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A Profile of the Working Poor, 2011

Abstract

In 2011, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 46.2 million people, or 15.0 percent of the nation's population, lived below the official poverty level.¹ 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, 10.4 million individuals were among the "working poor" in 2011; this measure was little changed from 2010. 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. In 2011, the working-poor rate—the ratio of the working poor to all individuals in the labor force for at least 27 weeks—was 7.0 percent, slightly below the previous year's figure (7.2 percent). (See tables A and 1 and chart 1.)

Keywords

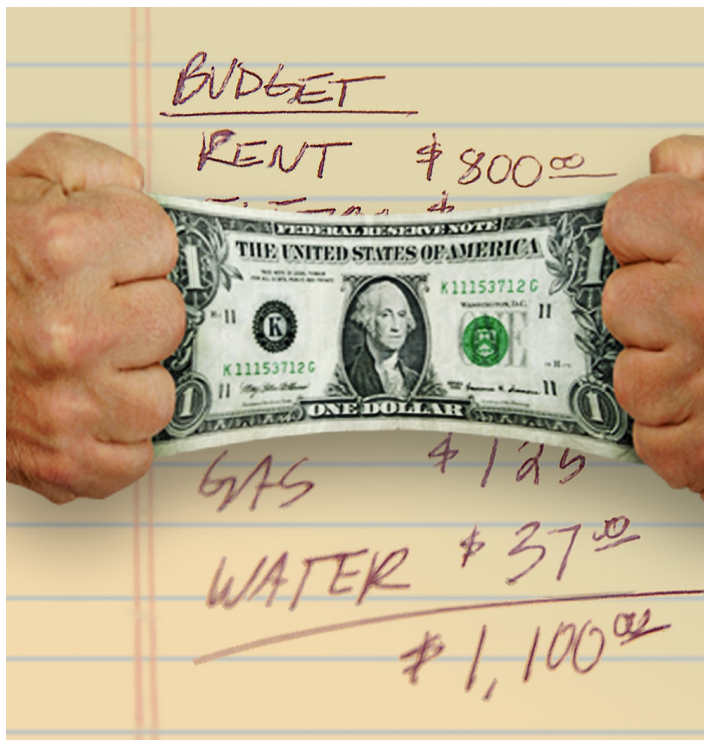
poverty, employment, working poor

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A Profile of the Working Poor, 2011



In 2011, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 46.2 million people, or 15.0 percent of the nation’s population, lived below the official poverty level.¹ 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, 10.4 million individuals were among the “working poor” in 2011; this measure was little changed from 2010. 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. In 2011, the working-poor rate—the ratio of the working poor to all individuals in the labor force for at least 27 weeks—was 7.0 percent, slightly below the previous year’s figure (7.2 percent). (See tables A and 1 and chart 1.)

Highlights

Following are additional highlights from the 2011 data:

- Full-time workers were less likely to be among the working poor than were part-time workers. Among persons 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 14.4 percent of part-time workers.
- Women were more likely than men to be among the working poor. Also, Blacks and Hispanics were more likely than 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, 2.4 percent of those who were in the labor force for at least 27 weeks were classified as working poor, compared with 20.1 percent of those with less than a high school diploma.

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Table A

Poverty status of persons and primary families in the labor force for 27 or more weeks, 2007–2011 (Numbers in thousands)					
Characteristic	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total persons¹	146,567	147,838	147,902	146,859	147,475
In poverty	7,521	8,883	10,391	10,512	10,382
Working poor rate	5.1	6.0	7.0	7.2	7.0
Unrelated individuals	33,226	32,785	33,798	34,099	33,731
In poverty	2,558	3,275	3,947	3,947	3,621
Working poor rate	7.7	10.0	11.7	11.6	10.7
Primary families²	65,158	65,907	65,467	64,931	66,225
In poverty	4,169	4,538	5,193	5,269	5,469
Working poor rate	6.4	6.9	7.9	8.1	8.3

1 Includes persons 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).

- The likelihood of being among the working poor was lower for individuals employed in management, professional, and related occupations than for those employed in service jobs.
- 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 2011 for workers and their families. 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. Data for this report were collected in the 2012 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey.

