A Profile of the Working Poor, 2015

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In 2015, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 43.1 million people, or 13.5 percent of the nation's population, lived below the official poverty level.[1] (See the technical notes section for examples of poverty levels.) Although the poor were primarily children and adults who had not participated in the labor force during the year, 8.6 million individuals were among the "working poor" in 2015, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; the 8.6 million figure was down from 9.5 million in 2014. The working poor are people who spent at least 27 weeks in the labor force (that is, working or looking for work) but whose incomes still fell below the official poverty level. In 2015, the working-poor rate—the ratio of the working poor to all individuals in the labor force for at least 27 weeks—was 5.6 percent, 0.7 percentage point lower than the previous year's figure. (See table A and 1 and chart 1)

Following are some highlights from the 2015 data:

- Full-time workers continued to be much less likely to be among the working poor than were part-time workers. Among persons in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 3.4 percent of those usually employed full time were classified as working poor, compared with 14.1 percent of part-time workers (table 1).
- Women were more likely than men to be among the working poor. In addition, Blacks and Hispanics continued to be more than twice as likely as Whites and Asians to be among the working poor (table 2).
- The likelihood of being classified as working poor diminishes as workers attain higher levels of education. Among those with less than a high school diploma, 16.2 percent of those who were in the labor force for at least 27 weeks were classified as working poor, compared with 1.7 percent of college graduates (table 3).
- Individuals who were employed in service occupations continued to be more likely to be among the working poor than those employed in other major occupational groups (table 4).
- Among families with at least one member in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, those with children under 18 years old were about 5 times as likely as those without children to live in poverty. Families maintained by women were almost twice as likely as families maintained by men to be living below the poverty level (table 5).

Table A. Poverty status of people and primary families in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 2007–15 (Numbers in thousands)

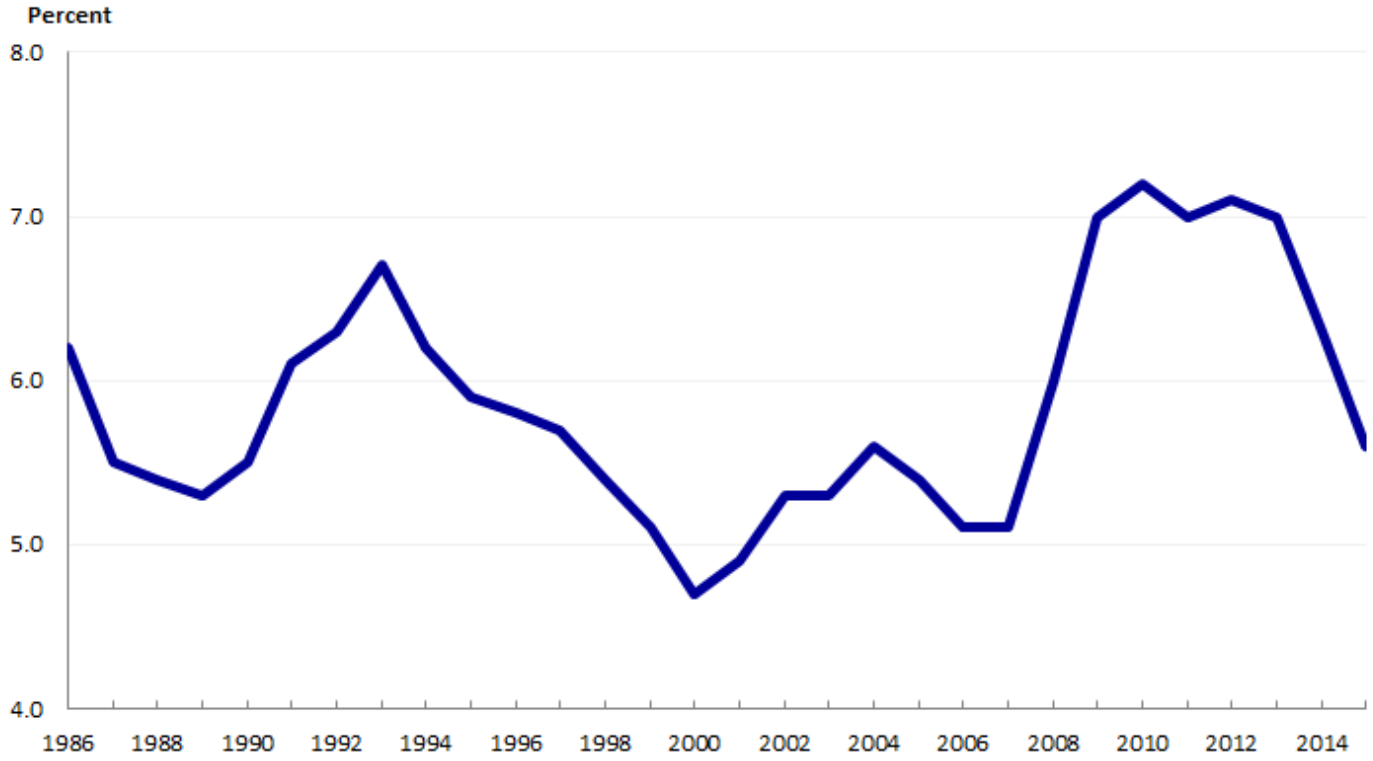
See footnotes at end of table.

Characteristic	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total in the labor force[1]	146,567	147,838	147,902	146,859	147,475	148,735	149,483	150,319	152,230
In poverty	7,521	8,883	10,391	10,512	10,382	10,612	10,450	9,487	8,560
Working-poor rate	5.1	6.0	7.0	7.2	7.0	7.1	7.0	6.3	5.6
Unrelated individuals	33,226	32,785	33,798	34,099	33,731	34,810	35,061	35,018	35,953
In poverty	2,558	3,275	3,947	3,947	3,621	3,851	4,141	3,395	3,137
Working-poor rate	7.7	10.0	11.7	11.6	10.7	11.1	11.8	9.7	8.7
Primary families[2]	65,158	65,907	65,467	64,931	66,225	66,541	66,462	66,732	67,193
In poverty	4,169	4,538	5,193	5,269	5,469	5,478	5,137	5,108	4,607
Working-poor rate	6.4	6.9	7.9	8.1	8.3	8.2	7.7	7.7	6.9

[1] Includes individuals in families, not shown separately.
[2] Primary families with at least one member in the labor force for more than half the year.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC).

