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WESTERN INFORMATION OFFICE: San Francisco, Calif.
Technical information: (415) 625-2270 BLSinfoSF@bls.gov www.bls.gov/regions/west
Media contact: (415) 625-2270

County Employment and Wages in Washington – Third Quarter 2016

Employment increased in all 10 of the large counties in Washington from September 2015 to September 2016 the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (Large counties are defined as those with 2015 annual average employment levels of 75,000 or more.) Assistant Commissioner for Regional Operations Richard Holden noted that rates of job growth in 9 of the 10 large counties in Washington exceeded the national rate of 1.7 percent.

Nationwide, employment increased in 307 of the 344 largest counties. York, S.C., had the largest percentage increase in the country, up 6.0 percent over the year. Midland, Texas, had the largest over-the-year decrease in employment with a loss of 5.8 percent.

Among the 10 largest counties in Washington, employment was highest in King County (1,331,300) in September 2016, while Kitsap County had the smallest employment level (85,900). Together, Washington's large counties accounted for 84.8 percent of total employment within the state. Nationwide, the 344 largest counties made up 72.5 percent of total U.S. employment.

From the third quarter of 2015 to the third quarter of 2016, average weekly wages increased in all 10 of Washington's largest counties. Weekly wage increases in 6 of the 10 large counties equaled or exceeded the national increase of 5.4 percent in the third quarter of 2016. (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 of $1,027 in the third quarter of 2016. (See table 2.)

Large county wage changes

All 10 large counties in Washington had increases in average weekly wages in the third quarter of 2016. King and Benton counties each had wage gains of 8.1 percent and were ranked 24th among the nation's 344 large counties. Kitsap County's 6.4-percent increase (ranked 100th) was the only other county in the top third. Two additional large counties were at or above the national 5.4 percent increase in the third quarter of 2016. Thurston County had the smallest weekly wage gain, 3.7 percent, which ranked 296th in the nation. (See table 1.)

Nationwide, 339 of the 344 largest counties had over-the-year wage increases. Clark, Nev., had the largest wage gain, up 12.2 percent from the third quarter of 2015. Manatee, Fla., was second with a wage increase of 10.7 percent, followed by Hillsborough, N.H. (10.4 percent); and Boone, Ky., and Elkhart, Ind. (10.3 percent each).

Among the largest U.S. counties, five large counties experienced over-the-year wage decreases. Rockland, N.Y., had the largest wage decrease with a loss of 14.9 percent. Lafayette, La., had the second-largest decrease in average weekly wages, down 3.4 percent from the third quarter 2015, followed by Benton, Ark. (-2.0 percent); Lake, Ill. (-0.9 percent); and Midland, Texas (-0.3 percent).

Large county average weekly wages

Average weekly wages in three of Washington's large counties placed in the top third of the national ranking. King County ($1,582, 8th), Snohomish ($1,108, 68th), and Benton ($1,042, 92nd) exceeded the national average in the third quarter of 2016. The two counties with the lowest average weekly wages—Whatcom ($844, 275th) and Yakima ($712, 339th)—placed in the bottom third of the largest U.S. counties.

Nationwide, average weekly wages were at or above the U.S. average ($1,027) in 102 of the 344 largest counties in the third quarter of 2016. Santa Clara, Calif., had the highest average weekly wage at $2,260, followed by San Mateo, Calif. ($2,098); San Francisco, Calif. ($1,892); New York, N.Y. ($1,879); and Washington, D.C. ($1,728).

Among the largest U.S. counties, 241 had weekly wages below the national average in the third quarter of 2016. Horry County, S.C., had the lowest wage ($632), followed by the Texas counties of Cameron ($636) and Hidalgo ($654).

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 $1,027. Among these smaller counties, Cowlitz had the highest average weekly wage at $921 in the third quarter of 2016, while Okanogan ($601) had the lowest weekly wage. (See table 2.)

When all 39 counties in Washington were considered, 5 had wages of $699 or lower. Eighteen counties had average weekly wages ranging from $700 to $799, 6 had wages from $800 to $899, and 10 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 2015 edition of this publication, which was published in September 2016, contains selected data produced by Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the first quarter 2016 version of the national news release. Tables and additional content from *Employment and Wages Annual Averages 2015* are now available online at https://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn15.htm. The 2016 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* will be available in September 2017.

The County Employment and Wages release for fourth quarter 2016 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, June 7, 2017.

