

Demographic Characteristics of the 1998 Hired Farmworkers

An average of about 117 million people aged 15 and older were employed per week at wage and salary jobs in the United States in 1998 (table 1), according to the Current Population Survey. Of these, 875,000 persons (less than 1 percent) identified “hired farmwork” (that is, farmwork for cash wages or salary) as their primary employment. Hired farmworkers include people paid to manage farms for employers (8 percent), supervisors of farmworkers (4 percent), and farm and nursery workers (88 percent). The group includes those hired directly by the farmer and those employed by farm labor contractors.

While the annual average number of people working per week as hired farmworkers has fluctuated slightly from year to year over the last decade, these changes for the most part have not been statistically different. The number of hired farmworkers stabilized between 1990 and 1998 at 800,000 to 900,000 (fig. 13 and app. table 1). In contrast, the average number of all wage and salary workers (including hired farmworkers) has consistently increased since 1991 (fig. 14 and app. table 2).

Hired farmworkers’ demographic characteristics differ from those of other wage and salary workers. Hired farmworkers in 1998 were younger and less educated than all wage and salary workers and were more likely to be male, Hispanic, and never married. Historical information on hired farmworkers and all wage and salary workers (1990-98) is shown in appendix tables 1 and 2.

Gender, Age, and Marital Status

Males accounted for about 84 percent of the hired farmworkers and about 52 percent of all wage and salary workers in 1998 (table 1). These percentages have remained constant in recent years (app. tables 1 and 2).

Hired farmworkers were younger than all wage and salary workers in 1998, as they have been throughout the 1990’s (table 1 and app. tables 1 and 2). More than half (54 percent) of the hired farmworkers were under 35 years of age, compared with 42 percent of all wage and salary workers. Hired farmworkers were more than twice as likely as all workers to be under 20 years of age.

More hired farmworkers (39 percent) than all wage and salary workers (29 percent) had never been married, and fewer hired farmworkers had been married or widowed, divorced, or separated (table 1). The differences in marital status may be because hired farmworkers are younger than other wage and salary workers.

Racial/Ethnic Group

Almost 42 percent of hired farmworkers were Hispanic in 1998, compared with almost 11 percent of all wage and salary workers (table 1). With the exception of 1996 when the numbers increased, the percentage of hired farmworkers who are Hispanic has not changed significantly since 1994 (app. table 1). However, the percentage of all wage and salary workers who are Hispanic did change significantly between 1994 and 1996 (app. table 2). The large increase in the percent of Hispanic workers in both workforces 1990-94 compared with 1994-98 is probably due to the redesign of the CPS to capture data from more Hispanic households, among other reasons.

Hired farmworkers are less likely to be white non-Hispanic and black and other non-Hispanic than all wage and salary workers (table 1). Both of these racial/ethnic groups have maintained their share of the hired farmwork force since 1994, with the exception of an increase in white workers in 1996 (app. table 2). In comparison, the percentage of all white wage and salary workers decreased steadily and the percentage who were black and other has increased almost steadily every year since 1994 (app. table 2).

Citizenship Status

About 62 percent of hired farmworkers in 1998 were born in the United States, but 34 percent were foreign-born and not U.S. citizens (table 2). The percentage of U.S.-born workers in 1998 declined since 1996, while the percentage of foreign-born increased (Runyan, 1996). In comparison with all wage and salary workers, greater proportions of hired farmworkers were foreign-born noncitizens, and in 1998, 7 percent of all wage and salary workers were foreign-born noncitizens.

