

# Occupational mobility and job tenure in 1983

*In 1983, more than 1 worker in 3 aged 35 to 44 had been with the same employer 10 years or longer and almost the same ratio of workers 45 and older had worked for the same employer 20 years or more*

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Intergenerational and intragenerational upward occupational mobility is an accepted part of American life. Also commonly accepted is a picture of the U.S. labor market in which workers are highly mobile in general. Numerous books and articles describe Americans' extensive "job hopping" and geographic mobility. American workers are seen as changing occupations and employers in far higher proportions than their counterparts in other industrial nations.<sup>1</sup>

This view of widespread job mobility is supported by a number of developments which tend to hold down the measures of average tenure in the United States, particularly in comparison with Japan and other industrial nations. These developments primarily are related to rapid increases in the U.S. population and labor force. For example, over the past decade, millions of American women have entered the labor force each year. Moreover, the American work force has been boosted by high rates of migration (both legal and illegal) into the United States. As a result, employment has grown by 20 million since the early 1970's. And with all of these new workers in the labor force, it is not too surprising that the overall measure of job tenure for the United States is relatively low.

Yet, a detailed look at the data on tenure shows that a large proportion of American workers apparently spend most of their "mature" worklife with the same employer and in

the same type of work.<sup>2</sup> Jobs held by middle-aged workers appear highly stable. New data from the Current Population Survey seem to support the contention that mature American workers, on average, show substantial job stability, thus making them not too unlike the workers of Japan.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, there is significant job movement among young workers, both in terms of employers and types of work. Still, once they settle into a career path, employees become considerably more stable in terms of their work than is generally thought. This is the picture which emerges from the most recent information on workers' tenure with their employer and in their current occupation. The information was gathered through special questions in the Current Population Survey on the work persons were doing in January 1983, whether it was the kind of work they did a year earlier, how long they had done that kind of work, and how long they had been working continuously for their current employer.

Among the principal findings:

- One worker in 6 has been with his or her employer for at least 15 years.
- Among workers aged 45 and over, nearly one-third have been with their current employer for 20 years or more.
- Tenure with one's employer is closely linked to occupational stability.
- The rate at which women change occupations has increased substantially over the past two decades, but for men there has been no trend.

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## Tenure with employer

As expected, the length of tenure with one's employer is strongly related to the age of workers. For example, the vast majority of teenagers working in January 1983 had held their jobs for 1 year or less. Workers aged 20 to 24 also had short tenure. Again this is not surprising, because most of these young adults are recent entrants into the labor force, their jobs being largely temporary in nature while they are in the process of searching for and establishing careers. In contrast, many older workers have become attached to a particular employer and a given occupation, and thus are far less mobile. Their longer attachment to a job usually provides wage increases and greater employment security as well as pension rights.

Among workers aged 35 to 44 in January 1983, more than one-third had been with the same employer for 10 years or more, and among workers 45 and over, nearly one-third had been at their jobs for at least 20 years. (See table 1.) This indicates a substantial employment stability among a large portion of American workers. While tenure among younger workers is obviously shorter, the observed pattern by age, if continued into the future, would indicate that about half of all workers aged 30 to 34 who have been with an employer for 10 to 14 years are likely to remain with that employer for a least another 10 years.<sup>4</sup> And for workers aged 25 to 29 the proportion would be almost 40 percent.

On average, men have longer job tenure than women. This is primarily because uninterrupted labor force participation has been common for men but is a more recent practice for women. As shown in table 1, among all workers 16 years of age and over, the proportion that had been with their employer 15 years or more was about 20 percent for men and 10 percent for women. Job tenure was longer for men than for women in part-time as well as full-time employment. Black women (who have had a high rate of labor force participation for many years) exceeded both white and Hispanic women in tenure with their 1983 employer.<sup>5</sup>

Young men and women have similar median years of job tenure. Tenure for men, however, becomes significantly longer than for women at ages 35 and older. As the following tabulation shows, in the 55-to-64 age group in January 1983, median tenure for men was 16.9 years, in contrast to 10.3 years for women.

