
Metro Milwaukee Economic Trends

August 2024

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August Economic Trends

Metro Milwaukee's economy held ground in August as seven of 23 indicators tracked monthly by the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC) improved from year-ago levels. August's total equals the number of positive indicators posted in July.

“In aggregate, monthly indicators for the metro area remain weak but improvement was noted in August unemployment indicators,” said Bret Mayborne, the MMAC's Vice President - Economic Research. “A double-digit year-over-year decline in the number of unemployed, as well as a drop in the overall labor force size, led to a steep fall in the unemployment rate versus year-ago levels.”

Highlights of the data include:

- Metro area nonfarm employment fell 0.6% in August (versus year-ago levels) to 862,600. August's decline ranked somewhat stronger than the 0.4% decreases posted in both June and July (year-over-year).
- Among major industry sectors, six of 10 registered year-over-year employment decreases. The information sector saw a 6.8% decline from one year ago, the steepest percentage job decrease. The government sector remains the main sector of employment growth – up 4.9% to 81,200. Jobs in the trade, transportation and utilities sector was unchanged in this period.
- The metro area saw a 20.7% drop in the number of unemployed (to 25,600), leading to a 0.8 percentage point fall in the seasonally unadjusted unemployment rate versus year-ago levels. August's 3.1% rate is down from the 3.9% rate posted one year ago. Milwaukee's rate registers below the 4.4% rate for the United States and ranks as the second-lowest recorded among 21 benchmark metros. Conversely, new unemployment compensation claims rose 14% in August versus one year ago, following consecutive months of year-over-year decline.
- Earnings indicators for manufacturing workers remain weak. Average hourly earnings fell for the twelfth consecutive month on a year-over-year basis, down 4% to \$28.03. Similarly, average weekly earnings for such workers fell 2.9% in the August to August 2023 period.
- Transportation related indicators were mixed. August new-car registrations in the metro area fell 32.2% year-over-year, marking its fourth consecutive month of decline. On the other hand, air passengers using Mitchell International Airport rose 5.8% from one year ago to 584,767, this indicator's highest passenger count since March.
- Following July gains, both local housing and real estate indicators registered declines in August. Metro area existing home sales in August fell 2.8% year-over-year while mortgages recorded in Milwaukee County declined 2.2%.

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 non-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 113,800 jobs in April 2020 (vs. March), the beginning of the COVID-19 recession. Since that time, the local economy added back 99,500 jobs cumulatively in the month-over-month record over the period from May 2020 to August 2024, or 87% of the initial loss.

Metropolitan Milwaukee Business Indicators

August 2024

	Month	Current month	Previous month	Year ago	% chg. from yr. ago	% chg. prev. month	% chg. year to date (1)
ESTABLISHMENT DATA							
Total nonfarm payroll employment (000)	Aug-24	862.6	862.0	868.1	-0.6%	0.1%	-0.6%
Construction, mining & natural res. (000)	Aug-24	39.8	39.4	38.9	2.3%	1.0%	2.8%
Manufacturing (000)	Aug-24	114.3	114.8	115.6	-1.1%	-0.4%	-1.1%
Trade, transportation, & utilities (000)	Aug-24	147.6	147.6	147.6	0.0%	0.0%	-0.7%
Information (000)	Aug-24	10.9	11.0	11.7	-6.8%	-0.9%	-6.7%
Financial activities (000)	Aug-24	48.1	48.4	49.8	-3.4%	-0.6%	-2.4%
Professional & business services (000)	Aug-24	119.4	118.9	123.0	-2.9%	0.4%	-4.2%
Education & health services (000)	Aug-24	174.2	175.3	173.8	0.2%	-0.6%	1.2%
Leisure & hospitality (000)	Aug-24	83.7	84.8	86.4	-3.1%	-1.3%	-0.8%
Other services, exc. public (000)	Aug-24	43.4	43.6	43.9	-1.1%	-0.5%	-0.9%
Government (000)	Aug-24	81.2	78.2	77.4	4.9%	3.8%	3.2%
LABOR FORCE DATA							
Civilian labor force (000)	Aug-24	822.9	827.6	835.4	-1.5%	-0.6%	-0.3%
Employed (000)	Aug-24	797.3	796.8	803.1	-0.7%	0.1%	-0.4%
Unemployed (000)	Aug-24	25.6	30.8	32.3	-20.7%	-16.9%	0.3%
Unemployment rate							
Metro Milwaukee	Aug-24	3.1%	3.7%	3.9%	-0.8(4)	-0.6(4)	0.0(4)
Wisconsin	Aug-24	2.7%	3.3%	3.4%	-0.7(4)	-0.6(4)	0.0(4)
United States	Aug-24	4.4%	4.5%	3.9%	0.5(4)	-0.1(4)	0.4(4)
New unemployment compensation claims	Aug-24	3,420	2,967	3,001	14.0%	15.3%	3.5%
HOURS & EARNINGS (mfg. production workers)							
Avg. weekly hours (manuf.)	Aug-24	36.0	36.2	35.6	1.1%	-0.6%	0.1%
Avg. weekly earnings (2)	Aug-24	\$1,009.08	\$979.93	\$1,039.16	-2.9%	3.0%	-8.8%
Avg. hourly earnings (2)	Aug-24	\$28.03	\$27.07	\$29.19	-4.0%	3.5%	-8.8%
HOUSING & REAL ESTATE							
Existing homes sold	Aug-24	1,337	1,404	1,376	-2.8%	-4.8%	4.6%
Mortgages (number) (3)	Aug-24	2,086	2,132	2,132	-2.2%	-2.2%	3.6%
TRANSPORTATION							
Airport passengers	Aug-24	584,767	579,768	552,670	5.8%	0.9%	9.5%
New-car registrations	Aug-24	667	874	984	-32.2%	-23.7%	-11.4%
OTHER INDICATORS (latest available)							
Consumer price index (1982-84=100)							
United States (CPI-U)	Aug-24	314.796	314.540	307.026	2.5%	0.1%	3.1%

