

Sonoma County posts best job growth in decade

Dan Verel, Business Journal Staff Reporter

Friday, April 19, 2013, 10:10 am

Categories: [Breaking News](#), [Employment](#), [Industry News](#), [Lake Report](#), [Marin Report](#), [Mendocino Report](#), [Napa Report](#), [North Bay News](#), [Solano Report](#), [Sonoma Report](#), [Sonoma Report newsletter 1st story](#), [Top News Item](#), [Top News Stories](#) | [No Comments](#)

Unemployment rates across the North Bay in March dropped several percentage points, and Sonoma County had its best year-over-year job growth in 12 years, according to state figures released this morning.

Sonoma County grew its workforce by 4 percent over the year, the best growth since February 2001 at the height of the tech boom, when job growth increased by 4.2 percent, according to analysis of Employment Development Department estimates.

Last month, Sonoma County added the most jobs in a 12-month period, 7,000, since the 7,300 jobs added in the 12 months ending in March 2001.

In March, the county jobless rate was 7.3 percent, down from a revised 7.6 percent in February and below last year's rate of 9.4 percent

Over the year, trade, transportation and utilities added the most jobs at 1,900, followed by leisure and hospitality, which added 1,400. The professional and business services, education and health services and the government sectors each added 900 jobs over the year, while construction added 500 positions.

Over the month, leisure and hospitality added 300 jobs, while professional and business services and education and health added 200 and 300 jobs, respectively.

Industry employment last month was 178,000, still 22,000 jobs below the county's employment high watermark of 200,000 positions in October 2007. That was when the housing market slump, which started in mid-2006, was pulling down local employment as real estate-connected companies shed jobs.

Marin County, part the three-county West Bay region that includes San Francisco and San Mateo counties, continued to post the lowest jobless rate in California at 5.2 percent. That's down from February's rate of 5.4 percent and 6.4 percent a year before. Industry employment figures for 2012 and the first three months of this year aren't yet available.

Napa County's March rate was 6.7 percent, down from a revised 7 percent the previous month and below the year-ago rate of 8.7 percent. Manufacturing, which includes wine production, led the way with 1,100 jobs over the year. Leisure and hospitality followed with 900 jobs, while trade, transportation and utilities and construction each added 400. The government sector added 200 jobs.

Over the month, gains occurred in professional services, at 200, and hospitality, education and health and the trades adding 100 apiece.

The unemployment rate in the Solano County was 8.9 percent in March, down from a revised 9.3 percent in February, and below the year-ago estimate of 10.9 percent.

Trade, transportation and utilities led the way with 1,100 new jobs over the year, while construction added 1,000 and leisure and hospitality added 500 jobs over the year. Over the month, hospitality added 400 jobs, education and health and the trades both added 300 and professional services added 200.

Lake County's preliminary jobless rate in March is 14 percent, down from 14.5 percent in February and well below last year's rate of 16.7 percent. Farming added 340 jobs over the year.

Mendocino County's rate dipped to 9 percent in March, down from 9.4 percent in February and 11.2 percent. Yearly job gains occurred largely in leisure and hospitality, at 310 jobs, farming, which added 110 jobs over the year.

The comparable rate in California in March was 9.4 percent, while nationally it was 7.6 percent.

Link to article: <http://www.northbaybusinessjournal.com/72185/march-2013-employment-figures/>