This report presents data on the relationship between labor force activity and poverty status in 2015 for workers and their families. These data were collected in the 2016 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey. (For a detailed description of the source of the data and an explanation of the concepts and definitions used in the report, see the technical notes.) The specific income thresholds used to determine people's poverty status vary, depending on whether the individuals are living with family members or are living alone or with nonrelatives. For family members, the poverty threshold is determined by their family's total income; for individuals not living in families, their personal income is used as the determinant.

Chart 1. Working-poor rate of people in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 1986–2015



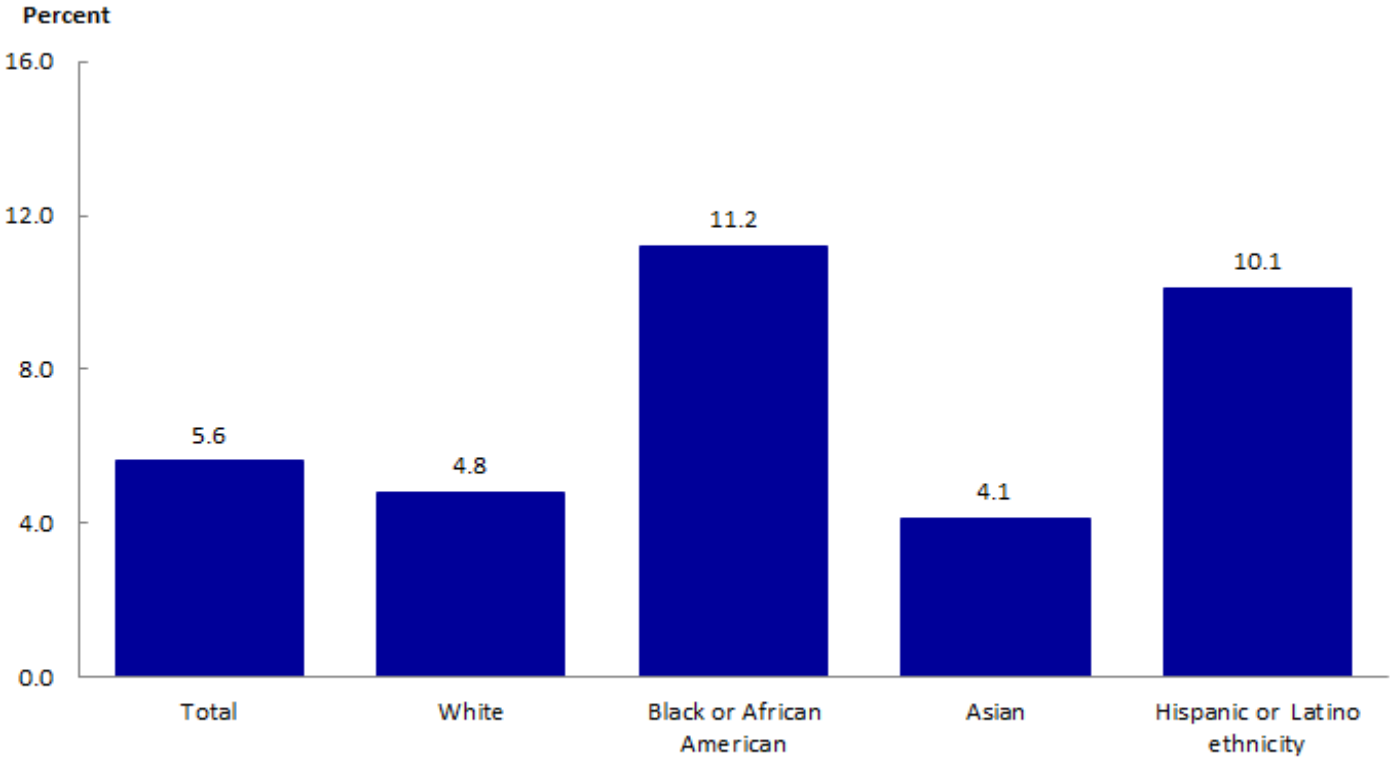
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC).

Demographic characteristics

Among those who were in the labor force for 27 weeks or more in 2015, the number of women classified as working poor (4.5 million) was higher than that of men (4.1 million). The working-poor rate also continued to be higher for women (6.3 percent) than for men (5.0 percent). The working-poor rates for both women and men were down from a year earlier. (See table 2.)

Blacks and Hispanics were more than twice as likely as Whites and Asians to be among the working poor. In 2015, the working-poor rates of Blacks and Hispanics were 11.2 percent and 10.1 percent, respectively, compared with 4.8 percent for Whites and 4.1 percent for Asians. (See chart 2 and table 2.)

Chart 2. Working-poor rates by race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2015



Note: People whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC).

Among Whites and Blacks, the working-poor rate was higher for women than for men. The rates for White women and White men who spent at least 27 weeks in the labor force were 5.2 percent and 4.4 percent, respectively. The rate for Black women was 13.3 percent, compared with 8.8 percent for Black men. Among Asians and Hispanics, the rates for women and men were little different from each other.

Young workers are more likely to be poor than are workers in older age groups, in part because earnings are lower for young workers and the unemployment rate for young workers is higher. Among youths who were in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 10.8 percent of 16- to 19-year-olds and 12.2 percent of 20- to 24-year-olds were living in poverty in 2015. Those rates were considerably higher than the rates for workers ages 25 to 34 (6.6 percent) and 35 to 44 (6.4 percent). Workers ages 45 to 54, 55 to 64, and 65 and older had lower working-poor rates—3.7 percent, 3.4 percent, and 1.6 percent, respectively—than did the younger age groups.

Educational attainment

Achieving higher levels of education reduces the incidence of living in poverty. Individuals who complete more years of education usually have greater access to higher paying jobs—such as management, professional, and related occupations—than those with fewer years of education. Of all the people in the labor force for 27 weeks or more in 2015, those with less than a high school diploma had a higher working-poor rate (16.2 percent) than did high school graduates with no college (7.6 percent). Workers with an associate's degree and those with a bachelor's degree or higher had the lowest working-poor rates (3.8 percent and 1.7 percent, respectively). In 2015, at all levels of educational attainment, except for bachelor's degree or higher, women were more likely than men to be among the working poor. (Among those with a bachelor's degree or higher, men and women were equally likely to be classified as working poor.) Blacks and Hispanics generally were more likely to be among the working poor than were Whites and Asians with the same educational attainment. (See table 3.)

