

January's jobless rate up over the month; Long view shows steady, 'stable growth'

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OCALA – The unemployment rate in the CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion region was 5.0 percent in January 2019, up 0.9 percentage point over the month and 0.2 percentage point lower than the region's rate a year ago.

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According to the preliminary employment summary released today by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, there were 10,088 unemployed residents in the region, up from 8,301 in December 2018 and 251 fewer than January 2018.

The labor force was 201,029, an increase of 859 over the month and an increase of 3,175 compared to January 2018 when the unemployment rate was 5.2 percent. There were 190,941 employed in January, a drop of 928 compared to December 2018, but an increase of 3,428 over the year.

Unemployment rates dropped over the year by 0.2 percentage point in Citrus and Marion counties and remained unchanged in Levy County.

Over the month, Levy County had the lowest unemployment rate at 4.5 percent, followed by Marion County at 4.8 percent and Citrus County at 5.9 percent.

Rusty Skinner, CareerSource CLM's CEO, noted that the report is the first after DEO's annual benchmarking process when data collection is refined for statistical issues.

"(Because of that), it is important to review the January labor market information in terms of its relationship to that of a year ago," Skinner said, adding that "in that respect, the report shows positive data."

When looking at it over the year, Skinner said the labor force has grown in all three counties, approximately 2,800 in Marion County and 200 each in Citrus and Levy counties.

Similarly, he said, the ranks of the employed grew by nearly 3,000 in Marion County and by 242 in Citrus County and 200 in Levy County.

"Overall, this report continues to show the stable growth for which our three counties are known," Skinner said.

Here's how each county compares to the December 2018 employment numbers:

- Citrus County's labor force fell by 108 to 47,456, the number of employed dropped by 579 to 44,634 and the number of unemployed rose by 471 to 2,822. However, over the year, when the county's jobless rate 6.1 percent, the labor force has expanded by 177, the number of employed increased by 242 and the number of unemployed is virtually unchanged, dropping by 67 to 2,822.

--UPDATED--

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• Levy County's labor force increased by 151 to 17,009, the number of those with jobs remained nearly unchanged, dropping by 4, and the number of unemployed increased by 155 to 766. Compared to January 2018, when the unemployment rate was also 4.5 percent, the labor force expanded by 211, the number of employed rose by 199 and the number of jobless fell slightly by 12.

• Marion County's labor force expanded by 816 to 136,564, the number of those with jobs fell by 345 to 130,064 and the number of unemployed increased by 1,161 to 6,500. Compared to January 2018, when the jobless rate was 5.0 percent, the labor force has grown by 2,789, the number of employed has increased by 2,985 while the number of jobless has dropped by 196.

The Citrus, Levy, Marion counties' region is not alone in terms of its over-the-month unemployment rate increase, experienced in 23 of 24 regions – one region's rate was unchanged. The jobless rate also rose over the month in all but one of Florida's 67 counties.

Compared to January 2018, the rate fell in 21 regions other than CareerSource CLM's, rose in two and remained the same in one. Looking at it county-by-county, jobless rates increased in five counties, remained unchanged in six and fell in 56 an average of 2.5 percent.

Florida's not-seasonally adjusted unemployment rate – a measure that matches how the region's monthly rate is determined – was 3.9 percent, an increase of 0.3 percentage point over the month and a 0.2 percentage point drop over the year. The state's seasonally adjusted rate was 3.4 percent, 0.1 percentage point lower than December 2018 and a decrease of 0.5 percent compared to January 2018.

Citrus County held the third highest rate among Florida's counties, Marion had the 14th highest and Levy tied with Flagler and Liberty counties with the 21st highest rate.

The Homosassa Springs MSA, which includes all of Citrus County, posted the second highest unemployment rate among Florida's 24 metropolitan statistical areas and the Ocala MSA continued to hold the fifth highest rate.

Nonfarm employment for the Ocala MSA was 105,800, a drop of 1,500 jobs since the last report, but an increase of 2,700 jobs (+2.6 percent) over the year.

Industries that grew as fast or faster in the metro area than statewide over the year were: mining, logging and construction, with 800 new jobs (+10.8 percent job growth); professional and business services, 700 new jobs (+7.9 percent); manufacturing, 300 new jobs (+3.6 percent); trade, transportation and utilities, 400 new jobs (+1.7 percent); and government, with 200 new jobs (+1.3 percent).

Education and health services added 500 new jobs over the year, for a 2.7 percent job growth rate.

Financial and leisure and hospitality industries were unchanged over the year. The information and other services industries each lost 100 jobs compared to January 2018.

In January 2019, nonagricultural employment in the Homosassa Springs MSA was 33,300, down 700 jobs over the December 2018 report and an increase of 200 jobs (0.6 percent job growth) compared to January 2018.

The region's preliminary job numbers for February is scheduled to be released on Friday, March 22.



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