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USUAL WEEKLY EARNINGS OF WAGE AND SALARY WORKERS: FIRST QUARTER 2009

Median weekly earnings of the nation's 100.4 million full-time wage and salary workers were \$738 in the first quarter of 2009, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported today. This was 2.6 percent higher than a year earlier. The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) was unchanged over the same period.

Data on usual weekly 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 Technical Note.) Highlights from the first-quarter data are:

- Women who usually worked full time had median earnings of \$649 per week, or 78.9 percent of the \$823 median for men. The female-to-male earnings ratios were higher among blacks (93.9 percent) and Hispanics (88.4 percent) than among whites (77.9 percent) or Asians (81.3 percent). (See table 1.)
- Median earnings for black men working at full-time jobs were \$595 per week, 69.6 percent of the median for white men (\$855). The difference was less among women, as black women's median earnings (\$559) were 83.9 percent of those for their white counterparts (\$666). Overall, median earnings of Hispanics who worked full time (\$545) were lower than those of blacks (\$577), whites (\$758), and Asians (\$869). (See table 1.)
- Among men, those age 45 to 54 and age 55 to 64 had the highest median weekly earnings, \$994 and \$962, respectively. Among women, weekly earnings also were highest for those age 45 to 54 and age 55 to 64, \$705 and \$728, respectively. (See table 2.)
- Among the major occupational groups, persons employed full time in management, professional, and related occupations had the highest median weekly earnings—\$1,258 for men and \$907 for women. Persons employed in service jobs earned the least. (See table 3.)
- Full-time workers age 25 and over without a high school diploma had median weekly earnings of \$450, compared with \$620 for high school graduates (no college) and \$1,138 for those 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 \$3,224 or more per week, compared with \$2,092 or more for their female counterparts. (See table 4.)

Technical 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: 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 errors 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 on a timely basis, mistakes made by respondents, 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 Household Data section of the "Explanatory Notes and Estimates of Error" available on the BLS Web site at http://www.bls.gov/cps/eetech_methods.pdf.

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, such as \$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. 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.

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 2008	I 2009	In current dollars		In constant (1982) dollars	
			I 2008	I 2009	I 2008	I 2009
SEX AND AGE						
Total, 16 years and over	106,507	100,370	\$719	\$738	\$327	\$336
Men, 16 years and over	59,324	55,231	790	823	360	375
16 to 24 years	5,888	5,009	466	461	212	210
25 years and over	53,436	50,222	848	879	386	400
Women, 16 years and over	47,182	45,139	637	649	290	295
16 to 24 years	4,531	4,010	419	448	191	204
25 years and over	42,652	41,128	666	679	303	309
RACE, HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY, AND SEX						
White	85,721	81,201	742	758	338	345
Men	48,810	45,882	822	855	374	389
Women	36,911	35,319	652	666	297	303
Black or African American	12,922	12,023	582	577	265	263
Men	6,101	5,448	604	595	275	271
Women	6,821	6,575	556	559	253	254
Asian	5,297	4,828	842	869	383	396
Men	2,981	2,662	939	951	427	433
Women	2,316	2,166	754	773	343	352
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	15,588	14,497	520	545	237	248
Men	9,819	9,125	538	577	245	263
Women	5,769	5,372	501	510	228	232

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. Persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

Table 2. Median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by age, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, first quarter 2009 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	100,370	\$738	55,231	\$823	45,139	\$649
16 to 24 years	9,020	456	5,009	461	4,010	448
16 to 19 years	978	364	612	370	366	350
20 to 24 years	8,042	472	4,398	476	3,644	464
25 years and over	91,350	772	50,222	879	41,128	679
25 to 54 years	74,082	767	40,981	865	33,101	672
25 to 34 years	23,802	674	13,369	716	10,433	619
35 to 44 years	24,733	803	13,824	914	10,910	696
45 to 54 years	25,547	851	13,789	994	11,758	705
55 years and over	17,268	807	9,241	942	8,027	707
55 to 64 years	14,669	835	7,815	962	6,854	728
65 years and over	2,599	683	1,426	787	1,173	593
White						
16 years and over	81,201	758	45,882	855	35,319	666
16 to 24 years	7,328	460	4,184	455	3,144	467
25 years and over	73,873	801	41,698	912	32,175	697
25 to 54 years	59,353	793	33,762	898	25,591	690
55 years and over	14,520	836	7,937	961	6,584	721
Black or African American						
16 years and over	12,023	577	5,448	595	6,575	559
16 to 24 years	1,125	411	537	457	588	388
25 years and over	10,897	596	4,911	616	5,986	581
25 to 54 years	9,136	587	4,104	597	5,031	579
55 years and over	1,762	663	807	760	955	591
Asian						
16 years and over	4,828	869	2,662	951	2,166	773
16 to 24 years	275	505	138	511	138	493
25 years and over	4,553	891	2,524	968	2,028	817
25 to 54 years	3,861	918	2,182	989	1,679	828
55 years and over	692	729	342	711	350	745
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity						
16 years and over	14,497	545	9,125	577	5,372	510
16 to 24 years	1,626	404	1,055	401	571	412
25 years and over	12,871	578	8,071	605	4,801	522
25 to 54 years	11,277	580	7,081	608	4,196	520
55 years and over	1,595	553	990	556	605	548

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. Persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