Age	Median years		
	Total	Men	Women
Total, 16 years and over .....	4.4	5.1	3.7
16 to 24 years .....	1.5	1.5	1.5
25 to 34 years .....	3.5	3.8	3.2
35 to 44 years .....	5.8	7.7	4.6
45 to 54 years .....	10.2	13.2	6.9
55 to 64 years .....	13.6	16.9	10.3
65 years and over .....	13.2	14.9	11.9

**Table 1. Distribution of workers by age, sex, and years of tenure with current employer, January 1983**

[Numbers in thousands]

Age and sex	Number employed	Years with current employer (percent distribution)						
		Total	1 year or less	2 to 5 years	6 to 9 years	10 to 14 years	15 to 19 years	20 years or more
<b>Total</b>								
16 years and over .....	97,273	100.0	27.3	33.1	12.4	10.9	6.4	9.9
16 to 24 years .....	18,732	100.0	56.4	40.2	3.1	3	—	—
25 years and over .....	78,541	100.0	20.3	31.3	14.6	13.5	7.9	12.3
25 to 34 years .....	27,805	100.0	30.0	43.0	16.8	9.2	9	.1
35 to 44 years .....	21,169	100.0	20.0	31.2	15.1	16.8	11.7	5.0
45 years and over .....	29,567	100.0	11.5	20.5	12.0	15.1	11.8	29.1
45 to 54 years .....	15,549	100.0	13.0	22.8	13.1	15.6	12.3	23.4
55 to 64 years .....	11,224	100.0	9.7	17.9	10.8	14.9	11.9	34.8
65 years and over .....	2,794	100.0	10.2	18.8	10.6	13.7	8.6	38.1
<b>Men</b>								
16 years and over .....	54,415	100.0	24.7	30.2	12.2	11.7	7.5	13.7
16 to 24 years .....	9,641	100.0	56.1	39.6	3.9	4	—	—
25 years and over .....	44,775	100.0	18.0	28.2	14.0	14.1	9.1	16.7
25 to 34 years .....	15,575	100.0	27.6	43.0	17.9	10.4	1.0	.1
35 to 44 years .....	11,924	100.0	16.8	26.2	14.8	20.0	15.4	6.9
45 years and over .....	17,276	100.0	10.2	16.3	9.9	13.2	12.0	38.3
45 to 54 years .....	9,003	100.0	11.1	17.3	10.9	14.3	13.5	32.8
55 to 64 years .....	6,590	100.0	8.9	14.5	8.4	12.3	11.2	44.7
65 years and over .....	1,683	100.0	10.1	18.3	10.5	11.3	7.5	42.4
<b>Women</b>								
16 years and over .....	42,858	100.0	30.5	36.7	12.5	10.0	5.0	5.2
16 to 24 years .....	9,092	100.0	56.7	40.9	2.3	2	—	—
25 years and over .....	33,766	100.0	23.4	35.5	15.3	12.7	6.4	6.7
25 to 34 years .....	12,229	100.0	33.1	43.2	15.4	7.6	7	—
35 to 44 years .....	9,245	100.0	24.3	37.7	15.6	12.7	7.1	2.7
45 years and over .....	12,291	100.0	13.2	26.5	14.9	17.8	11.4	16.1
45 to 54 years .....	6,546	100.0	15.5	30.3	16.1	17.3	10.6	10.3
55 to 64 years .....	4,634	100.0	10.8	22.8	14.4	18.6	12.8	20.7
65 years and over .....	1,111	100.0	10.3	19.6	10.8	17.3	10.3	31.6

The average length of tenure of workers with their employers does not vary greatly by major occupational group, particularly if one excludes "farming, forestry, and fishing." The workers in this occupational group have an unusually high median tenure because many are permanently self-employed and also because these are declining occupations which attract few newcomers. In all other occupational groups, the median years of tenure with employers do not show a wide dispersion from the overall averages for men and women. For example, median tenure for all men 25 and over is 6.9 years. When ranged by major occupational groups, the medians for these men varied from a high of 8.1 years for those in "executive, administrative, and managerial" jobs and "administrative support, including clerical" jobs, to a low of 4.1 years for those in service occupations other than private household and protective services. (See table 2.) For women 25 and over, the range of employer tenure is even smaller, with the medians for most occupational groups being closely clustered around 4.8 years for all women in this age group.

