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County Employment and Wages in North Carolina – Fourth Quarter 2018

Employment in 10 of North Carolina's 11 large counties increased from December 2017 to December 2018, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (Large counties are defined as those with 2017 average annual employment levels of 75,000 or more.) Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that employment increases ranged from 3.0 percent in Durham County to 0.6 percent in Guilford County. (See table 1.)

Nationally, employment advanced 1.5 percent from December 2017 to December 2018 as 296 of the 349 largest U.S. counties had increases. Midland, TX, had the largest over-the-year increase in employment with a gain of 10.0 percent. Bay, FL, had the largest over-the-year decrease in employment with a loss of 5.6 percent.

Among the 11 largest counties in North Carolina, employment was highest in Mecklenburg County (706,600) in December 2018, while Pitt County had the smallest employment level (78,700). Together, North Carolina's large counties accounted for 57.7 percent of total employment within the state. Nationwide, the 349 largest counties made up 73.2 percent of total U.S. employment, which stood at 148.1 million in December 2018.

Each of North Carolina's 11 large counties had over-the-year increases in average weekly wages in the fourth quarter of 2018, with the largest increase in Wake County (11.9 percent). Durham County had the highest weekly wage among the state's largest counties at $1,357, followed by Mecklenburg ($1,271), and Wake ($1,252). Nationally, the average weekly wage increased 3.2 percent over the year to $1,144. (See table 1.)

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 89 counties in North Carolina with 2017 average annual employment levels below 75,000. Average weekly wages in these counties ranged from $1,186 to $631. (See table 2.)

Large county wage changes

In the fourth quarter of 2018, 8 of the 11 large North Carolina counties had over-the-year average weekly wage gains that were at or above the 3.2-percent national average. Four of these counties placed in the top 50 of the national ranking: Wake (11.9 percent, 4th), Cumberland (6.8 percent, 15th), Durham (5.4 percent, 37th), and Buncombe (5.2 percent, 47th). (See table 1.)

Nationally, 332 of the 349 largest counties had over-the-year increases in average weekly wages. Tippecanoe, IN, had the largest over-the-year wage gain at 15.1 percent, followed by Williamson, TN (13.1 percent) and Olmsted, MN (13.0 percent).

Of the 349 largest U.S. counties, 15 had over-the-year wage decreases. Washington, PA, had the largest percentage decrease in average weekly wages (-6.6 percent), followed by Elkhart IN (-5.0 percent).

Large county average weekly wages

Among North Carolina's large counties, Durham ($1,357, 37th), Mecklenburg ($1,271, 52nd), and Wake ($1,252, 57th), had average weekly wages above the U.S average of $1,144 and ranked in the top 75 nationwide. Average weekly wages in the state's eight remaining large counties placed in the bottom half of the national ranking.

Nationwide, average weekly wages were above the U.S. average ($1,144) in 94 of the 349 largest counties in the fourth quarter of 2018. Santa Clara, CA, recorded the highest average weekly wage at $2,670, followed by San Francisco, CA ($2,452); San Mateo, CA ($2,410); and New York, NY ($2,400).

Among the largest U.S. counties, 255 had weekly wages below the national average in the fourth quarter of 2018. Hidalgo, TX ($680) had the lowest wage, followed by the counties of Cameron, TX, and Horry, SC ($685 each).

Average weekly wages in North Carolina's smaller counties

With the exception of Orange County ($1,186), counties in North Carolina with 2017 average annual employment levels below 75,000 had average weekly wages lower than the national average of $1,144. Among these smaller counties, Martin had the lowest average weekly wage in state, averaging $631 in the fourth quarter of 2018. (See table 2.)

When all 100 counties in North Carolina were considered, 18 had average weekly wages below $699, 52 had wages from $700 to $799, 20 had wages from $800 to $899, 5 had wages from $900 to $999, and 5 had wages above $1,000 in the fourth quarter of 2018. (See chart 1.)

