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County Employment and Wages in Arkansas – Fourth Quarter 2014

Employment increased in the three largest Arkansas counties from December 2013 to December 2014, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (Large counties are those with 2013 annual average employment levels of 75,000 or more.) Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that the rates of job growth in two of the large Arkansas counties exceeded the national average. Benton County's 5.5-percent job gain ranked ninth nationwide and Washington County's 3.5-percent gain ranked 66th. (See table 1.)

Nationally, employment advanced 2.2 percent from December 2013 to December 2014 with 319 of the 339 largest U.S. counties registering increases. Weld, Colo., and Midland, Texas, recorded the largest percentage increases in the country, each up 8.0 percent over the year. Atlantic, N.J., registered the largest percentage employment decline among large counties, down 5.0 percent.

Among the three largest counties in Arkansas, employment was highest in Pulaski County (245,900) in December 2014. Benton and Washington Counties had employment levels of 108,300 and 98,100, respectively. Together, the three largest Arkansas counties accounted for 38.3 percent of total employment within the state. Nationwide, the 339 largest counties made up 72.1 percent of total U.S. employment.

From the fourth quarter of 2013 to the fourth quarter of 2014, Benton County's 9.9-percent increase in average weekly wages ranked first among the 339 large U.S. counties. (See table 1.) Benton also recorded the highest average weekly wage among the state's large counties at $996 per week. Nationally, the average weekly wage increased 3.5 percent from a year ago to $1,035 in the fourth quarter of 2014.

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 72 counties in Arkansas with employment levels below 75,000. Wage levels in all of these smaller counties were below the national average in December 2014. (See table 2.)

Large county wage changes

The three largest Arkansas counties recorded wage growth rates that exceeded the 3.5-percent national average increase from the fourth quarter of 2013 to the fourth quarter of 2014. (See table 1.) As noted, Benton County's 9.9-percent rise in average weekly wages ranked first among the nation's 339 largest counties. Within Benton, an average weekly wage gain of 16.2 percent in professional and business services made the largest contribution to the county's increase in average weekly wages. In Washington County, average weekly wages were up 4.3 percent over the year, ranking 87th, and Pulaski's 3.7-percent wage gain ranked 143rd.

Nationally, 332 of the 339 largest counties registered over-the-year wage increases from the fourth quarter of 2013. Following Benton County's 9.9-percent average weekly wage increase, were the counties of Washington, Pa. (9.2 percent), Midland, Texas (9.0 percent), Brazoria, Texas (8.9 percent), and Douglas, Colo. (8.8 percent).

Among the large U.S. counties, seven experienced over-the-year decreases in average weekly wages. San Mateo, Calif., had the largest percentage decline in average weekly wages with a loss of 20.4 percent over the year. Olmsted, Minn., had the second largest decrease in average weekly wages, down 5.5 percent from the fourth quarter of 2013, followed by Morris, N.J. (-2.9 percent), and Rockland, N.Y. (-1.3 percent).

Large county average weekly wages

Despite registering above average over-the-year wage increases, the weekly wage levels in the state's three large counties were below the national average ($1,035) in the fourth quarter of 2014. Benton County's average weekly wage of $996 ranked 128th among the 339 large U.S. counties. Pulaski ($936) ranked 175th and Washington ($896) ranked 212th nationally.

Seventy-two percent of the largest U.S. counties (244) reported weekly wages below the national average of $1,035 in the fourth quarter of 2014. Horry County, S.C., reported the lowest wage ($610), followed by the Texas counties of Cameron ($621) and Hidalgo ($641).

Nationally, 95 large counties registered weekly wages above the U.S. average. San Mateo, Calif., held the top position with an average weekly wage of $2,166. New York, N.Y., was second at $2,138, followed by Santa Clara, Calif., at $2,114. Average wages in the highest-ranked county, San Mateo, Calif., were more than three times the average wage in the lowest-ranked county, Horry, S.C. ($610).

