

# **An Analysis of the Altus Area Labor Force**

Summary Report

for the

Altus / Southwest Area  
Economic Development Corporation

and

Oklahoma Department of Commerce

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## **An Analysis of the Altus Area Labor Force**

Sponsored by the Altus / Southwest Area Economic Development Corporation and the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, this study examines the availability of labor in the Altus area. Data were collected by telephone from randomly selected adults between February and May 1999. The results presented in this report are based on 1,237 interviews targeted to residents of Jackson, Harmon, Greer, Kiowa and Tillman Counties as well as Vernon, Texas.

This study demonstrates that a pool of labor exists among workers who are employed but do not fully utilize their education and skills. We call these workers the *underemployed*. In this study, underemployed workers meet three conditions: 1) they feel they are underutilized in their present employment, 2) they have training or education that is not required by their current job, and 3) they would change jobs in order to better utilize their skills and education. Approximately 12.7 percent of workers in the area fit the underemployed criteria.

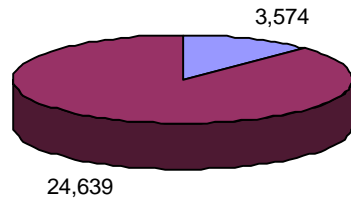
Many of the underemployed are searching for improved job situations. These workers exhibit a variety of occupations and skills. The results show that the median underemployed worker is willing to commute 20 miles or more for a job that pays 10 percent to 15 percent more than current wages.

A smaller pool of labor exists among those who are without work but who want to work. These persons include retirees who wish to return to work for a variety of reasons. In general, those who want to work are less skilled and have less education than does the average worker in the area.

## Highlights Regarding the Underemployed

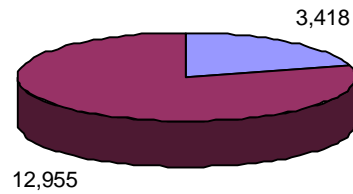
Approximately 3,574 persons in the target area are looking for work that better utilizes their skills and education. In addition, there are 3,418 persons who are currently not working but want to work.

