

Work Plans of Men Not in the Labor Force

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ONE-FIFTH OF THE 2.3 million men in the Current Population Survey who were not in the labor force in the week ending February 18, 1967 were out for only a short period or had reached the end of a protracted period. One week later, when the special survey was made, approximately 340,000 were in the labor force, either working or looking for work, and an additional 130,000 men expected to be in the labor force within 4 weeks.

Reentrants to Labor Force

Some of the men who were already in the labor force had been on seasonal layoff and returned to work when their former jobs again became available, or were just taking time off between jobs. Others may have been temporarily ill or had recovered from a prolonged illness. Some may have been jobless previously for a long period, became discouraged, stopped looking for work for a month or more, and then decided to reenter the job market.

The men who expected to be back in the labor force within 4 weeks were asked: "How does it happen you are not working or looking for work now?" Half of these men reported illness, accident, or other disability as reasons for not working; 22 percent, a seasonal lull in their kind of work, primarily construction; and about 11 percent were taking time off for a vacation or to orient themselves upon discharge or retirement from the Armed Forces, or for other personal reasons. The remaining men gave reasons such as illness among family members, bad weather, and desire to work only occasionally.

The 470,000 men who were back or expected to be back in the labor force within 4 weeks tended

to be younger than those who did not want a job at the time of the special survey. About 4 out of 10 were under age 45, and only 2 out of 10 were 60 to 64 years old; among the men who did not want a job the proportions were reversed. A greater proportion of the nonwhite than white men were labor force reentrants, partly because relatively more of the nonwhite men were under 45 years of age.

Over 60 percent of those returning to the labor force were married men, a proportion similar to that for the men who did not want a job. Almost all of the married men and one-third of the unmarried men were household heads.

Educational attainment was relatively low among reentrants: One-half had no more than 8 years of schooling and only 3 out of 10 had at least graduated from high school. Among all the other groups of men not in the labor force, only the men who did not want a job because they were sick or disabled had lower educational attainment.

Most of those returning to the labor force had been in the work force during 1966. About 7 out of 10 had worked at some time during the year, and another 1 out of 10 had looked for work for 1 week or more but had not found any. While the proportion of reentrants who had worked during the year was lower than for all men 20 to 64 years old, it was high, when compared with the other groups of men in the survey. The proportion who worked ranged from a low of 23 percent for the sick or disabled to a high of 44 percent for the men who wanted a job but were not looking for work.

A majority of the reentrants who had worked during 1966 had been employed at full-time jobs for less than 27 weeks or had worked at part-time jobs. Only one-third had worked full time for 40 weeks or more. Their tenuous job attachment is also evident from the high incidence of unemployment. About one-half of the reentrants who had been in the labor force during 1966 had been unemployed for 1 week or more, a proportion four times greater than among all men in the age group.

Long-Term Job Search. Most of the reentrants who had been unemployed at some time during the year were generally jobless for many weeks. About one-third of the unemployed had looked for work for a total of 15 to 26 weeks and another one-

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fourth for 27 weeks or more, substantially greater percentages than among all men. Further, 4 out of 10 of the men with work experience who had been unemployed had been jobless three times or more, nearly double the proportion for all men 20 to 64 years old.

The comparatively high proportions of reentrants with extensive unemployment and at least three spells of joblessness undoubtedly reflect factors such as relatively low educational attainment and poor physical condition, and seasonal demand for labor in their usual line of work. The experience of men in the job market is directly related to their education.¹ Persons who have not graduated from high school tend to be concentrated in unskilled and semiskilled jobs which are most likely to be terminated because of seasonal or other factors. Also, persons who have had to withdraw from the labor force frequently have a period of unemployment upon their return to the work force.

For those who had worked during 1966 and were returning to the labor force, illness or disability was much more likely to have been the reason for working less than a full year than among all men. About 30 percent of this group, but only 20 percent of all men 20 to 64 years old, said illness or disability was the main reason for not working a full year.

