

TRENDS

Reasons Why Employers May or May Not Provide Health Insurance Benefits

by: *Carola Cowan, Economist*

Under contract with the University of Wyoming, the Department of Employment's Research & Planning (R&P) section surveyed 500 Wyoming employers on factors influencing their decision as to whether or not to offer health insurance benefits to their employees. Results indicate the primary reason for offering health insurance was because employers felt their employees wanted it. The high cost of coverage topped the list of reasons for not providing insurance. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that employers might be encouraged to provide health insurance if costs were lower.

The Research & Planning (R&P) section of the Wyoming Department of Employment conducts the Employee Benefits Survey on a quarterly basis. In first quarter 2003 (2003Q1) the benefits survey contained additional questions designed to determine why employers may or may not offer health insurance benefits to their employees. In this article we focus on the reasons employers reported for choosing whether or not to offer health insurance.

Methodology

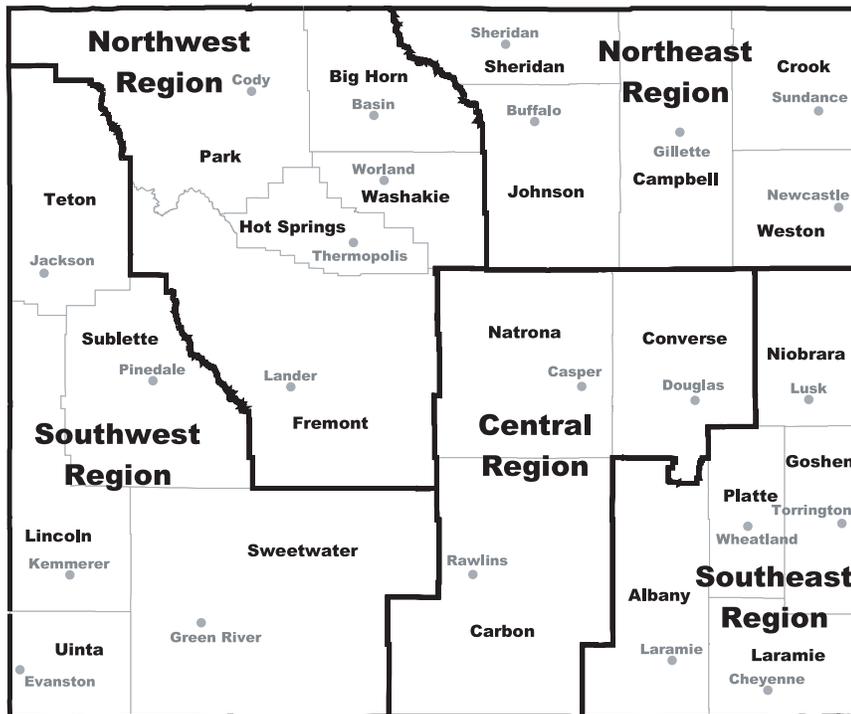
A stratified random sample of 500 companies was selected from the second quarter 2002 Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) database. Companies reporting zero employees for all three months, federal and state government, employers in Agriculture, and private household employers were eliminated from our universe.

(Text continued on page 3)

HIGHLIGHTS

- **For employers not offering health insurance benefits to their employees, most said cost was the main reason. However, employers might be encouraged to offer benefits if they were allowed to pool with other employers for group rates....page 5**
- **As the summer tourist season began, Teton County's unemployment rate fell from 2.6 percent in June to 1.8 percent in July....page 8**
- **Wyoming's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for July 2004 remained constant at 3.6 percent....page 9**
- **Over-the-year initial claims decreased 13.4 percent, while continued claims dropped 10.5 percent....page 14**

Wyoming Regions, Counties, and County Seats



Wyoming Labor Force Trends

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Survey response rates varied by industry, company size, and region but were never below 50 percent for any sub-category. The overall response rate was 76.1 percent. To account for response rate differences across industries, the results of the survey were weighted by the number of employers for each industry as reported by the QCEW for 2003Q1.

For the opinion questions, employers were given a choice of answers from which they could check as many as applied to them. They were also given an open-ended question where they could fill in a reason other than what was provided. The questions were as follows:

- For employers offering health insurance, what are the main reasons that you offer health insurance to your employees?
 - Employees want it.
 - Should be a company responsibility.
 - Needed to recruit the best people.
 - Reduces employee turnover.
 - Reduces absenteeism.
 - Increases productivity.
 - Improves morale.
- For employers not offering health insurance, would you say your company is currently either looking for or considering ways to offer health insurance to your employees?
- What are the main reasons that you do not currently offer health insurance to your employees?
 - Too expensive.
 - Too much paperwork.
 - Not required by law.
 - Not the company's responsibility.
 - Little value to this kind of company.
 - High employee turnover.
 - Policy offerings are too complicated.
 - Not familiar enough with options.

- Most employees are not interested in coverage.
- Most employees are covered elsewhere.
- Most employees would not be eligible.

- Which of the following could lead you to begin offering health insurance to your employees?
 - If tax credits were increased.
 - If pooling options were allowed to get group coverage with other employers.
 - If the state-employee health plan were made available to private employers.
 - If "defined contribution" plans were easier to set up.
 - Only if mandated by law.

Results

Of the 205 responding employers offering health insurance benefits to their employees, the most common reason for doing so was employees want it (73.2%; Figure 1, see page 4). The second most common response was that employers felt they needed it to recruit the best people (57.8%). Reducing employee turnover ranked third (48.5%).

Cost was the main reason employers did not offer health insurance (75.8%), followed by high employee turnover (41.9%) and that most employees are covered elsewhere (25.8%; Figure 2, see page 4). Some companies in Construction and Leisure & Hospitality felt offering health insurance to employees was of little value to their type of company because employees in these industries typically lack sufficient tenure to qualify for benefits.

Policy changes that might encourage employers to offer health insurance to their

Figure 1: Percentage of Companies in Wyoming Offering Health Insurance to Their Employees by Reason, First Quarter 2003

