

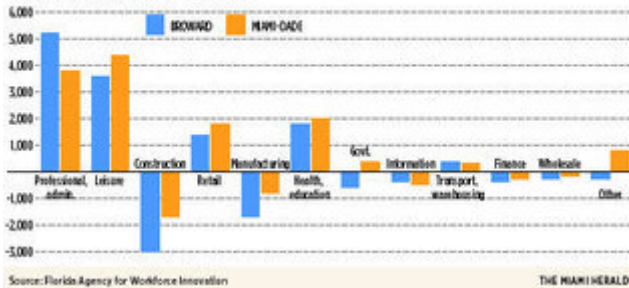
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## Unemployment back to 13 percent in Miami-Dade, even with 16,000 more jobs

By DOUGLAS HANKS

### A surge in white-collar jobs

South Florida added 15,700 jobs in April, with professional services leading the way in hiring. Changes in employment since April 2010:



Hiring continues to rebound in South Florida, but not fast enough to make much of a dent in the worst unemployment crisis on record.

Even with nearly 16,000 new jobs in the region, Miami-Dade's unemployment rate inched up from 12.9 percent to 13.1 percent last month as more people tried looking for work. The higher unemployment rate rolled the county back to where it was in November. In Broward, the picture looked a bit brighter as unemployment dropped from 9.3 percent to 8.9 percent.

In all, Florida's Agency for Workforce Innovation counted about 260,000 people as unemployed in Broward and Miami-Dade last month. But behind the jobless rates, employment numbers show a labor market on the rebound, with job gains spreading from retail and tourism to white-collar fields.

In April, the professional sector led South Florida in job growth, with 9,000 more positions. Analysts credited both an ongoing hiring spree for temporary workers and a need for more accountants, architects and other professionals as the economy recovers.

"As businesses in general expand, you're going to have more demand for attorneys, more demand for accountants, more demand for business consultants," said Manuel Lasaga, president of StratInfo, a Miami consulting firm that tracks South Florida's economy. "Our economy doesn't have the strength it did in the past. But this is a positive trend."

City National Bank conducted training Friday for recently hired employees at its new Bird Road branch in the Olympia Heights suburb of Miami. The new hires are part of a larger expansion as the bank responds to a slowly expanding economy.

"We need more loan processors. We are definitely seeing a lot more volume in our lending area," said Isabel Fernandez, head of marketing for City National. "We have 18 [job] openings posted on our website right now."



**ANDREA DIAZ, SHOWN IN HER OFFICE ON FRIDAY, MAY 20, 2011, IS A NEW HIRE AT CITY NATIONAL BANK.**

**"THIS OPPORTUNITY CAME UP AND I GRABBED IT," SAID DIAZ, WHO HAS WORKED 37 YEARS IN BANKING, AND HAD ACCEPTED A RETIREMENT OFFER FROM HER PREVIOUS EMPLOYER. IN THE JOB MARKET RECOVERY, THERE'S A GAP BETWEEN JOB OPENINGS AND PEOPLE ABLE TO FILL THEM.**

**DIAZ BRINGS DECADES OF EXPERIENCE TO HER NEW POSITION -- ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT AND A PERSONAL BANKING RELATIONSHIP SPECIALIST -- AT CITY NATIONAL BANK'S 26TH AND NEWEST BANKING CENTER. IT OPENS MONDAY AT 9696 SW 40TH ST. IN MIAMI'S WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY.**

**MARSHA HALPER / MIAMI HERALD**

Hammered by the housing crash, financial industries like banking took a big hit during the recession. But in recent months, the financial sector began flirting with a bottom in job losses. April's employment report showed the sector down just 700 jobs compared to April 2010 after scattered gains earlier in the year. As the financial markets crashed in late 2008 and into 2009, South Florida's finance sector was losing about 14,000 jobs a month.

Lisa Gonzalez started two weeks ago as a manager in Gibraltar Bank and Trust's commercial-credit division. The longtime banking executive described the hiring climate as challenging but not hostile.

"It's a competitive market because of the downturn," she said. "But the opportunities are out there."

Of the 15,700 jobs added to Broward and Miami-Dade payrolls last month, the biggest contributor was the professional sector's 9,000 positions. The hospitality sector added 8,000, making it the second-largest jobs producer, and health services and education finished third with 3,800 jobs. The job gains would have been higher if not for steep losses in manufacturing (down 2,500 positions) and construction (down nearly 5,000).

Even with more jobs, unemployment crept up in Miami-Dade because more people began looking for work.

Miami-Dade's labor force, which measures both the employed and job seekers, increased 3 percent over April 2010 while employment increased just 1.3 percent. In Broward, the labor market barely moved (up .2 percent) and employment increased 1 percent.

And analysts say it will take years for the job market to fully recover. South Florida has 148,000 fewer jobs than it did in April 2007, a peak year for hiring.

Statewide, unemployment dropped from 11.1 percent to 10.8 percent, the lowest since September 2009. That's still well above the national jobless rate of 9 percent. In all, 996,000 Floridians were counted as unemployed in April, the first time that figure dropped below 1 million since October 2009. Florida businesses employed 14,900 more people than in March, the seventh consecutive month of job growth for Florida.

As it has during much of the downturn, the Florida Keys bested the rest of Florida's labor market in April with the lowest unemployment rate in the state: 6.3 percent.

The new jobless numbers from Florida show a slight retreat for Miami-Dade in terms of short-term recovery and growing momentum for Broward. In Miami-Dade, the 10,000 new jobs in April fell below March's 11,900 new jobs. But in Broward, the 5,700 jobs added in April was an improvement over March's 3,400 new positions.

It was Miami-Dade's 10th month of job growth and the sixth for Broward.

Early gains came mostly from the tourism and retail sectors, home to some of the lowest-paying jobs in South Florida. The gains in professional services, a sector that includes architects, lawyers and accountants, suggests the recovery is spreading its footprint, said Jaap Donath, head of research for the Beacon Council, Miami-Dade's economic development agency.

"We saw retail creating jobs for a year now," he said. "Now we're seeing the next step."