

AN ANALYSIS OF THE LABOR FORCE  
OF STEPHENS COUNTY, OKLAHOMA

A SUMMARY REPORT PRESENTED TO:

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and

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## Introduction

Sponsored by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce and the Duncan Area Economic Development Foundation, this report is a part of a series of local labor force studies in Oklahoma. The report examines the availability of labor in Stephens County, located in southwest Oklahoma. Data were collected by telephone interview in 1999 from 567 randomly selected persons 18 years or older.

In order to ensure that the sample accurately represents local demographics, each interview response received a weight depending on age, gender, and county of residence. Results reported in this study are subject to a sampling error of +/- 4.1 percentage points with a confidence level of 95 percent.

## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- ?? A number of workers are either looking for other work (Job Shifters) or are willing to change jobs in order to better utilize their skills and abilities (underemployed).
- ?? An estimated 1,724 workers, 9.3 percent of the workforce, are underemployed.
- ?? In addition to the underemployed, 1,670 workers have looked for other work during the previous three months (Job Shifters).
- ?? The underemployed and Job Shifters exhibit a variety of occupations and skills.
- ?? About 19.8 percent of underemployed workers hold a bachelor's degree or higher.
- ?? 62.1 percent of the underemployed are willing to commute 30 miles to a place of employment; 61 percent would change jobs for a raise in pay of 15 percent or less.
- ?? A job that pays \$8-\$10 hour is viewed as desirable by 1,325 underemployed and 1,044 Job Shifters.

In Stephens County 18,472 of the 32,175 persons who are 18 years old or more are working, 57.4 percent of the adult population. Approximately 13,703 adult residents of county are not working; most are either retired, unable to work due to disability, or prefer not to work outside the home (table). A significant number of adults who are not working want to work

(2,481); this group consists primarily of retired persons who want to go back to work, homemakers who are looking for work outside the home, and persons who have recently lost their jobs. For purposes of discussion, this group

<b>Persons Not Working</b>			
<u>Reason Not Working</u>	<u>Want to Work</u>	<u>Don't Want to Work</u>	<u>Total</u>
Retired	570	8,175	8,745
Disabled or unable to work	179	692	871
Don't work outside the home	551	1,582	2,133
Student	82	211	293
Family responsibilities	0	379	379
Just moved into area	0	0	0
Laid off, lost job	932	131	1,062
Don't have reliable transportation	0	0	0
Other	166	53	219
Refused	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,481</b>	<b>11,222</b>	<b>13,703</b>

will be termed the *Job Seekers*. It should be noted that only a small portion of this group satisfies the technical requirements of *unemployment*. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, a person is counted as unemployed if he or she is without work and engages actively in job-searching activities. Using this definition this study estimates that 4.6 percent of the labor force in the county is *unemployed*.

## **Education**

Compared with state averages, the Stephens County labor force has about the same proportion of workers with college degrees. Also, more workers in the county have some college experience, without a degree. Neighbors of Stephens County, Comanche County and Grady County, have similar levels of education.

### **Highest Level of Education of Working Persons 18 Years Old or Older (percent)**

<u>Level of Education</u>	<u>Comanche County</u>	<u>Grady County</u>	<u>Stephens County</u>	<u>State</u>
Less than high school	3.1	5.6	7.1	10.8
High school	27.4	34.6	40.9	37.0
Some college	32.5	26.2	23.0	20.1
Associate degree	8.6	9.1	3.8	6.5
Bachelors degree	21.2	17.2	16.9	16.2
Postgraduate degree	7.3	7.1	8.2	9.4
Bachelors degree or higher	28.5	24.2	25.1	25.7

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

### Commuting Patterns

Almost 90 percent of working residents of Stephens County go to work at jobs within the county. By comparison, virtually all Comanche County workers got to jobs in the county, but 31 percent of Grady County workers commute to jobs elsewhere, mostly to counties located in the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area.

