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County Employment and Wages in Washington – Third Quarter 2015

Employment increased in 9 of Washington's 10 large counties from September 2014 to September 2015, 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 2014 annual average employment.) Assistant Commissioner for Regional Operations Richard Holden noted that employment increases ranged from 3.8 percent in Clark County to 1.8 percent each in Spokane and Whatcom Counties.

Nationally, employment advanced 1.9 percent from September 2014 to September 2015 as 312 of the 342 largest U.S. counties gained jobs. Williamson, Tenn., had the largest percentage increase in the country, up 6.5 percent over the year. Ector, Texas, had the largest over-the-year decrease in employment with a loss of 8.3 percent.

Among the 10 largest counties in Washington, employment was highest in King County (1,292,100) in September 2015, while Benton County had the smallest employment level (84,500). Together, Washington's large counties accounted for 85.0 percent of total employment within the state. Nationwide, the 342 largest counties made up 72.2 percent of total U.S. employment, which stood at 140.4 million in September 2015.

Average weekly wages increased in all 10 of Washington's largest counties from the third quarter of 2014 to the third quarter of 2015. King County had the highest average weekly wage ($1,463) followed by Snohomish County ($1,050). Both counties exceeded the national average weekly wage of $974, which rose 2.6 percent over the year ending in the third quarter of 2015. (See table 1.)

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 29 counties in Washington with employment below 75,000. All of these smaller counties had average weekly wages below the national average in the third quarter of 2015. (See table 2.)

Large county wage changes

All 10 large counties in Washington recorded increases in average weekly wages in the third quarter of 2015. Thurston County's 4.8-percent wage gain placed 13th among the nation's 342 large counties. Pierce County's 3.6-percent increase (ranked 64th) and Snohomish County's 3.2-percent wage increase (ranked 91st) also placed in the top 100. Four additional large counties exceeded the national 2.6 percent increase in the third quarter of 2015. King County had the smallest weekly wage gain, 1.0 percent, which ranked 300th in the nation. (See table 1.)

Nationally, 319 of the 342 largest counties registered over-the-year wage increases. Rockland, N.Y., had the largest wage gain, up 24.9 percent from the third quarter of 2014. Lake, Ill., was second with a wage increase of 11.7 percent, followed by the counties of Onondaga, N.Y. (6.5 percent), Washington, Ore. (6.4 percent), and Marin, Calif. and Santa Cruz, Calif. (6.1 percent each).

Among the largest U.S. counties, 20 experienced over-the-year wage decreases. Midland, Texas, had the largest wage decrease with a loss of 6.7 percent. Ector, Texas, had the second largest decrease in average weekly wages, down 4.9 percent from the third quarter of 2014, followed by Lafayette, La. (-3.2 percent), Stark, Ohio (-2.1 percent), and Gregg, Texas (-1.5 percent).

Large county average weekly wages

Average weekly wages in two of Washington's large counties placed in the top third of the national ranking. As noted, King County ($1,463, 8th) and Snohomish ($1,050, 70th) exceeded the national average in the third quarter of 2015. Benton County also ranked in the top third ($965, 106th), but its average wage was lower than the national average. The two counties with the lowest average weekly wages—Whatcom ($801, 274th) and Yakima ($679, 335th)—placed in the bottom third of the largest U.S. counties.

Nationally, 100 large counties registered average weekly wages above the U.S. average of $974 in the third quarter of 2015. Santa Clara, Calif., held the top position among the highest-paid large counties with an average weekly wage of $2,090. San Mateo, Calif., was second at $1,894, followed by New York, N.Y. ($1,829), San Francisco, Calif. ($1,712) and Washington, D.C. ($1,667).

Seventy-one percent of the largest U.S. counties (242) reported weekly wages below the national average. Horry County, S.C., reported the lowest wage ($598), followed by the counties of Cameron, Texas ($615), Hidalgo, Texas ($624), Marion, Fla. and Webb, Texas. ($658 each).

Average weekly wages in Washington's smaller counties

All 29 counties in Washington with employment below 75,000 had average weekly wages lower than the national average of $949. Among these counties, Pend Oreille County had the highest average weekly wage at $867. Okanogan County reported the lowest weekly wage among all counties in the state, averaging $582 in the third quarter of 2015. (See table 2.)

When all 39 counties in Washington were considered, 13 had wages below $700. Eleven counties had average weekly wages ranging from $700 to $799, 9 had wages from $800 to $899, and 6 had wages at or above $900. (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 2014 edition of this publication, which was published in September 2015, contains selected data produced by Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the first quarter 2015 version of the national news release. Tables and additional content from *Employment and Wages Annual Averages 2014* are now available online at https://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn14.htm. The 2015 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* will be available in September 2016.

The County Employment and Wages release for first quarter 2015 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, June 8, 2016.

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 9.6 million employer reports cover 140.4 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.

