PITTSBURGH WORKS TOGETHER

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PA and Pittsburgh are Falling Behind In the Race for Good-Paying Industrial Jobs

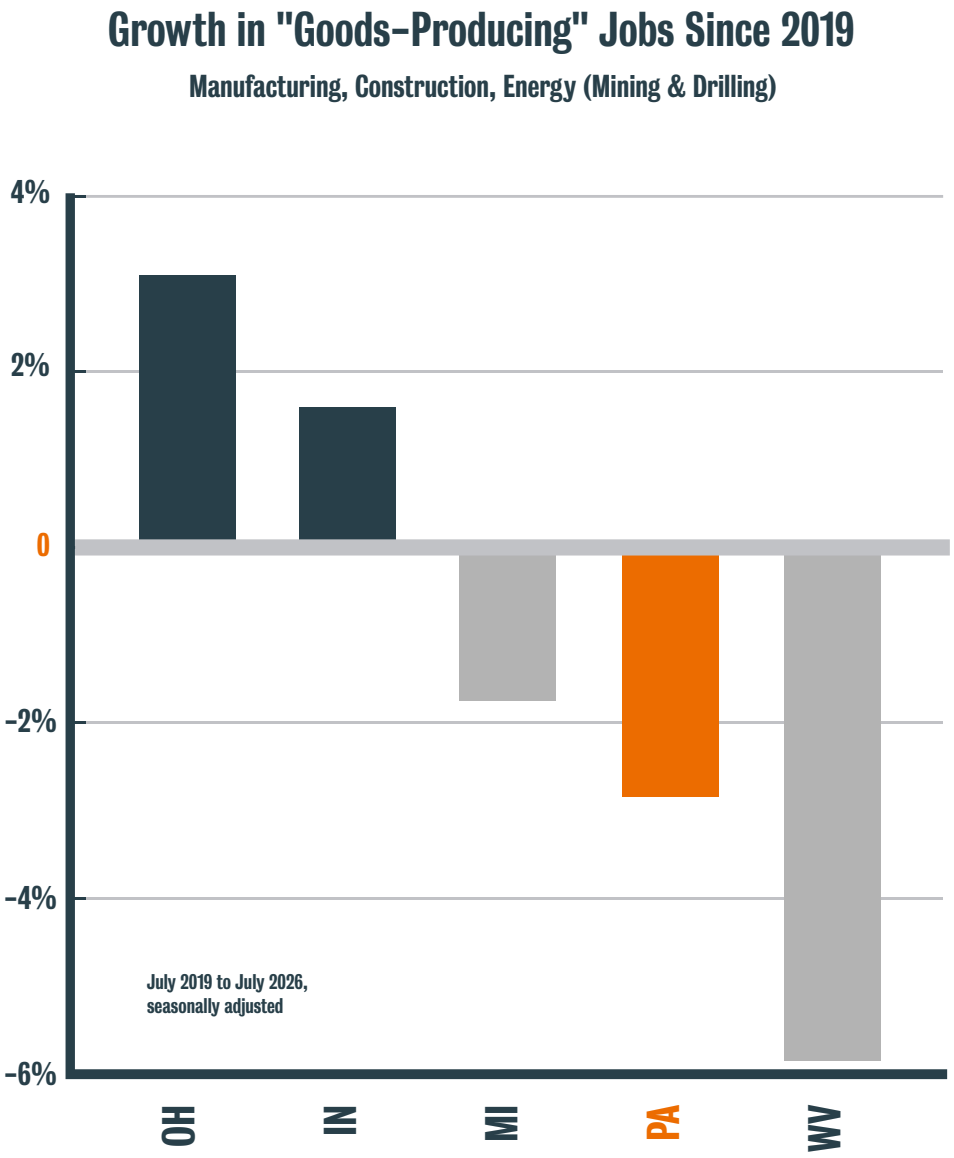
Summary

- **PA is Falling Behind Our Competitors:** Nearby states are doing better at attracting higher-paying manufacturing, construction, and other 'goods producing' industrial jobs.
- **The Pittsburgh region is worse off than the rest of the state:** Every other metro area in the state is doing better than the Pittsburgh region at attracting those jobs.
- **Pittsburgh is getting clobbered by its Ohio competitors:** Columbus, Cincinnati, and Cleveland are doing better at creating or holding onto those good-paying industrial jobs.
