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County Employment and Wages in North Carolina – Fourth Quarter 2019

Employment rose in 9 of North Carolina's 11 large counties from December 2018 to December 2019, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (Large counties are those with annual average employment levels of 75,000 or more in 2018.) Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that employment increases ranged from 3.0 percent in Durham County to 0.7 percent in Cumberland County. (See [table 1.](#))

Nationally, employment increased 1.2 percent over the year with 285 of the 355 largest U.S. counties reporting increases. Cleveland, OK, had the largest percentage increase in the country, up 5.8 percent over the year. Ector, TX, had the largest over-the-year percentage decrease in employment with a loss of 4.2 percent.

Among the 11 largest counties in North Carolina, employment was highest in Mecklenburg County (727,500) in December 2019, while Pitt County had the smallest employment level (78,200). Together, North Carolina's 11 large counties accounted for 57.8 percent of total employment within the state. Nationwide, the 355 largest counties made up 73.7 percent of total U.S. employment.

Nine of North Carolina's large counties reported average weekly wage gains from the fourth quarter of 2018 to the fourth quarter of 2019, with the largest gain in Guilford County, up 4.0 percent. Durham County had the highest average weekly wage among the state's largest counties (\$1,388). Nationally, the average weekly wage increased 3.5 percent from a year ago to \$1,185 in the fourth quarter of 2019.

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 89 counties in North Carolina with employment below 75,000. Average weekly wages in these counties ranged from \$1,226 to \$649. (See [table 2.](#))

Large county wage changes

In the fourth quarter of 2019, Guilford County (4.0 percent) and Mecklenburg County (3.7 percent) were the only large counties in North Carolina to have over-the-year wage gains above the national average of 3.5 percent. Wages declined over the year for Wake County (-3.3 percent) and Cumberland County (-0.9 percent).

Nationally, 341 of the 355 largest counties had over-the-year wage increases. Santa Cruz, CA, had the largest percentage wage increase (20.7 percent). The remaining 14 large counties had wage declines during the period. Linn, IA, had the largest over-the-year percentage decrease (-7.1 percent).

Large county average weekly wages

Among North Carolina's large counties, Durham (\$1,388, 41st), Mecklenburg (\$1,316, 51st), and Wake (\$1,213, 80th), had average weekly wages above the U.S average of \$1,185 and ranked in the top 100 nationwide. Average weekly wages in the state's eight remaining large counties placed in the bottom half of the national ranking in the fourth quarter of 2019.

Nationally, 93 large counties reported average weekly wages at or above the U.S. average in the fourth quarter of 2019. Santa Clara, CA, had the highest average weekly wage at \$2,825. Average weekly wages were below the national average in 262 counties. At \$701 a week, Cameron, TX, had the lowest average weekly wage.

Average weekly wages in North Carolina's smaller counties

Among the 89 smaller counties in North Carolina—those with employment below 75,000—only Orange County (\$1,226) had an average weekly wage above the national average of \$1,185. Clay County had the lowest average weekly wage in state, averaging \$649 per week in the fourth quarter of 2019.

When all 100 counties in North Carolina were considered, 10 reported average weekly wages of \$699 or below, 57 had wages from \$700 to \$799, 19 had wages from \$800 to \$899, 9 had wages from \$900 to \$999, and 5 had wages of \$1,000 or higher in the fourth quarter of 2019. (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.

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, which was published in September 2019, 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 this news release. Tables and additional content from the 2018 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* are now available at www.bls.gov/cew/publications/employment-and-wages-annual-averages/2018/home.htm. The 2019 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* will be available in September 2020.

The County Employment and Wages release for first quarter 2020 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, August 19, 2020. The County Employment and Wages full data update for first quarter 2020 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, September 2, 2020.

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.

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 11 largest counties in North Carolina, fourth quarter 2019

Area	Employment			Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
	December 2019 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2018-19 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level ⁽³⁾	Percent change, fourth quarter 2018-19 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾
United States ⁽⁴⁾	149,857.1	1.2	--	\$1,185	--	3.5	--
North Carolina	4,546.9	1.9	--	1,036	28	2.4	45
Buncombe	136.4	1.4	132	917	307	2.5	246
Cabarrus	78.6	1.5	114	856	338	3.5	149
Catawba	89.2	-0.7	327	885	327	2.7	226
Cumberland	122.3	0.7	204	869	332	-0.9	350
Durham	213.4	3.0	20	1,388	41	2.2	272
Forsyth	193.6	1.9	81	1,045	194	3.5	149
Guilford	288.4	1.0	175	992	239	4.0	109
Mecklenburg	727.5	2.9	28	1,316	51	3.7	133
New Hanover	119.3	2.9	28	936	295	2.9	213
Pitt	78.2	-0.2	298	914	314	1.7	304
Wake	582.9	2.7	39	1,213	80	-3.3	352

