



NEWS RELEASE

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March Economic Trends

May 4, 2018 – Economic conditions in metro Milwaukee showed continued strength in March as 17 of 23 local indicators improved over year-ago levels, according to a monthly report by the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC). March’s 17 positives match the 17 positives posted in February.

“The economic performance of the metro area has been consistently positive in recent months,” said Bret Mayborne, economic research director for the MMAC. “Nearly three-quarters of local indicators tracked by the MMAC have pointed upward in five of the past six months, suggesting a stable and positive economic environment.”

Highlights of the report include:

- Nonfarm employment averaged 866,800 in March, a 0.8% rise over year-ago levels. March’s gain is marginally below the 0.9% year-over-year increase recorded in February but above the 0.5% average year-over-year change posted over the past 12 months.
- Six of ten major industry sectors registered March job gains (vs. one year ago), while four posted declines. The other services sector (up 3% over year-ago levels) posted the largest percentage increase. Conversely, a 5.8% job decline in the information sector was the largest decrease registered.
- Manufacturing related indicators posted strong gains. Manufacturing jobs rose 2.1% from one year ago, while a manufacturing production worker’s workweek increased 3.5% (vs. one year ago). In addition, both earnings measures for such workers registered double-digit, year-over-year increases.

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For metro area unemployment indicators, the number of unemployed fell 13% (vs. one year ago) in March, to 26,100. New unemployment compensation claims fell at a 12.3% pace in March (vs. year ago levels), following the 12% decline registered in February. On a year-over-year basis new claims have risen only four times in the past four and one-half years.

March's seasonally unadjusted jobless rate of 3.1% is down 0.5 percentage points from the 3.6% rate posted one year ago. Currently, the metro area's unemployment rate is lower than both the state's 3.2% rate and the nation's 4.1% figure.

Indicators: March, 2018 vs. March, 2017

Nonfarm job levels in metro Milwaukee reached 866,800 in March, a 0.8% increase over one year ago. March's gains follow similar increases in recent months (up 1% in January and 0.9% in February, year-over-year) but rank higher than the average job change posted over the last 12 months (up 0.5%).

In percentage terms March's employment growth was led by a 3% increase in the other services sector. March gains were also posted in the education & health services (up 2.4%), manufacturing (up 2.1%), construction, mining & natural resources (up 1.8%), government (up 1.3%), and professional & business services (up 1.1%) sectors.

Four major industry sectors posted job declines in March. The information sector, down 5.8% (to 13,100), posted the largest year-over-year decrease. Declines were also registered in the financial activities (down 3.3%), leisure & hospitality (down 0.9%), and trade, transportation & utilities (down 0.8%) sectors.

Production worker indicators posted strong March gains. The average workweek length for manufacturing production workers rose for the ninth consecutive month, up 3.5%, to 41.9 hours. Gains in both earnings indicators surpassed national consumer price inflation. The average weekly earnings for production workers increased 14.6% (to \$1,002), while average hourly earnings rose 10.8%, to \$23.91. Both increases surpassed the 2.4% rise in the consumer price index nationally over the same time period.

Among local housing and real estate indicators tracked by the MMAC, existing home sales in the metro area rose 6.4%, to 1,354. March's gain follows the 10.1% increase posted in February (vs.

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one year ago). Mortgages recorded in Milwaukee County fell 0.6% in March, to 1,933. March's decline marks this indicator's ninth consecutive year-over-year decline, but also ranks as the smallest such decline in this period.

New-car registrations fell 26.4% from one year ago (to 1,456), following the 38% decline posted in February (vs. year-ago levels). March's decrease marks the third consecutive year-over-year decline in new car registrations. Air passenger totals at Mitchell International Airport reached 690,383 in March, a 5% increase over March, 2017.

Other Indicators (latest available)

Consumer prices nationally, as measured by the Consumer Price Index for Urban Consumers (CPI-U), rose 2.4% in March (vs. March, 2017) to 249.554 (1982-84 = 100). The Milwaukee area CPI-U reached 232.718 for the second half of 2017, a 1.8% increase from 2016's second half.

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Statistical table attached.

Metropolitan Milwaukee Business Indicators

March, 2018

	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)	Mar-18	866.8	861.8	860.1	0.8%	0.6%	0.9%
Construction, mining & natural res. (000)	Mar-18	28.9	28.5	28.4	1.8%	1.4%	2.3%
Manufacturing (000)	Mar-18	120.1	119.9	117.6	2.1%	0.2%	2.0%
Trade, transportation, & utilities (000)	Mar-18	143.3	142.9	144.4	-0.8%	0.3%	-0.6%
Information (000)	Mar-18	13.1	13.1	13.9	-5.8%	0.0%	-6.2%
Financial activities (000)	Mar-18	49.8	50.2	51.5	-3.3%	-0.8%	-2.7%
Professional & business services (000)	Mar-18	126.5	125.5	125.1	1.1%	0.8%	1.5%
Education & health services (000)	Mar-18	173.0	171.6	168.9	2.4%	0.8%	2.1%
Leisure & hospitality (000)	Mar-18	75.8	74.6	76.5	-0.9%	1.6%	-0.7%
Other services, exc. public (000)	Mar-18	47.5	46.8	46.1	3.0%	1.5%	2.4%
Government (000)	Mar-18	88.8	88.7	87.7	1.3%	0.1%	1.7%
LABOR FORCE DATA							
Civilian labor force (000)	Mar-18	840.2	838.1	829.8	1.3%	0.3%	0.8%
Employed (000)	Mar-18	814.1	811.1	799.8	1.8%	0.4%	1.6%
Unemployed (000)	Mar-18	26.1	26.9	30.0	-13.0%	-3.0%	-19.7%
Unemployment rate							
Metro Milwaukee	Mar-18	3.1%	3.2%	3.6%	-0.5(4)	-0.1(4)	-0.8(4)
Wisconsin	Mar-18	3.2%	3.3%	3.7%	-0.5(4)	-0.1(4)	-0.8(4)
United States	Mar-18	4.1%	4.4%	4.6%	-0.5(4)	-0.3(4)	-0.5(4)
New unemployment compensation claims	Mar-18	2,744	3,066	3,128	-12.3%	-10.5%	-10.4%
HOURS & EARNINGS (mfg. production workers)							
Avg. weekly hours (manuf.)	Mar-18	41.9	41.9	40.5	3.5%	0.0%	1.6%
Avg. weekly earnings (2)	Mar-18	\$1,001.83	\$985.49	\$873.99	14.6%	1.7%	12.0%
Avg. hourly earnings (2)	Mar-18	\$23.91	\$23.52	\$21.58	10.8%	1.7%	10.2%
HOUSING & REAL ESTATE							
Existing homes sold	Mar-18	1,352	869	1,271	6.4%	55.6%	7.3%
Mortgages (number) (3)	Mar-18	1,933	1,433	1,944	-0.6%	34.9%	-6.4%
TRANSPORTATION							
Airport passengers	Mar-18	690,383	534,868	657,727	5.0%	29.1%	6.9%
New-car registrations	Mar-18	1,456	933	1,977	-26.4%	56.1%	-24.8%
OTHER INDICATORS (latest available)							
Consumer price index (1982-84=100)							
Milwaukee (CPI-U)	2ndH-17	232.718	232.123	228.624	1.8%	0.3%	2.0%
United States (CPI-U)	Mar-18	249.554	248.991	243.801	2.4%	0.2%	2.2%

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, F.W. Dodge, and U.S. Dept. of Labor