**Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Impact on 2020 Household Survey Data**

Labor force statistics, including the unemployment rate, are based upon estimates from the Current Population Survey of households. Nonfarm employment data are provided by the BLS’ Current Employment Statistics survey program. The household survey measures labor force status, including unemployment, by demographic characteristics. The establishment survey measures nonfarm employment, hours, and earnings by industry.

In the establishment survey, workers who are paid by their employer for all or any part of the pay period including the 12th of the month are counted as employed, even if they were not actually at their jobs. Workers who are temporarily or permanently absent from their jobs and are not being paid are not counted as employed, even if they are continuing to receive benefits.

Since March, household survey interviewers have been instructed to classify employed persons absent from work due to temporary, coronavirus-related business closures or cutbacks as unemployed on temporary layoff, instead of employed but not at work. BLS and Census Bureau analyses of the underlying data suggest that this group still may include some workers affected by the pandemic who should have been classified as unemployed on temporary layoff. The share of responses that may have been misclassified was much smaller in recent months.

The “Impact summary” documents associated with the Employment Situation news release listed at www.bls.gov/covid19/effects-of-covid-19-pandemic-and-response-on-the-employment-situation-news-release.htm summaries extensively discuss the monthly impacts of misclassification in the household survey on the national estimates beginning in March 2020. Despite the considerable decline in its degree relative to the initial months of the pandemic, the misclassification continued to be widespread geographically through the end of 2020, with BLS analysis indicating that most states still were affected to at least some extent as of December. However, according to usual practice, the data from the household survey are accepted as recorded. To maintain data integrity, no ad hoc actions are taken to reclassify survey responses. Hence, the household survey estimates of employed and unemployed people that serve as the primary inputs to the state models were affected to varying degrees by the misclassification, which in turn affected the monthly estimates underlying the 2020 annual averages presented in the new release.

More information is available at <https://www.bls.gov/covid19/effects-of-covid-19-pandemic-and-response-on-the-employment-situation-news-release.htm>