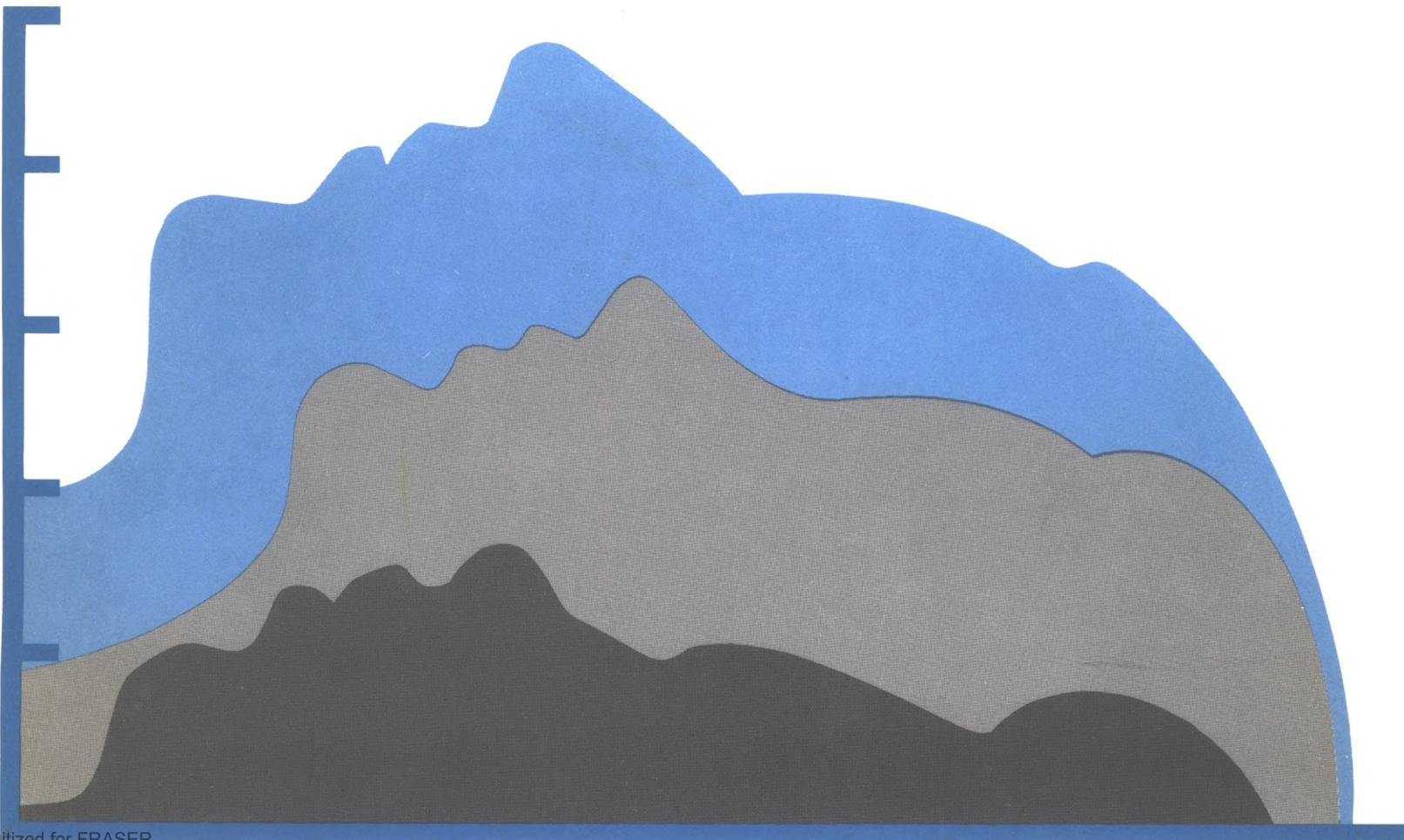


Who Are the Unemployed? A Chartbook



U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics
1977

Bulletin 1965



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U.S. Department of Labor
Ray Marshall, Secretary
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Julius Shiskin, Commissioner
1977

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Preface

Information in this chartbook is derived almost entirely from the Current Population Survey, conducted monthly by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Readers interested in keeping informed on current developments in the U.S. labor force can find up-to-date statistics in regular publications of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Labor force data are published monthly in *Employment and Earnings* and the *Monthly Labor Review*, both available by subscription from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Special analyses are published in the *Monthly Labor Review* as articles and Special

Labor Force Reports. Reprints are available, as long as supplies last, from the Bureau of Labor Statistics or any of its regional offices.

This chartbook was prepared in the Office of Current Employment Analysis, Division of Employment and Unemployment Analysis, John E. Bregger, Chief, by Robert N. Ray, under the direction of Deborah Pisetzner Klein.

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Introduction

Every civilian in the noninstitutional population aged 16 years and over is classified in the Current Population Survey as either employed, unemployed, or not in the labor force. The sum of the employed and unemployed constitutes the civilian labor force.

The majority of the employed are persons who worked during the survey week. Persons also are counted as employed if they had a job but did not work during the survey week because of such reasons as a strike, illness, or vacation.

Most of the unemployed are persons who did not work during the

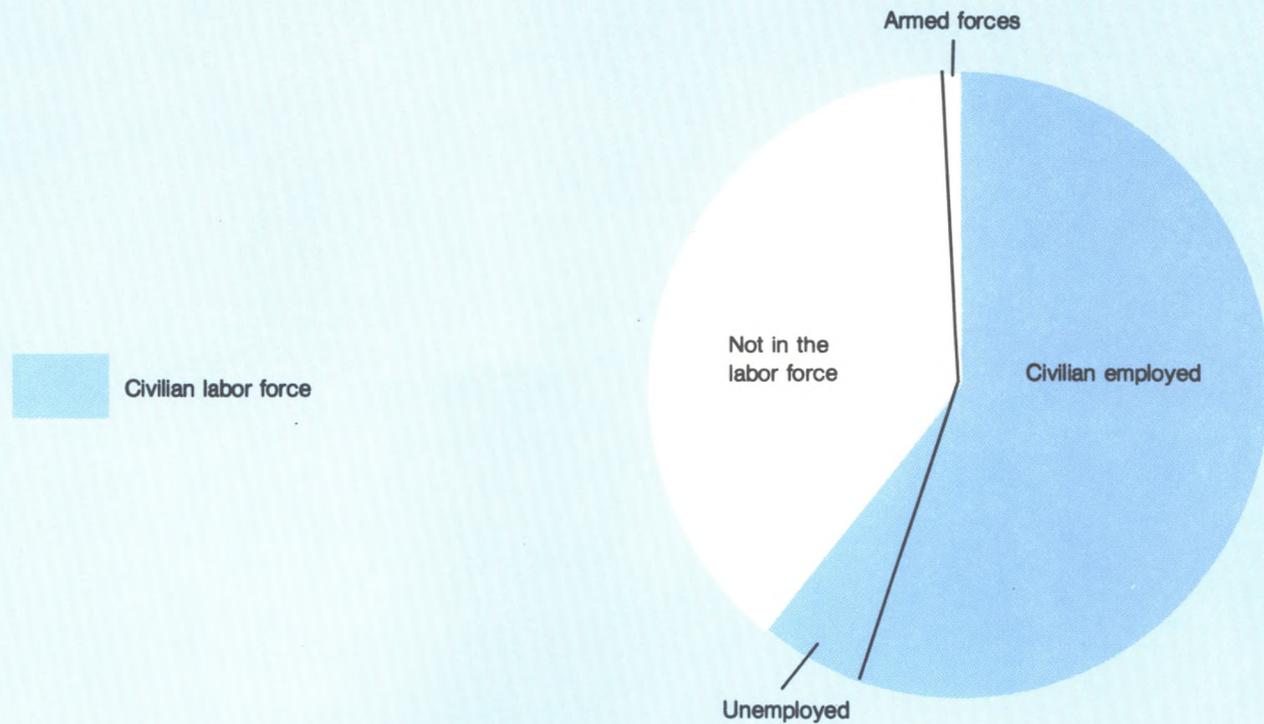
survey week but were available for work and made specific attempts to find a job. However, the category also includes persons on layoff and those waiting to begin a new job within 30 days.

Most persons classified as not in the labor force are homemakers, students, or retired people. Also included are the small but important number of persons who want to work but are not looking for a job because they feel it would be impossible to find one—persons who are frequently referred to as “discouraged workers.”

Three Out of Every Five Americans 16 Years of Age and Over Were in the Civilian Labor Force in 1976

	<u>Persons 16 years and over, 1976 annual averages</u>
Total noninstitutional population	156,048,000
Armed Forces	2,144,000
Civilian noninstitutional population	153,904,000
Civilian labor force	94,773,000
Employed	87,485,000
Unemployed	7,288,000
Unemployment rate (un- employed as percent of civilian labor force)	7.7
Not in labor force	59,130,000
Discouraged workers	911,000

Chart 1. Percent distribution of the population 16 years and over by employment status, 1976 annual averages



Part I: Characteristics of the Unemployed

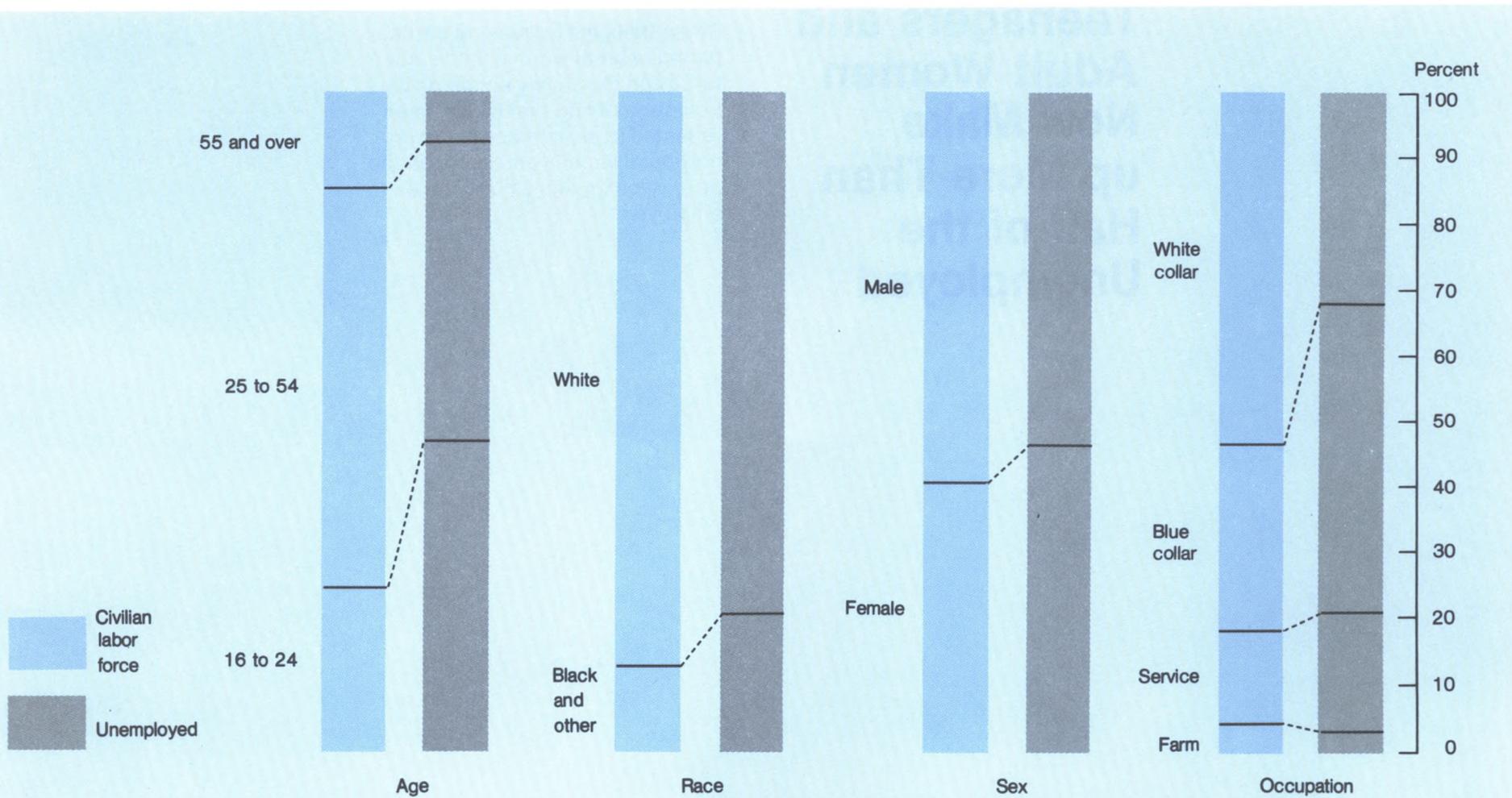
Among the unemployed are men and women, young and old, white and black, skilled and unskilled. In short, all population groups are affected. However, young people, high school dropouts, blue-collar workers and blacks are disproportionately represented among the unemployed. Many of the unemployed, have the responsibility for the support of other persons. Others among the unemployed, such as some teenagers, only want jobs to earn spending money. In

addition to persons who have lost their jobs, the unemployed includes persons who left their jobs voluntarily and persons who are entering the labor force for the first time or reentering after a period of absence. Moreover, the unemployed labor force is constantly changing, as many persons remain jobless for only a short period of time while others search for work for many months before becoming employed or dropping out of the labor force.

The Composition of the Unemployed Labor Force Differs from the Composition of the Labor Force as a Whole

Compared to the labor force as a whole, the unemployed work force is disproportionately young, black, female, and blue collar.

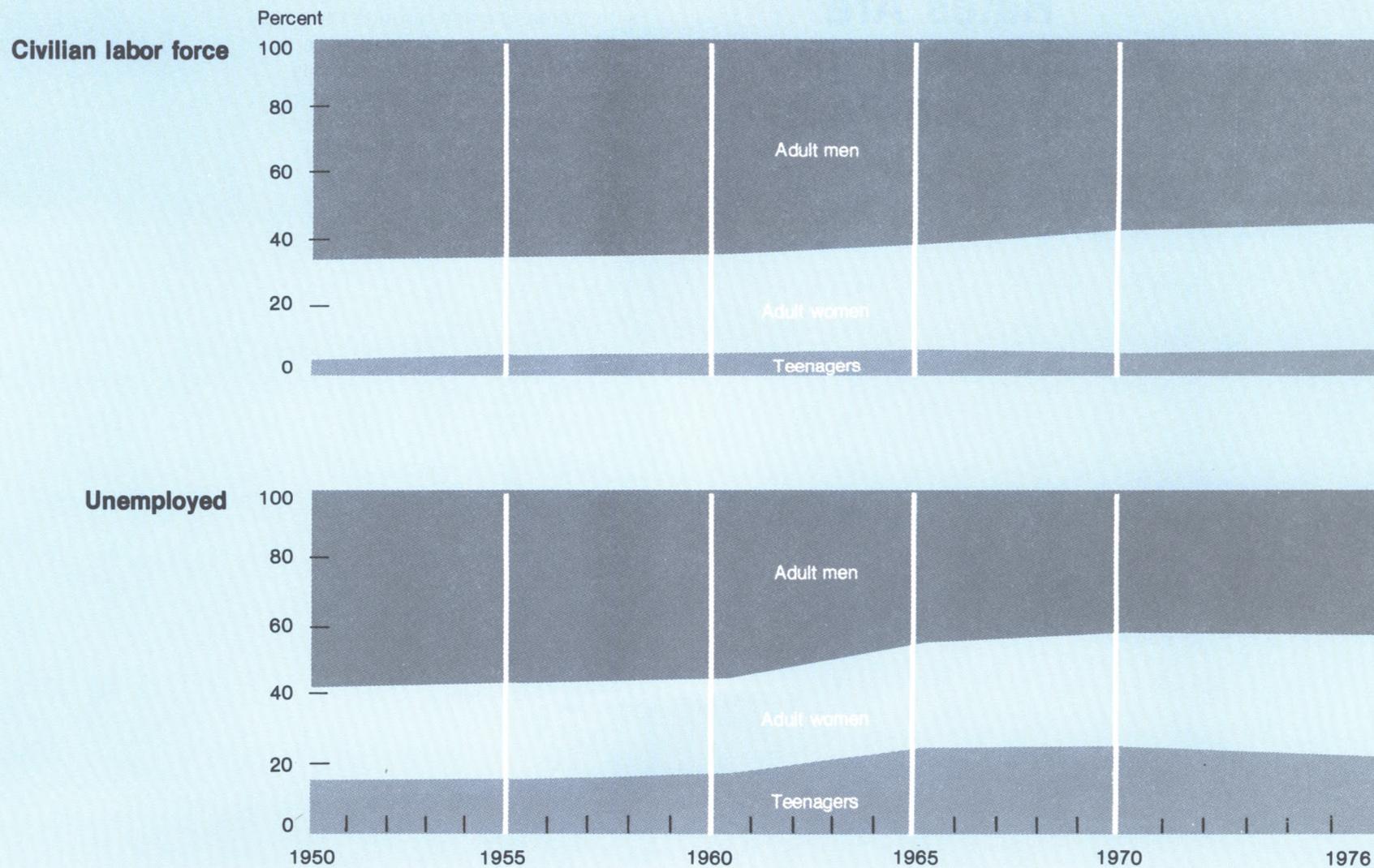
Chart 2. Percent distribution of the civilian labor force and the unemployed by selected characteristics, 1976 annual averages



Teenagers and Adult Women Now Make up More Than Half of the Unemployed

Since 1950, the increasing participation of adult women in the labor force and the slowly declining participation of adult men have been reflected in an increase in the proportion of women and a drop in the proportion of men among the unemployed.

