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EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUTH — SUMMER 2021

In July 2021, 54.4 percent of young people (persons ages 16 to 24) were employed, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. This was up from 46.7 percent in July 2020—when youth employment was unusually low due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic—but down from 56.2 percent in July 2019, before the pandemic. (The month of July typically is the summertime peak in youth employment.) The unemployment rate for youth was 10.0 percent in July 2021, down considerably from the rate in July 2020 (18.5 percent) but up from July 2019 (9.1 percent). (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.)

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 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 2.4 million, or 11.7 percent, to a total of 22.5 million in July. (See table 1.)

The labor force participation rate for all youth was 60.5 percent in July 2021, an increase of 3.2 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.) (See table 2.) The large over-the-year increase in the youth labor force participation rate partly reflects widespread business closures and other restrictions in the early stages of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which held down youth employment in July 2020. Despite the large increase in 2021, the July youth labor force participation rate was 1.3 percentage points lower than its 2019 level.

In 2021, the July labor force participation rate for 16- to 24-year-old men, at 61.8 percent, was up by 3.4 percentage points over the year but down by 1.4 percentage points from 2019. The July rate for young women increased by 2.9 percentage points in 2021 to 59.1 percent but was 1.3 percentage points lower than in 2019. Youth labor force participation rates for Whites (62.8 percent), Blacks (55.1 percent), and Hispanics (56.8 percent) were higher in July 2021 than they were a year earlier when participation rates for these groups declined abruptly due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However, the July 2021 participation rate for Asians (44.6

percent) changed little over the year. The July 2021 participation rate for young Whites and for young Blacks were 1.3 percentage points and 3.2 percentage points lower, respectively, than in July 2019. The participation rate for young Asians, at 44.6 percent in July 2021, was the same as in July 2019, and the rate for Hispanics, at 56.8 percent in July 2021, was little different than the rate in July 2019. (See table 2.)

Employment

In July 2021, there were 20.3 million employed 16- to 24-year-olds. Between April and July, the number of employed youth rose by 2.1 million, or 11.8 percent. The employment-population ratio for youth—the proportion of the 16- to 24-year-old civilian noninstitutional population with a job—was 54.4 percent in July 2021, an increase of 7.7 percentage points from the prior year. However, the July 2021 ratio was lower than the July 2019 ratio of 56.2 percent. (See tables 1 and 2.)

Employment-population ratios were higher in July 2021 than they were a year earlier for young men (55.1 percent), women (53.7 percent), Whites (57.2 percent), Blacks (47.6 percent), Asians (39.1 percent), and Hispanics (50.2 percent). However, for each of these groups the ratios in July 2021 were lower than July 2019.

In July 2021, 25 percent (5.2 million) of employed 16- to 24-year-olds worked in the leisure and hospitality industry, the largest share of youth workers. The leisure and hospitality industry, which includes food services, was particularly affected by pandemic-related job losses. As pandemic-related restrictions began to ease in 2021, youth employment in the leisure and hospitality industry started to rebound; it was up by 981,000 from July 2020 to July 2021. (By comparison, employment in the industry was down by 1.1 million from July 2019 to July 2020.) An additional 20 percent of employed youth worked in the retail trade industry in July 2021, and 12 percent worked in education 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. Unemployment among youth rose by 221,000 from April to July 2021. Three-fourths of the unemployed youth were looking for full-time work in July 2021, compared with about two-thirds in July 2018, 2019, and 2020. (See tables 1 and 2.)

