

# News

United States  
Department  
of Labor



Bureau of Labor Statistics

New York Office

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## AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN PUERTO RICO: FIRST QUARTER 2006 San Juan's wage level well below the U.S. average

In the first quarter of 2006, weekly wages averaged \$531 in San Juan, Puerto Rico's largest municipality. Regional Commissioner Michael L. Dolfman noted that San Juan's wage level was 37 percent lower than the U.S. average of \$838. Over the year, San Juan's 3.1-percent increase in wages fell well short of the national wage advance of 8.1 percent in the first quarter of 2006. (See table A.)

Employment in San Juan stood at 306,000 in March of 2006, falling 2.4 percent over the year. In the U.S., employment increased by 2.2 percent from March 2005 to March 2006.

Table A. Covered<sup>1</sup> employment and wages in the United States and San Juan, Puerto Rico, first quarter 2006<sup>2</sup>

Area	Employment		Average weekly wage <sup>3</sup>	
	March 2006 (thousands)	Percent change, March 2005-06 <sup>4</sup>	Level 2006	Percent change, 2005-06 <sup>4</sup>
United States <sup>5</sup> .....	132,613.1	2.2	\$838	8.1
Puerto Rico.....	1,048.1	0.2	450	3.9
San Juan.....	306.0	-2.4	531	3.1

<sup>1</sup> Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

<sup>2</sup> Data are preliminary.

<sup>3</sup> Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

<sup>4</sup> Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

<sup>5</sup> Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.



Round-the-clock recorded messages for the Consumer Price Index and a variety of other *Bureau of Labor Statistics* data are available by dialing the *New York Information Office's* main telephone number: (212) 337-2400. For recorded messages, press '2.' Press '1' for 24-hour Fax-on-Demand service.

## **Wage levels**

Since San Juan's employment level well exceeds the definition of a large county in the U.S. (those with employment of 75,000 or more), its average wage can be compared to the wages of the 325 largest counties nationwide. Over two-thirds of these counties had an average weekly wage lower than the national average, and if San Juan were counted among this group, it would rank fifth lowest among these largest counties. Only the counties of Webb, Texas (\$527), Horry, S.C. (\$524), Hidalgo, Texas (\$490), and Cameron, Texas (\$477) would fall below it.

At the other end of the wage scale, New York County, N.Y., recorded the highest average weekly wage at \$2,223. Fairfield, Conn., was second with an average weekly wage of \$1,836, followed by Santa Clara, Calif. (\$1,584), and Somerset, N.J. (\$1,522). Four of the 10 counties with the highest wages in the nation were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y.; Fairfield, Conn.; Somerset, N.J.; and Hudson, N.J.), 3 others were located in or around the San Francisco area (Santa Clara, San Francisco, and San Mateo, all in California), while 2 more were located in or around the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area (Arlington, Va., and Washington, D.C.). Rounding out the top 10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston metropolitan area.

Among the fifty states and the District of Columbia, five reported average wages greater than \$1,000 per week. At \$1,371, the average weekly wage in the District of Columbia was well above the national level of \$838. Four states also recorded averages at least 20 percent above the U.S. level: New York (\$1,193), Connecticut (\$1,191), Massachusetts (\$1,045), and New Jersey (\$1,037). At the lower end of the scale, four states reported average weekly wages under \$600: Montana (\$572), South Dakota (\$581), North Dakota (\$586), and Mississippi (\$597). Puerto Rico's average weekly wage (\$450) fell 46 percent below the national average and 20 percent below the lowest ranked state. The Virgin Islands, another territory, also reported a lower-than-average wage, but at \$664, its wage was approximately 50 percent higher than Puerto Rico's. (See table 1.)

## **Over-the-year wage changes**

San Juan's 3.1-percent over-the-year wage increase in the first quarter of 2006 trailed the averages for both Puerto Rico and the United States (3.9 and 8.1 percent, respectively). Of the large U.S. counties, 312 posted higher wage growth than San Juan. About 40 percent (130) of the large counties in the U.S. recorded over-the-year percent changes at or above the national average.

