

*In the Winter 2005 issue of **Monitoring Wisconsin**, the Institute for Survey and Policy Research (ISPR) of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) presents a summary of work in progress by Dr. Nik Heynen of the UW-Milwaukee, Department of Geography. The views expressed in this article are the author's and not necessarily those of ISPR. Any questions should be directed to: nheynen@uwm.edu*

The Promise of Universal Free Breakfast for Hungry Children in Milwaukee

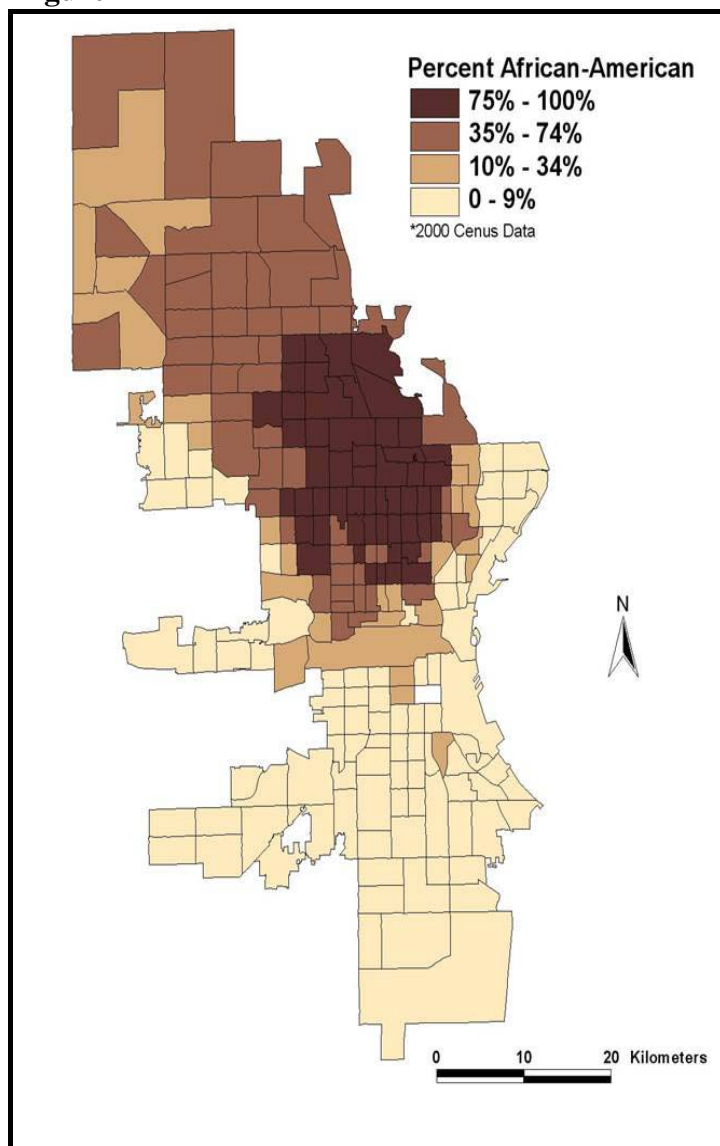
By Nik Heynen

In 1971, three young African-American men went to Milwaukee's Cross Lutheran Church at 1821 N. 16th St. to talk to Rev. Joseph Ellwanger about implementing the Black Panther Party's *Free Breakfast for Children Program* in the basement of his church. Rev. Ellwanger wanted church council approval before agreeing. The church council voted against the measure because they did not feel comfortable with guns in their church near children. However, whether Milwaukee Panthers generally carried guns is debated. Since neither the church nor the parishioners had recognized that hunger among Milwaukee's inner city youth as an issue, Rev. Ellwanger boldly took on the issue himself. He, church parishioners, and other concerned citizens began Milwaukee's Citizens for Central City School Breakfast Program (CCCSBP) that same year. The CCCSBP eventually evolved into the Milwaukee School Breakfast Coalition, which eventually evolved into what is today Milwaukee's Hunger Task Force (HTF). Rev. Ellwanger attributes the motivation for creating the CCCSBP to those three Panthers and their vision of ending inner city childhood hunger through grassroots action. Ultimately, the efforts of Rev. Ellwanger and the people that worked with him in these endeavors, and the efforts of the Milwaukee Branch of the Black Panther Party, led to the creation of Milwaukee's most important food bank/institutional advocate for the hungry.

