

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cochise Unemployment Reaches Highest Level Since 2020

BENSON — According to data from the Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity, Cochise County's labor market weakened during the first half of 2026, with unemployment rising above both state and national averages. The county's unadjusted unemployment rate averaged 6.0% from January through June, up from 5.0% during the same period in 2025, 4.1% in 2024, and 4.4% in 2023. The 2026 figure is the highest first-half unemployment rate recorded in Cochise County since 2020.

While labor market conditions have softened across the country, Cochise County has experienced a sharper increase than either Arizona or the nation. Arizona's unemployment rate averaged 4.7% through the first six months of 2026, while the U.S. rate averaged 4.4%. That places Cochise County more than a full percentage point above both benchmarks.

The county's labor force averaged about 45,630 actual and potential workers during the first half of 2026, down 4.9% from approximately 47,960 during the same months of 2025. Employment averaged roughly 42,892 workers, a decline of 5.9% from about 45,587 one year earlier. At the same time, the number of unemployed workers increased 15.3%, rising from about 2,375 to 2,739. The combination of fewer employed workers and more unemployed workers pushed the county's year-to-date unemployment rate to its highest level in several years.

Conditions varied across Cochise County communities, although every major city and town reported higher unemployment than a year earlier. Willcox posted the county's highest average unemployment rate during the first half of 2026 at 10.7%, up from 8.9% during the same period of 2025. Huachuca City followed at 10.0%, compared with 8.3% a year earlier. Douglas averaged 9.3%, up from 7.7%, while Bisbee increased from 6.9% to 8.3%. Benson's unemployment rate rose from 6.0% to 7.3%.

Sierra Vista continued to have the lowest unemployment rate among the county's larger communities, averaging 5.8% during the first six months of 2026. Even so, that represented an increase from 4.5% during the same period last year. Tombstone remained an outlier with an exceptionally low unemployment rate of just 0.5%, compared with 0.4% a year earlier.

The trend became more pronounced as the year progressed. Cochise County's unemployment rate rose from 5.4% in April to 5.8% in May and 6.9% in June. By comparison, the county recorded rates of 4.7%,

5.1%, and 5.4% during those same months in 2025. Arizona’s unemployment rate climbed from 4.6% in June 2025 to 5.5% in June 2026, while the U.S. rate remained at 4.4%.

June data showed elevated unemployment throughout Cochise County. Willcox recorded a 12.1% unemployment rate, followed by Huachuca City at 11.4%, Douglas at 10.6%, Bisbee at 9.5%, and Benson at 8.3%. Sierra Vista registered 6.5%, while Tombstone remained low at 0.7%. Each community reported a higher unemployment rate than one year earlier.

The county’s labor market remains well below the severe conditions experienced during the pandemic recession of 2020, but recent figures suggest that labor demand has softened. After several years of relatively stable unemployment rates near 4% to 5%, Cochise County entered 2026 with a slower job market, shrinking employment levels, and rising unemployment. Whether those trends persist through the remainder of the year will be an important indicator of the county’s economic direction.

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 June 2026 (Year-to-Date)

Area	YTD Unemployment Rate Through Jun 2026	YTD Unemployment Rate Through Jun 2025	Change (Percentage Points)
United States	4.4%	4.2%	+0.1
Arizona	4.7%	4.1%	+0.7
Cochise County	6.0%	5.0%	+1.0
Benson	7.3%	6.0%	+1.3
Bisbee	8.3%	6.9%	+1.4
Douglas	9.3%	7.7%	+1.6
Huachuca City	10.0%	8.3%	+1.7
Sierra Vista	5.8%	4.5%	+1.3
Tombstone	0.5%	0.4%	+0.0
Willcox	10.7%	8.9%	+1.8

Source: Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity and US Economic Research