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# Labor Market Information Department

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## Drop Seen in Statewide Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rate

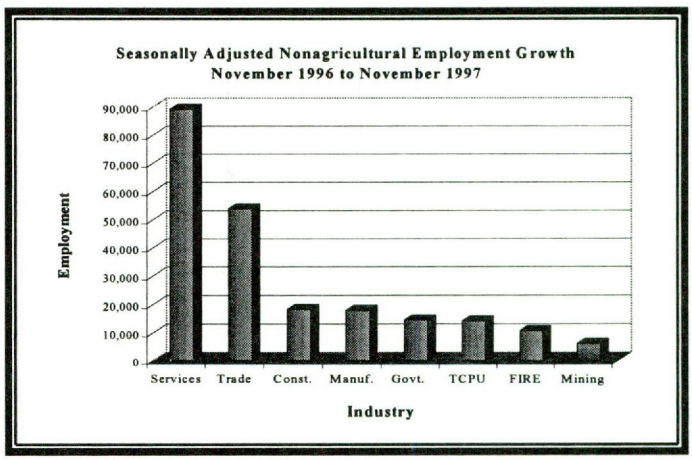
The Texas seasonally adjusted unemployment rate dropped a surprising four-tenths of a percentage point over the month. This represents the largest over-the-month decline since this year's March to April change and the largest (along with 1983) October to November change in the historical series which began in 1978. The current (November) rate of 5.0 percent is the lowest since 1980 and the lowest November rate since 1979.

## Seasonally Adjusted Total Nonagricultural Employment Continues to Climb

✦ Total Nonagricultural Wage and Salary employment climbed by 36,300 jobs in November, with Trade and Services employment accounting for 65% of the increase. The annual growth rate was comparable to rates experienced over the past two years, however, year-to-date job growth (Jan-Nov) is the largest since 1994.

✦ Employment in Mining increased by 300 jobs in November. This most recent upturn in Mining employment began in December 1995 as technological innovations made domestic oil and gas production and extraction more profitable. *Oil and Gas Field Services* continued to provide the largest concentration of employment in Mining.

✦ The Services industry gained 11,900 jobs over the month. The majority of this gain was the result of a surge in employment in *Business Services*. Growth in *Health Services* also contributed to the gain.



✦ Retail Trade employment increased by 11,300 in November. This was the largest one-month gain since October 1994. Significant increases were noted in *General Merchandise Stores*, *Food Stores*, and *Miscellaneous Retail*. The opening of a mall in the Dallas/Fort Worth area boosted employment in *General Merchandise Stores* last month and is expected to add as many jobs this month.

✦ Annual growth rates within Finance, Insurance and Real Estate (FIRE) remained strong, increasing to 2.4% for November. Year to date, FIRE employment has outpaced the last three years. The current year-to-date employment increase of 9,900 is the largest for this period since 1993, when the January-to-November gain was 12,600.

## Nonseasonally Adjusted Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) Employment

✦ All MSAs experienced job growth in November with the exception of San Angelo (which remained unchanged). The Dallas and Houston MSAs contributed the lion's share, accounting for 50% of total MSA employment growth.

✦ Employment in Texas MSAs increased by 50,700 jobs in November, with an above average seasonal gain in Retail Trade accounting for 61% of the growth. While every MSA added jobs in Retail Trade, Christmas hiring in the Dallas, Fort Worth-Arlington, and Houston MSAs accounted for 63% of the overall gain.

✦ Complementing seasonal increases in Retail Trade employment was the addition of 2,300 jobs in Texas' MSAs in Transportation, Communications, and Public Utilities (TCPU) as transportation companies increased staffing to handle holiday package delivery. The Dallas MSA alone contributed 52% of the new TCPU jobs.

✦ Durable Goods Manufacturing employees who were displaced by an October layoff in the Tyler MSA returned to work this month, accounting for 88% of the employment growth for this MSA. This single event represents 48% of November's statewide MSA growth in Durable Goods Manufacturing.

TEXAS

Labor  
Market  
Review



November  
1997

Texas Unemployment Rate		Texas Nonagricultural Wage & Salary Employment	
Actual Series	Seasonally Adjusted	Actual Series	Seasonally Adjusted
4.9%	5.0%	8,611,300	8,560,200

Macroeconomic Overview of the Texas Economy

by Christopher J. Sesler, Ph.D.

