

Look past the layoff-related headlines, the number of people working in retail keeps growing

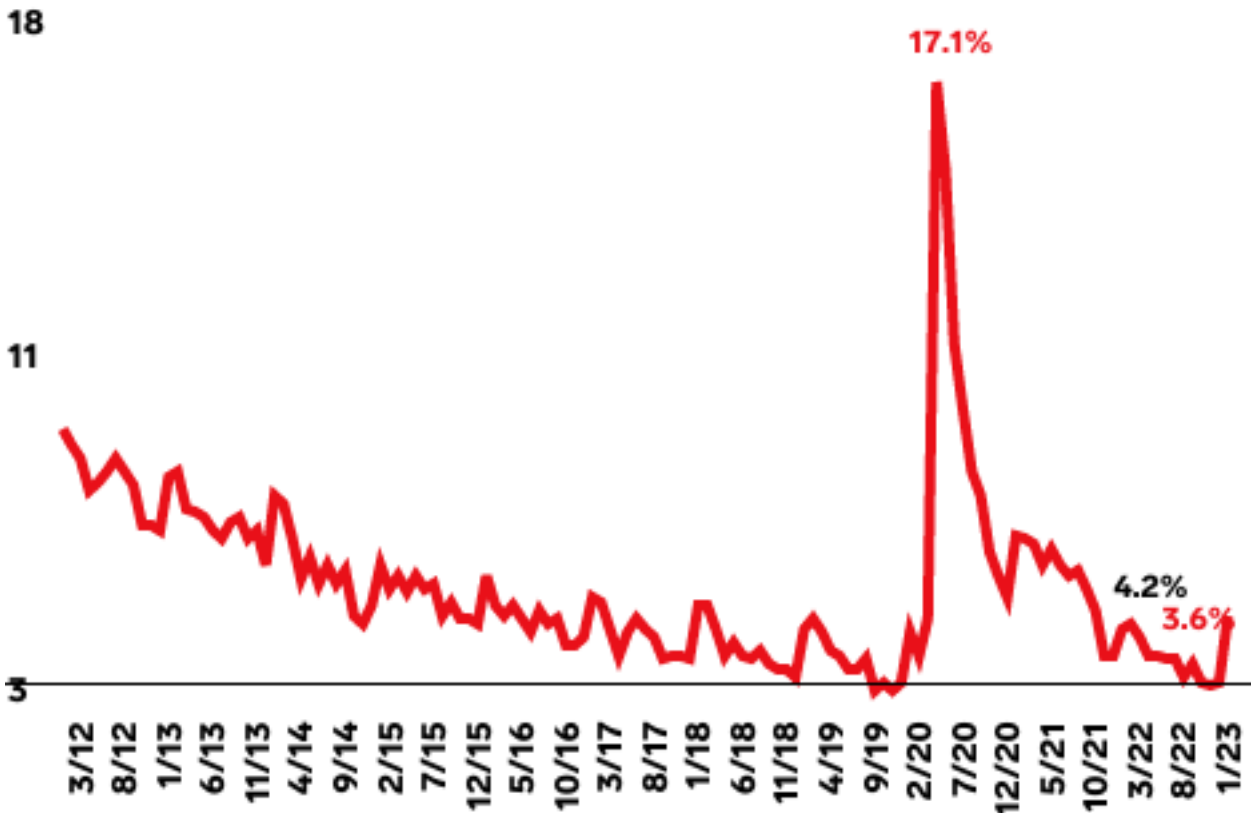
Article

The data: Despite a stream of recent [headlines](#) about layoffs in the retail and tech sectors—including Dell and Getir on Monday announcing job cuts—the number of people working in retail keeps growing.

- About 13.15 million people worked in retail trade in January 2023, up a few ticks from 13.12 million in December and up a few more ticks from 13.09 million a year earlier, [per](#) the US Labor Department.
- **The numbers would be even more pronounced if retailers could find more people to hire;** there were roughly 1.02 million retail job openings in December, a 15.2% increase compared with November (though down a bit from 1.04 million the previous year), [according](#) to the Labor Department.
- **And while total separations within retail, or job cuts, rose month-over-month in December, they were actually down almost 13% in December year-over-year.**

