

# Part-time workers: who are they?

*A new definition of part-timers,  
utilizing existing data  
from the Current Population Survey,  
gives a more accurate estimate of the  
number of part-time workers*

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Although typically pictured as working 40 hours a week, the American work force includes a substantial number of persons who put in far fewer hours. Young people working while attending school, parents juggling childrearing and career responsibilities, those in retirement wishing to remain partly active in the work force, and workers whose hours have been reduced because of economic conditions are examples of persons who either choose or have to settle for part-time employment.

Because of the variety of situations found in the workplace, labor market analysts who study part-time employment have sometimes found it a difficult concept to define. Although the official government definition of part-time work is clear, estimating the number of part-time workers is more complex. It depends on exactly what is being measured—the total number of persons who worked part-time hours during the survey reference week, the number who choose to work part-time hours, or the number who typically work part time.

Each month the Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes data on the number of hours worked by persons during the survey reference week and considerable detail about persons who work less than 35 hours a week—the official boundary between full- and part-time employment.<sup>1</sup> The data collected include both the reasons people work less than 35 hours as well as their usual full- or part-time status.

To reflect the diversity of the workplace, BLS disaggregates the data about people at work less than 35 hours into three subgroups: (1) those voluntarily at work part time, (2) those working part time for economic reasons, and (3) those who usually work full time but worked less than 35 hours during the reference week because of holiday, illness, vacation, or similar reasons. These data are combined with information on several other groupings—persons at work more than 35 hours (full-time workers), employed persons who were not at work during the survey reference week, and unemployed persons—to yield estimates of the full- and part-time labor forces. These categories are useful for a variety of analyses. The number of persons at work part time for economic reasons, for example, is of interest as a measure of underutilization of human resources and also is an important indicator of the cyclical movements in the labor market.<sup>2</sup> Data about the full- and part-time labor forces are used for unemployment rate calculations and to develop several of the alternative measures of unemployment that enhance our understanding of the labor market.<sup>3</sup>

Despite their usefulness, none of these groupings actually provides an estimate of the number of people who usually work part time. For example, the concept of voluntary part-time employment excludes persons who want full-time work but settle for a part-time job. The “at work” concept excludes the people who have part-time jobs but were away from their jobs during the survey reference week because of vacation, illness, or other reasons. The labor force categories classify some people according to the type of job they

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want, not necessarily the type they have.

This article discusses available BLS data about part-time workers, describing what information is published, and suggests a new combination of the data—all persons who usually work part time—which would provide a more accurate estimate of part-time employment. The data are based on the Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly sample survey of about 60,000 households nationwide, which provides information on the employment and unemployment status and related characteristics of the civilian population 16 years of age and over.

### Defining full and part time

When defining the full- and part-time status of workers, the first consideration is the number of hours worked during the survey reference week. As mentioned previously, 35 hours is the boundary between full- and part-time employment. Part-time work is defined as less than 35 hours a week. Working less than 35 hours during the survey week, however, is not a sufficient condition for classifying a person as a part-time worker. The worker's usual schedule and reason for working less than 35 hours a week also must be considered.<sup>4</sup> In addition to workers' preference, reasons for part-time hours can be economic—slack work, material shortages, beginning or ending a job, or because only a part-time job could be found—or noneconomic—holiday, vacation, illness, or bad weather. Based on their usual schedule and their reason for working a part-time schedule, persons at work less than 35 hours a week are allocated according to the pattern shown in table 1.

Those who usually work full time but during the survey reference week worked less than 35 hours for noneconomic reasons—5.6 million in 1985—are combined with those who worked more than 35 hours during the survey week under the label "full-time schedules." In terms of "labor force" classification, persons at work on "full-time sched-

ules" are combined with persons who are not at work during the reference week but usually work more than 35 hours, those working "part time for economic reasons," and unemployed workers seeking full-time jobs to form the "full-time labor force." (See box.)

#### Components of the full- and part-time labor forces

**Full-time labor force:**

- Employed persons on full-time schedules
- Employed persons working part time for economic reasons
- Employed persons not at work, who usually work full time
- Unemployed persons seeking full-time work

**Part-time labor force:**

- Employed persons working part time voluntarily
- Employed persons not at work, who usually work part time
- Unemployed persons seeking part-time work

The workers who usually work part time for noneconomic reasons—13.5 million in 1985—are classified as the "voluntary part-time employed," a group that has been the focus of several studies in recent years.<sup>5</sup> They clearly are part-timers. The vast majority of these workers do not want or are unavailable for jobs which call for 35 hours or more of work per week. The voluntary part-time group plus those employed persons not at work during the reference week who usually work less than 35 hours a week and unemployed workers who are seeking part-time jobs form the "part-time labor force." (See box.)

