

# ASPE RESEARCH BRIEF

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR PLANNING AND EVALUATION  
OFFICE OF HUMAN SERVICES POLICY - U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

## EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS AMONG PERSONS WITH CHILDREN DURING THE RECESSION<sup>1</sup>

### Summary

The employment patterns of persons with children under age 18 have largely mirrored the patterns of the nation's labor force during the recession. Between the fourth quarter of 2007 and the fourth quarter of 2009 the employment rates of parents decreased among most demographic groups. During the same time period the percent of couples with children with both members employed decreased from 62.1 percent to 56.6 percent, and the percent of couples with children with neither person employed increased from 3.0 percent to 5.5 percent.

### Background

This Research Brief reports employment information tabulated from the nation's primary data collection instrument on labor force activity, the Current Population Survey (CPS). The primary population of interest is persons living with their own children under age 18.<sup>2</sup> This population is important because lower levels of employment among parents generally correlate with increased levels of government transfers, material hardship, and poverty.

The methods used in this Research Brief to calculate unemployment rates are the same as those used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) for its official publications. The unemployment rate is the percent of the labor force (those persons working or actively seeking and available for work) that is not employed. The data in this Research Brief are not seasonally adjusted. In order to avoid misinterpreting labor market characteristics impacted by seasonal variation, this Brief focuses on comparing the labor force in the fourth quarter of 2007, the beginning of the recession, with the labor force in the fourth quarter of 2009.<sup>3</sup>

### ABOUT THIS RESEARCH BRIEF

*This Research Brief, written by ASPE analysts Kendall Swenson and Gilbert Crouse, analyzes quarterly data from the Current Population Survey, the nation's primary data collection instrument for labor force activity. Analyses of the employment patterns of persons with children under age 18 show that they have largely mirrored the employment patterns of the rest of the labor force during the recession, including a decrease in employment throughout 2008 and 2009. Findings show an increase in the percent of couples with neither parent employed and an increase in the percent of single mothers who were neither employed nor living with an employed cohabiting partner.*



<sup>1</sup> The authors would like to thank Mary Bowler, Gene Falk, Peter Horner, and Rose Kreider for providing thoughtful comments on an earlier draft of this Research Brief.

<sup>2</sup> Unless noted otherwise, the term "parents" refers to persons living with their own children under age 18, including biological, adopted, and step children.

<sup>3</sup> All comparisons cited in the text of this Research Brief are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

## All Parents

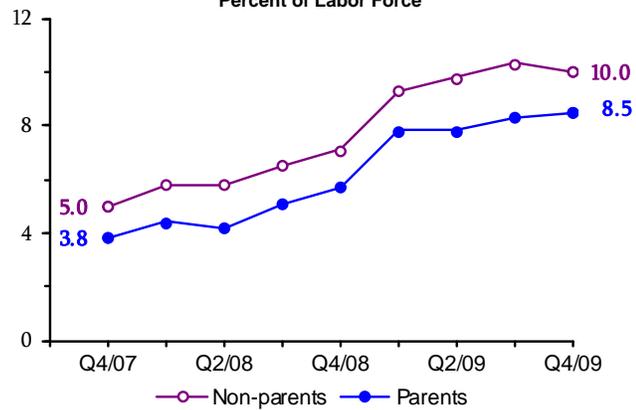
Parents living with children under age 18 made up 35.9 percent of the civilian, non-institutional labor force in the fourth quarter of 2009. Figure 1 shows that, in the aggregate, persons with children have lower rates of unemployment than persons without children (8.5 percent compared to 10.0 percent in the fourth quarter of 2009).

Since the start of the recession, the labor force patterns of parents living with children under age 18 largely mirrored the patterns of the rest of the labor force. Between the fourth quarter of 2007 and the fourth quarter of 2009, the unemployment rate of persons with children increased 4.7 percentage points from 3.8 percent to 8.5 percent, while the unemployment rate of non-parents in the labor force increased from 5.0 percent to 10.0 percent.

The unemployment rates of all of the parent populations shown in Figure 2 increased between the fourth quarter of 2007 and the fourth quarter of 2009, regardless of educational attainment. Unemployment rates among those with higher levels of education were lower than the rates of parents with less education in 2008 and 2009. For example, the unemployment rate of parents without a high school diploma or GED increased from 8.6 percent to 16.7 percent during this period. At the same time, the unemployment rate of parents with a college degree or more increased from 1.7 percent to 4.1 percent.

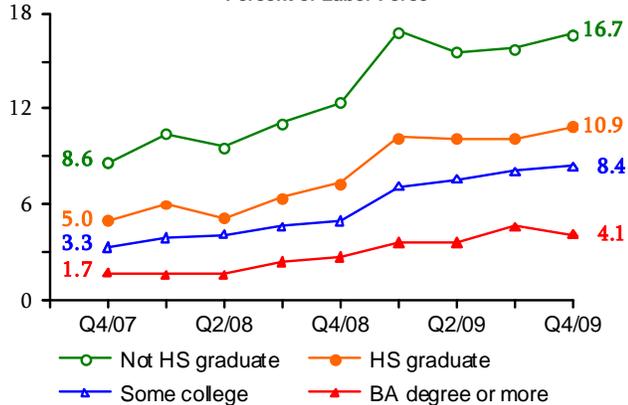
Unemployment rates of persons living with children also varied by race and ethnicity. The unemployment rates of Latinos, non-Latino Blacks, non-Latino Whites, and non-Latino Asians all increased between the last quarter of 2007 and the last quarter of 2009 (Figure 3). The rates for non-Latino Whites and Non-Latino Asians remained lower than the rates for non-Latino Blacks and Latinos.

**Figure 1. — Quarterly Unemployment Rates of All Persons By Presence of Own Children**  
Percent of Labor Force



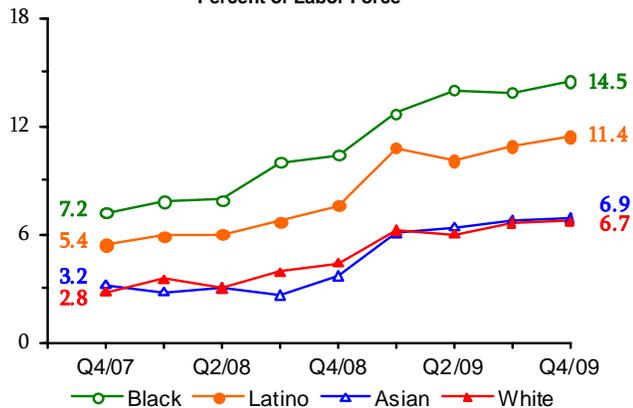
See appendix data tables for notes and sources.

