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Technical information: (202) 691-6378 • cpsinfo@bls.gov • www.bls.gov/cps
Media contact: (202) 691-5902 • PressOffice@bls.gov

WORK EXPERIENCE OF THE POPULATION — 2011

A total of 153.5 million persons worked at some point during 2011, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. The proportion of the civilian noninstitutional population age 16 and over who worked at some time during 2011 was 63.3 percent, down from 63.7 percent in 2010. The number of persons who experienced some unemployment during 2011 was 23.7 million, down by 1.5 million from 2010.

These data are based on information collected in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a monthly survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The ASEC collects information on employment and unemployment experienced during the prior calendar year. Additional information about the CPS and the ASEC, including concepts and definitions, is provided in the Technical Note.

Highlights from the 2011 data:

- The proportion of workers who worked full time, year round in 2011 was 65.8 percent, up from 64.7 percent in 2010. (See table 1.)
- The "work-experience unemployment rate"—defined as the number of persons unemployed at some time during the year as a proportion of the number of persons who worked or looked for work during the year—was 14.9 percent in 2011, down from 15.9 percent in 2010. (See table 3.)
- The number of individuals who looked for a job but did not work at all during 2011 declined by 348,000 over the year to 6.2 million. (See table 3.)

Persons with Employment

Overall, 63.3 percent of the population worked in 2011. The proportion of men who worked during the year was 68.8 percent, down from 69.3 percent in 2010. The proportion of women who worked at some point during 2011 was 58.1 percent, little changed from the prior year. (See table 1.)

The proportion of whites (64.1 percent) who worked at some time during 2011 declined from 2010, while the share of blacks (58.2 percent), Asians (62.8 percent), and Hispanics (63.4 percent) showed little or no change. (See table 2.)

Of those employed at some time during 2011, 78.6 percent usually worked full time, up from 78.2 percent a year earlier. The proportion of employed men working full time rose, while the proportion of

women changed little. Men continued to be more likely than women to work full time during the year, 84.8 versus 71.7 percent.

Of the total who worked during 2011, 77.0 percent were employed year round (working 50 to 52 weeks, either full or part time), an increase from 75.9 percent in 2010. The share of men employed year round rose by 1.7 percentage points to 78.4 percent in 2011, while the percentage of women working year round was little changed at 75.5 percent. (See table 1.)

Persons with Unemployment

About 159.7 million persons worked or looked for work at some time in 2011. Of those, 23.7 million experienced some unemployment during the year, 1.5 million fewer than in 2010.

At 14.9 percent in 2011, the work-experience unemployment rate (those looking for work during the year as a percent of those who worked or looked for work during the year) was 1.0 percentage point lower than in 2010. The rate for 2009 (16.4 percent) was the highest since 1985. The work-experience unemployment rate for men has also fallen since a recent peak in 2009, but the rate for women was about unchanged. Men continued to have higher work-experience unemployment rates in 2011 than women, 15.8 versus 13.8 percent. (See table 3.)

The work-experience unemployment rates for whites (13.7 percent) and Hispanics (18.3 percent) declined from 2010 to 2011, while the rates for blacks (22.2 percent) and Asians (12.2 percent) were little changed. Among whites, blacks, and Hispanics, the rates for men were higher than the rates for women. Among Asians, the rates for men and women were little different from each other. (See table 4.)

Among those who experienced unemployment in 2011, the median number of weeks spent looking for work was 19.8, about unchanged from 2009 and 2010. The number of persons who looked for a job but did not work at all in 2011 declined by 348,000 over the year to 6.2 million. Of the 17.5 million individuals who worked during 2011 and also experienced unemployment, 1 in 5 had two or more spells of joblessness, about the same as in the prior 2 years. (See table 3.)

Technical Note

The data presented in this release were collected in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a monthly sample survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Data from the CPS are used to obtain the monthly estimates of the nation's employment and unemployment levels. The supplement, conducted in the months of February through April, includes questions about work activity during the prior calendar year. For instance, data collected in 2012 refer to the 2011 calendar year. Because the reference period is a full year, the number of persons with some employment or unemployment greatly exceeds the average levels for any given month, which are based on a 1-week reference period, and the corresponding annual average of the monthly estimates. As shown below, for example, the number experiencing any unemployment during 2011 was about twice the number unemployed in an average month during the year.

