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USDL 04-646

For release: 10:00 A.M. EDT
Friday, April 16, 2004

Media contact: 691-5902

USUAL WEEKLY EARNINGS OF WAGE AND SALARY WORKERS: FIRST QUARTER 2004

Median weekly earnings of the nation's 99.7 million full-time wage and salary workers were \$634 in the first quarter of 2004, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported today. This was 2.3 percent higher than a year earlier, compared with a gain of 1.8 percent in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) over the same period.

Data on usual earnings are collected as part of the Current Population Survey, a nationwide sample survey of households in which respondents are asked, among other things, how much each wage and salary worker usually earns. (See the Explanatory Note.) Highlights from the first-quarter data are:

—Women who usually worked full time had median earnings of \$567 per week, or 79.7 percent of the \$711 median for men. The female-to-male earnings ratios were higher among blacks (87.8 percent) and Hispanics or Latinos (87.2 percent) than among whites (79.6 percent) or Asians (77.8 percent). (See table 1.)

—Median earnings for black men working at full-time jobs were \$567 per week, 77.8 percent of the median for white men (\$729). The difference was less among women, as black women's median earnings (\$498) were 85.9 percent of those for their white counterparts (\$580). Overall, median earnings of Hispanics or Latinos who worked full time (\$450) were lower than those of blacks (\$521), whites (\$652), and Asians (\$712). (See table 1.)

—Among men, those age 45 to 54 and age 55 to 64 had the highest median weekly earnings, \$849 and \$844, respectively. Among women, earnings also were highest for these two age groups—\$620 for 45- to 54-year olds and \$606 for 55- to 64-year olds. (See table 2.)

—Among the major occupational groups, persons employed full time in managerial, professional, and related occupations had the highest median weekly earnings—\$1,099 for men and \$767 for women. Men and women in service occupations earned the least. (See table 3.)

—Full-time workers age 25 and over without a high school diploma had median weekly earnings of \$396, compared with \$562 for high school graduates (no college) and \$996 for college graduates holding at least a bachelor's degree. Among college graduates with advanced degrees (professional or master's degree and above), the highest-earning 10 percent of male workers made \$2,712 or more per week, compared with \$1,883 or more for their female counterparts. (See table 4.)

Explanatory Note

The estimates in this release were obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS), which provides the basic information on the labor force, employment, and unemployment. The survey is conducted monthly for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau from a scientifically selected national sample of about 60,000 households, with coverage in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The earnings data are collected from one-quarter of the CPS monthly sample and are limited to wages and salaries. The data, therefore, exclude self-employment income.

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.

Reliability

Statistics based on the CPS are subject to both sampling and nonsampling error. When a sample, rather than the entire population, is surveyed, there is a chance that the sample estimates may differ from the "true" population values they represent. The exact difference, or *sampling error*, varies depending on the particular sample selected, and this variability is measured by the standard error of the estimate. There is about a 90-percent chance, or level of confidence, that an estimate based on a sample will differ by no more than 1.6 standard errors from the "true" population value because of sampling error. BLS analyses are generally conducted at the 90-percent level of confidence.

The CPS data also are affected by *nonsampling error*. Nonsampling error can occur for many reasons, including the failure to sample a segment of the population, inability to obtain information for all respondents in the sample, inability or unwillingness of respondents to provide correct information, and errors made in the collection or processing of the data.

For a full discussion of the reliability of data from the CPS and information on estimating standard errors, see the "Explanatory Notes and Estimates of Error" section of *Employment and Earnings*.

Definitions

The principal definitions used in connection with the earnings series are described briefly below.

Usual weekly earnings. Data represent earnings before taxes and other deductions and include any overtime pay, commissions, or tips usually received (at the main job in the case of multiple jobholders.) Prior to 1994, respondents were asked how much they usually earned per week. Since January 1994, respondents have been asked to identify the easiest way for them to report earnings (hourly, weekly, biweekly, twice monthly, monthly, annually, other) and how much they usually earn in the reported time period. Earnings reported on a basis other than weekly are converted to a weekly equivalent. The term "usual" is as perceived by the respondent. If the respondent asks for a definition of usual,

interviewers are instructed to define the term as more than half the weeks worked during the past 4 or 5 months.

