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Average Weekly Pay In Arkansas Counties

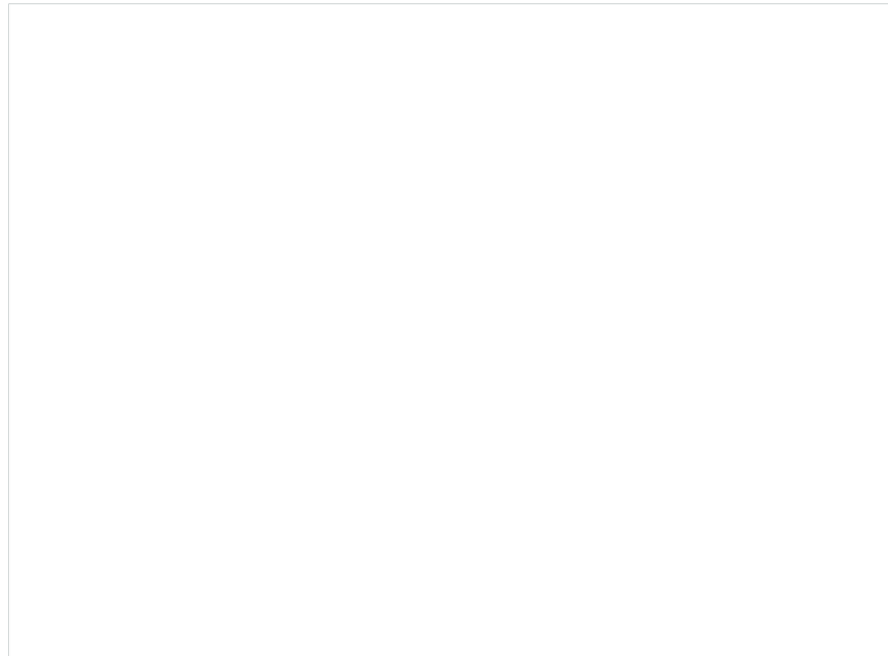


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Allison Woods
5NEWS Anchor/Reporter
6:21 p.m. CDT, July 13, 2011

Benton County brings the World's Largest Retailer, but not the largest weekly salary in the state.

In fact, the entire state of Arkansas is the third lowest in the country with workers making an average of \$738 a week.

Compare that to the national average of \$971.

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But this low comparison doesn't surprise economists.

"Historically Arkansas has been in the bottom few in terms of weekly wages at the same time it's a number that you would like to see go up in the future," says Jeff Cooperstein, University of Arkansas Economist.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statics releases weekly wages based on the fourth quarter of last year.

The highest average weekly wage was \$885 in Calhoun County;

Pulaski County was the second highest with an average of \$872.

Little River County was third with a mean of \$860.

The three largest Counties; Benton, **Washington** and Pulaski are below the national average.

Benton workers make \$839 a week and in Washington it's even lower at \$805.

Economist say population plays a big role in the average wage.

"If you have one or two employers who pay very well, in a county with a very low population that will make the average go up. For sure there are more highly paid people in Benton County, but the population base is greater so the percentage might be lower than in a county with a much smaller population," says Cooperstein. "If you got 20,000 people in our county but you've got 2,000 employees is of a firm that's paying a high average wage then the average for that county is going to look very good."

Cooperstein also says education and cost-of-living also play a role in wages.

"If you're in a state were the wages are already lower than you can afford to pay lower wages so, there's kind of inertia that's plays a part of it. Second, education is very important as people become more educated become more skilled they demand higher wages and they can afford to move to other places so, if a firm wants to keep them then the they will have to pay them."

Counties in the River Valley rank under Washington and Benton Counties in average weekly wage.

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Sebastian County Ranks 9th in the state at \$759 a week.

Crawford County is considerably lower, with a weekly average of \$605.

Newton County had the lowest average weekly wage of \$436.

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