



# An Economic Snapshot of Orange County

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## Highlights

- The number of jobs in Orange County grew to 128,987 in 2006, an increase of 7.9 percent or 9,400 jobs from the level in 2000. The pace of job growth slowed, however, in the first half of 2007.
- Together, the trade, transportation, and utilities sector and the government sector account for nearly half of the county's jobs.
- Three hospitals in Orange County employ 1,000 or more people, but most businesses in the county are small: almost 90 percent employ fewer than 20 people.
- While the unemployment rate in Orange County has begun to rise, it is still low and remains below the statewide rate.
- Since 2000, wages in Orange County have grown every year, rising by a total of 33.5 percent between 2000 and 2006.
- In 2006, the median home price in Orange County was \$309,000, which was seventh-highest among all State counties outside of New York City. Home values more than doubled between 2000 and 2006.
- Orange County's population grew at a faster rate (10 percent) than any other county in the State between 2000 and 2007.
- In 2006, the number of crimes per 1,000 people in Orange County was 22.2, less than the statewide rate of 24.7 crimes per 1,000 people.
- The expansion of Stewart Airport creates several opportunities for economic growth in Orange County.

Orange County has experienced strong economic growth since 2000. The strength of the local economy combined with the county's high quality of life has attracted new residents, and as a result Orange County has experienced the fastest population growth in New York State this decade. Jobs have been plentiful, and both unemployment and crime levels remain low.

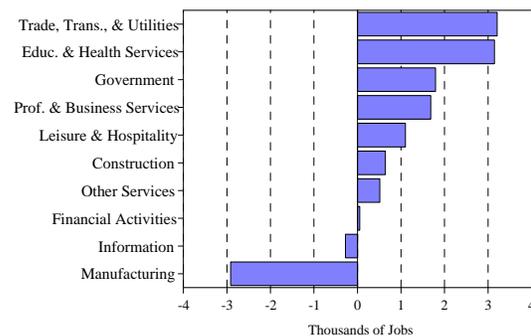
A number of economic development projects are underway—including the expansion of Stewart Airport—to build on the growth of recent years. The credit crunch and slowdown in the national economy, however, will affect the local economy.

## Employment

The number of jobs in Orange County grew to 128,987 in 2006—an increase of 9,400 jobs (7.9 percent) since 2000. The rate of job growth slowed during the first half of 2007, however, with employment increasing by only 0.4 percent.

The trade, transportation, and utilities sector accounts for more than one quarter of all jobs in the county, and generated the most new jobs (3,210) from 2000 to 2006 (see Figure 1). The educational and health services sector, with 15 percent of the county's jobs, produced nearly as many new jobs in the same period (3,148).

**Figure 1**  
**Employment Changes in Orange County**  
2000 to 2006



Source: NYS Department of Labor

## **Wages and Average Salaries**

Total wages rose by 3.9 percent to \$4.7 billion in Orange County in 2006. Since 2000, wages have grown every year, rising by a total of 33.5 percent, but the gain in 2006 was the smallest during this period. Since 2000, wages have grown in all sectors in the county except manufacturing, and the educational and health care services sector had the largest growth (68.1 percent).

The average salary in Orange County in 2006 was \$36,326, up 3.1 percent from 2005. While government had the highest average salary of any major sector (\$47,250), the average salary for the educational and health services sector grew the fastest—at nearly twice the overall pace.

## **Unemployment**

In 2007, the average unemployment rate for Orange County was 4.3 percent, unchanged from the previous year and lower than the statewide rate of 4.5 percent. During the first two months of 2008 the average unemployment rate in Orange County rose to 5.1 percent (from 4.7 percent during the same period last year), which was still lower than the statewide average (5.3 percent).

## **Housing**

Home values in Orange County more than doubled between 2000 and 2006, rising at an average annual rate of 12.9 percent to reach a median value of \$309,000—the seventh-highest among the counties outside of New York City. In 2006, the median home price in Orange County increased by only 4.7 percent, reflecting the start of the slowdown in the real estate market. Subprime mortgages also rose dramatically, increasing from 12.6 percent of all mortgages in 2004 to 29.5 percent of all mortgages in 2006.

## **Demographics**

The population of Orange County grew to 377,169 in 2007, an increase of 34,142 people since 2000. This represents a gain of 10 percent, the highest rate of growth in the State. More than one third of this growth was due to increased numbers of U.S. residents moving into the county, and was the largest net gain in the State.

White non-Hispanics are the largest group in Orange County, accounting for 71.1 percent of the population in 2006, followed by Hispanics (15.4 percent), Blacks or African-Americans (8.7 percent), and Asians (2.5 percent). While the population for all demographic groups increased between 2000 and 2006, the Hispanic population grew at the fastest rate (45.9 percent).

## **Crime**

Crime in Orange County has continued to decline in recent years, falling to 22.2 crimes per 1,000 people in 2006, which is lower than the statewide rate of 24.7 crimes per 1,000 people. While the overall trend in crime is down (it decreased 4.3 percent between 2002 and 2006), there was a slight increase in 2006 due to more crimes against property; the number of crimes against people, however, continued to fall.

## **Economic Development**

Orange County will benefit from the planned ten-year, \$500 million expansion of Stewart International Airport in New Windsor. In anticipation of the airport's growth, the New York State Department of Transportation recently completed a \$55 million road project to ease traffic congestion around the airport.

Orange County is studying ways to spur new commercial development in business parks around the airport—and is particularly focusing on the possibility of developing new distribution and warehousing centers to accommodate the increase in cargo capacity at Stewart that will result from the planned expansion.

Orange County is also making efforts to take advantage of another of its major assets—its waterfront on the Hudson River. The City of Newburgh is planning to develop 30 acres of waterfront land, which will include housing, retail, and commercial space, along with parks and open spaces. The housing component, consisting of duplex cottages, town houses, and single-family homes, will also incorporate workforce and affordable housing units. Construction is expected to begin in 2009.