

Average Weekly Wages and Percentage of Jobs Paying a Livable Wage

DEFINITION

This indicator reports average weekly wages for workers covered by unemployment insurance for 2009. It also reports the latest estimates of the percentage of jobs paying a livable wage.

CONTEXT

Average weekly wage is an important measure of a county's economic health and another useful indication of economic well being. This measure is based on place of work, not place of residence.

Previous studies have shown that a considerable proportion of New Hampshire jobs (and jobs in other states) do not pay a livable wage, or a wage sufficient for a household to pay for basic needs such as housing, food, transportation, child care and health care (Kenyon 2001, Kenyon and Churilla 2008). Whether a job with a particular weekly wage pays a livable wage depends on factors such as the household type (e.g., single person vs. two parent household with two children and both parents working) and the cost of basic needs in that county.

There are various ways that workers manage without a livable wage. Sometimes they make compromises such as deciding not to purchase health insurance. Sometimes one spouse earns considerably more than another spouse, enabling the lower-earning spouse to earn less than the livable wage without imposing a financial hardship. Also, some families rely on relatives for child care or receive income support from the federal, state or local government.

Average Weekly Wages and Percentage of Jobs Paying a Livable Wage By County, 2009

	2009 Average weekly wages	Estimated Percentage of Jobs Paying a Livable Wage		
		Single person	Two parents, two children, both parents working	Two parents, two children, one parent working
STATE TOTAL	\$864	61%	53%	25%
Belknap County	\$693	56%	48%	17%
Carroll County	\$587	56%	47%	16%
Cheshire County	\$742	56%	48%	18%
Coos County	\$610	56%	50%	21%
Grafton County	\$879	66%	58%	26%
Hillsborough County	\$959	62%	56%	31%
Merrimack County	\$810	61%	53%	25%
Rockingham County	\$839	58%	49%	23%
Strafford County	\$822	56%	53%	23%
Sullivan County	\$698	67%	60%	27%

NEW HAMPSHIRE FINDINGS

The 2009 average weekly wage in New Hampshire was \$864, but this varied greatly by county, with the highest weekly wage in Hillsborough County at \$959 and the lowest weekly wage of \$587 in Carroll County. Thus the average weekly wage in the highest wage county was 63 percent higher than the average weekly wage in the lowest wage county. (see table on previous page)

New Hampshire's average weekly wage in 2009 was the same as in 2008 and 10 percent higher than in 2005 (New Hampshire Employment Security 2010b, 8). The New Hampshire industries with highest average weekly wages in 2008 were, in order from highest to lowest, utilities, management of companies and enterprises, finance and insurance, professional and technical services, all with average weekly wages above \$1,400. The industries with the lowest average weekly wages were, in order from lowest to highest, accommodation and food services; arts, entertainment and recreation; transportation and warehousing; agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting; and other services, except public administration; all with average weekly wages less than \$600 (New Hampshire Employment Security 2010b, 8).

One can also examine the variation of average wages by occupational group. In this instance, wages are reported on an hourly basis. The occupations with the highest wages, all greater than \$30 per hour; in order from highest to lowest, were management, computer and mathematical, legal, healthcare practitioners and technical, and architecture and engineering occupations. At the other end of the spectrum, the occupations with the lowest wages, all less than \$15 per hour; in order from lowest to highest, were food preparation and service-related; personal care and service; building and grounds cleaning and maintenance; farming, fishing and forestry; and health care support occupations (New Hampshire Employment Security 2010a, iii).

The percentage of jobs paying a livable wage varies by county and household type. Across all family types Hillsborough County (home to Manchester and Nashua) and Sullivan County have the highest percentage of livable wage jobs and Carroll County has the lowest percentage of livable wage jobs. There is a greater availability of livable wage jobs for households without children and for dual earner families.

SOURCE OF DATA FOR ILLUSTRATION/METHODOLOGY

Kids Count Data Center: www.datacenterkidscount.org. Original data from New Hampshire Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau.

Data are weekly wage rates by industry for workers covered by unemployment insurance. These data are based on Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages program files extracted from Quarterly Employer Tax and Wage Reports.

Kenyon, Daphne A. and Allison Churilla. 2008. *Many New Hampshire Jobs Do Not Pay a Livable Wage*. Carsey Institute Issue Brief No. 10, Fall.

Estimates for other family types not reported here are two parents and one child, both parents working; two parents and one child, one parent working; single person and two children; and single person with one child.

REFERENCES

Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. 2010. *New England Economic Indicators, Second Quarter 2010*.

Kenyon, Daphne A. 2001. *The Availability of Livable Wage Jobs in New Hampshire*. Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy. November.

New Hampshire Employment Security. Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau. 2010a. *New Hampshire Occupational Employment and Wages 2010*.

New Hampshire Employment Security. Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau. 2010b. *Vital Signs 2010: Economic and Social Indicators for New Hampshire, 2005-2008*.