2012

State of the Northwest Arkansas Region 2012 Report

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2012

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS
GREAT FOR BUSINESS. GREAT FOR LIFE

State of the Northwest Arkansas Region Report

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The Northwest Arkansas Council is a nonprofit organization that has worked since 1990 to solve regional issues. It focuses on economic development, infrastructure, education, and community vitality. Visit www.nwacouncil.org for more information.

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2012 State of the Northwest Arkansas Region Report

Executive Summary

The State of the Northwest Arkansas Region Report is an annual publication that serves as a tool for evaluating the economic performance of the region in comparison with those peers that are most likely to compete with Northwest Arkansas by virtue of a similar industry mix or geographic proximity. As a player in the global economy, Northwest Arkansas has more to offer than superior performance in traditional economic development categories such as employment, unemployment, establishment growth, and income. This region showcases strengths in newer categories of economic development like the knowledge-based sectors and quality of life indicators such as cost of living, crime, and health. This report highlights and presents these diverse indicators mentioned above and compares them with peer regions.

The Northwest Arkansas Region: Key Economic Indicators

The Northwest Arkansas region is defined as the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers metropolitan statistical area, which is comprised of Benton, Madison, and Washington counties in Arkansas and McDonald County in Missouri. The region includes 50 incorporated cities and 15 unincorporated communities. According to 2011 U.S. Census estimates, the population of the Northwest Arkansas region was 473,830 and grew at a rate of 1.7 percent between 2010 and 2011. The most recent data available from 2012 shows that the Northwest Arkansas region has an employed workforce of 211,100 people. The trade, transportation and utilities, professional and business services, government, and manufacturing sectors account for 67 percent of the region's employment. The total economic activity in the region, as measured by the metropolitan gross product, was $16.4 billion in 2010.

Continuing the Recovery from the Recession

Even though the Northwest Arkansas region was impacted by the nationwide recession in 2008 and 2009, the region has made remarkable strides to recover from the economic slump. While the depth of the recession in Northwest Arkansas was not as harsh as in the rest of the country, the region's economic performance has in some instances surpassed pre-recession peaks.

Employment

During the period from 2000 to 2011, employment in Northwest Arkansas grew 25.0 percent, a rate that outstripped competitor regions, the state of Arkansas and the nation as a whole. Since the beginning of the recession in 2008, Northwest Arkansas employment declined 2.3 percent, a smaller loss than all but one peer region. However, the recovery of the Northwest Arkansas region was evident in the growth in employment between June 2011 and June 2012, when the region added 7,200 jobs. The total nonfarm employment in Northwest Arkansas in June 2012 stood at 211,100, which represents a new peak employment.

Establishment Growth

From 2001 to 2011, the number of business establishments grew by 34.8 percent in Northwest Arkansas. This growth rate outstripped every competitor region, the state, and the nation. After increasing at an annual rate of 4.9 percent from 2001 to 2008, the number of establishments in Northwest Arkansas declined by 2.6 percent in 2009 and by 1.2 percent in 2010 as a result of the recession. The growth rate picked up again by 0.2 percent in 2011 as the nation and region emerged from the recession.

Personal Income

Between 2001 and 2010, the Northwest Arkansas region's per capita personal income grew 33.4 percent, a rate that was second to only one other peer region. In 2010, the per capita personal income stood at $33,309, which was 3.1 percent higher than 2009.

Academic Research and Development

Nearly $105.5 million of research and development expenditures were made by the University of Arkansas in 2009, up 2.6 percent from the previous year. The university placed at 128th rank among research universities in that year.

Adult Education Attainment

Just over 25 percent of adults in Northwest Arkansas have attained a bachelor's degree or higher, ranking the region second to last among competitor regions, but better than the Arkansas average.

Cost of Home Ownership and Cost of Living

In 2005, home ownership costs accounted for 21.0 percent of household income in Northwest Arkansas. The measure rose to 22.4 percent in 2009 before dropping to 22.0 percent in 2010. Home ownership costs in Northwest Arkansas are in the middle of the pack when compared to costs in peer regions.

Poverty Indicators

The poverty rate in Northwest Arkansas was 15.0 percent in 2010. This rate declined 2.0 percent from 2009, but was 2.7 percent higher than the rate in 2000. The Northwest Arkansas poverty rate in 2010 was second highest among peer regions.

Commuting Statistics

In 2010, 74.1 percent of Northwest Arkansas workers spent less than 30 minutes commuting to work, while 3.4 percent of the region's workers used alternative modes of transportation to get to work, including biking, walking, and mass transit.

Health Indicators

In 2010, 82.3 percent of the residents of Northwest Arkansas had health insurance coverage. This percentage was lower than the health insurance coverage rate in peer regions with one exception. Compared to the rest of the state of Arkansas, the two major counties in the Northwest Arkansas region (Benton and Washington) had better health trends in some fields such as a lower rate of adult smoking and a lower rate of adult obesity.

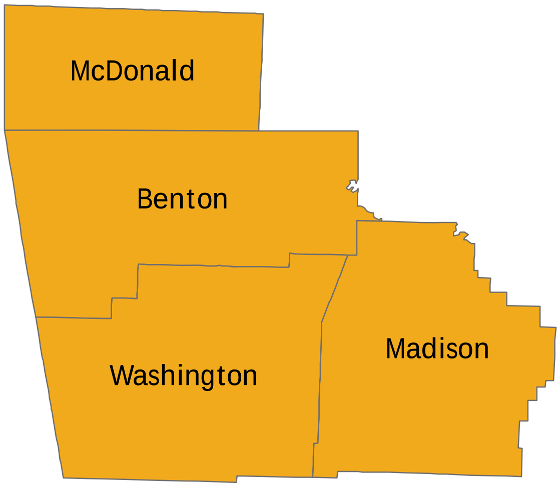
Conclusion

The second annual State of the Northwest Arkansas Region Report presents the Northwest Arkansas region through the lens of economic and quality of life indicators. While not comprehensive, the report provides insights into the region's superior performance in several indicators while highlighting areas that need improvement and lag behind peer regions. The region's high levels of employment growth, establishment growth and rising incomes are tempered by the slow progress in indicators like adult educational attainment and incoming federal research dollars. The Northwest Arkansas region has made improvements in these indicators when compared to past years but still has significant ground to make up against its peers. While the national recession affected Northwest Arkansas substantially, the region has been able to weather the effects and reemerge as an economically vibrant area. Continued efforts to improve the indicators in education and quality of life will enable Northwest Arkansas to remain a leading destination for business and living.

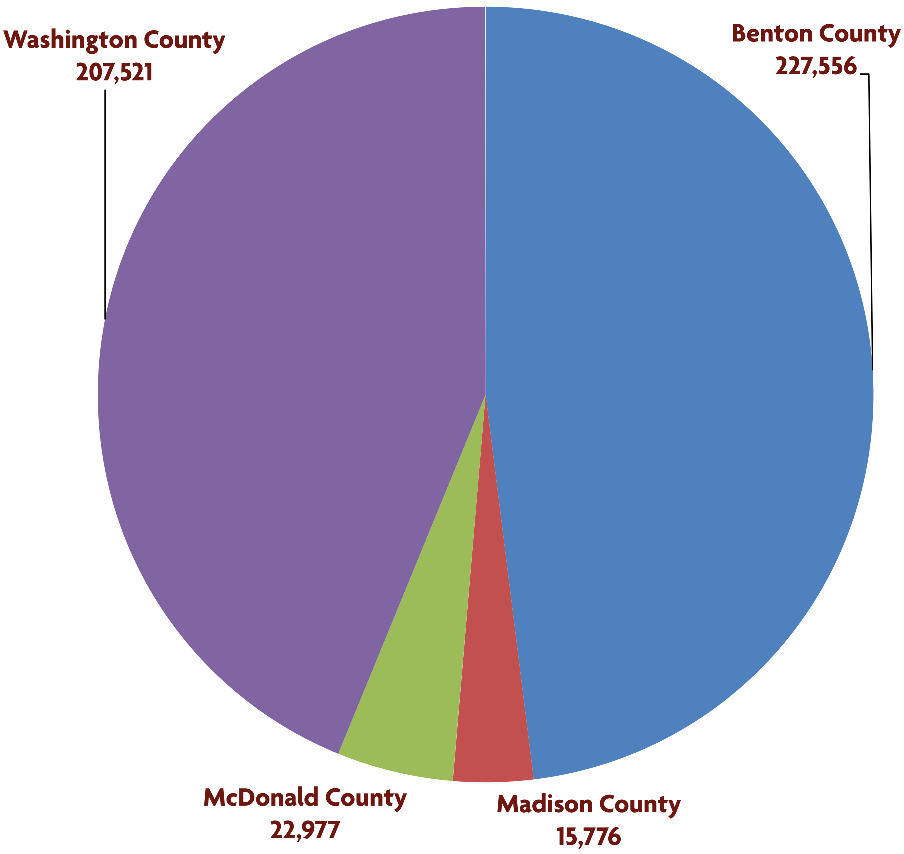
THE NORTHWEST ARKANSAS REGION:
Snapshot of Key Economic Indicators

Northwest Arkansas is comprised of Benton, Washington, and Madison counties in Arkansas and McDonald County in Missouri. The region is centered around the four large cities along the Interstate 540 corridor: Bentonville, Rogers, Springdale, and Fayetteville. Along with the headquarters of Walmart, Tyson Foods, and JB Hunt Transport Services, the University of Arkansas provides a strong economic center for the region.

2011 Population: 473,830
2010-2011 Population Growth: 1.7%
2010-2011 Population Change Rank: 26/366
2011 Employed Workforce: 211,110
2011 Unemployment Rate: 6.2%
2010 Gross Metro Product: $16.4 billion
2009 Per Capita Personal Income: $33,309



County Populations 2011
Source: U.S. Census Bureau



The Northwest Arkansas Region's Economy: Employment by Sector

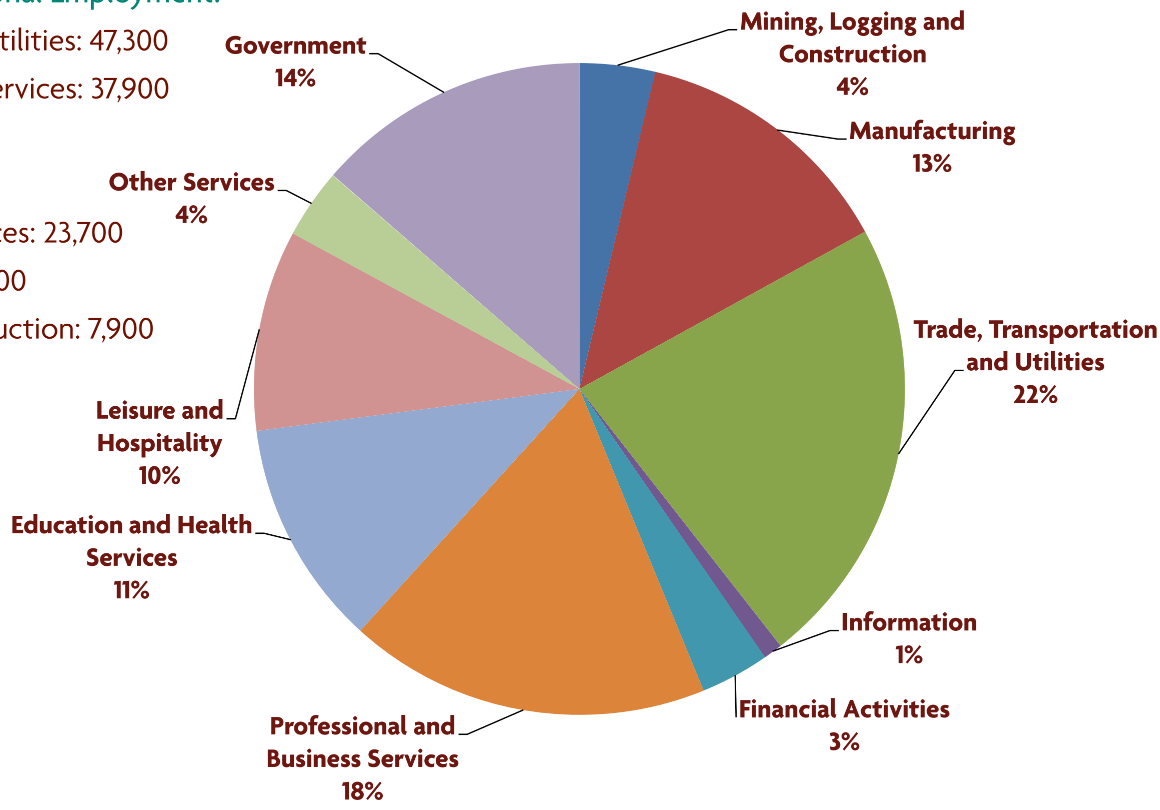
Northwest Arkansas has a well-diversified employment portfolio with employment of more than 211,000. Employment in the Northwest Arkansas economy is led by the trade, transportation and utilities sector and also has relative strengths in the professional and business services sector, the government sector, and the manufacturing sector. Education and health services and the leisure and hospitality sectors also are growth sectors in Northwest Arkansas.

