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Occupational Employment and Wages in Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton — May 2019

Workers in the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area had an average (mean) hourly wage of \$20.11 in May 2019, about 22 percent below the nationwide average of \$25.72, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that, after testing for statistical significance, 1 of the 22 major occupational groups had an average wage in the local area that was significantly higher than its respective national average. Twenty groups had significantly lower wages than their respective national averages, including construction and extraction, business and financial operations, and healthcare support.

When compared to the nationwide distribution, Hickory area employment was more highly concentrated in 3 of the 22 occupational groups: production; transportation and material moving; and installation, maintenance, and repair. Fifteen groups had employment shares significantly below their national representation, including business and financial operations, management, and office and administrative support. (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, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area, and measures of statistical significance, May 2019

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	\$25.72	\$20.11*	-22
Management	5.5	3.4*	58.88	52.19*	-11
Business and financial operations.....	5.6	2.7*	37.56	31.06*	-17
Computer and mathematical	3.1	1.0*	45.08	35.03*	-22
Architecture and engineering	1.8	1.1*	42.69	34.91*	-18
Life, physical, and social science	0.9	0.4*	37.28	26.58*	-29
Community and social service.....	1.5	1.3*	24.27	21.79*	-10
Legal.....	0.8	0.3*	52.71	31.68*	-40
Educational instruction and library	6.1	5.2*	27.75	21.36*	-23
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media.....	1.4	0.7*	29.79	21.77*	-27
Healthcare practitioners and technical	5.9	5.5*	40.21	38.03	-5
Healthcare support	4.4	4.5	14.91	12.66*	-15
Protective service	2.4	2.3	23.98	17.92*	-25
Food preparation and serving related	9.2	8.4*	12.82	10.47*	-18
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance ...	3.0	2.0*	15.03	12.48*	-17
Personal care and service.....	2.2	1.5*	15.03	12.87*	-14
Sales and related	9.8	9.7	20.70	18.96*	-8
Office and administrative support.....	13.3	11.3*	19.73	17.23*	-13
Farming, fishing, and forestry	0.3	(2)	15.07	16.30*	8
Construction and extraction.....	4.2	2.6*	25.28	19.23*	-24
Installation, maintenance, and repair	3.9	4.5*	24.10	21.09*	-12

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table A. Occupational employment and wages by major occupational group, United States and the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area, and measures of statistical significance, May 2019 - Continued

Major occupational group	Percent of total employment		Mean hourly wage		
	United States	Hickory	United States	Hickory	Percent difference ⁽¹⁾
Production	6.2	20.6*	19.30	17.45*	-10
Transportation and material moving	8.5	11.1*	18.23	16.51*	-9

Footnotes:

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

(2) Estimate not released

* The mean hourly wage or percent share of employment 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 had 31,690 jobs in production occupations, accounting for 20.6 percent of local area employment, significantly higher than the 6.2-percent share nationally. The local average hourly wage for this occupational group was \$17.45, significantly lower than the national wage of \$19.30.

Some of the larger detailed occupations within the production group included miscellaneous assemblers and fabricators (4,210), upholsterers (3,280), and sewing machine operators (2,410). Among the higher-paying jobs in this group were first-line supervisors of production and operating workers, and tool and die makers, with mean hourly wages of \$26.87 and \$22.60, respectively. At the lower end of the wage scale were meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers (\$11.52) and laundry and dry-cleaning workers (11.58). (Detailed data for the production occupations 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 area, above-average concentrations of employment were found in many of the occupations within the production group. For instance, upholsters were employed at 106.8 times the national rate in Hickory, and furniture finishers, at 33.3 times the U.S. average. Water and wastewater treatment plant and system operators had a location quotient of 1.0 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.

