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County Employment and Wages in Washington – Third Quarter 2017

Employment increased in 9 of Washington's 10 large counties from September 2016 to September 2017, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (Large counties are defined as those with employment of 75,000 or more as measured by 2016 annual average employment.) Assistant Commissioner for Regional Operations Richard Holden noted that employment increases ranged from 4.6 percent in Clark County to 1.1 percent in Pierce County.

Nationally, employment advanced 1.0 percent from September 2016 to September 2017 as 283 of the 346 largest U.S. counties gained jobs. Midland, Texas, had the largest percentage increase in the country, up 10.4 percent over the year. Collier, Fla., had the largest over-the-year decrease in employment with a loss of 5.2 percent.

Among the 10 largest counties in Washington, employment was highest in King County (1,367,100) in September 2017, while Kitsap County had the smallest employment level (87,500). Together, Washington's large counties accounted for 85.0 percent of total employment within the state. Nationwide, the 346 largest counties made up 72.7 percent of total U.S. employment, which stood at 144.5 million in September 2017.

Average weekly wages increased in 7 of Washington's 10 largest counties from the third quarter of 2016 to the third quarter of 2017. Yakima County had the largest wage gain at 3.2 percent, followed by King County at 2.7 percent. King County had the highest average weekly wage (\$1,626), followed by Snohomish County (\$1,102) and Benton County (\$1,030). (See [table 1](#).) Nationally, the average weekly wage fell 0.6 percent over the year to \$1,021 in the third quarter of 2017.

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 29 counties in Washington with employment below 75,000. All of these smaller counties had average weekly wages below the national average in the third quarter of 2017. (See [table 2](#).)

Large county wage changes

Seven large counties in Washington had increases in average weekly wages from the third quarter of 2016 to the third quarter of 2017. Yakima County's 3.2-percent wage gain placed eighth among the nation's 346 large counties. Three other Washington counties ranked in the top 20 nationwide: King (2.7 percent, 12th), Thurston (1.9 percent, 15th), and Whatcom (1.7 percent, 17th). Three of Washington's large counties had over-the-year average weekly wage decreases: Kitsap (-2.4 percent, 281st), Benton (-1.6 percent, 217th), and Snohomish (-0.5 percent, 111th). (See [table 1](#).)

Nationally, 265 of the 346 largest counties had over-the-year wage decreases. Mercer, N.J., had the largest wage drop, down 8.8 percent from the third quarter of 2016. Wyandotte, Kan., was second with a wage decrease of 6.0 percent, followed by Clark, Nev. (-5.3 percent); Somerset, N.J. (-5.0 percent); and Clay, Mo. (-4.8 percent).

Among the largest U.S. counties, 71 experienced over-the-year increases in average weekly wages. Midland, Texas, had the largest percentage increase in average weekly wages (8.4 percent), followed by Union, N.J. (8.2 percent); Elkhart, Ind. (6.5 percent); Forsyth, N.C. (5.3 percent); and Maui + Kalawao, Hawaii (4.6 percent).

Large county average weekly wages

Average weekly wages in three of Washington's large counties placed in the top third of the national ranking. King County (\$1,626, 8th), Snohomish (\$1,102, 64th), and Benton (1,030, 92nd) had weekly wages that exceeded the national average in the third quarter of 2017. The two counties with the lowest average weekly wages—Whatcom (\$858, 250th) and Yakima (\$735, 333rd)—placed in the bottom third of the largest U.S. counties.

Among the largest U.S. counties, 250 had weekly wages below the national average in the third quarter of 2017. Cameron, Texas (\$612), had the lowest wage, followed by the counties of Horry, S.C. (\$633); Hidalgo, Texas (\$649); and Webb, Texas (\$672).

Nationally, 96 large counties registered average weekly wages above the U.S. average of \$1,021 in the third quarter of 2017. Santa Clara, Calif., held the top position among the highest-paid large counties with an average weekly wage of \$2,320. San Mateo, Calif., was second at \$2,123 followed by San Francisco, Calif. (\$1,954), New York, N.Y. (\$1,889), and Washington, D.C. (\$1,759).