<b>Commuting Patterns for Residents of Stephens, Comanche, and Grady Counties</b>			
	Resides in:		
Employed in:	Comanche	Grady	Stephens
Beckham County	127	-	-
Caddo County	-	139	-
Canadian County	-	443	53
Carter County	-	49	239
Cleveland County	-	701	56
Comanche County	53,500	49	700
Garvin County	-	213	-
Grady County	-	13,851	241
Jefferson County	-	-	56
McClain County	-	417	-
Oklahoma County	-	3,346	108
Payne County	-	-	51
Sequoyah County	-	-	51
Stephens County	277	208	16,364
Other	-	145	160
Various (traveling)	137	452	
Texas	263	42	57
Out of state		48	114
<b>Total</b>	<b>54,305</b>	<b>20,104</b>	<b>18,250</b>
Employed in home county (percent)	98.5%	68.9%	89.7%

### Employment Participation Rates

Employment participation rates are lower in Stephens County than the statewide average due primarily to proportionally fewer workers 45 years and older. However, a higher percentage of young males are working: 82.4 percent of males 18 to 30 years old work, compared with the statewide Oklahoma figure of 80.1 percent.

<b>Employment Participation</b> (employed as percent of adult population)						
	<u>Stephens County</u>			<u>Oklahoma</u>		
	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Total</u>
Less than 30	82.4	63.6	72.7	80.1	73.9	77.1
30 to 44	89.7	63.4	76.4	88.3	81.6	84.8
45 to 64	69.5	60.4	64.7	73.1	61.9	67.3
65 or more	10.9	17.5	14.8	18.0	12.8	14.9
Total	65.2	50.5	57.4	70.8	59.7	65.0

### Type of Employment

Eighty-one percent of workers are engaged in full-time, permanent jobs. A significant proportion of workers in the county work part-time jobs, about one in every 6.5 workers.

Various reasons are given for part-time work: 30.8 percent work part-time due to child care and family obligations, 21.0 percent mention social security limitations on retirement earnings, 13.0 percent mention schooling and training. Other reasons for part-time instead of full-time work include health or medical limitations, and slack business conditions. A few persons indicated that they simply did not need to work a full-time job (table).

<b>Type of Employment</b>	
<b>Full-time</b>	
Permanent	15,006
Temporary	442
Unknown	166
<b>Part-time</b>	
Permanent	2,266
Temporary	242
Unknown	349
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,472</b>

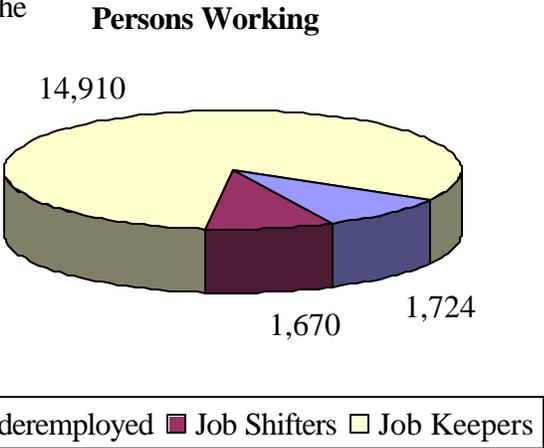
<b>Reasons for Working Part-time (percent)</b>	
Slack work / business conditions	7.2
Could only find part-time work	4.8
Child care obligations /problems	12.9
Other family / personal obligations	17.9
Health medical limitations	4.9
School / training	13.0
Retired / Social Security limit on earnings	21.0
Don't need or want to work full-time	12.1
Don't know	2.5
Other	3.6

**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 and want to work (*Job Seekers*).

*Job Shifters*

Approximately 1,670 workers in the county looked for other work during the previous three months. Most were 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).



<b>Jobsearch Methods Used by Job Shifters</b>	<u>Workers</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<i>Active Jobsearch Methods</i>		
Contacted employer directly / interview	652	39.1
Contacted public employment agency	222	13.3
Contacted private employment agency	56	3.3
Contacted friends or relatives	519	31.1
Contacted school / university employment center	107	6.4
Sent out resumés / filled out applications	713	42.7
Checked union / professional registers	56	3.3
Placed or answered ads	385	23.1
<i>Passive Jobsearch Methods</i>		
Looked at want ads	623	37.3
Attended job training programs / courses	75	4.5
At least one <i>active</i> jobsearch method	1,468	87.9
Note: more than one jobsearch method is possible.		