Average weekly wages in Arkansas's smaller counties

All 72 of Arkansas's smaller counties – those with employment below 75,000 – reported weekly wages below the national average of $1,035 in the fourth quarter of 2014. Among these counties, Calhoun ($994) and Van Buren ($864) posted the highest weekly wages, while Newton reported the lowest ($477). (See table 2.)

When all 75 counties in Arkansas were considered, 7 reported average weekly wages under $550, 28 reported wages from $550 to $649, 25 had wages from $650 to $749, 7 had wages from $750 to $849, and 8 averaged $850 or more per week. (See chart 1.) Higher-paying counties were located around the metropolitan areas of Blytheville, Fayetteville, Little Rock, and along the southern border of the state. Lower-paying counties were generally concentrated in the northern portion of the state.

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 2013 edition of this publication contains selected data produced by Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the first quarter 2014 version of the national news release. Tables and additional content from *Employment and Wages Annual Averages 2013* are now available online at www.bls.gov/cew/publications/employment-and-wages-annual-averages/2013/home.htm. The 2014 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* will be available in September 2015.

The County Employment and Wages release for first quarter 2015 is scheduled to be released on Thursday, September 17, 2015.

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 9.2 million employer reports cover 134.0 million full- and part-time workers. 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 (see Technical Note below) 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 3 largest counties in Arkansas, fourth quarter 2014

Area	Employment			Average Weekly Wage [1]			
	December 2014 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2013-14 [2]	National ranking by percent change [3]	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level [3]	Percent change, fourth quarter 2013-14 [2]	National ranking by percent change [3]
United States [4]	139,204.8	2.2	--	$1,035	--	3.5	--
Arkansas	1,180.5	2.2	--	807	47	4.5	5
Benton, Ark.	108.3	5.5	9	996	128	9.9	1
Pulaski, Ark.	245.9	0.7	272	936	175	3.7	143
Washington, Ark.	98.1	3.5	66	896	212	4.3	87

(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. Covered employment and wages 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 Arkansas, fourth quarter 2014

Area	Employment December 2014	Average Weekly Wage [1]
United States [2]	139,204,840	$1,035
Arkansas	1,180,489	807
Arkansas	10,245	778
Ashley	6,896	789
Baxter	14,675	713
Benton	108,310	996
Boone	13,788	733
Bradley	3,748	602
Calhoun	2,617	994
Carroll	10,449	564
Chicot	3,330	621
Clark	9,212	624
Clay	3,574	580
Cleburne	6,681	639
Cleveland	1,051	592
Columbia	8,478	794
Conway	7,143	715
Craighead	47,082	738
Crawford	19,287	693
Crittenden	16,353	664
Cross	5,064	650
Dallas	2,710	569
Desha	4,585	667
Drew	6,550	630
Faulkner	40,950	775
Franklin	4,371	715
Fulton	1,926	514
Garland	35,742	684
Grant	4,000	723
Greene	15,353	697
Hempstead	7,894	677
Hot Spring	8,517	678
Howard	6,292	631
Independence	14,781	690
Izard	3,162	582
Jackson	5,210	695
Jefferson	29,151	798
Johnson	8,566	621
Lafayette	1,280	710
Lawrence	4,202	579
Lee	1,994	660
Lincoln	2,976	642
Little River	3,580	863
Logan	5,494	633
Lonoke	13,711	652
Madison	3,262	603
Marion	3,872	610
Miller	13,334	752
Mississippi	18,929	850
Monroe	2,199	577
Montgomery	1,396	518
Nevada	2,405	635
Newton	1,126	477
Ouachita	7,090	650
Perry	1,260	596

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Covered employment and wages in the United States and all counties in Arkansas, fourth quarter 2014 - Continued

Area	Employment December 2014	Average Weekly Wage (1)
Phillips	5,752	645
Pike	2,397	563
Poinsett	5,123	685
Polk	6,182	588
Pope	27,156	711
Prairie	1,621	681
Pulaski	245,853	936
Randolph	4,666	540
Saline	22,564	678
Scott	3,150	561
Searcy	1,614	493
Sebastian	65,911	797
Sevier	4,894	587
Sharp	3,836	541
St. Francis	8,010	631
Stone	2,478	536
Union	18,220	861
Van Buren	3,930	864
Washington	98,102	896
White	24,881	717
Woodruff	1,894	634
Yell	6,550	583

(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: Covered employment and wages includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs. Data are preliminary.

