

Occupational tenure in 1987: many workers have remained in their fields

Generally, men have been in their current occupations longer than have women, whites longer than blacks, and college graduates longer than those with less education; almost half of the 55- to 59-year-olds have been in their current occupations at least 20 years

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Information on tenure—the length of time worked in an occupation—can be useful to individuals, employers, and labor market researchers. Individuals planning their careers can use tenure information to help identify occupations having long- and short-term worker attachment. In career planning, knowledge of tenure can aid in evaluating job satisfaction, job security, and career potential. Employers can use occupational tenure information in a variety of personnel planning activities. Together with information on separations, tenure data can be used by employers to anticipate the number of workers they may be required to hire to replace workers who leave their firm. The data also can be used to compare the occupational tenure of a firm's employees with the work force as a whole. Researchers in Government agencies, universities, employer associations, professional associations, and unions can use tenure information to study labor market behavior of workers in specific occupations of interest as well as in the labor market in general.

The information presented in this article is based on data obtained from a supplement to the January 1987 Current Population Survey. In that supplement, occupational tenure was defined as the cumulative number of years a person worked in his or her current occupation, regardless of number of employers, interruptions in employment, or time spent in other occupations. For

example, a person who worked as a librarian for 2 years, as a teacher for the next 5 years, and then as a librarian for the last 2 years (their current job), would be classified as a librarian with 4 years of tenure. This measure should not be confused with employer tenure—the amount of time worked for the same employer—which was treated separately in the survey and is briefly discussed later in this article.

Median occupational tenure of the 109.1 million workers 16 years of age and older in January 1987 was 6.6 years. (For ease of reading, medians henceforth will be called averages in the text of this article.) Average tenure increased directly with age, rising from 1.9 years for workers ages 16–24 to 21.9 years for those 70 and over. (See table 1.) Most teenagers, of course, have not been in the labor force long enough to have much experience, and jobs held by students typically are temporary. Moreover, young high school and college graduates often try more than one occupation before deciding on a career, and entry into some fields is delayed until advanced degrees are completed. By the time they are in their late twenties or early thirties, however, many people have settled into a career path. Almost 47 percent of all workers 35 to 39 years of age had 10 years or more of tenure, while only 12 percent had less than 2 years.¹ A person who has accumulated a lengthy amount of tenure in an occupation often will try to remain in it until retirement, because a change in careers could require a change of employers and result in a loss of

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seniority and pension rights. About 46 percent of the workers ages 55 to 59 had 20 years of tenure or more.

While the survey did not indicate when the current occupation was first entered, the data suggest that some older people had been doing the same kind of work virtually all their adult lives. Almost one-fifth of the workers ages 65 to 69, for example, reported 40 years of tenure or more, which means they could have started before age 25

but not after age 29. Because tenure was measured cumulatively, some of these people may have first entered their occupation well before age 25, with time away for military service, family responsibilities, or other reasons.

In addition to being a function of age, occupational tenure varies by sex, race, education, and other demographic characteristics. Generally, men had more tenure than women, whites more than blacks and Hispanics, and col-

Table 1. Occupational tenure of employed persons by age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, and employment status, January 1987

Characteristic	Total employed		Tenure in current occupation (percent distribution)												Median tenure (in years)
	Number (in thousands)	Percent	Less than 2 years	2-3 years	4-5 years	6-9 years	10 years or more								
							Total	10-14 years	15-19 years	20-24 years	25-29 years	30-34 years	35-39 years	40 years or more	
Total, 16 years and older	109,090	100.0	19.3	17.2	10.8	15.2	37.5	14.1	8.8	6.1	3.2	2.7	1.3	1.3	6.6
16-24.....	19,090	100.0	51.4	31.7	11.1	5.4	4.4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.9
25-29.....	16,326	100.0	21.7	24.8	19.0	25.4	9.1	8.7	3	—	—	—	—	—	4.4
30-34.....	15,833	100.0	14.8	16.5	13.2	24.3	31.3	25.4	3.6	3	—	—	—	—	6.9
35-39.....	14,674	100.0	12.3	13.3	10.1	17.7	46.6	23.3	18.2	4.8	3	—	—	—	9.0
40-44.....	11,871	100.0	10.2	12.2	8.6	14.3	54.7	17.9	18.2	15.2	3.2	3	—	—	10.7
45-49.....	9,360	100.0	8.6	9.9	7.3	12.1	62.2	15.4	14.7	16.5	11.0	4.3	3	—	13.3
50-54.....	7,684	100.0	7.9	8.9	7.6	10.5	65.2	14.0	12.7	12.3	12.1	11.0	2.7	3	15.2
55-59.....	6,914	100.0	6.5	7.6	5.1	9.9	70.8	12.7	11.9	12.4	8.7	13.8	7.8	3.5	17.7
60-64.....	4,500	100.0	5.9	6.9	5.0	9.6	72.6	12.8	10.4	10.9	7.5	10.8	9.7	10.5	19.4
65-69.....	1,692	100.0	7.6	9.1	6.2	7.8	69.4	9.9	9.1	7.5	7.5	9.4	6.8	19.3	20.1
70 and older.....	1,146	100.0	4.7	6.2	5.8	8.6	74.7	10.9	7.8	7.7	4.4	6.7	4.2	32.9	21.9
Men, 16 years and older	60,242	100.0	16.9	15.3	10.0	14.6	43.3	14.6	9.7	7.2	4.2	3.8	1.8	1.9	7.9
16-24.....	9,820	100.0	51.0	31.1	11.3	6.1	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.0
25-29.....	8,974	100.0	20.0	24.2	18.8	26.5	10.5	10.0	4	—	—	—	—	—	4.6
30-34.....	8,971	100.0	12.4	15.0	12.6	25.1	34.9	28.0	6.4	5	—	—	—	—	7.6
35-39.....	8,109	100.0	9.1	10.7	8.9	17.1	54.2	26.9	21.2	5.6	5	—	—	—	10.4
40-44.....	6,463	100.0	7.6	8.7	7.1	11.5	65.1	18.9	22.3	19.3	4.2	5	—	—	13.8
45-49.....	5,208	100.0	6.3	7.1	6.2	8.6	71.7	12.4	16.6	21.7	14.8	5.8	4	—	17.5
50-54.....	4,341	100.0	6.0	6.8	5.4	8.9	72.8	11.7	11.2	14.5	17.2	14.4	3.3	5	20.0
55-59.....	4,006	100.0	5.0	5.7	3.9	6.9	78.4	9.4	10.5	12.5	11.0	19.5	10.6	4.9	21.9
60-64.....	2,673	100.0	5.0	6.5	3.6	7.3	77.6	10.3	7.9	9.9	7.8	14.1	13.9	13.6	23.9
65-69.....	1,000	100.0	7.7	9.0	5.8	7.1	70.4	6.3	5.8	5.6	5.6	11.2	9.1	26.7	26.9
70 and older.....	678	100.0	3.3	6.0	6.4	8.3	76.0	8.2	6.5	5.2	3.6	6.1	4.4	42.1	30.5
Women, 16 years and older	48,848	100.0	22.2	19.6	11.9	16.0	30.3	13.4	7.8	4.6	1.9	1.4	.6	.6	5.4
16-24.....	9,270	100.0	51.7	32.3	11.0	4.7	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.9
25-29.....	7,353	100.0	23.7	25.6	19.3	24.1	7.3	7.1	2	—	—	—	—	—	4.1
30-34.....	6,863	100.0	18.1	18.4	13.8	23.2	26.5	22.0	4.5	1	—	—	—	—	6.0
35-39.....	6,565	100.0	16.3	16.4	11.6	18.4	37.3	18.9	14.6	3.7	1	—	—	—	7.0
40-44.....	5,408	100.0	13.3	16.3	10.5	17.6	42.2	16.6	13.3	10.3	1.9	1	—	—	8.0
45-49.....	4,152	100.0	11.3	13.4	8.6	16.4	50.3	19.3	12.2	10.0	6.2	2.4	1	—	10.0
50-54.....	3,343	100.0	10.3	11.5	10.3	12.6	35.2	17.1	14.6	9.4	5.4	6.7	1.9	—	10.8
55-59.....	2,908	100.0	8.6	10.2	6.8	14.0	60.4	17.3	13.8	12.3	5.5	5.9	3.9	1.6	12.4
60-64.....	1,827	100.0	7.3	7.5	7.0	13.0	65.3	16.5	14.0	12.3	7.1	6.0	3.4	6.0	14.5
65-69.....	692	100.0	7.4	9.2	6.7	8.6	68.1	15.0	13.8	10.2	10.1	6.8	3.6	8.7	15.6
70 and older.....	467	100.0	6.8	6.5	5.0	9.1	72.7	14.8	9.6	11.4	5.7	7.5	4.0	19.6	18.8
White	95,044	100.0	18.9	17.0	10.7	15.3	38.2	14.1	8.9	6.2	3.4	2.9	1.4	1.5	6.7
Men.....	53,096	100.0	16.2	14.8	9.7	14.6	44.6	14.8	9.9	7.4	4.5	4.0	2.0	2.1	8.3
Women.....	41,949	100.0	22.2	19.7	11.8	16.2	30.2	13.2	7.6	4.6	2.0	1.5	.6	.7	5.4
Black	10,851	100.0	21.3	18.0	12.0	14.7	34.0	14.3	9.1	5.7	2.3	1.7	.6	.5	5.8
Men.....	5,447	100.0	22.1	17.6	11.8	14.1	34.5	13.1	8.9	6.1	2.8	2.2	.6	.6	5.8
Women.....	5,404	100.0	20.6	18.4	12.2	15.2	33.6	15.4	9.3	5.2	1.8	1.1	.5	.3	5.8
Hispanic origin	7,198	100.0	24.3	23.0	11.8	15.9	25.1	12.2	6.1	3.2	1.7	1.3	.3	.3	4.5
Men.....	4,408	100.0	22.2	21.6	11.2	16.0	29.1	13.9	6.7	3.7	2.3	1.8	.4	.4	5.1
Women.....	2,790	100.0	27.6	25.2	12.7	15.8	18.7	9.7	5.2	2.4	.6	.5	.2	.1	3.7
Full-time workers	93,665	100.0	16.4	16.8	11.1	16.1	39.7	15.0	9.5	6.5	3.4	2.9	1.3	1.1	7.2
Men.....	55,464	100.0	14.4	14.9	10.2	15.4	45.1	15.5	10.3	7.6	4.5	3.9	1.8	1.6	8.4
Women.....	38,201	100.0	19.2	19.5	12.3	17.0	32.0	14.2	8.4	4.9	2.0	1.4	.6	.5	5.9
Part-time workers	15,425	100.0	36.9	19.9	9.5	10.0	23.6	8.6	4.8	3.1	1.8	1.8	1.0	2.5	3.1
Men.....	4,778	100.0	45.5	19.9	7.1	5.3	22.3	4.3	3.4	2.6	1.9	2.7	2.0	5.3	2.4
Women.....	10,647	100.0	33.1	19.9	10.6	12.2	24.2	10.5	5.4	3.3	1.7	1.4	.6	1.2	3.6

