

News

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Bureau of Labor Statistics

Washington, D.C. 20212

Information: (202) 691-5174 cbainfo@bls.gov
Media Contact: (202) 691-5902 hoyle_k@bls.gov
Internet Address: <http://www.bls.gov/cba>

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MAJOR WORK STOPPAGES IN 2003

The number of workers idled, the number of days of idleness, and the percent of estimated working time lost because of strikes and lockouts rose in 2003, but were still low by historical standards, the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics reported. Fourteen major work stoppages began during the year, idling 129,200 workers and resulting in 4.1 million workdays of idleness (about 1 out of every 10,000 available workdays). Comparable figures for 2002 were 19 stoppages, 46,000 workers idled, and 660,000 days of idleness. (See table 1 and charts A-C.) The major work stoppages series, which dates back to 1947, covers strikes and lockouts involving 1,000 workers or more and lasting at least one shift. For work stoppages that are still ongoing at the end of the calendar year, only those days of idleness in the calendar year are counted.

Of the major work stoppages beginning in 2003, 12 were in private industry and two were in state and local government. In private industry, the largest number of stoppages occurred in the manufacturing sector (three) and in the retail trade sector (three). In state and local government, one stoppage was in the transportation and warehousing sector and one was in public administration.

Five work stoppages beginning in 2003 accounted for 82 percent of all workers idled. The largest was between Albertsons, Ralphs Grocery Company, and Vons and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), with 67,300 workers idled. The second largest was a stoppage between General Electric Company and the Communications Workers (IUE-CWA) and the United Electrical Workers (UE-Ind.) that idled 17,500 workers. The third was a stoppage between Dierbergs Markets, Schnucks, and Shop 'n Save and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) that idled 10,200. The two work stoppages in state and local government were the next largest. A work stoppage between the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the United Transportation Union (UTU-Ind.) idled 6,200 workers while a work stoppage between The County of San Joaquin and the Service Employees (SEIU) idled 5,000 workers. (See table 2.)

Industry sectors with the most days of idleness during the year due to work stoppages were retail trade (3,689,000 days), transportation and warehousing (178,700 days), and manufacturing (82,800 days).

Nine-tenths of the year's days of idleness stemmed from three major disputes, including the disputes between Albertsons, Ralphs Grocery Company, and Vons and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) (3,374,200 days), between Dierbergs Markets, Schnucks, and Shop 'n Save and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) (183,600 days), and between the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the United Transportation Union (UTU-Ind.) (148,800 days).

The average length of work stoppages beginning in 2003 was 22 days, and 71 percent of all work stoppages lasted 30 days or less. The longest work stoppage was the dispute between Albertsons, Ralphs Grocery Company, and Vons and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) that began on October 13 and was still in effect on December 31. It also was the only dispute in 2003 that lasted more than 50 days (See Table A.)

Table A. Duration of work stoppages beginning in 2002 and 2003

Duration	2002		2003	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1-2 days	2	11	1	7
3-10 days	4	21	6	43
11-20 days	5	26	1	7
21-30 days	3	16	2	14
31-40 days	1	5	2	14
41-50 days	3	16	1	7
Over 50 days	1	5	1	7

Note: Percent totals may not add to 100 because of rounding.

The term "major work stoppage" includes both worker-initiated strikes and employer-initiated lockouts that involve 1,000 workers or more. BLS does not distinguish between strikes and lockouts in its statistics.

Information on work stoppages is obtained from reports from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service and state labor market information offices and from media sources such as *The Daily Labor Report* and the *Wall Street Journal*. One or both of the parties involved in the work stoppage (employer, union, etc.) is then contacted to verify the duration of and the number of workers idled by the stoppage.

