



Silver Valley Labor Market

Shoshone and Kootenai counties form a single labor market. Many Shoshone County residents work in Kootenai County, and some Kootenai County residents work in Shoshone County. Both counties traditionally have experienced high unemployment. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics designates Shoshone County as an official labor surplus area, making businesses located there eligible for preference on federal contracts.

Currently, about 8,600 Shoshone and Kootenai County residents are unemployed and actively looking for work. In addition, an employer moving into the Silver Valley will receive applications from many individuals who currently are employed, but who are looking for opportunities for increased hours of work, less unemployment in the winter months, higher pay, or shorter commutes.

Given the large labor surplus, employers would find it relatively easy to recruit workers, even hundreds of workers. Many local residents would jump at a chance to work in a manufacturing operation, a call center, or a distribution center.

A business that moves to the Silver Valley is likely to be highly satisfied with the Silver Valley's labor force. Businesses that have relocated to the Silver Valley say they are impressed by the availability, work ethic, and skills of the local labor force. After an employer has recruited a quality labor force in the Silver Valley, it keeps it. Given the Silver Valley's long-term high unemployment, retention rates tend to be much higher than in most communities.

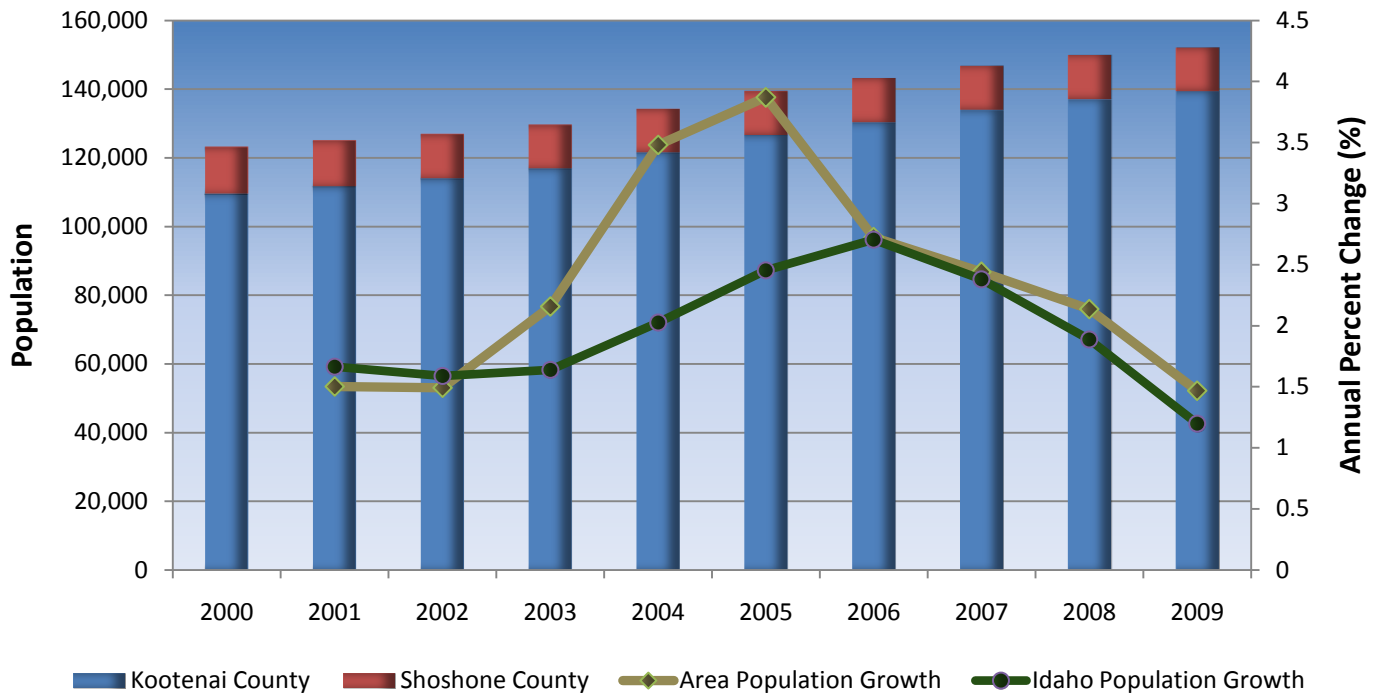




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From 2000 to 2009, Idaho was the fifth fastest growing state in terms of population, while the population of the Silver Valley labor market area (Shoshone and Kootenai counties) grew almost five percent faster than Idaho's. Population growth in Kootenai and Shoshone counties accelerated dramatically from 2000 to 2005, and at rates much higher than the state. Although growth has not been as impressive since 2005, the labor market area continues to expand, remaining above Idaho averages.

