

Community Builders, Inc. (CBI) is a Wyoming-based consulting firm that assists with development of businesses, organizations, and communities. Each month, *CBI Focus* newsletters provide current economic data and analytical graphics, each newsletter focused on one of Wyoming's 23 counties (plus one covering the entire state). All *CBI Focus* newsletters, source notes, and data explanations are online at www.consultCBI.com. CBI principal consultants are Bobbe Fitzhugh and Joe Coyne. Contact CBI at 873 Esterbrook Road, Douglas, WY 82633; email Joe@consultCBI.com; or call (307) 359-1640. © 2012 Community Builders, Inc.

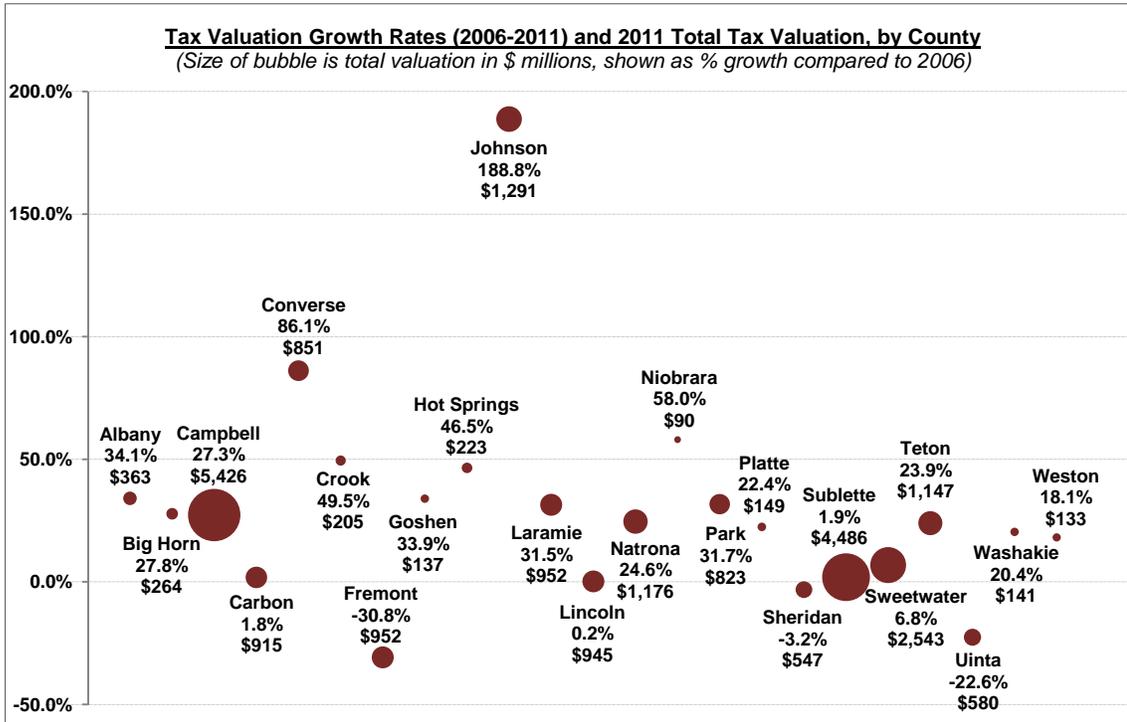


Tax Valuations (and growth rates)

Wyoming uses a variety of methods to establish the taxable value of real and personal property. The Wyoming Department of Revenue (DOR) sets mineral severance tax valuations based on their production value from the previous year. The DOR also assesses public utilities, including airlines, electric utilities, pipelines, railroads, and telecommunications. County Assessors

establish the value of local agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial land and improvements. Together, the sum total of these three property valuations creates a good sense of each county's tax base for personal and real property. The DOR's Annual Report includes this information. The report is online, along with many other helpful publications and data, at: <http://revenue.state.wy.us/>.

The chart on this page presents the sum total of mineral, non-mineral, and locally assessed property tax valuations. The size of each bubble represents the total sum of 2011 tax valuation (in \$ millions).



The vertical location of each bubble represents that county's tax valuation growth rate since 2006 (5-year growth rate). Thus, Campbell County has the largest total tax valuation (\$5,426 million), and it has grown by 27.3% since 2006. Likewise, Niobrara County has the smallest total tax valuation (\$90 million), and it has grown by 58.0% since 2006.

Since 2006, Wyoming's total tax valuation has increased 13.8% to a total of \$24.3 billion. Although gas valuations dropped more than \$2.5 billion during that time, oil and coal valuations grew by more than \$2.9 billion. Statewide, agricultural property valuations rose 18%, residential property increased 35%, commercial property grew 33%, and industrial property increased 77%, from 2006 to 2011. Three counties (Campbell, Sublette, and Sweetwater) collectively represent 51% of total 2011 state valuations.

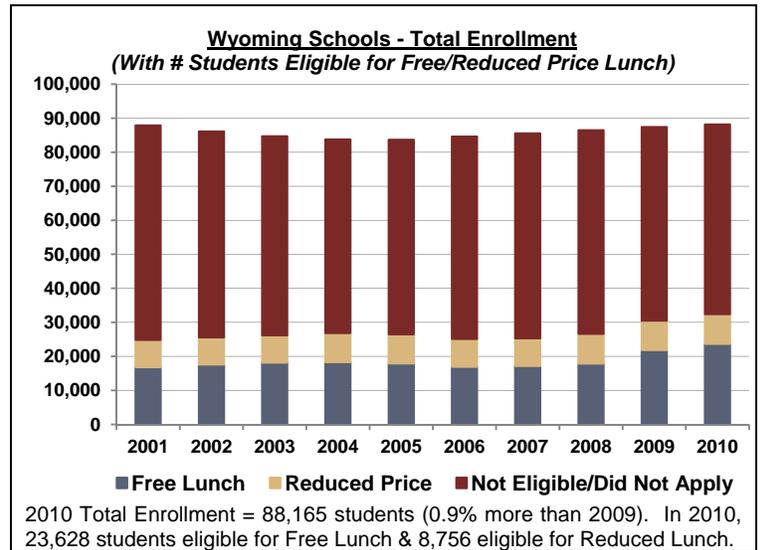
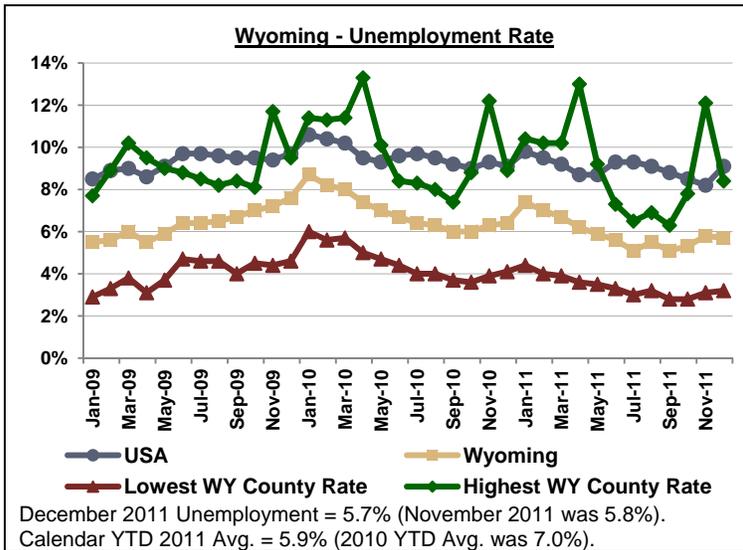
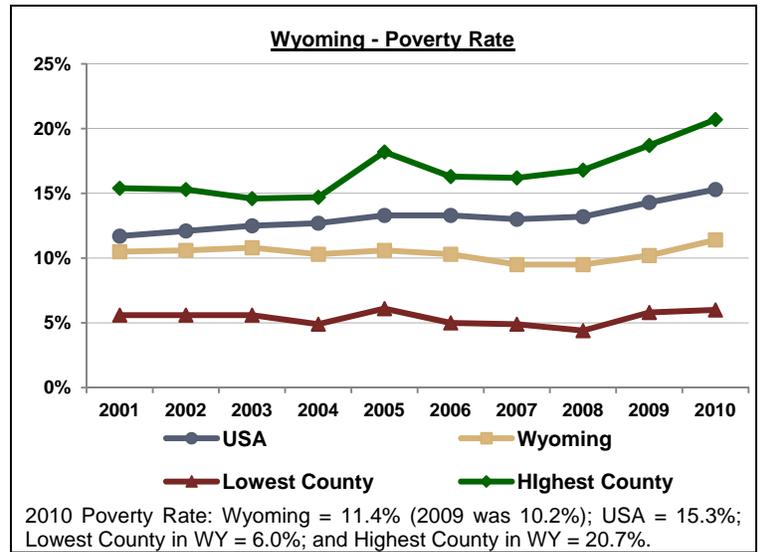
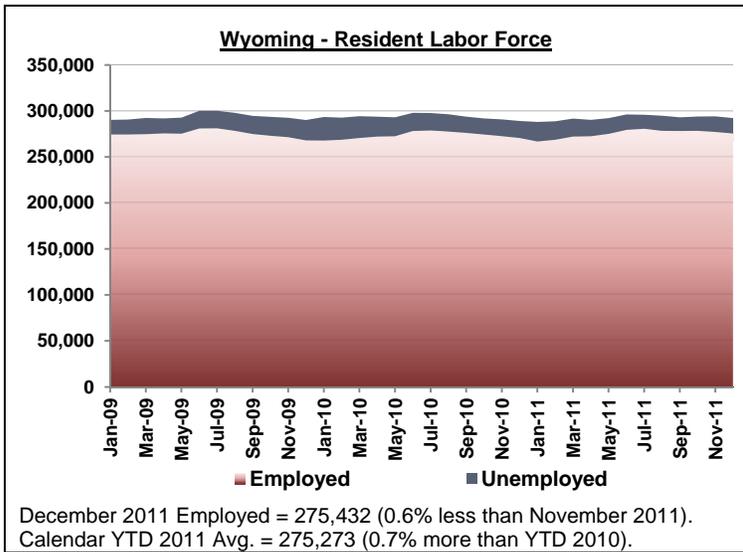
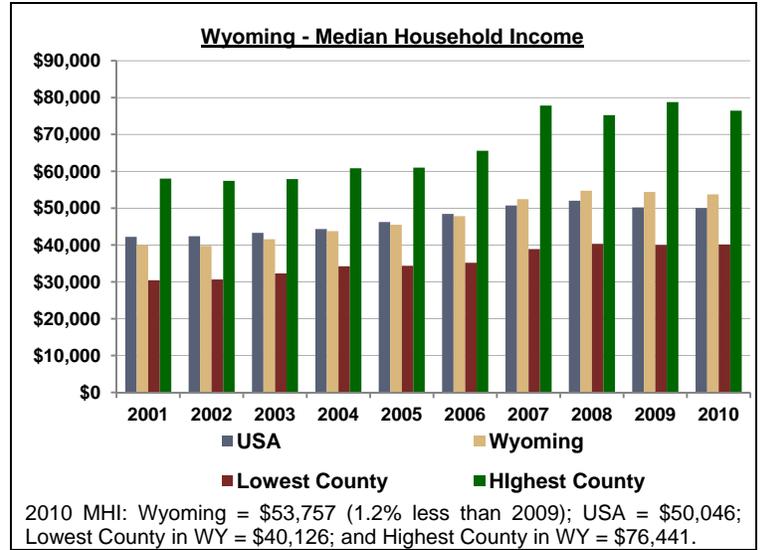
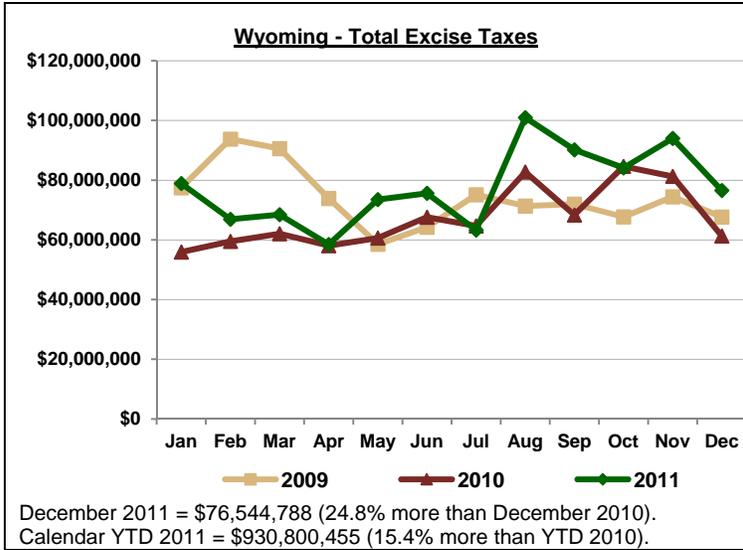


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Only three counties have experienced negative growth during 2006-2011: Fremont, Sheridan, and Uinta Counties. Each of those three counties suffered from a significant drop in their gas valuations. Campbell County had the biggest decrease in gas valuations (\$893 million), but that loss was more than offset by a \$1.5 billion increase in coal valuation. Four of the five fastest growing counties have small populations (less than 10,000 people). Those counties' growth has been driven by different components of their overall tax valuations. A huge increase in gas valuations (\$742 million) has led Johnson County's remarkable growth rate of 188.8% since 2006. Converse County has had significant growth in coal and electric utility values; Niobrara County's oil and railroad valuations have jumped; and Crook County's residential property values have started chasing increased production of oil and bentonite. In Hot Springs County, oil production has been leading the charge for growth for years.





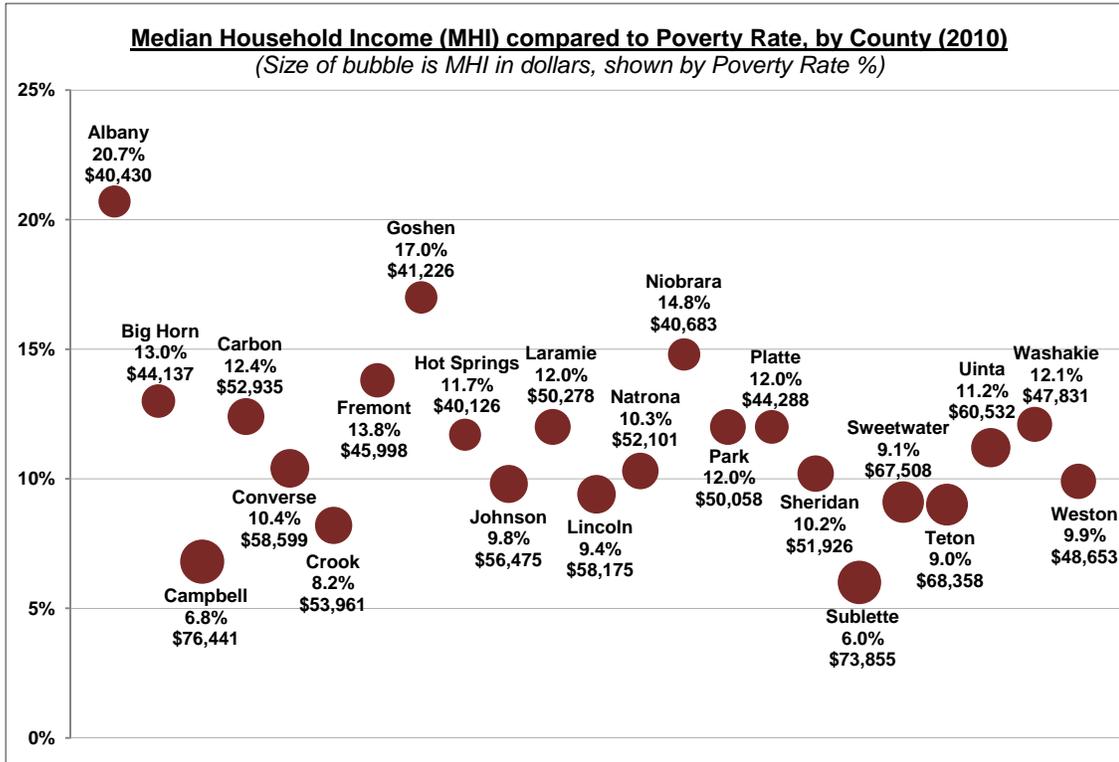
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Median Household Income and Poverty Rates

There are many ways to measure and report income. Many people are familiar with per capita income (individual earnings), adjusted gross income (for tax returns), and average household income. CBI is using Median Household Income (MHI) for this

report because it provides a more accurate indicator of income. Unlike per capita income or other averages, MHI cannot be skewed by a few individuals who have very high incomes. Instead, MHI is the point at which half of all household incomes are higher, and half are lower. The U.S. Census Bureau calculates MHI every winter (for the previous year, so 2010 was just released). The U.S. Census Bureau also determines the number of people who are living in poverty each year. For 2010, the national MHI was \$50,046 and the poverty rate was 15.3%.



is lower. Thus, the highest poverty rate (20.7%) is in Albany County, which has a relatively low MHI (\$40,430). Albany County's poverty rate is typically higher because of the large number of college students there. In contrast, Campbell and Sublette Counties have the highest MHI levels in the state, and they also have the lowest rates of poverty.

However, there are some key exceptions to the general rule. Crook County's MHI is \$53,961 – very close to the state MHI of \$53,757 – but it has a very low poverty rate (8.2%). Hot Springs County's MHI (\$40,126) is the lowest in the state, but its 11.7% poverty rate is just slightly higher than the state poverty rate of 11.4%. Uinta County has a relatively high MHI of \$60,532, but the poverty rate there (11.2%) is barely below the state rate.

