A profile of the working poor, 2017

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About 39.7 million people, or 12.3 percent of the nation's population, lived below the official poverty level in 2017, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.[1] (See the technical notes section for examples of poverty levels.) Although the poor were primarily adults who had not participated in the labor force during the year and children, 6.9 million individuals were among the "working poor" in 2017, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; this measure was down from 7.6 million in 2016. The working poor are people who spent at least 27 weeks in the labor force (that is, working or looking for work) but whose incomes still fell below the official poverty level. In 2017, the working-poor rate—the ratio of the working poor to all individuals in the labor force for at least 27 weeks—was 4.5 percent, 0.4 percentage point lower than the previous year's figure. (See table A, chart 1, and table 1.)

Following are some highlights from the 2017 data:

- Full-time workers continued to be much less likely to be among the working poor than were part-time workers. Among persons in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 2.9 percent of those usually employed full time were classified as working poor, compared with 10.9 percent of part-time workers. (See table 1.)
- Women were more likely than men to be among the working poor. In addition, Blacks or African Americans and Hispanics or Latinos continued to be more than twice as likely as Whites and Asians to be among the working poor.[2] (See table 2.)
- The likelihood of being classified as working poor diminishes as workers attain higher levels of education. Among those with less than a high school diploma, 13.7 percent of those who were in the labor force for at least 27 weeks were classified as working poor, compared with 1.5 percent of those with a bachelor's degree or higher. (See table 3.)
- Individuals who were employed in service occupations continued to be more likely to be among the working poor than those employed in other major occupational groups. (See table 4.)
- Among families with at least one member in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, those with children under 18 years old were over four times as likely as those without children to live in poverty. Families maintained by women were more than twice as likely as families maintained by men to be living below the poverty level. (See table 5.)

Table A. Poverty status of people and primary families in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 2007–17 (Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017

See footnotes at end of table.

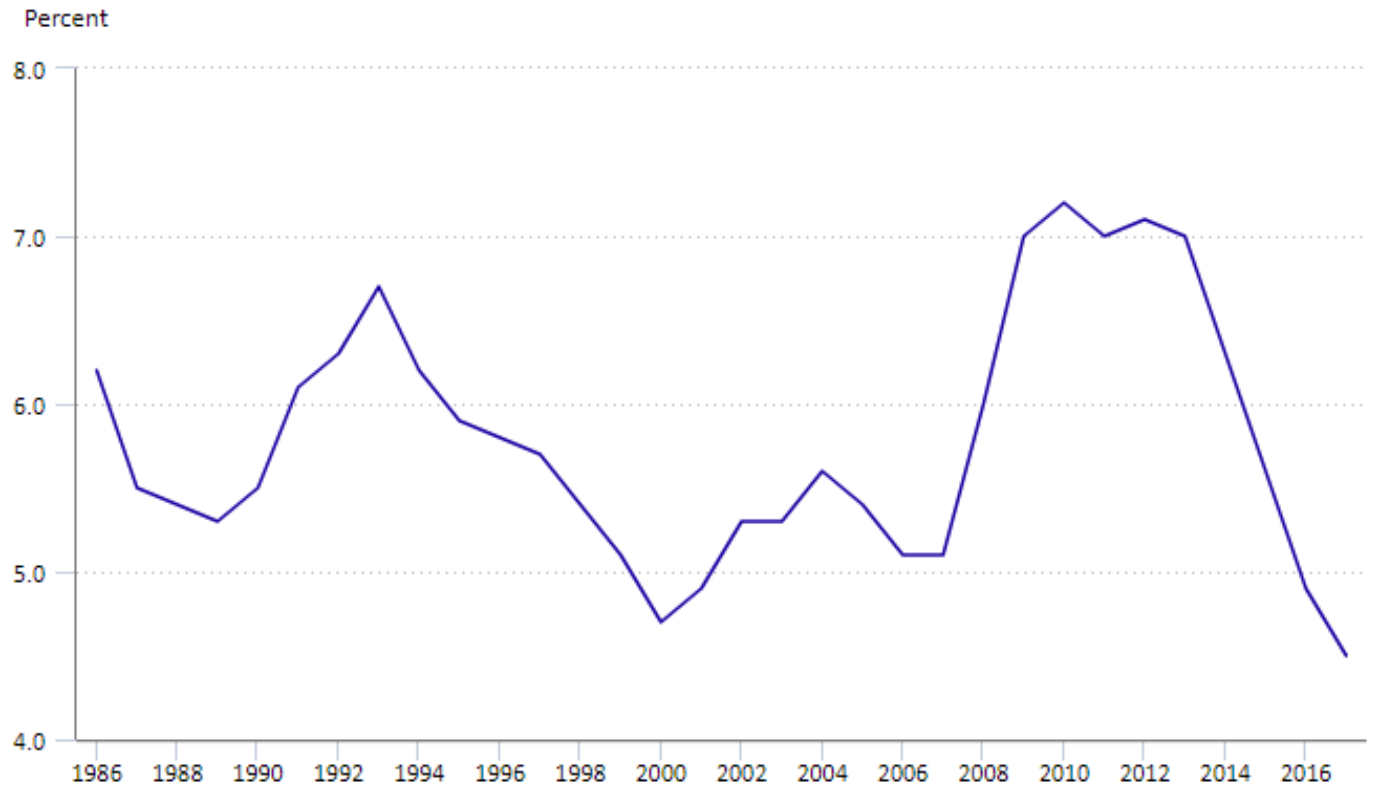
Table A. Poverty status of people and primary families in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 2007–17 (Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total in the labor force[1]	146,567	147,838	147,902	146,859	147,475	148,735	149,483	150,319	152,230	153,364	154,762
In poverty	7,521	8,883	10,391	10,512	10,382	10,612	10,450	9,487	8,560	7,572	6,946
Working poor rate	5.1	6.0	7.0	7.2	7.0	7.1	7.0	6.3	5.6	4.9	4.5
Unrelated individuals	33,226	32,785	33,798	34,099	33,731	34,810	35,061	35,018	35,953	35,789	36,959
In poverty	2,558	3,275	3,947	3,947	3,621	3,851	4,141	3,395	3,137	2,792	2,524
Working poor rate	7.7	10.0	11.7	11.6	10.7	11.1	11.8	9.7	8.7	7.8	6.8
Primary families[2]	65,158	65,907	65,467	64,931	66,225	66,541	66,462	66,732	67,193	67,628	67,588
In poverty	4,169	4,538	5,193	5,269	5,469	5,478	5,137	5,108	4,607	4,082	3,854
Working poor rate	6.4	6.9	7.9	8.1	8.3	8.2	7.7	7.7	6.9	6.0	5.7

[1]Includes individuals in families, not shown separately.
[2]Primary families with at least one member in the labor force for more than half the year.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS).

