Ohio hits record jobs number a month later than first thought

UAW on strike

The takeaway: Ohio posted a record number of jobs a month later than initially reported, for the first time exceeding the May 2000 record with 5,639,700 jobs in August. The unemployment rate rose slightly to 3.4% as 3,000 new job seekers entered the workforce and 2,000 found jobs. This positive jobs news comes as the United Auto Workers begin their strike across strategic locations at all Big Three automakers including in Toledo, Ohio. (Policy Matters released this separate statement about the strike.)

The jobs numbers: Seasonally adjusted data released today by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) show that Ohio employers added 3,500 jobs over the month, reaching 5,639,700 jobs in August and for the first time fully recovering jobs lost to the early 2000’s recession. The previous jobs record was 5,638,000, set in May 2000. After fully recovering pre-COVID jobs in May, the state went on last month to post 25,900 more jobs than in February 2020.

The data include a downward revision to July’s estimate, showing 5,636,200 jobs for that month. This underscores the importance of remembering that preliminary data are subject to change as we learn more to improve their accuracy. All these figures will be benchmarked in March 2024.

“We know these data are a little tricky to pinpoint, but reaching this benchmark a month later doesn’t take away from its historic importance,” said Policy Matters Ohio economist, Michael Shields. “Ohio working people have waited 23 years to get these jobs back. That long wait demonstrates the failure of government policies that have underinvested in our communities to give tax kickbacks to the wealthiest for too long. The rapid recovery from the deepest recession in eight decades shows the triumph of smart interventions from Congress scaled to the size of the crisis and directed to those who needed them. The contrast couldn’t be more clear.”

The details: Service providers added 4,600 jobs last month, offsetting losses of 800 jobs in goods producing industries and 300 government jobs. The service sector now has 33,000 more jobs than in February 2020, while the goods producing sector is up 6,500. Only the public sector has failed to restore jobs lost to the COVID recession, down 13,600.

“We’re going to want to keep an eye on manufacturing jobs if the UAW strike lasts into next month,” said Shields. “Auto workers each support about seven additional jobs, so we could see a short-term dip in job numbers; but they’ll use that leverage to seek big job quality improvements that could benefit other workers far beyond the scope of their union.”

The household survey: The separate household survey showed Ohio’s unemployment rate climbed 0.1 points to 3.4% as 3,000 Ohioans entered the workforce to take a job or seek work, and only 2,000 found jobs. With 5,820,000 Ohioans either working or seeking a job, Ohio’s workforce has 98,000 fewer people than in February 2020.

“This small increase in the unemployment rate actually comes from good news,” said Shields. “More people saw opportunities and came out to look for a job; and most of them found one.”

More jobs news today: Also in jobs news today, United Auto Workers walked off the job at strategic plants across all Big Three auto manufacturers at 11:59 last night, marking the first time the UAW has gone on strike against all three at the same time. Plants include the Toledo Ohio Assembly Plant. The United Auto Workers have a long history of fighting on the frontlines for workers to win their share of the wealth that they build and demanding equal rights for all. Check out our blog for more details.