

Occupational Employment Statistics

Organization: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. “The Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor is the principal Federal agency responsible for measuring labor market activity, working conditions, and price changes in the economy.”¹

Purpose and Uses: The Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) program annually produces employment and wage estimates for over 800 occupations in over 450 industry classifications for the nation, states, and metro areas. Data is also available by ownership. In addition OES had state industry data on its web site for research purposes.

OES data are used in labor market analysis, employment needs projections, vocational planning and counseling, state employment services, and industry skill and technology studies.² OES data are used in prevailing wage determinations for Foreign Labor Certification. They are used by O*NET, America’s Career Information Network and special tabulation of STEM occupations are provided to the National Science Foundation. OES data also are used as inputs to the BLS Employment Cost Index, calculating injury and illness rates, Medicare and Medicaid hospital reimbursement rates, and special OES tabulations are supplied to the Bureau of Economic Analysis for estimating Social Security payments from employers.

Data Elements Relevant to Postsecondary Education and Workforce Development: OES publishes the following elements for the nation, states, and metro areas:

- Number of employed by occupation
- Employment per thousand jobs by occupation
- Hourly and annual and median wage by occupation
- Percentile wages --10th, 25th, 50th (median) 75th and 90th -- by occupation

The OES data are not designed to produce a time series.

History and Status: The origin of the OES program can be traced to a small federal-state cooperative survey of manufacturing occupations in 1971.

The OES program has OMB clearance to operate through October 2016.

Methodology: The OES program is a cooperative effort between BLS and state labor market information agencies. BLS provides the procedures and technical support, draws the sample, and produces the survey materials, and estimates. States collect the data from the sample selected by BLS. The sample frame is the establishments covered by unemployment insurance. All fifty states, plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands participate in the survey.

¹ BLS website, <http://www.bls.gov/>

² BLS, “[Supporting Statement A: Report on Occupational Employment and Wages,](#)” October 2013, pp. 1-2.

The OES sample size is 1.2 million establishments over three years. The sample is divided into six panels (one every six months) of about 200,000 establishments. The sample is stratified by geography and industry. Data are collected for the payroll period including the 12th day of May or November. The survey does not cover the self-employed, owners and partners in unincorporated firms, household workers, or unpaid family workers. Establishments are included in the sample at most once every three years.

The OES program's goal is for each state to achieve an 80 percent response rate. In 2011, the overall response rate was about 77 percent.³

BLS produces annual estimates of occupational employment and wage rates by combining data from the most recent May panel with data from the five prior semiannual panels.

Data Products and Tools: OES data from 1988-2013 are available [here](#) in table, chart, map, and spreadsheet formats.

Program Cost: The federal cost of the OES program in FY2013 was \$36.0 million, including that part contributed by State Workforce Agencies from their BLS grants. For FY2015, the President requested \$36.6 million.

³ BLS, "[Supporting Statement B: Report on Occupational Employment and Wages](#)," July 2013, p. 6.