

Work Stoppages

The Work Stoppages program provides monthly and annual data on major work stoppages involving 1,000 or more workers and lasting one full shift or longer. Available data on major work stoppages include the organization(s) and union(s) involved in the work stoppage along with the location, the industry of establishment(s) involved, the number of workers, the number of lost workdays, and the days of idleness.

| Quick Facts: Work Stoppages | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Subject areas | Work stoppages |
| Key measures | Work stoppages |
| How the data are obtained | Estimated from multiple data sources |
| Classification system | Industry |
| Periodicity of data availability | Annual, Monthly |
| Geographic detail | National |
| Scope | Private sector, State and local government |
| Key products | News release Database query tools |
| Program webpage | www.bls.gov/wsp |



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Concepts

The Work Stoppages program provides monthly and annual data on major work stoppages involving 1,000 or more workers and lasting one full shift or longer. The monthly and annual data show the establishment and union(s) involved in the work stoppage along with the location, the number of workers involved, and the days of idleness. The monthly data show all work stoppages involving 1,000 or more workers that began or were in effect for each month of the year. The annual data releases provide statistics, analysis, and details of each work stoppage of 1,000 or more workers that occurred during the year. Definitions are provided below on the key work stoppage program concepts and terms.

Major work stoppage

A strike or lockout involving 1,000 or more workers and lasting for at least one full shift in establishments directly involved in a stoppage. Because of the complexity of most labor-management disputes, the Work Stoppages program makes no attempt to distinguish between strikes and lockouts in its statistics. The workers involved in a strike or lockout may or may not be members of a union. Production slowdowns (a deliberate slowing of pace by workers) or worker protests generally do not meet the criteria for inclusion as a work stoppage.

Strike

A temporary stoppage of work by a group of employees to express a grievance, enforce a demand, or protest the terms, conditions, or provisions of a contract.

Lockout

A temporary denial of employment by management, typically during a labor dispute.

Beginning date

Date on which the work stoppage officially begins. The day may not count in the calculations if it does not include a full shift by workers involved in the work stoppage or falls on a weekend or federal holiday.

Ending date

Date on which the work stoppage is ended, based on initial (tentative) agreement by both parties. The ending date may not be the actual contract ratification date or the date workers return to work, which may lag the date of initial agreement.

Industry

The primary economic activity of an establishment. The 2017 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is used to classify establishments belonging to a particular industry.

Workday

Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays.

Lost workdays

The number of workdays lost for the purposes of performing regular job duties by workers involved in the work stoppage. If applicable, the cumulative number of lost workdays also is computed for each work stoppage beyond the beginning reference month.

Number of workers involved

Workers who are directly involved in the work stoppage as well as those idled for related reasons, such as their facility is closed down during the stoppage. This number does not account for secondary idleness—that is, the effects of a stoppage on other establishments or industries whose employees may be made idle as a result of shortages of material or services.

Days of idleness

Days that an employee is scheduled to work (Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays), but does not work due to a work stoppage (i.e., lost workday). The number of total days of idleness is computed by multiplying the number of workers idled by the number of lost workdays during the reference month. If applicable, the cumulative number of days of idleness is computed for each work stoppage beyond the beginning reference month.

Stoppages “beginning”

Monthly or annual reference period when the work stoppage begins. Data are provided for both the number of work stoppages, number of workers, and days idle.

Stoppages “in effect”

Work stoppage continuing during either a monthly or annual period. Work stoppages begin in a particular reference period, but are considered in effect during one or more monthly or annual reference period (i.e. rollover). The work stoppages program provides in effect estimates for both the number of work stoppages, number of workers, and days idle.

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Data Sources

Information on work stoppages is obtained from reports from major media sources, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS), state labor market information offices, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) [Strike Reports](#) from the Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics. One or both parties involved in the work stoppage (the employer, the union or non-union organizations involved) are contacted by Work Stoppages program staff to verify the dates of the stoppage and the number of workers participating in the stoppage.

Data are based on the number of workers involved in or directly affected by the work stoppage. (For example, teacher work stoppage may involve closing schools and could impact additional staff.) Data are sometimes captured from third parties if either the organization or the union involved cannot provide detailed information or estimates. For example, BLS has used employment from state education department reports to most accurately identify workers involved in large work stoppages including teachers. If there are discrepancies between the available data sources, the most detailed information records available are typically utilized. Published monthly data may be revised if data sources are later found to provide more accurate details of a major work stoppage.

