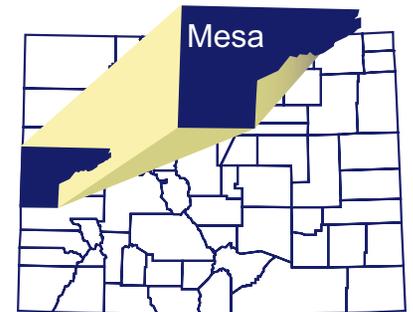


# Understanding the Colorado Economy — Mesa County



*By Allyson Reedy, Economist*

Mesa County is the largest population and economic center in western Colorado. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than one-third of the 129,872 Mesa County residents live in Grand Junction, the area's largest city and employment hub for surrounding cities and counties. This report will examine the region's population employment, wages, industries, occupations and projected job growth.





## Population

Mesa is Colorado's 11th largest county in terms of population. Whereas its 24.8% change in population from 1990 through 2000 did not match Colorado's overall growth of 30.6%, over the past five years

Mesa has grown at a faster rate than Colorado as a whole. Just 12 of the 64 counties have experienced faster population growth from 2000 through 2005.

### Colorado and County Population Estimates Comparison

Area	2005 Population Estimate	% Change		Area	2005 Population Estimate	% Change		Area	2005 Population Estimate	% Change	
		2000- 2005	1990- 2000			2000- 2005	1990- 2000			2000- 2005	1990- 2000
Colorado	4,665,177	8.4	30.6	Elbert	22,788	14.7	106	San Miguel	7,213	9.4	80.5
El Paso	565,582	9.4	30.2	Teller	21,918	6.6	64.9	Saguache	7,031	18.8	28.1
Denver	557,917	0.8	18.6	Routt	21,313	8.2	39.8	Rio Blanco	5,973	-0.2	-1.1
Arapahoe	529,090	8.2	24.6	Logan	20,719	0.7	16.7	Lincoln	5,618	-7.7	34.4
Jefferson	526,801	0.3	20.2	Otero	19,495	-4	0.6	Bent	5,558	-7.3	18.8
Adams	399,426	14.8	37.3	Chaffee	16,968	4.5	28.1	Crowley	5,401	-2.1	39.8
Boulder	280,440	3.9	29.3	Park	16,949	16.7	102.4	Gilpin	4,932	3.7	55
Larimer	271,927	8.1	35.1	Las Animas	15,446	1.6	10.5	Washington	4,633	-5.9	2.4
Douglas	249,416	41.9	191	Alamosa	15,282	2.1	9.9	Phillips	4,586	2.4	6.9
Weld	228,943	26.6	37.3	Pitkin	14,914	0.3	17.5	Ouray	4,260	13.8	63.1
Pueblo	151,322	7	15	Gunnison	14,226	1.9	35.9	Baca	4,069	-9.9	-0.9
<b>Mesa</b>	<b>129,872</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>24.8</b>	Prowers	13,892	-4.1	8.5	Custer	3,860	10.2	81.9
Garfield	49,810	13.7	46.1	Moffatt	13,417	1.8	16.1	Costilla	3,424	-6.5	14.8
Fremont	47,766	3.5	43	Grand	13,211	6.2	56.2	Sedgwick	2,529	-7.9	2.1
Eagle	47,530	14.1	90	Rio Grande	12,227	-1.5	15.3	Cheyenne	1,953	-12.5	-6.9
La Plata	47,452	8	36.1	Archuleta	11,886	20.1	80.2	Dolores	1,827	-0.9	22.6
Broomfield	43,478	10.9	NA	Yuma	9,789	-0.5	9.9	Jackson	1,448	-8.2	-1.7
Montrose	37,482	12.1	36.9	Clear Creek	9,197	-1.3	22.4	Kiowa	1,422	-12.3	-3.9
Delta	29,947	7.6	32.7	Conejos	8,512	1.3	12.7	Mineral	932	12.2	48.9
Morgan	27,995	3	23.8	Huerfano	7,771	-1.2	30.8	Hinsdale	765	-3.2	69.2
Summit	24,892	5.7	82.8	Lake	7,738	-0.9	30	San Juan	577	3.4	-25.1
Montezuma	24,778	4	27.6	Kit Carson	7,642	-4.6	12.2				

