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**An Analysis of the Western Oklahoma Labor Force Study  
Conducted Among Adult Residents Living in Beckham, Caddo, Custer,  
Dewey, Greer, Kiowa, and Washita Counties in Oklahoma**

**Survey Conducted by the University of Oklahoma Public Opinion Learning  
Laboratory**

**Report prepared by  
Dr. Mary Outwater, Director  
OU POLL**

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## Executive Summary of the Western Oklahoma Area Labor Force Study

This report is a labor force study of the Western Oklahoma area labor force which examines the availability of labor in the seven county area of Beckham, Caddo, Custer, Dewey, Greer, Kiowa, and Washita counties in Oklahoma. Within Caddo County, only residents at or north of highway 152 were included in this dataset.

In the Western Oklahoma area a considerable portion of the adult population are not employed for a variety of reasons. This group includes the retired, disabled, students, homemakers, and the unemployed. This study found that approximately 23,295 members of the adult population are not currently working. Of this group, the majority, 84.5%, indicate that they are not interested in working outside the home or they are unable to do so.

This study has identified 7,942 workers who are currently available for *other* work. The categories of Job Shifters and the Underemployed (described below) are included in this estimate. **Some workers are both Job Shifters and Underemployed, so the total number of workers in both categories is somewhat less than their sum.** Additionally, there are those adults who are not working but want to work (Job Seekers), and those workers who are not underemployed and have not looked for work in the past three months (Job Keepers), which can be included in the pool of potential workers. These two groups total another 36,637 potential workers for a grand total of approximately 44,579 adults who are either in the labor force or want to be in it.

Roughly 5,718 workers in the labor market area have looked for other work in the past three months. Of all the methods used to look for other work the majority, 62%,

were active. The reasons why the Job Shifters were looking for work were varied but the primary reason for 64.2% of people was in order to get higher pay and/or better benefits.

The data from this study estimates that 4,130 of all adult workers are currently underemployed. To be classified as Underemployed a worker must:

- 1) feel underutilized in their present employment,
- 2) possess training and/or education that is not required by their present job, **and**
- 3) be willing to change jobs to better utilize their skills.

Job Keepers are those individuals who have not been identified as being underemployed and have not looked for work within the past three months. This group makes up 33,037 people.

Job seekers are those people who are not currently employed but want to work. Five-point-six percent of all adults in the Western Oklahoma area are represented by this category.

The percentage of workers in the Western Oklahoma area with a least a Bachelors degree is about one-third of the current work force and about two-thirds of the workers have had at least some college.

About sixty-eight percent had not moved and an additional 13.2% remained in the same county. Twelve-point-nine percent had moved from a different county in the same state but only an additional 5.7% had moved from a different state or country.

Of all workers, 84.5% have full-time positions. Of those workers with part time jobs 26.9% would like to have a full-time position with just one employer.

As the wage rate increases, so does the number of people who are willing to work. Although Job Keepers by definition are those workers who are not interested in changing

jobs, about 27,389 still find a job of \$20 per hour plus benefits to be either “attractive” or “very attractive”. Of the Underemployed, 59.0% of workers indicated that they would be willing to change jobs for an increase in pay of 15% or less. Around 65% of Job Shifters were likely to change jobs for a 15% increase or less and Job Keepers were the group least likely to say they would change jobs for a pay increase of 15% or less with only 29.9% of workers. Only 31.2% of Job Keepers claimed to not be interested in changing jobs at all.

Workers who did not currently have a package of benefits were also asked what pay raise would be necessary for them to change jobs if benefits were included with that job. The Job Shifters were most likely to be willing to change jobs under such circumstances.

About forty-seven percent of workers live and work in the same county and at all but about ten percent of workers are employed in one of the counties in the study area. Over half of all workers (53.5%) indicate a willingness to commute distances of 21 miles or more to their job.

### **Introduction**

This report is a labor force study of the Western Oklahoma area labor force which examines the availability of labor in the seven county area of Beckham, Caddo, Custer, Dewey, Greer, Kiowa, and Washita counties in Oklahoma. Within Caddo County, only residents at or north of highway 152 were included in this dataset.

