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Statement of

William W. Beach  
Commissioner  
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Friday, June 7, 2019

Nonfarm payroll employment edged up in May (+75,000), and the unemployment rate remained at 3.6 percent. Employment continued to trend up in professional and business services and in health care.

Incorporating revisions for March and April, which decreased employment by 75,000, monthly job gains have averaged 151,000 over the past 3 months.

Employment in professional and business services continued to trend up in May (+33,000). Over the past 12 months, the industry has added 498,000 jobs.

In May, health care employment also continued to trend up (+16,000). Health care has added 391,000 jobs over the past 12 months.

Employment in construction was little changed in May (+4,000), following an increase of 30,000 in April. The industry has added 215,000 jobs over the last 12 months.

Employment showed little change in May in other major industries--including mining, manufacturing, wholesale trade, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, information, financial activities, leisure and hospitality, and government.

Average hourly earnings of all employees on private nonfarm payrolls rose by 6 cents in May to \$27.83, following a 6-cent gain in April. Over the past 12 months, average hourly earnings have risen by 3.1 percent; the over-the-year percent change has been 3.0 percent or above for 10 consecutive months. From April 2018 to April 2019, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) increased by 2.0 percent (on a seasonally adjusted basis).

Turning to measures from the survey of households, the unemployment rate held at 3.6 percent in May. The number of unemployed people, at 5.9 million, was little changed.

Among the unemployed, the number of people searching for work for 27 weeks or more was 1.3 million, little changed over the month. These long-term unemployed accounted for 22.4 percent of the unemployed.

Both the labor force participation rate, at 62.8 percent, and the employment-population ratio, at 60.6 percent, were unchanged over the month.

In May, 4.4 million people were working part time for economic reasons (also referred to as involuntary part-time workers), down by 299,000 from the previous month and by 565,000 over the year.

Among those neither working nor looking for work in May, 1.4 million were considered marginally attached to the labor force, little changed from a year earlier. (People who are marginally attached to the labor force 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.) Discouraged workers, a subset of the marginally attached who believed no jobs were available for them, numbered 338,000 in May, also little changed from a year earlier.

In summary, nonfarm payroll employment edged up in May (+75,000), and the unemployment rate remained at 3.6 percent.