UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN UWMILWAUKEE

Monitoring Wisconsin

Quarterly Newsletter of the Institute for Survey & Policy Research, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Summer 2005

In the Summer issue of ***Monitoring Wisconsin,*** *the Institute for Survey and Policy Research (ISPR) of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) presents a summary of a report on the Wisconsin Community Benchmark Survey - a survey conducted by the Institute for Survey and Policy Research as part of its annual Wisconsin Poll. The report is written by Dr. Thomas Moore, a member the Department of Sociology and a research associate at the Institute for Survey and Policy Research. The full report can be downloaded from the ISPR web site:*

http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/ISPR

Community Involvement and Trust in Wisconsin

Thomas S. Moore

Introduction

Between January and March of 2005 the Institute for Survey and Policy Research surveyed 876 state residents, including 393 Milwaukee residents, as part of its annual Wisconsin Poll. This Wisconsin Community Benchmark Survey (WCBS) was based upon the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (SCCBS) developed by the Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America Project at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government under the direction of Robert Putnam (see http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/saguaro/). The SCCBS is part of an ongoing effort to track the changing nature and levels of social involvement in communities throughout the country. The WCBS includes many of the questions in the longer SCCBS and establishes benchmark measures of social involvement and trust for Wisconsin and for the City of Milwaukee. This newsletter summarizes the initial report on the WCBS.

Terminology, Research Issues, and Sample Design

The term social or community involvement refers, both to the social networks in which people are involved (e.g., organizational and associational memberships, friendship ties) and to the generally beneficial activities that are presumably fostered by our involvement in those networks (e.g., registering to vote, attending political meetings or rallies, charitable giving). By creating and reinforcing norms of reciprocity, involvement in social networks also creates trust. The decision to trust others depends in large part upon how much we know about them, and upon our ability to damage their reputations if they prove untrustworthy. Social networks make available a great deal of information about their members, and they insure that the reputation of any member who proves untrustworthy will suffer. Involvement in social networks supports reciprocity and trust among members and, depending upon the connectedness of the networks in a community, may give rise to a more generalized reciprocity and trust as well.

The basic assumption underlying analysis of the WCBS is that the vitality of a community, and the social integration of its members, are manifested in and can be measured by the levels of trust and the number of social connections and community activities that residents report.

One of the most important findings to emerge from previous research on civic and community involvement concerns the effects of diversity. That research, including the preliminary results of the SCCBS, reveals that the more diverse a community is the less likely residents are to trust other people, including members of their own ethnic group; to connect with other people, even informally; to participate in politics; and to make social connections across class lines. It also reveals that the effects of racial/ethnic and economic diversity are interlinked (i.e., there is an interaction). The more racially and ethnically diverse the community, the greater the class differences in social involvement and trust.

Ideally, we would assess the effects of diversity by comparing a number of different Wisconsin communities. An alternative, and less costly, strategy that governed the design of the WCBS is to use two separate random samples, one drawn from the universe of telephone exchanges within Milwaukee, and the other drawn from non-Milwaukee telephone exchanges, including the Milwaukee suburbs. This sampling design enables us to estimate the levels of trust and social involvement within the state's largest and most diverse metropolitan community, and to compare those estimates to the same measures for the non-Milwaukee residents. Weighting the two samples based upon their different selection probabilities yields estimates of social involvement and trust for all Wisconsin residents. Although not strictly comparable to the results of the WCBS, findings from the national sample of the SCCBS are also included (in Table 1) where the same questions were asked in both surveys.

Table 1: Levels of Trust and Social Involvement

A. Summary Measures of Trust

	Social Trust				Racial Trust			
	U.S.[a]	Wisconsin			U.S.[a]	Wisconsin		
		All	Milw**	Non-Milw		All	Milw**	Non-Milw
High	54%	59%	31%	63%	24%	40%	26%	42%
Low	46%	41%	69%	37%	65%	54%	67%	53%

B. Summary Measures of Social Involvement

	Civic Involvement				Friendship Ties			
	U.S.	Wisconsin			U.S.	Wisconsin		
		All	Milw*	Non-Milw		All	Milw	Non-Milw
High	NA	48%	41%	49%	NA	42%	42%	42%
Low	NA	52%	59%	51%	NA	58%	58%	58%

[a] Percent that lie above and below the mean Wisconsin index score.

