

UNEMPLOYMENT

ISSUE BRIEF

Long-Term Unemployment: Spotlight on Women and Families

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Joan Entmacher, Katherine Gallagher Robbins, and Lauren Frohlich

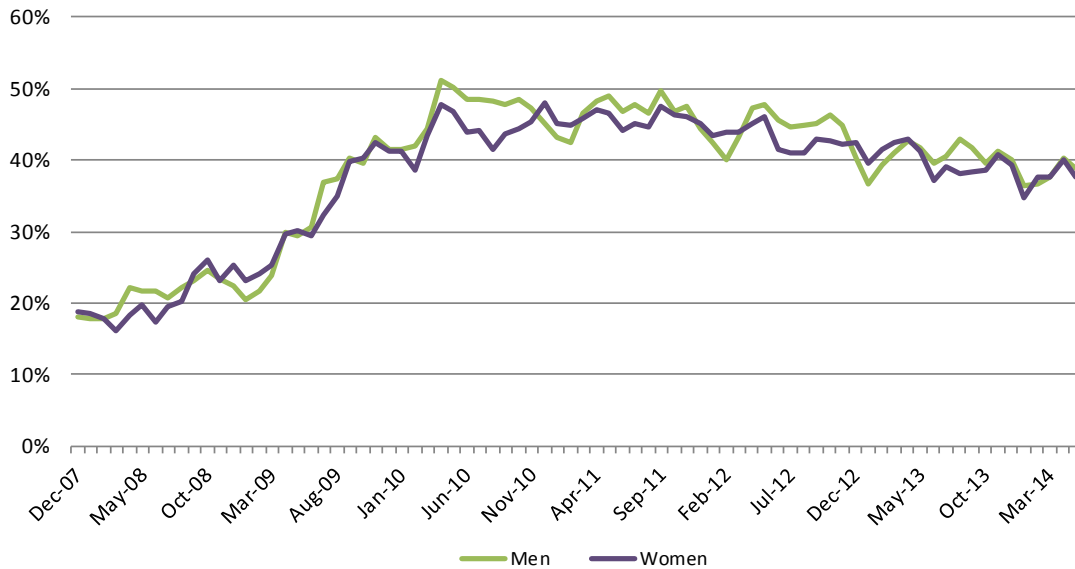
KEY FACTS

- About 4 in 10 unemployed adult women and men (20 and older) have been seeking work for more than 6 months.
- The average duration of unemployment for adult women and men is about 9 months—and state unemployment benefits typically last no more than six months.
- Women 55 and older experience the highest rates of long-term unemployment and longest spells of unemployment, among women by age.
- Asian-American and African-American women experience the highest rates of long-term unemployment and longest spells of unemployment, among women by race and ethnicity.
- 2.3 million children lived with a parent who had been seeking work for 6 months or more in an average month in 2013.
- The long-term unemployment rate among unemployed single parents was 55 percent, substantially higher than for unemployed married parents—44 percent.
- More than 1 in 3 families with a parent unemployed long-term were poor.
- Nearly 1.75 million people—including 446,000 children, 655,000 women, and 642,000 men—were lifted out of poverty in 2012 by unemployment insurance benefits, due in large part to federal emergency unemployment compensation.

Since Congress cut off federal emergency unemployment insurance benefits in December 2013, the number of long-term unemployed—workers who have been seeking employment for more than six months—who have lost this vital lifeline has grown from more than 1.3 million¹ to more than 3 million.² Long-term unemployment is a continuing crisis for both men and women, and their families. However, women's typically lower earnings when they are employed and their far greater likelihood of being single parents makes them and their children more economically vulnerable when both income from work and modest unemployment insurance benefits are lost. For that reason, this issue brief highlights long-term unemployment trends among women and the impact of parents' long-term unemployment on children.