Additional statistics and other information

QCEW 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 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 2017 edition of this publication contains selected data produced by Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the first quarter 2018 version of the national news release. Tables and additional content from *Employment and Wages Annual Averages 2017* are now available online at www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn17.htm. The 2018 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* will be available in September 2019.

The County Employment and Wages release for first quarter 2019 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, August 21, 2019. The County Employment and Wages full data update for first quarter 2019 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, September 4, 2019.

BLS Local Data App Now Available for Android Devices

The BLS Local Data app, first released for iPhones last fall, is now available for Android devices. Search using your current location, a zip code, or a location name to find employment and wage data for detailed industries and occupations. BLS continues to partner with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of the Chief Information Officer to expand the features and data in the app. For more information please visit: https://beta.bls.gov/labs/blogs/2019/04/17/bls-local-data-app-now-available-for-android-devices/.

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 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.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Service: (800) 877-8339.

Table 1. Covered employment and wages in the United States and the 11 largest counties in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2018

Area	Employment			Average weekly wage [1]			
	December 2018 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2017-18 [2]	National ranking by percent change [3]	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level [3]	Percent change, fourth quarter 2017-18 [2]	National ranking by percent change [3]
United States [4]	148,061.8	1.5	--	$1,144	--	3.2	--
North Carolina	4,458.9	1.6	--	1,013	26	5.1	6
Buncombe, NC	134.3	1.9	86	896	301	5.2	47
Cabarrus, NC	80.4	2.7	36	813	333	3.2	155
Catawba, NC	89.5	1.3	149	862	319	2.3	236
Cumberland, NC	121.2	-0.1	303	879	308	6.8	15
Durham, NC	207.9	3.0	28	1,357	37	5.4	37
Forsyth, NC	188.8	0.9	185	1,010	191	0.4	325
Guilford, NC	284.5	0.6	227	961	235	1.7	279
Mecklenburg, NC	706.6	2.1	69	1,271	52	3.5	128
New Hanover, NC	115.6	2.2	60	912	284	4.1	84
Pitt, NC	78.7	2.2	60	900	298	4.5	69
Wake, NC	566.6	1.6	126	1,252	57	11.9	4

Footnotes:
(1) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.
(2) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.
(3) Ranking does not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.
(4) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.
Note: Data are preliminary. Covered employment and wages includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

Table 2. Covered employment and wages in the United States and all counties in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2018

Area	Employment December 2018	Average Weekly Wage(1)
United States(2)	148,061,773	$1,144
North Carolina	4,458,862	1,013
Alamance	62,248	802
Alexander	9,264	682
Alleghany	3,025	656
Anson	7,287	694
Ashe	7,180	710
Avery	6,357	677
Beaufort	15,638	748
Bertie	5,844	648
Bladen	13,264	714
Brunswick	31,691	797
Buncombe	134,338	896
Burke	29,306	764
Cabarrus	80,379	813
Caldwell	25,163	778
Camden	1,197	761
Carteret	22,813	724
Caswell	3,073	749
Catawba	89,543	862
Chatham	15,076	784
Cherokee	7,999	689
Chowan	4,715	771
Clay	2,034	633
Cleveland	35,292	807
Columbus	14,968	720
Craven	39,239	885
Cumberland	121,222	879
Currituck	6,324	761
Dare	16,566	708
Davidson	44,079	812
Davie	12,984	745
Duplin	18,952	728
Durham	207,942	1,357
Edgecombe	16,525	752
Forsyth	188,808	1,010
Franklin	12,608	940
Gaston	76,326	843
Gates	1,521	711
Graham	2,048	754
Granville	21,182	895
Greene	4,199	719
Guilford	284,543	961
Halifax	15,680	708
Harnett	25,392	726
Haywood	17,726	741
Henderson	38,770	818
Hertford	9,177	764
Hoke	8,593	694
Hyde	1,735	710
Iredell	74,766	947
Jackson	13,899	746
Johnston	49,667	815
Jones	1,943	741
Lee	26,179	830
Lenoir	28,826	783

