

# Employment Data Digest

AARP Public Policy Institute's monthly look at the latest employment numbers for people ages 55+

- The labor force participation rate for people ages 55 and older was 40.1 percent in June 2017, up slightly from 39.9 percent in May.
- The overall unemployment rate was 4.4 percent in June 2017. The unemployment rate for those ages 55+ was 3.2 percent overall, and was 3.0 percent for men and 3.4 percent for women.
- Average duration of unemployment for jobseekers increases with age. In June it was 37.7 weeks for jobseekers ages 55 to 64 and 42.1 weeks for jobseekers ages 65 and over.

## Total Payroll Employment

In June total nonfarm payroll employment increased by 222,000 jobs, up from 152,000 (revised) in May. The unemployment rate was 4.4 percent. Jobs were added in health care, social assistance, financial activities and mining. Approximately 35.3 million people ages 55+ were employed in June.

## Labor Force Participation

The labor force participation rate is the percentage of the population that is either employed or unemployed (i.e., either working or actively seeking work). The labor force participation rates of those ages 16 to 24 and 25 to 54 have decreased since December 2007, the beginning of the Great Recession. The rate for those ages 55+ has increased slightly in the same time frame. In June 2017 it was 40.1 percent, up slightly from May.

TABLE 1  
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE BY AGE

	DEC 2007*	JUN 2016	MAR 2017	APR 2017	MAY 2017	JUN 2017
TOTAL, 16 YEARS AND OVER	66.0%	62.7%	63.0%	62.9%	62.7%	62.8%
16 TO 24 YEARS	59.2%	55.0%	55.8%	55.9%	55.1%	55.4%
25 TO 54 YEARS	83.1%	81.2%	81.7%	81.7%	81.5%	81.6%
55 AND OVER	38.9%	40.0%	40.1%	39.9%	39.9%	40.1%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Labor force statistics from the Current Population Survey. Seasonally adjusted. \*Beginning of recession, which officially ended in June 2009.

## Employment Rate

The employment rate (sometimes called the employment-to-population ratio) refers to the proportion of the civilian non-institutional population that is employed. A year-over-year comparison shows that the employment rate for individuals 25 to 54 went down during and after the recession but began rising during the last few years. Meanwhile, the rate for the 55+ age group held steady and has gone up slightly in recent years. In June 2017 the employment rate for people ages 55 and older was 38.8 percent.

TABLE 2  
EMPLOYMENT RATE

	DEC 2007*	JUN 2009	JUN 2010	JUN 2011	JUN 2012	JUN 2013	JUN 2014	JUN 2015	JUN 2016	JUN 2017
25 TO 54 YEARS	79.7%	75.9%	75.2%	75.0%	75.6%	75.9%	76.8%	77.2%	77.8%	78.5%
55 YEARS AND OVER	37.7%	37.4%	37.6%	37.5%	38.1%	38.3%	38.2%	38.4%	38.6%	38.8%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Seasonally adjusted. \*Beginning of recession, which officially ended in June 2009.

## Unemployment Rate

The unemployed are individuals ages 16 and older who were not employed during the survey reference week, but were available for work, and had made efforts to find employment sometime during the four-week period ending with the reference week. The unemployment rate is the number of people unemployed as a percentage of the labor force. Table 3

shows that those ages 55 and older had a lower unemployment rate (3.2 percent) in June compared with the total workforce (4.4 percent). The unemployment rate for men ages 55+ was 3.0 percent in June 2017 and 3.4 percent for women.

TABLE 3  
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE 55+

	DEC 2007*	JUN 2016	MAR 2017	APR 2017	MAY 2017	JUN 2017
TOTAL, 16 YEARS AND OVER	5.0%	4.9%	4.5%	4.4%	4.3%	4.4%
TOTAL, 55 YEARS AND OVER	3.2%	3.6%	3.4%	3.2%	3.1%	3.2%
MEN, 55 YEARS AND OVER	3.2%	3.8%	3.4%	3.2%	2.9%	3.0%
WOMEN, 55 YEARS AND OVER	3.3%	3.4%	3.3%	3.2%	3.4%	3.4%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Current Population Survey data. Seasonally adjusted. \*Beginning of recession, which officially ended in June 2009.

### Duration of Unemployment

The duration of unemployment refers to the length of time in weeks that individuals classified as unemployed have been looking for work. The median duration of unemployment refers to the midpoint of duration of unemployment, below and above which there is an equal number. As shown in Table 4, at ages 45 and over jobseekers tend to have longer average and median durations of unemployment compared with individuals in younger age groups. Jobseekers ages 65 and over often have the longest average durations of unemployment compared with other age groups. In June 2017 the average for people ages 65+ was 42.1 weeks and the median duration was 10.3 weeks.

TABLE 4  
UNEMPLOYMENT BY AGE

	JUNE 2017							
	UNEMPLOYED (NUMBERS IN THOUSANDS)						WEEKS OF UNEMPLOYMENT	
	TOTAL	LESS THAN 5 WEEKS	5 TO 14 WEEKS	15 WEEKS AND OVER			AVERAGE (MEAN) DURATION	MEDIAN DURATION
				TOTAL	15 TO 26 WEEKS	27 WEEKS AND OVER		
TOTAL, 16 YEARS AND OVER	7,250	3,057	1,739	2,454	867	1,587	22.9	7.6
16 TO 19 YEARS	1,135	720	253	161	64	97	9.4	3.6
20 TO 24 YEARS	1,254	597	329	328	157	171	15.3	5.4
25 TO 34 YEARS	1,558	592	405	561	224	337	21.6	8.7
35 TO 44 YEARS	1,047	420	243	384	139	245	22.5	7.8
45 TO 54 YEARS	1,143	376	292	475	143	333	31.3	11
55 TO 64 YEARS	773	233	148	391	106	285	37.7	15.1
65 YEARS AND OVER	340	119	68	153	33	120	42.1	10.3

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Not seasonally adjusted.