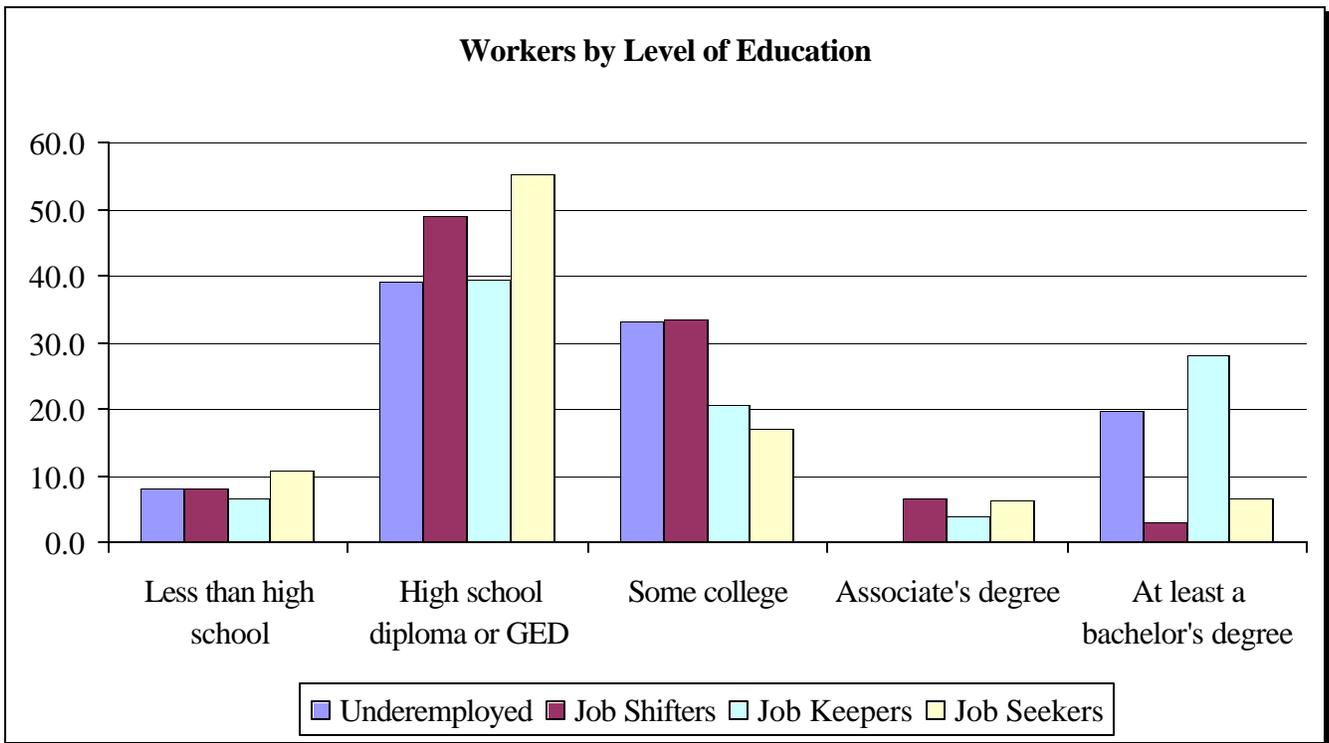
### *Underemployed*

The study also estimates that 1,724 workers are underemployed, accounting for 9.3 percent of all working adults. In order to be classified as underemployed in this study, workers must meet the following three conditions:

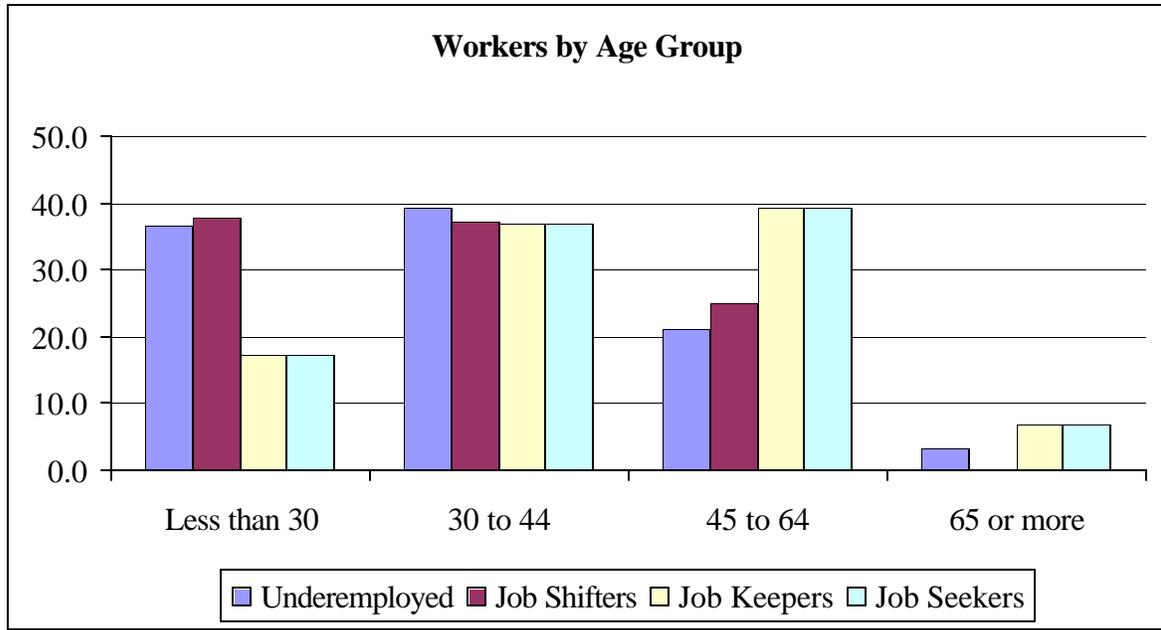
- ?? they must feel they are underutilized in their present employment,
- ?? they must possess training or education that is not required by their current job, and
- ?? they must be willing to change jobs in order to better utilize their skills and education.

