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FOR RELEASE:
June 10, 2009

OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN NEW ORLEANS-METAIRIE-KENNER: MAY 2008

Workers in the New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner Metropolitan Statistical Area had an average (mean) hourly wage of \$18.26 during May 2008, roughly 10 percent below the nationwide average of \$20.32, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) of the U.S. Department of Labor. Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that, after testing for statistical significance, wages in the local area were measurably lower than their respective national averages in 19 of the 22 major occupational groups. Only two groups, one of which was production, had significantly higher wages. (For a comprehensive definition of the New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner Metropolitan Statistical Area, please see Technical Note; this area is referred to as New Orleans throughout this release.)

When compared to the nationwide distribution, local employment was more highly concentrated in 8 of the 22 occupational groups including food preparation and serving related; construction and extraction; and transportation and material moving. Conversely, eight groups had employment shares significantly below their national representation; included in this group were education, training, and library, as well as production.

Table A. Occupational employment and wages by major occupational group, United States and the New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner Metropolitan Statistical Area and measures of statistical significance, May 2008

Major occupational group	Percent of total employment		Average hourly wage		
	United States	New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner	United States	New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner	
Total, all occupations	100.0%	100.0%	\$20.32	\$18.26	*
Management	4.6	4.8	48.23	41.17	*
Business and financial operations	4.5	3.8	31.12	26.08	*
Computer and mathematical science	2.4	1.2	35.82	28.87	*
Architecture and engineering	1.9	2.0	34.34	32.12	*
Life, physical, and social science	1.0	0.7	30.90	28.87	*
Community and social services	1.4	1.3	20.09	18.81	*
Legal	0.7	1.2	44.36	37.73	*
Education, training, and library	6.3	4.7	23.30	20.76	*
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	1.3	1.4	24.36	19.97	*
Healthcare practitioner and technical	5.2	5.7	32.64	29.99	*
Healthcare support	2.8	2.5	12.66	11.55	*
Protective service	2.3	3.1	19.33	15.79	*
Food preparation and serving related	8.5	9.7	9.72	8.92	*
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	3.3	3.1	11.72	10.12	*
Personal care and service	2.5	2.2	11.59	10.88	*
Sales and related	10.6	11.5	17.35	14.89	*
Office and administrative support	17.2	16.5	15.49	14.10	*
Farming, fishing, and forestry	0.3	0.1	11.32	15.39	*
Construction and extraction	4.8	5.9	20.36	18.08	*
Installation, maintenance, and repair	4.0	5.1	19.82	18.66	*
Production	7.3	5.4	15.54	18.38	*
Transportation and material moving	7.0	8.0	15.12	14.88	*

* Statistical significance testing at the 90-percent confidence level.

One occupational group, production, was chosen to illustrate the diversity of data available for any of the 22 major occupational categories. In New Orleans, 27,750 workers were employed in production jobs, accounting for 5.4 percent of local area employment, significantly less than the occupational group's representation nationally at 7.3 percent. However, the average hourly wage for local production workers was \$18.38, measurably above the national wage of \$15.54.

Welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers were the largest occupation within the production group with 3,760 employees, followed by first-line supervisors/managers of production workers and operating workers (2,240) and petroleum pump system operators, refinery operators, and gaugers (1,990). Four occupations had hourly wages exceeding \$25.00 led by chemical plant and system operators averaging \$29.39 and petroleum pump system operators, refinery operators, and gaugers at \$28.54; wages in both occupations were significantly above their respective national averages. At the lower end of the wage scale in production jobs were laundry and dry-cleaning workers (\$9.28) and meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers (\$8.00). (Detailed occupational data for production workers are presented in table B; for a complete listing of detailed occupations available go to www.bls.gov/oes/2008/may/oes_35380.htm.)

These statistics are from the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey, a federal-state cooperative program between BLS and State Workforce Agencies, in this case, the Louisiana Workforce Commission. The OES survey provides estimates of employment and hourly and annual wages for wage and salary workers in 22 major occupational groups and up to 801 non-military detailed occupations for the nation, states, metropolitan statistical areas, metropolitan divisions, and nonmetropolitan areas.

OES wage and employment data for the 22 major occupational groups in the New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner metropolitan area were compared to their respective national averages based on statistical significance testing. Only those occupations with wages or employment shares above or below the national wage or share after testing for significance at the 90-percent confidence level meet the criteria.

A value that is statistically different from another does not necessarily mean that the difference has economic or practical significance. Statistical significance is concerned with the ability to make confident statements about a universe based on a sample. It is entirely possible that a large difference between two values is not significantly different statistically, while a small difference is, since both the size and heterogeneity of the sample affect the relative error of the data being tested.

