

This PDF is a selection from an out-of-print volume from the National Bureau of Economic Research

Volume Title: The Measurement and Interpretation of Job Vacancies

Volume Author/Editor:

Volume Publisher: Columbia University Press

Volume ISBN: 0-87014-471-5

Volume URL: <http://www.nber.org/books/unkn66-2>

Publication Date: 1966

Chapter Title: Problems in the Collection of Data on Job Vacancies: Chicago Pilot Study

Chapter Author: Elizabeth E. Slotkin

Chapter URL: <http://www.nber.org/chapters/c1608>

Chapter pages in book: (p. 329 - 348)

PART III

*Job Vacancy Surveys in
the United States*

*Problems in the Collection of Data on
Job Vacancies: Chicago Pilot Study*

ELIZABETH J. SLOTKIN

ILLINOIS BUREAU OF EMPLOYMENT SECURITY

Interest in data on job vacancies at the Illinois Bureau of Employment Security arose out of concern about the rising level of unemployment. In the fall of 1960, plans for a study of the characteristics of job seekers in Illinois, to be followed by a survey of job openings, were already under discussion. The appointment in June 1961 of a Governor's Committee on Unemployment gave further impetus to the realization of the first study.¹ A Governor's Committee on Job Vacancies has provided additional stimulus to the agency's efforts to collect data on job vacancies.

Data on labor supply and labor demand are considered essential to the proper functioning of a manpower agency whose role is not only to facilitate placement, but to assure maximum utilization of our manpower resources through the development of needed skills. Adequate information on current job vacancies is essential, along with other information on vocational trends, for the counseling of job applicants and the establishment of suitable vocational training courses. This point of view was shared by the two Governor's Committees. The Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry, in its report on its own survey of job openings, made the following statement: "It would seem . . . that any community owes to its youngsters it is training in its vocational and conventional public and private schools, courses of study and training which are consistent with vocational opportunities."

¹ *Illinois Job Seekers Survey*, Illinois Department of Labor and Governor's Committee on Unemployment, 1962 (2 Vols.).

As a first step in the direction of collecting data on job vacancies, a feasibility study² was made. At present, the first attempt to collect data from a sizeable sample of employers is being undertaken. Both projects have been cooperative ventures with the U.S. Bureau of Employment Security. The current survey, requesting data as of November 20, 1964, is one of the studies in the pilot program of the U.S. Department of Labor. At the same time, the Illinois agency will obtain information in some detail on job openings listed with the Illinois State Employment Service as of the end of November. It is hoped that comparisons between these two sets of data will shed some light on various problems in the collection of such data.

This paper will summarize the findings of the earlier feasibility study, and, insofar as possible, indicate how some of the problems uncovered in that study appear to have been resolved in the plans for the current pilot study.

THE FEASIBILITY STUDY

The feasibility study was concerned with the definition of the term "job vacancy"; with the existence of records of job vacancies; and with the problems which might be encountered in attempting to collect information on job vacancies. One auxiliary question was explored; namely, whether employers could identify "hard-to-fill" jobs and assign an appropriate reason for the difficulties encountered in trying to fill such jobs. A schedule was designed for the use of an interviewer in eliciting the desired information and a "Job Vacancies—Employer Schedule" was prepared for use in an actual collection of data on job vacancies. A sample of small, medium, and large employers (three in each size class) was selected from each of the twenty largest industries in Cook County. Interviewers were trained to use the schedule and were asked to obtain one completed interview from an employer in each size class for each industry assigned to them. Sixty-two completed reports were submitted and were included in the analysis of the results of the survey.

² *Feasibility Study of Problems in the Collection of Data on Job Vacancies*, Illinois Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Security, March 1964 (mimeographed).

Though the sixty-two firms were stratified by relative size of their work force, the results were not affected by the size of the participating firm. On the other hand, there were marked differences among the twenty different industries canvassed in the ease with which job vacancy data could be obtained. These differences served to uncover problems which must be resolved before any collection program is attempted.