* Difference between Milwaukee and other state residents is significant at .05 level.

** Difference between Milwaukee and other state residents is significant at .01 level.

(continued on page 2).

Levels of Social Involvement and Trust

Four summary measures were constructed by taking the unweighted average of the responses to questions that reliably measured similar dimensions of trust and social involvement. These dimensions were: trust of others (social trust); trust of racial/ethnic groups other than one's own (racial trust); involvement in community organizations and associations, or formal social ties (civic engagement); and the number and diversity of friendships, or informal social ties (friendships). The percentages shown in Table 1 represent the proportion of each sample that fell above (high trust/involvement) or below (low trust/involvement) the mean scores for all Wisconsin respondents on these summary measures. Thus, for example, only 31 percent of Milwaukee respondents report an overall level of social trust above the state average while the level of social trust reported by 63 percent of the non-Milwaukee sample exceeds that average.

In brief, the figures in Table 1 show that Milwaukee residents are less trusting in their dealing with others, are less trustful of members of other racial and ethnic groups, and have fewer social connections, than other Wisconsin residents. By far the greatest differences involve trust of others. Although the levels of "social trust" appear to be considerably higher in our Wisconsin sample than in the country as a whole, the levels of social trust in Milwaukee are low, compared both to the rest of the state and to national norms. Milwaukee residents are also less trusting of racial and ethnic groups other than their own.

The differences in social involvement are smaller than the differences in trust and, therefore, cannot fully account for the latter. Nonetheless, the Milwaukee residents in our survey are less involved than the other state residents in civic associations and activities, and this lower level of civic involvement may explain some of the difference in trust. The single question that asked about the frequency of visits with friends is not shown but indicates that Milwaukee residents also report fewer informal social ties to others. However, there is no difference between the two samples in the overall extent and diversity of friendship ties.

The Stratification of Social Involvement and Trust

Individuals who experience economic or social disadvantage usually report lower levels of trust, in part because they are often treated by others with less honesty and respect. But they also have less access to social networks that provide information and through which they can damage the reputations of those who do prove untrustworthy. Trusting others becomes more risky when we have few social connections to the people we encounter and to the larger community. It is expected, therefore, that trust and the number of social ties will be distributed unequally within a community. This stratification can be just as important to community life as the overall levels of trust and social involvement. We may find, for example, that 30% of the residents in two separate communities report high levels of social involvement and trust. But in one community the highly involved members are drawn exclusively from a single racial/ethnic group and from more affluent and well-educated residents, while in the other they represent diverse racial and ethnic groups and are drawn more or less proportionately from different socioeconomic strata. The latter community is likely to prove more effective at mobilizing residents and addressing community problems.

The figures in Table 2 show how social involvement and trust are distributed, or stratified, between non-Hispanic whites and racial/ethnic minorities, and between three educational and income groupings, within both the Milwaukee and the non-Milwaukee samples. Those figures represent the percentage within each income, education, or racial/ethnic category that lie above the state mean on the summary measures of trust and social involvement. The statistical significance of the differences between the categories of each of these stratifying variables is indicated by a single (.05 level) or double (.01 level) asterisk. In addition to these percentage figures, the bottom line of Table 2 shows the adjusted R^2's obtained by regressing the summary measures of trust and social involvement on dummy variables for non-Hispanic whites and for the two higher income and education categories. These R^2's, the proportion of the variation accounted for statistically by all three stratifying variables, measure the overall class and racial/ethnic stratification of social involvement and trust.

Table 2: Stratification of Trust and Social Involvement

	% High Social Trust		% High Racial Trust		% High Civic Involvement		% High Informal Social Ties	
	Milw	Non-Milw	Milw	Non-Milw	Milw	Non-Milw	Milw	Non-Milw
Income								
<$30,000	21%**	40%**	22%	34%	30%**	32%**	43%	46%
$30-$50,000	38%	56%	29%	41%	43%	51%	48%	46%
>$50,000	41%	75%	35%	48%	58%	57%	45%	39%
Education								
<H.S.	16%**	39%**	18%*	40%	32%**	22%**	37%	44%
H.S. Grad	31%	65%	30%	43%	40%	50%	45%	44%
College Grad	56%	76%	36%	51%	60%	68%	40%	37%
Race / Ethnicity								
Minority	15%**	37%**	20%**	34%	40%	36%	43%	60%*
White	48%	65%	36%	45%	43%	50%	41%	40%
Adjusted R^2	.23**	.13**	.06**	.03*	.11**	.10**	.00	.06**

* Difference between income, education, or race/ethnic categories is significant at .05 level.

