

## Marin's jobless rate dropped slightly in November from October rates

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Marin's jobless rate dropped in November by two-tenths of a percentage point to 4.6 percent from the October rate of 4.8 percent, according to data released Friday by the state Employment Development Department.

Marin continued to have the lowest jobless rate in California with 6,500 people unemployed in November. About 136,200 people in the county had jobs last month, with the majority of those employees working in San Rafael and Novato. Those cities also reported the largest numbers of unemployed people in the county, with 1,800 people without jobs in San Rafael and 1,500 people without work in Novato, according to non-seasonally adjusted data.

Jobless rates have improved in the county since November of last year when the jobless rate was 5.7 percent — 1.1 percentage points higher than this year's November rate. In the region including Marin, San Francisco and San Mateo counties, the overall jobless rate dropped two-tenths of a percentage point in November to 5 percent.

Robert Eyler, CEO of the Marin Economic Forum and a professor at Sonoma State University, said Marin is continuing to do well as the economy rebounds.

"This is the lowest unemployment rate Marin has been at since the recession began," Eyler said. "June 2008 was when it was at least this low or better."

As far as actual job numbers are concerned, Eyler said the numbers are back where they were in 2008.

"We're back almost where we were before the last boom cycle right at the end of the dot-com run," Eyler said.

The total number of jobs located in the West Bay counties of Marin, San Francisco and San Mateo increased by 5,400 to a little more than 1 million from October to November. Retail outlets added 3,700 jobs for the holiday shopping season, performing better than a prior 10-year average addition of 3,100 jobs between October and November.

Since November of last year, the number of jobs in the West Bay climbed by 24,500 positions, or 2.4 percent. Non-farm jobs in the private sector rose by 23,500 jobs, or 2.7 percent. During the year professional and business services saw the largest gain with 9,600 jobs followed by the leisure and hospitality industry with 6,700 more jobs, marking the industry's highest November total on record.

Racy Ming, Marin County workforce investment board director, said the outlook for Marin County in 2014 is positive.

"Things are trending in the right direction," Ming said. "It's been a good, solid trend of decreases. We've been seeing a good pattern for the last year."

Eyler agreed.

"Most counties in California will continue to grow in 2014 and potentially in 2015," he said.

Jobless rates have also improved statewide, with the statewide seasonally adjusted November rate ranking at 8.5 percent — down 1.4 percentage points from last year. The state's unemployment rate has fallen two-tenths of a percentage point since October. It had fallen to 8.5 percent in June before bouncing back up to 8.9 percent by August.

In the past year, payrolls in California have grown by 226,000 jobs, second behind Texas, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"We added a large number of jobs," said Irena Asmundson, chief economist at the state Department of Finance. "People are finding work."

California has added 903,000 jobs since February 2010, when the state employment department says the economic recovery began. Despite the gains, the state still exceeds the national unemployment rate, which dropped to 7.0 percent in November from 7.3 in October and 7.8 percent from the same time last year. Nearly 1.6 million people remained unemployed in the state last month, down 34,000 from October.

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