

8 EXTENT AND NATURE OF FRICTIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT

CHAPTER I. SHORT- AND LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT

CURRENT MONTHLY SURVEY DATA

In a typical week during 1957, a year of relatively high employment,¹ about 1.5 million, or half the 2.9 million unemployed, had been seeking work or were on layoff for less than 5 weeks. This short-term group included 150,000 persons on temporary layoff with definite instructions to return to work within 30 days, and 100,000 persons who were scheduled to begin new jobs within 30 days. An additional 650,000, or 22 percent of the jobless total, had been unemployed for 5 to 10 weeks at the time of the survey.

Unemployment lasting 15 weeks or longer—long-term unemployment—averaged 560,000 in 1957 or about 20 percent of the unemployed total. Included among these long-term unemployed were 240,000 persons out of work for more than 6 months in one continuous spell, 8 percent of the jobless total. The total long-term group represented a little under 1 percent of the total labor force (70¼ million).

Short-term unemployment is, to a certain extent, seasonal unemployment and the range of seasonal variation in short-term unemployment in recent good years has been from a low of about 1.2 million to a high of about 2 million. The low point is generally reached in early spring and early fall, when layoffs in outdoor work and new entries into the labor market are both at a minimum. The peak is usually reached in June with the influx of students into the labor force in search of summer jobs. Other relatively high months are November, due to holiday season jobseekers, and January, reflecting cutbacks in trade and outdoor work (table I-1).

¹ See apps. 1 and 2, ch. I, for description of sources of duration data, and reasons for selection of 1957 as the main focus for this study.