



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## Virginia Employment Commission

**Carrie Roth**  
Commissioner  
Advisor to the Governor for Strategic Initiatives

Post Office Box 26441  
Richmond, VA 23261-6441

For Release: April 22, 2022

Contact: Timothy Aylor, Senior Economist  
Economic Information & Analytics Division  
(804) 786-3976 or (804) 786-7496

Follow us on Twitter, <http://twitter.com/VirginiaLMI>.

### **Virginia Job Openings and Labor Turnover – February 2022**

— The BLS Jobs Openings and Labor Turnover Survey released April 20th indicates that Virginians continued to switch jobs at a rapid pace in February, with 101,000 workers quitting their jobs in a very tight labor market.—

**RICHMOND— According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' February 2022 Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS), Virginia employers hired 182,000 workers that month while reporting 313,000 job openings.**

JOLTS data provides information on all pieces that go into the net change in the number of jobs. These components include job openings, hires, layoffs, voluntary quits, and other job separations (which includes retirements and worker deaths). Putting those components together reveals the overall change in payroll employment. JOLTS data is seasonally adjusted and describes conditions on the last business day of the month. Current month's data are preliminary and the prior month's data have been revised.

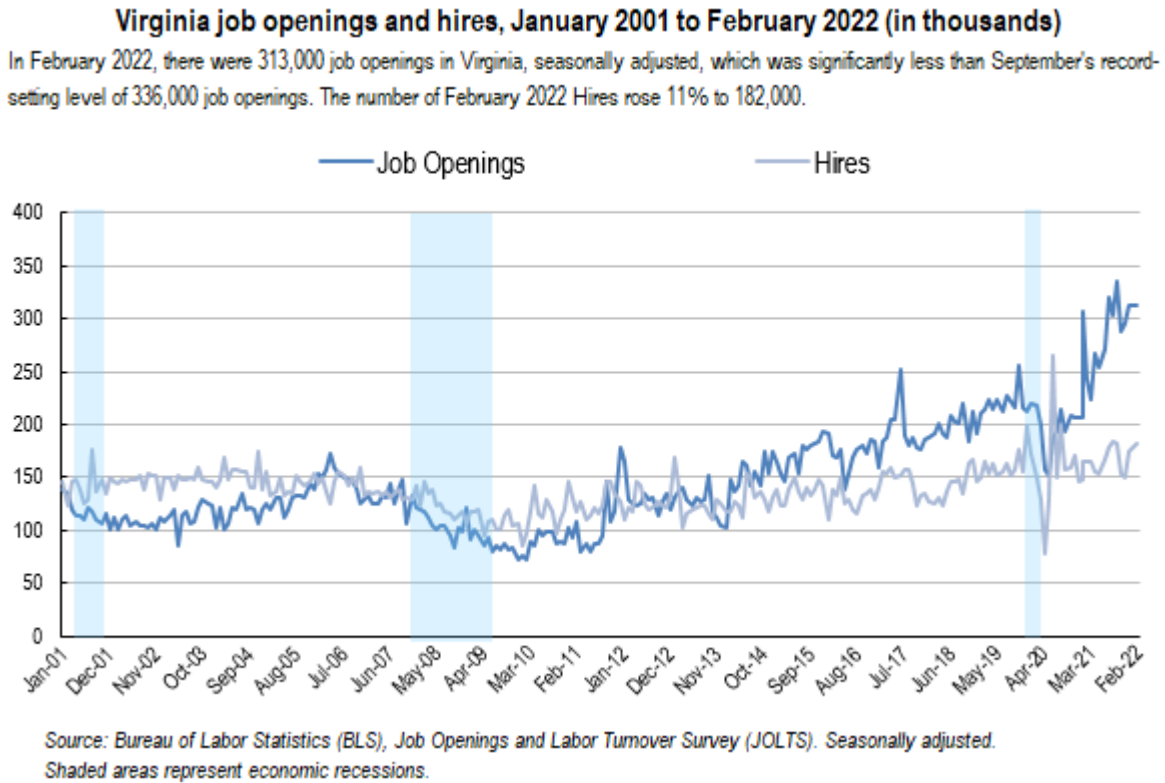
The 6,000 increase in the number of February 2022 **job openings** in Virginia was an increase from January 2022's revised figure of 307,000 but was 23,000 lower than last September's record high. Nationwide, job openings increased in several industries with the largest increases in arts, entertainment, and recreation (+32,000); educational services (+26,000); and federal government (+23,000). Job openings decreased in finance and insurance (-63,000) and in nondurable goods manufacturing (-39,000). The 2021