As stated above, workers who put in less than 35 hours a week because of slack work, the inability to find full-time work, or similar reasons—the 5.6 million workers on part time for economic reasons in 1985—are included in the full-time labor force. However, by treating them as a single group, the usual full-time/part-time work status of such workers is not readily identified. And, the two main components of the group—persons on slack work and persons who could only find part-time jobs—are quite dissimilar in terms of their usual work status.

Most of the workers on "part time for economic reasons" due to "slack work" usually work full time, while all who "could only find part-time work" usually work part time. Persons who worked less than 35 hours during the reference week because of slack work, but who usually work full time, are workers who have full-time jobs but are on a reduced work schedule temporarily because of low demand. This group expects to return to a full-time schedule when economic conditions improve, and thus it seems reasonable to view such persons as full-time workers. Those who worked less than 35 hours because they "could only find part-time work," however, present a somewhat different

**Table 1. Persons at work 1 to 34 hours by reason for working less than 35 hours, and usual status, 1985 annual averages**

[In thousands]

Reason for working less than 35 hours	Total	Usually work full time	Usually work part time
Total, 16 years and older	24,682	7,342	17,340
Economic reasons	5,590	1,739	3,851
Slack work	2,430	1,398	1,032
Material shortages or repairs to plant and equipment	62	62	—
New job started during week	190	190	—
Job terminated during week	90	90	—
Could find only part-time work	2,819	—	2,819
Other reasons	19,092	5,603	13,489
Does not want, or unavailable for, full-time work	11,217	—	11,217
Vacation	1,360	1,360	—
Illness	1,539	1,395	144
Bad weather	674	674	—
Industrial dispute	8	8	—
Legal or religious holiday	682	682	—
Full time for this job	1,545	—	1,545
All other reasons	2,066	1,484	582

situation. Despite their desire for full-time work, these persons only have part-time jobs. Their part-time status may or may not change as economic conditions improve, because they would have to find another job in order to become full-time workers. Therefore, to arrive at a more accurate estimate of the number of persons who typically work part time, it is necessary to disaggregate those working part time for economic reasons into two groups according to their usual full- or part-time schedule.

Several characteristics of those working part time for economic reasons illustrate the differences between the usual full-time and usual part-time workers. The data suggest that those who normally work full time resemble workers on "full-time schedules," whereas persons who normally work part time are more like voluntary part-time workers. One example is the number of hours worked. The following tabulation shows the percent of workers on part-time schedules for economic reasons and those on voluntary part time by the number of hours worked, 1985:

	<i>Part time for economic reasons</i>		<i>Voluntary part time</i>
	<i>Usually full time</i>	<i>Usually part time</i>	
Total .....	100.0	100.0	100.0
1 to 4 hours .....	1.3	3.5	4.4
5 to 14 hours .....	10.9	17.2	22.8
15 to 29 hours .....	42.9	54.8	54.2
30 to 34 hours .....	44.9	24.5	18.6

While close to half (45 percent) of the usual full-timers worked 30 to 34 hours a week, only a quarter of the usual part-timers did. More than half of the usual part-timers worked the number of hours—15 to 29 a week—typical for the "voluntary part time."

Another characteristic by which the two groups differ is the distribution by sex. As is true for people on full-time schedules, the majority of persons working part time involuntarily who usually work full time are men. In contrast, the majority of those who usually work part time—voluntarily or involuntarily—are women.

Persons who usually work part time are also like voluntary part-timers in their industrial and occupational distribution. The services and retail trade industries account for the vast majority of workers in both groups. The following tabulation shows the distribution, by industry, of nonagricultural wage and salary workers on part time for economic reasons and those on voluntary part time, 1985:

	<i>Part time for economic reasons</i>		<i>Voluntary part time</i>
	<i>Usually full time</i>	<i>Usually part time</i>	
Total .....	100.0	100.0	100.0
Retail trade .....	19.0	40.3	37.0
Services .....	22.4	35.4	42.6
Other industries .....	58.6	24.3	20.4

Among those part time for economic reasons who usually

work full time, a sizable proportion are in the manufacturing and construction industries. The occupational distributions reflect these industry differences. "Sales" and "service" occupations accounted for the largest part of both voluntary and involuntary usual part-timers. In contrast, "precision production, craft, and repair" and "operator, fabricator, and laborer" occupations accounted for about half the economic part-timers who usually are full time.

