Contingent work: results from the second survey

Although the incidence of contingent work declined between 1995 and 1997, it continues to be more common among women, youth, students, part-time workers, and in the construction and services industries; still, contingent workers are found in both high- and low-skilled occupations

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Both the number and proportion of workers with contingent jobs—that is, jobs that are structured to be short term or temporary—fell between 1995 and 1997. In the early 1990s, the Bureau of Labor Statistics developed a survey to estimate the number of contingent workers, conducting its first survey on the topic in February 1995. When the results of that first survey were published, three alternative measures of contingent work were introduced.[1] Under the broadest of the three definitions, there were 5.6 million contingent workers in 1997, and the contingency rate, which represents the proportion of the employed population holding contingent jobs, was 4.4 percent.[2] By comparison, in 1995, 6.0 million workers held contingent jobs, or 4.9 percent of total employment. The decline in the number and proportion of workers with temporary jobs coincided with a period of low unemployment and strong job growth.[3]

This article examines data on contingent work arrangements from the second special supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) on the topic, conducted in February 1997.[4] In the supplements, contingent workers are defined as individuals who do not perceive themselves as having an explicit or implicit contract for ongoing employment. The analysis presented here focuses on the most broadly defined group of contingent workers (estimate 3), using noncontingent workers—those who are not classified as contingent even under the broadest definition—as a point of comparison.[5]

Past analyses have shown that the characteristics of contingent and noncontingent workers differ markedly. Contingent work arrangements are more common among certain demographic groups, for example, and in certain occupations and industries. The two groups differ by other characteristics as well, including employee tenure and work schedules. Disentangling the impact of these differences on such things as earnings or health insurance coverage can be very complex. The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of the characteristics of contingent workers in 1997.

Demographics

The number of contingent workers and the contingency rate declined over the period between the two surveys for most of the major demographic groups. (See tables 1 and 2.) Among the age groups, young workers continued to be the most likely to work in contingent jobs—in 1997, the contingency rate for teens (16 to 19 years) was 11.5 percent, and the rate for 20- to 24-year-olds was 8.4 percent. In addition, both surveys showed that young contingent workers were more likely to be students than were their noncontingent counterparts. As the tabulation below shows, among 16- to 24-year-olds, 64 percent of contingent workers were enrolled in school in 1997, compared with 40 percent of noncontingent workers.

	Contingent workers (estimate 3)	Noncontingent workers
Total, 16 to 24 years (In thousands)	1,690	16,299
Percent	100.0	100.0
Enrolled	63.7	40.0
High school	19.5	16.0
College	44.3	24.0
Full time	38.6	17.2
Part time	5.6	6.8
Not enrolled	36.3	60.0

The large proportion of younger contingent

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Table 1. Employed contingent and noncontingent workers by age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, and educational attainment, February 1995 and February 1997

[Percent distribution]

Characteristic	Contingent workers[1]						Noncontingent workers[2]	
	Estimate 1		Estimate 2		Estimate 3			
	1995	1997	1995	1997	1995	1997	1995	1997
Age and sex								
Total, 16 years and older (thousands)	2,739	2,385	3,422	3,096	6,034	5,574	117,174	121,168
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
16 to 19 years	16.6	19.2	15.2	16.0	10.7	12.4	4.3	4.4
20 to 24 years	25.0	23.9	22.2	21.0	19.8	17.9	9.6	9.0
25 to 34 years	26.0	23.7	27.5	24.4	26.3	24.8	26.1	25.0
35 to 44 years	18.5	17.5	19.8	20.6	21.0	20.9	28.0	28.2
45 to 54 years	8.2	8.3	9.5	10.8	12.6	13.6	19.8	21.0
55 to 64 years	3.8	5.3	3.7	5.4	5.9	7.3	9.4	9.6
65 years and older	1.8	2.1	2.1	1.9	3.7	3.1	2.8	2.9
Men	49.3	49.5	49.4	48.4	49.6	49.3	54.0	53.8
16 to 19 years	7.2	9.5	6.8	7.7	4.8	6.2	2.2	2.2
20 to 24 years	12.0	11.6	10.7	9.8	9.7	8.5	5.2	4.8
25 to 34 years	12.9	11.4	13.6	11.6	13.8	12.3	14.3	13.6
35 to 44 years	10.0	8.2	10.3	9.6	10.2	10.2	15.1	15.2
45 to 54 years	3.3	4.1	4.2	5.0	5.7	6.2	10.5	11.1
55 to 64 years	2.6	3.5	2.4	3.4	3.6	3.8	5.1	5.2
65 years and older	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.9	2.0	1.7	1.6
Women	50.7	50.5	50.6	51.6	50.4	50.7	46.0	46.2
16 to 19 years	9.5	9.8	8.4	8.2	5.9	6.2	2.1	2.2
20 to 24 years	13.0	12.3	11.5	11.1	10.1	9.4	4.4	4.3
25 to 34 years	13.1	12.2	13.9	12.8	12.5	12.5	11.8	11.4
35 to 44 years	8.5	9.3	9.5	11.0	10.8	10.6	12.9	13.0
45 to 54 years	4.9	4.3	5.3	5.7	6.9	7.4	9.3	9.6
55 to 64 years	1.2	1.8	1.3	2.0	2.3	3.5	4.3	4.4
65 years and older	.6	.8	.8	.7	1.8	1.1	1.2	1.2
Race and Hispanic origin								
White	80.0	79.5	80.1	80.6	80.9	81.9	85.6	85.3
Black	13.9	13.3	13.6	13.0	13.3	11.1	10.5	10.6
Hispanic origin	13.6	12.2	12.9	12.8	11.3	12.4	8.3	9.4
Educational attainment								
Total, 25 to 64 years (thousands)	1,547	1,308	2,070	1,893	3,968	3,710	97,633	101,397
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than a high school diploma	14.0	10.0	13.6	11.0	12.0	10.4	9.6	9.6
High school graduates, no college	27.9	27.9	27.5	28.5	27.3	26.8	32.4	32.8
Some college, no degree	22.8	21.9	23.3	20.2	19.6	18.8	19.9	18.9
Associate degree	8.4	10.7	8.0	10.1	7.9	8.2	9.1	9.1
College graduates	27.0	29.4	27.7	30.1	33.2	35.8	28.9	29.5
Advanced degree	9.4	10.5	10.0	9.3	14.9	14.7	9.9	10.0

[1] Contingent workers are defined as individuals who do not perceive themselves as having an explicit or implicit contract with their employers for ongoing employment. Estimate 1 above is calculated using the narrowest definition of contingent work; estimate 3 uses the broadest definition. For the specific criteria used for each definition, see the appendix, pp. 34–35.

[2] Noncontingent workers are those who do not meet the criteria for any of the three definitions of contingent work.

NOTE: Data for the above race and Hispanic-origin groups will not sum to totals because data for the "other races" group are not presented and Hispanics are included in both the white and black population groups. Detail for other characteristics may not sum to totals due to rounding.

workers enrolled in school suggests that the lack of a long-term commitment associated with temporary work is compatible with school attendance. For example, a job structured to last only until the end of the school year might be mutually satisfactory for both employer and employee. Interestingly, much of the high rate of contingency among employed 20- to 24-year-old college students results from their employment in jobs that almost by definition are contingent. Thirteen percent of this group work in education (that is, at their schools), a higher percentage than any other industry except eating and

drinking places.

