



Work experience of the population in 1979

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In any year, millions of Americans leave the labor force to enroll in school, take care of a home, raise a family, enjoy the fruits of retirement, or recover from an illness. Meanwhile, millions more enter the labor force to replace outgoing workers and to take the additional jobs the economy provides each year. Among the entrants are high school and college graduates seeking their first jobs, homemakers reentering the labor market, and veterans of the Armed Forces seeking civilian jobs. In addition, there are millions of workers who are in the labor market for the entire year but who change jobs or experience one period or more of unemployment.

The work experience data from the March Current Population Survey show many of these transitions¹ and provide a picture of labor market activities of the entire population during the course of a year. The total number of Americans who worked for at least 1 week in 1979 was 113 million, 16 percent larger than the average employment level for that year. That is, more persons work at some time during the year than at any given time of the year. Similarly, many more persons experience unemployment during the year than in any given month. Many workers become unemployed but quickly find other jobs while others remain unemployed for many weeks. Turnover of unemployed workers during 1979 amounted to 18 million persons. This figure is three times larger than the average number of persons who were unemployed during the year.

This report examines the extent to which Americans participated in the labor force, worked, or looked for work during 1979. It also takes a look at changes in work activity over the past decade as reflected in the work experience data.

Employment highlights

The 113 million persons 16 years of age and over who were employed during all or part of 1979 repre-

sented an increase of 2.4 million over the 1978 total. (See table 1.) This gain was not as large as increases posted during the 1976-78 period, when, with the economy recovering from the 1975 recession, the number of persons with some employment during the year was growing by an average of 3 million annually.

Women continued to enter the labor market in record numbers during 1979. About 1.5 million more women worked at some time during the year than during 1978, and almost 700,000 more were working all year at full-time jobs. Women, ages 25 to 34, the "baby boom cohorts," continued to account for the bulk of the employment gains, which made up 1.0 of the 1.5-million increase in women with jobs. Higher levels of education, smaller families, changing social attitudes, and the rising cost of raising a family, help to account for the large increases in the employment of women in this age group.

Although men accounted for more than one-third of the employment gains in 1979, most of their employment increase was in full-time year-round jobs. This type of work accounted for about 80 percent of the increase in jobs among men. As in the case of women, the group of men with the largest employment gains were those 25 to 34 years old, a rapidly expanding population group.

As in 1978, white women were more likely to have worked during the year than either black or Hispanic women (58 vs. 56 and 54 percent). However, black and Hispanic women who do work have relatively more full-time employment than white women (75 and 76 vs. 67 percent). Hispanic women traditionally have been less likely to work outside the home but since 1976, the first year data were available on Hispanics, there has been a significant increase in the number of Hispanic women who worked during the year. In this 4-year period, the number of Hispanic women with jobs has increased by 24 percent compared with an 11-percent increase among white women, and a 13-percent increase among black women.

Hispanic men have always had high labor force par-

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ticipation rates even though their educational attainment levels are low, usually a strong indicator of a group's labor force activities. Hispanic and white men were more likely to have worked in 1979 than black men (84 and 82 vs. 72 percent). From 1978 to 1979, however, the proportion of black men who worked full time all year increased by 2 percentage points over the previous year. Nevertheless, both black and Hispanic men were still less likely to have worked all year at full-time jobs than white men (59 and 61 vs. 67 percent).

The number of persons experiencing unemployment at some time during the year rose slightly in 1979. (See table 2.) The number of persons with unemployment

dropped, reaching 17.7 million in 1978, compared with the 1975 recession high of 21.1 million. Between 1978 and 1979, unemployment increased by 230,000, and totaled 18.0 million. This was attributable to an increase of 380,000 in the number of persons who encountered some unemployment but also worked during the year and a decline of 150,000 in the number who looked for work but never held a job during the year. The number of unemployed persons in 1979 represented 15.7 percent of all those who worked or looked for work, not much different than the percentage in 1978, but well below the 20.2 percent in 1975.

Although the probability of women becoming unemployed during the course of a year is slightly higher than for men (16 vs. 15 percent), the average spell of unemployment is shorter for women than for men. About 66 percent of all women who encountered unemployment in 1979 searched for jobs for less than 15 weeks, compared with 59 percent of all men. Women are also less likely than men to experience two periods or more of joblessness during the year. In 1979, 28 percent of all women who worked during the year and were unemployed at some time had two periods or more of unemployment compared with 36 percent of all men.