The inclusion of all persons usually working part time for voluntary and economic reasons in the count of persons employed part time also helps reconcile recent trends in part-time employment and industry growth, and highlights the importance of part-time workers in the labor market. Between 1979 and 1985, employment in retail trade and services increased by 7 million. Because firms in those industries make extensive use of part-time workers, a significant rise in part-time employment also should have occurred during that period. Voluntary part-time employment—the traditional measure of part-time employment—increased by only 596,000. If all persons who usually work part time are tallied, however, the increase for the period would have been 2.4 million. This is more in line with the growth in retail trade and service employment. Further, the part-time employed measure shows that during the 1970's and early 1980's, part-time employment grew more rapidly than full-time employment. (See chart 1.) The rapid growth of part-time employment has led to some restructuring of the work force. Between 1968 and 1980, the proportion of employed persons who work part time edged up from 14 to 17 percent. The proportion reached 18 percent in 1982 as the recession forced more workers to settle for part-time employment. However, as the economy recovered during the 1983-85 period, the percentage returned to 17 percent.

Based on the findings presented above, it would seem that the most simple, straightforward answer to the question "How many part-time workers are there?" is a tally of the number of workers who usually work part time, regardless of the reason for their short hours. It would more accurately estimate the number of part-time workers according to the kinds of jobs they typically have.<sup>6</sup> Beginning with data for January 1986, the Bureau is revising table A-9 in its monthly periodical *Employment and Earnings*, to show employment by usual full- and part-time status in line with the concepts discussed in this article. Table 2 presents 1985 annual average data displayed by the format for the revised monthly table. Historical data are presented in table 3. Monthly and quarterly seasonally adjusted data series will be available in April 1986.

### Characteristics of part-time workers

Younger (ages 16 to 24) and older (65 and over) workers account for a much higher proportion of the part- than full-time employed. (See table 4.) A part-time schedule allows young people to attend school while working. The connection between part-time work and school attendance is shown

in the new BLS series on employment status by school enrollment. In October 1985, 6.3 million people between the ages of 16 and 24 were in school and employed. About four-fifths of these worked part time. By comparison, of the 13.8 million in that age group who worked but were not enrolled in school, fewer than 15 percent were part-timers.<sup>7</sup> Part-time schedules are attractive to older workers, who use them to ease the transition into retirement. These jobs also provide supplementary retirement income.

While age differences between part- and full-time workers occur among both sexes, differences are more pronounced among men. Nearly two-thirds of male part-timers are 16 to 24 years old or 65 years and older, compared with only one-third of their female counterparts.

Women make up the majority of the part-time employed—two-thirds of the total in 1985. (See table 4.) While full-time employment is the norm for both sexes, about 27 percent of the women are employed part time, compared with 10 percent of the men. This difference probably reflects the higher proportion of women who also handle household and childrearing responsibilities and therefore need flexibility in their work schedules.

About 6 of 10 women employed part time are married with their spouse present, about the same proportion as women who are employed full time. About 3 of 10 have never been married, a higher ratio than among women em-

ployed full time. This reflects the fact that female teenagers are more likely to be part-timers.

While most women who are employed part time are married, most men are single. Men who work part time are three times as likely as those employed full time to be single. This difference results from the high proportion of very young men working part time.

