

# Employment Data Digest

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

- The U.S. economy added 850,000 jobs in June, an increase from the 583,000 jobs added in May.
- The overall unemployment rate increased slightly, from 5.8 percent to 5.9 percent. The overall unemployment rate for people ages 55+ was unchanged at 4.9 percent. The unemployment rate for men ages 55 and older increased slightly to 4.8 percent and was unchanged at 5 percent for 55+ women.
- Since March, over half of jobseekers ages 55 and older have been categorized as long-term unemployed. In June 55.3 percent of workers ages 55+ were long-term unemployed compared with 36.0 percent of jobseekers ages 16 to 54.
- The labor force participation rate for the 55+ held steady at 38.4 percent and declined slightly for those ages 65 and older to 18.6 percent.

## Total Payroll Employment

The economy added 850,000 in June, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported, an increase from the 583,000 jobs added in May (revised up from +559,000). The unemployment rate increased slightly, from 5.8 percent to 5.9 percent. Jobs were added in leisure and hospitality, public and private education, professional and business services, retail trade, and other services. The number of people ages 55+ who were employed in June held steady at 35.7 million, while the number of those who were unemployed increased from 1.8 million in May to 1.9 million in June.

## Unemployment Rate

The unemployed are individuals ages 16 and older who were not employed during the survey reference week (generally the week of the 12<sup>th</sup>) 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 overall unemployment rate increased slightly in June, from 5.8 percent to 5.9 percent. The 55+ unemployment rate was unchanged at 4.9 percent. For men ages 55+, it increased from 4.6 percent to 4.8 percent. The unemployment rate for women ages 55+ held steady at 5 percent.

Figure 1  
55+ Unemployment Rate (*Month and Year*)



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Current Population Survey data. Seasonally adjusted.

TABLE 1  
Unemployment Rate

Sex/Age	Dec 2007*	Apr 2020**	Jun 2020	Mar 2021	Apr 2021	May 2021	Jun 2021
Total, 16 years and over	5.0%	14.8%	11.1%	6.0%	6.1%	5.8%	5.9%
Total, 55 years and over	3.2%	13.6%	9.6%	4.5%	5.0%	4.9%	4.9%
Men 55+	3.2%	12.1%	8.8%	4.5%	5.2%	4.6%	4.8%
Women 55+	3.3%	15.4%	10.6%	4.6%	4.9%	5.0%	5.0%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Current Population Survey data. Seasonally adjusted. \* Beginning of the Great Recession, which officially ended in June 2009. \*\*This month marked the highest unemployment levels during the COVID-19 pandemic so far.

### 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 older workers are usually longer than the durations experienced by younger age groups, especially during economic downturns. In June, the average duration of unemployment was 33.5 weeks for those ages 45 to 54, 39.7 weeks for those ages 55 to 64, and 41.4 weeks for those ages 65 and over.

TABLE 2  
Duration of Unemployment by Age, June 2021

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	9,883	2,709	1,980	5,195	1,276	3,918	29.8	17.6
16 to 19 years	915	603	169	142	67	76	9.4	3.4
20 to 24 years	1,504	530	406	568	152	416	22.3	8.7
25 to 34 years	2,367	564	496	1,307	406	901	28.4	20.1
35 to 44 years	1,800	407	340	1,052	243	809	34.7	23.4
45 to 54 years	1,446	264	297	885	192	693	33.5	25.8
55 to 64 years	1,255	209	198	847	169	678	39.7	32.4
65 years and over	598	130	73	395	49	346	41.4	46.5

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

TABLE 3  
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	Jun 2020	Jun 2021
20 years and over	8.6	23.1	21.5	18.0	14.4	10.8	9.6	8.8	8.0	8.6	11.2	22.0
55 to 64 years	10.8	35.4	28.2	22.4	23.7	12.8	12.1	15.1	9.7	10.5	11.6	32.4
65 years and over	7.4	32.8	36.6	26.7	25.4	9.9	10.2	10.3	6.5	8.3	11.8	46.5