**Estimated Persons Who Are Working**



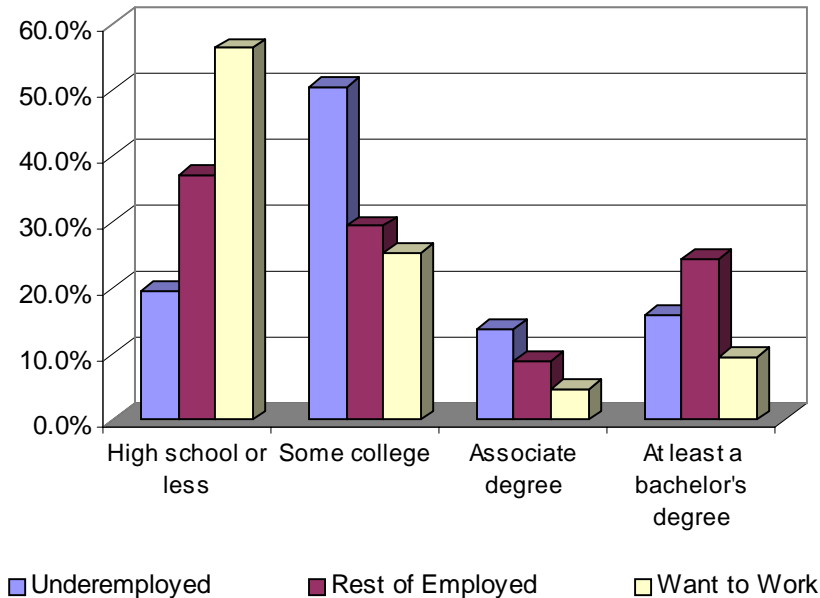
■ Underemployed ■ Rest of Employed

**Estimated Persons Who Are Not Working**

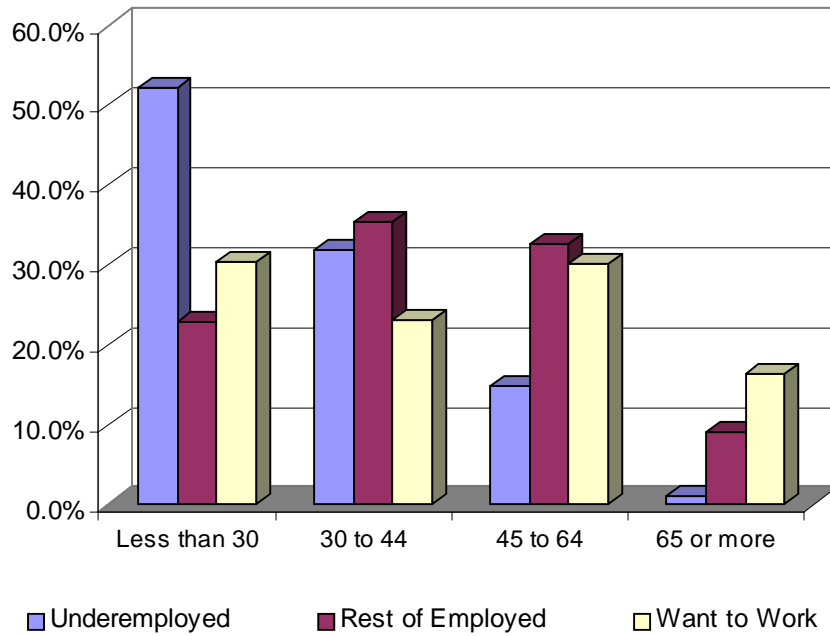


■ Want to Work ■ Don't desire work

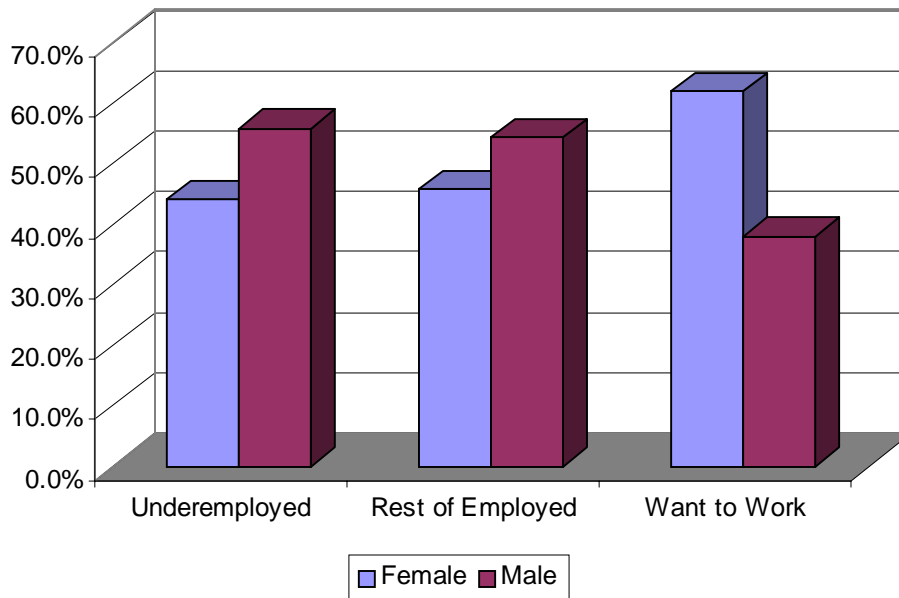
A smaller percentage of underemployed workers have four-year degrees than do other workers. Persons who are not working and want to work are less likely to have a post secondary degree.



