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OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN TACOMA, MAY 2011

Workers in the Tacoma Metropolitan Division had an average (mean) hourly wage of \$22.36 in May 2011, about 3 percent above the nationwide average of \$21.74, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Regional Commissioner Richard J. Holden noted that, after testing for statistical significance, wages in the local area were significantly higher than their respective national averages in 12 of the 22 major occupational groups, including construction and extraction, healthcare practitioners and technical, and protective service. Five groups had significantly lower wages than their respective national averages, including legal; arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media; and computer and mathematical.

When compared to the nationwide distribution, local employment was more highly concentrated in 8 of the 22 occupational groups, including construction and extraction, healthcare practitioners and technical, and food preparation and serving related. Conversely, eight groups had employment shares significantly below their national representation, including production, management, and computer and mathematical. (See table A and box note at end of release.)

Table A. Occupational employment and wages by major occupational group, United States and the Tacoma Metropolitan Division, and measures of statistical significance, May 2011

Major occupational group	Percent of total employment		Mean hourly wage		
	United States	Tacoma	United States	Tacoma	Percent difference ¹
Total, all occupations	100.0%	100.0%	\$21.74	\$22.36 *	3
Management	4.8	3.5 *	51.64	51.39	0
Business and financial operations	4.8	3.9 *	33.05	30.42 *	-8
Computer and mathematical	2.7	1.5 *	37.85	33.35 *	-12
Architecture and engineering	1.8	1.1 *	37.08	36.36	-2
Life, physical, and social science	0.8	0.7 *	32.44	33.20	2
Community and social service	1.5	2.4 *	21.07	21.29	1
Legal	0.8	0.7	47.30	38.02 *	-20
Education, training, and library	6.6	7.3 *	24.46	23.89 *	-2
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	1.3	0.9 *	25.89	21.34 *	-18
Healthcare practitioners and technical	5.9	6.9 *	34.97	39.90 *	14
Healthcare support	3.1	3.0	13.16	15.97 *	21
Protective service	2.5	2.5	20.54	24.64 *	20
Food preparation and serving related	8.7	9.7 *	10.30	11.86 *	15
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	3.3	3.3	12.29	13.74 *	12
Personal care and service	2.8	3.4 *	11.84	12.87 *	9
Sales and related	10.6	10.6	18.04	17.54	-3
Office and administrative support	16.7	16.3	16.40	17.71 *	8
Farming, fishing, and forestry	0.3	0.1 *	11.68	17.36 *	49
Construction and extraction	3.9	5.1 *	21.46	27.00 *	26
Installation, maintenance, and repair	3.9	4.5 *	20.86	23.77 *	14
Production	6.5	5.0 *	16.45	19.30 *	17
Transportation and material moving	6.7	7.5 *	15.96	19.03 *	19

* 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.

¹ A positive percent difference measures how much the mean wage in Tacoma is above the national mean wage, while a negative difference reflects a lower wage.

One occupational group—healthcare practitioners and technical—was chosen to illustrate the diversity of data available for any of the 22 major occupational categories. Tacoma had 17,630 jobs in healthcare practitioners and technical, accounting for 6.9 percent of local area employment, significantly higher than the 5.9-percent share nationally. The average hourly wage for this occupational group locally was \$39.90, measurably above the national wage of \$34.97.

With employment of 6,140, registered nurses was the largest occupation within the healthcare practitioners and technical group, followed by licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses (1,800) and medical records and health information technicians (760). Among the higher paying jobs were obstetricians and gynecologists, and general internists, with mean hourly wages of \$109.48 and \$101.47, respectively. At the lower end of the wage scale were dietetic technicians (\$14.77) and medical records and health information technicians (\$17.52). (Detailed occupational data for healthcare practitioners and technical are presented in table 1; for a complete listing of detailed occupations available go to www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_45104.htm)

