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## **OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN COLUMBIA, MAY 2011**

Workers in the Columbia Metropolitan Statistical Area had an average (mean) hourly wage of \$19.78 in May 2011, about 9 percent below the nationwide average of \$21.74, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that, after testing for statistical significance, nineteen groups had significantly lower wages than their respective national averages, including construction and extraction, business and financial operations, and architecture and engineering.

When compared to the nationwide distribution, employment shares were significantly above their national representation in 6 of the 22 occupational groups, including office and administrative support, healthcare practitioners and technical, and protective service. Conversely, seven groups had employment shares significantly below their national representation, including construction and extraction, transportation and material moving, and food preparation and serving related. (See table A and box note at end of release.)

One occupational group—office and administrative support—was chosen to illustrate the diversity of data available for any of the 22 major occupational categories. Columbia had 62,600 jobs in office and administrative support, accounting for 18.6 percent of local area employment, significantly higher than the 16.7-percent share nationally. The average hourly wage for this occupational group locally was \$15.67, measurably below the national wage of \$16.40.

With employment of 8,800, customer service representatives was the largest occupation within the office and administrative support group, followed by general office clerks (8,040) and secretaries and administrative assistants, except legal, medical, and executive (6,680). Among the higher paying jobs were first-line supervisors of office and administrative support workers and executive secretaries and executive administrative assistants, with mean hourly wages of \$22.04 and \$21.71, respectively. At the lower end of the wage scale were stock clerks and order fillers (\$10.80) and shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks (\$13.56). (Detailed occupational data for office and administrative support are presented in table 1; for a complete listing of detailed occupations available go to [www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_17900.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_17900.htm)).

**Table A. Occupational employment and wages by major occupational group, United States and the Columbia Metropolitan Statistical Area, and measures of statistical significance, May 2011**

| Major occupational group                       | Percent of total employment |          | Mean hourly wage |           |                                 |
|--|-----------------------------|----------|------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|
|  | United States               | Columbia | United States    | Columbia  | Percent difference <sup>1</sup> |
| <b>Total, all occupations</b>                  | 100.0%                      | 100.0%   | \$21.74          | \$19.78 * | -9                              |
| Management                                     | 4.8                         | 5.0      | 51.64            | 45.39 *   | -12                             |
| Business and financial operations              | 4.8                         | 5.1 *    | 33.05            | 27.71 *   | -16                             |
| Computer and mathematical                      | 2.7                         | 2.7      | 37.85            | 31.72 *   | -16                             |
| Architecture and engineering                   | 1.8                         | 1.7      | 37.08            | 33.55 *   | -10                             |
| Life, physical, and social science             | 0.8                         | 0.5 *    | 32.44            | 26.41 *   | -19                             |
| Community and social service                   | 1.5                         | 1.6 *    | 21.07            | 18.55 *   | -12                             |
| Legal  | 0.8                         | 1.1 *    | 47.30            | 36.01 *   | -24                             |
| Education, training, and library               | 6.6                         | 6.5      | 24.46            | 23.73     | -3                              |
| Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media | 1.3                         | 1.0 *    | 25.89            | 19.34 *   | -25                             |
| Healthcare practitioners and technical         | 5.9                         | 6.7 *    | 34.97            | 32.22 *   | -8                              |
| Healthcare support                             | 3.1                         | 2.9      | 13.16            | 12.56 *   | -5                              |
| Protective service                             | 2.5                         | 3.1 *    | 20.54            | 15.28 *   | -26                             |
| Food preparation and serving related           | 8.7                         | 8.0 *    | 10.30            | 9.32 *    | -10                             |
| Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance  | 3.3                         | 2.6 *    | 12.29            | 10.89 *   | -11                             |
| Personal care and service                      | 2.8                         | 2.0 *    | 11.84            | 11.28     | -5                              |
| Sales and related                              | 10.6                        | 10.7     | 18.04            | 15.82 *   | -12                             |
| Office and administrative support              | 16.7                        | 18.6 *   | 16.40            | 15.67 *   | -4                              |
| Farming, fishing, and forestry                 | 0.3                         | 0.3      | 11.68            | 12.15     | 4                               |
| Construction and extraction                    | 3.9                         | 3.1 *    | 21.46            | 17.18 *   | -20                             |
| Installation, maintenance, and repair          | 3.9                         | 4.1      | 20.86            | 19.72 *   | -5                              |
| Production                                     | 6.5                         | 6.9      | 16.45            | 15.30 *   | -7                              |
| Transportation and material moving             | 6.7                         | 5.9 *    | 15.96            | 14.50 *   | -9                              |

\* 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.

