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Occupational Employment and Wages in Columbia – May 2016

Workers in the Columbia Metropolitan Statistical Area had an average (mean) hourly wage of \$20.78 in May 2016, about 13 percent below the nationwide average of \$23.86, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that, after testing for statistical significance, wages in the local area were lower than their respective national averages in 20 of the 22 major occupational groups including, computer and mathematical; business and financial operations; and sales and related.

When compared to the nationwide distribution, local employment was more highly concentrated in 7 of the 22 occupational groups, including office and administrative support; transportation and material moving; and healthcare practitioners and technical. Conversely, 10 groups had employment shares significantly below their national representation, including food preparation and serving related; personal care and service; and business and financial operations. (See [table A](#) and [box note](#) at end of release.)

Table A. Occupational employment and wages by major occupational group, United States and the Columbia Metropolitan Statistical Area, and measures of statistical significance, May 2016

Major occupational group	Percent of total employment		Mean hourly wage		
	United States	Columbia	United States	Columbia	Percent difference (1)
Total, all occupations	100.0	100.0	\$23.86	\$20.78*	-13
Management	5.1	4.8*	56.74	49.63*	-13
Business and financial operations	5.2	4.7*	36.09	29.18*	-19
Computer and mathematical	3.0	2.9	42.25	33.17*	-21
Architecture and engineering	1.8	1.7	40.53	33.34*	-18
Life, physical, and social science	0.8	0.5*	35.06	30.00*	-14
Community and social service.....	1.4	1.7*	22.69	19.57*	-14
Legal.....	0.8	1.1*	50.95	33.80*	-34
Education, training, and library.....	6.2	5.9*	26.21	22.75*	-13
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media.....	1.4	1.1*	28.07	22.26*	-21
Healthcare practitioners and technical	5.9	6.4*	38.06	33.78*	-11
Healthcare support	2.9	2.6	14.65	13.36*	-9
Protective service	2.4	3.1*	22.03	18.22*	-17
Food preparation and serving related	9.2	8.4*	11.47	9.58*	-16
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance ...	3.2	2.9*	13.47	11.88*	-12
Personal care and service.....	3.2	2.6*	12.74	11.31*	-11
Sales and related	10.4	10.6	19.50	16.28*	-17
Office and administrative support.....	15.7	16.8*	17.91	16.72*	-7
Farming, fishing, and forestry	0.3	0.2*	13.37	13.62	2
Construction and extraction.....	4.0	3.6*	23.51	19.87*	-15
Installation, maintenance, and repair	3.9	4.3*	22.45	21.18*	-6
Production	6.5	6.6	17.88	18.41	3
Transportation and material moving.....	6.9	7.6*	17.34	15.23*	-12

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Footnotes:

(1) A positive percent difference measures how much the mean wage in the Columbia Metropolitan Statistical Area is above the national mean wage, while a negative difference reflects a lower wage.

* The percent share of employment or mean hourly wage for this area is significantly different from the national average of all areas at the 90-percent confidence level.

One occupational group—office and administrative support—was chosen to illustrate the diversity of data available for any of the 22 major occupational categories. Columbia had 62,940 jobs in office and administrative support, accounting for 16.8 percent of local area employment, significantly higher than the 15.7-percent share nationally. The average hourly wage for this occupational group locally was \$16.72, significantly below the national wage of \$17.91.

Some of the larger detailed occupations within the office and administrative support group included customer service representatives (9,450), secretaries and administrative assistants, except legal, medical, and executive (7,910), and first-line supervisors of office and administrative support workers (6,870). Among the higher paying jobs were brokerage clerks and executive secretaries and executive administrative assistants, with mean hourly wages of \$24.97 and \$23.71, respectively. At the lower end of the wage scale were stock clerks and order fillers (\$11.40) and receptionists and information clerks (\$12.82). (Detailed occupational data for office and administrative support are presented in [table 1](#); for a complete listing of detailed occupations available go to www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_17900.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 than it does nationally. In the Columbia Metropolitan Statistical Area, above-average concentrations of employment were found in many of the occupations within the office and administrative support group. For instance, insurance claims and policy processing clerks were employed at 2.0 times the national rate in Columbia, and first-line supervisors of office and administrative support workers, at 1.8 times the U.S. average. On the other hand, bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks had a location quotient of 1.1 in Columbia, 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, the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce.

Note on Occupational Employment Statistics Data

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. The OES data available from BLS include cross-industry occupational employment and wage estimates for the nation; over 650 areas, including states and the District of Columbia, metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), metropolitan divisions, nonmetropolitan areas, and territories; national industry-specific estimates at the NAICS sector, 3-, 4-, and selected 5- and 6-digit industry levels, and national estimates by ownership across all industries and for schools and hospitals. OES data are available at www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm.

