



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

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

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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 (2006-2007); b) the past three years (2004-2007), since the current mayoral administration took office; 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: December

The most recent monthly employment data for cities (December) reveal that Milwaukee continues on the path of sluggish employment growth observed through most of 2007. Employment in the city of Milwaukee increased by a mere 22 residents in December 2007 compared to December 2006, a miniscule year-over-year increase of 0.01%. Combined with the employment decline reported in the city in October and the tiny employment growth registered in November, Milwaukee appears to be on the edge of the recession threatening the national economy.

Ironically, despite this stagnant employment picture, Milwaukee's ranking among U.S. big cities in monthly year-over-year employment growth between 2006-2007 actually improved in December, jumping to 32nd among the nation's 50 largest cities (compared to 41st in November). In December, 18 of the nation's largest cities reported actual employment declines, perhaps a sign that these cities have begun to feel the effects of the slowing national economy more intensely than has Milwaukee. Clearly, one month does not make a trend, but notwithstanding continued stagnation in the local labor market, in December at least, Milwaukee outperformed one-third of the nation's largest cities in year-over-year employment performance over the past year. For a Milwaukee labor market that has struggled in national rankings for over a decade, this is a modestly encouraging finding that bears watching in the months ahead.

Since 2004, December employment in Milwaukee has increased by 2,839 (1.14%), placing the city 43rd among the nation's 50 largest cities (Table 2) in the rate of employment growth during this time period. In November, Milwaukee's rate of 2004-2007 employment growth ranked 46th nationally, so the December ranking represents a small improvement. As Mayor Tom Barrett nears the end of his first term, his record on employment growth is mixed. Since the mayor took office, year-over-year employment in the city has increased by a monthly average of around 2,000 (see Table 8), an increase of around one percent. This improvement is an unmistakably positive development, coming after a decade of employment decline in the city. However, the pace of employment growth here has been much less robust since 2004 than in most big cities in the nation; only seven of the nation's 50 largest cities have had slower employment growth than Milwaukee since Barrett became mayor. The record is better when we compare Milwaukee to other historically industrial cities of the Northeast-Midwest "Frostbelt": among the largest 20 cities in the Frostbelt, between 2004-2007 Milwaukee ranked in the middle -11th—in the rate of year-over-year employment growth in December (see Table 5).

In short, although Milwaukee has gained employment since 2004, it has done so at a slower pace than most big cities in the U.S., suggesting that recent employment growth here has been more a function of "surfing" the national business cycle than any particular revitalization in Milwaukee compared to other places. However, improvements in the December 2007 rankings for Milwaukee – both in the 2006-2007 and 2004-2007 comparisons—offer at least the hopeful possibility that the city's

labor market is stabilizing and could be poised for a turnaround. But it will take several months to determine whether, in fact, Milwaukee has begun to claw back from the disastrous period since 2000 that has seen city employment decline by 19,122 (in the December figures), an employment contraction of over seven percent (see Table 3).

Finally, comparison of December unemployment rates in the 50 largest cities reveals the degree to which Milwaukee remains one of the country's most distressed urban labor markets (Table 7), although even here, in relative terms, there were signs of improvement for the city. In December 2007, Milwaukee had the 43rd highest unemployment rate among the nation's 50 largest cities, posting a preliminary, non-seasonally adjusted rate of 6.5%. In November, Milwaukee ranked 47th, so this is a slight improvement in ranking. However, since 2000, Milwaukee's December ranking on unemployment among the 50 largest cities has steadily deteriorated. The city placed 36th in December 2000, 36th in December 2004, 45th in December 2006, and 43rd in December 2007.

