The 1.1 million\(^1\) workers employed in automobile manufacturing in the United States in 2005 received, on average, a wage that was 11 percent higher than the U.S. average. Autoworkers earned a mean hourly wage of $20.53, whereas the U.S. mean hourly wage for all occupations across all industries was $18.21. This wage premium, however, was not evenly distributed across all automobile manufacturing occupations: employees in less skilled occupations were paid more than their counterparts in other industries, while those in highly skilled occupations, such as engineers, were paid less than their counterparts in other industries. This article examines employment and wages in three groups of the automobile manufacturing industry—motor vehicle manufacturing (NAICS 3361), motor vehicle body and trailer manufacturing (NAICS 3362), and motor vehicle parts manufacturing (NAICS 3363)—for various occupations.

Motor vehicle parts manufacturing (NAICS 3363), the largest industry group, accounted for 693,120 workers, or 62 percent of the industry's workforce. The mean hourly wage paid to these workers fell between the other two industry groups at $19.79. The 256,700 workers in motor vehicle manufacturing (NAICS 3361) were paid the highest mean hourly wage of $25.03. Finally, motor vehicle body and trailer manufacturing (NAICS 3362) employed the fewest workers in automobile manufacturing and paid the lowest mean hourly wage. This industry group employed 168,840 workers, or 15 percent of the industry's workforce. These workers earned a mean hourly wage of $16.73. The variation in employment and wages persisted when looking at individual occupations.

Engineering managers accounted for a small percentage of the automobile manufacturing industry with 5,140 workers. Their mean hourly wage of $46.09 was very high in comparison to the rest of the industry. However, this wage was lower than the cross-industry mean hourly wage of $50.71. Engineering managers were an example of workers in higher skilled occupations who received a lower wage in automobile manufacturing than their counterparts in other industries.

The wages and employment of engineering managers fluctuated between the three industry groups. Motor vehicle manufacturing (NAICS 3361) employed a total of 610 engineering managers, earning a mean hourly wage of $50.36, the highest of the three industry groups. Motor vehicle parts manufacturing (NAICS 3363) employed the largest number of engineering managers with a total of 3,960. These managers earned a mean hourly wage of $46.18. Motor vehicle body and trailer manufacturing (NAICS 3362) employed the fewest engineering managers and paid the lowest wage. This industry group employed 570 engineering managers and paid a mean hourly wage of $40.90.

Another well-paying occupation in the automobile manufacturing industry in 2005 was industrial production managers. According to the Standard Occupational Classification Manual, 2000, industrial production managers planned, directed, or coordinated the work activities and resources necessary for manufacturing products in accordance with cost, quality, and quantity specifications. As with engineering managers, they represented a small percentage of employment in the automobile manufacturing industry with total employment of 8,270. The wages that they earned were high, in comparison to the rest of the automobile manufacturing industry, with a mean hourly wage of $38.29. Industrial production managers were another example of workers in a higher skilled position earning a lower wage in the automobile industry than across all industries. As mentioned, their mean hourly wage in automobile manufacturing was $38.29, whereas in other industries, their mean hourly wage was slightly higher at $39.41.

A more pronounced variation in wages and employment was present depending on which industry group employed industrial production managers. The industry group that paid the highest wages for this occupation was motor vehicle manufacturing (NAICS 3361). The 1,550 workers in this group earned a mean hourly wage of $41.67. Motor vehicle parts

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\(^1\) This figure does not include company headquarters, sales, or distribution centers. This article was written with data collected in May 2005 by the Occupational Employment Statistics program.

Welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers made up roughly 21 percent of total industry employment. Employment concentration between industry groups varied widely by State. Delaware paid the highest mean hourly wage of $22.61, while Nebraska paid the lowest mean hourly wage of $11.04. Ohio was the largest employer of engine and other machine assemblers with 3,480 people employed, and Iowa employed the highest concentration of these workers with a total of 2,020.

Employment and wages for engine and other machine assemblers varied dramatically by Occupation. Motor vehicle parts manufacturing (NAICS 3363) accounted for 8,790 workers, or 88 percent of electronic equipment assemblers' employment in the automobile manufacturing industry. Employment for computer-controlled machine tool operators, metal and plastic, was heavily weighted towards one industry group, motor vehicle parts manufacturing, which employed 14,710 of these workers, or 91 percent of their total in the automobile manufacturing industry. Similarly, employment of electrical and electronic equipment assemblers was not equally divided between industry groups. Motor vehicle parts manufacturing (NAICS 3363) accounted for 8,790 workers, or 88 percent of electrical and electronic equipment assemblers' employment in the automobile manufacturing industry. Employment for industrial engineering technicians was also similarly distributed. Motor vehicle parts manufacturing (NAICS 3363) employed 4,140 technicians, or 82 percent of the auto manufacturing workers in this occupation.

Variations existed in the employment and wages of auto-workers across the three industry groups as well as in comparison to cross-industry employment and wages. On average,
workers in the automobile manufacturing industry earned a wage 11 percent higher than workers doing the same job in other industries. However, this increase did not extend to all occupations in the industry. Higher skilled occupations were often paid less than their cross-industry counterparts, while lower skilled occupations received a higher wage than their counterparts in other industries. Mean wages also varied, sometimes dramatically, in the same occupation across different industry groups. Likewise, employment fluctuations were very common within the three industry groups.