Definition of "Job Vacancy"

Since statistical data are often influenced by preconceived notions of respondents about the subject under study, the first part of the interview was directed at eliciting from the respondent his ideas about the concept of a job vacancy. The sixty-two employers surveyed were asked: "What would you understand by the term 'Job Vacancy'?" The interviewees had difficulty replying, as the term seemed unfamiliar to them. However, the three most common replies (in the order given) were: (1) unfilled openings or jobs; (2) openings due to turnover (replacement demand); (3) jobs needed to be filled to maintain or meet production levels.

Few employers specifically noted that job openings might be caused by a combination of turnover and expansion, though both could be read into the first and third replies.

Probing more deeply, the interviewers found that a majority of the sixty-two employers included the following in their definitions of job vacancy:

1. Jobs filled the same day as the opening arose (forty firms).
2. Part-time jobs which are vacant (thirty-seven firms).
3. A job opening where the inability to recruit a new employee has caused the employer to schedule overtime for employees in a similar capacity (fifty-one firms).
4. The key job which must be filled before additional workers are hired *plus* the additional jobs (thirty-three firms).

A majority of the sixty-two employers (thirty-eight firms) excluded from their definitions, job openings for which a call-back of laid-off workers is scheduled.

Because of their orientation as manpower agencies, the interest of the two cooperating bureaus was primarily in jobs which might

suggest a need for training. Casual jobs which lasted less than four days were, therefore, excluded from the definition offered to respondents in the questionnaire. More than four-fifths of the employers (fifty-two firms) agreed with the definition of a job vacancy which appeared in the questionnaire. The definition read: "All jobs lasting more than three days for which the firm is now actively recruiting workers."

Although most of the interviewees thought that the above was an adequate definition, those who disliked the definition (and some who agreed with it) commented on that part of the definition which read "All jobs lasting more than three days. . . ." The comments fell into three categories: (1) Many thought the job had to be vacant more than three days before it could be counted as a vacancy. (2) Some said that the job had to last a week or more, or be a permanent position, before they recruited for it. (3) Some stated that *any* opening should be considered a job vacancy, regardless of the expected duration of the job.

From the evidence presented by the interviewees in this section of the questionnaire, it is evident that employers are more familiar with the term "job opening" than "job vacancy." The former term was used quite frequently by the employers.

Job Vacancy Records

Of the sixty-two firms interviewed, only about one in four, or fifteen firms, actually had formal job vacancy records; two others maintained partial records. In eleven of these firms, the records were maintained by one person at a single location. Four firms reported that the records were at one location, but were maintained by two to three persons, while the remaining two firms stated that records were available at a number of locations and were maintained by recruiting personnel at those locations. Nevertheless, these employers already had the records in a central location or would be able to assemble them in one place.

Although two of the seventeen did not have records for all of the vacancies in their firms, all indicated they would be able to identify the number and job title of their vacancies. Over two-thirds (twelve) of the seventeen firms kept job vacancy records for

one year or more, while the remainder kept their records until the end of the month (two firms) or until the vacancy was filled (three firms).

Some of the seventeen firms commented that the assembly of job vacancy data would require a change in the normal routine because there was presently no central file; that the assembly of records would be time consuming; and that the vacancies filled by the office were usually limited to the critical or hard-to-fill vacancies. It should be noted that the firms which felt it necessary to comment were the relatively large firms.

Six of the seventeen firms had to notify a central office before they began to recruit for an opening. This notification took place the same day the opening arose in four firms; the time lag on notification was one week in a fifth firm, and varied either with the type of occupation or location of outlet, or both, in the sixth firm.

For the forty-seven firms which had no formal records for job vacancies, and the two additional firms which kept only partial records, an attempt was made to ascertain where, in the recruitment process, complete job vacancy information might be found. Of these firms, thirty reported that one person recruited for all of the vacancies in the firm. Another seventeen firms reported that two or more persons recruited for the vacancies in the firm at a central location. In nine of these seventeen firms, the recruiting was carried out by two persons, each of whom specialized in recruiting for vacancies in specific occupations. In two of the seventeen firms, two persons recruited for all vacancies regardless of occupation. Three or more persons recruited for vacancies in six of the seventeen firms. Two or more persons recruited for vacancies at two or more locations in the remainder of the forty-nine firms.

