Unemployed In America

The Job Market, the Realities of Unemployment, and the Impact of Unemployment Benefits

Survey among 413 unemployed adults
Conducted April 17 – 28, 2003
Commissioned by National Employment Law Project
The Job Market Today

Finding an acceptable job in today’s market

- Fairly hard: 86%
- Very hard: 13%
- Easy: 1%

Finding an acceptable job today versus when you have looked for a job in the past

- Somewhat harder: 83%
- Much harder: 9%
- Easier: 9%
Confidence About Finding A Job In Next Three Months

- Very/fairly confident
- Just somewhat/not confident

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Very/fairly confident</th>
<th>Just somewhat/not confident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All unemployed</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed nine+ months</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-college graduates</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>College graduates</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>63%</td>
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Concern About Having To Accept Various Jobs

- Job that pays less than previous job: 48% Very concerned, 61% Fairly concerned
- Job that does not provide health insurance: 50% Very concerned, 60% Fairly concerned
- Job that does not provide retirement benefits: 44% Very concerned, 57% Fairly concerned
What Have You Done In The Past Three Months To Find Work?

- Searched classified ads, Internet, Web: 80%
- Contacted friends, relatives, colleagues about possible jobs: 70%
- Interviewed with a prospective employer: 51%
- Contacted job-training or job-search program: 43%
- Checked union registers or joined a job club or job-networking group: 22%

Unemployed adults have applied for an average of 29 jobs.
Financial Hardships Of Unemployment

- More than half of unemployed adults have had to postpone medical treatment (57%) or cut back on spending for food (56%).

- One in four (26%) has had to move to other housing or move in with friends or relatives.

- 38% have lost telephone service (22%) or are worried they will lose their phone (16%).

- More than one-third (36%) have had trouble paying gas or electric bills.
One-third (33%) of the unemployed were once covered by health insurance but lost these benefits as a result of their unemployment.
Unemployment’s Impact On The Family

◆ More than three in four (77%) unemployed Americans say the level of stress in their family has increased.

◆ Two-thirds (65%) of those with children have cut back on spending for their children.

◆ 26% say another family member has had to start a job or increase work hours.

◆ 23% have had to interrupt their education or that of a family member.
How The Unemployed Get By

- Spent significant amount of savings: 57% (57% for nine/more months)
- Borrowed money to pay current expenses: 48% (51% for nine/more months)
- Increased credit card debt: 30% (37% for nine/more months)
- Other family member started job/increased work hours: 26% (28% for nine/more months)
- Sold car, truck, other property: 20% (24% for nine/more months)
- Drawn on retirement savings: 15% (21% for nine/more months)
- Received support from food pantry, charity: 14% (17% for nine/more months)

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Unemployment Benefits Critical

37% of unemployed adults currently receive benefits (23%) or received benefits in the past two years (14%).

Just 19% of those under age 30 have received unemployment benefits.

How important have unemployment benefits been in helping you/your family meet basic needs?

- Very important: 78%
- Fairly important: 11%
- Less/not sure: 10%
- Not important: 1%

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Unemployed Adults Whose Benefits Have Run Out Are An Important Group

◆ 68% say that the ending of their unemployment benefits has had a major impact on their financial situation.

◆ 95% agree that if Congress were to increase benefits from 13 weeks to 26 weeks it would be very helpful to unemployed workers and their families.

◆ They are more concerned than others that they will have to accept a job that pays less than their last job (74%) or does not provide health benefits (64%).
Extending Unemployment Benefits

Should Congress extend the policy of providing 13 weeks of federal benefits?

- Should vote to continue providing extended benefits: 79%
  - GOPs: 69%
  - Dems: 86%
- Let policy expire: 12%

How helpful to the unemployed and their families would it be to increase benefits from 13 weeks to 26 weeks?

- Fairly helpful: 83%
  - GOPs: 79%
  - Dems: 90%
- Very helpful: 15%
- Less/not helpful: 15%

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Unemployment’s Impact On The Family

*In Their Own Words*

“It’s changed our lifestyle completely. We were feeling very good about retirement, and now a lot of the resources we were counting on are gone.” Woman, Ohio

“I’m the sole provider: there’s no money for rent, bills, or food. I have to rely on the government for help.” Man, Texas

“My car has been repossessed, the bank is threatening foreclosure on my house, and I am having a hard time being able to feed my child.” Woman, Georgia

“It has caused my blood pressure to go sky high, and there are some mornings when I can’t even get out of bed.” Man, Texas

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