Leading the nation in average weekly wage growth was Orleans County, La., with an increase of 33.3 percent. McLean, Ill., was second with a 20.5-percent wage gain, followed by Jefferson, La., 19.0 percent, Harrison, Miss., 18.0 percent, and Montgomery, Tex., 17.0 percent. The high average weekly wage growth rates for Orleans, Jefferson, and Harrison Counties were related to the disproportionate job and pay losses in lower-paid industries due to the impact of Hurricane Katrina. At the other end of the spectrum, only two counties experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages: Trumbull, Ohio (-0.4 percent) and Cumberland, Pa. (-3.7 percent).

Among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, Louisiana had the largest over-the-year wage growth, 12.6 percent, followed by Oklahoma (11.9 percent), Arizona (10.2 percent), Connecticut (10.0 percent), and Delaware (9.8 percent). No state saw its average wage decline or remain the same from

the first quarter of 2005. In fact, only three states experienced growth of less than 6 percent: Minnesota (5.8 percent), Rhode Island (5.6 percent), and Michigan (4.7 percent).

The average weekly wage in Puerto Rico rose 3.9 percent from the first quarter of 2005 to the first quarter of 2006—well below the national increase of 8.1 percent and less than smallest increase among the states. Only the Virgin Island's over-the-year wage growth was lower—2.3 percent.

## **Employment**

In March 2006, employment in San Juan stood at 306,000, accounting for 29 percent of Puerto Rico's workforce. Over the year, San Juan's employment declined by 2.4 percent. Six large counties in the U.S. experienced larger over-the-year job losses than San Juan. Three were located along the Gulf Coast—Orleans, La. (-38.7 percent), Harrison, Miss. (-18.8 percent) and Jefferson, La. (-11.7 percent), reflecting the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina. The other three declining counties suffered employment losses of a smaller magnitude—Monterey, Ca. (-3.6 percent), Boone, Ky. (-3.3 percent), and Saginaw, Mich. (-2.9 percent). Of the 325 largest counties nationwide, 31 registered a decrease in employment.

Nationally, Collin, Tex., just northeast of Dallas, had the largest over-the-year percentage increase in employment, 7.8 percent, and Lee County, Fla., followed closely with 7.7-percent growth. Overall, employment increased in 289 of the nation's 325 large counties from March 2005 to March 2006.

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 reports submitted by employers subject to unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 8.8 million employer reports cover 132.6 million full- and part-time workers. The average weekly wage is computed by dividing the quarterly total wages 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. 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, 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 Technical Note below) 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 2005 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 fourth quarter 2005 version of this news release. This edition will also be the first to include the data on a CD for enhanced access and usability. As a result of this change, the printed booklet will contain only selected graphic representations of QCEW data; the data tables themselves will be published exclusively in electronic formats as PDF and fixed-width text files. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2005* will be available for sale in late 2006 from

the United States Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250, telephone 866-512-1800, outside of Washington, D.C. Within Washington, D.C., the telephone number is 202-512-1800. Also, the bulletin will be available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site, <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn05.htm>. In addition, QCEW news releases issued by other regional offices have been placed at one convenient Web site location, <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewregional.htm>

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 New York-New Jersey Information Office at (212) 337-2400 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET.

### **Hurricane Katrina**

The measures of employment and wages reported in this news release reflect the impact of Hurricane Katrina and ongoing labor market trends. The effects of Hurricane Katrina, which hit the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, were reflected in the September QCEW employment counts and the wage totals for the third quarter of 2005. The impact of this catastrophic storm in parts of Louisiana and Mississippi continue to be reflected in monthly employment and quarterly wage totals in the first quarter of 2006. For more information, see the QCEW section of the Katrina coverage on the BLS Web site (<http://www.bls.gov/katrina/qcewquestions.htm>).

