

New Hampshire Economic Conditions

November 2009

New Hampshire Private Employment and Wages First Quarter 2008 to First Quarter 2009

First quarter 2009 employment is the first available data depicting how the recent recession has affected New Hampshire.

Private Employment

New Hampshire's total private employment contracted over 17,500 jobs between first quarter 2008 and first quarter 2009. That represented a drop of 3.3 percent quarter-to-quarter over-the-year change to 531,042 jobs.

Unemployment Claims

Going into first quarter 2009, between December 2008 and January 2009 initial claims for unemployment insurance benefits were double the numbers from corresponding months of the previous year. January 2009 had

over 4,800 and February had 4,900 more initial claims for unemployment benefits than the same months of the year before. March 2009 had 6,200 more claims than in March 2008. That trend continued through the next several months.

Private Wages

Private businesses have employed a multitude of approaches to survive during this recession. Reduced hours, furloughs, and layoffs have been utilized on a fairly regular basis. These avenues have had an impact on the total wage statistics reported for the quarter.

The average weekly wage for New Hampshire fell from \$877.44 in

first quarter 2008 to \$847.23 for first quarter 2009. This was a decline of over \$30 a week, minus 3.4 percent.

Private Employment by County

Every county in the state experienced a decline in private employment. The largest numeric changes were found in the counties that had the largest employment concentrations, Hillsborough and Rockingham counties respectively.

Hillsborough County lost almost 7,100 jobs, equaling 40 percent of the total private losses in the state. Compared to the county's employment in first quarter 2008, that was a drop of 4.1 percent. Hillsborough County is home to the two largest cities in the

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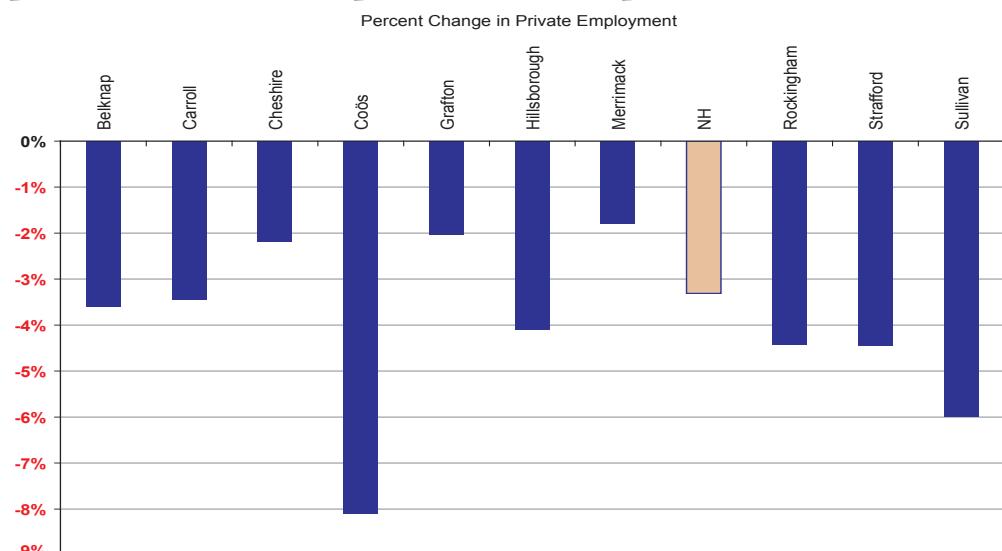
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Coös and Sullivan Counties experienced a decline of more than five percent of private workers from first quarter 2008 to first quarter 2009.



state and accounts for almost a third of all private employment in New Hampshire.

Rockingham County's decline was similar at 4.4 percent. Over 5,200 jobs were lost among Rockingham County's private businesses between first quarter 2008 and first quarter 2009. Just over 22 percent of the state's private employment is in Rockingham County.

Strafford County experienced the third largest numeric drop, more than 1,600 private jobs. On a percentage basis, the 4.5 percent drop was the third largest among the counties. Strafford County employed 6.8 percent of the private workforce in the state.

Coös and Sullivan are the two counties with the smallest shares of total private employment, with 2.0 percent each, and had the highest percentage job losses. The drop in Coös County was 8.1 percent with almost 900 jobs lost quarter-to-quarter over-the-year.

The loss left Coös County with slightly over 10,000 private sector jobs at the end of first quarter 2009. Sullivan County experienced a 6.0 percent drop in private employment, a reduction of more than 650 jobs from first quarter 2008 to first quarter 2009. The remaining jobs in the county outnumber those in Coös County by about 300.

Private Wages by County

Three counties had losses in average weekly wage greater than the state average. Hillsborough County typically has the highest average weekly wage among the counties and dropped almost \$60 from first quarter 2008 to first quarter 2009. That represented a decline of 6.0 percent in wages in the county over-the-year to \$937.67.

Cheshire County had the second largest drop in average weekly wage, both numerically and percent change. The change in Cheshire scaled back the average weekly wage by \$37.85, a

drop of 4.9 percent from first quarter 2008 to first quarter 2009. Cheshire has the fifth smallest share of private employment in the state. The average weekly wage in Cheshire County during first quarter 2009 was \$733.71.

Merrimack County had the next largest net change in average weekly wage, a decline of \$30.85. The drop of 4.0 percent from first quarter 2008 to first quarter 2009 brought the average weekly wage to \$740.94 for the county.

Belknap County had a 4.3 percent reduction in average weekly wage from first quarter 2008 to first quarter 2009. Average weekly wage shrank \$28.86, bringing Belknap County's average weekly wage to \$644.94, the third lowest in the state.

The only positive change in average weekly wage was in Strafford County, where the average increased a half a percent to \$790.78 during first quarter 2009.

Anita Josten

Hillsborough County experienced both the largest dollar decrease and the highest percentage decrease in average weekly wage among private workers from first quarter 2008 to first quarter 2009.

