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EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUTH – SUMMER 2020

From April to July 2020, the number of employed youth 16 to 24 years old increased by 4.4 million to 17.5 million, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. In July 2020, 46.7 percent of young people were employed, down from 56.2 percent in July 2019. (The month of July typically is the summertime peak in youth employment.) The unemployment rate for youth was 18.5 percent in July 2020, down from 26.9 percent in April but still about twice as high as a year earlier. (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.)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Impact on the Labor Market

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and efforts to contain it have had a dramatic effect on the labor market in recent months. Employment fell and unemployment rose sharply in March and April. Despite 3 months of improvements in the labor market, the share of the population age 16 and over employed in July was much lower than in February. The jobless rate and the number of unemployed people were considerably higher in July than in February. The changes have been widespread across all demographic groups, including youth. April represented the peak unemployment rate and the lowest employment recorded during the pandemic, both overall and among youth. Employment declines were particularly steep in leisure and hospitality, a sector that traditionally employs a large share of youth.

The annual summer employment and unemployment among youth news release compares labor market estimates from April, when many young people are enrolled in school, to July, when typically more are working or seeking employment. For 2020, the comparison of April to July youth labor market data reflects the seasonal trend of increased youth labor force participation over the period, the employment losses this past spring due to the coronavirus pandemic and efforts to contain it, and the employment gains from the partial resumption of economic activity through July.

More information on labor market developments and the impact of the pandemic on labor force estimates in recent months is available at www.bls.gov/covid19/employment-situation-covid19-faq-july-2020.htm .

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 typically search for or take summer jobs, and many graduates enter the labor market to look for or begin permanent employment. This summer, the youth labor force grew by 3.6 million, or 19.8 percent, to a total of 21.5 million in July. The youth labor force, however, was 1.8 million less than in July 2019, reflecting the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. (See tables 1 and 2.)

The labor force participation rate for all youth was 57.3 percent in July 2020, a decrease of 4.5 percentage points from a year earlier. (The labor force participation rate is the proportion of the civilian noninstitutional population that is employed or unemployed. To be classified as unemployed, a person must either be looking and available for work or on temporary layoff.) This year, the July labor force participation rate for people age 16 to 24 was the lowest rate for July in the history of the series, which goes back to 1948.

The July 2020 labor force participation rate for 16- to 24-year-old men, at 58.4 percent, was down 4.8 percentage points over the year. Over the same period the rate for young women declined by 4.2 percentage points to 56.2 percent. Continuing a long-standing pattern, Whites had the highest youth labor force participation rate in July 2020, at 59.4 percent. The rate for Blacks was 52.5 percent, for Asians 42.9 percent, and for Hispanics 54.4 percent. Over the year, the labor force participation rate fell for all race and ethnicity groups.

Employment

In July 2020, there were 17.5 million employed 16- to 24-year-olds. Between April and July, the number of employed youth rose by 4.4 million, or 33.5 percent. This was the largest April to July employment change among youth in the history of the series, which goes back to 1948. The change, however, reflected both the seasonal pattern of youth finding employment at the conclusion of the school year and the continued resumption of economic activity in July following the deep coronavirus pandemic-related contraction in employment in April. Despite the April to July increase in the number of employed youth, there were fewer youth employed in July than in February 2020, before the pandemic crisis unfolded in many parts of the United States. The employment-population ratio for youth—the proportion of the 16- to 24-year-old civilian noninstitutional population with a job—was 46.7 percent in July 2020, a decrease of 9.5 percentage points from the prior year. (See tables 1 and 2.)

Employment-population ratios in July 2020 were lower than they were a year earlier for young men (47.7 percent), women (45.8 percent), Whites (49.5 percent), Blacks (39.2 percent), Asians (32.0 percent), and Hispanics (42.6 percent). For these groups, the employment-population ratios were between 8.7 and 10.6 percentage points lower than in July 2019.

In July 2020, the largest percentage of employed youth worked in the leisure and hospitality industry (24 percent), which includes food services. The leisure and hospitality industry was particularly affected by coronavirus pandemic-related job losses. Youth employment in this industry was down by 1.1 million, or 21 percent, compared to July 2019. An additional 20 percent of employed youth worked in the retail trade industry, and 11 percent worked in educational and health services. (See table 3.)

