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attracting and holding labor in colorado agricultural cooperatives

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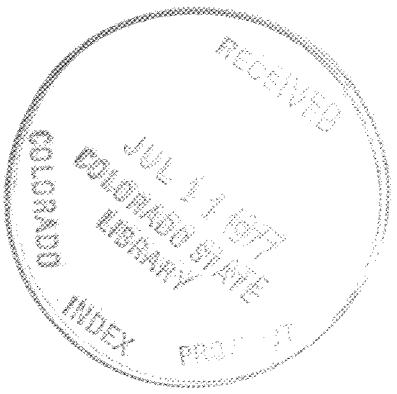
ATTRACTING AND HOLDING LABOR IN COLORADO AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES

By

Forrest E. Walters and Larry Marks*



*Professor and former Graduate Research Assistant, respectively, Department of Economics, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado

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ATTRACTING AND HOLDING LABOR IN COLORADO AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES

Colorado agricultural cooperatives have a unique problem in acquiring and holding labor, at all levels, due to competition from growing Front Range industry and other agricultural sectors of Colorado. The Colorado labor situation suggests that monitoring wage and employment levels of the competing Front Range industries and evaluating employee benefits are probably necessary. As indicated by a sample of 21 cooperative firms in rural areas, two-thirds of the cooperative firms outside the Front Range Area of Colorado were having labor problems that were to some extent disruptive to normal business activity. Of the seven cooperative firms who did not indicate that they had disruptive labor problems, six either used contract labor or offered a program of employee benefits.

The increasing size of the Front Range labor market is shown in Table 1. Employment increased roughly 58 percent from 1965 to 1972.

TABLE 1
Front Range Employment,[1,2] 1956-1972.
(Thousands of Employees and Employing Units)

Year	Reported Employees	Reporting Units[3]
1965	289	24
1972	457	28
% Increase[4]	58%	15%

[1]Includes Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, El Paso, Jefferson, Larimer, Pueblo, and Weld Counties.

[2]County Business Patterns, 1966-1973: U.S. Summary, Volume 1, and Colorado Volume 7.

[3]Firms that return sales and income tax forms.

[4]Accounts for rounding of data.

The increase in employment by the Front Range area was above national trends. Further, other studies indicate that the Front Range draws employees from rural areas of Colorado.[1]

As employment in the Front Range industries has increased, rural employment in Colorado has also increased, as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Employment in Rural Colorado,[1,2] 1965-1972.
(Thousands of Employees and Employing Units)

Year	Reported Employees	Reporting Units
1965	10.2	16.4
1972	14.1	15.8
% Change[3]	37%	-3.5%

[1]Includes Baca, Cheyenne, Mesa, Moffat, Montezuma, and Sedgwick Counties.

[2]County Business Patterns, 1966-1973: Colorado, Vol. 7.

[3]Accounts for rounding of data.

[1]Colorado Rural Development.

As demand for rural labor has increased, the qualification of the rural labor force has increased as indicated by comparative educational levels. During 1967, the average rural laborer's educational level was 8.6 years; by 1972, it had reached 10.7 years of formal education.[2] The increased educational level may lead to additional employment alternatives. For that reason, rural labor drawn into cooperative employment may not feel committed.

Monitoring Wage and Employment Levels

With the increased demand for labor in Front Range industries, a gap has developed between the average wage rates paid to laborers in agricultural cooperatives as compared to Denver union rates or hourly earnings of laborers by categories. Responses from the survey indicated that agricultural cooperatives were paying about $2.38 per hour during 1973/74. A more inclusive survey by the Colorado Cooperative Council indicated an average rate of $2.45 during the same period. As shown by Table 3, the sample of the same 21 firms taken in 1975 indicated an average rate of $2.75 per hour.