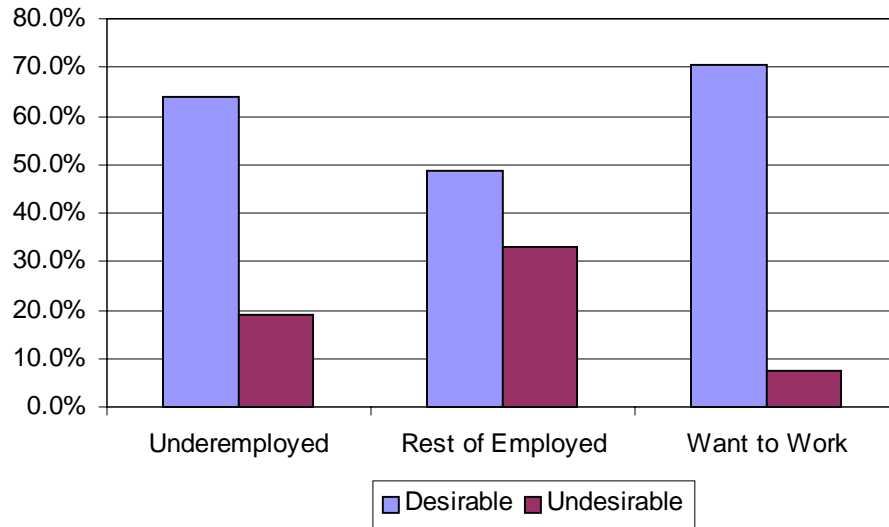
Underemployed workers are younger while persons without a job but who want to work are older.



A majority of the underemployed are male. Those who are without work but want to work are mostly female.

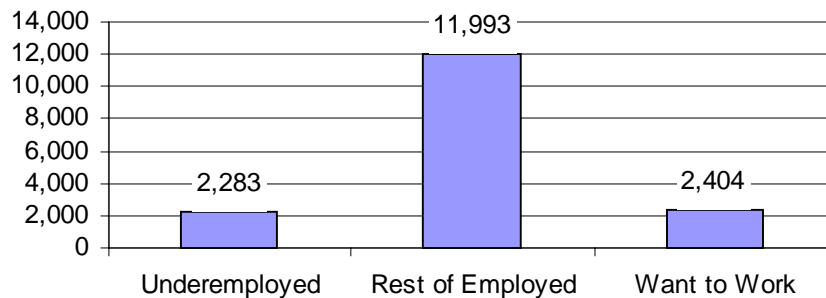


An employment opportunity that pays from \$8 per hour to \$10 per hour is viewed as desirable by 63.9 percent of the underemployed and by 48.7 percent of the rest of the employed. Seventy percent of persons who are without work but want to work view such a job as desirable.



An estimated 16,680 persons living in the Altus area are interested in a job that pays from \$8 hour to \$10 hour.

**Number of Persons Willing to Work for \$8-\$10 per Hour**



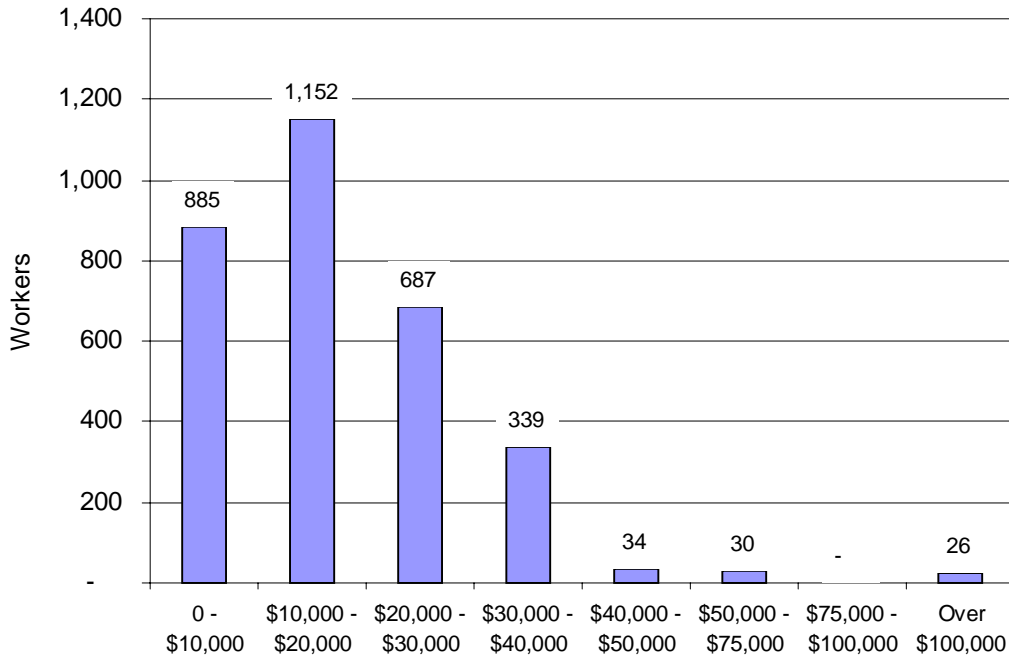
The underemployed work in a variety of occupations and skills, from executives and other professionals to craftsmen and clerks:

