



NEWS RELEASE



SOUTHEAST INFORMATION OFFICE
Atlanta, Ga.

For release: Friday, July 13, 2012

12-1422-ATL

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COUNTY EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN NORTH CAROLINA – FOURTH QUARTER 2011

North Carolina's nine largest counties each reported employment gains from December 2010 to December 2011, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (Large counties are defined as those with employment of 75,000 or more as measured by 2010 annual average employment.) Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that employment increases ranged from 3.1 percent in Mecklenburg County to 0.8 percent in both Buncombe and Cumberland Counties. (See table 1.)

Nationally, employment increased 1.4 percent during the 12-month period, as 266 of the 322 largest U.S. counties gained jobs. Kern, Calif., posted the largest increase, with a gain of 5.3 percent over the year. Benton, Wash., experienced the largest over-the-year decrease in employment among the largest counties in the U.S. with a loss of 3.4 percent.

Among the largest counties in North Carolina, employment was highest in Mecklenburg County (565,500) in December 2011. Two other counties—Wake and Guilford—had employment levels exceeding 250,000. Together, North Carolina's nine large counties accounted for 52.6 percent of total employment within the state. Nationwide, the 322 largest counties accounted for 70.7 percent of total U.S. employment, which stood at 131.3 million in December 2011.

Cumberland County had the only increase in average weekly wages among North Carolina's largest counties from the fourth quarter of 2010 to the fourth quarter of 2011 with an increase of 0.5 percent. Three of the nine large counties experienced wage declines of at least 3.0 percent—Durham (-6.5 percent), Forsyth (-3.4 percent) and Mecklenburg (-3.3 percent). Durham County had the highest average weekly wage in the state at \$1,205, followed by the counties of Mecklenburg (\$1,047) and Wake (\$945). Nationally, the average weekly wage decreased 1.7 percent over the year to \$955 in the fourth quarter of 2011. (See table 1.)

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 91 counties with employment levels below 75,000 in North Carolina. Average weekly wages in these counties ranged from \$946 to \$504. (See table 2.)

Large county wage changes

Average weekly wages decreased in eight of North Carolina's large counties from the fourth quarter of 2010 to the fourth quarter of 2011. At 6.5 percent, Durham's wage decline ranked 316th among the nation's 322 large counties. Two other counties placed in the bottom quartile of the rankings—Forsyth (-3.4 percent, 267th) and Mecklenburg (-3.3 percent, 263rd). (See table 1.)

Nationwide, 282 large counties experienced declines in average weekly wages. Olmsted, Minn., had the largest wage loss (-21.3 percent). Douglas, Colo., had the second largest decrease (-8.6 percent), followed by Williamson, Tenn. (-6.7 percent).

Among the 322 largest U.S. counties, 36 had over-the-year increases in average weekly wages in the fourth quarter of 2011. Tulsa, Okla., had the largest average weekly wage increase with a gain of 8.6 percent, followed by the counties of Harford, Md. (5.8 percent), Lake, Ohio (4.9 percent), Snohomish, Wash. (3.0 percent) and Westmoreland, Pa (2.9 percent).

Large county average weekly wages

Durham and Mecklenburg Counties, with average weekly wages of \$1,205 and \$1,047, respectively, placed in the top third of the national ranking among the 322 largest U.S. counties in the fourth quarter of 2011. Wake (\$945) and Forsyth (\$853) fell in the middle third of the national ranking and the state's remaining five large counties fell in the bottom third.

Nationally, New York, N.Y., recorded the highest average weekly wage at \$1,889, followed by Santa Clara, Calif. (\$1,836), Washington, D.C. (\$1,668), Suffolk, Mass. (\$1,599), and San Francisco, Calif. (\$1,597).

There were 219 large counties with an average weekly wage below the U.S. average in the fourth quarter of 2011. Horry, S.C. (\$569), reported the lowest wage, followed by the counties of Cameron, Texas (\$597), Hidalgo, Texas (\$601), and Yakima, Wash. (\$648).

Average weekly wages in North Carolina's smaller counties

Among the 91 counties in North Carolina with employment below 75,000, none registered an average weekly wage above the national average of \$955. Orange County (\$946) reported the highest weekly wage among the smaller counties, followed by the counties of Iredell (\$793) and Craven (\$782). Tyrrell County reported the lowest weekly wage in the state, averaging \$504 in the fourth quarter of 2011. (See table 2.)

When all 100 counties in North Carolina were considered, 27 reported average weekly wages under \$600, 51 reported wages from \$600 to \$699, 16 had wages from \$700 to \$799, and 6 had wages above \$800. (See chart 1.)

Additional statistics and other information

Quarterly 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/.

Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. The 2010 edition of this publication, which was published in November 2011, contains selected data produced by Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the first quarter 2011 version of the national news release. Tables and additional content from *Employment and Wages Annual Averages 2010* are now available online at www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn10.htm. The 2011 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* will be available later in 2012.

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.

