BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey

Highlights

April 2010

Bureau of Labor Statistics

June 8, 2010

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey and Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, June 8, 2010.

Notes: Shaded areas represent recessions as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER). NBER has not yet determined an endpoint for the recession that began in Dec. 2007.

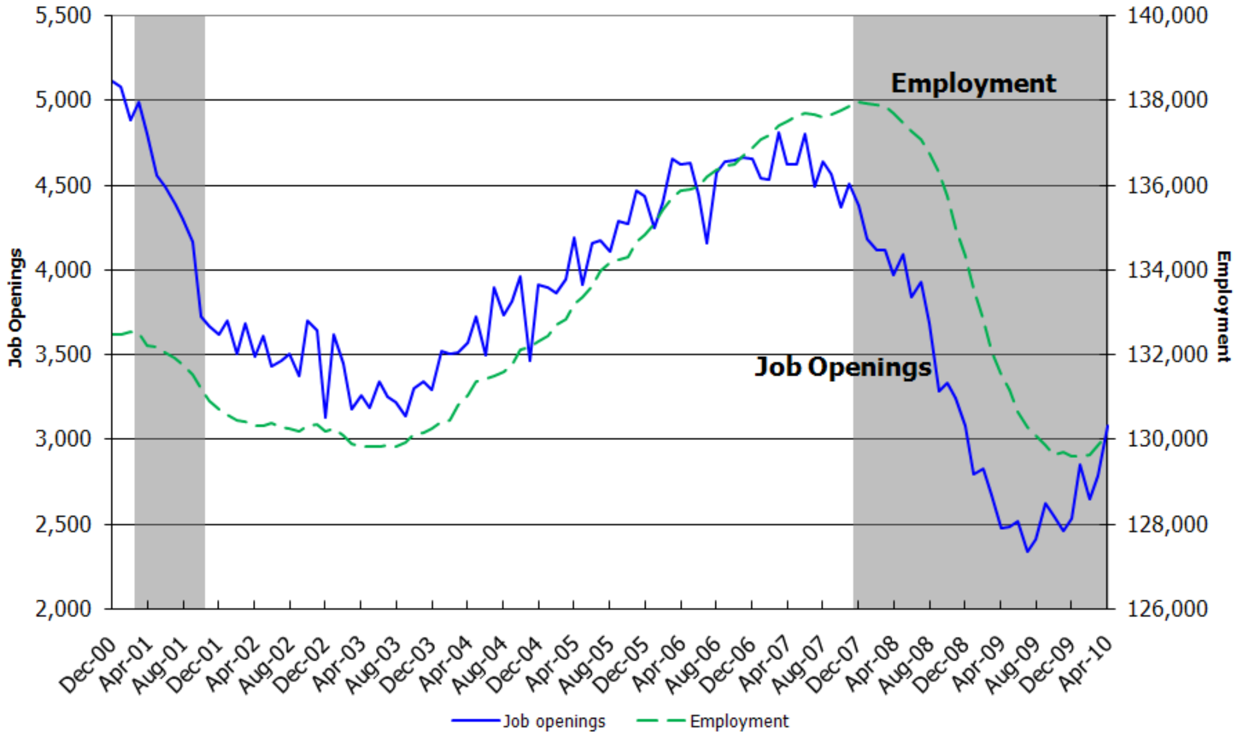
- Combining the unemployment level and job openings level produces a ratio between the 2 series that can serve as an indication of how the number of unemployed persons per job opening changes over time.

- When the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS) series began in December 2000, the ratio was just over 1 unemployed person per job opening. The ratio rose during and after the recession that began in March 2001, rising to a maximum of nearly 3 unemployed persons per open job in September 2003. After September, the ratio drifted steadily downward to 1.4 in March 2007.

- When the recession began in December 2007, there were 1.8 unemployed persons per job opening. The ratio rose to a high of 6.2 unemployed persons per open job, twice the highest ratio seen since the JOLTS series began.

- In April 2010, there were 5.0 unemployed persons per job opening.