Source Note: The "long-term unemployment rate" is the percentage of unemployed workers who have been seeking employment for more than six months. Data on long-term unemployment rates and average duration of unemployment by gender, age, race and ethnicity are based on NWLC's analysis of Current Population Survey data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. These data are as of May 2014 unless otherwise noted,³ and are summarized in Appendix Table 1. Data on long-term unemployment among parents and the impact on children are based on the Urban Institute's analyses of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey and Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation. Data on the number and percentage of children with long-term unemployed parents, by state, compiled by the Urban Institute, are summarized in Appendix Table 2.

Percentage of Adult Jobless Workers Who Were Unemployed After 26 Weeks



Source: NWLC calculations from Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

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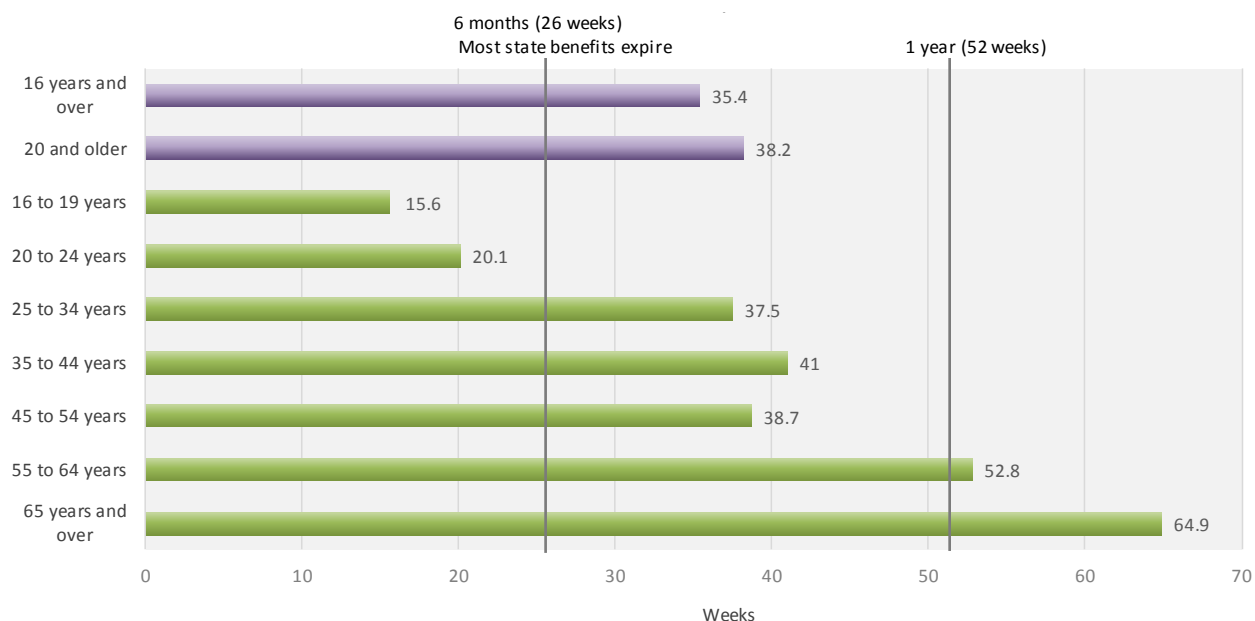


Trends in Long-Term Unemployment, by Gender, Age, Race and Ethnicity

About four in ten unemployed adult women and men have been seeking work for more than six months, double their rates at the start of the recession.

