



***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 (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: May

Preliminary employment data released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for May 2008 reveal that the city of Milwaukee remains stuck in a sluggish, recessionary labor market. For the tenth consecutive month the city lost employment compared to the same month a year earlier. Employment in Milwaukee fell by 1,282 residents in May 2008 compared to May 2007, an annual decline of 0.52%. Among the nation's 50 largest cities, 14 registered annual employment declines in May; unfortunately, Milwaukee remains among this group of city employment "losers."

In May 2008, Milwaukee ranked 41st among the nation's 50 largest cities in the rate of annual employment growth (compared to 44th in April), and 16th among the nation's 20 largest Northeast-Midwest Frostbelt cities (unchanged from April).

Since 2004, May employment in Milwaukee has increased by a meager 38 residents (0.02%), placing the city 44th among the nation's 50 largest cities in employment "growth" during this period (unchanged from April). Among the 20 largest Frostbelt cities, Milwaukee ranked 14th in employment change between May 2004-2008, (compared to 13th in April 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.

The May 2004-2008 period corresponds Tom Barrett's entire tenure as Milwaukee's mayor. The modest increase of 38 employed residents since May 2004 indicates that City Hall claims of over "11,00 jobs" created 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, May employment in Milwaukee has shrunk by 19,850, a substantial 7.47% decline. Milwaukee ranks 47th among the nation's 50 largest cities during this period in employment performance; among Frostbelt cities, we rank 18th out of 20.

Finally, comparison of May unemployment rates in the 50 largest cities reveals that Milwaukee had the 37th highest unemployment rate among the nation's 50 largest cities; in April 2008, we ranked 38th and in March 2008 we ranked 44th. 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 16th in the early 1990s). Thus, the ranking of 37th is an improvement over preceding months; however, it is still poor by historical standards. Moreover, it remains to be seen whether this improved ranking is simply a two-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 may give us a better handle on this issue.

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

Rank	City	May 2007	May 2008	% Change
1	Las Vegas	273,277	281,755	3.10%
2	Houston	971,301	994,259	2.36%
3	El Paso	235,882	241,352	2.32%
4	Fort Worth	295,621	302,462	2.31%
5	San Francisco	410,915	420,409	2.31%
6	Dallas	560,228	571,605	2.03%
7	San Antonio	585,878	597,281	1.95%
8	Austin	397,106	404,801	1.94%
9	Fresno	207,350	211,290	1.90%
10	Wichita	179,677	182,677	1.67%
11	Omaha	220,828	224,117	1.49%
12	Virginia Beach	220,370	223,599	1.47%
13	San Jose	420,295	426,396	1.45%
14	Denver	300,483	304,688	1.40%
15	Atlanta	213,634	216,506	1.34%
16	Honolulu	439,598	445,143	1.26%
17	Portland	283,472	287,007	1.25%
18	Columbus	396,785	401,641	1.22%
19	Philadelphia	572,929	578,841	1.03%
20	Baltimore	258,554	261,198	1.02%
21	Colorado Springs	207,220	209,203	0.96%
22	Mesa City	244,652	246,887	0.91%
23	Phoenix	805,172	812,525	0.91%
24	Chicago	1,245,731	1,256,845	0.89%
25	New York	3,630,813	3,658,026	0.75%
26	Washington, D.C.	305,755	307,965	0.72%
27	San Diego	653,706	656,880	0.49%
28	Seattle	351,300	352,654	0.39%
29	Indianapolis	407,048	408,466	0.35%
30	Sacramento	202,231	202,915	0.34%
31	Oklahoma City	244,737	245,443	0.29%
32	Miami	169,211	169,668	0.27%
33	Albuquerque	254,557	255,239	0.27%
34	Minneapolis	206,313	206,579	0.13%
35	Oakland	180,308	180,518	0.12%
36	Jacksonville	395,592	396,006	0.10%
37	Nashville	300,736	300,585	-0.05%
38	Charlotte	327,373	326,372	-0.31%
39	Tucson	255,130	254,336	-0.31%
40	Boston	287,868	286,932	-0.33%
41	Milwaukee	247,109	245,827	-0.52%
42	Louisville	341,702	339,579	-0.62%
43	Kansas City	219,993	218,031	-0.89%
44	Los Angeles	1,798,181	1,781,636	-0.92%
45	Long Beach	222,785	220,735	-0.92%
46	Memphis	294,529	290,301	-1.44%
47	Cleveland	173,472	170,757	-1.57%
48	St. Louis	145,561	143,100	-1.69%
49	Detroit	312,132	303,815	-2.66%
50	Tulsa	194,910	182,727	-6.25%

