

AN ANALYSIS OF THE LABOR FORCE OF THE LAWTON, OKLAHOMA LABOR MARKET

A SUMMARY REPORT PRESENTED TO

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and

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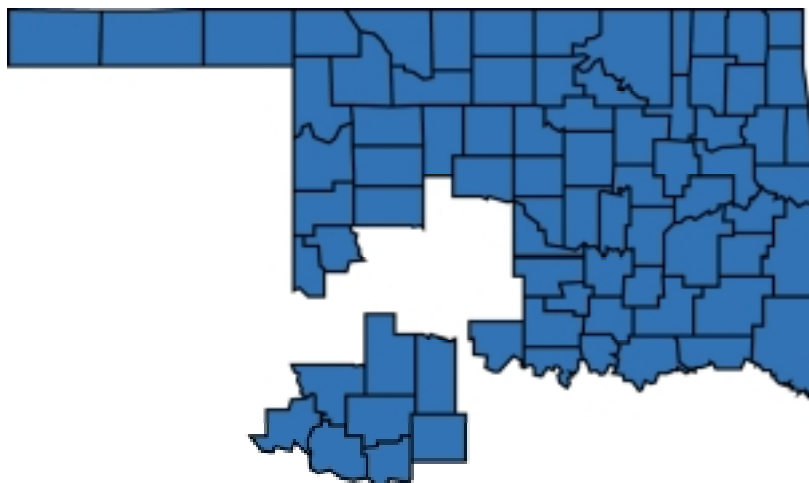
Introduction

Sponsored by the Lawton Chamber of Commerce and Industry 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 Caddo County, Comanche County, Cotton County, Grady County, Jackson County, Kiowa County, Stephens County, and Tillman County located in southwest Oklahoma. These counties comprise the 'Lawton Area' and 'labor market area' referred to in this report. The data contained in this report were collected by telephone from randomly selected adults in the summer of 2001. The results are based on 1,466 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

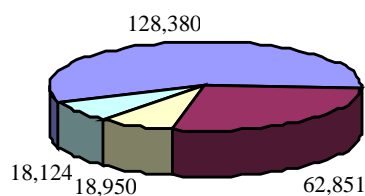
- A total of 27,909 workers are either actively looking for other work or are willing to change jobs for the right opportunity. These workers are currently available for other jobs.
- Of these workers, 16,682 are Underemployed.
- In addition to the Underemployed, 11,227 workers have looked for other work during the previous three months.
- The Underemployed exhibit a variety of occupations and skills.
- About 21.9 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 10,614 Underemployed and 6,396 workers looking for other work.

Counties in the Lawton Study Area



Adult Population

Of the 210,181 adults who reside in the Lawton area, 110,256 are employed in civilian occupations and 18,124 are in the military. Approximately 43 percent live in Comanche County.



As is the case in any labor market area, a significant number of adults do not work outside the home including retirees, students, homemakers, the disabled, and the unemployed.

Approximately 81,801 adults in the Lawton area are presently not working. Most (62,851) do not desire to work