### Characteristics of Potential Workers

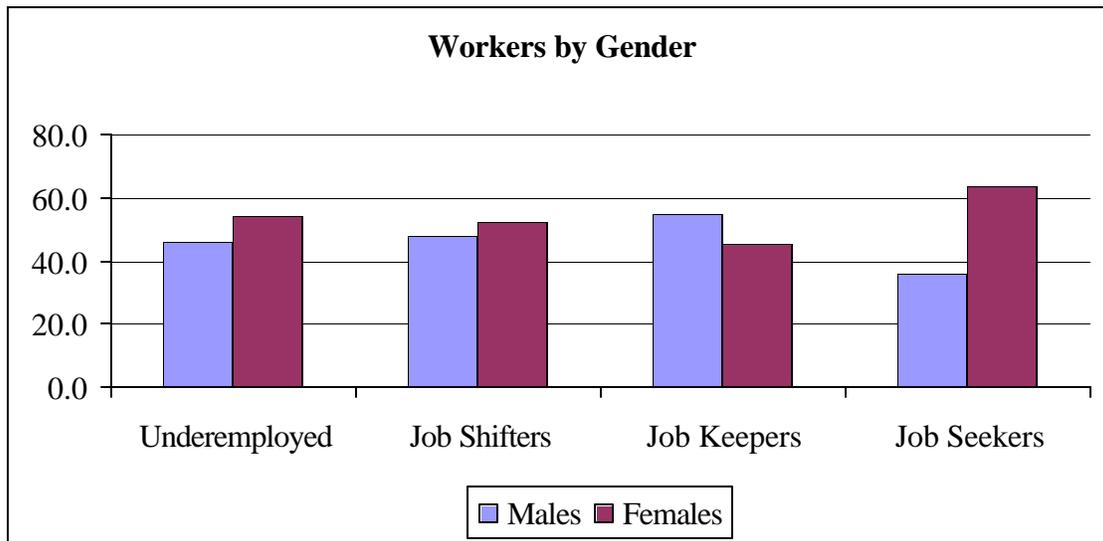
Job Keepers show the highest level of education: 28.2 percent have at least a Bachelor's degree, compared with 19.8 percent of the underemployed, just 3.1 percent of Job Shifters, and 6.5 percent of Job Seekers. Underemployed workers and Job Shifters have more college experience with no degree (some college) than other workers. Job Seekers and Job Shifters have much less education than the other groups.