Occupation

The likelihood of being among the working poor varies widely by occupation. Workers in occupations requiring higher education and characterized by relatively high earnings—such as management, professional, and related occupations—were least likely to be classified as working poor. For example, 1.8 percent of those in management, professional, and related occupations were among the working poor in 2015. By contrast, individuals employed in occupations that typically do not require high levels of education and that are characterized by relatively low earnings were more likely to be among the working poor. For instance, 11.6 percent of service workers who were in the labor force for at least 27 weeks were classified as working poor in 2015. Indeed, service occupations, with 3.0 million working poor, accounted for 38 percent of all those classified as working poor. Among those employed in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations, 6.9 percent were classified as working poor. Within this occupation group, 14.1 percent of workers in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations were among the working poor. (See table 4.)

Families

In 2015, 4.6 million families were living below the poverty level despite having at least one member in the labor force for half the year or more. This figure was down from 5.1 million in 2014. Among families with only one member in the labor force for at least 27 weeks in 2015, married-couple families had a lower likelihood of living below the poverty level (8.5 percent) than did families maintained by women (23.9 percent) or by men (14.0 percent). (See table 5.)

Among families with at least one member in the labor force for more than half the year, those with children in the household were much more likely to live below the poverty level than those without children. The proportion of families with children under age 18 that lived in poverty was 11.1 percent, compared with 2.2 percent for families without children. Among families with children under 18, the working-poor rate for those maintained by women (24.8 percent) was higher than that for those maintained by men (15.3 percent). Married-couple families with children under 18 had a working-poor rate of 6.2 percent in 2015.

Unrelated individuals

The "unrelated individuals" category includes individuals who live by themselves or with others not related to them. Of the 36.0 million unrelated individuals who were in the labor force for half the year or longer, 3.1 million lived below the poverty level in 2015, down from 3.4 million a year earlier. The working-poor rate for unrelated individuals was 8.7 percent, a decrease of 1.0 percentage point from the previous year's figure. (See table 6.)

Within the group of unrelated individuals, teenagers continued to be the most likely to be among the working poor. In 2015, 46.3 percent of teens who were in the labor force for 27 weeks or more and who lived on their own or with others not related to them lived below the poverty level. Overall, the working-poor rate for men living alone or with nonrelatives was 8.2 percent, and the rate for women was 9.3 percent. The working-poor rates for unrelated individuals were 13.9 percent for Blacks, 10.7 percent for Hispanics, 8.2 percent for Asians, and 7.7 percent for Whites. (See table 7.)

Of the 3.1 million unrelated individuals considered to be among the working poor in 2015, about 3 out of 5 lived with others. These individuals had a much higher working-poor rate than individuals who lived alone. Many unrelated individuals living below the poverty level may live with others out of necessity. By contrast, many of those who live alone do so because they have sufficient income to support themselves. Unrelated individuals' poverty status, however, is determined by each person's resources. The pooling of resources and sharing of living expenses may permit some individuals in this category—who are technically classified as poor—to live at a higher standard than they would have if they lived alone.

Labor market problems

As noted earlier, people who usually work full time are less likely to live in poverty than are those who work part time, yet there remains a sizable group of full-time workers who live below the poverty threshold. Among those who participated in the labor force for 27 weeks or more and usually worked in full-time wage and salary jobs, 3.8 million, or 3.2 percent, were classified as working poor in 2015—down from 4.4 million a year earlier. (See table 8.)

There are three major labor market problems that can hinder a worker's ability to earn an income that is above the poverty threshold: low earnings, periods of unemployment, and involuntary part-time employment. (See the technical notes section for detailed definitions.)

In 2015, 82 percent of the working poor who usually work full time experienced at least one of the major labor market problems. Low earnings continued to be the most common problem, with 68 percent subject to low earnings, either as the only problem or in combination with other labor market problems. About 31 percent experienced unemployment as the main labor market problem or in conjunction with other problems. Four percent of the working poor experience all three problems: low earnings, unemployment, and involuntary part-time employment.

Some 685,000, or 18 percent, of the working poor who usually worked full time did not experience any of the three primary labor market problems in 2015. Their classification as working poor may be explained by other factors, including short-term employment, some weeks of voluntary part-time work, or a family structure that increases the risk of poverty.

Notes

[1] *Income and Poverty in the United States: 2015*, Current Population Reports, P60-256 (U.S. Census Bureau, September 2016), table 3, https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-256.pdf.

Statistical Tables

Table 1. People in the labor force: poverty status and work experience, by weeks in the labor force, 2015 (Numbers in thousands)

Poverty status and work force	Total in labor force	27 weeks or more in labor force	
		Total	50 to 52 weeks
See footnotes at end of table.			
Total			
Total in the labor force	165,495	152,230	138,933
Did not work during the year	3,167	1,588	1,306
Worked during the year	162,329	150,642	137,627
Usual full-time workers	129,254	124,652	117,069
Usual part-time workers	33,075	25,990	20,558
Involuntary part-time workers	7,666	6,661	5,626
Voluntary part-time workers	25,409	19,329	14,932
At or above poverty level			
Total in the labor force	154,515	143,670	131,910
Did not work during the year	1,969	903	752
Worked during the year	152,546	142,767	131,158
Usual full-time workers	124,241	120,431	113,484
Usual part-time workers	28,305	22,336	17,675
Involuntary part-time workers	5,772	5,014	4,232
Voluntary part-time workers	22,533	17,322	13,443
Below poverty level			
Total in the labor force	10,980	8,560	7,023
Did not work during the year	1,197	685	554
Worked during the year	9,783	7,875	6,469
Usual full-time workers	5,013	4,221	3,586
Usual part-time workers	4,770	3,654	2,884
Involuntary part-time workers	1,894	1,647	1,394
Voluntary part-time workers	2,876	2,008	1,489
Rate[1]			
Total in the labor force	6.6	5.6	5.1
Did not work during the year	37.8	43.1	42.4
Worked during the year	6.0	5.2	4.7

Table 1. People in the labor force: poverty status and work experience, by weeks in the labor force, 2015 (Numbers in thousands)

Poverty status and work force	Total in labor force	27 weeks or more in labor force	
		Total	50 to 52 weeks
Usual full-time workers	3.9	3.4	3.1
Usual part-time workers	14.4	14.1	14.0
Involuntary part-time workers	24.7	24.7	24.8
Voluntary part-time workers	11.3	10.4	10.0

[1] Number below the poverty level as a percentage of the total in the labor force.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC).