** Difference between income, education, or race/ethnic categories is significant at .01 level.

In brief, the figures in Table 2 show that the class and racial/ethnic differences in trust, and in some measures of social involvement, are greater among Milwaukee residents than they are among other state residents. Again, the largest differences involve trust of others. As mentioned above, we expect less affluent and less-educated individuals, and racial and ethnic minorities, to be less trusting in their dealings with others because it is more risky for them to trust.

But the levels of social and inter-racial trust reported by distinct income and educational groups, and by racial/ethnic minorities and whites, differ to a greater extent in Milwaukee than in the rest of the state. Stated somewhat differently, the decision to trust is more contingent upon an individual's class position and racial/ethnic background in Milwaukee's urban environment than it is elsewhere in the state. The reasons why this is so are not clear. Levels of social involvement also vary between socioeconomic and racial/ethnic groups. But the class and racial/ethnic differences in social ties among Milwaukee and other state residents are similar within both samples, and cannot account for the much greater stratification of trust within the Milwaukee sample.

Implications of the Findings

These initial findings from the WCBS have both practical and research implications. On a practical note, trust enriches civic life. Communities with high levels of trust are better able to enlist the cooperation of their members in producing public goods. People are more likely to vote, to pay their taxes, and to work together to enforce community norms and thereby reduce crime and violence. Communities with higher levels of trust require less contractual and legal regulation and, as a result, spend less on lawyers and on security systems. Private businesses and governmental organizations function more efficiently, and this contributes to economic growth. Finally, the people who live in cohesive communities with high levels of trust tend to be healthier and happier. The lower levels and greater contingency of trust in Wisconsin's largest and most diverse urban community mean that residents likely experience greater friction in their daily encounters, that organizing communal activities entails greater effort and cost, and that civic organizations function less effectively.

The findings also raise issues for further research. It is widely assumed that trust, and trustworthiness, are fostered by social connections. However, the results of the WCBS indicate that the relatively low levels of trust that we find in more diverse communities such as Milwaukee cannot simply be attributed to lower levels of social integration. Milwaukee residents do report fewer social connections, and lower levels of social involvement, than other state residents. But the differences between Milwaukee and other state residents in the level and the distribution of social ties are far smaller than the differences in the level and distribution of trust. It may be that a given level of social integration produces less trust in large and diverse metropolitan communities. If so, understanding why it is so could prove important for improving civic life in our large metropolitan communities. ■

Table 3
Wisconsin Employment Data (in Thousands)

	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005.1
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
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
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
Natural Resources and Mining	3.9	4.2	4.0	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.0
Construction	87.9	101.7	124.8	125.4	124.1	124.1	124.6	113.6
Manufacturing	523.0	566.6	594.1	560.3	528.3	504.0	546.7	498.5
Trade, Trans. & Utilities	458.7	502.4	552.9	547.7	536.7	536.3	543.4	529.6
Information	44.4	45.2	53.6	53.3	51.2	50.3	52.1	50.6
Financial Activities	123.9	134.3	149.1	151.8	153.8	156.9	152.9	157.0
Professional & Business Services	153.6	206.9	247.0	238.5	239.8	244.3	242.4	240.6
Educational & Health Services	237.4	280.4	339.6	349.6	357.2	364.6	352.8	382.6
Leisure and Hospitality	199.3	217.9	236.7	238.6	240.4	245.5	240.3	234.5
Other Services	116.6	120.3	126.3	131.3	132.2	132.7	130.6	133.6
Government	342.9	378.7	405.6	413.7	414.8	412.9	411.8	418.4

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.