Chart 2. Job openings and employment
Seasonally adjusted, in thousands

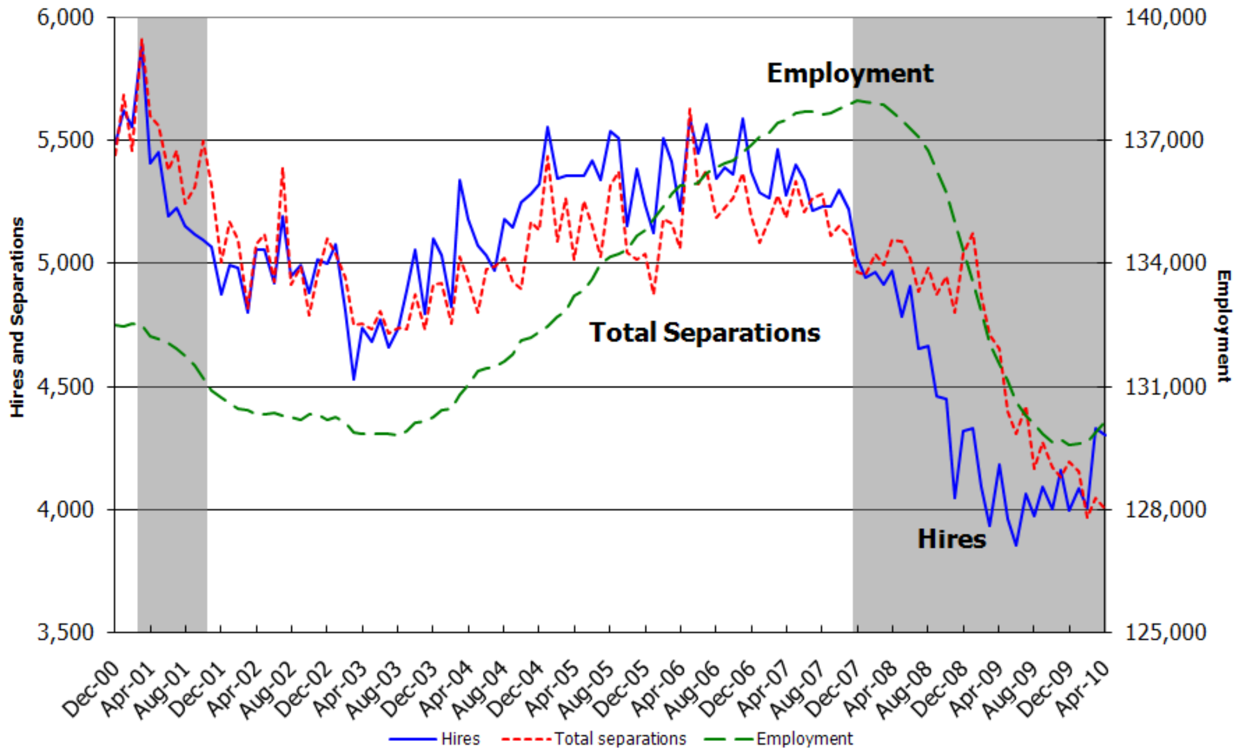


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics and Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, June 8, 2010.

Notes: Shaded areas represent recessions as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER). NBER has not yet determined an endpoint for the recession that began in Dec. 2007.

- The number of job openings peaked at 4.8 million in March 2007. Employment peaked later, at 138.0 million in December 2007.
- By the official start of the recession in December 2007, the number of job openings had already declined to 4.4 million.
- Job openings fell to a low of 2.3 million in July 2009 and has trended upward since.
- In April 2010, there were 3.1 million job openings in the United States and employment was 130.1 million.

Chart 3. Hires, total separations, and employment
Seasonally adjusted, in thousands



