

Issues



in Labor Statistics

U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Labor-Market Outcomes for City Dwellers and Suburbanites

Suburbanites are more likely to participate in the labor force than are city dwellers, and their unemployment rates are usually lower as well. These labor-market outcomes for suburbanites and city dwellers hold across the major age, sex, race, and educational attainment groups. In addition, groups that usually have poorer labor market outcomes are overrepresented in cities.

This summary compares labor force participation and unemployment rates for persons living in the 25 largest central cities with those of persons living in the suburbs of those cities. The data (1997 annual averages) were collected through the Current Population Survey (CPS), a nationwide monthly survey of some 50,000 households. It should be noted that the CPS is a survey of households, not employers. Thus, the classification of people as city dwellers or suburbanites depends on where they live, not where they work.

Participation and unemployment

Regardless of age, sex, race, or ethnicity, people in central cities are less likely to be in the labor force than are those living in the suburbs. The differences are particularly striking among blacks. About 60.2 percent of blacks living in central cities were in the labor force in 1997, compared with 73.3 percent of those living in the suburbs. (See table.)

Education strongly influences labor-

market outcomes. For all groups, labor force participation rates increased with education, but the urban-suburban differences remained. As the tabulation below shows, for example, 35.4 percent of black high school dropouts, 16 years of age and over, who lived in central cities were in the labor force, but for black college graduates living in cities the participation rate was more than twice as high, 82.2 percent. In contrast, among blacks living in the suburbs, 43.1

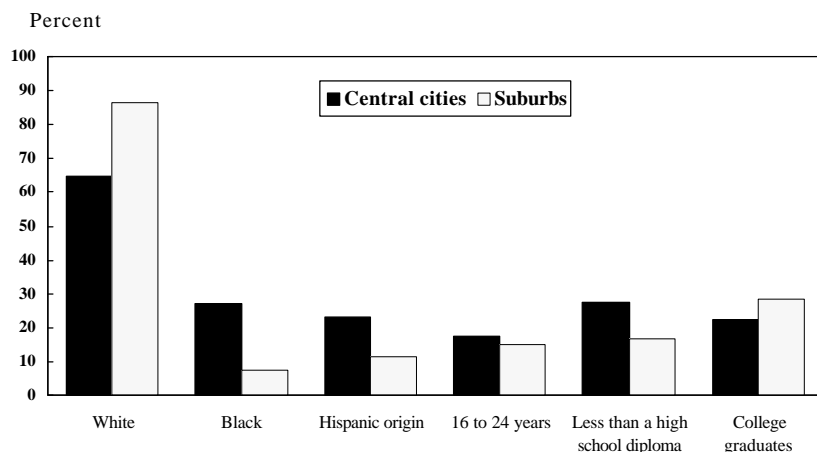
percent of those who had not graduated from high school were in the labor force, compared with 87.1 percent of those who were college graduates.

The unemployment rates for workers living in central cities were higher across the board than for members of the same demographic groups living in the suburbs. In both cities and suburbs, persons with more education were less likely to be unemployed, but, even among college graduates, those in cen-

Participation rates for blacks

	Central cities	Suburbs
Less than a high school diploma	35.4	43.1
High school diploma, no college	65.7	73.9
Some college, no degree	71.0	81.3
College graduates	82.2	87.1

Percent of the population living in the 25 largest central cities and their suburbs by selected characteristics, 1997 annual averages



Labor force participation and unemployment rates of persons living in the 25 largest cities and their suburbs, 1997 annual averages

Characteristic	Labor force participation rates ¹		Unemployment rates ²	
	Central cities	Suburbs	Central cities	Suburbs
Age and sex				
Total, 16 years and over	64.6	69.9	7.3	4.0
16 to 24 years	58.4	65.4	15.5	9.8
25 to 54 years	80.6	85.3	5.9	3.1
55 years and over	29.3	34.4	4.5	2.8
Men	73.3	78.2	7.2	3.9
Women	56.9	61.9	7.3	4.1
Race and Hispanic origin				
White	66.2	69.8	5.5	3.7
Black	60.2	73.3	12.5	7.6
Hispanic origin	64.3	71.3	8.1	6.1
Educational attainment³				
Less than a high school diploma	44.0	47.3	14.7	9.8
High school graduates, no college ..	64.0	65.8	8.0	4.3
Some college, no degree	74.6	74.9	5.8	3.6
College graduates	81.7	81.5	3.1	2.0

¹ Percent of population that is in the labor force.

³Data refer to persons 25 years and older.

² Percent of labor force that is unemployed.

tral cities had a higher unemployment rate (3.1 percent) than those living in the suburbs (2.0 percent).

The high concentrations in cities of groups that usually have poorer labor market outcomes than

the overall population tends to exacerbate the overall city-suburban differences. For instance, in 1997, blacks and Hispanics represented 27.2 and 23.0 percent, respectively, of the civilian noninstitutional population age 16 and over in the central cities. In con-

trast, among the suburban population, the figures were 7.6 and 11.3 percent, respectively. (See chart.) In addition, 27.3 percent of the central city population did not have a high school diploma, compared with 16.9 percent of the suburban population. There also were relatively few college graduates in the cities.

For additional information on the employment characteristics of persons who lived in the 25 largest cities and the surrounding suburbs in 1997 and a technical description of the Current Population Survey, contact Stella Cromartie, Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, DC 20212. Tel: (202)606-6378. E-mail: Cromartie_S@bls.gov. Information in this report is available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 606-7828; TDD phone: (202) 606-5897; TDD message referral phone: 1-800-326-2577. This material is in the public domain and, with appropriate credit, may be reproduced without permission.

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