

MONTANA

BUSINESS QUARTERLY

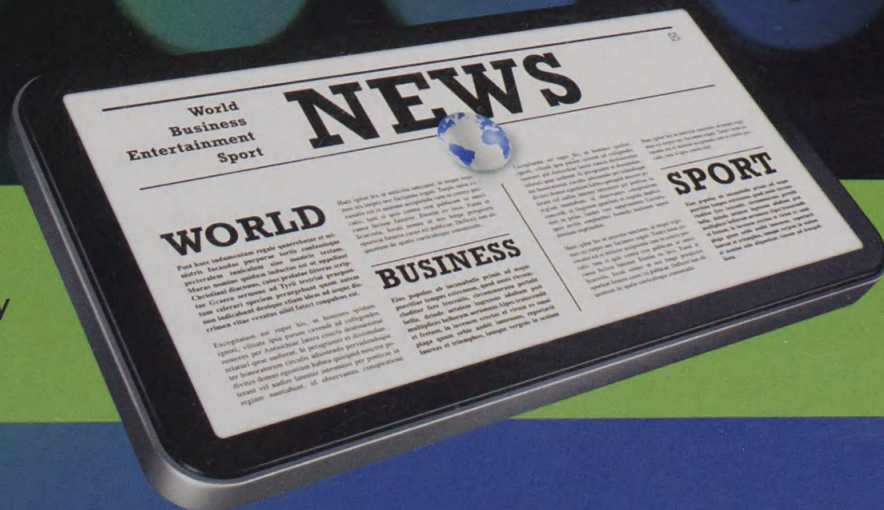
VOLUME 53, NUMBER 3, AUTUMN 2015

Getting the news.

Technology Changes Habits.

Inside:

- Statewide Media Habits Survey
- Post-Commodity Boom Economy
- Family-Friendly Workplaces
- Gender Pay Gap



ABOUT THE BUREAU OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH

The Bureau of Business and Economic Research has been providing information about Montana's state and local economies for more than 50 years. Housed on the campus of the University of Montana-Missoula, the Bureau is the research and public service branch of the School of Business Administration. On an ongoing basis, the Bureau analyzes local, state, and national economies; provides annual income, employment, and population forecasts; conducts extensive research on forest products, manufacturing, health care, and Montana Kids Count; designs and conducts comprehensive survey research at its on-site call center; presents annual economic outlook seminars in cities throughout Montana; and publishes the award-winning Montana Business Quarterly.

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MESSAGE FROM DEAN LARRY GIANCHETTA

I always look forward to writing the Message from the Dean for the Montana Business Quarterly. As luck would have it, at the same time I was reminded that it was my turn to write the Dean's Message, BBER Director Patrick Barkey hand-delivered his annual report for 2015. I am well aware of the Bureau's reputation, but each year when I read the annual report, I am overwhelmed with all they accomplish. Following are some of BBER's achievements for 2014-15:



- Carrying out a study of the savings that have been realized in state government that have occurred as paper-based forms and applications have been replaced with eGovernment services online;
- Continuing to raise its profile in health care research statewide with keynote addresses by BBER Director of Health Care Research Bryce Ward;
- Bringing its Economic Outlook Seminars to communities across the state for the 40th year;
- Continuing to partner with the Washington Foundation and the Governor's Office to explore ways of fostering early childhood development to plant the seeds for economic growth; and,
- Releasing a report on high-tech business development in Montana based on a survey of members of the Montana High Tech Business Alliance, showing that tech firms are faster growing and higher paying than average.

These achievements highlight a trend that has been going on within the Bureau since its beginning. As they study the state's economy, there continues to be a focus on those economic sectors that are experiencing rapid growth, such as health care and high-tech businesses. Another continuing pattern is the long-standing relationship between the Governor's Office and the state of Montana. I have to include the fact that this is the 41st consecutive year that the Bureau will travel throughout the state presenting its Economic Outlook Seminars. Each year I attend, it is encouraging to see attendees who represent the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. In other words, the annual Economic Outlook Seminar is somewhat like a traveling rock concert for many interested parties. The state is fortunate to have a partner like the Bureau.

Sincerely,

Larry Gianchetta
Dean, School of Business Administration
University of Montana

To subscribe, go to www.bber.umn.edu/mbq

MONTANA BUSINESS QUARTERLY

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GETTING THE NEWS

Technology Changes Habits



by John Baldrige and Bill Whitsitt

Montanans highly value their news and are increasingly using mobile devices to access news over the Internet. Among younger Montanans, ages 18 to 34, 58 percent reported obtaining news online or by mobile device every day. And young people aren't the only ones who are tech-savvy news consumers. Montanans in every age group – including 65 and older – are reading the latest news stories on phones, tablets, and computers. But they also rely on traditional news content producers like television stations, and they actively seek local news.

In a world with a growing wealth of Internet-based news and information, some vital questions were recently addressed by first-of-its-kind, Montana-based survey research conducted by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research for the Greater Montana Foundation, an organization that encourages communication, with emphasis on electronic media, on important issues facing Montana. The questions addressed were:

- What do Montanans believe are the most important issues facing our state?
- Where do Montanans prefer to get trusted information on these issues?

The findings of the survey are especially important since they come at a time of revolutionary changes in media technology, in addition to the growth in Internet use worldwide and in Montana. Such changes mean that there will undoubtedly be new media business models in the future, so the preferences of Montana's information consumers are key. In addition, from the perspective of citizen engagement, the wealth of today's information raises questions about which sources of information, both within and outside Montana, are or should be trusted.

The survey results demonstrate that Montanans appear to be discerning. They have trusted media sources. In addition, traditional news sources are critical to Montanans' ability to receive information on key issues, led by television. And

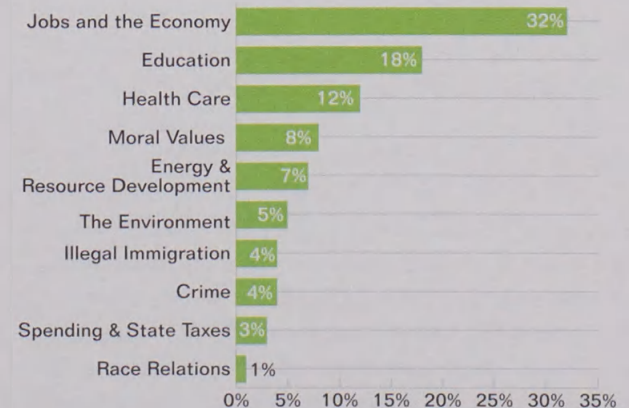
despite the growing use of the Internet as a news conduit, for now it appears that traditional sources hold their own and are well-trusted by Montanans.

This article describes the survey's findings about the issues that were most important to Montanans, their current preferences for and sources of news and information, and the role of the Internet in providing Montanans with news and information.

Jobs and the Economy, Education, and Health Care are Most Important to Montanans

Jobs and the economy was cited most often (32 percent) by adult Montanans as the most important issue facing the state. The next most commonly mentioned issue was education, cited by 18 percent as the most important issue facing the state. Other issues rated most important by Montanans included health care (12 percent), moral values (8 percent), energy and resource development (7 percent), and the environment (5 percent).

Q Which one of the following issues is currently the most important issue facing the state?

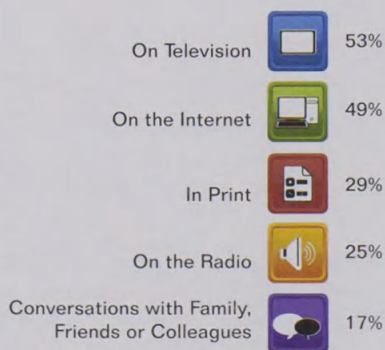


These survey results are particularly important because they offer Montana's news organizations an assessment of which topics news consumers find most important. These findings provide an opportunity for Montana's news organizations to tailor their coverage to Montanans' preferences, thus remaining competitive and relevant in today's rapidly changing news and information market. As this survey demonstrates, many of the most rapid changes in this market are occurring in the methods Montanans use to consume news and information.