TABLE 5  
MEDIAN DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT BY AGE (WEEKS)

	DEC 2007*	JUN 2009	JUN 2010	JUN 2011	JUN 2012	JUN 2013	JUN 2014	JUN 2015	JUN 2016	JUN 2017
20 YEARS AND OVER	8.6	16.5	24.8	23.1	21.5	18.0	14.4	10.8	9.6	8.8
55 TO 64 YEARS	10.8	20.9	29.8	35.4	28.2	22.4	23.7	12.8	12.1	15.1
65 YEARS AND OVER	7.4	18.1	27.3	32.8	36.6	26.7	25.4	9.9	10.2	10.3

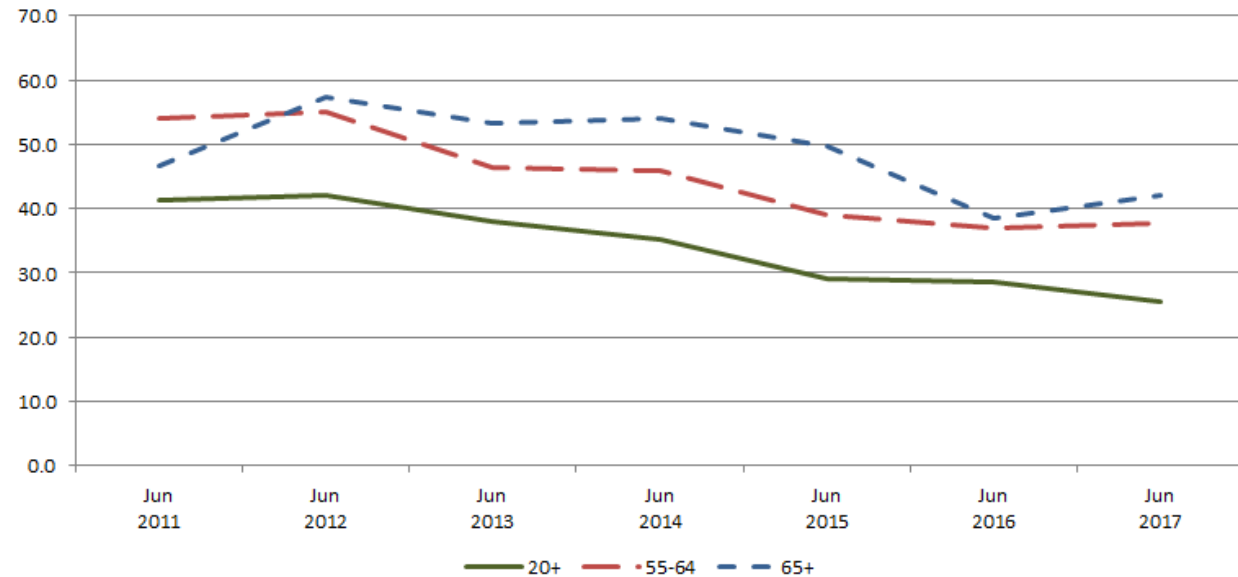
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Not seasonally adjusted. \*Beginning of recession, which officially ended in June 2009.

TABLE 6  
AVERAGE DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT BY AGE (WEEKS)

	JUN 2011	JUN 2012	JUN 2013	JUN 2014	JUN 2015	JUN 2016	JUN 2017
20 YEARS AND OVER	41.4	42.0	37.9	35.1	29.0	28.5	25.5
55 TO 64 YEARS	54.0	55.0	46.4	46.0	39.0	36.9	37.7
65 YEARS AND OVER	46.6	57.3	53.2	54.1	49.7	38.4	42.1

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Not seasonally adjusted.

FIGURE 1  
AVERAGE DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT BY AGE: YEAR-OVER-YEAR COMPARISON (WEEKS)



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Not seasonally adjusted.

**Long-Term Unemployment**

The long-term unemployed are individuals who have been looking for work for 27 weeks or more. Jobseekers ages 55 and over are typically more likely to experience long-term unemployment compared with younger jobseekers. In June 2017, 36.4 percent of jobseekers ages 55 and older were long-term unemployed compared with 19.3 percent of jobseekers in the 16-to-54 age group.

TABLE 7  
LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT

JUNE 2017			
AGE (YEARS)	TOTAL UNEMPLOYED (THOUSANDS)	NUMBER UNEMPLOYED 27 WEEKS AND OVER (THOUSANDS)	LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED (%)
AGES 16 TO 54	6,137	1,183	19.3%
AGES 55 AND OVER	1,113	405	36.4%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Not seasonally adjusted.

© AARP PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE  
601 E Street NW  
Washington, DC 20049

Follow us on Twitter @AARPolicy  
on facebook.com/AARPolicy  
[www.aarp.org/ppi](http://www.aarp.org/ppi)

Data compiled by Jen Schramm, AARP Public Policy Institute.