It should be noted that, historically, most research on tenure has been limited to male workers. Thus, the finding that many Americans spend much of their mature worklife with the same employer usually refers only to men. Yet, when observations on women are included, this remains true. There also is substantial job stability among older female workers; for example, almost half of women 45 and over in January 1983 had been with their current employer 10 years or more. Moreover, because increasing proportions of women are now permanent members of the work force, the gap in tenure between men and women should begin to narrow.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 2. Median years of tenure with current employer for employed civilians age 25 and over, by occupation and sex, January 1983**

(Numbers in thousands)

Occupation	Men		Women	
	Total employed	Median years of tenure	Total employed	Median years of tenure
Total, age 25 and over . . . . .	44,775	6.9	33,766	4.8
Executive, administrative, and managerial . . . . .	7,040	8.1	3,084	5.3
Professional specialty . . . . .	6,193	7.0	5,493	5.3
Technicians and related support . . . . .	1,256	5.2	1,196	4.5
Sales occupations . . . . .	4,845	5.8	3,576	3.5
Administrative support, including clerical . . . . .	2,506	8.1	10,140	5.0
Private household . . . . .	25	( <sup>1</sup> )	613	3.5
Protective service . . . . .	1,220	7.0	159	4.0
Service, except private household and protective service . . . . .	2,242	4.1	4,989	4.0
Precision production, craft, and repair . . . . .	9,251	6.9	701	5.8
Machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors . . . . .	3,334	7.8	2,740	5.8
Transportation and material moving . . . . .	3,084	6.5	295	5.3
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers . . . . .	1,667	5.6	449	5.5
Farming, forestry, and fishing . . . . .	2,112	10.8	329	7.4

<sup>1</sup>Rate not computed where base is less than 75,000.

Has tenure been increasing or declining over time? Unfortunately, the question cannot be answered, as the measurements taken in 1983 are not fully comparable with previous ones. Median tenure did turn out to be considerably higher in 1983 than when last measured in 1981—4.4 versus 3.2 years for workers 16 years and over. Some of the increase may have reflected the reluctance of workers to change employers during a period of economic downturn, such as that which preceded the January 1983 survey. This reluctance was shown by the lower proportion of "job leavers" among the unemployed. The sharpening of the 1983 questions, as compared with those used in 1981 and previous surveys, also was probably responsible for much of the increase in tenure measurements.<sup>7</sup>

**Occupational tenure and shifts**

For certain purposes—such as the analysis of earnings differences between groups—it may be more appropriate to focus on the workers' length of experience in their occupation rather than on their length of service with their employer. Data on time spent in a given occupation—occupational tenure—also were gathered as part of the January 1983 survey. (See table 3.)

As with employer tenure, occupational tenure is closely associated with age. On average, men are also more likely to have spent a longer period of time in the same occupation than are women. White, black, and Hispanic men all had longer occupational tenure than their female counterparts.

The longer the attachment with an employer, the less likely the worker is to change occupations. Of the 26 million men and women 25 years and over who had been working for their 1983 employer for 10 years or more, only 658,000 or 2.5 percent, had changed occupations in the preceding year. In contrast, as shown in the following tabulation, nearly 1 of 3 persons working for their 1983 employer for 1 year or less had changed occupations in 1982.

Tenure with current employer	Employed in January 1982 and January 1983	Changed occupation during period	
	Number	Number	Percent
Total employees, 25 years and over . . . . .	72,897	5,457	7.5
1 year or less . . . . .	11,141	3,602	32.3
2 to 4 years . . . . .	19,085	647	3.4
5 to 9 years . . . . .	16,465	550	3.3
10 or more years . . . . .	26,206	658	2.5

As shown above, about 8 percent of all workers 25 years and over in January 1983 were in occupations different from those held in 1982. Although the proportions of men and women moving into an occupation are similar for most occupations, their actual numbers vary widely.

