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New Institute
Survey on Flexible
Staffing Arrangements

Jobs for Welfare Recipients

New Books

Vol. 4, No. 1

Employment Research is published twice a year by the W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, a nonprofit research organization devoted to finding and promoting solutions to employment-related problems at the national, state, and local level. The Institute is an activity of the W. E. Upjohn Unemployment Trustee Corporation, which was established in 1932 to administer a fund set aside by the late Dr. W. E. Upjohn, founder of the Upjohn Company, to conduct research on the causes and effects of unemployment and seek measures for the alleviation of the hardships suffered by the unemployed.

W. E. Upjohn Institute
300 S. Westnedge Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49007-4686
(616) 343-5541
www.upjohninst.org

Randall W. Eberts
Executive Director

Susan N. Houseman

New Institute Survey on Flexible Staffing Arrangements

Employers' use of temporary, part-time, and contract employment is widespread and, available evidence suggests, growing. Many regard this development as troubling, pointing out that workers in these arrangements often receive low wages, few benefits, and little job security. Others argue that employers' use of so-called flexible staffing arrangements potentially benefits employees as well as employers.

Little information is available to inform the debate over the costs and benefits of flexible staffing arrangements. The February 1995 Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) on contingent and alternative work arrangements (repeated in February 1997) represented a first attempt in official statistics to provide a comprehensive picture of the number of workers in these arrangements. However, our understanding of which employers use these arrangements, why they use them, and why they may have been increasing their use in recent years is incomplete.

To help bridge this information gap, the Upjohn Institute sponsored a nationwide telephone survey of employers on their use of five flexible staffing arrangements: temporary agency workers, short-term hires, regular part-

time workers, on-call workers, and contract workers. We surveyed a stratified random sample of 550 establishments in the United States with five or more employees. This article highlights some findings from our survey.

Use of Flexible Staffing Arrangements

The use of flexible staffing arrangements is widespread among establishments of all sizes and in all industries. Forty-six percent of establishments in our sample use workers from temporary help agencies; 38 percent use short-term hires; 72 percent use regular, part-time workers; 27 percent use on-call workers; and 44 percent use independent contract workers. Excluding part-time workers (which the vast majority of establishments use), 78 percent of establishments in our survey use at least one type of flexible staffing arrangements (figure 1).

Although many employers use agency temporaries and short-term hires, employers generally use these forms of employment on a small scale. According to our estimates, in 1995 agency temporaries added 1.5 percent to regular employment and short-term hires added 2.3 percent to regular employment among

(continued on p. 3)

From the Executive Director

A unique feature of the Upjohn Institute is its dual function as a research institute and as the administrator of state and federal employment programs for our two-county area. Across the country, we are known primarily for our research and publications on a variety of employment-related issues. Locally, we are equally known for the job training, school-to-work and welfare-to-work programs we administer. As administrator of a service delivery area (SDA), the Institute provides intake, counseling, and job development services for economically disadvantaged, older adult, and displaced workers under the Job Training Partnership Act. We also administer the state's new welfare-to-work program, Work First. In the course of a year, we provide direct services or subcontracted services to upwards of 5,000 clients.

The fact that Institute staff members administer programs and see clients on a daily basis gives us as researchers a unique perspective on issues facing these

The Institute proposes a new system to profile and refer welfare-to-work participants to appropriate services.

programs. Many of our research programs have benefited from this first-hand knowledge. For instance, our local experience in operating labor programs was instrumental in our selection by the World Bank to design and help implement active labor programs in Hungary and Poland. Before that, the Institute designed and evaluated two unemployment

insurance reemployment bonus experiments, the first in Illinois and the second in Washington state. Both projects benefited from the expertise gained from our own operations of various employment programs at the Institute.

Similarly, the operations division has benefited from the insights and resources provided by the research division of the Institute. Researchers perform data analysis that enable operations staff to better understand the needs of clients and the outcomes of programs. In addition, research staff also assist operations personnel in thinking through ways to improve the delivery of services, bringing ideas and insights from demonstration projects and evaluations of other programs conducted around the country.

This close relationship between operations and research has given the Institute the opportunity to design and test a new approach to delivering job search and other assistance to welfare recipients. Working closely with the U.S. Department of Labor and Michigan's Job Commission, our SDA is scheduled to be the first pilot site for an initiative that allocates welfare-to-work services more effectively to welfare clients.

Currently, welfare-to-work programs, such as Michigan's Work First Program, provide the same services to all participants, regardless of their past work history and skills. However, some participants who have past work experience may be able to find employment without additional assistance, while others with little or no work experience may need more job search assistance than is presently provided through Work First. With limited resources, additional assistance for these participants is typically not available. We contend that a system of targeting resources based on client needs would be

a more efficient method of allocating resources within Work First.