Approximately 40,978 of the 64,273 adults who live in the Western Oklahoma area are employed, which is equal to 63.8% of the population who is 18 years of age or older.

In the Western Oklahoma area a considerable portion of the adult population are not employed for a variety of reasons. This group includes the retired, disabled, students,

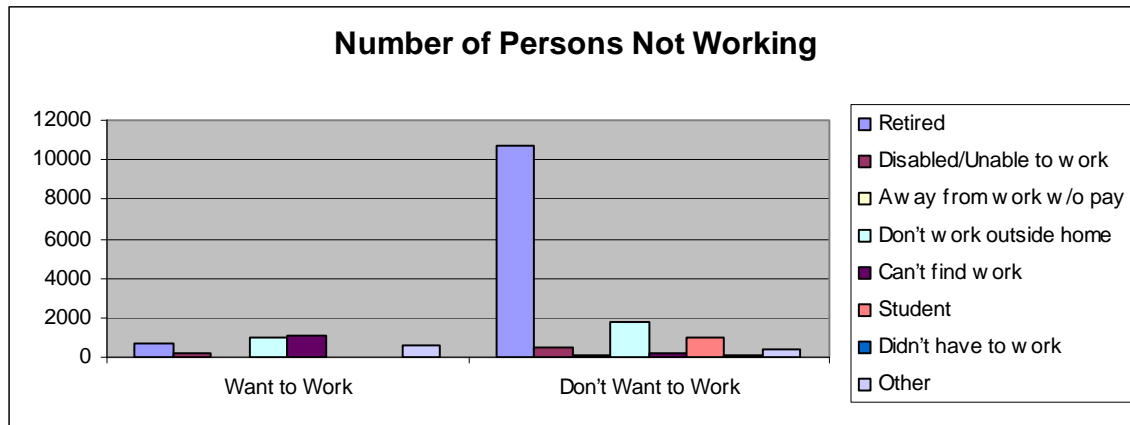
homemakers, and the unemployed. This study found that approximately 23,295 members of the adult population are not currently working. Of this group, the majority, 84.5%, indicate that they are not interested in working outside the home or they are unable to do so (see Table 1 below).

**Table 1: Number of Persons Not Working**

<u>Reason for Not Working</u>	<u>Want to Work</u>	<u>Don't Want to Work</u>	<u>Total</u>
Retired	741	10,695	11,436
Disabled/Unable to work	212	529	741
Away from work w/o pay	0	106	106
Don't work outside home	953	1,800	2,753
Can't find work	1,059	212	1,271
Student	0	953	953
Didn't have to work	0	106	106
Other	635	424	1,059
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,600</b>	<b>14,825</b>	<b>18,425</b>

\* Does not include those people who are unable to work in the next six months

\*\* Does not include those people who are temporarily away from work without pay or who are waiting to start work.

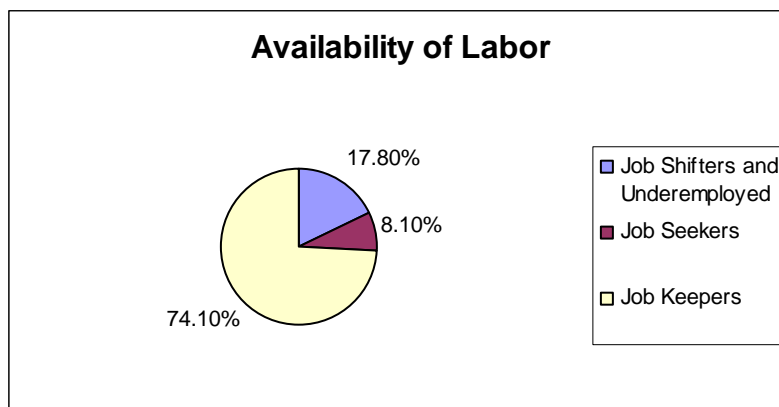


A significant proportion of the adult population is not currently working but only a small minority can be officially considered unemployed. The United States Department of Labor designates a person as being unemployed if they are without work but have been

actively seeking work. Based on this definition 3.2% of the population within the Western Oklahoma area are currently unemployed.

