

Employment of Rural People in Western Kentucky

A Study in Economic Area One

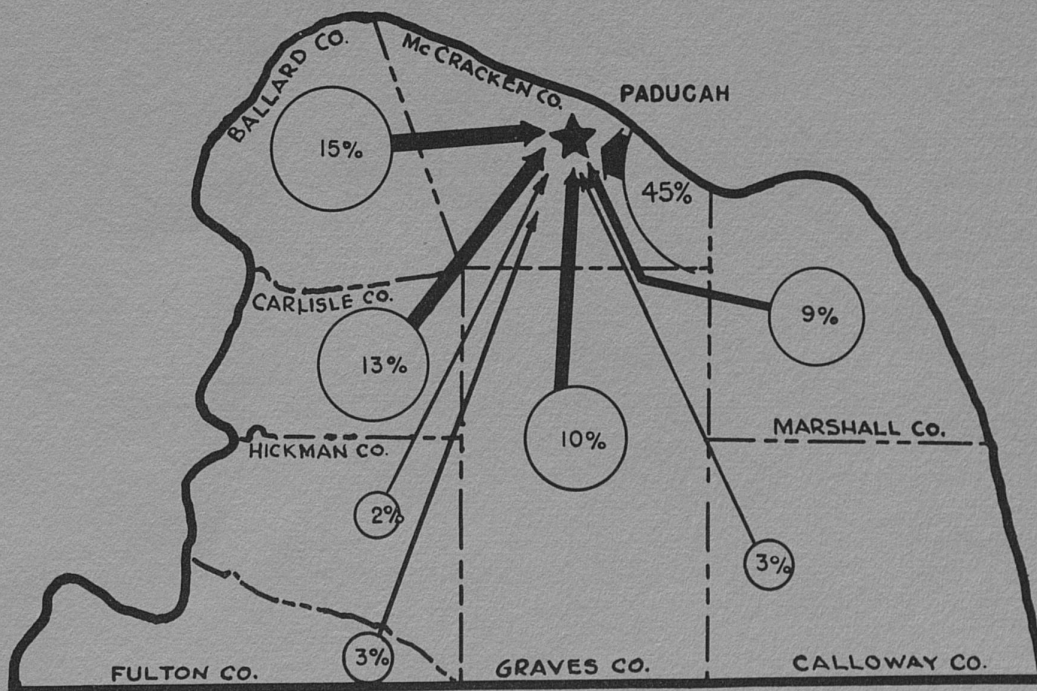


Figure 1. Percentage Distribution of Rural Residents in the Purchase Area Employed in McCracken County Defense Industries, by County of Residence.

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**AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE
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EMPLOYMENT OF RURAL PEOPLE IN WESTERN KENTUCKY

by
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The Department of Rural Sociology of the University of Kentucky, in cooperation with the Agricultural Marketing Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture made a study of rural families living in the Purchase Area² of western Kentucky during May 1953. The principal objectives of the study were to obtain a description of the contemporary open-country family and to make an analysis of changes that have taken place in the family since the beginning of the Korean War (June 1950). This is the first of a series of reports based on the data gathered for the study. Materials used in this report were gathered from key informants who furnished information about 647 rural open-country households located in the 79 area-segments comprising a single-stage, geographically stratified random sample.

In May 1953, 79 percent of the males and 17 percent of the females 14 years of age and older in the sample of rural families were employed. This was 2 percent more than the proportion of rural males and 1 percent less than the proportion of rural females in the area that had been reported by the Census as being employed 3 years earlier.

I. Location of Nonagricultural Employment

Many of the working members of the sample families were employed at places outside the county in which they lived. Construction of the Gaseous Diffusion Plant of the Atomic Energy Commission and the Tennessee Valley Authority Shawnee Steam Plant located in McCracken County near Paducah furnished much of this employment. Of persons in the sample households working in these plants, 45 percent came from within the county and 55 percent were from other Purchase Area counties (Fig. 1, see cover). The families living in the counties adjoining McCracken furnished 47 percent of those working there. However, counties as far away as Fulton, Hickman, and Calloway also furnished daily commuters to McCracken County.