Among the reentrants who had not worked at all during 1966, poor health was also an important factor which prevented them from working. One-half of them reported that illness or disability was the major reason and about 12 percent reported they could not find work. The other men gave such reasons as retirement, going to school, in the Armed Forces, or illness in the family.

Want a Job But Not Looking

A total of 130,000 men, or 5.5 percent of the 2.3 million in the survey, wanted a job but since they were not looking for work at the time of the special survey were classified as not in the labor force. These men were equally divided between those who wanted full-time and those who wanted part-time jobs. A majority of these men were not in the labor force because of health problems, as shown above:

<i>Reason not in labor force</i>	<i>Percent distribution</i>
Total.....	100.0
Health problems.....	56.7
Could not find work.....	12.6
Retired.....	12.6
Lack of education, training, or skill.....	5.5
No transportation to jobs.....	3.1
Too old.....	2.4
All other reasons.....	7.1

About one-fourth of the men who wanted a job—those who reported they could not find work, lacked education or training, had transportation problems, or that they were too old—could be considered “discouraged” workers. Although they were a relatively small number of all the men surveyed, their ranks might swell rapidly at a time when the demand for labor slackens and unemployment is high. A small number of men had retired earlier but at the time of the survey wanted a job, most likely one at which they could work part time.

The men who said they wanted a job were somewhat younger than those who did not want to work, but older than the men who were reentrants. The men who wanted to work were evenly divided between those who were 20–54 years old and those 55–64 years old.

Married men were about the same proportion of those who wanted jobs as of all men in the survey. The men who wanted jobs, however, had fewer dependents on average. Almost one-half of both groups had no dependents, but 11 percent of those who wanted a job had three dependents or more compared with 20 percent of all the men in the survey. More than one-half of the men who wanted a job said they had completed 8 years or less in regular schools, and only 28 percent had at least a high school education.

Work History and Income. Approximately 43 percent of the men who wanted a job at the time of the survey had worked at some time in 1966. Another 8 percent had looked for work but had not found a job. The remaining one-half had not been in the labor force at any time in 1966. In contrast, only 4 percent of all 20- to 64-year-old men had neither worked nor looked for work in 1966.

A substantial proportion of those who wanted a job had not been in the labor force for several years. Approximately 25 percent had not worked

¹ See “Educational Attainment of Workers, March 1966,” *Monthly Labor Review*, June 1967, pp. 39–47; reprinted as Special Labor Force Report No. 83.

at all between 1962 and February 1967. A very small proportion had never worked. In addition, of those who had worked since 1962, 55 percent reported working less than 1 year on their last job; only 29 percent held their job for more than 5 years. Job tenure for all 20- to 64-year-old men was significantly longer.² The large proportion with less than a year on the last job may indicate a pattern of intermittent employment resulting from illness and inadequate education and training.

About one-half of those who had worked since 1962 reported they had left their last job because of illness, accident, or physical disability. About one-fourth gave layoff and plant closure or relocation as the major reason for separation from their last job. Approximately one-tenth had retired and the remainder gave such reasons as quit, moved away, or illness in the family. Thus poor health, rather than lack of suitable employment opportunities, was the reason most frequently given for leaving the last job.

Men who wanted a job contributed a smaller proportion to family income than did the other men in the survey. Median family income per month for those who wanted to work, as for all men in the survey, was between \$200 and \$299. Only 1 out of 5 were in families with a monthly income of \$400 or more, a smaller percentage than among any other group of men covered by the survey. Median personal income per month was lower for those who wanted a job (\$50-\$99) than for all who were surveyed (\$100-\$149).

Job Preferences. About 22 percent of those who wanted a job said they were willing to accept any kind of work they could do. Some wanted light work only or jobs that did not require standing. Roughly 20 percent preferred clerical duties while an equivalent proportion wanted work as craftsmen. Approximately 10 percent expressed an interest in working as laborers, particularly non-farm. Preferences of the remainder were scattered throughout the other major occupation groups.

² For 20- to 64-year-old men who were employed in January 20 percent had held their current job for 1 year or less while 56 percent were on the same job for 5 years or more. See "Job Tenure of Workers, January 1966," *Monthly Labor Review*, January 1967, pp. 31-38; reprinted as Special Labor Force Report No. 77.