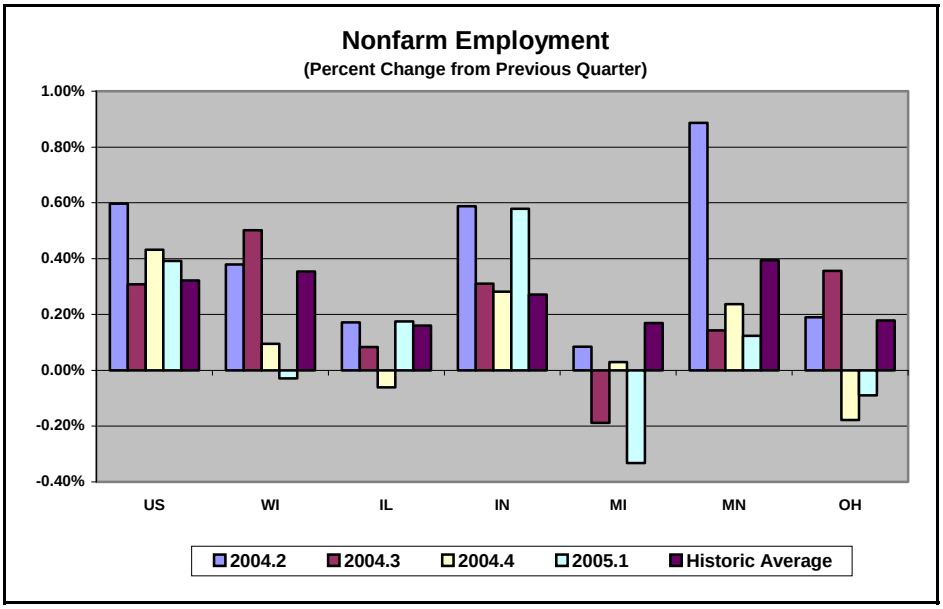
In addition, the ISPR can help meet your organization's survey needs by providing the following services:

- **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/.

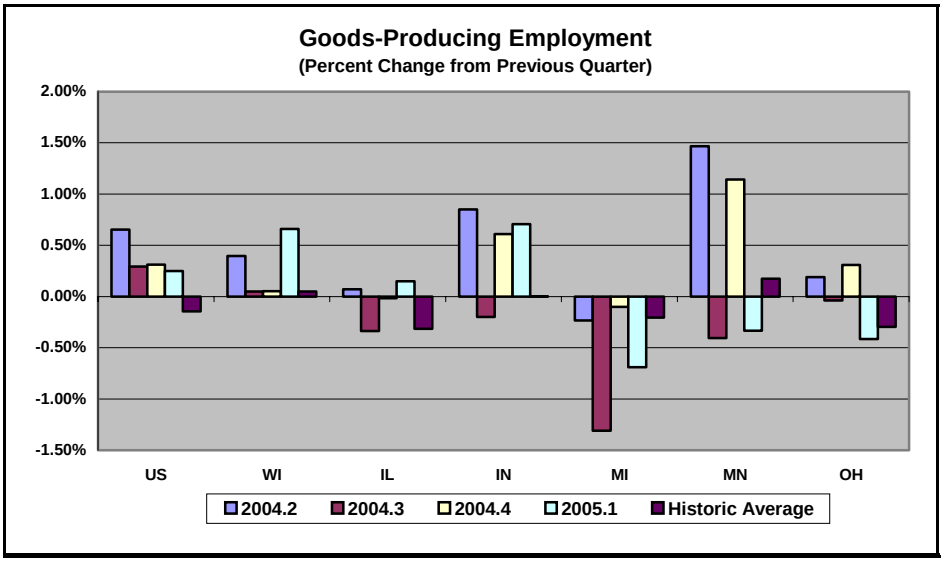
UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN
UWMILWAUKEE

Institute for Survey & Policy Research
Bolton Hall 874
PO Box 413
Milwaukee, WI
53201-0413



