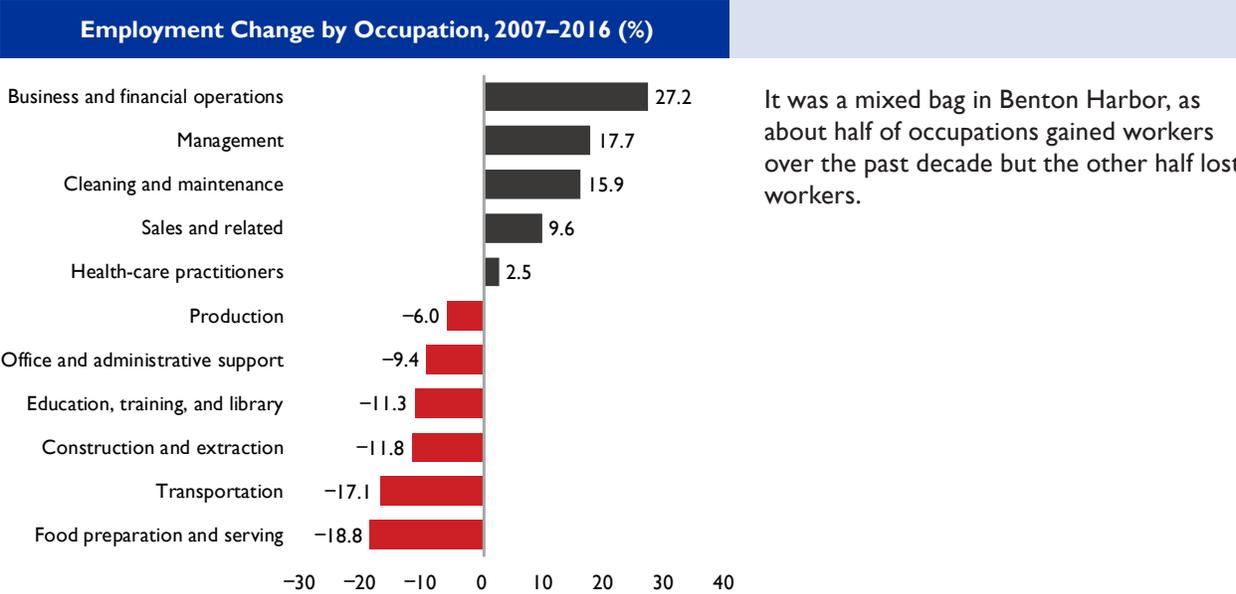


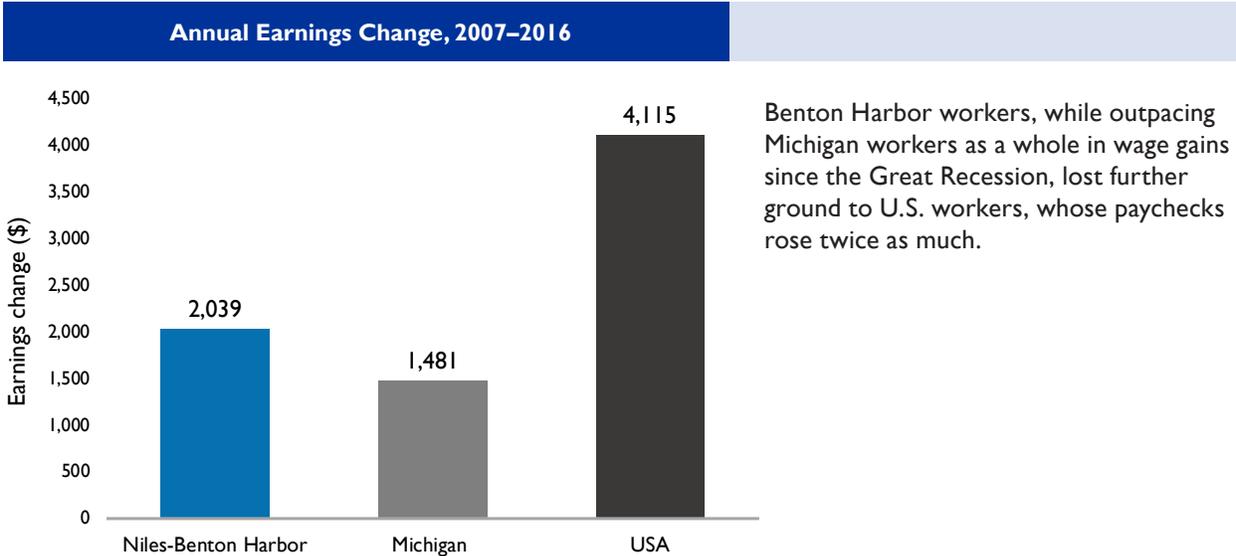
NILES–BENTON HARBOR MSA

The Niles–Benton Harbor MSA has had its share of difficulties in the decade since the Great Recession, suffering employment losses in many occupations. As a result, the top figures shown on these two pages tend to be bottom heavy, with many occupations falling below the break-even point in employment change. Surprisingly, however, the MSA had the greatest increase in earnings of any west Michigan MSA save Grand Rapids.