The occupations "executive, administrative, and management" and "protective service" are two occupations which had a substantially higher proportionate entry by women than by men. The occupational mobility rate—which meas-

**Table 3. Occupational tenure of employed civilians age 25 and over, who were employed in both January 1982 and January 1983, by sex, race, and Hispanic origin**

[Numbers in thousands]

Occupational tenure	Total		White		Black		Hispanic origin <sup>1</sup>	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Total, age 25 and over . . . . .	42,349	30,548	37,875	26,320	3,407	3,419	2,031	1,287
1 year or less . . . . .	3,487	3,157	3,086	2,785	303	298	215	135
2 to 4 years . . . . .	8,564	8,241	7,388	7,058	878	935	507	397
5 to 9 years . . . . .	9,464	8,120	8,424	6,949	796	923	554	391
10 or more years . . . . .	20,833	11,030	18,978	9,529	1,431	1,264	754	365

<sup>1</sup>It should be noted that the "Hispanic origin" category is not a racial classification. Persons in this group may appear in the white or black or other racial categories.

ures the proportion of workers who were employed both in 1983 and 1982, but in a different occupation<sup>8</sup>—was 10.9 percent for women versus 6.9 percent for men entering management, and 13.1 percent for women versus 6.4 percent for men entering protective service. (See table 4.) The high mobility rate for women into management is evidence of continued expanding employment opportunities for women in that occupation. While the absolute numbers are low, entry into protective service for women indicates movement into an occupation that is nontraditional for female workers.

Of those persons employed in both January 1982 and 1983 who changed occupations during that period, most moved within the same major occupational group, that is, the move was among very closely related occupations. Such mobility was high, for example, for both men and women in the professions.

Women were somewhat more likely than men to make a shift from one major occupational group to another. For example, more than 40 percent of men in executive, administrative, and managerial employment who had changed occupations during 1982–83 had made a shift within the management field, while a relatively high proportion of women who were managers in 1983 had been clerical work-

ers the previous year. Similarly, a somewhat larger percentage of women in sales in 1983 had been in clerical jobs in 1982. However, more men had made an intraoccupational move within sales during that period than any other type of occupational change. (See table 5.) These differences, however, may stem in part from errors made in reporting, recording, or classifying the data.

The rate at which women change occupations has increased substantially over the past two decades, unlike the situation for men. In 1966, the occupational mobility rate was markedly higher for men than for women. By 1978, and continuing to 1983, the situation was reversed. Over the 1966–83 period, the occupational mobility rate for women 18 and older and not in school increased from 6.8 to 9.9 percent, peaking at 11.7 percent in 1978. Over the same period, the rate for men did not show any definite trend; it rose during the 1970's but dropped off considerably in the early 1980's. The largest change over this 18-year period occurred for men and women 20 to 24. (See table 6.)

As measured in January 1983, the occupational mobility rate was slightly higher for Hispanic men than for white men, but considerably higher than for blacks. Black men had the lowest rate in almost every age group. The occupational mobility rate for black women was lower than those for both Hispanic and white women, and this difference appeared in almost all age groups.

A number of "push" and "pull" factors are involved in occupational mobility.<sup>9</sup> Among the pull factors, for example, are better pay and more appealing work. Push factors would include a forced change because of declining demand in one's preferred occupation. Much of women's recent occupational mobility may be attributed to pull factors. These are consistent with women's strong growth in the labor force, increased educational attainment, some slight improvements in earnings relative to men,<sup>10</sup> and broadened occupational opportunities. In contrast, because male work-

**Table 4. Men and women age 25 years and over, employed in January 1983, by current occupation and employment status in January 1982**

