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MID-ATLANTIC INFORMATION OFFICE: Philadelphia, Pa.

Technical information: (215) 597-3282 BLSInfoPhiladelphia@bls.gov www.bls.gov/regions/mid-atlantic

Media contact: (215) 861-5600 BLSMediaPhiladelphia@bls.gov

Occupational Employment and Wages in Charleston – May 2014

Workers in the Charleston Metropolitan Statistical Area had an average (mean) hourly wage of \$19.26 in May 2014, 15 percent below the nationwide average of \$22.71, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Sheila Watkins, the Bureau's regional commissioner, noted that, after testing for statistical significance, wages in the local area were significantly lower than their respective national averages in 18 of the 22 major occupational groups, including management, computer and mathematical, and legal. Only one group—production—had an average wage that was measurably higher than its respective national average. (See [table A](#) and box note at end of release.)

Table A. Occupational employment and wages by major occupational group, United States and the Charleston Metropolitan Statistical Area, and measures of statistical significance, May 2014

Major occupational group	Employment share (percent of total)			Average (mean) hourly wage			
	United States	Charleston	Significant difference (1)	United States	Charleston	Significant difference (1)	Percent difference (2)
Total, all occupations	100.00%	100.00%		\$22.71	\$19.26	Yes	-15
Management	5.0	5.0	No	54.08	39.12	Yes	-28
Business and financial operations	5.1	3.9	Yes	34.81	26.48	Yes	-24
Computer and mathematical	2.8	1.3	Yes	40.37	27.07	Yes	-33
Architecture and engineering	1.8	1.4	Yes	39.19	32.94	Yes	-16
Life, physical, and social science	0.8	1.2	Yes	33.69	22.64	Yes	-33
Community and social service	1.4	1.2	Yes	21.79	18.10	Yes	-17
Legal	0.8	1.4	Yes	48.61	36.32	Yes	-25
Education, training, and library	6.2	4.5	Yes	25.10	21.85	Yes	-13
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	1.3	0.9	Yes	26.82	21.52	Yes	-20
Healthcare practitioners and technical	5.8	7.8	Yes	36.54	29.68	Yes	-19
Healthcare support	2.9	2.6	Yes	13.86	11.68	Yes	-16
Protective service	2.4	2.6	No	21.14	15.59	Yes	-26
Food preparation and serving related	9.1	7.9	Yes	10.57	9.42	Yes	-11
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	3.2	2.8	Yes	12.68	10.34	Yes	-18
Personal care and service	3.1	3.8	No	12.01	9.70	Yes	-19
Sales and related	10.5	10.2	No	18.59	14.50	Yes	-22
Office and administrative support	16.0	17.9	Yes	17.08	14.80	Yes	-13
Farming, fishing, and forestry	0.3	0.1	Yes	12.09	14.61	No	21
Construction and extraction	3.9	7.1	Yes	22.40	22.83	No	2
Installation, maintenance, and repair	3.9	5.0	Yes	21.74	19.98	Yes	-8
Production	6.6	4.3	Yes	17.06	20.23	Yes	19
Transportation and material moving	6.8	7.3	No	16.57	17.12	No	3

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Footnotes:

(1) Statistical significance testing at the 90-percent confidence level.

(2) A positive percent difference measures how much the mean wage in Charleston is above the national mean wage, while a negative difference reflects a lower wage.

When compared to the nationwide distribution, Charleston employment was more highly concentrated in 6 of the 22 occupational groups including construction and extraction and office and administrative support. Conversely, 11 groups had employment shares significantly below their national representation; these groups included production; education, training, and library; and computer and mathematical.

One occupational group—construction and extraction—was chosen to illustrate the diversity of data available for any of the 22 major occupational categories. Charleston had 10,140 jobs in the construction and extraction group, accounting for 7.1 percent of local area employment, significantly above the 3.9-percent share nationally. The average hourly wage for this occupational group locally was \$22.83, similar to the national average of \$22.40.

With employment of 2,040, construction laborers was the largest occupation within the construction and extraction group, followed by operating engineers and other construction equipment operators (1,440). Among the higher-paying jobs were first-line supervisors of construction trades and extraction workers with a mean hourly wage of \$32.20 and electricians with a wage of \$28.82. At the lower end of the wage scale were highway maintenance workers (\$12.45) and construction laborers (\$18.08). (Detailed occupational data for construction and extraction are presented in [table 1](#); for a complete listing of detailed occupations available go to www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_16620.htm.)

Location quotients allow us to explore the occupational make-up of a metropolitan area by comparing the composition of jobs in an area relative to the national average. (See [table 1](#).) For example, a location quotient of 2.0 indicates that an occupation accounts for twice the share of employment in the area as it does nationally. In the Charleston area, above-average concentrations of employment were found in many of the occupations within the construction and extraction group. For instance, operating engineers and other construction equipment operators were employed at four times the national rate in Charleston, and mining roof bolters at more than forty-five times the U.S. average. On the other hand, carpenters had a location quotient of 1.2 in Charleston, indicating that this particular occupation's local and national employment shares were similar.

These statistics are from the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey, a federal-state cooperative program between BLS and State Workforce Agencies, in this case, WorkForce West Virginia.

Note

OES wage and employment data for the 22 major occupational groups in the Charleston Metropolitan Statistical Area were compared to their respective national averages based on statistical significance testing. Only those occupations with wages or employment shares above or below the national wage or share after testing for significance at the 90-percent confidence level meet the criteria.

