

A Profile of the Working Poor, 2012



In 2012, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 46.5 million people, or 15.0 percent of the nation’s population, lived below the official poverty level.¹ (See the technical notes section for examples of poverty levels.) Although the poor were primarily children and adults who had not participated in the labor force during the year, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 10.6 million individuals were among the “working poor” in 2012; this measure was little changed from 2011. 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 2012, the working-poor rate—the ratio of the working poor to all individuals in the labor force for at least 27 weeks—was 7.1 percent, little different from the previous year’s figure (7.0 percent). (See tables A and 1 and chart 1.)

Highlights

Following are additional highlights from the 2012 data:

- Full-time workers were considerably less likely to be among the working poor than were part-time workers. Among people in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 4.2 percent of those usually employed full time were classified as working poor, compared with 15.5 percent of part-time workers.
- Women were more likely than men to be among the working poor. In addition, Hispanics and Blacks continued to be more than twice as likely as Asians and Whites to be among the working poor.
- The likelihood of being classified as working poor diminishes as workers attain higher levels of education. Among college graduates, 2.1 percent of those who were in the labor force for at least 27 weeks were classified as working poor, compared with 21.2 percent of those with less than a high school diploma.

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Table A

Poverty status of people and primary families in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 2007–2012 (Numbers in thousands)						
Characteristic	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total in the labor force¹	146,567	147,838	147,902	146,859	147,475	148,735
In poverty	7,521	8,883	10,391	10,512	10,382	10,612
Working-poor rate	5.1	6.0	7.0	7.2	7.0	7.1
Unrelated individuals	33,226	32,785	33,798	34,099	33,731	34,810
In poverty	2,558	3,275	3,947	3,947	3,621	3,851
Working-poor rate	7.7	10.0	11.7	11.6	10.7	11.1
Primary families²	65,158	65,907	65,467	64,931	66,225	66,541
In poverty	4,169	4,538	5,193	5,269	5,469	5,478
Working-poor rate	6.4	6.9	7.9	8.1	8.3	8.2

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.
 Note: Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.
 Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC).

- 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.
- Among families with at least one member in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, those families with children under 18 years old were about 4 times more likely than those without children to live in poverty. Families maintained by women were more likely than families maintained by men to be living below the poverty level.

This report presents data on the relationship between labor force activity and poverty status in 2012 for workers and their families. These data were collected in the 2013 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey. (For a detailed description of the source of the data and an explanation of the concepts and definitions used in this report, see the technical notes at the end of this report.) The specific income thresholds used to determine people’s poverty status vary, depending on whether the individuals are living with family members or are living alone or with nonrelatives. For 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.

Demographic characteristics

Among those who were in the labor force for 27 weeks or more in 2012, the number of women (5.5 million) and men (5.1 million) who were classified as working poor was similar. The working-poor rate, however, continued to be higher for women (7.9 percent) than for men (6.4 percent). The working-poor rates for both women and men were essentially unchanged from a year earlier. (See table 2.)

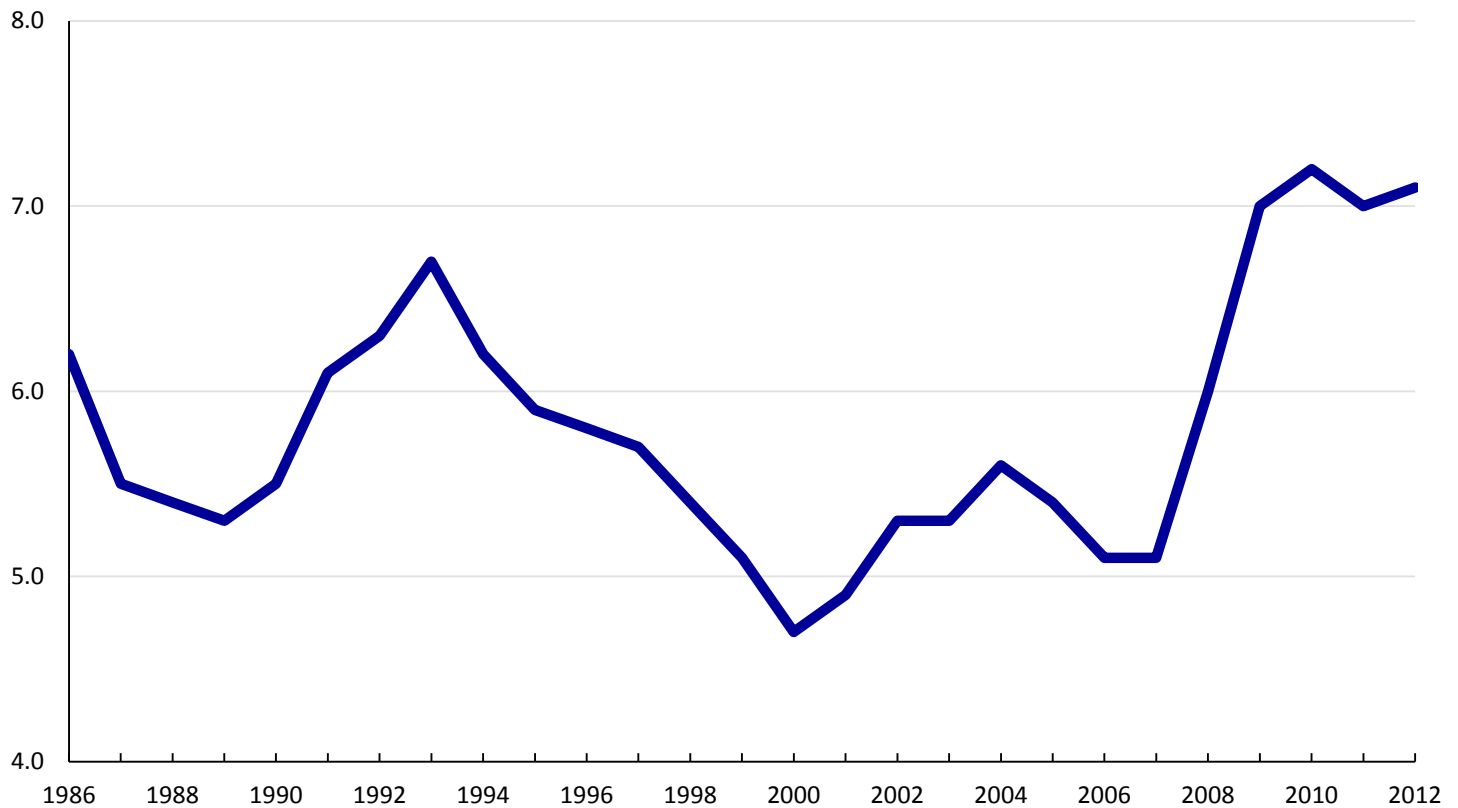
Hispanics and Blacks were more than twice as likely as Whites and Asians to be among the working poor. In 2012, the working-poor rates of Hispanics and Blacks were 13.8 percent and 13.6 percent, respectively, compared with 6.2 percent for Whites and 4.9 percent for Asians. (See chart 2 and table 2.)

