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Article

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## Unemployment rate returned to its prepandemic level in 2022

*The U.S. labor market logged another year of recovery in 2022. Unemployment continued to decline early in the year and then leveled off. In the fourth quarter, both the number of unemployed people, at 5.9 million, and the unemployment rate, at 3.6 percent, were on par with levels recorded prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Total employment, as measured by the Current Population Survey, continued to expand in 2022. The employment–population ratio, at 60.0 percent in the fourth quarter, increased over the year, but the labor force participation rate, at 62.2 percent, changed little. Both measures remained below their prepandemic levels.*

In 2022, the U.S. labor market continued to recover from the recession induced by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> In the fourth quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate averaged 3.6 percent, 0.6 percentage point below the rate from a year earlier.<sup>2</sup> The number of unemployed people, at 5.9 million in the fourth quarter, decreased over the year. Both measures returned to their prepandemic levels.<sup>3</sup>

Total employment, as measured by the Current Population Survey (CPS), rose over the year.<sup>4</sup> The employment–population ratio increased to 60.0 percent, but it remained below its prepandemic value. The labor force participation rate (the percentage of the population ages 16 and older who are either employed or actively seeking employment), at 62.2 percent in the fourth quarter, was essentially unchanged over the year (after removing the effects of annual adjustments to population controls) and remained below its prepandemic level. (See appendix A for more information about the CPS, as well as the Current Employment Statistics survey. See appendix B for more information on the annual adjustments to CPS population controls.)

This article highlights a broad range of economic indicators from the CPS, providing a picture of labor market performance in 2022, both overall and for various demographic groups. The article also provides 2022 updates on the trends in usual weekly earnings, labor force flows, the number of self-employed people, and it summarizes recent changes in the employment situations of veterans, people with a disability, and the foreign born.

### The number of unemployed people and the unemployment rate declined for all major demographic groups

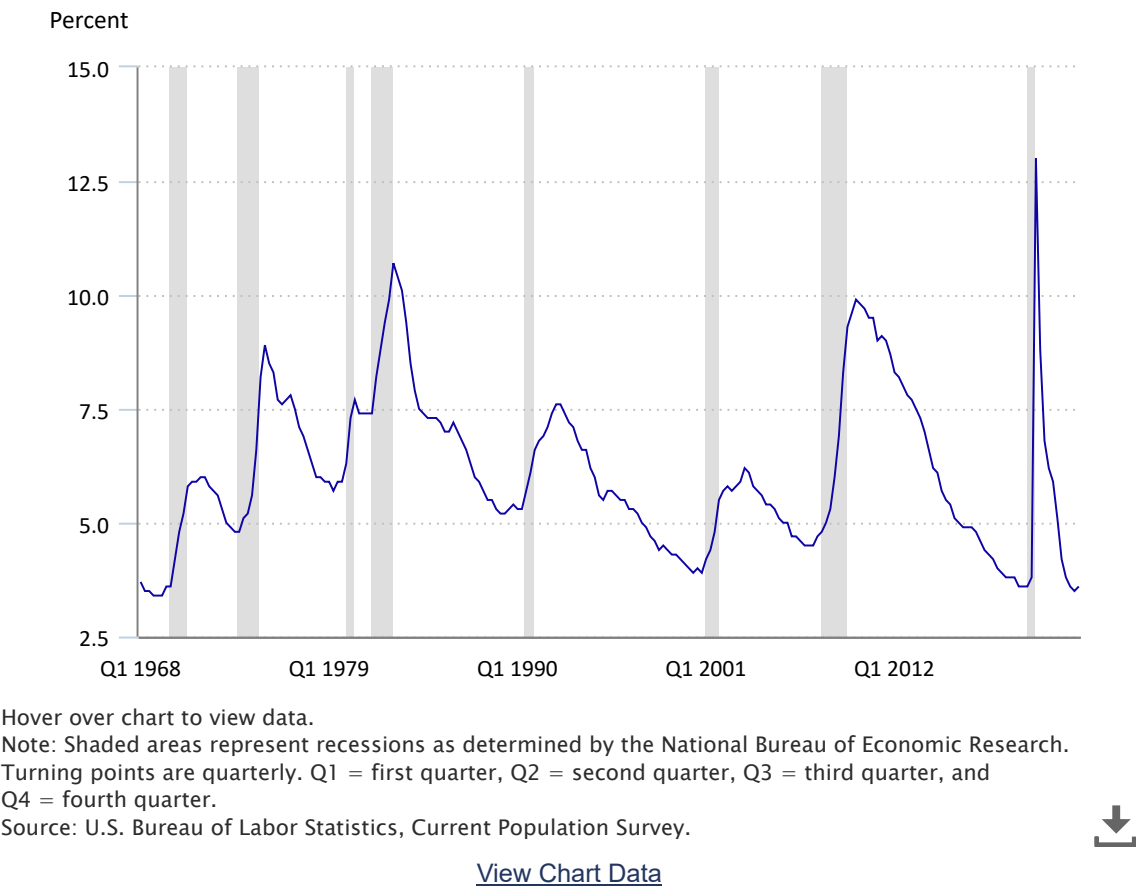
Both the number of unemployed people and the unemployment rate continued to decline in early 2022. From spring through the rest of the year, however, both measures held fairly steady. This general pattern held across most major demographic groups. The number of unemployed people was 5.9 million in the fourth quarter of 2022, down by roughly 900,000 from a year earlier. The unemployment rate averaged 3.6 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022, which is 0.6 percentage point below the rate in the fourth quarter of 2021. (See table 1.) With the continued improvement in 2022, the unemployment rate returned to its prepandemic rate. (See chart 1.)

Table 1. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years and older, by sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 2021–2022 (levels in thousands)

Characteristic	Fourth quarter 2021	2022			
		First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter
Total, 16 years and older					
Civilian labor force	162,155	163,932	164,077	164,441	164,713
Participation rate	61.9	62.3	62.2	62.2	62.2
Employed	155,337	157,680	158,113	158,605	158,788
Employment–population ratio	59.3	59.9	60.0	60.0	60.0
Unemployed	6,818	6,252	5,964	5,836	5,925
Unemployment rate	4.2	3.8	3.6	3.5	3.6
Men, 16 years and older					
Civilian labor force	85,949	87,294	87,256	87,336	87,810
Participation rate	67.8	68.0	67.9	67.8	68.1
Employed	82,347	83,938	84,047	84,175	84,665
Employment–population ratio	65.0	65.4	65.4	65.4	65.6
Unemployed	3,602	3,355	3,209	3,161	3,144
Unemployment rate	4.2	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.6
Women, 16 years and older					
Civilian labor force	76,206	76,638	76,821	77,105	76,903
Participation rate	56.3	56.8	56.8	56.9	56.7
Employed	72,990	73,742	74,066	74,430	74,122
Employment–population ratio	54.0	54.6	54.8	54.9	54.6
Unemployed	3,216	2,896	2,755	2,675	2,781
Unemployment rate	4.2	3.8	3.6	3.5	3.6
White					
Civilian labor force	124,693	125,995	125,682	126,000	126,163
Participation rate	61.7	62.1	61.9	62.0	62.0
Employed	120,161	121,832	121,600	122,079	122,142
Employment–population ratio	59.4	60.1	59.9	60.0	60.0
Unemployed	4,531	4,163	4,082	3,921	4,021
Unemployment rate	3.6	3.3	3.2	3.1	3.2
Black or African American					
Civilian labor force	20,530	21,106	21,293	21,188	21,343
Participation rate	60.9	62.1	62.5	62.0	62.3
Employed	19,081	19,725	20,015	19,900	20,105
Employment–population ratio	56.6	58.0	58.7	58.2	58.7
Unemployed	1,449	1,381	1,278	1,287	1,238
Unemployment rate	7.1	6.5	6.0	6.1	5.8
Asian					
Civilian labor force	10,770	10,736	10,886	11,055	11,006
Participation rate	65.1	63.8	64.6	65.0	64.6
Employed	10,348	10,403	10,578	10,767	10,713
Employment–population ratio	62.6	61.8	62.8	63.3	62.9
Unemployed	422	333	307	288	294
Unemployment rate	3.9	3.1	2.8	2.6	2.7
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity					
Civilian labor force	29,874	30,456	30,569	30,661	30,739
Participation rate	66.0	66.5	66.4	66.2	66.0
Employed	28,312	29,086	29,249	29,387	29,475
Employment–population ratio	62.6	63.5	63.5	63.5	63.3
Unemployed	1,562	1,370	1,320	1,275	1,265
Unemployment rate	5.2	4.5	4.3	4.2	4.1

Note: Estimates for the race groups (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. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Chart 1. Unemployment rate for people 16 years and older, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 1968–2022

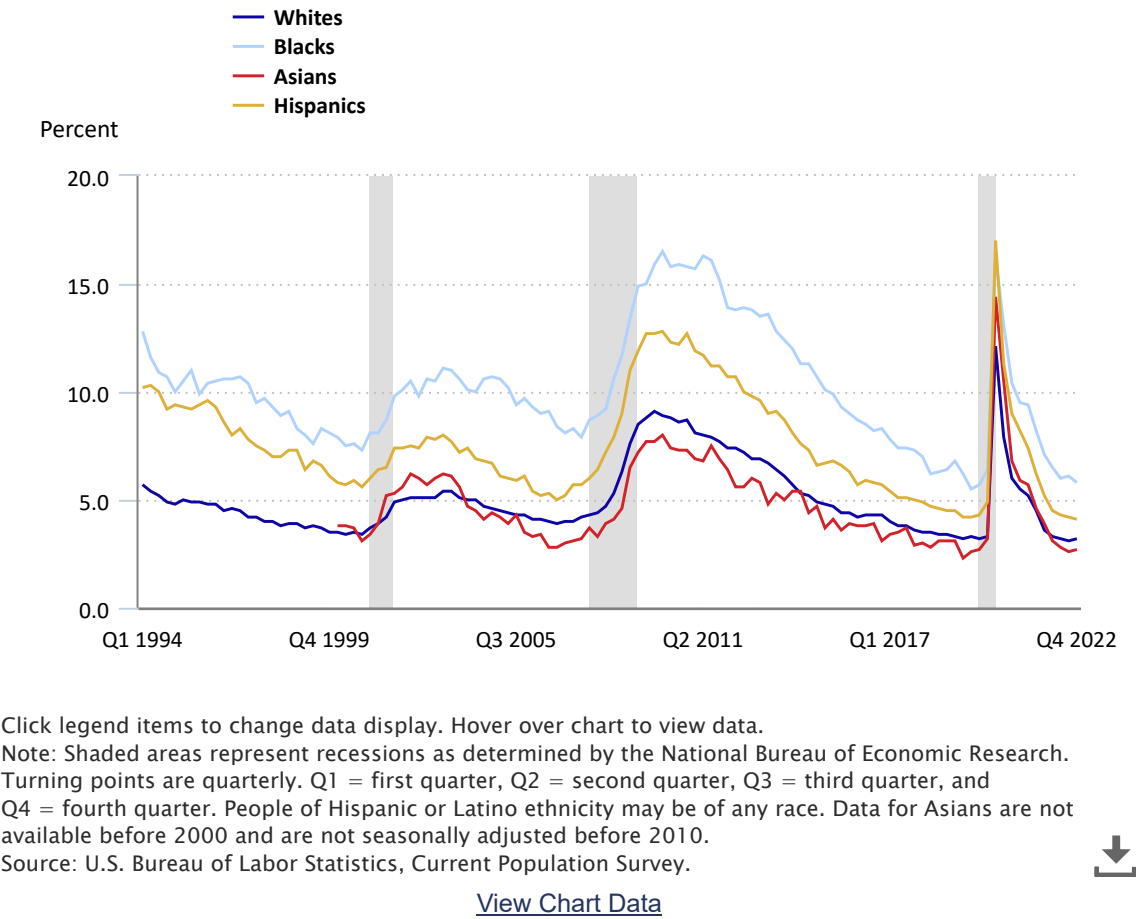


Unemployment declined among men and women in 2022. The jobless rates for both men and women fell by 0.6 percentage point over the year, each averaging 3.6 percent in the fourth quarter. At the end of the year, the jobless rate for each group matched its prepandemic level. (See table 1.)

Unemployment rates decreased for all major race and ethnicity groups

The unemployment rates for all race and ethnicity groups declined in 2022. The jobless rate for Blacks fell by 1.3 percentage points, to 5.8 percent, and the rate for Asians fell by 1.2 percentage points, to 2.7 percent. The jobless rate for Hispanics declined by 1.1 percentage points, to 4.1 percent, and the rate for Whites fell by 0.4 percentage point, to 3.2 percent. Even with these improvements, the unemployment rates for Blacks and Hispanics remained considerably higher than the rates for Asians and Whites. (See chart 2.)

Chart 2. Unemployment rates, by race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 1994–2022



Jobless rates declined for people of prime working age and older age groups

The unemployment rate for 16- to 24-year-olds changed little in 2022. Within this age group, the jobless rate for teenagers (those ages 16 to 19) changed little over the year, remaining below its prepandemic level. The jobless rate for young adults (those ages 20 to 24) also changed little over the year, but it remained above its prepandemic level. The unemployment rate for teenagers, at 10.9 percent, continued to be higher than the rate for young adults, at 7.0 percent. (See table 2.)