	Employed	Unemployed
2011 estimates (in thousands)		
Annual average of monthly estimates	139,869	13,747
Annual supplement data	153,479	23,739

In addition, estimates from the supplement differ from those obtained in the basic CPS because the questions used to classify workers as either employed or unemployed are different. More important, perhaps, is that fewer questions by which to categorize respondents are asked in the supplement. In regard to unemployment in particular, the supplement has no questions on the type of job search activity or on the respondent's availability to work. Also, individuals can be counted as both employed and unemployed in the work experience supplement data, whereas, for a specific monthly reference week, each person is only counted in one category and employment activity takes precedence over job search activity.

Work experience data for 2011, which were collected in the 2012 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS, are not strictly comparable with data for 2010 and earlier years because of the introduction in January 2012 of revised population controls used in the CPS. The effect of the revised population controls on the work experience estimates is unknown. However, the effect of the new January 2012 controls on the monthly CPS estimates was to increase the December 2011 employment level by 216,000 and the unemployment level by 42,000. Additional information is online at www.bls.gov/cps/documentation.htm#pop.

Reliability of the estimates

Statistics based on the CPS are subject to both sampling and nonsampling error. When a sample, rather than the entire population, is surveyed, there is a chance that the sample estimates may differ from the true population values they represent. The component of this difference that occurs because samples differ by chance is known as *sampling*

error, and its variability is measured by the standard error of the estimate. There is about a 90-percent chance, or level of confidence, that an estimate based on a sample will differ by no more than 1.6 standard errors from the true population value because of sampling error. BLS analyses are generally conducted at the 90-percent level of confidence.

The CPS data also are affected by *nonsampling error*. Nonsampling error can occur for many reasons, including the failure to sample a segment of the population, inability to obtain information for all respondents in the sample, inability or unwillingness of respondents to provide correct information, and errors made in the collection or processing of the data.

A full discussion of the reliability of data from the CPS and information on estimating standard errors is available at www.bls.gov/cps/documentation.htm#reliability.

Concepts and definitions

Persons who worked. In the 2012 supplement, persons are considered to have worked if they responded "yes" to either the question "Did you work at a job or business at any time during 2011?" or "Did you do any temporary, part-time, or seasonal work even for a few days during 2011?"

Unemployed persons. Persons who worked during the year but not in every week are counted as unemployed if they also reported looking for work or being on layoff from a job during the year. Those who reported no work activity during the year are considered unemployed if they responded "yes" to the question "Even though you did not work in 2011, did you spend any time trying to find a job or on layoff?"

Work-experience unemployment rate. The number of persons unemployed at some time during the year as a proportion of the number of persons who worked or looked for work during the year.

Labor force participants. Persons who either worked or were unemployed during the year.

Usual full- and part-time employment. These data refer to the number of hours a worker typically works during most weeks of the year. Workers are classified as full time if they usually worked 35 hours or more in a week; part-time employment refers to workers whose typical workweek was between 1 and 34 hours.

Year-round and part-year employment. Workers are classified as year round if they worked 50 to 52 weeks. Part-year employment refers to workers who worked fewer than 50 weeks.

Other information

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Service: (800) 877-8339.

Table 1. Work experience of the population during the year by sex and extent of employment, 2010-11

Extent of employment	Total		Men		Women	
	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011
Numbers (in thousands)						
Civilian noninstitutional population	238,999	242,602	115,986	116,984	123,012	125,619
Total who worked or looked for work	158,882	159,693	84,000	83,715	74,882	75,978
Percent of the population	66.5	65.8	72.4	71.6	60.9	60.5
Total who worked during the year ¹	152,320	153,479	80,341	80,503	71,980	72,976
Percent of the population	63.7	63.3	69.3	68.8	58.5	58.1
Full time ²	119,145	120,585	67,693	68,289	51,452	52,295
50 to 52 weeks	98,490	100,915	55,738	57,288	42,752	43,627
48 to 49 weeks	1,800	1,691	1,084	971	715	720
40 to 47 weeks	5,392	4,862	3,052	2,639	2,340	2,223
27 to 39 weeks	4,498	4,474	2,609	2,561	1,888	1,913
14 to 26 weeks	5,287	5,291	3,103	2,941	2,184	2,350
1 to 13 weeks	3,680	3,351	2,106	1,889	1,574	1,463
Part time ³	33,175	32,895	12,648	12,214	20,528	20,681
50 to 52 weeks	17,113	17,247	5,874	5,786	11,239	11,460
48 to 49 weeks	780	791	257	295	523	496
40 to 47 weeks	2,941	2,633	1,079	987	1,863	1,647
27 to 39 weeks	2,856	2,855	1,183	1,121	1,673	1,735
14 to 26 weeks	4,753	4,729	2,141	2,009	2,611	2,719
1 to 13 weeks	4,732	4,639	2,113	2,016	2,619	2,623
Percent distribution						
Total who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	78.2	78.6	84.3	84.8	71.5	71.7
50 to 52 weeks	64.7	65.8	69.4	71.2	59.4	59.8
48 to 49 weeks	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.2	1.0	1.0
40 to 47 weeks	3.5	3.2	3.8	3.3	3.3	3.0
27 to 39 weeks	3.0	2.9	3.2	3.2	2.6	2.6
14 to 26 weeks	3.5	3.4	3.9	3.7	3.0	3.2
1 to 13 weeks	2.4	2.2	2.6	2.3	2.2	2.0
Part time ³	21.8	21.4	15.7	15.2	28.5	28.3
50 to 52 weeks	11.2	11.2	7.3	7.2	15.6	15.7
48 to 49 weeks	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.7	0.7
40 to 47 weeks	1.9	1.7	1.3	1.2	2.6	2.3
27 to 39 weeks	1.9	1.9	1.5	1.4	2.3	2.4
14 to 26 weeks	3.1	3.1	2.7	2.5	3.6	3.7
1 to 13 weeks	3.1	3.0	2.6	2.5	3.6	3.6