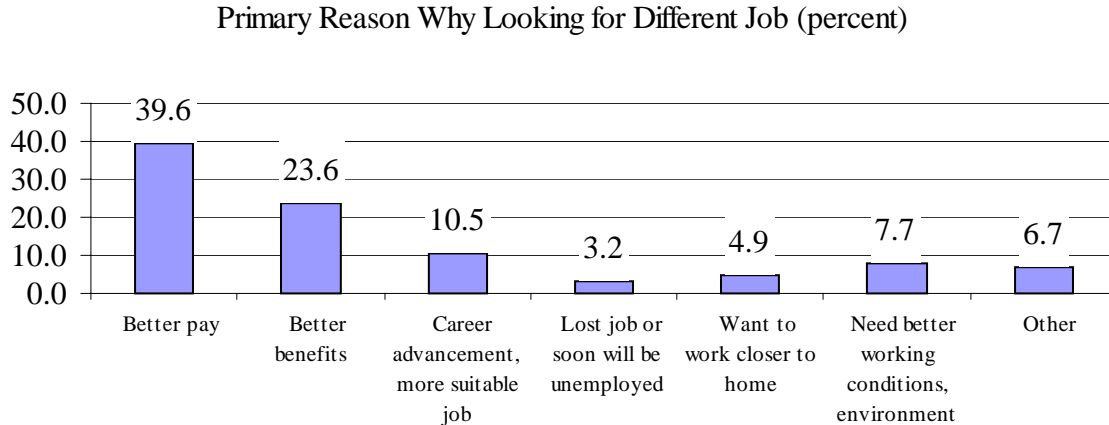
Persons Not Working

<u>Reason Not Working</u>	<u>Want to Work</u>	<u>Don't Want to Work</u>	<u>Total</u>
Retired	2,408	42,386	44,794
Disabled or unable to work	1,766	7,408	9,174
Don't work outside the home	6,495	9,804	16,299
Student	1,310	2,344	3,654
Family responsibilities	447	215	662
Just moved into area	1,872	694	2,565
Laid off, lost job	4,032	0	4,032
Don't have reliable transportation	307	0	307
Other	313	0	314
Total	18,950	62,851	81,801

or a preference not to work outside the home (table). A smaller number of adults (18,950) want to work; this group consists primarily of persons who have recently lost their jobs, 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 3.0 percent of the labor force in the Lawton area were *unemployed* on average during the first eight months of 2001, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Actively Looking for a Different Job

More than 11,227 workers, 10.2 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; better benefits was the second most often mentioned reason.



Career advancement and the desire to secure a more suitable job was next, followed by the desire for better working conditions, the desire to find other work before being laid off, and the desire to work closer to home.

Education

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

Highest Level of Education of Working Persons 18 Years Old or Older (percent)		
<u>Level of Education</u>	<u>Lawton Area</u>	<u>State</u>
Less than high school	4.2	10.8
High school	34.6	37.0
Some college	28.9	20.1
Associate degree	5.6	6.5
Bachelors degree	20.8	16.2
Postgraduate degree	5.1	9.4
Bachelors degree or higher	26.0	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, 39.8 percent lived in a different house or apartment five years ago, 7.4 percent did not live in the same county five years ago, and 11.9 percent did not live in the same state five years ago. Not surprisingly, Job Shifters are the most mobile of households: 64.7 percent did not live in the same county five years ago, compared with 50.1 percent for the Underemployed and 36.9 percent for Job Keepers.

Commuting Patterns

Most workers are employed in the county of residence: 95 percent of workers who live in Comanche County also work in Comanche County, while 76 percent of workers who live in the other counties in the Lawton labor market area work in the home county. Interestingly, more than 5,000 workers who live in the area commute to jobs in Oklahoma County and nearly 1,500 commute to jobs located in Texas.

Commuting Patterns for Residents of the Lawton Labor Market Area		
	Resides in:	
	<u>Comanche</u>	<u>Other Counties in the Labor Force Area</u>
<u>Employed in:</u>		
Caddo		287
Canadian		751
Carter		131
Cleveland		576
Comanche	37,392	3,035
Custer		338
Garvin		425
Grady	220	868
Greer		146
Harmon		466
Jackson		376
Kiowa		309
Oklahoma	622	4,704
Stephens		532
Tillman		337
Woodward		255
Own county		53,910
Texas	326	1,122
Various	317	1,226
Unknown	469	1,118
Total	39,347	70,910
Employed in Home County		
Number	37,392	53,910
Percent	95.0%	76.0%

Type of Employment

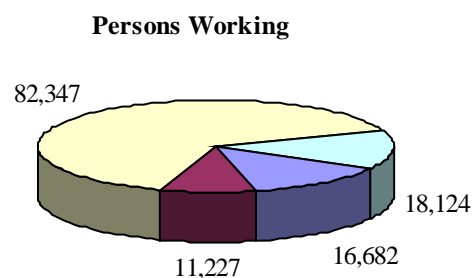
Eighty-six percent of civilian workers have full-time, permanent jobs. A significant proportion of civilian workers have part-time jobs, about one of every eight. Most part-time workers do not work full-time by choice: just 6.1 percent of part-time workers would like to work full-time. Lack of full-time work, retirement, child care obligations, and school are given as reasons why some are working part-time and not full-time (table).

