



***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, 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: October

For the first time in any month this year, employment in the city of Milwaukee was lower in October 2007 than it was in the same month last year. October employment in Milwaukee fell by 763 in the past year, a decline of 0.3%. This compares to average monthly year-over-year employment increases of 1,675 through September 2007, an average annual increase of 0.67%. Employment growth in Milwaukee has been slowing throughout the second half of 2007, but October marks the first month in which year-over-year employment actually declined, perhaps a sign that the recession many economists are predicting nationally for 2008 may be underway in Milwaukee.

In October, Milwaukee ranked 41st among the nation's 50 largest cities in the rate of employment growth over the past year (Table 1), a decline from a ranking of 38th in September. Among the nation's 20 largest "Frostbelt" cities, Milwaukee ranked 13th in October employment growth in the past year, a significant decline from a ranking of 9th in September (Table 4). These falling rankings reveal not only a continuing underperformance of the Milwaukee labor market in producing jobs for city residents, but also suggest that Milwaukee's employment market is worsening compared to other big cities. Clearly, these trends will bear watching in the final two employment reports of 2007, and into 2008.

Since 2004, the year that Tom Barrett assumed the mayor's office, October employment in Milwaukee has increased by just 821 (0.33%), placing the city 45th among the nation's 50 largest cities (Table 2) and 14th among the 20 largest Frostbelt cities (Table 5) in the rate of employment growth during this time period. These rankings represent deterioration by one position from the rankings in September. Although employment has increased slightly in Milwaukee since 2004, the pace of growth remains much less robust here than in most big cities, both in the nation as a whole as well as in the Frostbelt.

The small employment increases since 2004 have not compensated for the massive employment loss experienced in Milwaukee since 2000. Since October 2000, Milwaukee's employment has declined by 17,199 or 6.42%. This decline places Milwaukee 47th among the nation's 50 largest cities in employment growth since 2000 (Table 3), and 19th among the 20 largest Frostbelt cities (Table 6). Among Frostbelt cities, only Detroit—with an employment decline of almost 12% since 2000—ranks worse than Milwaukee since 2000 in generating employment for city residents.

Finally, comparison of September 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). In October 2007, Milwaukee had the 46th highest unemployment rate among the nation's 50 largest cities, posting a preliminary rate of 7.1% (up from 6.2% last October). Only Detroit, with a depression-era unemployment rate of 15.0%, as well as Oakland, Cleveland, and Fresno, ranked worse.

**Table 1 -- Employment Growth in the Nation's 50 Largest Cities:
2006-2007**

Rank	City	October 2006	October 2007	% Change
1	Wichita	178,669	186,142	4.18
2	Las Vegas	277,450	286,434	3.24
3	Seattle	342,265	352,779	3.07
4	Memphis	297,465	305,428	2.68
5	Atlanta	213,674	218,897	2.44
6	Tucson	253,628	259,727	2.40
7	Miami	161,348	165,221	2.40
8	Mesa City	245,174	251,056	2.40
9	Phoenix	806,890	826,248	2.40
10	Omaha	219,530	224,187	2.12
11	Nashville	304,463	309,856	1.77
12	Los Angeles	1,801,465	1,831,152	1.65
13	Long Beach	223,192	226,870	1.65
14	Albuquerque	254,477	258,620	1.63
15	Denver	302,246	307,096	1.60
16	Virginia Beach	218,704	221,881	1.45
17	Austin	401,410	406,852	1.36
18	Portland	286,004	289,777	1.32
19	Jacksonville	397,498	401,976	1.13
20	Boston	276,182	278,855	0.97
21	Louisville	342,739	345,863	0.91
22	Oklahoma City	253,328	255,426	0.83
23	Charlotte	332,353	334,888	0.76
24	Dallas	581,803	585,730	0.67
25	Fort Worth	293,364	295,267	0.65
26	San Antonio	590,286	593,255	0.50
27	Philadelphia	587,686	590,427	0.47
28	Colorado Springs	207,561	208,439	0.42
29	Columbus	398,785	400,429	0.41
30	San Francisco	410,125	411,094	0.24
31	Cleveland	176,306	176,617	0.18
32	San Jose	419,540	420,241	0.17
33	Washington, D.C.	299,451	299,611	0.05
34	Sacramento	203,710	203,679	-0.02
35	Minneapolis	211,253	211,180	-0.03
36	El Paso	240,627	240,541	-0.04
37	Fresno	205,556	205,335	-0.11
38	Oakland	181,505	181,181	-0.18
39	San Diego	655,153	653,521	-0.25
40	St. Louis	148,476	148,076	-0.27
41	Milwaukee	251,556	250,793	-0.30
42	New York	3,638,256	3,626,356	-0.33
43	Chicago	1,276,320	1,267,945	-0.66
44	Kansas City	223,580	221,865	-0.77
45	Baltimore	265,388	262,726	-1.00
46	Tulsa	201,520	199,158	-1.17
47	Honolulu	442,379	436,877	-1.24
48	Indianapolis	417,233	409,397	-1.88
49	Houston	967,722	947,364	-2.10
50	Detroit	319,592	312,685	-2.16

