

8-2007

Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey Briefing, Employment, 2006

Community Research Institute-Johnson Center

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Community Research Institute-Johnson Center, "Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey Briefing, Employment, 2006" (2007). *Research, Reports, and Publications*. 65.
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Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey Briefing:

Employment





Employment and Health

Americans have traditionally received health insurance from their employers. Data from the 2005/2006 Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey have been analyzed to examine links between employment and health. Eighty-eight percent of employed respondents had health care coverage of some kind, while only 62% of those who were unemployed and looking for a new job had coverage. Participants who were working rated their health more highly (34% indicated that they were in excellent health and 2% indicated that they were in poor health) than those who were not working but looking for a job (29% excellent; 9% poor).

The economic difficulties sometimes associated with unemployment affect health care as well. Ten percent of employed respondents had difficulty affording prescriptions in the past year, while 22% of those who were unemployed and looking for a job had that problem. A similar difference existed among respondents' abilities to afford doctor-recommended tests or treatment (11% of employed and 22% of unemployed had difficulty affording these). Twelve percent and 14% of retired respondents indicated having difficulty affording prescriptions and follow-up care, respectively.

Employed parents are more likely to have health insurance for their children than unemployed, job-hunting parents (96% and 87% had insurance, respectively).

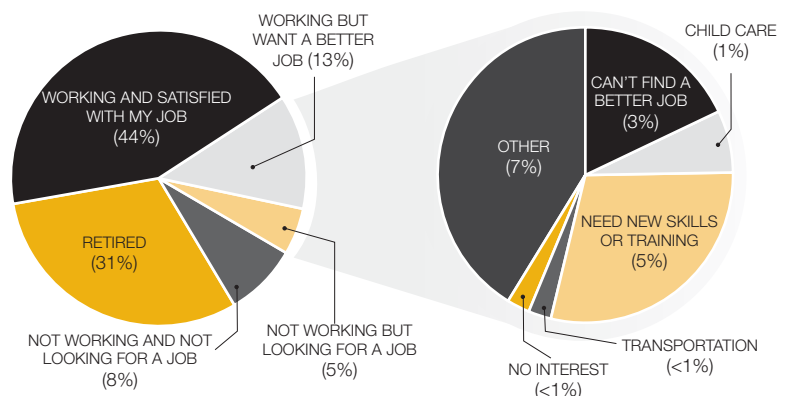
Employment in a Changing World

Employment is currently a critical issue in Michigan, as automotive manufacturing continues to decline and the state economy looks to new and different industries. Data from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth show that Kent County's unemployment rate (5.6% in 2006) has decreased in recent years but is still not as low as it was during the late 1990s (2.7% in 1998). The 2005/2006 Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey asked participants several questions related to employment.

Indicator 1 shows that more than half of the respondents were employed, though some were looking for a better job. Nearly one-third of participants were retired. Of those respondents who were not working, most were not looking for a job. Approximately 5% of respondents were not working and looking for a job—aligning with the traditional definition of unemployment. Those respondents who were looking for a new job (whether employed or unemployed) were asked what the main thing keeping them from getting the type of job they wanted was. Twenty-nine percent of these individuals stated that they need new skills or training, while 18% indicated that they simply cannot find a better job (*see Indicator 1*).

INDICATOR 1:

**HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR EMPLOYMENT STATUS?
WHAT IS THE MAIN THING KEEPING YOU FROM GETTING THE TYPE OF
JOB YOU WANT?**



PERCENTS DO NOT ADD UP TO 100 DUE TO ROUNDING.

