

Employment Data Digest

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

- The economy added 224,000 jobs in June, up from the 72,000 jobs added in May. The unemployment rate edged up to 3.7 percent.
- The unemployment rate for people ages 55 and older increased to 3.0 percent.
- The total labor force participation rate was 62.9 percent in June. The labor force participation rate for people ages 55 and older increased to 40.0 percent.
- Among jobseekers ages 55+, 29.0 percent were long-term unemployed in June, compared with 18.9 percent of jobseekers ages 16 to 54.

Total Payroll Employment

US employment increased by 224,000 jobs in June, an increase from the 72,000 jobs added in May (revised down from +75,000). The unemployment rate increased slightly to 3.7 percent. The professional and business services, health care, transportation and warehousing sectors all added jobs. The number of people ages 55+ employed in June edged up to 36.9 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 June total labor force participation rate was mainly unchanged at 62.9 percent but edged up slightly to 40.0 percent for those ages 55+. The labor force participation rates of those ages 16 to 24 and 25 to 54 have decreased since the beginning of the Great Recession, while the rate for those ages 55+ is somewhat higher.

TABLE 1
Labor Force Participation Rate by Age

Age	Dec 2007*	Jun 2018	Mar 2019	Apr 2019	May 2019	Jun 2019
Total, 16 years and over	66.0%	62.9%	63.0%	62.8%	62.8%	62.9%
16 to 24 years	59.2%	55.3%	55.6%	55.2%	55.9%	56.1%
25 to 54 years	83.1%	82.1%	82.5%	82.2%	82.1%	82.2%
55 and over	38.9%	40.1%	40.1%	39.9%	39.8%	40.0%

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 has now reached pre-recession levels. The rate for those ages 55+ is slightly above the pre-recession level and was 38.8 percent in June.

TABLE 2
Employment Rate

Age	Dec 2007*	Jun 2011	Jun 2012	Jun 2013	Jun 2014	Jun 2015	Jun 2016	Jun 2017	Jun 2018	Jun 2019
25 to 54 years	79.7%	75.0%	75.6%	75.9%	76.9%	77.4%	77.9%	78.6%	79.3%	79.7%
55 years and over	37.7%	37.5%	38.1%	38.3%	38.2%	38.4%	38.6%	38.7%	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 overall unemployment rate edged up to 3.7 percent. The unemployment rate for people ages 55+ also increased from 2.7 to 3.0 percent. The 55+ unemployment rate was 2.7 percent for men and 3.3 percent for women.

TABLE 3
Unemployment Rate

Gender/Age	Dec 2007*	Jun 2018	Mar 2019	Apr 2019	May 2019	Jun 2019
Total, 16 years and over	5.0%	4.0%	3.8%	3.6%	3.6%	3.7%
Total, 55 years and over	3.2%	3.1%	2.7%	2.6%	2.7%	3.0%
Men 55+	3.2%	3.2%	2.8%	2.6%	2.6%	2.7%
Women 55+	3.3%	3.0%	2.6%	2.6%	3.1%	3.3%

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 that individuals classified as unemployed have been looking for work. The median duration of unemployment refers to the midpoint of unemployment, below and above which there is an equal number of observations. Average durations of unemployment for those ages 45 and over are usually longer than the durations experienced by younger age groups. In June the average duration of unemployment for those ages 45 to 54 was 25.8 weeks, 26.2 weeks for those ages 55 to 64. The average time spent looking for work for people ages 65 and over was 25.5 weeks.

TABLE 4
Duration of Unemployment by Age, June 2019

Age	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	6,292	2,615	1,635	2,042	737	1,304	20.2	7.3
16 to 19 years	1,046	655	227	163	68	96	10.2	3.5
20 to 24 years	1,066	449	343	274	124	150	15.4	6.3
25 to 34 years	1,304	469	362	473	168	304	20.9	9.0
35 to 44 years	901	336	234	331	119	213	24.1	8.9
45 to 54 years	866	319	198	349	130	219	25.8	10.0
55 to 64 years	777	261	191	325	85	240	26.2	10.5
65 years and over	333	127	80	126	44	82	25.5	8.3

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

TABLE 5
Median Duration of Unemployment by Age (*weeks*)

Age	Dec 2007*	Jun 2011	Jun 2012	Jun 2013	Jun 2014	Jun 2015	Jun 2016	Jun 2017	Jun 2018	Jun 2019
20 years and over	8.6	23.1	21.5	18.0	14.4	10.8	9.6	8.8	8.0	8.6
55 to 64 years	10.8	35.4	28.2	22.4	23.7	12.8	12.1	15.1	9.7	10.5
65 years and over	7.4	32.8	36.6	26.7	25.4	9.9	10.2	10.3	6.5	8.3

