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**PARISH EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN LOUISIANA: FIRST QUARTER 2008**  
**Orleans Parish leads U.S. in over-the-year employment growth**

That several Louisiana parishes were continuing to recover from the substantial impact of Hurricane Katrina in September 2005 was evident from their relatively strong employment growth. Among Louisiana's 7 large parishes, those with 75,000 or more jobs as measured by 2007 annual average employment, Orleans Parish ranked first in the State, as well as the nation, with over-the-year employment growth of 5.0 percent in March 2008. In addition, 3 other parishes in Louisiana had employment gains greater than the national average of 0.4 percent, placing them in the top 30 percent among all 334 large counties nationwide. Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that while employment growth was mixed, average weekly wages in all seven of Louisiana's large parishes grew at a pace equal to or above the 2.4-percent rate of growth nationwide from the first quarter of 2007 to the first quarter of 2008 (See table A.)

**Table A. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and the 7 largest counties in Louisiana, first quarter 2008 (2)**

Area	Employment			Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	March 2008 (thousands)	Percent change, March 2007-08(4)	National ranking by percent change (5)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (5)	Percent change, 1st quarter 2007-08 (4)	National ranking by percent change (5)
United States (6)	134,761.1	0.4	--	\$905	--	2.4	--
Louisiana	1,887.3	1.3	10	765	30	4.8	4
Caddo, La.	126.0	0.8	101	693	285	2.4	184
Calcasieu, La.	86.2	-1.1	264	749	226	5.8	19
East Baton Rouge, La.	265.1	1.4	65	814	156	4.9	30
Jefferson, La.	199.5	0.3	154	797	172	3.8	73
Lafayette, La.	135.3	2.0	42	817	153	3.9	70
Orleans, La.	171.6	5.0	1	1,005	55	2.7	158
St. Tammany, La.	74.8	-1.2	272	689	289	4.7	38

(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.

### **Over-the-year employment change**

Employment in Orleans Parish rose 5.0 percent from March 2007 to March 2008. Only one year earlier, from March 2006 to March 2007, employment in Orleans Parish had expanded by 15.0 percent. Though the rate of employment growth was down considerably from the previous year, it was still the fastest-growing large county nationwide. What's more, Orleans Parish's nation-leading gains over the past two years stood in marked contrast to the March 2005 to March 2006 period when Orleans experienced the Katrina-related employment decline of nearly 40 percent placing it last among all large counties in the country. As of March 2008, employment in Orleans Parish was still just 71 percent of the pre-Katrina August 2005 level of 240,530. In comparison, over-the-year employment growth for the nation has slowed over the past three years, from 2.2 percent in March 2006 to 0.4 in March 2008.

Among the other large parishes in the State, employment in Lafayette rose 2.0 percent from March a year ago, ranking it 42<sup>nd</sup> in the country in job growth. East Baton Rouge followed with a 1.4-percent employment gain and ranked 65<sup>th</sup>, while Caddo Parish's growth of 0.8 percent ranked 101<sup>st</sup>. Jefferson Parish experienced the slowest over-the-year employment increase at 0.3 percent and ranked 154<sup>th</sup>. The two other large Louisiana parishes experienced over-the-year declines in March 2008. Employment was down 1.2 percent in St. Tammany (272<sup>nd</sup>) and 1.1 percent in Calcasieu (264<sup>th</sup>).

These seven parishes combined accounted for more than one-half of total employment in the State in March 2008. Above-average growth rates in a number of the large parishes helped push statewide employment up 1.3 percent, ranking Louisiana 10<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Orleans Parish aside, the State's employment level of 1,887,300 in March 2008 was little different from the August 2005 pre-Katrina level of 1,889,500.

A total of 189 large counties in the United States experienced employment increases from March 2007 to March 2008, and 146 of these had over-the-year gains above the national average of 0.4 percent. As noted previously, employment growth in Orleans Parish stood first in the national ranking. Fort Bend, Texas, and Montgomery, Texas, tied for the next largest increase, 4.7 percent, followed by Williamson, Texas (4.6 percent), Douglas, Colo., and Potter, Texas (both with gains of 4.1 percent). Employment declines occurred in 129 counties across the country, with the sharpest drops occurring in Lee, Fla. (-8.1 percent), and Collier, Fla. (-7.4 percent).

### **Over-the-year wage change**

Wage growth was equal to or better than the U.S. average of 2.4 percent in all seven large parishes in the State from March 2007 to March 2008, with all but one parish, Caddo, placing in the top half of the national ranking of the largest counties. This differed notably from the situation a year ago when 3 of the parishes ranked in the bottom 30. In 2007, many workers in lower-paid industries returned to work in Katrina-impacted areas and as a result, average wage levels rose only modestly or even declined in parishes such as Orleans.