Montanans Access Traditional News Sources in Old and New Ways

Most Montanans reported turning to television or the Internet to get news. When asked where they got their news and information over the last seven days, a majority of adult Montanans (53 percent) reported getting news from television. Similarly, 49 percent said they got news from the Internet over the previous week. A lower proportion said that they got news in the last week from a print source (29 percent), on the radio (25 percent), or from family and friends (17 percent).

Q Thinking about the news, how did you get your news in the past week?



It is important to note that getting news and information from the Internet can refer to a large number of possible sources including television websites, newspaper websites, radio websites, Internet-only news or information sites, and social media sites like Facebook or Twitter. In fact, it is apparent from this survey that newspaper news consumption among adult Montanans occurs via print and via the Internet. While fewer Montanans reported consuming news via radio compared to other sources, 61 percent of Montanans reported listening to radio. And like newspapers, many Montana radio stations now deliver their content via streaming on the Internet or by presenting news articles on their station's websites.

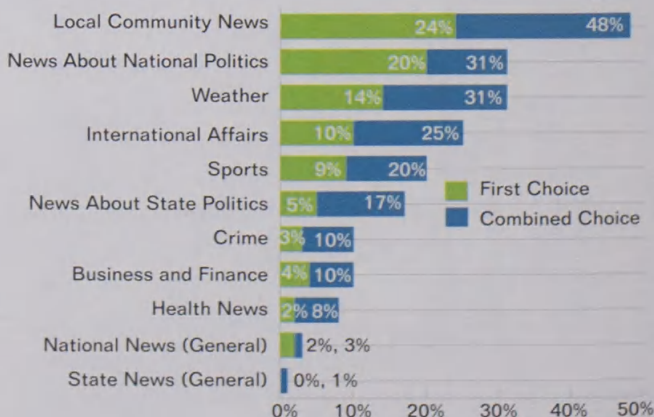
Two implications of this finding stand out. First, the Internet is a vitally important source of news and information for Montanans. Montana's news organizations must continue to offer news in formats that are compatible with this method of news consumption. Second, traditional Montana news organizations remain critically relevant as producers of news content that can be delivered to Montanans both on and off the Internet.

Montanans Highly Value Local News

Montana news organizations are uniquely positioned to provide news content that Montanans want, according to the Bureau survey. Local news sources are more sought after by adult Montanans than are national news sources. More than three-fifths of adult Montanans (64 percent) reported regularly or sometimes watching local television news. In addition, 63 percent reported regularly or sometimes reading a local newspaper like the Billings Gazette or the Missoulian. Finally, 52 percent of Montanans said that they regularly or sometimes read a local weekly community newspaper. In contrast, the most sought after national news source was nightly network television news, which 43 percent of Montanans reported watching regularly or sometimes.

In addition, the survey found that local community news interests Montanans more than other types of news and information. When asked which types of news and information programming are most interesting, 48 percent of adult Montanans answered local community news. This preference was followed by news about national politics (31 percent), weather (31 percent), international affairs (25 percent), and sports (20 percent).

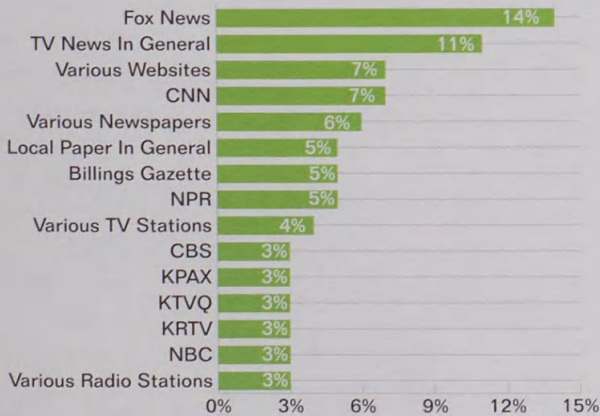
Q Which two or three types of news and information programming interest you the most?



Trusted News Sources

Montanans do make distinctions regarding the trustworthiness of news sources, whether these sources are local or national. More than three-fifths of adult Montanans (62 percent) said that they have one source of news that they trust most. Montanans, as a whole, mentioned a very broad spectrum of sources as most trustworthy. Fox News was cited as the most trusted news source (14 percent). Television news in general was cited by 11 percent of Montanans as most trustworthy. "Various websites" were named most trustworthy by a combined 7 percent of adult Montanans, while CNN was also mentioned as most trustworthy by 7 percent of adults. Various newspapers were cited by a combined 6 percent of adults as most trustworthy, while the Billings Gazette specifically, and NPR were each mentioned by 5 percent of adults.

Q What specific news source do you consider a trusted source of information?



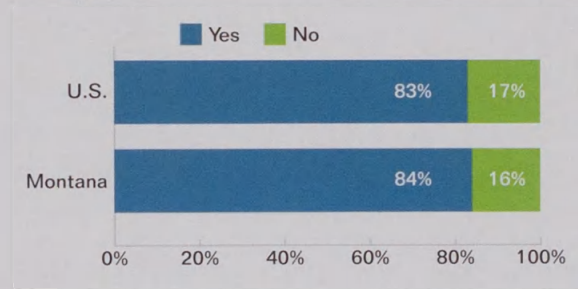
It is particularly interesting to observe the prominence of traditional news content producers on the list of Montanans' most trusted sources. Television networks and stations, newspapers, and radio stations were frequently cited as trusted news sources. However, these traditional sources of news content can be delivered to consumers in quite non-traditional ways, meaning via the Internet. In addition, newly established sources of news content, represented in the survey findings as "various websites," also appeared among the sources of news Montanans trust most.

Internet Access and News Consumption

To use the Internet to obtain news people must have Internet access. Eight in 10 adult Montanans (84 percent) reported having Internet access in their homes. There is no

statistical difference between this proportion of Montana households and the proportion of all U.S. households reporting Internet access in 2013 (83 percent).

Q Do you have Internet access at your home?



This high level of Internet access among Montanans implies that Montanans in general are exposed to the same possibilities for sources and methods of Internet news consumption as are people around the country. However, there are differences in Internet access between urban and rural Montanans.

Rural Montanans are somewhat less likely to report Internet access in their homes than are urban Montanans. Almost nine in 10 residents (89 percent) of Montana's seven most populous counties reported having Internet access in their homes. In comparison, 75 percent of residents of the remaining 49 Montana counties reported having Internet access in their homes.

The implication of this finding is that rural Montanans are slightly more reliant on traditional methods for consumption of news – print, radio, and television – than are urban Montanans.

Frequency of Internet News Consumption

The substantial penetration of Internet access in Montana households sets the conditions for significant use of the Internet by adult Montanans to obtain news. Two-thirds of adult Montanans (66 percent) reported consuming news online or using a mobile device at least weekly. More than four in 10 adult Montanans (43 percent) reported getting news via the Internet daily. An additional 23 percent reported getting news through the Internet weekly.

This substantial frequency of Internet use to obtain news and information by Montanans has very large implications for Montana's existing news organizations. Montana's news consumers increasingly seek news content via the Internet. Competing for Internet business is thus vital for the survival of Montana's news organizations.

Getting News over the Internet is Generational in Montana, but

While the survey does support the commonly held belief that younger people are more likely to use the Internet to get news than are older people, the survey also shows that a substantial portion of Montana's seniors are "wired."

