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WORK EXPERIENCE OF THE POPULATION — 2012

A total of 156.2 million persons worked at some point during 2012, 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 2012 was 63.8 percent, up from 63.3 percent in 2011. The number of persons who experienced some unemployment during 2012 decreased by 1.3 million to 22.4 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 2012 data:

- The proportion of workers who worked full time, year round in 2012 was 65.5 percent, little different 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—fell by 1.0 percentage point over the year to 13.9 percent in 2012. (See table 3.)
- About 5.5 million individuals looked for a job but did not work at all in 2012, down from 6.2 million in 2011. (See table 3.)

Persons with Employment

The proportion of men who worked during 2012 was 69.5 percent, up from 68.8 percent in 2011. The proportion of women who worked at some point during 2012 was 58.4 percent, little changed from 2011. (See table 1.)

The proportions of whites (64.5 percent), blacks (59.1 percent), Asians (64.5 percent), and Hispanics (64.3 percent) who worked at some time during 2012 increased from 2011. (See table 2.)

Among those with work experience during 2012, 78.4 percent usually worked full time, little different from 2011. Men continued to be more likely to work full time during the year (84.5 percent) than

women (71.5 percent). The proportions of employed men and women working full time showed little change over the year. (See table 1.)

Of the total who worked during 2012, 76.7 percent were employed year round (working 50 to 52 weeks, either full or part time), little changed from 2011. The percentage of women working year round decreased by 0.8 percentage point to 74.7 percent in 2012, while the percentage of men employed year round was little changed at 78.5 percent.

Persons with Unemployment

Overall, 161.7 million persons worked or looked for work at some time in 2012. Of those, 22.4 million experienced some unemployment during the year, 1.3 million fewer than in 2011. Men accounted for a disproportionately large share of the over-the-year decline in those who experienced some unemployment. (See table 3.)

At 13.9 percent in 2012, 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) was 1.0 percentage point lower than in 2011. The work-experience unemployment rates for whites (12.8 percent) and blacks (20.6 percent) declined from 2011 to 2012, while the rates for Asians (10.6 percent) and Hispanics (17.3 percent) changed little. (See tables 3 and 4.)

Overall, men continued to have higher work-experience unemployment rates in 2012 than women, 14.5 percent versus 13.1 percent. Among whites, blacks, and Hispanics, the rates for men were higher than the rates for women. Among Asians, the rates for men and women were little different from each other.

Among those who experienced unemployment in 2012, the median number of weeks spent looking for work fell to 18.4, following 3 years of little movement. The number of persons who looked for a job but did not work at all in 2012 declined by 701,000 over the year to 5.5 million. Of the 16.9 million individuals who worked during 2012 and also experienced unemployment, 22.2 percent had two or more spells of joblessness, up from 20.1 percent in 2011. (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 2013 refer to the 2012 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 1-week 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
2012 estimates (in thousands)		
Annual average of monthly estimates	142,469	12,506
Annual supplement data	156,194	22,423

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 2013 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 2012?" or "Did you do any temporary, part-time, or seasonal work even for a few days during 2012?"

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 2012, 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, 2011-12

