

**Table 5. Median years on current job of women by age, marital status, and full- and part-time status, January 1981**

| Age                                    | Single           |                  | Married, spouse present |           | Other marital status <sup>1</sup> |                  |
|--|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|------------------|
|  | Full time        | Part time        | Full time               | Part time | Full time                         | Part time        |
| Total, 16 years old and over . . . . . | 1.6              | 0.6              | 3.4                     | 2.3       | 3.4                               | 3.6              |
| 16 to 24 years . . . . .               | .8               | .6               | 1.0                     | .5        | .8                                | ( <sup>2</sup> ) |
| 25 to 34 years . . . . .               | 2.6              | .9               | 2.4                     | 1.2       | 1.7                               | 1.2              |
| 35 to 44 years . . . . .               | 6.2              | ( <sup>2</sup> ) | 3.8                     | 2.4       | 3.2                               | 2.3              |
| 45 to 54 years . . . . .               | 11.9             | ( <sup>2</sup> ) | 6.7                     | 4.8       | 4.8                               | 3.8              |
| 55 to 64 years . . . . .               | 15.3             | ( <sup>2</sup> ) | 10.7                    | 5.8       | 8.7                               | 5.5              |
| 65 years and older . . . . .           | ( <sup>2</sup> ) | ( <sup>2</sup> ) | 11.5                    | 7.4       | 11.3                              | 8.5              |

<sup>1</sup> Includes widowed, divorced, and separated persons.  
<sup>2</sup> Median not shown where base is less than 75,000.

In addition, job tenure will also be influenced by skill level of the work force. Employers are less likely to lay off or fire skilled workers, as it costs more in hiring and training costs to replace them.<sup>5</sup> Employers may try to reduce voluntary terminations of more valuable employees by linking vacation or pension benefits to increased seniority.

By industry, self-employed men in agriculture had the longest spells of job tenure. Self-employed workers in nonagricultural industries also had a high level of job tenure, although male wage and salary workers in public administration ranked highest. (See table 4.)

Since 1963, surveys have found farmers to have the longest job tenure of any occupational group. They tend to own their own farms, and remain at work regardless of cyclical fluctuations. In January 1981, median job tenure for male farmers was 17.5 years, well above that of all other occupations. Managers and administrators have the next highest level of job tenure for men, followed by professional workers. Laborers—both farm and nonfarm—have the lowest tenure on their current job. For women, the patterns by occupation are similar except farm laborers have relatively high tenure; probably these women work on family farms owned or operated by their husbands.

Tabulations of years of tenure were also compiled by full- or part-time status on one's current job. In general, part-time workers had less job tenure than full-time ones. A typical pattern is displayed in table 5, which lists job tenure for women by full- and part-time status.

For women who are widowed, divorced, or separated, relatively little difference by job status is apparent, but for wives, part-time work on the current job correlates with fewer years of tenure. Again, it seems likely that a desire to rearrange work schedules to facilitate child care is a major factor behind the relationship. □

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> This report is based primarily on information from a supplementary question, "When did . . . start working at his present job or business?" in the January 1981 Current Population Survey, conducted by

the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Most of the data relate to persons who are 16 years old and over employed in the civilian labor force in the week ending January 17, 1981. Sampling variability may be large where numbers are small. Therefore, small differences between estimates or percentages should be interpreted with caution.

Employment figures in this study differ significantly from those reported in the regular Current Population Survey (CPS) for January 1981. The primary reason for this difference is that the job tenure data are not adjusted for nonresponse as are the CPS figures. See *The Current Population Survey: Design and Methodology*, Technical Paper No. 40 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1978), for more information.

This is the seventh in a series of reports on this subject. The latest contained data for January 1978 and appeared in the December 1979 *Monthly Labor Review*. It was reprinted with additional tabular data and an explanatory note as *Special Labor Force Report 235*, "Job Tenure Declines as Work Force Changes." There are no comparisons in this report between 1978 and 1981 median tenure data, because of a change in the procedure used to calculate the medians. The 1981 Job Tenure Survey obtained more detail than earlier ones about persons who had begun their jobs during the previous year. Such people were asked the month in which they started work with their present employers. Additional information can be obtained from the Division of Labor Force Studies.

<sup>2</sup> Norman Bowers, "Probing the issues of unemployment duration," *Monthly Labor Review*, July 1980, pp. 23-32.

<sup>3</sup> "Job Tenure of Workers, January 1973," *Special Labor Force Report 172* provided an example of how this might be done.

<sup>4</sup> Allyson Sherman Grossman, "More than half of all children have working mothers," *Monthly Labor Review*, February 1981, pp. 44-46; and unpublished tables from the March 1981 Current Population Survey.

<sup>5</sup> One of the best treatments of these issues is Walter Y. Oi, "Labor as a Quasi-Fixed Factor," *Journal of Political Economy*, December 1962, pp. 538-55. Also see Donald Parsons, "Specific Human Capital: An Application to Quit Rates and Layoff Rates," *Journal of Political Economy*, November-December 1972, pp. 1120-43.

