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SOUTHWEST INFORMATION OFFICE: Dallas, Texas

Technical information: (972) 850-4800 BLSInfoDallas@bls.gov www.bls.gov/regions/southwest

Media contact: (972) 850-4800

Occupational Employment and Wages in Fort Smith, May 2016

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, AR-OK Metropolitan Statistical Area, and measures of statistical significance, May 2016

Major occupational group	Percent of total employment			Mean hourly wage			
	United States	Fort Smith, AR-OK		United States	Fort Smith, AR-OK	Percent difference ⁽¹⁾	
Total, all occupations	100.0	100.0		\$23.86	\$17.16	*	-28
Management	5.1	4.1	*	56.74	38.11	*	-33
Business and financial operations.....	5.2	2.7	*	36.09	26.66	*	-26
Computer and mathematical	3.0	1.1	*	42.25	28.09	*	-34
Architecture and engineering	1.8	0.8	*	40.53	30.37	*	-25
Life, physical, and social science	0.8	0.3	*	35.06	25.44	*	-27
Community and social service.....	1.4	1.4		22.69	17.56	*	-23
Legal.....	0.8	0.4	*	50.95	31.28	*	-39
Education, training, and library.....	6.2	5.1	*	26.21	20.62	*	-21
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media.....	1.4	0.4	*	28.07	17.30	*	-38
Healthcare practitioners and technical	5.9	5.8		38.06	31.29	*	-18
Healthcare support	2.9	2.8		14.65	12.30	*	-16
Protective service	2.4	1.9	*	22.03	15.76	*	-28
Food preparation and serving related	9.2	9.1		11.47	9.51	*	-17
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance.....	3.2	2.5	*	13.47	11.48	*	-15
Personal care and service.....	3.2	3.2		12.74	9.99	*	-22
Sales and related	10.4	10.3		19.50	14.21	*	-27
Office and administrative support.....	15.7	15.4		17.91	14.71	*	-18
Farming, fishing, and forestry.....	0.3	0.5	*	13.37	11.40	*	-15
Construction and extraction.....	4.0	4.6	*	23.51	17.96	*	-24

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table A. Occupational employment and wages by major occupational group, United States and the Fort Smith, AR-OK Metropolitan Statistical Area, and measures of statistical significance, May 2016 - Continued

Major occupational group	Percent of total employment			Mean hourly wage			Percent difference ⁽¹⁾
	United States	Fort Smith, AR-OK	*	United States	Fort Smith, AR-OK	*	
Installation, maintenance, and repair	3.9	4.3	*	22.45	17.86	*	-20
Production	6.5	13.3	*	17.88	14.76	*	-17
Transportation and material moving.....	6.9	10.0	*	17.34	14.96	*	-14

Footnotes:

(1) A positive percent difference measures how much the mean wage in the Fort Smith, AR-OK Metropolitan Statistical Area 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 (2,650), team assemblers (1,230), and first-line supervisors of production and operating workers (980). Among the higher-paying jobs were gas plant operators, as well as first-line supervisors of production and operating workers, with mean hourly wages of \$31.07 and \$24.17, respectively. At the lower end of the wage scale were laundry and dry-cleaning workers (\$9.49) and production workers’ helpers (\$10.11). (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

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 data available from BLS include cross-industry occupational employment and wage estimates for the nation; over 650 areas, including states and the District of Columbia, metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), metropolitan divisions, nonmetropolitan areas, and territories; national industry-specific estimates at the NAICS sector, 3-, 4-, 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.

OES estimates are constructed from a sample of about 1.2 million establishments. Each year, two semiannual panels of approximately 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 2016 estimates are based on responses from six semiannual panels collected over a 3-year period: May 2016, November 2015, May 2015, November 2014, May 2014, and November 2013. The overall national response rate for the six panels, based on the 50 states and the District of Columbia, is 73 percent based on establishments and 69 percent based on weighted sampled employment. The unweighted employment of sampled establishments across all six semiannual panels represents approximately 58 percent of total national employment. The sample in the Fort Smith Metropolitan Statistical Area included 1,679 establishments with a response rate of 81 percent. For more information about OES concepts and methodology, go to www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.tn.htm.

