

Public Employment in WNY

Data and Analysis from the Current Employment Survey and
Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Table 1

Public Sector Employment in Metro Buffalo, 1990-2005					
Metro Buffalo	All Governments	Federal	State	Local non-education	Local Education
Employees					
1990	89,600	10,900	22,900	26,200	29,700
2000	91,000	10,800	20,900	25,600	33,600
2005*	92,000	10,400	22,300	26,000	33,200
% Change, 1990-2000	1.6%	-0.9%	-8.7%	-2.3%	13.1%
% Change, 2000-2005	1.1%	-3.7%	6.7%	1.6%	-1.2%
% of Non-farm Employment (2005)	16.8%	1.9%	4.1%	4.8%	6.1%
% of Public Sector (2005)	NA	11.3%	24.2%	28.3%	36.1%
Average Wage (2005)	\$41,081	\$52,726	\$43,514	\$38,170	

Sources: Current Employment Survey (employment data); Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (wage data)

*Tribal casino employment subtracted from 2005 local government total (est. 2300 jobs) and converted to private sector jobs

Between 2000 and 2005, public sector employment in the two counties of metro Buffalo (Erie and Niagara) increased by 1,000—or 1.1%—from 91,000 to 92,000 jobs (see table 1). The sector, which represented 16.8% of total non-farm employment in 2005, was dominated by local government entities—particularly school districts, which employed 36.1% of all public sector workers.

This analysis includes an adjustment for tribal casino jobs. Until 2001-2002, tribal employment was classified by the federal government as private sector. Since then, tribal jobs—including fast-growing casino employment—have been classified as ‘local government’ employment. To make 2005 figures more comparable to 2000 figures, the estimated job total at Seneca Niagara Casino in 2005 (approximately 2,300 jobs) was subtracted from local government and placed in the private sector (though all other forms of tribal employment remain in local government). If the casino jobs had been retained as ‘local government,’ the public sector would have grown by almost 10% over the five-year period.

Table 2

Government Employment as a Percentage of Total Non-farm Employment, in Select New York and Other Metro Areas, 2005					
Metro Area	All Government	Federal	State	Local non-education	Local education
Albany	24.1%	1.5%	12.0%	4.6%	6.0%
Binghamton	21.7%	0.9%	6.9%	5.5%	8.6%
Utica	21.3%	1.7%	5.6%	5.2%	8.9%
Syracuse	17.9%	1.4%	4.3%	4.8%	7.4%
Buffalo	16.8%	1.9%	4.1%	4.8%	6.1%
Rochester	15.8%	0.9%	2.6%	4.6%	7.7%
New York City	15.7%	1.5%	1.6%	7.2%	5.4%
Seattle	15.4%	2.1%	4.3%	4.8%	4.2%
Portland, OR	14.1%	1.9%	2.2%	4.4%	5.6%
Cleveland	13.1%	1.7%	0.8%	5.5%	5.1%
Chicago	12.7%	1.4%	1.4%	4.5%	5.5%
Philadelphia	11.6%	2.4%	1.2%	3.5%	4.6%
Detroit	11.4%	1.4%	1.3%	3.4%	5.3%
Pittsburgh	11.1%	1.7%	1.4%	3.2%	4.9%
New York State	17.3%	1.5%	3.1%	6.9%	5.9%
United States	16.2%	2.0%	3.8%	4.5%	5.9%

Source: Current Employment Survey

*Figures adjusted by removing tribal casino jobs from local government classification (Buffalo, 2,300 jobs; Utica, 4,700; New York State, 8,300; United States, 236,000)

As data in table 2 indicate via comparison with other metropolitan areas, metros in New York State (in yellow) had a heavier reliance on public sector employment in 2005, ranging from 15.7% of total employment in New York City to 24.1% in Albany (not unusual for a state capital). In upstate metros (except Albany), local schools formed the largest share of public jobs, while local non-education jobs—numbering nearly 700,000—dominated in New York City (see details in table 3).

