

Workforce Supply

- **Mobile County has a 60,870-strong available labor pool that includes 53,064 underemployed workers who are looking for better jobs, as well as 7,806 unemployed residents.**

The underemployed are willing to commute farther and longer for a better job. For the one-way commute, 50 percent are prepared for 20 or more minutes longer and 24 percent will go 20 or more extra miles.

Labor force	186,473
Employed	178,667
Underemployment rate	29.7%
Number of underemployed workers	53,064
Unemployed	7,806
Available labor pool	60,870

Note: Based on May 2008 labor force data.

Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, The University of Alabama and Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

- **More people are traveling to work and both commute time and distance are up in 2008. Congestion is rising.**

Continuous maintenance and development of the county's transportation infrastructure and systems is essential because impeding the mobility of workers and the flow of goods can slow economic development.

- **Mobile County has lower population growth than the state, but comparable educational attainment.**

Of the county's age 25 and over population, 76.7 percent were high school graduates and 18.6 percent held bachelor's or higher degrees in 2000. For the state as a whole, 75.3 percent were high school graduates and 19.0 percent held bachelor's or higher degrees. The county's population growth from 1990 to 2000 amounted to 5.6 percent, compared to 10.1 percent for the state. The 2000 to 2010 projected population growth is 4.4 percent for Mobile County and 8.8 percent for Alabama. Growth of the prime working age group (20-64) and youth (0-19) will lag that of the total population through 2025, as the 65 and over population increases rapidly.

Workforce Demand

- **Employment is currently growing faster than the labor force and population.**
- **Retail trade; health care and social assistance; educational services; manufacturing; and accommodation and food services are the county's five largest employment sectors in decreasing order.**

These five sectors provided 88,159 jobs, about 51 percent of the county total, in the second quarter of 2007. Three of these leading employers had wages that were above the county's average monthly wage of \$3,035.

- **On average 9,667 jobs were created per quarter from second quarter 2001 to second quarter 2007; quarterly net job flows averaged 1,016.**

Job creation is the number of new jobs that are created either by new businesses or through expansion of existing firms. Net job flows reflect the difference between current and previous employment at all businesses.

- **The top five high-demand occupations are:** Registered Nurses; First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers; Maintenance and Repair Workers, General; Electricians; and Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters.
- **The top five fast-growing occupations are:** Refractory Materials Repairers, Except Brickmasons; Metal-Refining Furnace Operators and Tenders; Heat Treating Equipment Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic; Materials Engineers; and Pourers and Casters, Metal.
- **The 50 highest earning occupations are in the fields of management, engineering, health, legal, sales, computer, postsecondary education, and science and have a minimum salary of \$64,139. Nine of these do not require a bachelor's or higher degree. Four of the top 10 are in management and four are in health.**
- **Six occupations are high-earning, fast-growing, and in high-demand:** Construction Managers; Computer Systems Analysts; Industrial Production Managers;

Industrial Engineers; Engineering Managers; and Computer Software Engineers, Systems Software.

- **Eight jobs are high-earning and in high-demand:** Construction Managers
Computer Systems Analysts
Industrial Production Managers
Industrial Engineers
Engineering Managers
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers
Veterinarians
Computer Software Engineers, Systems Software
- **The county has 26 jobs that are both fast-growing and in high-demand:** Maintenance and Repair Workers, General
Construction Managers
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers
Computer Systems Analysts
Crane and Tower Operators
Heat Treating Equipment Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic
Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians
Structural Metal Fabricators and Fitters
Aircraft Structure, Surfaces, Rigging, and Systems Assemblers
Network and Computer Systems Administrators
Metal-Refining Furnace Operators and Tenders
Pourers and Casters, Metal
Industrial Production Managers
Industrial Engineers
Chemical Technicians
Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks
Engineering Managers
Cost Estimators
Rolling Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic
Refractory Materials Repairers, Except Brickmasons
Materials Engineers
Aerospace Engineers
Business Teachers, Postsecondary
Computer Software Engineers, Systems Software
Computer Software Engineers, Applications
Nursing Instructors and Teachers, Postsecondary

Implications for Workforce Development

- Worker shortfalls of about 17,200 and 40,500 are estimated by 2016 and 2025, respectively, due to strong economic output growth combined with low labor force and population growth rates, and low labor force participation, despite educational attainment in the county that is comparable to the state.
- Strategies to address these shortfalls should aim at increasing labor force participation, encouraging immigration, and raising worker productivity.

Such strategies might include:

1. Improving education and education funding
2. Continuing and enhancing programs to assess, retrain, and place dislocated workers
3. Focusing on hard-to-serve populations (e.g. out-of-school youth)
4. Using economic opportunities to attract new residents
5. Facilitating in-commuting
6. Encouraging older worker participation

- Investment in education/training and skills development is crucial.

Improving education is important because: (a) a highly educated and productive workforce is a critical economic development asset, (b) productivity rises with additional education, (c) more educated people are more likely to work, and (d) education yields high private and social rates of return on investment.

Workforce development must view all of education and other programs (e.g. adult education, career technical training, worker retraining, career readiness, etc.) as one system.

Financial support for workforce development may require tax reform at state and local levels and should provide for flexibility as workforce needs change over time and demand different priorities.

Publicizing both private and public returns to education can encourage individuals to raise their own educational attainment levels and also promote public and legislative support for education.

Higher incomes that come with improved educational attainment and work skills would help increase personal income for the county as well as raise additional local (county and city) tax revenues. This is important, especially for a county that has fairly low population and labor force growth rates.

Of the county's 806 occupations and occupational categories, 42 are expected to decline over the 2006 to 2016 period. Twenty-six occupations are expected to see a sharp decline of at least 8 percent, with each losing a minimum of 10 jobs. Education and training for declining occupations should slow accordingly.

- Skill and education requirements keep rising. In the future, more jobs will require postsecondary education and training at a minimum.

The importance of basic skills generally and for high-demand, high-growth, and high-earning jobs indicates a strong need for training in these skills.

The pace of training needs to increase for technical and systems skills while the scale of training is raised for basic and social skills.

Ideally, all high school graduates should possess basic skills so that postsecondary and higher education can focus on other and more complex skills.

Employers should be an integral part of planning for training as they can help identify future skill needs and any existing gaps.

- Economic development should target high-earning industries and workforce development should ensure availability of workers for such industries.

Economic development should aim to diversify and strengthen the Mobile County economy by retaining, expanding, and attracting more high-wage providing industries. This is necessary despite having three large employment sectors paying higher than average wages.

- Workforce development and economic development can together build a strong and well-diversified Mobile County economy. Indeed, one cannot achieve success without the other.

State of the Workforce Report III: Mobile County 2008 Summary



Funding for this project was provided by:
Alabama Department of Economic and
Community Affairs
Alabama Department of Industrial Relations
Alabama Department of Postsecondary
Education
Alabama Industrial Development Training
Alabama Power Company
Governor's Office of Workforce Development
The University of Alabama

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