



County's unemployment hot streak holds in 2018

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St. Johns County ended 2018 with the second-lowest unemployment rate in the state as the jobless rate in Florida remained lower than the national average.

County unemployment numbers were released Friday in a report from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

In December 2018, Monroe County had the state's lowest unemployment rate (2.6 percent), followed by St. Johns County and Okaloosa County (2.7 percent each); and Orange County, Seminole County and Union County (2.9 percent each).

Panhandle unemployment rates reflected the continued impacts from Hurricane Michael, the DEO report noted. Gulf County had the highest unemployment rate (7.9 percent) in Florida in December, followed by Bay County (5.9 percent) and Franklin County, Hendry County and Sumter County (5.0 percent each).

Individual county rates are not seasonally adjusted.

Florida's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 3.3 percent in December, unchanged from the November rate, and down 0.6 of a percentage point from a year ago. There were 335,000 jobless Floridians out of a labor force of 10,278,000. The U.S. unemployment rate was 3.9 percent in December.

The number of jobs in Florida was 8,891,200 in December, up 231,200 jobs from a year ago. The industry gaining the most jobs was education and health services (54,000 jobs, up 4.2 percent). Other industries gaining jobs over the year included: leisure and hospitality (45,800 jobs, up 3.7 percent); professional and business services (39,300 jobs, up 2.9 percent) and construction (34,900 jobs, up 6.7 percent).

For St. Johns County, the last 12 months have seen a stable level of employment. The county unemployment rate was 2.8 percent in December 2017 and 2.5 percent in November 2018. The labor force increased by about 2,000 in the course of a year to 125,457.

For those counties bordering St. Johns, Clay County had the lowest unemployment rate in December at 3.1 percent. That was followed by Duval County (3.2 percent), Flagler County (3.9 percent) and Putnam County (4.4 percent).