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Contact information: (972) 850-4800 • BLSInfoDallas@bls.gov • www.bls.gov/ro6

PARISH EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN LOUISIANA – FIRST QUARTER 2012

Employment rose in five of the seven largest parishes in Louisiana from March 2011 to March 2012 the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (Large counties/parishes are those with 2011 annual average employment levels of 75,000 or more.) Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that two Louisiana parishes ranked in the top 50 for job growth nationwide. Lafayette Parish's 3.9-percent gain led the state and ranked 22nd, followed by Orleans (3.2 percent, 40th). (See table 1.)

Employment nationwide advanced 1.8 percent during the 12-month period as 293 of the 328 largest U.S. counties registered increases. Gregg County, Texas, recorded the fastest increase, with a gain of 6.0 percent, while Benton, Wash., experienced the largest decline in employment, down 3.9 percent.

Among the seven largest parishes in Louisiana, employment was highest in East Baton Rouge (256,600) in March 2012, followed by Jefferson (190,100) and Orleans (177,400). Together, Louisiana's seven large parishes accounted for 56.0 percent of the state's total employment. Nationwide, the 328 largest counties made up 71.1 percent of total U.S. employment.

From the first quarter of 2011 to the first quarter of 2012, the parishes of Lafayette and Calcasieu recorded the fastest rates of increase in average weekly wages among Louisiana's seven large parishes, each registering a gain of 7.4 percent. (See table 1.) Orleans had the highest wage level among the largest parishes at \$979 per week. Nationally, average weekly wages rose 5.4 percent to \$984 in the first quarter 2012.

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 57 parishes in Louisiana with employment below 75,000. In all but five of these smaller parishes, wage levels were below the national average. (See table 2.)

Large parish wage changes

Four of Louisiana's seven largest parishes recorded wage growth above the 5.4-percent national increase from the first quarter of 2011 to the first quarter of 2012. (See table 1.) Wage increases in Lafayette and Calcasieu were the highest in the state, as both parishes registered wage growth of 7.4 percent, ranking 51st among the nation's largest counties. Wage gains in St. Tammany (6.4 percent, 100th) and East Baton Rouge (5.7 percent, 158th) ranked in the top one-half of the nation's large counties for wage increases. The slowest wage increase among the state's largest parishes was in Orleans Parish at 1.2 percent (319th). No large parish in Louisiana recorded an over-the-year decline.

Over the year, the national average weekly wage rose 5.4 percent with 323 of the 328 largest counties registering gains. Williamson, Texas, experienced the largest increase in the nation, up 27.4 percent. Middlesex, N.J., had the second largest overall increase (13.6 percent), followed by the counties of Washington, Pa. (12.4 percent), Newport News City, Va. (12.1 percent) and Collin, Texas (11.8 percent).

Among the nation's 328 largest counties, 4 experienced over-the-year wage decreases. New York, N.Y., had the largest wage decline with a loss of 6.3 percent over the year. Smaller first quarter 2012 bonus payments in the financial activities sector contributed significantly to New York County's wage loss. Somerset, N.J., had the second largest overall wage decline among large counties (-1.6 percent), followed by Hudson, N.J. (-0.4 percent) and Douglas, Colo. (-0.3 percent).

Large parish average weekly wages

Orleans' average weekly wage of \$979 was slightly below the national average (\$984) in the first quarter of 2012, but led among the state's largest parishes and ranked 100th in the country. Orleans was followed by Lafayette (\$918, 141st), East Baton Rouge (\$877, 161st), and Jefferson (\$868, 170th). Average weekly wages in Calcasieu (\$826, 217th), St. Tammany (\$817, 226th) and Caddo (\$769, 266th) were in the bottom one-third of the national ranking.

Nationwide, 95 large counties registered weekly wages above the U.S. average of \$984 in the first quarter of 2012. New York, N.Y., held the top position among the highest-paid large counties with an average weekly wage of \$2,464. Santa Clara, Calif., was second at \$1,957, followed by the counties of Fairfield, Conn. (\$1,942), Somerset, N.J. (\$1,881), and San Francisco, Calif. (\$1,791).

More than two-thirds of the largest U.S. counties (232) reported weekly wages below the national average. Horry County, S.C., reported the lowest wage (\$559), followed by the Texas counties Cameron (\$570) and Hidalgo (\$579). Wages in these lowest-ranked counties were less than one-fourth of the average weekly wage reported for the highest-ranked county, New York.

