

The data referenced in this report is obtained from the Mississippi Department of Employment Security.

Overall unemployment along Mississippi Gulf Coast remains at 7.9%.

The year over year increase in unemployment rates and decrease in establishment jobs along the Mississippi Gulf Coast continued in February but the month over month data for combined unemployment rates (February (7.9%) compared to January (7.9%)) leveled off. It is likely that the three combined coastal counties continue to see year over year decreases in establishment jobs for several more months; this trend will continue even when job growth resumes and will last until prior levels are reached. Another perspective: in February 2009 the combined three counties on the Mississippi Gulf Coast reported 4,600 more people filing for unemployment and about 6,250 less establishment jobs¹ than in February 2008. The overall unemployment rate (unadjusted) for Mississippi was at 9.2% and reported establishment jobs were down statewide 34,000 from February 2008.

The Mississippi Gulf Coast has not seen unemployment levels at 13,000 since July 2006. Notably, in February 2006 combined unemployment for the Mississippi Gulf Coast was at more than 21,000. It is not likely, however, that the Mississippi Gulf Coast will add jobs back at the same rate demonstrated in 2006.

The tables to the right contain summary employment data for February dating back to 2005. At the county level, Hancock County is the only area continuing to report growth in establishment jobs year over year. Harrison County maintains better employment rate of the three counties but has also been subjected to the largest percentage decrease in year over year establishment jobs. The trend for declines in establishment jobs did not begin for either Harrison or Jackson County until December 2008.

Table 1: February 2009 Unemployment Rates (unadjusted)

	MS Coast	Hancock	Harrison	Jackson	U.S. Average
Labor Force	163,780	18,120	84,990	60,670	153,804,000
Employed	150,780	16,660	78,590	55,530	140,105,000
Unemployed	13,000	1,460	6,400	5,140	13,699,000
Rate	7.9%	8.1%	7.5%	8.5%	8.9%
Establishment Jobs	153,850	13,990	87,860	52,000	NA
Prior YR Establishment Jobs	160,100	13,800	92,510	53,790	NA

Table 2: Historic February Employment levels for combined three coastal counties

	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Labor Force	163,780	165,650	163,110	159,530	174,380
Employed	150,780	157,250	153,380	138,470	163,720
Unemployed	13,000	8,400	9,730	21,060	10,660
Rate	7.9%	5.1%	6.0%	13.2%	6.1%
Establishment Jobs	153,850	160,100	151,920	139,690	159,590

The Gulf Coast Business Council Research Foundation initially identified negative employment trends in July 2008 and will continue to monitor employment data to identify a possible reversal of those trends in the coming months.

¹ Establishment jobs are jobs reported in each respective county. These jobs might be filled by either a resident of that respective county or a non-resident. Note that MDES periodically makes small revisions to data that it publishes on its website.