

Issues in Labor Statistics



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Bureau of Labor Statistics
Summary 00–15 August 2000

When one job is not enough

More than 8-1/2 million workers held two or more jobs in May 1997. Four out of every ten did so to meet regular household expenses or to pay off debts. Other common reasons for working more than one job included enjoying the work on the second job (14.5 percent), wanting to save for the future (8.7 percent), wanting to get experience or build up a business (7.7 percent), and wanting some extra money to buy something special (7.9 percent). These results were quite similar to those that were obtained in May 1991, the last time that data on the reasons for working more than one job were collected.¹ (See table and chart.)

The reasons for multiple jobholding varied noticeably among demographic groups. For example, the proportion working more than one job to pay off debts was highest among those aged 16 to 24 (18.2 percent) and then declined with age to a low of 2.1 percent for those 65 and older. Young workers (aged 16 to 24) also were the most likely to hold an extra job in order to get money to buy something special. The group aged 55 and older had the greatest percentage of workers who reported that they worked more than one job because they enjoyed the work on the second job (27 percent). These workers were almost twice as likely as adults aged 25 to 54, and nearly 6 times as likely as teenagers, to moonlight for this reason. The proportion of multiple jobholders who worked more than one job to pay regular household expenses was about 10 percentage points lower for older workers than for persons aged 25 to 54. Nevertheless, nearly a fourth of multiple jobholders aged 55 and older gave this as the reason for working more than one job.

In general, men and women worked more than one job for the same reasons. The sharpest disparities between the sexes occurred among older workers. A large proportion of men aged 55 and older (30.8 percent), worked more than one job because they enjoyed the work on the second job; this compares with

21.8 percent of older women. Older women, on the other hand, were most likely to moonlight in order to meet regular household expenses or to pay off debts—36.3 percent, versus 22.2 percent for older men.

For women who maintained families, the overwhelming reason for working multiple jobs was to meet regular expenses or to pay off debts (64.5 percent); this compares with 49.4 percent of men who maintained families.

A greater percentage of blacks (53.2 percent) and of Hispanics (49.0 percent) than of whites (39.5 percent) also reported that they worked more than one job to meet regular household expenses or to pay off debts. About 15 percent of whites were multiple jobholders because they enjoyed the work on the second job; this was slightly higher than the proportion among blacks and triple the proportion among Hispanics.

As the current economic expansion has continued past May 1997, the number of multiple jobholders has edged down. As mentioned

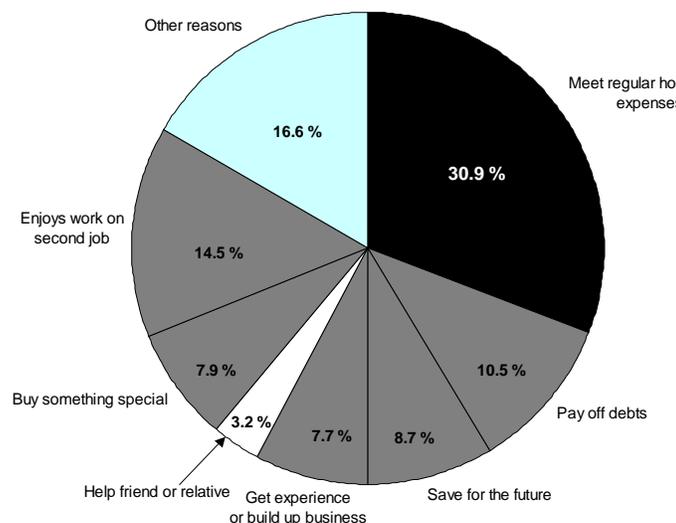
above, in May 1997 and in May 1991, about two-fifths of multiple jobholders worked more than one job in order to meet regular household expenses or to pay off debts. It may be that the number of multiple jobholders has edged down during the period since May 1997 because the continuing strength in the economy has enabled them to meet regular household expenses or pay off debts without having to work more than one job.

