



## Work experience profile, 1984: the effects of recovery continue

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The number of persons holding jobs during all or part of the year rose to 121.1 million during 1984, up 3.6 million from 1983. This was the largest single-year increase in 35 years. As the economy continued to improve in the wake of the recession of 1981–82, there were also indications that the work year of those employed had lengthened, the prevalence of unemployment had diminished, and its average duration had lessened.

These findings were derived from the work experience survey, conducted each March as a supplement to the Current Population Survey, the monthly nationwide household survey which measures the changes in the size of the labor force, employment, and unemployment. While the monthly measurements permit officials to closely monitor the pulse of the American economy, the March supplement provides a different perspective. Its retrospective questions covering the entire previous calendar year provide unique information on the labor force behavior of the population, on the extent to which each member, age 16 and over, worked or sought work during the year, and on income derived from employment and other sources.

The work experience profile is particularly informative in describing the labor force activity of groups whose work patterns are discontinuous or habitually irregular. Given the large movements in and out of the labor force each month, the March supplement normally identifies a much larger "economically active population" than does the monthly count. For example, 121.1 million adults were identified in the March 1985 survey as having worked for some period during 1984, while the average of the 12 monthly measurements was just 105.0 million. The total number of persons shown by the March supplement to have been unemployed for some portion of 1984 was 2.5 times as large as was the number encountering unemployment in the average month (that is, 21.5 million versus 8.5 million).

During 1984, the economic recovery took an irregular

path. The first half of the year was characterized by a strong surge of employment and corresponding declines in unemployment, both of which slowed during the summer months. During the final quarter, there was a modest upswing in employment, but it was not matched by proportionate declines in joblessness.<sup>1</sup> In light of these developments, it is particularly useful to examine the year's work experience profile for the many persons who entered or left the economic arena.

### Population and employment growth

Although by early 1984 the economy had already undergone a full year of recovery, it continued to grow rapidly. Workers appeared to be making up for lost time, both in terms of net entries into the job market and also through shifts to longer work hours. The continuing influx of women into the economic arena, and pressures of population growth, combined with the strong economic recovery to accelerate labor force growth.

The adult population (aged 16 and over) grew by about 1 percent during the year, the pace being roughly four times as great for Hispanics and about twice as fast for blacks as for whites. The following tabulation shows the 1983–84 percent increases in the population aged 16 and over, persons employed at all during the year, and those employed year round, full time, by selected characteristics:

	Civilian non-institutional population	Employment	
		Total	Full time, full year only
Total	1.0	3.0	5.5
Men	1.1	2.2	5.7
Women	0.9	4.0	5.2
White	0.8	2.5	5.1
Black	1.7	6.1	7.4
Hispanic	3.3	5.5	6.9

The character of population growth within each group differed, affecting its potential contribution to the work force. The growth of the white population was concentrated in the age range 25 and above, and was offset to a large degree by a contraction of the group 16–24 years of age. The number of black teenagers also declined, but of blacks aged 20 and above, the population increased. The population of Hispanic origin, whose expansion results as much from immigration of adults as from natural increase, registered gains at all ages 16 and over. Hence, the pool from which potential entrants were likely to be drawn was somewhat older for whites than

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for the other two groups. Each demographic group expanded most rapidly within the age range 25–44, where baby-boom cohorts and recent immigrants are concentrated. It is in this age range that life cycle pressures to obtain and hold employment are normally most acute.

As the health of the economy continued to improve, the share of the working-age population holding jobs during the year rose from less than 67 to more than 68 percent, with the pace of growth for women nearly twice that for men. (See table 1.) Nonetheless, because the labor force activity of men has been decreasing in the recent past, even the small increase shown in 1984 is noteworthy.

The number of black and Hispanic workers with full- or part-year jobs was sharply higher in 1984 than in the previous year, reflecting both the very rapid growth of their population and a greater potential for recovery from the recent recession.<sup>2</sup> Whereas the number of whites who were in the labor force at some time during the year grew by 2.5 percent, that of blacks increased by 6.1 percent and Hispanics, by 5.5 percent.

Looked at another way, the growth of the economically “active” population (persons working or looking for work

during the year) exceeded that of the total working-age population aged 16 and over, for all groups except men. (See table 2.) The size of the expansion of the year’s female work force was more than twice the increase of their entire working-age population. The number of persons who held no job at all during the year declined across the board. Only one group of “inactives,” men not looking for work (more than half of whom were retired), showed even minor growth.

### Work schedules

A record number of men (43.8 million) and women (26.6 million) held year-round, full-time jobs (50 weeks or more per year, usually at 35 hours or more per week) during 1984. The growth rate of such employment was slightly more rapid for men than for women, and was considerably greater for blacks and Hispanics—with low initial representation in this category—than it was for whites.