June 2012 Snapshot of Regional Employment:

Trade, Transportation and Utilities: 47,300
Professional and Business Services: 37,900
Government: 28,800
Manufacturing: 28,000
Education and Health Services: 23,700
Leisure and Hospitality: 21,000
Mining, Logging and Construction: 7,900
Other Services: 7,300
Financial Activities: 7,200
Information: 2,000

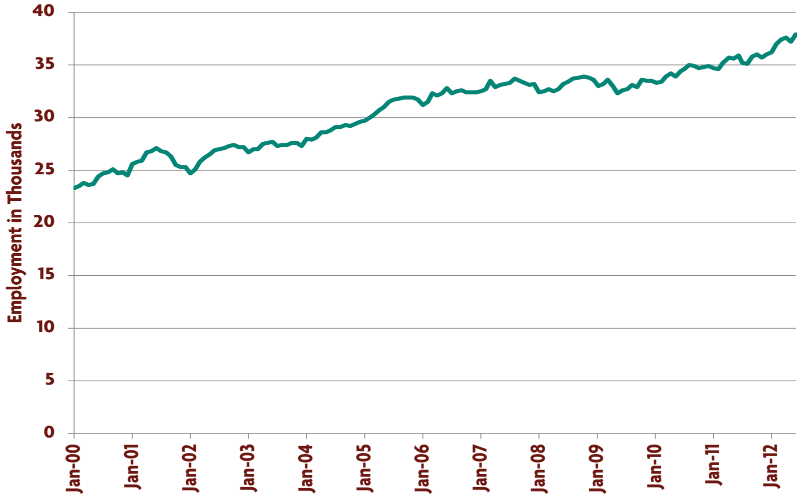
Employment by Sector (Preliminary June 2012 data)

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



The Northwest Arkansas Region

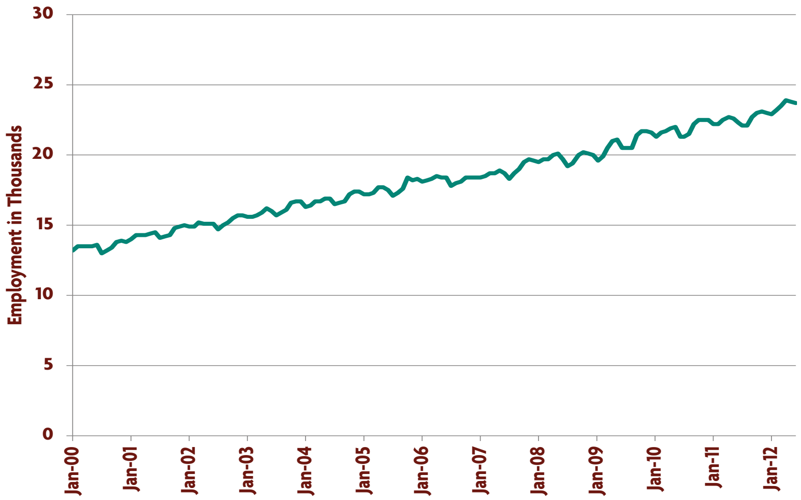
Employment by Sector: 2000-2012



Growth Sectors

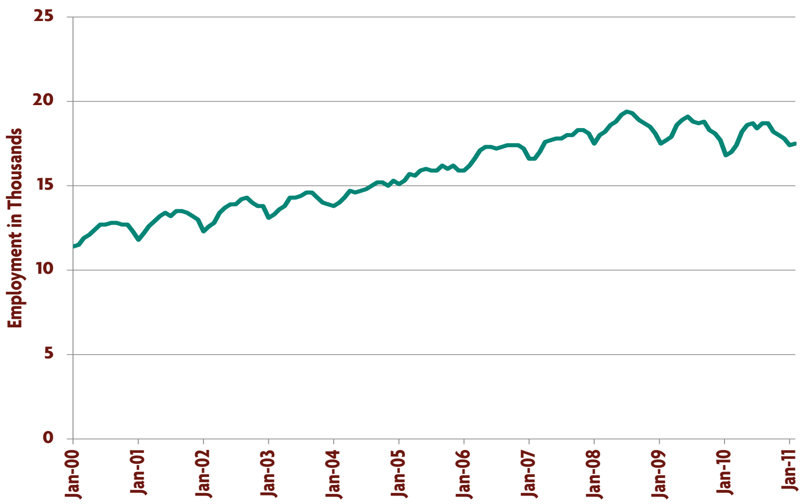
Professional and Business Services

The sector includes employment in establishments that perform professional, scientific and technical activities for others. These services range from legal work, accounting, bookkeeping and payroll to architectural and engineering services. This sector added 14,600 jobs to the Northwest Arkansas economy since 2000. Between June 2011 and June 2012, this sector added 2,000 jobs.



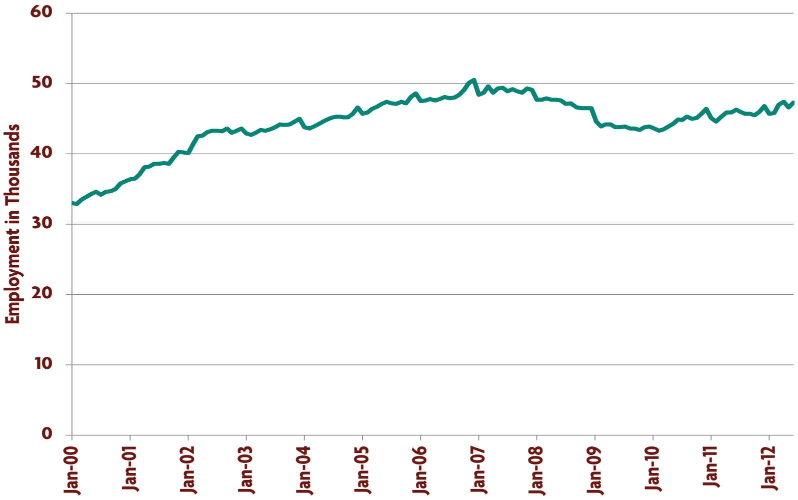
Education and Health Services

The education sector includes employment in public and private schools, colleges, universities and training centers. The health care sector is composed of employment in establishments that provide healthcare and social assistance for individuals. Employment in this sector grew from 13,200 in 2000 to 23,700 in 2012. The sector added 1,400 jobs from June 2011 to June 2012.



Leisure and Hospitality

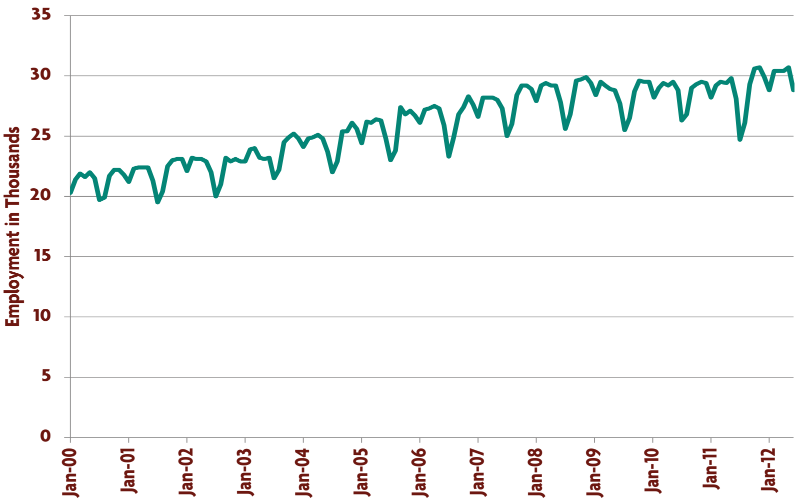
This sector includes employment in a wide range of businesses that operate facilities and provide services to meet cultural, entertainment and recreational interests. The leisure and hospitality sector currently accounts for 10 percent of employment in the Northwest Arkansas economy and added 9,600 jobs since 2000. For the most recent data, this sector grew by 1,700 jobs between June 2011 and June 2012.



Stable Sectors

Trade, Transportation and Utilities

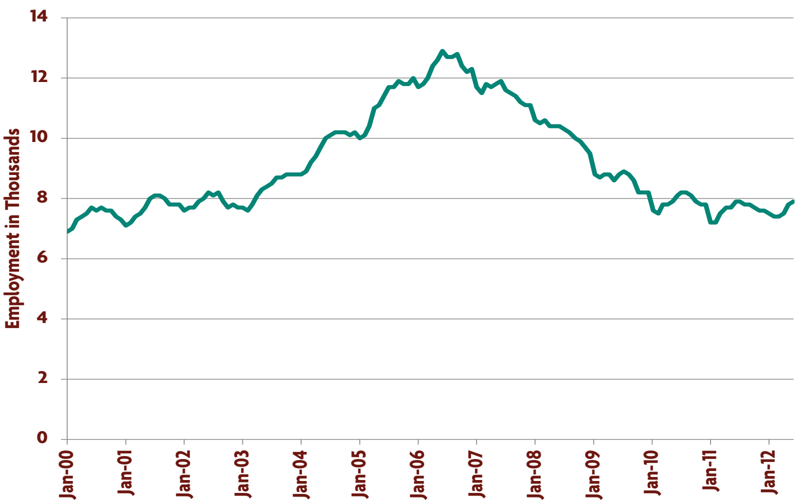
In this sector, employment from the wholesale trade, retail trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities sectors is included. Combined, this sector currently represents the largest share of employment in the Northwest Arkansas economy at 22.0 percent. Since 2000, this sector added 14,300 jobs to the Northwest Arkansas economy. From June 2011 to June 2012, the sector added 1,000 jobs.



Government

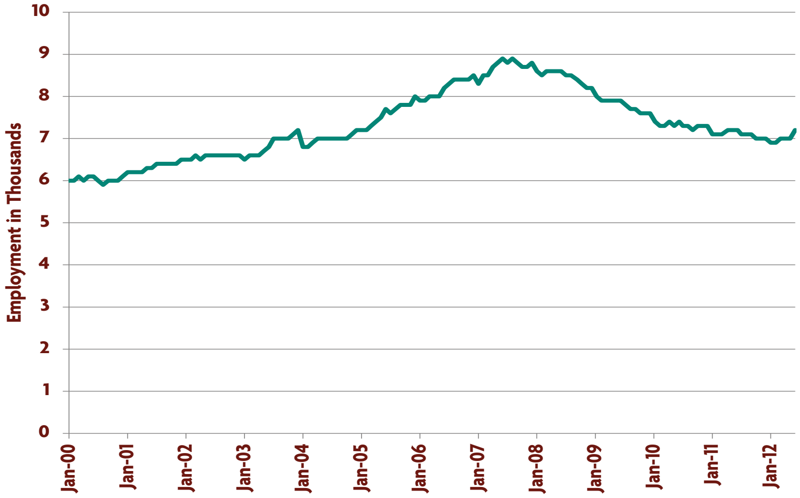
This sector includes employment in various federal, state and local agencies. This sector currently accounts for more than 14 percent of the area's employment but has remained fairly flat since 2008. Between June 2011 and June 2012, the sector added 700 jobs.

