

# NEWS

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## COUNTY EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN NORTH CAROLINA: FOURTH QUARTER 2007

### Durham County has highest wage and fastest wage growth

In the fourth quarter of 2007, the average weekly wage in Durham County increased by 7.2 percent, the largest advance among North Carolina's nine counties with 75,000 or more jobs as measured by 2006 annual average employment. Cumberland County's 6.0-percent wage growth was the second fastest in the State according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. Durham County also had the highest average weekly wage level in North Carolina at \$1,151, followed by Mecklenburg County at \$1,000. (See table 1.) Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that nationally, average weekly wages grew at a 4.2-percent pace, averaging \$898 in the fourth quarter of 2007.

Among the nine largest counties in North Carolina, employment was highest in Mecklenburg (578,600), followed by Wake (459,800) in December 2007. Employment was lowest in Catawba County (88,400). Eight of the nine counties recorded employment growth from December 2006 to December 2007. In fact, six of these counties had employment growth at least double the national increase of 0.8 percent. In contrast, Catawba County's employment declined 1.5 percent from December 2006 to December 2007.

### Large County Average Weekly Wages

Durham (\$1,151) and Mecklenburg (\$1,000) were the only large North Carolina counties that registered a weekly wage above the U.S. average, ranking 25<sup>th</sup> and 58<sup>th</sup>, respectively, among the 328 largest counties in the nation. Wake County's \$893 weekly wage was only \$5 below the nationwide average and ranked 110<sup>th</sup>. The remaining six counties had weekly wages that placed them in the bottom half of the rankings—Forsyth (\$803, 185<sup>th</sup>), Guilford (\$781, 216<sup>th</sup>), New Hanover (\$736, 263<sup>rd</sup>), Buncombe (\$712, 285<sup>th</sup>), Catawba (\$687, 300<sup>th</sup>), and Cumberland (\$675, 308<sup>th</sup>).

Across the country, average weekly wages were higher than the national average in 106 of the largest 328 U.S. counties. New York, N.Y., held the top position among the highest-paid large counties with an average weekly wage of \$1,862. Santa Clara, Calif., was second with an

average weekly wage of \$1,700, followed by Fairfield, Conn. (\$1,575), Suffolk, Mass. (\$1,546), and San Francisco, Calif. (\$1,529).

There were 222 counties with an average weekly wage below the national average in the fourth quarter of 2007. The lowest average weekly wage was reported in Cameron County, Texas (\$555), followed by the counties of Hidalgo, Texas (\$562), Horry, S.C. (\$582), Webb, Texas (\$590), and Yakima, Wash. (\$596).

### **Wage Changes in Large Counties**

Three counties in North Carolina exceeded the national increase in wages of 4.2 percent from the fourth quarter of 2006 to the fourth quarter of 2007 and ranked in the top 100 in wage growth among the nation's 328 largest counties—Durham (7.2 percent, 16<sup>th</sup>), Cumberland (6.0 percent, 33<sup>rd</sup>), and New Hanover (4.7 percent, 94<sup>th</sup>). The remaining six counties had wage growth placing them in the bottom half of the rankings—Buncombe (3.5 percent, 172<sup>nd</sup>), Mecklenburg (3.1 percent, 207<sup>th</sup>), Wake (3.0 percent, 219<sup>th</sup>), Catawba (2.4 percent, 254<sup>th</sup>), Forsyth (2.2 percent, 264<sup>th</sup>), and Guilford (1.8 percent, 278<sup>th</sup>).

Among the largest counties in the United States, Pulaski County, Ark., led the nation in wage growth with an increase of 26.2 percent from the fourth quarter of 2006. Williamson County, Texas, ranked second with a 16.5-percent gain, followed by the counties of Lake, Ill. (15.6 percent), Douglas Colo. (12.6 percent), and Westmoreland, Pa. (9.8 percent).

Eight counties experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages. Rockingham, N.H., experienced the largest decrease in wages (-12.4 percent), followed by the counties of Trumbull, Ohio (-7.2 percent), Sedgwick, Kan. (-4.1 percent), Lake, Fla. (-3.9 percent), and Montgomery, Ohio (-2.4 percent).

### **Average Wages in North Carolina's Smaller Counties**

Ninety of the 91 smaller counties in North Carolina, those with employment below 75,000, had average weekly wages below the national level of \$898. The exception was Orange County, which reported an average weekly that matched the nationwide average. Washington County reported the lowest average weekly wage at \$465 in the fourth quarter of 2007. (See table 2.)

When all 100 counties in North Carolina were considered, 3 counties in the State reported average weekly wages under \$500, 79 had wages in the \$501 to \$700 range, and 16 had wages from \$701 to \$900. The two remaining counties, Durham and Mecklenburg, had average weekly wages of \$1,000 or more.