Extent of employment	Total		Men		Women	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
Numbers (in thousands)						
Civilian noninstitutional population	242,602	244,993	116,984	118,202	125,619	126,791
Total who worked or looked for work	159,693	161,707	83,715	84,999	75,978	76,708
Percent of the population	65.8	66.0	71.6	71.9	60.5	60.5
Total who worked during the year ¹	153,479	156,194	80,503	82,143	72,976	74,051
Percent of the population	63.3	63.8	68.8	69.5	58.1	58.4
Full time ²	120,585	122,407	68,289	69,437	52,295	52,970
50 to 52 weeks	100,915	102,296	57,288	58,304	43,627	43,992
48 to 49 weeks	1,691	1,848	971	1,038	720	810
40 to 47 weeks	4,862	5,391	2,639	2,944	2,223	2,447
27 to 39 weeks	4,474	4,448	2,561	2,553	1,913	1,895
14 to 26 weeks	5,291	4,711	2,941	2,585	2,350	2,126
1 to 13 weeks	3,351	3,713	1,889	2,013	1,463	1,700
Part time ³	32,895	33,787	12,214	12,706	20,681	21,081
50 to 52 weeks	17,247	17,487	5,786	6,197	11,460	11,291
48 to 49 weeks	791	870	295	304	496	566
40 to 47 weeks	2,633	2,831	987	1,062	1,647	1,768
27 to 39 weeks	2,855	2,966	1,121	1,103	1,735	1,863
14 to 26 weeks	4,729	4,858	2,009	1,927	2,719	2,930
1 to 13 weeks	4,639	4,776	2,016	2,112	2,623	2,663
Percent distribution						
Total who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	78.6	78.4	84.8	84.5	71.7	71.5
50 to 52 weeks	65.8	65.5	71.2	71.0	59.8	59.4
48 to 49 weeks	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.0	1.1
40 to 47 weeks	3.2	3.5	3.3	3.6	3.0	3.3
27 to 39 weeks	2.9	2.8	3.2	3.1	2.6	2.6
14 to 26 weeks	3.4	3.0	3.7	3.1	3.2	2.9
1 to 13 weeks	2.2	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.0	2.3
Part time ³	21.4	21.6	15.2	15.5	28.3	28.5
50 to 52 weeks	11.2	11.2	7.2	7.5	15.7	15.2
48 to 49 weeks	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.7	0.8
40 to 47 weeks	1.7	1.8	1.2	1.3	2.3	2.4
27 to 39 weeks	1.9	1.9	1.4	1.3	2.4	2.5
14 to 26 weeks	3.1	3.1	2.5	2.3	3.7	4.0
1 to 13 weeks	3.0	3.1	2.5	2.6	3.6	3.6

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, 2011-12

(Numbers in thousands)

Extent of employment, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total		Men		Women	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
WHITE						
Civilian noninstitutional population	192,898	194,041	94,146	94,752	98,752	99,289
Total who worked or looked for work	127,809	128,903	68,304	69,027	59,505	59,876
Percent of the population	66.3	66.4	72.6	72.8	60.3	60.3
Total who worked during the year ¹	123,717	125,206	66,180	67,080	57,537	58,125
Percent of the population	64.1	64.5	70.3	70.8	58.3	58.5
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	78.4	78.1	85.1	84.6	70.6	70.6
50 to 52 weeks	65.8	65.5	71.7	71.4	59.0	58.7
27 to 49 weeks	7.2	7.5	7.7	8.0	6.7	6.9
1 to 26 weeks	5.4	5.1	5.8	5.3	5.0	5.0
Part time ³	21.6	21.9	14.9	15.4	29.4	29.4
50 to 52 weeks	11.4	11.4	7.0	7.5	16.5	15.9
27 to 49 weeks	4.2	4.4	3.0	3.0	5.5	5.9
1 to 26 weeks	6.0	6.1	4.8	4.9	7.4	7.6
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN						
Civilian noninstitutional population	29,790	30,253	13,447	13,684	16,343	16,568
Total who worked or looked for work	18,822	19,095	8,685	8,851	10,137	10,244
Percent of the population	63.2	63.1	64.6	64.7	62.0	61.8
Total who worked during the year ¹	17,332	17,870	7,932	8,253	9,399	9,617
Percent of the population	58.2	59.1	59.0	60.3	57.5	58.0
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	79.4	79.1	82.2	82.9	77.1	75.9
50 to 52 weeks	65.0	64.0	66.1	66.3	64.0	62.1
27 to 49 weeks	7.2	8.2	8.1	8.5	6.5	7.9
1 to 26 weeks	7.2	6.9	8.1	8.1	6.5	5.9
Part time ³	20.6	20.9	17.8	17.1	22.9	24.1
50 to 52 weeks	10.0	10.6	8.3	8.5	11.3	12.3
27 to 49 weeks	4.0	3.9	3.2	2.9	4.6	4.7
1 to 26 weeks	6.7	6.5	6.3	5.8	7.0	7.1
ASIAN						
Civilian noninstitutional population	12,813	13,228	5,979	6,174	6,834	7,055
Total who worked or looked for work	8,364	8,830	4,347	4,627	4,017	4,203
Percent of the population	65.3	66.7	72.7	75.0	58.8	59.6
Total who worked during the year ¹	8,048	8,528	4,194	4,472	3,854	4,056
Percent of the population	62.8	64.5	70.1	72.4	56.4	57.5
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	81.4	81.5	87.0	87.1	75.3	75.3
50 to 52 weeks	70.4	71.1	76.6	76.7	63.6	65.0
27 to 49 weeks	6.2	5.8	5.7	5.7	6.7	5.8
1 to 26 weeks	4.9	4.6	4.7	4.7	5.0	4.4
Part time ³	18.6	18.5	13.0	12.9	24.7	24.7
50 to 52 weeks	11.0	10.3	7.2	7.1	15.1	13.9
27 to 49 weeks	3.1	3.5	2.0	2.4	4.3	4.8
1 to 26 weeks	4.5	4.6	3.8	3.3	5.3	6.1