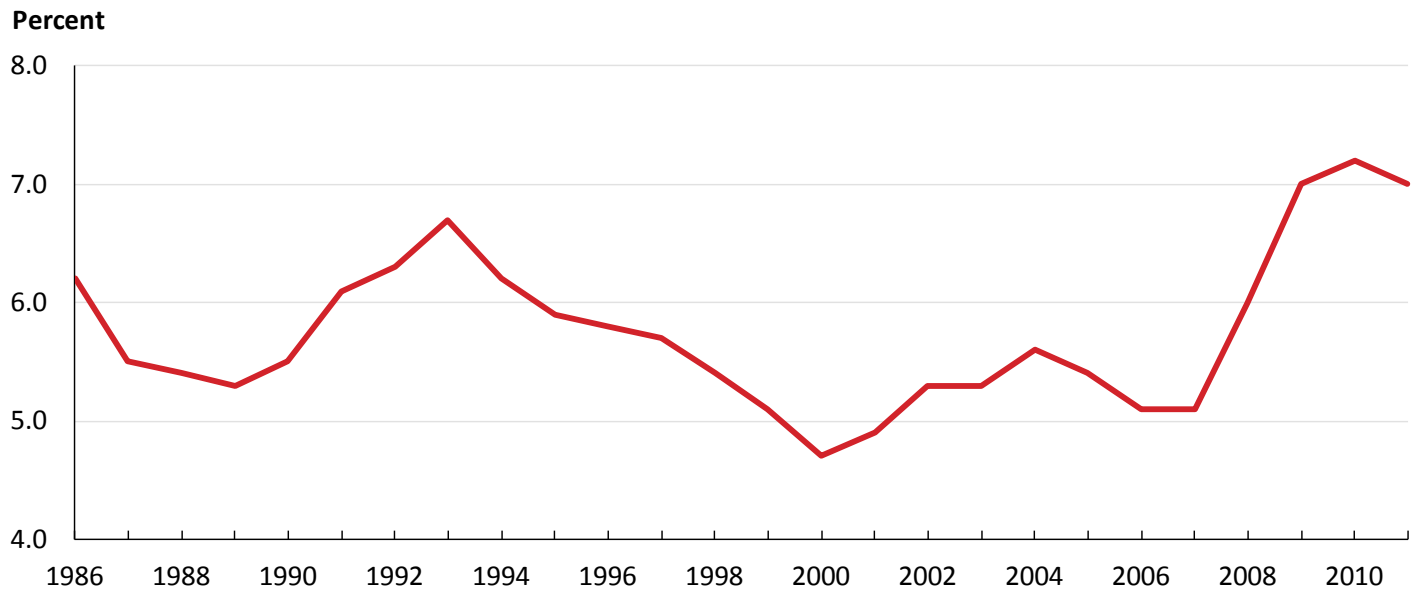
(For a detailed description of the source of the data and an explanation of the concepts and definitions used in this report, see the technical notes at the end of this report.)

Demographic characteristics

Among those who were in the labor force for 27 weeks or more in 2011, the number of women classified as working poor (5.5 million) was higher than that of men (4.9 million). The working-poor rate also was higher for women than for men. The working-poor rate for women rose from 7.6 percent to 8.0 percent over the year, while the working-poor rate for men declined from 6.7 to 6.2 percent. (See table 2.)

Blacks and Hispanics were more likely than Whites and Asians to be among the working poor. In 2011, 13.3 percent of Blacks and 12.9 percent of Hispanics were among the working poor, compared with 6.1 percent of Whites and 5.4 percent of Asians. (See chart 2.)

Among Whites and Blacks, the working-poor rate was higher for women than for men. The rate for White women who spent at least 27 weeks in the labor force was 6.7 percent, compared with 5.6 percent for White

Chart 1**Working-poor rate of persons in the labor force for 27 or more weeks, 1986–2011**

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

men. The rates for Black women and men were 15.6 percent and 10.5 percent, respectively. Among Asians and Hispanics, the rates for women and men were little different from each other.

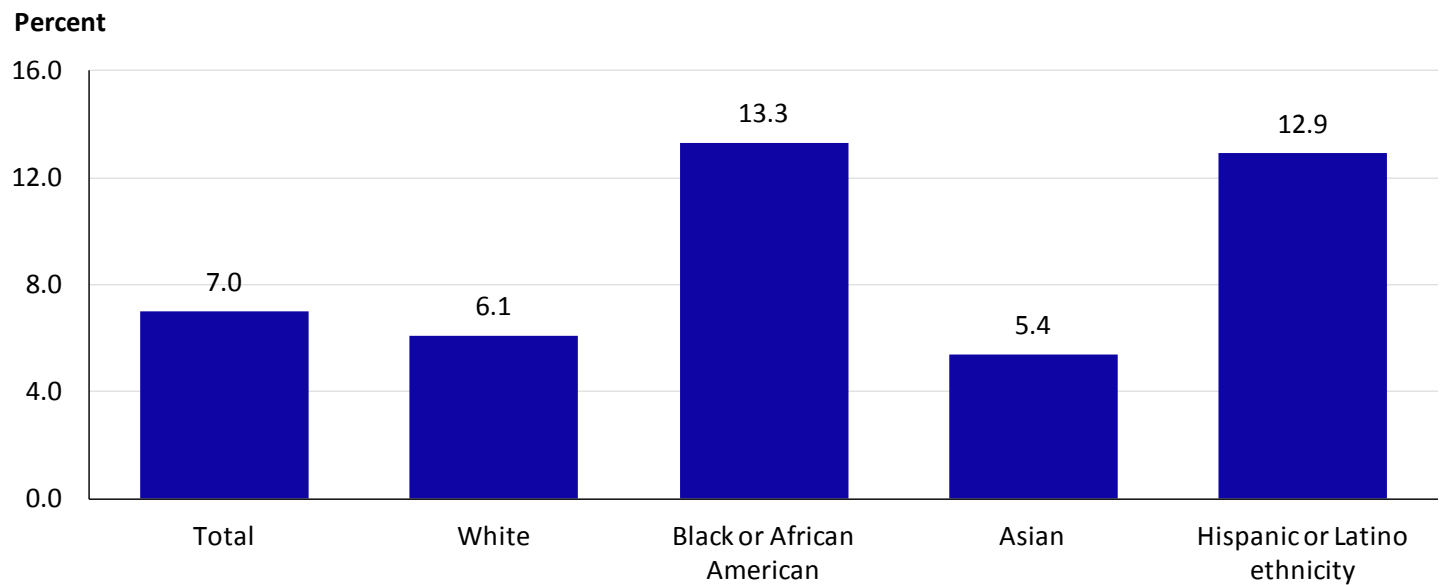
Young workers are more likely to be poor than are workers in older age groups, in part because earnings are lower for young workers, and the unemployment rate for young workers is higher. Among youths who were in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, 11.3 percent of 16- to 19-year-olds and 14.0 percent of 20- to 24-year-olds were in poverty in 2011, about double the 7.2-percent rate for workers age 35 to 44. Workers age 45 to 54, those age 55 to 64, and workers age 65 and older had lower working-poor rates—5.1 percent, 3.9 percent, and 1.7 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 2011, those with less than a high school diploma had a higher working-poor rate (20.1 percent) than did high school graduates with no college (9.2 percent). Workers with an associate's degree (4.6 percent) and those with a bachelor's degree or higher (2.4 percent) had the lowest working-poor rates. In 2011, 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 were more likely to be among the working poor than were Whites and Asians. (See table 3.)

