

Job Prospects Mixed for Black Workers Last Month

By Freddie Allen
NNPA Newswire

Even though Black women lost ground in the labor market last month, the unemployment rate for Black workers dipped below 8 percent for the first time since January 2017, according to the latest jobs report from the Labor Department.

Not only did the unemployment (UE) rate for Black workers improve, the labor force participation rate (LFPR), which is the share of people in the labor market who have jobs or who are looking for work, also moved in a positive direction. The labor force participation rate for Black workers increased from 62.3 percent in March to 62.5 percent in April. The employment-population ratio (E-POP), or the share of the population with jobs, climbed a few notches from

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57.3 percent to 57.6 percent in April.

The jobless rate for White workers decreased from 3.9 percent in March to 3.8 percent in April, and so did the labor force participation rate. The E-POP for White workers was flat.

April was a good month for Black men over 20 years-old; the three main indicators (UE, LFPR and E-POP) all moved in positive directions. The unemployment rate for that group improved from 8.2 percent in March to 7.3 percent last month.

Meanwhile, White, working men over 20 years-old, who looked for jobs in April, found them, for the most part. The labor force participation rate for White men was flat at 71.9 percent, but the employment-population ratio for that group increased from 69.2 percent in March to 69.4 percent in April. The unemployment rate for White men improved from 3.6 percent in March to 3.4 percent in April.

White working women over 20 years-old, took losses in two out of the three key market indicators last month and their unemployment rate was flat (3.5 percent), likely due to White women exiting the labor market.

April's jobs report was a tough one for Black women over 20 years-old. For the



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third month in a row, the labor force rate for Black working women was flat at (62.7 percent). The E-POP took a few steps back from the 58.6 percent mark set in March to 58.4 percent in April. The unemployment rate for Black women increased from 6.6 percent to 6.9 percent in April.

uniquely central to the economic well-being of their families,” wrote Wilson. “To begin with, more than two-thirds of all African American working mothers are single moms, making them the primary, if not sole, economic providers for their families. By comparison, 29.6 percent of white working mothers and 47.9 percent of Hispanic working mothers are single.”

Black married women with children also worked more hours per year and earned less money per hour than White married women with children, according to EPI.

“What’s behind this greater attachment to the labor force? For African American women, it may have to do with higher rates of Black unemployment and racial pay and wealth

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Economists say that the measures of labor market indicators for minority subgroups are more prone to wild swings, because the survey sample sizes are smaller for minority workers compared to the sample size for White workers. Economists also say that the public shouldn't make much out of a single job report and should instead watch for trends.

One of those trends, was an increase in “annual work hours for all workers, especially low-wage African American workers and women,” from 1979 to 2015, according to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), a think tank focused on the needs of low- and middle-income workers.

In a recent post on EPI's website, Valerie Rawlston Wilson, the director of the Program on Race, Ethnicity, and the Economy (PREE) for the think tank, noted that working moms were “significant contributors to this trend.” More than half of all Black female workers are moms compared to roughly 44 percent of White female workers.

“African American working moms are

Oregon's Unemployment Rate Reaches Record Low 3.7 Percent

Oregon Employment Department

Oregon's unemployment rate edged down to 3.7 percent in April from 3.8 percent in March, reaching a new record low since comparable records began in 1976. The U.S. unemployment rate fell to 4.4 percent in April. Oregon's rate was significantly below its year-ago rate of 5.0 percent in April 2016.

In April, nonfarm payroll employment rose by 6,600 following a revised gain of 1,300 in March. Gains were widespread among the industries, with eight of the 14 major industries each adding close to 1,000 jobs. Meanwhile only three industries cut jobs, and those losses were modest: government (-700 jobs), wholesale trade (-500), and information (-300).

Over the past 12 months, Oregon's total nonfarm payroll employment rose 39,100, or 2.1 percent, which was a deceleration from the growth rate near or above 3 percent throughout much of the past four years. Despite the deceleration, Oregon is still growing faster than the U.S. growth rate of 1.6 percent.

Since April 2016, Oregon's construction sector grew the fastest of the major industries, adding 6,400 jobs, or 7.2 percent. Within construction, specialty trade contractors and construction of buildings grew quickly. Transportation, warehousing and utilities (+3,600 jobs, or 6.0%) also expanded rapidly, due to growth in transportation and warehousing. Professional and business services (+8,700 jobs, or 3.7%) was the third-fastest growing major industry category. It was led by strong job gains in employment services. Health care and social assistance (+6,800 jobs, or 3.0%) rounded out the list

of fastest growing industries, as each of its four component industries added jobs at a rapid clip.

The Oregon Employment Department and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) work cooperatively to develop and publish monthly Oregon payroll employment and labor force data. The estimates of monthly job gains and losses are based on a survey of businesses. The estimates of unemployment are based on a survey of households and other sources.

The Oregon Employment Department publishes payroll employment estimates that are revised quarterly by using employment counts from employer unemployment insurance tax records. All department publications use this Official Oregon Series data unless noted otherwise. This month's release incorporates the October, November and December 2016 tax records data. In addition, data for July through September 2016 were revised upward by a total of 600 to 1,300 jobs per month. The department continues to make the original nonfarm payroll employment series available; these data are produced by the BLS.

The pdf version of the news release, including tables and graphs, can be found at www.QualityInfo.org/press-release. To obtain the data in other formats such as in Excel, visit www.QualityInfo.org, then within the top banner, select Economic Data, then choose LAUS or CES. To request the press release as a Word document, contact the person shown at the top of this press release.

For help finding jobs and training resources, visit one of the state's WorkSource Oregon Centers or go to: www.WorkSourceOregon.org.

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