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County Employment and Wages in Washington – Third Quarter 2021

Employment increased in Washington's 10 largest counties from September 2020 to September 2021, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (Large counties are those with annual average employment levels of 75,000 or more in 2020.) Regional Commissioner Chris Rosenlund noted that employment increases ranged from 6.8 percent in Clark County to 1.0 percent in Yakima County. (See [chart 1](#) and [table 1](#).)

Chart 1. Over-the-year percent change in covered employment among the largest counties in Washington, September 2021

County	Percent change, September 2021
Clark	6.8
King	5.7
Whatcom	4.8
Thurston	4.6
Benton	4.5
Pierce	4.0
Spokane	2.4
Kitsap	2.3
Snohomish	1.5
Yakima	1.0

National employment increased 4.4 percent over the year, with 332 of the 343 largest U.S. counties reporting gains. Honolulu, HI, had the largest over-the-year increase in employment with a gain of 13.3 percent. Jefferson, LA, had the largest over-the-year percentage decrease in employment with a loss of 3.2 percent.

Among the 10 largest counties in Washington, employment was highest in King County (1,405,400) in September 2021. Together, the 10 largest Washington counties accounted for 85.1 percent of total employment within the state. Nationwide, the 343 largest counties made up 72.3 percent of total U.S. employment.

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 29 counties in Washington with employment below 75,000. Wage levels in all 29 smaller counties were below the national average in the third quarter of 2021. (See [table 2](#).)

Large county wage changes

The 10 large Washington counties reported average weekly wage gains from the third quarter of 2020 to the third quarter of 2021. (See [chart 2](#).) Thurston County (6.7 percent) had a weekly wage gain equal to the national average of 6.7 percent, while increases for the other nine counties were below the national average.

After Thurston County, Clark County (+6.5 percent), King County (+6.5 percent), and Spokane County (+6.4 percent) had the highest weekly wage gains. Over-the-year wage gains among Washington’s other six large counties ranged from 6.0 percent to 3.8 percent.

Chart 2. Over-the-year percent change in covered average weekly wages among the largest counties in Washington, third quarter 2021

County	Percent change, third quarter 2021
Thurston	6.7
Clark	6.5
King	6.5
Spokane	6.4
Snohomish	6.0
Pierce	5.6
Kitsap	4.5
Whatcom	4.5
Yakima	4.3
Benton	3.8

Among the 343 largest counties in the United States, 333 had over-the-year wage increases. San Mateo, CA, had the largest percentage wage increase (+27.2 percent). Union, NJ, had the largest over-the-year percentage decrease (-1.2 percent).

Large county average weekly wages

Average weekly wages in four of Washington’s largest counties placed in the top third of the national ranking. King County (\$2,220, 5th) and Snohomish County (\$1,314, 66th) had weekly wages that exceeded the national average of \$1,251 in the third quarter of 2021. Yakima County (\$878, 332nd) had the lowest average weekly wage among the state’s largest counties.

Among the largest U.S. counties, 85 reported average weekly wages above the U.S. average in the second quarter of 2021. San Mateo, CA, had the highest average weekly wage at \$3,710. Average weekly wages were at or below the national average in the remaining 258 counties. At \$756 a week, Cameron, TX, had the lowest average weekly wage.

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 \$1,251. Among these counties, Cowlitz County had the highest average weekly wage at \$1,160. Wahkiakum County reported the lowest weekly wage among all counties in the state, averaging \$801 in the third quarter of 2021.

When all 39 counties in Washington were considered, 11 had wages below \$900. Twelve counties had average weekly wages ranging from \$900 to \$999, 6 had wages from \$1,000 to \$1,099, and 10 had wages at or above \$1,100. (See [chart 3](#).)

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. This publication is typically published in September of the following year of the reference period or shortly after the QCEW first quarter full data update. The *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* is available at www.bls.gov/cew/publications/employment-and-wages-annual-averages/.

The County Employment and Wages release for fourth quarter 2021 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, May 25, 2022. The County Employment and Wages full data update for fourth quarter 2021 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, June 8, 2022.

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; Telecommunications Relay Service: 7-1-1.

