

Part B, Chapter 2

Unemployment Concepts

Topic	See Page
2.A Introduction	B2-3
2.B Looking for Work	B2-3
2.C On Layoff	B2-4
2.D Activity Prior to Job Search or Reasons for Job Search	B2-5
2.E Duration of Unemployment	B2-5
2.F Availability for Work	B2-5

PART B, CHAPTER 2 UNEMPLOYMENT CONCEPTS

2.A Unemployment Concepts

The purpose of this chapter is to define unemployment and the related concepts of layoff, looking for work, duration of unemployment and availability for work. Further details on individual questions related to determining unemployment are contained in Part C, Chapter 4.

Unemployed. Persons who did not work or have a job during the reference week, and who were actively looking for work during the last 4 weeks and were available for work during the reference week.

Those on layoff from a job during the reference week, who are expecting to be recalled to a job (regardless of whether or not they looked for work) and were available to return to their jobs if they had been recalled are also unemployed.

You will ask persons who did not work or have a job last week about their job search activity and availability for work. For those who are actively looking for work, you will ask about the length of time they have been looking and about certain characteristics of their previous job.

You will ask specific questions about recall expectations of persons who reported being on layoff. Those who expect to be recalled are asked how long they have been on layoff, and certain characteristics of the job from which they were on layoff. Those who do not expect to be recalled are asked whether they have been looking for work,

and if so what job search methods they have used.

Those who do not expect to be recalled are routed through the looking for work series.

2.B LOOKING FOR WORK

Looking for Work. People look for work in a variety of ways. To be considered looking for work a person must have searched for a job within the 4 weeks prior to the interview week.

To be considered unemployed, there are additional requirements. Correctly identifying job search methods of those looking for work is critical to classifying persons as unemployed.

The definition of unemployed requires the use of an active job search method.

Active Job Search. An active job search is one that could have resulted in a job offer without further action on the part of the job seeker.

Some job search methods are passive (for example, just looking at job postings online, reading newspaper ads, or attending job training classes) because they could not result in a job offer unless additional steps were taken.

The distinction between active and passive job search methods is very important. **A job seeker is classified as unemployed only if (s)he used at least one active job search**

method to look for work. If the person used only passive job search methods, or did nothing, then (s)he is classified as “not in the labor force (NILF).”

Figure B2. Job Search Categories

Active Job Search Methods

- Contacted employer directly/interview (for example, spoke to someone in a company’s employment office about a job, emailed personnel offices at various companies inquiring about job openings, or scheduled an interview)
- Contacted public employment agency (for example, inquired about job openings listed at a state unemployment office or used a public employment agency’s online job search services)
- Contacted private employment agency (for example, talked to a recruiter or head hunter)
- Contacted friends or relatives (for example, asked friends for job leads or indicated job seeking status to friends via social network)
- Contacted school/university employment center (for example, visited a college placement office)
- Sent out resume or filled out applications (for example, mailed a job application to an employer or posted a resume on a job website).
- Checked union/professional registers (for example, placed name on a nurse’s register or checked union construction register)
- Placed or answered ads (for example, responded to a job posting or placed an ad

on a website indicating a person is looking for work)

- Other active (for example, bid on a contract or auditioned for a part in a play)

Passive Job Search Methods

- Looked at ads (for example, only browsed job postings or read newspaper ads, but did not respond to any)
 - Attended job training programs/courses (for example, took a computer skills class)
 - Other passive (for example, studied for a real estate license or received email alerts about available jobs)
-

2.C ON LAYOFF

Layoff. Persons are on layoff if they are not currently working, but are waiting to be recalled to a job from which they are temporarily separated for business-related reasons, such as temporary drops in demand, business downturns, plant remodeling, material shortages, and inventory taking. They must either have been given a date to report back to work or, if not given a date, must expect to be recalled to their job within 6 months.

Persons on layoff do not need to look for work to be classified as unemployed.

You will ask persons who are reported to be on layoff questions about their expectation of recall, the length of time on layoff, whether they have been looking for work, and the industry and occupation of the job from which they were on layoff.

2.D ACTIVITY PRIOR TO JOB SEARCH or REASONS FOR JOB SEARCH

A person's activity prior to job search, or the reason (s)he started looking for work, determines whether to classify the person as having lost or left a job, or as having newly entered or reentered the labor force.

This information, in turn, identifies persons with previous work experience.

You then go on to collect information about the previous job (Industry and occupation series). From this, we can get measures of the job skills of the unemployed.

Keep in mind that we are trying to measure the activity immediately prior to the current period of job search.

If the person was working just prior to the current job search, we want to know how the person was separated from that previous job; whether they lost their job, quit their job, or had a temporary job that ended.

2.E DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT

If a person was not unemployed in the previous month, you ask how long (s)he has been looking for work. The individual can respond in either weeks or months. **It is your responsibility to record both how long the individual has been looking for work and whether the individual reported in weeks or months.**

If the person has looked for work and was not unemployed in the previous month's interview, you ask how long (s)he has been looking for work or on layoff. If (s)he was unemployed in the previous month, the

instrument automatically updates his/her duration of unemployment information from the previous month.

2.F AVAILABILITY FOR WORK

You ask unemployed persons whether they could have started a job last week, if one had been offered. Please note that if the person attaches conditions to the type of work or work schedule they want, this does not affect their availability. For instance, people who can only work during certain hours, or who want a certain kind of work, WERE available for work.

You ask persons who were unavailable for work last week the reason they were unavailable such as temporarily ill, waiting to start a new job, going to school or some other reason.

You can find further details on unemployment related questions in Part C, Chapter 4.