<sup>1</sup> A positive percent difference measures how much the mean wage in Columbia is above the national mean wage, while a negative difference reflects a lower wage.

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 Columbia Metropolitan Statistical Area, above average concentrations of employment were found in some of the occupations within the office and administrative support group. For instance, insurance claims and policy processing clerks were employed at 3.5 times the national rate in Columbia, and customer service representatives, at 1.5 times the U.S. average. On the other hand, bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks had a location quotient of 0.9 in Columbia, indicating that this particular occupation's local and national employment shares were similar.

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 South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce. The OES survey provides estimates of employment and hourly and annual wages for wage and salary workers in 22 major occupational groups and nearly 800 detailed occupations for the nation, states, metropolitan statistical areas, metropolitan divisions, and nonmetropolitan areas.

OES wage and employment data for the 22 major occupational groups in the Columbia Metropolitan Statistical Area were compared to their respective national averages based on statistical significance testing. Only those occupations with wages or employment shares above or below the national wage or share after testing for significance at the 90-percent confidence level meet the criteria.

NOTE: 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. Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands also are surveyed, but their data are not included in the national estimates. OES estimates are constructed from a sample of about 1.2 million establishments. Forms are mailed to approximately 200,000 establishments in May and November of each year for a 3-year period. The nationwide response rate for the May 2011 survey was 77.3 percent based on establishments and 73.3 percent based on employment. May 2011 estimates are based on responses from six semiannual panels collected over a 3-year period: May 2011, November 2010, May 2010, November 2009, May 2009, and November 2008. The sample in the Columbia Metropolitan Statistical Area included 2,624 establishments with a response rate of 76 percent. For more information about OES concepts and methodology, go to [www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.tn.htm](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.tn.htm).

The May 2011 OES estimates mark the first set of estimates based in part on data collected using the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system. Nearly all the occupations in this release are 2010 SOC occupations; however, some are not. The May 2012 OES data will reflect the full set of detailed occupations in the 2010 SOC. For a list of all occupations, including 2010 SOC occupations, and how data collected on two structures were combined, see the OES Frequently Asked Questions online at [www.bls.gov/oes/oes\\_ques.htm#Ques41](http://www.bls.gov/oes/oes_ques.htm#Ques41).

### **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 **Columbia, S.C. Metropolitan Statistical Area** includes Calhoun, Fairfield, Kershaw, Lexington, Richland, and Saluda Counties.

### **Additional information**

OES data are available on our regional web page at [www.bls.gov/ro4/home.htm](http://www.bls.gov/ro4/home.htm). If you have additional questions, contact the Southeast Economic Analysis and Information Unit at (404) 893-4222. Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1 (800) 877-8339.

**Table 1. Employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey, by occupation, Columbia Metropolitan Statistical Area, May 2011**

