

Job openings dropped to 7.4 million last month

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WASHINGTON >> Employers posted 7.4 million job vacancies last month, a sign that the American job market continues to cool.

The Labor Department reported Tuesday that job openings in June were down from 7.7 million in May and were about what forecasters had expected.

The Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS) showed that layoffs were little changed in June. But the number of people quitting their jobs — a sign of confidence in their prospects elsewhere — dropped last month to the lowest level since December. Hiring also fell from May.

Posting on Bluesky, Glassdoor economist Daniel Zhao wrote that the report “shows softer figures with hires and quits rates still sluggish. Not dire, not amazing, more meh.”

The U.S. job market has lost momentum this year, partly because of the lingering effects of 11 interest rate hikes by the inflation fighters at the Federal Reserve in 2022 and 2023 and partly because President Donald Trump’s trade wars have created uncertainty that is paralyzing managers making hiring decisions.

On Friday, the Labor Department will put out unemployment and hiring numbers for July. They are expected to show that the unemployment rate ticked up to a still-low 4.2% in July from 4.1% in June. Businesses, government agencies and nonprofits are expected to have added 115,000 jobs in July, down from 147,000 in June, according to a survey of economists by the data firm FactSet.

The seemingly decent June hiring numbers were weaker than they appeared. Private payrolls rose just 74,000 in June, fewest since last October when hurricanes disrupted job sites. And state and local governments added nearly 64,000 education jobs in June — a total that economists suspect was inflated by seasonal quirks around the end of the school year.

So far this year, the economy has been generating 130,000 jobs a month, down from 168,000 last year and an average 400,000 a month from 2021 through 2023 during the recovery from COVID-19 lockdowns.

Employers are less likely to hire, but they’re also not letting workers go either. Layoffs remain below pre-pandemic levels.