



U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

OFFICE OF EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

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Current Population Survey

What is the Current Population Survey?

- The Current Population Survey (CPS) has been the nation's official labor force survey since 1940, and is the source of one of the principal Federal economic indicators—the national unemployment rate.
- The Census Bureau conducts the CPS (including sampling, data collection, and interviewer hiring and training), while the Bureau of Labor Statistics does the data analysis and publication.

What data are available from the CPS?

While the national unemployment rate is the most well-known number from the CPS, there are thousands of other labor market measures available from the CPS. Monthly data collected in the CPS include information on:

- Numbers and demographics of employed, unemployed and those not in the labor force
- Duration of unemployment
- Full-time versus part-time employment
- Length of the workweek
- Occupation, industry, and class of worker
- Multiple jobholders
- Union affiliation
- Earnings, including minimum wage workers

In addition to monthly data, the CPS conducts periodic supplements that collect data on:

- Veterans
- School enrollment
- Job tenure
- Displaced and contingent workers
- Volunteers
- Work at home
- Workers on flexible and shift schedules
- Work experience and income
- Marital and family characteristics

What are some of the questions that can be answered by CPS data?

- What is the national unemployment rate?
- Do earnings differ significantly between men and women working in the same occupation?
- Who are minimum wage workers?
- How many mothers of preschoolers work outside the home?

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- Are more students working now than 10 years ago?
- How many hours per week do professionals work?
- In which occupations are foreign-born workers most likely to be employed?

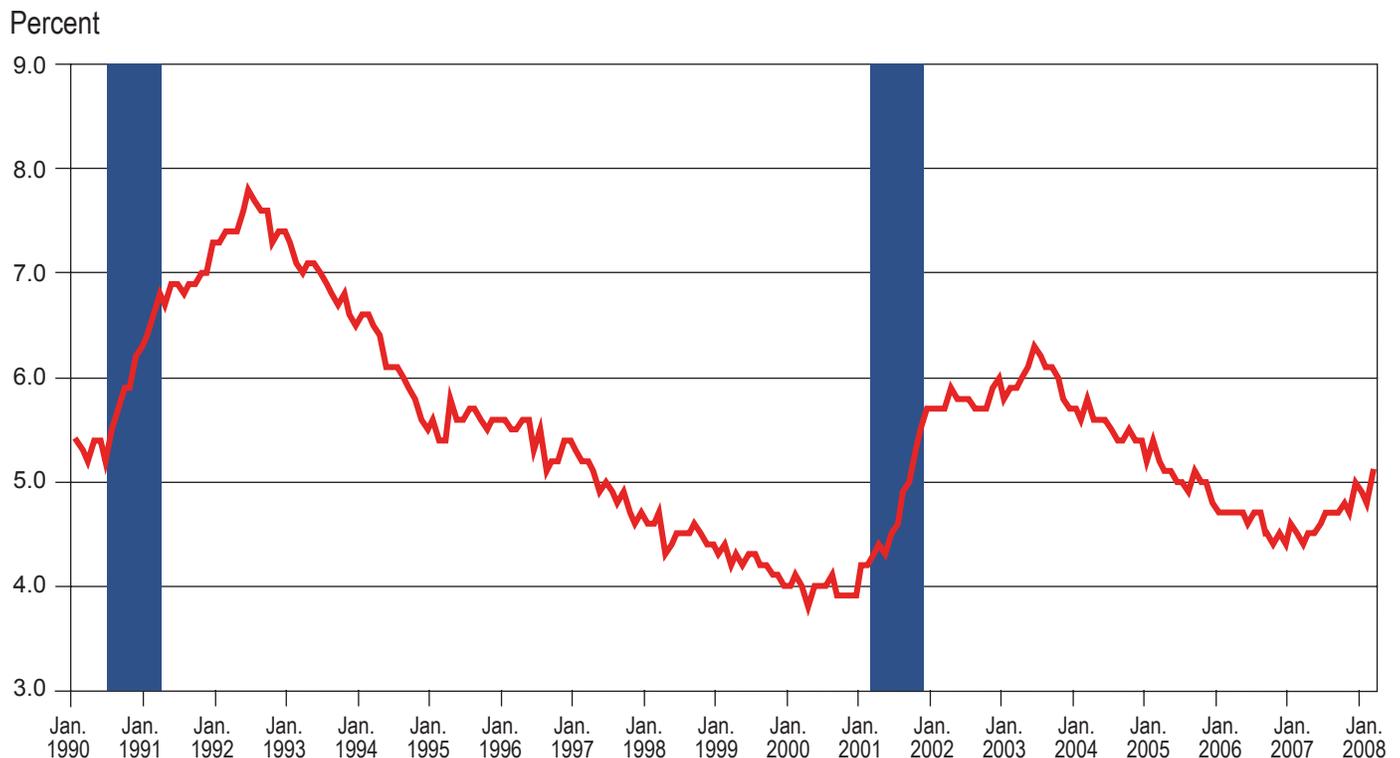
Who uses CPS data?

CPS data on the labor force are critically important to a wide variety of users, including the media, businesses, academia, labor organizations, research and planning organizations, all branches of government, and the general public.

Where can I learn more about the CPS program?

Visit the CPS website at www.bls.gov/cps to read more about the program, including recent news releases, publications by CPS staff members, and survey documents. You may also email us at cpsinfo@bls.gov or call (202) 691-6378 for national data, or at lausinfo@bls.gov and (202) 691-6392 for state and area data.

Civilian unemployment rate, seasonally adjusted, 1990–2008



NOTE: Dark blue areas denote recessions.