



Unemployment lowest in county since May 2016

By Stuart Korfhage
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The unemployment rate for St. Johns County fell to its lowest level since May 2016 last month and remained the second-lowest in the state.

The March unemployment numbers were released Friday by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity.

St. Johns County's unemployment rate of 3.3 percent was lower than every county but Monroe County at 2.8 percent. Individual county rates are not seasonally adjusted.

Overall, the state unemployment rate was a seasonally adjusted 4.8 percent in March, down 0.2 of a percentage point from February and down 0.1 of a percentage point from a year ago. The U.S. unemployment rate was 4.5 percent in March.

For St. Johns County, March's rate was down slightly from February's rate of 3.6 percent. The rate was also 3.6 percent in March 2016. However, in the past year, the county's labor force has grown by about 4,500 workers.

The county rate of 3.3 percent was the second-lowest level in almost a decade. In May 2016, the rate was 3.2 percent. That was the lowest rate since May 2007, when unemployment dipped to 2.9 percent.

By May 2008, the unemployment rate had risen to 4.7 percent. It topped off at 9.3 percent in January 2010.

Those counties around St. Johns also posted low unemployment numbers in March. Clay had the lowest rate at 3.9 percent, followed by Duval (4.3), Flagler (4.8) and Putnam (5.4). Putnam's rate was tied for the fifth-highest in the state, but it was almost a full percentage point lower than the previous year.

For the Jacksonville Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes St. Johns County, the unemployment rate was 4.1 percent.

In the latest report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average weekly wages for all industries in the Jacksonville area was \$913 vs. the national average of \$1,027. The average in St. Johns County was \$776.