

SOUTHWEST INFORMATION OFFICE
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COUNTY EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES IN TEXAS – THIRD QUARTER 2009

Employment declined in 23 of the 25 largest counties in Texas from September 2008 to September 2009, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported today. (Employment data for two Texas counties did not meet BLS disclosure standards. Large counties are defined as those with employment of 75,000 or more as measured by 2008 annual average employment.) Dallas and Webb Counties had the steepest rates of job losses in the State, down 5.2 percent each, followed by Jefferson's 5.0-percent decline. Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman pointed out that the rates of employment decline in the State's largest counties were all less than the U.S. average. (See table 1.)

Employment nationwide fell 5.3 percent during the 12-month period as 329 of the 334 largest U.S. counties registered declines. Elkhart County, Ind., recorded the largest over-the-year percentage decrease in employment in the country, down 14.5 percent. Yakima County, Wash., registered the fastest growth, up 1.7 percent, and was one of only two large counties nationwide to experience a gain.

In September 2009, employment was highest in Harris County (1,979,600) with Dallas County a distant second (1,405,100). Three other counties, Tarrant, Bexar, and Travis, had employment levels exceeding 500,000. Together, the 25 largest Texas counties accounted for 79.4 percent of total employment within the State. Nationwide, the 334 largest counties made up 71.1 percent of total U.S. employment.

At \$1,044 per week, Harris County also had the highest average weekly wage among the 25 largest counties, followed by Dallas at \$1,012. Bell County recorded the fastest growth in average weekly wages among the State's largest counties with a gain of 6.6 percent from the third quarter of 2008 to the third quarter of 2009; Collin registered the sharpest wage decrease with a loss of 3.1 percent. (See table 1.) Nationally, average weekly wages fell 0.1 percent over the year to \$840.

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 229 counties in Texas with employment levels below 75,000. Among the smaller counties, more than 95 percent (221) had average weekly wages below the national average. (See table 2.)

Large county wage changes

In contrast to the national decline, 12 of the large counties in Texas recorded wage gains from the third quarter of 2008 to the third quarter of 2009. (See table 1.) Bell County's 6.6-percent wage increase was not only the highest in the State, but also placed first in the national ranking. Within Bell County, large wage gains occurred in federal government where average weekly wages grew 18.1 percent over the year. Six counties registered wage increases clustered in the 2.5- to 2.8-percent range, while another five counties recorded smaller wage gains. Wages declined at a pace equal to or greater than the national decrease of 0.1 percent in 11 large Texas counties, led by Collin's 3.1-percent decline.

As noted, the average weekly wage for the nation fell 0.1 percent during the period. This was the third consecutive over-the-year decline in average weekly wages and one of only five declines dating back to 1978, when these quarterly data were first comparable. Employment and wage losses in the relatively high-paid financial activities and manufacturing supersectors contributed significantly to the over-the-year decline in U.S. average weekly wages.

Among the 334 largest counties, 131 had over-the-year decreases in average weekly wages in the third quarter of 2009. The largest wage loss occurred in Rutherford, Tenn., with a decline of 13.2 percent from the third quarter of 2008. Trumbull, Ohio, had the second largest decline (-8.3 percent), followed by the counties of Olmsted, Minn. (-5.8 percent), Santa Cruz, Calif. (-5.5 percent), and Lake, Ind. (-5.2 percent).

Average weekly wages rose in 189 large counties nationwide during the period. Following Bell County's 6.6-percent wage gain were the counties of Harford, Md. (6.2 percent), Cumberland, N.C. (6.1 percent), Madison, Ala. (5.8 percent), and Arlington, Va. (4.8 percent).

Large county average weekly wages

Average weekly wages in 4 of the 25 large Texas counties ranked in the top 20 percent of the largest counties in the United States in the third quarter of 2009. Wages in these four highest-paid counties were well above the U.S. average of \$840 per week: Harris (\$1,044, 24th), Dallas (\$1,012, 37th), Collin (\$976, 42nd), and Travis (\$932, 60th). Three additional Texas counties – Fort Bend, Jefferson, and Tarrant, reported wages close to or slightly above the U.S. average.

Texas had three of the five lowest-paying large counties in the United States, all located along the border with Mexico. These included Cameron (\$553, 333rd), Hidalgo (\$564, 332nd), and Webb (\$574, 331st). El Paso, located more than 500 miles from the three lowest-paying counties, but still on the Mexican border, fared little better at \$619 per week (323rd). However, while these four areas ranked near the bottom in average weekly wages, their wage *increases* were all well above the national average and ranked in the top 40 among all large U.S. counties.

