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COUNTY EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN TEXAS THIRD QUARTER 2007

Harris County wage leads the State; Counties along Texas-Mexico border among the lowest paid in the Nation

In the third quarter of 2007, Harris County's weekly wage averaged \$1,015, highest among the 23 Texas counties with 75,000 or more jobs as measured by 2006 annual average employment. Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that at the lower end of the wage scale were a number of counties along the Texas-Mexico border. Averaging \$518, the weekly wage in Cameron County was not only the lowest among Texas' large counties, but also the lowest among the 328 largest counties nationwide.

Wage levels

The average weekly wage in Harris County was closely followed by high wages in Dallas County, \$1,002, and Collin County, \$981. Wages in all three areas were 20 percent or more above the national average of \$818 per week in the third quarter of 2007. The 3 counties placed in the top 50 among the national rankings with Harris, Dallas, and Collin at 26th, 31st, and 37th, respectively. (See table A.) Three other large Texas counties (Travis, Fort Bend, and Tarrant) also reported weekly wages above the U.S. average.

Wages in the 17 remaining large counties in Texas were below that of the nation, although 4 of these (Brazoria, Jefferson, Williamson, and Galveston) were within 5 percent of the U.S. average. Four of the eight lowest-paying large counties in the nation were located in Texas—all along the border with Mexico. Average weekly wages in Cameron (\$518), Hidalgo (\$529), Webb (\$548), and El Paso (\$593) Counties ranked 328th, 327th, 325th, and 321st, respectively. Other large counties in Texas that ranked near the bottom in average weekly wages included the counties of Lubbock (315th), Brazos (312th), Bell (303rd), and McLennan (292nd).

Average weekly wages were higher than the national average in 112 of the largest 328 U.S. counties. Santa Clara, Calif., recorded the highest average weekly wage at \$1,585. New York County, N.Y., was second with an average weekly wage of \$1,544, followed by Washington, D.C. (\$1,376), Arlington, Va. (\$1,364), and San Mateo, Calif. (\$1,322). Three of the 10 counties with the highest wages in the nation were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y.; Fairfield, Conn.; and Somerset, N.J.), 3 were located in or around the San Francisco area (San Francisco, Santa Clara, and San Mateo, all in California), and 3 were located in or around the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area (Washington, D.C., Arlington, Va., and Fairfax, Va.). Rounding out the top 10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston metropolitan area.

Of the large counties in the United States, 215, or about two-thirds, had an average weekly wage below that for the nation in the third quarter of 2007. Joining the Texas counties of Cameron, Hidalgo, and Webb among the bottom five were Horry, S.C. (\$536/326th) and Yakima, Wash. (\$568/324th). Wages in these five counties were less than 40 percent of the wage level reported for the highest-ranked county in the nation, Santa Clara, Calif.

Table A. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and the 23 largest counties in Texas, third quarter 2007(2)

Area	Employment		Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	September 2007 (thousands)	Percent change, third quarter 2006-07 (4)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (5)	Percent change, third quarter 2006-07 (4)	National ranking by percent change (5)
United States (6)	136,246.9	0.9	\$818	--	4.3	--
Texas	10,304.9	2.9	825	14	5.0	13
Bell, Texas	98.6	3.0	644	303	4.9	71
Bexar, Texas	721.4	2.6	715	223	3.5	177
Brazoria, Texas	85.8	3.2	793	131	6.3	27
Brazos, Texas	85.3	(7)	629	312	(7)	-
Cameron, Texas	122.6	0.6	518	328	5.5	48
Collin, Texas	283.8	3.2	981	37	5.5	48
Dallas, Texas	1,487.3	2.2	1,002	31	4.2	110
Denton, Texas	166.1	3.0	716	222	2.9	216
El Paso, Texas	269.8	2.0	593	321	4.0	125
Fort Bend, Texas	124.6	7.1	854	85	4.3	102
Galveston, Texas	96.2	(7)	776	151	(7)	-
Harris, Texas	2,028.0	3.8	1,015	26	6.7	18
Hidalgo, Texas	211.8	4.5	529	327	2.5	240
Jefferson, Texas	124.5	1.9	787	135	0.6	298
Lubbock, Texas	122.8	1.0	616	315	3.0	211
McLennan, Texas	105.0	1.7	656	292	3.8	140
Montgomery, Texas	122.1	(7)	740	191	3.6	168
Nueces, Texas	151.6	1.5	709	234	6.0	34
Smith, Texas	92.6	0.9	715	223	3.6	168
Tarrant, Texas	769.0	2.6	830	105	2.3	254
Travis, Texas	572.6	3.1	911	57	2.7	228
Webb, Texas	88.3	2.8	548	325	4.2	110
Williamson, Texas	119.1	(7)	781	143	(7)	-

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

(5) Ranking does not include the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

(6) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(7) Data do not meet BLS or State agency disclosure standards.

