

ECONOMIC UPDATE

Issue 44

Fall 2021

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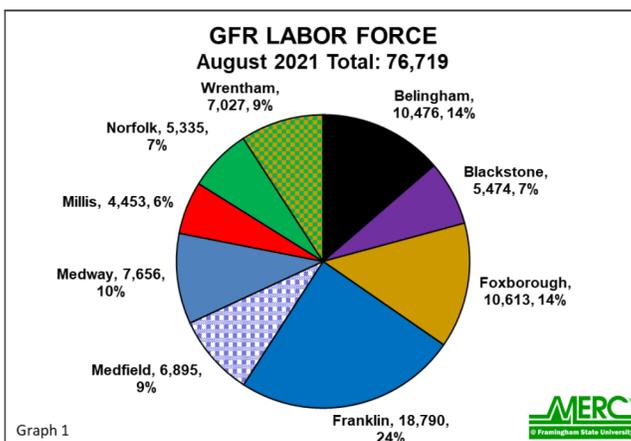
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[Unemployment in Greater Franklin Region: Road to Recovery](#)

By: Esi Afedzie

The Covid-19 Pandemic took a toll on unemployment rates in many communities. After the reopening of the state, the economy began recovering from the effects of the Pandemic. One of the regions affected and on its way to recovery is the Greater Franklin Region. The Greater Franklin Region is made up nine communities, which are Bellingham, Blackstone, Foxborough, Franklin, Medfield, Medway, Millis, Norfolk and Wrentham.

Starting with the recent labor force data for August 2021, the Greater Franklin Region (GFR) collectively had a labor force of 76,719 individuals. Among the nine communities in GFR, Franklin had the largest labor force in the region, as seen in Graph 1, of 18,790 representing 24% of the labor force in the region, followed by Foxborough with the second largest labor force of 10,613 representing 14% of the region's labor force. The 3rd largest was Bellingham, with 10,476 representing 14% of the region's labor force as well. Together, these three communities accounted for 52%



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[MetroWest: Employment and Average Wage Drives Region's Economy](#)

By: Gregory Demos

MetroWest Economic Research Center (MERC) collects employment data for different regions in Massachusetts, including the MetroWest region. MetroWest consists of nine communities: Ashland, Framingham, Holliston, Hopkinton, Natick, Sherborn, Southborough, Sudbury, and Wayland. This region is central to the conditions of the overall Massachusetts economy, as these communities provide many jobs and employment opportunities to residents around the area. The data used in this analysis was reported from 2009 to 2019, which allows for a detailed and comprehensive perspective on the MetroWest economy during this time.

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Esi Afedzie

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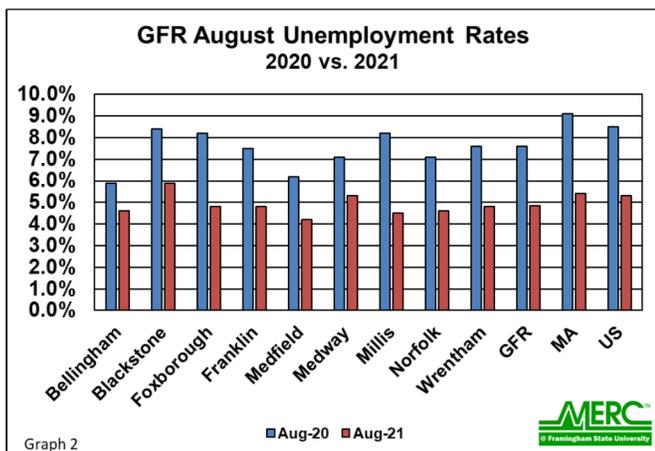
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of the GFR labor force. This means about 1 in 2 people in the Greater Franklin Region's labor force lived in one of these three communities. Millis, however, had the smallest labor force in the region with 4,453 representing only 6% of the region's labor force, closely followed by Norfolk with labor force of 5,335 and Blackstone with 5,474, both representing 7% each of the labor force for the region. Looking into unemployment rates in the GFR communities in August 2021, Graph 2 shows

