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Occupational Employment and Wages in Fort Smith, May 2015

Workers in the Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area had an average (mean) hourly wage of \$16.79 in May 2015, about 28 percent below the nationwide average of \$23.23, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Assistant Commissioner for Regional Operations Stanley W. Suchman noted that, after testing for statistical significance, all 22 of the local major occupational groups had hourly wages significantly lower than their respective national averages. Among the local groups with larger wage disparities were legal; arts design, entertainment, sports, and media; and management.

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 business and financial operations; computer and mathematical; and education, training, and library. (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 2015

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%		\$23.23	\$16.79	*	-28
Management	5.0	4.2	*	55.30	37.85	*	-32
Business and financial operations.....	5.1	2.6	*	35.48	26.32	*	-26
Computer and mathematical	2.9	1.0	*	41.43	28.86	*	-30
Architecture and engineering	1.8	0.8	*	39.89	29.29	*	-27
Life, physical, and social science	0.8	0.3	*	34.24	26.01	*	-24
Community and social service.....	1.4	1.4		22.19	16.71	*	-25
Legal.....	0.8	0.3	*	49.74	28.46	*	-43
Education, training, and library.....	6.2	5.0	*	25.48	20.13	*	-21
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media.....	1.3	0.6	*	27.39	17.46	*	-36
Healthcare practitioners and technical	5.8	5.9		37.40	29.97	*	-20
Healthcare support	2.9	3.1		14.19	11.52	*	-19
Protective service	2.4	2.1	*	21.45	15.33	*	-29
Food preparation and serving related	9.1	8.6	*	10.98	9.21	*	-16
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance.....	3.2	2.7	*	13.02	10.91	*	-16
Personal care and service.....	3.1	3.1		12.33	9.68	*	-21
Sales and related	10.5	10.4		18.90	14.02	*	-26
Office and administrative support.....	15.8	15.4		17.47	14.24	*	-18
Farming, fishing, and forestry.....	0.3	0.7		12.67	11.82	*	-7
Construction and extraction.....	4.0	4.6	*	22.88	17.45	*	-24

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 2015 - 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	4.4	*	22.11	17.74	*	-20
Production	6.6	12.8	*	17.41	14.37	*	-17
Transportation and material moving.....	6.9	10.1	*	16.90	15.04	*	-11

(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.

Note: * 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.

One occupational group—production—was chosen to illustrate the diversity of data available for any of the 22 major occupational categories. Fort Smith had 14,010 jobs in production, accounting for 12.8 percent of local area employment, nearly double the 6.6-percent national share. However, the local average hourly wage for this occupational group was \$14.37, significantly below the national average of \$17.41.

Some of the larger detailed occupations within the production group included production workers’ helpers (1,530), team assemblers (1,480), and meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers (1,240). Among the higher paying jobs were petroleum pump system operators, refinery operators, and gaugers, as well as gas plant operators, with mean hourly wages of \$31.35 and \$29.66, respectively. At the lower end of the wage scale were laundry and dry-cleaning workers (\$8.86) and meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers (\$10.16). (Detailed occupational data for the production group are presented in [table 1](#); for a complete listing of detailed occupations available 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 the majority of occupations within the production group. For instance, meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers were employed at 10.1 times the national rate in Fort Smith, and production workers’ helpers, at 4.4 times the U.S. average. Both location quotients were among the highest in all metropolitan areas for these particular occupations.

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.

Notes on Occupational Employment Statistics Data

With the issuance of data for May 2015, the OES program has incorporated redefined metropolitan area definitions as designated by the Office of Management and Budget. OES data are available for 394 metropolitan areas, 38 metropolitan divisions, and 167 OES-defined nonmetropolitan areas. A listing of the areas and their definitions can be found at www.bls.gov/oes/current/msa_def.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.

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. The OES program produces employment and wage estimates for over 800 occupations for all industries combined in the nation; the 50 states and the District of Columbia; 432 metropolitan areas and divisions; 167 nonmetropolitan areas; and Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. National estimates are also available by industry for NAICS sectors, 3-, 4-, and selected 5- and 6-digit industries, and by ownership across all industries and for schools and hospitals. OES data are available at www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm.

