

# Employment Data Digest

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

- In April 2018, the economy added 164,000 jobs, up from the 135,000 jobs added in March 2018. The unemployment rate declined from 4.1 percent in March to 3.9 percent in April.
- The labor force participation rate in April for people ages 55 and older was 39.9 percent, up slightly from 39.8 percent in March.
- The unemployment rate for those ages 55+ declined to 3.0 percent in April from 3.2 percent in March. The average time the unemployed spent looking for work was 31.7 weeks for people ages 55 to 64 and 33.7 weeks for people ages 65 and over.

## Total Payroll Employment

In April, total nonfarm payroll employment grew by 164,000 jobs, up from the 135,000 jobs (revised up from 103,000) added in March. The unemployment rate edged down to 3.9 percent. The professional and business services, manufacturing, health care, and mining industries all added jobs. The number of employed people ages 55+ in April increased from 35.7 to 35.9 million.

## 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 are below the rates of December 2007, the beginning of the Great Recession. Meanwhile, the rate for those ages 55+ mainly held steady. In April, the rate for those ages 55+ was 39.9 percent, up slightly from 39.8 percent in March.

TABLE 1  
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE BY AGE

	Dec 2007*	Apr 2017	Jan 2018	Feb 2018	Mar 2018	Apr 2018
Total, 16 years and over	66.0%	62.9%	62.7%	63.0%	62.9%	62.8%
16 to 24 years	59.2%	55.8%	55.8%	56.0%	56.0%	55.3%
25 to 54 years	83.1%	81.7%	81.8%	82.2%	82.1%	82.0%
55 and over	38.9%	39.9%	39.5%	39.9%	39.8%	39.9%

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 ages 25 to 54 is nearing pre-recession levels. The rate for the 55+ age group has increased since the recession. In April the employment rate for people ages 55+ was 38.7 percent.

TABLE 2  
EMPLOYMENT RATE

	Dec 2007*	Apr 2010	Apr 2011	Apr 2012	Apr 2013	Apr 2014	Apr 2015	Apr 2016	Apr 2017	Apr 2018
25 to 54 years	79.7%	75.4%	75.1%	75.7%	75.8%	76.5%	77.2%	77.8%	78.6%	79.2%
55 years and over	37.7%	37.5%	37.6%	37.7%	38.2%	38.1%	38.5%	38.6%	38.6%	38.7%

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. The unemployment rate for people ages 55+ decreased in April to 3.0 percent, and was unchanged at 3.2 percent for men and decreased to 2.8 percent for women.

**TABLE 3**  
**UNEMPLOYMENT RATE**

	Dec 2007*	Apr 2017	Jan 2018	Feb 2018	Mar 2018	Apr 2018
Total, 16 years and over	5.0%	4.4%	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	3.9%
Total, 55 years and over	3.2%	3.2%	3.0%	3.2%	3.2%	3.0%
Men, 55 years and over	3.2%	3.2%	3.3%	3.5%	3.2%	3.2%
Women, 55 years and over	3.3%	3.2%	2.5%	2.8%	3.2%	2.8%

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 of observations. As shown in Table 4, at ages 45 and over, jobseekers tend to have longer average durations of unemployment compared with individuals in younger age groups. In April, the average time spent looking for work among the unemployed was 31.7 weeks for people ages 55 to 64 and 33.7 weeks for people ages 65 and over.

**TABLE 4**  
**UNEMPLOYMENT BY AGE**

	April 2018							
	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	5,932	1,782	1,666	2,483	1,158	1,325	24.2	11.9
16 to 19 years	642	291	222	128	56	73	11.6	6.5
20 to 24 years	910	320	262	328	186	142	17.0	10.4
25 to 34 years	1,499	458	370	672	344	328	24.4	12.7
35 to 44 years	944	260	296	389	180	209	24.7	12.2
45 to 54 years	888	182	268	438	195	243	30.4	14.3
55 to 64 years	785	191	197	397	156	241	31.7	14.8
65 years and over	265	82	52	130	41	89	33.7	13.8

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

**TABLE 5**  
**MEDIAN DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT BY AGE (WEEKS)**

	Dec 2007*	Apr 2010	Apr 2011	Apr 2012	Apr 2013	Apr 2014	Apr 2015	Apr 2016	Apr 2017	Apr 2018
20 years and over	8.6	27.4	25.8	24.4	21.1	19.2	14.3	14.3	12.7	12.7
55 to 64 years	10.8	34.3	38.8	38.4	29.4	26.2	17.6	19.6	15.4	14.8
65 years and over	7.4	46.7	31.2	39.2	29.8	20.8	20.7	13.9	17.2	13.8

