# AN ANALYSIS OF THE LABOR FORCE OF GARVIN COUNTY, MURRAY COUNTY, AND PONTOTOC COUNTY, OKLAHOMA

A SUMMARY REPORT PRESENTED TO

Ada Jobs Foundation, Murray County Industrial Authority, Pauls Valley Chamber of Commerce

and

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### Introduction

Sponsored by the Ada Jobs Foundation, Murray County Industrial Authority, Pauls Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, this report

is the latest in a series of local labor force studies in Oklahoma. The report examines the availability of labor in Garvin County, Murray County, and Pontotoc County located in south central Oklahoma. These counties comprise the 'labor market area' referred to in this report.

The data contained in this report were collected by telephone from randomly selected adults in the fall of 2001. The results are based on 1,008 interviews of persons 18 years old or older who reside in areas served by the telephone prefixes for localities in the counties listed above. The number of interviews completed by county is shown in the Appendix. Results are subject to a sampling error of +/- 3.1 percentage points with a confidence level of 95 percent.

#### **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- A total of 7,780 workers are either actively looking for other work or are willing to change jobs for the right opportunity.
- Of these workers 4,122 are Underemployed.
- In addition to the Underemployed, 3,658 workers have looked for other work during the previous three months.
- The Underemployed exhibit a variety of occupations and skills.
- About 29.1 percent of Underemployed workers hold at least a bachelor's degree.
- The typical Underemployed worker is willing to change jobs for an increase in pay of 10% to 15%.
- A job that pays \$10 an hour is viewed as desirable by 1,989 Underemployed and 2,181 workers looking for other work.

#### **Counties in the Labor Market Area**



Of the 55,620 adults who reside in the labor market area, 33,424 are employed. Approximately 47 percent live in Pontotoc County, 36 percent in Garvin County, and 17 percent in Murray County.

As is the case in any labor market area, a significant number of adults do not work outside the home including retirees,



■ Not working and don't want to work □ Not working and want to work

students, homemakers, the disabled, and the unemployed. Approximately 22,196 adults are presently not working. Most (19,051) do not desire to work citing as reasons

retirement, inability to	Persons Not Working			
work, or a preference not		<b>XX</b> 7 ( )		
to work outside the home	Reason Not Working	Want to <u>Work</u>	Don't Want <u>to Work</u>	<u>Total</u>
(table). A smaller	Retired	1,158	12,134	13,292
number of adults (3,146)	Disabled or unable to work	357	2,988	3,345
$\frac{1}{10000000000000000000000000000000000$	Don't work outside the home	507	2,825	3,332
want to work; this group	Student	282	455	737
consists primarily of	Family responsibilities	129	117	246
consists primarily of	Just moved into area	51	0	51
persons who have	Laid off, lost job	556	45	601
no contly, lost their iches	Don't have reliable transportation	0	0	0
recently lost then jobs,	Other	105	486	591
	Total	3,146	19,051	22,196

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students, persons who want to go back to work, and homemakers who are looking for work outside the home. Only a small portion of those who want to work could be classified as unemployed. Using the U.S. Department of Labor definition, a person is unemployed if he or she is without work and engages actively in job-searching activities. Using this definition, approximately 3.4 percent of the labor force in the labor market area were unemployed on average during the summer of 2001, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

### **Actively Looking for a Different Job**

Approximately 5,786 workers, 17.3 percent of those working in civilian jobs, took actions in the previous three months to find a new job. Better pay was the primary reason for looking for a different job for most workers while better benefits and better working conditions were mentioned next most often.



Primary Reason Why Looking for Different Job (percent)

# Education

The percentage of workers with at least a Bachelor's degree is slightly below the Oklahoma state average (table). More workers in the labor market area have completed at least some college, compared with state averages.

Highest Level of Education of Working Persons 18 Years Old or Older (percent)			
Ι	Labor Market		
Level of Education	Area	State	
Less than high school High school Some college Associate degree Bachelors degree Postgraduate degree	6.1 34.7 27.7 5.3 14.9 9.6	10.8 37.0 20.1 6.5 16.2 9.4	
Bachelors degree or higher 24.5 25.7 Note: State averages are compiled from the Current Population Survey conducted in March 1999 by the U.S. Census Bureau			

# **Household Mobility**

Many households are very mobile, moving from one residence to another after a stay of only a few years. Among households in this study, 38.7 percent lived in a different house or apartment five years ago. Of these, 11.1 percent did not live in the same county five years ago, and 6.7 percent did not live in Oklahoma five years ago. Not surprisingly, Job Shifters are the most mobile of households: 19.0 percent did not live in the same county five years ago compared with 17.2 percent for the Underemployed and 10.6 percent for Job Keepers.

