



LI Job Growth Picks Up in May

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June 19, 2014*

The Long Island job market perked up last month.

The Island had 12,200 more jobs in May than it had a year earlier, state Labor Department data released Thursday show. It was the fastest pace for job growth since February; after that the gains in March and April dropped below 11,000.

"There's definitely some uncertainty still going on in the broader economy, and so we'll see uneven job growth," said Shital Patel, labor market analyst in the department's Hicksville office.

Lower-wage sectors led job growth in May. The trade, transportation and utilities sector, powered by retail, grew the most, by 6,700 jobs.

By contrast, the Island's highest-paying sector, financial activities, which includes banking, insurance and real estate, lost 2,300 jobs, compared with a year earlier. "The ongoing consolidation of the financial-services industry continued to impact employment in the sector," Patel said.

Some of the Island's other higher-paying sectors showed some gains. Construction added 3,700 jobs. Patel noted that construction on both residential and nonresidential projects drove the increases.

John Rizzo, chief economist of the Long Island Association, the region's largest business group, said the employment increase is encouraging since, as he noted, real estate sales have "been sluggish" in recent months.

Increased construction "suggests that the real estate market may be set for a turnaround," he said.

All told, the Island had 1.30 million jobs in May, up 0.9 percent from 1.29 million a year ago.

Phyllis Sajdak, a licensed mental health counselor, snagged a job last month when she was offered a position as a behavioral intervention specialist at the nonprofit EPIC Long Island. After 14 years at another nonprofit, she quit in January because

she said she needed a change. She expected a long job search.

"I am a little older," said Sajdak, who also has done part-time consulting work for the past two years. "So I thought my prospects might not be so great."

But EPIC, which provides services for people with developmental disabilities and mental health challenges, contacted her in April, four months after she began her search.

Government layoffs continued to drag down employment numbers. The government sector had 3,700 fewer jobs, mostly because of continuing layoffs at local public schools. The private sector gained 15,900 jobs, or 1.5 percent, compared with a year earlier, but government layoffs cut the overall employment gain to 12,200. The state private sector grew 1.4 percent in May and the nation's increased 2.1 percent, both year over year.

The department uses year-over-year comparisons because the data aren't adjusted to reflect seasonal swings in employment.
