

News

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AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN COLORADO: FOURTH QUARTER 2006

Three counties record weekly wages above \$1,000

In the fourth quarter of 2006 the average weekly wage in Denver County was \$1,069, the highest level among Colorado's nine counties with 75,000 or more jobs (as measured by the 2005 annual average employment), according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that Denver County also recorded the fastest over-the-year wage growth in the State, 6.3 percent. Among Colorado's nine largest counties, Denver, Boulder, and Arapahoe all had wage levels and wage growth that exceeded the national averages of \$861 and 4.2 percent. (See table A.)

Table A. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and the 9 largest counties in Colorado, fourth quarter 2006 (2)

Area	Employment	Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	December 2006 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (4)	Percent change, fourth quarter 2005-06 (5)	National ranking by percent change (4)
United States (6)	135,933.2	\$861	--	4.2	--
Colorado	2,283.3	877	12	5.0	15
Adams, Colo.	153.4	785	174	3.0	235
Arapahoe, Colo.	280.3	1,022	42	4.8	83
Boulder, Colo.	160.8	1,026	41	5.4	51
Denver, Colo.	439.7	1,069	30	6.3	28
Douglas, Colo.	89.8	859	108	2.1	285
El Paso, Colo.	247.2	774	184	3.2	220
Jefferson, Colo.	209.2	852	114	4.4	108
Larimer, Colo.	128.2	784	175	3.7	176
Weld, Colo.	81.8	711	262	5.0	71

(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.

Average Weekly Wages in Colorado, Fourth Quarter 2006 (continued)

Wage levels

Three of Colorado's large counties—Denver, Boulder, and Arapahoe—had average weekly wages that exceeded \$1,000, placing them in the top 50 of the U.S. ranking among the 325 largest counties nationwide. Denver County ranked 30th, and Boulder and Arapahoe, 41st and 42nd, respectively. Douglas County (\$859/108th) and Jefferson County (\$852/114th) ranked in the top half nationally with weekly wages near the U.S. average of \$861. The four remaining counties in the State recorded below-average wage levels that placed them in the bottom half of the ranking: Adams (\$785/174th), Larimer (\$784/175th), El Paso (\$774/184th), and Weld (\$711/262nd).

Average weekly wages were higher than the national average in 105 of the largest 325 U.S. counties. New York County, N.Y., held the top position among the highest-paid large counties with an average weekly wage of \$1,781. Santa Clara, Calif., was second with an average weekly wage of \$1,569, followed by Fairfield, Conn. (\$1,515), Suffolk, Mass. (\$1,481), and San Francisco, Calif. (\$1,460). Three of the 10 counties with the highest wages in the U.S. were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y., Fairfield, Conn., and Somerset, N.J.), 3 others were located in or around the San Francisco area (Santa Clara, San Francisco, and San Mateo, all in California), while 3 more were located in or around the Washington D.C. metropolitan area (Washington, D.C., Arlington, Va., and Fairfax, Va.). Rounding out the top 10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston metropolitan area.

Of the large counties in the United States, 219, or about two-thirds, had an average weekly wage below that for the nation in the fourth quarter of 2006. The lowest average weekly wage was reported in Cameron County, Texas (\$527), followed by the counties of Hidalgo, Texas (\$542), Yakima, Wash. (\$570), Webb, Texas (\$571), and Horry, S.C. (\$578).

At the state level, Colorado's weekly wage of \$877 was close to the national average, ranking 12th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. (See table 1.) The five highest wage levels in the nation were in the District of Columbia (\$1,424), New York (\$1,104), Connecticut (\$1,101), Massachusetts (\$1,072), and New Jersey (\$1,055). At the other end of the scale, four states had average earnings of less than 75 percent of the national average: South Dakota (\$614), Montana (\$625), Mississippi (\$630), and North Dakota (\$643).

Over-the-year wage changes

Five of Colorado's nine large counties recorded wage growth greater than the national increase of 4.2 percent from the fourth quarter of 2005 to the fourth quarter of 2006. Denver County's 6.3-percent wage gain was the largest increase in the State, ranking 28th in the nation among the 325 largest counties. Boulder County experienced the second-highest wage increase in the State at 5.4 percent and ranked 51st nationwide. Two additional counties also recorded rates of growth that placed them in the top 100 nationwide. Average weekly wages in Weld County rose 5.0 percent and in Arapahoe County, 4.8 percent, ranking them 71st and 83rd, respectively. Jefferson County's 4.4-percent increase ranked 108th nationwide.

The remaining four large counties in the State recorded slower-than-average wage growth: Larimer (3.7 percent/176th), El Paso (3.2 percent/220th), Adams (3.0 percent/235th) and Douglas (2.1 percent/285th). Wage growth in Douglas County placed it in the bottom quartile of the national ranking.

Among the 325 largest counties in the United States, Rockingham, N.H., led the nation in average weekly wage growth with an increase of 18.0 percent from the fourth quarter of 2005. Sedgwick, Kan., and Trumbull, Ohio, were second in wage growth (14.0 percent each), followed by the counties of Travis, Texas (10.9 percent), and Waukesha, Wis. (10.4 percent).

