HUNT INSTITUTE
FOR GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

Trends in Occupational Employment Size, Growth and Average Hourly Wages

in El Paso and Doña Ana Counties

1999-2017

The University of Texas at El Paso

In November 2015, the Hunt Institute for Global Competitiveness (Hunt Institute) modeled occupational employment for El Paso and Doña Ana counties from 1999 to 2017.[1] These figures were used to analyze employment evolution in the region for two time periods: *Period I* from 1999 to 2008 and *Period II* from 2009 to 2017.[2] Employment size, growth and average hourly wages[3] are explored individually for the two counties and for the region as a whole. This type of analysis can be used to identify workforce opportunities and challenges for the region. ***Table 1*** presents the occupational employment categories utilized in this report. Interestingly, the occupation composition has changed in the region during the period studied. For instance, *Healthcare* has become a new economic force in the region. This sector has grown rapidly with relatively high salaries. On the other hand, *Production* employment, a relatively low salary occupation, has decreased considerably.

TABLE 1. Occupational Employment Categories

1. Management, Business & Financial
2. Computer, Mathematical, Architecture, & Engineering
3. Life, Physical, & Social Science
4. Community & Social Services
5. Legal
6. Education, Training, & Library
7. Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, & Media
8. Healthcare
9. Protective Service
10. Food Preparation & Serving Related
11. Building, Grounds Cleaning, Maintenance, Personal Care & Service
12. Sales & Related, Office and Administrative Support
13. Farming, Fishing, & Forestry
14. Construction & Extraction
15. Installation, Maintenance, & Repair
16. Production
17. Transportation & Material Moving

Average employment size, growth and average hourly wages are shown in a three dimension graph for *Period I* and *Period II*; graphs include the counties of El Paso and Doña Ana combined (***Figure 1***). Additionally, occupational employment for El Paso and Doña Ana counties are studied individually (***Figure 2 & Figure 3***).

Employment occupations are represented by color coded circles. A larger circle indicates a higher number of employees, for the specific category. The vertical axis represents employment growth, while the horizontal axis denotes the average hourly wages in 2015 dollars[4].

The *Sales & Related Office and Administrative Support* category for the El Paso and Doña Ana counties combined is worth mentioning as it comprises one third of all employees in the region. The growth from 1999 to 2008 was twenty-one percent (more than 2 percent growth per year on average) and a seven percent growth from 2009 to 2017. Although this employment occupation is relatively large for both counties, wages are among the lowest. For example, an employee would earn, on average, an hourly wage of $13.20 for Period I, and $13.93 for Period II, a slight increase compared to other occupation categories.

The *Legal* occupational category presents the highest hourly wage ($36.78 for Period I and $40.32 for Period II, on average). However, this category has the least number of employees in the region. Although the *Legal* category presents the highest wages in the combined region, when studied individually in Doña Ana, the category *Computer, Mathematical, Architecture, & Engineering* overpasses *Legal* with hourly wages of $32.73 for *Period I* and $37.15 for *Period II*.

Management, Business, & Financial category has a relatively large number of employees, with a relatively high wage of $31.45 per hour in Period I and $36.06 per hour in Period II. This occupation accounts for approximately ten percent of total employees in the combined region. Additionally, it presents a considerable growth of twenty-five percent during Period I and about eight percent during Period II. Similarly, *Computer, Mathematical, Architecture & Engineering* presents a relatively high wage, $31.26 for Period I and $34.57 for Period II, with moderate to high employment size and growth.

Remarkably, the largest growing occupational category in the region during Period I is *Construction and Extraction,* with approximately 46 percent from 1999 to 2008. In Period II, *Construction and Extraction* grows at six percent, with other categories presenting the fastest growing occupations in the region: *Food Preparation & Serving Related* with 18.26 percent and *Healthcare* with 17.80 percent. Although *Construction and Extraction* grows at a slower pace during Period II in the region, for

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[1] The complete data set is available at the Hunt Institute webpage. http://huntinstitute.utep.edu/regional-economic-indicators/employment-by-occupation.
[2] 2015 to 2017 are forecasted figures.
[3] Computed with data from Bureau of Labor Statistics. http://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm. The 1999 to 2017 time period is analyzed due to data constraints.