Nationally, average weekly wages were higher than the U.S. average in 112 of the largest counties in the country. Santa Clara, Calif., held the top position among the highest-paid large counties with an average weekly wage of \$1,506. New York, N.Y., was second with an average weekly wage of \$1,500, followed by Washington, D.C. (\$1,450), Arlington, Va. (\$1,413), and Fairfax, Va. (\$1,321).

Of the largest counties in the United States, 222, or about two-thirds, reported average weekly wages below the national average in the third quarter of 2009. The lowest wage was reported in Horry, S.C., at \$534 per week. Joining the Texas counties of Cameron, Hidalgo, and Webb among the bottom five was Yakima, Wash. (\$584). Wages in these lowest-ranked counties were less than 40 percent of the average weekly wage reported for the highest-ranked county, Santa Clara, Calif.

Average weekly wages in smaller Texas counties

Nine of the 229 smaller counties in Texas – those with employment below 75,000 – reported average weekly wages equal to or above the national average of \$840. Two of these smaller counties had wages that not only exceeded \$1,000 per week, but also were the highest in the State: Carson (\$1,396) and Sutton (\$1,056). Menard County registered the lowest weekly wage, averaging \$434 in the third quarter of 2009. (See table 2.)

When all 254 counties in Texas were considered, all but 15 had wages below the national average. Fifty-five reported average weekly wages under \$550, 111 registered wages from \$550 to \$649, 53 had wages from \$650 to \$749, 21 had wages from \$750 to \$849, and 14 had wages of \$850 or more per week. (See chart 1.) The counties with above average wages were concentrated around the metropolitan areas of Austin, Amarillo, Corpus Christi, Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, and Midland. The lower-paid counties, those with wages under \$550, were generally located in the agricultural areas of the Texas Panhandle, as well as along the Texas-Mexico border.

Additional Statistics and Other Information

QCEW data for states have been included in this release in table 3. For additional information about quarterly employment and wages data, please read the Technical Note or visit the QCEW Web site at www.bls.gov/cew/.

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. The 2008 edition of this bulletin contains selected data produced by Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the first quarter 2009 version of the national news release. Tables and additional content from the 2008 Employment and Wages Annual Bulletin are now available online at www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn08.htm. These tables present final 2008 annual averages. The tables are included on the CD which accompanies the hardcopy version of the Annual Bulletin. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2008* will be available for sale from the United States Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250, telephone (866) 512-1800, outside Washington, D.C. Within Washington, D.C., the telephone number is (202) 512-1800. The fax number is (202) 512-2104. 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.

For personal assistance or further information on the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Dallas Information Office at 972-850-4800 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. CT.

Technical Note

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from summaries of employment and total pay of workers covered by state and federal unemployment insurance (UI) legislation and provided by State Workforce Agencies (SWAs). The 9.1 million employer reports covered 128.1 million full- and part-time workers. The average weekly wage values are calculated by dividing quarterly total wages by the average of the three monthly employment levels of those covered by UI programs. The result is then divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or states for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at www.bls.gov/cew/; however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised and may not match the data contained on the BLS Web site.

QCEW data are not designed as a time series. QCEW data are simply the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. Establishments can move in or out of a county or industry for a number of reasons—some reflecting economic events, others reflecting administrative changes.

The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. These potential differences result from the states' continuing receipt, review and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (noneconomic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

Table 1. Covered [1] employment and wages in the United States and the 25 largest counties in Texas, third quarter 2009 [2]