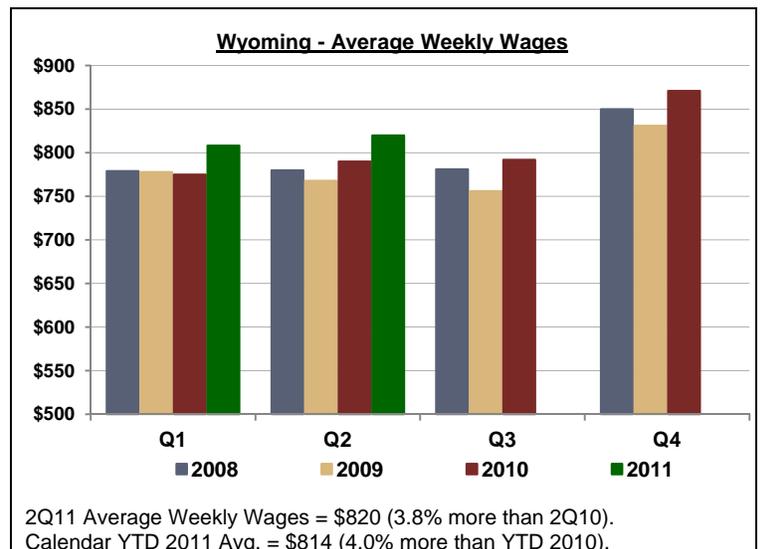
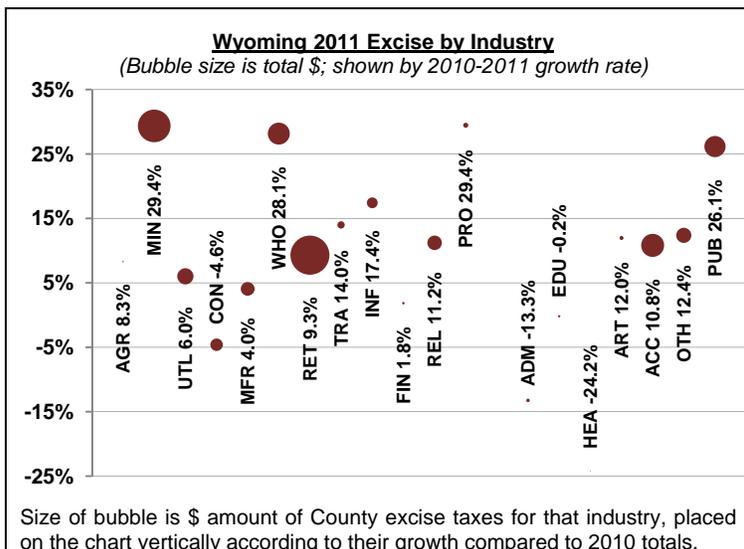
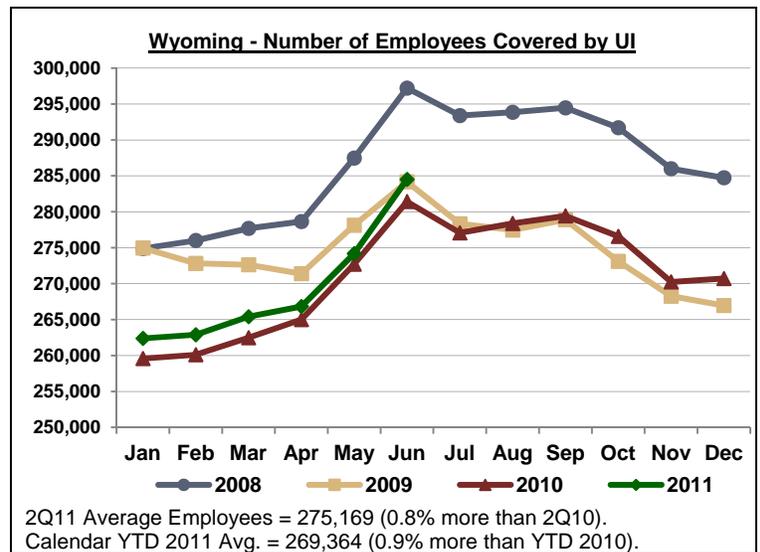
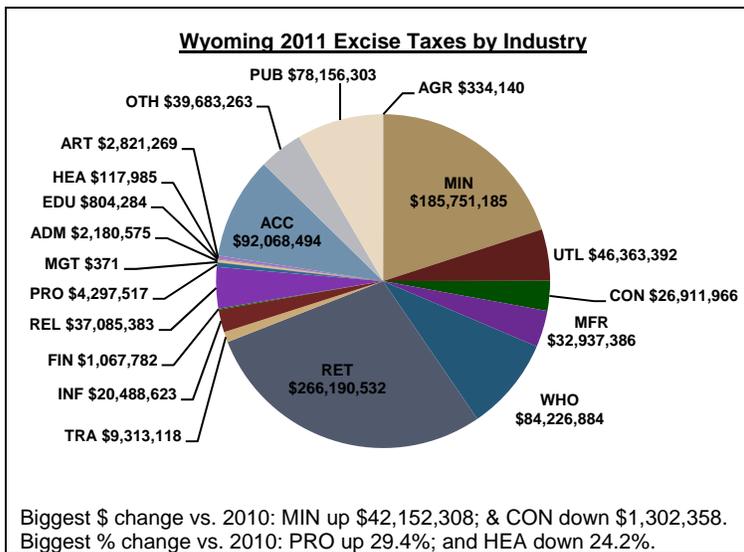
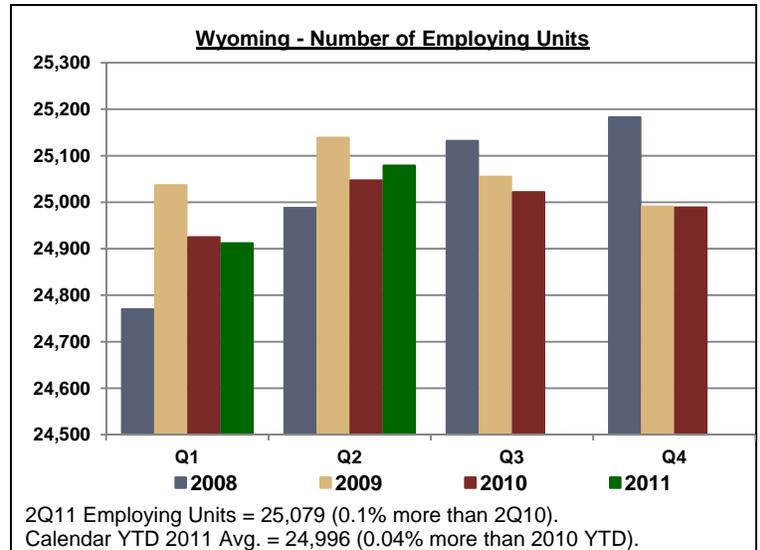
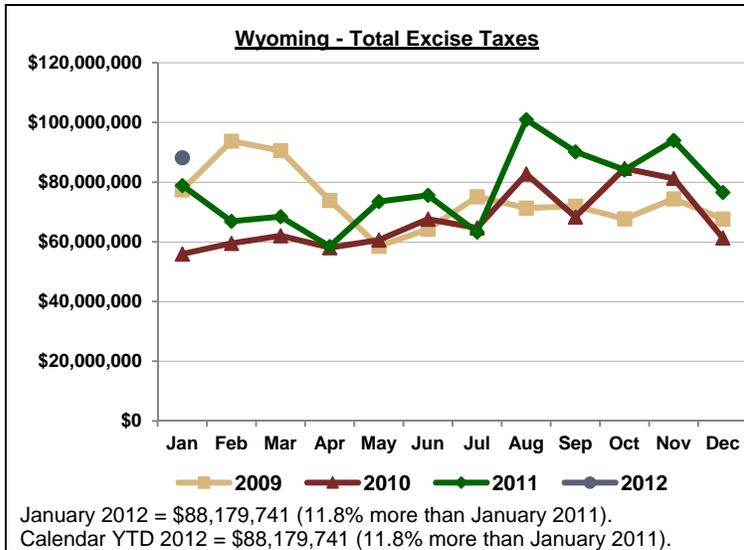


The chart above provides the MHI for each county in Wyoming, represented by the size of each bubble. Each county has been placed vertically on the chart according to the poverty rate for that county. The highest MHI (\$76,441 in Campbell County) is 90% greater than the lowest MHI (\$40,126 in Hot Springs County). The highest poverty rate (20.7% in Albany County) is more than three times greater than the lowest poverty rate (6.0% in Sublette County).

On the reverse side of this newsletter, additional charts provide the MHI and Poverty Rate for the county, state, and nation for the last ten years. There is also a chart providing school enrollments, including the number of students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunches. Many (but not all) students' families apply for the subsidized lunch program. The program provides another estimate of the size of a county's low-income population, since eligibility is based on whether a student's family household income is within a certain percentage of federal poverty guidelines (FPG). Eligibility for free lunches is 130% of FPG, and for reduced price lunches is 185% of FPG.

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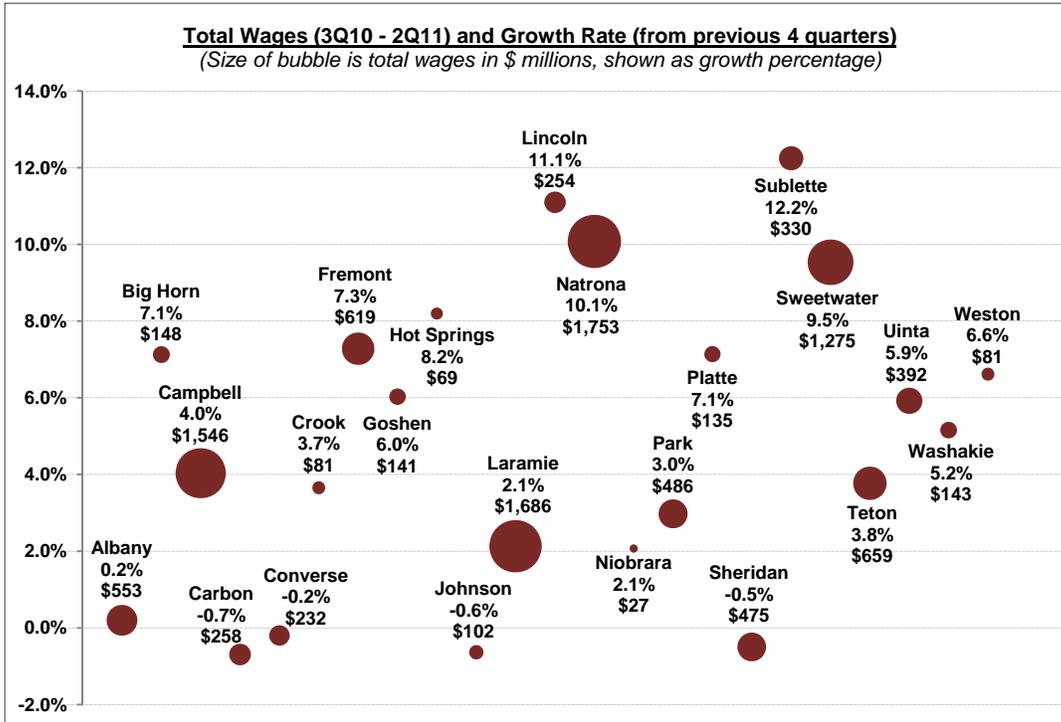


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the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) program, which creates monthly estimates of the entire labor force and unemployment rate for workers residing in a particular county, using Census counts, population estimates, and Wyoming's unemployment insurance (UI) system. The second measure, the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, tracks jobs by place of work. QCEW is a compilation of actual UI wage records filed by employers. Although QCEW data collection and reporting takes months to complete, and it only includes jobs with UI coverage, it compiles the exact number of employing units, employees, average weekly wages, and the total amount of wages paid in each county.

Total wages data is relevant to anyone wanting to know how much income has been available in the local economy. Such earnings are also major component of per capita income (which also includes investments, savings, employer-paid benefits, social security, and other types of income). It represents the total amount paid to all UI-covered employees in a county.

There are significant differences in the amount of total wages paid in Wyoming counties, as seen by the wide range of bubble sizes in the graph above. Campbell, Laramie, Natrona, and Sweetwater Counties each had more than \$1 billion in total wages during the last 4 quarters. Collectively, those four counties represent 53.7% of the total wages paid statewide. In contrast, there are four counties whose total wages are less than \$100 million during the last 4 quarters).

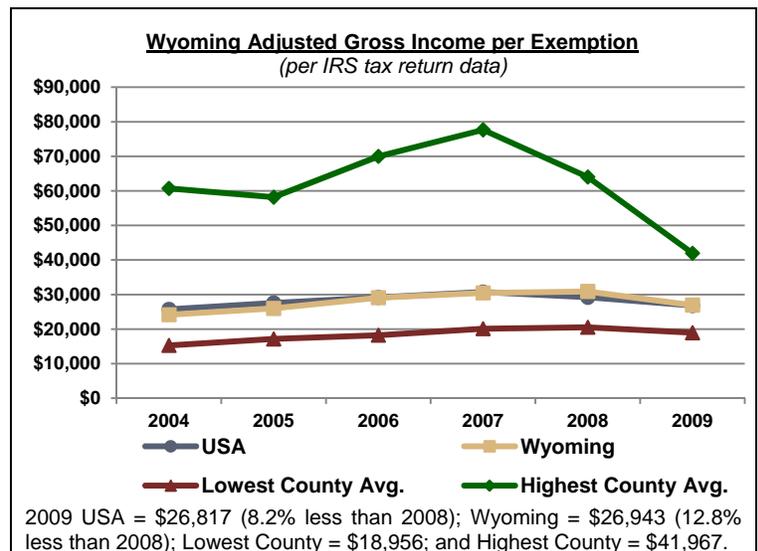
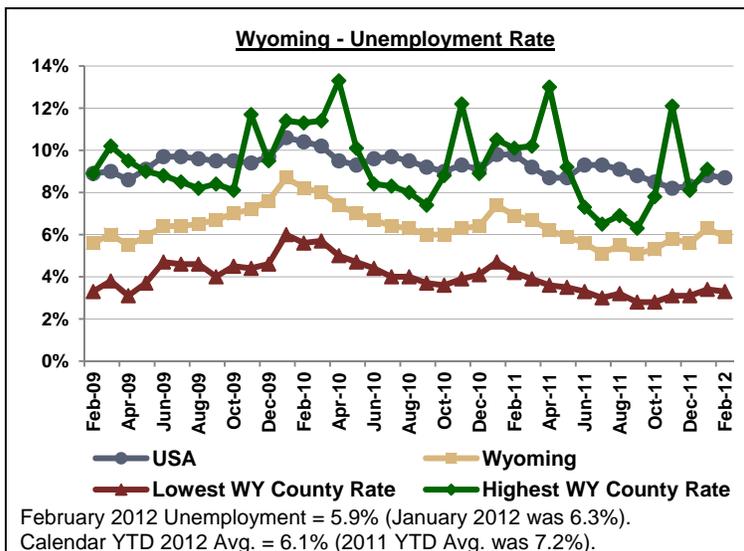
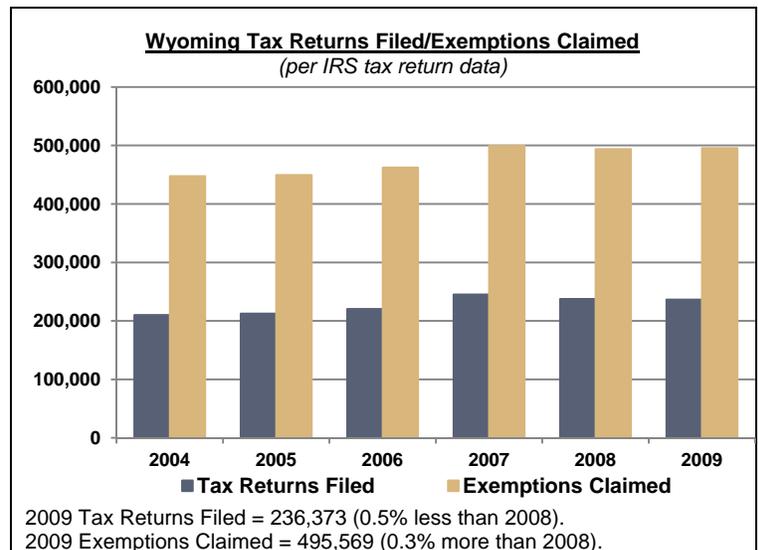
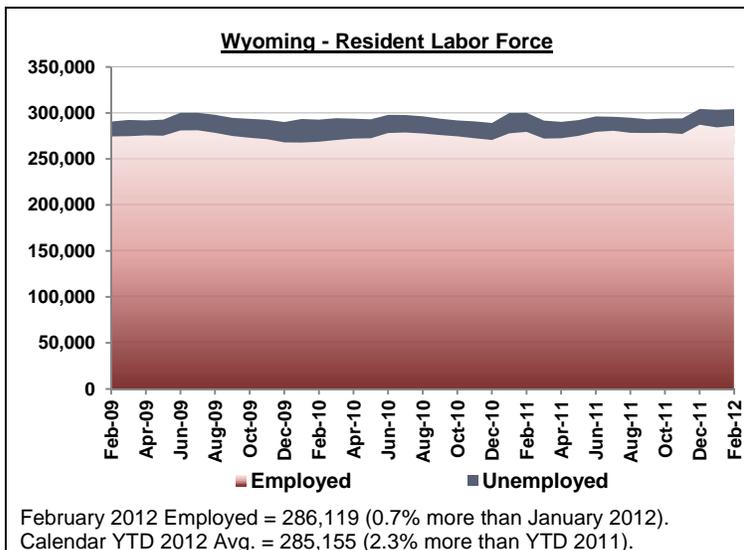
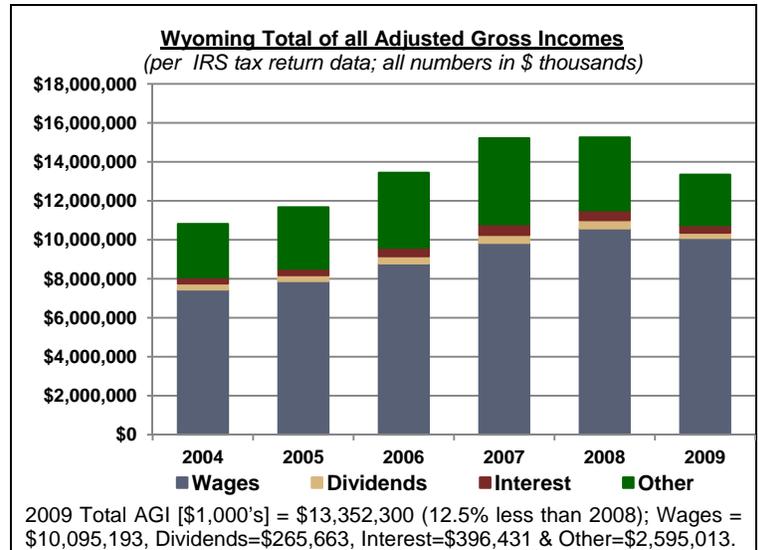
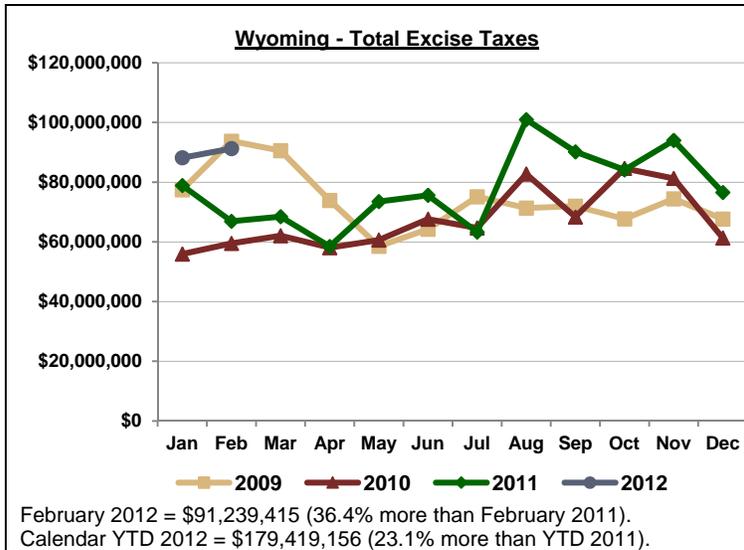
Growth rates for total wages (compared to the previous 4 quarters) are also widely divergent across the state, ranging from -0.7% (Carbon County) to +12.2% (Sublette County). Natrona County added the most total wages (\$160.5 million more), while Sheridan County lost the most (-\$2.4 million less). As a whole, Wyoming added \$578.3 million in total wages, representing 5.2% growth, bringing the total wages statewide to \$11.7 billion dollars for the last 4 quarters (3Q10 to 2Q11).