[4] Real wages were computed dividing nominal wages by the PCE Index by BEA+. The PCE Index original base year (2009=100) was rescaled to showing all dollar amounts in 2015 real dollars (2015=100).

Doña Ana alone the category represents one of the five occupations with largest growth in the county with almost fifteen percent.

Interestingly, the two categories with the largest growth projected during Period II tell a different story in terms of wages. While the *Food Preparation & Serving Related* category is the lowest paid occupation in the region with $9.78 per hour, *Healthcare* is a relatively high wage occupation with $24.24 per hour, on average. Although *Healthcare* sees growth more rapidly in El Paso, as compared to Doña Ana, the latter has a greater number of employees proportionally to its workforce size.

In Period I *Production* takes a different direction with a negative growth of twenty-seven percent. This implies that by 2008, there are more than a quarter less employees in this category with respect to 1999, in the region. Doña Ana County alone achieves different figures; *Production* occupational employment increases by 6.37 percent during Period I. Similarly, *Farming, Fishing, & Forestry* presents negative growth, decreasing eight percent during Period I. Both categories, however, are projected to grow back during Period II by approximately six percent. These two occupations are considered low-paid occupations. While *Farming, Fishing, & Forestry* has an average wage of $9.06 per hour, *Production* presents an average wage of $12.71 per hour.

This report identifies opportunities and challenges for the region. For instance, *Sales & Related, Office and Administrative Support* has a considerable number of employees with stable growth, yet employees in this occupation are paid a relatively low hourly wage. *Food Preparation & Serving Related* is growing significantly, however, its hourly wage is the lowest in the region.