Close to 1 million women who were unemployed in 1979 might be classified as "casual jobseekers," that is, they looked for employment for shorter periods, were unable to find the jobs they wanted, and then dropped out of the labor force. Women who did not work during the year and looked for employment for less than 15 weeks totaled 923,000 and made up 11 percent of all women who were unemployed at some time in 1979. By comparison, the number of men in this same category numbered 339,000 and made up only 3 percent of all men with unemployment in 1979.

Whites continued to experience less unemployment during 1979 than either blacks or Hispanics (15 vs. 24 and 22 percent). Blacks and Hispanics also were unemployed for longer periods. (See tables 2 and 3.) Close to half of all blacks with unemployment during 1979 looked for work unsuccessfully for 15 weeks or more, while less than one-third of all whites were unemployed for that long a period.

The 1970's in perspective

One of the most significant developments of the 1970's was the continuing rapid entry of women into the labor force. Since 1969, the number of women who worked during the year has increased by 11.8 million, while the gain among men has only been 8.5 million. Since 1973, the year-to-year increase in employment has always been larger for women than for men.

Since 1969, the proportion of working-age women with jobs during the year has increased by 5 percentage

Table 1. Work experience during the year of persons 16 years and over, by extent of employment, race, and sex, 1978 and 1979

Extent of employment	Both sexes		Men		Women	
	1978	1979 ¹	1978	1979 ¹	1978	1979 ¹
Numbers in thousands						
ALL PERSONS						
Population	160,756	163,410	76,070	77,362	84,686	86,048
Worked during the year ² :						
Number	110,290	112,721	61,917	62,843	48,373	49,879
Percent of population	68.6	69.0	81.4	81.2	57.1	58.0
Percent distribution						
Persons who worked during the year	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ³ :	79.1	79.0	87.9	87.6	67.8	68.1
50 to 52 weeks	56.4	56.4	66.3	66.5	43.7	43.7
1 to 49 weeks	22.7	22.5	21.6	21.1	24.1	24.3
Part-time ⁴ :	20.9	21.0	12.1	12.4	32.2	31.9
50 to 52 weeks	7.0	7.1	4.0	4.2	10.9	10.8
1 to 49 weeks	13.9	13.9	8.1	8.2	21.3	21.1
Numbers in thousands						
WHITE						
Population	140,999	143,114	67,187	68,241	73,812	74,873
Worked during the year ² :						
Number	97,603	99,773	55,378	56,183	42,226	43,591
Percent of population	69.2	69.7	82.4	82.3	57.2	58.2
Percent distribution						
Persons who worked during the year	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ³ :	78.9	78.8	88.1	87.8	66.8	67.1
50 to 52 weeks	56.8	56.8	67.2	67.3	43.0	43.3
1 to 49 weeks	22.1	22.0	20.9	20.5	23.7	23.8
Part-time ⁴ :	21.1	21.2	11.9	12.2	33.2	32.9
50 to 52 weeks	7.2	7.3	4.1	4.3	11.2	11.2
1 to 49 weeks	13.9	13.9	7.8	7.9	22.0	21.7
Numbers in thousands						
BLACK⁵						
Population	16,794	17,201	7,475	7,664	9,319	9,537
Worked during the year ² :						
Number	10,655	10,844	5,426	5,525	5,229	5,320
Percent of population	63.4	63.0	72.6	72.1	56.1	55.8
Percent distribution						
Persons who worked during the year	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time ³ :	80.7	80.3	86.2	85.4	74.9	75.0
50 to 52 weeks	52.5	53.4	57.1	59.3	47.8	47.2
1 to 49 weeks	28.1	26.9	29.1	26.1	27.1	27.8
Part-time ⁴ :	19.4	19.7	13.8	14.6	25.1	25.0
50 to 52 weeks	6.2	6.0	3.4	3.7	9.0	8.3
1 to 49 weeks	13.2	13.8	10.4	10.9	16.1	16.7

¹ Data for 1979 have been updated from what was previously issued in Press Release 80-575.

² Time worked includes paid vacation and sick leave.

³ Usually worked 35 hours or more.

⁴ Usually worked 1 to 34 hours per week.

