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EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS – FOURTH QUARTER 2009
St. Thomas' rate of employment loss smaller and rate of wage growth larger than for territory and U.S.

Employment in St. Thomas, the largest county in the Virgin Islands, stood at 23,300 in December 2009, after decreasing 2.7 percent over the year. Regional Commissioner Michael L. Dolfman noted that the county's employment decline was less than the 3.7-percent drop reported for the Virgin Islands as a whole over the same time period. For the United States, employment fell by 4.1 percent from December 2008. (See chart 1.)

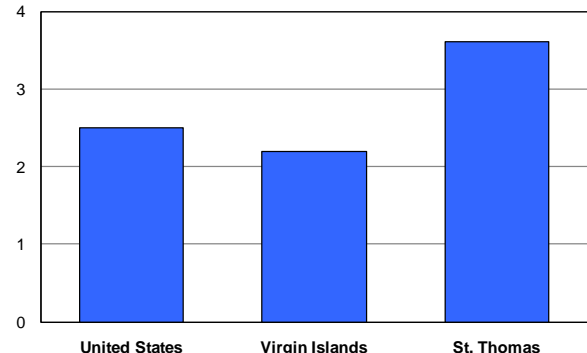
Between the fourth quarter of 2008 and the fourth quarter of 2009, average weekly wages in St. Thomas increased 3.7 percent, exceeding the territory-wide rise of 2.2 percent. In the United States, wages advanced 2.5 percent. (See chart 2.)

In the fourth quarter of 2009, weekly wages averaged \$696 in St. Thomas, \$50 less than the territory-wide average of \$746. The St. Thomas wage level was almost \$250, or 26 percent, below the U.S. average of \$942. Although lower than the United States' average, weekly wages in the Virgin Islands well exceeded the \$552 average in neighboring Puerto Rico.

Chart 1. Percent change in employment, United States, Virgin Islands, and St. Thomas, December 2008-09



Chart 2. Percent growth in average weekly wages, United States, Virgin Islands, and St. Thomas, fourth quarter, 2008-09



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-New Jersey Information Office's** main telephone number: **(646) 264-3600**. For recorded messages, press '2'.

Employment

In December 2009, employment in St. Thomas accounted for 53 percent of the territory's workforce. In the two other counties, workers on St. Croix numbered 18,300 (42 percent of the territory total) and on St. John, 2,200 (5 percent). In neighboring Puerto Rico, San Juan employment totaled 276,800, or 28 percent of the commonwealth's workers.

Over the year, employment in St. Thomas decreased 2.7 percent. Employment also fell in the largest counties of all 50 states and the District of Columbia, with the largest decline occurring in Wayne, Mich. (-7.1 percent). In addition to St. Thomas, the largest counties in 10 states and the District of Columbia experienced employment contractions of less than 3.0 percent. San Juan, Puerto Rico registered a 4.6-percent drop in employment from December 2008 to December 2009.

Wage levels

Among the three counties in the Virgin Islands, St. Croix recorded the highest average weekly wage, \$826, in the fourth quarter of 2009. St. Thomas followed with a weekly average of \$696, while St. John had the lowest wage, \$602.

Average weekly wages in the largest county in each of the states ranged from \$1,878 in New York, N.Y., to \$768 in Yellowstone, Mont. When the territories were also considered, the average wage in St. Thomas ranked second lowest among the largest counties. Only San Juan, Puerto Rico (\$653) ranked lower.

Over the year, average weekly wages in St. Thomas increased 3.7 percent. In 28 states and the District of Columbia, the largest county recorded wage growth exceeding the national average of 2.5 percent; no states recorded wage declines.

Additional statistics and other information

QCEW data for states have 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 2008 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 2009 version of the national news release. Tables and additional content from the 2008 Employment and Wages Annual Bulletin are now available online at www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn08.htm. These tables present final 2008 annual averages. The tables are included on the CD which accompanies the hardcopy version of the Annual Bulletin. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2008* is available for sale as a chartbook 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: 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 (646) 264-3600 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET.