	<u>Estimated</u> <u>Workers</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Executive, Administrative, and Managerial	200	5.7
Professional Specialty	190	5.4
Technicians and Related Support	117	3.3
Sales	419	11.9
Administrative Support, Including Clerical	416	11.8
Service Occupations	665	18.9
Farming, Forestry, and Fishing	63	1.8
Precision Production, Craft, and Repair	786	22.4
Machine Operators, Assemblers, and Inspectors	205	5.8
Transportation and Material Moving	229	6.5

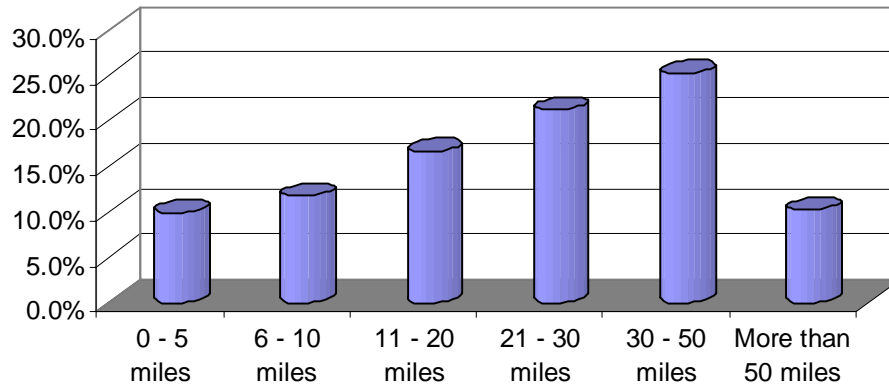
Most of the underemployed have skills they presently are not utilizing. These skills include...



The typical (median) underemployed worker earns between \$10,000 and \$20,000 a year and would change jobs for a pay increase of between 10 percent and 15 percent.

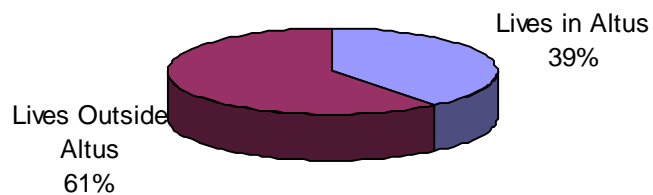


Approximately 56 percent of underemployed workers are willing to commute at least 21 miles to work...



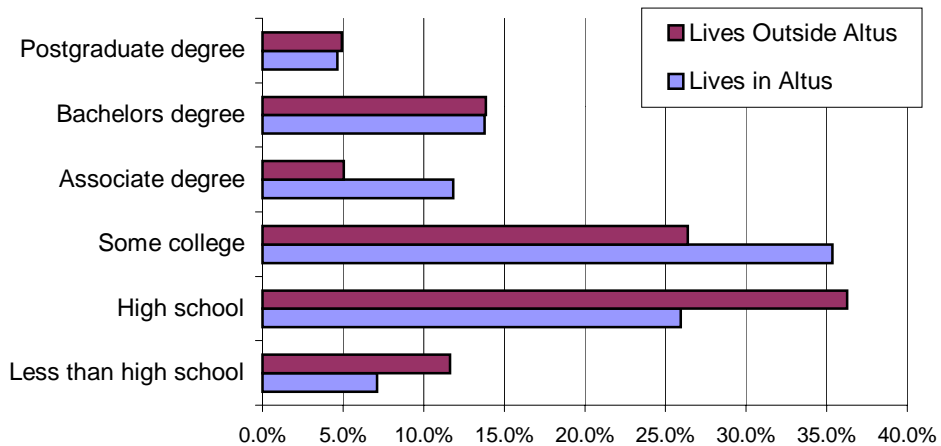
## Contrast of Altus Residents with the Rest of the Study Area

Thirty-nine percent of workers in the study live in Altus while 61 percent live elsewhere in the study area.