**Table 1 -- Employment Growth in the 50 Largest Cities:
2006 to 2007**

Rank	City	December 2006	December 2007	% Change
1	Seattle	343,909	358,370	4.20%
2	Miami	161,738	166,389	2.88%
3	Los Angeles	1,805,689	1,845,903	2.23%
4	Long Beach	223,715	228,697	2.23%
5	Wichita	180,631	184,617	2.21%
6	Portland	285,960	291,932	2.09%
7	Omaha	218,957	223,523	2.09%
8	Atlanta	216,372	220,679	1.99%
9	Memphis	298,047	303,614	1.87%
10	Fresno	202,928	206,685	1.85%
11	Las Vegas	279,793	284,483	1.68%
12	Virginia Beach	218,708	221,553	1.30%
13	Austin	403,083	408,295	1.29%
14	Columbus	398,992	401,612	0.66%
15	Dallas	584,672	588,424	0.64%
16	San Jose	420,695	423,117	0.58%
17	Nashville	305,300	306,984	0.55%
18	Washington, D.C.	298,113	299,451	0.45%
19	Houston	971,064	975,306	0.44%
20	Albuquerque	256,428	257,271	0.33%
21	San Francisco	412,563	413,908	0.33%
22	Mesa City	247,702	248,358	0.26%
23	Phoenix	815,208	817,366	0.26%
24	Denver	300,904	301,666	0.25%
25	Tucson	255,432	255,847	0.16%
26	New York	3,643,208	3,647,878	0.13%
27	Fort Worth	294,221	294,523	0.10%
28	Philadelphia	590,513	591,113	0.10%
29	Boston	277,724	277,995	0.10%
30	Charlotte	330,999	331,198	0.06%
31	San Antonio	590,880	591,039	0.03%
32	Milwaukee	252,387	252,409	0.01%
33	San Diego	657,874	657,462	-0.06%
34	Chicago	1,280,926	1,279,052	-0.15%
35	Oklahoma City	253,575	252,986	-0.23%
36	Jacksonville	398,838	397,897	-0.24%
37	Cleveland	174,539	174,023	-0.30%
38	Oakland	182,733	181,928	-0.44%
39	El Paso	241,273	239,830	-0.60%
40	Sacramento	204,991	203,749	-0.61%
41	St. Louis	148,369	147,467	-0.61%
42	Colorado Springs	207,300	205,950	-0.65%
43	Minneapolis	211,115	209,410	-0.81%
44	Baltimore	265,088	262,682	-0.91%
45	Louisville	347,740	344,512	-0.93%
46	Indianapolis	414,745	410,850	-0.94%
47	Tulsa	199,958	197,790	-1.08%
48	Kansas City	223,892	220,718	-1.42%
49	Honolulu	448,912	440,010	-1.98%
50	Detroit	320,623	309,958	-3.33%

**Table 2 - Employment Growth in the 50 Largest Cities:
2004 to 2007**

Rank	City	December 2004	December 2007	% Change
1	Atlanta	200,257	220,679	10.20%
2	Miami	151,295	166,389	9.98%
3	Seattle	326,136	358,370	9.88%
4	Memphis	276,358	303,614	9.86%
5	Mesa City	226,064	248,358	9.86%
6	Phoenix	743,997	817,366	9.86%
7	Fort Worth	270,360	294,523	8.94%
8	Albuquerque	237,925	257,271	8.13%
9	Fresno	191,729	206,685	7.80%
10	Charlotte	308,900	331,198	7.22%
11	Jacksonville	371,297	397,897	7.16%
12	San Antonio	554,081	591,039	6.67%
13	Wichita	173,434	184,617	6.45%
14	Omaha	211,230	223,523	5.82%
15	Colorado Springs	195,116	205,950	5.55%
16	Denver	285,818	301,666	5.54%
17	Nashville	291,731	306,984	5.23%
18	Portland	277,867	291,932	5.06%
19	Los Angeles	1,760,925	1,845,903	4.83%
20	Long Beach	218,169	228,697	4.83%
21	Virginia Beach	211,569	221,553	4.72%
22	Chicago	1,222,770	1,279,052	4.60%
23	Tucson	244,866	255,847	4.48%
24	San Jose	405,378	423,117	4.38%
25	New York	3,499,884	3,647,878	4.23%
26	Las Vegas	273,258	284,483	4.11%
27	Washington, D.C.	288,040	299,451	3.96%
28	Columbus	386,433	401,612	3.93%
29	Louisville	332,091	344,512	3.74%
30	Austin	393,566	408,295	3.74%
31	Sacramento	196,600	203,749	3.64%
32	Honolulu	425,831	440,010	3.33%
33	Baltimore	254,233	262,682	3.32%
34	Tulsa	191,625	197,790	3.22%
35	San Francisco	401,862	413,908	3.00%
36	Indianapolis	400,379	410,850	2.62%
37	San Diego	644,266	657,462	2.05%
38	El Paso	235,383	239,830	1.89%
39	Oklahoma City	249,063	252,986	1.58%
40	Oakland	179,292	181,928	1.47%
41	Dallas	580,581	588,424	1.35%
42	Kansas City	218,178	220,718	1.16%
43	Milwaukee	249,570	252,409	1.14%
44	Philadelphia	585,277	591,113	1.00%
45	Boston	275,270	277,995	0.99%
46	Houston	969,830	975,306	0.56%
47	Minneapolis	209,998	209,410	-0.28%
48	Cleveland	175,249	174,023	-0.70%
49	St. Louis	148,939	147,467	-0.99%
50	Detroit	322,513	309,958	-3.89%