Table 1. Covered establishments, employment, and wages in the United States and the 10 largest counties in Washington, third quarter 2021

Area	Establishments, third quarter (thousands)	Employment			Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
		September 2021 (thousands)	Percent change, September 2020–21 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾	Third quarter 2021	National ranking by level ⁽³⁾	Percent change, third quarter 2020–21 ⁽²⁾	National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾
United States ⁽⁴⁾	11,021.4	144,863.9	4.4	--	\$1,251	--	6.7	--
Washington.....	266.6	3,415.2	4.4	--	1,578	3	6.6	20
Benton	6.4	93.0	4.5	92	1,219	103	3.8	274
Clark	17.0	167.7	6.8	19	1,219	103	6.5	106
King	94.8	1,405.4	5.7	41	2,220	5	6.5	106
Kitsap	7.5	89.1	2.3	244	1,167	139	4.5	237
Pierce	24.9	314.8	4.0	129	1,171	136	5.6	168
Snohomish	23.2	276.2	1.5	291	1,314	66	6.0	142
Spokane	17.9	232.8	2.4	234	1,077	209	6.4	120
Thurston	9.2	118.7	4.6	87	1,191	123	6.7	97
Whatcom	7.9	88.8	4.8	77	1,052	232	4.5	237
Yakima.....	8.3	121.1	1.0	312	878	332	4.3	249

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 establishments, employment, and wages in the United States and all counties in Washington, third quarter 2021

Area	Establishments	Employment September 2021	Average weekly wage (1)
United States (2)	11,021,414	144,863,915	\$1,251
Washington	266,581	3,415,150	1,578
Adams	900	10,029	856
Asotin	655	6,805	871
Benton	6,416	92,996	1,219
Chelan	3,501	44,762	935
Clallam	2,547	23,849	927
Clark	17,008	167,726	1,219
Columbia	251	1,567	1,109
Cowlitz	3,255	39,436	1,160
Douglas	1,244	12,591	864
Ferry	304	1,674	971
Franklin	2,945	35,613	956
Garfield	92	663	1,088
Grant	3,354	42,149	1,008
Grays Harbor	2,434	22,956	963
Island	2,282	16,927	947
Jefferson	1,169	8,745	959
King	94,823	1,405,416	2,220
Kitsap	7,470	89,071	1,167
Kittitas	1,495	15,637	937
Klickitat	879	7,427	1,041
Lewis	2,596	26,484	975
Lincoln	514	2,769	872
Mason	1,467	14,061	954
Okanogan	1,923	17,236	834
Pacific	844	6,522	834
Pend Oreille	413	2,967	964
Pierce	24,866	314,787	1,171
San Juan	1,058	6,271	883
Skagit	4,273	50,940	1,100
Skamania	284	1,984	865
Snohomish	23,246	276,205	1,314
Spokane	17,889	232,780	1,077
Stevens	1,223	11,320	883
Thurston	9,192	118,665	1,191
Wahkiakum	141	743	801
Walla Walla	2,205	29,351	961
Whatcom	7,922	88,825	1,052
Whitman	1,333	18,871	1,046
Yakima	8,269	121,132	878

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: Data are preliminary. Covered employment and wages includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

Table 3. Covered establishments, employment, and wages by state, third quarter 2021