NOTE: Dashes indicate less than 0.1 percent.

lege graduates more than individuals with less education. In addition, self-employed individuals had more tenure than wage and salary workers, and full-time workers more than those on part-time schedules. The average tenure in any particular occupation not only reflects the ages and other demographic characteristics of workers, but also employment trends in the occupation. If employment has declined, the lack of jobs for young entrants combined with the aging of the experienced workers will tend to raise average tenure. Conversely, very rapid employment growth that provides jobs for many new workers will tend to lower average tenure in the occupation.

Among the major occupational groups, average tenure ranged from 10.4 years for farming, forestry, and fishing workers to 4.1 years for service workers, reflecting differences in the demographic profiles and employment growth rates of the detailed occupations within the groups. Averages are similar when workers are young, but diverge with age. (See table 2.) Differences in average tenure among detailed occupations were much greater than among the major groups, ranging from 24.8 years for barbers to 1.5 years for food counter and fountain workers. The relationship between tenure and age in detailed occupations can be seen in table 3, which ranks 277 occupations having 50,000 or more workers by median tenure.

Employment trends. The number of persons in occupations with the greatest average tenure generally has been growing very slowly or declining, but these occupations have sufficient appeal in terms of earnings, lifestyle, and other considerations to encourage continued worker attachment. Farmers exemplify this type of occupation. Although a career in farming is attractive to some young people, opportunities for new owner/operators have been limited by the growing expense of land and equipment and the consequent merging of small farms into larger, more economically viable holdings. As a result, fewer young people have gone into this field and the farming work force has aged. Only 6 percent of all farmers had 3 years of tenure or less, while 57 percent had 20 years or more. Lack of employment growth also has contributed to high average tenure in many other occupations, including barbers, railroad conductors, clergy, and millwrights.

In contrast, some occupations that would be expected to have high worker attachment have comparatively low average tenure because they have emerged in recent years and are growing very rapidly. Such occupations have a large proportion of young people with relatively little work experience. Computer programmers exemplify this type of occupation. About 45 percent of the programmers had 3 years of tenure or less, while only 7 percent had 20 years or more. Because of the impact of employment growth on average tenure, when analyzing a specific occupation, it is important to know how the age distribution of its workers compares with that of other occupations.

Table 2. Median years of tenure in current occupation, by major occupational group and age, January 1987

Occupational group	Total, 16 and older	Ages 16-24	Ages 25-34	Ages 35-44	Ages 45-54	Ages 55-64	Ages 65 and older
Total, age 16 and older	6.6	1.9	5.4	10.0	14.3	18.2	20.6
Executive, administrative, and managerial ...	8.4	2.4	5.6	10.1	15.1	17.9	26.3
Professional speciality	9.6	2.0	5.7	12.0	18.2	25.6	36.2
Technicians and related support	6.9	2.2	5.7	10.9	17.7	20.8	22.2
Sales occupations	5.1	1.7	4.7	7.7	10.5	15.5	21.6
Administrative support, including clerical	5.4	2.1	5.0	7.6	10.9	14.6	15.4
Service occupations...	4.1	1.7	4.4	6.9	9.0	10.6	10.4
Precision production, craft, and repair	9.3	2.6	7.1	13.5	19.9	25.7	30.1
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	5.5	1.7	4.6	9.1	13.7	18.1	14.7
Farming, forestry, and fishing	10.4	2.9	7.9	13.5	20.7	30.5	39.8

Sex, race, and ethnicity. Average occupational tenure was 7.9 years for men and 5.4 years for women. Although the difference in tenure by sex was not significant for young people, it increased steadily with age. Among workers ages 60 to 64, the average was 23.9 years for men, compared to only 14.5 years for women. Men had more tenure mainly because their labor force participation has been more continuous. Many women currently in the work force interrupted their careers for extended periods for home and family responsibilities and, moreover, some resumed work in a different career. At all but the youngest ages, they were more likely than men to have recently entered their occupation. The lower tenure of women also may reflect their underrepresentation in the higher paying managerial, professional, and craft jobs.

Men accounted for most of the employment in detailed occupations having the longest average tenure. They represented more than eight-tenths of the farmers and barbers, for example, and more than nine-tenths of the clergy and railroad conductors. Women with the greatest tenure generally were those who had pursued traditional careers, such as elementary school teachers, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and hairdressers and cosmetologists.

