



***Monthly Employment Watch:  
Milwaukee and the Nation's Largest Cities***

**A monthly report on employment trends in the nation's largest cities**

**Prepared by:**

**The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development**

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### ***About This Report***

Each month, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Economic Development, drawing on data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Local Area Unemployment Statistics*, monitors employment trends in Milwaukee and the nation's 50 largest cities. In addition, the Center also compares employment trends in Milwaukee to a smaller and more directly comparable group of "peer" cities, the 20 largest cities of the Northeast-Midwest "Frostbelt" region. Each month, the data compiled by the Center display year-over-year total employment for three different time periods: a) the most recent year (2007-2008); b) the past four years (2004-2008), since the current mayoral administration took office (the last political cycle); and c) since 2000, the peak of the last business cycle. By looking at three different time periods, and two different samples of cities, we hope to provide a fuller sense of how Milwaukee's employment growth stacks up against other big cities over time, and how Milwaukee's position has changed over time.

### ***The Monthly Employment Watch: April***

Preliminary employment numbers released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for April 2008 offer a ray of hope that the worst of the economic slowdown may be over in the city of Milwaukee. Employment in the city fell by only 83 residents in April 2008 compared to April 2007, a year-over-year decline of 0.03%. Although this marks the ninth consecutive month in which employment in Milwaukee has declined from the same month a year earlier, the April employment losses are the lowest in the city since employment began contracting in August 2007. The steepest monthly losses were in the months between October 2007 and February 2008, when monthly year-over-year employment declines in the city of Milwaukee averaged almost 3,000 residents.

However, the April employment figures also suggest that Milwaukee may be coming out of the labor market recession more slowly than other cities across the country as well as in the Northeast-Midwest “Frostbelt.” In April 2008, Milwaukee ranked 44<sup>th</sup> among the nation’s 50 largest cities in the rate of annual employment growth, and 16<sup>th</sup> among the nation’s 20 largest Frostbelt cities (see Tables 1 and 4). By contrast, in February and March, Milwaukee ranked 38<sup>th</sup> among the nation’s 50 largest cities in employment growth, and 12<sup>th</sup> among the 20 largest Frostbelt cities in “year-over-year” employment change.

Indeed, in another sign that the national economic slowdown may be attenuating, fewer cities across the country reported employment losses in April than in recent months. In February 2008, 23 cities (including Milwaukee) reported employment declines from the year earlier; in March 2008, 17 cities (including Milwaukee) suffered employment contraction. In the preliminary April 2008 figures, only seven cities reported year-over-year employment losses; unfortunately, Milwaukee was one of them.

Since 2004, April employment in Milwaukee has increased by 1,048 (0.43%), placing the city 44<sup>th</sup> among the nation’s 50 largest cities in employment “growth” during this period (compared to 45<sup>th</sup> in March). Among the 20 largest Frostbelt cities, Milwaukee ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in employment change between April 2004-2008, (compared to 14<sup>th</sup> in March 2004-2008 rankings). These rankings confirm, once again, that Milwaukee ranks among the bottom tier of the nation’s largest cities in employment growth in recent years. Moreover, the modest increase of 1,048 employed residents since April 2004 indicates that City Hall claims of over “11,00 jobs” “leveraged” in the city of Milwaukee since the current administration came to office are, to put it euphemistically, overstated.

Since 2000, the end of the last national business cycle, April employment in Milwaukee has shrunk by 21,080, a substantial 7.86% decline. Milwaukee ranks 46<sup>th</sup> among the nation’s 50 largest cities during this period in employment performance; among Frostbelt cities, we rank 18<sup>th</sup> out of 20.

Finally, comparison of April unemployment rates in the 50 largest cities reveals a change in Milwaukee's ranking from previous months. In April 2008, Milwaukee had the 38<sup>th</sup> highest unemployment rate among the nation's 50 largest cities; in March 2008, we ranked 44<sup>th</sup> and in February 2008 we ranked 46<sup>th</sup>. Since the UWMCED *Monthly Employment Watch* began in June 2007, Milwaukee has consistently ranked in the 44-49 range on this indicator, compared to an average ranking in the high 20s in the late 1990s (and as high as 16<sup>th</sup> in the early 1990s). Thus, the ranking of 38<sup>th</sup> is an improvement over the preceding two months; however, it is still poor by historical standards. Moreover, it remains to be seen whether this improved ranking is simply a one-month statistical aberration or, given the relatively weak employment growth numbers in the city, merely a sign that many residents have become discouraged and given up looking for work, and thus are no longer counted in the unemployment statistics. Rankings in subsequent months will give us a better handle on this issue.