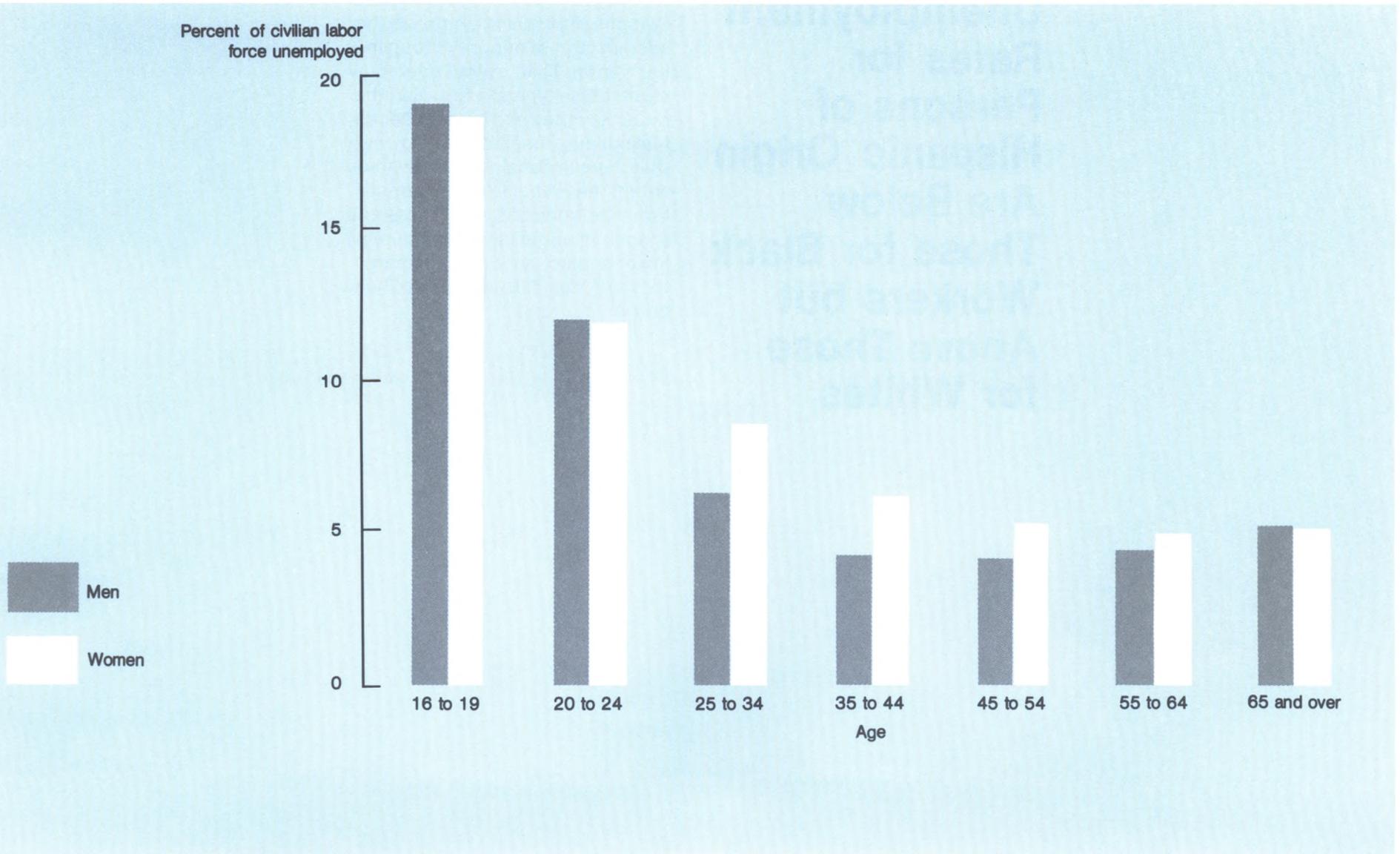
Chart 3. Percent distribution of the civilian labor force and the unemployed by age and sex, selected years, 1950-76



Unemployment Rates Are Highest for Young People

Unemployment is highest among young people and then diminishes with increasing age through the central age groups. There is little difference in unemployment rates between men and women in the younger and older age groups, but in the central age groups women have substantially higher rates than men.

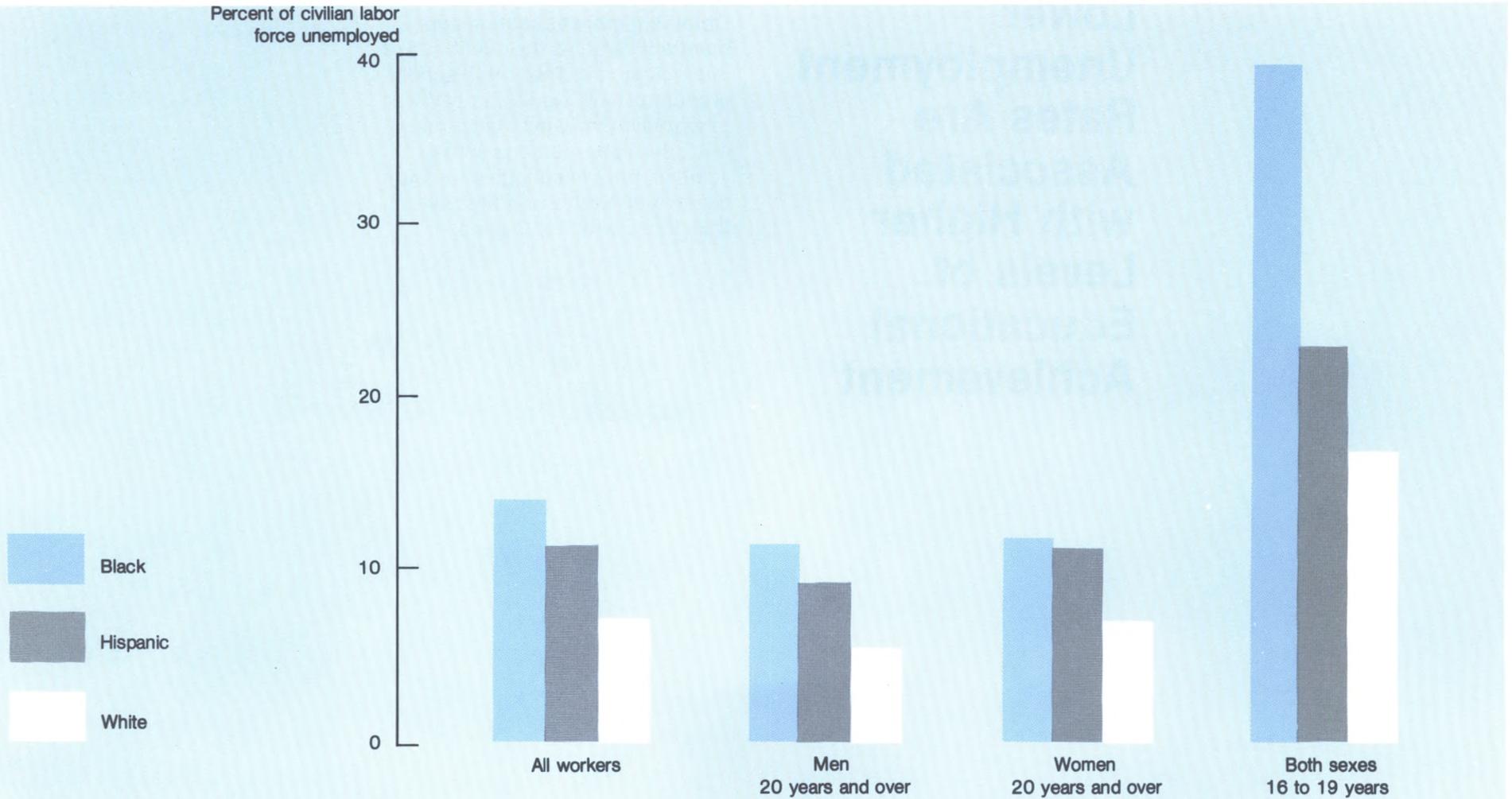
Chart 4. Unemployment rates by age and sex, 1976 annual averages



Unemployment Rates for Persons of Hispanic Origin Are Below Those for Black Workers but Above Those for Whites

Persons of Hispanic origin are the second largest minority group in the Nation. Their overall unemployment rate is typically between the rates of whites and blacks. Decennial census data indicate, however, that there is considerable diversity within the Hispanic-origin population—persons of Cuban and South American origin have considerably lower unemployment rates than those of Mexican and Puerto Rican origin.

Chart 5. Unemployment rates for white, black, and Hispanic origin workers by sex and age, 1976 annual averages

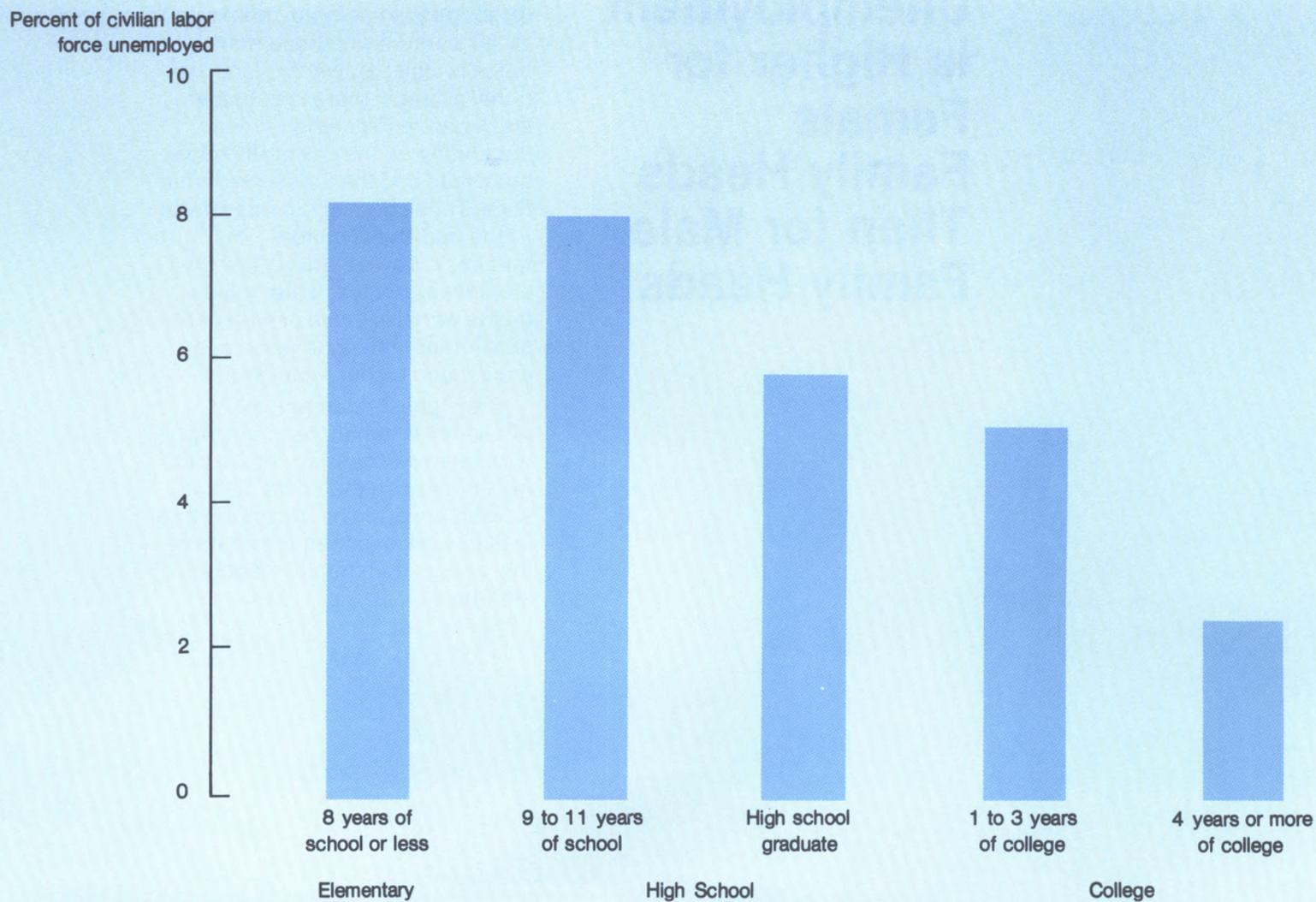


Note: Data on persons of Hispanic origin are tabulated separately without regard to race. Therefore Hispanic workers are also included in the data for white and black workers. At the time of the 1970 census, approximately 96 percent of the Hispanic population was white.

Lower Unemployment Rates Are Associated with Higher Levels of Educational Achievement

Obtaining more education substantially reduces the likelihood of unemployment. Thus, high school graduates have significantly lower unemployment rates than drop-outs. Similarly, persons with 4 years or more of college education have jobless rates sharply lower than those with 1 to 3 years.

Chart 6. Unemployment rates for persons 25 years of age and over by educational attainment, March 1976

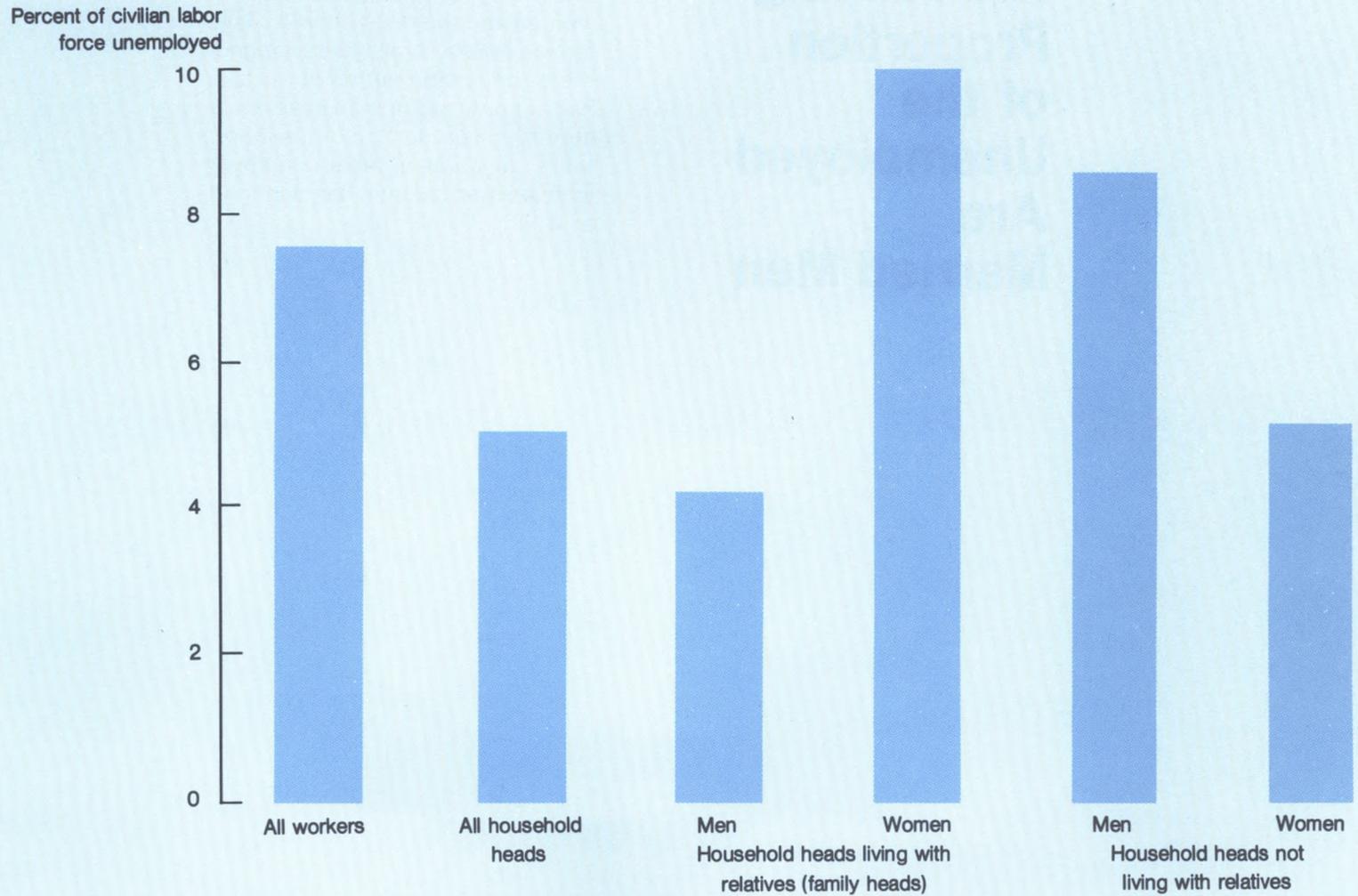


Unemployment Is Higher for Female Family Heads Than for Male Family Heads

Although the unemployment rate for all workers who head households is well below the overall national average, there is considerable variation in unemployment depending on the sex of the household head and the presence of relatives. Those household heads who fit the traditional image—men with families—have relatively low unemployment rates. Other male heads who live alone or with persons other than relatives experience much higher joblessness.

