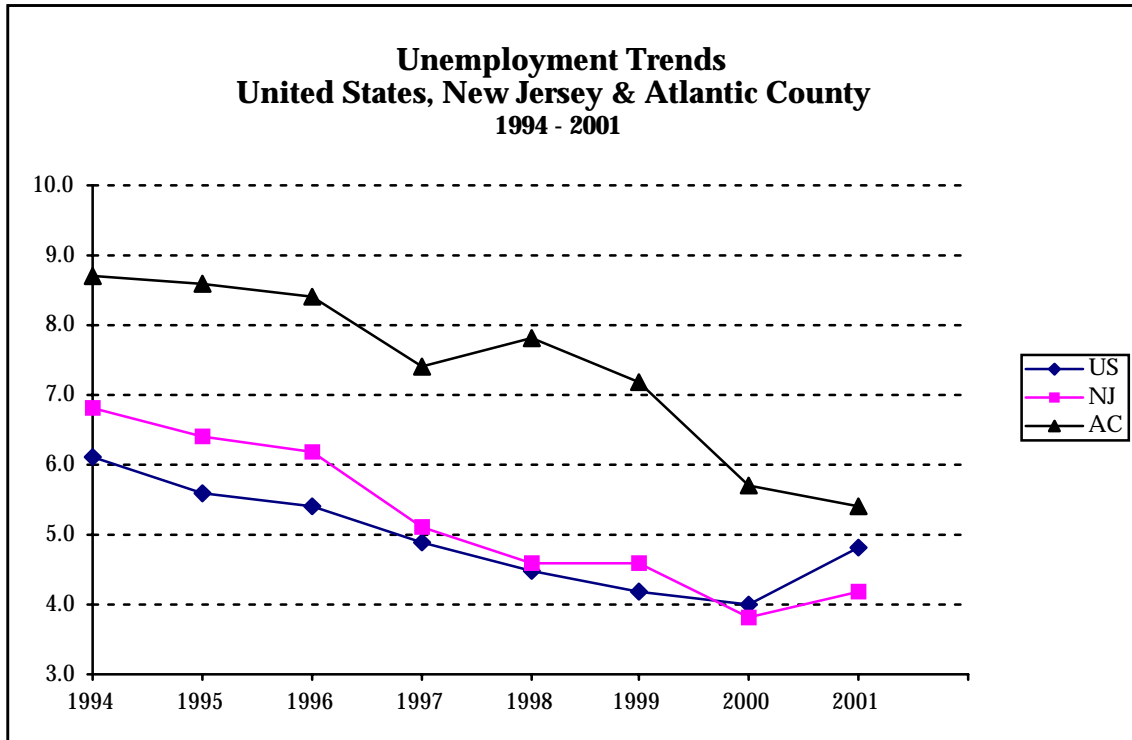


## **Labor Force and Unemployment, 1992 -2000**

With the onset of the 1990-1991 national recession, labor force growth slowed and the unemployment rate increased significantly in Atlantic County. From an average of about 5.0 percent during the 1987-1989 period, the county's unemployment rate more than doubled to an average of 10.4 percent in 1992.

As the local and state economies began to recover in late 1992 and 1993, the county's unemployment rate started to improve, falling to an average of 9.4 percent in 1993 (vs. 7.5% statewide). Except for a slight increase in 1998, unemployment continued to decline in Atlantic County through 2001.



**Except for a slight uptick in 1998, Atlantic County’s unemployment rate has fallen steadily since 1994. However, it remained above the rates of both the state and nation during this period.**

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, New Jersey Department of Labor, Division of Labor Market & Demographic Research.

Although the development of the hotel-casino industry and the ‘80s economic boom helped push unemployment rates down to the 5 percent range during the late 1980s, the county’s unemployment rate has generally remained well above the state’s due to several factors.

Mostly notably, the county still experiences seasonal variations in employment, which keep the number of unemployed higher on average than areas with little seasonal variation. Also, even during periods of slower economic growth, persons re-enter the labor force or migrate to the area attracted by prospects of employment.

Because some of them lack sufficient education, skills or experience, they are unable to find or maintain employment. This core group of hard-to-employ persons are much like those found in other areas of the country. In addition to insufficient skills, education and experience, another significant barrier to employment for this group can be transportation: both its cost and availability.

There are discernible trends in the changing composition of Atlantic County's labor force. Based on the 1990 Census and estimates for 1998 (latest available data), Atlantic County's labor force is becoming increasingly older and more diverse. From 1990 to 1998, the county's labor force grew by an estimated 4,300. The baby-boomers helped push up the number of 35-to-54 year olds in the labor force by 11,900

during this period, while the smaller baby-bust generation helped lower the number of 16-34 year olds by 6,500.

When examined by sex, race and Hispanic Origin (2), only white non-Hispanic males and white non-Hispanic females declined in number during the 1990 -1998 period. In the "black", "other races" and "Hispanic" categories, both males and females posted increases since 1990. Similar trends were evident at the state and national levels during this period.

In Atlantic County, the resident labor force is supplemented by a significant number of in-commuters. Although the 2000 census data on commuting patterns is not yet available, in 1990, over 34,000 commuted to Atlantic County to work.

To help reduce unemployment, the US Department of Labor has designated the city of Atlantic City as a labor surplus area for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2001. This designation allows

companies located within this municipality to receive preference when bidding on federal contracts.

**Footnotes:**

1. Estimates beginning in 1994 are not strictly comparable with prior years due to a major revision of the monthly household survey by the US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in 1994.
2. Hispanic origin is an ethnic not a racial category.