**Figure 2. — Quarterly Unemployment Rates of All Parents By Educational Attainment**  
Percent of Labor Force



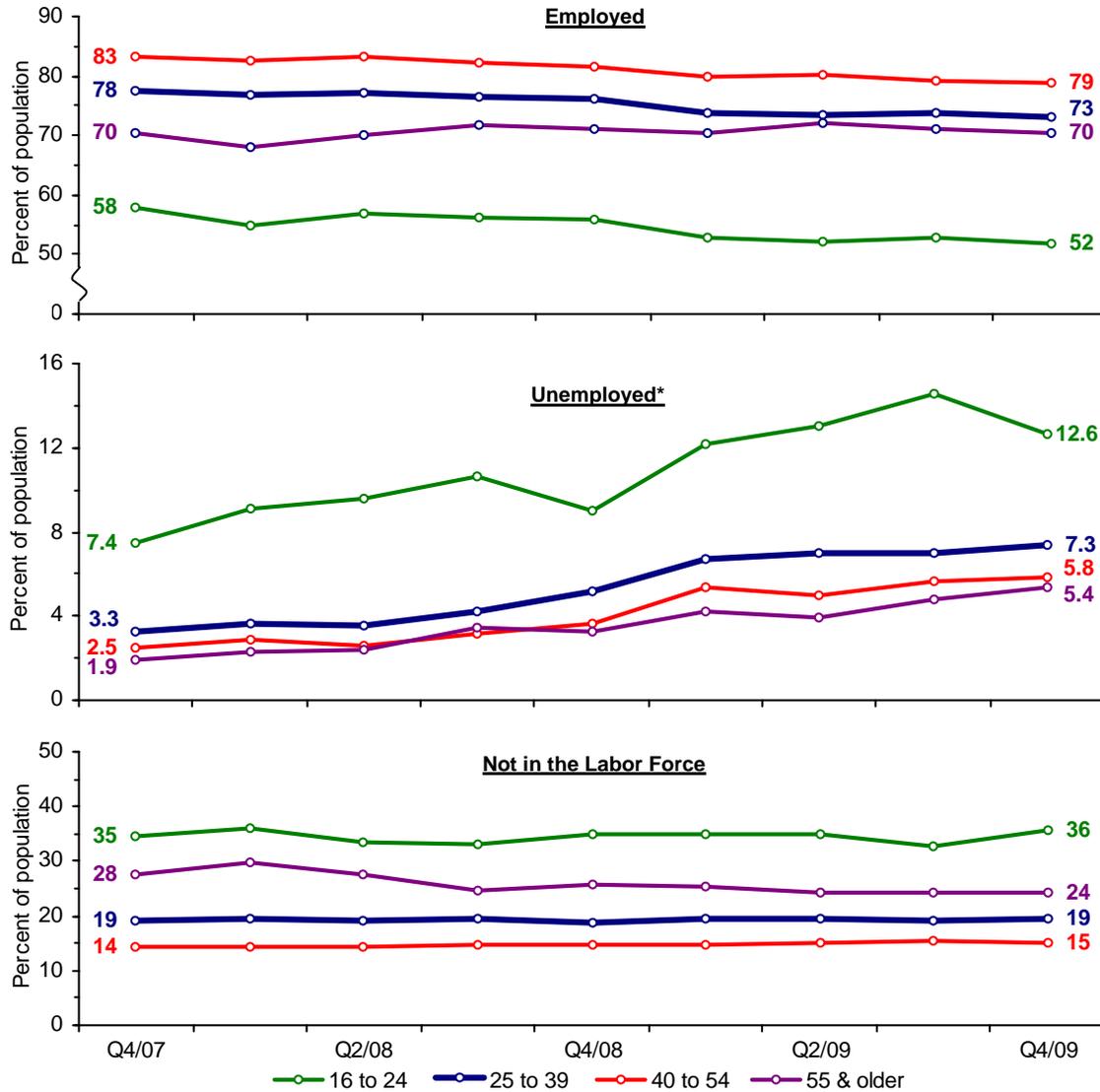
See appendix data tables for notes and sources.

**Figure 3. — Quarterly Unemployment Rates of All Parents By Race† & Ethnicity**  
Percent of Labor Force



† White, Black, and Asian categories are single race, non-Latino. See appendix data tables for notes and sources.

**Figure 4. — Distribution of Parents by Age and Employment Status**



\*Unlike the other figures in this research brief, these numbers are the percent of *all parents* that are unemployed, and include not only those parents in the labor force (i.e., those working or looking for work) but also those parents that are not currently looking for work.

See appendix data tables for notes and sources.

Figure 4 shows the *percent of all parents* who are employed, unemployed, or not in the labor force. Expanding the denominator to include all parents (instead of restricting the denominator to persons in the labor force) provides a different examination of the data because younger parents are much more likely to be out of the labor force than the other age groups. Between the fourth quarter in 2007 and the fourth quarter in 2009 the percent of parents employed decreased for all age groupings shown in Figure 4 except parents age 55 and older. Rates of employment among this group of parents remained statistically unchanged.

## Mothers

Between the fourth quarter in 2007 and the fourth quarter in 2009 the unemployment rates among non-married mothers were higher than those of married mothers, as shown in Figure 5.

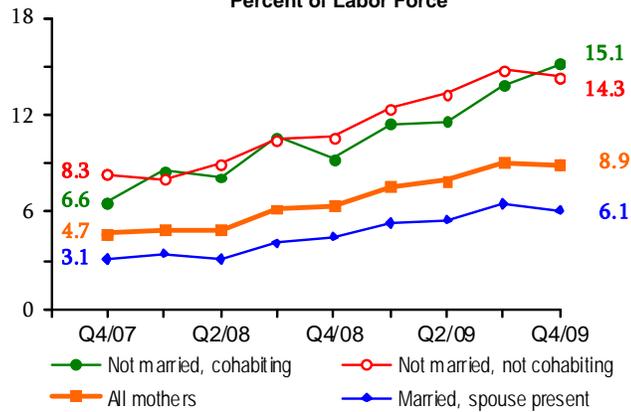
Throughout this time period, the unemployment rates of mothers living with cohabiting partners were closer to the rates of non-cohabiting, non-married mothers than to those of married mothers. In the fourth quarter of 2009 the unemployment rate of single mothers living with cohabiting partners was more than double that of married mothers living with their spouses.

Figure 6 below shows the percent of all mothers who are employed, and for those mothers who are not employed, whether they live with a spouse or cohabiting partner who is employed.<sup>4</sup>

Between the fourth quarter of 2007 and the fourth quarter of 2009, the percent of mothers who were not employed and did not live with an employed spouse or cohabiting partner increased from 9.7 percent to 12.8 percent. Thus, in the fourth quarter of 2009 about 87 percent (the sum of 65.2 and 22.0) of mothers either were employed themselves or lived with a spouse or cohabiting partner who was employed.

Single mothers are a population of interest among social scientists because previous research has confirmed that children living with unmarried mothers are more likely to experience material hardship than children living with married parents. Figure 7 focuses only on single mothers who are not living with spouses.<sup>5</sup> For those single mothers, it shows the percent who are employed and, for those single mothers who are not employed, whether they live with a cohabiting partner who is employed. Between the fourth quarter of 2007 and the fourth quarter of 2009, the percent of single mothers who were neither employed nor living with an employed cohabiting partner increased from 24.6 percent to 30.2 percent. Between the fourth quarter of 2007 and the fourth quarter of 2009 the percent of single mothers who were not employed but living with an employed cohabiting partner did not change statistically.

