

# Employment Data Digest

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

- The economy added 213,000 jobs in June, down from 244,000 jobs added in May. The unemployment rate increased from 3.8 percent in May to 4.0 percent in June.
- The labor force participation rate for people ages 55 and older was unchanged from May at 40.1 percent.
- The unemployment rate for people ages 55+ was 3.1 percent in June, up from 2.8 percent in May. A higher percentage of jobseekers ages 55+, 27.9 percent, were long-term unemployed (looking for work for 27 weeks or more) than jobseekers ages 16 to 54, at 18.1 percent.

## Total Payroll Employment

Total nonfarm payroll employment grew by 213,000 jobs in June, down from the 244,000 jobs (revised up from 223,000) added in May. The unemployment rate rose from 3.8 percent in May to 4.0 percent in June. The retail trade industry lost jobs, while job growth occurred in professional and business services, manufacturing, and health care. There were 36.2 million people ages 55+ 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 are below the rates of December 2007, the beginning of the Great Recession. Meanwhile, the rate for those ages 55+ is higher than it was at that time. In June, the labor force participation rate for those ages 55+ was 40.1 percent, unchanged from May.

TABLE 1  
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE BY AGE

	Dec 2007*	Jun 2017	Mar 2018	Apr 2018	May 2018	Jun 2018
Total, 16 years and over	66.0%	62.8%	62.9%	62.8%	62.7%	62.9%
16 to 24 years	59.2%	55.3%	56.0%	55.3%	55.1%	55.4%
25 to 54 years	83.1%	81.6%	82.1%	82.0%	81.8%	82.0%
55 and over	38.9%	40.0%	39.8%	39.9%	40.1%	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 ages 25 to 54 is nearing pre-recession levels. The rate for the 55+ age group has increased since the recession. In June the employment rate for people ages 55+ was 38.8 percent.

TABLE 2  
EMPLOYMENT RATE

	Dec 2007*	Jun 2010	Jun 2011	Jun 2012	Jun 2013	Jun 2014	Jun 2015	Jun 2016	Jun 2017	Jun 2018
25 to 54 years	79.7%	75.2%	75.0%	75.6%	75.9%	76.9%	77.4%	77.9%	78.6%	79.3%
55 years and over	37.7%	37.6%	37.5%	38.1%	38.3%	38.2%	38.4%	38.6%	38.8%	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. In June, the unemployment rate for people ages 55+ was 3.1 percent, up from 2.8 percent in May, and was 3.2 percent for men and 3.0 percent for women ages 55 and older.

TABLE 3  
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

	Dec 2007*	Jun 2017	Mar 2018	Apr 2018	May 2018	Jun 2018
Total, 16 years and over	5.0%	4.3%	4.1%	3.9%	3.8%	4.0%
Total, 55 years and over	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%	3.0%	2.8%	3.1%
Men, 55 years and over	3.2%	3.0%	3.2%	3.2%	3.0%	3.2%
Women, 55 years and over	3.3%	3.4%	3.2%	2.8%	2.7%	3.0%

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, average durations of unemployment tend to be longer compared with younger age groups. In June, the average time spent looking for work among the unemployed was 30.5 weeks for people ages 55 to 64 and 28.7 weeks for people ages 65 and over.

TABLE 4  
UNEMPLOYMENT BY AGE

	June 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	6,812	2,991	1,665	2,156	811	1,345	19.4	6.6
16 to 19 years	1,038	671	232	135	60	75	8.8	3.5
20 to 24 years	1,271	585	317	369	160	208	15.7	5.7
25 to 34 years	1,417	575	387	455	183	272	17.8	7.7
35 to 44 years	984	389	208	387	158	229	22.0	9.3
45 to 54 years	979	363	247	369	121	248	22.9	9.1
55 to 64 years	787	272	185	330	108	222	30.5	9.7
65 years and over	336	136	88	112	21	91	28.7	6.5

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 2010	Jun 2011	Jun 2012	Jun 2013	Jun 2014	Jun 2015	Jun 2016	Jun 2017	Jun 2018
20 years and over	8.6	24.8	23.1	21.5	18.0	14.4	10.8	9.6	8.8	8.0
55 to 64 years	10.8	29.8	35.4	28.2	22.4	23.7	12.8	12.1	15.1	9.7
65 years and over	7.4	27.3	32.8	36.6	26.7	25.4	9.9	10.2	10.3	6.5