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 10 largest counties in Washington, third quarter 2015

Area	Employment			Average weekly wage [1]			
	September 2015 (thousands)	Percent change, September 2014-15 [2]	National ranking by percent change [3]	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level [3]	Percent change, third quarter 2014-15 [2]	National ranking by percent change [3]
United States [4]	140,442.2	1.9	--	974.00	--	2.6	--
Washington	3,187.6	2.5	--	1111.00	7.00	2.20	34.00
Benton, Wash.	84.5	3.3	71	965.00	106.00	3.1	104
Clark, Wash.	147.9	3.8	42	915.00	157.00	3.0	117
King, Wash.	1,292.1	3.4	66	1463.00	8.00	1.0	300
Kitsap, Wash.	85.6	2.3	137	921.00	152.00	2.4	178
Pierce, Wash.	288.5	1.9	162	898.00	171.00	3.6	64
Snohomish, Wash.	277.8	2.8	104	1050.00	70.00	3.2	91
Spokane, Wash.	211.6	1.8	172	842.00	223.00	2.3	193
Thurston, Wash.	107.1	2.3	137	919.00	155.00	4.8	13
Whatcom, Wash.	84.9	1.8	172	801.00	274.00	2.7	147
Yakima, Wash.	121.3	(5)	--	679.00	335.00	2.9	129.00

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 Washington, third quarter 2015

Area	Employment September 2015	Average Weekly Wage [1]
United States [2]	140,442,224	$974
Washington	3,187,575	1,111
Adams	8,683	679
Asotin	5,993	680
Benton	84,459	965
Chelan	46,844	689
Clallam	22,809	701
Clark	147,852	915
Columbia	1,281	753
Cowlitz	38,001	851
Douglas	12,436	649
Ferry	1,862	736
Franklin	34,968	701
Garfield	739	828
Grant	42,757	694
Grays Harbor	22,131	736
Island	15,463	701
Jefferson	8,264	695
King	1,292,067	1,463
Kitsap	85,574	921
Kittitas	14,696	709
Klickitat	7,320	835
Lewis	24,273	750
Lincoln	2,769	680
Mason	13,480	756
Okanogan	20,811	582
Pacific	6,434	629
Pend Oreille	2,964	867
Pierce	288,464	898
San Juan	6,069	629
Skagit	49,675	815
Skamania	2,211	687
Snohomish	277,813	1,050
Spokane	211,648	842
Stevens	10,066	727
Thurston	107,119	919
Wahkiakum	735	668
Walla Walla	27,514	778
Whatcom	84,932	801
Whitman	18,084	858
Yakima	121,322	679

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.

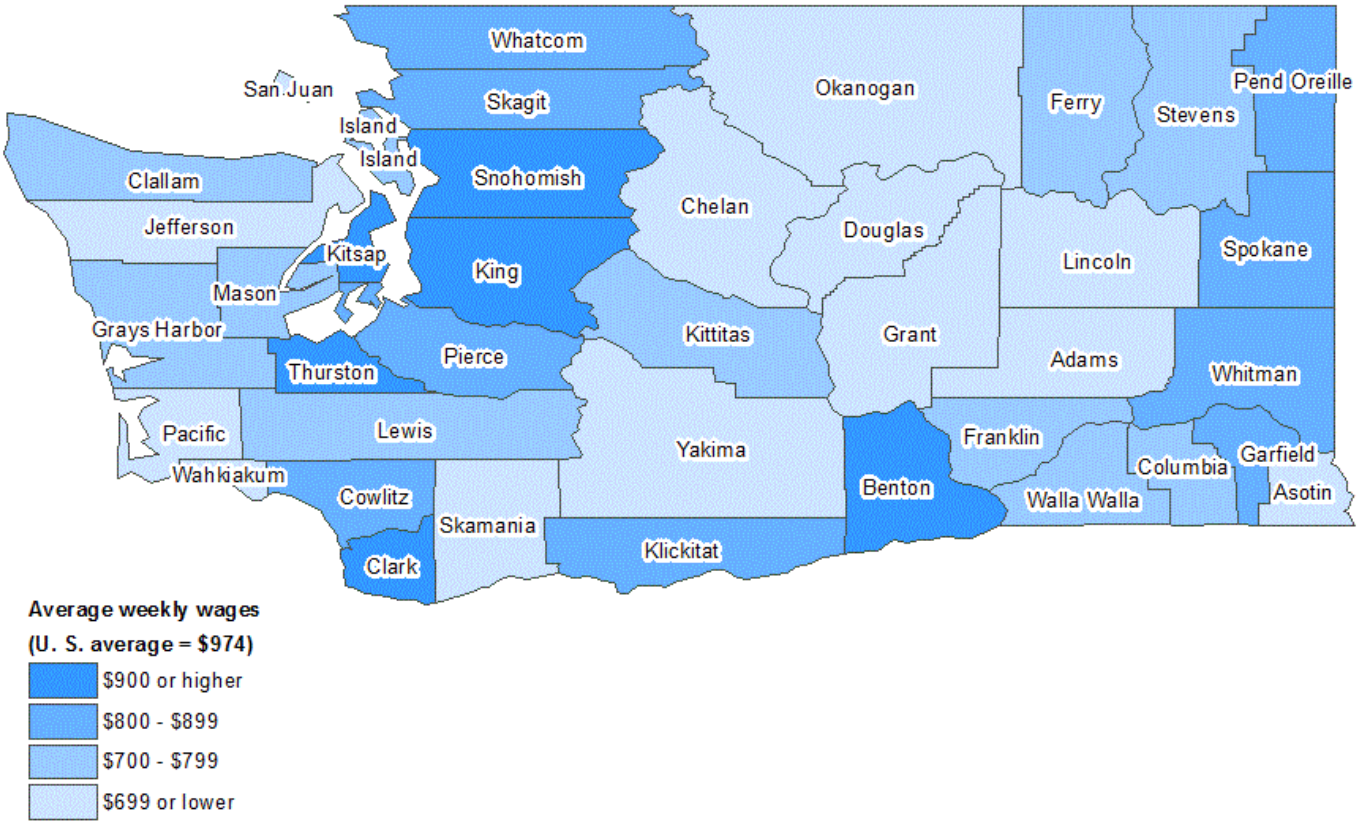
Table 3. Covered employment and wages by state, third quarter 2015