Metro Buffalo, though having a proportionally larger public sector than Rochester or New York City, had a smaller public sector, proportionally, than many smaller upstate metros. Overall, metro Buffalo had a smaller public sector than the state as a whole (16.8% vs. 17.3%), and a slightly larger public sector than the nation as a whole (16.8% vs. 16.2%). The proportion of public sector jobs in the U.S. as a whole—urban and rural areas together—is larger than in many individual metros due to heavier concentrations of public employees in small metro and rural areas, where they provide a fixed menu of services to smaller and more dispersed populations.

Table 3

Public Employment in New York Metropolitan Areas							
	Albany	Binghamton	Buffalo	Rochester	Syracuse	Utica	NYC
All Governments							
1990	111,300	21,200	89,600	68,600	53,700	31,800	876,600
2000	107,300	23,000	91,000	78,000	56,400	28,700	849,100
2005	107,600	24,400	92,000	81,200	57,400	28,300	847,900
% Change, 1990-2000	-3.6%	8.5%	1.6%	13.7%	5.0%	-9.7%	-3.1%
% Change, 2000-2005	0.3%	6.1%	1.1%	4.1%	1.8%	-1.4%	-0.1%
% of Non-farm Employment (2005)	24.1%	21.7%	16.8%	15.8%	17.9%	21.3%	15.7%
%pub. jobs federal	6.4%	4.1%	11.3%	5.8%	7.7%	7.8%	9.7%
%pub. jobs state	49.6%	31.6%	24.2%	16.5%	24.2%	26.1%	10.3%
%pub. jobs local (minus edu)	19.0%	25.4%	28.3%	28.9%	27.0%	24.4%	45.8%
%pub. jobs local edu	25.0%	39.3%	36.1%	48.8%	41.1%	41.7%	34.2%
Average Wage (2005)	\$43,959	\$33,468	\$41,081	\$39,277	\$37,154	\$37,298	\$51,822
Federal							
1990	10,700	1,100	10,900	5,400	4,600	4,900	108,100
2000	8,200	1,100	10,800	5,300	5,100	2,600	96,200
2005	6,900	1,000	10,400	4,700	4,400	2,200	82,400
% Change, 1990-2000	-23.4%	0.0%	-0.9%	-1.9%	10.9%	-46.9%	-11.0%
% Change, 2000-2005	-15.9%	-9.1%	-3.7%	-11.3%	-13.7%	-15.4%	-14.3%
% of Non-farm Employment (2005)	1.5%	0.9%	1.9%	0.9%	1.4%	1.7%	1.5%
Average Wage (2005)	\$54,430	\$50,836	\$52,726	\$50,230	\$51,784	\$54,758	\$60,336
State							
1990	61,000	6,500	22,900	13,200	13,000	8,900	103,500
2000	54,400	6,900	20,900	13,200	13,800	7,700	89,400
2005	53,400	7,700	22,300	13,400	13,900	7,400	87,700
% Change, 1990-2000	-10.8%	6.2%	-8.7%	0.0%	6.2%	-13.5%	-13.6%
% Change, 2000-2005	-1.8%	11.6%	6.7%	1.5%	0.7%	-3.9%	-1.9%
% of Non-farm Employment (2005)	12.0%	6.9%	4.1%	2.6%	4.3%	5.6%	1.6%
Average Wage (2005)	\$50,475	\$36,758	\$43,514	\$49,756	\$36,520	\$56,525	\$49,602
Local							
1990	39,600	13,600	55,900	50,000	36,100	18,000	664,800
2000	44,700	15,000	59,200	59,600	37,500	18,400	663,600
2005	47,300	15,800	59,200	63,100	39,100	18,700	678,500
1990 (minus local edu)	17,900	5,500	26,200	19,100	15,800	7,300	414,100
2000 (minus local edu)	18,200	5,900	25,600	20,400	14,500	7,000	384,600
2005 (minus local edu)	20,400	6,200	26,000	23,500	15,500	6,900	388,200
% Change, 1990-2000	1.7%	7.3%	-2.3%	6.8%	-8.2%	-4.1%	-7.1%
% Change, 2000-2005	12.1%	5.1%	1.6%	15.2%	6.9%	-1.4%	0.9%
% of Non-farm Employment (2005)	4.6%	5.5%	4.8%	4.6%	4.8%	5.2%	7.2%
Average Wage (2005)—includes local ed.	\$35,049	\$30,931	\$38,170	\$36,472	\$35,588	\$29,125	\$50,939
Local Education							
1990	21,700	8,100	29,700	30,900	20,300	10,700	250,700
2000	26,500	9,100	33,600	39,200	23,000	11,400	279,000
2005	26,900	9,600	33,200	39,600	23,600	11,800	290,300
% Change, 1990-2000	22.1%	12.3%	13.1%	26.9%	13.3%	6.5%	11.3%
% Change, 2000-2005	1.5%	5.5%	-1.2%	1.0%	2.6%	3.5%	4.1%
% of Non-farm Employment (2005)	6.0%	8.6%	6.1%	7.7%	7.4%	8.9%	5.4%