Changes to the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Data

With the May 2019 estimates, the OES program has begun implementing the 2018 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system. Each set of OES estimates is calculated from six panels of survey data collected over three years. Because the May 2019 estimates are based on a combination of survey data collected using the 2010 SOC and survey data collected using the 2018 SOC, these estimates use a hybrid of the two classification systems that contains some combinations of occupations that are not found in either the 2010 or 2018 SOC. These combinations may include occupations from more than one 2018 SOC minor group or broad occupation. Therefore, OES will not publish data for some 2018 SOC minor groups and broad occupations in the May 2019 estimates. The May 2021 estimates, to be published in Spring 2022, will be the first OES estimates based entirely on survey data collected using the 2018 SOC.

In addition, the OES program has replaced some 2018 SOC detailed occupations with SOC broad occupations or OES-specific aggregations. These include home health aides and personal care aides, for which OES will publish only the 2018 SOC broad occupation 31-1120 Home Health and Personal Care Aides.

For more information on the occupational classification system used in the May 2019 OES estimates, please see www.bls.gov/oes/soc_2018.htm and www.bls.gov/oes/oes_ques.htm#qf10.

The May 2019 OES estimates use the metropolitan area definitions delineated in Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Bulletin 17-01, which add a new Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) for Twin Falls, Idaho. For more information on the area definitions used in the May 2019 estimates, please see www.bls.gov/oes/current/msa_def.htm.

Technical Note

The Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey is a semiannual 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 580 areas, including states and the District of Columbia, metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), nonmetropolitan areas, and territories; national industry-specific estimates at the NAICS sector, 3-digit, most 4-digit, 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.

The OES survey is a cooperative effort between BLS and the State Workforce Agencies (SWAs). BLS funds the survey and provides the procedures and technical support, while the State Workforce Agencies collect most of the data. OES estimates are constructed from a sample of about 1.1 million establishments. Each year, two semiannual panels of approximately 180,000 to 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 2019 estimates are based on responses from six semiannual panels collected over a 3-year period: May 2019, November 2018, May 2018, November 2017, May 2017, and November 2016. The unweighted sample employment of 83 million across all six semiannual panels represents approximately 57 percent of total national employment. The overall national response rate for the six panels, based on the 50 states and the District of Columbia, is 71 percent based on establishments and 68

percent based on weighted sampled employment. The sample in the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area included 1,635 establishments with a response rate of 81 percent. For more information about OES concepts and methodology, go to www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_tec.htm.

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.

The May 2019 OES estimates are the first set of OES estimates to be based in part on survey data collected using the 2018 SOC. These estimates use a hybrid of the 2010 and 2018 SOC systems. More information on the hybrid classification system is available at www.bls.gov/oes/soc_2018.htm.

The May 2019 OES estimates are based on the 2017 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). More information about the 2017 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, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area** includes Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties.

For more information

Answers to frequently asked questions about the OES data are available at www.bls.gov/oes/oes_ques.htm. Detailed information about the OES program is available at www.bls.gov/oes/oes_doc.htm.

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 for production occupations, Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2019

