

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS in New Hampshire



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Foreign workers fill certain jobs in New Hampshire's economy

Recent discussions about foreign workers have spurred many questions. Just how many illegal immigrants are there nationally and locally? Although there are some estimates, that question is difficult at best to answer with any degree of accuracy because illegals don't want to be identified or counted because of their illegal status.

Seasonal demand requests

For the most part legal foreign workers in New Hampshire's economy fill specific needs. Through foreign worker programs, employers can request approval for workers they have located and recruited who have the skills required for vacant positions.

There are different types of work visas for different labor pools of foreign workers. Temporary laborers typically fill needed short-term positions. New Hampshire processes requests for two types of temporary foreign workers, seasonal and agricultural. These requests must be submitted from 45 to 60 days minimum to 120 days maximum before the date of hire. The length of employment is valid up to 364 days, however because of the seasonal designation, any request lasting longer than 10 months requires more thorough review as to why it still qualifies as a seasonal position and not year-round.

Foreign labor helps employers in the state meet seasonal demands. A count of program year 2005 temporary foreign work requests in the state revealed that housekeepers and landscape laborers were the two top requests made. The majority of these requests were received in the late fall, and early winter so the job could be filled early in the spring. Two of every five temporary jobs held by foreign workers were in the leisure and hospitality industry, an indication of that sector's strength in New Hampshire and need for workers. Food service workers, waitstaff, and line cooks made up over 20 percent of all seasonal work requests, and housekeepers and hotel clerks contributed another 23 percent. Ski instructors and lift attendants as well as amusement park attendants were among the temporary foreign requests to cover both the winter and summer recreational seasons. Many employers in the state find these positions difficult to fill. The industry

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2005 New Hampshire Seasonal Occupation Requests

Count	Occupations requested
189	Housekeeper
183	Landscape Laborer
106	Ski Instructors
84	Waitstaff
74	Food Service Worker
66	Line Cook
60	Amusement Park Attendants
57	Hotel Clerk
45	Quarry Stone Carver
20	Cashier

need is for full time help; however due to the low wages and seasonality, it makes them less attractive to residents.

Prevailing wage requests

Another source for tracking the demand for foreign workers is prevailing wage determinations. The prevailing wage requests can cover any type of foreign work visa, temporary or permanent. The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) requires that the hiring of a foreign worker will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of U.S. workers working in the occupation of intended employment. To comply with the statute, the U.S. Department of Labor's regulations require the wages offered to a foreign worker must be the prevailing wage rate for the occupational classification in the area of employment.¹

The requirement to pay prevailing wages, as a minimum, is true of most employment-based visa programs involving the U.S. Department of Labor. Programs that require the employer to pay the prevailing wage, or the same wage paid to others doing the same job, provide detailed information as part of the application process. The prevailing wage requests do include the desired experience level of the occupation and specialty, and the immediate need is verified in the request. These prevailing wage requests may shed some light on where occupational skills shortages are occurring in the New Hampshire labor market, although it is uncertain if any specific skill will remain in demand in the future.

Types of occupations

New Hampshire processes in the neighborhood of 600 prevailing wage applications for positions during a program year. By far the most requests during

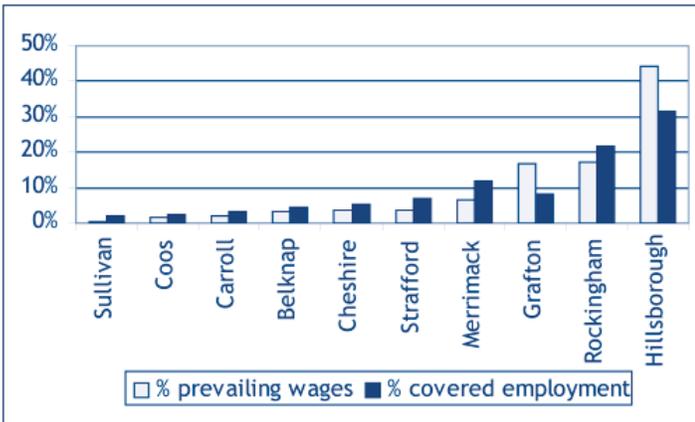
the 2005 program year² were made for occupations in the Computer and mathematical group, which contributed 216 of the 531 total requests. No other occupational group had as many requests. Management occupations were next on the list, providing just over ten percent of foreign work requests, because of experience and specialty training required. The Architecture and engineering occupations filled the needs of another 8.3 percent of employers. Employers requesting specialty training of positions in the Life, physical, and social sciences and the Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations covered another 6.6 percent of foreign workers in each group.