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

Rank	City	May 2004	May 2008	% Change
1	Fort Worth	262,423	302,462	15.26%
2	Miami	148,772	169,668	14.05%
3	Mesa City	220,731	246,887	11.85%
4	Phoenix	726,444	812,525	11.85%
5	Atlanta	194,718	216,506	11.19%
6	Seattle	322,143	352,654	9.47%
7	San Antonio	546,862	597,281	9.22%
8	Jacksonville	362,787	396,006	9.16%
9	Albuquerque	234,261	255,239	8.95%
10	Washington, D.C.	283,802	307,965	8.51%
11	Colorado Springs	193,256	209,203	8.25%
12	Denver	282,116	304,688	8.00%
13	Fresno	196,710	211,290	7.41%
14	Charlotte	305,348	326,372	6.89%
15	San Jose	399,498	426,396	6.73%
16	San Francisco	393,924	420,409	6.72%
17	New York	3,430,851	3,658,026	6.62%
18	Omaha	210,706	224,117	6.36%
19	Las Vegas	265,555	281,755	6.10%
20	Wichita	172,243	182,677	6.06%
21	Austin	382,941	404,801	5.71%
22	Honolulu	421,979	445,143	5.49%
23	Boston	272,381	286,932	5.34%
24	Houston	943,945	994,259	5.33%
25	Columbus	381,420	401,641	5.30%
26	Memphis	275,910	290,301	5.22%
27	Portland	272,957	287,007	5.15%
28	Tucson	241,928	254,336	5.13%
29	Virginia Beach	212,824	223,599	5.06%
30	Sacramento	193,209	202,915	5.02%
31	Nashville	286,994	300,585	4.74%
32	San Diego	627,524	656,880	4.68%
33	El Paso	230,607	241,352	4.66%
34	Chicago	1,204,361	1,256,845	4.36%
35	Los Angeles	1,712,229	1,781,636	4.05%
36	Long Beach	212,136	220,735	4.05%
37	Baltimore	251,952	261,198	3.67%
38	Louisville	328,736	339,579	3.30%
39	Oakland	176,031	180,518	2.55%
40	Indianapolis	400,086	408,466	2.09%
41	Philadelphia	567,980	578,841	1.91%
42	Kansas City	215,015	218,031	1.40%
43	Dallas	567,287	571,605	0.76%
44	Milwaukee	245,789	245,827	0.02%
45	Oklahoma City	245,436	245,443	0.00%
46	Minneapolis	206,744	206,579	-0.08%
47	St. Louis	146,680	143,100	-2.44%
48	Cleveland	177,750	170,757	-3.93%
49	Tulsa	190,245	182,727	-3.95%
50	Detroit	322,208	303,815	-5.71%