Women continued to be somewhat more likely than men to hold contingent jobs, although the rates for both groups fell over the 1995–97 period. Employment among women tends to be concentrated in many of the occupations and industries in which contingent work arrangements are most common. Women also have a greater tendency to work part time, and part-time workers are more likely to be contingent than full-time workers.

Similar to women, blacks and Hispanics in 1997 continued to have higher contingency rates than whites, although the rates for each of the three groups declined between the two surveys. The rates for whites (4.2 percent in 1997) and Hispanics (5.7 percent in 1997) fell slightly over the period, while the rate for blacks fell sharply, from 6.1 percent in 1995 to 4.6 percent in 1997.

Industry and occupation

Industry. As in the prior survey, the likelihood of holding a contingent job was greatest for workers in the construction and services industries. In 1997, contingency rates for construction and services were 7.2 percent and 6.7 percent, respectively.[6] (See table 3.) Specific industries within services that had relatively

high rates of contingency included personnel supply services (44.4 percent), private household services (15.7 percent), educational services (11.4 percent), entertainment and recreation services (6.8 percent), and social services (6.2 percent).

Major industry groups with below-average contingency rates (less than 3.0 percent) included manufacturing; transportation and public utilities; wholesale and retail trade; and finance, insurance, and real estate.

Occupation. As in 1995, contingent workers in the 1997 survey were found in both low- and high-skilled occupations. For example, contingency rates were highest for those in professional specialty (6.0 percent), administrative support (6.0 percent), and farming occupations (5.9 percent). The fact that the probability of holding a contingent job was relatively high among occupations with such varying skill levels tends to refute the stereotype that contingent workers are primarily low-skilled.

Within the professional specialty category, the contingency rate was especially high for postsecondary teachers—28.4 percent. The rate for elementary and secondary school teachers, by contrast, although still above average, was just 6.2 per-

Table 2. Contingency rates by age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, and educational attainment, February1995 and February 1997

[Percent]

Characteristic	Contingency rates[1]					
	Estimate 1		Estimate 2		Estimate 3	
	1995	1997	1995	1997	1995	1997
Age and sex						
Total, 16 years and older	2.2	1.9	2.8	2.4	4.9	4.4
16 to 19 years	8.1	7.6	9.2	8.2	11.4	11.5
20 to 24 years	5.5	4.8	6.1	5.4	9.6	8.4
25 to 34 years	2.2	1.8	2.9	2.4	4.9	4.4
35 to 44 years	1.5	1.2	2.0	1.8	3.7	3.3
45 to 54 years	.9	.8	1.4	1.3	3.2	2.9
55 to 64 years	.9	1.1	1.1	1.4	3.1	3.4
65 years and older	1.4	1.3	2.1	1.6	6.3	4.8
Men	2.0	1.7	2.5	2.2	4.5	4.0
Women	2.4	2.0	3.0	2.7	5.3	4.8
Race and Hispanic origin						
White	2.1	1.8	2.6	2.3	4.6	4.2
Black	2.9	2.4	3.5	3.0	6.1	4.6
Hispanic origin	3.6	2.4	4.2	3.3	6.5	5.7
Educational attainment						
Total, 25 to 64 years	1.5	1.2	2.0	1.8	3.9	3.5
Less than a high school diploma	2.2	1.3	2.9	2.1	4.8	3.8
High school graduates, no college	1.3	1.1	1.7	1.6	3.3	2.9
Some college, no degree	1.7	1.4	2.4	1.9	3.8	3.5
Associate degree	1.4	1.5	1.8	2.0	3.4	3.2
College graduates	1.4	1.2	1.9	1.8	4.5	4.3
Advanced degree	1.4	1.3	2.0	1.6	5.8	5.1

[1] Contingency rates are calculated by dividing the number of contingent workers in a specified worker group by the total number of employed persons in the same worker group. Estimate 1 above is calculated using the narrowest definition of contingent work; estimate 3 uses the broadest definition. For the specific criteria used for each definition, see the appendix, pp. 34–35.

Table 3. Contingency rates by occupation and industry, February 1995 and February 1997

[Percent]

Occupation and industry	Contingency rates[1]					
	Estimate 1		Estimate 2		Estimate 3	
	1995	1997	1995	1997	1995	1997
Occupation						
Total, 16 years and older	2.2	1.9	2.8	2.4	4.9	4.4
Managerial and professional specialty	1.7	1.4	2.1	1.7	4.8	4.2
Executive, administrative, and managerial	8	.7	1.1	1.0	2.7	2.2
Professional specialty	2.6	2.0	3.1	2.4	6.8	6.0
Technical, sales, and administrative support	2.1	2.1	2.5	2.6	4.4	4.3
Technicians and related support	1.3	1.8	1.9	2.7	4.2	4.7
Sales occupations	1.2	1.1	1.6	1.5	2.6	2.1
Administrative support, including clerical	3.1	3.0	3.4	3.5	5.8	6.0
Service occupations	3.0	2.3	4.1	3.2	5.8	5.0
Precision, production, craft, and repair	2.3	1.8	2.9	2.3	4.6	4.1
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	2.7	2.2	3.1	3.0	5.4	4.4
Farming, forestry, and fishing	2.2	2.0	3.2	3.0	5.6	5.9
Industry						
Total, 16 years and older	2.2	1.9	2.8	2.4	4.9	4.4
Agriculture	2.4	1.6	3.3	2.6	5.0	5.2
Mining	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.8	2.6	4.0
Construction	4.5	3.7	5.7	4.7	8.4	7.2
Manufacturing	1.3	.9	1.6	1.1	3.1	2.1
Transportation and public utilities	1.2	.7	1.3	1.2	2.9	2.6
Wholesale trade	.7	.8	1.0	1.3	2.3	2.1
Retail trade	1.6	1.5	2.0	1.7	3.0	2.6
Finance, insurance, and real estate	.7	1.1	.8	1.3	2.0	2.1
Services	3.4	2.8	4.3	3.7	7.5	6.7
Public administration	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	3.6	4.2

[1] Contingency rates are calculated by dividing the number of contingent workers in a specified worker group by the total number of employed persons in the same worker group. Estimate 1 above is calculated using the narrowest definition of contingent work; estimate 3 uses the broadest definition. For the specific criteria used for each definition, see the appendix, pp. 34–35.

cent. The high rate among college and university instructors most likely reflects the increasingly common practice within these institutions of employing untenured faculty, most of whom work under short-term contracts.[7] It also may help explain the relatively high contingency rate (5.1 percent) among workers with advanced degrees—more than three-fifths of these workers were in professional specialty occupations, which have above-average rates of contingency. Many workers with advanced degrees are employed by colleges and universities.

Other professional specialty occupations with relatively high contingency rates include biological and life scientists (19.8 percent), musicians and composers (12.6 percent), physicians (9.9 percent), actors and directors (9.9 percent). Occupations within the administrative support category having high contingency rates include library clerks (23.9 percent), file clerks (16.1 percent), general office clerks (14.4 percent), data entry keyers (14.4 percent), teachers' aides (11.8 percent), and interviewers (9.9 percent), and receptionists (8.6 percent.)

Contingent work and mothers

Some researchers have expressed concern about the negative impact that contingent work has on families.[8] Table 4 shows contingency rates for women by marital status and presence of children. Interestingly, both married and unmarried women with children under the age of 18 had *below-average* contingency rates—3.9 percent each, compared with 4.4 percent for all workers. This is related, in part, to the fact that most women with children under 18 are beyond the very young age groups in which contingent work is most common. When limited to women with children under 6 years, the contingency rate was 4.6 percent, slightly higher than the rate for all workers.

