
Advance copies of this statement are made available to the press under lock-up conditions with the explicit understanding that the data are embargoed until 8:30 a.m. Eastern Standard Time.

Statement of

Erica L. Groshen
Commissioner
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Friday, March 8, 2013

Nonfarm payroll employment increased by 236,000 in February, and the unemployment rate edged down from 7.9 to 7.7 percent. In the prior 3 months, employment had risen by an average of 195,000 per month. In February, employment increased in professional and business services, construction, and health care.

Employment in professional and business services rose by 73,000 in February after being little changed (+16,000) in January. The industry had added an average of 47,000 jobs per month in 2012. In February, employment increased by 44,000 in administrative and support services, which includes employment services and services to buildings. Accounting and bookkeeping added 11,000 jobs, and employment growth continued in computer systems design and in management and technical consulting services.

Construction added 48,000 jobs in February. Since September, construction employment has increased by 151,000. In February, employment rose in residential and nonresidential specialty trade contractors (+17,000 and +15,000, respectively) and in nonresidential building (+6,000).

Health care employment increased by 32,000 over the month, with gains throughout the component industries. Health care had added an average of 25,000 jobs per month over the prior 12 months.

In February, employment in the information industry increased (+20,000), due to a large gain in the motion picture and sound recording industry. Employment continued to trend up in retail trade, food services and drinking places, and wholesale trade. Employment in other major industries showed little change over the month.

Average hourly earnings of all employees on private nonfarm payrolls rose by 4 cents in February to \$23.82. Over the past 12 months, average hourly earnings have risen by 2.1 percent. From January 2012 to January 2013, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) increased by 1.6 percent.

Turning now to our survey of households, the unemployment rate edged down in February to 7.7 percent. Both the unemployment rate and the number of unemployed persons, at 12.0 million, have shown little movement, on net, since September. In

February, the labor force participation rate was little changed at 63.5 percent, and the employment-population ratio remained at 58.6 percent.

Among persons who were neither working nor looking for work in February, 2.6 million were classified as marginally attached to the labor force, unchanged from a year earlier. These individuals had not looked for work in the 4 weeks prior to the survey but wanted a job, were available for work, and had looked for a job within the last 12 months. The number of discouraged workers, a subset of the marginally attached, edged down over the year to 885,000.

In summary, nonfarm payroll employment rose by 236,000 in February, and the unemployment rate edged down to 7.7 percent.