The youth unemployment rate, at 10.0 percent in July 2021, was down from 18.5 percent in July 2020 but was higher than the July 2019 rate of 9.1 percent. The July 2021 unemployment rates for young men (10.9 percent), women (9.1 percent), Whites (8.9 percent), Blacks (13.6 percent), Asians (12.3 percent), and Hispanics (11.7 percent) were all substantially lower 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 2021

[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.....	37,290	37,274	37,262	37,250	-40	-0.1
Civilian labor force.....	20,159	20,471	22,120	22,522	2,363	11.7
Participation rate.....	54.1	54.9	59.4	60.5	6.4	11.8
Employed.....	18,126	18,410	19,701	20,268	2,142	11.8
Employment-population ratio.....	48.6	49.4	52.9	54.4	5.8	11.9
Unemployed.....	2,033	2,062	2,419	2,254	221	10.9
Looking for full-time work.....	1,499	1,553	1,780	1,697	198	13.2
Looking for part-time work.....	534	509	638	557	23	4.3
Unemployment rate.....	10.1	10.1	10.9	10.0	-0.1	-1.0
Not in labor force.....	17,131	16,803	15,142	14,728	-2,403	-14.0
Men						
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	18,713	18,705	18,698	18,692	-21	-0.1
Civilian labor force.....	10,376	10,484	11,270	11,547	1,171	11.3
Participation rate.....	55.5	56.1	60.3	61.8	6.3	11.4
Employed.....	9,231	9,353	9,972	10,294	1,063	11.5
Employment-population ratio.....	49.3	50.0	53.3	55.1	5.8	11.8
Unemployed.....	1,146	1,132	1,298	1,253	107	9.3
Looking for full-time work.....	882	926	964	976	94	10.7
Looking for part-time work.....	264	206	334	277	13	4.9
Unemployment rate.....	11.0	10.8	11.5	10.9	-0.1	-0.9
Not in labor force.....	8,337	8,220	7,428	7,145	-1,192	-14.3
Women						
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	18,577	18,570	18,564	18,559	-18	-0.1
Civilian labor force.....	9,783	9,987	10,850	10,976	1,193	12.2
Participation rate.....	52.7	53.8	58.4	59.1	6.4	12.1
Employed.....	8,895	9,057	9,729	9,975	1,080	12.1
Employment-population ratio.....	47.9	48.8	52.4	53.7	5.8	12.1
Unemployed.....	887	930	1,121	1,001	114	12.9
Looking for full-time work.....	617	627	816	721	104	16.9
Looking for part-time work.....	270	303	305	280	10	3.7
Unemployment rate.....	9.1	9.3	10.3	9.1	0.0	0.0
Not in labor force.....	8,794	8,583	7,714	7,583	-1,211	-13.8
White						
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	27,366	27,354	27,343	27,333	-33	-0.1
Civilian labor force.....	15,461	15,706	16,857	17,168	1,707	11.0
Participation rate.....	56.5	57.4	61.7	62.8	6.3	11.2
Employed.....	14,082	14,371	15,188	15,635	1,553	11.0
Employment-population ratio.....	51.5	52.5	55.5	57.2	5.7	11.1
Unemployed.....	1,379	1,335	1,669	1,533	154	11.2
Looking for full-time work.....	1,025	1,009	1,246	1,170	145	14.1
Looking for part-time work.....	353	327	423	363	10	2.8
Unemployment rate.....	8.9	8.5	9.9	8.9	0.0	0.0
Not in labor force.....	11,905	11,648	10,486	10,165	-1,740	-14.6
Black or African American						
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	5,458	5,456	5,454	5,452	-6	-0.1
Civilian labor force.....	2,664	2,634	2,994	3,004	340	12.8
Participation rate.....	48.8	48.3	54.9	55.1	6.3	12.9
Employed.....	2,238	2,195	2,586	2,594	356	15.9
Employment-population ratio.....	41.0	40.2	47.4	47.6	6.6	16.1
Unemployed.....	426	439	408	410	-16	-3.8
Looking for full-time work.....	334	329	343	325	-9	-2.7
Looking for part-time work.....	92	110	66	85	-7	-7.6
Unemployment rate.....	16.0	16.7	13.6	13.6	-2.4	-15.0
Not in labor force.....	2,794	2,821	2,460	2,448	-346	-12.4