Bubble Sectors



Mining, Logging and Construction

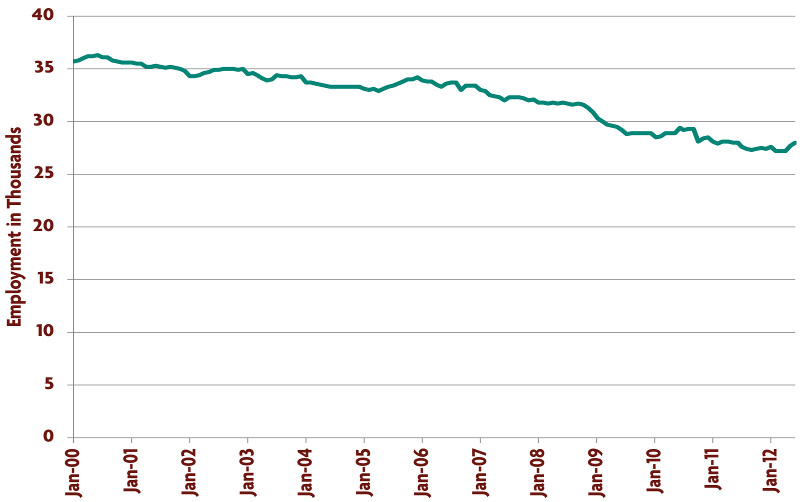
The mining sector comprises establishments that extract naturally occurring mineral solids, such as coal and ores; liquid minerals, such as crude petroleum; and gases, such as natural gas. The agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting sector comprises establishments primarily engaged in growing crops, raising animals, harvesting timber, and harvesting fish and other animals from a farm, ranch, or their natural habitats. The construction sector comprises establishments primarily engaged in the construction of buildings or engineering projects (e.g., highways and utility systems). Employment in this sector grew rapidly from 2003 and reached a peak of 12,900 jobs in mid-2006. Since then, the sector rapidly declined, netting only 1,000 jobs in the period between 2000 and 2012. Employment in the sector was unchanged from June 2011 and June 2012.



Financial Activities

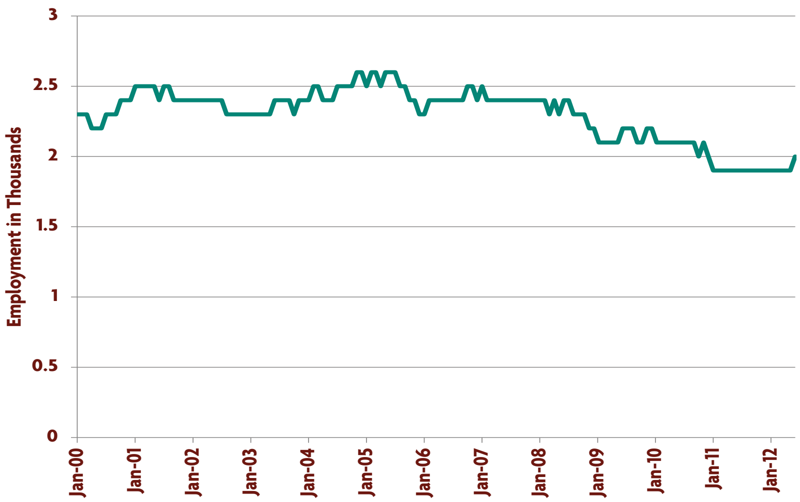
The sector comprises employment related to financial transactions, insurance and real estate activities. While this sector experienced job growth until the summer of 2007, reaching a peak of 8,900 jobs, employment has since declined to 7,200 jobs in 2012. From June 2011 to June 2012, there was no change in the financial activities workforce.

Declining Sectors



Manufacturing

The manufacturing sector comprises establishments engaged in the mechanical, physical, or chemical transformation of materials, substances, or components into new products. In a situation similar to many metros around the country, employment in the manufacturing industry has steadily declined since 2000, losing some 7,700 jobs in the Northwest Arkansas region. From June 2011 to June 2012, employment in this sector was unchanged.



Information

The information sector comprises establishments engaged in producing and distributing information and cultural products, providing the means to transmit or distribute these products as well as data or communications, and processing data. This sector, which currently represents 1.0 percent of the employment in Northwest Arkansas, has slowly declined since 2000. In June 2012, this sector gained 100 jobs when compared to June 2011.

A brief overview of the peer regions highlighted in this report:

In this report we compare the Northwest Arkansas region (the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers MSA) to five other peer regions. These regions were chosen since they are often cited by site selectors as the regional and employment mix based competitors for the Northwest Arkansas region in terms of attracting economic prospects. The peer MSA regions are Tulsa, Oklahoma; Knoxville, Tennessee; Huntsville, Alabama; Omaha-Council Bluffs, Iowa-Nebraska; and Kansas City, Missouri-Kansas.

Omaha-Council Bluffs MSA
Nebraska-Iowa

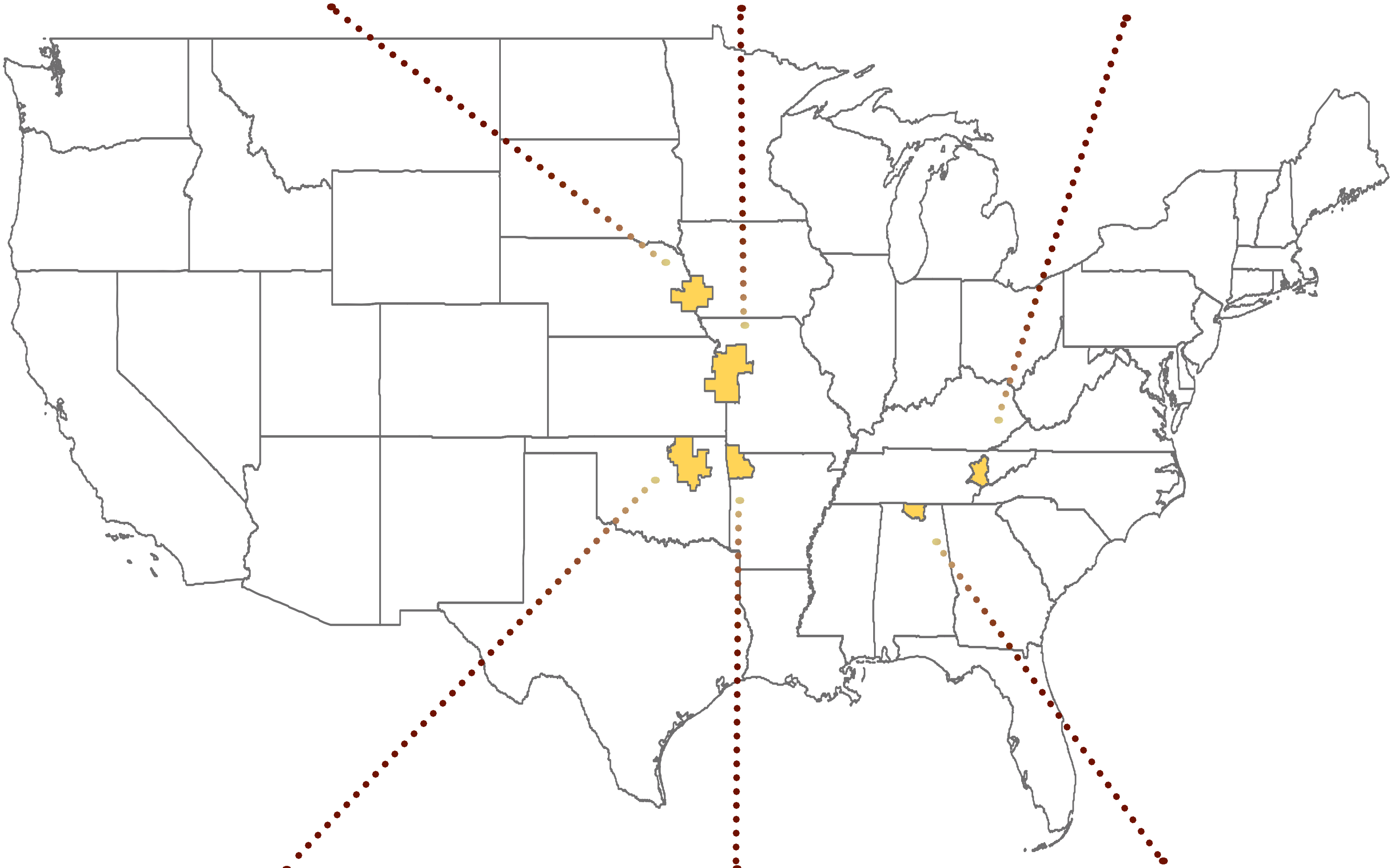
2011 Population: 877,110
2010 Population: 866,097
Growth 2010-2011: 1.3%
MSA Growth Rank: 102/366

Kansas City MSA
Missouri-Kansas

2011 Population: 2,052,676
2010 Population: 2,039,766
Growth 2010-2011: 0.6%
MSA Growth Rank: 177/366

Knoxville, MSA
Tennessee

2011 Population: 704,500
2010 Population: 699,258
Growth 2010-2011: 0.7%
MSA Growth Rank: 154/366



Tulsa MSA
Oklahoma

2011 Population: 946,962
2010 Population: 940,123
Growth 2010-2011: 0.7%
MSA Growth Rank: 159/366

Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers MSA
Arkansas-Missouri

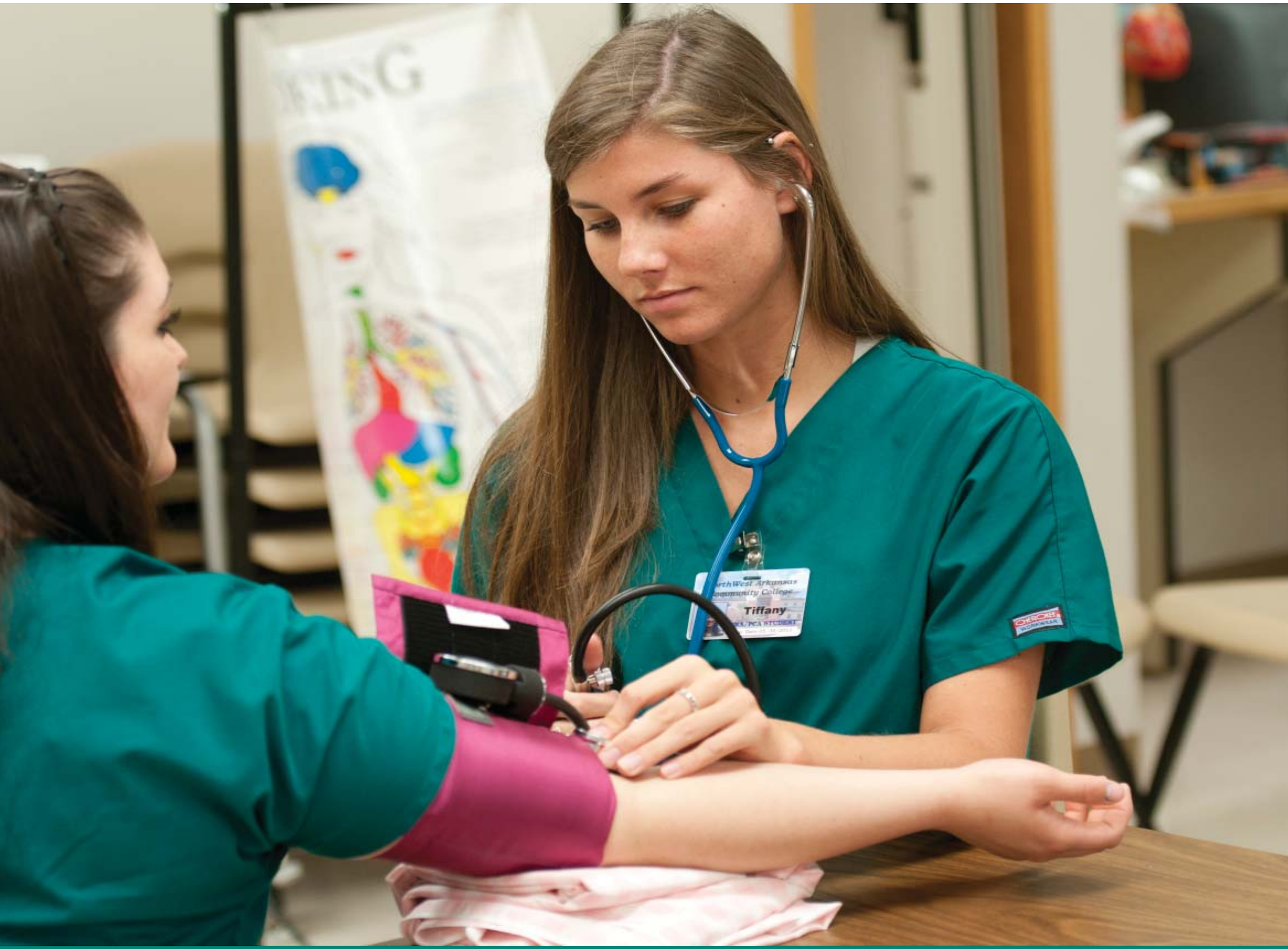
2011 Population: 473,830
2010 Population: 465,773
Growth 2010-2011: 1.7%
MSA Growth Rank: 26/366