This report presents data on the relationship between labor force activity and poverty status in 2017 for workers and their families. These data were collected in the 2018 Annual Social and Economic Supplement of the Current Population Survey. (For a detailed description of the source of the data and an explanation of the concepts and definitions used in the report, see the technical notes.) The specific income thresholds used to determine people's poverty status vary, depending on whether the individuals are living with family members, living alone, or living with nonrelatives. For people living with family members, the poverty threshold is determined by their family's total income; for individuals not living in families, their personal income is used as the determinant.

Chart 1. Working-poor rate of people in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 1986–2017

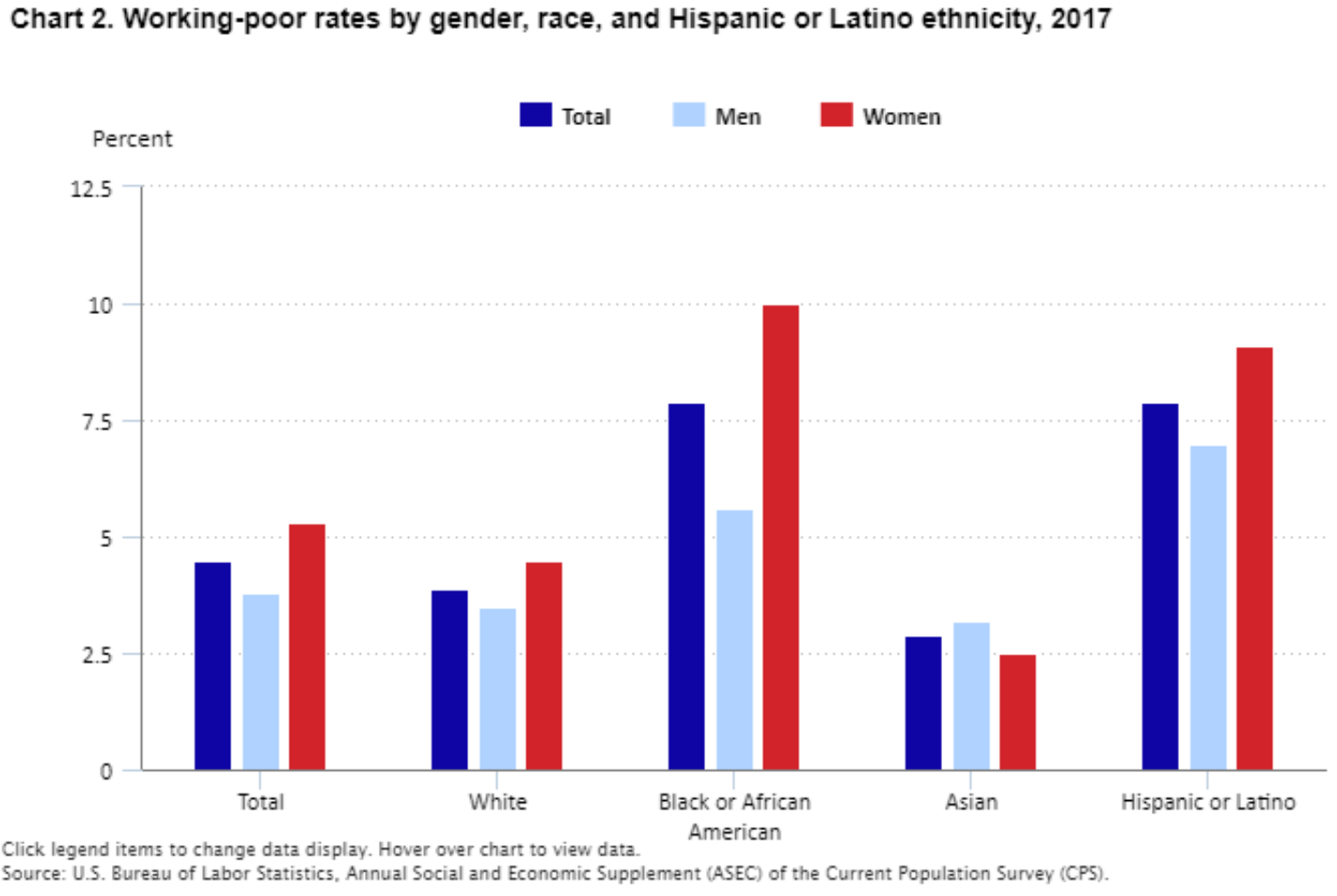


Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS).

Demographic characteristics

Among those who were in the labor force for 27 weeks or more in 2017, the number of women classified as working poor (3.8 million) was higher than that of men (3.1 million). The working-poor rate also continued to be higher for women (5.3 percent) than for men (3.8 percent). The working-poor rates for both women and men were down from a year earlier (table 2).

Blacks and Hispanics were more than twice as likely as Whites and Asians to be among the working poor. In 2017, the working-poor rate for both Blacks and Hispanics was 7.9 percent, compared with 3.9 percent for Whites and 2.9 percent for Asians (table 2 and chart 2).



Among Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics, the working-poor rate was higher for women than for men. The rates for White women and White men who spent at least 27 weeks in the labor force were 4.5 percent and 3.5 percent, respectively. The rate for Black women was 10.0 percent, compared with 5.6 percent for Black men. The working-poor rate for Hispanic women was 9.1 percent, while the rate for Hispanic men was 7.0 percent. Among Asians, the rates for women and men were little different from each other at 2.5 percent and 3.2 percent, respectively.

Young workers are more likely to be poor than are workers in older age groups, in part because earnings are lower for young workers and the unemployment rate for young workers is higher. Among youths who were in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 8.4 percent of 16- to 19-year-olds and 8.5 percent of 20- to 24-year-olds were living in poverty in 2017. Those rates were higher than the rates for workers ages 25 to 34 (5.7 percent) and 35 to 44 (5.0 percent). Workers ages 45 to 54, 55 to 64, and 65 and older had lower working-poor rates—3.1 percent, 2.6 percent, and 1.5 percent, respectively—than did those in younger age groups (table 2).

