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County Employment and Wages in Arkansas – Fourth Quarter 2016

Employment increased in the three largest Arkansas counties from December 2015 to December 2016, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (Large counties are those with 2015 annual average employment levels of 75,000 or more.) Assistant Commissioner for Regional Operations Stanley W. Suchman noted that the rates of job growth in two of the three large Arkansas counties exceeded the national average. Benton County's 3.1-percent job gain ranked 32nd nationwide and Washington County's 1.8-percent gain ranked 114th. Employment in Pulaski County rose 0.2 percent, below the national average. (See [table 1](#).)

Nationally, employment advanced 1.2 percent from December 2015 to December 2016 with 280 of the 344 largest U.S. counties registering increases. Williamson, Tenn., recorded the largest percentage increase in the country, up 5.1 percent over the year. Lafayette, La., registered the largest percentage employment decline among large counties, down 5.1 percent.

Among the three largest counties in Arkansas, employment was highest in Pulaski County (250,700) in December 2016. Benton and Washington Counties had employment levels of 117,500 and 104,700, respectively. Together, the three largest Arkansas counties accounted for 39.2 percent of total employment within the state. Nationwide, the 344 largest counties made up 72.8 percent of total U.S. employment.

From the fourth quarter of 2015 to the fourth quarter of 2016, Pulaski County had the largest percentage decrease in average weekly wages in Arkansas's large counties, down 2.6 percent. (See [table 1](#).) Benton recorded the highest average weekly wage among the state's large counties at \$1,017 per week. Nationally, the average weekly wage decreased 1.5 percent from a year ago, declining to \$1,067 in the fourth quarter of 2016. This is one of only eight national declines in the history of the series, which dates back to 1978, and was the largest decline since fourth quarter 2011 (-1.7 percent).

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 2016. (See [table 2](#).)

Large county wage changes

Average weekly wages declined in all three large Arkansas counties. Among the three, Washington experienced the smallest decline in average weekly wages, down 0.2 percent from the fourth quarter of 2015 to the fourth quarter of 2016, less than the national average decrease of 1.5 percent. (See [table 1](#).) The smaller over-the-year wage decline ranked 60th among the 344 large U.S. counties. Over-the-year wage decreases were greater than the U.S. average in Benton (-2.5 percent, 242nd) and Pulaski (-2.6 percent, 252nd).

Among the 344 large U.S. counties, 290 had over-the-year wage decreases. McLean, Ill., had the largest wage decline, down 9.2 percent from the fourth quarter of 2015. Clay, Mo., had the second-largest decline with an average weekly wage loss of 8.3 percent, followed by Lafayette, La., down 8.0 percent.

Of the 344 large U.S. counties, 48 experienced over-the-year increases in average weekly wages. Clayton, Ga., had the largest percentage increase in average weekly wages with a gain of 11.3 percent, followed by Washington, Pa. (4.9 percent); Marin, Calif. (4.3 percent); and Elkhart, Ind. (4.0 percent).

Large county average weekly wages

Weekly wage levels in the state's three large counties were below the nationwide average (\$1,067) in the fourth quarter of 2016. Benton County's average weekly wage of \$1,017 ranked 136th among the 344 large U.S. counties. Weekly wages in Washington and Pulaski Counties, at \$950 and \$949, respectively, ranked 187th and 188th nationally.

Among the large U.S. counties, 71 percent (243) reported average weekly wages below the national average of \$1,067. Cameron, Texas, reported the lowest weekly wage (\$640), followed by Hidalgo, Texas (\$648) and Horry, S.C. (\$654).

Nationally, 100 large counties registered average weekly wages above the U.S. average in the fourth quarter of 2016. Santa Clara, Calif., held the top position with an average weekly wage of \$2,365. New York, N.Y., was second at \$2,212, followed by San Mateo, Calif., at \$2,098. Average weekly wages in the highest-ranked county, Santa Clara, Calif., were more than three times the average weekly wage in the lowest-ranked county, Cameron, Texas (\$640).