- 38 percent of jobless adult (age 20 and older) women and 39 percent of jobless adult men were unemployed long term in May 2014—up from fewer than two in ten (19 percent for adult women, 18 percent for adult men) at the beginning of the recession in December 2007.
 - o Among all jobless workers (age 16 and older) more than one-third (35 percent) were still looking for work after six months as of May 2014—double the rate at the beginning of the most recent recession in December 2007 (17 percent). Prior to that recession, rates of long-term unemployment had never reached more than about one-quarter,⁴ and Congress had never allowed emergency unemployment compensation to permanently expire when the long-term unemployment rate was above 23.1 percent.⁵
- Jobless adult women and men were unemployed, on average, for about nine months as of May 2014—and many have been unemployed much longer. More than one-quarter of jobless adult women (26 percent) and men (27 percent) were still looking for work after a year of searching.
 - o State unemployment insurance benefits typically last no more than 6 months (26 weeks),⁶ so with the elimination of federal emergency unemployment compensation, no unemployment benefits are available to these workers.
- Long-term unemployment rates and the average duration of unemployment were substantially higher for women and men in their prime working and child-raising years (age 25 to 54) than for younger workers (age 16 to 24) as of May 2014.

Women's Average Duration of Unemployment (in Weeks), by Age May 2014



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (last visited Jun. 9, 2014). Figures are for May 2014 and are not seasonally adjusted.

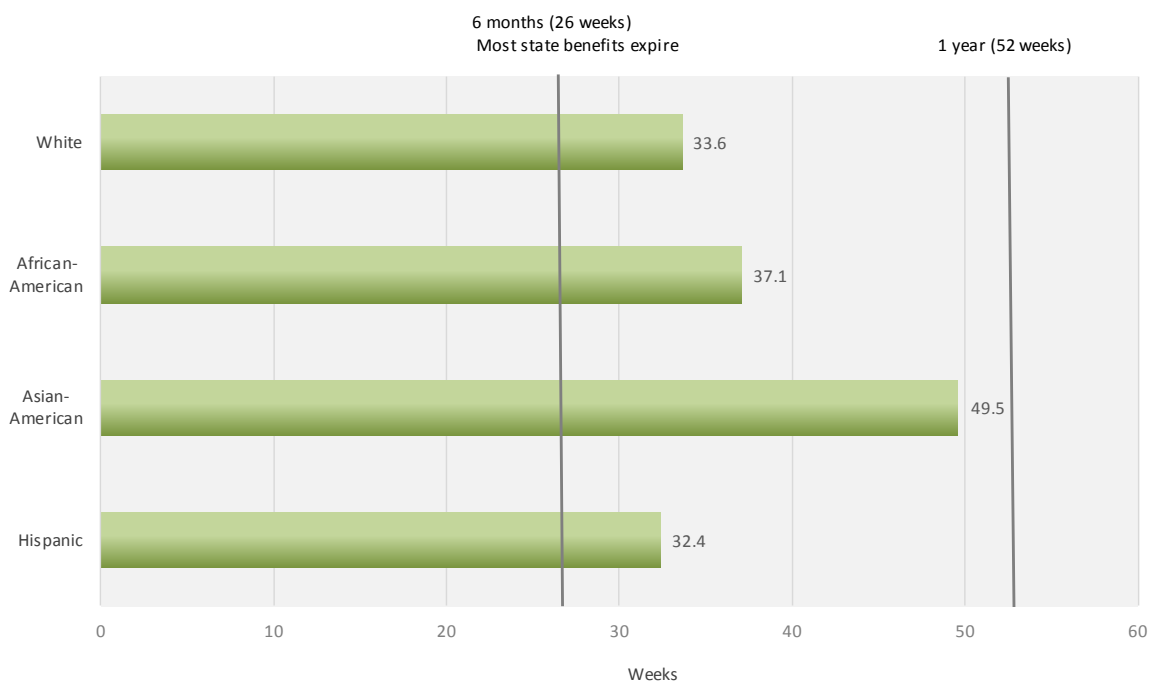
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Women 55 and older experience the highest rates of long-term unemployment and the longest spells of unemployment, among women by age.

