The Fourth District’s unemployment rate fell to 5.2% in May, down from 5.5% in April. Over the month, employment increased 0.1%, the number of unemployed people fell 4.7%, and the labor force shrank 0.1%. Nationally, the unemployment rate was 4.6% in both May and June.

Although unemployment rates in Fourth District counties generally exceeded the national average—145 of the District’s 169 counties had unemployment rates above 4.6% in May—many counties’ rates fell from April to May. In fact, 135 counties’ unemployment rates fell, 12 remained the same, and only 22 worsened.

Rates in most of the District’s metropolitan areas likewise dropped over the month. In Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, Toledo, and Lexington, rates fell by at least 0.2 percentage point; this brought rates in Cleveland, Columbus, and Lexington down to the national average or below.

Over the year, employment growth in Cleveland (0.2%) and Dayton (–0.3%) was weak compared to the nation’s (1.4%). This resulted partly from goods-producing industries’ poor employment growth in Cleveland (–0.8%) and Dayton (–1.9%). By comparison, U.S. employment in those industries gained 1.3% over the year. Like Cleveland and Dayton, Lexington lost goods-producing employment to the tune of 1.0%; however, its total employment change matches the U.S. gain of 1.4%.