Growth in total wages is very strong. For 2Q11, total wages statewide were more than \$2.9 billion, representing a 4.7% increase over 2Q10. Lincoln County led all counties on a percentage basis (20.8% growth), and Natrona County added the most actual dollars (more than \$38.2 million), compared to total wages in 2Q10. Three counties experienced a decrease in total wages compared to 2Q10: Carbon -6.7% (-\$4.6 million), Uinta -5.3% (-\$4.9 million) and Sheridan -0.03% (-\$41,706).



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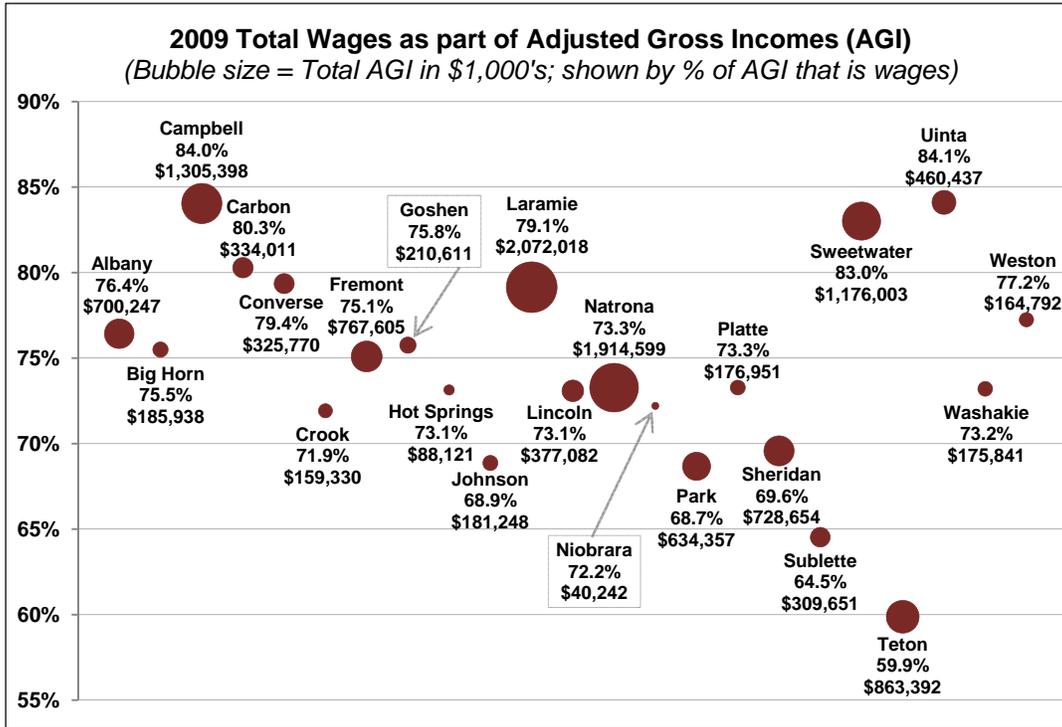


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Tax Returns

There are many sources of “official” data about the economy. Most data sources include estimates made by economists and analysts who are experienced and use their best judgment to provide good information. Other data sources use actual numbers based on specific transactions. This month, we use one such data source, from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The IRS collects information from every federal tax return, and collates it according to the county taxpayers live in when they file their tax return. (2009 is the latest data available – dated, yet very accurate). Information on nearly every line item from tax returns is available. This newsletter focuses on income.



Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) includes wages and salaries, dividends, interest, and many other forms of income. Nontaxable income and certain deductions are subtracted from the total gross income reported by taxpayers, in order to calculate AGI.

Wages and salaries (“Wages”) represent the amount of money earned by workers, a significant component of AGI. In Wyoming, the percentage of AGI that comes from Wages is a broad range. There are four counties whose Wages represent 80% or more of their total AGI: Uinta (84.1%), Campbell (84.0%), Sweetwater (83.0%), and Carbon (80.3%). Five counties have Wages that represent less than 70% of their total AGI: Teton (59.9%), Sublette (64.5%), Park (68.7%), Johnson (68.9%), and Sheridan (69.6%). Statewide, Wages account for 75.6% of total AGI (similar to the national rate of 75.8%).

Dividends are another significant component of AGI. The top three counties that have the highest percentage of Dividends in their total AGI are Teton (6.4%), Sheridan (3.3%), and Johnson (3.1%). Campbell County has the lowest percentage (0.6%) of Dividends included in its total AGI.

Interest is another key part of AGI. The top three counties that have the highest percentage of Interest in their total AGI are Teton (6.7%), Niobrara (4.5%), and Johnson (4.1%). Uinta County has the lowest percentage (1.3%) of Interest included in its total AGI.

AGI also includes “Other” income, such as taxable refunds, alimony, business income, capital gains, IRA distributions, pensions, rents, farm income, unemployment compensation, and some social security. CBI reduces Other income totals with the same deductions the IRS uses to calculate AGI. The top three counties for Other income as a percentage of their total AGI are Sublette (29.9%), Teton (27.0%), and Park (24.8%).

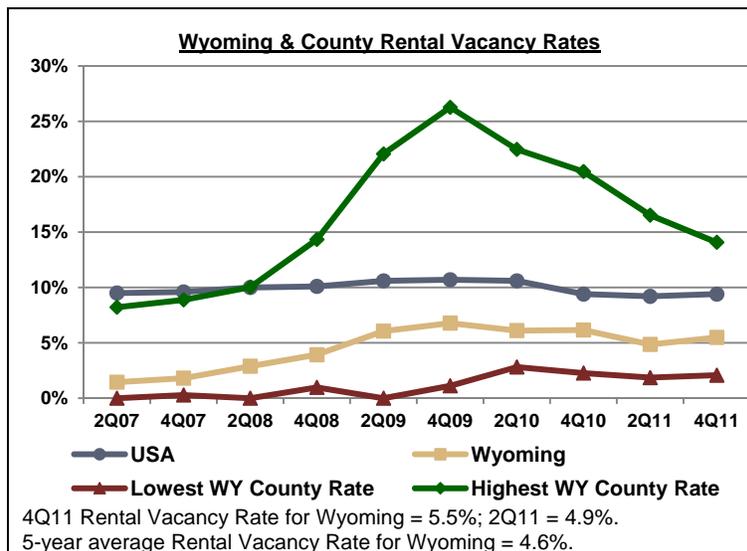
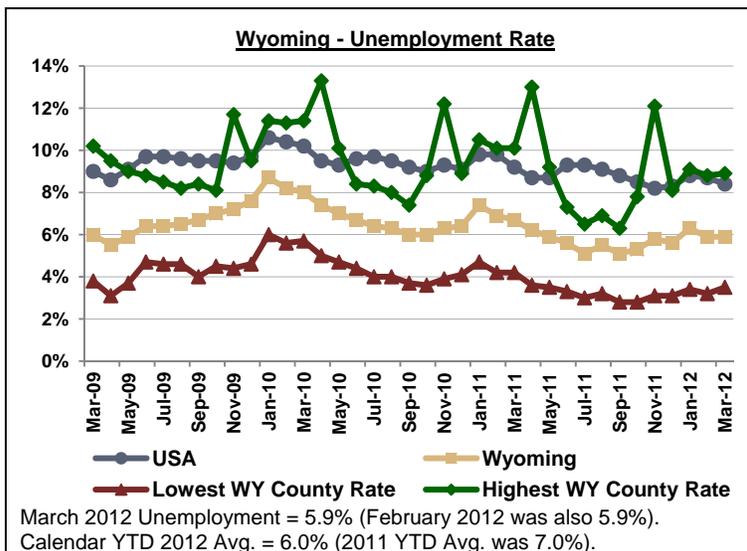
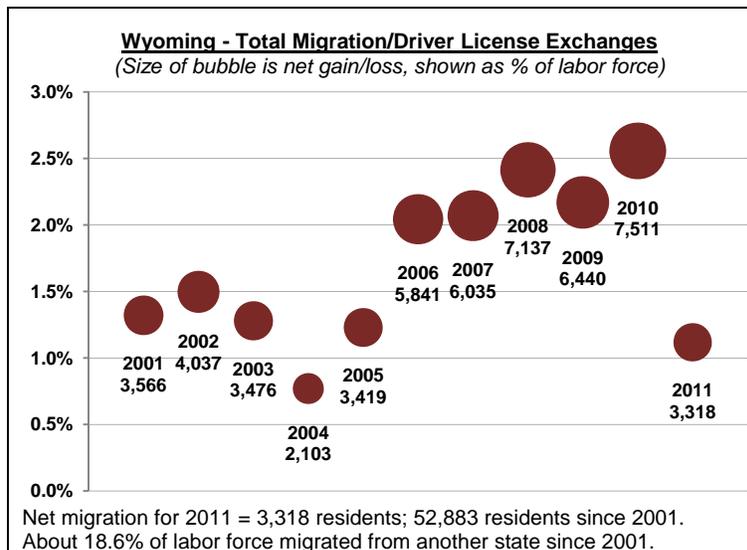
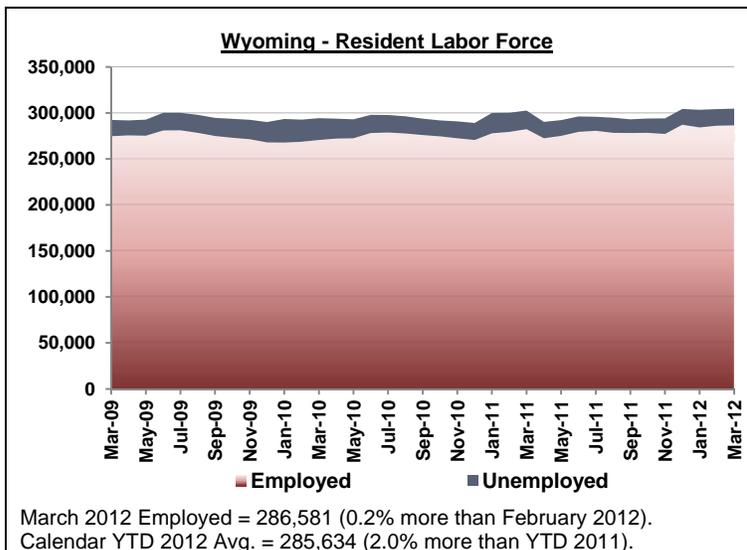
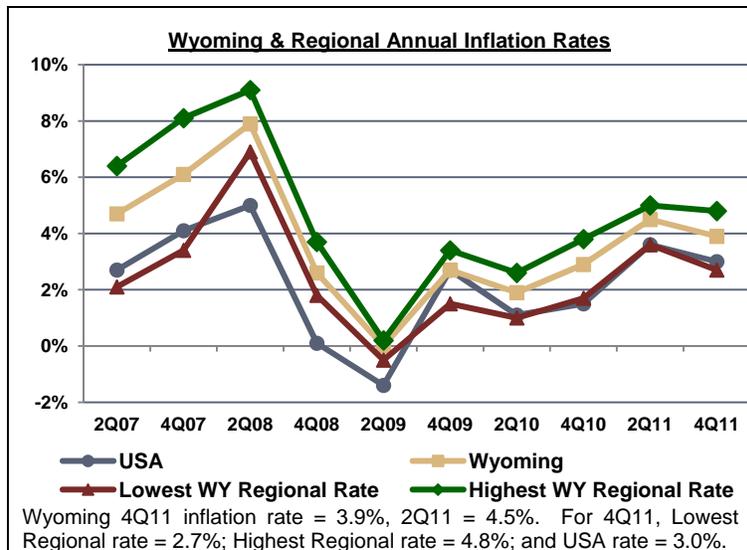
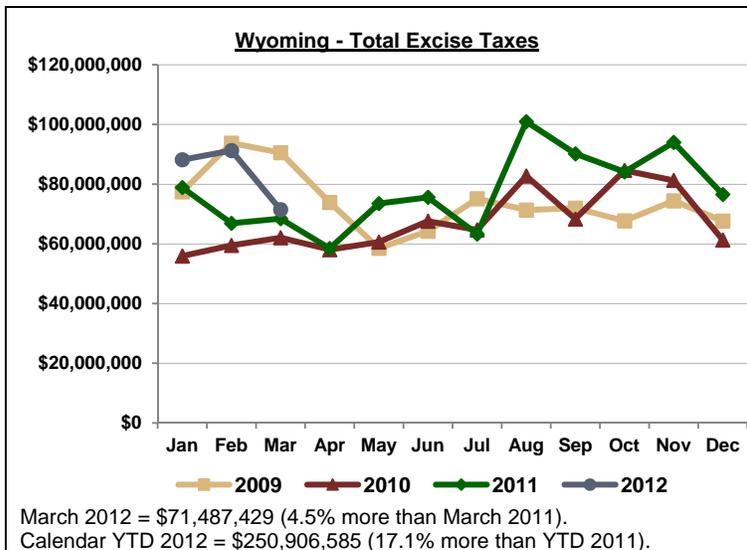
Five counties produce 54.9% of all AGI in Wyoming: Campbell, Laramie, Natrona, Sweetwater, and Teton Counties. Of course, except for Teton County, those are the most populated counties in Wyoming.



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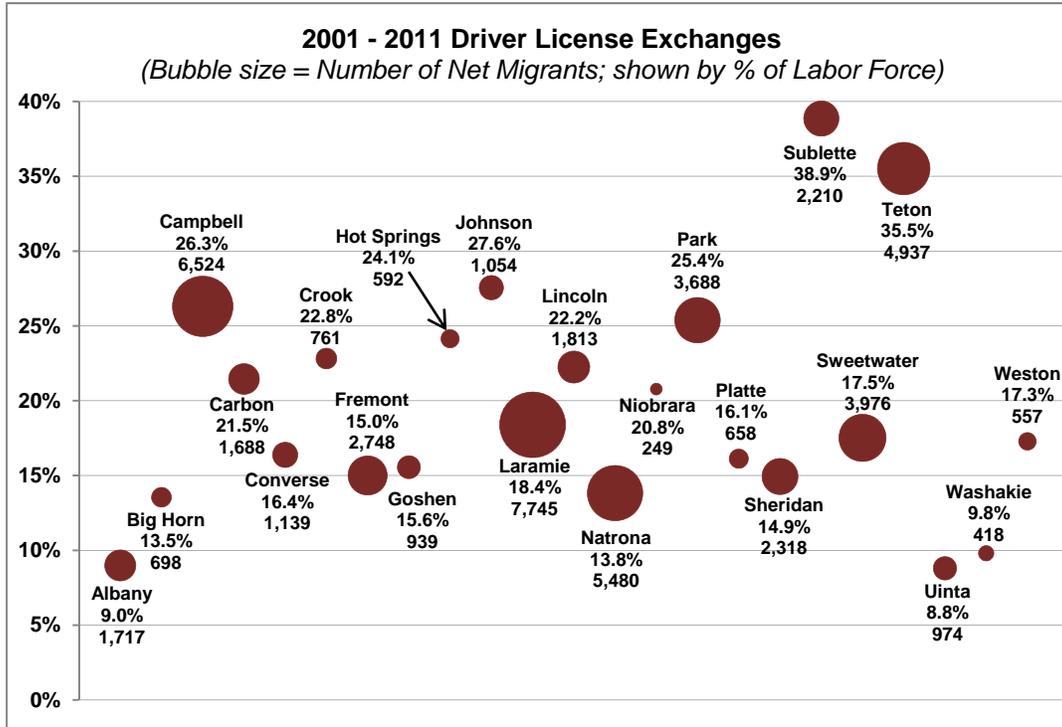
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Net Migration/Driver License Exchanges

Births, deaths, and people moving in or out of a community (migration), are the three components of population change. The U.S. Census Bureau analyzes and estimates migration every ten years, but typically does not make annual migration estimates for Wyoming counties. For more frequent information, other agencies track migration, such as the Wyoming

Community Development Authority (WCDA). The WCDA sponsors the preparation of a semi-annual report, the *Wyoming Profile of Demographics, Economics and Housing* (take a look at the WCDA Profile sometime – it is an excellent publication!). Included in the WCDA Profile are data for driver licenses exchanges. Wyoming law requires new residents to surrender their out-of-state driver's license for a Wyoming license. Similarly, when Wyoming residents move elsewhere they surrender their Wyoming license in their new state. Annual data on every such license exchange is aggregated and reported in the WCDA Profile, so that we know the net migration impact for every county in Wyoming.