White men had greater tenure than other men, averaging 8.3 years, compared to 5.8 years for blacks, and 5.1 years for Hispanics. White males were more likely to have lengthy tenure because they were older, and had higher labor force participation rates and lower unemployment rates. They also had better jobs than other men, who tended to be concentrated in lower paying jobs in the service group and the operator, fabricator, and laborer group. Black women, however, had more tenure than other women and about as much as black men. Historically, black women have been more likely than white

Table 3. Ranking of occupations by years of tenure in occupation and selected characteristics, January 1987

Occupation	Total employed, January 1987 (thousands)	Median tenure (in years)	Percent of employees with—				Median age	Percent of employees, ages—			
			3 years or less tenure	4–9 years tenure	10–19 years tenure	20 or more years tenure		16–24	25–34	35–54	55 and older
Total, age 16 and older	109,090	6.6	36.5	26.0	22.9	14.6	35.8	18.5	29.4	39.1	13.1
Barbers	88	24.8	14.5	9.4	10.9	65.2	49.5	6.0	13.4	47.1	33.5
Farmers, except horticultural	1,019	21.1	6.3	16.9	20.0	56.8	50.1	4.4	17.6	38.2	39.9
Railroad conductors and yardmasters	53	18.4	7.5	3.1	48.8	40.6	44.3	.3	17.8	61.0	21.0
Clergy	347	15.8	14.4	16.5	29.3	39.8	44.8	2.2	22.0	47.9	27.9
Dentists	149	15.7	9.3	16.2	32.8	41.7	43.2	.5	20.0	52.4	27.0
Telephone line installers and repairers	52	15.0	8.9	27.9	46.7	16.4	36.6	5.8	35.7	55.0	3.5
Millwrights	101	14.8	17.3	14.2	40.9	27.6	43.2	5.3	22.0	55.8	16.9
Locomotive operating occupations	72	14.8	7.4	14.1	46.8	31.7	39.3	.4	25.8	58.6	15.2
Managers; farms, except horticultural	132	14.4	9.3	22.1	29.6	39.0	39.4	11.1	29.6	37.2	22.1
Telephone installers and repairers	235	14.3	13.2	25.7	42.2	19.0	38.0	5.6	29.4	57.6	7.4
Airplane pilots and navigators	86	14.0	3.0	29.6	28.1	39.3	41.6	1.3	24.9	61.6	12.3
Supervisors; police and detectives	76	13.8	9.2	20.7	43.8	26.4	42.1	.4	14.8	78.2	6.6
Grader, dozer, and scraper operators	75	13.3	13.6	17.2	39.0	30.2	41.4	9.4	28.5	44.5	17.6
Tailors	51	13.3	24.6	12.4	24.1	38.9	44.2	8.8	18.2	48.4	24.5
Civil engineers	237	13.0	17.8	19.7	28.9	33.5	38.8	4.8	32.8	46.5	16.0
Crane and tower operators	97	12.9	10.8	26.2	31.9	31.2	41.6	4.4	32.4	49.2	13.9
Supervisors, n.e.c.	500	12.9	12.2	24.0	33.8	29.9	39.1	5.7	30.3	49.8	14.1
Teachers, secondary school	1,182	12.5	14.9	22.3	39.4	23.4	39.8	3.7	23.7	61.8	10.7
Teachers, elementary school	1,412	12.4	14.3	24.3	41.3	20.1	39.0	4.7	27.4	58.6	9.2
Dental laboratory and medical appliance technicians	68	12.3	14.3	27.6	34.1	23.9	35.0	11.9	36.3	34.9	16.9
Separating, filtering, and clarifying machine operators	59	12.1	15.1	27.3	41.0	16.5	37.1	9.0	33.7	48.6	8.8
Tool and die makers	151	12.0	17.8	16.0	30.6	35.6	39.8	8.2	28.4	41.1	22.3
Lathe and turning machine operators	77	11.9	32.8	11.3	25.7	30.2	34.1	13.4	40.2	34.8	11.7
Machinists	453	11.9	17.2	23.9	32.2	26.6	36.9	12.4	32.6	41.0	14.1
Pharmacists	141	11.8	17.9	25.8	31.2	25.1	38.1	5.7	36.4	42.6	15.3
Stationary engineers	93	11.7	17.0	24.7	31.2	27.0	41.5	4.4	29.0	46.2	20.4
Mechanical engineers	288	11.4	21.9	23.7	24.2	30.2	39.2	6.8	33.1	45.0	15.1
Chemists, except biochemists	134	11.1	14.5	29.1	25.8	30.7	37.7	6.8	34.1	46.0	13.2
Inspectors, testers, and graders	103	11.0	24.5	23.4	29.5	22.6	36.5	13.0	32.1	43.8	11.1
Electricians	656	11.0	17.4	24.5	36.8	21.3	36.1	12.8	33.6	42.5	11.2
Operating engineers	173	11.0	10.6	28.6	31.9	28.8	38.7	7.9	31.8	48.6	11.8
Radiologic technicians	127	10.9	17.3	28.8	30.9	22.9	32.1	13.6	44.9	35.7	5.7
Electrical power installers and repairers	100	10.8	17.7	26.4	24.9	30.9	37.5	7.3	34.1	49.3	9.3
Supervisors; mechanics and repairers	241	10.7	19.6	25.7	30.7	24.1	42.1	2.9	23.5	58.2	15.4
Heavy equipment mechanics	158	10.7	16.4	30.2	31.6	21.8	36.9	9.7	32.8	46.4	11.0
Bus, truck, and stationary engine mechanics	310	10.7	21.5	25.0	29.7	23.9	35.3	15.1	34.1	39.5	11.2
Physicians	516	10.7	20.5	26.7	25.4	27.4	40.3	.8	30.9	51.2	17.1
Construction inspectors	66	10.7	17.7	23.3	41.2	17.7	43.3	6.9	16.9	55.2	21.0
Cabinet makers and bench carpenters	56	10.6	17.6	22.8	38.1	21.5	34.6	19.9	33.1	34.5	12.5
Industrial machinery repairers	484	10.6	17.7	25.7	36.7	20.0	39.4	8.0	28.2	49.5	14.3
Automobile body and related repairers	164	10.4	22.0	21.5	41.6	14.8	33.2	20.3	36.4	34.0	9.3
Electrical and electronic engineers	520	10.4	18.2	29.6	25.3	26.9	36.3	9.3	36.7	42.7	11.3
Plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters	477	10.4	17.9	29.1	31.2	21.8	35.6	13.0	35.0	40.9	11.1
Licensed practical nurses	408	10.3	24.4	22.6	36.3	16.7	36.9	7.7	35.4	46.7	10.1
Brickmasons and stonemasons	182	10.2	27.0	22.0	24.9	26.2	35.1	15.5	35.0	36.2	13.3
Truck drivers, heavy	1,740	10.1	24.7	24.3	28.3	22.8	38.0	10.5	31.6	45.2	12.6
Tile setters, hard and soft	55	10.1	25.1	23.5	26.8	24.6	32.3	19.8	41.2	30.1	8.8
Lawyers	659	10.1	23.8	25.5	30.0	20.7	37.6	2.0	37.8	45.9	14.3
Supervisors; production occupations	1,379	10.1	24.4	25.1	29.7	20.8	40.6	5.9	27.2	52.3	14.5
Administrators, education and related fields	544	10.1	22.9	26.7	35.3	15.1	43.5	3.6	16.6	63.6	16.2
Engineers, n.e.c.	269	10.0	19.8	30.0	25.5	24.6	39.4	6.0	30.3	46.8	16.9
Excavating and loading machine operators	113	10.0	22.8	27.2	34.2	15.8	36.3	11.1	35.9	40.7	12.2
Firefighting occupations	167	10.0	17.2	32.9	38.0	11.9	33.7	8.8	46.7	39.5	5.0
Aircraft engine mechanics	125	10.0	19.1	31.0	17.6	32.3	42.0	7.6	25.2	55.2	12.0
Police and detectives, public service	474	9.7	21.8	29.0	34.6	14.6	35.6	7.0	41.0	48.5	3.5
Counselors, educational and vocational	196	9.7	24.1	27.7	33.2	14.9	40.5	6.4	21.1	59.8	12.6
Architects	99	9.6	12.8	39.4	18.5	29.3	36.1	7.6	38.2	39.0	15.1
Structural metal workers	51	9.6	20.5	33.9	25.5	20.1	35.2	11.2	40.0	41.7	7.2
Aerospace engineers	109	9.6	22.8	28.3	10.3	38.7	43.1	6.2	28.7	45.2	19.9
Miscellaneous material moving equipment operators	62	9.4	23.1	31.6	34.2	11.1	35.5	14.7	34.5	41.9	8.9
Dental hygienists	58	9.4	11.1	45.6	37.4	5.9	30.2	20.7	48.5	29.7	1.2
Automobile mechanics	933	9.3	26.6	24.6	26.7	22.1	32.1	22.3	36.8	31.7	9.2
Registered nurses	1,538	9.3	20.7	31.5	28.0	19.8	36.5	6.8	38.4	44.7	10.0
Speech therapists	60	9.3	22.3	36.3	34.8	6.6	33.2	5.9	54.8	37.0	2.3
Binding and twisting machine operators	64	9.3	30.0	23.3	33.4	13.4	38.1	12.9	28.5	43.2	15.4
Managers and administrators, n.e.c.	6,562	9.1	25.0	27.3	27.4	20.4	40.0	7.4	26.9	49.9	15.8
Personnel and labor relations managers	125	9.0	16.4	35.1	32.1	16.3	40.3	4.7	23.5	59.1	12.7
Office machine repairers	74	9.0	18.2	40.1	21.4	20.3	33.6	14.2	43.0	38.1	4.8

See footnote at end of table.

