

Community Profile for Washtenaw County, Michigan



Introduction

Washtenaw County is located in the southeastern area of Michigan. The county's 720 square mile area is home to about 344,000 people spread among 28 municipalities. These municipalities include the cities of Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Saline, Milan, and Chelsea; the villages of Dexter, Manchester, and Barton Hills; as well as 20 townships. Ann Arbor is the Washtenaw County Seat, as well as the largest of the five cities.



Image Source: Mapquest.com

Washtenaw County is bordered by Wayne County on the east, Monroe and Lenawee Counties to the south, Jackson County to the west, and Livingston and Oakland Counties to the north. The Detroit Metropolitan Airport, as well as the City of Detroit, is located approximately 30 miles east in Wayne County.

The County name is derived from the Chippewa Native American word “Wash-ten-ong”, meaning Grand River. Much important history developed rather quickly in Washtenaw. The Territory of Michigan (founded in 1805) outlined the boundaries of Washtenaw County in 1822, although the area administratively became a separate County in 1826, having previously been governed as part of Wayne County. The first permanent European settlement in Washtenaw County was initiated by Major Benjamin Woodruff in 1823 approximately a mile southeast of Ypsilanti. Soon after, in early 1825, the Village of Ann Arbor was founded by John Allen and Elisha Rumsey, who purchased the land from the Governor in order to sell it to settlers expanding westward. Ann Arbor was selected as the county seat the same year of its founding, despite the fact that the first cabin there had been built just that spring and the entire county had only between 15 and 30 residents and the village did not yet have a name. Although the exact point at which John and Elisha named the village is unknown, it became officially Ann Arbor (named after the two men's wives and the burr oak in the area) on May 25, 1825 when they registered the village in the Territory capital of Detroit. The Territory of Michigan gained

the honor of becoming the 26th State in 1835. In 1970 the current organization of the County into 15 districts, each with a representative on the County Board of Commissioners, was implemented.

Transportation has historically been a key driver of the Washtenaw economy, and it's proximity to the new Erie Canal was one of the reasons why Allen and Rumsey chose the site for their real estate venture. The Great Sauk Trail, a Native American route, was turned into the Chicago Military Road in 1827 (and is now Michigan Avenue which connects Ypsilanti and Saline). In 1829, the Territorial Road to St. Joseph, now US-12, was created. The most influential transportation development in the County occurred in 1839, with the creation of the Michigan Central Railroad's Detroit-Ann Arbor connection. This connected Washtenaw County directly to a major port, and therefore opened the doors to a huge increase in immigration, accessibility, trade, and economic growth. Today, transportation once again stands to play a major role in the economic development of the area, with the plans being formulated by Washtenaw and Wayne Counties to create an aerotropolis – an airport city.

A very well known and influential feature of Washtenaw County is the University of Michigan, which had been founded in Detroit in 1817, and moved its central campus to Ann Arbor in 1837. The Michigan State Normal School, now Eastern Michigan University, was founded in Ypsilanti in 1849 and is the oldest teachers' institution west of the Allegheny Mountains. These two prominent universities, as well as smaller schools such as Concordia and Washtenaw Community College, have helped shape the development of the modern Washtenaw economy. They provide access to a well-educated workforce, which combines with the proximity to important transportation centers that has historically been a strength of the County, and a strong business community. Some of the major economic sectors in Washtenaw are print and publishing, computer software, biotechnology, and automotive manufacturing.

Although Washtenaw County retains a vital economy, especially in comparison with State of Michigan trends, there are areas of concern. The manufacturing sector in particular has taken a serious downturn in recent years, which may continue to worsen. Currently of particular interest in Washtenaw County are the closures of large automotive manufacturing employers in three cities. These closures include an ACH (Ford) plant in Ypsilanti, another ACH (Ford) plant in Saline, and a third ACH (Ford) motor plant in Milan. Ford and its parts supplier (and previous offshoot) Visteon have turned a number of plants over to a new Ford branch called Automotive Components Holdings for sale or closure. All three of the aforementioned plants are part of this planned reduction. While these plants are already slated for closure, this trend in the industry as a whole may be an even greater source of economic hardship to the area in the future. GM and Ford both still remain large employers in the County, and it is yet to be seen whether these other plants will eventually leave as well, although under current contracts they will remain open. A potentially more worrisome occurrence is the flight of Pfizer's research and development plant from Ann Arbor, taking 2100 jobs from the city. With their reliance on a highly educated workforce, Pfizer is exactly the type of business Washtenaw County is most likely to attract into the area. Pfizer announced that the closure is intended to cut costs in the face of increased competition from generic drugs, and is one among many job cutting moves by the firm. The unanswered question is why the Ann Arbor plant specifically was chosen, as opposed to other locations, despite the advantages offered by this community.