Occupation	Men employed in January 1983	Men employed in January 1982 and 1983			Women employed in January 1983	Women employed in January 1982 and 1983		
		Total	Changed occupations			Total	Changed occupations	
			Number	Percent			Number	Percent
Total, 25 years and over . . . . .	44,775	42,349	3,054	7.2	33,766	30,548	2,403	7.9
Executive, administrative, and managerial . . . . .	7,040	6,901	477	6.9	3,084	2,908	316	10.9
Professional specialty . . . . .	6,193	6,018	304	5.1	5,493	5,112	286	5.6
Technicians and related support . . . . .	1,256	1,198	79	6.6	1,196	1,106	77	6.9
Sales occupations . . . . .	4,845	4,649	441	9.5	3,576	3,064	308	10.0
Administrative support, including clerical . . . . .	2,506	2,392	219	9.2	10,140	9,358	786	8.4
Private household . . . . .	25	18	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	613	491	30	6.2
Protective service . . . . .	1,220	1,149	74	6.4	159	144	19	13.1
Service, excluding private household and protective service . . . . .	2,242	2,024	184	9.1	4,989	4,300	286	6.6
Precision production, craft, and repair . . . . .	9,251	8,573	544	6.3	701	629	46	7.4
Machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors . . . . .	3,334	3,112	289	9.3	2,740	2,489	170	6.8
Transportation and material moving . . . . .	3,084	2,816	192	6.8	295	263	21	7.9
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers . . . . .	1,667	1,492	178	11.9	449	386	44	11.3
Farming, forestry, and fishing . . . . .	2,112	2,008	73	3.6	329	299	14	4.7

<sup>1</sup>Data not available.

**Table 5. Occupational distribution of employed civilians age 25 and over, who changed occupations between January 1982 and January 1983, by sex**

[Percent distribution]

Occupation	Different occupation in January 1982		Executive, administrative, and managerial	Professional specialty	Technicians and related support	Sales	Administrative support, including clerical	Protective service	Other service	Precision production, craft, and repair	Machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors	Transportation and material moving	Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers	Farming, forestry, and fishing
	Number (in thousands)	Percent												
<b>Men</b>														
Total, 25 years and over <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	3,054	100.0	14.2	10.1	3.2	11.0	7.9	1.8	5.9	18.7	10.3	8.3	5.6	3.0
Executive, administrative, and managerial . . . . .	477	100.0	41.4	12.5	5.0	12.3	6.6	.6	4.6	9.7	3.1	2.7	1.0	.5
Professional specialty . . . . .	304	100.0	13.3	44.0	7.9	5.1	4.3	.4	6.5	10.7	.9	3.1	1.8	2.0
Technicians and related support . . . . .	79	100.0	11.6	15.9	11.9	2.1	19.1	1.6	7.7	17.9	6.1	2.9	3.2	—
Sales occupations . . . . .	441	100.0	20.0	6.9	2.4	30.6	9.2	2.4	2.3	11.6	4.0	3.9	4.4	2.3
Administrative support, including clerical . . . . .	219	100.0	11.8	8.3	3.7	7.3	25.0	.3	5.0	17.4	5.6	6.7	7.6	1.1
<b>Women</b>														
Total, 25 years and over <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	2,403	100.0	10.1	12.6	2.4	12.5	34.6	.3	12.9	1.7	8.2	1.8	1.5	.4
Executive, administrative, and managerial . . . . .	316	100.0	25.4	15.1	2.5	14.1	30.3	.7	4.1	1.9	3.0	1.1	1.7	—
Professional specialty . . . . .	286	100.0	8.4	48.0	5.5	8.5	15.0	—	9.8	.1	3.0	.1	—	.1
Technicians and related support . . . . .	77	100.0	7.8	8.6	9.9	4.8	40.0	—	25.3	—	1.0	2.6	—	—
Sales occupations . . . . .	308	100.0	10.4	9.3	2.0	24.3	29.5	.7	12.5	1.8	4.9	1.4	.7	.7
Administrative support, including clerical . . . . .	786	100.0	9.0	6.3	1.6	9.3	59.1	.2	7.6	.7	3.2	2.6	.2	—

<sup>1</sup>Includes other occupations, not shown separately.

ers predominated in industries sharply affected by the 1981–82 recession, some of them may have been pushed, at least temporarily, into occupations with lower earnings and lower status.

