

Job seekers wait in line at a job fair June 13 in Anaheim, Calif. In June, U.S. employers posted 3.8 million openings — the most in four years — though hiring remains competitive. With 12.7 million people out of work in June, there were 3.4 unemployed people for each job. JAE C. HONG/AP

US job postings at four-year high

Labor Department reports 3.8 million openings in June

By Christopher S. Rugaber
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. employers posted the most job openings in four years in June, a sign that hiring may pick up.

The Labor Department said Tuesday that job openings rose to a seasonally adjusted 3.8 million in June, up from 3.7 million in May. That's the most since July 2008.

The data follow Friday's report that said employers in July added the most jobs in five months. A rise in openings could signal better hiring in coming months. It usually takes one to three months to fill a job.

Even with the increase, hiring is competitive. There were 12.7 million unemployed people in June, or an average of 3.4 unemployed people for each job.

That's down a bit from May and much lower than the nearly 7-1 ratio in July 2009, just after the recession ended. In a healthy job market, the ratio is usually around 2-to-1.

Still, employers have been slow to fill jobs. Since the recession ended in 2009, openings have increased 57 percent, but they remain below prerecession levels of nearly 4 million per month. Meanwhile, overall hiring is up only 19 percent. And openings are still below prerecession levels of about 5 million per month.