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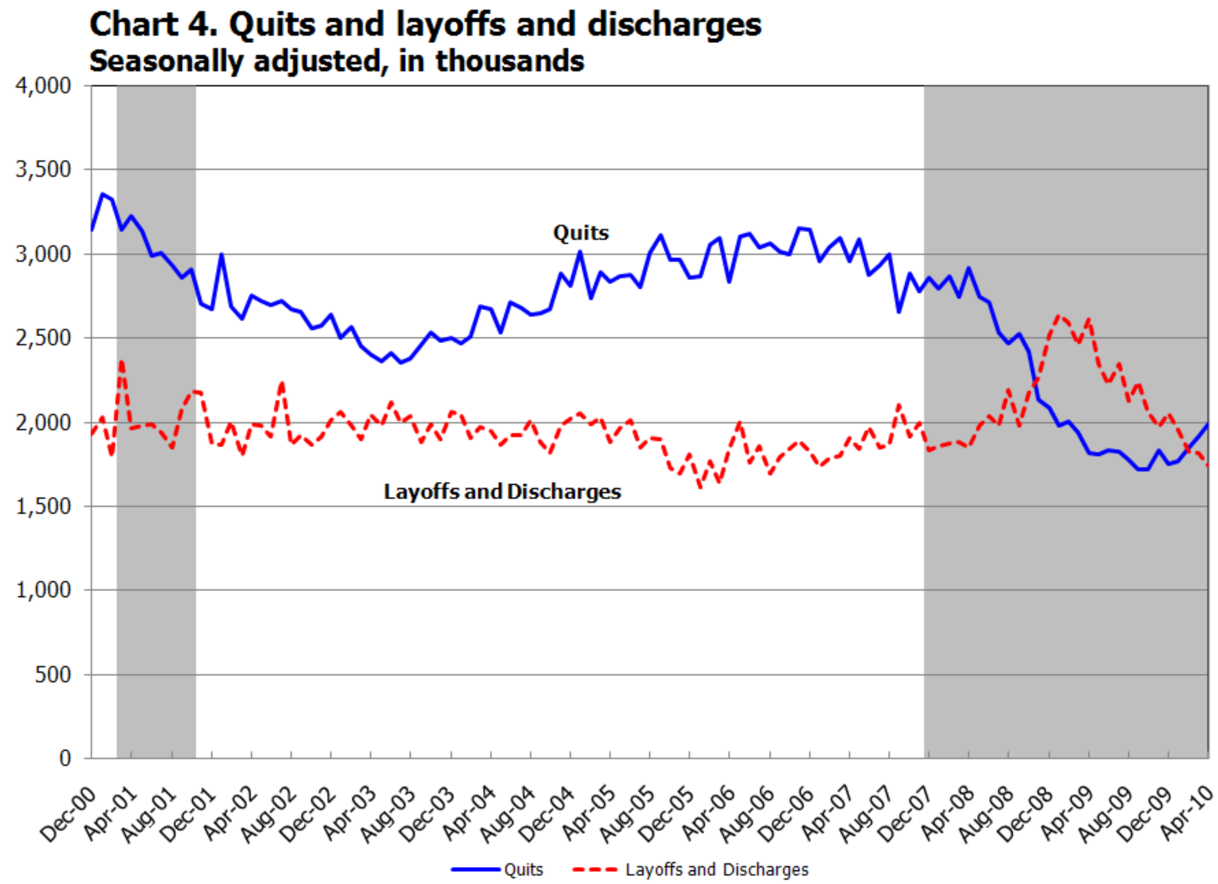
- The number of hires peaked at 5.6 million in January 2005 then remained essentially stable until November 2006 when hires began to decline. The number of hires had declined to 5.0 million by the official start of the recession in December 2007.
- Hires fell to a low point of 3.9 million in June 2009 and have been steadily rising since.
- Separations also began to decline before the recession, and in December 2007 when the recession began there were 5.0 million separations.
- Separations have trended downward overall since the start of the recession in December 2007.
- Employment continued to rise during the period immediately preceding the recession, because hires, although falling, were still greater than separations, which were also falling.
- Employment peaked at 138.0 million in December 2007, the beginning of the recession.
- In April 2010, there were 4.3 million hires and 4.0 million separations in the United States, which are still well below the levels at the beginning of the recession.