Occupations such as *Healthcare*, *Management, Business & Financial,* and *Computer, Mathematical, Architecture & Engineering,* are substantial and growing at a considerable pace with a relatively high wages in the region. As these occupations are considered relatively high skilled jobs, they are to be used as economic propellers for the region. This would eventually result in higher income and a better standard of living for the communities in the region.
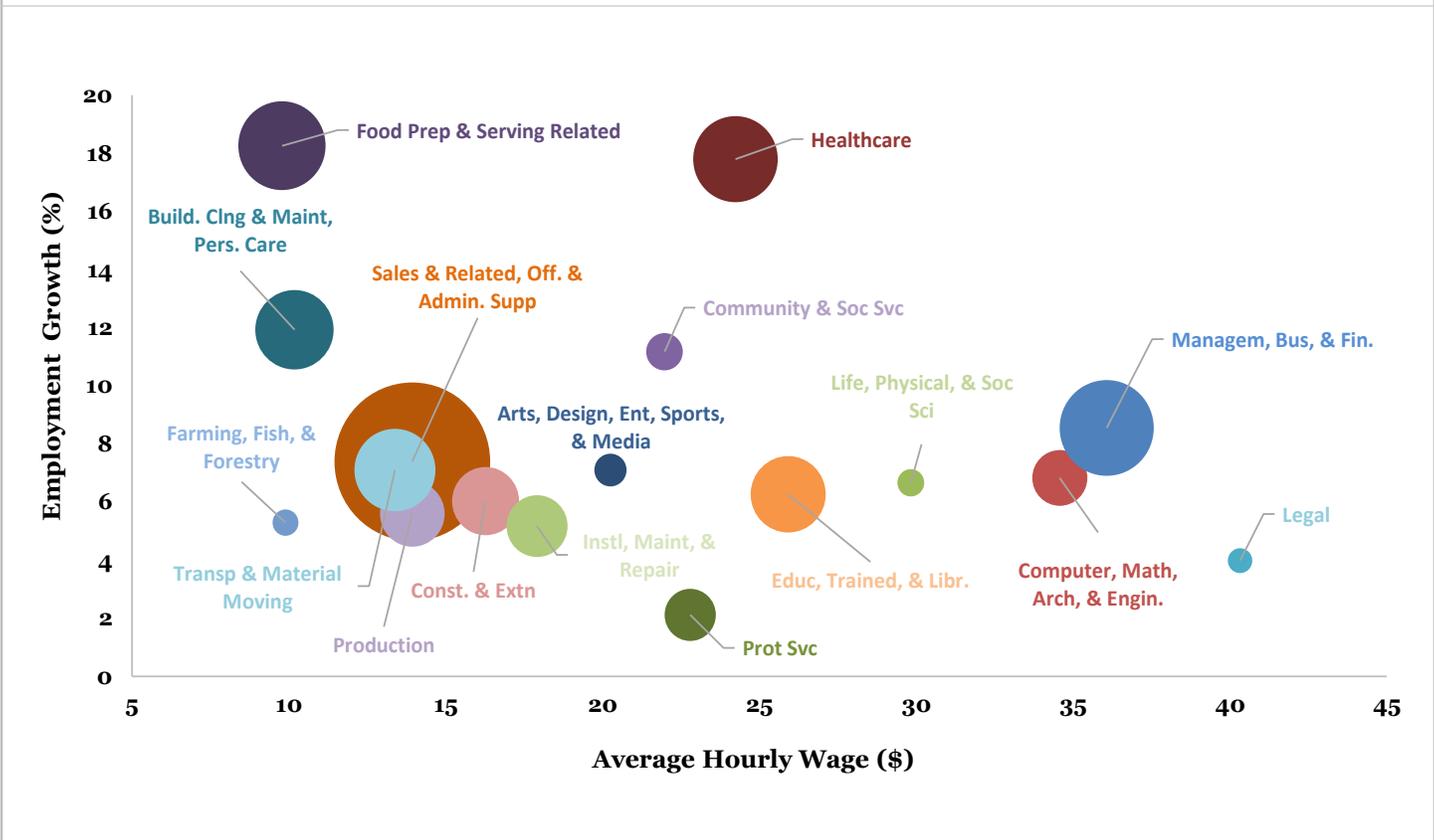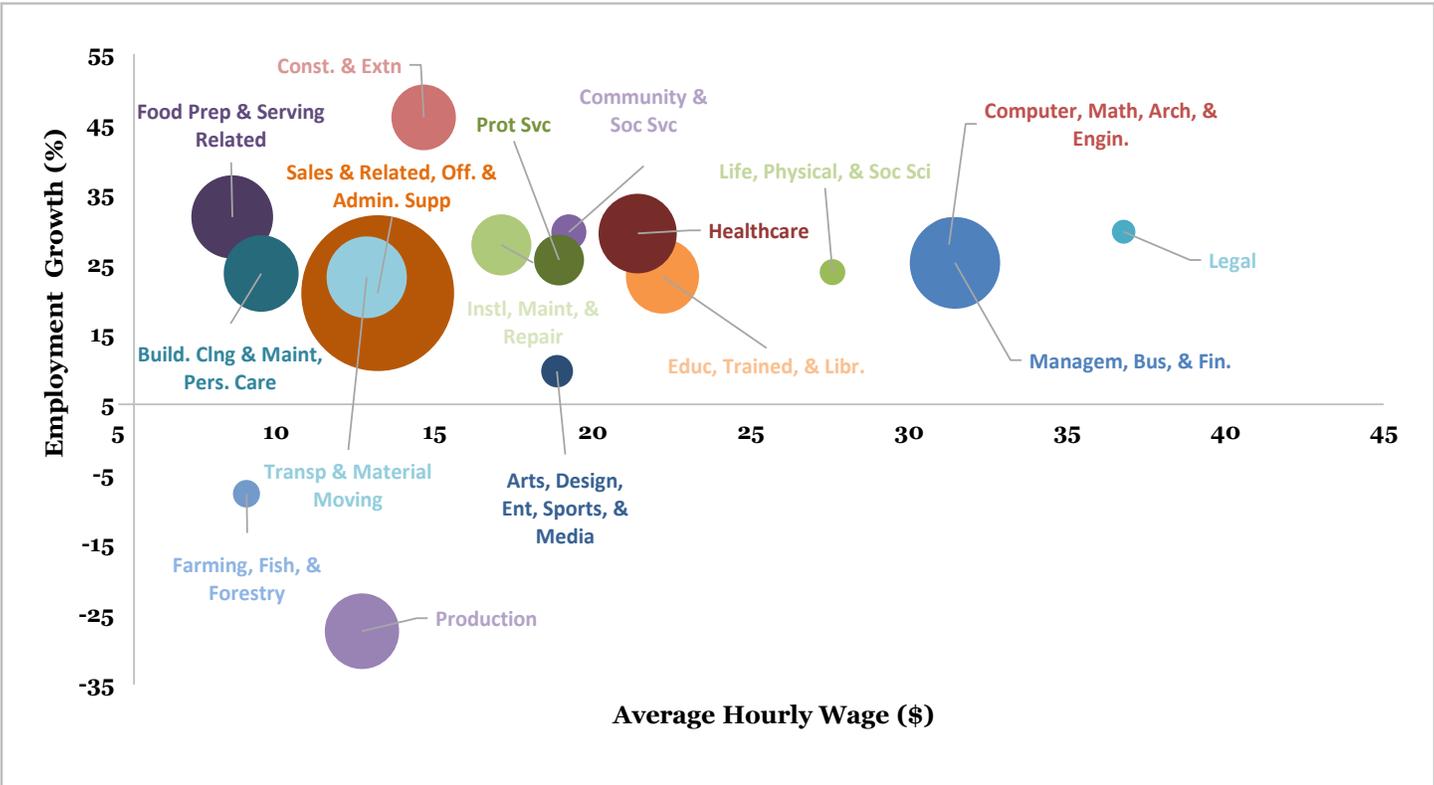