Men accounted for about 54 percent of the growth in employment between the last quarter of 1983 and the last quarter of 1984. However, because the work patterns of women are less regular, and their role in the labor force has

**Table 1. Work experience of the population during the year by extent of employment for men and women, 1983–84**

(Numbers in thousands)

Extent of employment	Total		Men		Women	
	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984
Civilian noninstitutional population .....	175,881	177,661	83,285	84,206	92,596	93,455
Total who worked or looked for work .....	121,503	124,117	66,350	67,234	55,153	56,883
Percent of the population .....	69.1	69.9	79.7	79.8	59.6	60.9
Total who worked during the year <sup>1</sup> .....	117,575	121,148	64,512	65,960	53,063	55,188
Percent of the population .....	66.8	68.2	77.5	78.3	57.3	59.1
Full time <sup>2</sup> .....	90,606	94,312	55,132	56,928	35,474	37,384
50 to 52 weeks .....	66,744	70,419	41,469	43,833	25,275	26,585
48 to 49 weeks .....	2,278	2,451	1,361	1,408	916	1,043
40 to 47 weeks .....	5,133	5,502	2,999	3,046	2,134	2,456
27 to 39 weeks .....	5,633	5,617	3,285	3,095	2,349	2,522
14 to 26 weeks .....	5,901	5,635	3,290	3,081	2,611	2,554
1 to 13 weeks .....	4,918	4,689	2,728	2,464	2,190	2,224
Part time <sup>3</sup> .....	26,969	26,836	9,380	9,032	17,588	17,804
50 to 52 weeks .....	10,297	9,832	3,210	3,099	7,087	6,734
48 to 49 weeks .....	762	861	231	272	531	589
40 to 47 weeks .....	2,339	2,380	738	793	1,602	1,587
27 to 39 weeks .....	3,103	3,129	1,049	1,000	2,055	2,129
14 to 26 weeks .....	4,513	4,733	1,759	1,704	2,754	3,029
1 to 13 weeks .....	5,953	5,900	2,394	2,164	3,559	3,736
Total who worked during the year <sup>1</sup> (percent) .....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time <sup>2</sup> .....	77.1	77.8	85.5	86.3	66.9	67.7
50 to 52 weeks .....	56.8	58.1	64.3	66.5	47.6	48.2
48 to 49 weeks .....	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.1	1.7	1.9
40 to 47 weeks .....	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.6	4.0	4.5
27 to 39 weeks .....	4.8	4.6	5.1	4.7	4.4	4.6
14 to 26 weeks .....	5.0	4.7	5.1	4.7	4.9	4.6
1 to 13 weeks .....	4.2	3.9	4.2	3.7	4.1	4.0
Part time <sup>3</sup> .....	22.9	22.2	14.5	13.7	33.1	32.3
50 to 52 weeks .....	8.8	8.1	5.0	4.7	13.4	12.2
48 to 49 weeks .....	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.4	1.0	1.1
40 to 47 weeks .....	2.0	2.0	1.1	1.2	3.0	2.9
27 to 39 weeks .....	2.6	2.6	1.6	1.5	3.9	3.9
14 to 26 weeks .....	3.8	3.9	2.7	2.6	5.2	5.5
1 to 13 weeks .....	5.1	4.9	3.7	3.3	6.7	6.8

<sup>1</sup>Time worked includes paid vacation and sick leave.

<sup>2</sup>Usually worked 35 hours or more per week.

<sup>3</sup>Usually worked 1 to 34 hours per week.

NOTE: These data reflect revised estimation procedures and are not comparable to data for prior years. Data for 1983 have been retabulated and differ from data previously published in the December 1984 issue.

**Table 2. Net changes between 1983 and 1984 by work pattern, sex, race, and Hispanic origin**  
[Numbers in thousands]

Work pattern	Net change, 1983-84					
	Total	Men	Women	White	Black	Hispanic <sup>1</sup>
Population aged 16 years and over .....	1,780	921	859	1,242	259	368
Persons who worked or looked for work .....	2,614	884	1,730	1,879	434	-386
Total who worked during the year .....	3,573	1,448	2,125	2,575	690	390
Full year (50 to 52 weeks) .....	3,210	2,253	957	2,523	444	282
Full time .....	3,675	2,364	1,310	2,996	466	269
Part time .....	-465	-111	-353	-473	-22	13
Part year (1 to 49 weeks) .....	364	-805	1,169	53	246	108
Full time .....	31	-569	600	-141	137	65
Part time .....	333	-236	569	194	109	43
Total full-time workers .....	3,706	1,796	1,910	2,855	603	334
Total part-time workers .....	-133	-348	216	-279	87	56
Total nonworkers .....	-1,793	-527	-1,267	-1,334	-431	-22
Looked for work .....	-959	-564	-395	-697	-255	-4
Did not look for work .....	-834	37	-871	-637	-176	-18

<sup>1</sup> Persons of Hispanic origin include whites, blacks, and others (not shown). This ethnic classification is not mutually exclusive from the racial breakdown shown.

been changing more rapidly than that of men, the record of work experience during the year gives quite a different picture of their relative contributions to growth. Nearly 60 percent of the additional 3.6 million persons holding jobs at some time during the year were women. (See table 2.) The proportion of all women reporting jobs rose from 57 percent in 1983 to 59 percent in 1984. The reviving economy also drew an additional 1.4 million men into the work force, raising the proportion of men with jobs to 78 percent.