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Covered employment and wages in the United States and all counties in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2018 - Continued

Area	Employment December 2018	Average Weekly Wage(1)
Lincoln	23,348	828
McDowell	15,829	727
Macon	11,184	689
Madison	3,807	698
Martin	6,619	631
Mecklenburg	706,634	1,271
Mitchell	4,624	778
Montgomery	9,115	756
Moore	36,533	810
Nash	41,462	804
New Hanover	115,639	912
Northampton	5,308	739
Onslow	48,680	708
Orange	72,142	1,186
Pamlico	3,253	668
Pasquotank	15,365	794
Pender	11,772	747
Perquimans	2,232	679
Person	9,645	827
Pitt	78,667	900
Polk	4,888	665
Randolph	45,028	744
Richmond	13,578	687
Robeson	39,350	713
Rockingham	25,260	705
Rowan	49,303	876
Rutherford	18,459	710
Sampson	18,539	765
Scotland	11,958	761
Stanly	19,167	731
Stokes	7,599	654
Surry	29,245	748
Swain	9,779	711
Transylvania	8,870	720
Tyrrell	1,066	668
Union	64,696	896
Vance	14,361	708
Wake	566,596	1,252
Warren	3,003	661
Washington	3,247	780
Watauga	24,058	721
Wayne	41,967	767
Wilkes	21,785	723
Wilson	36,429	886
Yadkin	9,975	727
Yancey	4,418	753

Footnotes
(1) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.
(2) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.
NOTE: Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs. Data are preliminary.

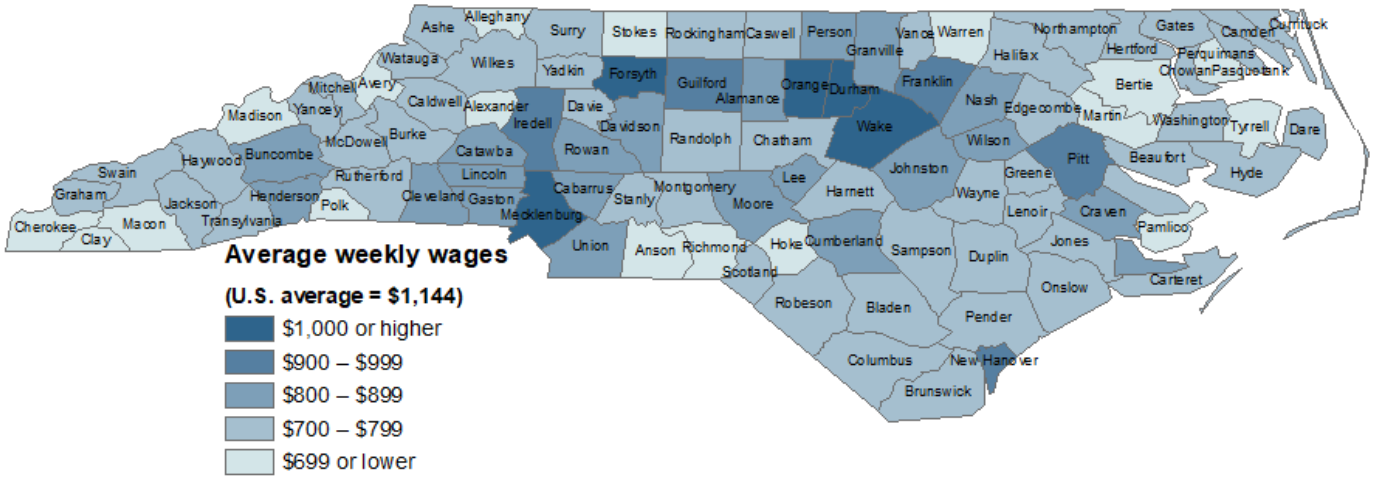
Table 3. Covered employment and wages by state, fourth quarter 2018