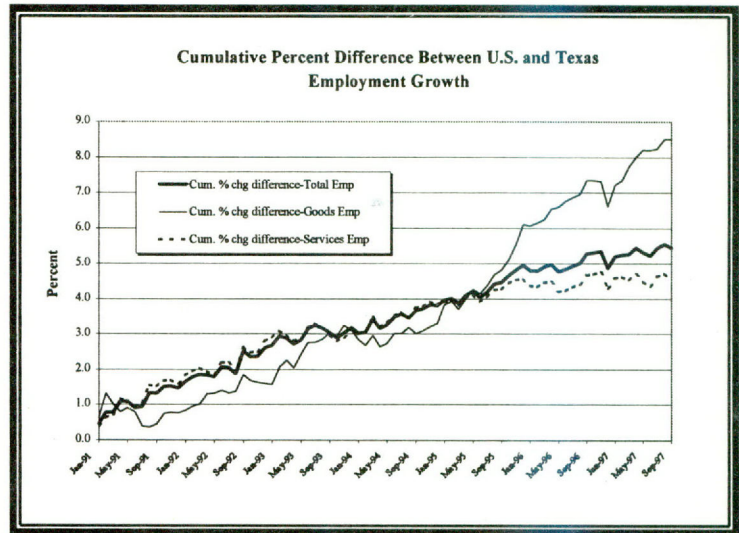
Macroeconomics is concerned with the aggregate nature of an economy. One of the main goals of macroeconomics is to gain an understanding of how an economy works. This can be better understood by analyzing a few key macroeconomic variables. These variables usually fall in the broad categories of economic growth, labor market activity, price inflation, and governmental monetary and fiscal policies. However, microeconomics (the study of firms and individual consumers and the choices they make) is the true underpinning of the macroeconomic environment. If macroeconomics is the forest, microeconomics is the trees.

Economic growth is simply an increase in an economy's productive capacity over time. Economic growth, among other things, is the result of increased factors of production (i.e., labor and capital), education and skills of the workforce, and technological progress. Technological progress is the main driver of increased labor productivity (output per hour of work) and ultimately this rate of productivity improvement is the dominant factor determining long-run economic growth. Economic growth, in turn, helps determine how quickly living standards (output per capita) rise, which represents real improvement in economic quality of life. Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the variable most commonly used as a proxy for economic growth. It measures the market value of goods and services produced. Furthermore, the rate of growth of real GDP helps determine whether a nation, as a whole, is rich or poor, and the growth rate of per-capita real GDP helps to determine the standard of living (per person economic well-being) of such a nation. However, GDP is not a perfect measure of either actual output or overall well-being due to not accounting for such things as non-market transactions, externalities, and non-economic quality-of-life improvements.

Since 1991, the start of the current national economic expansion, Texas has averaged approximately 3.91 percent in economic growth annually compared to the U.S. at approximately 2.84 percent as measured by real Gross State Product (GSP) and real GDP respectively. Texas' per-capita real GSP has been growing at approximately 1.95 percent annually compared to the U.S.'s per-capita real GDP growth rate of 1.57 percent. Texas has outperformed the U.S. in economic growth during this expansionary period due to its burgeoning economic diversity, productivity gains, export trade, and relatively fast-growing labor force. The labor force growth is largely due to increases in net in-migration and the labor force participation rate (the fraction of the working-age population actually in the labor force).

Labor market activity consists of, among others, the labor force, the labor force participation rate, labor productivity, the real wage, employment growth, and the unemployment rate. These variables along with physical capital stock help determine the output of an economy. Among the most important variables in this category to help judge the well-being of workers and overall macroeconomic health are the last two mentioned above: employment growth and the unemployment rate. Since 1991, Texas has averaged an unemployment rate of 6.5 percent versus 6.2 percent for the U.S. During this same time Texas' employment growth (as measured by nonseasonally adjusted total nonagriculture wage and salary

employment) has averaged 2.78 percent annually while the U.S. has averaged 2.0 percent. Overall, Texas has shown unemployment rate trends similar to that of the national rate. However, Texas' employment growth has exceeded the national rate by a significant margin. Again, this can be attributed to a growing labor force, favorable economic conditions for firm relocation, continuing strong economic growth, the incipient effects of NAFTA (while not without its critics, NAFTA has important implications for direct foreign investment, exports, and the creation of jobs in Texas), and the continuing improvement in infrastructure.



