

News

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USUAL WEEKLY EARNINGS OF WAGE AND SALARY WORKERS: FIRST QUARTER 2003

Median weekly earnings of the nation's 99.0 million full-time wage and salary workers were \$620 in the first quarter of 2003, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported today. This was 1.5 percent higher than a year earlier, compared with a gain of 2.8 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 \$551 per week, or 79.3 percent of the \$695 median for men. The female-to-male earnings ratios were higher among blacks or African Americans (89.3 percent) and Hispanics or Latinos (88.3 percent) than among whites (79.0 percent) and Asians (78.2 percent). (See table 1.)

—Median earnings for black men working at full-time jobs were \$552 per week, 77.4 percent of the median for white men (\$713). The difference was much less among women, as black women's median earnings (\$493) were 87.6 percent of those for their white counterparts (\$563). Overall, median earnings of Hispanics who worked full time (\$447) were lower than those of blacks (\$516), whites (\$636), and Asians (\$718). (See table 1.)

—Among men, the highest median weekly earnings were for those age 45 to 54 and age 55 to 64 (\$822 for each age group). Among women, earnings were highest for those 45 to 54 years old (\$606). (See table 2.)

—Among the major occupational groups, persons employed full time in managerial, professional, and related occupations had the highest median weekly earnings—\$1,058 for men and \$756 for women. Men and women 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 \$397, compared with \$549 for high school graduates (no college) and \$961 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 \$2,498 or more per week, compared with \$1,856 or more for their female counterparts. (See table 4.)

Changes in Usual Weekly Earnings Data

Several major changes introduced into the Current Population Survey in 2003 affect the usual weekly earnings data that are presented in this release. These include the use of new population controls that reflect Census 2000 results, the use of new questions about race and Hispanic ethnicity, the presentation of data for Asians, and the use of a new occupational classification system. Additionally, the first quarter 2003 data also reflect an additional upward adjustment to population controls and other changes to the survey. The first quarter 2002 data shown in this release have been revised to reflect the new population controls and the new occupational classification system introduced into the survey. (Data by race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity prior to the first quarter of 2003 continue to be based on the old race/ethnicity questions.) For a detailed discussion of the changes, see "Revisions to the Current Population Survey Effective in January 2003" in the February 2003 issue of *Employment and Earnings* and available on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/rvcps03.pdf>.

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 2002	I 2003	In current dollars		In constant (1982) dollars	
			I 2002	I 2003	I 2002	I 2003
SEX AND AGE						
Total, 16 years and over	98,809	98,988	\$611	\$620	\$332	\$327
Men, 16 years and over	55,217	55,162	682	695	370	366
16 to 24 years	5,725	5,829	406	396	220	209
25 years and over	49,491	49,333	729	741	395	391
Women, 16 years and over	43,592	43,826	533	551	289	291
16 to 24 years	4,509	4,266	375	384	203	202
25 years and over	39,083	39,560	570	581	309	306
RACE, HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY, AND SEX						
White ¹	81,543	80,878	625	636	339	336
Men	46,549	46,184	701	713	380	376
Women	34,994	34,694	547	563	297	297
Black or African American ¹	11,899	11,706	510	516	276	272
Men	5,669	5,443	533	552	289	291
Women	6,230	6,263	492	493	267	260
Asian ¹	4,354	4,230	651	718	353	379
Men	2,414	2,365	752	793	408	418
Women	1,939	1,865	558	620	303	327
Hispanic or Latino	12,861	13,653	420	447	228	236
Men	8,047	8,611	452	471	245	249
Women	4,815	5,042	387	416	210	219

¹ Beginning in 2003, persons who selected this race group only; persons who selected more than one race group are not included. Prior to 2003, persons who reported more than one race group were included in the group they identified as the main race.