Forty-four of the forty-nine firms reported that the person handling recruitment had the final authority to initiate recruitment. Three firms reported that the recruiter had to seek the approval of the chief officer of the firm. Nevertheless, a central person or department was informed of the intention to recruit in thirty-three of the forty-nine firms. This transmittal took place the same day as the vacancy arose and included the vacancies by number and job title. Of the fourteen firms where there was no central person

or department to inform, six firms stated that a mental record was kept by the person handling the recruitment and eight firms denied the existence of any record at all. Two firms failed to respond to this series of questions.

The existence or nonexistence of written job vacancy records does not seem to be an important factor in collecting current job vacancy data, as both firms with written records and those without written records can supply job vacancy information. However, the fact that so few firms have written records has significance. First, job vacancy data cannot be accumulated for past periods. Second, those employers who have seen no reason to keep records on such data in the past may become easily disillusioned with a program to collect such information in the future.

Many employers stated that job vacancy data are records which are highly perishable. This is due, no doubt, to the fact that many firms keep either temporary or only "mental" records on job vacancies. Therefore, the collection form used in a job vacancy data program would have to request information as of a specific day or date following the day or date of mailing of such forms to employers.

Availability of Data

More than four-fifths (fifty-two firms) of the firms interviewed reported that they could provide a listing of all vacancies by job title. An even higher number of firms (fifty-five) stated that they would furnish job vacancy data to the Illinois State Employment Service on a continuing basis. The main reason for the difference in response to the two questions was that some firms could provide only a partial listing of all vacancies since they only kept partial records. Seven firms were unable to provide a listing of any types of job vacancies and refused to submit job vacancy data to the Illinois State Employment Service at any time.

Job vacancy information was available daily in forty-seven of the fifty-five firms. The remaining firms stated that the data were available at the end of the week (six firms), or at the end of the month or later (two firms).

Thirty-three of the fifty-five firms tended to retain such informa-

tion for a period of one week following a specific date. The remaining twenty-two firms retained this type of data for two or more weeks following a specific date. The short duration of retention was due to two facts. First, this type of information was a mental rather than a written record in many firms. Secondly, many firms destroyed such information when a vacancy was filled or was allowed to remain vacant.

When the fifty-five firms were asked how frequently they would be willing to supply job vacancy data, thirty-three indicated monthly; ten, quarterly; nine, time periods up to and including one year; and three were willing to provide the data weekly.

Comments on the availability of job vacancy information fell into three categories:

1. Although those who were unwilling to cooperate stated they were "too busy," a careful analysis indicates that they may have felt that these reports would be utilized for ISES referral and placement activity. One stated that any vacancy he might have would be filled by the time ISES received the report, while another took this opportunity to complain about the low quality of ISES referrals. A third employer said he would submit a report only after he had complied with his firm's union agreement, which required him to post all vacancies in a conspicuous place in the plant, and the last employer stated that he would submit such data for statistical purposes only.

2. Many firms would cooperate only if the form were concise and simple and the reporting required was as infrequent as possible.

3. Some firms used "lack of clerical staff" as a reason for failing to participate in a collection program, while others felt that additional clerical staff might be necessary in order to participate in the program.

More than three-quarters (forty-seven) of the sixty-two interviewees thought job vacancy data could be collected by mail. Again, the majority felt that the form had to be simple and concise and that the reporting should be as infrequent as possible. Seven firms did not respond to this question, since they had already refused to participate in the collection of job vacancy information. Eight firms preferred personal visits, telephone collection, or would not

cooperate due to lack of staff in any project of this type. Those who preferred other-than-mail collection felt that this information would be worthless by the time it reached the collecting agency. Possibly these respondents were assuming, along with those who refused to cooperate, that the collecting agency wanted the information in order to assist in recruiting, although they had been told otherwise.