Most of the year's entrants are, by definition, classed as part-year workers, as few of them manage to work 50 weeks or more. Thus, in a year with large employment increases, one would expect a large increase in the number of part-year workers. The fact that this classification declined by 800,000 for men and grew by less than 1.2 million for women suggests that several million workers with part-year jobs in 1983 had moved on to full-year positions during 1984. Indeed, 2.4 million additional men and 1.3 million additional women reported full-year, full-time work in 1984.

Other evidence of the lengthening work year included a net decline in the representation of men in all less-intense work schedules, and a marked decline in the extent of year-round, part-time employment, especially for women. The modest increase in total part-time employment for women was more than offset by the withdrawal of men from this schedule, resulting in a contraction of the part-time work force. At the same time, full-time employment rose sharply, by more than 3.7 million persons, during the year. More than half (1.9 million) of this net increase was attributable to women.

During 1984, 6 of 10 net entrants to the work force and more than half of the net additions to the full-time work force were women. Yet women contributed only about a third to the increase in year-round employment.

## Components of change in employment

The work experience survey adds additional perspective to our understanding of the components of change. It illustrates, for instance, which groups experience disproportionate gains within each work schedule category. For example, whites comprised 70 percent of the growth in the working age population between 1983 and 1984.<sup>3</sup> They supplied 72 percent of the total net growth in employment and were responsible for 77 percent of the growth in full-time employment, 79 percent of the growth in year-round jobs, and 82 percent of the increase in year-round, full-time work. By contrast, blacks made up about 15 percent of the growth in the working age population but accounted for more than two-thirds of the growth in part-year work: a reflection of their continued high unemployment and labor force entry and exit rates, as well as their relatively youthful population. Hispanics (an ethnic group including blacks, whites, and others) accounted for 21 percent of the growth in population. They contributed just 11 percent to overall growth in employment during the year but 30 percent to the part-year work force.

The proportion of men holding jobs during part or all of 1984 was roughly 8 of 10 for both whites and Hispanics, but just 7 of 10 for blacks. Proportionately more white than black women held jobs during the year (59 versus 57 percent). However, black women were more likely than white women to hold year-round, full-time jobs if they did work (54 versus 47 percent). (See table 3.)

Given the secular trend toward early retirement, it was not clear how responsive the elderly workers would be to improvements in overall labor demand. As table 4 indicates, women aged 60 and over showed no greater inclination to hold jobs in 1984 than they had in 1983. There was a modest increase in employment among men aged 60 to 61, but job holding at older ages continued to drop. Yet among those older persons who continued to work, there appeared to be some lengthening of the average work year, with a rise in the proportion of "active" men 55 to 64 and of "active" women 60 to 64 holding year-round, full-time jobs.

Not surprisingly, younger workers—who had experienced the sharpest job cutbacks in the early 1980's—registered significant gains in work experience in 1984, as well as in full-year, full-time employment. Persons 35 to 59, the groups registering the least expansion in these areas in 1984, had experienced the least job loss during the recession.

## The unemployment picture

About 21.5 million persons, or 17 percent of all who worked or looked for work during 1984, experienced some unemployment. (See table 5.) This was a marked decline from the peak figure (22 percent) registered in 1982, but still higher than that registered in the 1978-79 period (less than 16 percent). The proportions encountering some unemployment during the year were 18.1 percent for men and 16.5 percent for women. When the added effect of racial dispar-

ities is considered, the figures range from about 15 percent for white women to 29 percent for black men. (See table 6.) Values for the Hispanic community, which includes whites, blacks, and others, fell within this range.

Overall, about 16 percent of all whites, nearly 27 percent of all blacks, and about 23 percent of all Hispanics experienced one or more spells of joblessness during 1984. For each group, this was the lowest level recorded since 1979.

