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STATE AND REGIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT, 2003 ANNUAL AVERAGES

Annual average unemployment rates edged up in three regions and rose in about two-thirds of the states in 2003. Meanwhile, employment-population ratios again declined in all four regions and in the majority of states, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported today. At the national level, the jobless rate edged up by 0.2 percentage point to 6.0 percent, while the employment-population ratio declined by 0.4 percentage point to 62.3 percent.

Regional Unemployment

Among the four regions, the Midwest experienced the largest jobless rate increase from 2002 (+0.4 percentage point), the Northeast and South both recorded smaller increases (+0.2 point each), and the West reported no rate change from the year before. For the 12th consecutive year, the West registered the highest regional unemployment rate, 6.5 percent. The Northeast and South each reported the lowest jobless rate, 5.8 percent, little different from the 5.9 percent rate in the Midwest. The range between the highest and lowest regional rates narrowed from 1.0 percentage point in 2002 to 0.7 point last year, despite generally higher rates.

In 2003, the New England and West South Central divisions posted the largest annual unemployment rate increases (+0.6 percentage point each), followed by the East North Central and West North Central divisions (+0.4 point each) and the East South Central (+0.3 point). For the 12th year in a row, the Pacific division reported the highest unemployment rate, 6.9 percent. The next highest rate was recorded in the West South Central division, 6.6 percent. The West North Central division, at 5.0 percent, posted the lowest rate for the second consecutive year, followed by the South Atlantic and New England divisions, at 5.2 and 5.4 percent, respectively.

State Unemployment

Annual average unemployment rates rose in 34 states and the District of Columbia from 2002 to 2003, declined in 11 states, and were unchanged in 5 states. The largest rate increases were in Connecticut and Oklahoma (+1.2 percentage points each), Michigan (+1.1 points), and New Mexico (+1.0 point). Thirteen additional states and the District of Columbia registered over-the-year rate increases of at least one-half percentage point. All four states in the West South Central division and four of the six states in New England recorded increases of 0.5 percentage point or greater. Arizona reported the largest annual unemployment rate decline from 2002 (-0.6 percentage point), followed closely by Mississippi and Utah (-0.5 point each). The Mountain division had the largest number of states reporting annual average

unemployment rate decreases in 2003, as four of its eight states had declines, ranging from 0.3 to 0.6 percentage point. (See table 1 and chart 1.)

States in the Pacific division continued to record the highest jobless rates in the nation in 2003: Oregon, 8.2 percent, Alaska, 8.0 percent, and Washington, 7.5 percent. The lowest jobless rates for the year were reported in three West North Central states—South Dakota, 3.6 percent, and Nebraska and North Dakota, 4.0 percent each. Overall, 32 states had unemployment rates below the national average of 6.0 percent, 17 states and the District of Columbia had rates above it, and one state had a rate equal to it. All seven states in the West North Central division and all six in New England posted rates below that of the Nation. In contrast, four of the five Pacific states and three of the four West South Central states recorded rates above the U.S. figure. (See chart 2.)

Regional Employment-Population Ratios

All four regions recorded declines in their annual employment-population ratios—the proportion of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years and over with a job. The Northeast posted the largest over-the-year decline (-0.8 percentage point), followed by the West (-0.6 point). The Midwest (64.6 percent) and West (62.4 percent) continued to report employment-population ratios above the U.S. average of 62.3 percent in 2003, while the Northeast (61.1 percent) and South (61.3 percent) had ratios below it.

Of the nine geographic divisions, the Middle Atlantic, New England, and Pacific registered the largest decreases in their employment-population ratios from 2002 (-0.8 percentage point each). The next largest decrease was in the West North Central division (-0.5 percentage point). The other five divisions had smaller annual average declines. The West North Central division, which in recent years has had high levels of agricultural employment and part-time workers, again recorded the highest employment-population ratio (68.2 percent). The East South Central division continued to have the lowest proportion of employed persons (59.1 percent).

