

The Impact of Long-term Unemployment
**Lost Income, Lost Friends—and Loss of Self-
respect**

FOR RELEASE: JULY 22, 2010

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A Social & Demographic Trends Report

The Impact of Long-term Unemployment

Lost Income, Lost Friends—and Loss of Self-respect

by Rich Morin and Rakesh Kochhar

Long-term unemployment takes a much deeper toll than short-term unemployment on a person’s finances, emotional well-being and career prospects, according to a new Pew Research Center survey that explores the attitudes and experiences of workers who have lost jobs during the Great Recession.

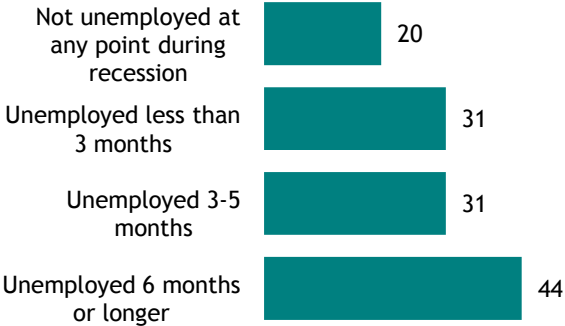
Of those who have experienced an unemployment spell of at least six months, more than four-in-ten (44%) report that the recession has caused “major changes” in their lives. By comparison, fewer than a third (31%) of those who had been unemployed less than six months and 20% of adults who were not unemployed during the recession say they were similarly affected.

To measure the impact of unemployment during the Great Recession, the Pew Research Center interviewed 810 adults ages 18 to 64¹ who are currently unemployed or who were jobless sometime since the recession officially began in December 2007. They were part of a nationally representative survey of 2,967 adults conducted May 11-31, 2010.

Pew Center researchers also analyzed recent employment data to create a demographic portrait of the long-term unemployed.² According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the median duration of unemployment stood at 25.5 weeks in June 2010, meaning half of the unemployed—the largest proportion since World War II—have been looking for work for six months or more. The previous high, in May 1983, was 12.3 weeks, less than half the level today. The Center’s demographic analysis finds that the median duration is highest among older workers, blue-collar workers and black workers. However, all workers, regardless of race or ethnicity, age, gender, nativity or occupation, have experienced a sharp increase in long-term unemployment during the recession.

Unemployment Changes Lives

% who say the recession has brought “major changes” in the way they live, by experience with unemployment



Question: *Has the recession caused major changes in the way you live, minor changes, or hasn't the recession changed the way you live one way or another?*

Note: N=810 for those ages 18-64 unemployed at some point during the recession and 1,093 for the sample of those in this age group who were not unemployed since the recession began.

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¹ Survey findings in this report are based only on those ages 18 to 64 in order to present a more precise picture of the experiences of working-age adults. In addition, the group of unemployed workers included in the analysis is based only on those who answered in the survey that they were currently not retired, not working, able to work and actively looking for a job. Both currently unemployed and previously unemployed are identified as being unemployed at some point during the recession.

² The demographic portrait is based on the Center’s tabulations from the May 2010 Current Population Survey for people ages 16 and older.

Together, the survey and analysis of employment data document how a prolonged period of joblessness can strain household budgets, test personal relationships, force changes in career plans and erode self-confidence. Key findings include:

- Family finances:** A majority of the long-term unemployed (56%) say their family income has declined during the recession, compared with 42% who were out of work less than three months and 26% of adults who have not been unemployed since the recession began in December 2007. Overall, the long-term unemployed are also more likely to say they are in worse shape financially now than before the recession.
- Impact on relationships:** Nearly half (46%) of those unemployed six months or more say joblessness has strained family relations, compared with 39% of those who were out of work for less than three months. At the same time, more than four-in-ten (43%) long-term unemployed say they lost contact with close friends
- Loss of self-respect:** Nearly four-in-ten (38%) long-term unemployed report they have lost some self-respect while out of work, compared with 29% who were jobless for shorter periods of time. The long-term unemployed also are significantly more likely to say they sought professional help for depression or other emotional issues while out of work (24% vs. 10% for those unemployed less than three months).
- Impact on career goals:** More than four-in-ten (43%) of the long-term unemployed say the recession will have a “big impact” on their ability to achieve their long-term

Unemployment's Impact on Household Income

% of each group who say their family income has declined since the recession began