Comparisons on the basis of the information available on the jobs these men held when they last worked indicate a shift from the more physically demanding occupations, such as operatives and laborers, to the less demanding, such as clerical. These changes are directly related to the high incidence of poor health and physical disability that placed limits on their employability. In turn, the shift in job patterns is probably the central reason for the interest that one-half of these men expressed in going to school for occupational training. The widespread incidence of work-restricting disabilities and the large numbers who indicated a willingness to enroll in training programs, coupled with the significant proportion who had no specific occupational preferences and had not worked in several years point to a definite need for job market information and vocational rehabilitation counseling.

Did Not Want a Job—Retired

A quarter of a million men—one tenth of all the men in the survey—said they did not want a job at the time of the survey because they had retired. As expected, these men were much older than those in the other groups, with nearly two-thirds 62 to 64 years old, and another 30 percent 55 to 61 years old. Frequently, the main reason older men do not want a job may be blurred when they are both retired and in ill health. Some may have retired because of a disabling health condition, while others may have been in good health when they retired but were ill at the time of the survey. Among men 62 to 64 years of age, 28 percent gave retirement as the reason for not wanting a job and 54 percent gave sickness or disability. Among men 60 and 61 years old, only 14 percent gave retirement, possibly because they were not eligible for retirement benefits, and 60 percent gave poor health as the reason.

Personal Characteristics. Only about 4 percent of the retired men were nonwhite, compared with 18 percent nonwhite among the sick or disabled men who did not want a job. Several factors may account for the markedly lower proportion of nonwhite than white men who did not want a job because they were retired. These include the generally younger age of the nonwhite men, the

greater incidence of sickness or disability in the nonwhite population, and the lesser likelihood of employment in jobs which are covered either by government or private pensions.

A large majority of the men who did not want a job because they were retired were not interested in working at a later date. Only about 14 percent of the retired men expressed any interest in working in the future or said that they might be interested. The preference for not working is supported by the fact that very few, 7 percent, of those who had retired since 1962 had looked for work after leaving their last job.

Approximately one-half of the retired men had income in 1966 from Social Security and a similar proportion from other pension plans. Some of the men undoubtedly received retirement income from both sources. Moreover, 6 out of 10 had income from dividends, interest, or rent, a much higher proportion than for any other group of men. Very few of the men reported that they had received public assistance or no income at all during 1966.

Income and Work Experience. Retired men had much more income than the average man who was not in the labor force. Four out of 10 retired men had personal income of \$400 a month or more, nearly three times the proportion for all men not in the labor force. At the other end of the income scale, relatively one-fourth as many retired as all nonparticipants had a monthly income of less than \$100. One factor for the higher incomes of men who did not want a job because they were retired may be that many of those who had retired early had worked a long time at relatively high earnings and therefore were entitled to higher than average social security benefits. Also, these men may have had sufficient financial resources and been entitled to supplemental employer pension benefits which induced them to retire before they reached age 65, the normal retirement age.³ It is also likely that some men who had retired with comparatively low retirement benefits may have been in the labor force in order to supplement their income (and were therefore not in the survey population) or may have said they could not work because of illness or disability.

When income of other family members is added to that of the retired man the proportion of retired men with a monthly family income of \$400 or

more rises to 56 percent; only one-third of all the men in the survey were in families with that much income.

Practically all of the retired men were household heads, and 4 out of 5 were married. When a man reaches retirement age he is less likely than a younger man to have several children dependent on him for support, since the children have married and left home or they are no longer dependent because they work. Therefore, the retired men were the least likely of any of the groups in the survey to have three dependents or more. Among the married men, almost 4 out of 10 reported they had no dependents. Apparently their wives had enough income, probably from employment, to preclude their being counted as dependents under the definitions of this survey.

Only one-fifth of the retired workers had not worked for over 5 years, a much smaller proportion than among those who were sick or disabled. On the other hand, one-third of the retired men had last worked in 1966 and only half of them had worked at full-time jobs for over half a year. Very few, however, had been unemployed during 1966.