The May 2016 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** 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 the 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, AR-OK Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2016

Occupation ⁽¹⁾	Employment		Mean wages	
	Level ⁽²⁾	Location quotient ⁽³⁾	Hourly	Annual ⁽⁴⁾
Production occupations	14,580	2.1	\$14.76	\$30,690
First-line supervisors of production and operating workers	980	2.1	24.17	50,270
Electrical and electronic equipment assemblers	240	1.4	21.38	44,480
Structural metal fabricators and fitters	170	2.8	16.74	34,830
Team assemblers	1,230	1.4	14.85	30,900
Assemblers and fabricators, all other	70	0.4	12.61	26,220
Bakers	130	0.9	11.23	23,350
Butchers and meat cutters	80	0.8	12.52	26,040
Meat, poultry, and fish cutters and trimmers	880	7.5	10.95	22,770
Food batchmakers	380	3.3	12.32	25,620
Food processing workers, all other	460	13.7	10.82	22,500
Computer-controlled machine tool operators, metal and plastic	230	2.0	21.37	44,460
Extruding and drawing machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	70	1.3	16.44	34,190
Cutting, punching, and press machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	220	1.5	15.94	33,150
Machinists	260	0.9	18.56	38,590
Molding, coremaking, and casting machine setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	90	0.8	16.87	35,090
Multiple machine tool setters, operators, and tenders, metal and plastic	80	0.9	10.53	21,890
Tool and die makers	90	1.6	22.80	47,430
Welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers	550	1.8	19.12	39,760
Printing press operators	120	0.9	19.13	39,790
Print binding and finishing workers	100	2.4	14.62	30,400
Laundry and dry-cleaning workers	140	0.9	9.49	19,740
Pressers, textile, garment, and related materials	50	1.4	8.92	18,550
Sewing machine operators	200	1.9	12.66	26,320
Upholsterers	(5)	(5)	11.41	23,730
Cabinetmakers and bench carpenters	90	1.2	13.78	28,650
Sawing machine setters, operators, and tenders, wood	50	1.2	9.92	20,630
Woodworking machine setters, operators, and tenders, except sawing	90	1.5	11.43	23,780
Water and wastewater treatment plant and system operators	260	2.9	16.15	33,590
Gas plant operators	40	2.9	31.07	64,620
Petroleum pump system operators, refinery operators, and gaugers	(5)	(5)	32.71	68,030
Separating, filtering, clarifying, precipitating, and still machine setters, operators, and tenders	50	1.2	19.62	40,810
Crushing, grinding, and polishing machine setters, operators, and tenders	(5)	(5)	13.11	27,270
Mixing and blending machine setters, operators, and tenders	270	2.6	16.86	35,070
Cutting and slicing machine setters, operators, and tenders	260	5.4	16.05	33,380
Inspectors, testers, sorters, samplers, and weighers	470	1.2	14.87	30,940
Packaging and filling machine operators and tenders	750	2.5	13.35	27,780
Coating, painting, and spraying machine setters, operators, and tenders	110	1.7	17.44	36,270
Cleaning, washing, and metal pickling equipment operators and tenders	(5)	(5)	10.89	22,650
Cooling and freezing equipment operators and tenders	130	20.1	10.42	21,670
Molders, shapers, and casters, except metal and plastic	30	1.1	16.13	33,550
Paper goods machine setters, operators, and tenders	80	1.1	17.68	36,780

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 1. Employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey, by occupation, Fort Smith, AR-OK Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2016 - Continued

Occupation ⁽¹⁾	Employment		Mean wages	
	Level ⁽²⁾	Location quotient ⁽³⁾	Hourly	Annual ⁽⁴⁾
Helpers-production workers	2,650	7.9	10.11	21,040
Production workers, all other.....	430	2.2	15.87	33,000

Footnotes:

(1) For a complete listing of all detailed occupations in the Fort Smith, AR-OK Metropolitan Statistical Area, 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.