OKLAHOMA
Economic Indicators
March 2020
March 2020

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Every year, the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission produces the state’s short-term employment projections. These projections use historical and current industry employment and occupational survey data to project how employment will change over a two-year period. The short-term projection results reflect short-term business cycle activity, such as periods of recession or rapid growth. Consequently, the short-term employment projections are helpful for those looking for immediate employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time.

The 2019-2021 short-term employment projections were based on Oklahoma historical data from the 1st quarter of 1996 through the 1st quarter of 2019. The primary data sources used were from our Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) and our Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey.

**Chart 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources and Mining</td>
<td>-3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade, Transportation, and Utilities</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Activities</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional and Business Services</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Health Services</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure and Hospitality</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services (Except Government)</td>
<td>-4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Industry Projections**

For our 2019 to 2021 short-term industry employment forecast for Oklahoma, we expect total payroll employment to grow approximately 1.19 percent, adding 21,480 jobs to the state’s economy (see Table 1, next page). Eight out of 11 of Oklahoma’s industry supersectors are anticipated to gain employment in the 2019-21 forecast period (see Chart 1).

In the goods-producing industries, construction is expected to lead employment growth, adding 2,490 jobs (3.07 percent) with specialty trade contractors (+1,630 jobs) and heavy and civil engineering construction (+750 jobs) contributing most of the job growth. Employment growth in mining is expected to contract by 2,040 jobs (-3.01 percent), while manufacturing is expected to decline by 480 jobs (-0.34 percent).
Table 1

Oklahoma Short-Term Industry Employment Projections, 2019-2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supersector</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Employment¹</td>
<td>1,803,860</td>
<td>1,825,340</td>
<td>21,480</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources and Mining</td>
<td>67,660</td>
<td>65,620</td>
<td>-2,040</td>
<td>-3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>81,170</td>
<td>83,660</td>
<td>2,490</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>141,630</td>
<td>141,150</td>
<td>-480</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade, Transportation, and Utilities</td>
<td>296,670</td>
<td>299,620</td>
<td>2,950</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>19,570</td>
<td>18,640</td>
<td>-940</td>
<td>-4.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Activities</td>
<td>78,970</td>
<td>79,590</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional and Business Services</td>
<td>190,910</td>
<td>195,460</td>
<td>4,550</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Health Services</td>
<td>397,740</td>
<td>402,770</td>
<td>5,030</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure and Hospitality</td>
<td>190,400</td>
<td>196,610</td>
<td>6,210</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services (Except Government)</td>
<td>71,120</td>
<td>71,470</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>171,910</td>
<td>173,500</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Includes Self-Employed and Unpaid Family Workers.

Source: Employment Projections Program, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, Research & Analysis Division

In the services-providing industries, employment in leisure & hospitality is forecast to provide the largest job gains adding 6,210 jobs (3.26 percent). Within the leisure & hospitality sector, employment in the food services & drinking places industry supports the most job growth adding 5,060 jobs (3.64 percent).

Education & health services employment is expected to add 5,030 jobs (1.27 percent) from 2019 to 2021. More than three-fourths of the job gains in this sector are in health care & social assistance (4,180 jobs) with more than half of those projected job gains coming from ambulatory health care services (2,270 jobs).

Professional & business services employment was projected to increase by 4,550 jobs (2.38 percent) from 2019 to 2021. Within this sector, professional, scientific, and technical services is projected to grow the most, adding 1,970 jobs (2.63 percent), while administrative and support & waste management and remediation services is forecast to add 1,690 jobs (1.76 percent).

The broad trade, transportation & utilities sector is forecast to add 2,950 jobs (0.99 percent) between 2019 and 2021. Most of the employment growth for this sector is projected in transportation & warehousing, adding 2,490 jobs (4.60 percent). Wholesale trade is expected to add 460 jobs (0.80 percent), while employment in utilities is forecast to grow 0.79 percent adding 90 jobs. Retail trade employment is expected to have relatively flat growth.

The financial activities supersector is forecast to add 610 jobs (0.79 percent) in the 2019-21 timeframe with real estate and rental & leasing growing by 420 (1.99 percent) and finance & insurance adding 190 jobs (0.33 percent).

Other services (except government) was forecast to gain 350 jobs (0.50 percent) over the two-year projection period.

Government employment is projected to grow 0.93 percent adding 1,600 jobs during the 2019-2021 period with the most growth in local government which is expected to add 1,590 jobs (1.81 percent). State government employment is forecast to decline by 410 jobs (-1.20 percent), while federal government employment is expected to increase by 420 jobs (0.84 percent).

Information was forecast to lose employment, shedding 940 jobs (-4.79 percent).
Turning to occupational projections, eight of the ten major occupational groups are expected to have positive job growth during the 2019-21 projection round (see Chart 2, above). An estimated 433,870 total job openings are forecast for the 2019-21 period or about 216,930 total openings annually. Approximately 77,750 job openings are expected to be added each year due to exits, plus an estimated 128,450 job openings due to transfers and 10,740 job openings due to projected growth (see Table 2, next page).

Service occupations are expected to see the largest gain in employment adding approximately 4,500 jobs (1.23 percent) each year along with an estimated 53,530 total annual openings due to exits and transfers. Within the service occupations, food preparation & serving related occupations are projected to add 2,570 jobs (1.57 percent) annually and another 27,710 annual openings from exits and transfers.

Transportation and material moving occupations was the fastest-growing major occupational group for the 2019 to 2021 period, growing at an annual rate of 1.34 percent and adding an estimated 1,550 new jobs each year during the two-year period in addition to 14,460 annual job openings due to exits and transfers.

