

Issues in Labor Statistics



U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Summary 99-2 February 1999

The Southeast is Maintaining Its Share of Textile Plant Employment

The Southeast¹ employs more textile workers than all other regions in the United States combined. About 50 years ago less than half of the industry's workforce was in the Southeast. By 1967, over 70 percent of the Nation's textile workers were employed there, a proportion that has held steady since then.

Southeastern textile plants employed 438,300 workers, on average, in 1997 (see table). North Carolina dominated the industry with 29 percent of total U.S. textile industry employment—as much as the combined textile employment of all States outside the Southeast region.

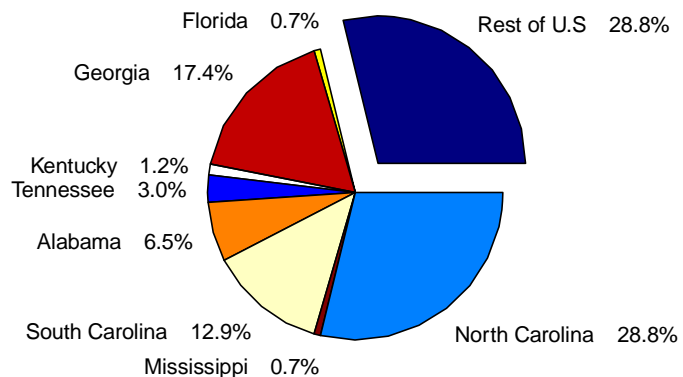
Despite the constancy in the share of textile employment in the Southeast over the past three decades, average employment declined from 1996 to 1997 by 12,400, or about 3 percent reflecting, perhaps, the continued movement of jobs to lower wage areas. North Carolina recorded the largest numerical decrease, 7,400 jobs, while Mississippi showed the largest numerical increase, 400 jobs. Kentucky had the largest percent decrease, 11 percent. Georgia, South Carolina, and Tennessee also recorded decreases over the year. Mississippi's employment increased 10 percent, while textile employment in Alabama remained stable.

Historically, earnings for textile workers in the Southeast have lagged behind the industry's national average. In 1997, their average hourly earnings in the Southeast rose 2.5 percent to \$9.86, whereas the U.S. average increased 3.5 percent to \$10.03. The average hourly earnings in the Southeast were 98 percent of national hourly rates. Textile plant employees in the Southeast worked an average of 41.5 hours per week in 1997, an increase of 1.5 percent over 1996. In comparison, average weekly hours for all U.S. textile workers rose 2.0 percent to 41.4. Florida reported average weekly hours of 42.9, the highest in the Southeast. Kentucky had the largest in-

crease in average weekly hours, rising 4.3 percent.

In 1997, average weekly earnings in the textile industry rose faster nationally than in the Southeast, resulting from faster growth for both average hourly earnings and average weekly hours. Southeast average weekly earnings rose 4.0 percent to \$409.19, while nationally textile industry earnings grew 5.5 percent to \$415.24. Florida continued to have the highest earnings in the Southeast. Both hourly earnings and weekly hours in Florida grew in 1997, resulting in weekly earnings of \$526.81. Among the southeastern States, Kentucky with wages traditionally below

Percent of textile employment, Southeastern States and rest of the United States, 1997



¹ The Southeast includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

the national average, continued to record the lowest average weekly earnings at \$384.40, despite increasing 11.6 percent in 1997.

Although the Southeast continues to maintain a large share of textile employment, the relative importance of the textile industry to the Southeast's total manufacturing employment has declined. From 1979 through 1997, manufacturing employment in the Southeast increased by 2.8 percent while textile employment declined by 27.9 percent. As a result, textile employment as a percent of overall manufacturing employment in the Southeast has dropped from 17 percent in 1979 to 12 percent in 1997.

Technical Notes

All data in this release are adjusted to the first quarter 1997 benchmark levels, and, therefore, are not comparable with data previously published. The data were compiled by State employment security agencies in cooperation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics. They relate to the total number of full-

and part-time textile workers in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Data are based on the *1987 Standard Industrial Classification Manual*. A brief technical description of statistics based on establishment records is presented in the explanatory notes of the monthly periodical, *Employment and Earnings*, a publication of the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

For additional information on employment trends in the Southeast, con-

tact the BLS Atlanta Regional Office at (404) 331-3415. Employment information on southeastern States is regularly updated on the Atlanta Regional Office Internet site, <http://stats.bls.gov/ro4home.htm>.

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Southeast textile employment, hours, and earnings, 1997

Area	Employment (in thousands)	Hourly earnings	Weekly hours	Weekly earnings
United States	615.5	\$10.03	41.4	\$415.24
Southeast	438.3	9.86	41.5	409.19
Alabama	39.9	9.73	42.3	411.58
Florida	4.4	12.28	42.9	526.81
Georgia	107.3	10.16	42.1	427.74
Kentucky	7.6	9.33	41.2	384.40
Mississippi	4.6	9.50	42.0	399.00
North Carolina	177.0	9.76	41.1	401.14
South Carolina	79.1	9.79	41.1	402.37
Tennessee	18.4	9.59	41.7	399.90

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