Among Asians, Whites, and Blacks, the working-poor rate was higher for women than for men. The rate for Asian women who spent at least 27 weeks in the labor force was 5.4 percent, compared with 4.4 percent for Asian men. The rates for White women and men were 6.6 percent and 5.8 percent, respectively, versus 15.5 percent and 11.4 percent for Black women and men. Among Hispanics, the rates for women and men were little different from each other.

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

Chart 1**Working-poor rate of people in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 1986–2012**

Percent



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

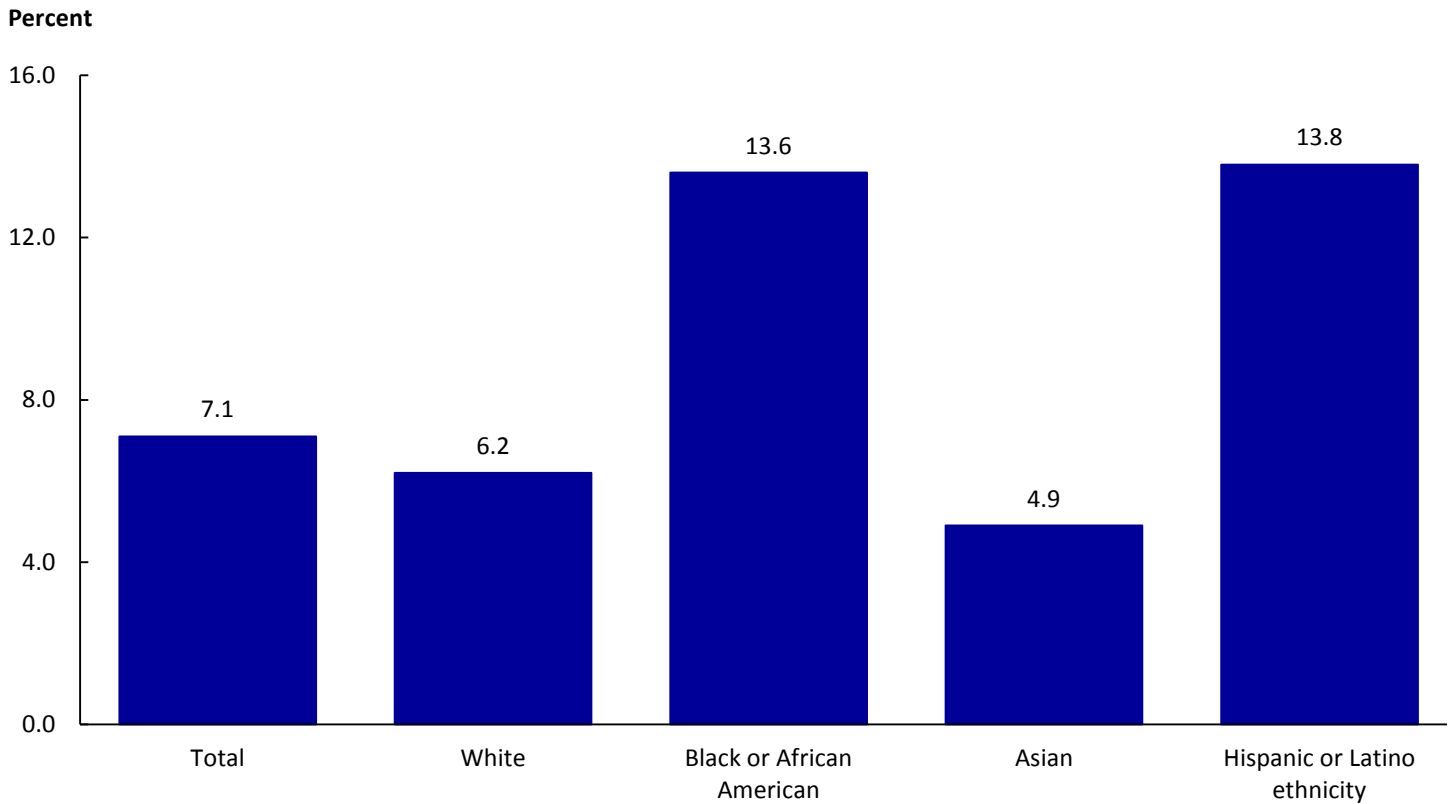
workers is higher. Among youths who were in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 12.9 percent of 16- to 19-year-olds and 13.8 percent of 20- to 24-year-olds were living in poverty in 2012, close to double the rate for workers age 35 to 44 (7.4 percent). Workers age 45 to 54, 55 to 64, and those age 65 and older had lower working-poor rates—4.9 percent, 3.9 percent, and 1.8 percent, respectively—than did other age groups.

