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Occupational Employment and Wages in Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton – May 2016

Workers in the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area had an average (mean) hourly wage of \$18.72 in May 2016, about 22 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 significantly lower than their respective national averages in 20 of the 22 major occupational groups, including construction and extraction; business and financial operations; and sales and related.

When compared to the nationwide distribution, local employment was more highly concentrated in 4 of the 22 occupational groups, including production and transportation and material moving. Conversely, 15 groups had employment shares significantly below their national representation, including business and financial operations; office and administrative support; and management. (See [table A](#) and [box note](#) at end of release.)

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

Major occupational group	Percent of total employment		Mean hourly wage		
	United States	Hickory	United States	Hickory	Percent difference (1)
Total, all occupations	100.0	100.0	\$23.86	\$18.72*	-22
Management	5.1	3.2*	56.74	52.29*	-8
Business and financial operations	5.2	2.4*	36.09	29.57*	-18
Computer and mathematical	3.0	0.9*	42.25	31.66*	-25
Architecture and engineering	1.8	1.0*	40.53	32.99*	-19
Life, physical, and social science	0.8	0.3*	35.06	24.31*	-31
Community and social service.....	1.4	1.4	22.69	19.56*	-14
Legal.....	0.8	0.2*	50.95	32.83*	-36
Education, training, and library.....	6.2	5.0*	26.21	19.82*	-24
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media.....	1.4	0.6*	28.07	22.49*	-20
Healthcare practitioners and technical	5.9	6.0	38.06	36.97	-3
Healthcare support	2.9	5.2*	14.65	12.59*	-14
Protective service	2.4	2.3	22.03	15.45*	-30
Food preparation and serving related	9.2	8.5*	11.47	10.03*	-13
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance ...	3.2	2.0*	13.47	11.66*	-13
Personal care and service.....	3.2	1.6*	12.74	11.62*	-9
Sales and related	10.4	9.4*	19.50	16.76*	-14
Office and administrative support.....	15.7	13.3*	17.91	15.61*	-13
Farming, fishing, and forestry	0.3	0.1*	13.37	13.11	-2
Construction and extraction.....	4.0	2.0*	23.51	17.83*	-24
Installation, maintenance, and repair	3.9	4.3*	22.45	19.73*	-12
Production	6.5	20.5*	17.88	16.17*	-10
Transportation and material moving.....	6.9	9.8*	17.34	15.58*	-10

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Footnotes:

(1) A positive percent difference measures how much the mean wage in the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton 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—production—was chosen to illustrate the diversity of data available for any of the 22 major occupational categories. Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton had 30,480 jobs in production, accounting for 20.5 percent of local area employment, significantly higher than the 6.5-percent share nationally. The average hourly wage for this occupational group locally was \$16.17, significantly below the national wage of \$17.88.

Some of the larger detailed occupations within the production group included team assemblers (3,870), upholsterers (3,310), and sewing machine operators (2,310). Among the higher paying jobs were first-line supervisors of production and operating workers, and metal and plastic extruding and drawing machine setters, operators, and tenders, with mean hourly wages of \$25.61 and \$20.39, respectively. At the lower end of the wage scale were production workers' helpers (\$12.82) and textile bleaching and dyeing machine operators and tenders (\$13.50). (Detailed occupational data for production are presented in [table 1](#); for a complete listing of detailed occupations available go to www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_25860.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 Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area, above-average concentrations of employment were found in many of the occupations within the production group. For instance, upholsterers were employed at 96.0 times the national rate in Hickory, and textile bleaching and dyeing machine operators and tenders, at 49.5 times the U.S. average. On the other hand, machinists had a location quotient of 1.2 in Hickory, 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 North Carolina Department of Commerce.

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 Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area included 1,714 establishments with a response rate of 90 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 **Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton, N.C. Metropolitan Statistical Area** includes Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba 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, Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2016