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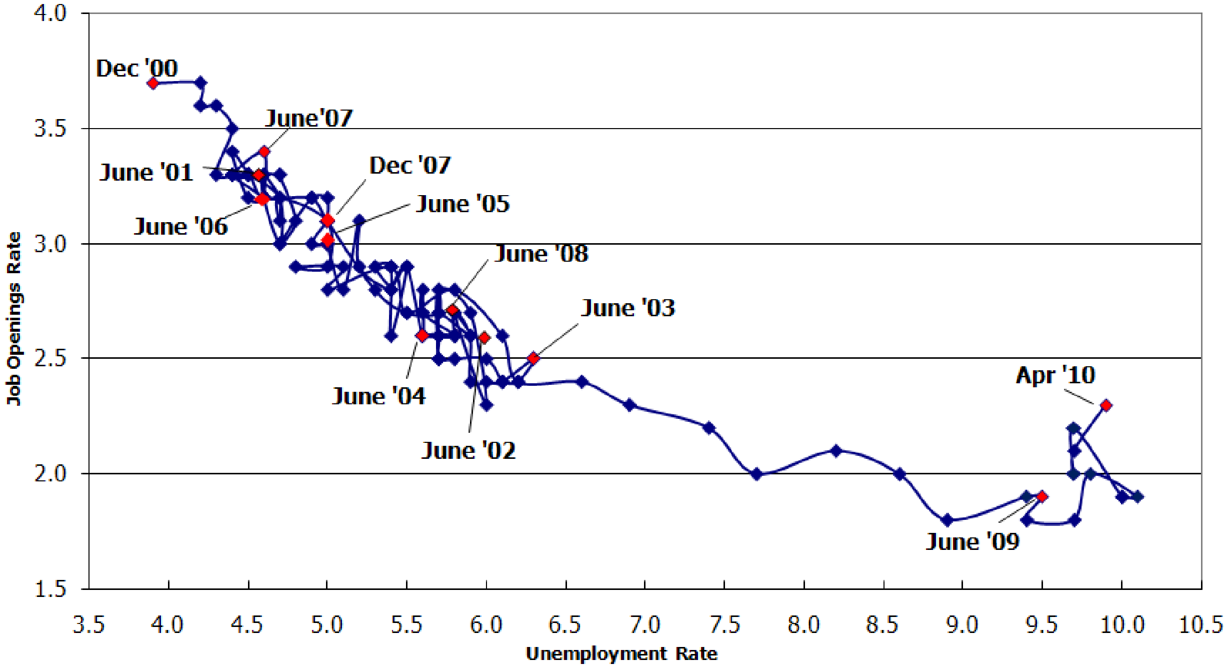
- For most of the JOLTS series, the number of quits has exceeded the number of layoffs and discharges. The number of layoffs and discharges began to rise in February 2006 and the number of quits began to decline in December 2006. By November 2008, layoffs and discharges outnumbered quits.

- The number of layoffs and discharges rose to a peak of 2.6 million in January 2009. The number of quits continued to fall, reaching a low of 1.7 million in September 2009.

- February 2010 was the first month since November 2008 that quits again outnumbered layoffs and discharges. Quits have continued to outnumber layoffs and discharges since February.

- In April 2010, there were 2.0 million quits and 1.7 million layoffs and discharges.

Chart 5. The Beveridge Curve (job openings vs. unemployment rate)
Seasonally adjusted



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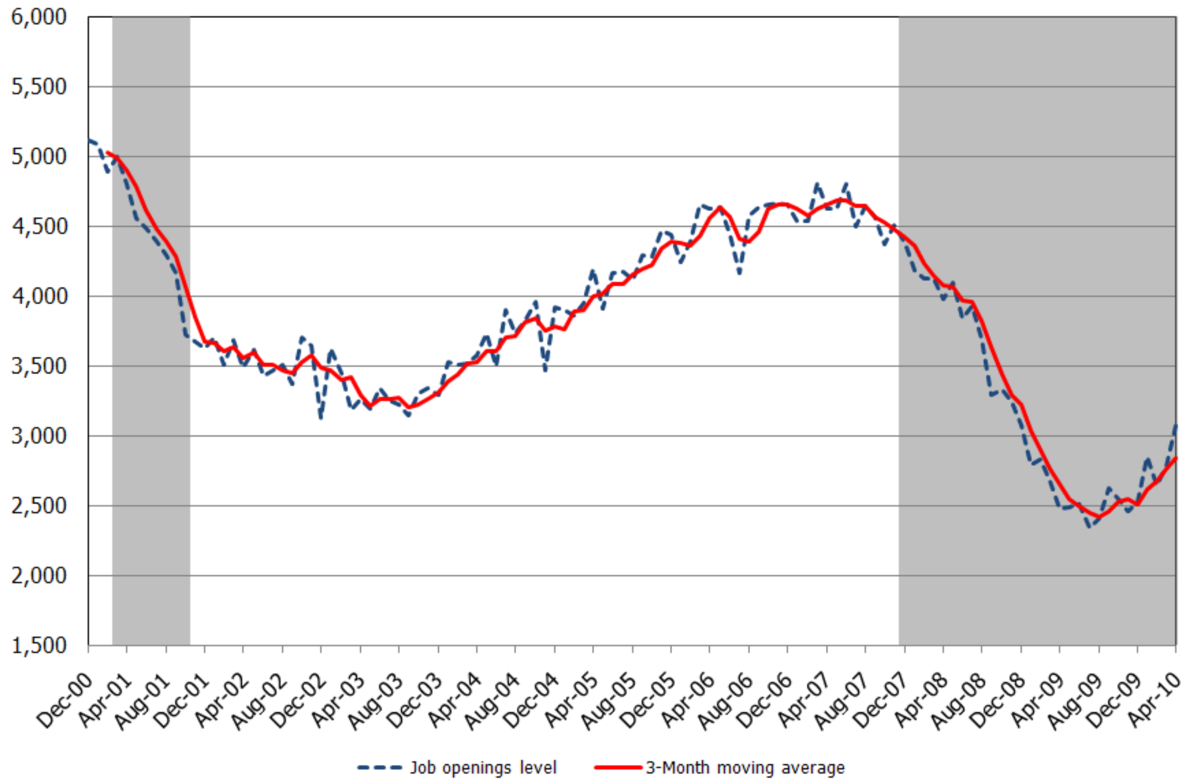
- The above graph plots the JOLTS job openings rate against the CPS unemployment rate. This graphical representation of the relationship between the unemployment rate and the vacancy rate is known as the Beveridge Curve, named after the British economist William Henry Beveridge (1879-1963). The economy's position on the downward sloping Beveridge Curve reflects the state of the business cycle.