Retail and Wholesale Unemployment Rate

US, 2012-2023



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

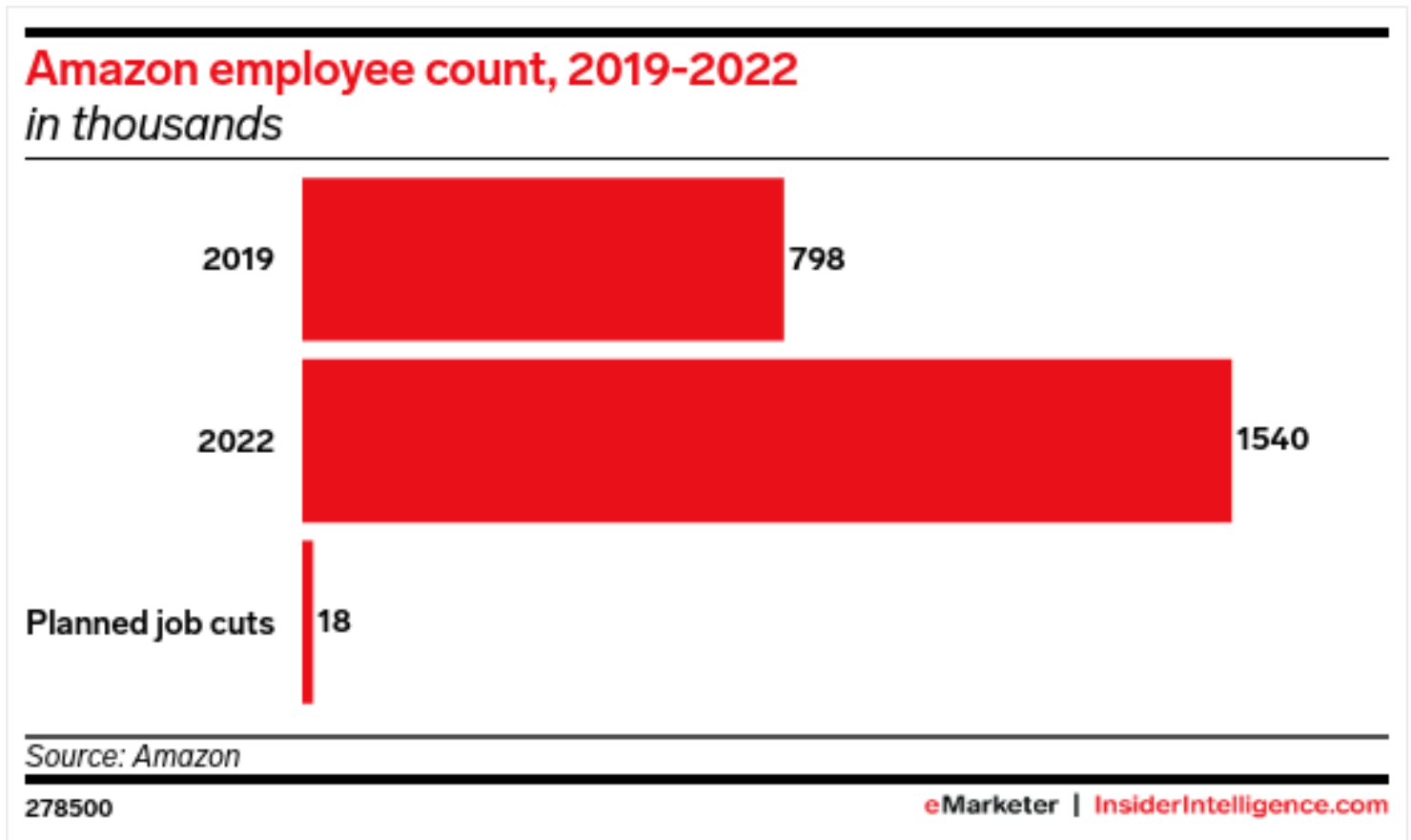
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It's hard to find good help: The US unemployment rate is 3.4%, the lowest it has been since the US first sent astronauts to the moon.

- **Competition for workers is tough.** With roughly two jobs for every person looking for work, retailers need to find ways to make their workplaces attractive. That's why we've argued that more retailers need to join the likes of **Walmart, Amazon, Macy's, and Target** in boosting wages.

Zooming in: While it is true that many high-profile retailers have recently announced layoffs, even after those job cuts many of those companies will still employ far more people than they did before the pandemic.

- Amazon—which is **laying off** about 18,000 employees—reported 1.54 million employees at the end of 2022, a 93% jump from 798,000 workers at the end of pre-pandemic 2019.
- Ecommerce platform provider **Shopify**—which **cut** about 1,000 employees last summer—had 10,000 employees as of the end of 2021, double the 5,000 it reported before the pandemic.
- Food delivery platform **DoorDash**—which in December said it was **trimming** about 1,250 jobs—had 8,600 employees as of the end of 2021, well more than double the 3,886 employees it had just a year earlier (the first time it reported an employee count).



The big takeaway: There is no shortage of stories about layoffs hitting the retail and technology sector.

- However, once we zoom out we can see that those companies are (slightly) correcting for the over-exuberant hiring spree they went on throughout the pandemic.
- With interest rates high, retailers are focused on short-term **needs**—ensuring they have adequate staffing to deliver a high-quality customer experience—rather than long-term bets.

That's a shift in mindset, which their hiring and layoff patterns reflect.

Go further: Read our [**Analyst Take: Future of work in limbo as upheaval rocks industries unevenly.**](#)

*This article originally appeared in Insider Intelligence's **Retail & Ecommerce Briefing**—a daily recap of top stories reshaping the retail industry. Subscribe to have more hard-hitting takeaways delivered to your inbox daily.*

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