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. Of all the people in the labor force for 27 weeks or more in 2012, those with less than a high school diploma had

a higher working-poor rate (21.2 percent) than did high school graduates with no college (9.4 percent). Workers with an associate's degree (4.9 percent) and those with a bachelor's degree or higher (2.1 percent) had the lowest working-poor rates. In 2012, at nearly all levels of educational attainment, women were more likely than men to be among the working poor; by race and ethnicity, Blacks and Hispanics generally were more likely to be among the working poor than were Whites and Asians. (See table 3.)

Working-poor rates were fairly similar among White men and women at each major educational level. For example, 18.1 percent of White men with less than a high school diploma who spent at least half the year in the labor force were among the working poor, compared with 22.4 percent of their female counterparts. For White men and women

Chart 2**Working-poor rates of people in the labor force for 27 weeks or more by race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2012**

Note: People whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race.

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

who had a bachelor's degree or higher, the proportions classified as working poor were 1.6 percent and 2.1 percent, respectively. By comparison, Black men with less than a high school diploma were considerably less likely than their female counterparts to be among the working poor—27.2 percent compared with 38.2 percent. Among Black men and women with a bachelor's degree or higher, the working-poor rates were similar (3.5 percent and 4.1 percent, respectively). The working-poor rate for Hispanic or Latino men with less than a high school diploma (21.7 percent) was lower than that for their female counterparts (27.8 percent). The working-poor rates for Hispanic men and women with a bachelor's degree or higher were closer, at 3.4 percent and 5.6 percent, respectively. The working-poor rates for Asian men and women with less than a high school diploma were little different from each other—15.8 percent versus 15.9 percent. Working-poor rates for Asian

men and women with a bachelor's degree or higher were also similar, at 2.3 percent and 1.9 percent, respectively.

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, 2.2 percent in 2012. 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 example, 14.1 percent of service workers who were in the labor force for at least 27 weeks were classified as working poor in 2012. Indeed, service occupations, with 3.5 million working poor, accounted for one-third of all

those classified as working poor. Among those employed in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations, 8.6 percent of workers were classified as working poor. Within this occupation group, 15.2 percent of workers employed in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations and 10.4 percent of those in construction and extraction occupations were among the working poor. (See table 4.)

Families

In 2012, the number of families living below the poverty level (5.5 million), despite having at least one member in the labor force for half the year or more, was unchanged from last year's figure. Among families with only one member in the labor force for at least 27 weeks in 2012, married-couple families had a lower likelihood of living below the poverty level (9.6 percent) than did families maintained by women (26.8 percent) or by men (16.8 percent). (See table 5.)

Families with children in households with at least one member in the labor force for half the year were much more likely to live below the poverty level than those without children. The proportion of families with children age 17 years and younger that lived in poverty was 13.0 percent, compared with 2.9 percent for families without children. Among families with children under 18, the working-poor rate for those maintained by women (28.6 percent) was higher than that for those maintained by men (17.2 percent). Married-couple families with children had a working-poor rate of 7.5 percent in 2012.

Unrelated individuals

The "unrelated individuals" category includes individuals who live by themselves or with others not related to them. Of the 34.8 million unrelated individuals who were in the labor force for half the year or longer, 3.9 million lived below the poverty level in 2012, an increase from last year's figure. The working-poor rate for unrelated individuals was 11.1 percent, little different from a year earlier. (See table 6.)

Within the group of unrelated individuals, teenagers continued to be the most likely to be among the working

poor. In 2012, 47.3 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 (10.3 percent) was lower than the rate for women (12.0 percent). The working-poor rates for unrelated individuals were higher for Hispanics (16.9 percent) and Blacks (15.3 percent) than for Whites (10.3 percent) and Asians (7.8 percent). (See table 7.)

Of the 3.9 million unrelated individuals considered to be among the working poor in 2012, about two-thirds lived with others. These individuals had a much higher working-poor rate than individuals who lived alone. Many unrelated individuals living below the poverty level may live with others out of necessity. Conversely, 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, 4.4 million, or 3.9 percent, were classified as working poor in 2012—little different from a year earlier. (See table 8.)

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

In 2012, 84 percent of the working poor who usually worked full time experienced at least one of the major labor market problems. Low earnings continued to be the most common problem, with 68 percent subject to low earnings, either as the major problem or in combination with other

labor market problems. About 37 percent experienced unemployment as the main labor market problem or in conjunction with other problems. Only 6 percent of the working poor experienced all three problems: low earnings, unemployment, and involuntary part-time employment.

Some 720,000, or 16 percent, of the working poor who usually worked full time did not experience any of the three primary labor market problems in 2012. 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.