- During an expansion, the unemployment rate is low and the vacancy rate is high. During a contraction, the unemployment rate is high and the vacancy rate is low. The position of the curve is determined by the efficiency of the labor market. For example, a greater mismatch between available jobs and the unemployed in terms of skills or location would cause the curve to shift outward.

- Since the start of the recession in December 2007, the point on the curve has moved lower and further to the right as the job openings rate declined and the unemployment rate rose.

- In April 2010, the point on the curve moved up and to the right as both the job openings rate and the unemployment rate rose, reaching 2.3 percent and 9.9 percent respectively.

Chart 6. Job openings level and 3-month moving average
Seasonally adjusted, in thousands



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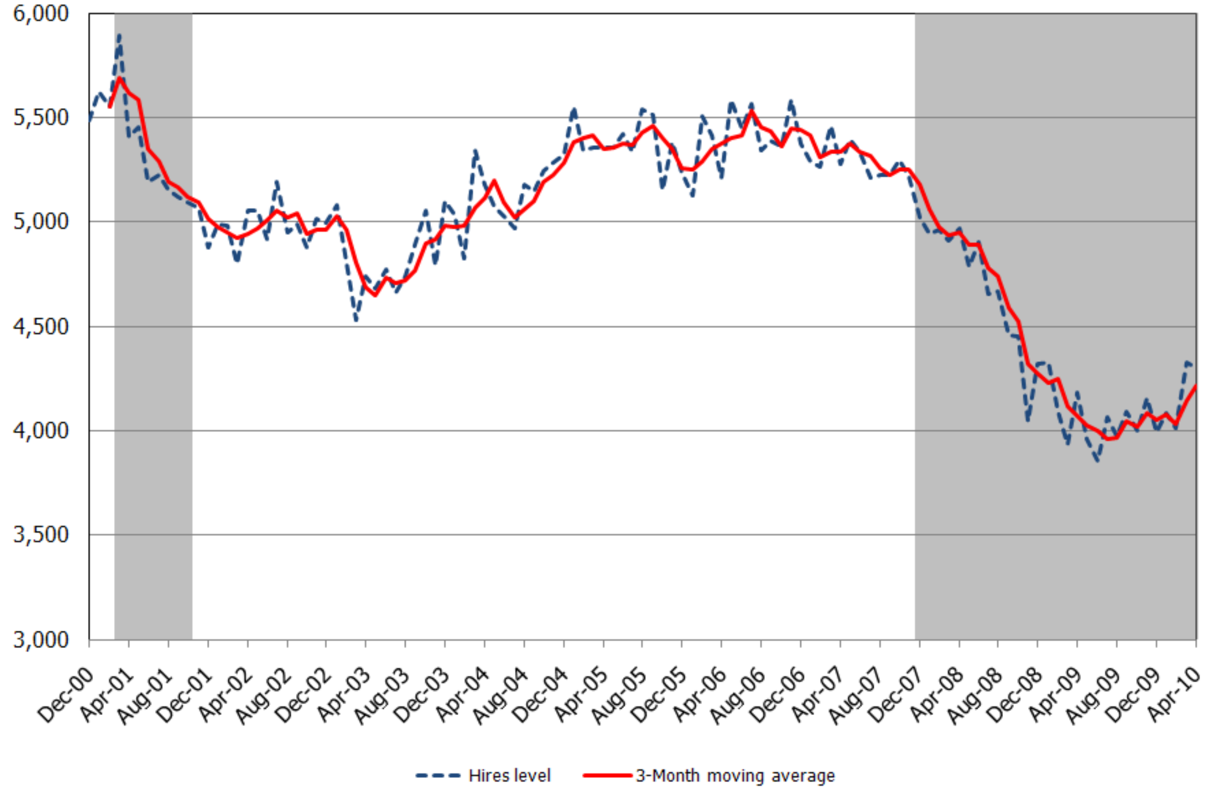
- A 3-month moving average is a tool used to smooth data series and look at the underlying trends. A simple moving average is used for the graph above. Each point on the graph represents a 3-month moving average. Each month's average is calculated using data from that month and the previous 2 months.
- The moving average for the job openings level began to decline in mid-2007, before the official start of the recession in December 2007, and declined steeply during the recession until mid-2009.
- Since mid-2009, the moving average for job openings has risen.