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. May 2015 estimates are based on responses from six semiannual panels collected over a 3-year period: May 2015, November 2014, May 2014, November 2013, May 2013, and November 2012. The overall national response rate for the six panels is 73.5 percent based on establishments and 69.6 percent based on weighted sampled employment. The unweighted employment of sampled establishments across all six semiannual panels represents approximately 57.9 percent of total national employment. (Response rates are slightly lower for these estimates due to the federal shutdown in October 2013.) The sample in the Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area included 1,731 establishments with a response rate of 84 percent. For more information about OES concepts and methodology, go to www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.tn.htm.

The May 2015 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.

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 **Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)** includes Crawford 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. 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/current/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: (800) 877-8339.

Table 1. Employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey, by occupation, Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2015

Occupation ⁽¹⁾	Employment		Mean wages	
	Level ⁽²⁾	Location quotient ⁽³⁾	Hourly	Annual ⁽⁴⁾
Production occupations	14,010	2.0	\$14.37	\$29,900
First-line supervisors of production and operating workers	950	2.0	23.07	47,980
Electrical and electronic equipment assemblers	320	1.9	19.02	39,560
Structural metal fabricators and fitters	170	2.6	16.31	33,920
Team assemblers	1,480	1.7	13.79	28,680
Assemblers and fabricators, all other	110	0.6	13.69	28,470
Bakers	120	0.9	10.31	21,450
Butchers and meat cutters	130	1.2	11.47	23,870
Meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers	1,240	10.1	10.16	21,120
Food and tobacco roasting, baking, and drying machine operators and tenders	100	6.2	8.46	17,600
Food batchmakers	430	4.0	11.73	24,400
Food processing workers, all other	320	9.0	9.65	20,070
Computer-controlled machine tool operators, metal and plastic	250	2.1	20.68	43,010
Cutting, punching, & press machine setters, operators, & tenders, metal & plastic	280	1.8	15.95	33,170
Milling and planing machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	30	2.1	20.49	42,620
Machinists	220	0.7	18.77	39,050
Molding, coremaking, & casting machine setters, operators, & tenders, metal & plastic	90	0.8	16.15	33,580
Multiple machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	130	1.6	12.20	25,380
Tool and die makers	110	1.8	21.01	43,690
Welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers	580	1.9	18.89	39,290
Welding, soldering, and brazing machine setters, operators, and tenders	60	1.5	17.86	37,140
Tool grinders, filers, and sharpeners	30	3.7	13.99	29,090
Print binding and finishing workers	100	2.5	14.09	29,320
Laundry and dry-cleaning workers	130	0.8	8.86	18,420
Sewing machine operators	100	0.9	12.30	25,580
Upholsterers	40	1.7	10.50	21,830
Cabinetmakers and bench carpenters	(5)	(5)	15.48	32,200
Sawing machine setters, operators, and tenders, wood	50	1.4	9.39	19,520
Woodworking machine setters, operators, and tenders, except sawing	(5)	(5)	10.69	22,240
Water and wastewater treatment plant and system operators	230	2.5	15.65	32,550
Gas plant operators	70	5.0	29.66	61,690
Petroleum pump system operators, refinery operators, and gaugers	60	1.9	31.35	65,210
Crushing, grinding, and polishing machine setters, operators, and tenders	(5)	(5)	12.53	26,070
Mixing and blending machine setters, operators, and tenders	230	2.3	14.86	30,900
Cutting and slicing machine setters, operators, and tenders	220	4.4	14.39	29,920
Inspectors, testers, sorters, samplers, and weighers	730	1.8	14.40	29,950
Medical appliance technicians	(5)	(5)	16.86	35,070
Packaging and filling machine operators and tenders	630	2.1	11.79	24,510
Coating, painting, and spraying machine setters, operators, and tenders	120	1.7	16.63	34,600
Cleaning, washing, and metal pickling equipment operators and tenders	90	6.8	10.65	22,160
Molders, shapers, and casters, except metal and plastic	50	1.7	14.00	29,120
Paper goods machine setters, operators, and tenders	90	1.3	16.23	33,760

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 2015 - Continued

Occupation ⁽¹⁾	Employment		Mean wages	
	Level ⁽²⁾	Location quotient ⁽³⁾	Hourly	Annual ⁽⁴⁾
Helpers-production workers	1,530	4.4	10.53	21,910
Production workers, all other.....	370	1.9	16.02	33,320

(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.