Almost six in 10 Montanans ages 18-34 (58 percent) reported getting news online or by a mobile device every day. Only 4 percent of Montanans ages 18-34 reported never getting news online or by a mobile device.

In contrast, about one-quarter of Montanans ages 65 and older (26 percent) reported obtaining news online or by a mobile device every day. Another 22 percent of Montanans ages 65 and older reported that they never consume news online or on a mobile device.

Survey Methods

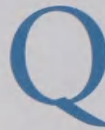
The statewide media habits survey was administered in April – May 2015, among 526 adult Montana residents and has a margin of error of +/- 4.3 percent.

The survey was fielded by the Bureau, with questionnaire and analytical assistance from Nicole McCleskey of Public Opinion Strategies, a national research firm.

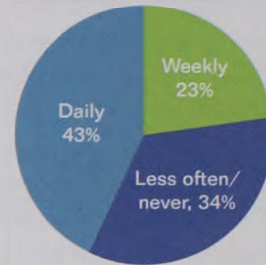
The methods used for this survey are:

- Population represented: Montana residents ages 18+.
- Type of sample: Probability.
- Mode of data collection: Telephone (landline and cell)
- Are the data weighted? Yes, to state targets from U.S. Census Bureau, Gallup, and phone type estimates by U.S. National Center for Health Statistics.

Full question wording may be obtained from John Baldrige at John.Baldrige@umontana.edu.



How often do you get news online or on a mobile device?

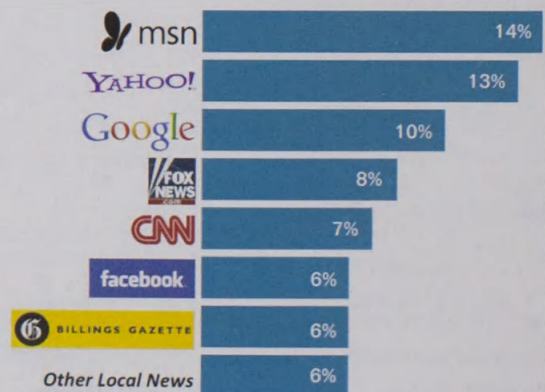


Most Commonly Cited Websites

The survey provided a first glimpse at the specific websites Montanans use to get news. When asked which websites they use for news and information, adult Montanans most often mentioned aggregator or search-engine sites like MSN (14 percent), Yahoo (13 percent), and Google (10 percent). Fox News (8 percent) and CNN (7 percent) were next most frequently mentioned. Facebook and the Billings Gazette were each cited by 6 percent of adult Montanans.



What are the one or two websites you use most frequently for news and information?



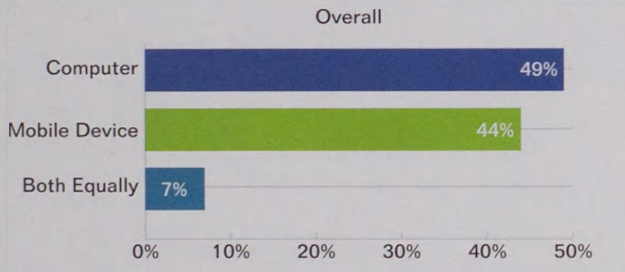
The survey results in this case raise as many questions as they answer. Clearly, aggregator websites are an important path chosen by Montanans to access news. But where do they go on the Internet from there? In addition, Montanans frequently access local news content producers like the Billings Gazette and other local news sources, but do they also access these websites through aggregator websites? The survey presented here just scratched the surface of these issues. But the survey did examine another important characteristic of Internet news consumption, and that is the use of handheld devices like smartphones.

Smartphones

Nearly half of Internet news consumers who are at least 18 years old and live in Montana (49 percent) reported using desktop computers to obtain news, but nearly as many reported using mobile devices like smartphones (44 percent). The small remaining portion used both equally (7 percent).



Do you get more of your online news using a computer or a mobile device?



Clearly, to remain competitive, Internet news content producers must make their offerings compatible with small-screen formats used by smartphones. In addition, the prominent use of handheld devices by Montanans to consume news tells us much about where and when Montanans are consuming their news. No longer are they only consuming news at the breakfast table or in their living rooms. Rather, they are consuming news on the move and at their places of work. This may imply that news content should be tailored to grab the attention of a consumer who is distracted by other events. Finally, a new type of Internet content has emerged worldwide and in Montana that is adding even more change to the news market, social networking.

Social Media Networking

The rise of Internet-based social media networking is well underway in Montana. Focusing only on news, the survey found that fully one-third of adult Montanans (34 percent) use social networking sites to access news and information. Just over three in 10 adult Montanans reported using Facebook to access news, while 5 percent reported using Twitter.



Do you use Facebook, Twitter, or other social media sites to access news or information?

Yes 34%



32%

No 66%



5%

Again, these survey results raise many important questions. First, what news websites do Montanans access through social networking sites like Facebook? Second, to what extent do the posts of friends on social networking websites influence the news that Montanans consume? Among this latter category, what factors influence what is posted, and how accurate is it? Additional study is needed to shed light on these very important questions.

Conclusion

This survey found that recent, revolutionary changes in media technology and growth in Internet use are having profound impacts on Montanans' news habits. That's seen in the survey results by the blurring of media sector lines. TV reporters now write for their websites. Newspaper reporters shoot video for their publications' websites. Radio content is streamed. This news and information is often delivered to Montana consumers over the Internet and is accessible by handheld devices. And, yes, Montanans rely heavily on traditional news content produced in traditional ways such as print newspapers and over-the-air broadcasting. But all of this is evolving, and changes mean there will undoubtedly be new media business models in the future to address the preferences of Montana's information consumers. □

John Baldridge is the director of survey research and Bill Whitsitt is the chairman of the Greater Montana Foundation and the executive in residence at the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

Social Media as a News Source

Three in five (60 percent) of Montana women ages 18-49 said that they get news from a social networking website like Facebook or Twitter. Just under half of men ages 18-49 reported consuming news via a social networking website.

Far fewer older Montanans access news via a social networking website. Only 18 percent of women ages 50 and older reported using a social networking website to get news. Similarly, just 12 percent of men ages 50 and older said that they got news from a social networking website.

The generational nature of this news consumption pattern is striking. But much remains to be learned about what news sources are accessed via social networking, to say nothing of the possible influence of friends' posts on people's news consumption.



How Montana is Faring in the Post-Commodity Boom Economy

by Patrick M. Barkey

If you enjoy sleepless nights and watching your hair fall out, then perhaps you should get into the commodity business. The big swings that occur in commodity prices, often due to speculation or events half a world away, make the business of prediction an exceedingly risky one. Yet Montana producers of all kinds of commodities – metals, energy, and foodstuffs – have been mostly winning in the marketplace the better part of the last decade. Sustained high prices for everything from oil to beef have added spark to the state economy and kept tax coffers in Helena flush.

That run of good fortune – from the point of view of producers, at least – has come to an apparent end. In the space of six months at the close of 2014, the International Monetary Fund's index of all commodities fell by a third and has shown no signs of a revival since. Taken collectively, commodity prices are back to the levels of the year 2005. Five commodity prices that are important to Montana – wheat, copper, lead, zinc, and crude oil – are at five-year lows.