⁵ Blacks only.

points while the proportion of men with work declined by 4. By far, the age group that has contributed the most to these gains are women 25 to 34 years. In 1969, 56 percent of all women in this age group held jobs; in 1979, that figure had jumped to 74 percent, an increase of 18 percentage points. By contrast, the proportion of employed men in this same age group slipped slightly, from 98 to 96 percent over the same period. The expanded participation of women 25 to 34 years of age and the large increase in their numbers caused by the inflow of the baby boom cohorts have made this demo-

graphic group one of the major growth components of the employment picture in the 1970's. (See table 4.)²

As in past years, decreasing participation among older workers continued to be observed in 1979. Both men and women 55 years and older are less likely to work today than their counterparts of a decade ago. From 1969 to 1979, the proportion of men over age 55 with some employment during the year has declined from 64 to 52 percent and the proportion of women with jobs has dropped from 32 to 27 percent. In spite of legislation minimizing mandatory retirement, many

Table 2. Persons 16 years and over who experienced some unemployment during the year, by race and sex, 1975, 1978, and 1979

Extent of unemployment	Both sexes			Men		Women	
	1975	1978	1979 ¹	1978	1979 ¹	1978	1979 ¹
ALL PERSONS							
Numbers in thousands							
Persons who worked or looked for work during the year	104,442	112,362	114,648	62,680	63,490	49,683	51,158
Percent with unemployment	20.2	15.8	15.7	15.3	15.4	16.4	16.0
Persons with unemployment	21,104	17,738	17,971	9,572	9,764	8,166	8,207
Did not work but looked for work	3,202	2,072	1,927	763	647	1,310	1,280
1 to 14 weeks	1,692	1,235	1,262	368	339	867	923
15 weeks or more	1,510	837	664	394	308	442	356
With work experience	17,903	15,666	16,045	8,809	9,117	6,856	6,927
Percent distribution							
Unemployed persons with work experience	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ² unemployed 1 or 2 weeks	4.7	4.3	5.2	5.0	6.4	3.4	3.6
Part-year workers ³ unemployed	95.3	95.7	94.8	95.0	93.6	96.6	96.4
1 to 4 weeks	21.1	25.9	25.8	20.8	21.2	32.4	32.0
5 to 14 weeks	31.2	35.7	35.7	37.7	37.3	33.1	33.5
15 weeks or more	42.9	34.1	33.2	36.5	35.0	31.1	30.9
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	31.3	32.5	32.2	35.0	35.7	29.3	27.6
WHITE							
Numbers in thousands							
Persons who worked or looked for work during the year	92,229	98,985	101,097	55,899	56,632	43,087	44,465
Percent with unemployment	19.1	14.7	14.7	14.2	14.5	15.3	14.9
Persons with unemployment	17,660	14,548	14,850	7,924	8,236	6,624	6,614
Did not work but looked for work	2,285	1,382	1,324	521	450	861	874
With work experience	15,375	13,166	13,526	7,403	7,786	5,763	5,740
Percent distribution							
Unemployed persons with work experience	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ² unemployed 1 or 2 weeks	4.9	4.5	5.6	5.2	6.9	3.5	3.9
Part-year workers ³ unemployed	95.1	95.5	94.4	94.8	93.1	96.5	96.1
1 to 4 weeks	21.7	27.5	26.9	22.5	21.8	33.9	33.7
5 to 14 weeks	31.7	35.8	36.5	37.9	38.3	33.2	33.9
15 weeks or more	41.7	32.2	31.1	34.4	32.9	29.4	28.6
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	30.9	31.7	31.7	34.1	35.3	28.7	26.9
BLACK⁴							
Numbers in thousands							
Persons who worked or looked for work during the year	10,496	11,304	11,405	5,658	5,710	5,646	5,695
Percent with unemployment	29.5	25.0	24.2	26.0	23.8	24.1	24.7
Persons with unemployment	3,100	2,831	2,764	1,471	1,357	1,360	1,407
Did not work but looked for work	866	649	560	232	185	417	375
With work experience	2,234	2,182	2,204	1,239	1,172	943	1,032
Percent distribution							
Unemployed persons with work experience	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers ² unemployed 1 or 2 weeks	3.8	3.2	3.3	3.9	4.2	2.2	2.4
Part-year workers ³ unemployed	96.2	96.8	96.7	96.1	95.8	97.8	97.6
1 to 4 weeks	16.6	16.2	19.1	10.9	16.3	23.2	22.4
5 to 14 weeks	28.8	35.3	30.8	37.2	30.6	32.7	30.9
15 weeks or more	50.9	45.3	46.7	48.2	48.9	41.6	44.4
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	33.9	37.3	35.5	40.9	38.7	32.3	31.8

¹ Data for 1979 have been updated from what was previously issued in Press Release 80-575.