2000- 2008

Rank	City	May 2000	May 2008	% Change
1	Mesa City	199,656	246,887	23.66%
2	Phoenix	657,084	812,525	23.66%
3	Las Vegas	232,125	281,755	21.38%
4	Fort Worth	254,564	302,462	18.82%
5	Miami	147,404	169,668	15.10%
6	San Antonio	520,137	597,281	14.83%
7	Fresno	185,626	211,290	13.83%
8	Colorado Springs	184,656	209,203	13.29%
9	Sacramento	179,490	202,915	13.05%
10	Atlanta	192,233	216,506	12.63%
11	Albuquerque	227,519	255,239	12.18%
12	Tucson	227,221	254,336	11.93%
13	Virginia Beach	199,877	223,599	11.87%
14	San Diego	587,316	656,880	11.84%
15	Charlotte	295,824	326,372	10.33%
16	El Paso	219,228	241,352	10.09%
17	Houston	908,769	994,259	9.41%
18	Seattle	323,785	352,654	8.92%
19	Omaha	208,252	224,117	7.62%
20	Jacksonville	368,532	396,006	7.45%
21	Washington, D.C.	287,523	307,965	7.11%
22	Honolulu	415,928	445,143	7.02%
23	Wichita	171,177	182,677	6.72%
24	New York	3,435,072	3,658,026	6.49%
25	Austin	383,787	404,801	5.48%
26	Los Angeles	1,695,035	1,781,636	5.11%
27	Long Beach	210,006	220,735	5.11%
28	Columbus	382,157	401,641	5.10%
29	Denver	295,612	304,688	3.07%
30	Oklahoma City	243,304	245,443	0.88%
31	Nashville	299,084	300,585	0.50%
32	Memphis	288,873	290,301	0.49%
33	Indianapolis	410,573	408,466	-0.51%
34	Baltimore	264,365	261,198	-1.20%
35	Portland	291,342	287,007	-1.49%
36	Boston	292,656	286,932	-1.96%
37	Dallas	585,382	571,605	-2.35%
38	Oakland	185,052	180,518	-2.45%
39	Louisville	348,133	339,579	-2.46%
40	Philadelphia	596,562	578,841	-2.97%
41	Kansas City	225,006	218,031	-3.10%
42	Chicago	1,306,020	1,256,845	-3.77%
43	Minneapolis	216,698	206,579	-4.67%
44	St. Louis	152,958	143,100	-6.44%
45	San Francisco	451,713	420,409	-6.93%
46	Tulsa	197,464	182,727	-7.46%
47	Milwaukee	265,677	245,827	-7.47%
48	San Jose	465,964	426,396	-8.49%
49	Cleveland	189,000	170,757	-9.65%
50	Detroit	354,033	303,815	-14.18%

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

Rank	City	May 2007	May 2008	% Change
1	Wichita	179,677	182,677	1.67%
2	Omaha	220,828	224,117	1.49%
3	Columbus	396,785	401,641	1.22%
4	Pittsburgh	143284	144773	1.04%
5	Philadelphia	572,929	578,841	1.03%
6	Baltimore	258,554	261,198	1.02%
7	Chicago	1,245,731	1,256,845	0.89%
8	New York	3,630,813	3,658,026	0.75%
9	Washington, D.C.	305,755	307,965	0.72%
10	Cincinnati	157442	158115	0.43%
11	Indianapolis	407,048	408,466	0.35%
12	Minneapolis	206,313	206,579	0.13%
13	St. Paul (MN)	137486	137663	0.13%
14	Buffalo	113635	113653	0.02%
15	Boston	287,868	286,932	-0.33%
16	Milwaukee	247,109	245,827	-0.52%
17	Kansas City	219,993	218,031	-0.89%
18	Cleveland	173,472	170,757	-1.57%
19	St. Louis	145,561	143,100	-1.69%
20	Detroit	312,132	303,815	-2.66%

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

Rank	City	May 2004	May 2008	% Change
1	Cincinnati	145255	158115	8.85%
2	Washington, D.C.	283,802	307,965	8.51%
3	New York	3,430,851	3,658,026	6.62%
4	Omaha	210,706	224,117	6.36%
5	Wichita	172,243	182,677	6.06%
6	Boston	272,381	286,932	5.34%
7	Columbus	381,420	401,641	5.30%
8	Chicago	1,204,361	1,256,845	4.36%
9	Baltimore	251,952	261,198	3.67%
10	Indianapolis	400,086	408,466	2.09%
11	Philadelphia	567,980	578,841	1.91%
12	Kansas City	215,015	218,031	1.40%
13	Pittsburgh	143854	144773	0.64%
14	Milwaukee	245,789	245,827	0.02%
15	Minneapolis	206,744	206,579	-0.08%
16	St. Paul (MN)	138906	137663	-0.89%
17	Buffalo	114918	113653	-1.10%
18	St. Louis	146,680	143,100	-2.44%
19	Cleveland	177,750	170,757	-3.93%
20	Detroit	322,208	303,815	-5.71%

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**Table 6- Employment Growth in the 20 Largest Frostbelt Cities
2000- 2008**

