

THE BUFFALO NEWS

Another month, another modern-day low for Buffalo Niagara unemployment



Toni Sawyer of CH2M Hill BWXT West Valley, left, talks with Rafel Lopez, right, during the Buffalo News Job Fair earlier this month. (Mark Mulville/News file photo)

By David Robinson | *Published May 22, 2019*

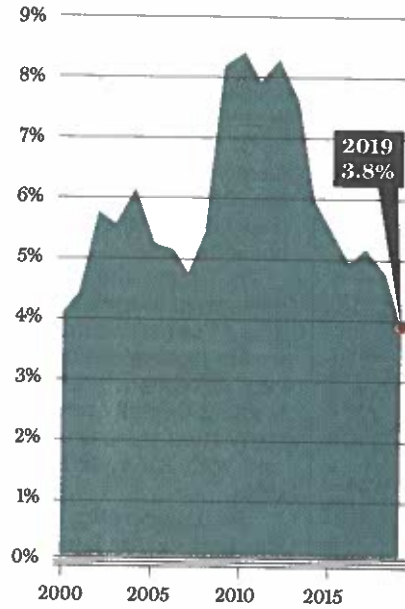
The Buffalo Niagara unemployment rate dropped to another nearly 30-year low in April.

The region's jobless rate fell to 3.8% during April – its lowest level for any April since at least 1990 – and almost a full percentage point below the 4.7% rate of April 2018.

Local unemployment rate drops

Unemployment rate dips

Region's jobless rate for April fell to more than 29-year lows of 3.8%



Not seasonally adjusted. Rates are for April of each year.

Source: State Labor Department

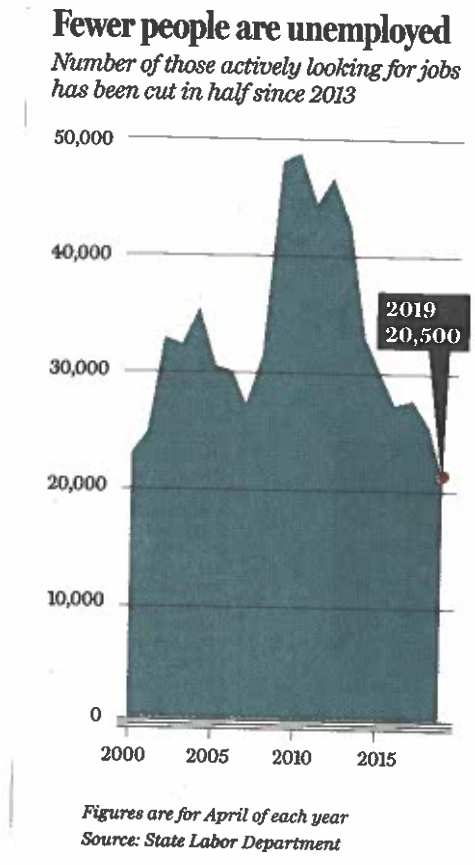
While the pace of hiring across the Buffalo Niagara region remains well below the national average, the latest report on unemployment from the State Labor Department shows that the Buffalo Niagara job market remains tight.

With a labor pool that is about the same size as it was two years ago, even a modest uptick in hiring can push down the jobless rate, and the shortage of qualified workers makes it hard for businesses to hire.

“It’s getting harder and harder for employers to find people,” said Timothy Glass, the Labor Department’s regional economist in Buffalo.

The local unemployment rate hasn’t been this low since at least the 1980s.

Fewer people are jobless



While local job growth is only about half of the national average, a steadily shrinking labor pool over the past decade, caused in large part by a wave of retiring baby boomers, has pushed unemployment to more than 29-year lows.

While the April jobless rate of 3.8% isn't adjusted for seasonal factors, so it isn't directly comparable with different months, the local unemployment rate has been this low only once before – when it was 3.7% in October 2018.

The number of people who are actively looking for work is at a 29-year low.

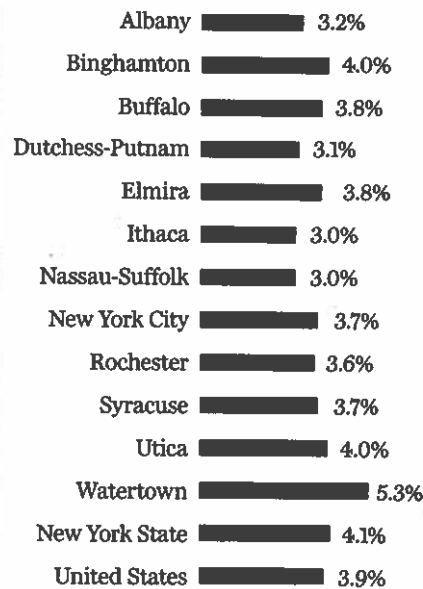
Over the last six years, the number of local workers who are unemployed has been cut in half. That means companies are facing much stiffer competition when they try to hire, and it also means that workers with sought-after skills are in especially short supply.

In the last year, the number of unemployed people has dropped by 18%. Many of the remaining unemployed face barriers to entering the workforce, such as a skills, child care, or transportation.

Unemployment rates by metro area

Unemployment rates by region

Buffalo Niagara jobless rate is the 11th-highest among 15 major New York metro areas



Unemployment rates are for April of each year; not seasonally adjusted

Source: State Labor Department

The local job market is tight, but it's even tighter in other places.

While unemployment is low by local standards, the jobless rate here still is higher than it is nationally and across all of New York State. In fact, only four of New York's 15 major metro areas – Binghamton, Glens Falls, Utica and Watertown – have a higher unemployment rate than the Buffalo Niagara region.

There's even a disparity across Buffalo Niagara, too. The 4.4% percent unemployment rate in Niagara County is well above the 3.7% jobless rate in Erie County.



David Robinson – *David Robinson is the deputy business editor for The News, where has*

worked since graduating from Syracuse University in 1985. A New Hampshire native, he started out in the News' Tonawanda bureau and moved into the business news department in October 1987, exactly a week after the stock market crash.