

U.S. Census Brings Temporary Federal Jobs

By Lincoln S. Dyer, Economist, DOL

By now most Connecticut households have received their 2010 Census forms. Advanced notifications were sent out in early March, followed soon after by the official 2010 Census forms. The 2010 Census forms were projected to arrive at U.S. residences in late March, to be completed and customarily returned in April. *April 1st is National Census Day*, and some newly hired census takers were expected to start late on March 31st with a rural canvassing and an urban homeless headcount campaign. Then a labor-intensive address follow-up and localized information drive is normally planned for May through July. By mid-summer, the short-term local economic impacts of the Census will be all but over. An evaluation of federal government civilian employment for Con-

necticut over the last four decades shows the U.S. Census employment buildup that occurs once every ten years in the state seems to follow this basic pattern.

However, this year technology implementation coupled with diverse economic conditions may influence local census staffing in the individual states. Whereas Internet collection is being researched and will be put into operation in future years, the 2010 Census is still mail reply only. Yet you may notice certain census takers this year with their customized global positioning (GPS) devices. This will help the census enumerators in their record keeping, address refinement/follow-up, and with the required mapping functions performed. Just think, in 1990 these duties were still being performed by hand.

In this decennial census year, estimates of federal government jobs in Connecticut through February 2010 show federal civilian hiring started out slow or was offset in the early going by federal post office employment declines. A late February press report¹ that cites difficulties encountered in Hartford and other state urban areas in fulfilling Census recruitments for “hard-to-count” geographies seems to bear this out. Nevertheless, temporary federal hiring is expected to increase substantially. In the last three censuses, hiring peaked in the month of May, coinciding with the challenging residential follow-up. Come September, the short-term Census employment impact in the state normally has run its course (chart 1).

The all-time high for federal civilian employment in Connecticut, 29,600 jobs, was reached in May 1990 during that year’s temporary Census hiring buildup. This federal job high point was reached, interestingly, during Connecticut’s deep employment recession of the early 1990’s (1989-1992). The January-May federal job buildup that year added 4,500 jobs. In 2000, the January-May federal Census-related job buildup was the largest ever at 6,000 jobs, and total federal civilian employment hit 28,600 (chart 2).

The size of the Census job buildup is important because it can foretell a more thorough population count for the state. Many feared in 2000 that the state would actually lose population after the 2000 tally, but were a little relieved when the population growth over the decade was slow but still positive at 3.6%, or 118,449 persons. For this decade, the Connecticut population estimates from 2000 through 2009 portray a similarly slow-growing population, with a 112,723 person or 3.3% increase with one year to go. Considering the apparent sluggish start this year in temporary Census hiring, the state may see a later month for the Census-hiring peak this year. And hopefully it is a large hiring push to make sure Connecticut gets a fair shake in counting its citizenry. ■

¹Janice Podzada, “Will Census Get Enough Counters,” *Courant.com* 21 Feb. 2010, 11 Mar. 2010

Chart 1: U.S. Federal Civilian Emp. (000's) in CT during Census Years (Jan-Sep)

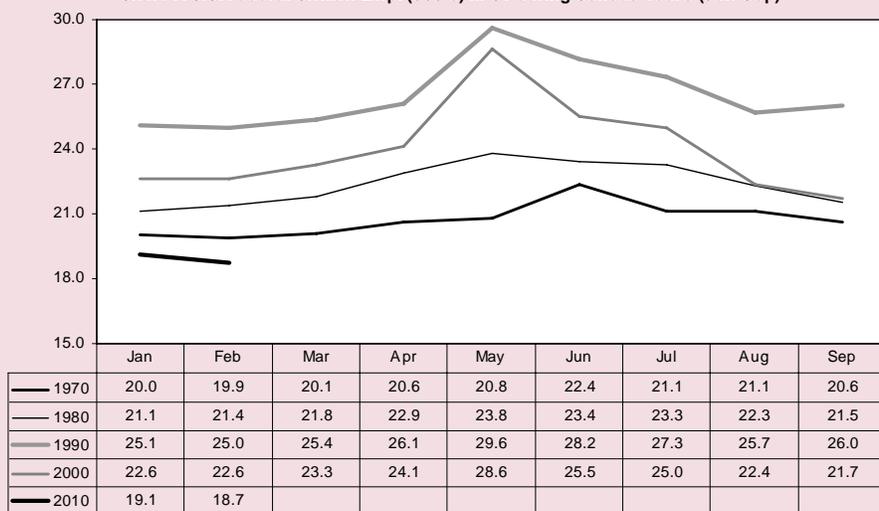


Chart 2: CT's Federal Gov. Civilian Emp. (NSA, 000's), Jan. 1947-Feb. 2010*