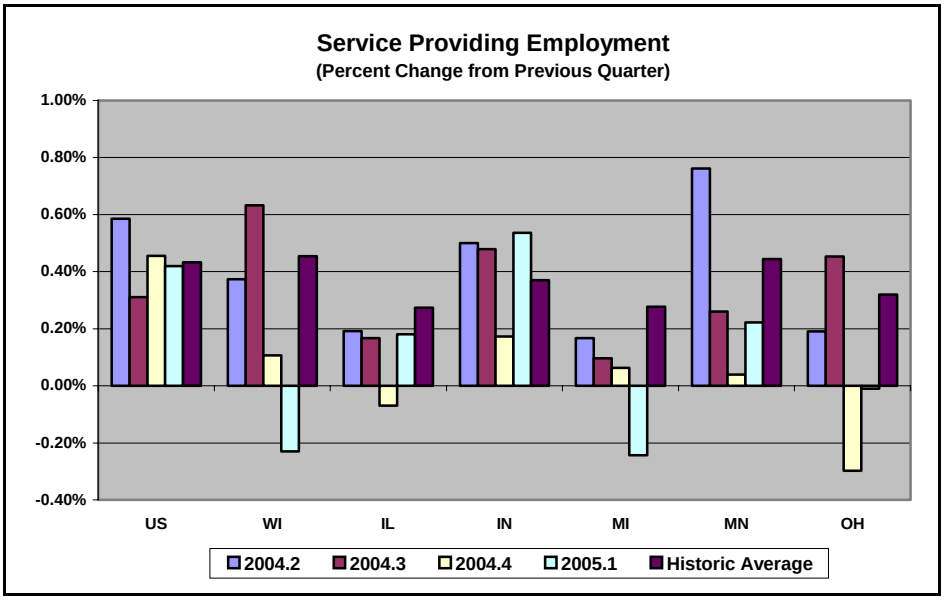
Seasonally-Adjusted, Non-farm Employment
(Thousands)

Quarter	WI	US
2004.3	2,813.1	131,730.7
2004.4	2,815.8	132,301.7
2005.1	2,815.0	132,821.7
2005.2 (forecast)	2,809.2	132,858.5
Average (1990-present)	2,615.4	121,643.3



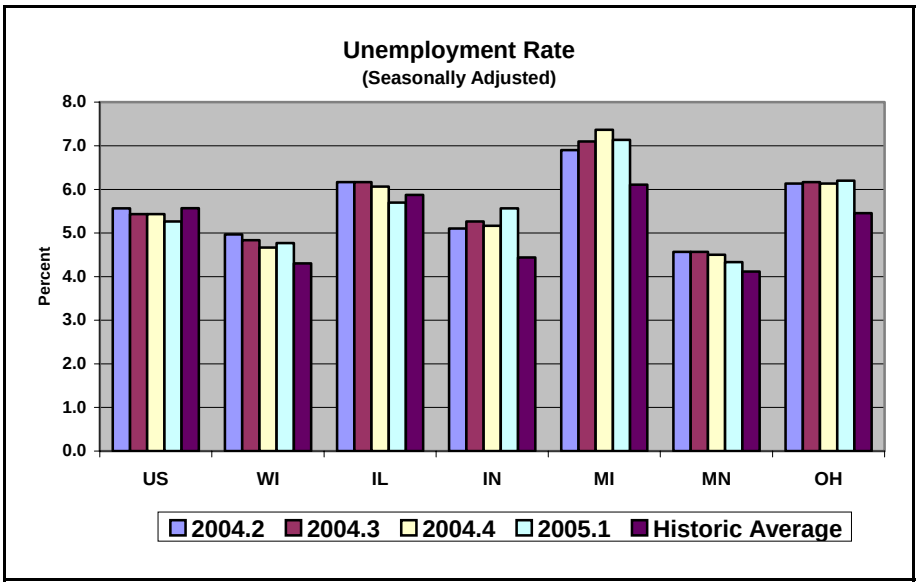
Seasonally-Adjusted, Goods-Producing Employment
(Thousands)

Quarter	WI	US
2004.3	632.7	21,931.7
2004.4	633.0	22,000.0
2005.1	637.2	22,055.0
2005.2 (forecast)	640.1	22,109.5
Average (1990-present)	661.0	23,145.7