In order to target services to clients' actual needs, the Institute proposes a system to profile and refer new participants to appropriate services. The profiling model is based on a statistical method that uses information collected at intake to assign to each participant a probability of being a long-term welfare recipient, or conversely, of quickly

Profiling would allow local providers to move away from a "one-size-fits-all" approach and tailor programs to meet the needs of their clients.

finding a job. The statistical model is similar to the one used by the Michigan's Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services System (WPRS) for unemployment insurance-eligible claimants. Profiling would allow local providers to move away from a "one-size-fits-all" approach and tailor programs to meet the needs of their clients. It promises to be more cost effective than current programs in meeting the goals of the new welfare reform—getting welfare recipients into jobs and gaining economic self-sufficiency.

Of course, whether or not this "triage" approach to allocating resources works can only be determined by implementing and evaluating the process. The Institute plans to design and model the program in the near term, and then to implement and evaluate the pilot program. Once the program is tested here, we will disseminate the information to other states in the hope that they may find our experience helpful in thinking about ways to improve their own welfare-to-work programs.

Randall W. Eberts

New Institute Survey on Flexible Staffing Arrangements

(Continued from page 1)

private sector establishments with five or more employees. These figures are in line with estimates from government data.

Figure 1. Percent of Establishments Using Flexible Staffing Arrangements

By their very nature, temporary jobs are short-lived. Although the amount of temporary employment may seem small, our data show that over the course of a year companies create seven to eight times the number of jobs for temporary agency workers and five to six times the number of jobs for short-term hires as would be captured in a point-in-time estimate. Thus, probably many more individuals experience a spell of temporary employment during the year than are working in temporary jobs at any point in time.

Why Employers Say They Use Flexible Staffing Arrangements

When asked why they use various types of flexible staffing arrangements, employers most commonly cited reasons concerning fluctuations in workload or absences of regular staff. Employers also often use agency temporaries and part-time workers to screen candidates for regular jobs; 21 percent of those using agency temporaries and 15 percent using regular part-time workers cited this reason as important. Interestingly, savings on wage and benefit costs were cited as important by just 12 percent of employers

using agency temporaries, by 21 percent using regular part-time workers, and by under 10 percent using short-term hires and on-call workers.

Wages and Benefits

Although employers seldom say that they use flexible staffing arrangements in order to save on wage and benefit costs, they often report that the hourly labor costs of workers in flexible staffing arrangements are, in fact, lower than those of regular workers in similar positions. These savings occur primarily because of savings on benefit costs. About 38 percent of establishments using agency temporaries reported that the billed hourly rate for agency temporaries is lower than the hourly wage-plus-benefit costs of regular workers in similar positions. Fifty-nine percent of establishments with short-term hires, 63 percent of establishments with regular part-time workers, and 73 percent of establishments with on-call workers reported that the hourly wage and benefit costs of these types of flexible workers are lower than the hourly wage and benefit costs of regular workers in similar positions.

Three of the five categories of flexible workers are direct employees of the establishment: short-term hires, part-time workers, and on-call workers. We collected information on benefits offered by the employer to workers in these categories and to regular, full-time employees. Short-term hires, part-time workers, and on-call workers are much less likely to receive fringe benefits such as paid vacations and holidays, paid sick leave, pensions, and health insurance than are regular, full-time workers (table 1). *The large gap in benefits occurs not because flexible workers are concentrated in establishments providing few benefits, but rather because employers discriminate between flexible workers and regular, full-time workers in determining benefits eligibility.*

Statistical analysis shows that establishments offering good benefits to regular, full-time workers are more likely to use various flexible staffing arrangements and/or to use them more intensively. One possible explanation for

this finding is that employers wish to offer costly benefits only to a certain segment of their workforce. However, employers encounter legal problems if they discriminate among regular full-time workers in offering benefits. Use of various flexible staffing arrangements is a way for employers to segment their workforce. Alternatively, employers may be particularly concerned about screening workers for positions that come with costly benefits, and may use flexible staffing arrangements for that purpose.

The lack of health insurance benefits may not matter to workers in flexible staffing arrangements if they are covered under another family member's plan. Simple tabulations from the February 1995 CPS show, however, that workers in flexible staffing arrangements are much less likely to have health insurance from any source than are workers in regular, full-time jobs. Moreover, workers in flexible staffing arrangements are much less likely to be eligible to receive health insurance through their employer, to have health insurance from any source, or to have pension benefits from their employer even after controlling for key individual and workplace characteristics (Houseman 1997).