About 35 percent of Altus residents have attended some college compared to about 26 percent of those who do not live in Altus. About 14 percent of both groups have at least a bachelor's degree.

**Level of Education by Place of Residence**



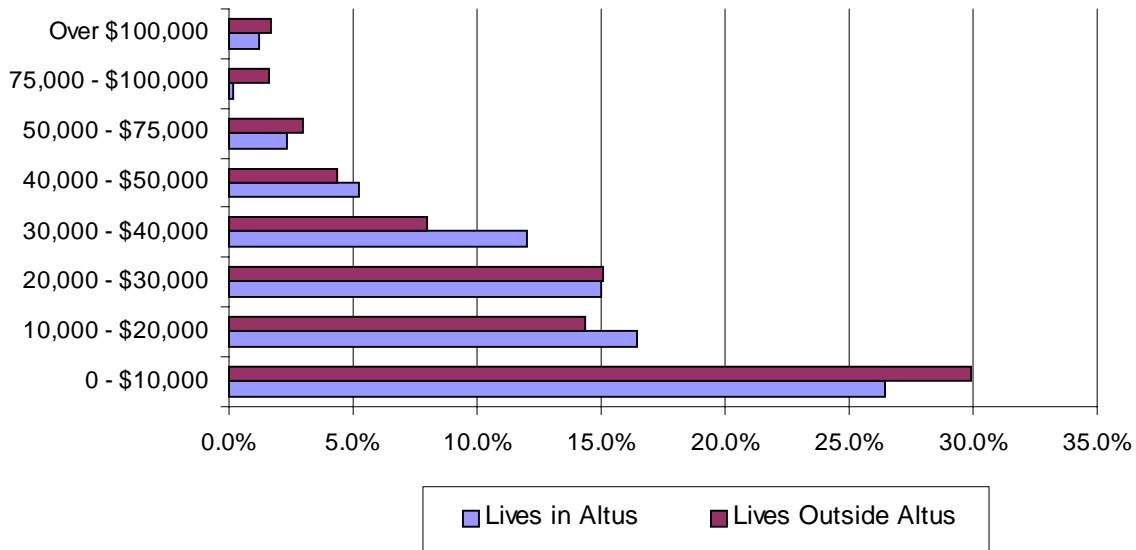
Workers in both groups are concentrated in government and private sector jobs. Those who do not live in the Altus area more likely to be self-employed compared with Altus residents.

**Sector of Employment by Place of Residence**



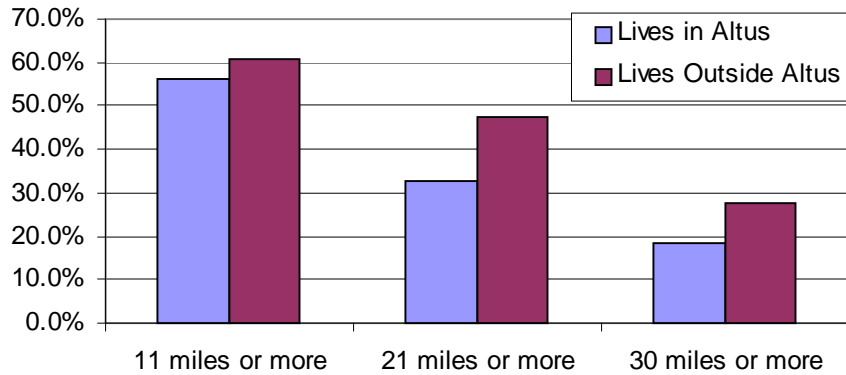
The distribution of earnings for both groups is similar; median earnings for both groups is between \$20,000 and \$30,000.

