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EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUTH — SUMMER 2026

In July 2026, 53.8 percent of young people (those ages 16 to 24) were employed, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. This measure was little changed from 53.1 percent in July 2025. (The month of July typically is the summertime peak in youth employment.) The youth unemployment rate was 9.1 percent in July 2026, lower than the rate in July 2025 (10.8 percent). (Because this analysis focuses on the seasonal changes in youth employment and unemployment that occur each spring and summer, the data are not seasonally adjusted.)

Labor Force

The youth labor force—16- to 24-year-olds working or actively looking for work—grows sharply between April and July each year. During these months, large numbers of high school and college students search for or take summer jobs, and many graduates enter the labor market to look for or begin permanent employment. In 2026, the youth labor force grew by 2.1 million, or 9.8 percent, from April (21.4 million) to July (23.5 million). (See table 1.)

The labor force participation rate for all youth was 59.1 percent in July 2026, little different from a year earlier (59.5 percent). (The labor force participation rate is the proportion of the civilian noninstitutional population that is working or actively looking for work.) (See table 2.)

The July 2026 labor force participation rates for 16- to 24-year-old men (61.1 percent) and women (57.2 percent) were little changed over the year. Continuing a long-standing pattern among the major groups, White youth (61.5 percent) had the highest labor force participation rate, and Asian youth had the lowest (47.4 percent) in July 2026. The participation rates for White (61.5 percent), Black (53.3 percent), Asian (47.4 percent), and Hispanic (56.2 percent) youth were little changed over the year.

Employment

There were 21.3 million employed 16- to 24-year-olds in July 2026. Between April and July, the number of employed youth rose by 1.8 million, or 9.1 percent. The employment-population ratio for youth—the proportion of the 16- to 24-year-old civilian noninstitutional population with a job—was 53.8 percent in July 2026, little different than the ratio of 53.1 percent from a year earlier. (See tables 1 and 2.)

In July 2026, the employment-population ratio for young men (55.7 percent) remained higher than the ratio for young women (51.8 percent). White youth were more likely to be employed (56.4 percent) than were Black (46.9 percent), Asian (42.2 percent), or Hispanic (51.2 percent) youth. The employment-population ratios for all these groups were little changed from a year earlier.

In July 2026, the largest share of employed 16- to 24-year-olds worked in the leisure and hospitality industry (25 percent, or 5.3 million). An additional 18 percent of employed youth worked in the retail trade industry, and 14 percent worked in education and health services. (See table 3.)

Youth employment across industries varied slightly by race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. In July 2026, leisure and hospitality represented the largest industry for young workers who are White (25 percent), Black (23 percent), or Hispanic (25 percent); while retail trade represented the second-largest share for all these groups. By contrast, the shares of Asian youth employment were highest in education and health services (22 percent) and in leisure and hospitality (20 percent).

Unemployment

Typically, the number of unemployed young people increases with the onset of summer, as people who were not in the labor force while attending school begin seeking employment. To be classified as unemployed, a person must be available for work and either looking for work or on temporary layoff. From April to July 2026, the number of unemployed youth rose by 322,000 to 2.1 million. About 7 in 10 of the unemployed youth were looking for full-time work in July 2026. (See tables 1 and 2.)

The youth unemployment rate, at 9.1 percent in July 2026, was 1.7 percentage points lower than the rate in July 2025 (10.8 percent). The July 2026 unemployment rates for young men (8.8 percent), White youth (8.3 percent), and Hispanic youth (8.9 percent) were lower than in the prior summer, while the rates for young women (9.4 percent), Black youth (12.0 percent), and Asian youth (11.0 percent) showed little change.

Technical Note

The estimates in this news release were obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS), a national sample survey of about 60,000 eligible households conducted monthly for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) by the U.S. Census Bureau. The data in this news release relate to the employment status of youth (16- to 24-year-olds) during the months of April-July. This period was selected as being the most representative time frame in which to measure the full summertime transition from school to work. July is the peak summer month of youth employment.

Beginning in January of each year, data reflect revised population controls used in the CPS. Additional information about population controls is available on the BLS website at www.bls.gov/cps/documentation.htm#pop.

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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.

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

Definitions

The principal definitions used in this news release are described briefly below.

Employed. Employed people are all those who, during the survey reference week (which is generally the week including the 12th day of the month), (a) did any work at all as paid employees; (b) worked in their own business, profession, or on their own farm; (c) worked 15 hours or more as unpaid workers in a business or a farm operated by a family member in their household. People who were temporarily absent from their jobs because of illness, bad weather, vacation, labor dispute, or another reason also are counted as employed.