Chart 7. Hires level and 3-month moving average
Seasonally adjusted, in thousands



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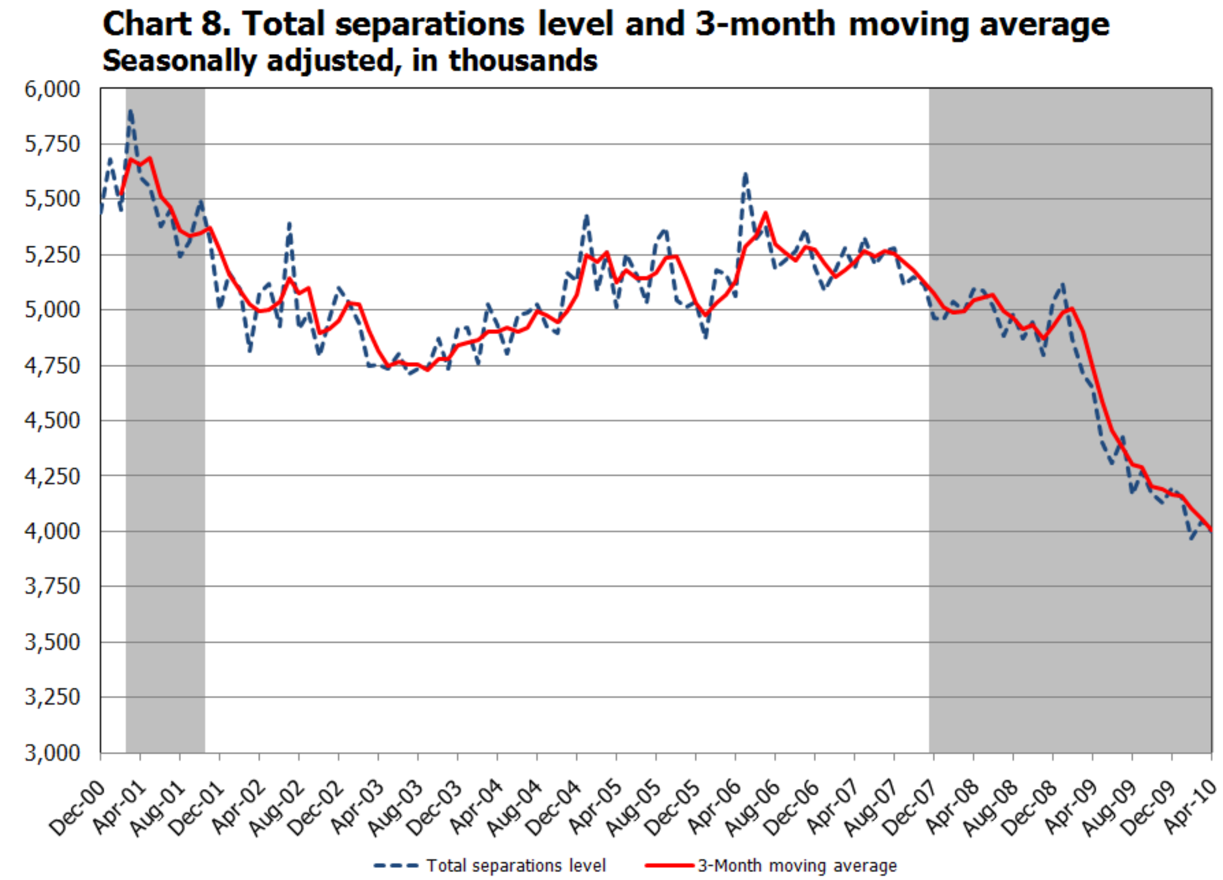
- The moving average for the hires level began to decline in mid-2006, before the official start of the recession in December 2007, and declined steeply during the recession until mid-2009.
- The hires moving average was flat through the second half of 2009 but has risen in 2010.