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 131.3 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. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and the 9 largest counties in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2011 (2)

Area	Employment			Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	December 2011 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2010-11 (4)	National ranking by percent change (5)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (5)	Percent change, fourth quarter 2010-11 (4)	National ranking by percent change (5)
United States (6)	131,254.2	1.4	--	\$955	--	-1.7	--
North Carolina	3,885.9	1.3	--	824	33	-2.0	33
Buncombe, N.C.	113.0	0.8	179	734	295	-1.5	126
Catawba, N.C.	79.2	1.0	156	730	298	-0.3	54
Cumberland, N.C.	120.2	0.8	179	771	275	0.5	28
Durham, N.C.	182.4	1.6	97	1,205	25	-6.5	316
Forsyth, N.C.	174.4	1.2	130	853	188	-3.4	267
Guilford, N.C.	265.3	1.1	144	819	231	-2.4	212
Mecklenburg, N.C.	565.5	3.1	24	1,047	59	-3.3	263
New Hanover, N.C.	96.6	1.1	144	790	261	-1.9	167
Wake, N.C.	447.9	2.1	70	945	109	-1.6	137

(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) 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 North Carolina, fourth quarter 2011 (2)

Area	Employment December 2011	Average weekly wage (3)	Area	Employment December 2011	Average weekly wage (3)
United States (4)	131,254,162	\$955	Iredell	63,812	\$793
North Carolina	3,885,855	824	Jackson	11,614	628
Alamance	57,366	676	Johnston	42,433	662
Alexander	8,966	570	Jones	1,887	617
Alleghany	3,165	536	Lee	24,875	749
Anson	7,695	617	Lenoir	26,803	642
Ashe	7,266	590	Lincoln	19,685	656
Avery	6,322	538	McDowell	14,807	582
Beaufort	16,364	659	Macon	10,452	602
Bertie	6,576	598	Madison	3,797	521
Bladen	12,203	636	Martin	7,542	604
Brunswick	26,720	679	Mecklenburg	565,463	1,047
Buncombe	113,017	734	Mitchell	5,084	599
Burke	28,372	659	Montgomery	8,522	623
Cabarrus	63,312	678	Moore	31,178	724
Caldwell	23,961	620	Nash	40,926	695
Camden	2,196	769	New Hanover	96,632	790
Carteret	20,920	591	Northampton	5,044	617
Caswell	3,129	580	Onslow	47,185	603
Catawba	79,170	730	Orange	61,792	946
Chatham	13,528	673	Pamlico	3,044	586
Cherokee	7,670	571	Pasquotank	15,788	669
Chowan	4,644	688	Pender	9,161	618
Clay	1,930	556	Perquimans	1,793	542
Cleveland	32,459	657	Person	9,898	641
Columbus	15,434	612	Pitt	71,007	771
Craven	37,976	782	Polk	4,741	607
Cumberland	120,161	771	Randolph	44,978	630
Currituck	4,597	570	Richmond	13,584	591
Dare	15,294	609	Robeson	38,874	578
Davidson	39,764	644	Rockingham	26,434	633
Davie	9,342	618	Rowan	45,409	743
Duplin	19,116	614	Rutherford	17,741	609
Durham	182,410	1,205	Sampson	18,614	641
Edgecombe	18,341	729	Scotland	11,607	636
Forsyth	174,400	853	Stanly	18,221	602
Franklin	11,895	666	Stokes	6,808	568
Gaston	66,340	711	Surry	27,545	605
Gates	1,416	584	Swain	7,888	605
Graham	2,028	604	Transylvania	7,820	609
Granville	20,038	767	Tyrrell	1,157	504
Greene	4,533	569	Union	52,713	717
Guilford	265,312	819	Vance	14,251	654
Halifax	16,551	597	Wake	447,866	945
Harnett	21,750	606	Warren	3,496	604
Haywood	16,449	632	Washington	3,130	558
Henderson	33,685	680	Watauga	21,344	639
Hertford	8,990	655	Wayne	43,683	665
Hoke	7,666	531	Wilkes	21,185	616
Hyde	1,784	580	Wilson	36,977	743
			Yadkin	9,963	574
			Yancey	3,772	584

(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 2011 (2)