## How European unions cope with new technology

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In European countries, as in the United States, computerized production systems and robots are being introduced into manufacturing plants. Electronic systems are eliminating many tasks for which workers previously were needed in warehouses, stores, banks, and insurance companies. Many secretaries, government workers, reporters, telephone operators, engineers, and technicians are working at electronic screens called video display terminals. Such changes threaten job security and could make the jobs which remain less interesting, more isolated and stressful.

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European unions generally are not trying to block technological change; rather they want to be sure such change will benefit workers as well as employers. To do this, the unions are asking for: consultation before decisions are made about new technology; technology which increases rather than replaces the workers' traditional skills, and which improves rather than worsens working conditions; protection from job losses and lower pay rates; a share in the profits and social benefits created by new technology; and assurance that new technology will not be used to undermine the union. To achieve these goals, they are giving local union committees more information and power.

By using their powerful labor parties to influence government policy, European unions have already won some new rights through legislation. For example, in Norway and Sweden, unions have the legal right to complete information about proposed new technology. Union representatives attend meetings of company boards of directors, obtain all information available to those boards, and present the union's point of view. Also, national "work environment" laws give unions the power to veto workplace changes which would adversely affect job safety and health, as many new technologies do without proper design and planning.

Through collective bargaining, European unions have won additional rights. For instance, a branch of the Norwegian Iron and Metal Workers' Union, which represents blue-collar and white-collar workers at an International Telephone and Telegraph subsidiary, has won the contract right to block any new computerized system that does not meet its approval.

In Germany, a contract covering about one-third of the metal workers guarantees against a decrease in income because of changing work assignments caused by new technology. And, at American Express, which employs 1,200 workers in banks on U.S. military bases, the German banking union won a contract prohibiting involuntary layoff or transfer of workers as a result of technological change.

A new technology benefit for Civil Service unions representing 600,000 government workers in England included a 10-percent reduction in working hours.

Another benefit, bargained by many unions in Norway, Sweden, and England, provides video display terminal operators with a 4-hour per day limit on their machines—scheduled in 2 hours on, 2 hours off rotation. This system forces employers to arrange a variety of work assignments for clericals who would otherwise be restricted to their terminals.

European unions are aided in preparing bargaining proposals by knowledge gained in union-sponsored, employer-financed training programs on new technology. Unlike U.S. unions which foot the bill for most labor education, national laws in Europe require management

to pay stewards, local officers, and committee members for attending union classes.

In Sweden, Germany, Norway, and England, unions have also obtained millions of dollars in government or employer funds to pay for training courses in the new technology.

In Scandinavia, the money for training comes from national work environment or labor education funds, financed by employer contributions largely controlled by the labor movement. In West Germany and Great Britain, union training programs are subsidized by government departments of industry, research, or technology.

European unions also have obtained government or employer funds to consult with outside experts on new technology. Many unions in Norway, Sweden, and Great Britain get advice from labor-oriented computer experts from university research programs and technical institutes, such as the government-funded Norwegian Computing Center, Swedish Work Life Center, and the British Center for Alternative Industrial Technological Systems. Under a government grant, the German Metal Workers set up a national system of "innovation advice bureaus" consisting of engineers, economists, and other technicians, to help local unions evaluate and bargain over employers' new technology plans.

German unions have also been represented for several years on advisory committees which give government research and development funds to projects that improve the work environment. This allows German unions to lobby for inclusion of health and safety features into new technology at the developmental stage.

Further, German unions are seeking a requirement that they be consulted before employers and equipment suppliers are given government money to experiment with production systems, such as computerized machine tools and industrial robots.

When a local union in Europe uses its rights to respond to technological change, the results can provide quite a contrast to comparable situations in the United States. For example, metal workers at an aircraft parts plant in Kongsberg, Norway, have had far more success in coping with the introduction of computer-based machine tools than have workers at a similar plant in Lynn, Massachusetts.

At Kongsberg, the trained union technology committee received complete information before the computerized machine tools were installed. On the basis of this information, the committee insisted that machine operators already on the job be trained to do the computer programming and repairs. As a result, the machinists' skills were broadened rather than narrowed by the technological change.

In contrast, at Lynn, the equipment was installed without consultation with the union. Now supervisors or nonunion programmers handle the computer work,

thereby reducing many skilled machinists to "machine tenders" or "button pushers" with less interesting work and lower pay. Job losses for union members are possible, and any future job action by the union will be less effective. □

## Cost-of-living indexes for Americans living abroad

The U.S. Department of State has computed new indexes of living costs for selected foreign cities. These indexes compare the costs (in dollars) of representative consumer goods and services (excluding housing and education) purchased at foreign posts with the costs of comparable goods and services in Washington, D.C.

In most of the foreign cities, living costs for Americans are higher than in Washington, D.C. However, in the last 2 years, relative costs have declined in many cities, as the appreciation of the U.S. dollar exchange rate offset, in part, the higher prices abroad.