- **One (sort of) bright spot:** Pennsylvania is doing OK in manufacturing jobs, but that means we're not shrinking as much as many of our competitor states.
- **Goods-producing jobs pay far more than service jobs:** In PA, the average goods-producing job pays almost 40% more, $79K annually versus $57K.
- **The lack of construction jobs does not bode well:** Pennsylvania, and the Pittsburgh region in particular, are trailing far behind competitors in these jobs, which can be viewed as an indicator of which way the economy is headed.

Pennsylvania is falling behind nearby competitors in creating manufacturing, construction, and other kinds of good-paying jobs that make things.

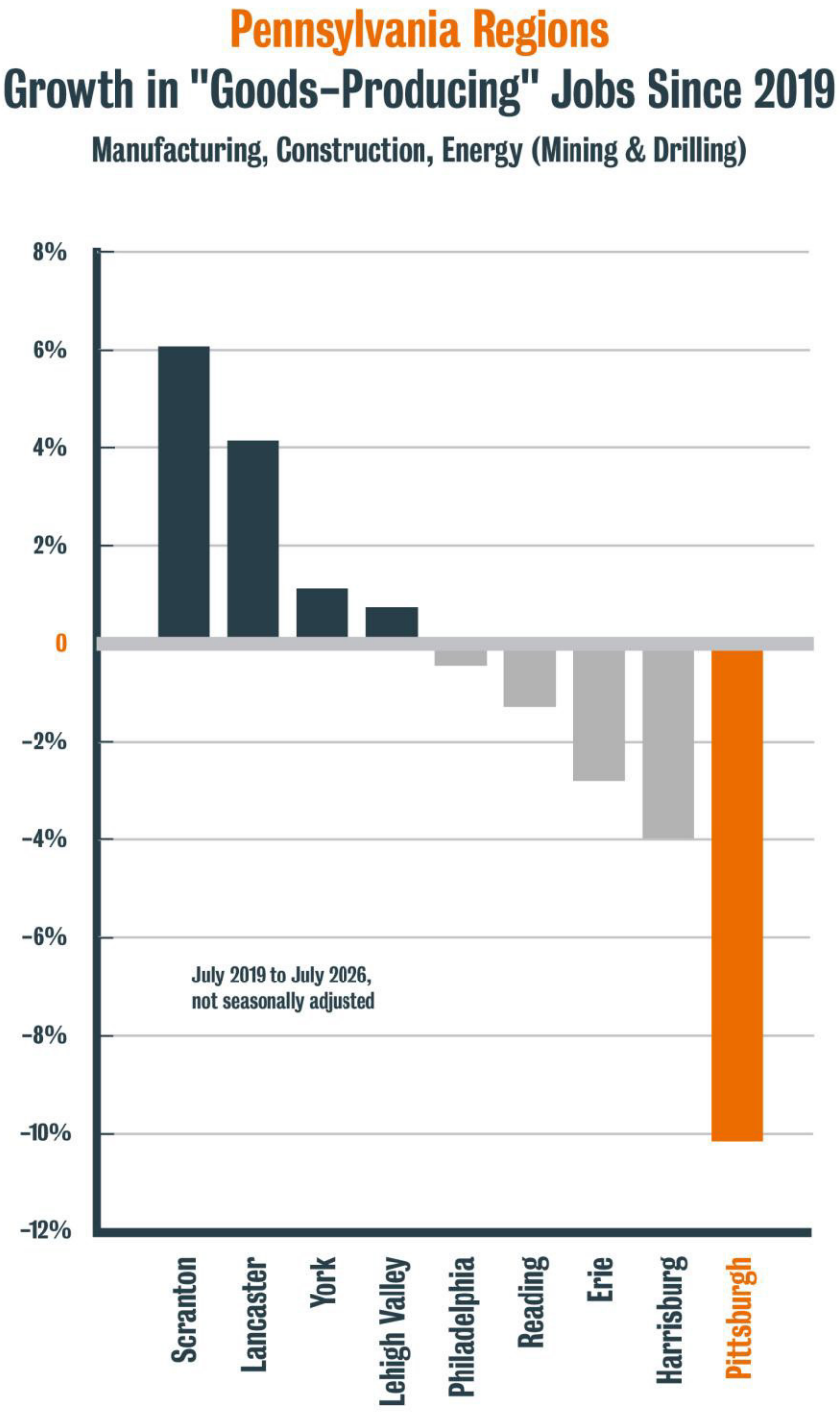
And the Pittsburgh region is performing the worst of any area in the state in that effort.

