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## **County Employment and Wages in North Carolina – Fourth Quarter 2016**

Employment increased in all of North Carolina's nine large counties from December 2015 to December 2016, 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 2015 annual average employment.) Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that employment increases ranged from 3.2 percent in Wake County to 0.1 percent in Cumberland County. (See [table 1](#).)

Nationally, employment advanced 1.2 percent from December 2015 to December 2016 as 280 of the 344 largest U.S. counties had increases. Williamson, Tenn., had the largest percentage increase, up 5.1 percent over the year. Lafayette, La., had the largest over-the-year percentage decrease in employment, with a loss of 5.1 percent.

Among the nine largest counties in North Carolina, employment was highest in Mecklenburg County (674,200) in December 2016, while Catawba County had the smallest employment level (87,300). Together, North Carolina's large counties accounted for 53.9 percent of total employment within the state. Nationwide, the 344 largest counties made up 72.8 percent of total U.S. employment, which stood at 143.7 million in December 2016.

Eight of North Carolina's 9 large counties had over-the-year wage decreases in December 2016, with the largest decline in Guilford County (-3.1 percent). Only Wake County had an increase in average weekly wages, up 0.7 percent over-the-year. Durham County had the highest weekly wage among the state's largest counties at \$1,254, followed by Mecklenburg (\$1,193) and Wake (\$1,085). Nationally, the average weekly wage declined 1.5 percent over the year to \$1,067 in the fourth quarter of 2016. (See [table 1](#).)

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 91 counties in North Carolina with employment below 75,000. With the exception of Orange County (\$1,101), wage levels in all of these smaller counties were below the U.S. average in December 2016. (See [table 2](#).)

### **Large county wage changes**

As noted, average weekly wages decreased in eight of the nine large counties in North Carolina from the fourth quarter of 2015 to the fourth quarter of 2016. The wage losses in three of the state's large counties placed in the bottom half of the national ranking—Guilford (-3.1 percent, 275<sup>th</sup>), Forsyth (-2.2 percent, 223<sup>rd</sup>), and Cumberland (-1.8 percent, 183<sup>rd</sup>). (See [table 1](#).)

Nationally, 290 of the 344 largest counties had over-the-year wage decreases. McLean, Ill., had the largest percentage wage decrease among the largest U.S. counties (-9.2 percent). Clay, Mo., was second with a wage decrease of -8.3 percent, followed by Lafayette, La. (-8.0 percent); Douglas, Colo. (-6.8 percent); and Passaic, N.J. (-6.0 percent).

Of the 344 largest counties, 48 had over-the-year increases in average weekly wages. Clayton, Ga., had the largest percentage increase in average weekly wages (11.3 percent), followed by Washington, Pa. (4.9 percent); Marin, Calif. (4.3 percent); Elkhart, Ind. (4.0 percent); and San Francisco, Calif. and Champaign, Ill. (3.7 percent each).

### **Large county average weekly wages**

Average weekly wages in three of North Carolina's nine large counties placed in the top quarter of the national ranking in the fourth quarter of 2016. The highest paid counties—Durham, Mecklenburg, and Wake—had average weekly wages above the U.S. average of \$1,067 and ranked in the top 85 nationwide. Average weekly wages in the state's six remaining large counties placed in the bottom half of the national ranking.

Nationwide, average weekly wages were at or above the U.S. average (\$1,067) in 101 of the 344 largest counties in the fourth quarter of 2016. Santa Clara, Calif., had the highest average weekly wage at \$2,365, followed by New York, N.Y. (\$2,212); San Mateo, Calif. (\$2,098); and San Francisco, Calif. (\$2,068).

Among the largest U.S. counties, 243 had average weekly wages below the national average in the fourth quarter of 2016. Cameron, Texas (\$640), reported the lowest weekly wage, followed by the counties of Hidalgo, Texas (\$648); Horry, S.C. (\$654); and Webb, Texas (\$683).

