News
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FOR RELEASE:
Monday, June 1, 2009

COUNTY EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN NORTH DAKOTA:
THIRD QUARTER 2008

Cass County reported an increase of 2.6 percent in its employment level from September 2007 to September 2008. Cass County is North Dakota's largest county, that is, it had employment of 75,000 or more as measured by 2007 annual average employment. Regional Commissioner Jay A. Mousa noted that Cass County's employment level of 101,100 in September 2008 accounted for 28.3 percent of total employment within the State.

Nationally, employment fell 0.8 percent during this 12-month period, as 207 of the 334 large U.S. counties lost jobs. The largest over-the-year percentage decline in employment in the nation was recorded in Elkhart County, Ind. (-10.8 percent); Yakima County, Wash., experienced the fastest growth (3.2 percent). Nationwide, the 334 largest counties made up 71.2 percent of total U.S. employment.

The average weekly wage in Cass County was $723 in the third quarter of 2008, an increase of 5.1 percent from its third quarter 2007 level. (See table 1.) Nationally, the average weekly wage rose 2.8 percent over the year to $841 in the third quarter of 2008.

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 52 counties in North Dakota with employment below 75,000. Forty-eight of these smaller counties had average weekly wages below the national average. (See table 2.)

Large County Wage Changes

Cass County's 5.1 percent wage growth from the third quarter of 2007 to the third quarter of 2008 ranked 24th nationally. (See table 1.) Nationwide, Rutherford, Tenn., ranked first in average weekly wage growth, with an increase of 17.3 percent from the third quarter of 2007. Yolo, Calif., was second with growth of 9.7 percent, followed by the counties of Madison, Ill. (9.2 percent), Suffolk, N.Y. (8.6 percent), and Calcasieu, La. (7.8 percent).

Twenty-one large counties in the United States experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages. Clayton, Ga., had the largest decrease and was the only county to experience a double-digit decline (-14.6 percent). The next largest declines were recorded in Santa Clara, Calif. and Duval, Fla. (-3.4 percent each), Gwinnett, Ga. (-3.1 percent), and Rock Island, Ill. (-2.6 percent).

Large County Average Weekly Wages

Cass County's $723 average weekly wage placed in the bottom third of the national ranking (246th) among the 334 largest counties in the third quarter of 2008.

Nationally, average weekly wages were higher than average in 108 of the largest 334 counties. New York, N.Y., held the top position among the highest-paid large counties with an average weekly wage of $1,552. Santa Clara, Calif., was second with an average weekly wage of $1,530, followed by Washington, D.C. ($1,391), San Mateo, Calif. ($1,374), and San Francisco, Calif. ($1,350).

Among the 226 counties with an average weekly wage below the U.S. average in the third quarter of 2008, Horry, S.C. ($537), reported the lowest wage, followed by the counties of Cameron, Texas ($538), Hidalgo, Texas ($549), Webb, Texas ($559), and Yakima, Wash. ($580). Wages in these lowest-ranked counties were less than 40 percent of the average weekly wage reported for the highest-ranked county, New York.

Average Weekly Wages in North Dakota's Smaller Counties

Forty-eight of the 52 counties in North Dakota with employment below 75,000 had average weekly wages lower than the national average of $841. The 4 counties that reported above average wages were Slope ($1,048), Oliver ($1,006), Williams ($948), and Mercer ($889). Sheridan reported the lowest wage among the smaller counties as well as the State, averaging $381 in the third quarter of 2008. (See table 2.)

When all 53 counties in North Dakota were considered, 3 counties had average wages above $900 and 5 had wages from $701 to $900. Thirty-five counties had wages from $501 to $700 and 10 reported wages under $500.

Additional Statistics and other Information

QCEW data for states has been included in this release in table 3. For additional information about quarterly employment and wages data, please read the Technical Note or visit the QCEW Web site at www.bls.gov/cew/.

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 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* is expected to be available for sale as a chartbook by the end of the second quarter of 2009 from the United States Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250, 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.

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 Midwest Information Office in Chicago at (312) 353-1880 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. CT.

Technical Note

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 9.2 million employer reports cover 135.2 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/; however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised and may not match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

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 largest county in North Dakota, third quarter 2008(2)

Area	Employment			Average Weekly Wage [3]			
	September 2008 (thousands)	Percent change, September 2007-08 [4]	National ranking by percent change [5]	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level [5]	Percent change, third quarter 2007-08 [4]	National ranking by percent change [5]
United States [6]	135,173.8	-0.8	--	$841	--	2.8	--
North Dakota	357.0	2.8	--	665	45	6.9	1
Cass, N.D.	101.1	2.6	5	723	246	5.1	24

[1] Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal
[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
[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.