Core Competencies and Competitive Advantages of Washtenaw County

Education Level

As previously mentioned and demonstrated in the data contained further into this profile, one of Washtenaw County's primary advantages is the well educated population. This high level of education is largely driven by the presence of University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan, in addition to smaller colleges and a strong grade school system. This will put Washtenaw in a good position to become a key player in the development of a new economy based on knowledge, innovation, and technology.

Transportation

Washtenaw County is located nearby many important transportation hubs. To the east are the major Great Lakes port of Detroit, and the major airport Detroit Metro. Willow Run airport can serve smaller private air traffic. Highway 94 connects Washtenaw County with Detroit to the east and Chicago to the west, two economically important cities. Highway 23 connects with highway 75 as the main North-South arteries of Michigan, continuing far south of the state. The planned aerotropolis will only increase the transportation advantage of Washtenaw County, as well as draw lots of development in addition to the jobs created by its very existence. Throughout history, proximity to convenient transportation has driven economic success.

Business Climate

There is also a strong business climate in Washtenaw County. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation provides a one-stop business assistance resource for any company already in Michigan or considering a location in the state. Professional account managers work with consultants, utilities, associations and local economic development agencies to match businesses with the best opportunities in Michigan. SEMCOG also helps aid and plan development for the entire southeast region of the state, including Washtenaw County; the aerotropolis is one of their projects. There are also a number of active chambers of commerce in communities around the county, helping local businesses to thrive and pushing economic development from the ground up.

Quality of Life

The high quality of life in Washtenaw County is a powerful tool to attract and retain a high quality workforce. Low crime, good schools, a high level of available services, and a wide variety of entertainment venues all contribute to making the County a good place to live. Increasing economic development both draws and requires a well educated and highly skilled pool of workers, and the workers are more likely to come (and stay) when the area offers the amenities they desire.

Organizational Capacity

There are a broad variety of organizations in the County dedicated to economic and community development. A few key organizations are:

Smart Zone



The Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti SmartZone concentrates its efforts on growing small companies that are established in the community. While remaining open to new technologies, the SmartZone focuses its efforts on industries with high potential for utilizing two or more of the area's historic

competencies, which include: advanced manufacturing, alternative energies, information technology, small technology, life sciences and wireless technology. The SmartZone is also home to Ann Arbor SPARK (see below).

Ann Arbor SPARK

www.annarborspark.com



Ann Arbor SPARK is a public-private partnership whose mission is to advance innovation-based economic development in the greater Ann Arbor region. SPARK's members represent the area's university, business, government, entrepreneurial, and community leaders.

SPARK's services focus on building an innovation-focused community through continual proactive support of entrepreneurs, regional businesses, university tech transfer offices, and networking organizations.

Huron Valley Community Network (HVCN) Business Information Center

<http://www.hvcn.org/>



The Huron Valley Community Network (HVCN) is Washtenaw County's on-line information resource. This business information center includes information on chambers of commerce, professional societies, venture capital, trade associations, and business education.

Center for Empowerment and Economic Development

<http://www.miceed.org/>



The Center for Empowerment and Economic Development (CEED) has assisted thousands of business owners in beginning and expanding their businesses. CEED provides entrepreneurs and business owners with the administrative, financial, and professional enrichment support services necessary for business success. CEED prides itself in meeting the needs of Michigan's women and minority business owners.

Michigan Small Business and Technology Development Center

<http://www.gvsu.edu/misbtdc/region12>



The Michigan Small Business and Technology Development Center at Washtenaw Community College is one of 12 regional offices statewide providing services and support to the Michigan small business community in the areas of counseling, training and research.

Demographic Characteristics

Washtenaw County:

Census 2000 Data

Population: 322,895
 Male Population: 50%
 Female Population: 50%
 Median Age: 31.3

*High School Graduates: 93%

*Bachelors Degree or Higher: 52%

*Nationally: 84% are High School Graduates, and 27% have Bachelors Degrees or Higher