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Work experience of the population during the year by race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, 2011-12 — Continued

(Numbers in thousands)

Extent of employment, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total		Men		Women	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY						
Civilian noninstitutional population	36,461	37,240	18,276	18,655	18,185	18,585
Total who worked or looked for work	24,216	24,914	13,683	14,185	10,533	10,729
Percent of the population	66.4	66.9	74.9	76.0	57.9	57.7
Total who worked during the year ¹	23,124	23,954	13,127	13,673	9,997	10,281
Percent of the population	63.4	64.3	71.8	73.3	55.0	55.3
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	79.2	78.6	84.6	84.3	72.1	71.0
50 to 52 weeks	64.3	63.7	68.6	68.3	58.8	57.6
27 to 49 weeks	8.5	8.8	9.6	10.1	7.1	7.2
1 to 26 weeks	6.3	6.1	6.4	6.0	6.2	6.2
Part time ³	20.8	21.4	15.4	15.7	27.9	29.0
50 to 52 weeks	11.3	11.7	7.8	8.4	15.9	16.1
27 to 49 weeks	3.8	3.9	3.0	2.9	4.8	5.2
1 to 26 weeks	5.7	5.8	4.7	4.4	7.2	7.7

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, 2011-12

Extent of unemployment	Total		Men		Women	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
Numbers (in thousands)						
Total who worked or looked for work	159,693	161,707	83,715	84,999	75,978	76,708
Percent with unemployment	14.9	13.9	15.8	14.5	13.8	13.1
Total with unemployment	23,739	22,423	13,262	12,352	10,477	10,071
Did not work but looked for work	6,214	5,513	3,212	2,856	3,002	2,657
1 to 14 weeks	1,395	1,455	656	614	739	842
15 weeks or more	4,819	4,057	2,556	2,242	2,263	1,815
Worked during the year	17,525	16,910	10,050	9,496	7,476	7,414
Year-round workers ¹ with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	417	464	271	309	147	155
Part-year workers ² with unemployment	17,108	16,447	9,779	9,187	7,329	7,259
1 to 4 weeks	2,211	2,242	1,170	1,178	1,041	1,064
5 to 10 weeks	2,273	2,349	1,238	1,362	1,035	987
11 to 14 weeks	2,063	2,174	1,276	1,242	787	933
15 to 26 weeks	4,942	4,709	2,936	2,714	2,007	1,995
27 weeks or more	5,619	4,972	3,159	2,692	2,459	2,280
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	19.8	18.4	19.9	18.1	19.8	18.8
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	3,524	3,761	2,448	2,326	1,076	1,435
2 spells	1,745	1,730	1,121	1,002	624	727
3 spells or more	1,779	2,031	1,327	1,324	451	707
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	22.4	26.4	20.4	21.5	24.6	31.7
15 weeks or more	77.6	73.6	79.6	78.5	75.4	68.3
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	2.4	2.7	2.7	3.3	2.0	2.1
Part-year workers ² with unemployment	97.6	97.3	97.3	96.7	98.0	97.9
1 to 4 weeks	12.6	13.3	11.6	12.4	13.9	14.3
5 to 10 weeks	13.0	13.9	12.3	14.3	13.8	13.3
11 to 14 weeks	11.8	12.9	12.7	13.1	10.5	12.6
15 to 26 weeks	28.2	27.8	29.2	28.6	26.8	26.9
27 weeks or more	32.1	29.4	31.4	28.3	32.9	30.8
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	20.1	22.2	24.4	24.5	14.4	19.4
2 spells	10.0	10.2	11.2	10.6	8.4	9.8
3 spells or more	10.1	12.0	13.2	13.9	6.0	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, 2011-12