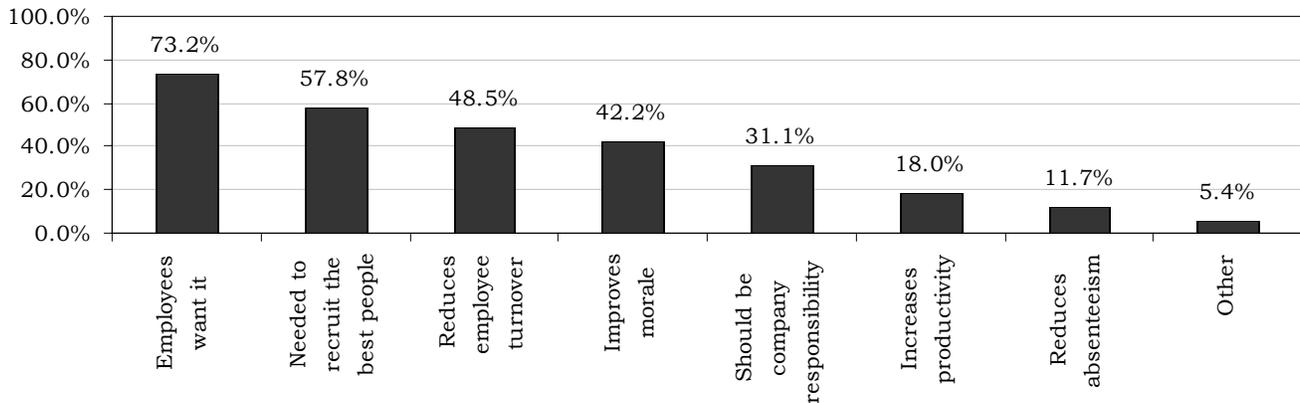
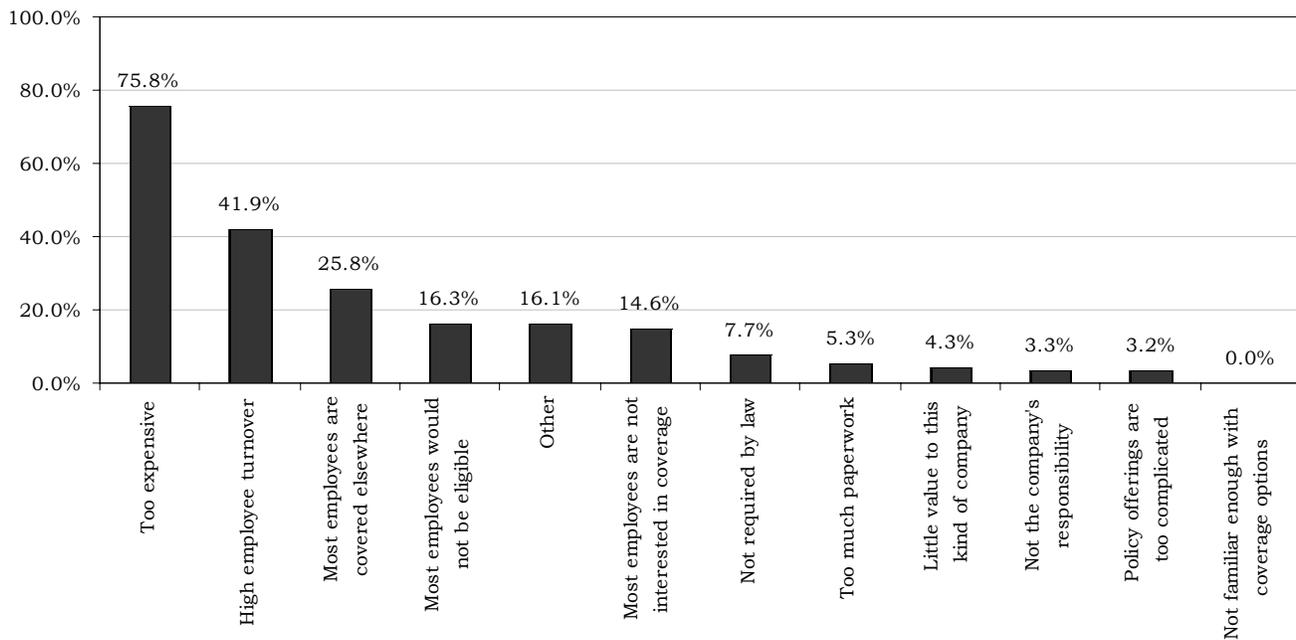


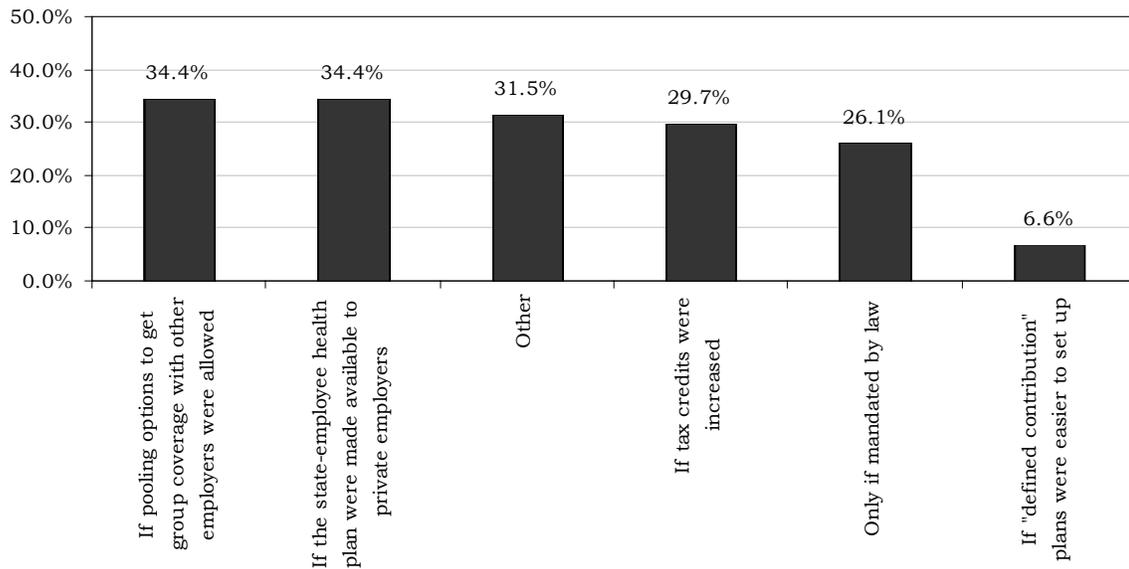
Figure 2: Percentage of Companies in Wyoming Not Offering Health Insurance to Their Employees by Reason, First Quarter 2003



employees included making state-employee health plans available to private employers (34.4%) and allowing employers to pool with each other for group coverage (34.4%; Figure 3, see page 5). Nearly half (48.2%) of employers selecting a reason other than

those given (31.5%) wrote in that they might consider offering insurance if the premium costs were lower. Interestingly, 26.1 percent of employers not currently offering insurance would consider providing insurance only if it were mandated by law.

Figure 3: Percentage of Companies in Wyoming Not Offering Health Insurance That May Start Offering Benefits by Reason, First Quarter 2003



Discussion

Many employers view providing health insurance as a key component to attracting and meeting the expectations of employees. Another major reason for offering benefits is to reduce turnover. Some employers also believe the provision improves morale. Far fewer employers report it should be a company's responsibility to offer health insurance to their employees or that it would increase productivity or reduce absenteeism.

For employers that did not offer health insurance to their employees, the two main deterrents are the high cost of coverage, followed by high employee turnover in industries where employees lack sufficient tenure to qualify for benefits.

Since most employers said cost was the main reason for not offering health insurance, it is therefore reasonable to assume that employers might be encouraged to provide insurance if costs

were lower. Unfortunately, lower premium costs was not listed as one of the choices to the question on what might entice employers to begin offering benefits. Lower costs also tie in with allowing employers to pool together for group rates or if the state-employee health plan was available to private employers, since it is believed either of these would result in reduced premium costs. Increased tax credits would also reduce cost to employers, although not as directly as reduced premiums.

If health insurance coverage for employees in Wyoming is to increase, it needs to be made more affordable for employers, preferably through reduced premiums instead of tax credits. However, current tax laws make the cost of purchasing insurance considerably less as health insurance premiums are fully deductible as a business expense. The tax deduction may be thought of as a discount to the cost of health insurance (The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, n.d.). Additionally, insurance premiums are

excluded from the base payroll when calculating an employer's state taxes and Medicare and Social Security payments. Educating employers on the existing tax advantages may encourage them to offer health insurance benefits.

Employees consider health insurance to be, by far, the most important fringe benefit (The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, n.d.). It would be reasonable to assume that employees would leave jobs that do not offer insurance benefits if they

could find comparable employment with a company offering health insurance coverage.

References

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (n.d.). *Guide to health insurance options for small businesses*. Retrieved May 18, 2004, from <http://www.CoverTheUninsuredWeek.org/materials/business/>



A First Look at Research & Planning's Newest Publication on Community College Graduates

by: Sara Saulcy, Economist

*This article highlights a few of the findings from the forthcoming publication, **Where Are They Now? Wyoming Community College Graduates' Labor Market Outcomes**. The publication examines the employment outcomes of May 2002 Wyoming community college graduates. Topics covered in the publication include the industries in which graduates work, selected demographic characteristics, hourly earnings, occupations, and employer satisfaction with graduates' skills and work habits.*

When May 2002 Wyoming community college graduates were entering the labor market, Wyoming's economy, relative to that of most surrounding states and the nation, was performing well. Colorado's economy in particular suffered during the May 2002 to May 2003 time period.

Community college graduates fill the labor needs for employers in Wyoming and surrounding states. In particular, colleges near the state's borders disproportionately supply workers to out-of-state labor markets. This should not be taken as a criticism of the colleges because they are filling a regional educational market niche. The fact that many of the graduates are successful in the labor markets of

surrounding states is an indication that the colleges are imbuing students with useful work skills.

