

AN ANALYSIS OF THE LABOR FORCE OF ATOKA COUNTY AND COAL COUNTY, OKLAHOMA

A SUMMARY REPORT PRESENTED TO:

City of Atoka, City of Coalgate
and
Oklahoma Department of Commerce

David A. Penn
Associate Director, CEMR

Robert C. Dauffenbach
Director, CEMR

John G. McCraw
Manager of Information
Systems, CEMR

Center for Economic and Management Research
Michael F. Price College of Business
The University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma

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Introduction

Sponsored by the City of Atoka, City of Coalgate, and the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, this report is one in a series of local labor force studies in Oklahoma. The report examines the availability of labor in the two county area consisting of Atoka County and Coal County located in southeast Oklahoma.

The data contained in this report were collected by telephone from randomly selected adults in spring of 2000. The results are based on 717 interviews of persons 18 years old or older who reside in Atoka County and Coal County. Results are subject to a sampling error of +/- 3.6 percentage points with a confidence level of 95 percent. Detailed results of the study are provided in tables that follow this summary report.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

A number of workers are either looking for other work or are willing to change jobs in order to better utilize their skills and abilities.

An estimated 980 workers are underemployed.

An additional 525 workers (not underemployed) have looked for other work during the previous three months.

The underemployed exhibit a variety of occupations and skills.

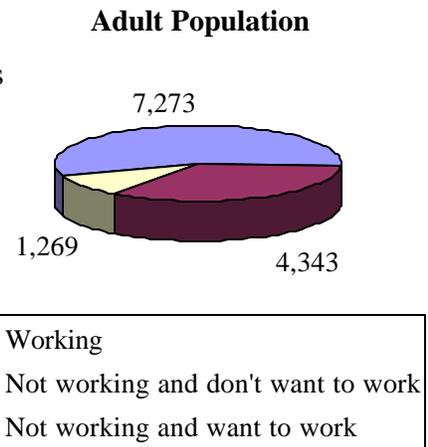
About 19.4 percent of underemployed workers hold at least a Bachelor's degree.

82.3 percent of the underemployed are willing to commute 20 miles or more for an increase in pay of 10% to 15%

A job that pays \$10 hour is viewed as desirable by 687 underemployed and 256 workers looking for other work.

An estimated 7,199 of the 12,810 adult residents of the two counties are employed, 56.2 percent of the population 18 years old or more. Two-thirds of the employed live in Atoka County (4,821) with the remaining one-third residing in Coal County (2,378).

As is the case in any labor market area, a significant percentage of adults are not working including retirees, students, homemakers, the disabled, and the unemployed. In Atoka County and Coal County, approximately 5,611 adults are not working; most (4,343) do not desire to work citing as reasons retirement, inability to work, or a preference not to work outside the home (table). A smaller number of adults (1,269) want to work; this group consists of retired persons who want to go back to work, homemakers who are looking for work outside the home, persons who have recently lost their jobs, and disabled persons who want to work. 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 3.3



Persons Not Working			
<u>Reason Not Working</u>	<u>Want to Work</u>	<u>Don't Want to Work</u>	<u>Total</u>
Retired	431	2,355	2,787
Disabled or unable to work	148	1,380	1,529
Don't work outside the home	256	281	537
Student	13	104	116
Family responsibilities	0	13	13
Just moved into area	0	0	0
Laid off, lost job	367	138	505
Don't have reliable transportation	17	0	17
Other	0	13	13
Refused	35	59	94
Total	1,269	4,343	5,611

percent of the labor force in the two county area are *unemployed* according to the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission.

Education

Compared with state averages, fewer workers in the two county area have a Bachelor’s degree or higher: 21.9 percent of workers have a Bachelor’s degree or higher, compared with the state average of 25.7 percent. A higher percentage of workers have a high school diploma, however: 92.8 percent have a high school diploma, compared with 89.2 percent for the state.