Table 3. Continued—Ranking of occupations by years of tenure in occupation and selected characteristics, January 1987

Occupation	Total employed, January 1987 (thousands)	Median tenure (in years)	Percent of employees with—				Median age	Percent of employees, ages—			
			3 years or less tenure	4–9 years tenure	10–19 years tenure	20 or more years tenure		16–24	25–34	35–54	55 and older
Electronic repairers, commercial and industrial equipment	189	9.0	24.4	27.4	26.1	22.1	35.1	16.3	33.8	39.3	10.7
Welders and cutters	566	9.0	28.2	23.3	30.0	18.6	34.9	13.8	36.7	40.9	8.6
Punching and stamping press machine operators	139	9.0	33.9	19.5	28.1	18.4	36.2	13.7	31.6	45.1	9.6
Sheet metal workers	119	8.9	26.3	26.0	30.2	17.6	35.0	16.1	34.8	38.4	10.6
Administrators and officials, public administration	498	8.9	24.8	28.0	31.3	15.9	43.0	2.6	19.2	58.9	19.3
Hairdressers and cosmetologists	723	8.9	30.3	21.6	24.3	23.8	35.5	21.7	26.6	41.5	10.3
Industrial engineers	213	8.9	24.5	29.0	24.6	21.9	39.2	6.0	32.0	46.7	15.2
Librarians	217	8.8	28.9	27.9	29.1	14.2	42.2	8.1	17.6	53.8	20.5
Inspectors and compliance officers, except construction	159	8.8	31.0	27.0	30.7	11.3	40.9	4.0	24.9	52.9	18.2
Upholsterers	95	8.6	38.7	12.1	17.8	31.4	38.1	15.9	27.1	36.9	20.0
Payroll and timekeeping clerks	137	8.6	24.3	28.0	25.4	22.3	38.1	12.2	28.5	40.7	18.5
Furnace, kiln, and oven operators, except food	97	8.6	28.8	31.8	24.4	14.9	37.6	12.6	30.3	40.7	16.3
Surveying and mapping technicians	57	8.6	23.7	31.7	25.1	19.4	34.0	20.0	31.5	41.8	6.8
Chemical engineers	74	8.6	25.6	28.6	22.2	23.6	33.9	9.3	45.8	30.2	14.7
Sheriffs, bailiffs, and other law enforcement officers	119	8.6	31.0	25.4	32.7	10.9	36.8	4.7	36.1	42.1	17.1
Concrete and terrazzo finishers	67	8.6	35.7	26.4	18.4	19.4	32.6	19.6	37.2	36.5	6.8
Sales representatives, mining, manufacturing, and wholesale	1,354	8.6	26.9	29.4	27.2	16.6	37.6	9.5	32.8	43.8	13.9
Supervisors; general office	465	8.6	23.9	33.5	24.0	18.6	39.3	6.7	28.4	51.7	13.2
Specified mechanics and repairers, n.e.c.	446	8.5	31.4	24.7	27.2	16.7	36.7	15.8	29.2	40.5	14.5
Stenographers	57	8.5	30.5	24.3	31.7	13.5	38.2	9.8	30.9	36.3	23.0
Typesetters and compositors	75	8.5	24.2	37.7	22.5	15.6	34.7	19.1	32.1	39.2	9.7
Financial managers	438	8.4	19.2	37.9	28.7	14.2	37.6	4.8	35.4	48.7	11.1
Psychologists	169	8.4	23.2	36.6	28.1	12.1	40.3	3.1	24.1	59.4	13.3
Teachers; special education	225	8.4	26.2	31.6	33.8	8.3	36.4	6.2	38.2	46.5	9.1
Statistical clerks	93	8.3	29.2	34.4	24.7	11.7	37.5	15.5	27.8	40.3	16.4
Designers	549	8.3	31.9	24.4	25.9	17.8	35.4	12.1	36.2	40.8	10.9
Water and sewage treatment plant operators	52	8.3	28.3	41.7	23.8	6.2	35.5	9.4	42.1	35.2	13.3
Printing machine operators	306	8.2	33.3	25.3	16.0	25.5	33.0	22.0	33.3	34.3	10.5
Heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics	269	8.1	29.5	29.4	22.5	18.6	34.8	17.6	34.0	39.0	9.3
Supervisors; distribution, scheduling, and adjusting clerks	164	8.1	28.0	25.5	26.9	19.7	38.4	6.4	31.5	48.0	14.1
Insurance sales occupations	591	8.1	31.0	25.8	22.1	21.0	39.7	7.9	27.1	49.4	15.6
Carpenters	1,222	8.0	29.7	26.7	26.6	17.0	32.7	20.6	36.9	31.9	10.6
Public transportation attendants	81	8.0	45.5	13.2	30.0	11.3	33.7	12.3	42.8	42.7	2.2
Drafting occupations	281	8.0	28.8	29.9	19.1	22.2	32.5	20.4	35.6	31.8	12.2
Butchers and meatcutters	275	8.0	29.7	29.0	18.9	22.5	35.2	21.0	29.0	36.1	13.9
Miscellaneous electrical and electronic equipment repairers	82	7.9	26.0	28.6	26.4	19.0	37.1	9.3	34.8	41.6	14.3
Dressmakers	94	7.9	35.1	17.2	18.0	29.7	47.9	6.4	15.7	40.5	37.4
Musicians and composers	187	7.9	21.9	29.5	18.0	30.6	33.7	15.7	40.3	29.3	14.7
Supervisors and proprietors; sales occupations	3,539	7.9	30.3	26.8	25.0	17.8	38.3	10.3	29.7	44.2	15.7
Painters, sculptors, craft-artists, and artist printmakers	195	7.9	32.3	24.6	30.7	12.4	36.4	9.7	36.5	39.9	13.9
Mechanics and repairers, not specified	187	7.7	25.0	37.0	25.0	13.1	37.3	11.6	31.7	40.5	16.2
Engineering technicians, n.e.c.	205	7.7	28.2	30.5	29.5	11.7	34.7	15.0	36.5	37.7	10.8
Clinical laboratory technologists and technicians	272	7.7	29.9	32.6	29.2	8.3	32.4	12.8	47.0	34.9	5.3
Purchasing managers	130	7.7	20.4	33.7	27.2	18.7	39.8	4.2	26.4	56.2	13.2
Purchasing agents and buyers, n.e.c.	225	7.7	30.3	31.2	27.3	11.3	38.6	8.3	31.0	47.5	13.3
Photographers	127	7.6	26.7	26.4	26.2	20.7	35.2	19.3	30.1	37.4	13.1
Chemical technicians	86	7.6	33.8	24.3	18.3	23.6	36.1	14.9	31.7	44.0	9.5
Managers; properties and real estate	413	7.6	28.5	30.2	25.3	16.0	42.8	7.3	24.8	42.5	25.4
Accountants and auditors	1,317	7.6	29.6	28.7	22.9	18.7	35.0	12.4	37.9	38.6	11.1
Religious workers, n.e.c.	77	7.6	39.7	23.7	23.7	12.8	42.5	7.4	24.1	45.1	23.4
Secretaries	3,897	7.5	30.5	29.3	26.5	13.7	36.1	18.5	28.5	41.4	11.6
Social workers	496	7.5	28.8	32.8	31.7	6.6	37.3	7.1	34.6	48.9	9.4
Operations and systems researchers and analysts	215	7.4	26.6	34.4	24.7	14.3	37.5	5.3	35.3	52.2	7.2
Postal clerks, except mail carriers	286	7.4	32.5	29.2	26.3	12.0	37.2	7.3	33.7	46.8	12.2
Managers; marketing, advertising, and public relations	417	7.3	28.8	36.3	23.2	11.7	37.9	5.3	33.7	50.3	10.6
Farm workers	703	7.3	33.5	27.5	23.8	15.2	30.0	35.5	25.0	26.1	13.4
Managers; medicine and health	130	7.2	23.5	35.3	26.3	14.8	39.4	2.6	30.4	54.7	12.4
Data processing equipment repairers	122	7.2	18.7	49.9	10.0	21.4	33.0	16.5	42.0	38.5	3.0
Bookkeepers, accounting and auditing clerks	2,110	7.1	33.7	26.5	22.9	16.9	38.9	13.4	26.8	41.5	18.3
Grinding, abrading, buffing, and polishing machine operators	138	7.0	34.0	30.0	22.5	13.5	36.5	14.7	31.6	39.5	14.2
Management related occupations, n.e.c.	277	7.0	28.4	31.8	27.8	12.1	36.1	11.2	35.6	41.8	11.5
Supervisors; cleaning and building service workers	152	7.0	29.0	27.1	29.5	14.3	44.2	5.5	20.0	52.3	22.2

See footnote at end of table.