Hours of work

Much like in the first survey, the 1997 data show that part-time workers—those *usually* working fewer than 35 hours per week—were more likely than full-time workers to hold contingent jobs. About 10 percent of part-timers were classified

as contingent workers in 1997, compared with just 3 percent of those who usually work full time. Viewed another way, among those holding contingent jobs in 1997, 43 percent usually worked fewer than 35 hours per week; among noncontingent workers, by contrast, only 18 percent usually worked part time. (See table 5).

As shown in the following tabulation, contingency rates were higher for part-time workers in each of the major industry groups.

	Full-time workers	Part-time workers
Total	3.1	9.9
Agriculture	4.3	8.3
Mining	2.5	–
Construction	6.9	9.8
Manufacturing	1.9	6.7
Transportation and public utilities	2.1	7.3
Wholesale trade	1.4	8.8
Retail trade	1.5	4.5
Finance, insurance and real estate	1.8	4.4
Services	4.3	14.4
Public administration	3.2	18.1

Data not available where base employment is less than 75,000.

Moreover, the rates for part-time workers were higher than the overall average of 4.4 percent in all but one industry—finance, insurance, and real estate. Among full-time workers, by contrast, the contingency rate was above average in just one industry, construction, in which the rate was 6.9 percent. This suggests that, while contingency may be closely related to certain types of work (construction and college teaching, for example), it also is an attribute of part-time jobs, regardless of the industry.

Among part-time workers, contingent and noncontingent workers were about equally likely to prefer working part time—that is, they worked part time voluntarily and not for economic reasons; four-fifths of workers in each group preferred working part time. Of those who did work part time for economic reasons, the vast majority (91 percent) held jobs that were not structured to be temporary. Contingent workers also tend to work slightly fewer hours per week than their noncontingent counterparts. Among persons who usually worked full time, average weekly hours were 40.2 for contingent workers, compared with 42.6 for noncontingent workers. For those who usually worked part time, contingent workers averaged 17.3 hours per week, compared with 20.7 hours per week for noncontingent workers.

Multiple jobholding

Contingent workers were more likely than noncontingent workers to hold more than one job. (For multiple jobholding respondents in the survey, the questions about contingency refer to their main jobs, that is, the job at which they worked the most hours during the reference week.) The multiple jobholding rate—the proportion of workers with more than one job—was 8.9 percent for contingent workers, compared with 6.7 percent for noncontingent workers. (See table 5.) One possible explanation for the higher multiple jobholding rate among contingent workers is that these workers are much more likely to work part time, and part-time workers are more likely than full-time workers to hold two or more jobs. Also, because they both work fewer hours and earn less, regardless of their work schedules, contingent workers probably are more likely to require an additional job to supplement their income.

Preferences and reasons

Workers holding contingent jobs were asked if they preferred such employment to noncontingent work, as well as the reason they were employed in a contingent job. Nearly three-fifths of contingent workers said they would rather hold a noncontingent job.[9] (See table 6.) Young contingent workers (aged 16 to 24) were much more likely than their older counterparts to be satisfied with their current arrangement—nearly half of the younger workers were happy with their contingent jobs, compared with about a third of those aged 25 and older. As discussed earlier, the majority of younger contingent work-

Table 4. Contingency rates for women by marital status and presence and age of children, February 1997

[Percent]

Characteristic	Contingency rates[1]		
	Estimate 1	Estimate 2	Estimate 3
Total			
Wives and women who maintain families	1.3	2.0	3.7
With children under 18 years	1.5	2.3	3.9
With children under 6 years	1.9	3.3	4.6
With children 6 to 17 years	1.3	1.6	3.5
With no children under 18 years .	1.0	1.6	3.4
Married, spouse present			
Wives	1.2	1.9	3.7
With children under 18 years	1.3	2.1	3.9
With children under 6 years	1.6	3.1	4.5
With children 6 to 17 years	1.1	1.4	3.5
With no children under 18 years .	0.9	1.6	3.5
Other marital status			
Women who maintain families	1.8	2.5	3.6
With children under 18 years	2.2	2.9	3.9
With children under 6 years	3.0	4.2	4.9
With children 6 to 17 years	1.9	2.1	3.4
With no children under 18 years .	1.0	1.7	3.1

[1] Contingency rates are calculated by dividing the number of contingent workers in a specified worker group by the total number of employed persons in the same worker group. Estimate 1 above is calculated using the narrowest definition of contingent work; estimate 3 uses the broadest definition. For the specific criteria used for each definition, see the appendix, pp. 34–35.

Table 5. Employed contingent and noncontingent workers by full- and part-time status, reason for part-time work, usual hours at work on primary job, and multiple job holding, February 1997

Characteristic	Contingent workers[1]			Noncontingent workers[2]
	Estimate 1	Estimate 2	Estimate 3	
Full- or part-time status[3]				
Total employed, 16 years and older (thousands)	2,385	3,096	5,574	121,168
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full-time workers	53.5	54.8	57.5	82.2
Part-time workers	46.6	45.2	42.5	17.8
At work part time for economic reasons	9.9	10.0	7.6	3.3
At work part time for noneconomic reasons	36.9	34.8	33.9	14.1
Hours of work				
Average hours, total at work	28.6	29.0	30.2	38.6
Average hours, usually work full time	39.4	39.3	40.2	42.6
Average hours, usually work part time	16.7	16.9	17.3	20.7
Multiple jobholding				
Total, 16 years and older (thousands)	202	243	497	8,077
Percent[4]	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Primary job full time, secondary job part time	49.5	51.0	49.3	55.9
Primary and secondary job both part time	37.1	36.6	35.4	21.4
Hours vary on primary or secondary jobs	11.9	10.7	13.7	19.8
Proportion of full-time workers who combined part-time jobs	2.2	2.2	2.4	1.0
Multiple jobholding rate[5]	8.4	7.8	8.9	6.7

[1] Contingent workers are defined as individuals who do not perceive themselves as having an explicit or implicit contract with their employers for ongoing employment. Estimate 1 above is calculated using the narrowest definition of contingent work; estimate 3 uses the broadest definition. For the specific criteria used for each definition, see the appendix, pp. 34–35.

[2] Noncontingent workers are those who do not meet the criteria for any of the three definitions of contingent work.

[3] Part-time is defined as 1 to 34 hours per week; full time is 35 hours or more. The classification of full- and part-time workers is based on the number of hours usually worked. The sum of the at-work part time categories would not equal the estimate for part-time workers as the latter includes those who had a job but were not at work in the reference week. Persons who are at work part time for an economic or noneconomic reason are limited to those who usually work part time.

[4] A small number of individuals who worked full time on both their primary and secondary jobs or worked part time on their primary jobs and full time on their secondary jobs are not shown separately.

[5] Multiple jobholding rates are calculated by dividing the number of multiple jobholders in a specified worker group by total employment for the same worker group.

NOTE: Some of the detail above may not sum to totals due to rounding.

ers (64 percent) are enrolled in school, and students often prefer alternative work arrangements to accommodate their schedules.

Nearly half of contingent workers gave personal reasons for accepting their contingent jobs, although among those who said they would rather have a noncontingent job, only 30 percent cited personal reasons. (See table 7.) Also, 46 percent of those who preferred noncontingent employment gave an economic reason for being in their current arrangement, compared with 6 percent of those who preferred contingent work.[10]

Contingent workers in 1997 were more likely to give a personal reason for holding a contingent job than were their counterparts in 1995. The proportion reporting a personal reason for holding a contingent job was 49 percent in 1997, compared with 44 percent in 1995. The increase between the two surveys suggests that contingent work was more of a voluntary choice in the most recent survey, coinciding with a stronger overall labor market.