Table 2. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more: poverty status, by age, gender, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2015 (Numbers in thousands)

Age and gender	Total					Below poverty level					Rate[1]				
	Total	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino	Total	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino	Total	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino
See footnotes at end of table.															
Total, 16 years and older	152,230	119,878	18,502	8,965	25,019	8,560	5,746	2,073	364	2,520	5.6	4.8	11.2	4.1	10.1
16 to 19 years	3,436	2,638	458	104	668	372	241	90	12	96	10.8	9.1	19.6	12.0	14.4
20 to 24 years	13,187	9,990	1,948	561	2,913	1,609	1,043	421	58	358	12.2	10.4	21.6	10.4	12.3
25 to 34 years	34,008	25,788	4,628	2,197	6,712	2,251	1,443	636	77	667	6.6	5.6	13.7	3.5	9.9
35 to 44 years	31,909	24,315	4,163	2,354	6,281	2,031	1,372	472	86	784	6.4	5.6	11.3	3.7	12.5
45 to 54 years	33,364	26,654	3,959	1,917	4,978	1,242	865	250	86	403	3.7	3.2	6.3	4.5	8.1
55 to 64 years	26,832	22,333	2,574	1,405	2,740	904	671	178	33	171	3.4	3.0	6.9	2.4	6.2
65 years and older	9,495	8,159	772	426	727	153	112	26	12	41	1.6	1.4	3.4	2.9	5.6
Men, 16 years and older	81,218	65,149	8,751	4,810	14,388	4,053	2,882	772	209	1,374	5.0	4.4	8.8	4.3	9.5
16 to 19 years	1,704	1,330	226	51	336	147	85	38	8	34	8.6	6.4	16.7	–	10.1
20 to 24 years	6,829	5,206	985	272	1,594	717	470	161	37	172	10.5	9.0	16.4	13.7	10.8
25 to 34 years	18,408	14,230	2,216	1,243	3,988	1,013	725	216	37	364	5.5	5.1	9.7	3.0	9.1
35 to 44 years	17,276	13,577	1,893	1,261	3,710	1,005	746	160	48	469	5.8	5.5	8.5	3.8	12.6
45 to 54 years	17,677	14,399	1,875	984	2,822	650	469	104	53	227	3.7	3.3	5.6	5.3	8.1
55 to 64 years	14,025	11,791	1,218	734	1,520	439	328	76	21	86	3.1	2.8	6.3	2.8	5.7
65 years and older	5,297	4,616	337	265	419	82	60	16	6	21	1.5	1.3	4.8	2.3	5.0
Women, 16 years and older	71,013	54,729	9,751	4,154	10,631	4,508	2,864	1,301	156	1,146	6.3	5.2	13.3	3.7	10.8
16 to 19 years	1,731	1,308	231	53	332	225	155	52	5	62	13.0	11.9	22.4	–	18.7
20 to 24 years	6,358	4,784	963	289	1,319	891	574	260	21	186	14.0	12.0	27.0	7.2	14.1
25 to 34 years	15,599	11,558	2,411	954	2,724	1,238	719	420	40	304	7.9	6.2	17.4	4.2	11.1
35 to 44 years	14,633	10,738	2,271	1,092	2,571	1,026	626	311	38	314	7.0	5.8	13.7	3.5	12.2
45 to 54 years	15,687	12,255	2,084	933	2,156	592	395	146	33	176	3.8	3.2	7.0	3.6	8.1
55 to 64 years	12,807	10,542	1,356	671	1,220	465	342	102	12	84	3.6	3.2	7.5	1.9	6.9

Table 2. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more: poverty status, by age, gender, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2015 (Numbers in thousands)

Age and gender	Total					Below poverty level					Rate[1]				
	Total	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino	Total	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino	Total	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino
65 years and older	4,197	3,543	435	161	308	71	52	10	6	20	1.7	1.5	2.3	4.0	6.4

[1] Number below the poverty level as a percent of the total in the labor force for 27 weeks or more.

Note: Estimates for the race groups shown (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. Dash represents zero, rounds to zero, or indicates that base is less than 80,000.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC).

Table 3. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more: poverty status, by educational attainment, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and gender, 2015 (Numbers in thousands)

Educational attainment, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total	Men	Women	Below poverty level			Rate[1]		
				Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
See footnotes at end of table.									
Total, 16 years and older	152,230	81,218	71,013	8,560	4,053	4,508	5.6	5.0	6.3
Less than a high school diploma	12,900	8,071	4,829	2,096	1,141	955	16.2	14.1	19.8
Less than 1 year of high school	4,280	2,805	1,475	710	453	257	16.6	16.2	17.4
1–3 years of high school	6,773	4,107	2,666	1,094	526	568	16.1	12.8	21.3
4 years of high school, no diploma	1,847	1,159	687	292	162	130	15.8	14.0	19.0
High school graduates, no college[2]	40,385	23,715	16,670	3,064	1,464	1,600	7.6	6.2	9.6
Some college or associate's degree	44,115	21,741	22,374	2,469	951	1,519	5.6	4.4	6.8
Some college, no degree	27,985	14,219	13,766	1,854	737	1,117	6.6	5.2	8.1
Associate's degree	16,129	7,522	8,608	615	214	401	3.8	2.8	4.7
Bachelor's degree and higher[3]	54,830	27,690	27,140	931	497	434	1.7	1.8	1.6
White, 16 years and older	119,878	65,149	54,729	5,746	2,882	2,864	4.8	4.4	5.2
Less than a high school diploma	10,198	6,630	3,568	1,580	905	675	15.5	13.6	18.9
Less than 1 year of high school	3,602	2,408	1,194	615	404	211	17.1	16.8	17.7
1–3 years of high school	5,303	3,368	1,935	783	402	381	14.8	11.9	19.7
4 years of high school, no diploma	1,293	854	439	182	99	83	14.1	11.6	18.9
High school graduates, no college[2]	31,638	19,014	12,624	1,963	1,008	955	6.2	5.3	7.6
Some college or associate's degree	34,485	17,335	17,149	1,580	652	928	4.6	3.8	5.4
Some college, no degree	21,414	11,084	10,330	1,158	493	664	5.4	4.5	6.4
Associate's degree	13,071	6,251	6,819	422	159	264	3.2	2.5	3.9
Bachelor's degree and higher[3]	43,557	22,170	21,387	623	317	306	1.4	1.4	1.4
Black or African American, 16 years and older	18,502	8,751	9,751	2,073	772	1,301	11.2	8.8	13.3
Less than a high school diploma	1,569	810	758	391	173	218	24.9	21.4	28.8
Less than 1 year of high school	290	159	130	58	32	26	20.0	20.1	19.8
1–3 years of high school	924	456	468	248	88	160	26.9	19.4	34.2
4 years of high school, no diploma	355	196	159	85	53	32	23.9	27.0	20.1
High school graduates, no college[2]	5,867	3,108	2,759	876	309	566	14.9	10.0	20.5
Some college or associate's degree	6,262	2,733	3,529	638	184	454	10.2	6.7	12.9
Some college, no degree	4,351	2,002	2,349	502	151	351	11.5	7.6	14.9
Associate's degree	1,911	731	1,180	136	33	103	7.1	4.5	8.7

