

There is more than one *unemployment rate*

One mechanism of official statistics — what the headline U-3 rate counts, what U-6 adds, and why “the real rate” is a published number, not a secret.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How This Guide Works

This is part of **Incognati Civics**, applying the field-guide format to the official statistics the government publishes — jobs, prices, crime, output, deaths — the numbers themselves and the way they are read, examined the same way regardless of which party the figure happens to help or hurt. Each specimen goes deep on one mechanism, with agency methodology, official records, and nonpartisan scholarship listed in full on the references page.

INCOGNATI CIVICS — OFFICIAL DATA REPORTING

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Headline Rate vs. Broader Measures

Una Mensura, Non Sola

Governing precedent / case BLS Table A-15, alternative measures of labor underutilization Status Recurring in every jobs debate

OBSERVED SPECIMEN	MONTHLY EMPLOYMENT SITUATION, TABLE A-15
The headline unemployment rate (U-3) counts people without a job who searched in the last four weeks and are available to work. It does not count discouraged workers who have given up, or part-timers who want full-time hours. BLS publishes five other measures for exactly this — U-1 through U-6 — where U-6 adds the marginally attached and involuntary part-timers and runs several points higher. “The real unemployment rate they hide from you” is Table A-15, released the same morning as the headline.	

THE HOOK	THE MECHANISM
The headline rate is presented as if it were the only measure, so a broader one looks like a suppressed truth.	BLS defines unemployment by active job search and availability, and publishes a graded family of measures (U-1 to U-6) capturing progressively broader definitions of underutilization.

Field mark: when someone cites ‘the real unemployment rate,’ ask which U-number — all six are official, defined, and released together, so the point is which definition, not which is hidden.

See the full references page for complete citations.

References

every source checkable at the link provided; DOIs given where the source has one

AGENCY DATA · BLS

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Table A-15. Alternative measures of labor underutilization.”

<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t15.htm>

The official table publishing U-1 through U-6 every month alongside the headline rate.

AGENCY REFERENCE · BLS

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “How the Government Measures Unemployment.”

https://www.bls.gov/cps/cps_htgm.htm

BLS's plain-language explanation of who counts as unemployed and why.

Reading an Unemployment Rate: A Gut Check

four questions before ‘the real rate’ changes what you think about the job market

1 Ask which measure

U-3 is the headline; U-6 is the broadest — name the one being quoted.

2 Find Table A-15

The ‘hidden’ rates are published every month in one standard table.

3 Watch definition-swaps

Comparing a U-6 to a past U-3 inflates the change; keep the measure constant.

4 Separate ‘wrong’ from ‘narrow’

A narrow definition is a choice, not a falsification.

INCOGNATI CIVICS

The Series Continues

This is Specimen No. 4 of the Official Data Reporting section within Incognati Civics. The full queue of twelve specimens is listed on the cover. This section joins Elections and Federal Laws within Civics, with local government and institutional communications planned beyond it. The Incognati Atlas catalogs the underlying patterns across all of it.