

## Defining the Labor Force Participation Rate

**Labor Force Participation Rate** - Represents the proportion of the total 16 years old and over population that is in the labor force (this can be any age over 16). The **labor force** includes all people classified in the civilian labor force, **plus** members of the U.S. Armed Forces (people on active duty with the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard). The **civilian labor force** consists of people classified as employed or unemployed. See the following breakdown to better understand the groups included within each.

**Labor Force** includes members of the U.S. **Armed Forces (1)** (people on active duty with the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard), **plus** all people classified in the **civilian labor force (2)**.

1. **Armed Forces** - All people between 16 and 65 years old who are on active duty in the United States Armed Forces. Armed Forces data are **not** shown for the population 65 years and over.
2. **Civilian labor force** consists of people classified as **employed (1)**, or **unemployed (2)**, *not including active duty*.
  - **Employed** - Employed includes all **civilians 16 years old** and over who were either **(1)** "at work" -- those who did any work at all during the reference week as paid employees, worked in their own business or profession, worked on their own farm, or worked 15 hours or more as unpaid workers on a family farm or in a family business; or **(2)** were "with a job but not at work" -- those who did not work during the reference week but had jobs or businesses from which they were temporarily absent due to illness, bad weather, industrial dispute, vacation, or other personal reasons. Excluded from the employed are people whose only activity consisted of work around the house or unpaid volunteer work for religious, charitable, and similar organizations; *also excluded are people on active duty in the United States Armed Forces*.
  - **Unemployed** - All civilians 16 years old and over are classified as unemployed if they **(1)** were neither "at work" nor "with a job but not at work" during the reference week, and **(2)** were actively looking for work during the last 4 weeks, and **(3)** were available to accept a job. Also included as unemployed are civilians who did not work at all during the reference week, were waiting to be called back to a job from which they had been laid off and were available for work except for temporary illness.

**Not in the labor force** includes all people 16 years old and over who are not classified as members of the labor force. This category consists mainly of students, housewives, retired workers, seasonal workers interviewed in an off season who were not looking for work, institutionalized people, and people doing only incidental unpaid family work (less than 15 hours during the reference week).

The main [Glossary](#) on [Census.gov](#) provides official definitions for all topics, censuses, surveys and programs. Additional American Community Survey metrics are on the ACS's [Code Lists, Definitions, and Accuracy](#) page as "Subject Definitions".