

Current Employment Statistics

Organization: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), U.S. Department of Labor. “The Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor is the principal Federal agency responsible for measuring labor market activity, working conditions, and price changes in the economy.”¹

Purpose and Uses: The Current Employment Statistics (CES) program provides monthly statistics on employment, hours, and earnings, by industry and geography, based on payroll records of business establishments. CES data are used in economic policy, other federal statistical products, wage negotiations, and academic and industry research.²

Data Elements Relevant to Postsecondary Education and Workforce Development:

- All employees
- Production or nonsupervisory employees (depending on industry)
- Women employees
- Average weekly hours
- Average hourly earnings (constant dollar and current dollar)
- Average weekly earnings
- Average overtime hours in manufacturing
- Indexes of aggregate hours and payrolls

Data are available for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and over 400 metropolitan areas and divisions. There are over 200 special derivative series, such as indices of aggregate hours and constant dollar earnings.

History and Status: The CES program is a Federal-State cooperative program. During the Great Depression, Congress gave the BLS the duty to collect and publish annual and monthly information on employment, average wages, and hours worked by area and industry. By 1939, 17 States were cooperating in obtaining employment and payroll data in manufacturing establishments. With budget cuts in 1947, the BLS shifted data compilation to State employment agencies under cooperative agreements. According to BLS:

By 1940, estimates of total nonfarm employment for all 48 States and the District of Columbia were available. Since 1949, the CES program has been a Federal-State program that provides employment, hours, and earnings information by industry on a national, State, and metropolitan area basis. By 1980, cooperative arrangements were in effect with all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.³

The CES program is authorized by 29 USC 2 and has OMB clearance through October 2014.

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics website, www.bls.gov.

² For list of uses, see <http://www.bls.gov/sae/790over.htm#datauses>.

³ *BLS Handbook of Methods*, [Chapter 2: Employment, Hours, and Earnings from the Establishment Survey](#).

Methodology: According to BLS, “The [CES] sample includes about 140,000 businesses and government agencies, which cover approximately 440,000 individual worksites drawn from a sampling frame of roughly 9.0 million Unemployment Insurance tax accounts. The active CES sample includes approximately one-third of all nonfarm payroll employees.”⁴ The CES probability sample is a stratified, simple random sample, where the strata are defined by state, industry (NAICS) major industry division, and employment size.⁵ Data on employment, hours, and earnings from employer payroll records are collected monthly for the pay period that includes the 12th of each month.

The CES program is voluntary under federal statute. Reporting to the state agencies is voluntary in all but four states (Oregon, Washington, North Carolina, and South Carolina), Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Automated data collection methods are used for most of the CES sample.

Monthly CES data are among the timeliest of the principal federal economic indicators, released three weeks after the reference week and typically on the first Friday of each month.⁶

Data Products and Tools: The BLS website provides access to CES data through [online databases](#).

Annual Cost: The FY 2012 total cost of the CES program was \$59.1 million, of which BLS awarded \$7.9 million as grants to SWAs. For FY 2015, the President has requested \$61.3 million for CES.

⁴ *Ibid.* The FY2015 BLS budget request indicates that, if fully funded, the CES program “will survey a sample of about 145,000 businesses (composed of approximately 577,000 individual worksites) nationwide.”

⁵ ICR-OIRA review of Report on Current Employment Statistics. Supporting Statement B. 2011

http://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewDocument?ref_nbr=201103-1220-008.

⁶ Reference: *BLS Handbook of Methods*, [Chapter 2: Employment, Hours, and Earnings from the Establishment Survey](#).