Average weekly wages in Arkansas's smaller counties

All 72 of Arkansas's smaller counties – those with employment of less than 75,000 – reported weekly wages below the national average of \$1,067 in the fourth quarter of 2016. Among these smaller counties, the highest weekly wages were in Calhoun (\$988) and Little River (\$970), while the lowest weekly wage was in Newton (\$483). (See [table 2](#).)

When all 75 counties in Arkansas were considered, 13 reported average weekly wages under \$600, 38 reported wages from \$600 to \$699, 15 had wages from \$700 to \$799, and 9 averaged \$800 or more per week. (See [chart 1](#).) For the most part, 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 along the northern and western borders 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 2015 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 2016 version of the national news release. Tables and additional content from *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* are now available online at www.bls.gov/cew/publications/employment-and-wages-annual-averages/2015/home.htm. The 2016 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* will be available in September 2017.

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.

The County Employment and Wages release for first quarter 2017 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, September 6, 2017.

Upcoming Industry Changes to QCEW Data

Beginning with the release of first quarter 2017 data, the program will switch to the 2017 version of the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) as the basis for the assignment and tabulation of economic data by industry. For more information on the change, please see the Federal Register notice at www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/federal_register_notices/notices/fr08au16.pdf.

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 9.9 million employer reports cover 143.7 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.

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Table 1. Covered employment and wages in the United States and the 3 largest counties in Arkansas, fourth quarter 2016

Area	Employment			Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
	December 2016 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2015-16 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level ⁽³⁾	Percent change, fourth quarter 2015-16 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾
United States ⁽⁴⁾	143,749.9	1.2	--	\$1,067	--	-1.5	--
Arkansas	1,205.4	0.4	--	827	47	-1.4	22
Benton, Ark.....	117.5	3.1	32	1,017	136	-2.5	242
Pulaski, Ark.....	250.7	0.6	230	949	188	-2.6	252
Washington, Ark.....	104.7	1.8	114	950	187	-0.2	60

(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, 4th quarter 2016

Area	Employment December 2016	Average weekly wage(1)
United States(2)	143,749,910	\$1,067
Arkansas	1,205,391	827
Arkansas	9,992	836
Ashley	6,531	794
Baxter	14,761	679
Benton	117,516	1,017
Boone	13,875	716
Bradley	3,779	649
Calhoun	2,837	988
Carroll	10,751	591
Chicot	3,222	616
Clark	9,304	648
Clay	3,260	587
Cleburne	6,413	646
Cleveland	980	623
Columbia	8,036	763
Conway	6,662	724
Craighead	49,915	741
Crawford	19,635	678
Crittenden	16,644	700
Cross	4,958	651
Dallas	2,825	609
Desha	4,567	658
Drew	6,440	674
Faulkner	40,593	770
Franklin	4,549	709
Fulton	1,851	558
Garland	36,061	699
Grant	4,065	749
Greene	15,189	712
Hempstead	7,903	676
Hot Spring	8,536	694
Howard	6,987	627
Independence	15,881	738
Izard	3,200	626
Jackson	5,237	681
Jefferson	28,364	774
Johnson	8,943	621
Lafayette	1,226	674
Lawrence	4,073	626
Lee	1,963	621
Lincoln	2,869	611
Little River	3,459	970
Logan	5,562	616
Lonoke	14,038	679
Madison	3,248	663
Marion	3,771	564
Miller	12,957	767
Mississippi	18,039	882
Monroe	2,083	580
Montgomery	1,347	529
Nevada	2,520	661
Newton	1,059	483
Ouachita	7,067	671
Perry	1,215	629
Phillips	5,427	631

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Covered employment and wages in the United States and all counties in Arkansas, 4th quarter 2016 - Continued