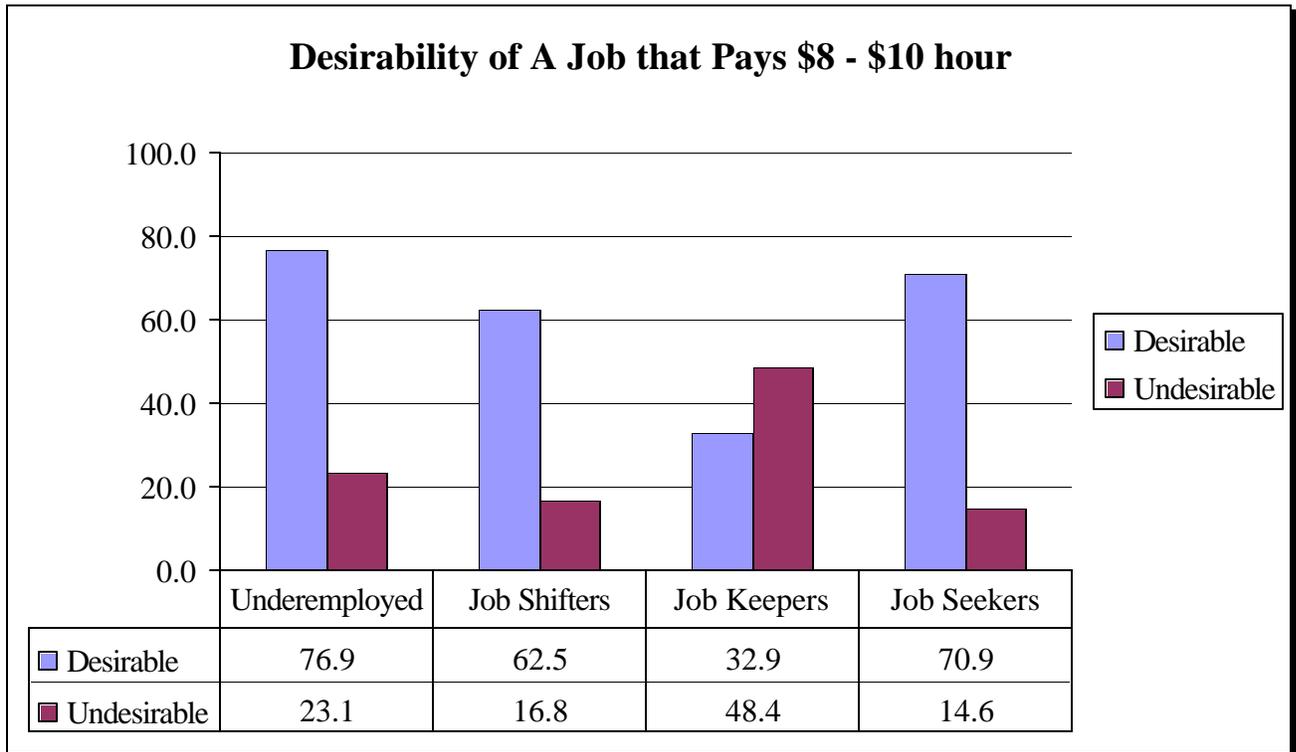
Job Shifters and the underemployed are relatively young: about 35 percent are less than 30 years old compared with approximately 17 percent of Job Keepers and Job Seekers.



A majority of Job Seekers, the underemployed, and Job Shifters are females while Job Keepers are mostly males.



Of the four groups Job Seekers, the underemployed, and Job Shifters are most interested in working for a wage of \$8 to \$10 per hour: An employment opportunity that pays \$8 - \$10 per hour is viewed favorably (desirable) by 76.9 percent of the underemployed, 62.5 percent of Job Shifters, 32.9 percent of Job Keepers, and 70.9 percent of Job Seekers. Among Job Seekers, the underemployed, and Job Shifters a total of 4,128 persons are willing to work for \$8 to \$10 per hour.



The underemployed and Job Shifters have a variety of occupations and skills, from executives and other professionals to craftsmen and clerks. The largest occupations include service occupations (606), precision production, craft, and repair (521), sales (489), administrative support, including clerical (434), and executive, administrative and managerial (367).

<b>Number of Persons by Occupation</b>			
	<u>Underemployed</u>	<u>Job Shifters</u>	<u>Total</u>
Executive, Administrative, and Managerial	155	211	367
Professional Specialty	184	56	240
Technicians and Related Support	-	139	139
Sales	301	189	489
Administrative Support, Including Clerical	213	222	434
Service Occupations	331	275	606
Farming, Forestry, and Fishing	108	57	165
Precision Production, Craft, and Repair	57	464	521
Machine Operators, Assemblers, and Inspectors	270	-	270
Transportation and Material Moving	104	57	162
	1,724	1,670	3,393

Workers with skills that are not being used are potential candidates for new jobs that require higher than average levels of skill. This study found that 37.1 percent of workers who have skills that are not being used in their present employment have computer skills of some kind. Knowledge of word processing was the most often mentioned computer skill, followed by spreadsheet analysis, bookkeeping software, and knowledge of computer hardware.