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. All data have been revised back to January 2000 to reflect the introduction of Census 2000-based population controls into the household survey. Beginning in January 2003, data also reflect an additional upward adjustment to population controls and other changes to the 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 2003 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	98,988	\$620	55,162	\$695	43,826	\$551
16 to 24 years	10,095	391	5,829	396	4,266	384
16 to 19 years	1,236	312	743	321	494	298
20 to 24 years	8,858	402	5,086	409	3,773	393
25 years and over	88,893	659	49,333	741	39,560	581
25 to 54 years	75,888	657	42,308	734	33,580	583
25 to 34 years	24,512	599	14,046	641	10,466	549
35 to 44 years	27,172	677	15,369	766	11,803	590
45 to 54 years	24,204	718	12,893	822	11,312	606
55 years and over	13,005	672	7,025	791	5,980	567
55 to 64 years	11,237	697	5,988	822	5,249	586
65 years and over	1,768	493	1,037	592	731	424
White¹						
16 years and over	80,878	636	46,184	713	34,694	563
16 to 24 years	8,343	393	4,936	398	3,407	385
25 years and over	72,535	679	41,248	761	31,287	590
25 to 54 years	61,514	676	35,227	752	26,287	592
55 years and over	11,021	696	6,021	831	5,000	579
Black or African American¹						
16 years and over	11,706	516	5,443	552	6,263	493
16 to 24 years	1,122	372	550	364	571	379
25 years and over	10,584	543	4,892	582	5,692	512
25 to 54 years	9,261	540	4,254	575	5,007	510
55 years and over	1,323	565	638	609	685	523
Asian¹						
16 years and over	4,230	718	2,365	793	1,865	620
16 to 24 years	359	413	200	428	159	396
25 years and over	3,871	739	2,165	828	1,705	652
25 to 54 years	3,376	755	1,875	859	1,501	665
55 years and over	495	670	291	728	204	558
Hispanic or Latino						
16 years and over	13,653	447	8,611	471	5,042	416
16 to 24 years	2,205	339	1,489	337	716	344
25 years and over	11,448	481	7,122	501	4,326	430
25 to 54 years	10,501	482	6,539	500	3,962	436
55 years and over	947	473	583	516	364	401

¹ Beginning in 2003, persons who selected this race group only; persons who selected more than one race group are not included. Prior to 2003, persons who reported more than one race group were included in the group they identified as the main race.

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. All data have been revised back to January 2000 to reflect the introduction of Census 2000-based population controls into the household survey. Beginning in January 2003, data also reflect an additional upward adjustment to population controls and other changes to the 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 2002	I 2003	I 2002	I 2003
TOTAL				
Managerial, professional, and related occupations	35,193	35,451	\$856	\$893
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	14,497	14,374	919	954
Professional and related occupations	20,696	21,077	820	854
Service occupations	12,749	13,327	389	407
Sales and office occupations	24,872	24,625	527	541
Sales and related occupations	9,483	9,853	596	594
Office and administrative support occupations	15,389	14,772	510	522
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	10,440	10,581	608	610
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	700	678	344	365
Construction and extraction occupations	5,650	5,561	592	601
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,090	4,342	670	668
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	15,555	15,005	513	519
Production occupations	9,079	8,493	514	524
Transportation and material moving occupations	6,476	6,511	512	513
Men				
Managerial, professional, and related occupations	17,559	17,569	1,017	1,058
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	8,085	7,936	1,090	1,140
Professional and related occupations	9,474	9,633	981	1,018
Service occupations	6,533	6,620	442	477
Sales and office occupations	9,118	9,192	642	645
Sales and related occupations	5,279	5,416	716	703
Office and administrative support occupations	3,839	3,776	573	583
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	9,972	10,116	613	615
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	512	541	355	376
Construction and extraction occupations	5,548	5,408	590	605
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	3,912	4,167	670	669
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	12,035	11,665	560	563
Production occupations	6,452	6,014	574	581
Transportation and material moving occupations	5,582	5,651	540	534
Women				
Managerial, professional, and related occupations	17,634	17,882	736	756
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	6,411	6,437	760	793
Professional and related occupations	11,222	11,444	721	740
Service occupations	6,216	6,707	344	366
Sales and office occupations	15,754	15,432	486	503
Sales and related occupations	4,204	4,437	441	461
Office and administrative support occupations	11,550	10,996	496	512
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	468	466	488	483
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	188	137	315	323
Construction and extraction occupations	102	153	620	480
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	178	175	639	631
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	3,520	3,339	403	407
Production occupations	2,627	2,479	409	411
Transportation and material moving occupations	894	860	383	397

NOTE: Occupations reflect the introduction of the 2002 Census occupational classification system derived from the 2000 Standard Occupational Classification system into the Current Population Survey.

