

Retail employment over time

The retail sector has changed over time in the United States. This report demonstrates some of the changes using data from the Current Employment Statistics series produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (<https://www.bls.gov/ces/>). The data provides counts of thousands of employees in the retail sector from 1939 to 2017 for each month. This report uses data from January of each year.

Figure 1: Retail Employment in the United States

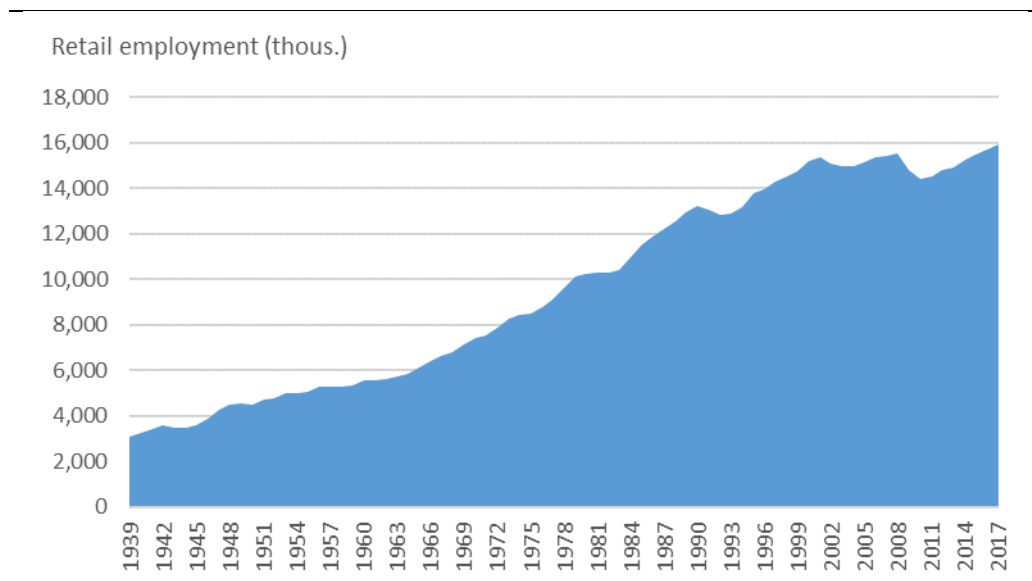
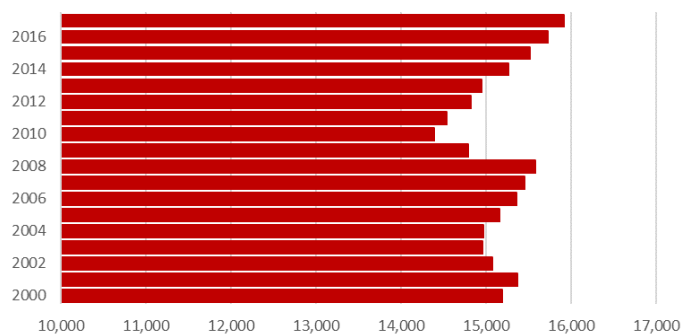


Figure 1 represents the total employment in all retail from 1939 to 2017, all of the available years of the survey. The data clearly shows an increase in total employment since 1939. There appears to be a very clear and consistent rise from about 1960 to the late 1980's. However, employment seems to have

Figure 2: Retail employment (thous.)



been much more volatile beginning in the 1990's. Overall, there was growth in employment through the 1990's but employment in the 2000's has fluctuated with macroeconomic conditions. Retail employment fell largely during the Great Recession and has since rebounded, but overall employment is not much higher in 2017 than it was in 2000.