

News

United States
Department
of Labor



Bureau of Labor Statistics

Washington, D.C. 20212

Technical information: (202) 691-6378
<http://www.bls.gov/cps/>

USDL 08-1460

Media contact: (202) 691-5902

For release: 10:00 A.M. (EDT)
Friday, October 17, 2008

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

Median weekly earnings of the nation's 107.2 million full-time wage and salary workers were \$720 in the third quarter of 2008, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported today. This was 3.6 percent higher than a year earlier, compared with a gain of 5.3 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 Technical Note.) Highlights from the third-quarter data are:

- Women who usually worked full time had median earnings of \$631 per week, or 79.3 percent of the \$796 median for men. The female-to-male earnings ratios were higher among Hispanics (88.0 percent) and blacks (82.0 percent) than among whites (79.5 percent) or Asians (75.3 percent). (See table 1.)
- Median earnings for black men working at full-time jobs were \$646 per week, 79.2 percent of the median for white men (\$816). The difference was less among women, as black women's median earnings (\$530) were 81.7 percent of those for their white counterparts (\$649). Overall, median earnings of Hispanics who worked full time (\$529) were lower than those of blacks (\$589), whites (\$739), and Asians (\$854). (See table 1.)
- Among men, those age 45 to 54 had the highest median weekly earnings (\$964). Women age 45 to 54 had median earnings of \$716, essentially the same as those age 55 to 64 (\$715). (See table 2.)
- Among the major occupational groups, persons employed full time in managerial, professional, and related occupations had the highest median weekly earnings--\$1,234 for men and \$916 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 \$471, compared with \$618 for high school graduates (no college) and \$1,131 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 \$3,192 or more per week, compared with \$2,287 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			
	III 2007	III 2008	In current dollars		In constant (1982) dollars	
			III 2007	III 2008	III 2007	III 2008
SEX AND AGE						
Total, 16 years and over	108,272	107,194	\$695	\$720	\$322	\$317
Men, 16 years and over	61,150	60,170	767	796	356	350
16 to 24 years	7,042	6,439	430	446	199	196
25 years and over	54,108	53,731	831	857	385	377
Women, 16 years and over	47,122	47,025	616	631	285	278
16 to 24 years	5,160	4,886	398	406	184	179
25 years and over	41,963	42,139	654	666	303	293
RACE, HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY, AND SEX						
White	87,258	86,600	713	739	331	325
Men	50,520	49,727	784	816	363	359
Women	36,738	36,873	630	649	292	286
Black or African American	13,229	12,878	578	589	268	259
Men	6,320	6,085	618	646	286	284
Women	6,909	6,793	534	530	247	233
Asian	5,250	5,266	842	854	390	376
Men	2,939	3,004	947	960	439	422
Women	2,311	2,261	738	723	342	318
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	16,525	16,095	502	529	233	233
Men	10,533	10,197	518	566	240	249
Women	5,993	5,898	469	498	217	219

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, third 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	107,194	\$720	60,170	\$796	47,025	\$631
16 to 24 years	11,325	425	6,439	446	4,886	406
16 to 19 years	1,883	332	1,087	347	797	315
20 to 24 years	9,442	458	5,353	475	4,089	428
25 years and over	95,869	763	53,731	857	42,139	666
25 to 54 years	78,664	757	44,276	845	34,388	661
25 to 34 years	25,690	656	14,763	699	10,926	614
35 to 44 years	26,297	802	15,103	901	11,194	669
45 to 54 years	26,678	842	14,410	964	12,267	716
55 years and over	17,205	798	9,455	916	7,751	692
55 to 64 years	14,661	826	7,964	937	6,696	715
65 years and over	2,545	654	1,490	751	1,054	566
White						
16 years and over	86,600	739	49,727	816	36,873	649
16 to 24 years	9,172	430	5,329	448	3,843	408
25 years and over	77,428	786	44,398	879	33,030	687
25 to 54 years	62,875	776	36,250	866	26,624	678
55 years and over	14,553	831	8,148	939	6,405	720
Black or African American						
16 years and over	12,878	589	6,085	646	6,793	530
16 to 24 years	1,415	396	709	410	705	376
25 years and over	11,463	615	5,376	683	6,087	564
25 to 54 years	9,798	619	4,629	687	5,169	575
55 years and over	1,665	590	747	655	918	524
Asian						
16 years and over	5,266	854	3,004	960	2,261	723
16 to 24 years	378	587	206	595	173	575
25 years and over	4,887	894	2,799	989	2,089	744
25 to 54 years	4,155	917	2,380	1,008	1,775	768
55 years and over	732	749	419	865	313	661
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity						
16 years and over	16,095	529	10,197	566	5,898	498
16 to 24 years	2,074	398	1,271	406	803	376
25 years and over	14,022	569	8,926	595	5,095	515
25 to 54 years	12,504	568	7,966	596	4,538	513
55 years and over	1,518	577	960	592	557	525