Hired farmworkers who are not U.S. citizens are more likely than all hired farmworkers to be Hispanic, less educated and located in the West (table 3). They are

Table 1—Demographic characteristics of hired farmworkers and all wage and salary workers, 1998

Characteristics	Annual averages			
	Hired farmworkers		All wage and salary workers	
	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Percent</i>
All	875	100	116,882	100
Gender:				
Male	733	83.8*	61,031	52.2
Female	142	16.2*	55,851	47.8
Racial/ethnic group:				
White	458	52.4*	85,830	73.4
Hispanic	366	41.8*	12,397	10.6
Black and others	51	5.8*	18,655	16.0
Age (years):				
Less than 20	133	15.2*	7,327	6.3
20-24	116	13.3*	12,216	10.5
25-34	224	25.6	29,059	24.9
35-44	185	21.1*	31,797	27.2
45-54	122	14.0*	23,519	20.1
55 and over	95	10.8	12,964	11.1
Median age		33*		38
Marital status:				
Married	454	51.9*	65,896	56.4
Widowed, divorced, or separated	82	9.3*	17,195	14.7
Never married	339	38.8*	33,791	28.9
Schooling completed:				
0-4 years	96	10.9*	910	0.8
5-8 years	184	21.1*	3,209	2.7
9-11 years	218	24.9*	11,913	10.2
12 years ¹	232	26.5*	37,124	31.8
13 or more years	145	16.6*	63,726	54.5

¹Schooling completed: 12 years means that a person received a high school diploma, GED, or equivalent degree.

*Significantly different from all wage and salary workers at the 95-percent confidence level.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

also more likely than all hired farmworkers to be employed in crop production (table 3).

Education Completed

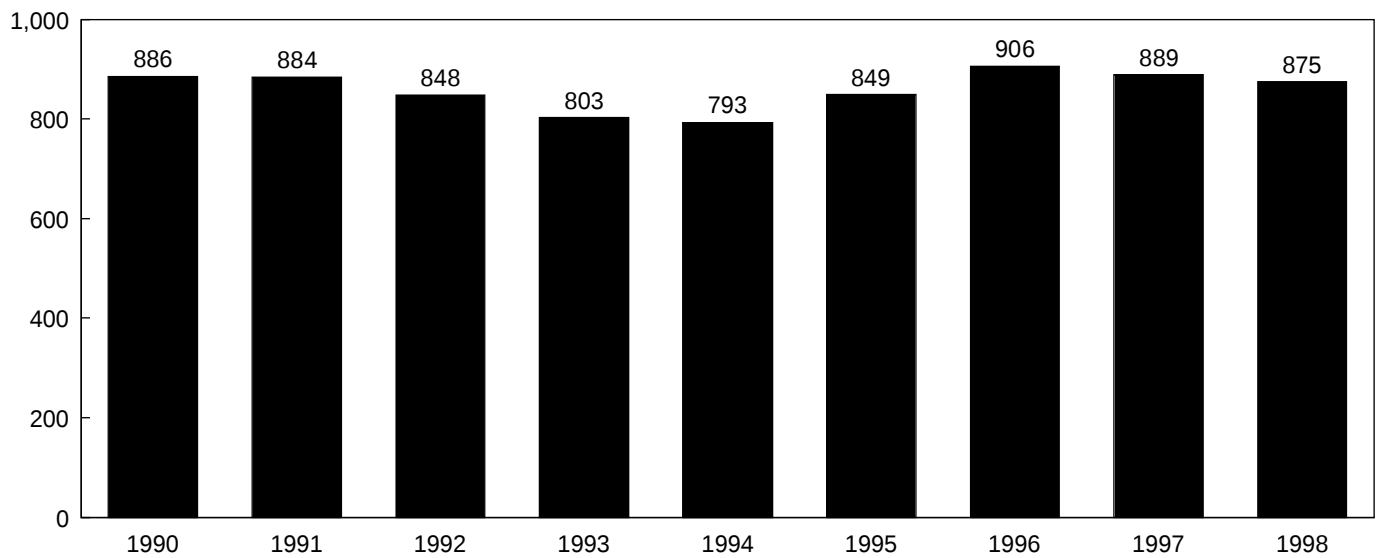
Hired farmworkers continue to be less educated than all wage and salary workers. In 1998, 32 percent of hired farmworkers had completed less than 8 years of education, and 57 percent had completed less than 12 years of education (table 1). In comparison, 4 percent of all wage and salary workers had completed less than 8 years of education, and 14 percent had completed less than 12 years of education (table 1). The educational attainment of hired farmworkers was considerably lower than for other major occupational groups (fig. 15).