Reasons for Working Part-time (percent)	
Could only find part-time work	18.7
Retired / Social Security limit on earnings	16.7
Child care obligations /problems	15.6
Other family / personal obligations	12.2
School / training	9.8
Health medical limitations	6.0
Slack work / business conditions	4.9
Other	16.1

Type of Employment	
Full-time	
Permanent	95,045
Temporary	1,766
Unknown	160
Part-time	
Permanent	12,554
Temporary	730
Unknown	-
Total Civilian	110,256

Availability of Labor

This study identified 27,909 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*).



■ Underemployed ■ Looking for other work ■ Rest of employed ■ Military

Job Shifters

Approximately 11,227 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	<u>Workers</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<i>Active Jobsearch Methods</i>		
Contacted employer directly / interview	2,943	26.2
Contacted public employment agency	453	4.0
Contacted private employment agency	242	2.2
Contacted friends or relatives	1,568	14.0
Contacted school / university employment center	-	0.0
Sent out resumés / filled out applications	6,634	59.1
Checked union / professional registers	-	0.0
Placed or answered ads	480	4.3
<i>Passive Jobsearch Methods</i>		
Looked at want ads	2,426	21.6
Attended job training programs / courses	156	1.4
At least one <i>active</i> jobsearch method	10,108	90.0
Note: more than one jobsearch method is possible.		

Underemployed

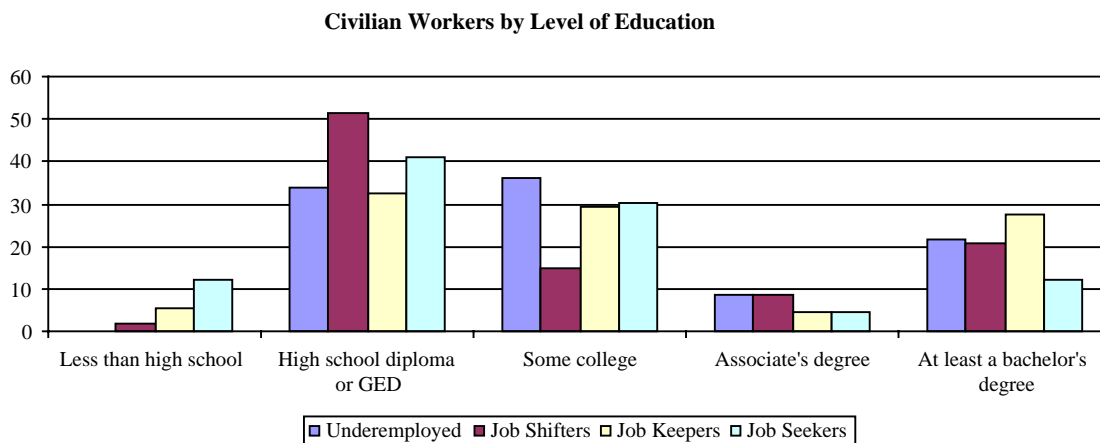
This study estimates that 16,682 workers in the labor market area are Underemployed, 15.1 percent of all workers. In order to be classified as Underemployed in this study, all three of the following conditions must be satisfied.

The worker must:

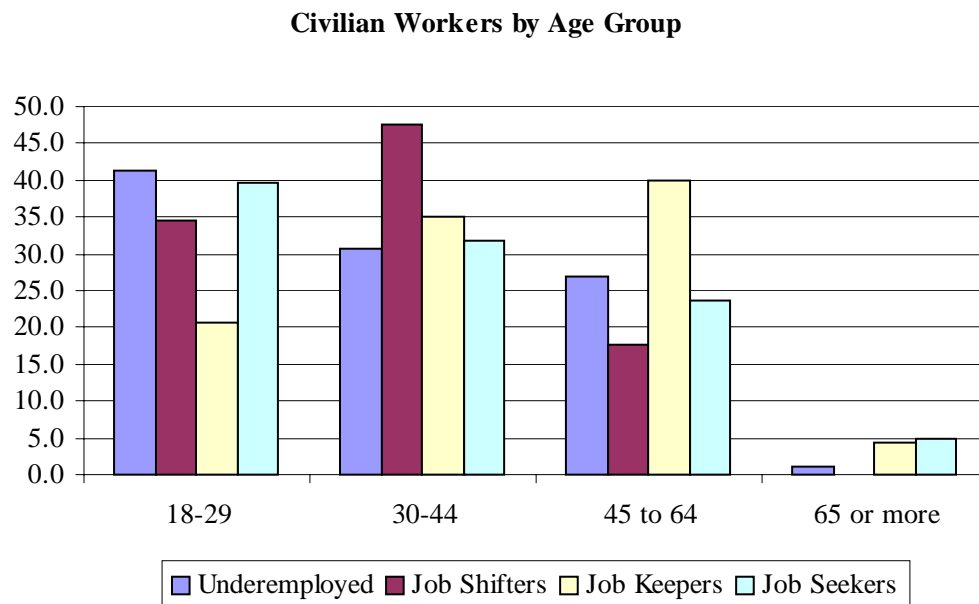
- feel underutilized in present employment,
- possess training or education that is not required by his or her current job, and
- be willing to change jobs in order to better utilize his or her skills and education.

