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COUNTY EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN ARKANSAS FOURTH QUARTER 2008

Employment declined in the three largest counties in Arkansas from December 2007 to December 2008. (Large counties are defined as those with employment of 75,000 or more as measured by 2007 annual average employment.) Washington County had the largest decrease, down 2.4 percent, closely followed by Benton where employment fell 2.2 percent. Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that Pulaski County experienced a slower rate of job loss, declining 1.2 percent over the year.

In comparison, employment nationwide fell 2.3 percent during the 12-month period as 285 of the 334 largest U.S. counties registered declines. Elkhart County, Ind., recorded the largest over-the-year percentage decrease in employment in the country, down 17.8 percent, while Montgomery County, Texas, experienced the fastest growth, up 2.7 percent.

Among the three largest counties in Arkansas, employment was highest in Pulaski County (250,300) in December 2008. The two other large Arkansas counties, Benton and Washington, had employment levels below 100,000. Employment in the three large counties accounted for 37.3 percent of the State's total employment. Nationwide, the 334 largest counties made up 71.5 percent of total U.S. employment.

From the fourth quarter of 2007 to the fourth quarter of 2008, Benton County recorded the fastest rate of increase in average weekly wages among Arkansas' largest counties, registering a gain of 6.3 percent. (See table 1.) Pulaski County had the highest wage level among the three large counties at \$847 per week. Nationally, the average weekly wage increased 2.2 percent over the year to \$918 in the fourth quarter of 2008.

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 72 counties in Arkansas with employment levels below 75,000. All of the smaller counties had wage levels below the national average, but two -- Little River and Calhoun -- had average weekly wages above the State's largest counties. (See table 2.)

Large County Wage Changes

Benton County's 6.3-percent wage gain from the fourth quarter of 2007 to the fourth quarter of 2008 far surpassed the national average of 2.2 percent and ranked 15th among the nation's largest counties. (See table 1.) Washington County registered a 2.2-percent wage increase during the period, matching the national average and ranking 181st. In contrast, Pulaski County's 14.3-percent decline was the largest in both the State and the nation. A year-ago, Pulaski County ranked first in the country in wage growth.

Nationwide, 180 large counties experienced higher over-the-year wage gains than the U.S. average. St. Louis City, Mo., ranked first in wage growth, with an increase of 56.8 percent coming predominantly from the professional and business services and manufacturing supersectors. Clayton County, Ga., was second with wage growth of 9.9 percent. These two top-ranked areas were followed by Calcasieu and East Baton Rouge, La., and Jefferson, Texas, areas still recovering from previous hurricane-related losses.

Wage growth was below the national average in 137 large counties in the United States and 43 of these experienced over-the-year declines. As mentioned, Pulaski had the largest decrease in the nation and was the only county to experience a double-digit decrease (-14.3 percent). Pulaski was followed by the counties of Lake, Ill. (-9.9 percent), Santa Clara, Calif. (-7.8 percent), Douglas, Colo. (-5.9 percent), and San Mateo, Calif. (-5.4 percent).

Large County Average Weekly Wages

Despite Pulaski County's sharp over-the-year decline, its average weekly wage of \$847 was the highest among the three large Arkansas counties. Benton County closely followed at \$844, after its above-average wage gain. Both counties were within 10 percent of the national average (\$918) and ranked in the middle of the 334 large U.S. counties. Washington County's average weekly wages were notably lower (\$747) and ranked 277th.

There were 106 counties with an average weekly wage above the national average in the fourth quarter of 2008. New York, N.Y., held the top position among the highest-paid large counties with an average weekly wage of \$1,856. Fairfield, Conn., was second with an average weekly wage of \$1,596, followed by Washington, D.C. (\$1,570), Suffolk, Mass. (\$1,568), and Santa Clara, Calif. (\$1,566).

More than two-thirds of the largest U.S. counties (228) reported average weekly wages below the national average. The lowest was reported in Hidalgo, Texas (\$574), followed by the counties of Horry, S.C. (\$581), Cameron, Texas (\$584), and Webb, Texas (\$600). Wages in these lowest-ranked counties were less than one-third of the average weekly wage reported for the highest-ranked county, New York.