Highest Level of Education of Working Persons 18 Years Old or Older (percent)				
<u>Level of Education</u>	<u>Atoka County</u>	<u>Coal County</u>	<u>Two County Area</u>	<u>State</u>
Less than high school	8.0	7.5	7.8	10.8
High school	40.9	42.8	41.5	37.0
Some college	22.7	25.9	23.8	20.1
Associate degree	5.5	4.1	5.0	6.5
Bachelors degree	17.5	15.3	16.8	16.2
Postgraduate degree	5.4	4.4	5.1	9.4
Bachelors degree or higher	22.9	19.7	21.9	25.7

Note: State averages are compiled from the Current Population Survey conducted in March 1999 by the U.S. Census Bureau

Commuting Patterns

Twenty-three percent of workers who reside in two counties commute to jobs located outside their county of residence. Twenty-five percent of workers who live in Coal County drive to jobs in other counties, as do 22 percent of workers in Atoka County. An estimated 17.5 percent, about 1,260 workers, commute to jobs located *outside* the two counties.

Commuting Patterns for Residents of the Four County Area, by County				
Employed in: (county)	Resides in: (county)			
	Atoka	Coal	Latimer	Pittsburg
Atoka	3,761	248		81
Bryan	363			
Coal	156	1,774		
Johnston	189			
Latimer			3,859	585
McIntosh				148
Pittsburg		37	364	15,943
Pontotoc		187		
Pushmataha	175			
Other Oklahoma	59	61	119	450
Various (traveling)	40	70		
Texas	78			
Other/Unknown				
Total	4,821	2,377	4,342	17,207
Employed in Home County:				
Number	3,761	1,774	3,859	15,943
Percent	78.0%	74.6%	88.9%	92.7%
Employed Within the Four County Area:				
Number	3,917	2,058	4,223	16,609
Percent	18.8%	13.4%	2.7%	3.5%

Type of Employment

Eighty-four percent of the employed in the two county area have full-time, permanent jobs. A smaller proportion have part-time jobs, about one of every seven workers. Thirty-percent of part-time workers want to secure a full-time job but cannot find full-time work or cannot work full-time due to family obligations, child care needs, or health needs. Most part-time workers do not seek full-time employment citing family and child care obligations, school, and retirement.

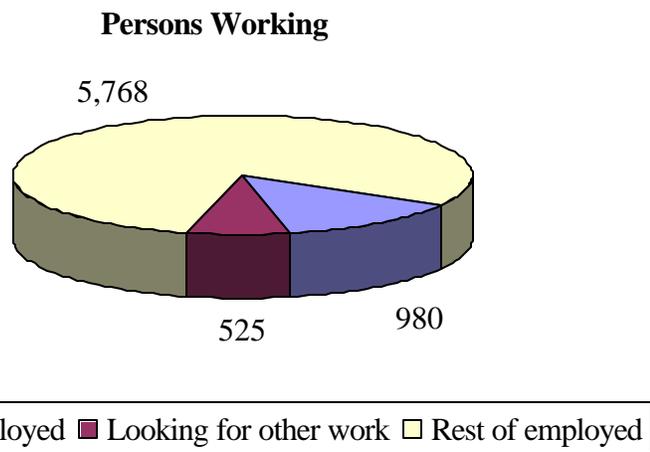
Type of Employment	
Full-time	
Permanent	5,996
Temporary	179
Unknown	34
Part-time	
Permanent	795
Temporary	126
Unknown	70
Total	7,199

Availability of Labor

This study identified four potential sources of workers for new or expanding employers: 1) workers who have looked for other work during the past three months (*Job Shifters*), and 2) workers who are *underemployed*, 3) workers who are neither underemployed nor looking for other work (*Job Keepers*), and 4) persons who are not working but want to work (*Job Seekers*).