Characteristics of Workers

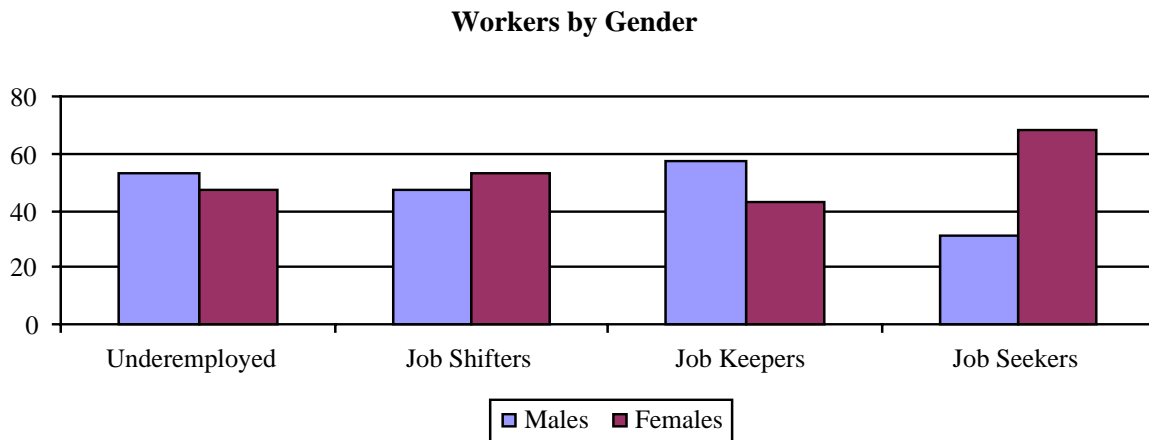
The Underemployed and Job Shifters are similar in terms of those with a Bachelor's degree or better, about 21% to 22%. Job Seekers have the lowest numbers of college graduates.



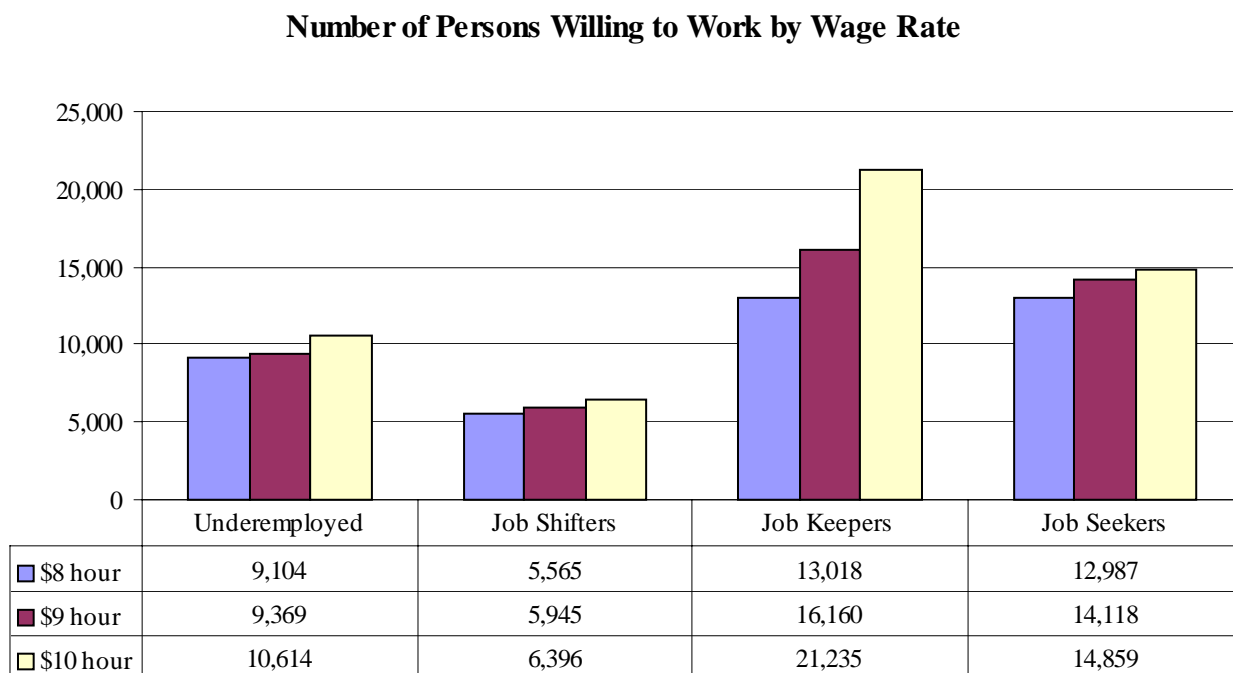
The Underemployed and Job Seekers tend to be the youngest, with 40 percent no more than 29 years old (graph). The largest number of Job Shifters are between 30 and 44 years old, while the largest portion of Job Keepers are in the 45 to 64 year age bracket.