TABLE 3
Wage Estimates for Colorado Manufacturing Workers and Agricultural Cooperative Workers
(Dollars Per Hour)

Year	Colorado Agricultural Cooperatives	Year	Production Workers Colorado Manufacturing[1]
1973/74	$2.38-$2.45	1973	$4.15
1974/75	$2.75	1974	$4.40-$4.70 (estimated)

[1]Employment and Earnings, 1964-74, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

A gap of as much as $.75 per hour could probably exist. Workers located in rural areas would probably be reluctant to move due to higher living costs in the Front Range area and probably undesirable living conditions. However, the current gap will probably encourage movement to the Front Range area. Employees of five cooperatives indicated that they would move if wages in the Front Range area were higher. However, they were reluctant to specify an exact amount. They indicated that $.75 per hour might be enough to encourgage them to move.

Table 4 shows Denver union rates and Table 5 shows hourly earnings by type of worker for the Denver area. Earnings in Table 5 are for 1972 and are taken directly from the Area Wage Survey, Denver, Colorado Metropolitan Area, December 1972. Rough estimates can be made for 1975 by adding 20 percent to each rate shown in the Area Wage Survey (Table 5). Attitudes of workers with lower paid skills in the $2-$3 per hour range indicate that rural employers must match the Denver rates to discourage movement to Denver. But, as noted above, workers with skills in the $4-$5 will accept as much as $.75 per hour less in order to remain in the rural area.

[2]Farm Labor Developments, 1968, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.

TABLE 4
Selected Colorado Wage Rates

Year	Denver Average Union Rates[1]		Production Workers Colorado Manufacturing[2]
	Helpers and Laborers	Local Truck Drivers	
1964	$2.95	$2.85	$2.83
1965	3.15	3.01	2.84
1966	3.31	3.18	2.89
1967	3.48	3.35	3.05
1968	3.62	3.48	3.24
1969	3.82	3.66	3.47
1970	4.02	4.02	3.57
1971	4.35	4.55	3.87
1972	4.37	4.81	4.05
1973	----[3]	----[3]	4.15

[1]U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Handbook of Labor Statistics 1973, Bulletin 1970, Table 96, p. 218.

[2]As reported in Employment and Earnings, 1964-74.

[3]Not available at the time of this writing.

Tables 3 and 4 are taken from the Area Wage Survey for Denver and the Handbook of Labor Statistics. They are published annually and the wage rates reported are for one and two years prior. Table 6 is taken from the Employment and Earnings report and can be used to indicate all the changes in wage levels on a current basis--up roughly 20 percent from 1972, the time of the Area Wage Survey.

In short, it is suggested that the Area Wage Survey be used to provide the base wage for an occupation. Employment and Earnings could then be referrred to periodically to detect current trends, and the Handbook of Labor Statistics would be used at the end to verify the position of the agricultural cooperative.

Monitoring Employee Benefits

Benefit programs are usually necessary to encourage laborers to consider their "job" as a career. Retirement programs are especially useful to promote employment longevity. Some boards of directors tend to discourage retirement programs because most members are farm producers, and farm producers do not for the most part maintain formal retirement programs. However, nearly all farm producers accumulate appreciating assets in land and whole life insurance programs that can be used for retirement if they desire and that can be inherited by the next generation. They also carry Social Security programs.

Agricultural cooperatives are currently building employee benefit programs as shown by Table 7.

The employee benefits offered by agricultural cooperatives are not at the levels of national averages yet. However, compared to farm workers, agricultural cooperative workers are in an enviable position. Table 8 shows the national levels in terms of percentage of employees receiving benefits.

Publications provided on employee benefit programs have been available for some time. Two publications published by the Farmer Cooperative Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture are: Employee Incentive Programs, General Report 104, August 1962; and Retirement Plans of Farmer Cooperatives, FCS Circular 21, September 1957.

An Alternative

A possible method of alleviating the labor problem burden on managers and allowing them to concentrate on the operations of the cooperative would be for the cooperative to affiliate with a larger association. That association would cope with the recruiting, training, and other problems of personnel management.

This would allow compensation and incentives to be standardized in a system that could be responsive to changes and trends in the field of employee relations. It would also allow employees to anticipate a continuous career in cooperatives, yet would allow them some mobility through transfers which would be made possible by a system such as this. Furthermore, it would allow for a centralized agency which could advertise for, and recruit, labor on a statewide basis. That convenience alone would allow an infinite advantage in the competition for labor.