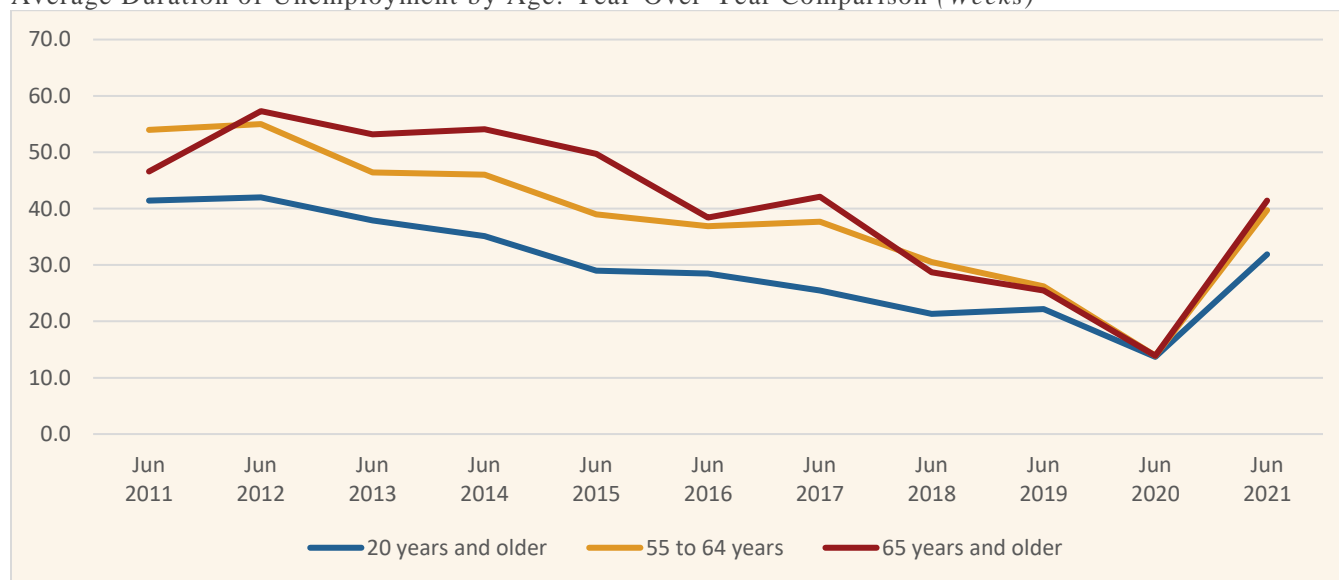
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Not seasonally adjusted. \* Beginning of the Great Recession, which officially ended in June 2009.

TABLE 4  
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	Jun 2020	Jun 2021
20 years and over	41.4	42.0	37.9	35.1	29.0	28.5	25.5	21.3	22.2	13.7	31.9
55 to 64 years	54.0	55.0	46.4	46.0	39.0	36.9	37.7	30.5	26.2	13.9	39.7
65 years and over	46.6	57.3	53.2	54.1	49.7	38.4	42.1	28.7	25.5	13.9	41.4

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

FIGURE 2  
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 typically experience higher rates of long-term unemployment compared with younger jobseekers. In June, over half of jobseekers ages 55 and older were long-term unemployed (55.3 percent, up from 52.5 percent in May). Meanwhile, 36.0 percent of jobseekers ages 16 to 54 were long-term unemployed in June, down from 39.3 percent in May.

TABLE 5  
Long-term Unemployment by Age, June 2021

Age (years)	Total Unemployed (thousands)	Number Unemployed 27 Weeks and over (thousands)	Long Term Unemployed (%)
Ages 16 to 54	8,032	2,895	36.0%
Ages 55 and over	1,853	1,024	55.3%

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.

## 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). In June, the total labor force participation rate remained unchanged at 61.6 percent and was also unchanged for those ages 55+, at 38.4 percent. The (unadjusted) rate for those ages 65 and older was down slightly, to 18.6 percent.

TABLE 6

Labor Force Participation Rate by Age

Age	Dec 2007*	Jun 2020	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Apr 2021	May 2021	Jun 2021
Total, 16 years and over	66.0%	61.4%	61.4%	61.5%	61.7%	61.6%	61.6%
16 to 24 years	59.2%	52.0%	55.1%	55.1%	55.8%	55.5%	55.2%
25 to 54 years	83.1%	81.5%	81.1%	81.3%	81.3%	81.3%	81.7%
55 and over	38.9%	38.9%	38.3%	38.2%	38.3%	38.4%	38.4%
65 and over	16.3%	18.9%	18.5%	18.8%	18.8%	18.7%	18.6%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Labor force statistics from the Current Population Survey. All age ranges except for 65+ are seasonally adjusted. \* Beginning of the Great Recession, which officially ended in June 2009.

## Employment Rate

The employment rate refers to the proportion of the civilian non-institutional population that is employed. In June, the year-over-year employment rate for individuals ages 25 to 54 increased to 77.2 percent. The rate for those ages 55+ increased to 36.5 percent, and for those ages 65+, it increased to 17.5 percent (unadjusted).

TABLE 7

Employment Rate

Age	Dec 2007*	Jun 2012	Jun 2013	Jun 2014	Jun 2015	Jun 2016	Jun 2017	Jun 2018	Jun 2019	Jun 2020	Jun 2021
25 to 54 years	79.7%	75.6%	75.9%	76.9%	77.4%	77.9%	78.6%	79.4%	79.8%	73.6%	77.2%
55 and over	37.7%	38.1%	38.3%	38.2%	38.4%	38.6%	38.8%	38.9%	38.8%	35.2%	36.5%
65 and over	15.8%	17.1%	17.7%	17.4%	18.1%	18.6%	18.5%	18.8%	19.0%	16.9%	17.5%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. All age ranges except for 65+ are seasonally adjusted. \* Beginning of the Great Recession, which officially ended in June 2009.

The data in this Employment Data Digest are derived from the Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly survey of households conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Census for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The survey provides a comprehensive body of data on the labor force, employment, unemployment, persons not in the labor force, hours of work, earnings, and other demographic and labor force characteristics.

For more information, go to [www.bls.gov/cps](http://www.bls.gov/cps).

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