

Tech Employment Snapshot: Q4 2016

Unemployment for key technology positions such as Web developers and network administrators ticked upward slightly in the fourth quarter of 2016, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). However, the technology industry's unemployment rate remained steady year-over-year at 2.9 percent.

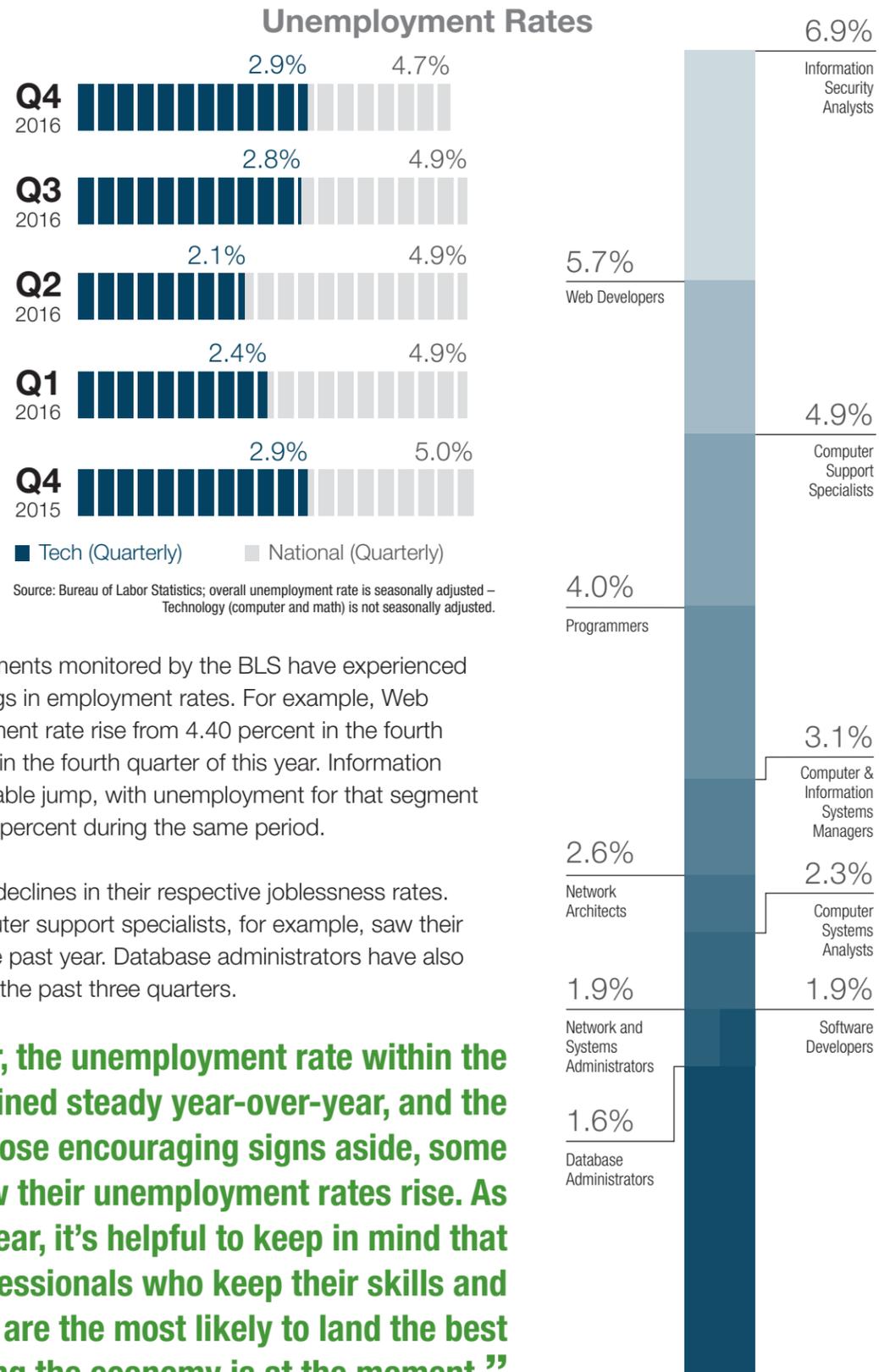
The technology industry continues to outperform the overall U.S. labor market, where the unemployment rate dipped slightly in the fourth quarter to 4.7 percent.

As usual, some technology segments monitored by the BLS have experienced notable quarter-by-quarter swings in employment rates. For example, Web developers saw their unemployment rate rise from 4.40 percent in the fourth quarter of 2015 to 5.70 percent in the fourth quarter of this year. Information security analysts also saw a notable jump, with unemployment for that segment rising from 1.70 percent to 6.90 percent during the same period.

