Among employers in 15 large U.S. metropolitan areas, those in the greater San Francisco area had the highest average total compensation costs per hour in March 2009, at $38.28 on average, according to recently released figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The BLS began publishing data in September on the average cost per hour of total employee compensation, wages, and benefits for private sector workers in 15 large metropolitan areas, as an addition to its employer costs for employee compensation data series, which is released quarterly.

The data for metropolitan areas will be released annually after the release of national Employer Costs for Employee Compensation (ECEC) data each March, and will serve as a counterpart for metropolitan area data for the employment cost index (ECI). Both data series are derived from the BLS national compensation survey of private business establishments. Although the ECEC data for nine Census regions have been published since 2004, BLS says, "users of ECEC and ECI data have requested even more geographic detail."


Of the $38.28 per hour average total compensation costs in the San Francisco area, $27.00 went to wages and salaries and $11.28 went to benefits. Other areas with high total compensation costs include Boston ($35.60), New York ($35.45), and Washington, D.C. ($34.03).

The cost of wages highest in San Francisco is followed by Boston ($25.08), Washington ($24.52), and New York ($24.43). Benefit costs also highest in San Francisco, are followed by New York ($11.02), Detroit ($10.78), and Boston ($10.52.)
