

## THE EMPLOYMENT SITUATION: FEBRUARY 2001

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

The unemployment rate held at 4.2 percent in February, 2001. The United States government considers this a period of “full employment” and has taken steps to hold down wages and raise the unemployment rate. Even though they call it “full employment”, there have been large job losses in manufacturing, where employment declined by 94,000. However, employment gains in several other industries, including services, accounted for the net increase in payroll employment.

Both the number of unemployed persons (5.9 million) and the unemployment rate (4.2 percent) were essentially unchanged in February. The jobless rates for most of the major worker groups--adult men (3.5 percent), adult women (3.7 percent), teenagers (13.6 percent), whites (3.7 percent), and Hispanics (6.3 percent)--were little changed from January. The unemployment rate for blacks declined to 7.5 percent, the same level as in the last quarter of 2000.

Total employment was essentially unchanged at 135.8 million, seasonally adjusted, in February. The civilian labor force, at 141.8 million persons, also was little changed over the month. The labor force participation rate--the proportion of the population age 16 and older who are either working or looking for work--edged down by 0.1 percentage point to 67.2 percent, still relatively high by historical standards. About 1.3 million persons (not seasonally adjusted) were marginally attached to the labor force in February, the same as a year earlier. These people wanted and were available to work and had looked for a job sometime in the prior 12 months. They were not counted as unemployed, however, because they had not actively searched for work in the 4 weeks preceding the survey. The number of discouraged workers was 289,000 in February, about the same as a year earlier. Discouraged workers, a subset of the marginally attached, were not currently looking for work specifically because they believed no jobs were available for them.

### **Who counts as unemployed:**

Must be actively looking for work sometime during the previous four weeks.

Cannot be working part-time.

Cannot be full-time student.

### **Who is unemployed according to these criteria:**

	White	Black	Hispanic
All	3.7 (4,385,000)	7.5 (1,251,000)	6.3 (980,000)
Men, 20 and older	3.2 (1,926,000)	6.6 (487,000)	
Women, 20 and older	3.3 (1,699,000)	5.8 (482,000)	
Men, 16-19	12.6	31.7	
Women, 16-19	9.2	25.7	

### **How many people are affected by “unemployment”:**

Many unemployed people are in and out of work. The number of people unemployed at some time during the year is probably double the number of people unemployed at any one time. That means that the percentage of Black people who lose a job during the year is about 15%. This only includes people actively looking for work, people who are not working part-time and people who are not full-time students. If we add discouraged workers and people who would work full-time or leave school if they could get a job, probably a third of the adult Black population of the United States could be counted as unemployed at some point during the year. This is at a time when the United States government says there is full employment and has taken steps to hold down wages and raise the unemployment rate.