

Work experience, earnings, and family income in 1981

The number of employed Americans increased but so did the number without jobs, as recovery from the 1980 recession proved to be brief; the family income of high-wage workers exceeded the poverty level, even when unemployed

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A total of 117 million Americans worked all or part of 1981, an increase of 1 million from the year before. However, the number of Americans who encountered some unemployment during the year rose to 23.4 million, an increase of more than 2 million, as the economy managed only a brief recovery from the 1980 recession and then entered a deeper slump.

Although it was a relatively small gain by historical standards, the 1981 increase in employment was still larger than the 1980 rise. The proportion of women employed year round, full time reached 45 percent, a new high.

The work experience and income supplement to the March Current Population Survey (CPS), the data source for this article, provides a comprehensive view of labor force activity, earnings, and family income for the preceding year for all members of the population of working age.¹ The total number of persons with some employment or unemployment in a given year, as measured by the March household survey, is always much greater than the average of the monthly CPS figures. In 1981, for example, the *average* number of persons employed, as measured during the course of the year, was 100.4 million, while the *total* number with some employment was 16.4 million higher, according to the March 1982 survey. The number of persons with some

unemployment in 1981, as measured in March 1982, was nearly three times as high as the average level of the monthly numbers.²

A total of 15.8 million families reported that one or more members had encountered some unemployment in 1981. The median income of these families was 23 percent lower than that of families with no unemployment. Moreover, in about 18 percent of the families with one or more unemployed members, family incomes fell below the poverty level.³ The likelihood of living in families below the poverty level, of course, depends not only on a spell of unemployment, but also on who in the family experiences it, the number of earners, the types of jobs held while employed, and other factors that may not even be related to the labor market.

Unemployment, earnings, and poverty

In general, workers in high-wage industries manage to hold family income above the poverty line despite periods of unemployment. In contrast, workers in low-wage industries often remain in poverty even when not affected by unemployment. This is evident from table 1, which shows the number of workers in each major industry in 1981 by employment or unemployment during the year, median annual earnings, median family income, and the percent whose family income fell below the poverty line.

One striking finding is that, for persons with work experience in the durable goods industries, family income in 1981 remained relatively high, despite what

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Table 1. Earnings and family income of workers by industry of longest job and employment status, 1981

[Numbers in thousands]

Industry	Workers with no unemployment				Workers with some unemployment				
	Number	Median annual earnings	Median family income	Percent in poverty	Number	Percent of all workers	Median annual earnings	Median family income	Percent in poverty
Total	96,276	\$11,669	\$26,618	5.4	20,518	17.6	\$5,144	\$18,495	16.0
Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries	3,481	3,447	15,636	23.9	665	16.0	2,829	11,611	37.1
Mining	1,011	20,943	31,359	1.1	237	19.0	12,365	21,947	9.3
Construction	4,730	14,436	25,893	6.1	2,613	35.6	8,086	17,835	15.2
Manufacturing	18,923	15,791	27,407	2.8	5,241	21.7	7,956	20,223	10.3
Durable goods	11,193	17,269	28,368	2.7	3,139	21.9	9,933	21,498	8.4
Lumber, wood products, and furniture	1,193	12,167	23,691	8.0	477	28.6	6,936	16,818	14.0
Stone, clay, and glass products	492	17,038	28,624	1.7	172	25.9	9,805	18,702	6.7
Primary metal industries	882	20,259	28,880	2.3	277	23.9	14,184	22,399	4.9
Fabricated metal products	1,364	16,384	27,001	2.4	352	20.5	9,754	21,146	12.7
Machinery, except electrical	2,528	18,544	29,682	2.2	523	17.1	10,372	21,659	6.6
Electric and electronic equipment	2,129	15,644	28,224	1.9	493	18.8	8,317	21,341	8.9
Automobiles	682	21,884	30,973	1.2	402	37.1	17,308	26,777	3.3
Aircraft and other transportation equipment	963	21,308	31,877	1.1	200	17.2	11,970	20,950	7.9
Instruments and related products	561	17,320	29,584	1.5	103	15.5	6,930	20,908	5.4
Miscellaneous manufacturing industries	399	10,384	23,984	6.3	141	26.1	5,582	18,880	10.6
Nondurable goods	7,729	13,490	25,960	3.0	2,102	21.4	6,142	18,566	13.0
Transportation and public utilities	6,055	18,910	28,796	2.4	970	13.8	7,716	18,574	13.7
Wholesale trade	4,177	15,710	29,008	2.8	721	14.7	6,668	18,651	12.9
Retail trade	16,309	5,917	24,801	7.5	4,083	20.0	2,878	18,136	19.7
Finance, insurance, and real estate	6,075	12,060	29,422	2.7	669	9.9	5,594	21,813	10.7
Business and repair services	4,120	10,301	25,317	6.4	992	19.4	4,554	16,939	20.1
Private household	1,438	927	14,773	20.5	304	17.5	612	10,476	35.3
Personal services, except private household	2,597	5,115	20,894	9.3	536	17.1	2,967	14,137	22.1
Entertainment and recreational services	1,168	3,971	26,811	7.7	327	21.9	3,031	16,832	18.8
Professional and related services	20,870	10,985	27,720	4.4	2,572	11.0	4,094	18,543	15.6
Public administration	5,323	17,454	29,391	2.1	589	10.0	5,052	18,770	15.1

