

BEYOND THE HEADLINES

At a Glance: Jobs, Workers & the Economy

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FOCUS: U.S.

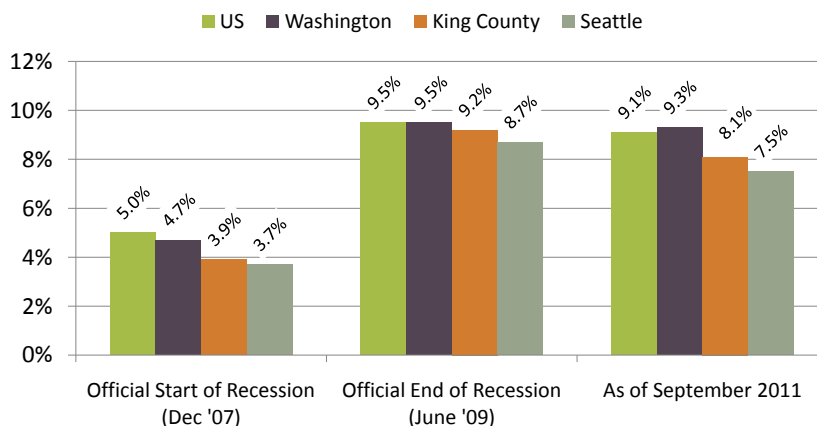
UNEMPLOYMENT & UNDEREMPLOYMENT

National and state unemployment rates have dropped less than 1 percent since the end of the recession in June 2009, stalling at over 9 percent.

The jobs situation and related unemployment continue to illustrate the stagnant economic landscape following the most recent downturn. Unemployment rates continue to hover around nine percent for both the nation and Washington state. For the state, 317,590 individuals were unemployed as of September 2011.

While the downturn brought with it a steep increase in the number of individuals out of work, Chart 1 illustrates that, in the time since the recession was marked as officially over in June 2009, not much movement has been made to bring this number down. While job growth numbers seem to indicate potential progress, the reality of unemployment continues to be bleak for many.

CHART 1
Unemployment Rate for
U.S., Washington, King County and City of Seattle

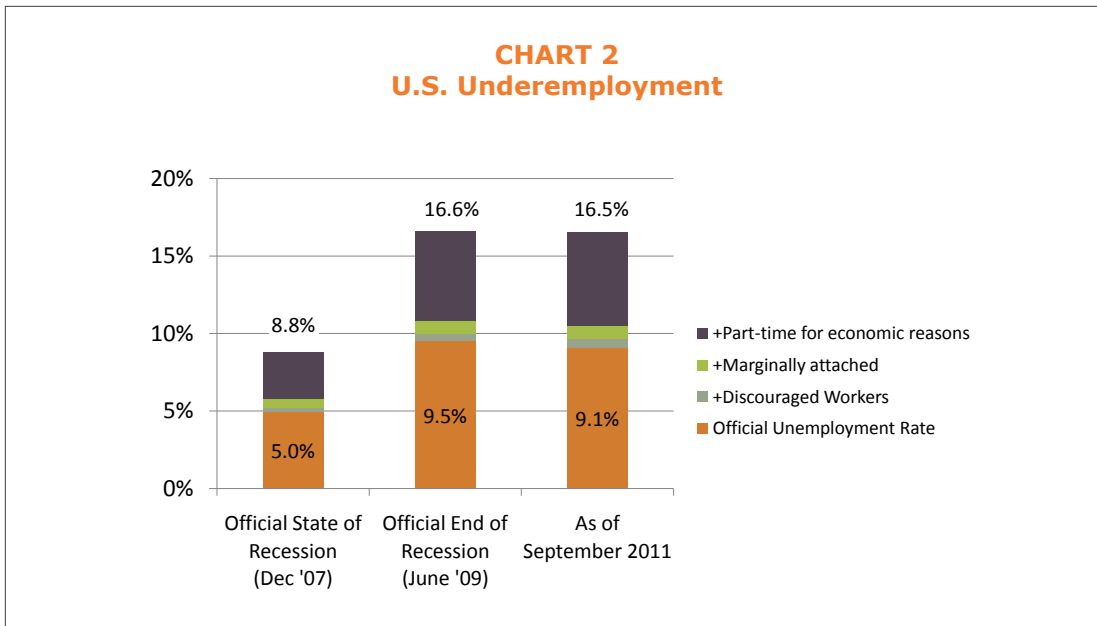


Source: Washington State Employment Security Department; Bureau of Labor Statistics -- Seattle and King County estimates are not seasonally adjusted.

