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WORK EXPERIENCE OF THE POPULATION - 2015

A total of 162.3 million persons worked at some point during 2015, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. The proportion of the civilian noninstitutional population age 16 and over who worked at some time during 2015 rose to 64.2 percent, up from 63.6 percent in 2014. The number of persons who experienced some unemployment during 2015 declined by 783,000 to 16.9 million.

These data are based on information collected in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a monthly survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The ASEC collects information on employment and unemployment experienced during the prior calendar year. Additional information about the CPS and the ASEC, including concepts and definitions, is provided in the Technical Note.

Highlights from the 2015 data:

- The proportion of workers who worked full time, year round in 2015 was 68.0 percent, about unchanged from the prior year. (See table 1.)
- The "work-experience unemployment rate"—defined as the number of persons unemployed at some time during the year as a proportion of the number of persons who worked or looked for work during the year—declined by 0.7 percentage point to 10.2 percent in 2015. (See table 3.)
- About 3.2 million individuals looked for a job but did not work at all in 2015, down from 3.7 million in 2014. (See table 3.)

Persons with Employment

Overall, 64.2 percent of the population worked in 2015, up from 63.6 percent in 2014. The proportions of both men and women who worked at some point during 2015 increased to 70.0 percent and 58.8 percent, respectively. (See table 1.)

The proportions of Whites (64.9 percent) and Hispanics (65.5 percent) who worked at some time during 2015 increased from 2014, while the shares of Blacks (60.6 percent) and Asians (64.0 percent) changed little. (See table 2.)

Among those with work experience in 2015, 79.6 percent usually worked full time, unchanged from a year earlier. In 2015, men (85.6 percent) continued to be more likely than women (73.0 percent) to work full time during the year. These proportions were little changed from the prior year. (See table 1.)

Of the total who worked during 2015, 78.6 percent were employed year round (working 50 to 52 weeks, either full or part time), about unchanged from a year earlier. In 2015, the percentages of men (80.9 percent) and women (76.0 percent) working year round were about unchanged.

Persons with Unemployment

Overall, 165.5 million persons worked or looked for work at some time in 2015, up by 2.7 million from the prior year. Of those, 16.9 million experienced some unemployment during 2015, down by 783,000 from 2014. (See table 3.)

The work-experience unemployment rate (those looking for work during the year as a percent of those who worked or looked for work during the year) continued to decline. At 10.2 percent in 2015, the work-experience unemployment rate was 0.7 percentage point lower than in 2014. The work-experience unemployment rates for Whites (9.5 percent), Asians (7.3 percent), and Hispanics (12.1 percent) declined from 2014 to 2015, while the rate for Blacks (15.0 percent) changed little. (See tables 3 and 4.)

In 2015, men continued to have a higher work-experience unemployment rate than women, 10.4 percent versus 10.0 percent. Among Whites and Blacks, the rates for men were higher than the rates for women. Among Asians, the rate for women was higher than the rate for men, while the rates for Hispanic men and women were little different from each other.

Among those who experienced unemployment in 2015, the median number of weeks spent looking for work was 14.7. The number of persons who looked for a job but did not work at all in 2015 declined by 534,000 over the year to 3.2 million. Of the 13.8 million individuals who worked during 2015 and also experienced unemployment, 21.6 percent had two or more spells of unemployment, little different than the share in 2014. (See table 3.)

Technical Note

The data presented in this release were collected in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a monthly sample survey of about 60,000 eligible households, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Data from the CPS are used to obtain the monthly estimates of the nation's employment and unemployment levels. The ASEC, conducted in the months of February through April, includes questions about work activity during the prior calendar year. For instance, data collected in 2016 refer to the 2015 calendar year. Because the reference period is a full year, the number of persons with some employment or unemployment greatly exceeds the average levels for any given month, which are based on a 1week reference period, and the corresponding annual average of the monthly estimates. As shown below, for example, the number experiencing any unemployment was about twice the number unemployed in an average month during the year.

	Employed	Unemployed
2015 estimates (in thousands)		
Annual average of		
monthly estimates	148,834	8,296
Annual supplement data	162,329	16,925

In addition, estimates from the supplement differ from those obtained in the basic CPS because the questions used to classify workers as either employed or unemployed are different. More important, perhaps, is that the supplement contains fewer questions for categorizing respondents. In regard to unemployment in particular, the supplement has no questions on the type of job search activity or on the respondent's availability to work. Also, individuals can be counted as both employed and unemployed in the work experience supplement data, whereas, for a specific monthly reference week, each person is only counted in one category and employment activity takes precedence over job search activity.

The data presented in this release are not strictly comparable with data for earlier years due to the introduction of updated population controls used in the CPS. The population controls are updated each year in January to reflect the latest information about population change. Additional information is available at www.bls.gov/cps/documentation.htm#pop.

Reliability of the estimates

Statistics based on the CPS are subject to both sampling and nonsampling error. When a sample, rather than the entire population, is surveyed, there is a chance that the sample estimates may differ from the true population values they represent. The component of this difference that occurs because samples differ by chance is known as *sampling error*, and its variability is measured by the standard error of the estimate. There is about a 90-percent chance, or level of confidence, that an estimate based on a sample will differ by no more than 1.6 standard errors from the true population value because of sampling error. BLS analyses are generally conducted at the 90-percent level of confidence.

The CPS data also are affected by *nonsampling error*. Nonsampling error can occur for many reasons, including the failure to sample a segment of the population, inability to obtain information for all respondents in the sample, inability or unwillingness of respondents to provide correct information, and errors made in the collection or processing of the data.

A full discussion of the reliability of data from the CPS and information on estimating standard errors is available at www.bls.gov/cps/documentation.htm#reliability.

Concepts and definitions

The principle concepts and definitions used in connection with the data in this release are described briefly below.

Persons who worked. In the 2016 supplement, persons are considered to have worked if they responded "yes" to either the question "Did you work at a job or business at any time during 2015?" or "Did you do any temporary, part-time, or seasonal work even for a few days during 2015?"

Unemployed persons. Persons who worked during the year but not in every week are counted as unemployed if they also reported looking for work or being on layoff from a job during the year. Those who reported no work activity during the year are considered unemployed if they responded "yes" to the question "Even though you did not work in 2015, did you spend any time trying to find a job or on layoff?"

Work-experience unemployment rate. The number of persons unemployed at some time during the year as a proportion of the number of persons who worked or looked for work during the year.

Labor force participants. Persons who either worked or were unemployed during the year.

Usual full- and part-time employment. These data refer to the number of hours a worker typically works during most weeks of the year. Workers are classified as full time if they usually worked 35 hours or more in a week; part-time employment refers to workers whose typical workweek was between 1 and 34 hours.

Year-round and part-year employment. Workers are classified as year round if they worked 50 to 52 weeks. Part-year employment refers to workers who worked fewer than 50 weeks.

Other information

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Service: (800) 877-8339.

Table 1. Work experience of the population during the year by sex and extent of employment, 2014-15

[Numbers in thousands]

	Tot	al	Me	en	Won	nen
Extent of Employment	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015
NUMBER OF EMPLOYED						
Civilian noninstitutional population	250,080	252,766	120,738	122,110	129,342	130,656
Total who worked or looked for work	162,757	165,495	85,602	87,149	77,156	78,347
Percent of the population	65.1	65.5	70.9	71.4	59.7	60.0
Total who worked during the year ¹	159,056	162,329	83,640	85,518	75,416	76,811
Percent of the population	63.6	64.2	69.3	70.0	58.3	58.8
Full time ²	126,566	129,254	71,710	73,181	54,856	56,074
	107,947	110,308	61,802	63,173	46,146	47,135
	1,844	2,200	1,090	1,374	754	826
	5,242	5,509	2,754	2,648	2,488	2,860
	4,179	3,861	2,142	1,992	2,037	1,869
	4,417	4,468	2,324	2,482	2,092	1,985
	2,936	2,909	1,598	1,510	1,339	1,399
Part time ³	32,490	33,075	11,930	12,338	20,560	20,737
	17,127	17,280	6,004	6,028	11,123	11,252
	886	882	342	298	544	584
	2,820	2,809	894	1,059	1,926	1,750
	2,825	2,775	1,072	1,054	1,753	1,720
	4,376	4,567	1,730	1,773	2,645	2,794
	4,458	4,762	1,889	2,126	2,569	2,637
PERCENT DISTRIBUTION	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total who worked during the year ¹ Full time ² 50 to 52 weeks 48 to 49 weeks 40 to 47 weeks 27 to 39 weeks 14 to 26 weeks 1 to 13 weeks	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	79.6	79.6	85.7	85.6	72.7	73.0
	67.9	68.0	73.9	73.9	61.2	61.4
	1.2	1.4	1.3	1.6	1.0	1.1
	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.1	3.3	3.7
	2.6	2.4	2.6	2.3	2.7	2.4
	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.6
	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.8
Part time ³	20.4	20.4	14.3	14.4	27.3	27.0
	10.8	10.6	7.2	7.0	14.7	14.6
	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.7	0.8
	1.8	1.7	1.1	1.2	2.6	2.3
	1.8	1.7	1.3	1.2	2.3	2.2
	2.8	2.8	2.1	2.1	3.5	3.6
	2.8	2.9	2.3	2.5	3.4	3.4

¹ Time worked includes paid vacation and sick leave.
 ² Usually worked 35 hours or more per week.
 ³ Usually worked 1 to 34 hours per week.
 NOTE: Data refer to persons 16 years and over. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

Table 2. Work experience of the population during the year by race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, 2014-15

[Numbers in thousands]

Evient of employment room and there are not attended.		tal	Men		Women	
Extent of employment, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015
WHITE						
Civilian noninstitutional population	196,434	197,883	95,899	96,722	100,535	101,161
Total who worked or looked for work	128,576	130,378	68,986	69,916	59,590	60,462
Percent of the population	65.5	65.9	71.9	72.3	59.3	59.8
Total who worked during the year ¹ Percent of the population	126,174 64.2	128,343 64.9	67,703 70.6	68,847 71.2	58,471 58.2	59,496 58.8
	04.2	04.9	70.0	71.2	50.2	56.0
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	79.4	79.5	86.0	85.9	71.7	72.0
50 to 52 weeks	67.8	67.8	74.3	74.2	60.3	60.4
27 to 49 weeks	7.1	7.2	7.2	7.1	7.0	7.3
1 to 26 weeks	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.3
Part time ³	20.6	20.5	14.0	14.1	28.3	28.0
50 to 52 weeks	10.9	10.8	7.0	6.8	15.4	15.4
27 to 49 weeks	4.3	4.1	2.8	2.8	6.0	5.5
1 to 26 weeks	5.5	5.7	4.2	4.4	6.9	7.1
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN		-				
Civilian noninstitutional population	31.257	31.750	14.203	14.455	17.054	17,295
Total who worked or looked for work	19,575	20,034	9,081	9,397	10,494	10,636
Percent of the population	62.6	63.1	63.9	65.0	61.5	61.5
Total who worked during the year ¹	18,680	19,229	8,618	8,972	10,062	10,258
Percent of the population	59.8	60.6	60.7	62.1	59.0	59.3
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	80.3	79.6	83.1	82.5	77.9	77.0
50 to 52 weeks	67.6	67.5	70.1	70.3	65.4	65.1
27 to 49 weeks	7.0	6.9	6.8	6.7	7.1	7.0
1 to 26 weeks	5.8	5.2	6.2	5.5	5.4	4.9
Part time ³	19.7	20.4	16.9	17.5	22.1	23.0
50 to 52 weeks	10.3	10.2	8.9	8.6	11.6	11.
27 to 49 weeks	3.4	3.8	2.8	3.1	3.9	4.3
1 to 26 weeks	6.0	6.5	5.2	5.7	6.6	7.2
ASIAN						
Civilian noninstitutional population	14.425	14.840	6.803	6.961	7.622	7.879
Total who worked or looked for work	9,406	9,658	4,933	5,100	4.473	4.558
Percent of the population.	65.2	65.1	72.5	73.3	58.7	57.9
Total who worked during the year ¹	9.195	9.495	4,821	5,035	4,375	4.460
Percent of the population.	63.7	64.0	70.9	72.3	57.4	56.6
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	82.3	83.2	88.4	88.4	75.6	77.3
50 to 52 weeks	72.2	73.4	78.4 5.9	79.6	65.4	66.4
27 to 49 weeks	6.1 4.0	5.5 4.2	5.9 4.1	4.8 4.0	6.3 3.9	6.4 4.5
1 to 26 weeks	4.0	4.2 16.8	11.6	4.0 11.6	3.9 24.4	4.: 22.
Part time ³	9.6	9.7	6.4	6.5	13.2	13.2
50 to 52 weeks		5.7				
50 to 52 weeks		20	22	1 8	<u>4 8</u>	<u>/ 1</u>
50 to 52 weeks 27 to 49 weeks 1 to 26 weeks	3.4 4.7	2.9 4.3	2.2 3.1	1.8 3.3	4.8 6.5	4.1 5.5

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Work experience of the population during the year by race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, 2014-15 --Continued

[Numbers in thousands]