Table 2. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years and older, by age and sex, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 2021–2022 (levels in thousands)

Characteristic	Fourth quarter 2021	2022			
		First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter
Total, 16 to 24 years					
Civilian labor force	20,860	21,103	21,015	21,054	21,197
Participation rate	56.1	55.7	55.4	55.4	55.7
Employed	19,116	19,355	19,345	19,359	19,464
Employment–population ratio	51.4	51.1	51.0	51.0	51.2
Unemployed	1,744	1,748	1,670	1,695	1,733
Unemployment rate	8.4	8.3	7.9	8.0	8.2
Total, 16 to 19 years					
Civilian labor force	5,974	6,215	6,243	6,280	6,367
Participation rate	36.3	36.5	36.6	36.7	37.2
Employed	5,308	5,569	5,583	5,586	5,673
Employment–population ratio	32.3	32.7	32.7	32.7	33.1
Unemployed	667	646	660	694	694
Unemployment rate	11.2	10.4	10.6	11.1	10.9
Total, 20 to 24 years					
Civilian labor force	14,886	14,888	14,772	14,773	14,830
Participation rate	71.7	71.4	70.8	70.7	70.9
Employed	13,808	13,786	13,763	13,773	13,791
Employment–population ratio	66.5	66.1	65.9	65.9	65.9
Unemployed	1,078	1,102	1,009	1,000	1,039
Unemployment rate	7.2	7.4	6.8	6.8	7.0
Total, 25 to 54 years					
Civilian labor force	103,252	104,643	104,843	105,030	104,819
Participation rate	81.8	82.3	82.5	82.6	82.4
Employed	99,377	101,215	101,626	101,884	101,585
Employment–population ratio	78.8	79.6	79.9	80.1	79.9
Unemployed	3,875	3,428	3,217	3,146	3,234
Unemployment rate	3.8	3.3	3.1	3.0	3.1
Men, 25 to 54 years					
Civilian labor force	54,938	55,875	55,924	55,925	55,873
Participation rate	88.1	88.5	88.6	88.6	88.5
Employed	52,887	54,083	54,242	54,240	54,198
Employment–population ratio	84.8	85.7	86.0	85.9	85.8
Unemployed	2,051	1,792	1,682	1,685	1,674
Unemployment rate	3.7	3.2	3.0	3.0	3.0
Women, 25 to 54 years					
Civilian labor force	48,315	48,767	48,919	49,105	48,946
Participation rate	75.7	76.1	76.4	76.7	76.4
Employed	46,490	47,132	47,385	47,644	47,387
Employment–population ratio	72.8	73.6	74.0	74.4	74.0
Unemployed	1,825	1,635	1,535	1,461	1,559
Unemployment rate	3.8	3.4	3.1	3.0	3.2
Total, 55 years and older					
Civilian labor force	37,914	38,351	38,220	38,314	38,548
Participation rate	38.4	39.0	38.7	38.7	38.8
Employed	36,689	37,247	37,177	37,343	37,575
Employment–population ratio	37.2	37.9	37.7	37.7	37.8
Unemployed	1,225	1,104	1,043	971	972
Unemployment rate	3.2	2.9	2.7	2.5	2.5
Men, 55 years and older					
Civilian labor force	20,231	20,805	20,611	20,654	20,926
Participation rate	44.2	45.1	44.5	44.4	44.8
Employed	19,612	20,180	20,039	20,134	20,390
Employment–population ratio	42.9	43.7	43.2	43.3	43.7

Note: Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Characteristic	Fourth quarter 2021	2022			
		First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter
Unemployed	619	625	572	520	535
Unemployment rate	3.1	3.0	2.8	2.5	2.6
Women, 55 years and older					
Civilian labor force	17,680	17,566	17,615	17,638	17,618
Participation rate	33.4	33.7	33.7	33.6	33.4
Employed	17,078	17,067	17,138	17,209	17,185
Employment–population ratio	32.3	32.7	32.8	32.8	32.6
Unemployed	602	499	477	430	433
Unemployment rate	3.4	2.8	2.7	2.4	2.5
Note: Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.					

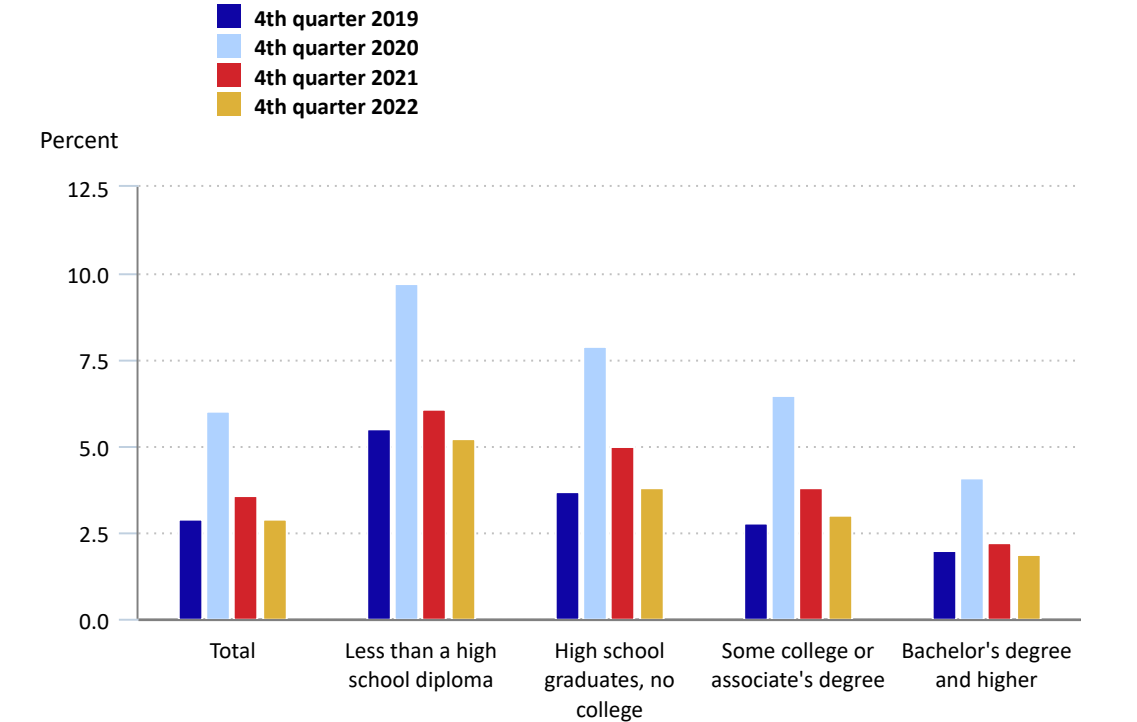
The unemployment rate for people of prime working age (those 25 to 54) declined over the year, to 3.1 percent in the fourth quarter, returning to its prepandemic level. The unemployment rates for both men and women of prime working age declined over the year, down to levels seen in the fourth quarter of 2019.

The unemployment rate for workers ages 55 and older was 2.5 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022, down by 0.7 percentage point over the year.<sup>5</sup> The jobless rates for men and women in this age group differed little from each other, at 2.6 percent for men and 2.5 percent for women. By the fourth quarter of the year, the rates for both groups differed little from the rates recorded in the fourth quarter of 2019, before the pandemic.

Jobless rates decreased over the year for people at all major educational attainment levels

Among workers ages 25 and older, jobless rates across all major educational attainment levels declined in 2022. The unemployment rate for people with less than a high school diploma declined by 0.9 percentage point over the year, to 5.2 percent in the fourth quarter. The rate for high school graduates with no college fell by 1.2 percentage points, to 3.8 percent by the end of 2022, the steepest drop among the educational attainment categories. The jobless rate for people with some college or an associate’s degree, at 3.0 percent in the fourth quarter, decreased by 0.8 percentage point over the year. The jobless rate for people with a bachelor’s degree and higher, at 1.9 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022, was 0.3 percentage point lower than it was a year earlier. As in the past, jobless rates in 2022 were much lower for people with higher levels of education than for those with less education. (See chart 3 and table 3.)

Chart 3. Unemployment rates for people 25 years and older, by educational attainment, seasonally adjusted, fourth quarter 2019–2022



Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.  
Note: The category "high school graduates, no college" includes people with a high school diploma or equivalent. The category "bachelor's degree and higher" includes people with bachelor's, master's, professional, and doctoral degrees.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

[View Chart Data](#)

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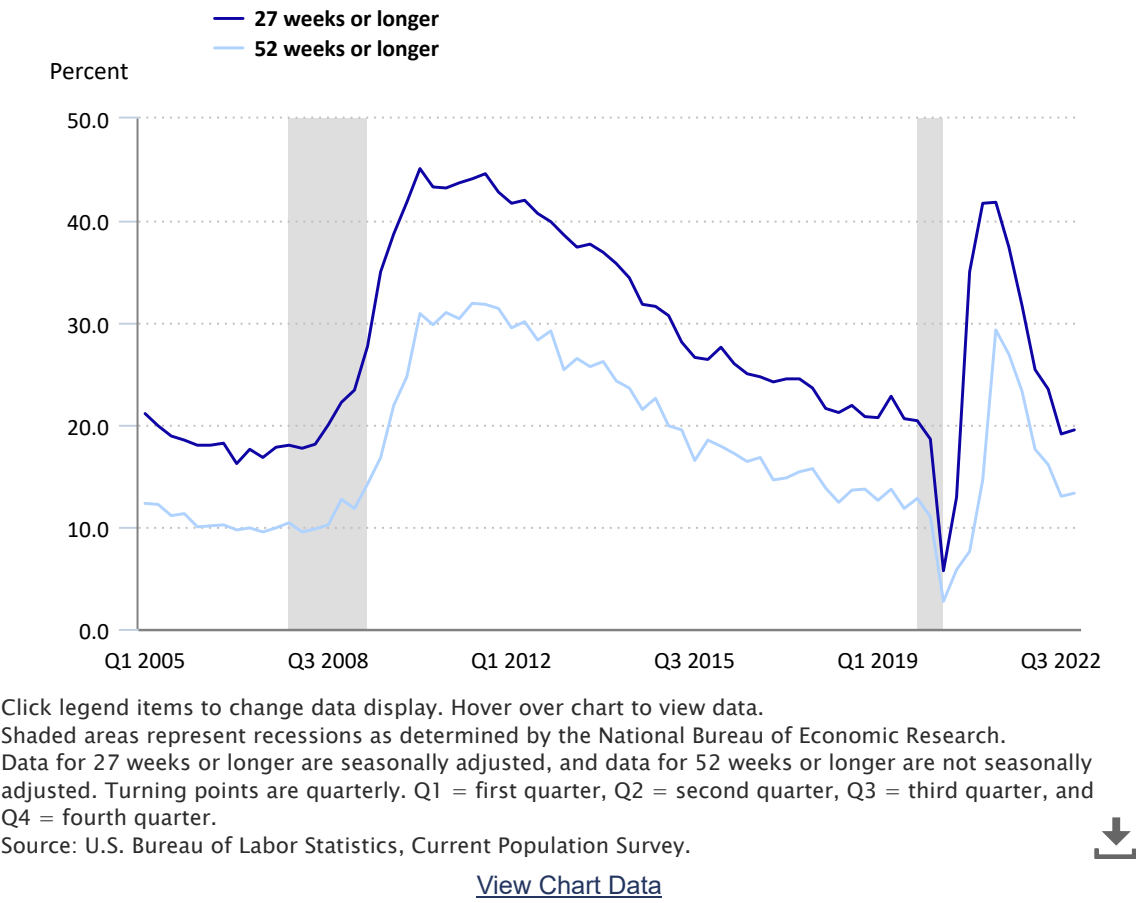
Table 3. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 25 years and older, by educational attainment, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 2021–2022 (levels in thousands)

Characteristic	Fourth quarter 2021	2022			
		First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter
Less than a high school diploma					
Civilian labor force	8,890	8,940	9,183	8,855	8,976
Participation rate	45.7	45.8	44.3	45.8	45.9
Employed	8,352	8,462	8,685	8,339	8,508
Employment–population ratio	42.9	43.3	41.9	43.1	43.5
Unemployed	538	478	498	516	468
Unemployment rate	6.1	5.4	5.4	5.8	5.2
High school graduates, no college <sup>[1]</sup>					
Civilian labor force	35,597	36,772	36,109	35,491	35,289
Participation rate	55.6	56.6	56.7	56.2	56.0
Employed	33,830	35,184	34,756	34,109	33,949
Employment–population ratio	52.8	54.2	54.6	54.0	53.8
Unemployed	1,767	1,589	1,353	1,381	1,340
Unemployment rate	5.0	4.3	3.7	3.9	3.8
Some college or associate's degree					
Civilian labor force	35,415	35,458	35,690	35,591	35,825
Participation rate	62.7	63.5	63.2	62.8	62.7
Employed	34,059	34,242	34,543	34,564	34,739
Employment–population ratio	60.3	61.3	61.1	61.0	60.8
Unemployed	1,356	1,216	1,147	1,027	1,086
Unemployment rate	3.8	3.4	3.2	2.9	3.0
Bachelor's degree and higher <sup>[2]</sup>					
Civilian labor force	61,175	61,804	62,103	63,491	63,168
Participation rate	72.1	72.6	73.2	72.9	72.6
Employed	59,805	60,490	60,848	62,290	61,939
Employment–population ratio	70.5	71.1	71.7	71.6	71.2
Unemployed	1,370	1,314	1,255	1,201	1,229
Unemployment rate	2.2	2.1	2.0	1.9	1.9
<sup>[1]</sup> This category includes people with a high school diploma or equivalent. <sup>[2]</sup> This category includes people with bachelor’s, master’s, professional, and doctoral degrees. Note: Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.					