Male farmworkers had lower educational levels than females (table 4). About 27 percent of women had completed education beyond high school compared with 15 percent of men in the hired farmworker force. Also, Hispanics were generally less educated. About 83 percent of the Hispanic hired farmworkers had completed less than 12 years of education, compared with 36 percent of white hired farmworkers and 56 percent of black and other hired farmworkers. Since Hispanics make up almost 95 percent of noncitizen hired farmworkers, this noncitizen group also had lower educational levels than other hired farmworkers (table 3).

Figure 13

Annual average number of hired farmworkers, 15 years and older, employed per week, 1990-98

Thousands

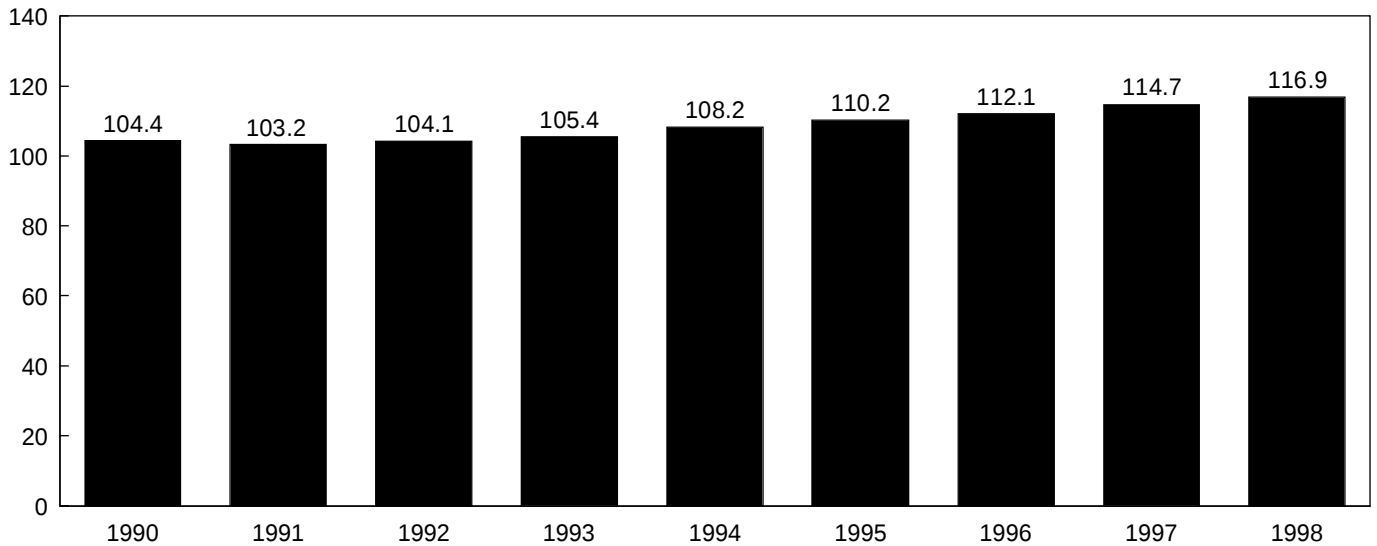


Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

Figure 14

Annual average number of all wage and salary workers, 15 years and older, employed per week, 1990-98

Millions



Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

Table 2—Citizenship status of hired farmworkers and all wage and salary workers, 1998

Citizenship status	Annual averages	
	Hired farmworkers	All wage and salary workers
	<i>Thousands</i>	
Total	875	116,882
	<i>Percent</i>	
Total	100	100
Native, born in the United States	61.9*	87
Native, born in Puerto Rico or U.S. outlying area	.2	5
Native, born abroad of American parent(s)	.5	1
Foreign-born, U.S. citizen by naturalization	3.8	4.3
Foreign-born, not U.S. citizen	33.5*	7.3

*Significantly different from all wage and salary workers at the 95-percent confidence level.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

Unemployment

Unemployed workers are people who reported on the CPS that they are “unemployed on layoff” or are “unemployed and looking for employment.”