Table 3. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more: poverty status, by educational attainment, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and gender, 2015 (Numbers in thousands)

Educational attainment, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total	Men	Women	Below poverty level			Rate[1]		
				Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Bachelor's degree and higher[3]	4,804	2,100	2,705	168	105	62	3.5	5.0	2.3
Asian, 16 years and older	8,965	4,810	4,154	364	209	156	4.1	4.3	3.7
Less than a high school diploma	555	287	269	62	33	29	11.2	11.6	10.8
Less than 1 year of high school	229	120	109	21	10	11	9.2	8.7	9.8
1–3 years of high school	206	103	103	22	14	8	10.9	14.0	7.7
4 years of high school, no diploma	121	64	57	19	8	10	15.6	–	–
High school graduates, no college2	1,470	780	690	86	57	29	5.8	7.3	4.2
Some college or associate's degree	1,670	828	842	105	60	46	6.3	7.2	5.4
Some college, no degree	1,011	536	475	81	46	35	8.0	8.5	7.4
Associate's degree	659	292	367	25	14	11	3.7	4.8	2.9
Bachelor's degree and higher[3]	5,269	2,915	2,354	111	59	52	2.1	2.0	2.2
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 16 years and older	25,019	14,388	10,631	2,520	1,374	1,146	10.1	9.5	10.8
Less than a high school diploma	6,389	4,216	2,173	1,190	714	475	18.6	16.9	21.9
Less than 1 year of high school	3,213	2,163	1,050	567	369	198	17.7	17.1	18.9
1–3 years of high school	2,524	1,626	898	503	271	232	19.9	16.7	25.8
4 years of high school, no diploma	652	428	225	119	74	45	18.3	17.3	20.1
High school graduates, no college[2]	7,895	4,824	3,071	766	415	351	9.7	8.6	11.4
Some college or associate's degree	6,401	3,175	3,227	417	174	242	6.5	5.5	7.5
Some college, no degree	4,377	2,219	2,158	309	137	171	7.1	6.2	7.9
Associate's degree	2,024	955	1,069	108	37	71	5.3	3.9	6.7
Bachelor's degree and higher[3]	4,334	2,174	2,160	147	70	77	3.4	3.2	3.6

[1] Number below the poverty level as a percentage of the total in the labor force for 27 weeks or more.
[2] Includes people with a high school diploma or equivalent.
[3] Includes people with bachelor's, master's, professional, and doctoral degrees.
Note: Estimates for the race groups shown (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. Dash represents zero, rounds to zero, or indicates that base is less than 80,000.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC).

Table 4. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more who worked during the year: poverty status, by occupation of longest job held, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and gender, 2015 (Numbers in thousands)

Occupation, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total	Men	Women	Below poverty level			Rate[1]		
				Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
See footnotes at end of table.									
Total, 16 years and older[2]	150,642	80,304	70,338	7,875	3,648	4,227	5.2	4.5	6.0
Management, professional, and related occupations	59,025	28,329	30,696	1,049	425	624	1.8	1.5	2.0
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	24,997	13,817	11,180	388	190	198	1.6	1.4	1.8
Professional and related occupations	34,028	14,512	19,516	661	235	426	1.9	1.6	2.2
Service occupations	25,848	11,361	14,488	2,994	1,073	1,920	11.6	9.4	13.3
Sales and office occupations	33,386	12,884	20,503	1,825	579	1,247	5.5	4.5	6.1
Sales and related occupations	15,743	7,998	7,744	1,054	320	734	6.7	4.0	9.5
Office and administrative support occupations	17,644	4,885	12,758	771	259	512	4.4	5.3	4.0
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	14,101	13,434	666	966	909	57	6.9	6.8	8.6
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	1,270	969	301	179	137	42	14.1	14.2	13.9
Construction and extraction occupations	7,862	7,651	211	606	595	11	7.7	7.8	5.4
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,968	4,815	154	181	177	4	3.6	3.7	2.5
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	18,183	14,216	3,967	1,041	662	379	5.7	4.7	9.6
Production occupations	8,829	6,352	2,477	400	206	193	4.5	3.2	7.8
Transportation and material-moving occupations	9,354	7,864	1,490	641	455	186	6.9	5.8	12.5
White, 16 years and older[2]	118,917	64,575	54,342	5,394	2,662	2,732	4.5	4.1	5.0
Management, professional, and related occupations	47,693	23,245	24,448	713	307	406	1.5	1.3	1.7
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	20,914	11,897	9,016	299	148	151	1.4	1.2	1.7
Professional and related occupations	26,779	11,348	15,432	414	159	254	1.5	1.4	1.6
Service occupations	18,830	8,470	10,360	1,944	740	1,204	10.3	8.7	11.6
Sales and office occupations	26,308	10,226	16,082	1,205	383	822	4.6	3.7	5.1
Sales and related occupations	12,628	6,640	5,988	733	227	507	5.8	3.4	8.5
Office and administrative support occupations	13,680	3,586	10,094	472	156	316	3.5	4.4	3.1
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	12,168	11,642	526	827	777	50	6.8	6.7	9.5
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	1,120	863	258	166	129	37	14.8	15.0	14.2
Construction and extraction occupations	6,835	6,677	158	521	511	10	7.6	7.6	6.4
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,212	4,102	110	141	138	3	3.3	3.4	2.8
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	13,839	10,926	2,913	704	454	250	5.1	4.2	8.6
Production occupations	6,904	5,096	1,808	293	170	123	4.2	3.3	6.8

