

NEWS

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BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS



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AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN KENTUCKY: FIRST QUARTER 2005 **Jefferson County records highest wages in the State**

In the first quarter of 2005, the average weekly wage in Kentucky stood at \$628, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. Wages in the State's two large counties, those with 75,000 or more jobs, averaged \$742 in Jefferson and \$684 in Fayette. Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that while the wages in the two large counties exceeded the statewide level, both fell below the national average of \$775. Together, employment in both Jefferson and Fayette Counties accounted for one-third of the State's total workforce of 1,741,200.

Over-the-year wage changes

Average weekly wages in both of Kentucky's large counties declined in the first quarter of 2005, falling 2.3 percent over the year in Fayette and 1.1 percent in Jefferson. Among the nation's 322 large counties, Kentucky's ranked near the bottom in percentage change – Fayette at 305th and Jefferson at 299th. Nationally, only seven of the nation's largest counties experienced a decrease in wages larger than Fayette County's 2.3 percent. Clayton County, Ga. recorded the largest decrease, down 6.0 percent over the past year. Other counties with wage declines in the first quarter of 2005 included Marin, Calif. (-5.6 percent), Hamilton, Ind. (-4.3 percent), McLean, Ill. (-2.8 percent), St. Louis, Minn. (-2.7 percent), and Santa Cruz, Calif. and Frederick, Md. (both with -2.4 percent). Overall, 35 large counties experienced a decline in average weekly wages from the first quarter 2004 to the first quarter 2005.

The largest growth in weekly wages in the first quarter of 2005 was recorded by Collier County, Fla. with an increase of 10.7 percent. Rounding out the top five were the counties of Cumberland, Pa. (9.3 percent), Hudson, N.J. (9.0 percent), Henrico, Va. (8.4 percent), and Fairfield, Conn. and Rock Island, Ill. (both 7.7 percent). Overall, 19 large counties had a growth rate of 5.0 percent or more and 85 had a growth rate of 3.0 percent or more.

At the statewide level, the average weekly wage in Kentucky grew 0.6 percent from the first quarter of 2004 to the first quarter of 2005, slowest in the nation. Kentucky was one of five states with wage growth of less than 1.0 percent; Nebraska and Minnesota (both with 0.8 percent), and Indiana and Missouri (both with 0.9 percent) joined Kentucky in this distinction. The District of Columbia led the U.S. in over-the-year wage growth with 4.2 percent. Rounding out the top five were Delaware (4.0 percent), and Connecticut, Vermont, and Wyoming (all at 3.9 percent). (See table 2.)

Wage levels

Jefferson County's wage level ranked 129th highest among the 322 large counties nationwide. Fayette County's wage level ranked 185th. Overall, roughly two-thirds (220) of 322 large counties nationwide recorded an average weekly wage below the national average. (San Juan is not included in the rankings.)

Among the 322 large counties in the nation, New York County, N.Y., recorded the highest average weekly wage at \$2,025. Fairfield, Conn., was second with an average weekly wage of \$1,613, followed by Suffolk, Mass. (\$1,390), and Santa Clara, Calif. (\$1,372). Four of the top 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., Somerset and Hudson, N.J.), 3 others were located in or around the San Francisco, California area (Santa Clara, San Francisco, and San Mateo), while 2 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. At the other end of the wage scale, the lowest average weekly wage was reported in Cameron, Texas (\$460), followed by Hidalgo, Texas (\$463), Horry, S.C. (\$479), Webb, Texas (\$490), and Yakima, Wash. (\$516). The wage level in the lowest ranked county, Cameron, was less than one-quarter the level reported for the highest ranked county, New York.

On a statewide level, the average weekly wage in Kentucky, \$628, was 19 percent below the national average. This placed Kentucky in the bottom one-third of the rankings at 35th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Kentucky's weekly wage was greater than in neighboring West Virginia (\$583, 45th), but was below levels in the other near-by states of Illinois (\$848, 8th), Virginia (\$794, 10th), Ohio (\$706, 22nd), Missouri (\$671, 27th), Indiana (\$667, 30th), and Tennessee (\$660, 31st).

Nationwide, average wage levels were greater than \$1,000 per week for the top three in the rankings: District of Columbia (\$1,277), New York (\$1,096), and Connecticut (\$1,084). Massachusetts (\$964) and New Jersey (\$963) rounded out the top five. Average weekly wages in the top five were more than 20 percent above the national average. At the other end of the scale, six states reported wages below \$580 per week – or less than 75 percent of the national average: Montana (\$533), South Dakota (\$544), Mississippi (\$545), North Dakota (\$550), Idaho (\$561), and Arkansas (\$579).