Table 3. Continued—Ranking of occupations by years of tenure in occupation and selected characteristics, January 1987

Occupation	Total employed, January 1987 (thousands)	Median tenure (in years)	Percent of employees with—				Median age	Percent of employees, ages—			
			3 years or less tenure	4–9 years tenure	10–19 years tenure	20 or more years tenure		16–24	25–34	35–54	55 and older
Management analysts	218	7.0	30.5	28.0	22.5	19.0	42.2	5.0	24.7	47.5	22.8
Science technicians, n.e.c.	79	7.0	29.7	30.7	29.2	10.3	32.4	20.4	39.0	33.9	6.8
Mail carriers, postal service	284	7.0	34.6	25.9	27.1	12.4	38.7	6.4	31.2	46.5	15.9
Knitting, looping, taping, and weaving machine operators	54	6.9	34.3	18.2	35.8	11.8	37.2	14.8	29.1	48.8	7.2
Electrical and electronic technicians	294	6.9	33.7	26.6	25.7	14.0	32.9	15.9	39.5	36.7	8.0
Painting and paint spraying machine operators	185	6.9	38.5	26.8	22.3	12.4	32.5	25.3	33.6	32.8	8.2
Postsecondary teachers, subject not specified	192	6.8	35.5	29.3	23.7	11.5	38.5	11.6	29.0	43.5	15.9
Crossing guards	67	6.8	37.2	28.2	28.9	5.7	51.5	2.6	10.8	39.1	47.5
Inhalation therapists	78	6.7	17.4	50.3	30.4	2.0	32.4	8.1	55.3	35.5	1.1
Carpet installers	123	6.7	38.1	21.9	20.7	19.2	30.3	24.5	44.6	24.4	6.5
Computer systems analysts and scientists	433	6.6	31.5	33.9	25.8	8.9	34.9	9.6	41.1	45.6	3.7
Other financial officers	594	6.6	32.0	31.9	25.0	11.2	36.8	8.3	34.8	45.6	11.4
Industrial truck and tractor equipment operators	402	6.6	33.0	27.6	29.6	9.8	33.9	18.8	35.5	38.3	7.4
Textile sewing machine operators	740	6.6	35.5	27.9	23.1	13.5	37.8	12.3	29.8	43.4	14.4
Correctional institution officers	190	6.5	37.4	29.0	24.5	9.1	33.8	12.1	42.8	36.1	9.0
Teachers, prekindergarten and kindergarten	418	6.4	36.5	27.3	28.0	8.1	35.9	13.4	34.1	46.2	6.3
Supervisors; financial records processing	89	6.4	26.7	43.5	27.8	2.0	40.0	4.8	32.0	48.3	14.9
Miscellaneous textile machine operators	69	6.4	33.9	31.0	26.2	8.8	31.7	22.7	34.9	30.0	12.4
Production inspectors, checkers, and examiners	632	6.3	38.5	25.1	25.2	11.2	39.3	10.1	27.8	46.2	15.8
Actors and directors	87	6.3	30.3	30.4	25.8	13.5	33.2	13.6	44.8	35.2	6.4
Health technologists and technicians, n.e.c.	186	6.3	40.0	28.7	23.4	7.9	31.3	22.3	43.2	29.9	4.7
Miscellaneous machine operators, n.e.c.	927	6.2	42.0	22.0	26.5	9.4	36.0	14.9	32.8	41.6	10.6
Private household cleaners and servants	481	6.2	40.0	20.4	22.9	16.7	45.9	11.5	16.1	41.8	30.7
Buyers, wholesale and retail trade, excluding farm products	205	6.0	40.4	20.5	23.8	15.3	35.7	10.1	38.2	39.0	12.7
Real estate sales occupations	726	6.0	37.4	27.1	24.8	10.7	43.5	4.3	21.4	50.6	23.7
Electrical and electronic equipment assemblers	377	6.0	40.1	27.2	24.6	8.1	34.9	18.5	31.1	39.5	10.8
Bus drivers	421	6.0	37.5	27.0	25.5	10.0	41.6	7.6	23.7	49.4	19.2
Editors and reporters	228	6.0	36.8	28.0	21.0	14.2	33.6	14.0	40.8	33.5	11.7
Laundering and dry cleaning machine operators	184	6.0	45.3	19.6	20.9	14.1	39.1	18.6	25.8	33.4	22.2
Meter readers	50	5.9	42.2	23.4	28.0	6.4	32.3	20.6	38.5	31.4	9.5
Painters, construction and maintenance	440	5.9	37.3	28.9	21.3	12.5	32.5	23.3	33.3	33.3	10.1
Driver-sales workers	300	5.9	34.1	30.7	19.6	15.5	34.4	13.7	38.3	39.0	9.0
Teachers, n.e.c.	475	5.9	36.1	28.5	18.3	17.0	36.8	15.1	29.2	39.7	16.0
Order clerks	257	5.8	35.9	33.6	24.2	6.3	34.0	15.3	38.6	37.1	9.0
Physicians' assistants	79	5.8	28.0	52.4	17.4	2.2	31.3	14.2	53.9	28.4	3.5
Billing clerks	145	5.8	40.3	32.6	18.1	9.0	34.6	20.4	31.1	37.9	10.6
Drywall installers	154	5.7	39.4	21.9	21.2	17.6	30.1	24.5	43.4	28.7	3.4
Construction trades, n.e.c.	196	5.7	41.7	26.1	16.7	15.5	31.9	28.7	29.0	30.7	11.5
Telephone operators	232	5.7	41.8	25.4	25.6	7.2	35.8	18.8	28.6	37.8	14.9
Authors	100	5.6	36.1	24.4	17.0	22.5	42.5	2.3	19.1	52.9	25.7
Nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants	1,283	5.6	41.0	28.9	23.3	6.8	36.5	19.3	27.0	39.8	13.9
Dental assistants	185	5.6	36.3	35.8	19.0	8.9	28.0	35.0	39.9	22.4	2.8
Timber cutting and logging occupations	65	5.5	40.1	19.5	16.8	23.6	35.5	21.8	28.6	39.1	10.5
Molding and casting machine operators	95	5.5	46.3	22.3	19.0	12.4	34.3	18.6	33.6	37.4	10.4
Miscellaneous hand-working occupations	78	5.5	39.2	24.8	30.1	5.9	36.4	20.9	26.4	34.1	18.6
Production coordinators	195	5.5	35.1	31.3	25.1	8.5	36.6	8.4	35.2	46.8	9.6
Public relations specialists	120	5.5	36.5	24.2	31.5	7.9	37.8	11.0	28.3	47.8	12.8
Personnel clerks, except payroll and timekeeping	63	5.4	44.7	26.5	15.3	13.5	37.7	14.3	28.3	40.6	16.8
Assemblers	1,033	5.4	43.6	23.6	21.8	10.9	34.6	19.0	32.7	37.2	11.1
Securities and financial services sales occupations	354	5.4	36.2	35.4	20.2	8.2	35.5	9.3	38.7	40.3	11.6
Salesworkers, furniture and home furnishings	194	5.4	42.2	21.9	19.1	16.8	38.1	18.0	25.1	39.0	17.9
Insurance adjusters, examiners, and investigators	237	5.3	42.3	34.6	12.5	10.6	32.9	17.7	38.1	33.9	10.3
Pressing machine operators	126	5.3	45.8	25.8	15.3	13.2	37.3	19.2	26.0	40.0	14.8
Roofers	143	5.3	36.4	29.8	16.4	17.4	28.9	30.1	37.0	28.1	4.7
Graders and sorters, except agricultural	105	5.3	45.6	24.0	23.5	6.9	33.6	22.6	33.0	34.5	9.9
Supervisors; related agricultural occupations	72	5.2	34.9	26.0	21.0	18.1	31.6	25.7	33.2	30.8	10.4
Typists	829	5.2	43.0	29.1	18.8	9.2	32.8	25.6	30.2	34.2	10.0
Supervisors; motor vehicle operators	68	5.2	44.0	36.1	7.4	12.5	36.2	17.8	29.9	40.0	12.3
Personnel, training, and labor relations specialists	323	5.2	42.9	34.0	17.6	5.5	38.2	6.9	31.8	49.7	11.6
Legal assistants	191	5.2	44.0	28.6	17.3	10.1	31.5	21.3	38.9	34.5	5.4
Physical therapists	76	5.2	46.4	33.4	15.1	5.2	33.2	11.4	45.2	39.3	4.2
Advertising and related sales occupations	153	5.1	38.4	30.9	20.5	10.1	33.2	15.5	40.3	32.5	11.6
Records clerks	149	5.1	42.6	32.0	20.4	5.0	35.7	19.9	28.4	35.8	16.0
Economists	104	5.1	42.2	32.9	18.1	6.7	36.0	9.6	38.8	42.8	8.8
Technicians, n.e.c.	252	5.0	42.5	33.4	10.2	13.9	33.8	16.7	37.6	36.6	9.1
Expeditors	118	5.0	36.5	29.5	23.6	10.4	34.9	21.2	28.1	35.6	15.1
Sales occupations, other business services	505	4.9	43.7	31.3	16.4	8.5	34.8	18.8	32.0	38.8	10.4
Computer operators	859	4.8	44.3	31.7	18.4	5.5	31.3	26.8	33.9	33.2	6.1