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 9.8 million employer reports cover 142.9 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 2016

Area	Employment			Average weekly wage [1]			
	September 2016 (thousands)	Percent change, September 2015-16 [2]	National ranking by percent change [3]	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level [3]	Percent change, third quarter 2015-16 [2]	National ranking by percent change [3]
United States [4]	142,940.5	1.7	--	$1,027	--	5.4	--
Washington	3,278.9	3.0	--	1,188	6	6.9	5
Benton, Wash.	86.9	2.5	105	1,042	92	8.1	24
Clark, Wash.	150.6	2.8	83	971	151	6.1	125
King, Wash.	1,331.3	3.3	51	1,582	8	8.1	24
Kitsap, Wash.	85.9	0.4	292	981	140	6.4	100
Pierce, Wash.	299.9	4.0	24	951	166	5.5	177
Snohomish, Wash.	284.9	2.0	142	1,108	68	5.4	187
Spokane, Wash.	217.6	3.4	46	883	234	4.4	262
Thurston, Wash.	112.0	4.7	8	949	170	3.7	296
Whatcom, Wash.	88.3	3.1	58	844	275	5.1	211
Yakima, Wash.	124.0	2.7	87	712	339	4.4	262

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 2016

Area	Employment September 2016	Average weekly wage(1)
United States(2)	142,940,452	$1,027
Washington	3,278,912	1,188
Adams	8,644	728
Asotin	6,138	716
Benton	86,925	1,042
Chelan	47,212	720
Clallam	23,344	749
Clark	150,630	971
Columbia	1,330	778
Cowlitz	38,371	921
Douglas	13,129	687
Ferry	1,806	796
Franklin	35,970	743
Garfield	830	820
Grant	42,298	755
Grays Harbor	22,472	759
Island	16,155	735
Jefferson	8,565	727
King	1,331,263	1,582
Kitsap	85,917	981
Kittitas	14,805	768
Klickitat	7,468	901
Lewis	25,009	780
Lincoln	2,957	711
Mason	14,025	764
Okanogan	21,034	601
Pacific	6,716	678
Pend Oreille	3,107	913
Pierce	299,910	951
San Juan	6,176	656
Skagit	50,838	872
Skamania	2,409	750
Snohomish	284,916	1,108
Spokane	217,557	883
Stevens	10,651	742
Thurston	111,980	949
Wahkiakum	722	661
Walla Walla	28,351	804
Whatcom	88,269	844
Whitman	18,426	879
Yakima	124,023	712

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.

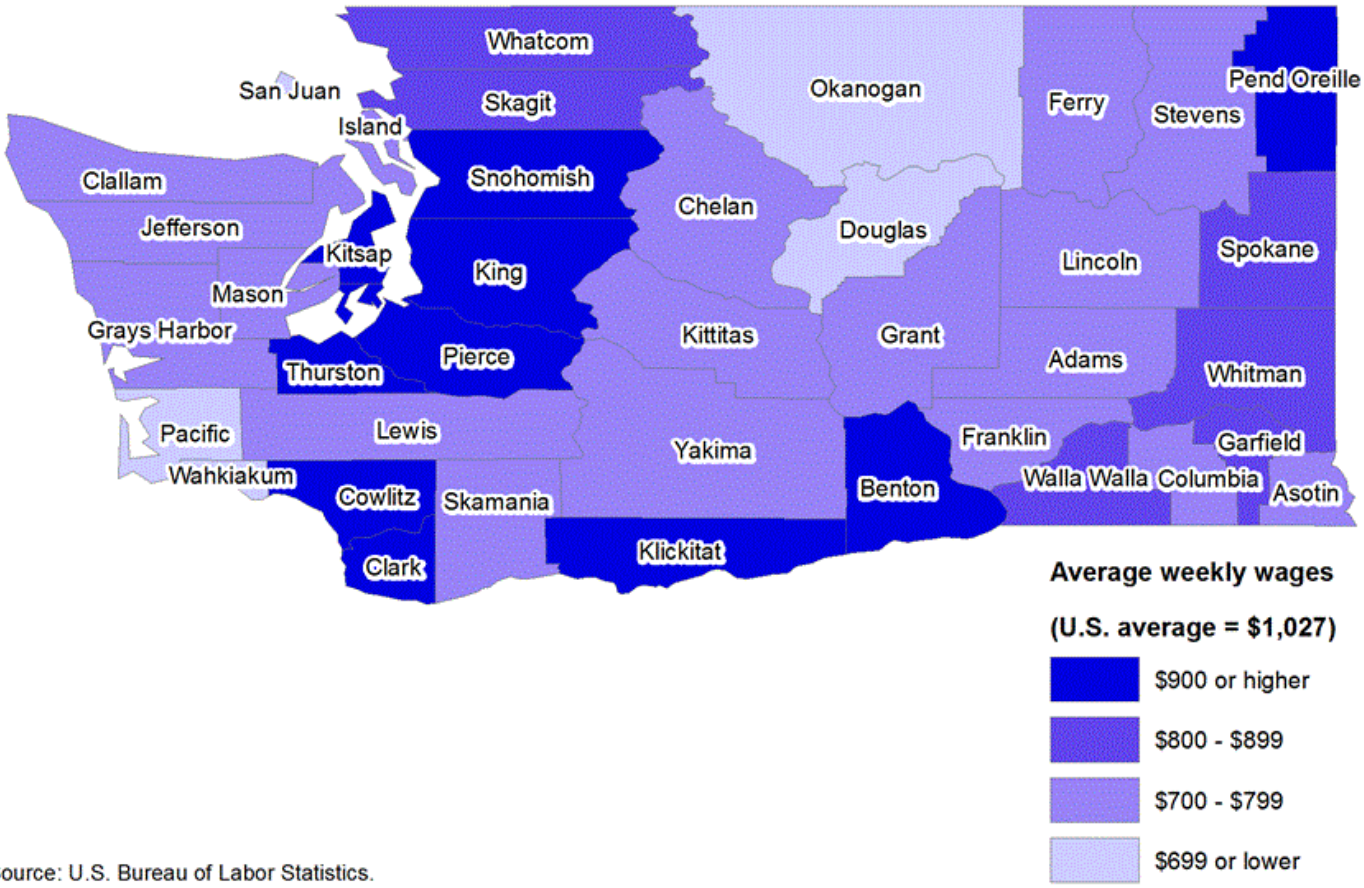
Table 3. Covered employment and wages by state, third quarter 2016