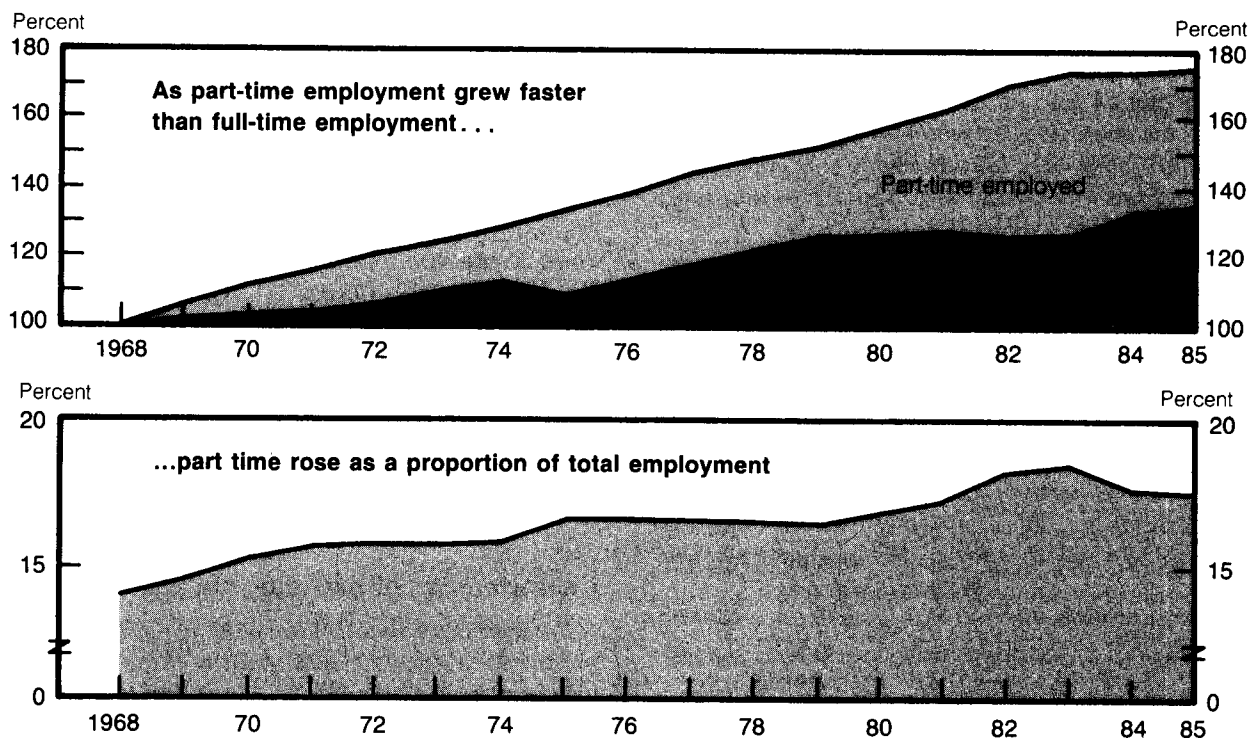
As shown in the tabulation below, a slightly higher proportion of whites than blacks were employed part time in 1985—18 versus 16 percent. This difference was greater among women than men. Women accounted for about two-thirds of those usually employed part time among each racial group. (Also see table 4.)

	<i>Percent of employed persons usually working:</i>	
	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>
White .....	82.4	17.6
Men .....	90.2	9.8
Women .....	72.4	27.6
Black .....	84.0	16.0
Men .....	88.1	11.9
Women .....	79.9	20.1

### Industry and occupational distribution

Part-time workers are more apt than their full-time counterparts to hold jobs in retail trade and services industries.

**Chart 1. Index of full- and part-time employment and part-time employment as a proportion of total employment, 1968-85**



**Table 2. Employed and unemployed full- and part-time workers by sex, age, and race, 1985 annual averages**

[In thousands]

