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County Employment and Wages in Arkansas – Fourth Quarter 2017

Employment increased in the three largest Arkansas counties from December 2016 to December 2017, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (Large counties are those with 2016 annual average employment levels of 75,000 or more.) Assistant Commissioner for Regional Operations Stanley W. Suchman noted that Washington County's 2.6-percent rate of job growth exceeded the 1.5-percent national rate and ranked 56th among the 346 large U.S. counties. In contrast, rates of job growth in two large Arkansas counties were below the national average, with Benton County's 1.3-percent job gain ranked 158th nationwide and Pulaski County's 0.9-percent gain ranked 215th. (See [table 1](#).)

Nationally, 316 of the 346 largest U.S. counties registered increases from December 2016 to December 2017. Midland, Texas, recorded the largest percentage increase in the country, up 11.5 percent over the year. Shawnee, Kan., and Caddo, La., had the largest over-the-year percentage decreases in employment among the largest counties in the U.S., with losses of 1.8 percent each.

Among the three largest counties in Arkansas, employment was highest in Pulaski County (253,200) in December 2017. Benton and Washington Counties had employment levels of 119,700 and 107,400, respectively. Together, the three largest Arkansas counties accounted for 39.5 percent of total employment within the state. Nationwide, the 346 largest counties made up 73.0 percent of total U.S. employment.

From the fourth quarter of 2016 to the fourth quarter of 2017, Washington County had the largest percentage increase in average weekly wages among Arkansas's large counties, up 5.5 percent. (See [table 1](#).) Benton recorded the highest average weekly wage among the state's large counties at \$1,008, followed closely by Washington County at \$1,002. Nationally, the average weekly wage increased 3.9 percent from a year ago, rising to \$1,109 in the fourth quarter of 2017.

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 2017. (See [table 2](#).)

Large county wage changes

As noted, average weekly wages in Washington County increased 5.5 percent, above the national increase of 3.9 percent and ranked 18th among the 346 largest U.S. counties. (See [table 1](#).) Pulaski County's 2.1-percent wage increase placed 264th. In contrast, Benton had an over-the-year wage decline of 1.4 percent, ranking 344th among the 346 largest U.S. counties.

Among the 346 large U.S. counties, 339 had over-the-year wage increases. San Mateo, Calif., and Ada, Idaho, had the largest over-the-year percentage increases in average weekly wages, with gains of 11.5 percent each. Seven large U.S. counties had over-the-year wage decreases. Clayton, Ga., had the largest over-the-year percentage decrease in average weekly wages (-6.7 percent).

Large county average weekly wages

Average weekly wage levels in the state's three large counties were below the nationwide average (\$1,109) in the fourth quarter of 2017. Benton County's average weekly wage of \$1,008 ranked 167th among the 346 large U.S. counties. Weekly wages in Washington and Pulaski Counties, at \$1,002 and \$971, respectively, ranked 173rd and 197th nationally.

Of the 346 large U.S. counties, 251 reported average weekly wages below the national average of \$1,109. Cameron, Texas, reported the lowest weekly wage (\$652), followed by Hidalgo, Texas (\$664) and Horry, S.C. (\$674).

Nationally, 95 large counties registered average weekly wages above the U.S. average in the fourth quarter of 2017. Santa Clara, Calif., held the top position with an average weekly wage of \$2,576. New York, N.Y., was second at \$2,439, followed by San Mateo, Calif., at \$2,341. Average weekly wages in the highest-ranked county, Santa Clara, Calif., were nearly four times the average weekly wage in the lowest-ranked county, Cameron, Texas (\$652).

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 \$1,109 in the fourth quarter of 2017. Among these smaller counties, the highest weekly wages were in Calhoun (\$1,034) and Little River (\$929), while the lowest weekly wage was in Newton (\$490). (See [table 2](#).)

When all 75 counties in Arkansas were considered, 8 reported average weekly wages under \$600, 31 reported wages from \$600 to \$699, 25 had wages from \$700 to \$799, and 11 averaged \$800 or more per week. (See [chart 1](#).) Higher-paying counties were generally located around the metropolitan areas of Blytheville, Fayetteville, Fort Smith, Little Rock, Texarkana, and along the southern border of the state. Lower-paying counties were generally concentrated along the northern border 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 2016 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 2017 version of the national news release. Tables and additional content from *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* are now available at www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn16.htm.

The County Employment and Wages release for first quarter 2018 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, August 22, 2018.

QCEW Publication Acceleration and Conversion to Two Data Releases

The national QCEW publication process has accelerated for a more timely release. Beginning with the national fourth quarter 2017 release, QCEW data are now published in two parts. The current County Employment and Wages news release and associated data have been accelerated and published first. The full QCEW data release, with smaller county data contained in this release, occurs two weeks later.

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 10.0 million employer reports cover 145.9 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.

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 2017

Area	Employment			Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
	December 2017 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2016-17 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level ⁽³⁾	Percent change, fourth quarter 2016-17 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾
United States ⁽⁴⁾	145,921.1	1.5	--	\$1,109	--	3.9	--
Arkansas	1,217.2	1.0	--	848	48	2.5	42
Benton, Ark.....	119.7	1.3	158	1,008	167	-1.4	344
Pulaski, Ark.....	253.2	0.9	215	971	197	2.1	264
Washington, Ark.	107.4	2.6	56	1,002	173	5.5	18

Footnotes:

(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 2017

Area	Employment December 2017	Average weekly wage(1)
United States(2)	145,921,109	\$1,109
Arkansas	1,217,172	848
Arkansas	9,723	820
Ashley	6,691	834
Baxter	15,169	708
Benton	119,661	1,008
Boone	14,008	751
Bradley	3,868	672
Calhoun	2,965	1,034
Carroll	10,804	600
Chicot	3,130	652
Clark	9,408	660
Clay	3,329	602
Cleburne	6,383	657
Cleveland	1,027	615
Columbia	8,012	781
Conway	6,438	742
Craighead	51,417	757
Crawford	19,574	721
Crittenden	16,672	715
Cross	4,869	674
Dallas	2,687	654
Desha	4,781	671
Drew	6,642	705
Faulkner	40,609	774
Franklin	4,643	719
Fulton	1,944	589
Garland	36,486	735
Grant	4,131	757
Greene	15,252	728
Hempstead	7,909	719
Hot Spring	8,532	715
Howard	7,280	644
Independence	16,027	758
Izard	3,083	628
Jackson	5,163	704
Jefferson	27,903	805
Johnson	8,823	641
Lafayette	1,219	668
Lawrence	4,051	650
Lee	1,946	652
Lincoln	2,792	657
Little River	3,394	929
Logan	5,399	633
Lonoke	13,705	679
Madison	3,371	763
Marion	3,739	577
Miller	13,171	771
Mississippi	18,226	925
Monroe	2,029	594
Montgomery	1,320	541
Nevada	2,398	706
Newton	1,073	490
Ouachita	6,943	698
Perry	1,166	641
Phillips	5,470	655

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Covered employment and wages in the United States and all counties in Arkansas, 4th quarter 2017 - Continued

Area	Employment December 2017	Average weekly wage(1)
Pike	2,591	643
Poinsett	5,211	712
Polk	5,851	606
Pope	25,972	797
Prairie	1,512	678
Pulaski	253,228	971
Randolph	5,544	625
Saline	24,589	707
Scott	3,076	608
Searcy	1,525	514
Sebastian	65,910	815
Sevier	4,912	662
Sharp	3,825	580
St. Francis	7,424	696
Stone	2,602	570
Union	17,729	922
Van Buren	3,625	697
Washington	107,391	1,002
White	24,281	732
Woodruff	1,784	724
Yell	6,663	618

Footnotes

(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 2017

State	Employment		Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
	December 2017 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2016-17	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2016-17	National ranking by percent change
United States ⁽²⁾	145,921.1	1.5	\$1,109	--	3.9	--
Alabama	1,955.3	1.1	928	36	2.9	32
Alaska	306.7	-1.2	1,052	19	1.5	51
Arizona	2,834.7	2.6	978	25	3.5	12
Arkansas	1,217.2	1.0	848	48	2.5	42
California	17,293.0	2.1	1,346	4	5.7	4
Colorado	2,653.3	2.5	1,133	10	4.3	9
Connecticut	1,689.7	0.3	1,317	5	2.2	46
Delaware	444.9	0.6	1,081	15	2.6	40
District of Columbia	769.0	0.9	1,812	1	2.7	37
Florida	8,712.0	2.0	975	26	3.4	16
Georgia.....	4,425.0	1.8	1,027	20	3.4	16
Hawaii.....	664.5	0.8	984	24	3.1	26
Idaho	712.4	3.0	857	46	7.1	1
Illinois	6,001.1	0.8	1,151	9	2.6	40
Indiana.....	3,057.8	1.1	915	38	3.6	11
Iowa	1,549.7	0.4	938	32	3.0	28
Kansas	1,390.3	0.4	894	41	1.9	49
Kentucky.....	1,903.8	0.5	892	42	2.1	47
Louisiana	1,918.8	0.4	933	35	2.1	47
Maine.....	610.3	1.2	884	43	3.4	16
Maryland.....	2,683.6	0.5	1,207	8	3.3	22
Massachusetts	3,582.2	1.3	1,411	3	4.4	8
Michigan	4,321.8	0.9	1,062	17	3.4	16
Minnesota.....	2,875.7	1.3	1,100	14	3.4	16
Mississippi.....	1,140.6	0.5	774	51	2.4	45
Missouri.....	2,809.5	1.0	945	31	2.9	32
Montana	461.4	1.0	843	50	2.7	37
Nebraska	980.9	0.9	901	39	3.0	28
Nevada	1,351.9	3.5	955	29	3.2	25
New Hampshire.....	661.3	0.7	1,132	11	3.7	10
New Jersey.....	4,106.9	1.6	1,262	6	1.8	50
New Mexico.....	816.7	0.6	865	45	2.5	42
New York	9,465.3	1.4	1,428	2	6.4	2
North Carolina	4,388.6	1.5	964	28	3.3	22
North Dakota	416.1	0.4	1,010	22	3.3	22
Ohio	5,409.2	0.8	973	27	3.1	26
Oklahoma.....	1,607.8	1.2	895	40	3.5	12
Oregon	1,900.4	2.0	1,014	21	4.5	7
Pennsylvania.....	5,870.4	1.2	1,075	16	3.5	12
Rhode Island	483.6	1.1	1,056	18	2.7	37
South Carolina.....	2,058.8	1.6	879	44	2.8	35
South Dakota.....	423.8	0.9	856	47	3.4	16
Tennessee.....	2,984.8	1.3	1,000	23	3.0	28
Texas	12,207.8	2.0	1,109	13	3.5	12
Utah	1,465.5	3.6	936	33	2.9	32
Vermont.....	314.7	0.5	919	37	2.5	42
Virginia.....	3,884.2	1.3	1,121	12	2.8	35
Washington.....	3,305.0	2.4	1,217	7	5.8	3
West Virginia	693.1	0.1	847	49	4.7	5
Wisconsin.....	2,872.6	1.0	951	30	3.0	28
Wyoming	267.5	0.6	935	34	4.6	6
Puerto Rico.....	887.0	-4.4	570	(3)	2.5	(3)
Virgin Islands.....	34.3	-11.1	827	(3)	7.7	(3)

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