The number of workers listed as involved in a major work stoppage may differ from media reports and union bargaining unit information. This may have an impact on the work stoppage meeting the criteria for inclusion in the total estimate. For example, a bargaining unit with 1,200 workers having 800 confirmed workers involved in a work stoppage, would not meet inclusion criteria of 1,000 workers or more.

Major work stoppages are classified by industry in monthly and annual reporting to identify sectors of the economy where work stoppages occurred. Industry classification is based on the 2017 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and the Work Stoppages program staff determines the most representative NAICS code for the organization or establishments directly involved in the work stoppage.

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Design

The Work Stoppages program is fundamentally different from most U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistic (BLS) programs because it does not provide data from a survey. BLS compiles data on work stoppages—strikes or lockouts—involving 1,000 or more workers for at least a full day or shift. Information on work stoppages is obtained from major media sources, reports from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, state labor market information offices, and BLS Strike Reports from the Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics. Work stoppages data have been collected consistently since 1947, with detailed information available since 1993.

Detailed data on work stoppages include monthly and annual listings of companies and state and local governments involved in a work stoppage are available at www.bls.gov/wsp. For an in-depth discussion of program concepts and measures, see the work stoppages [concepts](#) and [calculation](#) sections.

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Calculation

Since 1981, the Work Stoppages program produces monthly data on six time series detailed below.

Number of days idle from work stoppages in effect in period

Total number of days of idleness from all major work stoppages ongoing during the specified month. The days of idleness estimates are calculated by multiplying the duration of the work stoppage (in days) by the number of workers involved in the work stoppage.

For example, if a work stoppage lasted 10 workdays (Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays), and 4,000 union workers were directly affected, then the duration is multiplied by the total number of workers affected to arrive at 40,000 days of idleness ($4,000 \times 10 = 40,000$). If another work stoppage resulted in 20,000 days of idleness, the days of idleness would be summed together ($40,000 + 20,000 = 60,000$) for a monthly total of 60,000 days of idleness.

Number of days of idleness from work stoppages in effect as a percentage of total estimated working time

The total number of days of idleness in effect for a specific month divided by the total number of workdays, based on data from the Current Employment Statistics, as published in The Employment Situation news release.

The numerator is the total days of idleness from major work stoppages in effect for a specific month. The denominator is the total number of workdays (in thousands) based on the sum of the nonagriculture plus agriculture employees (from [Table B-1](#) and [Table A-8](#), not seasonally adjusted, in The Employment Situation news release) multiplied by the number of work days (Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays). The calculation is expressed as a percentage of working time (e.g., 0.01 percent). For the monthly time series, this is expressed as 0.00 percent, with a footnote detailing that the percent is above zero, but below 0.005 and rounded down to 0.00 percent).

For example, if the number of total days of idleness for the month was 60,000 (60 thousand) and the total number of workdays was 3,000,000 workdays (in thousands), then the percentage of total estimated working time would be $60/3,000,000 = 0.002$ percent.

This value would be listed as 0.00, with a footnote stating the value was under 0.005 percent. In this example, more than 150 thousand days idle in the month (numerator) would round up to 0.01 percent.

Number of workers involved for stoppages beginning during the month

Total (sum) of the number of workers for major work stoppages beginning in the specified month, rounded to the nearest hundred. This measure identifies the number of workers for new stoppages and is used for determining

the number of workers for calendar year annual major work stoppages. Ongoing major work stoppages from a prior month are not included in this measure.

For example, if there are two new major work stoppages (one with 2,000 workers and one with 1,500 workers) and one ongoing stoppage from a prior month with 5,000 workers then the calculation would be $2,000 + 1,500$ workers = 3,500 workers. The prior month's 5,000 would be excluded from the calculation.

Number of workers involved in stoppages in effect during the month

Total (sum) of the number of workers for all major work stoppages in effect during the specified month. For example, there are two new major work stoppages and one ongoing major work stoppage from a prior month with 5,500 workers involved (new work stoppages with 2,000 workers and one with 1,500 workers) then the calculation is $5,500 + 2,000 + 1,500$ workers = 9,000 workers.

