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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cochise Unemployment Up Sharply So Far This Year

BENSON — Cochise County's unadjusted unemployment rate averaged 6.2 percent through the first nine months of 2026, well above the 4.9 percent average for Arizona and 4.3 percent for the United States according to data from the Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity.

The county's rate is up from 5.2 percent over the same nine months of 2025. Arizona's average rose from 4.3 percent, while the national average held steady at 4.3 percent.

In other words, Cochise County's rate climbed about a full percentage point, roughly twice the statewide increase, while the nation saw almost no change.

The county's gap with Arizona has widened to 1.3 points, from 0.9 points a year ago. Cochise County is now about two points above the nation, roughly double last year's gap.

Even Arizona's own average, at 4.9 percent, now sits 0.6 points above the national figure. That gap was essentially zero a year ago.

Every incorporated community in the county shows the same upward pattern.

Sierra Vista, the county's largest city, has the lowest rate among the larger communities at 5.9 percent, up from 4.9 percent a year earlier. It still runs a full point above Arizona and 1.6 points above the nation.

Benson averaged 7.5 percent for the first three quarters of the year, up from 6.3 percent in 2025. That is about 1.3 points above the county average.

Bisbee averaged 8.5 percent, compared with 7.2 percent a year ago. The city is 3.6 points above the state average.

Douglas, the county's second-largest labor market, averaged 9.5 percent unemployment, up from 8.1 percent. That is nearly double the Arizona rate and more than double the national rate.

Huachuca City averaged 10.3 percent, up from 8.7 percent last year.

Willcox has the highest rate in the county at 11.0 percent, up from 9.3 percent. That is about two and a half times the national average. Willcox and Huachuca City are the only Cochise County municipalities above 10 percent.

Increases over last year ranged from roughly one point in Sierra Vista to more than 1.5 points in Huachuca City and Willcox. Each of those places saw a larger rise than Arizona's 0.6 points, and all far outpaced the nation's.

Douglas and Bisbee fell in between, with increases of 1.5 and 1.3 points. Benson's rise was 1.2 points. No community in the county saw its rate improve compared with a year ago.

Tombstone is an outlier with unemployment at 0.5 percent, up slightly from 0.4 percent. Its labor force is under 500 people, so estimates there are less reliable and should be read with caution.

Taken together, the figures point to a clear pattern. Five of the county's seven incorporated communities are averaging 7.5 percent or higher unemployment. That is more than 2.5 points above Arizona's average and at least 3 points above the nation's.

The spread within the county is wide. Willcox's rate is nearly twice Sierra Vista's, and about 4.8 points above the county average.

For job seekers and employers, those gaps matter. A rate above 10 percent, as in Willcox and Huachuca City, means more than one in ten people in the labor force is looking for work.

With three months left in the year, the full-year averages will show whether Cochise County can begin to close the gap with the state and the nation.

For more information on the Cochise County economy, including current and historical data, visit CochiseEconomy.com, a partnership project of Southeast Arizona Economic Development Group, Arizona G&T Cooperatives, and community sponsors.

Unemployment Trends Through September 2026 (Year-to-Date)

Area	YTD Unemployment Rate Through Sep 2026	YTD Unemployment Rate Through Sep 2025	Change (Percentage Points)
United States	4.3%	4.3%	0.0
Arizona	4.9%	4.3%	+0.6
Cochise County	6.2%	5.2%	+1.0
Benson	7.5%	6.3%	+1.2
Bisbee	8.5%	7.2%	+1.3
Douglas	9.5%	8.1%	+1.4
Huachuca City	10.3%	8.7%	+1.6
Sierra Vista	5.9%	4.9%	+1.0
Tombstone	0.5%	0.4%	+0.1
Willcox	11.0%	9.3%	+1.7

Source: Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity and US Economic Research

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