The office and administrative support occupational group was projected to have the largest decline in job openings due to change, shedding 690 jobs (-0.25 percent) annually, while adding 31,930 openings from exits and transfers. Within this major occupational group, the employment change for secretaries & administrative assistants was projected to decline by 390 (-0.71 percent) annually but was projected to gain 6,010 annual openings from exits and transfers for a net of 5,630 total annual openings.
### Table 2
#### Oklahoma Occupational Employment Projections by Major Group, 2019-2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Division</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>Numeric Change</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
<th>Annual Total Openings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total, All Occupations</td>
<td>1,803,860</td>
<td>1,825,340</td>
<td>21,480</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>216,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management, Business, and Financial Occupations</td>
<td>200,650</td>
<td>203,110</td>
<td>2,460</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>19,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional and Related Occupations</td>
<td>361,210</td>
<td>365,850</td>
<td>4,640</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>30,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Occupations</td>
<td>364,240</td>
<td>373,230</td>
<td>8,990</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>58,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and Related Occupations</td>
<td>177,060</td>
<td>177,290</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>24,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office and Administrative Support Occupations</td>
<td>274,410</td>
<td>273,040</td>
<td>-1,370</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
<td>31,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupinations</td>
<td>12,190</td>
<td>12,300</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>2,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction and Extraction Occupations</td>
<td>100,370</td>
<td>102,240</td>
<td>1,880</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>12,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations</td>
<td>83,920</td>
<td>85,490</td>
<td>1,580</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>8,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Occupations</td>
<td>114,560</td>
<td>114,430</td>
<td>-130</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>12,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Material Moving Occupations</td>
<td>115,250</td>
<td>118,360</td>
<td>3,100</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>16,010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
1) Major occupational groups 11-0000 through 13-0000 in the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC).
2) Major occupational groups 15-0000 through 29-0000 in the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC).
3) Major occupational groups 31-0000 through 39-0000 in the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC).

Source: Employment Projections program, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission

The other major occupational group forecast to decline in employment during the 2019-21 projection round was production occupations. Production occupations is projected to lose about 70 jobs (-0.06 percent) annually during the two-year period. However, we estimate that there will also be approximately 13,020 annual openings due to exits and transfers in this occupational group each year during this 2-year period for a net of 12,960 annual total openings.

**More Information**
Detailed industry and occupational forecast tables are available at:

There you will find industry and occupational projections for the 2019-2021 round as well as the 2016-2026 long-term industry and occupational projections along with past rounds of long-term and short-term projections.
Definition & Importance

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)—the output of goods and services produced by labor and property located in the United States—is the broadest measure of economic activity. It is also the measure that is most indicative of whether the economy is in recession. In the post-World War II period, there has been no recession in which GDP did not decrease in at least two quarters, (the exceptions being during the recessions of 1960-61 and 2001).

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), U.S. Department of Commerce releases GDP data on a quarterly basis, usually during the fourth week of the month. Data are for the prior quarter, so data released in April are for the 1st quarter. Each quarter’s data are revised in each of the following two months after the initial release.

Background

There are four major components to GDP:

1. Personal consumption expenditures: Individuals purchase durable goods (such as furniture and cars), nondurable goods (such as clothing and food) and services (such as banking, education and transportation).

2. Investment: Private housing purchases are classified as residential investment. Businesses invest in nonresidential structures, durable equipment and computer software. Inventories at all stages of production are counted as investment. Only inventory changes, not levels, are added to GDP.

3. Net exports: Equal the sum of exports less imports. Exports are the purchases by foreigners of goods and services produced in the United States. Imports represent domestic purchases of foreign-produced goods and services and are deducted from the calculation of GDP.

4. Government: Government purchases of goods and services are the compensation of government employees and purchases from businesses and abroad. Data show the portion attributed to consumption and investment. Government outlays for transfer payments or interest payments are not included in GDP.
The four major categories of GDP—personal consumption expenditures, investment, net exports and government—all reveal important information about the economy and should be monitored separately. This allows one to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the economy.

**Current Developments**

The pace of growth in the U.S. economy in the 4th quarter remained as previously thought, as an upward revision to personal consumption expenditures (PCE) was largely offset by downward revisions to federal government spending and business investment. Real gross domestic product (GDP) increased at an annual rate of 2.1 percent in the 4th quarter of 2019, according to the "third" estimate released by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). In the 3rd quarter, real GDP also increased 2.1 percent.

Consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of U.S. economic activity, was raised to a 1.8 percent annual pace from 1.7 percent—not as strong as the 3.2 percent rate seen in the 3rd quarter. Outlays on durable goods, such as automobiles, were revised upward to 2.8 percent rate in the 4th quarter, down from an 8.1 percent pace in the previous quarter. Nondurable goods spending dropped to -0.6 percent in the 4th quarter, from a -0.3 percent rate estimated earlier. Spending on services increased at a 2.8 percent rate, up from the previous estimate of 2.2 percent. With those revisions, personal consumption expenditures (PCE) added 1.24 percentage points to 4th quarter GDP, up from 1.17 percentage points reported earlier.

Business investment spending fell for a third straight quarter—the longest such stretch since 2009—sinking to a steeper 2.4 percent rate in the 4th quarter, rather than the previously reported 2.3 percent pace. Spending on structures such as mining exploration, shafts and wells dropped to a -7.2 percent rate, up from the -8.1 percent decline previously thought. Investment in equipment fell to a -4.3 percent rate, while outlays on intellectual property products, such as computer software, rose at 2.8 percent rate instead of the 4.0 percent pace reported earlier. Nonresidential fixed investment subtracted 0.33 percentage point from 4th quarter GDP growth, rather than -0.31 percentage point estimated last month.

Inventories rose at a $13.1 billion rate in the 4th quarter, up from the $13.0 billion rate reported last month. Inventory investment shaved 0.98 percentage point from GDP growth in the 4th quarter.

Investment in residential homebuilding continued its recovery in the 4th quarter. Residential construction grew at a higher 6.5 percent rate in the October to December period, reflecting the impact of lower borrowing rates due to the Fed’s rate cuts this year. Residential investment added 0.24 percentage point from GDP growth in the 4th quarter, up from the previously reported 0.22 percentage point.