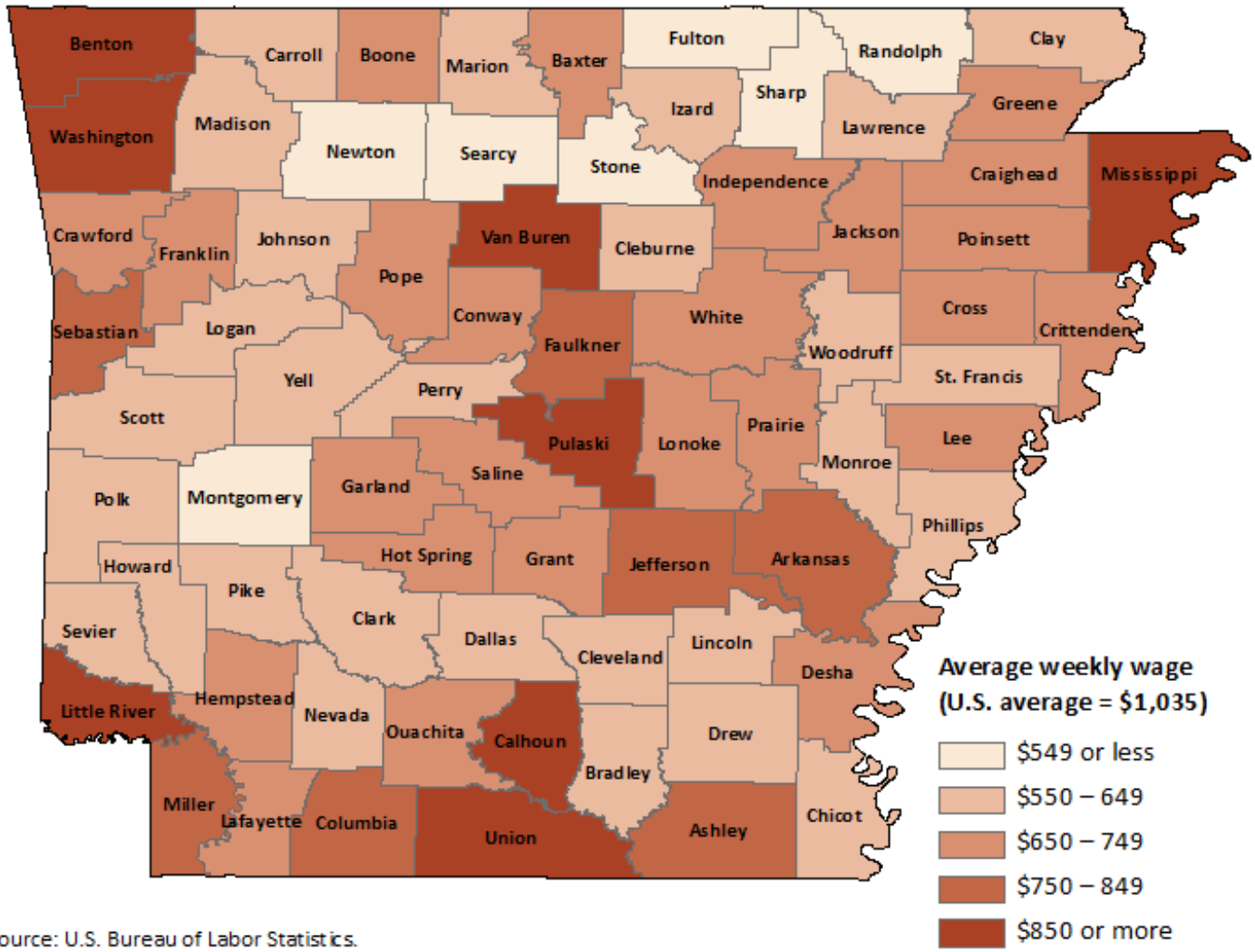
Table 3. Covered employment and wages by state, fourth quarter 2014