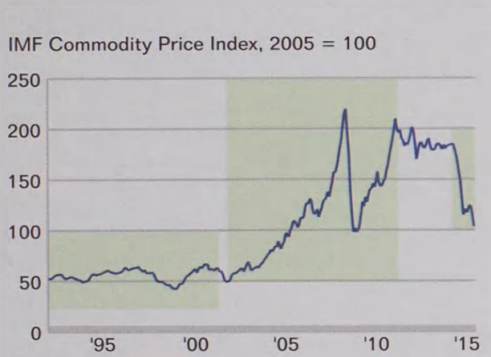
For consumers of commodities, this is a great thing. The plunge in commodity prices has been an important driver

of the very low inflation rates seen in most economies around the world. But for a commodity-producing state like Montana, lower commodity prices will produce reduced levels of investment, job losses, and softer tax collections. How the adjustment to lower prices will play out in the coming years for the Montana economy looms large in our updated economic outlook.

The Commodity Price Super Cycle

The reason many forecasters think that commodity prices could remain at these lower levels for an extended time is something that has been called the commodity price super cycle. This can be best explained by looking at the historical fluctuations in an index of all commodity prices over the last 25 years, as shown in Figure 1. In the 1990s, the IMF's overall commodity index – which combines prices of energy, food, metals, and other globally traded commodities – exhibited the fluctuations of what might be termed the ordinary cycle. These are the swings in prices associated with interruptions and/or additions to supply and production, as well as fluctuations in demand in the economic cycles of

Figure 1
The Commodity Price Super Cycle



Source: International Monetary Fund, All Commodity Price Index, 2005 = 100.

commodity-consuming countries around the world.

The upswing of the super cycle kicked in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s and the brief recession of 2001. Over a space of less than a decade, commodity prices as a whole increased by a factor of four or more. A key driver of this growth, of course, was the very rapid growth of developing economies, particularly China. Their demand for raw materials to build new infrastructure and manufacturing capacity, together with the millions of households joining the ranks of the middle class, was a seismic event for commodity markets worldwide.

The bubble briefly burst during the 2007-09 global economic downturn, only to recover quickly a short time afterward. But the outlook for slower growth in China and other formerly high-flying economies today is a big departure from 10 years ago. The restrained growth these countries are

expected to realize in the coming years, as well as new global production capacity sparked in part by historically high prices, have caused markets to adjust. If these expectations are realized, Montana and other commodity-sensitive regions and countries can expect future price fluctuations to be centered on much lower prices overall than what we saw in the last decade.

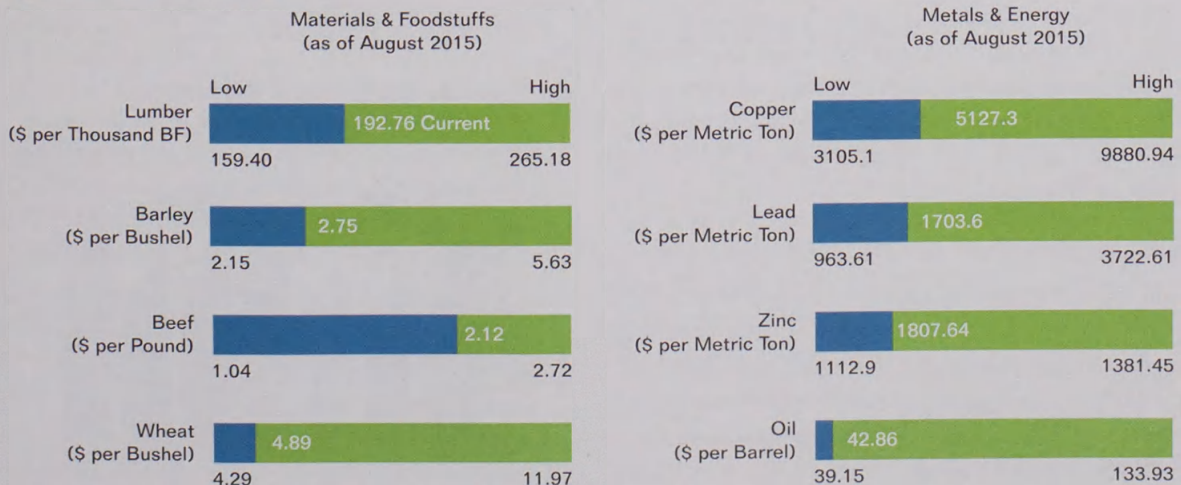
Montana-Specific Commodities

Not all individual commodities have behaved exactly as the overall index shown in Figure 1. But, with one important exception, prices for important Montana-produced commodities are running much cooler than the recent past.

As shown in Figure 2, which displays the August 2015 average price for globally traded commodities tracked by the IMF compared to recent historical experience, prices for both wheat and oil have fallen close to their 10-year lows. With the exception of beef prices, all of the commodity prices shown in the figure are lower than what they have averaged over the past 10 years. All of the metal prices shown in Figure 2 were at their five-year lows in August. Another important Montana-produced metal not tracked by the IMF, palladium, has seen prices fall by roughly a third since the summer of last year as well.

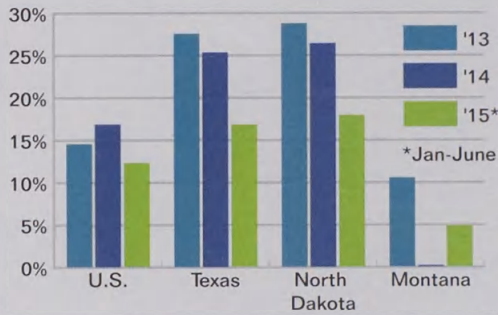
Beef prices may be bucking the trend because of the prominence of the U.S. market, which consumes roughly 25 percent of global production. Beef prices did decline sharply in the winter and spring, but they have recovered some ground since that point. Better growth in the U.S. economy and some drought-related issues with supply have helped keep beef prices stronger than other commodities.

Figure 2
Selected Commodity Prices,
August 2015 vs. 10-Year High/Low



Source: International Monetary Fund.

Figure 3
Percent Change in Crude Oil Production



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Assessing the Impact

The weakness in commodity markets is easier to demonstrate than the effect of that weakness on the Montana economy. Overall, the Montana economy has accelerated for each of the last four quarters for which data are available. While growth has begun to turn negative for the Montana counties most affected by the Bakken boom, such as Roosevelt and Richland counties, through the first quarter of 2015 growth in the more populous western Montana counties has picked up considerably.

Analysis of previous oil price declines suggests that the full impacts of those declines can take six to eight months to arrive. Most of that analysis predates the horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing process that is prevalent in the Bakken. The oil production data in Figure 3 show that even through the first six months of 2015, oil output in Texas, North Dakota, and even Montana continued to grow, despite price declines of nearly 50 percent. This growth occurred as existing well sites were finished and put into production.

Those increases are now winding down, and we expect to see more evidence of declines rippling through broader measures of economic activity as those data become available. This promises to change the pattern of growth across the state. But offsetting gains in other industries have thus far masked whatever declines in commodity-related business activity may have produced in statewide growth.

Updating the Outlook

The BBER will be updating its annual economic forecast for the state and its major cities at the end of the year. But the data that have arrived since our last forecast give us plenty of information to digest and consider. Since our last forecast, we have seen:

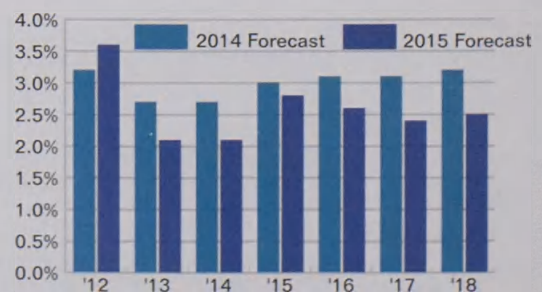
- accelerating growth in total wages, led by growth in construction, manufacturing, and retail trade industries;
- evidence of strong performance in nonresident tourist spending statewide, with growth in accommodations industries as well as receipts for taxes on rental cars;
- continued restraint in growth of health care employers, compared to the above average growth rates of that sector in prior years;
- outsized growth in Gallatin County, which continues to pace the urban counties across the state, but with populous counties such as Flathead and Missoula counties closing the growth gap as their economies improve;
- stronger-than-expected growth in state government's General Fund tax and non-tax receipts, which grew by almost 6 percent in the fiscal year ending in June 2015.