The factors associated with high occupational mobility generally parallel those given for low job tenure. The converse is also true. Thus, many mature workers reported both high job tenure and low occupational mobility. The occupational mobility rate for workers aged 45 and over in 1983 was only 4.0 percent.

Differences in occupational mobility by age are much larger than differences by sex or race or ethnic group. For example, the 22-percent mobility rate for workers 16 to 24 was 15 percentage points higher than the rate for those 35 to 44.

Single workers, being generally younger, are more likely to change occupations than their married counterparts. But age has a strong effect on mobility even within the single-worker group. More than twice as many single workers between the ages of 18 and 24 had changed occupations during 1982 than those 25 and over (2,050 versus 803).

This relationship between age and occupational mobility is similar to that between age and employer change: Youth are far more likely to be occupationally mobile and to shift employers than are adult workers.<sup>11</sup> The extensive mobility attributed to American workers applies for the most part to young, not older, workers. □

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Masanori Hashimoto and John Raisian, "Employment Tenure and On-the-Job Training: Firm Size Differences in Japan and the United States," January 1984; and *The New York Times*, June 17, 1984. "America's Astounding Job Machine," quoting Orley C. Ashenfelter on the high mobility of American versus British workers. For a discussion on occupational mobility in Britain also see David Metcalf, *Low Pay, Occupational Mobility, and Minimum-Wage Policy in Britain* (American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> More detailed data on job tenure and occupational mobility are available from the Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

<sup>3</sup> Robert E. Hall, "The Importance of Lifetime Jobs in the U.S. Economy," *American Economic Review*, September 1982. Hall also cites his earlier work based on data for older men from the National Longitudinal Survey of Work Experience, as well as related work, for example, George A. Akerlof and Brian Main (*American Economic Review*, December 1981) and Kazuo Koike (*Japanese Economic Studies*, Fall 1978). The Koike

**Table 6. Occupational mobility rates for employed civilians, by sex and age, 1965–83, selected years**

[In percent]

Sex and age	Occupational mobility rates <sup>1</sup>				
	1965–66	1972–73	1977–78	1980–81	1982–83
<b>Men</b>					
Total, 18 years and over . . . . .	9.9	9.2	11.6	10.1	9.3
18 to 19 years . . . . .	31.7	35.0	40.5	31.6	29.0
20 to 24 years . . . . .	28.5	25.0	27.3	23.8	21.3
25 to 34 years . . . . .	13.8	12.4	15.5	12.4	11.5
35 to 44 years . . . . .	7.4	6.2	8.1	7.4	6.7
45 to 54 years . . . . .	5.2	3.5	4.5	4.4	4.8
55 to 64 years . . . . .	3.8	2.6	3.4	3.5	3.1
65 years and over . . . . .	2.7	1.7	2.0	1.6	1.9
Total, 18 years and over not in school . . . . .	9.8	9.0	11.5	9.9	9.0
<b>Women</b>					
Total, 18 years and over . . . . .	6.9	8.4	12.0	11.7	10.1
18 to 19 years . . . . .	29.0	32.6	39.5	35.8	26.0
20 to 24 years . . . . .	14.9	18.9	22.9	22.8	20.1
25 to 34 years . . . . .	8.5	9.9	14.4	13.9	11.9
35 to 44 years . . . . .	5.3	6.3	9.3	8.9	7.8
45 to 54 years . . . . .	4.7	3.3	5.1	5.8	4.9
55 to 64 years . . . . .	2.4	2.4	3.6	2.7	3.8
65 years and over . . . . .	1.8	2.5	2.5	1.8	1.4
Total, 18 years and over not in school . . . . .	6.8	8.2	11.7	11.4	9.9

<sup>1</sup>Number of persons employed in a different occupation in the prior year as a proportion of the total employed in both years.

article (as cited by Hall) concludes that tenure of 15 years or longer is more common in the United States than in Japan. For occupational mobility in Japan, see Herman Kahn, *The Emerging Japanese Superstate. Challenge and Response* (Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970). Examining employment practices of large companies, such as the "lifetime contract" made by the employee with the firm, Kahn also notes the high mobility of workers within firms and between firms of a conglomerate, and observes that in terms of worker mobility the U.S. economy in many ways is much more rigid than the Japanese.