Job Shifters

Approximately 525 workers in the two-county 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	<u>Workers</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<i>Active Jobsearch Methods</i>		
Contacted employer directly / interview	279	53.1
Contacted public employment agency	-	0.0
Contacted private employment agency	44	8.4
Contacted friends or relatives	151	28.8
Contacted school / university employment center	31	6.0
Sent out resumés / filled out applications	83	15.8
Checked union / professional registers	-	0.0
Placed or answered ads	36	6.9
<i>Passive Jobsearch Methods</i>		
Looked at want ads	141	26.8
Attended job training programs / courses	23	4.3
At least one <i>active</i> jobsearch method	450	91.2
Note: more than one jobsearch method is possible.		

Underemployed

This study estimates that 980 employees could be categorized as underemployed, 13.6 percent of persons with jobs. In order to be classified as underemployed in this study, all three of the following conditions must be satisfied.

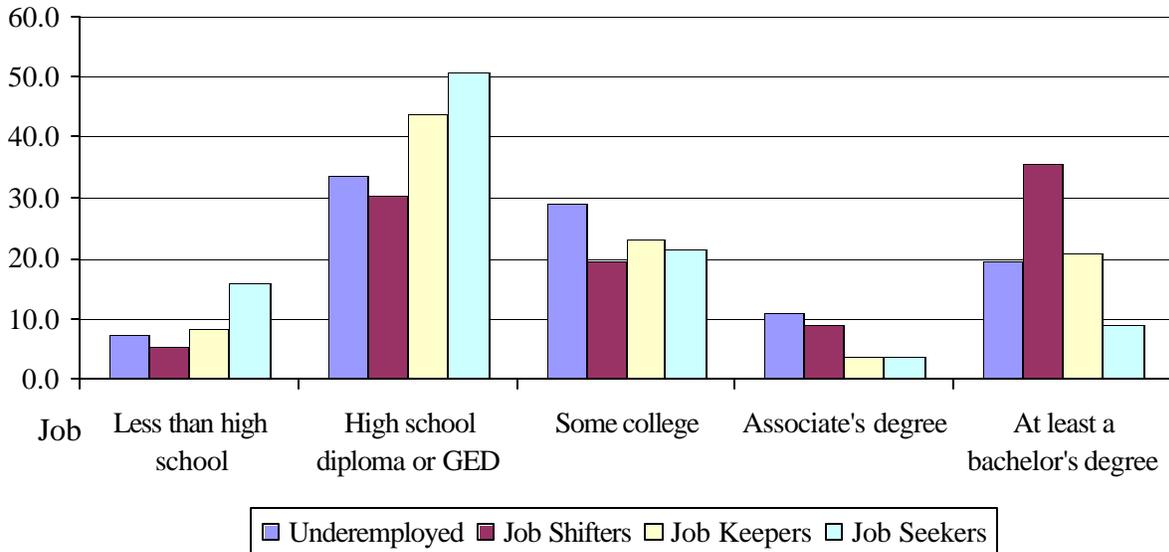
The worker must:

- ?? 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

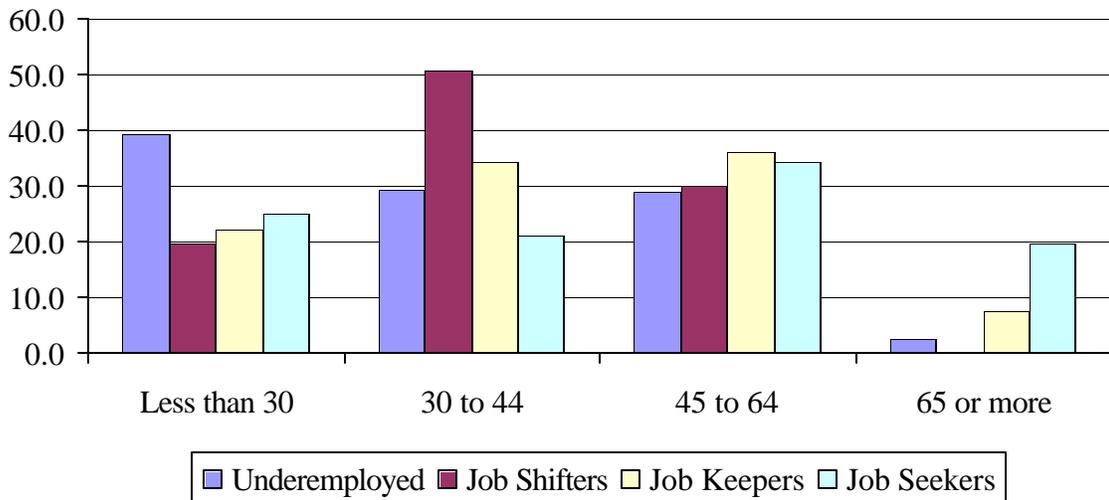
Few underemployed workers and Job Shifters have Bachelor's degrees compared with Job Keepers. The underemployed have more college experience than other workers, while Job Seekers have very little college experience.

