

# News

United States  
Department  
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**Bureau of Labor Statistics**

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## PRODUCTIVITY AND COSTS: WHOLESALE TRADE, RETAIL TRADE, AND FOOD SERVICES AND DRINKING PLACES, 2002

The Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported today on labor productivity and unit labor cost changes for wholesale trade, retail trade, and food services and drinking places. For 2002, labor productivity—defined as output per hour—rose 5.8 percent for all of wholesale trade, 4.2 percent for retail trade, and 1.3 percent for food services and drinking places. In both the retail and wholesale trade sectors, output increased in 2002 while hours and unit labor costs declined. In food services and drinking places, output, hours, and unit labor costs all increased in 2002.

Over the whole period for which data are presented, 1987 to 2002, labor productivity in the wholesale trade sector rose an average of 3.5 percent per year. Output increased 4.1 percent per year, hours increased 0.6 per year, and unit labor costs increased 0.7 percent per year. Labor productivity in retail trade increased 2.8 percent per year, while output increased 3.8 percent, hours increased 1.0 percent, and unit labor costs increased 0.5 percent per year. In the food services and drinking places subsector, annual average labor productivity increased 0.6 percent, in 1987-2002, as output increased at a rate of 2.3 percent, hours grew 1.6 percent, and unit labor costs increased 3.2 percent per year.

### **2001-02 change**

Labor productivity grew in 14 of the 18 durable and nondurable wholesale trade industries measured in 2002. Six of the nine durable goods wholesale industries had productivity increases, and eight of the nine nondurable goods wholesalers had productivity increases. Among the durable goods wholesale industries, the highest productivity increases occurred for commercial equipment (NAICS 4234) and lumber

and construction supplies (NAICS 4233), with output per hour increases of 15.7 percent and 9.7 percent, respectively. Druggists' goods (NAICS 4242) had the highest productivity increase among the nondurable industries (13.9 percent) followed by farm product raw materials (NAICS 4245) with an increase of 12.7 percent. Output increased in five of the nine durable goods and seven of the nine nondurable goods wholesalers in 2002. Hours declined in all of the durable goods wholesalers and six of the nondurable goods wholesalers. Unit labor costs declined in 13 of the 18 industries. Labor productivity increased 2.7 percent for wholesale electronic markets and agents and brokers (NAICS 425), reflecting a 2.7 percent increase in output and no change in hours in 2002.

Labor productivity rose in 23 of the 27 retail trade industries in 2002. The highest increases were 19.6 percent in electronics and appliance stores (NAICS 443) and 17.9 percent in electronic shopping and mail-order houses (NAICS 4541). Productivity grew in four of the six largest retail trade industries, those with more than 1,000,000 employees. Productivity increased 10.9 percent in other general merchandise stores (NAICS 4529), 6.2 percent in clothing stores (NAICS 4481), 3.9 percent in building material and supplies dealers (NAICS 4441), and 3.1 percent in grocery stores (NAICS 4451). Labor productivity declined 1.0 percent for department stores (NAICS 4521) and 2.6 percent for automobile dealers (NAICS 4411). Productivity declined in only two other retail trade industries—0.5 percent for jewelry, luggage, and leather goods stores (NAICS 4483) and 1.3 percent for other miscellaneous store retailers (NAICS 4539). Output grew in 22 of the 27 retail industries, and all but one of these industries experienced productivity increases. Hours declined in 15 retail industries, 14 of which experienced productivity increases.

Unit labor costs decreased in 20 of the 23 retail industries that had labor productivity increases in 2002. The largest declines were 19.5 percent in electronics and appliance stores and 15.3 percent in electronic shopping and mail-order houses. Unit labor costs declined in the three of the four largest retail industries that had productivity increases—3.8 percent in other general merchandise stores, 4.4 percent in building materials and supply dealers, and 1.6 percent in clothing stores. All of the industries with productivity declines also had unit labor cost increases.

Labor productivity increased 1.3 percent in food services and drinking places in 2002. All four of the industries had productivity gains. The largest productivity gains occurred for drinking places (NAICS 7224)—8.0 percent. The two large industries in this group, full-service eating places (NAICS 7221) and limited-service eating places (NAICS 7222), experienced productivity gains of 1.3 percent and 0.7 percent, respectively. Unit labor costs increased in the three food services industries in 2002, while drinking places had a decline in unit labor costs of 4.6 percent.