Population Growth in Silver Valley Labor Market Area, Shoshone and Kootenai counties



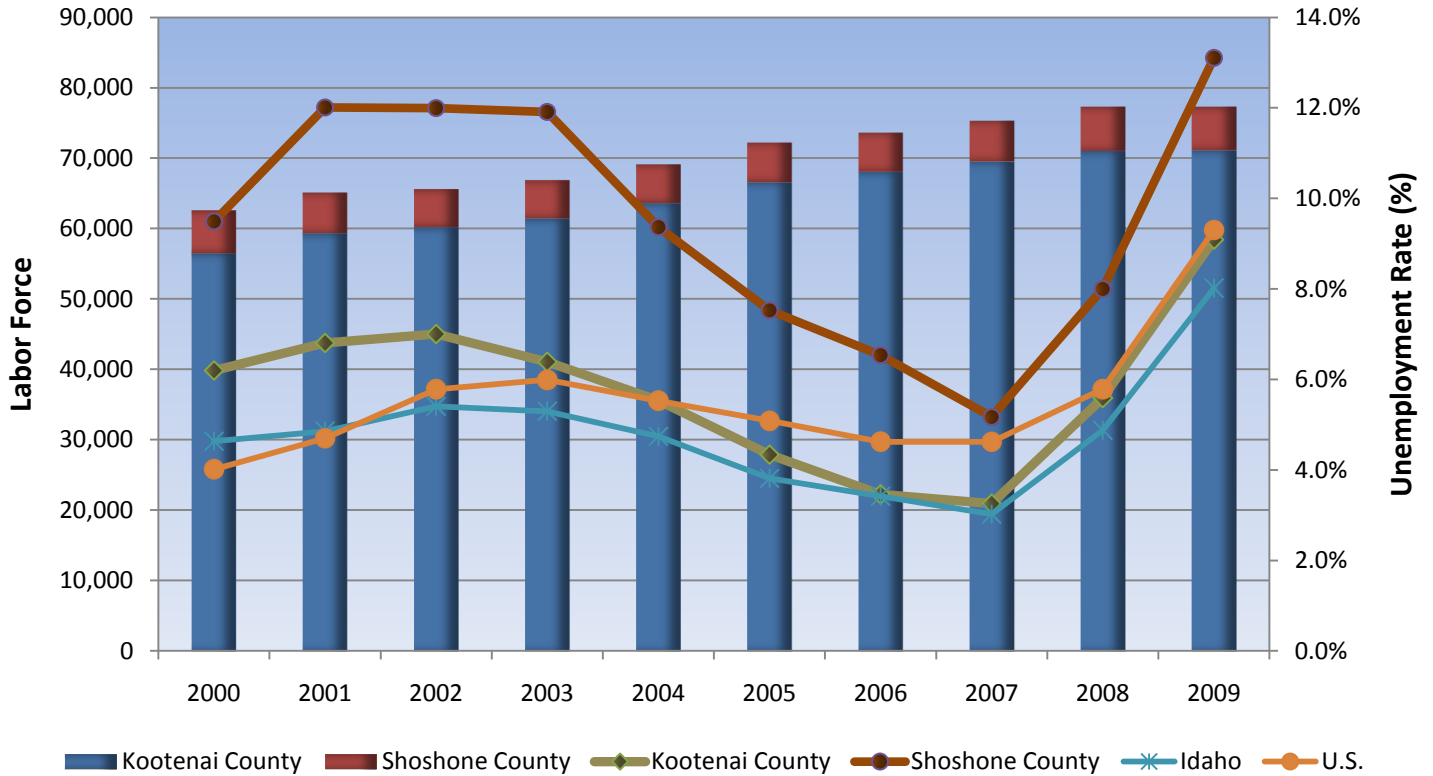
Population growth brings a large number of people with a wide variety of skills. Roughly half of the area's new residents join the labor force. While the U.S. labor force grew only eight percent from 2000 to 2009, and Idaho at 13 percent, Shoshone and Kootenai counties' labor force grew 24 percent from 62,600 in 2000 to 77,300 in 2009. The population influx kept the counties' unemployment rate relatively high, despite strong job growth in Kootenai County. High silver prices are breathing some life back into the mining industry as tourism continues to flourish in Shoshone County.