The graph above depicts the cumulative percent difference between U.S. and Texas employment growth. For example, if Texas' employment grew by 2 percent more than the U.S. for each year during a five year period, then the cumulative percent difference between U.S. and Texas employment growth would be 10 percent at the end of year five.

Prices play a paramount role in a capitalist economy, coordinating economic activity, distributing resources, and linking the decisions of firms and consumers. Price inflation is a persistent increase in a nation's general price level. The detrimental effects are commonly espoused in the media and include unfavorable impacts on the distribution of income and wealth, on long-run economic growth, and resource allocation. The severity of these detrimental effects depend largely on whether or not economic agents (i.e., consumers, investors, workers, and firms) are able to predict the inflation before it occurs. Once unleashed, inflation has a tendency to accelerate, thereby necessitating preemptive monetary actions. Moreover, low, non-volatile inflation and expected inflation are instrumental to stable and sustainable economic growth. The consumer price index (CPI) is the variable most commonly used as a proxy for price inflation. The CPI attempts to measure the change in the cost of a basket of goods and services purchased by a typical household. Texas' CPI, which is an average of the Houston and Dallas CPIs, has increased an average of 2.48 percent annually since 1991 as compared to the U.S.'s average annual increase of 2.75 percent. Both national and Texas inflation rates, as measured by their respective CPIs, are very low when judged by historical data. As with the national economy, Texas' moderate to strong economic growth has not accelerated inflation. Interestingly, eminent wage pressure has not materialized and firms are increasing productivity and efficiency instead of output price due to a highly competitive market environment.

Continued on page 3

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Governmental monetary and fiscal policy, especially at the national level, are tools aimed at influencing real economic activity. The "soft landing" or "fine tuning" of the 1990s is an attempt by the Federal Reserve System of the U.S. to use its control over short-term interest rates (most notably the discount rate), reserve requirements, and open market operations to influence (either cooling or heating up) the national economy. The ultimate goal of the Federal Reserve System and other branches of our government, in general, is to imbue a stable financial environment coupled with sustainable moderate economic growth, price level stability, and full employment through a combination of appropriate monetary (availability of credit, level of interest rates, and supply of money) and fiscal (expenditure and tax) policies. Appropriate state fiscal policy plays a tenable part in state economic performance and prosperity through the aggregate demand of goods and services.

Economic restructuring, a basic theme repeated throughout

economic history, is one of the factors behind Texas' economic revival of the 1990s. With years of economic diversity and restructuring as well as a healthy national economy, Texas' economy is robust and vital. As with the national economy, all areas and groups of workers do not share equally in the prosperity; however, there has been a general improvement in economic conditions for most of Texas. The economic future of Texas is, not surprisingly, tied to the health of the national economy and national monetary and fiscal policy, as well as to the economic vitality of Mexico, the continued growth of the technology sector, economic diversity, productivity, net migration, and state governmental fiscal and economic policies. As with the petrochemical industry years ago and the technology sector today, no one industry or sector is a panacea for economic growth and well-being. However, with prudent economic policies and judicious foresight, especially targeted towards long-run productivity performance, Texas can very well continue in its resurgent economic performance and leadership role for years to come.