Figure 5. — Quarterly Unemployment Rates of Mothers  
By Living Arrangement  
Percent of Labor Force

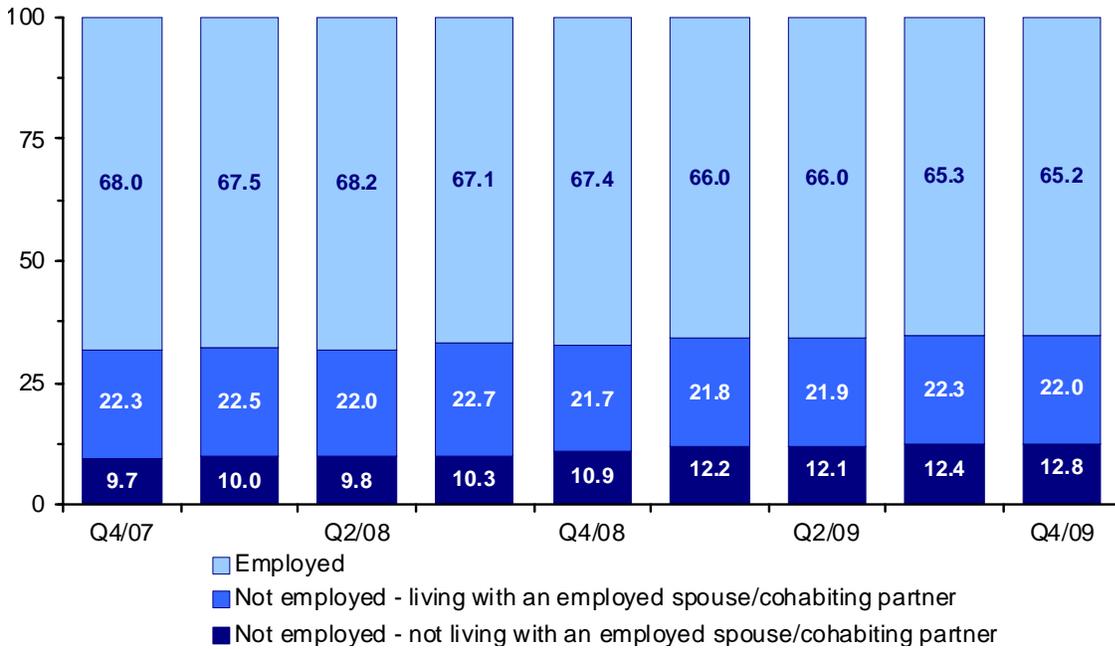


See appendix data tables for notes and sources.

<sup>4</sup> Unlike the figures showing unemployment rates, the employment percentages shown in Figures 5 and 6 compare employment levels to the entire civilian, non-institutional population, not just the labor force.

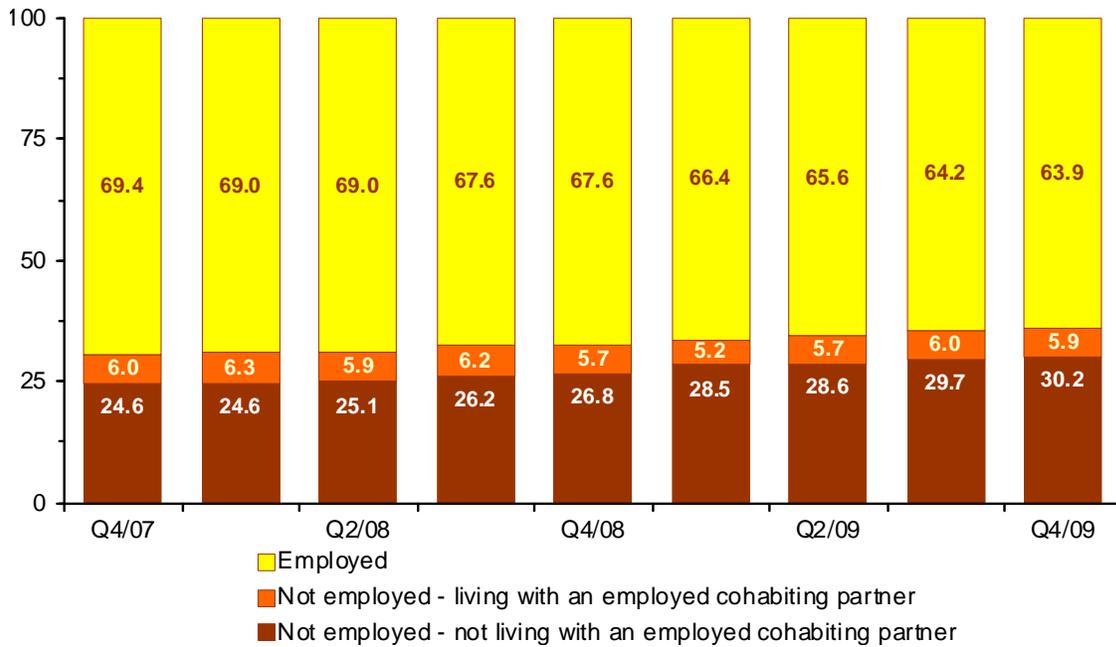
<sup>5</sup> Some of these women are separated or married, but not living with their spouses.

**Figure 6. — Percent Distribution of Mothers by Employment Status and Living Arrangement**



See appendix data tables for notes and sources.

**Figure 7. — Percent Distribution of Single\* Mothers by Employment Status and Living Arrangement**



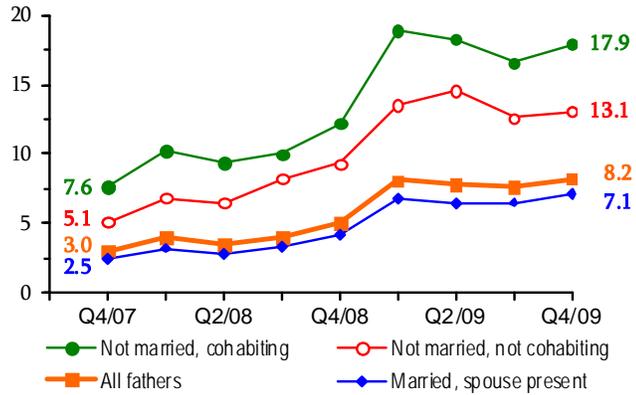
\*Single mothers in this figure refer to all mothers who do not have a spouse present.

See appendix data tables for notes and sources.

## Fathers

The employment patterns of fathers generally mirror those of the rest of the labor force. Between the fourth quarter in 2007 and the fourth quarter in 2009, the unemployment rate among non-married resident fathers<sup>6</sup> was higher than the rate of married fathers, as shown in Figure 8. The average unemployment rate of non-married fathers living with cohabiting partners during this time period was higher than for non-married fathers not living with cohabiting partners. Although the unemployment rate of all fathers was lower than the category of all mothers combined in the fourth quarter of 2009 (see Figure 5), the unemployment rate of married fathers was higher than the rate of married mothers (7.1 percent for fathers versus 6.1 percent for mothers).