It was a mixed bag in Benton Harbor, as about half of occupations gained workers over the past decade but the other half lost workers.

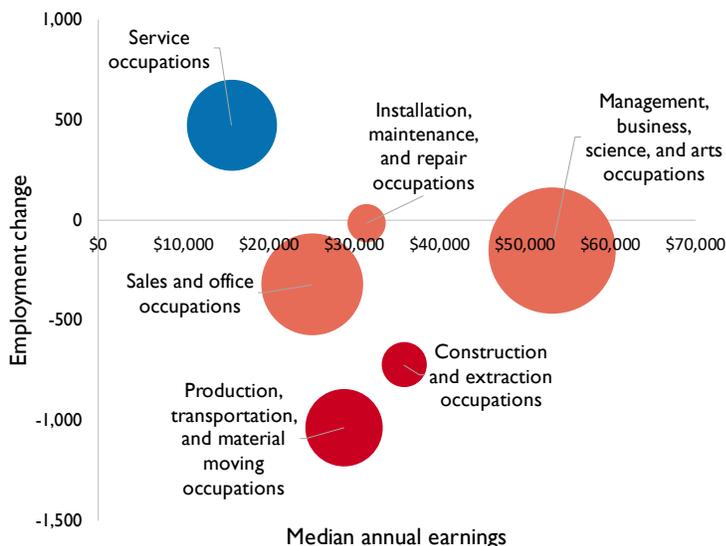
Occupational growth in the region was mixed: some occupations grew, but just as many fell over the 10 years (figure above). Overall job growth in the area was essentially flat from 2007 through 2016. In previous issues of *Business Outlook*, we have discussed the growth in the hospitality sector of the area. Food preparation and serving employment fell during the decade, but it could be that hotel employment was driving the growth in that sector. Unfortunately, hotel employment is spread throughout several occupations, making it difficult to say for certain. Hotel employees can be found in occupations as varied as management, cleaning and maintenance, and sales, which formed some of the largest occupations exhibiting growth.



Benton Harbor workers, while outpacing Michigan workers as a whole in wage gains since the Great Recession, lost further ground to U.S. workers, whose paychecks rose twice as much.

SOURCE: U.S. Census, American Community Survey.

Employment Change and Median Annual Earnings, 2007–2016



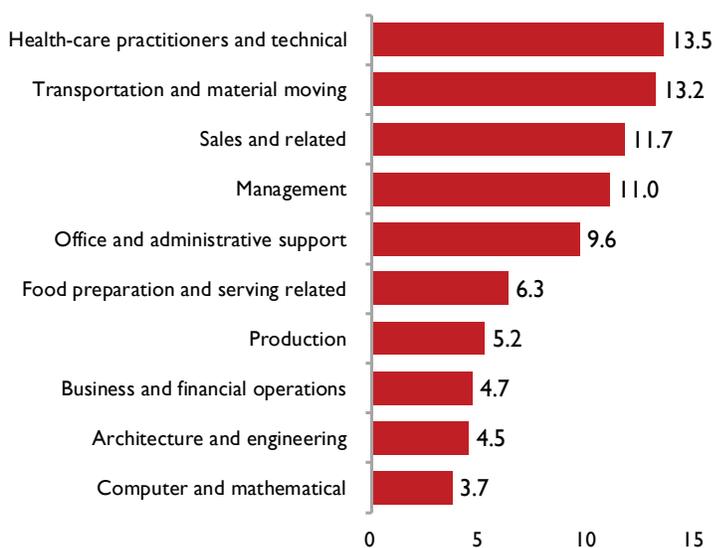
Service occupations were the main bright spot in the Benton Harbor economy, as the category added about 50 jobs per year over the past decade.

Earnings have improved in the area compared to the state of Michigan, but they were outpaced by growth in the nation as a whole (bottom figure, previous page). This improvement was somewhat unexpected, as some higher-wage jobs, including production, shrank over the decade, while lower-wage jobs, including services, increased.

The bubble chart (above) shows employment growth for occupational groups compared to median earnings. The size of the bubble represents the relative size of the occupational group. Management, business, science, and arts occupations make up the largest group, but they shrank slightly from 2007 to 2016.

The last figure (below) shows the top job postings in the area for 2017. Data from Labor Insight, a job-market data program from Burning Glass Technologies, show that the two largest job postings were for health care and transportation occupations. Sales and related occupations made up the third largest postings during 2017.

Job Postings for 2017 (%)



The Niles–Benton Harbor area experienced a healthy distribution of job postings among several different occupational categories. Even though transportation lost one in six workers over the past decade (top figure, previous page), it nearly led the way in job postings in 2017—either a sign of turnover or that the industry is rebounding.

SOURCE: Burning Glass Technologies.