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## The Best And Worst Cities For Jobs Right Now

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It's difficult to be optimistic about the bleak job market when unemployment is stuck at around 9.1%, but a survey just released by employment services firm ManpowerGroup offers hope for job seekers in many places around the country.

The survey reveals that the metropolitan area with the most optimistic forecast of all for hiring this fall is San Antonio, Texas, and there's also the good news that employers in 45 states expect the bleak employment picture to perk up. In fact, hiring managers in dozens of metropolitan areas anticipate considerable increases in hiring, while others present a darker forecast.

[ManpowerGroup](#) surveyed more than 18,000 employers in 100 metropolitan areas to find out who's hiring, who's firing and who plans to maintain their current staff levels in the fourth quarter of 2011, October through December. Of the surveyed employers, 16% anticipate an increase in staffing levels in their hiring plans, while 11% expect a decrease in payrolls. The difference between those numbers provides what ManpowerGroup calls a net employment outlook of 5%—or 7% when seasonally adjusted, which is still up from 6% for the same period last year, but down slightly from last quarter. Seventy percent of employers expect no change in their staffing, and the final 3% of employers are uncertain.

While the outlook is positive overall, the one-point drop from the third quarter is the first decrease in nine quarters. “The numbers are not going in the right direction this quarter, and they are not as robust as we would have liked them to be,” says Melanie Holmes, a vice president at ManpowerGroup. “Employers are hesitant about hiring in this economic climate. They are remaining guarded, and that is reflected in these results.”

Still, “We do see some bright spots in hiring, especially in **San Antonio**, which has the most promising hiring outlook for the fourth quarter,” says Jonas Prising, president of the Americas at ManpowerGroup. “Employers in other markets in Texas, including El Paso and **Austin**, are also anticipating strong hiring increases.”

The **San Antonio** metro area enjoys a 17% net employment outlook, the percentage of employers that expect to add employees (25%) minus the percentage that expect to reduce their workforce (8%). Another 64% said they anticipate no change, and 3% didn’t know.

“**San Antonio** has continued to see new jobs created, and new jobs brought to the region,” says Richard Perez, president and chief executive of the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce. “I would say that **San Antonio** is well positioned to come out ahead in the future as well because our cost of living remains low, making it a good environment for companies to increase their investment in jobs here, plus we have a very talented labor pool because we graduate more than 30,000 from our colleges and universities each year.”

The industry with the largest economic impact and largest number of employees in **San Antonio** is health care and biosciences, with more than 142,000 employees, Perez says. “This surprises a lot of people who think we are only a tourism town. One of every five workers is in the health care sector, and it has an estimated \$24 billion economic impact here. We also have large manufacturing and financial services sectors. And yes, we have a significant tourism industry in San Antonio, with approximately 106,000 employees.”

The largest employers in the **San Antonio** area include the Department of Defense, whose workplaces include Fort Sam Houston, Lackland Air Force Base and Randolph Air Force Base. Combined they employ over 70,000 individuals. The largest corporate employer is **San Antonio**-based financial services firm United Services Automobile Association, with 14,800 employees. H-E-B Grocery Company follows close behind with 14,600 workers. AT&T, Toyota, [JPMorgan Chase](#), [Wells Fargo](#), [Valero](#) Energy, Harland Clarke and Citibank are some of the area’s other major corporate employers.

“**San Antonio’s** list of large employers is long and diverse,” Perez says. “We do not rely heavily on one area and that is by design. San Antonio has many industries that together keep us a resilient economy. We are fortunate to have many strong industries, and many strong companies with large employee bases.”

Employers in the Cape Coral-Fort Myers and Baltimore-Towson metro areas also anticipate a significant upswing in hiring for the next quarter.

Nearly a quarter of Cape Coral-Fort Myers employers reported positive forecasts, while 6% drew a bleaker picture. Sixty-nine percent said they won’t be changing their employment levels, and the remaining 3% are unsure of their hiring plans. With a net employment outlook of 16%, the southwest Florida metro area is the second best place for finding a job this fall.

Baltimore-Towson employers are expressing similar sentiments. Twenty percent of that metro area’s hiring managers anticipate a bright fourth quarter. Meanwhile, 7% expect to decrease their payrolls, 71%

anticipate no change and 2% are uncertain. This yields a net employment outlook of 13% and positions the Maryland metropolis as the third best place for finding a job this fall. Greensboro-High Point, N.C., St. Louis and Tulsa enjoy the same rank.

Unfortunately not all cities are as confident about hiring. The net employment outlook in Spokane and Las Vegas is a far weaker -4%—and those metropolitan areas aren't even the worst. The Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville, Fla., metro area yields a net employment outlook of -5% for the quarter.

The worst area of all for finding a job this fall is Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk, Conn.

Only 12% of surveyed Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk metro area employers plan to hire between October and December, while 19% expect to reduce their staff levels. Sixty-nine percent expect to maintain their current workforce. This yields a net employment outlook of -7% for the Connecticut metropolis.

“Although this quarter we are seeing relatively stable hiring compared with last quarter and even the year before, we are way below the double-digit employment outlook numbers we saw prior to the end of 2008,” Prising says. “With daily fluctuations in the market and mixed news reports about housing and consumer sentiment, employers are just plain uncertain about the future. Until they see a sustainable demand for their products and services, employers will not commit to hiring in big numbers.”

**Courtesy of JB Goodwin**