were for some industries very high incidences of unemployment. In the automobile industry, for example, the number of jobless workers during the year was 402,000, or 37 percent out of a total of 1.1 million. Yet the median family income of these workers—\$26,777—was still relatively high, with only 3.3 percent of the families dropping below the poverty level.

In contrast, workers whose jobs were in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries or the various service-producing industries were much more likely to live in poor families regardless of their unemployment status. This was probably because their earnings tended to be much lower than those of workers in most of the durable goods industries. An extreme illustration of this is the agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers, who had very high incidences of poverty—24 percent—even when they experienced no unemployment during the year.

It should be noted, however, that in the work experience data, workers are classified according to the industry of their longest job during the year. Thus, workers who might have lost their jobs in a given industry (say, autos) early in the year and who, after a period of unemployment, managed to find work in another industry are likely to be classified on the basis of the industry of their last job. Moreover, the count of unemployed workers includes persons who were ending periods of joblessness at the beginning of 1981 or entering unemployment at the end of 1981. Among the latter, many may have remained unemployed far into 1982, and their economic situation may have deteriorat-

ed further as the Nation's unemployment rate moved to higher levels.

On average, workers with some unemployment earned only 44 percent as much for all of 1981 as did workers with no unemployment. However, only a portion of the earnings gap between the two groups was attributable to unemployment. Even when working, the persons who fell victim to unemployment earned much less than did workers who kept their jobs. As shown below, when one takes into account the number of weeks worked by the two groups, the median weekly earnings of workers with unemployment equaled only 72 percent of the median for workers with no unemployment.⁴

	No unemployment		Some unemployment		Earnings ratios	
	Annual	Weekly	Annual	Weekly	Annual	Weekly
Median earnings:						
All workers	\$11,669	\$243	\$5,148	\$175	.44	.72
Men	16,855	340	6,741	219	.40	.64
Women . .	7,928	175	3,863	136	.49	.78
Whites	11,874	248	5,408	181	.46	.73
Blacks	9,975	206	3,986	148	.40	.72
Hispanics . . .	9,848	206	4,826	162	.49	.79

On a weekly basis, women with some unemployment earned 78 percent as much as their counterparts who were not unemployed. Men with some unemployment fared even worse; their median weekly earnings equaled only 64 percent of the median for men with no unemployment.

The role of the family

During the past decade, the dramatic increase in the number of working wives and youths has led to substantial gains in the number of families with two or more earners. Among other things, this rapid rise has meant an increase in average family income, in spite of an accompanying decline in "average" real earnings per worker. For the unemployed, the presence of additional earners in the family has offered some financial protection and is another important factor which keeps many such families out of poverty.

Table 2 provides a detailed look at the different types of families in terms of the number of earners and whether any member encountered unemployment in 1981. Overall, there were 15.8 million families in which one or more members experienced some unemployment in 1981. Of these, 12 million were married-couple families, and the great majority, or 79 percent, had two or more earners during the year, only 2.4 million being one-earner families.

For married-couple families with two or more earners, the incidence of poverty in 1981 was 2 percent without unemployment and 6 percent with unemployment. For all one-earner families, the incidence of poverty was 7 percent without unemployment and 24 percent with unemployment. The main reason for the much higher incidence of poverty in the latter case is

that the worker unemployed is generally the husband, and because men generally earn more than women, the decline in family income is greater.