GDP growth in the 4th quarter got the biggest boost from a narrowing trade deficit, due in part because of an increase in U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods. Exports rose 2.1 percent, while imports shrank 8.4 percent in the 4th quarter. Net exports of goods and services added 1.51 percentage points to GDP growth in the 4th quarter, the most since the 2nd quarter of 2009.

Government spending increased the 4th quarter but outlays on federal military spending were less than estimated earlier. Federal government spending grew at 3.4 percent rate in the 4th quarter, as nondefense spending grew 1.9 percent while national defense spending was 4.4 percent, down from the previous 5.3 percent. State and local government outlays grew at a higher 2.0 percent rate in the 4th quarter. Government consumption expenditures and investment added 0.44 percentage point to 4th quarter GDP, rather than 0.46 percentage point reported earlier.
Definition & Importance
The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) recently began producing statistics of quarterly gross domestic product (GDP) by state dating back to 2005. These new statistics provide a more complete picture of economic growth across states that can be used with other regional data to gain a better understanding of regional economies as they evolve from quarter to quarter. The new data provide a fuller description of the accelerations, decelerations, and turning points in economic growth at the state level, including key information about changes in the distribution of industrial infrastructure across states.

Current Developments
U.S. real gross domestic product (GDP) by state—a measure of nationwide growth calculated as the sum of GDP of all states and the District of Columbia—increased in 49 states and the District of Columbia during the 3rd quarter of 2019, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). The percent change in real GDP in the 3rd quarter ranged from 4.0 percent in Texas to 0.0 percent in Delaware.

Overall growth in real GDP by state accelerated to a 2.1 percent pace in the 3rd quarter from a 2.0 percent rate in the 2nd quarter of 2019. Nondurable goods manufacturing; retail trade; and professional, scientific, and technical services were the leading contributors to the increase in real GDP nationally in the 3rd quarter, according to the BEA.

Oklahoma’s real GDP decelerated to a 1.9 percent rate in the 3rd quarter of 2019, following a 2.7 percent rate in the previous quarter, ranking Oklahoma 30th among all other states and the District of Columbia. Statewide GDP was at a level of $202.1 billion (in constant 2012 dollars) in the 2nd quarter, up $0.96 billion from the 2nd quarter level of $201.1 billion.
Nondurable goods manufacturing increased 10.1 percent for the nation and contributed to growth in all 50 states and was the leading contributor to growth in Texas, the fastest growing state. In Oklahoma, nondurable goods manufacturing added 0.55 percentage point to 3rd quarter GDP growth.

Retail trade increased 8.2 percent for the nation and contributed to growth in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In Oklahoma, retail trade added 0.53 percentage point to 3rd quarter GDP growth.

Professional, scientific, and technical services increased 5.6 percent for the nation and contributed to growth in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In Oklahoma professional, scientific, and technical services contributed 0.08 percentage point to state GDP growth.

Mining was the leading contributor to GDP growth in Alaska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Louisiana, and Wyoming in the 3rd quarter of 2019. In Oklahoma, mining was also the leading contributor to 3rd quarter GDP growth, adding 0.77 percentage point.

In contrast, finance and insurance decreased 5.3 percent for the nation, subtracting from growth in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and was the leading contributor to slow growth in New York and in Delaware—the slowest growing state. In Oklahoma, this sector subtracted 0.36 percentage point to 3rd quarter GDP growth.
**Definition & Importance**

Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) are county-based definitions developed by the Office of Management and Budget for federal statistical purposes. A metropolitan area is defined as a geographic area consisting of a large population nucleus together with adjacent communities having a high degree of economic and social integration with the nucleus.

GDP by metropolitan area is the sub-state counterpart of the Nation's gross domestic product (GDP), the BEA’s featured and most comprehensive measure of U.S. economic activity. GDP by metropolitan area is derived as the sum of the GDP originating in all the industries in the metropolitan area. Nationally, metropolitan statistical areas represent approximately 90 percent of total GDP. In Oklahoma, the four MSAs of Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Lawton and Enid accounted for 74.3 percent of total state GDP in 2017.

**Current Developments**

Real gross domestic product (GDP) increased in 366 out of 384 metropolitan areas in 2018, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). The percent change in real GDP by metropolitan area ranged from 21.9 percent in Midland, TX to -6.1 percent in Farmington, NM. Real GDP for U.S. metropolitan areas increased 3.0 percent in 2018, led by growth in professional and business services; information; and educational services, health care, and social assistance.

In 2018, all of Oklahoma’s four metropolitan areas experienced positive growth. Natural resources and mining was the leading contributor to growth in Enid MSA (1.4 percent), ranking it 299th among 384 metro areas in 2018. Natural resources and mining was also the leading contributor to GDP growth in Lawton MSA adding 0.7 percent in 2018 and ranked 231st among U.S. metro areas. Oklahoma City MSA grew 3.1 percent to $79.7 billion and ranked 126th, lifted by professional & business services and natural resources & mining. Tulsa MSA’s GDP also grew 3.1 percent to a level of $57.7 and ranked 122nd in 2018, boosted by durable-goods manufacturing.
Definition & Importance
The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia produces leading indexes for each of the 50 states. The indexes are calculated monthly and are usually released a week after the release of the coincident indexes. The Bank issues a release each month describing the current and future economic situation of the 50 states with special coverage of the Third District: Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware.

The leading index for each state predicts the six-month growth rate of the state's coincident index. In addition to the coincident index, the models include other variables that lead the economy: state-level residential housing permits (1 to 4 units), state initial unemployment insurance claims, delivery times from the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) manufacturing survey, and the interest rate spread between the 10-year Treasury bond and the 3-month Treasury bill.

Current Developments
The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia has released the leading indexes for the 50 states for December 2019. Forty-four state coincident indexes, including Oklahoma’s, are projected to grow over the next six months and six are expected to contract. For comparison purposes, the Philadelphia Fed has also developed a similar leading index for its U.S. coincident index, which is projected to grow 1.4 percent over the next six months.