Mobility into Regular Positions

According to the February 1995 Supplement to the CPS, most of those who consider their job temporary want permanent employment, and a significant minority of regular, part-time workers want full-time hours. Thus, a key issue is whether flexible staffing arrangements are avenues to regular jobs.

Although our survey provides evidence of some mobility into regular positions, relatively few employers report "often" promoting these workers, and, for most types of flexible workers, a majority of employers report seldom or never moving them into regular positions. However, there is a significant positive correlation between the degree to which employers hire agency temporaries into regular positions and how much they use these workers.

Trends in Use

Employers were asked if their use of a particular type of flexible worker had increased, decreased, or remained the same relative to the size of their workforce since 1990. Somewhat more employers increased their relative use of agency temporaries, short-term hires, and on-call workers than decreased their use. Many more establishments increased their relative use of part-time workers than decreased their use.

Policy Issues

Should we be concerned if a large and possibly growing number of workers in the United States are employed in flexible staffing arrangements? Our survey results clearly point to benefits as one issue of concern. Workers in flexible staffing arrangements typically do not receive basic workplace benefits and employers sometimes appear to hire these workers in order to avoid paying benefits. This raises the issue of the adequacy of a system in

if flexible staffing arrangements were usually vehicles to permanent, full-time positions for those wanting them. More research is needed to better understand the extent to which these jobs serve as bridges to regular employment.

Susan Houseman is a senior economist at the Upjohn Institute. This research was partially funded by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Table 1. Provision of Benefits, by Type of Worker (in percent)

	Short-term hires	Part-time workers		On-call workers	Regular full-time workers
		To any part-time	To 50% or more		
Paid vacation and holidays	11.0	53.7	48.3	15.3	95.8
Paid sick leave	5.7	35.8	32.0	11.3	83.5
Pension benefits	3.8	37.6	30.2	14.0	78.5
Profit or gain sharing	NA	16.0	13.1	6.0	37.6
Health insurance	9.5	38.9	34.2	13.3	89.8
Any of above benefits	16.2	66.7	60.2	24.7	96.5

A substantially greater number of establishments also contracted out work previously done in-house than brought work back in-house. Eighteen percent of all establishments in our sample have contracted work out previously done in-house since 1990. Another 10 percent of establishments in our sample brought work back in-house that had been previously contracted out. Along with findings from earlier surveys (reported in Abraham, 1988, 1990; Abraham and Taylor 1993), our data indicate that there has been a trend toward contracting out at least since 1980 and suggest a substantial restructuring of production and employment relations in our country.

When asked about future trends, two-thirds of the employers in our survey predicted that the use of workers in flexible staffing arrangements in their industry would increase in the next five years.

which health insurance and pensions are acquired primarily as fringe benefits of full-time, permanent jobs.

Another reason for concern is that workers in flexible staffing arrangements often have little job security, and thus are likely to experience spells of unemployment. Segal and Sullivan (1995), for example, show that workers in the temporary help industry are much more likely to experience unemployment than are other workers. Yet, the unemployment insurance system is designed with the traditional model of employment—a full-time job of indefinite duration—in mind. Part-time workers and workers in temporary jobs often are not eligible to receive unemployment insurance when their jobs end. This raises the issue of whether our social safety net is adequate to protect the large and growing number in alternative work arrangements.

One might be less concerned about the benefits and job security of these workers

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Timothy J. Bartik

Jobs for Welfare Recipients

Federal and state policies are increasingly pushing welfare recipients into the labor market. What types of jobs are welfare recipients likely to get? Do some types of jobs lead to greater long-run "success" for welfare recipients?

Welfare recipients are most commonly employed in low-wage jobs with low educational requirements (see table 1). However, these jobs vary widely in tasks and skills required, and in the likelihood that welfare recipients will be successful in retaining them.

Why the Types of Jobs Matter

Why might some jobs lead to greater long-run success for welfare recipients? Long-run success will be influenced by short-run job retention. One study of a welfare-to-work program shows that employment status three months after completing the program is a good predictor of the net earnings effect during the entire two-and-a-half year follow-up period (Zornitsky and Rubin 1988).

The short-run matters so much because many welfare recipients face problems with job retention. At one welfare-to-work program, Project Match in Chicago, researchers found that 46 percent of the program's clients lost their first job by three months, 60 percent by six months, and 73 percent by twelve months (Berg, Olson and Conrad 1992).