The incidence of unemployment during 1984 varied considerably by industry, as the figures below for wage and salary workers show:

Industry	Percent with unemployment
Total	15.9
Agriculture	28.8
Mining	23.6
Construction	35.1
Manufacturing	17.2
Durable goods	16.6
Nondurable goods	18.2
Transportation and public utilities	11.4
Wholesale and retail trade	17.9
Finance, insurance, and real estate	9.2
Services	12.6
Public administration	7.5

More than a third of all construction workers and nearly 3 of 10 persons in agriculture reported spells of joblessness, once again establishing these as the industries in which workers are most prone to encounter some unemployment. The decline in unemployment since the recession has been most notable in durable goods manufacturing, where 16.6 percent of the workers encountered some unemployment during 1984, down from 27.6 percent in 1982. The corresponding 2-year decline for construction workers was less than 6 percentage points, and for agriculture, less than 2. Agriculture was the only industry to register an absolute decline in employment between 1983 and 1984.

The extent of unemployment obviously affects the share of the total labor force able to work year round, and this is most apparent when one looks at the data by occupation. As table 7 illustrates, a low unemployment figure (such as was reported by executive, administrative, and managerial occupations, or by farm operators and managers) is likely to be associated with high proportions of year-round, full-time workers. However, the high unemployment occupations (such as the construction trades, operators, fabricators, and laborers) show a greater concentration of workers in part-year schedules.

At most, 4 of 5 workers in any occupational group shown held year-round, full-time jobs. In several occupations, including services (except for the protective services), construction trades, handlers, equipment cleaners and helpers, farmworkers and related occupations, and forestry and fishing occupations, fewer than half worked full time for the entire year. Most of these occupations were characterized by unusually high turnover and high unemployment.

**Duration of unemployment.** Of those experiencing some unemployment during the year, about 14 percent held no job whatsoever during that period. However, the figure for blacks was nearly 27 percent, reflecting the difficulties which blacks—especially the younger ones—face in finding jobs. (See table 6.)

For the most part, spells of unemployment during 1984 were somewhat shorter than those reported in 1983. The median length of time spent in search of a job (including multiple spells) dropped by 1.4 weeks, to 12.8 weeks. Whites and Hispanics each experienced a 1.6-week reduc-

**Table 3. Work experience of the population during the year by race, Hispanic origin, and sex, 1983–84**

(Numbers in thousands)

Extent of employment, race, and Hispanic origin	Total		Men		Women	
	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984
<b>White</b>						
Civilian noninstitutional population	152,047	153,289	72,546	73,180	79,501	80,109
Total who worked or looked for work	105,870	107,749	58,520	59,144	47,351	48,605
Percent of the population	69.6	70.3	80.7	80.8	59.6	60.7
Total who worked during the year <sup>1</sup>	103,243	105,818	57,274	58,324	45,969	47,494
Percent of the population	67.9	69.0	78.9	79.7	57.8	59.3
Total who worked during the year <sup>1</sup>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time <sup>2</sup>	77.0	77.8	85.8	86.8	66.0	66.8
50 to 52 weeks	56.8	58.3	64.9	67.3	46.8	47.3
27 to 49 weeks	11.2	11.2	12.0	11.4	10.2	10.9
1 to 26 weeks	8.9	8.3	8.9	8.1	9.0	8.6
Part time <sup>3</sup>	23.0	22.2	14.2	13.2	34.0	33.2
50 to 52 weeks	8.9	8.2	5.0	4.6	13.7	12.6
27 to 49 weeks	5.4	5.4	3.1	3.1	8.3	8.1
1 to 26 weeks	8.8	8.6	6.1	5.5	12.0	12.5
<b>Black</b>						
Civilian noninstitutional population	19,290	19,549	8,612	8,727	10,678	10,822
Total who worked or looked for work	12,560	12,994	6,234	6,297	6,326	6,697
Percent of the population	65.1	66.5	72.4	72.2	59.2	61.9
Total who worked during the year <sup>1</sup>	11,383	12,073	5,705	5,893	5,678	6,179
Percent of the population	59.0	61.8	66.2	67.5	53.2	57.1
Total who worked during the year <sup>1</sup>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time <sup>2</sup>	77.5	78.1	82.2	82.4	72.8	73.9
50 to 52 weeks	55.4	56.1	57.6	58.6	53.2	53.7
27 to 49 weeks	10.8	11.8	11.5	12.5	10.2	11.1
1 to 26 weeks	11.3	10.2	13.1	11.4	9.5	9.2
Part time <sup>3</sup>	22.5	21.9	17.8	17.6	27.2	26.1
50 to 52 weeks	7.9	7.3	5.0	5.3	10.9	9.2
27 to 49 weeks	4.6	4.3	3.7	2.9	5.4	5.6
1 to 26 weeks	10.0	10.3	9.2	9.4	10.8	11.3
<b>Hispanic origin</b>						
Civilian noninstitutional population	11,061	11,429	5,403	5,605	5,657	5,823
Total who worked or looked for work	7,409	7,795	4,378	4,567	3,030	3,228
Percent of the population	67.0	68.2	81.0	81.5	53.6	55.4
Total who worked during the year <sup>1</sup>	7,153	7,543	4,246	4,436	2,907	3,106
Percent of the population	64.7	66.0	78.6	79.1	51.4	53.3
Total who worked during the year <sup>1</sup>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time <sup>2</sup>	80.5	80.8	85.7	87.5	72.8	71.1
50 to 52 weeks	54.6	55.4	59.4	61.1	47.6	47.3
27 to 49 weeks	13.5	13.6	15.0	14.0	11.3	13.2
1 to 26 weeks	12.3	11.7	11.3	12.5	13.9	10.7
Part time <sup>3</sup>	19.5	19.2	14.3	12.5	27.2	28.9
50 to 52 weeks	7.2	7.0	5.2	4.5	10.1	10.5
27 to 49 weeks	4.3	4.4	2.9	2.8	6.2	6.6
1 to 26 weeks	8.1	7.9	6.1	5.2	10.9	11.8

<sup>1</sup>Time worked includes paid vacation and sick leave.

<sup>2</sup>Usually worked 35 hours or more per week.

<sup>3</sup>Usually worked 1 to 34 hours per week.

NOTE: These data reflect revised estimation procedures and are not comparable to data for prior years. Data for 1983 have been retabulated and differ from data previously published in the December 1984 issue. 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 Hispanics are included in both the white and black population groups.

**Table 4. Extent of employment by sex and age, 1983 and 1984**

Age (in years)	Percent of population 16 and over who worked during the year				Percent of year's work force with year-round, full time jobs			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984
Total .....	77.5	78.3	57.3	59.1	64.3	66.5	47.6	48.2
16 to 17 .....	46.2	49.7	40.4	46.8	1.6	2.2	0.5	1.0
18 to 19 .....	73.8	77.3	66.4	70.9	13.1	14.4	12.0	11.8
20 to 24 .....	86.8	88.1	76.0	78.1	41.0	43.1	37.3	37.6
25 to 34 .....	92.4	94.2	73.6	75.5	69.5	73.0	53.6	54.4
35 to 44 .....	94.0	94.1	73.2	74.3	79.2	81.7	55.1	55.3
45 to 54 .....	90.5	90.7	66.4	69.0	81.5	81.3	58.4	59.5
55 to 59 .....	81.9	81.8	53.6	55.8	77.0	79.3	55.9	55.9
60 to 61 .....	72.1	73.4	47.4	47.2	70.4	74.2	51.4	54.7
62 to 64 .....	60.1	58.1	34.6	34.8	61.4	62.4	46.4	48.7
65 to 69 .....	33.1	32.9	18.6	18.3	38.5	38.6	27.0	24.8
70 and over .....	15.6	15.1	6.4	6.7	26.9	26.6	18.9	14.6

tion in the median duration of unemployment. Blacks continued to report the longest spells, and the decline in their median length of unemployment amounted to just one-half week. This apparent stagnation masked the contradictory experiences among men and women. While the median spell for black women diminished by 3.4 weeks, and was the most impressive improvement registered, that for black men actually rose by 1.7 weeks, the only duration figure to rise during 1984.

*Unemployment and family income.* The following text tabulation shows the median income (exclusive of noncash transfers) for various types of families, by presence or absence of unemployment during the year:

Family structure	No member unemployed		At least one member with some unemployment	
	Median family income	Percent in poverty	Median family income	Percent in poverty
Married-couple families	\$33,960	4.1	\$25,713	12.0
Families maintained by:				
Women	17,225	17.8	10,427	41.6
Men	27,083	6.0	17,173	21.9
Persons not living in families	16,320	9.3	8,157	32.7

It should be noted that these groups are far from homogeneous: each has its own age and racial makeup. A disproportionate share of married-couple families are white, whereas families maintained by women are disproportionately black. In general, persons living alone are relatively young or old. And of course, unearned income (such as unemployment compensation, disability, military and Social Security benefits, and earnings on investments) affect each group's median differently.

Still, certain patterns are unmistakable. Within any given group, households are at least twice as likely to be classed as having income below the poverty line if some member experiences unemployment during the year. For example, in the absence of unemployment, less than 18 percent of the

households maintained by women were classified as being in poverty. Where some unemployment had occurred during the year more than half qualified as being "in poverty." Even among married-couple households, where the general incidence of poverty is relatively low, the families with some unemployment during the year were much more likely to be in poverty than those reporting no unemployment.