In families in which only the husband is an earner and in families in which only the wife is an earner, the incidence of poverty was identical—7 percent for those with no unemployment and 24 percent with unemployment. From this, it may appear that husbands and wives who are sole earners have similar earnings. But this is not the case. In traditional families in which husbands are the only earners, median family income is \$21,091, with the major portion, 89 percent, derived from their wages or salaries. In families in which wives are the only earners, median family income is 25 percent lower, and wages account for less than half of it. In fact, the \$7,189 median annual earnings of wives who were the sole earners was not substantially different from the median for all working wives—\$7,314.⁵

Because families maintained by women are the least likely to have more than one earner, the financial impact of unemployment is much greater. In 1981, there were 3 million families maintained by women in which at least one member was unemployed for part of the year, and 43 percent had income which fell below the poverty level. (See table 2.) In families headed by women with only one earner, unemployment meant a 50-percent chance of poverty, while in those with at least two earners, unemployment meant a 17-percent chance of poverty.

Table 2. Income by family type, number of earners, and unemployment status, 1981

[Numbers in thousands]

Family type and number of earners	With a member in the labor force			With no member unemployed			With at least one member unemployed		
	Number	Median family income	Percent in poverty	Number	Median family income	Percent in poverty	Number	Median family income	Percent in poverty
All families	53,496	\$24,393	9.4	37,692	\$26,154	5.9	15,803	\$20,089	17.7
Married-couple families	43,627	26,759	5.8	31,639	28,139	4.0	11,989	22,929	10.6
No earners	171	6,783	65.1	3	(¹)	(¹)	167	6,818	65.3
One earner	13,303	20,303	10.2	10,927	21,731	7.2	2,376	14,394	24.1
Husband	11,223	21,091	10.0	9,329	22,440	7.3	1,894	14,821	23.8
Wife	1,502	15,864	10.5	1,200	16,871	7.1	302	12,695	23.7
Other family member	578	19,953	13.5	399	22,190	7.1	179	14,270	27.8
Two or more earners	30,153	29,791	3.5	20,708	31,478	2.3	9,445	25,824	6.3
Husband and wife	26,226	29,576	3.2	18,299	31,280	2.0	7,927	25,263	5.9
Husband and other family member	3,325	32,973	5.2	2,099	34,520	4.4	1,225	30,154	6.4
Husband is not an earner	603	23,483	9.5	310	25,004	4.5	293	21,141	14.9
Families maintained by women	7,889	12,377	27.6	4,919	13,970	18.5	2,970	9,473	42.6
No earners	543	3,108	89.1	10	(¹)	(¹)	533	3,120	89.2
One earner	4,604	10,773	29.9	3,439	11,910	23.3	1,165	7,273	49.5
Two or more earners	2,741	19,655	11.5	1,469	21,368	7.0	1,272	17,745	16.7
Families maintained by men	1,980	19,584	16.2	1,135	23,412	5.6	844	12,192	30.5
No earners	232	1,271	77.9	4	(¹)	(¹)	228	1,233	79.0
One earner	873	18,500	12.1	650	19,979	7.6	223	12,719	25.0
Two or more earners	874	25,098	4.0	482	28,217	2.8	393	21,224	5.5
Persons not living in families	17,632	12,430	13.1	14,008	13,974	8.8	3,624	7,284	29.7
Persons living alone	10,869	13,655	9.6	9,057	14,796	6.8	1,812	8,162	23.3
Men	5,539	15,749	8.7	4,453	17,692	5.4	1,086	8,911	22.4
Women	5,330	11,903	10.4	4,604	12,640	8.2	726	7,504	24.7
All others ²	6,762	10,733	18.9	4,951	12,209	12.6	1,811	6,304	36.0
Men	4,088	11,927	16.5	2,899	14,341	10.0	1,189	7,038	32.3
Women	2,674	9,194	22.5	2,051	10,455	16.3	623	5,277	43.1

¹ Percent not shown when base is less than 75,000.

² The majority of these persons are living with nonrelatives. Also included are persons in

married-couple families where the husband is in the Armed Forces, persons in secondary families, and some whose family status is unknown.

Aside from those in a family environment, 17.6 million persons lived alone or with unrelated persons and participated in the labor force at some time in 1981. For the 1.8 million such persons who lived alone and incurred some joblessness in 1981, personal income was \$8,162, and 23 percent were living in poverty. For the other 1.8 million who also had some unemployment but lived with others, personal income was \$6,304 and the incidence of poverty was 36 percent.