### Availability of Labor

This study has identified 7,942 workers who are currently available for *other* work. The categories of Job Shifters and the Underemployed (described below) are included in this estimate. **Some workers are both Job Shifters and Underemployed, so the total number of workers in both categories is somewhat less than their sum.** Additionally, there are those adults who are not working but want to work (Job Seekers), and those workers who are not underemployed and have not looked for work in the past three months (Job Keepers), which can be included in the pool of potential workers. These two groups total another 36,637 potential workers for a grand total of approximately 44,579 adults who are either in the labor force or want to be in it.



#### *Job Shifters*

Roughly 14.0% (or 5,718 workers) in the labor market area have looked for other work in the past three months. Of all the methods used to look for other work the majority, 62%, were active (such as contacting an employer or filling out applications) and about 38%, were passive (such as looking at ads or browsing the internet).

The reasons why the Job Shifters were looking for work were varied but the primary reason for 64.2% of people was in order to get higher pay and/or better benefits.

### *Underemployed*

The data from this study estimates that 10.1%, or 4,130, of all adult workers are currently underemployed. To be classified as Underemployed a worker must:

- 4) feel underutilized in their present employment,
- 5) possess training and/or education that is not required by their present job, **and**
- 6) be willing to change jobs to better utilize their skills.

### *Job Keepers*

Job Keepers are those individuals who have not been identified as being underemployed and have not looked for work within the past three months. This group makes up 80.6% of all workers or 33,037 people.

### *Job Seekers*

This last category of potential workers contains those who are not currently employed but want to work. Five-point-six percent of all adults in the Western Oklahoma area are represented by this category which is equivalent to 3,600 people.

## **Education**

The percentage of workers in the Western Oklahoma area with a least a Bachelors degree is about one-third of the current work force (Table 2) and about two-thirds of the workers have had at least some college.

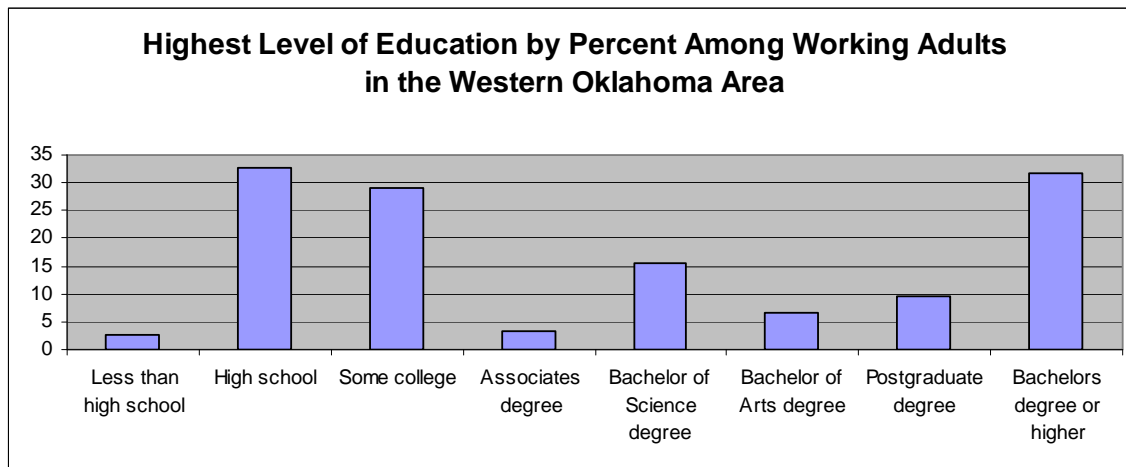
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**Table 2: Highest Level of Education Among Working  
Adults in the Western Oklahoma Area**

<u>Level of Education</u>	<u>Percent Adult Workers</u>
Less than high school	2.8
High school	32.8
Some college	29.2
Associates degree	3.4