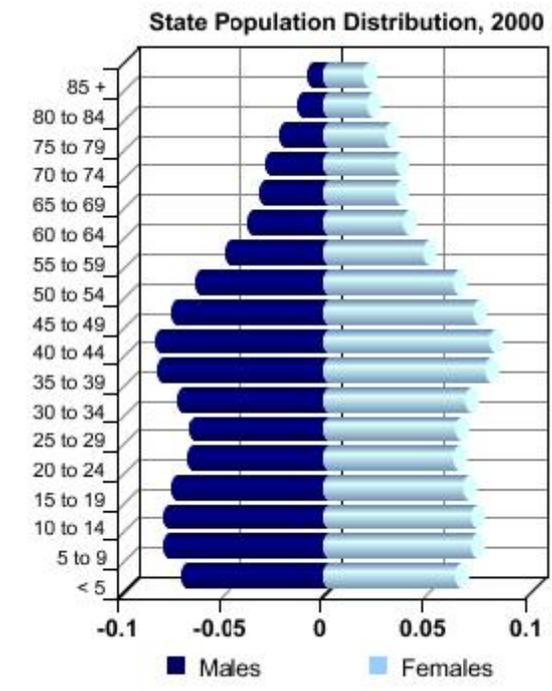
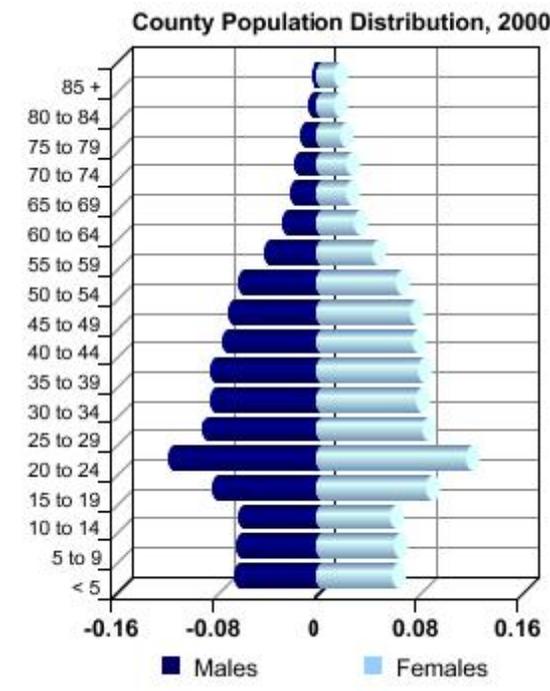
*Data is for people 25 years or older

American Community Survey 2006 Data

Population (2006): 344,047
 Male Population: 50%
 Female Population: 50%
 Median Age: 33.4

*High School Graduates: 93%

*Bachelors Degree or Higher: 52%



Source: SETA <<http://www.seta.iastate.edu/takecharge>>

Below Poverty Level, 2000

	Families		Individuals	
	Number	Percent of Population	Number	Percent of Population
Washtenaw County	5,962	7.7	49,887	14.5
U.S.		9.8		13.3

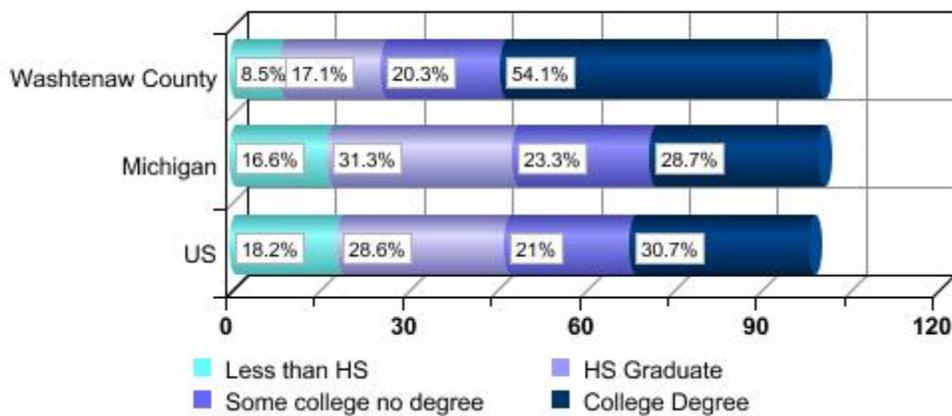
Source: 2006 ACS Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

Median Household Income, 1980, 1990, & 2000

	In Current Dollars			In Constant 2000 Dollars		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
Washtenaw County	\$20,696	\$36,307	\$51,990	\$42,154	\$47,517	\$51,990
Michigan	\$19,223	\$31,020	\$44,667	\$39,154	\$40,598	\$44,667
U.S.	\$16,647	\$30,056	\$41,994	\$33,907	\$39,336	\$41,994