State	Employment		Average weekly wage [1]			
	September 2016 (thousands)	Percent change, September 2015-16	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, third quarter 2015-16	National ranking by percent change
United States [2]	142,940.5	1.7	1027	--	5.4	--
Alabama	1,923.8	1.5	870	36	4.9	38
Alaska	337.4	-2.6	1055	12	1.2	49
Arizona	2,695.5	3.1	950	24	6.9	5
Arkansas	1,205.4	1.0	794	48	5.2	32
California	16,871.1	2.4	1210	4	6.7	8
Colorado	2,576.5	2.6	1062	10	5.6	23
Connecticut	1,674.2	0.3	1204	5	5	34
Delaware	440.7	0.8	1022	16	5.6	23
District of Columbia	759.2	1.7	1728	1	3.8	45
Florida	8,320.2	3.7	905	29	6.2	14
Georgia	4,290.4	2.9	969	21	5.9	18
Hawaii	648.4	1.8	956	23	6.7	8
Idaho	703.7	3.5	782	50	6.3	12
Illinois	5,933.6	0.6	1062	10	4.4	40
Indiana	3,025.9	1.8	866	37	5.9	18
Iowa	1,548.6	0.8	873	35	6.2	14
Kansas	1,377.2	0.5	857	39	5.9	18
Kentucky	1,880.2	1.5	857	39	6.5	10
Louisiana	1,908.8	-0.9	883	32	2.9	48
Maine	616.2	0.9	825	45	5.9	18
Maryland	2,648.1	1.4	1124	8	5.3	30
Massachusetts	3,522.9	2.0	1277	2	6.8	7
Michigan	4,292.2	2.1	976	19	5.9	18
Minnesota	2,849.5	1.6	1053	13	6.4	11
Mississippi	1,126.9	0.7	739	51	4.7	39
Missouri	2,782.1	1.6	888	30	5	34
Montana	464.5	1.5	792	49	4.3	41
Nebraska	973.9	0.9	857	39	5.5	26
Nevada	1,300.7	3.8	949	25	10.1	1
New Hampshire	655.0	1.8	1027	15	7.9	2
New Jersey	4,000.0	1.8	1173	7	5	34
New Mexico	811.5	0.2	830	44	4	43
New York	9,216.6	1.6	1222	3	3.5	46
North Carolina	4,290.3	2.3	909	28	5.3	30
North Dakota	423.2	-3.4	964	22	0.7	50
Ohio	5,347.3	1.1	924	26	5.4	27
Oklahoma	1,578.7	-1.3	854	42	3.5	46
Oregon	1,866.5	2.6	970	20	5.2	32
Pennsylvania	5,776.7	1.0	1013	17	5.4	27
Rhode Island	481.1	0.8	990	18	7.6	3
South Carolina	2,008.6	2.5	832	43	5.6	23
South Dakota	424.2	1.1	809	47	7	4
Tennessee	2,918.8	2.5	912	27	5.4	27
Texas	11,830.7	1.3	1042	14	4.3	41
Utah	1,407.4	3.8	881	33	6.3	12
Vermont	309.9	0.5	880	34	6.2	14
Virginia	3,801.0	1.0	1063	9	5	34
Washington	3,278.9	3.0	1188	6	6.9	5
West Virginia	691.5	-1.6	816	46	3.9	44
Wisconsin	2,850.1	1.0	885	31	6.2	14
Wyoming	274.8	-4.7	865	38	0	51
Puerto Rico	888.2	-0.4	524	[3]	2.3	[3]
Virgin Islands	37.4	1.4	778	[3]	5.9	[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 2016



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.