

### The December Review

Time-use studies in general, and the American Time-Use Survey (ATUS) in particular, are valued primarily for what they tell labor economists about the time workers spend away from the job. Harley Frazis and Jay Stewart remind us that time-use surveys do, in fact, contribute to our understanding of time on the job as well. Their analysis of working hours shows that ATUS and the Current Population Survey (CPS) produce similar estimates of hours at work for the weeks containing the 12th day of a month, but that the week containing the 12th is often the week in which people work the most hours. To a great extent, this reflects a deliberate choice: The week containing the 12th was selected as the government's standard reference week for surveys because it was the week in which the fewest holidays fall.

William J. Wiatrowski explores the impact of recent changes in the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's recordkeeping requirements on the analysis of the Bureau's workplace safety and health statistics.

Craig Brown reports on the advantages and disadvantages of using data from sources outside the Consumer Price Index (CPI) relative to using in-house data to perform hedonic regressions for the purpose of quality adjustment.

Jerome Pikulinski summarizes the new and emerging occupations identified in the 2001 Occupational Employment Survey.

In a new department, "Workplace Safety and Health," Stephen Pegula reports on fatal work injuries at road construction sites.

### Factory compensation

In the United States, hourly compensation costs for production workers in manufacturing increased to \$21.97 in

2003. These costs were higher than those in all the economies covered outside Europe, but ten European countries had higher hourly compensation costs (expressed in U.S. dollars) than did the United States. (Hourly compensation costs include hourly direct pay, employer social insurance expenditures, and other labor taxes.)

The strength of the European currencies in 2003 drove costs in those countries, as measured in U.S. dollars, up. Costs in the countries which use the euro as a currency rose the most, while costs in several of the European countries that do not use the euro (for example, the United Kingdom) rose less. The average for the 18 European countries in 2003 rose to more than \$24 per hour. Costs in Germany nearly reached the \$30 level.

Compensation costs in U.S. dollars in Canada also grew. In contrast, Mexican costs dropped. The drop was associated with a weakening peso and an increase in compensation costs on a national currency basis that was lower than average. For more information, see "International Comparisons of Hourly Compensation Costs for Production Workers in Manufacturing, 2003," news release USDL 04-2343.

### Car quality 2005

The value of quality changes in 2005 model-year cars averaged \$283.12. This figure represents 73.8 percent of the average increase in manufacturers' invoice prices. In the light truck segment, \$306.26 in quality changes accounted for 75.7 percent of average increases in invoice price.

The retail equivalent value of the quality changes to 2005 model-year passenger cars averaged \$310.50, or 74.3 percent of the over-the-year increase in manufacturers' suggested list prices. The retail value of the quality changes broke down to \$193.11 for safety

improvements and \$117.39 for other quality changes, such as emission improvements, changes in audio systems, and changes in levels of standard or optional equipment.

The retail equivalent value of quality changes for domestic light trucks averaged \$345.38, representing 75.2 percent of the average increase in manufacturers' suggested list prices. The quality changes broke down to \$18.30 for federally mandated safety improvements, \$120.43 for nonmandated safety improvements, and \$206.65 for other quality changes such as powertrain improvements, theft protection, changes in audio systems, and changes in levels of standard or optional equipment.

Estimates of the value of quality change are based on a review of data supplied by producers for similarly equipped 2004 and 2005 domestic vehicles priced in the Producer Price Index (PPI). For more information, see "Report on Quality Changes for 2005 Model Vehicles," news release UDSL 04-2351.

### Clarification

In Jonathan A. Schwabish's September article on wages and benefits, footnote 18 suggests that the distinction between defined benefit and defined contribution plans is unclear in the Employment Cost Index (ECI) survey. While that may have been true in the past, for the last decade, data used to compile the ECI has distinguished between defined benefit and defined contribution retirement plans using definitions consistent with other BLS surveys. Prior to 1995, ECI retirement costs used a different allocation scheme that classified retirement costs as "pensions" or "savings and thrift plans." Despite the change in definitions, the total cost of retirement benefits was not affected; what changed was the distribution of the costs among the types of retirement benefits. □