



There's more to this story.

[Watch Now](#)



- NEWS
- POLITICS
- OPINIONS
- BUSINESS
- LOCAL
- SPORTS
- ARTS & LIVING
- GOING OUT GUIDE
- JOB
- CARS
- REAL ESTATE
- RENTALS
- CLASSIFIEDS

SEARCH: [go](#) | [Search Archives](#)

[washingtonpost.com](#) > [Metro](#) > [The District](#)

NEW LOCAL HOME PAGE
Click for news, weather, entertainment, more.

Blacks hit hard by economy's punch

34.5 percent of young African American men are unemployed

By [V. Dion Haynes](#)

Washington Post Staff Writer
Tuesday, November 24, 2009

These days, 24-year-old Delonta Spriggs spends much of his time cooped up in his mother's one-bedroom apartment in Southwest Washington, the TV blaring soap operas hour after hour, trying to stay out of the streets and out of trouble, held captive by the economy. As a young black man, Spriggs belongs to a group that has been hit much harder than any other by unemployment.

Joblessness for 16-to-24-year-old black men has reached Great Depression proportions -- 34.5 percent in October, more than three times the rate for the general U.S. population. And last Friday, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that unemployment in the District, home to many young black men, rose to 11.9 percent from 11.4 percent, even as it stayed relatively stable in Virginia and Maryland.

His work history, Spriggs says, has consisted of dead-end jobs. About a year ago, he lost his job moving office furniture, and he hasn't been able to find steady work since. This summer he completed a construction apprenticeship program, he

GALLERY



Unemployment skyrockets for young African Americans

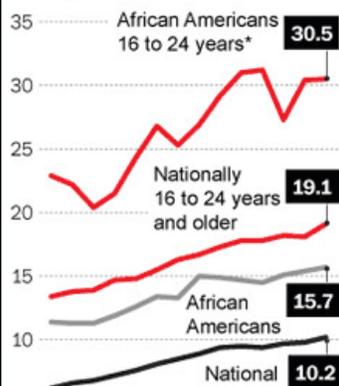
The nation's rising unemployment has afflicted young African Americans at greater rates than any other socioeconomic group, reaching Great Depression proportions and accelerating a reversal of hard-won economic gains of the 1990s.

[» LAUNCH PHOTO GALLERY](#)

African American youth hit hardest by unemployment

Those ages 16 to 24 have higher unemployment rates than the rest of the population. Young African Americans are afflicted more than any other group.

Unemployment rate



Advertisement

head & shoulders NEW HAIR ENDURANCE FOR MEN

THICKER LOOKING HAIR
IN 1 WEEK* GUARANTEED**

REPLAY

GET THICKER LOOKING HAIR IN 1 WEEK* »

TOP JOBS

The Washington Post

- Sales Representative**
DOUGLASVILLE, GA - AVON
- Fire Control Repairer**
ATLANTA, GA - NATIONAL GUARD
- Field Artillery Tactical Data System...**
ATLANTA, GA - NATIONAL GUARD
- Part-Time Package Handler**
ROSWELL, GA - UPS
- Investor Center Investments...**
ATLANTA, GA - FIDELITY INVESTMENTS

[SEE ALL JOBS](#)

Find Your Dream Job Now!

keywords location

Jobs by [SimplyHired](#)

FEATURED ADVERTISER LINKS

- [Lawsuit: Cochlear Implants, Toyota, Yaz Gallbladder, Januvia Pancreatitis, TVT Surgery, DePuy Hips](#)
- [Erin Brockovich, Mesothelioma, Asbestos & Vets, Lung Cancer, Boilers](#)
- [Roll over your old 401\(k\)s to Fidelity Investments.](#)
- [Get peace of mind now with Equifax ID Patrol.](#)
- [Russia Now: In-Depth Coverage of Russia News, Business, and More.](#)
- [Why Is Your Retirement Account Not Growing? Get Vanguard's Best Funds to Own Now](#)

says, seeking a career so he could avoid repeating the mistake of selling drugs to support his 3-year-old daughter. So far the most the training program has yielded was a temporary flagger job that lasted a few days.

"I think we're labeled for not wanting to do nothing -- knuckleheads or hardheads," said Spriggs, whose first name is pronounced Dee-*lon*-tay. "But all of us ain't bad."

Construction, manufacturing and retail experienced the most severe job losses in this down economy, losses that are disproportionately affecting men and young people who populated those sectors. That is especially playing out in the District, where unemployment has risen despite the abundance of jobs in the federal government.