Unemployment

Typically, the number of unemployed young people increases between April and July, as people who were not in the labor force while attending school begin seeking employment. However, this year unemployment increased sharply in April because of the coronavirus pandemic. The number of unemployed youth rose from 1.7 million in February to 4.9 million in May, and declined to 4.0 million in July. In July 2020, there were 1.9 million more unemployed 16- to 24-year-olds than in July 2019. About two-thirds of the unemployed youth in July 2020 were looking for full-time work, a similar percentage to a year earlier. (See tables 1 and 2.)

The youth unemployment rate spiked to 26.9 percent in April 2020 and declined to 18.5 percent in July. This rate is still about twice as high as in July 2019 and is the highest July rate since 2010. The July 2020 unemployment rates for young men (18.4 percent), women (18.6 percent), Whites (16.7 percent), Blacks (25.4 percent), Asians (25.4 percent), and Hispanics (21.7 percent) were all substantially higher than in the prior summer.

Technical Note

The estimates in this 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 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.

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.

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 release are described briefly below.

Employed. Employed persons 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 family member's business. Persons 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. Persons 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 persons classified as employed or unemployed.

Unemployment rate. The unemployment rate is the number of unemployed persons 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 persons 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. Persons with two or more jobs are classified in the job at which they worked the greatest number of hours. Beginning with data for 2020, persons are classified using the 2017 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 persons 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 persons whose businesses are incorporated are included with private wage and salary workers.

Unpaid family workers. Included in this group are persons 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 2020

[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	37,497	37,488	37,479	37,472	-25	-0.1
Civilian labor force	17,929	19,222	21,069	21,479	3,550	19.8
Participation rate	47.8	51.3	56.2	57.3	9.5	19.9
Employed	13,112	14,352	16,553	17,507	4,395	33.5
Employment-population ratio	35.0	38.3	44.2	46.7	11.7	33.4
Unemployed	4,817	4,870	4,517	3,973	-844	-17.5
Looking for full-time work	2,484	2,803	2,924	2,651	167	6.7
Looking for part-time work	2,333	2,067	1,593	1,321	-1,012	-43.4
Unemployment rate	26.9	25.3	21.4	18.5	-8.4	-31.2
Not in labor force	19,568	18,266	16,410	15,993	-3,575	-18.3
Men						
Civilian noninstitutional population	18,830	18,824	18,818	18,813	-17	-0.1
Civilian labor force	9,150	9,772	10,643	10,990	1,840	20.1
Participation rate	48.6	51.9	56.6	58.4	9.8	20.2
Employed	6,952	7,403	8,420	8,966	2,014	29.0
Employment-population ratio	36.9	39.3	44.7	47.7	10.8	29.3
Unemployed	2,198	2,369	2,222	2,024	-174	-7.9
Looking for full-time work	1,278	1,470	1,498	1,388	110	8.6
Looking for part-time work	920	899	725	636	-284	-30.9
Unemployment rate	24.0	24.2	20.9	18.4	-5.6	-23.3
Not in labor force	9,680	9,052	8,175	7,823	-1,857	-19.2
Women						
Civilian noninstitutional population	18,667	18,664	18,661	18,659	-8	0.0
Civilian labor force	8,779	9,449	10,426	10,489	1,710	19.5
Participation rate	47.0	50.6	55.9	56.2	9.2	19.6
Employed	6,160	6,949	8,132	8,541	2,381	38.7
Employment-population ratio	33.0	37.2	43.6	45.8	12.8	38.8
Unemployed	2,619	2,501	2,294	1,949	-670	-25.6
Looking for full-time work	1,206	1,333	1,426	1,263	57	4.7
Looking for part-time work	1,414	1,168	868	686	-728	-51.5
Unemployment rate	29.8	26.5	22.0	18.6	-11.2	-37.6
Not in labor force	9,888	9,215	8,235	8,170	-1,718	-17.4
White						
Civilian noninstitutional population	27,508	27,496	27,485	27,474	-34	-0.1
Civilian labor force	13,689	14,680	16,060	16,322	2,633	19.2
Participation rate	49.8	53.4	58.4	59.4	9.6	19.3
Employed	10,155	11,211	12,917	13,595	3,440	33.9
Employment-population ratio	36.9	40.8	47.0	49.5	12.6	34.1
Unemployed	3,534	3,469	3,143	2,727	-807	-22.8
Looking for full-time work	1,790	1,969	2,007	1,819	29	1.6
Looking for part-time work	1,744	1,499	1,136	908	-836	-47.9
Unemployment rate	25.8	23.6	19.6	16.7	-9.1	-35.3
Not in labor force	13,819	12,816	11,424	11,152	-2,667	-19.3
Black or African American						
Civilian noninstitutional population	5,504	5,501	5,497	5,494	-10	-0.2
Civilian labor force	2,406	2,609	2,839	2,884	478	19.9
Participation rate	43.7	47.4	51.6	52.5	8.8	20.1
Employed	1,726	1,821	2,054	2,151	425	24.6
Employment-population ratio	31.4	33.1	37.4	39.2	7.8	24.8
Unemployed	680	788	785	733	53	7.8
Looking for full-time work	419	560	563	537	118	28.2
Looking for part-time work	261	228	222	196	-65	-24.9
Unemployment rate	28.3	30.2	27.7	25.4	-2.9	-10.2
Not in labor force	3,098	2,892	2,658	2,610	-488	-15.8