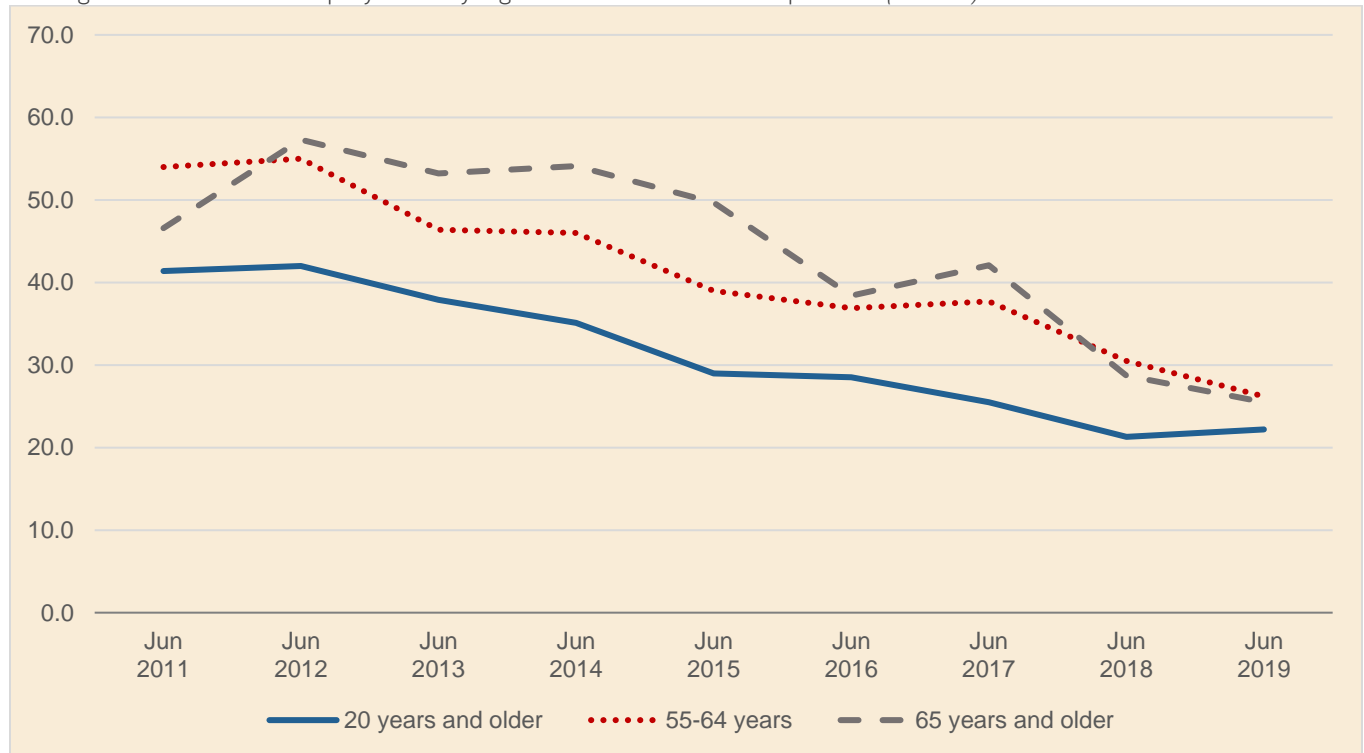
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Not seasonally adjusted. * Beginning of recession, which officially ended in June 2009.

TABLE 6
Average Duration of Unemployment by Age (*weeks*)

Age	Jun 2011	Jun 2012	Jun 2013	Jun 2014	Jun 2015	Jun 2016	Jun 2017	Jun 2018	Jun 2019
20 years and over	41.4	42.0	37.9	35.1	29.0	28.5	25.5	21.3	22.2
55 to 64 years	54.0	55.0	46.4	46.0	39.0	36.9	37.7	30.5	26.2
65 years and over	46.6	57.3	53.2	54.1	49.7	38.4	42.1	28.7	25.5

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. Generally, jobseekers ages 55+ are more likely to experience long-term unemployment compared with younger jobseekers. In June 2019, 29.0 percent of jobseekers ages 55+ were long-term unemployed compared with 18.9 percent of jobseekers in the 16 to 54 age group.

TABLE 7
Long-term Unemployment by Age, June 2019

Age (years)	Total Unemployed (thousands)	Number Unemployed 27 Weeks and over (thousands)	Long Term Unemployed (%)
Ages 16 to 54	5,183	982	18.9%
Ages 55 and over	1,110	322	29.0%

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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