NOTE: A value that is statistically different from another does not necessarily mean that the difference has economic or practical significance. Statistical significance is concerned with the ability to make confident statements about a universe based on a sample. It is entirely possible that a large difference between two values is not significantly different statistically, while a small difference is, since both the size and heterogeneity of the sample affect the relative error of the data being tested.

Technical Note

The Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey is a semiannual mail survey measuring occupational employment and wage rates for wage and salary workers in nonfarm establishments in the United States. Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands are also surveyed, but their data are not included in the national estimates. OES estimates are constructed from a sample of about 1.2 million establishments. Each year, forms are mailed to two semiannual panels of approximately 200,000 sampled establishments, one panel in May and the other in November. May 2014 estimates are based on responses from six semiannual panels collected over a 3-year period: May 2014, November 2013, May 2013, November 2012, May 2012, and November 2011. The overall national response rate for the six panels is 74.3 percent based on establishments and 70.5 percent based on employment. The sample in the Charleston Metropolitan Statistical Area included 1,767 establishments with a response rate of 68 percent. For more information about OES concepts and methodology, go to www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.tn.htm.

The OES survey provides estimates of employment and hourly and annual wages for wage and salary workers in 22 major occupational groups and 821 detailed occupations for the nation, states, metropolitan statistical areas, metropolitan divisions, and nonmetropolitan areas. In addition, employment and wage estimates for 94 minor groups and 458 broad occupations are available in the national data. OES data by state and metropolitan/nonmetropolitan area are available from www.bls.gov/oes/current/oessrcst.htm and www.bls.gov/oes/current/oessrcma.htm, respectively.

The May 2014 OES estimates are based on the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system and the 2012 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Information about the 2010 SOC is available on the BLS website at www.bls.gov/soc and information about the 2012 NAICS is available at www.bls.gov/bls/naics.htm.

Area definitions

The substate area data published in this release reflect the standards and definitions established by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.

The **Charleston Metropolitan Statistical Area** includes Boone, Clay, Kanawha, Lincoln, and Putnam Counties in West Virginia.

Additional information

OES data are available on our regional web page at <https://www.bls.gov/regions/mid-atlantic>. Answers to frequently asked questions about the OES data are available at www.bls.gov/oes/oes_ques.htm. Detailed technical information about the OES survey is available in our Survey Methods and Reliability Statement on the BLS website at www.bls.gov/oes/current/methods_statement.pdf. Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request – Voice phone: 202-691-5200; Federal Relay Service: 1-800-877-8339.

Table 1. Employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey, by occupation, Charleston Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2014

Occupation ⁽¹⁾	Employment ⁽²⁾		Mean wage	
	Level	Location quotient ⁽³⁾	Hourly	Annual ⁽⁴⁾
Construction and extraction occupations	10,140	1.8	\$22.83	\$47,490
First-line supervisors of construction trades and extraction workers	970	1.9	32.20	66,980
Brickmasons and blockmasons	80	1.3	16.84	35,030
Carpenters	780	1.2	21.19	44,070
Carpet installers	50	1.7	15.18	31,560
Cement masons and concrete finishers	80	0.5	20.24	42,090
Construction laborers	2,040	2.3	18.08	37,600
Pile-driver operators	40	9.7	27.42	57,040
Operating engineers and other construction equipment operators	1,440	4.0	24.23	50,410
Electricians	1,110	1.9	28.82	59,950
Painters, construction and maintenance	180	0.8	24.31	50,550
Pipelayers	60	1.5	19.22	39,970
Plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters	480	1.2	22.44	46,680
Roofers	90	0.8	18.03	37,500
Sheet metal workers	120	0.9	24.75	51,470
Structural iron and steel workers	100	1.6	26.48	55,090
Helpers--carpenters	60	1.6	11.05	22,990
Helpers--electricians	(5)	(5)	15.41	32,050
Helpers--pipelayers, plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters	(5)	(5)	11.50	23,920
Construction and building inspectors	60	0.6	20.80	43,270
Highway maintenance workers	390	2.6	12.45	25,910
Service unit operators, oil, gas, and mining	90	1.4	21.10	43,880
Earth drillers, except oil and gas	120	5.8	20.65	42,960
Explosives workers, ordnance handling, experts, and blasters	90	10.5	23.01	47,860
Continuous mining machine operators	120	10.1	28.61	59,500
Roof bolters, mining	270	45.0	29.14	60,610
Roustabouts, oil and gas	60	0.8	19.04	39,610
Helpers--extraction workers	240	9.4	23.90	49,720

Footnotes:

(1) For a complete listing of all detailed occupations in the Charleston MSA, see www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_16620.htm.

(2) Estimates for detailed occupations do not sum to the totals because the totals include occupations not shown separately. Estimates do not include self-employed workers.

(3) The location quotient is the ratio of the area concentration of occupational employment to the national average concentration. A location quotient greater than one indicates the occupation has a higher share of employment than average, and a location quotient less than one indicates the occupation is less prevalent in the area than average.

(4) Annual wages have been calculated by multiplying the hourly mean wage by a 'year-round, full time' hours figure of 2,080 hours; for those occupations where there is not an hourly mean wage published, the annual wage has been directly calculated from the reported survey data.

(5) Estimate not released.