² Worked 50 weeks or more.

³ Worked less than 50 weeks.

⁴ Black only.

Table 3. Persons of Hispanic origin: work experience and unemployment during 1979

Item	Both sexes	Men	Women
Population	8,268	4,074	4,194
Persons who worked during 1979			
Number (thousands)	5,683	3,410	2,272
Percent	68.7	83.7	54.2
Worked during the year	100.0	100.0	100.0
Full time	83.2	88.0	76.1
50 to 52 weeks	54.1	61.2	43.5
1 to 49 weeks	29.1	26.8	32.5
Part time	16.8	12.0	23.9
50 to 52 weeks	4.9	3.5	7.0
1 to 49 weeks	11.9	8.5	17.0
Persons who worked or looked for work during 1979	5,822	3,459	2,363
Percent with unemployment	22.0	21.5	22.7
Persons with unemployment	1,280	744	535
Did not work but looked for work	139	49	91
With work experience	1,140	695	445
Unemployed persons with work experience	100.0	100.0	100.0
Year-round workers unemployed			
1 or 2 weeks	3.9	4.5	2.8
Part-year workers unemployed	96.1	95.5	97.2
1 to 4 weeks	22.5	20.2	26.0
5 to 14 weeks	37.2	38.4	35.3
15 weeks or more	36.5	36.8	35.7
With 2 spells or more of unemployment	33.6	36.3	29.5

workers have chosen to retire at an earlier age because of liberal pension plans, improved disability provisions, and increased social security benefits. In addition, employers have increasingly instituted monetary incentives to encourage older workers to retire early, not only as cost saving measures but also to open up slots for younger workers.³

Another significant development of the 1970's is the widening of the gap in the proportion of black and white populations engaged in work. Previous to 1971, blacks⁴ were more likely to work during the year than were whites. In 1979, not only were blacks less likely to work during the year, but that difference—63 versus 70 percent—was the largest since data were first collected in 1951.⁵ (See table 5.)

Several factors have been responsible for this development. Black women have traditionally been very active in the labor force and their participation has remained high. However, over the last two decades, the attitudes of white women towards work outside the home have markedly changed and their labor market activities have increased considerably. The result is that whereas in 1969, black women were more likely to be working than white women (59 vs. 52 percent), in 1979, white women were more likely to work during the year than black women (58 vs. 56 percent).

While the difference in the proportion of black and white women working during the year was gradually converging throughout much of the decade, the gap between the employment experience of black and white men has greatly increased since 1969. The proportion of employed black men during the year declined by 11 percentage points from 1969 (from 83 to 72 percent)

which is more than three times greater than the decline experienced by white men (from 86 to 82 percent).

Black men were particularly affected by the 1973–75 recession. During this period, the proportion of black men with work during the year declined from 78 to 72 percent, and this ratio has not yet returned to prerecession levels. Two age groups show particularly sharp declines, especially when compared to the employment experience of white workers: teenagers (16 to 19 years old) and young adults (20 to 24 years old).

While the proportion of white teenagers holding jobs during the year has not changed substantially in the past decade (70 percent in 1969 and 71 percent in 1979), the proportion of black teenagers with jobs declined from 56 percent in 1969 to 42 percent in 1979. Most of this decline is attributable to the sharp drop in the employment of black men (from 67 to 45 percent) as compared with young black women (from 40 to 39 percent). Many reasons have been cited for the low employment of black teenagers, among them the lack of jobs in the inner city areas where most black youths reside, the minimum wage which makes it too costly for businesses to hire inexperienced black youths, and high dropout rates.⁶

Much of the controversy that surrounds policy discussions dealing with the status of black teenagers has been fueled by the sharp rise in their unemployment rates. In 1979, the average monthly unemployment rate of black teens was about 2.3 times greater than that of white teens (32 vs. 14 percent).⁷ When viewed from a "work experience" standpoint, this difference persists, but not to the same extent. Table 6 shows that close to 38 percent of the black teens with labor force experience during 1979 encountered some unemployment compared to 25 percent of the white teenagers. Thus, over a year, a black teenage worker is 1.5 times as likely as a white teenage worker to experience unemployment. The reason the monthly unemployment ratio between the two groups is much higher is that black teenage unemployment lasts longer. In 1979, 44 percent of all unemployed black youths looked for work for 15 weeks or more, while the proportion of white teens in this category was only 29 percent.