Feeding children before school has a host of important ramifications. Malnutrition impairs the body's ability to heal and decreases immune functions, which can lead to a vicious infection-malnutrition cycle. Hungry children,

even when not acutely ill, become apathetic or irritable and miss critical opportunities for learning. The connection between learning and public education makes this matter central to the other issues related to Milwaukee Public Schools. There is an increasingly large body of research that suggests students who eat school breakfast at the start of the school day demonstrate improved scores in math and reading. Also, children who eat school breakfasts tend to perform better on standardized tests than those children who skip breakfast. Schools that serve free breakfast in the classroom for all students also report decreases in school tardiness, discipline and psycho-

Figure 1



(continued on page 2).

logical problems, and visits to school nurses. Thus, research has shown that schools have much to gain from feeding hungry children before school.

Fast forward to 2005. Despite the vision of the Black Panther Party and the efforts of Rev. Ellwanger and his parishioners, the devastating reality of childhood hunger in Milwaukee is still a major issue. As Figures 1, 2 and 3 illustrate, there is a strong spatial relationship within Milwaukee between race, income and the concentration of schools given the distribution of the population within the city. Unlike the early 1970s when there were no major government programs geared toward feeding hungry children, there are now programs that can be used to respond to the needs of the community that are not being taken full advantage of.

For various reasons, the existing meal programs offered within Milwaukee Public Schools are drastically underutilized. According to data collected recently by Milwaukee's HTF, within the Milwaukee Public School System only 16%