**Table 1 -- Employment Growth in the Nation's 50 Largest Cities:  
2007 - 2008**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>April 2007</b>	<b>April 2008</b>	<b>% Change</b>
1	Las Vegas	272,331	281,702	3.44%
2	Houston	968,703	995,114	2.73%
3	Denver	298,350	306,421	2.71%
4	El Paso	235,975	242,205	2.64%
5	San Francisco	409,633	419,352	2.37%
6	Austin	396,874	406,047	2.31%
7	San Antonio	584,180	597,215	2.23%
8	Fort Worth	295,629	302,042	2.17%
9	Seattle	349,381	356,276	1.97%
10	Dallas	559,734	570,716	1.96%
11	Atlanta	213,300	217,439	1.94%
12	Colorado Springs	205,377	209,172	1.85%
13	Columbus	394,658	401,527	1.74%
14	Nashville	297,817	302,906	1.71%
15	Portland	282,829	287,415	1.62%
16	Fresno	206,698	209,968	1.58%
17	San Jose	418,983	425,606	1.58%
18	Chicago	1,244,768	1,264,288	1.57%
19	Virginia Beach	218,529	221,822	1.51%
20	Washington, D.C.	307,417	311,947	1.47%
21	Mesa City	244,118	247,653	1.45%
22	Phoenix	803,415	815,047	1.45%
23	Honolulu	439,574	445,688	1.39%
24	Wichita	180,933	183,141	1.22%
25	Omaha	221,026	223,668	1.20%
26	New York	3,644,620	3,684,394	1.09%
27	Baltimore	257,245	259,689	0.95%
28	Boston	288,475	290,610	0.74%
29	Indianapolis	402,999	405,716	0.67%
30	Minneapolis	205,571	206,833	0.61%
31	Albuquerque	254,952	256,351	0.55%
32	Sacramento	201,787	202,880	0.54%
33	San Diego	653,242	656,516	0.50%
34	Jacksonville	391,905	393,783	0.48%
35	Philadelphia	573,702	575,805	0.37%
36	Charlotte	325,708	326,887	0.36%
37	Tucson	255,457	256,336	0.34%
38	Memphis	292,155	293,088	0.32%
39	Los Angeles	1,796,872	1,802,548	0.32%
40	Long Beach	222,623	223,326	0.32%
41	Oakland	179,860	180,343	0.27%
42	Miami	168,647	168,978	0.20%
43	Louisville	338,260	338,457	0.06%
<b>44</b>	<b>Milwaukee</b>	<b>247,230</b>	<b>247,147</b>	<b>-0.03%</b>
45	Oklahoma City	245,785	244,189	-0.65%
46	Cleveland	172,663	171,287	-0.80%
47	Kansas City	220,608	218,415	-0.99%
48	St. Louis	145,534	142,600	-2.02%
49	Detroit	311,201	303,966	-2.32%
50	Tulsa	195,043	181,590	-6.90%