Among White men and women, the working poor rates at each major educational category were similar. For example, 17.5 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 21.2 percent of their female counterparts. For White men and women who had a bachelor's degree or higher, the proportions classified as working poor were 2.0 percent and 2.2 percent, respectively. In contrast, Black men with less than a high school diploma were considerably less likely than their female counterparts to be among the working poor—

Chart 2**Working-poor rates of persons in the labor force for 27 or more weeks by race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2011**

Note: Persons 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.

22.2 percent, compared with 37.0 percent. Among Black men and women with a bachelor's degree or higher, the working-poor rates were closer (3.7 percent and 5.0 percent, respectively). The working-poor rate for Hispanic or Latino men with less than a high school diploma was somewhat lower than that for their female counterparts—20.7 percent and 26.5 percent, respectively. The rates for Hispanic men and women with a bachelor's degree or higher were similar, at 4.2 percent and 4.0 percent, respectively. The working-poor rates for Asians with less than a high school diploma were 11.0 percent for men and 16.6 percent for women. Working-poor rates for Asian men and women with a bachelor's degree or higher were also similar, at 3.2 percent and 2.8 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 less likely to be classified as working poor, 2.2 percent in 2011. In 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, 13.1 percent of service workers were classified as working poor in 2011. Indeed, service occupations, with 3.3 million working poor, accounted for nearly one-third of all those classified as working poor. Among those employed in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations, 9.1 percent of workers were classified as working poor. Within this occupation group, 17.2 percent of workers employed in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations and 10.6 percent of those in construction and extraction occupations were among the working poor. (See table 4.)

Families

In 2011, 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 slightly above the 2010 figure (5.3 million). Among families with only one member in the labor force for at least 27 weeks in 2011, married-couple families had a lower likelihood of living below the

poverty level (9.5 percent) than did families maintained by women (27.2 percent) or by men (15.8 percent)—a pattern that held, regardless of which member of the married-couple family was in the labor force. (See table 5.)

Families with children with at least one member in the labor force for half the year were more likely to live below the poverty level than those without children. The proportion of families with children age 18 years and younger that lived in poverty was 13.1 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 (28.7 percent) was higher than that for those maintained by men (16.7 percent). Married-couple families with children had a working-poor rate of 7.4 percent in 2011.

Unrelated individuals

The “unrelated individuals” category includes individuals who live by themselves or with others not related to them. Of the 33.7 million unrelated individuals who were in the labor force for half the year or longer, 3.6 million lived below the poverty level in 2011. The working-poor rate for unrelated individuals was 10.7 percent. Both the working-poor level and rate were slightly lower from a year earlier. (See table 6.)

Within the group of unrelated individuals, teenagers were the most likely to be among the working poor. In 2011, 40.3 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 rates for men and women living alone or with unrelated individuals were 9.6 and 12.1 percent, respectively. The working-poor rates for unrelated individuals were higher for Hispanics (14.9 percent) and Blacks (14.6 percent) than for Whites (10.0 percent) and Asians (8.6 percent). (See table 7.)

Of the 3.6 million unrelated individuals considered to be among the working poor in 2011, about three-fifths 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, workers 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 4.0 percent, were classified as working poor in 2011—little changed 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 2011, 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 66 percent subject to low earnings, either alone or in combination with other labor market problems. About 39 percent experienced unemployment alone 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 695,000, or 16 percent, of the working poor who usually worked full time did not experience any of the three primary labor market problems in 2011. 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: 2011*, Current Population Reports, P60-243 (U.S. Census Bureau, September 2012), table 3, at www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p60-243.pdf.

