



A Story in Five Charts: Who Works Part-Time?

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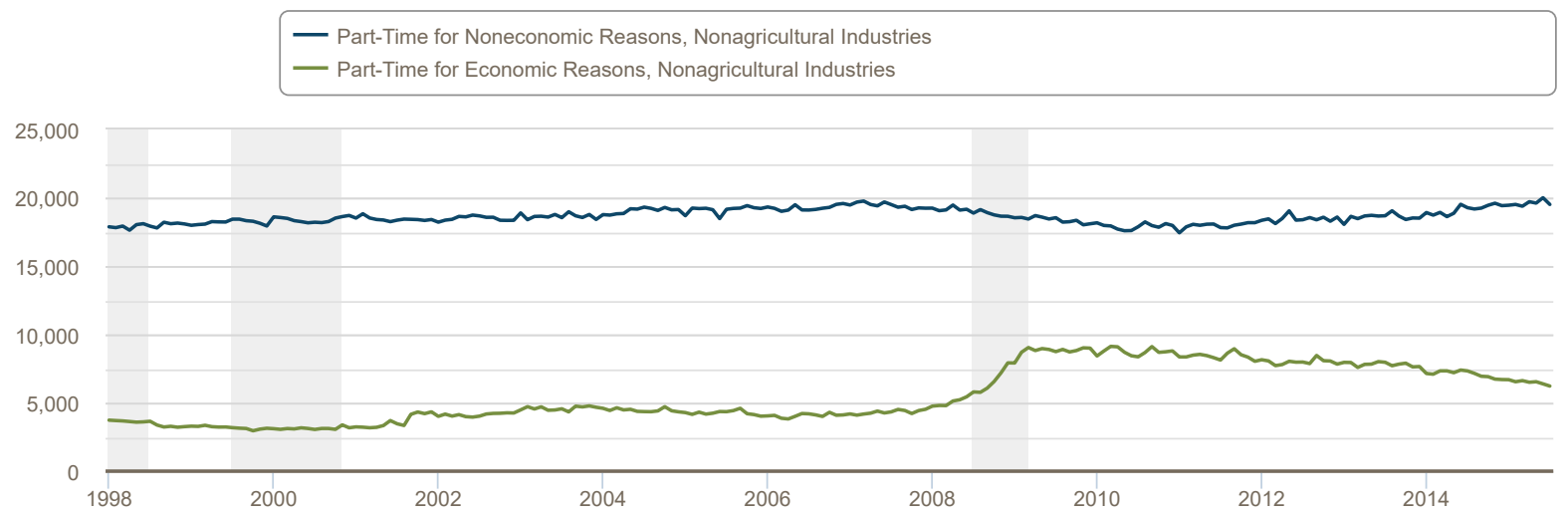


Not all part-time workers are underemployed. As the economic recovery continues to strengthen, policymakers have often pointed to the stubbornly high share of Americans who report working part-time for economic reasons, which many consider to be a key indicator of slack.

It may surprise some, then, that the vast majority of part-time workers voluntarily log fewer than 35 hours per week. Nearly 20 million Americans, about 76 percent of part-time workers, were in this category in July, compared to more than 6 million who would rather work more hours.

Most part-time workers choose to work fewer hours

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Note: Data are seasonally adjusted and are through July.
Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