Area	Employment			Average Weekly Wage [3]			
	September 2009 (thousands)	Percent change, September 2008-09 [4]	National ranking by percent change [5]	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level [5]	Percent change, third quarter 2008-09 [4]	National ranking by percent change [5]
United States [6]	128,088.7	-5.3	--	\$840	--	-0.1	--
Texas	10,050.2	-3.8	--	845	14	-0.5	39
Bell, Texas	102.6	-0.7	5	696	280	6.6	1
Bexar, Texas	709.3	-3.0	49	752	204	2.7	27
Brazoria, Texas	82.7	-4.2	108	780	174	-2.0	296
Brazos, Texas	86.0	[7]	-	653	315	[7]	-
Cameron, Texas	121.7	-1.0	8	553	333	2.8	24
Collin, Texas	277.9	[7]	-	976	42	-3.1	312
Dallas, Texas	1,405.1	-5.2	176	1,012	37	-1.1	266
Denton, Texas	164.8	-3.4	68	746	210	-0.1	199
El Paso, Texas	264.4	-2.5	27	619	323	2.8	24
Fort Bend, Texas	127.9	-1.8	16	863	91	-0.7	244
Galveston, Texas	92.5	-2.6	29	805	142	0.2	170
Gregg, Texas	71.0	-4.9	162	717	257	-2.2	297
Harris, Texas	1,979.6	-3.4	68	1,044	24	-0.6	237
Hidalgo, Texas	213.5	-0.8	6	564	332	2.7	27
Jefferson, Texas	118.2	-5.0	166	841	112	2.6	33
Lubbock, Texas	122.5	-2.0	19	643	321	0.3	163
McLennan, Texas	101.3	-2.1	21	692	285	1.8	70
Montgomery, Texas	124.9	-1.2	10	768	183	-2.4	304
Nueces, Texas	149.6	-3.4	68	721	251	-1.0	260
Potter, Texas	74.1	-2.1	21	721	251	1.5	89
Smith, Texas	90.7	-4.0	94	738	229	[7]	-
Tarrant, Texas	740.9	-3.8	83	839	113	-0.1	199
Travis, Texas	555.4	-4.3	116	932	60	0.8	124
Webb, Texas	83.8	-5.2	176	574	331	2.5	38
Williamson, Texas	118.8	-2.5	27	792	159	-1.1	266

[1] Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

[2] Data are preliminary.

[3] Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

[4] Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county

[5] Ranking does not include the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

[6] Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

[7] Data do not meet BLS or State agency disclosure standards.

Table 2. Covered [1] employment and wages in the United States and all counties in Texas, third quarter 2009 [2]

Area	Employment September 2009	Average Weekly Wage [3]	Area	Employment September 2009	Average Weekly Wage [3]
United States [4]	128,088,742	\$840	Concho	851	\$556
Texas	10,050,206	845	Cooke	14,219	687
Anderson	17,318	671	Coryell	15,016	637
Andrews	5,072	871	Cottle	437	564
Angelina	34,891	630	Crane	1,488	908
Aransas	5,537	536	Crockett	1,477	531
Archer	1,912	589	Crosby	1,491	525
Armstrong	381	657	Culberson	1,177	603
Atascosa	9,336	605	Dallam	3,606	657
Austin	12,202	803	Dallas	1,405,102	1,012
Bailey	2,630	581	Dawson	4,346	558
Bandera	2,936	504	De Witt	6,298	584
Bastrop	14,022	630	Deaf Smith	7,008	609
Baylor	1,189	520	Delta	1,309	441
Bee	8,355	592	Denton	164,805	746
Bell	102,578	696	Dickens	504	591
Bexar	709,282	752	Dimmit	2,900	660
Blanco	2,674	642	Donley	1,011	471
Borden	144	557	Duval	2,920	646
Bosque	3,642	579	Eastland	6,432	552
Bowie	42,209	689	Ector	56,469	783
Brazoria	82,734	780	Edwards	441	572
Brazos	85,971	653	El Paso	264,403	619
Brewster	4,864	555	Ellis	37,598	661
Briscoe	352	444	Erath	14,833	533
Brooks	2,445	655	Falls	3,213	549
Brown	15,474	590	Fannin	6,701	619
Burleson	3,507	644	Fayette	8,327	646
Burnet	12,081	621	Fisher	862	579
Caldwell	6,673	547	Floyd	1,909	539
Calhoun	9,520	905	Foard	344	438
Callahan	2,088	586	Fort Bend	127,863	863
Cameron	121,676	553	Franklin	3,017	598
Camp	4,170	543	Freestone	5,652	673
Carson	4,742	1,396	Frio	4,565	533
Cass	7,522	617	Gaines	5,264	605
Castro	2,506	555	Galveston	92,536	805
Chambers	9,621	835	Garza	1,684	654
Cherokee	14,739	563	Gillespie	8,977	545
Childress	2,563	509	Glasscock	355	504
Clay	1,606	577	Goliad	1,440	549
Cochran	777	603	Gonzales	6,421	581
Coke	690	467	Gray	8,068	748
Coleman	2,217	510	Grayson	41,288	674
Collin	277,899	976	Gregg	71,038	717
Collingsworth	854	489	Grimes	6,999	657
Colorado	6,193	609	Guadalupe	28,710	661
Comal	38,681	659	Hale	14,716	557
Comanche	3,708	534	Hall	896	451