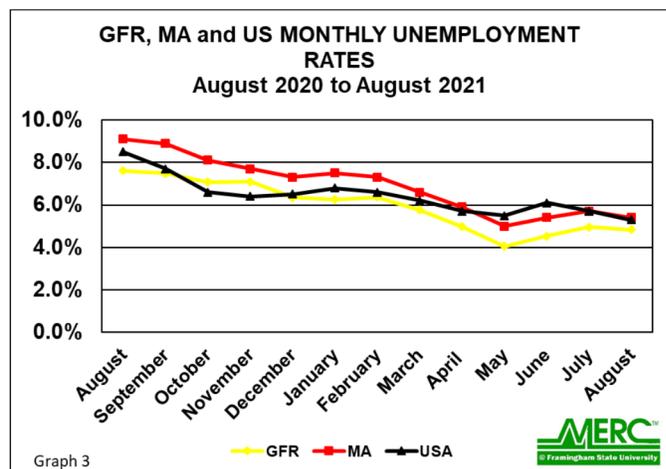
Blackstone had the highest unemployment rate at 5.9%. It was the only community in the region with an unemployment rate higher than the unemployment rates of the state and nation at 5.4% and 5.3%, respectively. The second highest unemployment rate in the re-



gion was Medway at 5.3%. On the other hand, Medfield showed to have the lowest rate in the region at 4.2%, followed by Millis at 4.5%. Comparing these rates with the rates of the same month last year, August 2020, Blackstone still had the highest unemployment rate in the region of 8.4%, dropping

2.5 percentage points in August 2021. However, this was not the largest decline in unemployment rates in the region. Millis posted an unemployment rate of 8.2% in August 2020, which has since reduced to 4.5% in August 2021. This is a 3.7 percentage point difference in unemployment rates, which indicates that Millis was doing better than other communities in the region in terms of recovery. This was similar to the recovery of the state of Massachusetts where the unemployment rate was at 9.1% and has since decreased 3.7 percentage points to 5.4%. Although Medfield showed to have the lowest unemployment rates of 4.2% in August 2021, it only showed a 2 percentage point difference in unemployment rates since August 2020 at 6.2%. In August 2020, the lowest unemployment rate was Bellingham at 5.9%, lower than both the state and nation at 9.1% and 8.5%, respectively.

Seeing how unemployment rates have changed since August 2020 for the individual GFR communities, Graph 3 will show the overall trend in unemployment rates for the region as a whole from August 2020 to August 2021 compared to the state and the nation. Starting in August 2020, GFR unemployment rates posted its highest of 7.6%, followed by a downward trend as unemployment rates decreased and reached its lowest for the period in May



2021 at 4.1%. By August 2021, GFR posted an unemployment rate of 4.8%. The state of

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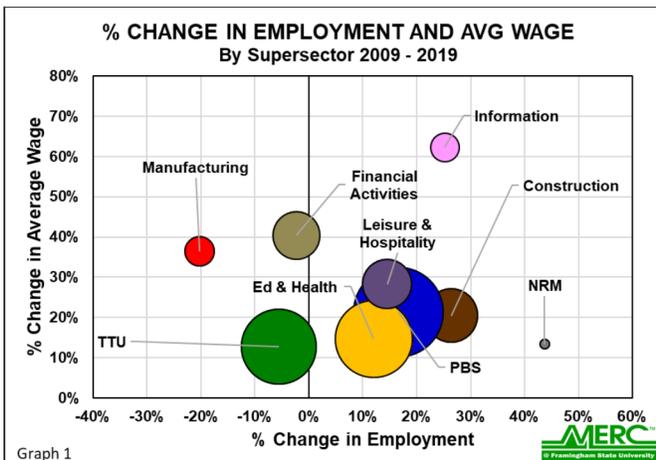
Gregory Demos

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It is important to understand that employment data focuses on the establishments and wages of workers employed in these communities, rather than the residents of these communities. Please also note that this data was reported before the beginning of the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020.

Graph 1 shows how employment and average wage changed in supersectors of MetroWest from 2009 to 2019. Circle sizes represent the number of establishments in 2019. This statistic is important

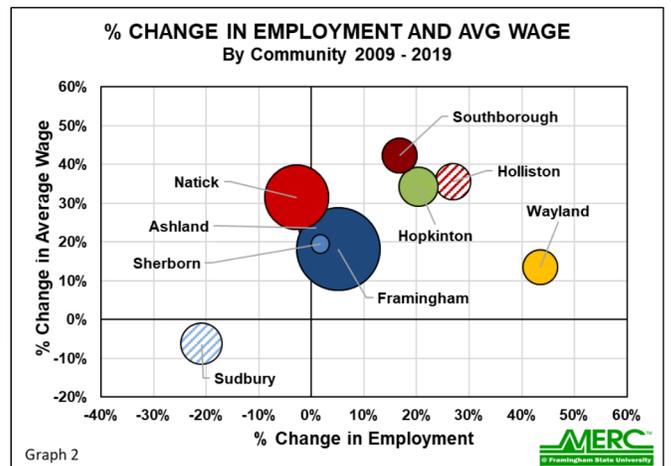
as it expresses which supersectors are most prevalent in the region's economy. Education & Health (Ed & Health), Trade, Transportation,