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



### ***Largest Mesa County Employers***

<b>Company</b>	<b>Industry</b>
Mesa County Valley School District	Government
St. Mary's Hospital	Health Care & Social Assistance
Wal-Mart	Retail Trade
Mesa County Local Government	Government
City of Grand Junction	Government
City Market	Retail Trade
Star Tek	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
Mesa State College	Government
Halliburton	Construction
Hilltop Community Resources	Health Care & Social Assistance

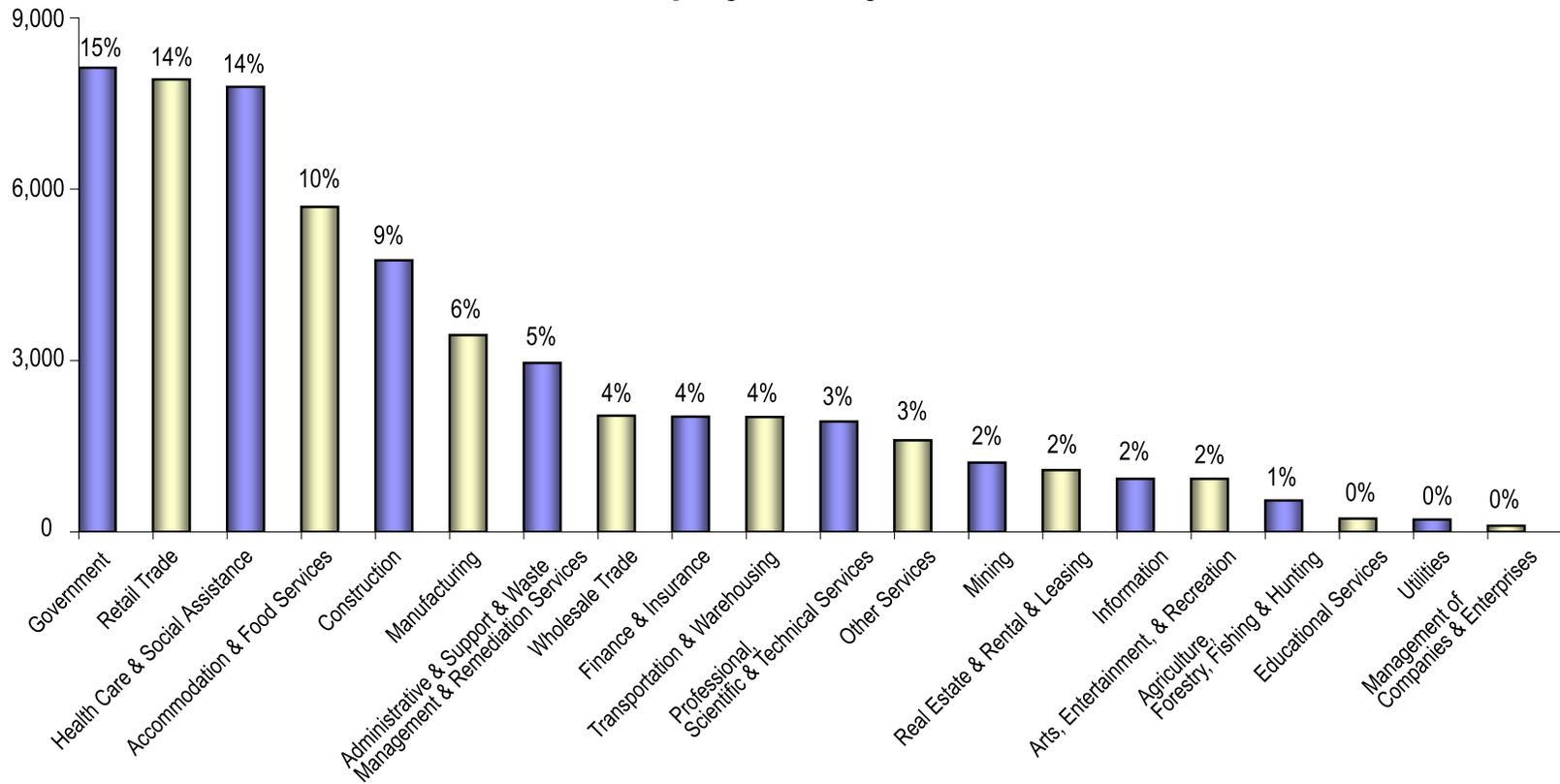
*Source: America's Labor Market Information System (ALMIS) Employer Database 2006 1st Edition and Grand Junction Economic Partnership*

### **Employment and Wages**

As of 2004, Government is Mesa County's biggest industry in terms of employment. It also accounts for four of Mesa's ten largest employers. As Grand Junction becomes an increasingly hot spot for regional retirees, the health care and social assistance industry, already third largest in employment, will continue to grow and add more employment to the region.