A PROFILE OF THE WORKING POOR, 2011

Table 1. **People in the labor force: poverty status and work experience by weeks in the labor force, 2011**

(Numbers in thousands)

Poverty status and work experience	Total in the labor force	27 or more weeks in the labor force	
		Total	50 to 52 weeks
Total			
Total in labor force	159,693	147,475	135,637
Did not work during the year	6,214	4,040	3,511
Worked during the year	153,479	143,435	132,126
Usual full-time workers	120,585	116,587	110,260
Usual part-time workers	32,895	26,849	21,867
Involuntary part-time workers	10,390	9,194	8,012
Voluntary part-time workers	22,505	17,655	13,855
At or above poverty level			
Total in labor force	146,847	137,094	126,697
Did not work during the year	3,926	2,449	2,135
Worked during the year	142,921	134,645	124,563
Usual full-time workers	114,928	111,673	105,886
Usual part-time workers	27,992	22,972	18,676
Involuntary part-time workers	7,921	7,031	6,119
Voluntary part-time workers	20,071	15,941	12,557
Below poverty level			
Total in labor force	12,847	10,382	8,940
Did not work during the year	2,288	1,591	1,376
Worked during the year	10,559	8,790	7,564
Usual full-time workers	5,657	4,914	4,374
Usual part-time workers	4,902	3,877	3,190
Involuntary part-time workers	2,469	2,163	1,893
Voluntary part-time workers	2,433	1,713	1,298
Rate¹			
Total in labor force	8.0	7.0	6.6
Did not work during the year	36.8	39.4	39.2
Worked during the year	6.9	6.1	5.7
Usual full-time workers	4.7	4.2	4.0
Usual part-time workers	14.9	14.4	14.6
Involuntary part-time workers	23.8	23.5	23.6
Voluntary part-time workers	10.8	9.7	9.4

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, 2011

Table 2. People in the labor force for 27 or more weeks: poverty status by age, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2011

(Numbers in thousands)

Age and sex	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	147,475	118,070	17,330	7,825	22,503	10,382	7,175	2,299	423	2,905
16 to 19 years	3,263	2,612	400	113	613	370	271	76	9	109
20 to 24 years	13,245	10,332	1,864	448	2,731	1,855	1,245	449	43	395
25 to 34 years	31,907	24,688	4,096	1,934	6,236	2,989	2,048	705	99	922
35 to 44 years	32,029	24,987	4,011	2,091	5,841	2,307	1,612	449	126	829
45 to 54 years	34,625	28,049	3,969	1,774	4,467	1,765	1,185	409	100	427
55 to 64 years	24,583	20,664	2,330	1,164	2,097	964	703	196	41	202
65 years and older	7,823	6,738	660	301	516	131	111	14	4	21
Men, 16 years and older	78,349	64,045	7,989	4,125	12,936	4,855	3,564	838	224	1,596
16 to 19 years	1,574	1,286	177	41	343	185	143	34	2	62
20 to 24 years	6,845	5,436	863	248	1,546	764	536	159	21	201
25 to 34 years	17,276	13,741	1,876	1,030	3,805	1,340	1,017	208	55	497
35 to 44 years	17,288	13,849	1,839	1,126	3,369	1,150	857	170	71	474
45 to 54 years	18,215	15,012	1,839	924	2,464	916	645	168	56	254
55 to 64 years	12,686	10,818	1,071	578	1,135	459	332	94	19	105
65 years and older	4,465	3,902	323	179	275	40	34	6	-	4
Women, 16 years and older	69,127	54,025	9,341	3,700	9,566	5,527	3,612	1,461	199	1,309
16 to 19 years	1,689	1,326	223	72	270	185	128	42	7	48
20 to 24 years	6,400	4,895	1,001	200	1,185	1,091	709	290	22	195
25 to 34 years	14,632	10,947	2,220	904	2,432	1,649	1,031	497	44	425
35 to 44 years	14,741	11,137	2,172	965	2,473	1,157	755	280	55	355
45 to 54 years	16,409	13,037	2,131	850	2,004	849	540	241	44	173
55 to 64 years	11,897	9,846	1,259	586	962	505	371	102	22	97
65 years and older	3,358	2,836	336	123	241	91	77	8	4	17

Age and sex	Rate ¹				
	Total	White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic or Latino ethnicity
Total, 16 years and older	7.0	6.1	13.3	5.4	12.9
16 to 19 years	11.3	10.4	19.1	8.1	17.8
20 to 24 years	14.0	12.0	24.1	9.7	14.5
25 to 34 years	9.4	8.3	17.2	5.1	14.8
35 to 44 years	7.2	6.5	11.2	6.0	14.2
45 to 54 years	5.1	4.2	10.3	5.6	9.6
55 to 64 years	3.9	3.4	8.4	3.5	9.6
65 years and older	1.7	1.6	2.1	1.4	4.1
Men, 16 years and older	6.2	5.6	10.5	5.4	12.3
16 to 19 years	11.8	11.1	19.4	(²)	17.9
20 to 24 years	11.2	9.9	18.4	8.4	13.0
25 to 34 years	7.8	7.4	11.1	5.3	13.1
35 to 44 years	6.7	6.2	9.2	6.3	14.1
45 to 54 years	5.0	4.3	9.1	6.0	10.3
55 to 64 years	3.6	3.1	8.8	3.2	9.3
65 years and older	0.9	0.9	1.7	0.1	1.4
Women, 16 years and older	8.0	6.7	15.6	5.4	13.7
16 to 19 years	10.9	9.7	18.8	(²)	17.6
20 to 24 years	17.0	14.5	29.0	11.2	16.4
25 to 34 years	11.3	9.4	22.4	4.9	17.5
35 to 44 years	7.8	6.8	12.9	5.7	14.3
45 to 54 years	5.2	4.1	11.3	5.2	8.6
55 to 64 years	4.2	3.8	8.1	3.8	10.0
65 years and older	2.7	2.7	2.5	3.1	7.1