and Utilities (TTU), and Professional & Business Services (PBS) were the three largest supersectors in MetroWest. TTU was the only one of these supersectors to experience a decrease in employment, around 5%. Ed & Health and PBS both reported a nearly 15% increase in average wage during this time. As seen in Graph 1, Information experienced the largest increase in average wage, at over

60%. Information also reported a 25% increase in employment, making it one of the fastest growing and highest-wage industries in MetroWest.

Graph 2 presents a look at how each MetroWest community performed in terms of average wage and employment from 2009 to 2019. Circle size shows the number of establishments each community had in 2019. Sudbury was the only community to report an overall decrease in both employment and average wage. Southborough had the highest increase in average wage at just over 40%, while Wayland had the highest increase in employment at around 44%. It is important to note that Framingham is the



largest community by establishments in the region, making it an integral part of the overall MetroWest economy. Framingham reported an increase in average wage of almost 20%, and an increase in employment of over 5% during this time.

Graph 3 on page 4 allows for a more specific perspective into the important supersector of TTU, as it is divided into the two largest sectors of Retail Trade and Wholesale Trade. Collectively, these sectors account for nearly 90% of the total employment in TTU. This graph now provides a closer look into the falling employment numbers, with a clear decrease in Wholesale Trade

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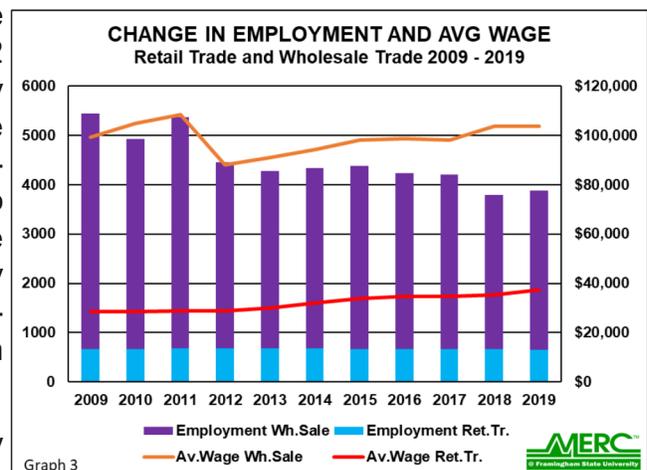
Massachusetts follows a similar trend, beginning with its highest rate in August 2020 at 9.1%, followed by a downward trend in its unemployment rates, and reached its lowest for the period in May 2021 at 5%. By August 2021, Massachusetts unemployment rates were at 5.4%. The US unemployment rates also follow a downward trend; the highest rate was posted in August 2020 at 8.5% then followed by a continuous decrease and reached its lowest by August 2021 at 5.3%.

To conclude, the largest contributors to GFR's labor force were Franklin, Foxborough and Bellingham. They accounted for about half of the total labor force in the region. GFR communities have shown a significant decline in its unemployment rates. Since August 2020, the largest drop in rates was shown by Millis with a 3.7 percentage point difference. Unemployment rates have shown an overall downward trend in the Greater Franklin Region as a whole, as well as the nation and state, indicating that the economy is on its road to recovery. ■

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employment during this time. The average wage of Retail Trade and Wholesale Trade both increased, with the Wholesale Trade average wage increasing by almost \$20,000 from 2012 to 2019. This represents an increase of nearly \$3,000 per year over that time. Retail Trade experienced a decrease in employment, reporting a loss of around 600 jobs from 2012 to 2019. During that same time, the average wage of Retail Trade increased, from nearly \$30,000 in 2012 to over \$35,000 in 2019. Retail Trade and Wholesale Trade were the main economic contributors to TTU in MetroWest.

