

Unemployment resulting from entry into the labor market or from voluntary job change is likely to be brief in periods of full employment, because a decision to look for another job, or to change jobs, is often made only if there is some previous knowledge that openings are readily available. The labor force behavior of teenagers and married women during the postwar period reflects this tendency, as indicated by changes in their rates of labor force participation. These groups are most likely to enter the labor force in good years. Data on factory quit rates also reflect this general psychology in relation to job shifts; the quit rate rises in periods of expanding economic activity, and falls in periods of declining activity.

Still more important than either voluntary job shifting or entrance into the labor market as a factor in determining the level of frictional unemployment are the very sharp seasonal variations in the level of production and employment in many American industries. It is estimated that variation in the level of employment in industry because of seasonal reasons (including the effects of weather, regular model changeovers, vacation, etc.) is a factor causing at least 20 percent of total unemployment in a year of high employment (ch. IV).

It is true that unemployment resulting from each of these kinds of situations (seasonal reasons, voluntary job shifting or labor force entrance) is likely to be of relatively short duration, at least for any given spell. Over the course of the year, however, the cumulative time lost by workers between seasons or between jobs is substantial. This point is dramatically made by the data from work experience studies covering an entire year, which are incorporated in this report. Moreover, there is evidence that the off season in outdoor work, such as farming and construction, is long enough so that at least some of those laid off in the winter turn up as long-term unemployed by March or April. The post-Christmas lull in trade also adds slightly to the total of long-term unemployed several months later. However, the effect of seasonality on long-term unemployment is not great, except in certain industries, since many of those who are dismissed from seasonal industries are women and teenagers who withdraw from the labor force immediately, or after a brief search for other jobs.

LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT

Whereas the terms "frictional" unemployment and "short term" unemployment have sometimes been used interchangeably, not all frictional unemployment is short term. As already noted, even some of the seasonally unemployed may become long-term unemployed before they are recalled. Moreover, some of the persons involved in frictional unemployment due to entry into the labor market or to voluntary job shifting may remain jobless for more than 15 weeks, perhaps because of unrealistic job aspirations or other personal characteristics. In addition, as defined in this study, frictional unemployment includes layoffs resulting from long run structural changes in the economy, which by their very nature tend to cause long-term unemployment.

As we have noted, personal characteristics sometimes obscure this latter relationship; the reason for unemployment is not the sole determinant of duration. Individual spells of unemployment of long duration, however, are more likely to result from basic developments