



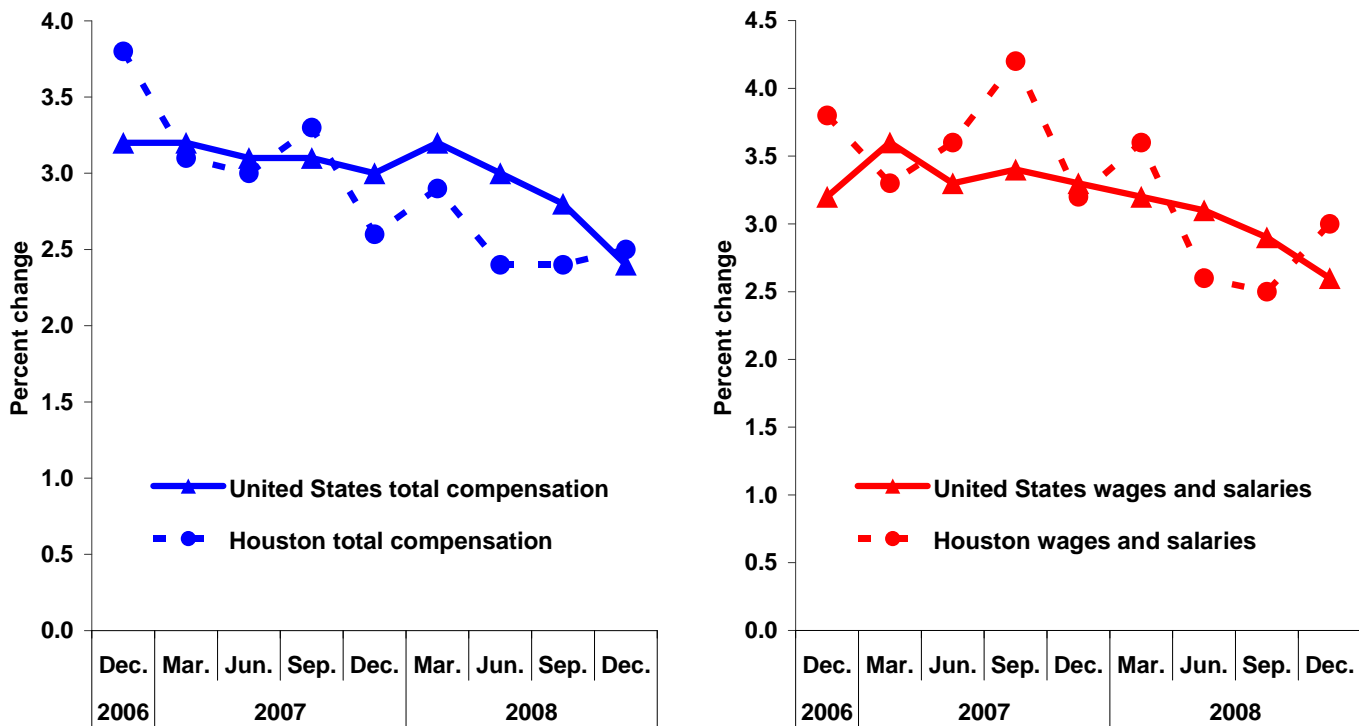
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FOR RELEASE:  
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## CHANGING COMPENSATION COSTS IN THE HOUSTON METROPOLITAN AREA DECEMBER 2008

Total compensation costs for private industry workers increased 2.5 percent in the Houston-Baytown-Huntsville, Texas metropolitan area for the year ended in December 2008, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that one year ago, Houston experienced an annual gain of 2.6 percent in total compensation costs. Locally, wages and salaries, the largest component of total compensation costs, advanced at a 3.0-percent pace for the 12-month period ended in December 2008. Nationwide, total compensation costs rose 2.4 percent and wages and salaries, 2.6 percent over the same period. (See chart A and table 1.)