**Distribution of Earnings by Place of Residence**



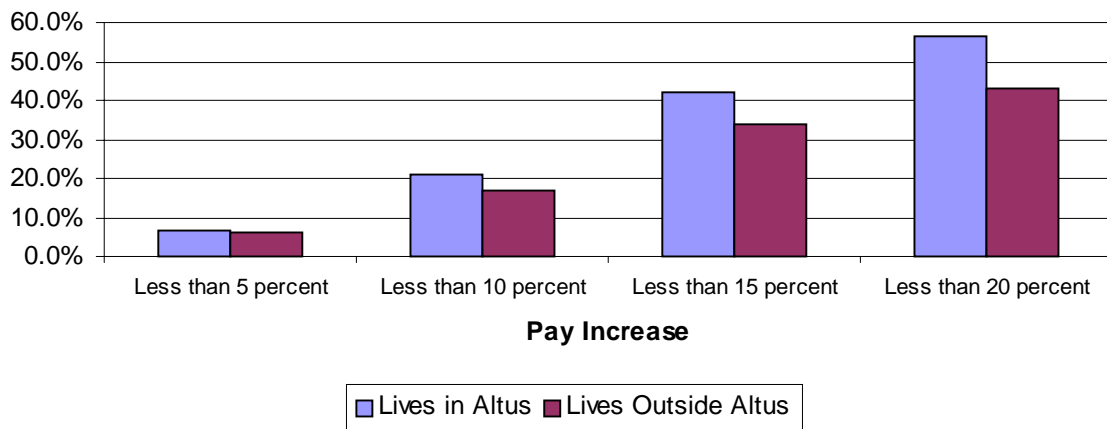
Those who do not live in Altus are more willing to commute than are Altus residents.

**Willingness to Commute by Place of Residence**



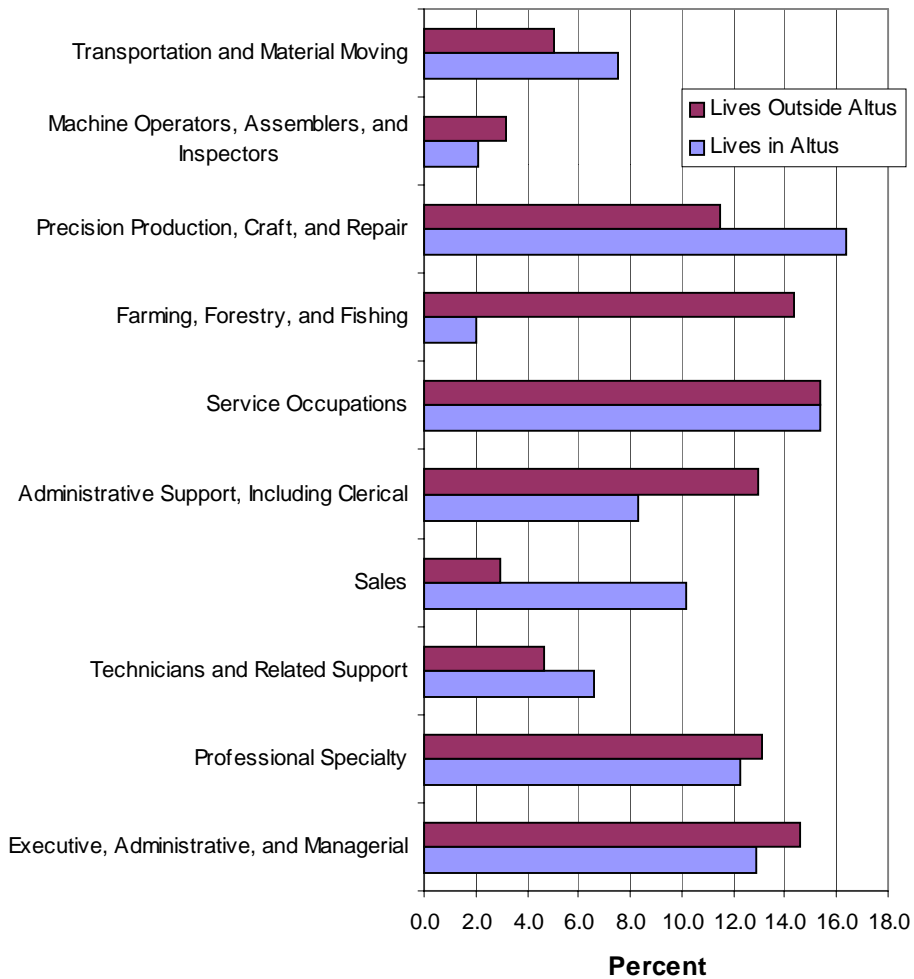
Workers living in Altus are more willing to change jobs than workers living outside Altus. Forty-two percent of Altus residents would change jobs for a pay increase of 15 percent or less, compared with 34 percent for those who do not live in Altus. Also, 22 percent of Altus residents and 27 percent of for those who do not live in Altus are not interested in changing jobs.