The highest unemployment rates are for female heads living with relatives, typically those raising children on their own. These women are often handicapped by a lack of work experience and training, and by their family responsibilities.

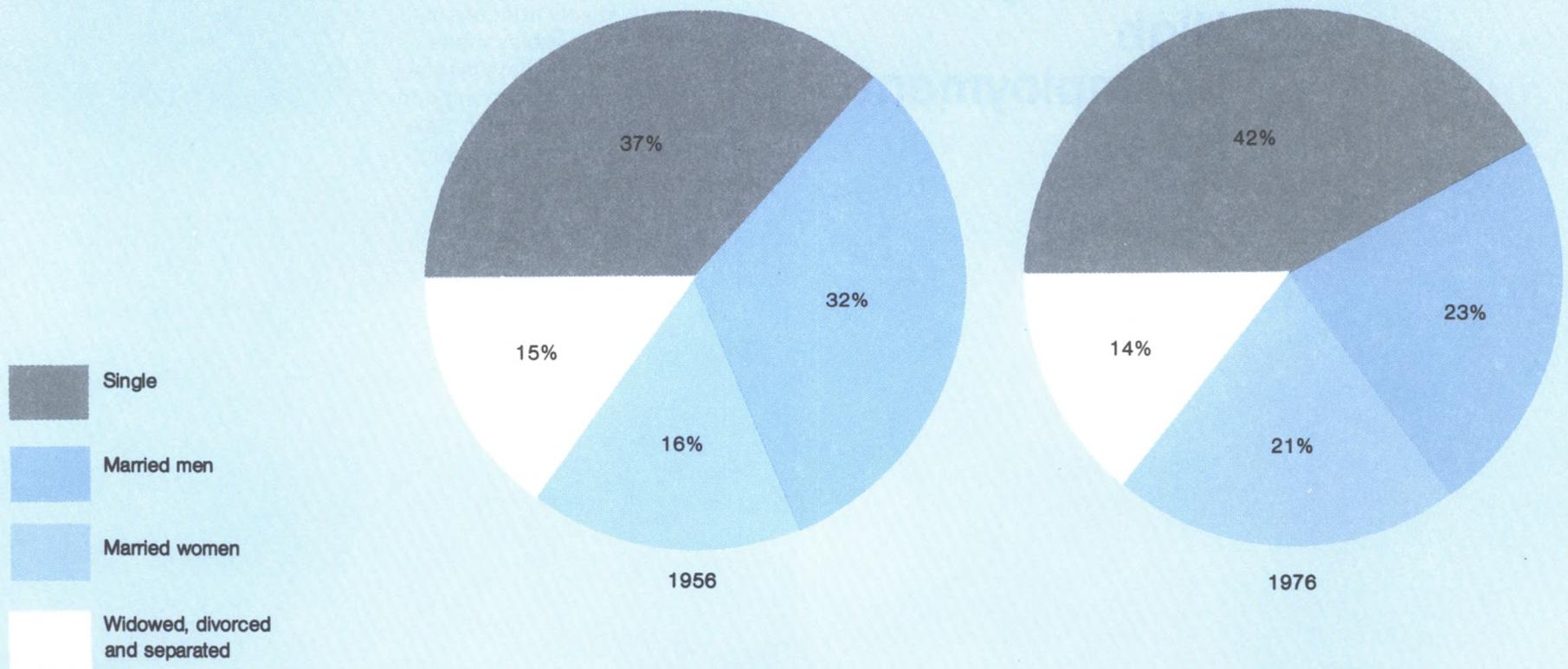
Chart 7. Unemployment rates for household heads by family status, 1976 annual averages



A Declining Proportion of the Unemployed Are Married Men

The increase in the participation of women and the rapid growth of the teenage labor force have changed the overall composition of the labor force. As adult men have declined as a proportion of the labor force, the share of the unemployed who are married men has declined as well.

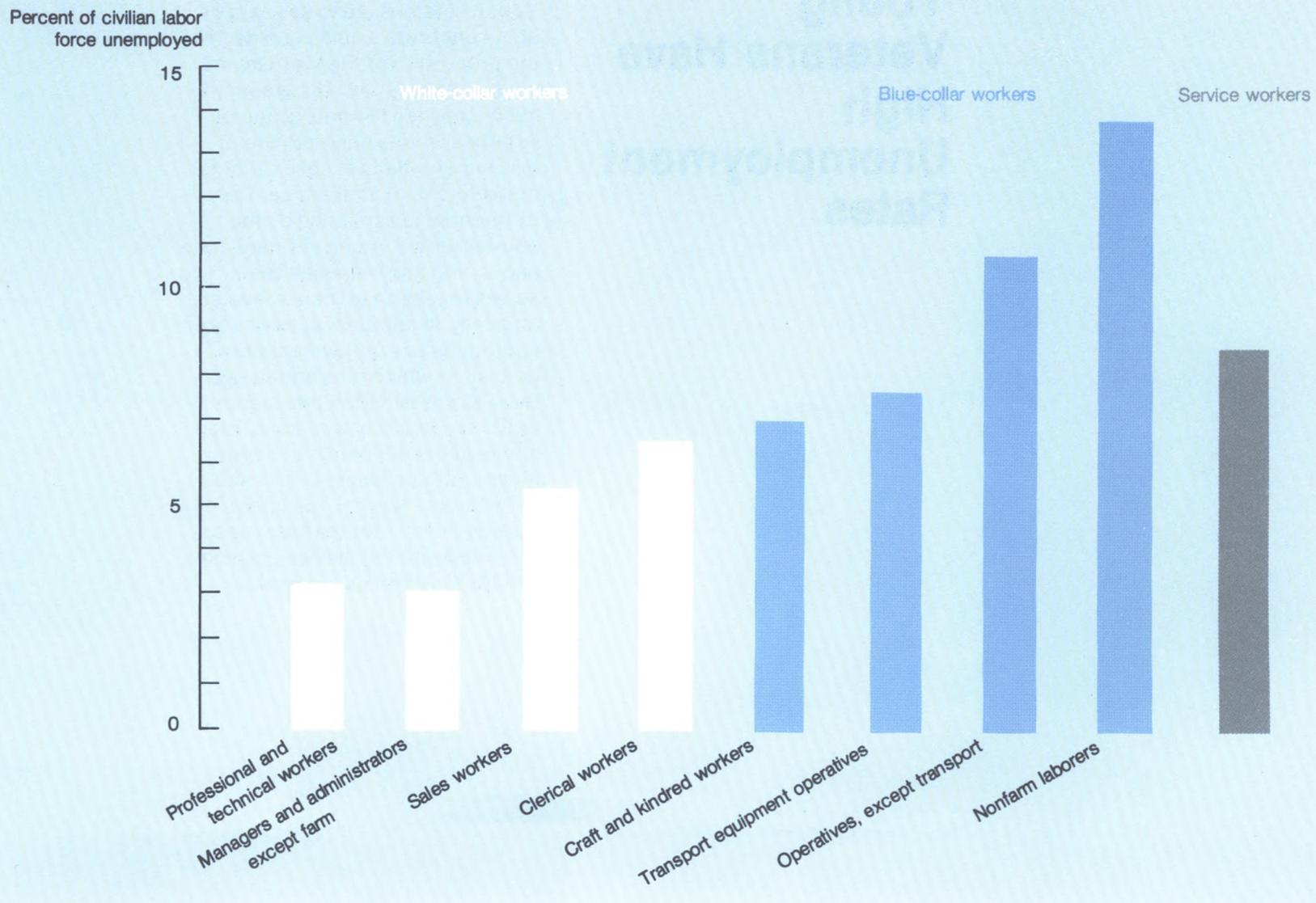
Chart 8. Percent distribution of the unemployed by marital status, 1956 and 1976 annual averages



Blue-Collar Workers Have Relatively High Unemployment Rates

The probability of becoming unemployed is closely related to the type of work a person does. White-collar workers, particularly those in professional and managerial jobs, experience relatively little unemployment, whereas joblessness among blue-collar workers is relatively high, particularly among non-farm laborers and operatives. Service workers also experience high unemployment rates.

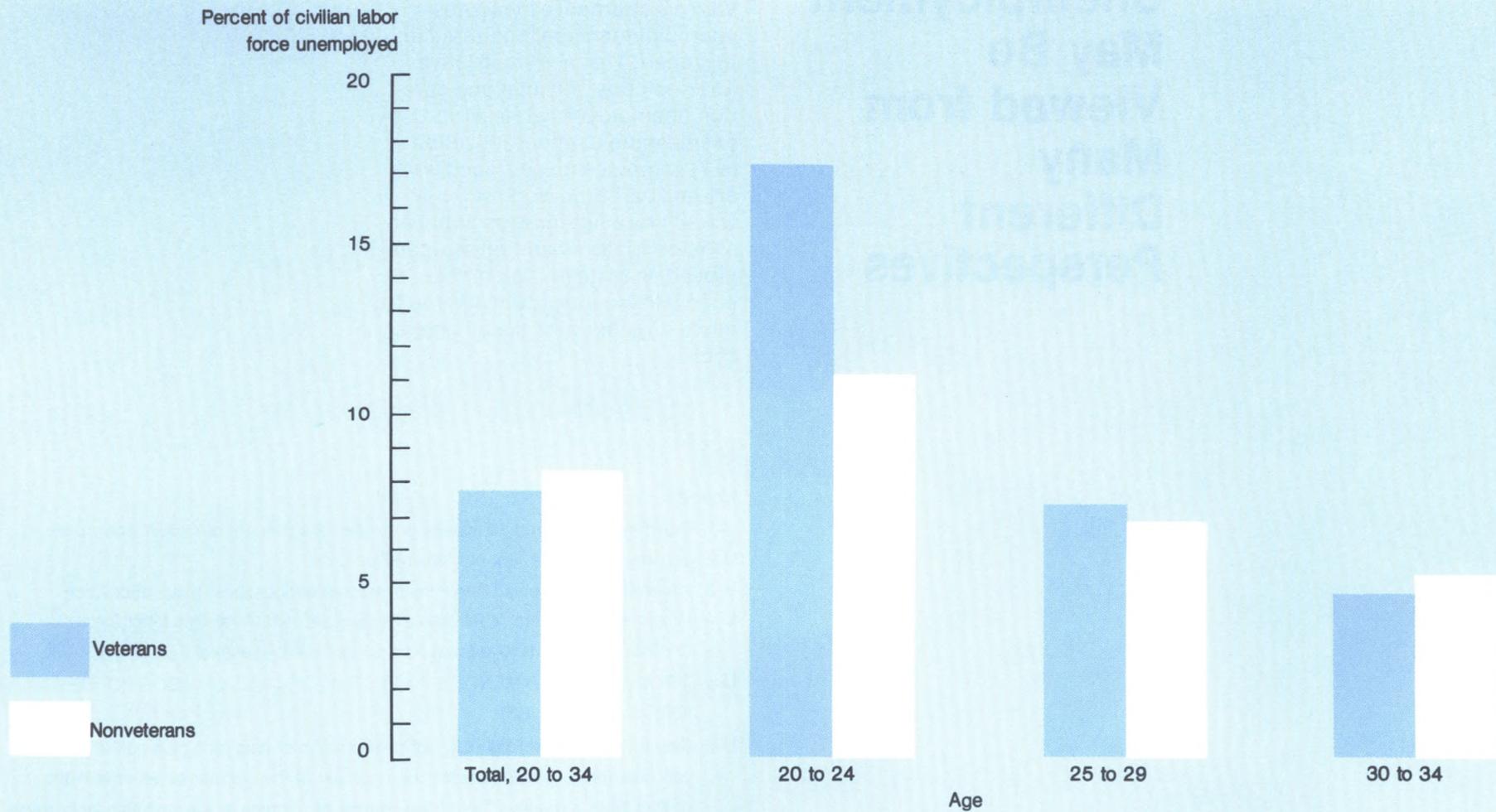
Chart 9. Unemployment rates by major nonfarm occupation, 1976 annual averages



Young Veterans Have High Unemployment Rates

Young veterans (20 to 24 years of age) constitute a small and declining proportion of the Vietnam-era veteran population (16 percent in 1976); they are the only group of veterans whose unemployment rate substantially exceeds that for nonveterans of similar age. This differential is explained by the shorter period young veterans have had to find and establish themselves in jobs than their nonveteran peers. In addition, veterans are eligible for unemployment compensation which may encourage them to sustain their job search until they find the right job. Differences in the incidence of unemployment between veterans and nonveterans tend to disappear in time as older veterans become assimilated into the civilian economy and build up work experience.

Chart 10. Unemployment rates by age for Vietnam-era veterans and nonveterans, 1976 annual averages



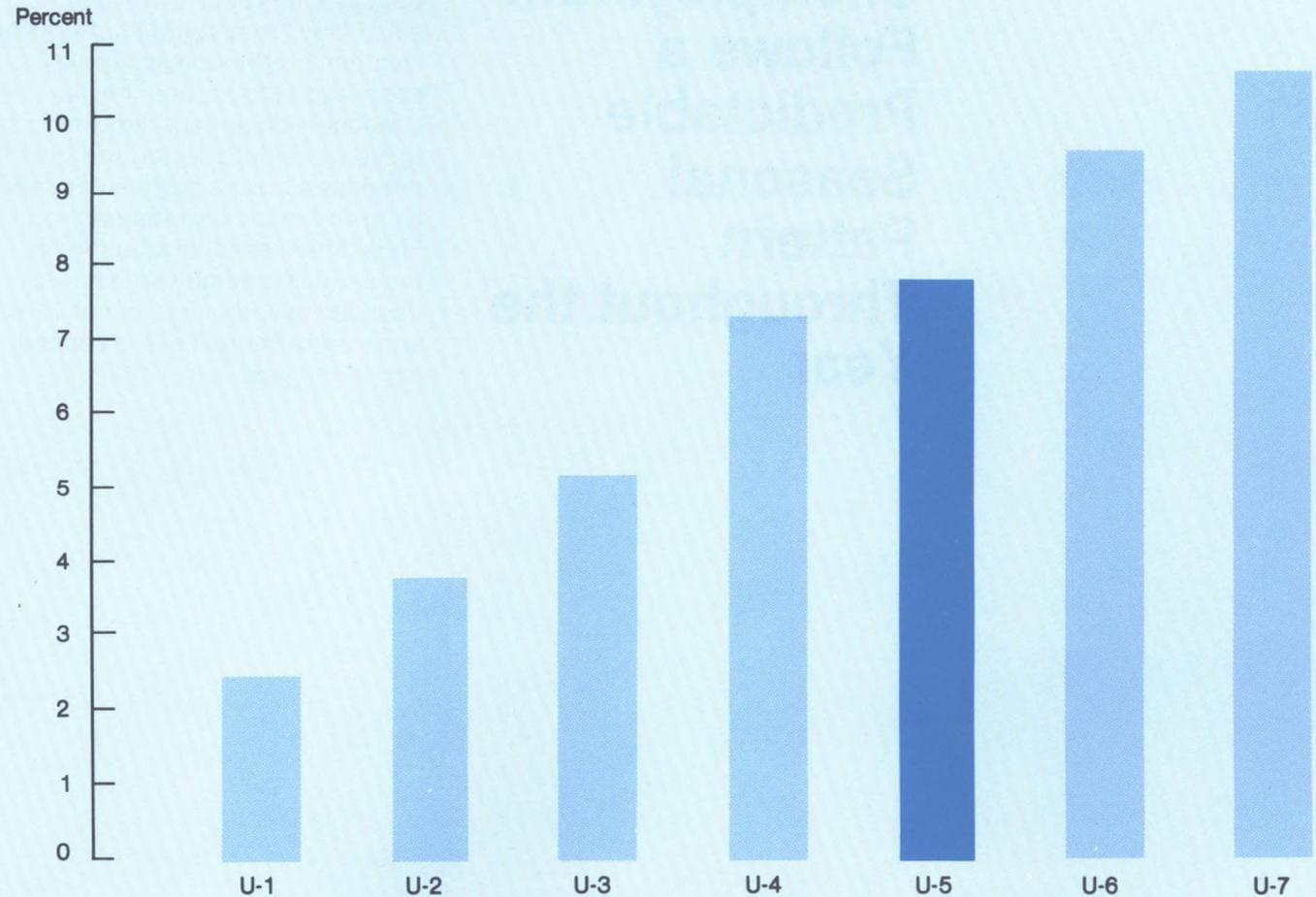
Unemployment May Be Viewed from Many Different Perspectives

Various alternative measures of unemployment are illustrated in this chart. The most restrictive (U-1) includes only the long duration unemployed, while the broadest measure of underutilization (U-7) combines discouraged workers and part-time workers who would like a full-time job with persons officially classified as unemployed. In spite of their differences, these indicators all tend to move together over the business cycle.