### Texas Nonagricultural Wage and Salary Employment Seasonally Adjusted<sup>+</sup>

INDUSTRY TITLE	Nov. 1997*	Oct. 1997	Nov. 1996	Oct. '97 to Nov. '97		Nov. '96 to Nov. '97	
				Absolute Change	Percent Change	Absolute Change	Percent Change
<b>TOTAL NONAG. W&amp;S EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>8,560,200</b>	<b>8,523,900</b>	<b>8,335,200</b>	<b>36,300</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>225,000</b>	<b>2.70</b>
<b>GOODS PRODUCING</b>	<b>1,705,100</b>	<b>1,698,200</b>	<b>1,662,700</b>	<b>6,900</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>42,400</b>	<b>2.55</b>
Mining	163,900	163,600	157,700	300	0.18	6,200	3.93
Construction	462,800	460,200	444,500	2,600	0.56	18,300	4.12
Manufacturing	1,078,400	1,074,400	1,060,500	4,000	0.37	17,900	1.69
Durable Goods	634,500	631,100	621,300	3,400	0.54	13,200	2.12
Nondurable Goods	443,900	443,300	439,200	600	0.14	4,700	1.07
<b>SERVICE PRODUCING</b>	<b>6,855,100</b>	<b>6,825,700</b>	<b>6,672,500</b>	<b>29,400</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>182,600</b>	<b>2.74</b>
Transportation, Comm., Utilities	504,700	503,000	490,500	1,700	0.34	14,200	2.90
Trade	2,063,400	2,051,600	2,009,500	11,800	0.58	53,900	2.68
Wholesale Trade	491,600	491,100	480,800	500	0.10	10,800	2.25
Retail Trade	1,571,800	1,560,500	1,528,700	11,300	0.72	43,100	2.82
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	458,200	456,900	447,500	1,300	0.28	10,700	2.39
Services	2,350,800	2,338,900	2,261,500	11,900	0.51	89,300	3.95
Government	1,478,000	1,475,300	1,463,500	2,700	0.18	14,500	0.99

Note: The number of nonagricultural jobs in Texas is without reference to place of residence of workers.

\*Estimates for the current month are preliminary. All estimates are subject to revision.

<sup>+</sup>All elements of seasonality are factored out to achieve an estimate which reflects the basic underlying trend.

### TEXAS AND U.S. CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE ESTIMATES

TEXAS*					UNITED STATES**			
Actual	CLF	Employment	Unemp.	Rate	CLF	Employment	Unemp.	Rate
Nov. '97	10,013,600	9,523,400	490,200	4.9	136,913,000	130,999,000	5,914,000	4.3
Oct. '97	10,006,800	9,514,500	492,300	4.9	136,666,000	130,671,000	5,995,000	4.4
Nov. '96	9,846,300	9,322,100	524,200	5.3	134,973,000	128,157,000	6,816,000	5.0
Seas. Adjusted	CLF	Employment	Unemp.	Rate	CLF	Employment	Unemp.	Rate
Nov. '97	9,978,300	9,476,000	502,300	5.0	136,814,000	130,565,000	6,249,000	4.6
Oct. '97	9,995,200	9,457,800	537,400	5.4	136,361,000	129,894,000	6,467,000	4.7
Nov. '96	9,804,000	9,274,600	529,400	5.4	134,831,000	127,644,000	7,187,000	5.3

Note: Only the actual series estimates for Texas and the U.S. are comparable to sub-state estimates. Current month estimates for Texas are preliminary. All estimates are subject to revision. In seasonally adjusted estimates all elements of seasonality are factored out to achieve an estimate which reflects the basic underlying trend.

\*Source - Labor Market Information Department, Texas Workforce Commission (model-based methodology)

\*\*Source - Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor (Current Population Survey)

Highlights of Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Although the Texas actual series unemployment rate remained unchanged at 4.9% from October to November, the rate is still four tenths below last year's rate of 5.3%. A robust economy coupled with the holiday season are largely responsible for the state rate remaining unchanged. The statewide jobless rate for November has not been this low since the 4.2% level of 1979. In addition, the number of insured unemployed without earnings in Texas fell from 87,619 in October to 87,250 in November. This level is still below the year-ago claimant count of 92,169.

- ◆ For most of this year, the Construction industry has experienced declines in the number of claims for benefits. In November, however, the industry saw a 9.1% increase due primarily to project completions. The Mining and Services sectors also experienced an increase in claims. The industry having the largest decrease from October was Manufacturing, which fell 15.6% from October due to the return of employees from temporary factory shutdowns. Industry sectors which also experienced a decline in claims were: Government; Trade; Transportation, Communications, and Public Utilities (TCPU); Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate (FIRE); and Agriculture. Claims filed in Manufacturing, TCPU, and Trade are at their lowest points since the beginning of the year.
- ◆ Of the state's 27 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), 22 had unemployment rates which either decreased or remained unchanged over the year, while five MSAs saw an increase in their unemployment rate. Of the 254 Texas counties, 167 had unemployment rates that were either the same or lower than the previous year while 87 had rates that increased.
- ◆ The Bryan-College Station MSA had the state's lowest unemployment rate at 1.8% and the McAllen-Edinburg-Mission MSA had the highest rate at 17.7%. Borden County had the lowest county rate at 0.7% and Presidio County had the highest rate at 27.6%.

