

# National Economic Trends

May 1988

The expansion of employment in the 1980s has been impressive. Since the business cycle peak in January 1980, total civilian employment has risen 14.9 percent, or at a 1.7 percent annual rate. Some analysts question the strength of this expansion, however, noting that the totals do not distinguish between full-time and part-time workers (persons working less than 35 hours per week).

The Bureau of Labor Statistics does not provide such a breakdown for total civilian employment, but it does provide information on "full-time vs. part-time persons at work in nonagricultural industries." Part-time workers, in turn, are divided into those working part-time voluntarily and those doing so for economic reasons (slack work, material shortages, repairs to plant and equipment, start or termination of job during the survey week, and inability to find full-time work).

The accompanying table summarizes "persons at work" for quarters of high economic activity since 1969. The proportion of part-time workers increased from 15.9 percent in late 1969 to 18.3 percent in the first quarter of 1988. The number of persons working part-time for economic reasons also increased over the period. Such people accounted for about 12 percent of the overall increase in persons at work from late 1979 to early 1988, compared with about 8 percent over the previous 10 years.

## Persons at Work in Nonagricultural Industries<sup>1</sup> (percent of total)

	Quarters of high economic activity			
	I/1988	IV/1979	IV/1973	IV/1969
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Full-time	81.7	82.3	83.0	84.1
Part-time	18.3	17.7	17.0	15.9
For economic reasons	4.9	3.8	3.2	2.6
Voluntarily	13.4	13.9	13.8	13.3

<sup>1</sup>Excludes persons with a job but not at work during the survey period for such reasons as vacation, illness or industrial dispute.

— Keith M. Carlson