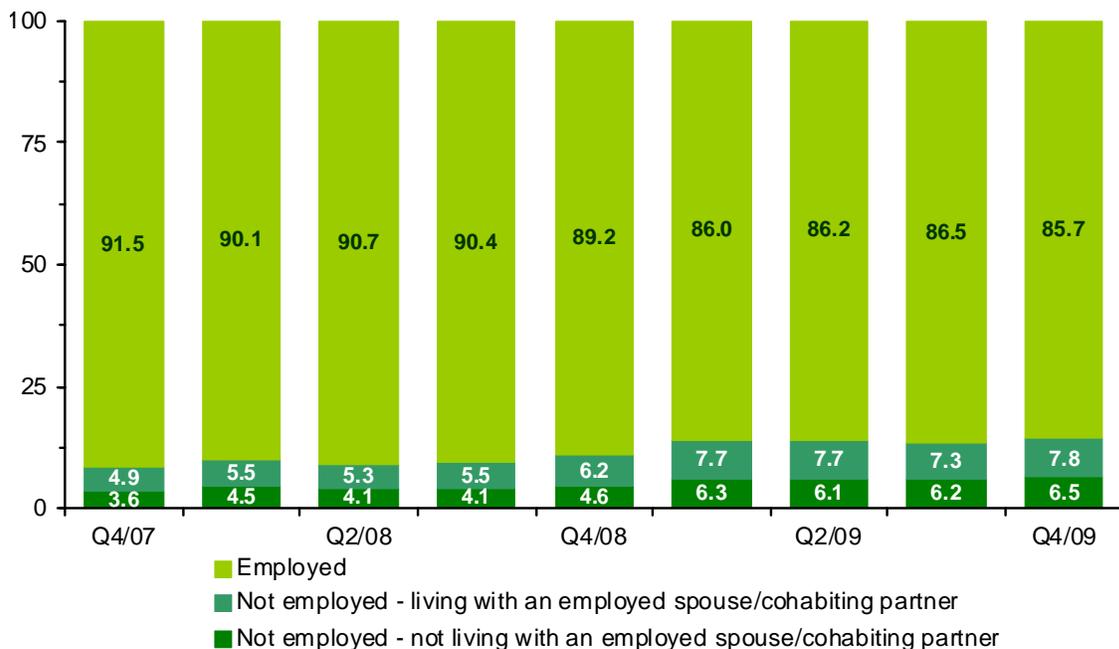
**Figure 8. — Quarterly Unemployment Rates of Fathers By Living Arrangements**  
Percent of Labor Force



See appendix data tables for notes and sources.

Figure 9 shows the percent of all fathers who are employed, and for those fathers who are not employed, whether they live with a spouse or cohabiting partner who is employed. In the aggregate, over 9 in 10 fathers were either employed or living with a spouse or cohabiting partner that was employed in the fourth quarter of 2009. However, the percent of fathers that were not employed and were not living with a spouse or cohabiting partner that was employed increased from 3.6 percent to 6.5 percent between the fourth quarter in 2007 and the fourth quarter in 2009.

**Figure 9. — Percent Distribution of Fathers by Employment Status and Living Arrangement**



See appendix data tables for notes and sources.

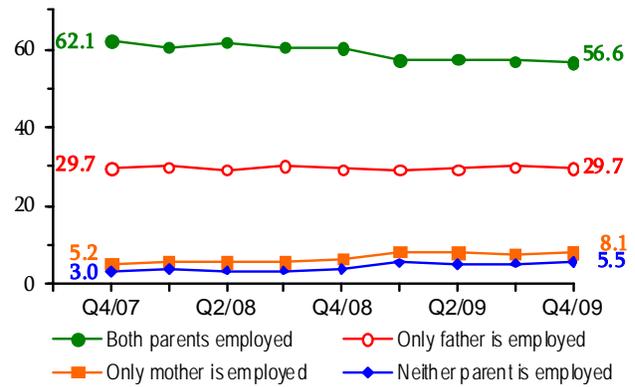
## Couples

Since mothers and fathers living together typically work collectively to provide for their children, it also is important to analyze their rates of employment as couples and not just as individuals. Figures 10 through 12 display the rates of employment of couples.<sup>7</sup>

Between the fourth quarter of 2007 and the fourth quarter of 2009, the percent of couples with children in which both parents were employed decreased from 62.1 percent to 56.6 percent. During this same time period, the percent of couples with neither parent employed increased from 3.0 percent to 5.5 percent. While the percent of couples with only the father employed stayed statistically unchanged during this time period, the percent of couples with only the mother employed increased from 5.2 percent to 8.1 percent.

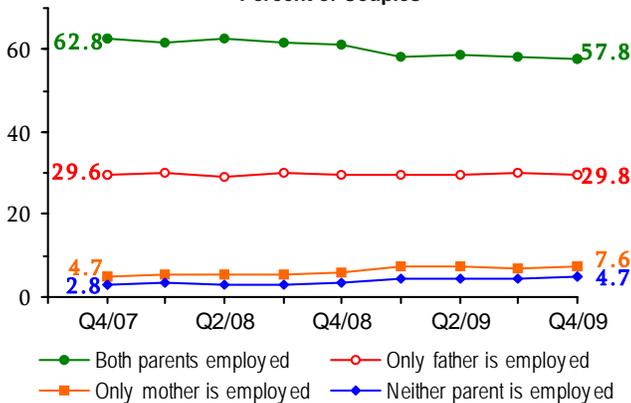
Figures 11 and 12 duplicate Figure 10 for married and cohabiting couples. As shown in Figure 12, the percent of cohabiting couples with both parents employed decreased from 54.4 percent to 44.2 percent, while the percent with neither parent working increased from 5.7 percent to 14.0 percent of the population, between the fourth quarter in 2007 and the fourth quarter in 2009.

**Figure 10 — Distribution of All Couples with Children  
By Spouse's Employment Status  
Percent of Couples**



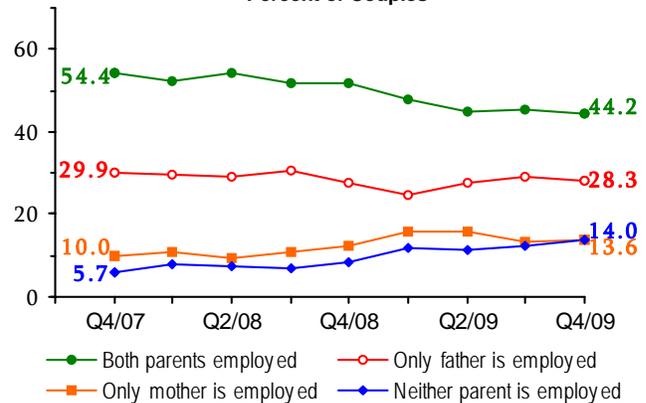
See appendix data tables for notes and sources.

**Figure 11. — Distribution of Married Couples with Children  
By Spouse's Employment Status  
Percent of Couples**



See appendix data tables for notes and sources.

**Figure 12. — Distribution of Cohabiting Couples with Children  
By Partners' Employment Status  
Percent of Couples**



See appendix data tables for notes and sources.

<sup>6</sup> The data exclude fathers that are not living with their children.

<sup>7</sup> Unlike the figures showing unemployment rates, the employment percentages shown in these figures compare employment levels to the entire civilian, non-institutional population, not just the labor force.

## **Conclusion**

Between the fourth quarter of 2007 and the fourth quarter of 2009, the percent of couples with both members employed decreased from 62.1 percent to 56.6 percent. During this same time period, the percent of couples with neither parent employed increased from 3.0 to 5.5 percent. The percent of couples with only the mother employed increased for both married and cohabiting couples with children.