See footnote at end of table.

Table 3. Continued—Ranking of occupations by years of tenure in occupation and selected characteristics, January 1987

Occupation	Total employed, January 1987 (thousands)	Median tenure (in years)	Percent of employees with—				Median age	Percent of employees, ages—			
			3 years or less tenure	4–9 years tenure	10–19 years tenure	20 or more years tenure		16–24	25–34	35–54	55 and older
Computer programmers	471	4.8	45.2	33.5	14.2	7.1	30.8	20.9	45.2	31.2	2.7
Investigators and adjusters, except insurance	461	4.8	45.3	25.4	23.1	6.2	33.2	20.6	34.7	37.0	7.7
Underwriters	86	4.8	45.2	28.0	19.7	7.0	31.8	9.4	54.0	30.5	6.1
Salesworkers, parts	183	4.8	43.3	29.4	18.3	8.9	29.1	31.6	36.2	23.9	8.3
Artists, performers, and related workers, n.e.c.	89	4.8	42.3	26.4	25.0	6.3	35.1	17.8	32.4	39.4	10.4
Teachers' aides	429	4.6	46.9	25.4	25.2	2.5	39.4	12.9	20.7	54.4	11.9
Maids and housemen	617	4.6	46.7	27.4	17.4	8.5	38.2	16.3	27.3	38.9	17.5
Sawing machine operators	74	4.6	44.6	21.4	22.0	12.0	31.3	22.9	34.8	30.8	11.5
Machine operators, not specified	325	4.5	46.9	26.6	17.8	8.6	34.9	18.3	32.1	38.9	10.8
Weighers, measurers, and checkers	53	4.5	47.6	17.5	17.4	17.5	37.0	21.6	23.4	39.6	15.4
Traffic, shipping, and receiving clerks	466	4.5	46.9	28.7	18.5	5.9	32.3	23.6	33.6	32.5	10.3
Salesworkers, hardware and building supplies	204	4.5	46.8	23.2	21.0	8.9	32.7	27.6	30.3	23.5	18.6
Biological technicians	64	4.4	45.6	35.0	4.6	14.9	33.8	19.5	35.7	34.8	10.0
Athletes	68	4.4	48.4	14.8	27.4	9.4	29.3	36.9	33.3	22.7	7.1
Bill and account collectors	103	4.4	45.8	32.8	12.4	9.0	33.8	16.3	37.2	34.3	12.2
Taxicab drivers and chauffeurs	186	4.4	48.1	26.2	18.7	7.1	38.2	13.8	29.8	35.4	21.0
Slicing and cutting machine operators	161	4.3	48.6	26.2	16.9	8.3	34.0	23.3	29.4	33.5	13.9
Administrative support occupations, n.e.c.	939	4.3	48.2	28.3	16.2	7.3	35.5	18.3	30.2	38.8	12.6
Mixing and blending machine operators	97	4.3	49.1	23.2	20.2	7.4	33.5	19.9	35.7	35.8	8.5
Waiters and waitresses	1,303	4.2	48.3	30.3	15.8	5.5	25.9	46.0	28.9	19.7	5.3
Janitors and cleaners	2,073	4.2	48.8	25.7	17.8	7.8	38.5	21.4	21.8	34.8	22.0
Production helpers	54	4.1	49.1	30.8	18.2	1.9	29.0	38.2	28.6	24.5	8.7
General office clerks	695	4.0	49.9	21.0	17.4	11.7	35.1	24.4	25.4	35.7	14.4
Machine feeders and offbearers	100	3.9	50.7	24.0	19.6	5.7	31.9	23.9	35.3	31.8	8.9
Interviewers	142	3.9	50.3	29.8	16.1	3.8	34.3	23.9	28.2	36.6	11.3
Bartenders	354	3.9	50.8	27.4	15.8	6.1	32.1	22.2	36.5	33.0	8.3
Eligibility clerks, social welfare	58	3.9	51.4	10.6	24.6	13.5	38.4	8.7	23.5	55.9	11.9
Bank tellers	450	3.8	52.1	28.2	15.7	3.9	28.4	35.4	30.6	28.5	5.5
Cooks, except short-order	1,596	3.8	51.7	24.3	17.0	6.9	29.3	39.7	21.5	26.2	12.7
Health aides, except nursing	388	3.7	53.2	24.9	14.4	7.4	32.3	25.5	31.8	34.2	8.6
Laborers, except construction	1,161	3.7	52.2	22.2	17.8	7.8	31.3	28.3	31.5	29.4	10.7
Welfare service aides	116	3.7	55.7	33.5	9.5	1.3	44.6	12.1	15.5	44.6	27.8
Salesworkers, motor vehicles and boats	346	3.7	52.7	22.3	11.6	13.4	36.5	15.8	29.4	39.8	15.0
Cost and rate clerks	94	3.6	52.8	30.2	10.6	6.4	35.8	22.0	26.5	40.2	11.3
Construction laborers	616	3.6	52.7	22.5	15.5	9.2	29.3	34.6	30.5	26.6	8.3
Stock and inventory clerks	628	3.6	54.0	20.5	16.1	9.5	34.1	22.8	29.7	36.2	11.3
Groundskeepers and gardeners, except farm	425	3.6	54.4	22.8	14.8	8.0	29.6	36.6	25.0	22.8	15.6
Hand packers and packagers	299	3.5	54.7	21.3	16.8	7.2	33.0	25.3	29.1	34.4	11.2
Transportation ticket and reservation agents	109	3.5	55.9	26.2	6.4	11.6	33.5	18.1	35.5	39.0	7.4
Animal caretakers, except farm	88	3.5	53.7	19.6	20.6	6.1	29.5	35.6	27.6	26.7	10.1
Photographic process machine operators	101	3.5	55.6	22.7	15.4	6.4	30.3	30.8	38.0	21.8	9.3
Freight, stock, and material movers, hand, n.e.c.	636	3.4	56.4	19.8	15.2	8.6	28.9	34.4	32.3	26.6	6.8
Data-entry keyers	323	3.4	56.8	20.9	19.1	3.2	31.7	25.5	32.7	35.3	6.4
Bakers	111	3.4	55.9	18.7	16.7	8.7	33.1	26.6	29.0	32.1	12.2
Dispatchers	207	3.3	57.1	29.6	10.2	3.1	34.0	18.1	35.3	34.7	11.9
Guards and police, except public service	623	3.3	55.7	25.5	13.3	5.5	38.6	19.8	24.1	32.0	24.1
Packaging and filling machine operators	339	3.3	55.9	19.4	15.8	8.9	35.0	21.7	28.6	38.7	11.0
Receptionists	766	3.3	58.2	25.3	12.5	4.1	31.4	32.5	25.4	29.9	12.3
Library clerks	150	3.3	58.0	21.5	18.3	2.2	28.9	43.4	16.2	27.3	13.2
Truckdrivers, light	674	3.2	56.0	20.4	14.2	9.5	30.2	31.1	32.8	25.5	10.6
Salesworkers, radio, television, hi-fi, and appliances	170	3.2	57.7	19.5	15.4	7.4	30.1	32.6	31.1	28.4	7.9
Salesworkers, apparel	390	3.1	56.1	24.9	9.4	9.6	27.2	45.6	14.2	22.0	18.2
Sales counter clerks	207	3.1	62.3	26.9	6.7	4.2	29.7	38.5	20.3	26.3	15.0
Salesworkers, other commodities	1,484	3.1	57.1	21.6	13.3	8.0	31.6	36.4	20.0	26.6	17.0
Small engine repairers	53	3.1	58.3	11.3	22.0	8.4	32.4	24.1	33.4	30.7	11.8
Supervisors, food preparation and service occupations	315	3.0	56.8	23.8	12.1	7.3	28.8	39.6	24.0	27.8	8.6
Health record technologists and technicians	53	2.9	51.3	20.3	11.0	17.4	35.3	18.5	28.3	38.6	14.6
Helpers, construction trades	141	2.9	58.5	27.6	7.9	6.0	24.9	51.1	27.1	17.5	4.2
Attendants, amusement and recreation facilities	114	2.8	63.9	17.5	15.1	3.6	26.9	46.4	22.0	22.6	9.0
Street and door-to-door salesworkers	270	2.7	59.9	20.6	12.7	6.8	35.8	18.5	29.6	35.7	16.2
Child-care workers, private household	422	2.7	67.3	24.8	3.9	4.0	21.9	59.2	15.2	15.1	10.5
Child-care workers, except private household	779	2.7	62.1	25.6	10.2	2.0	34.2	19.4	33.8	34.2	12.6
Information clerks, n.e.c.	257	2.7	62.3	20.0	7.6	10.1	33.6	29.9	23.2	33.1	13.8
Hotel clerks	78	2.7	57.1	29.0	8.2	5.7	27.7	36.6	28.8	23.8	10.8
Personal service occupations, n.e.c.	83	2.7	63.1	22.0	11.8	3.0	33.8	35.2	17.8	26.1	20.9
Salesworkers, shoes	102	2.6	72.8	9.9	13.7	3.6	22.3	62.4	13.6	12.4	11.7
Garage and service station related occupations	246	2.6	68.2	15.6	11.9	4.4	23.8	54.1	17.6	17.9	10.3
Short-order cooks	104	2.5	60.2	24.1	11.5	4.2	20.9	63.9	17.6	14.6	3.9
File clerks	289	2.5	66.7	17.3	13.4	2.6	28.5	40.4	23.4	24.1	12.1
Cashiers	2,123	2.4	65.9	19.8	11.3	3.0	24.4	52.2	20.5	20.1	7.2
Mail clerks, except postal service	181	2.3	67.0	13.1	15.5	4.4	29.8	32.7	28.5	25.8	13.0