In terms of the changes in family income in 1981 compared with 1980, income did not keep up with the pace of inflation.⁶ This was true not only for the families with some unemployment but also for those with no unemployment in both 1980 and 1981. The loss in real income was slightly greater for families (numbers in thousands) with at least one unemployed member—4.5 percent—than for those with no unemployed members—1.2 percent:

	1980		1981		Income change in percent (constant dollars)
	Number	Income	Number	Income	
No member unemployed . . .	38,455	\$24,020	37,692	\$26,154	-1.2
At least one member unemployed . . .	14,592	19,076	15,808	20,089	-4.5

In making year-to-year comparisons, it should be kept in mind that many of the families with unemployment in 1980 may not have had any unemployment in 1981. During the previous recession, March-to-March matches of the work experience data showed that 41 percent of all persons who encountered unemployment in 1974 also were unemployed at some time during 1975. The comparable figure for 1977-78, a much healthier employment period, was 35 percent. However, for many persons and families who were free of unemployment in 1980 but not in 1981, actual gains or losses in income were greater than the average changes shown above.⁷

Family income by race and Hispanic origin

The median income of black families in which at least one member was unemployed in 1981 was \$13,479, compared with \$21,586 for white families and \$15,772 for Hispanic families. The proportion of blacks whose family income fell below the poverty line when affected by unemployment was 36 percent, compared to 16 percent for white families, and 25 percent for Hispanic families.

Actually, the incidence of poverty is consistently greater for black families, relative to white or Hispanic families, regardless of the labor force status of the members of such families. Even when blacks were employed the entire year at full-time jobs, the incidence of poverty among their families was still 8 percent, more than twice as high as among whites with year-round full-time

work. And Hispanic families were only slightly better off than blacks, as indicated in the tabulation below:

Labor force status	Percent in poverty		
	White	Hispanic	Black
Full-time year-round workers . . .	3.2	7.1	8.0
All workers:			
No unemployment	4.7	10.4	12.3
Some unemployment	16.1	25.3	36.2
Some involuntary part-time work	14.2	26.7	31.1
Some involuntary part-time work and unemployment . . .	18.6	31.9	34.8
Persons who did not work but looked	32.8	45.2	59.1

An important factor contributing to the relatively high incidence of poverty among blacks and Hispanics is that, even when employed, the members of these two groups tend to be concentrated in jobs that are not as secure or as high-paying as those held by whites.

Changes in employment

The relatively small increase of 1 million in the number of persons with jobs in 1981 reflected the fact that the continued growth in some sectors of the economy was partly offset by large declines in government and manufacturing jobs and by a static situation in other key industries. Table 3 shows the total number of persons with some employment during the year in terms of the principal industries in which they worked.

Of particular interest is the 416,000 increase in the number of persons who were primarily self-employed, which accounted for two-fifths of the net gain in jobs in 1981. The number of such workers has been rising secularly since 1974, expanding by 2.6 million, or 30 percent. The relatively large gain posted in 1981 may also reflect the fact that many workers who lost their wage and salary jobs shifted to self-employment as an alternate means of support.

With population growth outpacing job growth in 1981, as it had in 1980, the proportion of the popula-

Table 3. Employment by industry of longest job and class of worker, 1980 and 1981
(Numbers in thousands)

Industry and class of worker	1980	1981	Change
Total	115,752	116,794	1,042
Wage and salary workers	106,342	106,956	614
Agriculture	1,923	2,054	131
Mining	1,054	1,206	152
Construction	6,114	6,107	-7
Manufacturing	24,539	23,788	-751
Transportation and public utilities	6,744	6,708	-36
Wholesale and retail trade	22,442	23,121	680
Finance and service industries	37,500	38,061	561
Government	6,206	5,911	-295
Self-employed	8,513	8,929	416
Unpaid family workers	897	909	12

Table 4. Persons with work experience by extent of employment, race, Hispanic origin, and sex, 1980 and 1981

[In percent]