Occupation ⁽¹⁾	Employment		Mean wages	
	Level ⁽²⁾	Location quotient ⁽³⁾	Hourly	Annual ⁽⁴⁾
Production occupations	30,480	3.2	\$16.17	\$33,620
First-line supervisors of production and operating workers	1,930	3.0	25.61	53,270
Electrical and electronic equipment assemblers	240	1.0	15.27	31,760
Structural metal fabricators and fitters	110	1.4	15.13	31,470
Team assemblers	3,870	3.3	13.54	28,160
Assemblers and fabricators, all other	120	0.5	14.85	30,880
Bakers	190	1.0	(5)	(5)
Butchers and meat cutters	130	0.9	14.26	29,660
Computer-controlled machine tool operators, metal and plastic	270	1.8	16.02	33,320
Computer numerically controlled machine tool programmers, metal and plastic	70	2.5	16.14	33,570
Extruding and drawing machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	630	8.2	20.39	42,410
Cutting, punching, and press machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	460	2.3	12.78	26,590
Grinding, lapping, polishing, and buffing machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	70	0.9	17.78	36,980
Lathe and turning machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	60	1.7	17.85	37,120
Milling and planing machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	50	2.4	17.92	37,270
Machinists	480	1.2	19.02	39,570
Molding, coremaking, and casting machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	460	3.0	14.74	30,660
Tool and die makers	130	1.6	22.73	47,290
Welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers	570	1.4	18.53	38,550
Heat treating equipment setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	80	3.8	15.82	32,920
Printing press operators	280	1.6	17.11	35,580
Laundry and dry-cleaning workers	290	1.3	10.51	21,860
Pressers, textile, garment, and related materials	50	0.9	9.69	20,160
Sewing machine operators	2,310	15.7	15.65	32,550
Sewers, hand	30	5.0	13.74	28,570
Textile bleaching and dyeing machine operators and tenders	570	49.5	13.50	28,070
Textile cutting machine setters, operators, and tenders ..	410	25.6	17.58	36,570
Textile knitting and weaving machine setters, operators, and tenders	480	20.8	13.58	28,250
Textile winding, twisting, and drawing out machine setters, operators, and tenders	470	14.8	12.32	25,620
Extruding and forming machine setters, operators, and tenders, synthetic and glass fibers	100	5.0	14.08	29,290
Fabric and apparel patternmakers	140	24.7	22.41	46,610
Upholsterers	3,310	96.0	19.56	40,680
Textile, apparel, and furnishings workers, all other	130	8.0	15.21	31,640
Cabinetmakers and bench carpenters	520	5.0	13.78	28,670
Furniture finishers	460	25.1	14.36	29,870
Model makers, wood	50	42.4	20.35	42,320
Sawing machine setters, operators, and tenders, wood .	230	4.3	13.98	29,090
Woodworking machine setters, operators, and tenders, except sawing	1,220	15.2	14.95	31,090
Water and wastewater treatment plant and system operators	170	1.4	18.08	37,600
Chemical equipment operators and tenders	100	1.3	14.65	30,470
Separating, filtering, clarifying, precipitating, and still machine setters, operators, and tenders	30	0.7	13.75	28,590
Grinding and polishing workers, hand	230	8.0	12.16	25,280

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 1. Employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey, by occupation, Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2016 - Continued

Occupation ⁽¹⁾	Employment		Mean wages	
	Level ⁽²⁾	Location quotient ⁽³⁾	Hourly	Annual ⁽⁴⁾
Mixing and blending machine setters, operators, and tenders	210	1.6	14.55	30,270
Cutters and trimmers, hand	640	42.7	17.73	36,880
Cutting and slicing machine setters, operators, and tenders	680	10.4	15.44	32,120
Extruding, forming, pressing, and compacting machine setters, operators, and tenders	370	5.0	14.48	30,110
Furnace, kiln, oven, drier, and kettle operators and tenders	50	2.3	15.77	32,790
Inspectors, testers, sorters, samplers, and weighers	1,560	2.8	15.12	31,460
Jewelers and precious stone and metal workers	30	1.1	21.21	44,110
Dental laboratory technicians	130	3.4	17.25	35,880
Packaging and filling machine operators and tenders ...	920	2.3	13.92	28,940
Coating, painting, and spraying machine setters, operators, and tenders	430	4.8	14.58	30,320
Painters, transportation equipment	30	0.6	19.48	40,520
Painting, coating, and decorating workers	50	3.2	16.63	34,580
Photographic process workers and processing machine operators	40	1.4	12.25	25,490
Adhesive bonding machine operators and tenders	300	17.0	12.27	25,520
Paper goods machine setters, operators, and tenders ...	310	3.1	16.40	34,120
Helpers--production workers	1,250	2.7	12.82	26,670
Production workers, all other	300	1.1	14.98	31,150

Footnotes:

- (1) For a complete listing of all detailed occupations in the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area, see www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_25860.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.