Endnote

1. *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2012*, Current Population Reports, P60-245 (U.S. Census Bureau, September 2013), table 3, at www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p60-245.pdf

Statistical Tables

A PROFILE OF THE WORKING POOR, 2012

Table 1. People in the labor force: poverty status and work experience by weeks in the labor force, 2012

(Numbers in thousands)

Poverty status and work experience	Total in the labor force	27 weeks or more in the labor force	
		Total	50 to 52 weeks
Total			
Total in the labor force	161,707	148,735	136,145
Did not work during the year	5,513	3,433	3,016
Worked during the year	156,194	145,302	133,129
Usual full-time workers	122,407	118,095	111,162
Usual part-time workers	33,787	27,207	21,966
Involuntary part-time workers	10,256	9,044	7,831
Voluntary part-time workers	23,531	18,163	14,135
At or above poverty level			
Total in the labor force	148,557	138,124	127,007
Did not work during the year	3,328	2,004	1,748
Worked during the year	145,229	136,119	125,258
Usual full-time workers	116,696	113,118	106,787
Usual part-time workers	28,532	23,001	18,471
Involuntary part-time workers	7,611	6,698	5,775
Voluntary part-time workers	20,921	16,303	12,696
Below poverty level			
Total in the labor force	13,150	10,612	9,138
Did not work during the year	2,184	1,429	1,268
Worked during the year	10,965	9,182	7,870
Usual full-time workers	5,711	4,977	4,375
Usual part-time workers	5,255	4,205	3,495
Involuntary part-time workers	2,645	2,345	2,056
Voluntary part-time workers	2,610	1,860	1,439
Rate¹			
Total in the labor force	8.1	7.1	6.7
Did not work during the year	39.6	41.6	42.0
Worked during the year	7.0	6.3	5.9
Usual full-time workers	4.7	4.2	3.9
Usual part-time workers	15.6	15.5	15.9
Involuntary part-time workers	25.8	25.9	26.3
Voluntary part-time workers	11.1	10.2	10.2

¹ Number below the poverty level as a percent of the total in the labor force.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

A PROFILE OF THE WORKING POOR, 2012

Table 2. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more: poverty status by age, gender, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2012

(Numbers in thousands)

Age and gender	Total	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Below poverty level				
						Total	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino ethnicity
Total, 16 years and older	148,735	118,575	17,632	8,203	23,048	10,612	7,322	2,394	403	3,169
16 to 19 years	3,293	2,608	414	111	601	425	307	92	11	97
20 to 24 years	13,302	10,133	1,990	573	2,850	1,840	1,223	485	47	472
25 to 34 years	32,477	25,000	4,201	2,044	6,352	3,185	2,169	746	89	985
35 to 44 years	31,942	24,760	4,043	2,157	5,842	2,350	1,646	517	95	883
45 to 54 years	34,117	27,620	3,938	1,782	4,547	1,680	1,160	345	97	484
55 to 64 years	25,289	21,251	2,387	1,210	2,272	981	708	185	54	193
65 years and older	8,316	7,203	659	326	584	150	109	23	10	56
Men, 16 years and older	79,303	64,497	8,181	4,354	13,373	5,112	3,770	930	194	1,756
16 to 19 years	1,619	1,300	180	63	319	197	143	43	6	50
20 to 24 years	7,025	5,516	921	278	1,621	857	601	199	16	248
25 to 34 years	17,583	13,827	1,982	1,115	3,846	1,443	1,067	270	38	528
35 to 44 years	17,354	13,803	1,842	1,174	3,438	1,206	924	191	39	531
45 to 54 years	17,962	14,795	1,819	944	2,567	847	609	136	65	270
55 to 64 years	13,070	11,134	1,108	609	1,261	489	374	80	24	104
65 years and older	4,691	4,123	331	171	321	72	52	11	6	24
Women, 16 years and older	69,433	54,078	9,451	3,850	9,675	5,499	3,552	1,464	209	1,414
16 to 19 years	1,674	1,308	234	48	283	228	164	49	5	48
20 to 24 years	6,277	4,617	1,069	295	1,229	983	622	287	31	224
25 to 34 years	14,894	11,174	2,220	929	2,506	1,742	1,103	476	51	457
35 to 44 years	14,588	10,957	2,201	982	2,403	1,144	722	326	56	352
45 to 54 years	16,155	12,825	2,119	838	1,980	833	550	210	32	213
55 to 64 years	12,220	10,117	1,279	602	1,011	492	333	105	31	89
65 years and older	3,625	3,080	329	155	263	78	58	12	3	32

Age and gender	Rate ¹				
	Total	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino ethnicity
Total, 16 years and older	7.1	6.2	13.6	4.9	13.8
16 to 19 years	12.9	11.8	22.3	10.1	16.2
20 to 24 years	13.8	12.1	24.4	8.2	16.6
25 to 34 years	9.8	8.7	17.8	4.3	15.5
35 to 44 years	7.4	6.6	12.8	4.4	15.1
45 to 54 years	4.9	4.2	8.8	5.4	10.6
55 to 64 years	3.9	3.3	7.8	4.5	8.5
65 years and older	1.8	1.5	3.5	3.0	9.5
Men, 16 years and older	6.4	5.8	11.4	4.4	13.1
16 to 19 years	12.2	11.0	24.1	(²)	15.5
20 to 24 years	12.2	10.9	21.6	5.7	15.3
25 to 34 years	8.2	7.7	13.6	3.4	13.7
35 to 44 years	7.0	6.7	10.4	3.3	15.4
45 to 54 years	4.7	4.1	7.5	6.9	10.5
55 to 64 years	3.7	3.4	7.2	3.9	8.3
65 years and older	1.5	1.3	3.4	3.6	7.5
Women, 16 years and older	7.9	6.6	15.5	5.4	14.6
16 to 19 years	13.6	12.5	20.9	(²)	16.9
20 to 24 years	15.7	13.5	26.8	10.5	18.2
25 to 34 years	11.7	9.9	21.4	5.4	18.2
35 to 44 years	7.8	6.6	14.8	5.7	14.6
45 to 54 years	5.2	4.3	9.9	3.8	10.8
55 to 64 years	4.0	3.3	8.2	5.1	8.8
65 years and older	2.2	1.9	3.5	2.2	12.0

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

² Data not shown where base is less than 80,000.