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Reasons for working more than one job, May 1997



¹ Data for 1991 were published in "Multiple Jobholding Unchanged in May 1991," USDL 91-547, October 28, 1991.

Multiple jobholders by age, race, Hispanic origin, sex, marital status, and reason for working at more than one job, May 1997

Characteristic	Total (thousands)	Percent distribution by reason								
		Total	To meet regular household expenses	To pay off debts	To save for the future	To get experience or build up a business	To help out a friend or relative	To get extra money to buy something special	Enjoys the work on the second job	Other reasons
Total, 16 years and older	8,751	100.0	30.9	10.5	8.7	7.7	3.2	7.9	14.5	16.6
16 to 24 years	1,274	100.0	24.7	18.2	11.4	5.2	2.3	13.0	6.5	18.5
25 to 34 years	2,054	100.0	34.7	14.2	8.3	9.2	2.4	7.5	10.4	13.4
35 to 44 years	2,607	100.0	32.7	8.1	9.5	8.5	3.7	6.8	15.4	15.3
45 to 54 years	1,986	100.0	31.5	7.6	7.2	8.0	3.8	5.8	17.3	18.8
55 years and older	829	100.0	23.6	4.6	6.1	5.0	3.8	9.4	27.0	20.6
Men, 16 years and older	4,720	100.0	29.3	10.4	10.1	8.4	2.8	7.4	15.9	15.8
16 to 24 years	647	100.0	25.3	17.7	13.2	6.6	3.5	13.5	7.4	12.7
25 to 34 years	1,143	100.0	33.6	16.2	9.8	7.9	1.9	5.0	11.5	14.1
35 to 44 years	1,419	100.0	32.6	7.3	11.0	9.3	2.2	6.8	16.0	14.8
45 to 54 years	1,033	100.0	27.4	6.9	9.3	9.1	3.7	6.5	19.0	18.1
55 years and older	478	100.0	19.1	3.1	5.7	7.6	3.8	8.5	30.8	21.6
Women, 16 years and older	4,031	100.0	32.7	10.7	7.0	7.0	3.7	8.5	12.8	17.6
16 to 24 years	628	100.0	24.1	18.8	9.6	3.9	1.1	12.5	5.6	24.3
25 to 34 years	912	100.0	36.0	11.6	6.3	10.8	3.0	10.7	9.1	12.4
35 to 44 years	1,188	100.0	33.0	9.0	7.8	7.4	5.4	6.8	14.7	15.9
45 to 54 years	953	100.0	35.9	8.3	4.9	6.8	4.0	5.1	15.6	19.5
55 years and older	351	100.0	29.6	6.7	6.7	1.5	3.8	10.7	21.8	19.3
White	7,566	100.0	29.7	9.8	8.8	8.0	3.5	8.0	15.2	17.0
Black	874	100.0	39.0	14.2	7.9	5.6	1.4	6.9	11.4	13.8
Hispanic origin	557	100.0	39.5	9.5	9.7	5.4	3.0	11.2	4.6	17.0
Men:										
Single	1,238	100.0	24.4	15.6	11.1	8.0	2.4	10.1	10.3	18.0
Married, spouse present	2,910	100.0	31.2	8.1	10.1	8.3	3.0	6.3	19.2	13.9
Widowed, divorced, or separated	573	100.0	30.6	10.5	7.8	9.8	2.8	7.1	11.0	20.3
Women:										
Single	1,145	100.0	28.7	15.6	9.4	3.5	2.5	12.9	9.0	18.3
Married, spouse present	1,941	100.0	28.8	7.2	6.5	9.9	4.1	7.4	16.5	19.6
Widowed, divorced, or separated	946	100.0	45.4	12.2	4.9	5.1	4.4	5.4	9.9	12.8
Women who maintain families	577	100.0	52.6	11.9	5.0	1.6	2.0	6.1	8.3	12.4

NOTE: Data on the number of multiple jobholders differ from the regularly published monthly data because of differences in the estimation procedures used to produce the data. Detail may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding. Detail for 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.

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