Most of these observations are based on data that extended only through March of 2015. The softness in the state's resource-related industries has shown up in announcements and anecdotes but not yet in the data. We expect those retrenchments to take a bite out of the robust growth displayed by the data as the information arrives.

The changing global climate described here has already factored into changes made in the BBER's forecast of state growth made at the beginning of 2015. As shown in Figure 4, the growth rates in the next three years for the state economy were reduced from the projections made at the beginning of 2014, when the boom was still in full swing. With the likelihood that lower commodity prices will stick around for the next few years, we expect our optimism for statewide growth to continue to be restrained in forecasts to come. □

Patrick M. Barkey is director of the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

Figure 4
Comparison of BBER Forecasts of Montana Growth
Percent Growth in Real Nonfarm Earnings



Source: Bureau of Business and Economic Research.



Iris Owen, a certified public accountant at Anderson ZurMuehlen, pictured with her 18-month-old twins at her Missoula office. Owen says that if it weren't for the supportive work environment and flexible workforce policies at Anderson ZurMuehlen she doesn't know if she could have come back to work after the twins, Vida and Liv, were born. Owen has a flexible schedule, working more hours during tax season (January-April) and three-quarters time the rest of the year.

Montana's Labor Shortage and Paid Family Leave

Recruiting Workers by Supporting Families

by Annie Glover

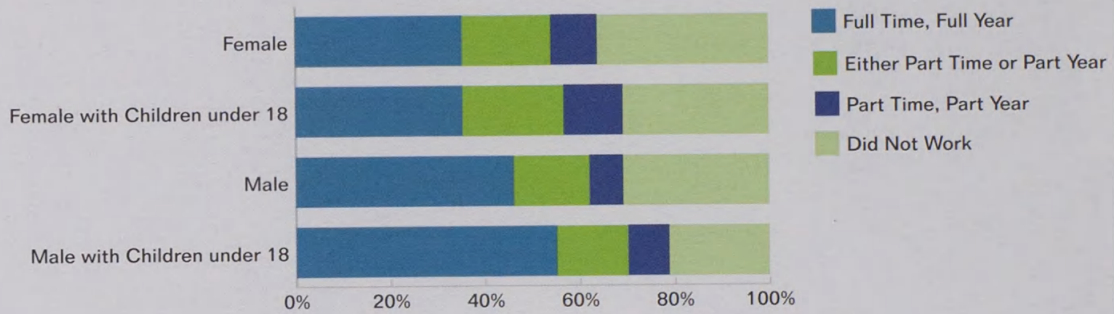
In the next 10 years, at least 130,000 working Montanans will retire. With an aging population, Montana's labor force will only grow by 4,100 workers per year for the next 10 years (Wagner, 2015). Given current trends, there will simply not be enough workers to fill the projected annual job growth of 6,500 to continue to grow Montana's economy. Montana must find strategies to increase labor force participation so businesses have the workers they need.

Meanwhile, workers face pressures each day at home – pressures that may be impacting their participation in the labor force. Parents leave the workforce when their children

are young, often because of the prohibitively high cost of childcare. With average annual child care costs in Montana ranging from \$9,062 for an infant to \$6,815 for after-school care for a school-age child, it may not make economic sense for some parents to work outside the home (Childcare Aware, 2015).

Women also face an especially costly penalty in wages when they become mothers. According to research conducted by the Montana Equal Pay for Equal Work Task Force, mothers of young children make less than their female counterparts, women are much more likely to take time off

Figure 1
Work Status by Gender and Parental Status for
Montanans 16 and Older



Source: The Montana Paid Leave Study, Research and Analysis Bureau, Montana Department of Labor and Industry.

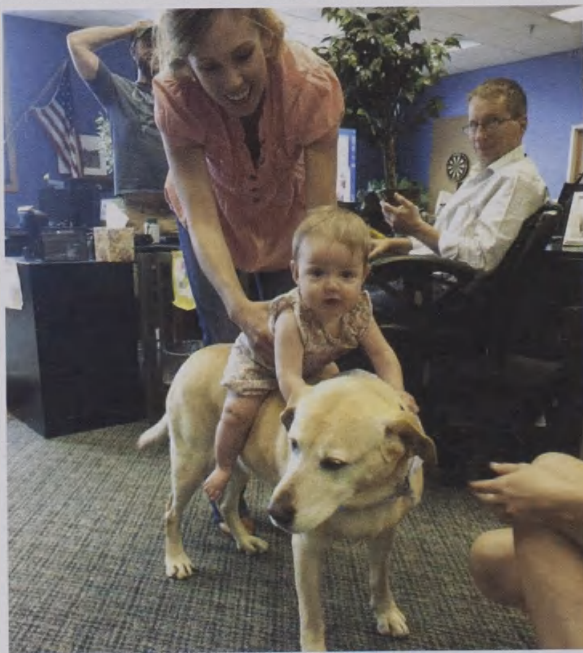


Photo by Matt Archibald

Samantha Severin, baby Hennessy, and Annie (the yellow lab), pictured above at Advanced Technology Group Missoula Solutions Center. ATG has a family-friendly and a dog-friendly workplace (see sidebar, page 14).

Working parents of young children are not the only people affected by home demands. Providing care for an aging parent, disabled relative, or child with special health care needs may also pull a worker out of the labor force. Caregiving for a disabled or ill family member occurs in an estimated 22 million American households (Cannuscio, 2013). Furthermore, the majority of adults in America who serve as informal caregivers also work, with 61 percent of the adults caring for elderly family members and 53 percent of parents of children with special needs employed outside the home. These families experience an average wage loss of 29 percent due to their home caregiving demands (Earle, 2012).

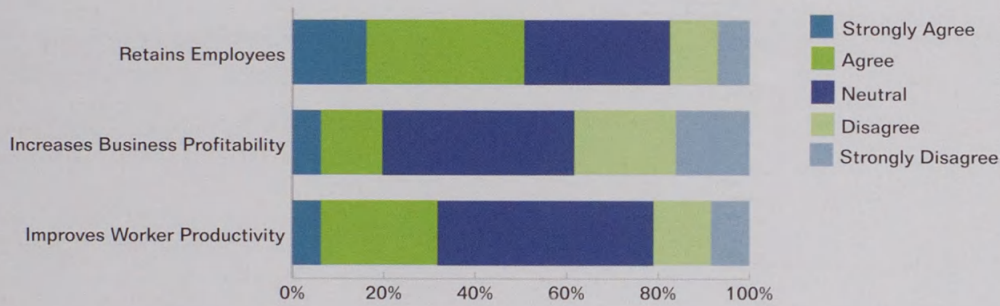
Paid Family Leave Important to Montanans

With the dual interest of closing Montana's gender wage gap (74.4 percent in 2014 for full-time workers) and increasing labor force participation, the Montana Department of Labor and Industry has recently concluded the Montana Paid Family Leave Study, a year-long endeavor funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau. The study focused on gathering data on the status quo of paid family leave and workers' access to family-friendly work policies in Montana. The study also conducted a poll of Montana adults – using a sample size of 500 – to take a pulse on paid leave and family workplace policies and better understand how family pressures affect workers and businesses.

to care for young children than men, and these long-term absences from work result in real skill loss and wage loss that affect workers for the rest of their careers (Figure 1). The American Association of University Women (AAUW) also has quantified the effect of motherhood on women's labor force participation and earnings, noting from their survey of workers "ten years after graduation, 23 percent of mothers were out of the workforce, and 17 percent worked part time. Among fathers, only 1 percent were out of the workforce, and only 2 percent worked part time" (AAUW, 2013).