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 2020 — 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....................................	2,207	2,218	2,247	2,234	27	1.2
Civilian labor force...	746	808	931	958	212	28.4
Participation rate...	33.8	36.4	41.4	42.9	9.1	26.9
Employed...	548	541	667	715	167	30.5
Employment-population ratio.................................	24.8	24.4	29.7	32.0	7.2	29.0
Unemployed...	198	267	264	243	45	22.7
Looking for full-time work.....................................	89	112	146	138	49	55.1
Looking for part-time work....................................	109	155	118	106	-3	-2.8
Unemployment rate...	26.5	33.0	28.4	25.4	-1.1	-4.2
Not in labor force...	1,461	1,410	1,316	1,277	-184	-12.6
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity						
Civilian noninstitutional population....................................	8,779	8,789	8,800	8,810	31	0.4
Civilian labor force...	4,188	4,498	4,926	4,789	601	14.4
Participation rate...	47.7	51.2	56.0	54.4	6.7	14.0
Employed...	2,983	3,166	3,717	3,752	769	25.8
Employment-population ratio.................................	34.0	36.0	42.2	42.6	8.6	25.3
Unemployed...	1,205	1,332	1,209	1,037	-168	-13.9
Looking for full-time work.....................................	703	825	813	726	23	3.3
Looking for part-time work....................................	502	507	397	311	-191	-38.0
Unemployment rate...	28.8	29.6	24.5	21.7	-7.1	-24.7
Not in labor force...	4,591	4,291	3,874	4,021	-570	-12.4

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. 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 2. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 to 24 years of age by sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, July 2017-2020

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

Employment status, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	July 2017	July 2018	July 2019	July 2020
TOTAL				
Civilian noninstitutional population...	38,152	37,997	37,729	37,472
Civilian labor force..	23,107	23,016	23,311	21,479
Participation rate..	60.6	60.6	61.8	57.3
Employed..	20,890	20,897	21,196	17,507
Employment-population ratio..	54.8	55.0	56.2	46.7
Unemployed..	2,217	2,119	2,115	3,973
Looking for full-time work..	1,607	1,458	1,447	2,651
Looking for part-time work...	610	660	668	1,321
Unemployment rate...	9.6	9.2	9.1	18.5
Not in labor force...	15,045	14,981	14,417	15,993
Men				
Civilian noninstitutional population...	19,219	19,128	18,964	18,813
Civilian labor force..	11,983	11,695	11,977	10,990
Participation rate..	62.3	61.1	63.2	58.4
Employed..	10,773	10,550	10,857	8,966
Employment-population ratio..	56.1	55.2	57.3	47.7
Unemployed..	1,210	1,145	1,120	2,024
Looking for full-time work..	944	828	803	1,388
Looking for part-time work...	266	317	317	636
Unemployment rate...	10.1	9.8	9.4	18.4
Not in labor force...	7,236	7,433	6,987	7,823
Women				
Civilian noninstitutional population...	18,932	18,869	18,765	18,659
Civilian labor force..	11,124	11,321	11,334	10,489
Participation rate..	58.8	60.0	60.4	56.2
Employed..	10,117	10,347	10,339	8,541
Employment-population ratio..	53.4	54.8	55.1	45.8
Unemployed..	1,007	974	995	1,949
Looking for full-time work..	663	630	645	1,263
Looking for part-time work...	344	344	350	686
Unemployment rate...	9.1	8.6	8.8	18.6
Not in labor force...	7,808	7,548	7,430	8,170
White				
Civilian noninstitutional population...	28,038	27,866	27,658	27,474
Civilian labor force..	17,423	17,509	17,716	16,322
Participation rate..	62.1	62.8	64.1	59.4
Employed..	16,031	16,174	16,295	13,595
Employment-population ratio..	57.2	58.0	58.9	49.5
Unemployed..	1,392	1,335	1,421	2,727
Looking for full-time work..	974	863	938	1,819
Looking for part-time work...	418	471	483	908
Unemployment rate...	8.0	7.6	8.0	16.7
Not in labor force...	10,615	10,357	9,942	11,152
Black or African American				
Civilian noninstitutional population...	5,749	5,668	5,561	5,494
Civilian labor force..	3,214	3,203	3,243	2,884
Participation rate..	55.9	56.5	58.3	52.5
Employed..	2,694	2,675	2,771	2,151
Employment-population ratio..	46.9	47.2	49.8	39.2
Unemployed..	520	528	472	733
Looking for full-time work..	412	438	374	537
Looking for part-time work...	108	90	98	196
Unemployment rate...	16.2	16.5	14.6	25.4
Not in labor force...	2,535	2,465	2,318	2,610

