

A Comparison of Hourly Wage Rates for Full- and Part-Time Workers by Occupation, 2007

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The majority of full-time workers earn more per hour than part-time workers; in some occupations, however, particularly those in healthcare, part-time workers earn more per hour than their full-time counterparts.

There are twenty-seven million part-time workers in the United States. They may work part time by choice, to supplement their income from a full-time job, or because full-time work simply is not an option. Using [National Compensation Survey](#) data, this article will answer questions such as the following: How do part-time hourly wages compare with full-time hourly wages? Do the differences in wages vary by occupation? Do these differences vary geographically? By using NCS national and regional wage data to answer these questions, this article provides insight into the wage structure of this sizable part of the U.S. workforce.

Prior Research On NCS Part-time Wages

Previous studies using NCS data have noted the difference in compensation costs of part-time and full-time workers. In his 1994 analysis of the [Employer Costs for Employee Compensation \(ECEC\)](#) program, Mark A. Brinkley writes, "In March 1993, compensation costs for part-time workers in private industry averaged \$9.00 per hour, compared with \$18.54 per hour worked for full-time workers."¹ Brinkley noted that the employer costs of wages and salaries per hour worked for full-time workers were higher than that of part-time workers; he also found that among the components of compensation cost, "the largest differences between full-time workers and part-time workers" were for benefit costs.²

While Brinkley compared the overall pay differences between full- and part-time workers in all private industry, Michael K. Lettau studied the occupational wage rates of full- and part-time workers in the same establishment. In a December 1994 study,³ Lettau examined data from the [Employment Cost Index \(ECI\)](#), a Principal Federal Economic Indicator, and concluded that part-time workers and full-time workers doing the same job in an establishment do not receive equal pay for the hours worked. He writes, "The results suggest that an individual can expect a lower wage rate if he or she decides to work part-time rather than full-time, and much lower benefits per hour." In a March 1999 article in the *Monthly Labor Review*, Lettau and Thomas C. Buchmueller examine benefit costs of full-time workers and part-time workers.⁴ Using data from the ECI and the [National Compensation Survey – Benefits \(EBS\)](#), the authors conclude that benefit costs are higher for full-time workers and that full-time workers have greater access to benefits than do part-time workers.

The findings of these studies are consistent with the notion that, throughout the Nation, part-time workers consistently receive relatively less compensation per hour than full-time workers. The present study examines hourly wage rates for part-time workers and for full-time workers at the national and regional level, predominantly focusing on those situations in which part-time workers earn more per hour than do their full-time counterparts.⁵

Methodology

For this study, the authors looked at civilian occupations from the 2007 National Compensation Survey for which there were published wage data for both part-time and full-time positions. Some occupational estimates were available by work level for both full- and part-time workers, particularly in healthcare and service occupations. This article focuses on occupational groups without regard to work level. (A study comparing full- and part-time workers by work levels would be an interesting topic for further analysis.) The study uses a significance test to determine which occupations show a statistically significant difference in part-time hourly wages and full-time hourly wages.⁶

Employees are classified in the NCS as part time or full time based on the definitions used by each establishment. The NCS provides data on employer costs for wages and salaries and for benefits, as well as details of employer-provided benefits. Data are shown by sector of the economy (private industry and State and local government), occupational groups, selected worker characteristics (such as full time and part time, and union and nonunion), and establishment characteristics (such as number of employees and geographic area).⁷

Nationwide

In the 2007 NCS [national wage bulletin](#), there are 324 occupations for which average earnings for part-time and full-time workers can be compared. A majority of these occupations (194) revealed a statistically significant difference between part-time and full-time wages. Of these 194 occupations, full-time workers almost always had higher earnings rates than part-time workers. Part-time workers had higher wages than full-time workers in only 12 of the 194 occupations. (See table 1.)

Table 1: Mean hourly earnings for occupations in which part-time earnings are greater than full-time earnings, civilian workers, 2007.

Occupation	Full-time Workers	Part-time Workers
Computer systems analysts	\$37.64	\$60.10
Clergy	16.23	22.87
Engineering and architecture teachers, postsecondary	57.42	73.56
Therapists	29.59	34.32
Physical therapists	33.82	37.16
Speech-language pathologists	33.20	63.52
Medical and clinical laboratory technologists	23.24	26.69
Dental hygienists	30.60	36.01
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	18.50	19.36
Legal secretaries	20.57	23.37
Farmworkers and laborers, crop, nursery, and greenhouse	9.77	14.51
Construction laborers	15.73	19.69

Geographic Area Differences

As with the national data, when hourly wage data are broken down by geographic area and occupation, full-time workers earn more per hour than part-time workers. Table 2 shows mean hourly earnings, by census division, for those occupations in which part-time workers earn more per hour than full-time workers.⁸ As can be seen from the table, the most common occupations in which part-time workers earn more per hour than full-time workers are healthcare occupations.⁹

Table 2: Mean hourly earnings for occupations in which part-time earnings are greater than full-time worker earnings, by census division, civilian workers, 2007

Census division and occupation (1)	All workers	Full-time workers	Part-time workers
East North Central			
Physicians and surgeons	\$84.94	\$78.72	\$139.95
East South Central			
Registered nurses	27.29	26.81	29.95
Middle Atlantic			
Physicians and surgeons	56.56	55.25	73.60
Mountain			
Social workers	18.33	17.70	24.62
Therapists	26.69	25.04	37.76
New England			
Clinical laboratory technologists and technicians	20.92	20.54	25.16
Pacific			
Preschool and kindergarten teachers	16.05	15.80	23.46
Preschool teachers, except special education	13.84	13.43	23.46
Registered nurses	38.57	37.36	42.35
Respiratory therapists	27.86	27.08	30.18
Vocational education teachers, postsecondary	29.62	25.26	39.00
Dental hygienists	41.14	36.75	45.23
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	21.64	21.16	23.79
Truck drivers, heavy and tractor-trailer	19.40	19.40	20.30
South Atlantic			
Physical Therapists	33.10	31.71	40.11
Social sciences teachers, postsecondary	46.29	45.84	57.18
Therapists	27.21	26.27	34.23
Radiologic technologists and technicians	25.23	24.37	30.71
West North Central			
Miscellaneous postsecondary teachers	24.64	23.93	31.69
Waiters and waitresses	4.83	4.27	5.10

Footnotes:

(1) The West South Central division has no occupations in which part-time earnings were greater than full-time earnings.

Note: The States (and the District of Columbia) that comprise the census divisions are: New England: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont; Middle Atlantic: New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania; South Atlantic: Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia; East South Central: Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee; West South Central: Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas; East North Central: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin; West North Central: Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota; Mountain: Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming; and Pacific: Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington.

As mentioned previously, very few part-time workers earn more per hour than their full-time counterparts. The number of occupations published in the divisional bulletins in which part-time workers earn more than full-time workers ranges from zero to eight; one census division, West South Central, published none. The number of occupational categories and specific occupations varies across the census divisions because of sample design and publication standards. (See table 3.)

Table 3: Occupations with a statistically significant difference between full-time and part-time wage rates, by geographic area, civilian workers, 2007

Geographic area	Total number of occupations	Part-time workers earning less than full-time workers		Part-time workers earning more than full-time workers		Occupations in which part-time workers earn more per hour than full-time workers
		Number of occupations	As a percentage of all part-time occupations	Number of occupations	As a percentage of all part-time occupations	
United States	194	182	93.8	12	6.2	Farm workers and laborers, crop, nursery, and greenhouse; Medical and clinical laboratory technologists; Computer systems analysts; Clergy; Engineering and architecture teachers, postsecondary; Therapists; Physical therapists; Speech-language pathologists; Dental hygienists; Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses; Legal secretaries; Construction laborers
East North Central	89	88	98.9	1	1.1	Physicians and surgeons
East South Central	21	20	95.2	1	4.8	Registered nurses
Middle Atlantic	69	68	98.6	1	1.4	Physicians and surgeons
Mountain	41	39	95.1	2	4.8	Social workers; Therapists
New England	35	34	97.1	1	2.9	Clinical laboratory technologists and technicians
Pacific	67	59	88.1	8	11.9	Preschool and Kindergarten Teachers; Preschool teachers, except special education; Registered nurses; Respiratory therapists; Vocational education teachers, postsecondary; Dental hygienists; Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses; Truck drivers, heavy and tractor-trailer
South Atlantic	75	71	94.7	4	5.3	Therapists; Social sciences teachers, postsecondary; Physical therapists; Radiologic technologists and technicians
West North Central	49	47	95.9	2	4.1	Miscellaneous postsecondary teachers; Waiters and waitresses
West South Central	49	49	100	0	0	(none)

Conclusion

This analysis shows that the majority of full-time workers earn more per hour than their part-time counterparts. These findings are consistent with previous studies and demonstrate that this relationship is true across census divisions nationwide. For many of the divisions, part-time workers in healthcare occupations earned more per hour than their full-time counterparts.¹⁰ Still, this finding is not uniform across all healthcare occupations.

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Notes

¹ See Mark A. Brinkley, "Employer Costs for Employee Compensation to Include Information on Part-time and Full-time Workers," *Compensation and Working Conditions*, June 1994.

² *Ibid*, p. 4.

³ Michael K. Lettau, "Compensation in Part-time Jobs Versus Full-time Jobs: What if the Job is the Same?," Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Working Paper 260, Office of Research and Evaluation, December 1994; available on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/ore/abstract/ec/ec940080.htm>.

⁴ Michael K. Lettau and Thomas C. Buchmueller, "Comparing Benefit Costs for Part-time and Full-time Workers," *Monthly Labor Review*, March 1999, pp. 30-35; available on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/1999/03/art4full.pdf>.

⁵ Jerome E. King examined the differences between part-time and full-time wage rates in terms of density of part-time workers within occupational category, ratios of benefit costs to total compensation, and other measures. He found marked compositional differences by occupation between private industry and State and local government. He also found that part-time workers received a higher percentage of their total compensation in wages and salaries than did full-time workers, and that part-time workers in the health field typically received higher average hourly earnings than did their full-time counterparts. See "Part-time Workers Earnings: Some Comparisons," *Compensation and Working Conditions*, Summer 2000, pp. 27-36; available on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/opub/cwc/archive/summer2000art5.pdf>.

⁶ The authors tested the difference of the standard errors of full-time and part-time mean wages, at a significance level of 0.1, to determine whether an occupation had a significantly higher wage for part-time workers than for full-time workers. For more information, see Research Methods Knowledge Base, on the Internet at <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/power.php>.

⁷ See *BLS Handbook of Methods*, available on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/home.htm>.

⁸ The census divisions are as follows: New England comprises Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont; Middle Atlantic comprises New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania; South Atlantic comprises Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia; East South Central comprises Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee; West South Central comprises Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas; East North Central comprises Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin; West North Central comprises Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota; Mountain comprises Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming; and Pacific comprises Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington.

⁹ For more information on hourly wages for full- and part-time workers by occupation and census division, see [Nine Census Summaries](#) on the BLS website at <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ocs/compub.htm#Division>.

¹⁰ Part-time nurses may earn higher wages because they already receive benefit coverage from a primary employer, allowing them to forego benefits in favor of higher pay at their second job. For another example of this occurrence, see Karen Shahpoori and James Smith, "Wages in Profit and Nonprofit Hospitals and Universities," *Compensation and Working Conditions Online*, June 2005; available on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/opub/cwc/cm20050624ar01p1.htm>.

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