At the state level, the average weekly wage in Texas was \$825, on a par with the \$818 national average and 14th highest in the nationwide ranking. (See table 1.) The four highest wage levels in the country were in the District of Columbia (\$1,376), Connecticut (\$1,021), New York (\$1,009) and Massachusetts (\$1,002). Average weekly wages in this group were more than 20 percent above the U.S. average. At the other end of the scale, three states had wage levels that were less than 75 percent of national earnings: South Dakota (\$598), Mississippi (\$607), and Montana (\$608).

Over-the-year wage changes

Harris County, which recorded the highest wage level in the State, also registered the largest wage increase in Texas at 6.7 percent, well above the U.S. average of 4.3 percent. On a national scale, wage growth in Harris County ranked 18th highest. Four other counties in the State ranked in the top 50 nationwide and 3 of these were located on the Gulf Coast. Brazoria County, with an average weekly wage gain of 6.3 percent, ranked 27th and Nueces, with a wage increase of 6.0 percent was 34th. Wages in Cameron County (lowest in the nation) and Collin County increased at a 5.5-percent pace, placing them 48th in the national ranking. No large county in Texas registered over-the-year declines.

Among all large counties in the United States, Clayton, Ga., led the nation in growth in average weekly wages, with an increase of 23.9 percent due to increases in wage disbursements in the trade, transportation, and utilities supersector during the quarter. Muscogee, Ga., was second with growth of 12.1 percent, followed by the counties of Santa Clara, Calif. (11.8 percent), Rock Island, Ill. (11.5), and Davidson, Tenn. (9.1 percent).

Across the country, 10 large counties experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages. Trumbull, Ohio, had the largest decline, -10.6 percent, followed by the counties of Vanderburgh, Ind. (-6.1 percent), Genesee, Mich. (-4.0 percent), Saginaw, Mich. (-3.1 percent), and Montgomery, Ohio (-3.0 percent).

On a statewide basis, average weekly wages rose 5.0 percent in Texas, 13th highest in the nation and above the U.S. advance of 4.3 percent. Washington led the United States with an over-the-year wage gain of 6.7 percent, followed by Connecticut and New York, at 6.6 and 6.1 percent, respectively. Three states that ranked in the bottom 10 in average wage levels ranked in the top 10 in pay growth—North Dakota (5.8 percent), Oklahoma (5.5 percent) and Nebraska (5.4 percent). Only Rhode Island experienced an over-the-year decline in wages among the states, down 0.1 percent.

Over-the-year employment changes

Seventeen of the 23 large counties in Texas recorded employment growth that exceeded the national average of 0.9 percent from September 2006 to September 2007. Fort Bend County led the State with an over-the-year gain of 7.1 percent, ranking second in the country in employment growth. Employment in Hidalgo County rose 4.5 percent (6th), followed by Harris County at 3.8 percent (9th). Three other counties in Texas ranked among the top 20 nationwide: Brazoria and Collin (both 3.2 percent) and Travis (3.1 percent). Not surprisingly, employment growth in Texas was third highest in the nation at 2.9 percent.

A total of 217 large counties in the United States experienced employment increases from September 2006 to September 2007; of these, 130 had over-the-year gains above the national average. Orleans County, La., had the largest over-the-year percentage increase in employment with an 8.6-percent gain. Second-ranked Fort Bend, Texas (7.1 percent) was followed by the counties of Williamson, Tenn. (5.8 percent), Wake, N.C. (5.2 percent), and Utah, Utah (5.0 percent). The large employment gain in Orleans County reflected significant recovery from the substantial job losses that occurred in 2005 and 2006, which were related to Hurricane Katrina. Employment declined in 86 counties across the country, with the largest percentage decline occurring in Trumbull County, Ohio (-5.7 percent).