After revisions, Oklahoma’s leading index, a six-month forecast of the state’s coincident index, has been declining since June 2019. The state’s leading index moved out of negative territory in December, rising to 0.64 percent from November’s reading of -0.36 percent. November’s reading was revised up to -0.36 percent (from -0.95 percent), following a upwardly-revised 0.25 percent reading (from -0.27 percent) in October, according to the latest figures from the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia.

Overall, Oklahoma’s leading index for December suggests expansion in the state’s economy through the 2nd quarter of 2020.
Definition & Importance
The Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) program produces monthly estimates of total employment and unemployment from a national survey of 60,000 households. The unemployment rate measures the percentage of people who are without work and is calculated by dividing the estimated number of unemployed people by the civilian labor force. The result expresses unemployment as a percentage of the labor force.

The unemployment rate is a lagging indicator of economic activity. During a recession many people leave the labor force entirely. As a result, the jobless rate may not increase as much as expected. This means that the jobless rate may continue to increase in the early stages of recovery because more people are returning to the labor force as they believe they will be able to find work. The civilian unemployment rate tends towards greater stability than payroll employment on a monthly basis and reveals the degree to which labor resources are utilized in the economy.

Current Developments
Mounting job losses in March pushed the U.S. unemployment rate to the largest one-month increase since January 1975. In March, the unemployment rate increased by 0.9 percentage point to 4.4 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The labor force participation rate—the share of working-age Americans who are employed or looking for work—fell by 0.7 percentage point to 62.7 percent in March.

Oklahoma’s seasonally adjusted unemployment rate declined 0.1 percentage point to 3.2 percent in February. Over the year, Oklahoma’s seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was down 0.1 percentage point compared to January 2019.

In January, Latimer County posted Oklahoma’s highest county unemployment rate at 7.3 percent, while Cimarron County had the lowest county unemployment rate at 1.6 percent. Unemployment rates in January were lower than a year earlier in 50 counties, higher in 21 counties and unchanged in 6 counties.
Definition & Importance

Initial unemployment claims are compiled weekly by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration and show the number of individuals who filed for unemployment insurance benefits for the first time. This particular variable is useful because it gives a timely assessment of the overall economy.

Initial claims are a leading indicator because they point to changes in labor market conditions. An increasing trend signals that layoffs are occurring. Conversely, a decreasing trend suggests an improving labor market. The four-week moving average of initial claims smooths out weekly volatility and gives a better perspective on the underlying trend.

Current Developments

The number of Americans filing claims for unemployment benefits surged for a second week in a row the last week of March, doubling the historic record from the previous week as businesses continue to lay off and furlough workers amid the coronavirus outbreak. In the week ending March 28, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 6,648,000, an increase of 3,341,000 from the previous week's revised level, according to the Department of Labor (DOL). This marks the highest level of seasonally adjusted initial claims in the history of the seasonally adjusted series. The previous week's level was revised up by 24,000 from 3,307,000 to 3,307,000. The less volatile 4-week moving average was revised up by 6,000 from 1,004,250 to 1,004,250.

The levels of initial and continued claims for jobless benefits in Oklahoma spiked in March reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 virus on the state’s labor market. For the file week ending March 28, 2020, the advance number of initial claims, unadjusted, totaled 44,970, an increase of 23,044 from the previous week. For the same file week, the less volatile 4-week moving average jumped 10,878 to 17,575.

For the same file week ending on March 28th, the advance unadjusted number for continued claims totaled 24,519, an increase of 7,665 from the previous week. The continued claims four-week moving average jumped 1,898 to 18,731.
Definition & Importance
Nonfarm payroll employment data is produced by the Current Employment Statistics (CES) program of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The CES Survey is a monthly survey of approximately 145,000 businesses and government agencies, representing 697,000 individual worksites. The CES program has provided estimates of employment, hours, and earnings data by industry for the nation as a whole, all States, and most major metropolitan areas since 1939. In order to account for the size disparity between U.S. and Oklahoma employment levels, we have indexed the data with January 2001 as the start value.

Payroll employment is one of the most current and reliable indicators of economic conditions and recessionary trends. Increases in nonfarm payrolls translate into earnings that workers will spend on goods and services in the economy. The greater the increases in employment, the faster the total economic growth.

Current Developments
U.S. payrolls plunged by the most in 11 years in March, snapping a historic 113 straight months of employment growth as the coronavirus pandemic forced a widespread economic shutdown. Total nonfarm payroll employment fell by 701,000 in March, reflecting the effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and efforts to contain it, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Employment in leisure and hospitality fell by 459,000 jobs, mainly in food services and drinking places. Notable declines also occurred in health care and social assistance (-61,000 jobs), professional and business services (-52,000 jobs), retail trade (-46,000 jobs), and construction (-29,000 jobs).

Oklahoma’s nonfarm employment added a seasonally-adjusted 1,000 jobs (0.1 percent) in February, to a level of 1,702,800 while January’s estimate was revised down to 1,701,800. Five of Oklahoma’s 11 supersectors added jobs over the month as mining & logging and education & health services (+900 jobs each) posted the largest monthly gains followed by financial activities (+500 jobs). Leisure & hospitality (-700 jobs) reported the largest over-the-month job losses.
Definition & Importance

Employment growth by industry identifies the types of jobs being created in the state. Conversely, industries with a declining employment trend indicate those which are becoming less important in the state’s economy. There may also be industries which behave more cyclically, growing during expansion and decreasing in times of economic slowdown or contraction. These changes are crucial in that they help to recognize the types of jobs being lost by individuals. Anticipating what will happen in recovery helps identify whether those jobs will return or what types of new jobs will be created. Consequently, key information for planning re-employment, retraining, and other workforce and economic development programs is contained within these data. For this analysis, we are using CES non-seasonally adjusted annual averages to compare year-over-year employment changes.