Summary

A number of the Colorado agricultural cooperatives have some difficulty in acquiring and maintaining acceptable labor. It appears that major reasons for this are the strong, competitive demand for labor in the growing Front Range industry sector and the greater use of hired labor on farms and agriculture-related industries in rural Colorado.

The drawing power of Front Range industries and other agricultural employment suggests that agricultural cooperatives in Colorado should monitor wage rates and employee benefit programs of their competitors for labor. Through monitory efforts, agricultural cooperatives can be more successful in offering wages and benefit programs that will hold current employees and be attractive to job seekers. This report provides information about and a procedure for monitoring wage rates paid to employees in Colorado.

TABLE 5[1]
Custodial and Material Movement Occupations: Hourly Earnings (Average Straight-Time Hourly Earnings of Workers in Selected Occupations by Industry Divison, Denver, Colorado, December 1972)

Sex, Occupation, and Industry Division	Number of Workers	Hourly Earnings[3]			$1.60 and Under $1.70	$1.70 $1.80	$1.80 $1.90	$1.90 $2.00	$2.00 $2.20	$2.20 $2.40	$2.40 $2.60	$2.60 $2.80	$2.80 $3.00	$3.00 $3.20	$3.20 $3.40	$3.40 $3.60	$3.60 $3.80	$3.80 $4.00	$4.00 $4.20	$4.20 $4.40	$4.40 $4.60	$4.60 $4.80	$4.80 $5.00	$5.00 $5.20	$5.20 $5.40	$5.40 $5.60	$5.60 $5.80
		Mean	Median	Middle Range																							
Men																											
Janitors, Porters, and Cleaners	2,577	$2.58	$2.44	$2.09-$2.84	22	8	66	153	534	208	800	132	93	76	66	92	75	192	31	5	9	1	-	10	-	-	4
Manufacturing	429	3.51	3.59	3.29- 3.93	6	-	-	2	-	10	28	14	9	33	46	71	33	157	10	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	-
Nonmanufacturing	2,148	2.40	2.41	2.07- 2.49	16	8	66	151	534	198	772	118	84	43	20	21	42	35	21	5	9	1	-	-	-	-	4
Public Utilities	146	3.68	3.68	3.55- 3.88	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	4	1	15	40	35	16	1	7	1	-	-	-	-	4
Retail Trade	362	2.47	2.29	2.09- 2.93	16	-	-	4	107	73	14	40	53	32	9	5	-	-	5	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Laborers, Material Handling	2,216	4.05	3.89	3.33- 4.50	-	1	1	2	45	45	26	74	35	225	125	215	115	278	319	137	73	-	-	21	3	-	476
Manufacturing	463	3.62	3.82	3.33- 3.89	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	53	2	33	48	25	28	191	76	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nonmanufacturing	1,753	4.17	4.05	3.34- 5.70	-	1	1	2	45	45	26	21	33	192	77	190	87	87	243	137	66	-	-	21	3	-	476
Public Utilities	546	5.53	5.74	5.71- 5.77	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	4	25	2	1	6	1	-	-	21	3	-	476
Retail Trade	460	3.25	3.53	2.61- 3.63	-	1	1	2	45	40	26	9	4	46	1	162	26	25	36	19	17	-	-	-	-	-	-
Order Fillers	1,931	3.70	4.01	3.33- 4.15	-	-	-	-	26	12	84	51	98	150	168	228	27	88	635	269	3	36	36	-	-	-	-
Manufacturing	540	3.90	3.85	3.55- 4.18	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-	7	16	23	170	17	49	142	12	-	36	56	-	-	-	-
Nonmanufacturing	1,391	3.63	4.01	3.14- 4.11	-	-	-	-	26	12	72	51	91	134	145	58	10	39	493	257	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Packers, Shipping	620	3.55	3.53	2.88- 4.28	-	-	-	13	22	23	2	69	105	45	14	40	12	24	1	120	34	96	-	-	-	-	-
Manufacturing	303	3.64	4.20	2.95- 4.26	-	-	-	-	-	13	2	58	6	29	8	4	6	24	1	120	32	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nonmanufacturing	317	3.46	3.04	2.87- 4.72	-	-	-	13	22	10	-	1	99	16	6	36	6	-	-	-	2	96	-	-	-	-	-
