Regional Conditions

Although more than half of the Fourth Federal Reserve District's counties posted unemployment rates at or below the national average in October, many others continued to exceed it, one by as much as 8.8 percentage points (Knox County, Kentucky). Morgan County recorded Ohio's highest jobless rate (11.6%), while Franklin and Delaware counties, in the Columbus metropolitan area, shared the state's lowest posting (2.7%).

October unemployment rates in the District's metropolitan areas were comparable to those of October 1995. Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, and Pittsburgh all saw their rates go down. The largest improvement came in the Youngstown-Warren area, which cut its jobless rate from 7% in October 1995 to 5.3% a year later.

In recent years, Pennsylvania has seen less robust jobs growth than Ohio and Kentucky. In fact, Pennsylvania employment is only slightly higher now than in 1990, whereas Ohio and Kentucky have posted gains of about 6% and 12%, respectively.

Ohio's quarterly employment figures show an increase in total employment between the first and second quarters of 1996. Gains occurred in every sector except government, which lost almost 4,000 workers. The biggest quarterly improvement came in services, which added more than 53,000 jobs, but large increases were also seen in construction and in wholesale and retail trade (up nearly 46,000 and 37,000, respectively).