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

Median weekly earnings of the nation's 101.4 million full-time wage and salary workers were \$618 in the third quarter of 2003, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported today. This was 2.5 percent higher than a year earlier, compared with a gain of 2.2 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 third-quarter data are:

—Women who usually worked full time had median earnings of \$550 per week, or 79.8 percent of the \$689 median for men. The female-to-male earnings ratios were higher among Hispanics (89.4 percent) and blacks (84.2 percent) than among whites (80.4 percent) or Asians (77.7 percent). (See table 1.)

—Median earnings for black men working at full-time jobs were \$568 per week, 80.2 percent of the median for white men (\$708). The difference was less among women, as black women's median earnings (\$478) were 84.0 percent of those for their white counterparts (\$569). Overall, median earnings of Hispanics who worked full time (\$444) were lower than those of blacks (\$509), whites (\$633), and Asians (\$692). (See table 1.)

—Among men, those age 45 to 54 (\$839) had the highest median weekly earnings. Among women, earnings also were highest for those 45 to 54 years old (\$619). (See table 2.)

—Among the major occupational groups, persons employed full time in managerial, professional, and related occupations had the highest median weekly earnings—\$1,056 for men and \$755 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 \$563 for high school graduates (no college) and \$958 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 \$2,495 or more per week, compared with \$1,812 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			
	III 2002	III 2003	In current dollars		In constant (1982) dollars	
			III 2002	III 2003	III 2002	III 2003
SEX AND AGE						
Total, 16 years and over	101,459	101,372	\$603	\$618	\$322	\$323
Men, 16 years and over	57,402	57,175	671	689	358	360
16 to 24 years	7,030	6,746	376	396	201	207
25 years and over	50,373	50,429	729	742	389	388
Women, 16 years and over	44,056	44,197	527	550	282	288
16 to 24 years	5,267	5,018	360	366	192	191
25 years and over	38,789	39,180	570	585	305	306
RACE, HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY, AND SEX						
White ¹	83,444	82,828	620	633	331	331
Men	48,281	47,815	694	708	371	370
Women	35,162	35,012	548	569	293	297
Black or African American ¹	12,288	11,984	484	509	259	266
Men	5,901	5,654	511	568	273	297
Women	6,387	6,330	457	478	244	250
Asian ¹	4,723	4,382	665	692	355	362
Men	2,661	2,500	757	762	404	399
Women	2,062	1,882	576	592	308	310
Hispanic or Latino	13,256	13,805	420	444	224	232
Men	8,256	8,761	435	463	232	242
Women	4,999	5,044	401	414	214	216

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. Beginning in January 2003, 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, third 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	101,372	\$618	57,175	\$689	44,197	\$550
16 to 24 years	11,764	384	6,746	396	5,018	366
16 to 19 years	2,040	315	1,191	324	849	304
20 to 24 years	9,724	401	5,555	413	4,169	384
25 years and over	89,608	662	50,429	742	39,180	585
25 to 54 years	76,458	659	43,222	735	33,237	586
25 to 34 years	25,082	594	14,513	630	10,569	547
35 to 44 years	26,889	683	15,458	769	11,431	586
45 to 54 years	24,487	729	13,251	839	11,236	619
55 years and over	13,150	684	7,207	786	5,943	583
55 to 64 years	11,489	708	6,212	816	5,277	599
65 years and over	1,661	526	995	620	666	415
White¹						
16 years and over	82,828	633	47,815	708	35,012	569
16 to 24 years	9,800	383	5,726	397	4,074	363
25 years and over	73,028	684	42,090	766	30,938	599
25 to 54 years	61,860	681	35,891	758	25,969	600
55 years and over	11,168	704	6,199	821	4,969	590
Black or African American¹						
16 years and over	11,984	509	5,654	568	6,330	478
16 to 24 years	1,270	381	637	389	633	373
25 years and over	10,714	529	5,018	592	5,696	497
25 to 54 years	9,454	528	4,410	591	5,043	495
55 years and over	1,260	537	607	595	653	505
Asian¹						
16 years and over	4,382	692	2,500	762	1,882	592
16 to 24 years	399	422	231	403	168	498
25 years and over	3,984	728	2,269	807	1,715	607
25 to 54 years	3,474	731	1,988	831	1,486	599
55 years and over	510	700	281	735	228	685
Hispanic or Latino						
16 years and over	13,805	444	8,761	463	5,044	414
16 to 24 years	2,098	357	1,386	358	712	355
25 years and over	11,708	477	7,376	493	4,332	431
25 to 54 years	10,747	477	6,830	490	3,917	438
55 years and over	961	477	546	522	415	386