Unlike the competing states of Ohio and Indiana, Pennsylvania does not have as many of the jobs that economists classify as "goods producing" as it did prior to COVID, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.[1] In addition to factory jobs, that category also includes construction, and certain energy jobs such as coal mining and oil and gas drilling.

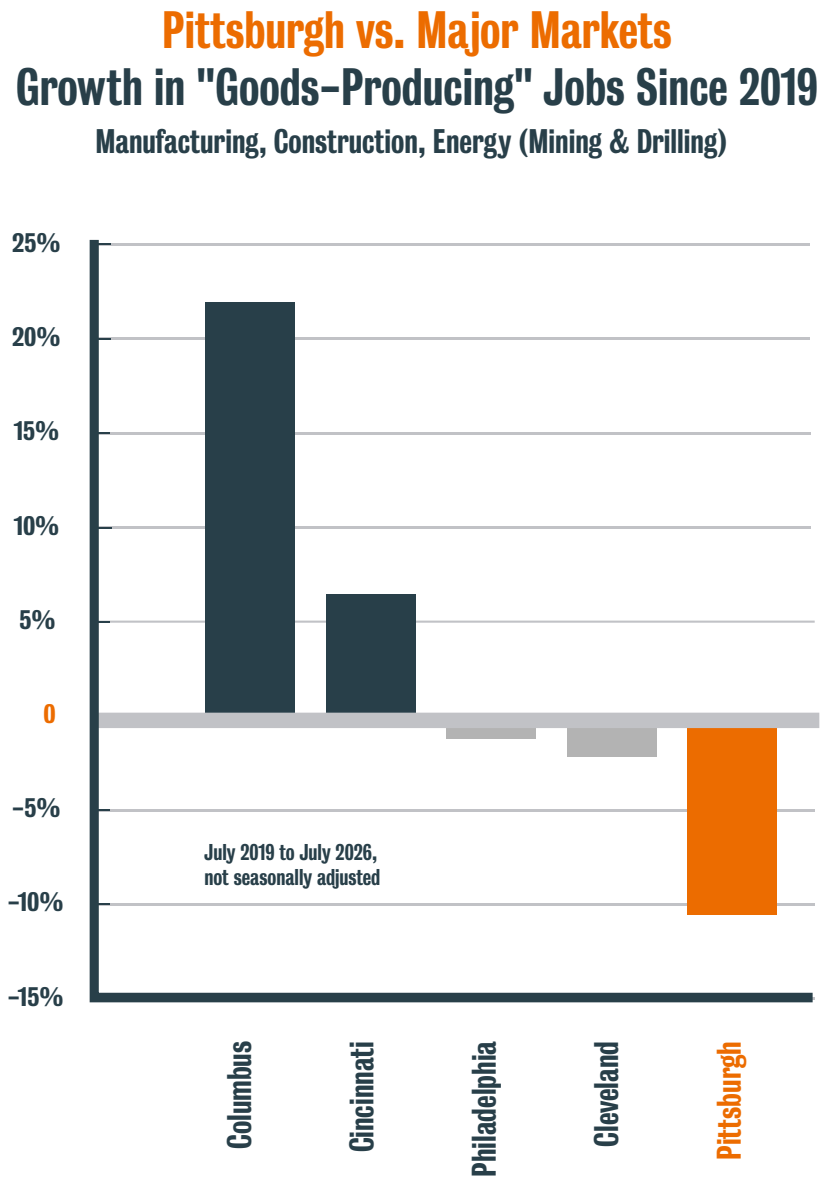


[1] Comparisons are from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Employment Statistics, July 2026 to July 2019, seasonally adjusted when possible. Some tables include preliminary figures for July 2026, subject to future revision.