Sex, age, and race	Employed						Unemployed	
	Full time			Part time			Looking for full-time work	Looking for part-time work
	Total	Full-time schedules <sup>1</sup>	Part time for economic reasons, usually work full time	Total	Voluntary <sup>1</sup>	Part time for economic reasons, usually work part time		
<b>Total</b>								
Total, 16 years and over .....	88,535	86,795	1,740	18,615	14,740	3,851	6,793	1,519
16 to 19 years .....	2,507	2,375	132	3,927	3,278	649	777	690
16 to 17 years .....	440	412	28	2,053	1,830	223	198	463
18 to 19 years .....	2,066	1,962	104	1,875	1,449	426	579	227
20 years and over .....	86,029	84,421	1,608	14,688	11,486	3,202	6,015	829
20 to 24 years .....	10,981	10,683	298	2,999	2,163	836	1,493	245
25 years and over .....	75,047	73,737	1,310	11,689	9,323	2,366	4,522	584
25 to 54 years .....	64,044	62,931	1,113	8,405	6,447	1,958	4,056	439
55 years and over .....	11,003	10,806	197	3,284	2,876	408	466	145
<b>Men, 16 years and over</b> .....	53,862	52,832	1,030	6,028	4,486	1,542	3,925	596
16 to 19 years .....	1,437	1,357	80	1,891	1,574	317	446	360
20 years and over .....	52,425	51,475	950	4,137	2,912	1,225	3,479	236
20 to 24 years .....	6,078	5,895	183	1,261	872	389	857	87
25 years and over .....	46,346	45,580	766	2,876	2,040	836	2,622	149
25 to 54 years .....	39,207	38,557	650	1,568	878	690	2,329	79
55 years and over .....	7,139	7,032	116	1,308	1,162	146	292	70
<b>Women, 16 years and over</b> .....	34,672	33,963	709	12,587	10,278	2,309	2,868	923
16 to 19 years .....	1,069	1,017	52	2,036	1,704	332	331	330
20 years and over .....	33,604	32,946	658	10,550	8,574	1,976	2,536	593
20 to 24 years .....	4,903	4,788	115	1,738	1,291	447	636	158
25 years and over .....	28,701	28,158	543	8,812	7,283	1,529	1,900	434
25 to 54 years .....	24,838	24,375	463	6,837	5,569	1,268	1,727	359
55 years and over .....	3,862	3,782	80	1,976	1,715	261	173	75
<b>White</b>								
<b>Men, 16 years and over</b> .....	47,824	46,953	871	5,222	4,009	1,213	2,961	465
16 to 19 years .....	1,298	1,229	69	1,686	1,421	265	318	274
20 years and over .....	46,526	45,724	802	3,536	2,588	948	2,642	192
20 to 24 years .....	5,371	5,213	158	1,057	759	298	624	70
25 years and over .....	41,155	40,511	644	2,480	1,829	651	2,019	122
25 to 54 years .....	34,682	34,137	545	1,283	752	531	1,778	63
55 years and over .....	6,473	6,374	99	1,197	1,077	120	241	59
<b>Women, 16 years and over</b> .....	29,441	28,859	582	11,249	9,383	1,866	2,027	738
16 to 19 years .....	953	907	46	1,831	1,548	283	230	252
20 years and over .....	28,488	27,952	536	9,418	7,835	1,583	1,797	486
20 to 24 years .....	4,290	4,198	92	1,517	1,153	364	420	121
25 years and over .....	24,197	23,753	444	7,901	6,682	1,219	1,377	365
25 to 54 years .....	20,811	20,438	373	6,182	5,168	1,014	1,235	301
55 years and over .....	3,386	3,315	71	1,719	1,514	205	142	65
<b>Black</b>								
<b>Men, 16 years and over</b> .....	4,641	4,506	135	629	341	288	839	112
16 to 19 years .....	118	108	10	161	115	46	119	74
20 years and over .....	4,524	4,399	125	468	226	242	719	38
20 to 24 years .....	567	546	21	159	75	84	209	15
25 years and over .....	3,957	3,853	104	310	152	158	510	23
25 to 54 years .....	3,429	3,341	88	221	85	136	465	14
55 years and over .....	528	512	16	89	67	22	45	9
<b>Women, 16 years and over</b> .....	4,180	4,073	107	1,051	665	386	757	156
16 to 19 years .....	92	87	5	161	117	44	95	69
20 years and over .....	4,086	3,985	101	890	548	342	662	87
20 to 24 years .....	501	481	20	171	95	76	199	32
25 years and over .....	3,585	3,504	81	720	453	267	445	55
25 to 54 years .....	3,200	3,125	75	499	281	218	435	45
55 years and over .....	385	379	6	221	172	49	10	10

<sup>1</sup> Employed persons with a job but not at work are distributed according to whether they usually work full or part time.

Note: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding.

Together, these industries accounted for 79 percent of the part-time nonagricultural wage and salary workers. This concentration is mirrored in the occupational distribution; nearly half of all part-timers are in sales or service jobs.