Figure 1. El Paso and Doña Ana Counties; Employment Size, Growth, and Wages.
Comparison between Periods 1999-2008 (up) and 2009-2017 (down)
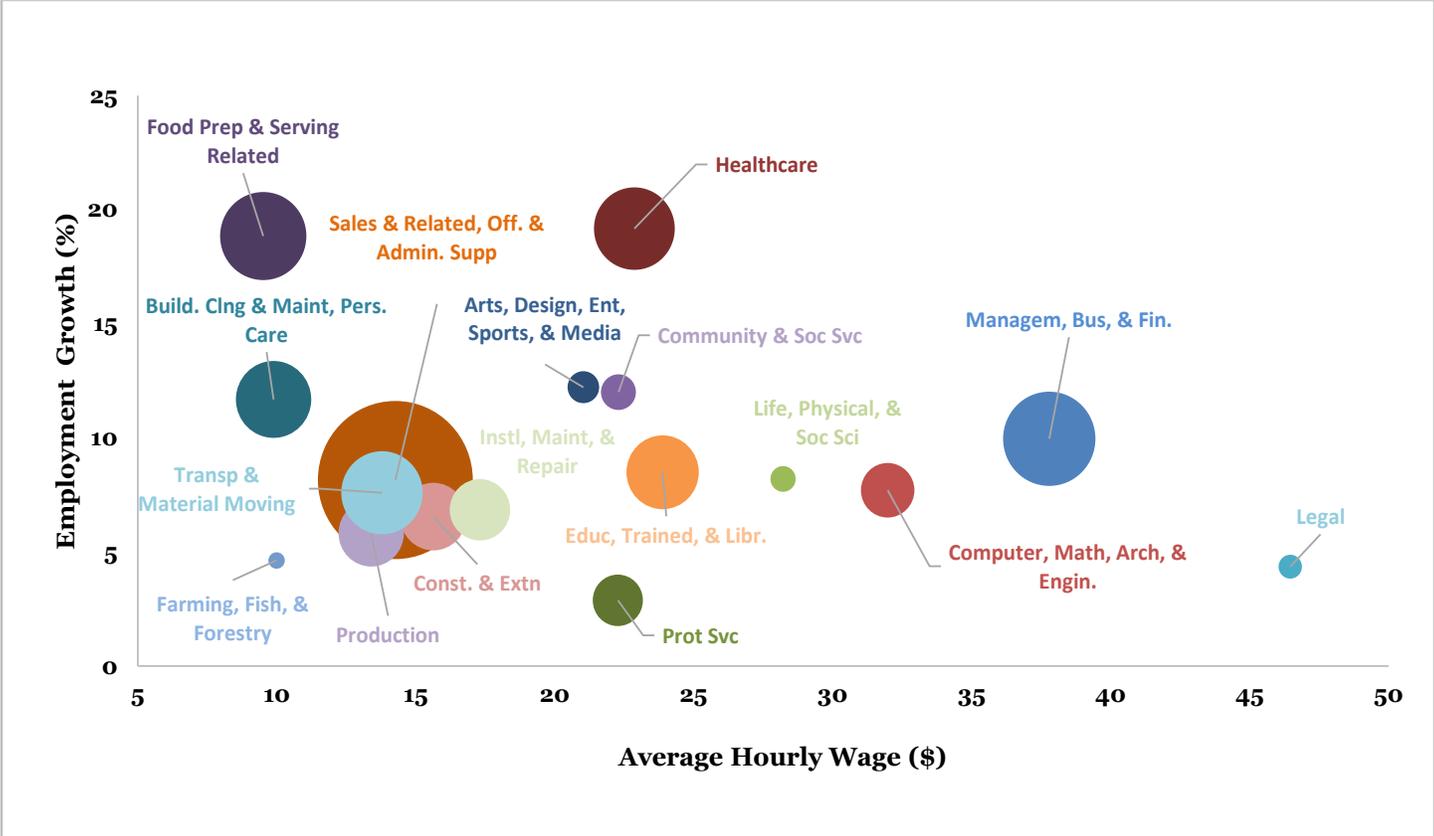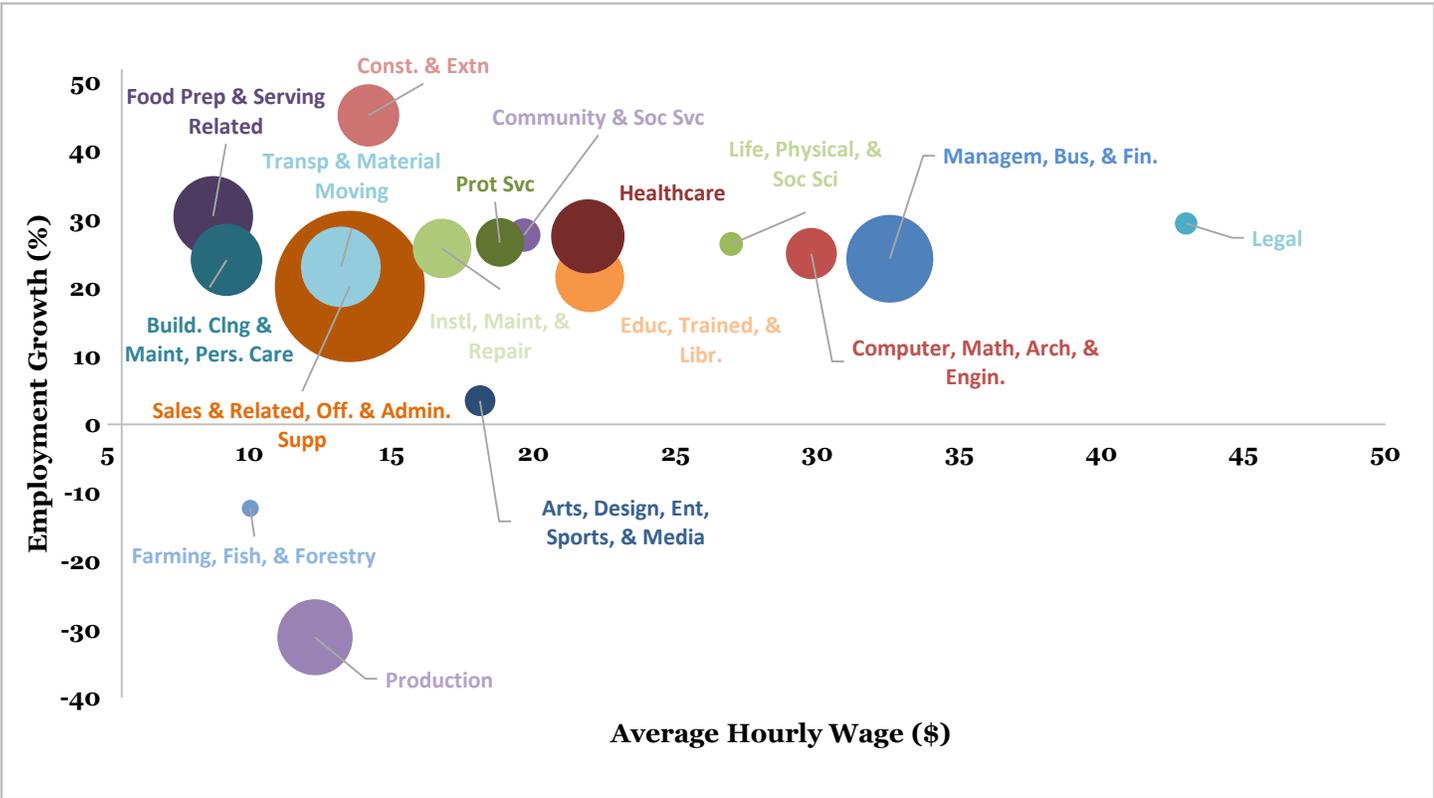Note: The circle's size represents the relative number of employees in each category.