Unemployed. The unemployed are those who had no employment during the reference week, were available for work at that time, and had made specific efforts to find employment sometime during the 4-week period ending with the reference week. People who were waiting to be recalled to a job from which they had been laid off need not have been looking for work to be classified as unemployed. Looking for full-time work refers to 35 hours or more per week; part-time work refers to fewer than 35 hours per week.

Civilian labor force. This group comprises all people classified as employed or unemployed.

Unemployment rate. The unemployment rate is the number of unemployed people as a percent of the civilian labor force.

Labor force participation rate. The labor force participation rate is the labor force as a percent of the population.

Employment-population ratio. The employment-population ratio is the employed as a percent of the population.

Not in the labor force. Included in this group are all people in the civilian noninstitutional population who are neither employed nor unemployed.

Industry and class of worker. This information applies to the job held during the reference week. People with two or more jobs are classified in the job at which they worked the greatest number of hours. Beginning with data for 2025, people are classified using the 2022 Census industry classification system. The class-of-worker breakdown assigns workers to the following categories: Private and government wage and salary workers, unincorporated self-employed workers, and unpaid family workers.

Wage and salary workers. Included in this group are people who receive wages, salary, commissions, tips, or pay in kind from a private employer or from a government entity.

Self-employed workers. Included in this group are those who work for profit or fees in their own unincorporated business, profession, trade, or farm. Only unincorporated self-employed are included in the self-employed category. Self-employed people whose businesses are incorporated are included with private wage and salary workers.

Unpaid family workers. Included in this group are people working without pay for 15 hours a week or more on a farm or in a business operated by a family member in their household.

Table 1. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 to 24 years of age by sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, April-July 2026

[Numbers in thousands. Data are not seasonally adjusted.]

Employment status, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	April	May	June	July	April-July changes	
					Number	Percent
TOTAL						
Civilian noninstitutional population	39,741	39,709	39,678	39,647	-94	-0.2
Civilian labor force	21,354	21,649	23,425	23,451	2,097	9.8
Participation rate	53.7	54.5	59.0	59.1	5.4	10.1
Employed	19,546	19,622	20,929	21,320	1,774	9.1
Employment-population ratio	49.2	49.4	52.7	53.8	4.6	9.3
Unemployed	1,809	2,027	2,496	2,131	322	17.8
Looking for full-time work	1,196	1,375	1,748	1,543	347	29.0
Looking for part-time work	612	652	749	588	-24	-3.9
Unemployment rate	8.5	9.4	10.7	9.1	0.6	7.1
Not in labor force	18,387	18,060	16,252	16,196	-2,191	-11.9
Men						
Civilian noninstitutional population	20,131	20,115	20,100	20,085	-46	-0.2
Civilian labor force	10,909	11,286	12,131	12,270	1,361	12.5
Participation rate	54.2	56.1	60.4	61.1	6.9	12.7
Employed	9,906	10,118	10,886	11,190	1,284	13.0
Employment-population ratio	49.2	50.3	54.2	55.7	6.5	13.2
Unemployed	1,004	1,169	1,245	1,080	76	7.6
Looking for full-time work	710	826	918	792	82	11.5
Looking for part-time work	293	342	327	288	-5	-1.7
Unemployment rate	9.2	10.4	10.3	8.8	-0.4	-4.3
Not in labor force	9,222	8,829	7,969	7,815	-1,407	-15.3
Women						
Civilian noninstitutional population	19,610	19,594	19,578	19,562	-48	-0.2
Civilian labor force	10,445	10,362	11,295	11,181	736	7.0
Participation rate	53.3	52.9	57.7	57.2	3.9	7.3
Employed	9,640	9,504	10,043	10,130	490	5.1
Employment-population ratio	49.2	48.5	51.3	51.8	2.6	5.3
Unemployed	805	858	1,252	1,051	246	30.6
Looking for full-time work	486	549	829	752	266	54.7
Looking for part-time work	319	310	422	299	-20	-6.3
Unemployment rate	7.7	8.3	11.1	9.4	1.7	22.1
Not in labor force	9,165	9,231	8,283	8,381	-784	-8.6
White						
Civilian noninstitutional population	27,216	27,187	27,159	27,132	-84	-0.3
Civilian labor force	15,104	15,451	16,614	16,680	1,576	10.4
Participation rate	55.5	56.8	61.2	61.5	6.0	10.8
Employed	14,002	14,140	15,001	15,301	1,299	9.3
Employment-population ratio	51.4	52.0	55.2	56.4	5.0	9.7
Unemployed	1,102	1,311	1,613	1,379	277	25.1
Looking for full-time work	695	890	1,131	1,000	305	43.9
Looking for part-time work	408	421	482	379	-29	-7.1
Unemployment rate	7.3	8.5	9.7	8.3	1.0	13.7
Not in labor force	12,111	11,735	10,546	10,452	-1,659	-13.7
Black or African American						
Civilian noninstitutional population	5,868	5,864	5,859	5,855	-13	-0.2
Civilian labor force	2,907	2,886	3,130	3,119	212	7.3
Participation rate	49.5	49.2	53.4	53.3	3.8	7.7
Employed	2,519	2,478	2,609	2,745	226	9.0
Employment-population ratio	42.9	42.3	44.5	46.9	4.0	9.3
Unemployed	389	408	520	375	-14	-3.6
Looking for full-time work	305	304	385	268	-37	-12.1
Looking for part-time work	84	104	135	107	23	27.4
Unemployment rate	13.4	14.1	16.6	12.0	-1.4	-10.4
Not in labor force	2,961	2,978	2,730	2,735	-226	-7.6

