Stronger Job Growth in September Puts Men within Striking Distance of their Pre-Recession Employment Level

According to an Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) analysis of the October employment report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), although the total number of jobs lost in the recession has been recovered (139,435,000 jobs in September 2014 vs. 138,350,000 jobs in December 2007 when the recession began), men are still short 142,000 jobs from the start of the recession. In September, men gained 147,000 jobs on nonfarm payrolls, while women gained 101,000 for an increase
of 248,000 total jobs in September. The unemployment rate decreased to 5.9 percent in September from 6.1 percent in August.

In September, women’s employment growth was strongest in Professional and Business Services (29,000 jobs gained by women), Education and Health Services (24,000 jobs gained by women), Retail Trade (16,600 jobs gained by women), Leisure and Hospitality (16,000 jobs gained by women), and Government (13,000 jobs gained by women).

In September, women hold 1.2 million more jobs on payrolls (68.8 million) than at their previous employment peak in March 2008 (67.6 million), indicating they have more than recovered all the jobs they lost in the downturn. Men have regained 98 percent (5.9 million) of the jobs they lost between December 2007 (70.8 million) and the trough for men’s employment (64.7 million) in December 2009 (6 million jobs lost).

In the last year, from September 2013 to September 2014, of the 2.6 million jobs added to payrolls, 41 percent were filled by women (1,090,000 jobs) and 59 percent were filled by men (1,545,000 jobs), an improvement in average job growth overall compared with the prior year. Women’s job gains were
strongest in Education and Health Services (289,000 jobs added for women), Professional and Business Services (288,000 jobs added for women), Leisure and Hospitality (188,000 jobs added for women), and Retail Trade (128,200 jobs added for women). In the same one year period, however, women lost 1,700 jobs in Utilities. Men’s job gains were strongest in Professional and Business Services (425,000 jobs added for men), Construction (205,000 jobs added for men), and Leisure and Hospitality (184,000 jobs added for men). Men lost 2,000 jobs in Information between September 2013 and September 2014.

According to the household survey data reported by the BLS, the unemployment rate for women aged 16 and older decreased to 6.0 percent in September from 6.1 percent in August. The unemployment rate for men aged 16 and older decreased to 5.9 percent in September from 6.2 percent in August. Among workers aged 20 and older, unemployment is higher among black women and men (9.6 percent and 11.0 percent respectively) and Hispanic women (7.2 percent) compared with Hispanic men (4.8 percent) and white women and men (4.8 percent and 4.4 percent respectively). Among single mothers (female heads of households), the unemployment rate decreased to 8.3 percent in September from 9.3 percent in August. Unemployment among single mothers is substantially lower than its peak four years ago, 13.4 percent in July and August 2010. Neither the unemployment rate for Hispanics nor the rate for single mothers is seasonally adjusted and can fluctuate due to small sample sizes in the household survey.

The overall labor force participation rate among adults age 16 and older decreased to 62.7 percent in September from 62.8 percent in August. Women’s labor force participation rate decreased to 56.7 percent in September from 56.9 percent in August, which is 2.7 percentage points lower than the 59.4 percent rate in December 2007. Men’s labor force participation rate was 69.1 percent in September, or 4.0 percentage points lower than the 73.1 percent rate in December 2007. In a report issued in February 2014, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that about half of the decline in total labor force participation is due to the aging of the U.S. population.

As of September, 9.3 million workers remain unemployed and, of these, 3.0 million (31.9 percent) have been unemployed for 27 weeks or longer, usually referred to as the long-term unemployed. This share has declined by 5.0 percentage points in the past year, from 36.9 percent in September 2013.

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