2005 New Hampshire Prevailing Wage Requests

Occupational Group	Occupational Group Title	
11-0000	Management Occupation	56
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	11
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	216
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	44
19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	35
21-0000	Community and Social Services Occupations	5
23-0000	Legal Occupations	1
25-0000	Education, Training, and Library Occupations	33
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	4
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	35
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	1
33-0000	Protective Service Occupations	0
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	27
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	15
39-0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	7
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	5
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	2
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	1
47-0000	Construction and Extraction Occupations	10
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	8
51-0000	Production Occupations	15
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	0

One of every four prevailing wage requests in New Hampshire during the 2005 program year was for Computer software engineers, specializing in applications. Additionally, these prevailing wage requests specified the experience level of the requested occupations. For this particular occupation in the state, over 70 percent indicated the need to have between two and four years of experience, and an additional

2005 New Hampshire Prevailing Wage vs. Covered Employment



20 percent wanted specialty experience, supervisory responsibilities, or higher education levels.

Geographic concentration

There are areas of the state that have more needs for foreign labor requests. Again the most detailed information is accessible from the prevailing wage requests.

Foreign labor requests are centralized in areas where the employers cannot fill the vacant positions. By far the majority of requests in New Hampshire require mathematical or healthcare specialties. It makes sense the locations requesting

Continued on page 8

Unemployment Compensation Claims Activity

Total Regular Unemployment Compensation Programs:	Feb-06		Jan-06		Feb-05		Change from Previous				
							Month		Year		
	Net	Percent	Net	Percent	Net	Percent	Net	Percent	Net	Percent	
Initial Claims	3,967	5,832	4,127	-1,865	-32.0%	-160	-3.9%				
Continued Weeks	35,388	42,863	40,994	-7,475	-17.4%	-5,606	-13.7%				

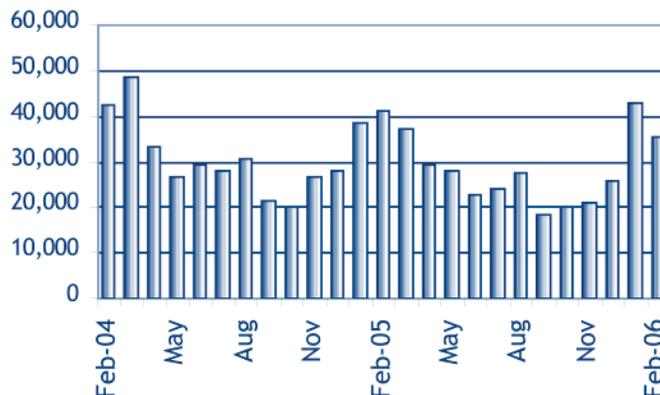
Claims Activity

Unemployment Compensation Fund

Unemployment compensation fund balance at the end of February	\$253,870,736.55
Average payment for a week of total unemployment:	\$253.80
Net benefits paid:	\$7,165,647.28
Net contributions received during the month:	\$3,457,364.33
Interest Received:	\$0.00
Reed Act Distribution:	\$0.00
Reed Act Withdrawal for Administrative Costs:	\$0.00

Trust Fund

Continued Weeks Claimed



Feb 2004 - Feb 2006

The seasonal over-the-month drop in continued weeks claimed was the largest drop, both numerically and percentage wise, since 1992.

Feb-06	Jan-06	Feb-05	Change from Previous	
			Month	Year
198.7	198.3	191.8	0.2%	3.6%

United States
All Urban Areas (CPI-U)
(1982-1984=100)

Consumer Price Index

Continued from page 3

the most help would be in areas that have high concentrations of high tech and healthcare industries.

Only Hillsborough and Grafton Counties have a higher share of foreign worker prevailing wage determinations than their share of covered employment. A possible explanation for that is the concentration of high technology industries in Hillsborough County, and the growing needs in Grafton County with specialties arising from the health and education facilities located there.

Hillsborough County by far outweighed the volume of prevailing wage determinations among the counties, submitting 44.4 percent of all requests

for the year. The next highest levels of requests were received from Rockingham and Grafton Counties with 17.3 and 16.8 percent respectively. As for the types of occupations requested in the counties, Hillsborough claimed 63.2 percent of all the computer software engineers previously mentioned.

Anita Josten

1. U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Foreign Labor Certification Prevailing Wages, <http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/foreign/wages.asp>

*application status does not necessarily indicate acceptance

2. Program Year for the prevailing wage program runs from October 1 through September 30.

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