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. 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 2019

Area	Employment December 2019	Average weekly wage(1)
United States(2)	149,857,130	\$1,185
North Carolina	4,546,869	1,036
Alamance	63,297	839
Alexander	9,463	681
Alleghany	3,143	655
Anson	6,930	712
Ashe	7,403	744
Avery	6,400	689
Beaufort	15,554	743
Bertie	5,689	680
Bladen	12,901	752
Brunswick	32,563	806
Buncombe	136,416	917
Burke	30,020	778
Cabarrus	78,590	856
Caldwell	25,504	789
Camden	1,253	761
Carteret	23,380	751
Caswell	2,977	748
Catawba	89,234	885
Chatham	15,695	799
Cherokee	7,997	701
Chowan	4,777	772
Clay	2,050	649
Cleveland	35,790	825
Columbus	15,443	719
Craven	40,229	923
Cumberland	122,301	869
Currituck	6,366	732
Dare	16,710	741
Davidson	44,455	857
Davie	13,020	804
Duplin	19,049	726
Durham	213,448	1,388
Edgecombe	15,972	761
Forsyth	193,612	1,045
Franklin	12,386	883
Gaston	74,846	849
Gates	1,608	753
Graham	1,986	734
Granville	20,898	913
Greene	4,465	738
Guilford	288,428	992
Halifax	15,621	706
Harnett	25,789	744
Haywood	17,897	748
Henderson	40,484	837
Hertford	9,205	783
Hoke	8,882	723
Hyde	1,708	711
Iredell	77,158	983
Jackson	14,354	776
Johnston	51,993	823
Jones	1,645	726
Lee	25,818	858
Lenoir	28,675	797

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 2019 - Continued

Area	Employment December 2019	Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾
Lincoln	25,213	885
McDowell	15,843	740
Macon	11,354	758
Madison	4,044	716
Martin	6,578	662
Mecklenburg	727,463	1,316
Mitchell	4,655	778
Montgomery	9,330	765
Moore	37,332	844
Nash	41,298	829
New Hanover	119,265	936
Northampton	5,443	709
Onslow	49,468	734
Orange	73,128	1,226
Pamlico	3,266	666
Pasquotank	15,361	788
Pender	12,778	745
Perquimans	2,127	731
Person	9,630	804
Pitt	78,238	914
Polk	5,060	674
Randolph	45,356	760
Richmond	13,660	712
Robeson	39,615	731
Rockingham	25,116	723
Rowan	49,110	887
Rutherford	18,576	729
Sampson	18,249	795
Scotland	12,143	787
Stanly	19,474	748
Stokes	7,641	667
Surry	28,616	743
Swain	10,036	740
Transylvania	9,242	740
Tyrrell	1,111	703
Union	66,059	925
Vance	14,441	715
Wake	582,930	1,213
Warren	2,981	693
Washington	3,171	800
Watauga	24,659	749
Wayne	41,894	783
Wilkes	21,030	750
Wilson	36,901	919
Yadkin	9,782	742
Yancey	4,513	791

