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Economic News Release

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Occupational Employment and Wages Summary

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OCCUPATIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES -- MAY 2013

Retail salespersons and cashiers were the occupations with the largest employment in May 2013, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. These two occupations combined made up nearly 6 percent of total U.S. employment, with employment levels of 4.5 million and 3.3 million, respectively. National employment and wage information for all occupations is shown in table 1.

The data in this release are from the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) program, which provides employment and wage estimates by area and by industry for wage and salary workers in 22 major occupational groups, 94 minor occupational groups, 458 broad occupations, and 821 detailed occupations.

Occupations

--The 10 largest occupations accounted for 21 percent of total employment in May 2013. In addition to retail salespersons and cashiers, the largest occupations included combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food; general office clerks; registered nurses; waiters and waitresses; and customer service representatives.

--Most of the largest occupations were relatively low paying. Of the 10 largest occupations, only registered nurses, with an annual mean wage of \$68,910, had an average wage above the U.S. all-occupations mean of \$22.33 per hour or \$46,440 annually. Annual mean wages for the rest of the 10 largest occupations ranged from \$18,880 for combined food preparation and serving workers to \$34,000 for secretaries and administrative assistants, except legal, medical, and executive.

--Office and administrative support was the largest occupational group, making up about 16 percent of total U.S. employment. The next largest groups were sales and related occupations and food preparation and serving related occupations, which made up nearly 11 percent and 9 percent of U.S. employment, respectively. Seven of the 10 largest occupations were in one of these three groups. Legal occupations and life, physical, and social science occupations were among the smallest occupational groups, each making up less than 1 percent of total employment.

--The highest paying occupational groups were management, legal, computer and mathematical, and architecture and engineering occupations. Most detailed occupations in these groups were also high paying. For example, all 19 computer and mathematical occupations had average wages above the U.S. all-occupations mean, ranging from \$50,450 for computer user support specialists to \$109,260 for computer and information research scientists. (See table 1.)

--The lowest paying occupational groups were food preparation and serving related; farming, fishing, and forestry; personal care and service; building and grounds

cleaning and maintenance; and healthcare support occupations. Annual mean wages for these groups ranged from \$21,580 for food preparation and serving related occupations to \$28,300 for healthcare support occupations. With few exceptions, the detailed occupations in these groups had below-average wages. For example, occupational therapy assistants and physical therapy assistants were the only healthcare support occupations with mean wages above the U.S. all-occupations mean. (See table 1.)

Occupational profiles for all occupations are available on the BLS website at www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_stru.htm.

Private and government employers

--The private sector accounted for over 90 percent of employment in more than half of the 821 detailed occupations, including 6 of the 10 largest occupations in the U.S. Almost all of the 4.5 million retail sales workers, 3.3 million cashiers, and 2.4 million waiters and waitresses were employed in the private sector. Among the 10 largest occupations in the private sector, general and operations managers and registered nurses had the highest wages, with annual mean wages of \$117,210 and \$69,060, respectively.

--Five of the 6 largest occupations in the public sector were teaching occupations: elementary school teachers, except special education; middle school teachers, except special and career/technical education; secondary school teachers, except special and career/technical education; teacher assistants; and substitute teachers. Over 75 percent of employment in each of these occupations was in the public sector, and for each, over 95 percent of their public sector employment was in local government. Other occupations with a large share of employment in local government included firefighters, police and sheriff's patrol officers, and water and wastewater treatment plant and system operators.

--Correctional officers and jailers; general office clerks; registered nurses; and secretaries and administrative assistants, except legal, medical, and executive were the largest occupations in state government. Combined, these four occupations accounted for 15 percent of all state government employment. Other large occupations in state government included graduate teaching assistants and postsecondary health specialties teachers.

--Three of the 5 largest occupations in the federal government were specific to the U.S. Postal Service--postal service mail carriers; postal service mail sorters, processors, and processing machine operators; and postal service clerks--which combined accounted for 19 percent of federal employment. Also among the largest federal government occupations were registered nurses, management analysts, compliance officers, and transportation security screeners.