### **Long-term trends**

Labor productivity increased in 14 of the 18 durable and nondurable industries in the wholesale trade sector from 1987 to 2002. Productivity in two of these industries increased 5.0 percent per year or more. Productivity in an additional three industries

increased between 2.5 and 4.9 percent per year. Average annual output rose in all but two wholesale durable and nondurable industries, petroleum (NAICS 4247) and miscellaneous nondurable goods (NAICS 4249). Hours declined in only three industries, while average annual unit labor costs declined in only commercial equipment (NAICS 4234) and electric goods (NAICS 4236). Productivity rose 5.1 percent per year in wholesale electronic markets and agents and brokers (NAICS 425), during 1987-2002, reflecting average gains in output, hours, and unit labor costs of 6.3 percent, 1.2 percent, and 0.1 percent, respectively.

Output per hour increased in 25 of the 27 retail trade industries from 1987 to 2002. Labor productivity advanced 5.0 percent per year or more in 4 of the retail industries, and output per hour increased in the 2.5-4.9 percent range for 14 retail industries. Average annual output increased in 25 of the 27 retail industries, while hours increased in 21 industries. Average annual unit labor costs declined in 12 of the 27 retail trade industries. Among the six largest retail industries, other general merchandise stores had 1987 to 2002 average productivity gains of 8.3 percent per year, while average annual output per hour increased 4.8 percent in clothing stores.

All three of the food services industries had long-term labor productivity rates of 0.8 percent or less. Labor productivity in drinking places declined 1.5 percent per year, 1987-2002, as output declined 0.5 percent per year while hours increased 1.1 percent. All food services and drinking places industries had unit labor costs increases between 1987 and 2002.

Labor productivity and associated series through 2001 for all 3-digit NAICS manufacturing industries are available on the Labor Productivity and Costs web site (<http://www.bls.gov/lpc/home.htm>). Additional selected 5-digit and 6-digit NAICS manufacturing industries are available by request.

### **Technical note**

The data in this news release replace the wholesale trade, retail trade, and food services and drinking places series published in the news release Productivity and Costs by Industry, 2001 (released Sept. 18, 2003). Data for 2002 should be considered preliminary. Due to periodic revision of source data, all measures are subject to revision.

Data in this news release are based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). The NAICS differs from the Standard Industry Classification (SIC) it replaced in that it uses a production-oriented approach to categorize economic units and has a greater emphasis on emerging industries and service-producing industries. In contrast to the SIC system, NAICS classifies auxiliary units involved in activities such as transportation and warehousing; accounting, bookkeeping, and payroll services; and general management into specialized industries rather than including them in the manufacturing, trade, or service industries they support.

Industry output indexes are prepared from basic data published by various public and private agencies, using the greatest level of detail available. Data from the Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, are used extensively in developing the output series. The Census of Retail Trade, the Census of Wholesale Trade, and the Census of Accommodation and Food Services provide detailed product data for the industries in this report. The Census Bureau also publishes annual industry sales data for the years 1992 forward on the North American Industry Classification System. Data prior to 1992 were classified according to the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system. Conversion ratios based on 1997 Census data were used to convert these sales data from SIC to NAICS. The labor series used in the industry productivity measures are based primarily on employment and average weekly hours data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Employment Statistics (CES) survey and the Current Population Survey (CPS).

### **Productivity measurement**

The industry labor productivity measures describe the relationship between output and the labor time involved in its production. They show the changes from period to period in the amount of goods and services produced per hour. Although these measures relate output to hours of employees or all persons engaged in an industry, they do not measure the specific contribution of labor, capital, or any other factor of production. Rather, they reflect the joint effects of many influences, including changes in technology; capital investment; level of output; utilization of capacity, energy, and materials; the organization of production; managerial skill; and the characteristics and effort of the workforce.

The indexes of industry output used in measuring labor productivity and unit labor costs are, wherever possible, calculated with a Tornqvist formula. This formula

aggregates the growth rates of the various industry products between two periods using the products' shares in industry value of production, averaged over the two periods, as weights.

Year-to-year movements in productivity measures for some industries might be erratic, particularly in the smaller industries. The annual changes in an industry's output and use of labor may reflect cyclical changes in the economy rather than long-term trends. Also, annual productivity indexes are based on sample data, which are likely to differ from data generated by a census of establishments in the industry. As a result, long-term trends tend to be more reliable indicators of the performance of an industry than are the year-to-year changes.

