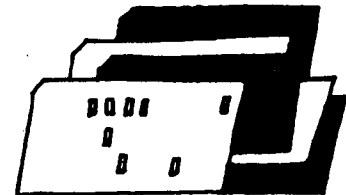


Research Summaries



Work experience of the labor force during 1985

SHIRLEY J. SMITH

During 1985, the third calendar year following the recession of 1981-82, the Nation's employment growth was steady but less dramatic than it had been in 1984. The most impressive employment gains in 1985 occurred among blacks, whose employment recovery had lagged behind that of whites in the 2 previous years. Full-time employment was increasingly common while part-time work did not keep pace with population growth. An expanding share of both the white and especially the black work force reported itself to be holding full-time jobs. The share of the population reporting no work experience at all during the year continued to contract.

More than 123 million persons, about 69 percent of all those age 16 and over, held jobs during all or part of 1985. Of these, roughly 3 of 5 held year-round, full-time jobs. About 21 million persons experienced some unemployment during the year, half a million fewer than during the previous year.

These findings are derived from the work experience survey, conducted each March as a supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly survey of about 59,500 households nationwide. The basic CPS data detail the labor force activities of household members during a specific reference week each month. These data provide policymakers with timely information on the changes occurring within the economy. They are also frequently cited in the form of annual averages, which show the situation in a series of "typical" weeks during the year.

The March CPS supplement on work experience provides a different vantage point on labor force activity than do the monthly data,¹ as it demonstrates the extent to which members of various groups have participated in the labor force during all or any part of the previous year. Certain groups, such as youth, minorities, older workers, and women of most ages, exhibit particularly high labor turnover. Members of these groups are far more likely to hold jobs or look for work at some point during the year than to do so during

a "typical" week. Thus, contrasts between estimates based on behavior during an average week and those based on a full year's activity highlight the particular nature of a group's labor force attachment. Consider the following comparisons between the CPS, 12-month average and the work experience data for 1985:

	Average of 12 months (Numbers in thousands)	Work experience data	Percent difference
Total employed	107,150	123,466	15.2
Teenagers	6,433	8,937	38.9
Adult men	56,563	62,643	10.7
Adult women	44,154	51,886	17.5
White	93,736	107,434	14.6
Black	10,501	12,567	19.7
Usual full-time workers	88,534	96,472	9.0
Usual part-time workers	18,615	26,993	45.0
Total unemployed	8,312	20,984	152.5
White	6,191	17,054	175.7
Black	1,864	3,321	78.2

High turnover groups are easily spotted by the fact that so many more people are captured in the work experience data than in the annual average counts. For instance, the number of persons reported to have held part-time jobs during at least part of 1985 was 45 percent larger than the average for the typical week of that year. The corresponding differential for full-time workers was only 9 percent. Nearly three times as many whites experienced unemployment during some part of the year as reported doing so during the average week. The contrast between weekly and yearly counts is much smaller for blacks, because of their longer spells of unemployment, which in turn increase the odds of their being counted as jobless in successive months. This inflates the monthly (and, therefore, annual average) data relative to the March counts, where persons can be so classified only once.

Varying the reference period in this way affects not only overall counts, but also our sense of the proportionate roles of the different groups in the total. For instance, although only 17 percent of all workers held part-time jobs in an average month, the share of those holding jobs during any part of the year who usually did so was about 22 percent. Similarly, blacks made up 22 percent of the monthly unemployment count but only 16 percent of the total seeking employment at any time during the year.²

Shirley J. Smith is a demographic statistician in the Division of Labor Force Statistics, Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Persons with employment

Although more men than women report having worked during any given year, the sex differential in work experience is clearly narrowing. Between 1973 and 1985, the share of adult men reporting some employment during the year dropped 5 percentage points, while that for women rose by about 6 percentage points:

	Percent who worked during reference year		
	Total	Employed full time	Employed year round
Total:			
1973	67.8	79.3	64.1
1985	68.6	78.1	67.0
Men:			
1973	83.7	87.4	72.3
1985	78.8	86.5	71.6
Women:			
1973	53.6	68.1	52.6
1985	59.4	68.1	61.2

In the same vein, there was a slight erosion in the share of all men with employment during the year who worked

year round (50 weeks or more), full time (35 hours or more per week). The full-time component of the female work force has held steady, while there has been a marked increase in their share reporting full-year schedules. The net effect of these developments has been a modest drop in full-time employment but a 3-percentage-point gain in year-round work.