¹ Time worked includes paid vacation and sick leave.

² Usually worked 35 hours or more per week.

³ Usually worked 1 to 34 hours per week.

NOTE: Data refer to persons 16 years and over. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

Table 2. Work experience of the population during the year by race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, 2010-11

(Numbers in thousands)

Extent of employment, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total		Men		Women	
	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011
WHITE						
Civilian noninstitutional population	192,792	192,898	94,689	94,146	98,103	98,752
Total who worked or looked for work	129,249	127,809	69,593	68,304	59,656	59,505
Percent of the population	67.0	66.3	73.5	72.6	60.8	60.3
Total who worked during the year ¹	124,651	123,717	66,984	66,180	57,667	57,537
Percent of the population	64.7	64.1	70.7	70.3	58.8	58.3
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	77.9	78.4	84.5	85.1	70.2	70.6
50 to 52 weeks	64.5	65.8	69.6	71.7	58.6	59.0
27 to 49 weeks	7.7	7.2	8.5	7.7	6.7	6.7
1 to 26 weeks	5.7	5.4	6.4	5.8	4.9	5.0
Part time ³	22.1	21.6	15.5	14.9	29.8	29.4
50 to 52 weeks	11.5	11.4	7.3	7.0	16.4	16.5
27 to 49 weeks	4.5	4.2	3.1	3.0	6.0	5.5
1 to 26 weeks	6.1	6.0	5.1	4.8	7.3	7.4
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN						
Civilian noninstitutional population	29,004	29,790	13,108	13,447	15,896	16,343
Total who worked or looked for work	18,263	18,822	8,466	8,685	9,797	10,137
Percent of the population	63.0	63.2	64.6	64.6	61.6	62.0
Total who worked during the year ¹	16,868	17,332	7,708	7,932	9,160	9,399
Percent of the population	58.2	58.2	58.8	59.0	57.6	57.5
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	79.6	79.4	82.0	82.2	77.6	77.1
50 to 52 weeks	64.5	65.0	66.0	66.1	63.2	64.0
27 to 49 weeks	8.3	7.2	8.6	8.1	8.0	6.5
1 to 26 weeks	6.8	7.2	7.4	8.1	6.3	6.5
Part time ³	20.4	20.6	18.0	17.8	22.4	22.9
50 to 52 weeks	9.5	10.0	7.3	8.3	11.4	11.3
27 to 49 weeks	3.4	4.0	3.2	3.2	3.6	4.6
1 to 26 weeks	7.4	6.7	7.5	6.3	7.4	7.0
ASIAN						
Civilian noninstitutional population	11,320	12,813	5,325	5,979	5,995	6,834
Total who worked or looked for work	7,569	8,364	3,955	4,347	3,614	4,017
Percent of the population	66.9	65.3	74.3	72.7	60.3	58.8
Total who worked during the year ¹	7,253	8,048	3,811	4,194	3,442	3,854
Percent of the population	64.1	62.8	71.6	70.1	57.4	56.4
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	81.7	81.4	87.2	87.0	75.7	75.3
50 to 52 weeks	70.7	70.4	76.4	76.6	64.4	63.6
27 to 49 weeks	5.7	6.2	5.9	5.7	5.5	6.7
1 to 26 weeks	5.4	4.9	5.0	4.7	5.8	5.0
Part time ³	18.3	18.6	12.8	13.0	24.3	24.7
50 to 52 weeks	10.1	11.0	6.6	7.2	14.1	15.1
27 to 49 weeks	3.6	3.1	2.6	2.0	4.7	4.3
1 to 26 weeks	4.5	4.5	3.6	3.8	5.5	5.3

