

WEST INFORMATION OFFICE
San Francisco, Calif.

For release: Wednesday, May 30, 2012

12-1096-SAN

Technical information: (415) 625-2286
Media contact: (415) 625-2270

• BLSInfoSF@bls.gov

• www.bls.gov/ro9

OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN BELLINGHAM, MAY 2011

Workers in the Bellingham Metropolitan Statistical Area had an average (mean) hourly wage of \$20.71 in May 2011, about 5 percent below 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 11 of the 22 major occupational groups, including protective service, construction and extraction, and transportation and material moving. Seven groups had significantly lower wages than their respective national averages, including legal, computer and mathematical, and management.

When compared to the nationwide distribution, local employment was more highly concentrated in 3 of the 22 occupational groups: food preparation and serving related, sales and related, and construction and extraction. Conversely, five groups had employment shares significantly below their national representation, including management, transportation and material moving, and business and financial operations. (See table A and box note at end of release.)

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

Major occupational group	Percent of total employment		Mean hourly wage		
	United States	Bellingham	United States	Bellingham	Percent difference ¹
Total, all occupations	100.0%	100.0%	\$21.74	\$20.71 *	-5
Management	4.8	3.5 *	51.64	46.24 *	-10
Business and financial operations	4.8	3.7 *	33.05	31.34 *	-5
Computer and mathematical	2.7	1.6 *	37.85	31.05 *	-18
Architecture and engineering	1.8	1.8	37.08	40.21	8
Life, physical, and social science	0.8	0.7	32.44	28.84 *	-11
Community and social service	1.5	1.6	21.07	20.85	-1
Legal	0.8	0.5 *	47.30	28.95 *	-39
Education, training, and library	6.6	7.1	24.46	24.47	0
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	1.3	1.3	25.89	20.76 *	-20
Healthcare practitioners and technical	5.9	4.6	34.97	36.13	3
Healthcare support	3.1	2.7	13.16	14.98 *	14
Protective service	2.5	2.1	20.54	27.75 *	35
Food preparation and serving related	8.7	10.6 *	10.30	11.51 *	12
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	3.3	3.7	12.29	13.39 *	9
Personal care and service	2.8	3.4	11.84	13.07 *	10
Sales and related	10.6	12.3 *	18.04	15.34 *	-15
Office and administrative support	16.7	15.9	16.40	16.77 *	2
Farming, fishing, and forestry	0.3	0.4	11.68	17.74 *	52
Construction and extraction	3.9	5.5 *	21.46	24.61 *	15
Installation, maintenance, and repair	3.9	4.0	20.86	21.74 *	4
Production	6.5	7.4	16.45	18.06 *	10
Transportation and material moving	6.7	5.6 *	15.96	18.60 *	17

* 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 Bellingham is above the national mean wage, while a negative difference reflects a lower wage.

One occupational group—construction and extraction—was chosen to illustrate the diversity of data available for any of the 22 major occupational categories. Bellingham had 4,080 jobs in construction and extraction, accounting for 5.5 percent of local area employment, significantly higher than the 3.9-percent share nationally. The average hourly wage for this occupational group locally was \$24.61, measurably above the national wage of \$21.46.

With employment of 620, carpenters was the largest occupation within the construction and extraction group, followed by construction laborers (550) and plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters (430). Among the higher paying jobs were operating engineers and other construction equipment operators, and first-line supervisors of construction trades and extraction workers, with mean hourly wages of \$34.21 and \$31.95, respectively. At the lower end of the wage scale were glaziers (\$14.29) and septic tank servicers and sewer pipe cleaners (\$15.56). (Detailed occupational data for construction and extraction are presented in table 1; for a complete listing of detailed occupations available go to www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_13380.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 Bellingham Metropolitan Statistical Area, above average concentrations of employment were found in many of the occupations within the construction and extraction group. For instance, plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters were employed at 2.1 times the national rate in Bellingham, and construction and maintenance painters, at 2.0 times the U.S. average. On the other hand, operating engineers and other construction equipment operators had a location quotient of 1.0 in Bellingham, 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 Bellingham 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 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 Bellingham Metropolitan Statistical Area included 1,304 establishments with a response rate of 78 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 **Bellingham, Wash. Metropolitan Statistical Area** includes Whatcom 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, Bellingham Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2011

Occupation ^[1]	Employment		Mean Wages	
	Level ^[2]	Location quotient ^[3]	Hourly	Annual ^[4]
Construction and extraction occupations	4,080	1.4	\$24.61	\$51,180
First-line supervisors of construction trades and extraction workers	410	1.6	31.95	66,450
Carpenters	620	1.8	25.43	52,890
Cement masons and concrete finishers	120	1.6	21.66	45,060
Construction laborers	550	1.2	23.61	49,100
Operating engineers and other construction equipment operators	190	1.0	34.21	71,160
Drywall and ceiling tile installers	80	1.8	26.51	55,130
Tapers	30	3.8	23.26	48,380
Electricians	190	0.6	24.61	51,180
Glaziers	*[5]	*[5]	14.29	29,720
Painters, construction and maintenance	220	2.0	17.57	36,550
Pipelayers	70	2.9	29.06	60,440
Plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters	430	2.1	26.49	55,100
Roofers	180	3.2	20.19	41,990
Sheet metal workers	180	2.4	19.79	41,160
Structural iron and steel workers	*[5]	*[5]	27.18	56,520
Helpers--brickmasons, blockmasons, stonemasons, and tile and marble setters	*[5]	*[5]	22.06	45,890
Construction and building inspectors	50	1.0	29.96	62,320
Septic tank servicers and sewer pipe cleaners	*[5]	*[5]	15.56	32,370

[1] For a complete listing of all detailed occupations in Bellingham, see www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_13380.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.