

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Update on Trends, Budget, and New Initiatives

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Bureau of Labor Statistics

- Principal Federal agency responsible for measuring
 - ▶ labor market activity
 - ▶ working conditions
 - ▶ price changes in the economy
- Collect, analyze, and disseminate essential economic information to support public and private decision making



Building blocks for BLS data

Accurate. . . Getting it right

Objective. . . Free from bias

Relevant. . . Information you can use

Timely. . . Getting it out quickly

Accessible. . . Easy to find and use



New Leadership Developments at BLS

- Does BLS have a new commissioner?
 - ▶ Not yet
- White House announced on October 24, 2017 the nomination of Dr. William Beach to be the 15th commissioner of BLS, still awaiting Senate confirmation
- The DOL does have a new Labor Secretary, Alex Acosta, who has been on board for about a year
- Secretary Acosta is briefed each month on the employment release, he's very interested in the data and asks lots of questions, he uses the data frequently in his speeches



BLS FY 2019 Budget

- The FY 2019 President's Budget was submitted to Congress on February 12, 2018 with a request level of \$609 million
- The budget request is similar to appropriated levels for the past several years, it largely proposes to maintain operations
- The budget proposals include modernizing electronic data interchange (EDI) program to process large data files from employers, improving survey efficiencies for the Consumer Price Index, and reviewing how federal statistical functions can be streamlined across federal agencies



Trends/Efficiencies

- Collecting more data electronically
- Matching and blending data across programs/agencies
- Using machine learning/autocoding
- Using web scraping
- Using data aggregation (industry, occupation, geography)
- Using more modeling of estimates
- Using alternate data sources
- Improving sample design
- Streamlining publication methods
- Improving data processing systems
- Improving seasonal adjustment procedures
- Using new software (Python, Java, R, Stata, Tableau, Hadoop, Leaflet wrapped in Shiny written in R)
- Releasing data earlier
- Developing new survey management tools
- Producing videos
- Big data



Updated Classification Systems

- Programs converted to 2017 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)
 - ▶ Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages
 - ▶ Current Employment Statistics
 - ▶ Producer Price Index
 - ▶ Occupational Employment Statistics (OES)
- 2018 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) published last November
 - ▶ 70 occupations added and almost 400 occupations updated
 - ▶ BLS played a key leadership role in a 5-year project
 - ▶ OES will begin collecting data in November 2018



BLS Major Offices

- Employment and Unemployment Statistics
- Compensation and Working Conditions
- Prices and Living Conditions
- Productivity
- Publications and Special Studies



Employment and Unemployment Statistics

- Measures, analyzes, and disseminates national, state, and local area information on
 - ▶ the labor force
 - ▶ industry and occupational wages and employment
 - ▶ time use
 - ▶ job openings and labor turnover



Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)

- Advance releases of *County Employment and Wages*, two weeks sooner each quarter
- Transitioned from the 2012 to 2017 North American Industry Classification System
- Researching “Quick” Business Surveys



Reporter's Guide to QCEW

- Collection of one-page tip sheets
- Based on feedback from journalists, works for researchers too!
- Good resource for a fast start

<https://www.bls.gov/cew/cewreportersguide.htm>



Current Employment Statistics (CES)

- Updated data series to the NAICS 2017 in February 2018
- Continuing to investigate potential changes to benchmark timing (annual, semi-annual, quarterly) and methodology
- Working on better explainability of data



Current Employment Statistics – State and Area

- Moved to Concurrent Seasonal Adjustment in March 2018
- Planning to discuss only statistically significant changes in the Metro Area release
- Planning fall release of a Diffusion Index of the total non-farm estimates across states
 - ▶ Released as an experimental series



Occupational Employment Statistics

- Moving towards time series
 - ▶ Developing autocoder, using machine learning to help code employer-provided job titles and information into SOC codes to reduce state burden, improve consistency, and lower employer burden
 - ▶ Developing a new central web-based data collection system for processing employment and point wages
 - ▶ Exploring series as a short-term demand indicator

Employment Projections

- Information about the labor market for the nation as a whole for 10 years in the future
 - ▶ 2016-26 Employment Projections released in October 2017, two months ahead of schedule
 - ▶ Implemented a new methodology on separation rates
- Moving to annual releases
- Updating the Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) in real time
- Adding career videos to the OOH