The proportion of black teenagers encountering un-

Table 4. Proportion of all persons 16 years and older who worked during the year, by age and sex, 1969 and 1979

Age	Men			Women		
	1969	1979	Change	1969	1979	Change
All persons	85.2	81.2	-4.0	52.6	58.0	+5.4
16 to 19 years ...	74.4	70.6	-3.8	58.3	62.3	+4.0
20 to 24 years ...	89.8	91.7	+1.9	73.5	78.5	+5.0
25 to 34 years ...	97.8	96.0	-1.8	55.5	73.6	+18.1
35 to 54 years ...	97.0	94.5	-2.5	59.6	67.7	+8.1
55 and older ...	63.7	52.2	-11.5	32.3	27.3	-5.0

Table 5. Proportion of all persons 16 years and older who worked during the year, by race, age, and sex, 1969 and 1979

Race and age	Both sexes			Men			Women		
	1969	1979	Change	1969	1979	Change	1969	1979	Change
WHITES									
Percent who worked or looked for work during year	68.4	70.6	+2.2	86.0	83.0	-3.0	52.7	59.4	+6.7
Percent who worked during year	67.7	69.7	+2.0	85.5	82.3	-3.2	51.9	58.2	+6.3
16 to 19	70.2	70.8	+0.6	75.5	75.1	-0.4	61.3	66.5	+5.2
20 to 24	81.2	87.5	+6.3	90.2	93.5	+3.3	74.1	81.6	+7.5
25 to 34	75.0	85.1	+10.1	98.0	96.9	-1.1	53.4	73.7	+20.3
35 to 54	77.3	81.2	+3.9	97.3	95.3	-2.0	58.5	67.8	+9.3
55 and older	46.1	38.4	-7.7	63.9	52.8	-11.1	31.7	27.0	-4.7
BLACKS									
Percent who worked or looked for work during year	72.1	66.3	-5.8	84.0	74.5	-9.5	62.2	59.7	-2.5
Percent who worked during year	70.0	63.0	-7.0	82.7	72.1	-10.6	58.7	55.8	-2.9
16 to 19	56.3	41.9	-14.4	67.3	45.0	-22.3	40.0	39.0	-1.0
20 to 24	77.5	69.0	-8.5	87.2	80.3	-6.9	69.7	60.1	-9.6
25 to 34	82.3	80.7	-1.6	96.3	89.8	-6.5	70.8	73.8	+3.0
35 to 54	79.3	76.6	-2.7	93.5	88.1	-5.4	67.6	67.3	-0.3
55 and older	49.0	36.7	-12.3	61.7	45.6	-16.3	38.3	29.9	-8.4

employment during the course of a year has not varied significantly from 1969 levels (from 36 to 38 percent). However, the composition of black teenage unemployment has undergone a major change over the last 10 years. Specifically, black teenagers who never worked in the year but nevertheless searched for jobs made up 40 percent of all black teens with unemployment in 1979—a sharp increase from the 26 percent in 1969. By comparison, the proportion of white teenagers who never worked but searched for jobs showed little change over the decade. (See table 6.)

The employment situation of young black adults, 20 to 24, to some extent parallels the experience of black teenagers. The proportion of blacks in this age group who worked during the year has declined (from 78 percent in 1969 to 69 percent in 1979). During the same period, the proportion of whites in this age group who worked during the year has increased (from 81 percent

in 1969 to 88 percent in 1979).