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 Tacoma Metropolitan Division, above average concentrations of employment were found in some of the occupations within the healthcare practitioners and technical group. For instance, surgeons were employed at 2.8 times the national rate in Tacoma, and family and general practitioners, at 2.4 times the U.S. average. On the other hand, respiratory therapists had a location quotient of 1.0 in Tacoma, 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 Washington Employment Security Department. 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 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 Tacoma Metropolitan Division 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 the national estimates. 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 2011 survey was 77.3 percent based on establishments and 73.3 percent based on employment. May 2011 estimates are based on responses from six semiannual panels collected over a 3-year period: May 2011, November 2010, May 2010, November 2009, May 2009, and November 2008. The sample in the Tacoma Metropolitan Division included 2,386 establishments with a response rate of 76 percent. For more information about OES concepts and methodology, go to www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.tn.htm.

The May 2011 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 **Tacoma, Wash. Metropolitan Division** includes Pierce County.

Additional information

OES data are available on our regional web page at www.bls.gov/ro9/home.htm. If you have additional questions, contact the San Francisco Economic Analysis and Information Unit at (415) 625-2270. 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, Tacoma Metropolitan Division, May 2011

Occupation ^[1]	Employment		Mean Wages	
	Level ^[2]	Location quotient ^[3]	Hourly	Annual ^[4]
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations	17,630	1.2	\$39.90	\$82,990
Chiropractors	60	1.2	30.53	63,500
Dentists, general	370	2.1	93.57	194,620
Dietitians and nutritionists	90	0.8	31.67	65,870
Pharmacists	560	1.0	53.62	111,520
Family and general practitioners	480	2.4	86.60	180,120
Internists, general	90	1.0	101.47	211,050
Obstetricians and gynecologists	*[5]	*[5]	109.48	227,710
Psychiatrists	90	1.9	92.63	192,670
Surgeons	230	2.8	*[7]	*[7]
Physicians and surgeons, all other	660	1.1	98.68	205,260
Physician assistants	310	1.9	45.86	95,390
Registered nurses	6,140	1.1	36.46	75,830
Occupational therapists	300	1.5	31.23	64,960
Physical therapists	330	0.9	33.67	70,030
Recreational therapists	90	2.2	21.05	43,780
Respiratory therapists	230	1.0	27.97	58,190
Speech-language pathologists	220	1.0	32.28	67,150
Veterinarians	140	1.3	41.24	85,770
Medical and clinical laboratory technologists	330	1.0	31.65	65,830
Medical and clinical laboratory technicians	210	0.7	19.56	40,680
Dental hygienists	480	1.3	38.88	80,880
Cardiovascular technologists and technicians	100	1.0	32.07	66,700
Diagnostic medical sonographers	130	1.2	34.48	71,710
Nuclear medicine technologists	80	1.9	38.34	79,740
Radiologic technologists and technicians	390	0.9	30.86	64,200
Emergency medical technicians and paramedics	130	0.3	31.68	65,890
Dietetic technicians	*[5]	*[5]	14.77	30,720
Pharmacy technicians	700	1.0	18.88	39,270
Surgical technologists	220	1.2	22.46	46,710
Veterinary technologists and technicians	210	1.4	17.90	37,220
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	1,800	1.2	21.98	45,720
Medical records and health information technicians	760	2.1	17.52	36,450
Opticians, dispensing	110	0.9	18.60	38,700
Orthotists and prosthetists	*[5]	*[5]	29.23	60,800
Health technologists and technicians, all other	320	1.6	25.64	53,330
Occupational health and safety specialists	190	1.6	34.50	71,770
Healthcare practitioners and technical workers, all other	110	1.0	24.79	51,570

[1] For a complete listing of all detailed occupations in Tacoma, see www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_45104.htm.

[2] 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.

[3] 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.

[4] 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.

[5] Estimate not released.

[7] This wage is equal to or greater than \$80.00 per hour or \$166,400 per year.