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USUAL WEEKLY EARNINGS OF WAGE AND SALARY WORKERS: FIRST QUARTER 2008

Median weekly earnings of the nation's 106.5 million full-time wage and salary workers were \$719 in the first quarter of 2008, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported today. This was 3.8 percent higher than a year earlier, compared with a gain of 4.1 percent in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) 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 \$637 per week, or 80.6 percent of the \$790 median for men. The female-to-male earnings ratios were higher among Hispanics (93.1 percent) and blacks (92.1 percent) than among whites (79.3 percent) or Asians (80.3 percent). (See table 1.)
- Median earnings for black men working at full-time jobs were \$604 per week, 73.5 percent of the median for white men (\$822). The difference was less among women, as black women's median earnings (\$556) were 85.3 percent of those for their white counterparts (\$652). Overall, median earnings of Hispanics who worked full time (\$520) were lower than those of blacks (\$582), whites (\$742), and Asians (\$842). (See table 1.)
- Among men, those age 45 to 54 and age 55 to 64 had the highest median weekly earnings, \$927 and \$957, respectively. Among women, weekly earnings also were highest for those age 45 to 54 and age 55 to 64, \$700 and \$702, respectively. (See table 2.)
- Among the major occupational groups, persons employed full time in managerial, professional, and related occupations had the highest median weekly earnings—\$1,236 for men and \$890 for women. Men and women 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 \$435, compared with \$615 for high school graduates (no college) and \$1,108 for those holding at least a bachelor's degree. Among college graduates with advanced degrees (professional or master's degree and above), the highest 10 percent of male workers made \$3,080 or more per week, compared with \$1,988 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 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 Household Data section of the "Explanatory Notes and Estimates of Error" 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 2007	I 2008	In current dollars		In constant (1982) dollars	
			I 2007	I 2008	I 2007	I 2008
SEX AND AGE						
Total, 16 years and over	105,888	106,507	\$693	\$719	\$328	\$327
Men, 16 years and over	59,052	59,324	759	790	359	360
16 to 24 years	6,102	5,888	451	466	214	212
25 years and over	52,951	53,436	811	848	384	386
Women, 16 years and over	46,836	47,182	615	637	291	290
16 to 24 years	4,632	4,531	414	419	196	191
25 years and over	42,203	42,652	646	666	306	303
RACE, HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY, AND SEX						
White	85,359	85,721	714	742	338	338
Men	48,802	48,810	783	822	371	374
Women	36,557	36,911	625	652	296	297
Black or African American	13,007	12,922	561	582	266	265
Men	6,135	6,101	585	604	277	275
Women	6,872	6,821	540	556	256	253
Asian	5,146	5,297	798	842	378	383
Men	2,845	2,981	864	939	409	427
Women	2,301	2,316	743	754	352	343
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	16,037	15,588	502	520	238	237
Men	10,092	9,819	520	538	246	245
Women	5,946	5,769	471	501	223	228

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 2008 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	106,507	\$719	59,324	\$790	47,182	\$637
16 to 24 years	10,419	445	5,888	466	4,531	419
16 to 19 years	1,381	343	832	370	548	316
20 to 24 years	9,038	469	5,056	483	3,982	443
25 years and over	96,088	757	53,436	848	42,652	666
25 to 54 years	78,799	751	44,142	834	34,657	664
25 to 34 years	25,469	659	14,532	701	10,938	618
35 to 44 years	26,559	805	15,086	915	11,474	688
45 to 54 years	26,770	809	14,524	927	12,246	700
55 years and over	17,289	781	9,295	932	7,995	674
55 to 64 years	14,746	819	7,898	957	6,848	702
65 years and over	2,543	643	1,396	751	1,146	530
White						
16 years and over	85,721	742	48,810	822	36,911	652
16 to 24 years	8,376	453	4,790	475	3,585	422
25 years and over	77,345	780	44,019	881	33,326	683
25 to 54 years	62,740	774	35,997	864	26,743	680
55 years and over	14,605	816	8,023	960	6,583	693
Black or African American						
16 years and over	12,922	582	6,101	604	6,821	556
16 to 24 years	1,277	390	665	402	612	380
25 years and over	11,645	602	5,436	632	6,209	581
25 to 54 years	9,941	599	4,694	621	5,247	581
55 years and over	1,704	639	742	726	962	584
Asian						
16 years and over	5,297	842	2,981	939	2,316	754
16 to 24 years	384	557	193	520	191	604
25 years and over	4,913	875	2,788	974	2,125	769
25 to 54 years	4,188	914	2,396	1,027	1,791	781
55 years and over	726	696	391	694	334	700
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity						
16 years and over	15,588	520	9,819	538	5,769	501
16 to 24 years	2,016	408	1,279	417	737	392
25 years and over	13,572	555	8,540	577	5,032	519
25 to 54 years	12,163	554	7,682	576	4,482	520
55 years and over	1,409	563	858	582	550	516