Educational attainment

Achieving higher levels of education reduces the incidence of living in poverty. Individuals who complete more years of education usually have greater access to higher paying jobs—such as management, professional, and related occupations—than those with fewer years of education. Among people in the labor force for 27 weeks or more in 2017, those with less than a high school diploma had the highest working-poor rate, at 13.7 percent, while those with a bachelor's degree or higher had the lowest, at 1.5 percent (table 3).

In 2017, at all levels of educational attainment except for bachelor's degree or higher, women were more likely than men to be among the working poor. Among those with a bachelor's degree or higher, men and women were equally likely to be classified as working poor (1.5 percent). Blacks and Hispanics generally were more likely to be among the working poor than were Whites and Asians with the same educational attainment.

Occupation

The likelihood of being among the working poor varies widely by occupation. Workers in occupations requiring higher education and characterized by relatively high earnings—such as management, professional, and related occupations—were least likely to be classified as working poor. For example, 1.4 percent of those in management, professional, and related occupations were among the working poor in 2017. By contrast, individuals employed in occupations that typically do not require high levels of education and that are characterized by relatively low earnings were more likely to be among the working poor. For instance, 9.0 percent of service workers who were in the labor force for at least 27 weeks were classified as working poor in 2017. The 2.3 million working poor employed in service occupations accounted for 36 percent of all those classified as working poor. Among those employed in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations, 6.0 percent were classified as working poor (table 4).

Families

In 2017, 3.9 million families were living below the poverty level despite having at least one member in the labor force for half the year or more. This figure was down from 4.1 million in 2016. Among families with only one member in the labor force for at least 27 weeks in 2017, married-couple families were less likely to be living below the poverty level, at 7.1 percent, than were families maintained by women, at 21.5 percent, or families maintained by men, at 10.9 percent (table 5).

Among families with at least one member in the labor force for more than half the year, those with children in the household were much more likely to live below the poverty level than those without children. The proportion of families with children under age 18 who lived in poverty was 9.2 percent, compared with 2.0 percent for families without children. Among families with children under 18, the working-poor rate for those maintained by women (22.4 percent) was higher than that for those maintained by men (10.1 percent). Married-couple families with children under 18 had a working-poor rate of 5.0 percent in 2017.

Unrelated individuals

The "unrelated individuals" category includes individuals who live by themselves or with others not related to them. Of the 37.0 million unrelated individuals who were in the labor force for half the year or longer, 2.5 million lived below the poverty level in 2017, down from 2.8 million a year earlier. The working-poor rate for unrelated individuals was 6.8 percent, a decrease of 1.0 percentage point from last year's figure. (See table 6.)

Within the group of unrelated individuals, teenagers continued to be the most likely to be among the working poor. In 2017, 30.9 percent of teens who were in the labor force for 27 weeks or more and who lived on their own or with others not related to them lived below the poverty level. Overall, the working-poor rate for men living alone or with nonrelatives was 6.2 percent, and the rate for women was 7.5 percent. The working-poor rates for unrelated individuals were higher for Hispanics and Blacks (9.9 percent and 9.6 percent, respectively) than for Whites (6.2 percent), and Asians (4.6 percent). (See table 7.)

Of the 2.5 million unrelated individuals considered to be among the working poor in 2017, about 3 out of 5 lived with others. These individuals had a higher working-poor rate than individuals who lived alone. Many unrelated individuals living below the poverty level may live with others out of necessity. By contrast, many of those who live alone do so because they have sufficient income to support themselves. Unrelated individuals' poverty status, however, is determined by each person's resources. The pooling of resources and sharing of living expenses may permit some individuals in this category—who are technically classified as poor—to live at a higher standard than they would have if they lived alone.

Labor market problems

As noted earlier, people who usually work full time are less likely to live in poverty than are those who work part time, yet there remains a sizable group of full-time workers who live below the poverty threshold. Among those who participated in the labor force for 27 weeks or more and usually worked in full-time wage and salary jobs, 3.3 million, or 2.7 percent, were classified as working poor in 2017—little different than the 3.4-million figure a year earlier. (See table 8).

There are three major labor market problems that can hinder a worker's ability to earn an income that is above the poverty threshold: low earnings, periods of unemployment, and involuntary part-time employment. (See the technical notes section for detailed definitions.)

In 2017, 80 percent of the working poor who usually work full time experienced at least one of the major labor market problems. Low earnings continued to be the most common problem, with 67 percent subject to low earnings, either as the only problem or in combination with other labor market problems. About 28 percent experienced unemployment as the main labor market problem or in conjunction with other problems. Three percent of the working poor experienced all three problems: low earnings, unemployment, and involuntary part-time employment (table 8).

Some 659,000, or 20 percent, of the working poor who usually worked full time did not experience any of the three primary labor market problems in 2017. Their classification as working poor may be explained by other factors, including short-term employment, some weeks of voluntary part-time work, or a family structure that increases the risk of poverty.

Notes

(1) "Income and Poverty in the United States: 2017," *Current Population Reports*, P60-263 (U.S. Census Bureau, September 2018), table 3, https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2018/demo/p60-263.pdf.

(2) People of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity may be of any race.

Statistical Tables

Table 1. People in the labor force: poverty status and work experience by weeks in the labor force, 2017 (Numbers in thousands)

See footnotes at end of table.

Poverty status and work experience	Total in labor force	27 weeks or more in labor force	
		Total	50 to 52 weeks
Total			
Total in the labor force	167,538	154,762	141,425
Did not work during the year	2,375	1,067	907
Worked during the year	165,163	153,694	140,519
Usual full-time workers	132,784	128,271	120,513
Usual part-time workers	32,379	25,424	20,006
Involuntary part-time workers	6,144	5,282	4,446
Voluntary part-time workers	26,235	20,141	15,560
At or above poverty level			
Total in the labor force	158,195	147,816	135,730
Did not work during the year	1,529	661	551
Worked during the year	156,666	147,155	135,178
Usual full-time workers	128,244	124,494	117,309
Usual part-time workers	28,422	22,661	17,869
Involuntary part-time workers	4,916	4,311	3,631
Voluntary part-time workers	23,506	18,350	14,238
Below poverty level			
Total in the labor force	9,343	6,946	5,696
Did not work during the year	846	407	355
Worked during the year	8,497	6,539	5,340
Usual full-time workers	4,540	3,777	3,204
Usual part-time workers	3,957	2,762	2,137
Involuntary part-time workers	1,228	971	816
Voluntary part-time workers	2,729	1,791	1,321
Rate(1)			
Total in the labor force	5.6	4.5	4.0
Did not work during the year	35.6	38.1	39.2
Worked during the year	5.1	4.3	3.8

Table 1. People in the labor force: poverty status and work experience by weeks in the labor force, 2017 (Numbers in thousands)

Poverty status and work experience	Total in labor force	27 weeks or more in labor force	
		Total	50 to 52 weeks
Usual full-time workers	3.4	2.9	2.7
Usual part-time workers	12.2	10.9	10.7
Involuntary part-time workers	20.0	18.4	18.3
Voluntary part-time workers	10.4	8.9	8.5

(1)Number below the poverty level as a percent of the total in the labor force.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS).