Each day a third of the employed males who were heads of sample families left the county in which they lived to work at places outside the county (Table 1). Sons and daughters also were going outside their home county to work.

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²The Purchase Area (Census Economic Area One) of western Kentucky consists of the following eight counties: Ballard, Calloway, Carlisle, Fulton, Graves, Hickman, McCracken, and Marshall, all of which lie between the Tennessee and Mississippi Rivers.

Table 1. -- Percentage distribution of workers in nonagricultural industries by position in the family and by location of job

Location of job	Total	Position in family			
		Male head	Wife	Son	Daughter
----- Percent -----					
Total	100	100	100	100	100
In county	70	66	88	68	65
In adjoining counties	26	28	11	27	30
In other Purchase counties	3	4	-	5	5
In other Kentucky counties	1/	1	-	-	-
In other states	1/	1	1	-	-

1/ Less than 1 percent

Construction of the Atomic Energy Plant and the Shawnee Steam Plant furnished the major part of the employment to the nonfarm workers in the sample families (Table 2). However, other industries in McCracken County and especially in Paducah, the clothing industries in Mayfield, and industries in Murray and Calvert City were also important sources of employment. More heads of families were employed in defense industries in Paducah than in other industries. More wives, however, were employed in the clothing industries in Mayfield. Employed children living at home worked at more varied locations and industries than did their parents.

Table 2. -- Percentage distribution of workers in nonagricultural industries by position in family and location of job

Location of job	Total	Position in family			
		Male head	Wife	Son	Daughter
----- Percent -----					
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Paducah	54	65	21	41	30
Atomic Energy Plant	31	38	2	18	20
Others	23	27	19	14	10
Mayfield	15	8	41	26	30
Clothing industry	9	3	34	13	20
Others	6	5	7	13	10
Murray	11	8	18	14	20
Kentucky Dam and State Park	5	4	4	5	-
Calvert City	3	3	-	5	-
Other locations	12	12	16	9	20

Although a few families lived as far as 50 miles from the play of employment of some of their members, the average distance to their work for persons employed in nonagricultural industries was 8.9 miles. Fifty-four percent of those employed had less than 10 miles to travel to their work (Table 3). However, 9 percent travelled more than 30 miles to work each day. Males who were heads of families and also children travelled farther to reach their places of employment than did the wives of the heads. None of the wives nor sons travelled as far as 40 miles to get to work, but 10 percent of the daughters and 5 percent of the male heads of families travelled at least this distance to their jobs each day.

Table 3. --Percentage distribution of workers in nonagricultural industries by position in family and by distance to work

Distance to work	Total	Position in family			
		Male head	Wife	Son	Daughter
----- Percent -----					
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Under 5 miles	28	25	41	23	25
5 - 9 miles	26	27	23	23	25
10 -19 miles	28	27	34	31	35
20 -29 miles	9	10	2	14	5
30 -39 miles	5	6	-	9	-
40 miles and over	4	5	-	-	10

II. Principal Occupation of Employed Persons

In the sample families, most employed men were farm operators, craftsmen, foremen, and laborers, and most employed girls and women were operatives, machine operators, sales clerks, and technical workers (Table 4). In studying combinations of jobs, it is noted that a larger proportion of sons than fathers were both

Table 4. --Percentage distribution of employed persons^{1/} by major occupation and by position in family

Major occupation	Total	Position in family			
		Male head	Wife	Son	Daughter
----- Percent -----					
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Professional and technical	3	3	13	-	9
Managers, officials, and proprietors, except farm	2	3	-	2	-
Clerical and sales workers	7	5	12	-	49
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers	19	22	7	11	-
Operatives and kindred workers	13	8	52	9	23
Service workers	3	2	12	-	5
Laborers, except farm	18	19	4	19	5
Farm operators	30	34	-	41	-
Farm laborers	3	2	-	10	9
Unemployed	2	2	-	8	-

^{1/} Age 14 years and older, in sample of 647 rural families.

farm operators and laborers on other farms. Also a relatively high proportion of daughters were working on farms. More daughters than mothers were sales clerks and clerical workers, while more mothers than daughters worked as operatives and technical workers. About 1 in 10 of the employed children in these families worked as farm laborers. The number of all the employed persons in these sample families who worked in nonagricultural pursuits was about twice the number who worked in agriculture.

