



# **Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey**

## **Highlights**

**May 2014**

Bureau of Labor Statistics

July 8, 2014

**Chart 1. Number of unemployed persons per job opening  
Seasonally adjusted**

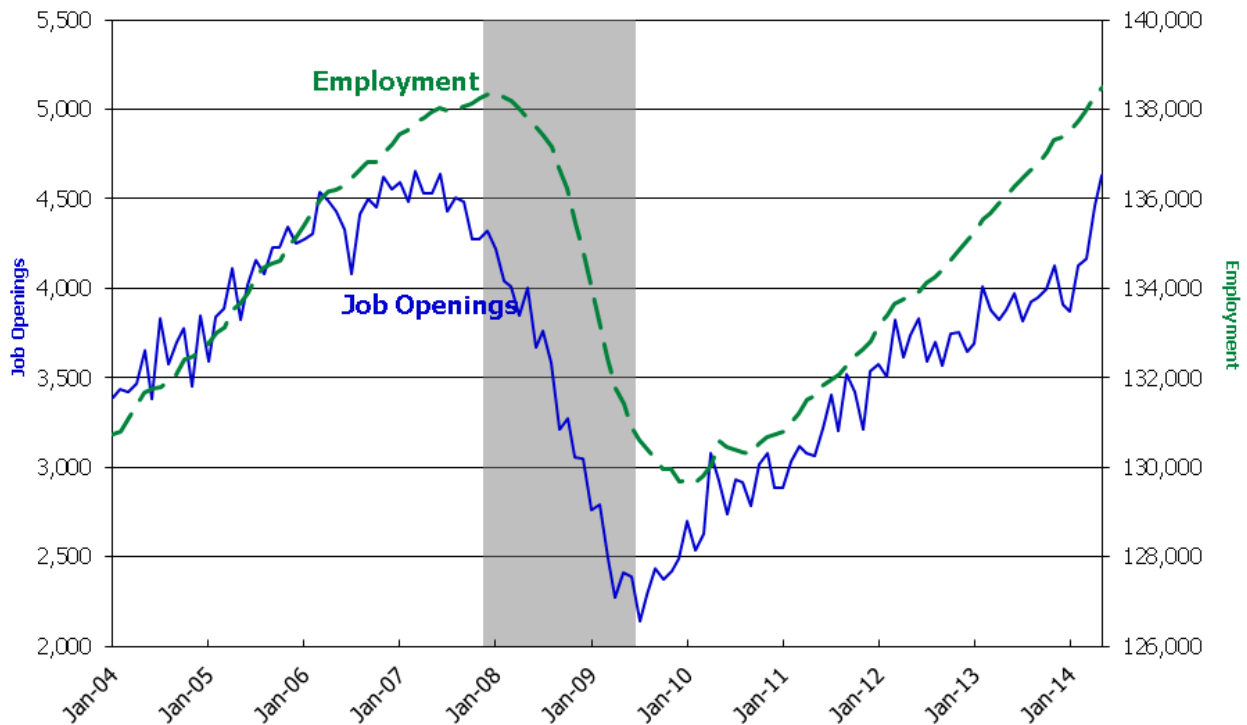


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey and Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, July 8, 2014.

Note: Shaded area represents recession as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).

- The ratio between the unemployment level and job openings level changes over time.
- When the most recent recession began (December 2007), the number of unemployed persons per job opening was 1.8. When the recession ended (June 2009), there were 6.2 unemployed persons per job opening.
- The unemployed persons per job opening ratio has trended downward since the end of the recession and was 2.1 in May 2014.

