

Labor Market Trend Data & Analysis for Hampden County

Labor Force and Unemployment (LAUS)

Month and Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Area Rate	MA Rate
August 2005	220,908	209,510	11,398	5.2 %	4.1%
August 2004	222,440	209,570	12,870	5.8%	4.9%
August 2003	224,010	209,379	14,631	6.5%	5.9%

Labor Force Participation Rates (2000 Census vs. 2004 American Community Survey*)

Region	% in Labor Force Age 16+ 2000 Census	% in Labor Force Age 16+ 2004 ACS Estimate
Hampden County	62.4%	65.6%
Massachusetts	66.2%	68.5%
United States	63.9 %	65.9%

Average Weekly Wages, All Industries (ES-202)

Region	Average Weekly Wages First Quarter 2005	Average Weekly Wages First Quarter 2004
Hampden County	\$727	\$710
Worcester County	\$752	\$742
Massachusetts	\$964	\$954

Average Monthly Employment by Industry and Percent of Total Employment (ES-202)

Period	Construction	Manufacturing	FIRE	Professional and Business Services	Education and Health Services
1 st Quarter 2005	6,851 (3.5%)	24,587 (12.6%)	11,965 (6%)	15,551 (7.9%)	56,452 (28.9%)
1 st Quarter 2003	6,796 (3.5%)	25,495 (13%)	12,309(6.3%)	14,749 (7.5%)	56,244 (28.7%)

Racial/Ethnic Characteristics (2000 Census vs. 2004 American Community Survey*)

Year	Total Population	White: % of Total Pop.	Black: % of Total Pop.	Hispanic: % of Total Pop.	Asian: % of Total Pop.
2004 (estimated)	461,844	79.9%	8.1%	17.1%	1.7%
2000	456,228	79.1%	8.1%	15.2%	1.3%

Social and Economic Characteristics (2000 Census vs. 2004 American Community Survey*)

Year	High School Graduate or Higher Age 25+	Bachelor's Degree or Higher Age 25+	Foreign Born	Speak a Language Other than English at Home	Individuals Below Poverty
2004 (estimated)	82.8%	23.2%	7.6%	21.7%	16%
2000	79.2%	20.5%	7.2%	22.3%	14.7%

*** Note:** The American Community Survey (ACS) updates the decennial census data annually. These ACS figures above are estimates, subject to adjustment at a later date and caution is recommended when drawing conclusions based on a comparison of ACS to decennial census data.

Observations and Implications:

- The flat labor force growth is a significant barrier to economic growth. Since the labor force is not growing to meet labor needs, employers must keep older workers employed longer and the region must increase the labor force participation rate of individuals from historically under-represented population groups such as workers with disabilities, at-risk youth, limited English speaking workers and offenders.
- Although the area unemployment rate saw a 1.3% decrease in the last two years, comparing 2003 to 2005, there are actually fewer employees now based on ES-202 data. This could be due to more self-employed workers that are not counted in the ES-202 data and/or more unemployed workers giving up their search for employment and thus losing their status as members of the labor force.
- Hampden County wages continue to be depressed compared to other regions of the state and Connecticut. Two of the area's highest paying industries, Manufacturing and FIRE, saw drops in employment between 2003 and 2005.
- The Education and Health Services industry continues to have the highest number of employees. A minimum of an Associate Degree is required for many new, better-paying jobs in this industry.
- Hispanics continue to be the fastest growing racial/ethnic group. More ESOL and work-based education programs will be needed to prepare the population for work and career advancement.
- Insufficient data is available to draw conclusions on why educational attainment levels have increased in the last 4 years. It may have something to do with higher educational levels of the foreign born population moving to the region.
- Poverty appears to have increased in Hampden County. WIA adult programs should continue to target low-income adults and the REB should maintain its policy of promoting the generation of better-paying jobs that can sustain a family.