### **TECHNICAL 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 (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.

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**Table 1. Covered<sup>1</sup> employment and wages by state and territory, first quarter 2006<sup>2</sup>**

Area	Employment		Average weekly wage <sup>3</sup>		
	March 2006 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National rank by level <sup>4</sup>	Percent change, 2005-06	National rank by percent change <sup>4</sup>
United States <sup>5</sup>	132,613.1	\$838	-	8.1	-
Alabama	1,923.6	690	33	7.6	29
Alaska	296.3	791	19	6.5	46
Arizona	2,613.3	767	21	10.2	3
Arkansas	1,171.6	621	46	7.1	40
California	15,422.5	952	7	9.2	8
Colorado	2,211.3	858	11	9.2	8
Connecticut	1,640.1	1,191	3	10.0	4
Delaware	415.0	965	6	9.8	5
District of Columbia	664.9	1,371	1	7.3	36
Florida	8,014.1	735	25	8.2	19
Georgia	3,989.2	799	18	7.7	25
Hawaii	615.1	719	28	7.5	31
Idaho	623.3	609	47	8.6	14
Illinois	5,733.7	913	8	7.7	25
Indiana	2,870.4	717	29	7.5	31
Iowa	1,445.7	662	38	7.5	31
Kansas	1,317.1	686	35	8.7	12
Kentucky	1,769.9	671	36	6.8	42
Louisiana	1,793.1	697	32	12.6	1
Maine	577.5	652	42	6.2	48
Maryland	2,511.2	897	9	7.9	23
Massachusetts	3,136.3	1,045	4	8.4	18
Michigan	4,207.8	816	15	4.7	51
Minnesota	2,633.0	827	13	5.8	49
Mississippi	1,112.1	597	48	9.3	6
Missouri	2,680.5	724	27	7.7	25
Montana	416.8	572	51	7.3	36
Nebraska	888.4	648	43	8.0	21
Nevada	1,260.0	764	22	6.7	44
New Hampshire	617.1	800	17	7.5	31
New Jersey	3,933.9	1,037	5	7.6	29
New Mexico	795.5	647	44	8.6	14
New York	8,329.2	1,193	2	8.8	11
North Carolina	3,905.5	744	24	7.8	24
North Dakota	328.8	586	49	6.9	41
Ohio	5,267.2	751	23	6.5	46
Oklahoma	1,505.6	660	40	11.9	2
Oregon	1,669.7	734	26	7.3	36
Pennsylvania	5,551.7	807	16	8.0	21
Rhode Island	468.2	777	20	5.6	50
South Carolina	1,834.1	661	39	8.2	19
South Dakota	373.2	581	50	6.6	45
Tennessee	2,717.7	705	31	6.8	42
Texas	9,850.2	824	14	8.6	14
Utah	1,147.2	660	40	8.9	10

See footnotes at end of table.

**Table 1. Covered<sup>1</sup> employment and wages by state and territory, first quarter 2006<sup>2</sup>**  
**-- continued**

Area	Employment		Average weekly wage <sup>3</sup>		
	March 2006 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level <sup>4</sup>	Percent change, 2005-06	National ranking by percent change <sup>4</sup>
Vermont	300.5	688	34	7.7	25
Virginia	3,613.3	862	10	8.6	14
Washington	2,784.0	833	12	8.7	12
West Virginia	697.7	625	45	7.2	39
Wisconsin	2,712.2	716	30	7.5	31
Wyoming	256.8	667	37	9.3	6
Puerto Rico	1,048.1	450	<sup>6</sup>	3.9	<sup>6</sup>
Virgin Islands	45.6	664	<sup>6</sup>	2.3	<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

<sup>2</sup> Data are preliminary.

<sup>3</sup> Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

<sup>4</sup> Ranking does not include Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

<sup>5</sup> Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

<sup>6</sup> Data not included in the national ranking.