

# STATE COINCIDENT INDEXES



AUGUST 2020

Release Date: September 29, 2020

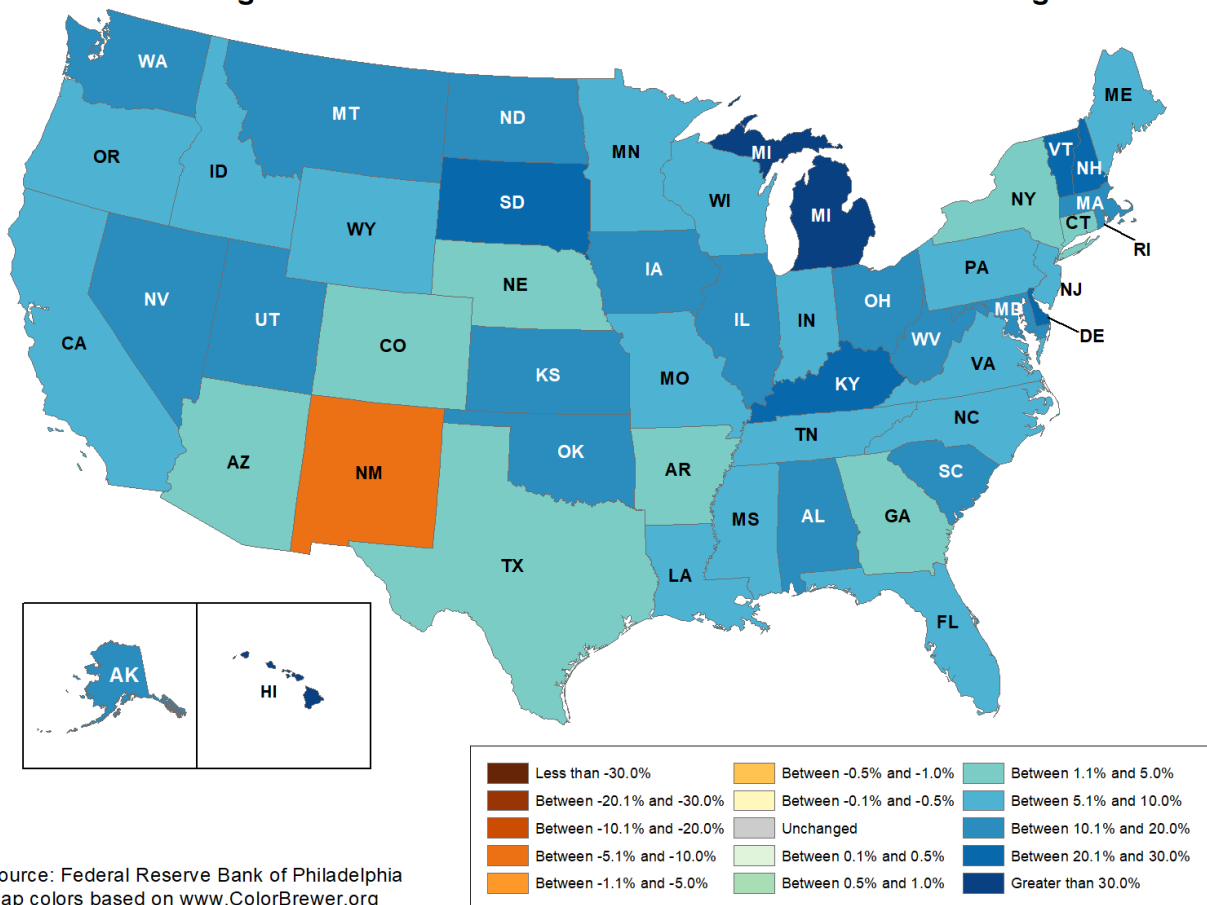
The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia has released the coincident indexes for the 50 states for August 2020. Over the past three months, the indexes increased in 49 states and decreased in one state, for a three-month diffusion index of 96. Additionally, in the past month, the indexes increased in 48 states and decreased in two states, for a one-month diffusion index of 92. For comparison purposes, the Philadelphia Fed has also developed a similar coincident index for the entire United States. The Philadelphia Fed's U.S. index increased 3.9 percent over the past three months and 1.4 percent in August.

\*\* See the **Potential Impacts of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic on the August 2020 State Unemployment Rates and the State Coincident Indexes** and **South Carolina Employment and Wages Data** on the third page.

\*\*\* **Greater volatility of the Coincident Index has prompted an expanded map scale, and more discussion of this volatility will be forthcoming.**

The next release date of the state coincident indexes will be October 23, 2020.

**August 2020 State Coincident Indexes: Three-Month Change**



Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia  
Map colors based on [www.ColorBrewer.org](http://www.ColorBrewer.org)

RESEARCH DEPARTMENT | FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF PHILADELPHIA

Ten Independence Mall, Philadelphia, PA 19106-1574 | [www.philadelphiafed.org](http://www.philadelphiafed.org)

## THIRD DISTRICT COINCIDENT INDEXES: AUGUST 2020

### *Pennsylvania*

In the three months to August, the coincident index for Pennsylvania increased 6.2 percent. The level of payroll employment rose over the past three months but remained lower than that of February. The unemployment rate declined during the three-month period but generally remained at an elevated level. In addition, average hours worked in manufacturing increased slightly. Overall, Pennsylvania's economic activity as measured by the coincident index has fallen 10.7 percent over the past 12 months.

### *New Jersey*

In the three months to August, the coincident index for New Jersey increased 6.6 percent. The level of payroll employment rose over the past three months but remained lower than that of February. The unemployment rate declined during the three-month period but generally remained at an elevated level. In addition, average hours worked in manufacturing declined. Overall, New Jersey's economic activity as measured by the coincident index has fallen 8.0 percent over the past 12 months.

### *Delaware*

In the three months to August, the coincident index for Delaware increased 21.7 percent. The level of payroll employment rose over the past three months but remained lower than that of February. The unemployment rate declined during the three-month period but generally remained at an elevated level. In addition, average hours worked in manufacturing rose. Overall, Delaware's economic activity as measured by the coincident index has fallen 13.1 percent over the past 12 months.

**August 2020 DATA: Third District Coincident Indexes**

Area	August 2020*	1-Month Change	3-Month Change	12-Month Change
Pennsylvania	109.1	4.8%	6.2%	-10.7%
New Jersey	116.0	4.9%	6.6%	-8.0%
Delaware	110.9	5.3%	21.7%	-13.1%
US	123.4	1.4%	3.9%	-4.3%

\* Indexed to 2007 annual average. Values are subject to monthly revision.

Historical data for the state coincident indexes and diffusion indexes are available in Excel format. Click [here](#) to download the files. Visit [our website](#) for data, maps, and more information on the state coincident indexes.

Please contact [Joey Lee](#) for media inquiries.  
Phone: 215-574-3840

## **\*\* Potential Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the August 2020 State Unemployment Rates and the Philadelphia Fed's State Coincident Indexes**

In August 2020, unemployment rates were lower in 41 states and higher in two states (in which the monthly change was considered statistically significant); the monthly changes in the remaining seven states were considered stable. For nonfarm payroll jobs, statistically significant changes were positive in 40 states.

However, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) noted the following for the U.S. as a whole:

- Despite the over-the-month increase, nonfarm employment in August was 11.5 million (or 7.6 percent) below its February level.
- Although unemployment fell in August, the unemployment rate and the number of unemployed people are up 4.9 percentage points and 7.8 million, respectively, since February.

Our map and our three-month diffusion index currently depict changes from May through August, which continued the broadly positive results from the July report. The monthly unemployment rate is typically the most influential factor underlying a state's coincident index for most states, and the unemployment rate declined in most states on a three-month basis.

Of note, the BLS reported on changes to and aspects of its standard methodology for state estimates that bear particular relevance to movements in the Philadelphia Fed's coincident indexes.

- **Handling reports of zero employment:** The BLS noted that the relationship between firm births and deaths is no longer stable. This prompted a change to its methodology to include some portion of firms that reported zero employment for the period (they are typically excluded). This change resulted in lower payroll job totals for August preliminary estimates, as well as for July final estimates. The latter change contributed to downward revisions of the July coincident indexes for some states. However, for some firms reported employment turned positive in August from zero in July. [See [State Employment and Unemployment — August 2020](#).]
- **Handling misclassifications:** The BLS noted again that in August 2020 an atypically large number of workers were classified as employed, but not at work for “other reasons,” and suggested that some of these workers should have been classified as “unemployed on temporary layoff.” The BLS noted that the national unemployment rate might have been as high as 9.2 percent (not seasonally adjusted) compared with 8.5 percent. Thus, state unemployment rates also may have been higher than estimated, which would imply that the coincident indexes may have increased less than our model indicates. [See [FAQ: The Impact of the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic on the Employment Situation for August 2020](#).]

Finally, the BLS reported two other aspects of its methodology of relevance for the coincident indexes:

- **Greater uncertainty:** The August 2020 unemployment rate estimates met the Census Bureau's standards for accuracy and reliability, even though the response rate for the household survey was about 13 percentage points less than in the 12 months preceding February 2020. [See [FAQ: The Impact of the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic on the Employment Situation for August 2020](#).]
- **Handling outliers:** The BLS routinely examines each state's Current Population Survey inputs for outliers. If an outlier is sufficiently large — passes certain statistical tests — the information is retained or preserved as a level shift. If not, the information is discounted. Generally, the need to implement level shifts does not occur during normal month-to-month processing. For August 2020, level shifts were implemented for most, if not all, states.

Beginning with the May report and continuing with the June through August reports, the BLS also modified its seasonal adjustment process for state estimates to reduce the impact these large outliers have on the seasonal factors. [See [State Employment and Unemployment — August 2020](#).]

## **\*\* South Carolina Employment and Wages Data**

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), “QCEW and BED data for 2018 and the first quarter of 2019 for South Carolina are showing unusual movements, potentially as a result of a change in reporting. These unusual movements coincide with a modernization of the South Carolina unemployment insurance system. Both QCEW and BED data are subject to changes in the administrative data produced by state unemployment insurance systems. The BLS is working with its South Carolina partners to identify any impact this system change may have. Data from both QCEW and BED are considered preliminary until the release of their final revision.” [Read the report](#).