

ECONOMY

Jobless rate low

Mass. unemployment 4%;
national rate is 5.1%

By Tony Dobrowolski

[tdobrowolski@](mailto:tdobrowolski@berkshireeagle.com)

berkshireeagle.com

@TonyDobrow on Twitter

PITTSFIELD » The Berkshire County unemployment rate has set a nine-year low — for the second time in recent months.

Led by another monthly increase in jobs in the Pittsfield metropolitan area, Berkshire unemployment dropped from 4.7 percent to 4.3 percent in July, according to figures released on Tuesday by the state Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. The state unemployment rate is 4.0 percent, which is lower than the national rate of 5.1 percent.

In May, Berkshire unemployment hit 4.4 percent, the lowest percentage since December 2007. The last time local unemployment reached 4.3 percent was in both May and July 2007, according to the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board.

Last month's drop represents a hefty decrease from July 2015, when Berkshire unemployment was almost a full percentage point higher at 5.3 percent. The local unemployment rate has been below 5 percent since March.

July's low local numbers once again appear to be due to the summer tourism season.

After adding 1,700 jobs in June, mostly in the leisure and hospitality sector, the 15 municipalities that make up the Pittsfield metropolitan area added another 200 jobs in July, a 0.4 percent increase from June. For the 12 months ending in July, 500 jobs were added in the Pittsfield metropolitan area, an increase of 1.1 percent.

Of the 15 areas for which the state tracks seasonal job gains, Barnstable was the only other sector that experienced job growth last month, as 6,200 jobs were added, an increase of 5.4 percent. Overall, the state lost 10,500 jobs in those 15 areas last month, a 0.3 percent drop from June. However, jobs have been added in all 15 of those areas over the last 12 months.

Locally, unemployment dropped slightly in the county's three labor market areas, with the biggest decrease occurring in North Adams, where the jobless rate fell from 6.0 to 5.4 percent between June and July. Unemployment in the North Adams area was 6.7 percent in July 2015.

Unemployment in the Great Barrington area was 3.2 percent last month, the third lowest percentage among all the areas tracked by the state, behind only Nantucket (1.9 percent) and Vineyard Haven (2.9 percent).

In the county's two cities, unemployment dropped from 4.9 percent to 4.5 percent in Pittsfield last month, and from 6.7 percent to 6.2 percent in North Adams. Unemployment in North Adams was 7.7 percent in July 2015.

The numbers released on Tuesday are not seasonally adjusted, which means they take into account seasonal construction jobs and positions in the travel and tourism industry.