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Updated: 12:12 a.m. Wednesday, April 24, 2013 | Posted: 10:37 a.m. Tuesday, April 23, 2013

## Butler County unemployment rate sinks to 6.8%

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By Chelsey Levingston

Staff Writer

Butler County's unemployment rate dropped in March to 6.8 percent, one percentage point below what it was a year ago this time.

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services reported the new estimates Tuesday of local metro, county and city unemployment rates for March.

Last month, Butler County's employment level grew by 100 jobs to 174,800 people working from March 2012 employment levels of 174,700.

Unemployment, which considers people who don't have a job, but are looking for work, fell to 12,900 people in March from 13,300 people the month before. A year ago in March, 14,700 people in Butler County were unemployed.

The county's two largest cities — Hamilton and Middletown — had dropping unemployment rates in March of 8.2 and 7.7 percent in order. Fairfield's unemployment rate in March was unchanged from February, sitting at 6.5 percent.

Overall Cincinnati metro area unemployment, including Butler and Warren counties, fell to 7.2 percent in March from 7.7 percent in March 2012, according to state figures.

The economy is growing at a snail's pace, and employment levels are expected to grow less than one percent this year from last in the Tri-state Cincinnati market, said Janet Harrah, senior director of Northern Kentucky University's Center for Economic Analysis & Development.

Private employment growth is being offset by job losses in the public sector and in construction, Harrah said. Job growth is concentrated in the professional and business services and health care sectors.

"We are seeing net job growth, but it's not very robust," Harrah said. "It's kind of the same story we had last year. We're going to have job growth, it's going to be slow and it's going to be concentrated in one or two sectors."

The unemployed face many headwinds. Jobless people have skills in sectors that continue to shed jobs, Harrah said.

Employment may recover, but some types of jobs lost will never come back, creating a skills mismatch. Not only does greater Cincinnati have to recover the number of jobs lost since the recession of 2007-2009, but employment growth also has to account for Cincinnati's population growth, so more jobs have to be created than were lost, she said.

Demand has to also grow enough to outpace the productivity gains created from technology. Technology is absorbing some job creation, she said.

Many aspects of the economy are improving such as the housing market, but "the indicator that's not showing improvement that we care about the most is the labor market," she said.

The new local unemployment numbers follow Friday's release of Ohio's March labor rates. Ohio lost more jobs last month than any other state as overall employment declined by 20,400 — the largest monthly decline since June 2009, according to reports Friday from the state jobs department and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The state's jobless rate in March held steady at 7.1 percent last month, down from 7.4 percent a year ago and also lower than the national rate of 7.6 percent.

Unemployment rates fell in 85 of 88 Ohio counties in March, mainly a product of workers falling out of the labor force. The size of Butler County's labor force shrank by 1,700 people year-over-year.

Labor force participation traditionally increases after a downturn, but that has not happened yet, said Benjamin Johnson, spokesman for Ohio Job and Family Services.

"We want to see the labor force grow," he said. "We still believe that at some point, the labor force will begin to grow."

Even though West Chester Twp.'s population is larger than Middletown's, the state does not track labor data for townships alone.

### Job fair Thursday

Workforce One of Butler County, the county's largest job placement agency, is having a job fair Thursday for construction workers.

The job fair is 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday at the government-run job center located at 4631 Dixie Hwy./Ohio 4, Fairfield.

This is the second in a series of monthly themed jobs fairs Workforce One is introducing. A job fair was held in March with hiring manufacturing employers.

Job seekers should bring copies of their resume and dress professionally.

Participating companies include Tradesmen International, Myers Poured Concrete and Metcon Ltd., according to Whitney Read, Workforce One's new business services liaison. The BizTech Center in Hamilton will also be there, according to Read.

*Staff writer Cornelius Frolik contributed to this report.*

|   | Unemployment rates |        |        |              |                  |                        |
|---|--------------------|--------|--------|--------------|------------------|------------------------|
|   | Mar-12             | Feb-13 | Mar-13 | 2012 average | Jan. 2010 (peak) | Lowest rate since 2005 |
| Butler County                           | 7.8%               | 7.1%   | 6.8%   | 7.1%         | 10.4%            | 4.7% Dec. 2006         |
| Hamilton city                           | 9.3%               | 8.6%   | 8.2%   | 8.1%         | 12.2%            | 5.1% Aug. 2007         |
| Middletown                              | 9.3%               | 8.0%   | 7.7%   | 8.4%         | 12.6%            | 5.2% Oct. 2006         |
| Fairfield                               | 7.2%               | 6.5%   | 6.5%   | 6.6%         | 9.8%             | 4.1% April 2008        |
| Hamilton County                         | 7.5%               | 7.2%   | 6.9%   | 7.0%         | 10.5%            | 4.5% April 2008        |
| Warren County                           | 6.6%               | 6.5%   | 6.3%   | 6.3%         | 10.0%            | 4.2% May 2007          |
| Cincinnati metropolitan area (Tristate) | 7.7%               | 7.5%   | 7.2%   | 7.1%         | 10.7%            | 4.7% April 2008        |
| Ohio, seasonally adjusted               | 7.4%               | 7.1%   | 7.1%   | 7.2%         | 10.6%            | 5.3% April 2006        |

**SOURCE: Ohio Department of Job and Family Services**

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they're pencil whooping the heck on those numbers.



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I'll believe the unemployment rate has gone down when I finally get a job. I have been diligent in my search with no feedback.



- Posted by jeff760 at 3:01 p.m. Apr. 23, 2013
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unemployment is zero. there are jobs but the people who don't have one, don't want one. with a flick of the keyboard we have full employment.

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