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Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Explanatory Note

The Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program is a cooperative program involving the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) of the U.S. Department of Labor and the State Employment Security Agencies (SESAs). The QCEW program produces a comprehensive tabulation of employment and wage information for workers covered by State unemployment insurance (UI) laws and Federal workers covered by the Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) program. Publicly available files include data on the number of establishments, monthly employment, and quarterly wages, by NAICS industry, by county, by ownership sector, for the entire United States. These data are aggregated to annual levels, to higher industry levels (NAICS industry groups, sectors, and supersectors), and to higher geographic levels (national, State, and Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)).

Data Available

The QCEW program serves as a near census of monthly employment and quarterly wage information by 6-digit NAICS industry at the national, State, and county levels. At the national level, the QCEW program publishes employment and wage data for nearly every NAICS industry. At the State and area level, the QCEW program publishes employment and wage data down to the 6-digit NAICS industry level, if disclosure restrictions are met. In accordance with BLS policy, data provided to the Bureau in confidence are not published and are used only for specified statistical purposes. BLS withholds publication of UI-covered employment and wage data for any industry level when necessary to protect the identity of cooperating employers. Totals at the industry level for the States and the Nation include the nondisclosable data suppressed within the detailed tables. However, these totals cannot be used to reveal the suppressed data.

Reference Period

Employment data under the QCEW program represent the number of covered workers who worked during, or received pay for, the pay period including the 12th of the month. Wages represent total compensation paid during the calendar quarter, regardless of when services were performed.

Coverage

The QCEW program data refer to employment and wages of workers covered by State unemployment insurance (UI) laws and Federal workers covered by the Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) program. Employment data exclude members of the armed forces, the self-employed, proprietors, domestic workers, unpaid family workers, and railroad workers covered by the railroad unemployment insurance system. Wages include pay for vacation and other paid leave, bonuses, stock options, tips, the cash value of meals and lodging, and in some States, contributions to deferred compensation plans (such as 401(k) plans). The QCEW program does provide partial information on agricultural industries and employees in private households.