



Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

December 16, 2009

Pennsylvania Holiday Shopping Season

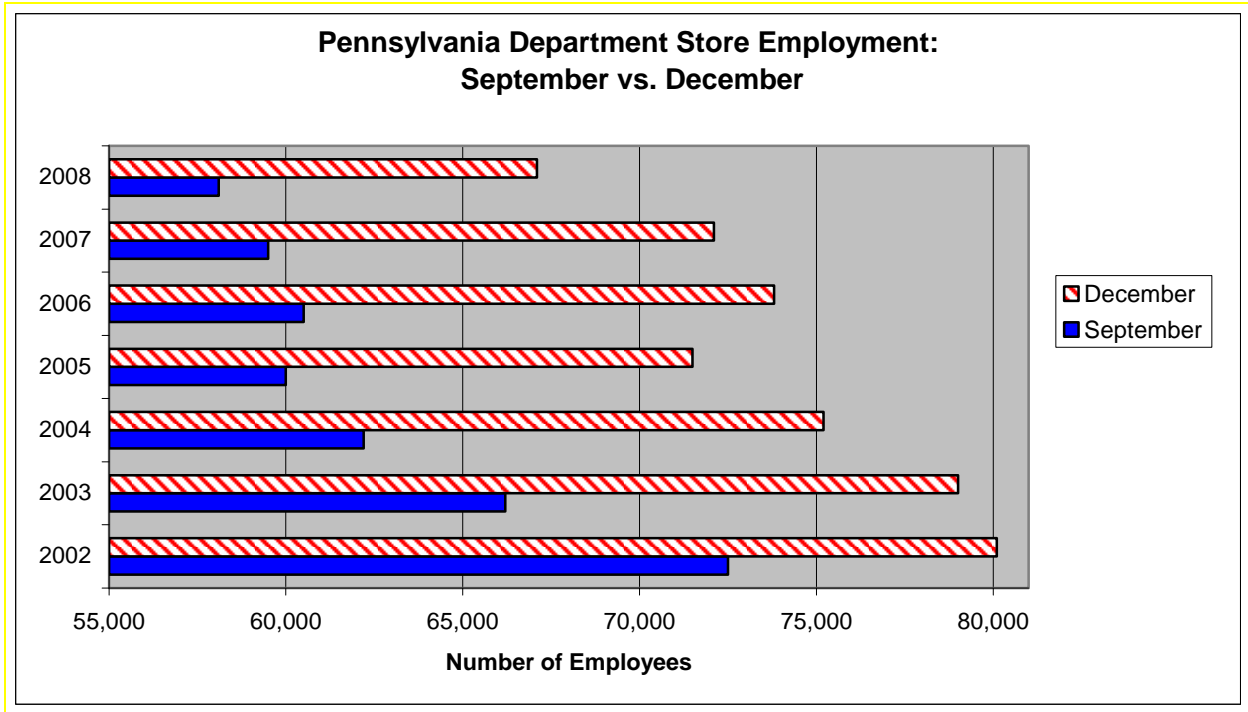
MIDDLETOWN, Pa – The holiday season is a time for celebration, gift-giving and family. From the Christmas shopping bonanza that fills the coffers of Pennsylvania malls and retail outlets to other wintertime celebrations like Hanukkah or Kwanzaa, Pennsylvania's economy sees a boost of activity in the 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 Pennsylvania's Retail Trade industry in December 2008 added 18,600 employees over the preceding three months, an increase of 2.9 percent. Department Store employment alone jumped 9,000 jobs during this time period, an increase of 15.5 percent. Overall, Pennsylvania ranks 5th in the nation in number of retail trade employees, with 647,600 in 2008, according to BLS.

Nationwide, department stores retail sales represented \$28.2 billion in the month of December 2008, a 40 percent spike over the previous month: the largest month-to-month increase throughout the year. Across the nation, certain types of stores saw larger percentage increases: bookstores jumped 95 percent between November and December 2008, while jewelry stores saw increases of 125 percent.

Gifts for Pennsylvania Kids

Many youngsters will be hoping for a toy for the holidays. In Pennsylvania, there were 399 Hobby, Toy and Game Stores in 2007, providing ample shopping opportunities to find the perfect gift. These stores employed 6,059 people and generated annual payroll of \$91 million according to the 2007 County Business Patterns. Wrapping paper is big business, too: coated and laminated paper manufacturers, including gift-wrap manufacturers, employed 2,564 people located in 28 establishments according to the 2007 County Business Patterns.



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 2007, Pennsylvania harvested approximately 1.2 million Christmas trees, according to the USDA. Pennsylvania is also ranked nationally in its production of potted Poinsettias: the state is ranked eighth, with more than 2 million potted poinsettias sold in 2008. In 2008, Pennsylvania farms raised 11.5 million turkeys, representing a value of more than \$138 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: County Business Patterns, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Agricultural Statistics Service, National Candle Association.