



Research Brief

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Pennsylvania Holiday Shopping Season

MIDDLETOWN, Pa – The holiday season is a time for celebration, gift-giving and family. From the Christmas shopping bonanza that fills the coffers of Pennsylvania malls and retail outlets to other wintertime celebrations like Hanukkah or Kwanzaa, Pennsylvania's economy sees a boost of activity in the holiday season.

Shopping malls and department stores fill with throngs of Christmas shoppers during the holiday season, and retail outlets increase their staffing to compensate. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Retail Trade industry in December 2006 added 39,000 employees over the preceding three months, an increase of 6.0 percent. Pennsylvania Department Store employment alone jumped 12,800 jobs from October to December, an increase of 21.2 percent.

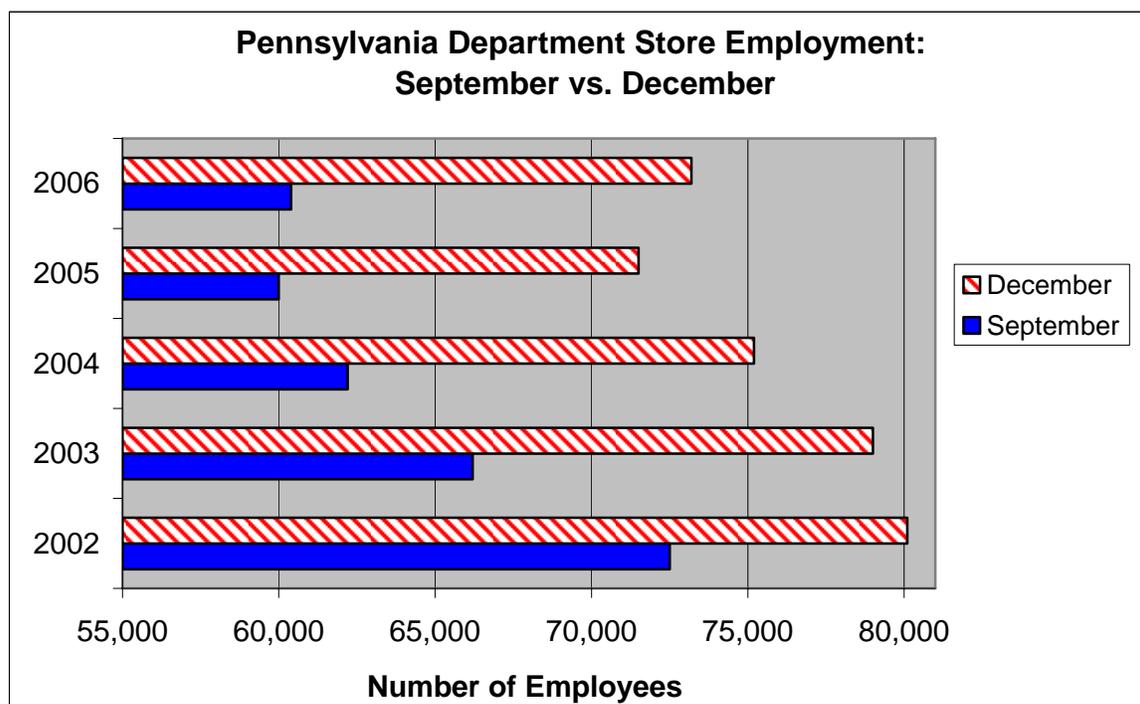
Nationwide, retail sales represented \$31.4 billion in the month of December alone, a 44 percent spike over the previous month: the largest month-to-month increase throughout the year. Across the nation, certain types of stores saw even more marked increases: bookstores jumped 86 percent between November and December 2006, while jewelry stores saw increases of 155 percent.

Pennsylvania ranks 5th in the nation in number of retail trade employees, with 655,800 in 2006, according to BLS. According to the Economic Census, there were a total of 48,041 retail trade establishments in Pennsylvania in 2002, with annual sales, shipments and receipts of more than \$130 billion.

Gifts for Pennsylvania Kids

Many youngsters will be hoping for a toy underneath the gift-wrapping on Christmas morning. In Pennsylvania, there were 473 Hobby, Toy and Game Stores in 2002, providing ample shopping opportunities to find the perfect gift. These stores employed 6,883 people and generated \$810.5 million in revenue, according to the Economic Census. Wrapping paper is big business, too: coated and laminated paper manufacturers, including gift-wrap manufacturers, employed 2,634 people and brought in \$805.5 million in revenue in 2002, according to the Economic Census.





Holiday Agriculture

Christmas trees, Poinsettias, and the traditional holiday turkey mean that Pennsylvania’s agriculture gets a boost during the winter months, as well. In 2006, Pennsylvania sold more than 17.3 million Christmas trees, according to the USDA. Pennsylvania is also ranked nationally in its production of potted Poinsettias: the state is ranked fourth, with more than 4 million potted poinsettias sold in 2006. In 2006, Pennsylvania farms raised 10.5 million turkeys, representing a value of more than \$105 million, according to the USDA.

Holiday Lighting

Hanukkah, the festival of lights, is celebrated with the progressive lighting of eight candles on a Menorah. Many Kwanzaa celebrations also involve lighting candles. That means big business for Pennsylvania candle manufacturers: in 2002, they shipped \$11.4 million worth of candles. According to the National Candle Association, 35 percent of all candle sales occur during the holiday season.

The Pennsylvania State Data Center is the commonwealth’s official source for population and economic statistics. It is based at Penn State Harrisburg’s Institute of State and Regional Affairs. The Pennsylvania State Data Center is part of the U.S. Census Bureau’s National State Data Center Program.

Editors: For additional data, contact the Pennsylvania State Data Center’s State Capital Office at 717.772.2710 or for faculty comment on this topic, contact Penn State Harrisburg’s Public Information Office at 717.948.6029.

Source: 2002 Economic Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Agricultural Statistics Service, National Candle Association.