Average weekly wages in Washington's smaller counties

All 29 counties in Washington with employment below 75,000 had average weekly wages lower than the national average of \$1,021. Among these counties, Cowlitz County had the highest average weekly wage at \$925. Skamania County reported the lowest weekly wage among all counties in the state, averaging \$624 in the third quarter of 2017. (See [table 2](#).)

When all 39 counties in Washington were considered, 5 had wages below \$700. Eighteen counties had average weekly wages ranging from \$700 to \$799, 6 had wages from \$800 to \$899, 7 had wages from \$900 to \$999, and 3 had wages at or above \$1,000. (See [chart 1](#).)

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 2017 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/publications/employment-and-wages-annual-averages/2016/home.htm. The 2017 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* will be available in September 2018.

The County Employment and Wages release for fourth quarter 2017 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, May 23, 2018.

QCEW Publication Acceleration and Conversion to Two Data Releases

The QCEW publication process is accelerating for a more timely release. Beginning with the fourth quarter 2017 release, QCEW data will be published in two parts. The current County Employment and Wages news release and associated data will be accelerated and published first. The full QCEW data release will occur two weeks later, accompanied by a data release notice.

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 144.5 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. 13, the number of weeks in a quarter, then divide the result. 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 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 10 largest counties in Washington, third quarter 2017

Area	Employment			Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
	September 2017 (thousands)	Percent change, September 2016-17 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level ⁽³⁾	Percent change, third quarter 2016-17 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾
United States ⁽⁴⁾	144,464.4	1.0	--	1021	--	-0.6	--
Washington.....	3,343.4	2.0	--	1208	5	1.7	1
Benton, Wash.....	89.6	3.8	9	1030	92	-1.6	217
Clark, Wash.....	158.0	4.6	4	975	136	0.7	43
King, Wash.....	1,367.1	2.8	28	1626	8	2.7	12
Kitsap, Wash.....	87.5	1.4	104	947	162	-2.4	281
Pierce, Wash.....	305.1	1.1	145	953	154	0.3	59
Snohomish, Wash.....	283.4	-0.8	321	1102	64	-0.5	111
Spokane, Wash.....	220.8	1.4	104	889	214	0.7	43
Thurston, Wash.....	114.8	3.3	16	946	164	1.9	15
Whatcom, Wash.....	89.8	1.9	67	858	250	1.7	17
Yakima, Wash.....	125.0	1.3	114	735	333	3.2	8

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 Washington, third quarter 2017

Area	Employment September 2017	Average Weekly Wage(1)
United States(2)	144,464,425	\$1,021
Washington	3,343,421	1,208
Adams	9,005	724
Asotin	6,535	735
Benton	89,594	1,030
Chelan	46,386	738
Clallam	23,397	763
Clark	157,971	975
Columbia	1,328	794
Cowlitz	39,001	925
Douglas	13,875	666
Ferry	1,826	791
Franklin	36,313	758
Garfield	760	837
Grant	43,501	755
Grays Harbor	23,272	775
Island	16,684	739
Jefferson	8,873	739
King	1,367,136	1,626
Kitsap	87,454	947
Kittitas	15,067	785
Klickitat	7,753	889
Lewis	25,756	783
Lincoln	2,878	732
Mason	13,929	783
Okanogan	19,999	634
Pacific	6,633	703
Pend Oreille	3,096	915
Pierce	305,087	953
San Juan	6,492	655
Skagit	51,501	900
Skamania	2,186	624
Snohomish	283,391	1,102
Spokane	220,780	889
Stevens	10,855	745
Thurston	114,810	946
Wahkiakum	718	695
Walla Walla	28,650	820
Whatcom	89,819	858
Whitman	18,809	887
Yakima	124,987	735

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: 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, third quarter 2017