### **Unit labor cost measurement**

The unit labor cost series in this release describe the cost of labor input required to produce one unit of output. Unit labor costs are calculated as the ratio of current dollar labor compensation to constant dollar output. The indexes of unit labor costs for each industry are computed by dividing an index of current dollar compensation by an index of constant dollar output.

Compensation is a measure of the cost to the employer of securing the services of labor. It is defined as payroll plus supplemental payments. Payroll includes salaries, wages, commissions, dismissal pay, bonuses, vacation and sick leave pay, and compensation in kind. Supplemental payments are divided into legally required expenditures and payments for voluntary programs. The legally required expenditures include employers' contributions to Social Security, unemployment insurance taxes, and workers' compensation. Payments for voluntary programs include all programs not specifically required by legislation, such as the employer portion of private health insurance and pension plans.

Productivity and unit labor cost data for the NAICS industries in this news release can be obtained in several ways: by visiting the Labor Productivity and Costs web site (<http://www.bls.gov/lpc/home.htm>); by calling the Division of Industry Productivity Studies (202-691-5618); or by sending a request by e-mail ([dipsweb@bls.gov](mailto:dipsweb@bls.gov)). Historical productivity and related series for 3- and 4-digit SIC industries through 2000 will continue to be maintained, but will no longer be updated. SIC-based industry data are available on the BLS web site or by request.

**Table 1. Annual percent change in output per hour and related series: retail trade, wholesale trade, and food services and drinking places industries, 1987-02 and 2001-02**

NAICS code	Industry	2002 Employment (thousands)	Annual percent change, 1987-02			Annual percent change, 2001-02		
			Output per hour	Output	Hours	Output per hour	Output	Hours
<b>Wholesale Trade</b>								
42	Wholesale trade	5842	3.5	4.1	0.6	5.8	2.2	-3.3
423	Durable goods	3096	5.0	5.4	0.4	6.2	0.6	-5.3
4231	Motor vehicles and parts	360	3.4	3.6	0.2	6.7	5.1	-1.5
4232	Furniture and furnishings	116	1.8	2.3	0.5	-1.5	-3.5	-2.0
4233	Lumber and construction supplies	229	0.0	1.3	1.4	9.7	9.3	-0.4
4234	Commercial equipment	673	13.6	14.3	0.6	15.7	6.6	-7.9
4235	Metals and minerals	128	-0.3	0.1	0.4	-1.4	-5.9	-4.6
4236	Electric goods	374	9.7	9.9	0.1	8.4	-1.5	-9.1
4237	Hardware and plumbing	244	1.8	2.8	1.0	5.2	1.0	-4.0
4238	Machinery and supplies	696	2.2	2.1	-0.2	-2.8	-8.2	-5.5
4239	Miscellaneous durable goods	276	2.2	3.1	0.9	7.9	3.1	-4.5
424	Nondurable goods	2111	1.2	1.8	0.6	5.3	4.0	-1.3
4241	Paper and paper products	164	2.0	2.3	0.3	9.4	1.2	-7.5
4242	Druggists' goods	215	3.3	6.7	3.3	13.9	14.8	0.8
4243	Apparel and piece goods	158	1.6	1.7	0.1	8.9	4.9	-3.7
4244	Grocery and related products	711	1.6	2.8	1.1	2.7	4.6	1.8
4245	Farm product raw materials	79	3.4	0.2	-3.0	12.7	2.3	-9.2
4246	Chemicals	135	-0.2	1.1	1.3	2.9	1.6	-1.2
4247	Petroleum	113	1.8	-0.6	-2.4	7.4	-0.4	-7.2
4248	Alcoholic beverages	134	1.1	2.0	0.9	5.2	6.6	1.3
4249	Miscellaneous nondurable goods	402	-0.8	-0.3	0.5	-6.8	-8.4	-1.8
425	Electronic markets and agents and brokers	636	5.1	6.3	1.2	2.7	2.7	0.0
42511	Business to business electronic markets	85	7.8	8.2	0.4	17.7	7.9	-8.4
42512	Wholesale trade agents and brokers	550	3.9	5.2	1.3	-2.0	-0.7	1.4
<b>Retail Trade</b>								
44, 45	Retail trade	15942	2.8	3.8	1.0	4.2	3.3	-0.9
441	Motor vehicle and parts dealers	1950	1.7	3.0	1.3	-0.2	-0.6	-0.4
4411	Automobile dealers	1304	1.3	2.8	1.4	-2.6	-1.1	1.6
4412	Other motor vehicle dealers	145	3.2	5.2	1.9	3.3	5.8	2.4
4413	Auto parts, accessories, and tire stores	501	2.6	3.4	0.8	5.8	-0.2	-5.6
442	Furniture and home furnishings stores	602	3.3	4.5	1.1	5.3	5.4	0.0
4421	Furniture stores	313	3.6	4.3	0.7	6.0	6.0	0.0
4422	Home furnishings stores	289	3.0	4.6	1.5	4.4	4.5	0.1
443	Electronics and appliance stores	566	12.9	15.2	2.0	19.6	15.3	-3.6
444	Building material and garden supply stores	1206	2.9	4.9	1.9	3.5	5.7	2.2
4441	Building material and supplies dealers	1044	2.8	5.1	2.2	3.9	6.5	2.5
4442	Lawn and garden equipment and supplies stores	162	3.3	3.4	0.1	0.9	0.8	-0.1
445	Food and beverage stores	3014	0.1	0.5	0.4	2.8	0.5	-2.3
4451	Grocery stores	2551	0.0	0.6	0.5	3.1	0.3	-2.6
4452	Specialty food stores	303	-0.6	-0.5	0.1	3.8	2.7	-1.0
4453	Beer, wine and liquor stores	160	1.0	0.3	-0.7	0.7	1.0	0.3
446	Health and personal care stores	954	2.2	3.8	1.6	4.6	4.6	0.0
447	Gasoline stations	924	2.2	1.7	-0.5	5.9	2.3	-3.4
448	Clothing and clothing accessories stores	1389	4.5	4.6	0.0	4.8	5.5	0.7
4481	Clothing stores	1003	4.8	5.0	0.2	6.2	6.4	0.1
4482	Shoe stores	185	3.9	2.5	-1.4	4.0	0.3	-3.6
4483	Jewelry, luggage, and leather goods stores	201	3.8	4.5	0.7	-0.5	6.0	6.6
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book, and music stores	732	4.1	5.6	1.5	6.1	4.6	-1.4
4511	Sporting goods and musical instrument stores	492	4.6	6.0	1.4	5.7	6.4	0.7