	То	Total		Men		Women	
Extent of employment, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	
HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY							
Civilian noninstitutional population Total who worked or looked for work Percent of the population Total who worked during the year ¹ Percent of the population Percent who worked during the year ¹ Full time ² 50 to 52 weeks	64.6 100.0 80.6 67.5	40,382 26,976 66.8 26,459 65.5 100.0 80.5 67.5 8.1	19,601 14,895 76.0 14,527 74.1 100.0 86.3 73.0	20,112 15,255 75.8 15,011 74.6 100.0 87.0 73.7 8.7	19,722 11,216 56.9 10,886 55.2 100.0 72.9 60.1	20,270 11,721 57.8 11,448 56.5 100.0 72.0 59.4	
27 to 49 weeks 1 to 26 weeks Part time ³ 50 to 52 weeks 27 to 49 weeks 1 to 26 weeks	8.1 5.0 19.4 10.8 3.5 5.1	8.1 4.9 19.5 10.8 3.3 5.3	8.6 4.7 13.7 7.4 2.6 3.7	8.7 4.6 13.0 6.6 2.4 4.0	7.5 5.3 27.1 15.5 4.7 6.8	7.4 5.2 28.0 16.4 4.6 7.1	

¹ Time worked includes paid vacation and sick leave.
 ² Usually worked 35 hours or more per week.
 ³ Usually worked 1 to 34 hours per week.
 NOTE: Estimates for the above race groups (White, Black or African American, and Asian) do not sum to totals shown in table 1 because data are not presented for all races. Persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

Table 3. Extent of unemployment during the year by sex, 2014-15

[Numbers in thousands]

Tot		tal	Me	Men		nen
Extent of unemployment	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015
NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED						
Total who worked or looked for work	162,757	165,495	85,602	87,149	77,156	78,347
Percent with unemployment	10.9	10.2	11.4	10.4	10.3	10.0
Total with unemployment	17,708	16,925	9,784	9,063	7,924	7,862
Did not work but looked for work	3,701	3,167	1,962	1,630	1,740	1,536
1 to 14 weeks	1,199	1,112	550	487	649	625
15 weeks or more	2,502	2,054	1,412	1,143	1,090	911
Worked during the year.	14,006	13,759	7,822	7,433	6,185	6,326
Year-round workers ¹ with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment.	392	392	286	245	106	147
Part-year workers ² with unemployment.	13,614	13,366	7,536	7,188	6,079	6,179
1 to 4 weeks.	2,365	2,618	1,227	1,367	1,138	1,251
5 to 10 weeks.	1,999	2,102	1,168	1,159	831	943
11 to 14 weeks.	1,889	1,916	1,095	993	794	923
15 to 26 weeks.	3,855	3,572	2,124	2,000	1,731	1,571
27 weeks or more.	3,507	3,159	1,924	1,668	1,584	1,491
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	16.3	14.7	15.9	14.8	16.8	14.6
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	2,872	2,971	1,787	1,762	1,084	1,209
2 spells	1,472	1,376	934	767	539	609
3 spells or more	1,399	1,595	854	995	546	600
PERCENT DISTRIBUTION						
Did not work but looked for work	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1 to 14 weeks	32.4	35.1	28.0	29.9	37.3	40.7
15 weeks or more	67.6	64.9	72.0	70.1	62.7	59.3
Worked during the year	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ¹ with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	2.8	2.9	3.7	3.3	1.7	2.3
Part-year workers ² with unemployment	97.2	97.1	96.3	96.7	98.3	97.7
1 to 4 weeks	16.9	19.0	15.7	18.4	18.4	19.8
5 to 10 weeks	14.3	15.3	14.9	15.6	13.4	14.9
11 to 14 weeks	13.5	13.9	14.0	13.4	12.8	14.6
15 to 26 weeks	27.5	26.0	27.1	26.9	28.0	24.8
27 weeks or more	25.0	23.0	24.6	22.4	25.6	23.6
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	20.5	21.6	22.9	23.7	17.5	19.1
2 spells	10.5	10.0	11.9	10.3	8.7	9.6
3 spells or more	10.0	11.6	10.9	13.4	8.8	9.5

¹ Worked 50 or 51 weeks.
 ² Worked less than 50 weeks.
 NOTE: Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

Table 4. Extent of unemployment during the year by race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, 2014-15

[Numbers in thousands]