For example, although prices in Switzerland increased at the same rate as in the United States, living costs were down 22 percent in Geneva—from 176 to 137—according to the May 1981 index, because 21 percent of the higher Swiss prices was offset by the appreciation of the U.S. dollar. Similarly, living costs for Americans were down 8 percent in Tokyo—from 155 to 142—according to the February 1982 index. Japanese prices rose 3 percent more than U.S. prices over the previous year, but appreciation of the dollar offset 10 percent of the higher Japanese prices.

The new index for Rome, however, shows living costs down by only 4 percent, even though the U.S. dollar exchange rate appreciated about 25 percent, because consumer prices in Rome rose 20 percent more than prices in Washington, D.C. In some countries, recent price increases have been greater than the appreciation of the dollar. For example, the new (January 1982) index for Mexico City showed U.S. dollar costs for Americans up 6 percent over the previous year because, while the dollar appreciated 12 percent versus the peso, Mexican prices rose 19 percent more than U.S. prices. (In February, the peso was devalued, and costs for Americans have sharply declined.)

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 of living costs abroad are computed in order to establish allowances for American government employees assigned to foreign posts where the cost of

**Table 1. Indexes of living costs abroad, excluding housing and education, July 1982**

[Washington, D.C. = 100]

| Country and city                  | Survey date | Monetary unit | Rate of exchange per U.S. Dollar | Local index |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Argentina: Buenos Aires           | Aug. 1981   | Peso          | 7350                             | 107         |
| Australia: Canberra               | Sep. 1981   | Dollar        | 0.8547                           | 126         |
| Austria: Vienna                   | Jan. 1982   | Shilling      | 16.4                             | 137         |
| Bahrain: Manama                   | Nov. 1980   | Dinar         | 0.3774                           | 138         |
| Belgium: Brussels                 | Apr. 1981   | Franc         | 37.0                             | 126         |
| Brazil: Sao Paulo                 | Oct. 1980   | Cruzeiro      | 58.3                             | 96          |
| Canada: Ottawa                    | Nov. 1981   | Dollar        | 1.18                             | 105         |
| China: Beijing                    | July 1980   | Yuan          | 1.46                             | 96          |
| France: Paris                     | Mar. 1981   | Franc         | 4.80                             | 153         |
| Germany: Frankfurt                | Feb. 1981   | Mark          | 2.00                             | 138         |
| Hong Kong: Hong Kong              | Apr. 1981   | Dollar        | 5.40                             | 115         |
| India: New Delhi                  | Mar. 1981   | Rupee         | 8.25                             | 93          |
| Israel: Tel Aviv                  | May 1981    | Shekel        | 9.60                             | 125         |
| Italy: Rome                       | Feb. 1982   | Lira          | 1300                             | 108         |
| Japan: Tokyo                      | Feb. 1982   | Yen           | 230                              | 142         |
| Korea: Seoul                      | June 1981   | Won           | 684                              | 125         |
| Mexico: Mexico, D.F.              | Jan. 1982   | Peso          | 26.4                             | 110         |
| Netherlands: The Hague            | Feb. 1982   | Guilder       | 2.60                             | 125         |
| Nigeria: Lagos                    | Mar. 1981   | Naira         | 0.5774                           | 169         |
| Philippines: Manila               | Dec. 1980   | Peso          | 7.66                             | 104         |
| Saudi Arabia: Al Khobar (Dhahran) | July 1981   | Riyal         | 3.38                             | 142         |
| Singapore: Singapore              | July 1981   | Dollar        | 2.16                             | 118         |
| South Africa: Johannesburg        | Nov. 1981   | Rand          | 0.9524                           | 103         |
| Spain: Madrid                     | Feb. 1982   | Peseta        | 99.0                             | 114         |
| Sweden: Stockholm                 | May 1981    | Krona         | 4.80                             | 148         |
| Switzerland: Geneva               | May 1981    | Franc         | 2.01                             | 137         |
| United Arab Emirates: Abu Dhabi   | May 1981    | Dirham        | 3.64                             | 133         |
| United Kingdom: London            | Apr. 1981   | Pound         | 0.5000                           | 130         |
| U.S.S.R.: Moscow                  | Dec. 1981   | Ruble         | 0.7000                           | 142         |
| Venezuela: Caracas                | Sep. 1981   | Bolivar       | 4.28                             | 142         |

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

living is significantly higher than in Washington, D.C. In addition, indexes are computed for American private employees. (The indexes shown in table 1 are those computed for private Americans.) The indexes and post allowances cover most living costs, except housing and education which are covered by separate allowances.

The indexes of living costs abroad and quarters (housing) allowances for selected foreign cities are published quarterly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. They are now available by subscription, or single copy, from the Superintendent of Documents. The new subscription series include indexes for more than 160 cities, housing allowances for about 75 cities, and hardship differentials for all important hardship posts.

*U.S. Department of State Indexes of Living Costs Abroad, Quarters Allowances, and Hardship Differentials* can be ordered from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Price for an annual subscription (four quarterly issues) is \$6.50 domestic, \$8.15 foreign; individual copies, \$1.75 domestic, \$2.20 foreign. A description of the statistics and overseas allowances system, *U.S. Department of State Indexes of Living Costs Abroad and Quarters Allowances: A Technical Description* (Report 568), is available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. □