

## Mixed bag in latest jobs numbers for California

By Ryan Carter, Staff Writer

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San Gabriel Valley and Whittier-area cities saw slight increases in their jobless rates across cities, according to a state report out Friday.

But corresponding growth in the labor force might be a good sign, experts said.

El Monte went from 14.7 percent to 14.9; Whittier (8.6 to 8.7); Pasadena (9.1 to 9.3), according to the state's Employment Development Department.

The countywide increase, which rose from April's 12.2 to 12.3 percent in May, bucked statewide and national trends, which in 37 states - including California - saw jobless rates fall.

For the fifth straight month, the number of new jobs in California grew, with more than 28,000 non-farm payroll positions added last month. Since Jan. 1, the state has added more than 84,000 new jobs.

The gains were nevertheless disappointing, since most new jobs created in recent months were temporary U.S. Census worker positions, analyst Steve Levy of the Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy told the Associated

Press.

"The state matches the national picture of expanding production and trade with very little private sector job growth," Levy said.

On the national scene, unemployment fell from 9.9 percent to 9.7 percent, but some analysts saw that as a sign that discouraged workers are continuing to drop out of the labor force.

But in California and Los Angeles County, the labor force has actually been growing.

Job-seekers who left the

market discouraged are returning, a sign that workers have some hope in a reviving job market, some experts said.

"We aren't increasing the number of employees as fast as we're increasing the number of unemployed who are returning to the labor market," said Brad Kemp, regional director of research for Los Angeles-based Beacon Economics. "The rises in the unemployment rate are actually positive news right now. People are coming back in."

Between April 2010 and May 2010, the county's total nonfarm employment increased by a net of 6,500 jobs.

Government had the largest increase over the month, adding 8,900 jobs, though gains at the state and federal level were offset by local

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government, which lost 9,300 jobs.

Leisure and hospitality gained 4,800 positions from April to May.

Information was up 1,800, and trade, transportation, and utilities were up 1,200.

Construction climbed by 500 jobs, and manufacturing spiked by 400, according to the EDD.

Still, educational and health services fell by 7,300 positions in May. Nearly all the losses were at colleges, universities and professional schools, the report said.

"The unemployment picture is still very tough," said Jack Kyser, founding economist of the Los Angeles Economic Development Corp. "But (based on employment surveys) you are seeing we are adding jobs month to month, and the year-over-year employment decline has narrowed dramatically."

Still, between May 2009 and this year, Los Angeles County lost 69,500 jobs, a decline of 1.8 percent, the EDD said.

And Edwin Duterte, who runs a networking mixer in Pasadena and other cities, hasn't seen many silver linings.

"My attendance has dropped, not because people are finding jobs, but because people are getting frustrated," he said.

But it's a mixed bag, he added.

Last year at this time, he said, he wasn't getting much interest from recruiters and companies to attend the mixers.

"Now, companies are coming to our events," he said.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

[ryan.carter@sgvn.com](mailto:ryan.carter@sgvn.com)

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