About 1 in 5 unemployed people had been jobless for 27 weeks or longer

The number of long-term unemployed people (those who were jobless for 27 weeks or longer) declined to 1.2 million by the end of 2022. This group accounted for 19.5 percent of the total number of unemployed people in the fourth quarter of 2022, down from 31.7 percent in the fourth quarter of 2021.<sup>6</sup> At the end of 2022, the number of long-term unemployed people and its share of total unemployment were little different from their levels before the pandemic. (See table 4 and chart 4.)

Chart 4. Long-term unemployed as a percentage of total unemployed, quarterly averages, 2005–2022



After reaching a record high of 4.5 million (not seasonally adjusted) in the second quarter of 2010, the number of people unemployed for 52 weeks or longer declined for nearly a decade. At the onset of the pandemic-related surge in unemployment in the second quarter of 2020, the number of people in this group, at 556,000, was the lowest it had been since 2003. The initial surge in unemployment continued to move through the longer duration categories for the remainder of 2020 and into 2021. The number of those unemployed for 52 weeks or longer declined by 756,000 from the fourth quarter of 2021 to the fourth quarter of 2022, settling at 729,000. The group’s share of total unemployment fell from 23.3 percent in the fourth quarter of 2021 to 13.3 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022, nearly returning to its prepandemic share (12.8 percent).

Table 4. Unemployed people, by reason and duration of unemployment, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 2021–2022 (levels in thousands)

Characteristic	Fourth quarter 2021	2022			
		First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter
Reason for unemployment					
Job losers and people who completed temporary jobs	3,377	3,020	2,738	2,613	2,695
On temporary layoff	899	871	834	790	824
Not on temporary layoff	2,478	2,149	1,904	1,823	1,871
Permanent job losers	1,903	1,530	1,341	1,247	1,319
Persons who completed temporary jobs	575	619	562	576	552
Job leavers	803	902	798	881	838
Reentrants	2,114	1,986	1,926	1,830	1,813
New entrants	487	446	504	459	516
Percent distribution					
Job losers and people who completed temporary jobs	49.8	47.5	45.9	45.2	46.0
On temporary layoff	13.3	13.7	14.0	13.7	14.1
Not on temporary layoff	36.5	33.8	31.9	31.5	31.9
Job leavers	11.8	14.2	13.4	15.2	14.3
Reentrants	31.2	31.3	32.3	31.6	30.9
New entrants	7.2	7.0	8.4	7.9	8.8
Duration of unemployment					
Less than 5 weeks	2,016	2,291	2,184	2,157	2,231
5 to 14 weeks	1,718	1,703	1,659	1,736	1,702
15 weeks or longer	3,066	2,300	2,050	1,956	1,973
15 to 26 weeks	909	699	663	841	822
27 weeks or longer	2,157	1,601	1,386	1,116	1,151
Average (mean) duration, in weeks	28.0	25.0	23.2	21.6	20.6
Median duration, in weeks	12.8	9.0	8.4	8.4	8.7
Percent distribution					
Less than 5 weeks	29.7	36.4	37.1	36.9	37.8
5 to 14 weeks	25.3	27.1	28.1	29.7	28.8
15 weeks or longer	45.1	36.5	34.8	33.4	33.4
15 to 26 weeks	13.4	11.1	11.3	14.4	13.9
27 weeks or longer	31.7	25.4	23.5	19.1	19.5
Note: Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.					

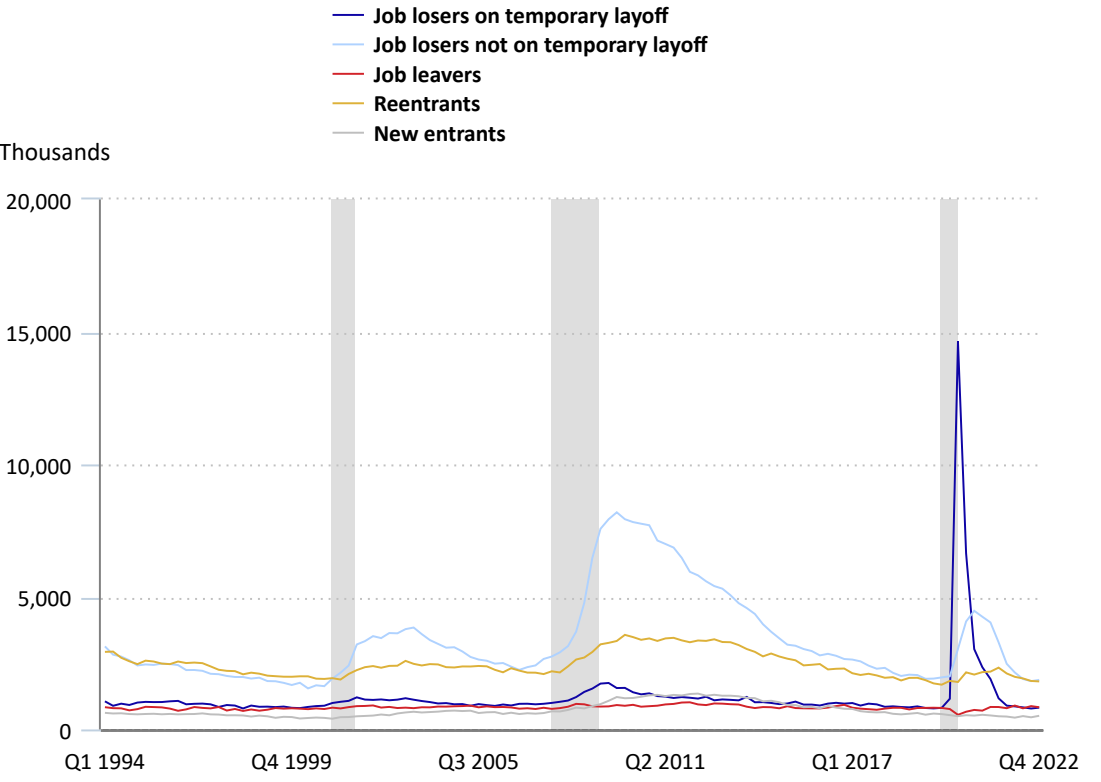
Number of people unemployed because they lost their job continued to decline

Unemployed people are grouped by their reasons for unemployment. People are unemployed because they either (1) were on temporary layoff, permanently lost their job, or completed a temporary job (job losers); (2) voluntarily left their job (job leavers); (3) reentered the labor force (reentrants); or (4) entered the labor force for the first time (new entrants).

The number of job losers and those who completed temporary jobs rose to an unprecedented level during the COVID-19 pandemic, surging to 17.7 million in the second quarter of 2020. (This was the highest quarterly average in the history of the data series, which began in 1967.) This number then declined markedly, a pattern that continued in 2022. The number of job losers averaged 2.7 million in the fourth quarter of 2022, roughly in line with its prepandemic level. (See table 4 and chart 5.)



Chart 5. Unemployed people, by reasons for unemployment, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 1994–2022



Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.  
Note: Shaded areas represent recessions as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research. Turning points are quarterly. Q1 = first quarter, Q2 = second quarter, Q3 = third quarter, and Q4 = fourth quarter.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

[View Chart Data](#)

Most of the increase in the number of job losers in the second quarter of 2020, at the onset of the pandemic, consisted of people on temporary layoff.<sup>7</sup> The number of unemployed people on temporary layoff then fell sharply, returning to its prepandemic level by the end of 2021, and subsequently held at about this level throughout most of 2022.

The number of unemployed people not on temporary layoff, a group consisting mostly of permanent job losers, was 1.9 million at the end of 2022, accounting for 31.9 percent of the total number of unemployed people. This measure continued to decline during the first half of 2022, and by the end of the year, it was roughly at its prepandemic level. The number of unemployed reentrants to the labor force, at 1.8 million in the fourth quarter of 2022, declined by 301,000 over the year. Reentrants are people who had been in the labor force previously, had spent time out of the labor force, and were actively seeking work once again. Reentrants accounted for 30.9 percent of unemployed people at the end of 2022.

The number of unemployed job leavers—that is, people who voluntarily left their jobs—changed little over the year, averaging 838,000 in the fourth quarter of 2022. The number of new entrants to the labor force also changed little over the year, at 516,000 in the fourth quarter.

Unemployment declined the most in service occupations

From 2021 to 2022, the unemployment rate decreased for all five major occupational categories. (Data are annual averages.) The jobless rate for service occupations had the sharpest decrease, declining by 3.0 percentage points, to 4.8 percent in 2022. Within this category, food preparation and serving related occupations, with a jobless rate of 5.7 percent, and personal care and service occupations, with a jobless rate of 4.1 percent, had the largest declines in 2022. The jobless rates also declined for production, transportation, and material moving occupations (4.9 percent); natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations (4.4 percent); sales and office occupations (3.7 percent); and management, professional, and related occupations (2.0 percent). (See table 5.)

Table 5. Unemployment rates, by occupational group and sex, annual averages, 2021–2022 (in percent)

Occupational group	Total			Men			Women		
	2021	2022	Change, 2021–22	2021	2022	Change, 2021–22	2021	2022	Change, 2021–22
Management, professional, and related occupations	2.8	2.0	-0.8	2.8	1.8	-1.0	2.9	2.1	-0.8
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	2.8	1.8	-1.0	2.7	1.6	-1.1	3.0	2.0	-1.0
Professional and related occupations	2.8	2.1	-0.7	2.9	2.0	-0.9	2.8	2.2	-0.6
Service occupations	7.8	4.8	-3.0	7.9	4.8	-3.1	7.7	4.8	-2.9
Healthcare support occupations	5.9	3.9	-2.0	5.3	3.3	-2.0	6.0	4.1	-1.9
Protective service occupations	3.9	3.4	-0.5	3.6	3.0	-0.6	4.8	4.6	-0.2
Food preparation and serving related occupations	10.3	5.7	-4.6	11.1	5.6	-5.5	9.7	5.8	-3.9
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	7.5	5.4	-2.1	6.6	5.0	-1.6	8.8	5.9	-2.9
Personal care and service occupations	8.3	4.1	-4.2	12.5	5.6	-6.9	7.1	3.7	-3.4
Sales and office occupations	5.3	3.7	-1.6	4.9	3.6	-1.3	5.5	3.8	-1.7
Sales and related occupations	5.6	3.9	-1.7	4.6	3.2	-1.4	6.6	4.5	-2.1
Office and administrative support occupations	5.0	3.6	-1.4	5.5	4.2	-1.3	4.8	3.3	-1.5
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	6.6	4.4	-2.2	6.4	4.3	-2.1	9.1	6.0	-3.1
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	8.9	6.8	-2.1	8.3	6.3	-2.0	10.9	7.9	-3.0
Construction and extraction occupations	7.8	5.4	-2.4	7.7	5.4	-2.3	11.0	5.5	-5.5
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	3.9	2.2	-1.7	4.0	2.1	-1.9	3.7	4.5	0.8
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	7.1	4.9	-2.2	6.9	4.7	-2.2	7.6	5.4	-2.2
Production occupations	5.8	3.9	-1.9	5.5	3.6	-1.9	6.3	4.6	-1.7
Transportation and material moving occupations	8.0	5.5	-2.5	7.8	5.4	-2.4	8.8	6.1	-2.7

Note: The unemployed are classified by occupation according to their last job, which may or may not be similar to the job they are currently seeking. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

All six alternative measures of labor underutilization declined

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) regularly publishes six alternative measures of labor underutilization.<sup>8</sup> These measures, known as U-1 through U-6 (U-3 is the official unemployment rate), tend to show similar cyclical patterns, but the alternative measures provide additional insight into the degree to which labor resources are being underutilized. (See the box that follows for more information about the six measures of labor underutilization.)

