Employment in Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Columbus, Ohio’s largest cities, is increasing at similar rates and in step with the state’s overall performance. The cities have comparable workforce compositions, with two notable exceptions: Columbus, the state capital, has a larger share of government and financial services workers, and Cleveland has a slightly higher share of manufacturing employees. Business cycle events should have about the same influence on all three cities, and this in fact seems to be the case. Since 1993, each has experienced a 2-percentage-point decline in manufacturing employment, matched by a similar increase in service-sector jobs.

Despite these parallels, employment growth in the Cleveland area has lagged that of Columbus and Cincinnati over the current business expansion. Columbus has added 83,500 new jobs since 1993, a 2.3% average annual increase, while Cleveland saw only a 1.5% rise. Most of Columbus’s growth has occurred in the service industries (particularly business, health, and education) and in engineering. The capital city historically has enjoyed a low unemployment rate, but since 1993, Cleveland’s jobless measure (which tends to follow the state average) has demonstrated the greatest improvement.

Population change has followed a pattern not unlike that of employment growth. Columbus once again led the way with a 1.0% annual increase, while Cincinnati posted an uninspiring 0.7% gain. Cleveland’s population growth has been stagnant since 1993, and actually declined 0.3% last year.