As shown in the Figure (see page 7), graduates' employment in Wyoming was primarily in service-providing industries (798 of 894 jobs). The goods-producing industries (Natural Resources & Mining, Construction, and Manufacturing) employed predominantly men (72 men compared to 24 women). In contrast, service-providing industries employed mostly women (581 women compared to 217 men).

Across all age groups, service-providing industries employed the most graduates. Graduates between 20 and 54 years of age

worked in Health Care & Social Assistance (267). Those in the 55-64 age group were concentrated in Professional & Business Services.

On average, graduates earned \$3.75 per hour more than the entry-level wage of all Wyoming workers (\$10.93 per hour compared to \$7.18 per hour). With four exceptions (Business & Financial Operations; Architecture & Engineering; Life, Physical, & Social Science; and Legal occupations), graduates earned higher hourly wages in 2003 than entry-level

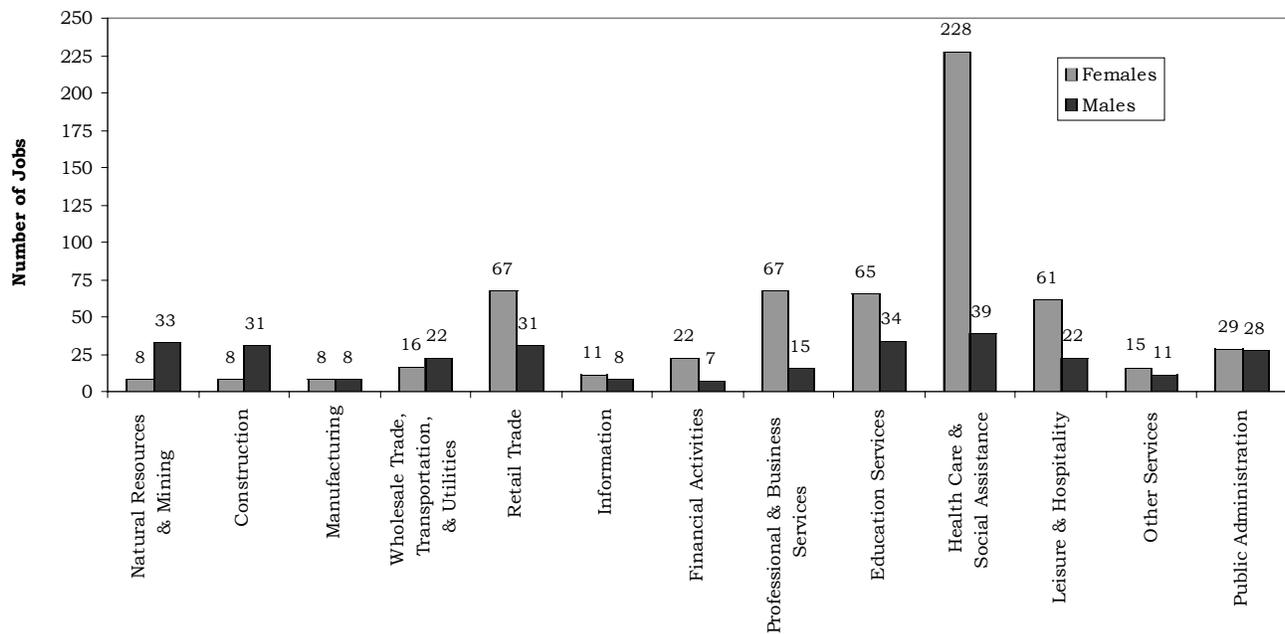
wages for all Wyoming workers within that occupational group.

Overall, employers report that they are satisfied with the skills and work habits of the graduates they employ.

The complete study of May 2002 graduates' employment outcomes, *Where Are They Now? Wyoming Community College Graduates' Labor Market Outcomes*, is now available from our website at <<http://doe.state.wy.us/LMI/CollegeReport2004.htm>>.



Figure: Jobs Held by May 2002 Wyoming Community College Graduates^a in Wyoming by Industry and Gender, Second Quarter 2003



^aMay include multiple responses for a single employer or graduate.

fyi...

In first quarter 2004 there were 175 private non-profit establishments in Wyoming employing an average of 7,064 workers.

Wyoming Unemployment Remains Low in July

by: *David Bullard, Senior Economist*

Wyoming's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate held steady at 3.6 percent in July. It remains well below its July 2003 level of 4.3 percent and the current U.S. unemployment rate of 5.5 percent. Wyoming job growth continued at a healthy pace in July as 4,700 jobs (1.8%) were added on an over-the-year basis.

From June to July, employment fell by 3,000 jobs or 1.1 percent. This seasonal decrease occurs every year when public schools close for the summer (Government employment fell by 5,800 jobs or 8.8%). Job gains in Natural Resources & Mining (500 jobs or 2.5%), Construction (300 jobs or 1.4%), and Leisure & Hospitality (1,700 jobs or 4.8%) helped offset seasonal job losses.

From July 2003 to July 2004, Wyoming added 4,700 jobs or 1.8 percent. Natural Resources & Mining (including oil & gas)

continued to dominate the job gains (1,800 jobs or 9.5%). Other notable job gains were seen in Wholesale Trade (300 jobs or 4.2%), Financial Activities (300 jobs or 2.9%), Educational & Health Services (900 jobs or 4.3%), Leisure & Hospitality (800 jobs or 2.2%), and Government (900 jobs or 1.5%). Employment fell slightly in Information (-200 jobs or -4.8%), Professional & Business Services (-100 jobs or -0.6%), and Other Services (-300 jobs or -3.1%).

As expected, most county unemployment rates decreased slightly in July. The largest decrease occurred in Teton County where the unemployment rate fell from 2.6 percent in June to 1.8 percent in July. Other large decreases were seen in Johnson County (down from 1.6% to 1.1%), Fremont County (down from 5.2% to 4.7%), and Crook and Carbon counties (both down from 3.5% to 3.0%).

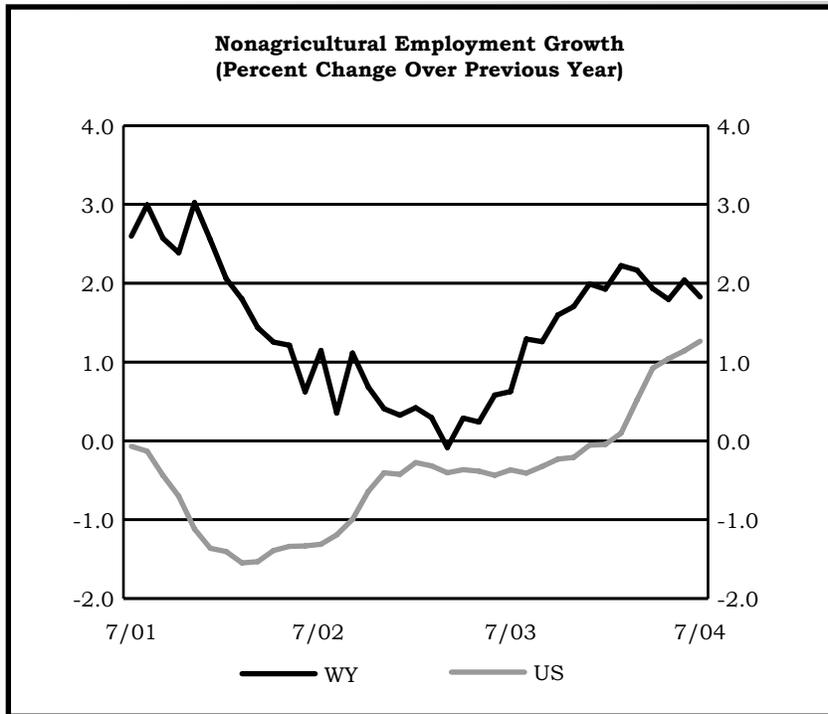


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Growing and Declining Industries for First Quarter 2004