Current Developments

Oklahoma's annual average employment grew at a moderate pace in 2019, with job gains in both goods-producing and services-providing industries. Total nonfarm employment added a non-seasonally adjusted 14,300 jobs (0.8 percent) in 2019. For comparison, in 2018, 26,600 jobs were gained for a 1.6 percent increase.

In 2019, nine out of 11 statewide supersectors recorded job gains. Government led all other supersectors adding 4,600 jobs (1.3 percent) with local government adding the bulk of the job gains. Leisure and hospitality added 3,000 jobs (1.7 percent), while education and health services gained 2,500 jobs (1.1 percent). Professional and business services employment grew by 2,400 jobs (1.3 percent). Construction and manufacturing added 2,200 jobs each for 2.7 percent and 1.6 percent gains respectively. The broad trade, transportation and utilities supersector added a non-seasonally adjusted 1,500 jobs (0.5 percent). Financial activities grew by 300 jobs (0.4 percent) and other services added 100 jobs (0.1 percent) over the year.

The largest annual average over-the-year job losses were seen in mining and logging, shedding a non-seasonally adjusted 4,100 jobs (-7.8 percent), followed by information dropping 300 jobs (-1.5 percent).
Definition & Importance
Manufacturing employment data is also produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Current Employment Statistics (CES) program. Manufacturing and production are still important parts of both the U.S. and Oklahoma economies. During the 2007-09 recession, employment in manufacturing declined sharply. Although manufacturing plunged in 2008 and early 2009 along with the rest of the economy, it is on the rebound today while other key economic sectors, such as construction, still suffer. In Oklahoma, manufacturing accounts for one of the largest shares of private output and employment in the state. In addition, many manufacturing jobs are among the highest paying jobs in the state. In order to account for the size disparity between the U.S. and Oklahoma employment levels, we have indexed the data with January 2001 as the starting value.

Current Developments
U.S. manufacturing employment edged down in March, as auto and other manufacturers have closed factories because of fears of coronavirus infection. Manufacturing employment shed 18,000 jobs in March, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Over the past 12 months, employment in the industry has shown little net change.

Oklahoma manufacturing employment lost 200 jobs (-0.1 percent) over the month in February, falling to a seasonally adjusted level of 137,500 jobs. Job losses in durable goods manufacturing (-300 jobs) were partially offset by job gains in non-durable goods manufacturing (100 jobs).

Over the year, statewide manufacturing employment contracted by a seasonally-adjusted 4,300 jobs (-3.0 percent), as a seasonally adjusted 4,800 jobs were lost in durable goods manufacturing while 500 jobs were added in non-durable goods manufacturing.
Definition & Importance
Economists consider the Institute for Supply Management’s Purchasing Managers’ Index (PMI™) a key economic indicator. The Institute for Supply Management (ISM®) surveys more than 300 manufacturing firms on employment, production, new orders, supplier deliveries, and inventories. The ISM® manufacturing index is constructed so that any level at 50 or above signifies growth in the manufacturing sector, which accounts for about 12 percent of the U.S. economy. A level above 43 or so, but below 50, indicates that the U.S. economy is still growing even though the manufacturing sector is contracting. Any level below 43 indicates that the economy is in recession.

For the region, since 1994, the Creighton Economic Forecasting Group at Creighton University has conducted a monthly survey of supply managers in nine states (including Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Dakota), to produce leading economic indicators for the Mid-America economy using the same methodology as the national survey by the ISM®.

Current Developments
Manufacturing activity contracted in the United States and around the world in March, as the economic fallout from the coronavirus outbreak pulled down factory activity. The March PMI® registered 49.1 percent, down 1 percentage point from the February reading of 50.1 percent, according to the latest ISM Manufacturing Report On Business®. Ten of 18 U.S. industries surveyed reported growth in March, but six contracted, led by energy companies, coal producers and textile mills.

Demand, as measured by ISM’s gauge of new orders, slumped to an 11-year low, as disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic while the Customers’ Inventories Index remained at ‘too low’ status at 43.4 percent. Consumption, as measured by ISM’s Production (47.7 percent) and Employment (43.8 percent) Indexes, contributed negatively for a combined 5.7-percentage point decline. Inputs, expressed as supplier deliveries (57.3 percent), inventories (46.9 percent) and imports (42.1 percent) strengthened in March.
The Creighton University Mid-America Business Conditions Index, a leading economic indicator for a nine-state region stretching from North Dakota to Arkansas, plummeted for the month reaching its lowest level since September 2016. The Business Conditions Index, which ranges between 0 and 100, tumbled to 46.7 from February’s reading of 52.8.

“According to Creighton’s March survey of regional manufacturing supply managers, covid-19 had a smaller impact on the manufacturing sector than other areas of the economy more directly tied to the consumer. I expect negative impacts for manufacturers to worsen in the next month since almost two-thirds of supply managers reported that the coronavirus produced shipping problems to and from vendors,” said Ernie Goss, Ph.D., director of Creighton University’s Economic Forecasting Group and the Jack A. MacAllister Chair in Regional Economics in the Heider College of Business.

Oklahoma’s Business Conditions Index declined below growth neutral in March. The overall index for March slumped to 45.7 from February’s 51.5. Components of the overall March index were: new orders at 34.4, production or sales at 38.1, delivery lead time at 68.0, inventories at 49.1, and employment at 38.7.

"Between the second and third week of March, the state’s first-time claims for unemployment insurance from the U.S. Department of Labor expanded 9.7-fold. This was well below the 16.4-fold regional increase, and the 11.2-fold U.S. growth," said Goss.
**Definition & Importance**

Crude oil is an important commodity in the global market. Prices fluctuate depending on supply and demand conditions in the world. Since oil is such an important part of the economy, it can also help determine the direction of inflation. In the U.S. consumer prices have moderated whenever oil prices have fallen, but have accelerated when oil prices have risen. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) provides weekly information on petroleum inventories in the U.S., whether produced here or abroad.

