

AN ANALYSIS OF THE

**EXPERIENCED
HIRED
FARM
WORKING
FORCE**

1948-1957

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCED HIRED FARM WORKING FORCE,
1948-1957*

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SUMMARY

Over 7 million persons were employed as hired farm workers at some time during a recent 10-year period. This number represents about 6 percent of the U. S. labor force in February 1958 when this information was obtained. Over half of these persons had done farm wage work in 1957, the latest year of the period covered by the survey.

This information on persons with experience as hired farm workers was obtained in the February 1958 Current Population Survey. ^{1/} A description of the survey is contained in the Appendix to this report. Special questions on farm wage work experience over a 10-year period obtained information on the size and characteristics of the "central core" of the hired farm working force; the relationship between farm wage work experience and earnings; and the experience of migratory and nonmigratory workers.

These data represent a departure from most occupational studies in that they (1) present a work history for a cross section of the U. S. population of working age and (2) include information not only on those in the occupation but on those who have been out of the occupation for as long as 10 years. Data such as these are unique for the farm labor force and rare for any occupational group.

The information presented in this report is intended to supplement that provided in the annual series on the hired farm working force.

The following is a brief summary of some of the more important findings from this survey.

1. Of the 7.3 million persons who reported hired farm work at some time during the decade 1948-57, 54 percent of these persons had done farm

* This report was prepared under the general direction of Margaret Jarman Hagood, Chief, Farm Population and Rural Life Branch. Robert Pearl, Chief, Economic Statistics Branch, Bureau of the Census, supervised the survey operations and tabulations of the data. Earle J. Gerson, Bureau of the Census and Dorothy Anne Fisher, formerly of the Farm Population and Rural Life Branch, cooperated in the preparation of tabulations of the data.

1/ Preliminary results were presented in The Hired Farm Working Force of 1957, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Information Bulletin No. 208. pp. 62-64.

wage work in 1957. Among this group there was little difference between the average daily earnings of those with the most and the least farm wage work experience.

2. In general, workers with the most years of farm wage work experience worked substantially more days at farm wage work in 1957 than did the less experienced workers. In all but the least experienced category, migratory workers worked about as many days as the most experienced group of nonmigratory workers.

3. Three out of 10 persons who reported hired farm work during the 10-year period had worked in only one year, while about one in 6 had done such work in all 10 years.

4. Nonwhites comprised a relatively greater proportion of those who had worked in all 10 years and a much smaller proportion of those who reported farm wage work only in 1957.

5. Most of the persons who had left the hired farm working force during the period had moved to jobs of higher social and economic status than that of farm laborer. In addition, those persons who had been out of the hired farm working force for the longest period of time had moved furthest from the occupation both as indicated by the jobs held in February 1958 and by shifts in residence from nonmetropolitan to metropolitan areas.

6. Differences among farm wage workers in length of experience were more closely related to color of the worker than to migratory status.

INTRODUCTION

(The data presented in this report supply information for the first time on the characteristics of those persons who have done farm wage work for various periods during the 1948-57 decade.) Such data are rare for any occupational group. Not only do they supply a better basis than has been previously available for the interpretation of the annual reports on the hired farm working force, but they will also be (of value to labor force analysts and to farmers and others who are concerned with the recruitment or employment of farm wage workers, as well as to public administrators and policy makers.)

This report presents detailed information on the characteristics of persons 14 years of age and over in the civilian noninstitutional population in February 1958 who reported wage work at any time during the 1948-57 decade.) The survey, conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Agricultural Marketing Service, included the following questions concerning farm wage work during the period 1948-57:

1. "During the past 10 years, that is, since January 1948, did ... do any farm work for cash wages or salary (even for a few days)?"

This question was asked for all persons included in the survey. If the answer to the question was "Yes" then the following two questions were asked:

2. "In what years since January 1948 did ... do any farm work for cash wages?"
3. "(Ask for each year checked in Item [2]). Some farm workers leave home to harvest crops or do other seasonal farm work in a different county. Did ... do this in _____?" ^{2/}
(Year)

These questions were asked for all persons included in the survey. Combined with other data obtained in the survey, the answers to these questions provide information on the number and characteristics of persons with varying degrees of experience in farm wage work. They also permit a description of the group which comprised the central core of the hired farm working force.

Limitations. The most important limitations of these data are those which apply to persons who were not employed as farm wage workers in 1957, but who did report farm wage work sometime during the period 1948-56. First, since the survey was conducted in February 1958, some of the persons who did farm wage work in earlier years had died, entered military service, left the country, or had otherwise been removed from the possibility of inclusion in the survey. Second, it was not feasible to ask detailed questions on farm and nonfarm wage work experience for any year except 1957. This means that fewer data are available on persons who reported farm wage work in years other than 1957, and that persons who worked only a few days and those who worked regularly at farm wage work are included in the group with farm wage work experience in any year. Third, the recall of work experience over a 10-year period may be subject to greater error than that for a single year. The respondent may not remember short-term work done 2 to 10 years ago, and he may confuse the experience of 1 year with that of another. The possibility of error is increased when someone other than the person himself answers the question, as is often the case in the CPS where one member of the household often supplies information about all members of the household. Fourth, as is true of all surveys, results are subject to sampling variability.

Two groups of farm wage workers are discussed in the following sections. In the first section, the prior farm wage work experience of the 1957 hired farm working force is analyzed. Next, the characteristics of workers with different amounts of farm wage work experience during the 1948-57 decade are discussed; and finally, differences in the patterns of experience for males and females, migratory and nonmigratory workers, and white and nonwhite workers are analyzed.