About a fifth of contingent workers reported attending school or training as the reason for being in their current ar-rangement. Other reasons suggest contingent work enabled some to participate in the labor market despite their involvement in activities that otherwise may have precluded them from employment. Specifically, 15 percent of contingent workers gave either flexibility of schedule or family obligations as a reason for being in a contingent arrangement. The primary economic reason given was that it was the only type of work they could find; 18 percent of contingent workers gave such a reason.

Compensation

Earnings. As in the prior survey, contingent workers in 1997 earned less per week than noncontingent workers. Median earnings were $266 per week for contingent workers, compared with $444 per week for their noncontingent counterparts. The disparity reflects the many differences between the two groups in terms of work schedules, demographics, occupational and industry concentration, and employer tenure. As mentioned previously, for example, contingent workers are more likely to hold part-time jobs than are noncontingent workers.

Still, even among those who worked full time, median weekly earnings were just $417, or roughly 80 percent of the median for full-time noncontingent workers. Similarly, earnings for part-time contingent workers were $111 per week, or 76 percent of what those who held permanent jobs earned. The ratios were roughly similar for all of the major worker groups—men, women, whites, blacks, and Hispanics. (See table 8.)

As mentioned earlier, contingent workers are employed in both high- and low-skilled occupations. As a result, their earnings varied considerably by occupation. Among occupations that had above-average contingency rates, full-time contingent workers holding professional specialty jobs had the highest weekly earnings ($677), followed by administrative support, including clerical ($342); service occupations ($258);

Table 6.	Preferences of employed contingent workers for contingent and noncontingent arrangements by sex and age, February 1997		

[Percent distribution]

Characteristic	Contingent workers[1]		
	Estimate 1	Estimate 2	Estimate 3
Total			
Employed (thousands)	2,385	3,096	5,574
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Prefer noncontingent arrangement .	60.2	56.7	55.5
Prefer contingent arrangement	34.1	35.8	36.1
It depends	4.9	5.2	5.8
Preference not available	.9	2.3	2.5
Men, 25 years and older			
Employed (thousands)	679	954	1,926
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Prefer noncontingent arrangement .	69.8	63.8	60.9
Prefer contingent arrangement	24.2	28.5	29.3
It depends	4.9	5.1	6.7
Preference not available	1.2	2.6	3.1
Women, 25 years and older			
Employed (thousands)	677	999	1,958
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Prefer noncontingent arrangement .	70.2	59.7	58.5
Prefer contingent arrangement	25.4	31.9	33.4
It depends	4.0	5.2	5.2
Preference not available	.4	3.2	2.9
Both sexes, 16 to 24 years			
Employed (thousands)	1,029	1,143	1,690
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Prefer noncontingent arrangement .	47.3	48.1	46.0
Prefer contingent arrangement	46.4	45.4	47.1
It depends	5.4	5.3	5.4
Preference not available	1.0	1.2	1.5

[1] Contingent workers are defined as individuals who do not perceive themselves as having an explicit or implicit contract with their employers for ongoing employment. Estimate 1 above is calculated using the narrowest definition of contingent work; estimate 3 uses the broadest definition. For the specific criteria used for each definition, see the appendix, pp. 34–35.

NOTE: Some of the detail above may not sum to totals due to rounding.

Table 7.	Employed contingent workers by reason for contingency and preference for noncontingent work, February 1997		

[Percent distribution]

Reason	Contingent workers[1]		
	Estimate 1	Estimate 2	Estimate 3
Total			
Total, 16 years and older (thousands)	2,385	2,663	5,140
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Economic reasons	38.2	39.6	30.5
Only type of work could find	23.2	24.8	18.2
Hope job leads to permanent employment	8.1	8.0	6.7
Other economic reason	7.0	6.8	5.6
Personal reasons	48.7	47.3	48.5
Flexibility of schedule and only wanted to work a short period of time	11.2	12.6	11.7
Family or personal obligations and child-care problems	2.9	2.8	3.2
In school or training	21.6	19.7	19.2
Money is better	1.7	1.5	1.4
Other personal reason	11.2	10.7	13.0
Reason not available	13.1	13.1	20.9
Prefer noncontingent employment			
Total, 16 years and older (thousands)	1,436	1,755	3,096
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0
Economic reasons	57.9	55.2	45.8
Only type of work could find	36.1	35.6	28.3
Hope job leads to permanent employment	12.3	11.1	10.1
Other economic reason	9.5	8.5	7.5
Personal reasons	28.3	26.6	29.6
Flexibility of schedule and only wanted to work a short period of time	6.3	6.5	6.1
Family or personal obligations and child-care problems	2.5	2.5	2.2
In school or training	10.0	8.8	10.6
Money is better	1.8	1.5	1.3
Other personal reason	7.9	7.3	9.3
Reason not available	13.6	18.2	24.6

[1] Contingent workers are defined as individuals who do not perceive themselves as having an explicit or implicit contract with their employers for ongoing employment. Estimate 1 above is calculated using the narrowest definition of contingent work; estimate 3 uses the broadest definition. For the specific criteria used for each definition, see the appendix, pp. 34–35.

and farming, forestry, and fishing ($233). (See table 9.)

Health insurance. As in the first survey, contingent workers in 1997 were much less likely than noncontingent workers to have employer-provided health insurance coverage—slightly more than a third of those holding contingent jobs were offered health insurance coverage by their employer, in contrast to nearly three-fourths of those in noncontingent jobs.[11] (See table 10.) As with other measures discussed earlier, the low coverage rates can be partially explained by the make-up of the contingent workforce—its age, work schedules, industry and occupational concentrations.

Although workers with contingent jobs were less likely than those with noncontingent jobs to obtain health insurance from their employers, a relatively large share (about two-thirds) had coverage from some source. Contingent workers received coverage from a variety of sources, but access through another family member was the most prevalent source.

Relatively high proportions of both teenage contingent workers and those aged 65 years and older had health insurance from some source—nearly the same coverage rates as their noncontingent counterparts. Teenagers often are covered under their parents' plans, and persons in the older age group have almost universal coverage under medicare. Among

Table 8. Median weekly earnings of full- and part-time time contingent and noncontingent wage and salary workers by selected characteristics, February 1997

| Characteristic | Median weekly earnings | | | |
| | Full-time workers[1] | | Part-time workers[2] | |
	Con-tingent (Esti-mate 3)[3]	Noncon-tingent[4]	Con-tingent (Esti-mate 3}	Noncon-tingent
Age and sex				
Total, 16 years and older	$417	$510	$111	$146
16 to 19 years	246	238	67	97
20 to 24 years	300	329	90	131
25 years and older	475	549	170	175
25 to 34 years	421	486	186	184
35 to 44 years	518	578	166	188
45 to 54 years	490	612	191	199
55 to 64 years	502	572	151	171
65 years and older	(5)	447	121	123
Men, 16 years and older	486	578	111	129
Women, 16 years and older	353	449	110	153
Race and Hispanic origin				
White	426	523	110	145
Black	377	426	107	150
Hispanic origin	278	359	101	141
Educational attainment				
Less than a high school diploma	235	304	74	101
High school graduates, no college	382	427	134	154
Some college, no degree	399	494	93	142
Associate degree	498	519	148	222
College graduates	592	772	203	249

[1] Full-time workers are those who *usually* work 35 hours per week or more.
[2] Part-time workers are those who *usually* work 1 to 34 hours per week.
[3] Contingent workers are defined as individuals who do not perceive themselves as having an explicit or implicit contract with their employers for ongoing employment. Estimate 3 above is calculated using the broadest definition. For the specific criteria used for each definition, see the appendix, pp. 34–35.
[4] Noncontingent workers are those who do not meet the criteria for any of the three definitions of contingent work.
[5] Data not shown where base employment is less than 75,000.