Although a 2.3 million increase in numbers of persons holding jobs during 1985 represented clear growth, the pace of this expansion had obviously slowed from the record 3.6 million increase posted the previous year. The bulk of the 1985 increase was registered in year-round, full-time jobs. (See table 1.) The proportion working part time continued to fall, though there was a slight increase in the absolute number on such schedules.

Nearly 90 percent of the men who worked during 1985 did so full time, and about two-thirds held such jobs year round. Two-thirds of all working women maintained full-time schedules, and about half did so for 50 weeks or more.

The most spectacular employment gains during 1985 were posted by blacks. (See table 2.) The share of all blacks

Table 1. Work experience of the population during the year by sex and extent of employment, 1984-85

Extent of employment	Total		Men		Women	
	1984	1985	1984	1985	1984	1985
Numbers (in thousands)						
Civilian noninstitutional population	177,661	179,944	84,206	85,454	93,455	94,490
Total who worked or looked for work	124,117	125,890	67,234	68,270	56,883	57,620
Percent of the population	69.9	70.0	79.8	79.9	60.9	61.0
Total who worked during the year ¹	121,148	123,466	65,960	67,301	55,188	56,165
Percent of the population	68.2	68.6	78.3	78.8	59.1	59.4
Full time ²	94,312	96,472	56,928	58,206	37,384	38,266
50 to 52 weeks	70,419	72,422	43,833	44,952	26,585	27,470
48 to 49 weeks	2,451	2,485	1,408	1,469	1,043	1,016
40 to 47 weeks	5,502	5,603	3,046	3,169	2,456	2,434
27 to 39 weeks	5,617	5,527	3,095	3,119	2,522	2,408
14 to 26 weeks	5,635	5,759	3,081	3,114	2,554	2,645
1 to 13 weeks	4,689	4,676	2,464	2,383	2,224	2,293
Part time ³	26,836	26,993	9,032	9,094	17,804	17,899
50 to 52 weeks	9,832	10,188	3,099	3,262	6,734	6,926
48 to 49 weeks	861	731	272	204	589	527
40 to 47 weeks	2,380	2,559	793	836	1,587	1,724
27 to 39 weeks	3,129	3,263	1,000	1,112	2,129	2,150
14 to 26 weeks	4,733	4,707	1,704	1,665	3,029	3,042
1 to 13 weeks	5,900	5,545	2,164	2,015	3,736	3,530
Percent distribution						
Total who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	77.8	78.1	86.3	86.5	67.7	68.1
50 to 52 weeks	58.1	58.7	66.5	66.8	48.2	48.9
48 to 49 weeks	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.2	1.9	1.8
40 to 47 weeks	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.5	4.3
27 to 39 weeks	4.6	4.5	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.3
14 to 26 weeks	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.7
1 to 13 weeks	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.5	4.0	4.1
Part time ³	22.2	21.9	13.7	13.5	32.3	31.9
50 to 52 weeks	8.1	8.3	4.7	4.8	12.2	12.3
48 to 49 weeks7	.6	.4	.3	1.1	.9
40 to 47 weeks	2.0	2.1	1.2	1.2	2.9	3.1
27 to 39 weeks	2.6	2.6	1.5	1.7	3.9	3.8
14 to 26 weeks	3.9	3.8	2.6	2.5	5.5	5.4
1 to 13 weeks	4.9	4.5	3.3	3.0	6.8	6.3

¹ Time worked includes paid vacation and sick leave.

² Usually worked 35 hours or more per week.

³ Usually worked 1 to 34 hours per week.

NOTE: Figures for 1985 are not strictly comparable with those for 1984, because of the revision of population weights.

holdings jobs during the year rose sharply, as did the share working year round. Most of these gains were achieved by black men. However, black women also registered some substantial gains. In particular, they increased the margin by which they led white women in reporting full-time work and narrowed the margin by which they followed them with respect to overall work experience.