At the topline, 73 percent of Montanans support work policies that allow employees to take paid time off to care for an aging parent; 66 percent support six weeks of paid maternity leave; and, 60 percent support six weeks of paid parental leave (including both maternity and paternity leave). Montanans have a variety of reasons they support paid family leave. Sixty-seven percent feel that paid family leave is good

Figure 2
Business Perspectives on Paid Parental Leave



Source: The Montana Paid Leave Study, Research and Analysis Bureau, Montana Department of Labor and Industry.

for children and families, and 65 percent feel that a lack of paid leave is especially unfair to women. Most notably, 56 percent of Montanans feel that paid family leave is good for businesses – a number that increases to 65 percent when the issue is put in the context of Montana’s labor shortage. Based on this finding, nearly two-thirds of Montana adults recognize paid family leave as a strategy that may boost recruitment and retention by keeping workers on the job and engaged in the labor force.

Recognizing the ROI of Family-Friendly Workplaces

Aside from the workers who stand to benefit, businesses have a vested interest in the provision of paid family leave and other family-friendly workplace policies. Paying for family leave may cost a business directly or indirectly through taxes, and policies such as flexible scheduling may pose logistic difficulties for managers struggling to cover shifts. To make financial sense, businesses must recognize the return on and investment in family-friendly work policies. Starting in January 2015, the Research and Analysis Bureau at the Department of Labor and Industry surveyed 2,303 Montana businesses to quantify the prevalence of these policies in Montana and better understand how business owners view paid family leave. The survey wrapped up in March with 948 valid completions (42 percent).

Currently in Montana, about 45 percent of businesses, covering 68 percent of workers, provide some type of paid leave, including general paid time off, vacation, sick leave, or family/parental leave. Paid family leave is very uncommon in Montana, with only about 6 percent of businesses providing this benefit to all their employees. When asked why they did not provide paid family/parental leave, business respondents gave a variety of answers, including the expense, their feeling that employees would not use it, employer preference, and a perceived negative impact on business productivity. Businesses

also generally do agree that paid family/parental leave helps to retain employees; however, businesses have not connected the benefit of employee retention to profitability and productivity (Figure 2).

Working Montanans and the “Double Whammy”

On average, women’s labor participation in other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries has increased from 61.7 percent in 1990 to 79.5 percent in 2010. In the same time period, the U.S. rate has barely changed, increasing slightly from 74 to 75.2 percent. Hoping to explain the stagnancy of female labor force participation in the U.S. since 1990, researchers at the Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) looked to international trends in family-friendly workplace policies. As other OECD countries have substantially grown paid family leave and public child care spending, U.S. policies have not kept up. After controlling for demographic and other policy variables, IZA attributes 29 percent of the deterioration in American women’s relative labor force participation rate to the paltry family-work policies in this country (Blau, 2013).

As baby boomers continue to retire, more and more working adults are finding themselves in the “Sandwich Generation” where they are responsible for the care of children in the home as well as their aging parents. The vast majority (78 percent) of parents who are also providing elder care are also employed, with 63 percent employed full time. Montanans are clearly already feeling the strain that providing care to family members can put on their incomes. Access to paid leave reduces the odds that a family caregiver will experience that income loss by 37 percent (Earle, 2012). Given the double whammy of caring for young children as well as caring for aging parents, policy discussions must be inclusive of paid family leave that includes provisions for both.

Where Family Values Meets Business Success

In October 2015, U.S. Labor Secretary Thomas E. Perez visited Missoula to hear from Montana businesses about how they are helping employees stay on the job and balance the needs at home. A number of local businesses and nonprofits discussed their family-friendly policies as essential strategies to attract – and more importantly retain – the highly skilled workers they need (see sidebar). Anecdotally, the businesses felt that this investment paid off; as employers of choice, they can compete for the best and brightest at the state and national levels.

As shown by the Montana Paid Family Leave Study, Montanans place a high value on family-friendly work policies, and specifically on provisions that allow them to take time off work to care for their children and aging parents. Businesses need to attract and retain skilled workers to maintain their competitive edge in Montana's growing economy. Work-family policies, such as paid family leave, lie squarely at the intersection of family values and business success. □

Annie Glover is the director of Public Health and Economic Security Initiatives at the Montana Department of Labor and Industry.

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Employees to Labor Secretary



Photo by Tom Mateer

Claude Sammoury, director of business development at Advanced Technology Group; Holly Foster, ATG's director of solution delivery; Secretary Perez; and Carey Davis, ATG's director of operations, pictured in front of the downtown tech company.

by Shannon Furniss

When Iris Owen found out she was pregnant with twins she was thrilled – and then terrified. A certified public accountant at Anderson ZurMuehlen's Missoula office, Owen didn't know how she would be able to continue her career with not just one but two infants.

After the twins were born, Owen had a few health complications and took four months off to stay at home. "If I didn't work for a company that was so supportive, I might not have gone back to work," she said. Now her girls are 18 months old, and the tax accountant has a flexible schedule, working more hours January through April (tax season) and three-quarters time during the rest of the year. She works from home sometimes and is happy that "at our company no one ever has to miss a soccer game or a doctor's appointment."

That kind of flexibility "really takes the stress off," Owen said.

Owen told her story to U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez and a group of Montana business and nonprofit leaders during a roundtable discussion on flexible workplace policies held in October at Advanced Technology Group Missoula Solutions Center.

Flexible Workplace is Key to Happy, Committed Employees



Photo by Tom Mateer

Pam Bucy, commissioner of the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, pictured with U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez at a roundtable on flexible workforce policies held at Advanced Technology Group Missoula Solutions Center.

Secretary Perez was in Missoula for the University of Montana's "Defining a 21st Century Education for a Vibrant Democracy" conference. October is National Work and Families Month, and Perez wanted to talk with local businesses about balancing the demands of work with the responsibilities of caring for families.

Work-life balance is important at downtown Missoula tech company ATG, according to Holly Foster, director of solution delivery at ATG. The company keeps its refrigerator well-stocked with healthy snacks, has ping-pong tournaments during breaks, and has "walk-and-talk" meetings along the river, she said. In addition to a family-friendly work environment and flexible workplace schedules, ATG has a dog-friendly environment where employees can bring their dogs to work. In fact, Hercules, a golden retriever, Annie, a yellow lab (pictured on page 12), and Ein, a corgi, have become office fixtures, she said.

"It's core to our culture all the way into our ranks that we support flexibility, support families, and support people," Foster said.

Secretary Perez praised Montana's business leaders and forward-thinking companies for their flexible workforce policies. "In a modern family world, you've got families

“It's core to our culture all the way into our ranks that we support flexibility, support families, and support people.”

-Holly Foster, director of solution delivery,
ATG Missoula Solutions Center

balancing a lot of things," Perez said, adding that workers shouldn't have to win the "boss lottery" to have paid leave or workforce flexibility.

Also at the roundtable was Pam Bucy, commissioner of the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, who agreed that workplace flexibility is important.