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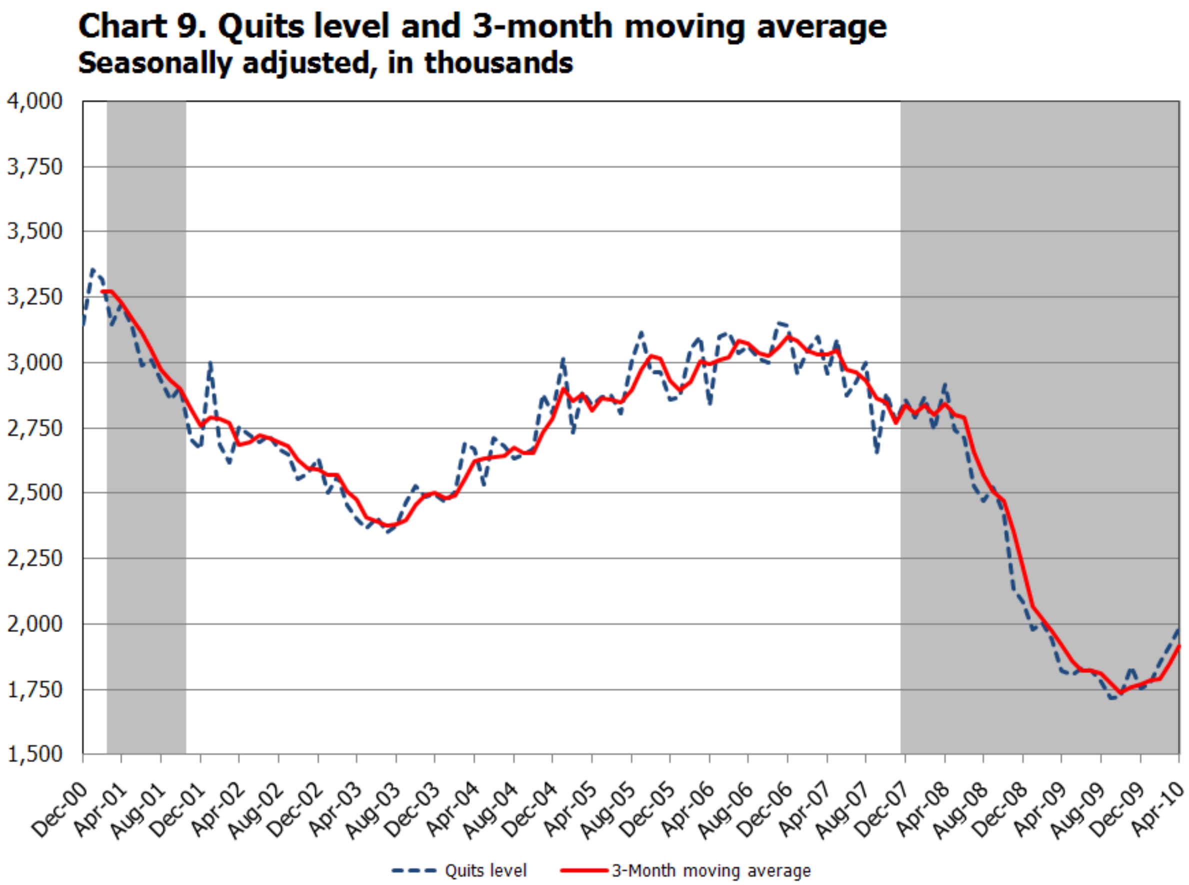
- The moving average for separations began declining downward from mid-2006 through January 2009. The moving average has fallen steeply since January 2009.