Alternative measures of labor underutilization

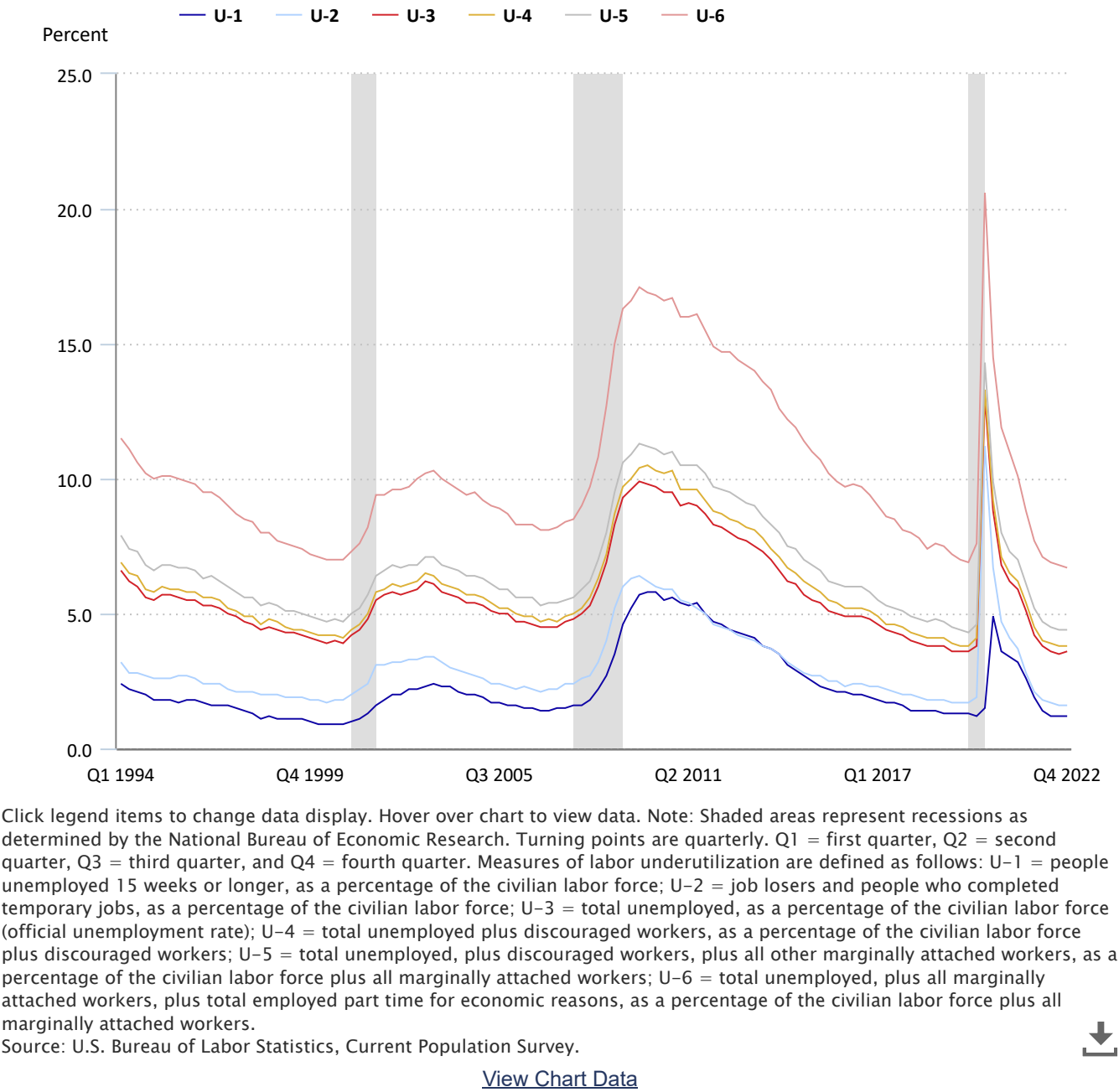
Six alternative measures of labor underutilization have long been available from the Current Population Survey for the United States as a whole. The official concept of unemployment—as measured in the CPS by U-3 in the range of alternative measures (U-1 through U-6)—includes all jobless people who are available to take a job and have actively sought work in the past 4 weeks. The other five measures encompass concepts both narrower (U-1 and U-2) and broader (U-4 through U-6) than the official concept of unemployment. The six measures are defined as follows:

- U-1: people unemployed 15 weeks or longer, as a percentage of the civilian labor force
- U-2: job losers and people who completed temporary jobs, as a percentage of the civilian labor force
- U-3: total unemployed, as a percentage of the civilian labor force (this is the definition used for the official unemployment rate)
- U-4: total unemployed plus discouraged workers, as a percentage of the civilian labor force plus discouraged workers
- U-5: total unemployed, plus discouraged workers, plus all other marginally attached workers, as a percentage of the civilian labor force plus all marginally attached workers
- U-6: total unemployed, plus all marginally attached workers, plus total employed part time for economic reasons, as a percentage of the civilian labor force plus all marginally attached workers

Discouraged workers (included in the U-4, U-5, and U-6 measures) are people who are not in the labor force, want and are available for work, and had looked for a job sometime in the prior 12 months. They are not counted as unemployed because they had not actively searched for work in the 4 weeks preceding the survey. Discouraged workers are not currently looking for work because they believe no jobs are available for them or there are none for which they qualify. The marginally attached category (included in the U-5 and U-6 measures) includes discouraged workers. The inclusion criteria for marginally attached workers are the same as those for discouraged workers, except that the marginally attached can cite any reason for their lack of active job search in the prior 4 weeks. People at work part time for economic reasons (included in the U-6 measure) are those working less than 35 hours per week who want to work full time, are available to do so, and give an economic reason for working part time (for example, their hours had been cut back or they were unable to find a full-time job). These individuals are sometimes referred to as involuntary part-time workers.

Each of the six measures of labor underutilization decreased from the fourth quarter of 2021 to the fourth quarter of 2022. U-2 (1.6 percent) and U-6 (6.7 percent) recorded their lowest levels since the current range of measures was introduced in 1994. Among the other measures, U-1 declined by 0.7 percentage point over the year, to 1.2 percent; U-3 fell by 0.6 percentage point, to 3.6 percent; and U-5 decreased by 0.8 percentage point, to 4.4 percent. (See chart 6.) In the fourth quarter of 2022, U-5 was the only measure to remain above its prepandemic level. The other five measures were either at or below the levels recorded in the fourth quarter of 2019.

Chart 6. Alternative measures of labor underutilization, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 1994–2022

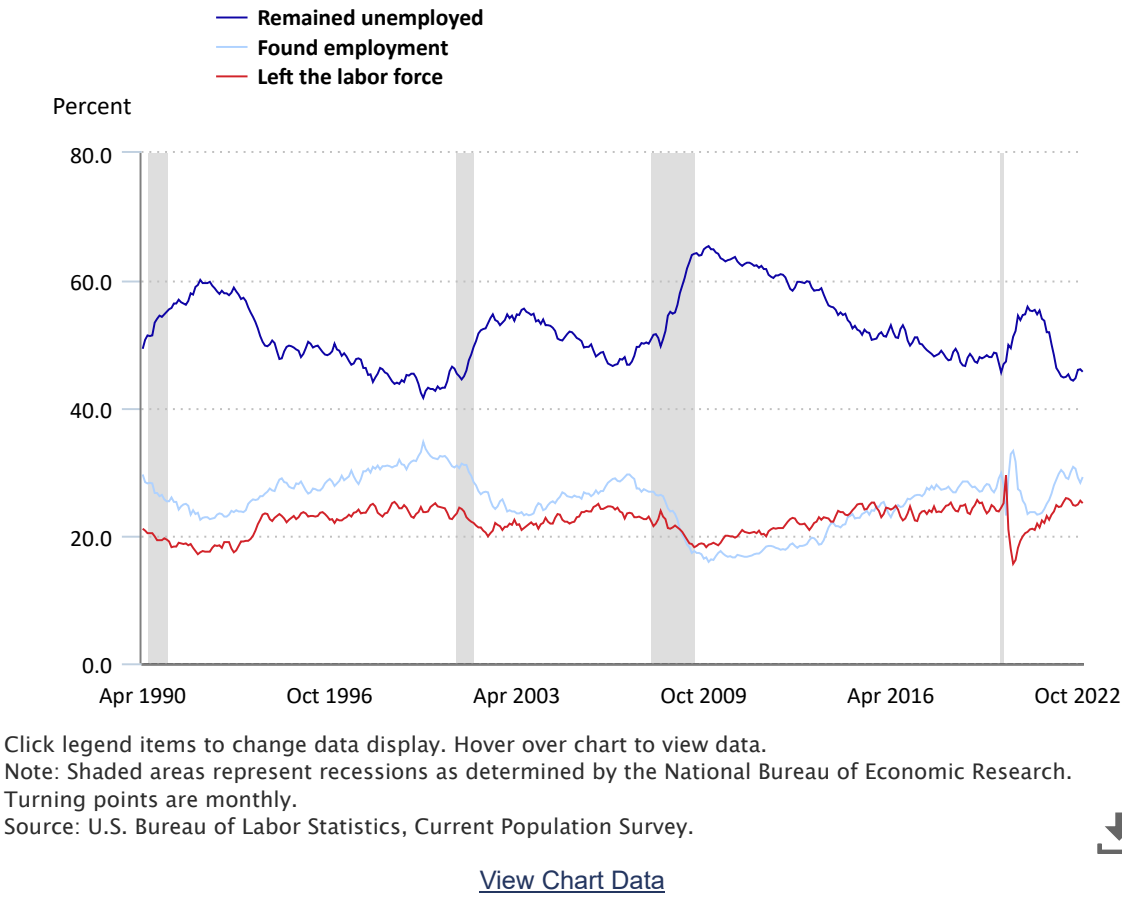


Labor force status flows showed an improvement in unemployment

A great deal of underlying movement contributes to the relatively small over-the-month net changes that typically occur in the different labor force statuses. These gross movements are captured by data on labor force flows, which show that millions of people move between employment and unemployment each month, while millions of others leave or enter the labor force.<sup>9</sup> In 2022, 16.1 million people, or 6.1 percent of the population, changed their labor force status in an average month. Examining the current status (employed, unemployed, or not in the labor force) of people who were unemployed in the previous month provides a greater understanding of unemployment in 2022.

Historically, unemployed people have been more likely to remain unemployed from one month to the next than to either find employment or leave the labor force. The likelihood of unemployed people remaining unemployed tends to decrease during labor market recoveries. The share of unemployed people who remained unemployed was 45.7 percent in December 2022 (calculated as a 3-month moving average), which is below its value of 48.3 percent at the end of 2021. In December 2022, 29.2 percent of people who were unemployed a month earlier found work, while 25.1 percent stopped looking for work and left the labor force. These two measures were slightly above their levels of 27.9 and 23.8 percent, respectively, from a year earlier. (See chart 7.)

Chart 7. Percentage of the unemployed who remained unemployed, found employment, or left the labor force, 3-month moving average, seasonally adjusted, April 1990–December 2022



Number of people not in the labor force who wanted a job changed little

People who are neither employed nor unemployed are classified as not in the labor force. In the fourth quarter of 2022, the number of people not in the labor force was 100.0 million, little changed from a year earlier. Most people who are not in the labor force do not want a job (about 95 percent at the end of 2022).<sup>10</sup> At the end of 2022, there were 5.5 million people outside the labor force who indicated they wanted a job.<sup>11</sup> Although this measure had declined since the 2020 recession, it was still above its prepandemic level of 4.8 million recorded in the fourth quarter of 2019.<sup>12</sup> (See table 6.)

Table 6. Number of people not in the labor force, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 2021–2022 (in thousands)

Category	Fourth quarter 2021	2022			
		First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter
Total not in the labor force	99,869	99,392	99,614	99,742	99,983
Persons who currently want a job	5,823	5,621	5,728	5,745	5,462
Marginally attached to the labor force <sup>[1]</sup>	1,639	1,459	1,536	1,522	1,415
Discouraged workers <sup>[2]</sup>	454	391	415	426	396

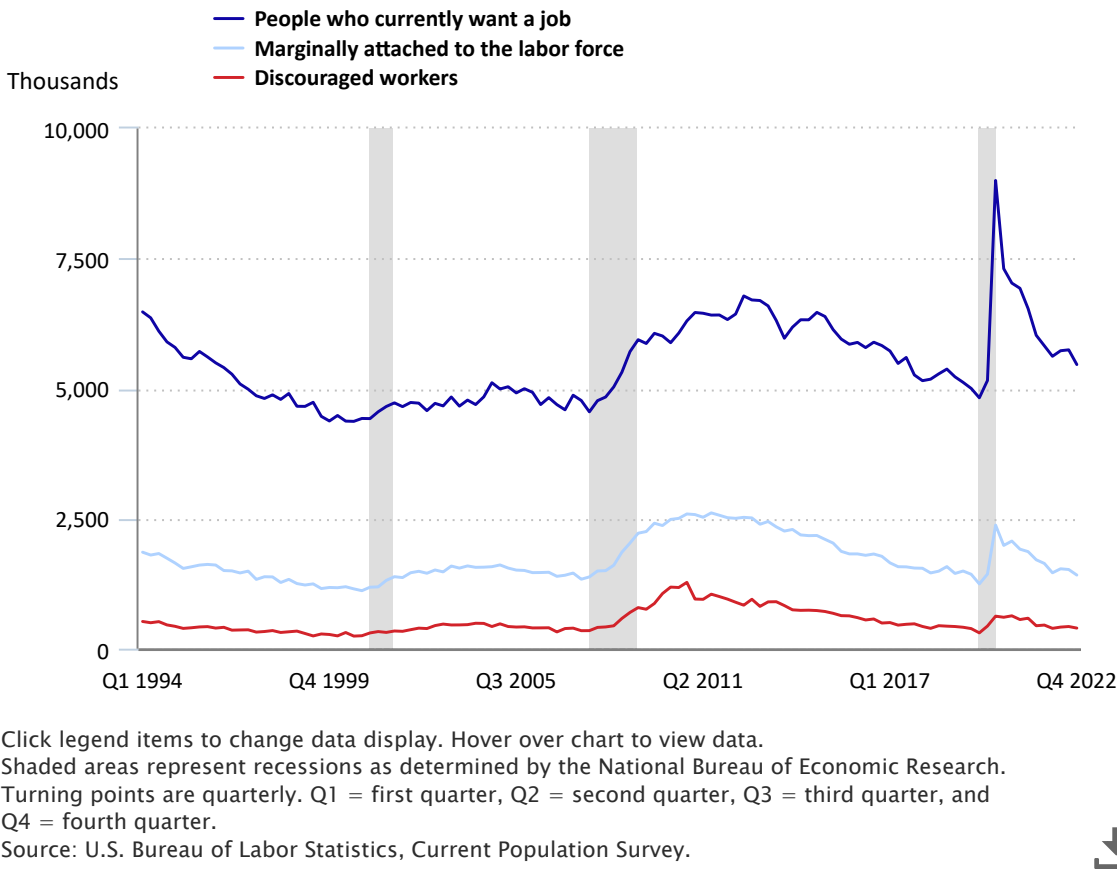
<sup>[1]</sup> This category includes people who want a job, have searched for work during the prior 12 months, and were available to take a job during the reference week but had not looked for work in the 4 weeks prior to the survey.