Females outnumber males among Job Seekers and Job Shifters, while the majority of the Underemployed and Job Keepers are males.



About one in three workers finds a wage of \$8 per hour attractive, including 9,104 Underemployed, 5,565 Job Shifters, 13,018 Job Keepers, as well as 12,987 Job Seekers. For a wage offer of \$9 per hour the number of available workers increases by about 14 percent, and rises another 22 percent if the wage is \$10 per hour.



The attractiveness of a particular wage rate varies greatly with the worker's level of education. For example, only 6.7 percent of workers with Bachelor's degrees find \$8 per hour attractive compared with 25.7 percent of those with two years of college or Associate's degrees and 35.9 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 executive, administrative and managerial (4,040), administrative support (3,651), transportation and material moving (3,418), and sales (3,320).

Underemployed and Job Shifters by Occupation			
	<u>Underemployed</u>	<u>Job Shifters</u>	<u>Total</u>
Executive, Administrative, and Managerial	2,995	1,046	4,040
Professional Specialty	1,315	1,674	2,988
Technicians and Related Support	1,203	1,007	2,210
Sales	2,180	1,140	3,320
Administrative Support, Including Clerical	1,698	1,953	3,651
Service Occupations	1,487	1,146	2,633
Farming, Forestry, and Fishing	849	174	1,023
Precision Production, Craft, and Repair	1,307	678	1,985
Machine Operators, Assemblers, and Inspectors	947	1,208	2,155
Transportation and Material Moving	2,536	882	3,418
Other	165	319	484
	16,682	11,227	27,909

Workers with workplace skills that are not being used offer potential recruits for employment opportunities that better use their skills. This study found that 20.6 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 spreadsheet analysis and work on machines (table).

Workers with Computer Skills (among workers with skills not in use)			
		Job	
<u>Strongest Computer Skill (percent)</u>	<u>Underemployed</u>	<u>Shifters</u>	<u>Total</u>
Word processing (MS-Word)	1,563	2,590	4,153
Spreadsheet analysis (Excel, Lotus)	694	133	826
Bookkeeping (Quicken)	160	0	160
Computer assisted design (CAD)	271	0	271
Web site development	0	156	156
Work on machines, troubleshooting	820	0	820
Computer programming (C, SAS, SPSS)	314	0	314

About 58 percent of the Underemployed are willing to change jobs for an increase in pay of 15 percent or less (table), 66 percent for Job Shifters. Potential employers could hire 17,049 workers among the

Underemployed and Job Shifters for a pay increase of 15 percent or less. The median Job Keeper, however, would require a raise of 15 percent to 20 percent to change jobs.