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program. The data are derived from reports submitted by employers subject to Unemployment Insurance (UI) laws. The 8.5 million employer reports cover 129.8 million full-time and part-time workers. The average weekly wage is computed by dividing the total quarterly payroll of employees covered by UI programs by the average monthly number of these employees. This number then is divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. 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. 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 revised (see Note below) and will not necessarily 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 bulletin is now available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn03.htm>. Also, the quarterly press release, County Employment and Wages, presents employment and wage data for the largest counties in the U.S. and is available at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>.

QCEW-based news releases issued by other regional offices have been placed at one convenient BLS Web site location, see <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewregional.htm>.

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 (440) 331-3415. 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 <http://www.bls.gov/ro4/home.htm>. Users may also obtain the release from the Bureau's fax-on-demand service in Atlanta by dialing (404) 331-3403.

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 (non-economic) 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 two largest counties in Kentucky, first quarter 2005²

	Employment March 2005 (thousands)	Average Weekly Wage ³			
		Average Weekly Wage	National ranking by level ⁴	Percent change, first quarter 2004- 05 ⁵	National ranking by percent change ⁴
United States ⁶	129,802.3	\$775	-	2.2	-
Kentucky.....	1,741.2	\$628	35	0.6	51
Fayette, KY.....	167.5	\$684	185	-2.3	305
Jefferson, KY.....	415.8	\$742	129	-1.1	299

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.

Table 2. Covered¹ employment and wages by state, first quarter 2005²

	Employment March 2005 (thousands)	Average Weekly Wage ³			
		Average Weekly Wage	National ranking by level ⁴	Percent change, first quarter 2004-05 ⁵	National ranking by percent change ⁴
United States ⁶	129,802.3	\$775	-	2.2	-
Alabama.....	1,871.5	\$642	32	2.6	16
Alaska.....	290.3	\$744	18	1.5	37
Arizona.....	2,459.7	\$698	23	2.3	22
Arkansas.....	1,144.8	\$579	46	2.8	11
California.....	15,064.5	\$872	7	2.0	26
Colorado.....	2,158.6	\$787	11	2.2	24
Connecticut.....	1,624.7	\$1,084	3	3.9	3
Delaware.....	407.9	\$878	6	4.0	2
District of Columbia.....	661.7	\$1,277	1	4.2	1
Florida.....	7,731.0	\$679	26	3.5	7
Georgia.....	3,877.0	\$742	19	1.9	30
Hawaii.....	597.6	\$669	28	2.0	26
Idaho.....	594.2	\$561	47	1.6	36
Illinois.....	5,644.9	\$848	8	2.9	10
Indiana.....	2,838.7	\$667	30	0.9	47
Iowa.....	1,419.5	\$616	37	1.7	33
Kansas.....	1,290.7	\$631	34	1.4	41
Kentucky.....	1,741.2	\$628	35	0.6	51
Louisiana.....	1,873.8	\$619	36	2.8	11
Maine.....	573.2	\$614	38	1.7	33
Maryland.....	2,458.0	\$831	9	2.0	26
Massachusetts.....	3,094.8	\$964	4	1.2	44
Michigan.....	4,218.3	\$780	13	1.2	44
Minnesota.....	2,559.7	\$783	12	0.8	49
Mississippi.....	1,113.1	\$545	49	2.3	22
Missouri.....	2,644.2	\$671	27	0.9	47
Montana.....	403.8	\$533	51	3.5	7
Nebraska.....	879.8	\$600	42	0.8	49
Nevada.....	1,187.6	\$714	21	2.6	16
New Hampshire.....	606.9	\$745	17	2.8	11
New Jersey.....	3,863.5	\$963	5	1.8	32
New Mexico.....	765.0	\$596	43	2.1	25
New York.....	8,242.3	\$1,096	2	3.7	6
North Carolina.....	3,808.0	\$687	24	2.7	14
North Dakota.....	320.4	\$550	48	1.5	37
Ohio.....	5,228.6	\$706	22	2.0	26
Oklahoma.....	1,453.9	\$591	44	1.9	30
Oregon.....	1,621.6	\$685	25	1.5	37
Pennsylvania.....	5,481.0	\$747	16	1.5	37
Rhode Island.....	466.9	\$736	20	1.2	44
South Carolina.....	1,800.3	\$611	39	2.5	18
South Dakota.....	365.1	\$544	50	2.4	20
Tennessee.....	2,665.2	\$660	31	1.4	41
Texas.....	9,454.6	\$760	15	3.1	9
Utah.....	1,091.9	\$607	40	1.3	43
Vermont.....	297.5	\$639	33	3.9	3
Virginia.....	3,525.7	\$794	10	2.7	14
Washington.....	2,702.3	\$766	14	2.4	20
West Virginia.....	683.6	\$583	45	2.5	18
Wisconsin.....	2,687.0	\$668	29	1.7	33
Wyoming.....	246.2	\$606	41	3.9	3
Puerto Rico.....	1,048.2	\$433	(5)	3.3	(5)
Virgin Islands.....	44.2	\$650	(5)	13.4	(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.