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 9.1 million employer reports cover 128.3 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. Covered¹ employment and wages in the United States, the Virgin Islands, and St. Thomas, fourth quarter 2009²

Area	Employment		Average weekly wage ³	
	December 2009 (thousands)	Percent change December 2008-09 ⁴	Average weekly wage	Percent change, fourth quarter 2008-09 ⁴
United States ⁵	128,334.9	-4.1	\$942	2.5
Virgin Islands	43.9	-3.7	746	2.2
St. Thomas	23.3	-2.7	696	3.7

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 Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

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

Table 2. Covered¹ employment and wages, the United States, the Virgin Islands, and counties in the Virgin Islands, fourth quarter 2009²

Area	Employment December 2009 (thousands)	Average weekly wage ³
United States ⁴	128,334.9	\$942
Virgin Islands	43.9	746
St. Croix	18.3	826
St. John	2.2	602
St. Thomas	23.3	696

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. Covered¹ employment and wages by state, fourth quarter 2009²

State	Employment		Average weekly wage	Average weekly wage ³		
	December 2009 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2008-09		National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2008-09	National ranking by percent change
United States ⁴	128,334.9	-4.1	\$942	-	2.5	-
Alabama	1,819.9	-4.7	818	30	3.4	13
Alaska	302.4	-0.5	959	12	3.5	11
Arizona	2,406.2	-6.0	876	20	3.3	15
Arkansas	1,136.2	-2.8	725	47	2.5	29
California	14,476.4	-5.3	1,074	6	3.1	20
Colorado	2,183.6	-4.9	965	10	3.5	11
Connecticut	1,620.1	-4.0	1,192	2	2.3	34
Delaware	398.3	-5.0	960	11	2.1	39
District of Columbia	686.7	-0.1	1,614	1	2.7	25
Florida	7,208.9	-5.0	855	23	3.6	8
Georgia	3,773.5	-4.9	875	21	2.6	28
Hawaii	592.5	-3.7	843	25	2.7	25
Idaho	604.3	-4.7	708	48	2.2	37
Illinois	5,529.4	-4.6	1,008	8	2.3	34
Indiana	2,709.7	-4.3	781	38	2.2	37
Iowa	1,436.2	-3.3	771	40	2.1	39
Kansas	1,309.8	-4.4	792	37	2.9	21
Kentucky	1,726.2	-3.1	781	38	3.4	13
Louisiana	1,842.8	-3.5	833	27	0.4	49
Maine	579.0	-2.8	759	43	3.3	15
Maryland	2,462.9	-2.8	1,054	7	4.5	1
Massachusetts	3,142.5	-3.0	1,176	4	1.8	42
Michigan	3,767.7	-5.6	913	18	1.1	47
Minnesota	2,559.4	-3.8	928	17	2.3	34
Mississippi	1,076.5	-3.7	697	49	2.7	25
Missouri	2,598.7	-3.8	816	32	-3.2	51
Montana	419.4	-3.3	695	50	2.5	29
Nebraska	896.6	-2.9	756	44	3.6	8
Nevada	1,123.2	-6.9	875	21	1.4	45
New Hampshire	605.8	-3.2	958	13	2.4	33
New Jersey	3,806.6	-2.9	1,143	5	1.6	44
New Mexico	787.0	-4.2	794	36	3.3	15
New York	8,445.4	-2.6	1,190	3	1.7	43
North Carolina	3,802.2	-5.0	818	30	3.2	18
North Dakota	353.6	-0.2	752	45	3.7	6
Ohio	4,911.8	-4.9	840	26	2.9	21
Oklahoma	1,486.4	-4.8	763	41	0.9	48
Oregon	1,593.3	-4.8	829	29	2.5	29
Pennsylvania	5,474.5	-3.1	931	16	3.8	4
Rhode Island	448.1	-3.5	912	19	2.9	21

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 3. Covered¹ employment and wages by state, fourth quarter 2009²--Continued

State	Employment		Average weekly wage	Average weekly wage ³		
	December 2009 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2008-09		National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2008-09	National ranking by percent change
South Carolina	1,748.6	-4.9	\$763	41	4.4	2
South Dakota	386.0	-2.4	688	51	3.8	4
Tennessee	2,572.3	-4.5	849	24	2.9	21
Texas	10,146.9	-3.5	944	15	1.2	46
Utah	1,158.1	-4.5	796	35	3.2	18
Vermont	296.4	-2.7	804	34	3.7	6
Virginia	3,551.6	-2.8	994	9	4.3	3
Washington	2,776.6	-3.7	952	14	3.6	8
West Virginia	693.6	-2.9	752	45	2.5	29
Wisconsin	2,634.2	-4.4	810	33	2.1	39
Wyoming	266.9	-6.3	831	28	-2.2	50
Puerto Rico	977.6	-5.2	552	(⁵)	4.5	(⁵)
Virgin Islands	43.9	-3.7	746	(⁵)	2.2	(⁵)

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.

⁵ Data not included in the national ranking.