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COUNTY EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN TENNESSEE: FIRST QUARTER 2008

The average weekly wage in Shelby County increased 5.1 percent in the first quarter of 2008, the largest advance among Tennessee's 6 counties with 75,000 or more jobs as measured by 2007 annual average employment. Davidson County's 4.1-percent wage growth was the second fastest in the State according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. Williamson County had the highest average weekly wage level in Tennessee at \$939 followed by Davidson County (\$898) and Shelby County (\$883). Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that among the State's large counties, three recorded wage growth above the national rate of 2.4 percent, and one had wages above the national average of \$905. (See table 1.)

Among the six largest counties in Tennessee, employment was highest in Shelby County (502,600) and lowest in Williamson County (87,000). Four large counties—Knox, Williamson, Rutherford, and Hamilton—recorded employment gains greater than the 0.4-percent national average from March 2007 to March 2008. Shelby County was the only large county in Tennessee to record a decline (-0.2) in employment while Davidson County matched the national average growth rate.

Large County Average Weekly Wages

The average weekly wage levels in the counties of Williamson (\$939), Davidson (\$898), and Shelby (\$833) placed in the top third of the national rankings among the 334 largest counties in the United States. Williamson County's average weekly wage ranked 74th; Davidson, 91st; and Shelby, 108th. As noted, the only large county in Tennessee to exceed the \$905 national average weekly wage was Williamson County.

The average weekly wages in Tennessee's three remaining large counties placed in the bottom half of the national rankings—Hamilton (\$742/235th), Rutherford (\$741/237th), and Knox (\$711, 271st).

Average weekly wages were higher than the national average in 92 of the largest 334 U.S. counties. New York County, N.Y., recorded the highest average weekly wage at \$2,805. Fairfield, Conn., ranked second with an average weekly wage of \$1,905, followed by Somerset, N.J. (\$1,765), Suffolk, Mass. (\$1,708), and San Francisco, Calif. (\$1,639). Four of the top 10 counties with the highest wages in the U.S. were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y., Fairfield, Conn., Somerset, N.J., and Hudson, N.J.); 3 were located in or around the San Francisco metropolitan area (San Francisco, Santa Clara, and San Mateo, all in California); and 2 were located in

the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, Washington, D.C. and Arlington, Va. Rounding out the top 10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston metropolitan area.

Nationwide, 241 or 72 percent of the largest counties recorded an average weekly wage below the national level. The lowest average weekly wage was reported in Cameron, Texas (\$523), followed by the counties of Hidalgo, Texas (\$532), Horry, S.C. (\$534), Webb, Texas (\$554), and Yakima, Wash. (\$587).

Wage Changes in Large Counties

As noted, three counties in Tennessee exceeded the national increase in wages of 2.4 percent in the first quarter of 2008, ranking in the upper half in wage growth among the nation's 334 largest counties. Shelby County's 5.1 percent wage gain was the 26th highest in the nation and the largest increase in Tennessee. This was followed by Davidson County (4.1 percent, 60th) and Williamson County (2.8 percent, 151st). The remaining three counties ranked in the bottom half with lower-than-average wage growth. Hamilton County's 2.2 percent wage gain ranked 199th and Knox County, at 0.6 percent, placed 271st. Rutherford County (-1.9 percent, 317th) was the only county in the State to register a decline in their average weekly wage.

Among the largest counties in the nation, Westmoreland, Pa., ranked first in average weekly wage growth with an increase of 14.9 percent from the first quarter of 2007. Williamson, Texas, was second with 10.8-percent wage growth, followed by the counties of Somerset, N.J. (9.0 percent), San Luis Obispo, Calif. (8.3 percent), and Jefferson, Texas (7.9 percent).

Thirty-four counties experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages. The five largest decreases in wages occurred in the counties of Trumbull, Ohio (-17.2 percent), Saginaw, Mich. (-4.4 percent), Rockingham, N.H. (-3.9 percent), Fairfield, Conn. (-3.8 percent), and Mecklenburg, N.C. (-3.4 percent).

State Average Weekly Wages

The average weekly wage in Tennessee grew 3.3 percent from the first quarter of 2007 to the first quarter of 2008, ranking 23rd among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The average weekly wage in Tennessee, (\$761, 31st), was 16.0 percent below the \$905 national average, but was higher than neighboring Alabama (\$740, 34th), Kentucky (\$714, 39th), Arkansas (\$667, 46th) and Mississippi (\$634, 49th). Tennessee was lower than neighboring Virginia (\$918, 11th), Georgia (\$847, 20th), North Carolina (\$788, 24th), and Missouri (\$768, 29th). (See table 2.)

Across the country, the District of Columbia (\$1,488), New York (\$1,399), Connecticut (\$1,254), Massachusetts (\$1,143), and New Jersey (\$1,133) had the highest wage levels. At the other end of the scale, three states reported wages that were 30 percent or less than the nation: Mississippi (\$634), South Dakota (\$632), and Montana (\$625).

Wyoming led the United States in over-the-year wage growth with a gain of 6.7 percent. North Dakota was second with 6.2 percent wage growth, followed by South Dakota (5.2 percent), Louisiana (4.8 percent), and Nevada (4.7 percent). Connecticut (-0.6 percent) was the only state to experience an over-the-year decline in their average weekly wage. (See table 2.)