### Nonworkers

To round out the picture of economic activity during 1984, it is interesting to consider the segment of the adult population which held no job at all during the year. There were 56.5 million such persons, of which slightly more than two-thirds (68 percent) were women. Only 5 percent of the nonworkers were reported as having made any attempt to find employment during the year. Overall, 3 of 10 nonworkers reported that they were retired, a figure which is proba-

**Table 5. Extent of unemployment during the year by sex, 1983-84**

Extent of unemployment	Total		Men		Women	
	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984
<b>Numbers (in thousands)</b>						
Total who worked or looked for work	121,503	124,117	66,350	67,234	55,153	56,833
Percent with unemployment	19.6	17.4	21.0	18.1	17.8	16.5
Total with unemployment	23,762	21,535	13,919	12,174	9,842	9,361
Did not work but looked for work	3,928	2,969	1,838	1,274	2,091	1,696
1 to 14 weeks	1,643	1,355	508	375	1,135	979
15 weeks or more	2,285	1,615	1,330	898	956	716
Worked during the year	19,833	18,565	12,083	10,900	7,752	7,665
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	14.2	12.8	15.2	14.1	12.6	10.7
Year-round workers <sup>1</sup> with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	917	898	611	539	307	359
Part-year workers <sup>2</sup> with unemployment	18,916	17,668	11,471	10,362	7,445	7,306
1 to 4 weeks	3,356	3,702	1,709	1,750	1,647	1,952
5 to 10 weeks	3,594	3,628	2,063	2,033	1,530	1,594
11 to 14 weeks	2,544	2,351	1,581	1,443	963	907
15 to 26 weeks	4,965	4,377	3,232	2,759	1,733	1,618
27 weeks or more	4,457	3,610	2,885	2,376	1,572	1,234
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	6,428	6,147	4,255	4,027	2,173	2,120
2 spells	3,305	3,000	2,073	1,831	1,232	1,169
3 spells or more	3,123	3,147	2,182	2,196	941	952
<b>Percent distribution</b>						
Did not work but looked for work	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1 to 14 weeks	41.8	45.6	27.6	29.5	54.3	57.8
15 weeks or more	58.2	54.4	72.4	70.5	45.7	42.2
Worked during the year	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers <sup>1</sup> with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	4.6	4.8	5.1	4.9	4.0	4.7
Part-year workers <sup>2</sup> with unemployment	95.4	95.2	94.9	95.1	96.0	95.3
1 to 4 weeks	16.9	19.9	14.1	16.1	21.2	25.5
5 to 10 weeks	18.1	19.5	17.1	18.7	19.7	20.8
11 to 14 weeks	12.8	12.7	13.1	13.2	12.4	11.8
15 to 26 weeks	25.0	23.6	26.7	25.3	22.4	21.1
27 weeks or more	22.5	19.4	23.9	21.8	20.3	16.1
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	32.4	33.1	35.2	36.9	28.0	27.7
2 spells	16.7	16.2	17.2	16.8	15.9	15.2
3 spells or more	15.7	17.0	18.1	20.1	12.1	12.4

<sup>1</sup>Worked 50 or 51 weeks.

<sup>2</sup>Worked less than 50 weeks.

NOTE: These data reflect revised estimation procedures and are not comparable to data for prior years. Data for 1983 have been retabulated and differ from data previously published in the December 1984 issue.

bly understated because retired women often report themselves as homemakers. Retirees made up at least a third of the nonworking white population, but were much less prevalent in the black and Hispanic groups.

**Table 6. Extent of unemployment during the year by race, Hispanic origin, and sex, 1983-84**

[Numbers in thousands]