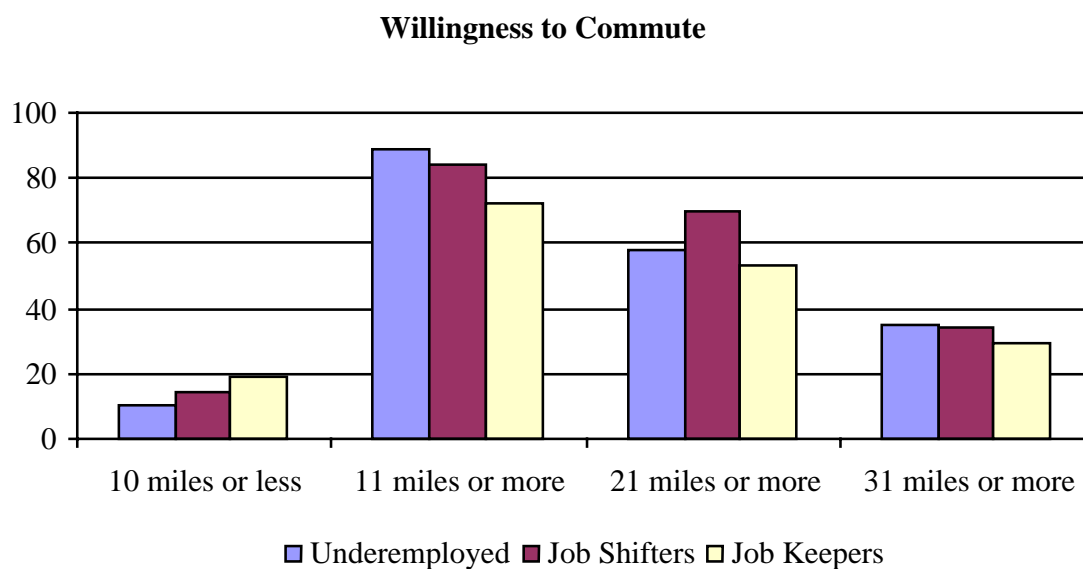
Workers Willing to Change Jobs by Percent Pay Raise			
		Job	Job
<u>Desired raise in pay</u>	<u>Underemployed</u>	<u>Shifters</u>	<u>Keepers</u>
Less than 5%	654	2,222	8,573
Between 5% and 10%	5,184	3,588	9,177
Between 10% and 15%	3,843	1,558	12,815
Between 15% and 20%	2,530	1,001	12,325
More than 20%	2,215	1,058	17,510
Not interested	885	1,020	17,289
Don't know	312	226	3,009
Refused	-	-	1
Other	1,060	554	1,649
Total	16,682	11,227	82,347

Interestingly, 21.0 percent of Job Keepers are not interested in changing jobs regardless of the increase in pay.

About 20 percent of all workers drive at least 21 miles to work. Commuting distances for the Underemployed, Job Shifters, and Job Keepers are similar (table).

	<u>All Workers</u>	<u>Underemployed</u>	<u>Job Shifters</u>	<u>Job Keepers</u>
0 - 5 miles	50.6	53.9	59.7	48.7
6 - 10 miles	16.0	14.2	17.2	16.3
11 - 20 miles	12.8	9.8	4.7	14.5
21 - 30 miles	8.7	8.2	9.4	8.6
30 - 50 miles	8.9	10.7	9.1	8.5
More than 50 miles	2.5	2.1	0.0	2.9

A large proportion (58 percent) of the Underemployed and 70 percent of Job Shifters are willing to commute 21 miles or more to a job. About 34 percent are willing to commute 31 miles or more (graph).



Conclusions

- A significant pool of available labor exists in the Lawton area among the *Underemployed* (16,682 workers) and among workers looking for other jobs, or *Job Shifters* (11,227 workers).
- Most of the Underemployed and Job Shifters are willing to commute at least 21 miles for a pay increase of 15% to 20%.
- 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>Oklahoma</u>	<u>Interviews</u>
Caddo County	95
Comanche County	452
Cotton County	21
Grady County	144
Jackson County	87
Kiowa County	34
Stephens County	141
Tillman County	29
Total	1,003

More than 6,000 randomly generated phone numbers were called in order to complete the 1,003 interviews. Approximately 1,765 numbers were not in service. Another 1,505 numbers were not eligible for the study (language barrier, hard of hearing, children's telephone, business or fax). In addition, 693 households refused to be interviewed and 695 numbers were never answered after five and six attempts. Of the eligible numbers that were answered, a response rate of 56 percent was achieved.

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