



St. Johns County unemployment rate sinks to 2.4 percent

By Stuart Korfhage
May 17, 2019

The unemployment rate in St. Johns County continues to stay low even as the workforce fails to expand.

In the latest numbers released Friday by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Monroe County had the state's lowest unemployment rate (2 percent); followed by St. Johns County and Okaloosa County (2.4 percent each), and Alachua County, Collier County, Lafayette County, Orange County, Seminole County, Wakulla County and Walton County (2.6 percent each).

Individual county numbers are not seasonally adjusted.

In April, 29 of the 67 counties in Florida recorded an unemployment rate less than 3 percent, the largest number in nearly 13 years.

Florida's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 3.4 percent in April 2019, down 0.1 of a percentage point from the March 2019 rate and down 0.3 of a percentage point from a year ago. There were 357,000 jobless Floridians out of a labor force of 10.3 million. The U.S. unemployment rate was 3.6 percent in April.

For St. Johns County, the 2.4-percent rate is near a record low and was a reduction of 0.4 of a percentage point from last month and from the rate in April 2018.

What's interesting is that the total labor force in one of the fastest-growing counties in the country was virtually unchanged over the last 12 months. The April labor force was 126,435 while the total for April 2018 was 126,620. Meanwhile, the total number of jobs increased by about 250 over that period.

Statewide, the seasonally adjusted total nonagricultural employment was 8.9 million in April, an increase of 16,700 jobs over the month. The state gained 206,100 jobs over the year, an increase of 2.4 percent. Nationally, the number of jobs rose 1.8 percent over the year.

The industry gaining the most jobs was education and health services (46,800 jobs, 3.6 percent). Other industries gaining jobs over the year included professional and business services (42,700 jobs, 3.1 percent); leisure and hospitality (32,000 jobs, 2.6 percent); trade, transportation, and utilities (24,600 jobs, 1.4 percent); and construction (22,600 jobs, 4.2 percent).

Among the counties bordering St. Johns, Clay County had the lowest unemployment rate in April at 2.8 percent. That was followed by Duval (3 percent), Flagler (3.4 percent) and Putnam (3.8 percent) counties.

Reflecting the continued impacts from Hurricane Michael, Gulf County had the highest unemployment rate (4.7 percent) in Florida in April, followed by Sumter County (4.4 percent), Citrus County (4.3 percent each), and Hardee County (4.2 percent).