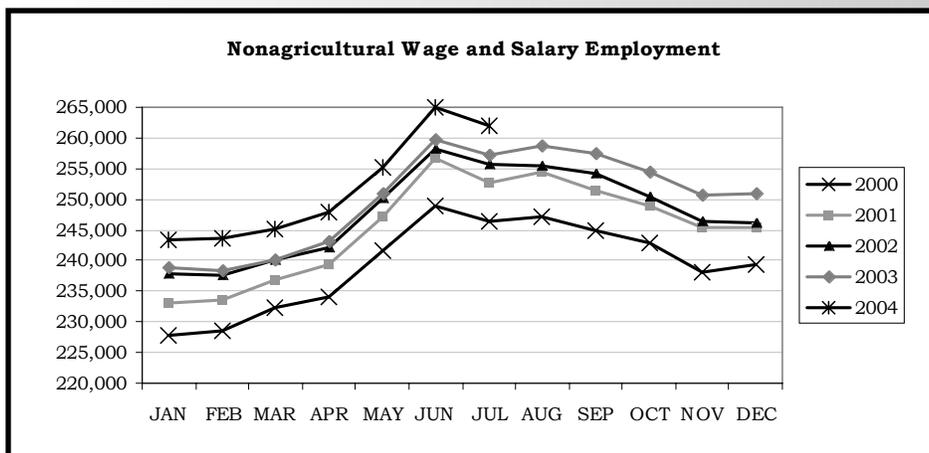
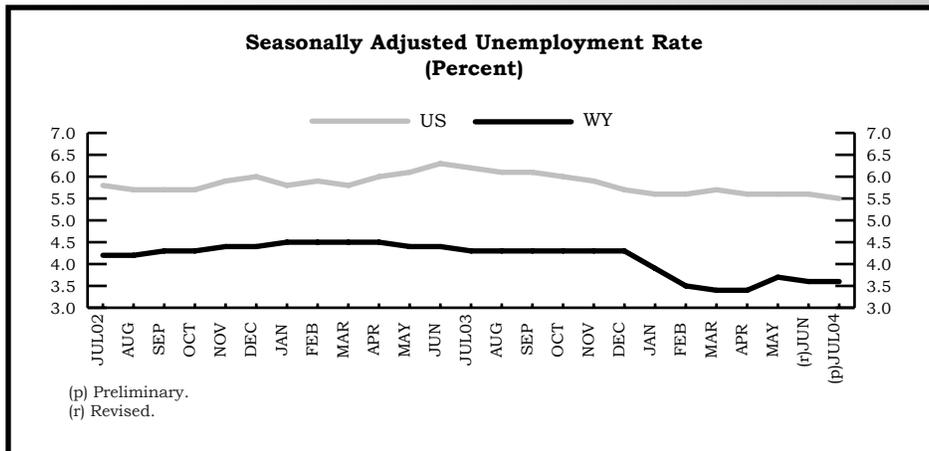
First quarter 2004 total wages rose by 7.0 percent over the year to \$1.8 billion. The increase was led, in large part, by growth in Mining (i.e., oil & gas extraction and support activities for mining). Some industries within Manufacturing, however, are in decline (i.e., wood product manufacturing and computer & electronic product manufacturing).

For more information on growing and declining industries, visit our website at http://doe.state.wy.us/LMI/G_DInd/G_D_Industries.htm.



State Unemployment Rates July 2004 (Seasonally Adjusted)

State	Unemp. Rate
Puerto Rico	9.7
District of Columbia	7.8
Alaska	7.2
Michigan	6.8
Oregon	6.8
California	6.1
Illinois	6.1
Louisiana	6.1
South Carolina	6.0
Washington	6.0
Mississippi	5.9
New York	5.9
Ohio	5.9
Alabama	5.7
Rhode Island	5.7
Texas	5.7
Arkansas	5.6
Missouri	5.5
United States	5.5
Kentucky	5.3
Massachusetts	5.3
New Mexico	5.3
Pennsylvania	5.3
West Virginia	5.2
Colorado	5.1
Indiana	5.1
New Jersey	5.0
North Carolina	5.0
Idaho	4.9
Utah	4.8
Wisconsin	4.7
Connecticut	4.6
Kansas	4.6
Tennessee	4.5
Arizona	4.4
Florida	4.4
Iowa	4.4
Minnesota	4.4
Nevada	4.4
Oklahoma	4.4
Montana	4.3
Maine	4.2
Georgia	4.1
Maryland	4.1
Delaware	3.9
New Hampshire	3.9
Wyoming	3.6
Nebraska	3.4
South Dakota	3.4
Vermont	3.4
Virginia	3.4
North Dakota	3.1
Hawaii	3.0



Wyoming Nonagricultural Wage and Salary Employment

by: David Bullard, Senior Economist

Employment fell by 3,000 jobs from June to July, as schools closed for the summer. Job gains in Natural Resources & Mining and Leisure & Hospitality helped offset seasonal losses.