Part of the decline in the annual employment experience of young black adults is reflected in rising unemployment levels. In 1969, 31 percent of blacks 20 to 24 with labor force experience during the year encountered some unemployment; in 1979, this proportion had increased to 38 percent. Whites in this age group have also experienced a rise in the incidence of unemployment, although not to the same extent as blacks. In 1969, 19 percent of all young white adults experienced some unemployment; in 1979, it was 24 percent. □

— FOOTNOTES —

¹ The data for this report are based on responses to special "work experience" questions included in the March 1980 Current Population Survey (CPS), conducted for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the Bureau of the Census. The work experience questions refer retroactively to the civilian work experience of persons during the entire preceding year. Because many persons enter and leave the labor force during the course of the year, the number of persons with employment and with unemployment as determined through the work experience questions is much greater than the annual average for the same year based on the monthly survey conducted during the year. Persons who reached age 16 during January, February, or March 1980 are included. However, the work experience of persons who were in the civilian labor force during 1979 but were not in the civilian noninstitutional population in March 1980 is not included. Similarly, data on persons who died in 1979 or 1980, before the survey date, are not reflected.

This is the latest in a series of reports on this subject. Data from the March 1979 survey were published in the *Monthly Labor Review*, March 1980, pp. 43-47, and issued with additional tabular data and explanatory notes as Special Labor Force Report 236. This report will be reprinted with additional data from the March 1980 survey as a Special Labor Force Report later this year.

² Increased participation of women in the labor force has been thoroughly documented in other BLS publications. See, for example, Janet L. Norwood and Elizabeth Waldman, "Women in the Labor Force: Some New Data Series," Report 575 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1979).

³ *The Wall Street Journal* reported early retirement inducements were recently being promoted by such companies as General Motors,

Table 6. Incidence of unemployment and nonworkers as percent of unemployed, by race and age, 1969 and 1979

Item	Whites			Blacks		
	1969	1979	Change	1969	1979	Change
Percent of the labor force with unemployment during the year						
All persons	11.6	14.7	+3.1	19.7	24.2	+4.5
16 to 19 years	21.4	25.1	+3.7	36.3	37.6	+1.3
20 to 24 years	18.9	23.9	+5.0	30.6	38.4	+7.8
25 to 54 years	9.7	12.6	+2.9	15.9	21.1	+5.2
55 and older	7.2	7.1	-0.1	10.8	11.4	+0.6
Nonworkers who looked for work as percent of the unemployed						
All persons	8.9	8.9	0	14.7	20.3	+5.6
16 to 19 years	16.2	13.5	-2.7	25.7	40.2	+14.5
20 to 24 years	6.4	6.7	+0.3	18.3	19.2	+0.9
25 to 54 years	6.8	7.9	+1.1	8.2	16.5	+8.3
55 and older	9.8	12.4	+2.6	13.5	9.2	-4.3

Sears, Eaton Corp., Caterpillar, United Airlines, American Airlines, and B. F. Goodrich. For further details see, Joann S. Lublin and Michael L. King, "More Employers Offer an Early Retirement," *The Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 12, 1980. Also, for a discussion of the labor force impact of legislation dealing with mandatory retirement, see Philip L. Ronen, "The retirement decision: a question of opportunity?" *Monthly Labor Review*, November 1980, pp. 14-17.

⁴ Previous to 1976, data for all persons other than white were used to represent data for blacks. In 1969, blacks represented 92 percent of all persons who were not white.

⁵ The monthly CPS employment-population ratios show similar trends.

⁶ For an in-depth analysis of the discouragement of black youth, see Norman Bowers, "Young and marginal: an overview of youth employment" and Morris J. Newman, "The labor market experience of black youth, 1954-78," *Monthly Labor Review*, October 1979, pp. 4-16 and 17-27.

⁷ *Employment and Earnings*, January 1980, pp. 158-59.

Wages in meatpacking and prepared meat products plants, May 1979

Straight-time hourly earnings of production workers in meatpacking plants averaged \$6.97 an hour in May 1979, and \$6.52 an hour for workers in prepared meat products plants, where slaughtering is not performed. Earnings averaged about 50 percent higher than in March 1974, when the Bureau of Labor Statistics conducted a similar survey of wages and related benefits.¹ During the same period, earnings rose 54 percent in all manufacturing industries, according to the Bureau's Hourly Earnings Index.

Earnings in meat products manufacturing ranged widely from the May 1979 Federal minimum of \$2.90 an hour to more than \$10. Contributing to this relatively high degree of dispersion were broad differences in skill levels for various manufacturing processes. The middle 50 percent of workers in meatpacking earned between \$5.64 and \$8.06 an hour. In prepared meat products, the corresponding range was \$4.84 to \$8.01 an hour.