In conclusion, the MetroWest economy from 2009 to 2019 experienced differences in changes to employment and average wage, in both the communities and supersectors studied in this analysis. The two largest communities, Framingham and Natick, both maintained similar employment numbers while experiencing significant increases in average wage. This trend followed for most of the other MetroWest communities except for Sudbury, which was the only community to report decreases in both employment and average wage. All the other communities reported increases in average wage, as did every supersector studied in the region. Each supersector in MetroWest experienced an increase of at least 10% in average wage. The overall economic conditions portrayed constant improvements in these economic metrics over this time, which is indicative of the MetroWest region's overall economic health and vitality. ■



MERC Cost of Living Survey

After being canceled in March of 2020 due to the Pandemic, MERC was able to resume its bi-annual Cost of Living Survey this October. The Cost of Living Survey is organized by the Council For Community and Economic Research (C2ER) during Quarters 2 and 4 of every year to track the price changes of everyday items from previous quarters. The collected data is then used to compare the prices of local goods and services to those from surrounding areas. MERC interns went on a total of nine different routes — routes that have since changed due to store closures that occurred as a result of the Pandemic. Interns took an account of goods such as gasoline, ibuprofen, groceries, insulin, and services such as haircuts and eye exams. It was a nice change of pace for MERC interns to be out of the office and experience this Cost of Living Survey for the first time since 2020, when it was necessary for MERC to work remotely. ■



MERC Interns: Fall 2021



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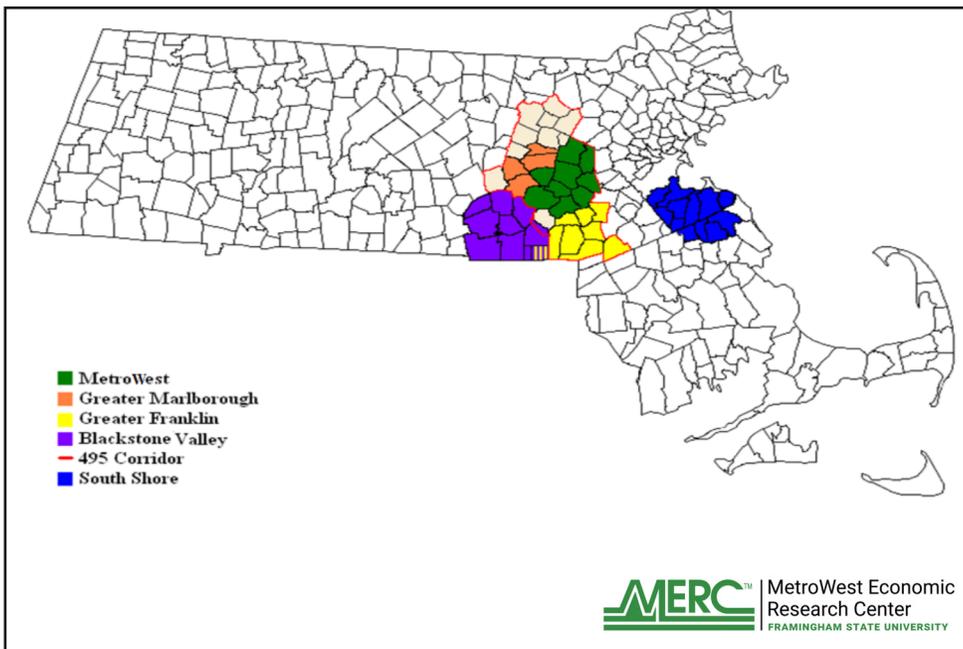
David Hyer Jr.



Raul Sanchez

MERC SUBSTATE REGIONS MAP

MERC provides economic data and analysis for the six sub-state regions shown on the map: MetroWest CCSA™, Greater Marlborough Region, Greater Franklin Region, Blackstone Valley, 495/MetroWest Corridor, and the South Shore CCSA™.



September 2021 UNEMPLOYMENT RATES Not Seasonally Adjusted (Preliminary Data)

495/MW	4.2%
Blackstone Valley	4.5%
Blackstone	4.8%
Douglas	4.0%
Grafton	4.6%
Hopedale	5.1%
Mendon	4.0%
Millbury	4.7%
Millville	5.1%
Northbridge	4.7%
Sutton	3.9%
Upton	3.9%
Uxbridge	4.8%
Greater Franklin	4.6%
Bellingham	4.3%
Blackstone	4.8%
Foxborough	5.1%
Franklin	4.6%
Medfield	3.8%
Medway	4.8%
Millis	4.0%
Norfolk	4.7%
Wrentham	4.7%
Greater Marlborough	4.4%
Hudson	4.6%
Marlborough	4.4%
Northborough	4.5%
Westborough	3.9%
MetroWest	3.8%
Ashland	3.9%
Framingham	4.1%
Holliston	3.8%
Hopkinton	3.6%
Natick	3.7%
Sherborn	3.6%
Southborough	3.8%
Sudbury	3.3%
Wayland	3.2%
South Shore	5.4%
Abington	5.5%
Braintree	5.3%
Cohasset	4.1%
Hanover	4.8%
Hingham	4.2%
Milton	4.7%
Norwell	4.7%
Quincy	5.4%
Randolph	7.3%
Rockland	5.3%
Weymouth	5.6%
MA	5.3%
US	4.6%