"It's going to be costly for our economy if people don't step up and figure out how they're going to get their workforce in place and keep them there," Bucy said. □

Shannon Furniss is the communications director at the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

The Complex Causes of the Gender Pay Gap



by Barbara Wagner

In the United States, women earn median wages that are 71 percent of the median earnings for men. In Montana, this figure is 68 percent. The gap between the median wages for men and women is referred to as the gender wage gap. The gap between men's and women's wages exists in nearly every occupation, in all industries, in every state, across countries, at all education levels, and in the private, government, and nonprofit sectors. While the gender pay gap is improving, the narrowing is happening at such a slow pace that it would take until 2058 to reach gender pay equity (Hayes, 2013).

When presented with statistics on the gender pay gap, many react with disbelief because they don't see discrimination in their workplaces. After all, it is illegal to make hiring decisions, promotion decisions, and pay decisions based on gender. On the other side of the spectrum, there are many others who have witnessed or experienced gender discrimination in their workplaces and are ready to attribute the full gap to discrimination. Both of these viewpoints are incomplete.

Subtle Stereotypes at Work

Economic research on the gender pay gap has found many reasons for the differences in pay between men and women, including different career and education choices, differences in work experience, and, yes, discrimination. Pay discrimination is usually not overt but instead a reinforcing of subtle stereotypes that lead to unconscious gender bias. Both male and female managers are equally likely to demonstrate

gender bias in hiring and pay, and the pervasiveness of the wage gap across all industries, occupations, education levels, and other demographics suggests that the pay gap is a result of historical and cultural beliefs that are common to us all.

The largest factor that explains the gender pay gap is differences in hours worked by men and women. Women are more likely to work in part-time jobs and less likely to work year-round. However, when comparing full-time, year-round workers in Montana, women's median earnings are only 75 percent of men's median earnings, meaning a sizable pay gap still exists after accounting for hours at work.

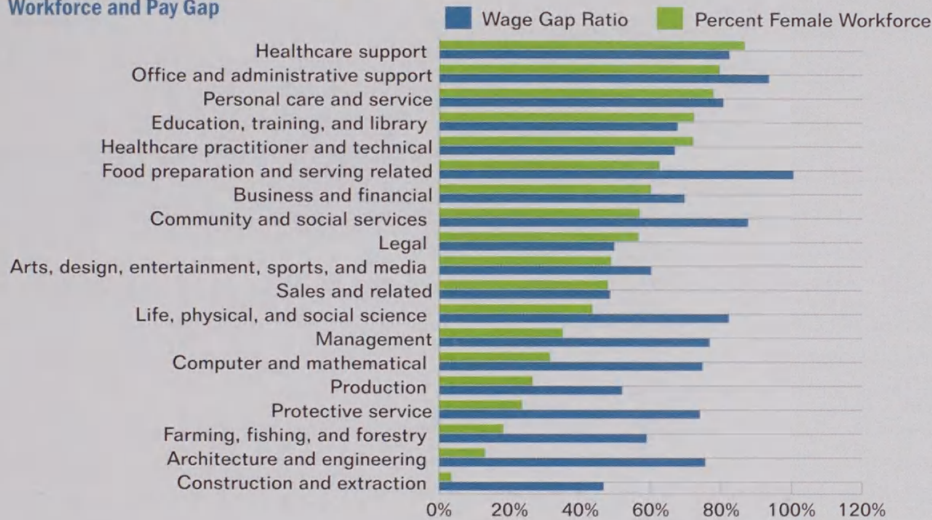
Over time, lower work hours by women result in women having lower experience levels than men, and less

work experience translates to lower pay. Yet women face a pay gap immediately in their careers, before experience differences exist. Young women age 16-24 earn roughly 90 percent to 95 percent of men's earnings. College-aged women graduating with similar grades in similar majors and accepting jobs similar to their male colleagues' earn 7 percent lower starting salaries (Hill and Corbett, 2012). The wage gap experienced by younger women is of particular concern because raises are often calculated as a percentage of the existing salary, leaving little hope that today's college graduates will ever achieve pay equity.

Further, research suggests that the experience levels of women are treated differently from other workers. Many studies have been completed where employers receive identical resumes, but half of the resumes have a female

“While the gender pay gap is improving, the narrowing is happening at such a slow pace that it would take until 2058 to reach gender pay equity.”

Figure 1
Montana Occupations by Percentage of Female Workforce and Pay Gap



Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

name (Barb) and the other half list a male applicant (Bob). Employers are more likely to offer the job to the male, with starting salary offers 7 percent to 15 percent higher than those offered to females, despite identical qualifications listed (Blau and Kahn, 2000). Similar studies have found that bias exists even before the worker reaches the job market, with women being less likely to be accepted into education and training programs in non-traditional fields.

In general, the education levels between men and women are fairly equal, with little of the pay gap being explained by differences in education. However, there are gaps between the fields pursued by men and women, with women less likely to pursue degrees in the high-paying fields of engineering, science, math, and technology.

The differences in degree fields result in differences in the occupational and industry choices of men and women, with women generally working in occupations and industries that have lower pay. Nearly 32 percent of working women in the U.S. are in the low-paying sales and office support occupations. In contrast, women comprise only 9 percent of workers in the high-paying legal and management occupations. Gender differences in occupation and industry choice can explain a sizable portion of the wage gap – up to 50 percent of the difference in some studies (Blau and Kahn, 2000).

However, the use of occupation and industry choice raises some concerns that the analysis is hiding pre-market discrimination. All other factors being equal, why would

women choose occupations with less pay instead of more pay? Research suggests that women are likely concentrated in low-paying occupations after not being hired for higher-paying jobs (Gobillon et al., 2015). Further, even within an occupation or industry, women earn less than men. Male nurses make more than female nurses. Male writers make more than female writers. In all of the 26 occupational categories used to track wages, men out-earn women.

The Intangible Factor: Discrimination

All of these factors put together can help explain most of the differences in pay between men and women. Differences in education, occupation, industry, experience, and hours worked can explain almost half of the difference between men's and women's pay. However, there remains a sizable portion that cannot be explained, despite many years and a multitude of studies attempting to figure it out. Most studies find that roughly 8 cents to 15 cents of the pay gap cannot be explained by other factors and is usually considered to be due to discrimination.

The issue of gender pay equity is sure to inspire emotional reactions, as this issue touches nearly every worker. Employers, women, their families, and their co-workers all desire and deserve fair and equitable treatment. We all want to feel that we have earned our wages in a competitive process that rewards and encourages the best workers. Yet a gender pay gap continues to exist, with both male and female managers exhibiting biases.

Solutions

The causes of the gender wage gap are complex, and finding solutions is challenging. Change will come with solid approaches to the factors we know and understand combined with across-the-workplace understanding of subtle discrimination.

Centralized pay determinations that remove the perception of individual managers can help. Instead, researchers suggest transparent pay determinations, which openly discuss the methods that are used to determine pay, and which use measurable criteria like education, years of experience, and quantitative performance measures. Even providing a salary range with the job posting can equalize pay by encouraging more women to negotiate their starting salaries. Finally, providing paid parental leave for both men and women has been effective in other countries in spreading family care duties among both parents, plus women receiving paid maternity leave are more likely to return to their employers post-childbirth, retaining more women in the workforce and eliminating long periods of time off work.

Individuals can also play a role to change the culture of work. Recognizing subtle differences in gender treatment

at work, giving public recognition for female coworkers' accomplishments, and encouraging women to negotiate for raises and promotions are all actions individuals can take to address the gender wage gap. Together, we can start bringing greater equality to the workplaces of Montana.

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Barbara Wagner is the chief economist at the Research and Analysis Bureau, Montana Department of Labor and Industry.