Since the start of the recession, the labor force patterns of parents living with children under age 18 largely mirrored the patterns of the rest of the labor force. Between the fourth quarter of 2007 and the fourth quarter of 2009, the unemployment rate of persons with children increased from 3.8 to 8.5 percent, while the unemployment rate of non-parents increased from 5.0 percent to 10.0 percent.

Between the fourth quarter of 2007 and the fourth quarter of 2009, the percent of single mothers that were neither employed nor living with an employed cohabiting partner increased from 24.6 percent to 30.2 percent. Therefore, in the fourth quarter of 2009, about 3 in 10 single mothers were not employed and did not live with employed cohabiting partners.

**Data for Figure 1. — Quarterly Unemployment Rates of All Persons By Presence of Own Children**

Year-quarter	Total (000s)	Employed (000s)	Unemployed (000s)	In Labor Force (000s)	Unemployment Rate
<b>No Own Child in Unit</b>					
2007-4	164,785	93,188	4,883	98,071	5.0
2008-1	164,955	92,099	5,629	97,728	5.8
2008-2	165,337	92,921	5,761	98,682	5.8
2008-3	166,801	93,911	6,577	100,488	6.5
2008-4	166,839	92,091	6,991	99,082	7.1
2009-1	167,582	89,682	9,239	98,922	9.3
2009-2	167,675	89,798	9,779	99,577	9.8
2009-3	169,720	90,510	10,344	100,853	10.3
2009-4	170,092	89,236	9,941	99,177	10.0
<b>Parent with Own Child in Unit</b>					
2007-4	68,152	53,544	2,137	55,681	3.8
2008-1	67,852	52,656	2,438	55,094	4.4
2008-2	68,073	53,245	2,338	55,583	4.2
2008-3	67,309	52,117	2,793	54,911	5.1
2008-4	67,986	52,409	3,170	55,579	5.7
2009-1	67,330	50,443	4,295	54,738	7.8
2009-2	67,784	50,794	4,326	55,120	7.8
2009-3	66,372	49,560	4,510	54,070	8.3
2009-4	66,647	49,489	4,623	54,112	8.5

**Data for Figure 6. — Percent Distribution of Mothers by Employment Status and Living Arrangement**

Year-qtr	Total (000s)	Employed (000s)	Not Employed, Spouse/Partner Employed (000s)	Not Employed, Spouse/Partner Not Employed (000s)	Percent Employed	Percent Not Employed, Spouse/Partner Employed	Percent Not Employed, Spouse/Partner Not Employed
2007-4	36,975	25,152	8,247	3,576	68.0	22.3	9.7
2008-1	36,651	24,728	8,248	3,675	67.5	22.5	10.0
2008-2	36,861	25,148	8,117	3,595	68.2	22.0	9.8
2008-3	36,636	24,568	8,298	3,770	67.1	22.7	10.3
2008-4	36,898	24,867	8,022	4,009	67.4	21.7	10.9
2009-1	36,480	24,082	7,959	4,439	66.0	21.8	12.2
2009-2	36,738	24,247	8,041	4,450	66.0	21.9	12.1
2009-3	36,061	23,543	8,040	4,477	65.3	22.3	12.4
2009-4	36,293	23,671	7,967	4,656	65.2	22.0	12.8

**Data for Figure 7. — Percent Distribution of Single Mothers by Employment Status and Living Arrangement**

Year-qtr	Total (000s)	Employed (000s)	Not Employed, Spouse/Partner Employed (000s)	Not Employed, Spouse/Partner Not Employed (000s)	Percent Employed	Percent Not Employed, Spouse/Partner Employed	Percent Not Employed, Spouse/Partner Not Employed
2007-4	11,604	8,049	699	2,855	69.4	6.0	24.6
2008-1	11,471	7,919	725	2,826	69.0	6.3	24.6
2008-2	11,302	7,795	672	2,835	69.0	5.9	25.1
2008-3	11,441	7,734	710	2,997	67.6	6.2	26.2
2008-4	11,846	8,005	672	3,169	67.6	5.7	26.8
2009-1	11,519	7,645	596	3,278	66.4	5.2	28.5
2009-2	11,597	7,610	666	3,320	65.6	5.7	28.6
2009-3	11,384	7,314	684	3,386	64.2	6.0	29.7
2009-4	11,593	7,408	686	3,499	63.9	5.9	30.2

**Data for Figure 2. — Quarterly Unemployment Rates of All Parents By Educational Attainment**

Year-quarter	Total (000s)	Employed (000s)	Unemployed (000s)	In Labor Force (000s)	Percent Unemployed
<b>Less than HS</b>					
2007-4	8,896	5,619	531	6,150	8.6
2008-1	8,878	5,381	623	6,004	10.4
2008-2	8,884	5,535	587	6,121	9.6
2008-3	8,520	5,158	644	5,802	11.1
2008-4	8,616	5,178	729	5,906	12.4
2009-1	8,491	4,822	977	5,799	16.8
2009-2	8,799	5,083	930	6,012	15.5
2009-3	8,567	5,004	937	5,941	15.8
2009-4	8,471	4,802	964	5,766	16.7
<b>HS, no College</b>					
2007-4	20,032	15,306	800	16,106	5.0
2008-1	19,492	14,624	928	15,551	6.0
2008-2	19,305	14,632	801	15,433	5.2
2008-3	19,286	14,522	1,001	15,523	6.4
2008-4	19,683	14,663	1,159	15,822	7.3
2009-1	19,493	14,037	1,589	15,626	10.2
2009-2	19,153	13,731	1,551	15,282	10.1
2009-3	18,753	13,447	1,514	14,961	10.1
2009-4	18,527	13,103	1,609	14,712	10.9
<b>HS, Some College but no degree</b>					
2007-4	18,715	15,211	513	15,724	3.3
2008-1	18,633	14,936	599	15,535	3.9
2008-2	18,854	15,085	650	15,735	4.1
2008-3	18,656	14,836	714	15,550	4.6
2008-4	18,966	15,011	792	15,803	5.0
2009-1	18,724	14,363	1,091	15,453	7.1
2009-2	18,942	14,426	1,192	15,618	7.6
2009-3	18,475	14,039	1,243	15,282	8.1
2009-4	18,863	14,261	1,303	15,564	8.4
<b>Bachelors degree or more</b>					
2007-4	20,509	17,408	294	17,701	1.7
2008-1	20,850	17,716	289	18,004	1.6
2008-2	21,030	17,993	300	18,293	1.6
2008-3	20,847	17,600	435	18,036	2.4
2008-4	20,721	17,557	491	18,048	2.7
2009-1	20,622	17,221	639	17,859	3.6
2009-2	20,890	17,555	654	18,209	3.6
2009-3	20,578	17,070	816	17,886	4.6
2009-4	20,787	17,323	748	18,071	4.1