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

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. Persons 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, 2011

Table 3. People in the labor force for 27 or more weeks: poverty status by educational attainment, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, 2011

(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	147,475	78,349	69,127	10,382	4,855	5,527	7.0	6.2	8.0
Less than a high school diploma	13,636	8,454	5,182	2,738	1,516	1,222	20.1	17.9	23.6
Less than 1 year of high school	4,469	2,965	1,505	974	597	377	21.8	20.1	25.1
1-3 years of high school	7,437	4,424	3,013	1,469	765	704	19.8	17.3	23.4
4 years of high school, no diploma	1,729	1,065	664	295	155	140	17.0	14.5	21.1
High school graduates, no college ²	41,178	23,474	17,705	3,800	1,799	2,000	9.2	7.7	11.3
Some college or associate's degree	43,373	21,177	22,196	2,680	980	1,700	6.2	4.6	7.7
Some college, no degree	28,028	14,133	13,895	1,972	725	1,246	7.0	5.1	9.0
Associate's degree	15,345	7,044	8,300	708	255	453	4.6	3.6	5.5
Bachelor's degree and higher ³	49,289	25,244	24,045	1,164	559	605	2.4	2.2	2.5
White, 16 years and older	118,070	64,045	54,025	7,175	3,564	3,612	6.1	5.6	6.7
Less than a high school diploma	10,815	6,937	3,878	2,034	1,213	821	18.8	17.5	21.2
Less than 1 year of high school	3,847	2,604	1,243	853	541	312	22.2	20.8	25.1
1-3 years of high school	5,739	3,539	2,200	996	567	430	17.4	16.0	19.5
4 years of high school, no diploma	1,229	794	435	185	105	80	15.1	13.3	18.3
High school graduates, no college ²	32,776	19,094	13,682	2,487	1,278	1,210	7.6	6.7	8.8
Some college or associate's degree	34,491	17,157	17,334	1,823	655	1,169	5.3	3.8	6.7
Some college, no degree	21,939	11,260	10,679	1,338	479	860	6.1	4.3	8.1
Associate's degree	12,551	5,897	6,654	485	176	309	3.9	3.0	4.6
Bachelor's degree and higher ³	39,987	20,857	19,131	831	419	412	2.1	2.0	2.2
Black or African American, 16 years and older	17,330	7,989	9,341	2,299	838	1,461	13.3	10.5	15.6
Less than a high school diploma	1,727	891	836	507	198	309	29.3	22.2	37.0
Less than 1 year of high school	260	152	108	66	31	35	25.3	20.4	32.4
1-3 years of high school	1,143	568	575	356	134	221	31.1	23.6	38.5
4 years of high school, no diploma	324	171	153	85	33	52	26.3	19.1	34.2
High school graduates, no college ²	5,637	2,877	2,760	997	358	639	17.7	12.4	23.2
Some college or associate's degree	5,847	2,558	3,289	611	221	389	10.4	8.7	11.8
Some college, no degree	4,125	1,903	2,221	476	181	295	11.5	9.5	13.3
Associate's degree	1,723	655	1,068	135	40	95	7.8	6.1	8.9
Bachelor's degree and higher ³	4,119	1,662	2,456	184	61	123	4.5	3.7	5.0
Asian, 16 years and older	7,825	4,125	3,700	423	224	199	5.4	5.4	5.4
Less than a high school diploma	568	293	275	78	32	46	13.7	11.0	16.6
Less than 1 year of high school	231	119	112	33	9	24	14.4	7.8	21.5
1-3 years of high school	244	126	118	38	18	19	15.5	14.6	16.4
4 years of high school, no diploma	94	49	45	7	5	2	7.2	(⁴)	(⁴)
High school graduates, no college ²	1,468	760	708	128	74	54	8.7	9.8	7.7
Some college or associate's degree	1,523	777	746	87	44	43	5.7	5.6	5.8
Some college, no degree	944	491	453	54	28	26	5.8	5.7	5.8
Associate's degree	580	287	293	33	16	17	5.7	5.6	5.8
Bachelor's degree and higher ³	4,265	2,295	1,970	129	73	56	3.0	3.2	2.8
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 16 years and older	22,503	12,936	9,566	2,905	1,596	1,309	12.9	12.3	13.7
Less than a high school diploma	6,526	4,302	2,223	1,478	889	589	22.7	20.7	26.5
Less than 1 year of high school	3,384	2,275	1,109	788	507	281	23.3	22.3	25.3
1-3 years of high school	2,483	1,571	911	565	309	256	22.8	19.7	28.1
4 years of high school, no diploma	658	456	203	125	73	52	19.0	16.1	25.7
High school graduates, no college ²	7,035	4,226	2,808	878	486	391	12.5	11.5	13.9
Some college or associate's degree	5,546	2,798	2,749	411	153	258	7.4	5.5	9.4
Some college, no degree	3,890	2,007	1,883	292	109	183	7.5	5.5	9.7
Associate's degree	1,657	791	866	118	43	75	7.2	5.5	8.7
Bachelor's degree and higher ³	3,396	1,610	1,786	138	68	71	4.1	4.2	4.0