Auxiliary Information

While there are many reasons why a particular vacancy may be hard to fill, one reason may be a shortage of workers having the required skills. Because of the interest in identifying possible training needs, questions were included about the difficulties which employers were encountering in trying to fill their vacancies. The interviewees were asked whether they could identify "hard-to-fill" vacancies, and fifty of the sixty-two firms said they could do so. While twenty-five of the firms tried to demonstrate this by listing occupations and occupational categories for which they had hiring problems, many of the other firms answering in the affirmative said they had never had any hiring problems. No attempt was made to define the term "hard-to-fill" at the time this question was asked; thus, the fact that fifty firms reported they could identify a "hard-to-fill" vacancy need not mean that a common standard exists for this term.

The sixty-two firms were asked if they could assign reasons for their difficulty in filling a vacancy for an unspecified occupation from a list of reasons given them. More than three-quarters of the firms (forty-seven) gave "lack of qualified workers" as a reason. Other reasons, such as wages, commuting difficulties, unfavorable location, working conditions, fewer fringe benefits, and second and third shifts, were given by only three to twelve of the respondents. Some respondents who gave "lack of qualified workers" as a reason stated they checked this reason because they found that the qualified workers were "unwilling to work." These respondents were in industries characterized by low wages and highly seasonal activities, yet none of these firms indicated that wages, working conditions, or other conditions of employment were reasons for the

inability to fill jobs. Since all of the reasons except lack of qualified workers can be interpreted as criticisms of a firm's policy, it is not surprising that this was the overwhelming preference of respondents.

Interviewees who had no formal job vacancy records were asked whether there was any special company procedure for handling recruitment where openings were difficult to fill. More than half (twenty-nine) of the forty-nine firms said "no." However, many of the twenty-five who replied affirmatively described procedures which were automatically instituted whenever a vacancy occurred, and these procedures were considered to be a part of the regular recruitment process.

An attempt was made to determine the "normal" length of time between the beginning of recruitment and hiring, to validate or invalidate the use of a specific period of time after which a vacancy may be termed "hard-to-fill." From the table below, it is apparent that a single specific time period would provide an inadequate definition, since the periods varied greatly for different occupational categories. In some cases, employers volunteered two periods of time for an occupational group, though only one was sought. This was due to the fact that the expected recruitment time varied by individual occupation rather than by occupational group.

<i>Occupational Group</i>	<i>Number of Firms Replying</i>	<i>Expected Recruitment Period (Modal Group)</i>	<i>Percentage of Category in Modal Group</i>
Laborers, unskilled	44	1 to 2 Weeks	93.2
Semiskilled	43	1 to 2 Weeks	76.7
Foreman	27	1 Month	37.0
Skilled maintenance	30	2 to 4 Weeks	46.7
Skilled production	22	2 to 4 Weeks	36.4
Clerical	47	1 to 2 Weeks	53.2
Sales (retail)	20	1 to 2 Weeks	55.0
Sales (other)	24	2 to 4 Weeks	33.3
Managerial	31	Over 1 Month	45.2
Professional and technical	32	1 Month	34.4

Employer Reporting Schedule

While the first part of the study (the questionnaire) tried to attack

definitional problems and to identify the unit in the responding organization which could furnish job vacancy data, the second part of the study tried to find out about reporting problems through an actual tryout of a reporting form. As it turned out, this was the crucial part of the study.

The employers who agreed to cooperate in a collection program were offered copies of a proposed *Employer Reporting Schedule* along with agency-addressed, postpaid envelopes. The employer was to: (1) Enter the total number of workers on his payrolls as of the fifteenth of the month. (2) List the job title of each vacancy in the firm, the total number of vacancies for each job title, check the job titles which were considered to be hard-to-fill, and provide comments on why the job was hard-to-fill, if possible. Specifically, this part of the study was an attempt to determine: (1) the response of those who said they would cooperate; (2) the usefulness of the information submitted; and (3) the problem of classifying the information submitted.