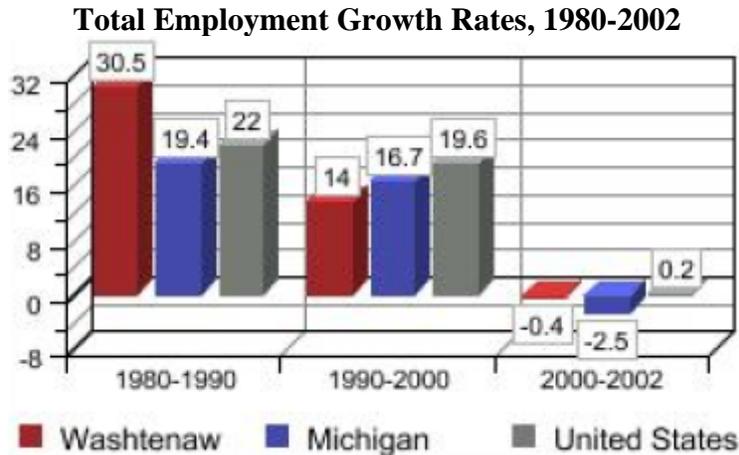
Source: SETA <<http://www.seta.iastate.edu/takecharge>>

Educational Attainment, 2000



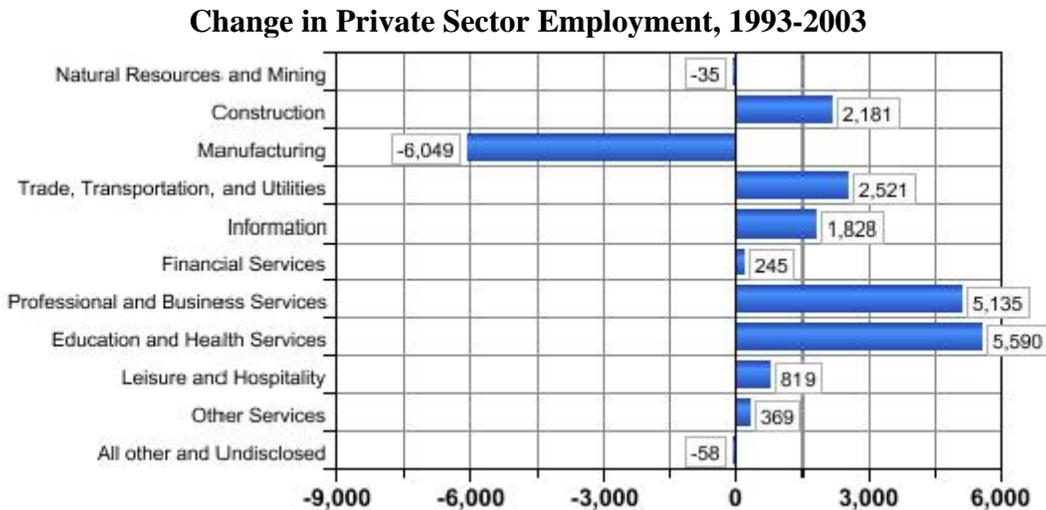
Source: SETA <<http://www.seta.iastate.edu/takecharge>>

Washtenaw County Economic Climate



Between the years 2000 to 2002, the total employment in Washtenaw County declined 0.4 %. The graph above illustrates employment growth trends in the county, the state, and the nation. Job levels are indexed to 1980 values, so a value of 100 in a given year would indicate that year's employment grew 100 percent of the 1980 level.

Source: SETA <<http://www.seta.iastate.edu/takecharge>>



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Between 1993 and 2003, Washtenaw County experienced a net gain of 12546 private sector jobs. Washtenaw County's net gain of 12546 private sector jobs translated into a 10.7 percent rate of growth from 1993 to 2003. Michigan averaged a statewide 10.2 percent rate of growth. The national rate of growth in private sector employment was 17.4 percent.

Workforce Information, 2006

	Washtenaw County
Total Civilian Workforce	183,286
Employed	172,360
Unemployment Rate	6.0%
Per Capita Personal Income	\$30,048
Median Household Income	\$56,817
Mean Household Income	\$75,354
Median Family Income	\$76,361
Mean Family Income	\$94,514
Mean travel Time to Work	22.1

Source: 2006 ACS, U.S. Census Bureau

Building Activity, Washtenaw County, 2001-2007

Residential Building Permits	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Jan-Aug 2007
Total Permits Filed	2,105	2,333	2,527	2,708	1,676	775	286
Single Family	1,813	2,285	2,153	1,994	1,441	627	233
All Multi-Family	292	48	374	714	235	148	53
Two Family	38	12	14	14	8	8	0
Three & Four Family	12	6	26	36	0	8	8
Five Families and More	242	30	334	664	227	132	45

