

News

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County Employment and Wages in Virginia: First Quarter 2008

Arlington County ranked 9th highest in wages in the nation

In the first quarter of 2008, Arlington County had an average weekly wage level of \$1,473, the highest among Virginia's 12 counties with employment of 75,000 or more. Fairfax County was a close second with an average weekly wage of \$1,376, followed by Alexandria City (\$1,180), Richmond City (\$1,114), and Loudoun County (\$1,105). The average weekly wage in Newport News City increased by 4.6 percent over the year, the largest advance among Virginia's large counties. Richmond City's 4.4-percent wage growth was the second fastest in the Commonwealth. Sheila Watkins, the Bureau's regional commissioner, noted that among Virginia's 12 large counties, 6 recorded wages above the national average of \$905, and 7 had wage growth above the national rate of 2.4 percent. (See table 1.)

Virginia's counties had some of the highest average weekly wages in the country. Arlington County ranked 9th; Fairfax County, 12th; and Alexandria City, 25th when wage levels were compared for all 334 large counties nationwide, placing them in the top 10 percent in the United States. Counties in Virginia also recorded high rates of wage growth compared to other large counties in the nation: Newport News City ranked 42nd, followed by the cities of Richmond and Alexandria which ranked 48th and 62nd, respectively. These three counties were among the top one-fifth of large counties nationwide in wage growth.

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 122 counties in Virginia with employment below 75,000. All but 7 (Goochland, Surry, King George, Falls Church City, Manassas City, Fairfax City, and Louisa) of these 122 counties had average weekly wages below the national level. (See table 2.)

County Wage Levels

Among Virginia's 12 large counties, 6 had average weekly wages exceeding the national level of \$905 in the first quarter of 2008—Arlington, Fairfax, Alexandria City, Richmond City, Loudoun, and Henrico. Wages in these six large counties, four of which are located in the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, D.C.-Va.-Md.-W.Va. metropolitan area, ranged from 10 percent higher than the national average in Henrico to 63 percent higher in Arlington.

At the other end of the wage spectrum, Chesapeake City (\$672) and Virginia Beach City (\$683) reported the lowest average weekly wage levels among the large counties in the Commonwealth. (See chart 1.) These two counties, both of which are located in the Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, Va.-N.C. metropolitan area, had wages in the bottom fifth of the national ranking, at 304th and 291st, respectively. Average weekly wages in the four remaining large areas (Prince William County, Chesterfield County, Newport News City, and Norfolk City) were all below the national level.

New York, N.Y., held the top position among the highest-paid large counties with an average weekly wage of \$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). Of the 10 counties with the highest wages in the United States, 4 were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y., Fairfield, Conn., Somerset, N.J., and Hudson, N.J.), 3 others were located in or around the San Francisco area (San Francisco, Santa Clara, and San Mateo, all in California), and 2 more were located in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area (Washington, D.C., and Arlington, Va.). Rounding out the top 10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston

metropolitan area. The lowest average weekly wage was reported in Cameron County, Texas (\$523), followed by the counties of Hidalgo, Texas (\$532), Horry, S.C. (\$534), Webb, Texas (\$554), and Yakima, Wash. (\$587).

County Wage Changes

Of Virginia's 12 large counties, 7 recorded wage growth above the national increase of 2.4 percent from the first quarter of 2007 to the first quarter of 2008. As mentioned, Newport News City's 4.6-percent wage gain was the largest increase in the Commonwealth and 42nd in the nation, followed by Richmond City's 4.4-percent gain (48th). The cities of Alexandria and Virginia Beach and the counties of Chesterfield, Prince William, and Loudoun also had growth rates above the national average, ranging from 2.5 to 4.0 percent.

Henrico County and Norfolk City were the only two counties in the Commonwealth to have over-the-year declines in wages in the first quarter of 2008, down 0.8 and 0.2 percent, respectively. Three other Virginia counties posted wage growth rates below that for the nation—Fairfax, Chesapeake City, and Arlington—ranging from 0.4 to 1.7 percent. All five of these counties ranked among the bottom one-third of large U.S. counties in wage growth.

Among the largest counties, Westmoreland, Pa., led the nation in growth in average weekly wages, 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 the counties of Somerset, N.J. (9.0 percent), San Luis Obispo, Calif. (8.3 percent), and Jefferson, Texas (7.9 percent).

Thirty-four large counties experienced 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).