Table 2. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more: poverty status by age, gender, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2017 (Numbers in thousands)

Age and gender	Total					Below poverty level					Race[1]				
	Total	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino	Total	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino	Total	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino
See footnotes at end of table.															
Total, 16 years and older	154,762	120,750	19,225	9,699	26,371	6,946	4,754	1,518	279	2,082	4.5	3.9	7.9	2.9	7.9
16 to 19 years	3,620	2,851	462	119	769	305	196	74	5	89	8.4	6.9	16.1	4.3	11.6
20 to 24 years	13,170	9,883	1,951	591	2,890	1,115	672	325	27	241	8.5	6.8	16.6	4.6	8.3
25 to 34 years	35,065	26,235	4,958	2,420	6,968	1,997	1,324	510	65	603	5.7	5.0	10.3	2.7	8.7
35 to 44 years	32,662	24,740	4,271	2,519	6,539	1,646	1,170	309	68	645	5.0	4.7	7.2	2.7	9.9
45 to 54 years	32,769	25,812	3,930	2,136	5,354	1,023	744	166	59	329	3.1	2.9	4.2	2.8	6.1
55 to 64 years	27,190	22,359	2,845	1,458	3,061	709	533	108	51	147	2.6	2.4	3.8	3.5	4.8
65 years and older	10,286	8,870	808	455	791	152	116	27	4	27	1.5	1.3	3.3	0.9	3.4
Men, 16 years and older	82,562	65,721	9,047	5,202	15,085	3,132	2,291	503	166	1,051	3.8	3.5	5.6	3.2	7.0
16 to 19 years	1,772	1,397	212	67	377	114	74	25	3	42	6.4	5.3	11.6	-	11.1
20 to 24 years	6,842	5,193	965	317	1,592	475	292	119	16	109	6.9	5.6	12.3	5.0	6.8
25 to 34 years	18,987	14,509	2,366	1,349	4,038	824	614	126	44	290	4.3	4.2	5.3	3.3	7.2
35 to 44 years	17,740	13,788	2,003	1,366	3,837	787	602	107	38	352	4.4	4.4	5.3	2.8	9.2
45 to 54 years	17,230	13,889	1,799	1,100	3,048	496	363	76	35	165	2.9	2.6	4.2	3.2	5.4
55 to 64 years	14,182	11,829	1,330	764	1,735	363	287	41	27	83	2.6	2.4	3.1	3.6	4.8
65 years and older	5,810	5,116	371	240	458	74	58	10	2	9	1.3	1.1	2.6	0.9	2.0
Women, 16 years and older	72,199	55,030	10,178	4,497	11,286	3,814	2,463	1,015	113	1,032	5.3	4.5	10.0	2.5	9.1
16 to 19 years	1,848	1,454	250	52	392	191	122	50	2	47	10.3	8.4	19.9	-	12.1
20 to 24 years	6,328	4,690	986	274	1,298	640	379	205	11	132	10.1	8.1	20.8	4.1	10.2
25 to 34 years	16,078	11,726	2,591	1,072	2,930	1,173	710	384	21	313	7.3	6.1	14.8	1.9	10.7
35 to 44 years	14,922	10,952	2,268	1,154	2,702	859	567	202	30	293	5.8	5.2	8.9	2.6	10.8
45 to 54 years	15,539	11,923	2,131	1,036	2,306	527	381	90	24	164	3.4	3.2	4.2	2.3	7.1
55 to 64 years	13,008	10,530	1,515	695	1,326	347	245	67	23	64	2.7	2.3	4.4	3.3	4.9

Table 2. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more: poverty status by age, gender, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2017 (Numbers in thousands)

Age and gender	Total					Below poverty level					Race[1]				
	Total	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino	Total	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino	Total	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino
65 years and older	4,476	3,755	437	215	332	78	58	17	2	18	1.7	1.6	3.9	0.9	5.4

[1]Number below the poverty level as a percent of the total in the labor force for 27 weeks or more. Note: Estimates for the race groups shown (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. Dash represents zero, rounds to zero, or indicates that base is less than 80,000.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS).

Table 3. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more: poverty status by educational attainment, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and gender, 2017 (Numbers in thousands)

See footnotes at end of table.

Educational attainment, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total	Men	Women	Below poverty level			Rate[1]		
				Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Total, 16 years and older	154,762	82,562	72,199	6,946	3,132	3,814	4.5	3.8	5.3
Less than a high school diploma	12,013	7,488	4,525	1,640	925	715	13.7	12.4	15.8
Less than 1 year of high school	3,792	2,496	1,296	548	351	197	14.4	14.0	15.2
1–3 years of high school	6,398	3,822	2,576	901	457	444	14.1	12.0	17.2
4 years of high school, no diploma	1,823	1,169	654	192	117	75	10.5	10.0	11.4
High school graduates, no college[2]	40,550	24,017	16,534	2,531	1,076	1,455	6.2	4.5	8.8
Some college or associate's degree	43,673	21,789	21,885	1,888	690	1,198	4.3	3.2	5.5
Some college, no degree	27,236	14,142	13,094	1,370	534	836	5.0	3.8	6.4
Associate's degree	16,437	7,647	8,790	518	156	362	3.2	2.0	4.1
Bachelor's degree and higher[3]	58,524	29,269	29,255	886	441	445	1.5	1.5	1.5
White, 16 years and older	120,750	65,721	55,030	4,754	2,291	2,463	3.9	3.5	4.5
Less than a high school diploma	9,482	6,164	3,318	1,185	715	471	12.5	11.6	14.2
Less than 1 year of high school	3,150	2,170	980	442	291	150	14.0	13.4	15.3
1–3 years of high school	4,992	3,097	1,895	614	328	286	12.3	10.6	15.1
4 years of high school, no diploma	1,339	896	443	130	95	34	9.7	10.6	7.8
High school graduates, no college[2]	31,517	19,023	12,493	1,697	775	922	5.4	4.1	7.4
Some college or associate's degree	33,806	17,287	16,519	1,216	473	743	3.6	2.7	4.5
Some college, no degree	20,737	11,051	9,686	863	352	511	4.2	3.2	5.3
Associate's degree	13,069	6,236	6,833	353	121	232	2.7	1.9	3.4
Bachelor's degree and higher[3]	45,946	23,247	22,699	655	328	327	1.4	1.4	1.4
Black or African American, 16 years and older	19,225	9,047	10,178	1,518	503	1,015	7.9	5.6	10.0
Less than a high school diploma	1,344	676	668	296	121	174	22.0	17.9	26.1
Less than 1 year of high school	220	94	126	36	14	22	16.4	15.0	17.5
1–3 years of high school	801	413	388	214	92	123	26.8	22.3	31.6
4 years of high school, no diploma	323	169	154	45	15	30	14.0	9.0	19.4
High school graduates, no college[2]	6,026	3,284	2,742	609	185	424	10.1	5.6	15.4
Some college or associate's degree	6,402	2,808	3,595	489	145	343	7.6	5.2	9.5
Some college, no degree	4,283	1,977	2,306	380	126	254	8.9	6.4	11.0
Associate's degree	2,119	831	1,288	109	19	89	5.1	2.3	6.9