Table 9. Median weekly earnings of full- and part-time time contingent and noncontingent wage and salary workers by occupation and industry, February 1997

| Occupation and industry | Median weekly earnings | | | |
| | Full-time workers[1] | | Part-time workers[2] | |
	Con-tingent (Esti-mate 3)[3]	Non-con-tingent[4]	Con-tingent (Esti-mate 3)	Non-con-tingent
Occupation				
Managerial and professional specialty	$627	$755	$165	$256
Executive, administrative, and managerial	557	733	126	234
Professional specialty	677	783	169	266
Technical, sales, and administrative support	357	459	107	145
Technicians and related support	529	578	154	300
Sales occupations	325	486	97	125
Administrative support, including clerical	342	419	107	160
Service occupations	258	312	73	126
Private household	241	212	57	91
Other services	263	314	78	129
Precision, production, craft, and repair	630	534	203	221
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	323	410	115	134
Farming, forestry, and fishing	233	310	87	115
Industry				
Agriculture	234	322	78	117
Mining	(5)	666	(5)	430
Construction	668	508	212	259
Manufacturing	391	529	174	156
Durable goods	408	575	152	168
Nondurable goods	314	490	199	146
Transportation and public utilities	614	635	140	196
Wholesale trade	(5)	513	(5)	140
Retail trade	273	351	90	124
Finance, insurance, and real estate	515	545	119	165
Services	397	513	112	161
Private household	267	224	67	87
Other services	401	516	114	164
Professional services	473	554	111	176
Public administration	462	619	114	181

[1] Full-time workers are those who *usually* work 35 hours per week or more.
[2] Part-time workers are those who *usually* work 1 to 34 hours per week.
[3] Contingent workers are defined as individuals who do not perceive themselves as having an explicit or implicit contract with their employers for ongoing employment. Estimate 3 above is calculated using the broadest definition. For the specific criteria used for each definition, see the appendix, pp.34–35.
[4] Noncontingent workers are those who do not meet the criteria for any of the three definitions of contingent work.
[5] Data not shown where base employment is less than 75,000.

ences in coverage rates were substantial—less than two-thirds of those with contingent arrangements had health insurance

whose jobs were noncontingent.

Women with contingent jobs were less likely than their

| Table 10. | Employed contingent and noncontingent wage and salary workers with health insurance coverage by selected characteristics, February 1997 |

| Characteristic | Contingent workers (estimate 3)[1] | | | | Noncontingent workers[2] | | | | |
| | | Percent with health insurance coverage | | | | | Percent with health insurance coverage | | Percent |
	Total (in thousands)	Total	Through current employer at main job	Through other job or union	Percent Eligible for employer-provided health insurance	Total (in thousands	Total	Through current employer at main job	Through other job or union	Eligible for employer-provided health insurance
Age and sex										
Total, 16 years and older	5,140	67.1	22.4	3.5	35.3	106,697	83.0	61.2	0.7	73.8
16 to 19 years	664	70.6	5.6	([3])	12.3	5,272	71.7	9.4	([3])	22.6
20 to 24 years	945	65.1	11.5	1.0	26.6	10,653	65.2	41.8	.3	57.7
25 years and older	3,531	66.9	28.5	4.9	42.0	90,773	85.7	66.5	.8	78.7
25 to 34 years	1,251	59.6	30.0	3.4	43.2	27,845	80.7	63.7	.6	77.4
35 to 44 years	1,041	63.2	28.6	4.8	40.8	29,790	86.4	67.9	.7	80.0
45 to 54 years	683	72.5	29.3	7.3	45.8	21,539	88.8	70.9	.8	81.8
55 to 64 years	393	81.2	28.5	6.4	39.2	9,349	89.8	67.9	1.9	78.3
65 years and older	163	90.2	13.5	4.3	31.3	2,249	91.7	35.4	2.5	48.9
Men	2,547	62.6	24.8	6.1	37.1	55,754	82.2	66.7	1.1	76.5
Women	2,593	71.5	20.1	1.0	33.6	50,944	83.8	55.3	.3	70.9
Race and Hispanic origin										
White	4,177	69.4	22.4	4.1	35.0	90,098	84.0	61.1	.7	73.9
Black	585	49.7	13.7	.3	25.6	12,218	77.0	62.6	.6	73.7
Hispanic origin	610	39.0	13.9	3.0	27.5	10,534	62.1	48.9	.6	60.8
Full- and part-time status										
Full-time workers	2,890	62.0	31.7	5.5	45.3	87,378	84.8	70.8	.7	82.9
Part-time workers	2,230	73.4	10.4	1.1	22.4	19,067	74.7	17.5	.8	32.4
Educational attainment[4]										
Less than a high school diploma	495	36.6	14.7	2.2	22.2	10,882	61.6	45.4	.8	57.1
High school graduates, no college	1,116	55.5	18.9	7.0	30.2	34,508	79.8	58.9	1.0	72.7
Some college, no degree	783	64.2	20.2	5.4	35.6	18,901	84.9	65.7	.7	78.5
Associate degree	308	59.4	21.8	7.1	37.0	8,989	89.0	67.8	.8	83.0
College graduates	1,381	79.6	41.6	2.0	56.2	26,998	93.5	77.1	.5	87.3

[1] Contingent workers are defined as individuals who do not perceive them-selves as having an explicit or implicit contract with their employers for ongoing employment. Estimate 3 above is calculated using the broadest definition. For the specific criteria used for each definition, see the appendix, pp. 34–35.
[2] Noncontingent workers are those who do not meet the criteria for any of the three definitions of contingent work.
[3] Less than 0.05 percent.

[4] Excludes workers aged 16 to 24 enrolled in school.

NOTE: Detail for the above race and Hispanic-origin groups will not sum to totals because data for the "other races" group are not presented and Hispan-ics are included in both the white and black population groups. Detail for other characteristics may not sum to totals due to rounding.

ployer or an employment-related source, but they were *more* likely than men to have coverage from all sources. (Many women are covered under their spouses' plans.) Among the race and ethnic groups, white contingent workers had much higher coverage rates than either blacks or Hispanics, regard-less of the source considered. Nearly 70 percent of whites were insured, compared with 50 percent of blacks and 39 per-cent of Hispanics. White workers also were considerably more likely than blacks or Hispanics to have employer-provided insurance.

In terms of occupation and industry, contingent workers in every major group were less likely than their noncontingent counterparts to have health insurance from any source; they also were less likely to be eligible for, and to receive, em-ployer-provided insurance. However, the likelihood of receiv-ing employer-provided coverage or of being eligible for cov-erage also varies by occupation and industry. For example, managers and professionals in both contingent and

noncontingent work arrangements had higher employer-provided coverage and eligibility rates than their counterparts in other occupations. In fact, coverage and eligibility rates for managers and professionals in contingent jobs actually *exceeded* those of some workers holding noncontingent jobs in other occupations—namely, workers in service and farming occupations. (See table 11.)

