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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 <sup>(1)</sup> |
| 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 <sup>(1)</sup> |
| 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](http://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](http://www.bls.gov/oes/soc_2018.htm) and [www.bls.gov/oes/oes\\_ques.htm#qf10](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.bls.gov/oes/oes_ques.htm). Detailed information about the OES program is available at [www.bls.gov/oes/oes\\_doc.htm](http://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 <sup>(1)</sup>   | Employment           |                                  | Mean wages |                       |
|---|----------------------|----------------------------------|------------|-----------------------|
|   | Level <sup>(2)</sup> | Location quotient <sup>(3)</sup> | Hourly     | Annual <sup>(4)</sup> |
| 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 <sup>(1)</sup>  | Employment           |                                  | Mean wages |                       |
|--|----------------------|----------------------------------|------------|-----------------------|
|  | Level <sup>(2)</sup> | Location quotient <sup>(3)</sup> | Hourly     | Annual <sup>(4)</sup> |
| 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](http://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.