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 or rounds to zero.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

A PROFILE OF THE WORKING POOR, 2012

Table 3. People in the labor force for 27 weeks or more: poverty status by educational attainment, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and gender, 2012

(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
Total, 16 years and older	148,735	79,303	69,433	10,612	5,112	5,499	7.1	6.4	7.9
Less than a high school diploma	13,132	8,260	4,871	2,781	1,572	1,209	21.2	19.0	24.8
Less than 1 year of high school	4,247	2,884	1,364	926	584	342	21.8	20.3	25.1
1-3 years of high school	7,160	4,311	2,848	1,520	795	724	21.2	18.5	25.4
4 years of high school, no diploma	1,725	1,066	659	335	192	143	19.4	18.0	21.6
High school graduates, no college ²	40,616	23,263	17,352	3,805	1,898	1,907	9.4	8.2	11.0
Some college or associate's degree	44,251	21,841	22,410	2,970	1,167	1,803	6.7	5.3	8.0
Some college, no degree	28,388	14,540	13,848	2,199	896	1,303	7.7	6.2	9.4
Associate's degree	15,863	7,301	8,563	771	271	500	4.9	3.7	5.8
Bachelor's degree and higher ³	50,737	25,938	24,798	1,055	475	581	2.1	1.8	2.3
White, 16 years and older	118,575	64,497	54,078	7,322	3,770	3,552	6.2	5.8	6.6
Less than a high school diploma	10,472	6,805	3,667	2,054	1,233	821	19.6	18.1	22.4
Less than 1 year of high school	3,568	2,504	1,064	769	502	267	21.5	20.0	25.1
1-3 years of high school	5,611	3,480	2,131	1,054	595	459	18.8	17.1	21.5
4 years of high school, no diploma	1,293	821	473	231	136	95	17.9	16.6	20.0
High school graduates, no college ²	32,245	18,879	13,366	2,511	1,340	1,171	7.8	7.1	8.8
Some college or associate's degree	34,969	17,624	17,344	1,985	847	1,138	5.7	4.8	6.6
Some college, no degree	22,041	11,642	10,399	1,436	627	809	6.5	5.4	7.8
Associate's degree	12,928	5,982	6,946	549	220	329	4.2	3.7	4.7
Bachelor's degree and higher ³	40,889	21,189	19,700	772	349	422	1.9	1.6	2.1
Black or African American, 16 years and older	17,632	8,181	9,451	2,394	930	1,464	13.6	11.4	15.5
Less than a high school diploma	1,585	845	740	513	230	283	32.3	27.2	38.2
Less than 1 year of high school	294	164	130	88	41	47	30.0	24.7	36.6
1-3 years of high school	999	521	478	343	142	201	34.3	27.3	41.9
4 years of high school, no diploma	293	160	133	82	47	35	28.0	29.5	26.2
High school graduates, no college ²	5,662	2,909	2,752	979	411	568	17.3	14.1	20.6
Some college or associate's degree	6,148	2,670	3,477	739	228	511	12.0	8.5	14.7
Some college, no degree	4,333	1,910	2,422	584	200	383	13.5	10.5	15.8
Associate's degree	1,815	760	1,055	156	28	128	8.6	3.6	12.1
Bachelor's degree and higher ³	4,238	1,757	2,481	163	61	102	3.8	3.5	4.1
Asian, 16 years and older	8,203	4,354	3,850	403	194	209	4.9	4.4	5.4
Less than a high school diploma	543	268	276	86	42	44	15.9	15.8	15.9
Less than 1 year of high school	210	88	121	32	21	12	15.5	23.3	9.7
1-3 years of high school	248	127	121	42	18	24	16.9	14.1	20.0
4 years of high school, no diploma	86	52	34	12	4	8	13.8	(⁴)	(⁴)
High school graduates, no college ²	1,414	728	686	128	60	68	9.1	8.2	10.0
Some college or associate's degree	1,631	831	800	92	34	57	5.6	4.1	7.2
Some college, no degree	999	515	484	64	24	40	6.4	4.6	8.3
Associate's degree	632	316	316	28	11	17	4.4	3.4	5.4
Bachelor's degree and higher ³	4,615	2,527	2,088	97	57	40	2.1	2.3	1.9
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 16 years and older	23,048	13,373	9,675	3,169	1,756	1,414	13.8	13.1	14.6
Less than a high school diploma	6,452	4,376	2,077	1,529	951	578	23.7	21.7	27.8
Less than 1 year of high school	3,157	2,212	945	769	499	270	24.3	22.5	28.5
1-3 years of high school	2,631	1,724	906	602	362	240	22.9	21.0	26.5
4 years of high school, no diploma	664	439	225	158	90	68	23.7	20.4	30.2
High school graduates, no college ²	7,258	4,397	2,861	1,008	564	444	13.9	12.8	15.5
Some college or associate's degree	5,712	2,811	2,901	468	179	289	8.2	6.4	10.0
Some college, no degree	3,938	2,025	1,913	340	130	211	8.6	6.4	11.0
Associate's degree	1,775	787	988	128	50	78	7.2	6.3	7.9
Bachelor's degree and higher ³	3,626	1,790	1,836	164	61	103	4.5	3.4	5.6

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.