**Data for Figure 3. — Quarterly Unemployment Rates of All Parents By Race & Ethnicity**

Year-quarter	Total (000s)	Employed (000s)	Unemployed (000s)	In Labor Force (000s)	Percent Unemployed
<b>Not Latino, White Alone</b>					
2007-4	42,315	34,374	994	35,368	2.8
2008-1	42,141	33,892	1,212	35,104	3.5
2008-2	42,315	34,138	1,068	35,206	3.0
2008-3	41,699	33,333	1,336	34,669	3.9
2008-4	41,866	33,524	1,542	35,066	4.4
2009-1	41,758	32,571	2,148	34,720	6.2
2009-2	41,816	32,648	2,102	34,750	6.0
2009-3	40,904	31,817	2,243	34,059	6.6
2009-4	41,100	31,869	2,302	34,171	6.7
<b>Not Latino, Black Alone</b>					
2007-4	7,892	5,979	467	6,447	7.2
2008-1	7,782	5,805	494	6,299	7.8
2008-2	7,880	5,908	506	6,415	7.9
2008-3	7,843	5,807	648	6,455	10.0
2008-4	7,816	5,686	663	6,349	10.4
2009-1	7,584	5,334	776	6,110	12.7
2009-2	7,802	5,388	881	6,268	14.0
2009-3	7,579	5,274	852	6,126	13.9
2009-4	7,483	5,128	870	5,998	14.5
<b>Not Latino, Asian Alone</b>					
2007-4	3,534	2,697	89	2,786	3.2
2008-1	3,517	2,696	79	2,775	2.8
2008-2	3,585	2,829	87	2,915	3.0
2008-3	3,654	2,856	78	2,933	2.6
2008-4	3,659	2,809	109	2,919	3.7
2009-1	3,429	2,580	167	2,747	6.1
2009-2	3,562	2,705	186	2,891	6.4
2009-3	3,611	2,687	196	2,883	6.8
2009-4	3,617	2,692	199	2,891	6.9
<b>Not Latino, Other or 2+ races</b>					
2007-4	1,328	1,005	49	1,054	4.7
2008-1	1,354	957	73	1,030	7.1
2008-2	1,358	1,005	82	1,088	7.6
2008-3	1,286	915	76	991	7.6
2008-4	1,387	981	81	1,062	7.6
2009-1	1,374	919	111	1,030	10.8
2009-2	1,395	954	138	1,092	12.7
2009-3	1,330	911	131	1,042	12.6
2009-4	1,373	917	110	1,027	10.8
<b>Latino</b>					
2007-4	13,083	9,488	537	10,026	5.4
2008-1	13,059	9,307	580	9,887	5.9
2008-2	12,934	9,364	595	9,959	6.0
2008-3	12,826	9,206	656	9,862	6.7
2008-4	13,258	9,408	775	10,184	7.6
2009-1	13,184	9,038	1,093	10,132	10.8
2009-2	13,208	9,099	1,019	10,119	10.1
2009-3	12,950	8,871	1,089	9,959	10.9
2009-4	13,075	8,884	1,142	10,025	11.4

**Data for Figure 4. — Distribution of Parents by Age and Employment Status**

Year-quarter	Total Population (000s)	Not In Labor Force (000s)	Employed (000s)	Unemployed (000s)	Not In Labor Force (percent)	Employed (percent)	Unemployed (percent)**
<b>16 to 24 Years of Age</b>							
2007-4	3,977	1,381	2,300	296	34.7	57.8	7.4
2008-1	3,894	1,405	2,134	355	36.1	54.8	9.1
2008-2	3,878	1,303	2,204	370	33.6	56.8	9.5
2008-3	3,859	1,279	2,170	410	33.1	56.2	10.6
2008-4	3,917	1,374	2,189	354	35.1	55.9	9.0
2009-1	3,813	1,329	2,020	463	34.9	53.0	12.2
2009-2	3,807	1,327	1,983	497	34.9	52.1	13.1
2009-3	3,649	1,189	1,928	532	32.6	52.8	14.6
2009-4	3,711	1,318	1,923	469	35.5	51.8	12.6
<b>25 to 39 Years of Age</b>							
2007-4	33,288	6,348	25,851	1,089	19.1	77.7	3.3
2008-1	33,140	6,506	25,420	1,214	19.6	76.7	3.7
2008-2	33,339	6,420	25,735	1,184	19.3	77.2	3.6
2008-3	33,136	6,414	25,316	1,406	19.4	76.4	4.2
2008-4	33,118	6,204	25,216	1,698	18.7	76.1	5.1
2009-1	32,962	6,474	24,267	2,221	19.6	73.6	6.7
2009-2	33,191	6,496	24,377	2,318	19.6	73.4	7.0
2009-3	32,366	6,230	23,857	2,279	19.2	73.7	7.0
2009-4	32,575	6,346	23,837	2,392	19.5	73.2	7.3
<b>40 to 54 Years of Age</b>							
2007-4	28,300	4,027	23,570	703	14.2	83.3	2.5
2008-1	28,208	4,073	23,326	810	14.4	82.7	2.9
2008-2	28,198	4,038	23,440	720	14.3	83.1	2.6
2008-3	27,744	4,070	22,786	887	14.7	82.1	3.2
2008-4	28,232	4,133	23,069	1,030	14.6	81.7	3.6
2009-1	27,789	4,088	22,207	1,494	14.7	79.9	5.4
2009-2	28,026	4,176	22,448	1,402	14.9	80.1	5.0
2009-3	27,613	4,222	21,824	1,567	15.3	79.0	5.7
2009-4	27,650	4,216	21,819	1,616	15.2	78.9	5.8
<b>55 Years of Age and Older</b>							
2007-4	2,586	715	1,823	49	27.6	70.5	1.9
2008-1	2,610	774	1,776	59	29.7	68.1	2.3
2008-2	2,658	728	1,865	64	27.4	70.2	2.4
2008-3	2,570	636	1,845	89	24.7	71.8	3.5
2008-4	2,719	696	1,935	88	25.6	71.2	3.2
2009-1	2,767	701	1,949	117	25.3	70.4	4.2
2009-2	2,760	665	1,985	109	24.1	71.9	4.0
2009-3	2,746	662	1,951	133	24.1	71.1	4.8
2009-4	2,711	655	1,910	146	24.2	70.5	5.4

\*\* The unemployment percentages shown in this figure compare employment levels to the entire civilian, non-institutional population, not just the labor force.