Workers by Level of Education



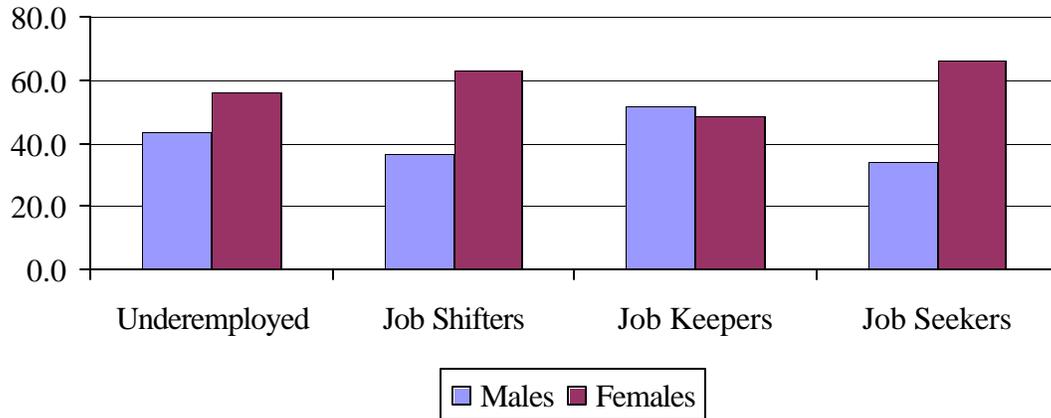
Shifters and the underemployed are substantially younger than Job Keepers and Job Seekers, with at least 30 percent in the 18-30 age group. Job Seekers tend to be much older than the other groups.

Workers by Age Group



Females outnumber males among the underemployed, Job Shifters, and Job Seekers.