**Table 2 - Employment Growth in the Nation's 50 Largest Cities:  
2004 - 2008**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>April 2004</b>	<b>April 2008</b>	<b>% Change</b>
1	Fort Worth	261,822	302,042	15.36%
2	Miami	148,228	168,978	14.00%
3	Mesa City	220,606	247,653	12.26%
4	Phoenix	726,034	815,047	12.26%
5	Atlanta	194,624	217,439	11.72%
6	Seattle	322,142	356,276	10.60%
7	Colorado Springs	190,954	209,172	9.54%
8	Denver	279,898	306,421	9.48%
9	San Antonio	545,717	597,215	9.44%
10	Jacksonville	359,945	393,783	9.40%
11	Albuquerque	234,891	256,351	9.14%
12	Washington, D.C.	286,051	311,947	9.05%
13	Fresno	192,584	209,968	9.03%
14	Charlotte	304,300	326,887	7.42%
15	New York	3,442,370	3,684,394	7.03%
16	San Jose	398,905	425,606	6.69%
17	Memphis	275,492	293,088	6.39%
18	Las Vegas	264,905	281,702	6.34%
19	San Francisco	394,389	419,352	6.33%
20	Boston	273,335	290,610	6.32%
21	Omaha	210,568	223,668	6.22%
22	Austin	382,373	406,047	6.19%
23	Nashville	285,447	302,906	6.12%
24	Columbus	378,844	401,527	5.99%
25	Wichita	172,905	183,141	5.92%
26	Tucson	242,625	256,336	5.65%
27	Houston	944,012	995,114	5.41%
28	Honolulu	422,808	445,688	5.41%
29	El Paso	229,911	242,205	5.35%
30	Portland	272,964	287,415	5.29%
31	Los Angeles	1,714,895	1,802,548	5.11%
32	Long Beach	212,467	223,326	5.11%
33	Chicago	1,204,325	1,264,288	4.98%
34	Virginia Beach	211,323	221,822	4.97%
35	Sacramento	193,309	202,880	4.95%
36	San Diego	628,310	656,516	4.49%
37	Louisville	327,119	338,457	3.47%
38	Baltimore	251,093	259,689	3.42%
39	Oakland	176,032	180,343	2.45%
40	Indianapolis	396,903	405,716	2.22%
41	Kansas City	215,300	218,415	1.45%
42	Philadelphia	570,423	575,805	0.94%
43	Dallas	566,686	570,716	0.71%
<b>44</b>	<b>Milwaukee</b>	<b>246,099</b>	<b>247,147</b>	<b>0.43%</b>
45	Minneapolis	206,467	206,833	0.18%
46	Oklahoma City	245,905	244,189	-0.70%
47	St. Louis	146,637	142,600	-2.75%
48	Cleveland	177,034	171,287	-3.25%
49	Tulsa	190,870	181,590	-4.86%
50	Detroit	321,615	303,966	-5.49%

**Table 3 - Employment Growth in the Nation's 50 Largest Cities:  
2000 - 2008**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>April 2000</b>	<b>April 2008</b>	<b>% Change</b>
1	Phoenix	659,098	815,047	23.66%
2	Mesa City	200,268	247,653	23.66%
3	Las Vegas	231,855	281,702	21.50%
4	Fort Worth	256,461	302,042	17.77%
5	Fresno	182,331	209,968	15.16%
6	Miami	147,587	168,978	14.49%
7	Colorado Springs	182,980	209,172	14.31%
8	San Antonio	524,618	597,215	13.84%
9	Atlanta	192,411	217,439	13.01%
10	Sacramento	180,344	202,880	12.50%
11	Albuquerque	229,724	256,351	11.59%
12	San Diego	590,103	656,516	11.25%
13	Tucson	230,576	256,336	11.17%
14	Virginia Beach	199,586	221,822	11.14%
15	Charlotte	296,668	326,887	10.19%
16	Seattle	323,648	356,276	10.08%
17	El Paso	222,062	242,205	9.07%
18	Houston	919,092	995,114	8.27%
19	Jacksonville	367,290	393,783	7.21%
20	New York	3,447,449	3,684,394	6.87%
21	Washington, D.C.	292,591	311,947	6.62%
22	Omaha	210,591	223,668	6.21%
23	Honolulu	420,010	445,688	6.11%
24	Los Angeles	1,704,293	1,802,548	5.77%
25	Long Beach	211,153	223,326	5.77%
26	Wichita	173,271	183,141	5.70%
27	Austin	384,705	406,047	5.55%
28	Columbus	382,849	401,527	4.88%
29	Denver	295,502	306,421	3.70%
30	Memphis	289,674	293,088	1.18%
31	Nashville	300,136	302,906	0.92%
32	Indianapolis	407,709	405,716	-0.49%
33	Oklahoma City	246,443	244,189	-0.91%
34	Boston	294,384	290,610	-1.28%
35	Baltimore	263,752	259,689	-1.54%
36	Portland	292,235	287,415	-1.65%
37	Louisville	347,548	338,457	-2.62%
38	Dallas	588,968	570,716	-3.10%
39	Oakland	186,151	180,343	-3.12%
40	Chicago	1,313,305	1,264,288	-3.73%
41	Kansas City	227,078	218,415	-3.81%
42	Philadelphia	599,750	575,805	-3.99%
43	Minneapolis	217,681	206,833	-4.98%
44	St. Louis	153,899	142,600	-7.34%
45	San Francisco	455,031	419,352	-7.84%
<b>46</b>	<b>Milwaukee</b>	<b>268,227</b>	<b>247,147</b>	<b>-7.86%</b>
47	San Jose	465,938	425,606	-8.66%
48	Tulsa	198,870	181,590	-8.69%
49	Cleveland	188,890	171,287	-9.32%
50	Detroit	354,358	303,966	-14.22%