Seven of the sixty-two firms refused to cooperate and did not accept the *Employer Reporting Schedule*. Of the fifty-five firms given an *Employer Reporting Schedule*, ten never returned it. This demonstrates that some who initially promise cooperation will fail to submit even an initial reporting form. Thus, seventeen of the original sixty-two firms did not take part in this portion of the study.

Of the forty-five employer schedules returned, four were immediately returned to the interviewer with the explanation that the firm had no vacancies at that time. There is some doubt whether these firms would comply with the requirements of a reporting system, although they were counted as having returned their schedules.

The size of a firm did not seem to be a factor in determining the cooperation of the employers in this phase of the study, as Table 1 reveals. However, firms in some industries did not cooperate at all in this phase of the survey (eating and drinking places and construction) or only one of the three firms chosen cooperated (food products, chemical products, and insurance carriers). An analysis of the questionnaires from the firms in the eating and drinking places and construction industries revealed two reasons for their lack of cooperation. First, the operations of these industries require continuous

TABLE 1
*Distribution and Return of Employer Schedules
 by Size ^a of Firm*

Size of Firm	Total in Study	Returned Schedules	
		Total	With Job Vacancies
Total	62	45	16
Small	19	14	2
Medium	21	15	4
Large	22	16	10

^a Firms in each industry were arrayed by number of employees and then divided into three groups with equal employment in each.

manning of work stations. Therefore, a work station cannot and does not remain vacant for more than a few hours. Second, these two industries characteristically hire through unions and employment agencies. The evidence for these points rest in the interviewers' evaluation of the respondent's reaction and cooperation. Some typical comments were:

"Employer's urgency to fill all vacancies seemed to prevent his participation in this proposal."

"Employer is interested in plan but feels time lapse will preclude cooperation."

Employer "... understood need for such a survey, but felt that the construction industry was not an industry that could submit job vacancy data, as their openings were filled through the union and personal contacts within the industry."

Employer "... felt that construction industry would not be helpful in a survey of job vacancies since the vacancies are filled through unions, employers, etc."

The other group of industries which seemed lax in cooperating with this phase of the survey presented quite a different problem. Upon analysis, the questionnaires of the firms in the food products, chemical products, and insurance industries revealed no consistent pattern. However, some firms did complain that they lacked clerical workers for this task.

Of the forty-five returned Employer Schedules, twenty-nine either listed no job vacancies or had "no vacancies" written thereon. At the same time, two of the 29 schedules failed to list even the number of employees in these firms. Thus, two more firms can be added to the list of "doubtful" participants, since they too refused, or overlooked, the required reporting steps.

The sixteen Employer Schedules which listed job vacancies were about one-third of the forty-five schedules returned. Ten of the sixteen schedules with job vacancies on them were returned by large-sized firms, four by medium-sized firms and only two by small-sized firms. Although large-sized firms are more likely to have vacancies than smaller firms, the fact that large-sized firms reported vacancies may indicate that these firms are better prepared to supply such information, since they have had to standardize and centralize machinery for the identification and filling of vacancies to meet their needs.

These sixteen schedules contained a total of 178 job vacancies which were distributed among sixty-five separate job titles listed. These job titles did not represent that many separate occupations for which there were vacancies. To determine the actual number of occupations involved, all sixty-five job titles had to be classified.

The *Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT)* was the occupational classification system used to code the schedules. Job titles reported were compared with the job titles in the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* and then assigned the appropriate *DOT* code. There was no additional information available for fifty-eight of the sixty-five job titles. Employers supplied brief job descriptions for the remaining seven job titles which were then compared with the job descriptions in the *DOT* before being coded.

