

May jobs report points to 'good signs' as region enters summer season



This is a view of the job fair hosted this week by CareerSource CLM.

Story and Photos Provided
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Published June 18, 2021 at

OCALA – The unemployment rate for the CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion region was 5.5 percent in May, 0.1 percentage point lower than the previous month and 6.6 percentage point lower than the year ago rate of 12.1 percent.

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Across the three-county region, the labor force was 211,963, up 12,844 compared to May 2020 for an annual increase of 6.5 percent. The number of those with jobs grew over the year by 25,333 to 200,367 and the number of unemployed dropped by 12,482 to 11,596.

According to today's release of preliminary employment numbers by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Levy County continued to hold the lowest jobless rate in the region at 4.8 percent, down 0.1 percentage point over the month; Marion County followed with a rate of 5.3 percent, also down 0.1 percentage point; and Citrus County's rate was 6.1 percent, a decrease of 0.1 percentage point. Florida's not seasonally adjusted jobless rate – a measure that matches the way local rates are calculated – was 5.0 percent, down 0.2 percentage point over the month and 8.0 percent lower than April 2020.

The nonagricultural employment in the Ocala metropolitan statistical area, which covers all of Marion County, was 108,000 in May, an increase of 5,600 jobs over the year for a 5.5 percent annual growth rate.

In the Homosassa Springs MSA, which includes all of Citrus County, there were 33,000 nonfarm jobs, an increase of 2,000 jobs over the year for an annual growth rate of 6.5 percent.

Rusty Skinner, CEO of CareerSource CLM, said the report offers some "very positive signs."

"What we're seeing in all three counties is growth in the labor force, growth in number of jobs – both over the month and over the year – and dropping numbers of unemployed. That's a good, clear sign that the jobs are there," Skinner said. "Over time, over the next month or so, unemployment will drop even more as more are



In this photo from the job fair, a likeness of Marion County Sheriff Billy Woods (in the background) shows job seekers a potential for employment at the Marion County Sheriff's Office.

As indication that jobs are already waiting, he pointed to the job fair hosted this week by CareerSource CLM.

"We had 40 diverse area businesses take part, all with multiple, multiple jobs to fill," Skinner said. "We couldn't be happier with the buzz of energy as nearly 200 job seekers got to meet face-to-face with employers for the first time in more than a year."

Here is a breakdown of the May jobs numbers for each county:

Citrus County's labor force in May expanded by 422 to 49,073, the number of employed rose by 439 to 46,067 and the number of unemployed fell by 17 to 3,006. Compared to May 2020 when the unemployment rate was 14.2 percent, the labor force grew by 2,570, there are 6,162 employed and 3,592 fewer unemployed.

Levy County's labor force grew by 191 over the month to 17,625, the number of those with jobs increased by 198 to 16,782, and the number of jobless dropped by 7 to 843. Over the year, when the jobless rate was 9.5 percent, those numbers represent 1,437 more in the labor force, an increase of 2,135 with jobs, and a decrease of 698 unemployed.

Marion County's labor force expanded by 655 to 145,265, the number of those with jobs went up by 746 to 137,518, and the number of unemployed decreased by 91 to 7,747. Compared to the same time last year, when the jobless rate was 11.7 percent, the labor force increased by 8,837, the number of employed grew by 17,036 and the number of jobless dropped by 8,199.

In the Ocala metro area, the manufacturing (+7.5 percent); professional and business services (+7.5 percent); and government (+2.1 percent) industries grew as fast or faster in the metro area than statewide over the year.

Industries gaining jobs over the year were trade, transportation, and utilities (+1,500 jobs); leisure and hospitality (+1,400 jobs); manufacturing (+700 jobs); professional and business services (+700 jobs); education and health services (+600 jobs); government (+300 jobs); mining, logging, and construction (+200 jobs); and other services (+200 jobs).

The information and financial activities industries were unchanged over the year, while no industry sectors reported job losses.

Among the state's 67 counties, Citrus County held with sixth highest jobless rate; Marion County maintained its tie with St. Lucie and Taylor counties for the 14th highest rate; and Levy County, was the 25th highest, tying with Columbia and Pasco counties.

Among the states metro areas, the Homosassa Springs MSA continued to hold the third highest rate and the Ocala MSA stayed at the seventh highest rate. The Villages metro, which includes a portion of Marion County, tied with Lakeland-Winterhaven MSA for the fourth highest rate.

The region's preliminary employment summary for June is scheduled to be released on Friday, July 16.