

62 EXTENT AND NATURE OF FRICTIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT

Other indexes of the duration of unemployment throw added light on this trend. Despite the still tight labor markets of the Korean period, the average duration of unemployment was at essentially the 1948 level during 1952 (table V-2). Between 1948 and 1956 this average became almost 3 weeks longer. The increasing extent of prolonged unemployment lasting 15 weeks or longer, and even more so, 27 weeks or longer, appears to have been one of the most important factors in this development. Fairly similar increases in duration occurred among both men and women.

It is difficult to determine why an increase in unemployment between these 2 years of relatively full employment should have taken this form, since many of the statistics on detailed characteristics of the long-term unemployed were not tabulated until around 1954. However, certain possible causes may be eliminated and the probability of others evaluated to a certain extent.

TABLE V-2.—*Selected measures of the duration of unemployment, 1948, 1952, and 1956*

Duration measure	1948	1952	1956
Annual average duration of unemployment (weeks).....	8.6	8.3	11.3
Male.....	9.2	(1)	12.0
Female.....	7.1	(1)	10.0
Percent of total unemployment reporting:			
15 weeks or more unemployment.....	15.0	13.9	20.9
27 weeks or more unemployment.....	5.6	5.0	9.1

¹ Not available.

NOTE.—Figures are based on old definition of unemployment.

CHANGES IN LABOR FORCE PATTERNS AND THE RATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT

It is possible for the unemployment rate for each of the major labor force groups to remain unchanged, yet the overall rate change because of shifts in the relative importance of the groups. These shifts may occur because of population changes, new work habits, or other characteristics of a growing economy, without any fundamental disturbance in the usual rate of unemployment for the groups mainly concerned, but with implications for the rate of total unemployment if the groups becoming more important tend to have unemployment rates significantly different from the average.

Two most important labor force trends in this period with potential effect for the overall rate have been the continuing movement of agricultural workers into nonfarm jobs and the sharply increasing rate of labor force participation among women. Everything else being equal, a labor force with a higher proportion of women would probably have a higher overall rate of unemployment, since women usually work in more marginal occupations than married men, who make up the bulk of the male labor force. Similarly, since most of the migration from the farm work force has been among self-employed farmers or unpaid family workers, who in their original occupations had an almost nonexistent degree of unemployment in the usual survey sense, the movement of these persons into nonfarm jobs where unemployment is more common could also be expected to raise the