Estant of more large and some and the same set of the state	То	tal	Men		Women	
Extent of unemployment, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015
WHITE						
Total who worked or looked for work Percent with unemployment	128,576 10.0	130,378 9.5	68,986 10.5	69,916 9.7	59,590 9.5	60,462 9.3
Total with unemployment Did not work but looked for work Worked during the year	12,920 2,402 10,518	12,409 2,035 10,374	7,246 1,283 5,962	6,764 1,069 5,694	5,675 1,119 4,556	5,645 966 4,680
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	15.3	14.1	14.9	14.3	15.8	13.9
Percent who worked during the year ¹ Year-round workers ² with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment Part-year workers ³ with unemployment 1 to 4 weeks 5 to 14 weeks 15 weeks or more	100.0 3.1 96.9 17.6 28.7 50.6	100.0 3.0 97.0 19.9 30.2 46.8	100.0 4.0 96.0 16.4 29.9 49.8	100.0 3.6 96.4 18.8 30.1 47.5	100.0 2.0 98.0 19.1 27.2 51.7	100.0 2.4 97.6 21.2 30.4 46.0
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	21.6	21.4	23.6	23.2	18.9	19.1
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN Total who worked or looked for work Percent with unemployment Total with unemployment Did not work but looked for work	19,575 15.6 3,052 895	20,034 15.0 2,995 804	9,081 17.5 1,589 463	9,397 16.2 1,523 426	10,494 13.9 1,463 433	10,636 13.8 1,473 379
Worked during the year Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	2,156 21.6	2,191 19.5	1,126 20.7	1,097 20.3	1,031 22.8	1,094 18.9
Percent who worked during the year ¹ Year-round workers ² with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment Part-year workers ³ with unemployment 1 to 4 weeks 5 to 14 weeks 15 weeks or more With 2 spells or more of unemployment	100.0 2.3 97.7 12.7 22.2 62.8 18.0	100.0 2.2 97.8 14.8 58.2 22.0	100.0 3.5 96.5 12.1 23.1 61.4 20.6	20.3 100.0 2.6 97.4 16.2 22.4 58.8 25.0	100.0 1.0 99.0 13.4 21.2 64.4 15.3	100.0 1.8 98.2 13.4 27.2 57.6 19.1
ASIAN						
Total who worked or looked for work Percent with unemployment	9,406 9.1	9,658 7.3	4,933 9.4	5,100 6.5	4,473 8.7	4,558 8.3
Total with unemployment Did not work but looked for work Worked during the year	852 210 642	709 163 545	462 112 350	330 65 265	390 98 292	379 99 280
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	16.8	14.6	15.2	14.1	18.9	15.1
Percent who worked during the year ¹ Year-round workers ² with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment Part-year workers ³ with unemployment 1 to 4 weeks 5 to 14 weeks 15 weeks or more	100.0 1.6 98.4 18.5 25.8 54.1	100.0 2.6 97.4 21.5 27.2 48.8	100.0 2.5 97.5 16.8 30.2 50.6	100.0 2.2 97.8 21.5 28.9 47.4	100.0 0.6 99.4 20.5 20.6 58.3	100.0 2.9 97.1 21.4 25.5 50.2
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	13.2	18.3	13.9	19.5	12.4	17.2

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 4. Extent of unemployment during the year by race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, 2014-15 -- Continued

[Numbers in thousands]

	То	tal	Men		Women	
Extent of unemployment, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015
HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY						
Total who worked or looked for work Percent with unemployment.	26,110 13.5	26,976 12.1	14,895 13.8	15,255 11.8	11,216 13.1	11,721 12.4
Total with unemployment Did not work but looked for work Worked during the year	3,531 697 2,834	3,257 517 2,740	2,059 367 1,692	1,799 244 1,555	1,472 330 1,143	1,458 273 1,185
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	15.9	16.0	15.8	15.6	16.2	16.7
Percent who worked during the year ¹ Year-round workers ² with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment Part-year workers ³ with unemployment 1 to 4 weeks 5 to 14 weeks 15 weeks or more	2.8 97.2 16.8	100.0 2.7 97.3 18.0 26.9 52.4	100.0 3.8 96.2 16.5 28.4 51.4	100.0 3.3 96.7 16.8 28.4 51.4	100.0 1.4 98.6 17.2 29.1 52.2	100.0 2.0 98.0 19.6 24.8 53.6
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	22.5	23.8	25.8	26.5	17.7	20.3

¹ Time worked includes paid vacation and sick leave.
 ² Worked 50 or 51 weeks.
 ³ Worked less than 50 weeks.
 NOTE: Estimates for the above race groups (White, Black or African American, and Asian) do not sum to totals shown in table 3 because data are not presented for all races. Persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.