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Work experience of the population during the year by race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, 2010-11 — Continued

(Numbers in thousands)

Extent of employment, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total		Men		Women	
	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011
HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY						
Civilian noninstitutional population	34,155	36,461	17,602	18,276	16,552	18,185
Total who worked or looked for work	22,825	24,216	13,301	13,683	9,524	10,533
Percent of the population	66.8	66.4	75.6	74.9	57.5	57.9
Total who worked during the year ¹	21,686	23,124	12,663	13,127	9,023	9,997
Percent of the population	63.5	63.4	71.9	71.8	54.5	55.0
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	78.9	79.2	84.0	84.6	71.8	72.1
50 to 52 weeks	62.2	64.3	65.7	68.6	57.2	58.8
27 to 49 weeks	9.8	8.5	11.0	9.6	8.1	7.1
1 to 26 weeks	7.0	6.3	7.3	6.4	6.5	6.2
Part time ³	21.1	20.8	16.0	15.4	28.2	27.9
50 to 52 weeks	11.2	11.3	8.0	7.8	15.8	15.9
27 to 49 weeks	4.1	3.8	3.4	3.0	5.0	4.8
1 to 26 weeks	5.8	5.7	4.6	4.7	7.4	7.2

¹ Time worked includes paid vacation and sick leave.

² Usually worked 35 hours or more per week.

³ Usually worked 1 to 34 hours per week.

NOTE: Estimates for the above race groups (white, black or African

American, and Asian) do not sum to totals shown in table 1 because data are not presented for all races. Persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

Table 3. Extent of unemployment during the year by sex, 2010-11

Extent of unemployment	Total		Men		Women	
	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011
Numbers (in thousands)						
Total who worked or looked for work	158,882	159,693	84,000	83,715	74,882	75,978
Percent with unemployment	15.9	14.9	17.7	15.8	13.8	13.8
Total with unemployment	25,241	23,739	14,880	13,262	10,360	10,477
Did not work but looked for work	6,562	6,214	3,659	3,212	2,903	3,002
1 to 14 weeks	1,351	1,395	634	656	717	739
15 weeks or more	5,211	4,819	3,025	2,556	2,186	2,263
Worked during the year	18,679	17,525	11,221	10,050	7,458	7,476
Year-round workers ¹ with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	591	417	379	271	211	147
Part-year workers ² with unemployment	18,088	17,108	10,842	9,779	7,246	7,329
1 to 4 weeks	2,259	2,211	1,178	1,170	1,081	1,041
5 to 10 weeks	2,393	2,273	1,419	1,238	974	1,035
11 to 14 weeks	2,299	2,063	1,438	1,276	861	787
15 to 26 weeks	5,113	4,942	3,231	2,936	1,882	2,007
27 weeks or more	6,024	5,619	3,577	3,159	2,447	2,459
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	19.9	19.8	20.1	19.9	19.5	19.8
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	3,872	3,524	2,620	2,448	1,252	1,076
2 spells	1,786	1,745	1,129	1,121	657	624
3 spells or more	2,086	1,779	1,491	1,327	595	451
Percent distribution						
Did not work but looked for work	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1 to 14 weeks	20.6	22.4	17.3	20.4	24.7	24.6
15 weeks or more	79.4	77.6	82.7	79.6	75.3	75.4
Worked during the year	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ¹ with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	3.2	2.4	3.4	2.7	2.8	2.0
Part-year workers ² with unemployment	96.8	97.6	96.6	97.3	97.2	98.0
1 to 4 weeks	12.1	12.6	10.5	11.6	14.5	13.9
5 to 10 weeks	12.8	13.0	12.6	12.3	13.1	13.8
11 to 14 weeks	12.3	11.8	12.8	12.7	11.5	10.5
15 to 26 weeks	27.4	28.2	28.8	29.2	25.2	26.8
27 weeks or more	32.3	32.1	31.9	31.4	32.8	32.9
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	20.7	20.1	23.3	24.4	16.8	14.4
2 spells	9.6	10.0	10.1	11.2	8.8	8.4
3 spells or more	11.2	10.1	13.3	13.2	8.0	6.0

¹ Worked 50 or 51 weeks.

