American Community Survey (ACS)
Why We Ask: Labor Force Status

We ask about whether a person worked last week, and if the answer is no, why they were not working, and whether they are looking for work to produce statistics about labor force status. These statistics about the employed, unemployed, and those out of the labor force help the federal government understand more about unemployment and the availability of workers, plan unemployment programs and services, and plan programs to grow employment over time.

Examples of Federal Uses
- Required to enforce nondiscrimination provisions in employment by private employers, employment agencies, and labor organizations. Required in federal affirmative employment programs, to identify under-representation in job categories, including veterans and people with disabilities.
- Used to understand the unmet needs of people with developmental disabilities and to identify the characteristics of the target service population.
- Used in assessing program eligibility and planning outreach in programs that help low-income families and individuals afford health insurance, utilities, housing, and other necessities.
- Used to help make other federal surveys more accurate, including those that produce the nation’s official labor market estimates.

Examples of Other Uses
State and local agencies use these statistics to identify labor surplus areas (areas with people available for hiring and training) plan workforce development programs including job fairs to training programs, and promote business opportunities.