By industry, public administration workers in contingent or noncontingent arrangements had higher employer-provided coverage and eligibility rates than their counterparts in other industries. And, as with occupations, coverage and eligibility rates for contingent workers in some industries were higher than those of some noncontingent workers. Specifically, contingent workers in public administration and in durable-goods manufacturing had higher rates than did noncontingent workers in agriculture.

Pensions. As in the prior survey, the 1997 data show that contingent workers were much less likely than those with noncontingent arrangements to participate in employer-sponsored pension plans.[12] (See table 12.) Only 16 percent of contingent workers participated in such plans, in contrast to half of noncontingent workers. Moreover, contingent workers were much less likely than noncontingent workers to be eligible

Table 11. Employed contingent and noncontingent wage and salary workers with health insurance coverage by occupation and industry, February 1997

Occupation and industry	Contingent workers (estimate 3)[1]					Noncontingent workers[2]				
	Total (in thousands)	Percent with health insurance coverage			Percent eligible for employer-provided health insurance	Total (in thousands)	Percent with health insurance coverage			Percent eligible for employer-provided health insurance
		Total	Through current employer at main job	Through other job or union			Total	Through current employer at main job	Through other job or union	
Occupation										
Managerial and professional specialty	1,497	80.7	40.9	1.5	54.2	30,610	92.5	75.6	0.3	86.4
Executive, administrative, and managerial	372	77.7	39.5	1.1	53.8	14,415	91.2	75.2	.4	86.3
Professional specialty	1,125	81.7	41.4	1.6	54.4	16,195	93.7	76.0	.3	86.6
Technical, sales, and administrative support	1,523	71.0	13.9	1.9	30.5	32,451	85.5	58.1	.5	73.4
Technians and related support	184	70.7	28.3	1.1	56.0	3,851	90.5	70.3	.5	83.8
Sales occupations	256	66.0	10.2	1.2	25.0	11,916	79.9	47.5	.6	63.3
Administrative support, including clerical	1,082	72.4	12.2	2.2	27.5	16,684	88.4	62.8	.4	78.2
Service occupations	736	61.4	9.1	.8	19.6	14,759	68.5	37.5	.6	50.8
Private household	99	40.4	(3)	(3)	3.0	533	46.0	4.5	(3)	6.4
Other services	636	64.8	10.5	.9	22.2	14,226	69.3	38.8	.6	52.5
Precision production, craft, and repair	508	62.2	25.8	20.7	33.1	11,230	79.5	65.4	2.4	75.6
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	729	46.0	16.0	2.7	28.4	16,206	77.9	61.5	1.0	73.5
Farming, forestry, and fishing	147	37.4	9.5	(3)	12.2	1,443	54.4	34.0	.1	41.2
Industry										
Agriculture	126	44.4	12.7	(3)	18.3	1,350	57.0	33.6	.1	41.5
Mining	25	(4)	(4)	(4)	(4)	575	90.1	85.4	(3)	90.8
Construction	515	55.5	20.0	20.6	28.7	5,222	70.0	48.3	4.7	60.2
Manufacturing	436	57.3	32.8	.7	45.2	19,576	87.9	78.1	.3	88.1
Durable goods	245	62.0	35.5	1.2	49.8	11,809	89.3	80.4	.3	90.1
Nondurable goods	188	52.7	29.8	(3)	39.4	7,697	86.0	74.7	.3	85.4
Transportation and public utilities	193	78.2	28.5	9.8	46.1	7,958	88.4	76.0	.7	85.3
Wholesale trade	78	62.8	29.5	(3)	35.9	4,182	85.5	68.1	.9	80.1
Retail trade	487	58.5	7.6	.8	22.6	18,060	70.6	35.2	.8	51.7
Finance, insurance, and real estate	160	71.3	27.5	(3)	34.4	6,902	90.0	67.5	.5	81.6
Services	2,887	70.8	21.9	1.6	35.7	37,537	84.3	58.8	.5	72.4
Private household	124	42.7	(3)	1.6	2.4	606	44.1	4.5	(3)	7.3
Other services	2,763	72.0	22.8	1.6	37.2	36,931	85.0	59.7	.5	73.4
Professional and related services	1,834	79.3	30.0	1.5	42.0	26,814	89.3	64.3	.4	77.9

[1] Contingent workers are defined as individuals who do not perceive themselves as having an explicit or implicit contract with their employers for ongoing employment. Estimate 3 above is calculated using the broadest definition. For the specific criteria used for each definition, see the appendix, pp. 34–35.

[2] Noncontingent workers are those who do not meet the criteria for any of the three definitions of contingent work.
[3] Less than 0.05 percent.
[4] Data not shown where base employment is less than 75,000.

	Contingent workers (estimate 3)[1]			[2]		
Characteristic	Total (in thousands)	Percent with pension coverage	Percent eligible pension	Total (in thousands)	Percent with pension	pension
Age and sex						
Total, 16 years and older	5,140	15.9	23.1	106,697	50.0	57.2
16 to 19 years	664	.6	5.6	5,272	4.4	14.7
20 to 24 years	945	3.1	11.1	10,653	20.6	34.7
25 years and older	3,531	22.2	29.6	90,773	56.1	62.3
25 to 34 years	1,251	13.7	24.0	27,845	47.9	57.0
35 to 44 years	1,041	23.9	29.9	29,790	58.9	64.6
45 to 54 years	683	32.4	38.9	21,539	63.9	68.1
55 to 64 years	393	29.0	34.1	9,349	59.7	63.4
65 years and older	163	19.0	21.5	2,249	31.5	38.0
Men	2,547	16.5	24.1	55,754	52.3	58.8
Women	2,593	15.3	22.2	50,944	47.5	55.4
Race and Hispanic origin						
White	4,177	17.1	24.2	90,098	50.3	57.4
Black	585	9.1	15.4	12,218	50.0	57.8
Hispanic origin	610	8.5	16.4	10,534	31.5	38.4
Full- and part-time status						
Full-time workers	2,890	23.6	32.4	87,378	57.2	64.6
Part-time workers	2,230	6.0	10.9	19,067	17.2	23.6
Educational attainment[3]						
Less than a high school diploma	495	8.3	13.9	10,882	27.0	33.2
High school graduates, no college	1,116	15.1	20.8	34,508	46.5	54.2
Some college, no degree	783	16.6	26.3	18,901	53.0	60.5
Associate degree	308	21.8	28.9	8,989	58.5	67.1
College graduates	1,381	29.4	38.9	26,998	69.0	75.0

Table 12 Employed contingent and noncontingent wage and salary workers with pension coverage by selected characteristics, February 1997

[1] Contingent workers are defined as individuals who do not perceive themselves as having an explicit or implicit contract with their employers for ongoing employment. Estimate 3 above is calculated using the broadest definition. For the specific criteria used for each definition, see the appendix, pp. 34–35.

[2] Noncontingent workers are those who do not meet the criteria for any of the three definitions of contingent work.

[3] Excludes workers age 16 to 24 enrolled in school.

for pensions from their employers—slightly less than one-fourth of those with contingent jobs were offered employer-provided pensions, compared with nearly three-fifths of noncontingent workers.

Contingent workers under the age of 25—who make up nearly a third of all contingent workers—were much less likely than those aged 25 to 54 to participate in pension plans or to be employed in industries that have a higher probability of offering pensions. Among workers in each age group, those with contingent jobs were less likely than those holding noncontingent jobs to have, or to be eligible for, employer-provided pensions. Finally, as with health insurance coverage, contingent workers had lower rates of pension coverage and eligibility than noncontingent workers in virtually every occupation and industry group. (See table 13.)