(more)

Toll Free: 1 (866) 832-2363  
E-Mail: [customerservice@vec.virginia.gov](mailto:customerservice@vec.virginia.gov)

VRC/TDD VA Relay 711  
Equal Opportunity Employer/Program

rapid rise in U.S. job openings was led by accommodations and food service and health care but many industries spanning the economy have also seen similar increases over the past year. The Virginia **job openings rate** (job openings as a percentage of total employment) was little-changed; rising by 0.1 of a percentage point to 7.2% in February but was significantly lower than the series high of 7.9% set in September 2021.



The **number of hires** in Virginia rose by 18,000 to 182,000 in February and was the same amount higher compared to February 2021. JOLTS defines hires as all additions to the payroll during the month. The series low of 77,000 was set in April 2020, while the high of 265,000 was set in June of that year. Nationwide, the number of hires edged up to 6.7 million in February 2022, an increase of over a quarter million from January. The number of hires was lower than its peak of 8.1 million set in May 2020 but was still elevated compared to typical levels seen over the past two decades. U.S. hires increased significantly in construction (+75,000) and decreased in information (-29,000). In Virginia, the **hires rate** rose around half of a percentage point over the month to 4.5%.

An estimated 101,000 workers quit jobs from Virginia employers in February. That's down significantly from the record-breaking month of December 2021 when 131,000 Virginia workers quit their jobs. The **number of quits** decreased by 16,000 from January's revised figure of 117,000 but was 15% higher than a year earlier. Quits, a component of total separations, are voluntary separations initiated by the employee.

(more)

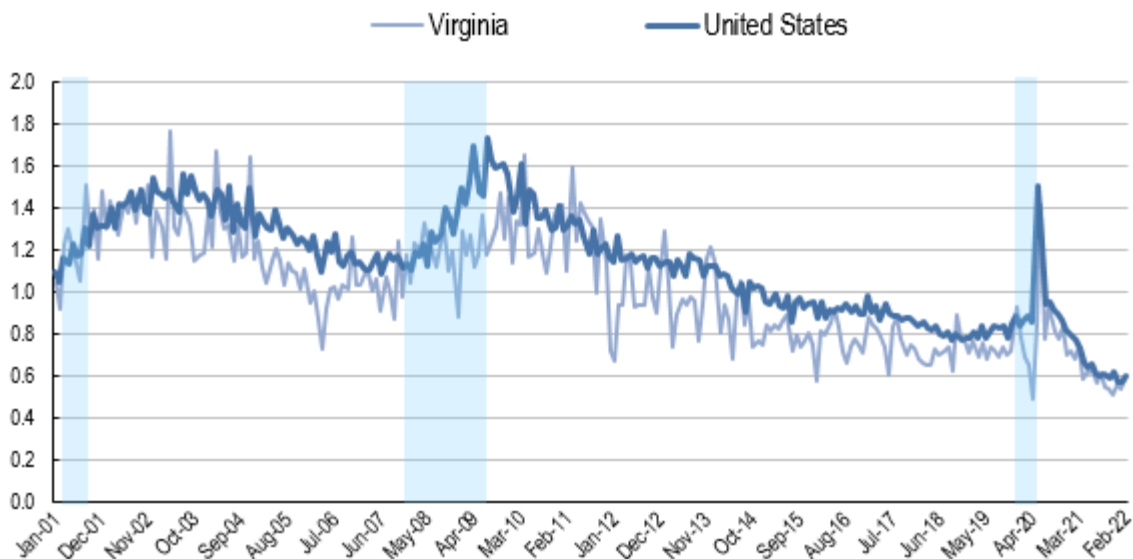
Across the U.S. in February, the number of quits was little changed at 4.4 million. Virginia, along with Michigan and Arizona, saw significantly fewer quits. U.S. quits increased in retail trade (+74,000); durable goods manufacturing (+22,000); and state and local government education (+14,000). Quits decreased in finance and insurance (-30,000). With February 2022 27% higher than February 2021, recent months' figures represent the most people quitting since the United States began keeping records of the statistic about two decades ago, The number of quits can be seen as a leading indicator of wage trends in that it includes workers who quit to move to another job.