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Bachelor of Science degree	15.5
Bachelor of Arts degree	6.5
Postgraduate degree	9.6
Bachelors degree or higher	31.6

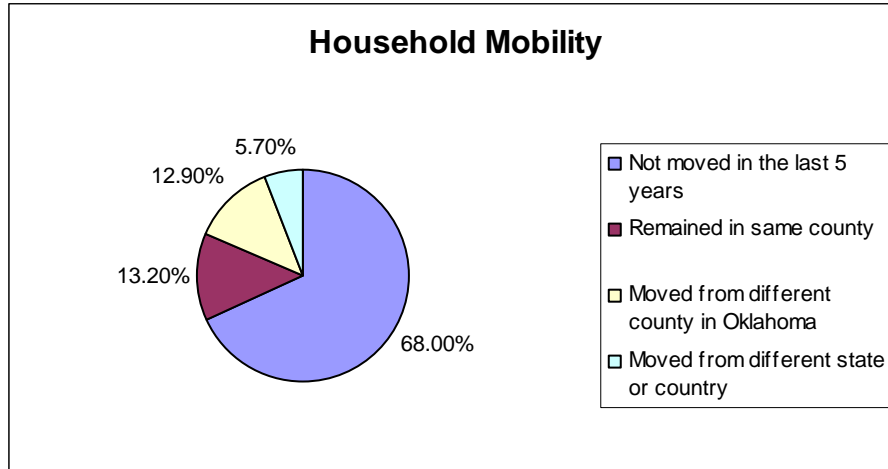


### Household Mobility

To understand how much the Western Oklahoma area population shifts in a five year period, respondents were asked if they have lived at the same residence for the last five years. About sixty-eight percent had not moved and an additional 13.2% remained in the same county. Twelve-point-nine percent had moved from a different county in the same state but only an additional 5.7% had moved from a different state or country.

Of the Underemployed, 25.6% did not live in the same county five years ago whereas 38.9% of the Job Shifters had not lived in the same county and only 16.7% of Job Keepers.

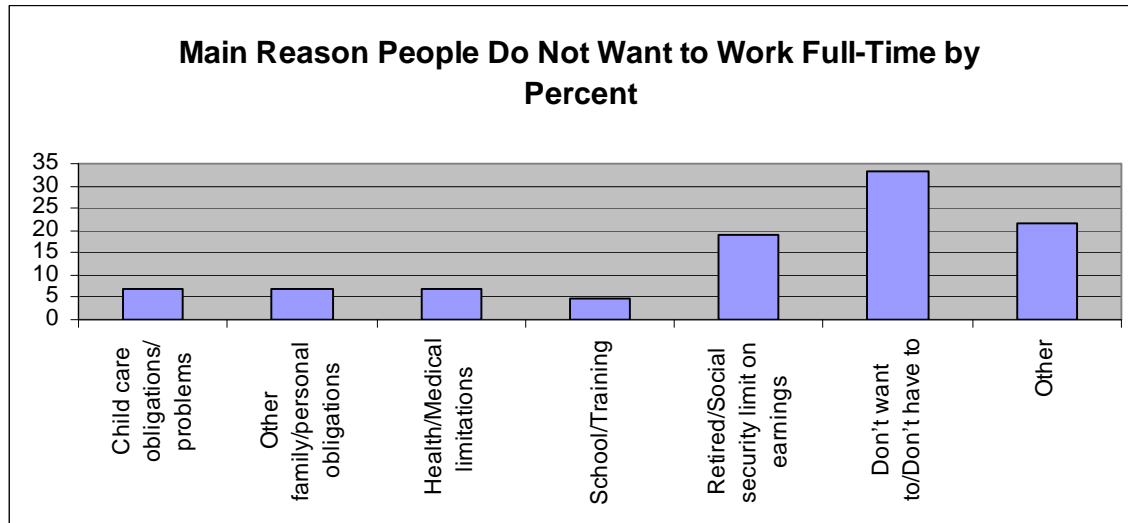




**Type of Employment**

Of all workers, 84.5% (or about 34,625 people) have full-time positions, and another 15.5% (or about 6,353 people) have part-time jobs. Of those workers with part time jobs 26.9% would like to have a full-time position with just one employer. Part-time workers listed several reasons for why they wanted to work part-time instead of full-time and these are described below in Table 3.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution		
What is the main reason you do not want to work full-time?		
	Frequency	Percent
Child care obligations/problems	3	7.1
Other family/personal obligations	3	7.1
Health/Medical limitations	3	7.1
School/Training	2	4.8
Retired/Social security limit on earnings	8	19.0
Don't want to/Don't have to	14	33.3
Other	9	21.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>99.8</b>



