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Unemployment in the Tampa Bay region fell below 6 percent last month, as the state added 34,000 jobs in April, matching a national improvement in jobs.

Florida's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell to 6.2 percent in April 2014, down from 6.3 in March and down 1.4 percentage points from 7.6 percent a year ago. The number of jobs in the state was up by 246,800 from a year ago, an increase of 3.3 percent.

“This looks to be a broad recovery in Florida, with the labor market building momentum,” said University of Central Florida economist Sean Snaith. “It's been a good start for 2014, and as long as we continue this momentum, we're looking at a much healthier labor market.”

The sector adding the most jobs in April was professional and business services, which added 56,000 jobs over the last year, followed by leisure and hospitality, which added 54,000 jobs. “Those are the lawyers, accountants, consultants and other white collar jobs,” Snaith said. “Early in the recovery, it was by and large tourism that was pulling us out of the hole. Now we see virtually all sectors creating jobs.”

Of the 22 metro areas in Florida, 21 had over-the-year job gains in April 2014, led by Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford (plus 47,200 jobs), Miami-Miami Beach-Kendall (plus 34,600 jobs), and Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater (plus 30,900 jobs.)

That Tampa region improvement also brought the unemployment rate locally to 5.9 percent, down from 7.2 percent the same time last year. Those figures are “non-seasonally adjusted,” meaning they aren't adjusted to compensate for normal seasonal swings, but Snaith said the Bay area's current 5.9 percent April

unemployment rate clearly shows progress when you compare it to April last year,

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begun hiring for significant projects here, he said.

“Those are all jobs that pay above the average wage in Hillsborough County,” Homans said. “Just this week we had two headquarters operations teams doing site visits on the same days ... It was a handful, but indicative of the kind of activity we are seeing.”

Florida is far from alone in adding jobs.

Unemployment rates fell in nearly all U.S. states last month, and half the states now have rates below 6 percent. The figures are a sign of widespread, if slow, improvement in the nation's job market.

Two weeks ago, national jobs figures for April showed the economy's hiring kicked into high gear and employers expanded payrolls by the most in two years. The nation added 288,000 non-farm jobs in April, and the unemployment rate fell from 6.7 percent to 6.3 percent, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the lowest jobless rate since the collapse of Lehman Brothers. The total number of people out of work fell by 733,000, an improvement of the prior four months when national jobs figures showed little change.

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