Rank	City	May 2000	May 2008	% Change
1	Omaha	208,252	224,117	7.62%
2	Washington, D.C.	287,523	307,965	7.11%
3	Wichita	171,177	182,677	6.72%
4	New York	3,435,072	3,658,026	6.49%
5	Columbus	382,157	401,641	5.10%
6	Cincinnati	151,699	158,115	4.23%
7	Indianapolis	410,573	408,466	-0.51%
8	Baltimore	264,365	261,198	-1.20%
9	Boston	292,656	286,932	-1.96%
10	Pittsburgh	148,673	144,773	-2.62%
11	Philadelphia	596,562	578,841	-2.97%
12	Kansas City	225,006	218,031	-3.10%
13	Buffalo	117,859	113,653	-3.57%
14	Chicago	1,306,020	1,256,845	-3.77%
15	Minneapolis	216,698	206,579	-4.67%
16	St. Louis	152,958	143,100	-6.44%
17	St. Paul (MN)	147,511	137,663	-6.68%
18	Milwaukee	265,677	245,827	-7.47%
19	Cleveland	189,000	170,757	-9.65%
20	Detroit	354,033	303,815	-14.18%

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Table 7 -- Unemployment Rates in the 50 Largest Cities

Rank	City	May 2000	May 2004	May 2007	May 2008
1	Mesa City	2.8	3.8	2.4	3.1
2	Honolulu	3.8	2.9	2.3	3.1
3	Albuquerque	3.9	5.1	3.0	3.3
4	Austin	3.2	5.2	3.1	3.4
5	Virginia Beach	2.3	3.3	2.5	3.4
6	Omaha	3.4	4.8	3.4	3.5
7	Oklahoma City	3.1	5.0	4.9	3.5
8	Tulsa	3.3	5.5	4.5	3.5
9	Seattle	4.3	5.6	3.5	3.6
10	San Antonio	4.3	5.9	3.6	3.9
11	Phoenix	3.7	4.9	3.1	4.0
12	Tucson	3.9	4.8	3.3	4.2
13	Houston	5.1	7.1	4.0	4.2
14	Fort Worth	4.7	7.0	4.2	4.6
15	Wichita	4.5	6.5	4.2	4.7
16	Minneapolis	2.9	4.6	4.0	4.7
17	Dallas	4.7	7.7	4.3	4.7
18	Boston	2.8	5.7	4.5	4.8
19	New York	5.7	6.8	4.7	4.8
20	San Francisco	3.3	5.6	4.0	4.9
21	Indianapolis	2.8	5.3	4.2	4.9
22	Columbus	3.5	5.2	4.5	4.9
23	Portland	4.6	7.4	4.8	4.9
24	Nashville	2.8	4.1	3.4	5.0
25	Denver	2.6	6.2	3.6	5.1
26	Jacksonville	3.3	4.9	3.6	5.2
27	Miami	6.8	7.0	3.6	5.2
28	Charlotte	3.3	5.6	3.9	5.2
29	El Paso	6.6	7.0	5.2	5.2
30	Colorado Springs	2.5	5.3	3.7	5.3
31	San Diego	3.8	4.7	4.1	5.5
32	Louisville	3.8	5.6	5.1	5.9
33	Las Vegas	4.5	4.6	4.3	5.9
34	Atlanta	4.9	7.0	4.6	6.0
35	Baltimore	5.7	7.0	5.3	6.0
36	San Jose	3.5	7.1	4.8	6.1
37	Milwaukee	5.5	7.9	7.0	6.2
38	Washington, D.C.	5.6	7.2	5.4	6.5
39	Philadelphia	5.5	7.4	6.0	6.9
40	Memphis	4.5	6.6	4.9	7.0
41	Long Beach	6.0	7.2	5.0	7.1
42	Los Angeles	6.0	7.3	5.0	7.1
43	Chicago	5.4	7.5	5.5	7.4
44	Kansas City	3.6	7.2	5.8	7.5
45	St. Louis	5.0	8.5	6.4	7.5
46	Sacramento	5.0	6.5	5.9	7.7
47	Oakland	5.6	8.9	6.8	8.9
48	Fresno	9.6	9.2	7.5	9.0
49	Cleveland	7.4	8.1	7.4	9.7
50	Detroit	6.7	13.0	13.2	16.5