

You Decide: Why Are So Many Men Not Working

By Dr. Mike Walden, North Carolina Cooperative Extension: Do we have a "man problem" in today's economy? Some analysts think we do, and they cite one simple statistic for proving it. After World War II in the late 1940s, 6 percent of prime working-age men (those between the ages of 25 and 54) were not employed and were not looking for work. Today that rate is 14 percent. Translated to numbers, 1 million prime, working-age men in the late 1940s were out of the labor force – today the number is 7 million.

The trend has been exactly the opposite for women. Prime, working-age females with jobs in the paid labor market steadily rose from the end of World War II to 2000, before modestly declining since then. Still, the proportion of 25-54-year-old females working today is twice as high as 70 years ago.

A big reason for these changes has been a shift in the economics of work. Prior to World War II much of paid work was hard physical labor – on the farm, at the construction site or in the factory – and this is where the majority of men put in their hours. You didn't need a college degree – or maybe even a high school degree – to do these jobs. My late father never finished high school, and my uncle – who's still active at almost age 90 – didn't even attend high school. Both worked with their hands and backs first in farming and then in construction!

Modern technology and machinery have reduced the need for physical labor. Employment in agriculture has been dropping for almost a century, and less than 2 percent of all jobs are on the farm today. Manufacturing jobs peaked in the 1970s and is down one-third since then. And construction jobs have never recovered from their peak during the housing boom of the early 2000s.

So where have the new jobs been created? Many have been in fields that require "brain-power" rather than "brawn-power", in the fields like science, finance, management, information and health care.

This job shift has hurt some men in two ways. First, those men whose competencies and interests are in growing, building or assembling things – like my late father and uncle – have found their job opportunities significantly reduced. Second, the expanding job fields usually require college training, and some men are simply averse to formalized education. Also, it is often difficult for a long-time worker whose occupation has been eliminated to change focus from "work mode" to "school mode".

Interestingly, while the change in jobs from "brawn power" fields to "brain power" occupations has hurt the work prospects of some men, analysts think it has expanded the job opportunities for females. This is not to imply that women cannot do jobs requiring strength and stamina – many women can and do willingly perform these jobs with outstanding results. But the expansion of jobs requiring more cognitive talents has certainly opened up employment opportunities to more females. Thus the reduction in physically-oriented jobs in manufacturing, construction and farming is one potential reason for more prime working-age men being out of the labor force. But there are other possible reasons. Some economists argue the recent expansion of Social Security disability rules allowing more individuals to qualify for non-physical impairments has provided an alternative for working-age men not finding jobs. Others point to the large increase in imprisoned men during recent decades as being related to the reduction of men active in the labor force. Additionally, some men may willingly choose to not work for pay and instead take care of household chores if their spouse or partner has a good-paying job.

However, analysts who have carefully accounted for these other explanations say they cannot fully account for the rise in non-working men. So there does seem to be an issue. And the worry is, it may get worse. Technology is rapidly becoming capable of performing more and more work tasks. For example, recently a European company developed an automated brick-laying machine. If my father were still alive, I could imagine him shaking his head in amazement – and concern!

Indeed, a new term has been invented to define jobless men who have no hope of employment – "precarariat". The fear is we will see the ranks of the precariats swell in coming years, living with family, friends or being homeless.

Fortunately, there have already been ideas presented about how to address the "man problem" in the labor market. Included are alternative courses for students in high school who have an aptitude and interest in trade and technical jobs, expanded trade and technical offerings in community colleges and more apprenticeship programs between students and businesses. At the college level, expanded programs for adult students who have found their jobs taken over by technology will likely be needed.

Besides providing an income, psychologists say work is important for giving purpose and pride to individuals. If so, then the growing numbers of working-age men with no job is a much broader problem than we may think. Could the "man problem" in employment be the big issue of the next several decades? You decide.

Walden is a William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor and Extension Economist in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at North Carolina State University who teaches and writes on personal finance, economic outlook, and public policy.

