

Labor Market of the Silver Valley



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From 1990 to 2000, the U.S. population between the ages of 20 and 34 years of age declined 5.5 percent. So, there were fewer young Americans to fill new jobs. Fortunately, the Silver Valley labor market (Shoshone and Kootenai Counties) has bucked the national trend. So far in this decade, the Silver Valley labor market is seeing more than double the growth in the U.S. working-age population. That means there is a steady flow of young adults into the area's labor force. Along with the people moving into the area, this flow of young adults into the labor force constantly increases and refreshes the area's labor force.

	United States		Silver Valley Labor Market	
	1990-2000	2000-2008	1990-2000	2000-2008
Population 16-34 years of age	-5.5%	5.5%	32.9%	26.2%
Population 35-54 years of age	31.5%	4.9%	59.1%	11.4%
Population 55-64 years of age	15.1%	38.8%	55.0%	56.5%
Total Working Age Pop.	13.4%	9.7%	49.2%	23.8%

Rapid labor force growth and a history of high unemployment have made the Silver Valley an employer's job market. In their competition for jobs, many workers accept jobs for which they are over-qualified, and many accept relatively low wages. The chart below shows average annual wages per job in the Silver Valley labor market, the State of Idaho, and the United States in 2008. Average annual wages are total wages, salaries, reported tips, commissions, and other labor income from employment covered by unemployment insurance divided by average monthly employment. The Silver Valley labor market's annual wage is low, because of:

- ☞ the intense competition for jobs, caused by rapid population growth, which bids down hourly wages;
- ☞ the mix of industries and occupations (*Shoshone and Kootenai Counties have a relatively high proportion of low-paying sectors such as tourism and a smaller proportion of high-paying high-tech jobs*) and
- ☞ the highly seasonal pattern of employment, reducing hours worked in the winter.

Average Annual Wage Per Job