**Chart 2. Job openings and employment**  
**Seasonally adjusted, in thousands**

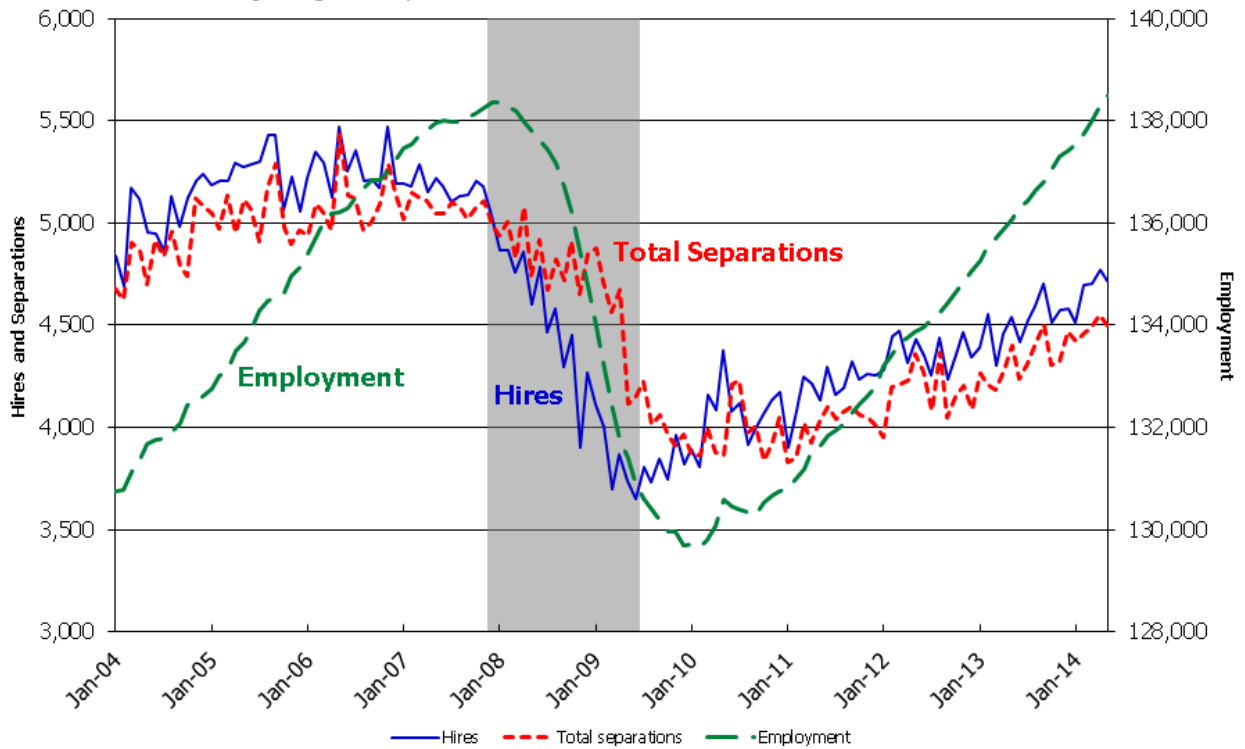


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics and Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, July 8, 2014.

Note: Shaded area represents recession as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).

- The number of job openings declined to a series low in July 2009, one month after the official end of the most recent recession. Employment continued to decline after the end of the recession, reaching a low point in February 2010.
- Job Openings have trended upward since their series low in July 2009, and have returned to prerecession levels. In May 2014, there were 4.6 million job openings.

