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County Employment and Wages in Massachusetts – First Quarter 2019

Employment increased in 8 of the 9 large counties in Massachusetts from March 2018 to March 2019. (Large counties are those with 2018 annual average employment levels of 75,000 or more.) Regional Commissioner Deborah A. Brown noted that three counties had over-the-year employment gains that were larger than the 1.4-percent national average: Suffolk (2.4 percent), Hampden (1.6 percent), and Middlesex (1.6 percent). Norfolk County experienced an employment decline, down 0.3 percent over the year. (See table 1)

Nationally, 298 of the 355 large counties had employment gains from March 2018 to March 2019. The largest over-the-year percentage gain was recorded in Midland, TX (5.8 percent). Bay, FL, had the largest over-the-year decrease in employment (-5.9 percent).

Among the nine large counties in Massachusetts, employment was highest in Middlesex (926,100) in March 2019, followed by Suffolk (686,400). Together, Massachusetts' large counties accounted for 94.0 percent of total employment within the commonwealth. Nationwide, the 355 largest counties made up 73.5 percent of total U.S. employment in March 2019.

Average weekly wages increased in all of the large counties in Massachusetts from the first quarter of 2018 to the first quarter of 2019. Middlesex and Plymouth Counties had the largest wage gains, up 5.4 percent each. Barnstable (4.5 percent) and Bristol (4.2 percent) recorded the next highest wage growth. Suffolk County had the highest average weekly wage at \$2,270, followed by Middlesex County at \$1,886. Nationally, the average weekly wage increased 2.8 percent over the year to \$1,184 in the first quarter of 2019. (See [table 1](#).)

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the five counties in Massachusetts with employment below 75,000. Of these five smaller counties, Nantucket (\$1,190) had an average weekly wage above the national average. (See [table 2](#).)

Large County Wage Changes

Eight of the nine large counties in Massachusetts recorded wage growth above the national increase of 2.8 percent. Middlesex and Plymouth Counties each had a 5.4-percent annual wage gain, ranking 18th among the 355 largest U.S. counties in the first quarter of 2019. Suffolk County's wage gain of 0.2 percent over the year ranked in the bottom-fifth among the large U.S. counties. (See [table 1](#).)

Of the 355 largest U.S. counties, 325 had over-the-year increases in average weekly wages. Nationwide, San Francisco, CA, ranked first in average weekly wage growth, with an increase of 10.2 percent from the first quarter of 2018. Twenty-eight large U.S. counties had wage declines over the year. Elkhart, IN, had the largest percentage decline in average weekly wages with a loss of 7.6 percent.

Large County Average Weekly Wages

Average weekly wages in four large Massachusetts counties were above the national average of \$1,184 in the first quarter of 2019 and all ranked in the top-fourth nationwide. Two of these counties placed in the top 10 nationwide: Suffolk (\$2,270, 5th) and Middlesex (\$1,886, 11th). Barnstable County (\$969, 215th) had the lowest average weekly wage among the large counties in the commonwealth.

Average weekly wages were higher than the national average in 92 of the 355 largest U.S. counties. New York, NY, held the top position with an average weekly wage of \$3,153. San Francisco, CA, was second with an average weekly wage of \$2,759, followed by Santa Clara, CA (\$2,758), San Mateo, CA (\$2,645), and Suffolk County, MA (\$2,270).

More than two-thirds of the largest U.S. counties (263) reported average weekly wages below the national average in the first quarter of 2019. The lowest weekly wage was reported in Cameron, TX (\$648), followed by Horry, SC (\$652), and Hidalgo, TX (\$662) and Webb, TX (\$705). Wages in these lowest-ranked counties were less than one-third of the average weekly wage reported for the highest-ranked county, New York, NY (\$3,153).

Average Weekly Wages in Massachusetts' Smaller Counties

Among the five smaller counties in Massachusetts with employment below 75,000, Nantucket (\$1,190) had the highest average weekly wage. Franklin reported the lowest average weekly wage at \$827.

When all 14 counties in Massachusetts were considered, 1 county had average weekly wages below \$899. Four counties reported weekly wages ranging from \$900 to \$999, three had wages from \$1,000 to \$1,099, and six had wages above \$1,100. The two highest-paid counties were located in the Boston metropolitan area, which includes the area encircled by Highway 128. (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 the QCEW Web site at 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 2018 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 2019 version of the national news release. Tables and additional content from *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* are now available at www.bls.gov/cew/publications/employment-and-wages-annual-averages/2018/home.htm.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; Federal Relay Services: 1-800-877-8339.

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.