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 2021 — 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.....	2,139	2,185	2,143	2,186	47	2.2
Civilian labor force.....	815	873	903	976	161	19.8
Participation rate.....	38.1	39.9	42.1	44.6	6.5	17.1
Employed.....	742	783	779	856	114	15.4
Employment-population ratio.....	34.7	35.9	36.3	39.1	4.4	12.7
Unemployed.....	74	89	124	120	46	62.2
Looking for full-time work.....	34	61	60	70	36	105.9
Looking for part-time work.....	40	28	64	50	10	25.0
Unemployment rate.....	9.0	10.2	13.8	12.3	3.3	36.7
Not in labor force.....	1,323	1,312	1,240	1,210	-113	-8.5
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity						
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	8,855	8,863	8,872	8,880	25	0.3
Civilian labor force.....	4,703	4,634	4,932	5,044	341	7.3
Participation rate.....	53.1	52.3	55.6	56.8	3.7	7.0
Employed.....	4,124	4,114	4,346	4,456	332	8.1
Employment-population ratio.....	46.6	46.4	49.0	50.2	3.6	7.7
Unemployed.....	579	520	585	588	9	1.6
Looking for full-time work.....	430	402	427	472	42	9.8
Looking for part-time work.....	149	118	158	116	-33	-22.1
Unemployment rate.....	12.3	11.2	11.9	11.7	-0.6	-4.9
Not in labor force.....	4,152	4,229	3,940	3,836	-316	-7.6

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 2018-2021

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

Employment status, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	July 2018	July 2019	July 2020	July 2021
TOTAL				
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	37,997	37,729	37,472	37,250
Civilian labor force.....	23,016	23,311	21,479	22,522
Participation rate.....	60.6	61.8	57.3	60.5
Employed.....	20,897	21,196	17,507	20,268
Employment-population ratio.....	55.0	56.2	46.7	54.4
Unemployed.....	2,119	2,115	3,973	2,254
Looking for full-time work.....	1,458	1,447	2,651	1,697
Looking for part-time work.....	660	668	1,321	557
Unemployment rate.....	9.2	9.1	18.5	10.0
Not in labor force.....	14,981	14,417	15,993	14,728
Men				
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	19,128	18,964	18,813	18,692
Civilian labor force.....	11,695	11,977	10,990	11,547
Participation rate.....	61.1	63.2	58.4	61.8
Employed.....	10,550	10,857	8,966	10,294
Employment-population ratio.....	55.2	57.3	47.7	55.1
Unemployed.....	1,145	1,120	2,024	1,253
Looking for full-time work.....	828	803	1,388	976
Looking for part-time work.....	317	317	636	277
Unemployment rate.....	9.8	9.4	18.4	10.9
Not in labor force.....	7,433	6,987	7,823	7,145
Women				
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	18,869	18,765	18,659	18,559
Civilian labor force.....	11,321	11,334	10,489	10,976
Participation rate.....	60.0	60.4	56.2	59.1
Employed.....	10,347	10,339	8,541	9,975
Employment-population ratio.....	54.8	55.1	45.8	53.7
Unemployed.....	974	995	1,949	1,001
Looking for full-time work.....	630	645	1,263	721
Looking for part-time work.....	344	350	686	280
Unemployment rate.....	8.6	8.8	18.6	9.1
Not in labor force.....	7,548	7,430	8,170	7,583
White				
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	27,866	27,658	27,474	27,333
Civilian labor force.....	17,509	17,716	16,322	17,168
Participation rate.....	62.8	64.1	59.4	62.8
Employed.....	16,174	16,295	13,595	15,635
Employment-population ratio.....	58.0	58.9	49.5	57.2
Unemployed.....	1,335	1,421	2,727	1,533
Looking for full-time work.....	863	938	1,819	1,170
Looking for part-time work.....	471	483	908	363
Unemployment rate.....	7.6	8.0	16.7	8.9
Not in labor force.....	10,357	9,942	11,152	10,165
Black or African American				
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	5,668	5,561	5,494	5,452
Civilian labor force.....	3,203	3,243	2,884	3,004
Participation rate.....	56.5	58.3	52.5	55.1
Employed.....	2,675	2,771	2,151	2,594
Employment-population ratio.....	47.2	49.8	39.2	47.6
Unemployed.....	528	472	733	410
Looking for full-time work.....	438	374	537	325
Looking for part-time work.....	90	98	196	85
Unemployment rate.....	16.5	14.6	25.4	13.6
Not in labor force.....	2,465	2,318	2,610	2,448