Pittsburgh is doing worse in that category than any other market in Pennsylvania. Nearly every other market in Pennsylvania is close to or above its pre-COVID total for goods-producing jobs. The total in the Pittsburgh region has shrunk by more than 10%.



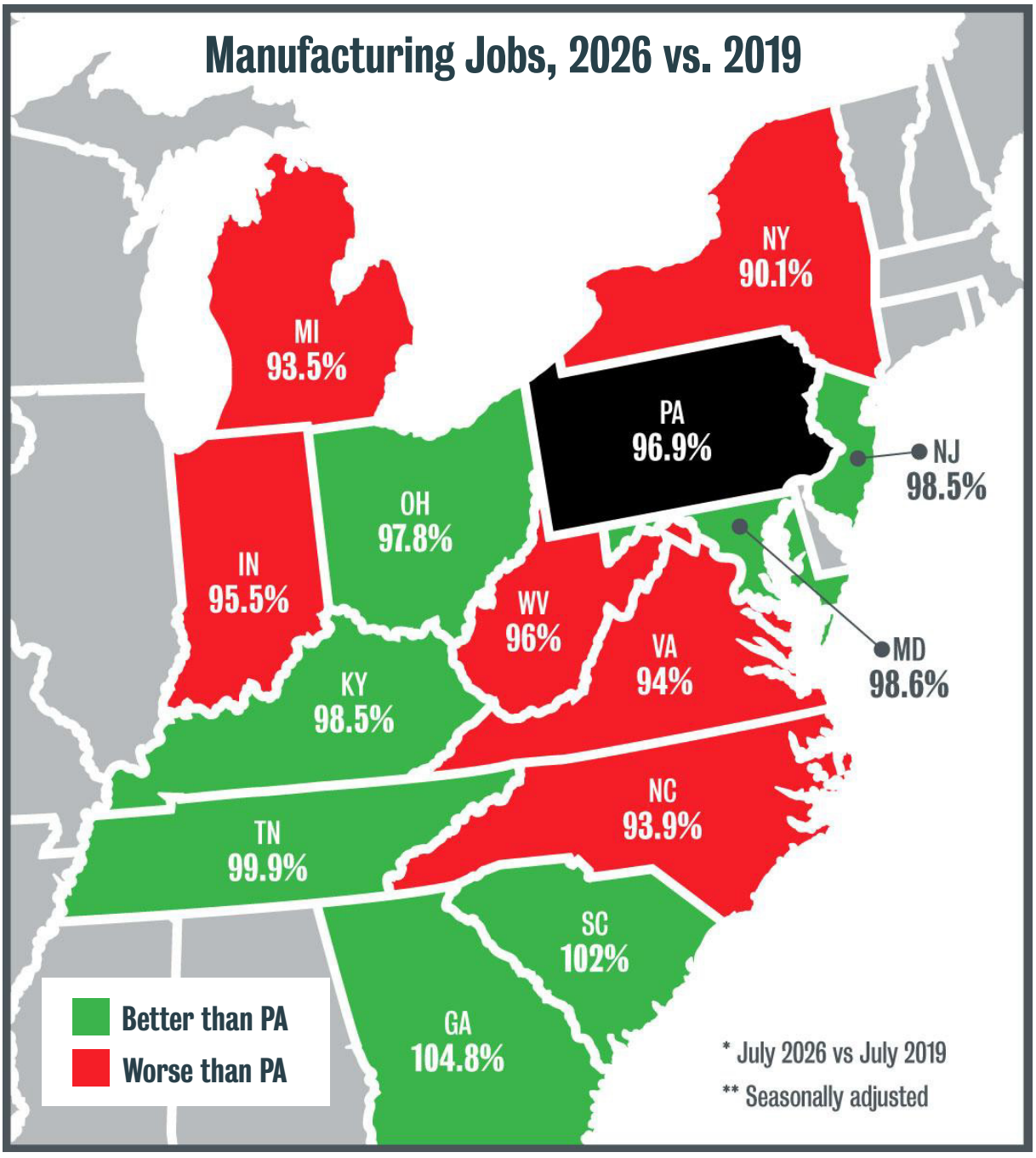
In Ohio, the worst performing major market is Cleveland, which has shrunk about 2% from its pre-pandemic level, while Columbus (123.4%) and Cincinnati (106.3%) are much larger. In 2019, the Cincinnati region had fewer goods-producing jobs than Pittsburgh. By July 2026, it had 26,000 more.