### **State Average Weekly Wages**

At the state level, the average weekly wage in North Carolina was \$777, nearly 15 percent below the national average, ranking 31<sup>st</sup> among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. (See table 2.) North Carolina's average weekly wage was lower than neighboring

Virginia's (\$921, 11<sup>th</sup>), Georgia's (\$835, 21<sup>st</sup>), and Tennessee's (\$813, 24<sup>th</sup>), but higher than South Carolina's (\$716, 43<sup>rd</sup>).

Nationwide, five states and the District of Columbia had average weekly wages exceeding \$1,000: the District of Columbia (\$1,506), New York (\$1,152), Connecticut (\$1,149), Massachusetts (\$1,133), New Jersey (\$1,092), and California (\$1,035). Average weekly wages in this group were at least 15 percent above the national average. At the other end of the scale, three states reported wages at least 25 percent below the national average: Montana (\$659), Mississippi (\$654), and South Dakota (\$647). (See table 3.)

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 137.0 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. 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/](http://www.bls.gov/cew/); however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised (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 representation of QCEW data; the data tables themselves are published exclusively in electronic formats as PDF. The 2006 bulletin is available in a 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 Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Atlanta Information Office at (404) 893-4222. Customers in the Miami area can reach us at (305) 358-2305. This release is available in text and PDF format on the Atlanta BLS Web site at [www.bls.gov/ro4/home.htm](http://www.bls.gov/ro4/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 in the United States and the 9 largest counties in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2007(2)**

Area	Employment		Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	December 2007 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2006-07(5)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (4)	Percent change, fourth quarter 2006-07 (5)	National ranking by percent change (4)
United States (6)	137,027.3	0.8	\$898	--	4.2	--
North Carolina	4,127.7	1.5	777	31	3.5	36
Buncombe, N.C.	118.8	2.3	712	285	3.5	172
Catawba, N.C.	88.4	-1.5	687	300	2.4	254
Cumberland, N.C.	120.6	1.8	675	308	6.0	33
Durham, N.C.	186.8	1.6	1,151	25	7.2	16
Forsyth, N.C.	189.8	1.1	803	185	2.2	264
Guilford, N.C.	286.3	0.7	781	216	1.8	278
Mecklenburg, N.C.	578.6	2.7	1,000	58	3.1	207
New Hanover, N.C.	106.3	2.1	736	263	4.7	94
Wake, N.C.	459.8	3.9	893	110	3.0	219

(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 the county of 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. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and all of the counties in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2007(2)**

Area	Employment December 2007	Average weekly wage (3)	Area	Employment December 2007	Average weekly wage (3)
Alamance County	61,240	\$656	Johnston County	44,895	\$665
Alexander County	10,291	570	Jones County	1,642	596
Alleghany County	3,978	480	Lee County	27,605	726
Anson County	8,109	618	Lenoir County	28,096	620
Ashe County	8,200	567	Lincoln County	22,643	628
Avery County	7,419	522	Macon County	11,921	579
Beaufort County	17,950	579	Madison County	4,277	509
Bertie County	7,085	527	Martin County	8,853	579
Bladen County	13,542	558	McDowell County	16,659	573
Brunswick County	27,628	625	Mecklenburg County	578,615	1000
Buncombe County	118,752	712	Mitchell County	5,555	557
Burke County	32,946	634	Montgomery County	10,016	581
Cabarrus County	69,299	742	Moore County	32,421	662
Caldwell County	27,115	612	Nash County	43,466	658
Camden County	2,226	778	New Hanover County	106,314	736
Carteret County	22,879	557	Northampton County	6,017	562
Caswell County	3,224	560	Onslow County	45,976	541
Catawba County	88,388	687	Orange County	62,956	898
Chatham County	17,348	634	Pamlico County	3,057	531
Cherokee County	8,400	564	Pasquotank County	18,242	625
Chowan County	5,615	616	Pender County	10,537	574
Clay County	2,260	529	Perquimans County	2,103	523
Cleveland County	34,824	647	Person County	11,053	644
Columbus County	17,505	599	Pitt County	74,016	693
Craven County	43,551	753	Polk County	5,218	569
Cumberland County	120,649	675	Randolph County	49,829	614
Currituck County	5,186	591	Richmond County	15,115	531
Dare County	17,648	588	Robeson County	43,805	553
Davidson County	44,159	623	Rockingham County	30,153	616
Davie County	11,137	604	Rowan County	49,075	727
Duplin County	20,687	570	Rutherford County	23,465	562
Durham County	186,815	1151	Sampson County	20,059	644
Edgecombe County	21,051	725	Scotland County	14,184	589
Forsyth County	189,784	803	Stanly County	19,808	602
Franklin County	12,079	694	Stokes County	7,391	542
Gaston County	71,324	686	Surry County	31,421	581
Gates County	1,571	551	Swain County	7,624	564
Graham County	2,952	493	Transylvania County	9,345	610
Granville County	20,049	722	Tyrrell County	1,037	505
Greene County	4,575	568	Union County	59,398	726
Guilford County	286,294	781	Vance County	16,582	579
Halifax County	18,161	567	Wake County	459,763	893
Harnett County	24,811	593	Warren County	3,652	517
Haywood County	17,571	627	Washington County	3,574	465
Henderson County	36,808	664	Watauga County	22,839	598
Hertford County	9,787	606	Wayne County	46,004	619
Hoke County	8,807	529	Wilkes County	23,618	580
Hyde County	1,815	518	Wilson County	41,065	719
Iredell County	67,850	738	Yadkin County	9,667	566
Jackson County	14,581	609	Yancey County	4,095	531

