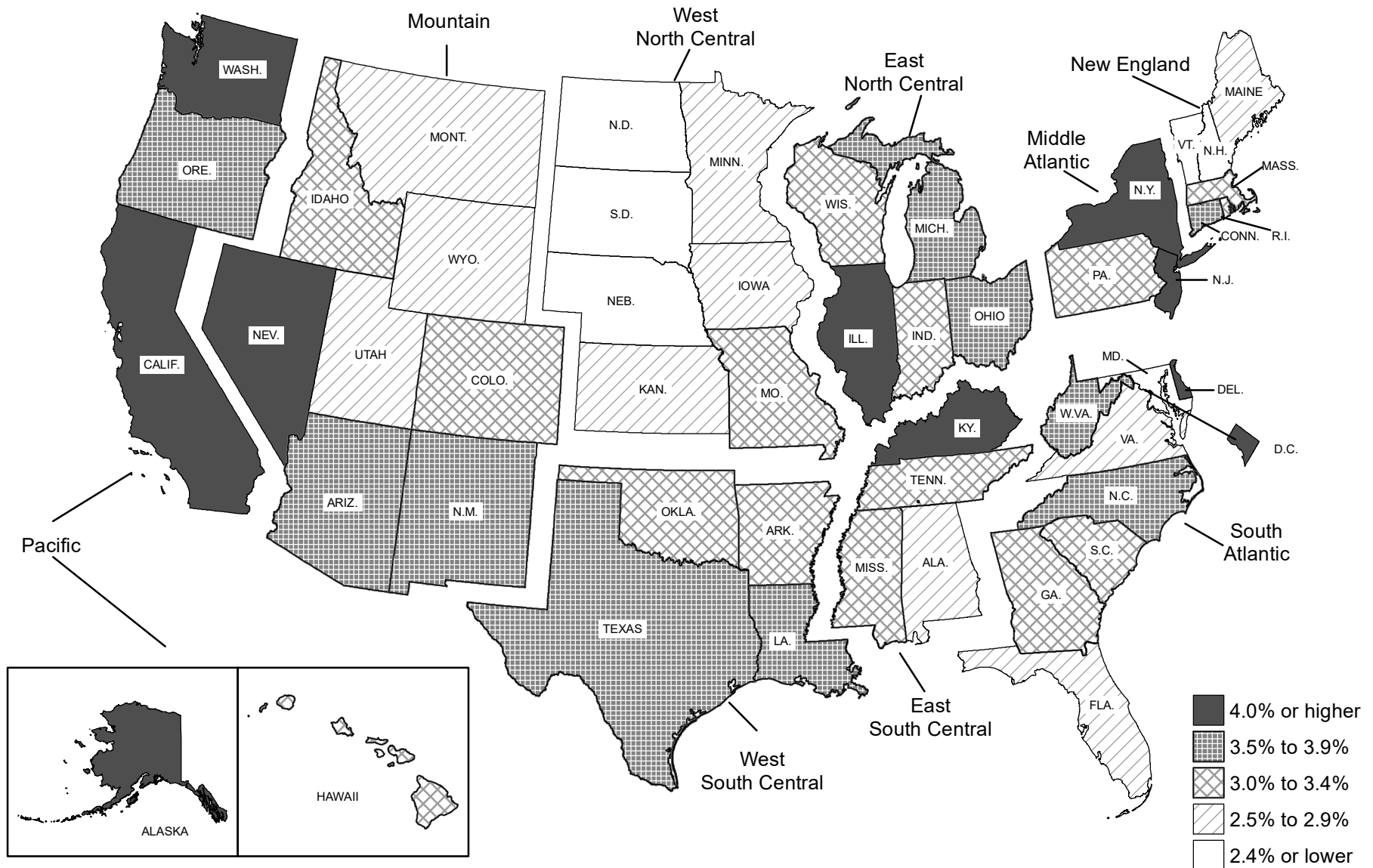
Map 1. Over-the-year change in unemployment rates by state, 2022-23 annual averages

(U.S. change = 0.0 percentage point)



Map 2. Unemployment rates by state, 2023 annual averages

(U.S. rate = 3.6 percent)



Map 3. Employment-population ratios by state, 2023 annual averages

(U.S. ratio = 60.3 percent)