Extent of employment	Total		Men		Women	
	1980	1981	1980	1981	1980	1981
Total						
Population (in thousands) ¹	169,452	171,666	80,193	81,231	89,259	90,436
Worked during the year: ²						
Number (in thousands)	115,752	116,794	64,260	64,769	51,492	52,025
Percent of the population	68.3	68.0	80.1	79.7	57.7	57.5
Persons who worked during the year	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ³	78.5	77.6	87.2	86.2	67.8	67.0
50 to 52 weeks	56.1	55.9	65.2	64.5	44.7	45.1
27 to 49 weeks	12.5	12.4	12.9	12.9	12.0	11.7
1 to 26 weeks	10.0	9.4	9.1	8.7	11.0	10.1
Part time ⁴	21.5	22.4	12.8	13.8	32.2	33.0
50 to 52 weeks	7.7	7.8	4.4	4.5	11.9	11.9
27 to 49 weeks	5.2	5.6	3.0	3.2	8.0	8.7
1 to 26 weeks	8.5	8.9	5.5	6.1	12.3	12.4
White						
Population (in thousands) ¹	147,371	149,136	70,154	71,018	77,217	78,118
Worked during the year: ²						
Number (in thousands)	101,904	102,825	57,122	57,615	44,782	45,210
Percent of the population	69.1	68.9	81.4	81.1	58.0	57.9
Persons who worked during the year	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ³	78.4	77.3	87.5	86.3	66.9	65.9
50 to 52 weeks	56.5	56.1	66.2	65.2	44.1	44.5
27 to 49 weeks	12.4	12.2	12.7	12.7	12.0	11.6
1 to 26 weeks	9.5	9.0	8.5	8.4	10.8	9.8
Part time ⁴	21.6	22.7	12.5	13.7	33.1	34.1
50 to 52 weeks	7.8	8.0	4.4	4.6	12.2	12.3
27 to 49 weeks	5.4	5.8	3.0	3.2	8.4	9.1
1 to 26 weeks	8.4	8.9	5.1	5.8	12.6	12.7
Black						
Population (in thousands) ¹	18,105	18,480	8,065	8,236	10,039	10,244
Worked during the year: ²						
Number (in thousands)	11,153	11,211	5,652	5,653	5,502	5,558
Percent of the population	61.6	60.7	70.1	68.6	54.8	54.3
Persons who worked during the year	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ³	78.9	79.6	84.5	85.0	73.1	74.1
50 to 52 weeks	52.7	54.0	56.4	58.8	49.0	49.2
27 to 49 weeks	13.1	13.3	14.3	14.5	11.9	12.0
1 to 26 weeks	13.1	12.3	13.9	11.8	12.2	12.9
Part time ⁴	21.1	20.4	15.5	15.0	26.9	25.9
50 to 52 weeks	6.9	6.3	3.8	3.5	10.0	9.0
27 to 49 weeks	4.3	4.5	2.8	3.1	5.9	5.8
1 to 26 weeks	9.9	9.7	8.9	8.3	11.0	11.0
Hispanic origin						
Population (in thousands) ¹	8,862	9,227	4,255	4,393	4,607	4,834
Worked during the year: ²						
Number (in thousands)	5,914	6,125	3,484	3,605	2,430	2,520
Percent of the population	66.7	66.4	81.9	82.1	52.7	52.1
Persons who worked during the year	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ³	82.4	81.9	88.3	87.6	73.9	73.8
50 to 52 weeks	53.1	54.6	61.1	61.4	41.6	45.0
27 to 49 weeks	15.2	14.8	15.7	14.9	14.4	14.7
1 to 26 weeks	14.1	12.4	11.5	11.3	17.8	14.1
Part time ⁴	17.6	18.1	11.7	12.4	26.1	26.2
50 to 52 weeks	5.9	6.1	4.0	4.1	8.6	9.0
27 to 49 weeks	4.2	4.0	2.4	3.0	6.7	5.5
1 to 26 weeks	7.6	8.0	5.4	5.4	10.8	11.7

¹ Population as of the survey date.

² Weeks worked include paid vacation and sick leave.

³ Usually worked 35 hours or more per week.

⁴ Usually worked 1 to 34 hours per week.

⁵ Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

tion with some employment edged down further, to 68 percent. (See table 4.) For men, the proportion who worked continued a 15-year decline and, at 79.7 percent, reached its lowest level since 1948. For women, the proportion who worked at any time during the year was essentially unchanged and remained near the high of 58 percent, reached in 1979.⁸

The proportion of blacks who worked during 1981 also receded to a new low of 60.7 percent. For black

men, the proportion dropped to 69 percent, 4 percentage points lower than in 1978. The proportion of whites and Hispanics with some employment during the year remained largely unchanged at 69 and 66 percent.

