Total nonfarm payroll employment fell by 48,000 jobs in April 2003, after losing a revised 124,000 jobs in March. By early April, about 220,000 reservists had been called up because of war, but the Bureau of Labor Statistics cannot quantify the effect on its employment figures.

In April, job losses were concentrated in goods-producing industries, which posted a net loss of 73,000. Manufacturing employment fell by 95,000, the largest drop in 15 months and twice the monthly average for the prior 12 months. Manufacturing’s drop was partly offset by gains in construction (18,000), and mining (4,000). Service-producing industries added 25,000 jobs in April after two months of steep decline. Help supply (temporary) employment declined by 14,000, its second consecutive drop this year. Government added 32,000 jobs after declining in February. Services posted a 21,000-job gain. Wholesale and retail trade fell by 16,000 jobs. Health services continued adding jobs, 13,000 in April.

The unemployment rate jumped to 6.0%, 0.2 percentage point higher than in March. The employment-to-population ratio inched up 0.1 percentage point to 62.4.

The insured unemployment rate (the share of the labor force that claims unemployment benefits) rose to 2.8% in April, this year’s highest level. It is lower than the total unemployment rate because some unemployed persons do not qualify or do not choose to receive benefits. Consistent with the declining labor market, the weekly average of initial claims rose sharply to 444,000 in April, the highest level since November 2001.