PRIOR FARM WAGE WORK EXPERIENCE OF THE 1957 HIRED FARM WORKING FORCE

The data presented in table 1 show that 3 out of 10 members (over 1 million persons) of the 1957 hired farm working force had worked in all of the preceding 9 years, and that over half of all workers had farm wage experience in at least 4 years. This was true for both migratory and nonmigratory workers. Undoubtedly, some proportion of this group had worked for more than 10 years, but no data are available on what this proportion might be. At the other

^{2/} This question provided the basis for classification of migratory and nonmigratory farm workers.

Table 1.--Distribution of farm wage workers, average days worked and wages earned at farm and nonfarm wage work in 1957, by years of farm wage work since 1948 and migratory status of worker

| Migratory status and years of farm wage work since 1948 | Number of farm wage workers | | Farm and nonfarm | | | | Farm | | | | Nonfarm | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|------|------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------|------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| | Thou. | Pct. | No. | Wages earned in 1957 | | Days worked | No. | Wages earned in 1957 | | Days worked | No. | Wages earned in 1957 | | Days worked |
| | | | | Per year | Per day 1/ worked | | | Per year | Per day 1/ worked | | | Per year | Per day 1/ worked | |
| Total | 3,962 | 100 | 98 | 666 | 6.80 | 74 | 446 | 6.05 | 24 | 220 | 9.15 | | | |
| 10 years | 1,177 | 30 | 122 | 784 | 6.40 | 102 | 630 | 6.15 | 20 | 154 | 7.70 | | | |
| 4 - 9 | 950 | 24 | 112 | 747 | 6.65 | 87 | 534 | 6.15 | 25 | 213 | 8.45 | | | |
| 2 - 3 | 901 | 23 | 82 | 584 | 7.10 | 59 | 343 | 5.85 | 23 | 241 | 10.35 | | | |
| 1 | 934 | 23 | 69 | 515 | 7.55 | 40 | 224 | 5.65 | 29 | 291 | 10.20 | | | |
| Migratory | 427 | 100 | 113 | 785 | 6.90 | 93 | 606 | 6.50 | 20 | 179 | 8.80 | | | |
| 10 years | 126 | 30 | 122 | 768 | 6.30 | 101 | 628 | 6.20 | 21 | 140 | 6.80 | | | |
| 4 - 9 | 91 | 21 | 120 | 885 | 7.35 | 104 | 660 | 6.30 | 16 | 225 | 14.10 | | | |
| 2 - 3 | 116 | 27 | 137 | 957 | 6.95 | 110 | 753 | 6.80 | 27 | 204 | 7.45 | | | |
| 1 | 94 | 22 | 68 | 502 | 7.45 | 52 | 345 | 6.65 | 16 | 157 | 9.90 | | | |
| Nonmigratory | 3,535 | 100 | 96 | 652 | 6.80 | 72 | 427 | 5.95 | 24 | 225 | 9.20 | | | |
| 10 years | 1,051 | 30 | 122 | 786 | 6.40 | 102 | 631 | 6.15 | 20 | 155 | 7.80 | | | |
| 4 - 9 | 859 | 24 | 111 | 733 | 6.60 | 85 | 521 | 6.10 | 26 | 212 | 8.05 | | | |
| 2 - 3 | 785 | 22 | 74 | 528 | 7.15 | 51 | 282 | 5.55 | 23 | 246 | 10.90 | | | |
| 1 | 840 | 24 | 68 | 516 | 7.55 | 38 | 210 | 5.50 | 30 | 306 | 10.20 | | | |

1/ Rounded to the nearest 5 cents. Farm wage earnings are cash only and do not include the value of perquisites received by many farm workers.

extreme, about a fourth of all hired farm workers in 1957 reported farm wage work only in that year. It is likely that most of these persons had entered the hired farm working force for the first time in 1957. Slightly less than a fourth (23 percent) of all workers had worked in agriculture for 2 or 3 years, including, of course, 1957.

For the total 1957 hired farm working force, those workers with the most years in which farm wage work was reported had the greatest number of days of farm wage work in 1957, but earned about the same amount per day as the less experienced workers. However, combined farm and nonfarm average daily earnings were highest for those with the least farm wage work experience, due to their higher average daily earnings at nonfarm jobs.

For the nonmigratory worker, farm wage work experience in earlier years was associated with a greater number of days of farm wage work in 1957. That is, the longer the worker had been in the hired farm working force, the more days of farm wage work reported in 1957.

The direct relationship between farm wage work experience and number of days of farm wage work in 1957, which was characteristic of nonmigratory workers, did not hold for migratory workers. With the exception of those migratory workers who reported farm wage work only in 1957 and had presumably entered the farm work force for the first time in 1957, migratory workers in the three more experienced groups did about as much farm wage work in 1957 as the most experienced group of nonmigratory workers. ^{3/} None of the experience-groups shown in table 1 averaged more than 110 days at farm wage work during the year.

The prior farm wage work experience of the nonwhites differed markedly from that of the whites (table 2). Nonwhites, who comprised about a third (32 percent) of the 1957 hired farm working force, accounted for almost half (47 percent) of all those who reported farm wage work in all 10 years, but only about a fifth of those who worked only in 1957. For both whites and nonwhites, the majority of all workers in 1957 had worked either in at least 10 years or only in 1957. Relatively small proportions reported farm wage work for other periods of time within the decade.

About 24 percent of all workers reported farm wage work only in 1957, and it is likely that most of these workers entered the hired farm working force for the first time in 1957. The proportion of all whites who reported farm wage work only in 1957 was over twice as great as that of nonwhites.