Table 3. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more: poverty status by educational attainment, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and gender, 2017 (Numbers in thousands)

Educational attainment, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total	Men	Women	Below poverty level			Rate[1]		
				Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Bachelor's degree and higher[3]	5,453	2,279	3,174	124	51	74	2.3	2.2	2.3
Asian, 16 years and older	9,699	5,202	4,497	279	166	113	2.9	3.2	2.5
Less than a high school diploma	564	279	285	59	34	25	10.4	12.2	8.6
Less than 1 year of high school	236	109	127	38	22	16	16.1	20.4	12.5
1–3 years of high school	238	114	124	16	8	8	6.7	7.2	6.2
4 years of high school, no diploma	91	56	35	5	4	1	5.3	-	-
High school graduates, no college[2]	1,551	870	681	86	52	34	5.6	6.0	5.1
Some college or associate's degree	1,727	872	855	56	28	28	3.3	3.2	3.3
Some college, no degree	1,041	551	490	33	19	14	3.2	3.5	2.8
Associate's degree	687	321	365	23	9	14	3.4	2.8	3.9
Bachelor's degree and higher[3]	5,857	3,181	2,676	78	52	26	1.3	1.6	1.0
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 16 years and older	26,371	15,085	11,286	2,082	1,051	1,032	7.9	7.0	9.1
Less than a high school diploma	5,987	4,008	1,979	893	553	340	14.9	13.8	17.2
Less than 1 year of high school	2,851	1,954	897	405	260	145	14.2	13.3	16.2
1–3 years of high school	2,428	1,542	887	401	225	177	16.5	14.6	20.0
4 years of high school, no diploma	708	513	195	87	69	18	12.3	13.5	9.3
High school graduates, no college[2]	8,411	5,164	3,247	676	322	354	8.0	6.2	10.9
Some college or associate's degree	7,003	3,512	3,491	368	112	256	5.3	3.2	7.3
Some college, no degree	4,695	2,448	2,246	277	85	191	5.9	3.5	8.5
Associate's degree	2,309	1,064	1,244	91	27	64	4.0	2.5	5.2
Bachelor's degree and higher[3]	4,970	2,401	2,569	145	63	82	2.9	2.6	3.2

[1]Number below the poverty level as a percent of the total in the labor force for 27 weeks or more.
[2]Includes people with a high school diploma or equivalent.
[3]Includes people with bachelor's, master's, professional, and doctoral degrees.
Note: Estimates for the race groups shown (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. Dash represents zero, rounds to zero, or indicates that base is less than 80,000.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS).

Table 4. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more who worked during the year: poverty status by occupation of longest job held, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and gender, 2017 (Numbers in thousands)

Occupation, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total	Men	Women	Below poverty level			Rate[1]		
				Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
See footnotes at end of table.									
Total, 16 years and older[2]	153,694	81,945	71,749	6,539	2,911	3,628	4.3	3.6	5.1
Management, professional, and related occupations	61,894	29,947	31,948	892	387	505	1.4	1.3	1.6
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	25,723	14,205	11,518	267	156	111	1.0	1.1	1.0
Professional and related occupations	36,171	15,742	20,429	625	232	394	1.7	1.5	1.9
Service occupations	25,902	11,160	14,742	2,341	713	1,628	9.0	6.4	11.0
Sales and office occupations	32,901	12,929	19,972	1,446	394	1,052	4.4	3.0	5.3
Sales and related occupations	15,418	7,885	7,534	880	253	627	5.7	3.2	8.3
Office and administrative support occupations	17,482	5,044	12,438	566	141	425	3.2	2.8	3.4
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	14,332	13,574	758	860	775	85	6.0	5.7	11.2
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	1,181	864	317	115	66	49	9.7	7.7	15.4
Construction and extraction occupations	8,220	7,982	238	584	553	31	7.1	6.9	12.8
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,931	4,728	203	161	155	6	3.3	3.3	2.9
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	18,579	14,261	4,318	997	642	355	5.4	4.5	8.2
Production occupations	8,681	6,097	2,583	420	222	199	4.8	3.6	7.7
Transportation and material-moving occupations	9,898	8,164	1,734	577	420	157	5.8	5.1	9.0
White, 16 years and older[2]	120,135	65,385	54,750	4,529	2,172	2,358	3.8	3.3	4.3
Management, professional, and related occupations	49,277	24,176	25,101	645	286	359	1.3	1.2	1.4
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	21,233	12,026	9,207	213	126	87	1.0	1.0	0.9
Professional and related occupations	28,044	12,149	15,895	432	160	272	1.5	1.3	1.7
Service occupations	18,634	8,168	10,467	1,570	511	1,059	8.4	6.3	10.1
Sales and office occupations	25,931	10,327	15,604	932	271	661	3.6	2.6	4.2
Sales and related occupations	12,417	6,538	5,879	553	175	378	4.5	2.7	6.4
Office and administrative support occupations	13,514	3,788	9,725	378	96	282	2.8	2.5	2.9
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	12,440	11,805	635	720	653	67	5.8	5.5	10.6
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	1,071	805	266	96	57	39	9.0	7.1	14.6
Construction and extraction occupations	7,184	6,969	215	492	466	26	6.9	6.7	12.1
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,184	4,031	153	132	130	2	3.2	3.2	1.4
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	13,790	10,850	2,940	663	450	212	4.8	4.1	7.2
Production occupations	6,624	4,862	1,763	253	144	109	3.8	3.0	6.2