Note:

- U-1 Persons unemployed 15 weeks or longer as a percent of civilian labor force
- U-2 Job losers as a percent of civilian labor force
- U-3 Unemployed household heads as a percent of household head labor force
- U-4 Unemployed seekers of full-time jobs as a percent of full-time labor force (including those employed part time for economic reasons)
- U-5 TOTAL UNEMPLOYMENT AS A PERCENT OF CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE (OFFICIAL MEASURE)
- U-6 Seekers of full-time jobs plus half seekers of part-time jobs plus half total on part time for economic reasons as a percent of the number of persons in the civilian labor force less half of the number of persons in the part-time labor force
- U-7 U-6 plus discouraged workers

Chart 11. Range of unemployment measures based on varying definitions of unemployment and the labor force, 1976 annual averages

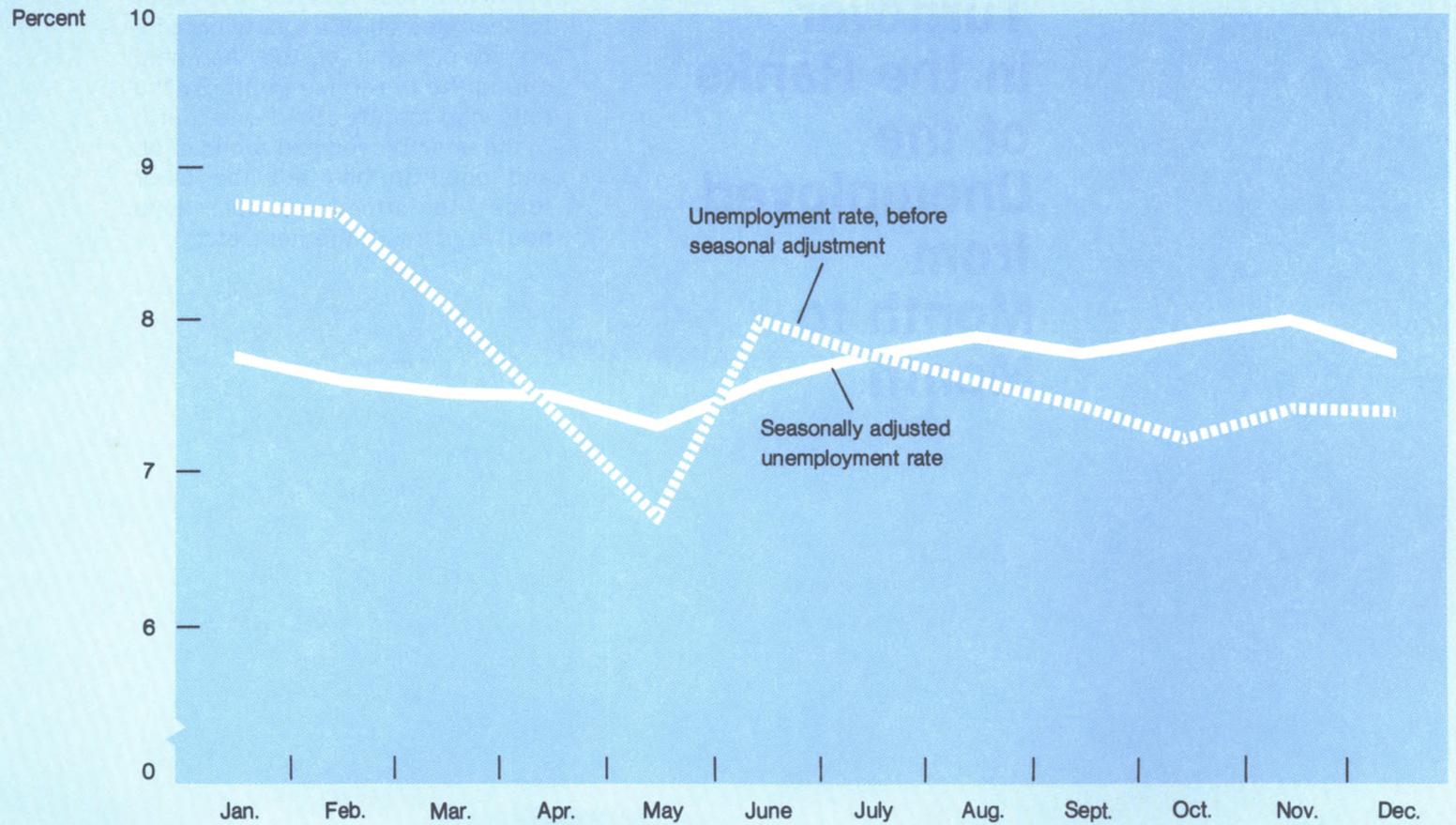


Note: For further information on the development of these measures, see Julius Shiskin, "Employment and Unemployment: The Doughnut or the Hole," Monthly Labor Review, February 1976.

Unemployment Follows a Predictable Seasonal Pattern Throughout the Year

Seasonal ups and downs are caused by the recurring patterns of weather, production schedules, school schedules, and the like. Seasonal adjustment removes these systematic variations and provides a clearer picture of underlying economic developments. Thus, after seasonal adjustment, the national unemployment rate declined over the first half of 1976 and rose over most of the second half of the year.

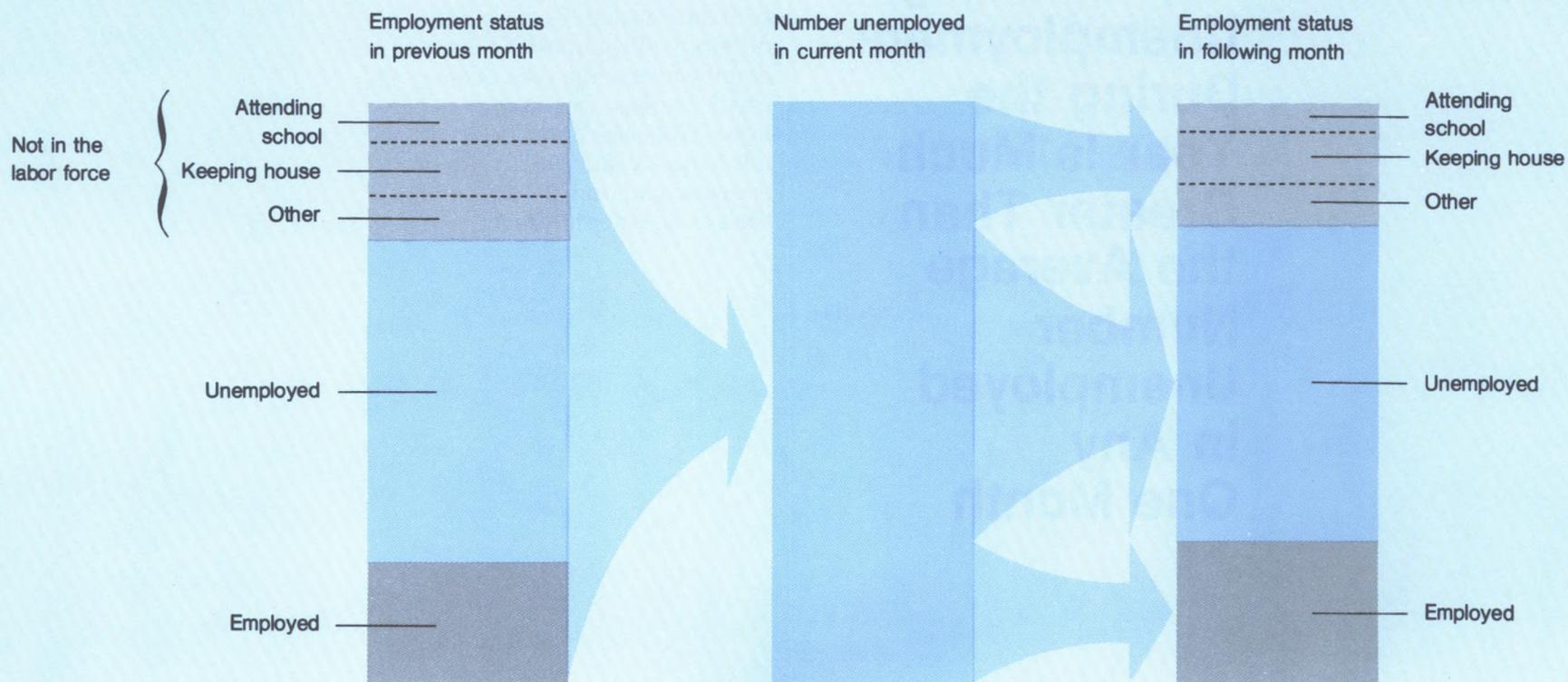
Chart 12. Percent of civilian labor force unemployed before and after seasonal adjustment, 1976



There Is Considerable Turnover in the Ranks of the Unemployed from Month to Month

In an average month during 1976 nearly half of the unemployed were new to that situation. Some of them had just entered the labor force in search of a job, while others left or lost a job they had held during the previous month. By the following month, about one-fourth of the unemployed had found a job and one-fifth had left the labor force (to attend school, keep house, go into retirement, etc.)

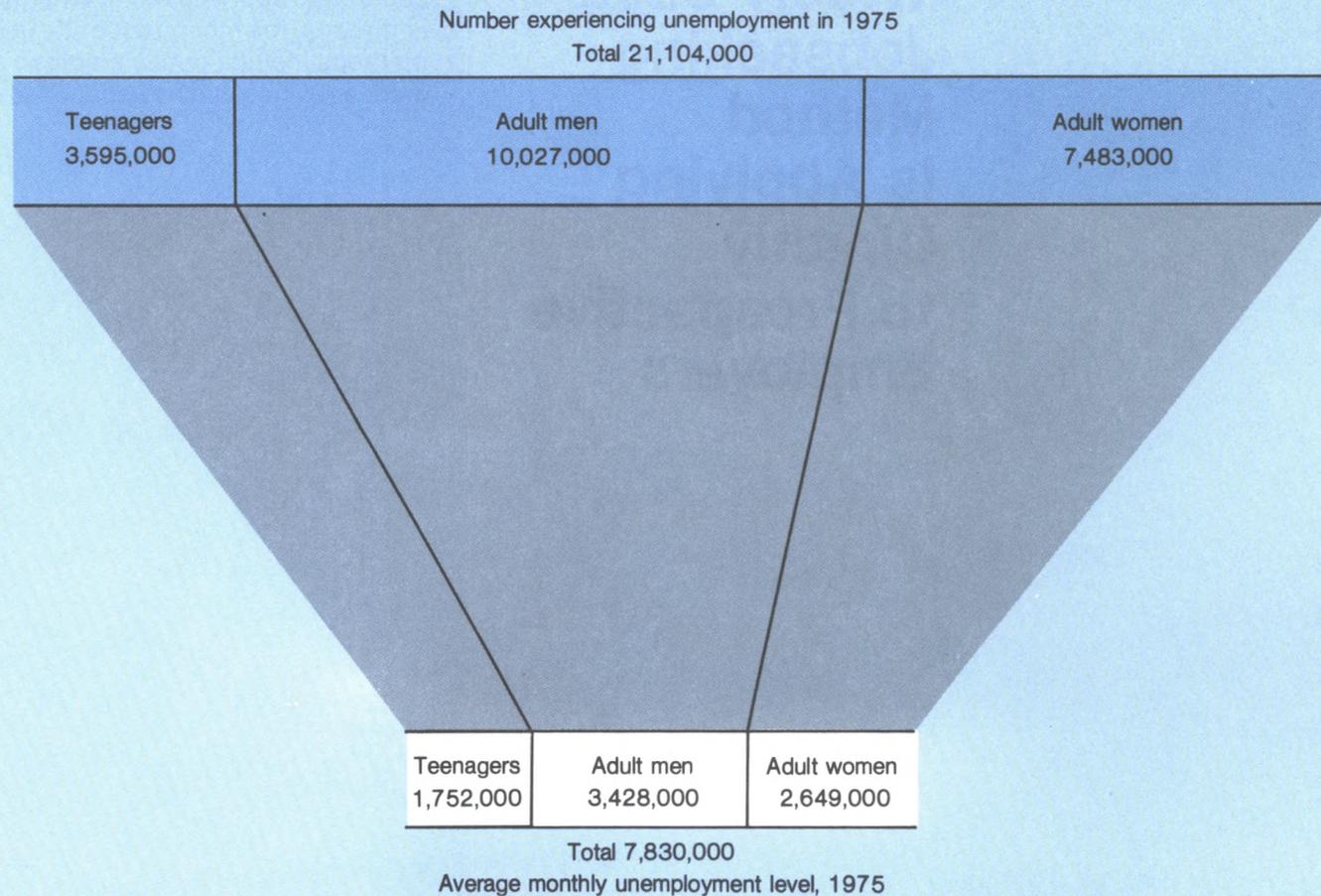
Chart 13. Employment status of the unemployed during preceding and following months



The Number of Persons Experiencing Unemployment During the Year Is Much Greater Than the Average Number Unemployed in Any One Month

The total number of persons experiencing unemployment at any time during the year greatly exceeds the number unemployed at any one time. In 1975 for instance (most recent data available), the number of different individuals who were unemployed at some time or another was 2.7 times the average monthly figure. This was consistent with totals in past years which have generally ranged from 2½ to 4 times the average monthly level.