Unemployed hired farmworkers are those unemployed people who reported their last primary job was hired farmwork. They accounted for over 2 percent of all unemployment in 1998. The unemployment rate for hired farmworkers (11.8 percent) was one of the highest for all major occupations in 1998, sharing similarly high rates with private household workers, handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers and laborers, and other farming, fishing and forestry workers (fig. 16). Unemployment in the hired farm labor force remained stable between 1994 and 1998 (12.4 to 11.5 percent), while unemployment in the wage and salary labor force declined (from 6.1 percent to 4.5 percent) (fig. 17). However, the unemployment rate for the hired farm labor force fluctuated widely during 1998 (3.48 percent in October to 24.19 percent in March) than that of the total wage and salary labor force (3.97 percent in December to 5.27 percent in January).

Table 3—Demographic characteristics of foreign-born workers who were not citizens of the United States, 1998

Characteristics	Annual averages	
	Foreign-born, noncitizen hired farmworkers	Foreign-born, noncitizen wage and salary workers
	<i>Thousands</i>	
Total	294	8,530
	<i>Percent</i>	
Total	100	100
Gender:		
Male	86.8*	62.3
Female	13.2*	37.7
Racial/ethnic group		
White	2.2***	17.7
Hispanic	94.5***	55.7
Black and others	3.3*	26.6
Age (years):		
Less than 20	4.3**	4.1
20-24	20.3***	12.9
25-34	32.3	34.5
35-44	22.1	27.6
45-54	15.1	14.4
55 and over	5.8**	6.4
Median age	32*	34
Schooling completed:		
0-4 years	25.9***	7.5
5-8 years	41.4***	17.0
9-11 years	16.0**	16.3
12 years ¹	12.3***	23.7
13 or more years	4.5***	35.5
Establishment:		
Crop production	73.4**	—
Livestock production	21.6**	—
Other	5.0	—
Census region:		
Northeast	3.0***	21.8
South	22.0**	26.9
Midwest	1.5***	10.6
West	73.5***	40.6

¹Schooling completed: 12 years means that a person received a high school diploma, GED, or equivalent degree.

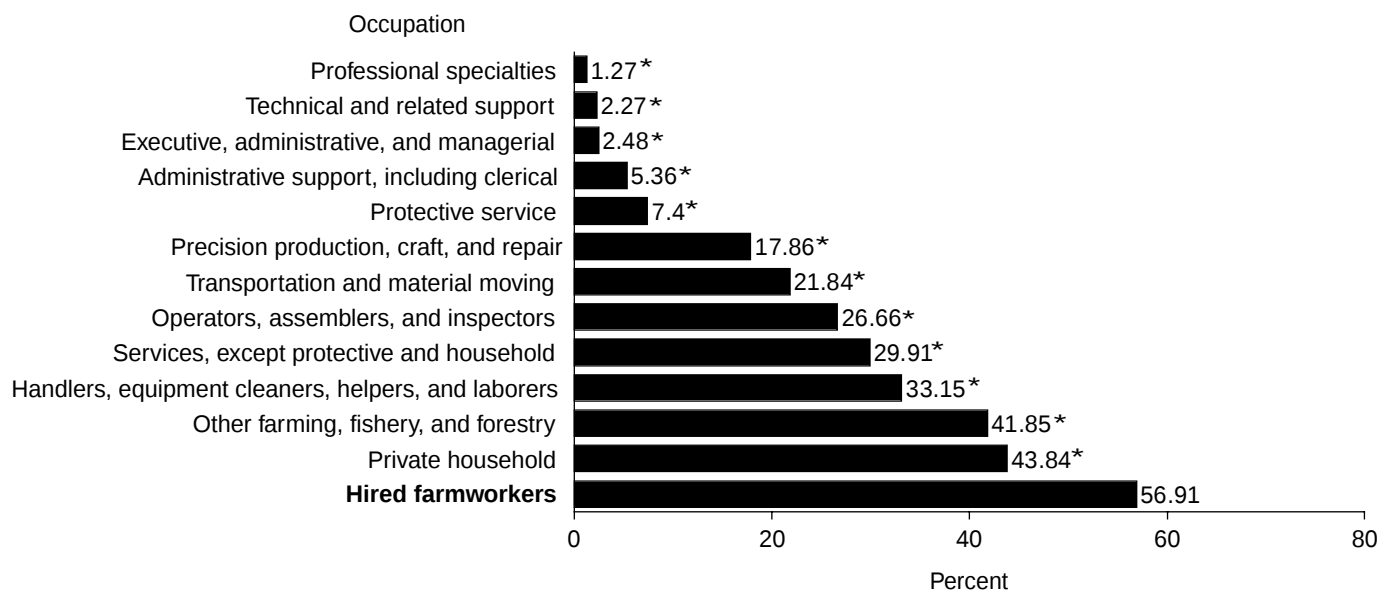
*Significantly different from all wage and salary workers at the 95-percent confidence level.