<sup>[2]</sup> This category includes people who did not actively look for work in the 4 weeks prior to the survey for reasons such as thinks no work available, could not find work, lacks schooling or training, employer thinks too young or old, and other types of discrimination.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Among people not in the labor force who currently want a job, those classified as marginally attached to the labor force numbered 1.4 million in the fourth quarter of 2022, higher than the level in the fourth quarter of 2019. These individuals wanted a job, had searched for work sometime in the previous year, and were available to work if a job had been offered to them. (Still, they were not counted as unemployed because they had not actively searched for work in the 4 weeks preceding the survey.) Among the marginally attached, people currently not looking for work because they felt that no jobs were available for them are defined as discouraged workers. The number of discouraged workers edged down because of population controls in 2022 and stood at 396,000 in the fourth quarter. (See chart 8.)

Chart 8. People not in the labor force, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 1994–2022



[View Chart Data](#)

Overall labor force participation rate changed little

The overall labor force participation rate, at 62.2 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022, held steady over the year (after accounting for the effects of the annual population controls introduced at the beginning of the year). The participation rate fell precipitously with the onset of the pandemic, but then it rebounded quickly and continued to trend up in 2021. However, the upward trend faded in early 2022, and by the end of the year, the participation rate was still more than a full percentage point below its prepandemic value.

Labor force participation showed little movement for most race and ethnicity groups

Among the major race and ethnicity groups, the labor force participation rates for Whites (62.0 percent), Hispanics (66.0 percent), and Asians (64.6 percent) in the fourth quarter of 2022 were about in line with their year-earlier figures. However, the labor force participation rate for Blacks, at 62.3 percent in the fourth quarter, rose markedly over the year.

Labor force participation increased for people of prime working age

After a steep pandemic-related decline, the labor force participation rate for prime-working-age people, those ages 25 to 54, increased in 2021 and then continued to trend up in 2022, averaging 82.4 percent in the fourth quarter. Despite this upward trend, the group’s labor force participation rate remained below its prepandemic value recorded in the fourth quarter of 2019 (82.9 percent). (See table 2.)

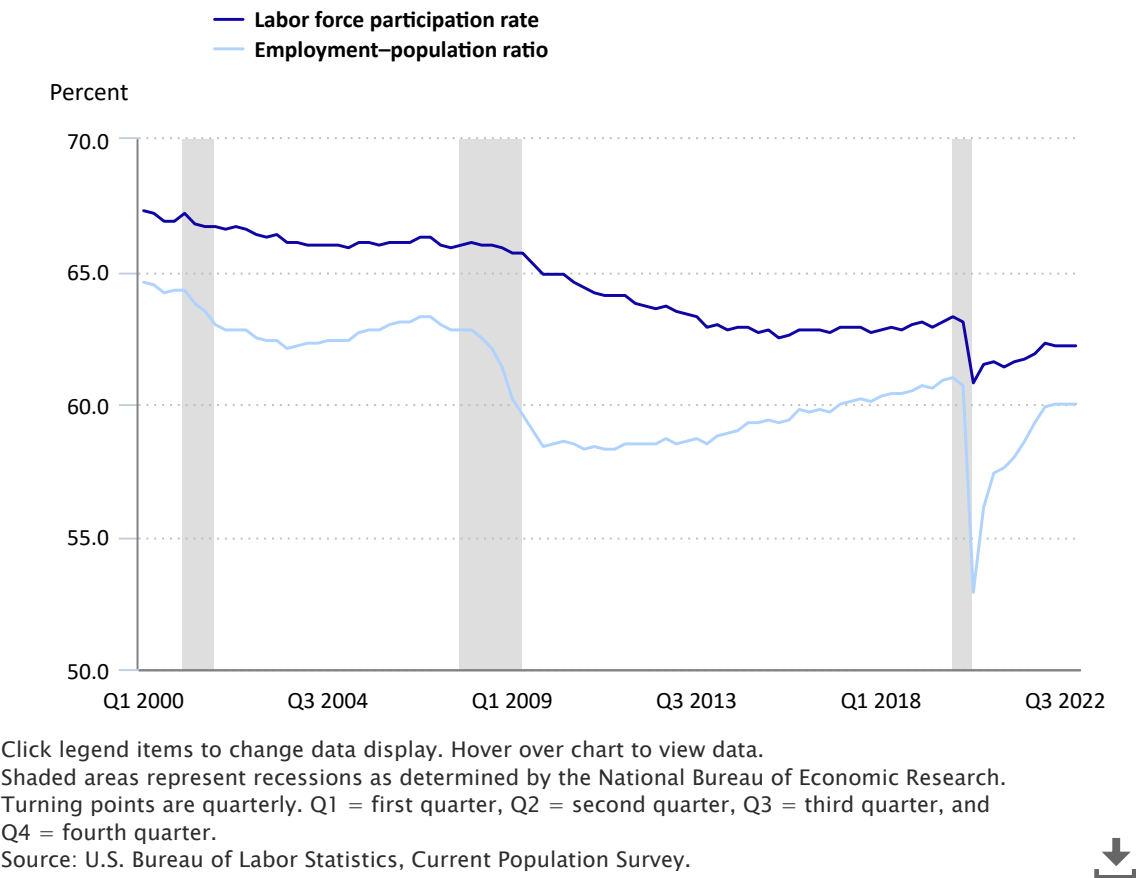
The labor force participation rate for older workers, those 55 years and older, declined in 2022 (after accounting for population controls), averaging 38.8 percent in the fourth quarter and remaining well below its value recorded in the fourth quarter of 2019 (40.3 percent). Recent research indicates that the shortfall in the overall U.S. labor force participation rate relative to its prepandemic level is partly due to excess retirements among older workers.<sup>13</sup>

For younger workers, those ages 16 to 24, the labor force participation rate showed little movement in 2022, averaging 55.7 percent in the fourth quarter, not much different from a year earlier.

Employment growth continued

In the fourth quarter of 2022, the number of employed people averaged 158.8 million. While employment growth continued in 2022 (after accounting for the effects of annual population controls introduced at the beginning of the year), the pace of job growth slowed from that observed in 2021. The employment–population ratio (the percentage of the population ages 16 and older who are employed) increased in 2022, but it remained below its level recorded for the fourth quarter of 2019. From the fourth quarter of 2021 to the fourth quarter of 2022, employment increased for both men and women. The employment–population ratio increased for men but changed little for women. (See table 1 and chart 9.)

Chart 9. Labor force participation rate and employment–population ratio, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 2000–2022



[View Chart Data](#)

Employment–population ratio rose sharply for Blacks

Employment rose for all major race and ethnicity groups in 2022. The employment–population ratio for Blacks increased sharply over the year. At 58.7 percent in the fourth quarter, this ratio was up about 2 percentage points from a year earlier. The employment–population ratios for Whites (60.0 percent in the fourth quarter), Hispanics (63.3 percent), and Asians (62.9 percent) showed little change over the year. (See table 1.)

Employment expanded for people of prime working age and older age groups

Employment for prime-working-age people, those ages 25 to 54, increased in 2022. The employment–population ratio for this group increased over the year, to 79.9 percent in the fourth quarter, which is slightly below the prepandemic value of 80.3 percent in the fourth quarter of 2019. (See table 2.)

The number of employed people ages 55 and older increased in 2022, with men accounting for much of that increase. The employment–population ratio for older workers was 37.8 percent in the fourth quarter, not much different from a year earlier (after taking population controls into account).

Employment for younger workers, those ages 16 to 24, changed little in 2022. While employment grew for people ages 16 to 19, it was essentially unchanged for 20-to 24-year-olds. The employment–population ratio for people ages 16 to 24 was 51.2 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022, little different from the value of 51.4 percent in the fourth quarter in 2021.

Employment growth was strongest for people with a bachelor’s degree and higher

For people ages 25 and older, employment among those with less than a high school diploma (8.5 million) and the employment–population ratio for that group (43.5 percent) were essentially unchanged from the fourth quarter of 2021 to the fourth quarter of 2022 (after accounting for population controls). Employment for high school graduates with no college (33.9 million) and their employment–population ratio (53.8 percent) changed little over the year. Employment among people with some college or an associate’s degree (34.7 million) changed little over the year, and the employment–population ratio for this group (60.8 percent) was essentially unchanged in 2022. Employment among people with a bachelor’s degree and higher increased over the year, rising to 61.9 million in the fourth quarter of 2022. The employment–population ratio for this group, at 71.2 percent in the fourth quarter, was little changed from a year earlier. (See table 3.)

Employment increased for several major occupational groups

In 2022, employment in management, professional, and related occupations increased to 68.1 million. This category accounted for the largest increase in employment of the major occupational groups. (Data are annual averages.) Employment in management, professional, and related occupations made up 43.0 percent of the total number of employed people in 2022. (See table 7.)



Table 7. Employment, by occupational group and sex, annual averages, 2021–2022 (in thousands)

Occupational group	Total		Men		Women	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
Total, 16 years and over	152,581	158,291	80,829	84,203	71,752	74,089
Management, professional, and related occupations	64,744	68,099	31,109	33,016	33,636	35,083
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	27,864	29,350	15,231	16,188	12,633	13,162
Professional and related occupations	36,880	38,749	15,878	16,828	21,003	21,921
Service occupations	24,403	25,438	10,328	10,935	14,075	14,503
Healthcare support occupations	4,887	4,930	728	757	4,158	4,173
Protective service occupations	2,987	3,057	2,276	2,346	711	711
Food preparation and serving related occupations	7,370	7,907	3,343	3,690	4,027	4,218
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	5,482	5,576	3,198	3,235	2,285	2,341
Personal care and service occupations	3,676	3,968	783	907	2,893	3,061
Sales and office occupations	30,166	30,412	11,604	11,764	18,563	18,649
Sales and related occupations	14,369	14,316	7,219	7,237	7,150	7,079
Office and administrative support occupations	15,797	16,096	4,384	4,527	11,413	11,570
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	13,959	14,260	13,181	13,442	778	818
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	1,061	980	804	723	257	257
Construction and extraction occupations	8,057	8,427	7,746	8,070	311	357
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,840	4,853	4,630	4,649	210	204
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	19,309	20,082	14,608	15,046	4,700	5,036
Production occupations	7,950	8,256	5,703	5,797	2,247	2,459
Transportation and material moving occupations	11,359	11,826	8,906	9,249	2,453	2,578
Note: Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.						

Employment in service occupations increased to 25.4 million in 2022. Employment in this occupational group remained below its 2019 prepandemic level. Within the service occupational group, employment in food preparation and serving related occupations increased to 7.9 million. Employment in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations (14.3 million) showed little change from the 2021 average. Similarly, employment in sales and office occupations (30.4 million) showed little change. At the same time, the number of employed workers in production, transportation, and material moving occupations increased to 20.1 million.

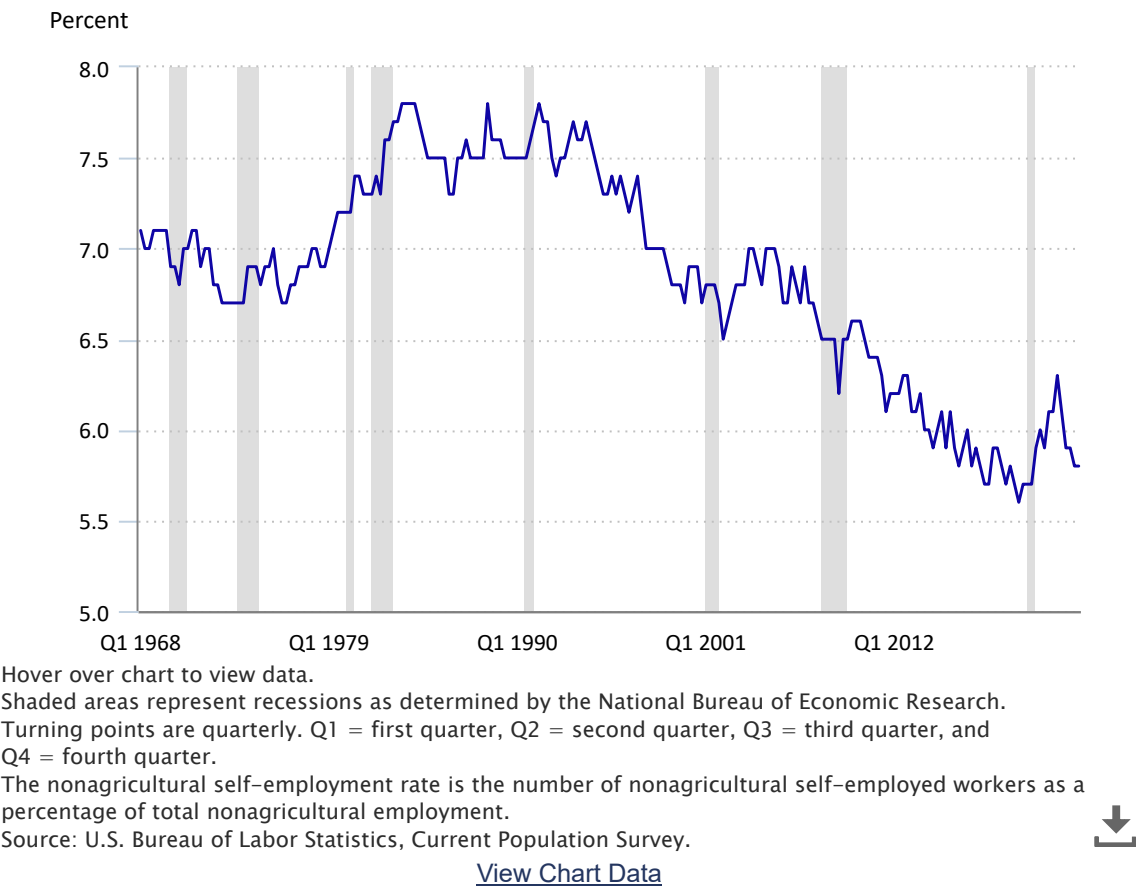
Number of self-employed workers was little changed

In the fourth quarter of 2022, the total number of nonagricultural self-employed workers, at 9.1 million, changed little over the year. This is in contrast to the employment increase of nonagricultural self-employed workers in 2021.<sup>14</sup> The nonagricultural self-employment rate (the proportion of total nonagricultural employment made up of self-employed workers) was 5.8 percent at the end of 2022, down from 6.1 percent in the fourth quarter of 2021. (See table 8 and chart 10.)

