

# News

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## County Employment and Wages in Pennsylvania: First Quarter 2008

### Westmoreland County recorded fastest wage growth in the United States

In the first quarter of 2008, the average weekly wage in Westmoreland County increased by 14.9 percent over the year, the largest advance among all U.S. counties with employment of 75,000 or more, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. Butler County's 6.1-percent wage growth was the second fastest among Pennsylvania's 19 large counties and ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in the nation. Montgomery County had the highest average weekly wage level in the Commonwealth, \$1,189, followed by Chester County (\$1,118) and Philadelphia County (\$1,064). Sheila Watkins, the Bureau's regional commissioner, noted that among Pennsylvania's 19 large counties, 8 recorded wage growth above the national rate of 2.4 percent, and 5 had wages above the nationwide average of \$905. (See table 1.)

Pennsylvania's counties had some of the highest average weekly wages in the country. Montgomery County ranked 21<sup>st</sup>; Chester County, 36<sup>th</sup>; and Philadelphia County, 44<sup>th</sup> when wages were compared for all 334 large counties nationwide. Several counties in Pennsylvania also registered some of the largest over-the-year wage gains in the nation in the first quarter of 2008. In addition to Westmoreland (1<sup>st</sup>) and Butler (14<sup>th</sup>) counties, two other Pennsylvania counties ranked in the top one-fourth nationwide—Northampton and Delaware, at 70<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup>, respectively. Delaware was the only county in the Commonwealth to rank in the top one-fourth of large counties nationwide in both wage levels and wage growth.

In Pennsylvania, Allegheny County (which includes Pittsburgh) registered the highest level of employment in March 2008 at 677,163, closely followed by Philadelphia County at 630,752. After these two urban counties, Montgomery County had the third-highest level of employment at 486,272. Chester County had the highest percent growth in employment—2.0 percent—which was five times the national average of 0.4 percent.

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 48 counties in Pennsylvania with employment below 75,000. Of these counties, Montour was the only one with an average weekly wage (\$909) above the national average. (See table 2 and chart 1.)

### Large County Average Weekly Wages

Among Pennsylvania's 19 large counties, 5 had average weekly wages exceeding \$900 in the first quarter of 2008—Montgomery, Chester, Philadelphia, Delaware, and Allegheny. All five of these large counties, four of which were located in the Philadelphia, Pa. metropolitan area, recorded wage levels greater than the nationwide average of \$905 and ranked in the top one-fourth nationally. The average weekly wage in the top-paying county of Montgomery was 31 percent above the national level.

At the other end of the wage spectrum, Lackawanna County (\$645) reported the lowest average weekly wage level in the Commonwealth, followed by the counties of Luzerne (\$674), Erie (\$683), Lancaster (\$729), and Butler (\$750). These five counties, two of which were located in the Scranton—Wilkes-Barre, Pa. metropolitan area, ranked in the bottom one-third nationwide.

New York, N.Y., held the top position among the highest-paid large counties with an average weekly wage of \$2,805. Fairfield, Conn., was second with an average weekly wage of \$1,905, followed by Somerset, N.J. (\$1,765), Suffolk, Mass. (\$1,708), and San Francisco, Calif. (\$1,639). Of the 10 counties with the highest wages in the United States, 4 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 (San Francisco, Santa Clara, and San Mateo, all in California), and 2 more were located in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area (Washington, D.C., and Arlington, Va.). Rounding out the top 10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston metropolitan area. The lowest average weekly wage was reported in Cameron County, Texas (\$523), followed by the counties of Hidalgo, Texas (\$532), Horry, S.C. (\$534), Webb, Texas (\$554), and Yakima, Wash. (\$587).

### **Large County Wage Changes**

Of Pennsylvania's 19 large counties, 8 recorded wage growth above the national increase of 2.4 percent from the first quarter of 2007 to the first quarter of 2008. After Westmoreland County's 14.9-percent wage growth was Butler County's 6.1-percent gain, which ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in the nation. The other six counties with higher-than-average wage growth were Northampton (3.9 percent/70<sup>th</sup>), Delaware (3.7 percent/80<sup>th</sup>), Washington (3.5 percent/97<sup>th</sup>), York (3.3 percent/112<sup>th</sup>), Lancaster (2.8 percent/151<sup>st</sup>), and Philadelphia (2.6 percent/163<sup>rd</sup>). Four of the eight counties registered wage gains that were among the highest one-fourth of large counties in the United States.