The high concentration of part-time workers in retail trade and services reflects their importance in these industries. A third of the wage and salary workers in retail trade and a fifth

of those in services are employed part time. The extensive use of part-time workers in these industries results from the need of such businesses to offer services to customers during evenings and other times that are not readily staffed by full-timers. In goods-producing industries where operations generally are conducted in one 8-hour shift or more, the usefulness of part-time workers is limited. As a result, these

**Table 3. Employed full- and part-time workers by sex and age, 1968-85 annual averages**

[In thousands]

Year	Total			Men, 20 years and over			Women, 20 years and over			Both sexes, 16 to 19 years		
	Total	Full time	Part time	Total	Full time	Part time	Total	Full time	Part time	Total	Full time	Part time
1968	75,920	65,276	10,643	44,859	42,720	2,139	25,281	19,600	5,681	5,781	2,956	2,823
1969	77,902	66,596	11,306	45,388	43,100	2,288	26,397	20,454	5,944	6,117	3,042	3,074
1970	78,678	66,752	11,924	45,581	43,138	2,444	26,952	20,654	6,297	6,144	2,960	3,183
1971	79,367	66,973	12,394	45,912	43,322	2,591	27,246	20,769	6,477	6,208	2,882	3,326
1972	82,153	69,213	12,938	47,130	44,475	2,654	28,276	21,536	6,741	6,746	3,202	3,543
1973	85,064	71,803	13,262	48,310	45,637	2,673	29,484	22,494	6,990	7,271	3,672	3,599
1974	86,794	73,091	13,702	48,922	46,157	2,764	30,424	23,181	7,243	7,448	3,753	3,695
1975	85,846	71,585	14,260	48,018	45,051	2,966	30,726	23,242	7,484	7,104	3,292	3,810
1976	88,752	73,965	14,788	49,190	46,175	3,016	32,226	24,406	7,819	7,336	3,384	3,953
1977	92,017	76,626	15,393	50,555	47,403	3,152	33,775	25,587	8,187	7,688	3,636	4,054
1978	96,048	80,195	15,855	52,143	49,007	3,136	35,836	27,326	8,511	8,070	3,862	4,208
1979	98,824	82,654	16,171	53,308	50,174	3,134	37,434	28,622	8,812	8,083	3,858	4,225
1980	99,303	82,564	16,742	53,101	49,699	3,403	38,492	29,391	9,102	7,710	3,474	4,237
1981	100,397	83,242	17,154	53,582	50,092	3,490	39,590	30,040	9,549	7,225	3,110	4,115
1982	99,526	81,419	18,106	52,891	48,895	3,996	40,086	30,007	10,079	6,549	2,517	4,031
1983	100,834	82,322	18,511	53,487	49,264	4,223	41,004	30,680	10,324	6,342	2,378	3,964
1984	105,005	86,544	18,461	55,769	51,624	4,145	42,793	32,404	10,388	6,444	2,516	3,928
1985	107,150	88,535	18,615	56,562	52,425	4,137	44,154	33,604	10,550	6,434	2,507	3,927

NOTE: Detail may not add to totals because of rounding.

**Table 4. Employed persons by usual status and age, sex, and race, 1985**

[In percent]

Characteristic	Employed	
	Usually full time	Usually part time
<b>Age</b>		
16 years and over (in thousands)	88,535	18,615
16 to 19	2.8	21.1
16 and 17	0.5	11.0
18 and 19	2.3	10.1
20 and over	97.2	78.9
20 to 24	12.4	16.1
25 to 34	31.1	19.8
35 to 44	24.7	15.5
45 to 54	16.6	9.8
55 to 64	10.9	9.9
55 to 59	6.8	4.9
60 to 64	4.1	5.0
65 and over	1.5	7.8
<b>Sex and race</b>		
Total (in thousands)	88,535	18,615
Men	60.8	32.4
Women	39.2	67.6
White	100.0	100.0
Men	61.9	31.7
Women	38.1	68.3
Black	100.0	100.0
Men	52.6	37.4
Women	47.4	62.6

industries have very low percentages of part-time workers. And, the occupations that are concentrated in those industries such as precision production, craft, and repair and operators, fabricators, and laborers have a very low percentage of part-time workers. As expected, another occupational group that typically has a low percentage of part-timers is executive, administrative, and managerial.<sup>8</sup>