# **Commuting Patterns**

Most workers are employed in the county of residence: 90 percent of workers who live in Pontotoc County also work in Pontotoc County, while about 76 percent of workers who live in the other counties in the labor market area work in their home county. Interestingly, nearly 500 workers who live in the area commute to jobs in Oklahoma County.

Commuting Patterns for Residents of the Labor Force Area				
Employed in:	Resides in (county):			
(county)	Garvin	Murray	Pontotoc	
Atoka			55	
Carter	161	458	184	
Cleveland	358	28		
Garvin	8,309	275	459	
Hughes			138	
Johnston		98	70	
Murray	123	4,010	175	
Oklahoma	428	28	51	
Pontotoc	478	158	15,606	
Other Oklahoma	235	35	53	
Various (travels)	579	134	356	
Unknown	134	78	169	
Total	10,806	5,302	17,316	
Employed in Home County				
Number	8,309	4,010	15,606	
Percent	76.9%	75.6%	90.1%	

# Type of Employment

Eighty-one percent of civilian workers have full-time, permanent jobs. A significant proportion of civilian workers have part-time jobs, about one of every six. Most part-time workers are not working full-time by choice: just 5.2 percent of part-time workers would like to work full-time. Lack of full-time work, health problems, retirement, child care obligations, and school are given as reasons why some are working part-time and not

Type of Employment		
Full-time		
Permanent	27,086	
Temporary	523	
Unknown	214	
Part-time		
Permanent	4,344	
Temporary	813	
Unknown	444	
Total	33,424	

Reasons for Working Part-time (percent)		
Could only find part-time work	3.1	
Retired / Social Security limit on earnings	4.5	
Child care obligations /problems	10.2	
Other family / personal obligations	7.0	
School / training	3.4	
Health medical limitations	25.3	
Slack work / business conditions	23.5	
Other	1.4	

full-time (table).

# Availability of Labor

This study identified 7,780 workers who are readily available for other work, including workers who have looked for other work during the past three months (Job Shifters), and

workers who are Underemployed. In addition to these two types of workers, the study identified workers who are neither Underemployed nor looking for other work (Job Keepers), and persons who are not working but want to work (Job Seekers).

# **Persons Working**



Underemployed Looking for other work Rest of employed

# Job Shifters

Approximately 3,658 workers in the labor market area looked for other work during the previous three months. Most engaged in what the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics refers to as active jobsearch methods, including contacting employers and employment agencies, sending out resumes and completing employment applications, and answering help wanted ads (table).

Jobsearch Methods Used by Workers Looking for Other Work	Number of <u>Workers</u>	Percent
Active Jobsearch Methods		
Contacted employer directly / interview	1,009	27.6
Contacted public employment agency	115	3.1
Contacted private employment agency	78	2.1
Contacted friends or relatives	1,058	28.9
Contacted school / university employment center	-	0.0
Sent out resumés / filled out applications	1,741	47.6
Checked union / professional registers	127	3.5
Placed or answered ads	174	4.8
Passive Jobsearch Methods		
Looked at want ads	1,476	40.3
Attended job training programs / courses	75	2.0
At least one <i>active</i> jobsearch method	3,078	85.3
Note: more than one jobsearch method is possible.		

# Underemployed

This study estimates that 4,122 workers in the labor market are Underemployed, 12.3 percent of all workers. In order to be classified as Underemployed in this study, all three of the following conditions must be satisfied.

The worker must:

- feel underutilized in present employment,
- possess training or education that is not required by his or her current job, and
- be willing to change jobs in order to better utilize his or her skills and education.

# **Characteristics of Workers**

The Underemployed have the highest percentage of college graduates, about 29 percent, followed by Job Keepers at 25.1 percent. Job Seekers have the lowest numbers of college graduates.





The Underemployed and Job Shifters tend to be the youngest, while Job Seekers are the oldest group. The largest number of Job Keepers are between 45 and 64 years old.



#### **Civilian Workers by Age Group**

Job Seekers are predominantly female, while the majority of the Underemployed, Job Shifters, and Job Keepers are male.



### Workers by Gender

About one in four workers finds a wage of \$8 per hour attractive, including 1,050 Underemployed, 1,665 Job Shifters, 5,965 Job Keepers, as well as 2,280 Job Seekers. For a wage offer of \$9 per hour the number of available workers increases by about 27 percent, and rises another 18 percent if the wage is \$10 per hour.