### Characteristics of Workers

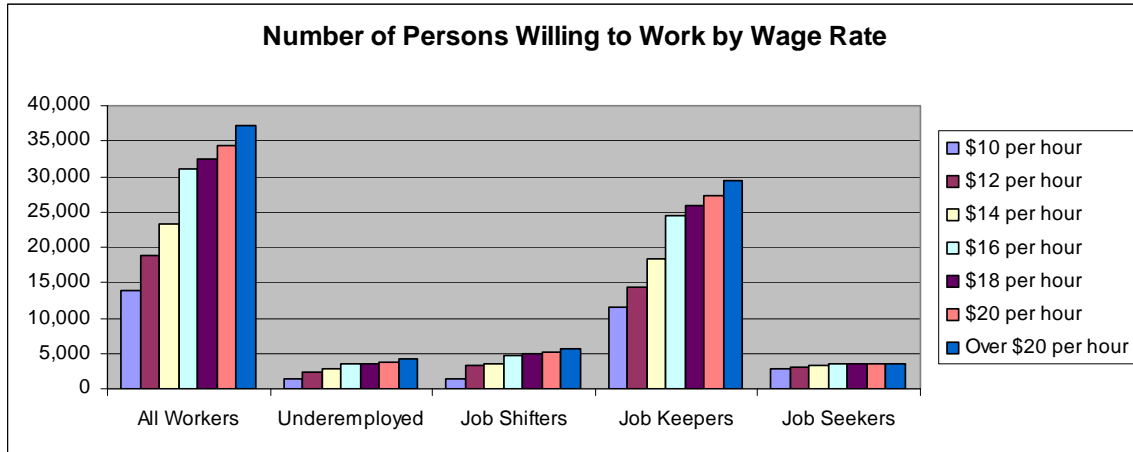
#### Wage Rates

As the wage rate increases, so does the number of people who are willing to work. Table 4 describes how many people in each of the available worker categories are willing to take a position at various pay levels that includes a standard package of benefits.

Although Job Keepers by definition are those workers who are not interested in changing jobs, about 27,389 still find a job of \$20 per hour plus benefits to be either “attractive” or “very attractive”.

**Table 4: Number of Persons Willing to Work by Wage Rate**

	All Workers	Underemployed	Job Shifters	Job Keepers	Job Seekers
\$10 per hour	13,933	1,483	1,378	11,431	2,776
\$12 per hour	18,774	2,404	3,340	14,326	3,106
\$14 per hour	23,304	2,749	3,621	18,368	3,271
\$16 per hour	31,010	3,485	4,785	24,456	3,490
\$18 per hour	32,495	3,485	4,902	25,941	3,490
\$20 per hour	34,302	3,669	5,135	27,389	3,490
Over \$20 per hour	37,059	4,130	5,601	29,343	3,490