Texas Metropolitan Statistical Areas Ranked by Unemployment Rate November 1997

1	Bryan-College Station	1.8
2	Austin-San Marcos	2.9
3	San Angelo	3.1
4	Amarillo	3.2
5	Fort Worth-Arlington	3.3
6(tie)	Dallas	3.4
	Lubbock	3.4
8	Abilene	3.5
9(tie)	San Antonio	3.8
	Sherman-Denison	3.8
11	Victoria	4.0
12	Waco	4.2
13(tie)	Odessa-Midland	4.3
	Wichita Falls	4.3
15	Houston	4.4
16	Killeen-Temple	4.8
17	Tyler	6.0
18(tie)	Brazoria	6.4
	Corpus Christi	6.4
20(tie)	Galveston-Texas City	7.1
	Longview-Marshall	7.1
22	Texarkana	7.3
23	Beaumont-Port Arthur	7.6
24	Laredo	9.1
25	El Paso	10.0
26	Brownsville-Harlingen	12.2
27	McAllen-Edinburg-Mission	17.7

Civilian Labor Force Estimates for Texas Metropolitan Statistical Areas (In Thousands)

	November 1997*				October 1997**				November 1996			
	C.L.F.	Emp.	Unemp.	Rate	C.L.F.	Emp.	Unemp.	Rate	C.L.F.	Emp.	Unemp.	Rate
State of Texas	10,013.6	9,523.4	490.2	4.9	10,006.8	9,514.5	492.3	4.9	9,846.3	9,322.1	524.2	5.3
Abilene	61.0	58.9	2.1	3.5	61.1	59.0	2.1	3.4	61.0	58.5	2.5	4.1
Amarillo	115.7	112.0	3.7	3.2	115.7	111.9	3.8	3.3	114.1	109.5	4.6	4.0
Austin-San Marcos	648.5	629.7	18.8	2.9	647.6	628.6	19.0	2.9	644.4	623.5	20.9	3.2
Beaumont-Port Arthur	181.6	167.9	13.7	7.6	181.0	167.3	13.7	7.6	180.8	165.7	15.1	8.4
Brazoria	107.8	100.9	6.9	6.4	107.8	100.9	6.9	6.4	107.2	100.1	7.1	6.6
Brownsville-Harlingen	128.7	112.9	15.8	12.2	128.2	113.2	15.0	11.7	124.4	109.7	14.7	11.8
Bryan-College Station	72.6	71.3	1.3	1.8	72.6	71.3	1.3	1.8	72.0	70.4	1.6	2.2
Corpus Christi	180.4	168.9	11.5	6.4	180.9	168.9	12.0	6.6	181.6	166.4	15.2	8.4
Dallas	1,842.9	1,779.9	63.0	3.4	1,839.7	1,775.4	64.3	3.5	1,786.9	1,720.6	66.3	3.7
El Paso	291.4	262.2	29.2	10.0	295.4	262.5	32.9	11.1	292.5	258.9	33.6	11.5
Fort Worth-Arlington	869.1	840.8	28.3	3.3	869.0	840.6	28.4	3.3	846.2	816.0	30.2	3.6
Galveston-Texas City	127.7	118.6	9.1	7.1	128.1	118.8	9.3	7.2	126.6	116.0	10.6	8.3
Houston	2,067.1	1,975.3	91.8	4.4	2,065.7	1,972.0	93.7	4.5	2,035.0	1,934.2	100.8	5.0
Killeen-Temple	116.5	110.9	5.6	4.8	116.7	111.0	5.7	4.9	113.5	108.2	5.3	4.7
Laredo	71.3	64.8	6.5	9.1	71.0	64.7	6.3	8.9	69.3	61.4	7.9	11.4
Longview-Marshall	103.2	95.9	7.3	7.1	103.3	96.0	7.3	7.0	103.7	96.1	7.6	7.3
Lubbock	126.5	122.2	4.3	3.4	126.4	122.1	4.3	3.4	124.0	120.0	4.0	3.3
McAllen-Edinburg-Mission	199.1	163.9	35.2	17.7	191.3	160.2	31.1	16.2	192.9	156.7	36.2	18.8
Odessa-Midland	121.1	115.8	5.3	4.3	121.3	115.9	5.4	4.5	120.8	114.7	6.1	5.0
San Angelo	50.7	49.1	1.6	3.1	50.7	49.1	1.6	3.1	51.1	49.5	1.6	3.1
San Antonio	752.3	723.5	28.8	3.8	752.0	723.1	28.9	3.8	736.0	706.9	29.1	4.0
Sherman-Denison	49.8	47.9	1.9	3.8	50.0	48.0	2.0	3.9	50.0	47.9	2.1	4.2
Texarkana	57.2	53.0	4.2	7.3	56.7	53.0	3.7	6.5	57.8	53.6	4.2	7.3
Tyler	89.2	83.9	5.3	6.0	90.4	82.4	8.0	8.8	87.8	82.5	5.3	6.0
Victoria	42.9	41.2	1.7	4.0	43.1	41.3	1.8	4.1	42.2	40.2	2.0	4.8
Waco	102.6	98.3	4.3	4.2	103.2	98.8	4.4	4.3	101.1	97.0	4.1	4.0
Wichita Falls	65.9	63.1	2.8	4.3	65.7	63.1	2.6	4.0	66.0	63.3	2.7	4.1