State Employment-Population Ratios

In 2003, 29 states posted declines in their proportion of employed persons from 2002, 18 states reported increases, and 3 states and the District of Columbia had no change. The largest employment-population ratio drop from 2002 was recorded in Iowa (-2.9 percentage points). Arkansas reported the second largest decrease (-1.7 points). Ten additional states had declines of at least 1.0 percentage point, and 10 others had decreases of one-half point or more. Four states reported increases in employment-population ratios of more than a full percentage point for the year: Rhode Island (+1.4 points), Alabama and Wyoming (+1.2 points each), and Georgia (+1.1 points). Another seven states posted increases of at least 0.5 percentage point from 2002. (See table 2 and chart 3.)

West Virginia continued to have the lowest employment-population ratio among all states in 2003, 51.3 percent, a decline of 1.3 percentage points from the previous year. Louisiana had the next lowest ratio, 56.9 percent. Overall, 8 of the 10 states with employment-population ratios below 60 percent were located in the South. Minnesota continued to report the highest proportion of employed persons, 71.3 percent, despite a decline of 1.1 percentage points from 2002. Two other Midwestern states—Nebraska and South Dakota—registered the next highest ratios, 71.1 percent each, and were the only other states with ratios over 70.0 percent. Thirty states recorded employment-population ratios higher than the U.S. figure of 62.3 percent, while 20 states and the District of Columbia posted lower ratios. All states in the New England and West North Central divisions again had employment-population ratios above that of the Nation, while all states in the Middle Atlantic and East South Central divisions continued to have ratios below it.

NOTE: All estimates presented in this release, except those for Puerto Rico, were derived from the Current Population Survey, a sample survey conducted monthly for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau. A description of the survey and information about the reliability of the state estimates appear in *Geographic Profile of Employment and Unemployment, 2002*, Bulletin 2564, available on the Internet at <http://stats.bls.gov/opub/gp/laugp.htm>. Annual averages for regions, divisions, states, and the District of Columbia, shown in tables 1 and 2, reflect updated Census 2000-based population controls. Data for Puerto Rico are not included in the U.S. totals.

The length of the annual series varies by state and ranges from 28 to 34 years. The region and division annual series begin in 1976.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

Table 1. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years of age and over by region, division, and state, 2002-03 annual averages

(Numbers in thousands)

