

# Introduction

In 2005, approximately 133 million workers were employed in the United States. This bulletin provides information on the types of jobs held by these 133 million people and the wages they were paid for that work. For example, the two largest occupations, retail salespersons and cashiers, accounted for almost 8 million workers, or nearly 6 percent of all jobs, and earned average hourly wages of \$11.14 and \$8.32, respectively. (See table 1.) Registered nurses, with 2.4 million workers, made up the largest occupation paying above-average wages, with a mean wage of \$27.35 per hour.

Employment and wages for these and other occupations vary by industry. Even wage patterns vary by industry. This bulletin contains descriptions of two industries with distinct wage patterns. The automobile-manufacturing industries exhibit a compressed wage distribution, paying workers in low-paid occupations above the occupational average and workers in higher paid occupations below the occupational average. On the other hand, the mining industries display the opposite pattern and more wage dispersion, with the highest paid workers earning more than their counterparts in other industries and the lowest paid workers earning less than their counterparts in other industries.

Several factors may affect wages for an occupation, including where the workers are located. It is by no means surprising to find workers in New York City, Seattle, or the District of Columbia earning higher wages for the same work than workers in Jacksonville, Florida; Portland, Maine; or Omaha, Nebraska. Articles in this bulletin look at some of the reasons wages may vary by area, including the size of the area, the concentration of certain workers in the area, the industries present in the area, and the wages of other workers in the area.

Two articles contain descriptions of employment patterns for different occupations: life and physical science occupations and social science occupations. Employment in these occupations is not evenly distributed, but tends to be concentrated in certain industries and geographic areas.

Finally, while the data in this bulletin provide a detailed picture of static employment patterns in 2005, many people are interested in seeing how labor markets change over time. Although Occupational Employment Statistics data are not designed to be a time series, special applications of the data can provide information about the changing economy. One article compares specific employers surveyed at two points in time in order to analyze the types of workers they retain, hire, or let go as the establishment grows and shrinks. Two other articles look at important industries that are changing. The first of these examines staffing and wages in elder care services, which is becoming increasingly important as the population ages. The second examines the effects of economic changes on selected financial services occupations between 2001 and 2005.

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. Industry information for all of the four-digit NAICS industries is shown in table 2. The largest occupations for each industry are listed. Table 3 presents occupational profiles for the five largest occupations in each SOC major group. The profiles show the industries and areas that have the highest employment and wages for those occupations.

Additional information about each occupation, industry, or geographic area is available on the OES Web site, [www.bls.gov/oes/](http://www.bls.gov/oes/).