⁴ Data not shown where base is less than 80,000.

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.

A PROFILE OF THE WORKING POOR, 2012

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, 2012

(Numbers in thousands)

Occupation, 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 ²	148,735	79,303	69,433	10,612	5,112	5,499	7.1	6.4	7.9
Management, professional, and related occupations	54,087	26,406	27,681	1,200	511	689	2.2	1.9	2.5
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	22,781	12,805	9,976	470	255	215	2.1	2.0	2.2
Professional and related occupations	31,306	13,601	17,705	730	255	475	2.3	1.9	2.7
Service occupations	25,207	11,202	14,005	3,549	1,327	2,222	14.1	11.8	15.9
Sales and office occupations	33,242	12,746	20,496	2,180	683	1,497	6.6	5.4	7.3
Sales and related occupations	14,892	7,820	7,073	1,206	389	817	8.1	5.0	11.6
Office and administrative support occupations	18,350	4,927	13,423	974	295	680	5.3	6.0	5.1
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	13,353	12,792	561	1,147	1,087	59	8.6	8.5	10.5
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	906	701	205	137	99	38	15.2	14.1	18.7
Construction and extraction occupations	7,524	7,359	165	785	767	18	10.4	10.4	10.8
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,924	4,732	192	225	222	3	4.6	4.7	1.6
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	17,347	13,562	3,785	1,492	1,070	422	8.6	7.9	11.2
Production occupations	8,491	6,154	2,337	649	422	227	7.6	6.9	9.7
Transportation and material-moving occupations	8,856	7,408	1,448	843	648	195	9.5	8.7	13.4
White, 16 years and older ²	118,575	64,497	54,078	7,322	3,770	3,552	6.2	5.8	6.6
Management, professional, and related occupations	44,309	21,936	22,372	901	423	478	2.0	1.9	2.1
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	19,233	11,089	8,144	374	210	163	1.9	1.9	2.0
Professional and related occupations	25,075	10,847	14,228	527	213	314	2.1	2.0	2.2
Service occupations	18,677	8,470	10,207	2,408	965	1,444	12.9	11.4	14.1
Sales and office occupations	26,411	10,282	16,129	1,414	450	964	5.4	4.4	6.0
Sales and related occupations	12,022	6,514	5,508	784	256	528	6.5	3.9	9.6
Office and administrative support occupations	14,390	3,769	10,621	631	195	436	4.4	5.2	4.1
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	11,627	11,151	477	940	889	51	8.1	8.0	10.8
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	768	598	170	112	79	33	14.5	13.2	19.2
Construction and extraction occupations	6,612	6,467	145	649	632	17	9.8	9.8	11.9
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,247	4,085	161	180	178	2	4.2	4.4	1.0
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	13,343	10,638	2,704	1,006	752	254	7.5	7.1	9.4
Production occupations	6,625	4,951	1,674	456	304	152	6.9	6.1	9.1
Transportation and material-moving occupations	6,718	5,687	1,031	550	448	102	8.2	7.9	9.9
Black or African American, 16 years and older ²	17,632	8,181	9,451	2,394	930	1,464	13.6	11.4	15.5
Management, professional, and related occupations	4,664	1,761	2,903	216	47	168	4.6	2.7	5.8
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	1,688	712	976	63	28	35	3.7	3.9	3.6
Professional and related occupations	2,977	1,049	1,927	153	20	133	5.1	1.9	6.9
Service occupations	4,225	1,709	2,516	865	263	602	20.5	15.4	23.9
Sales and office occupations	4,211	1,395	2,816	558	149	409	13.2	10.7	14.5
Sales and related occupations	1,597	657	941	295	73	221	18.5	11.2	23.5
Office and administrative support occupations	2,613	738	1,875	263	76	188	10.1	10.2	10.0
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	995	940	54	133	126	7	13.3	13.4	(³)
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	77	54	23	13	8	5	(³)	(³)	(³)
Construction and extraction occupations	505	496	9	91	91	-	18.0	18.3	(³)
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	413	391	22	28	27	2	6.9	6.9	(³)
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	2,699	1,995	704	359	245	114	13.3	12.3	16.2
Production occupations	1,074	694	380	134	84	50	12.5	12.1	13.2
Transportation and material-moving occupations	1,625	1,301	324	225	161	64	13.8	12.4	19.7

See footnotes at end of table.

A PROFILE OF THE WORKING POOR, 2012

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, 2012 — Continued

(Numbers in thousands)