**Table 3 - Employment Growth in the 50 Largest Cities:
2000 to 2007**

Rank	City	December 2000	December 2007	% Change
1	Mesa City	205,214	248,358	21.02%
2	Phoenix	675,378	817,366	21.02%
3	Las Vegas	238,240	284,483	19.41%
4	Fort Worth	258,074	294,523	14.12%
5	San Antonio	522,357	591,039	13.15%
6	Fresno	183,044	206,685	12.92%
7	Atlanta	198,184	220,679	11.35%
8	Miami	149,544	166,389	11.26%
9	Tucson	230,603	255,847	10.95%
10	Sacramento	184,097	203,749	10.67%
11	Virginia Beach	200,539	221,553	10.48%
12	Colorado Springs	186,551	205,950	10.40%
13	Charlotte	300,412	331,198	10.25%
14	Seattle	325,335	358,370	10.15%
15	San Diego	601,035	657,462	9.39%
16	Albuquerque	235,484	257,271	9.25%
17	El Paso	222,862	239,830	7.61%
18	Jacksonville	372,115	397,897	6.93%
19	Wichita	172,681	184,617	6.91%
20	Omaha	211,378	223,523	5.75%
21	Long Beach	216,449	228,697	5.66%
22	Los Angeles	1,747,047	1,845,903	5.66%
23	New York	3,465,587	3,647,878	5.26%
24	Houston	927,349	975,306	5.17%
25	Honolulu	421,217	440,010	4.46%
26	Austin	394,754	408,295	3.43%
27	Memphis	295,172	303,614	2.86%
28	Oklahoma City	246,945	252,986	2.45%
29	Columbus	392,182	401,612	2.40%
30	Washington, D.C.	293,889	299,451	1.89%
31	Denver	298,821	301,666	0.95%
32	Nashville	305,966	306,984	0.33%
33	Indianapolis	409,553	410,850	0.32%
34	Portland	294,433	291,932	-0.85%
35	Tulsa	200,445	197,790	-1.32%
36	Baltimore	266,736	262,682	-1.52%
37	Louisville	350,720	344,512	-1.77%
38	Dallas	599,547	588,424	-1.86%
39	Chicago	1,303,297	1,279,052	-1.86%
40	Philadelphia	610,001	591,113	-3.10%
41	Kansas City	228,938	220,718	-3.59%
42	Oakland	190,681	181,928	-4.59%
43	St. Louis	155,547	147,467	-5.19%
44	Minneapolis	221,012	209,410	-5.25%
45	Boston	298,589	277,995	-6.90%
46	Milwaukee	271,531	252,409	-7.04%
47	Cleveland	188,004	174,023	-7.44%
48	San Francisco	465,706	413,908	-11.12%
49	Detroit	355,700	309,958	-12.86%
50	San Jose	485,784	423,117	-12.90%

