# JOB OPENINGS JUMP TO RECORD

## April numbers hit 5.4 million, could boost confidence

**Paul Davidson**
USA TODAY

The number of job openings in the U.S. surged to a 14-year high in April, a sign that job growth could strengthen further in coming months, the Department of Labor said Tuesday.

Employers posted 5.4 million openings in April, up from 5.1 million in March and the most since labor began tracking the figure in 2000, according to the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS). Openings climbed by 100,000 in health care and social assistance; 88,000 in trade, transportation and utilities; and 44,000 in professional and business services.

The number of hires fell slightly to 5 million but remained near recent highs. Through much of the past year, hiring has lagged behind openings — a disparity that some economists attribute to mismatches between the skills of employees and the requirements of employers. But hiring has picked up in recent months.

Labor reported last week that employers added a net 221,000 jobs in April and 280,000 in May as the labor market bounced back after a harsh winter.

Tuesday's JOLTS report provides a more detailed view of hiring and employee movements. In April, hiring increased in construction and in state and local government but fell in professional and business services, leisure and hospitality, and trade, transportation and utilities.

The number of people quitting jobs fell to 2.7 million from a seven-year high of 2.8 million in March. Quitting is a sign of a healthy labor market in which employees feel confident enough to leave one job for another.

Despite the drop, the relatively high number of people quitting is consistent with annual wage growth picking up from 2.3% to 3% by the end of the year as employers increase pay to attract and retain workers, says Paul Ashworth, chief U.S. economist at Capital Economics.

Another indication the balance may be shifting toward workers is that there were 1.6 unemployed workers for each job opening in April, down from 1.7 in March and a high of 6.7 in 2009.

**HIGH**