

# Adjustments to Household Survey Population Estimates in January 2026

Beginning in January 2026, data from the Current Population Survey (CPS, or household survey) reflect updated population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. The 2026 adjustment was delayed by a month due to the 2025 federal government shutdown. The 2026 adjustment was implemented with the publication of February estimates in March, and all data for January were revised at that time to incorporate the new population estimates.

## Population controls

The independent estimates of population from the Census Bureau are referred to as population controls. They are used to weight, or control, the survey results to reflect the size and composition of the civilian noninstitutional population age 16 and older. Population controls are updated annually and are typically introduced with data for January. (See the [CPS technical documentation](#) for information about adjustments for prior years.)

The Census Bureau develops the population estimates for the CPS. Each year, the Census Bureau adjusts their population estimates to include the latest information about population change and to incorporate improvements in their estimation methodology.

The population adjustments incorporated with data for January 2026 are based on the Census Bureau's Vintage 2025 population estimates reflecting a 2020 Census population base. This year's adjustment reflects changes to methodology that incorporate updated demographic information about the population from the 2020 Census. This marks a departure from the "blended base" introduced in recent years that combined population totals from the 2020 Census and demographic characteristics from other sources. The Vintage 2025 population estimates also include updated information showing a decline in net international migration. (Read more below about where the population controls come from.)

Conceptually, the effects of the annual population control adjustments represent the cumulative over- or under-estimation of the population all the way back to the last population base, typically the last decennial census. Hence, the January 2026 adjustment reflects changes back to the April 2020 Census population base, even though the entire adjustment is incorporated in the January 2026 estimates. The introduction of population controls affects the comparability of estimates over time. (Read more below about historical comparability.)

## The effects of the January 2026 adjustment

This year's adjustment reflects changes to Census Bureau methodology that include the incorporation of updated demographic information about the population from the 2020 Census. This marks a departure from the "blended base" introduced in recent years that combined population totals from the 2020

Census and demographic characteristics from other sources. The new population estimates also include updated information showing a decline in net international migration. The January 2026 adjustment reflects changes back to the April 2020 Census population base, even though the entire adjustment is incorporated in the January 2026 household survey estimates.

While the net effect of the updated 2020 Census base on the total population level was relatively small, shifts in the demographic composition of the population had notable impacts on labor force measures.

The updated 2020 Census base resulted in a decrease in the population level for men (mostly among those ages 25 to 54), while the population level for women increased (particularly among those age 65 and over). A decline in the number of men ages 25 to 54 (who tend to have higher labor force participation rates than other groups) and an increase in the number of women age 65 and over (who generally have lower labor force participation rates than other groups) both put downward pressure on the overall labor force participation rate. These population changes had similar impacts on employment and the overall employment-population ratio. The unemployment rate was unaffected.

In addition, the updated 2020 Census base resulted in some notable population differences across race groups. There were decreases in both the White population and the Black or African American population, while there were substantial increases in the Asian population and people in other race groups, including those who are two or more races. (People who report two or more races are not included in the individual race groups.) There was relatively little change in the number of people who are Hispanic or Latino. (People of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity may be of any race.)

To show the impact on the labor force data, BLS uses special tabulations of December data that incorporate the new population controls. When applied to December 2025, the adjustment decreased the estimated size of the civilian noninstitutional population age 16 and over by 231,000. However, the adjustment increased the number of people not in the labor force by 1.2 million and decreased both the total civilian labor force and the number of employed people by 1.4 million each. The adjustment lowered the labor force participation rate by 0.4 percentage point and lowered the employment-population ratio by 0.5 percentage point. The adjustment had little effect on the total unemployment level (+15,000), and the unemployment rate was unchanged.

See the accompanying table for the population control adjustment effects on the major labor force series, based on not seasonally adjusted data for December 2025. Population control adjustment effects for additional series are available in a [supplemental table \(XLSX\)](#).

## **Historical data comparability**

The introduction of population controls affects the comparability of estimates over time.

Because of the delay in the production of updated population controls, the 2026 adjustment was implemented with the publication of February 2026 estimates in March, and all data for January 2026 were revised at that time to incorporate the new population estimates. (Read more below about the revision.)

In accordance with usual practice, official household survey estimates for December 2025 and earlier months were not revised. Consequently, household survey data for January 2026 and later months will not be strictly comparable with data for December 2025 or earlier periods.