**Significantly different from all hired farmworkers (see tables 2, 13, and 15) at the 95-percent confidence level.

***Significantly different from all wage and salary workers and all hired farmworkers (see tables 2, 13, and 15) at the 95-percent confidence level.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

Figure 15

Percent of workers completing less than 12 years of education, by occupation, 1998

*Significantly different from hired farmworkers at the 95-percent confidence level.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

Table 4—Education completed by hired farmworkers, by gender and racial/ethnic group, 1998

Years of education completed	Annual averages				
	Male	Female	White	Hispanic	Black and other
<i>Thousands</i>					
Total	733	142	458	366	51
<i>Percent</i>					
Total	100	100	100	100	100
0-4	12.2	4.3*	1.5	23.8**	3.6
5-8	20.6	23.3	6.0	40.2**	19.3*
9-11	25.4	22.5	28.6	19.1**	33.4
12	27.2	22.6	37.3	12.5**	28.6
13 or more	14.6	27.3*	26.6	4.4**	15.1

Schooling completed: 12 years means that a person received a high school diploma, GED, or equivalent degree.

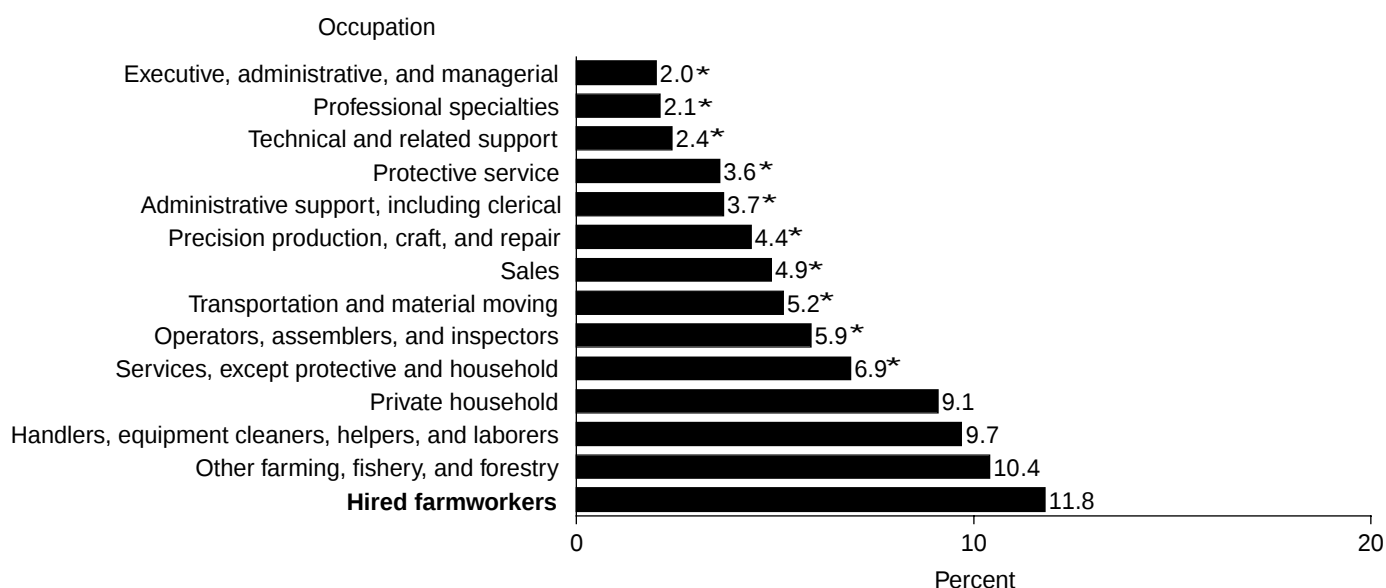
*Significantly different from male workers at the 95-percent confidence level.