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 2019

State	Employment		Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
	December 2019 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2018-19	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2018-19	National ranking by percent change
United States ⁽²⁾	149,857.1	1.2	\$1,185	--	3.5	--
Alabama	2,007.9	1.0	985	36	2.6	39
Alaska	309.9	0.6	1,139	16	3.2	27
Arizona	2,999.8	2.7	1,059	23	4.1	7
Arkansas	1,232.9	0.5	898	50	3.2	27
California	17,836.3	1.5	1,457	4	4.7	4
Colorado	2,772.6	2.2	1,227	9	4.0	8
Connecticut	1,687.4	-0.7	1,383	5	3.8	11
Delaware	455.3	0.8	1,136	17	2.6	39
District of Columbia	782.5	0.8	1,992	1	2.5	42
Florida	9,085.5	2.0	1,044	26	3.6	14
Georgia.....	4,576.1	1.7	1,090	21	3.6	14
Hawaii.....	665.1	-0.8	1,053	24	3.5	17
Idaho	756.9	3.1	918	46	3.1	32
Illinois	6,043.5	0.2	1,221	10	2.7	38
Indiana.....	3,106.0	0.6	969	38	3.0	34
Iowa	1,560.4	0.1	984	37	1.9	47
Kansas	1,410.7	0.6	959	40	3.5	17
Kentucky.....	1,928.3	0.8	955	41	3.2	27
Louisiana	1,927.7	-0.5	993	34	2.5	42
Maine.....	620.2	0.7	955	41	5.3	2
Maryland.....	2,728.1	0.9	1,271	8	3.5	17
Massachusetts	3,660.8	0.9	1,511	2	3.8	11
Michigan	4,385.3	0.4	1,115	18	3.4	22
Minnesota.....	2,912.8	0.4	1,177	14	3.2	27
Mississippi.....	1,145.0	0.0	818	51	3.2	27
Missouri	2,846.2	0.9	1,010	32	3.0	34
Montana	474.1	1.1	918	46	3.4	22
Nebraska	990.9	0.7	969	38	4.2	6
Nevada	1,435.5	2.7	1,030	29	2.4	45
New Hampshire.....	671.3	0.8	1,192	12	2.9	37
New Jersey.....	4,157.4	0.8	1,332	7	2.5	42
New Mexico	844.0	1.5	942	44	4.0	8
New York	9,691.0	0.8	1,499	3	3.7	13
North Carolina	4,546.9	1.9	1,036	28	2.4	45
North Dakota	424.6	0.5	1,085	22	2.6	39
Ohio	5,477.2	0.5	1,037	27	3.1	32
Oklahoma	1,639.4	0.3	945	43	1.4	49
Oregon	1,969.3	1.6	1,100	19	4.6	5
Pennsylvania	5,985.9	0.8	1,143	15	3.6	14
Rhode Island	489.8	0.6	1,099	20	1.1	50
South Carolina.....	2,144.8	1.2	931	45	4.0	8
South Dakota.....	430.7	0.6	916	48	3.5	17
Tennessee	3,085.4	1.6	1,047	25	1.6	48
Texas	12,793.0	2.0	1,187	13	3.4	22
Utah	1,547.8	2.5	1,022	30	5.0	3
Vermont.....	314.0	-0.4	987	35	3.5	17
Virginia.....	3,978.7	1.2	1,204	11	3.4	22
Washington.....	3,457.7	2.2	1,370	6	6.4	1
West Virginia	690.3	-2.0	904	49	-1.4	51
Wisconsin	2,898.0	0.2	1,022	30	3.3	26
Wyoming	276.3	1.4	1,007	33	3.0	34
Puerto Rico.....	910.7	1.5	575	(3)	-0.2	(3)
Virgin Islands.....	39.2	10.8	1,065	(3)	13.5	(3)

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Footnotes:

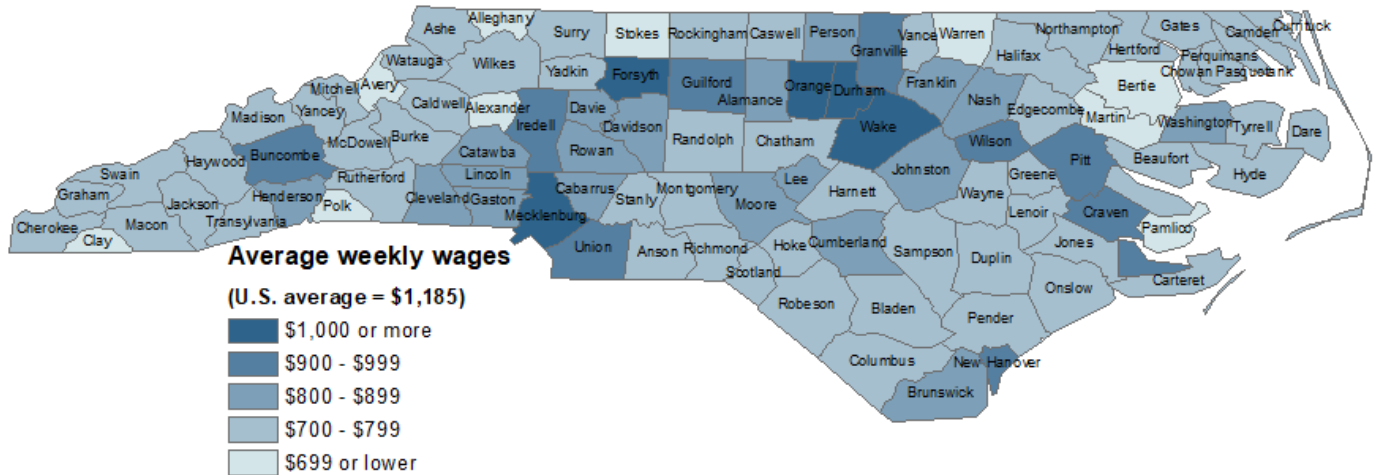
(1) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(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. 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 2019



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.