With wage growth of 5.8 percent from the first quarter of 2007, Calcasieu Parish ranked 19<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation. East Baton Rouge was second in the State with wage growth of 4.9 percent (30<sup>th</sup>), followed by St. Tammany at 4.7 percent (38<sup>th</sup>). Lafayette recorded a 3.9-percent gain (70<sup>th</sup>) and Jefferson had an increase of 3.8 percent (73<sup>rd</sup>). Orleans Parish – where employment growth ranked first in the country – registered a wage gain of 2.7 percent (158<sup>th</sup>). Wages in Caddo Parish were up 2.4 percent (186<sup>th</sup>), matching the U.S. average. (See table A.)

Leading the nation in average weekly wage growth was Westmoreland, Pa., with an increase of 14.9 percent from the first quarter of 2007. Williamson, Texas, was second with growth of 10.8 percent, followed by Somerset, N.J. (9.0 percent), San Luis Obispo, Calif., (8.3 percent), and Jefferson, Texas (7.9 percent). Among the 34 large counties experiencing over-the-year declines in average weekly wages, Trumbull, Ohio, had the largest decrease (-17.2 percent), followed by the counties of Saginaw, Mich. (-4.4 percent), Rockingham, N.H. (-3.9 percent), Fairfield, Conn. (-3.8 percent), and Mecklenburg, N.C. (-3.4 percent).

At the statewide level, average weekly wages in Louisiana rose 4.8 percent from the first quarter of 2007 to the first quarter of 2008, and ranked 4<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Wyoming led all States with a 6.7-percent wage gain. Connecticut was the only state to record an over-the-year decline in average weekly wages, 0.6 percent. (See table 1.)

### **Wage levels**

While all but one of the large Louisiana parishes experienced above average wage gains, only one—Orleans Parish—registered an above average wage level in the first quarter of 2008. At \$1,005 per week, the average wage in Orleans was \$100 higher than the national average of \$905, ranking the parish 55<sup>th</sup> among the 334 large counties in the country. Far below Orleans, but second in the State, was Lafayette Parish with an average wage of \$817 per week, 153<sup>rd</sup> in the country; it was closely followed by East Baton Rouge at \$814 (156<sup>th</sup>). Jefferson Parish wages averaged \$797 and ranked 172<sup>nd</sup>. The three remaining parishes had average weekly wages placing them in the bottom one-third of all large counties nationwide: Calcasieu, \$749 (226<sup>th</sup>); Caddo, \$693 (285<sup>th</sup>); and St. Tammany \$689 (289<sup>th</sup>). (See table A.)

Among the 334 largest counties in the nation, New York County, N.Y., recorded the highest average weekly wage at \$2,805. Fairfield, Conn., was second with an average weekly wage of \$1,905, followed by Somerset, N.J. (\$1,765), Suffolk, Mass. (\$1,708), and San Francisco, Calif. (\$1,639). Four of the 10 counties with the highest wages in the country were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y., Fairfield, Conn., Somerset, N.J., and Hudson, N.J.), three others were located in or around the San Francisco area (Santa Clara, San Francisco, and San Mateo, all in California), while two more were located in or around the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area (Arlington, Va. and Washington, D.C.). Rounding out the top 10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston metropolitan area.

At the other end of the wage scale, the lowest average weekly wage was reported in Cameron, Texas (\$523), followed by Hidalgo, Texas (\$532), Horry, S.C. (\$534), Webb, Texas (\$554), and Yakima, Wash. (\$587). Wage levels in the five lowest-ranked counties were approximately 20 percent of the wage level reported for the highest-ranked county in the nation, New York.

On a statewide level, Louisiana had an average weekly wage of \$765 in the first quarter of 2008, 15 percent below that for the nation, ranking it 30<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Louisiana's weekly wage was above that of three nearby states, Oklahoma (\$707, 41<sup>st</sup>), Arkansas (\$667, 46<sup>th</sup>), and Mississippi (\$634, 49<sup>th</sup>), but well below that of Texas (\$903, 13<sup>th</sup>). (See table 1.)

Nationwide, average weekly wages exceeded \$1,000 in the District of Columbia (\$1,488), New York (\$1,399), Connecticut (\$1,254), Massachusetts (\$1,143), New Jersey (\$1,133) and California (\$1,008). Average weekly wages in this group were more than 10 percent above the national level. At the other end of the scale, four states reported wages that were 30 percent or more below the national average: Idaho (\$635), Mississippi (\$634), South Dakota (\$632), and Montana (\$625).