CBI further analyzes WCDA's driver license exchange data to reach a deeper understanding of local economies. Generally speaking, licensed drivers are a part of the labor force. If we compare the number of driver license exchanges in a county to the size of that county's labor force, we can get a glimpse of how important migration has been for that county's labor force. For example, since 2001, Laramie County has gained more residents through migration than any other county. However, as a percent of its total labor force, the rate of net migration to Laramie County is about the same as the statewide average (18.6%). As of December 2011, about 18.4% of Laramie County's labor force is represented by workers who moved here from another state.



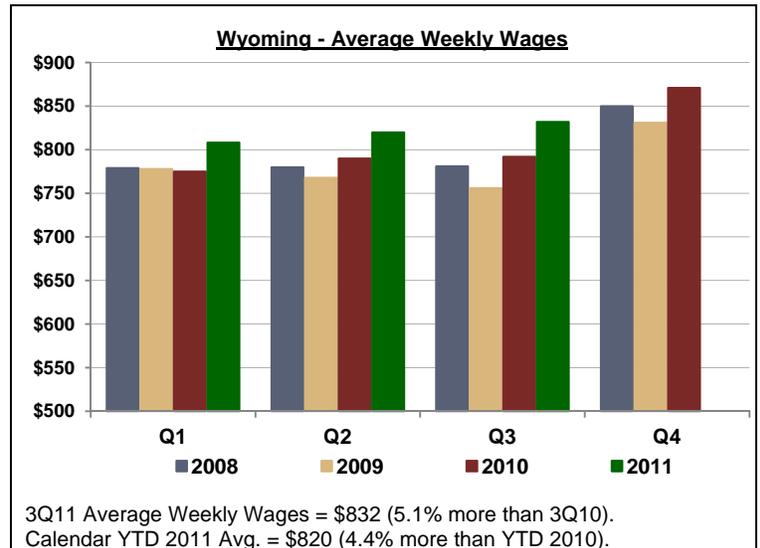
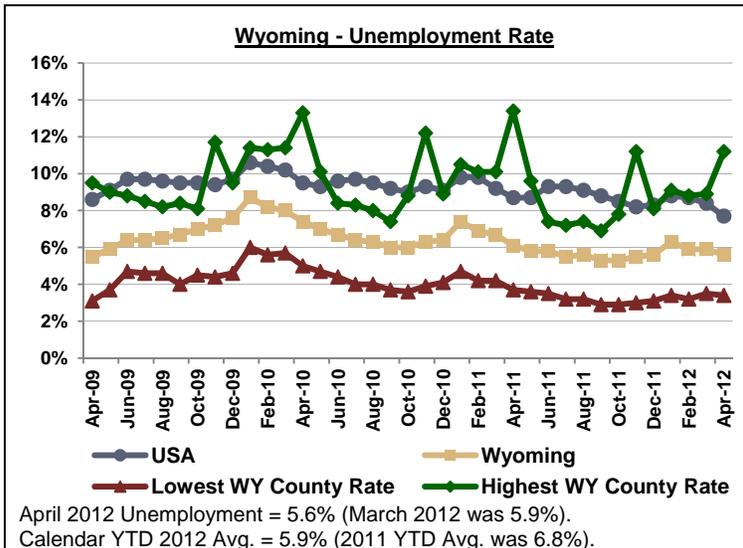
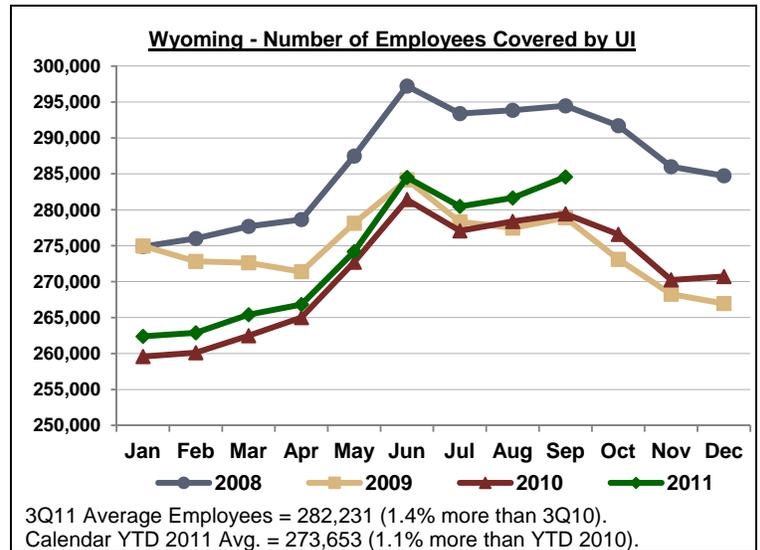
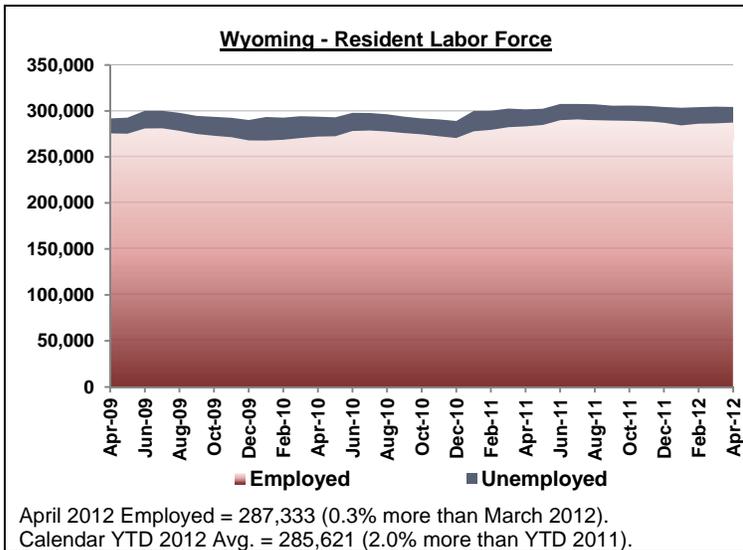
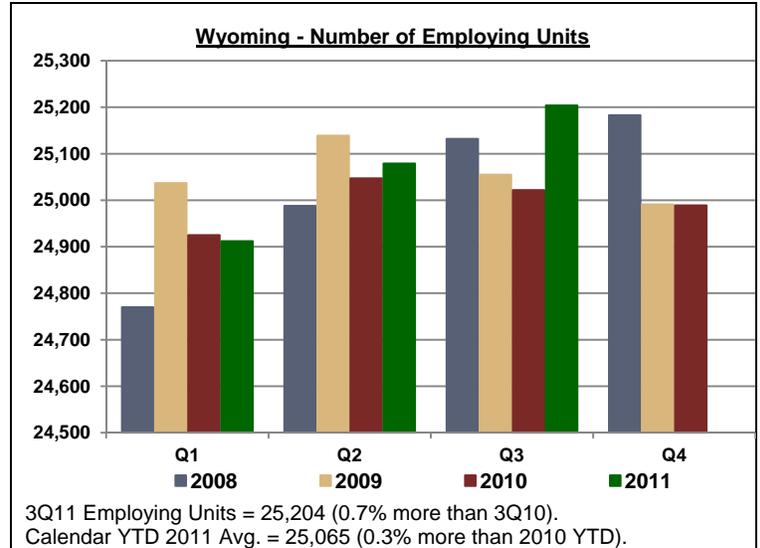
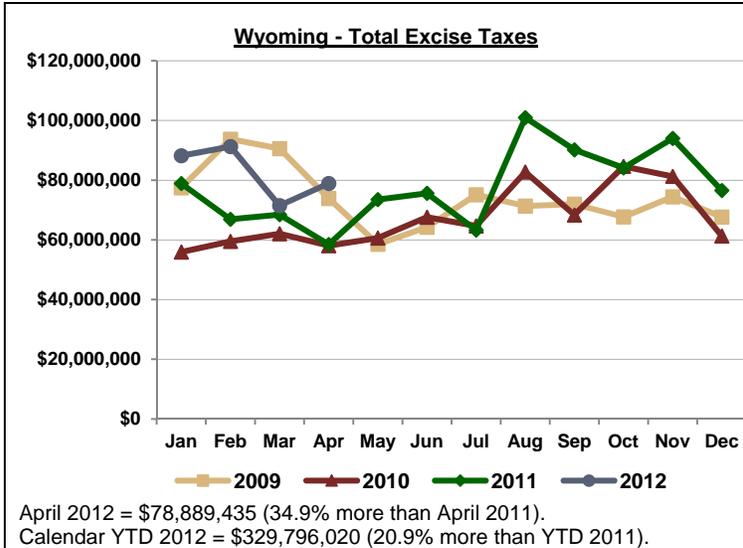
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Sublette County has the highest percentage of its labor force coming from net migration (38.9%). At the other extreme is Uinta County, where just 8.8% of the labor force includes new residents from another state. [Note: Albany County, because of its large student "temporary" population attending the University, may actually be more impacted by net migration than the data suggests, since many students do not exchange their driver license].

During the past ten years, the five top counties accounted for 54.2% of all migration growth (Campbell, Laramie, Natrona, Sweetwater, and Teton Counties). Wyoming's total net migration, from 2001 to 2002, resulted in 52,883 new residents who moved here from someplace else. Remember, births and deaths also have an impact on the total resident population. This article focuses on net migration only because it has a more significant and immediate impact on the labor force and the local community.



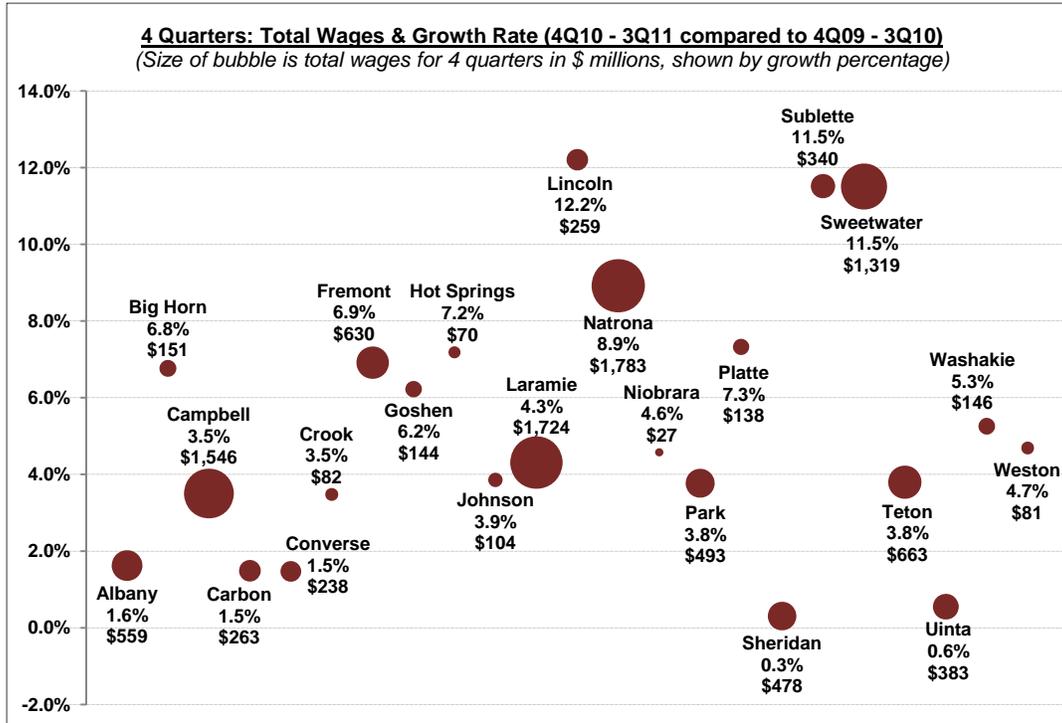


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There are significant differences in the amount of total wages paid in Wyoming counties, as seen by the wide range of bubble sizes in the graph above. Campbell, Laramie, Natrona, and Sweetwater Counties each had more than \$1 billion in total wages during the last four quarters. Collectively, those four counties represent 53.8% of the

total wages paid statewide, and a huge part (63.9%) of wage growth during that time. In contrast, there are four counties whose total wages are less than \$100 million for the last 4 quarters: Crook, Hot Springs, Niobrara, and Weston.

Growth rates for total wages (compared to the previous 4 quarters) are also widely divergent across the state, ranging from 0.3% (Sheridan County) to 12.2% (Lincoln County). Natrona County added the most total wages (\$146 million more). As a whole, Wyoming added \$635 million in total wages, representing 5.7% growth, bringing the total wages statewide to more than \$11.8 billion dollars for the most recently reported four quarters (4Q10 to 3Q11).

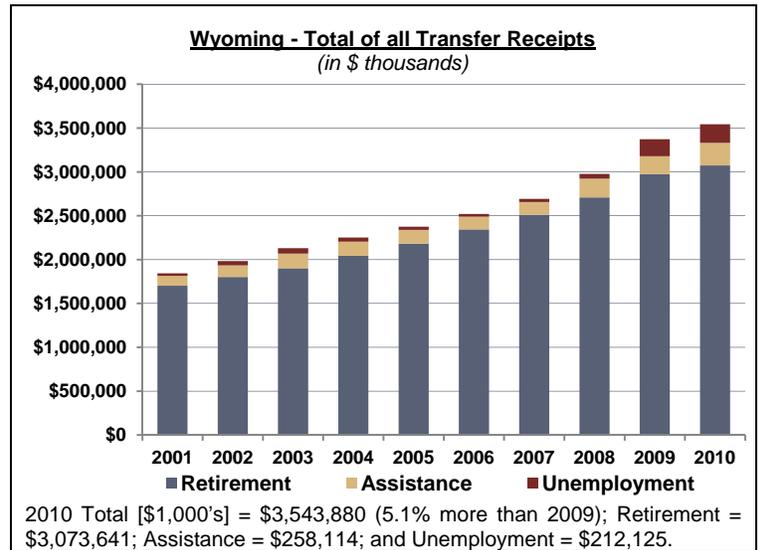
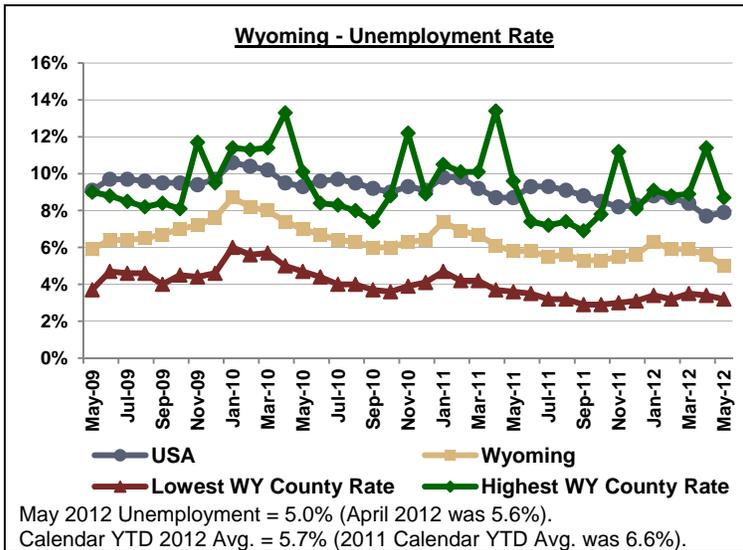
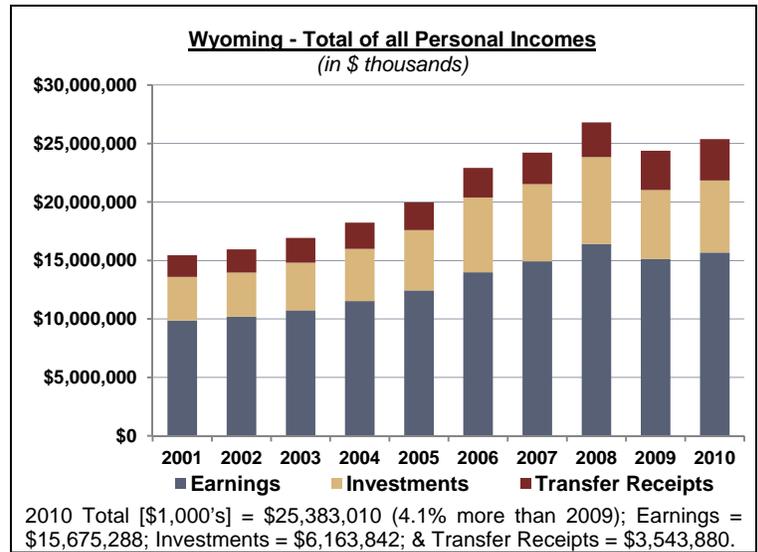
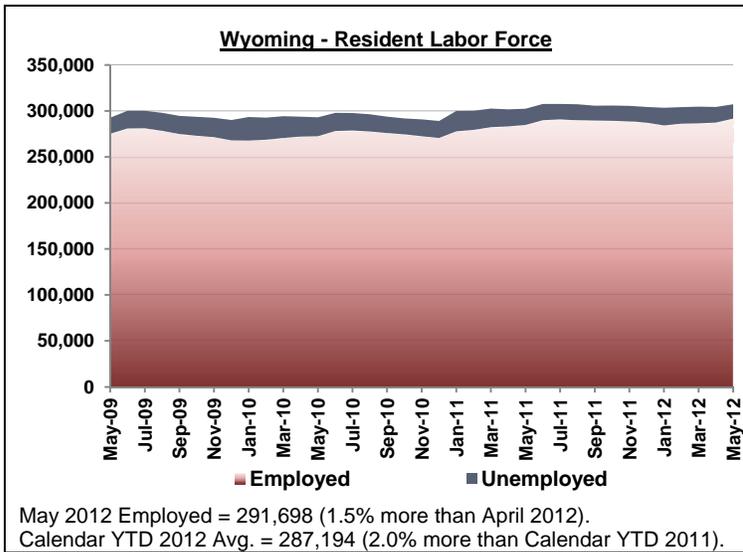
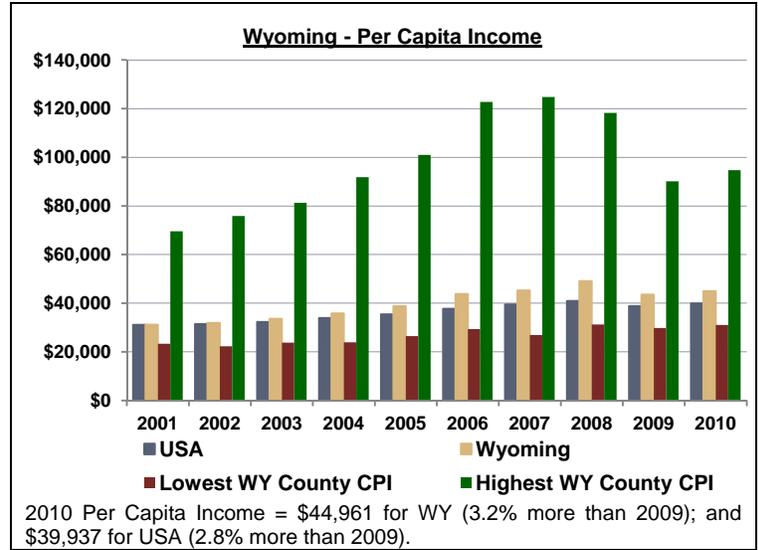
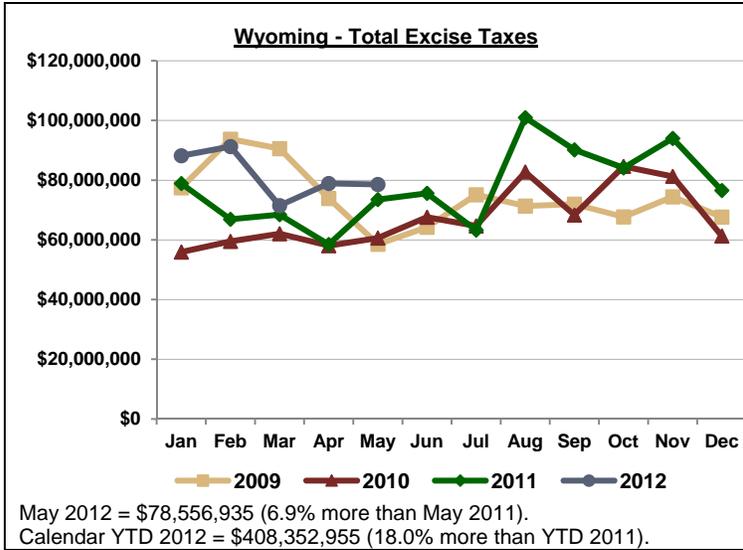
3Q11 growth in total wages compared to 3Q10 is very strong. For 3Q11, total wages statewide were more than \$3 billion, representing a 6.5% increase over 3Q10. Sweetwater County led all counties on a percentage basis (15.3% growth), and Laramie County added the most actual dollars (\$37.8 million), compared to total wages in 3Q10. Only one county experienced a decrease in total wages compared to 3Q10: Uinta County's total wages were down by 8.9% (-\$9 million).