WYOMING STATEWIDE	Employment in Thousands					Percent Change Total Employment		LARAMIE COUNTY	Employment in Thousands					Percent Change Total Employment							
	Jul04(p)		Jun04(r)		Jul03(b)		Jun04		Jul03		Jul04(p)		Jun04(r)		Jul03(b)		Jul04		Jul03		
TOTAL NONAG. WAGE & SALARY EMPLOYMENT	262.0	265.0	257.3	-1.1	1.8			TOTAL NONAG. WAGE & SALARY EMPLOYMENT	41.4	41.8	41.0	-1.0	1.0								
TOTAL PRIVATE	201.9	199.1	198.1	1.4	1.9			TOTAL PRIVATE	29.0	29.0	28.8	0.0	0.7								
GOODS PRODUCING	51.3	50.4	49.4	1.8	3.8			GOODS PRODUCING	4.5	4.4	4.3	2.3	4.7								
Natural Resources & Mining	20.7	20.2	18.9	2.5	9.5			Nat. Res., Mining, & Construction	3.0	2.9	2.8	3.4	7.1								
Mining	20.7	20.2	18.7	2.5	10.7			Manufacturing	1.5	1.5	1.5	0.0	0.0								
Oil & Gas Extraction	3.5	3.4	3.3	2.9	6.1			SERVICE PROVIDING	36.9	37.4	36.7	-1.3	0.5								
Mining Except Oil & Gas	7.5	7.5	7.5	0.0	0.0			Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	8.7	8.7	8.6	0.0	1.2								
Coal Mining	5.0	5.0	5.0	0.0	0.0			Wholesale Trade	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.0								
Support Activities for Mining	9.7	9.3	7.9	4.3	22.8			Retail Trade	5.5	5.5	5.6	0.0	-1.8								
Support Act. for Oil & Gas	6.5	6.4	5.4	1.6	20.4			Information	0.9	0.9	1.1	0.0	-18.2								
Construction	21.1	20.8	21.1	1.4	0.0			Financial Activities	2.0	2.0	2.0	0.0	0.0								
Construction of Buildings	4.5	4.4	4.5	2.3	0.0			Professional & Business Services	3.5	3.5	3.6	0.0	-2.8								
Heavy & Engineering Constr.	6.0	5.8	6.2	3.4	-3.2			Educational & Health Services	3.0	3.2	3.0	-6.3	0.0								
Specialty Trade Contractors	10.6	10.6	10.4	0.0	1.9			Leisure & Hospitality	4.9	4.7	4.6	4.3	6.5								
Manufacturing	9.5	9.4	9.4	1.1	1.1			Other Services	1.5	1.6	1.6	-6.3	-6.3								
Durable Goods	5.1	5.1	5.0	0.0	2.0			TOTAL GOVERNMENT	12.4	12.8	12.2	-3.1	1.6								
Non-Durable Goods	4.4	4.3	4.4	2.3	0.0			Federal Government	2.7	2.7	2.7	0.0	0.0								
SERVICE PROVIDING	210.7	214.6	207.9	-1.8	1.3			State Government	4.0	4.0	3.9	0.0	2.6								
Trade, Trans., Warehouse, & Util.	50.7	50.2	50.2	1.0	1.0			Local Government	5.7	6.1	5.6	-6.6	1.8								
Wholesale Trade	7.4	7.3	7.1	1.4	4.2			NATRONA COUNTY													
Merchant Whslsrs., Durable	4.2	4.2	4.2	0.0	0.0			TOTAL NONAG. WAGE & SALARY EMPLOYMENT	35.7	36.3	34.6	-1.7	3.2								
Retail Trade	31.2	31.0	31.2	0.6	0.0			TOTAL PRIVATE	30.6	30.4	29.6	0.7	3.4								
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	4.2	4.2	4.3	0.0	-2.3			GOODS PRODUCING	7.0	6.9	6.7	1.4	4.5								
Bldg. Material & Garden Sup.	2.5	2.5	2.6	0.0	-3.8			Natural Resources & Mining	2.9	2.8	2.5	3.6	16.0								
Food & Beverage Stores	4.8	4.9	5.0	-2.0	-4.0			Construction	2.5	2.5	2.6	0.0	-3.8								
Grocery Stores	3.9	3.8	4.0	2.6	-2.5			Manufacturing	1.6	1.6	1.6	0.0	0.0								
Gasoline Stations	4.5	4.4	4.6	2.3	-2.2			SERVICE PROVIDING	28.7	29.4	27.9	-2.4	2.9								
General Merchandise Stores	6.4	6.2	6.2	3.2	3.2			Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	8.2	8.1	7.9	1.2	3.8								
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	1.9	1.9	2.0	0.0	-5.0			Wholesale Trade	2.2	2.2	2.2	0.0	0.0								
Transport., Warehouse, & Util.	12.1	11.9	11.9	1.7	1.7			Retail Trade	4.8	4.8	4.6	0.0	4.3								
Utilities	2.2	2.2	2.2	0.0	0.0			Transport., Warehouse, & Util.	1.2	1.1	1.1	9.1	9.1								
Transportation & Warehousing	9.9	9.7	9.7	2.1	2.1			Information	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0								
Truck Transportation	3.5	3.4	3.4	2.9	2.9			Financial Activities	1.9	1.8	1.8	5.6	5.6								
Information	4.0	4.1	4.2	-2.4	-4.8			Professional & Business Services	3.4	3.4	3.3	0.0	3.0								
Financial Activities	10.8	10.7	10.5	0.9	2.9			Educational & Health Services	4.4	4.5	4.3	-2.2	2.3								
Finance & Insurance	7.0	7.0	6.9	0.0	1.4			Leisure & Hospitality	3.5	3.5	3.4	0.0	2.9								
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	3.8	3.7	3.6	2.7	5.6			Other Services	1.7	1.7	1.7	0.0	0.0								
Professional & Business Services	16.5	16.5	16.6	0.0	-0.6			TOTAL GOVERNMENT	5.1	5.9	5.0	-13.6	2.0								
Prof., Scientific & Tech. Services	7.9	7.8	7.7	1.3	2.6			Federal Government	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.0	14.3								
Architect., Engineering & Rel.	2.2	2.2	2.2	0.0	0.0			State Government	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.0								
Mgmt. of Companies & Enterpr.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0			Local Government	3.6	4.4	3.6	-18.2	0.0								
Admin., Support & Waste Svcs.	8.1	8.2	8.4	-1.2	-3.6			Local Education	2.1	2.8	2.0	-25.0	5.0								
Educational & Health Services	21.7	22.0	20.8	-1.4	4.3			Note: Current Employment Statistics (CES) estimates include all full- and part-time wage and salary workers in nonagricultural establishments who worked or received pay during the week which includes the 12th of the month. Self-employed, domestic services, and personnel of the armed forces are excluded. Data are not seasonally adjusted. Wyoming and Natrona County are published in cooperation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics.													
Educational	2.2	2.2	2.2	0.0	0.0			(p) Preliminary. (r) Revised. (b) Benchmarked.													
Health Care & Social Assistance	19.5	19.8	18.6	-1.5	4.8																
Ambulatory Health Care	7.3	7.4	7.0	-1.4	4.3																
Offices of Physicians	3.0	3.1	2.9	-3.2	3.4																
Hospitals	2.8	2.8	2.7	0.0	3.7																
Nursing & Res. Care Facilities	4.5	4.5	4.3	0.0	4.7																
Social Assistance	4.9	5.1	4.6	-3.9	6.5																
Leisure & Hospitality	37.4	35.7	36.6	4.8	2.2																
Arts, Entertainment, & Rec.	3.6	3.4	3.4	5.9	5.9																
Accommodation & Food Services	33.8	32.3	33.2	4.6	1.8																
Accommodation	14.3	13.5	14.0	5.9	2.1																
Food Serv. & Drinking Places	19.5	18.8	19.2	3.7	1.6																
Other Services	9.5	9.5	9.8	0.0	-3.1																
Repair & Maintenance	3.1	3.0	3.1	3.3	0.0																
TOTAL GOVERNMENT	60.1	65.9	59.2	-8.8	1.5																
Federal Government	8.5	8.4	8.6	1.2	-1.2																
State Government	14.6	15.4	14.2	-5.2	2.8																
State Govt. Education	5.2	5.9	4.7	-11.9	10.6																
Local Government	37.0	42.1	36.4	-12.1	1.6																
Local Govt. Education	15.0	20.4	15.2	-26.5	-1.3																
Hospitals	5.8	5.8	5.6	0.0	3.6																

Wyoming Nonagricultural Wage and Salary Employment (Continued)

	Employment in Thousands			Percent Change Total Employment	
	Jul04(p)	Jun04(r)	Jul03(b)	Jul04	Jul03
				Jul04	Jul04
CAMPBELL COUNTY					
TOTAL NONAG. WAGE & SALARY EMPLOYMENT	22.0	22.4	21.4	-1.8	2.8
TOTAL PRIVATE	18.6	18.4	18.1	1.1	2.8
GOODS PRODUCING	9.0	8.9	8.7	1.1	3.4
Natural Resources & Mining	6.2	6.2	6.1	0.0	1.6
Construction	2.3	2.2	2.1	4.5	9.5
Manufacturing	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0
SERVICE PROVIDING	13.0	13.5	12.7	-3.7	2.4
Trade, Transport., & Utilities	4.2	4.1	4.0	2.4	5.0
Information	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0
Financial Activities	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0
Professional & Bus. Services	1.4	1.4	1.4	0.0	0.0
Educational & Health Serv.	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.0	-11.1
Leisure & Hospitality	1.7	1.7	1.7	0.0	0.0
Other Services	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.0	14.3
TOTAL GOVERNMENT	3.4	4.0	3.3	-15.0	3.0
SWEETWATER COUNTY					
TOTAL NONAG. WAGE & SALARY EMPLOYMENT	20.7	21.2	19.9	-2.4	4.0
TOTAL PRIVATE	17.2	17.0	16.3	1.2	5.5
GOODS PRODUCING	6.9	6.8	6.4	1.5	7.8
Natural Resources & Mining	4.1	4.0	3.7	2.5	10.8
Construction	1.6	1.6	1.5	0.0	6.7
Manufacturing	1.2	1.2	1.2	0.0	0.0
SERVICE PROVIDING	13.8	14.4	13.5	-4.2	2.2
Trade, Transport., & Utilities	4.5	4.5	4.2	0.0	7.1
Information	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0
Financial Activities	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.0
Professional & Bus. Services	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.0	-10.0
Educational & Health Serv.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.0	0.0
Leisure & Hospitality	2.4	2.4	2.2	0.0	9.1
Other Services	0.7	0.6	0.7	16.7	0.0
TOTAL GOVERNMENT	3.5	4.2	3.6	-16.7	-2.8
TETON COUNTY					
TOTAL NONAG. WAGE & SALARY EMPLOYMENT	20.0	18.3	20.1	9.3	-0.5
TOTAL PRIVATE	17.6	15.9	17.8	10.7	-1.1
GOODS PRODUCING	2.4	2.4	2.6	0.0	-7.7
Nat. Res., Mining & Const.	2.2	2.2	2.4	0.0	-8.3
Manufacturing	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0
SERVICE PROVIDING	17.6	15.9	17.5	10.7	0.6
Trade, Transport., & Utilities	2.8	2.6	2.8	7.7	0.0
Information	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.0
Financial Activities	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.0	0.0
Professional & Bus. Services	1.6	1.6	1.8	0.0	-11.1
Educational & Health Serv.	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.0	-11.1
Leisure & Hospitality	8.3	6.8	8.0	22.1	3.8
Other Services	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0
TOTAL GOVERNMENT	2.4	2.4	2.3	0.0	4.3