Table 8. Employed people, by class of worker, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 2021–2022 (in thousands)

Class of worker	Fourth quarter 2021	2022			
		First quarter	Second quarter	Third quarter	Fourth quarter
Agriculture and related industries	2,278	2,346	2,323	2,254	2,248
Wage and salary workers	1,480	1,530	1,520	1,520	1,494
Self-employed workers, unincorporated	768	776	773	698	733
Nonagricultural industries	153,065	155,096	155,858	156,479	156,578
Wage and salary workers	143,736	146,262	146,409	147,126	147,459
Self-employed workers, unincorporated	9,320	9,180	9,205	9,041	9,089
Note: Both agricultural and nonagricultural wage and salary workers include self-employed workers whose businesses are incorporated. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.					

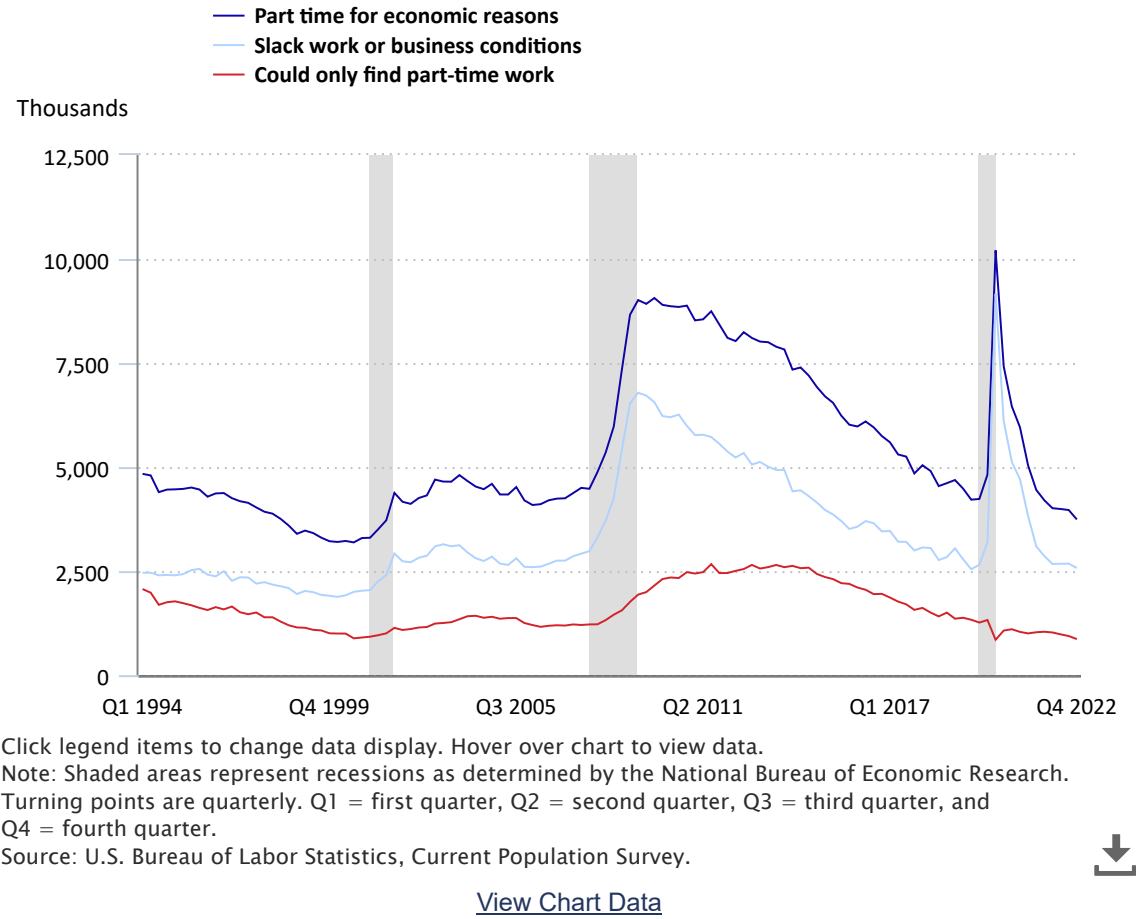
Chart 10. Nonagricultural self-employment rate, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 1968–2022



Number of people employed part time for economic reasons fell below its prepandemic level

The number of people who worked part time for economic reasons (those who worked less than 35 hours per week but would have preferred full-time employment, also referred to as involuntary part-time employment) was 3.7 million in the fourth quarter of 2022, slightly below prepandemic levels.<sup>15</sup> Historically, slack work or unfavorable business conditions, rather than an inability to find full-time work, has been the primary reason for involuntarily working part time. The number of involuntary part-time workers has been decreasing since it reached a high of 10.2 million in the second quarter of 2020. (See chart 11.)

Chart 11. Number of people employed part time for economic reasons, quarterly averages, seasonally adjusted, 1994–2022



At the end of 2022, men continued to make up slightly more than half of all involuntary part-time workers. The number of men who worked part time for economic reasons decreased from the fourth quarter of 2021 to 2.0 million in the fourth quarter of 2022. Over the same period, the number of women working part time for economic reasons decreased to 1.6 million. (These data are not seasonally adjusted.)

Unemployment rate for veterans continues to decline

There were 18.3 million veterans in the civilian noninstitutional population in the fourth quarter of 2022. The largest share of veterans (33.5 percent) served during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam-era (6.1 million). Veterans who served during Gulf War-era II accounted for the second-largest share of the veteran population, at 5.0 million, and there were 3.2 million veterans who served during Gulf War-era I. Also, there were 3.9 million veterans who served on active duty outside these designated wartime periods. Among veterans from all service periods, women accounted for 11.1 percent of the total veteran population in the fourth quarter of 2022.<sup>16</sup> (See table 9.)

Table 9. Employment status of people 18 years and older, by veteran status, period of service, and sex, quarterly averages, not seasonally adjusted, 2021–2022 (levels in thousands)

Employment status, veteran status, and period of service	Total		Men		Women	
	Fourth quarter 2021	Fourth quarter 2022	Fourth quarter 2021	Fourth quarter 2022	Fourth quarter 2021	Fourth quarter 2022
Veterans, 18 years and older						
Civilian noninstitutional population	17,951	18,266	16,029	16,233	1,921	2,033
Civilian labor force	8,409	8,771	7,247	7,576	1,162	1,195
Participation rate	46.8	48.0	45.2	46.7	60.5	58.8
Employed	8,102	8,521	6,991	7,349	1,111	1,172
Employment–population ratio	45.1	46.7	43.6	45.3	57.8	57.7
Unemployed	307	249	256	226	51	23
Unemployment rate	3.6	2.8	3.5	3.0	4.4	1.9
Gulf War-era II veterans						
Civilian labor force	3,620	4,030	3,048	3,339	572	691
Participation rate	78.7	80.6	80.5	81.7	70.3	75.7
Employed	3,471	3,911	2,924	3,236	547	675
Employment–population ratio	75.5	78.2	77.2	79.2	67.3	73.9
Unemployed	149	119	125	103	25	16
Unemployment rate	4.1	2.9	4.1	3.1	4.3	2.3
Gulf War-era I veterans						
Civilian labor force	2,257	2,213	1,911	1,915	346	298
Participation rate	71.7	69.2	72.0	70.2	70.2	63.7
Employed	2,194	2,158	1,861	1,861	333	297
Employment–population ratio	69.7	67.5	70.1	68.2	67.6	63.4
Unemployed	62	55	49	54	13	1
Unemployment rate	2.8	2.5	2.6	2.8	3.7	0.3
World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam-era veterans						
Civilian labor force	1,011	920	960	879	51	41
Participation rate	16.1	15.0	15.8	14.9	23.0	16.9
Employed	971	888	925	849	46	40
Employment–population ratio	15.4	14.5	15.2	14.4	20.8	16.3
Unemployed	40	32	35	30	5	2
Unemployment rate	3.9	3.5	3.6	3.5	[1]	[1]
Veterans of other service periods						
Civilian labor force	1,521	1,608	1,328	1,443	193	165
Participation rate	38.9	40.8	37.8	40.8	49.0	40.5
Employed	1,466	1,564	1,281	1,404	185	161
Employment–population ratio	37.5	39.7	36.5	39.7	47.0	39.4
Unemployed	55	43	47	39	8	4
Unemployment rate	3.6	2.7	3.6	2.7	4.1	2.6
Nonveterans, 18 years and older						
Civilian noninstitutional population	235,053	237,076	106,245	108,027	128,808	129,049
Civilian labor force	151,277	153,228	77,328	78,742	73,949	74,485
Participation rate	64.4	64.6	72.8	72.9	57.4	57.7
Employed	145,399	148,198	74,289	76,163	71,110	72,034
Employment–population ratio	61.9	62.5	69.9	70.5	55.2	55.8
Unemployed	5,877	5,030	3,039	2,579	2,838	2,451
Unemployment rate	3.9	3.3	3.9	3.3	3.8	3.3
<div>[1] No data available, data do not meet publication criteria, or base is less than 60,000.</div> <div>Note: Veterans are men and women who previously served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces and were not on active duty at the time of the survey. Nonveterans never served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces. Veterans could have served anywhere in the world during these periods of service: Gulf War-era II (September 2001–present), Gulf War-era I (August 1990–August 2001), Vietnam-era (August 1964–April 1975), Korean War (July 1950–January 1955), World War II (December 1941–December 1946), and other service periods (all other periods). Veterans are only counted in one period of service: their most recent wartime period. Veterans who served in both a wartime period and any other service period are classified in the wartime period.</div> <div>Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.</div>						

In the fourth quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate for all veterans was 2.8 percent (not seasonally adjusted). This fourth quarter rate is 0.8 percentage point lower than the previous year’s rate and 7.0 percentage points lower from its peak in the second quarter of 2020 (9.8 percent). In comparison, the jobless rate for nonveterans declined by 0.6 percentage point to 3.3 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022.



The labor force participation rate for veterans increased over the year to 48.0 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022, while the rate for nonveterans changed little, at 64.6 percent. Labor force participation rates, for veterans and nonveterans, tend to be lower for older people than they are for people of prime working age. For instance, the labor force participation rate for those who served during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam-era, who are all over age 60, was 15.0 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022, little changed from the year prior. In contrast, Gulf War-era II veterans, who tend to be younger, had a much higher participation rate, 80.6 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022, also little changed from a year earlier.

Labor market improved for both people with and people with no disability

Although the job market remains especially challenging for people with a disability, the employment situation for this group showed some improvement in 2022. In the fourth quarter, their labor force participation rate was little changed, at 23.7 percent; however, their employment–population ratio increased to 22.3 percent. (Data are not seasonally adjusted.) Among people with no disability, the labor force participation rate was 67.6 percent, and the employment–population ratio was 65.4 percent. (See table 10.)

In the fourth quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate for people with a disability reached its lowest level (6.1 percent) since collection of these data began in 2008.<sup>17</sup> But the unemployment rate for people with a disability continues to be substantially higher than the unemployment rate for people with no disability (3.2 percent).

Table 10. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population, by sex, age, and disability status, quarterly averages, not seasonally adjusted, 2021–2022 (levels in thousands)

Employment status, sex, and age	Persons with a disability		Persons with no disability	
	Fourth quarter 2021	Fourth quarter 2022	Fourth quarter 2021	Fourth quarter 2022
Total, 16 years and older				
Civilian noninstitutional population	31,859	32,818	230,165	231,877
Civilian labor force	7,229	7,776	154,657	156,641
Participation rate	22.7	23.7	67.2	67.6
Employed	6,634	7,304	148,865	151,617
Employment–population ratio	20.8	22.3	64.7	65.4
Unemployed	595	471	5,792	5,023
Unemployment rate	8.2	6.1	3.7	3.2
Men, 16 to 64 years				
Civilian labor force	3,018	3,236	76,510	77,986
Participation rate	38.3	39.6	82.0	82.4
Employed	2,748	3,020	73,573	75,435
Employment–population ratio	34.9	37.0	78.9	79.7
Unemployed	270	216	2,937	2,551
Unemployment rate	8.9	6.7	3.8	3.3
Women, 16 to 64 years				
Civilian labor force	2,904	3,146	68,490	68,856
Participation rate	35.9	38.1	71.4	71.6
Employed	2,652	2,945	65,905	66,631
Employment–population ratio	32.7	35.6	68.7	69.3
Unemployed	252	201	2,585	2,225
Unemployment rate	8.7	6.4	3.8	3.2
Total, 65 years and over				
Civilian noninstitutional population	15,887	16,389	41,006	41,080
Civilian labor force	1,306	1,393	9,657	9,799
Participation rate	8.2	8.5	23.6	23.9
Employed	1,233	1,339	9,387	9,552
Employment–population ratio	7.8	8.2	22.9	23.3
Unemployed	73	54	271	247
Unemployment rate	5.6	3.9	2.8	2.5
Note: A person with a disability has at least one of the following conditions: is deaf or has serious difficulty hearing; is blind or has serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses; has serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition; has serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs; has difficulty dressing or bathing; or has difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.				