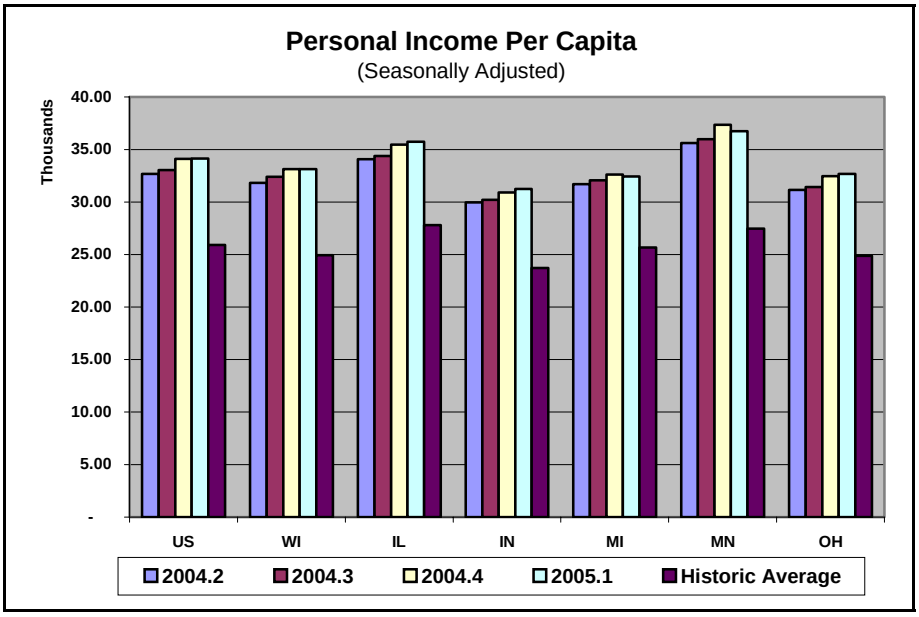
Seasonally-Adjusted, Service-Providing Employment
(Thousands)

Quarter	WI	US
2004.3	2,180.4	109,799.0
2004.4	2,182.8	110,301.7
2005.1	2,177.8	110,766.7
2005.2 (forecast)	2,168.7	110.811.9
Average (1990-present)	1,954.4	98,497.7



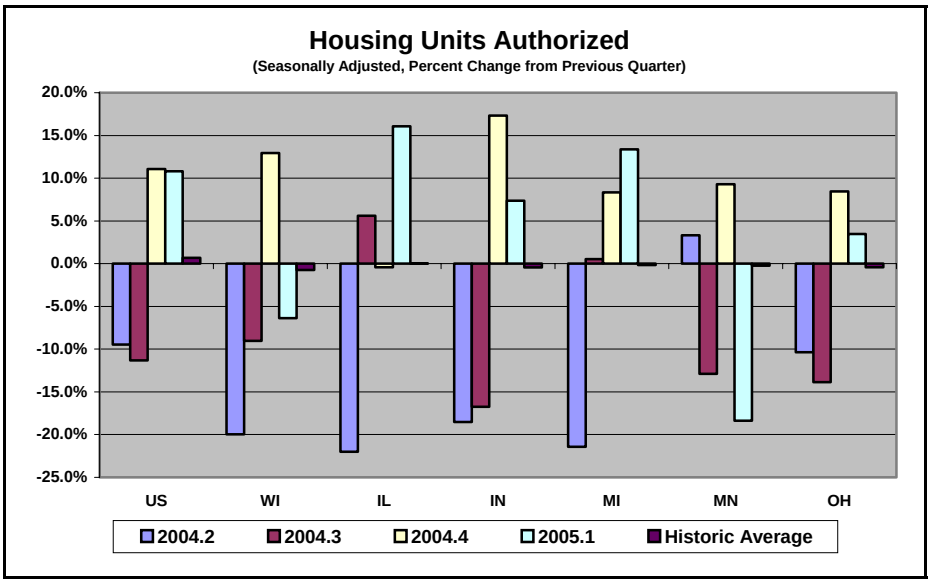
Unemployment Rate (%)
Seasonally-Adjusted

Quarter	WI	US
2004.3	4.8	5.6
2004.4	4.7	5.6
2005.1	4.8	5.5
2005.2 (forecast)	4.9	5.4
Average (1990-present)	5.4	5.6



Per Capita Personal Income
Seasonally-Adjusted

Quarter	WI	US
2004.3	$32,414	$33,036
2004.4	$33,130	$34,128
2005.1	$33,139	$34,148
2005.2 (forecast)	$33,437	$34,452
Average (1990-present)	$24,945	$25,927



Housing Units Authorized,
Seasonally-Adjusted
(Thousands)

Quarter	WI	US
2004.3	3.0	1,543.1
2004.4	3.4	1,735.4
2005.1	3.2	1,945.8
2005.2 (forecast)	3.0	1,787.7
Average (1995-present)	2.9	1,393.7