See footnote at end of table.

Table 3. Continued—Ranking of occupations by years of tenure in occupation and selected characteristics, January 1987

Occupation	Total employed, January 1987 (thousands)	Median tenure (in years)	Percent of employees with—				Median age	Percent of employees, ages—			
			3 years or less tenure	4–9 years tenure	10–19 years tenure	20 or more years tenure		16–24	25–34	35–54	55 and older
Miscellaneous food preparation occupations	653	2.3	65.3	20.8	10.6	3.4	29.5	42.2	17.0	26.5	14.2
News vendors	101	2.3	67.9	30.0	2.1	.0	26.4	46.3	23.9	19.8	10.0
Vehicle washers and equipment cleaners	232	2.3	69.2	18.0	7.0	5.8	26.7	43.1	27.3	22.4	7.3
Messengers	149	2.3	69.1	18.6	10.4	1.8	30.3	35.6	25.3	23.4	15.8
Kitchen workers, food preparation	107	2.1	72.3	13.7	11.1	2.9	27.2	43.6	21.2	24.8	10.3
Stock handlers and baggers	933	1.9	71.4	16.7	7.2	4.7	21.1	67.5	16.6	11.3	4.6
Waiters' and waitresses' assistants	323	1.7	79.1	13.6	5.0	2.4	20.3	68.9	19.7	10.8	6.6
Food counter, fountain, and related occupations	310	1.5	88.1	7.7	3.4	.8	18.8	80.7	9.6	6.9	2.8

n.e.c. = not elsewhere classified.

women to head families without husbands and, thus, have had a greater need for employment. Moreover, black wives were more likely than white wives to continue working after having children, compelled, in part, by the relatively greater labor force difficulties of black husbands, compared with white husbands.²

Full- and part-time workers. Average occupational tenure was 7.2 years for the 93.7 million full-time workers in January 1987, compared to only 3.1 years for the 15.4 million part-time workers.³ Many part-time workers do not have a strong attachment to their occupation and are more likely than others to change jobs, become unemployed, or leave the labor force, thereby slowing their accumulation of experience in any particular occupation. Almost seven-tenths of all part-time workers were women, many of whom were employed in administrative support occupations. Some mothers prefer shorter hours or fewer workdays per week which allows them to schedule their jobs around family responsibilities. Almost 23 percent of the part-time workers were teenagers, compared with less than 3 percent of the full-time workers. Retail sales and food service occupations are major sources of jobs for teenagers who are in school and want to work part time.

Differences in the age distribution and gender of part-time workers affected tenure. Interestingly, men in part-time jobs had higher tenure than women at most ages, but their overall average was lower because a disproportionately large number were young; relatively few were of prime working age (25 to 54). More than one-half of the men in part-time jobs were under 25 years of age, compared with less than one-third of the women. Men in part-time jobs also were more likely to be older workers—15 percent were age 65 and older, compared with about 6 percent of the women.

Many older part-time workers had lengthy tenure. About 35 percent of those ages 60 to 64 and 45 percent of those ages 65 to 69 had at least 20 years of tenure in their

current occupation. Many of these workers probably accumulated the bulk of the years while previously employed full time in that occupation, and then decided to reduce their hours or days of work, rather than retire altogether.

Education and training. The strength of a person's attachment to a specific occupation usually is dependant on his or her investment in it in terms of education and training. The greater the investment, the more likely a person will remain in the occupation, because starting another career can result in loss of earnings and related benefits. An additional investment in training may also be required to change careers. Therefore, tenure tends to be lengthy for individuals in occupations that require lengthy education, such as physicians, lawyers, engineers, and teachers. Similarly, tenure tends to be long for workers in skilled crafts that require several years of on-the-job or apprenticeship training, such as machinists, electricians, and plumbers. Some occupations that can be entered without specialized education and training also have long tenure, including police and firefighters, whose job attachment is influenced by liberal retirement benefits.

Among workers under age 35, individuals who had been in their current occupation the longest usually were not those with the most education. In fact, young college graduates frequently had less tenure than their high school classmates who entered the work force earlier. However, tenure for college educated workers was greater than for other workers at age 35 and over, and increased directly with the years of college completed. At ages 55 to 59, for example, average tenure was 22.3 years for workers with 5 or more years of college, 20.6 years for those with 4 years of college, and 16.6 years for those with 1 to 3 years. (See table 4.) As a group, workers with no more than 8 years of (elementary) school had high average tenure because a disproportionate number of them were older workers, but at most age levels, they had somewhat less tenure than individuals who attended or completed high school.

Self-employment. Average occupational tenure was 10.6 years for self-employed individuals and 6.2 years for wage and salary workers. The self-employed generally have greater flexibility in adjusting their work schedules to suit their needs and, thus, are more likely than others to continue working beyond customary retirement age. More than 8 percent of them were age 65 and older, compared to only 2 percent of the wage and salary workers. Self-employment was prevalent in many occupations having the greatest tenure, including dentist, farmer, and barber. Working beyond age 65, however, also contributed to the high average tenure in some jobs having relatively few self-employed people, such as clergy and farm managers.

