

Marin's jobless rate sees dramatic decline, remains lowest in the state

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Marin County's unemployment rate declined dramatically in April to 4.6 percent from 5.2 percent in March, and Marin continued its trend of having the lowest jobless rate in California, according to data released Friday by the state Employment Development Department.

The April rate marked a decline of 1.7 percentage points from 6.3 percent in the same month of 2012, with 6,600 people unemployed and seeking jobs last month. The last time Marin's jobless rate dipped below 4.6 percent was in October 2006.

Marin's unemployment rate in April was about half the statewide average of 9 percent, marking a 0.4 percentage point drop for the state from March. The county's rate was also much lower than the national jobless rate of 7.5 percent, which marks a four-year low for the nation from 7.6 percent in March.

"Marin County looks like it's going to continue to see labor growth through the end of this year," said Robert Eyer, CEO of the Marin Economic Forum and a professor at Sonoma State University. "Things seem like they're just kind of cooking along."

Eyer said the speed at which the county is regaining jobs is reminiscent of the middle of the last decade and the late 1990s. **He said the county has created about 4,200 jobs over the past 12 months.**

"Marin County's been doing pretty well the past two-and-a-half years. In late 2010 is where you start to see some momentum pick up," he said.

San Mateo County recorded the second-lowest figure for April of 5.1 percent, and San Francisco had the third-lowest with 5.4 percent. In the region including Marin, San Francisco and San Mateo counties, the total number of jobs increased by 4,100 to a little more than 1 million in April, according to state data. Leisure and hospitality expanded by 1,500 jobs, and construction services climbed by 1,100 jobs.

The jobless rate within Marin varied. While Corte Madera, Larkspur, Mill Valley and Sausalito all boasted unemployment rates below 3.5 percent, San Rafael, Novato and San Anselmo all reported rates exceeding 5.8 percent. Fairfax, which reported a jobless rate of 7.9 percent, was the community with the highest rate of unemployment in Marin.

California's jobless rate is at its lowest point since November 2008, nearly a year after the recession began. The state was among three states in April, including New York and South Carolina, that experienced the sharpest drops in unemployment.

Nearly 1.7 million Californians remain unemployed, down 300,000 from April 2012.

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