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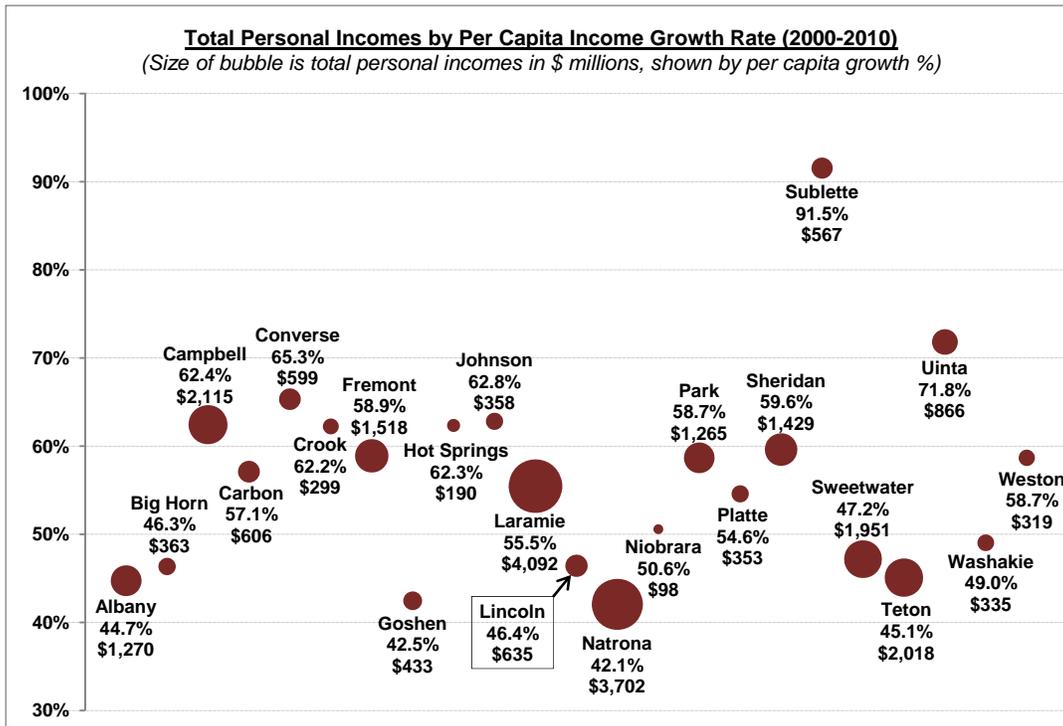


Per Capita Income and Total Personal Income

There are many ways to measure income. In an earlier newsletter, CBI discussed the income that was reported on federal tax returns filed with the IRS. Tax return data is very accurate, but obviously does not include nontaxable income. Per capita income (PCI) is a broader measure, and it is helpful to consider PCI changes over a long period of time, as it gives a general idea of the overall health of local economies.

The PCI of every county in the nation is estimated every year by the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). Basically, the BEA estimates every form of income that is produced, and then divides the total personal income in each county by its population (as determined by the U.S. Census Bureau) to calculate PCI.

Calculation of PCI starts with its three main components: Earnings, Investments, and Transfer Receipts. Transfer Receipts are payments to people for which no current services are performed, including Retirement funds, Assistance from the government (e.g., food stamps), and Unemployment insurance compensation.



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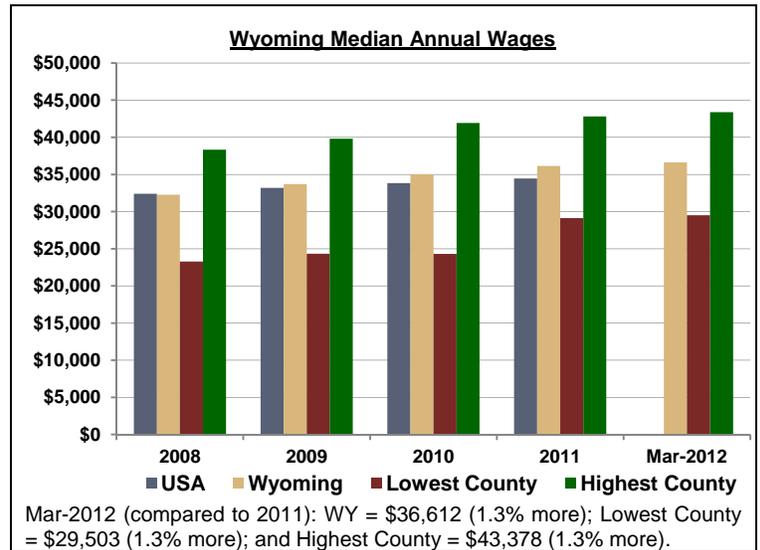
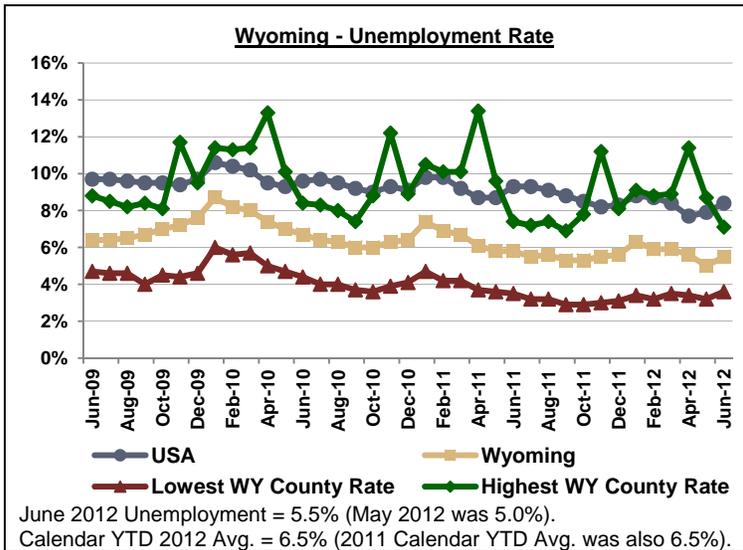
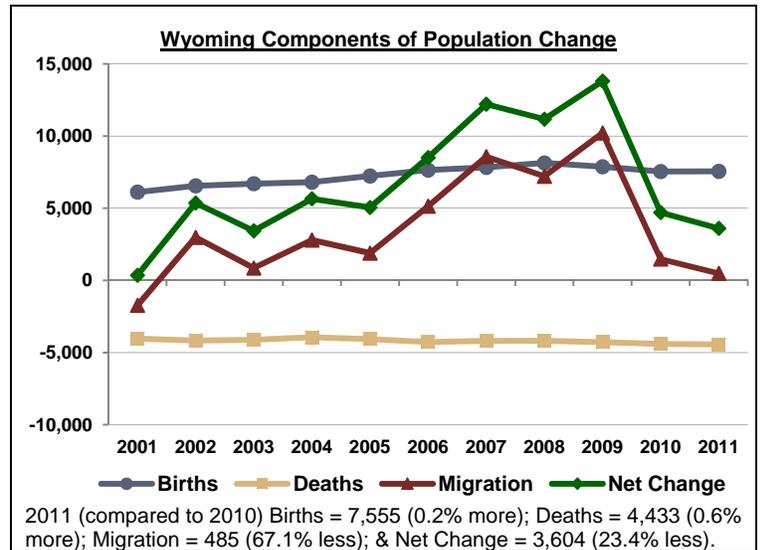
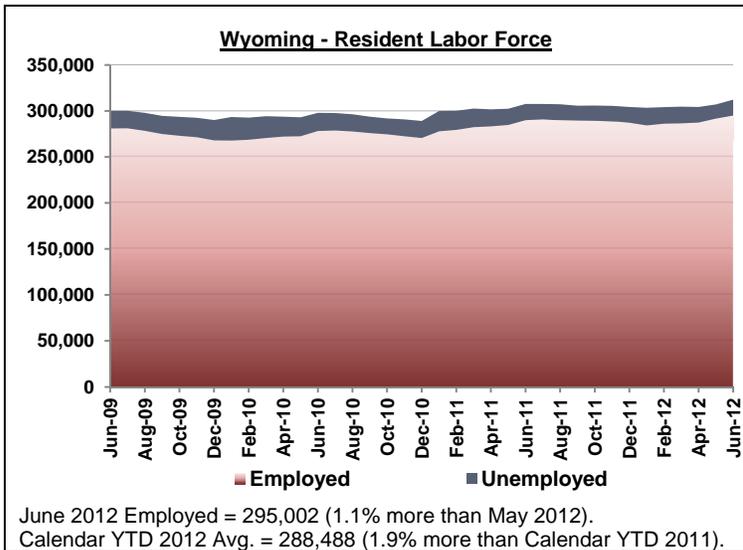
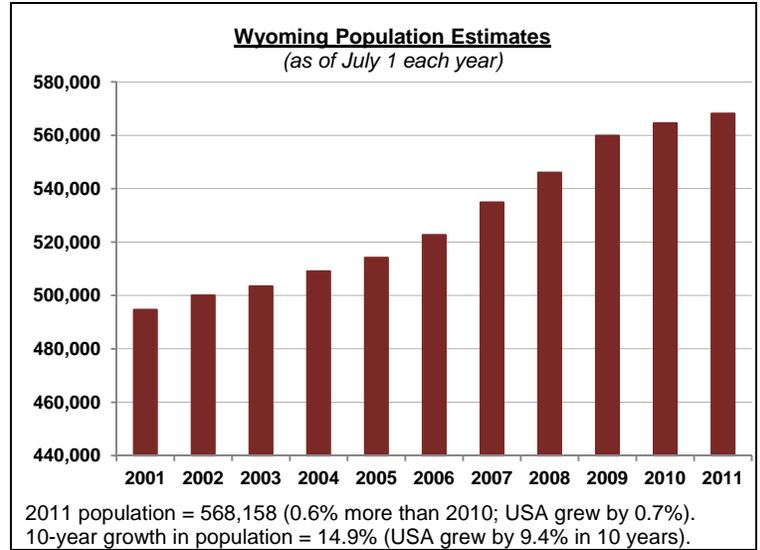
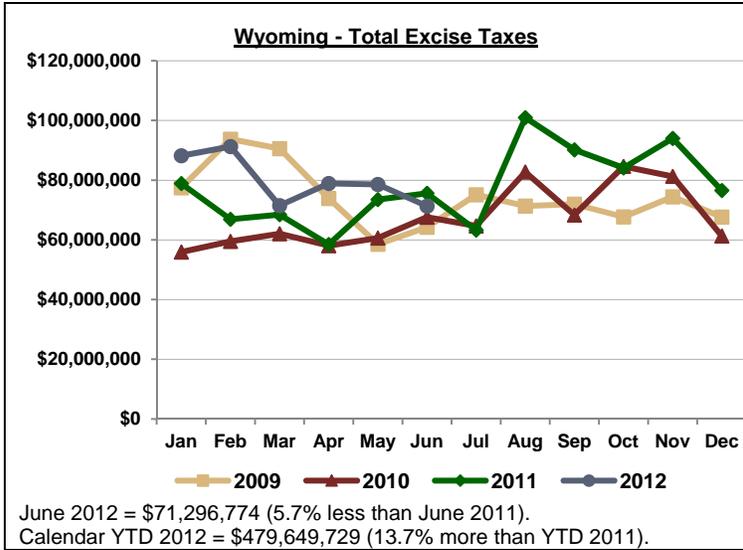
Sublette County (91.5%), Uinta County (71.8%), and Converse County (65.3%) experienced the most PCI growth. However, it is important to note that Counties with the “slowest” PCI growth still exceeded the national growth rate of 31.7%: Natrona = 42.1%; Goshen = 42.5%; and Albany = 44.7%. The five Counties with the largest total personal income together represent 54.7% of Wyoming’s total personal income, which reached \$25.4 billion in 2010 (Laramie = \$4.1 billion; Natrona = \$3.7 billion; Campbell = \$2.1 billion; Teton = \$2 billion; and Sweetwater = \$2 billion).



For the three components of personal income, Sublette County led growth in Earnings (318.6%) and Investment income (112.5%), while Teton County led Transfer Receipts growth (155.3%). Within the Transfer Receipts component, Campbell County had the fastest growth rates for Retirement (124.3%) and Assistance incomes (170.4%), while Sublette County grew by an incredible 1,818.9% for Unemployment compensation. Statewide, total personal income grew 75.5% from 2000 to 2010.

In terms of actual dollars for personal income growth, Laramie County led the state in growth of Net Earnings (\$1.044 billion) and Transfer Receipts (\$355 million), while Teton County led in growth of Investment income (\$402 million). Actual dollar growth within the components of Transfer Receipts was led by Laramie County (\$295 million more Retirement income and \$31 million more Assistance income) and Natrona County (\$30 million more Unemployment compensation). Wyoming’s total personal income grew by more than \$10.9 billion (53.7%) from 2000 to 2010.



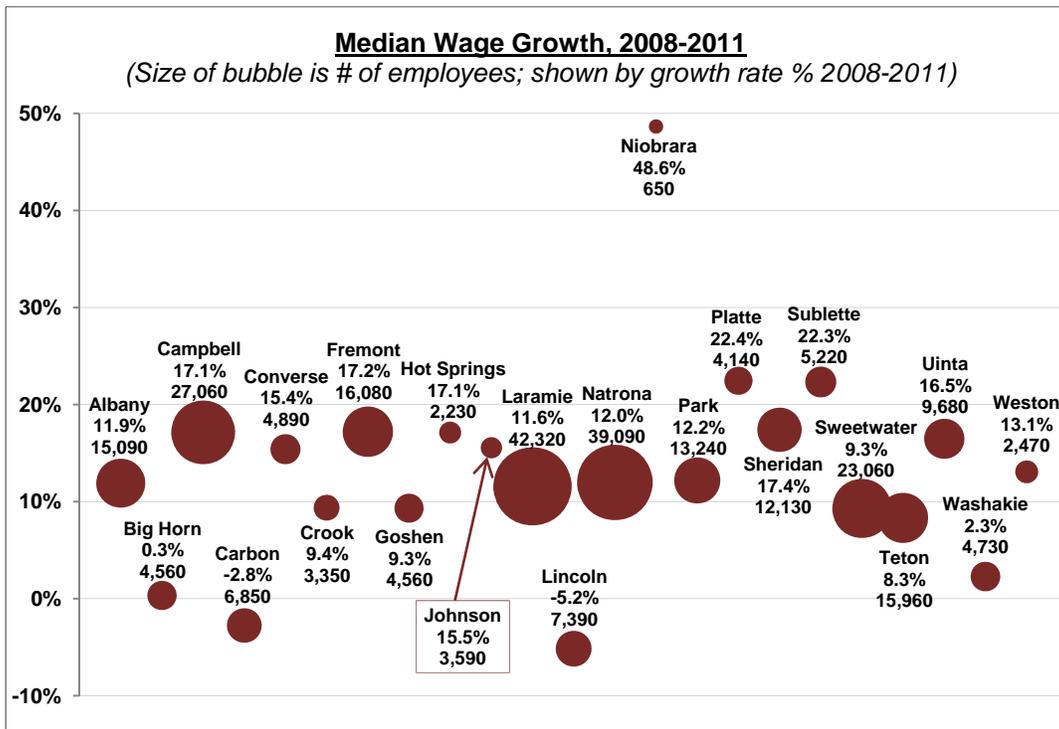


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Median Wage Growth

The Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, Research & Planning (R&P) section conducts an annual Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Wage Survey every year. From the OES survey, R&P produces occupational employment and wage estimates. OES data is very detailed, and can be used by employers to determine if they are offering competitive wages. Students and workers can use the data for career planning. CBI is presenting OES data for all occupations (combined) to compare Median Wages paid in each county, and to also consider the growth rate of Median Wages from 2008 to 2011. Median Wages represent a mid-point for each county where half of all employees are paid less and half are paid more than the Median Wage. Median Wages are not the same thing as average wages, which would be a total of all wages divided by the number of employees. Average wages can be skewed by a few relatively high paid workers.