Conceptually, the effects of the annual population control adjustments represent the cumulative over- or under-estimation of the population all the way back to the last population base, typically the last decennial census. Thus, the January 2026 adjustment reflects changes back to the April 2020 Census

population base. Although official estimates over this time period were not revised, BLS is planning to provide an update to the [experimental series](#) that were originally introduced with the 2025 population control adjustment. These experimental time series account for the size and timing of the updated population control adjustments back to the April 2020 Census base. The experimental series will be available in the CPS [technical documentation](#) as soon as practicable.

## Estimates of veterans

Population controls for veterans did not change with the release of data for 2026. These controls are updated periodically. The last change, in January 2025, introduced updated veterans population controls based on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran Population Projection Model (VetPop2023). Information about the [Veteran Population Projection Model](#) is available from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

## Where do the new population controls come from?

The CPS population controls incorporate the most recent population estimates available from the Census Bureau. Each year, the Census Bureau's [Population Estimates Program \(PEP\)](#) creates a new time series, or vintage, of population data back to the most recent decennial census. The vintage incorporates the latest information about population change and any improvements in the estimation methodology.

In Vintage 2025, the enumerated population from the 2020 Census is the starting point for the estimates, a [departure from the "blended base"](#) introduced in recent years that combined population totals from the 2020 Census and demographic characteristics from other sources. Vintage 2025 incorporates updated demographic information about the population from the 2020 Census via the [Modified Age and Race Census \(MARC\) file](#). Changes in the [way data on race were collected in the 2020 Census](#) showed in initial findings that the [U.S. population is much more multiracial](#) than was measured in the past.

The Vintage 2025 population estimates also incorporate new information showing a [decline in net international migration](#).

The components of population change (births, deaths, and net migration) are updated with a lag. For additional information, see the Census Bureau's [Vintage 2025 Methodology and Release Notes documentation](#). The production of Vintage 2025 population estimates was delayed due to the 2025 federal government shutdown. Please direct questions about the population estimates and the methodology used to develop them to the [Census Bureau](#).

Each vintage includes a short-term projection of monthly population estimates. For example, Vintage 2025 has monthly estimates from April 2020 through December 2026, where the estimates from August 2025 to December 2026 are short-term projections. The January 2026 adjustment introduces the Vintage 2025 short-term projections for January through December 2026, which will be used to weight the CPS estimates for 2026.

## Why were estimates from January 2026 revised?

The production of Vintage 2025 population estimates by the Census Bureau was delayed due to the 2025 federal government shutdown. The annual population control adjustments that are usually incorporated with the release of January estimates in February were instead introduced with the release of February 2026 estimates in March. Consequently, the initial January 2026 CPS estimates continued to use short-

term projections of monthly population estimates derived from population adjustments introduced in January 2025 (based on Vintage 2024 population estimates provided by the U.S. Census Bureau).

CPS estimates for January 2026 were revised to reflect the introduction of the updated population controls. With this revision, the population control reference point continues to be January 2026, consistent with annual updates in prior years. All CPS estimates for January 2026 in the [BLS labor force statistics database](#) were revised on March 6, 2026. CPS public use microdata for January 2026 will be reissued with new weights that incorporate the updated population controls.

## **How are the population controls implemented in the CPS?**

Estimates from the CPS are weighted to represent the civilian noninstitutional population. (Official BLS estimates refer to people age 16 and older.) The weights are adjusted so that CPS sample estimates match independent estimates of population controls that account for specific combinations of age, sex, race, and Hispanic ethnicity. (There are different controls used for national and state estimates. Note that not all race groups are part of the population controls. Other characteristics, such as foreign- or native-born status, are not part of the population controls.) The population controls make CPS estimates representative at both the national and state level. A discussion of the weighting and estimation process is available in Chapter 2-3 of [Design and methodology: Current Population Survey, Technical Paper 77](#) (2019).

The new population controls are accounted for in the standard multi-stage weighting process for CPS estimation. When the population controls are adjusted, the weighting process simply uses the new controls. There is no change in estimation or adjustment to methodology needed to account for the updated population information. The weights are created by the Census Bureau and used by BLS for estimation.

