



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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## **December Economic Trends report for metro Milwaukee**

*Feb. 8, 2022*

MILWAUKEE – The 2021 calendar year finished strong with a majority of metro area business activity indicators pointing upward, according to a monthly report by the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC.) For December, 15 of 22 available economic indicators registered positive vs. year-ago levels, matching the number of positives (15) posted in November.

“For the ninth consecutive month, a majority of local indicators registered positive, suggesting that Milwaukee’s economy has a firm base for continuing growth into 2022,” said Bret Mayborne, the MMAC’s economic research director. “Robust gains across a broad slice of industries, particularly leisure & hospitality, construction and manufacturing, help set the table for future growth.”

Highlights of the data include:

- Employment in the metro area averaged 837,300 in December, a 2.9% increase from one year ago. December’s gain represents improvement from the 2.4% gain posted in November and marks the strongest rate of increase registered in five months.
- Gains were widespread, with seven of 10 major industry sectors posting December year-over-year job increases. Among industries with increases, the leisure & hospitality sector posted the sharpest gain, up 24.8%. For industries with job declines, the financial activities sector had the largest year-over-year decrease, down 5.5% - this sector’s 14th consecutive month of decline.
- Metro Milwaukee’s seasonally unadjusted unemployment rate of 2.2% matched November’s historically low rate, falling 2.4 percentage points from one year ago. December’s rate ranks somewhat higher than Wisconsin’s 2% but below the 3.7% rate recorded nationally.
- Manufacturing related indicators were mixed. Manufacturing employment rose 6.1% in December (vs. one year ago) reaching 120,200. In contrast, the length of the average work week for manufacturing production workers fell 14.9% to 35.9 hours, contributing to a 3.3% fall in average weekly earnings. Average hourly earnings for such workers rose strongly, up 13.7% to \$26.87.

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- Metro area existing homes sold rose 5.6% in December (vs. one year ago) to 1,620, up from the 0.1% increase posted in November. Mortgages recorded in Milwaukee County numbered 3,385 in December, down 16% from one year ago.
- Passenger totals at Mitchell International Airport totaled 443,855 in December, a 134.2% increase from year-ago levels. On the other hand, December new-car registrations fell 16% from year-ago levels, this indicator's sixth consecutive month of year-over-year decline.

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### Note

Seasonally unadjusted data is used in this analysis thus month-over-month job changes may be due to seasonal effects. A truer month-to-month trend is captured in seasonally adjusted data. Unfortunately for most metro areas the breadth of employment and unemployment data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics is almost exclusively released in not seasonally adjusted form. Total nonfarm employment is available as a seasonally adjusted series for the metro area.

The seasonally adjusted series showed a loss of 112,400 jobs in April 2020 (vs. March), the beginning of the Covid-19 recession. Since that time, the local economy added back 77,900 jobs cumulatively in the month-over-month record over the May 2020 to December 2021 period or 69% of the initial loss.

Statistical table attached.

## Metropolitan Milwaukee Business Indicators

### December 2021

	Month	Current month	Previous month	Year ago	% chg. from yr. ago	% chg. prev. month	% chg. year to date (1)
<b>ESTABLISHMENT DATA</b>							
Total nonfarm payroll employment (000)	Dec-21	837.3	837.6	813.8	2.9%	0.0%	1.0%
Construction, mining & natural res. (000)	Dec-21	32.2	34.5	29.8	8.1%	-6.7%	-4.9%
Manufacturing (000)	Dec-21	120.2	119.0	113.3	6.1%	1.0%	3.4%
Trade, transportation, & utilities (000)	Dec-21	145.1	143.1	143.3	1.3%	1.4%	1.5%
Information (000)	Dec-21	12.1	12.1	12.3	-1.6%	0.0%	-1.8%
Financial activities (000)	Dec-21	46.5	47.1	49.2	-5.5%	-1.3%	-4.7%
Professional & business services (000)	Dec-21	122.8	123.8	117.0	5.0%	-0.8%	5.2%
Education & health services (000)	Dec-21	161.6	161.6	167.5	-3.5%	0.0%	-2.3%
Leisure & hospitality (000)	Dec-21	72.5	71.7	58.1	24.8%	1.1%	8.5%
Other services, exc. public (000)	Dec-21	44.8	44.7	44.6	0.4%	0.2%	2.7%
Government (000)	Dec-21	79.5	80.0	78.7	1.0%	-0.6%	-2.8%
<b>LABOR FORCE DATA</b>							
Civilian labor force (000)	Dec-21	807.7	811.1	791.9	2.0%	-0.4%	0.7%
Employed (000)	Dec-21	789.6	793.0	755.2	4.6%	-0.4%	3.7%
Unemployed (000)	Dec-21	18.1	18.0	36.7	-50.7%	0.6%	-38.9%
Unemployment rate							
Metro Milwaukee	Dec-21	2.2%	2.2%	4.6%	-2.4(4)	0.0(4)	-2.8(4)
Wisconsin	Dec-21	2.0%	1.9%	4.0%	-2.0(4)	0.1(4)	-2.6(4)
United States	Dec-21	3.7%	3.9%	6.5%	-2.8(4)	-0.2(4)	-2.7(4)
New unemployment compensation claims	Dec-21	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<b>HOURS &amp; EARNINGS (mfg. production workers)</b>							
Avg. weekly hours (manuf.)	Dec-21	35.9	39.0	42.2	-14.9%	-7.9%	0.9%
Avg. weekly earnings (2)	Dec-21	\$964.63	\$966.03	\$997.19	-3.3%	-0.1%	6.9%
Avg. hourly earnings (2)	Dec-21	\$26.87	\$24.77	\$23.63	13.7%	8.5%	6.0%
<b>HOUSING &amp; REAL ESTATE</b>							
Existing homes sold	Dec-21	1,620	1,598	1,534	5.6%	1.4%	6.0%
Mortgages (number) (3)	Dec-21	3,385	3,210	4,031	-16.0%	5.5%	14.7%
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>							
Airport passengers	Dec-21	443,855	448,189	189,522	134.2%	-1.0%	72.3%
New-car registrations	Dec-21	749	653	892	-16.0%	14.7%	-7.1%
<b>OTHER INDICATORS (latest available)</b>							
Consumer price index (1982-84=100)							
United States (CPI-U)	Dec-21	278.802	277.948	260.474	7.0%	0.3%	4.7%

**Notes:** (1) The average or cumulative figure year-to-date vs. the same total one year ago. (2) Not adjusted for inflation. (3) Milwaukee County only. (4) Percentage point change.

Figures are not seasonally adjusted except where indicated (SA).

Figures are for metro Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington & Waukesha counties) except where indicated.

**Sources:** Wisconsin Dept. of Workforce Development, Multiple Listing Service, Milwaukee County Register of Deeds Office, Mitchell International Airport, Wisconsin Dept. of Transportation, and U.S. Dept. of Labor