

# BEYOND THE HEADLINES

## At a Glance: Jobs, Workers & the Economy

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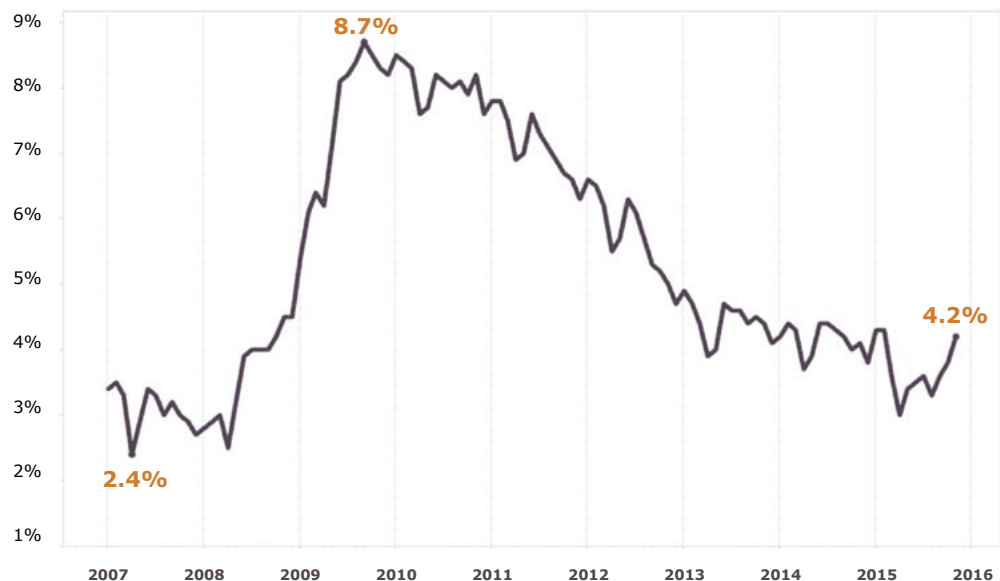
FOCUS: CITY OF SEATTLE

### Who are Seattle's Unemployed?

As the country turns its calendar to begin a new year, Seattle Jobs Initiative believes it is an ideal time to reflect on the sustained plight of the jobless. Despite the economy recovering from the ravages of the Great Recession, unemployment remains a significant presence. This is especially true locally, where unemployment rates have recently climbed.<sup>1</sup>

In December 2015, the nation's unemployment rate stood at 5.0%.<sup>2</sup> While experiencing a lower rate than the U.S. at large, Seattle saw unemployment increase to 4.2% in November 2015 from April's 3%. This amounts to over 4,700 newly unemployed, for a total of 17,206 jobless.

**FIGURE 1:**  
**Seattle's Unemployment Rate, 2007–2015 (Not Seasonally Adjusted)**



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

Who exactly are these unemployed? Who has recovered from the recession, and who continues to struggle? In this brief, we examine the composition of Seattle’s unemployed from 2009 to 2014 to answer these questions. Some of the major takeaways are:

- **Older individuals flooded the ranks of the unemployed during the recession with 4 out of 5 unemployed being over the age of 25 in 2010. By 2014, their presence among the unemployed fell by 22%, and those under 25 now comprise 86% more of that population.**
- **The employment situation for males has worsened since 2009, as their share of the unemployed population expanded by 7% compared to female’s 8% decrease.**

**FIGURE 2:**  
**Composition of Seattle’s Unemployed Population, 2009–2014**

| DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP           | 2009  | 2014  | % Change |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|----------|
| <b>AGE</b>                  |       |       |          |
| 16-19                       | 5.7%  | 15.9% | 177%     |
| 20-24                       | 14.7% | 22.1% | 51%      |
| 25-34                       | 25.7% | 18.4% | -29%     |
| 35-49                       | 28.0% | 23.4% | -16%     |
| 50-64                       | 23.2% | 16.4% | -29%     |
| 65+                         | 2.7%  | 3.9%  | 43%      |
| <b>GENDER</b>               |       |       |          |
| Male                        | 55.1% | 58.5% | 7%       |
| Female                      | 44.9% | 41.2% | -8%      |
| <b>RACE</b>                 |       |       |          |
| White                       | 60.4% | 54.4% | -10%     |
| African American            | 9.8%  | 10.8% | 10%      |
| Hispanic                    | 9.6%  | 6.5%  | -33%     |
| Asian                       | 14.2% | 12.1% | -15%     |
| 2 or More Races             | 3.9%  | 14.8% | 282%     |
| Some Other Race             | 2.1%  | 1.4%  | -32%     |
| <b>POVERTY STATUS</b>       |       |       |          |
| Below 200% FPL              | 37.1% | 61.8% | 66%      |
| Above 200% FPL              | 62.9% | 38.2% | -39%     |
| <b>COGNITIVE DIFFICULTY</b> |       |       |          |
| Yes                         | 3.1%  | 8.2%  | 164%     |
| No                          | 96.9% | 91.8% | -5%      |
| <b>EDUCATION</b>            |       |       |          |
| Less than High School       | 7.7%  | 9.6%  | 25%      |
| High School/GED             | 17.9% | 13.0% | -27%     |
| Some College, No Degree     | 24.1% | 30.0% | 24%      |
| Associate’s                 | 5.4%  | 10.0% | 84%      |
| Bachelor’s                  | 31.5% | 23.5% | -25%     |
| Graduate Degree             | 13.3% | 14.0% | 5%       |

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2009 and 2014 1-Year Estimates.

- **In terms of race, all individuals except African Americans (10%) and those of 2 or more races (282%) reduced their presence among the unemployed. Hispanics saw the greatest improvement with a contraction of 33%.**
- **At the height of the recession individuals with incomes 200% above the Federal Poverty Line were unemployed at a far higher rate than those falling under it (63% to 37%). Five years on, the situation has completely reversed with the lower-income group now making up 62% of the unemployed.**
- **Those with cognitive difficulties saw their share of the unemployed increase by 164% since 2009.<sup>3</sup>**
- **In terms of education, those with Less than a High School Education or Some College but No Degree both saw their portion of the unemployed increase by about 25%. Those with a High School Diploma or Bachelor's Degree saw their share reduce by similar amounts.**

The numbers show that people of color, low-income individuals, people with lower levels of educational attainment and those with cognitive difficulties now occupy a greater portion of Seattle's unemployed. The efforts of workforce development organizations in our area remain critical as these communities continue to face economic hardship.

1. Janet I. Tu, "Jobless Rates Rise for Seattle, Washington State," The Seattle Times, January 21, 2016, <http://www.seattletimes.com/business/economy/jobless-rates-rise-for-seattle-washington-state/>.
2. United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Situation Summary, January 8, 2016, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm>.
3. The U.S. Census defines cognitive difficulty as "having difficulty remembering, concentrating, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or emotional problem".

**BEYOND THE HEADLINES:** Policy & Labor Market Updates for Those Working to Help Low-Income and Low-Skill Individuals Advance through Education, Training & Living-Wage Jobs

### **About Seattle Jobs Initiative**

Seattle Jobs Initiative creates opportunities for students, workers and business to succeed by helping education and job training programs meet the demands of a new economy. We find and apply solutions for people to gain the skills they need for good jobs that create prosperity for all in today's marketplace.

***Supported by the City of Seattle Office of Economic Development***

### **Contact Information**

For questions or suggestions, please email:

Chris Klaeyen | SJI Senior Policy Analyst | [cklaeyen@seattlejobsinit.com](mailto:cklaeyen@seattlejobsinit.com)