Figure 2

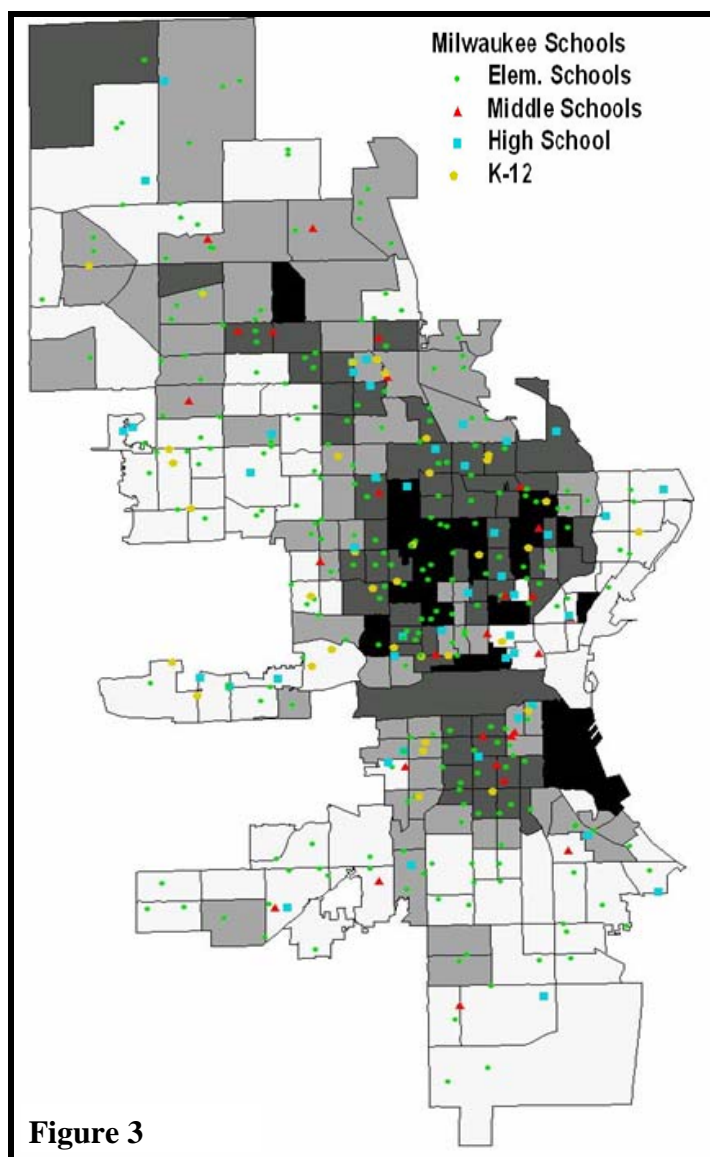
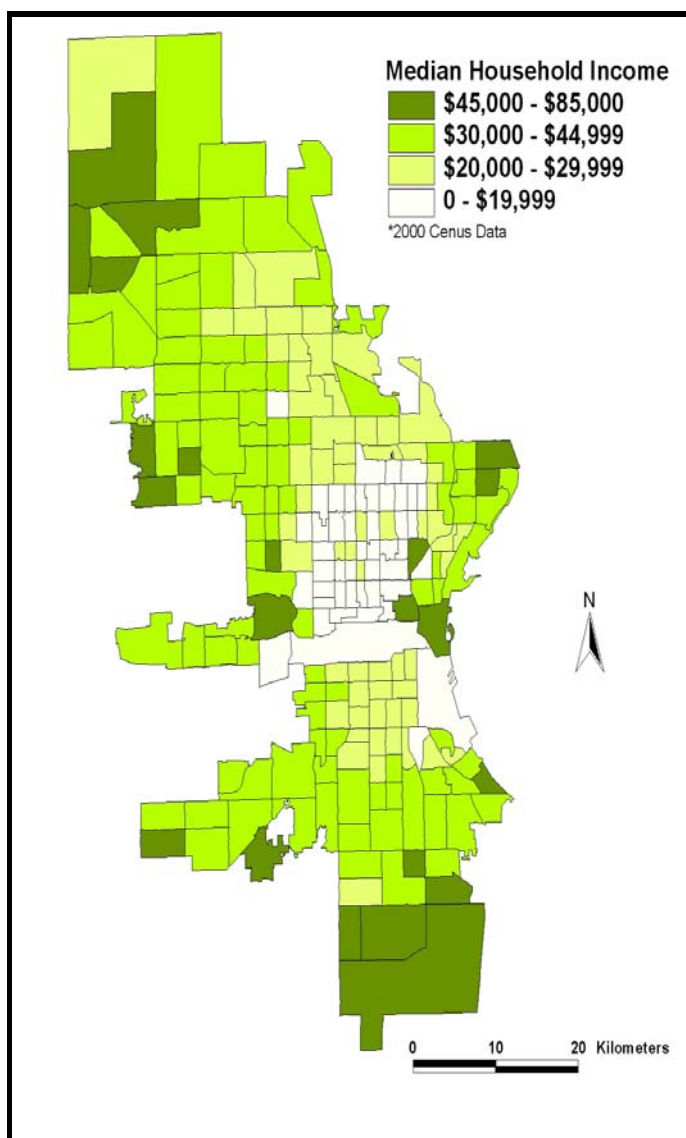


Figure 3

of students eat breakfast through school breakfast programs. At the same time, 77% of all public school students in Milwaukee are eligible for free, or reduced cost breakfasts. In 2002, Milwaukee's HTF completed a statewide study entitled *The State of Breakfast in Wisconsin*. This study suggests that the main reasons for low participation in school breakfast programs includes busing, breakfast food choices and the stigma involved with eating school breakfast. Furthermore, according to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), Wisconsin ranks last in the country for low-income student participation in school breakfast programs. Only 23% of low-income Wisconsin children eat school breakfast, compared to 43% nationwide.

