

## Marin's jobless rate continues downward trend in December

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Marin County continued to experience a drop in unemployment rates in December by four-tenths of a percentage point to 4.2 percent from the November rate of 4.6 percent, according to data released Friday by the state Employment Development Department.

Marin again had the lowest jobless rate in California with 6,000 people unemployed, down from 6,500 unemployed workers in November. About 136,900 people in the county had jobs last month, with most employees working in the cities of San Rafael and Novato. The county's jobless rate improved in December by 1.4 percentage points from the same month in 2012.

Robert Eyer, head of the Marin Economic Forum and a professor at Sonoma State University, said Marin is doing well, employing 2,900 more people in December than it did in December 2012.

"Obviously the employment rate continuing to shrink helps a lot," Eyer said.

In the region including Marin, San Francisco and San Mateo counties, the overall jobless rate dropped four-tenths of a percentage point in December to 4.6 percent — marking a large decrease from the December 2012 figure of 6.1 percent.

San Mateo had the second lowest unemployment rate in the state behind Marin with 4.6 percent, followed by San Francisco with 4.8 percent. In the West Bay counties of Marin, San Francisco and San Mateo, jobs increased by 6,400 to a little more than 1 million from November to December. Trade, transportation and utility services led the increase by adding 2,600 jobs — with retail accounting for 1,400 of those positions. Professional and business services increased by 2,100 jobs, much better than its average gain of 600 jobs at this time of year, and construction gained 300 jobs instead of seeing its usual December loss of 700 jobs.

Since December of 2012, the number of jobs in the West Bay has climbed by 2.6 percent, or 26,700 jobs. Professional and business services added 10,600 jobs to reach its highest monthly total on record. Construction added 3,400 jobs and posted the fastest year-over job growth rate of any major industry group with 9.4 percent.

When the January jobless figures are released, Eyer said it's possible the Bay Area and state could see an uptick in unemployment numbers as many seasonal jobs will have ended. In addition, the state's drought might also raise the unemployment rate.

"The water situation may have some effect on this," Eyer said. "There might be some short-term job losses."

As people foresee the need to cutback on water and possibly pay more for water, some businesses may cut back on their workforce — especially in the farm and construction industries.

Farm jobs in the Marin, San Francisco and San Mateo counties have decreased from December 2012 to December 2013 by about 100 jobs, according to the Employment Development Department. During that same year-long period construction jumped from 36,100 jobs to 39,500.

California's jobless rate also improved in December to 8.3 percent, down from 8.5 percent in November. The state's jobless figure is 1.5 percentage points lower than it was in December 2012. A total of 13,600 nonfarm payroll jobs were added last month, bringing total job gains in the state to 922,500 since February 2010 — when the department says the recovery from the recession began. The state's unemployment rate was at 9 percent or higher for five years until May 2013.

The national jobless rate declined from 7 percent to 6.7 percent in December despite a decline in job growth, with the Labor Department reporting Jan. 10 that only 74,000 jobs were created nationwide after four straight months of totals higher than 200,000.

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### Marin Unemployment Rates

- Marin's December 2013 unemployment rate was 4.2 percent.
- About 6,000 people were unemployed in Marin in December 2013.
- Marin's unemployment rate improved in December by 1.4 percentage points from the same month in 2012.