**Table 2 - Employment Growth in the Nation's 50 Largest Cities:
2004-2007**

Rank	City	October 2004	October 2007	% Change
1	Mesa City	225,493	251,056	11.34
2	Phoenix	742,118	826,248	11.34
3	Atlanta	197,902	218,897	10.61
4	Memphis	278,026	305,428	9.86
5	Miami	150,431	165,221	9.83
6	Fort Worth	269,013	295,267	9.76
7	Seattle	321,763	352,779	9.64
8	Jacksonville	369,721	401,976	8.72
9	Albuquerque	238,018	258,620	8.66
10	Wichita	172,360	186,142	8.00
11	Charlotte	311,031	334,888	7.67
12	San Antonio	554,413	593,255	7.01
13	Denver	289,342	307,096	6.14
14	Nashville	292,028	309,856	6.10
15	Tucson	244,933	259,727	6.04
16	Fresno	194,746	205,335	5.44
17	Colorado Springs	197,738	208,439	5.41
18	Omaha	213,093	224,187	5.21
19	Louisville	329,944	345,863	4.82
20	Long Beach	216,659	226,870	4.71
21	Los Angeles	1,748,738	1,831,152	4.71
22	Virginia Beach	212,044	221,881	4.64
23	Las Vegas	273,987	286,434	4.54
24	Portland	277,355	289,777	4.48
25	Honolulu	418,952	436,877	4.28
26	Washington, D.C.	287,730	299,611	4.13
27	New York	3,482,972	3,626,356	4.12
28	Tulsa	191,391	199,158	4.06
29	Chicago	1,220,091	1,267,945	3.92
30	Austin	392,233	406,852	3.73
31	San Jose	405,238	420,241	3.70
32	Sacramento	196,446	203,679	3.68
33	Columbus	386,738	400,429	3.54
34	Baltimore	255,139	262,726	2.97
35	San Francisco	399,483	411,094	2.91
36	Oklahoma City	248,265	255,426	2.88
37	El Paso	235,430	240,541	2.17
38	San Diego	640,543	653,521	2.03
39	Kansas City	217,920	221,865	1.81
40	Philadelphia	579,944	590,427	1.81
41	Boston	273,921	278,855	1.80
42	Indianapolis	402,442	409,397	1.73
43	Oakland	178,548	181,181	1.47
44	Dallas	579,033	585,730	1.16
45	Milwaukee	249,972	250,793	0.33
46	Minneapolis	211,192	211,180	-0.01
47	Cleveland	177,210	176,617	-0.33
48	St. Louis	148,742	148,076	-0.45
49	Houston	962,000	947,364	-1.52
50	Detroit	323,821	312,685	-3.44