The most accessible option, and one most likely to succeed for cities like Milwaukee with such high poverty rates, is Provision 2, an option within the US Federal School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program and is operated through the United States Department of Agriculture. Central to the potential success of Provision 2 is that schools that use it offer

universal free school breakfasts. This means schools offer breakfast at no charge to all students regardless of income. One of the main purposes of Provision 2 is to reduce paperwork and reduce the logistical complexity of operating school meal programs. Another benefit for some school breakfast programs under Provision 2 is that they are able to provide breakfast in the classroom in the morning, as opposed to in a cafeteria, which also increases participation. An initial impediment for some schools considering Provision 2 is that they must pay the difference between the cost of providing meals for free and the federal reimbursement. However, the significant administrative savings that result from Provision 2 help offset this cost differential. Research has shown Provision 2 counteracts the issues the HTF found as contributing to low meal program utilization, especially the stigma issue since all children can now eat for free.

Milwaukee's HTF, in coordination with the HTF's grassroots anti-hunger group, *Voices Against Hunger* (VAH), put forth a proposal in May 2005 to the Milwaukee Public Schools' Board that called for the implementation of the Universal Free Breakfast and Lunch Program through Provision 2 in 26 of Milwaukee's Neighborhood schools for the 2005-2006 school year. This was suggested as the first step toward eventually

implementing the program in all MPS schools. The proposal was based on in-depth conversations with MPS administrators as well as research on the success of the implementation of Provision 2 in other cities including Cleveland, Indianapolis and St. Paul. For reasons that were not, and have not yet been made clear by the School Board, MPS only conceded to implement Provision 2 in 6, of their 221 schools.

Schools with high percentages of students eligible for free or reduced price meals are the most probable to be successful Provision 2. School districts that have implemented Provision 2 have determined that they can do so without losing money in schools with as few as 60% to 75% of students eligible for free or reduced price school meals. Seventy-seven percent of children in Milwaukee are eligible. Universal Free Breakfast and Lunch Program through Provision 2 could help alleviate suffering and facilitate learning within MPS schools. The Black Panther Party, Rev. Ellwanger and many others have fought to provide these kinds of services in the community, let us try to figure out how to take advantage of them. For more information see: Hunger Task Force: <http://www.hungertaskforce.org/> and Food Research and Action Center: <http://www.frac.org/> ■

Table 3
Wisconsin Employment Data (in Thousands)

	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005.1	2005.2	2005.3
Labor Force	2,598.9	2,881.2	2,992.3	3,032.1	3,037.9	3,068.7	3,032.8	3,066.7	3,048.8	3,035.6
Total Employment	2,486.1	2,773.6	2,891.2	2,898.9	2,877.0	2,896.7	2,891.0	2,920.2	2,907.8	2,894.1
Total Nonfarm	2,291.5	2,558.6	2,833.8	2,813.9	2,782.4	2,775.3	2,801.4	2,762.0	2,840.4	2,856.2
Natural Resources and Mining	3.9	4.2	4.0	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.0	3.7	3.9
Construction	87.9	101.7	124.8	125.4	124.1	124.1	124.6	113.6	134.8	141.1
Manufacturing	523.0	566.6	594.1	560.3	528.3	504.0	546.7	498.5	502.4	505.9
Trade, Trans. & Utilities	458.7	502.4	552.9	547.7	536.7	536.3	543.4	529.6	538.9	541.7
Information	44.4	45.2	53.6	53.3	51.2	50.3	52.1	50.6	50.8	50.2
Financial Activities	123.9	134.3	149.1	151.8	153.8	156.9	152.9	157.0	158.3	159.1
Professional & Business Serv.	153.6	206.9	247.0	238.5	239.8	244.3	242.4	240.6	253.2	263.7
Educational & Health Services	237.4	280.4	339.6	349.6	357.2	364.6	352.8	382.6	382.3	384.2
Leisure and Hospitality	199.3	217.9	236.7	238.6	240.4	245.5	240.3	234.5	260.0	266.7
Other Services	116.6	120.3	126.3	131.3	132.2	132.7	130.6	133.6	135.9	135.8
Government	342.9	378.7	405.6	413.7	414.8	412.9	411.8	418.4	420.2	404.0

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

About ISPR:

The Institute for Survey & Policy Research (ISPR), a premier institute dedicated to high quality surveys and policy research, was established in 1968. It is a major resource for the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM), the greater Milwaukee area, and the State of Wisconsin. Its services include the following:

- **The Greater Milwaukee Survey** – semiannual cost-shared survey of public opinion in the Milwaukee metropolitan area.
- **The Wisconsin Poll** – semiannual cost-shared survey of public opinion in the State of Wisconsin.
- **Monitoring Wisconsin** – quarterly review of the Wisconsin economy. It includes an analysis of a prominent sector of the economy, forecasts by sector using the latest techniques, and reports by UWM faculty on their Wisconsin-based research.
- **Survey Research** – survey research, program evaluation, needs assessment, policy research.
- **Econometric Research** – economic impact studies, economic forecasting.
- **Data Archive**—US Census Data, ICPSR data, economic data, demographic data.

In addition, the ISPR can help meet your organization's survey needs by providing the following services:

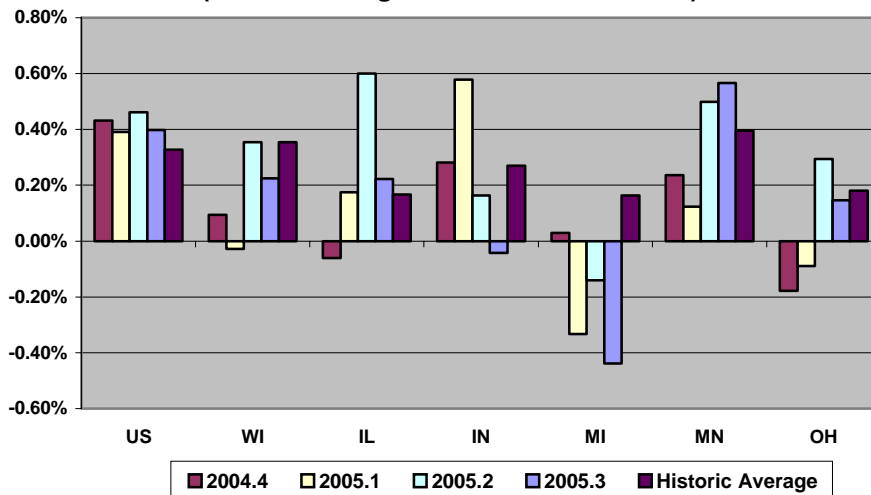
- **Proposal Assistance** – The ISPR can aid in preparing survey cost estimates and the writing of research proposals.
- **Sampling** – The ISPR can help you to choose the proper sampling frames for surveys that your organization conducts.
- **Questionnaire Design** – The ISPR can work with you to create surveys with proper question wording, question order and layout to ensure accurate data collection.
- **Survey Data Collection** – The ISPR can conduct surveys by telephone, in person, by mail, and on the Internet. All data collection is done by the ISPR's professionally-trained and supervised interviewing staff. Telephone surveys are conducted on the ISPR's state-of-the-art Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system.
- **Statistical Analysis** – If your organization has a survey that requires special statistical analysis, ISPR staff are trained in the latest computer software and statistical techniques.

For more information, please contact Professor Swarnjit S. Arora, Director of ISPR, by email at ssa2@csd.uwm.edu or at 1.414.229.5313. Visit us on the web at <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/ISPR/>.

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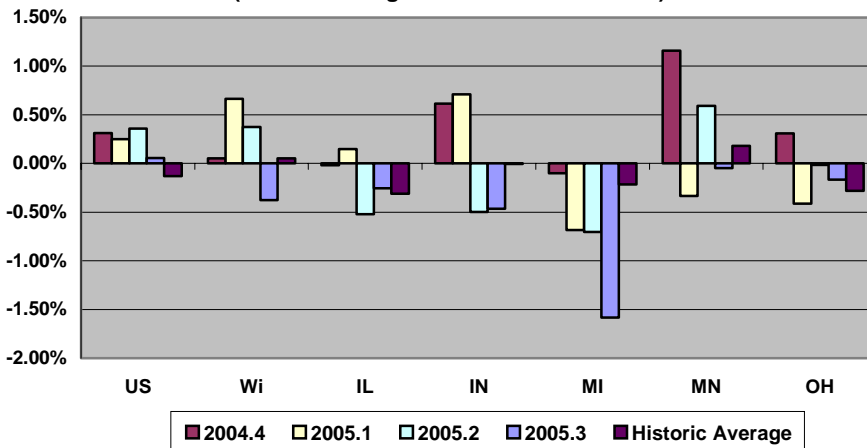
Nonfarm Employment (Percent Change from Previous Quarter)