The **quits rate** nationwide rose to 2.9%, which was slightly off of the series high set at the end of 2021. However, it significantly decreased in Virginia, Arizona, Michigan, Maryland, and Tennessee. The **quits rate** in the Commonwealth fell by nearly half of a percentage point to 2.5%, yet remained at the highly elevated levels seen during 2021. In general, industries with relatively low rates of quitting like government, finance, and educational services had even lower rates compared to the year before while a handful of large industries with relatively high rates of quitting like accommodation and food services and retail had even higher rates compared to the year before.

The **hires-per-job-openings (HPJO) ratio** rose to 0.6 in February in Virginia, equaling the rate nationwide. This measure shows the rate of hiring compared to open jobs and is a proxy for time to fill positions.

### The Hires-Per-Job-Opening (HPJO) ratio, January 2001 to February 2022

Nationwide, the HPJO ratio in February 2021 was unchanged from January 2021's record low of 0.6 and was the same as Virginia's rate. This indicates that there were only 60 hires for every 100 job openings in Virginia and nationwide.



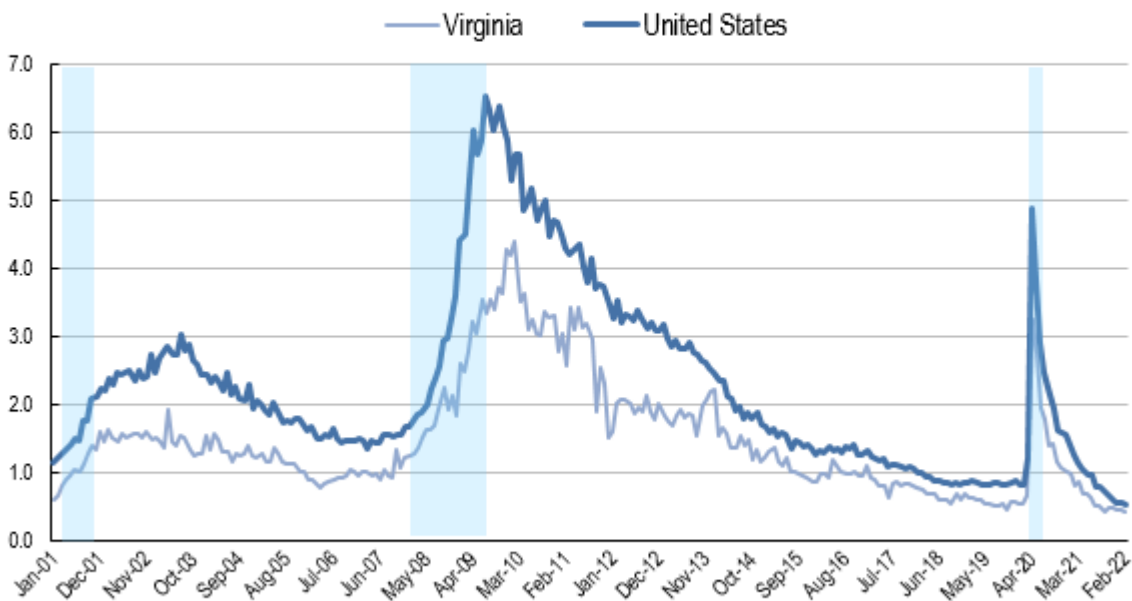
Source: VEC analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey data. Shaded areas represent economic recessions.