² Worked less than 50 weeks.

NOTE: Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

Table 4. Extent of unemployment during the year by race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, 2010-11

(Numbers in thousands)

Extent of unemployment, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total		Men		Women	
	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011
WHITE						
Total who worked or looked for work	129,249	127,809	69,593	68,304	59,656	59,505
Percent with unemployment	15.0	13.7	16.8	14.7	12.8	12.5
Total with unemployment	19,329	17,479	11,687	10,026	7,643	7,453
Did not work but looked for work	4,598	4,092	2,609	2,124	1,989	1,968
Worked during the year	14,732	13,387	9,078	7,902	5,654	5,485
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	19.2	18.8	19.6	19.0	18.5	18.4
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ² with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	3.4	2.6	3.6	3.0	3.1	2.1
Part-year workers ³ with unemployment	96.6	97.4	96.4	97.0	96.9	97.9
1 to 4 weeks	12.0	13.6	10.2	12.3	14.9	15.5
5 to 14 weeks	26.3	25.7	26.6	25.8	25.7	25.5
15 weeks or more	58.3	58.1	59.6	58.9	56.3	56.9
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	21.5	20.4	23.7	24.5	17.9	14.6
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN						
Total who worked or looked for work	18,263	18,822	8,466	8,685	9,797	10,137
Percent with unemployment	22.5	22.2	25.9	24.5	19.5	20.3
Total with unemployment	4,105	4,180	2,192	2,124	1,913	2,056
Did not work but looked for work	1,395	1,491	758	753	637	737
Worked during the year	2,710	2,689	1,434	1,371	1,276	1,319
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	22.9	23.9	22.3	23.6	23.6	24.1
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ² with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	1.8	1.7	2.0	1.7	1.6	1.8
Part-year workers ³ with unemployment	98.2	98.3	98.0	98.3	98.4	98.2
1 to 4 weeks	11.7	8.9	11.4	8.8	12.2	9.1
5 to 14 weeks	19.9	20.6	20.0	21.2	19.8	19.9
15 weeks or more	66.5	68.7	66.6	68.2	66.4	69.2
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	17.2	17.7	20.7	22.8	13.2	12.4
ASIAN						
Total who worked or looked for work	7,569	8,364	3,955	4,347	3,614	4,017
Percent with unemployment	12.9	12.2	12.9	12.0	12.9	12.4
Total with unemployment	973	1,020	509	522	465	498
Did not work but looked for work	316	316	144	153	172	162
Worked during the year	657	705	364	369	293	335
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	21.3	20.5	21.7	20.2	20.8	20.7
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ² with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	3.0	0.8	3.6	0.9	2.3	0.6
Part-year workers ³ with unemployment	97.0	99.2	96.4	99.1	97.7	99.4
1 to 4 weeks	14.6	10.6	15.3	12.1	13.9	8.9
5 to 14 weeks	20.6	27.1	19.5	28.1	21.9	25.9
15 weeks or more	61.8	61.6	61.6	58.8	61.9	64.6
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	14.0	18.9	16.9	22.0	10.5	15.4

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 4. Extent of unemployment during the year by race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, 2010-11 — Continued

(Numbers in thousands)

Extent of unemployment, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	Total		Men		Women	
	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011
HISPANIC OR LATINO ETHNICITY						
Total who worked or looked for work	22,825	24,216	13,301	13,683	9,524	10,533
Percent with unemployment	20.5	18.3	22.4	19.2	18.0	17.1
Total with unemployment	4,686	4,427	2,974	2,630	1,712	1,798
Did not work but looked for work	1,138	1,093	638	556	500	536
Worked during the year	3,548	3,335	2,336	2,073	1,212	1,261
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	20.0	20.0	19.9	19.7	20.2	20.6
Percent who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ² with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.9	2.1	1.7
Part-year workers ³ with unemployment	97.7	97.6	97.7	97.1	97.9	98.3
1 to 4 weeks	10.7	11.0	8.9	10.3	14.0	12.3
5 to 14 weeks	26.5	24.8	27.8	25.2	24.1	24.1
15 weeks or more	60.5	61.7	60.9	61.6	59.8	61.9
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	24.0	22.5	26.7	25.9	18.8	16.8

¹ Time worked includes paid vacation and sick leave.

² Worked 50 or 51 weeks.

³ Worked less than 50 weeks.

NOTE: Estimates for the above race groups (white, black or African

American, and Asian) do not sum to totals shown in table 3 because data are not presented for all races. Persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.