State	Employment		Average weekly wage [1]			
	December 2018 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2017-18	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2017-18	National ranking by percent change
United States [2]	148,061.8	1.5	$1,144	--	3.2	--
Alabama	1,986.6	1.6	957	36	3.1	33
Alaska	308.3	0.4	1,103	16	4.9	7
Arizona	2,921.1	3.0	1,017	24	4.1	11
Arkansas	1,227.0	0.8	869	50	2.4	43
California	17,556.7	1.7	1,392	4	3.3	26
Colorado	2,713.7	2.2	1,180	10	4.1	11
Connecticut	1,697.9	0.5	1,334	5	1.3	49
Delaware	451.2	1.1	1,107	15	2.4	43
District of Columbia	775.1	0.6	1,943	1	7.3	2
Florida	8,902.7	2.1	1,006	27	3.1	33
Georgia	4,499.8	1.8	1,053	21	2.4	43
Hawaii	669.3	0.6	1,016	25	3.3	26
Idaho	734.4	3.2	890	47	3.6	20
Illinois	6,026.0	0.3	1,189	9	3.3	26
Indiana	3,086.2	0.9	941	38	2.8	37
Iowa	1,558.4	0.5	966	35	3.0	35
Kansas	1,402.2	0.8	927	41	3.7	18
Kentucky	1,914.0	0.3	924	42	3.2	30
Louisiana	1,934.1	0.7	968	34	3.8	15
Maine	618.4	1.3	906	44	2.5	41
Maryland	2,702.5	0.8	1,228	8	1.7	48
Massachusetts	3,620.3	1.0	1,457	2	3.3	26
Michigan	4,366.5	1.0	1,077	19	1.3	49
Minnesota	2,902.3	0.9	1,140	14	3.6	20
Mississippi	1,144.3	0.2	793	51	2.5	41
Missouri	2,821.3	0.5	980	31	3.6	20
Montana	468.8	1.6	888	48	5.2	5
Nebraska	983.0	0.2	930	40	3.2	30
Nevada	1,397.4	3.3	1,006	27	5.3	4
New Hampshire	666.0	0.7	1,158	12	2.3	46
New Jersey	4,125.6	0.8	1,298	6	2.7	38
New Mexico	830.2	1.5	905	45	4.6	9
New York	9,613.2	1.5	1,445	3	1.0	51
North Carolina	4,458.9	1.6	1,013	26	5.1	6
North Dakota	422.3	1.5	1,057	20	4.7	8
Ohio	5,442.9	0.5	1,006	27	3.4	24
Oklahoma	1,632.3	1.5	932	39	4.1	11
Oregon	1,935.8	1.7	1,052	22	3.7	18
Pennsylvania	5,932.5	1.0	1,103	16	2.6	39
Rhode Island	487.2	0.8	1,085	18	2.6	39
South Carolina	2,119.6	2.8	893	46	1.9	47
South Dakota	428.4	1.2	885	49	3.4	24
Tennessee	3,039.8	1.8	1,030	23	3.0	35
Texas	12,531.7	2.5	1,148	13	3.5	23
Utah	1,511.5	3.2	972	33	3.8	15
Vermont	314.2	-0.4	954	37	3.2	30
Virginia	3,927.2	1.1	1,164	11	3.8	15
Washington	3,384.2	2.4	1,292	7	6.3	3
West Virginia	704.2	1.5	917	43	8.3	1
Wisconsin	2,892.3	0.6	989	30	4.0	14
Wyoming	272.1	1.8	978	32	4.4	10
Puerto Rico	896.4	0.8	576	[3]	0.9	[3]
Virgin Islands	34.5	0.5	925	[3]	2.3	[3]

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Footnotes:
(1) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.
(2) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.
(3) Data not included in the national ranking.
Note: Data are preliminary. Covered employment and wages includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

Chart 1. Average weekly wages by county in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2018



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.