Average weekly wages in Louisiana's smaller parishes

For smaller parishes in Louisiana – those with employment below 75,000 – 52 of 57 reported weekly wages below the national average (\$984) in the first quarter of 2012. In the five remaining smaller parishes, wages not only exceeded \$1,000 per week, but also were the highest in the state: St. Charles (\$1,266), Plaquemines (\$1,231), St. James (\$1,153), Iberville (\$1,116), and Cameron (\$1,033). The parishes of Madison and West Carroll reported the lowest weekly wages in the state for the first quarter of 2012, at \$498 and \$499, respectively. (See table 2.)

When all 64 parishes were considered, 8 reported average wages under \$550 per week, 17 registered wages from \$550 to \$649, 14 had wages from \$650 to \$749, 13 had wages from \$750 to \$899, and 12 had wages of \$900 or more. (See chart 1.) The higher-paying parishes were concentrated in the southern half of the state around the metropolitan areas of Baton Rouge, Houma, Lafayette, Lake Charles, and New Orleans. The lower-paid parishes, those with weekly wages under \$550, were generally located in the northeastern quadrant of the state.

Additional statistics and other information

QCEW data for states has been included in this release in table 3. For additional information about quarterly employment and wages data, please read the Technical Note or visit the QCEW Web site at www.bls.gov/cew/.

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. The 2010 edition of this publication, which was published in November 2011, contains selected data produced by Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the first quarter 2011 version of the national news release. Tables and additional content from *Employment and Wages Annual Averages 2010* are now available at www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn10.htm. The 2011 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* will be available later in 2012.

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.

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 9.2 million employer reports cover 130.2 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. 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 (see Technical Note below) 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.

Table 1. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and the 7 largest parishes in Louisiana, first quarter 2012 (2)

Area	Employment			Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	March 2012 (thousands)	Percent change, March 2011-12 (4)	National ranking by percent change (5)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (5)	Percent change, first quarter 2011-12 (4)	National ranking by percent change (5)
United States (6)	130,175.4	1.8	--	\$984	--	5.4	--
Louisiana	1,863.1	1.2	--	836	31	4.9	44
Caddo, La.	120.2	-0.3	306	769	266	4.8	224
Calcasieu, La.	82.8	0.3	276	826	217	7.4	51
East Baton Rouge, La.	256.6	1.1	203	877	161	5.7	158
Jefferson, La.	190.1	-0.9	324	868	170	5.1	205
Lafayette, La.	137.0	3.9	22	918	141	7.4	51
Orleans, La.	177.4	3.2	40	979	100	1.2	319
St. Tammany, La.	78.8	2.7	72	817	226	6.4	100

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

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

(4) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

(5) Ranking does not include the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

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

Table 2. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and all parishes in Louisiana, first quarter 2012 (2)

Area	Employment March 2012	Average Weekly Wage (3)	Area	Employment March 2012	Average Weekly Wage (3)
United States (4)	130,175,438	\$984	Livingston	22,542	\$647
Louisiana	1,863,052	836	Madison	3,219	498
Acadia	14,961	655	Morehouse	7,146	537
Allen	8,152	615	Natchitoches	13,047	610
Ascension	35,934	905	Orleans	177,379	979
Assumption	4,427	784	Ouachita	69,235	685
Avoyelles	11,163	584	Plaquemines	14,513	1,231
Beauregard	8,171	703	Pointe Coupee	5,561	681
Bienville	4,298	650	Rapides	58,304	713
Bossier	44,384	703	Red River	2,590	761
Caddo	120,219	769	Richland	6,470	556
Calcasieu	82,839	826	Sabine	5,353	607
Caldwell	2,438	519	St. Bernard	10,475	868
Cameron	2,586	1,033	St. Charles	23,135	1,266
Catahoula	2,261	530	St. Helena	1,378	569
Claiborne	4,270	735	St. James	8,222	1,153
Concordia	5,896	596	St. John the Baptist	15,022	942
De Soto	7,341	866	St. Landry	24,040	627
East Baton Rouge	256,599	877	St. Martin	12,215	625
East Carroll	1,843	568	St. Mary	26,463	918
East Feliciana	4,861	667	St. Tammany	78,845	817
Evangeline	8,062	618	Tangipahoa	41,535	636
Franklin	4,898	512	Tensas	1,144	530
Grant	3,241	667	Terrebonne	54,604	887
Iberia	32,642	871	Union	4,773	531
Iberville	13,225	1,116	Vermilion	13,871	768
Jackson	3,562	659	Vernon	15,435	649
Jefferson	190,109	868	Washington	10,001	643
Jefferson Davis	8,471	647	Webster	12,830	682
La Salle	4,634	701	West Baton Rouge	12,037	857
Lafayette	136,954	918	West Carroll	2,356	499
Lafourche	36,729	952	West Feliciana	4,977	977
Lincoln	17,368	656	Winn	5,121	593

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE).