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Labor Force Trends in the Silver Valley Labor Market Area, Shoshone and Kootenai counties



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From 1990 to 2000, the U.S. population between the ages of 16 and 34 years of age increased at a much lower rate than any other age group, meaning fewer young Americans to fill new jobs. During this decade, this age group edged upwards to seven percent while the number of people between the ages of 55 and 64 increased 43 percent. The rate at which baby boomers will retire will also start increasing dramatically, creating more jobs in the labor market.

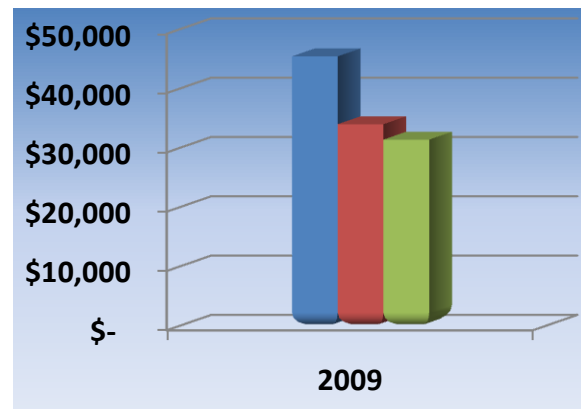
On the other hand, the Silver Valley labor market saw the working age population more than double in growth compared to the nation, generating a steady flow of adults into the area's labor force. The composition of the Silver Valley labor market is similar to that of the state and nation with a slightly older work force. Approximately 20 percent of the working age population will retire within the next ten years. However, the flow of young adults moving to the area and entering the labor force constantly increases and refreshes the area's labor force.

Age of Labor Force

Age Group	United States			Idaho			Silver Valley Labor Market		
	1990-2000	2000-2009	Percent of Working Age Pop. (2009)	1990-2000	2000-2009	Percent of Working Age Pop. (2009)	1990-2000	2000-2009	Percent of Working Age Pop. (2009)
Population 16-34 years of age	3.2%	7.0%	41.2%	32.5%	17.2%	43.6%	46.8%	23.7%	38.7%
Population 35-54 years of age	31.9%	4.0%	41.9%	46.4%	9.0%	39.3%	60.1%	11.6%	41.2%
Population 55-64 years of age	14.8%	43.3%	16.9%	37.9%	59.9%	17.1%	54.8%	68.7%	20.0%
Total Working Age Pop.	15.9%	10.4%	100.0%	38.9%	19.1%	100.0%	53.9%	24.8%	100.0%

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 numerous accept relatively low wages. The chart to the right shows average annual wages per job in the Silver Valley labor market, the State of Idaho, and the United States in 2009. 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's labor market's annual wage is low, because of:

Average Annual Wage per Job



- ❖ the intense competition for jobs, caused by rapid population growth, which bids down hourly wages;
- ❖ the industrial mix 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.