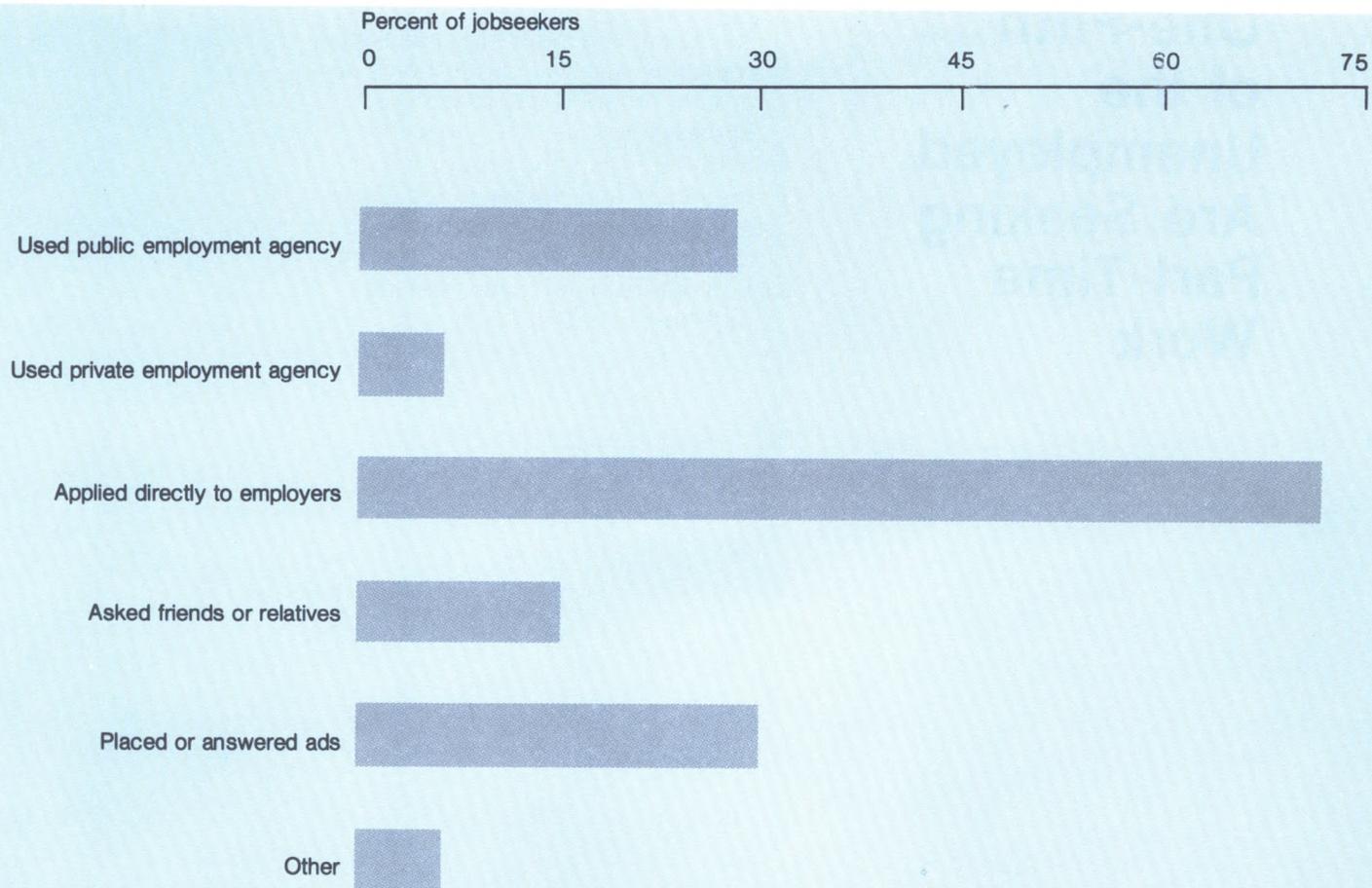
Chart 14. Average monthly unemployment and total number of persons with at least one spell of unemployment during 1975



The Most Widely Used Jobseeking Method Is Applying Directly to Prospective Employers

The unemployed use a variety of methods in the search for work. In addition to applying to the employer directly, the most frequently used methods include public employment agencies and newspaper ads.

Chart 15. Methods used by jobseekers, 1976 annual averages

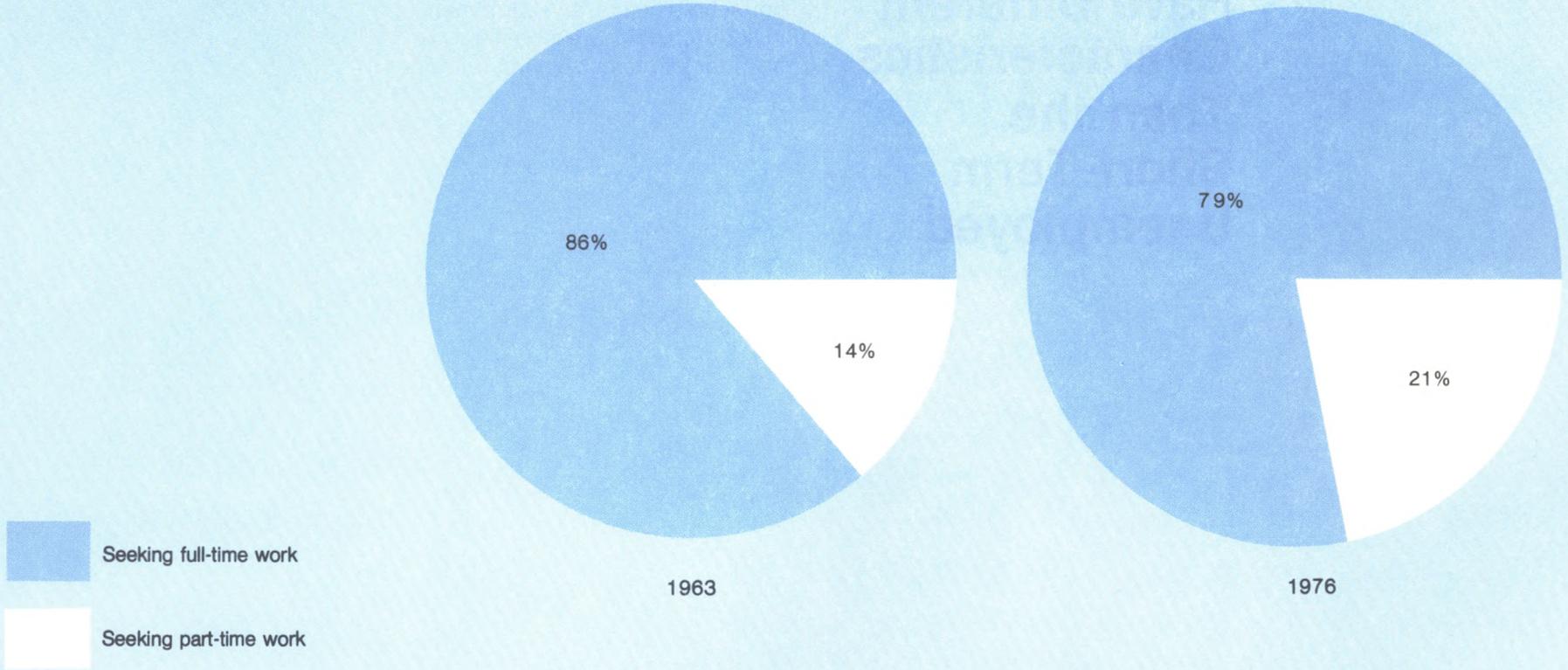


Note: The percentage using each method totals more than 100 because many jobseekers used more than one method.

One-Fifth of the Unemployed Are Seeking Part-Time Work

As the service industries such as trade have grown in importance, a greater proportion of jobs have short workweeks. This, together with the expanding proportion of teenagers and women in the work force, has resulted in an increase during recent years in the proportion of the unemployed seeking part-time work.

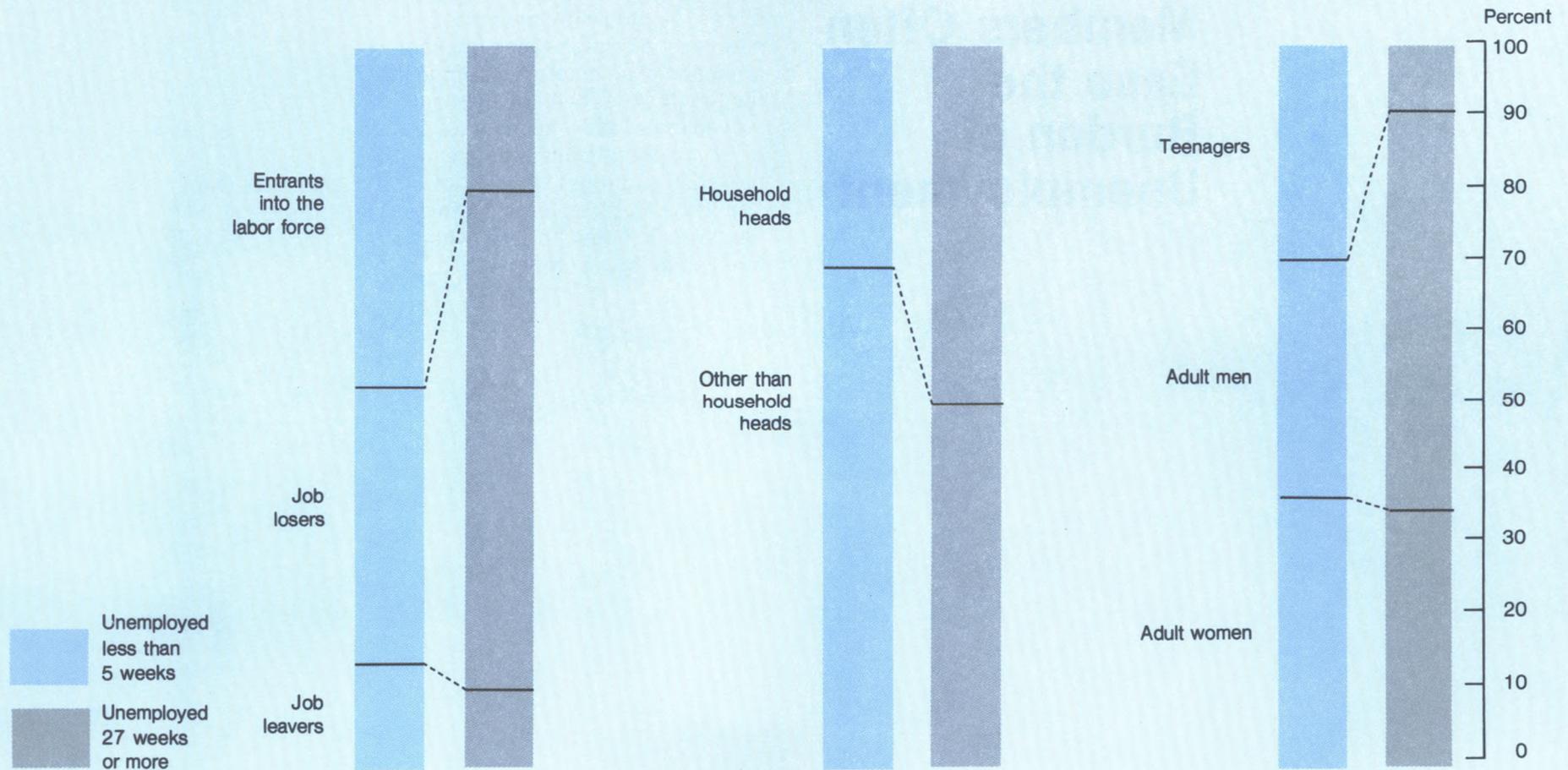
Chart 16. Proportion of the unemployed seeking full- and part-time work, 1963 and 1976 annual averages



The Long-Term Unemployed Have Different Characteristics Than the Short-Term Unemployed

Compared with persons unemployed a month or less, persons unemployed for long periods are disproportionately job losers, household heads, and adult men. In addition, they are more likely to be older and to be seeking full-time work.

Chart 17. Percent distribution of persons unemployed less than 5 weeks and more than 26 weeks by selected characteristics, 1976 annual averages

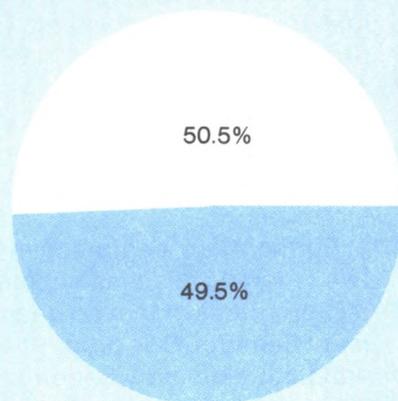


Other Family Members Often Ease the Burden of Unemployment

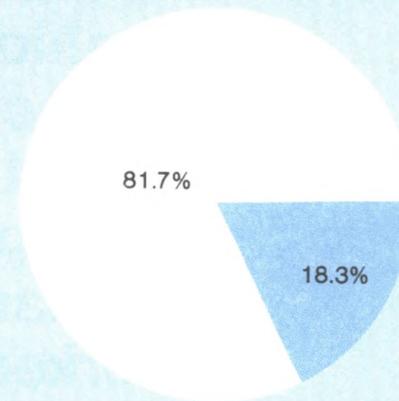
The financial hardship that is usually associated with unemployment is sometimes eased by the presence of an employed person in the family. About half of all unemployed male family heads have a person in their family who is employed. By contrast, only about one-fifth of jobless female family heads are in households in which a family member is employed.

Chart 18. Unemployed persons by family relationship and presence of employed family member(s), 1976 annual averages

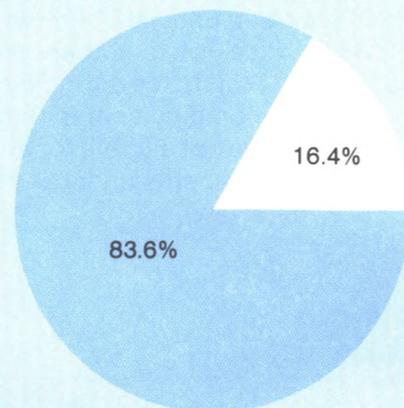
Unemployed male family heads



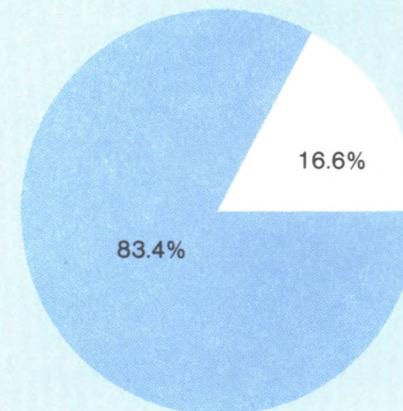
Unemployed female family heads



Unemployed wives



Unemployed relatives of family heads



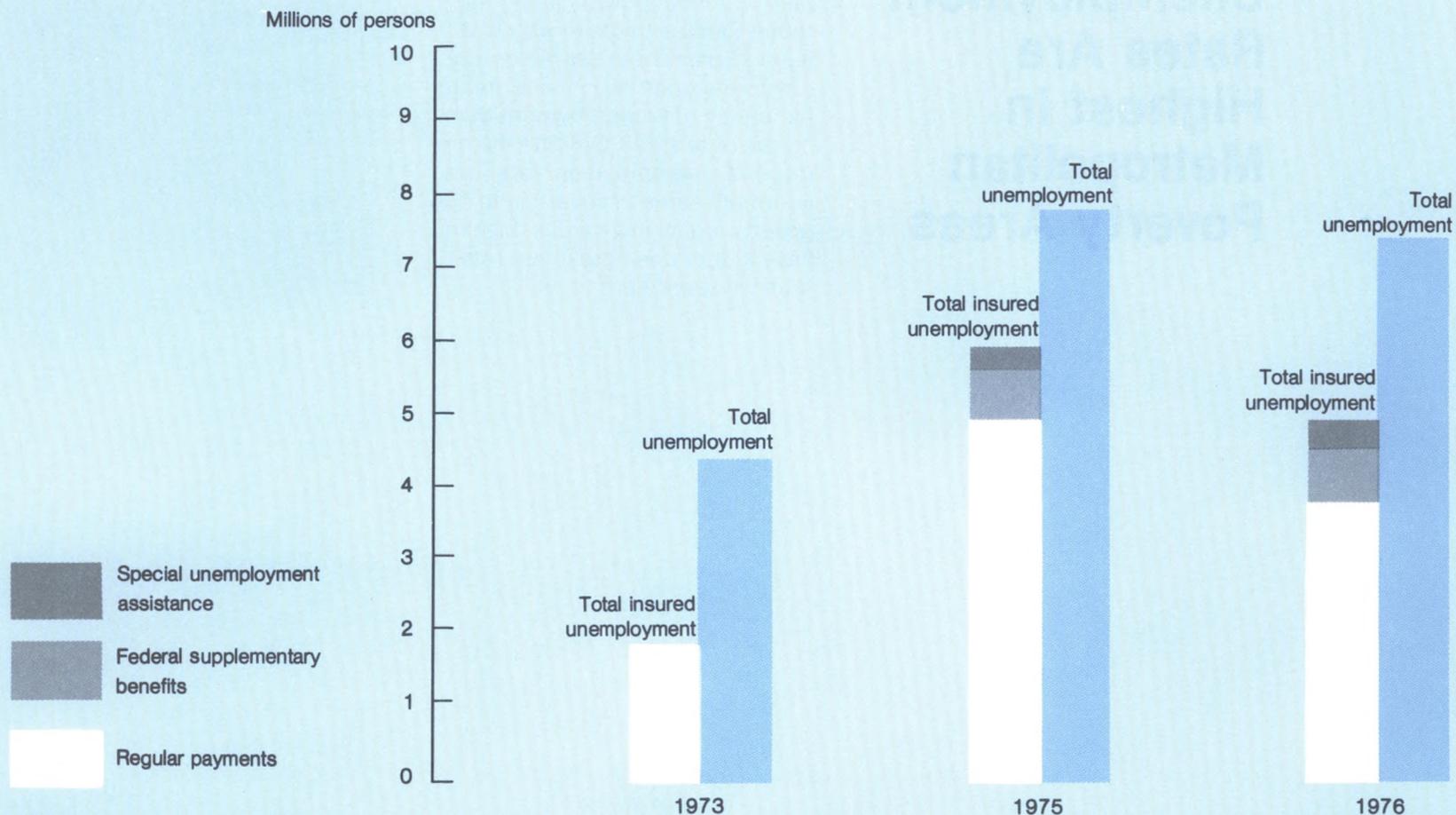
 With employed person in family
 Without employed person in family

Unemployment Insurance Cushions the Financial Impact of Unemployment for Many Workers

Unemployment compensation programs are specifically designed to assist experienced workers who lose their jobs by providing a portion of lost wages. Thus, the proportion of the jobless receiving unemployment compensation is higher in years of high unemployment, such as 1975, when job loss increases.