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

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. Persons 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, 2011

Table 4. People in the labor force for 27 or more weeks who worked during the year: poverty status by occupation of longest job held, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, 2011

(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	147,475	78,349	69,127	10,382	4,855	5,527	7.0	6.2	8.0
Management, professional, and related occupations	52,974	25,690	27,285	1,177	481	696	2.2	1.9	2.6
Management, business, and financial operations									
occupations	22,251	12,601	9,650	490	253	237	2.2	2.0	2.5
Professional and related occupations	30,723	13,088	17,635	687	228	459	2.2	1.7	2.6
Service occupations	25,117	11,167	13,950	3,279	1,115	2,165	13.1	10.0	15.5
Sales and office occupations	33,289	12,731	20,557	2,272	747	1,524	6.8	5.9	7.4
Sales and related occupations	15,045	7,797	7,248	1,267	433	834	8.4	5.6	11.5
Office and administrative support occupations	18,244	4,934	13,310	1,005	315	690	5.5	6.4	5.2
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance									
occupations	13,326	12,759	566	1,212	1,133	79	9.1	8.9	14.0
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	1,000	781	218	172	138	34	17.2	17.7	15.5
Construction and extraction occupations	7,595	7,421	173	806	777	29	10.6	10.5	17.0
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,731	4,557	175	234	218	16	4.9	4.8	9.2
Production, transportation, and material-moving									
occupations	17,574	13,678	3,896	1,414	968	445	8.0	7.1	11.4
Production occupations	8,835	6,286	2,549	654	380	274	7.4	6.0	10.7
Transportation and material-moving occupations	8,738	7,392	1,346	760	588	172	8.7	8.0	12.8
White, 16 years and older ²	118,070	64,045	54,025	7,175	3,564	3,612	6.1	5.6	6.7
Management, professional, and related occupations	43,510	21,519	21,992	858	389	469	2.0	1.8	2.1
Management, business, and financial operations									
occupations	18,724	10,880	7,843	369	205	164	2.0	1.9	2.1
Professional and related occupations	24,787	10,638	14,148	489	184	305	2.0	1.7	2.2
Service occupations	18,430	8,327	10,102	2,123	769	1,354	11.5	9.2	13.4
Sales and office occupations	26,776	10,323	16,453	1,563	498	1,065	5.8	4.8	6.5
Sales and related occupations	12,310	6,587	5,723	887	307	580	7.2	4.7	10.1
Office and administrative support occupations	14,466	3,736	10,731	677	191	485	4.7	5.1	4.5
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance									
occupations	11,643	11,192	451	1,045	974	71	9.0	8.7	15.7
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	860	682	178	146	116	30	17.0	17.0	16.9
Construction and extraction occupations	6,726	6,576	150	704	678	26	10.5	10.3	17.2
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	4,056	3,933	123	195	180	15	4.8	4.6	12.2
Production, transportation, and material-moving									
occupations	13,834	10,932	2,901	968	680	287	7.0	6.2	9.9
Production occupations	7,038	5,170	1,869	462	298	164	6.6	5.8	8.8
Transportation and material-moving occupations	6,795	5,763	1,033	506	383	123	7.4	6.6	11.9
Black or African American, 16 years and older ²	17,330	7,989	9,341	2,299	838	1,461	13.3	10.5	15.6
Management, professional, and related occupations	4,763	1,759	3,004	216	45	171	4.5	2.6	5.7
Management, business, and financial operations									
occupations	1,784	793	991	65	19	46	3.6	2.4	4.6
Professional and related occupations	2,979	966	2,013	152	26	125	5.1	2.7	6.2
Service occupations	4,287	1,718	2,569	861	224	637	20.1	13.0	24.8
Sales and office occupations	3,926	1,351	2,575	476	161	315	12.1	11.9	12.2
Sales and related occupations	1,510	599	910	247	67	180	16.3	11.1	19.8
Office and administrative support occupations	2,417	752	1,665	229	94	135	9.5	12.6	8.1
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance									
occupations	1,006	946	60	102	95	7	10.1	10.1	(³)
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	72	50	22	14	12	2	(³)	(³)	(³)
Construction and extraction occupations	558	545	13	59	55	4	10.6	10.1	(³)
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	377	352	25	30	28	1	7.8	8.1	(³)
Production, transportation, and material-moving									
occupations	2,453	1,819	634	317	191	126	12.9	10.5	20.0
Production occupations	1,044	652	392	121	38	84	11.6	5.8	21.3
Transportation and material-moving occupations	1,408	1,167	242	196	153	43	13.9	13.1	17.8

See footnotes at end of table.

