

Wages of Full-time and Part-time Cooks: A Multicity Tour

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Data from the [National Compensation Survey \(NCS\)](#) show that, in the United States as a whole, wages of full-time and part-time cooks vary somewhat, depending on the type of cook; NCS data also show that wages of cooks, regardless of the type, vary widely across some metropolitan areas.

The job of cook is important to society and the economy. Cooks play an important role in influencing diets and eating habits and therefore in the health and well-being of society. Good cooks bring out the best in food and make eating an enjoyable experience.¹ According to data from the [American Time Use Survey](#), in 2009, individuals age 15 and over in the United States spent, on average, 1.22 hours per day engaged in eating and drinking activities.² Also in 2009, the average household in the United States spent \$6,372 per year on food--which includes money spent on food at home and money spent on food away from home. A large portion (41 percent) of these annual food expenditures was spent on food away from home, in restaurants and in eating and drinking places.³ Cooks play a vital role in the success of these businesses.

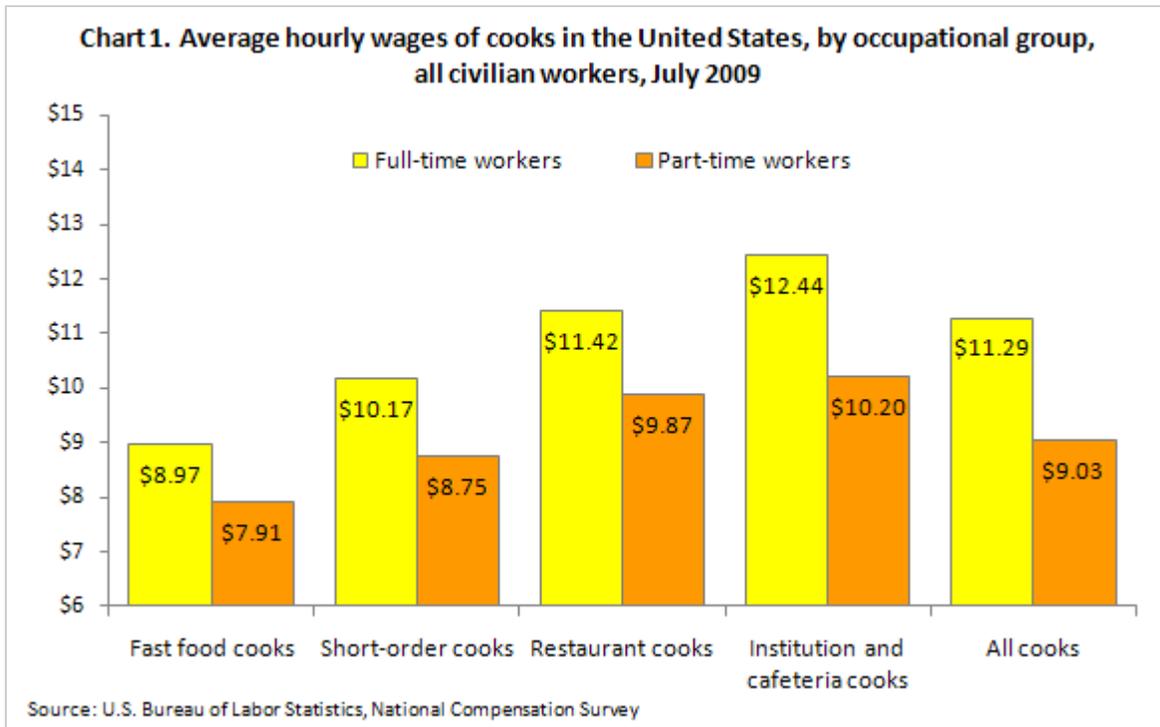
Over 2 million workers, 1.5 percent of all civilian workers in the United States, are employed as cooks.⁴ This occupation includes fast food cooks, short order cooks, restaurant cooks, and institution and cafeteria cooks. About 75 percent of cooks work in food services and drinking establishments,⁵ which include fast food restaurants, food courts, and full-service restaurants. The remaining 25 percent work in places such as hospitals, schools, and nursing homes. About two-thirds of cooks jobs are full-time jobs and one-third are part-time jobs.⁶