### 2005 Employment by Sector



Source: CDLE, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)



Government, the County and state's largest sector, grew by 1.3% over 2004, slower than the 2.8% growth rate for all sectors in Mesa County. Mining experienced the largest jump in employment from 2004 to 2005 in both Mesa County, at 50.1%, and in Colorado, at 18.4%. Mining's take-off is largely due to increasing energy prices.

### 2004–2005 Covered Employment by Sector

Colorado Employment			Sector	Mesa County Employment		
2004	2005	% Change		2004	2005	% Change
341,687	345,972	1.3	Government	8,023	8,127	1.3
241,407	246,048	1.9	Retail trade	7,868	7,922	0.7
192,424	197,134	2.4	Health care and social assistance	7,415	7,794	5.1
209,187	214,194	2.4	Accommodation and food services	5,685	5,690	0.1
151,425	160,102	5.7	Construction	4,424	4,756	7.5
154,540	150,586	-2.6	Manufacturing	3,456	3,444	-0.3
131,694	135,276	2.7	Administrative & support & waste management & remediation services	3,226	2,960	-8.2
92,227	93,781	1.7	Wholesale trade	1,977	2,035	2.9
104,412	106,823	2.3	Finance and insurance	1,943	2,020	4.0
61,022	61,103	0.1	Transportation and warehousing	1,891	2,010	6.3
144,791	155,997	7.7	Professional, scientific and technical services	1,810	1,931	6.7
65,314	65,132	-0.3	Other services, except public administration	1,553	1,606	3.4
14,368	17,007	18.4	Mining	809	1,214	50.1
46,005	46,854	1.8	Real estate and rental and leasing	1,030	1,081	5.0
81,242	77,438	-4.7	Information	948	929	-2.0
42,143	43,212	2.5	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	806	929	15.3
14,544	14,963	2.9	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	588	547	-7.0
23,485	24,823	5.7	Educational services	244	235	-3.7
7,927	7,949	0.3	Utilities	213	217	1.9
22,437	24,900	11.0	Management of companies and enterprises	114	109	-4.4
2,142,281	2,189,294	2.2	All sectors	54,023	55,556	2.8

Source: CDLE, *Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)*



### Average Annual Wages by Sector — Colorado and Mesa County

Between 2004 and 2005 Mesa County wages grew 5.5%, outpacing Colorado's 3.2% growth rate. Other services (except public administration) experienced the largest increase in wages of 49.1%. This sector includes industries in repair, maintenance, personal care, and laundry services, as well as religious, grant-making, and civic organizations. In Mesa County, two industries saw a decrease in wages over the year, and both by less than 2%.