Average Weekly Wages in Smaller Arkansas Counties

All 72 smaller counties in Arkansas, those with employment below 75,000, had average weekly wages lower the national average of \$918. However, two of these, Little River (\$880) and Calhoun (\$855), reported wage levels above the three largest Arkansas counties. Newton County reported the lowest weekly wage among the smaller counties, as well as the State, averaging \$425 in the fourth quarter of 2008. (See table 2.)

When all 75 counties in Arkansas were considered, 13 reported average weekly wages under \$500, 37 reported wages from \$500 to \$599, 17 had wages from \$600 to \$699, 4 had wages from \$700 to \$799, and 4 were above \$800 per week. (See chart 1.) The four top-paying counties included, or were near the areas of, Camden, Fayetteville, Little Rock, and Texarkana. The lower-paid counties, those with wages under \$500, were generally located along the western and northern borders of the State.

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 are also included on the CD which accompanies the hardcopy version of the Annual Bulletin. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2007* is available online as a chartbook or for sale 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 Dallas Information Office at 972-850-4800 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.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 133.9 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 3 largest counties in Arkansas, fourth quarter 2008 [2]

Area	Employment			Average Weekly Wage [3]			
	December 2008 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2007-08 [4]	National ranking by percent change [5]	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level [5]	Percent change, fourth quarter 2007-08 [4]	National ranking by percent change [5]
United States [6]	133,870.4	-2.3	--	918	--	2.2	--
Arkansas	1,168.2	-1.5	--	706	47	-1.0	50
Benton, Ark.	94.7	-2.2	160	844	168	6.3	15
Pulaski, Ark.	250.3	-1.2	92	847	164	-14.3	324
Washington, Ark.	90.9	-2.4	177	747	277	2.2	181

[1] Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) & Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

[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 reclassifications.

[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 counties in Arkansas, fourth quarter 2008 [2]

	Employment December 2008	Average Weekly Wage [3]	Area	Employment December 2008	Average Weekly Wage [3]
United States [4]	133,870,395	\$918	Lawrence	4,059	\$496
Arkansas-Statewide	1,168,162	706	Lee	2,143	521
Arkansas	10,040	662	Lincoln	2,992	543
Ashley	7,853	697	Little River	4,865	880
Baxter	14,551	596	Logan	5,800	543
Benton	94,662	844	Lonoke	12,630	573
Boone	13,839	617	Madison	3,200	517
Bradley	3,529	528	Marion	3,813	497
Calhoun	2,966	855	Miller	12,981	641
Carroll	9,959	501	Mississippi	19,461	723
Chicot	3,458	503	Monroe	2,272	507
Clark	9,860	539	Montgomery	1,569	488
Clay	3,977	514	Nevada	2,421	541
Cleburne	6,859	554	Newton	1,103	425
Cleveland	1,096	428	Ouachita	7,711	569
Columbia	9,100	686	Perry	1,431	601
Conway	7,081	610	Phillips	6,642	520
Craighead	42,952	658	Pike	2,803	512
Crawford	19,766	586	Poinsett	5,470	573
Crittenden	16,711	627	Polk	6,479	480
Cross	5,134	551	Pope	26,703	652
Dallas	3,424	539	Prairie	1,433	568
Desha	4,545	586	Pulaski	250,252	847
Drew	6,767	517	Randolph	4,923	474
Faulkner	39,326	690	St. Francis	8,279	595
Franklin	4,379	616	Saline	21,269	612
Fulton	2,013	455	Scott	3,020	510
Garland	36,543	592	Searcy	1,764	438
Grant	3,854	551	Sebastian	71,940	689
Greene	15,314	550	Sevier	5,579	491
Hempstead	7,984	576	Sharp	3,802	467
Hot Spring	7,543	607	Stone	2,931	453
Howard	7,611	539	Union	18,805	756
Independence	15,342	618	Van Buren	3,786	516
Izard	3,135	482	Washington	90,905	747
Jackson	5,571	588	White	25,325	691
Jefferson	32,730	715	Woodruff	1,990	539
Johnson	9,094	548	Yell	7,066	531
Lafayette	1,431	548			

