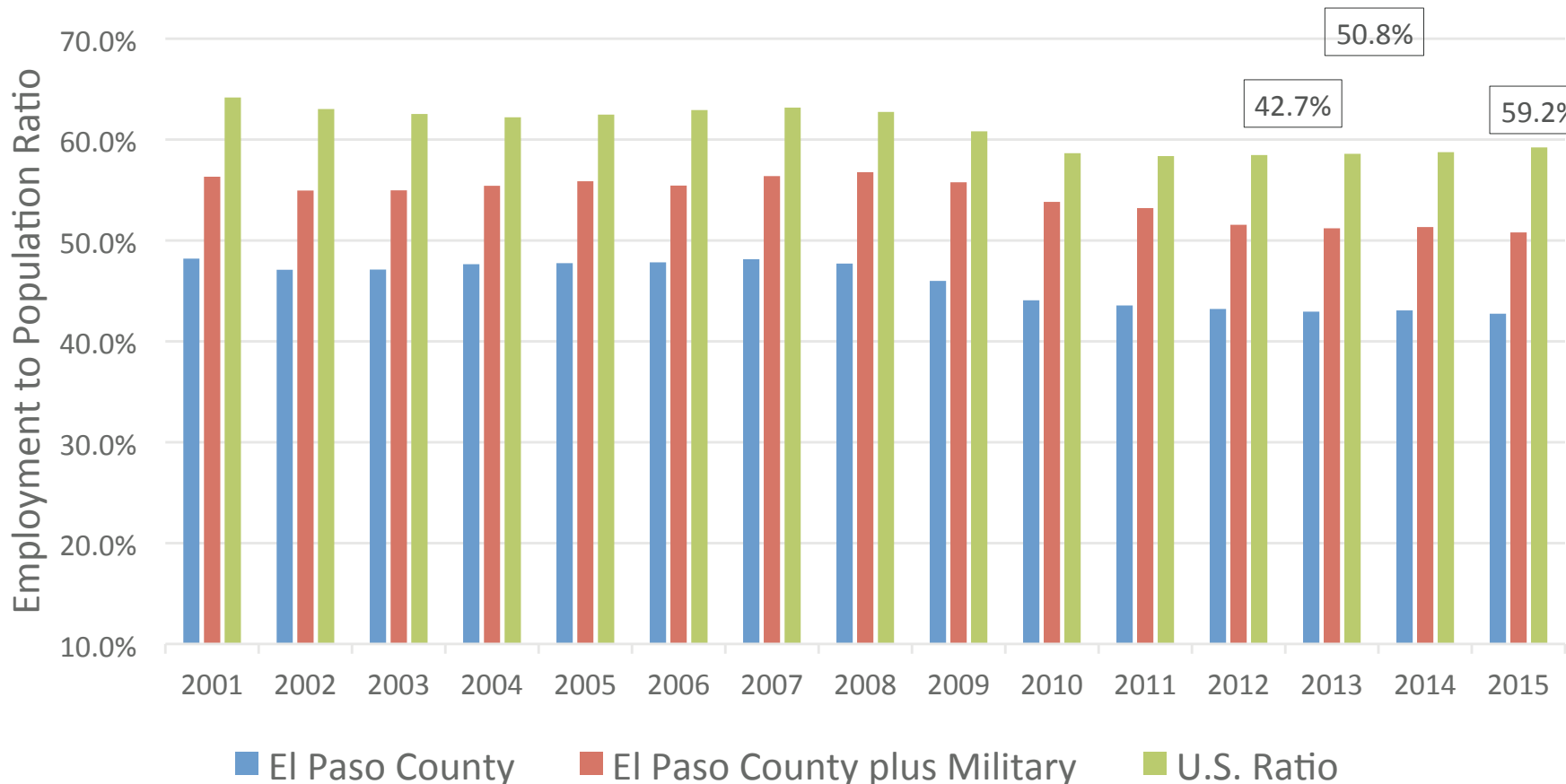


BY THE NUMBERS: El Paso County employment

Information provided by the UCCS College of Business Southern Colorado Economic Forum

Employment to Population: Regional and U.S.



Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics; U.S. Census Bureau Economic Forum

El Paso County: Younger demographics affect job growth

Last month, the Southern Colorado Economic Forum reported some positive news on the jobs front. The local unemployment numbers are positive. Colorado Springs has a 4.1 percent unemployment rate at the end of 2015. Median salaries now exceed the state's wages, and more jobs are being posted than jobs demanded. A surprising number of those jobs are in the professional categories. Local businesses are hiring — it all seems to be pretty good news.

But those numbers don't tell the whole story. We need to look at how many workers we have engaged in the labor force, compared to our local population. The commonly used metric is the employment-to-population ratio. Unfortunately, El Paso County does not do as well in this regard — and it affects our gross metropolitan product.

The graph shows the employment-to-population ratio for El Paso County and the nation as a whole. Prior to the last recession, the El Paso County ratio was almost 50 percent, meaning about half El Paso County's residents worked. More recently we have been hovering at a ratio of about 43 percent. How does this compare to the national ratio? In 2015, the U.S. employment-to-population ratio was 59.2 percent, actually quite low compared to historical averages. Even at these lower national ratios, El Paso County is about 15 percentage points below the

national level. However, U.S. Census numbers include military personnel, but the local employment numbers do not. If we add the roughly 55,000 local military personnel, our employment-to-population ratio increases to 50.8 percent, still well below the national rate.

There are several possible explanations. Most people might assume that El Paso County has more retirees older than 65. Another possibility is that the high number of military personnel have spouses who do not work, which is difficult to validate.

Other statistics show:

- El Paso County (11.5 percent) does not have as high a proportion of retirees as the U.S. (14.5 percent). We are not the "old" community many people assume we are.
- El Paso County (25.1 percent) has a higher proportion of children ages 0-17 than the U.S. (23.1 percent).
- El Paso County has a higher proportion of residents in childbearing/rearing ages 20-39 (30 percent) than the U.S. (27.1 percent).

If we look strictly at demographics, nonworking spouses and children seem to be driving down the local employment-to-population ratio. A young population bodes well for future growth, so the numbers aren't

necessarily bad news. It might help explain why our region currently does not have the economic output or gross metropolitan product of other cities our size. It also highlights the importance of understanding our own demographic composition and using that information to our advantage. The surprisingly young nature of our populace highlights the necessity of providing training and job opportunities for younger cohorts and former military, if we are to have sustainable and robust growth in our region.

Tatiana Bailey is the executive director of the Southern Colorado Economic Forum. She can be reached at tbailey6@uccs.edu.

Don't miss the next By the Numbers
March 11, 2016

To receive the monthly four-page dashboard as an Economic Forum sponsor, contact Tatiana Bailey:
tbailey6@uccs.edu or 255-3661



The UCCS College of Business is proud to support the 20th annual Southern Colorado Economic Forum. Here's to many more years of "Building Successful Futures" together for the Pikes Peak Region and beyond!

The UCCS College of Business was established in 1965 and has more than 1,100 undergraduates and 350 MBA and distance MBA students.

The College of Business and Administration awards the Bachelor of Science in Business and Bachelor of Innovation degrees. The Graduate School of Business Administration awards the Master of Business Administration and Master of Science in Accounting degrees.

More than 8,000 alumni of the College of Business live and work around the world. For more information, visit www.uccs.edu/business.

UCCS College of Business
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO COLORADO SPRINGS