Medians (and other quantiles) of weekly earnings. The median (or upper limit of the second quartile) is the amount which divides a given earnings distribution into two equal groups, one having earnings above the median and the other having earnings below the median. Ten percent of a given distribution have earnings below the upper limit of the first decile (90 percent have higher earnings); 25 percent have earnings below the upper limit of the first quartile (75 percent have higher earnings); 75 percent have earnings below the upper limit of the third quartile (25 percent have higher earnings); and 90 percent have earnings below the upper limit of the ninth decile (10 percent have higher earnings).

The estimating procedure places each reported or calculated weekly earnings value into \$50-wide intervals which are centered around multiples of \$50. The actual value is estimated through the linear interpolation of the interval in which the quantile boundary lies.

Over-the-year changes in the medians (and other quantile boundaries) for specific groups may not necessarily be consistent with the movements estimated for the overall quantile boundary. The most common reasons for this possible anomaly are: (1) There could be a change in the relative weights of the subgroups. For example, the medians of both 16-to-24 year olds and those 25 years and over may rise; but if the lower-earning 16-to-24 group accounts for a greatly increased share of the total, the overall median could actually fall. (2) There could be a large change in the shape of the distribution of reported earnings, particularly near a quantile boundary. This could be caused by survey observations that are clustered at rounded values, e.g., \$250, \$300, \$400. An estimate lying in a \$50-wide centered interval containing such a cluster or "spike" tends to change more slowly than one in other intervals.

Wage and salary workers. Workers who receive wages, salaries, commissions, tips, payment in kind, or piece rates. The group includes employees in both the private and public sectors but, for the purposes of the earnings series, excludes all self-employed persons, regardless of whether or not their businesses are incorporated.

Full-time workers. Workers who usually work 35 hours or more per week at their sole or principal job.

Part-time workers. Workers who usually work fewer than 35 hours per week at their sole or principal job.

Constant dollars. The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) is used to convert current dollars to constant (1982) dollars.

Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. This refers to persons who identified themselves in the enumeration process as being Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino. Persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race and, therefore, are classified by ethnicity as well as by race.

Table 1. Median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by selected characteristics, quarterly averages, not seasonally adjusted

Characteristic	Number of workers (in thousands)		Median weekly earnings			
	I 2003	I 2004	In current dollars		In constant (1982) dollars	
			I 2003	I 2004	I 2003	I 2004
SEX AND AGE						
Total, 16 years and over	98,988	99,720	\$620	\$634	\$327	\$328
Men, 16 years and over	55,162	55,888	695	711	366	368
16 to 24 years	5,829	5,762	396	410	209	212
25 years and over	49,333	50,126	741	757	391	392
Women, 16 years and over	43,826	43,832	551	567	291	294
16 to 24 years	4,266	4,342	384	387	202	200
25 years and over	39,560	39,490	581	592	306	307
RACE, HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY, AND SEX						
White	80,878	81,271	636	652	336	338
Men	46,184	46,562	713	729	376	378
Women	34,694	34,709	563	580	297	300
Black or African American	11,706	11,796	516	521	272	270
Men	5,443	5,585	552	567	291	293
Women	6,263	6,211	493	498	260	258
Asian	4,230	4,440	718	712	379	369
Men	2,365	2,489	793	790	418	409
Women	1,865	1,951	620	615	327	318
Hispanic or Latino	13,653	13,648	447	450	236	233
Men	8,611	8,678	471	478	249	248
Women	5,042	4,970	416	417	219	216

NOTE: Estimates for the above race groups (white, black or African American, and Asian) do not sum to totals because data are not presented for all races. In addition, persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race and, therefore, are classified by ethnicity as well as by race. Beginning in January 2004, data reflect revised population controls used in the household survey.

Table 2. Median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by age, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, first quarter 2004 averages, not seasonally adjusted