Average Weekly Wages in Colorado, Fourth Quarter 2006 (continued)

Eight counties experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages. New Castle, Del., had the largest decrease (-5.7 percent), followed by the counties of Elkhart, Ind. (-5.3 percent), Orleans, La. (-4.4 percent), York, Pa. (-4.3 percent), and Harrison, Miss. (-2.4 percent).

At the state level, Colorado's wage growth of 5.0 percent in the fourth quarter of 2006 was above the national average, ranking 15th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Nationwide, Wyoming had the fastest wage increase (11.3 percent) and Delaware reported the only decline (-4.1 percent).

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 reports submitted by every employer subject to unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 8.9 million employer reports cover 135.9 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; this 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 <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 2005 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 fourth quarter 2005 version of this news release. This edition is the first to include the data on a CD for enhanced access and usability. As a result of this change, the printed booklet contains only selected graphic representations of QCEW data; the data tables themselves are published exclusively in electronic formats as PDF and fixed-width text files. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2005* is available for sale from the United States Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250, telephone 866-512-1800, outside of Washington, D.C. Within Washington, D.C., the telephone number is 202-512-1800. The fax number is 202-512-2104. Also, the 2005 bulletin is available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn05.htm>.

QCEW-based news releases issued by other regional offices have been placed at one convenient BLS Web site location, <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 Census of Employment and Wages Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Kansas City Information Office at 816-285-7000 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. CT.

Hurricane Katrina

The employment and wages reported in this news release reflect the impact of Hurricane Katrina and ongoing labor market trends in certain counties. The effects of Hurricane Katrina, which hit the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, were first apparent in the September QCEW employment counts and in the wage totals for the third quarter of 2005. This catastrophic storm continued to affect monthly employment and quarterly wage totals in parts of Louisiana and Mississippi in the fourth quarter of 2006. For more information, see the QCEW section of the Katrina coverage on the BLS Web site at (<http://www.bls.gov/katrina/qcewquestions.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.

Data for 2006 will be the last from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program using the 2002 version of the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). With the release of first quarter 2007 data, scheduled for October 18, the QCEW program will switch to the 2007 NAICS as the basis for the assignment and tabulation of economic data by industry.

Table 1. Covered (1) employment and wages by state, fourth quarter 2006 (2)

State	Employment	Average weekly wage (3)			
	December 2006 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2005-06	National ranking by percent change
United States (4)	135,933.2	\$861	-	4.2	-
Alabama	1,948.9	737	33	4.4	27
Alaska	296.2	837	17	5.3	11
Arizona	2,693.3	805	22	4.7	18
Arkansas	1,179.3	652	47	2.8	43
California	15,672.1	987	6	4.4	27
Colorado	2,283.3	877	12	5.0	15
Connecticut	1,706.3	1,101	3	2.0	50
Delaware	427.5	896	10	-4.1	51
District of Columbia	675.0	1,424	1	5.0	15
Florida	8,126.2	788	23	4.6	20
Georgia	4,090.4	812	21	2.1	49
Hawaii	632.3	762	27	3.5	38
Idaho	649.8	672	45	7.0	4
Illinois	5,899.5	928	8	4.6	20
Indiana	2,924.3	723	36	2.6	45
Iowa	1,486.3	697	40	3.7	35
Kansas	1,358.9	725	34	6.5	5
Kentucky	1,815.4	708	37	3.8	33
Louisiana	1,855.1	748	30	5.1	14
Maine	603.4	679	43	2.7	44
Maryland	2,570.5	941	7	3.4	39
Massachusetts	3,244.5	1,072	4	4.5	25
Michigan	4,242.5	852	14	2.2	48
Minnesota	2,683.1	840	16	4.0	32
Mississippi	1,140.3	630	49	2.6	45
Missouri	2,737.5	741	32	2.3	47
Montana	431.6	625	50	5.8	6
Nebraska	912.2	687	42	3.6	37
Nevada	1,285.8	817	19	5.4	10
New Hampshire	636.9	917	9	8.1	2
New Jersey	4,023.6	1,055	5	4.4	27
New Mexico	823.2	705	39	7.1	3
New York	8,643.1	1,104	2	5.3	11
North Carolina	4,054.0	751	29	4.6	20
North Dakota	341.0	643	48	4.7	18
Ohio	5,346.2	774	24	3.1	42
Oklahoma	1,536.4	679	43	5.8	6
Oregon	1,723.9	763	26	4.8	17
Pennsylvania	5,680.8	837	17	4.4	27
Rhode Island	488.4	817	19	3.8	33
South Carolina	1,886.8	688	41	3.3	41
South Dakota	387.1	614	51	4.2	31
Tennessee	2,785.2	773	25	4.6	20
Texas	10,164.2	871	13	5.8	6
Utah	1,208.0	725	34	5.5	9
Vermont	308.7	707	38	3.4	39
Virginia	3,682.9	887	11	3.7	35
Washington	2,863.7	846	15	5.2	13
West Virginia	714.3	656	46	4.6	20
Wisconsin	2,792.4	746	31	4.5	25
Wyoming	270.9	759	28	11.3	1
Puerto Rico	1,062.8	494	(5)	4.7	(5)
Virgin Islands	45.5	711	(5)	7.2	(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.