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Covered [1] employment and wages in the United States and all counties in Texas, third quarter 2009 [2]
(continued)

Area	Employment September 2009	Average Weekly Wage [3]	Area	Employment September 2009	Average Weekly Wage [3]
Hamilton	2,639	\$575	Liberty	16,614	\$635
Hansford	1,948	675	Limestone	8,334	574
Hardeman	1,183	556	Lipscomb	1,175	558
Hardin	12,130	621	Live Oak	2,887	647
Harris	1,979,584	1,044	Llano	4,225	565
Harrison	22,076	718	Loving	56	818
Hartley	1,592	606	Lubbock	122,469	643
Haskell	1,956	554	Lynn	1,352	522
Hays	47,338	616	Madison	4,014	532
Hemphill	1,864	738	Marion	1,922	531
Henderson	15,617	571	Martin	1,283	645
Hidalgo	213,497	564	Mason	1,052	512
Hill	9,127	541	Matagorda	11,252	744
Hockley	8,510	654	Maverick	15,895	524
Hood	12,850	605	McCulloch	2,723	536
Hopkins	11,690	617	McLennan	101,265	692
Houston	6,067	650	McMullen	221	640
Howard	12,126	674	Medina	7,942	526
Hudspeth	1,151	821	Menard	488	434
Hunt	27,614	762	Midland	64,184	863
Hutchinson	8,258	850	Milam	5,540	711
Irion	533	784	Mills	1,426	516
Jack	2,620	798	Mitchell	2,307	588
Jackson	4,854	616	Montague	4,837	559
Jasper	10,400	613	Montgomery	124,854	768
Jeff Davis	990	563	Moore	10,025	621
Jefferson	118,211	841	Morris	3,495	673
Jim Hogg	1,984	603	Motley	357	473
Jim Wells	16,106	645	Nacogdoches	23,159	577
Johnson	38,209	650	Navarro	15,835	560
Jones	3,904	569	Newton	1,878	537
Karnes	3,619	556	Nolan	6,099	602
Kaufman	25,803	630	Nueces	149,577	721
Kendall	10,570	680	Ochiltree	4,208	691
Kenedy	383	727	Oldham	719	536
Kent	290	461	Orange	21,377	746
Kerr	16,884	649	Palo Pinto	8,048	682
Kimble	1,443	476	Panola	8,143	703
King	204	682	Parker	25,693	630
Kinney	753	681	Parmer	5,169	581
Kleberg	12,300	637	Pecos	5,455	702
Knox	1,248	648	Polk	10,674	592
La Salle	1,613	715	Potter	74,060	721
Lamar	19,443	639	Presidio	2,251	621
Lamb	4,463	553	Rains	1,644	510
Lampasas	4,743	550	Randall	27,630	577
Lavaca	5,793	540	Reagan	1,506	781
Lee	5,133	632	Real	706	435
Leon	5,536	748	Red River	2,778	525

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Covered [1] employment and wages in the United States and all counties in Texas, third quarter 2009 [2] (continued)

Area	Employment September 2009	Average Weekly Wage [3]	Area	Employment September 2009	Average Weekly Wage [3]
Reeves	3,863	\$571	Titus	16,211	\$620
Refugio	2,171	589	Tom Green	43,218	621
Roberts	281	547	Travis	555,383	932
Robertson	3,636	636	Trinity	2,322	479
Rockwall	20,252	644	Tyler	4,006	548
Runnels	2,738	559	Upshur	6,406	582
Rusk	13,737	708	Upton	1,354	757
Sabine	2,066	751	Uvalde	9,025	539
San Augustine	1,596	545	Val Verde	16,963	600
San Jacinto	2,088	546	Van Zandt	10,166	549
San Patricio	17,444	751	Victoria	36,103	679
San Saba	1,702	549	Walker	23,791	626
Schleicher	707	645	Waller	12,595	739
Scurry	6,064	745	Ward	3,394	817
Shackelford	1,068	617	Washington	14,362	615
Shelby	8,047	570	Webb	83,820	574
Sherman	848	561	Wharton	14,705	586
Smith	90,735	738	Wheeler	2,040	606
Somervell	3,937	990	Wichita	52,722	638
Starr	13,560	503	Wilbarger	6,900	611
Stephens	3,141	602	Willacy	3,545	581
Sterling	546	651	Williamson	118,764	792
Stonewall	570	563	Wilson	6,456	520
Sutton	2,552	1,056	Winkler	2,227	859
Swisher	2,065	551	Wise	17,518	702
Tarrant	740,887	839	Wood	9,304	554
Taylor	57,036	630	Yoakum	3,299	796
Terrell	305	717	Young	6,520	666
Terry	3,756	621	Zapata	3,352	699
Throckmorton	480	496	Zavala	2,732	451

[1] Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance [UI] and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees [UCFE] programs.