(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.

**Table 3. Covered (1) employment and wages by state, fourth quarter 2007(2)**

State	Employment		Average weekly wage (3)			
	December 2007 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2006-07	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2006-07	National ranking by percent change
United States (4)	137,027.3	0.8	\$898	-	4.2	-
Alabama	1,971.0	1.2	762	33	3.3	39
Alaska	299.4	1.0	877	16	4.9	15
Arizona	2,693.3	-0.1	827	22	2.6	46
Arkansas	1,187.6	0.7	712	44	9.2	1
California	15,794.7	0.8	1,035	6	4.8	18
Colorado	2,329.9	2.0	927	9	5.7	7
Connecticut	1,717.8	0.7	1,149	3	4.5	26
Delaware	428.8	0.3	926	10	3.3	39
District of Columbia	681.6	0.7	1,506	1	5.8	6
Florida	8,024.3	-1.3	810	25	2.8	43
Georgia	4,111.5	0.6	835	21	2.8	43
Hawaii	637.2	0.7	793	28	4.1	29
Idaho	660.2	1.7	686	47	2.1	50
Illinois	5,933.0	0.6	975	8	5.1	13
Indiana	2,929.1	0.1	745	35	3.0	42
Iowa	1,498.5	0.7	732	39	4.9	15
Kansas	1,372.7	1.2	745	35	2.6	46
Kentucky	1,830.5	0.8	732	39	3.4	38
Louisiana	1,903.1	2.3	783	29	4.7	20
Maine	608.8	0.8	707	45	4.1	29
Maryland	2,580.1	0.4	986	7	4.7	20
Massachusetts	3,270.9	0.7	1,133	4	5.4	8
Michigan	4,194.9	-1.2	873	17	2.5	49
Minnesota	2,708.7	0.8	883	15	5.1	13
Mississippi	1,148.9	0.7	654	50	3.8	34
Missouri	2,746.2	0.3	780	30	5.3	11
Montana	440.4	2.1	659	49	5.4	8
Nebraska	925.2	1.3	723	41	5.2	12
Nevada	1,290.8	0.4	872	19	6.7	4
New Hampshire	638.8	0.3	914	12	-0.3	51
New Jersey	4,027.4	0.2	1,092	5	3.5	36
New Mexico	831.7	1.1	738	38	4.8	18
New York	8,762.7	1.4	1,152	2	4.2	27
North Carolina	4,127.7	1.5	777	31	3.5	36
North Dakota	347.7	2.0	690	46	7.3	2
Ohio	5,336.8	-0.2	795	27	2.8	43
Oklahoma	1,556.1	1.3	721	42	6.2	5
Oregon	1,740.5	0.9	798	26	4.6	22
Pennsylvania	5,712.8	0.5	873	17	4.2	27
Rhode Island	480.9	-1.5	838	20	2.6	46
South Carolina	1,904.0	1.0	716	43	4.1	29
South Dakota	393.5	1.7	647	51	5.4	8
Tennessee	2,790.3	0.9	813	24	4.0	33
Texas	10,460.8	3.0	911	13	4.6	22
Utah	1,241.8	2.8	758	34	4.6	22
Vermont	309.1	-0.2	743	37	4.9	15
Virginia	3,709.0	0.7	921	11	3.8	34
Washington	2,936.0	2.6	885	14	4.6	22
West Virginia	716.8	0.4	683	48	4.1	29
Wisconsin	2,803.9	0.3	769	32	3.1	41
Wyoming	279.6	3.0	815	23	7.1	3
Puerto Rico	1,055.2	-1.4	517	(5)	4.4	(5)
Virgin Islands	46.0	0.6	738	(5)	3.9	(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.