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County Employment and Wages in California – Fourth Quarter 2020

Employment declined in all of California’s 29 largest counties from December 2019 to December 2020

Employment declined in all of California’s 29 largest counties from December 2019 to December 2020, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (Large counties are those with annual average employment levels of 75,000 or more in 2019.) Regional Commissioner Chris Rosenlund noted that San Francisco County (-14.0 percent), Napa County (-12.7 percent), and Marin County (-11.0 percent) had the largest over-the-year decreases in employment. (See [chart 1](#) and [table 1](#).)

Chart 1. Over-the-year percent change in covered employment among selected large counties in California, December 2020

County	Percent change, December 2020
San Francisco	-14.0
Napa	-12.7
Marin	-11.0
Los Angeles	-10.5
Sonoma	-10.1
Orange	-9.6
San Diego	-9.3
San Luis Obispo	-9.3
San Mateo	-9.2
Butte	-9.1
Fresno	-6.2
Riverside	-5.8
Merced	-5.3
Sacramento	-5.3
Yolo	-4.7
Kern	-4.4
Stanislaus	-4.3
Tulare	-4.2
San Bernardino	-3.8
San Joaquin	-2.2

National employment decreased 6.1 percent over the year, with 352 of the 357 largest U.S. counties reporting declines. Maui + Kalawao, HI, had the largest over-the-year decrease in employment with a loss of 22.8 percent. Utah, UT, experienced the largest over-the-year percentage increase in employment with a gain of 3.8 percent.

Among the 29 largest counties in California, employment was highest in Los Angeles County (4,105,300) in December 2020. Within Los Angeles County’s private industry, health care and social assistance accounted for the largest employment. Together, the 29 largest California counties accounted for 94.0 percent of total employment within the state. Nationwide, the 357 largest counties made up 73.1 percent of total U.S. employment.

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 29 counties in California with employment below 75,000. Wage levels in all 29 smaller counties were below the national average in the fourth quarter of 2020. (See [table 2](#)).

Large county wage changes

All 29 large California counties reported average weekly wage gains from the fourth quarter of 2019 to the fourth quarter of 2020. (See [chart 2](#).) San Francisco County had the largest wage gain at 44.3 percent, followed by San Mateo County (+31.0 percent) and Santa Clara County (+30.6 percent). Over-the-year wage gains among California’s other 26 large counties ranged from 19.2 percent to 0.2 percent.

Chart 2. Over-the-year percent change in covered average weekly wages among selected large counties in California, fourth quarter 2020

County	Percent change, fourth quarter 2020
San Francisco	44.3
San Mateo	31.0
Santa Clara	30.6
San Diego	19.2
Placer	17.3
Orange	16.6
Alameda	16.5
Marin	16.4
Butte	15.6
Sonoma	15.0
Los Angeles	12.4
Fresno	12.1
Napa	11.8
Stanislaus	11.7
Yolo	11.2
Kern	11.0
Sacramento	10.5
Santa Barbara	10.5
Monterey	9.9
Santa Cruz	0.2

Among the 357 largest counties in the United States, 356 had over-the-year wage increases. Nationally, across most industries, increases in average weekly wages reflect substantial employment declines combined with wage increases. The lowest paying industry, leisure and hospitality, had the largest employment loss, which results in higher average weekly wages for the industry and the nation. San Francisco, CA, had the largest percentage wage increase (+44.3 percent). Ector, TX, had the only over-the-year percentage decrease (-7.5 percent).

Large county average weekly wages

Weekly wages in the 14 of the 29 largest counties in California were above the national average of \$1,339 in the fourth quarter of 2020. Average weekly wages in three counties held the top three positions nationwide: Santa Clara (\$3,690, 1st); San Francisco (\$3,646, 2nd); and San Mateo (\$3,435, 3rd).

Among the largest U.S. counties, 89 reported average weekly wages above the U.S. average in the fourth quarter of 2020. Santa Clara, CA, had the highest average weekly wage at \$3,690. Average weekly wages were below the national average in the remaining 268 counties. At \$760 a week, Cameron, TX, had the lowest average weekly wage.

Average weekly wages in California's smaller counties

All of the 29 counties in California—those with employment below 75,000—had average weekly wages below the national average of \$1,339. El Dorado County had the highest wage (\$1,204), followed by Nevada (\$1,135). Lake County (\$912) had the lowest weekly wage in the state.

When all 58 counties in California were considered, 31 reported average weekly wages of \$1,099 or lower, 7 had wages from \$1,100 to \$1,199, 4 had wages from \$1,200 to \$1,299, 6 had wages from \$1,300 to \$1,399, and 10 had wages of \$1,400 or higher. (See [chart 3](#).) The higher-paying counties were located in and around the San Francisco bay area and the coastal southern California metropolitan areas. The lower-paying counties, those with weekly wages under \$1,000, were found in the in the northwestern and central portions 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 2019 edition of this publication was published in September 2020. Tables and additional content from the 2019 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* are available at www.bls.gov/cew/publications/employment-and-wages-annual-averages/2019/home.htm. The 2020 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* will be available in September 2021.

The County Employment and Wages release for first quarter 2021 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, August 18, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. (ET). The County Employment and Wages full data update for first quarter 2021 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, September 1, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. (ET).

QCEW Imputation Issue Caused by Pandemic-Related Challenges

In the spring of 2020, BLS modified its imputation process for QCEW to be more responsive to current economic conditions. While continuing work to improve this process, BLS made an unintended data processing error. This error affected data for the second, third, and fourth quarters of 2020. BLS has analyzed this issue and has determined that the impact on QCEW employment was negligible at the statewide level. In smaller areas and industries, revisions may be larger than usual. Wage data were not affected. Following the usual QCEW practice, these data will be revised and corrected with the full data update on September 1, 2021.

For more information on QCEW imputation methodology, see www.bls.gov/cew/additional-resources/imputation-methodology.htm

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 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 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 individuals with sensory impairments 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 29 largest counties in California, fourth quarter 2020

Area	Establishments, fourth quarter 2020 (thousands)	Employment			Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
		December 2020 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2019–20 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾	Fourth quarter 2020	National ranking by level ⁽³⁾	Percent change, fourth quarter 2019–20 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾
United States ⁽⁴⁾	10,675.8	140,881.3	-6.1	--	\$1,339	--	13.0	--
California	1,660.2	16,380.1	-8.3	--	1,724	3	18.5	1
Alameda	67.3	729.1	-8.9	296	1,831	15	16.5	29
Butte	8.4	75.1	-9.1	305	1,046	294	15.6	45
Contra Costa	35.3	340.3	-9.1	305	1,609	32	13.9	94
Fresno	38.9	376.4	-6.2	186	1,059	282	12.1	189
Kern	22.5	319.2	-4.4	103	1,069	275	11.0	248
Los Angeles	528.3	4,105.3	-10.5	337	1,612	31	12.4	176
Marin	12.9	104.3	-11.0	342	1,758	16	16.4	30
Merced	7.1	75.7	-5.3	142	998	323	13.3	127
Monterey	14.5	165.2	-8.8	294	1,100	250	9.9	295
Napa	6.0	67.0	-12.7	347	1,331	94	11.8	205
Orange	133.0	1,501.1	-9.6	320	1,513	47	16.6	27
Placer	14.4	163.3	-6.4	198	1,382	73	17.3	19
Riverside	72.7	739.8	-5.8	167	1,051	289	14.5	69
Sacramento	64.3	653.3	-5.3	142	1,407	65	10.5	266
San Bernardino	66.6	780.3	-3.8	74	1,115	236	14.7	64
San Diego	120.1	1,369.8	-9.3	314	1,564	41	19.2	9
San Francisco	62.2	665.6	-14.0	349	3,646	2	44.3	1
San Joaquin	19.2	256.5	-2.2	32	1,140	215	14.1	84
San Luis Obispo	10.9	107.3	-9.3	314	1,202	171	14.3	76
San Mateo	29.6	383.9	-9.2	310	3,435	3	31.0	2
Santa Barbara	16.2	197.9	-6.9	221	1,239	143	10.5	266
Santa Clara	76.8	1,047.3	-8.2	269	3,690	1	30.6	3
Santa Cruz	9.9	94.5	-8.2	269	1,241	142	0.2	356
Solano	12.0	131.5	-8.5	284	1,347	86	12.7	161
Sonoma	20.4	191.2	-10.1	330	1,378	76	15.0	52
Stanislaus	16.7	183.4	-4.3	100	1,106	246	11.7	211
Tulare	12.1	155.0	-4.2	97	963	339	13.2	130
Ventura	28.7	309.0	-7.7	252	1,329	95	14.7	64
Yolo	7.4	102.7	-4.7	114	1,376	77	11.2	233

Footnotes:

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

(2) Percent changes were computed from 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 California, fourth quarter 2020

Area	Employment December 2020	Average weekly wage(1)
United States(2)	140,881,253	\$1,339
California	16,380,064	1,724
Alameda	729,068	1,831
Alpine	789	938
Amador	11,553	1,053
Butte	75,103	1,046
Calaveras	9,649	979
Colusa	8,480	1,053
Contra Costa	340,296	1,609
Del Norte	7,580	951
El Dorado	54,137	1,204
Fresno	376,366	1,059
Glenn	9,468	1,017
Humboldt	46,927	982
Imperial	60,823	938
Inyo	7,025	1,060
Kern	319,195	1,069
Kings	47,118	1,029
Lake	15,515	912
Lassen	9,257	1,107
Los Angeles	4,105,314	1,612
Madera	49,934	1,044
Marin	104,313	1,758
Mariposa	4,459	967
Mendocino	29,640	1,001
Merced	75,659	998
Modoc	2,418	943
Mono	6,265	920
Monterey	165,204	1,100
Napa	66,980	1,331
Nevada	30,116	1,135
Orange	1,501,090	1,513
Placer	163,282	1,382
Plumas	5,842	1,012
Riverside	739,814	1,051
Sacramento	653,254	1,407
San Benito	15,657	1,084
San Bernardino	780,280	1,115
San Diego	1,369,849	1,564
San Francisco	665,617	3,646
San Joaquin	256,476	1,140
San Luis Obispo	107,312	1,202
San Mateo	383,866	3,435
Santa Barbara	197,948	1,239
Santa Clara	1,047,311	3,690
Santa Cruz	94,521	1,241
Shasta	64,848	1,077
Sierra	529	953
Siskiyou	12,812	1,019
Solano	131,534	1,347
Sonoma	191,164	1,378
Stanislaus	183,357	1,106
Sutter	29,941	1,006
Tehama	18,530	1,055
Trinity	2,607	954
Tulare	154,979	963

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Covered employment and wages in the United States and all counties in California, fourth quarter 2020 - Continued

Area	Employment December 2020	Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾
Tuolumne.....	15,793	1,051
Ventura.....	309,028	1,329
Yolo.....	102,739	1,376
Yuba.....	18,694	1,171

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, fourth quarter 2020

State	Establishments, fourth quarter 2020 (thousands)	Employment		Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
		December 2020 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2019–20	Fourth quarter 2020	National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2019–20	National ranking by percent change
United States ⁽²⁾	10,675.8	140,881.3	-6.1	\$1,339	--	13.0	--
Alabama	134.6	1,951.2	-2.9	1,096	35	11.4	36
Alaska	23.1	290.1	-6.4	1,260	17	10.6	44
Arizona	173.9	2,908.7	-3.3	1,214	22	14.6	9
Arkansas	94.6	1,194.8	-3.2	999	49	11.4	36
California	1,660.2	16,380.1	-8.3	1,724	3	18.5	1
Colorado	219.6	2,613.7	-5.7	1,378	10	12.3	25
Connecticut	126.8	1,578.4	-6.5	1,551	6	12.2	27
Delaware	35.1	432.9	-5.2	1,262	16	11.3	38
District of Columbia	43.8	713.0	-8.9	2,293	1	15.2	6
Florida	765.4	8,642.8	-5.0	1,180	24	13.1	17
Georgia	319.7	4,405.9	-4.0	1,208	23	10.9	42
Hawaii	47.3	561.1	-16.1	1,219	21	16.0	4
Idaho	71.8	763.5	0.8	1,034	47	12.8	21
Illinois	386.3	5,573.8	-7.8	1,378	10	13.0	18
Indiana	173.1	2,985.1	-4.0	1,076	39	11.2	39
Iowa	105.6	1,494.3	-4.3	1,099	34	11.6	32
Kansas	89.9	1,346.9	-4.5	1,070	40	11.5	34
Kentucky	130.4	1,839.6	-4.8	1,057	42	10.8	43
Louisiana	140.8	1,796.9	-7.0	1,078	38	8.6	48
Maine	55.4	594.3	-4.3	1,092	36	14.5	10
Maryland	174.5	2,546.1	-6.7	1,445	8	13.6	16
Massachusetts	266.7	3,365.8	-8.3	1,766	2	17.0	3
Michigan	265.3	3,998.2	-8.9	1,257	19	12.8	21
Minnesota	186.4	2,684.1	-7.9	1,322	13	12.3	25
Mississippi	76.1	1,119.1	-2.4	901	51	10.4	45
Missouri	221.5	2,724.4	-4.3	1,127	33	11.6	32
Montana	54.6	467.4	-1.4	1,035	45	12.7	23
Nebraska	72.5	962.7	-2.9	1,079	37	11.5	34
Nevada	90.2	1,283.1	-10.7	1,178	25	14.4	11
New Hampshire	57.1	637.3	-5.2	1,406	9	17.9	2
New Jersey	291.0	3,860.5	-7.2	1,517	7	13.9	15
New Mexico	64.8	767.1	-9.5	1,052	43	11.8	29
New York	662.4	8,693.4	-10.3	1,712	4	14.2	13
North Carolina	301.7	4,431.0	-2.7	1,152	29	11.2	39
North Dakota	32.6	394.4	-7.1	1,136	31	4.7	50
Ohio	307.3	5,199.9	-5.1	1,161	27	12.0	28
Oklahoma	113.6	1,569.1	-4.4	1,013	48	7.3	49
Oregon	167.3	1,824.3	-7.5	1,256	20	14.2	13
Pennsylvania	370.5	5,549.4	-7.4	1,287	15	12.6	24
Rhode Island	40.7	449.6	-8.3	1,259	18	14.7	7
South Carolina	149.2	2,074.4	-3.5	1,035	45	11.1	41
South Dakota	35.5	422.8	-1.9	1,048	44	14.4	11
Tennessee	176.2	3,002.5	-2.7	1,172	26	11.7	30
Texas	743.1	12,251.1	-4.3	1,294	14	9.0	47
Utah	117.9	1,557.8	0.6	1,154	28	12.9	20
Vermont	26.6	286.1	-8.9	1,133	32	14.7	7
Virginia	289.8	3,796.1	-4.7	1,360	12	13.0	18
Washington	259.7	3,219.7	-6.8	1,589	5	16.0	4
West Virginia	51.9	654.1	-5.3	997	50	10.3	46
Wisconsin	184.2	2,762.5	-4.8	1,140	30	11.7	30
Wyoming	27.7	260.2	-5.3	1,061	41	4.6	51
Puerto Rico	46.0	873.8	-4.0	621	(3)	8.0	(3)

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 3. Covered employment and wages by state, fourth quarter 2020 - Continued

State	Establishments, fourth quarter 2020 (thousands)	Employment		Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
		December 2020 (thousands)	Percent change, December 2019–20	Fourth quarter 2020	National ranking by level	Percent change, fourth quarter 2019–20	National ranking by percent change
Virgin Islands	3.5	35.3	-11.5	1,057	(3)	-1.3	(3)

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 3. Average weekly wages by county in California, fourth quarter 2020

Area	Average Weekly Wage ⁽¹⁾
United States ⁽²⁾	\$1,339
Alameda	1,831
Alpine	938
Amador	1,053
Butte	1,046
Calaveras	979
Colusa	1,053
Contra Costa	1,609
Del Norte	951
El Dorado	1,204
Fresno	1,059
Glenn	1,017
Humboldt	982
Imperial	938
Inyo	1,060
Kern	1,069
Kings	1,029
Lake	912
Lassen	1,107
Los Angeles	1,612
Madera	1,044
Marin	1,758
Mariposa	967
Mendocino	1,001
Merced	998
Modoc	943
Mono	920
Monterey	1,100
Napa	1,331
Nevada	1,135
Orange	1,513
Placer	1,382
Plumas	1,012
Riverside	1,051
Sacramento	1,407
San Benito	1,084
San Bernardino	1,115
San Diego	1,564
San Francisco	3,646
San Joaquin	1,140
San Luis Obispo	1,202
San Mateo	3,435
Santa Barbara	1,239
Santa Clara	3,690
Santa Cruz	1,241
Shasta	1,077
Sierra	953
Siskiyou	1,019
Solano	1,347
Sonoma	1,378
Stanislaus	1,106
Sutter	1,006
Tehama	1,055
Trinity	954
Tulare	963
Tuolumne	1,051
Ventura	1,329

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Chart 3. Average weekly wages by county in California, fourth quarter 2020 - Continued

Area	Average Weekly Wage ⁽¹⁾
Yolo.....	1,376
Yuba	1,171

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.