^{3/} It should be made clear that prior farm wage work experience refers only to the number of years in which farm wage work was reported, and not to the actual length of time the person may have spent in the hired farm labor force. Thus, "more experienced" means only that more years in which farm wage work was done were reported, and does not necessarily mean that a greater number of days was spent in farm wage work. While this caution must be observed, it is true that the more experienced nonmigratory worker -- as measured by number of years in which farm wage work was done -- also had the most number of days at farm wage work in 1957.

Table 2.--Distribution of 1957 farm wage workers by number of years any farm wage work reported and color of worker, 1948-57

| Number of years any farm wage work reported | Number of farm wage workers, 1957 | | White | | Nonwhite | |
|---|---|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | Thousands | Percent | Thousands | Percent | Thousands | Percent |
| Total | 3,962 | 100 | 2,680 | 100 | 1,282 | 100 |
| 10 years | 1,177 | 30 | 622 | 23 | 555 | 43 |
| 9 | 78 | 2 | 58 | 2 | 20 | 2 |
| 8 | 109 | 3 | 63 | 2 | 46 | 4 |
| 7 | 133 | 3 | 81 | 3 | 52 | 4 |
| 6 | 157 | 4 | 90 | 3 | 67 | 5 |
| 5 | 215 | 5 | 139 | 5 | 76 | 6 |
| 4 | 258 | 7 | 180 | 7 | 78 | 6 |
| 3 | 407 | 10 | 305 | 12 | 102 | 8 |
| 2 | 494 | 12 | 379 | 14 | 115 | 9 |
| 1957 only | 934 | 24 | 763 | 29 | 171 | 13 |

These data suggest that the great majority of persons who ever do farm wage work do so only for a relatively short period of their lives, but that those who remain in the occupation longer than 3 years tend to continue in farm wage work for an extended period of time. ^{4/} Information obtained in earlier surveys shows that between 23 and 30 percent of the total hired farm working force reported at least 25 days of farm wage work during the year and also reported farm wage work as their chief activity during the year. ^{5/}

It has been shown (table 1) that about 30 percent of the 1957 hired farm working force had worked in at least 10 years, and that the number of years of farm wage work experience was associated with a greater number of days at such work during the year. It has also been shown that in recent years farm wage work was the chief activity of about 23 to 30 percent of the hired farm working force. Although inferences from these two sets of data must be made with caution, it does appear that about a fourth of the total hired farm working force is composed of persons whose chief activity during

^{4/} Even among those workers who had been in the labor force for a substantial period of time, a comparatively small proportion reported an extended period of farm wage work. For example, only about one-quarter of nonmigratory white male workers aged 45-54 and about 28 percent of these workers in the 2 oldest age groups (55-64 and 65 and over) reported farm wage work in all 10 years.

^{5/} The Hired Farm Working Force of 1957., op. cit., p. 11. The years for which strictly comparable information on chief activity was available were 1951, 1952, 1954, 1956, and 1957.

the year is farm wage work and who have been in this occupation for a relatively long period of time, perhaps 10 years or more. Thus, there is evidence that in recent years experienced farm wage workers have comprised about a fourth of the total hired farm working force.

FARM WAGE WORK EXPERIENCE OF ALL PERSONS WITH ANY FARM WAGE WORK
1948-1957

Information on current (as of February 1958) labor force status, combined with data on the last year in which farm wage work was done, permits a limited analysis of the occupational mobility of the farm wage worker. By comparing the length of time the person has been out of the hired farm labor force with the occupation held in February 1958, it was possible to determine whether farm wage workers remained in agriculture, either as hired workers or as farm operators or managers, or whether they entered nonfarm occupations.

Table 3 summarizes this information for all persons who reported any farm wage work during the 1948-57 period. Information is available only for the period in which farm wage work was last performed and for February 1958.^{6/} It is not possible to know how many occupations the worker may have held during the time between his departure from the hired farm working force and the time of the survey, but only the occupation held at two times during the past 10 years of his work history.

Data on nonmigratory workers (table 3) show that 46 percent of the most recent male workers were in farm jobs as a main occupation, either as hired workers or as farm operators or farm managers. This is in marked contrast to the occupation held by males who had last done farm wage work in the period 1948-50, where about 1 in 10 was in a farm job and almost 4 out of 10 were in occupations classed as craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers or those classed as operatives and kindred workers. A comparatively high proportion of males who last did farm wage work in each of the 4 periods shown in table 3 was unemployed in February 1958.

The majority of female nonmigratory workers were out of the labor force in February 1958. Despite the difference in labor force status, there are some similarities between males and females in the relationship between the time at which farm wage work was last done and the occupation held in February 1958. Women who had last worked for farm wages in the period 1948-50 were more likely to be in service jobs or in sales and clerical jobs than those who worked in 1957. The proportion of women married and keeping house, and therefore out of the labor force, was highest for those who had been out of the farm labor force the longest. A substantial proportion (over a fifth) of females who reported farm work in 1957 was not in the labor force in February 1958 for other reasons, probably because of enrollment in school.

^{6/} It should be noted that the information obtained in February 1958 related only to the occupation reported during the survey week, and that no information is available on the degree of attachment to the hired farm working force. For example, some persons reporting a nonfarm occupation may also have done farm wage work during the survey week.