(more)

In February 2022, there was less than one (0.4) unemployed worker per job opening in the Commonwealth, little changed over the last six months. This period marked the lowest rate since January 2001, when BLS began collecting the data. In Virginia, **the unemployed per job opening ratio** (sometimes called the ‘job seekers ratio’) peaked at 4.4 unemployed per job opening in February 2010 during the Great Recession, while the number of unemployed workers per job opening stood at 3.3 in April 2020 during the height of pandemic employment impacts. Nationwide, February’s ratio of unemployed-to-openings matched a record low when there were approximately 60 unemployed workers for every 100 job openings.

### The Unemployed Per Job Opening Ratio, January 2001 to February 2022

In February 2022, there were less than 0.5 unemployed per job opening in the Commonwealth, unchanged from January 2022’s level. Nationwide, there were also 0.5 unemployed per job opening, remaining at the record low set in recent months.



Source: VEC analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey data. Shaded areas represent economic recessions.

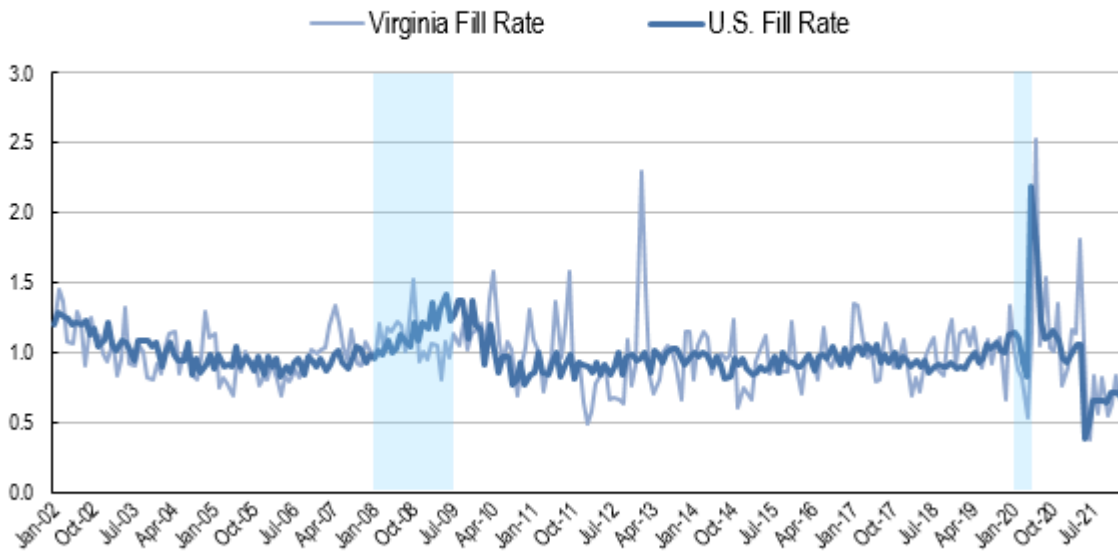
In February 2022, the **‘annual fill’ rate** (the ratio of ‘this month’ hires to ‘last month’ job openings, over the year) sharply rose from the revised January figure of 0.7 to 1.0, the highest level since May 2021. The U.S. annual fill rate also ascended to 0.9, the highest level since April of last year. This indicates, in Virginia and nationwide, a trend toward less difficulty in filling positions compared to recent months. The fill rate is a measure used to evaluate how labor markets differ in the pace that job openings are filled. An annual fill rate near or above 1.0 can indicate that employers are growing more efficient at filling job openings. On the other hand, an annual fill rate of less than 1.0 can indicate a tighter labor market, with employers having greater difficulty filling job openings.

(more)

Going back to 2001, the highest annual fill rate occurred during June 2020 because, after the nationwide shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, employers across the country sought to quickly hire for vacated positions. The lowest fill rate in Virginia occurred in June 2021. During that time, there were many factors that hindered the filling of vacant positions by employers, such as health concerns, employee skills, childcare needs, and industry characteristics.