Region, division, and state	Population		Civilian labor force		Employed		Unemployed		Unemployment rate		Error range of rate, 2003 ¹		
	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003			
United States ²	217,570	221,168	144,863	146,510	136,485	137,736	8,378	8,774	5.8	6.0	5.9	-	6.1
Northeast	41,960	42,264	27,531	27,415	25,984	25,815	1,547	1,599	5.6	5.8	5.6	-	6.0
New England	11,007	11,092	7,548	7,554	7,182	7,145	366	409	4.8	5.4	5.1	-	5.7
Connecticut	2,651	2,680	1,792	1,803	1,714	1,704	78	99	4.3	5.5	5.0	-	6.0
Maine	1,025	1,039	680	693	650	658	30	35	4.4	5.1	4.6	-	5.6
Massachusetts	5,018	5,028	3,467	3,416	3,283	3,217	184	198	5.3	5.8	5.3	-	6.3
New Hampshire	990	1,005	706	719	673	688	33	31	4.7	4.3	3.9	-	4.7
Rhode Island	835	844	553	573	525	543	28	30	5.1	5.3	4.8	-	5.8
Vermont	489	494	349	351	336	335	13	16	3.7	4.6	4.2	-	5.0
Middle Atlantic	30,953	31,173	19,984	19,860	18,803	18,671	1,181	1,190	5.9	6.0	5.8	-	6.2
New Jersey	6,563	6,619	4,353	4,375	4,099	4,118	254	257	5.8	5.9	5.5	-	6.3
New York	14,789	14,891	9,345	9,315	8,773	8,726	572	589	6.1	6.3	6.0	-	6.6
Pennsylvania	9,601	9,663	6,286	6,170	5,930	5,826	356	344	5.7	5.6	5.2	-	6.0
Midwest	49,563	49,929	34,099	34,291	32,222	32,267	1,878	2,024	5.5	5.9	5.7	-	6.1
East North Central	34,723	34,963	23,411	23,553	22,025	22,063	1,386	1,491	5.9	6.3	6.1	-	6.5
Illinois	9,510	9,583	6,369	6,330	5,955	5,908	414	422	6.5	6.7	6.3	-	7.1
Indiana	4,648	4,679	3,170	3,188	3,007	3,024	163	163	5.1	5.1	4.6	-	5.6
Michigan	7,650	7,706	5,001	5,042	4,691	4,674	310	368	6.2	7.3	6.8	-	7.8
Ohio	8,729	8,771	5,847	5,915	5,515	5,552	332	363	5.7	6.1	5.7	-	6.5
Wisconsin	4,186	4,224	3,025	3,078	2,858	2,905	167	174	5.5	5.6	5.0	-	6.2
West North Central	14,841	14,966	10,689	10,737	10,196	10,204	492	533	4.6	5.0	4.7	-	5.3
Iowa	2,271	2,286	1,663	1,612	1,596	1,540	67	72	4.0	4.5	4.0	-	5.0
Kansas	2,035	2,049	1,410	1,434	1,338	1,357	72	77	5.1	5.4	4.9	-	5.9
Minnesota	3,851	3,896	2,915	2,923	2,787	2,778	128	145	4.4	5.0	4.5	-	5.5
Missouri	4,318	4,352	2,982	3,021	2,818	2,850	164	170	5.5	5.6	5.1	-	6.1
Nebraska	1,305	1,318	956	976	921	937	34	39	3.6	4.0	3.5	-	4.5
North Dakota	489	490	344	346	330	333	14	14	4.0	4.0	3.5	-	4.5
South Dakota	571	576	419	425	406	410	13	15	3.1	3.6	3.2	-	4.0
South	77,583	78,692	50,551	51,228	47,711	48,277	2,840	2,951	5.6	5.8	5.6	-	6.0
South Atlantic	40,706	41,345	26,642	26,995	25,218	25,586	1,424	1,409	5.3	5.2	5.0	-	5.4
Delaware	617	625	420	417	402	399	18	18	4.2	4.4	3.9	-	4.9
District of Columbia	458	454	303	302	284	281	19	21	6.4	7.0	6.3	-	7.7
Florida	12,943	13,211	8,095	8,164	7,653	7,744	443	420	5.5	5.1	4.8	-	5.4
Georgia	6,318	6,431	4,280	4,414	4,060	4,207	220	207	5.1	4.7	4.2	-	5.2
Maryland	4,124	4,181	2,897	2,904	2,771	2,773	126	131	4.4	4.5	4.0	-	5.0
North Carolina	6,254	6,328	4,166	4,230	3,885	3,957	281	273	6.7	6.5	6.0	-	7.0
South Carolina	3,105	3,142	1,944	2,003	1,828	1,866	116	136	6.0	6.8	6.2	-	7.4
Virginia	5,451	5,532	3,733	3,773	3,581	3,620	152	154	4.1	4.1	3.6	-	4.6
West Virginia	1,435	1,442	804	787	755	739	49	48	6.1	6.1	5.5	-	6.7
East South Central	13,126	13,235	8,248	8,325	7,778	7,828	470	497	5.7	6.0	5.7	-	6.3
Alabama	3,419	3,442	2,095	2,147	1,971	2,023	124	125	5.9	5.8	5.2	-	6.4
Kentucky	3,129	3,153	1,932	1,956	1,824	1,836	108	120	5.6	6.2	5.6	-	6.8
Mississippi	2,126	2,138	1,292	1,312	1,204	1,229	88	83	6.8	6.3	5.6	-	7.0
Tennessee	4,451	4,501	2,928	2,909	2,779	2,740	150	169	5.1	5.8	5.2	-	6.4
West South Central	23,752	24,112	15,661	15,908	14,715	14,863	946	1,045	6.0	6.6	6.3	-	6.9
Arkansas	2,054	2,071	1,281	1,265	1,212	1,186	70	78	5.4	6.2	5.5	-	6.9
Louisiana	3,324	3,348	1,998	2,037	1,876	1,904	123	134	6.1	6.6	5.9	-	7.3
Oklahoma	2,622	2,646	1,695	1,696	1,618	1,600	76	96	4.5	5.7	5.0	-	6.4
Texas	15,753	16,047	10,686	10,910	10,009	10,173	677	738	6.3	6.8	6.4	-	7.2
West	48,903	49,792	32,948	33,245	30,813	31,070	2,135	2,176	6.5	6.5	6.3	-	6.7
Mountain	14,137	14,433	9,693	9,837	9,135	9,281	558	556	5.8	5.7	5.4	-	6.0
Arizona	4,027	4,131	2,667	2,690	2,503	2,539	165	151	6.2	5.6	5.0	-	6.2
Colorado	3,393	3,440	2,437	2,478	2,298	2,328	140	150	5.7	6.0	5.5	-	6.5
Idaho	991	1,013	686	693	646	655	40	37	5.8	5.4	4.8	-	6.0
Montana	705	714	464	475	442	452	21	22	4.6	4.7	4.1	-	5.3
Nevada	1,626	1,686	1,129	1,141	1,066	1,082	62	59	5.5	5.2	4.7	-	5.7
New Mexico	1,378	1,401	875	897	828	840	48	57	5.4	6.4	5.7	-	7.1
Utah	1,634	1,660	1,165	1,184	1,094	1,118	71	67	6.1	5.6	5.0	-	6.2
Wyoming	383	387	270	278	259	266	11	12	4.2	4.4	3.9	-	4.9
Pacific	34,766	35,359	23,256	23,409	21,678	21,789	1,577	1,620	6.8	6.9	6.6	-	7.2
Alaska	450	459	324	332	299	305	25	27	7.7	8.0	7.3	-	8.7
California	26,040	26,490	17,376	17,460	16,215	16,283	1,161	1,177	6.7	6.7	6.4	-	7.0
Hawaii	927	944	606	618	581	592	26	27	4.2	4.3	3.8	-	4.8
Oregon	2,726	2,770	1,840	1,859	1,701	1,707	139	152	7.5	8.2	7.5	-	8.9
Washington	4,624	4,697	3,109	3,140	2,883	2,903	227	237	7.3	7.5	6.8	-	8.2
Puerto Rico ³	2,934	2,980	1,356	1,393	1,190	1,226	166	167	12.3	12.0	(4)		

¹ Error ranges are shown at the 90-percent confidence level.

² Because of separate processing and weighting procedures, totals for the United States differ from the results obtained by aggregating data for regions, divisions, or states.

³ The source of these data is the Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human

Resources.

⁴ Not available.

NOTE: Region and division data are derived from summing the component states. Sub-national data except for Puerto Rico incorporate updated Census 2000-based population controls. Historical data except for Puerto Rico have been revised.

Table 2. Employment-population ratio of persons 16 years of age and over by region, division, and state, 2002-03 annual averages

(Percent)

Region, division, and state	Employment-population ratio		Over-the-year change	Error range of employment-population ratio, 2003 ¹	
	2002	2003			
United States	62.7	62.3	-4	62.1	- 62.5
Northeast	61.9	61.1	-8	60.7	- 61.5
New England	65.2	64.4	-8	63.7	- 65.1
Connecticut	64.7	63.6	-1.1	62.1	- 65.1
Maine	63.5	63.3	-.2	61.9	- 64.7
Massachusetts	65.4	64.0	-1.4	62.7	- 65.3
New Hampshire	68.0	68.5	.5	67.2	- 69.8
Rhode Island	62.9	64.3	1.4	63.2	- 65.4
Vermont	68.6	67.7	-.9	66.4	- 69.0
Middle Atlantic	60.7	59.9	-.8	59.4	- 60.4
New Jersey	62.5	62.2	-.3	61.2	- 63.2
New York	59.3	58.6	-.7	57.8	- 59.4
Pennsylvania	61.8	60.3	-1.5	59.4	- 61.2
Midwest	65.0	64.6	-.4	64.1	- 65.1
East North Central	63.4	63.1	-.3	62.5	- 63.7
Illinois	62.6	61.6	-1.0	60.6	- 62.6
Indiana	64.7	64.6	-.1	63.2	- 66.0
Michigan	61.3	60.7	-.6	59.5	- 61.9
Ohio	63.2	63.3	.1	62.0	- 64.6
Wisconsin	68.3	68.8	.5	67.3	- 70.3
West North Central	68.7	68.2	-.5	67.5	- 68.9
Iowa	70.3	67.4	-2.9	66.1	- 68.7
Kansas	65.8	66.2	.4	64.5	- 67.9
Minnesota	72.4	71.3	-1.1	69.8	- 72.8
Missouri	65.2	65.5	.3	63.7	- 67.3
Nebraska	70.6	71.1	.5	69.7	- 72.5
North Dakota	67.5	67.9	.4	66.0	- 69.8
South Dakota	71.1	71.1	.0	69.4	- 72.8
South	61.5	61.3	-.2	60.9	- 61.7
South Atlantic	62.0	61.9	-.1	61.4	- 62.4
Delaware	65.1	63.8	-1.3	62.3	- 65.3
District of Columbia	61.9	61.9	.0	60.4	- 63.4
Florida	59.1	58.6	-.5	57.6	- 59.6
Georgia	64.3	65.4	1.1	64.0	- 66.8
Maryland	67.2	66.3	-.9	64.9	- 67.7
North Carolina	62.1	62.5	.4	61.1	- 63.9
South Carolina	58.9	59.4	.5	58.0	- 60.8
Virginia	65.7	65.4	-.3	63.6	- 67.2
West Virginia	52.6	51.3	-1.3	49.6	- 53.0
East South Central	59.3	59.1	-.2	58.2	- 60.0
Alabama	57.6	58.8	1.2	57.1	- 60.5
Kentucky	58.3	58.2	-.1	56.3	- 60.1
Mississippi	56.6	57.5	.9	55.7	- 59.3
Tennessee	62.4	60.9	-1.5	59.2	- 62.6
West South Central	62.0	61.6	-.4	60.8	- 62.4
Arkansas	59.0	57.3	-1.7	55.8	- 58.8
Louisiana	56.4	56.9	.5	55.1	- 58.7
Oklahoma	61.7	60.5	-1.2	58.9	- 62.1
Texas	63.5	63.4	-.1	62.4	- 64.4
West	63.0	62.4	-.6	62.0	- 62.8
Mountain	64.6	64.3	-.3	63.6	- 65.0
Arizona	62.2	61.5	-.7	59.9	- 63.1
Colorado	67.7	67.7	.0	66.0	- 69.4
Idaho	65.2	64.6	-.6	62.8	- 66.4
Montana	62.7	63.3	.6	61.4	- 65.2
Nevada	65.6	64.2	-1.4	62.8	- 65.6
New Mexico	60.0	59.9	-.1	58.1	- 61.7
Utah	66.9	67.3	.4	65.5	- 69.1
Wyoming	67.6	68.8	1.2	67.2	- 70.4
Pacific	62.4	61.6	-.8	61.1	- 62.1
Alaska	66.4	66.5	.1	64.1	- 68.9
California	62.3	61.5	-.8	60.9	- 62.1
Hawaii	62.7	62.7	.0	61.4	- 64.0
Oregon	62.4	61.6	-.8	60.2	- 63.0
Washington	62.3	61.8	-.5	60.4	- 63.2
Puerto Rico ²	40.6	41.1	.5		(³)

¹ Error ranges are shown at the 90-percent confidence level.

² The source of these data is the Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources.

³ Not available.

NOTE: Region and division data are derived from summing the component states. Sub-national data except for Puerto Rico incorporate updated Census 2000-based population controls. Historical data except for Puerto Rico have been revised.

Chart 1. Over-the-year change in unemployment rates by state, 2002-03 annual averages

(U.S. change = +0.2 percentage point)

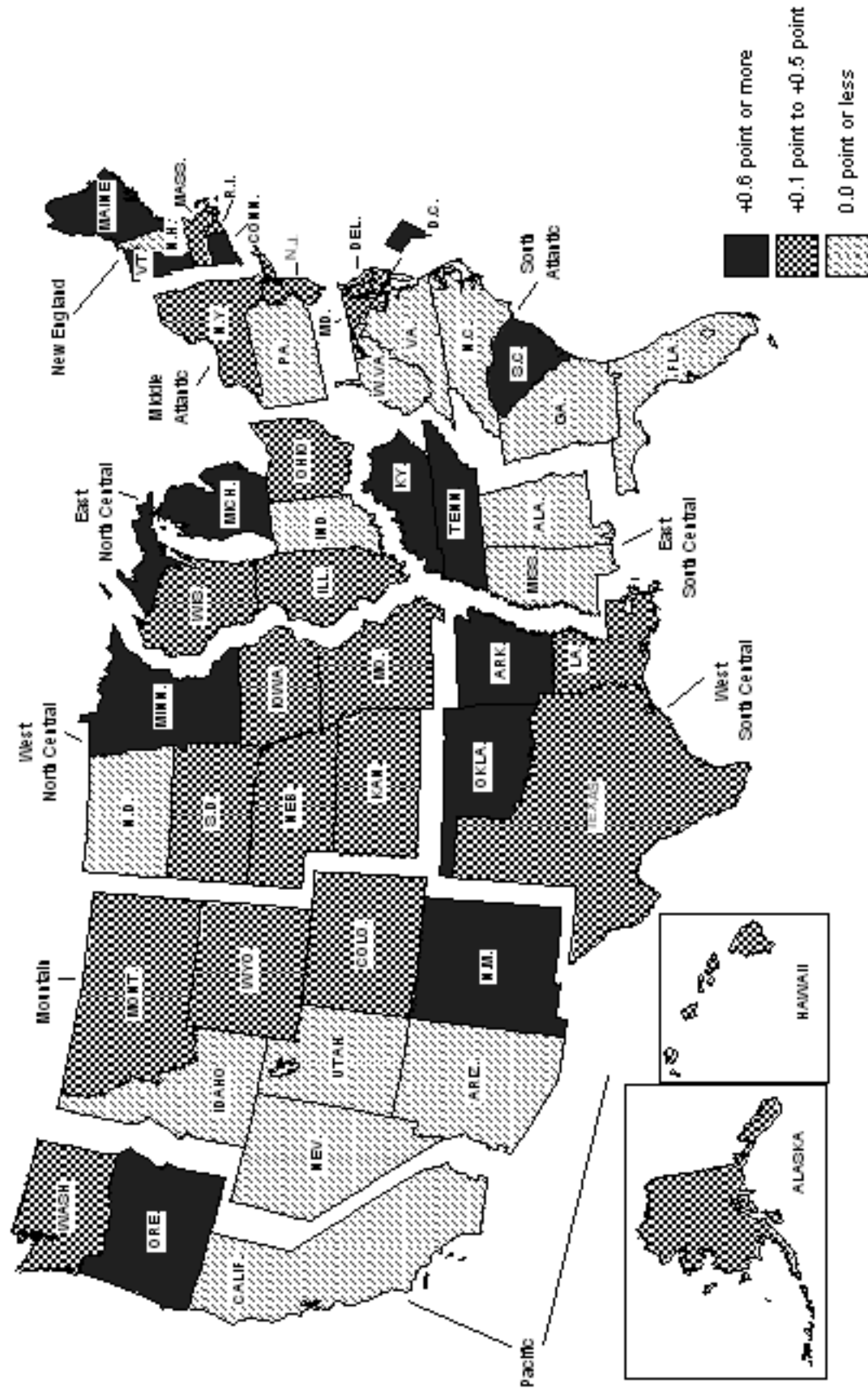


Chart 2. Unemployment rates by state, 2003 annual averages

(U.S. rate = 6.0 percent)

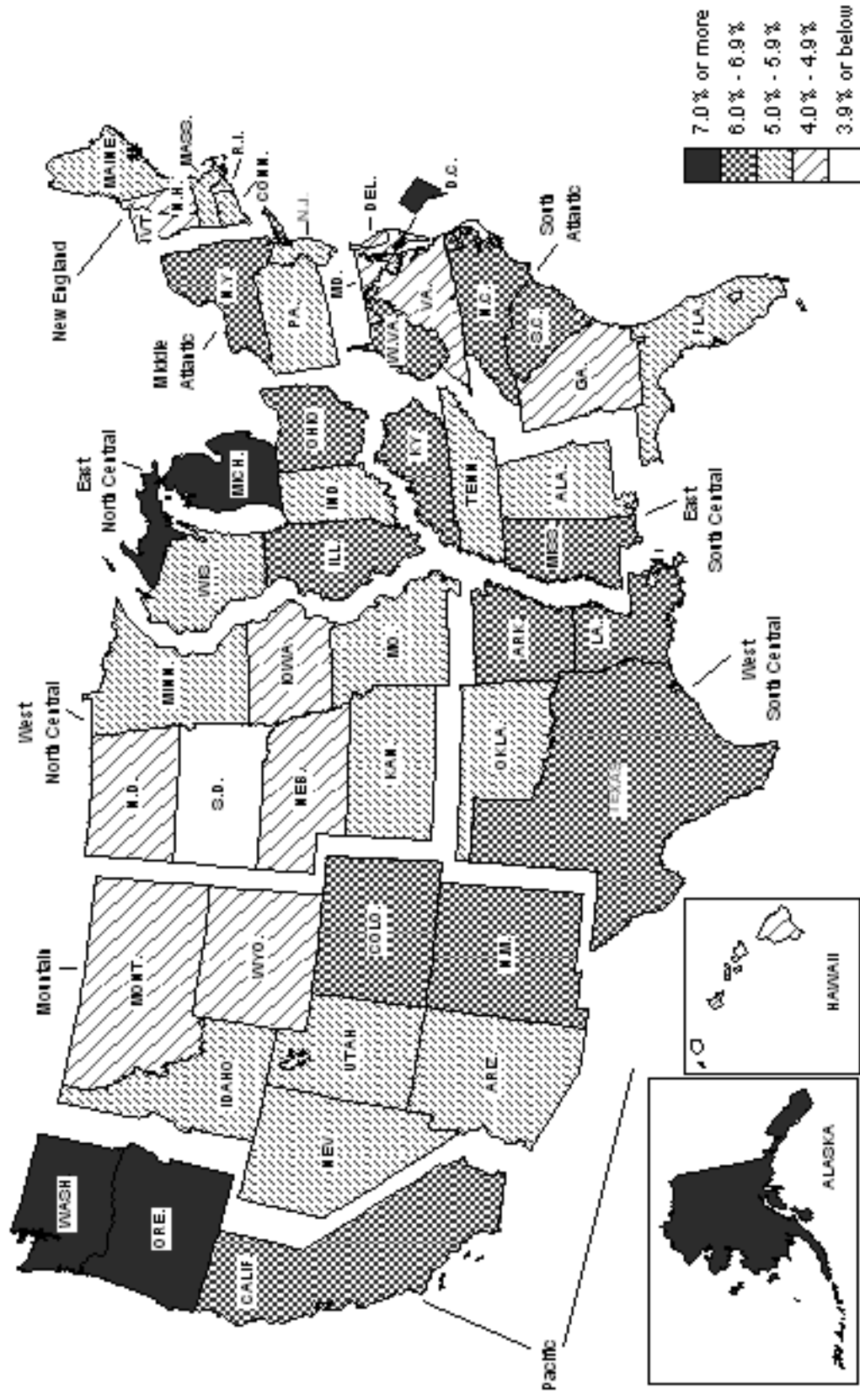


Chart 3. Employment-population ratios by state, 2003 annual averages

(U.S. average = 62.3 percent)