Cooks require important skills such as the safe handling and storing of food; knowing how to cut, combine, and mix food items; and regulating stoves and ovens and grills to apply the right amount of heat to the food being cooked. Cooks with greater expertise also know how different foods complement one another and how to correctly season food in order to bring out the best flavor. Cooks prepare a wide range fare, from fast food to elegant dinners.⁷

Considering the broad range of skills needed and the variety of meals cooks may prepare, how much are different types of cooks paid in the United States? Do the wages vary by area? Do full-time cooks earn more than part-time cooks? This article takes us on a tour of selected cities to see what full-time and part-time cooks earn.⁸ It uses [National Compensation Survey \(NCS\)](#) occupational earnings data on all civilian workers, which include workers in private industry and in State and local government.⁹

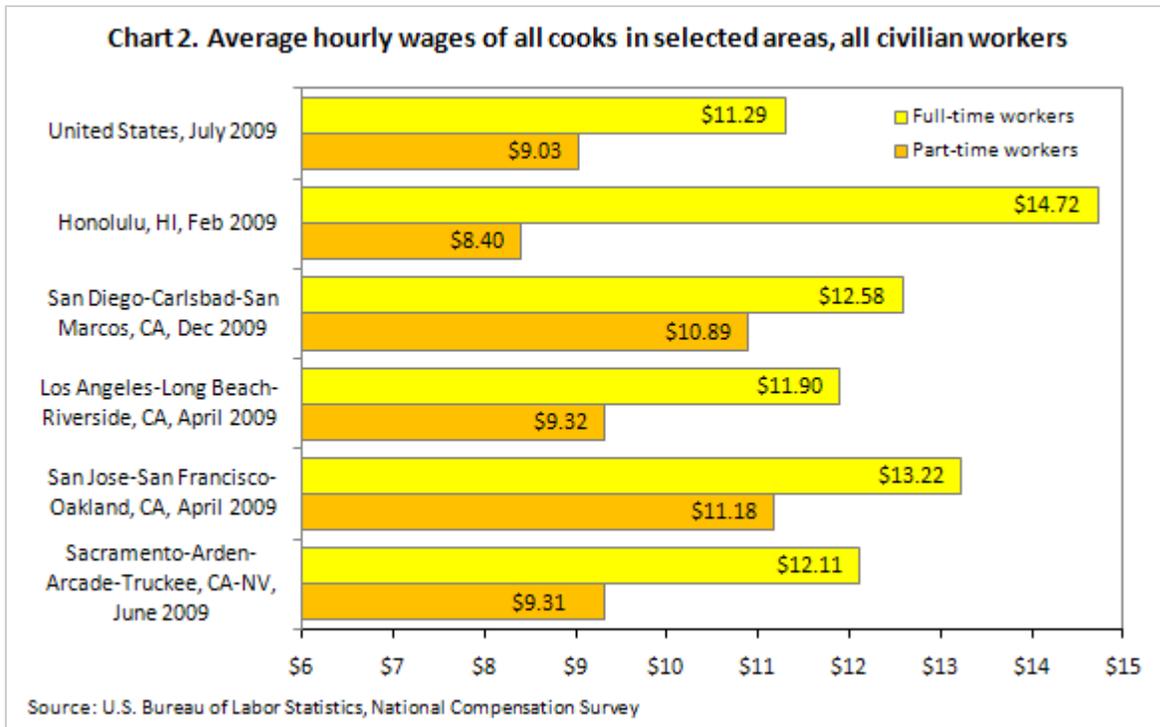
Chart 1 shows average hourly wages of full-time and part-time cooks, by type of cook, in the United States as a whole. For the NCS, a worker is considered full time or part time not on the basis of the number of hours worked, but on whether the employer considers the employee to be working full time or part time. In 2009, full-time civilian workers worked, on average, 39.5 hours per week, while their part-time counterparts worked an average of 20.7 hours per week.

The national estimates have an average reference month of July 2009.