OES estimates are constructed from a sample of about 1.2 million establishments. Each year, two semiannual panels of approximately 200,000 sampled establishments are contacted, one panel in May and the other in November. Responses are obtained by mail, Internet or other electronic means, email, telephone, or personal visit. The May 2016 estimates are based on responses from six semiannual panels collected over a 3-year period: May 2016, November 2015, May 2015, November 2014, May 2014, and November 2013. The overall national response rate for the six panels, based on the 50 states and the District of Columbia, is 73 percent based on establishments and 69 percent based on weighted sampled employment. The unweighted employment of sampled establishments across all six semiannual panels represents approximately 58 percent of total national employment. The sample in the Columbia Metropolitan Statistical Area included 2,796 establishments with a response rate of 66 percent. For more information about OES concepts and methodology, go to www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.tn.htm.

The May 2016 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.

Metropolitan 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 **Columbia, S.C. Metropolitan Statistical Area** includes Calhoun, Fairfield, Kershaw, Lexington, Richland, and Saluda Counties.

Additional information

OES data are available on our regional web page at www.bls.gov/regions/southeast. 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: (800) 877-8339.

Table 1. Employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey, by occupation, Columbia Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2016

Occupation ⁽¹⁾	Employment		Mean wages	
	Level ⁽²⁾	Location quotient ⁽³⁾	Hourly	Annual ⁽⁴⁾
Office and administrative support occupations.....	62,940	1.1	\$16.72	\$34,780
First-line supervisors of office and administrative support workers.....	6,870	1.8	24.26	50,460
Switchboard operators, including answering service.....	290	1.2	13.87	28,850
Bill and account collectors.....	1,160	1.5	16.10	33,490
Billing and posting clerks.....	1,570	1.2	16.46	34,230
Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks.....	4,510	1.1	17.40	36,190
Payroll and timekeeping clerks.....	300	0.7	19.80	41,170
Procurement clerks.....	300	1.6	20.76	43,180
Tellers.....	1,100	0.8	13.60	28,290
Brokerage clerks.....	(5)	(5)	24.97	51,940
Court, municipal, and license clerks.....	290	0.8	18.51	38,500
Credit authorizers, checkers, and clerks.....	140	1.4	17.89	37,200
Customer service representatives.....	9,450	1.3	16.13	33,550
Eligibility interviewers, government programs.....	70	0.2	19.43	40,420
File clerks.....	360	1.0	13.39	27,840
Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks.....	820	1.2	10.09	20,980
Interviewers, except eligibility and loan.....	630	1.3	14.63	30,440
Library assistants, clerical.....	280	1.1	11.88	24,700
Loan interviewers and clerks.....	540	0.9	18.51	38,510
Order clerks.....	330	0.7	17.54	36,480
Human resources assistants, except payroll and timekeeping.....	470	1.3	17.74	36,910
Receptionists and information clerks.....	2,100	0.8	12.82	26,660
Reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks.....	180	0.5	14.63	30,430
Information and record clerks, all other.....	330	0.8	19.74	41,060
Cargo and freight agents.....	100	0.4	18.76	39,010
Couriers and messengers.....	310	1.6	11.49	23,900
Police, fire, and ambulance dispatchers.....	260	1.0	14.89	30,970
Dispatchers, except police, fire, and ambulance.....	340	0.7	20.16	41,930
Meter readers, utilities.....	140	1.5	16.51	34,350
Postal service clerks.....	130	0.6	23.58	49,060
Postal service mail carriers.....	820	0.9	24.06	50,050
Postal service mail sorters, processors, and processing machine operators.....	460	1.6	22.77	47,360
Production, planning, and expediting clerks.....	1,150	1.4	24.60	51,180
Shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks.....	2,000	1.1	13.93	28,980
Stock clerks and order fillers.....	4,320	0.8	11.40	23,710
Weighers, measurers, checkers, and samplers, recordkeeping.....	440	2.2	12.70	26,410
Executive secretaries and executive administrative assistants.....	1,040	0.6	23.71	49,320
Legal secretaries.....	460	0.9	20.83	43,330
Medical secretaries.....	1,790	1.2	16.02	33,320
Secretaries and administrative assistants, except legal, medical, and executive.....	7,910	1.3	15.84	32,960
Computer operators.....	130	1.0	21.20	44,100
Data entry keyers.....	540	1.0	13.70	28,500
Insurance claims and policy processing clerks.....	1,450	2.0	15.62	32,480
Mail clerks and mail machine operators, except postal service.....	280	1.2	14.06	29,250
Office clerks, general.....	5,470	0.7	13.18	27,410
Office machine operators, except computer.....	140	0.9	14.62	30,410
Statistical assistants.....	80	2.6	19.70	40,980

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Footnotes:

- (1) For a complete listing of all detailed occupations in the Columbia, SC Metropolitan Statistical Area, see www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_17900.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.