NOTICE

Town of Wadesboro PLANNING BOARD MEETING REZONING HEARING

The Town of Wadesboro Planning Board will hold a meeting on Monday, October 24, 2016, at 5:30 p.m. at the Town Hall Meeting Room. The Planning Board will hear a zoning request to rezone property located at 302 Lee Avenue and East Wade Street, Wadesboro, NC.

Donald Logan Scarborough has requested the property to be rezoned from Residential 10 to Residential Office.

The Planning Board will also discuss a Solar Farm Ordinance.

The public is invited to attend.

LEGAL NOTICE

At the meeting of the Board of Health on September 13, 2016, the board adopted the 2016 model rule for the postexposure management of dogs and cats recommended by the North Carolina Division of Public Health.

This model rule for rabies postexposure management of dogs and cats implements and particularizes the authority given to the local health director in G.S. 130A-197 to effectively and efficiently protect the public's health utilizing the most current science. Accordingly, the Anson County Board of Health adopted the recommendations and guidelines for rabies postexposure management of dogs and cats specified by the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians in the 2016 edition of the Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control (Part 1. Rabies Prevention and Control B. Prevention and control methods in domestic and confined animals. 5 Postexposure Management). These provisions of the Compendium shall be required control measures in the County of Anson pursuant to G.S. 130A-197, effective November 1, 2016.

Copies of the rule are available at the Anson County Health Department. The new control measures will result in fewer dogs and cats euthanized, shorter quarantine periods (4 months rather than six months) and allow for more 45-day owner (at-home) observations for lapsed animals with appropriate documentation.

For additional information, contact Anson County Health Director, Dr. Fred Thompson, at (704) 695-6627.

ANSON COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE Employment Opportunity

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

The Anson County Chamber of Commerce is seeking a full-time Administrative Assistant.

Purpose of the Position

The Administrative Assistant is responsible for general clerical duties; provides administrative support for the Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, the Executive Director of the Anson Economic Development Partnership and the Anson County Tourism Development Authority.

Professional Development/Expectations

Position requires daily contact, both in person and by telephone, with chamber members, visitors and the general public. Professional development in human relations, management and customer service skills are expected. This position offers the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills related to Chamber of Commerce work and will offer unique opportunities to take additional responsibilities as appropriate.

Qualifications/Requirements

- A minimum of high school diploma or GED. Associates Degree preferred.
- Minimum of three years related experience required.
- Excellent communication skills, both written and oral.
- Must be detail oriented and accurate in all aspects of the position.
- Must be computer literate and proficient with Microsoft Word and Excel.
- Organizational skills are a must, with an ability to manage time and volunteers as needed.
- Must be able to work with minimal supervision.
- Must be able to multitask.
- Must have reliable car and a valid driver's license.

Please submit Application, Cover Letter and Resume by October 28, 2016 to:

Anson County Chamber of Commerce
107-A East Wade Street
Wadesboro, NC 28170

Applications are available at the Anson County Chamber of Commerce or online at www.ansoncounty.org.

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YARD SALE

lot of antique items that have been passed down through the generations-old hand tools, grinders, old saws & woodworking items. We have 2 large pieces of almost new carpet with padding. More-styrofoam coolers, crockpots, soup pots, lots of cloth material for crafts, wooden pieces for crafts & plenty of pattern books. Tools include drills, routers, scroll saws, sanders, jigsaws, table saw & drill press. Lots of small cabinets with bolts, nuts & screws.

YARD SALE

Assorted items for crafts & for home repair. Aluminum ramps used for loading a scooter or 4 wheeler. A large working kids go cart, garden tools & supplies. Historic or antique electric welder, butter churns, lots of new Christmas lights & village decorations. U-Haul style enclosed trailer, many electronics (Play Station), kids toys...and many more items too numerous to list! Rain date is 10/22. If you want to look at what will sell call 704-272-8649

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