Montana Department of Labor & Industry: Helping Montanans with Workforce Needs

The Department of Labor & Industry is led by Commissioner Pam Bucy, who oversees an agency of almost 900 employees located in all areas of Montana, including local Job Service offices. Six divisions help Montanans with workforce needs, including:

- **The Commissioner's Office and Central Service Division** implements and promotes the department's initiatives and is the public face of the agency.
- **The Workforce Services Division** concentrates on developing and maintaining a high-quality workforce system for Montana that enhances the economic health of the business community and provides a prepared pipeline of workers.
- **The Unemployment Insurance Division's** responsibility is to increase the return-to-employment rate of claimants receiving unemployment insurance.
- **The Employment Relations Division** focuses on conducting timely, impartial investigations of charges of illegal discrimination under state and federal law.
- **The Business Standards Division** provides efficient and effective administrative and professional services to assist citizen boards in their duty to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.
- **The Technical Services Division** is critical in standardizing or integrating the information technology services for the public to interact with the department.

Each of these divisions is here to serve Montanans with their workforce needs. For more information, please visit dli.mt.gov.

Rising Property Tax Bills

Is There a Limit?

2016 Economic Outlook Seminar

Presented by NorthWestern Energy and the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research

Program:

Mention property taxes to anyone living or doing business in Montana and you are sure to get a reaction. Or maybe even an earful. One of the reasons Montana's oldest tax is among the least popular is that it is also the least well understood, and in many cases it continues to increase. The BBER's 2016 Economic Outlook Seminars, to be held around the state in January-March, will take square aim at that issue. The program will address not just how the tax works, but whether it's working well and why the growth is seemingly endless. Is the state's oldest tax prepared for the future? We hope you can join us for what promises to be a timely and insightful program.

Doug Young, professor emeritus of economics at Montana State University, will discuss Montana's current property tax system and its viability for the future in his keynote address at the 41st Annual Economic Outlook Seminar.

This half-day seminar and luncheon will highlight the latest economic trends for local, state, and national economies. Bureau economists Patrick Barkey and Paul Polzin will present economic forecasts for each seminar city, and industry specialists will provide the outlook for Montana's important economic sectors: nonresident travel, health care, real estate, agriculture, manufacturing, forest industry products, and energy.

Continuing education credits are available. Groups of five or more may register at a discount online at www.bber.umt.edu. Sign up now and guarantee your spot!

2016 Schedule

7:45 - 8:00	Coffee and Registration
8:00 - 8:15	Introductions, Patrick Barkey
8:15 - 8:45	U.S. and Montana Outlooks, Patrick Barkey
8:45 - 9:05	Local Outlook, Paul Polzin
9:05 - 9:25	Health Care, Bryce Ward
9:25 - 9:35	Break
9:35 - 9:55	Nonresident Travel, Norma Nickerson
9:55 - 10:15	Agriculture, George Haynes
10:15 - 10:35	Manufacturing and Forest Products, Todd Morgan
10:35 - 10:45	Break
10:45 - 11:05	Real Estate and Housing, Kyle Morrill
11:05 - 11:25	Energy, Terry Johnson
11:25 - 11:40	Local Expert
11:40 - 11:50	Wrap-up and Summary, Patrick Barkey
11:50 - Noon	Break
Noon - 12:50 (Lunch provided)	Luncheon Keynote, Doug Young

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Rising Property Tax Bills Is There a Limit?



Douglas J. Young
Professor Emeritus
Montana State University

Joining us for our 41st Annual Montana Economic Outlook Seminars is Douglas J. Young, who received his Ph.D. in economics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and became a professor at Montana State University in 1977. Doug has written extensively on Montana state and local finance issues – especially taxation – and was a presenter at BBER Outlook seminars in 2001 and 2005.

“My wife is an accountant, and we come here every year to stay on top of things.”
- Missoula, MT

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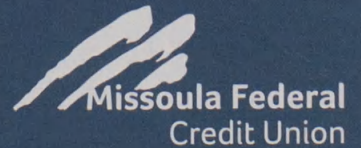
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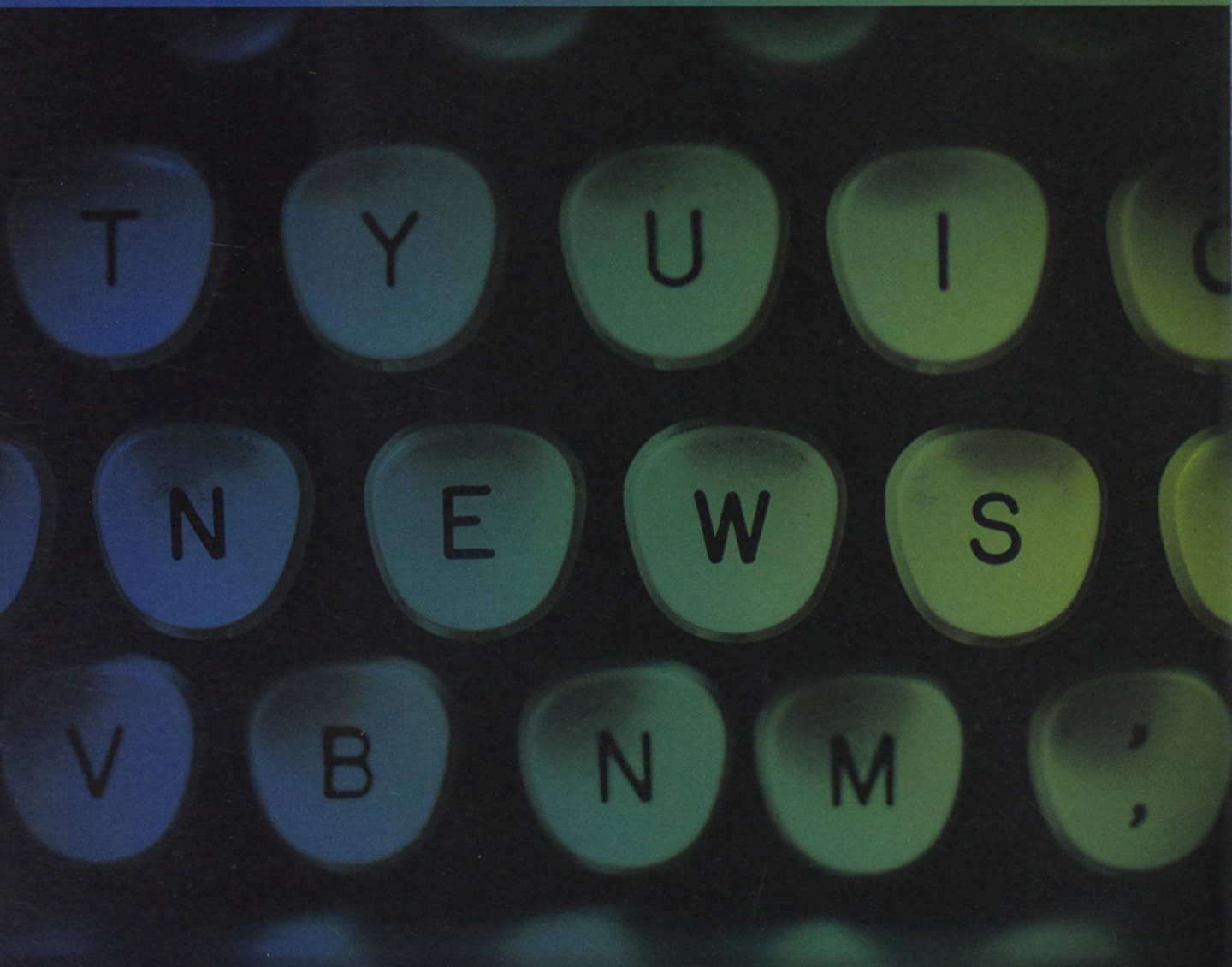
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