Another important aspect of the work experience situation is the number of weeks that persons worked during the year. In 1981, the proportion of workers who worked all year long at full-time jobs was 56 percent, largely unchanged from the previous year. The percent-

age of women with full-time year-round jobs, which has been increasing steadily over the last 20 years, reached 45 percent in 1981, another high. For men, however, the proportion employed full time year round, 65 percent in 1981, edged down for the fourth straight year; the low of 64 percent was reached in 1975.

The proportion of black women who worked all year at full-time jobs in 1981—49 percent—was higher than for either white or Hispanic women. However, the proportion of Hispanic women employed full time, year round did increase in 1981, and at 45 percent, was equal to that of white women. The rate for Hispanic women has increased steadily since these data were first collected in 1975.

Another way to look at employment trends is to look at hours usually worked over the course of the year, that is, whether those with jobs were employed full time or part time. In 1981, the number who usually worked full time (35 hours or more a week) edged down by 250,000, while the number who usually worked part time increased significantly, by 1.3 million. Because of these shifts, the proportion of the work force usually employed part time, 22 percent in 1981, was at its highest level since 1950. The proportion tends to increase during recessions as fewer persons are able to find full-time jobs.

Involuntary part-time work

Whether those working part time do so because of adverse economic conditions, such as slack work or material shortages, or whether they do so entirely by personal choice is an important indication of the economy's health. Largely because of the recession, the number of persons who worked part time due to labor market related reasons (or involuntarily) increased by 1.6 million in 1981 and totaled 14.6 million. This was the highest level since 1975.⁹

Close to 10 million had seen their hours cut because of slack work; the remaining 4.8 million worked part time because they had not been able to find full-time jobs.

Involuntary part-timers are also vulnerable to other labor market problems. The data for 1981 reveal that of the 14.6 million such persons, nearly one-half also experienced some periods of unemployment during the year:

	<i>Involuntary part-time work only</i>	<i>Involuntary part-time work and unemployment</i>	<i>Unemployment only</i>
Number of persons (in thousands) . . .	8,166	6,461	16,921
Median weeks worked	52	32	28
Median family income	\$19,622	\$15,600	\$18,516
Percent below poverty level	13.2	21.2	18.3

As shown, the family economic situation of workers experiencing involuntary part-time employment and unemployment was actually worse than that of workers experiencing only unemployment or involuntary part-time work. Workers with both some unemployment and involuntary part-time work reported much lower family income, the median being \$15,600, and had a much higher incidence of poverty—21.2 percent. With a median of only 32 weeks of work, the annual earnings of these workers, many of them householders,¹⁰ were relatively low.

Persons with unemployment

The 23.4 million persons who encountered some unemployment in 1981 accounted for 19.5 percent of all persons with labor force activity during the year. (See table 5.) In 1980, this proportion was 18.1 percent and in 1975, a record 20.2 percent.¹¹

Among men, the proportion was 20.0 percent, the same as in 1975. Among women, the proportion was

Table 5. Selected characteristics of persons who were unemployed during the year, 1980 and 1981

[Numbers in thousands]

Characteristic	1980			1981		
	Number of persons	Percent of labor force	Median weeks unemployed	Number of persons	Percent of labor force	Median weeks unemployed
Sex, race, and Hispanic origin						
Total	21,410	18.1	13	23,382	19.5	13
Men	12,072	18.5	13	13,175	20.0	14
Women	9,338	17.6	11	10,207	19.0	11
White	17,506	16.9	12	19,140	18.3	13
Men	10,005	17.3	13	10,963	18.8	13
Women	7,501	16.4	10	8,177	17.7	11
Black	3,352	28.0	14	3,703	30.5	15
Men	1,755	29.4	17	1,884	31.2	20
Women	1,596	26.6	13	1,819	29.7	13
Hispanic origin	1,396	23.0	13	1,491	23.7	13
Men	822	23.2	14	891	24.2	16
Women	574	22.7	12	600	22.9	12
Occupation¹						
Professional and technical workers	1,458	8.2	10	1,596	8.7	12
Managers and administrators, except farm	867	7.0	12	935	7.6	12
Salesworkers	827	11.4	10	1,020	13.5	11
Clerical workers	2,907	13.4	11	3,110	14.5	11
Craft and kindred workers	2,959	20.6	13	3,244	22.6	13
Operatives, except transport	3,520	28.6	13	3,758	30.8	12
Transport equipment operatives	894	22.4	13	952	24.1	13
Nonfarm laborers	1,821	30.8	14	1,903	31.5	17
Private household workers	162	11.5	14	221	16.0	14
Other service workers	2,987	19.1	13	3,327	20.7	13
Farmers and farm managers	34	(²)	(²)	24	(²)	(²)
Farm laborers	376	22.1	16	428	24.2	17
Family status³						
Husbands	5,397	13.3	13	5,735	14.1	13
Wives	4,226	14.6	11	4,581	15.6	12
Women who maintain families	1,406	22.3	12	1,510	23.4	12
Men who maintain families	315	20.3	14	331	21.1	13