Area	Employment December 2016	Average weekly wage(1)
Pike	2,508	598
Poinsett	5,281	690
Polk	5,879	585
Pope	26,433	809
Prairie	1,526	668
Pulaski	250,699	949
Randolph	5,257	604
Saline	23,911	695
Scott	3,127	581
Searcy	1,513	530
Sebastian	66,985	790
Sevier	4,929	613
Sharp	3,882	581
St. Francis	7,830	662
Stone	2,546	562
Union	17,628	905
Van Buren	3,533	680
Washington	104,728	950
White	24,385	730
Woodruff	1,779	696
Yell	6,509	605

(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 2016

State	Employment		Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
	December 2016 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2015-16	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2015-16	National ranking by percent change
United States ⁽²⁾	143,749.9	1.2	1067	--	-1.5	--
Alabama	1,932.6	0.7	901	35	-1.3	21
Alaska	310.0	-1.9	1038	17	-5.2	51
Arizona	2,760.1	2.1	945	25	-2.2	34
Arkansas	1,205.4	0.4	827	47	-1.4	22
California	16,923.3	1.9	1271	5	-0.3	4
Colorado	2,588.6	2.0	1086	12	-1.5	24
Connecticut	1,685.5	0.0	1289	4	-3.4	46
Delaware	441.2	-0.1	1055	15	-2.9	44
District of Columbia	760.9	0.5	1763	1	0.6	2
Florida	8,538.9	2.7	942	27	-1.8	28
Georgia.....	4,349.3	2.4	993	20	-0.9	14
Hawaii.....	658.3	0.7	954	24	-0.3	4
Idaho	691.6	3.2	800	50	-0.4	8
Illinois	5,947.6	0.4	1122	9	-2.0	31
Indiana.....	3,021.7	0.9	883	38	-0.9	14
Iowa	1,542.0	0.1	911	33	-1.0	16
Kansas	1,384.5	0.1	877	39	-2.2	34
Kentucky.....	1,894.2	0.6	874	41	-1.4	22
Louisiana	1,907.4	-1.6	914	32	-2.9	44
Maine.....	602.6	0.8	855	43	-2.1	33
Maryland.....	2,666.7	1.0	1169	7	-0.4	8
Massachusetts	3,530.4	1.3	1352	2	-2.4	39
Michigan	4,283.0	1.5	1026	19	-1.6	25
Minnesota	2,839.7	1.2	1062	14	-1.1	18
Mississippi	1,134.0	0.0	756	51	-1.8	28
Missouri	2,783.2	0.9	918	31	-1.7	27
Montana	456.5	0.7	822	48	0.5	3
Nebraska	972.4	0.0	876	40	-0.5	10
Nevada	1,307.8	2.7	924	29	-1.2	20
New Hampshire.....	656.9	1.3	1092	10	-4.1	48
New Jersey.....	4,042.1	1.4	1239	6	-1.9	30
New Mexico	811.4	0.0	844	45	-2.5	41
New York	9,332.5	1.2	1342	3	-2.3	36
North Carolina	4,326.3	1.8	932	28	-0.7	13
North Dakota	414.4	-3.2	978	21	-4.2	49
Ohio	5,365.6	0.7	943	26	-2.3	36
Oklahoma	1,587.7	-1.2	864	42	-3.5	47
Oregon	1,860.7	2.4	970	22	-1.0	16
Pennsylvania	5,799.8	0.7	1039	16	-2.3	36
Rhode Island	478.3	0.0	1027	18	-1.6	25
South Carolina.....	2,024.3	1.8	855	43	-0.6	12
South Dakota.....	419.9	0.5	828	46	-0.5	10
Tennessee	2,947.5	1.8	970	22	-1.1	18
Texas	11,974.7	1.2	1072	13	-2.5	41
Utah	1,415.1	2.9	910	34	-0.3	4
Vermont.....	312.6	0.1	897	36	-2.4	39
Virginia.....	3,831.6	0.6	1091	11	-0.3	4
Washington.....	3,227.9	2.8	1150	8	1.7	1
West Virginia	693.1	-1.6	809	49	-2.5	41
Wisconsin	2,842.4	0.5	924	29	-2.0	31
Wyoming	265.8	-3.9	894	37	-4.7	50
Puerto Rico.....	928.2	-0.3	555	(3)	-1.9	(3)
Virgin Islands.....	38.5	0.2	769	(3)	-1.8	(3)