Table 3.--Labor force status and occupation in February 1958 by period in which nonmigratory and migratory farm wage work was last reported and sex of worker (in percentages)

| Labor force and occupational status in February 1958 | Sex of worker and last year of nonmigratory work | | | | | | | |
|--|--|-----------|-----------|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------|
| | Male | | | | Female | | | |
| | 1948-1950 | 1951-1953 | 1954-1956 | 1957 | 1948-1950 | 1951-1953 | 1954-1956 | 1957 |
| | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| In the labor force | 93 | 87 | 78 | 72 | 29 | 36 | 31 | 26 |
| Farmers and farm managers | 9 | 11 | 14 | 21 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers | 21 | 15 | 7 | 2 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Operatives and kindred workers | 17 | 18 | 16 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Farm laborers and foremen | 1/ | 1/ | 2 | 25 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| Laborers, except farm and mine | 9 | 12 | 8 | 5 | -- | 1 | -- | 1/ |
| Service and private household workers | 8 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 10 | 13 | 13 | 10 |
| Sales, clerical and kindred workers | 7 | 7 | 5 | 1 | 8 | 7 | 5 | 1/ |
| All other occupations | 12 | 12 | 9 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| Unemployed | 10 | 7 | 11 | 9 | 4 | 9 | 5 | 7 |
| Not in the labor force | 7 | 13 | 22 | 28 | 71 | 64 | 69 | 74 |
| Keeping house | -- | 1/ | 1/ | 1/ | 69 | 60 | 53 | 51 |
| All other | 7 | 13 | 22 | 28 | 2 | 4 | 16 | 23 |
| | Sex of worker and last year of migratory work | | | | | | | |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| In the labor force | 94 | 86 | 78 | 78 | 30 | 57 | 43 | 30 |
| Farmers and farm managers | 4 | 4 | 3 | 8 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers | 22 | 17 | 3 | 2 | -- | -- | 3 | -- |
| Operatives and kindred workers | 22 | 15 | 17 | 7 | -- | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Farm laborers and foremen | -- | 2 | 2 | 30 | -- | 12 | -- | 7 |
| Laborers, except farm and mine | 7 | 5 | 18 | 4 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Service and private household workers | 8 | 11 | 5 | 2 | 15 | 18 | 21 | 6 |
| Sales, clerical and kindred workers | 10 | 7 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 15 | 8 | -- |
| All other occupations | 10 | 13 | 9 | 1 | -- | 6 | -- | -- |
| Unemployed | 11 | 12 | 16 | 22 | 7 | -- | 5 | 11 |
| Not in the labor force | 6 | 14 | 22 | 22 | 70 | 43 | 57 | 70 |
| Keeping house | -- | -- | -- | -- | 44 | 30 | 49 | 49 |
| All other | 6 | 14 | 22 | 22 | 26 | 13 | 8 | 21 |

1/ Less than 1 percent.

For migratory males, (table 3) the general pattern is similar to that of nonmigratory males with two important exceptions. A much smaller proportion of migratory workers were farm operators or farm managers, and over a fifth of the most recent workers were unemployed in February 1958. As in the case of nonmigratory males, those migratory males who had last done farm wage work in the period 1948-50 were concentrated in the skilled and semiskilled occupations in February 1958. The most apparent difference between nonmigratory and migratory females was the larger proportion of females who had last done farm wage work in the periods 1948-50 and 1951-53 who, in 1958, were out of the labor force for other reasons. A considerably lower proportion of the most recent female migratory workers were in service occupations or in clerical and sales jobs (6 percent of the 1957 workers compared to between more than a fifth and a third of the workers in other periods).

In general, these data show that farm wage workers who have been out of the hired farm labor force the longest were least likely to have remained in agriculture in any capacity, and most likely to be in occupations generally considered to be of higher economic status than that of farm laborer. Relatively few males moved from the occupation of farm wage worker to that of farm operator, and this was particularly true for the migratory males. Only among the 1957 workers was there an important proportion of males working as farm operators or farm managers in February 1958.

There is some evidence that geographic mobility was associated with the length of time the worker had been out of the hired farm working force. On the basis of information obtained on the place of residence of all those who reported any farm wage work during the 1948-57 decade, it was possible to examine the relationship between the length of time since farm wage work was last done and the region and metropolitan status of the area in which the worker resided in February 1958. As in the case of occupation, the comparison is restricted to two periods of time, and nothing is known about mobility between the two periods. In addition, there may be differences between the place of residence in February 1958 and the place where farm wage work had been done.

Data presented in table 4 compare the proportions of workers living inside and outside Standard Metropolitan Areas (SMA's) for groups of workers who had last done farm wage work in specified years, that is who had left the hired farm working force in specific years. More than half of the persons who had last done farm wage work in 1948 resided in an SMA in February 1958, compared to 15 percent of those who had worked for farm wages in 1957. Throughout the period the proportion living in SMA's increased with length of time since departure from the farm labor force. This indicates that workers who left the farm labor force early in the 10-year period were more likely to be living in an area in February 1958 where alternative jobs were more available to them than to those who resided outside an SMA. Related information is shown in table 5 where residence is classified by region of the U. S. For the total group, those who had been out of the farm labor force the longest were less likely to be living in the South than were those with more recent farm wage work experience. For example, 6 out of 10 of those who reported farm wage work in 1957 lived in the South in February 1958, compared with about 4 out of 10 of those who had last done this type of work in 1948.

Table 4.--Percentage distribution of workers who last did farm wage work each year 1948-57, by color, migratory status, and Standard Metropolitan Area residence status of worker in February 1958