Table 4. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more who worked during the year: poverty status, by occupation of longest job held, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and gender, 2015 (Numbers in thousands)

Occupation, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total	Men	Women	Below poverty level			Rate[1]		
				Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Transportation and material-moving occupations	6,935	5,830	1,105	412	285	127	5.9	4.9	11.5
Black or African American, 16 years and older[2]	18,004	8,476	9,527	1,783	620	1,162	9.9	7.3	12.2
Management, professional, and related occupations	5,313	1,971	3,342	212	55	157	4.0	2.8	4.7
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	2,030	849	1,182	44	14	29	2.1	1.7	2.5
Professional and related occupations	3,283	1,122	2,160	169	41	128	5.1	3.7	5.9
Service occupations	4,439	1,729	2,710	789	210	579	17.8	12.1	21.4
Sales and office occupations	4,260	1,534	2,726	440	115	325	10.3	7.5	11.9
Sales and related occupations	1,696	700	995	224	39	186	13.2	5.5	18.7
Office and administrative support occupations	2,564	833	1,731	215	76	139	8.4	9.2	8.0
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	1,092	1,018	75	86	83	3	7.9	8.2	–
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	88	61	27	8	5	2	8.6	–	–
Construction and extraction occupations	592	571	20	55	55	1	9.4	9.6	–
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	412	385	27	23	23	–	5.6	5.9	–
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	2,891	2,221	670	256	157	99	8.8	7.1	14.8
Production occupations	1,120	730	390	79	23	56	7.1	3.1	14.4
Transportation and material-moving occupations	1,771	1,490	281	177	134	43	10.0	9.0	15.2
Asian, 16 years and older[2]	8,897	4,773	4,124	346	192	154	3.9	4.0	3.7
Management, professional, and related occupations	4,669	2,537	2,132	84	47	36	1.8	1.9	1.7
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	1,526	820	706	39	25	13	2.5	3.1	1.9
Professional and related occupations	3,144	1,717	1,427	45	22	23	1.4	1.3	1.6
Service occupations	1,419	597	822	105	47	58	7.4	7.9	7.0
Sales and office occupations	1,696	774	922	94	52	42	5.5	6.7	4.5
Sales and related occupations	867	464	403	51	33	18	5.9	7.1	4.4
Office and administrative support occupations	830	310	519	43	19	24	5.2	6.0	4.6
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	263	235	28	14	13	1	5.2	5.5	–
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	17	9	8	0	0	–	–	–	–
Construction and extraction occupations	110	100	10	7	7	–	6.0	6.6	–
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	136	125	10	7	6	1	4.9	4.6	–
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	842	625	218	50	33	17	5.9	5.2	7.9
Production occupations	498	325	174	16	10	6	3.2	3.0	3.7

Table 4. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more who worked during the year: poverty status, by occupation of longest job held, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and gender, 2015 (Numbers in thousands)

Occupation, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total	Men	Women	Below poverty level			Rate[1]		
				Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Transportation and material-moving occupations	344	300	44	34	23	11	9.8	7.6	–
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 16 years and older[2]	24,768	14,254	10,513	2,400	1,307	1,093	9.7	9.2	10.4
Management, professional, and related occupations	5,230	2,452	2,778	165	86	80	3.2	3.5	2.9
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	2,459	1,315	1,143	79	50	29	3.2	3.8	2.5
Professional and related occupations	2,772	1,137	1,635	86	36	50	3.1	3.2	3.1
Service occupations	6,323	2,994	3,329	941	383	557	14.9	12.8	16.7
Sales and office occupations	5,116	2,022	3,094	415	128	287	8.1	6.3	9.3
Sales and related occupations	2,349	1,113	1,236	229	63	166	9.8	5.7	13.4
Office and administrative support occupations	2,767	909	1,858	186	65	121	6.7	7.1	6.5
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	4,116	3,852	264	527	485	42	12.8	12.6	15.9
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	614	449	165	129	94	35	21.0	20.9	21.3
Construction and extraction occupations	2,580	2,511	68	337	331	7	13.1	13.2	–
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	922	892	31	60	60	–	6.5	6.8	–
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	3,973	2,931	1,042	352	225	127	8.9	7.7	12.2
Production occupations	1,997	1,298	699	155	83	72	7.8	6.4	10.4
Transportation and material-moving occupations	1,976	1,633	343	197	143	54	10.0	8.7	15.8

[1] Number below the poverty level as a percentage of the total in the labor force for 27 weeks or more who worked during the year.

[2] Estimates for the occupational groups do not sum to totals because data include the long-term unemployed with no previous work experience and a small number of people whose last job was in the Armed Forces.

Note: Estimates for the race groups shown (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. Dash represents zero, rounds to zero, or indicates that base is less than 80,000.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC).

Table 5. Primary families: poverty status, presence of related children, and work experience of family members in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 2015 (Numbers in thousands)

See footnotes at end of table.