Huntsville MSA
Alabama

2011 Population: 425,480
2010 Population: 419,380
Growth 2010-2011: 1.5%
MSA Growth Rank: 49/366

GREAT FOR BUSINESS: Northwest Arkansas Economic Indicators from 2000-2012

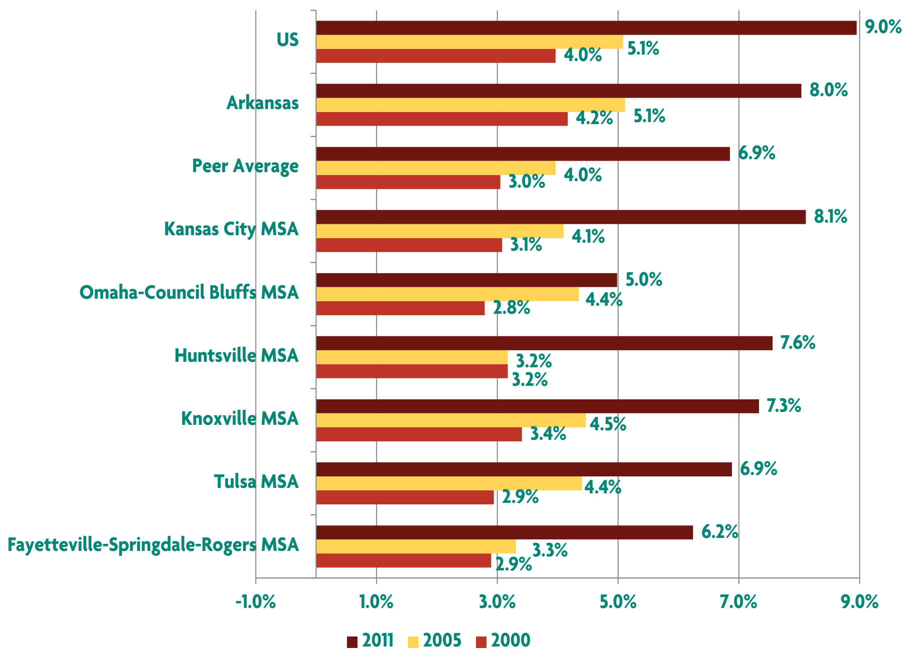
The Northwest Arkansas economy experienced tremendous growth between 2000 and 2012. During this period, over 54,700 jobs were created, an increase in employment of nearly 35 percent. Even though the Northwest Arkansas region was impacted by the nationwide recession in 2008 and 2009, the region's economic strengths allowed it to weather the recession and fare better than the state of Arkansas and the nation as a whole. Since the recession, the region has made remarkable strides to recover from the economic slump and in some instances has surpassed pre-recession peaks. This section of the report provides detailed statistics on the Northwest Arkansas economy and compares it to peer regions, the state, and the nation.



Unemployment

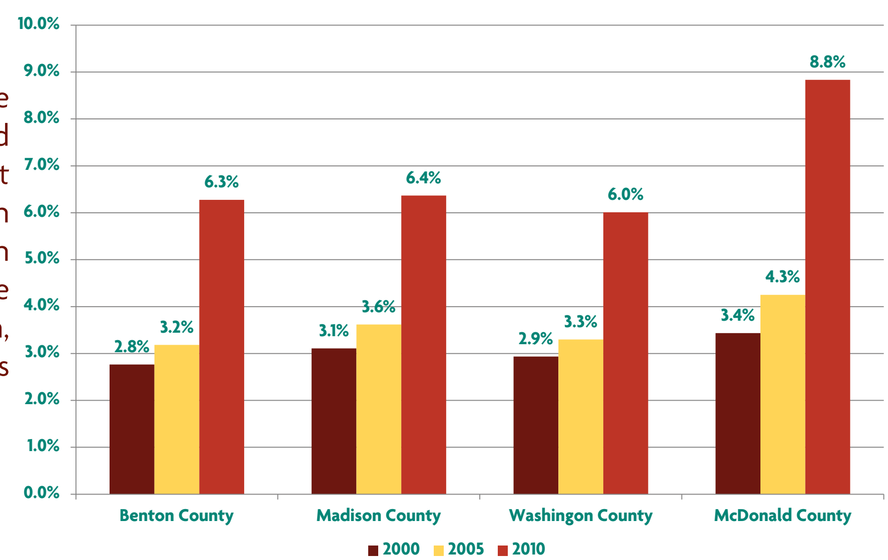
When compared to its competitor regions, Northwest Arkansas had the second lowest unemployment rate in 2011. The unemployment rate dropped 0.3 percent from 2010 to 6.2 percent in 2011. The unemployment rate in Northwest Arkansas averaged 4.2 percent during the past 11 years; however, it peaked at 7.2 percent in 2010 as a result of the recession. From 2008 to 2011, the Northwest Arkansas unemployment rate averaged 5.8 percent, significantly lower than the national rate, which averaged 8.4 percent and the Arkansas unemployment rate which averaged 7.2 percent during the same time period.

Unemployment Rate, Annual Average
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



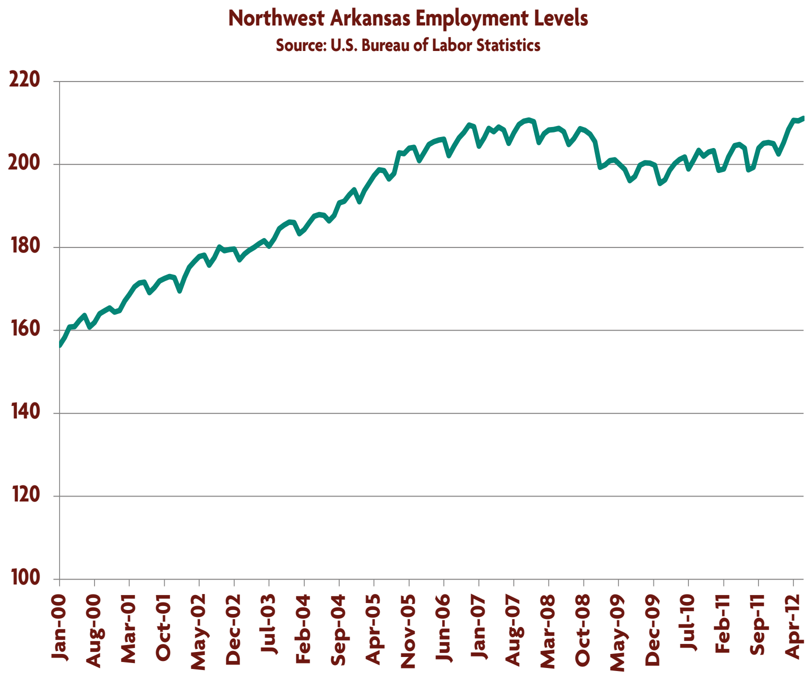
Northwest Arkansas Region County Unemployment Rates
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

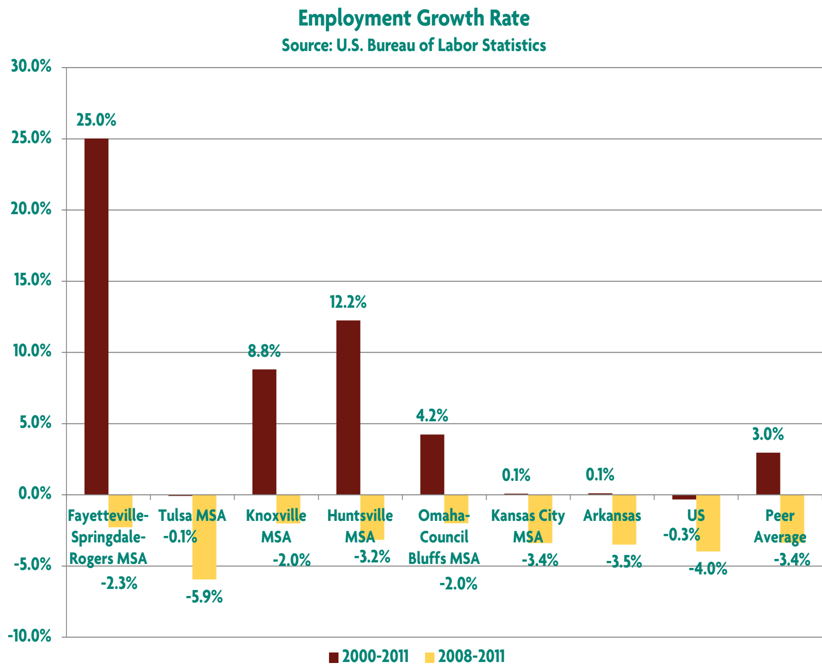
While the unemployment rates were low during the first half of the previous decade, the recession caused significant surges in the county level unemployment rates in Northwest Arkansas. McDonald County in Missouri has significantly higher unemployment than the Northwest Arkansas counties in the region over the past decade. As the region moves out of the recession, the unemployment rate dropped in all four counties between 2010 and 2011.



Employment

During the period from 2000 to 2011, employment in Northwest Arkansas grew at 25.0 percent, a rate that outstripped competitor regions, the state of Arkansas, and the nation as a whole. Since the beginning of the recession in 2008, Northwest Arkansas employment declined 2.3 percent, a smaller loss than every competitor region except Huntsville, Alabama. However, the strength of the recovery in the Northwest Arkansas economy was evident in the growth in employment between June 2011 and June 2012, when the region added 7,200 jobs. The total nonfarm employment in Northwest Arkansas in June 2012 stood at 211,100, which represents a new peak employment for this region.

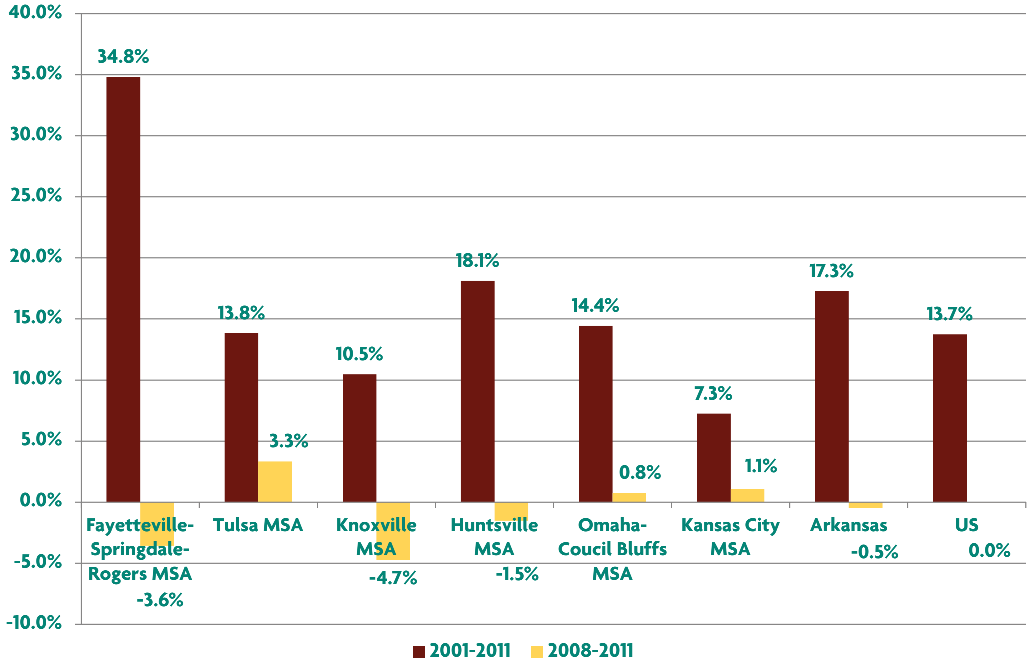




Establishment Growth

From 2001 to 2011, the number of business establishments in Northwest Arkansas grew 34.8 percent. This growth rate outstripped every competitor region, the state, and the nation. After increasing at an annual rate of 4.9 percent from 2001-2008, the number of establishments in Northwest Arkansas declined 2.6 percent in 2009 and 1.2 percent in 2010 as a result of the recession. The growth rate picked up again by 0.2 percent in 2011 as the nation and region emerged from the recession. However, the Northwest Arkansas recovery rate in establishment growth in 2011 was lower than every competitor region with the exception of Knoxville, Tennessee.

