

News

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COUNTY EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN MASSACHUSETTS: SECOND QUARTER 2008

Wages in Suffolk and Middlesex Counties Rank among the Top 15 in the Nation

In the second quarter of 2008, the average weekly wage in Suffolk County was \$1,309, the highest among Massachusetts' nine large counties and eighth highest among all counties nationwide with employment of 75,000 or more jobs as measured by 2007 annual average employment, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. Middlesex County had the 2nd highest average weekly wage at \$1,240 and ranked 11th nationwide. Middlesex County's average wages increased 5.2 percent over the year, the largest advance in the Commonwealth and 19th fastest in the nation. (See table 1.) Regional Commissioner Denis M. McSweeney noted that nationally, weekly wages averaged \$841 and were up 2.6 percent over the year.

Among the nine large counties in Massachusetts, employment was highest in Middlesex at 834,500, followed by Suffolk at 596,600 in June 2008. These same two counties were the only ones to add jobs from June 2007 to June 2008--with employment in Suffolk expanding 0.9 percent and in Middlesex, 0.8 percent. Elsewhere, employment in Essex County was unchanged over the year. In the remaining six counties, employment declined at a pace faster than the national average (-0.3 percent). Four of these six experienced a decline of 1.0 percent or more.

Employment and average wages (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the five counties in Massachusetts with employment below 75,000. All of these counties had an average weekly wage below the national average in the second quarter of 2008. (See table 2.)

Large County Average Weekly Wages

Five of the 9 largest counties in Massachusetts recorded average weekly wages that ranked in the top 100 among the 334 largest counties nationwide--Suffolk (\$1,309, 8th), Middlesex (\$1,240, 11th), Norfolk (\$1,013, 35th), Essex (\$902, 69th), and Worcester (\$869, 93rd). Wages in the remaining four counties were all below the national average of \$841, ranging from \$829 in Plymouth (121st) to \$725 in Barnstable (235th).

Across the country, average weekly wages were higher than the national average in 109 of the largest 334 U.S. counties. New York., N.Y., held the top position with an average weekly

wage of \$1,569. Santa Clara, Calif., was second at \$1,529, followed by the District of Columbia (\$1,433), Arlington, Va. (\$1,376), and San Francisco, Calif. (\$1,334).

There were 224 counties with an average weekly wage below the national average in the second quarter of 2008. The lowest average weekly wage was reported in Cameron County, Texas (\$535), followed by the counties of Hidalgo, Texas (\$538), Horry, S.C. (\$539), Webb, Texas (\$562), and Yakima, Wash. (\$580).

Large County Wage Changes

Middlesex County's 5.2-percent wage growth from the second quarter of 2007 to the second quarter of 2008 was the highest in the Commonwealth and ranked 19th nationally among the 334 largest counties. Four other counties in Massachusetts recorded over-the-year wage growth higher than that of the nation—Worcester (3.3 percent, 94th), Plymouth (3.1 percent, 117th), and Essex and Norfolk (both 2.7 percent, 145th). The remaining four counties had wage growth that were below the national average of 2.6 percent—Barnstable (2.5 percent, 166th), Bristol and Hampden (both 2.4 percent, 175th), and Suffolk (2.2 percent, 194th).

Among the largest counties in the United States, Rock Island, Ill., led the nation with 10.5-percent wage growth from the second quarter 2007. Weld, Colo., ranked second at 10.4 percent, followed by the counties of Utah, Utah (9.4 percent), Whatcom, Wash. (8.3 percent), and East Baton Rouge, La. (7.8 percent).

Twenty-six counties experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages. Clayton, Ga., experienced the largest decrease in wages (-43.7 percent), followed by the counties of Boone, Ky. (-10.0 percent), Ventura, Calif., and Trumbull, Ohio (-4.8 percent each), and Queens, N.Y. (-4.3 percent).

Average Wages in Massachusetts's Smaller Counties

All five small counties in Massachusetts—that is, they had employment of less than 75,000, had average weekly wages below the national average of \$841. Still, Nantucket's wage of \$828 was just \$13 below that for the nation. Three more counties had an average wage of at least \$700: Dukes (\$766), Hampshire (\$759), and Berkshire (\$732). Franklin County had the lowest average weekly wage among the small counties, as well as the Commonwealth, at \$664.

State Average Weekly Wages

Massachusetts ranked among the very highest in the nation when its average weekly wage was compared to the rest of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The five highest average weekly wages nationwide were in the District of Columbia (\$1,433), Massachusetts (\$1,044), New York (\$1,040), Connecticut (\$1,036), and New Jersey (\$1,004). Average weekly wages in this group were 19 percent or more above that for the nation. At the other end of the scale, the three states with the lowest average weekly wages were South Dakota (\$606), Montana (\$629), and Mississippi (\$635). (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 136.6 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 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 Technical Note) 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 2007 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 2008 version of the national news release. Tables and additional content from the 2007 Employment and Wages Annual Bulletin are now available online at www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn07.htm. These tables present final 2007 annual averages. The tables will also be included on the CD which accompanies the hardcopy version of the Annual Bulletin. Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2007 will be available for sale by the end of the first quarter in 2009 from the United States Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 37194, Pittsburgh, PA 15230, telephone 866-512-1800, outside Washington, D.C. Within Washington, D.C., the telephone number is 202-512-1800. The fax number is 202-512-2104.

This information will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (617) 565-2072; Federal Relay Services: 1-800-877-8339. (Check paragraph spacing.)