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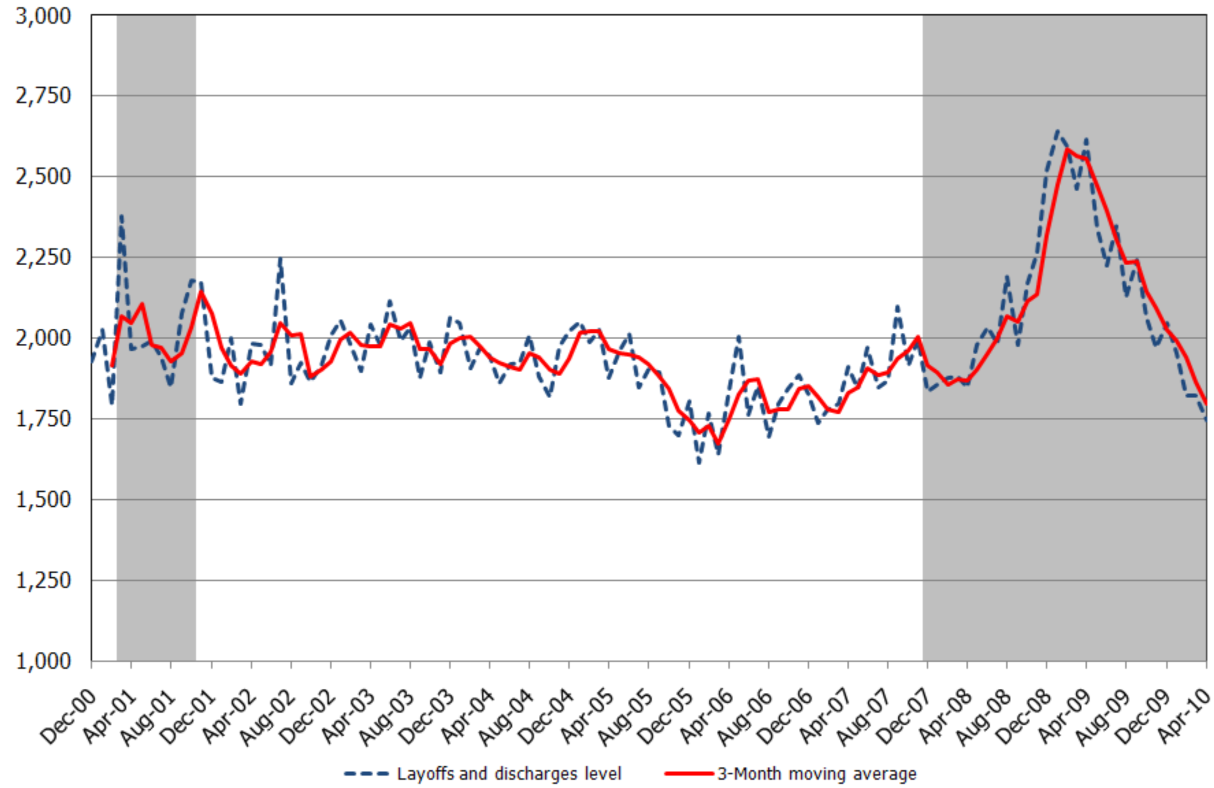
- The moving average for the quits level began to decline in the beginning of 2007, before the official start of the recession in December 2007. As the recession started, the moving average for the quits level flattened temporarily, but then declined steeply from June 2008 through October 2009.

- Since October 2009, the moving average for quits has increased.

- Although the number of quits is rising, the 2.0 million quits in April 2010 is still well below the 2.9 million quits in December 2007, the first month of the recession.

Chart 10. Layoffs and discharges level and 3-month moving average
Seasonally adjusted, in thousands



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- The moving average for the layoffs and discharges level began to rise in April 2007, before the official start of the recession in December 2007. In the first 3 months of the recession, the layoffs and discharges moving average actually declined slightly, then rose sharply through February 2009.
- After rising to a high in February 2009, the moving average for layoffs and discharges has fallen steeply.
- In April 2010, there were 1.7 million layoffs and discharges, which is less than the 1.8 million layoffs and discharges in December 2007, the first month of the recession.