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

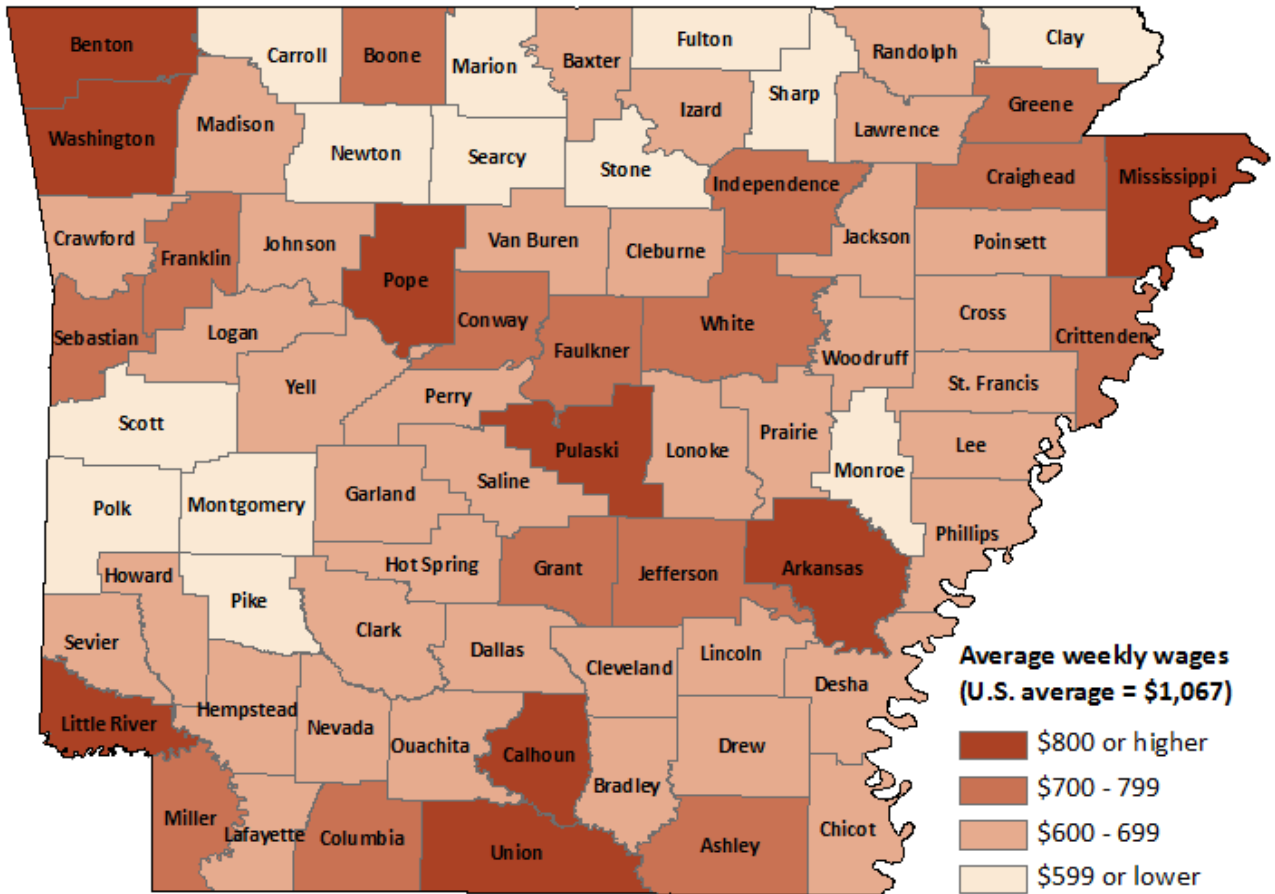
(1) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(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 2016



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.