**Table 3 - Employment Growth in the Nation's 50 Largest Cities:
2000-2007**

Rank	City	October 2000	October 2007	% Change
1	Phoenix	665,125	826,248	24.22
2	Mesa City	202,099	251,056	24.22
3	Las Vegas	235,551	286,434	21.60
4	Fort Worth	256,116	295,267	15.29
5	San Antonio	519,155	593,255	14.27
6	Tucson	227,438	259,727	14.20
7	Atlanta	194,872	218,897	12.33
8	Sacramento	182,227	203,679	11.77
9	Charlotte	299,639	334,888	11.76
10	Albuquerque	231,604	258,620	11.66
11	Fresno	184,174	205,335	11.49
12	Miami	148,577	165,221	11.20
13	Virginia Beach	200,030	221,881	10.92
14	Colorado Springs	187,977	208,439	10.89
15	Seattle	319,876	352,779	10.29
16	San Diego	594,913	653,521	9.85
17	Wichita	170,868	186,142	8.94
18	El Paso	221,088	240,541	8.80
19	Jacksonville	373,187	401,976	7.71
20	Omaha	210,181	224,187	6.66
21	Long Beach	213,832	226,870	6.10
22	Los Angeles	1,725,919	1,831,152	6.10
23	Honolulu	414,441	436,877	5.41
24	New York	3,455,188	3,626,356	4.95
25	Memphis	293,839	305,428	3.94
26	Oklahoma City	246,253	255,426	3.73
27	Austin	394,073	406,852	3.24
28	Houston	919,669	947,364	3.01
29	Columbus	388,733	400,429	3.01
30	Denver	298,605	307,096	2.84
31	Washington, D.C.	292,781	299,611	2.33
32	Nashville	304,019	309,856	1.92
33	Louisville	345,773	345,863	0.03
34	Indianapolis	410,716	409,397	-0.32
35	Tulsa	200,124	199,158	-0.48
36	Portland	292,510	289,777	-0.93
37	Baltimore	265,559	262,726	-1.07
38	Philadelphia	600,761	590,427	-1.72
39	Dallas	597,479	585,730	-1.97
40	Kansas City	227,765	221,865	-2.59
41	Chicago	1,303,436	1,267,945	-2.72
42	Minneapolis	219,260	211,180	-3.69
43	Oakland	188,508	181,181	-3.89
44	St. Louis	155,001	148,076	-4.47
45	Boston	295,776	278,855	-5.72
46	Cleveland	188,435	176,617	-6.27
47	Milwaukee	267,992	250,793	-6.42
48	San Francisco	460,731	411,094	-10.77
49	Detroit	354,156	312,685	-11.71
50	San Jose	481,021	420,241	-12.64

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

Rank	City	October 2006	October 2007	% Change
1	Wichita	178,669	186,142	4.18
2	Omaha	219,530	224,187	2.12
3	Boston	276,182	278,855	0.97
4	Philadelphia	587,686	590,427	0.47
5	Columbus	398,785	400,429	0.41
6	Cincinnati	147,396	147,769	0.25
7	Cleveland	176,306	176,617	0.18
8	Pittsburgh	146,054	146,166	0.08
9	Washington, D.C.	299,451	299,611	0.05
10	Minneapolis	211,253	211,180	-0.03
11	St. Paul (MN)	141,619	141,570	-0.03
12	St. Louis	148,476	148,076	-0.27
13	Milwaukee	251,556	250,793	-0.30
14	New York	3,638,256	3,626,356	-0.33
15	Chicago	1,276,320	1,267,945	-0.66
16	Kansas City	223,580	221,865	-0.77
17	Baltimore	265,388	262,726	-1.00
18	Buffalo	115,981	114,469	-1.30
19	Indianapolis	417,233	409,397	-1.88
20	Detroit	319,592	312,685	-2.16

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

Rank	City	October 2004	October 2007	% Change
1	Wichita	172,360	186,142	8.00
2	Omaha	213,093	224,187	5.21
3	Washington, D.C.	287,730	299,611	4.13
4	New York	3,482,972	3,626,356	4.12
5	Chicago	1,220,091	1,267,945	3.92
6	Columbus	386,738	400,429	3.54
7	Baltimore	255,139	262,726	2.97
8	Kansas City	217,920	221,865	1.81
9	Philadelphia	579,944	590,427	1.81
10	Boston	273,921	278,855	1.80
11	Indianapolis	402,442	409,397	1.73
12	Cincinnati	145,922	147,769	1.27
13	Pittsburgh	145,536	146,166	0.43
14	Milwaukee	249,972	250,793	0.33
15	Minneapolis	211,192	211,180	-0.01
16	St. Paul (MN)	141,895	141,570	-0.23
17	Cleveland	177,210	176,617	-0.33
18	St. Louis	148,742	148,076	-0.45
19	Buffalo	116,329	114,469	-1.60
20	Detroit	323,821	312,685	-3.44