Industry detail

Average weekly wages by industry supersector are available for two of Texas' large counties, Harris and Dallas, the fourth and seventh largest counties in the nation, respectively. In Harris County, the natural resources and mining supersector reported the highest average weekly wage at \$2,580, more than three times the U.S. average of \$820 in the third quarter of 2007. (See table 2.) The wage level in Harris' natural resources and mining industry was about twice the average wage in the next four highest-paying local supersectors: manufacturing (\$1,290), information (\$1,258), financial activities (\$1,256), and professional and business services (\$1,156). Partially reflecting its relatively large share of part-time employment, the lowest-paying supersector locally (as well as nationally) was leisure and hospitality, averaging \$366 per week in Harris County in the third quarter of 2007. Over-the-year wage increases in Harris County ranged from 9.1 percent in information to 1.7 percent in education and health services. Nationally, information had the highest average weekly wage at \$1,274, followed by financial activities at \$1,200. Natural resources and mining led all supersectors in the country in terms of wage increase with a 7.8-percent advance. However, unlike Harris County where this supersector was the highest paying, average pay in this industry ranked 7th nationwide at \$820 per week.

The natural resources and mining supersector in Dallas County also had the highest average weekly wage, \$2,962. Exhibiting a pattern similar to that of Harris County, the next four highest-paying supersectors in Dallas County had wages well below that for the top-paying natural resources and mining industry, though the rank order was different: information (\$1,385), financial activities (\$1,366), manufacturing (\$1,174), and professional and business services (\$1,109). Leisure and hospitality was the lowest-paying supersector in Dallas at \$434 per week; even so, this was still nearly 25 percent above the U.S. industry average of \$348. This supersector was the only one in Dallas to experience an over-the-year decline in wages (-1.8 percent). Locally, the fastest over-the-year wage growth occurred in manufacturing, up 7.5 percent. Financial activities experienced the second fastest growth rate at 6.4 percent.

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from reports submitted by employers subject to unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 9.0 million employer reports cover 136.2 million full- and part-time workers. The average weekly wage values are calculated by dividing quarterly total wages by the average of the three monthly employment levels of those covered by UI programs; this result is then divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or states for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas, counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>; however, data in QCEW press releases have been adjusted (see Technical Note below) and may not match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

Additional statistics and other information

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. The 2006 edition of this bulletin contains selected data produced by Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the first quarter 2007 version of this news release. As with the 2005 edition, this edition includes the data on a CD for enhanced access and usability with the printed booklet containing selected graphic representations of QCEW data; the data tables themselves will be published exclusively in electronic formats as PDFs. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2006* is available for sale from the United States Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA. 15250, telephone (866) 512-1800, outside Washington, D.C. Within Washington, D.C., the telephone number is (202) 512-1800. The fax number is (202) 512-2104. Also, the 2006 bulletin is available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn06.htm>.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

For personal assistance or further information on the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Dallas Information Office at 214-767-6970 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. CT. This release is available in text and PDF format on the Dallas BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/ro6/home.htm>.

TECHNICAL NOTE

QCEW data are the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. For this reason, county and industry data are not designed to be used as a time series.

The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. The potential differences result from several causes. Differences between BLS and state published data may be due to the continuing receipt, review, and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (noneconomic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

Table 1. Covered (1) employment and wages by state, third quarter 2007(2)