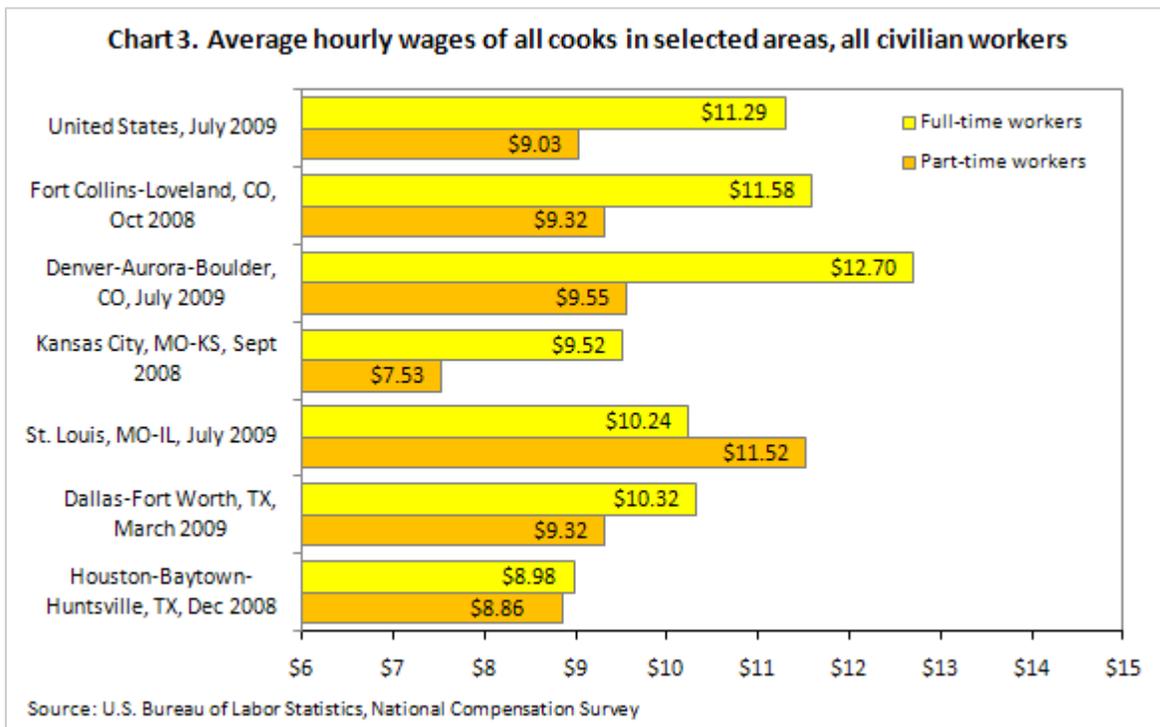


- Chart 1 shows that, in the United States in 2009, the average wage rate for full-time cooks ranged from \$8.97 per hour for fast food cooks to \$12.44 per hour for institution and cafeteria cooks; and the wage rate for part-time cooks ranged from \$7.91 per hour for fast food cooks to \$10.20 per hour for institution and cafeteria cooks.
- Chart 1 also shows that the wage rate for all full-time cooks in the United States in 2009 was \$11.29 per hour and that the wage rate for all part-time cooks was \$9.03 per hour.

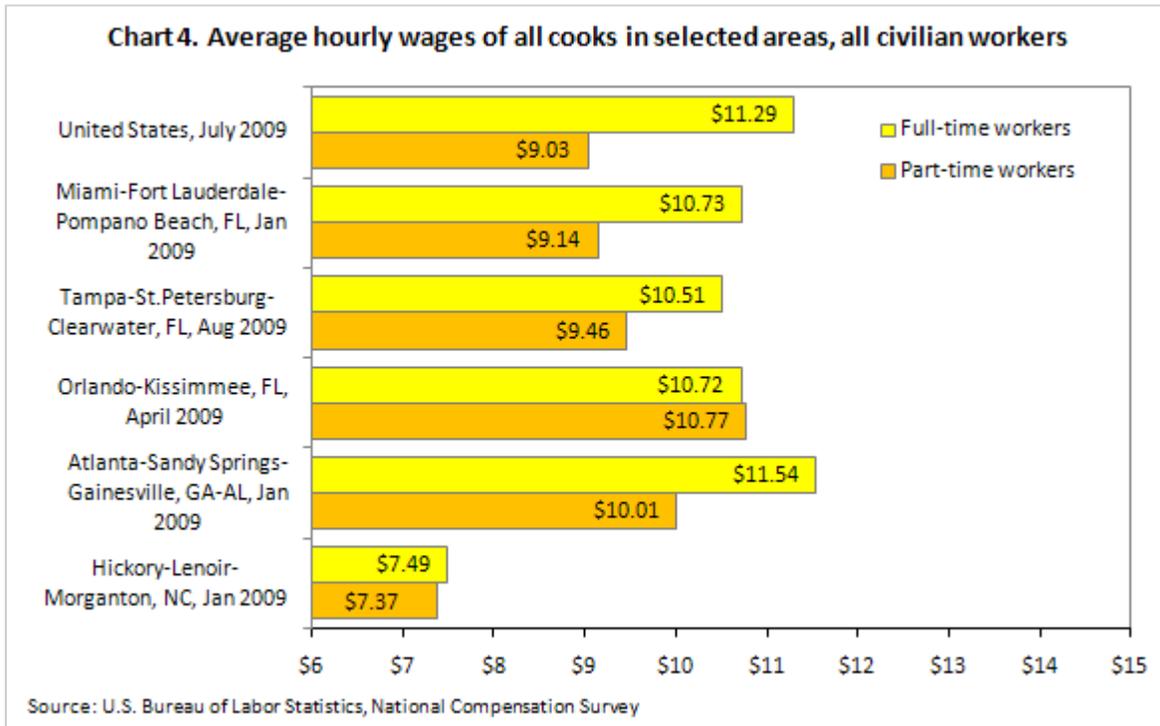
Charts 2 through 6 show data for selected metropolitan areas. Data for cooks as a whole are used for comparisons at the area level because data on more detailed occupational categories of cooks are not available for these areas. The average reference month for these areas varies from May 2008 to January 2010.¹⁰ The charts reveal that there are significant differences in wages of all cooks across some areas.¹¹