### **Average weekly wages in North Carolina's smaller counties**

With the exception of Orange County (\$1,101), all of the smaller counties in North Carolina—those with employment below 75,000—had average weekly wages lower than the national average of \$1,067. Among these smaller counties, Iredell had the second-highest average weekly wage at \$893, followed by Pitt at \$854. Clay County and Pamlico County each had an average weekly wage of \$591, the lowest in the state. (See [table 2](#).)

When all 100 counties in North Carolina were considered, 16 had average weekly wages below \$650, 56 had wages from \$650 to \$749, 19 had wages from \$750 to \$849, and 9 had wages above \$850. (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](http://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 the 2015 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages* are now available online at [www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn15.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn15.htm). The 2016 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* will be available in September 2017.

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**The County Employment and Wages release for first quarter 2017 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, September 6, 2017.**

## **Upcoming Industry Changes to QCEW Data**

Beginning with the release of first quarter 2017 data, the program will switch to the 2017 version of the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) as the basis for the assignment and tabulation of economic data by industry. For more information on the change, please see the Federal Register notice at [www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/federal\\_register\\_notices/notices/fr08au16.pdf](http://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/federal_register_notices/notices/fr08au16.pdf).

### **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 9.9 million employer reports cover 143.7 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/](http://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 9 largest counties in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2016**

Area	Employment			Average weekly wage <sup>(1)</sup>			
	December 2016 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2015-16 <sup>(2)</sup>	National ranking by percent change <sup>(3)</sup>	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level <sup>(3)</sup>	Percent change, fourth quarter 2015-16 <sup>(2)</sup>	National ranking by percent change <sup>(3)</sup>
United States <sup>(4)</sup> .....	143,749.9	1.2	--	\$1,067	--	-1.5	--
North Carolina .....	4,326.3	1.8	--	932	28	-0.7	13
Buncombe, N.C. ....	130.3	3.1	32	837	302	-0.7	95
Catawba, N.C. ....	87.3	3.1	32	818	310	-1.3	144
Cumberland, N.C.....	120.4	0.1	268	799	320	-1.8	183
Durham, N.C. ....	198.7	1.2	172	1,254	39	-1.6	168
Forsyth, N.C. ....	184.8	0.4	250	953	183	-2.2	223
Guilford, N.C.....	283.9	0.8	211	898	243	-3.1	275
Mecklenburg, N.C.....	674.2	2.1	98	1,193	56	-0.7	95
New Hanover, N.C.....	110.5	2.7	58	865	276	-0.2	60
Wake, N.C. ....	541.5	3.2	28	1,085	85	0.7	25

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 North Carolina, fourth quarter 2016**

Area	Employment December 2016	Average Weekly Wage(1)
United States(2)	143,749,910	\$1,067
North Carolina	4,326,302	932
Alamance	61,583	762
Alexander	8,994	644
Alleghany	3,166	600
Anson	7,244	646
Ashe	7,282	675
Avery	6,439	621
Beaufort	16,425	707
Bertie	6,275	613
Bladen	12,886	688
Brunswick	30,384	737
Buncombe	130,323	837
Burke	29,597	710
Cabarrus	77,738	802
Caldwell	24,674	724
Camden	1,414	719
Carteret	22,696	659
Caswell	3,039	657
Catawba	87,283	818
Chatham	14,683	743
Cherokee	8,051	640
Chowan	4,605	718
Clay	1,977	591
Cleveland	34,882	762
Columbus	15,564	675
Craven	40,090	843
Cumberland	120,383	799
Currituck	5,854	701
Dare	16,477	666
Davidson	43,848	766
Davie	12,804	685
Duplin	20,180	655
Durham	198,666	1,254
Edgecombe	16,869	701
Forsyth	184,785	953
Franklin	11,844	793
Gaston	71,207	760
Gates	1,508	669
Graham	1,947	651
Granville	21,209	834
Greene	4,220	668
Guilford	283,907	898
Halifax	15,813	659
Harnett	25,105	695
Haywood	17,319	697
Henderson	37,120	756
Hertford	9,157	691
Hoke	8,469	665
Hyde	1,752	634
Iredell	72,417	893
Jackson	13,241	711
Johnston	47,237	762
Jones	1,725	712
Lee	26,485	764
Lenoir	28,129	724