**Table 4 - Employment Growth in the 20 Largest Frostbelt Cities
2006-2007**

Rank	City	December 2006	December 2007	% Change
1	Wichita	180,631	184,617	2.21%
2	Omaha	218,957	223,523	2.09%
3	Columbus	398,992	401,612	0.66%
4	Washington, D.C.	298,113	299,451	0.45%
5	Cincinnati	147,392	148,044	0.44%
6	New York	3,643,208	3,647,878	0.13%
7	Philadelphia	590,513	591,113	0.10%
8	Boston	277,724	277,995	0.10%
9	Milwaukee	252,387	252,409	0.01%
10	Chicago	1,280,926	1,279,052	-0.15%
11	Cleveland	174,539	174,023	-0.30%
12	Pittsburgh	145,857	145,060	-0.55%
13	St. Louis	148,369	147,467	-0.61%
14	Minneapolis	211,115	209,410	-0.81%
15	St. Paul (MN)	141,527	140,384	-0.81%
16	Baltimore	265,088	262,682	-0.91%
17	Indianapolis	414,745	410,850	-0.94%
18	Buffalo	115,481	113,952	-1.32%
19	Kansas City	223,892	220,718	-1.42%
20	Detroit	320,623	309,958	-3.33%

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**Table 5- Employment Growth in the 20 Largest Frostbelt Cities
2004 to 2007**

Rank	City	December 2004	December 2007	% Change
1	Wichita	173,434	184,617	6.45%
2	Omaha	211,230	223,523	5.82%
3	Chicago	1,222,770	1,279,052	4.60%
4	New York	3,499,884	3,647,878	4.23%
5	Washington, D.C.	288,040	299,451	3.96%
6	Columbus	386,433	401,612	3.93%
7	Baltimore	254,233	262,682	3.32%
8	Indianapolis	400,379	410,850	2.62%
9	Cincinnati	145,657	148,044	1.64%
10	Kansas City	218,178	220,718	1.16%
11	Milwaukee	249,570	252,409	1.14%
12	Philadelphia	585,277	591,113	1.00%
13	Boston	275,270	277,995	0.99%
14	Minneapolis	209,998	209,410	-0.28%
15	St. Paul (MN)	141,092	140,384	-0.50%
16	Pittsburgh	145,999	145,060	-0.64%
17	Cleveland	175,249	174,023	-0.70%
18	St. Louis	148,939	147,467	-0.99%
19	Buffalo	116,179	113,952	-1.92%
20	Detroit	322,513	309,958	-3.89%

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**Table 6- Employment Growth in the Twenty Largest Frostbelt Cities
2000 to 2007**

Rank	City	December 2000	December 2007	% Change
1	Wichita	172,681	184,617	6.91%
2	Omaha	211,378	223,523	5.75%
3	New York	3,465,587	3,647,878	5.26%
4	Columbus	392,182	401,612	2.40%
5	Washington, D.C.	293,889	299,451	1.89%
6	Indianapolis	409,553	410,850	0.32%
7	Baltimore	266,736	262,682	-1.52%
8	Chicago	1,303,297	1,279,052	-1.86%
9	Philadelphia	610,001	591,113	-3.10%
10	Pittsburgh	149,885	145,060	-3.22%
11	Cincinnati	153,284	148,044	-3.42%
12	Buffalo	118,112	113,952	-3.52%
13	Kansas City	228,938	220,718	-3.59%
14	St. Louis	155,547	147,467	-5.19%
15	Minneapolis	221,012	209,410	-5.25%
16	St. Paul (MN)	150,448	140,384	-6.69%
17	Boston	298,589	277,995	-6.90%
18	Milwaukee	271,531	252,409	-7.04%
19	Cleveland	188,004	174,023	-7.44%
20	Detroit	355,700	309,958	-12.86%

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Table 7 -- Unemployment Rates in the 50 Largest Cities