Six of the seven job descriptions came from an employer who published a weekly flier called "Open Jobs" as part of his recruitment process. In lieu of filling in the *Employer Reporting Schedule*, this employer attached this flier to the schedule and returned it. The flier carries the job title and the number of vacancies for each job title for all the vacancies he wishes to fill. It also contains a brief job description for each job title, when the opening first occurs, but not if it remains open in subsequent weeks.

The seventh job description was obtained by an alert interviewer. This person noted that the job title placed on the *Employer Reporting Schedule* ("Packer") did not adequately describe the job duties ("Pie Filling Machine Operator"). Had he not done so the job would have been coded as an unskilled instead of a semiskilled job. This incident also points up the kind of error which can occur when classifying job openings on the basis of the employer's job title alone.

When the coding of job titles was attempted, the following resulted:

Total number of job titles	65
Single <i>DOT</i> code assigned	50
Two <i>DOT</i> codes possible	9
Three or more <i>DOT</i> codes possible	6

While it was possible to assign a single code to fifty of the sixty-five job titles, there were fifteen job titles which had two or more possible codes. One job title in the latter group had thirty-seven possible codes. These fifteen job titles divided themselves into two groups: those titles which combined job duties of several distinct and codeable occupations; and those for which a job description was required before a specific code could be assigned. Many of the two-code job titles fell into the first group, while all those with three or more possible codes fell into the second group.

There were three results from the attempt to code the job titles. First, the number of different jobs were reduced from the sixty-five job titles originally listed to fifty-five coded occupations. Second, the attempt demonstrated the difficulty of identifying specific jobs from employer reports, since some of the job titles could have been given more than one code. Third, there is no real assurance that the job titles to which a single code was assigned have job duties corresponding with those for the code given that job title.

The situation that pertained to the "Pie Filling Machine Operator" who was called a "Packer" by the employer casts strong doubt on even those job titles which were assigned a single code. Since the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* has not been universally adopted by employers for their use, job nomenclature is still

a "babble of tongues." Therefore, in order to code reported job vacancies accurately, it is necessary to obtain job descriptions. An established program for the collection of job vacancy data could provide for the collection of job descriptions from each of the participating firms for all of the job titles in that firm, so that the firm need not be contacted for additional job descriptions unless a new job title should appear. This step, if accomplished, would mean that the coder could consult a precoded list of job titles for that firm in processing the *Employer Reporting Schedule*.

If the job vacancy report is to have timeliness, precoding of occupations could be provided by individualized questionnaires prepared for each firm in the sample, or for groups of establishments with a common occupational pattern, listing all plant job titles for firms in the sample under the five- or six-digit *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* codes for each job. Also, an open-end listing space for new occupations should be provided. The respondent employer would then be required to report only the number of job vacancies existing for each occupation as of the date of the report. This would then require only a minimum editing of the returned questionnaires prior to electronic data processing.

Even with the aids described above, it should be realized that the collection of job vacancy data will involve a great deal more staff time and effort than any of the current employment statistics programs now being handled by state employment security agencies.

PRELIMINARY NOTES ON CURRENT STUDY

It will be recalled that difficulties arose with the definition of a job vacancy used in the feasibility study. That definition read as follows: "All jobs lasting more than three days for which the firm is now actively recruiting workers." Schedules for the new set of surveys define job vacancies as "current unfilled job openings in your establishment which are immediately available for occupancy by workers from outside your firm and for which your firm is actively seeking such workers. Included are full-time, part-time, permanent, temporary, seasonal, and short-term job openings."

The troublesome phrase in the first definition—"lasting more

than three days"—has been eliminated. At the same time, the scope of the survey has been enlarged to include the casual jobs which the earlier definition sought to eliminate. This change will no doubt clarify what is wanted. However, experience with the feasibility survey also demonstrated that jobs filled the same day they became open are not likely to be reported by the employer. Since many casual jobs are of this type, the new definition may not elicit a substantially longer list of openings. The use of the term "job opening" in the new definition should also help to clarify what is wanted on the questionnaire. Interviewers' comments on the feasibility study indicated that the term "job openings" was more familiar to respondents.