Receiving Clerks	311	3.61	3.71	3.23- 4.08	-	-	-	-	-	9	20	2	18	14	47	26	36	57	34	20	10	17	-	1	-	-	-
Manufacturing	92	3.86	3.89	3.64- 4.13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	19	12	31	27	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nonmanufacturing	219	3.50	3.39	3.09- 3.90	-	-	-	-	-	9	20	2	18	14	47	7	24	26	7	18	9	17	-	1	-	-	-
Retail Trade	88	3.52	3.73	2.87- 4.29	-	-	-	-	-	9	9	1	6	9	2	1	19	2	7	12	9	1	-	1	-	-	-
Shipping Clerks	172	3.56	3.80	3.41- 3.94	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	11	-	15	2	36	11	50	24	9	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Manufacturing	42	3.93	3.93	3.85- 4.12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	25	12	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nonmanufacturing	130	3.44	3.48	3.17- 3.87	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	11	-	15	2	34	9	25	12	8	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Shipping and Receiving Clerks	204	3.68	3.63	3.22- 4.30	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	31	16	31	18	17	29	8	38	-	7	4	-	3	-	-
Manufacturing	83	3.55	3.61	2.96- 3.99	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	29	5	-	7	10	13	8	3	-	4	4	-	-	-	-
Nonmanufacturing	121	3.77	3.66	3.32- 4.33	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	11	31	11	7	16	-	35	-	3	-	-	3	-	-
Retail Trade	62	3.96	4.31	3.58- 4.36	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	5	4	5	-	10	-	35	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Truck Drivers	4,177	4.44	4.59	3.64- 5.18	-	-	-	-	31	32	121	115	176	245	145	167	160	170	229	260	255	331	408	360	-	5	967
Manufacturing	883	4.41	4.49	3.86- 5.14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	77	2	27	3	59	149	66	5	57	-	68	360	-	5	-
Nonmanufacturing	3,294	4.45	4.59	3.47- 5.71	-	-	-	-	31	32	121	110	99	243	118	164	101	21	163	255	198	331	340	-	-	-	967
Public Utilities	1,604	5.29	5.72	4.75- 5.76	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	34	1	4	116	165	175	142	-	-	-	967
Retail Trade	662	4.04	4.22	3.43- 4.92	-	-	-	-	12	10	21	24	25	53	3	79	9	-	87	83	20	38	198	-	-	-	-
Truck Drivers, Light (Under 1-1½ Tons)	613	3.30	3.03	2.75- 3.52	-	-	-	-	31	22	55	84	71	173	1	55	3	5	5	16	-	6	24	-	-	2	60
Manufacturing	51	4.10	4.80	3.19- 4.86	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	7	1	-	-	3	4	4	-	-	-	24	-	-	2	-
Nonmanufacturing	562	3.23	3.02	2.74- 3.20	-	-	-	-	31	22	55	79	64	172	1	55	-	1	-	16	-	6	-	-	-	-	60
Truck Drivers, Medium (1½ to and Including 4 Tons	1,801	4.36	4.39	3.44- 5.71	-	-	-	-	-	10	66	31	105	72	131	109	72	104	79	136	163	175	44	-	-	2	502
Manufacturing	236	3.75	3.86	2.90- 4.01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	70	1	14	-	8	84	13	-	-	-	44	-	-	2	-
Nonmanufacturing	1,565	4.46	4.53	3.47- 5.72	-	-	-	-	-	10	66	31	35	71	117	109	64	20	66	136	163	175	-	-	-	-	502
Public Utilities	987	5.14	5.70	4.56- 5.75	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31	-	4	112	163	175	-	-	-	-	502
Retail Trade	238	3.25	3.28	2.96- 3.49	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	21	25	53	3	79	9	-	6	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Truck Drivers, Heavy (Over 4 Tons, Trailer Type	1,041	5.05	4.94	4.49- 5.74	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	33	13	95	50	78	22	340	-	-	1	405
Nonmanufacturing	950	5.13	4.96	4.82- 5.74	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33	-	80	49	21	22	340	-	-	-	405
Public Utilities	550	5.52	5.73	4.89- 5.77	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	142	-	-	-	415

