



DEPARTMENT OF  
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**Unemployment hits record high, but new jobs opening**

**Hagåtña, Guam** – As of December 2020, Guam reached its highest rate of unemployment at 19.4%, or 13,850 persons completely unemployed during that period. This is an increase from September's 17.9% and December 2019's rate of 6.1 percent a year earlier. The number of persons not in the labor force increased as well.

Pandemic related job losses began to be reflected in the March 2020 job numbers which declined somewhat in tourism related industries. From March to June 2020 an additional 5,870 private sector additional job losses occurred. By September 2020 the rate of private sector job loss declined for the quarter to 2,270 but the total losses increased to 7,980 and the average weekly hours paid decreased from 36.2 to 31.1 over the year.

The largest job reductions by industry through September 2020 are in Retail Trade 3,440, Hotels 2,800, All other Services 1,530 and Transportation and Public Utilities 900.

Employment began a partial rebound in December 2020 with employment increasing by 990 jobs and average weekly private sector hours paid from 31.1 to 32.9.

Construction is the only industry to show growth over the year increasing from 7,350 to 8,330 jobs in December 2020.

"Much like Hawaii, a large share of our economy is tourism related. Hotels and anything that relied on tourism declined due to the pandemic. But because almost all of our tourists are international, recovery is more complex," said Gary Hiles, Guam Department of Labor chief economist.

Asia's vaccine rate has been low in comparison to the U.S.

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Retail trade is another industry hit hard by the pandemic. In order to contain the spread of the coronavirus, many operations had to cease while the island's Pandemic Condition of Readiness levels fluctuated. Other businesses opted to close due to a lack of customers.

According to Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero's State of the Island Address, 1,500 new business licenses were issued between March and September of 2020. Businesses had to adapt and it's evident as we see more food and commodity delivery services, curbside pick-up and ready-to-go meals.

The entrepreneurial spirit has come alive and these new adaptations will probably continue to stay with us beyond recovery.

"We're seeing a restoration of employment in some industries in addition to construction. The Guam Department of Labor's recovery efforts through the National Dislocated Worker Grant program also created new jobs for hundreds of individuals," said Department of Labor Director David Dell'Isola. "We will be shifting this grant money toward up-skilling and retraining opportunities to in-demand occupations as our service providers open up classrooms and start to offer programs."

We still have a long way to go, but with the plans to contain the coronavirus activated by Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero and Lt. Gov. Joshua Tenorio, we're reaching a level of recovery that even Washington D.C. has acknowledged. The numbers overall speak for themselves, including the low number of positive cases.

The economy will continue to improve as restrictions are eased, more people get vaccinated and as the confidence in public safety grows. Guam will see the largest impact when the tourists and the industry return.

For more information, visit [www.bls.guam.gov](http://www.bls.guam.gov). All of the latest unemployment and employment reports are available with more details including graphs and charts.

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