** Significantly different from white workers at the 95-percent confidence level.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

Figure 16

Rates of unemployment, by occupation, 1998

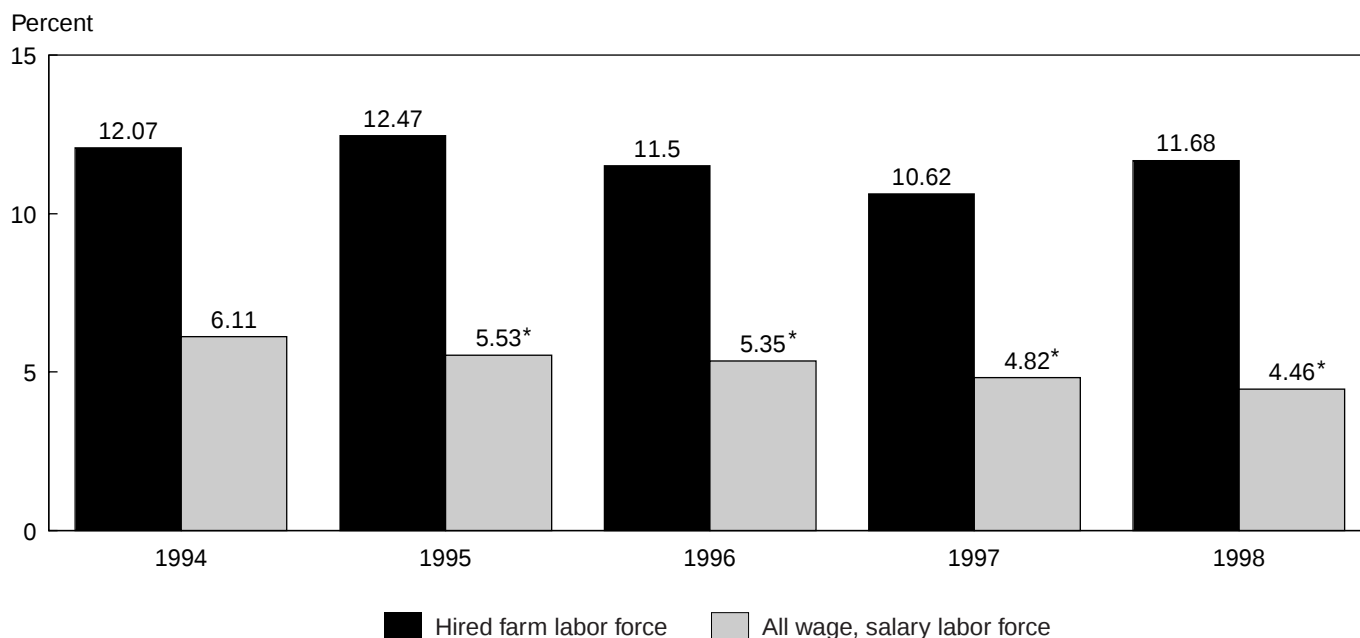


*Significantly different from hired farmworkers at the 95-percent confidence level.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

Figure 17

Percent unemployment, hired farm labor force and all wage and salary labor force, 1994-98¹



¹Last job was hired farmwork.