State Unemployment Rates July 2004 (Not Seasonally Adjusted)

State	Unemp. Rate
Puerto Rico	10.0
District of Columbia	8.2
Michigan	7.5
South Carolina	6.6
Alaska	6.5
California	6.5
Oregon	6.5
Louisiana	6.4
Illinois	6.2
Texas	6.2
Arkansas	6.1
Ohio	6.1
Mississippi	6.0
New York	5.9
Washington	5.9
Alabama	5.8
Missouri	5.8
New Mexico	5.8
Rhode Island	5.8
United States	5.7
New Jersey	5.5
Kentucky	5.4
Massachusetts	5.4
North Carolina	5.4
Pennsylvania	5.4
Indiana	5.2
West Virginia	5.2
Colorado	5.1
Arizona	5.0
Utah	5.0
Connecticut	4.9
Tennessee	4.7
Florida	4.6
Kansas	4.6
Wisconsin	4.6
Nevada	4.5
Georgia	4.4
Idaho	4.4
Oklahoma	4.4
Maryland	4.2
Minnesota	4.2
Iowa	4.0
Delaware	3.9
Montana	3.9
New Hampshire	3.8
Nebraska	3.7
Maine	3.5
Virginia	3.5
Hawaii	3.3
South Dakota	3.2
Vermont	3.1
Wyoming	3.1
North Dakota	2.9

Economic Indicators

by: *David Bullard, Senior Economist*

The number of Wyoming building permits issued rose 77.2 percent from a year ago.

	Jul 2004 (p)	Jun 2004 (r)	Jul 2003 (b)	Percent Change	
				Month	Year
Wyoming Total Civilian Labor Force	285,529	284,732	285,506	0.3	0.0
Unemployed	8,839	9,583	10,851	-7.8	-18.5
Employed	276,690	275,149	274,655	0.6	0.7
Wyoming Unemp. Rate/Seasonally Adjusted	3.1%/3.6%	3.4%/3.6%	3.8%/4.3%	N/A	N/A
U.S. Unemployment Rate/Seasonally Adjusted	5.7%/5.5%	5.8%/5.6%	6.3%/6.2%	N/A	N/A
U.S. Multiple Jobholders	7,521,000	7,361,000	7,304,000	2.2	3.0
As a percent of all workers	5.3%	5.3%	5.3%	N/A	N/A
U.S. Discouraged Workers	504,000	478,000	470,000	5.4	7.2
U.S. Part-Time for Economic Reasons	4,648,000	4,623,000	4,870,000	0.5	-4.6
Hours & Earnings for Production Workers					
Wyoming Mining					
Average Weekly Earnings	\$1,004.85	\$1,008.57	\$960.53	-0.4	4.6
Average Weekly Hours	43.5	44.1	43.7	-1.4	-0.5
U.S. Mining Hours & Earnings					
Average Weekly Earnings	\$832.58	\$837.14	\$786.74	-0.5	5.8
Average Weekly Hours	45.2	45.3	44.1	-0.2	2.5
Wyoming Manufacturing Hours & Earnings					
Average Weekly Earnings	\$626.73	\$632.64	\$640.92	-0.9	-2.2
Average Weekly Hours	39.0	39.1	39.1	-0.3	-0.3
U.S. Manufacturing Hours & Earnings					
Average Weekly Earnings	\$646.82	\$659.69	\$620.93	-2.0	4.2
Average Weekly Hours	40.3	41.0	39.6	-1.7	1.8
Wyoming Unemployment Insurance					
Weeks Compensated	9,278	12,381	13,093	-25.1	-29.1
Benefits Paid	\$2,210,055	\$2,970,683	\$3,029,341	-25.6	-27.0
Average Weekly Benefit Payment	\$238.20	\$239.94	\$231.37	-0.7	3.0
State Insured Covered Jobs	238,116	242,794	234,647	-1.9	1.5
Insured Unemployment Rate	1.2%	1.4%	1.4%	N/A	N/A
Consumer Price Index (U) for All U.S. Urban Consumers (1982 to 1984 = 100) - All Items					
Food & Beverages	189.4	189.7	183.9	-0.2	3.0
Housing	187.2	186.8	180.3	0.2	3.8
Apparel	190.9	190.3	185.9	0.3	2.7
Transportation	115.9	120.1	116.2	-3.5	-0.3
Medical Care	164.0	165.7	156.8	-1.0	4.6
Recreation (Dec. 1997=100)	311.0	310.0	297.6	0.3	4.5
Education & Comm. (Dec. 1997=100)	108.7	108.9	107.7	-0.2	0.9
Other Goods & Services	110.9	110.8	108.9	0.1	1.8
Other Goods & Services	305.1	304.1	299.2	0.3	2.0
Producer Prices (1982 to 1984 = 100) - All	147.6	147.1	137.7	0.3	7.2
Wyoming Building Permits (New Privately Owned Housing Units Authorized)					
Total Units	397	282	224	40.8	77.2
Valuation	\$55,305,000	\$40,301,000	\$37,299,000	37.2	48.3
Single Family Homes	306	231	196	32.5	56.1
Valuation	\$48,734,000	\$36,899,000	\$34,481,000	32.1	41.3
Baker Hughes North American Rotary Rig Count for WY	83	78	62	6.4	33.9

(p) Preliminary. (r) Revised. (b) Benchmarked.

Wyoming County Unemployment Rates

by: Brad Payne, Economist

As expected, most county unemployment rates decreased slightly in July.

REGION County	Labor Force			Employed			Unemployed			Unemployment Rate		
	Jul 2004 (p)	Jun 2004 (r)	Jul 2003 (b)									
NORTHWEST	49,495	49,469	50,108	47,759	47,533	48,077	1,736	1,936	2,031	3.5	3.9	4.1
Big Horn	5,787	6,003	5,850	5,580	5,773	5,633	207	230	217	3.6	3.8	3.7
Fremont	18,573	18,679	18,650	17,706	17,706	17,636	867	973	1,014	4.7	5.2	5.4
Hot Springs	2,249	2,328	2,346	2,195	2,271	2,289	54	57	57	2.4	2.4	2.4
Park	18,295	17,864	18,476	17,816	17,337	17,880	479	527	596	2.6	3.0	3.2
Washakie	4,591	4,595	4,786	4,462	4,446	4,639	129	149	147	2.8	3.2	3.1
NORTHEAST	49,190	49,614	48,686	47,958	48,238	46,970	1,232	1,376	1,716	2.5	2.8	3.5
Campbell	23,452	23,269	23,051	22,780	22,560	22,186	672	709	865	2.9	3.0	3.8
Crook	3,156	3,327	3,141	3,061	3,212	3,035	95	115	106	3.0	3.5	3.4
Johnson	4,383	4,487	4,349	4,335	4,414	4,247	48	73	102	1.1	1.6	2.3
Sheridan	15,041	15,353	14,997	14,697	14,961	14,463	344	392	534	2.3	2.6	3.6
Weston	3,158	3,178	3,148	3,085	3,091	3,039	73	87	109	2.3	2.7	3.5
SOUTHWEST	59,095	57,593	58,755	57,454	55,764	56,496	1,641	1,829	2,259	2.8	3.2	3.8
Lincoln	7,830	7,910	7,979	7,540	7,601	7,599	290	309	380	3.7	3.9	4.8
Sublette	4,264	4,185	4,271	4,191	4,104	4,167	73	81	104	1.7	1.9	2.4
Sweetwater	20,844	20,792	20,506	20,251	20,160	19,630	593	632	876	2.8	3.0	4.3
Teton	14,666	13,232	14,775	14,402	12,891	14,472	264	341	303	1.8	2.6	2.1
Uinta	11,491	11,474	11,224	11,070	11,008	10,628	421	466	596	3.7	4.1	5.3
SOUTHEAST	75,872	76,139	75,638	73,353	73,569	73,131	2,519	2,570	2,507	3.3	3.4	3.3
Albany	18,674	19,282	18,789	18,321	18,921	18,431	353	361	358	1.9	1.9	1.9
Goshen	6,116	6,342	6,097	5,919	6,150	5,891	197	192	206	3.2	3.0	3.4
Laramie	45,432	44,634	45,108	43,675	42,835	43,385	1,757	1,799	1,723	3.9	4.0	3.8
Niobrara	1,224	1,260	1,215	1,201	1,242	1,190	23	18	25	1.9	1.4	2.1
Platte	4,426	4,621	4,429	4,237	4,421	4,234	189	200	195	4.3	4.3	4.4
CENTRAL	51,878	51,917	52,317	50,166	50,047	49,980	1,712	1,870	2,337	3.3	3.6	4.5
Carbon	8,187	8,371	8,310	7,942	8,082	7,950	245	289	360	3.0	3.5	4.3
Converse	6,546	6,533	6,861	6,320	6,299	6,576	226	234	285	3.5	3.6	4.2
Natrona	37,145	37,013	37,146	35,904	35,666	35,454	1,241	1,347	1,692	3.3	3.6	4.6
STATEWIDE	285,529	284,732	285,506	276,690	275,149	274,655	8,839	9,583	10,851	3.1	3.4	3.8
Statewide Seasonally Adjusted										3.6	3.6	4.3
U.S.....										5.7	5.8	6.3
U.S. Seasonally Adjusted.....										5.5	5.6	6.2