Regionally, average earnings were highest in the Pacific States (\$8.10 an hour in meatpacking and \$8.37 in prepared meat products) and lowest in the Southeast (\$4.69 in meatpacking and \$4.73 in prepared meat products). Meatpacking workers in the Middle West, slightly more than one-third of the 104,000 production workers studied, averaged \$7.84 an hour. In prepared meat products, the Great Lakes region had the largest employment, with three-tenths of the industry's nearly 49,000 production workers. These workers averaged \$7.03 an hour.

The occupations studied separately represent various pay levels and skills in meatpacking and prepared meat products plants. Hourly averages in meatpacking plants

ranged from \$4.52 for beef stunners who use devices other than pneumatic hammers or captive-bolt pistols² to \$9.63 for millwrights. Hourly earnings for the most numerous jobs (1,500 or more incumbents) averaged \$6.71 for night cleaners; \$6.41 for shipping packers; \$6.12 for truckdrivers other than semi-or trailer; \$7.38 for general utility maintenance workers; and \$7.09 for boxers of entire beef carcasses.

In prepared meat products plants, averages ranged from \$5.26 for baggers of boxed beef to \$8.77 an hour for stationary engineers. Shipping packers, the most numerous job studied, averaged \$6.29 an hour. Other numerically important jobs included: night cleaners, \$6.42, and general utility maintenance workers, \$7.77.

Workers in the meatpacking industry were about equally divided between plants employing fewer than 500 workers and those with 500 or more; however, less than one-tenth of the prepared meat products employees worked in plants with 500 workers or more. In both industries, establishments within the scope of the survey employed a minimum of 20 workers, and were, for the most part, located in metropolitan areas. Four-fifths of the meatpacking workers and seven-tenths of the prepared meat products employees were covered by labor-management agreements. The Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America (AFL-CIO) was the major union. In June 1979, this union merged with the Retail Clerks International Union to form the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union.

Wages tended to be higher in metropolitan areas or union establishments than in smaller communities or nonunion plants. Similarly, employees in large establishments (those with at least 500 workers in meatpacking, and at least 100 workers in prepared meats) and in multiplant establishments averaged higher earnings than employees performing comparable tasks in smaller or single-plant establishments. Pay advantages recorded for such comparisons were typically 20 percent or more above the lower averages.

Nearly every plant surveyed provided paid holidays, paid vacations, and at least part of the cost of life and various health insurance plans. Eight to 10 holidays annually were typical, as were 1 to 5 weeks of vacation pay, depending on years of service.

A comprehensive report (*Industry Wage Survey: Meat Products, May 1979*, Bulletin 2082) is available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, D.C. 20212, or its regional offices. □

FOOTNOTES

¹ For an account of the earlier study, see Harry B. Williams, "Meat industry wages in March 1974," *Monthly Labor Review*, pp. 53-55, December 1975.

² These workers stun beef preparatory for slaughtering.

Cost of living indexes for Americans living abroad

The U.S. Department of State has prepared new indexes of living costs abroad for 19 major foreign cities. The changes in the indexes range from a 15-percent decline for Tokyo and Buenos Aires to a 25-percent increase for Mexico City and Johannesburg. The periods between price survey dates were 2½ to 3 years for Mexico City and Johannesburg, and 5 to 18 months for the other cities.

The indexes of living costs abroad are used to compute post allowances for Americans assigned to foreign posts where living costs, based on an American pattern of living, are significantly higher than in Washington, D.C. The indexes compare the cost in dollars of representative goods and services, excluding housing and education, purchased at foreign posts and in Washington, D.C. Table 1 shows indexes of living costs abroad for 30 major foreign cities.

For Americans in Tokyo, living costs in dollars de-

clined 15 percent, as average prices rose less than in Washington, D.C., and the foreign exchange cost of the yen declined 6 percent. In eight other foreign cities, average prices paid by Americans also rose less than in the United States. In Frankfurt, The Hague, Geneva, and Abu Dhabi, these relative price trends were offset in part by increases in foreign exchange costs. Living costs in dollars, as measured by the local index, declined 8 percent in Abu Dhabi, 6 percent in Frankfurt, 4 percent in Geneva, and 2 percent in The Hague. For Americans in Al Khobar and Stockholm, the relative price trends were fully reflected in lower living costs in dollars (down 6 percent for Al Khobar and 3 percent for Stockholm), because the exchange rates were unchanged. In Brussels and Paris, on the other hand, the relative price trends were almost exactly offset by increased exchange rate costs, and living costs in dollars were unchanged.