As the economy expanded and the labor market strengthened between 1995 and 1997, both the number of contingent workers and the proportion of total employment made up of such workers declined. The overall characteristics of these workers, however, changed little over the period. In both surveys, for example, contingent workers were more likely to be women, under the age of 25, enrolled in school, and to be employed part time. Workers in construction and services continued to have the greatest likelihood of holding a contingent job. However, as in the first survey, contingent workers were likely to be found in both high- and low-skilled occupations. Workers in professional specialty occupations and in administive support, including clerical, for example, were about equally likely to work in contingent jobs.

Although most contingent workers would have preferred a noncontingent job, many were satisfied with their current ar-

Table 13.

Table 13. Employed contingent and noncontingent wage and salary workers with pension coverage by occupation and industry, February 1997

Occupation and Industry	Contingent workers (estimate 3)[1]			Noncontingent workers[2]		
	Total (in thousands)	Percent with pension coverage	Percent eligible for employer-provided pension	Total (in thousands)	Percent with pension coverage	Percent eligible for employer-provided pension
Occupation						
....	1,497		36.6	30,610		72.7
Executive, administrative, and managerial	372	33.9		14,415	63.2	
Professional specialty		26.3	34.8		70.0	75.5
....	1,523		19.4	32,451		57.2
Technicians and related support	184	15.2		3,851	59.3	
Sales occupations		3.9	13.7		36.0	44.7
....	1,082		20.2	16,684		63.5
Service occupations	736	6.1		14,759	28.6	
Private household		3.0	3.0		1.3	1.5
....	636		13.2	14,226		36.6
Precision production, craft, and repair	508	21.3		11,230	49.5	
Operators, fabricators, and laborers		9.7	14.5		44.3	52.6
....	147		10.2	1,443		20.6
Industry						
....	126		11.1	1,350		17.8
Mining	25	(3)	(3)	575	66.4	71.8
Construction	515	14.6	21.2	5,222	31.6	37.2
Manufacturing	436	22.0	32.6	19,576	62.0	69.9
Durable goods	245	23.7	33.1	11,809	64.2	71.8
Nondurable goods	188	20.2	31.9	7,697	58.9	67.2
Transportation and public utilities	193	28.5	34.7	7,958	65.2	71.2
Wholesale trade	78	7.7	19.2	4,182	51.5	57.6
Retail trade	487	4.1	11.7	18,060	23.7	32.5
Finance, insurance, and real estate	160	26.9	35.0	6,902	57.8	66.6
Services	2,887	14.8	20.9	37,537	49.7	56.9
Private household	124	2.4	2.4	606	2.1	3.0
Other services	2,763	15.3	21.8	36,931	50.5	57.8
Professional and related services	1,834	20.3	26.4	26,814	58.7	65.6
Public administration	234	39.3	52.6	5,336	89.1	91.1

[1] Contingent workers are defined as individuals who do not perceive themselves as having an explicit or implicit contract with their employers for ongoing employment. Estimate 3 above is calculated using the broadest definition. For the specific criteria used for each definition, see the appendix, pp.34–35.

[2] Noncontingent workers are those who do not meet the criteria for any of the three definitions of contingent work.
[3] Data not shown where base employment is less than 75,000.

rangement. Specifically, younger workers were about as likely to prefer contingent arrangements as noncontingent ones, probably because a large number were enrolled in school and thus were less concerned with establishing longstanding relationships with their employers. Compared with the first survey, contingent workers in 1997 were more likely to have cited personal, rather than economic, reasons for being in contin-

gent arrangements, implying that workers were more likely to have chosen contingent work in the most recent survey.

Finally, contingent workers earned less and were less likely than noncontingent workers to have been included in employer-provided health insurance or pension plans. When comparing the wages and benefits of contingent and noncontingent workers, however, there was considerable variation by age, educational attainment, occupation, and industry. ☐

Footnotes

[1] For an explanation of the three measures, as well as other relevant concepts and definitions, see the appendix, pp. 34–35. For more on the definitions, as well as analysis of the results of the 1995 survey, see the articles in the special issue of the *Monthly Labor Review* on contingent workers and alternative work arrangements, October 1996.

[2] Contingency rates are calculated by dividing the number of contingent workers in a specified worker group by total employment for the same worker group.

[3] For instance, the unemployment rate was 5.4 percent in February 1995

and 5.3 percent in February 1997, both low by historical standards. Employment growth, as measured by the Current Employment Statistics (CES) survey, a monthly sample survey of about 390,000 nonfarm business establishments, averaged 206,000 per month between the two survey dates.

[4] The Current Population Survey (CPS) is a nationwide sample survey of about 50,000 households, conducted monthly by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The CPS collects information about the demographic characteristics and employment status of the noninstitutional working-age population (16 years and older). Special supplements

to the CPS occasionally are added to the survey questionnaire to obtain information on various topics of interest. The first CPS supplement on contingent work and alternative work arrangements was conducted in February 1995. This article examines data from the 1997 supplement, comparing the results with those obtained in 1995.

[5] The two narrower estimates of contingency (estimates 1 and 2) require a 1-year tenure restriction on workers' current and expected tenure with their employers. The broadest definition of contingency (estimate 3) removes this tenure restriction and basically includes all workers who say that their jobs are temporary. Although the median tenure for contingent workers under the broadest definition (0.7 year) was much less than that for noncontingent workers (5 years), 45 percent of these contingent workers had been with their employers for 1 year or more.

[6] Although contingent workers were employed in all industries, they were disproportionately concentrated in services and construction. In both the 1995 and 1997 surveys, more than half of all contingent workers were employed in the services industry, and an additional 10 percent were employed in the construction industry. As the contingency rates show, however, the vast majority (93 percent) of workers in these two industries were not contingent.

[7] For an in-depth discussion of the prevalence of contingent work in post-secondary education, see Kathleen Barker, "Contingent Work in Higher Education," in Kathleen Barker and Kathleen Christensen, eds., *Contingent Work: American Employment Relations in Transition* (Cornell University Press, 1998).

[8] See Kathleen Christensen, "Countervailing Human Resource Trends in Family-Sensitive Firms," in Barker and Christensen, *Contingent Work.*

[9] It should be noted that under estimate 1, the proportion of workers aged 25 years and older who were dissatisfied with their arrangement was much higher than under estimate 3.

[10] In the survey, information concerning preferences for a contingent or noncontingent job was collected separately from the reasons for holding a contingent job. Thus, a contingent worker could prefer noncontingent work but still provide a personal reason for holding a contingent job.

[11] In the survey, respondents were asked, "Do you have health insurance from any source?" If the response was "yes," they were then asked if their insurance was provided by their employer. Those who did not receive health insurance from their employer were asked for the source of their health insurance; in addition, they were asked if they were *eligible* for employer-provided health insurance. Respondents who said "no" to the initial question were asked, "Does (employer's name) offer a health insurance plan to any of its employees?" If the answer to that question was "yes," the respondent was then asked, "Are you included in this plan?" If the response was "no," the respondent was asked, "Why not?" The answer to this question was used to determine whether or not the respondent was eligible to receive insurance from his or her employer.

[12] In the survey, respondents were asked, "Does (employer's name) offer a pension or retirement plan to any of its employees?" If they answered "yes," they were then asked, "Are you included in this plan?" If the response was "no," respondents were then asked "Why not?" The response to this last question was used to determine eligibility for those not in the plan.