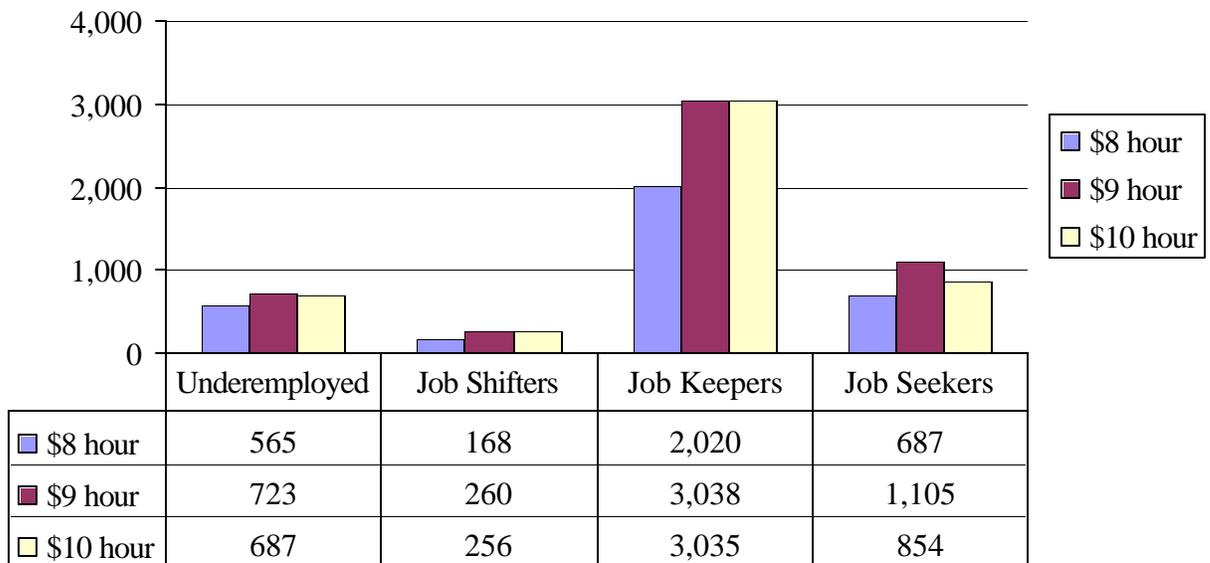
Workers by Gender



About 38 percent of workers find \$8 hour an attractive wage including 557 underemployed, 168 Job Shifters, and 2,020 Job Keepers. In addition, 687 Job Seekers find \$8 per hour attractive. The number of Job Keepers who find \$8 hour an attractive wage should not be taken to suggest that they necessarily would change jobs for an offer of \$8 per hour, since many indicated that they simply are not interested in changing jobs. Consequently, the pool of what may be termed *readily available* consists of the underemployed, Job Shifters, and Job Seekers. Among the readily available, a total of 1,412 adults find \$8 an attractive wage. If the wage offer is \$9 per hour the number of readily available increases to 1,652, rising to 1,797 adults if the offer is \$10 per hour.

The attractiveness of an \$8 per hour wage rate varies greatly with the worker's level of education. For example, only 11.6 percent of workers with Bachelor's degrees find \$8 per hour attractive compared with 44.8 percent of those with two years of college or Associate's degrees and 47.7 percent of those with only a High School diploma.

Number of Persons Willing to Work by Wage Rate



The underemployed and Job Shifters display a variety of occupations and skills, from executives and other professionals to craftsmen and clerks. The largest occupations include and precision production, craft, and repair (300), professional specialty (268), and service occupations (265).

Underemployed and Looking for Other work by Occupation			
	<u>Underemployed</u>	<u>Looking for other work</u>	<u>Total</u>
Executive, Administrative, and Managerial	50	61	112
Professional Specialty	133	135	268
Technicians and Related Support	37	56	93
Sales	53	12	64
Administrative Support, Including Clerical	97	36	133
Service Occupations	209	56	265
Farming, Forestry, and Fishing	34	39	74
Precision Production, Craft, and Repair	251	49	300
Machine Operators, Assemblers, and Inspectors	70	16	86
Transportation and Material Moving	46	65	111
	980	525	1,505

Workers with workplace skills that are not being used in the present job offer potential recruits for employment opportunities that better use their skills. This study found that 27.7 percent of those with skills not presently in use had computer skills of one type or the other. Knowledge of word processing was the most often mentioned computer skill.

Workers with Computer Skills (among workers with skills not in use)			
<u>Strongest Computer Skill (percent)</u>	<u>Underemployed</u>	<u>Looking for other work</u>	<u>Total</u>
Word processing (MS-Word)	225	69	293
Spreadsheet analysis (Excel, Lotus)	29	0	29
Bookkeeping (Quicken)	0	20	20
Computer programming	0	20	20
Work on machines, troubleshooting	91	0	91