- About half of female jobless workers age 55 to 64 (51 percent) and 65 and older (46 percent) were still looking for work after 26 weeks as of May 2014. These long-term unemployment rates were higher than for women in other age groups.
 - o For men age 55 to 64, the long-term unemployment rate was 46 percent; for men age 65 and older, 36 percent, as of May 2014.
- Jobless women age 55 to 64 had been unemployed for an average of a year (53 weeks) as of May 2014; jobless women age 65 and older had been unemployed for an average of nearly 15 months (65 weeks). These spells of unemployment were higher than for women in other age groups.
 - o For men age 55 to 64, the average duration of unemployment was 50 weeks; for men age 65 and older, 49 weeks, as of May 2014. These spells were longer than for other groups of male workers by age.

Women's Average Duration of Unemployment (in Weeks), by Race and Ethnicity May 2014



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Table A-36, available at <http://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpseee36.htm> (last visited Jun. 9, 2014). Figures are for May 2014 and are not seasonally adjusted.

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Asian-American and African-American women have the highest long-term unemployment rates and the longest spells of unemployment, among women by race and ethnicity.

- Nearly half of unemployed Asian-American women (47 percent) were still looking for work after six months as of May 2014, as were 39 percent of unemployed African-American women, 33 percent of unemployed white women, and 30 percent of unemployed Hispanic women.
 - Among unemployed men, the highest rate of long-term unemployment as of May 2014 was for African-American men at 39 percent; the lowest was for white men at 36 percent.
- Among unemployed women, Asian-Americans had the longest average duration of unemployment as of May 2014 at nearly a year (50 weeks), followed by African-American women (37 weeks), white women (34 weeks), and Hispanic women (32 weeks).
 - Among unemployed men, the average duration of unemployment as of May 2014 ranged from 41 weeks for Asian-American men to 34 weeks for African-American men.⁷

Children Affected by Their Parents' Long-Term Unemployment

The number of children living with a parent seeking work for six months or more has tripled since the start of the recession.

- In an average month in 2013, 2.3 million children across the country were living with a parent who had been looking for work for six months or more, three times the number in 2007.⁸
- The ten states with the largest percentage of children living with a long-term unemployed parent are Rhode Island, Illinois, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Connecticut, North Carolina, California, New Jersey, and Tennessee; the highest percentage of all is in the District of Columbia.⁹

Single parents are more likely to be unemployed long term than are married parents.

- A study by the Urban Institute shows that the long-term unemployment rate for unemployed single parents was 55 percent, compared to 44 percent for unemployed married parents.¹⁰ The vast majority of children in single-parent families, 85 percent, live with their mother.¹¹
 - As of May 2014, the regular unemployment rate for women who maintain families was substantially higher (8.4 percent) than the overall unemployment rate (6.3 percent).

More than one in three families with a parent unemployed long-term was poor.

- The poverty rate for families in which a parent has been unemployed for six months or more was 35.3 percent.¹² Families with only one breadwinner and low incomes before the job loss are more likely to fall into poverty.

Parental unemployment and poverty hurt children.

- Families in poverty struggle to provide the basics that children need for healthy development, including nutritious meals, safe housing, and safe and stable child care.
- The stress of long-term unemployment also affects family dynamics and adversely affects children's school performance, reflected in poorer attendance, lower math scores, higher risk of grade repetition or even expulsion.¹³
- The negative impacts on children can persist long-term, including lower rates of college attendance and lower annual earnings; these effects may be the result of a combination of reduced financial resources, the detrimental effect of increased family conflict, and children's changed aspirations for their success in the job market.¹⁴

Unemployment benefits were a critical income support for workers and their families—but they have been cut off for long-term jobless workers who need them most.

- Due in large part to federal emergency unemployment compensation, unemployment benefits kept nearly 1.75 million people—including 446,000 children, 655,000 women, and 642,000 men—from falling into poverty in 2012.¹⁵
- Unemployment insurance benefits lifted 95,000 single-mother families with children out of poverty in 2012.¹⁶

Restoring federal emergency unemployment benefits is vital for working women and men, their families, and the economy.

