

U.S. labor market shows gradual improvement in 2011

Most major employment and unemployment indicators signaled improvement in the labor market in 2011; the unemployment level and rate fell, and employment was up over the year

Eleni Theodossiou

In 2011, the U.S. labor market continued to recover from the 2007–2009 recession.¹ Employment growth accelerated while unemployment continued to trend downward. Still, despite the overall improvement, unemployment rates for most worker groups remained quite high at the end of the year, and the proportion of unemployed persons who had been without work for exceptionally long periods held close to historically high levels.

The number of employed persons 16 years and older, as measured by the Current Population Survey (CPS), grew by about twice as much in 2011 as in 2010, reaching 140.6 million in the fourth quarter of the year.² (For a comparison of the employment measures available from the CPS and the Current Employment Statistics survey (CES), see the box on page 4.) The employment–population ratio edged up over the year, to 58.5 percent.³ In the fourth quarter of 2011, 13.4 million persons were unemployed and the unemployment rate was 8.7 percent, nearly 1 percentage point lower than a year earlier. The civilian labor force—the sum of the employed and the unemployed—was about unchanged in 2011. Given the rise in the civilian noninstitutional population, the labor force participation rate declined by 0.4 percentage point over the year, to 64.0 percent.

This article examines changes in key labor market measures from the CPS in 2011 and takes a detailed look at these changes as regards various demographic characteristics, including age, gender, race and ethnicity, and educational attainment. The article also covers changes in earnings and in the duration of unemployment, and reviews the employment situations of veterans, persons with a disability, and the foreign born.

Among the major demographic groups, both the number of unemployed persons and the unemployment rate declined in 2011. Largely reflecting a drop in the first quarter, unemployment fell by 1.3 million over the year, to 13.4 million in the fourth quarter. The unemployment rate also exhibited a large drop in the first quarter of the year, falling from 9.6 percent in the fourth quarter of 2010 to 9.0 percent in the first quarter of 2011. After holding steady at or near 9.1 percent for much of the summer, the unemployment rate resumed its trend downward for the remainder of the year. The rate was 8.7 percent in the fourth quarter of 2011, nearly a percentage point lower than its year-earlier level of 9.6 percent. (See table 1.) Compared with its behavior in previous recoveries following the deep and prolonged economic contractions of the mid-1970s and early 1980s, however, the unemployment rate has shown a relatively gradual improvement thus far during the current recovery.⁴ (See chart 1.)

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The CPS and the CES Survey

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, the Bureau) produces two monthly employment series that are independently obtained: the estimate of total nonfarm jobs, derived from the Current Employment Statistics (CES) survey, also called the establishment or payroll survey; and the estimate of total civilian employment, based on the Current Population Survey (CPS), also called the household survey. The two surveys use different definitions of employment, as well as different survey and estimation methods. The CES survey is a survey of employers that provides a measure of the number of payroll jobs in nonfarm industries. The CPS is a survey of households that provides a measure of employed people ages 16 years and older in the civilian noninstitutional population. Employment estimates from the CPS give information about workers in both the agricultural and nonagricultural sectors and in all types of work arrangements: workers with wage and salary jobs (including employment in a private household), those engaging in self-employment, and those doing unpaid work for at least 15 hours a week in a business or farm operated by a family member. CES payroll employment estimates are restricted to nonagricultural wage and salary jobs and exclude private household workers. As a result, employment estimates from the CPS are higher than those from the CES survey. In the CPS, however, employed people are counted only once, regardless of whether they hold more than one job during the survey reference period. By contrast, because the CES survey counts the number of jobs rather than the number of people, each nonfarm job is counted once, even when two or more jobs are held by the

same person.

The reference periods for the surveys also differ. In the CPS, the reference period is the calendar week that includes the 12th day of the month. In the CES survey, employers report the number of workers on their payrolls for the pay period that includes the 12th of the month. Because pay periods vary in length among employers and may be longer than 1 week, the CES employment estimates can reflect longer reference periods.

For purposes of comparison, however, some adjustments can be made to CPS employment estimates to make them more similar in definitional scope to CES employment figures. The Bureau routinely carries out these adjustments to evaluate how the two employment series are tracking. The long-term trends in the two surveys' employment measures are quite comparable. Nonetheless, throughout the history of the surveys, there have been periods when the short-term trends diverged or when growth in one series significantly outpaced growth in the other. For example, following the end of the 2001 recession, CPS employment began to trend upward while CES employment continued to decline for a number of months.

The Bureau publishes a monthly report with the latest trends and comparisons of employment as measured by the CES survey and the CPS. (See "Employment from the BLS household and payroll surveys: summary of recent trends," www.bls.gov/web/ces_cps_trends.pdf.) This report includes a summary of possible causes of differences in the surveys' employment trends, as well as links to additional research on the topic.

Table 1. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years and older, by age and selected characteristics, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 2010–2011

[Levels in thousands]

Characteristic	Fourth quarter, 2010	2011				Change, fourth quarter, 2010, to fourth quarter, 2011
		First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter	
Total, 16 years and older						
Civilian labor force	153,788	153,314	153,510	153,679	153,960	172
Participation rate	64.4	64.2	64.1	64.1	64.0	–.4
Employed	139,077	139,549	139,607	139,770	140,567	1,490
Employment–population ratio	58.3	58.4	58.3	58.3	58.5	.2
Unemployed	14,711	13,766	13,903	13,908	13,393	–1,318
Unemployment rate	9.6	9.0	9.1	9.1	8.7	–.9
Men, 20 years and older						
Civilian labor force	78,907	78,744	79,072	79,103	79,389	482
Participation rate	73.7	73.4	73.5	73.3	73.4	–.3
Employed	71,344	71,804	72,028	72,123	72,769	1,425
Employment–population ratio	66.6	66.9	67.0	66.9	67.3	.7
Unemployed	7,563	6,940	7,044	6,980	6,621	–942
Unemployment rate	9.6	8.8	8.9	8.8	8.3	–1.3
Women, 20 years and older						
Civilian labor force	69,049	68,838	68,769	68,826	68,813	–236
Participation rate	60.1	60.0	59.8	59.7	59.6	–.5
Employed	63,394	63,423	63,301	63,328	63,398	4
Employment–population ratio	55.2	55.3	55.1	55.0	54.9	–.3
Unemployed	5,656	5,414	5,468	5,498	5,415	–241
Unemployment rate	8.2	7.9	8.0	8.0	7.9	–.3
Total, 16 to 19 years						
Civilian labor force	5,831	5,733	5,669	5,750	5,758	–73
Participation rate	34.7	34.0	33.8	34.3	34.5	–.2
Employed	4,339	4,322	4,278	4,319	4,400	61
Employment–population ratio	25.8	25.7	25.5	25.8	26.3	.5
Unemployed	1,492	1,411	1,391	1,431	1,358	–134
Unemployment rate	25.6	24.6	24.5	24.9	23.6	–2.0
White						
Civilian labor force	124,795	124,351	124,660	124,621	124,666	–129
Participation rate	64.8	64.6	64.6	64.5	64.4	–.4
Employed	113,971	114,403	114,620	114,673	115,074	1,103
Employment–population ratio	59.2	59.4	59.4	59.3	59.4	.2
Unemployed	10,824	9,948	10,040	9,948	9,593	–1,231
Unemployment rate	8.7	8.0	8.1	8.0	7.7	–1.0
Black or African American						
Civilian labor force	17,968	17,827	17,773	17,889	18,037	69
Participation rate	62.3	61.5	61.2	61.4	61.6	–.7
Employed	15,106	15,050	14,900	15,000	15,250	144
Employment–population ratio	52.3	51.9	51.3	51.4	52.1	–.2
Unemployed	2,863	2,777	2,872	2,889	2,787	–76
Unemployment rate	15.9	15.6	16.2	16.1	15.5	–.4

See notes at end of table.

Table 1. Continued—Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years and older, by age and selected characteristics, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 2010–2011

[Levels in thousands]

Characteristic	Fourth quarter, 2010	2011				Change, fourth quarter, 2010, to fourth quarter, 2011
		First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter	
Asian¹						
Civilian labor force	7,336	7,372	7,352	7,357	7,462	126
Participation rate	64.6	65.0	64.7	64.2	64.4	-.2
Employed	6,802	6,859	6,858	6,803	6,949	147
Employment–population ratio	59.9	60.5	60.3	59.4	59.9	.0
Unemployed	534	513	494	554	513	-21
Unemployment rate	7.3	7.0	6.7	7.5	6.9	-.4
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity						
Civilian labor force	22,852	22,639	22,790	22,910	23,248	396
Participation rate	67.0	66.4	66.4	66.3	66.8	-.2
Employed	19,917	20,006	20,117	20,324	20,625	708
Employment–population ratio	58.4	58.7	58.6	58.8	59.3	.9
Unemployed	2,935	2,633	2,673	2,586	2,624	-311
Unemployment rate	12.8	11.6	11.7	11.3	11.3	-1.5

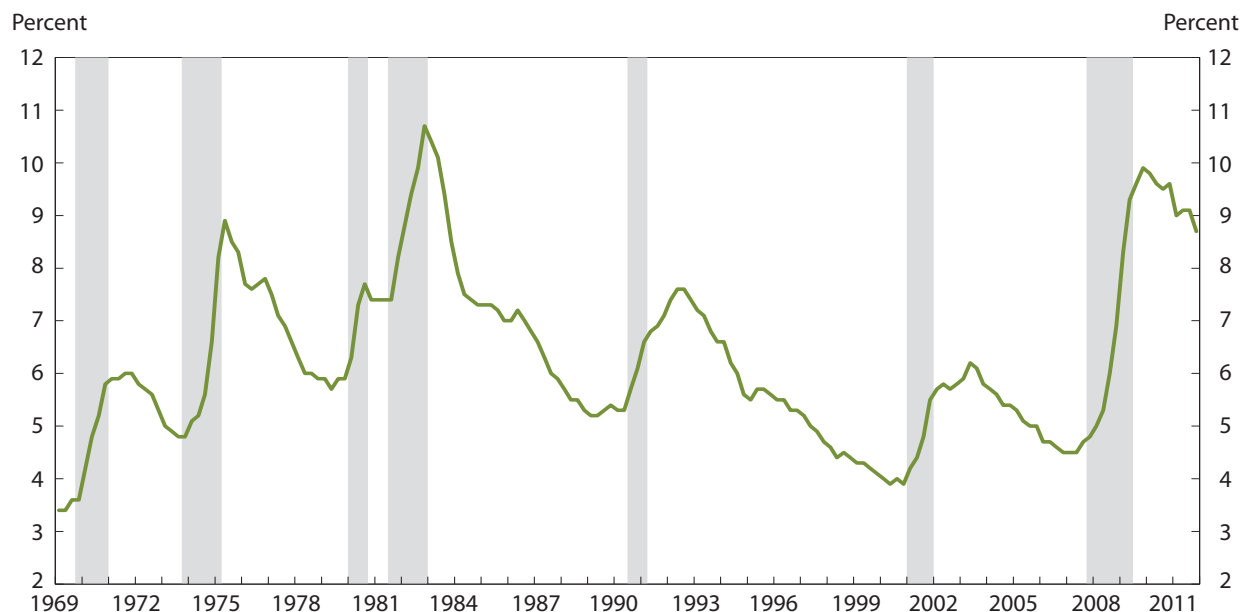
¹ Data for Asians are not seasonally adjusted.

NOTE: Estimates for race and Hispanic ethnicity do not sum to totals because data are not presented for all races and because persons of Hispanic ethnicity may be of any race and are also included in the race

groups. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Chart 1. Unemployment rate for persons 16 years and older, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 1969–2011



NOTE: Shaded regions represent recessions as designated by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER). Turning points are quarterly.
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

A disproportionately larger share of the decline in unemployment in 2011 occurred among adult men, whose jobless rate dropped by 1.3 percentage points, to 8.3 percent in the fourth quarter. In comparison, the rate for adult women declined by 0.3 percentage point, to 7.9 percent. Although men experienced a greater decline in their unemployment rate than did women over the year, their rate continued to be higher than that of women, a pattern that has been in place since the rates began to diverge in mid-2008. The jobless rate for teenagers 16 to 19 years of age fell 2.0 percentage points over the year, to 23.6 percent in the fourth quarter.

The unemployment rates for Whites and persons of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity declined in 2011, while the rates for Blacks and Asians were little changed.⁵ The unemployment rates for Whites and Hispanics fell to 7.7 percent and 11.3 percent, respectively, in the fourth quarter. The unemployment rate for Blacks was 15.5 percent, and the rate for Asians (not seasonally adjusted) was 6.9 percent.

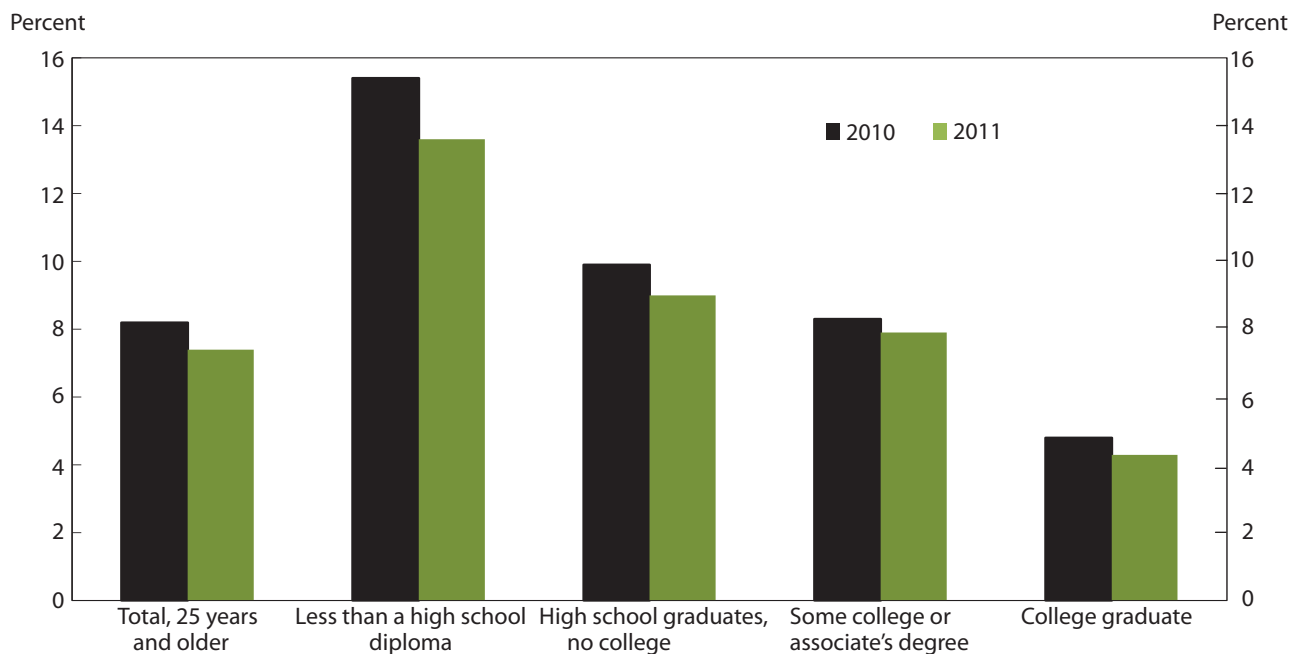
The unemployment rate declined for persons at all levels of educational attainment in 2011. (See chart 2.) Among workers 25 years and older, the jobless rate

of persons with less than a high school diploma showed the largest over-the-year decline among the major educational attainment categories. Despite the large decline, the rate of persons with less than a high school diploma remained in double digits, at 13.6 percent, in the fourth quarter of the year. The unemployment rate for high school graduates fell to 9.0 percent, while the rates for persons with some college and for those with at least a bachelor's degree declined to 7.9 percent and 4.3 percent, respectively. (See table 2.)

The proportion of persons unemployed for long periods remained high by historical standards. Following 3 years of sizable increases, the number of long-term unemployed (persons who were jobless for 27 weeks or longer) fell by more than a half million, to 5.7 million, in 2011.⁶ Although the number of long-term unemployed declined, their share of total unemployment was little changed, at about 43 percent, in the fourth quarter of 2011. (See table 3 and chart 3.)

After expanding for 3 consecutive years and reaching a record-high 4.5 million (not seasonally adjusted) in the second quarter of 2010, the number of persons unemployed for a year or longer declined by 338,000 in 2011, to 4.0 million in the fourth quarter. Their proportion of total unemployment, however, reached a series high of 31.9 percent

Chart 2. Unemployment rate for persons 25 years and older, by educational attainment, seasonally adjusted, fourth quarter, 2010, and fourth quarter, 2011



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Table 2. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 25 years and older, by educational attainment, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 2010–2011

[Levels in thousands]

Characteristic	Fourth quarter, 2010	2011				Change, fourth quarter, 2010, to fourth quarter, 2011
		First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter	
Less than a high school diploma						
Civilian labor force	11,749	11,468	11,490	11,716	11,720	-29
Participation rate	46.4	45.6	45.3	46.8	47.0	.6
Employed	9,940	9,871	9,825	10,039	10,127	187
Employment–population ratio	39.3	39.3	38.7	40.1	40.6	1.3
Unemployed	1,808	1,597	1,665	1,678	1,593	-215
Unemployment rate	15.4	13.9	14.5	14.3	13.6	-1.8
High school graduates, no college						
Civilian labor force	37,894	37,446	37,557	37,264	37,119	-775
Participation rate	61.0	60.3	60.4	60.4	60.2	-.8
Employed	34,130	33,897	33,901	33,732	33,773	-357
Employment–population ratio	54.9	54.6	54.5	54.7	54.7	-.2
Unemployed	3,764	3,549	3,656	3,532	3,347	-417
Unemployment rate	9.9	9.5	9.7	9.5	9.0	-.9
Some college or associate's degree						
Civilian labor force	37,042	36,690	36,741	36,954	36,941	-101
Participation rate	70.1	69.7	69.7	69.2	68.9	-1.2
Employed	33,949	33,847	33,806	33,896	34,039	90
Employment–population ratio	64.2	64.3	64.2	63.5	63.5	-.7
Unemployed	3,093	2,844	2,935	3,058	2,903	-190
Unemployment rate	8.3	7.8	8.0	8.3	7.9	-.4
Bachelor's degree and higher						
Civilian labor force	46,261	46,606	46,899	46,796	47,085	824
Participation rate	76.5	76.7	77.0	76.1	75.9	-.6
Employed	44,040	44,596	44,818	44,800	45,073	1,033
Employment–population ratio	72.9	73.4	73.6	72.9	72.7	-.2
Unemployed.	2,221	2,010	2,081	1,997	2,012	-209
Unemployment rate	4.8	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.3	-.5

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

in the second quarter of the year and held close to that level for the remainder of the year.⁷ The number of persons who were jobless for 99 weeks or longer (1.9 million in the fourth quarter of 2011) increased by 428,000 over the year. Indeed, at the end of 2011, about 1 in 7 unemployed persons had been jobless for about 2 years or longer.

Overall, the median duration of unemployment edged down to 21.1 weeks by the end of 2011. Prior to reaching a series high of 23.2 weeks in the second quarter of 2010, the median duration of unemployment had increased by nearly 15 weeks since the onset of the 2007–2009 recession.

The number of persons unemployed because they lost their job declined for the second consecutive year. The number of unemployed job losers declined by 1.4 million in 2011, to 7.7 million in the fourth quarter. Job losers are split into two categories: persons on temporary layoff who expect to be recalled to their jobs and those not on temporary layoff. Persons in the latter category, who do not expect to be recalled, are further categorized as either permanent job losers or persons who have completed temporary jobs. A decline in permanent job losers accounted for about three-quarters of the decline in the total number of unemployed job losers in 2011. (See table 3 and chart 4.)

Table 3. Unemployed persons, by reason and duration of unemployment, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 2010–2011

[Levels in thousands]

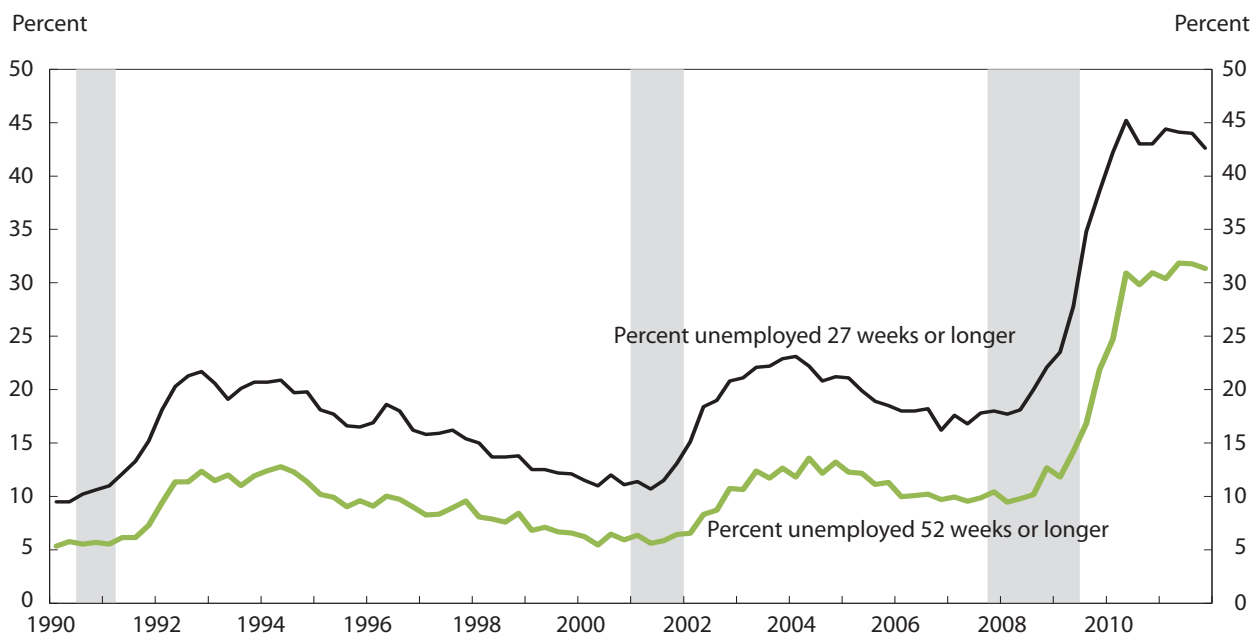
Reason and duration	Fourth quarter, 2010	2011				Change, fourth quarter, 2010, to fourth quarter, 2011
		First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter ¹	Fourth quarter	
Reason for unemployment						
Job losers and persons who completed temporary jobs	9,085	8,348	8,221	8,098	7,708	-1,377
On temporary layoff	1,359	1,237	1,237	1,226	1,208	-151
Not on temporary layoff	7,726	7,111	6,984	6,872	6,501	-1,225
Permanent job losers	6,193	5,723	5,572	5,470	5,143	-1,050
Persons who completed temporary jobs	1,533	1,388	1,412	1,402	1,358	-175
Job leavers	876	906	945	960	1,008	132
Reentrants	3,447	3,328	3,418	3,476	3,380	-67
New entrants	1,286	1,329	1,259	1,282	1,282	-4
Percent distribution:						
Job losers and persons who completed temporary jobs	61.8	60.0	59.4	58.6	57.6	-4.2
On temporary layoff	9.2	8.9	8.9	8.9	9.0	-.2
Not on temporary layoff	52.6	51.1	50.4	49.7	48.6	-4.0
Job leavers	6.0	6.5	6.8	7.0	7.5	1.5
Reentrants	23.5	23.9	24.7	25.2	25.3	1.8
New entrants	8.8	9.6	9.1	9.3	9.6	.8
Duration of unemployment						
Less than 5 weeks	2,747	2,501	2,826	2,718	2,619	-128
5 to 14 weeks	3,282	3,006	2,940	2,995	3,013	-269
15 or more weeks	8,675	8,263	8,084	8,193	7,754	-921
15 to 26 weeks	2,357	2,146	1,975	2,068	2,052	-305
27 or more weeks	6,319	6,116	6,109	6,125	5,702	-617
Average (mean) duration, in weeks	34.5	37.8	39.2	40.3	40.3	5.8
Median duration, in weeks	21.7	21.5	21.6	21.5	21.1	-.6
Percent distribution:						
Less than 5 weeks	18.7	18.2	20.4	19.5	19.6	.9
5 to 14 weeks	22.3	21.8	21.2	21.5	22.5	.2
15 or more weeks	59.0	60.0	58.4	58.9	57.9	-1.1
15 to 26 weeks	16.0	15.6	14.3	14.9	15.3	-.7
27 or more weeks	43.0	44.4	44.1	44.0	42.6	-.4

NOTE: Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

The number of unemployed reentrants to the labor force, 3.4 million in the fourth quarter of 2011, was about unchanged from its year-earlier level. Reentrants are persons who had been in the labor force previously, had spent

time out of the labor force, and were actively seeking work once again. Reentrants accounted for about 1 in 4 unemployed persons at the end of 2011. The number of unemployed job leavers, persons who voluntarily left their jobs,

Chart 3. Long-term unemployed as a percentage of total unemployed, quarterly averages, 1990–2011

NOTE: Data for 27 weeks or longer are seasonally adjusted. Data for 52 weeks or longer are not seasonally adjusted. Shaded regions represent recessions as designated by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER). Turning points are quarterly.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

increased by 132,000, to 1.0 million, in the fourth quarter, while the number of new entrants to unemployment was about unchanged over the year.

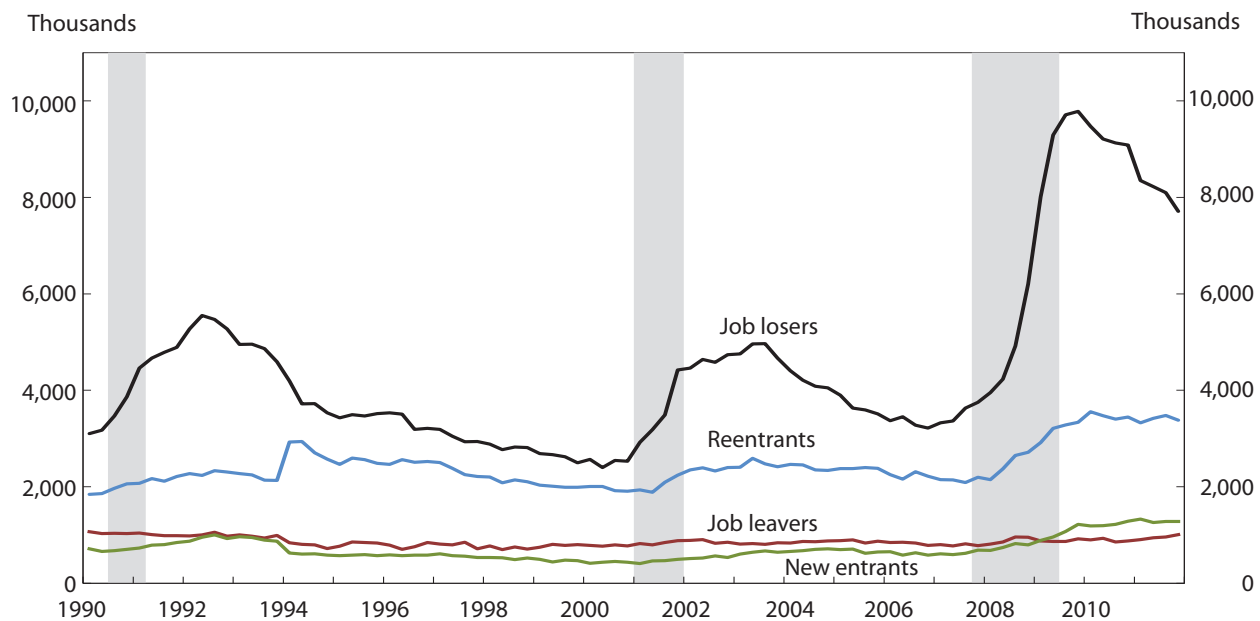
The persistently high level of unemployment in 2011 is reflected in labor force status flow data. Each month, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, the Bureau) reports on the number of persons employed, the number unemployed, and the number not in the labor force, as measured by the CPS. A great deal of underlying movement contributes to the relatively small over-the-month net changes that typically occur between the different labor force statuses. These gross movements are captured by labor force status flow data, which show that millions of people move between employment and unemployment each month while millions of others leave or enter the labor force.⁸ In 2011, 17.6 million people, or 7.3 percent of the population, changed their labor force status in an average month.

A greater understanding of the continued high level of unemployment in 2011 can be obtained by examining the current status (employed, unemployed, or not in the labor force) of persons who were unemployed in

the previous month. Chart 5 shows the proportions of unemployed persons who found employment, remained unemployed, and left the labor force. Historically, data indicate that persons are more likely to remain unemployed from one month to the next than to either find employment or leave the labor force. This pattern became more pronounced during the 2007–2009 recession and has persisted throughout the current recovery. Nonetheless, the share of unemployed persons who remained unemployed, about 62 percent in December 2011 (calculated as a 3-month moving average), continued to edge down over the year. The likelihood of unemployed persons finding employment edged up over the year, while the share of the unemployed who quit looking and left the labor force was unchanged in 2011. In December, the likelihood of unemployed persons finding employment was 18.3 percent, while the probability of them abandoning their search and leaving the labor force was slightly higher, at 19.9 percent.

The number of persons employed part time for economic reasons declined to 8.5 million in 2011. Also referred to as involuntary part-time employment, this measure of underem-

Chart 4. Reasons for unemployment, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 1990–2011



NOTE: Shaded regions represent recessions as designated by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER). Turning points are quarterly.
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

ployment ended the fourth quarter 456,000 lower than its year-earlier level.⁹ Historically, slack work or unfavorable business conditions, rather than an inability to find full-time work, has been the primary reason for working part time involuntarily. Even with the decline in 2011, the number of persons employed part time involuntarily remained relatively high by historical standards. (See chart 6.)

The number of persons who were not in the labor force, but wanted a job, continued to trend upward in 2011; however, the number of discouraged workers declined following 3 consecutive years of large gains (not seasonally adjusted).¹⁰ Persons not in the labor force are neither employed nor unemployed. The number of persons not in the labor force totaled 86.7 million in the fourth quarter of 2011. Persons 65 years and older continued to make up about 40 percent of those not in the labor force. The number of persons not in the labor force who wanted a job, but were not looking for one, edged up from its level a year earlier, to 6.1 million in the fourth quarter of 2011. (See table 4.) The proportion of persons not in labor force who wanted a job, however, was unchanged over the year, at 7.0 percent in the fourth quarter.

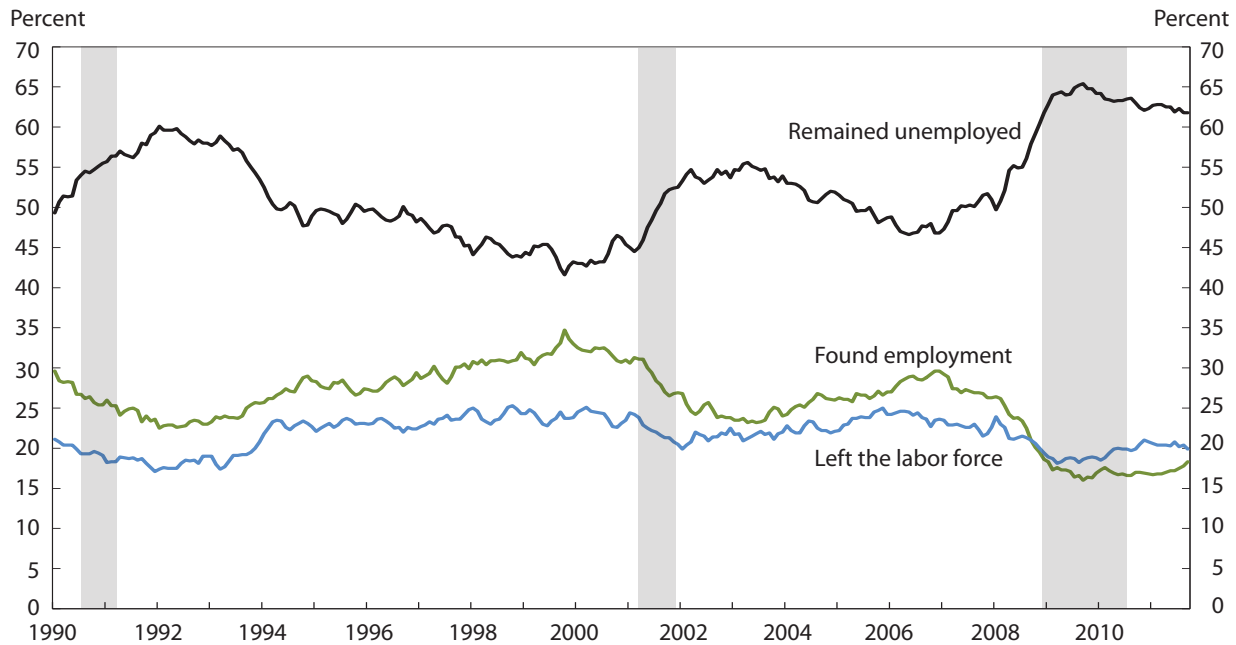
Among persons who wanted a job but currently were

not looking for one, 2.6 million (not seasonally adjusted) had searched for work sometime in the previous year and were available to work had a job been offered to them. This group of persons, known as “persons marginally attached to the labor force,” are not counted as unemployed because they had not actively searched for work in the 4 weeks preceding the survey week.¹¹ Among marginally attached individuals, some were currently not looking for work specifically because they felt that no jobs were available for them. This subset of the marginally attached is defined as “discouraged workers.” The number of discouraged workers declined by 271,000 in 2011, to 1.0 million in the fourth quarter. The number of discouraged workers had risen nearly fourfold from the fourth quarter of 2007 (344,000) to the fourth quarter of 2010 (1.3 million).

The remaining 1.6 million persons marginally attached to the labor force in the fourth quarter of 2011—those who had not searched for work in the 4 weeks preceding the survey for reasons such as school attendance or family responsibilities—increased by 251,000 in 2011.

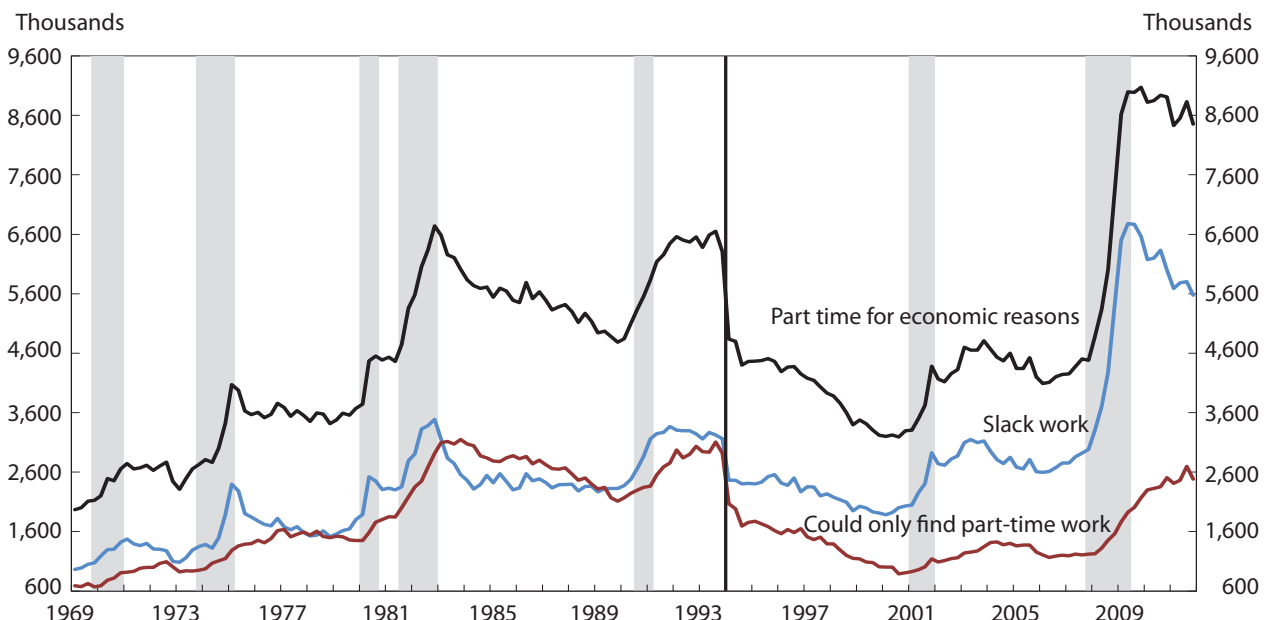
Paralleling the unemployment rate, all five alternative measures of labor underutilization declined in 2011. The Bu-

Chart 5. Percentage of the unemployed who found employment, remained unemployed, or left the labor force, 3-month moving average, seasonally adjusted, April 1990–December 2011



NOTE: Shaded regions represent recessions as designated by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Chart 6. Persons employed part time for economic reasons, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 1969–2011



NOTE: Shaded regions represent recessions as designated by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER). Turning points are quarterly. Beginning in 1994, data are affected by the redesign of the Current Population Survey (denoted by vertical black line) and are not strictly comparable with data for previous years.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Table 4. Persons not in the labor force, quarterly averages, not seasonally adjusted, 2007–2011

[Levels in thousands]

Category	Fourth quarter, 2007	Fourth quarter, 2008	Fourth quarter, 2009	Fourth quarter, 2010	Fourth quarter, 2011	Change, fourth quarter, 2010, to fourth quarter, 2011
Total not in the labor force	79,185	80,164	83,450	85,210	86,717	1,507
Persons who currently want a job	4,289	5,019	5,726	5,971	6,096	125
Marginally attached to the labor force ¹	1,357	1,831	2,394	2,581	2,562	-19
Discouraged workers ²	344	578	866	1,273	1,002	-271
Other persons marginally attached to the labor force ³	1,013	1,253	1,528	1,308	1,559	251

¹ Data refer to persons who want a job, have searched for work during the previous 12 months, and were available to take a job during the reference week, but had not looked for work in the past 4 weeks.

² Includes those who did not actively look for work in the past 4 weeks for reasons such as they thought that no work was available, they could not find work, they lacked schooling or training, their employer thought that they were too young or too old, and other types of discrimination.

³ Includes those who did not actively look for work in the past 4 weeks for reasons such as school or family responsibilities, ill health, and transportation problems, as well as a number for whom their reason for non-participation was not determined.

NOTE: Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

reau uses CPS data to construct alternative measures of labor underutilization.¹² Known as U-1, U-2, and U-4 through U-6 (U-3 is the official unemployment rate), these measures tend to show similar cyclical patterns, yet provide additional insight into the degree to which labor resources are being underutilized. Like the official unemployment rate, the alternative measures are presented as a percentage of the labor force (adjusted as necessary). Alternative measure U-1 shows the number of individuals unemployed 15 weeks or longer, while U-2 presents job losers and persons who completed temporary jobs. U-4 through U-6 are broader than the official measure: to the unemployed, U-4 adds in discouraged workers, U-5 all persons marginally attached to the labor force, and U-6 all persons marginally attached to the labor force plus persons employed part time for economic reasons.

For the first time in the history of the U-1 through U-6 series, U-1 and U-2 were essentially the same (5.3 percent) throughout 2011. Like the official unemployment rate (U-3), alternative measures U-4 to U-6 declined over the year. By the end of 2011, U-4 had declined to 9.3 percent, U-5 to 10.2 percent, and U-6 to 15.6 percent. (See chart 7.)

The civilian labor force was little changed in 2011, at 154.0 million, while the working-age population continued to expand. As a result, the labor force participation rate continued to trend downward. After falling a full percentage point

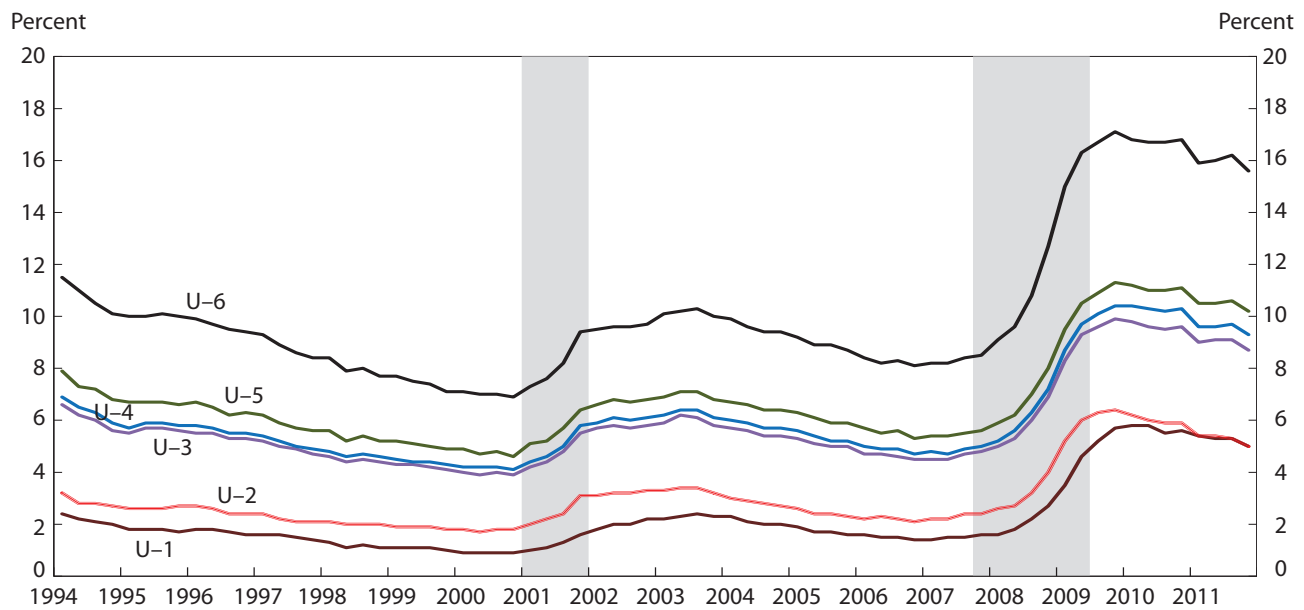
in 2009, the labor force participation rate—the proportion of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years and older that is in the labor force—declined by about one-half of a percentage point in 2011 for the second consecutive year. (See chart 8.)

The labor force participation rates for most of the major race and ethnicity groups edged down or showed little change in 2011, with the exception of Whites, whose rate declined by 0.4 percentage point, to 64.4 percent, in the fourth quarter. The rate for Blacks edged down to 61.6 percent. The rates for Asians and Hispanics showed little change over the year, finishing at 64.4 percent (not seasonally adjusted) and 66.8 percent, respectively, in the fourth quarter. (See table 1.)

Labor force participation rates and over-the-year percentage-point changes also varied by age, as the following tabulation of seasonally adjusted data shows:

Age	Labor force participation rate (percent)		
	Fourth quarter, 2010	Fourth quarter, 2011	Percentage-point change
Total, 16 years and older ...	64.4	64.0	-0.4
16 to 19 years.....	34.7	34.5	-.2
20 to 24 years.....	71.4	71.8	.4

Chart 7. Measures of labor underutilization, U-1 to U-6, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 1994–2011



NOTE: Shaded regions represent recessions as designated by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER). Turning point are quarterly.
 SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

25 to 34 years.....	81.9	81.5	-.4
35 to 44 years.....	82.9	82.4	-.5
45 to 54 years.....	80.9	80.4	-.5
55 years and older.....	40.1	40.4	.3

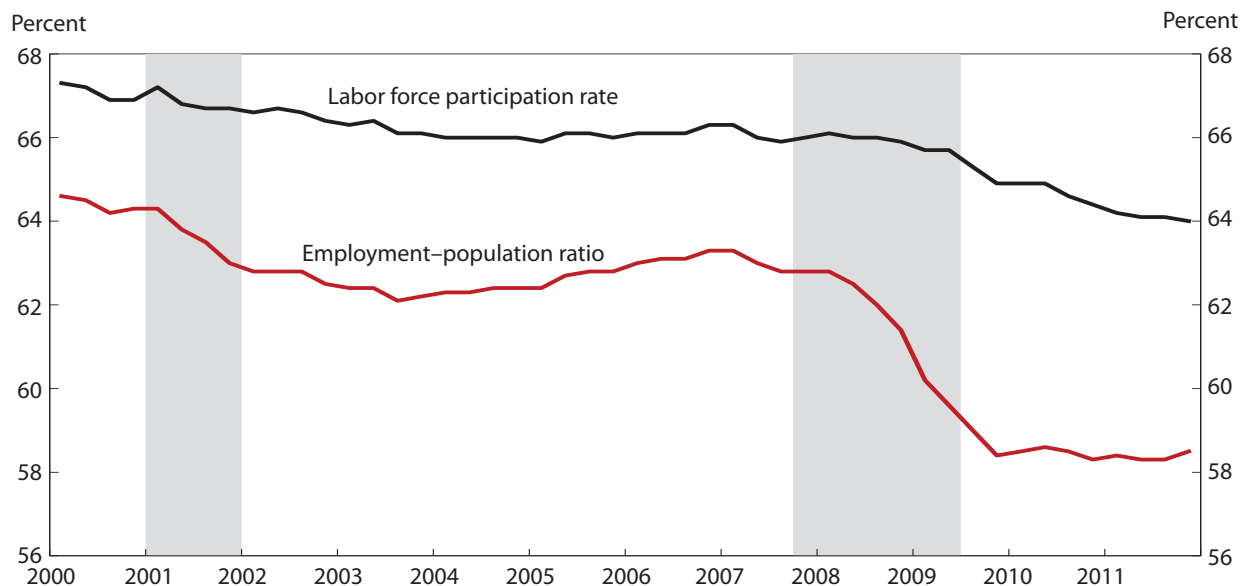
twice as much as in 2010. Although adult men make up about half of total employment, they accounted for nearly all of the over-the-year growth in employment in 2011. By comparison, employment among adult women and teens remained essentially unchanged for the second consecutive year. Note, however, that the steep employment losses that occurred during the recent recession were concentrated among adult men.

Teens (16 to 19 years old) tend to have a relatively low labor force participation rate. The teen labor force participation rate has been trending down since the late 1980s, with the pace of decline intensifying during recessions. Increased school enrollment, poor labor market conditions, and increased job competition from both older workers and recent immigrants have been identified in the economic literature as factors that have contributed to the long-term decline in teen labor force participation.¹³ In contrast, the participation rate for those 55 years and older continued to trend upward in 2011, reaching 40.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2011.¹⁴

The employment–population ratio for all persons ages 16 and older edged up over the year. The employment–population ratio is the proportion of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years and older that is employed. After falling by 4.4 percentage points from 2007 to 2009 and remaining essentially flat in 2010, the employment–population ratio edged up by 0.2 percentage point in 2011, to 58.5 percent in the fourth quarter. (See chart 8.) The employment–population ratio for adult men increased by 0.7 percentage point over the year, to 67.3 percent, while the ratio for adult women edged down by 0.3 percentage point, to 54.9 percent. (See table 1.) In 2011, the employment–population ratio among teenagers was about unchanged over the year, at 26.3 percent. From the fourth quarter of 2007 through

Total civilian employment grew faster in 2011 than in 2010. As measured in the CPS, or household survey, employment reached 140.6 million in the fourth quarter of 2011. The number of employed persons rose by 1.5 million in 2011,

Chart 8. Labor force participation rate and employment–population ratio, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 2000–2011



NOTE: Shaded regions represent recessions as designated by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER). Turning points are quarterly.
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

the end of 2010, the ratio for teenagers had declined by 8.9 percentage points.

During 2011, the employment–population ratio for Whites edged up, to 59.4 percent in the fourth quarter, while the ratio for Hispanics increased over the year, to 59.3 percent. The ratios for Blacks (52.1 percent) and Asians (59.9 percent, not seasonally adjusted) showed little or no change.

The number of workers holding more than one job, 7.0 million in the fourth quarter of 2011, edged up 197,000 over the year, breaking a 4-year downward trend. The percentage of the employed that were multiple jobholders, however, held steady at about 5.0 percent throughout the year, following a decline in 2010.

The total number of self-employed workers, including both those whose businesses were incorporated and those whose businesses were not, continued to trend downward in 2011. In the fourth quarter of 2011, 14.4 million (not seasonally adjusted) were self-employed. The proportion of total employment made up of the self-employed was 10.2 percent. Of all self-employed persons, 9.3 million, or nearly two-thirds, had unincorporated businesses while

the remaining 5.1 million had incorporated businesses. During 2011, the total number of self-employed, as well as their share of total employment, edged down. However, from the fourth quarter of 2007 to the fourth quarter of 2011, the number of self-employed fell by 1.5 million; over the same period, their proportion of all workers fell from 10.8 percent to 10.2 percent.¹⁵

In the fourth quarter of 2011, about 2 of 5 workers were employed in management, professional, and related occupations; by comparison, 24 percent of employed persons were concentrated in sales and office occupations, 12 percent were in production, transportation, and material moving occupations, and 9 percent were in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations. Employment in service occupations accounted for about 18 percent of total employment. Beginning with data for January 2011, CPS occupation estimates reflect the introduction of the 2010 Census occupation classification system into the household survey. (Historical data have not been revised.) Consequently, data beginning with January 2011 are not strictly comparable with data for earlier years, and an over-the-year analysis

of employment changes by occupation is not presented in this section.

In 2011, women made up slightly more than half of all persons employed in management, professional, and related occupations, somewhat more than their share of total employment (47 percent). Employed men were overrepresented in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations and in production, transportation, and material moving jobs. In the fourth quarter of 2011, men accounted for 97 percent of all persons employed in construction and extraction jobs while women accounted for 87 percent of persons employed in health care support jobs. (See table 5.)

Median weekly earnings for full-time wage and salary workers increased in 2011, but at a considerably slower pace than inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). Median weekly earnings were \$756 in 2011, up 1.2 percent from 2010. (The data in this section are annual averages.) During the same period, inflation increased by 3.2 percent. Real median usual weekly earnings (adjusted with the use of the CPI-U) showed one of the largest declines in the history of the series, down 1.8 percent from 2010. (See table 6.)

Men's median weekly earnings were little changed in 2011, while women's earnings increased by 2.2 percent

Table 5. Employment, by occupational group and gender, fourth quarter, 2011, averages and percent distribution, not seasonally adjusted

[Levels in thousands]

Occupation	Total		Men		Women	
	Fourth quarter, 2011	Percent distribution	Fourth quarter, 2011	Percent distribution	Fourth quarter, 2011	Percent distribution
Total, 16 years and older	140,912	100.0	74,975	100.0	65,937	100.0
Management, professional, and related occupations	52,820	37.5	25,675	34.2	27,144	41.2
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	21,839	15.5	12,459	16.6	9,380	14.2
Professional and related occupations	30,981	22.0	13,217	17.6	17,764	26.9
Service occupations	24,856	17.6	10,965	14.6	13,891	21.1
Health care support occupations	3,377	2.4	442	.6	2,936	4.5
Protective service occupations	3,168	2.2	2,541	3.4	626	.9
Food preparation and serving related occupations	7,778	5.5	3,580	4.8	4,197	6.4
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	5,559	3.9	3,359	4.5	2,200	3.3
Personal care and service occupations	4,975	3.5	1,043	1.4	3,932	6.0
Sales and office occupations	33,178	23.5	12,616	16.8	20,562	31.2
Sales and related occupations	15,585	11.1	8,001	10.7	7,584	11.5
Office and administrative support occupations	17,593	12.5	4,615	6.2	12,978	19.7
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	13,216	9.4	12,678	16.9	538	.8
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	985	.7	791	1.1	194	.3
Construction and extraction occupations	7,261	5.2	7,067	9.4	195	.3
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,969	3.5	4,820	6.4	150	.2
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	16,843	12.0	13,041	17.4	3,802	5.8
Production occupations	8,408	6.0	5,965	8.0	2,443	3.7
Transportation and material moving occupations	8,435	6.0	7,076	9.4	1,359	2.1

NOTE: Data may not sum to totals because of rounding. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data. Beginning with data for January 2011, occupation estimates reflect the introduction of the 2010 Census

occupation classification system into the household survey. This system is derived from the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification system. Historical data have not been revised.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Table 6. Median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers, by selected characteristics, annual averages, 2010–2011

Characteristic	Current dollars			Constant (1982–1984) dollars		
	2010	2011	Percent change, 2010–2011	2010	2011	Percent change, 2010–2011
Total, 16 years and older	\$747	\$756	1.2	\$342	\$336	–1.8
Men	824	832	1.0	378	370	–2.1
Women	669	684	2.2	307	304	–1.0
White	765	775	1.3	351	344	–2.0
Men	850	856	.7	390	381	–2.3
Women	684	703	2.8	313	313	.0
Black or African American	611	615	.7	280	274	–2.1
Men	633	653	3.2	290	290	.0
Women	592	595	.5	271	264	–2.6
Asian	855	866	1.3	392	385	–1.8
Men	936	970	3.6	429	431	.5
Women	773	751	–2.8	355	334	–5.9
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	535	549	2.6	245	244	–.4
Men	560	571	2.0	257	254	–1.2
Women	508	518	2.0	233	230	–1.3
Total, 25 years and older-	782	797	1.9	359	354	–1.2
Less than a high school diploma	444	451	1.6	204	200	–1.5
High school graduates, no college	626	638	1.9	287	284	–1.2
Some college or associate's degree	734	739	.7	337	329	–2.4
Bachelor's degree or higher	1,144	1,150	.5	525	511	–2.6

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey and Consumer Price Index.

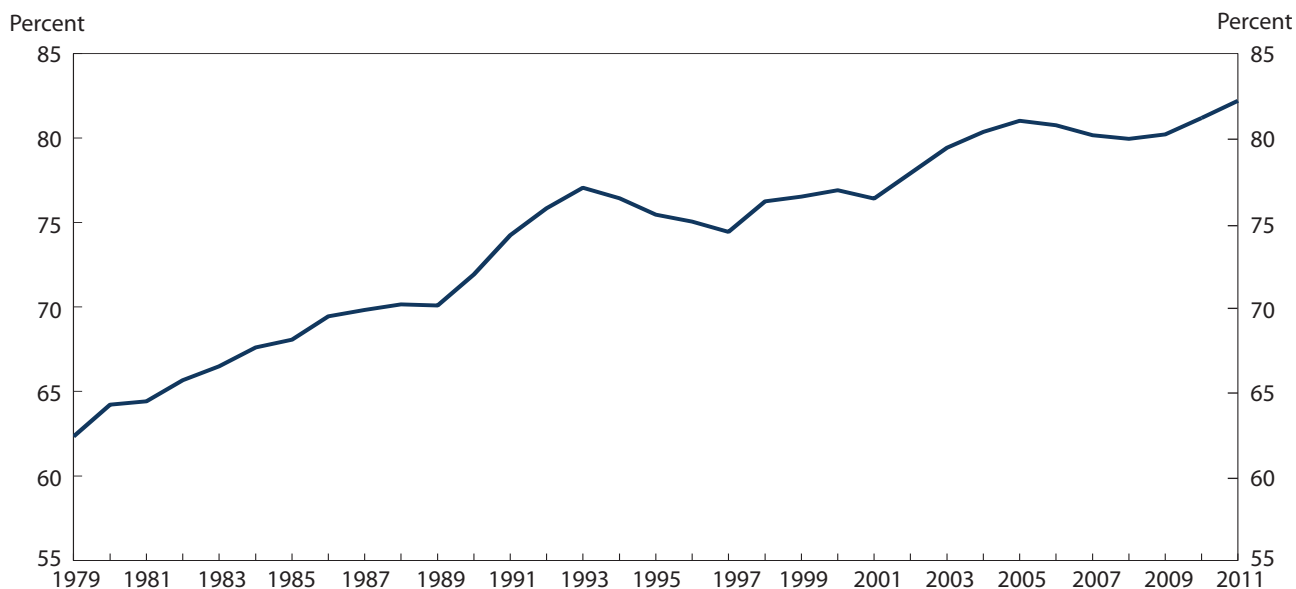
over the year. This difference resulted in a further narrowing of the earnings gap between the genders: the women's-to-men's earnings ratio increased to 82.2 percent in 2011 from 81.2 percent in 2010. In 1979, the first year for which comparable data on usual weekly earnings are available, women's earnings were 62.3 percent of men's earnings. (See chart 9.)

Among the major race and ethnicity groups, median weekly earnings increased by 1.3 percent and 2.6 percent for Whites and Hispanics, respectively, in 2011. (See table 6.) Earnings for Blacks (\$615) and Asians (\$866) were about unchanged for the year.

Of all education groups, workers 25 years and older with only a high school diploma saw the largest over-the-year increase in median weekly earnings, 1.9 percent, to \$638 in 2011. Earnings of workers with less than a high school diploma edged up 1.6 percent, to \$451 per week. Workers with some college or an associate's degree

earned \$739 per week, and those with a bachelor's degree or higher earned \$1,150, with both figures little changed from a year earlier.

In 2011, the unemployment rate for veterans (not seasonally adjusted) edged down over the year. From the fourth quarter of 2010 to the fourth quarter of 2011, the unemployment rate for all veterans edged down by 0.8 percentage point, to 7.6 percent. (See table 7.) In the CPS, veterans are defined as men and women 18 years and older who have previously served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces and who are civilians at the time the survey is conducted.¹⁶ Veterans are more likely than nonveterans to be men and older. In part, this difference reflects the characteristics of veterans who served during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam era. Veterans who served during these wartime periods account for about one-half of the total veteran noninstitutional population.

Chart 9. Women's median usual weekly earnings as a percentage of men's, full-time wage and salary workers, annual averages, 1979–2011

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Among Gulf War–era II veterans—veterans who served in the military at any time since September 2001—15 percent were women, compared with 3 percent of veterans from the combined World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam era. In the fourth quarter of 2011, the unemployment rate for male Gulf War–era II veterans was 11.4 percent while that of their female counterparts was 16.8 percent; rates for both groups were not statistically different from a year earlier. (See table 7.)

The employment–population ratio for all male veterans continued to trend downward in 2011. Among male Gulf War–era II veterans, the employment–population ratio was 74.7 percent in the fourth quarter of 2011.

The labor force participation rate for persons with a disability was little changed from its year-earlier level. The labor force participation rate for persons with a disability was 20.9 percent in the fourth quarter of 2011. In contrast, the rate for those without a disability was much higher, 69.4 percent. (See table 8.) The low labor force participation rate among persons with a disability is due partly to the

fact that a large proportion of the population of those with a disability is 65 years and older, an age group that, in general, has a low rate of labor force participation. However, both men and women 16 to 64 years old with a disability also were much less likely to be in the labor force than were their counterparts with no disability.

The unemployment rate for persons with a disability continued to be higher than the rate for those with no disability—13.2 percent versus 8.1 percent in the fourth quarter of 2011. The rates for both groups declined over the year.

Both foreign-born and native-born individuals experienced a decline in their unemployment rates in 2011. By the end of the year, the unemployment rate for the foreign born was 8.7 percent while that for the native born was 8.3 percent. (See table 9.) Foreign-born workers are persons who reside in the United States, but were born outside the country or outside one of its outlying areas, such as Puerto Rico or Guam, to parents neither of whom was a U.S. citizen. The foreign born comprise legally admitted immigrants; refugees; temporary resi-

Table 7. Employment status of persons 18 years and older, by veteran status, period of service, and gender, quarterly averages, not seasonally adjusted, 2010–2011

[Levels in thousands]

Employment status, veteran status, and period of service	Total			Men			Women		
	Fourth quarter, 2010	Fourth quarter, 2011	Change, fourth quarter, 2010, to fourth quarter, 2011	Fourth quarter, 2010	Fourth quarter, 2011	Change, fourth quarter, 2010, to fourth quarter, 2011	Fourth quarter, 2010	Fourth quarter, 2011	Change, fourth quarter, 2010, to fourth quarter, 2011
Veterans, 18 years and older									
Civilian labor force	11,571	11,154	-417	10,458	10,049	-409	1,113	1,105	-8
Participation rate	52.9	52.0	-.9	52.1	51.1	-1.0	62.1	61.2	-.9
Employed	10,599	10,305	-294	9,564	9,285	-279	1,035	1,020	-15
Employment–population ratio	48.5	48.0	-.5	47.6	47.2	-.4	57.7	56.5	-1.2
Unemployed	973	849	-124	894	764	-130	79	85	6
Unemployment rate	8.4	7.6	-.8	8.5	7.6	-.9	7.1	7.7	.6
Gulf War–era II veterans									
Civilian labor force	1,862	1,957	95	1,606	1,708	102	257	250	-7
Participation rate	81.8	82.2	.4	84.3	84.4	.1	69.0	69.8	.8
Employed	1,662	1,721	59	1,432	1,513	81	231	208	-23
Employment–population ratio	73.0	72.2	-.8	75.2	74.7	-.5	62.0	58.1	-3.9
Unemployed	200	237	37	174	195	21	26	42	16
Unemployment rate	10.7	12.1	1.4	10.8	11.4	.6	10.1	16.8	6.7
Gulf War–era I veterans									
Civilian labor force	2,489	2,482	-7	2,149	2,130	-19	340	352	12
Participation rate	87.0	84.1	-2.9	88.4	86.3	-2.1	78.8	73.0	-5.8
Employed	2,321	2,344	23	2,005	2,006	1	317	338	21
Employment–population ratio	81.1	79.5	-1.6	82.5	81.3	-1.2	73.3	70.0	-3.3
Unemployed	167	138	-29	144	123	-21	24	14	-10
Unemployment rate	6.7	5.5	-1.2	6.7	5.8	-.9	6.9	4.1	-2.8
World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam–era veterans									
Civilian labor force	3,886	3,321	-565	3,767	3,226	-541	120	95	-25
Participation rate	35.8	32.4	-3.4	35.9	32.5	-3.4	33.8	29.5	-4.3
Employed	3,542	3,095	-447	3,430	3,002	-428	112	93	-19
Employment–population ratio	32.6	30.2	-2.4	32.7	30.3	-2.4	31.7	28.8	-2.9
Unemployed	345	227	-118	337	224	-113	8	2	-6
Unemployment rate	8.9	6.8	-2.1	8.9	7.0	-1.9	6.4	2.5	-3.9
Veterans of other service periods									
Civilian labor force	3,334	3,393	59	2,937	2,985	48	397	408	11
Participation rate	56.8	57.6	.8	56.1	56.9	.8	62.5	63.4	.9
Employed	3,073	3,145	72	2,698	2,763	65	375	382	7
Employment–population ratio	52.3	53.4	1.1	51.5	52.6	1.1	59.1	59.3	.2
Unemployed	261	248	-13	239	222	-17	22	26	4
Unemployment rate	7.8	7.3	-.5	8.1	7.4	-.7	5.5	6.4	.9

See notes at end of table.

Table 7. Continued—Employment status of persons 18 years and older, by veteran status, period of service, and gender, quarterly averages, not seasonally adjusted, 2010–2011

[Levels in thousands]

Employment status, veteran status, and period of service	Total			Men			Women		
	Fourth quarter, 2010	Fourth quarter, 2011	Change, fourth quarter, 2010, to fourth quarter, 2011	Fourth quarter, 2010	Fourth quarter, 2011	Change, fourth quarter, 2010, to fourth quarter, 2011	Fourth quarter, 2010	Fourth quarter, 2011	Change, fourth quarter, 2010, to fourth quarter, 2011
Nonveterans, 18 years and older									
Civilian labor force	140,048	140,782	734	70,248	71,182	934	69,799	69,600	-199
Participation rate	67.4	67.0	-.4	77.2	76.9	-.3	59.8	59.2	-.6
Employed	127,462	129,253	1,791	63,387	65,092	1,705	64,076	64,162	86
Employment–population ratio	61.4	61.5	.1	69.7	70.3	.6	54.9	54.6	-.3
Unemployed	12,585	11,529	-1,056	6,862	6,090	-772	5,724	5,439	-285
Unemployment rate	9.0	8.2	-.8	9.8	8.6	-1.2	8.2	7.8	-.4

NOTE: Veterans served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces and were not on active duty at the time of the survey. Nonveterans never served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces. Veterans could have served anytime (and anywhere) during the following periods of service: Gulf War era II (September 2001–present), Gulf War era I (August 1990–August 2001), Vietnam era (August 1964–April 1975), Korean War (July 1950–January 1955), World War II (December 1941–December 1946), and any other

period of service. Veterans who served in more than one wartime period are classified only in the most recent one. Veterans who served during one of the selected wartime periods and another period are classified only in the selected period. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

dents, such as students and temporary workers; and undocumented immigrants.

In the fourth quarter of 2011, the foreign born represented 16 percent of the U.S. civilian labor force. The labor force participation rate of the foreign born, 67.3 percent in the fourth quarter, was little changed over the year, while that for the native born declined to 63.3 percent. From the fourth quarter of 2010 to the fourth quarter of 2011, the employment–population ratio of the foreign born, 61.4 percent, also was little changed, while that of native-born workers edged up to 58.1 percent.

IN SUM, MOST MAJOR EMPLOYMENT and unemploy-

ment measures from the CPS continued to point to improvement in the U.S. labor market in 2011. The unemployment level and the unemployment rate declined over the year, although the proportion of unemployed persons who had been jobless for long periods held close to historically high levels. Employment, as measured by the CPS, showed a notably greater increase than in the previous year, while the employment–population ratio edged up for the first time in 5 years. The number of persons employed part time for economic reasons declined in 2011, but remained high by historical standards. Median weekly earnings for all full-time wage and salary workers increased, but at a considerably slower pace than inflation. □

Table 8. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population, by gender, age, and disability status, quarterly averages, not seasonally adjusted, 2010–2011

[Levels in thousands]

Employment status, gender, and age	Persons with a disability			Persons with no disability		
	Fourth quarter, 2010	Fourth quarter, 2011	Change, fourth quarter, 2010, to fourth quarter, 2011	Fourth quarter, 2010	Fourth quarter, 2011	Change, fourth quarter, 2010, to fourth quarter, 2011
Total, 16 years and older						
Civilian labor force	5,715	5,710	-5	147,787	148,005	218
Participation rate	21.3	20.9	-.4	69.7	69.4	-.3
Employed	4,885	4,955	70	134,556	135,958	1,402
Employment–population ratio	18.2	18.2	.0	63.5	63.8	.3
Unemployed	830	755	-75	13,231	12,047	-1,184
Unemployment rate	14.5	13.2	-1.3	9.0	8.1	-.9
Men, 16 to 64 years						
Civilian labor force	2,625	2,618	-7	75,217	75,328	111
Participation rate	35.5	34.6	-.9	82.3	82.4	.1
Employed	2,206	2,217	11	67,874	68,899	1,025
Employment–population ratio	29.9	29.3	-.6	74.3	75.3	1.0
Unemployed	418	401	-17	7,343	6,429	-914
Unemployment rate	15.9	15.3	-.6	9.8	8.5	-1.3
Women, 16 to 64 years						
Civilian labor force	2,303	2,215	-88	66,518	66,204	-314
Participation rate	31.0	30.0	-1.0	71.1	70.6	-.5
Employed	1,955	1,931	-24	61,018	61,005	-13
Employment–population ratio	26.4	26.2	-.2	65.2	65.0	-.2
Unemployed	348	285	-63	5,500	5,199	-301
Unemployment rate	15.1	12.9	-2.2	8.3	7.9	-.4
Total, 65 years and older						
Civilian labor force	787	877	90	6,052	6,473	421
Participation rate	6.6	7.1	.5	22.4	23.2	.8
Employed	723	807	84	5,664	6,053	389
Employment–population ratio	6.0	6.5	.5	21.0	21.7	.7
Unemployed	63	69	6	388	419	31
Unemployment rate	8.1	7.9	-.2	6.4	6.5	.1

NOTE: A person with a disability has at least one of the following conditions: is deaf or has serious difficulty hearing; is blind or has serious difficulty seeing, even when wearing glasses; has serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition; has serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs;

has difficulty dressing or bathing; or has difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping, because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Table 9. Employment status of the foreign- and native-born populations by gender, quarterly averages, not seasonally adjusted, 2010–2011

[Levels in thousands]

Employment status	Total			Men			Women		
	Fourth quarter, 2010	Fourth quarter, 2011	Change, fourth quarter, 2010, to fourth quarter, 2011	Fourth quarter, 2010	Fourth quarter, 2011	Change, fourth quarter, 2010, to fourth quarter, 2011	Fourth quarter, 2010	Fourth quarter, 2011	Change, fourth quarter, 2010, to fourth quarter, 2011
Foreign born, 16 years and older									
Civilian labor force	24,700	24,794	94	14,410	14,493	83	10,290	10,301	11
Participation rate	67.8	67.3	–.5	79.8	79.4	–.4	56.1	55.4	–.7
Employed	22,274	22,642	368	12,984	13,301	317	9,290	9,342	52
Employment–population ratio	61.2	61.4	.2	71.9	72.8	.9	50.6	50.2	–.4
Unemployed	2,427	2,152	–275	1,427	1,193	–234	1,000	959	–41
Unemployment rate	9.8	8.7	–1.1	9.9	8.2	–1.7	9.7	9.3	–.4
Native born, 16 years and older									
Civilian labor force	128,802	128,921	119	67,200	67,567	367	61,602	61,354	–248
Participation rate	63.7	63.3	–.4	68.9	68.6	–.3	58.8	58.4	–.4
Employed	117,167	118,270	1,103	60,595	61,674	1,079	56,572	56,596	24
Employment–population ratio	57.9	58.1	.2	62.1	62.6	.5	54.0	53.9	–.1
Unemployed	11,634	10,651	–983	6,605	5,893	–712	5,029	4,758	–271
Unemployment rate	9.0	8.3	–.7	9.8	8.7	–1.1	8.2	7.8	–.4

NOTE: The foreign born are those residing in the United States who were not U.S. citizens at birth. That is, they were born outside the United States or one of its outlying areas, such as Puerto Rico or Guam, to parents, neither of whom was a U.S. citizen. The native born are persons who were born in the United States or one of its outlying areas, such as

Puerto Rico or Guam, or who were born abroad of at least one parent who was a U.S. citizen. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Notes

¹ The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), generally recognized as the official arbiter of recessions in the United States, determined that the recent recession began in December 2007 and ended in June 2009.

² The data in this article are based on information collected in the Current Population Survey (CPS)—also called the household survey—a monthly sample survey of about 60,000 households nationwide that is conducted by the Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Although the CPS is a monthly survey, the data analyzed throughout the article are seasonally adjusted quarterly averages, unless otherwise noted. All over-the-year changes are comparisons of fourth-quarter data from 2010 with fourth-quarter data from 2011.

³ Effective with the data for January 2011, updated population estimates were used in the household survey. Each year, the Census Bureau updates the population estimates to reflect new information and assumptions about the growth of the population during the decade. In accordance with usual practice, the Bureau of Labor Statistics did not revise the official household survey estimates for December 2010 and earlier months. (For additional information on the population adjustments and their effect on national labor force estimates, see “Adjustments to Household Survey Population Estimates in January 2011” (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, February 2011), www.bls.gov/cps/cps11adj.pdf.)

⁴ For more information on the labor market’s performance during the most recent recession, see James M. Borbely, “Sizing up the

2007–09 recession: comparing two key labor market indicators with earlier downturns,” *Issues in Labor Statistics*, Summary 10–11 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, December 2010), www.bls.gov/opub/ils/pdf/opbils88.pdf.

⁵ Persons of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity may be of any race. About 90 percent of persons of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity identify themselves as White in the CPS.

⁶ The duration of joblessness is the length of time (through the current reference week) that people classified as unemployed have been looking for work. This measure refers to the duration of the current spell of unemployment, rather than to that of a completed spell.

⁷ For additional information, see Thomas Luke Spreen, “Ranks of those unemployed for a year or more up sharply,” *Issues in Labor Statistics*, Summary 10–10 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, October 2010), www.bls.gov/opub/ils/pdf/opbils87.pdf.

⁸ For more information and analysis of recent data, see Randy E. Ilg, “How long before the unemployed find jobs or quit looking,” *Issues in Labor Statistics*, Summary 11–1 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2011), www.bls.gov/opub/ils/pdf/opbils89.pdf; Harley J. Frazis, “Labor force flows in the most recent recession,” *Issues in Labor Statistics*, Summary 10–08 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, July 2010), www.bls.gov/opub/ils/pdf/opbils85.pdf; and Harley J. Frazis and Randy E. Ilg, “Trends in labor force flows during recent recessions,” *Monthly Labor Review*, April 2009, pp. 3–18, www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2009/04/art1full.pdf.

⁹ For additional information, see Emy Sok, “Involuntary part-time work on the rise,” *Issues in Labor Statistics*, Summary 08–08 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, December 2008), www.bls.gov/opub/ils/pdf/opbils71.pdf.

¹⁰ “Persons not in the labor force who want a job” is a measure of persons who reported wanting a job without having necessarily looked

for one; this group includes all persons who responded “yes” to the question, “Do you currently want a job, either full or part time?”

¹¹ For additional analysis of persons marginally attached to the labor force, see Sharon Cohany, “Ranks of Discouraged Workers and Others Marginally Attached to the Labor Force Rise During Recession,” *Issues in Labor Statistics*, Summary 09–04 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, April 2009), <http://www.bls.gov/opub/ils/pdf/opbils74.pdf>.

¹² For further information, see Steven E. Haugen, “Measures of Labor Underutilization from the Current Population Survey,” Working Paper 424 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 2009), www.bls.gov/osmr/pdf/ec090020.pdf.

¹³ See Teresa L. Morisi, “The early 2000s: a period of declining teen summer employment rates,” *Monthly Labor Review*, May 2010, pp. 23–35, <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2010/05/art2full.pdf>; and “Youth enrollment and employment during the school year,” *Monthly Labor Review*, February 2008, pp. 51–63, <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2008/02/art3full.pdf>.

¹⁴ For more information about workers by age, see Emy Sok, “Record unemployment among older workers does not keep them out of the job market,” *Issues in Labor Statistics*, Summary 10–04 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 2010), http://www.bls.gov/opub/ils/summary_10_04/older_workers.htm; and Abraham Mosisa and Steven Hipple, “Trends in labor force participation in the United States,” *Monthly Labor Review*, October 2006, pp. 35–57, <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2006/10/art3full.pdf>.

¹⁵ For additional analysis, see Steven F. Hipple, “Self-employment in the United States,” *Monthly Labor Review*, September 2010, pp. 17–32, <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2010/09/art2full.pdf>.

¹⁶ Veterans who served in more than one wartime period are classified into only the most recent one.