Current Population Survey (CPS)

- Certifications and licenses
 - ▶ Questions added in January 2015
 - ▶ Annual average estimates for the nation
- Contingent workers and alternative employment arrangements
 - ▶ May 2017 data released yesterday
 - ▶ Last released in 2005, 2001, 1999, 1997, 1995

Local Area Unemployment Statistics

- Seasonal adjustment improvements
 - ▶ introduced in early 2018
 - ▶ less distortions from the benchmarking process
 - ▶ decrease the month-to-month volatility in the seasonally adjusted estimates
- Continuing to research data sources and methods in an effort to improve estimates
- Working on better explainability of data

Compensation and Working Conditions

- Information on pay, benefits, workers' safety, and job requirements
 - ▶ Occupational Requirements Survey (ORS), the newest BLS survey under contract with the Social Security Administration (SSA)
 - Physical demands, environmental conditions, mental and cognitive demands, and vocational preparation requirements, and other requirements of jobs for SSA in administering disability program
 - First full cycle of ORS data to be released in early 2019

Prices and Living Conditions

- Data on inflation and spending
 - ▶ Introduced a new geographic area sample for the Consumer Price Index starting with January 2018 indexes
 - Reflects 2010 Decennial Census and updated area sample design
 - Changes to the frequency of publication for several local area indexes

International Price Program

- U.S. export price indexes by locality of destination (LOD) and terms of trade indexes (TOT)
 - ▶ Expanding price measures related to international competitiveness
 - ▶ Releasing data in September 2018



Productivity

- New labor productivity measures for the urban transit industry to be published in August 2018
- Enabled another way for customers to access data:
 - ▶ added data to Google Public Data
 - ▶ developed dynamic Google dashboards

Publications and Special Studies

- Redesign of BLS news releases
 - ▶ Prototypes to be available to the public in 2019
 - ▶ Greater focus on visuals
- Updates to BLS.gov
 - ▶ New program templates to be rolled out 2018-20
 - ▶ Updates to [Economy](http://www.bls.gov/economy) and [Industry](http://www.bls.gov/industry) at a glance pages, prototypes available in 2019

The screenshot shows the Bureau of Labor Statistics website. The header includes the BLS logo, navigation links (Home, Subjects, Data Tools, Publications, Economic Releases, Students, Beta), and social media links. The main content area is titled "Consumer Price Index" and features a search bar and a navigation menu with links to CPI Home, CPI Publications, CPI Data, CPI Methods, About CPI, and Contact CPI. Below the navigation menu is a brief description of the CPI as a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers. The page is divided into sections for ANNOUNCEMENTS, CHARTS, NEWS RELEASES, and PUBLICATIONS. The CHARTS section displays a bar chart showing the 12-month percentage change in the CPI for selected categories in April 2018. The NEWS RELEASES section features a headline about a 0.2% increase in the CPI for all items in April, with a sub-headline about shelter indexes. The PUBLICATIONS section highlights a news release titled "Consumer prices up 2.5 percent over year ended April 2018".

ANNOUNCEMENTS
» Recent and upcoming methodology changes [Read More »](#)

CHARTS
12-month percentage change, Consumer Price Index, selected categories, April 2018, not seasonally adjusted

Major categories	Percent
All items	2.5
Food	1.2
Energy	7.5
All items less food and energy	1.8

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. [read more »](#)

NEWS RELEASES
MAY 10 **CPI for all items rises 0.2% in April as gasoline and shelter indexes increase**
In April, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers increased 0.2 percent seasonally adjusted; rising 2.5 percent over the last 12 months, not seasonally adjusted. The index for all items less food and energy rose 0.1 percent in April (SA); up 2.1 percent over the year (NSA).
[HTML](#) | [PDF](#) | [RSS](#) | [Charts](#) | [Local and Regional CPI](#)

PUBLICATIONS
THE ECONOMICS DAILY
Consumer prices up 2.5 percent over year ended April 2018
Over the 12 months from April 2017 to April 2018, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) increased 2.5 percent, not seasonally adjusted.

Is this enough?



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