| Color, migratory and SMA residence status | : Total workers | Last year of farm wage work | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | | : 1948 | : 1949 | : 1950 | : 1951 | : 1952 | : 1953 | : 1954 | : 1955 | : 1956 | : 1957 |
| | | : Percent | : Percent | : Percent | : Percent | : Percent | : Percent | : Percent | : Percent | : Percent | : Percent |
| Total | : | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Inside SMA | : | 25 | 53 | 48 | 46 | 46 | 45 | 41 | 39 | 32 | 25 |
| Outside SMA | : | 75 | 47 | 52 | 54 | 54 | 55 | 59 | 61 | 68 | 75 |
| Migratory | : | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Inside SMA | : | 38 | 100 | 67 | 59 | 40 | 77 | 77 | 65 | 66 | 51 |
| Outside SMA | : | 62 | -- | 33 | 41 | 60 | 23 | 23 | 35 | 34 | 49 |
| Nonmigratory | : | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Inside SMA | : | 24 | 48 | 45 | 44 | 46 | 41 | 39 | 35 | 30 | 23 |
| Outside SMA | : | 76 | 52 | 55 | 56 | 54 | 59 | 61 | 65 | 70 | 77 |
| White | : | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Inside SMA | : | 27 | 58 | 49 | 42 | 47 | 42 | 40 | 36 | 32 | 23 |
| Outside SMA | : | 73 | 42 | 51 | 58 | 53 | 58 | 60 | 64 | 68 | 77 |
| Nonwhite | : | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Inside SMA | : | 21 | 34 | 37 | 67 | 37 | 60 | 46 | 50 | 33 | 30 |
| Outside SMA | : | 79 | 66 | 63 | 33 | 63 | 40 | 54 | 50 | 67 | 70 |

Table 5.--Percentage distribution of workers who last did farm wage work each year 1948-57, by color, migratory status of worker during the last year of farm wage work, and region of residence in February 1958

| Color, migratory status, and region | : Total workers | Last year of farm wage work | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | | : 1948 | : 1949 | : 1950 | : 1951 | : 1952 | : 1953 | : 1954 | : 1955 | : 1956 | : 1957 |
| | | : Percent | : Percent | : Percent | : Percent | : Percent | : Percent | : Percent | : Percent | : Percent | : Percent |
| Total | : | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Northeast | : | 9 | 18 | 15 | 8 | 11 | 13 | 14 | 13 | 12 | 11 |
| North Central | : | 22 | 32 | 25 | 31 | 29 | 24 | 29 | 26 | 21 | 20 |
| South | : | 55 | 43 | 45 | 42 | 48 | 50 | 44 | 47 | 54 | 56 |
| West | : | 14 | 7 | 15 | 19 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 14 | 13 | 14 |
| Migratory | : | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Northeast | : | 6 | -- | 6 | -- | -- | 22 | 29 | 13 | 5 | -- |
| North Central | : | 19 | 56 | 32 | 44 | 25 | 14 | 30 | 23 | 32 | 21 |
| South | : | 58 | 44 | 48 | 46 | 42 | 54 | 41 | 48 | 63 | 72 |
| West | : | 17 | -- | 14 | 10 | 33 | 10 | -- | 16 | -- | 7 |
| Nonmigratory | : | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Northeast | : | 9 | 20 | 16 | 9 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 12 | 12 |
| North Central | : | 22 | 29 | 24 | 30 | 30 | 26 | 29 | 27 | 20 | 21 |
| South | : | 55 | 43 | 45 | 41 | 48 | 49 | 45 | 47 | 54 | 55 |
| West | : | 14 | 8 | 15 | 20 | 10 | 13 | 14 | 13 | 14 | 13 |
| White | : | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Northeast | : | 11 | 21 | 17 | 9 | 12 | 13 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 12 |
| North Central | : | 28 | 37 | 26 | 34 | 33 | 28 | 32 | 30 | 24 | 24 |
| South | : | 43 | 33 | 40 | 35 | 41 | 43 | 37 | 38 | 45 | 48 |
| West | : | 18 | 9 | 17 | 22 | 14 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 16 | 16 |
| Nonwhite | : | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Northeast | : | 3 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 6 | 12 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 8 |
| North Central | : | 5 | 13 | 18 | 12 | 8 | 8 | 14 | 12 | 11 | 8 |
| South | : | 90 | 79 | 76 | 80 | 83 | 80 | 80 | 79 | 86 | 82 |
| West | : | 2 | -- | -- | -- | 3 | -- | -- | 2 | 2 | 2 |

The changes in occupation and in residence which were made by persons longest out of the hired farm labor force indicate a shift to nonfarm jobs and to areas where nonfarm employment opportunities are relatively more accessible. Differences in occupation are more marked than are differences in residence, perhaps because a change in occupation does not always require a change in residence. Although geographic mobility does not necessarily entail an occupational change, it is likely that the two types of mobility are related, particularly for those persons who leave the occupation of farm wage worker.

As mentioned earlier, detailed information on farm wage work experience was obtained only for 1957 and the discussion in this section is limited to the relationships between farm wage work experience during the period 1948-57 and the age, sex, color, and migratory status of the worker.

Table 6 presents detailed information on the number of years in which farm wage work was done for various categories of workers. About 7.3 million persons (6 percent of those 14 years of age and over in February 1958) reported some farm wage work during the 10-year period. The general pattern for all categories of workers is one in which the majority worked either in all 10 years or worked in less than 3 years. For the total group of workers, 3 out of 10 worked in only 1 year; somewhat over a fourth worked 2 or 3 years; and one in 6 worked in all 10 years. A comparatively small proportion, around 5 percent, reported farm wage work for each of the other periods.

Table 6.--Percentage distribution of farm wage workers, by number of years any farm wage work reported, 1948-57

| Number of years any farm wage work reported | All workers | Migra- tory ^{1/} | Non- migra- tory | Male | Female | White | Non- white |
|---|----------------|------------------------------|------------------------|-------|--------|-------|---------------|
| Total - (000) | 7,282 | 940 | 6,342 | 4,991 | 2,291 | 5,342 | 1,940 |
| (Pct.) | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| 10 years | 16 | 22 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 11 | 28 |
| 9 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| 8 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| 7 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 5 |
| 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 6 |
| 5 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 4 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| 3 | 11 | 14 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 12 | 8 |
| 2 | 16 | 12 | 17 | 17 | 15 | 18 | 12 |
| 1 | 30 | 26 | 30 | 29 | 31 | 34 | 19 |

^{1/} Includes all persons who reported any migratory farm wage work during the period. About 207,000 of these persons reported both migratory and non-migratory farm wage work in the period 1948-57.