This poor job retention is *not* due primarily to inadequate technical or "hard" skills. Welfare recipients generally lose jobs because of problems with absenteeism and punctuality, or because of conflicts with supervisors and co-workers (Berg, Olson and Conrad 1992; Quint and Musick 1994). The one "hard skills" deficiency that is frequently mentioned is problems in running a cash register.

Job retention problems occur in part because many welfare recipients find the

circumstances of low-wage jobs to be unfamiliar. The usual daily activities of an unemployed welfare recipient are comprised of child care and home care, with no supervisors or co-workers to accommodate, and with the welfare recipient controlling her own schedule.

Table 1. Top Ten Occupations /Industries of Welfare Recipients

Occupation	Percentage of sample
Cashiers	9.8
Nursing aides	6.7
Waitresses	6.3
Maids	4.3
Cooks	4.0
Janitors	3.9
Secretaries	2.8
Child care	2.6
Household cleaning	2.1
Assemblers	1.8

Industry	Percentage of sample
Eating and drinking places	16.4
Nursing and personal care	5.6
Private household services	4.2
Hotels and motels	4.1
Grocery stores	3.7
Elementary & secondary schools	3.6
Department stores	3.1
Personnel supply services	2.9
Hospitals	2.8
Services to dwellings & buildings	2.4

SOURCE: March Current Population Survey (1983-1995). See Bartik (forthcoming).

Some types of jobs might lead to greater job retention for welfare recipients because occupations or industries differ in pressure for timely completion of tasks, the strictness of supervision, and interactions with co-workers or customers. Occupations or industries also differ in whether the skills required have much in common with child care or home care. Some occupations and industries

may better tolerate substandard performance while the new worker adjusts to the job. Finally, higher wages or benefits make an otherwise bad job easier to endure.

Estimated "Effects" of Job Characteristics

In a recent working paper, I examine how the occupation, industry, and wage of a job held by a welfare mother are associated with her later employment and earnings (Bartik, forthcoming). This research uses data from 13 years (1983-95) of the March Current Population Survey. The analysis is based on all single mothers in this data base who received welfare during the year prior to the March interview and who worked during the prior year. The research examines what influence the characteristics of last year's job had on the individual's employment and weekly earnings as of the March interview.

One issue is how to interpret the estimated "effects" of job characteristics. Better workers will tend to have gotten better jobs in the prior year, and to have done better in the labor market in March. What appear to be effects of job characteristics on later employment and earnings could occur because the individuals taking those jobs are, for unobservable reasons, better workers. The research does control for many personal characteristics, including education, age, and number of children. In addition, for many purposes it is of interest to simply know what jobs are associated with later success. Whether that success is due to the job or the person may be a secondary issue. For example, welfare-to-work programs could benefit from knowing what types of jobs are associated with later success. The program could improve performance by both targeting those jobs for placements and providing the training needed for clients to succeed in those jobs.

Of those welfare recipients who held a job last year, 48 percent were employed the following March. The average weekly earnings of those employed in March was around \$190 in 1995 dollars, or an average of \$91 when including those who

are not working. For welfare recipients who were *not* employed at all last year, the probability of employment in March was only 5 percent.

These data indicate the following "effects" of last year's job characteristics on this March's employment probability and weekly earnings:

- The hourly wage rate that a welfare recipient was paid on last year's job has statistically significant effects on whether the individual is employed in March as well as the individual's earnings. These effects are more modest than one might expect. A job last year that pays 25 percent higher hourly wages is associated with an increase in the March employment probability of only one percentage point, from 48 percent to 49 percent. Average weekly earnings go up by more, from \$91 to \$100.
- The size of the firm in which the welfare recipient was employed last year has no significant effects on March employment or earnings.
- Both the industry and occupation of last year's job have significant effects on March employment probabilities. Industry matters more than occupation.
- The industries that have the most positive effects on March employment, compared to the average industry, are hospitals, educational services, finance/insurance/real estate, and durable goods manufacturing. The industry with the most negative effect on March employment is the temporary help industry.
- Two occupations for last year's job have effects on March employment that differ significantly from the average occupation: laborers and cashiers. Both occupations reduce March employment probabilities.
- These industry/occupation effects are large. For example, if a welfare recipient had a job in the hospital industry, their probability of being employed in March of the following year is increased by 13 percentage points, from 48 percent to 61 percent.

