

# Introduction

In 2006, there were approximately 132.6 million jobs in the United States, earning an hourly median wage of \$14.61 and an hourly mean wage of \$18.84. This bulletin details the spectrum of occupations found in the U.S. labor market, providing data on earnings and employment. For example, the occupation with the highest employment in 2006 was retail salespersons, with about 4.4 million jobs and an hourly mean wage of \$11.51. The major occupational group with the highest employment was office and administrative support, with about 23 million jobs and an hourly mean wage of \$14.60. Some of the highest-paying occupations in 2006 included physician specialists, chief executives, airline pilots, lawyers, air traffic controllers, and engineering managers. Occupational employment and wage statistics are also available by industry. For example, general medical and surgical hospitals employed nearly 1.4 million registered nurses, representing about 57 percent of total employment in this occupation. Lastly, occupational data can be compared across States and metropolitan areas. For accountants and auditors, New York was the top-paying State with an hourly mean wage of \$34.64, while the District of Columbia had the highest employment concentration of these workers, at about 1.84 percent of total employment.

The introductory article to this bulletin explores some of the characteristics of typical U.S. jobs. Many of the occupations with the highest employment paid below the median wage of \$14.61, including retail salespersons, cashiers, general office clerks, and waiters and waitresses. Occupations earning closest to the U.S. median wage were often in manu-

facturing, construction, and office and administrative support. These average-paying occupations included printing machine operators, earning a median wage of \$14.90, and loan interviewers and clerks, earning a median wage of \$14.89.

The article also compares the regional differences in earnings for selected occupations, focusing on States and metropolitan areas along Interstate 80, which runs across the continental U.S. from New Jersey to California. In general, the article finds that these selected occupations, including truck drivers, cashiers, general office clerks, registered nurses, and accountants and auditors, had above-average wages in California and New Jersey, with lower wages in the middle of the country. Registered nurses had the greatest wage variation across the metropolitan areas along Interstate 80, while cashiers and general office clerks showed the least.

The tables in the bulletin show a selection of the OES data that is available on Web pages or in database format from the BLS Web site. Table 1 shows the national, cross-industry employment for occupations in the Standard Occupational Classification system, along with mean and percentile wages. Table 2 provides employment and wage data for the largest occupations in each four-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) industry. Occupational profiles are presented in Table 3. Each profile shows national cross-industry employment and wages for the occupation, as well as the industries with the highest employment levels and wages and the States and metropolitan areas with the highest employment concentrations and wages.