[1]U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Area Wage Survey, Denver, Colorado, Metropolitan Area, December, 1972, Bulletin 1775-35, March 1974, p. 14.

TABLE 6[1]
Establishment Data—State and Area Hours and Earnings (Gross Hours and Earnings of Production Workers on Manufacturing Payrolls, by State and Selected Areas)

State and Area	Average Weekly Earnings			Average Weekly Hours			Average Hourly Earnings		
	June 1974	May 1975	June 1975P	June 1974	May 1975	June 1975P	June 1974	May 1975	June 1975P
Alabama	$152.93	$160.34	$159.54	41.0	39.3	39.2	$3.73	$4.08	$4.07
Birmingham	177.80	192.57	194.93	40.5	39.3	39.7	4.39	4.90	4.91
Mobile	180.13	209.32	196.49	41.6	43.7	40.1	4.33	4.79	4.90
Alaska	272.00	270.29		40.0	35.8		6.80	7.55	
Arizona	172.73	184.70	186.05	39.8	38.4	38.6	4.34	4.81	4.82
Phoenix	175.71	188.47	189.44	40.3	38.7	38.9	4.36	4.87	4.87
Tucson	183.82	187.02	189.24	40.4	38.8	39.1	4.55	4.82	4.84
Arkansas	133.32	136.64	138.84	40.4	38.6	39.0	3.30	3.54	3.56
Fayetteville-Springdale	123.82	125.45	129.35	41.0	38.6	39.8	3.02	3.25	3.25
Fort Smith	129.69	133.92	135.42	39.3	37.2	37.0	3.30	3.60	3.66
Little Rock-North Little Rock	147.02	154.01	157.19	40.5	38.6	39.2	3.63	3.99	4.01
Pine Bluff	160.74	156.08	168.39	40.9	37.7	38.8	3.93	4.14	4.34
California	188.94	201.88	203.97	40.2	39.2	39.3	4.70	5.15	5.19
Anaheim-Santa Ana-Garden Grove	176.99	188.65	191.68	40.5	39.8	40.1	4.37	4.74	4.78
Bakersfield	195.21	200.85	199.56	40.5	39.0	38.9	4.82	5.15	5.13
Fresno	162.33	176.73	176.32	39.4	39.1	38.0	4.12	4.52	4.64
Los Angeles-Long Beach	180.63	192.18	192.57	40.5	39.3	39.3	4.46	4.89	4.90
Modesto	179.10	189.00	192.79	38.6	37.5	38.1	4.64	5.04	5.06
Oxnard-Simi Valley-Ventura	163.17	177.45	181.43	39.7	39.0	39.7	4.11	4.55	4.57
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario	190.48	203.94	205.88	40.7	39.6	39.9	4.68	5.15	5.16
Sacramento	197.51	212.80	220.38	38.5	38.0	38.8	5.13	5.60	5.68
Salinas-Seaside-Monterey	173.82	183.55	184.61	38.8	38.4	38.3	4.48	4.78	4.82
San Diego	187.78	189.88	194.43	39.7	37.6	38.5	4.73	5.05	5.05
San Francisco-Oakland	218.96	235.39	239.78	39.1	38.4	38.8	5.60	6.13	6.18
San Jose	196.18	215.67	218.79	40.2	39.0	39.0	4.88	5.53	5.61
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc	160.65	173.18	176.18	37.8	38.4	38.3	4.25	4.51	4.60
Santa Rosa	180.85	182.66	186.50	39.4	36.9	37.3	4.59	4.95	5.00
Stockton	199.36	211.14	218.79	39.4	38.6	39.0	5.06	5.47	5.61
Vallejo-Fairfield-Napa	188.18	219.85	206.45	38.8	39.4	37.4	4.85	5.58	5.52
Colorado	181.65	196.21		40.1	39.8		4.53	4.93	
Denver-Boulder	186.80	195.50		40.0	39.1		4.67	5.00	
Connecticut	183.90	188.25	191.68	41.7	39.8	40.1	4.41	4.73	4.78
Bridgeport	181.86	182.46	184.28	42.0	40.1	40.5	4.33	4.55	4.55
Hartford	197.86	209.80	214.56	43.2	41.3	41.5	4.58	5.08	5.17
New Britain	192.04	187.53	191.97	42.3	39.9	40.5	4.54	4.70	4.74
New Haven	174.53	182.28	188.73	40.4	39.2	39.4	4.32	4.65	4.79
Stamford	198.37	200.88	199.58	41.5	40.5	40.4	4.78	4.96	4.94
Waterbury	167.84	161.95	164.40	42.6	39.5	40.0	3.94	4.10	4.11
Delaware	183.37	192.94	196.21	40.3	38.9	39.4	4.55	4.96	4.98
Wilmington	205.77	213.62	216.16	39.8	38.7	38.6	5.17	5.52	5.60
District of Columbia:									
Washington SMSA	196.86	213.38	216.19	38.3	37.5	38.4	5.14	5.69	5.63
Florida	152.25	156.81	160.78	40.6	39.3	39.7	3.75	3.99	4.05
Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood	154.09	157.56	157.60	41.2	39.0	39.5	3.74	4.04	3.99
Jacksonville	181.01	189.20	198.13	41.9	40.6	41.8	4.32	4.66	4.74
Miami	139.91	143.56	144.34	39.3	38.8	38.8	3.56	3.70	3.72
Orlando	159.51	162.41	162.81	40.9	40.4	40.6	3.90	4.02	4.01
Pensacola	181.12	182.05	193.39	44.5	38.9	40.8	4.07	4.68	4.74
Tampa-St. Petersburg	164.41	168.70	178.09	41.0	39.6	40.2	4.01	4.26	4.43
West Palm Beach-Boca Raton	179.86	186.41	190.28	40.6	40.7	40.4	4.43	4.58	4.71
Georgia	144.18	147.81	150.86	40.5	39.0	39.7	3.56	3.79	3.80
Atlanta	164.61	177.87	180.85	39.1	38.5	39.4	4.21	4.62	4.59
Savanah	176.36	181.75	193.66	42.6	41.4	42.1	4.14	4.39	4.60