Figure 2. El Paso County; Employment Size, Growth, and Wages.
Comparison between Periods 1999-2008 (up) and 2009-2017 (down)
Note: The circle's size represents the relative number of employees in each category.
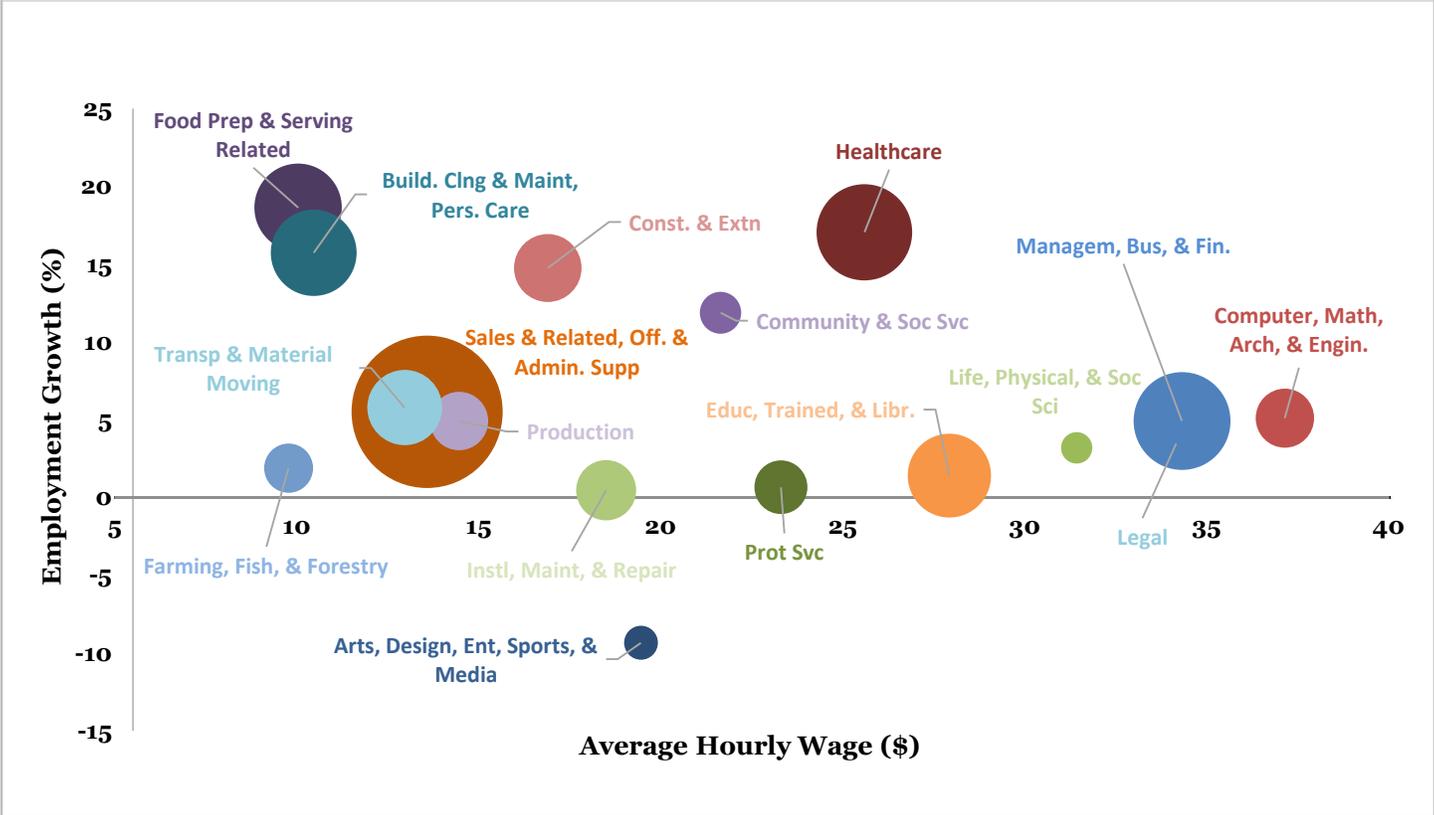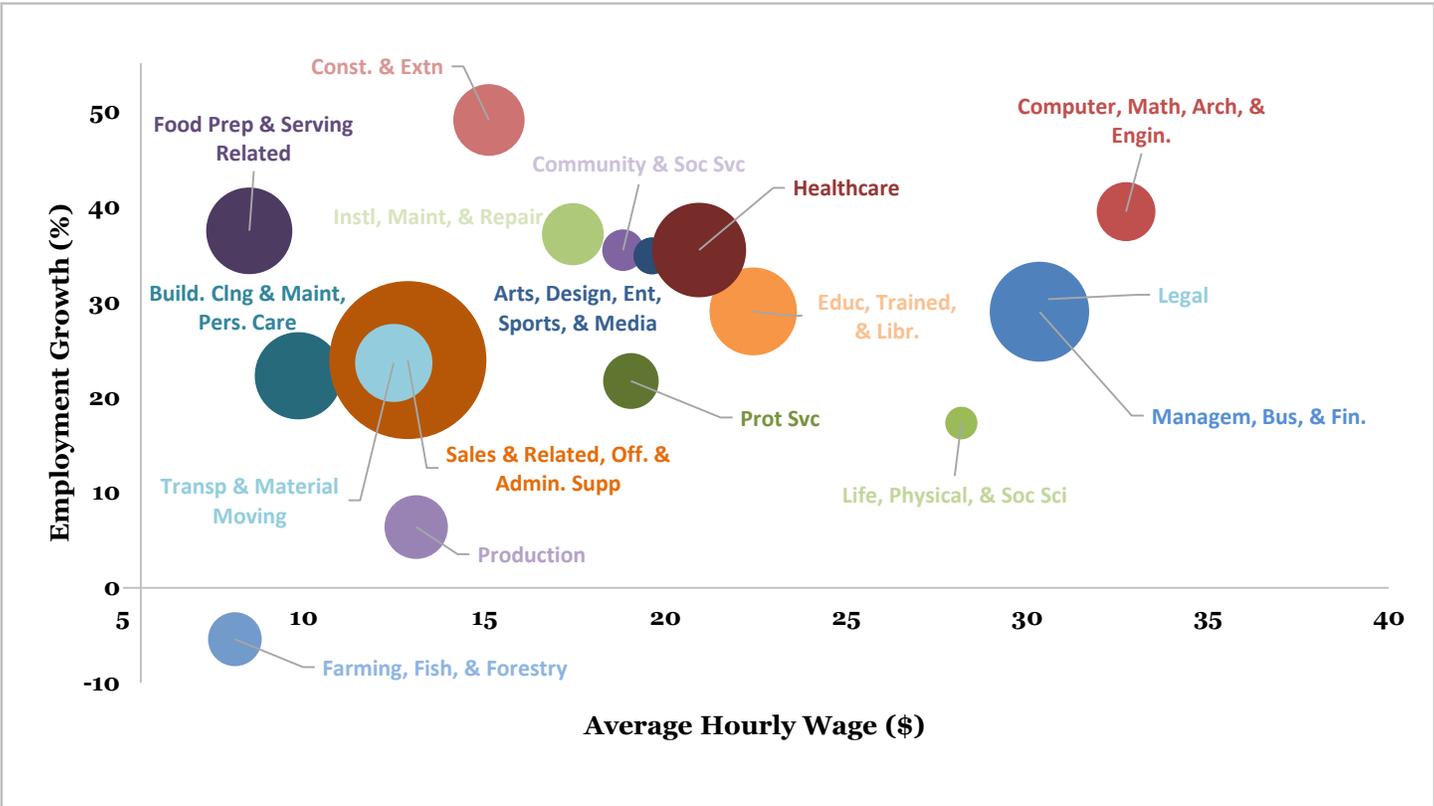
Figure 3. Doña Ana County; Employment Size, Growth, and Wages.
Comparison between Periods 1999-2008 (up) and 2009-2017 (down)
Note: The circle's size represents the relative number of employees in each category.