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

**Table 2. Covered employment and wages in the United States and all counties in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2016 - Continued**

Area	Employment December 2016	Average Weekly Wage(1)
Lincoln .....	22,576	772
McDowell .....	16,000	687
Macon .....	10,987	674
Madison .....	3,846	651
Martin .....	7,139	602
Mecklenburg .....	674,213	1,193
Mitchell .....	4,730	664
Montgomery .....	9,409	688
Moore .....	35,339	775
Nash .....	41,194	749
New Hanover .....	110,521	865
Northampton .....	5,376	679
Onslow .....	48,138	679
Orange .....	71,632	1,101
Pamlico .....	3,253	591
Pasquotank .....	15,873	708
Pender .....	11,275	682
Perquimans .....	2,104	639
Person .....	10,213	740
Pitt .....	76,477	854
Polk .....	5,034	599
Randolph .....	45,347	701
Richmond .....	13,593	669
Robeson .....	39,318	664
Rockingham .....	26,705	675
Rowan .....	47,561	812
Rutherford .....	18,349	668
Sampson .....	18,349	714
Scotland .....	11,775	713
Stanly .....	19,223	677
Stokes .....	7,172	597
Surry .....	28,545	680
Swain .....	10,000	666
Transylvania .....	8,686	683
Tyrrell .....	1,111	638
Union .....	62,615	842
Vance .....	15,374	677
Wake .....	541,477	1,085
Warren .....	3,234	603
Washington .....	3,404	739
Watauga .....	23,696	704
Wayne .....	42,471	719
Wilkes .....	22,270	669
Wilson .....	37,367	804
Yadkin .....	10,159	660
Yancey .....	3,750	620

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, fourth quarter 2016**

State	Employment		Average weekly wage <sup>(1)</sup>			
	December 2016 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2015-16	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2015-16	National ranking by percent change
United States <sup>(2)</sup>	143,749.9	1.2	\$1,067	--	-1.5	--
Alabama	1,932.6	0.7	901	35	-1.3	21
Alaska	310.0	-1.9	1,038	17	-5.2	51
Arizona	2,760.1	2.1	945	25	-2.2	34
Arkansas	1,205.4	0.4	827	47	-1.4	22
California	16,923.3	1.9	1,271	5	-0.3	4
Colorado	2,588.6	2.0	1,086	12	-1.5	24
Connecticut	1,685.5	0.0	1,289	4	-3.4	46
Delaware	441.2	-0.1	1,055	15	-2.9	44
District of Columbia	760.9	0.5	1,763	1	0.6	2
Florida	8,538.9	2.7	942	27	-1.8	28
Georgia	4,349.3	2.4	993	20	-0.9	14
Hawaii	658.3	0.7	954	24	-0.3	4
Idaho	691.6	3.2	800	50	-0.4	8
Illinois	5,947.6	0.4	1,122	9	-2	31
Indiana	3,021.7	0.9	883	38	-0.9	14
Iowa	1,542.0	0.1	911	33	-1	16
Kansas	1,384.5	0.1	877	39	-2.2	34
Kentucky	1,894.2	0.6	874	41	-1.4	22
Louisiana	1,907.4	-1.6	914	32	-2.9	44
Maine	602.6	0.8	855	43	-2.1	33
Maryland	2,666.7	1.0	1,169	7	-0.4	8
Massachusetts	3,530.4	1.3	1,352	2	-2.4	39
Michigan	4,283.0	1.5	1,026	19	-1.6	25
Minnesota	2,839.7	1.2	1,062	14	-1.1	18
Mississippi	1,134.0	0.0	756	51	-1.8	28
Missouri	2,783.2	0.9	918	31	-1.7	27
Montana	456.5	0.7	822	48	0.5	3
Nebraska	972.4	0.0	876	40	-0.5	10
Nevada	1,307.8	2.7	924	29	-1.2	20
New Hampshire	656.9	1.3	1,092	10	-4.1	48
New Jersey	4,042.1	1.4	1,239	6	-1.9	30
New Mexico	811.4	0.0	844	45	-2.5	41
New York	9,332.5	1.2	1,342	3	-2.3	36
North Carolina	4,326.3	1.8	932	28	-0.7	13
North Dakota	414.4	-3.2	978	21	-4.2	49
Ohio	5,365.6	0.7	943	26	-2.3	36
Oklahoma	1,587.7	-1.2	864	42	-3.5	47
Oregon	1,860.7	2.4	970	22	-1	16
Pennsylvania	5,799.8	0.7	1,039	16	-2.3	36
Rhode Island	478.3	0.0	1,027	18	-1.6	25
South Carolina	2,024.3	1.8	855	43	-0.6	12
South Dakota	419.9	0.5	828	46	-0.5	10
Tennessee	2,947.5	1.8	970	22	-1.1	18
Texas	11,974.7	1.2	1,072	13	-2.5	41
Utah	1,415.1	2.9	910	34	-0.3	4
Vermont	312.6	0.1	897	36	-2.4	39
Virginia	3,831.6	0.6	1,091	11	-0.3	4
Washington	3,227.9	2.8	1,150	8	1.7	1
West Virginia	693.1	-1.6	809	49	-2.5	41
Wisconsin	2,842.4	0.5	924	29	-2	31
Wyoming	265.8	-3.9	894	37	-4.7	50
Puerto Rico	928.2	-0.3	555	(3)	-1.9	(3)
Virgin Islands	38.5	0.2	769	(3)	-1.8	(3)