APPENDIX: Concepts and definitions

The supplement to the February 1997 Current Population Survey obtained information on workers in contingent jobs, or jobs that were expected to last only for a limited period. Additional information was collected on employees working under alternative employment arrangements—namely, working as independent contractors or being "on call," as well as working through temporary help agencies or contract firms. (A companion article in this issue by Sharon R. Cohany presents a profile of workers in alternative employment arrangements.) All employed persons except unpaid family workers were included in the supplement. For persons holding more than one job, the questions referred to the characteristics of their main job—the job in which they worked the most hours. A similar survey was conducted in February 1995.

The contingent workforce

Contingent workers were defined as those who do not have an explicit or implicit contract for long-term employment. Several pieces of information were collected in the supplement from which the existence of a contingent employment arrangement could be discerned: whether the job was temporary or not expected to continue, how long the worker expected to be able to hold the job, and how long the worker had held the job. For workers who had a job with an intermediary, such as a temporary help agency or a contract company, information was collected about their employment at the place they were assigned to work by the intermediary as well as their employment with the intermediary itself.

The key factor used to determine if a job fit the conceptual definition of contingent work was whether the job was temporary or not expected to continue. The first two questions in the supplement were:

1. Some people are in temporary jobs that last only for a limited time or until the completion of a project. Is your job temporary?
2. Provided the economy does not change and your job performance is adequate, can you continue to work for your current employer as long as you wish?

Respondents who answered "yes" to the first question, or "no" to the second, were then asked a series of questions to distinguish persons who were in temporary jobs from those who, for personal reasons, were temporarily holding jobs that offered the opportunity of ongoing employment. For example, students holding part-time jobs in fast-food restaurants while in school might view those jobs as temporary if they intend to leave them at the end of the school year. The jobs themselves, however, would be filled by other workers once the students leave. Jobs were defined as being short term or temporary if the person was working only until the completion of a specific project, temporarily replacing another worker, being hired for a fixed period, filling a seasonal job that is available only during certain times of the year, or if other business conditions dictated that the job was short term.

Workers also were asked how long they expected to stay in their current job and how long they had been with their current employer. The rationale for asking how long an individual expects to remain in his or her current job was that being able to hold a job for a year or more could be taken as evidence of at least an implicit contract for ongoing employment. In other words, the employer's need for the worker's services is not likely to evaporate tomorrow. By the same token, the information on how long a worker has been with the employer shows whether a job has been ongoing. Having remained with an employer for more than a year may be taken as evidence that, at least in the past, there was an explicit or implicit contract for continuing employment.

To assess the impact of altering some of the defining factors on the estimated size of the contingent workforce, the following three measures of contingent employment were developed:

Estimate 1. The narrowest definition, estimate 1 defines contin-

gent workers as wage and salary workers who indicated that they expected to work in their current job for 1 year or less and who had worked for their current employer for 1 year or less. Self-employed workers, both incorporated and unincorporated, and independent contractors are excluded from the count of contingent workers under estimate 1; the rationale was that people who work for themselves, by definition, have ongoing employment arrangements, although they may face financial risks. Individuals who worked for temporary help agencies or contract companies are considered contingent under estimate 1 only if they expect their employment arrangement with the temporary help or contract company to last for 1 year or less, and they had worked for that company for 1 year or less.

Estimate 2. This measure expands the definitions of contingent workers by including the self-employed (incorporated and unincorporated) and independent contractors who expect to be, and had been, in such employment arrangements for 1 year or less. (The questions asked of the self-employed are different from those asked of wage and salary workers.) In addition, temporary help and contract company workers are classified as contingent under estimate 2 if they had worked and expected to work for the customers to whom they were assigned for 1 year or less. For example, a "temp" secretary who is sent to a different customer each week but has worked for the same temporary help firm for more than 1 year and expects to be able to continue with that firm indefinitely is contingent under estimate 2, but not under estimate 1. In contrast, a "temp" who is assigned to a single client for more than a year and expects to be able to stay with that client for more than a year is not counted as contingent under either estimate.

Estimate 3. The third definition expands the concept of contingency by removing the 1-year requirement on expected duration of the job and on tenure in the current job (for wage and salary workers). Thus, the estimate effectively includes all the wage and salary workers who do not expect their employment to last, except for those who, for personal reasons, expect to leave jobs that they would otherwise be able to keep. Thus, a worker who had held a job for 5 years could be considered contingent if he or she now viewed the job as temporary. These conditions on expected and current tenure are not relaxed for the self-employed and independent contractors, because they were asked a different set of questions from wage and salary workers.

Alternative employment arrangements

To provide estimates of the number of workers in alternative employment arrangements, the February 1997 CPS supplement included questions about whether individual workers were paid by a temporary help agency or a contract company, or whether they were "on call" or independent contractors. The definitions of each category, as well as the main questions used to identify workers in each category, follow.

Independent contractors. Workers who were identified as independent contractors, consultants, and freelance workers in the supplement—regardless of whether they were identified as wage

and salary workers or self-employed in the responses to basic CPS labor force status questions—all are classified as independent contractors. Workers identified as self-employed (incorporated and unincorporated) in the basic CPS were asked, "Are you self-employed as an independent contractor, independent consultant, freelance worker, or something else (such as a shop or restaurant owner)?" in order to distinguish those who consider themselves to be independent contractors, consultants, or freelance workers from those who were business operators such as shop owners or restaurateurs. Those identified as wage and salary workers in the basic CPS were asked, "Last week, were you working as an independent contractor, an independent consultant, or a freelance worker? That is, someone who obtains customers on their own to provide a product or service." (About 88 percent of independent contractors were identified as self-employed in the main questionnaire, while 12 percent were identified as wage and salary workers; conversely, about half of the self-employed were identified as independent contractors.)

On-call workers. These are persons who are called into work only when they are needed. This category includes workers who answered affirmatively to the question, "Some people are in a pool of workers who are ONLY called to work as needed, although they can be scheduled to work for several days or weeks in a row—for example, substitute teachers and construction workers supplied by a union hiring hall. These workers sometimes are referred to as ON-CALL workers. Were you an ON-CALL worker last week?" Persons with regularly scheduled work that might include periods of being on call to perform work at unusual hours, such as medical residents, were not included in this category.

Temporary help agency workers. These are workers who were paid by a temporary help agency. To the extent that permanent staff of temporary help agencies indicate that they are paid by their agencies, the estimate of the number of workers whose employment was mediated by temporary help agencies is overstated. This category includes workers who said that their job was temporary and answered "yes" to the question, "Are you paid by a temporary help agency?" Also included are workers who said their job was not temporary and answered affirmatively to the question, "Even though you told me your job was not temporary, are you paid by a temporary help agency?"

Workers provided by contract firms. These are individuals identified as working for a contract company and who usually work for only one customer, usually at the customer's worksite. The last two requirements were imposed to focus on workers whose employment appeared to be very closely tied to the firm for which they were performing the work, rather than on all workers employed by firms that provide services to other firms. This category included workers who answered "yes" to the question, "Some companies provide employees or their services to others under contract. A few examples of services that can be contracted out include security, landscaping, or computer programming. Did you work for a company that contracts out you or your services last week?" These workers also had to respond negatively to the question, "Are you usually assigned to more than one customer?" They also had to answer "yes" to the question, "Do you usually work at the customer's worksite?"