Traditionally the last hired and first fired, workers in Spriggs's age group have taken the brunt of the difficult economy, with cost-conscious employers wiping out the very apprenticeship, internship and on-the-job-training programs that for generations gave young people a leg up in the work world or a second chance when they made mistakes. Moreover, this generation is being elbowed out of entry-level positions by older, more experienced job seekers on the unemployment rolls who willingly trade down just to put food on the table.

Advertisement

The jobless rate for young black men and women is 30.5 percent. For young blacks -- who experts say are more likely to grow up in impoverished racially isolated neighborhoods, attend subpar public schools and experience discrimination -- race statistically appears to be a bigger factor in their unemployment than age, income or even education. Lower-income white teens were more likely to find work than upper-income black teens, according to the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, and even blacks who graduate from college suffer from joblessness at twice the rate of their white peers.

Young black women have an unemployment rate of 26.5 percent, while the rate for all 16-to-24-year-old women is 15.4 percent.

Victoria Kirby, 22, has been among that number. In the summer of 2008, a D.C. publishing company where Kirby was interning offered her a job that would start upon her graduation in May 2009 from Howard



TOOLBOX

AAA Resize Print E-mail
Yahoo! Buzz

Ad

COMMENT

1148 Comments | [View All »](#)

COMMENTS ARE CLOSED

WHO'S BLOGGING powered by **sphere**

» [Links to this article](#)

Sponsored Links

Penny Stock Gaining 5000%
Sign up for Free to receive alerts about the next stock to jump 5000%
www.PennyStockGains.com

Refinance Now 4.0% FIXED!
\$160,000 Mortgage for \$633/mo. Free. No Obligation. Get 4 Quotes!
Mortgage.LendGo.com

[Buy a link here](#)

University. But the company withdrew the offer in the fall of 2008 when the economy collapsed.

Kirby said she applied for administrative jobs on Capitol Hill but was told she was overqualified. She sought a teaching position in the D.C. public schools through the Teach for America program but said she was rejected because of a flood of four times the usual number of applicants.

Finally, she went back to school, enrolling in a master's of public policy program at Howard. "I decided to stay in school two more years and wait out the recession," Kirby said.

On a tightrope

The Obama administration is on a tightrope, balancing the desire to spend billions more dollars to create jobs without adding to the \$1.4 trillion national deficit. Yet some policy experts say more attention needs to be paid to the intractable problems of underemployed workers - those who like Spriggs may lack a high school diploma, a steady work history, job-readiness skills or a squeaky-clean background.

"Increased involvement in the underground economy, criminal activity, increased poverty, homelessness and teen pregnancy are the things I worry about if we continue to see more years of high unemployment," said Algernon Austin, a sociologist and director of the race, ethnicity and economy program at the Economic Policy Institute, which studies issues involving low- and middle-income wage earners.

Earlier this month, District officials said they will use \$3.9 million in federal stimulus funds to provide 19 weeks of on-the-job training to 500 18-to-24-year-olds. But even those who receive training often don't get jobs.

"I thought after I finished the [training] program, I'd be working. I only had three jobs with the union and only one of them was longer than a week," Spriggs, a tall slender man wearing a black Nationals cap, said one afternoon while sitting at the table in the living room/dining room in his mother's apartment. "It has you wanting to go out and find other ways to make money. . . . [Lack of jobs is why] people go out hustling and doing what they can to get by."

"Give me a chance to show that I can work. Just give me a chance," added Spriggs, who is on probation for drug possession. "I don't want to think negative. I know the economy is slow. You got to crawl before you walk. I got to be patient. My biggest problem [which prompted the effort to sell drugs] is not being patient."

The economy's seismic shift has been an equal-opportunity offender, hurting various racial and ethnic groups, economic classes, ages, and white- and blue-collar job categories. Nevertheless, 16-to-24-year-olds face heavier losses, with a 19.1 percent unemployment rate, about nine points higher than the national average for the general population.

Their rate of employment in October was 44.9 percent, the lowest level in 61 years of record keeping, according to the Bureau of Labor

Statistics. Employment for men in their 20s and early 30s is at its lowest level since the Great Depression, according to the Center for Labor Market Studies.

Troubling consequences

Unemployment among young people is particularly troubling, economists say, because the consequences can be long-lasting. This might be the first generation that does not keep up with its parents' standard of living. Jobless teens are more likely to be jobless twenty-somethings. Once forced onto the sidelines, they likely will not catch up financially for many years. That is the case even for young people of all ethnic groups who graduate from college.