Wage levels in Virginia's smaller counties

As mentioned, all but 7 of the 122 counties in Virginia with employment below 75,000 had average weekly wages below the national level. Highland County reported the lowest wage level at \$447. The highest wage among Virginia's 122 small counties was Goochland County's \$1,525, followed by Surry County's \$1,506.

When all 134 counties in Virginia are considered, only 9 had average wages below \$500 per week. Nine counties had wages above \$1,100, while five others had wages ranging from \$901 to \$1,100. Most of the higher-paid counties were located in the Washington and Richmond metropolitan areas. Eighty-seven, or over three-fifths, of the counties in Virginia reported average weekly wages from \$501 to \$700 in the first quarter of 2008. (See chart 1.)

State Average Weekly Wages

At the state level, the average weekly wage in Virginia was \$918, which was \$13 above the nationwide level and ranked 11th highest among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. (See table 3.) Nationally, 8 of the 12 areas with above-average weekly wage levels were located in a contiguous band along the east coast, stretching from Massachusetts to Virginia. The five highest average wages at the state level were in the District of Columbia (\$1,488), New York (\$1,399), Connecticut (\$1,254), Massachusetts (\$1,143), and New Jersey (\$1,133). Average weekly wages in this group were 25 percent or more above that for the nation. At the other end of the scale, seven states had wage levels 75 percent or less of national earnings: Montana (\$625), South Dakota (\$632), Mississippi (\$634), Idaho (\$635), North Dakota (\$652), Arkansas (\$667), and West Virginia (\$679).

Wyoming experienced wage growth of 6.7 percent from the first quarter of 2007 to the first quarter of 2008, higher than that of any other state. North Dakota was second with 6.2-percent growth, followed by South Dakota, averaging 5.2 percent. Connecticut was the only state to experience an over-the-year wage decline, down 0.6 percent. Wages in Delaware and New York were virtually unchanged over the year, up just 0.1 percent. Virginia's average wage growth of 2.0 percent was below the nation's 2.4-percent advance.

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 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 workers. The average weekly wage values are computed

by dividing quarterly total 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 (MSAs), counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at www.bls.gov/cew/; however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised (see Note below) and will 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 the Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the first quarter 2007 version of this news release. This edition includes the data on CD for enhanced access and usability with the printed booklet containing selected graphic representation of QCEW data; the data tables themselves will be published exclusively in the electronic PDF formats at 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 Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Mid-Atlantic Information Office at 215-597-3282 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. ET.

QCEW-based news releases issued by other regional offices have been placed at one convenient Web site location, www.bls.gov/cew/cewregional.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. Covered¹ employment and wages in the United States and the 12 largest counties in Virginia, first quarter 2008²

Area	Employment		Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	March 2008 (thousands)	Percent change, March 2007-08(5)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (4)	Percent change, first quarter 2007-08 (5)	National ranking by percent change (4)
United States (6)	134,761.1	0.4	\$905	--	2.4	--
Virginia	3,653.5	0.2	918	11	2.0	42
Alexandria City, Va.	99.8	0.3	1,180	25	4.0	62
Arlington, Va.	153.1	1.0	1,473	9	1.7	224
Chesapeake City, Va.	99.3	-1.3	672	304	1.4	233
Chesterfield, Va.	120.1	-0.8	790	180	3.3	112
Fairfax, Va.	585.0	0.8	1,376	12	0.4	279
Henrico, Va.	179.6	0.4	998	56	-0.8	309
Loudoun, Va.	130.2	1.9	1,105	39	2.5	177
Newport News City, Va.	99.5	-0.1	794	177	4.6	42
Norfolk City, Va.	143.6	-0.7	826	144	-0.2	297
Prince William, Va.	102.6	0.2	761	210	2.6	163
Richmond City, Va.	157.8	0.7	1,114	37	4.4	48
Virginia Beach City, Va.	172.7	-0.7	683	291	3.8	73

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 Ranking does not include San Juan, Puerto Rico.

⁵ Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

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.