Occupation, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total	Men	Women	Below poverty level			Rate ¹		
				Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Asian, 16 years and older ²	8,203	4,354	3,850	403	194	209	4.9	4.4	5.4
Management, professional, and related occupations	3,939	2,178	1,761	52	32	20	1.3	1.5	1.1
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	1,370	767	603	21	16	6	1.6	2.0	1.0
Professional and related occupations	2,568	1,411	1,157	30	16	14	1.2	1.1	1.2
Service occupations	1,371	581	790	124	39	86	9.1	6.6	10.9
Sales and office occupations	1,611	708	903	101	59	42	6.3	8.3	4.6
Sales and related occupations	833	460	372	71	46	24	8.5	10.1	6.5
Office and administrative support occupations	779	248	531	30	13	18	3.9	5.1	3.3
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	288	274	14	14	14	—	5.0	5.2	(³)
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	20	12	7	—	—	—	(³)	(³)	(³)
Construction and extraction occupations	130	127	3	11	11	—	8.1	8.3	(³)
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	138	135	4	4	4	—	2.7	2.8	(³)
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	775	519	256	68	38	30	8.8	7.4	11.7
Production occupations	515	306	209	38	19	20	7.4	6.1	9.4
Transportation and material-moving occupations	260	214	47	30	20	10	11.6	9.2	(³)
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 16 years and older ²	23,048	13,373	9,675	3,169	1,756	1,414	13.8	13.1	14.6
Management, professional, and related occupations	4,407	1,998	2,409	187	68	119	4.2	3.4	5.0
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	1,900	985	915	94	48	45	4.9	4.9	4.9
Professional and related occupations	2,507	1,013	1,494	93	19	74	3.7	1.9	5.0
Service occupations	5,898	2,937	2,961	1,227	578	648	20.8	19.7	21.9
Sales and office occupations	4,634	1,825	2,809	486	122	364	10.5	6.7	13.0
Sales and related occupations	2,098	1,032	1,066	227	57	170	10.8	5.5	16.0
Office and administrative support occupations	2,536	793	1,743	259	65	194	10.2	8.2	11.1
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	3,492	3,356	136	574	552	22	16.4	16.4	16.1
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	402	313	90	88	69	19	21.9	22.1	21.4
Construction and extraction occupations	2,290	2,260	30	399	396	3	17.4	17.5	(³)
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	800	783	17	87	87	—	10.9	11.1	(³)
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	3,702	2,828	874	481	345	136	13.0	12.2	15.5
Production occupations	1,859	1,281	579	216	134	82	11.6	10.4	14.2
Transportation and material-moving occupations	1,843	1,548	295	265	211	54	14.4	13.6	18.2

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 Includes the long-term unemployed with no previous work experience and a small number of people whose last job was in the Armed Forces.

³ Data not shown where base is less than 80,000.

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 or rounds to zero.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

A PROFILE OF THE WORKING POOR, 2012

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, 2012**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total families	At or above poverty level	Below poverty level	Rate ¹
Total primary families	66,541	61,063	5,478	8.2
With related children under 18 years	35,003	30,450	4,554	13.0
Without children	31,538	30,613	924	2.9
With one member in the labor force	28,836	24,369	4,467	15.5
With two or more members in the labor force	37,705	36,694	1,011	2.7
With two members	31,683	30,786	896	2.8
With three or more members	6,022	5,907	115	1.9
Married-couple families	49,118	46,806	2,312	4.7
With related children under 18 years	24,353	22,520	1,833	7.5
Without children	24,765	24,285	479	1.9
With one member in the labor force	17,067	15,423	1,644	9.6
Husband	12,139	10,883	1,256	10.3
Wife	4,185	3,901	283	6.8
Relative	744	639	105	14.1
With two or more members in the labor force	32,050	31,383	668	2.1
With two members	27,221	26,631	590	2.2
With three or more members	4,829	4,752	77	1.6
Families maintained by women	12,075	9,542	2,532	21.0
With related children under 18 years	7,817	5,582	2,235	28.6
Without children	4,257	3,960	297	7.0
With one member in the labor force	8,461	6,194	2,267	26.8
Householder	6,985	4,985	2,000	28.6
Relative	1,476	1,209	267	18.1
With two or more members in the labor force	3,614	3,348	265	7.3
Families maintained by men	5,349	4,715	634	11.9
With related children under 18 years	2,833	2,347	486	17.2
Without children	2,516	2,368	148	5.9
With one member in the labor force	3,308	2,752	556	16.8
Householder	2,715	2,261	453	16.7
Relative	593	491	102	17.3
With two or more members in the labor force	2,041	1,963	78	3.8

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

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Table 6. People in families and unrelated individuals: poverty status and work experience, 2012

(Numbers in thousands)

Poverty status and work experience	Total people	In married-couple families				In families maintained by women			In families maintained by men			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	
Total												
All people ¹	244,993	58,546	59,178	5,746	20,666	15,455	2,252	13,199	6,206	643	6,216	56,884
With labor force activity	161,707	44,790	37,053	1,478	12,936	10,921	445	7,887	4,782	99	4,004	37,312
1 to 26 weeks	12,972	1,486	2,650	919	2,712	754	282	1,006	236	58	366	2,502
27 weeks or more	148,735	43,304	34,403	559	10,224	10,168	163	6,881	4,546	40	3,638	34,810
With no labor force activity	83,287	13,757	22,125	4,269	7,730	4,533	1,807	5,312	1,424	545	2,212	19,572
At or above poverty level												
All people ¹	213,108	54,870	55,474	5,269	19,359	10,666	1,528	10,705	5,188	525	5,488	44,035
With labor force activity	148,557	42,750	35,974	1,421	12,450	8,243	352	7,006	4,193	89	3,736	32,343
1 to 26 weeks	10,433	1,331	2,410	880	2,615	300	218	780	165	52	298	1,383
27 weeks or more	138,124	41,419	33,564	541	9,835	7,943	134	6,226	4,028	37	3,437	30,959
With no labor force activity	64,551	12,121	19,500	3,848	6,909	2,423	1,177	3,699	994	436	1,753	11,693
Below poverty level												
All people ¹	31,885	3,676	3,704	477	1,307	4,788	724	2,494	1,018	119	728	12,849
With labor force activity	13,150	2,040	1,079	57	486	2,678	94	881	589	10	268	4,970
1 to 26 weeks	2,538	155	240	38	97	453	65	226	71	7	67	1,119
27 weeks or more	10,612	1,885	839	18	389	2,225	29	655	518	—	201	3,851
With no labor force activity	18,735	1,636	2,626	421	821	2,110	631	1,613	430	109	460	7,879
Rate²												
All people ¹	13.0	6.3	6.3	8.3	6.3	31.0	32.1	18.9	16.4	18.5	11.7	22.6
With labor force activity	8.1	4.6	2.9	3.8	3.8	24.5	21.0	11.2	12.3	9.9	6.7	13.3
1 to 26 weeks	19.6	10.4	9.1	4.2	3.6	60.1	22.9	22.4	30.1	(³)	18.4	44.7
27 weeks or more	7.1	4.4	2.4	3.3	3.8	21.9	17.7	9.5	11.4	(³)	5.5	11.1
With no labor force activity	22.5	11.9	11.9	9.9	10.6	46.6	34.9	30.4	30.2	20.0	20.8	40.3