Number of major work stoppages beginning in the month

The number of major work stoppages that began during the specified month. This measure identifies new stoppages and is used for determining annual major work stoppages for the calendar year.

For example, there if are only two new major work stoppages during a month then the events equal two.

Number of major work stoppages in effect during the month

The number of all major work stoppages in effect during the specified month. For example, if there are two new major work stoppages during the month plus one ongoing work stoppage beginning in a prior month then the calculation is $2 + 1 = 3$. If in effect major work stoppages were used to identify annual major work stoppages, there would be double counting for annual measures.

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Presentation

The Work Stoppages program provides monthly and annual data on major work stoppages (involving 1,000 or more workers) lasting one full shift or longer, for private industry and state and local government. The program's [news releases](#), [data](#), and other information can be found at www.bls.gov/wsp.

Work stoppages provide media, researchers, labor relations specialists, union, and government labor agencies with information about labor management disputes in the national economy across the business cycle. While the Work Stoppages program does not report on the nature of the dispute, identifying the details of parties involved enables users to assess the impact of compensation trends, union membership and activity, and legislation.

Detailed data on major work stoppages provide monthly and annual listings of companies and government's involved in a work stoppage including:

- the name of the establishment(s) involved in the dispute
- the name of the union involved in the dispute
- the location of the stoppage
- the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code for affected establishments
- the beginning and ending dates of the dispute
- the number of lost workdays during the reference month
- the cumulative number of lost workdays from the beginning of the work stoppage
- the number of workers idled by the stoppage
- the number of days of idleness during the reference month
- the cumulative number of days of idleness from the beginning of the work stoppage.

Accessing data

The complete set of major work stoppages data can be found at www.bls.gov/wsp. Major work stoppages data can be found for various time periods:

- Detailed monthly data is available from 1993 and can be accessed in [monthly](#) form at <https://www.bls.gov/wsp/#tables> or as an [html listing](#) at https://www.bls.gov/wsp/monthly_listing.htm.
- Annual work stoppages historical news releases, available since 1992, can be accessed at www.bls.gov/bls/news-release/home.htm#WKSTP.
- Time series monthly data back to 1981 and annual data back to 1947 are available at <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/surveymost?ws>. Data for the prior month are typically available (at www.bls.gov/wsp) the Friday following the Employment Situation release.
- Annual summary historical table on major work stoppages since 1947, showing the number of work stoppages, number of workers involved, number of total days idle, and percent of estimated working time are available at www.bls.gov/news.release/wkstp.t01.htm.
- Historical publications (1936–79) containing additional work stoppages information and data can be located at www.bls.gov/wsp/wspfaq.htm#Question_10.

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History

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has collected information on work stoppages (strikes and lockouts) in the United States dating back to the 1880s. Over the long history of providing work stoppage data, there have been scope and publication changes to reflect both labor trends and legislative changes in program funding. In addition, changes in union membership, establishment size, and other factors have led to significant reductions in the number of major work stoppages.

BLS has published two work stoppage series. The first one ran from 1947 through 1981. The second series began in 1982, but contains data starting with 1947. Both include administrative data collected through available news sources and verified by the parties whenever possible. Historical publications can be found at the [BLS Work Stoppages program website](#), from the [Department of Labor Wirtz Labor Library](#), and from the [National Archives](#).

Under the first Work Stoppage program (1947–81)

BLS reported all work stoppages in the United States that involved six workers or more and continued for the equivalent of a full day or shift or longer.

- Information on the actual or probable existence of work stoppages from available sources.
- News articles on labor disputes were obtained from a comprehensive coverage of daily and weekly newspapers throughout the country.
- Information was also regularly received from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service and state labor-related agencies.
- Questionnaires were then sent to the parties who furnished BLS with information on a voluntary basis.
- The data were compiled and published each year.
- Because of budget reductions, the series was terminated in January 1982. Detailed statistical data were printed in the annual reports, commonly referred to as the “Analysis of Work Stoppage” bulletins. (The last bulletin, containing 1980 data, was published in March 1982).