For personal assistance or further information on the QCEW program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the New England Information Office at (617) 565-2327. This release is available in PDF and HTML format on the New England BLS Web site at www.bls.gov/rol/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 Massachusetts, second quarter 2008[2]

Area	Employment		Average Weekly Wage [3]			
	June 2008 (thousands)	Percent change, June 2007-08 [4]	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level [5]	Percent change, second quarter 2007-08 [4]	National ranking by percent change [5]
United States [6]	136,631.8	-0.3	\$841	--	2.6	--
Massachusetts	3,310.4	0.1	1,044	2	3.6	10
Barnstable, Mass.	101.4	-1.6	725	235	2.5	166
Bristol, Mass.	221.4	-1.4	773	171	2.4	175
Essex, Mass.	305.6	0.0	902	69	2.7	145
Hampden, Mass.	202.2	-0.5	766	183	2.4	175
Middlesex, Mass.	834.5	0.8	1,240	11	5.2	19
Norfolk, Mass.	329.6	-0.5	1,013	35	2.7	145
Plymouth, Mass.	180.7	-1.0	829	121	3.1	117
Suffolk, Mass.	596.6	0.9	1,309	8	2.2	194
Worcester, Mass.	324.9	-1.2	869	93	3.3	94

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

[5] Ranking does not include the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

[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 Massachusetts, second quarter 2008[2]

Area	Employment June 2008	Average weekly wage [3]
Barnstable County	101,400	\$725
Berkshire County	64,184	732
Bristol County	221,389	773
Dukes County	9,535	766
Essex County	305,624	902
Franklin County	27,469	664
Hampden County	202,176	766
Hampshire County	29,834	759
Middlesex County	834,534	1,240
Nantucket County	8,243	828
Norfolk County	329,644	1,013
Plymouth County	180,713	829
Suffolk County	596,596	1,309
Worcester County	324,929	869

[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, second quarter 2008[2]

State	Employment		Average weekly wage [3]			
	June 2008 (thousands)	Percent change, June 2007-08	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, second quarter 2007-08	National ranking by percent change
United States [4]	136,631.8	-0.3	\$841	-	2.6	-
Alabama	1,955.4	-0.5	720	33	3.3	15
Alaska	330.6	1.4	860	12	3.1	16
Arizona	2,543.9	-2.6	806	19	2.4	34
Arkansas	1,183.5	-0.2	661	46	3.4	11
California	15,760.3	-0.5	955	6	2.2	42
Colorado	2,346.3	0.8	858	13	3.1	16
Connecticut	1,722.3	0.5	1,036	4	0.3	49
Delaware	427.3	-0.9	862	10	-0.8	51
District of Columbia	691.4	1.2	1,433	1	5.9	1
Florida	7,620.1	-3.4	762	26	2.6	30
Georgia	4,059.7	-0.6	787	22	-0.6	50
Hawaii	623.9	-1.3	764	24	3.9	9
Idaho	671.9	-0.9	636	48	1.6	46
Illinois	5,930.0	-0.4	893	8	2.3	39
Indiana	2,906.5	-0.9	715	38	1.9	43
Iowa	1,521.2	0.1	683	42	2.9	23
Kansas	1,389.1	1.2	720	33	2.4	34
Kentucky	1,818.9	-0.5	718	35	2.6	30
Louisiana	1,900.3	1.2	750	29	5.5	3
Maine	620.3	0.1	676	44	2.7	28
Maryland	2,577.7	-0.3	920	7	2.8	26
Massachusetts	3,310.4	0.1	1,044	2	3.6	10
Michigan	4,163.3	-2.2	825	18	2.4	34
Minnesota	2,733.9	-0.5	849	14	1.8	45
Mississippi	1,139.1	0.1	635	49	4.4	7
Missouri	2,761.6	0.0	752	28	3.4	11
Montana	450.3	0.1	629	50	2.9	23
Nebraska	936.1	0.5	676	44	3.4	11
Nevada	1,271.8	-1.9	797	20	2.7	28
New Hampshire	641.9	-0.4	835	16	1.5	48
New Jersey	4,054.4	-0.4	1,004	5	1.6	46
New Mexico	837.2	0.6	715	38	4.2	8
New York	8,758.2	0.6	1,040	3	2.3	39
North Carolina	4,083.6	-0.1	735	31	2.4	34
North Dakota	356.4	2.5	654	47	5.8	2
Ohio	5,315.0	-1.3	757	27	2.3	39
Oklahoma	1,556.0	1.0	701	40	5.3	5
Oregon	1,747.4	-0.8	764	24	3.0	20
Pennsylvania	5,743.3	0.1	827	17	3.1	16
Rhode Island	481.6	-2.2	796	21	2.8	26
South Carolina	1,907.5	-0.6	681	43	2.4	34
South Dakota	409.0	1.2	606	51	2.9	23
Tennessee	2,752.7	-0.4	745	30	1.9	43
Texas	10,510.3	2.2	849	14	2.5	33
Utah	1,234.3	0.1	716	37	2.6	30
Vermont	305.6	-0.9	718	35	3.0	20
Virginia	3,720.4	-0.3	885	9	3.0	20
Washington	3,000.9	0.3	862	10	3.4	11
West Virginia	715.3	0.0	695	41	5.1	6
Wisconsin	2,836.8	-0.5	730	32	3.1	16
Wyoming	296.7	2.7	780	23	5.4	4
Puerto Rico	997.8	-2.0	475	[5]	3.5	[5]
Virgin Islands	45.9	-2.2	703	[5]	-0.6	[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.