Table 1. Work stoppages involving 1,000 or more workers, 1947-2003

Period	Number of stoppages beginning in period	Number of workers involved ¹ (thousands)	Days idle ²	
			Number (thousands)	Percent of estimated working time ³
1947	270	1,629	25,720	(4)
1948	245	1,435	26,127	.22
1949	262	2,537	43,420	.38
1950	424	1,698	30,390	.26
1951	415	1,462	15,070	.12
1952	470	2,746	48,820	.38
1953	437	1,623	18,130	.14
1954	265	1,075	16,630	.13
1955	363	2,055	21,180	.16
1956	287	1,370	26,840	.20
1957	279	887	10,340	.07
1958	332	1,587	17,900	.13
1959	245	1,381	60,850	.43
1960	222	896	13,260	.09
1961	195	1,031	10,140	.07
1962	211	793	11,760	.08
1963	181	512	10,020	.07
1964	246	1,183	16,220	.11
1965	268	999	15,140	.10
1966	321	1,300	16,000	.10
1967	381	2,192	31,320	.18
1968	392	1,855	35,367	.20
1969	412	1,576	29,397	.16
1970	381	2,468	52,761	.29
1971	298	2,516	35,538	.19
1972	250	975	16,764	.09
1973	317	1,400	16,260	.08
1974	424	1,796	31,809	.16
1975	235	965	17,563	.09
1976	231	1,519	23,962	.12
1977	298	1,212	21,258	.10
1978	219	1,006	23,774	.11
1979	235	1,021	20,409	.09
1980	187	795	20,844	.09
1981	145	729	16,908	.07
1982	96	656	9,061	.04
1983	81	909	17,461	.08
1984	62	376	8,499	.04
1985	54	324	7,079	.03
1986	69	533	11,861	.05
1987	46	174	4,481	.02
1988	40	118	4,381	.02
1989	51	452	16,996	.07
1990	44	185	5,926	.02
1991	40	392	4,584	.02
1992	35	364	3,989	.01
1993	35	182	3,981	.01
1994	45	322	5,021	.02
1995	31	192	5,771	.02
1996	37	273	4,889	.02
1997	29	339	4,497	.01
1998	34	387	5,116	.02

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 1. Work stoppages involving 1,000 or more workers, 1947-2003—Continued

Period	Number of stoppages beginning in period	Number of workers involved ¹ (thousands)	Days idle ²	
			Number (thousands)	Percent of estimated working time ³
1999	17	73	1,996	0.01
2000	39	394	20,419	.06
2001	29	99	1,151	(⁵)
2002	19	46	660	(⁵)
2003	14	129.2	4091.2	.01
January	1	17.5	48.8	(⁵)
February	0	0	0	.00
March	2	4.0	18.5	(⁵)
April	1	4.0	40.0	(⁵)
May	1	1.3	7.8	(⁵)
June	1	4.0	16.0	(⁵)
July	0	0	12.0	(⁵)
August	3	8.2	35.9	(⁵)
September	0	0	51.3	(⁵)
October	5	82.2	1168.5	.04
November	0	8.0 ⁶	1219.0	.05
December	0	0	1473.4	.05

¹ Workers are counted more than once if they are involved in more than one stoppage during the reference period.

² Days idle includes all stoppages in effect during the reference period. For work stoppages that are still ongoing at the end of the calendar year, only those days of idleness in the calendar year are counted.

³ Agricultural and government employees are included in the calculation of estimated working time; private households, forestry, and fishery employees are excluded.

⁴ Data not available.

⁵ Less than .005.

⁶ Reflects an increase in the number of workers idled by a work stoppage in effect.

Table 2. Work stoppages involving 5,000 or more workers beginning in 2003

Organizations involved and location ¹	Industry code ²	Beginning date	Ending date	Number of workers ³	Days idle
General Electric Company Communication Workers (IUE-CWA); United Electrical Workers (UE-Ind.)	334612	1/14/03	1/15/03	17,500	35,000
The County of San Joaquin Stockton, CA Service Employees (SEIU)	921190	8/4/03	8/8/03	5,000	25,000
Dierbergs Markets, Schnucks, and Shop 'n Save St. Louis, MO United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)	445110	10/7/03	10/31/03	10,200	183,600
Albertsons, Ralphs Grocery Company, and Vons Southern CA United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)	445110	10/12/03	(⁴)	67,300 ⁵	3,374,200
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority Los Angeles, CA United Transportation Union (UTU-Ind.)	485111	10/14/03	11/17/03	6,200	148,800

¹ Labor organizations are affiliated with the AFL-CIO except where noted as Independent (Ind.).

² Industry code is from the 2002 NAICS (North American Industry Classification System).

³ The number of workers involved is rounded to the nearest 100.

⁴ As of December 31, 2003, the work stoppage was still ongoing.

⁵ The number of workers idled on October 12, 2003 was 59,300; on November 24, 2003 the number increased to 67,300 and on December 23, 2003 the number decreased to 61,300.