A PROFILE OF THE WORKING POOR, 2011

Table 4. People in the labor force for 27 or more weeks who worked during the year: poverty status by occupation of longest job held, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, 2011 — 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	7,825	4,125	3,700	423	224	199	5.4	5.4	5.4
Management, professional, and related occupations	3,514	1,914	1,600	62	37	25	1.8	2.0	1.6
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	1,233	679	554	30	20	10	2.4	3.0	1.8
Professional and related occupations	2,281	1,235	1,046	32	17	15	1.4	1.4	1.4
Service occupations	1,410	631	779	148	57	91	10.5	9.0	11.6
Sales and office occupations	1,604	711	893	92	55	37	5.7	7.7	4.1
Sales and related occupations	785	407	377	63	40	23	8.1	9.8	6.2
Office and administrative support occupations	820	304	516	28	15	14	3.5	4.9	2.6
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	299	267	32	28	27	2	9.5	10.0	(³)
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	36	23	13	-	-	2	(³)	(³)	(³)
Construction and extraction occupations	117	112	5	16	16	-	13.8	14.4	(³)
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	146	132	14	8	8	-	5.5	6.1	(³)
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	762	508	254	60	40	20	7.8	7.9	7.8
Production occupations	516	298	218	44	26	18	8.5	8.6	8.3
Transportation and material-moving occupations	246	210	36	16	14	2	6.5	6.9	(³)
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 16 years and older ²	22,503	12,936	9,566	2,905	1,596	1,309	12.9	12.3	13.7
Management, professional, and related occupations	4,165	1,901	2,264	149	52	97	3.6	2.8	4.3
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	1,787	944	844	66	34	33	3.7	3.6	3.9
Professional and related occupations	2,378	957	1,420	83	19	64	3.5	2.0	4.5
Service occupations	5,830	2,898	2,931	1,002	424	578	17.2	14.6	19.7
Sales and office occupations	4,656	1,812	2,844	492	160	332	10.6	8.8	11.7
Sales and related occupations	2,005	938	1,067	264	83	181	13.2	8.9	17.0
Office and administrative support occupations	2,651	874	1,777	228	76	152	8.6	8.8	8.5
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	3,390	3,219	171	567	536	31	16.7	16.6	18.2
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	462	353	109	107	84	23	23.1	23.9	20.6
Construction and extraction occupations	2,196	2,156	41	391	384	7	17.8	17.8	(³)
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	732	710	21	69	68	1	9.4	9.5	(³)
Production, transportation, and material-moving occupations	3,674	2,717	957	470	327	143	12.8	12.0	15.0
Production occupations	1,888	1,245	643	202	119	83	10.7	9.6	12.9
Transportation and material-moving occupations	1,786	1,472	314	268	207	61	15.0	14.1	19.4

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

² Includes 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. Persons 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, 2011

Table 5. **Primary families: poverty status, presence of related children, and work experience of family members in the labor force for 27 or more weeks, 2011**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total families	At or above poverty level	Below poverty level	Rate ¹
Total primary families	66,225	60,756	5,469	8.3
With related children under 18 years	34,925	30,358	4,567	13.1
Without children	31,300	30,399	902	2.9
With one member in the labor force	28,759	24,292	4,467	15.5
With two or more members in the labor force	37,466	36,465	1,001	2.7
With two members	31,471	30,587	884	2.8
With three or more members	5,995	5,878	117	2.0
Married-couple families	48,837	46,559	2,279	4.7
With related children under 18 years	24,153	22,360	1,793	7.4
Without children	24,684	24,199	486	2.0
With one member in the labor force	16,930	15,317	1,613	9.5
Husband	12,061	10,831	1,231	10.2
Wife	4,215	3,884	331	7.9
Relative	654	603	51	7.8
With two or more members in the labor force	31,908	31,242	666	2.1
With two members	27,085	26,492	594	2.2
With three or more members	4,823	4,750	72	1.5
Families maintained by women	12,322	9,707	2,615	21.2
With related children under 18 years	8,122	5,789	2,333	28.7
Without children	4,200	3,918	282	6.7
With one member in the labor force	8,656	6,303	2,353	27.2
Householder	7,108	5,066	2,042	28.7
Relative	1,547	1,237	310	20.1
With two or more members in the labor force	3,666	3,404	263	7.2
Families maintained by men	5,065	4,491	575	11.3
With related children under 18 years	2,649	2,208	441	16.7
Without children	2,416	2,283	134	5.5
With one member in the labor force	3,174	2,672	502	15.8
Householder	2,585	2,176	409	15.8
Relative	589	496	93	15.8
With two or more members in the labor force	1,892	1,819	73	3.9

¹ Number below the poverty level as a percent of the total in the labor force for 27 or more weeks.
 NOTE: Data relate to primary families with at least one member in the labor force for 27 or more weeks.
 SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

A PROFILE OF THE WORKING POOR, 2011

Table 6. People in families and unrelated individuals: poverty status and work experience, 2011