Table 2. Covered¹ employment and wages in the United States and all of the counties in Virginia, first quarter 2008²

Area	Employment March 2008 (thousands)	Average weekly wage ³
United States (4)	134,761.1	\$905
Virginia	3,653.5	918
Accomack	12.8	558
Albemarle	50.0	847
Alleghany	4.4	590
Amelia	2.9	554
Amherst	9.7	610
Appomattox	3.4	549
Arlington	153.1	1,473
Augusta	25.5	658
Bath	2.3	622
Bedford	15.3	605
Bland	2.0	709
Botetourt	10.9	644
Brunswick	4.9	568
Buchanan	8.0	739
Buckingham	3.3	576
Campbell	15.6	589
Caroline	5.7	670
Carroll	6.4	480
Charles City	1.6	682
Charlotte	2.8	513
Chesterfield	120.1	790
Clarke	4.2	691
Craig	0.7	515
Culpeper	15.5	662
Cumberland	1.4	529
Dickenson	3.7	666
Dinwiddie	8.6	698
Essex	4.1	535
Fairfax County	585.0	1,376
Fauquier	21.5	739
Floyd	2.8	460
Fluvanna	4.1	617
Franklin	14.7	523
Frederick	23.6	714
Giles	4.7	692
Gloucester	10.0	549
Goochland	10.7	1,525
Grayson	2.4	476
Greene	3.0	564

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.

Table 2. Covered¹ employment and wages in the United States and all of the counties in Virginia, first quarter 2008² - continued

Area	Employment March 2008 (thousands)	Average weekly wage ³
Greensville	4.8	610
Halifax	12.6	586
Hanover	45.8	701
Henrico	179.6	998
Henry	15.8	552
Highland	0.5	447
Isle of Wight	12.0	698
James City	26.9	648
King and Queen	1.0	697
King George	9.2	1,203
King William	3.8	713
Lancaster	4.9	553
Lee	5.5	537
Loudoun	130.2	1,105
Louisa	7.1	949
Lunenburg	2.8	506
Madison	3.1	532
Mathews	1.7	451
Mecklenburg	13.1	518
Middlesex	3.4	505
Montgomery	40.0	660
Nelson	3.7	523
New Kent	3.8	633
Northampton	4.9	566
Northumberland	2.5	519
Nottoway	5.9	554
Orange	9.2	590
Page	5.8	506
Patrick	5.2	468
Pittsylvania	11.6	542
Powhatan	6.4	638
Prince Edward	9.0	528
Prince George	11.3	847
Prince William	102.6	761
Pulaski	11.3	669
Rappahannock	1.5	829
Richmond County	3.2	568
Roanoke County	35.5	647
Rockbridge	6.8	534
Rockingham	29.4	659
Russell	7.4	585

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.

Table 2. Covered¹ employment and wages in the United States and all of the counties in Virginia, first quarter 2008² - continued

Area	Employment March 2008 (thousands)	Average weekly wage ³
Scott	5.0	514
Shenandoah	14.4	562
Smyth	12.8	559
Southampton	4.3	576
Spotsylvania	30.1	635
Stafford	34.6	810
Surry	2.1	1,506
Sussex	3.7	594
Tazewell	17.8	545
Warren	11.9	602
Washington	20.1	635
Westmoreland	3.7	503
Wise	14.3	634
Wythe	12.4	535
York	21.4	619
Alexandria City	99.8	1,180
Bedford City	3.7	601
Bristol City	13.0	596
Buena Vista City	2.4	519
Charlottesville City	36.3	813
Chesapeake City	99.3	672
Colonial Heights City	10.5	497
Covington City	4.1	784
Danville City	28.1	590
Emporia City	4.1	488
Fairfax City	20.4	963
Falls Church City	12.3	1,102
Franklin City	4.3	509
Fredericksburg City	26.4	665
Galax City	6.8	479
Hampton City	59.5	761
Harrisonburg City	31.3	636
Hopewell City	8.3	877
Lexington City	5.1	624
Lynchburg City	55.0	744
Manassas City	24.2	1,025
Manassas Park City	3.5	808
Martinsville City	12.3	518
Newport News City	99.5	794
Norfolk City	143.6	826
Norton City	4.2	672

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.

Table 2. Covered¹ employment and wages in the United States and all of the counties in Virginia, first quarter 2008² - continued

Area	Employment March 2008 (thousands)	Average weekly wage ³
Petersburg City	14.6	662
Poquoson City	2.0	516
Portsmouth City	43.5	799
Radford City	6.7	743
Richmond City	157.8	1,114
Roanoke City	70.4	703
Salem City	22.5	784
Staunton City	12.1	549
Suffolk City	25.5	700
Virginia Beach City	172.7	683
Waynesboro City	10.7	644
Williamsburg City	15.0	603
Winchester City	27.1	728

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.

Table 3. Covered¹ employment and wages by state, first quarter 2008²

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.

Chart 1. Average weekly wages by county in Virginia, first quarter 2008

Average weekly wages (National average = \$905)