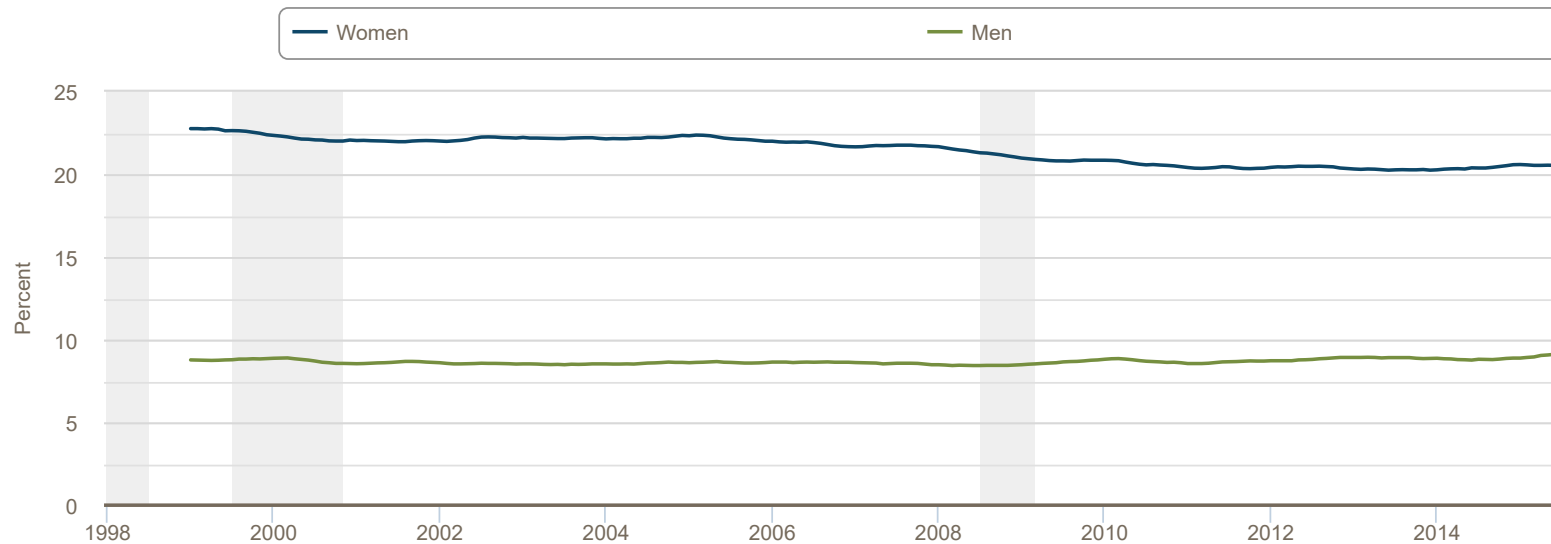
So who are these "happy" part-time workers?

Perhaps not surprisingly, the share of people working part-time and their reasons for doing so vary significantly across demographic groups. Part-time employment can give workers more flexibility to deal with family or personal obligations, pursue education or training, or simply keep a toehold in the labor market as they transition into retirement.

To begin, **women** are much more likely than men to work part-time. About 20 percent of all employed women are voluntary part-time workers, compared with about 9 percent of employed men.

More women choose to work part-time

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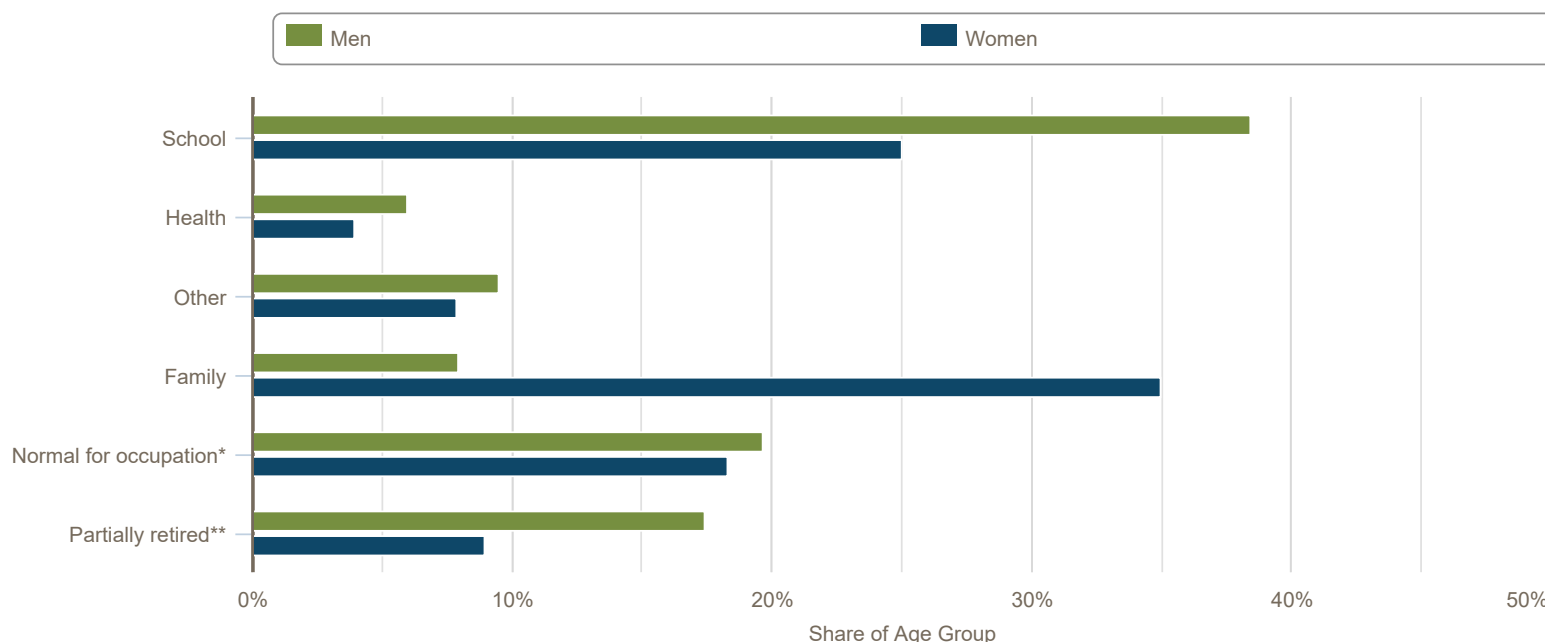