But a handful of segments saw declines in their respective joblessness rates. Software developers and computer support specialists, for example, saw their unemployment rates fall over the past year. Database administrators have also enjoyed a downward trend over the past three quarters.

“In the fourth quarter, the unemployment rate within the technology industry remained steady year-over-year, and the layoff rate dipped. Those encouraging signs aside, some technology segments saw their unemployment rates rise. As we begin the new year, it’s helpful to keep in mind that technology professionals who keep their skills and certifications up-to-date are the most likely to land the best jobs, no matter how strong the economy is at the moment.”

— Bob Melk, President of Dice

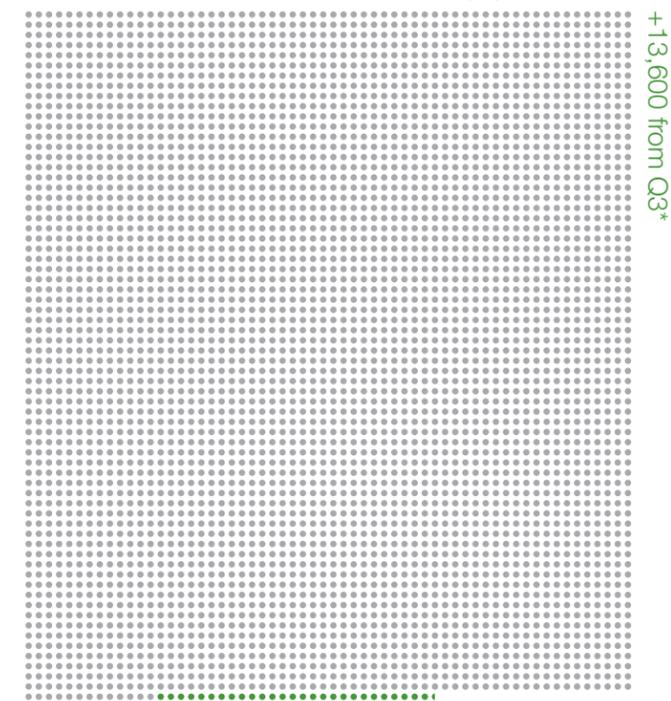


Source: Unemployment rates, Q4 2016, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Household Survey

Jobs Created/Lost in Q4 2016

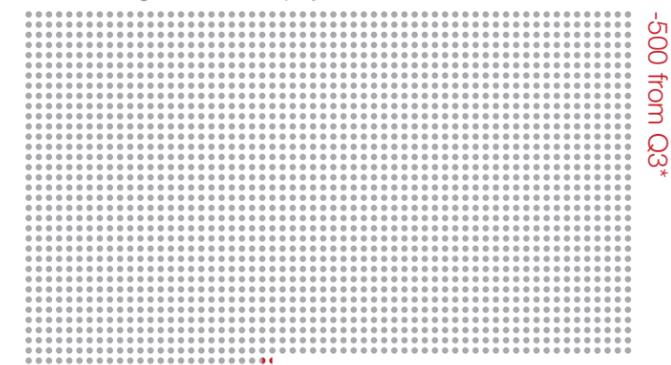
Computer systems design

Professional and Business Services: 2,030,100 employed*



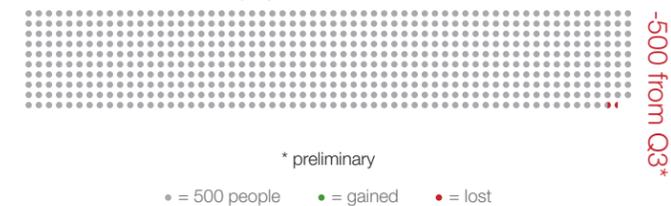
Computer and electronic products

Manufacturing: 1,032,400 employed*



Data processing and hosting

Information: 298,966 employed*



Source: Change in number of employed positions from Q3 2016 to Q4 2016 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Establishment Survey

Monthly Average of Quits

(Professional and Business Services)



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, Professional and Business Services, average preliminary Voluntary Quits, October and November 2016.

BLS data suggests that the average rate of voluntary quits in the first two months of the quarter, the latest period for which data is available, stood at 595,000 on average, a significant increase from the fourth quarter of 2015, when the rate stood at an average of 555,000. This higher rate suggests that, despite the uptick in unemployment for some technology segments, many technology professionals remain confident about their prospects on the open market.

Preliminary BLS data also suggests that the total average layoffs and discharges for October and November, the latest months for which data is available, was 355,000. That's a fairly significant decrease from the fourth quarter of 2015, when average layoffs and discharges stood at 427,000. Again, that's good news for the technology industry as a whole heading into 2017, even as unemployment for some segments rose.