AN ALTERNATIVE WAY of combining existing data to estimate the number of part-time workers has been presented in this article. Counting as "part-time employed" all persons who usually work less than 35 hours a week appears to reflect existing labor market conditions. However, there are limitations to this estimate. To the extent that some workers hold a full-time as well as a part-time job or combine two separate part-time jobs in order to work more than 35 hours a week, the suggested "part-time employed" figure understimates the number of part-time jobs. This problem occurs because, in the CPS, multiple job-holders are counted only once. Nevertheless, the CPS data are the only source of current information about workers on part-time schedules, and defining the part-time employed as suggested in this article appears to be an accurate way to answer the often-asked question: How many part-time workers are there? □

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> This definition has been in effect since 1947. Over the years some labor market analysts have suggested this cutoff be revised, arguing that overall hours of work have declined over the long run, and thus the 40-hour standard workweek, upon which the definition of the full-time workweek is based, may no longer be the norm. The National Commission on Employment and Unemployment Statistics addressed the issue in their report, *Counting the Labor Force*. They found no evidence of a significant change from the 40-hour standard and thus recommended that 35 hours continue to be used as the dividing line between part- and full-time work. See *Counting the Labor Force*, National Commission on Employment and Unemployment Statistics (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1979), pp. 54-55.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the cyclical sensitivity of this measure and its component parts, see Robert W. Bednarzik, "Short workweeks during economic downturns," *Monthly Labor Review*, June 1983, pp. 3-11.

<sup>3</sup> Each month in the news release, "The Employment Situation," BLS publishes a set of alternative measures of unemployment. These measures, labeled U-1 through U-7, are designed to reflect a wide range of assumptions about unemployment. Three of the alternatives involve the full-time/part-time concepts. U-4 is defined as unemployed full-time jobseekers as a percent of the full-time labor force. U-6 is defined as total full-time jobseekers plus half of the part-time jobseekers plus half of the total working part time for economic reasons as a percent of the civilian labor force less

half of the part-time labor force. U-7 is the same as U-6 with the number of discouraged workers added to the count of jobseekers and the civilian labor force.

<sup>4</sup> Employed persons with a job but not at work during the survey reference week are classified as full- or part-time workers according to whether they usually work 35 hours or more. This group averaged 5.8 million in 1985, and ranged from a low of 3.9 million in November to a high of 11.8 million in July.

<sup>5</sup> See Carol Leon and Robert W. Bednarzik, "A profile of women on part-time schedules," *Monthly Labor Review*, October 1978, pp. 3-12; and William V. Deutermann, Jr. and Scott Campbell Brown, "Voluntary part-

time workers: a growing part of the labor force," *Monthly Labor Review*, June 1978, pp. 3-10. The latter article dealt only with nonagricultural employment.

<sup>6</sup> In terms of the existing classifications, a count of the part-time employed would include voluntary part-timers, the part-timers for economic reasons who usually work part time, and persons with a job but not at work who usually work less than 35 hours a week.

<sup>7</sup> See Anne McDougall Young, "New monthly data series on school age youth," *Monthly Labor Review*, July 1985, pp. 49-50.

<sup>8</sup> Janice Neipert Hedges, "Job commitment in America: is it waxing or waning?" *Monthly Labor Review*, July 1983, pp. 17-24.

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### Tenements house some hard numbers

During the winter of 1914-15 the Committee on Unemployment formed by Mayor John P. Mitchell called upon the Bureau of Labor Statistics for a series of field surveys of unemployment in New York City. The committee had collected data from employers on the number employed in a week of December 1914 and for the corresponding week of December 1913. At about the same time, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, in cooperation with the Mayor's Committee, had surveyed its industrial policyholders in Greater New York. At the request of the committee, with personnel borrowed from the U.S. Immigration Bureau and the New York City Tenement House Inspection Service, the Bureau covered over 100 city blocks and some 3,700 individual tenement houses in January and February 1915. It found an unemployment rate of 16.2 percent, which approximated the 18-percent rate reported by Metropolitan. The results were published by the Bureau in *Unemployment in New York City, New York*.

[BLS Commissioner] Meeker then contracted with Metropolitan for studies in 16 cities in the East and Middle West and in 12 Rocky Mountain and Pacific Coast cities. In August and September 1915, at the urging of the Mayor's Committee, both the Bureau and Metropolitan conducted surveys in New York City for a second time. The results of this work were presented in 1916 in a Bureau publication, *Unemployment in the United States*.

—JOSEPH P. GOLDBERG AND WILLIAM T. MOYE

*The First Hundred Years of the  
Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Bulletin 2235 (Bureau of Labor  
Statistics, 1985).*

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