

As has been noted, not all of the seasonal variations in employment are reflected in unemployment, mainly because the labor force expands and contracts to meet seasonal needs for workers. Another factor tending to offset seasonal unemployment, which is particularly applicable to construction and agriculture, is the job mobility of workers.

High worker mobility, as we have noted elsewhere in this report, is usually associated with a high rate of unemployment. However, where mobility lies in the work rather than the worker, i.e., where the locus of the worker's employment shifts, as in crop harvesting, food canning and construction, unemployment tends to be reduced to the extent that the worker can dovetail his employment from an activity of seasonally declining demand into an activity of seasonally rising demand.

In a survey of job mobility for the year 1955, approximately 24 percent of the wage and salary workers in both construction and agriculture held more than one job during the year. By comparison, only 11 percent of workers in all industries held more than one job.⁹ Job mobility in these two industries is a natural consequence of the periodicity of the work and the multiplicity of employer units; separate projects at different locations under different employers result, of necessity, in a lack of job continuity.

Workers in manufacturing had substantially lower rates of seasonal unemployment (1.3 percent seasonal out of 4.5 percent total) than in construction and agriculture but, because of its large employment, manufacturing accounted for the largest proportion of total seasonal unemployment (30 percent).

Workers in durable and nondurable goods were on the average about equally affected by seasonal unemployment. An analysis of employment data indicates that the manufacturing industries with the widest seasonal fluctuations included canning and several other food processing industries, tobacco, automobiles, lumber and the apparel industries.

Relatively low seasonal unemployment was characteristic of the service and trade industries; this could probably be attributed as much to flexibility in the work force in these industries as to steadiness in employment. Total unemployment rates in these industries were about as high as in manufacturing.

Next to manufacturing, the largest numbers of seasonally unemployed workers came from the construction industry (19 percent of the total). Other industries contributed substantially less to the total number of seasonally unemployed workers. However, a large proportion of seasonal unemployment (13 percent) was among new workers—without previous work experience. The seasonal unemployment of new workers is concentrated in the late spring, summer and early fall, with the peak months in June and July. (See table IV-2.) In the spring months and in September, manufacturing accounts for the largest part of seasonal unemployment; in the winter months, construction is the source of the largest seasonal unemployment.

The month with the least seasonal unemployment is October. The unemployment of workers from manufacturing, construction, trade,

⁹ Percentages refer to consecutive jobholding, not concurrent.