These industry/occupation effects are large enough that it seems plausible that they are true effects and not solely a reflection of unobservable personal characteristics. One can speculate why these effects occur. Temporary help employment is of course temporary, and laborer occupations may in many cases also be casual jobs. Cashiers must have

The results suggest that the job in which a welfare recipient is placed has a significant impact on future success.

technical skills and handle pressures for accuracy. Hospitals and the educational services industry may have more in common with the regular activities of many welfare recipients. These industries and finance/insurance/real estate may have less pressure for dealing with customers. Durable manufacturing industries, hospitals, and educational services may offer benefits, which are not measured in these data.

Implications for Welfare-to-Work Programs

What do these results imply for welfare-to-work programs? The results suggest that the job in which a welfare recipient is placed has a significant impact on future success. Program managers might consider efforts to target higher-wage jobs, and jobs in hospitals, the educational services industry, finance/insurance/real estate, and durable goods manufacturing. Targeting jobs in an industry should include efforts to ensure that a welfare recipient has the training needed to succeed in that industry.

Welfare-to-work programs must plan for what to do if the job is lost, as it will be in many cases. Programs such as Project Match in Chicago have had much experience helping welfare recipients after a job is lost (see Herr and Halpern 1991). In addition, the federal

government is sponsoring a study of the effectiveness of post-employment services to welfare recipients, to help them retain jobs or recover from job loss (Haimson, Hershey and Rangarajan 1995). Both Project Match and the Postemployment Services Demonstration offer program managers lessons on dealing with job retention and job loss.

Timothy J. Bartik is a senior economist at the Upjohn Institute. This research is part of a broader project, "Jobs for the Poor: Can Labor Demand Policies Help?" The project is being conducted with financial help from the Russell Sage Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foundations or the Institute.

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New Books from the Upjohn Institute

Teacher Pay and Teacher Quality

Dale Ballou

University of Massachusetts at Amherst

Michael Podgursky

University of Missouri-Columbia

Ballou and Podgursky examine issues surrounding the debate over whether increasing salaries for teachers leads to a more qualified teaching workforce. Since their analyses of several national data bases offer little evidence to support this link, they pursue two questions: (1) What went wrong with this widely implemented

method of school reform? and (2) Which reforms are likely to meet with increased success?

The authors show how key structural features of the labor market for

teachers systematically undermine efforts to improve teacher quality, and how public schools show little preference for teacher applicants who have strong academic backgrounds. They also undertake a comparison of personnel policies and staffing patterns in public and private schools, and comment on the impact of regulatory constraints currently imposed on public school administrators.

"This book should be required reading by anybody who wishes to discuss school reform"

Eric Hanushek, University of Rochester

"(This) is an important book that should be read by everyone interested in the future of our public schools and the future of the American economy."

Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Cornell University

"School boards, school superintendents, and teacher union leaders should read Ballou and Podgursky's book before negotiating the next round of teacher contracts."

Richard J. Murnane, Harvard University

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On-the-Job Training

John M. Barron

Purdue University

Mark C. Berger

University of Kentucky

Dan A. Black

University of Kentucky

The authors examine the and effects of OJT on productivity, wages and turnover by studying the amount of training provided to newly hired workers, and the characteristics of the workers who receive this training. This allows them to present evidence supporting the standard predictions of the effects of OJT on wage and productivity growth. However, they find insufficient evidence to support

the prediction that OJT substantially reduces the starting wage.

Also presented are the results of a "matched" survey that allows the authors to compare the responses of

employers who provided training with the responses of newly hired workers who received that training. This exercise reveals discrepancies in the amount of training reported, leading to new insights on the issue of measurement error. In addition, the authors offer several findings pertinent to discussions on how to increase the human capital of lower-income workers, and advice to policy makers who wish to encourage more OJT in the private sector.

210 pp. \$25 cloth ISBN 0-88099-178-X

\$15 paper ISBN 0-88099-175-5 / 1997

Lessons for Welfare Reform An Analysis of the AFDC Caseload and Past Welfare-to-Work Programs

David M. O'Neill

Nathan Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research

June Ellenoff O'Neill

Congressional Budget Office

O'Neill and O'Neill offer in-depth analysis of data covering three areas pertinent to welfare reforms enacted in 1996, including: (1) The extent to which recipients respond to changes in the welfare benefit system, (2) The characteristics and work skills of welfare recipients, and (3) The effectiveness of work and training programs.

They include a discussion of past initiatives to increase the self-sufficiency of welfare recipients, along with a review of experiments evaluating recent work and training programs, including those aimed specifically at teenage mothers, workfare programs, and programs aimed at older mothers with school-age children.

The authors also examine the capacity of state and local governments to implement welfare reform which will include time limits on welfare receipt, aggressive promotion of work, and a high percentage of welfare recipients participating in employment and training programs.

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