State	Establishments, third quarter (thousands)	Employment		Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾			
		September 2021 (thousands)	Percent change, September 2020–21	Third quarter 2021	National ranking by level	Percent change, third quarter 2020–21	National ranking by percent change
United States ⁽²⁾	11,021.4	144,863.9	4.4	\$1,251	--	6.7	--
Alabama	139.8	1,955.3	2.6	1,030	36	5.3	37
Alaska	24.0	316.9	4.6	1,205	16	3.4	50
Arizona	184.5	2,926.3	4.6	1,167	19	7.0	13
Arkansas	97.4	1,212.9	2.9	963	47	7.8	6
California	1,679.6	17,208.7	6.6	1,576	4	7.7	8
Colorado	231.8	2,723.4	4.8	1,322	9	7.0	13
Connecticut	132.0	1,605.1	2.9	1,401	6	5.7	31
Delaware	35.9	439.7	2.1	1,198	18	4.4	45
District of Columbia	45.4	736.1	3.1	2,042	1	4.1	46
Florida	808.4	8,910.9	7.0	1,120	25	8.7	3
Georgia	343.9	4,491.4	4.9	1,158	20	6.8	17
Hawaii	49.2	592.8	16.6	1,150	22	3.3	51
Idaho	79.2	804.0	5.3	953	50	7.8	6
Illinois	398.4	5,751.2	3.3	1,274	11	6.3	22
Indiana	178.9	3,020.6	2.6	1,032	34	7.4	10
Iowa	106.8	1,509.6	2.2	1,015	39	4.9	43
Kansas	92.1	1,349.3	1.7	997	40	4.7	44
Kentucky	134.3	1,869.0	3.4	989	43	5.8	28
Louisiana	144.2	1,772.7	1.7	1,021	37	5.4	36
Maine	58.5	619.9	3.6	1,031	35	6.7	18
Maryland	178.1	2,604.6	3.9	1,314	10	3.5	49
Massachusetts	281.4	3,501.0	5.5	1,593	2	7.0	13
Michigan	271.3	4,181.4	3.6	1,154	21	5.3	37
Minnesota	186.9	2,780.5	2.7	1,249	13	6.1	24
Mississippi	77.3	1,122.2	2.6	859	51	6.3	22
Missouri	223.9	2,760.3	2.9	1,055	31	6.0	26
Montana	57.0	487.5	4.4	963	47	6.5	21
Nebraska	75.6	964.6	1.4	1,017	38	5.5	35
Nevada	96.0	1,389.5	10.8	1,135	23	8.3	5
New Hampshire	60.0	654.6	3.3	1,349	8	15.0	1
New Jersey	304.1	3,977.2	5.1	1,384	7	4.1	46
New Mexico	64.8	806.2	4.2	997	40	5.6	32
New York	671.2	8,922.4	4.4	1,534	5	6.1	24
North Carolina	318.4	4,516.4	4.5	1,112	26	7.1	11
North Dakota	33.0	407.2	2.2	1,076	30	5.1	40
Ohio	315.7	5,248.0	2.2	1,098	28	5.6	32
Oklahoma	116.4	1,576.6	1.8	966	45	5.6	32
Oregon	171.2	1,909.5	3.7	1,220	15	9.6	2
Pennsylvania	375.4	5,685.4	3.2	1,205	16	5.8	28
Rhode Island	43.2	474.1	4.8	1,131	24	3.6	48
South Carolina	152.9	2,086.0	2.8	988	44	6.9	16
South Dakota	37.0	435.6	3.1	965	46	5.1	40
Tennessee	187.7	3,044.1	4.2	1,111	27	8.7	3
Texas	770.0	12,613.1	5.6	1,227	14	6.7	18
Utah	123.1	1,594.7	5.0	1,087	29	7.1	11
Vermont	28.1	293.5	2.7	1,055	31	5.8	28
Virginia	299.2	3,845.3	2.9	1,264	12	5.3	37
Washington	266.6	3,415.2	4.4	1,578	3	6.6	20
West Virginia	53.6	664.2	2.7	960	49	5.0	42
Wisconsin	189.5	2,815.9	2.3	1,049	33	7.5	9
Wyoming	28.7	271.1	2.5	995	42	6.0	26
Puerto Rico	47.9	887.9	6.5	568	(3)	4.0	(3)
Virgin Islands	3.6	34.5	1.9	956	(3)	-5.4	(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 3. Average weekly wages by county in Washington, third quarter 2021

County	Average weekly wage
Adams	\$856
Asotin	871
Benton	1,219
Chelan	935
Clallam	927
Clark	1,219
Columbia	1,109
Cowlitz	1,160
Douglas	864
Ferry	971
Franklin.....	956
Garfield.....	1,088
Grant	1,008
Grays Harbor.....	963
Island	947
Jefferson.....	959
King	2,220
Kitsap	1,167
Kittitas.....	937
Klickitat.....	1,041
Lewis	975
Lincoln	872
Mason.....	954
Okanogan.....	834
Pacific.....	834
Pend Oreille.....	964
Pierce	1,171
San Juan	883
Skagit	1,100
Skamania	865
Snohomish	1,314
Spokane	1,077
Stevens	883
Thurston	1,191
Wahkiakum.....	801
Walla Walla.....	961
Whatcom	1,052
Whitman	1,046
Yakima.....	878