

## WISCONSIN JOB PICTURE CONTINUES TO STABILIZE

Wisconsin has 137,100 fewer jobs than when the recession started in December 2007 – a nearly 5 percent loss in total jobs – and the unemployment rate remains at highs not seen since the 1980s. However, Figure 1 shows that the jobs picture appears to be stabilizing. The state lost an average of 18,650 jobs per month in the six months leading up to April 2009. From April to July, the total number of jobs has held roughly steady (a 3,700 gain in jobs from April to June, and a 4,100 loss from June to July).

But stability in the jobs picture is only a first and weak step toward recovery. Many Wisconsinites have lost their jobs and are looking for work. Wisconsin's unemployment rate doubled since the beginning of the recession, reaching a high of 9.0 percent in June and July. The majority of this spike in unemployment has occurred since September 2008, though the rate of increase has slowed substantially in recent months, with unemployment up only 0.5 percent from March to July 2009. (Table 1, Figure 3 on back page.)

## MANUFACTURING AND CONSTRUCTION JOBS STILL IN DECLINE

Wisconsin's manufacturing sector has 66,100 fewer jobs than when the recession started. This decline accounts for nearly 50 percent of total job loss in Wisconsin since December 2007, and represents a 13 percent loss within this sector. The rate of job loss in manufacturing slowed notably beginning in April 2009, and jobs remained stable between May and June. However, another 4,800 manufacturing jobs were lost between June and July 2009.

The construction industry has lost 19,600 jobs since the start of the recession, an almost 16 percent loss within this sector. The spike in construction jobs between April and May 2009 (5,100 jobs) was a welcomed trend and the first time construction jobs had risen since May 2008. However, the last two months have seen construction jobs fall yet again, with 2,500 jobs lost between May and July 2009. (Table 1, Figure 2)

Table 1

**CHANGES IN UNEMPLOYMENT AND NUMBER OF JOBS IN WISCONSIN, DECEMBER 2007 TO JULY 2009**

	<i>December 2007</i>	<i>July 2009</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>
Unemployment	4.5%	9.0%	4.5	
All jobs	2,889,000	2,751,900	-137,100	-4.7%
Manufacturing jobs	500,000	433,900	-66,100	-13.2%
Construction jobs	123,800	104,200	-19,600	-15.8%

Figure 1

**TOTAL JOB LOSS IN WISCONSIN, DECEMBER 2007 TO JULY 2009**

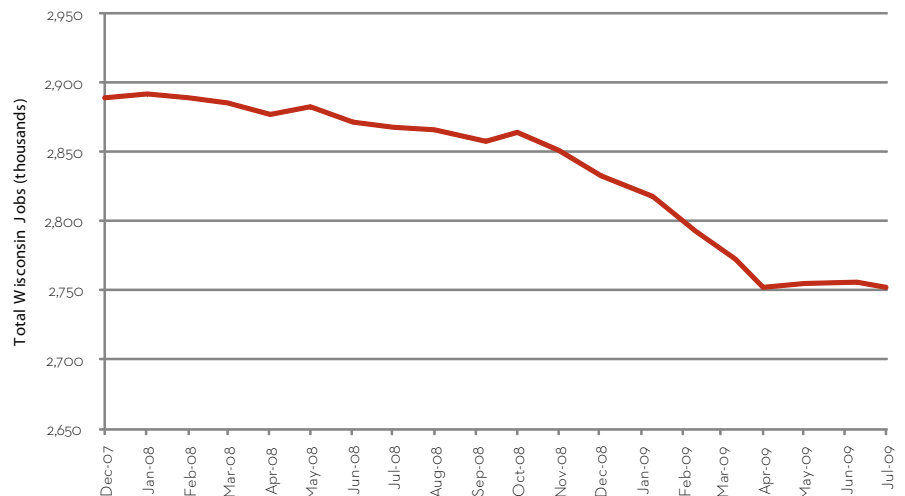
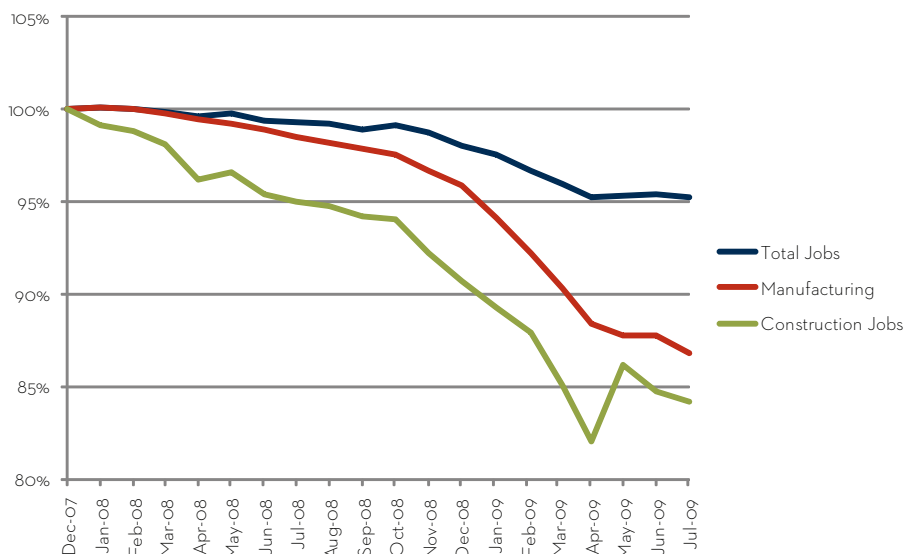