Furthermore, beginning in 1975, two federally financed supplementary programs extended unemployment benefits. One program, Federal Supplementary Benefits, provides up to 13 additional weeks of federally sponsored benefits during periods of high unemployment to qualified claimants who exhaust their eligibility under permanent programs. A second Federal program, Special Unemployment Assistance, is a temporary program of assistance during periods of high unemployment for individuals who are not eligible for unemployment benefits under any State or Federal law.

Chart 19. Total unemployment and insured unemployment in 1973, 1975, and 1976

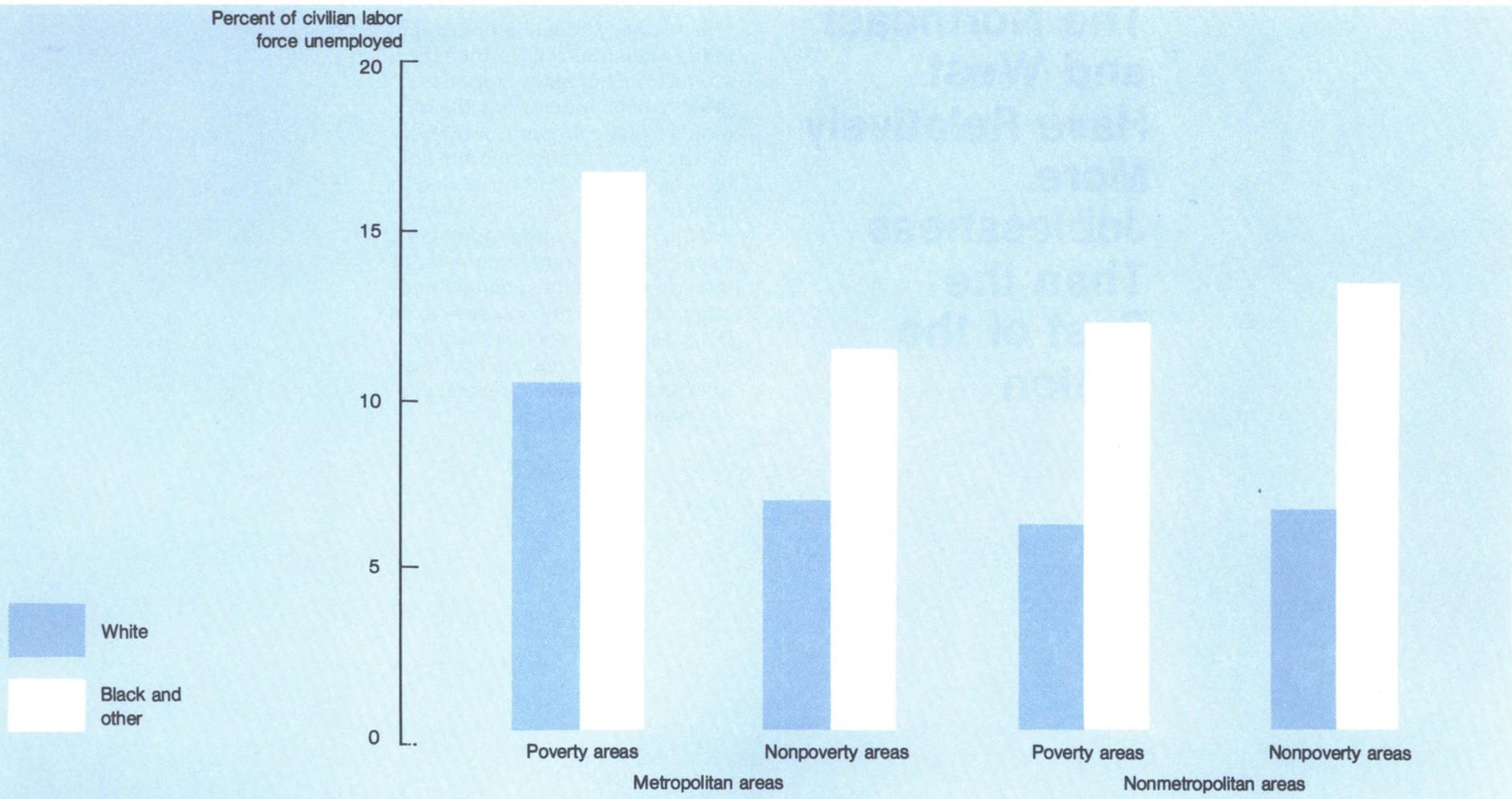


Note: Proportions based on these counts should be used with caution because the two sets of data differ in concept and method of measurement.

Unemployment Rates Are Highest in Metropolitan Poverty Areas

Metropolitan “poverty areas”—those Census tracts in which at least 20 percent of the residents are poor—generally have a greater incidence of unemployment than nonpoverty areas. Outside the metropolis, unemployment rates are about the same in poverty and nonpoverty areas. In all areas, blacks have higher unemployment rates than white workers.

Chart 20. Unemployment rates in poverty and nonpoverty areas by race, 1976 annual averages



Note: Designation of poverty areas is based upon 1970 decennial census income data.

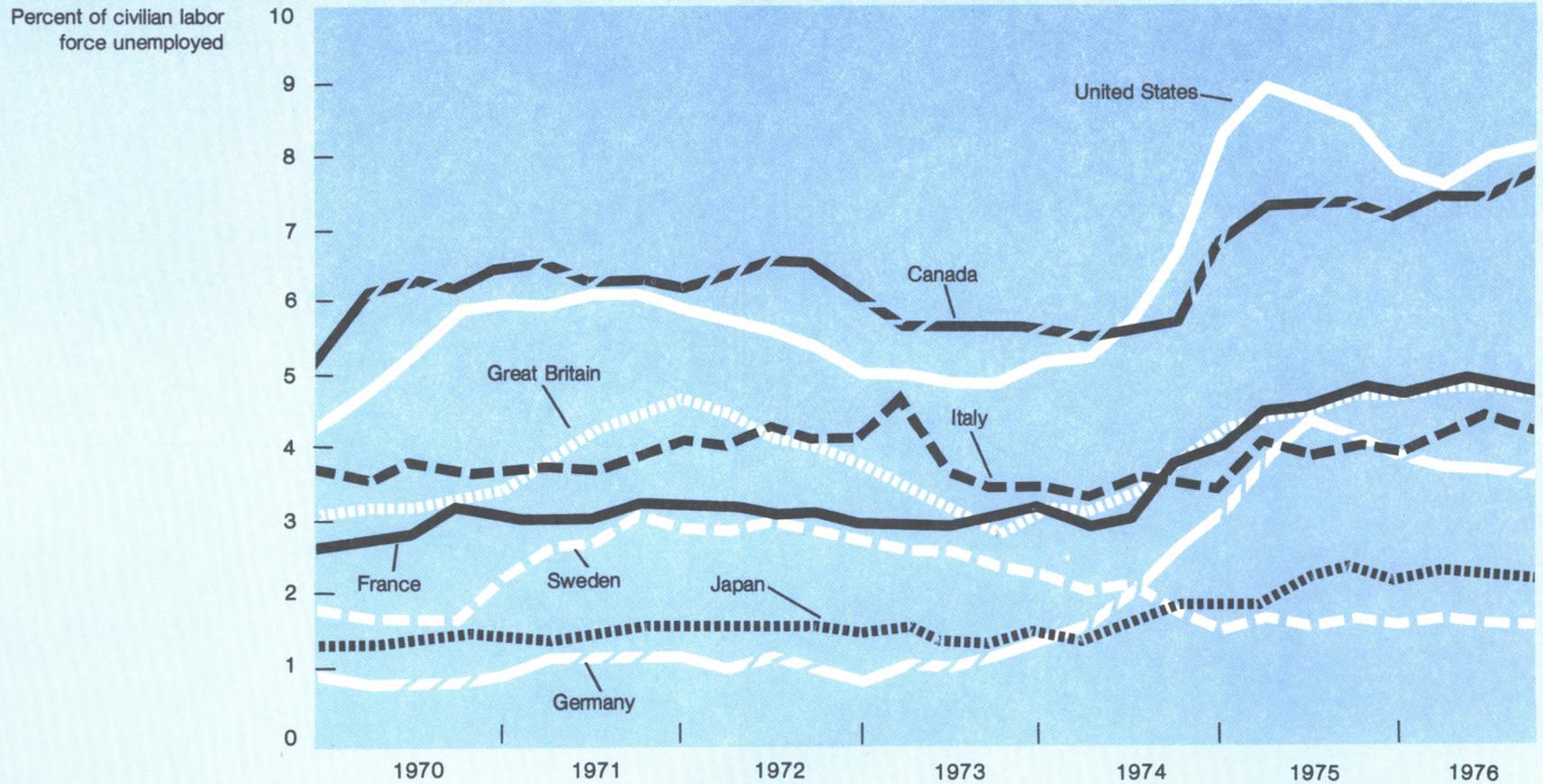
The Northeast and West Have Relatively More Joblessness Than the Rest of the Nation

The relatively high unemployment in the industrialized Northeast stems from generally sluggish growth in manufacturing, the region's major economic activity, and a decline in construction employment. Factors contributing to high unemployment in the West are the relatively larger numbers of people who migrate into the region looking for jobs, the younger age composition of the population, and the greater prevalence of highly seasonal industries, such as logging and food harvesting and processing.

The United States and Canada Historically Have Had Higher Unemployment Rates than Other Industrialized Countries

Unemployment is not estimated in the same way in all countries nor are the concepts identical from country to country. However, after adjustment to the extent possible for these differences, the United States and Canada have averaged consistently higher unemployment rates than other industrialized countries. Economic, cultural, and political factors have all contributed to this pattern.

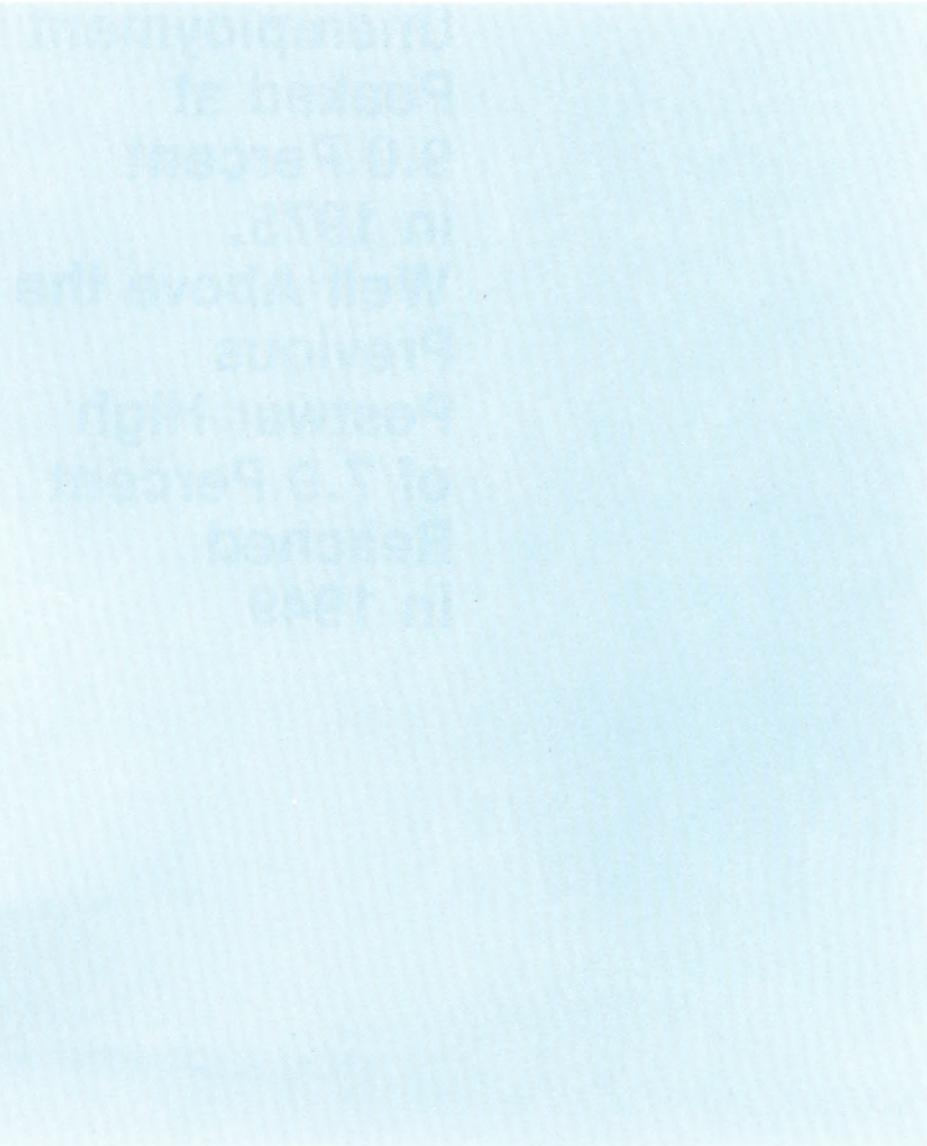
Chart 22. Unemployment rates in eight industrialized nations, quarterly averages, 1970-76



Part II: The Cyclical Behavior of Unemployment

Unemployment has fluctuated markedly over the post-World War II period, with certain important patterns consistently recurring during slack periods in the economy. Even before unemployment begins to rise, the number of hours in the workweek usually declines as producers take the less drastic course of cutting hours rather than laying off workers. As conditions worsen, however, job cutbacks become more widespread and the proportion of the unemployed who have lost their last job will usually rise. The average duration of unem-

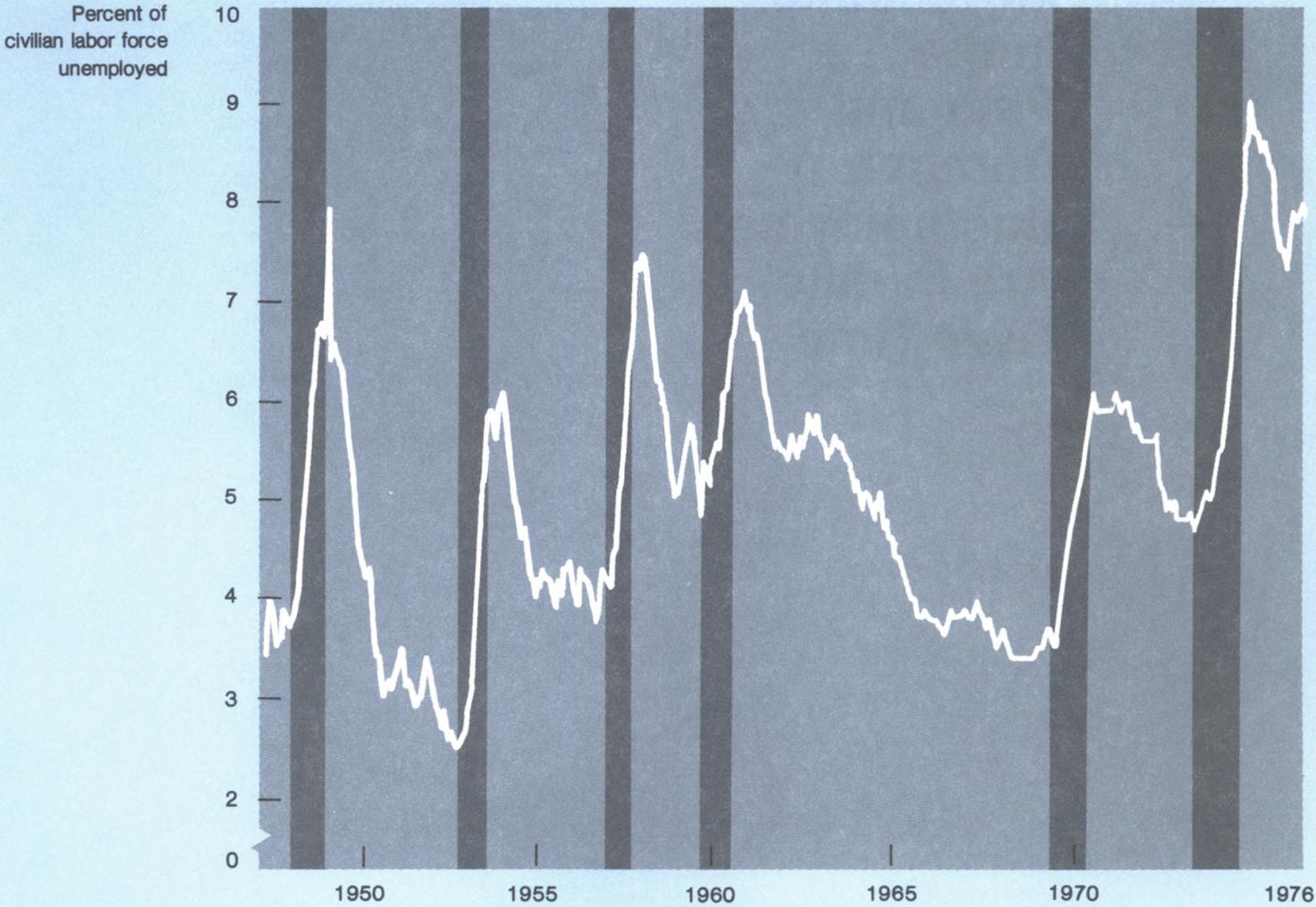
ployment will also rise as the recession continues, although initially it may be unchanged or even decline as newly unemployed workers lower the average. As high unemployment persists, some workers may become discouraged and stop looking for work entirely. All of these factors tend to be reversed when the economy begins to improve and employers begin to expand their work force. The following charts depict the impact of the recent recession and recovery. (All data are seasonally adjusted.)