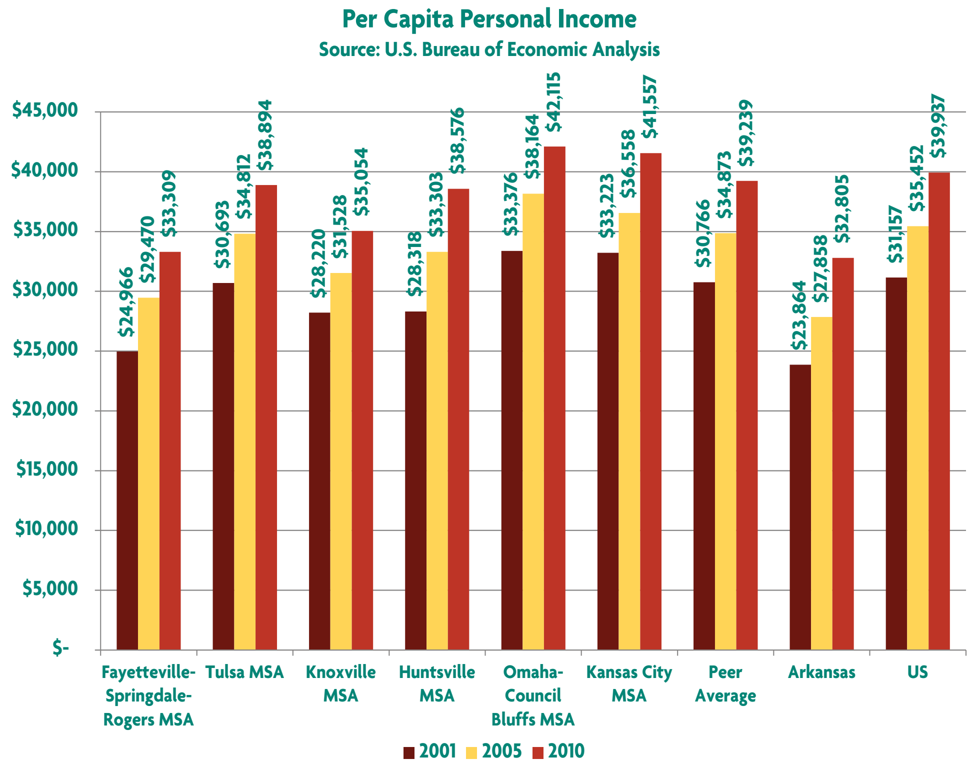
Establishment Growth
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

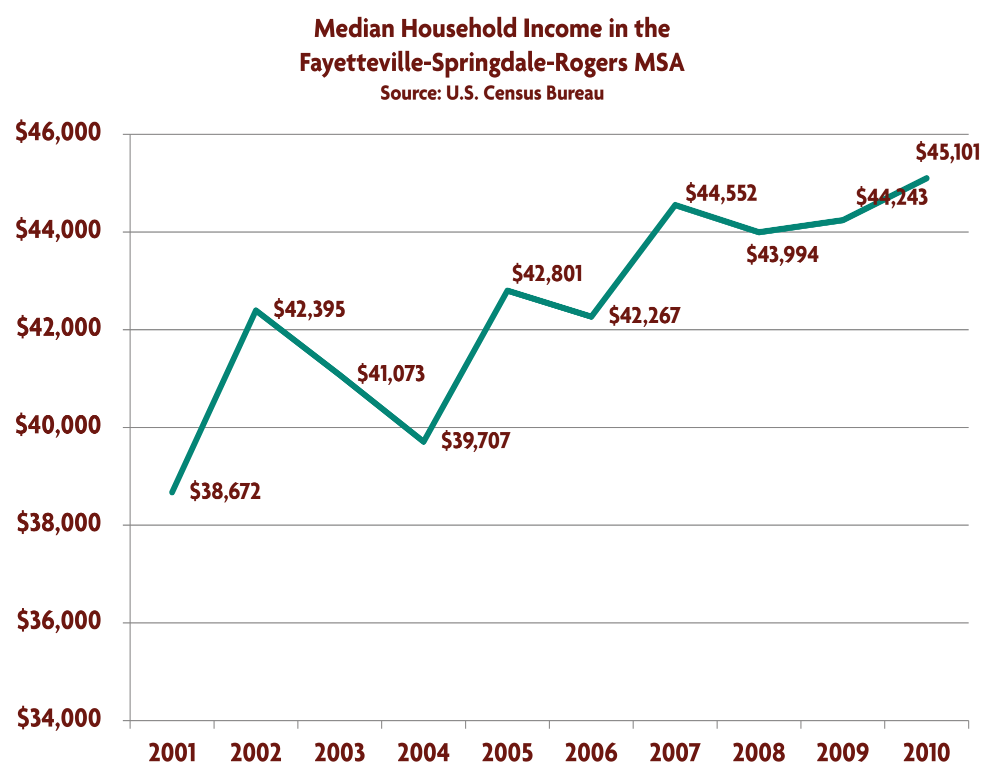


Income

Per capita personal incomes in Northwest Arkansas have tended to be higher than those in Arkansas, but below peers and the nation as a whole. The peer regions had on average a per capita personal income that was 17.8 percent higher than Northwest Arkansas in 2010. However, between 2001 and 2010, the Northwest Arkansas region's per capita personal income grew 33.4 percent, a rate that was second only to the Huntsville MSA. In 2010, per capita personal income in Northwest Arkansas stood at $33,309, which was 3.1 percent higher than the year before.

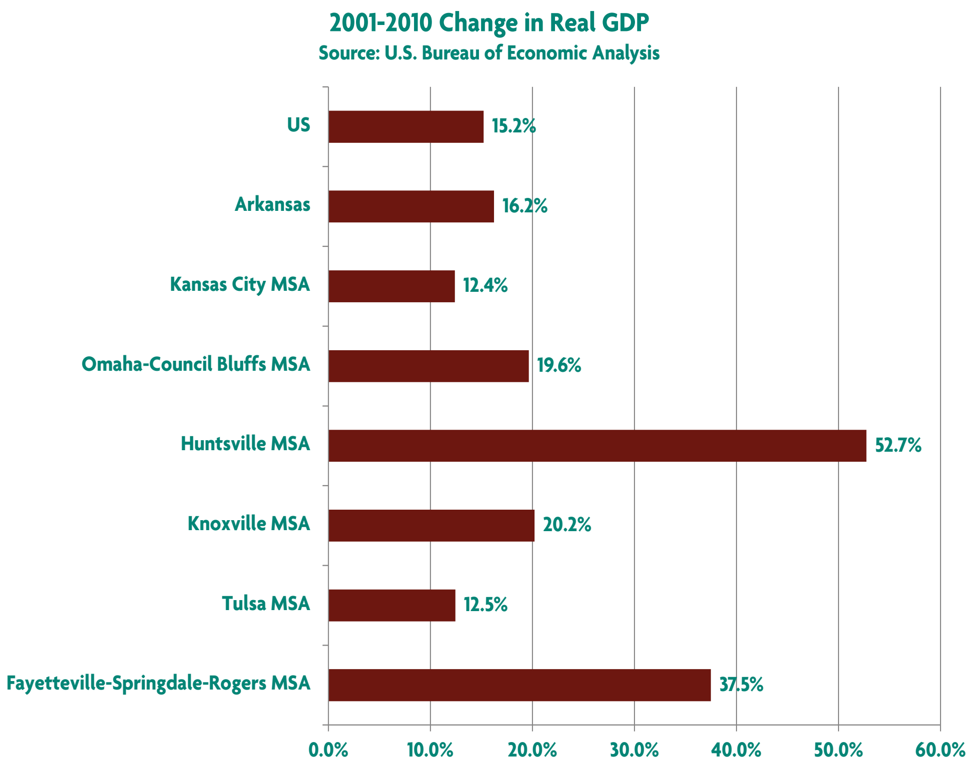
The median household income in the Northwest Arkansas region was $45,101 in 2010, the most recent year available. This income level was 1.9 percent higher than in 2009, and 16.6 percent higher than the median income in 2001.

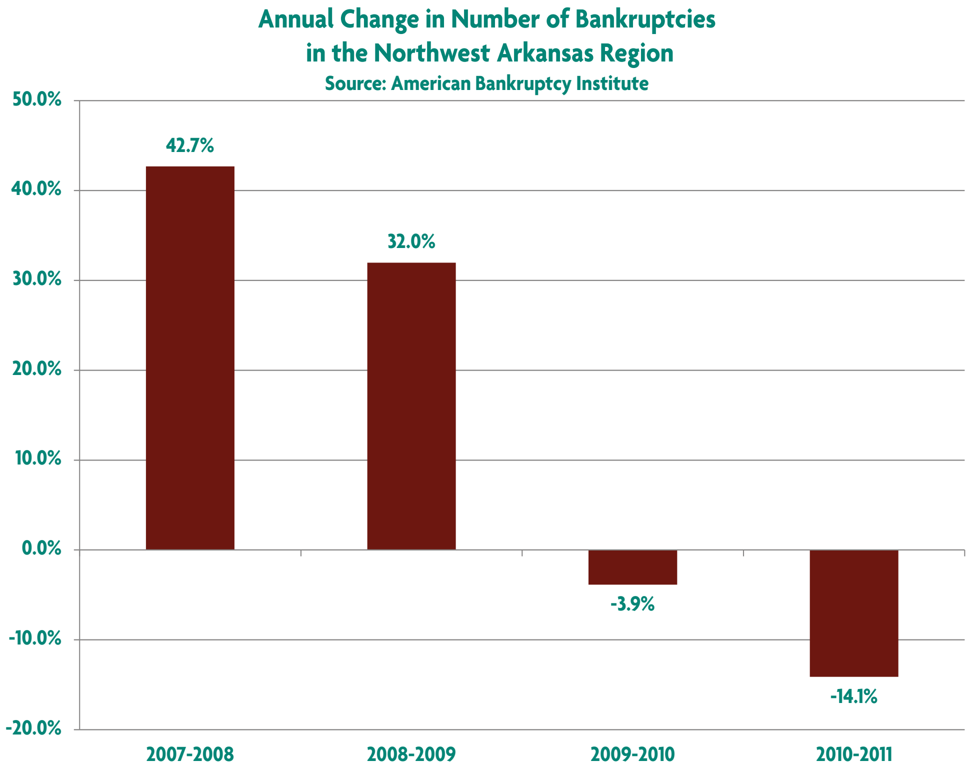




Metropolitan GDP

From 2001 to 2010, the real gross domestic product (GDP) in the Northwest Arkansas region grew 37.5 percent. The region's economy grew at an average annual rate of 3.7 percent, outpacing all competitor regions except Huntsville, Alabama. The growth rate for the region's economic output was strong during the period between 2001 and 2006, but declined between 2007 and 2009, before increasing 3.9 percent again in 2010.



