

# U.S. Job Market Takes Break After Hiring Binge

BY PAUL WISEMAN  
 AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — The U.S. job market took a breather in March after its best hiring stretch since the Great Recession.

Employers added 120,000 jobs last month — half the December-February pace and well short of the 210,000 economists were expecting. The unemployment rate fell from 8.3 percent in February to 8.2 percent, the lowest since January 2009, but that was largely because many Americans stopped looking for work.

Still, few economists expect hiring to fizzle in spring and summer, as it did the past two years. And they blamed seasonal factors for much of Friday's disappointing report from the Labor Department.

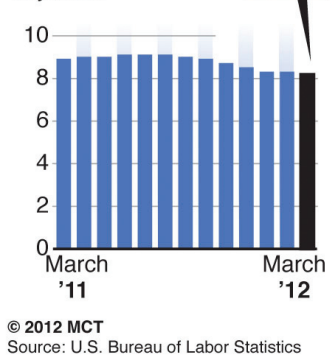
"We don't think this is the start of another spring dip in labor market conditions," said Paul Ashworth, chief U.S. economist with Capital Economics.

The report was also closely watched in political circles. If employers retreat on hiring, consumers could lose confidence in the economy and potentially dim President Barack Obama's re-election hopes.

Ashworth and other economists cited the weather for the latest jobs report. A warm January and February allowed construction companies and other businesses that work outdoors to hire workers a few weeks earlier than usual, effectively stealing jobs from March. It helps explain a 7,000 drop in construction jobs.

## Jobless rate

Percent of civilian labor force that is unemployed, by month, seasonally adjusted:



Alan Amdahl, who has run his own construction company in Sioux Falls, S.D., for three decades, said a mild winter helped contribute to a flurry of new remodeling jobs. He started hiring in January.

"Our winter didn't really exist," he said. "It's just incredible. People didn't hibernate."

Economists also say the numbers can bounce around from month to month. Consistently creating 200,000 jobs a month is tough. The economy hasn't put together four straight months of 200,000 or more new jobs since early 2000.

Economists are still encouraged by the recent hiring trend:

Each month from January through March has generated an average of 212,000 jobs.

Anthony Chan, chief economist at JP Morgan Wealth Management, noted strong growth among businesses that are especially sensitive to the economy's health. Hotels and restaurants hired 39,000 workers. Manufacturers added 37,000.

The factory hiring is especially welcome. Expanding factories create more jobs at the mines that produce raw materials, in warehouses and at trucking companies.

Government jobs, which declined by an average of 22,000 a month last year, fell just 1,000 in March. An improving economy is generating tax revenue and easing budget problems at city halls and statehouses across the country.

The March slowdown brings back painful memories of what happened in mid-2010 and again in 2011, when the economy lost momentum and job growth sputtered.

Most investors didn't have the chance to deliver a verdict on the report. The stock market was closed for Good Friday. Bond markets closed early.

The job market had been on a recent roll. From December through February, the country added 734,000 jobs, an average of 245,000 each month. The only three-month stretch that was better since the recession ended was March through May 2010, when the government was hiring tens of thousands of temporary workers for the census.

## Bosnia Marks 20 Years Since War Started

BY AIDA CERKEZ  
 Associated Press

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — Bosnians walked silently and sobbed on Sarajevo's main street, leaving flowers and gifts on 11,541 red chairs arranged in seemingly endless rows — the number represents the men, women and children killed in a siege that ended up being the longest of a city in modern history.

Sarajevo marked the 20th anniversary of the start of the Bosnian war Friday. Exhibitions, concerts and performances were held, but the impact of the empty chairs reduced many to tears.

"It's as if the whole tragedy materialized, became visible," said Asja Rasavac, who covered her face with an umbrella, embarrassed for not being able to control the tears. "One cannot even describe the feeling. It's not hatred. It's not anger. It's just endless sadness."

Hundreds of the chairs were small, representing the slain children. On some, passers-by left teddy bears, little plastic cars, other toys or candy.

"The amount of the chairs really hit me, especially the little ones," said Ana Macanovic, who placed white roses on seven chairs — each for a member of her family killed by mortar shells during the siege.

Of the tens of thousands of passers-by, hardly anyone spoke a word. Many just walked and

sobbed, overwhelmed by the length of the red river of empty chairs.

"This city needs to stop for a moment and pay tribute to its killed citizens," said Haris Pasovic, organizer of the "Sarajevo Red Line."

The Serb siege of Sarajevo went on longer than the World War II 900-day siege of Leningrad, now St. Petersburg. Its 380,000 people were left without food, electricity, water or heating for 46 months, hiding from the 330 shells a day that smashed into the city.

On the fateful day of April 6, 1992, around 40,000 people from all over the country — Muslim Bosniaks, Christian Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats — poured into a square further down the red street to demand peace from their quarreling nationalist politicians.

The European Community had recognized the former Yugoslav republic of Bosnia as an independent state after most of its people voted for independence. But the vote went down along ethnic lines, with Bosniaks and Croats voting for independence, and Bosnian Serbs preferring to stay with Serb-dominated Yugoslavia.

The ethnic unity being displayed on the Sarajevo square irritated Serb nationalists, who then shot into the crowd from a nearby hotel, killing five people and igniting the 1992-1995 war. The Serb nationalists, helped by neighboring Serbia, laid siege to Sarajevo and within a few months occupied 70

percent of Bosnia, expelling all non-Serbs from territory they controlled.

Bosniaks and Croats — who started off as allies — then turned against each other, so all three groups ended up fighting a war that took more than 100,000 lives, made half of the population homeless and left the once-ethnically mixed country devastated and divided into mono-ethnic enclaves.

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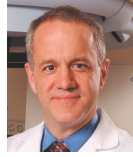
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