Lisa B. Kahn, an economics professor at Yale University who studied graduates during recessions in the 1980s, determined that the young workers hired during a down economy generally start off with lower wages than they otherwise would have and don't recover for at least a decade.

"In your first job, you're accumulating skills on how to do the job, learning by doing and getting training. If you graduate in a recession, you're in a [lesser] job, wasting your time," she said. "Once you switch into the job you should be in, you don't have the skills for that job."

Some studies examining how employers review black and white job applicants suggest that discrimination may be at play.

"Black men were less likely to receive a call back or job offer than equally qualified white men," said Devah Pager, a sociology professor at Princeton University, referring to her studies a few years ago of white and black male job applicants in their 20s in Milwaukee and New York.

"Black men with a clean record fare no better than white men just released from prison."

Sponsored Links

Refinance Now 4.0% FIXED!

\$160,000 Mortgage for \$633/mo. Free. No Obligation. Get 4 Quotes!
Mortgage.LendGo.com

Penny Stock Gaining 5000%

Sign up for Free to receive alerts about the next stock to jump 5000%
www.PennyStockGains.com

Now Hiring: Make \$63/hr Part-Time

\$63/hr part-time jobs open. Requirements: Just a computer
LA-Sentinel.com

[Buy a link here](#)

7
diggs

543

Share

More ways to share this Article...

[Reddit](#)

[Twitter](#)

[myspace](#)

[del.icio.us](#)

[NewsTrust](#)

[Stumble It!](#)

From Our Partners



[Shafer: What Ross Douthat Overlooks About Conspiracy Theorists](#)

[Why Do Investors Keep Making Bad Bets Against Obama?](#)

[Strange YouTube Trend: The Girls](#)

PRINT THIS
EMAIL THIS
SHARE THIS

Hard Times for Latino Men in U.S.

by Mark Mather and Linda A. Jacobsen

DID YOU KNOW?

One-half of the older men in 10 European countries were overweight in 2004; only one-third of men qualified as having normal weight. [More...](#)

(February 2010) No racial or ethnic group has been immune to the effects of the U.S. recession, but a new *Population Bulletin* by the Population Reference Bureau shows that Latino men may be feeling those effects more than other demographic groups. PRB's report, "U.S. Economic and Social Trends Since 2000," not only examines the impact of the recession on the U.S. population, but also assesses the divergent paths of racial and ethnic groups over the past few years.

Focusing on unemployment, black men have fared the worst. Since the onset of the recession in December 2007, the unemployment rate for black men has increased from 10 percent to 21 percent. During the same period, the rate for Latino men jumped from 6 percent to 15 percent.¹ However, unemployment rates do not tell the whole story. The unique position of Latino men in the U.S. economy—combined with their low levels of education and geographic concentration in economically distressed states—has put them in a precarious economic position relative to other demographic groups.

Latino Unemployment

Latino men have been disproportionately affected by the sagging demand for new homes, remodeling, and commercial real estate. Nearly one-fourth of Latino men (23 percent) were working in construction at the beginning of the recession in 2007, a higher share than that of white men (13 percent) and nearly three times the share of black men (8 percent).² The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that about 2 million construction jobs were lost between December 2007 and January 2010.³ One positive note for Latinos has been the shorter amount of time spent unemployed compared with other racial/ethnic groups. The relatively young age structure of the Latino workforce may be a factor in helping them find employment sooner, since unemployed older workers spend more time, on average, looking for work.⁴

Education Gap Limits Job Opportunities

Latino men have lower levels of education compared with other demographic groups, limiting their access to jobs with decent wages. In 2008, 41 percent of Latino men ages 25 and older had not graduated from high school, nearly twice the proportion of black men (21 percent) and four times the share of non-Hispanic white men (10 percent). Young Latino men are also less likely to be enrolled in college compared with young adults in other groups. Less than one-fourth of Latino men ages 18 to 24 were enrolled in college or graduate school in 2008, compared with one-third of Latino women. Among non-Hispanic whites, nearly half of women and 41 percent of men were enrolled in college or graduate school (see Figure 1). These differences are important because earning capacity varies considerably by education level. In 2008, poverty levels ranged from a low of 3 percent among those with graduate or professional degrees to a high of 24 percent among high school dropouts.⁵

Declining Home Values and Geographic Disadvantage

Latinos are geographically disadvantaged because of their high concentrations in states with the steepest declines in home values, including California, Florida, and Nevada. During the housing market boom, Latinos benefitted from an increase in mortgage lending to lower-income households. The homeownership rate among Latino-headed households jumped 6 percentage points between 2000 and 2007 and surpassed the rate for black householders beginning in 2003. Median home value for Latino homeowners rose sharply in the first half of the decade and exceeded that of non-Hispanic whites by 2007.