For Americans in Caracas, living costs in dollars were unchanged, as prices rose at the same rate as in Washington, D.C., and the exchange rate for the Bolivar was also unchanged relative to the dollar.

In the remaining foreign cities, average prices paid by Americans rose more than in the United States. In Buenos Aires, Canberra, and Mexico City, lower exchange rates offset part of the steeper price trends, while in Hong Kong, Johannesburg, and London, higher exchange rate costs added to living costs in dollars. For Americans in Rome, the exchange rate was unchanged. New local indexes were up 5 percent for Hong Kong, 8–10 percent for Buenos Aires, Canberra, and Rome, 18 percent for London, and about 25 percent for Mexico City and Johannesburg.

For Mexico City, as well as Sao Paulo, living costs in dollars were nevertheless still lower than in Washington, D.C. On the other hand, for Tokyo and the European cities (except Rome), living costs for Americans were 50 to 75 percent higher. It is advisable to check the prevailing exchange rates whenever using the indexes of living costs abroad because the rates are subject to sudden shifts, and different rates would substantially affect living costs in dollars.

The indexes for 165 foreign cities are published in quarterly reports entitled *U.S. Department of State Indexes of Living Costs Abroad and Quarters Allowances*. Data for all cities are published in April, and subsequent revisions are published in July, October, and January. The methods of compiling and using the indexes are explained in *U.S. Department of State Indexes of Living Costs Abroad and Quarters Allowances: A Technical Description*, Report 568 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1980). The reports are available on request from the Office of Publications, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, D.C. 20212. □

Table 1. Indexes of living costs abroad, excluding housing and education, January 1981

[Washington, D.C. = 100]

Country and city	Survey date	Monetary unit	Rate of exchange per U.S. dollar	Local index
Argentina: Buenos Aires	June 1980	Peso	1836	155
Australia: Canberra	May 1980	Dollar	0.8547	127
Austria: Vienna	Feb. 1980	Shilling	13.3	154
Bahrain: Manama	Nov. 1979	Dinar	0.3800	142
Belgium: Brussels	Mar. 1980	Franc	28.0	157
Brazil: Sao Paulo	Oct. 1980	Cruzeiro	58.3	96
Canada: Ottawa	Nov. 1979	Dollar	1.18	100
China: Beijing	July 1980	Yuan	1.46	96
France: Paris	Mar. 1980	Franc	4.00	168
Germany: Frankfurt	May 1980	Mark	1.76	155
Hong Kong: Hong Kong	June 1980	Dollar	4.95	117
India: New Delhi	July 1979	Rupee	8.11	93
Israel: Tel Aviv	Dec. 1979	Shekel	3.30	123
Italy: Rome	Feb. 1980	Lira	832	125
Japan: Tokyo	Feb. 1980	Yen	226	156
Korea: Seoul	June 1980	Won	587	135
Mexico: Mexico, D.F.	Apr. 1980	Peso	22.7	99
Netherlands: The Hague	Feb. 1980	Guilder	1.98	151
Nigeria: Lagos	Mar. 1980	Naira	0.5774	173
Philippines: Manila	Jan. 1979	Peso	7.38	89
Saudi Arabia: Al Khobar (Dhahran)	May 1980	Riyal	3.33	139
Singapore: Singapore	May 1979	Dollar	2.15	115
South Africa: Johannesburg	June 1980	Rand	0.7634	112
Spain: Madrid	Dec. 1979	Peseta	66.0	124
Sweden: Stockholm	June 1980	Krona	4.18	168
Switzerland: Geneva	May 1980	Franc	1.58	176
United Arab Emirates: Abu Dhabi	Aug. 1980	Dirham	3.66	135
United Kingdom: London	Apr. 1980	Pound	0.4169	154
U.S.S.R.: Moscow	Jan. 1980	Ruble	0.6575	135
Venezuela: Caracas	Oct. 1980	Bolivar	4.28	137

SOURCE: U.S. Department of State, Allowances Staff.