(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	242,602	58,262	58,924	5,568	20,661	15,646	2,317	13,469	5,861	598	6,049	55,248
With labor force activity	159,693	44,556	36,939	1,225	12,888	11,060	389	8,164	4,427	115	3,952	35,977
1 to 26 weeks	12,218	1,430	2,639	726	2,556	771	219	1,003	160	64	405	2,246
27 or more weeks	147,475	43,126	34,300	500	10,333	10,289	170	7,161	4,267	51	3,548	33,731
With no labor force activity	82,909	13,706	21,985	4,342	7,772	4,586	1,928	5,305	1,433	484	2,097	19,271
At or above poverty level												
All people ¹	211,044	54,662	55,274	5,116	19,390	10,758	1,511	10,940	4,918	495	5,413	42,568
With labor force activity	146,847	42,559	35,833	1,185	12,447	8,372	312	7,209	3,905	106	3,688	31,231
1 to 26 weeks	9,753	1,287	2,414	714	2,426	342	169	771	111	56	343	1,121
27 or more weeks	137,094	41,272	33,419	471	10,021	8,030	143	6,439	3,794	49	3,345	30,110
With no labor force activity	64,198	12,103	19,440	3,931	6,942	2,386	1,199	3,731	1,013	389	1,725	11,337
Below poverty level												
All people ¹	31,558	3,600	3,650	452	1,271	4,888	806	2,529	942	103	636	12,680
With labor force activity	12,847	1,997	1,106	40	441	2,688	77	955	522	9	264	4,746
1 to 26 weeks	2,465	143	225	12	130	429	50	232	50	7	62	1,126
27 or more weeks	10,382	1,854	880	29	311	2,260	27	723	473	—	202	3,621
With no labor force activity	18,712	1,603	2,545	411	830	2,200	729	1,574	420	94	372	7,934
Rate²												
All people ¹	13.0	6.2	6.2	8.1	6.2	31.2	34.8	18.8	16.1	17.3	10.5	23.0
With labor force activity	8.0	4.5	3.0	3.3	3.4	24.3	19.8	11.7	11.8	7.8	6.7	13.2
1 to 26 weeks	20.2	10.0	8.5	1.6	5.1	55.6	22.8	23.2	30.9	(³)	15.3	50.1
27 or more weeks	7.0	4.3	2.6	5.7	3.0	22.0	15.9	10.1	11.1	(³)	5.7	10.7
With no labor force activity	22.6	11.7	11.6	9.5	10.7	48.0	37.8	29.7	29.3	19.5	17.7	41.2

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

A PROFILE OF THE WORKING POOR, 2011

Table 7. Unrelated individuals in the labor force for 27 or more weeks: poverty status by age, sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and living arrangement, 2011

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total	At or above poverty level	Below poverty level	Rate ¹
Age and sex				
Total unrelated individuals	33,731	30,110	3,621	10.7
16 to 19 years	319	191	128	40.3
20 to 24 years	3,902	3,079	824	21.1
25 to 64 years	27,421	24,818	2,602	9.5
65 years and older	2,089	2,023	66	3.2
Men	18,656	16,864	1,793	9.6
Women	15,075	13,246	1,828	12.1
Race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity				
White	26,905	24,227	2,678	10.0
Men	15,111	13,786	1,325	8.8
Women	11,794	10,441	1,352	11.5
Black or African American	4,504	3,848	656	14.6
Men	2,334	2,001	333	14.3
Women	2,170	1,847	323	14.9
Asian	1,203	1,099	104	8.6
Men	620	578	42	6.7
Women	583	521	62	10.6
Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	4,336	3,691	645	14.9
Men	2,807	2,445	362	12.9
Women	1,529	1,247	282	18.5
Living arrangement				
Living alone	17,772	16,339	1,433	8.1
Living with others	15,959	13,771	2,188	13.7

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

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. Persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Table 8. **People in the labor force for 27 or more weeks: poverty status and labor market problems of full-time wage and salary workers, 2011**

(Numbers in thousands)

Labor market problems	Total	At or above poverty level	Below poverty level	Rate ¹
Total, full-time wage and salary workers	110,512	106,142	4,369	4.0
No unemployment, involuntary part-time employment, or low earnings ²	89,085	88,389	695	.8
Unemployment only	6,821	6,192	629	9.2
Involuntary part-time employment only	2,806	2,741	65	2.3
Low earnings only	7,376	5,719	1,657	22.5
Unemployment and involuntary part-time employment	1,213	1,109	104	8.6
Unemployment and low earnings	1,817	1,098	719	39.6
Involuntary part-time employment and low earnings	849	606	244	28.7
Unemployment, involuntary part-time employment, and low earnings	545	289	256	46.9
Unemployment (alone or with other problems)	10,396	8,688	1,708	16.4
Involuntary part-time employment (alone or with other problems)	5,413	4,745	668	12.3
Low earnings (alone or with other problems)	10,587	7,711	2,876	27.2

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

² The low-earnings threshold in 2011 was \$331.07 per week.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



Technical Notes

4675, Washington, DC 20212; email: cpsinfo@bls.gov; or telephone (202) 691-6378.

Source of data

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 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 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 2012 refer to the 2011 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: 2011*, Current Population Reports, P60-243 (U.S. Census Bureau, September 2012). This publication is available on the U.S. Census Bureau website at www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p60-243.pdf, and additional information about income and poverty measures is available at www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/income.html.

Information in this report will be made available to sensory-impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Service: (800) 877-8339. This material is in the public domain and, with appropriate credit, may be reproduced without permission.

For more information on the data provided in this report, write to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Division of Labor Force Statistics, 2 Massachusetts Avenue NE, Room

Comparability of estimates

The 2011 estimates in this report, which were collected in the 2012 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS, are not strictly comparable with data for 2010 and earlier years because of the introduction in January 2012 of revised population controls used in the CPS. 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 2011, the average poverty threshold for a family of four was \$23,021; for a family of nine or more persons, the threshold was \$46,572; and for an unrelated individual aged 65 years or older, it was \$10,788. 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: 2011*, at www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p60-243.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 2011, the low-earnings threshold was \$331.07 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: 2011*, at www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p60-243.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 occupation 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.