About $2\frac{1}{2}$ times as many nonwhites as whites reported farm wage work in all 10 years. Only about a fifth of the nonwhites reported farm wage work in but 1 year, compared with a third of the whites. The nonwhites, who comprised 27 percent of all workers, accounted for 47 percent of all those who reported work in every year and 32 percent of all those who had done farm wage work from 4 to 9 years. The experience pattern for migrants resembled that of nonwhites more closely than that of whites, but there was little difference between males and females in the pattern of farm wage work experience.

The general experience pattern shown in table 6 indicates that the occupation of farm wage worker is characterized by a high turnover rate, a relatively short stay in the occupation for most workers, and yet in the case of nonwhites, a comparatively high proportion who have done farm wage work in at least 10 consecutive years.

The age of the worker is important in determining the number of years that are spent in the farm wage working force. Not only does age set an upper limit on the number of years that the worker can spend at farm wage work (or any other activity, for that matter) but participation in the labor force is, in part, a function of age. For example, 1957 labor force participation rates varied from 48.6 percent for males aged 14 to 19 to 97.9 percent for males aged 35 to 44. ^{7/}

In tables 7 and 8, data are presented on the age distribution of various categories of workers with varying amounts of farm wage work experience.

For all 7.3 million workers the differences in age among the four experience-groups follow the pattern expected. Those who had worked in all 10 years were the oldest group, and those with less than 4 years of experience were the youngest. The median age of those who had worked in all 10 years was 44, compared to a median age of about 26 for those with 2-3 years at farm wage work. However, for each category of workers, those with experience in only 1 year are somewhat older than those with experience in from 2-3 years. ^{8/} This reversal of the expected pattern is most marked for nonwhites, where the least-experienced group is, on the average, about 6 years older than the next most-experienced group.

For each category of worker, about 4 out of 10 were in the age group 14-24; about half were aged 25-54; and approximately 10 percent were 55 or over. The median age for those who reported farm wage work in all 10 years ranged from about 40 (for females) to about 47 (for males).

^{7/} Current Population Reports. "Annual Report on the Labor Force: 1957", Series P-50, No. 85. June 1958. p. 5.

^{8/} About 2.2 million of the 7.3 million persons reported farm wage work in only 1 year, and about 900,000 of these reported such work in 1957 only. Thus, the remaining 1.3 million persons reported farm wage work in a single year other than 1957.

Table 7.--Percentage distribution and median age of farm wage workers by age in 1958, number of years any farm wage work reported and migratory status, 1948-57

| Number of years : any farm wage : work reported and : migratory status : | Total | Age in 1958 | | | | | | | 65 : and : over : | Median : age : Yrs. |
|---|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| | | 14-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | | | | |
| | | Thou. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | | |
| Total | 7,282 | 100 | 39 | 20 | 16 | 13 | 7 | 5 | 30.6 | |
| 10 years | 1,177 | 100 | 14 | 16 | 22 | 26 | 13 | 9 | 44.2 | |
| 4 - 9 | 1,993 | 100 | 38 | 20 | 16 | 12 | 8 | 6 | 31.1 | |
| 2 - 3 | 1,949 | 100 | 49 | 21 | 14 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 25.7 | |
| 1 | 2,163 | 100 | 44 | 23 | 14 | 10 | 5 | 4 | 27.7 | |
| Nonmigratory | 6,342 | 100 | 39 | 20 | 15 | 13 | 7 | 6 | 30.7 | |
| 10 years | 968 | 100 | 13 | 16 | 21 | 25 | 14 | 11 | 44.7 | |
| 4 - 9 | 1,753 | 100 | 38 | 19 | 15 | 13 | 8 | 7 | 31.3 | |
| 2 - 3 | 1,704 | 100 | 49 | 19 | 14 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 25.7 | |
| 1 | 1,917 | 100 | 44 | 22 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 4 | 27.8 | |
| Migratory 1/ | 940 | 100 | 37 | 26 | 18 | 12 | 4 | 3 | 30.0 | |
| 10 years | 209 | 100 | 17 | 14 | 25 | 31 | 9 | 4 | 42.3 | |
| 4 - 9 | 240 | 100 | 36 | 27 | 19 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 30.1 | |
| 2 - 3 | 245 | 100 | 48 | 30 | 16 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 25.7 | |
| 1 | 246 | 100 | 42 | 32 | 12 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 27.3 | |

1/ Includes all persons who reported any migratory farm wage work during the period. About 207,000 of these persons reported both migratory and nonmigratory farm wage work in the period 1948-57.

Table 8.--Percentage distribution and median age of farm wage workers by age in 1958, number of years any farm wage work reported, sex and color, 1948-57