Table 1. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 to 24 years of age by sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, April-July 2026 — Continued

[Numbers in thousands. Data are not seasonally adjusted.]

Employment status, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	April	May	June	July	April-July changes	
					Number	Percent
Asian						
Civilian noninstitutional population	2,939	2,833	2,858	2,913	-26	-0.9
Civilian labor force	1,294	1,188	1,364	1,381	87	6.7
Participation rate	44.0	42.0	47.7	47.4	3.4	7.7
Employed	1,225	1,074	1,243	1,230	5	0.4
Employment-population ratio	41.7	37.9	43.5	42.2	0.5	1.2
Unemployed	69	114	121	151	82	118.8
Looking for full-time work	42	67	86	112	70	166.7
Looking for part-time work	28	48	35	39	11	39.3
Unemployment rate	5.4	9.6	8.9	11.0	5.6	103.7
Not in labor force	1,646	1,644	1,494	1,531	-115	-7.0
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity						
Civilian noninstitutional population	10,721	10,718	10,716	10,714	-7	-0.1
Civilian labor force	5,794	5,889	5,885	6,019	225	3.9
Participation rate	54.0	54.9	54.9	56.2	2.2	4.1
Employed	5,266	5,370	5,199	5,483	217	4.1
Employment-population ratio	49.1	50.1	48.5	51.2	2.1	4.3
Unemployed	527	519	686	536	9	1.7
Looking for full-time work	334	332	513	375	41	12.3
Looking for part-time work	194	188	173	161	-33	-17.0
Unemployment rate	9.1	8.8	11.7	8.9	-0.2	-2.2
Not in labor force	4,927	4,829	4,831	4,695	-232	-4.7

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. People 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 2. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 to 24 years of age by sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, July 2023-2026

[Numbers in thousands. Data are not seasonally adjusted.]

Employment status, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	July 2023	July 2024	July 2025	July 2026
TOTAL				
Civilian noninstitutional population	39,342	38,993	39,761	39,647
Civilian labor force	23,681	23,566	23,663	23,451
Participation rate	60.2	60.4	59.5	59.1
Employed	21,623	21,259	21,116	21,320
Employment-population ratio	55.0	54.5	53.1	53.8
Unemployed	2,059	2,307	2,547	2,131
Looking for full-time work	1,437	1,689	1,813	1,543
Looking for part-time work	621	618	734	588
Unemployment rate	8.7	9.8	10.8	9.1
Not in labor force	15,660	15,427	16,099	16,196
Men				
Civilian noninstitutional population	19,842	19,662	20,080	20,085
Civilian labor force	11,987	12,040	12,163	12,270
Participation rate	60.4	61.2	60.6	61.1
Employed	10,886	10,859	10,827	11,190
Employment-population ratio	54.9	55.2	53.9	55.7
Unemployed	1,101	1,181	1,336	1,080
Looking for full-time work	799	943	965	792
Looking for part-time work	302	238	372	288
Unemployment rate	9.2	9.8	11.0	8.8
Not in labor force	7,855	7,623	7,917	7,815
Women				
Civilian noninstitutional population	19,500	19,331	19,681	19,562
Civilian labor force	11,694	11,526	11,500	11,181
Participation rate	60.0	59.6	58.4	57.2
Employed	10,736	10,400	10,289	10,130
Employment-population ratio	55.1	53.8	52.3	51.8
Unemployed	958	1,126	1,210	1,051
Looking for full-time work	638	746	848	752
Looking for part-time work	319	380	362	299
Unemployment rate	8.2	9.8	10.5	9.4
Not in labor force	7,806	7,805	8,182	8,381
White				
Civilian noninstitutional population	28,661	28,301	28,616	27,132
Civilian labor force	17,938	17,958	17,824	16,680
Participation rate	62.6	63.5	62.3	61.5
Employed	16,681	16,457	16,079	15,301
Employment-population ratio	58.2	58.1	56.2	56.4
Unemployed	1,257	1,501	1,745	1,379
Looking for full-time work	876	1,056	1,215	1,000
Looking for part-time work	381	444	530	379
Unemployment rate	7.0	8.4	9.8	8.3
Not in labor force	10,723	10,344	10,792	10,452
Black or African American				
Civilian noninstitutional population	5,771	5,713	5,820	5,855
Civilian labor force	3,086	2,999	3,036	3,119
Participation rate	53.5	52.5	52.2	53.3
Employed	2,530	2,531	2,601	2,745
Employment-population ratio	43.8	44.3	44.7	46.9
Unemployed	556	468	436	375
Looking for full-time work	420	405	310	268
Looking for part-time work	136	62	126	107
Unemployment rate	18.0	15.6	14.3	12.0
Not in labor force	2,685	2,714	2,783	2,735