Figure 2

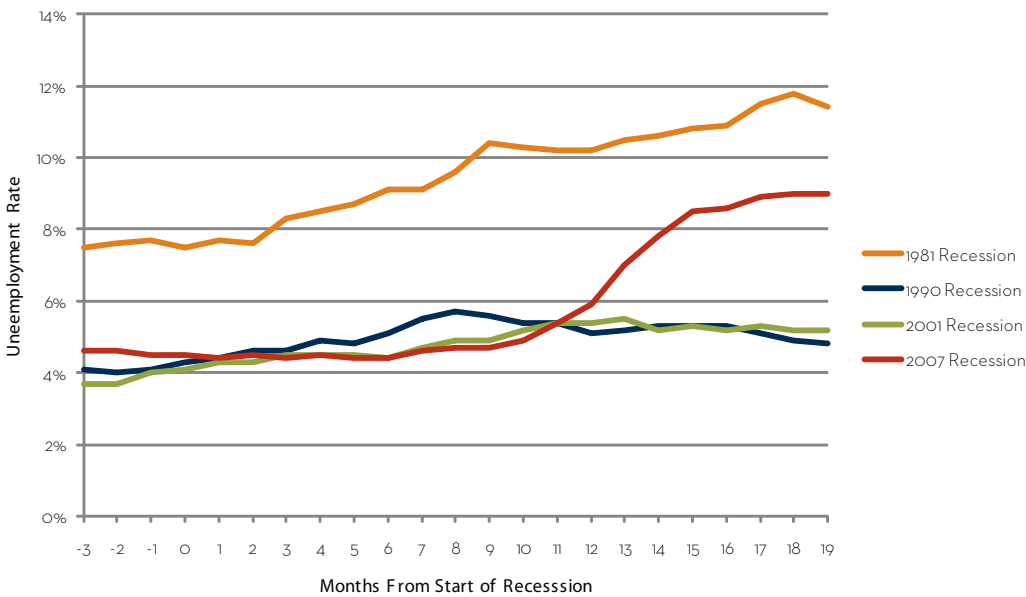
**PERCENT CHANGE IN MANUFACTURING, CONSTRUCTION, AND TOTAL JOBS IN WISCONSIN, DECEMBER 2007 TO JULY 2009**



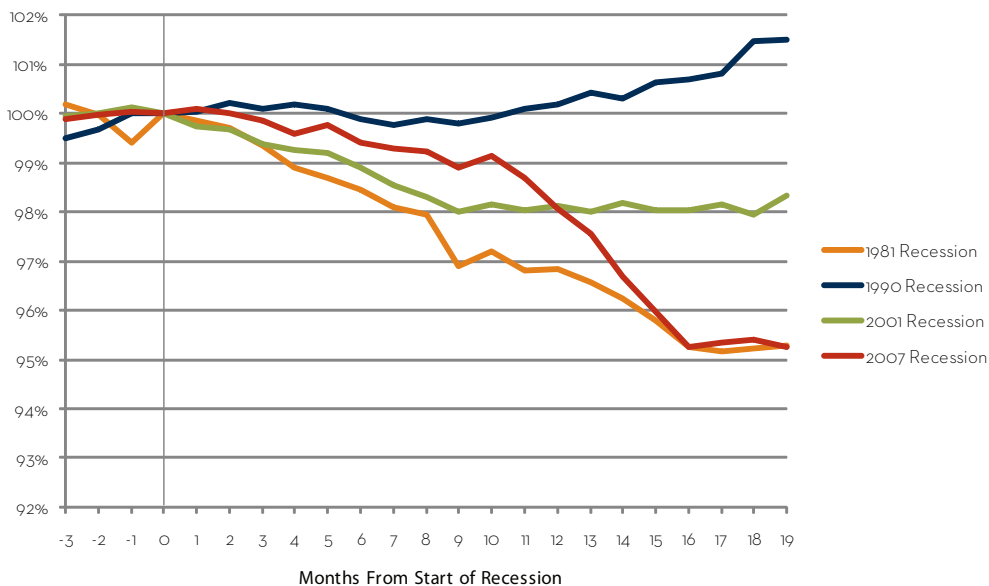
## JOB LOSS RIVALS THAT OF OF 1981 RECESSION

This has been a long and difficult recession. That job loss appears to be bottoming off is a welcome relief for hard hit communities and workers in the state. This recession is severe, especially when compared to the 1990 and 2001 recessions. Those past recessions officially lasted eight months each; the current recession is in its 19th month. More tellingly, the current recession rivals the severe recession of the early 1980s with respect to percent of jobs lost (almost 5 percent). Though Wisconsin's unemployment rate is still well below 1980s levels, unemployment has risen more precipitously in this recession, and it has not necessarily reached its peak (whereas unemployment peaked in the 18th month following the start of the 1981 recession). Given that unemployment typically continues to rise even when jobs stabilize, we will likely see further increases in coming months. (Figures 3 and 4)

**Figure 3**  
WISCONSIN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN CURRENT RECESSION, COMPARED WITH 1981, 1990, AND 2001 RECESSIONS



**Figure 4**  
PERCENT CHANGE IN WISCONSIN JOBS IN CURRENT RECESSION, COMPARED WITH 1981, 1990, AND 2001 RECESSIONS



Wisconsin Job Watch, a monthly publication of the Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS), provides a snapshot of Wisconsin's job picture and reports on key recession trends. The numbers provided in this report are based on seasonally-adjusted Bureau of Labor Statistics data compiled by the Economic Policy Institute ([www.epi.org](http://www.epi.org)).

The Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) is a policy center and field laboratory for high road economic development – a competitive market economy of shared prosperity, environmental sustainability, and capable democratic government. Housed at University of Wisconsin-Madison, COWS has been supporting progressive policy innovation since 1991. For more information, visit [www.cows.org](http://www.cows.org).

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1180 Observatory Drive • Madison, WI  
608.263.3889 • [www.cows.org](http://www.cows.org)