[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, fourth quarter 2008 [2]

State	Employment		Average weekly wage [3]			
	December 2008 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2007-08	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2007-08	National ranking by percent change
United States [4]	133,870.4	-2.3	\$918	-	2.2	-
Alabama	1,909.8	-3.1	790	33	3.5	16
Alaska	303.9	1.6	927	14	5.7	4
Arizona	2,557.9	-5.1	848	23	2.7	25
Arkansas	1,168.2	-1.5	706	47	-1.0	50
California	15,288.5	-3.2	1,042	6	0.7	48
Colorado	2,295.8	-1.5	932	13	0.5	49
Connecticut	1,688.0	-1.7	1,164	3	1.2	44
Delaware	416.8	-3.0	943	10	1.9	36
District of Columbia	687.5	0.3	1,570	1	5.1	6
Florida	7,586.6	-5.3	824	26	1.6	39
Georgia	3,970.3	-3.5	853	21	2.3	33
Hawaii	614.7	-3.5	821	28	3.5	16
Idaho	634.1	-3.9	693	48	1.0	45
Illinois	5,795.8	-2.3	985	8	1.0	45
Indiana	2,831.3	-3.4	764	38	2.7	25
Iowa	1,483.7	-1.0	756	39	3.1	19
Kansas	1,370.2	-0.2	769	36	3.1	19
Kentucky	1,783.2	-2.6	754	41	3.0	21
Louisiana	1,907.5	0.1	829	25	5.9	3
Maine	595.3	-2.1	735	42	4.0	11
Maryland	2,531.8	-1.9	1,010	7	2.4	31
Massachusetts	3,239.6	-1.1	1,154	4	1.8	38
Michigan	3,993.3	-4.9	903	17	3.6	15
Minnesota	2,658.8	-1.9	907	16	2.6	27
Mississippi	1,117.2	-2.8	679	49	3.8	13
Missouri	2,700.9	-1.7	842	24	7.9	1
Montana	433.8	-1.5	678	50	2.9	23
Nebraska	923.1	-0.3	730	45	1.0	45
Nevada	1,206.5	-6.5	862	20	-1.1	51
New Hampshire	626.2	-2.0	936	11	2.2	34
New Jersey	3,927.7	-2.4	1,123	5	2.8	24
New Mexico	821.2	-1.2	768	37	3.9	12
New York	8,677.4	-1.0	1,169	2	1.4	40
North Carolina	4,003.8	-3.0	793	31	1.9	36
North Dakota	354.4	1.9	725	46	5.1	6
Ohio	5,167.5	-3.2	816	29	2.6	27
Oklahoma	1,559.8	0.0	755	40	4.9	8
Oregon	1,676.6	-3.7	808	30	1.3	43
Pennsylvania	5,645.8	-1.3	897	18	2.6	27
Rhode Island	464.3	-3.4	887	19	5.7	4
South Carolina	1,837.1	-3.5	731	44	2.1	35
South Dakota	395.2	0.4	663	51	2.5	30
Tennessee	2,695.7	-3.3	824	26	1.4	40
Texas	10,510.8	0.4	933	12	2.4	31
Utah	1,215.0	-2.1	770	35	1.4	40
Vermont	304.4	-1.7	774	34	4.3	9
Virginia	3,656.8	-1.3	953	9	3.3	18
Washington	2,885.0	-1.8	918	15	3.7	14
West Virginia	713.8	-0.1	735	42	7.1	2
Wisconsin	2,753.2	-1.9	793	31	3.0	21
Wyoming	284.5	1.5	850	22	4.3	9
Puerto Rico	1,028.5	-2.9	528	[5]	2.3	[5]
Virgin Islands	45.5	-1.4	731	[5]	-0.8	[5]

[1] Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) & 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 in Arkansas counties, fourth quarter 2008