Luzerne County was the only county in Pennsylvania to record a decline (-0.7 percent) in average weekly wages, ranking it 308<sup>th</sup> in the nation. Chester County, at 0.3 percent (283<sup>rd</sup>), reported the lowest percentage increase in average weekly wages in the Commonwealth in the first quarter of 2008, followed by the counties of Allegheny (0.5 percent/276<sup>th</sup>), Lehigh (0.7 percent/267<sup>th</sup>), and Montgomery (1.0 percent/253<sup>rd</sup>). These five counties ranked in the bottom one-fourth in wage growth nationwide.

As noted earlier, Westmoreland, Pa., led the nation in average weekly wage growth, with an increase of 14.9 percent from the first quarter of 2007. Williamson, Texas, was second at 10.8 percent, followed by the counties of Somerset, N.J. (9.0 percent), San Luis Obispo, Calif. (8.3 percent), and Jefferson, Texas (7.9 percent).

Thirty-four large counties experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages. Trumbull, Ohio, had the largest decrease (-17.2 percent), followed by the counties of Saginaw, Mich. (-4.4 percent), Rockingham, N.H. (-3.9 percent), Fairfield, Conn. (-3.8 percent), and Mecklenburg, N.C. (-3.4 percent).

### **Wage Levels in Pennsylvania's Smaller Counties**

As mentioned, all but 1 of the 48 counties in Pennsylvania with employment below 75,000 had average weekly wages below the national level. Susquehanna County reported the lowest wage level among Pennsylvania's 48 small counties, at \$479. The highest wage among these small counties was Montour County's \$909, followed by Greene County's \$852.

Five of the Commonwealth's 19 large counties recorded higher wage levels than Montour County, but none recorded lower wages than Susquehanna County. When all 67 counties in Pennsylvania are considered, just two—Susquehanna and Sullivan—had wages below \$500. Both of these two counties were located in the northeastern part of the Commonwealth. Three other counties—Montgomery, Chester, and Philadelphia—had wages above \$1,000. All three of these counties were located in the Philadelphia metropolitan area, in the southeastern part of the Commonwealth. Forty-three, or nearly two-thirds, of the counties in Pennsylvania reported average weekly wages from \$501 to \$700 in the first quarter of 2008. (See chart 1.)

### **State Average Weekly Wages**

The average weekly wage in Pennsylvania was \$869, \$36 below the nationwide level, ranking 15<sup>th</sup> highest among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. (See table 3.) Nationally, 8 of the 12 areas with above-average weekly wage levels were located in a contiguous band along the east coast, stretching from Massachusetts to Virginia. The five highest average wages were in the District of Columbia (\$1,488), New York (\$1,399), Connecticut (\$1,254), Massachusetts (\$1,143), and New Jersey (\$1,133). Average weekly wages in this group were 25 percent or more above that for the nation. At the other end of the scale, seven states had wage levels 75 percent or less of national earnings: Montana (\$625), South Dakota (\$632), Mississippi (\$634), Idaho (\$635), North Dakota (\$652), Arkansas (\$667), and West Virginia (\$679).

Wyoming experienced wage growth of 6.7 percent from the first quarter of 2007 to the first quarter of 2008, higher than any other state. North Dakota was second with 6.2-percent growth, followed by South Dakota at 5.2 percent. One state, Connecticut, experienced an over-the-year decline (-0.6 percent). Two other states, Delaware and New York, remained virtually unchanged, each up 0.1 percent. Pennsylvania's average wage growth equaled the nation's 2.4-percent advance.

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 134.8 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/](http://www.bls.gov/cew/); however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised (see Note below) and will 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 2006 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 2007 version of this news release. As with the 2005 edition, this edition includes the data on a CD for enhanced access and usability with the printed booklet containing selected graphic representations of QCEW data; the data tables themselves have been published exclusively in electronic formats as PDFs. Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2006 is available in a PDF on the BLS Web site at [www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn06.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn06.htm). Also, the quarterly press release, County Employment and Wages, presents employment and wage data for the largest counties in the U.S. and is available at [www.bls.gov/cew/](http://www.bls.gov/cew/).