The Illinois survey was conducted in November 1964 entirely by mail. Since more than three-quarters of the employers interviewed in the feasibility study thought this would be a satisfactory way to obtain the data, it was hoped that the response would be satisfactory. The sample which was selected included 2,068 employers with 51.4 per cent of the employment in the universe from which it was selected. Respondents totaled 1,246, or 60.2 per cent of those to whom schedules were mailed. However, the employment in the responding firms was 32.0 per cent of that in the universe, as of the benchmark period. This reflects the somewhat greater response from the larger firms in the sample than was obtained from the smaller ones, and was to be expected from the results obtained in the feasibility study. The response rate might have been higher had it been possible to mail all schedules one week in advance of the survey date, November 20, 1964. Late arrival of instructions and other problems usually encountered in mounting new types of surveys conspired to delay the mailing, so that half of the schedules did not reach the employers until three or four business days after the survey date. Lack of records on job vacancies may have prevented some potential respondents from reconstructing from memory the data requested.

Orders on hand in offices of the Illinois State Employment Service were tabulated as of the end of November. Although only raw sample data from the job vacancy survey are available as this goes to press, a few comparisons are possible. The 1,246 employers who

responded reported 6,738 vacancies in 211 different three-digit occupational groups. Orders on hand at the ISES covered 330 such three-digit occupational groups, with 9,163 openings. Only eight of these, with 441 openings, were for jobs in private households (which were not covered in the job vacancy survey). There were only twenty-seven three-digit occupational groups with 196 vacancies not found on the list of orders. On the other hand, there were

TABLE 2
*Occupations and Openings Reported Exclusively in the
Survey or Represented Among ISES Orders,
November 1964*

Occupational Group	Vacancy Survey		ISES Orders	
	No. of Occup.	No. of Openings	No. of Occup.	No. of Openings
Professional	3	25	14	61
Clerical and sales	1	3	11	308
Service	1	73	18	625
Excl. private household	1	73	10	184
Agricultural	1	1	5	11
Skilled	10	66	31	253
Semiskilled	5	16	38	200
Unskilled	6	12	29	173
Total	27	196	146 ^a	1,631 ^a

^a Total includes private households in service group.

138 three-digit occupational groups listed among the orders (with 1,190 openings) which were not among the vacancies reported.³ A larger number of occupations appear among the orders in every level of skill than in the corresponding skill level as reported in the survey. There has not been time to make a detailed comparison of the occupational profile of the two sets of data, but a cursory analysis seems to indicate great similarity. Consequently, it appears that orders provide a reliable and a richer source of occupational detail on labor demand than was provided by the job vacancy survey.

³ Eight occupational groups with 441 openings in private households have been eliminated from this comparison, although railway jobs included in the survey but not normally serviced by ISES have not been eliminated from the survey data.

Orders placed with the employment service represent action taken by an employer to seek an applicant for a job. This parallels the requirement that to be counted as unemployed a worker must have been seeking work during the survey week. It is true that certain exceptions are allowed, and so might they be in relation to job vacancies.

Orders have other features which recommend them for further study. Wages offered are on the order along with various qualifications such as sex, age, education, experience, union membership, licenses required, etc. Furthermore, an occupational code has been assigned on the basis of a discussion with the employer, rather than inferred from a plant title.

It is possible to devise a system of record-keeping for the employment service which would make these data readily available for tabulation by electronic data processing equipment. Both open orders and placements could be tabulated on a periodic schedule which would yield a great deal of information about a significant proportion of the transactions occurring in the labor market.

Such data would provide a richer source of information on the character of labor demand than is likely to be developed with an equal effort expended on a sample survey of employers. For this reason, it would seem wise to take the necessary steps to make data on orders available on a periodic basis as soon as possible. The survey technique could then be used from time to time as a check on the information obtained from orders. Surveys could be used to assure that the occupational profile obtained from orders was continuing to provide useful information on the demand for particular skills, and that wage rates offered were representative of the labor market as a whole.