However, the rise in homeownership that increased Latino household wealth earlier in the decade became a liability for many Latino families when home values declined. The median value of Hispanic-owned homes dropped sharply

RELATED

- PRB Discuss Online: U.S. Economic and Social Trends
- U.S. Economic and Social Trends Since 2000

Get PRB E-mail News

Topic

OR
Region or country

[DataFinder >](#)

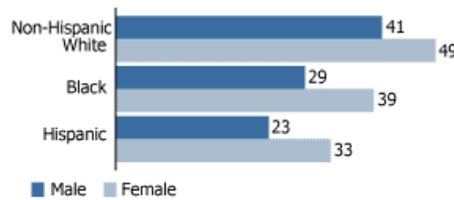
[Discuss Online >](#)

[2009 World Population Data Sheet >](#)

[Population Bulletins >](#)

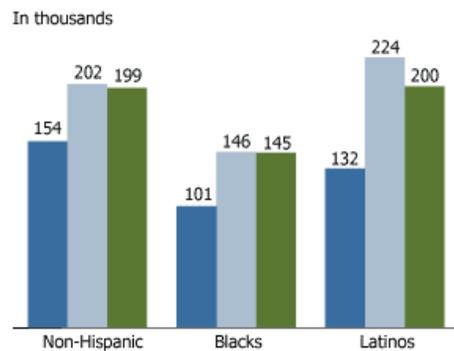
[Graphics Bank >](#)

Figure 1
Percent of Persons Ages 18 to 24 Enrolled in College or Graduate School by Race/Ethnicity, 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

Figure 2
Median Home Value by Race/Ethnicity of Homeowner, 2000, 2007, 2008 (Adjusted for Inflation)



in 2008, and many Latino families lost their homes to foreclosure. After adjusting for inflation, the median home value for Hispanics fell by 11 percent between 2007 and 2008, compared with a 2 percent drop for non-Hispanic whites, and a 1 percent decrease for African Americans (see Figure 2).

whites
■ 2000 ■ 2007 ■ 2008
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and American Community Survey.

The proportion of Latinas in the labor force remains well below that of Latino men. However, the declining economic prospects for Latino men has created more pressure for Latinas to enter the workforce to supplement male earnings. In fact, the latest data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the labor force participation rate for Latinas has increased slightly since the onset of the recession, from 56 percent to 57 percent, while the rate for Latino men dropped from 81 percent to 78 percent.⁶ If these trends continue, Latinas could close the gender gap in labor force participation rates and play a more central role in providing economic security for Latino families.

Linda A. Jacobsen is vice president and **Mark Mather** is associate vice president of Domestic Programs at PRB.

References

1. PRB analysis of data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Unemployment estimates are for those ages 16 and older and are not seasonally adjusted.
2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employed Persons by Occupation, Race, Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity, and Sex," accessed at <ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/lf/aa2007/pdf/cpsaat10.pdf>, on Feb. 22, 2010.
3. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Situation Summary," accessed at www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm, on Feb.22, 2010.
4. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Unemployed Persons by Age, Sex, Race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, Marital status, and Duration of Unemployment," accessed at www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat31.pdf, on Feb.23, 2010.
5. U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (Annual Social and Economic Supplement).
6. PRB analysis of data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Project Websites: [IGWG](#) • [CPIPR](#) • [InfoShare](#) • [POPOV](#) ■ **Follow PRB:** [Facebook](#) • [iTunes](#) • [YouTube](#)

Services: [RSS Feeds](#) • [Get E-Mail News](#) • [Join/Renew Membership](#) • [Donate](#) • [Bookstore](#) • [Contact](#) • [Español](#) • [Français](#)

Copyright 2010, Population Reference Bureau. All rights reserved. • [Privacy Policy](#)
1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW • Suite 520 • Washington, DC 20009-5728 • USA
Phone: 800-877-9881 • **Fax:** 202-328-3937 • **E-mail:** popref@prb.org