

Media Relations

July 23, 2013

Carsey Institute: Part-Time Workers Still Struggling to Find Full-Time Work

DURHAM, N.H. – American workers who found themselves in part-time positions in the aftermath of the economic downturn still struggle to find full-time work and are much more likely to be living in poverty than their peers with full-time work, according to new research from the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire.

“Part-time employment increased dramatically during the recent recession for both men and women. Individuals work part time for many reasons. Some do so to care for children and elderly family members. Others do so because they are in school. Yet others work part time because they cannot find full-time work. This latter reason may be a cause of concern for both workers and employers, as well as those interested in the long-term productivity and efficiency of the U.S. economy,” said researcher Rebecca Glauber, assistant professor of sociology and a faculty fellow at the Carsey Institute.

The new research is presented in the Carsey Institute policy brief “Wanting More but Working Less: Involuntary Part-Time Employment and Economic Vulnerability.” Involuntary part-time employment is defined as working fewer than 35 hours per week because full-time work is unavailable.

Glauber found:

- The single largest five-year increase in involuntary part-time employment since the 1970s occurred between 2007 and 2012.
- The involuntary part-time employment rate more than doubled between 2007 and 2012. For women, it rose from 3.6 percent to 7.8 percent. For men, the rate increased from 2.4 percent in 2007 to 5.9 percent in 2012.
- While the unemployment rate has slowly fallen since 2010, the rate of workers in involuntary part-time positions has remained relatively constant.
- Involuntary part-time employment is a key factor in poverty. In 2012, one in four involuntary part-time workers lived in poverty, whereas just one in twenty full-time workers lived in poverty.
- In 2012, involuntary part-time workers were nearly five times more likely than full-time workers to have spent more than three months of the previous year unemployed.

According to Glauber, the disparities between involuntary part-time workers and full-time workers are striking. Among women, median family income was \$31,928 greater for full-time workers than for involuntary part-time workers. Among men, median family income was \$35,000 greater. Both men and women working part time involuntarily were more than five times as likely to live in poverty as those working full time. They were nearly three times more likely to be low income. Men and women working part time involuntarily were approximately five to six times more likely to have spent a substantial portion of the year unemployed than their counterparts working full time.

“Policies that increase the quality of part-time positions, such as unemployment insurance for part-time workers, may go far in alleviating the economic penalties associated with involuntary part-time employment,”

Glauber said.

This research relied on data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly household survey conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the U.S. Census Bureau. The research was supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and anonymous donors.

The complete Carsey Institute report about this research is available at <http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publication/794>.

The Carsey Institute conducts policy research on vulnerable children, youth, and families and on sustainable community development. The institute gives policy makers and practitioners the timely, independent resources they need to effect change in their communities. For more information about the Carsey Institute, go to www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu.

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-30-

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