(Numbers in thousands)

Extent of unemployment, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total		Men		Women	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
WHITE						
Total who worked or looked for work	127,809	128,903	68,304	69,027	59,505	59,876
Percent with unemployment	13.7	12.8	14.7	13.6	12.5	11.9
Total with unemployment	17,479	16,534	10,026	9,388	7,453	7,146
Did not work but looked for work	4,092	3,698	2,124	1,947	1,968	1,751
Worked during the year	13,387	12,836	7,902	7,442	5,485	5,395
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	18.8	17.6	19.0	17.4	18.4	18.0
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ² with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	2.6	2.9	3.0	3.5	2.1	2.2
Part-year workers ³ with unemployment	97.4	97.1	97.0	96.5	97.9	97.8
1 to 4 weeks	13.6	13.9	12.3	12.7	15.5	15.6
5 to 14 weeks	25.7	27.5	25.8	28.4	25.5	26.3
15 weeks or more	58.1	55.6	58.9	55.4	56.9	55.9
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	20.4	23.2	24.5	25.5	14.6	20.0
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN						
Total who worked or looked for work	18,822	19,095	8,685	8,851	10,137	10,244
Percent with unemployment	22.2	20.6	24.5	21.9	20.3	19.5
Total with unemployment	4,180	3,936	2,124	1,936	2,056	2,000
Did not work but looked for work	1,491	1,225	753	598	737	627
Worked during the year	2,689	2,712	1,371	1,338	1,319	1,374
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	23.9	21.6	23.6	21.6	24.1	21.6
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ² with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	1.7	2.0	1.7	1.9	1.8	2.1
Part-year workers ³ with unemployment	98.3	98.0	98.3	98.1	98.2	97.9
1 to 4 weeks	8.9	9.4	8.8	9.9	9.1	9.0
5 to 14 weeks	20.6	24.6	21.2	24.3	19.9	24.9
15 weeks or more	68.7	64.0	68.2	63.9	69.2	64.0
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	17.7	18.8	22.8	19.3	12.4	18.2
ASIAN						
Total who worked or looked for work	8,364	8,830	4,347	4,627	4,017	4,203
Percent with unemployment	12.2	10.6	12.0	10.3	12.4	10.9
Total with unemployment	1,020	933	522	476	498	457
Did not work but looked for work	316	302	153	156	162	146
Worked during the year	705	631	369	320	335	311
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	20.5	17.4	20.2	17.5	20.7	17.3
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ² with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	0.8	3.0	0.9	4.2	0.6	1.6
Part-year workers ³ with unemployment	99.2	97.0	99.1	95.8	99.4	98.4
1 to 4 weeks	10.6	16.6	12.1	17.9	8.9	15.3
5 to 14 weeks	27.1	25.3	28.1	22.6	25.9	28.0
15 weeks or more	61.6	55.2	58.8	55.3	64.6	55.1
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	18.9	19.0	22.0	21.9	15.4	16.0

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 4. Extent of unemployment during the year by race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, 2011-12 — Continued

(Numbers in thousands)

Extent of unemployment, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total		Men		Women	
	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY						
Total who worked or looked for work	24,216	24,914	13,683	14,185	10,533	10,729
Percent with unemployment	18.3	17.3	19.2	18.2	17.1	16.0
Total with unemployment	4,427	4,304	2,630	2,585	1,798	1,720
Did not work but looked for work	1,093	960	556	512	536	448
Worked during the year	3,335	3,345	2,073	2,073	1,261	1,272
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	20.0	18.1	19.7	16.9	20.6	20.2
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ² with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	2.4	3.2	2.9	3.9	1.7	1.9
Part-year workers ³ with unemployment	97.6	96.8	97.1	96.1	98.3	98.1
1 to 4 weeks	11.0	14.0	10.3	12.6	12.3	16.2
5 to 14 weeks	24.8	26.1	25.2	29.2	24.1	20.9
15 weeks or more	61.7	56.8	61.6	54.2	61.9	61.0
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	22.5	22.9	25.9	24.5	16.8	20.1

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.