



Wiregrass WorkReady Region Economic and Workforce Profile Executive Summary

Executive Briefing

Highlights of population and labor force trends, labor force quality, target industry and occupation trends are excerpted below, followed by a detailed analysis of the region's workforce supply and demand.

Population Trends

- With an annual growth rate of 0.6 percent between 2000 and 2008, the population of the region was 109,252 in 2008.
- Over the next eight years, the annual population growth of the region is projected to slow to 0.3 percent with a population estimate of 112,035 by 2016.
- Growing at 0.8 percent annually between 2008 and 2016, Atkinson County is projected to experience the fastest growth in the region over the next eight years.
- The unemployment rate increased from 7.4 percent in February 2008 to 13.0 percent in February 2009, as 2,687 more workers were unemployed in February 2009 than one year prior.
- The labor force participation rates of the region have fallen steadily and significantly from 62.4 percent in 1990, to 54.0 percent in 2007.
- In 2007, 6,612 people migrated to the region and 6,627 people emigrated from the region, creating a net out-migration of 15 people.
- The region is less diverse than the state. The region's population is 33.0 percent non-white, while the state's population is 41.4 percent non-white.

Labor Force Trends

- Between 2000 and 2008, the labor force in the region declined by 2.1 percent annually, while it increased by 0.9 percent annually on a state level.
- The manufacturing labor turnover rate at 6.9 percent is similar to the statewide manufacturing turnover rate of 7.0 percent.
- With approximately 11 percent of workers aged 19-24, the region has about the same percentage of workers in this age bracket as the state of Georgia.
- The manufacturing sector is composed of a higher percentage of males than females, with 67.0 percent of the workforce being male.

Labor Force Quality

- In 2006, the average income in the Wiregrass WorkReady Region was \$26,624 or almost 33 percent lower than the state average of \$39,969.
- Self-employed proprietors account for 22.6 percent of jobs in the region, up from 17.6 percent a decade ago.
- More than three in ten (31.6 percent) residents of the region aged 25 and above have not completed high school compared with 16.7 percent for Georgia and 14.9 percent for the U.S.



Industry and Occupation Trends

- Most supersectors in the region either maintained stable employment levels between 2000 and 2008 or experienced low growth rates over the time period. However, one significant exception to this statement is the manufacturing sector, which lost 2,691 jobs (24 percent) between 2000 and 2008.
- Manufacturing is predicted to shed more jobs between 2008 and 2013 but stabilize employment between 2013 and 2018.
- Manufacturing jobs have been important to the region because the average earnings in manufacturing industries were \$31,097 per year, whereas the average earnings for all workers are \$29,344 per year.
- With 1,004 workers in 2008, the largest occupation within the manufacturing industries is team assemblers.
- East Central Technical College offers a number of different programs, including industrial mechanics and maintenance technology and welding technology. Additionally, South Georgia College, another postsecondary institution located in the region, offers, among other programs, a program in heavy equipment maintenance technologies.