**Table 1. Annual percent change in output per hour and related series: retail trade, wholesale trade, and food services and drinking places industries, 1987-02 and 2001-02-- Continued**

NAICS code	Industry	2002 Employment (thousands)	Annual percent change, 1987-02			Annual percent change, 2001-02		
			Output per hour	Output	Hours	Output per hour	Output	Hours
4512	Book, periodical, and music stores	240	3.2	4.9	1.6	7.3	1.2	-5.7
452	General merchandise stores	2835	3.9	5.5	1.6	4.8	6.6	1.7
4521	Department stores	1711	1.1	3.3	2.2	-1.0	-0.1	0.8
4529	Other general merchandise stores	1124	8.3	9.2	0.8	10.9	14.2	3.0
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	1138	4.0	5.3	1.2	5.3	-0.1	-5.2
4531	Florists	146	2.8	1.6	-1.2	10.5	-2.4	-11.6
4532	Office supplies, stationery and gift stores	513	6.3	7.1	0.8	10.2	3.6	-6.0
4533	Used merchandise stores	127	2.7	7.4	4.6	5.5	4.4	-1.0
4539	Other miscellaneous store retailers	351	1.9	4.1	2.2	-1.3	-3.8	-2.5
454	Nonstore retailers	634	8.4	9.1	0.6	13.2	10.6	-2.3
4541	Electronic shopping and mail-order houses	250	12.4	16.9	4.0	17.9	14.4	-3.0
4542	Vending machine operators	78	0.8	-0.1	-0.9	0.9	0.3	-0.7
4543	Direct selling establishments	306	2.9	1.7	-1.1	7.3	5.0	-2.1
<b>Food Services and Drinking Places</b>								
722	Food services and drinking places	8611	0.6	2.3	1.6	1.3	2.4	1.1
7221	Full-service restaurants	4084	0.8	2.5	1.7	1.3	3.1	1.8
7222	Limited-service eating places	3612	0.8	2.4	1.6	0.7	1.8	1.0
7223	Special food services	519	0.3	2.3	2.0	0.8	-0.2	-1.0
7224	Drinking places, alcoholic beverages	396	-1.5	-0.5	1.1	8.0	5.8	-2.1

Industry employment may not sum to aggregate levels due to rounding.