| Occupation <sup>(1)</sup>   | Employment           |                                  | Mean Wages |                       |
|---|----------------------|----------------------------------|------------|-----------------------|
|   | Level <sup>(2)</sup> | Location quotient <sup>(3)</sup> | Hourly     | Annual <sup>(4)</sup> |
| Office and administrative support occupations                                   | 62,600               | 1.1                              | \$15.67    | \$32,590              |
| First-line supervisors of office and administrative support workers             | 5,550                | 1.6                              | 22.04      | 45,840                |
| Switchboard operators, including answering service                              | 320                  | 0.9                              | 11.68      | 24,300                |
| Bill and account collectors   | 750                  | 0.7                              | 15.82      | 32,900                |
| Billing and posting clerks  | 1,740                | 1.4                              | 15.04      | 31,280                |
| Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks                                    | 3,970                | 0.9                              | 16.97      | 35,300                |
| Payroll and timekeeping clerks  | 570                  | 1.2                              | 18.54      | 38,560                |
| Procurement clerks  | 510                  | 2.8                              | 17.25      | 35,890                |
| Tellers   | 930                  | 0.7                              | 11.93      | 24,820                |
| Brokerage clerks  | 110                  | 0.7                              | 18.14      | 37,720                |
| Court, municipal, and license clerks  | 220                  | 0.7                              | 15.11      | 31,430                |
| Credit authorizers, checkers, and clerks  | 260                  | 2.0                              | 14.71      | 30,600                |
| Customer service representatives  | 8,800                | 1.5                              | 15.02      | 31,250                |
| Eligibility interviewers, government programs                                   | 70                   | 0.2                              | 18.47      | 38,420                |
| File clerks   | 380                  | 0.9                              | 11.23      | 23,360                |
| Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks  | 550                  | 0.9                              | 9.57       | 19,900                |
| Interviewers, except eligibility and loan                                       | 220                  | 0.4                              | 13.26      | 27,590                |
| Library assistants, clerical  | 310                  | 1.1                              | 13.28      | 27,630                |
| Loan interviewers and clerks  | 370                  | 0.8                              | 16.38      | 34,060                |
| New accounts clerks   | 60                   | 0.4                              | 14.49      | 30,140                |
| Order clerks  | 350                  | 0.6                              | 14.50      | 30,160                |
| Human resources assistants, except payroll and timekeeping                      | 680                  | 1.8                              | 17.07      | 35,500                |
| Receptionists and information clerks  | 2,880                | 1.1                              | 13.24      | 27,540                |
| Reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks                  | 70                   | 0.2                              | 12.85      | 26,730                |
| Information and record clerks, all other  | 460                  | 0.9                              | 19.67      | 40,910                |
| Cargo and freight agents  | 80                   | 0.4                              | 18.10      | 37,650                |
| Couriers and messengers   | 410                  | 1.9                              | 10.95      | 22,780                |
| Police, fire, and ambulance dispatchers   | 230                  | 0.9                              | 14.87      | 30,940                |
| Dispatchers, except police, fire, and ambulance                                 | 530                  | 1.1                              | 17.46      | 36,320                |
| Meter readers, utilities  | 80                   | 0.8                              | 17.07      | 35,500                |
| Postal service clerks   | 150                  | 0.9                              | 25.37      | 52,770                |
| Postal service mail carriers  | 710                  | 0.9                              | 24.01      | 49,940                |
| Postal service mail sorters, processors, and processing machine operators       | 390                  | 1.1                              | 23.12      | 48,090                |
| Production, planning, and expediting clerks                                     | 630                  | 0.9                              | 21.36      | 44,430                |
| Shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks   | 1,670                | 0.9                              | 13.56      | 28,210                |
| Stock clerks and order fillers  | 4,420                | 0.9                              | 10.80      | 22,460                |
| Weighers, measurers, checkers, and samplers, recordkeeping                      | 160                  | 0.9                              | 12.08      | 25,130                |
| Executive secretaries and executive administrative assistants                   | 2,150                | 0.9                              | 21.71      | 45,160                |
| Legal secretaries   | 860                  | 1.5                              | 19.67      | 40,920                |
| Medical secretaries   | 1,050                | 0.8                              | 13.62      | 28,320                |
| Secretaries and administrative assistants, except legal, medical, and executive | 6,680                | 1.3                              | 14.65      | 30,470                |
| Computer operators  | 180                  | 0.9                              | 17.02      | 35,410                |
| Data entry keyers   | 910                  | 1.7                              | 14.10      | 29,330                |
| Word processors and typists   | 110                  | 0.5                              | 13.41      | 27,890                |
| Insurance claims and policy processing clerks                                   | 2,000                | 3.5                              | 17.28      | 35,940                |
| Mail clerks and mail machine operators, except postal service                   | 260                  | 0.9                              | 13.22      | 27,500                |
| Office clerks, general  | 8,040                | 1.1                              | 13.51      | 28,090                |
| Office machine operators, except computer                                       | 50                   | 0.3                              | 14.17      | 29,480                |
| Proofreaders and copy markers   | (5)                  | (5)                              | 12.99      | 27,030                |
| Statistical assistants  | 130                  | 3.5                              | 17.45      | 36,290                |
| Office and administrative support workers, all other                            | 370                  | 0.5                              | 16.95      | 35,250                |

(1) For a complete listing of all detailed occupations in Columbia, see [www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_17900.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_17900.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) Estimate not released.