*Significantly different from previous year at the 95-percent confidence level.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

Compared with all unemployed in the wage and salary labor force, unemployed hired farmworkers were more likely to be male, Hispanic, older, less educated, not U. S. citizens, and located in the West (table 5).

Although the 11.8 percent unemployment rate in the hired farm workforce was considerably higher than for all wage and salary workers, some groups had much higher rates (table 6). Groups with higher rates of unemployment were female, black and other races, 20 to 24 year olds, those with less than 8 years of education, noncitizens, those working in the West, and those working in crop production and other establishments. Groups with lower rates of unemployment were managers, supervisors of farmworkers, nursery workers, white, 55 years and older, those with 13 or more years of education, those working in the Midwest, and those working in livestock production.

A higher percentage of unemployed hired farmworkers gave “job loser/on layoff” as the reason for unemployment, and only a small percent were “job leavers” (table 7). Both unemployed groups had similar median lengths of unemployment, but higher numbers of hired farmworkers reported they were off work 4 to 6 months in 1998 (table 7).

Secondary Job Holders

Secondary jobholders are workers who held more than one job during the reference week.³ The job at which the worker spent the most hours was the primary occupation, and the job with the next greatest number of work hours was the secondary job.

About 63,000 people whose primary jobs were not hired farmworker had secondary jobs as hired farmworkers in 1998 (table 8). These workers were more likely than all hired farmworkers to be white, older, more highly educated, and U.S. citizens. Almost half lived in the Midwest.⁴ Most (97 percent) had second jobs as farmworkers in agricultural service establishments.

³ Secondary jobholders include employed people who had either two or more jobs in wage and salary work; were self-employed and also held a wage and salary job; or worked as an unpaid family worker and also held a wage and salary job and reported hired farmwork as their secondary job.

⁴ The distribution of all wage and salary workers in 1998 was 19.1 percent in the Northeast, 34.9 percent in the South, 24.3 percent in the Midwest, and 21.7 percent in the West.

Table 5—Demographic characteristics of the unemployed, 1998

Characteristics	Annual averages			
	Hired farmworkers		All wage and salary workers	
	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Percent</i>
All	117	100	5,473	100
Gender:				
Male	81	69.1***	2,887	52.7
Female	36	30.9***	2,586	47.3
Racial/ethnic group:				
White	34	29.1***	3,100	56.6
Hispanic	60	51.4*	914	16.7
Black and others	23	19.5**	1,459	26.7
Age (years):				
Less than 20	20	16.8	847	15.4
20-24	24	20.4	984	18.0
25-34	23	19.9	1,339	24.5
35-44	27	23.2	1,128	20.6
45-54	15	13.1	756	13.8
55 and over	8	6.5**	419	7.7
Median age	33*		31	
Marital status:				
Married	54	45.9	1,959	35.8
Widowed, divorced, or separated	16	13.4	887	16.2
Never married	47	40.7	2,627	48.
Schooling completed:				
0-4 years	19	16.6*	73	1.3
5-8 years	34	29.0*	267	4.9
9-11 years	30	26.1*	1,280	23.4
12 years ¹	26	22.6*	1,935	35.3
13 or more years	7	5.7***	1,918	35.1
Citizenship status:				
U.S citizen	64	54.3***	4,941	90.3
Not U.S. citizen	53	45.7***	532	9.7
Establishment:				
Crop production	93	79.4**	—	—
Livestock production	11	9.7**	—	—
Other	13	10.9	—	—
Census region				
Northeast	7	6.4*	1,069	19.6
South	26	22.4*	1,795	32.8
Midwest	13	11.2***	1,135	20.7
West	70	60.0**	1,474	26.9

¹Schooling completed: 12 years means that a person received a high school diploma, GED, or equivalent degree.

*Significantly different from All Wage and Salary Workers at the 95-percent confidence level.

