

FLORIDA KEYS SHOW GROWTH IN JOBS



[caption id="attachment_6069" align="alignnone" width="150" caption="florida flag"]

[[caption] The Florida Keys, which are in Monroe County, saw some job growth recently while the county led the entire state once again as it posted the lowest unemployment numbers in the 67 counties of Florida. The September unemployment rate for Monroe was 6.7 percent, making it 22 percent better than rates that were recorded last year when unemployed workers in the Keys sat at 8.6 percent. In September, labor officials for the state of Florida reported that the unemployment rate dropped to 10.6 percent, which dropped for a total of one-tenth of 1 percent. Despite the drop, the jobless rate for Florida is still 1.5 percentage points higher than the country's average, which is at 9.1 percent. The reason for the job growth in the Florida Keys is strong tourism rates. Compared to the same timeframe last year, the occupancy levels at hotels, the average room rates, and the arrivals at Key West Airport have all increased. There has been a 23 percent increase in passenger counts in August this year compared to August of last year. These stats were provided by the Monroe County Airport Authority. The month of September saw a passenger count increase of 17.2 percent. "We're at 510,000 for the year and still have three months to go," Peter Horton, airport director, said. "We could be seeing the best year ever if this keeps up." The record year for passenger traffic at Key West Airport was in 2005 when the number was 618,174 passengers. "We've had such a good year," added Jodi Weinhofer, president of the Lodging Association of the Florida Keys and Key West. "We've been up significantly all summer, with all months the best in five years." Smith Travel Research reported that the September occupancy numbers for Key West finished 10 percent ahead of the same time last year. Figures for the county, which exclude Key West, went up 7.6 percent ahead of the levels seen in 2010. The Miami Herald reported that the hospitality industry has led the job growth in the state, which began in South Florida last year. The Miami Herald also reported that South Florida recorded excellent employment for jobs in hospitality, which passed a peak of 174,200 employees, which was set back in July of 2008. Since 2007, there has been a 4 percent jump in jobs in the healthcare and education categories in the state of Florida, which is not rivaled by any other industry. South Florida's popularity amongst retirees has helped the healthcare industry in the state explode with jobs, making it one of the strongest industries during the recession recovery. The largest employer in the Florida Keys is the Navy, then the Monroe County School Board, then Monroe County (which includes the Sheriff's Office) and finally the public utilities. The state of Florida can thank its tourism spots, especially the Keys, as the unemployment numbers continue to drop.