If Pittsburgh's goods-producing sector had simply kept pace with Cleveland's performance, the region would have 14,000 more jobs paying an average of $79,114 per year. That would add $1.1 billion to the regional economy annually.

And that's one reason why goods-producing jobs are so important: On average they pay 39% more than service-sector jobs in Pennsylvania, according to BLS data. Service-sector jobs pay an average of $56,784.

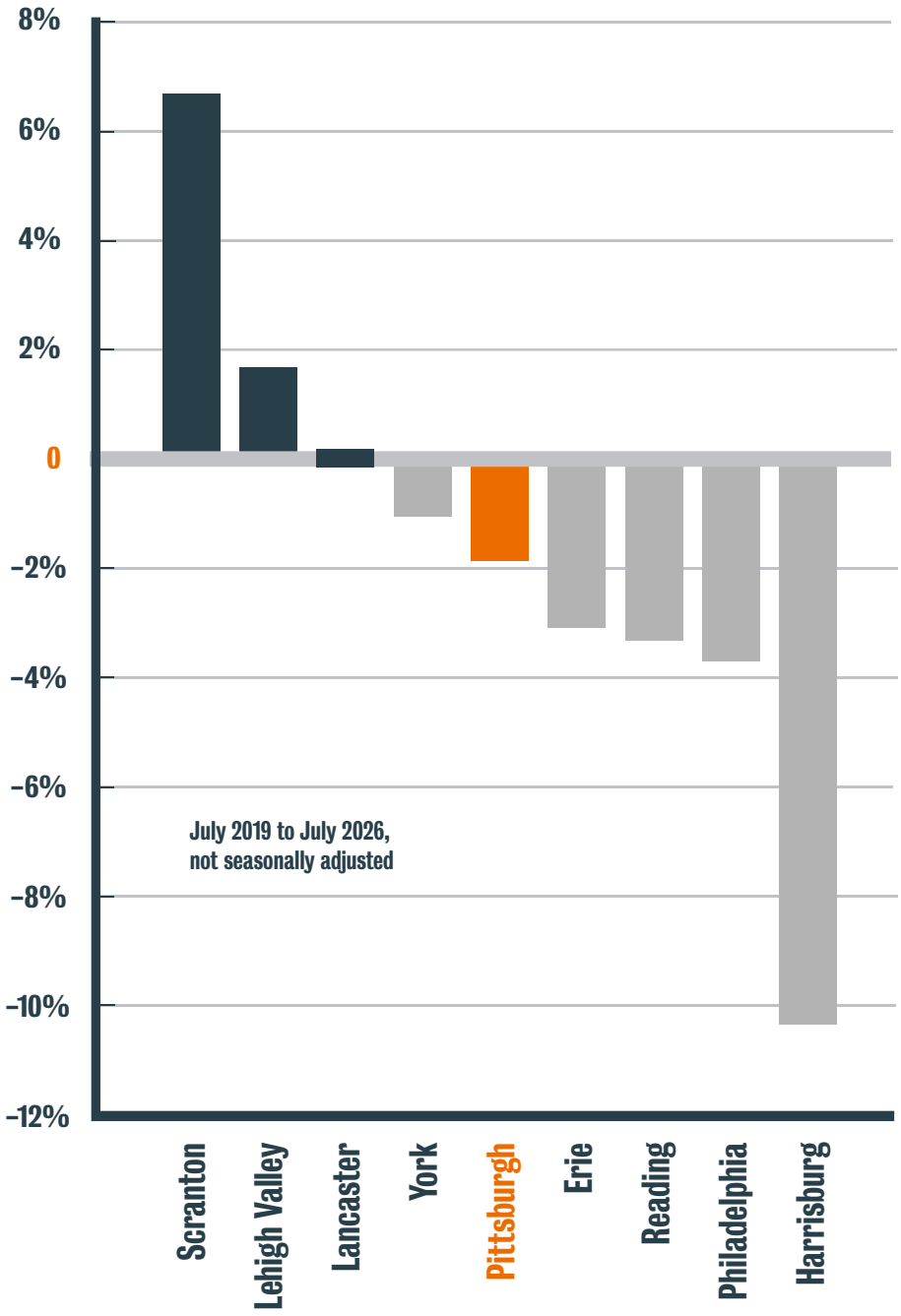
The bright spot in the data is Pennsylvania's relatively good showing in the manufacturing sector compared to its neighbors. There are fewer manufacturing jobs in the state than there were before COVID hit, but most other states in this part of the country have shrunk even more.



One notable exception: Ohio, which has more manufacturing jobs than Pennsylvania, and recovered them faster.

The Pittsburgh region is middle of the pack when it comes to its Pennsylvania neighbors. Scranton and the Lehigh Valley have more manufacturing jobs today than seven years ago, while Philadelphia, Erie, and other regions are faring worse than Pittsburgh.

Pennsylvania Regions
Manufacturing Job Growth Since 2019



In Ohio, Cincinnati and Columbus have more manufacturing jobs than prior to the pandemic.