State	Employment		Average weekly wage [1]			
	December 2014 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2013-14	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2013-14	National ranking by percent change
United States [2]	139,204.8	2.2	$1,035	--	3.5	--
Alabama	1,891.4	1.3	881	35	3.5	31
Alaska	317.6	0.8	1,063	13	4.0	20
Arizona	2,630.8	2.2	926	25	2.3	47
Arkansas	1,180.5	2.2	807	47	4.5	5
California	16,068.5	2.6	1,209	6	2.9	41
Colorado	2,478.0	3.9	1,066	12	4.1	17
Connecticut	1,681.2	1.2	1,278	4	2.7	45
Delaware	433.0	2.9	1,049	16	1.5	51
District of Columbia	736.9	0.9	1,696	1	3.7	28
Florida	8,009.6	3.5	911	28	3.1	40
Georgia	4,131.9	3.7	958	21	3.8	25
Hawaii	638.3	0.7	908	29	4.2	15
Idaho	650.7	2.5	782	50	4.0	20
Illinois	5,844.1	1.4	1,089	8	2.8	42
Indiana	2,946.5	1.7	846	41	3.9	22
Iowa	1,527.6	1.1	870	38	4.3	11
Kansas	1,377.2	1.3	855	39	2.6	46
Kentucky	1,852.2	1.8	836	43	4.1	17
Louisiana	1,954.0	2.1	923	26	3.8	25
Maine	592.7	0.9	826	44	5.1	4
Maryland	2,590.3	1.3	1,113	7	3.5	31
Massachusetts	3,415.6	2.2	1,315	3	4.5	5
Michigan	4,158.9	2.1	984	20	3.3	37
Minnesota	2,762.9	1.4	1,024	17	3.6	30
Mississippi	1,118.6	1.0	747	51	2.3	47
Missouri	2,709.8	1.5	891	32	3.4	34
Montana	442.2	0.5	794	48	4.5	5
Nebraska	958.1	1.4	837	42	5.2	3
Nevada	1,229.6	4.2	899	30	1.6	50
New Hampshire	638.0	1.4	1,081	10	6.3	2
New Jersey	3,933.6	1.3	1,211	5	2.0	49
New Mexico	808.4	1.3	850	40	4.4	10
New York	9,067.6	2.0	1,321	2	4.3	11
North Carolina	4,141.8	2.4	890	33	3.4	34
North Dakota	454.8	4.5	1,050	15	7.1	1
Ohio	5,264.3	1.6	922	27	3.9	22
Oklahoma	1,614.3	2.1	876	36	2.8	42
Oregon	1,755.4	3.2	928	23	3.8	25
Pennsylvania	5,716.5	1.2	1,013	18	3.7	28
Rhode Island	471.5	1.9	1,003	19	4.5	5
South Carolina	1,931.4	2.9	817	46	3.2	39
South Dakota	412.5	1.3	791	49	4.2	15
Tennessee	2,822.1	2.4	927	24	3.5	31
Texas	11,662.7	3.7	1,070	11	4.3	11
Utah	1,324.2	3.0	872	37	4.3	11
Vermont	311.0	0.7	882	34	4.1	17
Virginia	3,691.4	0.6	1,057	14	2.8	42
Washington	3,069.7	3.2	1,082	9	4.5	5
West Virginia	712.0	0.1	818	45	3.3	37
Wisconsin	2,789.3	1.3	894	31	3.4	34
Wyoming	283.6	1.5	952	22	3.9	22
Puerto Rico	944.2	-1.5	556	[3]	0.7	[3]
Virgin Islands	38.5	-0.3	746	[3]	-1.2	[3]

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

(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. Covered employment and wages includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

Chart 1. Average weekly wages by county in Arkansas, fourth quarter 2014



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.