**Percent of Workers Willing to Change Jobs by Percent Pay Increase Needed**

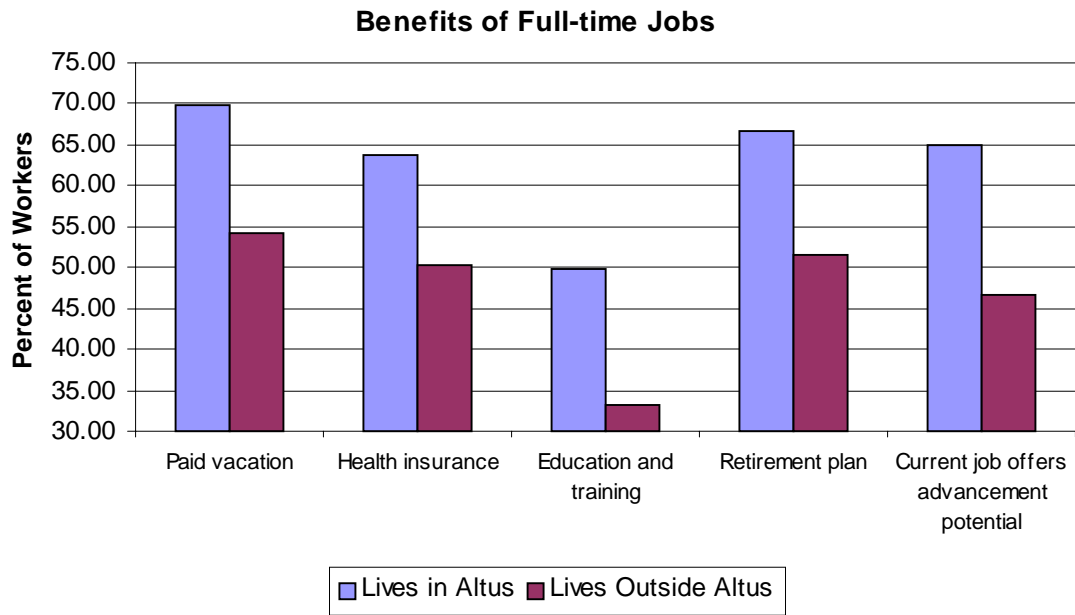


With some exceptions, the distribution of occupations is similar. Most notably, those who do not live in Altus are much more likely to be in farming than are Altus residents while workers living in Altus tend more towards sales occupations.

**Occupation by Place of Residence**



A much higher proportion of Altus residents receive benefits with their jobs compared with those who do not live in Altus.



## Conclusions

### **Underemployed workers**

- A significant pool of labor exists among workers who are not fully utilizing their education and skills
- Many underemployed workers are searching for higher-paying jobs
- The underemployed exhibit a variety of occupations and skills
- About 56 percent are willing to commute 20 miles or more for an increase in pay of 10% to 15%
- A smaller pool of labor exists among those not working who desire work. These persons typically are less skilled and not as well educated

### **Comparing Altus residents with those who do not live in Altus**

- On average, earnings for Altus residents are slightly higher than for those who do not live in Altus.
- Workers who do not live in Altus are more resistant to changing jobs compared with Altus residents.
- Occupational patterns are similar, but workers who do not live in Altus are more concentrated in farming and administrative support jobs while Altus residents are more concentrated in precision production and repair and sales occupations.
- Thirty-eight percent of Altus residents and 33 percent of workers who do not live in Altus are employed in private sector positions.
- A higher proportion of Altus residents enjoy benefits with their full-time jobs compared with workers who do not live in Altus.

## **Appendix: Distribution of the Sample**

Note: results in the report are based on sample weighted by gender and age by county.

<b>County</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Jackson	547	44.2
Harmon	56	4.5
Greer	95	7.7
Kiowa	227	18.4
Tillman	263	21.3
Vernon, Texas	49	4.0
	1,237	100.0