



## DATA FROM THE UNITED STATES BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

The federal government is both a rich source and the original source for oodles of statistical information. The Bureau of Labor Statistics is the government resource for economic variables surrounding the labor market. But like many federal government web sites, it can be—shall we say—cluttered. Familiarity with the site unlocks the door to its wealth of economic information.

Let's keep it simple and focus on three statistics—employment, unemployment, and occupational wages. These can be found nationally, by state, and by major metropolitan areas.

Let's start with employment. On the web site, find the tab across the top labeled Databases & Tables. Now click on the Employment link. There are separate rows for national and state/metropolitan data. From here, I would recommend the column labeled One-Screen Data Search (the green icon). If looking for Utah data, select the state row. A new window pops up. In box 1, select Utah. In box 2, select statewide. In boxes 3 and 4 select Total Nonfarm. In box 5 select All

Employees, in Thousands. In box 6, there are the options for seasonally adjusted or not seasonally adjusted (both can be chosen). Once these steps are taken, box 7 will be Get Data.

A new window will open with your results. The default of history will be from 2000 to 2010, but a drop-down box allows the employment search to go all the way back to 1939, if one so chooses.

You can largely repeat this procedure to get unemployment data. Having clicked on the Databases & Tables tab, instead select Unemployment. Again, there are two rows of interest; one national, the other local (called LAUS). Again, I recommend the column of green icons. You can work your way through the boxes, selecting Utah, then statewide or counties, and the seasonally adjusted or not (seasonally adjusted only available statewide). As before, your results will default to a history from 2000 to 2010, but data back to 1976 is available by changing the date in the drop-down box.

Finally, occupational wage data. This can be found on the left column of the home page, under the heading Subject Area. Hover over Pay & Benefits, then select Wages by Area and Occupation. From here, national, state, or metropolitan areas can be chosen. As an example, select Metropolitan Area (375 nationwide metro areas are available). Select U (for Utah) from the alphabetical index, then Salt Lake City. Twenty-two major occupational categories are now available. Select Computer and Mathematical, and you will get a list of occupations under this heading and some wage

results. Median and mean hourly wages, and mean annual wages by occupation are given (survey results).

An added benefit is these wages can be compared across occupational areas. By going back just a few steps to the alphabetical index, you can select a different state and one of its metropolitan areas, and check the pay of the same occupational titles in that metropolitan area. When comparing wages across areas, keep in mind that some area's cost-of-living's are higher than in other areas, so compare wages accordingly. ①

## BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS WEB SITE WWW.BLS.GOV



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