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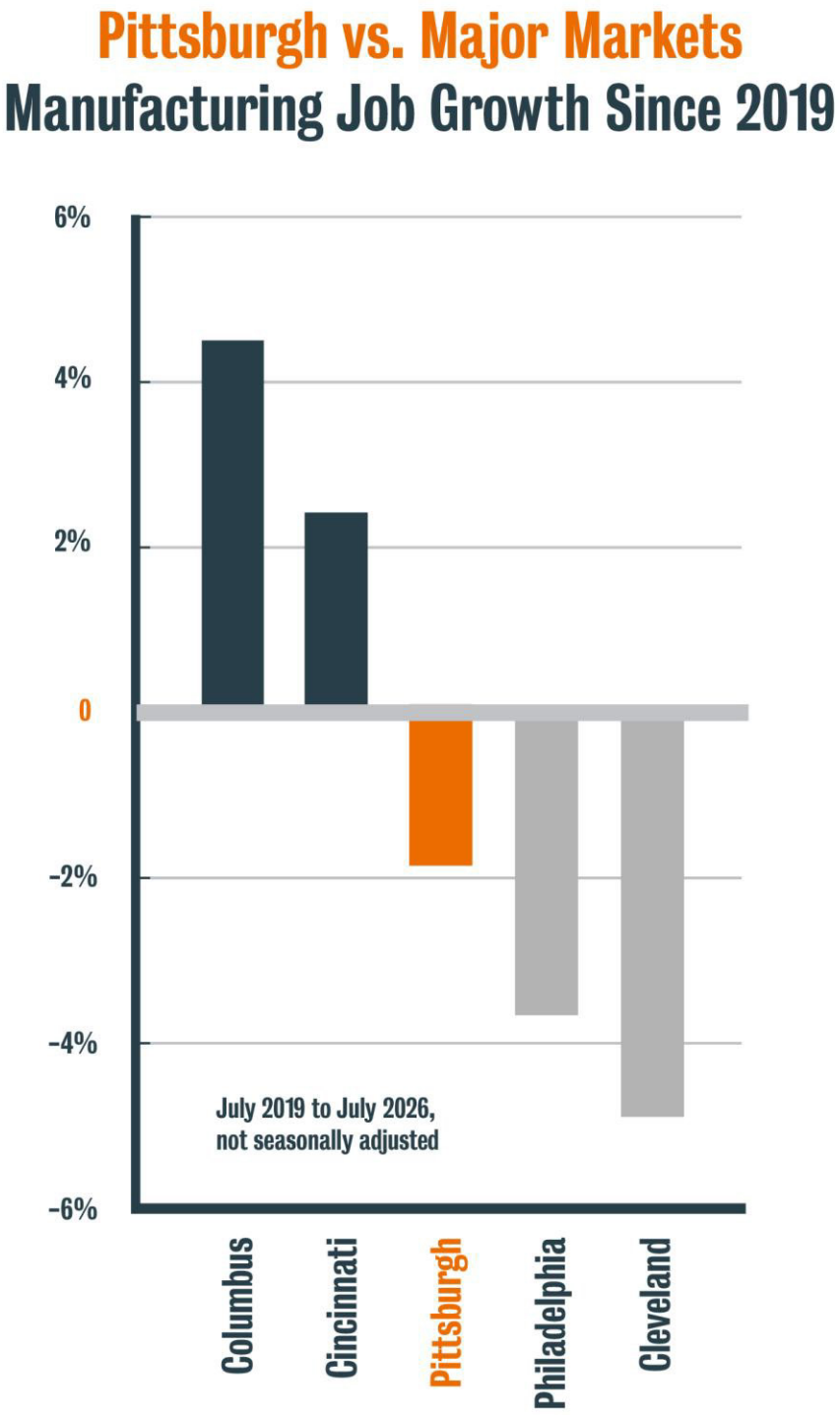
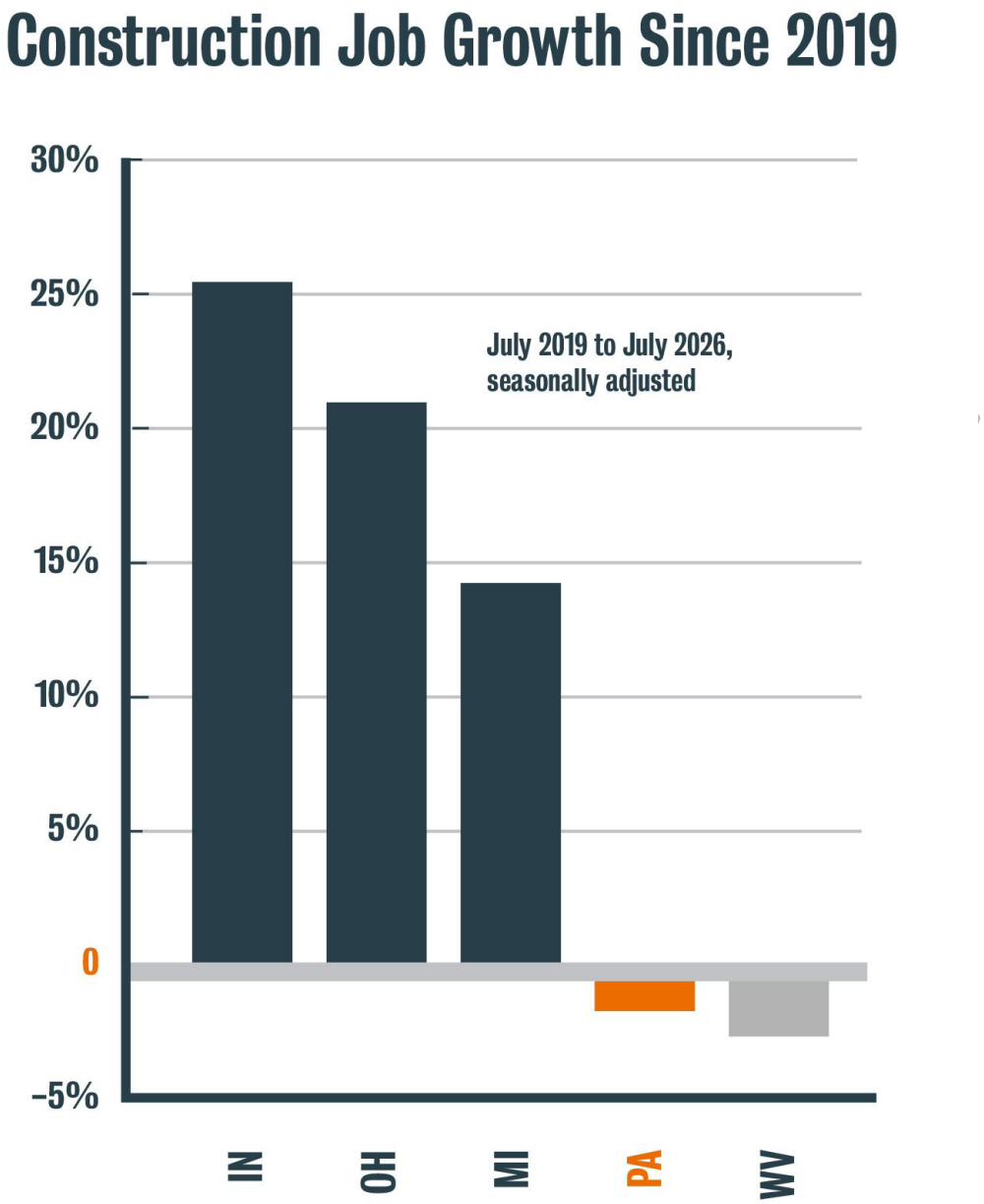


Unfortunately for Pennsylvania and the Pittsburgh region, the data is not promising for the future, either. Construction jobs can be seen as leading economic indicators, as construction jobs can represent projects or supporting infrastructure that will result in permanent jobs in the future.



Pennsylvania has nearly as many construction jobs as it did before COVID. But states like Indiana and Ohio have grown by more than 20%. Seven years ago, Ohio had 35,000 fewer construction jobs than Pennsylvania. Today, it has 12,000 more.

And as with the other data, Pittsburgh is doing worse than the rest of the state, with construction jobs down 16% in the region from the pre-pandemic level.

It is not a surprise when the Pittsburgh region and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania score poorly compared to fast-growing Sunbelt states such as Georgia and South Carolina on measures of manufacturing and construction jobs. But when our state and region lag other markets similar to ours, it is a clear indication that we need to be far more creative and aggressive in attracting businesses and jobs.

Pittsburgh Works Together is a business-organized labor-workforce-economic development alliance working to grow jobs and expand the industries that are the foundation of our economy, including energy, manufacturing, and construction, to provide opportunity for all residents. To learn more, please visit pghworks.com

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