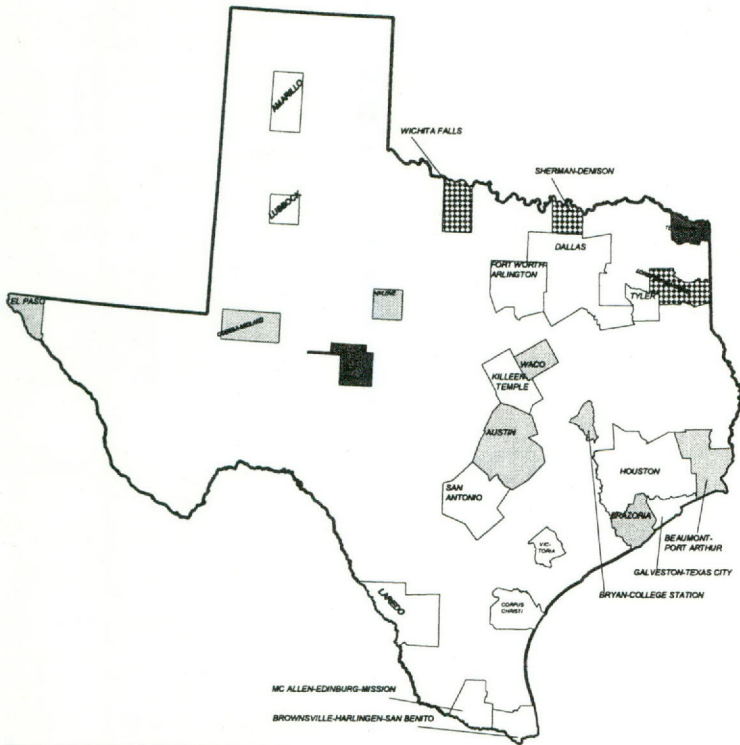
\*Estimates for the current month are preliminary. All estimates are subject to revision. Estimates reflect actual (not seasonally adjusted) data. Civilian Labor Force (C.L.F.) includes wage and salary workers, self-employed, unpaid family, domestics in private households, agricultural workers, workers involved in labor disputes and the unemployed, all by place of residence. Percent Unemployed is based upon unrounded Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment numbers. A discrepancy can occur when rounded numbers are used to calculate the Unemployment Rate. Estimates of TWC are in cooperation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.







**Percent Change in Nonagricultural W&S Employment  
by MSA from November 1996 to November 1997**



Over-the-Year Percent Change	
□	2.7% and over (14)
■	1.7% to 2.6% (8)
▨	0.0% to 1.6% (3)
■	negative change (2)

TLMR Editor: Clayton Griffis. Also contributing to this publication were: Bob Davis, Mark Dermit, Jorge Garcia, Ryan Grametbauer, Chris Jensen, David Jesus, John Kruse, Brandon Smith, Rachel Tello-Sanchez, Ian Twohig, Robert Wallis, and Betty Whalen.

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