**Table 4 - Employment Growth in the 20 Largest Frostbelt Cities  
2007 - 2008**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>April 2007</b>	<b>April 2008</b>	<b>% Change</b>
1	Columbus	394,658	401,527	1.74%
2	Chicago	1,244,768	1,264,288	1.57%
3	Washington, D.C.	307,417	311,947	1.47%
4	Wichita	180,933	183,141	1.22%
5	Omaha	221,026	223,668	1.20%
6	New York	3,644,620	3,684,394	1.09%
7	Cincinnati	156,333	158,038	1.09%
8	Baltimore	257,245	259,689	0.95%
9	Pittsburgh	142,191	143,526	0.94%
10	Boston	288,475	290,610	0.74%
11	Indianapolis	402,999	405,716	0.67%
12	Minneapolis	205,571	206,833	0.61%
13	St. Paul (MN)	136,992	137,832	0.61%
14	Philadelphia	573,702	575,805	0.37%
15	Buffalo	112,645	113,002	0.32%
<b>16</b>	<b>Milwaukee</b>	<b>247,230</b>	<b>247,147</b>	<b>-0.03%</b>
17	Cleveland	172,663	171,287	-0.80%
18	Kansas City	220,608	218,415	-0.99%
19	St. Louis	145,534	142,600	-2.02%
20	Detroit	311,201	303,966	-2.32%

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**Table 5- Employment Growth in the 20 Largest Frostbelt Cities  
2004 - 2008**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>April 2004</b>	<b>April 2008</b>	<b>% Change</b>
1	Cincinnati	144,410	158,038	9.44%
2	Washington, D.C.	286,051	311,947	9.05%
3	New York	3,442,370	3,684,394	7.03%
4	Boston	273,335	290,610	6.32%
5	Omaha	210,568	223,668	6.22%
6	Columbus	378,844	401,527	5.99%
7	Wichita	172,905	183,141	5.92%
8	Chicago	1,204,325	1,264,288	4.98%
9	Baltimore	251,093	259,689	3.42%
10	Indianapolis	396,903	405,716	2.22%
11	Kansas City	215,300	218,415	1.45%
12	Philadelphia	570,423	575,805	0.94%
<b>13</b>	<b>Milwaukee</b>	<b>246,099</b>	<b>247,147</b>	<b>0.43%</b>
14	Minneapolis	206,467	206,833	0.18%
15	Pittsburgh	143,504	143,526	0.02%
16	St. Paul (MN)	138,720	137,832	-0.64%
17	Buffalo	114,025	113,002	-0.90%
18	St. Louis	146,637	142,600	-2.75%
19	Cleveland	177,034	171,287	-3.25%
20	Detroit	321,615	303,966	-5.49%