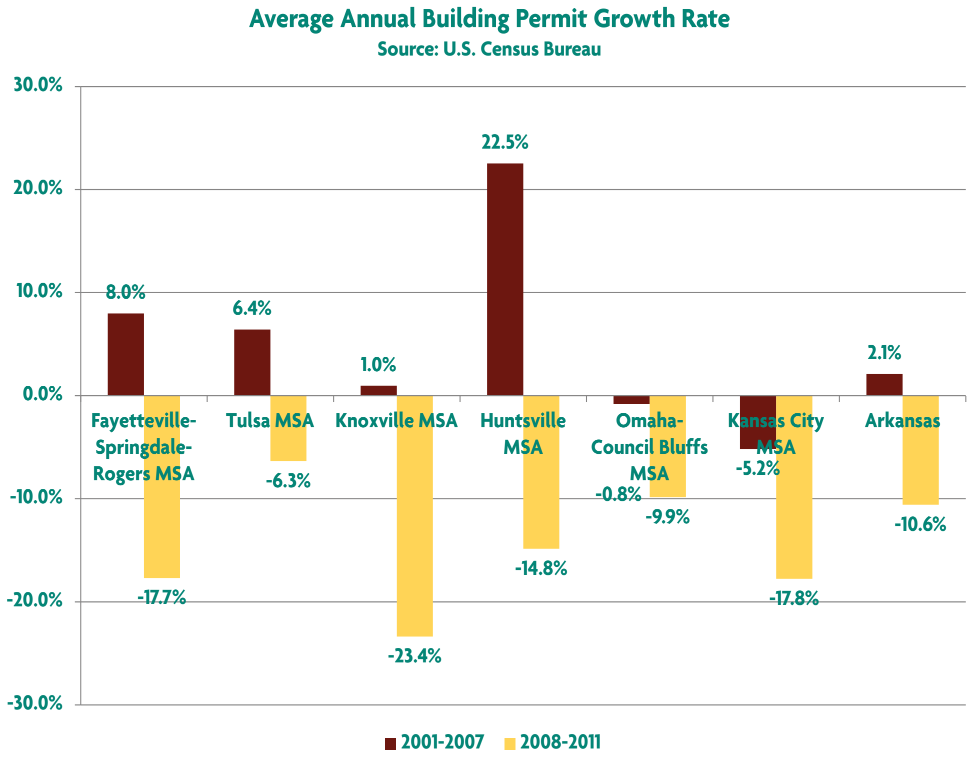


Bankruptcies

The rate and occurrence of bankruptcies provide a good indicator of the general health of the economy of a region. As the recession began, the number of bankruptcies filed in Fayetteville in the Western District Bankruptcy Court of Arkansas rose by 42.7 percent in 2008 and 32.0 percent in 2009. As the economic situation in Northwest Arkansas improved, the number of bankruptcies declined 3.9 percent in 2010 and further declined 14.1 percent in 2011. The percent of statewide filings made in Fayetteville rose from 11.8 percent in 2007 to 15.9 percent in 2009 before dropping to 14.9 percent in 2011.

Building Permits

The number of building permits issued shows the relative strength of a region's economy, as boom times are marked by increased demands for new construction and, subsequently, a greater number of building permits. Before the real estate crash and recession of 2007 to 2009, the Northwest Arkansas region had a high average annual growth rate in building permits of 8.0 percent. Since the crash, the number of building permits issued in Northwest Arkansas declined on average 17.7 percent annually between 2008 and 2011. The most recent data between 2010 and 2011 shows that new building permits in Northwest Arkansas are declining more slowly at 4.3 percent per year. While the growth rate in Northwest Arkansas building permits was second among peers between 2001 and 2007, the decline in building permits issued after the crash has been in the middle of the pack.



THE KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY

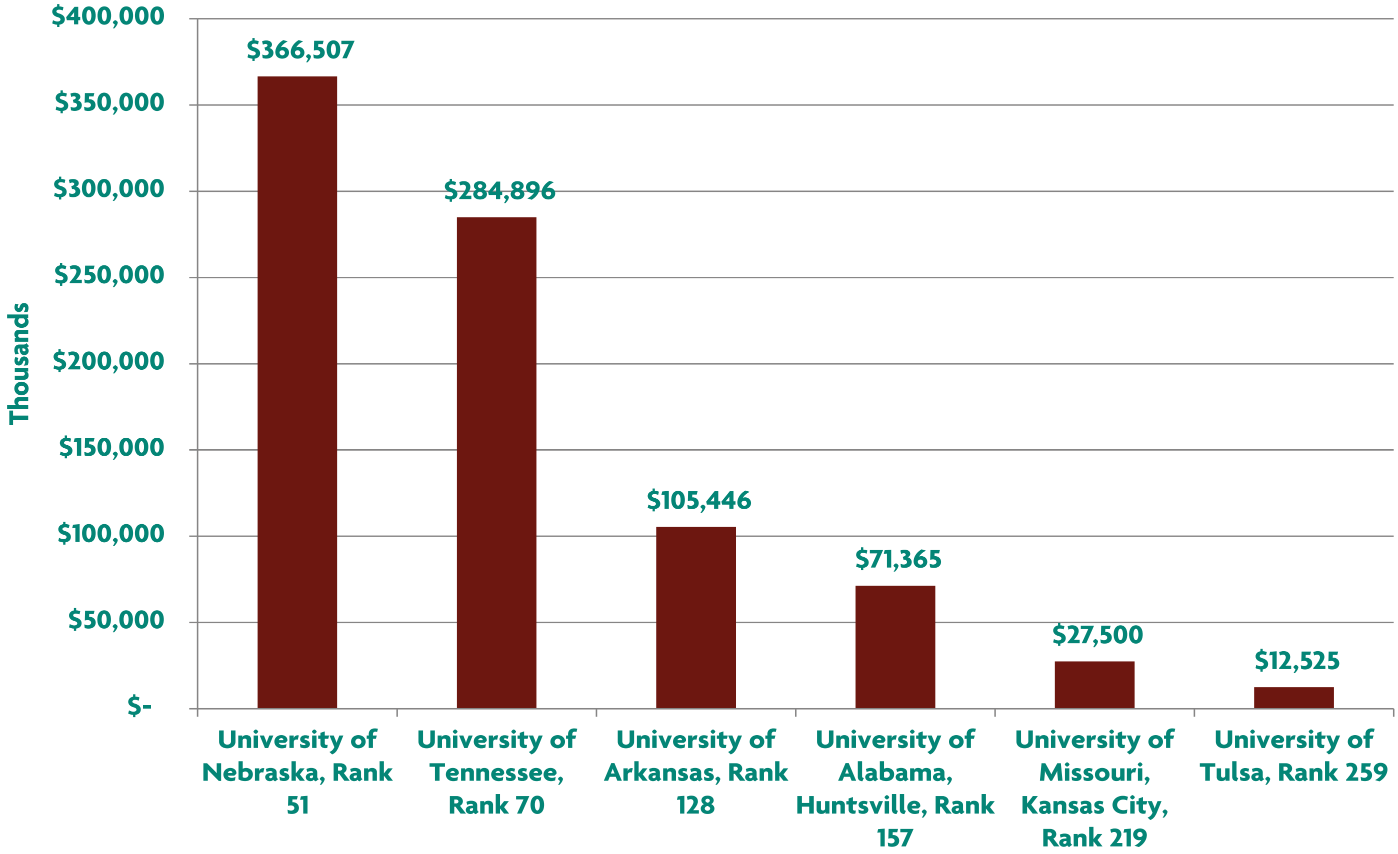
The impact of the recession in Northwest Arkansas created a sense of urgency related to economic development and the future of the region's economy. In large part, the future any region's economy hinges on its ability to educate and innovate in order to compete in the global knowledge-based economy. The State of the Northwest Arkansas Region Report examines the following metrics to determine how well the region is positioning itself for the future: academic research and development, small business innovation research, small business technology transfer funds, and adult educational attainment.

Academic Research and Development

Research expenditures at the University of Arkansas increased 34.7 percent from 2001 to 2009, but the growth rate was the second slowest among the major research institutions in the competitor regions of Northwest Arkansas. Nearly $105.5 million of research and development expenditures were made by the University of Arkansas in 2009, up 2.6 percent from the previous year. The university ranked 128th among research universities in that year. Higher federal funding represents recognition of the value of university-performed activities at the federal level and shows the actual capacity of the state's academic institutions to perform research at a competitive level.

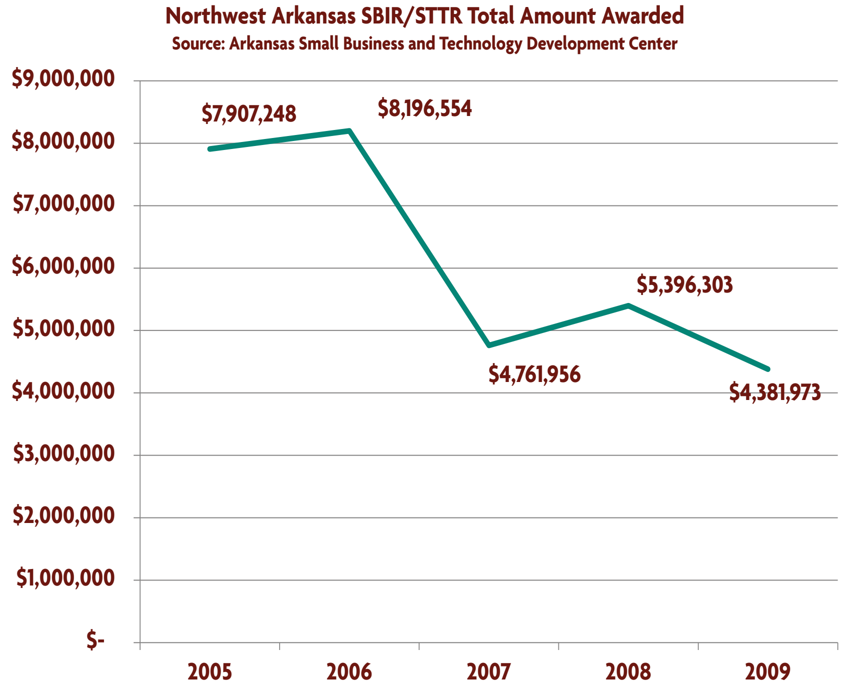
At the University of Arkansas, the Technology Licensing Office (TLO) helps faculty and research scientists identify, protect, and commercialize intellectual property developed from their research or other university supported activities. The TLO engages inventors, faculty start-up/spin-out companies, and businesses in transferring inventions into the marketplace. The TLO facilitates the granting of patents and licenses to university faculty and research scientists. From 1987 to August 2012, the TLO received 579 invention disclosures and obtained 107 US patents. The TLO also records that 91 US patent applications were filed from these disclosures. In fiscal year 2012, the TLO reported $240,068 in royalties distributed to inventors living in Arkansas and the office collected gross royalty income of $776,333 and an additional $800 from options, license signing fees, and milestones.

R&D Expenditures 2009
Source: National Science Foundation



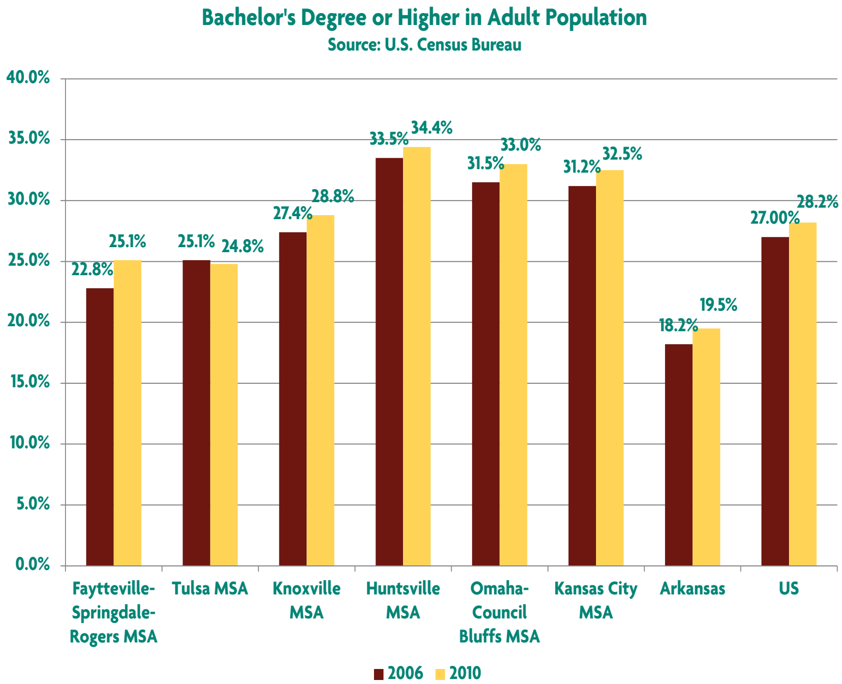
Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer Grants

The Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) grants provide federal recognition of the region's industrial innovative capabilities. These grants encourage small businesses to engage in research and development processes and thereby promote knowledge-based economic development. The Northwest Arkansas Region averaged nearly 24 grants a year and an average total grant amount of $6,128,807 between 2005 and 2009.