### The Annual Fill Rate, January 2002 to February 2022

In February 2022, the directional trend in ability to hire for open positions continued to point in a positive direction in Virginia and nationwide. Virginia's rate climbed from 0.7 in January to the typical level of around 1.0 and well above the record-setting low of 0.4 set in June 2021.

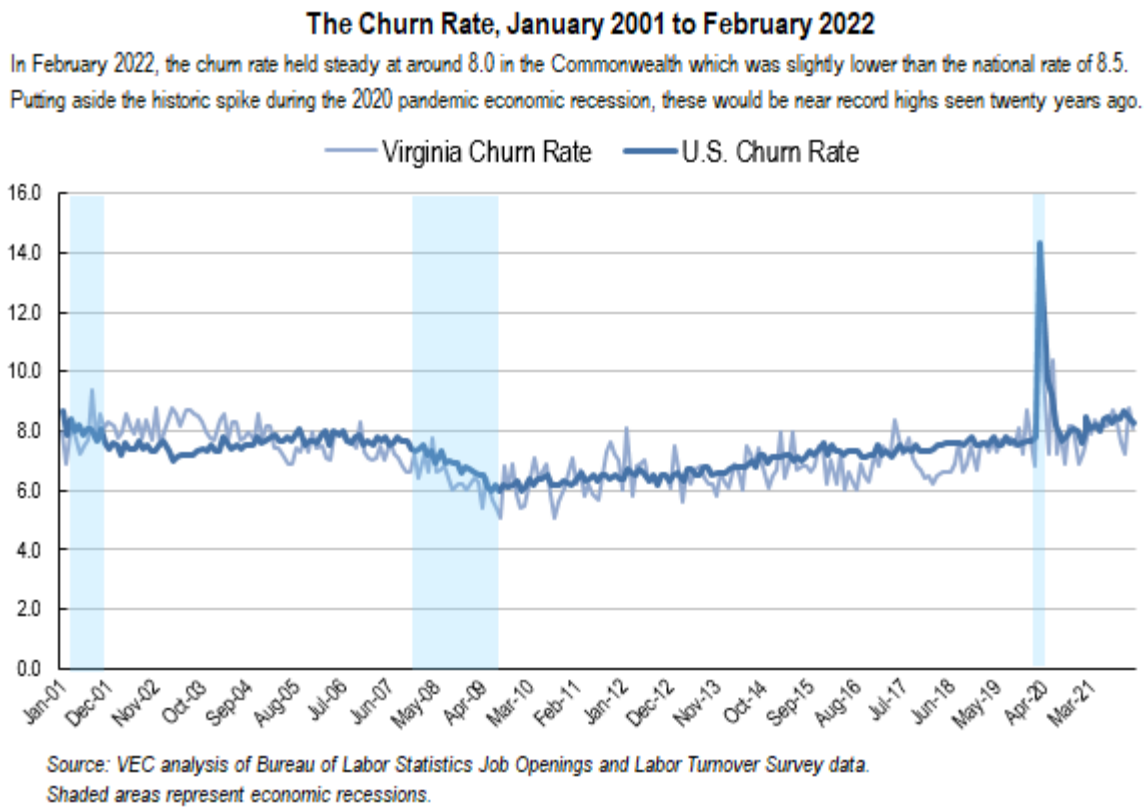


Source: VEC analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey data. Shaded areas represent economic recessions.

The number of **layoffs and discharges** in Virginia increased to 39,000 in February 2022. However, this was still a reduction of 87% from the pandemic high set in March 2020 and five percent lower than in February 2021. In February 2022, the number of U.S. layoffs and discharges was little changed at 1.4 million and the rate was unchanged at 0.9 percent. U.S. layoffs and discharges significantly decreased in information (-60,000). Layoffs and discharges are involuntary separations initiated by the employer. Layoffs and discharges are countercyclical, which means that layoffs typically increase during economic contractions and decrease during economic expansions.