Earnings. CPS data on earnings for wage and salary workers who usually work full time indicate that occupations with high earnings have longer tenure than those with low earnings.⁴ Average (median) weekly earnings of workers in more than one-half of the occupations in table 3 were greater than the \$358 total for all wage and salary employees who usually worked full time in 1986. In almost four-fifths (112) of these occupations, average tenure also was greater than the 6.6-year total for all workers in January 1987. Similarly, about four-fifths of the occupations with less than average earnings had less than average tenure.

The wage and salary workers with the greatest earnings were concentrated in professional speciality and managerial occupations. People usually enter professional specialty occupations soon after college and many remain in their chosen field until retirement, particularly if they have advanced degrees or highly specialized education. Almost seven-tenths of the workers in the professional specialty group who were ages 45 to 54 had been in their occupation 20 years or more, and the proportion was about nine-tenths among physicians and lawyers. How-

Table 4. Median years of tenure in current occupation by years of school completed and age, January 1987

Years of school completed	Total employed (in thousands)	Total age 16 and older	Ages 16 to 24	Ages 25 to 29	Ages 30 to 34	Ages 35 to 39	Ages 40 to 44	Ages 45 to 49	Ages 50 to 54	Ages 55 to 59	Ages 60 to 64	Age 65 and older
Total ...	109,090	6.6	1.9	4.4	6.9	9.0	10.7	13.3	15.2	17.7	19.4	20.6
Elementary 8 years or less	5,633	8.9	1.7	3.6	5.2	7.2	8.5	11.0	14.5	17.2	15.5	18.4
High school 1 to 3 years	12,050	4.2	1.4	4.3	5.7	7.5	10.0	12.7	15.1	17.7	16.8	20.2
4 years ...	43,827	6.4	2.1	5.0	7.2	8.5	10.4	12.2	14.0	16.0	17.1	18.1
College 1 to 3 years	22,669	6.0	2.2	4.6	7.3	9.3	10.6	12.9	15.4	16.6	20.7	21.8
4 years ...	14,679	6.8	1.9	4.0	6.9	9.7	10.8	13.8	16.6	20.6	22.2	25.4
5 years or more	10,231	10.1	2.1	3.4	6.4	10.2	13.1	16.5	18.6	22.3	25.2	33.8

ever, many managerial workers have been promoted into their occupations after years of working in other jobs and, thus, have not had time to accumulate much tenure. Nevertheless, almost one-half of the managerial workers ages 55 to 64 had been in their jobs 20 years or more.

A large proportion of the wage and salary workers with the lowest earnings were in food preparation and service occupations and in retail sales jobs such as cashier and counter clerk. Many others were child-care workers, stock handlers and baggers, and garage and service station workers. The occupations with the lowest earnings usually can be entered by individuals who have little, if any, previous training or work experience, and who want a job as an immediate source of income rather than a long-term career commitment. Consequently, large numbers of people enter these jobs but few stay very long. For example, 88 percent of the food counter and fountain workers had 3 years of tenure or less, while only 1 percent had 20 years or more.

Table 5. Percent distribution of workers by years of tenure in current occupation and years of tenure with current employer, January 1987

Tenure in current occupation	Total employed		Tenure with current employer								
	Number (in thousands)	Percent	Less than 2 years	2 years	3 years	4-5 years	6-9 years	10-14 years	15-19 years	20-24 years	25 years or more
Total, age 16 and older	109,090	100.0	28.8	11.4	8.6	10.8	13.8	10.8	6.6	4.1	5.2
Less than 2 years	21,022	100.0	88.4	2.7	1.7	1.9	2.0	1.4	.8	.6	.4
2 years	10,404	100.0	20.7	66.8	2.6	2.2	3.0	2.2	1.1	.8	.6
3 years	8,361	100.0	19.3	7.5	60.7	3.8	3.0	2.8	1.4	.6	.8
4-5 years	11,831	100.0	19.2	8.6	7.2	54.0	4.4	2.8	1.8	.8	1.2
6-9 years	16,598	100.0	15.5	6.9	6.2	8.7	55.8	3.1	2.0	.8	.9
10-14 years	15,343	100.0	12.7	6.5	5.1	8.9	11.6	49.6	2.5	1.4	1.6
15-19 years	9,649	100.0	9.4	5.0	4.3	6.6	11.0	10.8	47.9	2.6	2.5
20-24 years	6,608	100.0	9.7	4.2	3.8	7.2	9.8	11.3	9.5	41.3	3.3
25 years or more	9,272	100.0	7.4	3.7	3.3	5.5	8.0	8.3	7.2	8.4	48.3

NOTE: Occupational tenure is in cumulative years, whereas employer tenure is in continuous (uninterrupted) years.

Employer tenure

Data on occupational tenure and employer tenure differ because the former is measured in cumulative years and the latter is measured in continuous (uninterrupted) years. Nevertheless, as can be seen in table 5, there is a link between the two. A change in occupations usually means a change in employers. Of the 21 million workers who had less than 2 years of cumulative tenure in their occupation, about 88 percent also had less than 2 years of continuous tenure with their employer and most of the remainder had less than 10 years. Movement of workers from occupation to occupation usually occurred between, rather than within, employing organizations, except in the case of advancement to managerial and supervisory positions.

As expected, the probability of a change in employers tended to diminish as occupational tenure increased. Of the 9.3 million workers who had been in their occupation for 25 years or more, almost one-half also had 25 years or more continuous tenure with their employer and another one-fourth had 10 to 24 years. A disproportionate number of workers who had lengthy tenure in both categories were in occupations that (a) have high concentrations of self-employed workers, such as farmers and physicians, or (b) are restricted or limited as to type of employer, such as

postal service mail carriers and firefighters. Only one-fifth of the individuals with 25 years or more tenure in their occupation had been with their employer 5 years or less. Many of them were accountants, engineers, registered nurses, automobile mechanics, carpenters, and heavy-truck drivers.

Trends

Occupational tenure has increased in recent years and further increases seem likely. Average years of tenure rose from 5.7 in 1983 to 6.6 in 1987, as the work force aged.⁵ The increase, however, was more than just a reflection of an older population, as men and women at almost every age had been working in their occupation longer in 1987 than in 1983. Young people entering the labor force in recent years may eventually accumulate even more tenure than their parents. Unlike their mothers 20 or 30 years ago, young women today are more likely to remain in the labor force for a large part of their adult lives and to work even when they have infants and toddlers at home.⁶ Another factor that may eventually increase tenure among both sexes is the changing occupational structure of employment. Occupations that require the most education—and thus, have the strongest worker attachment—are projected to increase as a proportion of total employment.⁷ □

—FOOTNOTES—

¹The amount of tenure reported by respondents was rounded to the nearest year, or to zero if less than 6 months. In the tabulations, the category, "less than 2 years," actually consists of all workers who had up to 1½ years of tenure, including those with less than 6 months. The category, "2 to 3 years," consists of all workers with more than 1½ years, but less than 3½ years, and so forth.

²See Howard Hayghe, "Rise in mothers' labor force activity includes those with infants," *Monthly Labor Review*, February 1986, pp. 43–45.

³Part-time work is defined as less than 35 hours per week. Persons who usually work 35 hours or more per week, but for economic reasons worked fewer hours during the survey week, were classified as full-time workers. See Thomas H. Nardone, "Part-time workers: who are they?" *Monthly Labor Review*, February 1986, pp. 13–19.

⁴The data on earnings are limited to wage and salary workers who usually work full time, and consequently are not strictly comparable to

the tenure data presented in this article, which also include self-employed workers as well as those on part-time schedules.

⁵Prior to January 1987, occupational tenure was measured in supplements to the January 1983 and January 1981 Current Population Surveys. The economic recovery may have contributed to the increase in age-specific tenure between 1983 and 1987. The results of the two most recent surveys were difficult to compare with those from the January 1981 survey, because the latter used broader intervals to measure the amount of time the worker had accumulated in the current occupation and obtained the data only for workers who had not changed occupations between January 1980 and January 1981.

⁶See Susan E. Shank, "Women and the labor market: the link grows stronger," *Monthly Labor Review*, March 1988, pp. 3–8.

⁷See George T. Silvestri and John M. Lukasiewicz, "A look at occupational employment trends to the year 2000," *Monthly Labor Review*, September 1987, pp. 46–63.