Table 2. Covered(1) employment and wages in the United States and all of the counties in North Dakota third quarter 2008(2)

Area	Employment September 2008	Average weekly wages(3)	Area	Employment September 2008	Average weekly wages(3)
United States(4)	135,173,800	$841	McKenzie	3,310	$812
North Dakota	357,046	665	McLean	3,146	669
Adams	1,015	536	Mercer	5,099	889
Barnes	5,192	609	Morton	9,314	588
Benson	2,034	573	Mountrail	2,338	596
Billings	545	545	Nelson	1,178	559
Bottineau	2,479	557	Oliver	705	1,006
Bowman	1,481	563	Pembina	4,121	681
Burke	649	675	Pierce	1,873	504
Burleigh	50,438	661	Ramsey	5,703	535
Cass	101,106	723	Ransom	2,264	580
Cavalier	1,561	690	Renville	873	608
Dickey	2,093	509	Richland	7,846	626
Divide	604	505	Rolette	4,641	548
Dunn	950	588	Sargent	2,646	820
Eddy	686	466	Sheridan	281	381
Emmons	1,097	478	Sioux	1,637	625
Foster	1,731	637	Slope	214	1,048
Golden Valley	628	476	Stark	13,019	671
Grand Forks	39,036	626	Steele	662	738
Grant	607	444	Stutsman	10,697	588
Griggs	977	477	Towner	843	503
Hettinger	633	535	Traill	3,187	554
Kidder	840	444	Walsh	5,799	556
LaMoure	1,302	538	Ward	29,113	598
Logan	540	416	Wells	1,636	441
McHenry	1,209	570	Williams	13,175	948
McIntosh	1,162	427			

(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.

Table 3. Covered [1] employment and wages by state, third quarter 2008[2]

State	Employment		Average weekly wage [3]			
	September 2008 (thousands)	Percent change, September 2007-08	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, third quarter 2007-08	National ranking by percent change
United States [4]	135,173.8	-0.8	$841	-	2.8	-
Alabama	1,936.4	-1.2	730	32	3.3	17
Alaska	332.1	1.4	872	13	3.7	13
Arizona	2,570.1	-3.0	798	20	2.0	45
Arkansas	1,185.0	-0.1	649	47	3.0	22
California	15,527.1	-1.4	959	6	2.9	24
Colorado	2,322.7	0.4	877	11	3.8	12
Connecticut	1,692.5	-0.3	1,032	2	1.0	50
Delaware	420.6	-1.1	879	10	2.1	42
District of Columbia	688.2	1.4	1,391	1	1.0	50
Florida	7,546.4	-4.1	756	27	2.2	40
Georgia	4,018.6	-1.6	794	21	1.5	47
Hawaii	613.0	-2.1	774	24	1.8	46
Idaho	665.7	-1.4	643	48	1.3	49
Illinois	5,872.8	-0.7	891	9	2.9	24
Indiana	2,897.6	-1.4	718	35	2.3	37
Iowa	1,499.0	0.2	696	40	4.2	8
Kansas	1,368.9	0.0	711	38	4.6	6
Kentucky	1,795.3	-1.0	692	42	2.4	36
Louisiana	1,877.4	-0.2	756	27	5.6	4
Maine	610.8	-0.6	683	43	3.5	14
Maryland	2,543.4	-0.8	920	7	3.1	19
Massachusetts	3,265.7	0.0	1,025	4	2.3	37
Michigan	4,093.9	-3.0	820	18	1.5	47
Minnesota	2,699.6	-0.5	862	14	4.7	5
Mississippi	1,128.3	-1.3	631	49	4.0	11
Missouri	2,736.1	-0.4	739	31	2.8	29
Montana	446.4	0.1	628	50	3.1	19
Nebraska	925.7	0.2	694	41	4.2	8
Nevada	1,253.0	-2.7	809	19	2.1	42
New Hampshire	634.6	-0.5	822	16	2.8	29
New Jersey	3,952.9	-0.7	990	5	2.5	33
New Mexico	835.2	0.7	712	37	3.5	14
New York	8,633.8	0.5	1,030	3	2.2	40
North Carolina	4,064.2	-1.0	741	30	3.1	19
North Dakota	357.0	2.8	665	45	6.9	1
Ohio	5,251.1	-1.5	766	25	2.8	29
Oklahoma	1,562.8	1.2	698	39	4.5	7
Oregon	1,734.1	-1.0	766	25	2.1	42
Pennsylvania	5,679.0	0.0	822	16	2.5	33
Rhode Island	476.0	-2.0	778	23	2.5	33
South Carolina	1,874.6	-1.5	683	43	2.9	24
South Dakota	401.3	1.0	623	51	4.2	8
Tennessee	2,730.4	-1.5	745	29	2.8	29
Texas	10,438.3	1.4	850	15	2.9	24
Utah	1,229.3	-0.1	717	36	2.9	24
Vermont	304.2	-0.5	722	34	3.3	17
Virginia	3,676.1	-0.3	877	11	2.3	37
Washington	3,007.5	1.0	903	8	3.0	22
West Virginia	716.4	0.6	661	46	5.9	3
Wisconsin	2,788.7	-0.6	730	32	3.4	16
Wyoming	294.0	3.3	781	22	6.4	2
Puerto Rico	992.8	-1.6	477	[5]	5.5	[5]
Virgin Islands	44.9	-0.9	709	[5]	4.3	[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.

Chart 1. Average weekly wages by county in North Dakota, third quarter 2008