

Compensation of residential and nonresidential construction workers

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ABSTRACT

Beginning around 2001, employment in residential construction rose much faster than that in nonresidential construction, but the former then began a precipitous drop earlier than the latter; in addition, employee compensation has grown faster in recent years in nonresidential building construction than in residential building construction.

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EXCERPT

For more than two decades, the Employer Cost for Employee Compensation (ECEC) publications available from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics have reported estimates of the mean hourly costs for wages and benefits tabulated across industries, occupations, and labor force characteristics. The data for these estimates are drawn from the National Compensation Survey (NCS).¹ What makes ECEC statistics particularly useful for data users is the comprehensive detail of cost-level estimates for compensation components such as paid leave, health insurance, and contributions to retirement plans. Although the ECEC tabulations (published quarterly) currently serve a broad set of data users, the expansion over the last several years in the size of the NCS samples, along with enhancements in the industry classification system, have provided opportunities to examine through the use of industry averages industries that were once veiled from standard statistical analysis. This article presents compensation estimates for subsets of the construction sector, estimates that allow for an examination of recent trends in wages and benefits of workers employed in residential and nonresidential construction activities. Standard ECEC publications provide data on compensation in the overall construction sector, but a more detailed analysis of subsectors, industry groups, and industries shows that compensation patterns for the construction sector as a whole mask important differences within the sector. The industry analysis in this article shows that workers in nonresidential construction typically earn more than workers in residential construction in the same subsector and that, for the construction of buildings subsector, the differential

grew from 2004 to 2009.

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