Data are based on Census 2000 based-population controls. Beginning in January 2003, data also reflect an additional upward adjustment to population controls and other changes to the survey.

Table 4. Quartiles and selected deciles of usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by selected characteristics, first quarter 2003 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	98,988	\$300	\$414	\$620	\$945	\$1,413
Men	55,162	320	460	695	1,062	1,586
Women	43,826	283	381	551	803	1,139
White ¹	80,878	305	423	636	967	1,447
Men	46,184	324	475	713	1,089	1,637
Women	34,694	286	386	563	814	1,150
Black or African American ¹	11,706	281	373	516	762	1,076
Men	5,443	296	393	552	809	1,156
Women	6,263	268	353	493	726	1,000
Asian ¹	4,230	299	423	718	1,121	1,694
Men	2,365	319	475	793	1,263	1,894
Women	1,865	285	396	620	918	1,344
Hispanic or Latino	13,653	258	318	447	675	991
Men	8,611	270	325	471	701	1,057
Women	5,042	245	307	416	615	902
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT						
Total, 25 years and over	88,893	316	445	659	988	1,464
Less than a high school diploma	8,483	238	300	397	539	766
High school graduates, no college	26,930	297	394	549	766	1,047
Some college or associate degree	24,859	339	462	635	909	1,210
Bachelor's degree and higher	28,621	477	672	961	1,426	1,961
Bachelor's degree only	18,732	438	623	903	1,324	1,885
Advanced degree	9,889	580	774	1,104	1,614	2,226
Men, 25 years and over	49,333	350	497	741	1,123	1,665
Less than a high school diploma	5,617	263	320	431	597	815
High school graduates, no college	15,040	337	461	627	870	1,158
Some college or associate degree	12,982	384	514	731	1,019	1,380
Bachelor's degree and higher	15,694	522	767	1,129	1,654	2,301
Bachelor's degree only	10,315	494	718	1,047	1,544	2,113
Advanced degree	5,380	618	896	1,283	1,875	2,498
Women, 25 years and over	39,560	293	396	581	840	1,168
Less than a high school diploma	2,866	208	270	338	444	593
High school graduates, no college	11,890	270	345	464	628	856
Some college or associate degree	11,877	312	410	561	761	1,022
Bachelor's degree and higher	12,927	427	607	819	1,134	1,562
Bachelor's degree only	8,417	400	569	758	1,044	1,430
Advanced degree	4,510	545	709	927	1,278	1,856

¹ Beginning in 2003, persons who selected this race group only; persons who selected more than one race group are not included. Prior to 2003, persons who reported more than one race group were included in the group they identified as the main race.

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. All data have been revised back to January 2000 to reflect the introduction of Census 2000-based population controls into the household survey. Beginning in January 2003, data also reflect an additional upward adjustment to population controls and other changes to the 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	
	2002	2003	2002	2003
SEX AND AGE				
Total, 16 years and over	21,817	22,154	\$179	\$184
Men, 16 years and over	6,971	6,988	171	172
16 to 24 years	3,681	3,557	143	137
25 years and over	3,289	3,431	219	225
Women, 16 years and over	14,847	15,165	184	191
16 to 24 years	4,628	4,696	133	129
25 years and over	10,218	10,469	214	224
RACE, HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY, AND SEX				
White ¹	18,607	18,761	181	185
Men	5,771	5,754	170	167
Women	12,837	13,007	186	193
Black or African American ¹	2,032	2,050	168	178
Men	735	762	168	192
Women	1,296	1,287	168	169
Asian ¹	960	804	186	202
Men	372	298	170	206
Women	588	506	192	198
Hispanic or Latino	2,359	2,183	184	181
Men	812	775	191	200
Women	1,547	1,408	180	171

¹ Beginning in 2003, persons who selected this race group only; persons who selected more than one race group are not included. Prior to 2003, persons who reported more than one race group were included in the group they identified as the main race.

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. All data have been revised back to January 2000 to reflect the introduction of Census 2000-based population controls into the household survey. Beginning in January 2003, data also reflect an additional upward adjustment to population controls and other changes to the survey.