Characteristic	Total families	At or above poverty level	Below poverty level	Rate[1]
Total primary families	67,193	62,586	4,607	6.9
With related children under 18 years	34,948	31,052	3,896	11.1
Without children	32,245	31,534	711	2.2
With one member in the labor force	29,232	25,247	3,985	13.6
With two or more members in the labor force	37,960	37,339	621	1.6
With two members	31,654	31,095	560	1.8
With three or more members	6,306	6,244	62	1.0
Married-couple families[2]	49,515	47,668	1,847	3.7
With related children under 18 years	24,230	22,729	1,500	6.2
Without children	25,285	24,939	347	1.4
With one member in the labor force	17,345	15,877	1,468	8.5
Husband	12,240	11,106	1,135	9.3
Wife	4,299	4,023	276	6.4
Relative	806	749	57	7.1
With two or more members in the labor force	32,170	31,791	379	1.2
With two members	27,234	26,889	345	1.3
With three or more members	4,936	4,901	35	0.7
Families maintained by women[3]	12,287	10,042	2,245	18.3
With related children under 18 years	7,988	6,011	1,978	24.8
Without children	4,299	4,032	267	6.2
With one member in the labor force	8,602	6,544	2,058	23.9
Householder	6,932	5,205	1,727	24.9
Relative	1,670	1,339	331	19.8
With two or more members in the labor force	3,686	3,498	187	5.1
Families maintained by men[3]	5,390	4,875	515	9.6
With related children under 18 years	2,730	2,312	418	15.3
Without children	2,660	2,563	97	3.6
With one member in the labor force	3,285	2,826	460	14.0
Householder	2,650	2,286	365	13.8
Relative	635	540	95	15.0

Table 5. Primary families: poverty status, presence of related children, and work experience of family members in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 2015 (Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total families	At or above poverty level	Below poverty level	Rate[1]
With two or more members in the labor force	2,105	2,050	55	2.6

1 Number below the poverty level as a percentage of the total in the labor force for 27 weeks or more who worked during the year.
2 Refers to opposite-sex married-couple families only.
3 No opposite-sex spouse present.
Note: Data relate to primary families with at least one member in the labor force for 27 weeks or more.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC).

Table 6. People in families and unrelated individuals: poverty status and work experience, 2015 (Numbers in thousands)

Poverty status and work experience	Total people	In married-couple families[1]				In families maintained by women[2]			In families maintained by men[2]			Unrelated individuals
		Husbands	Wives	Related children under 18 years	Other relatives	Householder	Related children under 18 years	Other relatives	Householder	Related children under 18 years	Other relatives	
See footnotes at end of table.												
Total												
All people	252,766	59,618	60,205	5,484	21,742	15,595	2,288	14,416	6,265	711	6,873	59,568
With labor force activity	165,495	45,164	37,268	1,368	13,651	10,897	534	8,744	4,807	153	4,447	38,462
1 to 26 weeks	13,265	1,640	2,791	776	2,646	751	297	1,070	253	68	464	2,509
27 weeks or more	152,230	43,523	34,477	592	11,005	10,145	237	7,674	4,554	85	3,984	35,953
With no labor force activity	87,271	14,454	22,937	4,116	8,091	4,698	1,754	5,672	1,458	558	2,426	21,106
At or above poverty level												
All people	222,699	56,411	56,960	5,052	20,754	11,196	1,539	11,957	5,339	571	6,227	46,693
With labor force activity	154,515	43,537	36,479	1,337	13,342	8,579	410	7,887	4,317	145	4,254	34,228
1 to 26 weeks	10,846	1,511	2,584	758	2,554	314	208	827	181	63	434	1,412
27 weeks or more	143,670	42,027	33,895	579	10,788	8,265	201	7,060	4,136	82	3,821	32,817
With no labor force activity	68,183	12,874	20,481	3,715	7,412	2,617	1,130	4,070	1,022	426	1,972	12,464
Below poverty level												
All people	30,067	3,207	3,245	432	987	4,399	749	2,460	926	140	647	12,876
With labor force activity	10,980	1,626	789	32	309	2,317	125	858	490	8	193	4,234
1 to 26 weeks	2,420	130	208	19	91	437	89	243	72	5	30	1,097
27 weeks or more	8,560	1,497	581	13	218	1,880	35	615	418	4	163	3,137
With no labor force activity	19,087	1,581	2,456	401	679	2,082	624	1,602	435	132	454	8,642
Rate[3]												
All people	11.9	5.4	5.4	7.9	4.5	28.2	32.7	17.1	14.8	19.7	9.4	21.6

Table 6. People in families and unrelated individuals: poverty status and work experience, 2015 (Numbers in thousands)

Poverty status and work experience	Total people	In married-couple families[1]				In families maintained by women[2]			In families maintained by men[2]			Unrelated individuals
		Husbands	Wives	Related children under 18 years	Other relatives	Householder	Related children under 18 years	Other relatives	Householder	Related children under 18 years	Other relatives	
With labor force activity	6.6	3.6	2.1	2.3	2.3	21.3	23.3	9.8	10.2	5.4	4.3	11.0
1 to 26 weeks	18.2	7.9	7.4	2.4	3.4	58.2	30.0	22.7	28.5	-	6.5	43.7
27 weeks or more	5.6	3.4	1.7	2.2	2.0	18.5	15.0	8.0	9.2	4.3	4.1	8.7
With no labor force activity	21.9	10.9	10.7	9.7	8.4	44.3	35.6	28.2	29.9	23.6	18.7	40.9

[1] Refers to opposite-sex married-couple families only.
[2] No opposite-sex spouse present.
[3] Number below the poverty level as a percentage of the total.
Note: Dash represents zero, rounds to zero, or indicates that base is less than 80,000.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC).

Table 7. Unrelated individuals in the labor force for 27 weeks or more: poverty status, by age, gender, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity and living arrangement, 2015 (Numbers in thousands)

See footnotes at end of table.

Characteristic	Total	At or above poverty level	Below poverty level	Rate[1]
Age and gender				
Total unrelated individuals	35,953	32,817	3,137	8.7
16 to 19 years	373	200	173	46.3
20 to 24 years	4,182	3,304	878	21.0
25 to 64 years	28,729	26,705	2,024	7.0
65 years and older	2,669	2,607	62	2.3
Men	19,700	18,075	1,625	8.2
Women	16,253	14,741	1,512	9.3
Race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity				
White	28,058	25,907	2,151	7.7
Men	15,481	14,409	1,072	6.9
Women	12,577	11,498	1,080	8.6
Black or African American	5,126	4,416	710	13.9
Men	2,710	2,330	380	14.0
Women	2,416	2,086	330	13.7
Asian	1,533	1,408	125	8.2
Men	822	747	75	9.1
Women	711	661	51	7.1
Hispanic or Latino, ethnicity	4,887	4,364	523	10.7
Men	3,101	2,818	283	9.1
Women	1,786	1,546	240	13.4
Living arrangement				
Living alone	18,469	17,285	1,184	6.4
Living with others	17,484	15,531	1,953	11.2

[1] Number below the poverty level as a percentage of the total in the labor force for 27 weeks or more.