**Unemployment
Peaked at
9.0 Percent
in 1975,
Well Above the
Previous
Postwar High
of 7.9 Percent
Reached
in 1949**

There have been six business downturns in the post-World War II period, each marked by a high level of unemployment. The downturn during 1973-75 was particularly severe, as unemployment reached its highest level in 35 years. The level of unemployment continued to be high in the recovery, despite an upsurge in jobholding, as an expansion in labor force growth tended to slow the drop in the unemployment rate.

Chart 23. Unemployment rate, 1948-76

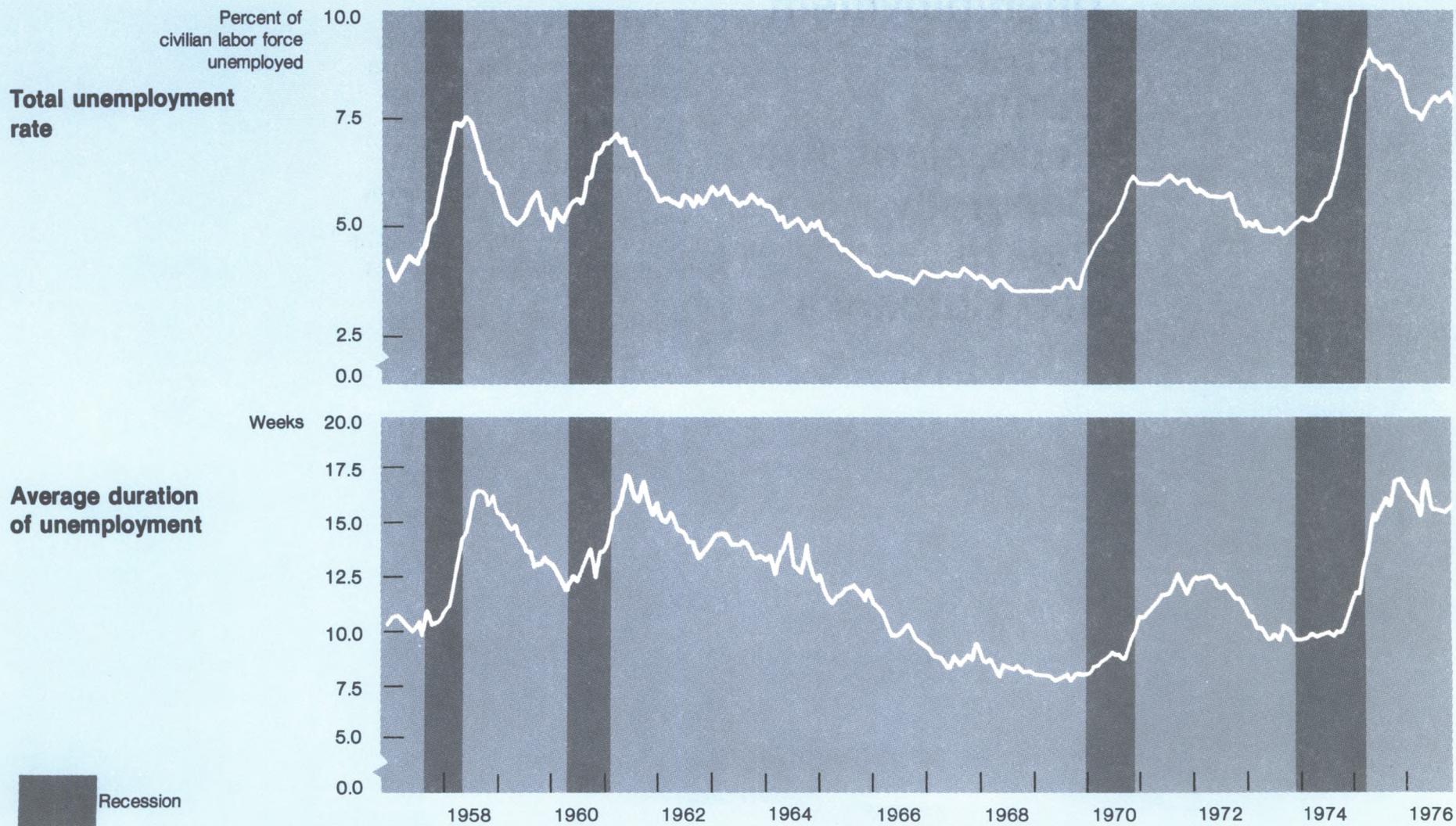


Note: Recession periods determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Movements in the Rate and Duration of Unemployment Are Parallel Over Time

Changes in the incidence of unemployment are affected both by the flow into and out of unemployment and by changes in the length of time persons remain unemployed. These changes tend to move in tandem, but duration changes lag slightly. Thus, when economic conditions worsen, there are increases in the number of persons losing jobs and in the number unable to find work after entering the labor force. There is also an increase in the duration of joblessness among those who enter the unemployment stream.

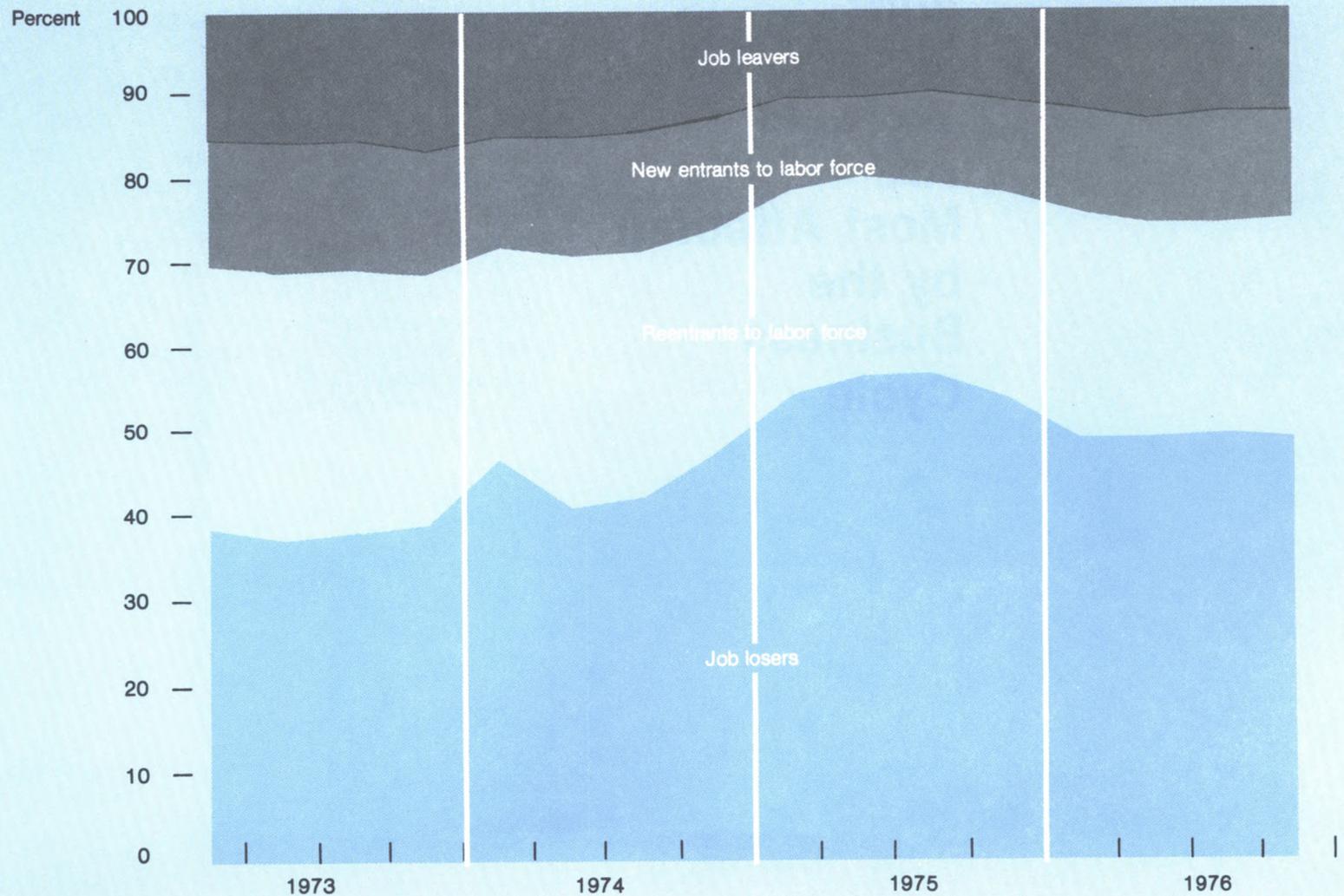
Chart 24. Unemployment rate and the average duration of unemployment, 1957-76



Unemployment Increases During Recessions Are Generally Due to Job Cutbacks

Although the numbers of job losers, reentrants, and new entrants into unemployment all rise during recessions, the proportion who have lost their job increases the most. The number of persons who leave a job and become unemployed is not generally affected by the business cycle. During the fourth quarter of 1976, about half of the unemployed had lost their last job, a very high proportion for an expansionary period.

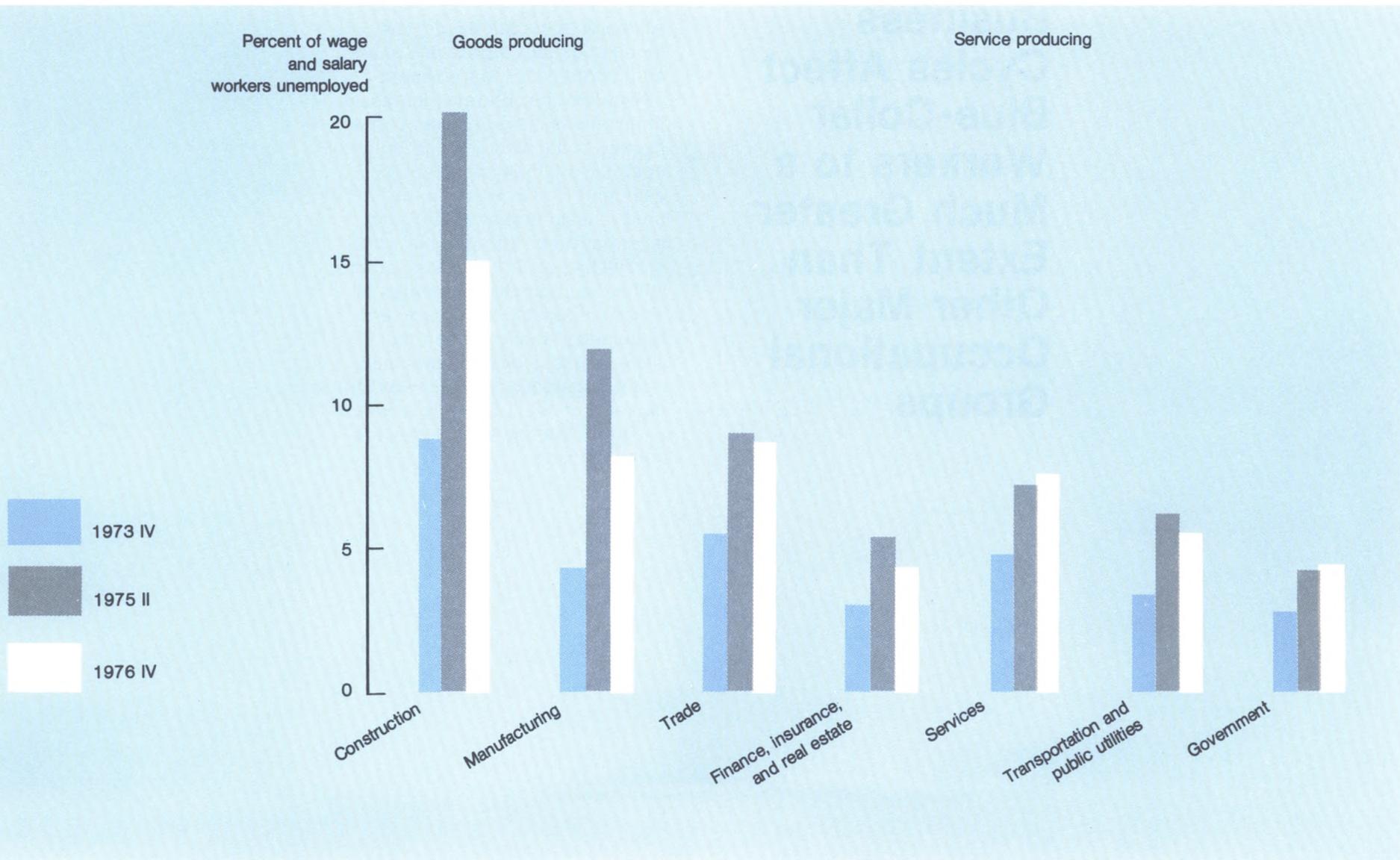
Chart 25. Percentage distribution of the unemployed by status when entering unemployment stream, quarterly averages, 1973-76



Construction and Manufacturing Workers Are Most Affected by the Business Cycle

Recessions almost always affect goods-producing industries to a greater extent than service-producing industries. This primarily stems from the fact that much of the goods consumed during recessions come from stored inventories that are not replaced by new production. In the case of services, however, consumption and output must coincide since inventories are essentially nonexistent. This pattern is illustrated in the most recent recession and recovery periods in which the strongest cyclical swings have occurred in construction and manufacturing.

Chart 26. Unemployment rates of wage and salary workers by major nonagricultural industry, selected quarters, 1973, 1975, and 1976



Business Cycles Affect Blue-Collar Workers to a Much Greater Extent Than Other Major Occupational Groups

All major occupational groups faced unusually high levels of unemployment during the recent downturn. The greatest increase in joblessness, however, was borne by blue-collar workers, particularly operatives—the typical factory assembly line workers. In the post-recession year of 1976, joblessness among blue-collar workers fell by over 2 percentage points, while the unemployment rates of white-collar and service workers remained virtually unchanged. Nevertheless, the unemployment rate of blue-collar workers was still higher than that of service workers and more than twice that of white-collar workers.