Note: Data are 12-month moving averages, not seasonally adjusted, and are through June.
Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Among women who choose part-time work schedules, the most common reasons for doing so are family obligations and education or training. A sizeable share, just under 20 percent, have occupations for which a full-time work week is fewer than 35 hours (airline pilots, for example).

Women and men have different reasons for working part-time voluntarily

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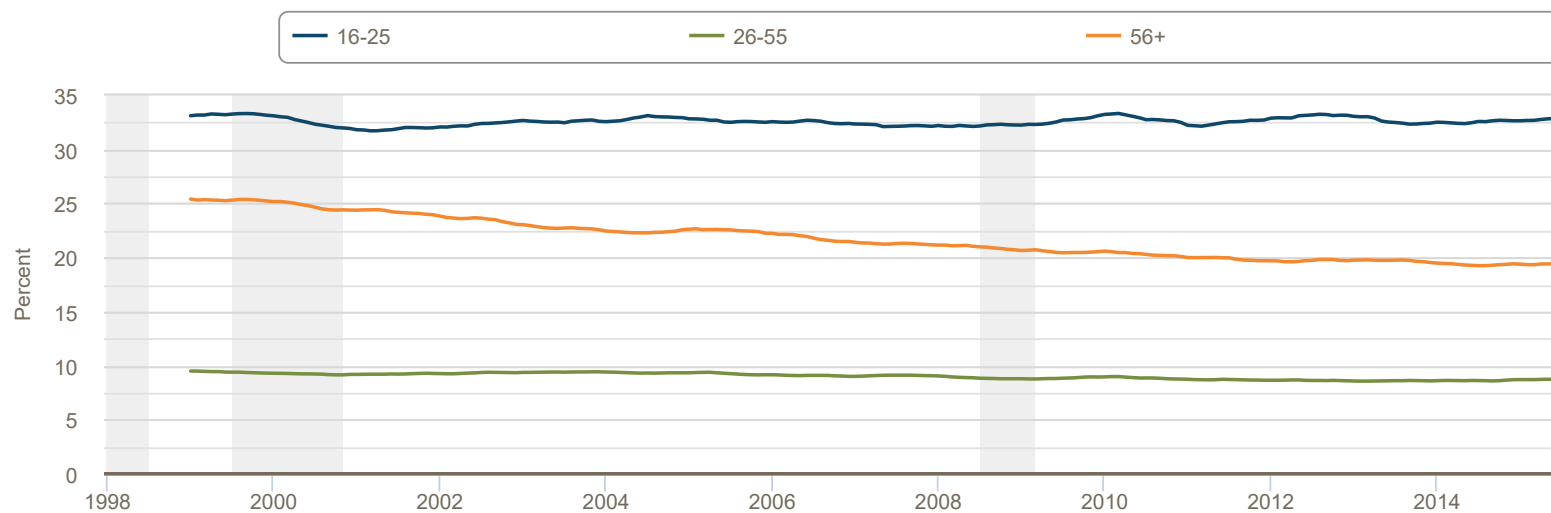


* Some occupations have normal a "full-time" work week of fewer than 35 hours.
** Partially retired or Social Security limit on earnings
Note: A small share of each age group (<2% want to work full-time and give an economic reason working part-time, but are unavailable for full-time work)
Source: Current Population Survey, authors' calculations

Part-time also varies by age. Young people are the most likely to work work part-time, followed by those over age 55. While the share of young employed persons working part-time has remained relatively stable, the share of older individuals who choose to work part-time has decreased over time.