The Baker Hughes rig count is an important indicator for the energy industry and Oklahoma. When drilling rigs are active they consume products and services produced by the oil service industry. The active rig count acts as a leading indicator of demand for products used in drilling, completing, producing and processing hydrocarbons.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI-Cushing) is a light crude oil produced in Texas and southern Oklahoma which serves as a reference or "marker" for pricing a number of other crude streams and which is traded in the domestic spot market at Cushing, Oklahoma.

**Background**

Oklahoma produces a substantial amount of oil. Excluding federal offshore areas, Oklahoma was the nation's 6th-largest crude oil producing state in 2017 (at 165,920,000 barrels). Crude oil wells and gathering pipeline systems are concentrated in central Oklahoma. Two of the 100 largest oil fields in the United States are found in Oklahoma.

The city of Cushing, in central Oklahoma, is a major crude oil trading hub connecting Gulf Coast producers to Midwest refining markets. In addition to Oklahoma crude oil, the Cushing hub receives supply from several major pipelines that originate in Texas. Traditionally, the Cushing Hub has pushed Gulf Coast and Mid-Continent crude oil supply north to Midwest refining markets. However, production from those regions is in decline, and an underused crude oil pipeline system has been reversed to deliver rapidly expanding heavy crude oil supply produced in Alberta, Canada to Cushing, where it can access Gulf Coast refining markets. For this reason,
Cushing is the designated delivery point for the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX) crude oil futures contracts. Crude oil supplies from Cushing that are not delivered to the Midwest are fed to Oklahoma’s five refineries. As of January 2018, those refineries had a combined distillation capacity of more than 522,000 barrels per day—roughly 3.0 percent of the total U.S. refining capacity.

Current Developments
As the U.S. Energy Information Agency (EIA) has noted, markets for oil, as well as other commodities and equities, have experienced significant volatility and price declines since the final week in February. After their March 6th meeting, OPEC and key ally Russia failed to agree on a cut to oil production that would have contained the plunge in the price of crude caused by the new coronavirus outbreak’s massive disruption to world business and falling demand. On the following Monday, West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude fell by more than 24 percent closing at $31.05 a barrel (03/09/2020), the lowest since February 12, 2016.

Because of the outcome of the March 6th OPEC meeting, EIA’s March Short-Term Energy Outlook (STEO) increased its OPEC liquid fuels production forecast by 150,000 barrels per day (bbl/d) in 2020 and by 200,000 bbl/d in 2021 compared with the February STEO. EIA expects OPEC crude oil production will average 29.1 million bbl/d in the 2nd and 3rd quarters of 2020, up from 28.7 million bbl/d in the 1st quarter of 2020. EIA forecasts international benchmark Brent crude oil prices will average $63 per barrel (bbl) in 2020, down from an average of $64/bbl in 2019. For 2020, EIA expects prices will average $37/bbl during the 2nd quarter and rise to $43/bbl during the 2nd half of the year. EIA forecasts that average Brent prices will rise to an average of $55/bbl in 2021 as declining global oil inventories put upward pressure on prices.

Statewide crude production dipped in January, falling to the lowest level in a year and a half. Oklahoma field production of crude oil for January 2020 was at a level of 16,457,000 bbl, 1,018,000 bbl (-5.8 percent) less than the downwardly-revised December level of 17,475,000 bbl, according to data reported by the EIA. For 2019, statewide crude production was at an estimated level of 211,857,000 bbl—11,171,000 bbl (5.6 percent) more than the record-setting 2018 level of 200,686,000 bbl.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI-Cushing) prices plunged in March amid a demand slump caused by the coronavirus pandemic and a glut of supply. For the week ending March 27th, WTI-Cushing was at $19.44/bbl, the lowest average weekly price in 23 years.

The nationwide number of rigs drilling for oil and natural gas was down 44 to 728 for the week ending March 27th, 2020, according to Houston oilfield services company Baker Hughes Inc. Of that total, 624 rigs (85.7 percent) drilled for oil while 102 (14.0 percent) explored for natural gas. Compared to a year ago, the nation’s rig count was 278 less than the 1,006 rigs reported on March 2th, 2019. The U.S. rig count peaked at 4,530 in 1981 and bottomed out in May 2016 at 404.

Oklahoma’s active rig count fell to an all-time low in the last week of March. For the week ending Friday, March 27th the statewide rig count stood at 39, down four from the previous week’s level of 43 active rigs, according to oil field services company Baker Hughes. Oil-directed rigs accounted for 38 active rigs (97 percent) of total rig activity.
**Definition & Importance**

The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) provides weekly information on natural gas stocks in underground storage for the U.S., and three regions of the country. The level of inventories helps determine prices for natural gas products. Natural gas product prices are determined by supply and demand—like any other good or service. During periods of strong economic growth, one would expect demand to be robust. If inventories are low, this will lead to increases in natural gas prices. If inventories are high and rising in a period of strong demand, prices may not need to increase at all, or as much. However, during a period of sluggish economic activity, demand for natural gas may not be as strong. If inventories are rising, this may push down oil prices.

The Henry Hub in Erath, Louisiana is a key benchmark location for natural gas pricing throughout the United States. The Henry Hub is the largest centralized point for natural gas spot and futures trading in the United States. The New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX) uses the Henry Hub as the point of delivery for its natural gas futures contract. Henry Hub “spot gas” represents natural gas sales contracted for **next day** delivery and title transfer at the Henry Hub. The settlement prices at the Henry Hub are used as benchmarks for the entire North American natural gas market. Approximately 49 percent of U.S. wellhead production either occurs near the Henry Hub or passes close to the Henry Hub as it moves to downstream consumption markets.

**Background**

Oklahoma is one of the top natural gas producers in the nation, ranking 4th among all states in U.S. gross production in 2017, (excluding offshore production), and accounting for 8.6 percent of U.S. marketed production. More than a dozen of the 100 largest natural gas fields in the country are found in Oklahoma and proven reserves of conventional natural gas have been increasing in recent years.