Note: Estimates for the race groups shown (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.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC).

Table 8. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more: poverty status and labor market problems of full-time wage and salary workers, 2015 (Numbers in thousands)

Labor market problems	Total	At or above poverty level	Below poverty level	Rate1
See footnotes at end of table.				
Total, full-time wage and salary workers	118,203	114,450	3,753	3.2
No unemployment, involuntary part-time employment, or low earnings2	99,264	98,579	685	0.7
Workers experiencing one labor market problem				
Unemployment only	5,259	4,891	368	7.0
Involuntary part-time employment only	2,538	2,478	60	2.3
Low earnings only	7,697	6,037	1,660	21.6
Workers experiencing multiple labor market problems				
Unemployment and involuntary part-time employment	993	911	82	8.2
Unemployment and low earnings	1,357	795	561	41.4
Involuntary part-time employment and low earnings	728	539	189	26.0
Unemployment, involuntary part-time employment, and low earnings	368	220	148	40.3
Workers experiencing each labor market problem				
Unemployment (alone or with other problems)	7,976	6,817	1,159	14.5
Involuntary part-time employment (alone or with other problems)	4,626	4,147	479	10.3
Low earnings (alone or with other problems)	10,149	7,591	2,558	25.2

1 Number below the poverty level as a percentage of the total in the labor force for 27 weeks or more.
2 The low-earnings threshold in 2015 was $348.85 per week.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC).

Technical Notes

The data presented in this report were collected in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS). Conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the CPS is a monthly sample survey of about 60,000 eligible households. Data from the CPS are used to obtain 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 and income during the previous calendar year. For instance, data collected in 2016 are for the 2015 calendar year.

The estimates presented in this report are based on a sample and, consequently, may differ from estimates that would have been obtained from a complete count using the same questionnaire and procedures. Sampling variability may be relatively large in cases where the numbers are small. Thus, both small estimates and small differences between estimates should be interpreted with caution. For a detailed explanation of the ASEC supplement to the CPS, its sampling variability, more extensive definitions than those provided here, and additional information about income and poverty measures, see "Income and poverty in the United States: 2015," *Current Population Reports*, P60-256 (U.S. Census Bureau, September 2016), https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-256.pdf.

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For more information on the data provided in this report, contact the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Division of Labor Force Statistics. Email: cpsinfo@bls.gov; Telephone: (202) 691-6378.

Concepts and definitions

Poverty classification. Poverty statistics presented in this report are based on definitions developed by the Social Security Administration in 1964 and revised by federal interagency committees in 1969 and 1981. These definitions originally were based on the Department of Agriculture's Economy Food Plan and reflected the different consumption requirements of families on the basis of factors such as family size and the number of children under 18 years of age.

The actual poverty thresholds vary with the makeup of the family. In 2015, the weighted average poverty threshold for a family of four was $24,257; for a family of nine or more people, the threshold was $49,177; and for one person (see Unrelated individuals), it was $12,082. Poverty thresholds are updated each year to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). Thresholds do not vary geographically. (For more information, see "Income and poverty in the United States: 2015.")

Low earnings. The low-earnings level, as first developed in 1987, represented the average of the real value of the minimum wage between 1967 and 1987 for a 40-hour workweek. The year 1967 was chosen as the base year because that was the first year in which minimum-wage legislation covered essentially the same broad group of workers that currently is covered. The low-earnings level has been adjusted each year since then in accordance with the CPI-U, so the measure maintains the same real value that it held in 1987. In 2015, the low-earnings threshold was $348.85 per week. For a complete definition, see pp. 5–8 of "A profile of the working poor," *Monthly Labor Review*, https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/1989/10/art1full.pdf.

Income. Data on income are limited to money income—before personal income taxes and payroll deductions—received in the calendar year preceding the CPS supplement. Data on income do not include the value of noncash benefits, such as food stamps, Medicare, Medicaid, public housing, and employer-provided benefits. For a complete definition of income, see "Income and poverty in the United States: 2015."

Labor force. People in the labor force are those who worked or looked for work sometime during the calendar year. The number of weeks in the labor force is accumulated over the entire year. The focus in this report is on people who were in the labor force for 27 weeks or more.

Working poor. The working poor are people who spent at least 27 weeks in the labor force (that is, working or looking for work) but whose incomes still fell below the official poverty level.

Working-poor rate. This rate is the number of individuals in the labor force for at least 27 weeks whose incomes still fell below the official poverty level, as a percentage of all people who were in the labor force for at least 27 weeks during the calendar year.

Involuntary part-time workers. These are people who, during at least 1 week of the year, worked fewer than 35 hours because of slack work or unfavorable business conditions or because they could not find full-time work. The number of weeks of involuntary part-time work is accumulated over the year.

Occupation. This term refers to the job in which a person worked the most weeks during the calendar year.

Unemployed. Unemployed people are those who looked for work while not employed or those who were on layoff from a job and were expecting to be recalled to that job. The number of weeks unemployed is accumulated over the entire year.

Family. A family is defined as a group of two or more people residing together who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. The count of families used in this report includes only primary families. A primary family consists of the reference person (the householder) and all people living in the household who are related to the reference person. Families are classified either as married-couple families or as those maintained by men or women without spouses present. Family status is determined at the time of the survey interview and, thus, may be different from that of the previous year.

Unrelated individuals. These are people who are not living with anyone related to them by birth, marriage, or adoption. Such individuals may live alone, reside in a nonrelated family household, or live in group quarters with other unrelated individuals.

Related children. Related children are children under age 18 (including sons, daughters, stepchildren, and adopted children) of the husband, wife, or person maintaining the family, as well as other children related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.

Race. White, Black or African American, and Asian are categories used to describe the race of people. People in these categories are those who selected that race group only. Data for the two remaining race categories—American Indian and Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander—and for people who selected more than one race category are included in totals, but are not shown separately because the number of survey respondents is too small to develop estimates of sufficient quality for publication. In the enumeration process, race is determined by the household respondent.

Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. This term refers to people who identified themselves in the CPS enumeration process as being of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish ethnicity. People whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race.