¹ Only persons who worked during the year are asked to report their occupation; therefore, the percent of the labor force with unemployment represents the percent of workers with unemployment.

² Percentages and medians not shown where base is less than 75,000.

³ Not all classifications shown.

19.0 percent, compared with the 1975 peak of 20.5 percent. Men were not only more likely to become unemployed but generally remained unemployed longer than women.

For blacks, the proportion experiencing some unemployment in 1981—30.5 percent—was up from the 1980 level (28.0 percent) and even higher than the 1975 peak (29.5 percent). By comparison, the proportion of whites with unemployment, 18.3 percent in 1981, was higher than in 1980 but still lower than in 1975. For Hispanics, the proportion remained largely unchanged over the 1980–81 period at 24 percent.

While the great majority of the 23.4 million persons with some unemployment in 1981 managed to work during some or most of the year, about 2.9 million were completely unsuccessful in their job search. The number of such persons was about 270,000 higher than in 1980.

About 2.1 million of these unsuccessful job-seekers spent only part of the year looking for work and the balance outside the labor force—keeping house, going to school, drawing retirement, and so forth. However, when asked the *main* reason they had not worked in 1981, 1.7 million of all unemployed workers cited the lack of job opportunities.

Those who searched for jobs but did not work at all were predominantly women (59 percent), youths (42 percent), and blacks (33 percent). But these percentages have varied in recent years, reflecting the changes in the general employment climate. In 1979, a much healthier year in terms of demand for labor, the total number of such workers was much smaller and its composition was dominated by women, whites, and youths:

	1979	1980	1981
Number (in thousands)	1,990	2,597	2,863
Percent	100	100	100
Men	34	39	41
Women	66	61	59

Whites	68	66	64
Blacks	30	32	33
Others	2	2	3
16 through 24 years . . .	47	47	42
25 years and over	53	53	58

The 2.9 million persons who searched for a job but never held one during the year can be divided into two groups, about equal in size, in terms of certain characteristics. One group of about 1.4 million consisted of persons who looked for work for a relatively long period and who were mainly family householders and persons responsible for their own support. The other group consisted of persons who looked for work for a much shorter period and who probably did not carry the main burden of family support:

	<i>Family householders and persons not living in families</i>	<i>Family members other than householders</i>
Job searchers with no employment (in thousands)	1,408	1,455
Median weeks of unemployment	22	10
Median family income	\$3,242	\$19,085
Percent below poverty level	76	20

What is even more strikingly different between the two groups is that the one composed mostly of householders had a very low median family income (\$3,242) and a very high incidence of poverty (76 percent). In contrast, the other group, made up mostly of young family members, generally the sons and daughters of the householder, had a much higher family income (\$19,085) and a much lower incidence of poverty (20 percent). □

— FOOTNOTES —

¹ The data for this report are based on responses to special "work experience" questions included in the March 1982 Current Population Survey, conducted for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the Bureau of the Census. The questions refer to the civilian work experience of persons during the entire preceding year. Persons who reached age 16 during January, February, or March 1982 are included. However, the work experience of persons in the civilian labor force during 1981 but not in the civilian noninstitutional population in March 1982 is not included; similarly, data on persons who died in 1981 or in 1982, before the survey date, are not reflected.

² For a review of the employment and unemployment situation in 1981 based on data collected during the year, see Robert W. Bednarzik, Marillyn A. Hewson, and Michael A. Urquhart, "The employment situation in 1981: new recession takes its toll," *Monthly Labor Review*, March 1982, pp. 3–14.