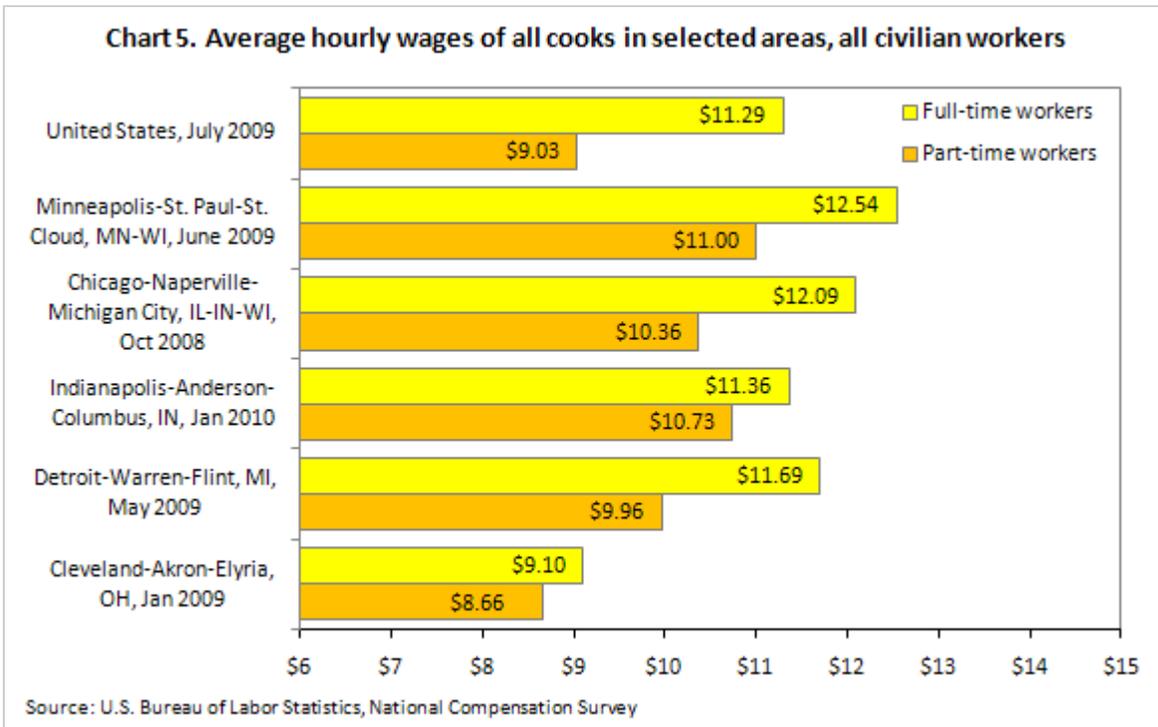
- Chart 2 shows that in Honolulu, full-time cooks earn \$14.72 per hour, significantly higher than the \$11.90 per hour in Los Angeles-Long Beach-Riverside.
- Chart 2 also shows that wage rates in San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland for part-time cooks are \$11.18 per hour, compared with \$9.31 per hour in Sacramento-Arden-Arcade-Truckee.