Table 4. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more who worked during the year: poverty status by occupation of longest job held, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and gender, 2017 (Numbers in thousands)

Occupation, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total	Men	Women	Below poverty level			Rate[1]		
				Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Transportation and material-moving occupations	7,165	5,988	1,177	409	306	104	5.7	5.1	8.8
Black or African American, 16 years and older[2]	18,873	8,833	10,040	1,357	417	940	7.2	4.7	9.4
Management, professional, and related occupations	5,934	2,258	3,676	142	34	108	2.4	1.5	2.9
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	2,129	943	1,186	27	5	22	1.3	0.5	1.9
Professional and related occupations	3,806	1,316	2,490	115	29	86	3.0	2.2	3.4
Service occupations	4,567	1,835	2,732	556	127	429	12.2	6.9	15.7
Sales and office occupations	4,181	1,510	2,671	368	86	282	8.8	5.7	10.6
Sales and related occupations	1,657	686	971	228	54	174	13.8	7.9	17.9
Office and administrative support occupations	2,525	824	1,700	140	32	108	5.5	3.8	6.4
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	1,082	1,013	69	71	59	13	6.6	5.8	-
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	34	14	19	9	3	6	-	-	-
Construction and extraction occupations	582	571	10	42	39	3	7.2	6.9	-
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	467	428	39	20	16	4	4.3	3.8	-
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	3,088	2,205	884	218	111	106	7.0	5.1	12.0
Production occupations	1,194	721	473	110	40	70	9.2	5.6	14.7
Transportation and material-moving occupations	1,894	1,484	411	107	71	36	5.7	4.8	8.9
Asian, 16 years and older[2]	9,653	5,175	4,479	275	164	112	2.9	3.2	2.5
Management, professional, and related occupations	5,122	2,820	2,301	61	47	14	1.2	1.7	0.6
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	1,726	933	792	20	18	2	1.2	2.0	0.2
Professional and related occupations	3,396	1,887	1,509	41	29	12	1.2	1.5	0.8
Service occupations	1,550	616	934	98	42	57	6.3	6.8	6.1
Sales and office occupations	1,639	705	933	41	16	25	2.5	2.2	2.7
Sales and related occupations	836	443	393	30	12	18	3.6	2.7	4.6
Office and administrative support occupations	802	262	540	11	4	7	1.3	1.4	1.3
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	361	333	28	20	18	2	5.5	5.4	-
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	39	20	20	3	1	2	-	-	-
Construction and extraction occupations	162	156	6	15	15	-	9.3	9.6	-
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	160	157	3	2	2	-	1.3	1.3	-
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	981	698	282	55	41	14	5.6	5.9	4.8
Production occupations	507	290	217	20	12	8	3.9	4.1	3.5

Table 4. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more who worked during the year: poverty status by occupation of longest job held, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and gender, 2017 (Numbers in thousands)

Occupation, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total	Men	Women	Below poverty level			Rate[1]		
				Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Transportation and material-moving occupations	474	409	65	35	29	6	7.5	7.2	-
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 16 years and older[2]	26,205	14,998	11,207	2,019	1,025	994	7.7	6.8	8.9
Management, professional, and related occupations	5,939	2,815	3,124	162	65	97	2.7	2.3	3.1
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	2,449	1,338	1,111	33	19	14	1.3	1.4	1.3
Professional and related occupations	3,490	1,477	2,013	129	46	83	3.7	3.1	4.1
Service occupations	6,125	2,714	3,411	737	236	501	12.0	8.7	14.7
Sales and office occupations	5,325	2,049	3,276	320	77	243	6.0	3.7	7.4
Sales and related occupations	2,392	1,104	1,289	195	48	147	8.2	4.3	11.4
Office and administrative support occupations	2,932	946	1,987	124	29	95	4.2	3.1	4.8
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	4,407	4,155	252	465	429	36	10.6	10.3	14.4
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	527	372	156	61	33	28	11.6	9.0	17.9
Construction and extraction occupations	2,884	2,816	68	336	330	6	11.7	11.7	-
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	995	967	28	68	66	2	6.8	6.8	-
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	4,398	3,253	1,145	335	219	117	7.6	6.7	10.2
Production occupations	2,079	1,353	726	149	81	67	7.2	6.0	9.3
Transportation and material-moving occupations	2,319	1,900	419	187	137	49	8.1	7.2	11.8

[1]Number below the poverty level as a percent of the total in the labor force for 27 weeks or more who worked during the year.
[2]Estimates for the occupational groups do not sum to totals because data includes the long-term unemployed with no previous work experience and a small number of people whose last job was in the Armed Forces.
Note: Estimates for the race groups shown (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. Dash represents zero, rounds to zero, or indicates that base is less than 80,000.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS).

Table 5. Primary families: poverty status, presence of related children, and work experience of family members in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 2017 (Numbers in thousands)

See footnotes at end of table.

Characteristic	Total families	At or above poverty level	Below poverty level	Rate[1]
Total primary families	67,588	63,734	3,854	5.7
With related children under 18 years	34,759	31,547	3,212	9.2
Without children	32,829	32,187	642	2.0
With one member in the labor force	29,212	25,803	3,410	11.7
With two or more members in the labor force	38,376	37,932	444	1.2
With two members	31,792	31,372	420	1.3
With three or more members	6,584	6,560	24	0.4
Married-couple families[2]	49,945	48,422	1,523	3.0
With related children under 18 years	24,275	23,063	1,212	5.0
Without children	25,670	25,359	311	1.2
With one member in the labor force	17,497	16,253	1,243	7.1
Husband	12,463	11,489	973	7.8
Wife	4,326	4,100	226	5.2
Relative	708	664	44	6.2
With two or more members in the labor force	32,448	32,169	280	0.9
With two members	27,210	26,942	268	1.0
With three or more members	5,239	5,227	12	0.2
Families maintained by women[3]	12,140	10,199	1,941	16.0
With related children under 18 years	7,665	5,951	1,714	22.4
Without children	4,474	4,247	227	5.1
With one member in the labor force	8,368	6,567	1,801	21.5
Householder	6,734	5,170	1,564	23.2
Relative	1,634	1,397	236	14.5
With two or more members in the labor force	3,772	3,631	140	3.7
Families maintained by men[3]	5,503	5,114	390	7.1
With related children under 18 years	2,819	2,533	286	10.1
Without children	2,685	2,581	104	3.9
With one member in the labor force	3,348	2,982	366	10.9
Householder	2,744	2,465	279	10.2
Relative	603	517	86	14.3

