

The 1957 work experience data showed that there were 10.6 million different persons who had lost some working time during the year because of unemployment or layoff. About 3.6 million—or one-third of the total—lost less than 5 weeks. Another 2.3 million lost from 5 to 10 weeks. More than half (55 percent) of those experiencing any unemployment lost a total of 10 weeks or less.

There were some 3.4 million—one-third of the total—who experienced 15 weeks or more of unemployment. This group included 1.5 million (14 percent of the total) who had over 26 weeks of unemployment during the course of the year.

As compared with the data for a single month (or an average of monthly data) the work experience data necessarily show a much smaller proportion with unemployment of less than 5 weeks and a much larger proportion with 15 weeks or more. One reason is that the work experience data reflect an aggregate of all spells of unemployment; about 4.4 million of the annual total of unemployed had more than one spell. Another reason for the longer duration is that by and large the data reflect completed spells of unemployment rather than duration of those still unemployed. Moreover, there are indications that unemployment is underreported when respondents are asked to recall their experience during a whole year, and a short period of unemployment is more likely to be overlooked than are longer spells or a succession of short spells.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SHORT- AND LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED IN 1957

Age and sex

In just about every age group, men are more likely than women to have a higher proportion of long-term unemployed and a lower proportion of short-term unemployed.² At the same time, for both men and women, duration of unemployment tends to lengthen with age. The differences are especially marked at the two extremes of the age scale. For those under 18, the short-term unemployed outnumber the long-term by 6 to 1. For those 65 and over, the numbers of short- and long-term unemployed are virtually equal (table I-3).

² Rates of long-term unemployment in the sections through p. 27 represent the number unemployed 15 weeks or longer as a percent of all the unemployed in a given group.