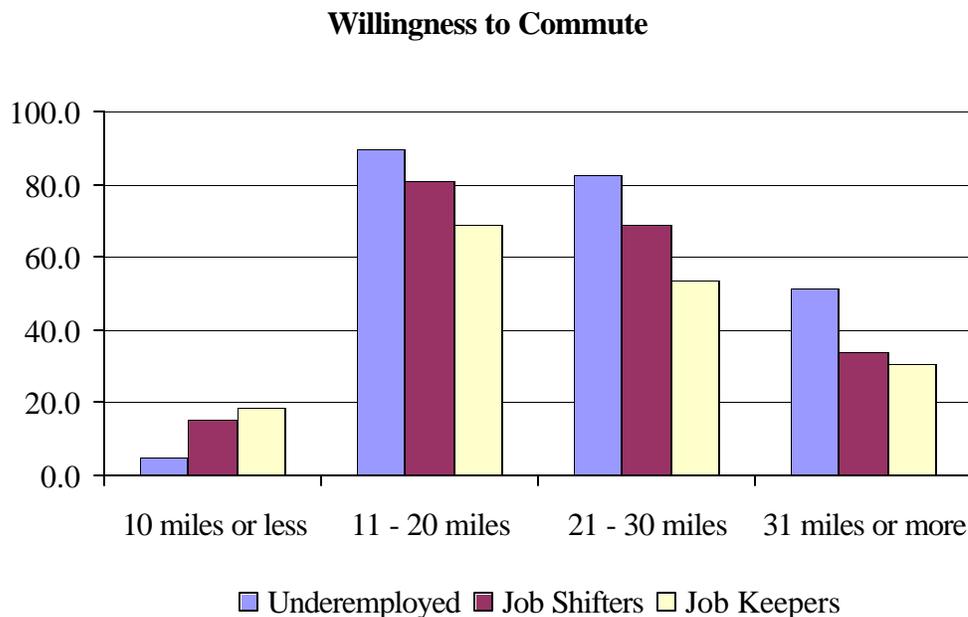
About half of underemployed workers and Job Shifters are willing to change jobs for an increase in pay of no more than 15 percent (table). Potential employers could hire as many as 792 workers among the underemployed and Job Shifters for a pay increase of 15 percent or less. In addition, more than 1,854 Job Keepers would be willing to change jobs for this pay increase. However, 25 percent of Job Keepers are not interested in changing jobs, regardless of the amount of pay increase.

Workers Willing to Change Jobs by Percent Pay Raise			
<u>Desired raise in pay</u>	<u>Underemployed</u>	<u>Job Shifters</u>	<u>Job Keepers</u>
Less than 5%	101	95	191
Between 5% and 10%	229	52	666
Between 10% and 15%	223	93	998
Between 15% and 20%	49	43	306
More than 20%	249	132	1,338
Not interested	20	20	1,408
Don't know	35	57	646
Refused	-	-	-
Other	74	34	142
Total	980	525	5,694

About half of workers in the two county area reside within 10 miles of their place of employment. In addition, the underemployed commute longer distances than do other employees.

Distance Travelled to Place of Employment				
	All Workers	Underemployed	Job Shifters	Job Keepers
0 - 5 miles	37.8	24.4	35.7	40.4
6 - 10 miles	11.8	9.8	9.7	12.4
11 - 20 miles	24.5	30.0	25.0	23.5
21 - 30 miles	9.7	11.8	8.1	9.5
30 - 50 miles	11.0	20.8	12.9	9.1
More than 50 miles	4.0	3.2	8.7	3.7
Don't Know	1.1	0.0	0.0	1.4
Refused	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

A large proportion of the underemployed (51.2 percent) and Job Shifters (34.1 percent) are willing to commute 31 miles or more. About 70 percent are willing to commute 21 to 30 miles, while 80 percent will drive 11 to 20 miles to work.



Conclusions

- ?? A significant pool of labor exists in the Atoka County and Coal County among the *underemployed* (980 workers) and among workers looking for other jobs, or *Job Shifters* (525 workers).
- ?? Most of the underemployed and Job Shifters are willing to commute 30 miles or more to a job for a pay increase of no more than 15 percent.
- ?? 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.