III. Industries in Which Employed Persons Worked

Among the various industries, agriculture was the principal employer of workers in the sample families (Table 5). Almost 4 in 10 of the employed persons reported an agricultural pursuit as their major source of employment.

Table 5. --Percentage distribution of employed persons^{1/} by major industry and and by position in family

Major industry	Total	Male head	Position in family		
			Wife	Son	Daughter
			Percent		
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Agricultural, forestry and fisheries	36	41	0	56	9
Mining	2/	0	0	2	0
Construction	26	31	2	15	18
Manufacturing	13	8	56	11	32
Wholesale and retail trade	7	5	11	2	23
Transportation, communications, and public utilities	5	6	2	0	0
Finance, insurance, and real estate	1	1	2	0	5
Business and repair service	3	3	4	6	0
Other services	6	3	25	0	13
Public administration	1	1	0	0	0
Industry not reported	2	2	0	9	0

^{1/} Age 14 years and over, in sample of 647 rural families.

^{2/} Less than 1 percent.

The principal nonagricultural industries employing family members were construction, the chief employer of males, and manufacturing, the chief employer of females. Employed sons of the family heads were most likely to be engaged in agriculture and less likely than their fathers to work in the construction industry or in manufacturing plants. Employed daughters tended to be employed in wholesale and retail trades in greater proportions and less in manufacturing than their mothers. Because of the large clerical force employed by the builders of the defense plants in Paducah, the construction industry was an important source of employment for daughters living at home as well as for their fathers. Many persons whose principal employment was in nonagricultural pursuits also did some farm work on their home places.

IV. Median Age of Employed Persons

The median age of all employed workers in the sample families was 42 years, higher for men than for women, 43 and 37 years, respectively (Table 6).

Table 6. -- Median age of employed persons by occupation and by sex

Occupation	Total (Years)	Male (Years)	Female (Years)
All occupations	42	43	37
Agricultural ^{1/}	49	49	<u>2/</u>
Nonagricultural	39	40	37
Service workers (including private household workers)	46	55	43
Professional, technical, Managers, officials, and proprietors (except farm)	44	41	47
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers	39	39	39
Laborers (except farm)	39	39	39
Clerical and sales workers	38	42	26
Operatives and kindred workers	37	40	35

^{1/} Includes farm operators, farm managers, and farm laborers. The median age for farm laborers was 39 years.

^{2/} Only two females reported their principal occupation as agriculture and both were farm laborers under 20 years of age.

Persons employed in agriculture were older than those working in nonagricultural occupations. Employed males were also older than employed females.

In the nonagricultural occupations, service workers were the oldest and operatives were the youngest employees, as indicated by the age medians. Females employed as clerks and sales ladies were the youngest among all occupational groups, but males working in these occupations were the oldest. Persons under 30 years of age, more so than those older, were employed as laborers, operatives, craftsmen, and farmers. Males under 30 years of age, were usually laborers, craftsmen, and farmers. Females of corresponding age were machine operators, sales and clerical workers, and farm workers. Over 60 percent of the men who were 60 years of age and older worked as farm operators. Most men of this age employed in nonagricultural industries worked as laborers, craftsmen, and foremen.

As for industry, persons working in agriculture were older on an average than those employed in nonagricultural industries (Table 7). Among the nonagricultural industries, manufacturing tended to attract the younger family members and the service industries attracted the older members. Males employed in agricultural and the service industries had the highest median ages and those in construction

and manufacturing the lowest median ages. Females employed as clerks in the offices of construction companies and as sales girls in retail stores had the lowest median age and those in the service industries had by far the highest median age.

Table 7. Median age of employed persons by industry and sex

Industry	Total (Years)	Male (Years)	Female (Years)
All industries	42	43	37
Agriculture	49	49	1/
Construction	38	39	28
Manufacturing	36	36	35
Transportation, communications, and public utilities	43	43	1/
Wholesale and retail trades	39	41	28
Other services	45	44	46

1/ Too few cases for a median.