Seasonally-Adjusted, Non-Farm Employment (Thousands)

Quarter	WI	US
2005.1	2,815.0	132,813.7
2005.2	2,825.0	133,429.3
2005.3	2,831.3	133,961.0
2005.4 (forecast)	2,839.4	134,029.0
Average (1990-present)	2,622.1	122,025.8

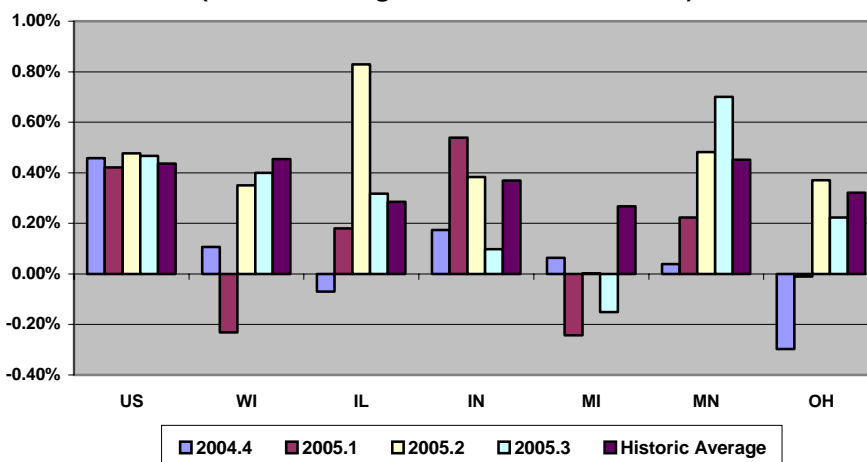
Goods-Producing Employment (Percent Change from Previous Quarter)



Seasonally-Adjusted, Goods-Producing Employment (Thousands)

Quarter	WI	US
2005.1	637.2	22,055.0
2005.2	639.6	22,134.0
2005.3	637.2	22,146.3
2005.4 (forecast)	634.9	22,145.9
Average (1990-present)	660.3	23,113.7

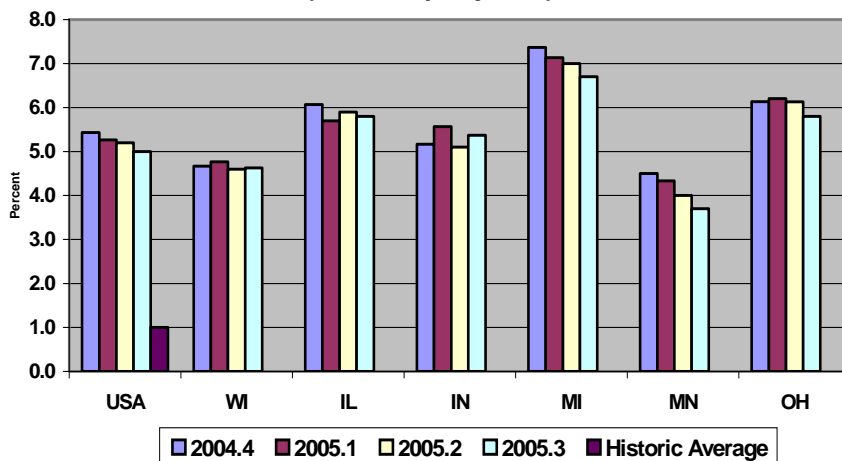
Service Providing Employment (Percent Change from Previous Quarter)



Seasonally-Adjusted, Service-Providing Employment (Thousands)

