



WORKFORCE
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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Workforce Solutions Supporting Austin's Workforce as Unemployment Dips to 11.4% in May 2020

AUSTIN – Figures released by the Texas Workforce Commission today show the unemployment rate in the Austin-Round Rock MSA* decreased from 12.2% in April 2020 to 11.4% in May. The 11.4% unemployment rate represented 132,803 residents seeking jobless benefits. The region's unemployment rate remained below both the Texas (12.7%)** and national (13%)** rates.

The Austin-Round Rock region has experienced an annual growth rate of -7.7%, representing the collective loss of 86,300 jobs since May 2019.

Further, unemployment in the Capital Area/Travis County*** decreased from 12.4% in April 2020 to 11.6% in May. The 11.6% unemployment rate represented 81,466 residents who have applied for jobless benefits. The Capital Area/Travis County unemployment rate rose above the overall Austin-Round Rock MSA rate but remained below the state of Texas and national rates.

From March 1 to May 31, nearly half of those seeking jobless benefits were previously in food prep and serving occupations (22 percent), sales and related occupations (14 percent), and personal care and service occupations (eight percent), according to Workforce Solutions Capital Area.

While the unemployment rate in Austin/Travis County appears to have begun tapering down, the overall rate is significantly high when viewed historically.

During the Great Recession, there were roughly 49,000 unemployment claimants in Austin/Travis County from September 2008 to August 2009, according to Workforce Solutions Capital Area. In the first three months of the current pandemic, over 116,000 residents sought jobless benefits, including typically ineligible gig and contract workers who have applied for jobless benefits.

“Layoffs in Texas appear to have begun receding, but many people in Travis County are still seeking work or training opportunities at a volume much higher than before the pandemic,” said Tamara Atkinson, Chief Executive Officer for Workforce Solutions Capital Area. “Workforce Solutions is here by phone, email, and in-person to connect you to jobs you are interested in, quality job training, and child care so you can have more options.”

Workforce Solutions Capital Area's three career centers across Austin are gradually reopening to serve residents and businesses impacted by economic changes caused by COVID-19. The North and East centers reopened by appointment only on June 15 and the South center will reopen by appointment only on June 22.

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“Reopening by appointment only means we are continuing to support our community during the pandemic and doing so in a personal and safe way,” said Melanie Flowers, Chair of the Board of Directors for Workforce Solutions Capital Area. “We connect local people to local jobs—by phone and email or by six feet apart in our centers.”

To understand the real-time needs of the community and refine support services for the jobless, Workforce Solutions Capital Area is surveying all unemployment benefits recipients in Travis County to learn more about their current situation and plans to return to the workforce. According to survey responses collected in May and June, 75 percent of respondents said they are looking for employment, 61 percent said they are interested in retraining to a new career, and 90 percent indicated they have the tools to learn or work from home.

“Workforce Solutions Capital Area will be there to help Austin’s impacted workers navigate through this new world of work,” said Atkinson. “We will continue to work with our partners to drive the change needed to make Austin’s workforce smarter, stronger, safer, and higher-earning.”

Residents seeking assistance can contact us at 512.549.4967 or visit www.wfscapitalarea.com. Workforce Solutions stands with Austin and offers many resources, including:

- **Jobs Now:** This online tool features over 1,000 job openings for over thousands of listings with employers across Austin and is updated daily. Job seekers can search openings at www.wfscapitalarea.com/Job-Seekers/Jobs-Now.
- **Childcare assistance for Austin’s workforce.** Residents returning to work who will need child care may be eligible for tuition scholarships. To begin, parents can apply online to join the childcare waitlist at <http://www.wfscapitalarea.com/ChildCareServices>.
- **Resources for businesses.** Workforce Solutions offers outplacement assistance, layoff aversion strategies, and potential financial assistance at no cost to Austin’s employers. To get started, go to www.wfscapitalarea.com/Employer-Services/COVID-19-Resources-for-Employers.

Key Points by Industry in the Austin-Round Rock MSA in May 2020:

- Leisure & Hospitality experienced the greatest increase with 15,100 jobs, followed by Other Services (4,700) and Financial Activities (2,500).
 - Other industries that experienced a jobs increase were Trade, Transportation, & Utilities (900), Professional & Business Services (800), and Mining, Logging & Construction (700).
- Government experienced the greatest decrease with the loss of 6,300 jobs, followed by Information (-300).
- Education & Health Services was the only industry to not gain or lose any jobs.
- Financial Activities experienced the greatest regional annual job growth with an increase of 11.9%, followed by Mining, Logging & Construction (6.0%).
- Industries that experienced a significant decrease in regional annual job growth include Leisure & Hospitality (-37.6%), Other Services (-18.6%), Education & Health Services (-13.4%), and Information (-12.4%).

Workforce Solutions Capital Area Workforce Board is the publicly-funded workforce board for Travis County. Through strong partnerships and strategic collaborations, Workforce Solutions is leading the region’s workforce system in the development of a world-class workforce.

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**The Austin-Round Rock Metropolitan Statistical Area includes Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson counties.*

***Unemployment rates listed are not seasonally adjusted.*

****The Capital Area Workforce Development Area includes Travis County.*

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