Sick or Disabled

Most of the men who were not in the labor force did not want a job at the time of the survey because they were sick or disabled. Approximately 1.4 million men, or 59 percent of all the men in the survey, gave this reason for not wanting a job.⁴

These men were considerably older than the reentrants, with nearly two-fifths in their fifties and one-third 60 to 64 years old. The proportion who said they did not want a job because they were sick or disabled was higher for older men than younger, reaching a peak among those 50 to 59 years old and declining among 60- to 64-year-olds. As indicated earlier in the section on the retired, the greater incidence of retirement in the most senior group cuts into the frequency of sickness or disability as a reason for nonparticipation even when sickness or disability may also have been present among them.

³ See Lenore A. Epstein, "Early Retirement and Work-Life Experience," *Social Security Bulletin*, March 1966, pp. 3-10.

⁴ For additional information on the effect of health on ability to work of men not in the labor force, see "Work Limitations and Chronic Health Problems," *Monthly Labor Review*, January 1967, pp. 38-41.

Personal Characteristics. Approximately 250,000, or 18 percent, of those who were not interested in working at the time of the survey because they were sick or disabled were nonwhite. They represented about 64 percent of the nonwhite men in the survey, roughly the same proportion as for whites. The closeness of the proportions seems to contradict evidence that health problems occur more frequently among nonwhite men. This can be explained by the fact that more nonwhite men in the survey were in the younger ages where the incidence of sickness and disability is lower than in the older age groups. The following tabulation shows that in most age groups the proportion of the total nonwhite population who did not want a job because they were sick or disabled was at least twice that of white men.⁵

Age	Men who did not want a job because of sickness or disability as percent of civilian noninstitutional population		
	Total	White	Nonwhite
Total.....	3.0	2.7	5.1
20-34 years.....	.7	.6	2.0
35-44 years.....	1.4	1.3	2.9
45-49 years.....	2.2	1.9	5.6
50-54 years.....	3.8	3.4	6.9
55-59 years.....	7.0	6.5	11.6
60-61 years.....	9.8	9.7	11.4
62-64 years.....	14.3	13.4	22.8

About 2 out of 3 of the sick or disabled men were married, and three-fourths were household heads. One-half of the men had no dependents, but one-fifth reported they had three dependents or more.

The sick or disabled men had the least schooling among those not in the labor force. Two-thirds had completed no more than 8 years of school and less than one-fifth had completed high school. The large proportion with relatively little schooling undoubtedly reflects the fact that some of these men had life-long impairments, including mental retardation.

Economic Effects of Poor Health. Only one-fourth of the men who did not want a job because they were sick or disabled had been in the labor

force at some time during 1966. About 4 out of 10 of those who had worked during the year had been employed at full-time jobs for over 26 weeks. Of all those who had worked less than a full year, 84 percent gave illness or disability as the main reason for not working all year and only 5 percent, unemployment. Poor health was also the main reason for not working for 9 out of 10 of the men who had not worked during 1966. These findings indicate that health problems not only led to the forced withdrawal of many of those who had been working, but also prevented nearly all of the sick or disabled men from working or looking for work during the entire year.

Many of the men who did not want a job because they were sick or disabled had been unable to work for over 5 years. Four out of ten had not worked since 1962 or had never worked, a greater proportion than of any other group in the survey. Of the 775,000 sick or disabled men who had worked sometime since 1962, 9 out of 10 had left their last job because of poor health rather than because of lay-off, retirement, quitting, or for any other reason. This evidence suggests that the health problems of the sick or disabled were no less work-restricting when the survey was taken than earlier when illness forced these men to leave their jobs.