<sup>4</sup>The retention rate is computed by dividing the percent of workers aged 40 to 44 years with 20 to 24 years of tenure by the percent aged 30 to 34 with 10 to 14 years' tenure. (It assumes that job tenure at older ages in January 1983 can represent tenure of younger groups as they age over time.) Using similar procedures, Hall (see footnote 3) found that more than half of all male workers over age 30 are holding jobs which will last more than 20 years. Harvey R. Hamel (*Monthly Labor Review*, January 1967) also used such procedures but, in addition, his computation allowed for the loss of workers due to mortality. Hamel found, for example, that 46.9 percent of men aged 35 to 39 with over 10 years' service with their 1966 employer could be expected to remain with that employer an additional 10 years.

<sup>5</sup>It should be noted that the "Hispanic origin" category is not a racial classification. Persons in this group may appear in the white or black or other racial categories.

<sup>6</sup>Hall (see footnote 3) observes that while women on average have much shorter job tenure than men, the typical number of jobs held over a lifetime is almost the same.

<sup>7</sup>The 1983 questions relate specifically to tenure with the worker's "employer," whereas the 1981 questions relate to one's "job." Because workers may change jobs without changing employers, the measures are not exactly equivalent. (The relevant question in the 1983 survey was "How long has . . . been working continuously for the present employer (or as self-employed)?" In previous surveys, the comparable question was "When did . . . start working at his present job or business?")

<sup>8</sup>Occupational mobility is defined as a change in employment in a "3-digit" census occupation in January 1983 from the one reported for January 1982. The mobility rate measures the proportion of workers who held the January 1983 occupation, not the proportion leaving the 1982 occupation. Thus, it reflects the percentage of workers in an occupation who come from a different one, not the probability of workers leaving a given occupation.

The data on occupational mobility (as well as on occupational and job tenure) are subject to certain limitations, such as those stemming from differences in the way respondents report occupations from one year to another, and limitations resulting from retrospective bias. These may result in serious inconsistencies in response, and may lead to overstatements of mobility. Note, too, that because the survey asks for workers' occupation only in January 1983 and January 1982, any intermediate changes during the year are not included.

<sup>9</sup>This has been described as such in James J. Byrne, "Occupational mobility of workers," *Monthly Labor Review*, February 1975, pp. 53-59, reprinted as Special Labor Force Report No. 176. Other reports on occupational mobility appeared in the *Monthly Labor Review* of June 1967, December 1979, and September 1982. The last also included a section on job tenure. Other reports on job tenure were published in the *Monthly Labor Review* of January 1967, September 1969, January 1973, and December 1979. These articles were reprinted as Special Labor Force Report No. 84, No. 231, Bulletin 2162, Special Labor Force Report No. 77, No. 112, No. 172, and No. 235.

<sup>10</sup>See Earl F. Mellor, "Investigating the differences in weekly earnings of women and men," *Monthly Labor Review*, June 1984, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup>A study of labor mobility during 1940-50 found that job shifts of younger workers were more "complex" than those of older workers. A smaller proportion of older than younger workers changed employer, occupation, and industry at the same time; and employment shifts of older workers were more likely to involve only a change of employer. (Gladys L. Palmer, *Labor Mobility in Six Cities* (Social Science Research Council, 1954), p. 63.)

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### A note on communications

The *Monthly Labor Review* welcomes communications that supplement, challenge, or expand on research published in its pages. To be considered for publication, communications should be factual and analytical, not polemical in tone. Communications should be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief, *Monthly Labor Review*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C. 20212.

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