Adult Educational Attainment

Just over 25 percent of adults in Northwest Arkansas have attained a bachelor's degree or higher, ranking the region second to last among competitor regions, but better than the Arkansas average. Indeed, half of the Northwest Arkansas competitor regions have populations with more than one-third of adults with at least a bachelor's degree. However, between 2006 and 2010, the number of adults age 25 or over in Northwest Arkansas with a bachelor's degree or higher climbed 10.1 percent from 22.8 percent to 25.1 percent.

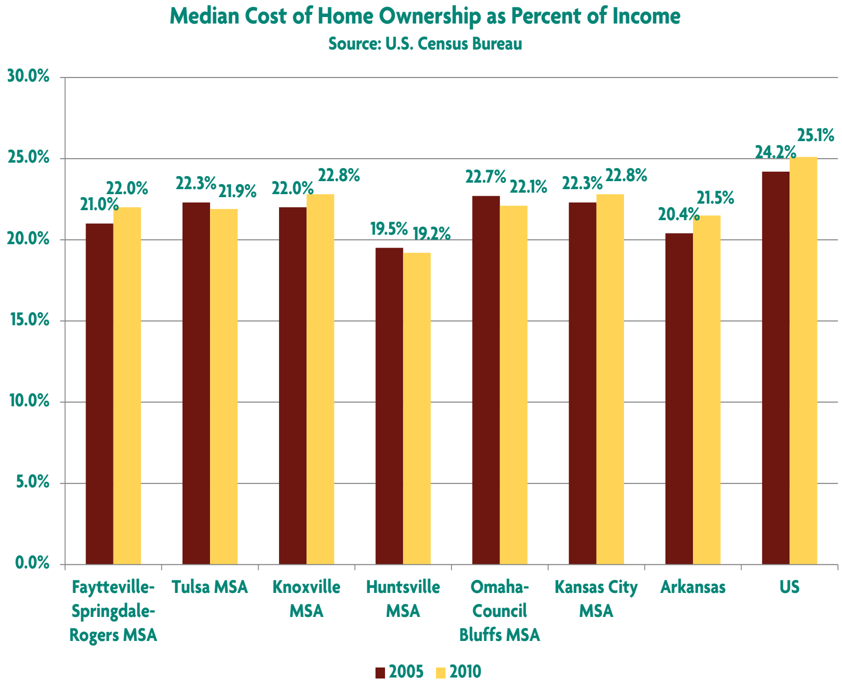


GREAT FOR LIFE: Quality of Life in Northwest Arkansas

Northwest Arkansas boasts a high concentration of amenities for a region of its size, including world-class museums, expansive and diverse shopping, a minor league baseball team, a world-class performance theatre, and a nationally competitive college football team. Improvements in the quality of life of any region are both a result of the fruits of economic development in the region and smart investments in the community vitality of the region. In this section of the report, we examine various quality of life indicators such as cost of living, crime, poverty, commuting time, modes of transportation, and health.

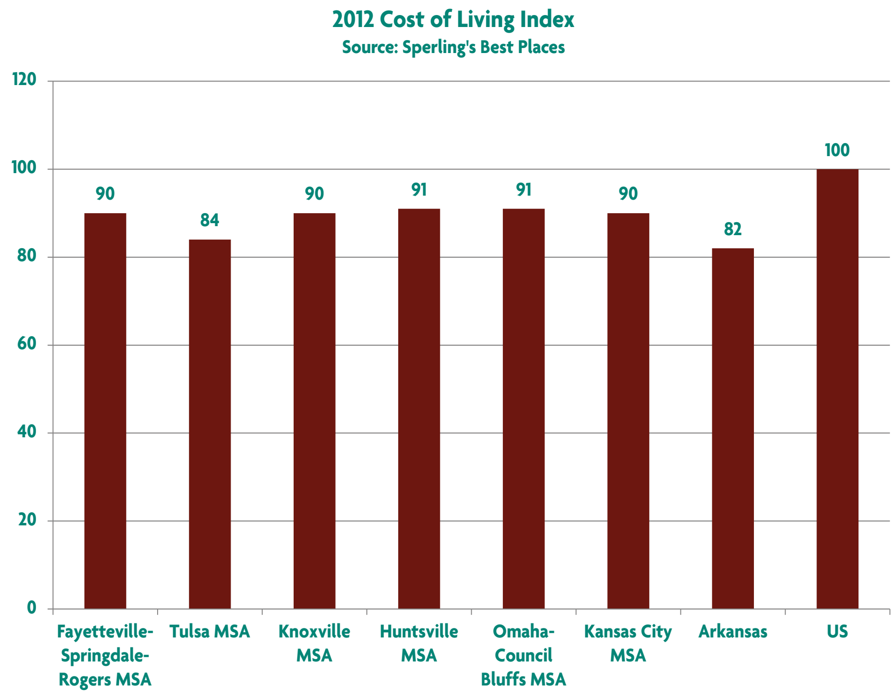
Cost of Homeownership

The measure of homeownership costs as a percentage of monthly household income provides an excellent tool for comparing housing affordability. In 2005, home ownership costs accounted for 21.0 percent of household income in Northwest Arkansas, rising to 22.4 percent in 2009 before dropping to 22.0 percent in 2010. Home ownership costs in Northwest Arkansas are in the middle of the pack when compared to costs in peer regions.



Cost of Living

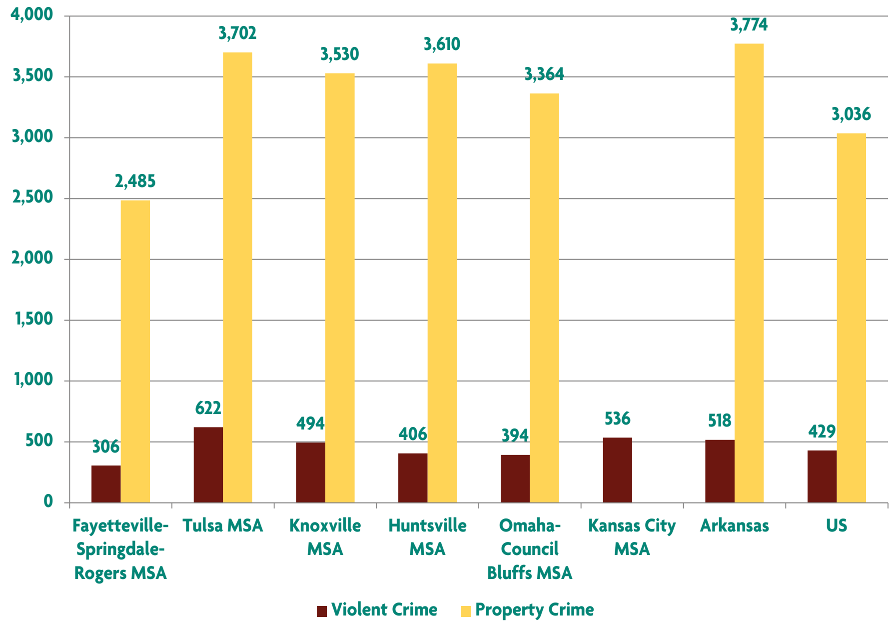
The Sperling cost of living index is calculated based on the spending categories of housing costs, food and groceries costs, transportation costs, healthcare costs and other costs such as clothing, and entertainment. Based on these factors, the Northwest Arkansas cost of living index is 90 which is compared against the national average of 100. The Northwest Arkansas index was in the middle of the pack when compared to its peer regions.



Crime Indicators

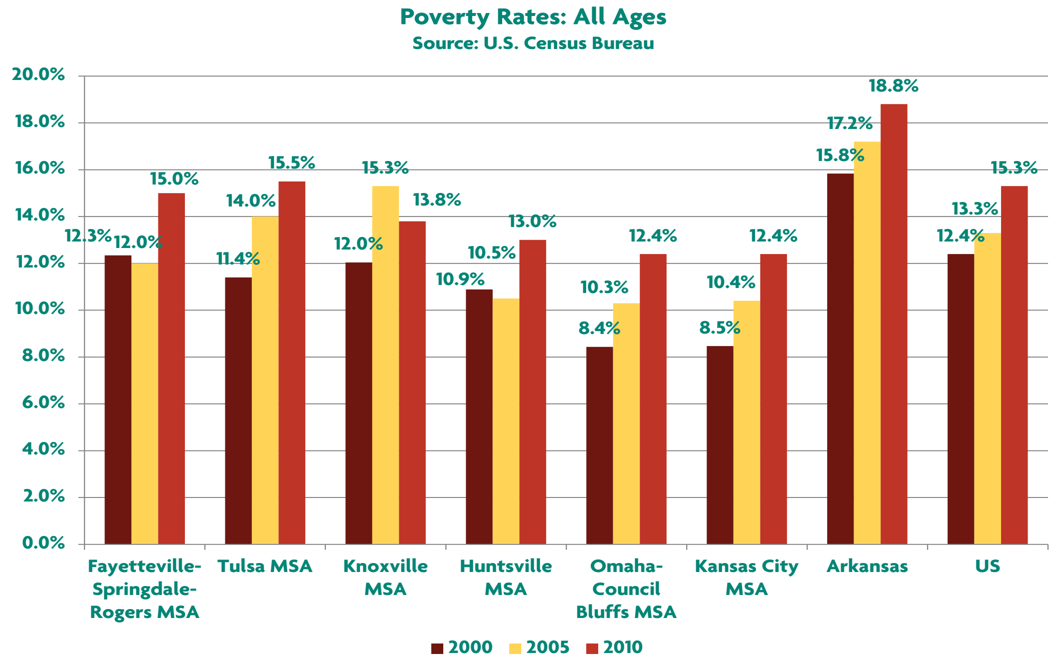
According to data gathered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, crime rates per 1,000 persons were lower in Northwest Arkansas than any of the peer regions, the state, and nation. In 2009, Northwest Arkansas had 305.8 violent crimes per 100,000 inhabitants and 2,484.8 property crimes per 100,000 inhabitants. Violent crimes were 37.6 percent lower and property crimes were 25.6 percent lower than the peer average.

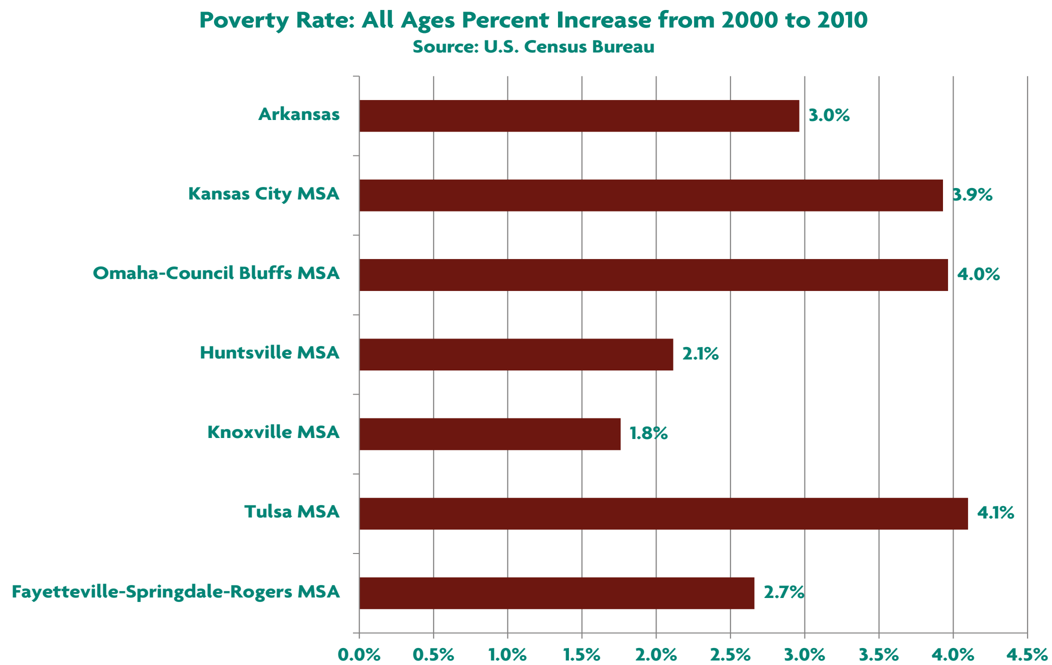
2009 Crime Rates per 100,000
Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation



Poverty Indicators

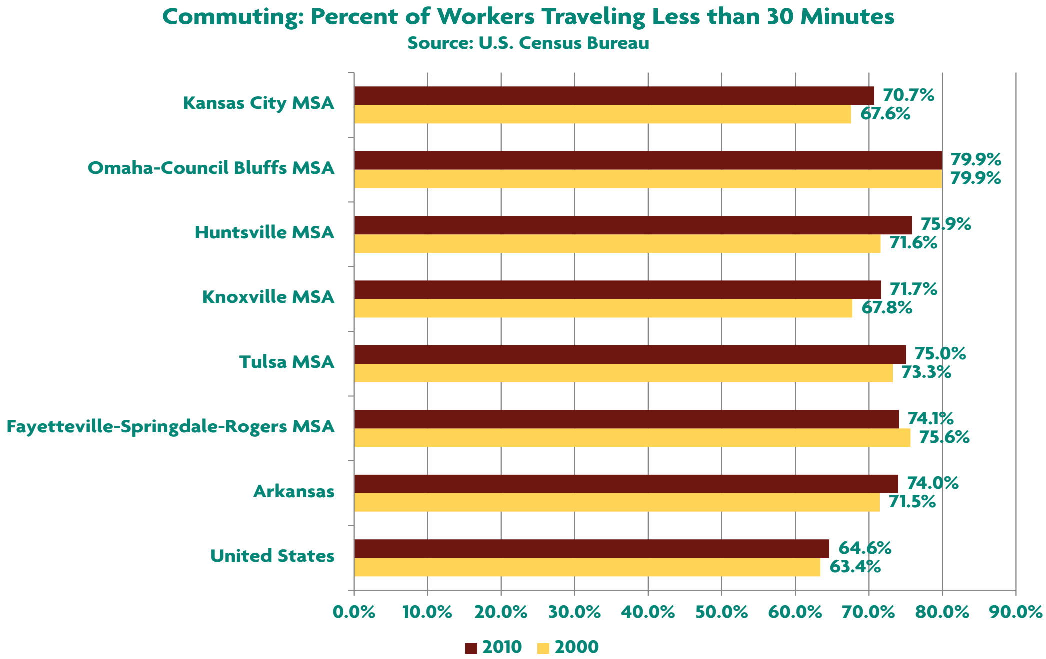
The poverty rate in Northwest Arkansas was 15.0 percent in 2010. This rate declined 2.0 percent from 2009 but was 2.7 percent higher than the rate in 2000. The Northwest Arkansas poverty rate in 2010 was second highest among peer regions, lower than only the Tulsa MSA. However, the change in the Northwest Arkansas poverty rate from 2000 to 2010 was in the middle of the pack among its peers. The 2010 poverty rate in Northwest Arkansas was lower than the rate for the state of Arkansas and lower than the national rate of 15.3 percent.



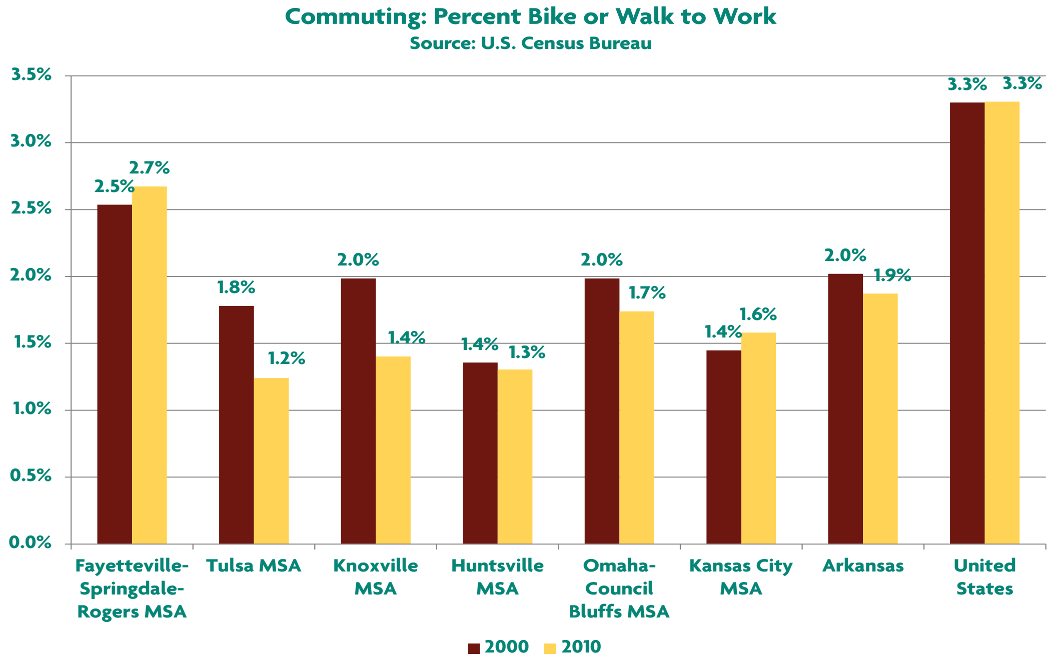


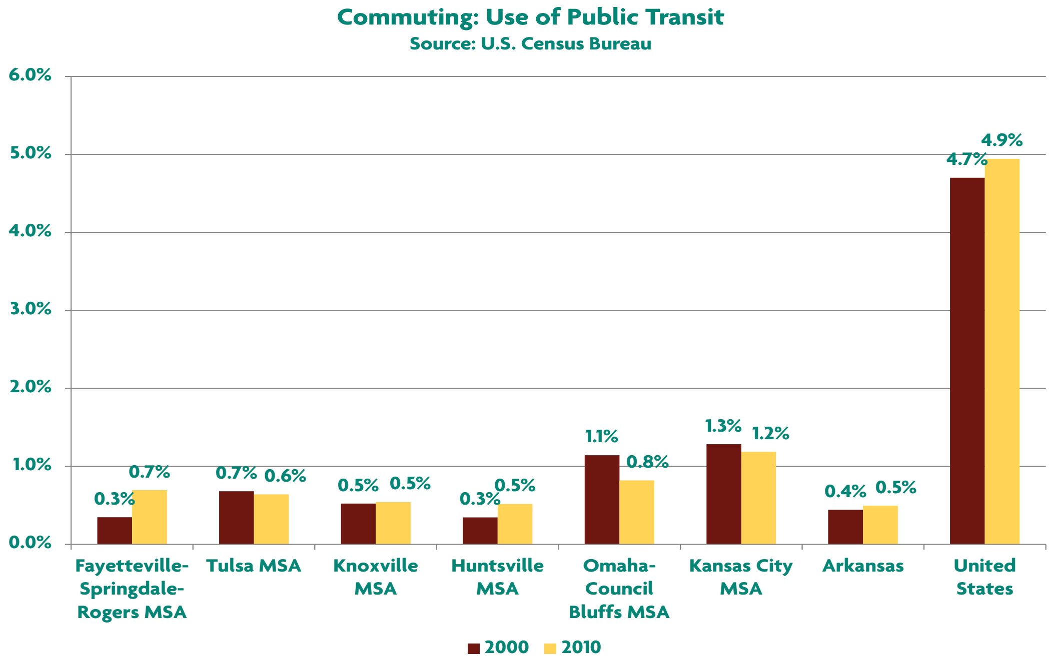
Commuting Statistics

According to data from 2010, 74.1 percent of workers spent less than 30 minutes commuting to work in the Northwest Arkansas region, slightly less than the 74.8 percent in 2009. Workers who commuted less than 30 minutes in the peer regions ranged from 70.7 percent in the Kansas City MSA to 79.9 percent in the Omaha MSA.

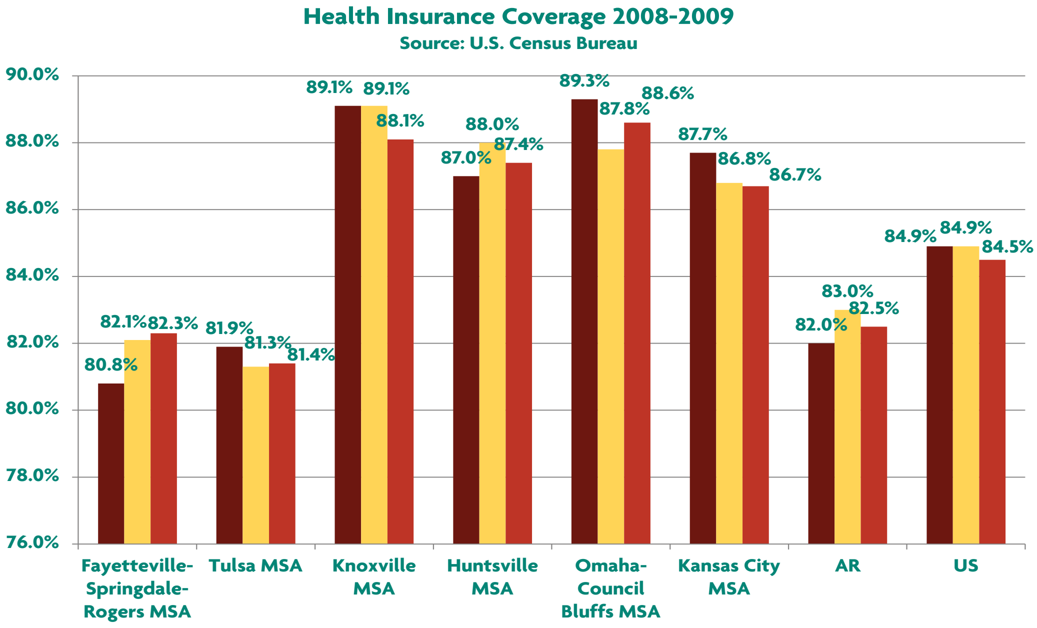


In 2010, the percentage of the working population that biked or walked to work was 2.7 percent, a figure that was higher than every peer region and the state but lower than 3.3 percent for the nation as a whole. There hasn't been a significant increase in the percentage of the working population that biked or walked to work in Northwest Arkansas over time. In 2000, 2.5 percent biked or walked to work while in 2009, 2.8 percent biked or walked to work in Northwest Arkansas. A total of 0.7 percent of workers in Northwest Arkansas used public transit to get to work in 2010, an increase from 0.3 percent in 2009. The percent of workers who used public transit to get to work in Northwest Arkansas was in the middle of the pack when compared to its peers.





Health Insurance Coverage



In 2010, 82.3 percent of the residents of Northwest Arkansas had health insurance coverage. This percentage was lower than the health insurance coverage rate in other peer regions with the exception of Tulsa. Health insurance coverage data from the Census Bureau are only available from 2008 and Northwest Arkansas' coverage rate increased 1.5 percent during that time. The 2010 coverage rate in Northwest Arkansas was lower than the statewide rate at 82.5 percent and the national rate at 84.5 percent.

Healthy Lifestyles

Compared to the rest of the state of Arkansas, the two major counties in the Northwest Arkansas region (Benton and Washington) have better health trends in some categories such as lower adult smoking and lower rate of adult obesity. A total of 19.0 percent of adults in Benton County and 21.0 percent of adults in Washington County smoke, compared to 23.0 percent statewide. Adult obesity is at 28.0 percent in Benton County and 30.0 percent in Washington County, while statewide the obesity rate is 32.0 percent. The rate of excessive drinking is higher in Washington County (16.0 percent) than the state (12.0 percent), likely due to the presence of the public university student community. Only 12.0 percent of the low-income population statewide has limited access to grocery stores, compared to 17.0 percent in Benton County and 15.0 percent in Washington County.

Information for this report was gathered from the following sources: American Bankruptcy Institute, Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center, County Health Rankings, Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Science Foundation, Sperling's Best Places, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and U.S. Census Bureau.

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