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	
	III 2007	III 2008	III 2007	III 2008
TOTAL				
Management, professional, and related occupations	38,843	40,192	\$1,011	\$1,041
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	15,848	16,448	1,114	1,135
Professional and related occupations	22,995	23,744	958	1,000
Service occupations	15,296	15,475	445	470
Sales and office occupations	25,844	24,795	602	610
Sales and related occupations	10,473	9,728	640	657
Office and administrative support occupations	15,371	15,067	587	597
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	12,678	11,683	659	701
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	825	822	372	476
Construction and extraction occupations	7,304	6,536	631	689
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,549	4,325	745	779
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	15,611	15,049	584	590
Production occupations	8,399	7,991	585	592
Transportation and material moving occupations	7,212	7,058	584	589
Men				
Management, professional, and related occupations	19,325	19,938	1,205	1,234
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	8,448	8,797	1,328	1,335
Professional and related occupations	10,877	11,141	1,151	1,167
Service occupations	7,612	7,637	503	545
Sales and office occupations	9,769	9,396	710	728
Sales and related occupations	5,767	5,432	784	787
Office and administrative support occupations	4,002	3,965	624	657
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	12,187	11,265	663	704
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	663	688	379	480
Construction and extraction occupations	7,126	6,387	633	688
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,398	4,190	744	781
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	12,257	11,933	622	637
Production occupations	6,013	5,797	643	650
Transportation and material moving occupations	6,245	6,136	608	620
Women				
Management, professional, and related occupations	19,518	20,254	868	916
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	7,400	7,650	923	958
Professional and related occupations	12,118	12,604	835	886
Service occupations	7,684	7,838	408	416
Sales and office occupations	16,075	15,399	562	576
Sales and related occupations	4,706	4,297	507	524
Office and administrative support occupations	11,370	11,103	577	585
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	490	417	526	599
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	162	134	353	423
Construction and extraction occupations	178	149	560	755
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	150	134	773	685
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	3,354	3,116	437	456
Production occupations	2,387	2,194	443	468
Transportation and material moving occupations	967	923	426	423

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, third 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	107,194	\$345	\$484	\$720	\$1,131	\$1,708
Men	60,170	376	519	796	1,246	1,886
Women	47,025	319	435	631	966	1,435
White	86,600	352	493	739	1,154	1,745
Men	49,727	380	529	816	1,272	1,897
Women	36,873	325	450	649	985	1,460
Black or African American	12,878	311	411	589	882	1,307
Men	6,085	337	470	646	952	1,374
Women	6,793	294	386	530	789	1,243
Asian	5,266	368	525	854	1,362	1,916
Men	3,004	401	606	960	1,561	2,261
Women	2,261	330	470	723	1,121	1,645
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	16,095	301	387	529	803	1,199
Men	10,197	316	403	566	852	1,255
Women	5,898	286	354	498	723	1,103
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT						
Total, 25 years and over	95,869	374	513	763	1,180	1,766
Less than a high school diploma	7,841	284	347	471	631	877
High school graduates, no college ¹	27,759	341	453	618	887	1,240
Some college or associate degree	26,599	382	514	725	1,039	1,435
Bachelor's degree and higher ²	33,671	552	761	1,131	1,666	2,329
Bachelor's degree only	21,979	507	712	1,020	1,542	2,116
Advanced degree	11,692	642	896	1,333	1,895	2,881
Men, 25 years and over	53,731	403	578	857	1,328	1,911
Less than a high school diploma	5,459	298	382	505	697	924
High school graduates, no college ¹	16,239	385	508	710	993	1,366
Some college or associate degree	13,805	431	593	835	1,182	1,596
Bachelor's degree and higher ²	18,227	603	866	1,291	1,889	2,719
Bachelor's degree only	12,025	579	811	1,173	1,760	2,386
Advanced degree	6,202	695	988	1,509	2,139	3,192
Women, 25 years and over	42,139	338	469	666	1,011	1,487
Less than a high school diploma	2,381	256	305	381	492	647
High school graduates, no college ¹	11,520	306	396	518	710	983
Some college or associate degree	12,794	343	471	622	880	1,189
Bachelor's degree and higher ²	15,443	499	685	968	1,401	1,906
Bachelor's degree only	9,954	461	631	888	1,265	1,764
Advanced degree	5,490	608	824	1,166	1,605	2,287

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	
	III 2007	III 2008	III 2007	III 2008
SEX AND AGE				
Total, 16 years and over	21,707	22,345	\$218	\$223
Men, 16 years and over	6,855	7,262	213	212
16 to 24 years	3,279	3,533	174	169
25 years and over	3,577	3,729	268	280
Women, 16 years and over	14,851	15,083	221	229
16 to 24 years	4,529	4,517	164	172
25 years and over	10,323	10,566	262	262
RACE, HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY, AND SEX				
White	18,190	18,677	221	224
Men	5,543	5,926	214	212
Women	12,646	12,751	224	230
Black or African American	2,039	2,122	200	214
Men	768	782	201	206
Women	1,271	1,340	198	218
Asian	902	879	233	245
Men	347	301	251	244
Women	555	578	222	246
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	2,377	2,781	208	220
Men	786	1,043	202	226
Women	1,591	1,739	210	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. 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.