Source: <<http://socds.huduser.org/permits/index.html?>>

Nonfarm Employment by Sector, 2002

Sector	Number of Jobs		Ranking by Sector Size	
	Washtenaw County	Michigan	Washtenaw County	Michigan
All nonfarm sectors	242,388	5,415,949		
Forestry, fishing, and related activities	193	15,453	20	19
Mining	256	13,453	19	20
Utilities	487	21,322	18	18
Construction	8,455	299,131	9	8
Manufacturing	26,365	778,668	2	1
Wholesale trade	5,167	190,790	12	12
Retail trade	22,412	636,455	5	3
Transportation and warehousing	2,558	130,022	17	13
Information	5,776	86,334	11	15
Finance and insurance	5,019	213,613	13	10
Real estate and rental and leasing	6,901	196,274	10	11
Professional and technical services	22,995	358,476	4	5
Management of companies and enterprises	2,590	70,387	16	17
Administrative and waste services	11,687	320,899	7	7
Educational services	3,110	76,692	15	16
Health care and social assistance	24,269	563,924	3	4
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	4,636	102,010	14	14
Accommodation and food services	11,785	354,133	6	6
Other services, except public administration	8,538	289,605	8	9
Government and government enterprises	69,189	698,308	1	2
Undisclosed	0	0	21	21

Source: BLS Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Farm Employment

Percentage Farm Employment

Year	Washtenaw County	Michigan	United States
1980	1.2%	2.4%	3.3%
1990	0.8%	1.7%	2.3%
2000	0.7%	1.3%	1.9%

Source: SETA <<http://www.seta.iastate.edu/takecharge>>

Farm Size and Quantity

	Washtenaw County		Michigan	
	1997	2002	1997	2002
Number of Farms	1,203	1,325	53,519	53,315
Land in farms (acres)	189,863	175,259	10,443,935	10,142,958
Land in farms - Average size of farm (acres)	158	132	195	190
Approximate land area (acres)		454,361		36,354,446
Proportion in farms (percent)		38.6		27.9

Source: SETA <<http://www.seta.iastate.edu/takecharge>>

These charts present data from the 2002 Census of Agriculture on the number and size of farms for Washtenaw County and the state of Michigan. Farmland comprised 38.6 percent of the land area in Washtenaw County, relative to 27.9 percent statewide in 2002. There were a reported 1325 farms in the county, with an average of 132 acres per farm. This average farm size was smaller than the statewide average of 190 acres per farm.

Proportion of Land in Farms, 2002

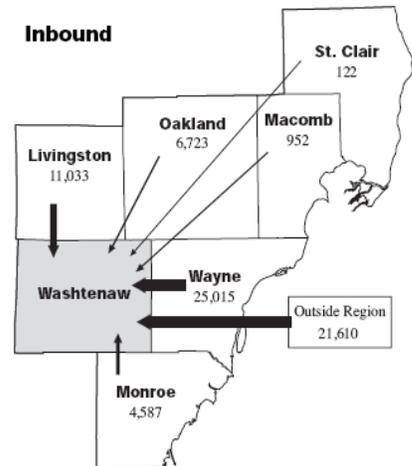
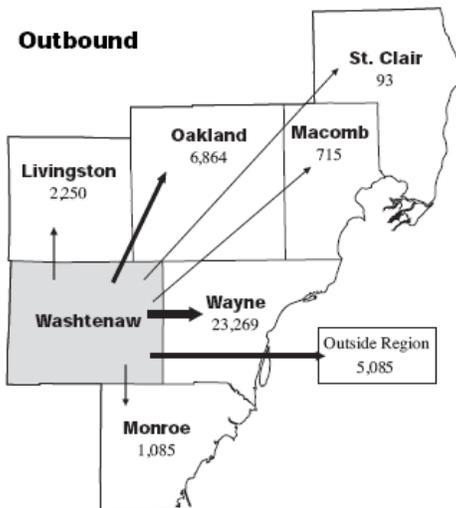


Source: SETA <<http://www.seta.iastate.edu/takecharge>>

Commuting Patterns, 2000

Top Five Counties Sending Workers INTO Washtenaw County

County	Number of Workers
Wayne County	25,015
Livingston County	11,033
Oakland County	6,723
Monroe County	4,587
Macomb County	952
Total	23,295 (12.99% of County workforce)



Top Five Counties Receiving Workers FROM Washtenaw County

County	Number of Workers
Wayne County	23,269
Oakland County	6,864
Livingston County	2,250
Monroe County	1,085
Macomb County	715
Total	34,183 (19.1% of County workforce)

Source: <<http://www.semcog.org/Products/pdfs/CommutingSEMI.pdf>>