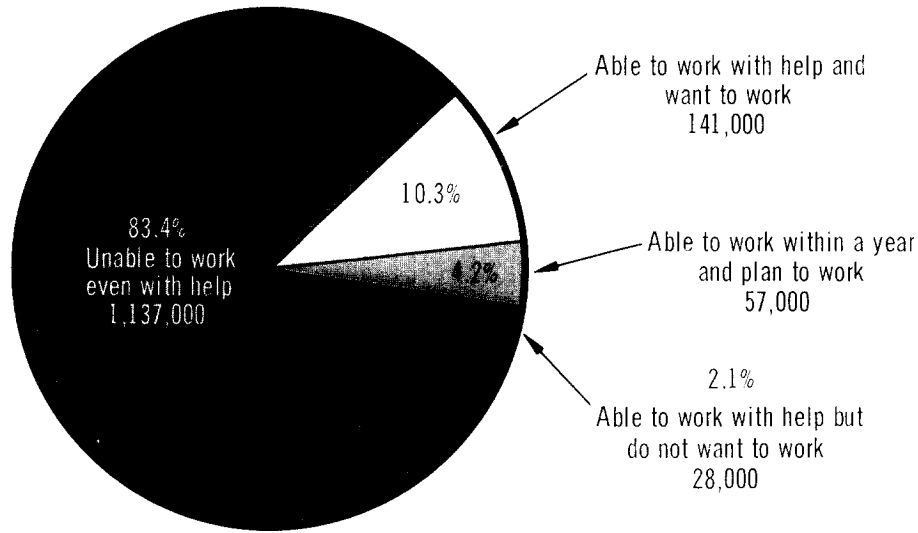
Median income of the sick or disabled men, both personal and family, was below that for retired and other men who did not want a job at the time of the survey. For men in the survey, low income and a desire for work were not necessarily related since poor health limits, if it does not fully curtail, ability to work. Sick or disabled men had a median personal income of \$100 to \$149 and a family income of \$200 to \$299, both roughly \$200 below those of men who did not want a job because they were retired.

The sources of income in 1966 of the sick and disabled men covered a wide range. Over half (54 percent) of the sick or disabled men had income from Social Security and 25 percent were receiving pensions from other sources such as Civil Service, Veteran's, railroad retirement, and private employers.⁶ Twenty percent of the men had earnings during the year. A similar proportion received public assistance, a much greater percentage than among retired men. However, about 7 percent of the sick or disabled men reported they had no income during the year.

⁵ For information on greater incidence among nonwhites than whites, see *Chronic Conditions and Activity Limitations, United States, July 1961-June 1963* (U.S. Public Health Service, National Center for Health Statistics, 1965), Public Health Service Publication No. 1000, Series 10, No. 17, p. 5.

⁶ For information on public income-maintenance programs, see Lawrence D. Haber, *Prevalence of Disability Among Noninstitutionalized Adults Under Age 65: 1966 Survey of the Disabled Adults* (U.S. Social Security Administration, 1968), Research and Statistics Note 4.

Work Plans of Sick or Disabled Men



Job Prospects. The sick or disabled men were asked if they believed they could do work of some kind within the next year. If they indicated that they would not or were not sure, they were asked whether they would be able to work if they received special arrangements or assistance.

As shown in the chart, most of the 1.4 million men who did not want a job because they were sick or disabled said they would not be able to work even if they had special help. A very small proportion indicated they would be able to work without help and planned to work as soon as they could.

Only 1 out of 10 said they would be able and wanted to work if they had special arrangements or assistance. The proportion of sick or disabled men in poverty areas who indicated they would be able to work under these circumstances was double the proportion for men in poverty areas, 18 percent and 8 percent, respectively.

The kinds of arrangements the men would need to be able to work include :

Arrangements or assistance needed	Percent distribution ¹
Rest periods, part-time work, or light work only.....	81.5
Help in getting to and from work.....	29.8
Eyeglasses, hearing aid, or tooth repair.....	15.3
Ramps, elevators, or special equipment at work.....	12.1
Crutches, braces, or artificial limb.....	7.3
Other ²	14.5

¹ Exceeds 100 percent since some men require more than one type of assistance.

² Including little standing or walking, and no bending or stooping.