KENT COUNTY 2006

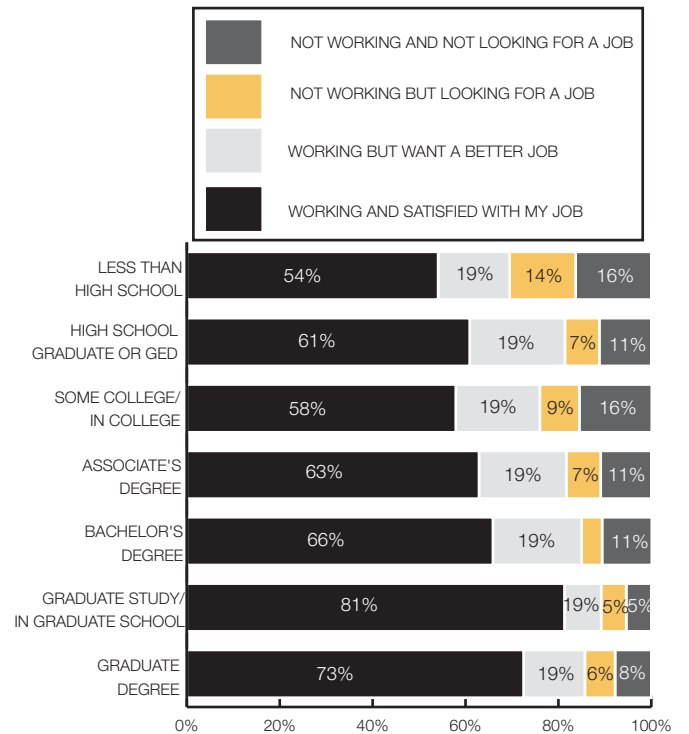
Employment and Demographics

Demographic differences exist in respondents' descriptions of their employment statuses. For this section, respondents indicating that they were retired were omitted, so that working-aged responses only could be examined. Seventy-one percent of male respondents indicated that they were employed and satisfied with their jobs, in comparison to 59% of females; 16% of women were not working and not looking for a job, while only 3% of men indicated this status. Urban and suburban respondents both indicated lower levels of employment with job satisfaction and higher levels of not working and not seeking a job than their rural counterparts. Urban participants had a higher frequency of working but looking for a better job than suburban and rural respondents.

Differences exist when employment status and race/ethnicity are examined as well (see Indicator 2). White respondents indicated being unemployed and looking for a job less frequently than minority respondents (6% and 14%, respectively—again omitting retirees). Asian/Pacific Islander respondents described themselves as unemployed and not looking for a job at a lower rate than other ethnic groups (6% and 13%, respectively). African American and Multi-racial respondents cited being employed and satisfied with their jobs less frequently than other groups (37%, 42%, and 61%, respectively).

INDICATOR 3:

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION, "HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR EMPLOYMENT STATUS?" BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

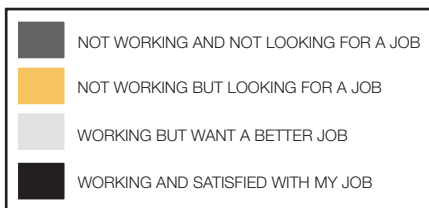


KENT COUNTY 2006



INDICATOR 2:

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION, "HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR EMPLOYMENT STATUS?" BY RACE/ETHNICITY



KENT COUNTY 2006

Employment and Educational Attainment

Employment and education are often discussed together. In order to determine if relationships exist between levels of education and employment status, data from the 2005/2006 Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey were analyzed (see Indicator 3). These data show that respondents with less than a high school diploma showed the lowest frequency of employment with job satisfaction (54%) and the highest frequency of having no job and looking for a job (14%) of any educational attainment level. Individuals with some graduate education or a graduate degree had higher levels of employment and job satisfaction (81% and 73%, respectively) than groups with less education.

The Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey, now in its sixth year, assesses citizen opinions, perceptions, and behaviors as they relate to quality of life in the Greater Grand Rapids Area (Kent County). More specifically, the community survey provides population, economic, community and public opinion data to present a picture of the Kent County community as a place to live. The 2006 Survey is a collaborative effort between the Community Research Institute of the Johnson Center at Grand Valley State University (CRI), Grand Rapids Community Foundation, Heart of West Michigan United Way, and the Doug and Maria DeVos Foundation.

This report is part of a series of briefing papers. It is available online at www.cridata.org/publications, along with the rest of the series and the 2005/2006 Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey report.



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