Rank	City	December 2000	December 2004	December 2006	December 2007
1	Honolulu	3.4	2.5	1.6	2.5
2	Albuquerque	3.3	4.6	2.9	2.7
3	Virginia Beach	1.9	3.2	2.6	2.9
4	Omaha	3.0	4.8	2.6	3.3
5	Seattle	4.3	5.1	3.8	3.3
6	Austin	2.6	4.9	3.1	3.4
7	Mesa City	2.7	3.4	3.0	3.5
8	Phoenix	3.5	4.4	3.9	3.9
9	San Antonio	3.6	5.6	3.6	3.9
10	Boston	2.6	4.8	4.9	4.0
11	Nashville	3.0	4.4	3.6	4.1
12	Wichita	3.7	5.9	4.5	4.2
13	Minneapolis	2.7	4.2	3.7	4.2
14	Charlotte	3.2	5.3	3.9	4.2
15	Houston	4.1	6.7	4.1	4.2
16	Jacksonville	3.1	4.3	3.1	4.3
17	Miami	6.2	6.8	3.7	4.3
18	Denver	2.7	6.2	4.4	4.4
19	Indianapolis	2.5	5.5	4.5	4.4
20	Fort Worth	3.9	6.6	4.3	4.4
21	San Francisco	3.0	5.0	3.7	4.5
22	Tulsa	2.6	4.9	3.8	4.5
23	Dallas	4.0	7.4	4.3	4.5
24	Oklahoma City	2.5	4.8	3.9	4.6
25	Columbus	2.9	5.1	4.4	4.7
26	Portland	4.3	6.4	4.8	4.7
27	Tucson	3.7	4.4	4.2	4.8
28	Colorado Springs	2.4	5.3	4.1	4.8
29	San Diego	3.2	4.1	3.7	4.9
30	Atlanta	4.2	7.7	4.9	4.9
31	El Paso	5.7	7.2	5.5	5.2
32	Louisville	3.6	5.4	4.8	5.4
33	New York	5.4	6.3	4.4	5.4
34	San Jose	2.7	6.0	4.5	5.5
35	Chicago	5.7	7.0	4.3	5.5
36	Baltimore	5.4	7.1	5.8	5.5
37	Las Vegas	5.0	4.4	4.2	5.7
38	Long Beach	5.0	6.4	4.6	5.8
39	Los Angeles	5.1	6.4	4.6	5.8
40	Washington, D.C.	5.5	7.7	6.2	5.8
41	Philadelphia	4.9	6.3	5.7	5.8
42	Memphis	4.6	8.0	5.6	6.0
43	Milwaukee	4.7	6.7	6.3	6.5
44	Kansas City	4.1	7.4	6.0	6.8
45	Sacramento	4.3	6.0	5.3	7.0
46	St. Louis	5.8	8.6	6.3	7.1
47	Oakland	4.6	7.8	6.1	7.7
48	Cleveland	6.4	7.7	6.9	7.8
49	Fresno	9.9	9.6	7.5	9.2
50	Detroit	7.1	13.8	13.3	13.7

Table 8**Monthly “Year-over-Year” Employment Change in Milwaukee,
By Month, In Selected Time Periods, 2000-2007**

Month	2006-2007	2004-2007	2000-2007
June	+1,016	+2,542	-18,593
July	+2,191	+3,212	-16,092
August	+708	+918	-17,219
September	+1,013	+2,366	-16,071
October	-763	+821	-17,199
November	+394	+1,795	-18,103
December	+22	+2,839	-19,122
Average monthly “year-over-year” growth	+654	+2,070	-17,486

Table 9**Milwaukee’s Rank Among the Nation’s 50 Largest Cities in
Employment Growth, By Month, For Selected Time Periods, 2000-2007**

Month	2006-2007	2004-2007	2000-2007
June	42	46	46
July	39	46	46
August	39	47	46
September	38	46	46
October	41	45	47
November	41	46	47
December	32	43	46