Chart 27. Unemployment rates of major occupational groups, annual averages, 1973, 1975, and 1976

Percent of experienced workers unemployed

15
10
5
0

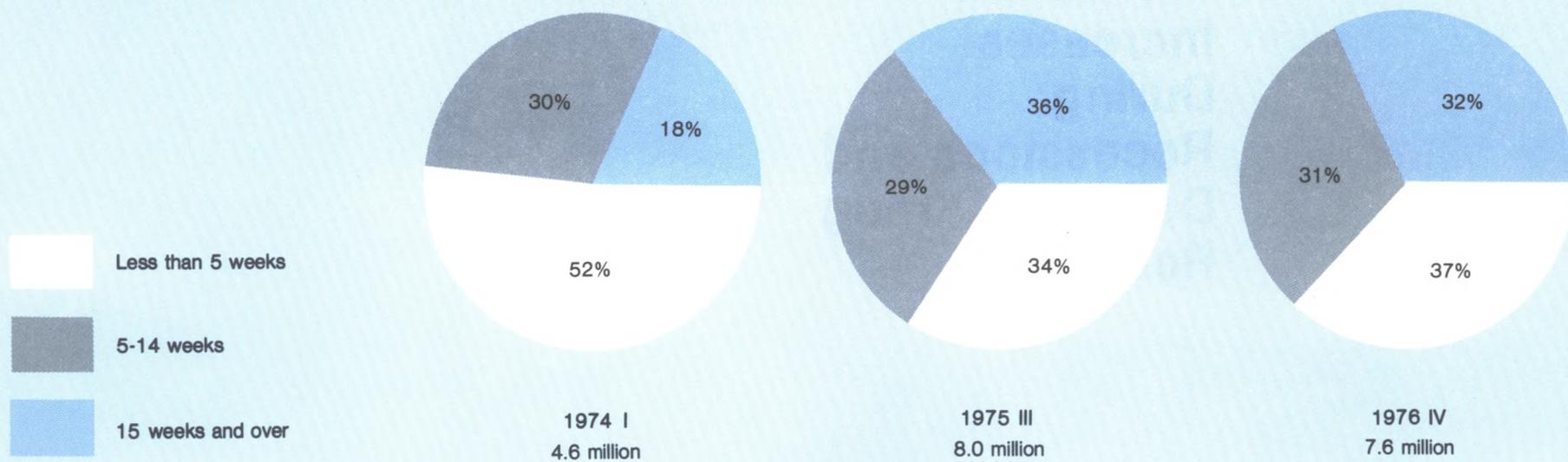
1973
1975
1976

Blue collar Service White collar

The Duration of Unemployment Varies Over the Course of the Business Cycle

As economic conditions improve, jobs become easier to find and the number of newly unemployed usually decreases. A drop in the number of newly unemployed persons, however, initially tends to raise the average duration of unemployment and only after a period of time will the presence of more jobs tend to lower the proportion of the unemployed in the longer duration categories. This is illustrated by the current recovery period in which the proportion of the unemployed who were jobless for 15 weeks or longer has been slow to decline despite a gain of 3 million jobs between the third quarter of 1975 and the fourth quarter of 1976.

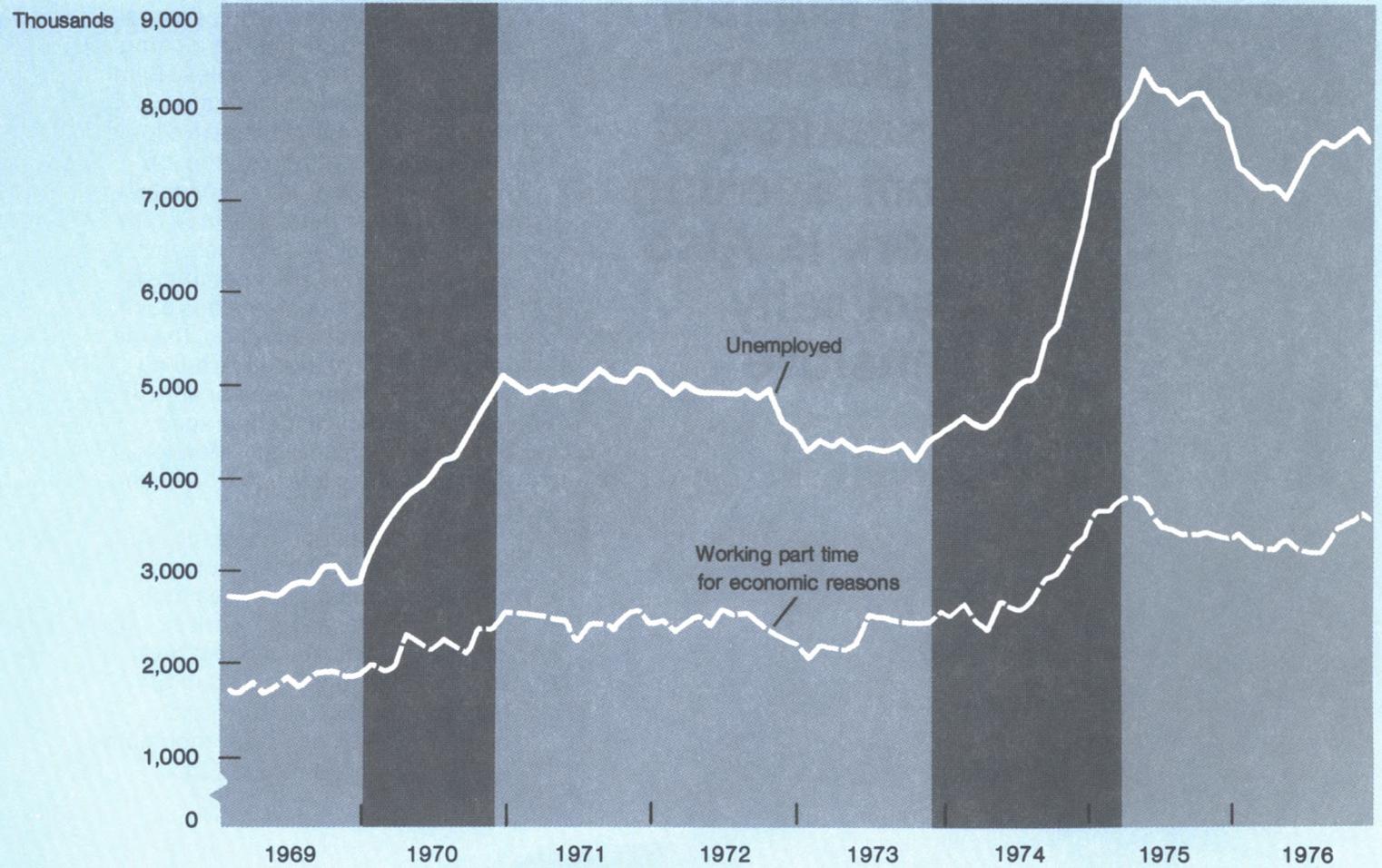
Chart 28. Duration of unemployment, selected quarters, 1974, 1975, and 1976



The Number of People Who Are Involuntarily on a Reduced Workweek Increases During Recessions and Declines During Recoveries

Employed workers who work less than 35 hours a week but want to work full time are classified as on part-time schedules for economic reasons. The increase in their numbers during recessions indicates that, in addition to the unemployed, other workers are adversely affected by downturns in the economy.

Chart 29. Unemployed persons and the number working part time due to economic reasons, 1969-76

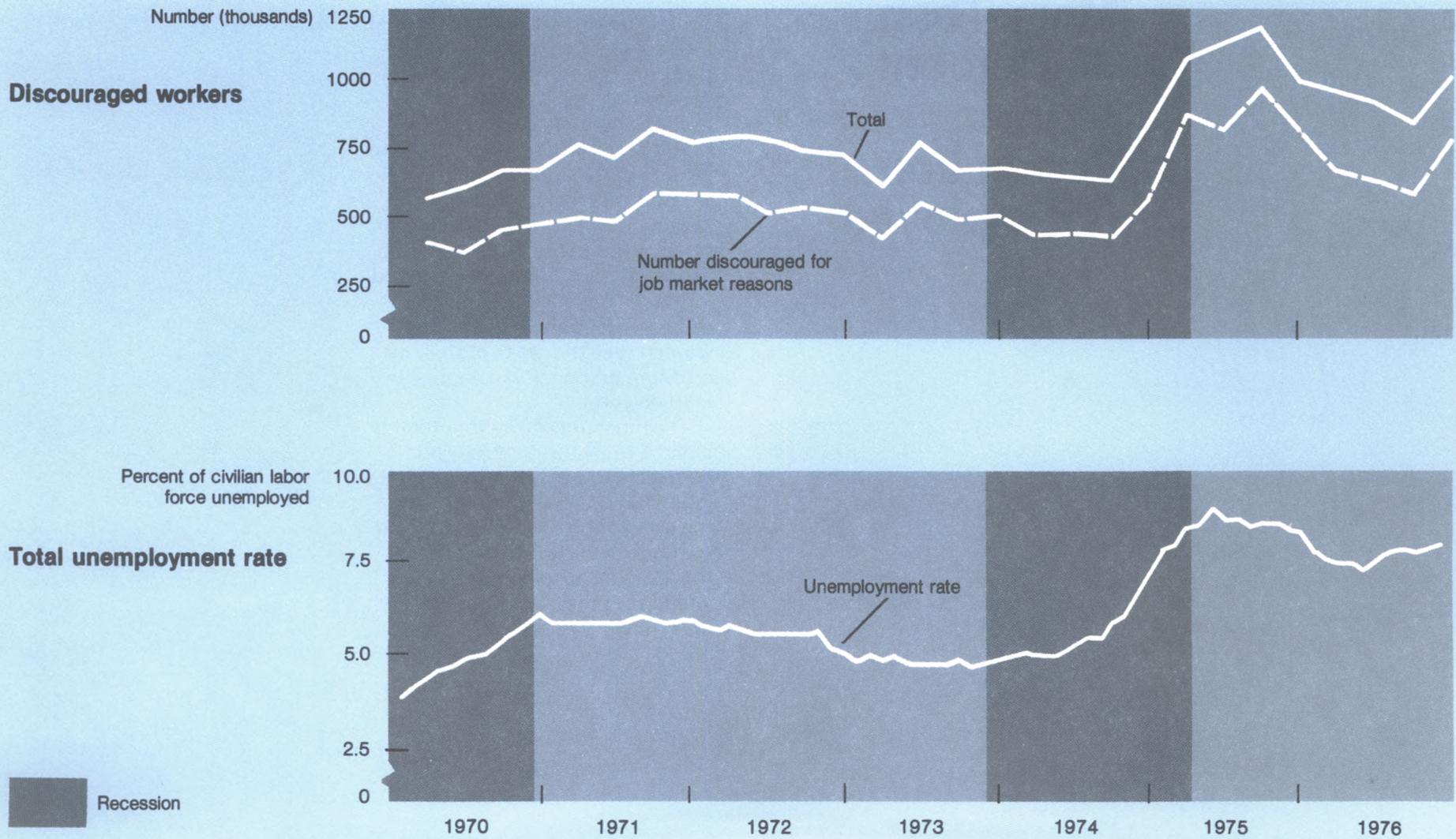


The Number of Persons Discouraged from Seeking Work Is Also Cyclically Sensitive

Discouraged workers are persons who want a job but are not looking for work because they believe it impossible to find work. Because they are not engaged in active job search, they do not meet the job market test and are therefore classified as not in the labor force rather than unemployed. While some of these persons are discouraged because of personal reasons such as age or lack of education, the majority simply believe there are no jobs in their line of work or area. It is this category of discouraged workers which normally increases or decreases in line with the unemployment rate.

During the latest recession, the number of discouraged workers citing job market factors as their reason for not seeking work exceeded 900,000, the highest level since these statistics were first collected in 1967. By the fourth quarter of 1976, however, their number had fallen below 800,000.

Chart 30. Number of discouraged workers and unemployment rate, quarterly averages, 1970-76

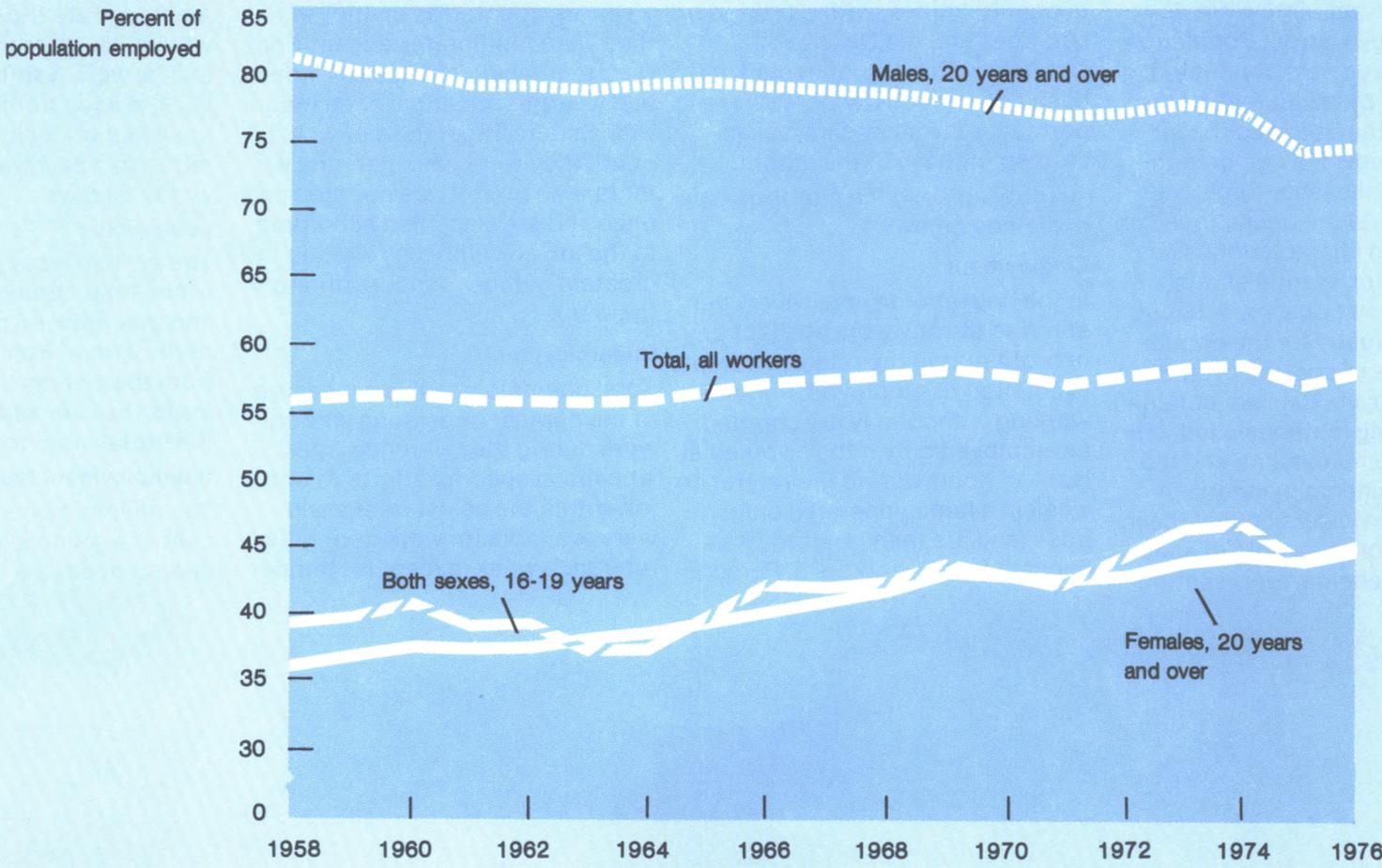


More Than 55 Percent of the Population Is Employed

To help put the preceding material into perspective, this last chart presents the ratio of civilian employment to the total noninstitutional population. Over the post-World War II period, the overall proportion of the population that is working has remained about steady. There have been, however, offsetting underlying movements, as the ratio for adult men declined (primarily because of earlier retirements) while the ratio for women rose (because of their increasing propensity to engage in market work).

The measure shows that for the past 10 years the economy has been able to consistently generate jobs for more than 55 percent of the population despite short-term cyclical reverses, strong population growth, and substantial changes in the labor force attachment of various worker groups.

Chart 31. Employment-population ratios by sex and age, 1958-76



Appendix: Current Population Survey

Statistics on the employment status of the population are derived from the Current Population Survey. This survey, conducted each month by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, provides comprehensive data on the labor force, the employed, and the unemployed, including such characteristics as age, sex, color, marital status, household relationship, occupation, and industry for the population 16 years of age and over. For the unemployed, data are obtained on jobseeking methods used, reasons for unemployment, and the duration of unemployment. Trained interviewers collect the information from a sample of about 47,000 households, representing

461 areas in 923 counties and independent cities, with coverage in 50 States and the District of Columbia. The data collected are based on the activity or status reported for the calendar week including the 12th of the month.

Terms used in the chartbook are explained below:

Employment

In the household survey every person who did any work at all for pay or profit during the reference week is counted as employed. Persons working without pay are counted as employed *only* if they worked at least 15 hours during the reference week in a family-operated enterprise (and are then referred to as “unpaid family workers”). Persons

who did *no* work at all during the week are counted as employed *if* they were temporarily absent from their regular job because of illness, bad weather, vacation, or an industrial dispute, regardless of whether or not they were paid. Persons with more than one job are counted *only* once and are classified according to the job at which they worked the greatest number of hours during the week.

Unemployment

Total unemployment is a measure of the number of persons without work during the reference week, who made specific efforts to find a job within the past 4 weeks and were available for work during the reference week (except for tempor-

ary illness). Also included as unemployed are those who did not work at all, were available for work, and (a) were waiting to be called back to a job from which they had been laid off, or (b) were waiting to report to a new wage or salary job within 30 days.

Labor Force

The civilian labor force is the sum of the total number of employed and unemployed people. Members of the Armed Forces are excluded from the civilian labor force by definition but are added to it to yield the “total labor force.”

Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate is the percent of a group’s labor force that is unemployed.

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