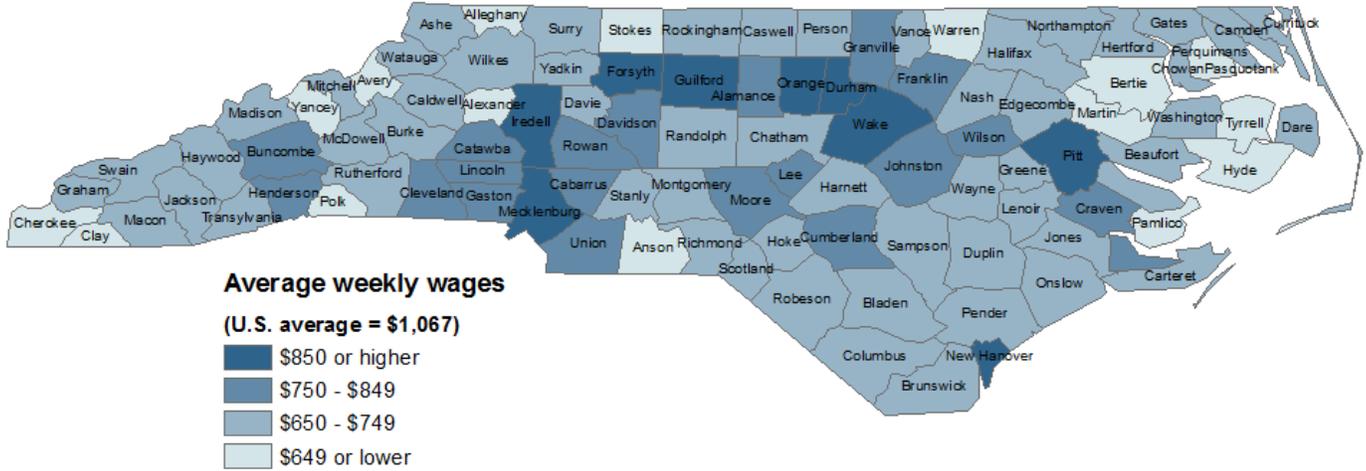
Note: See footnotes at end of table.

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 North Carolina, fourth quarter 2016**



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.