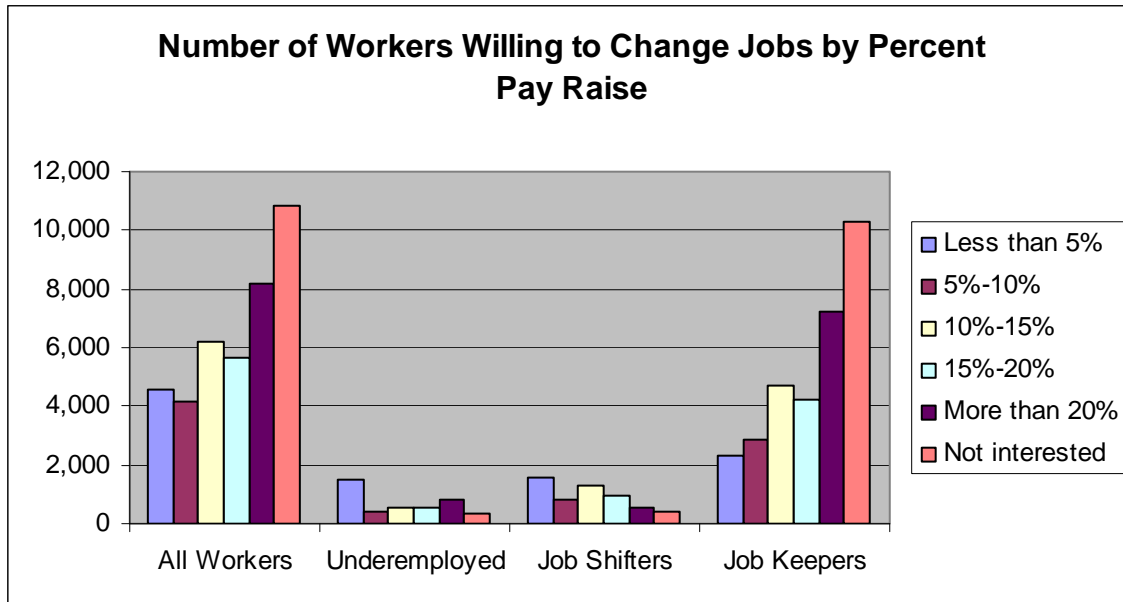


### Willingness to Change Jobs

As shown in Table 5, of the Underemployed, 2,436 workers (59.0%) indicated that they would be willing to change jobs for an increase in pay of 15% or less. Around 3,706 (64.8%) of Job Shifters were likely to change jobs for a 15% increase or less and Job Keepers were, not surprisingly, the group least likely to say they would change jobs for a pay increase of 15% or less with only 29.9% (or 9,879 workers). However, even though this figure is a smaller proportion than for the other two groups, it still represents a sizable group of workers. It is also interesting to note that only 31.2% of Job Keepers claimed to not be interested in changing jobs at all.

**Table 5: Number of Workers Willing to Change Jobs by Percent Pay Raise**

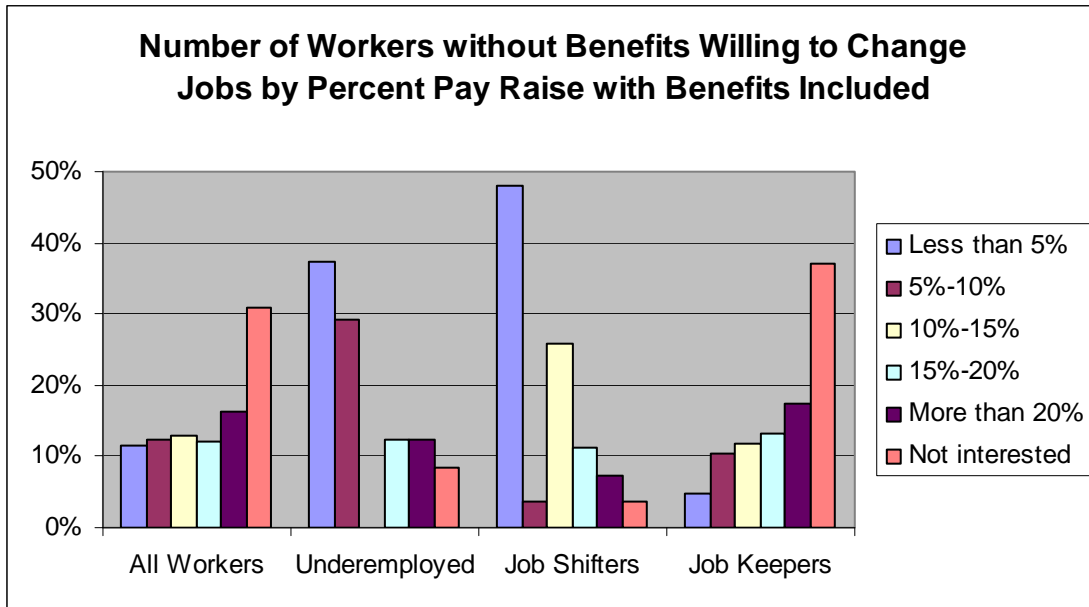
Desired raise in pay	All Workers	Underemployed	Job Shifters	Job Keepers
Less than 5%	4,577	1,483	1,588	2,337
5%-10%	4,151	424	847	2,868
10%-15%	6,173	529	1,271	4,674
15%-20%	5,641	529	953	4,249
More than 20%	8,196	847	529	7,224
Not interested	10,857	318	424	10,304



