

Current Population Survey (CPS) and Current Employment Statistics (CES) Survey

The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development releases key labor market statistics derived from separate surveys – the household-based Current Population Survey (CPS) and the nonagricultural employer (including government) Current Employment Statistics (CES) survey. Labor market data often are considered to be major indicators of economic activity within the state. However, these data series often move in different directions. Although the coverage of the labor market is broader in the household survey, an intensive review of the literature suggests that most labor economists tend to rely more on the establishment-based survey because it is constructed from a much larger sample and is often less volatile than the household survey. The CES sample size for New Jersey is roughly 5,500 representing about 265,000 establishments and the CPS sample size is roughly 1,200 households, representing approximately 3.2 million households. Below is listed of some of the differences between the surveys, which could explain why the CES and CPS often diverge.

CES data pertain to filled jobs.	CPS data pertain to persons.
A person may be included more than once if they hold more than one job.	A person is included only once.
The reference period is the pay period which includes the 12th of the month. It could be weekly, biweekly, semimonthly, etc.	The reference period is the calendar week which includes the 12th of the month
If a person is on an unpaid leave of absence during the reference period that person is not counted as employed/working.	A person is included as employed during an unpaid absence because they have a job to which to return.
CES is an establishment-based data, based on place of work.	CPS is a household-based data, based on place of residence. For example if a person work in one state and resides in another state that individual is counted as unemployed in the state where they reside.
Age is not a factor.	Persons must be 16 years of age or older.
CES is designed to measure changes in jobs and hours.	CPS is designed to track changes in <i>rates of</i> unemployment and labor force participation.
CES does not include self-employed and unpaid family workers. It includes some, but not all, domestic and agricultural workers.	CPS includes self- employed, unpaid family, domestic, and agricultural workers.
CES data are estimates and are benchmarked annually to the QCEW data, which are universe counts of all Unemployment Insurance covered industries.	CPS data are estimates, rather than counts.