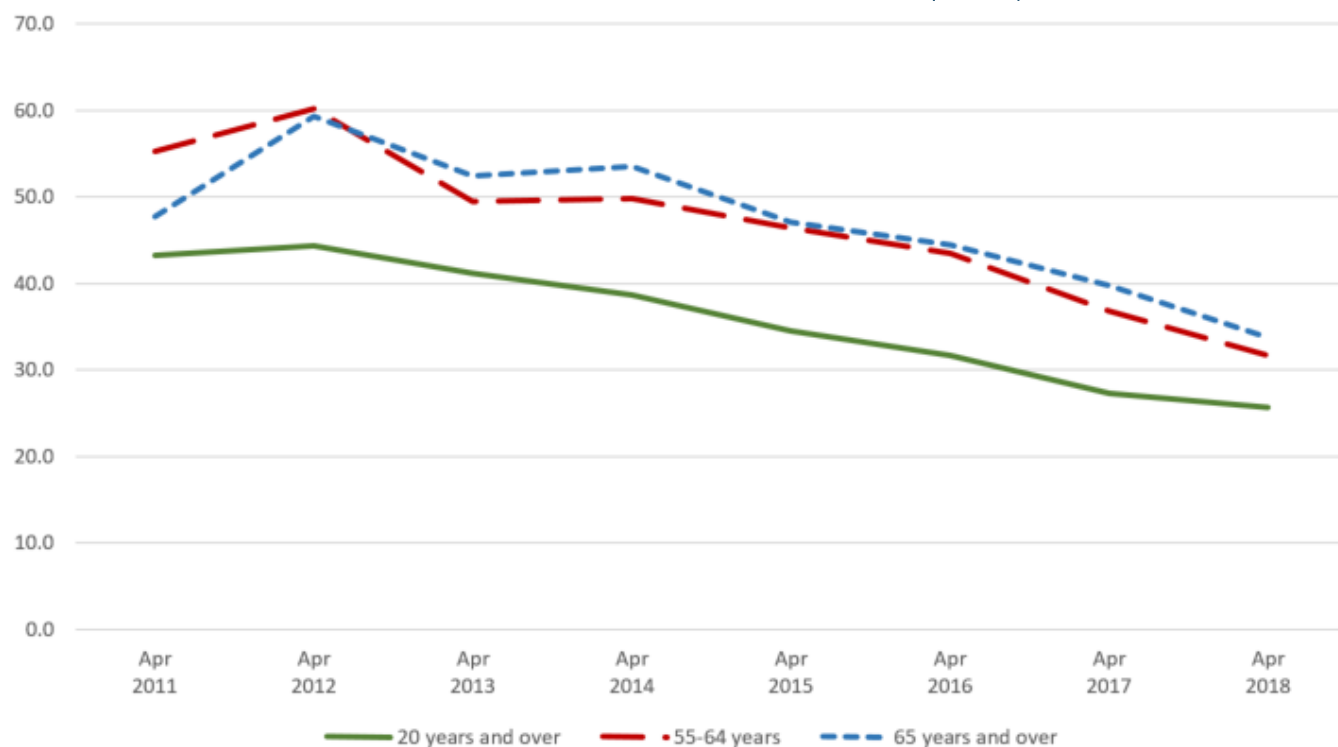
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Not seasonally adjusted. \*Beginning of recession, which officially ended in June 2009.

**TABLE 6**  
**AVERAGE DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT BY AGE (WEEKS)**

	Apr 2011	Apr 2012	Apr 2013	Apr 2014	Apr 2015	Apr 2016	Apr 2017	Apr 2018
20 years and over	43.3	44.4	41.2	38.7	34.5	31.7	27.3	25.7
55 to 64 years	55.3	60.2	49.5	49.8	46.4	43.5	36.8	31.7
65 years and over	47.7	59.3	52.4	53.5	47.1	44.5	39.8	33.7

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 older are more likely to experience long-term unemployment compared with younger jobseekers. In April 2018, 31.4 percent of jobseekers ages 55 and older were long-term unemployed compared with 20.4 percent of jobseekers in the 16 to 54 age group.

TABLE 7  
LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT

April 2018			
Age (years)	Total unemployed (thousands)	Number unemployed 27 weeks and over (thousands)	Long-term unemployed (%)
Ages 16 to 54	4,883	995	20.4%
Ages 55 and over	1,050	330	31.4%

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

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601 E Street NW  
Washington, DC 20049

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Data compiled by Jen Schramm, AARP Public Policy Institute.