**Table 2. Annual percent change in total compensation, output, and unit labor costs: retail trade, wholesale trade, and food services and drinking places industries, 1987-02 and 2001-02**

NAICS code	Industry	2002 Employment (thousands)	Annual percent change, 1987-02			Annual percent change 2001-02		
			Total compensation	Output	Unit labor costs	Total compensation	Output	Unit labor costs
<b>Wholesale Trade</b>								
42	Wholesale trade	5842	4.8	4.1	0.7	-1.3	2.2	-3.4
423	Durable goods	3096	4.5	5.4	-0.9	-4.5	0.6	-5.1
4231	Motor vehicles and parts	360	3.7	3.6	0.1	1.4	5.1	-3.6
4232	Furniture and furnishings	116	4.5	2.3	2.2	1.9	-3.5	5.6
4233	Lumber and construction supplies	229	4.6	1.3	3.2	2.3	9.3	-6.4
4234	Commercial equipment	673	5.3	14.3	-7.9	-6.5	6.6	-12.3
4235	Metals and minerals	128	3.6	0.1	3.5	-2.5	-5.9	3.6
4236	Electric goods	374	4.6	9.9	-4.8	-10.7	-1.5	-9.3
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4243	Apparel and piece goods	158	3.4	1.7	1.7	1.7	4.9	-3.0
4244	Grocery and related products	711	4.8	2.8	2.0	5.3	4.6	0.7
4245	Farm product raw materials	79	1.5	0.2	1.3	-4.3	2.3	-6.5
4246	Chemicals	135	4.7	1.1	3.6	0.1	1.6	-1.5
4247	Petroleum	113	2.0	-0.6	2.6	-7.1	-0.4	-6.8
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42511	Business to business electronic markets	85	4.8	8.2	-3.2	-12.1	7.9	-18.5
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443	Electronics and appliance stores	566	6.2	15.2	-7.9	-7.2	15.3	-19.5
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447	Gasoline stations	924	2.3	1.7	0.6	-0.4	2.3	-2.7
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4481	Clothing stores	1003	3.7	5.0	-1.3	4.6	6.4	-1.6
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4483	Jewelry, luggage, and leather goods stores	201	3.3	4.5	-1.1	6.9	6.0	0.8
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book, and music stores	732	5.2	5.6	-0.4	0.8	4.6	-3.6
4511	Sporting goods and musical instrument stores	492	5.1	6.0	-0.9	2.7	6.4	-3.4



**Table 2. Annual percent change in total compensation, output, and unit labor costs: retail trade, wholesale trade, and food services and drinking places industries, 1987-02 and 2001-02--Continued**

NAICS code	Industry	2002 Employment (thousands)	Annual percent change, 1987-02			Annual percent change 2001-02		
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4521	Department stores	1711	4.0	3.3	0.7	0.4	-0.1	0.6
4529	Other general merchandise stores	1124	4.1	9.2	-4.7	9.8	14.2	-3.8
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4539	Other miscellaneous store retailers	351	3.3	4.1	-0.8	-2.0	-3.8	1.9
454	Nonstore retailers	634	5.2	9.1	-3.6	-2.2	10.6	-11.6
4541	Electronic shopping and mail-order houses	250	9.3	16.9	-6.5	-3.1	14.4	-15.3
4542	Vending machine operators	78	2.1	-0.1	2.1	-6.0	0.3	-6.2
4543	Direct selling establishments	306	3.2	1.7	1.4	-0.4	5.0	-5.1
<b>Food Services and Drinking Places</b>								
722	Food services and drinking places	8611	5.6	2.3	3.2	4.3	2.4	1.9
7221	Full-service restaurants	4084	6.1	2.5	3.5	5.1	3.1	1.9
7222	Limited-service eating places	3612	4.6	2.4	2.1	4.3	1.8	2.5
7223	Special food services	519	7.5	2.3	5.1	2.2	-0.2	2.4
7224	Drinking places, alcoholic beverages	396	4.6	-0.5	5.1	0.9	5.8	-4.6

Industry employment may not sum to aggregate levels due to rounding.