Most natural gas in Oklahoma is consumed by the electricity generation and industrial sectors. About three-fifths of Oklahoma households use natural gas as their primary energy source for...
home heating. Nevertheless, only about one-third of Oklahoma’s natural gas output is consumed within the state. The remaining supply is sent via pipeline to neighboring states, the majority to Kansas, including the natural gas trading hubs in Texas and Kansas.

**Current Developments**

In the March 2020 *Natural Gas Monthly* report, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) reported that in January 2020, for the 33rd consecutive month, dry natural gas production increased year to year for the month. The preliminary level for dry natural gas production in January 2020 was 2,930 billion cubic feet (Bcf), or 94.5 Bcf/d. This level was 5.9 Bcf/d (6.7 percent) higher than the January 2019 level of 88.6 Bcf/d. The average daily rate of dry production was the highest for the month since EIA began tracking monthly dry production in 1997.

However, the EIA also reported that estimated natural gas consumption in January 2020 was 3,288 Bcf, or 106.1 Bcf/d. This level was 3.6 Bcf/d (-3.3 percent) lower than the 109.7 Bcf/d consumed in January 2019 and was the first year-to-year decrease of natural gas consumption since April 2019.

Oklahoma natural gas production levels dropped in January. Statewide natural gas gross withdrawals were at a level of 263,015 million cubic feet (MMcf) in January 2020, down 7,079 MMcf (-2.6 percent) from the downwardly-revised December level of 270,094 MMcf. For 2019, statewide natural gas production was at an estimated level of 3,175,113 MMcf, which is 228,998 MMcf (7.8 percent) more than the record-setting 2018 level of 2,946,115 MMcf.

Natural gas spot prices fell in March, as continued mild weather through the rest of the winter pushed down consumption. Henry Hub spot prices fell from $1.88 per million British thermal units (MMBtu) for the week ending February 28th to $1.73/MMBtu for the week ending March 27th.

According to Baker Hughes, for the week ending Friday, March 27th, the U.S. natural gas rig count was down four to 102 active rigs from the previous week’s count of 106 and 88 less than a year ago.

Oklahoma’s natural gas-directed drilling rig count remained at one unit for the week ending March 27th, unchanged from the previous week. Over the year, the number of statewide rotary rigs exploring for natural gas was down five (5) from six (6) rigs reported for the week ended March 29th, 2019.
Definition & Importance

The U.S. Census Bureau and the Department of Housing and Urban Development jointly provide monthly national and regional data on the number of new housing units authorized by building permits; authorized, but not started; started; under construction; and completed. The data are for new, privately-owned housing units (single and multifamily), excluding "HUD-code" manufactured homes. Because permits precede construction, they are considered a leading indicator for the residential construction industry and the overall economy. Most of the construction begins the same month the permit is issued. The remainder usually begins construction during the following three months; therefore we also use a three-month moving average.

While home construction represents a small portion of the housing market, it has an outsize impact on the economy. Each home built creates an average of three jobs for a year and about $90,000 in taxes, according to the National Association of Home Builders. Overall, homebuilding fell to its lowest levels in 50 years in 2009, when builders began work on just 554,000 homes.

Current Developments

U.S. building permits, a measure of future home building activity, dipped in February after surging to a near 13-year high in January. Privately-owned housing units authorized by building permits in February were at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1,464,000, 5.5 percent below the revised January rate of 1,550,000, but 13.8 percent above the February 2019 rate of 1,287,000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Single-family housing building permits rose 1.7 percent to a rate of 1,004 million units in February, the highest level since May 2007. However, permits for the construction of multifamily homes plunged 20.5 percent to a rate of 415,000 units, the lowest level since June 2019.

The National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI) registered a modest drop in March but remained high at 72, two points lower than February’s reading of 74.
Definition & Importance
The data services of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis produces series that are seasonally adjusted including monthly state level data on the number of new housing units authorized by building permits. These adjustments are made using the X-12 Procedure of SAS to remove the seasonal component of the series so that non-seasonal trends can be analyzed. This procedure is based on the U.S. Bureau of the Census X-12-ARIMA Seasonal Adjustment Program.

Current Developments
Statewide residential permitting activity turned up in February, as Oklahoma homebuilders requested more applications for apartments. Total residential permitting was at a seasonally-adjusted level of 933 in February, up 30 permits (3.3 percent) from the downwardly-revised December level of 903, and 207 permits (-18.1 percent) less than the February 2019 level of 783 permits, according to figures from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

In February, permits for single-family homes were at a seasonally-adjusted level of 875, down six (6) permits (-0.7 percent) from a level of 881 permits in January. Multi-family permitting rose to a seasonally-adjusted level of 58 units in February, up 36 permits (163.3 percent) from the downwardly-revised level of 22 in the previous month. Single-family permitting accounted for 93.8 percent of total residential permitting activity in January while the more volatile multi-family permitting accounted for 6.2 percent.

For 2019, Oklahoma had a total of 11,963 permits issued for residential construction, up 1,636 permits (15.8 percent) from 10,327 issued in 2018. Of the 2019 total, 10,071 permits (84.2 percent) were issued for single-family homes while 1,893 permits (15.8 percent) were approved for multi-family units.
Definition & Importance
Personal income is a broad measure of economic activity and one for which relatively current data are available. Personal income includes earnings, property income such as dividends, interest, and rent and transfer payments, such as retirement, unemployment insurance, and various other benefit payments. It is a measure of income that is available for spending and is seen as an indicator of the economic well-being of the residents of a state. Earnings and wages make up the largest portion of personal income.

To show the vastly different levels of total personal income for the U.S. and Oklahoma on the same chart, these data have been converted to index numbers. This chart shows a comparison of Oklahoma and U.S. growth in real personal income with 1st quarter 2000 as the base year.