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 Mid-Atlantic Information Office at 215-597-3282 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. ET.

QCEW-based news releases issued by other regional offices have been placed at one convenient Web site location, [www.bls.gov/cew/cewregional.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewregional.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<sup>1</sup> employment and wages in the United States and the 19 largest counties in Pennsylvania, first quarter 2008<sup>2</sup>**

Area	Employment		Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	March 2008 (thousands)	Percent change, March 2007-08(5)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (4)	Percent change, first quarter 2007-08 (5)	National ranking by percent change (4)
United States (6)	134,761.1	0.4	\$905	--	2.4	--
Pennsylvania	5,608.8	0.5	869	15	2.4	34
Allegheny, Pa.	677.2	0.3	952	69	0.5	276
Berks, Pa.	167.9	0.2	770	198	2.4	184
Bucks, Pa.	262.0	0.5	849	131	2.3	192
Butler, Pa.	78.8	0.8	750	223	6.1	14
Chester, Pa.	241.7	2.0	1,118	36	0.3	283
Cumberland, Pa.	125.1	0.3	794	177	2.3	192
Dauphin, Pa.	180.0	0.1	842	135	1.4	233
Delaware, Pa.	209.1	0.6	959	65	3.7	80
Erie, Pa.	125.4	-1.1	683	291	2.4	184
Lackawanna, Pa.	100.4	-0.9	645	315	2.4	184
Lancaster, Pa.	227.3	0.7	729	252	2.8	151
Lehigh, Pa.	176.4	0.2	872	116	0.7	267
Luzerne, Pa.	140.2	0.0	674	301	-0.7	308
Montgomery, Pa.	486.3	1.0	1,189	21	1.0	253
Northampton, Pa.	99.2	0.8	772	195	3.9	70
Philadelphia, Pa.	630.8	-0.3	1,064	44	2.6	163
Washington, Pa.	78.1	1.2	762	208	3.5	97
Westmoreland, Pa.	133.6	-0.5	757	214	14.9	1
York, Pa.	176.3	0.6	759	211	3.3	112

<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 the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

<sup>5</sup> Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

<sup>6</sup> Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

**Table 2. Covered<sup>1</sup> employment and wages in the United States and all of the counties in Pennsylvania, first quarter 2008<sup>2</sup>**

Area	Employment March 2008 (thousands)	Average weekly wage <sup>3</sup>
United States (4)	134,761.1	\$905
Pennsylvania	5,608.8	869
Adams	34.6	633
Allegheny	677.2	952
Armstrong	18.3	686
Beaver	56.1	718
Bedford	15.5	545
Berks	167.9	770
Blair	58.9	621
Bradford	21.1	684
Bucks	262.0	849
Butler	78.8	750
Cambria	58.5	603
Cameron	2.5	579
Carbon	16.8	550
Centre	65.4	723
Chester	241.7	1,118
Clarion	14.5	566
Clearfield	30.6	592
Clinton	12.8	597
Columbia	25.0	623
Crawford	31.0	621
Cumberland	125.1	794
Dauphin	180.0	842
Delaware	209.1	959
Elk	15.4	639
Erie	125.4	683
Fayette	41.9	575
Forest	2.3	628
Franklin	58.2	659
Fulton	5.2	694
Greene	12.7	852
Huntingdon	13.2	601
Indiana	32.8	706
Jefferson	16.2	593
Juniata	6.3	533
Lackawanna	100.4	645
Lancaster	227.3	729
Lawrence	30.1	656
Lebanon	47.6	637
Lehigh	176.4	872

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

**Table 2. Covered<sup>1</sup> employment and wages in the United States and all of the counties in Pennsylvania, first quarter 2008<sup>2</sup> (continued)**