**Chart A. Twelve-month percent changes in the Employment Cost Index for total compensation and for wages and salaries, private industry workers, United States and the Houston area, not seasonally adjusted, December 2006 to December 2008**



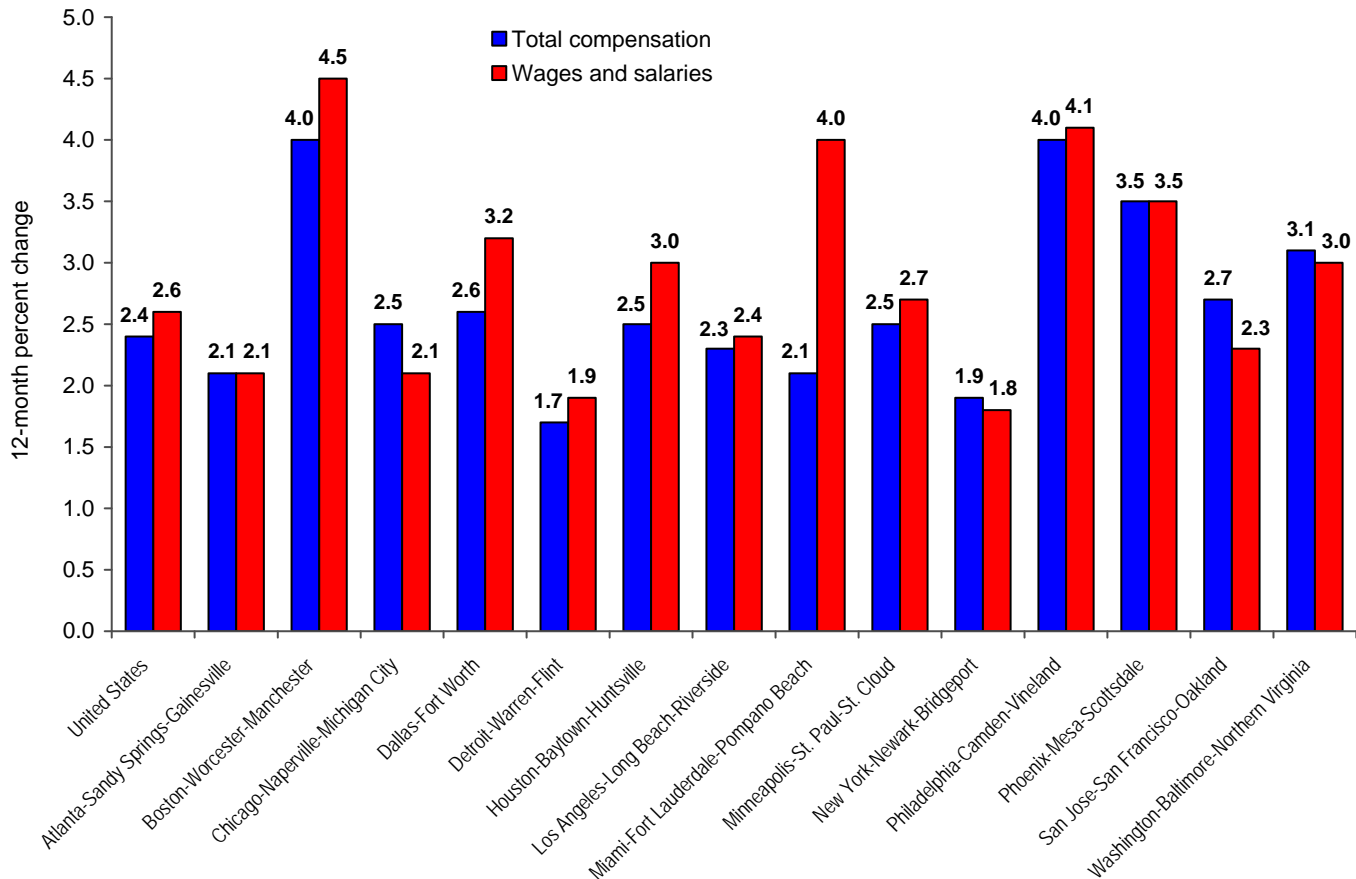
The "Employment Cost Index for the Regions" news releases have been discontinued. However, the estimates that appeared in those releases are available in table 6 ([www.bls.gov/news.release/eci.t06.htm](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/eci.t06.htm)) and table 10 ([www.bls.gov/news.release/eci.t10.htm](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/eci.t10.htm)) of the "Employment Cost Index" news release issued by the BLS National Office. Historical estimates can be retrieved at [www.bls.gov/ncs/ect/regionaleci.htm](http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ect/regionaleci.htm).

Houston is 1 of 14 metropolitan areas in the United States, and 1 of 5 areas in the South region of the country, for which local compensation cost data are available. Among these 14 largest areas, both Boston and Philadelphia experienced the highest percent change in total compensation costs from December 2007 to December 2008; Boston registered the largest gain in wages and salaries. Over-the-year growth in the cost of total compensation ranged from 4.0 percent in Boston and Philadelphia to 1.7 percent in Detroit in December 2008; for wages and salaries, annual advances ranged from 4.5 percent in Boston to 1.8 percent in New York. (See chart B.)