Sources: Current Employment Survey (employment data); Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (wage data); *Employment data is for New York City proper; wage data includes NYS suburbs of NYC; *Tribal casino employment subtracted from 2005 local government totals for Buffalo (2,300 jobs) and Utica (4,700 jobs)

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Table 4

Public Employment in Urban and Rural Counties of WNY, by Level of Government (2005)										
	URBAN			RURAL						
	Urban Total	Eric	Niagara	Rural Total	Allegany	Cattaraugus	Chautauqua	Genesee	Orleans	Wyoming
All Governments										
Employment	89,620	74,714	14,906	38,396	4,149	9,876	9,861	5,879	4,238	4,393
Average Wage	\$41,081	\$41,606	\$38,451	\$35,767	\$32,111	\$32,672	\$34,470	\$34,862	\$46,379	\$40,060
Employees/1,000 residents	78.1	80.3	68.7	92.6	82.0	119.7	72.3	99.2	97.7	102.9
Federal										
Employment	10,401	9,074	1,327	1,640	124	238	387	692	92	107
Average Wage	\$52,726	\$52,449	\$54,617	\$41,046	\$35,282	\$41,038	\$44,868	\$40,888	\$37,526	\$37,971
Employees/1,000 residents	9.1	9.7	6.1	4.0	2.5	2.9	2.8	11.7	2.1	2.5
State										
Employment	20,490	19,455	1,035	7,420	741	1,446	1,595	666	1,211	1,761
Average Wage	\$43,514	\$42,865	\$55,706	\$46,983	\$35,051	\$39,178	\$33,146	\$58,300	\$76,323	\$46,487
Employees/1,000 residents	17.9	20.9	4.8	17.9	14.6	17.5	11.7	11.2	27.9	41.2
Local										
Employment	58,729	46,185	12,544	29,336	3,284	8,192	7,879	4,521	2,935	2,525
Average Wage	\$38,170	\$39,008	\$35,085	\$32,060	\$31,554	\$31,280	\$34,227	\$30,487	\$34,302	\$28,692
Employees/1,000 residents	51.2	49.6	57.8	70.7	64.9	99.3	57.8	76.3	67.6	59.1

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (numbers subject to revision)

The relatively greater reliance of rural areas on public employment pertains to the Buffalo Niagara region. In Western New York as a whole, rural areas are more dependent on public sector employment than urban areas, according to an analysis of the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (table 4). In the region's more urban counties (Erie and Niagara), there were 78.1 public employees per thousand residents in 2005, compared to an average of 92.6 in the six largely rural counties.

The larger public sector in rural areas comes primarily from local governments. Although federal jobs were more prevalent in urban counties and state jobs were about even in both areas, local governments in rural counties had an average of 70.7 employees per thousand residents, compared to 51.2 in urban counties. That said, state employment—in the form of colleges and prisons—was especially important in some rural counties, especially Orleans and Wyoming (home to multiple state prisons apiece), which had the highest reliance on state employment of any WNY counties.