Employment growth in the Fourth District has been closely associated with population change. Sometimes, job opportunities may encourage workers to move to areas with high employment; other times, it seems that population loss is reflected in lower numbers of people working.

The greatest population gains have occurred in the areas surrounding Columbus, the suburban counties of Cleveland and Cincinnati, and the counties in Kentucky that border I-75. To some extent, this reflects a change in residential preference, as people move from the inner-ring suburbs to areas further from downtown. However, it also represents an increase in the availability of durable manufacturing jobs along the so-called auto corridor of I-75, as well as a growing number of light manufacturing jobs in the Columbus area.

Continuing trends that began in the 1970s and 1980s, the greatest population loss is seen in the mountainous coal mining regions of the District and in western Pennsylvania more generally. The population loss in the western counties of Pennsylvania may stem in part from the demise of employment opportunities in the area’s once-prevalent heavy manufacturing industries.

Despite the lack of population growth in large pockets of the region, employment growth has been impressive throughout the Fourth District. Even in the counties where manufacturing is declining or expanding only slowly, jobs growth has outpaced increases in labor force participation, producing impressive dips in unemployment.