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	
	2008	2009	2008	2009
TOTAL				
Management, professional, and related occupations	39,815	39,353	\$1,018	\$1,046
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	16,313	16,373	1,127	1,146
Professional and related occupations	23,502	22,981	967	990
Service occupations	14,227	13,967	464	457
Sales and office occupations	25,574	23,566	614	622
Sales and related occupations	10,320	9,386	650	666
Office and administrative support occupations	15,253	14,180	601	611
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	11,633	10,329	699	730
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	688	623	400	411
Construction and extraction occupations	6,374	5,293	676	720
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,571	4,413	772	790
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	15,259	13,154	595	597
Production occupations	8,369	6,817	594	590
Transportation and material moving occupations	6,890	6,338	596	603
Men				
Management, professional, and related occupations	19,388	19,073	1,236	1,258
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	8,810	8,884	1,341	1,358
Professional and related occupations	10,578	10,189	1,170	1,183
Service occupations	7,141	6,737	529	516
Sales and office occupations	9,651	8,926	737	748
Sales and related occupations	5,645	5,173	788	834
Office and administrative support occupations	4,006	3,753	651	664
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	11,138	9,930	701	736
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	560	499	407	413
Construction and extraction occupations	6,209	5,186	675	720
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,369	4,245	772	791
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	12,007	10,566	632	643
Production occupations	5,908	5,026	660	657
Transportation and material moving occupations	6,099	5,540	612	625
Women				
Management, professional, and related occupations	20,427	20,281	890	907
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	7,503	7,489	954	952
Professional and related occupations	12,924	12,792	859	879
Service occupations	7,086	7,230	408	411
Sales and office occupations	15,923	14,640	578	587
Sales and related occupations	4,675	4,213	508	513
Office and administrative support occupations	11,248	10,427	591	601
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	495	399	609	566
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	128	124	363	404
Construction and extraction occupations	165	107	740	696
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	202	168	774	743
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	3,252	2,588	469	452
Production occupations	2,461	1,790	462	450
Transportation and material moving occupations	791	798	486	456

NOTE: Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

Table 4. Quartiles and selected deciles of usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by selected characteristics, first quarter 2009 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	100,370	\$349	\$489	\$738	\$1,151	\$1,748
Men	55,231	377	524	823	1,305	1,919
Women	45,139	326	446	649	974	1,422
White	81,201	359	503	758	1,175	1,793
Men	45,882	383	552	855	1,341	1,988
Women	35,319	332	463	666	995	1,449
Black or African American	12,023	311	406	577	871	1,270
Men	5,448	312	421	595	917	1,403
Women	6,575	310	395	559	831	1,192
Asian	4,828	362	535	869	1,378	1,923
Men	2,662	391	608	951	1,548	2,223
Women	2,166	330	494	773	1,155	1,671
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	14,497	293	381	545	813	1,233
Men	9,125	305	394	577	874	1,328
Women	5,372	278	356	510	738	1,080
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT						
Total, 25 years and over	91,350	370	514	772	1,195	1,811
Less than a high school diploma	7,224	272	337	450	612	901
High school graduates, no college ¹	25,722	337	442	620	888	1,229
Some college or associate degree	25,348	378	512	726	1,040	1,445
Bachelor's degree and higher ²	33,057	547	768	1,138	1,677	2,393
Bachelor's degree only	21,399	509	724	1,024	1,548	2,214
Advanced degree	11,657	664	912	1,326	1,899	2,831
Men, 25 years and over	50,222	397	579	879	1,368	1,998
Less than a high school diploma	4,846	287	365	493	681	980
High school graduates, no college ¹	14,778	377	500	712	1,009	1,373
Some college or associate degree	13,139	421	594	844	1,196	1,628
Bachelor's degree and higher ²	17,459	614	890	1,353	1,912	2,881
Bachelor's degree only	11,232	582	823	1,239	1,798	2,498
Advanced degree	6,227	743	1,024	1,537	2,212	3,224
Women, 25 years and over	41,128	341	471	679	1,009	1,463
Less than a high school diploma	2,377	236	303	388	515	644
High school graduates, no college ¹	10,944	308	395	527	721	962
Some college or associate degree	12,209	344	466	627	876	1,183
Bachelor's degree and higher ²	15,598	497	695	962	1,366	1,885
Bachelor's degree only	10,168	468	633	885	1,251	1,753
Advanced degree	5,430	599	828	1,140	1,541	2,092

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. Persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

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	
	2008	2009	2008	2009
SEX AND AGE				
Total, 16 years and over	22,195	24,180	\$216	\$222
Men, 16 years and over	6,975	8,007	207	218
16 to 24 years	3,375	3,429	161	165
25 years and over	3,600	4,578	272	272
Women, 16 years and over	15,220	16,173	221	225
16 to 24 years	4,412	4,671	156	156
25 years and over	10,808	11,502	258	269
RACE, HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY, AND SEX				
White	18,638	20,264	218	223
Men	5,800	6,532	208	217
Women	12,838	13,732	223	226
Black or African American	2,111	2,342	207	221
Men	710	858	209	219
Women	1,401	1,484	206	222
Asian	879	954	220	234
Men	283	365	211	255
Women	596	589	225	221
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	2,647	3,296	212	224
Men	995	1,189	222	244
Women	1,652	2,108	206	212

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. Persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.