**Data for Figure 5. — Quarterly Unemployment Rates of Mothers By Living Arrangements**

Year-quarter	Total (000s)	Employed (000s)	Unemployed (000s)	In Labor Force (000s)	Unemployment Rate
<b>All Mothers</b>					
2007-4	37,361	25,386	1,255	26,642	4.7
2008-1	37,108	24,972	1,297	26,269	4.9
2008-2	37,359	25,402	1,320	26,722	4.9
2008-3	37,101	24,814	1,642	26,456	6.2
2008-4	37,391	25,139	1,722	26,861	6.4
2009-1	36,908	24,292	1,997	26,289	7.6
2009-2	37,237	24,475	2,108	26,583	7.9
2009-3	36,514	23,734	2,381	26,115	9.1
2009-4	36,716	23,849	2,326	26,175	8.9
<b>Married, Spouse Present</b>					
2007-4	25,750	17,331	555	17,886	3.1
2008-1	25,620	17,041	597	17,638	3.4
2008-2	26,045	17,597	562	18,159	3.1
2008-3	25,652	17,073	734	17,808	4.1
2008-4	25,533	17,127	798	17,926	4.5
2009-1	25,383	16,642	932	17,574	5.3
2009-2	25,630	16,858	974	17,832	5.5
2009-3	25,112	16,413	1,132	17,545	6.5
2009-4	25,108	16,433	1,068	17,500	6.1
<b>Not Married, Cohabiting</b>					
2007-4	2,409	1,566	111	1,677	6.6
2008-1	2,548	1,620	151	1,770	8.5
2008-2	2,423	1,576	139	1,714	8.1
2008-3	2,405	1,535	182	1,717	10.6
2008-4	2,505	1,616	166	1,783	9.3
2009-1	2,451	1,572	203	1,775	11.4
2009-2	2,485	1,536	202	1,738	11.6
2009-3	2,459	1,463	234	1,696	13.8
2009-4	2,490	1,462	261	1,723	15.1
<b>Not Married, Not Cohabiting</b>					
2007-4	9,202	6,490	589	7,079	8.3
2008-1	8,940	6,311	550	6,861	8.0
2008-2	8,891	6,229	619	6,849	9.0
2008-3	9,045	6,206	726	6,932	10.5
2008-4	9,353	6,395	757	7,152	10.6
2009-1	9,074	6,078	861	6,939	12.4
2009-2	9,121	6,080	932	7,012	13.3
2009-3	8,942	5,858	1,016	6,874	14.8
2009-4	9,117	5,955	998	6,952	14.3

**Data for Figure 8. — Quarterly Unemployment Rates of Fathers By Living Arrangements**

Year-quarter	Total (000s)	Employed (000s)	Unemployed (000s)	In Labor Force (000s)	Unemployment Rate
<b>All Fathers</b>					
2007-4	30,791	28,157	882	29,039	3.0
2008-1	30,743	27,684	1,140	28,824	4.0
2008-2	30,714	27,842	1,018	28,860	3.5
2008-3	30,208	27,304	1,151	28,455	4.0
2008-4	30,594	27,270	1,448	28,718	5.0
2009-1	30,422	26,151	2,298	28,449	8.1
2009-2	30,548	26,319	2,218	28,537	7.8
2009-3	29,859	25,826	2,129	27,955	7.6
2009-4	29,932	25,639	2,297	27,937	8.2
<b>Married, Spouse Present</b>					
2007-4	26,838	24,815	642	25,457	2.5
2008-1	26,682	24,390	814	25,203	3.2
2008-2	26,707	24,529	718	25,248	2.8
2008-3	26,311	24,117	823	24,940	3.3
2008-4	26,564	24,080	1,046	25,126	4.2
2009-1	26,453	23,267	1,707	24,974	6.8
2009-2	26,449	23,324	1,608	24,932	6.4
2009-3	25,864	22,839	1,594	24,434	6.5
2009-4	25,913	22,699	1,728	24,427	7.1
<b>Not Married, Cohabiting</b>					
2007-4	2,489	2,093	173	2,266	7.6
2008-1	2,614	2,137	242	2,379	10.2
2008-2	2,455	2,035	211	2,246	9.4
2008-3	2,464	2,031	226	2,257	10.0
2008-4	2,594	2,057	287	2,344	12.2
2009-1	2,528	1,830	426	2,257	18.9
2009-2	2,546	1,844	414	2,257	18.3
2009-3	2,512	1,864	372	2,235	16.6
2009-4	2,550	1,849	404	2,253	17.9
<b>Not Married, Not Cohabiting</b>					
2007-4	1,464	1,249	67	1,316	5.1
2008-1	1,448	1,157	85	1,242	6.8
2008-2	1,552	1,278	89	1,367	6.5
2008-3	1,434	1,155	103	1,258	8.2
2008-4	1,437	1,133	115	1,249	9.2
2009-1	1,441	1,054	165	1,219	13.5
2009-2	1,553	1,152	197	1,348	14.6
2009-3	1,482	1,123	163	1,286	12.7
2009-4	1,469	1,091	165	1,257	13.1

**Data for Figure 9. — Percent Distribution of Fathers by Employment Status  
and Living Arrangement**

Year-qtr	Total Population (000s)	Employed (000s)	Not Employed, Spouse/Partner Employed (000s)	Not Employed, Spouse/Partner Not Employed (000s)	Percent Employed	Percent Not Employed, Spouse/Partner Employed	Percent Not Employed, Spouse/Partner Not Employed
2007-4	30,747	28,124	1,516	1,108	91.5	4.9	3.6
2008-1	30,724	27,667	1,674	1,383	90.1	5.4	4.5
2008-2	30,678	27,820	1,616	1,242	90.7	5.3	4.0
2008-3	30,174	27,282	1,646	1,246	90.4	5.5	4.1
2008-4	30,568	27,252	1,901	1,414	89.2	6.2	4.6
2009-1	30,404	26,139	2,351	1,915	86.0	7.7	6.3
2009-2	30,525	26,305	2,348	1,872	86.2	7.7	6.1
2009-3	29,835	25,813	2,182	1,840	86.5	7.3	6.2
2009-4	29,903	25,623	2,329	1,951	85.7	7.8	6.5

**Data for Figure 10. — Distribution of All Couples with Children By Spouse's Employment Status**

Year-qtr	Total (000s)	Both Parents Employed (000s)	Only Father is Employed (000s)	Only Mother is Employed (000s)	Neither Parent is Employed (000s)	Percent Both Parents Employed	Percent Only Father is Employed	Percent Only Mother is Employed	Percent Neither Parent is Employed
2007-4	28,558	17,747	8,470	1,471	870	62.1	29.7	5.2	3.0
2008-1	28,534	17,321	8,520	1,630	1,062	60.7	29.9	5.7	3.7
2008-2	28,556	17,685	8,338	1,591	943	61.9	29.2	5.6	3.3
2008-3	28,142	17,073	8,509	1,612	949	60.7	30.2	5.7	3.4
2008-4	28,388	17,116	8,339	1,848	1,085	60.3	29.4	6.5	3.8
2009-1	28,260	16,201	8,262	2,308	1,488	57.3	29.2	8.2	5.3
2009-2	28,310	16,272	8,317	2,292	1,428	57.5	29.4	8.1	5.0
2009-3	27,750	15,855	8,332	2,127	1,436	57.1	30.0	7.7	5.2
2009-4	27,817	15,754	8,261	2,266	1,535	56.6	29.7	8.1	5.5

**Data for Figure 11. — Distribution of Married Couples with Children By Spouse's Employment Status**

Year-qtr	Total (000s)	Both Parents Employed (000s)	Only Father is Employed (000s)	Only Mother is Employed (000s)	Neither Parent is Employed (000s)	Percent Both Parents Employed	Percent Only Father is Employed	Percent Only Mother is Employed	Percent Neither Parent is Employed
2007-4	26,184	16,456	7,761	1,233	733	62.8	29.6	4.7	2.8
2008-1	26,029	16,012	7,784	1,364	869	61.5	29.9	5.2	3.3
2008-2	26,195	16,404	7,655	1,365	771	62.6	29.2	5.2	2.9
2008-3	25,800	15,859	7,796	1,355	790	61.5	30.2	5.3	3.1
2008-4	25,906	15,837	7,656	1,540	872	61.1	29.6	5.9	3.4
2009-1	25,824	15,041	7,660	1,925	1,198	58.2	29.7	7.5	4.6
2009-2	25,876	15,178	7,644	1,903	1,150	58.7	29.5	7.4	4.4
2009-3	25,358	14,767	7,643	1,810	1,138	58.2	30.1	7.1	4.5
2009-4	25,384	14,680	7,574	1,935	1,196	57.8	29.8	7.6	4.7