**Employment status of the population for selected labor force groups, not seasonally adjusted, December 2025 (2026 population adjustment effect)**

(Numbers in thousands)

Employment status, age, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	As published	Based on updated population controls	Difference
<b>TOTAL</b>			
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	274,816	274,585	-231
Civilian labor force.....	170,723	169,306	-1,417
Participation rate.....	62.1	61.7	-0.4
Employed.....	163,720	162,288	-1,432
Employment-population ratio.....	59.6	59.1	-0.5
Unemployed.....	7,003	7,018	15
Unemployment rate.....	4.1	4.1	0.0
Not in labor force.....	104,094	105,279	1,185
<b>Men, 16 years and over</b>			
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	134,046	132,506	-1,540
Civilian labor force.....	90,199	88,569	-1,630
Participation rate.....	67.3	66.8	-0.5
Employed.....	86,372	84,784	-1,588
Employment-population ratio.....	64.4	64.0	-0.4
Unemployed.....	3,827	3,785	-42
Unemployment rate.....	4.2	4.3	0.1
Not in labor force.....	43,847	43,936	89
<b>Men, 20 years and over</b>			
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	124,981	123,523	-1,458
Civilian labor force.....	87,251	85,657	-1,594
Participation rate.....	69.8	69.3	-0.5
Employed.....	83,874	82,317	-1,557
Employment-population ratio.....	67.1	66.6	-0.5
Unemployed.....	3,377	3,340	-37
Unemployment rate.....	3.9	3.9	0.0
Not in labor force.....	37,730	37,866	136
<b>Women, 16 years and over</b>			
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	140,770	142,079	1,309
Civilian labor force.....	80,524	80,736	212
Participation rate.....	57.2	56.8	-0.4
Employed.....	77,348	77,503	155
Employment-population ratio.....	54.9	54.5	-0.4
Unemployed.....	3,176	3,233	57
Unemployment rate.....	3.9	4.0	0.1
Not in labor force.....	60,246	61,342	1,096

See notes at end of table.

**Employment status of the population for selected labor force groups, not seasonally adjusted, December 2025 (2026 population adjustment effect) -- Continued**

(Numbers in thousands)

Employment status, age, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	As published	Based on updated population controls	Difference
<b>Women, 20 years and over</b>			
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	132,034	133,433	1,399
Civilian labor force.....	77,358	77,621	263
Participation rate.....	58.6	58.2	-0.4
Employed.....	74,572	74,776	204
Employment-population ratio.....	56.5	56.0	-0.5
Unemployed.....	2,787	2,844	57
Unemployment rate.....	3.6	3.7	0.1
Not in labor force.....	54,675	55,812	1,137
<b>Both sexes, 16 to 19 years</b>			
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	17,801	17,629	-172
Civilian labor force.....	6,113	6,028	-85
Participation rate.....	34.3	34.2	-0.1
Employed.....	5,275	5,194	-81
Employment-population ratio.....	29.6	29.5	-0.1
Unemployed.....	839	834	-5
Unemployment rate.....	13.7	13.8	0.1
Not in labor force.....	11,688	11,601	-87
<b>WHITE</b>			
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	208,058	202,416	-5,642
Civilian labor force.....	128,066	123,205	-4,861
Participation rate.....	61.6	60.9	-0.7
Employed.....	123,518	118,846	-4,672
Employment-population ratio.....	59.4	58.7	-0.7
Unemployed.....	4,548	4,360	-188
Unemployment rate.....	3.6	3.5	-0.1
Not in labor force.....	79,992	79,211	-781
<b>BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN</b>			
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	35,995	35,340	-655
Civilian labor force.....	22,539	22,004	-535
Participation rate.....	62.6	62.3	-0.3
Employed.....	20,978	20,458	-520
Employment-population ratio.....	58.3	57.9	-0.4
Unemployed.....	1,562	1,546	-16
Unemployment rate.....	6.9	7.0	0.1
Not in labor force.....	13,456	13,335	-121

See notes at end of table.

**Employment status of the population for selected labor force groups, not seasonally adjusted, December 2025 (2026 population adjustment effect) -- Continued**

(Numbers in thousands)

Employment status, age, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	As published	Based on updated population controls	Difference
<b>ASIAN</b>			
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	19,788	21,089	1,301
Civilian labor force.....	12,997	13,935	938
Participation rate.....	65.7	66.1	0.4
Employed.....	12,557	13,450	893
Employment-population ratio.....	63.5	63.8	0.3
Unemployed.....	441	485	44
Unemployment rate.....	3.4	3.5	0.1
Not in labor force.....	6,790	7,154	364
<b>HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY</b>			
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	52,080	52,483	403
Civilian labor force.....	34,856	35,021	165
Participation rate.....	66.9	66.7	-0.2
Employed.....	33,166	33,276	110
Employment-population ratio.....	63.7	63.4	-0.3
Unemployed.....	1,690	1,746	56
Unemployment rate.....	4.8	5.0	0.2
Not in labor force.....	17,224	17,462	238

NOTE: Estimates for the above race groups (White, Black or African American, and Asian) do not sum to totals because data are not presented for all races. Persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race.