

The June Review

As summer and the seasonal upswing in teenage employment begin, it is appropriate that we lead this issue with an article on the risks youths face in the workplace. Janice Windau, Eric Sygnatur, and Guy Toscano find that 15-year-olds have about the same risk of fatal injury as adult workers and that 16- and 17-year-olds have fatality rates about three-quarters that for all workers combined. Still, more than 400 youths 17 and younger were killed on the job between 1992 and 1997, and, as the authors observe, “youth fatalities and other serious injuries tend to have a greater emotional impact on society, and concerns for their safety will continue to be an important consideration.”

John W. Ruser looks at another important issue in occupational injury and illness data. The overall incidence of workplace injuries and illnesses was 7.1 cases per 100 workers in 1997—the lowest rate since the Bureau of Labor Statistics began reporting these data in the early 1970s. Within that decline, there has also been a change in the way the more serious cases are treated: Cases with lost work time are now less likely to involve days totally away from work and more likely to involve a return to restricted work activities. Ruser attributes the change to a possible decrease in the severity of injuries combined with a trend toward more quickly returning affected workers to the job.

Daniel Hecker extends the popular exercise of identifying and counting “high-tech” employment. Noting the “fairly wide agreement on the general characteristics of high-technology industries,” his article suggests a more expansive definition of high-tech employment should also include a portion of employment in other industries that are suppliers to the high-tech sector and workers in high-tech occupations—such as engineers and scientists—throughout the rest of the economy.

Kenneth J. Stewart and Stephen B. Reed have reconstructed the Consumer

Price Index along the lines it would have looked like if today’s methods had been in place starting in 1978. Their results, “CPI research series using current methods (CPI-U-RS),” is not an official series, but is deemed good enough for research work. As such, this most detailed and systematic estimate of a historically consistent CPI series can serve as a valuable tool for researchers needing estimates of past inflation as it would have been measured using the Bureau’s current (1999) methodology.

Lawrence Klein Awards announced

For the past three decades, the annual Lawrence R. Klein Award has honored the best articles appearing in the *Monthly Labor Review*. The award was established in honor of Dr. Klein, who, upon his retirement after 22 years as editor-in-chief of the *Review*, established a fund to encourage a continuing high level of writing in our pages.

This year, the Klein Award trustees selected “The 1996 grain price shock: how did it affect food price inflation?” by Jerry L. Light and Thomas J. Shevlin as the best article from within the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Among articles by authors outside BLS, the trustees selected “New views of inequality trends in Canada and the United States,” by Michael C. Wolfson and Brian B. Murphy of Statistics Canada.

BLS reports on women’s earnings

Median weekly earnings of female full-time wage and salary workers were \$456 in 1998, 76.3 percent of the \$598 median for men. Both the level of women’s earnings and the difference from men’s varied considerably by age.

Among women, 45- to 54-year-olds had the highest median weekly earnings in 1998 (\$516), followed by 35- to 44-year-olds (\$498). The difference between

women’s and men’s earnings was relatively large among older workers. For workers ages 45 to 54, women’s earnings were 70.5 percent of men’s. Among 55- to 64-year-olds, the earnings ratio was 68.2 percent.

In contrast, young women and men under age 25 had fairly similar earnings. Median weekly earnings for women 16 to 24 years of age were \$305, roughly 91 percent of the earning of young men of that age. For more information, see *Highlights of Women’s Earnings*, BLS Report 928.

More workers self-employed

About 17 percent of self-employed workers were in executive, administrative, and managerial occupations in 1996. Self-employed people in this group either manage their own business or work for themselves in occupations such as accounting. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that these occupations will grow to an 18.7-percent share of the self-employed in 2006.

Significant opportunities for self-employment exist in professional specialty occupations. This group accounted for 14.3 percent of the self-employed in 1996. Professionals are projected to be 14.8 percent of the self-employed in 2006. For more information, see “Considering self-employment: What to think about before starting a business,” *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, Summer 1999.

Beginning in this issue

This issue hosts the debut of a new department, “Regional trends.” Kenneth D. LeVasseur and his colleagues in the Bureau of Labor Statistics Division of Local Area Unemployment Statistics plan to contribute a series of reports based on regional tabulations from the Current Population Survey. They kick off the new department with reports on union membership and multiple jobholding by State.