(2) Data are preliminary.

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

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

Table 3. Covered (1) employment and wages by state, first quarter 2012 (2)

State	Employment		Average weekly wage (3)			
	March 2012 (thousands)	Percent change, March 2011-12	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, first quarter 2011-12	National ranking by percent change
United States (4)	130,175.4	1.8	\$984	--	5.4	--
Alabama	1,822.8	0.8	808	35	5.6	32
Alaska	316.4	1.9	973	15	6.7	9
Arizona	2,437.2	2.1	887	21	5.7	29
Arkansas	1,151.5	1.5	747	47	4.6	46
California	14,670.6	2.0	1,125	6	5.5	33
Colorado	2,230.4	2.4	1,003	13	5.4	36
Connecticut	1,613.1	1.5	1,330	3	3.8	50
Delaware	398.8	0.8	1,071	7	4.2	48
District of Columbia	712.1	1.3	1,602	1	4.0	49
Florida	7,377.3	2.0	837	30	5.4	36
Georgia	3,815.5	1.3	931	17	5.2	41
Hawaii	600.3	0.9	834	32	5.7	29
Idaho	596.7	1.1	692	50	5.0	43
Illinois	5,557.5	1.5	1,061	9	5.9	25
Indiana	2,777.0	2.2	822	34	6.3	17
Iowa	1,448.3	1.9	784	40	6.4	14
Kansas	1,314.2	1.8	803	37	7.2	5
Kentucky	1,750.3	1.9	785	39	6.4	14
Louisiana	1,863.1	1.2	836	31	4.9	44
Maine	561.4	0.5	757	46	4.7	45
Maryland	2,492.4	1.7	1,071	7	6.0	23
Massachusetts	3,178.7	1.7	1,227	5	5.7	29
Michigan	3,865.8	2.6	920	20	5.5	33
Minnesota	2,586.3	2.1	989	14	6.1	20
Mississippi	1,083.5	0.8	687	51	5.9	25
Missouri	2,593.7	1.2	838	29	6.5	12
Montana	419.5	1.8	706	48	7.8	4
Nebraska	905.3	2.1	765	44	6.1	20
Nevada	1,118.4	1.4	846	28	5.5	33
New Hampshire	602.1	1.0	923	19	5.4	36
New Jersey	3,749.0	1.5	1,228	4	5.9	25
New Mexico	779.7	0.4	782	41	5.8	28
New York	8,479.4	1.7	1,357	2	-0.8	51
North Carolina	3,874.9	1.7	869	23	5.3	39
North Dakota	397.4	9.0	857	25	14.6	1
Ohio	4,967.8	2.0	873	22	6.6	11
Oklahoma	1,525.5	2.0	806	36	9.4	2
Oregon	1,613.0	1.4	864	24	6.4	14
Pennsylvania	5,531.1	1.2	960	16	7.1	7
Rhode Island	443.5	1.1	931	17	8.0	3
South Carolina	1,797.7	1.7	764	45	6.0	23
South Dakota	390.4	2.1	703	49	6.7	9
Tennessee	2,636.7	2.4	847	27	6.8	8
Texas	10,605.2	2.6	1,013	11	7.2	5
Utah	1,193.1	3.2	799	38	6.1	20
Vermont	296.6	1.5	774	42	4.6	46
Virginia	3,586.3	1.4	1,019	10	5.3	39
Washington	2,831.9	1.9	1,009	12	6.5	12
West Virginia	705.5	2.4	768	43	6.2	18
Wisconsin	2,639.0	1.1	827	33	6.2	18
Wyoming	271.8	2.4	850	26	5.2	41
Puerto Rico	931.3	0.6	521	(5)	4.6	(5)
Virgin Islands	42.7	-5.4	722	(5)	-2.0	(5)

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

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

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

(5) Data not included in the national ranking.