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 summaries of employment and total pay of workers covered by state and federal unemployment insurance (UI) legislation and provided by State Workforce Agencies (SWAs). The 9.1 million employer reports cover 134.8 million full- and part-time jobs. The average weekly wage values are calculated by dividing total quarterly wages by the average of the three monthly employment levels of those covered by UI programs. The 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 have been published exclusively in electronic formats as PDFs. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2006* is available on the BLS Web site at [www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn06.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn06.htm).

QCEW-based news releases issued by other regional offices have been placed at one convenient BLS Web site location, [www.bls.gov/cew/cewregional.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewregional.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 Covered Employment and Wages 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 [www.bls.gov/ro6/home.htm](http://www.bls.gov/ro6/home.htm).

### **TECHNICAL NOTE**

QCEW data are not designed as a time series. QCEW data are simply the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. Establishments can move in or out of a county or industry for a number of reasons--some reflecting economic events, others reflecting administrative changes.

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. These potential differences result from the states' 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, first quarter 2008 (2)**

State	Employment		Average weekly wage (3)			
	March 2008 (thousands)	Percent change, March 2007-08	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, first quarter 2007-08	National ranking by percent change
United States (4)	134,761.1	0.4	\$905	-	2.4	-
Alabama	1,947.0	-0.2	740	34	3.2	27
Alaska	303.0	1.0	866	16	4.2	11
Arizona	2,639.7	-1.3	820	22	2.4	34
Arkansas	1,178.4	-0.1	667	46	4.1	12
California	15,561.5	0.1	1,008	6	2.1	41
Colorado	2,300.0	1.7	920	10	3.6	16
Connecticut	1,683.9	1.2	1,254	3	-0.6	51
Delaware	418.4	0.5	987	7	0.1	49
District of Columbia	680.8	1.1	1,488	1	4.3	9
Florida	7,918.6	-2.2	777	26	1.8	43
Georgia	4,060.9	0.1	847	20	1.3	44
Hawaii	628.1	0.2	773	28	3.5	19
Idaho	645.3	0.2	635	48	0.3	48
Illinois	5,796.1	0.1	980	8	2.6	33
Indiana	2,858.7	-0.7	757	33	2.4	34
Iowa	1,469.8	0.9	710	40	3.6	16
Kansas	1,363.2	1.0	737	35	2.4	34
Kentucky	1,794.0	0.1	714	39	2.4	34
Louisiana	1,887.3	1.3	765	30	4.8	4
Maine	584.1	0.5	701	42	3.5	19
Maryland	2,530.3	0.0	963	9	2.8	31
Massachusetts	3,203.1	0.9	1,143	4	3.3	23
Michigan	4,058.8	-1.8	857	18	0.9	47
Minnesota	2,644.8	0.6	908	12	4.0	13
Mississippi	1,138.2	0.8	634	49	3.3	23
Missouri	2,708.0	0.0	768	29	3.5	19
Montana	432.4	0.9	625	51	4.3	9
Nebraska	912.2	1.4	687	44	3.2	27
Nevada	1,266.3	-1.2	839	21	4.7	5
New Hampshire	621.2	0.3	863	17	3.4	22
New Jersey	3,939.9	0.5	1,133	5	3.3	23
New Mexico	823.8	0.6	717	38	4.7	5
New York	8,555.0	1.3	1,399	2	0.1	49
North Carolina	4,069.1	0.9	788	24	1.3	44
North Dakota	343.3	2.6	652	47	6.2	2
Ohio	5,189.1	-1.0	798	23	1.0	46
Oklahoma	1,560.0	1.6	707	41	4.7	5
Oregon	1,713.1	0.3	776	27	2.9	30
Pennsylvania	5,608.8	0.5	869	15	2.4	34
Rhode Island	464.8	-1.5	851	19	2.3	39
South Carolina	1,888.3	0.1	695	43	2.8	31
South Dakota	389.4	2.0	632	50	5.2	3
Tennessee	2,746.4	0.6	761	31	3.3	23
Texas	10,420.8	2.8	903	13	3.6	16
Utah	1,220.2	1.4	718	37	3.2	27
Vermont	300.8	-0.3	735	36	4.4	8
Virginia	3,653.5	0.2	918	11	2.0	42
Washington	2,928.6	2.1	899	14	3.7	15
West Virginia	700.3	0.3	679	45	4.0	13
Wisconsin	2,734.3	0.2	760	32	2.2	40
Wyoming	277.2	2.9	779	25	6.7	1
Puerto Rico	1,004.5	-1.6	489	(5)	2.7	(5)
Virgin Islands	46.5	1.1	708	(5)	3.4	(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.