The 2.5-percent annual increase in total compensation costs in Houston in December 2008 was similar to the gain of 2.6 percent in Dallas. In the three other areas in the South, annual compensation increases were 3.1 percent in Washington and 2.1 percent in Atlanta and Miami. Wages and salaries rose 3.0 percent in both Houston and Washington and 3.2 percent in Dallas over this same 12-month period. Miami saw the highest wage and salary gain at 4.0 percent in December 2008, while Atlanta experienced the lowest at 2.1 percent. (See table 2.)

Local compensation costs are part of the national Employment Cost Index (ECI) which measures quarterly changes in total compensation costs, including wages, salaries, and employer costs for employee benefits. In addition to the 14 local estimates provided in this release, ECI data for the nation, 4 geographical regions, and 9 geographical divisions are available. (Geographical definitions for the metropolitan areas mentioned in this release are included in the Technical Note.)

**Chart B. Percent change in the Employment Cost Index for total compensation and for wages and salaries, private industry workers, United States and localities, not seasonally adjusted, December 2007 to December 2008**



In addition to the geographic data, a comprehensive national report is available that provides data by industry, occupational group, and union status, as well as for both private and state and local government employees. The report on the Employment Cost Index and further technical information may be obtained from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Southwest Regional Office by calling 214-767-6970. The report is also available on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/eci.toc.htm>. Current and historical information from other Bureau programs may be accessed via our regional homepage at [www.bls.gov/ro6/](http://www.bls.gov/ro6/). The ECI for March 2009 will be released on Thursday, April 30, 2009 at 8:30 a.m. (ET). Information from the Employment Cost Index program is available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200, Federal Relay Services: 1-800-877-8339.

## Technical Note

The Employment Cost Index (ECI) is a measure of the change in the cost of labor, free from the influence of employment shifts among occupations and industries. The total compensation series includes changes in wages and salaries and employer costs for employee benefits.

Wages and salaries are defined as straight-time average hourly earnings or, for workers not paid on an hourly basis, straight-time earnings divided by the corresponding hours. Straight-time wage and salary rates are total earnings before payroll deductions, excluding premium pay for overtime, work on weekends and holidays, and shift differentials. Production bonuses, incentive earnings, commission payments, and cost-of-living adjustments are included in straight-time earnings, whereas nonproduction bonuses (such as Christmas or year-end bonuses) are excluded. Also excluded are such items as payments-in-kind, free room and board, and tips.

### Selection of areas

Based on available resources and the existing ECI sample, it was determined that estimates would be published for 14 metropolitan areas. Since the ECI sample sizes by area are directly related to area employment, the areas with the largest private industry employment as of the year 2000 were selected. For each of these areas, 12-month percent changes and associated standard areas were computed for the periods since December 2006.

The metropolitan area definitions of the 14 published localities are listed below.

**Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Gainesville, Ga.-Ala. Combined Statistical Area (CSA)** includes Barrow, Bartow, Butts, Carroll, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, Dawson, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Hall, Haralson, Heard, Henry, Jasper, Lamar, Meriwether, Newton, Paulding, Pickens, Pike, Polk, Rockdale, Spalding, Troup, Upson, and Walton Counties in Georgia; and Chambers County in Alabama.

**Boston-Worcester-Manchester, Mass.-N.H. CSA** includes Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, Plymouth, Suffolk, and Worcester Counties in Massachusetts and Belknap, Hillsborough, Merrimack, Rockingham, and Strafford Counties in New Hampshire.

**Chicago-Naperville-Michigan City, Ill.-Ind.-Wis. CSA** includes Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties in Illinois; Jasper, Lake, LaPorte, Newton, and Porter Counties in Indiana; and Kenosha County in Wisconsin.

**Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas CSA** includes Collin, Cooke, Dallas, Delta, Denton, Ellis, Henderson, Hood, Hunt, Johnson, Kaufman, Palo Pinto, Parker, Rockwall, Somervell, Tarrant, and Wise Counties in Texas.

**Detroit-Warren-Flint, Mich. CSA** includes Genesee, Lapeer, Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties in Michigan.

**Houston-Baytown-Huntsville, Texas CSA** includes Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, San Jacinto, Walker, and Waller Counties in Texas.

**Los Angeles-Long Beach-Riverside, Calif. CSA** includes Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties in California.

**Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, Fla. Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)** includes Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach Counties in Florida.

**Minneapolis-St. Paul-St. Cloud, Minn.-Wis. CSA** includes Anoka, Benton, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Goodhue, Hennepin, Isanti, McLeod, Ramsey, Rice, Scott, Sherburne, Stearns, Washington, and Wright Counties in Minnesota; and Pierce and St. Croix Counties in Wisconsin.