Table 2. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 to 24 years of age by sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, July 2018-2021 — Continued
 [Numbers in thousands. Data are not seasonally adjusted.]

Employment status, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	July 2018	July 2019	July 2020	July 2021
Asian				
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	2,302	2,387	2,234	2,186
Civilian labor force.....	997	1,065	958	976
Participation rate.....	43.3	44.6	42.9	44.6
Employed.....	913	978	715	856
Employment-population ratio.....	39.7	41.0	32.0	39.1
Unemployed.....	84	87	243	120
Looking for full-time work.....	59	37	138	70
Looking for part-time work.....	25	50	106	50
Unemployment rate.....	8.4	8.2	25.4	12.3
Not in labor force.....	1,305	1,322	1,277	1,210
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity				
Civilian noninstitutional population.....	8,687	8,750	8,810	8,880
Civilian labor force.....	5,035	5,059	4,789	5,044
Participation rate.....	58.0	57.8	54.4	56.8
Employed.....	4,492	4,485	3,752	4,456
Employment-population ratio.....	51.7	51.3	42.6	50.2
Unemployed.....	543	574	1,037	588
Looking for full-time work.....	362	384	726	472
Looking for part-time work.....	181	190	311	116
Unemployment rate.....	10.8	11.3	21.7	11.7
Not in labor force.....	3,652	3,691	4,021	3,836

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 2020-2021

[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 2020	July 2021	July 2020	July 2021	July 2020	July 2021	July 2020	July 2021	July 2020	July 2021
Total employed.....	17,507	20,268	13,595	15,635	2,151	2,594	715	856	3,752	4,456
Agriculture and related industries.....	298	251	278	238	1	4	1	0	58	52
Nonagricultural industries.....	17,209	20,017	13,317	15,397	2,151	2,590	713	856	3,694	4,404
Private wage and salary workers ¹	15,693	18,396	12,172	14,108	1,970	2,399	662	795	3,383	4,088
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction.....	46	29	24	29	8	0	14	0	14	10
Construction.....	933	1,002	813	882	56	62	12	6	264	340
Manufacturing.....	1,189	1,212	972	976	135	135	53	25	244	258
Durable goods.....	727	758	604	600	72	75	39	18	136	159
Nondurable goods.....	462	455	368	376	64	60	14	7	107	99
Wholesale trade.....	230	231	179	171	36	27	5	20	16	53
Retail trade.....	3,558	4,061	2,711	3,036	439	641	167	132	846	922
Transportation and utilities.....	673	831	482	538	95	196	45	31	209	258
Information.....	117	239	96	193	13	11	0	26	28	18
Financial activities.....	642	660	470	487	100	97	43	52	121	105
Professional and business services...	1,352	1,745	1,092	1,286	116	220	80	140	248	328
Education and health services.....	1,905	2,379	1,460	1,809	282	334	73	146	326	437
Leisure and hospitality.....	4,180	5,161	3,186	3,990	621	601	92	190	906	1,193
Other services.....	871	847	687	711	67	76	77	29	161	166
Government wage and salary workers.....	1,145	1,130	853	902	129	124	49	47	226	187
Federal.....	215	233	113	196	52	3	8	15	19	32
State.....	406	360	309	280	51	49	17	17	94	56
Local.....	524	538	431	427	26	72	24	15	114	98
Self-employed, unincorporated, and unpaid family workers.....	371	491	292	388	51	68	3	13	85	129

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.