Area	Employment March 2008 (thousands)	Average weekly wage <sup>3</sup>
Luzerne	140.2	674
Lycoming	51.9	637
Mc Kean	17.3	654
Mercer	48.5	636
Mifflin	15.5	589
Monroe	58.6	707
Montgomery	486.3	1,189
Montour	14.3	909
Northampton	99.2	772
Northumberland	29.8	622
Perry	8.0	505
Philadelphia	630.8	1,064
Pike	10.5	544
Potter	5.4	655
Schuylkill	51.9	617
Snyder	15.9	574
Somerset	25.7	583
Sullivan	1.5	488
Susquehanna	8.9	479
Tioga	12.5	579
Union	16.4	656
Venango	20.3	625
Warren	14.9	651
Washington	78.1	762
Wayne	14.9	584
Westmoreland	133.6	757
Wyoming	9.3	700
York	176.3	759

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

**Table 3. Covered<sup>1</sup> employment and wages by state, first quarter 2008<sup>2</sup>**

State	Employment		Average weekly wage (3)			
	March 2008 (thousands)	Percent change, March 2007-08	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, first quarter 2007-08	National ranking by percent change
United States (4)	134,761.1	0.4	\$905	-	2.4	-
Alabama	1,947.0	-0.2	740	34	3.2	27
Alaska	303.0	1.0	866	16	4.2	11
Arizona	2,639.7	-1.3	820	22	2.4	34
Arkansas	1,178.4	-0.1	667	46	4.1	12
California	15,561.5	0.1	1,008	6	2.1	41
Colorado	2,300.0	1.7	920	10	3.6	16
Connecticut	1,683.9	1.2	1,254	3	-0.6	51
Delaware	418.4	0.5	987	7	0.1	49
District of Columbia	680.8	1.1	1,488	1	4.3	9
Florida	7,918.6	-2.2	777	26	1.8	43
Georgia	4,060.9	0.1	847	20	1.3	44
Hawaii	628.1	0.2	773	28	3.5	19
Idaho	645.3	0.2	635	48	0.3	48
Illinois	5,796.1	0.1	980	8	2.6	33
Indiana	2,858.7	-0.7	757	33	2.4	34
Iowa	1,469.8	0.9	710	40	3.6	16
Kansas	1,363.2	1.0	737	35	2.4	34
Kentucky	1,794.0	0.1	714	39	2.4	34
Louisiana	1,887.3	1.3	765	30	4.8	4
Maine	584.1	0.5	701	42	3.5	19
Maryland	2,530.3	0.0	963	9	2.8	31
Massachusetts	3,203.1	0.9	1,143	4	3.3	23
Michigan	4,058.8	-1.8	857	18	0.9	47
Minnesota	2,644.8	0.6	908	12	4.0	13
Mississippi	1,138.2	0.8	634	49	3.3	23
Missouri	2,708.0	0.0	768	29	3.5	19
Montana	432.4	0.9	625	51	4.3	9
Nebraska	912.2	1.4	687	44	3.2	27
Nevada	1,266.3	-1.2	839	21	4.7	5
New Hampshire	621.2	0.3	863	17	3.4	22
New Jersey	3,939.9	0.5	1,133	5	3.3	23
New Mexico	823.8	0.6	717	38	4.7	5
New York	8,555.0	1.3	1,399	2	0.1	49
North Carolina	4,069.1	0.9	788	24	1.3	44
North Dakota	343.3	2.6	652	47	6.2	2
Ohio	5,189.1	-1.0	798	23	1.0	46
Oklahoma	1,560.0	1.6	707	41	4.7	5
Oregon	1,713.1	0.3	776	27	2.9	30
Pennsylvania	5,608.8	0.5	869	15	2.4	34
Rhode Island	464.8	-1.5	851	19	2.3	39
South Carolina	1,888.3	0.1	695	43	2.8	31
South Dakota	389.4	2.0	632	50	5.2	3
Tennessee	2,746.4	0.6	761	31	3.3	23
Texas	10,420.8	2.8	903	13	3.6	16
Utah	1,220.2	1.4	718	37	3.2	27
Vermont	300.8	-0.3	735	36	4.4	8
Virginia	3,653.5	0.2	918	11	2.0	42
Washington	2,928.6	2.1	899	14	3.7	15
West Virginia	700.3	0.3	679	45	4.0	13
Wisconsin	2,734.3	0.2	760	32	2.2	40
Wyoming	277.2	2.9	779	25	6.7	1
Puerto Rico	1,004.5	-1.6	489	(5)	2.7	(5)
Virgin Islands	46.5	1.1	708	(5)	3.4	(5)