**New York-Newark-Bridgeport, N.Y.-N.J.-Conn.-Pa. CSA** includes Bronx, Dutchess, Kings, Nassau, New York, Orange, Putnam, Queens, Richmond, Rockland, Suffolk, Ulster, and Westchester Counties in New York; Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, and Union Counties in New Jersey; Fairfield, Litchfield, and New Haven Counties in Connecticut; and Pike County in Pennsylvania.

**Philadelphia-Camden-Vineland, Pa.-N.J.-Del.-Md. CSA** includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties in Pennsylvania; Burlington, Camden, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem Counties in New Jersey; New Castle County in Delaware; and Cecil County in Maryland.

**Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, Ariz. MSA** includes Maricopa and Pinal Counties in Arizona.

**San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland, Calif. CSA** includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Sonoma, and Solano Counties in California.

**Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia, D.C.-Md.-Va.-W.Va. CSA** includes the District of Columbia; Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, and St. Mary's Counties in Maryland; Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Fredericksburg, Manassas, Manassas Park, and Winchester Cities and Arlington, Clarke, Fairfax, Fauquier, Frederick, Loudoun, Prince William, Spotsylvania, Stafford, and Warren Counties in Virginia; and Hampshire and Jefferson Counties in West Virginia.

**Table 1. Employment Cost Index for total compensation and for wages and salaries, private industry workers, United States, South region, and the Dallas area, not seasonally adjusted**

Area	Total compensation				Wages and salaries			
	12-month percent changes for period ended:				12-month percent changes for period ended:			
	Mar	June	Sep	Dec	Mar	June	Sep	Dec
<b>United States</b>								
2006	2.6	2.8	3.0	3.2	2.4	2.8	3.0	3.2
2007	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.6	3.3	3.4	3.3
2008	3.2	3.0	2.8	2.4	3.2	3.1	2.9	2.6
<b>South Region</b>								
2006	2.1	2.3	3.1	3.5	2.1	2.3	3.2	3.6
2007	3.3	3.6	3.2	3.1	3.6	3.9	3.5	3.3
2008	3.4	3.0	2.8	2.4	3.3	3.3	3.1	2.8
<b>Houston-Baytown-Huntsville</b>								
2006				3.8				3.8
2007	3.1	3.0	3.3	2.6	3.3	3.6	4.2	3.2
2008	2.9	2.4	2.4	2.5	3.6	2.6	2.5	3.0

**Table 2. Employment Cost Index for total compensation and for total wages and salaries, private industry workers, United States, geographical regions, and localities, not seasonally adjusted**

Area	Total compensation			Wages and salaries		
	12-month percent changes for period ended:			12-month percent changes for period ended:		
	Dec 2007	Sep 2008	Dec 2008	Dec 2007	Sep 2008	Dec 2008
<b>United States</b>	3.0	2.8	2.4	3.3	2.9	2.6
<b>Northeast</b>	3.4	2.4	2.5	3.4	2.5	2.8
Boston-Worcester-Manchester	3.2	2.4	4.0	3.6	2.5	4.5
New York-Newark-Bridgeport	3.5	2.4	1.9	3.5	2.3	1.8
Philadelphia-Camden-Vineland	3.0	4.6	4.0	3.5	4.7	4.1
<b>South</b>	3.1	2.8	2.4	3.3	3.1	2.8
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Gainesville	3.3	2.1	2.1	2.7	2.0	2.1
Dallas-Fort Worth	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.9	3.2
Houston-Baytown-Huntsville	2.6	2.4	2.5	3.2	2.5	3.0
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach	3.8	2.8	2.1	3.1	4.4	4.0
Washington-Baltimore-No. Virginia	2.7	3.0	3.1	2.8	2.8	3.0
<b>Midwest</b>	2.4	2.7	2.2	2.9	2.8	2.3
Chicago-Naperville-Michigan City	2.5	3.3	2.5	3.6	3.1	2.1
Detroit-Warren-Flint	0.9	1.8	1.7	1.0	1.9	1.9
Minneapolis-St. Paul-St. Cloud	2.3	2.8	2.5	2.1	2.9	2.7
<b>West</b>	3.4	3.4	2.7	3.7	3.5	2.9
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Riverside	3.6	2.5	2.3	3.7	2.1	2.4
Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale	3.6	4.5	3.5	3.6	4.4	3.5
San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland	3.8	3.5	2.7	4.5	3.2	2.3