

Local Unemployment Rates, 2007 – 2009

The economic downturn hit already-challenged areas hardest.

Unemployment rates are important indicators of the region's economy and job market. The unemployment rate is calculated as the percentage of the labor force that is unemployed and looking for work.

In the MAPC region, the unemployment rate rose from 4.1 percent in July 2007 (when first signs of an upcoming recession were observed by economists) to 8 percent in July 2009. This translates to an increase of 67,000 unemployed persons over a two-year period. The good news is that labor conditions in Metro Boston are better than the state average and the nation overall, where unemployment rates were pushing 10 percent in the latter half of 2009. Our slightly better performance can be explained in part by the high educational attainment of the workforce and the region's lower reliance on industries hardest hit by the current recession.

However, some communities in Metro Boston have been hit harder than others. Unemployment rate increases of 4 percent or more were seen in a dozen urban communities from Quincy to Gloucester; comparable increases occurred in 13 suburban communities throughout the region. Thirteen cities and towns, located in six of the eight MAPC subregions, had unemployment rates exceeding 9 percent in July 2009. Meanwhile, many wealthier and well-educated communities have been spared such dramatic increases in unemployment. Overall, there were more than 135,000 unemployed workers in the region in July 2009, pointing to the desperate need for workforce development strategies that can support faster economic recovery.