Persons with unemployment

During 1985, 21 million workers—or roughly 1 in 6 of

those in the labor market—experienced some unemployment. This was $2\frac{1}{2}$ times the annual average figure, about the same ratio as in 1984. The median duration of joblessness was little changed from the previous year at 12.6 weeks, and was about 2 weeks longer for men than for women. (See table 3.) Of all those who reported themselves to have been unemployed during 1985, a third experienced two or more spells of joblessness. Nine of 10 held a job for at least some portion of the year, and the unemployment experience for 1 in 20 was sufficiently limited for them to also be classed as

Table 2. Work experience of the population during the year by sex, race, and Hispanic origin, 1984–85
[Numbers in thousands]

Characteristic	Total		Men		Women	
	1984	1985	1984	1985	1984	1985
WHITE						
Civilian noninstitutional population	153,289	155,003	73,180	74,169	80,109	80,834
Total who worked or looked for work	107,749	109,060	59,144	59,924	48,605	49,136
Percent of the population	70.3	70.4	80.8	80.8	60.7	60.8
Total who worked during the year ¹	105,818	107,434	58,324	59,264	47,494	48,170
Percent of the population	69.0	69.3	79.7	79.9	59.3	59.6
Percent distribution						
Total who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	77.8	78.0	86.8	86.8	66.8	67.0
50 to 52 weeks	58.3	58.8	67.3	67.6	47.3	48.1
27 to 49 weeks	11.2	11.0	11.4	11.5	10.9	10.4
1 to 26 weeks	8.3	8.2	8.1	7.8	8.6	8.6
Part time ³	22.2	22.0	13.2	13.2	33.2	33.0
50 to 52 weeks	8.2	8.4	4.6	4.8	12.6	12.9
27 to 49 weeks	5.4	5.4	3.1	3.1	8.1	8.3
1 to 26 weeks	8.6	8.2	5.5	5.3	12.5	11.8
BLACK						
Civilian noninstitutional population	19,549	19,814	8,727	8,833	10,822	10,980
Total who worked or looked for work	12,994	13,297	6,297	6,504	6,697	6,793
Percent of the population	66.5	67.1	72.2	73.6	61.9	61.9
Total who worked during the year ¹	12,073	12,567	5,893	6,212	6,179	6,356
Percent of the population	61.8	63.4	67.5	70.3	57.1	57.9
Percent distribution						
Total who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	78.1	79.4	82.4	83.7	73.9	75.2
50 to 52 weeks	56.1	57.3	58.6	60.7	53.7	54.0
27 to 49 weeks	11.8	11.5	12.5	11.9	11.1	11.2
1 to 26 weeks	10.2	10.6	11.4	11.1	9.2	10.1
Part time ³	21.9	20.6	17.6	16.3	26.1	24.8
50 to 52 weeks	7.3	7.1	5.3	5.2	9.2	8.9
27 to 49 weeks	4.3	4.0	2.9	3.5	5.6	4.6
1 to 26 weeks	10.3	9.5	9.4	7.6	11.3	11.3
HISPANIC ORIGIN						
Civilian noninstitutional population	11,429	12,224	5,605	6,047	5,823	6,178
Total who worked or looked for work	7,795	8,252	4,567	4,891	3,228	3,361
Percent of the population	68.2	67.5	81.5	80.9	55.4	54.4
Total who worked during the year ¹	7,543	8,024	4,436	4,794	3,106	3,230
Percent of the population	66.0	65.6	79.1	79.3	53.3	52.3
Percent distribution						
Total who worked during the year ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ²	80.8	81.9	87.5	87.4	71.1	73.8
50 to 52 weeks	55.4	55.6	61.1	60.5	47.3	48.3
27 to 49 weeks	13.6	14.1	14.0	15.3	13.2	12.3
1 to 26 weeks	11.7	12.3	12.5	11.6	10.7	13.2
Part time ³	19.2	18.1	12.5	12.6	28.9	26.2
50 to 52 weeks	7.0	6.9	4.5	5.1	10.5	9.5
27 to 49 weeks	4.4	4.2	2.8	2.8	6.6	6.2
1 to 26 weeks	7.9	7.0	5.2	4.7	11.8	10.5

¹ Time worked includes paid vacation and sick leave.

² Usually worked 35 hours or more per week.

³ Usually worked 1 to 34 hours per week.

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 Hispanics are included in both the white and black population groups. Figures for 1985 are not strictly comparable with those for 1984, because of the revision of population weights.

