

Finding employment takes lot of work

Metro Orlando rate rises to 5.2% in June

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More than 50,000 people in metropolitan Orlando looked for work last month as the unemployment rate hit 5.2 percent, up from May but down from a year earlier.

Despite the month-to-month increase, reported Friday by the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation, the news actually was good for Orlando because of the long-term improvement, said David Scott, a University of Central Florida economist.

The number of jobs in metropolitan Orlando — Orange, Seminole, Osceola and Lake counties — was 14,400 greater than a year earlier, “a nice number for Orlando,” Scott said.

Comparisons of monthly unemployment rates are misleading because the figures are not adjusted for seasonal differences, Scott said. That problem is especially troublesome between May and June, when an influx of students and teachers seeking summer work always drives the monthly jobless rate up, he said.

In contrast, Orlando’s year-over-year performance is especially good in light of results elsewhere, he said.

“We’re bucking the national trend” in which unemployment rose from June 2002, Scott said.

The numbers released by Workforce Innova-

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tion included a revision of May’s jobless rate, to 4.9 percent.

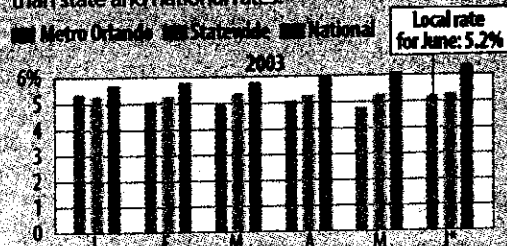
In June last year there were nearly 54,000 unemployed in the four metropolitan Orlando counties — and the jobless rate was 5.6 percent.

As for what the latest numbers bode for the future, Scott said: “We hope this continues and Orlando continues to lead out” of the national jobs recession.

“There’s still a jobs recession in the United States,” as the national jobless rate rose sharply to 6.4 percent in June from 5.8 percent a year earlier. “There is not a jobs recession in metro Orlando.”

UNEMPLOYMENT SNAPSHOT

Though the metro Orlando unemployment rate rose to 5.2% in June, it has for the most part been lower than state and national rates.



NOTE: Metro Orlando includes Lake, Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties. * Figures for June are preliminary.

SOURCES: Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation, U.S. Department of Labor.

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Another local economist, Hank Fishkind, of Fishkind & Associates, an economic consulting firm in Orlando, said the latest figures were mixed. But on balance, he is more encouraged.

“We’re beginning to see the kind of slow improvement that’s reasonable to expect” in the economy and in employment levels, he said.

Unemployment numbers are categorized as a “trailing” indicator, that is, one that follows economic activity, rather than predicting it. So, as the economy improves slowly, “you’ll see mixed results,” Fishkind said.

But the payroll jobs figure, on which economists depend more than the unemployment rate, is a concurrent number.

Among seven Central Florida counties, Polk County not only had by far the highest unemployment last month, 6.8 percent, but was the only county where the rate was up from a year before.

Statewide, unemployment was 5.6 percent, up sharply from 5 percent in May but down from 5.8 percent a year before.