Colorado Average Annual Wage			Sector	Mesa County Average Annual Wage		
2004	2005	% Change		2004	2005	% Change
\$58,183	\$60,764	4.4	Government - Federal	\$59,207	\$61,002	3.0
\$43,919	\$44,990	2.4	Government - State	\$40,009	\$41,092	2.7
\$35,468	\$36,159	1.9	Government - Local	\$34,179	\$35,229	3.1
\$25,070	\$25,395	1.3	Retail trade	\$23,064	\$23,953	3.9
\$38,022	\$38,870	2.2	Health care and social assistance	\$34,206	\$35,467	3.7
\$14,730	\$15,039	2.1	Accommodation and food services	\$11,618	\$12,037	3.6
\$40,277	\$41,488	3.0	Construction	\$33,718	\$36,544	8.4
\$52,633	\$53,692	2.0	Manufacturing	\$34,134	\$36,196	6.0
\$29,179	\$29,792	2.1	Administrative & support & waste management & remediation services	\$20,158	\$21,945	8.9
\$56,149	\$57,969	3.2	Wholesale trade	\$36,165	\$38,901	7.6
\$59,525	\$62,091	4.3	Finance and insurance	\$42,715	\$43,990	3.0
\$38,669	\$38,841	0.4	Transportation and warehousing	\$33,125	\$35,564	7.4
\$64,509	\$67,569	4.7	Professional, scientific and technical services	\$38,084	\$39,788	4.5
\$28,132	\$28,763	2.2	Other services, except public administration	\$23,051	\$34,378	49.1
\$83,812	\$83,213	-0.7	Mining	\$55,751	\$55,957	0.4
\$37,039	\$38,896	5.0	Real estate and rental and leasing	\$27,833	\$27,647	-0.7
\$65,771	\$68,642	4.4	Information	\$34,679	\$34,902	0.6
\$26,635	\$26,947	1.2	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	\$11,787	\$11,574	-1.8
\$24,054	\$24,441	1.6	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	\$18,673	\$19,603	5.0
\$30,696	\$31,579	2.9	Educational services	\$16,220	\$17,941	10.6
\$71,631	\$71,791	0.2	Utilities	\$56,964	\$58,780	3.2
\$87,730	\$99,729	13.7	Management of companies and enterprises	\$58,047	\$58,180	0.2
\$40,296	\$41,601	3.2	All sectors	\$29,965	\$31,611	5.5

Source: CDLE, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)



Mesa County's average annual wage of \$31,611 is \$10,000 below the Colorado average and ranks 20th highest among the 64 Colorado counties.

### 2005 Average Annual Wages by County

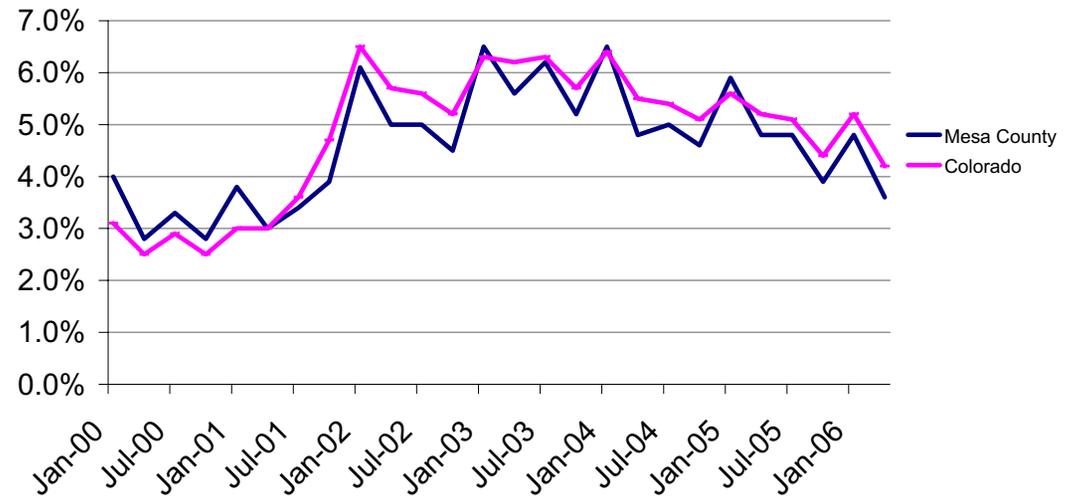
Colorado	..\$41,601	Gunnison ..\$27,875
Statewide ..\$41,601		Lincoln .....\$27,616
Broomfield..\$51,667		Logan .....\$26,994
Denver .....\$50,055		Yuma.....\$26,850
Boulder .....\$49,114		Ouray .....\$26,769
Arapahoe ..\$48,578		Bent .....\$26,657
Jefferson ....\$41,516		Grand .....\$26,608
Douglas.....\$41,143		Las Animas \$26,425
Pitkin .....\$39,487		Alamosa ....\$26,252
Adams.....\$38,379		Delta .....\$26,144
El Paso .....\$37,506		Montezuma \$26,064
Rio Blanco \$36,670		Archuleta....\$25,620
Larimer .....\$36,611		Chaffee .....\$25,250
Eagle.....\$36,427		Prowers.....\$24,977
Garfield .....\$35,216		Lake .....\$24,745
Routt .....\$34,166		Rio Grande \$24,499
Clear Creek\$33,771		Washington \$24,391
Moffat .....\$33,722		Conejos.....\$24,239
Weld .....\$33,636		Phillips .....\$24,233
Gilpin.....\$33,585		Otero.....\$23,991
La Plata ....\$32,163		Huerfano ....\$23,959
<b>Mesa .....\$31,611</b>		Kit Carson..\$23,940
San Miguel \$31,421		Jackson.....\$23,450
Cheyenne ..\$30,672		Sedgwick ..\$22,944
Fremont ....\$30,418		Custer .....\$22,586
Crowley.....\$30,402		Saguache ..\$21,947
Pueblo.....\$30,165		Costilla .....\$21,905
Elbert .....\$29,391		San Juan ..\$21,497
Summit .....\$29,045		Kiowa .....\$20,858
Park .....\$28,873		Baca .....\$20,466
Montrose....\$28,802		Hinsdale ....\$20,375
Teller .....\$28,658		Dolores .....\$19,794
Morgan .....\$27,971		Mineral .....\$18,782



