

ANALYSIS BRIEF

POUNDING THE PAVEMENT LOOKING FOR WORK



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The transportation infrastructure connects people to the places they want to go--workers to jobs, shoppers to stores, and students to schools. It also provides access to a range of opportunities—new jobs and clients, training, networking events, and other business prospects—for people looking for work. Policy makers and planners are interested in how the transportation system serves the needs of unemployed workers who are seeking those opportunities, and in any ways that barriers to finding work can be overcome.

The most recent NHTS 2009 included about 16 million Americans who reported that they were temporarily absent or laid off from a regular job or looking for work (1). This analysis focuses on those in the sample who said they were specifically 'looking for work'.

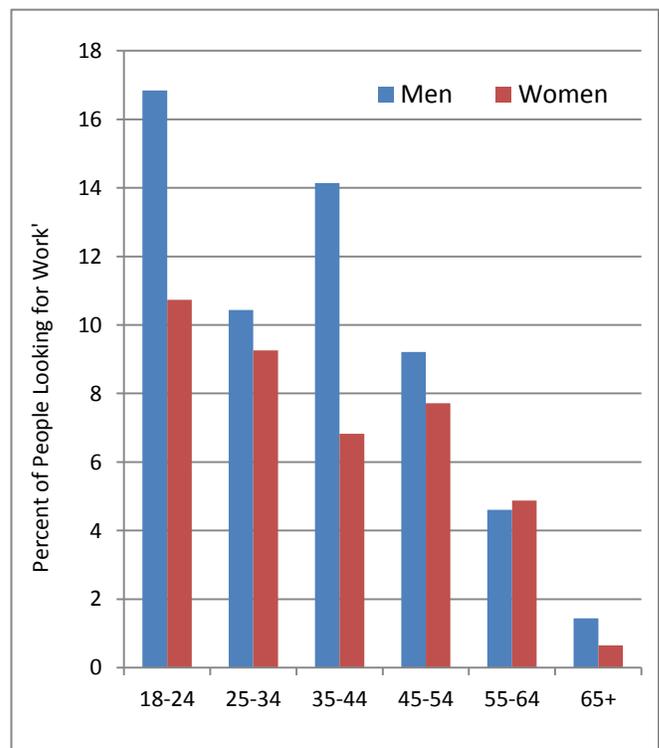
Almost 60 percent of the people who reported that they were looking for work were men. While the average age of job-seekers was 36 years old, over a

quarter (27.6 percent) were younger than 25. Middle-aged men (35-54) were more than twice as likely as women in the same age groups to be unemployed (see Exhibit 1).

People looking for work reported lower household incomes compared to others. Overall, job-seekers had an average household income of \$45,000 compared to \$68,000 for workers and \$55,000 for all other groups.

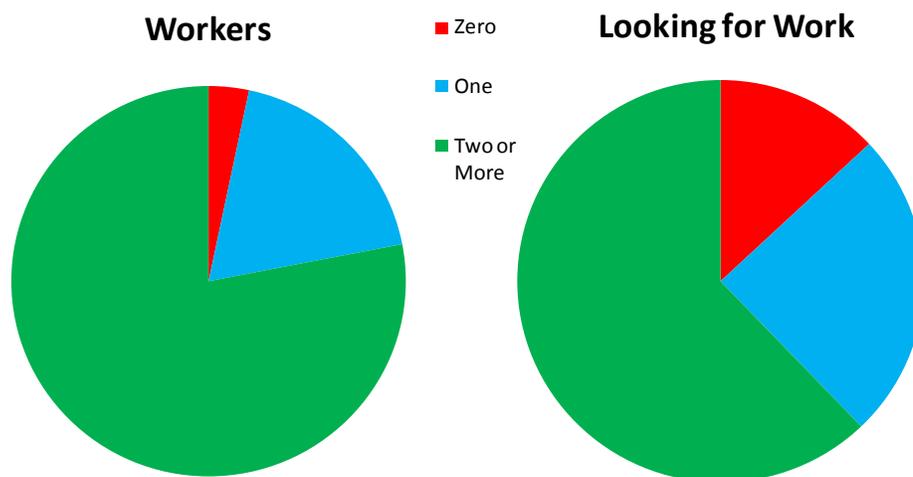
Job-seekers were also likely to be in a household without a vehicle available (see Exhibit 2). Over 13 percent of people looking for work were in households with no vehicles available, compared to just 3 percent of workers. People who have a vehicle travel in a range ten times the distance compared to similar people without a vehicle, offering a wider range of access to potential jobs.

Exhibit 1 – Age Distribution of Men and Women Who are 'Looking for Work'



(1) The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated 15 million Americans were unemployed in the same period, but definitions vary. See: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm>

Exhibit 2 – Percent of People (Workers and Looking for Work) by Vehicle Availability



Although many job-seekers may use on-line resources, the NHTS data shows that the traditional saying ‘pounding the pavement’ looking for work still applies. Job-seekers reported more trips in an average day than workers, and traveled more miles and more minutes on the travel day than other non-workers (see Exhibit 3).

People who said they were looking for work made an average of 4.6 trips per day and traveled 38.2 miles per day compared to 47.4 for workers and 35.7 for all others (students, homemakers, and retired). Significantly, pounding the pavement seems to be a literal description of their travel—nearly 18 percent of all trips made by job-seeker were by walking.

Exhibit 3 – Travel Characteristics of Working-Age People

Primary activity 'Last Week'	Daily Trips	Daily Miles	Daily Minutes in Travel	Percent of Trips by Mode		
				Private Vehicle	Transit	Walk
Working	4.5	47.4	87.6	87.4	1.0	9.5
Looking for Work	4.6	38.2	82.0	74.2	1.1	17.9
All Others	4.2	35.7	68.8	83.4	1.4	12.1

People looking for work are traveling as much or more than people who are currently working. Job-seekers spent almost 10 hours a week (82 minutes a day) in travel. Going to job sites, attending job fairs, and simply walking from store to store asking about job opportunities is a traditional, and not obsolete, method of seeking out opportunities.

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