³ Poverty statistics presented in this report are based on a definition developed by the Social Security Administration in 1964 and revised

by a Federal Interagency Committee in 1969. These indexes are based on the Department of Agriculture's Economy Food Plan and reflect the different consumption requirements of families based on their size, composition, and age of the family head. In 1981, the poverty level for a family of four was \$9,287.

Poverty thresholds are updated each year to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index. The poverty definition was changed slightly in 1981. For more information on the income and poverty population in 1981 and the change in the definition of poverty, see *Money Income and Poverty Status of Families and Persons in the United States: 1981* (Advance Data From the March 1982 Current Population Survey), Series P-60, No. 134 (Bureau of the Census, 1982).

⁴ Estimates of median weekly earnings are derived by dividing annual earnings by the number of weeks worked during the year and then computing the median.

⁵ Unpublished data, March 1982 work experience and income supplement.

⁶ The Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) is used to convert current dollars to constant dollars. This index rose by 10.2 percent from 1980 to 1981.

⁷ For a discussion of the year-to-year changes in family income and the factors which bring them about, see Greg J. Duncan, "Who Gets Ahead? And Who Gets Left Behind?" *American Demographics*, July/August 1982, pp. 38-41.

⁸ Historical work experience data are published in *Labor Force Statistics Derived from the Current Population Survey: A Databook, Volume I*, Bulletin 2096 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1982).

⁹ The total number of persons with some involuntary part-time work over the course of the year is three times greater than the annual average of the monthly figure. For a detailed study of involuntary part-time work based on the March CPS, see Sylvia Lazos Terry, "Involuntary part-time work: new information from the CPS," *Monthly Labor Review*, February 1981, pp. 70-74.

¹⁰ Unpublished data, March 1982 work experience and income supplement. As defined in the March CPS, the householder is the first adult listed on the questionnaire. The instructions call for listing first the person (or one of the persons) in whose name the home is owned

or rented. If the house is owned jointly by a married couple, either the husband or the wife may be listed first, thereby becoming the reference person, or householder, to whom the relationship of the other household members is recorded. One person in each household is designated as the householder. In March 1982, 96 percent of all husbands were designated as householders, and 100 percent of all men and women who maintain families were householders.

¹¹ Many researchers have made comparisons of the unemployment figures derived from the derived work experience survey and those from the monthly surveys. This is done by converting the work experience unemployment figures to a total number of weeks of unemployment. Results show that the work experience unemployment number tends to understate the comparable figure based on the annual average of the monthly figure. For further discussion, see Richard Morgenstern and Nancy Barrett, "The Retrospective Bias in Unemployment Reporting by Sex, Race and Age," *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, June 1974, pp. 355-57; Wayne Vroman, "Measuring Annual Unemployment," Working Paper 1280-01 (Washington, The Urban Institute, 1979); and Francis W. Horvath, "Forgotten unemployment: recall bias in retrospective data," *Monthly Labor Review*, March 1982, pp. 40-43.

"Never married" women on the rise

Irrespective of their household and family-membership status, the proportion of women remaining single is experiencing a substantial upswing. . . . In 1980, the proportion of women 20 to 24 years of age who had never married (50.2 percent) was almost twice the equivalent for 1960 (28.4 percent), with a similar evolution over time in the 25-to-29-years-of-age category. It should be pointed out that the increase in the 20-to-24-year-old sector is particularly significant since this is the age when most women have traditionally married. Moreover, in conjunction with the increased prevalence of nonmarriage in the subsequent age group (25 to 29 years), it may suggest the general acceptance by young women for either postponing marriage or remaining single throughout their lives.

It is interesting to note the reverse pattern as we focus on the older age groups. In 1960, there was a far higher proportion of women, particularly in those age categories above 45 years, who had never married than holds true currently (1980). Is this the residual of trends earlier in this century in Suffragettism? Is it related in part, particularly among the middle-aged members of this group, to the depression years? Or does it perhaps indicate that in the future we will see a shift toward later marriage? And if it is the last, what impact will that have on population growth?

—GEORGE STERNLIEB, JAMES W. HUGHES,
and CONNIE O. HUGHES, *Demographic Trends and
Economic Reality: Planning and Markets in the '80s*
(New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers, The State University
of New Jersey, Center for Urban Policy Research,
1982), p. 29.
