

UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE REGION LOWEST IT'S BEEN IN PAST FEW MONTHS



The unemployment rate for the metro area of Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton has actually declined to 8.9 percent during the month of December in 2011. With the decline, the jobless rate for the region has reached its lowest point since May of 2011, when the jobless rate was at 8.7 percent. The Department of Labor and Industry released this statistical data the other day. While there was a decline and the jobless rate has decreased for the first time, the metro area still led the state when it came down to unemployment, for 21 months in a row. An analyst for the Department of Labor and Industry, Steven Zellers, has said, "Overall, it's good." Zellers also says, "Pennsylvania has been doing generally better over several months and it is catching up with the smaller areas." The jobless rate managed to decrease because in the region, there was a small boost in employment. Seasonal employment in all three counties had increased by 700 during the month of November. This information was provided within the state data. The entire labor force decreased by about 900 people during the month of December, leaving the total at about 279, 200. An economist for the University of Scranton, Satyajit Ghosh, has said, "If the labor market had stayed the same, we would not have seen a three-tenths of a percentage drop." Ghosh also says, "We have a little momentum. It is getting backed up by the job-creation data." Employment within the retail trade industry had increased by 800 during the month of December and was expected to do so due to the amount of money being spent during the holiday season. The general merchandising sector also increased employment by 300. Health services, however, saw a decrease in employment, with a loss of nearly 700 jobs. Dr. Ghosh says, "I'm kind of hopeful." Ghosh also says, "I see good signs all over that the economy is turning around." As of right now, State College has the lowest unemployment rate for the state, at just about 5.1 percent. Both Allentown and Philadelphia seem to have higher jobless rates, at 8.4 percent. The metro area has had the highest unemployment rates for the state since April of 2010. The jobless rate in Lackawanna County during the month of December was at 8.6 percent, which was down from 8.8 percent during the previous month in November. The unemployment rate in Wyoming County and Luzerne County also dropped in December from the previous month of November. While improvement has definitely occurred, there are still many individuals who are unemployed and are living in the region. There are still some people who have gone without employment for an extended period of time and are still frustrated with the slow recovery of the economy. Ghosh says, "The fact that the economy is recovering is still not sinking into people's heads."

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