Appendix

Table 1, Long-Term Unemployment Rates and Duration of Unemployment by Gender, Age, Race, and Ethnicity

May 2014				
	Women		Men	
	<i>Long-term unemployment rate</i>	<i>Average duration of unemployment (weeks)</i>	<i>Long-term unemployment rate</i>	<i>Average duration of unemployment (weeks)</i>
Age				
16 years and over	34.7%	35.4	36.4%	36.3
20 years and older	37.6%	38.2	38.9%	38.5
16 to 19 years	14.2%	15.6	15.5%	17.2
20 to 24 years	18.4%	20.1	30.4%	27.2
25 to 34 years	39.9%	37.5	41.2%	37.8
35 to 44 years	38.3%	41.0	37.1%	38.1
45 to 54 years	43.0%	38.7	44.1%	43.8
55 to 64 years	50.6%	52.8	46.3%	49.5
65 years and over	46.4%	64.9	35.6%	49.2
Race				
White	32.5%	33.6	36.2%	37.2
African-American	38.8%	37.1	39.0%	34.2
Asian-American	47.2%	49.5	38.5%	40.5
Hispanic	30.2%	32.4	37.0%	37.4

Source: National Women's Law Center Calculations based on Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. Data are seasonally unadjusted and are for workers 16 and older unless otherwise noted.

Table 2, Children with Long-Term Unemployed Parents, by State

State	Children with Long Term Unemployed Parents			Children with Long Term Unemployed Parents in 2013	
	2007	2013	Ratio of 2013 to 2007	As Share of Children with Unemployed Parents	As Share of All Children
Alabama	6,800	33,900	5.0	41%	3.2%
Alaska	600†	3,200	5.1†	29%	1.7%
Arizona	16,600	55,100	3.3	51%	3.5%
Arkansas	4,900	17,200	3.5	36%	2.6%
California	127,700	347,300	2.7	42%	3.9%
Colorado	12,300	26,000	2.1	33%	2.2%
Connecticut	11,900	30,700	2.6	48%	4.0%
Delaware	1,000	6,500	6.6	44%	3.3%
District of Columbia	2,600	8,000	3.0	66%	7.4%
Florida	30,100	145,500	4.8	51%	3.8%
Georgia	33,200	114,800	3.5	48%	4.8%
Hawaii	900†	6,100	7.0†	41%	2.1%
Idaho	2,200	10,900	5.0	37%	2.6%

Table 2 (Continued)

State	Children with Long Term Unemployed Parents			Children with Long Term Unemployed Parents in 2013	
	2007	2013	Ratio of 2013 to 2007	As Share of Children with Unemployed Parents	As Share of All Children
Illinois	48,700	143,400	2.9	49%	4.9%
Indiana	11,600	41,700	3.6	33%	2.7%
Iowa	4,400	7,400	1.7	19%	1.0%
Kansas	4,300	13,900	3.3	33%	2.0%
Kentucky	11,800	39,600	3.3	49%	4.2%
Louisiana	8,100	30,900	3.8	41%	2.8%
Maine	2,500	5,300	2.2	31%	2.1%
Maryland	12,600	41,200	3.3	40%	3.2%
Massachusetts	21,600	41,600	1.9	41%	3.0%
Michigan	43,000	89,900	2.1	45%	4.1%
Minnesota	13,100	22,200	1.7	31%	1.8%
Mississippi	16,400	21,400	1.3	37%	3.1%
Missouri	20,000	31,400	1.6	32%	2.3%
Montana	1,300†	4,000	3.1†	36%	1.9%
Nebraska	2,600	7,100	2.7	29%	1.6%
Nevada	5,500	23,000	4.1	42%	3.6%
New Hampshire	1,500	6,000	3.9	37%	2.3%
New Jersey	16,100	77,400	4.8	45%	3.9%
New Mexico	2,500†	18,300	7.4†	45%	3.8%
New York	41,500	152,700	3.7	48%	3.7%
North Carolina	23,000	90,100	3.9	53%	4.0%
North Dakota	400†	1,300	3.3†	26%	0.8%
Ohio	29,400	81,000	2.8	37%	3.1%
Oklahoma	5,100	8,900	1.8	18%	1.0%
Oregon	5,500†	22,800	4.1†	36%	2.8%
Pennsylvania	22,200	93,400	4.2	50%	3.5%
Rhode Island	2,600	11,500	4.5	49%	5.5%
South Carolina	13,900	36,100	2.6	41%	3.6%
South Dakota	2,200	2,400	1.1	27%	1.2%
Tennessee	11,800	54,300	4.6	41%	3.9%
Texas	56,800	140,700	2.5	32%	2.1%
Utah	3,500	7,400	2.1	20%	0.8%
Vermont	900	1,600	1.8	29%	1.3%
Virginia	5,800†	45,900	7.9†	43%	2.5%
Washington	12,900	44,000	3.4	41%	2.9%
West Virginia	2,900	8,400	2.9	39%	2.4%
Wisconsin	14,700	43,800	3.0	43%	3.4%
Wyoming	200†	1,700	7.4†	31%	1.3%
Total	753,600	2,318,900	3.1	42%	3.3%