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**Table 6- Employment Growth in the Twenty Largest Frostbelt Cities  
2000 - 2008**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>April 2000</b>	<b>April 2008</b>	<b>% Change</b>
1	New York	3,447,449	3,684,394	6.87%
2	Washington, D.C.	292,591	311,947	6.62%
3	Omaha	210,591	223,668	6.21%
4	Wichita	173,271	183,141	5.70%
5	Columbus	382,849	401,527	4.88%
6	Cincinnati	151,772	158,038	4.13%
7	Indianapolis	407,709	405,716	-0.49%
8	Boston	294,384	290,610	-1.28%
9	Baltimore	263,752	259,689	-1.54%
10	Pittsburgh	148,946	143,526	-3.64%
11	Chicago	1,313,305	1,264,288	-3.73%
12	Kansas City	227,078	218,415	-3.81%
13	Philadelphia	599,750	575,805	-3.99%
14	Buffalo	117,835	113,002	-4.10%
15	Minneapolis	217,681	206,833	-4.98%
16	St. Paul (MN)	148,180	137,832	-6.98%
17	St. Louis	153,899	142,600	-7.34%
<b>18</b>	<b>Milwaukee</b>	<b>268,227</b>	<b>247,147</b>	<b>-7.86%</b>
19	Cleveland	188,890	171,287	-9.32%
20	Detroit	354,358	303,966	-14.22%

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**Table 7 -- Unemployment Rates in the Nation's 50 Largest Cities**

Rank	City	April 2000	April 2004	April 2007	April 2008
1	Tulsa	2.8	5.3	4.0	2.8
2	Mesa City	2.6	4.0	2.6	2.9
3	Oklahoma City	2.7	4.7	4.4	2.9
4	Seattle	3.9	5.2	3.2	2.9
5	Honolulu	3.7	3.2	2.3	3.0
6	Albuquerque	3.7	5.0	3.0	3.0
7	Austin	3.0	5.2	3.1	3.0
8	Virginia Beach	1.9	3.2	2.4	3.1
9	Omaha	3.0	4.7	3.1	3.4
10	San Antonio	3.9	5.8	3.5	3.5
11	Boston	2.8	5.4	4.0	3.6
12	Phoenix	3.4	5.2	3.4	3.7
13	Houston	4.7	7.1	3.9	3.7
14	Wichita	4.2	6.5	4.1	3.8
15	Tucson	3.6	5.0	3.6	3.9
16	Minneapolis	2.7	4.6	3.9	4.0
17	Nashville	2.7	4.2	3.4	4.1
18	Fort Worth	4.3	7.0	4.2	4.1
19	Dallas	4.3	7.6	4.3	4.2
20	Indianapolis	2.8	5.4	4.4	4.4
21	Columbus	3.4	5.3	4.6	4.4
22	San Francisco	3.1	5.9	4.1	4.5
23	Jacksonville	3.1	4.9	3.5	4.6
24	Charlotte	2.6	5.3	3.8	4.6
25	Denver	2.7	6.5	3.7	4.7
26	New York	6.0	7.4	4.8	4.7
27	El Paso	6.3	6.9	5.2	4.7
28	Colorado Springs	2.6	5.4	3.8	4.9
29	Portland	4.6	7.8	4.9	4.9
30	San Diego	3.7	4.7	4.2	5.0
31	Miami	6.5	7.1	3.8	5.1
32	Washington, D.C.	4.8	7.0	5.1	5.4
33	Atlanta	4.4	6.6	4.4	5.4
34	Baltimore	5.6	6.8	5.4	5.4
35	Louisville	3.3	5.6	5.1	5.5
36	Las Vegas	4.5	5.0	4.5	5.5
37	San Jose	3.4	7.5	4.9	5.7
38	Chicago	5.2	7.4	5.4	5.9
<b>39</b>	<b>Milwaukee</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>6.0</b>
40	Kansas City	3.1	7.1	5.9	6.2
41	Memphis	4.3	6.8	5.1	6.2
42	Long Beach	5.7	7.1	5.1	6.3
43	Los Angeles	5.7	7.1	5.1	6.3
44	St. Louis	4.4	8.2	6.3	6.4
45	Philadelphia	4.9	6.9	5.4	6.4
46	Sacramento	4.9	6.6	6.0	7.2
47	Oakland	5.3	9.2	6.8	8.1
48	Cleveland	7.0	7.9	7.1	8.2
49	Fresno	10.2	10.3	8.2	9.3
50	Detroit	6.0	12.0	12.7	12.9