Age, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total		Men		Women	
	Number of workers (in thousands)	Median weekly earnings	Number of workers (in thousands)	Median weekly earnings	Number of workers (in thousands)	Median weekly earnings
TOTAL						
16 years and over	99,720	\$634	55,888	\$711	43,832	\$567
16 to 24 years	10,104	399	5,762	410	4,342	387
16 to 19 years	1,282	315	787	320	495	307
20 to 24 years	8,822	412	4,974	427	3,847	398
25 years and over	89,616	676	50,126	757	39,490	592
25 to 54 years	75,937	673	42,746	749	33,191	592
25 to 34 years	24,397	603	14,154	648	10,243	551
35 to 44 years	26,694	695	15,287	773	11,407	600
45 to 54 years	24,845	740	13,305	849	11,540	620
55 years and over	13,679	696	7,380	817	6,299	593
55 to 64 years	11,827	719	6,371	844	5,456	606
65 years and over	1,852	521	1,009	645	843	456
White						
16 years and over	81,271	652	46,562	729	34,709	580
16 to 24 years	8,204	401	4,798	413	3,407	389
25 years and over	73,067	696	41,764	780	31,302	602
25 to 54 years	61,478	692	35,431	769	26,047	603
55 years and over	11,589	722	6,333	858	5,255	601
Black or African American						
16 years and over	11,796	521	5,585	567	6,211	498
16 to 24 years	1,229	358	599	365	630	353
25 years and over	10,567	549	4,986	600	5,581	512
25 to 54 years	9,190	545	4,339	591	4,851	510
55 years and over	1,378	586	648	661	730	524
Asian						
16 years and over	4,440	712	2,489	790	1,951	615
16 to 24 years	357	432	189	449	168	419
25 years and over	4,083	742	2,299	847	1,784	647
25 to 54 years	3,562	756	2,012	888	1,550	661
55 years and over	521	636	287	722	234	600
Hispanic or Latino						
16 years and over	13,648	450	8,678	478	4,970	417
16 to 24 years	2,082	358	1,376	359	706	355
25 years and over	11,566	480	7,302	501	4,264	438
25 to 54 years	10,540	476	6,669	498	3,871	436
55 years and over	1,026	511	633	583	393	464

NOTE: Estimates for the above race groups (white, black or African American, and Asian) do not sum to totals because data are not presented for all races. In addition, persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race and, therefore, are classified by ethnicity as well as by race. Beginning in January 2004, data reflect revised population controls used in the household survey.

Table 3. Median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by occupation and sex, quarterly averages, not seasonally adjusted

Occupation and sex	Number of workers (in thousands)		Median weekly earnings	
	I 2003	I 2004	I 2003	I 2004
TOTAL				
Managerial, professional, and related occupations	35,451	36,362	\$893	\$914
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	14,374	15,047	954	982
Professional and related occupations	21,077	21,315	854	865
Service occupations	13,327	12,985	407	410
Sales and office occupations	24,625	24,705	541	555
Sales and related occupations	9,853	9,978	594	605
Office and administrative support occupations	14,772	14,726	522	532
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	10,581	10,617	610	629
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	678	637	365	327
Construction and extraction occupations	5,561	5,641	601	608
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,342	4,340	668	713
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	15,005	15,052	519	519
Production occupations	8,493	8,588	524	522
Transportation and material moving occupations	6,511	6,465	513	515
Men				
Managerial, professional, and related occupations	17,569	18,013	1,058	1,099
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	7,936	8,277	1,140	1,168
Professional and related occupations	9,633	9,736	1,018	1,037
Service occupations	6,620	6,510	477	476
Sales and office occupations	9,192	9,380	645	656
Sales and related occupations	5,416	5,620	703	741
Office and administrative support occupations	3,776	3,759	583	566
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	10,116	10,240	615	635
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	541	505	376	345
Construction and extraction occupations	5,408	5,543	605	608
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,167	4,192	669	712
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	11,665	11,745	563	575
Production occupations	6,014	6,118	581	594
Transportation and material moving occupations	5,651	5,627	534	538
Women				
Managerial, professional, and related occupations	17,882	18,349	756	767
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	6,437	6,769	793	809
Professional and related occupations	11,444	11,579	740	750
Service occupations	6,707	6,475	366	375
Sales and office occupations	15,432	15,325	503	515
Sales and related occupations	4,437	4,358	461	476
Office and administrative support occupations	10,996	10,967	512	523
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	466	377	483	460
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	137	132	323	306
Construction and extraction occupations	153	98	480	(¹)
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	175	147	631	\$724
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	3,339	3,308	407	404
Production occupations	2,479	2,469	411	400
Transportation and material moving occupations	860	838	397	413

¹ Data not shown where base is less than 100,000.

NOTE: Beginning in January 2004, data reflect revised population controls used in the household survey.

