

The October Review

Fasten your seatbelts as you peruse our lead article this month on the turbulence that has afflicted the airline transportation industry in recent years.

As the author Christopher J. Goodman notes, the industry has been buffeted with the recession of 2001 and that year's September 11th terrorist attacks, with financial difficulties, waves of restructuring, changes in passenger volume and, most recently, soaring fuel prices. He documents the expansion of business activity in the industry in the latter half of the 1990s, when passenger volume was increasingly steadily, profits were generally sound, and employment was growing. The recession of 2001 sharply affected demand for air travel, especially among business travelers, and the September 11th attacks exacerbated an already difficult situation. Although air travel eventually began to grow again, it did not translate into renewed growth in airline employment; in fact, the number of jobs in the industry has not returned to pre-recession levels.

Over the years, the *Monthly Labor Review* from time to time has published articles taking a historical look at changes in labor-related programs, laws, or regulations. Stephen A. Wandner this month provides a history of three employment services programs related to the unemployment insurance system: Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services; Short-Time Compensation; and Self-Employment Assistance.

James A. Walker provides a look at

union membership in 2007 in a visual essay. Using annual average figures from the Current Population Survey, he examines the current composition of union membership by industry, occupation, age and other variables. He also provides some historical perspective by showing long-term trends in union membership rates overall, as well as those for men and women and major race/ethnic groups.

Women's earnings

The ratio of women's to men's earnings has been a statistic widely examined for a long time. The latest annual average data—for 2007—indicate that women who were full-time wage and salary workers had median weekly earnings of \$614, or about 80 percent of the \$766 median for their male counterparts. This ratio has grown since 1979 (the first year for which earnings data from the Current Population Survey are comparable to current figures), when women earned about 62 percent as much as men.

The occupational distribution of female and male full-time workers differs significantly. Relatively few women work in construction, production, or transportation occupations, for instance, whereas the concentration of men in administrative support jobs is small. The types of jobs women and men hold, as well as other variables such as educational attainment and work experience, can contribute to overall wage differences between the sexes.

A full range of comparative information on women's and men's earnings is found in an annual publication

produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics called *Highlights of Women's Earnings*. The edition with data for 2007 can be found online at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpswom2007.pdf>

The nonprofit sector

Nonprofit organizations are a growing presence in the U.S. economy. In 1994, according to the IRS, there were slightly more than 1.1 million nonprofit organizations in the country, and that figure had risen to more than 1.6 million in 2007. According to BLS data, nonprofits in 1994 employed about 5.4 million people, or 4.4 percent of all workers; by 2007, they employed 8.7 million workers, or nearly 6 percent of all workers.

Examples of nonprofits include hospitals, churches, educational institutions, and charities. In the first of a series of articles to be published in *Compensation and Working Conditions Online*, Amy Butler uses data from the BLS National Compensation Survey to examine the wage rates of managers and selected professional and administrative support workers in nonprofit organizations. She compares the rates for those workers with their counterparts in private industry and State and local government. Among her conclusions, she finds that full-time workers in these kinds of jobs had higher hourly wages in nonprofits than in private industry, but lower hourly wages than in State and local government.

The article can be found online at <http://www.bls.gov/opub/cwc/cm20081022ar01p1.htm> □