### Mesa County Unemployment Rate

#### Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate, the ratio of unemployed to the labor force expressed as a percent, has peaked each January since 2000 in Mesa County, with the highest rates in January of 2003 and 2004 at 6.5%. Mesa County's 3.6% unemployment rate for May 2006 is below the Colorado rate of 4.3%. Like the state, the rate has been gradually declining over the past two years.



Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS), not seasonally adjusted

#### Current Labor Force

	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
<b>Mesa County May 2006</b>	72,942	70,292	2,650	3.6%
<b>Colorado May 2006</b>	2,604,554	2,492,615	111,939	4.3%

Source: CDLE, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS); preliminary May 2006 data



### ***Annual Wage Rates for the 15 Highest Employment Occupations in Mesa County***

<b>Occupational Title</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Average Annual Wage</b>	<b>Entry Annual Wage</b>	<b>Experienced Annual Wage</b>
Retail Salespersons	2,550	\$25,462	\$13,218	\$30,601
Office Clerks, General	1,750	\$22,510	\$12,715	\$27,895
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	1,300	\$14,751	\$11,558	\$16,540
Registered Nurses	1,280	\$54,206	\$38,520	\$63,517
Waiters and Waitresses	1,180	\$14,526	\$11,430	\$14,349
General and Operations Managers	980	\$78,575	\$32,763	\$98,176
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	940	\$27,928	\$18,460	\$33,529
Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer	940	\$31,648	\$22,693	\$35,517
Customer Service Representatives	870	\$25,964	\$18,092	\$29,087
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	850	\$19,842	\$14,454	\$22,958
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	820	\$22,014	\$14,540	\$25,585
Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	790	\$25,556	\$18,266	\$30,583
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products	670	\$40,152	\$22,120	\$49,426
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants	650	\$22,175	\$15,989	\$25,115
Truck Drivers, Light or Delivery Services	560	\$24,976	\$15,689	\$31,937