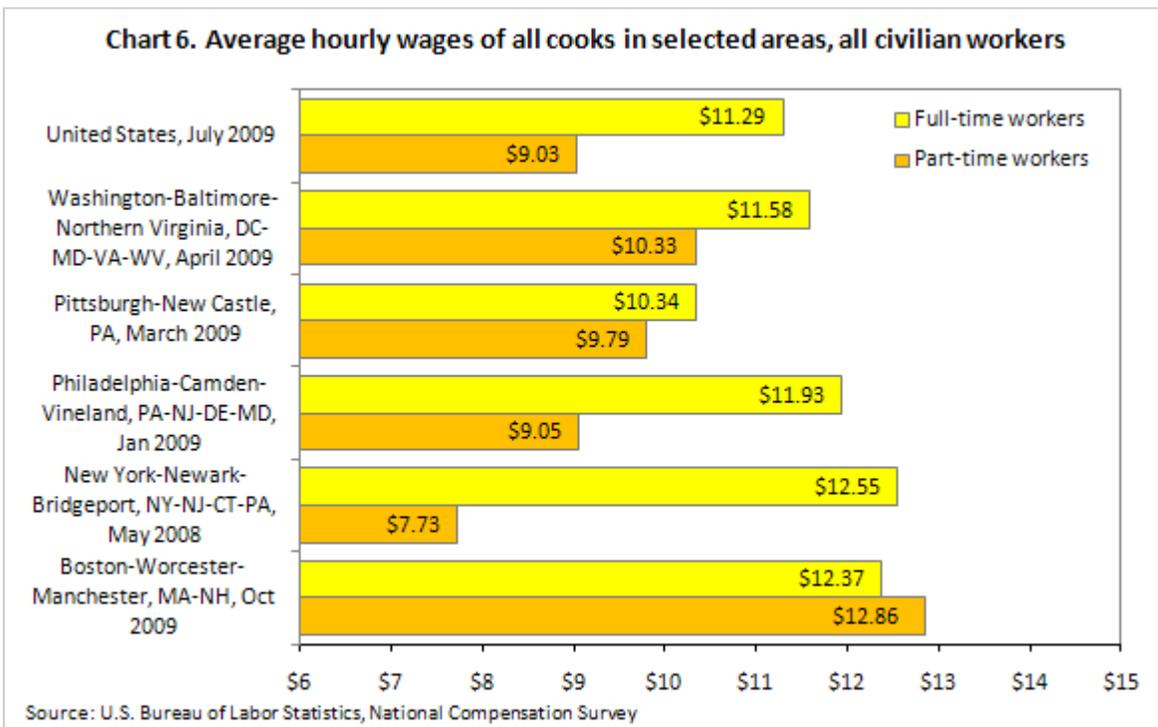
- Chart 3 shows that in Denver-Aurora-Boulder the wage for full-time cooks is \$12.70 per hour, significantly higher than in Kansas City, where the wage is \$9.52 per hour.
- Chart 3 also shows that in the Dallas-Fort Worth area the wage for part-time cooks is \$9.32 per hour; and in Houston-Baytown-Huntsville, the wage is \$8.86 per hour.



- Chart 4 shows that for selected areas in Florida, wage rates for full-time cooks are close to the national average of \$11.29 per hour: in Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, full-time cooks earn \$10.73 per hour; and in Orlando-Kissimmee, full-time cooks earn \$10.72 per hour.
- Chart 4 also shows that in the Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Gainesville area, full-time cooks earn \$11.54 per hour; and in this area part-time cooks earn \$10.01 per hour, considerably more than the national average of \$9.03 per hour for all part-time cooks.



- Chart 5 shows that in Minneapolis-St. Paul-St. Cloud, full-time cooks earn \$12.54 per hour, compared with \$12.09 per hour in Chicago-Naperville-Michigan City.
- Chart 5 also shows that in the Detroit-Warren-Flint area, part-time cooks earn \$9.96 per hour, significantly more than and in the Cleveland-Akron-Elyria area, where the wage for part-time cooks is \$8.66 per hour.