Table B. Employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey, for production occupations, New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2008

Occupation	Employment ¹	Mean wages		Median hourly wages
		Hourly	Annual ²	
Production occupations	27,750	\$18.38	\$38,240	17.05
First-line supervisors/managers of production and operating workers	2,240	28.38	59,020	24.95
Structural metal fabricators and fitters	800	19.01	39,550	18.95
Team assemblers	800	13.59	28,260	13.02
Assemblers and fabricators, all other	510	17.54	36,480	17.98
Bakers	470	10.31	21,450	10.03
Butchers and meat cutters	620	11.46	23,840	11.21
Meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers	490	8.00	16,630	7.45
Food and tobacco roasting, baking, and drying machine operators and tenders	70	12.63	26,260	13.11
Food batchmakers	220	10.41	21,660	9.56
Food cooking machine operators and tenders	80	11.26	23,430	11.02
Extruding and drawing machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	60	14.93	31,050	16.17
Cutting, punching, and press machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	170	15.51	32,260	15.79
Grinding, lapping, polishing, & buffing machine tool setters, operators, & tenders, metal & plastic	³	11.48	23,880	11.15
Lathe and turning machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	60	14.72	30,630	13.97
Machinists	1,430	20.73	43,120	19.61
Molding, coremaking, & casting machine setters, operators, & tenders, metal & plastic	270	11.63	24,200	10.09
Welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers	3,760	19.18	39,900	18.63
Welding, soldering, and brazing machine setters, operators, and tenders	60	17.56	36,510	17.32
Metal workers and plastic workers, all other	80	12.62	26,250	11.80
Bindery workers	³	10.04	20,870	8.03
Job printers	³	13.68	28,450	11.79
Prepress technicians and workers	140	13.07	27,190	13.26
Printing machine operators	520	14.30	29,750	13.22
Laundry and dry-cleaning workers	1,190	9.28	19,310	8.97
Pressers, textile, garment, and related materials	240	10.90	22,670	10.93
Sewing machine operators	180	9.44	19,640	9.50
Tailors, dressmakers, and custom sewers	130	12.00	24,960	11.51
Upholsterers	³	13.83	28,770	12.88
Textile, apparel, and furnishings workers, all other	³	19.51	40,590	19.41
Cabinetmakers and bench carpenters	120	15.15	31,510	14.50
Furniture finishers	³	12.41	25,810	12.33
Stationary engineers and boiler operators	150	18.73	38,960	18.38
Water and liquid waste treatment plant and system operators	360	16.43	34,170	16.05
Chemical plant and system operators	700	29.39	61,120	29.17
Petroleum pump system operators, refinery operators, and gaugers	1,990	28.54	59,360	28.53
Plant and system operators, all other	270	21.28	44,250	19.99
Chemical equipment operators and tenders	320	26.65	55,440	27.66
Crushing, grinding, and polishing machine setters, operators, and tenders	210	16.34	34,000	15.03
Mixing and blending machine setters, operators, and tenders	120	20.04	41,680	20.36
Cutting and slicing machine setters, operators, and tenders	40	12.92	26,880	11.70
Furnace, kiln, oven, drier, and kettle operators and tenders	40	17.86	37,140	20.02
Inspectors, testers, sorters, samplers, and weighers	1,480	18.70	38,890	17.91
Jewelers and precious stone and metal workers	³	22.01	45,770	22.14
Dental laboratory technicians	160	15.32	31,870	13.59
Ophthalmic laboratory technicians	140	12.39	25,770	11.67
Packaging and filling machine operators and tenders	760	15.03	31,260	14.88
Coating, painting, and spraying machine setters, operators, and tenders	170	14.33	29,800	14.37
Painters, transportation equipment	³	20.72	43,090	18.79
Photographic processing machine operators	200	10.05	20,910	10.03
Helpers--production workers	1,200	12.59	26,190	12.49
Production workers, all other	1,910	16.53	34,390	15.60

¹ Estimates for detailed occupations do not sum to the totals because the totals include occupations not shown separately. Estimates do not include self-employed workers.

² Annual wages have been calculated by multiplying the hourly mean wage by a 'year-round, full-time' hours figure of 2,080 hours; for those occupations where there is not an hourly mean wage published, the annual wage has been directly calculated from the reported survey data.

³ Estimate not released.

Technical Note

The Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey is a semiannual mail survey measuring occupational employment and wage rates for wage and salary workers in nonfarm establishments in the United States. Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands also are surveyed, but their data are not included in this release. OES estimates are constructed from a sample of about 1.2 million establishments. Forms are mailed to approximately 200,000 establishments in May and November of each year for a 3-year period. The nationwide response rate for the May 2008 estimates is 78.2 percent based on establishments and 74.3 percent based on employment. The survey included establishments sampled in the May 2008, November 2007, May 2007, November 2006, May 2006, and November 2005 semiannual panels. The sample in the New Orleans Metropolitan Statistical Area included 4,320 establishments with a response rate of 74 percent. For more information about OES concepts and methodology, go to <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.tn.htm>

Metropolitan Statistical Area definition

The substate area data published in this release reflect the standards and definitions established by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, dated December 2005.

New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner Metropolitan Statistical Area consists of consists of Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John the Baptist and St. Tammany Parishes in Louisiana.

Additional information

OES data are available on our regional web page at www.bls.gov/ro6/home.htm. If you have additional questions, contact the Southwest Economic Analysis and Information Unit at 972-850-4800. 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.

NOTE: Effective with this news release, the Occupational Employment Statistics program has switched the basis for their industry classification from the 2002 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) to the 2007 NAICS. Historical data were not revised.
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