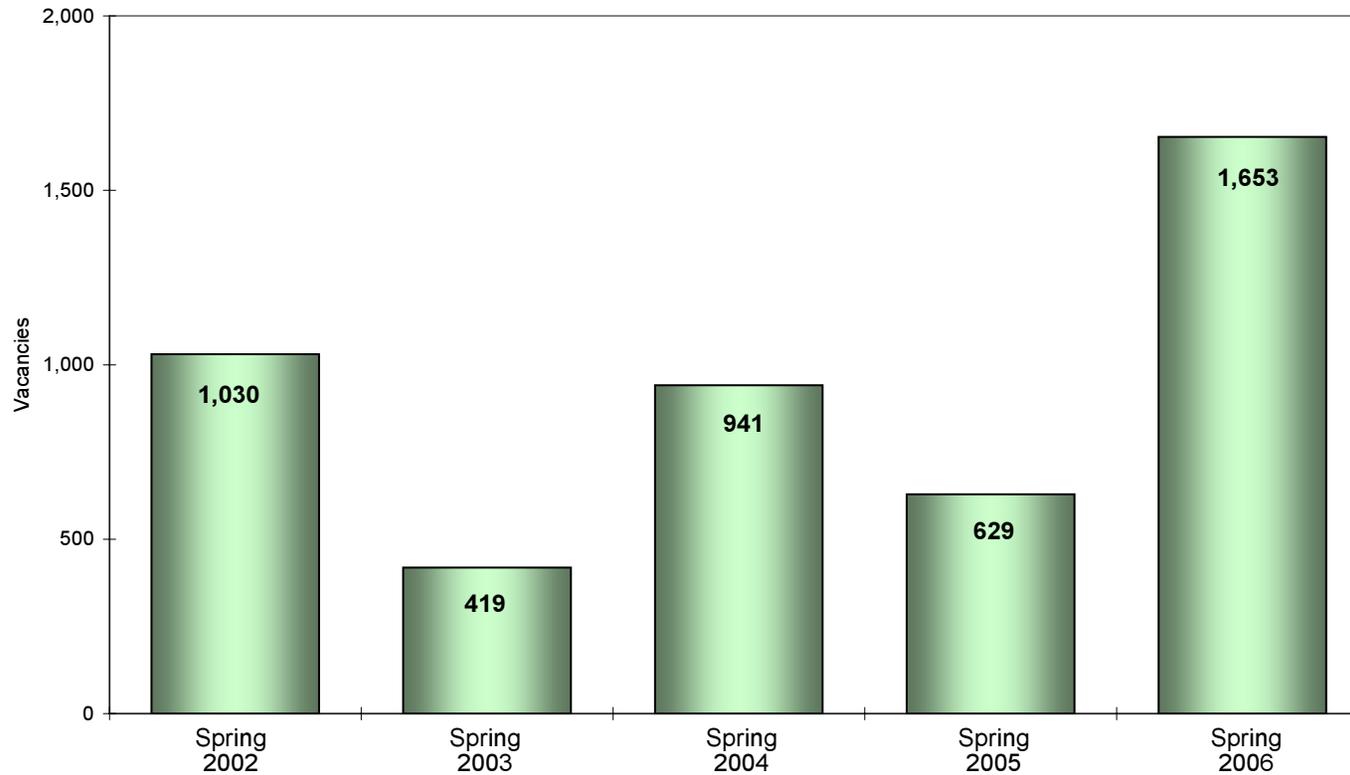
Source: CDLE, Colorado Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) May 2005 Survey

### **Occupational Wages**

Of the largest 15 occupations in Mesa County, only four pay an average annual wage above \$30,000. Many of these positions do not require high levels of education, and therefore receive lower wages.



