

7-1-1961

Labor Market News Letter, July 1961

Maine Employment Security Commission

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Recommended Citation

Maine Employment Security Commission, "Labor Market News Letter, July 1961" (1961). *Center for Workforce Research and Information Documents*. Paper 181.
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LABOR MARKET



NEWS LETTER

Maine Employment Security Commission

331 Water Street

Augusta, Maine

JULY - 1961
ISSUED BI-MONTHLY

Labor Market Highlights—Between mid-April and mid-June labor market conditions in Maine improved, but at a relatively slower pace than in preceding years. The two-month gain in jobholding this year was 8.4 percent, but in the five years 1956-1960 had ranged between 10.3 and 13.9 percent above April levels. Recently, seasonal increases took place in agriculture, and the most significant gains in nonagricultural activities were also of a seasonal nature. Insured unemployment dropped around 40 percent from a mid-April high of almost 22,800 to a June level of about 13,700. Total unemployment dropped relatively much less, or by only 18.1 percent from 31,500 to 25,800, the numbers of unemployed new workers and those re-entering the labor force having increased from 9.0 percent of all jobless persons in April to 16.6 percent in June.

Work Force Trends—Although most of these changes just mentioned take place regularly at this season of the year, the current levels, in some instances, differ significantly from those of recent years. Unemployment in mid-June at 6.4 percent of the work force was higher, both numerically and relatively, than in the years 1953-1957 when it had been between 9,900 and 19,000, and in 1959 and 1960, when it was 20,400 and 18,400. A June peak level of 33,400 jobless, or 8.4 percent of the work force had been reached in 1958. Agricultural jobs, comparing June levels for the past decade, have with few exceptions, experienced a continuing downward trend. In 1951, these numbered 43,800; in 1956, 38,300; and this year, 27,200 — a drop in five years of 29 percent and in ten years of 38 percent. In comparison with this long-term uptrend in June unemployment and decline in farm jobs, the total number of persons in the State's work force in this month has remained practically stationary. In the decade 1952-1961, these figures have moved only within the very narrow range of 394,800 to 396,400, and are currently 395,900.

Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment — In mid-June employment in nonagricultural establishments in Maine totalled 285,900, the highest level reached since September of last year. Seasonal expansions resulted in an increase of 19,800 nonfarm jobs in the State between the

middle of April and payroll periods ending nearest to June 15. The largest gains during the two-month period occurred in lumber and wood products, food and kindred products, leather and leather products, contract construction, wholesale and retail trade, service, and government industries.

Demand for Labor—The spring increase in labor requirements of expanding industries was less this year than last, and approximated levels of 1959. From the first of May to the end of June, local employment offices of the Maine Employment Security Commission made 743 placements of workers on farms, compared with 1,606 last year and 523 in 1959; this year, there were 5,063 nonagricultural placements made during this sixty-day period, a year ago there had been 5,820 and in 1958 there were 5,080. In May and June this year, compared with last year, local offices made 19.5 percent more placements in wholesale and retail trade, 5.6 percent less in nondomestic services, 10.1 percent less in contract construction, and 23.9 percent less in manufacturing. Placements in June were 2,786 this year and had been 3,119 last year; this falling off practically equalled the decline by two coastal offices in food industry placements, fish canneries having this year run below last year's employment figures because of lack of fish. Nonagricultural job openings received in May and June this year totalled 11,987, or 7.6 per-

cent below last year's figure for these two months of 12,970. At the first of July, the local offices had 1,342 unfilled openings on hand, excluding those in which Canadian woodsmen may be employed in the absence of qualified resident workers.

Average Workweek and Earnings—The average workweek of production workers engaged

in manufacturing activities moved up from 39.4 hours in April and May to 40.1 hours in June. Hourly earnings in all three months averaged \$1.82. In mid-June 1960, the average workweek was 40.5 hours and average hourly earnings amounted to \$1.77. Weekly earnings in June this year averaged \$72.98, a gain of \$1.27 over April and May, and \$1.29 above the average for June 1960.

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