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

Rank	City	October 2000	October 2007	% Change
1	Wichita	170,868	186,142	8.94
2	Omaha	210,181	224,187	6.66
3	New York	3,455,188	3,626,356	4.95
4	Columbus	388,733	400,429	3.01
5	Washington, D.C.	292,781	299,611	2.33
6	Indianapolis	410,716	409,397	-0.32
7	Baltimore	265,559	262,726	-1.07
8	Philadelphia	600,761	590,427	-1.72
9	Pittsburgh	149,638	146,166	-2.32
10	Kansas City	227,765	221,865	-2.59
11	Chicago	1,303,436	1,267,945	-2.72
12	Cincinnati	152,477	147,769	-3.09
13	Minneapolis	219,260	211,180	-3.69
14	Buffalo	118,855	114,469	-3.69
15	St. Louis	155,001	148,076	-4.47
16	St. Paul (MN)	149,255	141,570	-5.15
17	Boston	295,776	278,855	-5.72
18	Cleveland	188,435	176,617	-6.27
19	Milwaukee	267,992	250,793	-6.42
20	Detroit	354,156	312,685	-11.71

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

Rank	City	October 2000	October 2004	October 2006	October 2007
1	Honolulu	3.7	2.9	1.9	2.4%
2	Albuquerque	3.8	5.0	3.3	2.6%
3	Mesa City	3.0	3.8	3.1	2.7%
4	Virginia Beach	1.9	3.3	2.9	2.7%
5	Omaha	3.0	4.5	2.5	3.0%
6	Austin	2.9	5.1	3.5	3.1%
7	Phoenix	3.9	5.0	4.0	3.5%
8	San Antonio	4.0	5.7	4.1	3.5%
9	Wichita	4.6	6.7	4.9	3.6%
10	Nashville	3.3	4.6	3.8	3.6%
11	Seattle	4.3	5.4	3.9	3.6%
12	Denver	2.7	5.9	4.3	3.8%
13	Houston	4.5	6.9	4.5	3.8%
14	Tucson	4.1	4.9	4.4	3.9%
15	Colorado Springs	2.5	5.3	4.1	3.9%
16	Jacksonville	3.3	4.6	3.2	4.0%
17	Boston	2.6	5.1	4.9	4.0%
18	Fort Worth	4.3	6.8	4.6	4.1%
19	Minneapolis	2.9	4.4	3.5	4.2%
20	Charlotte	3.2	5.3	4.0	4.2%
21	Dallas	4.3	7.5	4.7	4.2%
22	San Francisco	3.3	5.4	3.8	4.3%
23	Indianapolis	2.1	5.4	4.4	4.3%
24	Tulsa	2.8	5.0	3.8	4.3%
25	Oklahoma City	2.7	4.8	3.9	4.5%
26	Miami	6.8	7.5	4.1	4.6%
27	San Diego	3.7	4.5	3.8	4.8%
28	Columbus	3.1	5.5	4.4	4.8%
29	Portland	4.8	6.8	4.6	4.8%
30	El Paso	5.9	6.9	5.9	4.9%
31	Atlanta	4.6	7.5	5.0	5.1%
32	Las Vegas	5.0	4.5	4.0	5.1%
33	Louisville	3.4	4.7	5.2	5.2%
34	Memphis	4.8	7.7	5.6	5.2%
35	New York	5.6	6.4	4.3	5.3%
36	Long Beach	5.6	6.8	4.7	5.5%
37	Los Angeles	5.7	6.8	4.7	5.5%
38	San Jose	3.1	6.4	4.6	5.5%
39	Washington, D.C.	5.3	7.5	5.6	5.6%
40	Chicago	4.8	7.2	4.3	5.6%
41	Baltimore	5.7	6.9	5.9	6.1%
42	Philadelphia	5.6	7.0	6.0	6.1%
43	Sacramento	4.9	6.2	5.2	6.6%
44	Kansas City	4.0	7.5	6.5	7.1%
45	St. Louis	5.3	8.7	6.5	7.1%
46	Milwaukee	4.5	6.9	6.2	7.1%
47	Cleveland	6.1	7.7	6.4	7.3%
48	Oakland	5.3	8.4	6.4	7.6%
49	Fresno	8.7	8.8	6.4	7.8%
50	Detroit	6.7	14.4	13.9	15.0%