Table 3. Extent of unemployment during the year by sex, 1984-85

Extent of unemployment	Total		Men		Women	
	1984	1985	1984	1985	1984	1985
Numbers (in thousands)						
Total who worked or looked for work	124,117	125,890	67,234	68,270	56,883	57,620
Percent with unemployment	17.4	16.7	18.1	17.2	16.5	16.0
Total with unemployment	21,535	20,984	12,174	11,754	9,361	9,230
Did not work but looked for work	2,969	2,424	1,274	970	1,696	1,455
1 to 14 weeks	1,355	1,202	375	335	979	867
15 weeks or more	1,615	1,222	898	635	716	587
Worked during the year	18,565	18,560	10,900	10,784	7,665	7,775
Year-round workers ¹ with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	898	906	539	582	359	325
Part-year workers ² with unemployment	17,668	17,654	10,362	10,203	7,306	7,451
1 to 4 weeks	3,702	3,779	1,750	1,804	1,952	1,975
5 to 10 weeks	3,628	3,594	2,033	2,051	1,594	1,542
11 to 14 weeks	2,351	2,547	1,443	1,573	907	975
15 to 26 weeks	4,377	4,415	2,759	2,751	1,618	1,664
27 weeks or more	3,610	3,319	2,376	2,024	1,234	1,294
Median weeks of unemployment for all workers	12.8	12.6	14.1	13.4	10.7	11.2
With 2 or more spells of unemployment	6,147	5,955	4,027	3,866	2,120	2,090
2 spells	3,000	2,960	1,831	1,880	1,169	1,080
3 or more spells	3,147	2,995	2,196	1,986	952	1,010
Percent distribution						
Did not work but looked for work	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1 to 14 weeks	45.6	49.6	29.5	34.5	57.8	59.6
15 weeks or more	54.4	50.4	70.5	65.5	42.2	40.4
Worked during the year	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ¹ with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	4.8	4.9	4.9	5.4	4.7	4.2
Part-year workers ² with unemployment	95.2	95.1	95.1	94.6	95.3	95.8
1 to 4 weeks	19.9	20.4	16.1	16.7	25.5	25.4
5 to 10 weeks	19.5	19.4	18.7	19.0	20.8	19.8
11 to 14 weeks	12.7	13.7	13.2	14.6	11.8	12.5
15 to 26 weeks	23.6	23.8	25.3	25.5	21.1	21.4
27 weeks or more	19.4	17.9	21.8	18.8	16.1	16.6
With 2 or more spells of unemployment	33.1	32.1	36.9	35.8	27.7	26.9
2 spells	16.2	15.9	16.8	17.4	15.2	13.9
3 or more spells	17.0	16.1	20.1	18.4	12.4	13.0

¹ Worked 50 or 51 weeks.

² Worked fewer than 50 weeks.

NOTE: Data on median weeks of unemployment include the unemployment experience of persons who held jobs for 50 weeks or more. This measure was previously calculated based on the experience of part-year workers only. Figures for 1985 are not strictly comparable with those for 1984, because of the revision of population weights.

year-round (50 to 52 week) workers.

The unemployed as a proportion of all those with labor force experience during the year dropped by nearly a percentage point for men; yet, at 17.2 percent, it was still somewhat higher than the 15.7 percent registered in 1979. At 16.0 percent, the rate for women had returned to its 1979 level.

Less than 16 percent of all white workers were unemployed during 1985; the rate fell by only half a percentage point. By contrast, the proportion of all blacks experiencing unemployment during the year dropped 1.7 percentage points between 1984 and 1985. Despite this sizable improvement, 25 percent of all blacks still faced at least 1 week of unemployment during the year. (See table 4.)

Patterns of redistribution by work schedule

The growth of year-round employment outpaced that of the adult population by nearly 2 percentage points between 1984 and 1985. The expansion of the year-round work force was particularly rapid for black men and, to a lesser extent, white women. Both of these groups, as well as black women, registered their most impressive gains in full-year,

full-time employment; white men registered their greatest relative gains in full-year, part-time work.³

Overall, both the full-year and full-time components of the work force grew relative to the population. As existing labor force attachments became stronger, there was also a net shift of persons previously outside the work force into employment. This shift was particularly strong among black men. The number of black men with work experience during the year grew more than 4 percentage points faster than might have been expected on the basis of population growth alone. The comparable gain in work experience for black women outpaced their own population growth by 1.4 percentage points. Both groups appeared to be shifting from part- to full-time employment, particularly in a full-year, full-time capacity. □

FOOTNOTES

¹ Basic CPS labor force data are normally referred to as monthly data although technically they pertain to the week that includes the 12th of the month.