- Chart 6 shows that the wage for full-time cooks in Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia is \$11.58 per hour; and the wage for full-time cooks in Pittsburgh-New Castle is considerably lower, at \$10.34 per hour.
- Chart 6 also shows that in New York-Newark-Bridgeport, the wage for part-time cooks is \$7.73 per hour, while in Boston-Worcester-Manchester, the wage for part-time cooks is significantly higher, at \$12.86 per hour.

Here the tour ends, and what have we seen? For the areas discussed in this article, wages of full-time cooks range from \$7.49 per hour in the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton, NC, area to \$14.72 per hour in the Honolulu, HI, area; and wages of part-time cooks range from \$7.37 per hour in the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton, NC, area to \$12.86 per hour in the Boston-Worcester-Manchester, MA-NH, area. In some areas, such as Honolulu, HI, and New York-Newark-Bridgeport, NY-NJ-CT-PA, wages of full-time cooks are considerably higher than are wages of part-time cooks; and in other areas, such as Houston-Baytown-Huntsville, TX, and Orlando-Kissimmee, FL, wages of full-time cooks are essentially the same as wages of part-time cooks.

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End Notes

1 “[Restaurant Association Praises White House Chefs Initiative to Combat Childhood Obesity](#),” National Restaurant Association news release, June 4, 2010, on the Internet at <http://www.restaurant.org/pressroom/pressrelease/?ID=1966> (accessed October 29, 2010).

2 See [American Time Use Survey--2009 Results](#), USDL-10-0855 (U.S. Department of Labor), June 22, 2010, table 1, on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/atus.pdf>.

3 See <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/cesan.nr0.htm>. The [Consumer Expenditure Survey \(CE\)](#) measures the expenditures of *consumer units* rather than *households*. For definitions, see the [CE Glossary](#), on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/cex/csxgloss.htm>.

4 Jobs are classified using the [Standard Occupational Classification \(SOC\)](#) system, available on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/soc/home.htm>. The SOC uses a six-digit hierarchical classification system that categorizes more than 800 individual jobs into 23 major groups. According to estimates from the BLS [Occupational Employment Survey](#) for May 2009, there were 2,008,000 employed cooks in May 2009. The estimate includes the following types of cooks: cooks, fast food (35-2011); cooks, institution and cafeteria (35-2012); cooks, private household (35-2013); cooks, restaurant (35-2014); cooks, short order (35-2015); cooks, all other (35-2019). Note that this estimate includes private household workers; private household workers are excluded from the wage estimates found later in this article. For more information, see [May 2009 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates: United States](#), on the Internet at http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm#35-0000.

5 Establishments are classified into industries using the [North American Industry Classification System \(NAICS\)](#). The NAICS code for this industry is 722000, [Food Services and Drinking Places](#). For more information, see [May 2009 National Industry-Specific Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates](#), on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oessrci.htm>.

6 See “[Cooks and Food Preparation Workers](#)” in [Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010—11 Edition](#), Bulletin 2800 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 2010), on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos331.htm>.

7 Ibid.

8 The metropolitan areas selected for this study are areas for which NCS has published average hourly wages data for both full-time and part-time cooks. For all NCS published areas see [National Compensation Survey--Wages](#), on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ocs/compub.htm>. Some of the areas selected for this study are Consolidated Statistical Areas (CSAs) and others are Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). These designations are based on [Office of Management and Budget](#) area definitions. In this article, shortened titles are used to refer to particular metropolitan areas, but in all cases the full CSA or MSA is intended. For more information on NCS metropolitan area definitions, see [BLS Handbook of Methods](#), chapter 8, “[National Compensation Measures](#),” on the Internet at http://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/homch8_a.htm#description_of_NCS.

9 The [National Compensation Survey \(NCS\)](#) is a program of the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\)](#). NCS collects and publishes wage data by occupation, Census Division, and metropolitan area. The NCS surveys workers in private industry establishments, and in State and local government, in the 50 States and the District of Columbia. Establishments with one or more workers are included in the survey. Major exclusions from the survey are workers in the Federal Government, military personnel, agricultural workers, workers in private households, the self-employed, volunteers, unpaid workers, individuals receiving long-term disability compensation, and U.S. citizens working overseas.