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

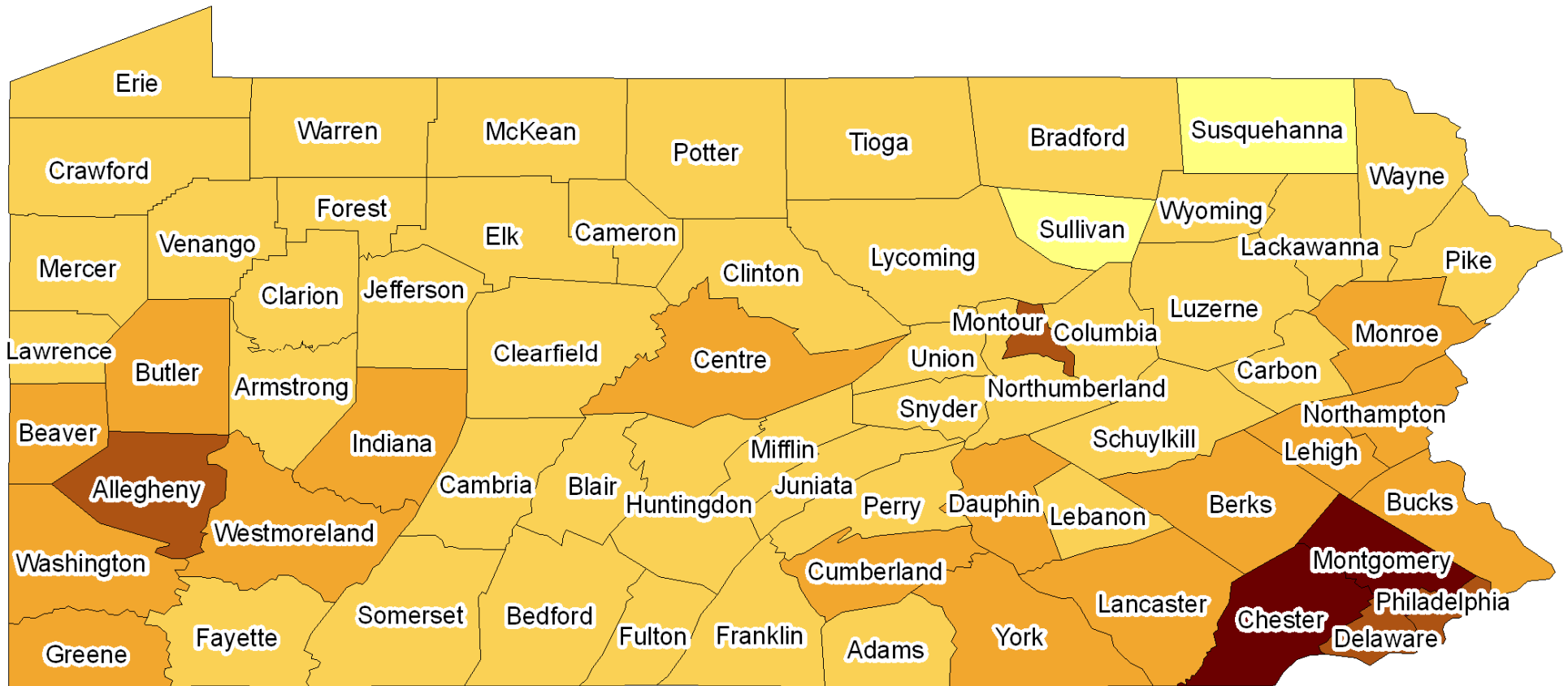
<sup>2</sup> Data are preliminary.

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

<sup>4</sup> Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

<sup>5</sup> Data not included in the national ranking.

Chart 1. Average weekly wages by county in Pennsylvania, first quarter 2008



**Average weekly wages  
(National average = \$905)**

