

Low pay + few positions = low job-seeker appeal for Fresno

<http://www.fresnobee.com/2014/03/03/3801844/low-pay-few-positions-low-job.html>

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Another economic list is telling Fresnoans something that many already know: It's tough to find a job here, and many of the jobs that are available just don't pay very well.

WalletHub.com, a social network aimed at issues related to personal finance and economics, on Monday [issued its 2014 report](#) on the best and worst large cities to find a job. Fresno's dismal ranking -- third-worst out of 60 major U.S. cities -- reflects the city's economic and employment situation as it continues its slow slog out of recession.

Fresno, with just over a half million people, is the nation's 34th most-populous city.

The WalletHub report evaluated communities' appeal to job-seekers under three broad categories:

- Ease of finding a job.
- Pay and benefits.
- Cost of living.

"In other words, a given city is no good if you cannot find a job or you will not be paid enough to make ends meet," said John S. Kiernan, the report's author and a senior analyst for Evolution Finance Inc., WalletHub's parent company.

Using data from the federal Census Bureau, Department of Labor and other sources, Kiernan's research team analyzed the number of job openings, job growth, unemployment rate trends, industry variety, part-time versus full-time job openings, the number of employees living in poverty, health care coverage, starting salary, cost of living, housing costs, income tax rates, commute time versus work time, and disability inclusiveness in the work force.

"The fact that we have lots of working-class poor people, employees living in poverty, is probably one of the things that put us near the bottom," said Blake Konczal, executive director of the Fresno Regional Workforce Investment Board.

"We always come out of recessions slower than other parts of the country," Konczal added.

Fresno's labor market ranked at or near the bottom in several of the WalletHub metrics: The city ranked 60th in median starting salaries (the point at which half of the jobs pay more and half pay less), 59th in the number of job openings in proportion to the population, 59th in the change in unemployment rate from year to year between 2012 and 2013, and 58th in the proportion of employees who work full time compared to part time.

But Kiernan added that the Fresno was fifth best in per-capita job growth and the ratio of time spent at work to commuting time, and sixth in the variety of industries in the local job market.

Austin, Texas, was the top-ranked city in the study, while only New York City and Los Angeles ranked lower than Fresno in the overall compilation, based largely on a much higher cost of living compared to the wages of available jobs, Kiernan said.

"The moral of the story is there are obviously plenty of opportunities in any of the cities on this list," he said. "This is all about giving people a point of reference on where to look when they look for a job. ... By no means are any of these cities bad places to work, but some offer a slightly better overall value than others."

The Fresno area's historic dependence on agriculture and greater job growth in low-wage industries conspire to weigh the community down in rankings like those issued by WalletHub. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that in 2012, nearly half of all private-sector jobs in Fresno County were in farming or agriculture, hospitality work including hotels/motels or food service, or in retail stores.

More than one in five jobs in the county were in farming or related support industries, with almost 49,000 employees earning an average annual wage of about \$27,000 a year.

Greener pastures?

A [WalletHub.com analysis](#) of the 60 largest cities in the U.S. ranks Fresno among the worst cities in the nation for job seekers.

Five best cities:

1. Fort Worth, Texas
2. Washington, D.C.
3. Tampa, Fla.
4. Arlington, Texas
5. Dallas

Five worst cities:

60. Los Angeles

59. New York

58. Fresno

57. Honolulu

56. Riverside

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