**Significantly different from all hired farmworkers (tables 2, 13, and 15) at the 95-percent confidence level.

***Significantly different from all wage and salary workers and all hired farmworkers (see tables 2, 13, and 15) at the 95-percent confidence level.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

Table 6—Rates of unemployment among hired farmworkers, by demographic characteristic, 1998

	<i>Percent unemployed</i>
All hired farmworkers	11.8
Occupation:	
Managers, farms, except horticultural	0*
Managers, horticultural specialty farms	8.4*
Supervisors, farmworkers	7.0*
Farmworkers	13.0
Nursery workers	9.1*
Gender:	
Male	9.9
Female	20.4*
Racial/ethnic group	
White	6.9*
Hispanic	14.2
Black and other	31.0*
Age (years):	
Less than 20	12.9
20-24	17.9*
25-34	9.4
35-44	12.8
45-54	11.0
55 and over	7.4*
Schooling completed	
0-4 years	16.9*
5-8 years	15.6*
9-11 years	12.3
12 years	10.2
13 or more years	4.3*
Citizenship status:	
U.S. citizen	9.8
Not U.S. citizen	15.5*
Census region:	
Northeast	10.4
South	8.7
Midwest	7.2*
West	16.0
Establishment:	
Crop production	16.9*
Livestock production	3.0*
Other	20.5*

¹Schooling completed: 12 years means that a person received a high school diploma, GED, or equivalent degree.

*Significantly different from unemployed percent (11.8) of all hired farmworkers at the 95-percent confidence level.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

Table 7—Reasons for unemployment and duration of unemployment, 1998

Item	Hired farmworkers		All wage and salary workers	
	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Reasons for unemployment:				
Job loser/on layoff	47	40.5*	883	16.1
Other job loser	8	6.7*	1,286	23.5
Temporary job ended	16	13.8	560	10.2
Job leaver	4	3.7*	701	12.8
Re-entrant	41	35.3	2,043	37.3
Duration of unemployment:				
Less than 4 months	32	27.0	1,671	30.5
4-6 months	33	28.0*	923	16.9
7-9 months	10	8.3	612	11.2
10-12 months	6	5.3	476	8.7
13 months and over	36	31.3	1,790	32.7
Median (months)		6		7

*Significantly different from all wage and salary workers at the 95-percent confidence level.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

Table 8—Demographic characteristics of individuals reporting hired farmwork as their secondary job, 1998¹

Characteristics	Annual averages			
	Secondary job in hired farmwork		All hired farmworkers	
	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Thousands</i>	<i>Percent</i>
All	63	100	875	100
Gender:				
Male	46	72.7	733	83.8
Female	17	27.3	142	16.2
Racial/ethnic group:				
White	56	88.7 *	458	52.4
Hispanic	4	6.9*	366	41.8
Black and others	3	4.4	52	5.8
Age (years):				
Less than 20	5	8.3	133	15.2
20-24	6	9.3	116	13.3
25-34	17	26.9	224	25.6
35-44	15	24.4	185	21.1
45-54	12	19.4	122	14.0
55 and over	7	11.7	95	10.8
Median age	37*		33	
Schooling completed:				
0-4 years	1	1.4*	96	10.9
5-8 years	3	4.7*	184	21.1
9-11 years	6	9.0*	218	24.9
12 years ²	20	32.5	232	26.5
13 or more years	33	52.4*	145	16.6
Citizenship:				
U.S. citizen	60	94.6*	581	66.5
Not U.S. citizen	3	5.4*	294	33.5
Establishment:				
Crop production	0	0*	458	52.3
Livestock production	2	2.7*	368	42.0
Other	61	97.3*	49	5.7
Census region:				
Northeast	8	12.8	64	7.4
South	11	18.1*	275	31.4
Midwest	31	49.7*	167	19.1
West	12	19.4*	369	42.2

¹Employed people who had either two or more jobs as a wage and salary worker, were self-employed and also held a wage and salary job, or worked as an unpaid family member and also held a wage and salary job and reported hired farmwork as their secondary job.

²Schooling completed: 12 years means that a person received a high school diploma, GED, or equivalent degree.

*Significantly different from all hired farmworkers at the 95-percent confidence level.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.