

The April Review

The evolution of the U.S. economy from a primarily goods-producing system to a predominately service-providing one has been the topic of many papers, reports, and discussions for decades. How these changes have been reflected in different sections of the country also has been an occasional focus of research. In this issue's lead article, Bureau regional economists Gerald Perrins and Diane Nilsen take a look at how the Philadelphia metropolitan area job market has changed considerably during the last decade. Once a fairly traditional metropolitan area with the largest percentage of jobs concentrated in the trade, transportation, and utilities industries, Philadelphia has transformed itself by becoming a significant job creator in the education, health care, and professional and business services industries. Using employment and wage data from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages program, the authors examine shifts in both employment and wage growth for the these industries in the 11 counties composing the greater Philadelphia area. In addition, using available detailed county-level industry data, the article analyzes each jurisdiction's distinct growth pattern independently. Finally, where appropriate, the authors also compare Philadelphia—1 of the 12 largest U.S. metropolitan areas—with its counterparts.

The Bureau's International Price Program (IPP) produces and disseminates data on monthly price changes in the foreign trade sector of the U.S. economy. The IPP publishes these price changes through the Import Price Index and the Export Price Index. Edwin Bennion, an economist in the Office of

Prices and Living Conditions, presents an annual look at import and export price changes in "IPP 2008 year in review." For the year as a whole, a drop in both import and export prices, led primarily by energy goods, left each index down for the first time since 2001. However, this simplified summary hardly tells the story. In fact, as Bennion points out, the sharp price increases experienced during the first 7 months of 2008 contrasted sharply with the dramatic price decreases that occurred during the last 5 months of the year. In fact, the overall price increases for the first 7 months of 2008 and the price decreases for the whole year were each greater than any increase or decrease during a comparable period since the inception of the Import and Export Price Indices. Specifically, import prices increased 15.9 percent during the first part of 2008 and then fell 22.4 percent from August to December. Likewise, export prices rose 7.3 percent during the first part of 2008 and then fell 9.5 percent during the latter part of the year.

For more than 20 years the Bureau's Employer Cost for Employee Compensation (ECEC) publications have provided estimates of the average hourly costs for wages and benefits across industries, occupations, and labor force characteristics. What makes ECEC data (which are drawn from the National Compensation Survey) especially helpful is that they include detailed estimates for paid leave, health insurance, and contributions to retirement plans, among other benefits. Thomas Moehle, an economist in the Office of Compensation and Working Conditions, uses ECEC estimates to analyze the changes in compensation of construction workers over the 2004-to-2009 period. "Compensation of residential and nonresidential construction work-

ers" finds that workers in nonresidential construction typically earn more than workers in residential construction and that the difference has grown over time. The author demonstrates this by presenting changes in compensation patterns for residential and nonresidential construction activities in the construction of buildings subsector and the specialty trade contractors subsector. The article also incorporates employment data from the Current Employment Statistics program as part of the analysis.

This issue of the *Review* concludes with a conference report by Geoffrey Paulin, a senior economist in the Office of Prices and Living Conditions. The report summarizes the Consumer Expenditure (CE) Survey Microdata Users' Workshop, which was sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics on July 29–31, 2009. The 3-day workshop has been an annual event since 2006 and includes speakers who demonstrate features of CE topcoded microdata as well as present reports and articles that highlight their work. The 2009 workshop included presentations by CE economists, researchers, and academicians on topics such as sampling methods and the construction and proper use of sample weights. A training session was also conducted that, in part, provided examples of many of the concepts shown during the workshop. The next workshop is expected to be held in July 2010 and, as usual, will be free, although registration is required. For more information about the 2009 workshop and forthcoming workshops, visit the CE website, www.bls.gov/cex, and look for "Annual Workshop" under the left navigation bar entitled "Public Use Microdata." For direct access to this information, go to www.bls.gov/cex/csxannualworkshop.htm. □