Chart A. Number of major work stoppages, 1947-2003

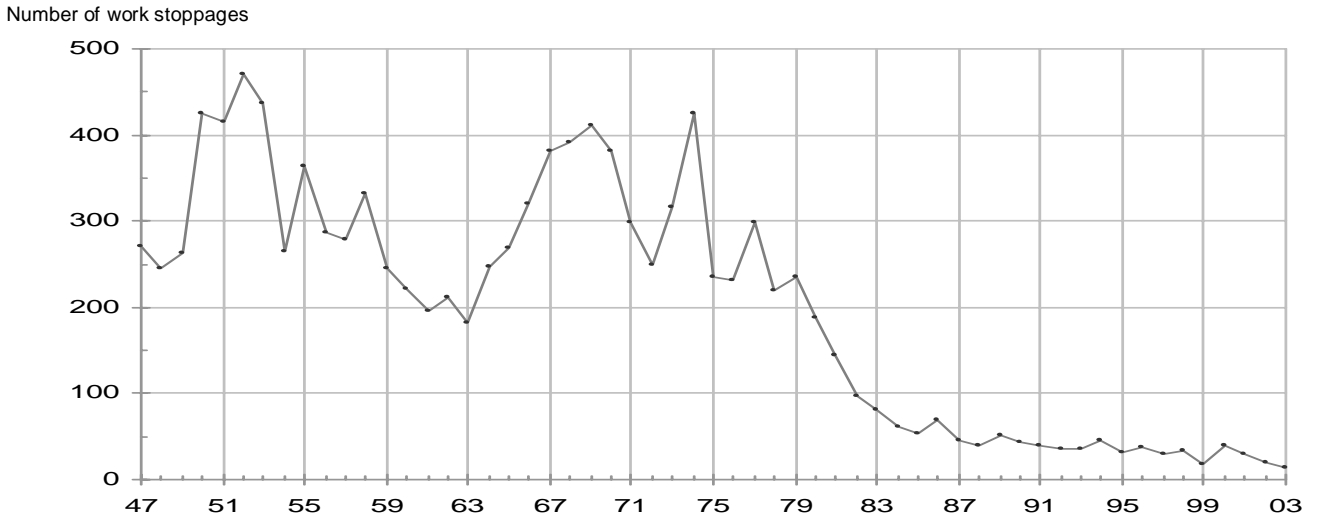


Chart B. Number of workers involved in major work stoppages, 1947-2003

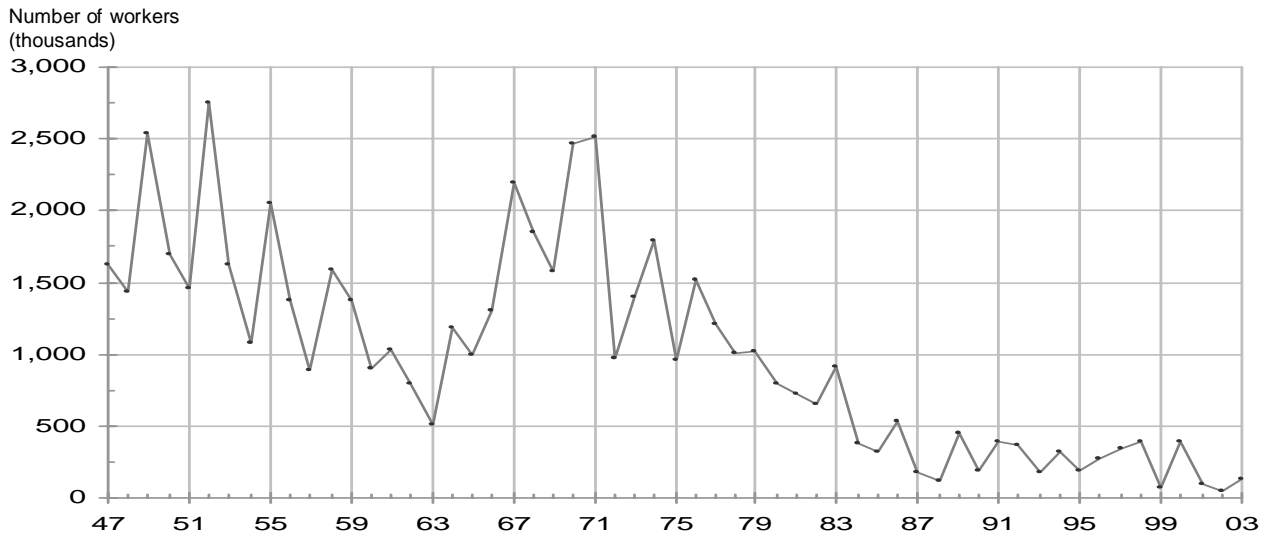


Chart C. Number of days of idleness from major work stoppages, 1947-2003