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. Beginning in January 2003, 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	
	III 2002	III 2003	III 2002	III 2003
TOTAL				
Managerial, professional, and related occupations	35,350	35,663	\$857	\$883
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	14,317	14,388	925	951
Professional and related occupations	21,034	21,276	816	840
Service occupations	13,959	13,996	391	400
Sales and office occupations	25,567	25,199	530	544
Sales and related occupations	10,079	10,003	591	598
Office and administrative support occupations	15,488	15,196	512	524
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	10,824	11,344	591	600
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	838	783	338	398
Construction and extraction occupations	6,084	6,378	583	586
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	3,903	4,182	660	679
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	15,759	15,170	508	527
Production occupations	9,109	8,790	503	526
Transportation and material moving occupations	6,650	6,380	516	529
Men				
Managerial, professional, and related occupations	17,742	17,799	1,015	1,056
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	7,984	8,070	1,067	1,112
Professional and related occupations	9,758	9,728	973	1,018
Service occupations	7,252	7,112	423	451
Sales and office occupations	9,880	9,583	652	647
Sales and related occupations	5,848	5,653	732	728
Office and administrative support occupations	4,032	3,930	577	571
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	10,275	10,870	599	604
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	628	648	369	408
Construction and extraction occupations	5,921	6,224	586	587
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	3,725	3,998	663	681
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	12,254	11,811	553	579
Production occupations	6,414	6,210	563	595
Transportation and material moving occupations	5,840	5,601	542	549
Women				
Managerial, professional, and related occupations	17,608	17,865	739	755
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	6,332	6,317	768	808
Professional and related occupations	11,276	11,547	723	731
Service occupations	6,706	6,883	356	361
Sales and office occupations	15,687	15,616	483	501
Sales and related occupations	4,231	4,350	426	428
Office and administrative support occupations	11,456	11,266	498	516
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	549	474	397	488
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	209	135	306	327
Construction and extraction occupations	162	154	478	510
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	178	185	573	639
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	3,505	3,359	397	414
Production occupations	2,695	2,579	401	400
Transportation and material moving occupations	810	780	382	477

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.

Beginning in January 2003, 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, third 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	101,372	\$300	\$411	\$618	\$950	\$1,405
Men	57,175	321	453	689	1,073	1,562
Women	44,197	282	377	550	800	1,159
White ¹	82,828	305	420	633	975	1,444
Men	47,815	326	466	708	1,101	1,598
Women	35,012	286	384	569	817	1,184
Black or African American ¹	11,984	276	360	509	736	1,073
Men	5,654	293	382	568	769	1,152
Women	6,330	259	338	478	701	992
Asian ¹	4,382	299	443	692	1,073	1,638
Men	2,500	320	489	762	1,253	1,863
Women	1,882	263	402	592	857	1,246
Hispanic or Latino	13,805	264	327	444	654	991
Men	8,761	278	344	463	681	1,074
Women	5,044	244	308	414	612	880
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT						
Total, 25 years and over	89,608	319	449	662	1,001	1,469
Less than a high school diploma	8,575	241	303	397	518	731
High school graduates, no college	27,060	302	403	563	777	1,074
Some college or associate degree	24,521	337	460	634	914	1,258
Bachelor's degree and higher	29,452	478	671	958	1,410	1,914
Bachelor's degree only	19,480	444	624	892	1,303	1,861
Advanced degree	9,972	593	775	1,132	1,587	2,201
Men, 25 years and over	50,429	356	500	742	1,137	1,636
Less than a high school diploma	5,758	269	334	427	577	820
High school graduates, no college	15,508	344	467	632	884	1,175
Some college or associate degree	12,770	382	527	736	1,055	1,421
Bachelor's degree and higher	16,394	524	746	1,120	1,597	2,195
Bachelor's degree only	10,730	494	694	1,023	1,499	2,020
Advanced degree	5,663	630	874	1,273	1,773	2,495
Women, 25 years and over	39,180	293	400	585	841	1,207
Less than a high school diploma	2,817	213	268	327	423	532
High school graduates, no college	11,553	276	350	480	639	839
Some college or associate degree	11,751	309	407	559	759	1,011
Bachelor's degree and higher	13,058	433	611	830	1,162	1,572
Bachelor's degree only	8,750	404	577	766	1,057	1,475
Advanced degree	4,308	549	728	969	1,348	1,812

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. Beginning in January 2003, 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	
	III 2002	III 2003	III 2002	III 2003
SEX AND AGE				
Total, 16 years and over	20,850	20,907	\$194	\$199
Men, 16 years and over	6,597	6,428	189	189
16 to 24 years	3,285	3,295	158	153
25 years and over	3,312	3,134	231	241
Women, 16 years and over	14,253	14,478	197	205
16 to 24 years	4,376	4,457	154	153
25 years and over	9,877	10,022	226	235
RACE, HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY, AND SEX				
White ¹	17,747	17,637	196	200
Men	5,473	5,369	190	190
Women	12,274	12,268	198	205
Black or African American ¹	1,901	1,954	183	187
Men	666	651	186	178
Women	1,234	1,302	181	191
Asian ¹	978	807	199	227
Men	351	219	187	173
Women	628	588	207	251
Hispanic or Latino	2,256	2,365	186	195
Men	841	830	205	200
Women	1,415	1,535	176	193

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. Beginning in January 2003, data reflect revised population controls used in the household survey.