State	Employment		Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
	September 2017 (thousands)	Percent change, September 2016-17	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, third quarter 2016-17	National ranking by percent change
United States ⁽²⁾	144,464.4	1.0	\$1,021	--	-0.6	--
Alabama	1,941.1	0.8	859	37	-1.3	38
Alaska	335.4	-0.7	1,025	15	-2.8	50
Arizona	2,760.1	2.4	948	24	-0.2	10
Arkansas	1,213.0	0.6	788	49	-0.6	19
California	17,153.4	1.7	1,215	4	0.5	4
Colorado	2,625.9	1.9	1,067	9	0.5	4
Connecticut	1,676.3	0.1	1,179	6	-2.2	47
Delaware	443.0	0.4	1,026	14	0.4	6
District of Columbia	764.7	0.7	1,759	1	1.3	2
Florida	8,305.8	-0.2	896	29	-1.1	31
Georgia	4,343.5	1.3	961	21	-0.9	27
Hawaii	652.5	0.4	953	22	-0.3	13
Idaho	722.3	2.7	778	50	-0.5	16
Illinois	5,969.6	0.5	1,057	10	-0.3	13
Indiana	3,044.0	0.6	861	36	-0.6	19
Iowa	1,546.1	-0.2	855	38	-2.2	47
Kansas	1,376.4	-0.1	839	41	-2.1	46
Kentucky	1,890.4	0.5	837	42	-2.4	49
Louisiana	1,904.3	-0.1	869	33	-1.7	42
Maine	621.9	0.7	821	46	-0.5	16
Maryland	2,661.8	0.5	1,105	8	-1.7	42
Massachusetts	3,568.0	0.9	1,265	2	-0.9	27
Michigan	4,334.3	0.9	964	20	-1.1	31
Minnesota	2,883.0	1.1	1,030	13	-2.0	45
Mississippi	1,129.1	-0.1	729	51	-1.4	39
Missouri	2,805.8	0.9	878	31	-1.2	34
Montana	468.6	0.9	793	48	0.1	8
Nebraska	973.3	-0.2	850	39	-0.8	23
Nevada	1,337.7	2.9	914	26	-3.8	51
New Hampshire	659.1	0.6	1,022	16	-0.4	15
New Jersey	4,043.6	1.1	1,156	7	-1.5	41
New Mexico	816.0	0.3	823	45	-0.8	23
New York	9,329.8	1.2	1,219	3	-0.2	10
North Carolina	4,348.0	1.3	904	27	-0.7	21
North Dakota	419.2	-1.0	953	22	-1.2	34
Ohio	5,383.6	0.6	920	25	-0.8	23
Oklahoma	1,593.3	0.7	843	40	-1.2	34
Oregon	1,905.3	1.8	969	19	-0.1	9
Pennsylvania	5,836.5	1.0	1,002	17	-1.1	31
Rhode Island	484.5	0.8	973	18	-1.8	44
South Carolina	2,027.2	0.8	828	43	-0.5	16
South Dakota	426.2	0.4	803	47	-0.7	21
Tennessee	2,953.3	1.1	903	28	-1.2	34
Texas	12,008.9	1.4	1,032	12	-1.0	29
Utah	1,444.1	2.6	879	30	-0.2	10
Vermont	310.3	0.1	869	33	-1.4	39
Virginia	3,843.6	1.0	1,053	11	-0.8	23
Washington	3,343.4	2.0	1,208	5	1.7	1
West Virginia	694.0	0.2	826	44	1.1	3
Wisconsin	2,866.9	0.5	876	32	-1.0	29
Wyoming	276.2	0.3	868	35	0.3	7
Puerto Rico	862.8	-3.1	509	(3)	-2.7	(3)
Virgin Islands	36.9	-1.1	763	(3)	-1.9	(3)

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Footnotes:

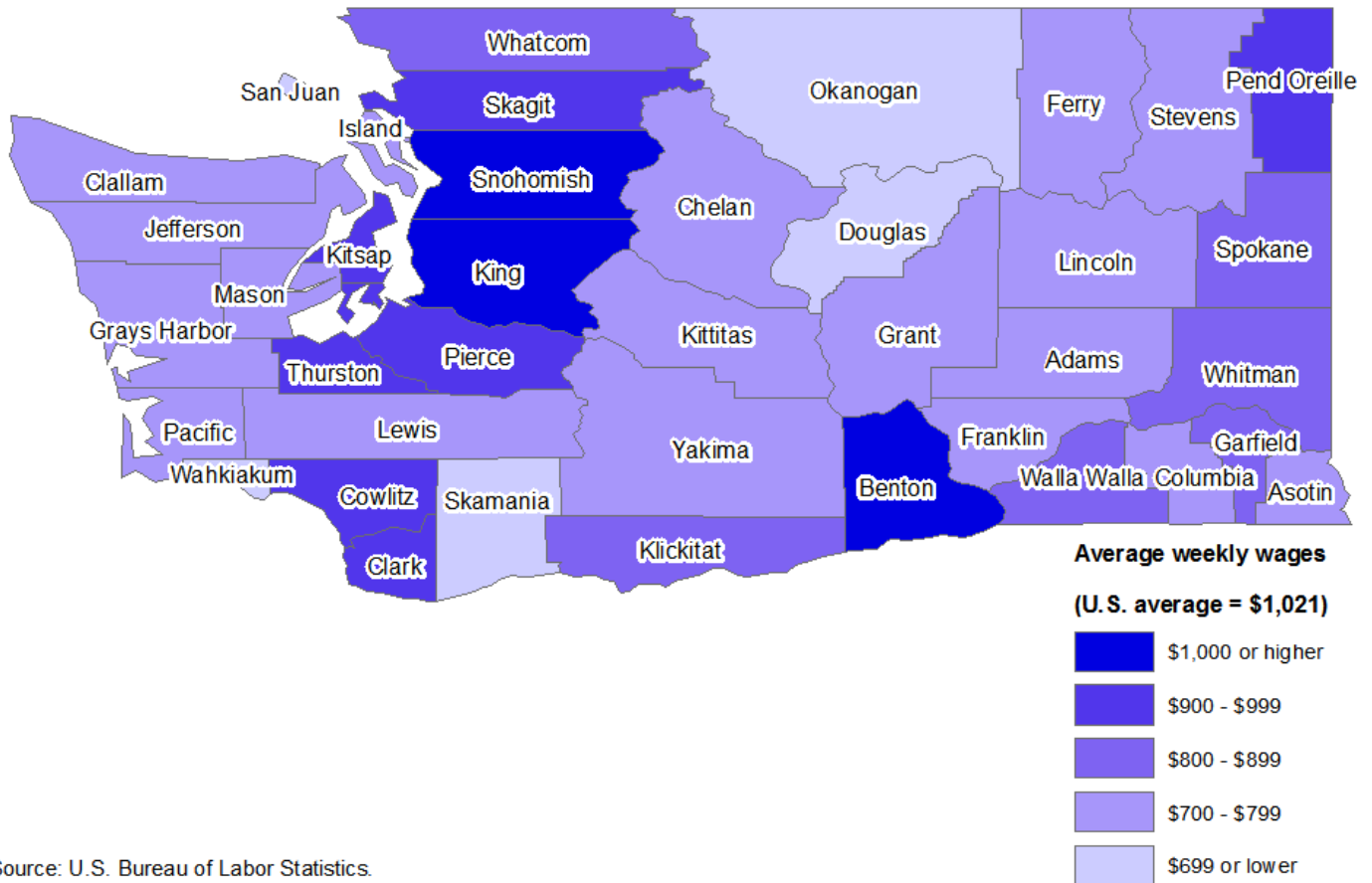
(1) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(2) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(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 Washington, third quarter 2017



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.