Table 4. Quartiles and selected deciles of usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by selected characteristics, first quarter 2004 averages, not seasonally adjusted

Characteristic	Number of workers (in thousands)	Upper limit of:				
		First decile	First quartile	Second quartile (median)	Third quartile	Ninth decile
SEX, RACE, AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY						
Total, 16 years and over	99,720	\$307	\$421	\$634	\$973	\$1,458
Men	55,888	325	473	711	1,102	1,649
Women	43,832	290	388	567	829	1,201
White	81,271	311	434	652	999	1,490
Men	46,562	330	484	729	1,132	1,685
Women	34,709	295	396	580	847	1,226
Black or African American	11,796	285	364	521	748	1,098
Men	5,585	300	391	567	823	1,178
Women	6,211	273	344	498	694	1,003
Asian	4,440	323	448	712	1,144	1,758
Men	2,489	370	505	790	1,270	2,075
Women	1,951	294	404	615	957	1,482
Hispanic or Latino	13,648	264	323	450	671	988
Men	8,678	276	333	478	702	1,018
Women	4,970	247	309	417	603	926
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT						
Total, 25 years and over	89,616	323	456	676	1,019	1,518
Less than a high school diploma	8,433	248	304	396	551	758
High school graduates, no college ¹	26,999	301	397	562	773	1,055
Some college or associate degree	24,361	345	470	649	925	1,255
Bachelor's degree and higher ²	29,824	491	689	996	1,460	2,023
Bachelor's degree only	19,334	461	639	926	1,362	1,901
Advanced degree	10,489	586	790	1,149	1,662	2,380
Men, 25 years and over	50,126	353	506	757	1,152	1,737
Less than a high school diploma	5,624	268	323	434	606	828
High school graduates, no college ¹	15,147	337	462	640	884	1,187
Some college or associate degree	12,791	383	530	747	1,046	1,420
Bachelor's degree and higher ²	16,563	534	777	1,148	1,704	2,322
Bachelor's degree only	10,816	502	734	1,070	1,557	2,120
Advanced degree	5,748	618	909	1,352	1,902	2,712
Women, 25 years and over	39,490	300	406	592	862	1,243
Less than a high school diploma	2,809	231	279	339	441	582
High school graduates, no college ¹	11,852	278	350	479	634	859
Some college or associate degree	11,570	320	416	571	773	1,042
Bachelor's degree and higher ²	13,260	456	618	855	1,213	1,634
Bachelor's degree only	8,519	421	585	782	1,118	1,497
Advanced degree	4,741	556	727	982	1,349	1,883

¹ Includes persons with a high school diploma or equivalent.

² Includes persons with bachelor's, master's, professional, and doctoral degrees.

NOTE: Ten percent of all full-time wage and salary workers earn less than the upper limit of the first decile; 25 percent earn less than the upper limit of the first quartile; 50 percent earn less than the upper limit of the second quartile, or median; 75 percent earn less than the upper limit of the

third quartile; and 90 percent earn less than the upper limit of the ninth decile. Estimates for the above race groups (white, black or African American, and Asian) do not sum to totals because data are not presented for all races. In addition, persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race and, therefore, are classified by ethnicity as well as by race. Beginning in January 2004, data reflect revised population controls used in the household survey.

Table 5. Median usual weekly earnings of part-time wage and salary workers by selected characteristics, quarterly averages, not seasonally adjusted

Characteristic	Number of workers (in thousands)		Median weekly earnings	
	I 2003	I 2004	I 2003	I 2004
SEX AND AGE				
Total, 16 years and over	22,154	22,127	\$184	\$192
Men, 16 years and over	6,988	7,057	172	180
16 to 24 years	3,557	3,624	137	140
25 years and over	3,431	3,433	225	240
Women, 16 years and over	15,165	15,071	191	198
16 to 24 years	4,696	4,614	129	136
25 years and over	10,469	10,457	224	232
RACE, HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY, AND SEX				
White	18,761	18,665	185	194
Men	5,754	5,813	167	179
Women	13,007	12,852	193	200
Black or African American	2,050	2,098	178	191
Men	762	721	192	200
Women	1,287	1,377	169	189
Asian	804	856	202	168
Men	298	342	206	161
Women	506	514	198	175
Hispanic or Latino	2,183	2,338	181	195
Men	775	825	200	203
Women	1,408	1,513	171	190

NOTE: Estimates for the above race groups (white, black or African American, and Asian) do not sum to totals because data are not presented for all races. In addition, persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race and, therefore, are classified by ethnicity as well as by race. Beginning in January 2004, data reflect revised population controls used in the household survey.