

Citrus Levy Marion counties' regional unemployment increases

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OCALA – The percentage rate of jobless people in the CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion (CLM) Region was 3.9 percent in December 2023, the same rate as the previous month and 1 percentage point greater than the area's year ago rate, according to information from the state government. At 222,773, the labor force expanded by 6,726 or 3.1 percent over the year.

There were 214,147 employed residents across the three-county area, virtually unchanged at a drop of 47 over the month but 4,352 more than in December 2022, according to preliminary employment data released on Jan. 19 by FloridaCommerce, formerly known as the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

There were 8,626 unemployed in the Citrus-Levy-Marion counties' region, down 85 compared to November and 2,374 more over the year, according to state government records.

Levy County posted the lowest jobless rate in December at 3.6 percent, down 0.1 percentage point since the previous month, Marion County held at 3.7 percent, and Citrus County was also unchanged over the month at 4.5 percent. Florida's not seasonally adjusted rate, which matches how local rates are determined, was unchanged over the month at 2.9 percent.

Citrus County had 49,611 workers in December, down 76 over the month but up 1,807 compared to December's year ago numbers; there were 2,319 unemployed, 30 fewer than the previous month and 634 more than a year ago.

Levy County had 16,897 employed individuals, 82 fewer than the previous month and 305 more than in December 2022. There were 637 people who were jobless in Levy County, which was nine fewer than in November and an increase of 177 over the year.

Marion County had 148,639 employed, an increase of 111 compared to November and 2,240 more than a year ago. The county had 5,670 unemployed, down 46 over the month and up 1,563 over the year.

Cory Weaver, CareerSource CLM's director of operations, said that the slight increase in unemployment is typically "expected" as the region moved into the holidays and seasonal hires dropped off.

"Really, what we saw over the month in all three counties, were very minor changes," Weaver said. "Overall, there were slightly fewer jobs but also fewer out of work. What's significant is that there are 4,352 more jobs throughout the region than a year ago."

Weaver said he believes the region will better understand annual job growth after FloridaCommerce conducts annual benchmark revisions next month. The benchmarking is a standard part of the estimation process that takes place at the same time in each state nationwide.

Weaver said CareerSource CLM continues to provide fee-free help and training opportunities -- including job fairs, hiring events and other job seeker and employer services.

One such opportunity is a Commercial Driver License Job Fair on Feb. 29 from 5-7 p.m. at Marion Technical College in Ocala. More information is available by calling 800-434-JOBS (5627).

In December, nonfarm employment in the Ocala Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which covers all of Marion County, was 122,100, an increase of 2,100 jobs (+1.8 percent) over the year.

The Ocala MSA had the second fastest annual job growth rate compared to all metro areas in the state in Trade, Transportation and Utilities at 4.2 percent. The Ocala metro also tied for the third fastest growth rate in Government employment at 3.8 percent.

Industries gaining jobs over the year were Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (+1,300 jobs); Education and Health Services (+1,000 jobs); and Government (+600 jobs); and Other Services (+100 jobs).

Industries losing jobs were Manufacturing (-400); Mining, Logging and Construction (-200 jobs); and Professional and Business Services (-100).

The Financial Activities, Information, Leisure and Hospitality, and Other Services were unchanged over the year.

Nonagricultural jobs in the Homosassa Springs MSA, which covers all of Citrus County, hit 37,200, an increase of 1,400 jobs (+3.9 percent) over the year. At 10.4 percent, the Government industry grew faster in the metro area than statewide over the year, adding 500 jobs over the year, and it posted the fastest annual job growth rate compared to all other metro areas.