**Chart 3. Hires, total separations, and employment**  
**Seasonally adjusted, in thousands**

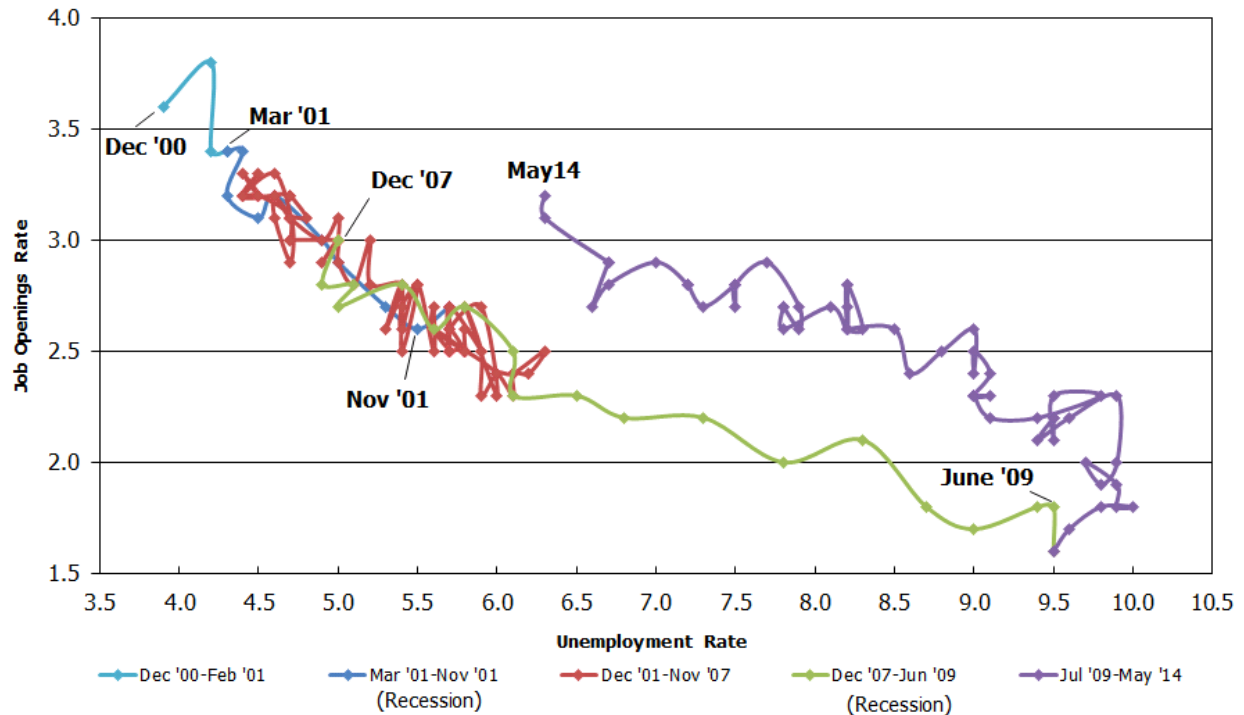


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics and Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, July 8, 2014.

Note: Shaded area represents recession as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).

- Hires and total separations remained below prerecession levels in May 2014.
- In May, there were 4.7 million hires, which was 29 percent higher than the trough in June 2009.
- There were 4.5 million total separations in May.

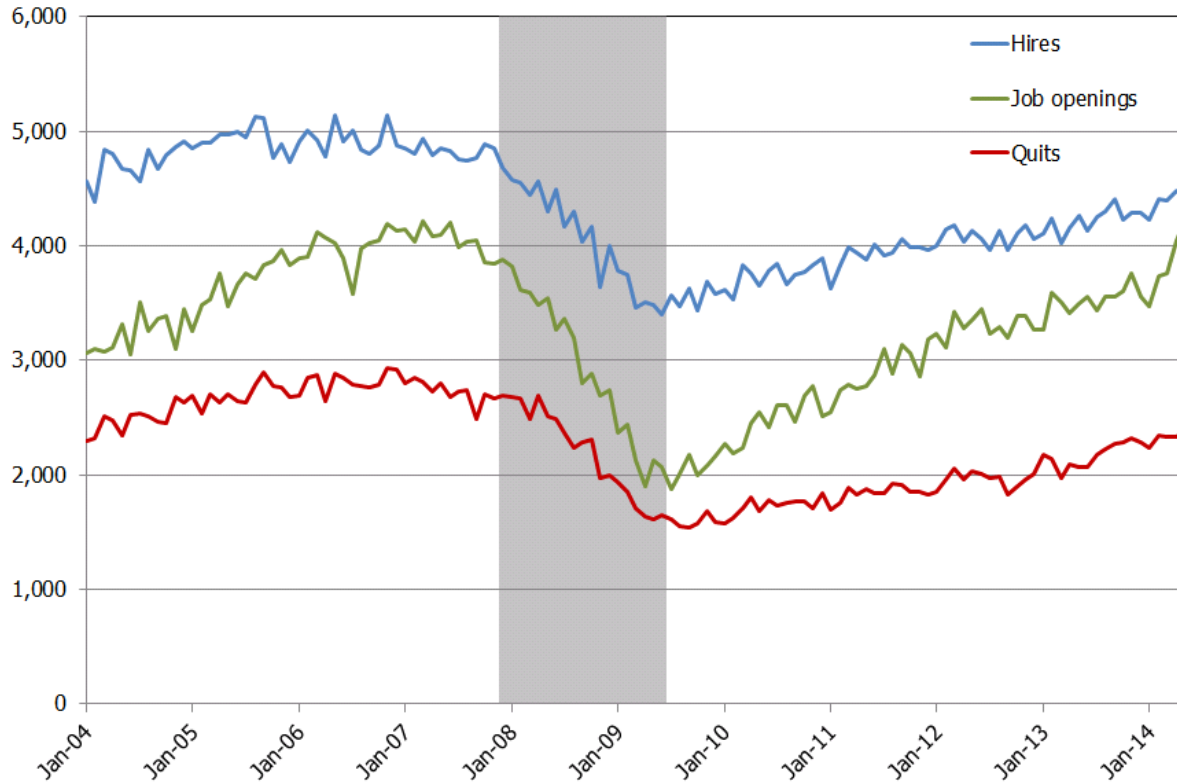
**Chart 4. The Beveridge Curve (job openings vs. unemployment rate)  
Seasonally adjusted**



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey and Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, July 8, 2014.

- This graph plots the job openings rate against the unemployment rate. This graphical representation is known as the Beveridge Curve, named after the British economist William Henry Beveridge (1879–1963). **The economy's position on the downward sloping Beveridge Curve reflects the state of the business cycle.**
- During an expansion, the unemployment rate is low and the job openings rate is high. Conversely, during a contraction, the unemployment rate is high and the job openings rate is low. The position of the curve is determined by the efficiency of the labor market. For example, a greater mismatch between available jobs and the unemployed in terms of skills or location would cause the curve to shift outward (up and toward the right).
- From the start of the most recent recession in December 2007 through the end of 2009, each **month's** point on the curve moved lower and further to the right as the job openings rate declined and the unemployment rate rose. From 2010 to the present, the point moved up and to the left as the job openings rate increased and the unemployment rate decreased.
- In May 2014, the job openings rate was 3.2 percent and the unemployment rate was 6.3 percent.

**Chart 5. Total private job openings, hires, and quits**  
**Seasonally adjusted, in thousands**

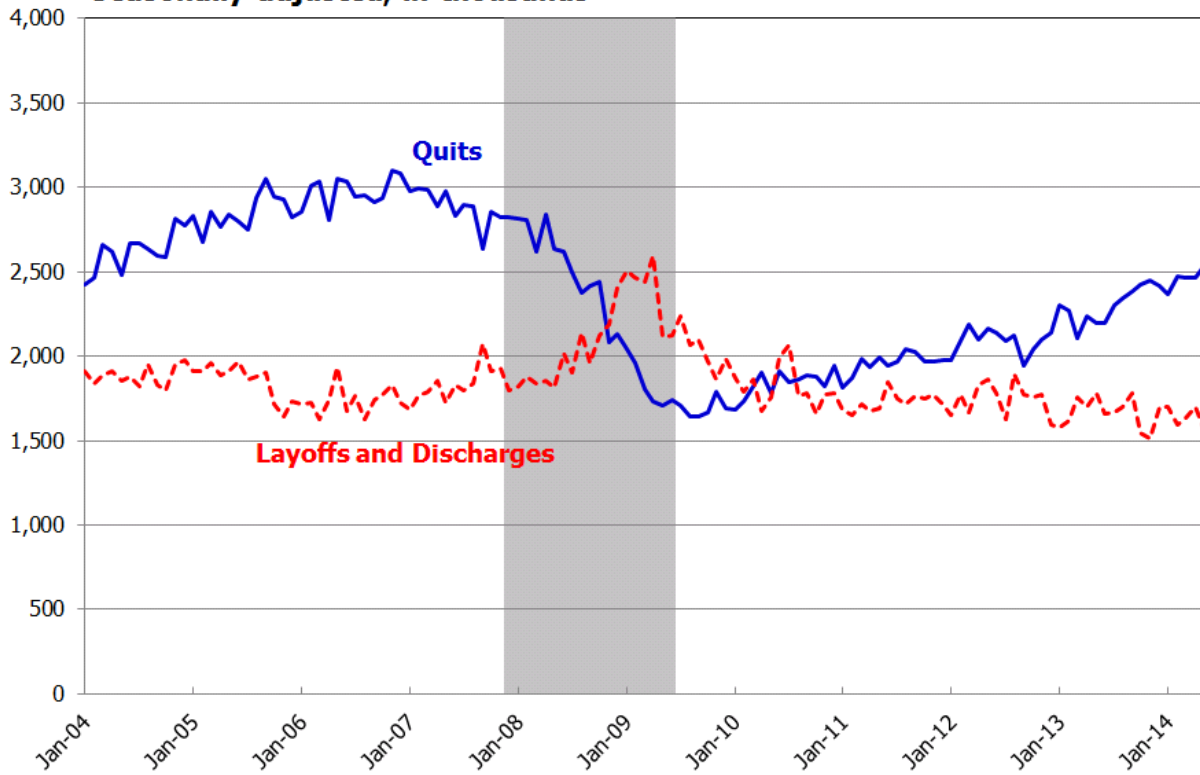


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, July 8, 2014.

Note: Shaded area represents recession as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).

- Since reaching their respective postrecession troughs, the number of job openings has steadily increased and the numbers of hires and quits have increased slightly.
- Job openings in the private sector have increased since their low in July 2009, returning to prerecession levels at 4.2 million in May 2014.
- Hires in the private sector have increased 30 percent since their low in June 2009, but remain below prerecession levels at 4.4 million in May 2014.
- Quits in the private sector have increased 55 percent since their low in September 2009, but remain below prerecession levels at 2.4 million in May 2014.

**Chart 6. Quits and layoffs and discharges**  
**Seasonally adjusted, in thousands**

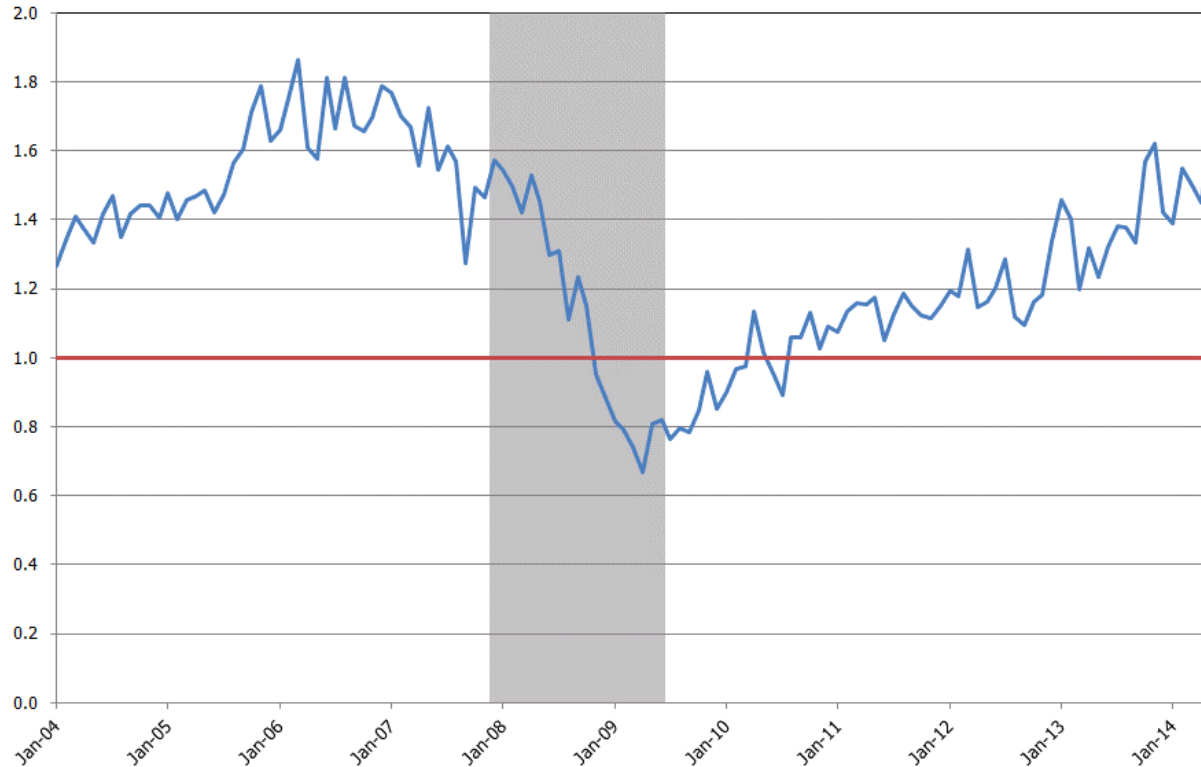


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, July 8, 2014.

Note: Shaded area represents recession as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).

- Quits are generally voluntary separations initiated by employees. Therefore, the quits rate can **serve as a measure of workers' willingness** or ability to leave jobs.
- The number of quits has exceeded the number of layoffs and discharges for most of the 12-year JOLTS history. During the latest recession, this relationship changed as layoffs and discharges outnumbered quits from November 2008 through March 2010.
- In May 2014, there were 2.5 million quits, still well below the 2.8 million quits in December 2007, the first month of the recession.
- The total number of nonfarm layoffs and discharges have returned to their prerecession level at 1.6 million in May.