**Data for Figure 12. — Distribution of Cohabiting Couples with Children By Spouse’s Employment Status**

Year-qtr	Total (000s)	Both Parents Employed (000s)	Only Father is Employed (000s)	Only Mother is Employed (000s)	Neither Parent is Employed (000s)	Percent Both Parents Employed	Percent Only Father is Employed	Percent Only Mother is Employed	Percent Neither Parent is Employed
2007-4	2,374	1,291	709	238	136	54.4	29.9	10.0	5.7
2008-1	2,505	1,309	736	266	193	52.3	29.4	10.6	7.7
2008-2	2,361	1,281	683	226	172	54.2	28.9	9.6	7.3
2008-3	2,342	1,214	713	257	159	51.8	30.4	10.9	6.8
2008-4	2,483	1,279	682	308	212	51.5	27.5	12.4	8.5
2009-1	2,435	1,160	602	383	290	47.6	24.7	15.7	11.9
2009-2	2,433	1,093	673	389	278	44.9	27.7	16.0	11.4
2009-3	2,392	1,087	690	317	299	45.5	28.8	13.2	12.5
2009-4	2,433	1,075	687	332	340	44.2	28.3	13.6	14.0

### Notes on Methodology

This Research Brief report is based on ASPE tabulations of public use data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), which is the nation’s primary data collection instrument for measurements of employment and unemployment rates in the United States.<sup>8</sup> The CPS is administered by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), U.S. Department of Labor and collects data from about 60,000 occupied households each month using a nationally representative probability design. Many of the questions on the survey refer to labor force participation during the week that includes the 12<sup>th</sup> day of each month. Persons included in the survey do not have to be citizens of the United States but must reside in the country.

Once a year the CPS expands the list of income and demographic questions that it asks its respondents and creates a supplemental dataset called the CPS-Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS-ASEC). The ASEC was formerly called the March Supplement. This supplement is used by various organizations to report rates of poverty and health insurance coverage, and data about household incomes. Historically, it also was the primary CPS-based data source to compare employment and labor force participation between persons with children and those without children. However, since 2004 the publicly available data from the Basic Monthly CPS has been expanded to allow the identification of parents who live with their own children under age 18. Tabulations of employment and unemployment rates isolating parents are available on a monthly basis from 2004 to the present using the public CPS Basic Monthly files, and also are available on an annual basis through the use of the CPS-ASEC once-a-year supplement. This Research Brief exclusively uses the Basic-Monthly CPS because its information reflects a more current reporting period.

This Research Brief includes the same universe analyzed by the BLS for its calculations of unemployment statistics. Using this methodology, the following populations are excluded from all of the tabulations:

- Institutionalized persons (e.g., persons in prisons, long-term care hospitals, and nursing homes)
- Persons living outside of the United States or living in military housing
- Persons age 15 and younger

The methods used in this Research Brief to calculate unemployment rates are the same as those used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) for its official publications. The unemployment rate is the percent of the labor force (those persons working or actively seeking and available for work) that is employed. In general, the labor force includes persons who are either working or looking for work. However, persons on layoff from a job and expecting recall also are included in the labor force even when they are not seeking other employment. Examples of persons excluded from the labor force for unemployment rate calculations include persons who

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.bls.gov/cps>

cannot work, do not want to work, or are not actively looking for employment because they are discouraged about their job prospects. Therefore, unemployed persons are a subset of a larger population that is not employed.

Some of the subpopulations examined in this Research Brief consist of relatively small monthly sample sizes in the CPS. Therefore, the Research Brief averages three months of data together for all estimates to reduce sampling error across time. Each calculation is performed independently for each month, and the statistic reported (for example, unemployment rates) is computed by averaging three months of data to present 3-month quarterly averages. No estimate presented in this Research Brief is adjusted for seasonality, and care should be exercised when comparing different quarters of data throughout the year. Quarters refer to calendar year quarters, not fiscal year quarters.

Although a majority of the couples presented in the figures are opposite-sex couples the data are able to distinguish them from couples who are same-sex couples. Overall, same-sex couples comprise less than 0.1 percent of the couples with children in the CPS; this produces a sample size too small for separate tabulations of this group. Same-sex couples are excluded from Figures 10-12 in order to highlight differences by gender, but are included in Figures 1-9.

Some persons are included in BLS's labor force tabulations but live with spouses or partners who are excluded. These persons are included in figures 1-5 and 8 but are excluded in figures 6, 7, and 9. Couples containing one or more persons who are excluded from BLS labor force tabulations are excluded in figures 10-12. For example, a person age 17 who is living with a cohabiting partner that is age 15 would be included in the population examined for Figures 1-5 and 8, but would be excluded in Figures 6, 7, 9, and 10-12. In this case, the person age 15 would be excluded from the labor force universe because the minimum age for inclusion in the labor force is 16. Another example is a couple that consists of one civilian adult and one adult in the Armed Services. Like the previous example, this couple would be included in the population examined for Figures 1-5 and 8, but is excluded in Figures 6, 7, 9, and 10-12. The exclusion of mixed couples with only one person included in the labor force universe means that the populations will not sum perfectly across some of the data tables. For example, the number of married couples with children in Figure 11 is slightly lower than the number of married fathers in Figure 8.<sup>9</sup>

The definition of parent used for the estimates presented here includes only those parents who are living with their own children under age 18, or those living with a cohabiting partner with his or her own children under age 18. This includes parents of biological and adopted children, but excludes parents of foster children and other relatives of children taking on informal parenting responsibilities. Thus, a person living with her granddaughter would not be identified as a parent, even though she may be providing parental care for the child. In addition, parents of children age 18 and older also are excluded, even when they are providing significant financial support to these adult children. Finally, non-resident parents, even those supporting dependents with child support payments or claiming the children for tax reporting purposes, are excluded from the parental universe in this Research Brief if they are not living with at least one of their own children.

The Research Brief identifies couples with children under age 18 for Figures 10-12 if either person in the couple is living with his or her own child, including adopted children. The numbers may not add to 100 percent because of rounding. All comparisons made in the text of this Research Brief are statistically significant at  $p < .05$ . Standard errors can be approximated for all numbers shown. For more information on how standard errors can be approximated for comparisons not mentioned in the text, visit the BLS' *Technical Documentation* Internet pages at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/documentation.htm>.

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<sup>9</sup> Another reason why the number of married couples will not be exactly equal to the number of married individuals is that, unlike the annual CPS-ASEC supplement (i.e., the March Supplement), the Basic Monthly CPS does not post-stratify in a manner that gives two persons in a married couple the exact same population weight. For this analysis, couples are assigned the weight of the household or family reference person.