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Occupational Employment and Wages in Fort Smith, May 2013

Workers in the Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area had an average (mean) hourly wage of \$16.81 in May 2013, more than 20 percent below the nationwide average of \$22.33, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that, after testing for statistical significance, wages in the local area were significantly lower than their respective national averages in all but 1 of the 22 major occupational groups; local wages for the farming, fishing, and forestry occupational group were not measurably different from the national average.

When compared to the nationwide distribution, local employment was more highly concentrated in 4 of the 22 occupational groups, including production; transportation and material moving; and construction and extraction. Conversely, 11 groups had employment shares significantly below their national representation, including office and administrative support; business and financial operations; and computer and mathematical. (See [table A](#) and [box note](#) at end of release.)

Table A. Occupational employment and wages by major occupational group, United States and the Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area, and measures of statistical significance, May 2013

Major occupational group	Percent of total employment			Mean hourly wage			
	United States	Fort Smith		United States	Fort Smith	Percent difference ⁽¹⁾	
Total, all occupations	100.0%	100.0%		\$22.33	\$16.81	*	-25
Management	4.9	4.4	*	53.15	40.58	*	-24
Business and financial operations	5.0	3.2	*	34.14	27.86	*	-18
Computer and mathematical	2.8	0.9	*	39.43	29.57	*	-25
Architecture and engineering	1.8	0.8	*	38.51	31.24	*	-19
Life, physical, and social science	0.9	0.2	*	33.37	24.24	*	-27
Community and social service	1.4	1.2	*	21.50	17.68	*	-18
Legal	0.8	0.4	*	47.89	37.28	*	-22
Education, training, and library	6.3	5.8	*	24.76	18.70	*	-24
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	1.3	0.7	*	26.72	18.86	*	-29
Healthcare practitioners and technical	5.8	5.7		35.93	28.99	*	-19
Healthcare support	3.0	3.1		13.61	10.66	*	-22
Protective service	2.5	2.4		20.92	15.49	*	-26
Food preparation and serving related	9.0	9.1		10.38	8.88	*	-14
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	3.2	2.7	*	12.51	10.57	*	-16
Personal care and service	3.0	2.9		11.88	9.52	*	-20
Sales and related	10.6	10.1		18.37	13.91	*	-24
Office and administrative support	16.2	14.8	*	16.78	13.90	*	-17
Farming, fishing, and forestry	0.3	0.8		11.70	11.48		-2
Construction and extraction	3.8	4.2	*	21.94	17.29	*	-21

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table A. Occupational employment and wages by major occupational group, United States and the Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area, and measures of statistical significance, May 2013 - Continued

Major occupational group	Percent of total employment			Mean hourly wage			
	United States	Fort Smith	*	United States	Fort Smith	*	Percent difference ⁽¹⁾
Installation, maintenance, and repair	3.9	4.3	*	21.35	18.01	*	-16
Production	6.6	12.1	*	16.79	13.86	*	-17
Transportation and material moving	6.8	10.1	*	16.28	14.94	*	-8

* 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.

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

One occupational group—production—was chosen to illustrate the diversity of data available for any of the 22 major occupational categories. Fort Smith had 13,570 jobs in production, accounting for 12.1 percent of local area employment, nearly double the 6.6-percent national share. The local average hourly wage for this occupational group was \$13.86, 17 percent below the national average of \$16.79. Still, the wage differential for this local group was much smaller than the overall local difference of 25 percent.

Some of the largest detailed occupations within the production group included production workers’ helpers and team assemblers (both at 1,660), followed by meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers (1,380). First-line supervisors of production and operating workers, along with machinists, were among the higher paying jobs with mean hourly wages of \$21.91 and \$18.50, respectively. At the lower end of the wage scale were slaughterers and meat packers (\$8.58) and laundry and dry-cleaning workers (\$9.19). (Detailed occupational data for the production occupational group are presented in [table 1](#); for a complete listing of detailed occupations go to www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_22900.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 Fort Smith metropolitan area, above average concentrations of employment were found in many of the occupations within the production group. For instance, slaughterers and meat packers were employed at 9.6 times the national rate in Fort Smith, and meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers, at more than 10 times the U.S. average. Fort Smith’s meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers location quotient of 10.2 ranked third highest in the entire country, followed by another Arkansas area, Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers (9.9).

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 Arkansas Department of Workforce Services.

Note

OES wage and employment data for the 22 major occupational groups in the Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area were compared to their respective national averages based on statistical significance testing. Only those occupations with wages or employment shares above or below the national wage or share after testing for significance at the 90-percent confidence level meet the criteria.

Note: 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. Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands are also surveyed, but their data are not included in the national estimates. OES estimates are constructed from a sample of about 1.2 million establishments. Forms are mailed to approximately 200,000 sampled establishments in May and November each year for a 3-year period. May 2013 estimates are based on responses from six semiannual panels collected in May 2013, November 2012, May 2012, November 2011, May 2011, and November 2010. The overall national response rate for the six panels is 75.3 percent based on establishments and 71.6 percent based on employment. The sample in the Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area included 1,864 establishments with a response rate of 87 percent. For more information about OES concepts and methodology, go to www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.tn.htm.