Of the 200,000 men who would be able to work, either with or without assistance, and were interested in working, one-third were willing to accept any kind of work at all. About one-half of the men wanted jobs as craftsmen, operatives, or service workers, with about equal proportions in each occupation. The rest of the men wanted jobs which were distributed among the remaining major occupation groups except sales. None of the men wanted sales jobs, presumably because the work would involve standing. More than one-half, 55 percent, of the men indicated a willingness to return to school for training if it would improve their chances of finding work.

All Other Men

Only 100,000 men, or fewer than 5 percent of all the men in the survey, did not want or were not sure that they wanted a job at the time of the survey for reasons other than their own ill health or retirement. The reasons included illness in the family, not needing the money, and imminent induction into the Armed Forces.

About 7 out of 10 of these men indicated a definite or possible interest in working at some later date, a much higher proportion than among either those who had health problems or had retired. The relatively large percentage who definitely wanted

or might want a job in the future undoubtedly reflects the temporary nature of some of the circumstances which kept them out of the labor force, and also their comparative youth. One-third of this residual group of men were under 45 years of age compared with one-fifth of the sick or disabled men.

During 1966 these men received income from a variety of sources. About 4 out of 10 had income from earnings, the same proportion as had worked at some time during the year, and nearly one-half received dividends, interest, or rent. Social security payments provided income to one-fourth of the men and one-third received other pensions. At the time of the special survey, nearly one-third of the men had incomes of \$400 a month or more, but the proportion with incomes of less than \$100 was almost as high. Since many of the men were in families which had other adult members with income, only about 5 percent were in families with a current income of under \$100 a month.

Looking Ahead

Poor health is by far the most frequent reason for nonparticipation in the labor force by men in the prime working ages. Moreover, for the great majority of men who are not in the labor force because of sickness or disability, incapacitation is long-term rather than of short duration, and many have no prospect of ever being able to resume working.

On the other hand, an appreciable number of men who are not in the labor force would like to work and could, with help, hold a job. For some, correctional devices or special on-the-job arrangements to accommodate a limiting rather than totally disabling medical condition are needed. For others who have become discouraged and stopped

looking for work, factors such as lack of education, training, skills or experience, and discrimination because of age or color are the obstacles in the way of employment.

Seasonal patterns of employment in some industries (agriculture, construction, and apparel, for example) also add to the number of nonparticipants. Some of the men who are temporarily out of the labor force are waiting for the season to open up in their line of work.

The avoidable or remediable nature of many of the factors which keep men out of the labor force underscores the needlessness of the human misery and waste which are their outgrowth. Preventive and rehabilitative medical services, often unavailable to the poor to the extent required, could substantially reduce the incidence of incapacitation. The various Federal-State vocational rehabilitation programs and the many manpower training programs⁷ that provide health services are aimed, in part, at meeting the needs of men in circumstances similar to those of many of the men covered in this survey. Redesign of job content and of work stations by employers and additional rest periods or part-time work would facilitate employment of physically handicapped workers.⁸ More effective application of industrial safety practices and equipment could significantly reduce the incidence of on-the-job injuries.

Other steps are necessary to complement those in the health field if underutilization of potential workers is to be reduced. Provision of education, training, and retraining opportunities, especially on-the-job training, could result in the employability of many whose qualifications are substandard. The applications of new technology and more efficient scheduling of job phases could significantly reduce the seasonal nature of many jobs.⁹ Enforcement of legal measures to eliminate barriers to employment which arise from arbitrary discrimination on the score of age or color will have incalculable effect in raising motivational and aspirational levels among those who have been the victims of such discrimination.

⁷ See *Manpower Report of the President* (U.S. Department of Labor, 1967), pp. 139-145.

⁸ See *Job Redesign for Older Workers: Ten Case Studies* (BLS Bulletin 1523, 1967).

⁹ See "Seasonality and Construction," *Monthly Labor Review*, September 1967, pp. 1-8.

ERRATUM

In the August issue (p. 11), table 3, Source of Personal Income in 1966 of Men Not in the Labor Force, by Work Plans, the following figures should appear in the total line instead of 100.0 percent:

Total	2,310	470	128	1,363	247	102
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