Extent of unemployment, race, and Hispanic origin	Total		Men		Women	
	1983	1984	1983	1984	1983	1984
<b>White</b>						
Total who worked or looked for work	105,870	107,749	58,520	59,144	47,351	48,605
Percent with unemployment	18.5	16.2	19.8	16.9	16.8	15.3
Total with unemployment	19,549	17,461	11,614	10,008	7,935	7,454
Did not work but looked for work	2,627	1,930	1,246	819	1,381	1,111
Worked during the year	16,922	15,531	10,369	9,188	6,553	6,343
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	13.8	12.2	14.8	13.4	12.0	10.2
Total who worked during the year (percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers <sup>1</sup> with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	4.9	5.1	5.3	5.3	4.3	4.8
Part-year workers <sup>2</sup> with unemployment	95.1	94.9	94.7	94.7	95.7	95.2
1 to 4 weeks	17.5	20.9	14.6	16.6	22.2	27.0
5 to 14 weeks	31.6	33.3	30.8	33.7	32.8	32.6
15 weeks or more	45.9	40.8	49.3	44.4	40.6	35.6
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	31.9	32.7	34.8	36.7	27.3	27.0
<b>Black</b>						
Total who worked or looked for work	12,560	12,994	6,234	6,297	6,326	6,697
Percent with unemployment	29.0	26.7	32.0	29.3	26.0	24.3
Total with unemployment	3,640	3,473	1,992	1,847	1,648	1,626
Did not work but looked for work	1,177	922	529	404	648	518
Worked during the year	2,462	2,551	1,463	1,443	1,000	1,108
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	18.0	17.4	18.5	20.2	17.3	13.9
Total who worked during the year (percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers <sup>1</sup> with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	2.6	3.6	3.0	2.8	2.0	4.6
Part-year workers <sup>2</sup> with unemployment	97.4	96.4	97.0	97.8	98.0	95.4
1 to 4 weeks	12.9	14.5	11.2	12.5	15.2	17.2
5 to 14 weeks	27.5	26.6	27.4	22.5	27.6	31.8
15 weeks or more	57.1	37.3	58.4	37.3	55.1	37.3
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	36.3	35.2	37.9	39.1	33.9	30.3
<b>Hispanic origin</b>						
Total who worked or looked for work	7,409	7,795	4,378	4,567	3,030	3,228
Percent with unemployment	24.7	22.8	26.3	25.0	22.4	19.7
Total with unemployment	1,830	1,778	1,151	1,144	680	634
Did not work but looked for work	256	252	132	131	124	121
Worked during the year	1,575	1,526	1,019	1,013	556	513
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	16.1	14.5	16.7	14.9	14.9	14.7
Total who worked during the year (percent)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers <sup>1</sup> with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	3.7	3.1	3.5	3.0	4.1	3.2
Part-year workers <sup>2</sup> with unemployment	96.3	96.9	96.5	97.0	95.9	96.8
1 to 4 weeks	15.7	16.1	14.2	14.6	18.4	19.3
5 to 14 weeks	28.1	32.6	28.3	32.8	27.8	32.0
15 weeks or more	52.5	48.2	54.0	49.5	49.7	45.4
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	34.9	35.4	37.6	38.6	30.0	29.2

<sup>1</sup>Worked 50 weeks or more.

<sup>2</sup>Worked less than 50 weeks.

NOTE: These data reflect revised estimation procedures and are not comparable to data for prior years. Data for 1983 have been retabulated and differ from data previously published in the December 1984 issue. 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 Hispanics are included in both the white and black population groups.

The single most frequently cited reason for refraining from work was home responsibilities. These were cited by nearly 2 of 3 of the Hispanic women, slightly more than half of the white women, and slightly more than a third of the black women who did not hold jobs. Roughly a quarter of all inactive black and Hispanic men explained their nonparticipation in terms of illness or disability; fewer than 20 percent of white men cited these reasons. Because of their relative youth, blacks and Hispanics were more likely than whites to cite school attendance or inability to find work as the primary cause of their inactivity.

During 1984, there was record growth in the work force, as women, blacks, and Hispanics established stronger footing within the economic arena. However, white men made the most significant gains, especially with regard to year-round, full-time employment.

There was ample evidence of a lengthened work year, both with respect to numbers of weeks worked and a decline

**Table 7. Incidence of unemployment, and proportion of workers on various work schedules, by occupation of longest job in 1984**

Occupation longest held	Experienced some unemployment	Full year <sup>1</sup>		Part year <sup>2</sup>	
		Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time
Total	15.3	58.1	8.1	19.7	14.0
Managerial, professional specialty occupations	6.8	73.7	5.2	13.2	7.8
Executive, administrators, managerial	6.5	80.7	4.0	11.7	3.6
Professional specialty occupations	7.0	67.6	6.3	14.7	11.4
Technical, sales, and administrative support	11.8	58.0	10.7	15.9	15.3
Technicians and related support	10.0	70.0	8.0	14.2	7.8
Sales occupations	13.2	52.9	12.1	14.5	20.6
Administrative support, including clerical	11.1	59.5	10.2	17.4	12.9
Service occupations	18.1	36.5	15.2	18.7	29.7
Private household	13.1	13.0	23.9	13.6	49.5
Protective services	11.1	67.3	4.3	16.8	11.6
Service, except private household	19.4	34.8	15.7	19.4	30.2
Precision production, craft, and repair	21.2	65.7	2.8	25.3	6.2
Mechanics and repairers	12.9	75.7	3.2	17.3	3.7
Construction trades	34.5	49.2	2.7	37.6	10.5
Other precision production, craft, and repair	14.4	74.6	2.6	19.2	3.7
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	26.0	53.8	4.8	30.9	10.5
Machine operators, assemblers, inspectors	24.9	60.9	2.8	31.0	5.4
Transportation and material moving	23.2	58.5	4.3	27.9	9.3
Handlers, equipment cleaners, and helpers	30.3	37.7	8.7	33.4	20.2
Farming, forestry, and fishing	19.1	44.7	8.2	26.6	20.5
Farm operators and managers	2.5	78.0	11.0	6.7	4.4
Farmworkers and related occupations	26.2	29.6	7.3	34.3	28.8
Forestry and fishing occupations	29.4	34.6	1.4	51.4	12.6
Armed forces occupations <sup>3</sup>	36.4	43.5	0.5	52.2	3.8

<sup>1</sup>150 to 52 weeks.