The OES survey provides estimates of employment and hourly and annual wages for wage and salary workers in 22 major occupational groups and 821 detailed occupations for the nation, states, metropolitan statistical areas, metropolitan divisions, and nonmetropolitan areas. In addition, employment and wage estimates for 94 minor groups and 458 broad occupations are available in the national data. OES data by state and metropolitan/nonmetropolitan area are available from www.bls.gov/oes/current/oessrcst.htm and www.bls.gov/oes/current/oessrcma.htm, respectively.

The May 2013 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.

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 **Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)** includes Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties in Arkansas, and Le Flore and Sequoyah Counties in Oklahoma.

Additional information

OES data are available on our regional web page at www.bls.gov/regions/southwest/home.htm. 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/2013/may/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: 1-800-877-8339.

Table 1. Employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey, by occupation, Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2013

Occupation ⁽¹⁾	Employment		Mean wages	
	Level ⁽²⁾	Location quotient ⁽³⁾	Hourly	Annual ⁽⁴⁾
Production occupations	13,570	1.8	\$13.86	\$28,830
First-line supervisors of production and operating workers	890	1.8	21.91	45,570
Electrical and electronic equipment assemblers	(5)	(5)	13.03	27,110
Structural metal fabricators and fitters	40	0.6	14.64	30,450
Team assemblers	1,660	1.9	14.39	29,940
Assemblers and fabricators, all other	150	0.7	13.49	28,050
Bakers	90	0.6	9.88	20,550
Butchers and meat cutters	100	0.8	11.41	23,740
Meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers	1,380	10.2	10.33	21,480
Slaughterers and meat packers	670	9.6	8.58	17,840
Food and tobacco roasting, baking, and drying machine operators and tenders	(5)	(5)	8.89	18,490
Food batchmakers	110	1.1	9.99	20,770
Food cooking machine operators and tenders	200	7.0	12.46	25,910
Food processing workers, all other	380	10.4	9.70	20,180
Cutting, punching, and press machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	330	2.1	17.58	36,560
Grinding, lapping, polishing, and buffing machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	40	0.6	13.62	28,320
Lathe and turning machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	30	1.0	17.19	35,760
Milling and planing machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	30	1.5	(5)	(5)
Machinists	150	0.5	18.50	38,490
Multiple machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	220	2.8	13.34	27,750
Tool and die makers	(5)	(5)	17.44	36,270
Welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers	510	1.7	16.34	33,980
Welding, soldering, and brazing machine setters, operators, and tenders	(5)	(5)	16.72	34,770
Heat treating equipment setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	40	2.3	20.17	41,950
Plating and coating machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	(5)	(5)	15.16	31,520
Metal workers and plastic workers, all other	80	4.4	15.11	31,430
Prepress technicians and workers	70	2.1	16.93	35,210
Printing press operators	190	1.4	14.62	30,420
Laundry and dry-cleaning workers	120	0.7	9.19	19,120
Pressers, textile, garment, and related materials	(5)	(5)	9.56	19,890
Sewing machine operators	40	0.4	9.65	20,070
Upholsterers	50	1.9	(5)	(5)
Cabinetmakers and bench carpenters	40	0.6	13.94	29,000
Woodworking machine setters, operators, and tenders, except sawing	90	1.5	11.13	23,140
Power plant operators	(5)	(5)	30.06	62,530
Water and wastewater treatment plant and system operators	180	2.0	15.32	31,860
Separating, filtering, clarifying, precipitating, and still machine setters, operators, and tenders	40	1.1	15.52	32,280
Crushing, grinding, and polishing machine setters, operators, and tenders	50	2.0	10.79	22,440
Mixing and blending machine setters, operators, and tenders	100	1.0	15.34	31,910
Cutting and slicing machine setters, operators, and tenders	290	5.7	11.32	23,540
Inspectors, testers, sorters, samplers, and weighers ..	810	2.0	14.98	31,160
Packaging and filling machine operators and tenders ..	580	1.8	13.77	28,640

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 1. Employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey, by occupation, Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2013 - Continued

Occupation ⁽¹⁾	Employment		Mean wages	
	Level ⁽²⁾	Location quotient ⁽³⁾	Hourly	Annual ⁽⁴⁾
Coating, painting, and spraying machine setters, operators, and tenders	160	2.2	18.36	38,180
Cleaning, washing, and metal pickling equipment operators and tenders	60	4.5	10.82	22,510
Molders, shapers, and casters, except metal and plastic	40	1.6	12.37	25,720
Paper goods machine setters, operators, and tenders	310	3.9	17.10	35,570
Helpers--production workers	1,660	4.6	11.08	23,040
Production workers, all other	90	0.5	11.79	24,510

(1) For a complete listing of all detailed occupations in the Fort Smith MSA, see www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_22900.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) Estimates not released.