Table 2. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 to 24 years of age by sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, July 2023-2026 — Continued

[Numbers in thousands. Data are not seasonally adjusted.]

Employment status, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	July 2023	July 2024	July 2025	July 2026
Asian				
Civilian noninstitutional population	2,422	2,394	2,632	2,913
Civilian labor force	1,205	1,201	1,243	1,381
Participation rate	49.8	50.2	47.2	47.4
Employed	1,137	1,072	1,078	1,230
Employment-population ratio	47.0	44.8	41.0	42.2
Unemployed	68	130	165	151
Looking for full-time work	37	73	120	112
Looking for part-time work	31	57	45	39
Unemployment rate	5.6	10.8	13.3	11.0
Not in labor force	1,217	1,193	1,389	1,531
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity				
Civilian noninstitutional population	9,704	9,848	10,352	10,714
Civilian labor force	5,578	5,617	5,937	6,019
Participation rate	57.5	57.0	57.3	56.2
Employed	4,993	5,017	5,187	5,483
Employment-population ratio	51.5	50.9	50.1	51.2
Unemployed	585	600	750	536
Looking for full-time work	423	449	592	375
Looking for part-time work	162	152	158	161
Unemployment rate	10.5	10.7	12.6	8.9
Not in labor force	4,125	4,231	4,415	4,695

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. People 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. Employed people 16 to 24 years of age by industry, class of worker, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, July 2025-2026

[Numbers in thousands. Data are not seasonally adjusted.]

Industry and class of worker	Total		White		Black or African American		Asian		Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	
	July 2025	July 2026	July 2025	July 2026	July 2025	July 2026	July 2025	July 2026	July 2025	July 2026
Total employed	21,116	21,320	16,079	15,301	2,601	2,745	1,078	1,230	5,187	5,483
Agriculture and related industries	271	257	250	223	15	14	3	15	69	73
Nonagricultural industries	20,845	21,063	15,829	15,077	2,586	2,731	1,075	1,214	5,118	5,410
Private wage and salary workers[1]	18,901	19,039	14,396	13,535	2,355	2,496	973	1,123	4,618	4,903
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	45	31	40	18	4	7	0	0	17	12
Construction	1,277	1,289	1,099	1,083	80	84	26	31	471	484
Manufacturing	1,241	1,201	1,022	888	121	171	45	59	318	258
Durable goods	842	856	669	655	108	109	31	42	179	149
Nondurable goods	399	345	353	233	13	62	14	17	138	109
Wholesale trade	178	250	157	198	18	32	0	19	55	61
Retail trade	3,564	3,732	2,685	2,588	486	556	123	162	908	967
Transportation and utilities	702	763	459	476	118	189	83	53	228	218
Information	157	270	130	200	8	1	1	44	44	71
Financial activities	778	585	565	429	91	80	78	30	145	180
Professional and business services	1,696	1,806	1,344	1,283	120	139	122	166	393	492
Education and health services	2,952	2,944	2,120	1,944	438	503	225	268	640	610
Leisure and hospitality	5,359	5,300	4,010	3,797	752	618	244	248	1,219	1,390
Other services	951	867	764	631	118	116	26	43	181	160
Government wage and salary workers	1,484	1,404	1,106	1,098	157	167	89	41	362	291
Federal	195	194	113	139	49	14	13	5	49	44
State	462	445	322	340	49	63	26	16	120	77
Local	826	765	671	618	59	90	49	20	193	171
Self-employed, unincorporated, and unpaid family workers	461	621	327	445	74	68	13	50	138	216

[1] Includes self-employed workers whose businesses are incorporated.

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. People 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.