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.

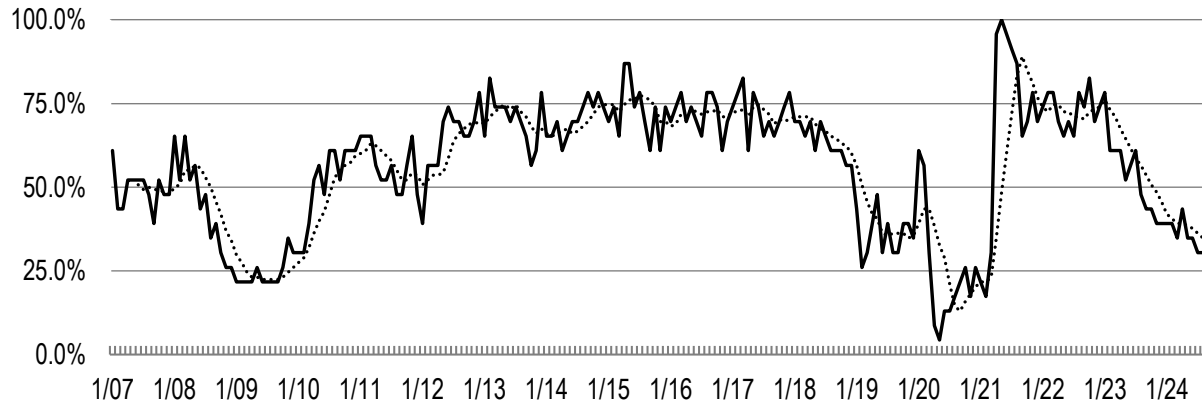
Figures are not seasonally adjusted except where indicated (SA).

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

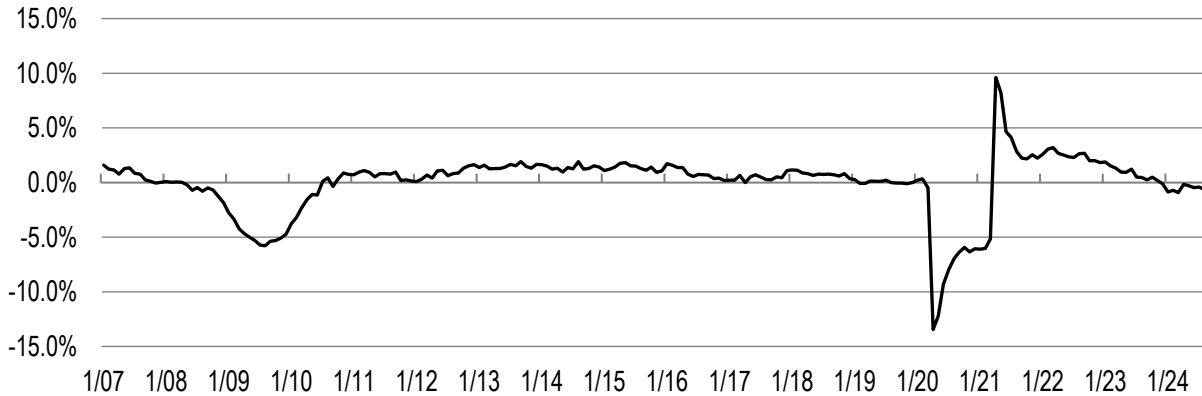
Metro Milwaukee Monthly Indicators Diffusion Index

Percentage of available monthly indicators (23) with year-over-year improvement



Nonfarm Employment - Metro Milwaukee

Percent change vs. year-ago levels



Year-Over-Year Job Change by Industry - Metro Milwaukee

Percent change August 2023 to August 2024