<sup>2</sup>Less than 50 weeks.

<sup>3</sup>Because these data exclude persons living on military bases and include those recently discharged from the military, they are not fully representative of the armed forces population.

in usual part-time schedules. Most demographic groups shared in the year's gains, but black men continued to report very serious unemployment problems. □

—FOOTNOTES—

<sup>1</sup>See Richard M. Devens, Jr., Carol Boyd Leon, and Debbie L. Sprinkle, "Employment and unemployment in 1984: a second year of strong growth in jobs," *Monthly Labor Review*, February 1985, pp. 3-15.

<sup>2</sup>During 1984, the proportion of whites with some employment during the year rose to within half a percentage point of the level registered in 1979. The proportion of blacks with jobs during all or part of the year was a full percentage point below, and for Hispanics, 2.3 percentage points below the figure reported in 1979.

<sup>3</sup>In reality, the population weights and estimates, and age references from the March survey correspond with survivors to that month, rather than all persons alive during the previous year. Thus, year-to-year population growth is measured from March 1984 to March 1985.

## Rise in mothers' labor force activity includes those with infants

HOWARD HAYGHE

The notion that mothers of preschool-aged children, especially infants, usually stay out of the labor force at least until their youngest child has entered elementary school has changed rapidly during the 1980's. At mid-decade, nearly half of the mothers are either entering or reentering the work force soon after giving birth. By the time their youngest child is 4 years of age, 60 percent are in the work force. This report introduces a newly expanded series of statistics that traces some of the profound changes that have occurred in the labor force participation rates of the mothers of young children.<sup>1</sup>

### Married mothers

In March 1985, nearly half of all wives (husband present) with infant children 1 year old or under were in the labor force, compared with only 31 percent in 1975. The proportion rises significantly until the youngest child reaches school age. Fifty-four percent of the mothers of 2-year-olds were working or looking for work in March, as were 62 percent of those with 5-year-olds. For mothers of school-age children the proportion ranged between 64 and 71 percent.<sup>2</sup> (See table 1.)

Altogether, about 25 million children—over half in married-couple families—are in families where the mother is absent from the home for part of the workday on a regular basis; almost all of these children have a working father (91 percent).<sup>3</sup> This latter fact, when linked to information on the

full- or part-time employment status of wives, helps provide some insight into the extent and nature of the demand for child care. In 1985, 65 percent of the employed mothers with children under age 3 worked full time, as did 67 percent of those with children 3 to 5 years old (none younger) and 70 percent of those whose youngest child was 6 to 17.<sup>4</sup>

*Race.* The labor force participation rates of black married mothers were considerably higher than those of white married mothers, especially when the youngest child was a preschooler. At 64 percent, the participation rate for black mothers with infant children (1 year or under) was 15 percentage points higher than the rate for whites. For the most part, this difference showed few signs of narrowing until the youngest child was 7 years or older. Even among mothers of older children, blacks maintained higher labor force participation rates.

Reasons underlying the higher participation rates of black mothers with very young children are both historical and economic. Black wives have a long history of participating in the labor market to a much greater extent than their white counterparts, impelled in part by the relatively greater labor force difficulties of black than white husbands. In March 1985, for instance, the unemployment rate for black fathers with preschool children was 10.2 percent, compared with 5 percent for the white fathers; for those whose youngest child was of school age, the unemployment rates were 6.3 percent for black fathers and 4.2 percent for white fathers. In addition, median usual weekly earnings of black husbands who were full-time wage and salary earners in the third quarter of 1985 were \$353, or 77 percent of the \$459 for white husbands.<sup>5</sup>

Along with their generally higher labor force participation rates, employed black mothers usually work more weeks each year than white mothers, and a substantially larger proportion work all year at full-time jobs. This is true for mothers of preschoolers as well as school-age children; among those with children under age 3, 47 percent of the blacks worked year round, full time in 1984, compared with 31 percent of the whites. The proportions were 65 percent (for blacks) and 35 percent (for whites) for those with 3- to 5-year-olds. As a consequence of these marked differences, median earnings of black wives with preschoolers were \$10,480 overall in 1984, compared with \$7,020 for whites; for wives with school-age children, the earnings were \$12,010 (for blacks) and \$8,800 (for whites).<sup>6</sup>

However, the higher earnings of black mothers do not translate into higher total *family* income because of the significant difference between the earnings of black husbands and white husbands. The 1984 median income of black married-couple families with preschool children was \$22,480, compared with \$27,800 for whites.<sup>7</sup>

### Single-parent mothers

Because single-parent mothers are often the sole support of themselves and their children, they are far more likely to

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