Workers who did not currently have a package of benefits were also asked what pay raise would be necessary for them to change jobs if benefits were included with that job. The Job Shifters were most likely to be willing to change jobs under such circumstances.

**Table 6: Percentage of Workers without Benefits Willing to Change Jobs by Percent Pay Raise with Benefits Included**

<u>Desired raise in pay</u>	<u>All Workers</u>	<u>Underemployed</u>	<u>Job Shifters</u>	<u>Job Keepers</u>
Less than 5%	11.4%	37.5%	48.1%	4.9%
5%-10%	12.5%	29.2%	3.7%	10.5%
10%-15%	13.0%	0.0%	25.9%	11.9%
15%-20%	12.0%	12.5%	11.1%	13.3%
More than 20%	16.3%	12.5%	7.4%	17.5%
Not interested	31.0%	8.3%	3.7%	37.1%



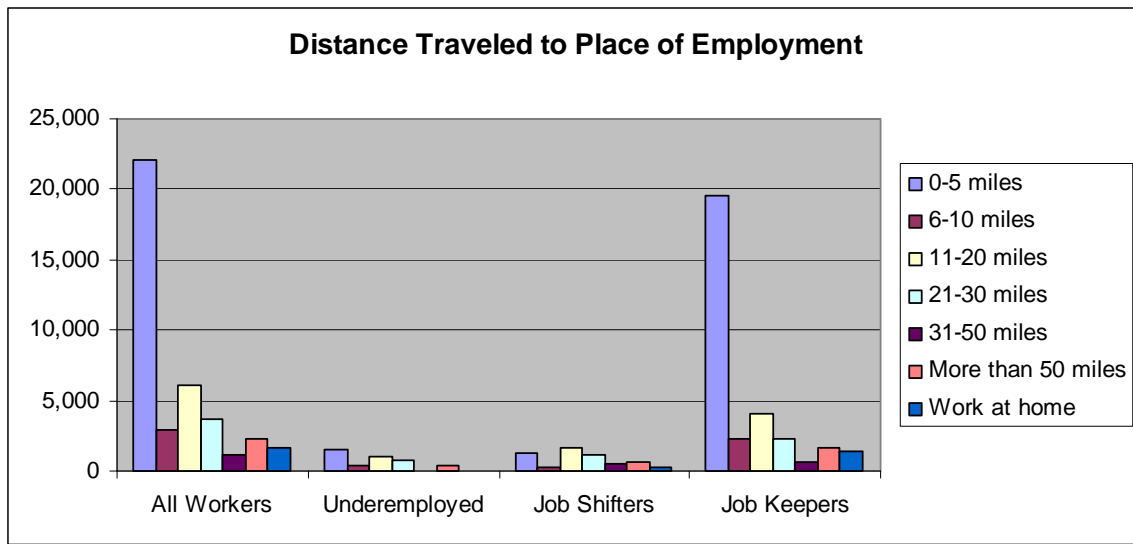
### Commuting Patterns

About forty-seven percent of workers (46.8%) live and work in the same county and at all but about ten percent of workers are employed in one of the counties in the study area.

About 7,171 workers (or 17.4%) living in the Western Oklahoma area already commute at least 21 miles to work and an additional 14.8% commute 11-20 miles as shown in Table 7 below.

