

## **McKinley, Cibola unemployment rates show signs of improvement**

Written by By Bernie Dotson For the Sun  
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New Mexico's seasonally adjusted unemployment shows signs of improvement according to the most recent statistics. The state's unemployment rate was 5.6 percent in March of this year, down from 5.8 percent in February and 6.3 percent a year ago.

The national unemployment rate has also lowered since the last year, though it has stagnated. This March, the rate was 4.1 percent for the seventh consecutive month, down from 4.5 percent in March 2017, according to information from the New Mexico Department of Work Force Solutions.

In McKinley County, the unemployment rate for March was 7.1 percent, down from 7.7 percent in February. In neighboring Cibola County, the unemployment rate for March was 6.3 percent, which was lower than the 6.8 percent unemployment rate in February.

The state unemployment statistics are a month behind due to the length of time it takes to compile them.

"I think this (unemployment decrease) is an example of seasonal jobs coming into play," Bill Lee, executive director at the Gallup-McKinley County Chamber of Commerce, said. "As the weather gets warmer, particularly in the more rural counties in New Mexico, the workload picks up."

According to Work Force statistics, the private service-providing industries were up 4,700 jobs, or 0.9 percent, while the goods-producing industries were up 4,200 jobs, representing a gain of 4.7 percent. Trade, transportation, and utilities were up 400 jobs, or 0.3 percent, according to the statistics.

### **Some Background**

There are 33 counties in New Mexico. The top employers in McKinley County are in the healthcare, retail, and education sectors. The Gallup Indian Medical Center and the Rehoboth

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McKinley Christian Health Care Services are top employers in McKinley County. In Cibola County, wherein parts of the Navajo Nation, as well as Acoma, Zuni and Laguna pueblos are located, the top employment industries are tourism, government, and healthcare.

Gallup also has a shopping mall—the Rio West Mall—while Cibola County has no shopping mall, and a good portion of Gallup and McKinley County’s retail jobs are based at the Rio West Mall.

The highest unemployment rate in New Mexico for March was Luna County, at 16 percent. The lowest unemployment rate in the Land of Enchantment for March was Union County, at 2.9 percent.

By Bernie Dotson

For the Sun