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OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN HICKORY-LENOIR-MORGANTON, MAY 2010

Workers in the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area had an average (mean) hourly wage of \$16.86 in May 2010, roughly 21 percent below the nationwide average of \$21.35, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that, after testing for statistical significance, wages in the local area were significantly lower than their respective national averages in 20 of the 22 major occupational groups, including management, healthcare practitioners and technical, and sales and related.

When compared to the nationwide distribution, local employment was more highly concentrated in 3 of the 22 occupational groups: production, transportation and material moving, and healthcare support. Conversely, 17 groups had employment shares significantly below their national representation, including office and administrative support, business and financial operations, and computer and mathematical. (See table A and box note at end of release.)

One occupational group—production—was chosen to illustrate the diversity of data available for any of the 22 major occupational categories. Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton had 26,780 jobs in production, accounting for 19.5 percent of local area employment, significantly higher than the 6.5-percent share nationally. The average hourly wage for this occupational group locally was \$14.57, measurably below the national wage of \$16.24.

With employment of 2,670, team assemblers was the largest occupation within the production group, followed by upholsterers (2,180) and production worker helpers (1,780). Among the higher paying jobs were first-line supervisors of production and operating workers and upholsterers, with mean hourly wages of \$22.46 and \$18.71, respectively. At the lower end of the wage scale were meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers (\$9.22) and laundry and dry cleaning workers (\$9.29). (Detailed occupational data for production are presented in table 1; for a complete listing of detailed occupations available go to www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_25860.htm.)

Table A. Occupational employment and wages by major occupational group, United States and the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area, and measures of statistical significance, May 2010

Major occupational group	Percent of total employment		Average hourly wage	
	United States	Hickory	United States	Hickory
Total, all occupations	100.0%	100.0%	\$21.35	\$16.86 *
Management	4.7	3.4 *	50.69	45.14 *
Business and financial operations	4.8	2.1 *	32.54	26.75 *
Computer and mathematical	2.6	0.7 *	37.13	28.96 *
Architecture and engineering	1.8	0.8 *	36.32	27.88 *
Life, physical, and social science	0.8	0.3 *	31.92	24.72 *
Community and social service	1.5	1.5	20.76	17.58 *
Legal	0.8	0.4 *	46.60	27.04 *
Education, training, and library	6.7	6.2 *	24.25	18.98 *
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	1.4	0.7 *	25.14	25.34
Healthcare practitioners and technical	5.8	5.4 *	34.27	31.51 *
Healthcare support	3.1	4.8 *	12.94	11.46 *
Protective service	2.5	2.4 *	20.43	14.95 *
Food preparation and serving related	8.7	8.3 *	10.21	9.07 *
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	3.3	2.2 *	12.16	10.50 *
Personal care and service	2.7	2.0 *	11.82	10.28 *
Sales and related	10.6	9.4 *	17.69	15.16 *
Office and administrative support	16.9	14.0 *	16.09	14.09 *
Farming, fishing, and forestry	0.3	0.2 *	11.70	14.38 *
Construction and extraction	4.0	2.4 *	21.09	16.07 *
Installation, maintenance, and repair	3.9	3.8	20.58	18.30 *
Production	6.5	19.5 *	16.24	14.57 *
Transportation and material moving	6.7	9.5 *	15.70	14.49 *

* The percent share of employment or mean hourly wage for this area is significantly different from the national average of all areas at the 90-percent confidence level.

Location quotients allow us to explore the occupational make-up of a metropolitan area by comparing the composition of jobs in an area relative to the national average. (See table 1.) For example, a location quotient of 2.0 indicates that an occupation accounts for twice the share of employment in the area than it does nationally. In the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area, above average concentrations of employment were found in many of the occupations within the production group. For instance, upholsterers were employed at 66.5 times the national rate in Hickory, and sewing machine operators, at 11.0 times the U.S. average. On the other hand, laundry and dry-cleaning workers had a location quotient of 1.1 in Hickory, indicating that this particular occupation's local and national employment shares were similar.

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 North Carolina Labor Market Information Division. The OES survey provides estimates of employment and hourly and annual wages for wage and salary workers in 22 major occupational groups and nearly 800 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 Hickory Metropolitan Statistical 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.

NOTE: 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.

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 2010 survey was 78.2 percent based on establishments and 74.4 percent based on employment. May 2010 estimates are based on responses from six semiannual panels collected over a 3-year period: May 2010, November 2009, May 2009, November 2008, May 2008, and November 2007. The sample in the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area included 1,628 establishments with a response rate of 94 percent. For more information about OES concepts and methodology, go to www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.tn.htm.

The May 2010 OES estimates mark the first set of estimates based in part on data collected using the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system. Nearly all the occupations in this release are 2010 SOC occupations; however, some are not. The May 2012 OES data will reflect the full set of detailed occupations in the 2010 SOC. For a list of all occupations, including 2010 SOC occupations, and how data collected on two structures were combined, see the OES Frequently Asked Questions online at www.bls.gov/oes/oes_ques.htm#Ques41.