There are several categories of unemployment rates. U-1 through U-6, not seasonally adjusted, are reported below for the U.S. period rates in September 2021. MERC uses the U-3 rate, which is the official unemployment rate.

Measures: U.S. September 2021

U-1	Persons unemployed 15 weeks or longer, as a percentage of the civilian labor force	2.2%
U-2	Job losers and persons who completed temporary jobs, as a percentage of the civilian labor force	2.3%
U-3	Total unemployed persons, as a percentage of the civilian labor force (the official unemployment rate)	4.6%
U-4	Total unemployed persons plus discouraged workers, as a percentage of the civilian labor force plus discourage workers	4.8%
U-5	(U-4) plus all other "marginally attached" workers, as a percentage of the civilian labor force plus all "marginally attached" workers	5.6%
U-6	Total unemployed persons, plus all "marginally attached" workers, plus all persons employed part time for economic reasons, as a percentage of the civilian labor force plus all "marginally attached" workers	8.1%

Recent MERC Publications



Population Changes In Greater MetroWest (GMW) Census 2020

Published: November 2021

By: Lori Lavigne, PhD and Martha Meaney, MA

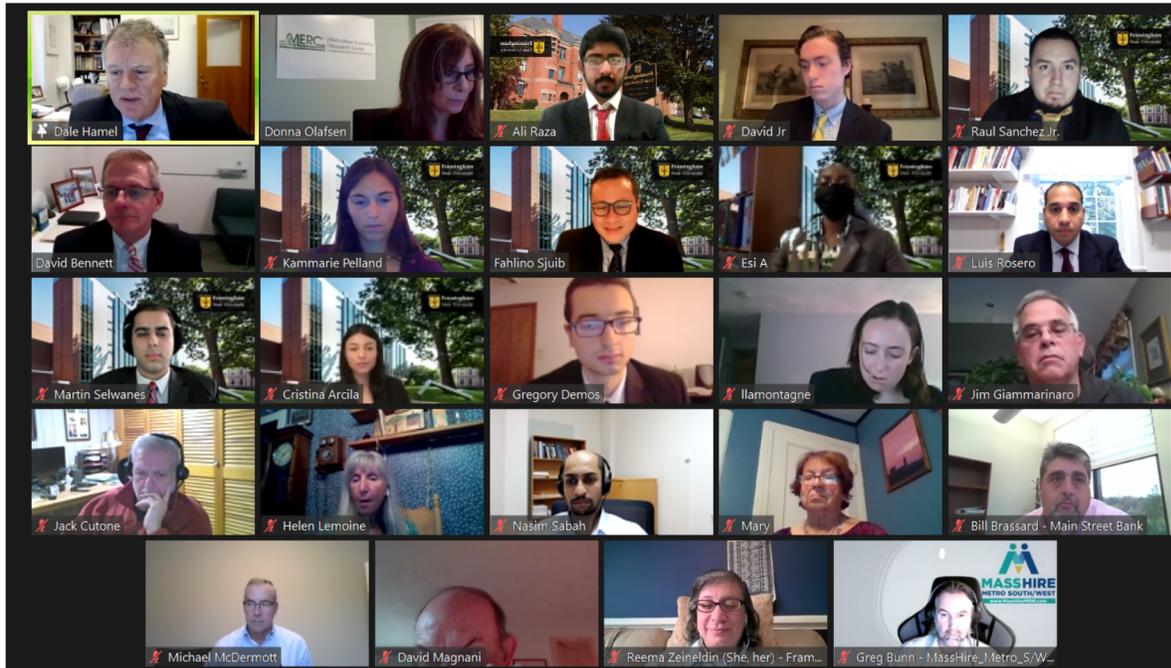


Skyrocketing Home Prices; Buying And Selling In Greater MetroWest (GMW)

Published: November 2021

By: Lori Lavigne, PhD

Fall 2021 Advisory Board Meeting



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SAVE THE DATE:

29th MERC Annual Conference

Wednesday, June 1, 2022

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