NCS data are collected by field economists who work from six [BLS regional offices](#) (<http://www.bls.gov/bls/regnhome.htm>). To collect the data, field economists interview employers that are selected to participate in the NCS. Wage rates are collected in a variety of forms, depending on the method of pay used by an employer, such as weekly or monthly rates, or base pay and incentive pay. Wage rates collected are straight-

time earnings and do not include overtime or shift differentials. Field economists also collect information on employee work schedules. Work schedule information is needed to calculate the straight-time average hourly wage rate for an occupational group. For more information on methods, see *BLS Handbook of Methods*, chapter 8, “National Compensation Measures,” on the Internet at http://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/homch8_a.htm#description_of_NCS.

10 The collection reference date can affect outcomes: because of certain economic factors such as inflation, wage rates with a reference date at the beginning of a year tend to be lower than wage rates with a reference date at the end of the same year.

11 “Statistical significance” describes a mathematical measure of difference between estimates. In this article, values are described as “significantly higher” or “significantly lower” than other values if they pass a test of statistical significance at the 90-percent level of confidence.

Data for Chart 1. Average hourly wages of cooks in the United States, by occupational group, all civilian workers, July 2009

Occupational group	Full-time workers	Part-time workers
Fast food cooks	\$8.97	\$7.91
Short-order cooks	\$10.17	\$8.75
Restaurant cooks	\$11.42	\$9.87
Institution and cafeteria cooks	\$12.44	\$10.20
All cooks	\$11.29	\$9.03

Data for Chart 2. Average hourly wages of all cooks in selected areas, all civilian workers

Area	Full-time workers	Part-time workers
United States, July 2009	\$11.29	\$9.03
Honolulu, HI, Feb 2009	\$14.72	\$8.40
San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA, Dec 2009	\$12.58	\$10.89
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Riverside, CA, April 2009	\$11.90	\$9.32
San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland, CA, April 2009	\$13.22	\$11.18
Sacramento-Arden-Arcade-Truckee, CA-NV, June 2009	\$12.11	\$9.31

Data for Chart 3. Average hourly wages of all cooks in selected areas, all civilian workers

Area	Full-time workers	Part-time workers
United States, July 2009	\$11.29	\$9.03
Fort Collins-Loveland, CO, Oct 2008	\$11.58	\$9.32
Denver-Aurora-Boulder, CO, July 2009	\$12.70	\$9.55
Kansas City, MO-KS, Sept 2008	\$9.52	\$7.53
St. Louis, MO-IL, July 2009	\$10.24	\$11.52
Dallas-Fort Worth, TX, March 2009	\$10.32	\$9.32
Houston-Baytown-Huntsville, TX, Dec 2008	\$8.98	\$8.86

Data for Chart 4. Average hourly wages of all cooks in selected areas, all civilian workers

Area	Full-time workers	Part-time workers
United States, July 2009	\$11.29	\$9.03
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL, Jan 2009	\$10.73	\$9.14
Tampa-St.Petersburg-Clearwater, FL, Aug 2009	\$10.51	\$9.46
Orlando-Kissimmee, FL, April 2009	\$10.72	\$10.77

Area	Full-time workers	Part-time workers
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Gainesville, GA-AL, Jan 2009	\$11.54	\$10.01
Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton, NC, Jan 2009	\$7.49	\$7.37

Data for Chart 5. Average hourly wages of all cooks in selected areas, all civilian workers

Area	Full-time workers	Part-time workers
United States, July 2009	\$11.29	\$9.03
Minneapolis-St. Paul-St. Cloud, MN-WI, June 2009	\$12.54	\$11.00
Chicago-Naperville-Michigan City, IL-IN-WI, Oct 2008	\$12.09	\$10.36
Indianapolis-Anderson-Columbus, IN, Jan 2010	\$11.36	\$10.73
Detroit-Warren-Flint, MI, May 2009	\$11.69	\$9.96
Cleveland-Akron-Elyria, OH, Jan 2009	\$9.10	\$8.66

Data for Chart 6. Average hourly wages of all cooks in selected areas, all civilian workers

Area	Full-time workers	Part-time workers
United States, July 2009	\$11.29	\$9.03
Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia, DC-MD-VA-WV, April 2009	\$11.58	\$10.33
Pittsburgh-New Castle, PA, March 2009	\$10.34	\$9.79
Philadelphia-Camden-Vineland, PA-NJ-DE-MD, Jan 2009	\$11.93	\$9.05
New York-Newark-Bridgeport, NY-NJ-CT-PA, May 2008	\$12.55	\$7.73
Boston-Worcester-Manchester, MA-NH, Oct 2009	\$12.37	\$12.86