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	
	2007	2008	2007	2008
TOTAL				
Management, professional, and related occupations	39,139	39,815	\$976	\$1,018
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	16,389	16,313	1,042	1,127
Professional and related occupations	22,750	23,502	936	967
Service occupations	14,050	14,227	451	464
Sales and office occupations	25,748	25,574	597	614
Sales and related occupations	10,717	10,320	645	650
Office and administrative support occupations	15,031	15,253	577	601
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	12,180	11,633	672	699
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	657	688	341	400
Construction and extraction occupations	7,164	6,374	659	676
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,359	4,571	730	772
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	14,772	15,259	563	595
Production occupations	7,933	8,369	568	594
Transportation and material moving occupations	6,839	6,890	558	596
Men				
Management, professional, and related occupations	18,855	19,388	1,162	1,236
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	8,829	8,810	1,244	1,341
Professional and related occupations	10,026	10,578	1,135	1,170
Service occupations	7,054	7,141	516	529
Sales and office occupations	9,946	9,651	715	737
Sales and related occupations	6,025	5,645	769	788
Office and administrative support occupations	3,921	4,006	635	651
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	11,741	11,138	677	701
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	548	560	340	407
Construction and extraction occupations	7,028	6,209	662	675
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,165	4,369	732	772
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	11,457	12,007	606	632
Production occupations	5,627	5,908	630	660
Transportation and material moving occupations	5,830	6,099	584	612
Women				
Management, professional, and related occupations	20,284	20,427	846	890
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	7,561	7,503	872	954
Professional and related occupations	12,724	12,924	832	859
Service occupations	6,996	7,086	395	408
Sales and office occupations	15,802	15,923	539	578
Sales and related occupations	4,692	4,675	494	508
Office and administrative support occupations	11,110	11,248	557	591
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	439	495	512	609
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	109	128	346	363
Construction and extraction occupations	136	165	497	740
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	194	202	708	774
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	3,315	3,252	431	469
Production occupations	2,306	2,461	434	462
Transportation and material moving occupations	1,009	791	423	486

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 2008 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	106,507	\$344	\$481	\$719	\$1,112	\$1,653
Men	59,324	371	515	790	1,240	1,875
Women	47,182	321	436	637	955	1,386
White	85,721	354	494	742	1,138	1,694
Men	48,810	381	538	822	1,264	1,886
Women	36,911	328	449	652	965	1,402
Black or African American	12,922	307	402	582	857	1,254
Men	6,101	319	419	604	896	1,328
Women	6,821	299	389	556	822	1,200
Asian	5,297	360	521	842	1,368	1,921
Men	2,981	390	550	939	1,523	2,173
Women	2,316	319	491	754	1,148	1,686
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	15,588	297	379	520	777	1,174
Men	9,819	307	389	538	814	1,273
Women	5,769	282	358	501	719	1,037
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT						
Total, 25 years and over	96,088	366	507	757	1,156	1,734
Less than a high school diploma	7,998	281	338	435	597	821
High school graduates, no college ¹	27,866	331	433	615	873	1,196
Some college or associate degree	26,207	381	510	715	1,017	1,416
Bachelor's degree and higher ²	34,017	558	761	1,108	1,617	2,297
Bachelor's degree only	22,033	516	714	1,012	1,495	2,081
Advanced degree	11,984	642	890	1,259	1,865	2,659
Men, 25 years and over	53,436	392	567	848	1,302	1,903
Less than a high school diploma	5,520	293	366	479	637	898
High school graduates, no college ¹	15,986	375	497	701	988	1,336
Some college or associate degree	13,843	422	588	819	1,162	1,563
Bachelor's degree and higher ²	18,087	609	874	1,274	1,883	2,698
Bachelor's degree only	11,681	582	801	1,170	1,730	2,402
Advanced degree	6,406	732	1,000	1,493	2,116	3,080
Women, 25 years and over	42,652	338	464	666	989	1,438
Less than a high school diploma	2,478	250	303	375	496	633
High school graduates, no college ¹	11,880	302	388	518	713	963
Some college or associate degree	12,364	351	459	624	876	1,163
Bachelor's degree and higher ²	15,930	509	682	950	1,340	1,838
Bachelor's degree only	10,352	484	634	886	1,238	1,733
Advanced degree	5,578	603	807	1,081	1,487	1,988

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	
	2007	2008	2007	2008
SEX AND AGE				
Total, 16 years and over	22,369	22,195	\$211	\$216
Men, 16 years and over	7,172	6,975	199	207
16 to 24 years	3,572	3,375	150	161
25 years and over	3,600	3,600	273	272
Women, 16 years and over	15,197	15,220	216	221
16 to 24 years	4,637	4,412	152	156
25 years and over	10,560	10,808	259	258
RACE, HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY, AND SEX				
White	18,896	18,638	211	218
Men	5,987	5,800	198	208
Women	12,909	12,838	217	223
Black or African American	2,071	2,111	206	207
Men	685	710	199	209
Women	1,386	1,401	209	206
Asian	815	879	237	220
Men	281	283	233	211
Women	534	596	240	225
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	2,581	2,647	203	212
Men	954	995	221	222
Women	1,627	1,652	195	206

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.