| Number of years : any farm wage : work reported, : sex and color : | Total | Age in 1958 | | | | | | | 65 : and : over : | Median : age : Yrs. |
|---|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| | | 14-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | | | | |
| | | Thou. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | | |
| Male | 4,991 | 100 | 38 | 22 | 15 | 12 | 7 | 6 | 30.7 | |
| 10 years | 787 | 100 | 12 | 14 | 20 | 27 | 14 | 13 | 46.7 | |
| 4 - 9 | 1,382 | 100 | 36 | 22 | 15 | 12 | 8 | 7 | 31.5 | |
| 2 - 3 | 1,367 | 100 | 47 | 23 | 14 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 26.4 | |
| 1 | 1,455 | 100 | 45 | 24 | 12 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 26.9 | |
| Female | 2,291 | 100 | 40 | 18 | 19 | 13 | 7 | 3 | 30.4 | |
| 10 years | 390 | 100 | 18 | 21 | 26 | 23 | 10 | 2 | 39.5 | |
| 4 - 9 | 611 | 100 | 43 | 14 | 17 | 14 | 8 | 4 | 29.9 | |
| 2 - 3 | 582 | 100 | 53 | 16 | 16 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 24.4 | |
| 1 | 708 | 100 | 40 | 22 | 18 | 11 | 6 | 3 | 29.6 | |
| White | 5,342 | 100 | 39 | 21 | 16 | 12 | 7 | 5 | 30.0 | |
| 10 years | 623 | 100 | 10 | 13 | 24 | 26 | 16 | 11 | 45.9 | |
| 4 - 9 | 1,353 | 100 | 36 | 21 | 15 | 14 | 8 | 6 | 31.8 | |
| 2 - 3 | 1,567 | 100 | 48 | 21 | 15 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 26.1 | |
| 1 | 1,799 | 100 | 44 | 24 | 14 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 27.2 | |
| Nonwhite | 1,940 | 100 | 37 | 18 | 16 | 15 | 8 | 6 | 32.4 | |
| 10 years | 554 | 100 | 18 | 19 | 19 | 26 | 10 | 8 | 41.8 | |
| 4 - 9 | 640 | 100 | 43 | 17 | 17 | 10 | 7 | 6 | 29.3 | |
| 2 - 3 | 382 | 100 | 52 | 18 | 11 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 24.6 | |
| 1 | 364 | 100 | 39 | 18 | 15 | 14 | 7 | 7 | 30.7 | |

A more detailed examination of the age distribution of workers than is shown here indicates that a majority of nonwhites in each age group reported farm wage work in at least 4 years, but that for whites, this was true only for the age groups 45 and over. A comparison of the age distribution and experience patterns for whites and nonwhites showed that the differences in farm wage work experience were due largely to a greater proportion of each age group of nonwhites with more years in which farm wage work was done, and not to differences in the age composition of the two groups.

The differences in the farm wage work experience of whites and nonwhites are illustrated in table 9, in which the work experience of nonmigratory white and nonwhite males is compared. The median age for both groups was about the same, 31 years of age. Examination of additional data showed that in each of the 10-year age groups used in the analysis, a greater proportion of nonwhites than whites reported at least 10 years of farm wage work in the period 1948-1957. The proportion reporting such work in all 10 years was more than twice as great for nonwhites as for whites.

In table 10, the period during which the worker had last done farm wage work is shown for various categories of workers.

Slightly more than half (54 percent) of all workers reporting any farm wage work experience in the 10-year period had worked at farm wage work in 1957. Half the whites with farm wage work experience during the decade had left the hired farm labor force prior to 1957, while only a third of all the nonwhites were no longer in the hired farm working force in 1957.

Although detailed analysis of the relationship among color, sex, migratory status, and prior farm wage work experience was not possible, it was possible to determine whether color was more closely associated with length of farm wage work experience than was migratory status.

Data presented in table 11 show that color of the worker was more closely related to the number of years in which farm wage work was reported than was migratory status of the worker. Nonwhites were more likely to report a greater number of years of farm wage work than were whites, regardless of migratory status. In the 10-year period 1948-57, the farm wage work experience of white migratory workers was more similar to that of nonmigratory whites than it was to the experience of nonwhites in either category. The experience of the nonwhites was the opposite of that of whites in that about 6 out of 10 nonwhites in all four categories reported at least 4 years of farm wage work while about the same proportion of whites reported farm wage work in less than 4 years.

Among nonwhites, females comprised about 40 percent of all migratory workers and about half of all nonmigratory workers; while among whites, females accounted for about one-quarter of both groups of workers. ^{9/} The greater proportion of nonwhite females with farm wage work experience may mean that farm wage work by both husband and wife is more frequent among

^{9/} In general labor force participation rates are higher for nonwhite females than for white females.

Table 9.--Percentage distribution and median age of nonmigratory male farm wage workers by age in 1958, color, and number of years any farm wage work reported, 1948-57

| Number of years any farm wage work reported and color | Age in 1958 | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------|---------------|
| | Total | | 14-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65 and over | Median age |
| | Thou. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Yrs. |
| White | 3,499 | 100 | 37 | 22 | 15 | 12 | 8 | 6 | 30.8 |
| 10 years | 424 | 100 | 5 | 14 | 24 | 25 | 17 | 15 | 47.8 |
| 4 - 9 | 922 | 100 | 32 | 23 | 14 | 14 | 9 | 8 | 32.6 |
| 2 - 3 | 1,019 | 100 | 46 | 22 | 15 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 27.0 |
| 1 | 1,134 | 100 | 46 | 24 | 12 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 26.6 |
| Nonwhite | 815 | 100 | 41 | 15 | 13 | 13 | 9 | 9 | 31.4 |
| 10 years | 226 | 100 | 21 | 15 | 13 | 25 | 13 | 13 | 45.4 |
| 4 - 9 | 286 | 100 | 45 | 17 | 14 | 9 | 7 | 8 | 27.9 |
| 2 - 3 | 162 | 100 | 56 | 12 | 11 | 6 | 9 | 6 | 23.9 |
| 1 | 141 | 100 | 45 | 13 | 14 | 13 | 7 | 8 | 28.7 |