[2] Data are preliminary.

[3] Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

[4] Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

SOURCE: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

Table 3. Covered [1] employment and wages by state, third quarter 2009 [2]

State	Employment		Average weekly wage [3]			
	September 2009 (thousands)	Percent change, September 2008-09	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, third quarter 2008-09	National ranking by percent change
United States [4]	128,088.7	-5.3	\$840	-	-0.1	-
Alabama	1,814.8	-6.3	744	31	1.8	8
Alaska	329.3	-0.9	887	10	1.6	11
Arizona	2,365.2	-8.0	800	20	0.3	29
Arkansas	1,137.0	-3.9	658	47	1.1	16
California	14,494.0	-6.6	950	6	-0.9	45
Colorado	2,188.1	-5.8	876	13	-0.1	34
Connecticut	1,611.1	-4.8	1,024	2	-0.9	45
Delaware	401.9	-5.0	881	11	0.5	24
District of Columbia	682.6	-1.1	1,450	1	4.2	1
Florida	7,047.8	-6.5	759	27	0.4	27
Georgia	3,757.9	-6.4	800	20	0.8	19
Hawaii	585.1	-4.8	788	23	1.9	5
Idaho	624.3	-6.2	646	48	0.5	24
Illinois	5,539.8	-5.7	880	12	-1.2	47
Indiana	2,715.4	-6.3	714	37	-0.6	42
Iowa	1,444.1	-3.8	695	41	-0.1	34
Kansas	1,310.1	-4.3	706	38	-0.6	42
Kentucky	1,714.3	-4.4	706	38	1.9	5
Louisiana	1,832.7	-2.4	761	26	0.3	29
Maine	592.0	-3.4	688	43	0.7	21
Maryland	2,458.1	-3.4	941	7	2.4	2
Massachusetts	3,140.7	-4.0	1,022	3	-0.2	36
Michigan	3,785.6	-7.6	809	18	-1.3	48
Minnesota	2,561.2	-5.1	836	15	-3.0	50
Mississippi	1,076.9	-4.7	635	50	0.8	19
Missouri	2,610.3	-4.6	744	31	0.7	21
Montana	428.7	-3.9	637	49	1.3	13
Nebraska	901.1	-2.7	689	42	-0.7	44
Nevada	1,126.2	-10.1	805	19	-0.5	39
New Hampshire	607.6	-4.3	831	16	1.1	16
New Jersey	3,782.9	-4.2	995	5	0.4	27
New Mexico	793.7	-5.0	722	35	1.3	13
New York	8,325.5	-3.6	1,012	4	-1.7	49
North Carolina	3,810.7	-6.3	745	29	0.7	21
North Dakota	354.9	-0.6	680	45	2.3	3
Ohio	4,925.5	-6.2	764	25	-0.5	39
Oklahoma	1,484.5	-5.1	700	40	0.1	33
Oregon	1,613.8	-6.9	768	24	0.3	29
Pennsylvania	5,448.2	-4.1	826	17	0.5	24
Rhode Island	451.3	-5.2	793	22	1.9	5
South Carolina	1,752.7	-6.5	688	43	0.9	18
South Dakota	392.1	-2.3	633	51	1.6	11
Tennessee	2,561.4	-6.0	745	29	-0.3	37
Texas	10,050.2	-3.8	845	14	-0.5	39
Utah	1,162.5	-5.4	719	36	0.3	29
Vermont	292.5	-4.0	734	33	1.8	8
Virginia	3,530.7	-3.9	897	9	2.2	4
Washington	2,862.3	-4.7	916	8	1.3	13
West Virginia	691.2	-3.6	673	46	1.7	10
Wisconsin	2,639.7	-5.6	726	34	-0.4	38
Wyoming	278.6	-5.4	756	28	-3.2	51
Puerto Rico	936.9	-5.9	494	[5]	3.8	[5]
Virgin Islands	42.4	-5.7	724	[5]	2.4	[5]

[1] Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

[2] Data are preliminary.

[3] Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

[4] Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

[5] Data not included in the national ranking.