Table 5. Primary families: poverty status, presence of related children, and work experience of family members in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 2017 (Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total families	At or above poverty level	Below poverty level	Rate[1]
With two or more members in the labor force	2,156	2,132	24	1.1

[1]Number below the poverty level as a percent of the total in the labor force for 27 weeks or more who worked during the year.
[2]Refers to opposite-sex married-couple families only.
[3]No opposite-sex spouse present.
Note: Data relate to primary families with at least one member in the labor force for 27 weeks or more.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS).

Table 6. People in families and unrelated individuals: poverty status and work experience, 2017 (Numbers in thousands)

Poverty status and work experience	Total	In married-couple families[1]				In families maintained by women[2]			In families maintained by men[2]			Unrelated individuals
		Husbands	Wives	Related children under 18 years	Other relatives	Householder	Related children under 18 years	Other relatives	Householder	Related children under 18 years	Other relatives	
See footnotes at end of table.												
Total												
All people	257,097	60,550	61,186	5,663	22,032	15,410	2,202	14,792	6,394	662	6,910	61,297
With labor force activity	167,538	45,465	37,355	1,497	14,062	10,668	474	9,067	4,950	173	4,390	39,438
1 to 26 weeks	12,776	1,512	2,626	827	2,526	660	269	1,097	281	96	403	2,479
27 weeks or more	154,762	43,953	34,729	671	11,536	10,008	205	7,969	4,668	77	3,987	36,959
With no labor force activity	89,559	15,085	23,832	4,165	7,970	4,741	1,728	5,725	1,444	489	2,520	21,859
At or above poverty level												
All people	228,963	57,564	58,183	5,321	21,217	11,453	1,516	12,618	5,604	567	6,336	48,583
With labor force activity	158,195	44,038	36,676	1,456	13,871	8,642	363	8,428	4,556	159	4,220	35,785
1 to 26 weeks	10,379	1,325	2,417	795	2,460	318	199	886	189	85	356	1,350
27 weeks or more	147,816	42,714	34,259	661	11,411	8,324	164	7,542	4,367	75	3,864	34,435
With no labor force activity	70,768	13,525	21,507	3,865	7,346	2,811	1,153	4,191	1,048	408	2,116	12,798
Below poverty level												
All people	28,134	2,986	3,003	341	815	3,957	686	2,174	790	94	574	12,714
With labor force activity	9,343	1,426	678	41	190	2,027	111	639	394	13	170	3,652
1 to 26 weeks	2,397	187	209	32	66	342	70	211	92	11	47	1,129
27 weeks or more	6,946	1,239	469	9	124	1,684	41	427	302	2	123	2,524
With no labor force activity	18,791	1,560	2,325	300	624	1,930	575	1,535	396	81	404	9,062
Rate[3]												
All people	10.9	4.9	4.9	6.0	3.7	25.7	31.1	14.7	12.4	14.3	8.3	20.7

Table 6. People in families and unrelated individuals: poverty status and work experience, 2017 (Numbers in thousands)

Poverty status and work experience	Total	In married-couple families[1]				In families maintained by women[2]			In families maintained by men[2]			Unrelated individuals
		Husbands	Wives	Related children under 18 years	Other relatives	Householder	Related children under 18 years	Other relatives	Householder	Related children under 18 years	Other relatives	
With labor force activity	5.6	3.1	1.8	2.8	1.4	19.0	23.4	7.0	8.0	7.7	3.9	9.3
1 to 26 weeks	18.8	12.4	8.0	3.9	2.6	51.9	25.9	19.3	32.8	11.6	11.7	45.5
27 weeks or more	4.5	2.8	1.4	1.4	1.1	16.8	20.1	5.4	6.5	2.9	3.1	6.8
With no labor force activity	21.0	10.3	9.8	7.2	7.8	40.7	33.3	26.8	27.4	16.6	16.0	41.5

[1]Refers to opposite-sex married-couple families only.
[2]No opposite-sex spouse present.
[3]Number below the poverty level as a percent of the total in the labor force for 27 weeks or more who worked during the year.
Note: Dash represents zero, rounds to zero, or indicates that base is less than 80,000.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS).

Table 7. Unrelated individuals in the labor force for 27 weeks or more: poverty status by age, gender, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and living arrangement, 2017 (Numbers in thousands)

See footnotes at end of table.

Characteristic	Total	At or above poverty level	Below poverty level	Rate[1]
Age and gender				
Total unrelated individuals	36,959	34,435	2,524	6.8
16 to 19 years	413	285	127	30.9
20 to 24 years	4,360	3,728	632	14.5
25 to 64 years	29,302	27,588	1,714	5.8
65 years and older	2,885	2,834	51	1.8
Men	20,206	18,945	1,261	6.2
Women	16,753	15,490	1,263	7.5
Race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity				
White	28,482	26,717	1,765	6.2
Men	15,760	14,862	898	5.7
Women	12,722	11,855	867	6.8
Black or African American	5,432	4,912	520	9.6
Men	2,793	2,548	245	8.8
Women	2,639	2,364	275	10.4
Asian	1,762	1,681	82	4.6
Men	971	934	37	3.8
Women	792	747	45	5.7
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	5,030	4,531	499	9.9
Men	3,198	2,928	270	8.4
Women	1,832	1,603	229	12.5
Living arrangement				
Living alone	18,503	17,521	982	5.3
Living with others	18,456	16,915	1,541	8.4

[1]Number below the poverty level as percent of total in the labor force for 27 weeks or more.

Note: Estimates for the race groups shown (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.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS).

Table 8. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more: poverty status and labor market problems of full-time wage and salary workers, 2017 (Numbers in thousands)

See footnotes at end of table.

