

The March Review

After a number of years of relatively robust growth, the Nation's labor market showed signs of gradual weakening in 2007.

Following a long-standing tradition, economists from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) early each year prepare for the *Monthly Labor Review* trenchant analyses of employment and unemployment developments for the preceding calendar year. In the first of two such articles this month, James Marschall Borbely discusses changes in 2007 in some of our most fundamental labor market indicators. The unemployment rate for the United States edged up during the year to 4.8 percent in the fourth quarter, a mark still low by historical standards. Owing to slowing employment growth, the share of the population with jobs trended below 63 percent by the end of 2007, about half a percentage point less than a year earlier.

Slowing job growth also was evident based upon estimates derived from employer reports. Robyn J. Richards finds that industries related to the housing market suffered employment losses, and the longer-term contraction in manufacturing continued. Some reliable job-generating industries of recent years, including hospitals, education, and professional and technical services, continued to grow in 2007. Two measures relating to production workers—average weekly hours and average hourly earnings adjusted for inflation—declined.

Facing challenges different from those generated by the business cycle, one group of Americans were still

contending with the after-effects of one of the country's worst natural disasters. Owing to a remarkably timely data collection effort conducted by BLS and the Census Bureau, Jeffrey A. Groen and Anne E. Polivka have been studying changes in residency, employment, income and other variables for evacuees of Hurricane Katrina. Their article finds a number of notable differences a year after the storm between evacuees who returned to the storm-affected areas and those who did not. The winds and floods may have passed, but economic and other consequences still remain.

Certainly few occupations receive as much interest, review, and commentary—from the media, elected officials, and families around the dinner table—as teachers. Rachel Krantz-Kent examines teachers' working patterns using data from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS). The contrasts in schedules between teachers and other professionals, due in part to the unique aspects of school calendars, are apparent in a number of ways. This essay provides one example of the many types of analysis time use data such as those collected in the ATUS can support.

Industries at a glance

By any measure, BLS produces a very large volume of outputs, be they data, analyses, reports, and so on. Providing the Bureau's data-using customers with tools to navigate this myriad of information, and, perhaps more importantly, to help them make sense of it all, is one of the Bureau's principal activities. On its Web site,

BLS recently has expanded and improved its feature called "Industries at a Glance." The new version, which is found at www.bls.gov/iag/home.htm, increases the number of industries and types of data covered. More than 100 industries are now featured, and outputs from a wide array of Bureau programs are included.

Career guides

One of the Bureau's most popular products is the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (OOH). The 2008–09 edition is now available. The *Handbook* is a nationally recognized source of career information, designed to help individuals in making decisions about their work lives. The OOH is revised every 2 years, and consistently is one of the Federal Government's most sought-after resources. In addition to the popular print edition, an online version can be found at www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm

The 2008–09 edition of the *Career Guide to Industries* also is now available. It serves as a companion to the OOH by providing perspectives on employment by industry. Information is included for dozens of industries on training, earnings, job prospects, and more. An online version is available at www.bls.gov/oco/cg/home.htm

Erratum

In the article, "The rise and decline of auto parts manufacturing" (*Monthly Labor Review*, October 2007, p. 17), the second boxhead contained an incorrect year. The correction is, "Average weekly wage (in 1992 dollars)." □