<b>Workers with Computer Skills (among workers with skills not in use)</b>			
<u>Strongest Computer Skill (percent)</u>	<u>Underemployed</u>	<u>Job Shifters</u>	<u>Total</u>
Word processing (MS-Word)	237	506	743
Spreadsheet analysis (Excel, Lotus)	57	56	113
Bookkeeping (Quicken)	56	57	113
Computer assisted design (CAD)	75	0	75
Work on machines, troubleshooting	56	0	56
Computer programming (C, SAS, SPSS)	113	0	113
Develops own software applications	51	0	51

An increase in pay of 10 percent or less would be sufficient to hire approximately 31 percent (534) of the underemployed, 53 percent (883) of Job Shifters, and 17 percent of Job Keepers (2,567). A pay raise of 15 percent would attract 61 percent of the underemployed (1,051), 66 percent of Job Shifters (1,096), and 34 percent of Job Keepers (4,996). Thus, potential employers could hire 2,147 workers most likely to change jobs (the underemployed and Job Shifters) for a raise in pay of no more than 15 percent. Interestingly, a large number of Job Keepers (4,411) are not interested in changing jobs regardless of the increase in pay.

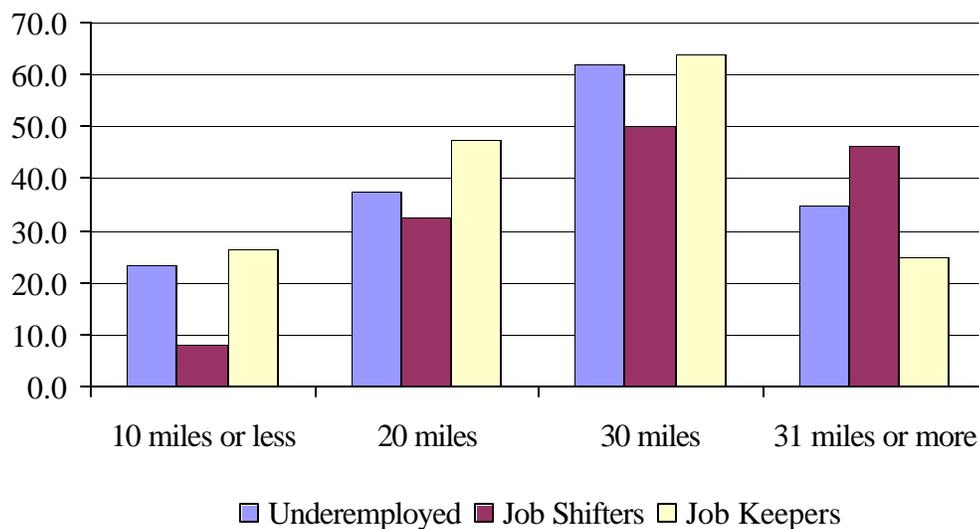
<b>Workers Willing to Change Jobs by Percent Pay Raise</b>			
Raise in pay no more than:	<u>Underemployed</u>	<u>Job Shifters</u>	<u>Job Keepers</u>
10 percent	534	883	2,567
15 percent	1,051	1,096	4,996
20 percent	1,324	1,234	5,886
Not interested	-	51	4,411

The vast majority of county residents drive short distances to work, just 10 miles or less. About 9.7 percent of the underemployed drive 20 miles or more, compared with 21.0 percent of Job Shifters and 14.4 percent of Job Keepers.

<b>Distance Travelled to Place of Employment</b>			
	Underemployed	Job Shifters	Job Keepers
0 - 5 miles	53.9	43.1	58.6
6 - 10 miles	13.9	20.1	16.1
11 - 20 miles	22.5	15.8	9.3
21 - 30 miles	3.1	0.0	6.6
30 - 50 miles	3.3	17.5	4.5
More than 50 miles	3.3	3.4	3.2
Don't Know	0.0	0.0	1.4
Refused	0.0	0.0	0.4

Although the apparent need to commute to a place of employment is low, the willingness to commute is much higher. Most workers, 50 to 60 percent, are willing to drive 30 miles to a place of employment. A significant number are willing to drive 31 miles or more to get to work. By contrast, approximately 30 and 45 percent of workers are willing to drive 20 miles or less to a job.

**Willingness to Commute**



**Conclusions**

- ?? A significant pool of labor exists in Stephens County among the *underemployed* and among workers looking for other jobs (*Job Shifters*).
- ?? 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.