Source: Urban Institute tabulations of monthly Current Population Survey data, January–November 2013 and January–December 2007. Counts are average monthly counts.

† The estimate is based on a sample of fewer than 30 observations and so is not as precise as estimates based on larger samples.

- 1 Nat'l Emp. Law Project (NELP), Tables: Emergency Unemployment Compensation State-by-State Cutoff Numbers and Benefits Paid/Jobs Saved, at 2 (Jan. 2014), available at <http://www.nelp.org/page/-/UI/2013/EUC-state-impact-tables.pdf?nocdn=1>.
- 2 "3 Million And Counting: Unemployment Insurance Cut-off Hits New Milestone" House Ways and Means Committee Democrats (June 9, 2014) <http://democrats.waysandmeans.house.gov/press-release/3-million-and-counting-unemployment-insurance-cut-hits-new-milestone>.
- 3 The data the Bureau of Labor Statistics provides on unemployment duration by gender, age, race and ethnicity are seasonally unadjusted and thus are subject to seasonal variation.
- 4 Long-term unemployment reached its previous high of 26 percent in 1983. Data collection began in 1948.
- 5 NWLC, Renewing Federal Emergency Unemployment Benefits: Vital for Women & Families—and the Economy, (June 2014), available at <http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/uifactsheetjune2014.pdf>.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 African-American men's average duration of unemployment was lower in May 2014 than it had been in several months – in 2013 the annual average was 41 weeks or 9.5 months – a figure more typical of the first four months of 2014.
- 8 Julia Isaacs and Olivia Healy, Urban Institute, Unemployment benefits can be a lifeline for long-term unemployed families, (Jan. 13, 2014), available at <http://blog.metrotrends.org/2014/01/unemployment-benefits-lifeline-long-term-unemployed-families/>.
- 9 Ibid. See Appendix Table 2, presenting Urban Institute tabulations of monthly Current Population Survey data, January-November 2013 and January-December 2007, cited in Isaacs and Healy, *supra* note 8.
- 10 Sheila Zedlewski and Austin Nichols, Urban Institute, What Happens to Families' Income and Poverty after Unemployment (May 2012), available at <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412580-What-Happens-to-Families-Income-and-Poverty-after-Unemployment.pdf>.
- 11 NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census, America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2013, Table C3, available at <https://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/cps2013C.html>.
- 12 Zedlewski and Nichols, *supra* note 10.
- 13 Julia Isaacs, Urban Institute and First Focus, Unemployment from a Child's Perspective (March 2013), available at <http://firstfocus.net/sites/default/files/Unemployment%20from%20a%20Childs%20Perspective.pdf>.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 NWLC calculations based on CPS ASEC 2013 using CPS Table Creator, *supra* note 10.
- 16 Ibid.