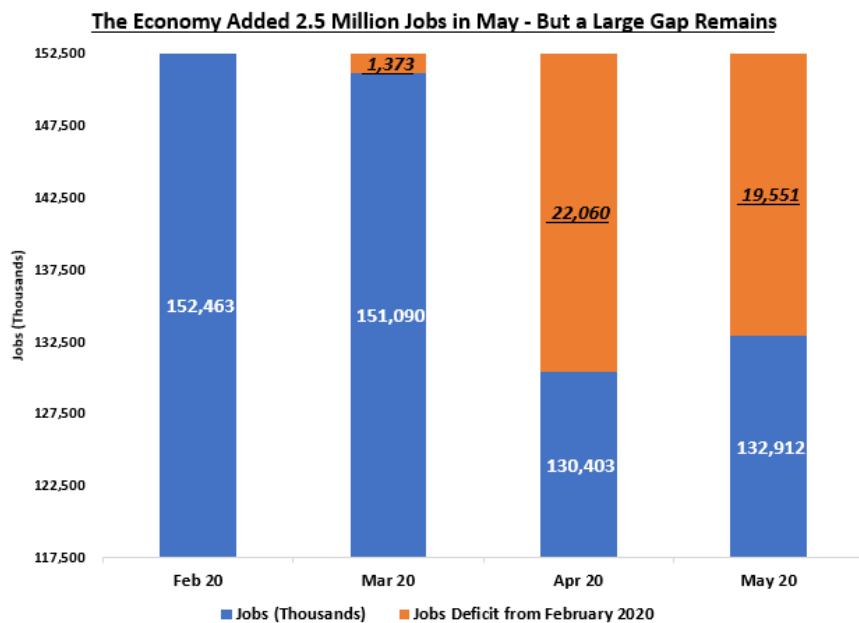


Explaining May's Surprising Jobs Numbers



On Friday, the May jobs report shocked many observers. Most anticipated another steep drop in employment. Instead, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) [report](#) showed the economy added 2.5 million jobs. This was a big, pleasant surprise. However, the unexpected figure lead some to question whether the BLS made an error or cooked the books.

BLS did not do anything wrong. The number is as accurate as can be under the challenging, current circumstances. The BLS data comes from surveys of individuals and businesses. Getting a hold of both groups is different during a pandemic than during normal times. Classifying certain workers, such as those that are furloughed, meaning they are not at work but are still being paid, is also difficult.

Under normal conditions, there can be significant revisions from month to month as BLS has more time to get more accurate data. It is likely that the revisions will be larger for recent months because of difficulties BLS is facing. This does not mean BLS is doing anything wrong.

BLS is operating with the utmost integrity and doing the best it can in uncharted waters. We should accept the good news while at the same time remember the number could change due to the normal revision process.

We should also remember that even with the 2.5 million jobs added in May, we lost more than 22 million jobs in March and April combined. We still have to add 20 million jobs to fill that gap.

—Curtis Dubay, Senior Economist, U.S. Chamber of Commerce