OES data by ownership are available on the BLS website at www.bls.gov/oes/current/oesrsci.htm.

Industries

--Health care and social assistance was the industry sector with the largest employment in May 2013. Four major occupational groups made up about 77 percent of employment within this industry sector: healthcare practitioners and technical, healthcare support, office and administrative support, and personal care and service. Registered nurses, nursing assistants, and personal care aides were the largest detailed occupations in the health care and social assistance sector, with about 2.3 million, 1.3 million, and 1.0 million jobs, respectively. Nearly 71 percent of registered nurses in the health care and social assistance sector were employed in hospitals, about 62 percent of nursing assistants in the sector were employed by nursing and residential care facilities, and about 47 percent of personal care aides in the sector were employed in the social assistance subsector.

--Other large industry sectors in May 2013 included retail trade, educational services, accommodation and food services, and manufacturing. More than half of retail trade employment was in just three occupations: retail salespersons, cashiers, and stock

clerks and order fillers. Education, training, and library occupations and office and administrative support occupations made up about 69 percent of employment in the educational services sector, including 7 of the 10 largest occupations within the sector. Food preparation and serving related occupations made up nearly 81 percent of employment in the accommodation and food services sector and production occupations made up over half of employment in manufacturing.

--In industries with the highest mean wages, the largest occupations tended to have wages well above average. For example, the two largest occupations in securities and commodity contracts intermediation and brokerage--securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents, and personal financial advisors--had annual mean wages of \$130,800 and \$104,900, respectively. These two occupations combined made up about 41 percent of total industry employment. Similarly, the largest occupations in computer and peripheral equipment manufacturing included systems software developers, applications software developers, and computer hardware engineers, which had annual mean wages ranging from \$108,140 to \$112,080.

--Restaurants and other eating places had the lowest mean wage of any industry in May 2013 at \$21,720. Eleven of the 12 largest detailed occupations in this industry had wages that averaged less than \$23,000. Several of the lowest-paying industries were in the retail trade sector, including gasoline stations, clothing stores, and department stores. Cashiers, with an annual mean wage of \$18,930, made up 66 percent of employment in gasoline stations. Retail salespersons was the largest occupation in both clothing stores and department stores, with mean wages of \$21,890 and \$21,950, respectively.

OES data by industry are available on the BLS website at www.bls.gov/oes/current/oessrci.htm.

States and areas

--States with high total employment tended to have the highest employment of many detailed occupations. For example, Florida, New York, and California had the highest employment of baggage porters and bellhops. However, smaller states often had higher-than-average shares of employment for particular occupations. For example, Nevada had nearly 8 times the concentration of baggage porters and bellhops and Hawaii had nearly 7 times the concentration when compared to the U.S.

--Similarly, the largest metropolitan areas tended to have the highest numbers of jobs in many detailed occupations, but smaller metropolitan areas often had higher concentrations of specific occupations. For example, New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, N.Y.-N.J.-Pa., had the highest employment of rehabilitation counselors, although the concentration of this occupation in the metropolitan area was about average. On the other hand, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, had a concentration of rehabilitation counselors roughly 8 times that of the U.S. and Mount Vernon-Anacortes, Wash., had nearly 7 times the concentration.

--Wages for occupations also varied considerably across states and metropolitan areas. For example, annual mean wages for advertising sales agents ranged from \$32,220 in Wyoming and \$35,800 in Louisiana, to \$70,080 in Connecticut and \$76,470 in New York. Wages for this occupation varied even more by area than by state: among metropolitan areas with at least 100 advertising sales agents, annual mean wages ranged from \$26,880 in Joplin, Mo., and \$27,410 in Lake Charles, La., to \$80,840 in New York-White Plains-Wayne, N.Y.-N.J., and \$96,760 in Danbury, Conn.

OES data, including location quotients, by state and metropolitan/nonmetropolitan area are available on the BLS website at www.bls.gov/oes/current/oessrcst.htm and www.bls.gov/oes/current/oessrcma.htm, respectively.

- [Occupational Employment and Wages Technical Note](#)
- [Table 1. National employment and wage data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey by occupation, May](#)

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