Occupation ⁽¹⁾	Employment		Mean wages	
	Level ⁽²⁾	Location quotient ⁽³⁾	Hourly	Annual ⁽⁴⁾
Production occupations	31,690	3.3	\$17.45	\$36,300
First-line supervisors of production and operating workers	1,800	2.7	26.87	55,880
Coil winders, tapers, and finishers	(5)	(5)	15.64	32,540
Electrical, electronic, and electromechanical assemblers, except coil winders, tapers, and finishers	710	2.4	17.00	35,370
Structural metal fabricators and fitters	50	0.6	18.63	38,750
Miscellaneous assemblers and fabricators	4,210	2.9	14.02	29,150
Bakers	120	0.6	12.87	26,760
Butchers and meat cutters	70	0.5	17.40	36,200
Meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers	450	2.8	11.52	23,970
Slaughterers and meat packers	50	0.7	12.95	26,930
Food batchmakers	(5)	(5)	19.16	39,860
Food processing workers, all other	80	1.8	11.46	23,830
Extruding and drawing machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	1,520	18.9	20.33	42,290
Forging machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	110	6.5	19.40	40,350
Rolling machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	50	1.4	19.18	39,890
Cutting, punching, and press machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	480	2.4	13.85	28,810
Grinding, lapping, polishing, and buffing machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	140	1.8	16.67	34,660
Lathe and turning machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	(5)	(5)	24.04	49,990
Machinists	440	1.1	19.76	41,100
Molding, coremaking, and casting machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	410	2.3	15.45	32,140
Tool and die makers	110	1.5	22.60	47,010
Welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers	580	1.4	17.99	37,410
Heat treating equipment setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	100	5.1	15.11	31,430
Prepress technicians and workers	50	1.6	17.34	36,080
Printing press operators	250	1.4	19.80	41,170
Print binding and finishing workers	(5)	(5)	13.93	28,970
Laundry and dry-cleaning workers	340	1.5	11.58	24,080
Sewing machine operators	2,410	17.3	17.46	36,310
Textile bleaching and dyeing machine operators and tenders	650	72.0	14.45	30,060
Textile cutting machine setters, operators, and tenders ..	380	27.7	16.55	34,420
Textile knitting and weaving machine setters, operators, and tenders	290	13.2	14.86	30,910
Textile winding, twisting, and drawing out machine setters, operators, and tenders	730	22.5	12.96	26,960
Extruding and forming machine setters, operators, and tenders, synthetic and glass fibers	(5)	(5)	16.47	34,260
Fabric and apparel patternmakers	130	20.7	22.08	45,920
Upholsterers	3,280	106.8	21.43	44,570
Textile, apparel, and furnishings workers, all other	330	17.4	13.72	28,540
Cabinetmakers and bench carpenters	570	5.5	13.17	27,400
Furniture finishers	560	33.3	15.16	31,530
Sawing machine setters, operators, and tenders, wood .	290	5.5	16.28	33,860
Woodworking machine setters, operators, and tenders, except sawing	920	11.1	16.46	34,240
Water and wastewater treatment plant and system operators	130	1.0	17.02	35,390
Chemical equipment operators and tenders	60	0.6	21.45	44,620

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 1. Employment and wage data for production occupations, Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2019 - Continued

Occupation ⁽¹⁾	Employment		Mean wages	
	Level ⁽²⁾	Location quotient ⁽³⁾	Hourly	Annual ⁽⁴⁾
Crushing, grinding, and polishing machine setters, operators, and tenders	80	2.2	16.90	35,160
Grinding and polishing workers, hand	180	5.9	14.60	30,360
Mixing and blending machine setters, operators, and tenders	480	3.6	15.07	31,340
Cutters and trimmers, hand	960	94.8	19.50	40,560
Cutting and slicing machine setters, operators, and tenders	650	10.8	17.55	36,510
Extruding, forming, pressing, and compacting machine setters, operators, and tenders	310	4.2	16.70	34,730
Inspectors, testers, sorters, samplers, and weighers	1,520	2.5	15.97	33,220
Dental laboratory technicians	80	2.3	20.26	42,150
Packaging and filling machine operators and tenders ...	480	1.2	13.05	27,140
Painting, coating, and decorating workers	90	6.6	14.81	30,810
Coating, painting, and spraying machine setters, operators, and tenders	440	2.9	17.56	36,530
Computer numerically controlled tool operators.....	130	0.8	17.65	36,720
Computer numerically controlled tool programmers	(5)	(5)	26.47	55,070
Adhesive bonding machine operators and tenders	320	22.4	13.09	27,230
Paper goods machine setters, operators, and tenders ...	460	4.4	20.47	42,590
Tire builders	40	1.8	11.45	23,820
Helpers--production workers	950	3.0	16.06	33,400
Production workers, all other.....	190	0.8	15.93	33,140

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 may not sum to the totals due to rounding, and because the totals may include occupations that are 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.