Prepared in cooperation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Benchmarked 03/04. Run Date 08/04.

Data are not seasonally adjusted except where otherwise specified.

(p) Preliminary. (r) Revised. (b) Benchmarked.

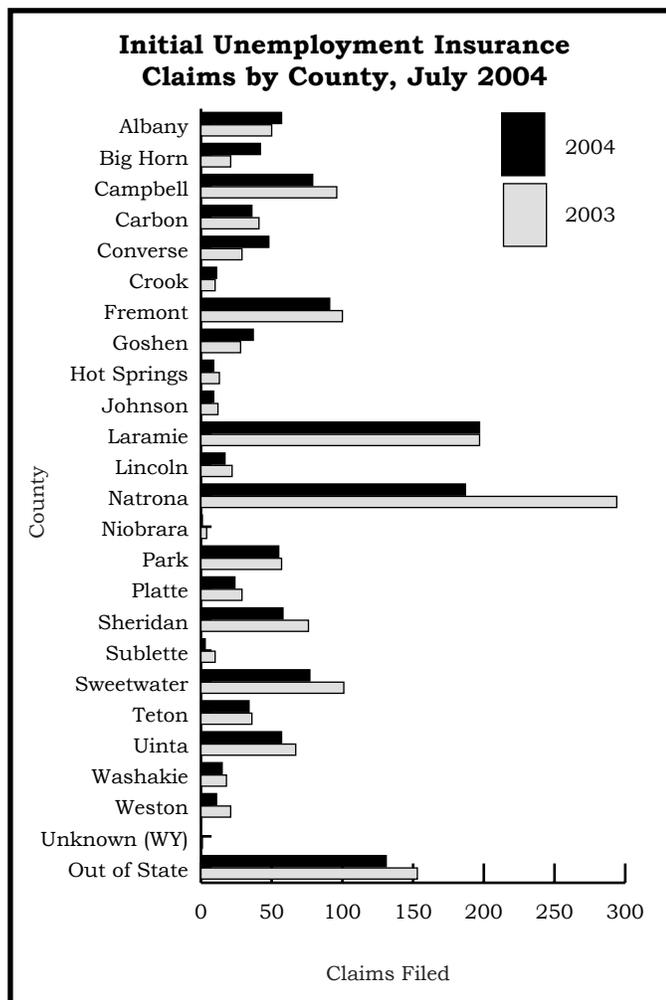
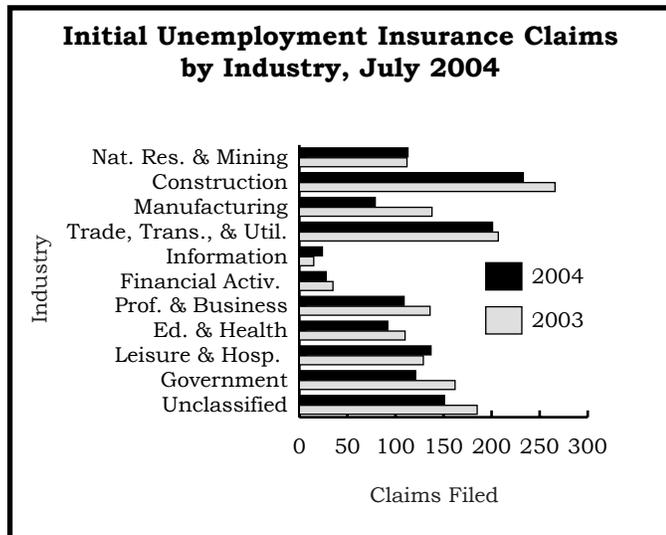
NOTE: The Current Population Survey (CPS) estimated the 2003 annual average Wyoming unemployment rate at 4.4 percent.

The 90 percent confidence interval for this estimate suggests that in 9 of 10 cases, the interval 3.9 to 4.9 percent would contain the actual rate.

Wyoming Normalized Unemployment Insurance Statistics: Initial Claims

by: Douglas W. Leonard, Research Analyst

Although over-the-year declines in Mining have leveled off, the difference appears to be offset with more rapid declines in Construction and Manufacturing.



WYOMING STATEWIDE	Claims Filed		Percent Change	
	Jul04	Jun04	Jul03	Jul04 Jul03
TOTAL CLAIMS FILED	1,288	1,375	1,487	-6.3 -13.4
TOTAL GOODS PRODUCING	425	490	516	-13.3 -17.6
Natural Resources and Mining	113	106	112	6.6 0.9
Mining	92	83	100	10.8 -8.0
Oil & Gas Extraction	8	10	14	-20.0 -42.9
Construction	233	326	266	-28.5 -12.4
Manufacturing	79	58	138	36.2 -42.8
TOTAL SERVICE PROVIDING	634	633	667	0.2 -4.9
Trade, Trans., Storage, & Util.	201	178	207	12.9 -2.9
Wholesale Trade	23	26	41	-11.5 -43.9
Retail Trade	141	117	127	20.5 11.0
Trans., Storage, & Utilities	37	35	39	5.7 -5.1
Information	24	11	15	118.2 60.0
Financial Activities	28	23	35	21.7 -20.0
Professional & Business Serv.	109	119	136	-8.4 -19.9
Educational & Health Services	92	124	110	-25.8 -16.4
Leisure & Hospitality	137	137	129	0.0 6.2
Other Services	43	41	35	4.9 22.9
TOTAL GOVERNMENT	121	133	162	-9.0 -25.3
Federal Government	28	23	22	21.7 27.3
State Government	25	14	26	78.6 -3.8
Local Government	68	96	114	-29.2 -40.4
Local Education	25	43	53	-41.9 -52.8
UNCLASSIFIED	108	119	142	-9.2 -23.9

LARAMIE COUNTY				
TOTAL CLAIMS FILED	195	222	196	-12.2 -0.5
TOTAL GOODS PRODUCING	46	66	43	-30.3 7.0
Construction	40	55	36	-27.3 11.1
TOTAL SERVICE PROVIDING	112	117	115	-4.3 -2.6
Trade, Trans., Storage, & Util.	38	28	37	35.7 2.7
Financial Activities	4	12	6	-66.7 -33.3
Professional & Business Serv.	28	27	33	3.7 -15.2
Educational & Health Services	15	7	18	114.3 -16.7
Leisure & Hospitality	16	22	17	-27.3 -5.9
TOTAL GOVERNMENT	21	19	26	10.5 -19.2
UNCLASSIFIED	16	20	12	-20.0 33.3