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 9.1 million employer reports cover 134.8 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 (see Technical Note below) and may not match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

Additional statistics and other information

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. The 2006 edition of this bulletin contains selected data produced by the Business Employment dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the first quarter 2007 version of this news release. This edition includes the data on a CD for enhanced access and usability with the printed booklet containing selected graphic representation of QCEW data; the data tables themselves will be published exclusively in electronic PDF formats at www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn06.htm. 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.

For personal assistance or further information on the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Southeast Information Office at 404-893-4222 from 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. and 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. ET. This release is available on the Atlanta BLS Web site at www.bls.gov/ro4/home.htm.

TECHNICAL NOTE

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 6 largest counties in Tennessee, first quarter 2008(2)

Area	Employment		Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	March 2008 (thousands)	Percent change, March 2007-08(5)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (4)	Percent change, first quarter 2007-08 (5)	National ranking by percent change (4)
United States (6)	134,761.1	0.4	\$905	--	2.4	--
Tennessee	2,746.4	0.6	761	31	3.3	23
Davidson, Tenn.	438.8	0.4	898	96	4.1	60
Hamilton, Tenn.	195.0	1.2	742	235	2.2	199
Knox, Tenn.	230.5	2.3	711	271	0.6	271
Rutherford, Tenn.	100.4	1.4	741	237	-1.9	317
Shelby, Tenn.	502.6	-0.2	883	108	5.1	26
Williamson, Tenn.	87.0	2.3	939	74	2.8	151

(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) Ranking does not include the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

(5) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

(6) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(7) Data do not meet BLS or State agency disclosure standards.

Table 2. Covered (1) employment and wages by state, first quarter 2008(2)

State	Employment		Average weekly wage (3)			
	March 2008 (thousands)	Percent change, March 2007-08	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, first quarter 2007-08	National ranking by percent change
United States (4)	134,761.1	0.4	\$905	-	2.4	-
Alabama	1,947.0	-0.2	740	34	3.2	27
Alaska	303.0	1.0	866	16	4.2	11
Arizona	2,639.7	-1.3	820	22	2.4	34
Arkansas	1,178.4	-0.1	667	46	4.1	12
California	15,561.5	0.1	1,008	6	2.1	41
Colorado	2,300.0	1.7	920	10	3.6	16
Connecticut	1,683.9	1.2	1,254	3	-0.6	51
Delaware	418.4	0.5	987	7	0.1	49
District of Columbia	680.8	1.1	1,488	1	4.3	9
Florida	7,918.6	-2.2	777	26	1.8	43
Georgia	4,060.9	0.1	847	20	1.3	44
Hawaii	628.1	0.2	773	28	3.5	19
Idaho	645.3	0.2	635	48	0.3	48
Illinois	5,796.1	0.1	980	8	2.6	33
Indiana	2,858.7	-0.7	757	33	2.4	34
Iowa	1,469.8	0.9	710	40	3.6	16
Kansas	1,363.2	1.0	737	35	2.4	34
Kentucky	1,794.0	0.1	714	39	2.4	34
Louisiana	1,887.3	1.3	765	30	4.8	4
Maine	584.1	0.5	701	42	3.5	19
Maryland	2,530.3	0.0	963	9	2.8	31
Massachusetts	3,203.1	0.9	1,143	4	3.3	23
Michigan	4,058.8	-1.8	857	18	0.9	47
Minnesota	2,644.8	0.6	908	12	4.0	13
Mississippi	1,138.2	0.8	634	49	3.3	23
Missouri	2,708.0	0.0	768	29	3.5	19
Montana	432.4	0.9	625	51	4.3	9
Nebraska	912.2	1.4	687	44	3.2	27
Nevada	1,266.3	-1.2	839	21	4.7	5
New Hampshire	621.2	0.3	863	17	3.4	22
New Jersey	3,939.9	0.5	1,133	5	3.3	23
New Mexico	823.8	0.6	717	38	4.7	5
New York	8,555.0	1.3	1,399	2	0.1	49
North Carolina	4,069.1	0.9	788	24	1.3	44
North Dakota	343.3	2.6	652	47	6.2	2
Ohio	5,189.1	-1.0	798	23	1.0	46
Oklahoma	1,560.0	1.6	707	41	4.7	5
Oregon	1,713.1	0.3	776	27	2.9	30
Pennsylvania	5,608.8	0.5	869	15	2.4	34
Rhode Island	464.8	-1.5	851	19	2.3	39
South Carolina	1,888.3	0.1	695	43	2.8	31
South Dakota	389.4	2.0	632	50	5.2	3
Tennessee	2,746.4	0.6	761	31	3.3	23
Texas	10,420.8	2.8	903	13	3.6	16
Utah	1,220.2	1.4	718	37	3.2	27
Vermont	300.8	-0.3	735	36	4.4	8
Virginia	3,653.5	0.2	918	11	2.0	42
Washington	2,928.6	2.1	899	14	3.7	15
West Virginia	700.3	0.3	679	45	4.0	13
Wisconsin	2,734.3	0.2	760	32	2.2	40
Wyoming	277.2	2.9	779	25	6.7	1
Puerto Rico	1,004.5	-1.6	489	(5)	2.7	(5)
Virgin Islands	46.5	1.1	708	(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.