Current Developments
Personal income rose again in February, boosted by higher wages and transfer payments to farmers affected by the ongoing U.S-China trade war while consumer spending has slowed a bit in 2020 ahead of the coronavirus and is expected to dramatically weaken in the next few months as the economy falls into recession. Personal income increased $106.8 billion (0.6 percent) in February, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). Disposable personal income (DPI) increased $88.7 billion (0.5 percent) and personal consumption expenditures (PCE) increased $27.7 billion (0.2 percent). Real DPI increased 0.4 percent in February and Real PCE increased 0.1 percent. The PCE price index increased 0.1 percent. Excluding food and energy, the PCE price index increased 0.2 percent.

Outlays on durable goods such as motor vehicles and appliances sank 0.7 percent in February after a 0.5 percent gain in January. Purchases of nondurable goods such as food and clothing rose 0.1 percent while outlays on services, such as utilities and doctor visits grew 0.2 percent.

With income once again rising by much more than spending, personal saving as a percentage of disposable personal income climbed to 8.2 percent in February from 7.9 percent in January.
**Definition & Importance**
Quarterly estimates of state personal income are seasonally adjusted at annual rates by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). Quarterly personal income estimates are revised on a regular schedule to reflect more complete information than the data that were available when the estimates were initially prepared and to incorporate updated seasonal factors.

**Current Developments**
State personal income increased 3.0 percent at an annual rate in the 4th quarter of 2019, after increasing 2.8 percent in the 3rd quarter, according to estimates by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). The percent change in personal income across all states ranged from 4.7 percent in Michigan to 1.1 percent in North Dakota.

Oklahoma’s personal income grew at a 1.7 percent rate in the 4th quarter of 2019, to a level of $191.1 billion, ranking the state 47th among all states. For the 3rd quarter of 2019, Oklahoma’s personal income was revised downward to $190.2 billion (2.8 percent) from the previous estimate of $190.3 billion.

For the nation, earnings increased 3.6 percent in the 4th quarter of 2019 and was the leading contributor to growth in personal income in most states, including Oklahoma. Earnings increases in durable goods manufacturing in Michigan, and in eight other states—Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas—in part, reflect ratification of new contracts between auto manufacturers and members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) union.

Oklahoma’s net earnings grew 1.4 percent in the 4th quarter of 2019, contributing 0.9 percentage points to personal income growth. Health care and social assistance earnings (0.30 percentage point), was the leading contributor to 4th quarter earnings growth. State and local government and federal, civilian government earnings (0.20 percentage point each) were the second-largest contributors to 4th quarter earnings growth followed by accommodation and food services (0.14 percentage point). Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (-0.37 percentage point) was the largest subtraction from 4th quarter earnings growth.
Definition & Importance
Retail sales measure the total receipts at stores that sell merchandise and related services to final consumers. Sales are by retail and food services stores. Data are collected from the Monthly Retail Trade Survey conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Essentially, retail sales cover the durables and nondurables portions of consumer spending. Consumer spending accounts for roughly two-thirds of the U.S. GDP and is therefore essential to Oklahoma’s economy. Retail sales account for around one-half of consumer spending and economic recovery calls for consumption growth.

Current Developments
U.S. retail sales fell by the most in more than a year in February as Americans cut back on their spending, while the coronavirus outbreak is expected to depress sales in the coming months. Advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for February 2020, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were $528.1 billion, a decrease of 0.5 percent from the previous month, but 4.3 percent above February 2019, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The December 2019 to January 2020 percent change was revised upward from 0.3 percent to 0.6 percent.

Auto sales dropped 0.9 percent in February after rising 0.8 percent in January. Receipts at service stations tumbled 2.8 percent, reflecting lower pump prices. Excluding the volatile automobile and gasoline categories, retail sales dipped 0.2 percent in February.

Sales at building material stores plunged 1.3 in February, after being boosted by unseasonably mild temperatures recently. Receipts at clothing stores fell 1.2 percent and sales at restaurants and bars dropped 0.5 percent. Online and mail-order retail sales rose 0.7 percent, following a 0.2 percent gain in January.

The less volatile “core” or retail-control group sales which are used to calculate gross domestic product, and strips out automobiles, gasoline, building materials, and food services sales were unchanged in February after increasing by an upwardly revised 0.4 percent in January.
Definition & Importance
The Center for Economic and Management Research (CEMR) Price College of Business, at the University of Oklahoma produces the Oklahoma Monthly Retail Sales Series containing monthly estimates of retail sales for Oklahoma, the Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Lawton Metropolitan Statistical Areas and 48 selected cities in Oklahoma. The series is based on sales tax collection data provided by the Business Tax Division, Oklahoma Tax Commission (OTC). In order to smooth out monthly volatility, we have used a six-month moving average.

Current Developments
Oklahomans spent at a modest pace during the last month of the year. Total adjusted retail trade in December was at a level of $3.62 billion, a 1.8 percent increase from the downwardly revised November level of $3.56 billion. Over the year, total adjusted retail sales were up 6.9 percent from the December 2018 level of $3.39 billion. Excluding estimated gasoline sales, total retail sales for December grew 0.3 percent over the month.

Total durable goods sales grew 0.5 percent in December. Advancing categories were lumber & hardware (0.9 percent); furniture (1.0 percent); miscellaneous durable goods (0.5 percent); and auto accessories & repair (0.02 percent). Declining durable goods categories in December were electronics & music stores (-0.6 percent); and used merchandise (-0.02 percent).

Total non-durable goods spending grew 2.2 percent in December as higher pump prices pushed the volatile estimated gasoline sales category up 13.6 percent over the month. Other advancing non-durable goods category in December were miscellaneous non-durable goods (2.1 percent); apparel (0.6 percent); and eating & drinking places (0.2 percent); and food stores (0.06 percent). Declining non-durable goods categories in December were general merchandise stores (-0.2 percent); liquor stores (-0.2 percent); and drug stores (-0.1 percent).

Total adjusted retail sales for 2019 were at a level of $41.8 billion, 1.9 percent more than the 2018 level of $41.0 billion.
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