**Table 7: Distance Traveled to Place of Employment**

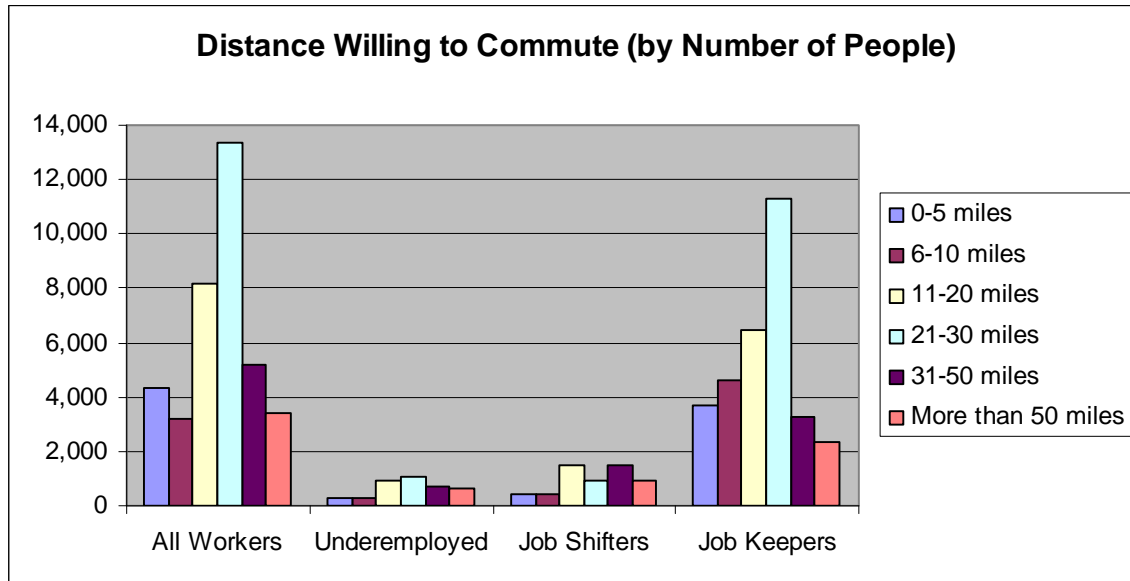
<u>Distance Traveled</u>	<u>All Workers</u>	<u>Underemployed</u>	<u>Job Shifters</u>	<u>Job Keepers</u>
0-5 miles	22,139	1,483	1,271	19,502
6-10 miles	2,874	424	212	2,345
11-20 miles	6,067	1,059	1,694	4,050
21-30 miles	3,725	741	1,165	2,345
31-50 miles	1,171	0	529	639
More than 50 miles	2,235	424	635	1,599
Work at home	1,597	0	212	1,385



Over half of all workers (53.5%) indicate a willingness to commute distances of 21 miles or more to their job and only 18.3% said that they would not commute more than ten miles to work.

**Table 8: Distance Willing to Commute (by Number of People)**

<u>Distance</u>	<u>All Workers</u>	<u>Underemployed</u>	<u>Job Shifters</u>	<u>Job Keepers</u>
0-5 miles	4,341	318	424	3,706
6-10 miles	3,177	318	424	4,647
11-20 miles	8,153	953	1,482	6,459
21-30 miles	13,342	1,059	953	11,330
31-50 miles	5,188	741	1,482	3,283
More than 50 miles	3,388	635	953	2,330



### Conclusions

- 7,942 residents of the Western Oklahoma area are either Underemployed or Job Shifters or both and are readily available to change jobs.
- 3,600 people are currently unemployed and but want to work.
- Among working adults about one-third (31.6%) have completed at least a Bachelor's degree and an additional 32.6% have had some college or an Associate's degree.
- A total of 18,774 current workers expressed a willingness to work for at least \$12 per hour and a total of 37,059 current workers would work for \$20 per hour.
- A total of 14,901 current workers are currently willing to change jobs for a pay raise of 15% or less.
- 21,918 current workers are willing to commute 21 miles or more to work.