

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE WAGE STRUCTURE

With the passage of Act 10 Wisconsin has sharply curtailed collective bargaining for most public employees and also mandated employee pension contribution that equaled 5.8% of salary in 2011 and allowing local governments throughout Wisconsin to collect higher contributions from employees for health care costs. As a result many local governments in Wisconsin are faced with the prospect of negotiating individual contracts with public employees.



For most local governments this creates a challenge because prior to Act 10 public sector unions often provided guidelines for acceptable, and unacceptable, pay scales for employees. Without those union negotiated contracts local governments now must implement pay scales for a wide range of public employees. While some local government may elect to maintain formal relationships with public sector unions or use prior contract negotiations to help establish pay scales, others will be looking to create new pay scales. This latter option opens a fundamental question that local governments must be able to address: what represents a reasonable pay scale?

Using the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES), a joint survey effort of the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, we are able to obtain a wide range of wage scales for occupations most relevant to local governments. The survey attempts to determine the occupations that are in demand, the number of employees in each occupation, and the wages paid to employees in those occupations. The survey generates estimates of the mean wage, the median wage, the 10th percentile wage, the 25th percentile wage, the 75th percentile wage and the 90th percentile wage for about 800 occupations.

Using the "Industry to Occupation" bridge tables maintained by the Bureau of Labor Statistics we were able to identify 240 separate occupations that compose the pool of public sector employees for municipal and county governments. While this level of detail may appear impressive, many of the occupations have only a small number of employees in the public sector. For this fact-sheet we selected the top 25 occupations that are most commonly found in Wisconsin local governments. *For this analysis we did not include K12 public education employees.*

For Wisconsin municipalities and counties, police and sheriff's patrol officers and fire fighters are the largest single occupational category with an average hourly wage of \$23.19 for patrol officers and \$14.80 for fire fighters. Highway maintenance workers are the third most common occupation with an average hourly wage of \$17.31. Notice that then entry hourly wages, these would be new hires who have limited if any experience, are substantially below the average or median hourly wages.

The highest average hourly wage rates are for registered nurses with an entry wage of \$22.34 and average wage of \$28.26. In contrast the lowest average hourly wage rates is \$10.38 for crossing guards, \$10.49 for library assistants and clerical workers, \$10.53 for recreational workers (park and recreation departments) and \$10.90 for janitors. Many of the starting wages for these latter occupations are close to the Federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour.

These data are intended to help local municipalities and counties in Wisconsin think through potential pay scales for public employees in light of Act 10. These are state-wide averages and data at the metropolitan regional level are available at the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Worknet Data Analysis website (<http://worknet.wisconsin.gov/worknet/datablelist.aspx?menuselection=da>).



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Wisconsin Occupational Data for Local Governments (non-educational)

Occupation	Estimated Jobs 2011	Avg Hourly Wage	Median		Entry		Experienced		25th Pctile		75th Pctile	
			Hourly Wage	Hourly Wage	Hourly Wage	Hourly Wage	Hourly Wage	Hourly Wage	Hourly Wage	Hourly Wage	Hourly Wage	Hourly Wage
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	11356	23.19	23.58	16.80	26.38	19.44	27.58					
Fire Fighters	8254	14.80	13.15	7.96	18.22	8.93	20.50					
Highway Maintenance Workers	5300	17.31	17.70	13.16	19.38	15.15	20.12					
Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants	3291	11.47	11.21	9.40	12.49	9.88	13.05					
Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics	3045	13.00	12.22	7.23	15.88	7.69	15.68					
Office Clerks, General	2762	12.56	12.27	8.78	14.46	9.88	14.74					
Court, Municipal, and License Clerks	2672	13.68	14.23	7.48	16.78	8.07	17.51					
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping	2464	10.90	10.03	7.59	12.56	8.19	12.91					
Correctional Officers and Jailers	2192	19.43	19.26	15.66	21.32	16.66	22.03					
Child, Family, and School Social Workers	2168	21.45	21.03	14.59	24.88	16.61	25.93					
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	2156	14.56	14.26	10.18	16.75	11.75	17.11					
Water and Liquid Waste Treatment Plant and System	2135	18.41	18.70	13.19	21.01	15.49	22.03					
Secretaries, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	1917	13.97	13.89	10.63	15.64	11.80	16.38					
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	1855	16.99	16.80	11.49	19.75	13.25	20.55					
Library Assistants, Clerical	1841	10.49	10.04	7.31	12.08	7.93	12.56					
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	1734	11.79	11.13	8.34	13.52	9.14	13.88					
Registered Nurses	1731	28.26	27.66	22.34	31.23	23.94	32.32					
Library Technicians	1641	12.58	12.27	8.71	14.50	9.80	15.00					
Social and Human Service Assistants	1532	13.86	13.63	9.34	16.13	10.64	16.72					
Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	1458	17.24	18.72	10.98	20.37	12.64	21.30					
Recreation Workers	1442	10.53	9.71	7.30	12.14	7.75	12.26					
Crossing Guards	1430	10.38	9.95	7.35	11.90	7.93	11.75					
Executive Secretaries and Administrative Assistant	1296	17.33	16.78	12.73	19.63	14.03	20.03					
Police, Fire, and Ambulance Dispatchers	1292	17.67	17.68	14.42	19.29	15.58	20.09					
Librarians	1250	22.77	22.60	16.40	25.96	18.65	27.08					

The inclusion of "pay per call" fire fighters may artificially lower these averages.