### Number of Persons Willing to Work by Wage Rate

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The attractiveness of a particular wage rate varies greatly with the worker's level of education. For example, only 4.5 percent of workers with Bachelor's degrees find \$8 per hour attractive compared with 26.9 percent of those with two years of college or Associate's degrees and 35.5 percent of those with only a High School diploma (see Table 2 in the Appendix).

The Underemployed and Job Shifters display a variety of occupations and skills, from executives and other professionals to craftsmen and clerks. The largest occupations are service occupations (1,517), executive, administrative and managerial (1,186), and sales (1,153).

Underemployed and Job Shifters by Occupation			
		Job	
	Underemployed	Shifters	Total
Executive, Administrative, and Managerial	717	469	1,186
Professional Specialty	364	305	670
Technicians and Related Support	214	155	370
Sales	596	557	1,153
Administrative Support, Including Clerical	452	205	658
Service Occupations	630	887	1,517
Farming, Forestry, and Fishing	267	179	447
Precision Production, Craft, and Repair	304	166	470
Machine Operators, Assemblers, and Inspectors	161	370	531
Transportation and Material Moving	415	320	735
Other	0	45	45
	4,122	3,658	7,780

Workers with workplace skills that are not being used offer potential recruits for employment opportunities that better use their skills. This study found that 17.4 percent of those with skills not presently in use have computer skills of one type or the other (see Table 5 in the Appendix). Knowledge of word processing was most often mentioned, followed by bookkeeping and work on machines (table).

Workers with Computer Skills (among workers with skills not in use)			
		Job	
Strongest Computer Skill (percent)	Underemployed	Shifters	Total
Word processing (MS-Word)	595	443	1,038
Bookkeeping (Quicken)	114	168	282
Computer assisted design (CAD)	39	28	68
Work on machines, troubleshooting	68	68	136
Computer programming (C, SAS, SPSS)	50	0	50

About 67 to 68 percent of the Underemployed and Job Shifters are willing to change jobs for an increase in pay of 15 percent or less (table), amounting to a potential pool of workers of approximately 5,221. The median Job Keeper, however, would require a raise of more than 20 percent to change jobs. Interestingly, 33.9 percent of Job Keepers are not interested in changing jobs regardless of the increase in pay.

Workers Willing to Change Jobs by Percent Pay Raise				
		Job	Job	
Desired raise in pay	<u>Underemployed</u>	Shifters	Keepers	
Less than 5%	513	428	837	
Between 5% and 10%	1,145	1,320	3,049	
Between 10% and 15%	1,126	690	3,621	
Between 15% and 20%	392	335	2,682	
More than 20%	409	370	5,253	
Not interested	354	28	8,682	
Don't know	-	315	884	
Refused	-	-	131	
Other	184	173	462	
Total	4,122	3,658	25,601	

About 17 percent of all workers drive at least 21 miles to work. Commuting distances for the Underemployed, Job Shifters, and Job Keepers are similar (table).

Distance Travelled to Place of Employment (percent of workers)				
	All Workers	Underemployed	Job Shifters	Job Keepers
0 - 5 miles	52.0	51.8	63.7	51.4
6 - 10 miles	15.3	15.7	7.6	17.8
11 - 20 miles	14.2	13.4	14.5	12.7
21 - 30 miles	5.7	5.1	3.9	5.7
30 - 50 miles	6.3	6.5	6.5	7.4
More than 50 miles	5.3	5.9	3.2	3.6

A large proportion (59 percent) of the Underemployed and Job Shifters are willing to commute 21 miles or more to a job. About 35 percent are willing to commute 31 miles or more (graph).



# Willingness to Commute

# Conclusions

- A significant pool of available labor exists in the labor market area among the Underemployed (4,122 workers) and among workers looking for other jobs, or Job Shifters (3,658 workers).
- Most of the Underemployed and Job Shifters are willing to commute at least 21 miles for a pay increase of 10% to 15%.
- A smaller pool of labor exists among those not working who desire work (Job Seekers). Job Seekers typically are less skilled and not as well educated as most workers.

# Appendix: Distribution of Interviews by County

<u>Area</u>	Interviews
Garvin County	349
Murray County	250
Pontotoc County	409
Total	1,008

More than 4,900 randomly generated phone numbers were called in order to complete the 1,008 interviews. Of these phone numbers, approximately 1,314 were not in service. Another 1,089 numbers were not eligible for the study (language barrier, hard of hearing, children's telephone, business or fax). In addition, 721 households refused to be interviewed and 574 numbers were never answered after five and six attempts. Of the eligible numbers that were answered, a response rate of 54 percent was achieved.

Completions for each county were weighted by age group, gender, and county population for the data analysis.