In February 1982, BLS initiated its major work stoppage series:

- The series includes work stoppages idling 1,000 workers or more for the equivalent of a full shift, full day, or longer.
- Using data from the old series, BLS extended the major work stoppage series back to include data starting in 1947.
- The Work Stoppages program currently produces 12 monthly data releases and 1 annual news release, typically published in February, summarizing the prior year.
- Monthly data are typically released the Friday after The Employment Situation release for the prior month, and considered preliminary and subject to change until the annual news release is published.

Timeline of events:

1895: Publication of BLS Bulletin #1—*Strikes and Lockouts in the United States, from January 1, 1881 to June 30, 1894*.

1937: Publication of BLS Bulletin #651—*Strikes in the United States, 1880 to 1936* (with focus on strikes during the period 1927–36). Annual publications begin on strike data through 1943.

1947: Introduction of annual work stoppages (includes strikes and lockouts) data based on Taft-Hartley Act.

1949: Introduction of “Analysis of Work Stoppages” publications. Available historical work stoppages publications are available in [Work Stoppages Frequently Asked Questions](#).

1952: Record high for number of annual major work stoppages—470.

1982: Program change to capture data only on major work stoppages of 1,000 or more workers, due to end of funding for the BLS Division of Industrial Relations.

1992: First news release for Major Work Stoppages included cumulative totals and analysis of data for the calendar year. [Archive News Releases](#) are available to the present year.

1993: Detailed monthly data published, including the number of major work stoppages beginning and in effect during each month. Detailed [historical data](#) listing are available back to 1993.

2003: Industry classification of establishments involved in work stoppages is added to detailed monthly data. Industry classification is based on the most current NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) edition (currently 2017).

2009: Record low for number of major work stoppages—5.

2016: Historical work stoppages publications available at www.bls.gov/wsp/wspfaq.htm#Question_10.

The Work Stoppages Program was at one time part of the BLS National Compensation Survey chapter of the *Handbook of Methods*. The archived WSP appeared as an appendix in the chapter available at <https://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/pdf/ncs-20110404.pdf#page=22>.

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More Information

Additional information on the Work Stoppages program is available on the WSP website: www.bls.gov/wsp. Frequently asked questions are available at <https://www.bls.gov/wsp/wspfaq.htm>.

The complete set of major work stoppages data can be found at www.bls.gov/wsp. Major work stoppages data can be found for various time periods:

- Detailed monthly data is available from 1993 and can be accessed in [monthly](https://www.bls.gov/wsp/#tables) form at <https://www.bls.gov/wsp/#tables> or as an html listing at https://www.bls.gov/wsp/monthly_listing.htm.
- Annual work stoppages historical news releases, available since 1992, can be accessed at www.bls.gov/bls/news-release/home.htm#WKSTP.
- Time series monthly data back to 1981 and annual data back to 1947 are available at data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/surveymost?ws.
- Annual summary historical table on major work stoppages since 1947, showing the number of work stoppages, number of workers involved, number of total days idle, and percent of estimated working time are available at www.bls.gov/news.release/wkstp.t01.htm.
- Historical publications (1936–79) containing additional work stoppages information and data can be located at www.bls.gov/wsp/wspfaq.htm#Question_10.

Information on private industry work stoppages for all size classes (from 1984 to current) are available from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service at www.fmcs.gov. The International Labor Organization (ILO) publishes foreign work stoppage statistics at www.ilo.org.

Related articles on Work Stoppages

- [Profiles of significant collective bargaining disputes of 2012](#)
- [Profiles of Significant Collective Bargaining Disputes of 2009](#)
- [Profiles of Significant Collective Bargaining Disputes of 2010](#)
- [Profiles of Significant Collective Bargaining Disputes of 2008](#)
- [Profiles of Significant Collective Bargaining Disputes in 2007](#)
- [Collective Bargaining Agreements File Moves to New Home](#)
- [Profiles of Significant Collective Bargaining Disputes in 2006](#)
- [Major Work Stoppages in 2004 and 2005](#)
- [Major Work Stoppages in 2003](#)
- [Industries with 10 or More Major Work Stoppages for the Period 1993-2003](#)
- [What Can You Tell Me About Collective Bargaining Expirations and Work Stoppages?](#)
- [Major Work Stoppages in 2002](#)
- [2001 Major Work Stoppages](#)
- [Work Stoppages in 1999](#)
- [1998 Work Stoppages](#)

Additional articles on Work Stoppages can be found at <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/subject/w.htm#work-stoppages>.

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