### Spring Job Vacancies — Mesa County

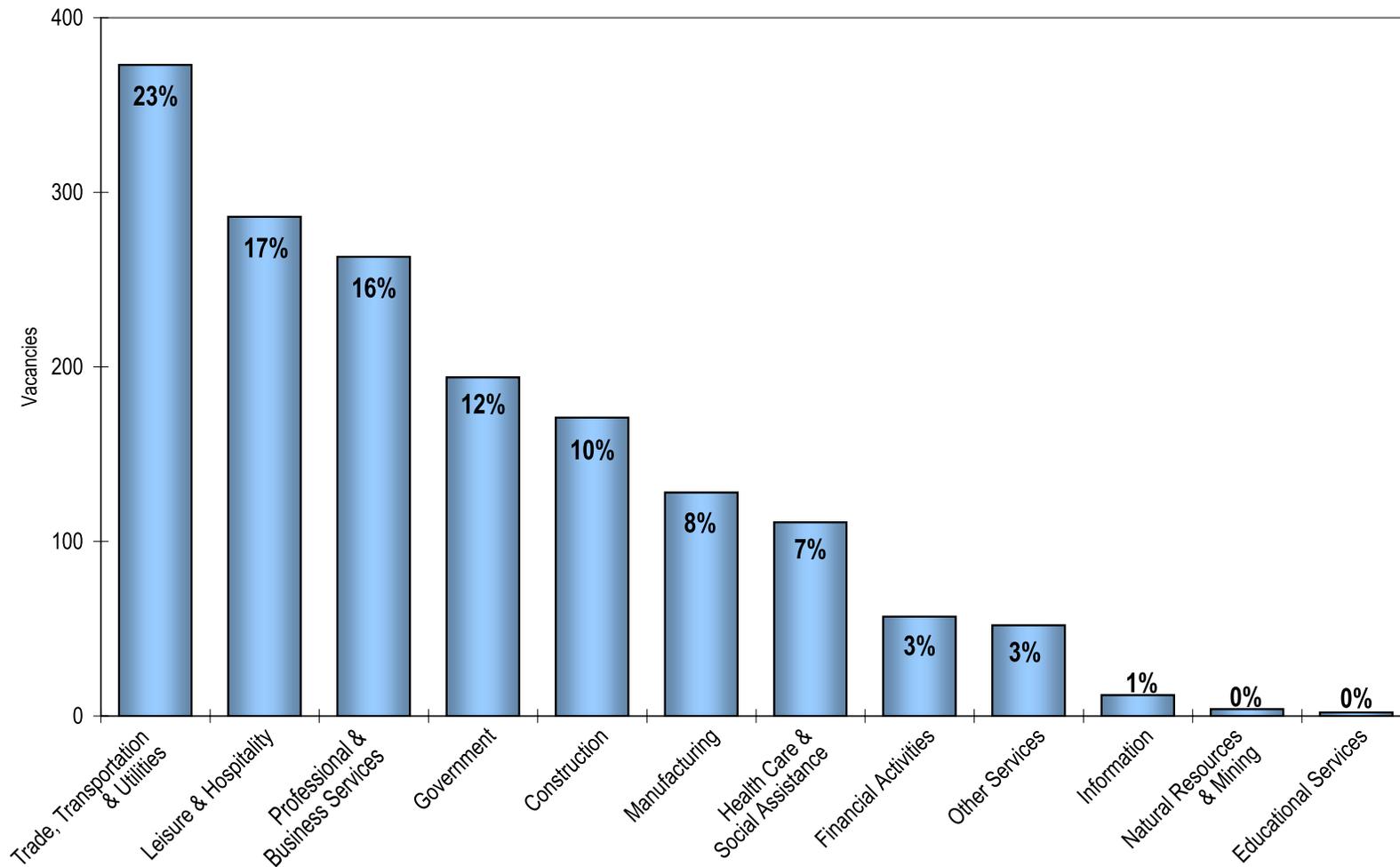


#### Job Vacancy Survey Results

The Job Vacancy Survey (JVS) is a survey of employers that provides current information on the demand for workers. The Spring 2006 Mesa County JVS had the most estimated job openings since the survey began, and more than double the vacancies found in Spring 2005.



### Spring 2006 Vacancies by Industry — Mesa County



The top three industries in terms of vacancies — trade, transportation and utilities, leisure and hospitality, and professional and business services — make up 56 percent of Mesa County’s job openings.



### Top 15 Industries by Percentage Growth — Mesa County

Industry Subsector	2004 Base	2014 Projection	Absolute Change	10-Yr % Change
Administrative and Support Services	2,925	5,805	2,880	98.5
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,810	3,345	1,535	84.8
Construction of Buildings	835	1,490	655	78.4
Support Activities for Transportation	405	680	275	67.9
Food Manufacturing	165	260	95	57.6
Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers	900	1,400	500	55.6
Transit and Ground Passenger Transport	200	310	110	55.0
Air Transportation	120	185	65	54.2
Support Activities for Mining	695	1,065	370	53.2
Apparel Manufacturing	50	75	25	50.0
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, and Music Stores	575	825	250	43.5
Heavy and Civil Engineering Construction	885	1,265	380	42.9
Ambulatory Health Care Services	2,700	3,795	1,095	40.6
Health and Personal Care Stores	250	350	100	40.0
Electronics and Appliance Stores	205	285	80	39.0

Source: CDLE Long-Term Industry Projections, released June 2006

### Projections

Growth is expected to be greatest through 2014 in the 15 subsectors shown above. Only 11 industry subsectors are projected to lose jobs over the 10-year period, with broadcasting (except Internet), utilities and telecommunications shedding the most positions.



## Future Outlook

According to the latest projections and Job Vacancy Survey data, job vacancies and employment should continue to increase. Most of this increase is expected to occur in support services and industries aimed at the growing baby boomer population, such as ambulatory health care services and health and personal care stores. The low unemployment rate, which has been declining over the past two years, puts job seekers in the Grand Junction area in a good position.

Although employment is growing, it is important to look at what types of jobs Mesa County is gaining. Many of the top current occupations are not high paying, and of the industry subsectors poised for the most growth, many are in low-paying sectors such as retail trade and support services. However, between 2004 and 2005, only two sectors saw a decrease in average annual wages and another two increased by more than 10%.

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