Quarter	WI	US
2,005.1	2,177.7	110,766.7
2,005.2	2,185.4	111,295.3
2,005.3	2,194.1	111,814.7
2005.4 (forecast)	2,201.8	111,932.6
Average (1990-present)	1,961.9	98,912.2

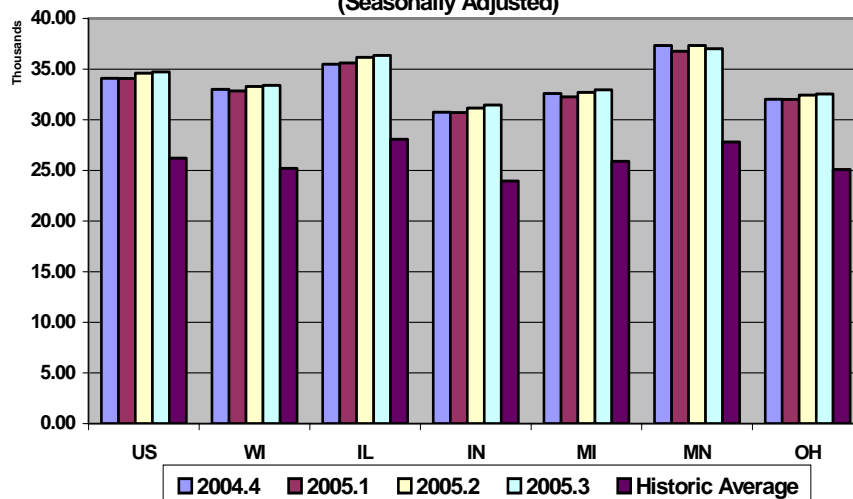
Unemployment Rate (Seasonally Adjusted)



Unemployment Rate Seasonally-Adjusted

Quarter	WI	US
2005.1	4.8	5.3
2005.2	4.6	5.2
2005.3	4.6	5.0
2005.4 (forecast)	4.6	4.9
Average (1990-present)	4.3	5.6

Personal Income Per Capita (Seasonally Adjusted)

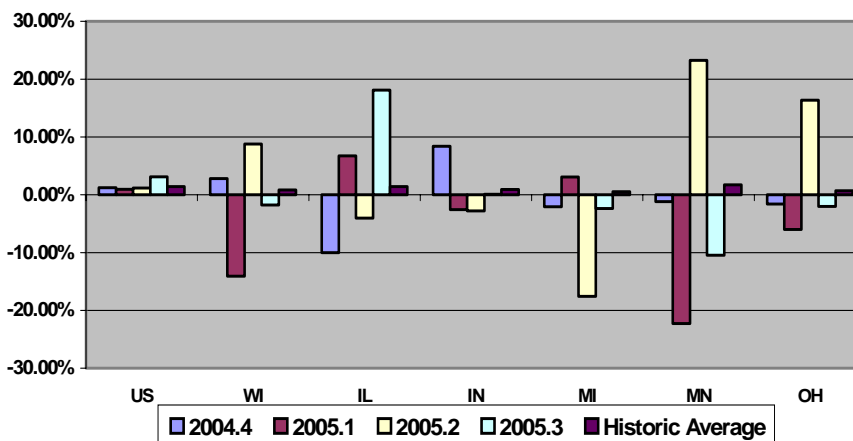


Per Capita Personal Income Seasonally-Adjusted

Quarter	WI	US
2005.1	\$32,848.7	\$34,080.6
2005.2	\$33,294.5	\$34,604.8
2005.3	\$33,394.4	\$34,722.4
2005.4 (forecast)	\$33,376.4	\$34,764.2
Average (1990-present)	\$25,200.0	\$26,205.5

Housing Units Authorized

(Seasonally Adjusted, Percent Change from Previous Quarter)



Housing Units Authorized Seasonally-Adjusted (Thousands)

Quarter	WI	US
2005.1	2,878	173,995
2005.2	3,131	176,068
2005.3	3,076	181,520
2005.4 (forecast)	3,054	139,583
Average (1990-present)	3,079	181,775