

U.S. Unemployment Claims Fall by 34,000

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Economist had forecast a figure closer to 287,000 after 296,000 first-time claims the previous week.

The rolling four-week average of initial jobless claims, a more reliable indicator of trends in the labor market, decreased last week by 1,250 to 283,750, also the lowest level in 15 years, the report said.

The four-week average has been below or only slightly above 300,000 since last September.

The number of people receiving unemployment benefits for more than six months fell by 74,000 to 2.25 million in the week ending April 18, the lowest figure since late 2000.

Unemployment came in at 5.5 percent in March, unchanged from the previous month, and the lowest level since 2008.

The U.S. economy added more than 1 million jobs between November and January, the best three-month performance since 1997.

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