State	Employment		Average weekly wage (3)			
	December 2011 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2010-11	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2010-11	National ranking by percent change
United States (4)	131,254.2	1.4	\$955	--	-1.7	--
Alabama	1,828.3	0.2	832	31	-0.8	14
Alaska	311.3	1.6	982	11	-0.5	10
Arizona	2,458.4	1.7	882	21	-1.1	17
Arkansas	1,157.1	0.9	736	47	-1.2	19
California	14,731.8	1.3	1,100	6	-2.7	47
Colorado	2,250.1	2.1	975	13	-2.6	46
Connecticut	1,642.0	0.9	1,188	4	-3.1	49
Delaware	405.9	0.4	984	10	-1.6	26
District of Columbia	708.0	1.3	1,668	1	-1.2	19
Florida	7,364.1	1.4	847	29	-2.8	48
Georgia	3,826.9	1.0	885	20	-2.2	39
Hawaii	607.0	1.4	845	30	-1.5	23
Idaho	606.4	0.8	717	50	-2.2	39
Illinois	5,635.9	1.1	1,013	8	-2.1	35
Indiana	2,799.2	2.0	789	41	-1.9	32
Iowa	1,464.2	1.1	793	40	-0.8	14
Kansas	1,320.1	0.7	800	38	-1.5	23
Kentucky	1,770.2	1.3	786	42	-1.0	16
Louisiana	1,870.8	1.0	850	27	-1.7	28
Maine	580.9	0.4	755	46	-1.8	30
Maryland	2,516.4	1.1	1,058	7	-2.0	33
Massachusetts	3,230.8	1.3	1,192	3	-2.1	35
Michigan	3,911.8	2.4	933	18	-0.5	10
Minnesota	2,636.4	2.1	936	16	-3.9	51
Mississippi	1,083.8	0.3	699	51	-1.1	17
Missouri	2,617.0	0.8	825	32	-1.7	28
Montana	426.7	1.8	727	48	0.7	4
Nebraska	910.5	0.8	762	45	-1.3	21
Nevada	1,124.1	0.8	852	26	-3.2	50
New Hampshire	615.4	0.9	971	15	-0.7	13
New Jersey	3,811.6	0.6	1,138	5	-2.1	35
New Mexico	784.3	-0.3	799	39	-2.2	39
New York	8,618.4	1.4	1,197	2	-1.8	30
North Carolina	3,885.9	1.3	824	33	-2.0	33
North Dakota	397.0	7.6	871	23	7.7	1
Ohio	5,027.6	1.3	855	25	-1.3	21
Oklahoma	1,530.0	1.3	817	34	2.6	2
Oregon	1,629.8	1.2	850	27	-0.2	6
Pennsylvania	5,595.1	0.7	936	16	-1.6	26
Rhode Island	451.9	0.1	919	19	-2.1	35
South Carolina	1,796.1	1.3	763	44	-1.5	23
South Dakota	397.0	1.5	724	49	1.4	3
Tennessee	2,654.9	2.1	858	24	-2.3	42
Texas	10,607.9	2.4	973	14	-0.3	8
Utah	1,202.8	2.8	806	37	-2.5	45
Vermont	303.9	1.3	809	36	-0.5	10
Virginia	3,625.0	1.3	1,004	9	-2.4	43
Washington	2,843.6	1.4	979	12	-0.2	6
West Virginia	714.0	2.2	776	43	-0.3	8
Wisconsin	2,689.6	0.7	817	34	-2.4	43
Wyoming	276.9	2.3	876	22	0.6	5
Puerto Rico	960.9	0.1	552	(5)	-1.1	(5)
Virgin Islands	43.2	-4.0	772	(5)	-3.4	(5)

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

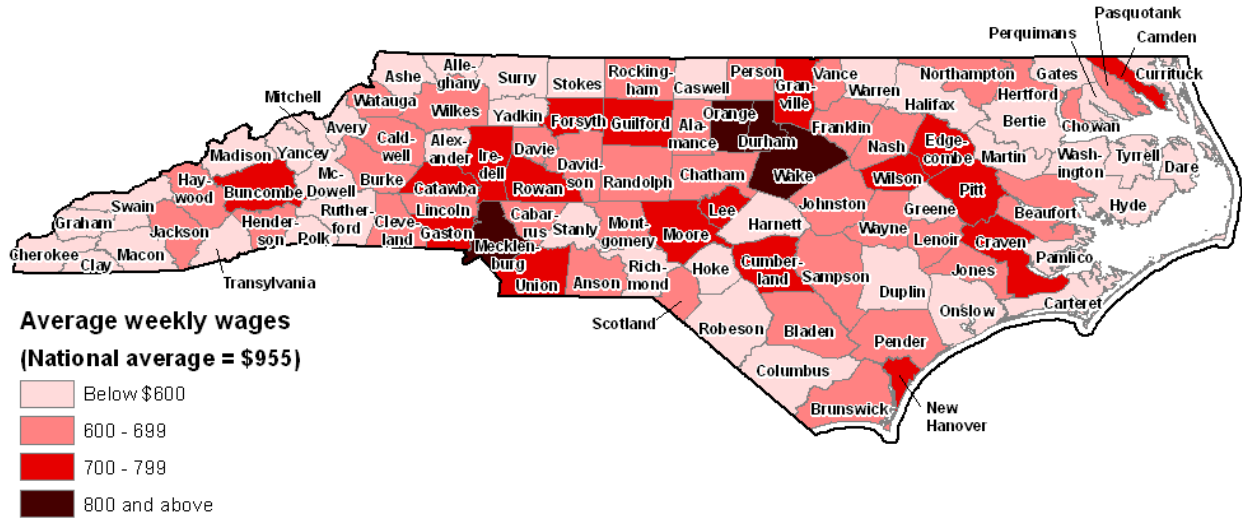
(2) Data are preliminary.

(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.

Chart 1. Average weekly wages in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2011



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics