

The February Review

The subtle difficulties of measuring employment dynamics among the various sizes of employer are addressed by Shail J. Butani, Richard L. Clayton, Vinod Kapani, James R. Spletzer, David M. Talan, and George S. Werking, Jr. The Business Employment Dynamics program provides a solid basis for research on questions such as which sizes of establishment that account for what shares of employment growth.

Mary Bowler and Teresa L. Morisi perform the latest analysis of the differences between the Bureau's two most visible monthly labor market surveys: the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the Current Employment Statistics (CES) program.

Michael H. Strople analyzes the impact new models of retailing, such as warehouse clubs and supercenters, are having on the employment structure of the retail trade sector.

Stephen Cohen, Dee McCarthy, Richard Rosen, and William Wiatrowski report on the broad outlines of how the Bureau of Labor Statistics is working to use the Internet as a data collection medium.

Stephanie L. Costo updates the statistics on the movement of retirement coverage from defined benefit pensions to defined contribution accounts.

Stephanie Boraas White's visual essay describes the characteristics of the nearly 30 percent of the working age population that volunteers at least some working time.

Mass layoffs in 2005

During 2005, 16,466 mass layoff events occurred in the Nation, resulting in 1,795,341 initial claims filings for unemployment insurance. In 2004, there were 15,980 events and 1,607,158 initial claimants.

Manufacturing accounted for 29 percent of all mass layoff events and 37 percent of initial claims filed during 2005. The number of initial claims filed in 2005

due to mass layoffs was higher in the Midwest than in any other region. Layoffs in transportation equipment manufacturing accounted for 30 percent of the claims in the Midwest.

Mass layoffs data for 2005 are preliminary and subject to revision. Each mass layoff event involves at least 50 persons from a single establishment. See "Mass Layoffs in December 2005 and Annual Averages for 2005," news release USDL 06-122, for more information.

Union membership in 2005

In 2005, the union membership rate was higher for men (13.5 percent) than for women (11.3 percent). The gap between their rates has narrowed considerably since 1983, when the rate for men was 10 percentage points higher than the rate for women. This narrowing occurred because the union membership rate for men declined more rapidly than the rate for women over the period. Blacks were more likely to be union members (15.1 percent) than were whites (12.2 percent), Asians (11.2 percent), or Hispanics (10.4 percent). Find out more in "Union Members in 2005," news release USDL 06-99.

Compensation up 3 percent in 2005

Compensation costs in private industry rose 3.0 percent in the year ended December 2005, slowing from a 3.8-percent increase in December 2004. The components of compensation showed differences in their rates of change in the 12 months ended in December. While increases in wages and salaries continued at a moderate pace, the increase in benefit costs was somewhat lower than it had been in the past several years. For more information, see "Employment Cost Index - December 2005," news release USDL 06-157.

Price changes in 2005

For the 12-month period ended in

December 2005, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) rose 3.4 percent. This compares with an increase of 3.3 percent in 2004. Excluding food and energy, the CPI-U advanced 2.2 percent for all of 2005, the same as in 2004.

From December 2004 to December 2005, producer prices for finished goods advanced 5.4 percent. This followed a 4.2-percent increase in 2004. Prices for finished goods other than foods and energy rose 1.7 percent in 2005, following a 2.3-percent gain in 2004.

Overall import prices rose 7.9 percent for the year ended in December 2005, following a 6.7-percent increase over the prior 12 months. Prices for non-petroleum imports increased 2.4 percent for the December 2004-05 period after rising 3.7 percent over the previous 12 months.

To learn more, see "Consumer Price Index: December 2005," news release USDL 06-84; "Producer Price Indexes-December 2005," news release USDL 06-42; "U.S. Import and Export Price Indexes-December 2005," news release USDL 06-41; and articles in forthcoming issues of the *Review*.

Absences and occupation

Workers in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations and in management, professional, and related occupations had the lowest absence rates in 2005. Full-time workers in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations had an absence rate of 2.8 percent while those in service occupations and in sales and office occupations had the highest absence rates, both at 3.7 percent. Management, professional, and related occupations had an absence rate of 3.0 percent and production, transportation, and material moving occupations had an absence rate of 3.5 percent. More information on absences in 2005 can be found in the January 2006 *Employment and Earnings* (table 47). □