

January 12, 2018

Senator Fred S. Martin  
District 15, Idaho State Senate  
P.O. Box 83720  
Boise, Idaho 83720

Representative Rick D. Youngblood  
District 12, Idaho House of Representatives  
P.O. Box 83720  
Boise, Idaho 83720

Dear Sen. Martin and Rep. Youngblood,

Thank you for the opportunity to present to the Economic Outlook and Revenue Assessment Committee. Committee members asked several important questions about Idaho's current labor market conditions and we are pleased to provide the following responses:

**Question: The definitions of urban versus rural and why Twin Falls is rural one day and urban the next?**

For official reporting purposes, the delimitation of metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) and other urban areas is determined by the federal government. An MSA is a relatively densely populated area that can consist of a single or multiple counties with economic connections.

Specifically, the Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issues periodic updates between decennial censuses. In its [Bulletin No. 17-01](#) published on August 15, 2017, the OMB recognized Twin Falls as an MSA. Since 2003, Jerome and Twin Falls counties have been identified as a micropolitan statistical area—non-rural—(Population of at least 10,000 but fewer than 50,000 people). This latest update recognized a population growth surpassing 50,000 people and the economic connection of Jerome and Twin Falls counties which has occurred since the last decennial census.

As an agency which conducts statistical activities to collect and publish data, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) uses the area delineations set forth by the OMB for its labor market information. By the year 2019, we estimate that the monthly and annual products the BLS produces will fully represent the Twin Falls delineation along with Idaho's five other MSAs which include: Coeur d'Alene, Lewiston, Boise, Pocatello and Idaho Falls.

More details can be found at the following links:

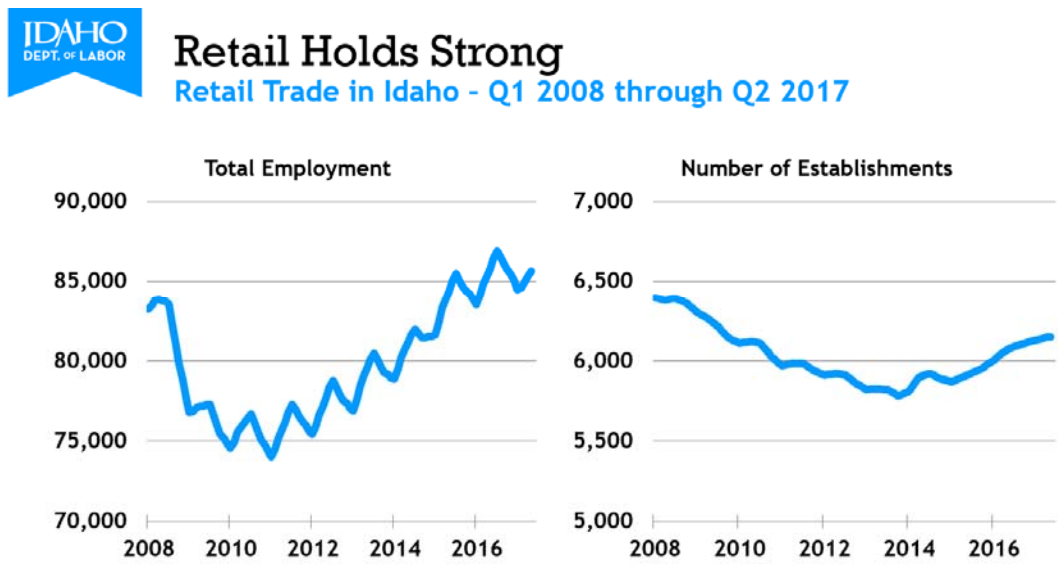
1. Census Bureau's method for determining an urban area:  
[https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/reference/ua/Defining\\_Rural.pdf](https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/reference/ua/Defining_Rural.pdf)
2. Information on Twin Falls City:  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/twinfallscityidaho,twinfallscountyidaho/PST045216>

**Question: Are part-time workers included in employment figures?**

Yes, part-time workers are counted as employed. For statistical purposes, part-time is defined as working one to 34 hours during a reference week. This means that as long as one hour was worked during a reference week of a month, that person would be counted as employed. The national share of the employed is about 82 percent full-time and 18 percent part-time. Our analysts estimate Idaho’s employed to be about 78 percent full-time and 22 percent part-time. There has been a recent trend in Idaho in the reduction of the share of part-time workers to full-time workers.

**Question: Is Idaho’s retail sector still growing?**

We acknowledge that the retail model is changing and employment may change as a result. However, at present, this industry is still growing both in terms of total employment and in the number of establishments. See the attached chart:



Please let us know if you have additional questions, or we can be of further assistance.

Thank you,  
Craig Shaul  
Research Analyst, Supervisor