¹ Data on families include primary families that own or rent the housing unit as well as related and unrelated subfamilies that reside with them.

² Number below the poverty level as a percent of the total.

³ Data not shown where base is less than 80,000.

Note: Dash represents or rounds to zero.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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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, 2012

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total	At or above poverty level	Below poverty level	Rate ¹
Age and gender				
Total unrelated individuals	34,810	30,959	3,851	11.1
16 to 19 years	348	183	165	47.3
20 to 24 years	4,171	3,243	928	22.2
25 to 64 years	28,174	25,485	2,689	9.5
65 years and older	2,116	2,047	69	3.3
Men	19,352	17,357	1,995	10.3
Women	15,458	13,603	1,856	12.0
Race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity				
White	27,548	24,701	2,847	10.3
Men	15,497	14,010	1,487	9.6
Women	12,052	10,691	1,361	11.3
Black or African American	4,748	4,023	725	15.3
Men	2,460	2,074	386	15.7
Women	2,289	1,950	339	14.8
Asian	1,415	1,305	110	7.8
Men	783	744	39	5.0
Women	632	561	71	11.2
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	4,682	3,891	791	16.9
Men	2,989	2,559	431	14.4
Women	1,692	1,332	360	21.3
Living arrangement				
Living alone	17,814	16,461	1,354	7.6
Living with others	16,996	14,498	2,497	14.7

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.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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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, 2012

(Numbers in thousands)

Labor market problems	Total	At or above poverty level	Below poverty level	Rate ¹
Total, full-time wage and salary workers	111,951	107,560	4,391	3.9
No unemployment, involuntary part-time employment, or low earnings ²	90,879	90,159	720	.8
Unemployment only	6,454	5,960	494	7.7
Involuntary part-time employment only	2,731	2,665	67	2.4
Low earnings only	7,448	5,699	1,749	23.5
Unemployment and involuntary part-time employment	1,341	1,200	141	10.5
Unemployment and low earnings	1,676	931	746	44.5
Involuntary part-time employment and low earnings	857	647	210	24.5
Unemployment, involuntary part-time employment, and low earnings	564	299	265	46.9
Unemployment (alone or with other problems)	10,035	8,390	1,646	16.4
Involuntary part-time employment (alone or with other problems)	5,493	4,811	682	12.4
Low earnings (alone or with other problems)	10,545	7,576	2,970	28.2

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

² The low-earnings threshold in 2012 was \$337.92 per week.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



Technical Notes

Source of data

The data presented in this report were collected in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a monthly sample survey of about 60,000 eligible households, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Data from the CPS are used to obtain the 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 2013 refer to the 2012 calendar year.

Estimates in this report are based on a sample and, consequently, may differ from figures 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, and more extensive definitions than those provided in these technical notes, see *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2012*, Current Population Reports, P60-245 (U.S. Census Bureau, September 2013). This publication is available on the U.S. Census Bureau website at www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p60-245.pdf, and additional information about income and poverty measures is available at www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/income.html.

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This information is available to sensory-impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Service: (800) 877-8339.

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.

Comparability of estimates

The data presented in this release are not strictly comparable with data for earlier years due to the introduction of updated population estimates, or controls, used in the CPS. The population controls are updated each year in January to reflect the latest information about population change. Additional information is at www.bls.gov/cps/documentation.htm#pop.

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 predicated on the basis of factors such as family size and the number of children under 18 years of age.

The actual poverty thresholds vary, due to the makeup of the family. In 2012, the weighted average poverty threshold for a family of four was \$23,492; for a family of nine or more people, the threshold was \$47,297; and for one person (unrelated individual), it was \$11,720. 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, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2012*, at www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p60-245.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 2012, the low-earnings threshold was \$337.92 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, at 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, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2012*, at www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p60-245.pdf.

Labor force. Persons 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 persons who were in the labor force for 27 weeks or more.

Working poor. The working poor are persons 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 percent of all persons who were in the labor force for at least 27 weeks during the calendar year.

Involuntary part-time workers. These are persons who, during at least 1 week of the year, worked fewer than 35 hours because of slack work or 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 persons 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.

Family. A family is defined as a group of two or more persons residing together who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. The count of families used in this report includes only primary families. A primary family consists of the reference person (householder) and all people living in the household who are related to the reference person. Families are classified either as married-couple families or as those maintained by men or women without spouses present. 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 persons who are not living with any relatives. 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 (including sons, daughters, and step-children, or 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 or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or 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 refers to persons who identified themselves in the CPS enumeration process as being of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. People whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race.