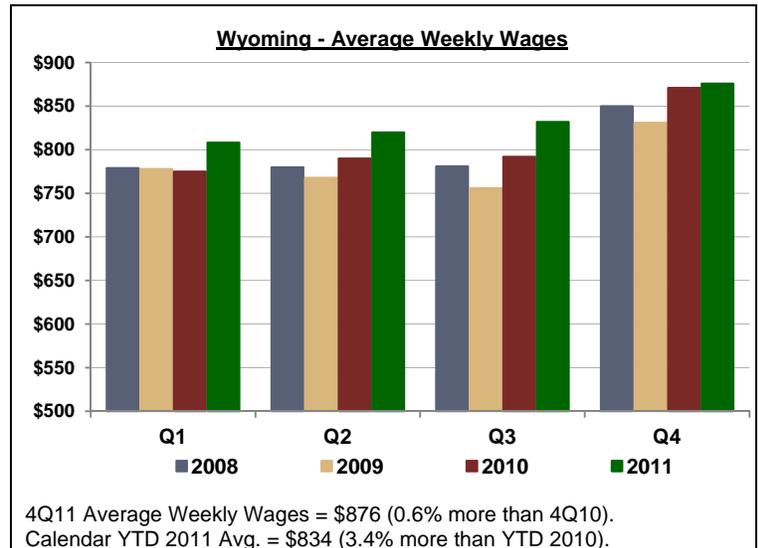
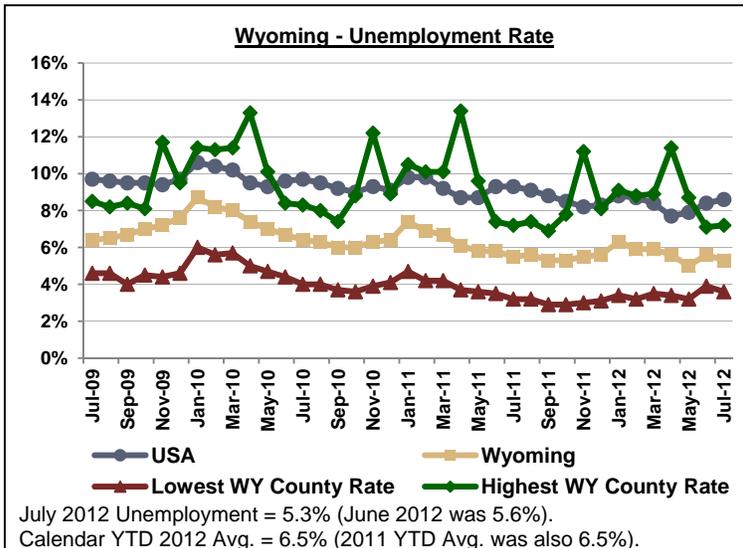
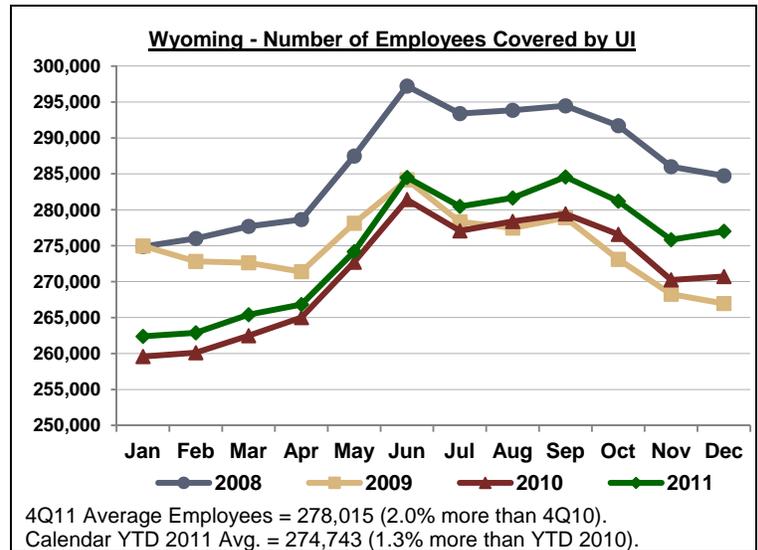
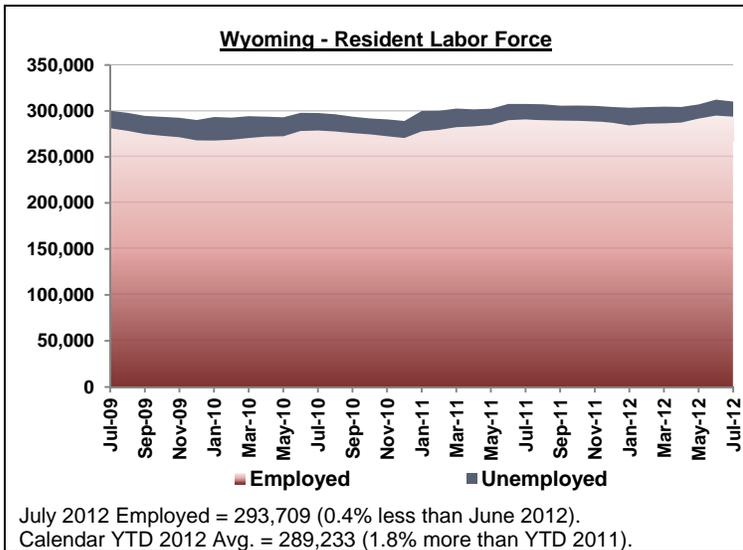
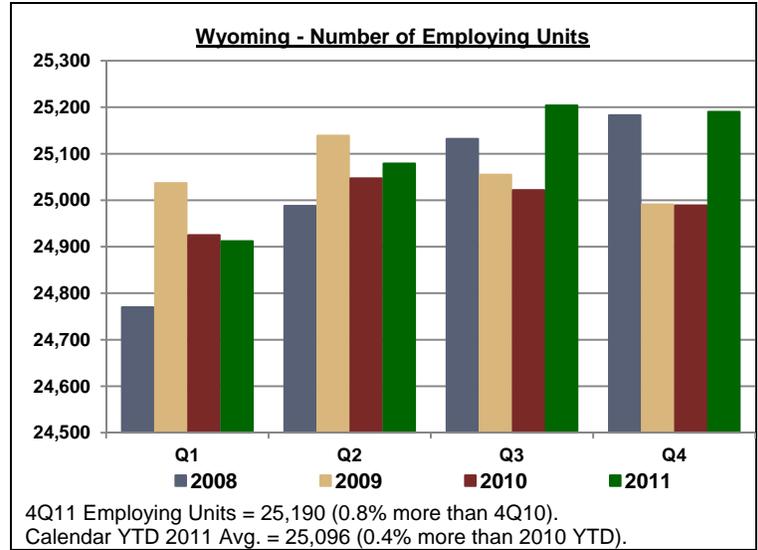
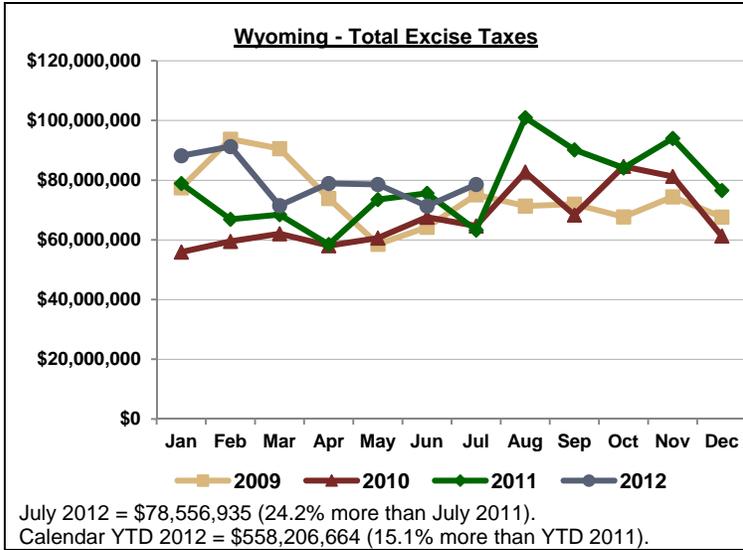
Most counties in Wyoming experienced growth in Median Wages from 2008 to 2011. Statewide, Median Wages grew by an average of \$3,860, or 12.0%. Two counties experienced reductions in their Median Wages: Lincoln County's Median Wages lost \$1,839, or -5.2%; and Carbon County's Median Wage lost \$968, or -2.8%. Niobrara County's Median Wages grew an astonishing \$11,326, or 48.6%, during those three years. Other high growth counties include Platte County, which added \$6,817, or 22.4%, to its Median Wage; and Sublette County, which grew by \$7,815, or 22.3% from 2008 to 2011. Statewide, Median Wages are expected to have grown by an average of 1.3% since May 2011.



Some counties have experienced volatility in Median Wage change. Big Horn County, for example, saw its Median Wage drop steeply from 2008 to 2009, but it has recently recovered that lost ground. Crook County faced a similar decline from 2008 to 2009, but since then it has grown strongly. Johnson and Weston Counties, each of which outpaced the state growth rate of 12.0%, would have performed even better, but for a sharp decline from 2010 to 2011.

Many Wyoming counties have fewer employees in 2011 than they did in 2008. Sweetwater County lost 3,460 employees during those three years, Sheridan lost 1,460 employees, and Carbon County shrank by 1,340 employees (or -16.4%). Some of Wyoming's smallest counties, however, grew from 2008 to 2011. Albany County (620 more employees), Platte County (590 more employees), and Washakie County (560 employees) were among the leaders in growing the number of employees from 2008 to 2011. The total number of estimated employees statewide dropped by more than 11,000 from 2008 to 2011.





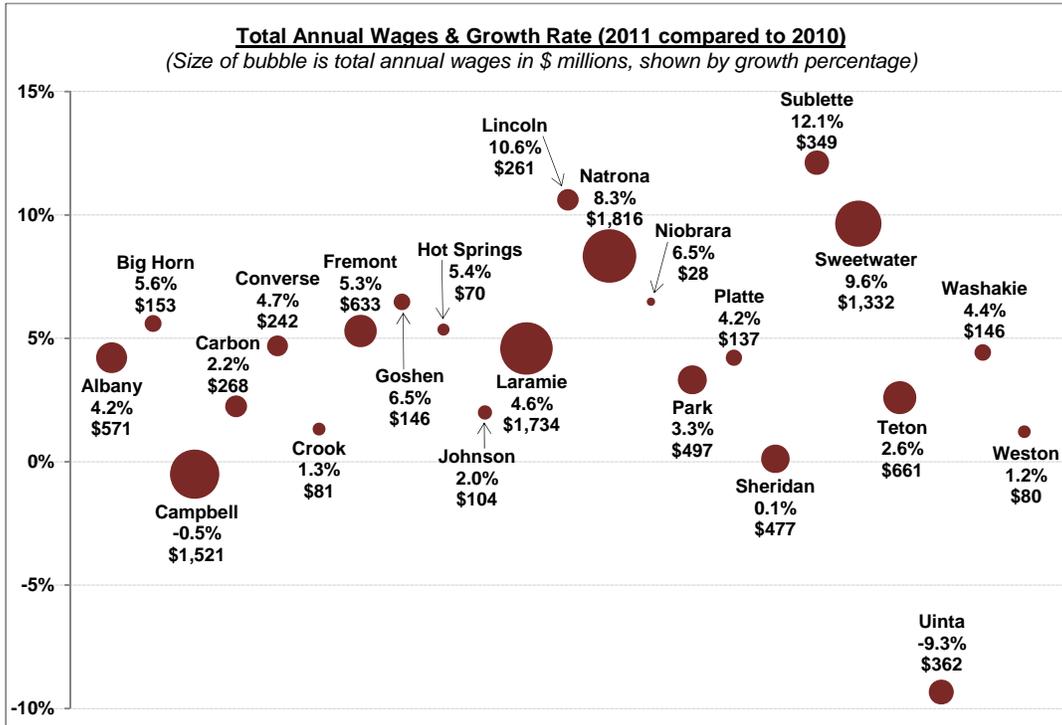
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Total Wages

CBI frequently uses two different measures of employment. The first employment measure is the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) program, which creates monthly *estimates* of the entire labor force and unemployment rate for workers residing in a particular county,

using Census counts, population estimates, and Wyoming's unemployment insurance (UI) system. The second measure, the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, tracks jobs by place of work. QCEW is a compilation of *actual* UI wage records filed by employers. Although QCEW data collection and reporting takes months to complete, and it only includes workers who have UI coverage, it compiles the exact number of employing units, employees, average weekly wages, and the total amount of wages paid in each county.



Total wages data is relevant to anyone wanting to know how much income has been available in the local economy. Such

earnings are also a major component of per capita income (which also includes investments, savings, employer-paid benefits, social security, and other types of income). The total wages above represent the total amount paid to all UI-covered employees in each county in Wyoming for all four quarters of 2011.

There are significant differences in the amount of total wages paid in Wyoming counties, as seen by the wide range of bubble sizes in the graph above. Campbell, Laramie, Natrona, and Sweetwater Counties each had more than \$1 billion in total wages during 2011. Collectively, those four counties represent 53.7% of the total wages paid statewide, and a huge part (60.5%) of wage growth during that time. The amount of those four counties' total wages, and their contribution to statewide total wage growth, is becoming even greater with each passing quarter.

In contrast, there are four counties whose total wages are less than \$100 million for all of 2011: Crook, Hot Springs, Niobrara, and Weston.