Table 10.--Percentage distribution and median age of farm wage workers by age in 1958, last year farm wage work reported, sex, and color, 1948-57

| Last year farm wage work re- ported, sex and color | Age in 1958 | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------|---------------|
| | Total | | 14-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65 and over | Median age |
| | Thou. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Pct. | Yrs. |
| Total | 7,282 | 100 | 39 | 20 | 16 | 13 | 7 | 5 | 30.6 |
| 1948-1950 | 661 | 100 | 18 | 44 | 15 | 10 | 6 | 7 | 32.2 |
| 1951-1953 | 845 | 100 | 32 | 28 | 19 | 10 | 4 | 7 | 31.3 |
| 1954-1956 | 1,814 | 100 | 42 | 20 | 16 | 11 | 6 | 5 | 29.1 |
| 1957 | 3,962 | 100 | 42 | 15 | 16 | 14 | 8 | 5 | 30.4 |
| Male | 4,991 | 100 | 38 | 22 | 15 | 12 | 7 | 6 | 30.7 |
| 1948-1950 | 462 | 100 | 14 | 49 | 15 | 10 | 6 | 6 | 32.4 |
| 1951-1953 | 604 | 100 | 30 | 30 | 18 | 10 | 4 | 8 | 31.7 |
| 1954-1956 | 1,160 | 100 | 41 | 23 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 6 | 29.1 |
| 1957 | 2,765 | 100 | 42 | 15 | 14 | 14 | 9 | 6 | 30.2 |
| Female | 2,291 | 100 | 40 | 18 | 19 | 13 | 7 | 3 | 30.4 |
| 1948-1950 | 199 | 100 | 30 | 31 | 14 | 10 | 6 | 9 | 31.5 |
| 1951-1953 | 241 | 100 | 38 | 25 | 21 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 30.0 |
| 1954-1956 | 654 | 100 | 44 | 14 | 18 | 13 | 7 | 4 | 29.2 |
| 1957 | 1,197 | 100 | 40 | 17 | 19 | 15 | 7 | 2 | 30.7 |
| White | 5,342 | 100 | 39 | 21 | 16 | 12 | 7 | 5 | 30.0 |
| 1948-1950 | 565 | 100 | 18 | 47 | 15 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 31.8 |
| 1951-1953 | 697 | 100 | 34 | 29 | 19 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 30.7 |
| 1954-1956 | 1,401 | 100 | 43 | 21 | 15 | 11 | 6 | 4 | 28.4 |
| 1957 | 2,679 | 100 | 43 | 14 | 16 | 14 | 8 | 5 | 29.8 |
| Nonwhite | 1,940 | 100 | 37 | 18 | 16 | 15 | 8 | 6 | 32.4 |
| 1948-1950 | 96 | 100 | 19 | 25 | 12 | 18 | 12 | 14 | 40.0 |
| 1951-1953 | 148 | 100 | 26 | 25 | 22 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 34.6 |
| 1954-1956 | 413 | 100 | 39 | 15 | 18 | 13 | 7 | 8 | 32.4 |
| 1957 | 1,283 | 100 | 39 | 17 | 15 | 16 | 8 | 5 | 31.4 |

nonwhites than among whites. It may also be that fewer alternative occupational opportunities are available to the nonwhite female than to the white female.

These data also indicate that color of the worker is a particularly important factor in the analysis of the experience of the hired farm working force, and that, for certain purposes, color is of greater significance than is migratory status.

Table 11.--Percentage distribution of farm wage workers by migratory status, color, sex and number of years any farm wage work reported, 1948-57

| Migratory status, sex and color ^{1/} | Total | Number of years any farm wage work reported | | | | |
|--|-----------|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | | 10 | 4-9 | 2-3 | 1 | |
| | Thousands | Percent | Percent | Percent | Percent | Percent |
| Migratory | 940 | 100 | 22 | 26 | 26 | 26 |
| White | 671 | 100 | 16 | 24 | 29 | 31 |
| Male | 519 | 100 | 16 | 25 | 29 | 30 |
| Female | 152 | 100 | 17 | 24 | 27 | 32 |
| Nonwhite | 269 | 100 | 37 | 28 | 20 | 15 |
| Male | 158 | 100 | 34 | 29 | 22 | 15 |
| Female | 111 | 100 | 42 | 27 | 16 | 15 |
| Nonmigratory | 6,342 | 100 | 15 | 28 | 27 | 30 |
| White | 4,671 | 100 | 11 | 26 | 29 | 34 |
| Male | 3,499 | 100 | 12 | 27 | 29 | 32 |
| Female | 1,172 | 100 | 8 | 23 | 30 | 39 |
| Nonwhite | 1,671 | 100 | 27 | 34 | 20 | 19 |
| Male | 815 | 100 | 28 | 35 | 20 | 17 |
| Female | 856 | 100 | 27 | 33 | 19 | 21 |

^{1/} Includes all persons who reported any migratory farm wage work. About 207,000 of these persons reported both migratory and nonmigratory farm wage work in the period 1948-57.

APPENDIX

Method of the survey. The data on which this report is based were obtained for the Agricultural Marketing Service by the Bureau of the Census in conjunction with the Current Population Survey conducted in February 1958. Surveys of the hired farm working force have been conducted in all but two years (1953 and 1955) since 1945. 10/

The Current Population Survey obtains interviews in some 35,000 households throughout the United States. The special questions included in the February 1958 survey were asked for all persons in the sample who were 14 years of age and over in the civilian noninstitutional population of the continental United States. As in all sample surveys, the estimates are subject to sampling variability. Small figures and minor differences between estimates must be interpreted with this fact in mind. 11/ In addition to sampling variability, errors in response and interviewer bias must also be considered.

In a household survey with questions concerning a 10-year period, the difficulty of recall and lack of knowledge may be important sources of reporting error.

10/ For a more detailed description of these surveys, see: The Hired Farm Working Force of 1957 op., cit., pp. 4-5 and p. 65.

11/ Estimates of sampling variability are provided in: Monthly Report on the Labor Force. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor.