

WISCONSIN JOB LOSS SLOWS

Wisconsin lost another 2,100 jobs from April to May 2009, leaving the state with 138,800 fewer jobs than when the recession started in December 2007. While Wisconsin continues to shed employment, the rate of job loss slowed notably last month. On average, the state lost 18,650 jobs each month in the six months leading up to April 2009; from April to May, the number of jobs lost – 2,100 – was a fraction of that decline. It will become more clear in future months whether this slowing rate of job loss signals a turnaround in the Wisconsin economy. (Figure 1)

Wisconsin's unemployment rate continues to rise, increasing from 8.6 to 8.9% from April to May. Unemployment is now nearly double the rate of unemployment in December 2007. (Table 1, Figure 3 on back page)

MANUFACTURING DECLINE CONTINUES, CONSTRUCTION GROWS SLIGHTLY

Wisconsin's manufacturing sector is still declining, with 65,400 fewer manufacturing jobs now than when the recession started. This loss of manufacturing jobs accounts for nearly half of total job loss in Wisconsin since December 2007, and it represents a 13 percent decline of the state's manufacturing workforce. The construction sector has seen its job numbers shrink even faster, with a decline of 16 percent (20,200 jobs) since the start of the recession. The recent growth in construction jobs in May (up 2,000 jobs since April) is a promising though expected trend as Wisconsin's weather – and associated construction work – heats up. (Table 1, Figure 2)

Table 1

CHANGES IN UNEMPLOYMENT AND NUMBER OF JOBS IN WISCONSIN, DECEMBER 2007 TO MAY 2009

	December 2007	May 2009	Change	Percent Change
Unemployment	4.5%	8.9%	4.4	
All jobs	2,889,000	2,750,200	-138,800	-4.8%
Manufacturing jobs	500,000	434,600	-65,400	-13.1%
Construction jobs	123,800	103,600	-20,200	-16.3%

Figure 1

TOTAL JOB LOSS IN WISCONSIN, DECEMBER 2007 TO MAY 2009

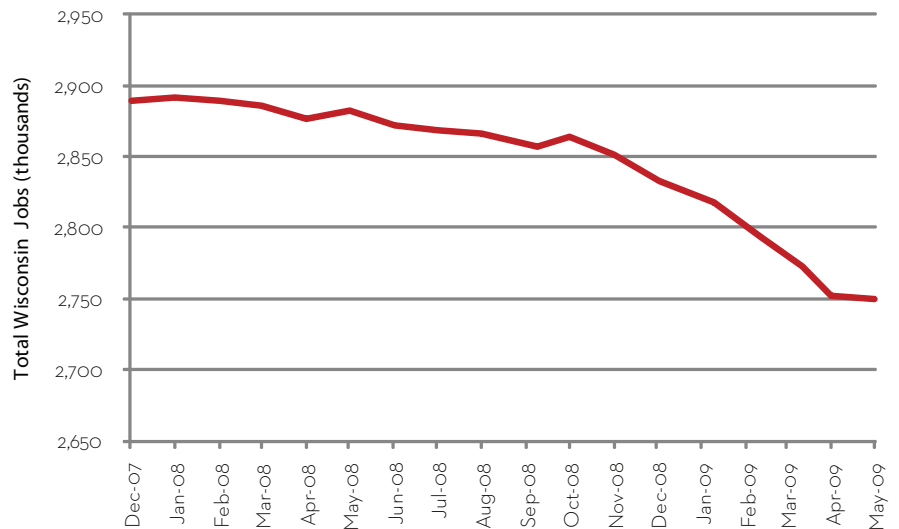
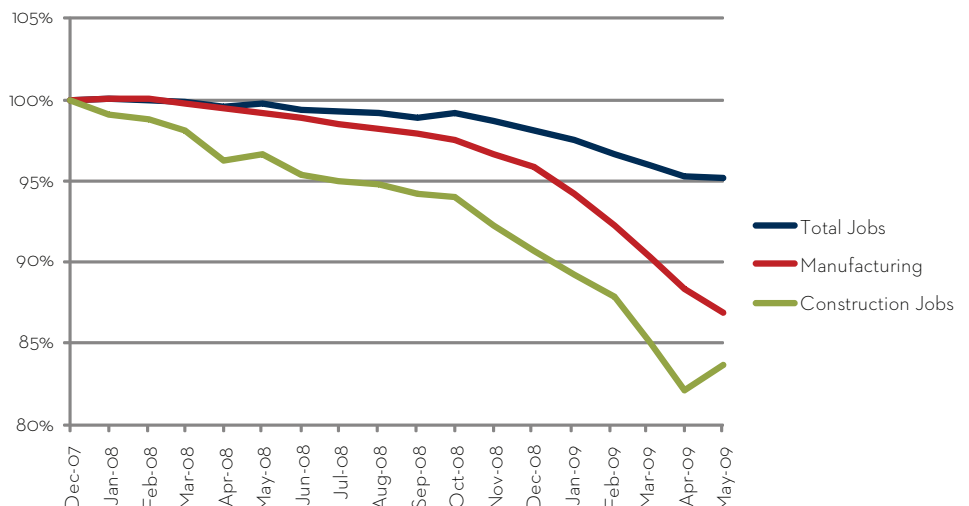