**Chart 7. Ratio of quits per layoff and discharge  
Seasonally adjusted**



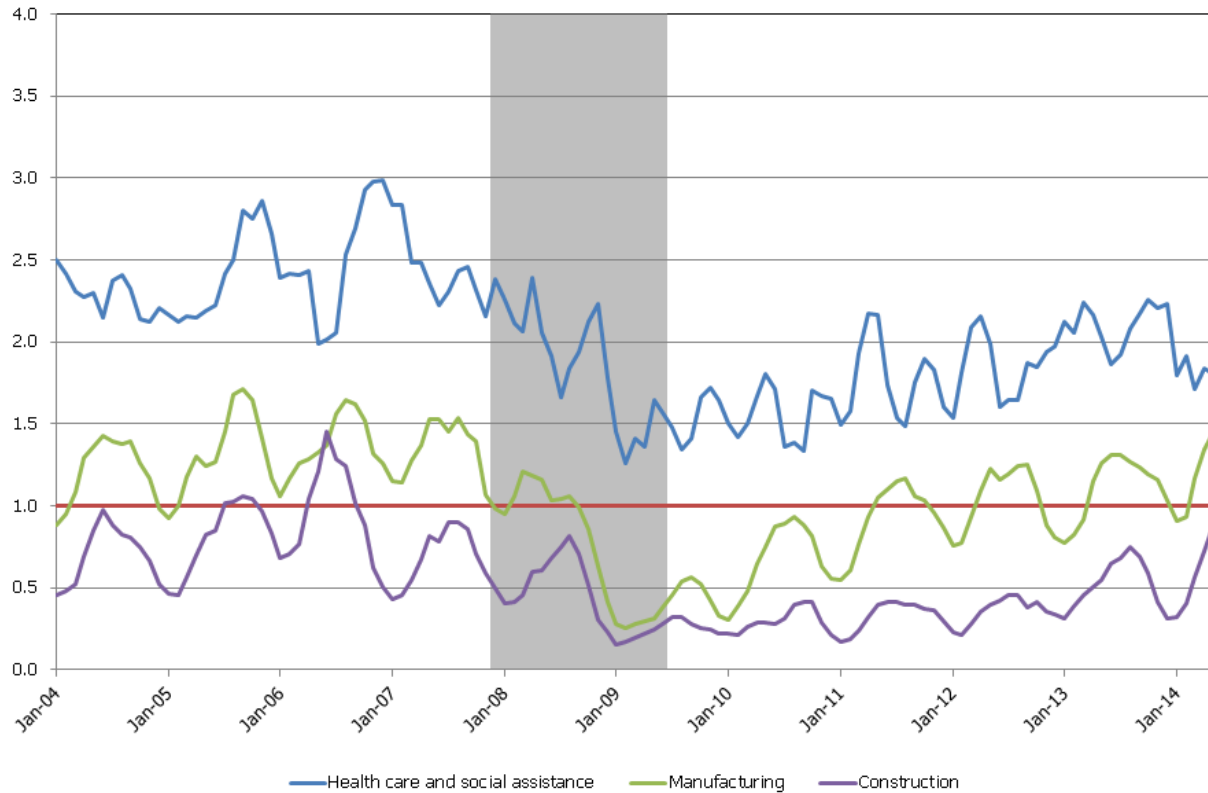
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, July 8, 2014.

Note: Shaded area represents recession as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).

- Quits are generally voluntary separations initiated by employees. Quits are procyclical, rising with an improving economy and falling with a faltering economy. Layoffs and discharges are generally involuntary separations initiated by an employer and are countercyclical, moving in the opposite direction of quits. The ratio of the number of quits to the number of layoffs and discharges provides insight into churn in the labor market over the business cycle.
- In March 2006, before the recession, the ratio was highest at 1.9 with nearly two people quitting their job for each person laid off or discharged.
- From November 2008 through March 2010, layoffs and discharges outnumbered quits and the ratio fell below 1.0. The ratio was lowest at 0.7 in April 2009 toward the end of the recession, with less than one person quitting for each person laid off or discharged.
- The quits per layoff and discharge ratio was 1.6 in May 2014.



**Chart 8. Ratio of quits per layoff and discharge, selected industries  
Not seasonally adjusted, 3-month moving average**



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, July 8, 2014.

Note 1: Shaded area represents recession as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).

Note 2: Seasonally adjusted data are not available for layoffs and discharges by industry.

- Although all industries experienced a change in the ratio of quits to layoffs and discharges over the business cycle, there are also ongoing differences among the industries regardless of the economic climate.
- The ratio for health care and social assistance remains above 1.0 throughout the business cycle and for the history of JOLTS. The high ratio suggests a need for workers as evidenced by constant voluntary turnover and few layoffs and discharges.
- The ratio for manufacturing goes above and below 1.0 across the business cycle, indicating that both quits and layoffs and discharges in the industry depend on the economy.
- The ratio for construction is below 1.0 for nearly every month in the JOLTS history, indicating that layoffs and discharges are more common than quits in this industry as workers are routinely laid off as projects are completed, and then rehired elsewhere for new projects.