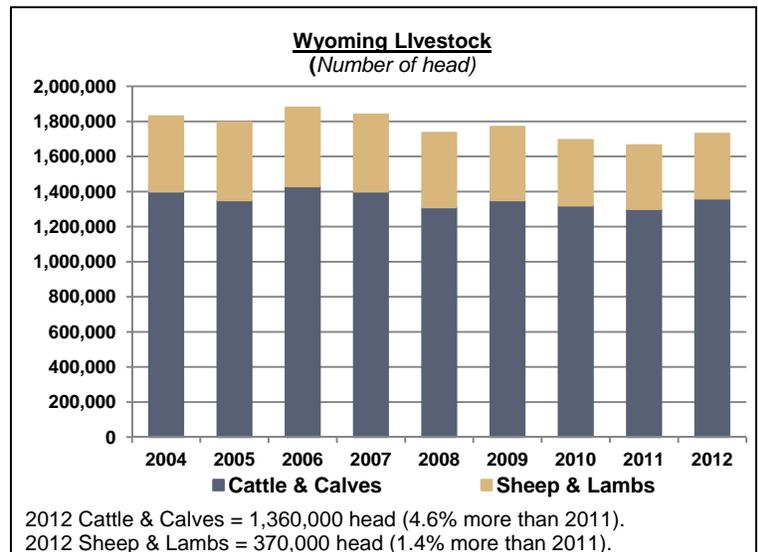
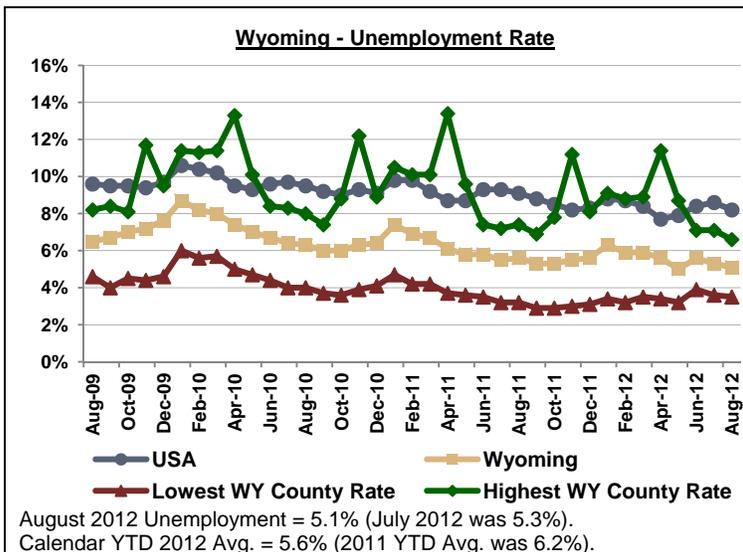
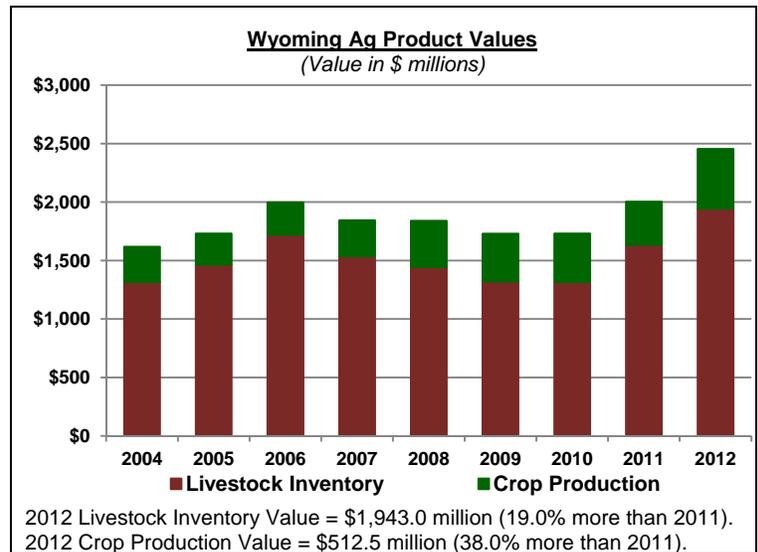
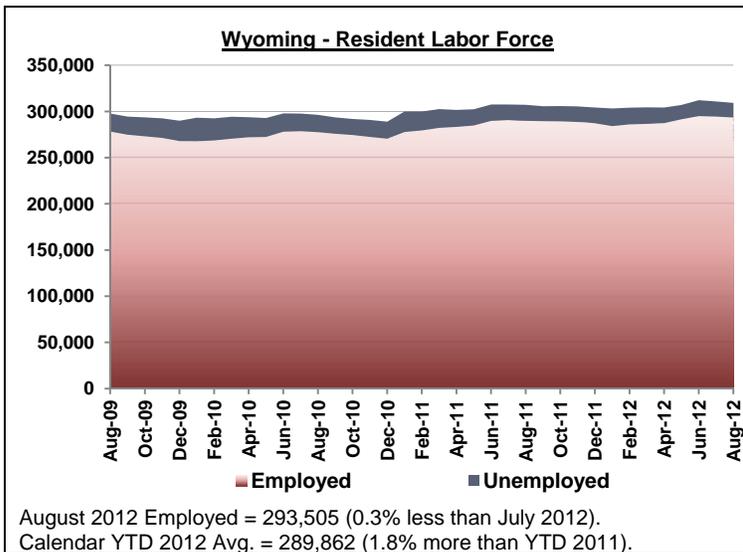
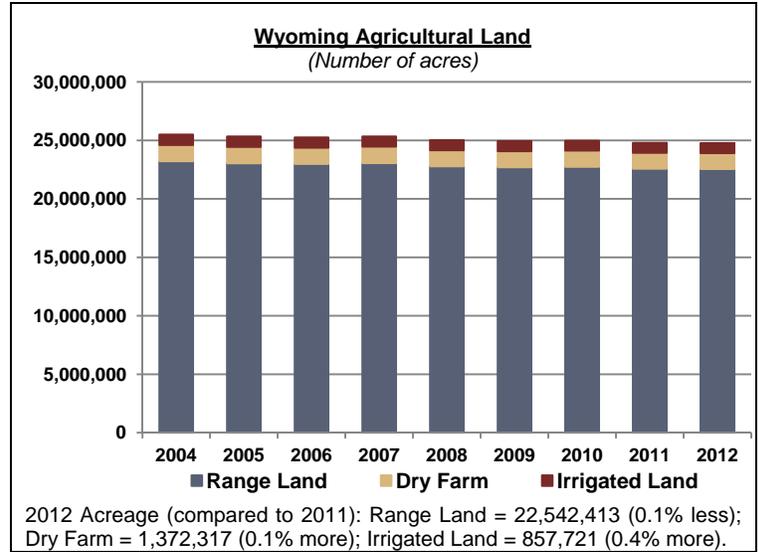
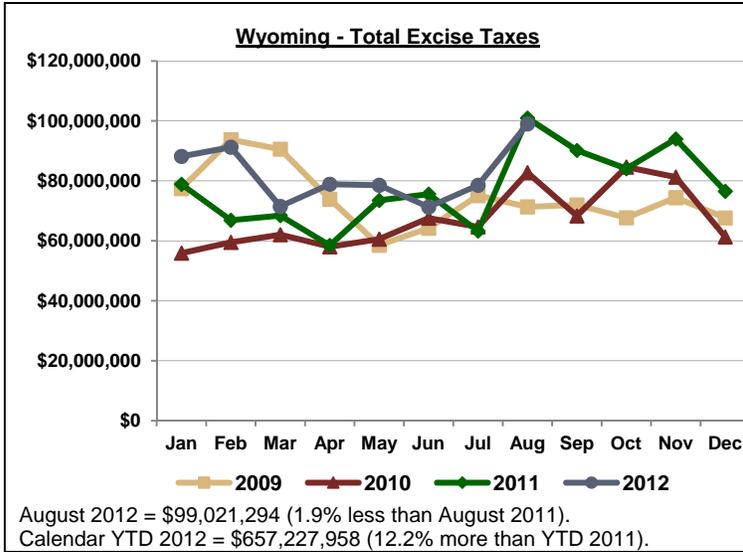
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Growth rates for total wages (compared to the previous year) are also widely divergent across the state, ranging from -9.3% (Uinta County) to 12.1% (Sublette County). Natrona County added the most total wages (\$139.7 million more). As a whole, Wyoming added \$538.1 million in total wages, representing 4.7% growth, bringing the total wages statewide to more than \$11.9 billion dollars for the most recently reported four quarters (i.e., calendar year 2011).

4Q11 growth in total wages compared to 4Q10 was not strong, primarily because of the unusually large decreases in quarterly wages for Campbell (-5.8%) and Uinta (-18.0%) counties. Statewide, 4Q11 wages grew by \$78.7 million to \$3.2 billion. Sublette County led all counties for growth on a percentage basis (10.4%), and Natrona County added the most actual dollars (\$33 million), compared to total wages in 4Q10.

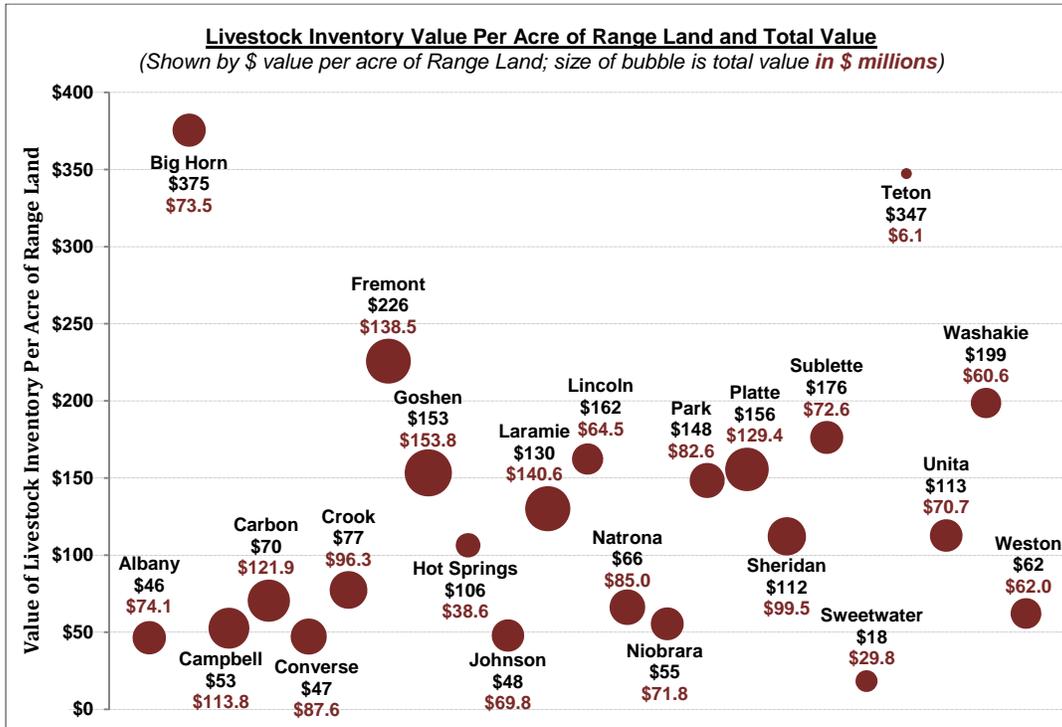




Range Land and Value of Livestock

About 48% of all land in Wyoming is owned by the federal government. The State of Wyoming owns almost 6%, and the Arapahoe and Shoshone Tribes own another 3% of all land, meaning that only about 43% of all land in Wyoming is privately owned (and taxed). Nearly 85% of private land in Wyoming (22.5 million acres) is used and assessed as Range Land.

Wyoming indeed has a lot of "open space."



Range Land supports livestock, mostly cattle and sheep. As of January 1, 2012, the total value of livestock inventory in Wyoming was \$1,943 million. Based on 2012 tax assessments, that means each acre of Range Land has about \$86 of livestock inventory on it. Of course, much of Wyoming's livestock also grazes on public land, which is leased to ranchers. Additionally, the quality of soils, grasses, water resources, weather, and terrain play a huge role in how much livestock can be located on any given acre of land,

Livestock inventory (total value shown with bubble size and burgundy font color) and

livestock value per acre of (private) Range Land is shown in the chart above. Two counties (Big Horn and Teton) have very high values per acre because those counties have high percentages of public land (which is leased for livestock grazing). Others, like Sweetwater County, have high percentage rates of public land, but desert conditions and other factors severely limit agricultural productivity.

Goshen County, with a value of \$153.8 million, has the largest inventory of livestock, followed closely by Laramie County (\$140.6 million) and Fremont County (\$138.5 million). Those counties that

have limited acreage of private land tend to have small livestock inventories. For example, Teton County (with just 17,563 acres of Range Land) has the smallest inventory of livestock (\$6.1 million). Yet, the five largest Range Land counties (Albany, Campbell, Carbon, Converse, and Sweetwater – each of which has more than 1.5 million acres of

Range Land, and together represent 40% of all Wyoming Range Land) have a collective livestock inventory value of just \$427 million (22% of all Wyoming livestock).

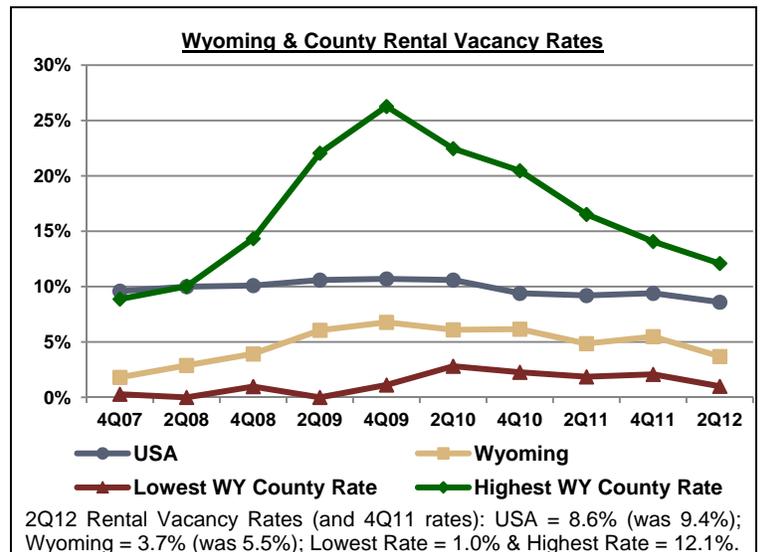
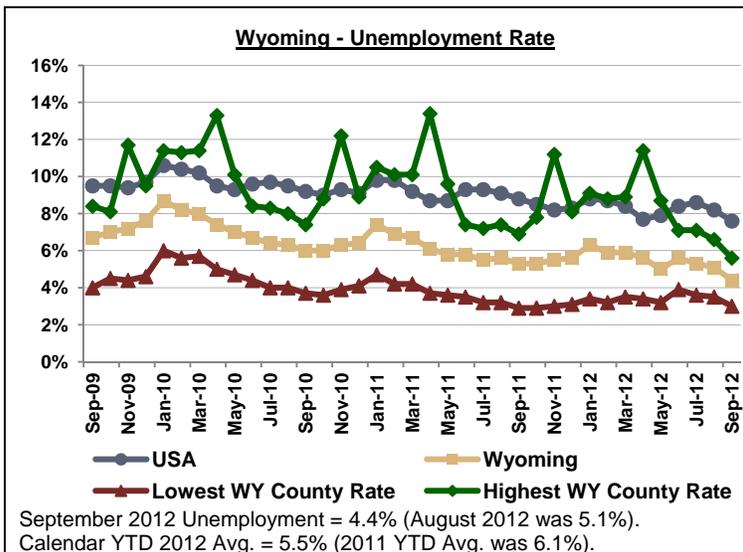
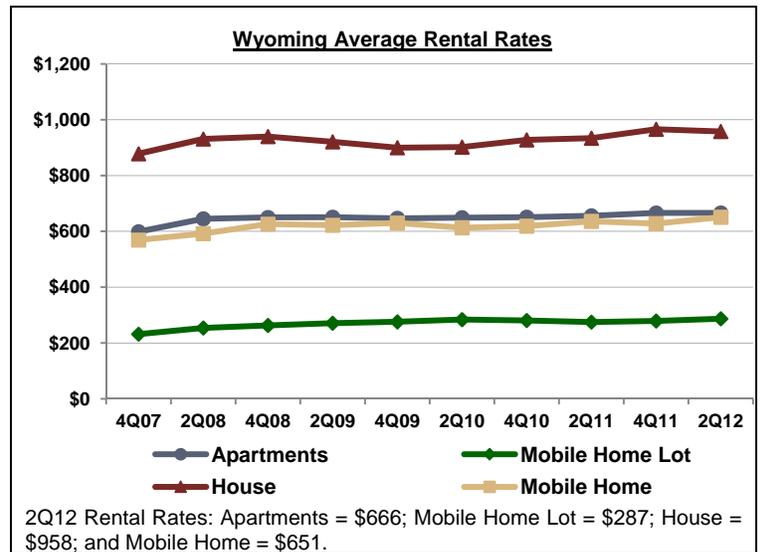
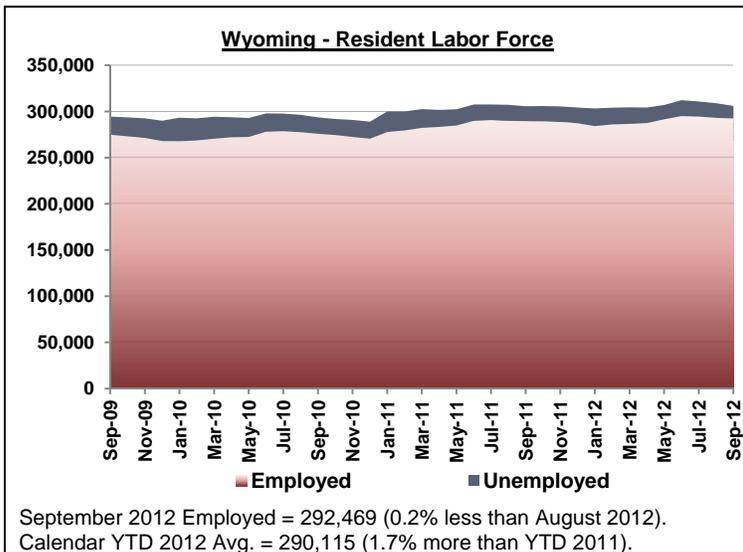
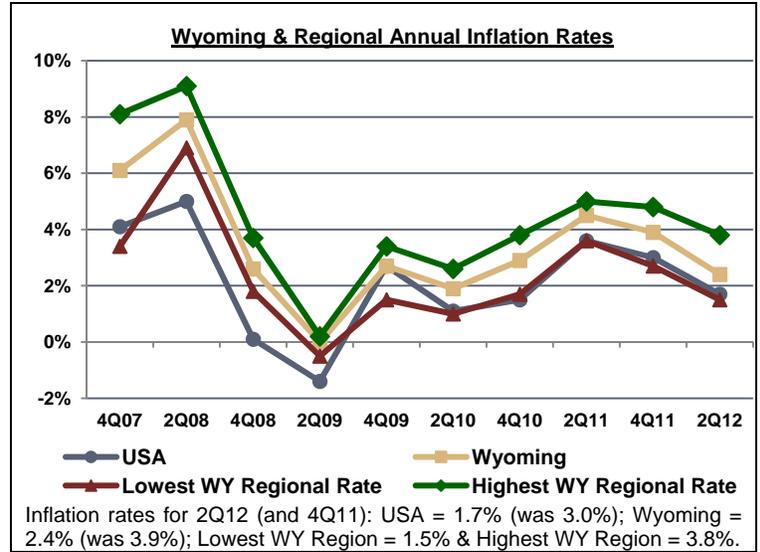
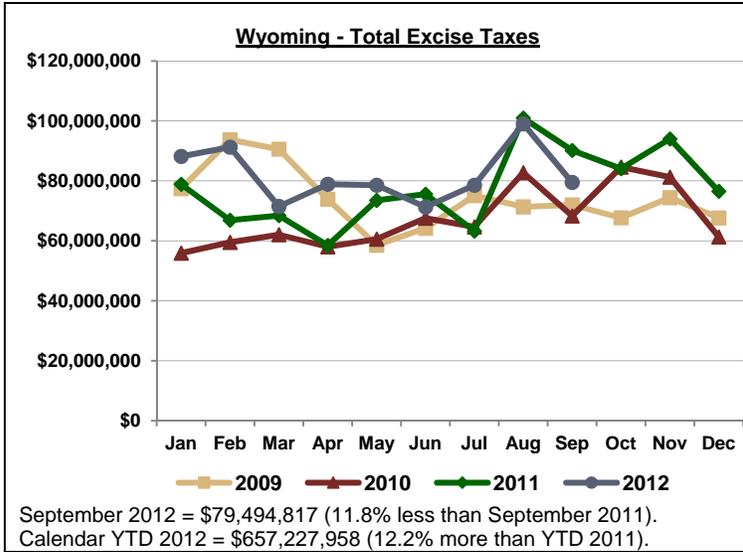
Accordingly, there is quite a range of livestock value per acre of Range Land in Wyoming. Sweetwater County (\$18/acre) has the lowest value per acre, followed by Albany County (\$46/acre) and Converse County (\$47/acre). Big Horn County has the highest value per acre (\$375/acre), followed by Teton County (\$347/acre) and Fremont County (\$226/acre). Statewide, Wyoming has a livestock inventory value of \$86/acre of Range Land.