State	Employment		Average weekly wage [1]			
	September 2015 (thousands)	Percent change, September 2014-15	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, third quarter 2014-15	National ranking by percent change
United States [2]	140,442.2	1.9	$974	--	2.6	--
Alabama	1,893.6	1.2	830	34	1.8	40
Alaska	346.4	0.4	1,041	9	2.2	34
Arizona	2,613.9	2.9	889	24	1.5	42
Arkansas	1,193.4	1.9	756	48	2.6	22
California	16,474.4	3.0	1,134	5	3.4	6
Colorado	2,513.0	2.9	1,006	12	2.4	30
Connecticut	1,668.3	0.2	1,147	4	2.0	38
Delaware	436.3	2.1	963	15	0.3	48
District of Columbia	743.6	1.4	1,667	1	2.3	33
Florida	8,023.2	3.5	852	31	3.1	10
Georgia	4,171.1	2.8	916	22	2.8	19
Hawaii	635.4	1.4	896	23	3.1	10
Idaho	680.3	3.3	736	50	2.1	37
Illinois	5,888.6	1.3	1,020	10	3.9	3
Indiana	2,971.7	1.6	818	39	2.4	30
Iowa	1,535.9	0.4	823	38	3.0	14
Kansas	1,370.9	0.6	809	41	1.8	40
Kentucky	1,852.5	1.4	804	42	2.9	18
Louisiana	1,926.3	-0.2	858	30	0.7	47
Maine	609.7	0.7	779	46	3.3	7
Maryland	2,607.8	1.3	1,067	8	2.4	30
Massachusetts	3,446.9	1.4	1,197	2	3.0	14
Michigan	4,203.0	1.6	921	20	2.7	20
Minnesota	2,800.7	1.4	990	14	2.6	22
Mississippi	1,118.9	1.2	706	51	1.3	43
Missouri	2,737.9	1.9	846	32	2.2	34
Montana	457.9	1.9	759	47	3.7	4
Nebraska	964.0	1.4	811	40	4.2	2
Nevada	1,254.5	3.2	862	29	2.5	27
New Hampshire	642.8	1.5	952	18	2.7	20
New Jersey	3,933.9	1.4	1,116	6	2.6	22
New Mexico	809.2	0.6	798	43	1.3	43
New York	9,065.4	1.8	1,180	3	3.1	10
North Carolina	4,194.1	2.5	863	28	3.0	14
North Dakota	438.0	-3.8	956	17	-2.3	51
Ohio	5,282.7	1.2	878	25	1.9	39
Oklahoma	1,598.0	0.2	825	37	0.0	49
Oregon	1,812.8	3.0	924	19	4.4	1
Pennsylvania	5,722.1	0.8	961	16	2.5	27
Rhode Island	477.4	1.2	919	21	2.6	22
South Carolina	1,959.7	2.9	788	44	2.6	22
South Dakota	419.5	0.9	756	48	3.1	10
Tennessee	2,850.6	2.7	864	27	3.2	8
Texas	11,681.0	2.1	999	13	1.1	45
Utah	1,353.9	3.7	829	35	3.2	8
Vermont	308.2	0.5	829	35	3.0	14
Virginia	3,759.7	2.5	1,014	11	2.5	27
Washington	3,187.6	2.5	1,111	7	2.2	34
West Virginia	702.4	-1.1	785	45	0.9	46
Wisconsin	2,815.7	0.9	834	33	3.5	5
Wyoming	287.4	-1.5	866	26	-1.1	50
Puerto Rico	891.1	-0.7	512	[3]	1.4	[3]
Virgin Islands	36.8	-2.1	738	[3]	2.1	[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 Washington, third quarter 2015



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.