² Analysis of labor force changes between 1984 and 1985 has been complicated by a January 1986 revision of the population weights used to

inflate CPS findings. The most important change was the introduction of an allowance for the inflow of undocumented aliens into this country. The net effect of this and other corrections was an estimated upward revision of the total civilian noninstitutional population age 16 and over (between December 1985 and January 1986) of 388,000, or two-tenths of 1 percent. These additions were concentrated among employed white men, particularly those between the ages of 25 and 54, and especially among persons of

Hispanic origin. The reader should keep these revisions in mind in comparing estimated levels for 1984 and 1985. See Jeffrey S. Passel, "Changes in the estimation procedure in the Current Population Survey beginning in January 1986," *Employment and Earnings*, February 1986, pp. 7-10.

³ See Shirley J. Smith, "The growing diversity of work schedules," *Monthly Labor Review*, November 1986, pp. 7-13.

Table 4. Extent of unemployment during the year by race, Hispanic origin, and sex, 1984-85
[Numbers in thousands]

Characteristic	Total		Men		Women	
	1984	1985	1984	1985	1984	1985
WHITE						
Total who worked or looked for work	107,749	109,060	59,144	59,924	48,605	49,136
Percent with unemployment	16.2	15.6	16.9	16.2	15.3	14.9
Percent distribution						
Total with unemployment	17,461	17,054	10,008	9,718	7,454	7,336
Did not work but looked for work	1,930	1,626	819	660	1,111	966
Worked during the year	15,531	15,428	9,188	9,059	6,343	6,369
Total who worked during the year	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ¹ with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.7	4.8	4.4
Part-year workers ² with unemployment	94.9	94.8	94.7	94.3	95.2	95.6
1 to 4 weeks	20.9	21.4	16.6	17.4	27.0	27.2
5 to 14 weeks	33.3	33.7	33.7	34.1	32.6	32.9
15 weeks or more	40.8	39.7	44.4	42.8	35.6	35.3
Percent with 2 or more spells of unemployment	32.7	31.6	36.7	35.6	27.0	25.9
Median weeks of unemployment	12.2	12.0	13.4	13.0	10.2	10.4
BLACK						
Total who worked or looked for work	12,994	13,297	6,297	6,504	6,697	6,793
Percent with unemployment	26.7	25.0	29.3	25.9	24.3	24.1
Total with unemployment	3,473	3,321	1,847	1,685	1,626	1,636
Did not work but looked for work	922	730	404	292	518	438
Worked during the year	2,551	2,591	1,443	1,393	1,108	1,199
Percent distribution						
Total who worked during the year	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ¹ with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	3.6	3.0	2.8	3.0	4.6	2.9
Part-year workers ² with unemployment	96.4	97.0	97.8	97.0	95.4	97.1
1 to 4 weeks	14.5	13.7	12.5	12.0	17.2	15.6
5 to 14 weeks	26.6	30.0	22.5	30.6	31.8	29.2
15 weeks or more	37.3	53.4	37.3	54.4	37.3	52.2
Percent with 2 or more spells of unemployment	35.2	35.6	39.1	38.1	30.3	32.7
Median weeks of unemployment	17.4	16.5	20.2	17.0	13.9	16.1
HISPANIC ORIGIN						
Total who worked or looked for work	7,795	8,252	4,567	4,891	3,228	3,361
Percent with unemployment	22.8	22.6	25.0	24.4	19.7	19.9
Total with unemployment	1,778	1,865	1,144	1,194	634	670
Did not work but looked for work	252	229	131	97	121	132
Worked during the year	1,526	1,636	1,013	1,097	513	539
Percent distribution						
Total who worked during the year	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ¹ with 1 or 2 weeks of unemployment	3.1	3.6	3.0	3.6	3.2	3.8
Part-year workers ² with unemployment	96.9	96.4	97.0	96.4	96.8	96.2
1 to 4 weeks	16.1	16.5	14.6	13.6	19.3	22.3
5 to 14 weeks	32.6	31.9	32.8	32.4	32.0	30.8
15 weeks or more	48.2	48.0	49.5	50.4	45.4	43.2
Percent with 2 or more spells of unemployment	35.4	33.8	38.6	37.9	29.2	25.6
Median weeks of unemployment	14.5	14.5	14.9	15.1	14.7	13.1

¹ Worked 50 weeks or more.

² Worked fewer than 50 weeks.

NOTE: Data on median weeks of unemployment include the unemployment experience of persons who held jobs for 50 weeks or more. This measure was previously calculated

based on the experience of part-year workers only. 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. Figures for 1985 are not strictly comparable with those for 1984, because of the revision of population weights.