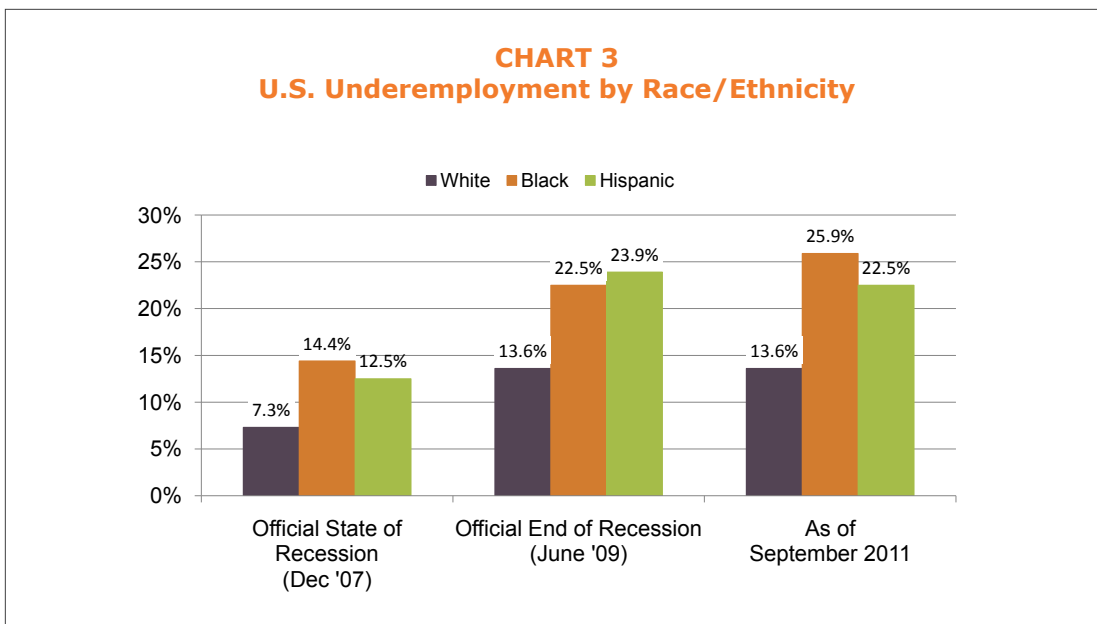
The national underemployment rate, a more realistic measure of economic struggle, is 16.5 percent.

The official unemployment rate only represents part of the out-of-work population struggling in today’s rough economic landscape. It does not capture those individuals who have been displaced from the workforce – those individuals who currently are neither working nor looking for work but indicate that they want and are available for a job and have looked for work sometime in the past 12 months.

Chart 2 illustrates underemployment as a more complete measure of the effects this recession and the weak recovery have played on a larger portion of the workforce. When discouraged and marginally attached workers are taken into consideration, current underemployment goes up to 10.5 percent. Add on those individuals who have currently settled for part-time work due to economic reasons, and the underemployment rate rises to 16.5 percent.



Closer examination of the post-recession labor market on underemployment by particular subcategories reveals additional interesting findings.

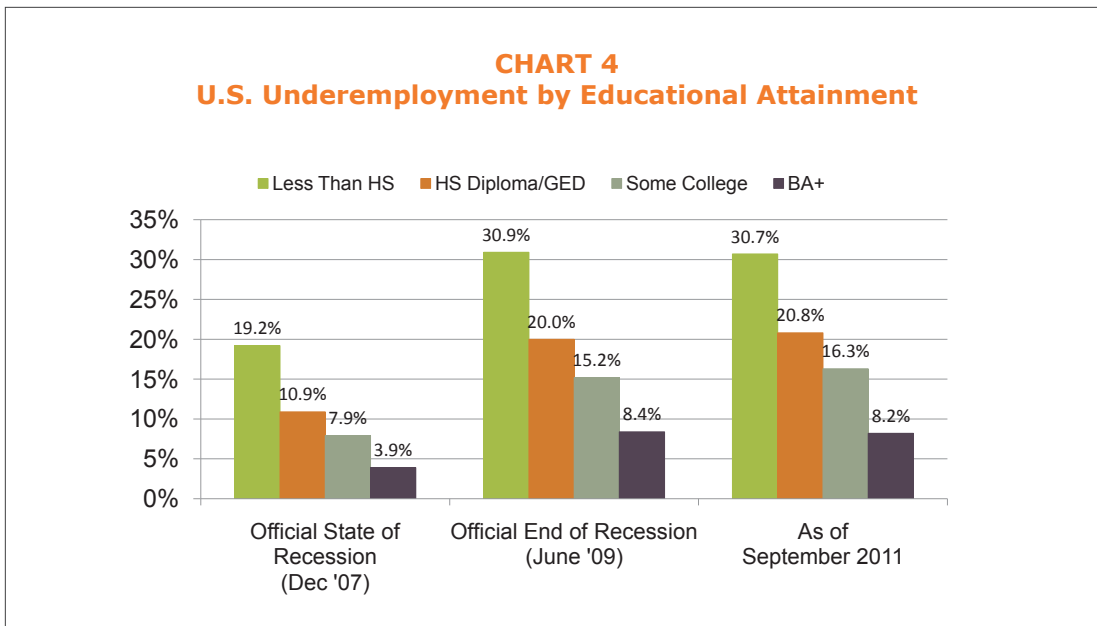


Black underemployment is double that of Whites at 25.9 percent. Hispanics are only slightly lower at 22.5 percent.

Chart 3 details U.S. total underemployment by race and ethnicity, showing that Black and Hispanic rates of underemployment have consistently been approximately double that of Whites. Black underemployment continues to remain high well into the post-recession years, while Hispanic underemployment has seen some reduction. White underemployment has seen no change over the same time period.

Underemployment rates for individuals with low levels of educational attainment are high – roughly 21 percent for those with a high school education, and 31 percent for those without a high school education.

Chart 4 provides similar opportunities for comparison in terms of educational attainment. The data reveal that those with higher educational attainment report lower levels of underemployment, more evidence that educational attainment is a resiliency factor for underemployment as well as unemployment.



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.

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Contact Information

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