(more)

The movement of the February 2022 **churn rate** (the sum of the hires rate and the total separations rate) to 8.2 from January's revised 8.1 in Virginia indicated continued elevated velocity, in-line with the pace of labor market turnover seen during the summer of 2021. There was a slight speeding up in churn nationwide as it increased to 8.5 from January's revised 8.3. An elevated churn rate indicates a labor market with a high hires rate, a high separations rate, or both. It can signify that workers are moving more frequently into and out of jobs in the labor market. Conversely, a low churn rate indicates a labor market with a low hires rate, a low separations rate, or both. Labor markets with the most churn may have more seasonal employment patterns not fully captured by seasonal adjustment factors, which can lead to more frequent job-to-job movement.



In February 2022, measures of Virginia job openings and labor turnover indicated that turnover remained high, as the Commonwealth continued to see an unusual amount of churn in the job market. With both layoffs and unemployment in the state at very low levels, firms appeared very reluctant to let staff go amid near record-high numbers of job openings. Modest upticks in hiring and in the ability to fill positions compared to conditions in 2021 provided some positive news for employers in February. At the same time, it appeared to be an opportune moment for many job seekers who felt that they could quit their jobs and easily find another, better position.

(more)

The Virginia Employment Commission plans to release the March 2022 analysis of the BLS Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey for Virginia on Friday, May 20, 2022. The data for all states and the U.S. will be available on the BLS website JOLTS page, at <https://www.bls.gov/jlt/>. BLS is scheduled to release the March JOLTS data for states on Wednesday, May 18, 2022.

Technical note: The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS) produces monthly data on U.S. and regional job openings, hires, quits, layoffs and discharges, and other separations from a sample of approximately 21,000 establishments. As a supplement, BLS has begun publishing state estimates that provide monthly information that can be used to better understand the dynamic activity of businesses in state economies that leads to aggregate employment changes. For more information on the program's concepts and methodology, see "Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey: *Handbook of Methods* (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, July 13, 2020), <https://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/jlt/home.htm>. For more information on BLS' state JOLTS estimates, see [https://www.bls.gov/jlt/jlt\\_statedata.htm](https://www.bls.gov/jlt/jlt_statedata.htm).

*Definitions of JOLTS terms\**

**Job Openings**

Job openings include all positions that are open on the last business day of the reference month. A job is open only if it meets the following three conditions: (1) A specific position exists and there is work available for that position; the position can be full time or part time, and it can be permanent, short term, or seasonal; (2) the job could start within 30 days, whether or not the employer can find a suitable candidate during that time; and (3) the employer is actively recruiting workers from outside the establishment to fill the position. Excluded are positions open only to internal transfers, promotions or demotions, or recalls from layoffs.

**Hires**

Hires include all additions to the payroll during the entire reference month, including newly hired and rehired employees; full-time and part-time employees; permanent, short-term, and seasonal employees; employees who were recalled to a job at the location following a layoff (formal suspension from pay status) lasting more than 7 days; on-call or intermittent employees who returned to work after having been formally separated; workers who were hired and separated during the month; and transfers from other locations. Excluded are transfers or promotions within the reporting location, employees returning from a strike, and employees of temporary help agencies, employee leasing companies, outside contractors, or consultants.

**Separations**

Separations include all separations from the payroll during the entire reference month and are reported by type of separation: quits, layoffs and discharges, and other separations. Quits include employees who left voluntarily, except for retirements or transfers to other locations. Layoffs and discharges include involuntary separations initiated by the employer, including layoffs with no intent to rehire; layoffs (formal suspensions from pay status) lasting or expected to last more than 7 days; discharges resulting from mergers, downsizing, or closings; firings or other discharges for cause; terminations of permanent or short-term employees; and terminations of seasonal employees (whether or not they are expected to return the next season). Other separations include retirements, transfers to other locations, separations due to employee disability, and deaths. Excluded are transfers within the same location, employees on strike, and employees of temporary help agencies, employee leasing companies, outside contractors, or consultants.

\*Excerpted from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Handbook of Methods*, "Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey: Concepts," <https://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/jlt/concepts.htm>.