Area definitions

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

The **Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton, N.C. Metropolitan Statistical Area** includes Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties.

Additional information

OES data are available on our regional web page at www.bls.gov/ro4/home.htm. If you have additional questions, contact the Southeast Economic Analysis and Information Unit at (404) 893-4222. 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.

Table 1. Employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey, by occupation, Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2010

Occupation	Employment		Mean Wages	
	Level ^[1]	Location quotient ^[2]	Hourly	Annual
Production occupations	26,780	3.0	\$14.57	\$30,310
First-line supervisors of production and operating workers	1,660	2.8	22.46	46,720
Structural metal fabricators and fitters	60	0.6	16.54	34,400
Team assemblers	2,670	2.7	13.49	28,060
Assemblers and fabricators, all other	190	0.7	11.89	24,730
Bakers	290	1.9	13.77	28,640
Butchers and meat cutters	190	1.4	13.20	27,460
Meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers	180	1.0	9.22	19,180
Slaughtering and meat packers	130	1.3	8.63	17,950
Food batchmakers	[3]	[3]	11.35	23,610
Computer-controlled machine tool operators, metal and plastic	120	0.9	14.17	29,480
Forging machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	[3]	[3]	13.21	27,470
Cutting, punching, and press machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	260	1.3	13.25	27,550
Drilling and boring machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	140	5.6	12.86	26,740
Grinding, lapping, polishing, and buffing machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	40	0.5	12.92	26,880
Lathe and turning machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	150	3.5	17.78	36,990
Milling and planing machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	30	1.5	14.95	31,100
Machinists	660	1.7	15.53	32,310
Molding, coremaking, and casting machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	280	2.2	15.00	31,210
Multiple machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	350	4.7	14.11	29,340
Tool and die makers	100	1.3	16.94	35,230
Welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers	310	0.9	14.25	29,650
Heat treating equipment setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	50	2.4	15.59	32,430
Tool grinders, filers, and sharpeners	150	11.7	15.50	32,240
Printing press operators	240	1.2	17.89	37,210
Laundry and dry-cleaning workers	240	1.1	9.29	19,320
Pressers, textile, garment, and related materials	210	3.4	10.00	20,790
Sewing machine operators	1,750	11.0	14.47	30,100
Textile bleaching and dyeing machine operators and tenders	670	48.5	10.74	22,350
Textile cutting machine setters, operators, and tenders	280	17.2	13.71	28,510
Textile knitting and weaving machine setters, operators, and tenders	600	26.0	12.18	25,340
Textile winding, twisting, and drawing out machine setters, operators, and tenders	340	11.4	10.45	21,740
Extruding and forming machine setters, operators, and tenders, synthetic and glass fibers	[3]	[3]	11.48	23,880
Fabric and apparel patternmakers	210	32.1	17.95	37,340
Upholsters	2,180	66.5	18.71	38,910
Textile, apparel, and furnishings workers, all other	[3]	[3]	9.37	19,490
Cabinetmakers and bench carpenters	270	3.0	15.19	31,590
Furniture finishers	790	47.4	13.66	28,420
Model makers, wood	90	48.4	14.28	29,700
Sawing machine setters, operators, and tenders, wood	450	11.1	13.20	27,460
Woodworking machine setters, operators, and tenders, except sawing	880	13.3	12.48	25,960
Water and wastewater treatment plant and system operators	90	0.8	16.71	34,750
Grinding and polishing workers, hand	220	7.5	11.93	24,820
Mixing and blending machine setters, operators, and tenders	330	2.5	13.38	27,830
Cutters and trimmers, hand	710	37.9	15.97	33,220
Cutting and slicing machine setters, operators, and tenders	360	5.5	12.35	25,680
Extruding, forming, pressing, and compacting machine setters, operators, and tenders	230	3.2	13.92	28,950
Inspectors, testers, sorters, samplers, and weighers	1,390	3.1	13.85	28,800
Dental laboratory technicians	30	0.8	16.95	35,250

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 1. Employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey, by occupation, Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2010—continued

Occupation	Employment		Mean Wages	
	Level ^[1]	Location quotient ^[2]	Hourly	Annual
Packaging and filling machine operators and tenders	700	1.9	\$12.04	\$25,050
Coating, painting, and spraying machine setters, operators, and tenders	680	8.0	13.28	27,610
Painting, coating, and decorating workers	100	3.8	12.61	26,230
Photographic process workers and processing machine operators	70	1.2	10.84	22,540
Adhesive bonding machine operators and tenders	200	12.4	12.06	25,090
Paper goods machine setters, operators, and tenders	210	2.1	^[3]	^[3]
Tire builders	100	6.3	12.73	26,480
Helpers--production workers	1,780	4.2	12.48	25,970
Production workers, all other	420	1.7	13.96	29,030

[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] The location quotient is the ratio of the area concentration of occupational employment to the national average concentration. A location quotient greater than one indicates the occupation has a higher share of employment than average, and a location quotient less than one indicates the occupation is less prevalent in the area than average.

[3] Estimate not released.