Unemployment rate for the foreign-born population slightly lower than that of the native-born population

The foreign-born population accounted for 18.5 percent of the U.S. civilian labor force ages 16 years and older in the fourth quarter of 2022, up from 17.8 percent a year earlier. Over the year, both the foreign-born and native-born populations saw a decrease in their unemployment rates, to 3.2 percent and 3.4 percent, respectively.<sup>18</sup> (Data are not seasonally adjusted.) The employment–population ratios for foreign-born workers (64.0 percent) and native-born workers (59.2 percent) edged up over the year. (See table 11.)

Table 11. Employment status of the foreign- and native-born populations, by sex, quarterly averages, not seasonally adjusted, 2021–2022 (levels in thousands)

Employment status and nativity	Total		Men		Women	
	Fourth quarter 2021	Fourth quarter 2022	Fourth quarter 2021	Fourth quarter 2022	Fourth quarter 2021	Fourth quarter 2022
Foreign born, 16 years and older						
Civilian noninstitutional population	43,890	45,945	21,386	22,474	22,503	23,470
Civilian labor force	28,740	30,359	16,575	17,434	12,165	12,925
Participation rate	65.5	66.1	77.5	77.6	54.1	55.1
Employed	27,628	29,400	15,999	16,886	11,630	12,514
Employment–population ratio	62.9	64.0	74.8	75.1	51.7	53.3
Unemployed	1,112	960	576	548	535	412
Unemployment rate	3.9	3.2	3.5	3.1	4.4	3.2
Native born, 16 years and older						
Civilian noninstitutional population	218,134	218,751	105,390	106,502	112,744	112,249
Civilian labor force	133,146	134,057	69,044	70,025	64,102	64,032
Participation rate	61.0	61.3	65.5	65.7	56.9	57.0
Employed	127,870	129,522	66,222	67,633	61,648	61,889
Employment–population ratio	58.6	59.2	62.8	63.5	54.7	55.1
Unemployed	5,276	4,535	2,822	2,392	2,454	2,143
Unemployment rate	4.0	3.4	4.1	3.4	3.8	3.3
Note: The foreign born are people residing in the United States who were not U.S. citizens at birth. That is, they were born outside the United States or one of its outlying areas, such as Puerto Rico or Guam, to parents who were not U.S. citizens. This group includes legally admitted immigrants, refugees, students, temporary workers, and undocumented immigrants. The survey data, however, do not separately identify the number of people in these categories. The native born are people who were born in the United States or one of its outlying areas, such as Puerto Rico or Guam, or who were born abroad of at least one parent who was a U.S. citizen. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.						

Foreign-born workers continued to have a higher labor force participation rate than native-born workers in 2022. The labor force participation rates for foreign-born (66.1 percent) and native-born workers (61.3 percent) were little changed over the year.

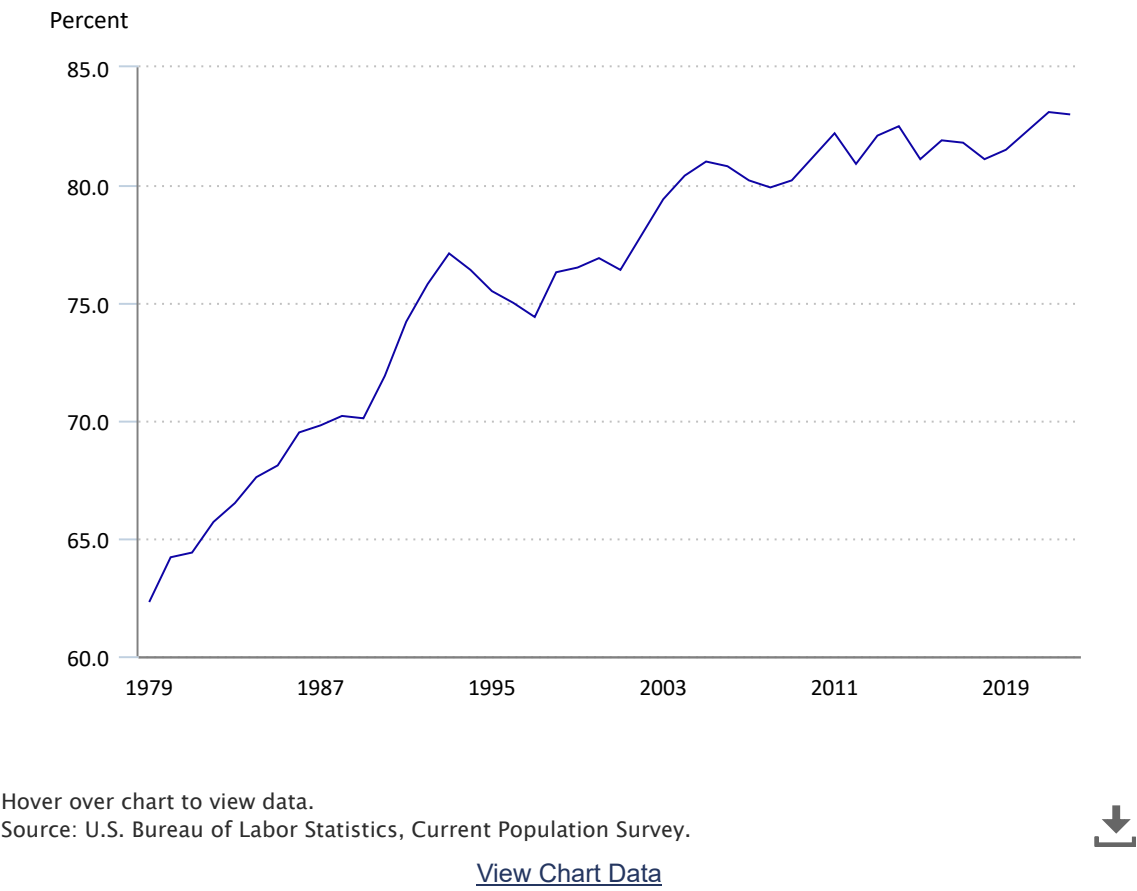
Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers increased but did not keep pace with inflation

Median weekly earnings for full-time wage and salary workers were \$1,059 in 2022, up by 6.1 percent from 2021.<sup>[19](#)</sup> (Data are annual averages.) During the same period, inflation was 8.0 percent, as measured by the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). Real median usual weekly earnings (adjusted with the use of the CPI-U) declined 1.6 percent from 2021.<sup>[20](#)</sup> (See table 12.) Women’s median weekly earnings were \$958 in 2022; this was 83.0 percent of men’s median weekly earnings (\$1,154). In 1979, the first year for which comparable data on usual weekly earnings are available, women’s earnings were 62.3 percent of men’s earnings. (See chart 12.)

Table 12. Median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers, by selected characteristics, annual averages, 2021–2022

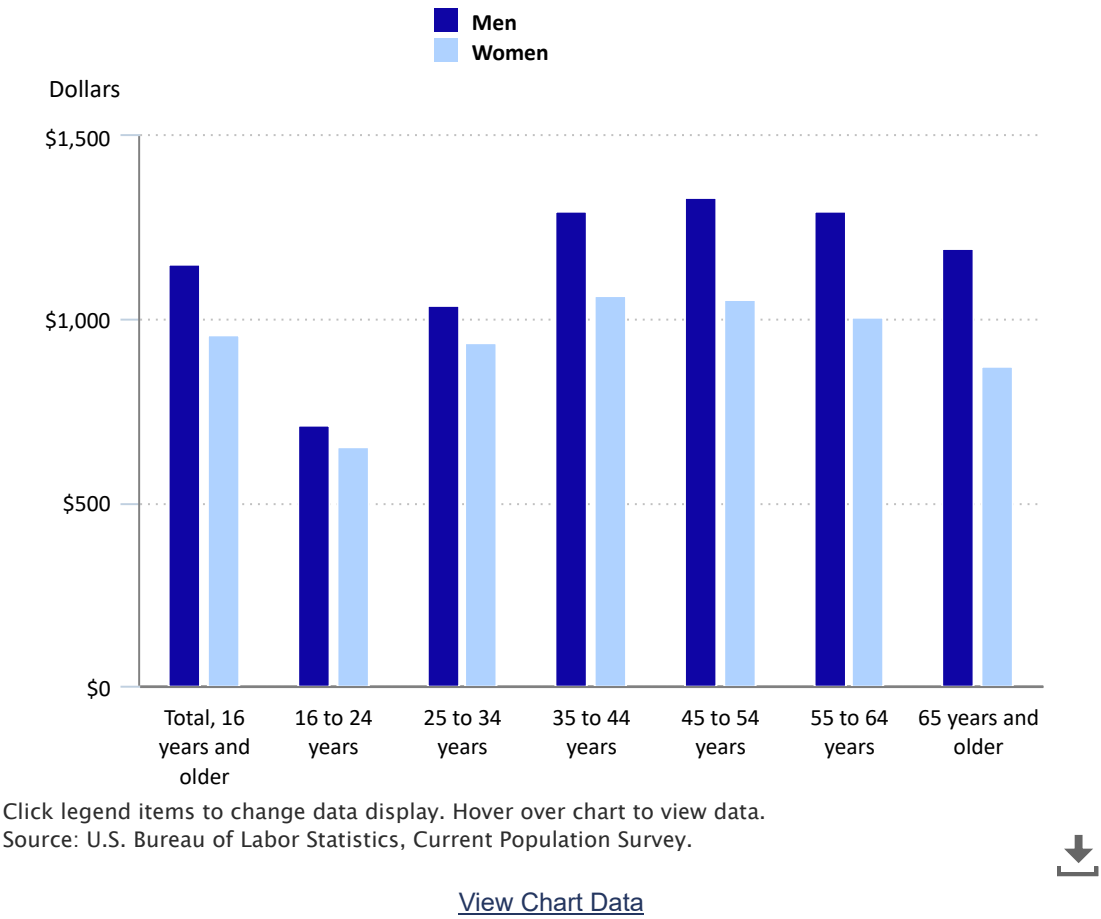
Characteristic	Current dollars			Constant (1982–84) dollars		
	2021	2022	Percent change, 2021–22	2021	2022	Percent change, 2021–22
Total, 16 years and older	\$998	\$1,059	6.1	\$368	\$362	-1.6
Men	1,097	1,154	5.2	405	394	-2.7
Women	912	958	5.0	336	327	-2.7
White	1,018	1,085	6.6	376	371	-1.3
Men	1,125	1,172	4.2	415	401	-3.4
Women	925	973	5.2	341	333	-2.3
Black or African American	801	878	9.6	296	300	1.4
Men	825	921	11.6	304	315	3.6
Women	776	835	7.6	286	285	-0.3
Asian	1,328	1,401	5.5	490	479	-2.2
Men	1,453	1,559	7.3	536	533	-0.6
Women	1,141	1,234	8.2	421	422	0.2
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	777	823	5.9	287	281	-2.1
Men	820	887	8.2	303	303	0.0
Women	718	761	6.0	265	260	-1.9
Total, 25 years and older	1,057	1,123	6.2	390	384	-1.6
Less than a high school diploma	626	682	8.9	231	233	0.9
High school graduate, no college	809	853	5.4	299	291	-2.4
Some college or associate’s degree	925	969	4.8	341	331	-3.0
Bachelor’s degree or higher	1,452	1,544	6.3	536	528	-1.5
Note: The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers is used to convert current dollars to constant (1982–84) dollars. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.						

Chart 12. Women's median usual weekly earnings as a percentage of men's, full-time wage and salary workers, annual averages, 1979–2022



Median weekly earnings were highest for men ages 35 to 64. By age group, median weekly earnings were \$1,297 for men ages 35 to 44, \$1,336 for men ages 45 to 54, and \$1,294 for men ages 55 to 64. Women’s median weekly earnings were also highest for workers ages 35 to 64. Median weekly earnings were \$1,065 for women ages 35 to 44, \$1,058 for women ages 45 to 54, and \$1,007 for women ages 55 to 64. Men and women ages 16 to 24 had the lowest median weekly earnings, \$713 and \$656, respectively. Men's and women's earnings were closer among younger workers than older workers. For example, women ages 16 to 24 earned 92.0 percent as much as men in the same age group, while the women's-to-men's earnings ratio was 73.1 percent for those ages 65 and over. (See chart 13.)

Chart 13. Median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers, by age and sex, annual averages, 2022



Among the major race and ethnicity groups, median weekly earnings increased for all groups. From 2021 to 2022, earnings increased (in nominal terms) by 9.6 percent for Blacks (\$878), 6.6 percent for Whites (\$1,085), 5.9 percent for Hispanics (\$823), and 5.5 percent for Asians (\$1,401). (See table 12.) The women’s-to-men’s earnings ratio varied by race and ethnicity; the ratio was higher among Blacks and Hispanics. For example, White women earned 83.0 percent as much as White men; Black women earned 90.7 percent as much as Black men; Asian women earned 79.2 percent as much as Asian men; and Hispanic women earned 85.8 percent as much as Hispanic men.

Among workers ages 25 years and older, those with less than a high school diploma had the largest over-the-year increase in median weekly earnings in comparison with other educational attainment groups. Earnings for workers with less than a high school diploma (\$682) rose by 8.9 percent from 2021 to 2022. (See table 12.)

Among the major occupational groups, people employed full time in management, professional, and related occupations had the highest median weekly earnings in 2022: \$1,726 for men and \$1,284 for women. As has historically been the case, men (\$767) and women (\$643) employed in service occupations earned the least among the major occupational groups in 2022. (See table 13.)