Table 2. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 to 24 years of age by sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, July 2017-2020 — Continued

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

Employment status, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	July 2017	July 2018	July 2019	July 2020
Asian				
Civilian noninstitutional population…………………………………………	2,208	2,302	2,387	2,234
Civilian labor force………………………………………………………	1,047	997	1,065	958
Participation rate……………………………………………………	47.4	43.3	44.6	42.9
Employed………………………………………………………………	944	913	978	715
Employment-population ratio………………………………………	42.7	39.7	41.0	32.0
Unemployed……………………………………………………………	103	84	87	243
Looking for full-time work…………………………………………	70	59	37	138
Looking for part-time work…………………………………………	33	25	50	106
Unemployment rate…………………………………………………	9.9	8.4	8.2	25.4
Not in labor force…………………………………………………………	1,162	1,305	1,322	1,277
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity				
Civilian noninstitutional population…………………………………………	8,535	8,687	8,750	8,810
Civilian labor force………………………………………………………	4,835	5,035	5,059	4,789
Participation rate……………………………………………………	56.6	58.0	57.8	54.4
Employed………………………………………………………………	4,347	4,492	4,485	3,752
Employment-population ratio………………………………………	50.9	51.7	51.3	42.6
Unemployed……………………………………………………………	488	543	574	1,037
Looking for full-time work…………………………………………	353	362	384	726
Looking for part-time work…………………………………………	135	181	190	311
Unemployment rate…………………………………………………	10.1	10.8	11.3	21.7
Not in labor force…………………………………………………………	3,700	3,652	3,691	4,021

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. 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. Employed persons 16 to 24 years of age by industry, class of worker, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, July 2019-2020

[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 2019	July 2020	July 2019	July 2020	July 2019	July 2020	July 2019	July 2020	July 2019	July 2020
Total employed................................	21,196	17,507	16,295	13,595	2,771	2,151	978	715	4,485	3,752
Agriculture and related industries..........	322	298	290	278	3	1	9	1	66	58
Nonagricultural industries...................	20,874	17,209	16,005	13,317	2,768	2,151	969	713	4,419	3,694
Private wage and salary workers[1].......	19,008	15,693	14,568	12,172	2,542	1,970	897	662	4,104	3,383
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction.............................	66	46	52	24	7	8	0	14	15	14
Construction.............................	1,135	933	955	813	83	56	13	12	308	264
Manufacturing...........................	1,451	1,189	1,159	972	157	135	53	53	298	244
Durable goods........................	972	727	770	604	113	72	41	39	183	136
Nondurable goods...................	480	462	389	368	44	64	12	14	115	107
Wholesale trade........................	266	230	200	179	53	36	9	5	62	16
Retail trade.............................	3,647	3,558	2,708	2,711	583	439	140	167	809	846
Transportation and utilities.............	663	673	435	482	145	95	40	45	169	209
Information..............................	277	117	204	96	34	13	31	0	41	28
Financial activities.....................	728	642	556	470	92	100	46	43	173	121
Professional and business services...	1,706	1,352	1,327	1,092	182	116	131	80	361	248
Education and health services........	2,844	1,905	2,108	1,460	447	282	144	73	557	326
Leisure and hospitality................	5,282	4,180	4,083	3,186	661	621	247	92	1,189	906
Other services..........................	941	871	781	687	97	67	44	77	123	161
Government wage and salary workers...................................	1,466	1,145	1,119	853	193	129	53	49	239	226
Federal.................................	219	215	162	113	35	52	6	8	44	19
State....................................	507	406	381	309	62	51	30	17	59	94
Local....................................	740	524	575	431	96	26	17	24	136	114
Self-employed, unincorporated, and unpaid family workers.................	401	371	318	292	34	51	18	3	76	85

[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. 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.