Younger and older workers more likely to choose part-time

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Note: Data are 12-month moving averages, not seasonally adjusted, and are through June.
Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

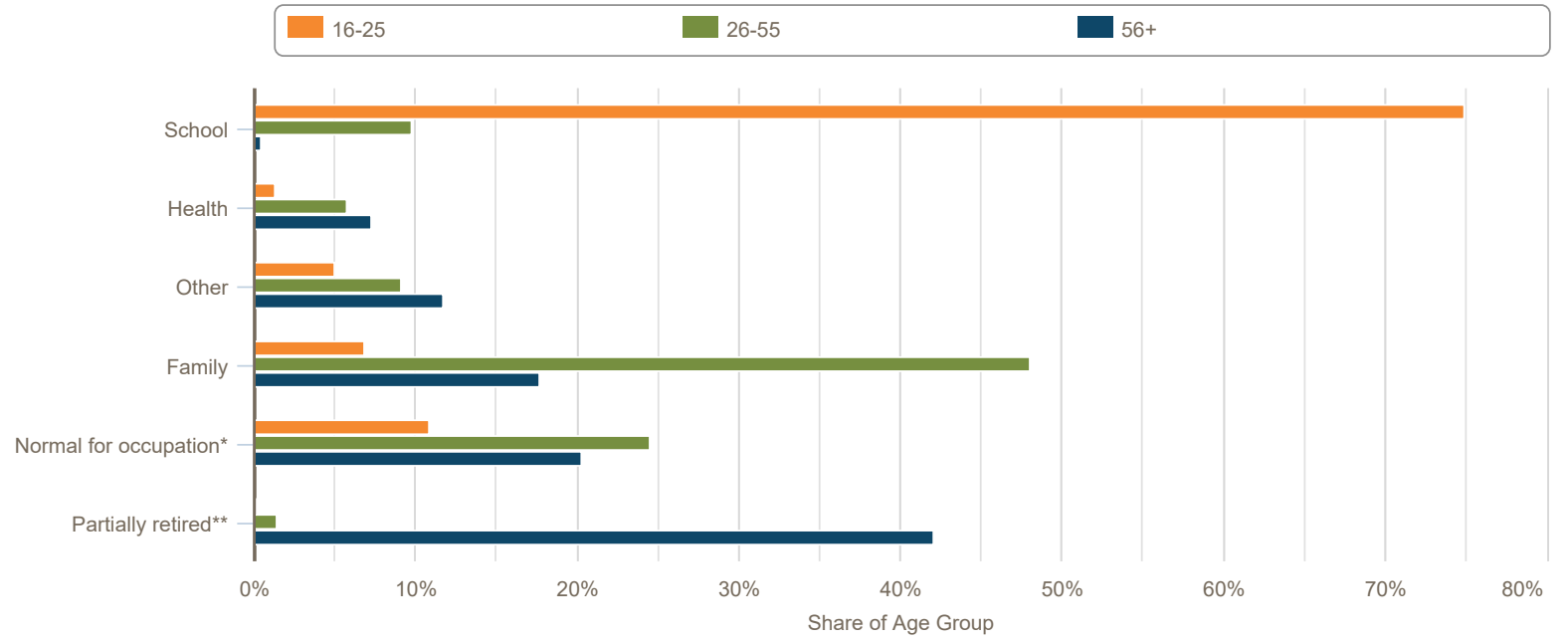
Nearly a third of 16- to 25-year-old workers choose to put in fewer than 35 hours per week. Their primary reason for doing so is overwhelming related to school and training—not surprising, especially considering the tough labor market conditions facing young adults in recent years.

Part-time work is also more prevalent among older people, but for very different reasons. About 19 percent of those over 56 years old work part-time, mostly commonly because they are partially retired or face Social Security limits on their earnings. The decline over time is mostly because people are staying at their full-time jobs for longer, transitioning to retirement or partial

retirement at a later age. For more on this, see the Atlanta Fed's [Labor Force Participation Dynamics](#) web page.

Different age groups have different reasons for working part-time voluntarily

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Source: Current Population Survey, authors' calculations



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