NATRONA COUNTY				
TOTAL CLAIMS FILED	185	217	295	-14.7 -37.3
TOTAL GOODS PRODUCING	75	76	150	-1.3 -50.0
Construction	31	47	40	-34.0 -22.5
TOTAL SERVICE PROVIDING	98	128	130	-23.4 -24.6
Trade, Trans., Storage, & Util.	29	32	35	-9.4 -17.1
Financial Activities	4	3	11	33.3 -63.6
Professional & Business Serv.	18	23	25	-21.7 -28.0
Educational & Health Services	15	36	19	-58.3 -21.1
Leisure & Hospitality	22	28	29	-21.4 -24.1
TOTAL GOVERNMENT	9	6	11	50.0 -18.2
UNCLASSIFIED	3	7	4	-57.1 -25.0

Wyoming Normalized Unemployment Insurance Statistics: Continued Claims by: Douglas W. Leonard, Research Analyst

Over-the-month percentage declines were slightly larger than those in recent history. However, some industries, such as Information had substantial over-the-year increases.

WYOMING STATEWIDE	Claims Filed		Percent Change	
	Jul04	Jun04	Jul03	Jul04
	Jul04	Jun04	Jul03	Jul04
TOTAL WEEKS CLAIMED	11,612	13,199	12,978	-12.0 -10.5
TOTAL UNIQUE CLAIMANTS	3,569	3,559	3,459	0.3 3.2
TOTAL GOODS PRODUCING	3,155	3,984	4,309	-20.8 -26.8
Natural Resources and Mining	665	811	691	-18.0 -3.8
Mining	572	707	620	-19.1 -7.7
Oil & Gas Extraction	95	116	48	-18.1 97.9
Construction	1,949	2,456	2,674	-20.6 -27.1
Manufacturing	541	717	944	-24.5 -42.7
TOTAL SERVICE PROVIDING	6,339	7,027	6,199	-9.8 2.3
Trade, Trans., Storage, & Util.	1,570	1,687	2,024	-6.9 -22.4
Wholesale Trade	258	279	387	-7.5 -33.3
Retail Trade	997	1,007	1,115	-1.0 -10.6
Trans., Storage, & Utilities	315	401	522	-21.4 -39.7
Information	394	410	230	-3.9 71.3
Financial Activities	391	448	340	-12.7 15.0
Professional & Business Serv.	1,359	1,395	1,022	-2.6 33.0
Educational & Health Serv.	1,040	1,029	942	1.1 10.4
Leisure & Hospitality	1,233	1,683	1,211	-26.7 1.8
Other Services	352	375	430	-6.1 -18.1
TOTAL GOVERNMENT	1,226	1,290	1,353	-5.0 -9.4
Federal Government	257	346	219	-25.7 17.4
State Government	217	214	196	1.4 10.7
Local Government	752	730	938	3.0 -19.8
Local Education	262	229	354	14.4 -26.0
UNCLASSIFIED	892	898	1,117	-0.7 -20.1

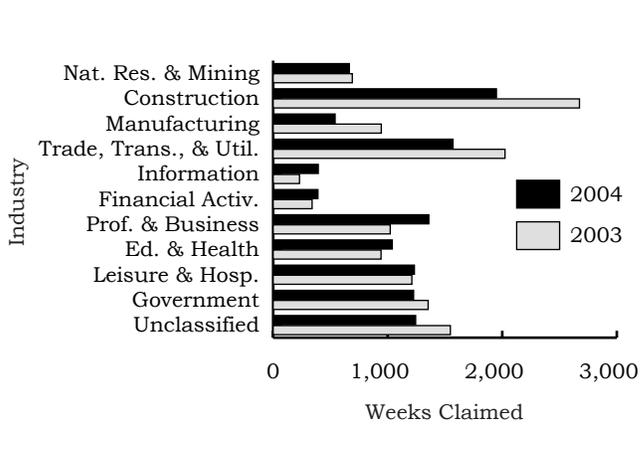
LARAMIE COUNTY

TOTAL WEEKS CLAIMED	2,408	2,530	1,839	-4.8 30.9
TOTAL UNIQUE CLAIMANTS	694	636	467	9.1 48.6
TOTAL GOODS PRODUCING	390	527	393	-26.0 -0.8
Construction	241	325	324	-25.8 -25.6
TOTAL SERVICE PROVIDING	1,680	1,683	1,163	-0.2 44.5
Trade, Trans., Storage, & Util.	316	307	371	2.9 -14.8
Financial Activities	111	110	63	0.9 76.2
Professional & Business Serv.	643	637	223	0.9 188.3
Educational & Health Services	121	144	91	-16.0 33.0
Leisure & Hospitality	151	155	219	-2.6 -31.1
TOTAL GOVERNMENT	219	250	209	-12.4 4.8
UNCLASSIFIED	119	70	74	70.0 60.8

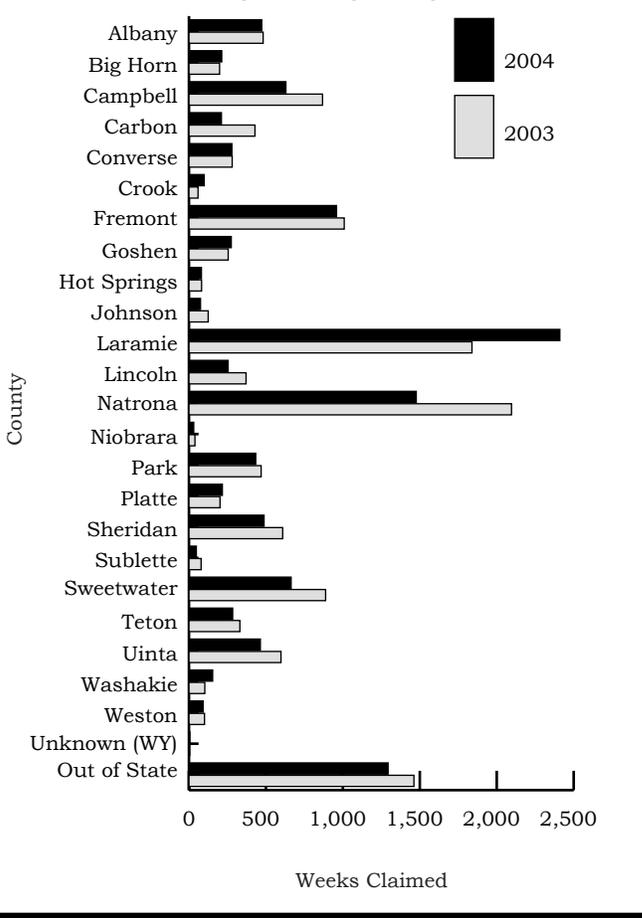
NATRONA COUNTY

TOTAL WEEKS CLAIMED	1,475	1,580	2,095	-6.6 -29.6
TOTAL UNIQUE CLAIMANTS	465	431	583	7.9 -20.2
TOTAL GOODS PRODUCING	433	494	714	-12.3 -39.4
Construction	246	309	341	-20.4 -27.9
TOTAL SERVICE PROVIDING	932	984	1,179	-5.3 -20.9
Trade, Trans., Storage, & Util.	246	241	328	2.1 -25.0
Financial Activities	46	64	80	-28.1 -42.5
Professional & Business Serv.	162	205	210	-21.0 -22.9
Educational & Health Services	277	259	248	6.9 11.7
Leisure & Hospitality	150	145	179	3.4 -16.2
TOTAL GOVERNMENT	59	60	138	-1.7 -57.2
UNCLASSIFIED	51	42	64	21.4 -20.3

Continued Unemployment Insurance Claims by Industry, July 2004



Continued Unemployment Insurance Claims by County, July 2004



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Research & Planning
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