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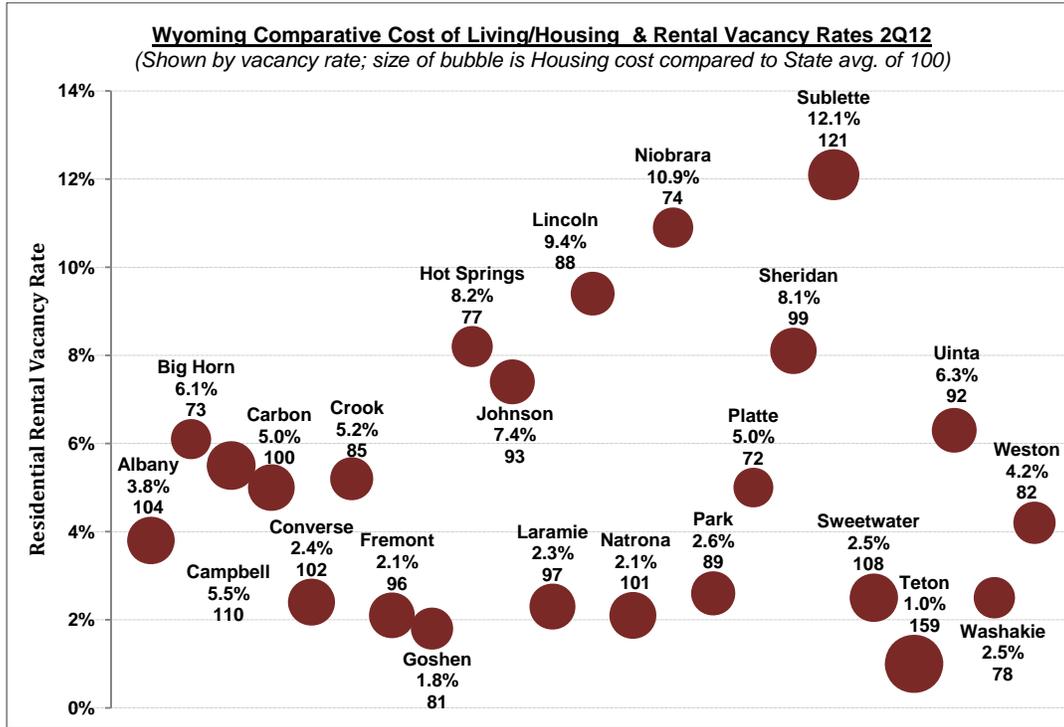
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Housing Costs and Rental Vacancy Rates

The Wyoming Division of Economic Analysis prepares a Wyoming Cost of Living Index twice a year (WCLI). The WCLI identifies changes in the cost for several consumer categories, including housing, and it compares costs in each county to the state average.

For purposes of the WCLI, the state average for each consumer category, including housing, is set at 100. Housing is one of the biggest items in any consumer's budget, and it typically drives the overall WCLI values. The comparative cost for each county in Wyoming is presented by the size of the bubbles in the chart to the left, with values that range from 72 (Platte County) to 159 (Teton County). These values compare to the statewide average of 100 for the 2nd Quarter of 2012.



Housing. In addition to using the WCLI data, the WCDA surveys residential rental properties in every Wyoming county to determine rental prices and vacancy rates (see the other page of this newsletter for that information). In the chart above, residential vacancy rates determine the vertical placement for the bubble representing each county's comparative housing cost.

In general, the economic theory of supply and demand dictates that housing costs go up (i.e., larger bubble above), as vacancy rates go down (i.e., the bottom of the chart). In fact, the highest comparative housing cost (159, in Teton County) also has the lowest vacancy rate (1.0%).

At the other extreme, one of the lowest comparative costs (74, in Niobrara County) has one of the highest vacancy rates (10.9%). However, one of the highest comparative costs (121, in Sublette County) also has the highest vacancy rate (12.1%).

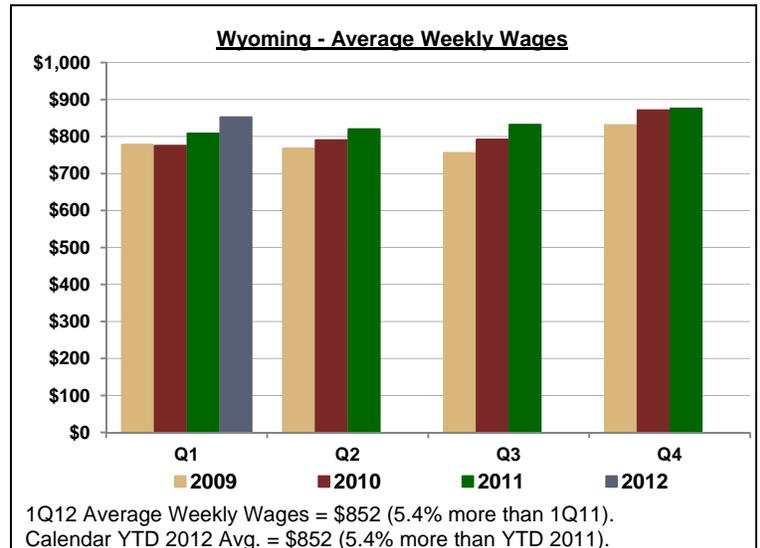
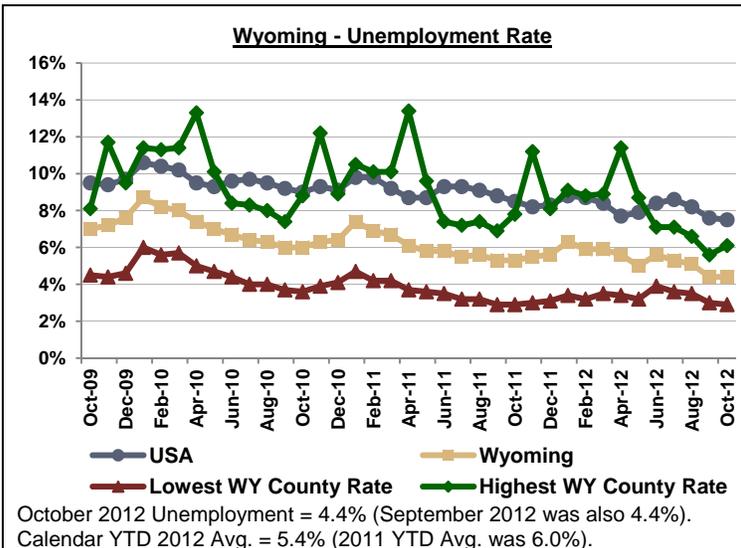
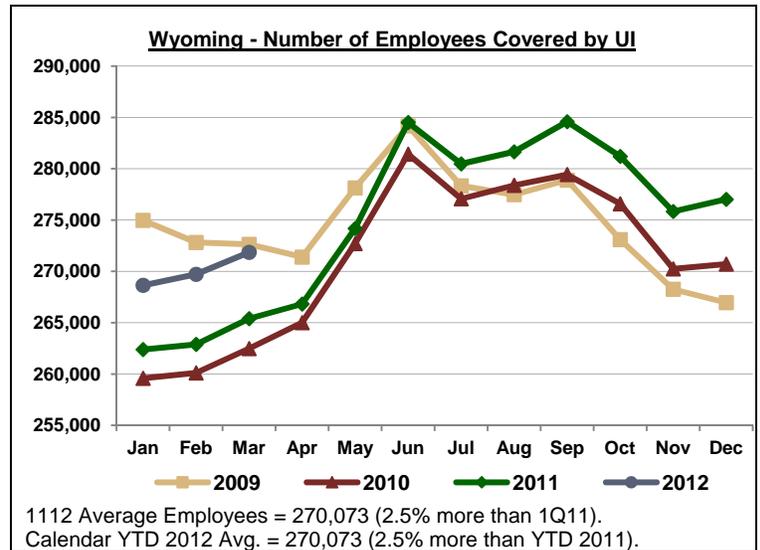
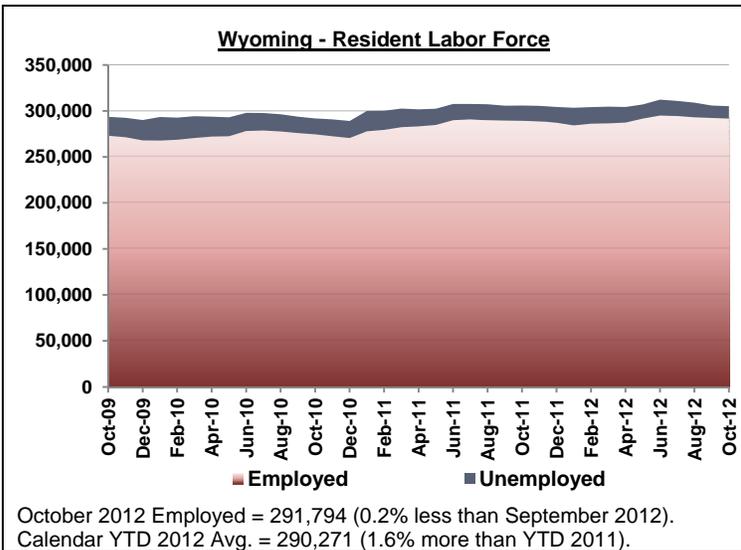
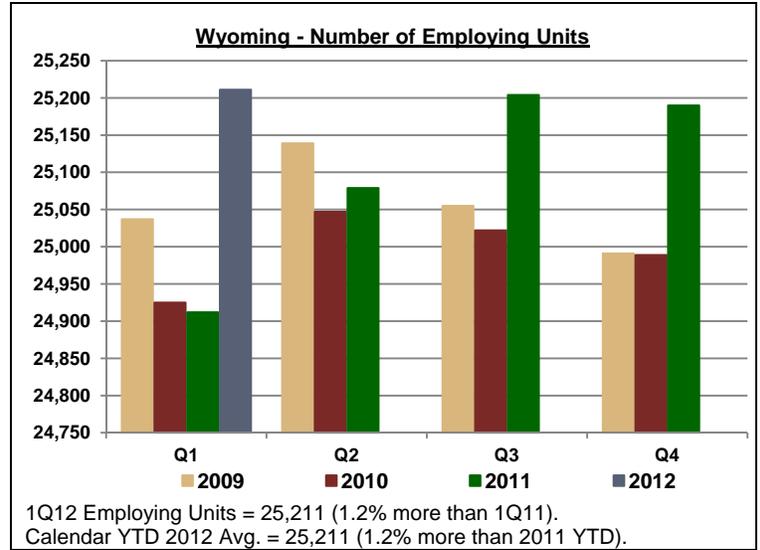
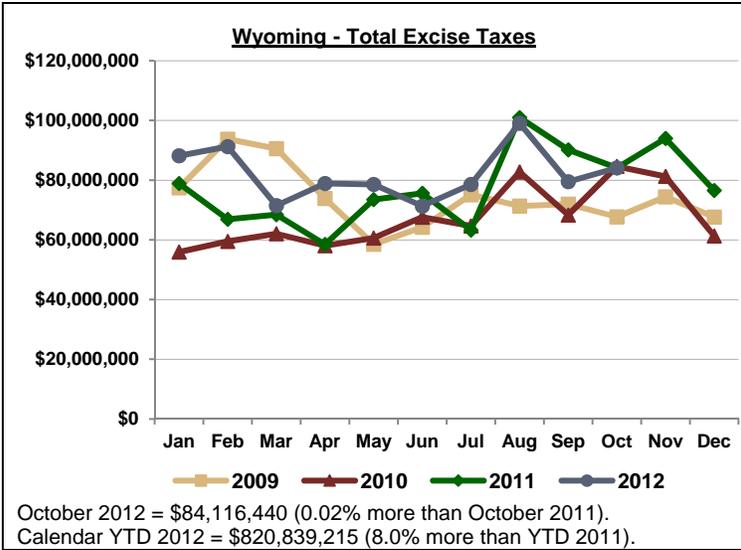
It is likely that there is more going on with rental prices and vacancy rates than supply and demand. Cost of land and construction costs play a huge role. But local economic dynamics also play a part. For instance, one observation would be that many of the counties with above average rental costs are those that currently have significant energy developments underway (e.g. Campbell, Converse, Natrona, Sublette, and Sweetwater Counties). Energy development tends to attract higher-income workers who need to find accommodations quickly (and for the short-term), driving up rental prices. Counties that have the lowest comparative costs (Big Horn, Hot Springs, Niobrara, Platte, and Washakie Counties) have little or no energy development at the current time. Also, counties that have recently experienced a significant drop in energy development activities (such as Sheridan and Sublette Counties), now have relatively high vacancy rates, regardless of rental prices, providing further evidence that the energy economy has a large impact on residential prices and vacancy rates.



Community Builders, Inc. (CBI) can provide you with much deeper analysis of the topics presented in this newsletter, and many others as well. We have 50+ years experience with community and economic development, and provide business plans, feasibility studies, grant writing, strategic planning, project development, facilitation, and other services.

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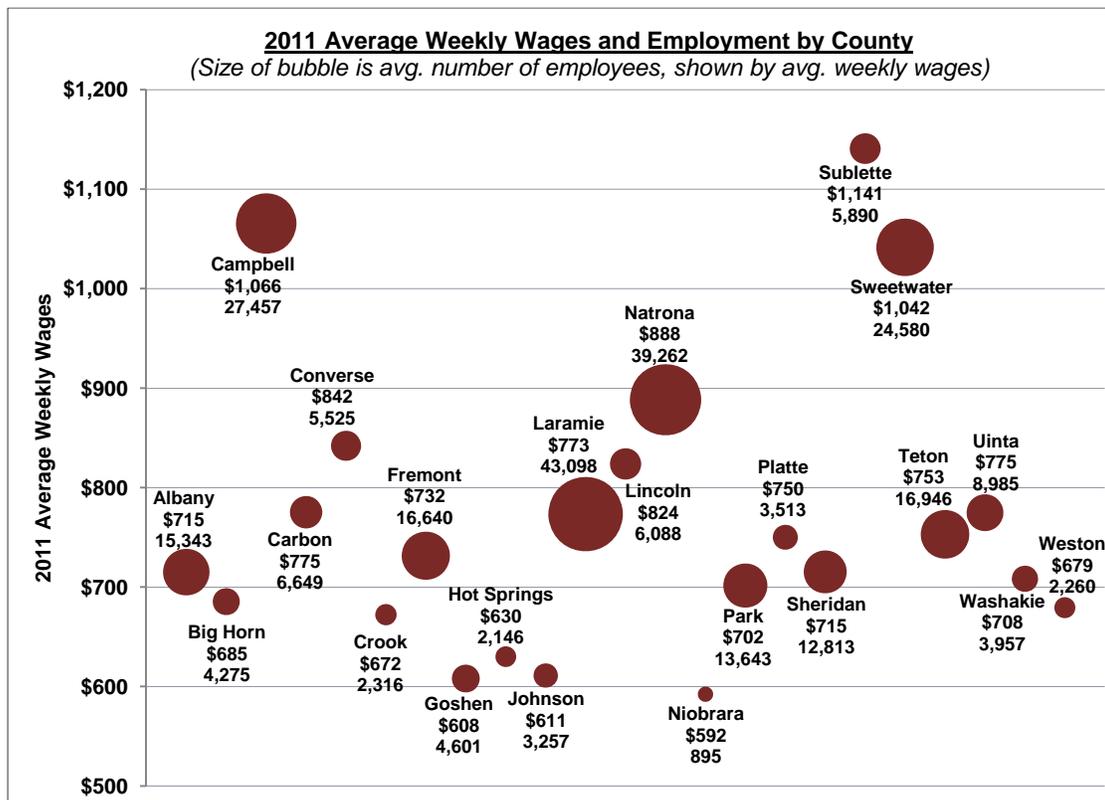
Community Builders, Inc. (CBI) is a Wyoming-based consulting firm that assists with development and operation of businesses, organizations, and communities. Each monthly *CBI Focus* newsletter provides recent economic data and analytical graphs for one of Wyoming's 23 counties (plus one covering the entire state). The *CBI Focus* newsletter archive, source notes, and data explanations are online at www.consultCBI.com. CBI principal consultants are Bobbe Fitzhugh and Joe Coyne. Contact CBI at 873 Esterbrook Road, Douglas, WY 82633; email Joe@consultCBI.com; or call (307) 359-1640. © 2012 Community Builders, Inc.



Total Wages

According to the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, average weekly wages varies considerably from county to county in Wyoming. QCEW is a compilation of actual Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records filed by employers with the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services. Although QCEW data collection and reporting takes several months to complete, and it only includes workers who have UI coverage, it compiles the exact number of employing units, employees, average weekly wages, and the total amount of wages paid in each county. The QCEW program, therefore, provides the most reliable information available for jobs and wages.

Average weekly wages are relevant to anyone wanting to know how much income has been available in the local economy. Wage earnings are a major component of per capita income (which also includes investments, savings, employer-paid benefits, social security, and other types of income). The average weekly wages in the chart to the left have been calculated by dividing the total wages paid to all employees by the average number of employees working in each county for all four quarters of 2011.



The average weekly wage paid in Wyoming during 2011 was \$834, and many counties are clustered around that average. However, energy producing counties have much higher wages (Campbell, \$1,066; Sublette, \$1,141; and Sweetwater, \$1,42), while counties that have lower levels of energy production have much lower wages (Goshen, \$608; Johnson, \$611; and Niobrara, \$592).



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Compared to 2010, average weekly wages in Wyoming went up by an average of 3.4%. Those counties that have ongoing oil & gas activities have enjoyed stronger growth in their average weekly wages (Lincoln, 9.4%; Sublette, 5.8%; Sweetwater, 5.6%; and Natrona, 4.6%). In contrast, counties that have experienced decreasing coal bed methane production have had the least growth in their average weekly wages (Sheridan, 0.8%; Campbell, 1.0%; and Johnson, 2.2%). Only one county had a decline in average weekly wages: Uinta County's average weekly wages in 2011 were 5.4% less than 2010. Uinta County is more closely tied to the nation's economy than other Wyoming counties, and it does not benefit from high levels of energy production that other counties do.

QCEW for the first quarter of 2012 suggest that average weekly wages are growing faster than they did in 2011 for every county except Teton County, which declined by 0.5%.

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