Labor market problems	Total	At or above poverty level	Below poverty level	Rate[1]
Total, full-time wage and salary workers	121,997	118,683	3,314	2.7
No unemployment, involuntary part-time employment, or low earnings[2]	104,625	103,966	659	0.6
Workers experiencing one labor market problem				
Unemployment only	5,000	4,720	280	5.6
Involuntary part-time employment only	2,602	2,540	61	2.4
Low earnings only	6,936	5,451	1,485	21.4
Workers experiencing multiple labor market problems				
Unemployment and involuntary part-time employment	828	742	86	10.4
Unemployment and low earnings	1,097	659	438	39.9
Involuntary part-time employment and low earnings	600	405	195	32.5
Unemployment, involuntary part-time employment, and low earnings	310	199	111	35.7
Workers experiencing each labor market problem				
Unemployment (alone or with other problems)	7,235	6,320	915	12.6
Involuntary part-time employment (alone or with other problems)	4,340	3,887	453	10.4
Low earnings (alone or with other problems)	8,943	6,714	2,228	24.9

[1]Number below the poverty level as percent of total in the labor force for 27 weeks or more.
[2]The low-earnings threshold in 2017 was $360.78 per week.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) of the Current Population Survey (CPS).

Technical Notes

The data presented in this report were collected in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS). Conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the CPS is a monthly sample survey of about 60,000 eligible households. Data from the CPS are used to obtain monthly estimates of the nation's employment and unemployment levels. The ASEC, conducted in the months of February through April, includes questions about work activity and income during the previous calendar year. For instance, data collected in 2018 are for the 2017 calendar year.

Estimates in this report are based on a sample and, consequently, may differ from estimates that would have been obtained from a complete count using the same questionnaire and procedures. Sampling variability may be relatively large in cases where the numbers are small. Thus, both small estimates and small differences between estimates should be interpreted with caution. For a detailed explanation of the ASEC supplement to the CPS, its sampling variability, more extensive definitions than those provided here, and additional information about income and poverty measures, see "Income and poverty in the United States: 2017," *Current Population Reports*, P60-263 (U.S. Census Bureau, September 2018), https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2018/demo/p60-263.pdf.

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For more information on the data provided in this report, contact the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Division of Labor Force Statistics. Email: cpsinfo@bls.gov; Telephone: (202) 691-6378.

Concepts and definitions

Poverty classification. Poverty statistics presented in this report are based on definitions developed by the Social Security Administration in 1964 and revised by federal interagency committees in 1969 and 1981. These definitions originally were based on the Department of Agriculture's Economy Food Plan and reflected the different consumption requirements of families on the basis of factors such as family size and the number of children under 18 years of age.

The actual poverty thresholds vary with the makeup of the family. In 2017, the weighted average poverty threshold for a family of four was $25,094; for a family of nine or more people, the threshold was $50,681; and for one person (unrelated individual), it was $12,488. Poverty thresholds are updated each year to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). Thresholds do not vary geographically. For more information, see "Income and Poverty in the United States: 2017," https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2018/demo/p60-263.pdf.

Low earnings. The low-earnings level, as first developed in 1987, represented the average of the real value of the minimum wage between 1967 and 1987 for a 40-hour workweek. The year 1967 was chosen as the base year because that was the first year in which minimum-wage legislation covered essentially the same broad group of workers that currently is covered. The low-earnings level has been adjusted each year since then in accordance with the CPI-U, so the measure maintains the same real value that it held in 1987. In 2017, the low-earnings threshold was $360.78 per week. For a complete definition, see Bruce W. Klein and Philip L. Rones, "A profile of the working poor," *Monthly Labor Review*, October 1989, pp. 3–11, https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/1989/10/art1full.pdf.

Income. Data on income are limited to money income—before personal income taxes and payroll deductions—received in the calendar year preceding the CPS supplement. Data on income do not include the value of noncash benefits, such as food stamps, Medicare, Medicaid, public housing, and employer-provided benefits. For a complete definition of income, see "Income and Poverty in the United States: 2017," https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2018/demo/p60-263.pdf.

Labor force. People in the labor force are those who worked or looked for work sometime during the calendar year. The number of weeks in the labor force is accumulated over the entire year. The focus in this report is on people who were in the labor force for 27 weeks or more.

Working poor. The working poor are people who spent at least 27 weeks in the labor force (that is, working or looking for work) but whose incomes still fell below the official poverty level.

Working-poor rate. This rate is the number of individuals in the labor force for at least 27 weeks whose incomes still fell below the official poverty level, as a percentage of all people who were in the labor force for at least 27 weeks during the calendar year.

Involuntary part-time workers. These are people who, during at least 1 week of the year, worked fewer than 35 hours because of slack work or unfavorable business conditions or because they could not find full-time work. The number of weeks of involuntary part-time work is accumulated over the year.

Occupation. This term refers to the job in which a person worked the most weeks during the calendar year.

Unemployed. Unemployed people are those who looked for work while not employed or those who were on layoff from a job and were expecting to be recalled to that job. The number of weeks unemployed is accumulated over the entire year.

Householder. The householder is the family reference person. This is the person, or one of the persons, in whose name the housing unit is owned or rented. The relationships of the other individuals in the household are defined in terms of their relationships to the householder. The race or ethnicity of the family is determined by that of the householder.

Family. A family is a group of two or more people residing together who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption; all such people are considered members of one family. The count of families is for "primary" families only. A primary family consists of a householder and all other people related to and residing with the householder. A subfamily is a family that does not maintain its own household, for example, a married couple living in the home of a friend and their family. Families include those with or without children under 18 years old. Families are classified either as married-couple families, which refers to opposite-sex married couples only, or as those maintained by men or women without opposite-sex spouses present. The household may or may not include a same-sex spouse or an unmarried domestic partner of either sex. Family status is determined at the time of the survey interview and, thus, may be different from that of the previous year.

Unrelated individuals. These are people who are not living with anyone related to them by birth, marriage, or adoption. Such individuals may live alone, reside in a nonrelated family household, or live in group quarters with other unrelated individuals.

Related children. Related children are children under age 18 (including sons, daughters, stepchildren, and adopted children) of the husband, wife, or person maintaining the family, as well as other children related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.

Race. White, Black or African American, and Asian are categories used to describe the race of people. People in these categories are those who selected that race group only. Data for the two remaining race categories—American Indian and Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander—and for people who selected more than one race category are included in totals, but are not shown separately because the number of survey respondents is too small to develop estimates of sufficient quality for publication. In the enumeration process, race is determined by the household respondent.

Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. This term refers to people who identified themselves in the CPS enumeration process as being of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish ethnicity. People whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race.