[1]Employment and Earnings, Vol. 22, No. 2, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, July 1975, June data is preliminary (1975P).

TABLE 7
Agricultural Cooperative Employee Benefit Programs

Kind of Benefit	Percentage Offering
(1) Retirement	67%
(2) Health Insurance	71%
(3) Life Insurance	57%
(4) Paid Vacation	62%
(5) Sick Leave	38%
(6) Overtime Pay	43%
(7) Bonus	43%

TABLE 8
Fringe Benefits Offered to U.S. Workers

Percentage of plant and office workers in all industries who were employed by establishments which provide health, insurance, or pension benefits in 1969 and 1970.[1]

	Plant Workers	Office Workers
Life Insurance	93%	97%
Hospitalization	95%	96%
Sickness and Accident Insurance and/or Sick Leave	77%	87%
Retirement	77%	84%

Percentage of all U.S. workers receiving paid vacation in 1969-70.[2]

	Plant Workers	Office Workers
One Week or More After:		
One Year	98%	99%
Two Weeks or More After:		
One Year	26%	79%
Two Years	54%	95%
Three Years	78%	98%
Five Years	95%	99%

Percentage of U.S. workers receiving five or more paid holidays per year in 1969-70.[3]

Plant Workers	Office Workers
93%	99%

[1]Handbook of Labor Statistics 1972, Table 113, p. 263-64.

[2]Ibid., Table 115, p. 266.

[3]Ibid., Table 116, p. 266.