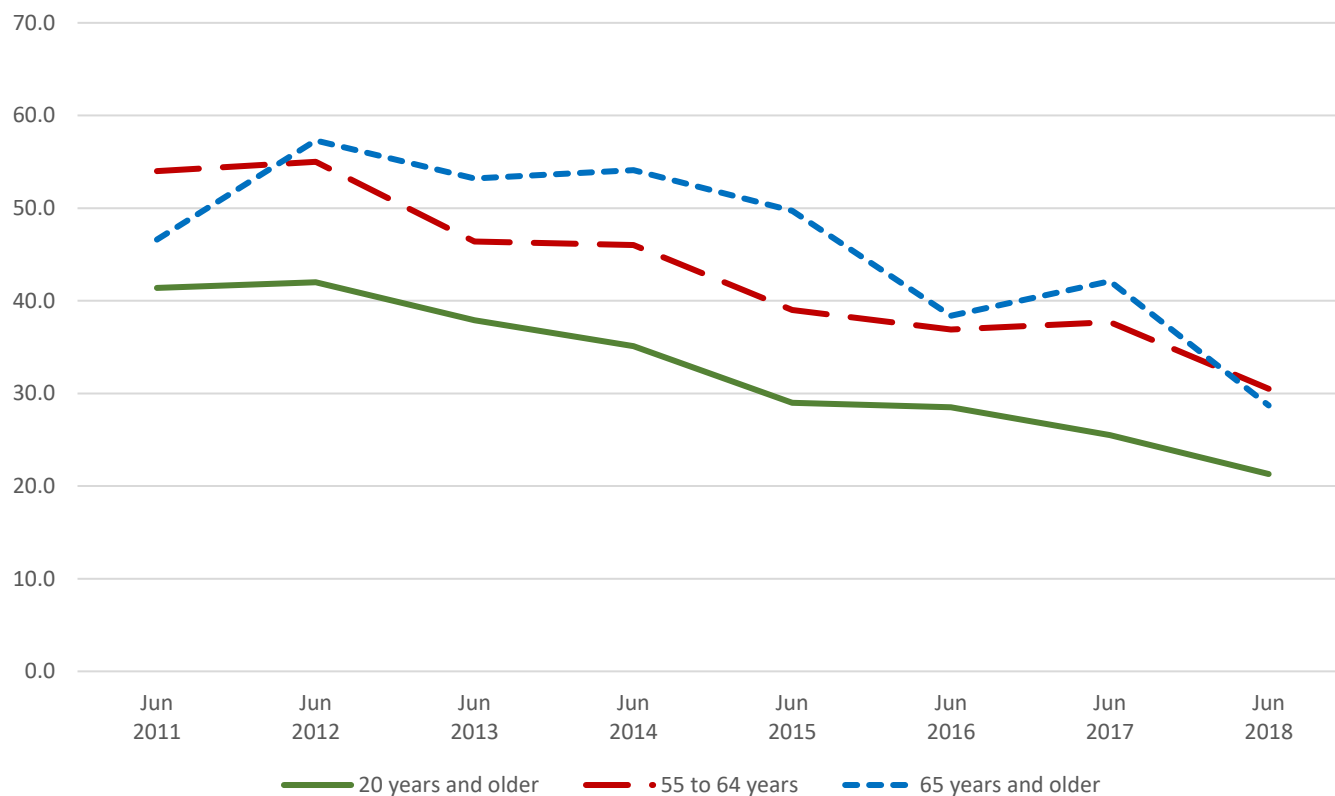
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Not seasonally adjusted. \*Beginning of recession, which officially ended in June 2009.

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

	Jun 2011	Jun 2012	Jun 2013	Jun 2014	Jun 2015	Jun 2016	Jun 2017	Jun 2018
20 years and over	41.4	42.0	37.9	35.1	29.0	28.5	25.5	21.3
55 to 64 years	54.0	55.0	46.4	46.0	39.0	36.9	37.7	30.5
65 years and over	46.6	57.3	53.2	54.1	49.7	38.4	42.1	28.7

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 June 2018, 27.9 percent of jobseekers ages 55 and older were long-term unemployed compared with 18.1 percent of jobseekers in the 16 to 54 age group.

TABLE 7  
LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT

June 2018			
Age (years)	Total unemployed (thousands)	Number unemployed 27 weeks and over (thousands)	Long-term unemployed (%)
Ages 16 to 54	5,689	1,032	18.1%
Ages 55 and over	1,123	313	27.9%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Not seasonally adjusted. Note: Because the long-term unemployed are a small subset of the overall CPS data population, please use caution when using data and expect fluctuations in estimates from month-to-month.

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