Figure 2

PERCENT CHANGE IN MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION, AND TOTAL JOBS IN WISCONSIN, DECEMBER 2007 TO MAY 2009



A LONG AND BRUTAL RECESSION

Wisconsin has seen unemployment climb and jobs lost at a faster and more sustained rate compared to the 1990 and 2001 recessions. The past two recessions officially lasted eight months each, while the current recession is in its 17th month. While the jobs picture had already stabilized by this point during the last two recessions, the most precipitous job loss and unemployment spikes in the current recession have occurred in the last seven months. (Figures 3 and 4)

Figure 3
WISCONSIN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN CURRENT RECESSION, COMPARED WITH 1990 AND 2001 RECESSIONS

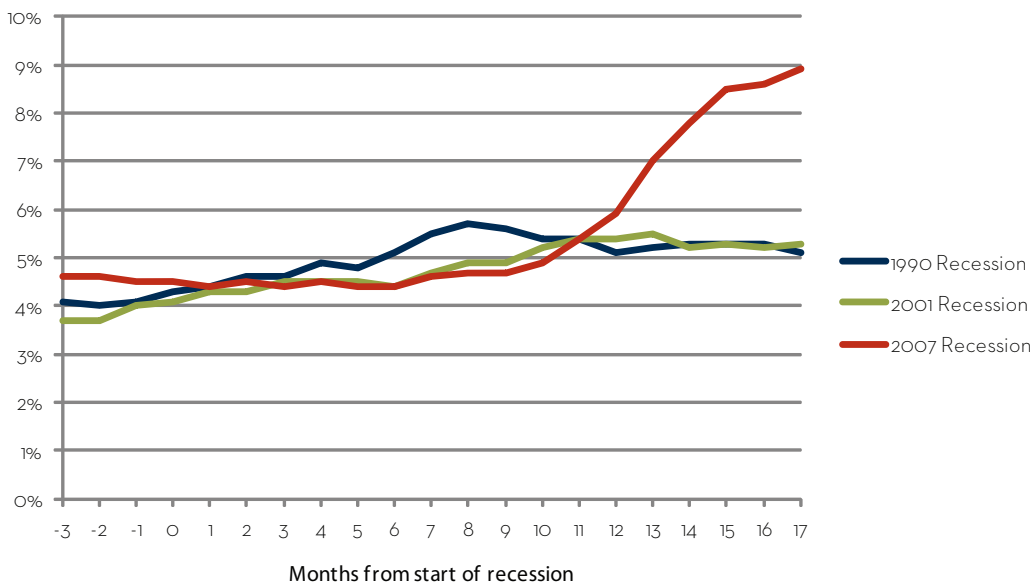
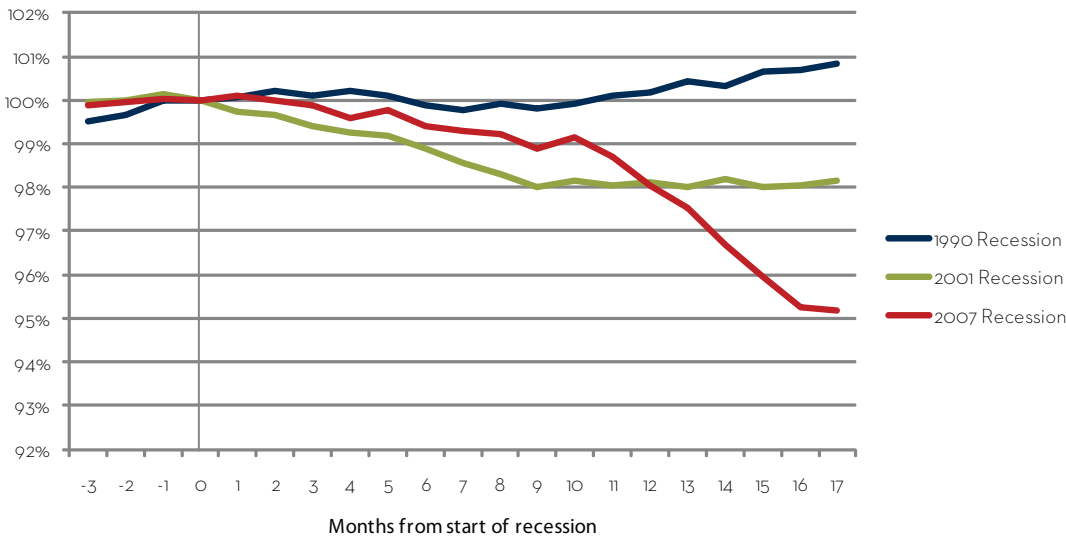


Figure 4
PERCENT CHANGE IN WISCONSIN JOBS IN CURRENT RECESSION, COMPARED WITH 1990 AND 2001 RECESSIONS



Wisconsin Job Watch, a monthly publication of the Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS), provides a snapshot of Wisconsin’s job picture and reports on key recession trends. The numbers provided in this report are based on seasonally-adjusted Bureau of Labor Statistics data compiled by the Economic Policy Institute (www.epi.org). Lakitquana Leal provided valuable research assistance to this report.

The Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) is a policy center and field laboratory for high road economic development – a competitive market economy of shared prosperity, environmental sustainability, and capable democratic government. Housed at University of Wisconsin-Madison, COWS has been supporting progressive policy innovation since 1991. For more information, visit www.cows.org.

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