State	Employment		Average weekly wage (3)			
	September 2007 (thousands)	Percent change, third quarter 2006-07	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, third quarter 2006-07	National ranking by percent change
United States (4)	136,246.9	0.9	\$818	-	4.3	-
Alabama	1,959.0	1.1	707	32	3.7	37
Alaska	327.3	0.7	840	13	5.4	9
Arizona	2,644.9	0.5	783	20	4.1	25
Arkansas	1,184.5	0.3	629	46	4.1	25
California	15,755.0	0.7	932	6	4.5	18
Colorado	2,314.3	2.4	844	12	3.2	42
Connecticut	1,696.9	1.0	1,021	2	6.6	2
Delaware	425.2	0.1	860	10	1.2	50
District of Columbia	679.0	0.6	1,376	1	5.3	12
Florida	7,879.9	-0.9	741	26	4.1	25
Georgia	4,089.4	1.2	782	21	4.1	25
Hawaii	624.4	0.3	760	22	5.4	9
Idaho	675.5	2.2	634	45	3.4	41
Illinois	5,917.6	0.6	866	9	4.0	32
Indiana	2,937.4	0.5	702	34	2.2	49
Iowa	1,494.5	0.9	668	40	4.2	22
Kansas	1,368.7	1.7	680	38	2.7	46
Kentucky	1,814.3	1.0	676	39	3.0	44
Louisiana	1,880.8	2.7	716	31	4.5	18
Maine	615.3	0.7	660	44	3.9	35
Maryland	2,563.7	0.7	892	7	4.1	25
Massachusetts	3,261.0	1.0	1,002	4	5.5	5
Michigan	4,218.2	-1.4	808	16	2.4	48
Minnesota	2,713.3	0.9	822	15	4.6	16
Mississippi	1,142.2	0.6	607	50	3.8	36
Missouri	2,746.7	0.8	719	29	4.2	22
Montana	446.1	2.7	608	49	4.6	16
Nebraska	922.7	1.7	666	41	5.4	9
Nevada	1,286.4	-0.1	792	19	5.5	5
New Hampshire	637.2	0.3	799	18	3.2	42
New Jersey	3,985.2	0.1	965	5	3.7	37
New Mexico	830.4	0.8	682	37	4.1	25
New York	8,585.3	1.3	1,009	3	6.1	3
North Carolina	4,104.1	2.4	719	29	3.5	40
North Dakota	347.4	1.5	621	48	5.8	4
Ohio	5,331.9	-0.2	745	25	2.8	45
Oklahoma	1,548.2	1.8	666	41	5.5	5
Oregon	1,751.7	1.2	750	24	4.2	22
Pennsylvania	5,673.4	0.5	802	17	4.4	20
Rhode Island	486.1	-1.0	759	23	-0.1	51
South Carolina	1,904.7	1.7	664	43	3.6	39
South Dakota	397.5	2.0	598	51	4.7	15
Tennessee	2,774.4	0.5	728	28	4.3	21
Texas	10,304.9	2.9	825	14	5.0	13
Utah	1,231.6	3.6	696	36	5.5	5
Vermont	305.2	-0.2	699	35	4.0	32
Virginia	3,686.6	1.0	857	11	5.0	13
Washington	2,976.5	2.1	878	8	6.7	1
West Virginia	713.8	0.3	623	47	4.0	32
Wisconsin	2,802.3	-0.1	705	33	2.6	47
Wyoming	284.3	3.6	734	27	4.1	25
Puerto Rico	1,008.0	-1.1	453	(5)	2.5	(5)
Virgin Islands	45.0	0.7	682	(5)	-0.3	(5)

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(5) Data not included in the national ranking.

Table 2. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States, Harris County, Texas, and Dallas County, Texas, third quarter 2007 (2)

Area and Supersector	Employment September 2007 (thousands)	Average weekly wage (3)	
		Average weekly wage	Percent change, 2006-07 (4)
United States (5).....	136,246.9	\$818	4.3
Private industry.....	114,790.8	810	4.5
Natural resources and mining.....	1,931.5	820	7.8
Construction.....	7,774.4	876	5.7
Manufacturing.....	13,845.4	987	4.3
Trade, transportation, and utilities.....	26,299.2	707	3.2
Information.....	3,033.1	1,274	4.6
Financial activities.....	8,123.2	1,200	5.9
Professional and business services.....	18,017.6	998	6.4
Education and health services.....	17,506.6	775	3.6
Leisure and hospitality.....	13,562.6	348	4.2
Other services.....	4,433.8	531	4.1
Government.....	21,456.1	859	3.2
Harris, TX.....	2,028.0	1,015	6.7
Private industry.....	1,783.4	1,027	7.1
Natural resources and mining.....	78.4	2,580	(6)
Construction.....	151.5	968	6.1
Manufacturing.....	182.2	1,290	7.7
Trade, transportation, and utilities.....	424.7	901	6.0
Information.....	32.8	1,258	9.1
Financial activities.....	120.7	1,256	7.3
Professional and business services.....	341.2	1,156	7.5
Education and health services.....	214.7	824	1.7
Leisure and hospitality.....	176.2	366	2.2
Other services.....	58.4	595	7.6
Government.....	244.6	922	3.1
Dallas, TX.....	1,487.3	1,002	4.2
Private industry.....	1,323.2	1,012	4.2
Natural resources and mining.....	7.3	2,962	(6)
Construction.....	84.6	901	3.1
Manufacturing.....	142.2	1,174	7.5
Trade, transportation, and utilities.....	306.9	960	6.0
Information.....	48.1	1,385	(6)
Financial activities.....	144.5	1,366	6.4
Professional and business services.....	274.8	1,109	4.6
Education and health services.....	146.2	895	2.4
Leisure and hospitality.....	127.6	434	-1.8
Other services.....	39.3	609	3.7
Government.....	164.1	919	2.9

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for any noneconomic county reclassifications. See Technical Note.

(5) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(6) Data do not meet BLS or State agency disclosure standards.