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This page provides statistics about applicants registered with the Idaho Department of Labor offices in the Silver Valley and Kootenai County as well as job openings listed by employers with the two offices. These statistics grossly understate the potential labor force because:

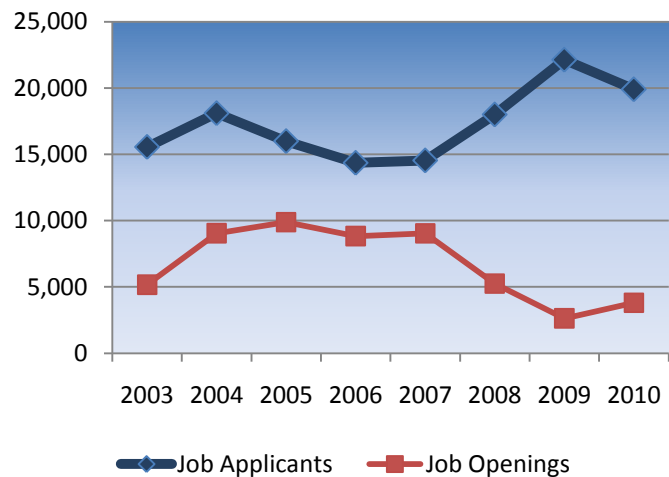
- 1) Many job seekers do not register with any Idaho Department of Labor offices.
- 2) Many people who already are working would be willing to change jobs and occupations, if given opportunities for higher pay, more year-round work, better benefits, more hours of work, greater flexibility, or more interesting responsibilities. Shoshone County residents would be pleased to accept jobs closer to home with over 500 commuting to Kootenai County and another few hundred to Montana or Washington State for work.

In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010:

- ❖ 42 percent of the adult applicants had completed high school and received no additional schooling and
- ❖ 33 percent had attended college or technical school after high school.

From 2003 to 2010, the number of job applicants registered with the Idaho Department of Labor offices in the Silver Valley and Kootenai County went up 28 percent, from 15,550 in 2003 to 19,905 as of fiscal year ending June 30, 2010. During that same period of time, the number of job openings dwindled by 26.5 percent. The least amount of activity from employers posting jobs was in 2009 when the supply was at its peak. The graph to the right illustrates this obvious disconnect through the recession, however, it also shows a slow movement back to a regular business cycle.

Job Applicants and Openings





Silver Valley Labor Market

The table below compares median wages in the Idaho Panhandle to wages in the state and nationwide from the U.S. and Idaho Occupational Employment and Wage Surveys conducted in 2009. “Median” means half of the people in that occupation were paid more and half were paid less. Seven of the 27 North Idaho occupations listed are higher than the national average and almost half were higher than the state average.

Median Hourly Wages

Occupation	North Idaho	Idaho	United States
All Occupations	\$14.06	\$14.44	\$15.95
Assemblers, Team	\$11.10	\$12.57	\$12.89
Bookkeepers & Accounting Clerks	\$14.44	\$14.13	\$16.08
Carpenters	\$16.08	\$15.83	\$18.98
Clerks, File	\$10.76	\$12.76	\$11.89
Clerks, General Office	\$11.42	\$11.67	\$12.57
Computer Support Specialists	\$17.01	\$17.62	\$21.30
Customer Service Representatives	\$12.01	\$12.11	\$14.56
Data Entry Keyers	\$12.44	\$11.79	\$13.05
Electricians	\$21.47	\$21.64	\$22.68
Forklift Operators	\$14.10	\$13.59	\$14.21
Helpers--Production Workers	\$9.83	\$12.51	\$10.75
Interviewers	\$14.25	\$11.30	\$13.78
Janitors	\$9.76	\$10.89	\$10.56
Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers	\$11.33	\$9.75	\$11.11
Machinists	\$15.90	\$16.87	\$18.10
Millwrights	\$18.23	\$20.27	\$23.14
Order Clerks	\$13.72	\$15.22	\$13.71
Packers & Packers, Hand	\$10.47	\$9.49	\$9.36
Nurses, Registered	\$30.75	\$28.07	\$30.65
Receptionists & Information Clerks	\$11.43	\$10.99	\$12.05
Secretaries	\$12.80	\$13.74	\$14.41
Security Guards	\$11.63	\$12.69	\$11.45
Shipping & Receiving Clerks	\$12.12	\$12.11	\$13.58
Stock Clerks & Order Fillers	\$10.53	\$10.00	\$10.08
Truck Drivers, Light or Delivery Services	\$13.19	\$11.95	\$13.62
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, & Brazers	\$14.22	\$14.46	\$16.71

National Data Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics Survey 2010

State and County Data Sources: Idaho Occupational Employment and Wage Survey 2010

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