

Definitions of Labour Relations

As a starting point for each geographical unit and cross section, we take the whole population and subsequently determine what part is not as a rule working, and, consequently, what part is working. (These “calculations” will often be based on estimates rather than actual data.) The non-working population is divided into the following three categories:

- Those **who cannot work or cannot be expected to work** (because they are either too young, too old, disabled or studying)
- Those who do not have to work (because they are **affluent**)
- And those who wish to work but have no job (**unemployed**).

A central focus of the project is the possible impact of the market economy, and to help analyse that the working population is also divided into three categories.

- Workers who provide labour within the household and the community are subsumed within the category **Reciprocal labour**.
- Others are obliged to work for the polity (often the state, though it could also be a feudal or religious authority). Their labour is not commodified and owned by the polity. Those workers are included in the category **Tributary labour**.
- One of the main trends we examine is the commodification of labour. The employer who “buys” labour power may produce for the market or for non-market institutions. Therefore, the category **Commodified labour** will be subdivided into those working for the market and those working for public institutions *which may nevertheless produce for the market* (though not for the gain of private individuals). In some statistical sources those comprising the category of commodified labour are referred to as “gainful workers”.

Summing up all these categories, we arrive at the following taxonomy:

Non-working:

1. *Cannot work or cannot be expected to work*: those who cannot work, because they are too young (≤ 6 years), too old (≥ 75 years),¹ disabled, or are studying.
2. *Affluent*: those who are so prosperous that they do not need to work for a living (rentiers, etc.).
3. *Unemployed*: though unemployment is very much a nineteenth- and, especially, twentieth-century concept, we do distinguish between those in employment and those wishing to work but who cannot find employment.

Working:

Reciprocal labour

Within the household:

4. *Leading household producers*: heads of self-sufficient households (these include family-based and non-kin-based forms, such as monasteries and palaces). In many households after 1500, “self-sufficiency” can no longer have been complete. Basic foodstuffs, such as salt, and materials for tools and weapons, such as iron, were

¹ These minimum and maximum ages are very much culturally determined. If these differ very much for a certain region or a certain cross section, please indicate this in the database.

acquired through barter or monetary transactions even in tribal societies that were, by 1500, only marginally exposed to market production.² “Self-sufficiency” in our sense, which occurs in labour relations 4, 5, and 6, can include small-scale market transactions that aim at sustaining households rather than accumulating capital by way of profiting from exchange value.³

5. *Household kin producers*: subordinate kin (men, women, and children) contributing to the maintenance of self-sufficient households.
6. *Household servants*: subordinate kin (men, women, and children) contributing to the maintenance of self-sufficient households. This category does not refer to household servants who earn a salary and are free to leave their employer of their own volition, but rather to servants in feudal autarchic households.

Within the community:

7. *Community-based redistribution agents*: persons who perform tasks for the local community in exchange for communally provided remuneration in kind, such as food, accommodation, and services, or a plot of land and seed to grow food on their own. Examples of this type of labour include working under the Indian *jajmani* system, hunting and defence by Taiwanese aborigines, or communal work in nomadic and sedentary tribes in the Middle East and North Africa. In the case of the *jajmani* workers, hereditary structures form the basis of the engagement, while in Taiwan the criteria for fulfilling community-based labour are gender (male) and age (between the ages of six and forty).

Tributary labour

8. *Forced labourers*: those who have to work for the polity, and are remunerated mainly in kind. They include corvée labourers, conscripted soldiers and sailors, and convicts.
9. *Indentured tributary labourers*: those contracted to work as unfree labourers for the polity for a specific period of time to pay off a debt. For example, German regiments (the “Hessians”) in service with the British Empire which fought against the American colonists during the American Revolutionary War.
10. *Tributary serfs*: those working for the polity because they are bound to its soil and bound to provide specified tasks for a specified maximum number of days, for example state serfs in Russia.
11. *Tributary slaves*: those who are owned by and work for the polity indefinitely (deprived of the right to leave, to refuse to work, or to receive compensation for their labour). One example is forced labourers in concentration camps.

² According to Amalendu Guha, “The Medieval Economy of Assam”, in Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of India* (Cambridge, 1982), vol. 1, p. 487, “village self-sufficiency in a total sense was a myth”, even for the relatively remote sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Assam.

³ Marcel van der Linden, “Global Labour History and ‘the Modern World-System’”, *International Review of Social History*, 46 (2001), pp. 423-459, p. 452, referring to G.A. Cohen, *Karl Marx’s Theory of History: A Defence* (Oxford, 1978). See too Akira Hayami, Osamu Saitô, and Ronald P. Toby (eds), *The Economic History of Japan, 1600-1990*, Vol. 1: *Emergence of Economic Society in Japan, 1600-1859* (Oxford, 2004), who argue in a similar sense for a broader concept of “self-sufficiency” that allows for market production as long as accumulation is not the basic goal of such transactions.

Commodified labour

For the market, private employment:

12. *Self-employed*: those who produce goods or services for market institutions, possibly in cooperation with other household members or no more than three wage labourers, apprentices, serfs, or slaves (for example, peasants, craftsmen, petty traders, transporters, as well as those in a profession). NB: All members of a family working under a putting-out system should be counted as self-employed producers.⁴
13. *Employers*: those who produce goods or services for market institutions by employing more than three wage labourers, indentured labourers, serfs, or slaves.
14. *Market wage earners*: wage earners who produce commodities or services for the market in exchange mainly for monetary remuneration.
 - 14.1. Sharecropping wage earners: remuneration is a fixed share of total output (including to the temporarily unemployed).
 - 14.2. Piece-rate wage earners: remuneration at piece rates (including to the temporarily unemployed).
 - 14.3. Time-rate wage earners: remuneration at time rates (including to the temporarily unemployed).
15. *Indentured labourers for the market*: those contracted to work as unfree labourers for an employer for a specific period of time to pay off a debt. They include indentured labourers in the British Empire after the abolition of slavery.
16. *Serfs working for the market*: those bound to the soil and bound to provide specified tasks for a specified maximum number of days, for example serfs working on the estates of the nobility.
17. *Chattel slaves who produce for the market*: those owned by their employers (masters). They are deprived of the right to leave, to refuse to work or to receive compensation for their labour.
 - 17.1 Sharecropping chattel slaves working for their proprietor, for example plantation slaves working in the Caribbean.
 - 17.2 Slaves for hire, for example for agricultural or domestic labour in eighteenth-century Virginia.

For non-market institutions that may produce for the market

18. *Wage earners employed by non-market institutions*, such as the state, state-owned companies, the Church, or production cooperatives, who produce or render services for a free or a regulated market.
 - 18.1 Sharecropping wage earners: remuneration is a fixed share of total output (including the temporarily unemployed).
 - 18.2 Piece-rate wage earners: remuneration at piece rates (including the temporarily unemployed), e.g. hired artisans in Chinese imperial silk weaveries during the Ming and Qing dynasties.
 - 18.3 Time-rate wage earners: remuneration at time rates (including the temporarily unemployed), e.g. hired artisans on Chinese imperial construction projects during the Ming and Qing dynasties, but also workers and employees in twentieth-century state enterprises.

⁴ As long as they are ≥ 6 and ≤ 75 .