Table 1. Covered employment and wages in the United States and the 9 largest counties in Massachusetts, first quarter 2019

Area	Employment			Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
	March 2019 (thousands)	Percent change, March 2018-19 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level ⁽³⁾	Percent change, first quarter 2018-19 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾
United States ⁽⁴⁾	146,497.6	1.4	--	\$1,184	--	2.8	--
Massachusetts	3,558.1	1.1	--	1,561	3	3.5	7
Barnstable, Mass.....	86.8	0.1	285	969	215	4.5	50
Bristol, Mass.....	224.8	0.6	232	999	198	4.2	60
Essex, Mass.....	321.5	0.2	275	1,229	77	3.5	92
Hampden, Mass.....	210.0	1.6	118	1,015	187	3.8	75
Middlesex, Mass.....	926.1	1.6	118	1,886	11	5.4	18
Norfolk, Mass.....	348.6	-0.3	316	1,324	55	3.4	102
Plymouth, Mass.....	191.6	0.7	224	1,058	157	5.4	18
Suffolk, Mass.....	686.4	2.4	48	2,270	5	0.2	319
Worcester, Mass.....	348.5	0.7	224	1,121	121	3.0	136

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 the counties in Massachusetts, first quarter 2019

Area	Employment March 2019	Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾
United States ⁽²⁾	146,497,599	\$1,184
Massachusetts	3,558,071	1,561
Barnstable	86,769	969
Berkshire	60,047	913
Bristol	224,765	999
Dukes	7,071	1,094
Essex.....	321,517	1,229
Franklin.....	25,992	827
Hampden.....	210,033	1,015
Hampshire	64,841	950
Middlesex	926,058	1,886
Nantucket	5,617	1,190
Norfolk.....	348,637	1,324
Plymouth	191,645	1,058
Suffolk.....	686,359	2,270
Worcester.....	348,517	1,121

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: Covered employment and wages include 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, first quarter 2019

State	Employment		Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
	March 2019 (thousands)	Percent change, March 2018-19	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, first quarter 2018-19	National ranking by percent change
United States ⁽²⁾	146,497.6	1.4	\$1,184	--	2.8	--
Alabama	1,978.0	1.6	944	38	2.5	32
Alaska	312.4	0.3	1,108	18	3.3	9
Arizona	2,895.1	2.5	1,056	22	3.0	21
Arkansas	1,218.5	0.7	896	45	2.2	38
California	17,436.4	1.8	1,401	5	3.8	4
Colorado	2,690.3	1.9	1,231	9	4.8	2
Connecticut	1,650.6	0.0	1,487	4	2.3	34
Delaware	444.1	1.3	1,199	13	-0.1	51
District of Columbia	773.5	0.5	1,921	1	0.2	49
Florida	8,894.3	2.1	1,015	26	2.7	25
Georgia	4,488.6	2.1	1,121	17	2.6	28
Hawaii	658.1	-0.4	1,006	27	3.4	8
Idaho	732.3	2.7	828	50	2.3	34
Illinois	5,912.0	0.1	1,275	8	2.7	25
Indiana	3,059.1	1.2	963	33	0.9	48
Iowa	1,527.1	0.1	942	39	2.3	34
Kansas	1,379.3	0.6	940	40	3.2	12
Kentucky	1,882.6	0.6	920	41	2.2	38
Louisiana	1,916.8	-0.1	954	34	2.5	32
Maine	599.8	1.2	919	42	3.1	16
Maryland	2,670.3	0.9	1,228	10	1.7	45
Massachusetts	3,558.1	1.1	1,561	3	3.5	7
Michigan	4,307.4	0.6	1,078	20	0.1	50
Minnesota	2,840.8	0.5	1,203	12	2.3	34
Mississippi	1,129.8	0.4	779	51	1.8	43
Missouri	2,788.4	0.5	986	31	2.6	28
Montana	458.8	0.9	844	49	3.1	16
Nebraska	965.6	0.1	917	43	2.2	38
Nevada	1,392.2	3.0	992	29	1.5	47
New Hampshire	656.2	1.2	1,156	15	3.1	16
New Jersey	4,040.2	1.3	1,399	6	1.7	45
New Mexico	825.4	1.3	890	47	3.2	12
New York	9,453.5	1.5	1,639	2	2.6	28
North Carolina	4,458.5	2.0	1,054	23	3.2	12
North Dakota	414.3	1.5	1,021	25	3.3	9
Ohio	5,363.2	0.7	1,035	24	3.0	21
Oklahoma	1,617.0	1.1	953	35	4.3	3
Oregon	1,921.9	1.3	1,060	21	3.3	9
Pennsylvania	5,850.3	1.1	1,146	16	2.8	24
Rhode Island	474.7	0.8	1,104	19	1.8	43
South Carolina	2,110.0	2.0	901	44	3.0	21
South Dakota	419.0	0.4	865	48	2.7	25
Tennessee	3,004.2	2.0	996	28	1.9	42
Texas	12,455.6	2.2	1,204	11	3.1	16
Utah	1,501.4	3.0	978	32	3.1	16
Vermont	309.1	0.4	950	36	3.7	5
Virginia	3,896.9	1.2	1,186	14	2.1	41
Washington	3,371.1	1.8	1,368	7	4.9	1
West Virginia	687.1	0.3	896	45	3.2	12
Wisconsin	2,838.9	0.1	992	29	2.6	28
Wyoming	269.0	1.9	948	37	3.7	5
Puerto Rico	875.8	2.2	553	(3)	-2.1	(3)

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 3. Covered employment and wages by state, first quarter 2019 - Continued

State	Employment		Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
	March 2019 (thousands)	Percent change, March 2018-19	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, first quarter 2018-19	National ranking by percent change
Virgin Islands.....	36.6	9.6	966	(3)	-1.0	(3)

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 Massachusetts, first quarter 2019