Table 13. Median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers, by occupation and sex, annual averages, 2021–2022

Occupation and sex	Number of workers (in thousands)		Median weekly earnings		
	2021	2022	2021	2022	Percent change, 2021–22
Total, 16 years and over	114,316	118,869	\$998	\$1,059	6.1
Management, professional, and related occupations	51,166	53,962	1,390	1,465	5.4
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	21,529	22,707	1,482	1,569	5.9
Professional and related occupations	29,637	31,255	1,335	1,392	4.3
Service occupations	14,630	15,468	644	697	8.2
Sales and office occupations	21,748	21,978	826	880	6.5
Sales and related occupations	9,281	9,170	887	941	6.1
Office and administrative support occupations	12,467	12,808	806	847	5.1
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	11,182	11,386	919	965	5.0
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	800	762	623	645	3.5
Construction and extraction occupations	6,171	6,406	904	943	4.3
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,211	4,218	1,017	1,043	2.6
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	15,590	16,076	774	821	6.1
Production occupations	7,107	7,352	809	862	6.6
Transportation and material moving occupations	8,483	8,724	738	796	7.9
Men, 16 years and over	62,928	65,554	1,097	1,154	5.2
Management, professional, and related occupations	24,561	26,229	1,609	1,726	7.3
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	11,231	12,079	1,672	1,772	6.0
Professional and related occupations	13,330	14,150	1,555	1,647	5.9
Service occupations	7,000	7,463	723	767	6.1
Sales and office occupations	8,677	8,741	970	1,019	5.1
Sales and related occupations	5,090	5,048	1,049	1,139	8.6
Office and administrative support occupations	3,587	3,693	899	933	3.8
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	10,635	10,823	930	979	5.3
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	651	582	637	661	3.8
Construction and extraction occupations	5,965	6,195	908	951	4.7
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,019	4,047	1,023	1,051	2.7
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	12,056	12,298	825	891	8.0
Production occupations	5,251	5,314	884	943	6.7
Transportation and material moving occupations	6,804	6,984	786	842	7.1
Women, 16 years and over	51,388	53,315	912	958	5.0
Management, professional, and related occupations	26,605	27,733	1,222	1,284	5.1
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	10,299	10,629	1,306	1,409	7.9
Professional and related occupations	16,306	17,104	1,167	1,229	5.3
Service occupations	7,630	8,005	598	643	7.5
Sales and office occupations	13,071	13,236	766	810	5.7
Sales and related occupations	4,191	4,122	720	783	8.8
Office and administrative support occupations	8,880	9,115	779	818	5.0
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	547	562	696	700	0.6
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	149	180	585	611	4.4
Construction and extraction occupations	207	211	720	796	10.6
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	192	171	836	861	3.0
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	3,535	3,778	638	694	8.8
Production occupations	1,856	2,038	653	700	7.2
Transportation and material-moving occupations	1,679	1,740	624	687	10.1
Note: Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.					

Summary

In 2022, the labor market continued to recover from the recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and several labor market measures returned to their prepandemic levels. Over the year, the national unemployment rate declined to 3.6 percent, which was down 0.6 percentage point from 2021. Total employment continued to expand; the employment–population ratio increased from the previous year, but the labor force participation rate changed little. The jobless rate declined for all major race and ethnicity groups. The number of people working part time for economic reasons also declined over the year. Median usual weekly earnings increased to \$1,059 in 2022; this was 6.1 percent higher than earnings in 2021, but the increase did not keep pace with inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index.

Appendix A: The CPS and the CES

BLS produces two monthly employment series obtained from two different surveys: an estimate of total nonfarm jobs, derived from the Current Employment Statistics (CES) survey, also called the establishment or payroll survey; and an estimate of total civilian employment, derived from the Current Population Survey (CPS), also called the household survey. The two surveys use different definitions of employment, as well as different survey and estimation methods. The CES survey is a survey of employers that provides a measure of the number of payroll jobs in nonfarm industries. The CPS is a survey of households that provides a measure of employed people ages 16 years and older in the civilian noninstitutional population.

Employment estimates from the CPS provide information about workers in both the agricultural and nonagricultural sectors and in all types of work arrangements: workers with wage and salary jobs (including employment in a private household), workers who are self-employed, and workers doing unpaid work for at least 15 hours per week in a business or farm operated by a family member. CES payroll employment estimates are restricted to nonagricultural wage and salary jobs and exclude private household workers. As a result, employment estimates from the CPS are higher than those from the CES survey. In the CPS, however, workers who hold multiple jobs (referred to as “multiple jobholders”) are counted only once, regardless of how many jobs these workers held during the survey reference period. By contrast, because the CES survey counts the number of jobs rather than the number of people, each nonfarm job is counted separately, even when two or more jobs are held by the same person.

The reference periods for the surveys also differ. In the CPS, the reference period is generally the calendar week that includes the 12th day of the month. In the CES survey, employers report the number of workers on their payrolls for the pay period that includes the 12th of the month. Because pay periods vary in length among employers and may be longer than 1 week, the CES employment estimates can reflect longer reference periods.

For more information on the two monthly employment measures, see “Comparing employment from the BLS household and payroll surveys,” Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, last modified February 3, 2023), [https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/ces\\_cps\\_trends.htm](https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/ces_cps_trends.htm).

Appendix B: Adjustments to population estimates for the CPS

Updated population controls for the CPS are introduced annually with the publication of January data in *The Employment Situation* news release. The change in population reflected in the estimates introduced in January 2022 is based on a blended 2020 population base, which combines population totals from the 2020 census and demographic characteristics from other sources. Consequently, data for 2022 are not strictly comparable to those for earlier years. For the analysis presented in this article, the effects of the updated population controls have been taken into account.

The adjustment increased the estimated size of the civilian noninstitutional population in December 2021 by 973,000, the civilian labor force by 1,530,000, employment by 1,471,000, and unemployment by 59,000. People not in the labor force decreased by 557,000. Although the adjustment did not affect the total unemployment rate, it did increase the labor force participation rate and the employment–population ratio, each by 0.3 percentage point. These increases were due mostly to an increase in the population in age groups that participate in the labor force at high rates (those ages 35 to 64) and a large decrease in the population ages 65 and older, whose members participate in the labor force at a low rate.

For additional information on the population adjustments and their effect on national labor force estimates, see “Adjustments to household survey population estimates in January 2022” (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, February 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/cps/population-control-adjustments-2022.pdf>.

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Notes

<sup>1</sup> For more information, see “Effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the Employment Situation news release and data” (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, last modified September 1, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/covid19/effects-of-covid-19-pandemic-and-response-on-the-employment-situation-news-release.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Although data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) are published monthly, the data analyzed in this article are seasonally adjusted quarterly averages, and all over-the-year changes are comparisons of fourth-quarter 2021 data with fourth-quarter 2022 data, unless noted otherwise. Comparisons to prepandemic levels refer to data for the fourth quarter of 2019.

<sup>3</sup> In the CPS, unemployed people are defined as those ages 16 and older who were not employed during the survey reference week, had actively searched for work during the 4 weeks prior to the survey, and were available for work. People who were on temporary layoff and available for work are counted as unemployed and do not need to have searched for work.

<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) produces two sets of national employment estimates each month from two different surveys: an estimate of total nonfarm jobs, derived from the Current Employment Statistics survey, also known as the establishment or payroll survey, and an estimate of total civilian employment, based on the CPS, also called the household survey. The two surveys use different definitions of employment, as well as different survey and estimation methods. For more information on the two monthly employment measures, see appendix A and appendix B of this article and “Comparing employment from the BLS household and payroll surveys,” Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, last modified February 3, 2023), [https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/ces\\_cps\\_trends.htm](https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/ces_cps_trends.htm).

<sup>5</sup> For more information, see Teresa Ghilarducci, “In the latest jobs report, older workers tell us a lot about the economy,” *Forbes*, November 4, 2022, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/teresaghilarducci/2022/11/04/mixed-unemployment-report-for-older-workers/?sh=610652967478>.

<sup>6</sup> The duration of joblessness is the length of time (through the current reference week) that people classified as unemployed have been looking for work. This measure refers to the duration of the current spell of unemployment, rather than to that of a completed spell. Data for 27 weeks or longer are seasonally adjusted. Data for 52 weeks or longer are not seasonally adjusted.

<sup>7</sup> The Current Population Survey collects data on the different reasons people are unemployed, including being on temporary layoff. Unemployed people on temporary layoff are those who (1) said they were laid off or were not at work during the survey reference week because of layoff (temporary or indefinite) or slack work/business conditions, (2) have been given a date to return or expect to be recalled within the next 6 months, and (3) could have returned to work if they had been recalled (except for their own temporary illness). Unlike other unemployed people, those on temporary layoff do not need to look for work to be classified as unemployed. Pay status is not a criterion to be unemployed on temporary layoff. People absent from work because of temporary layoff are classified as unemployed on temporary layoff, whether or not they are paid for the time they are off work.

<sup>8</sup> For more information, see Steven E. Haugen, “Measures of labor underutilization from the Current Population Survey,” Working Paper 424 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 2009), <https://www.bls.gov/osmr/research-papers/2009/pdf/ec090020.pdf>, and John E. Bregger and Steven E. Haugen, “BLS introduces new range of alternative unemployment measures,” *Monthly Labor Review*, October 1995, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/1995/10/art3full.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> For more information, see “Research series on labor force status flows from the Current Population Survey,” Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, last modified October 8, 2015), [www.bls.gov/cps/cps\\_flows.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cps/cps_flows.htm).

<sup>10</sup> For more information, see Monica D. Castillo, “Persons outside the labor force who want a job,” *Monthly Labor Review*, July 1998, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/1998/07/art3full.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> People not in the labor force who “want a job” is a measure of people who reported wanting a job without having necessarily looked for one; this group includes all people who responded to the question “Do you currently want a job, either full or part time?” with the answer “Yes or maybe, it depends.”



<sup>12</sup> See Ron Wirtz, “Why is there a labor shortage? Ask workers” (Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, February 24, 2023), <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2023/why-is-there-a-labor-shortage-ask-workers>.

<sup>13</sup> For more information, see Jerome H. Powell, “Inflation and the Labor Market” (Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, November 30, 2022), <https://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/speech/powell20221130a.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> Since the late 1940s, data on self-employment have been collected regularly as part of the CPS. In addition to classifying employment by occupation and industry, the CPS subdivides the employed by “class of worker”—that is, wage and salary employees, self-employed, and unpaid family workers. In 1967, it became possible to identify another group of self-employed workers: those who reported in the CPS they were self-employed and had incorporated their businesses. Individuals choose to incorporate their businesses for several reasons, such as legal and tax considerations. Since 1967, the estimates of self-employment regularly published by BLS have included only the unincorporated self-employed workers. Although it is possible to identify the incorporated self-employed workers separately, these individuals are counted as wage and salary workers in the statistics because, from a legal standpoint, they are employees of their own businesses. For more information, see Steven F. Hipple and Laurel A. Hammond, “Self-employment in the United States,” *Spotlight on Statistics* (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 2016), <https://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2016/self-employment-in-the-united-states/>.

<sup>15</sup> BLS produces measures of people at work part time for economic and noneconomic reasons from the CPS. People at work part time for economic reasons, also referred to as involuntary part-time workers, include those who gave an economic reason when asked why they worked 1 to 34 hours during the reference week (the week including the 12th of the month). Economic reasons include the following: slack work, unfavorable business conditions, inability to find full-time work, and seasonal declines in demand. People who usually work part time and were at work part time during the reference week must indicate that they wanted and were available for full-time work to be classified as part time for economic reasons.

<sup>16</sup> In the CPS, veterans are defined as men and women ages 18 and over who previously served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces and who were civilians at the time the survey was conducted. Veterans are categorized as having served in the following periods of service: (1) Gulf War-era II (September 2001 to the present), (2) Gulf War-era I (August 1990 to August 2001), (3) World War II (December 1941 to December 1946), (4) Korean War (July 1950 to January 1955), (5) Vietnam-era (August 1964 to April 1975), and (6) other service period (all other periods). Veterans who served in more than one wartime period are classified into only the most recent period. Veterans who served in both a wartime period and any other service period are classified in the wartime period.

<sup>17</sup> Labor force statistics for people with and without a disability are available beginning in June 2008, the first month disability questions were added to the basic CPS.

<sup>18</sup> Foreign-born people are people who reside in the United States but were born outside the country or outside one of its outlying areas, such as Puerto Rico or Guam, to parents who were not U.S. citizens. Foreign-born people include legally admitted immigrants; refugees; temporary residents, such as students and temporary workers; and undocumented immigrants.

<sup>19</sup> Data are annual averages and are in current dollars. The CPS data on earnings represent earnings before taxes and other deductions and include any overtime pay, commissions, or tips typically received. For multiple jobholders, only earnings received at their main job are included. Earnings reported on a nonweekly basis are converted to a weekly equivalent. The term “usual” reflects each survey respondent’s understanding of the term. If the respondent asks for a definition of “usual,” interviewers are instructed to define the term as more than half the weeks worked during the past 4 or 5 months. Wage and salary workers are defined as those who receive wages, salaries, commissions, tips, payment in kind, or piece rates. This definition includes both public- and private-sector employees but excludes all self-employed people, regardless of whether their businesses are incorporated or unincorporated. Earnings comparisons made in this article are on a broad level and do not control for many factors that help explain earnings differences, such as job skills and responsibilities, work experience, and specialization. Finally, full-time workers are those who usually work 35 hours or more per week at their main job.

<sup>20</sup> The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) is used to convert current dollars to constant (1982-84) dollars.



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