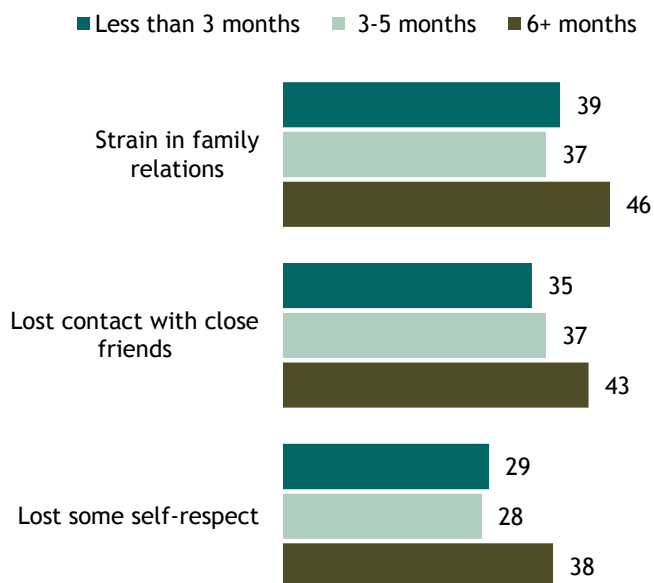


Question: Compared to what it was before the recession, has your family income increased, decreased or stayed about the same?

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Impact of Long-term Unemployment

% experiencing each problem, by duration of unemployment



Note: Figures based on respondents ages 18-64 who are currently unemployed or who were unemployed sometime during the recession; n=810

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career goals. Among those unemployed less than three months, 28% said being jobless would have a similarly serious impact.

- Am I in the right job? More than seven-in-ten long-term unemployed say they changed their careers or job fields or seriously thought about doing so. They also were more likely to pursue job retraining programs or other educational opportunities while out of work.

- Settling for less: Among workers who found a job after being

unemployed for six months or longer, about three-in-ten (29%) say their new job is worse than the one they lost, compared with only 16% of re-employed workers who had been jobless for less than six months. In separate questions, these workers also report their new job paid less and had worse benefits than their old one.

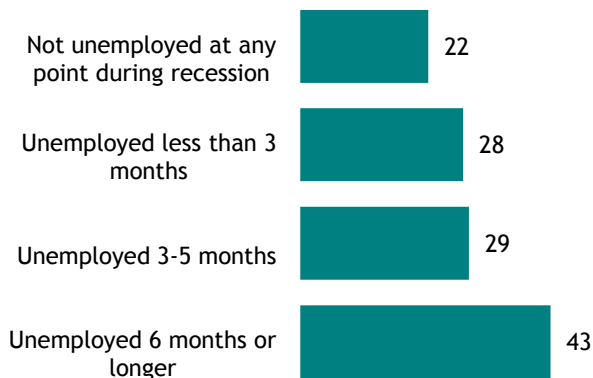
- Pessimism on the job hunt: Among adults who are currently unemployed, those who have been jobless for six months or longer are significantly more pessimistic than the short-term unemployed about their chances of finding a job as good as the one they lost.

While the long-term unemployed have suffered the most during the Great Recession, the survey found that shorter spells of unemployment also have been painful for many Americans and their families

For example, a third of all long-term unemployed (33%) say they have had problems paying their rent or mortgage—identical to the proportion of those unemployed less than three months who experienced difficulty paying for housing. This proportion is more than double the share of Americans who have not been jobless at any point during the recession but who have had difficulty paying for housing during the recession (16%).

Impact of Unemployment on Long-term Career Goals

% who say recession will have a “big impact” on career goals, by experience with unemployment



Question: *Just your best guess: Do you think the recession will have a big, small or no impact on your ability to achieve your long-term career goals?*

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The remainder of this report examines in more detail how the unemployed—particularly the long-term unemployed—have fared during the Great Recession. Chapter 1 offers a demographic profile of the long-term unemployed. The report then examines the problems encountered by those who have been unemployed during the recession and the larger hardships faced by the long-term unemployed. The final chapter examines how long-term unemployment affects workers even after they find another job and the attitudes of the currently unemployed.

About the Data

Findings presented in this report are primarily based on two sources: a new national survey conducted by the Pew Research Center and data gathered by the federal government and analyzed by Pew Research Center staff.

Survey results for this report are based on telephone interviews conducted with a sample of 810 people ages 18 to 64 living in the continental United States who were unemployed at some point during the recession. A total of 446 interviews were completed with respondents who are currently unemployed and 364 interviews were conducted of those who are currently working but were unemployed at some point during the recession.

These respondents were part of a representative national sample of 2,967 adults. A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent all adults in the continental United States who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. Interviews were conducted by landline and cellular phones. Data for this larger survey are weighted to produce a final sample that is representative of the general population of adults in the continental United States. In addition, the sample of those unemployed during the recession was weighted to estimates of duration of unemployment from the U.S. Census Bureau released in June, 2010.

- 810 interviews conducted May 11-31, 2010
- Margin of sampling error is plus or minus 4.2 percentage points for results based on the total sample at the 95% confidence level.
- Survey interviews were conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish.

The economic analyses presented in the report are drawn from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Pew Research Center tabulations of the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. Additional data came from the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Note on terminology: Whites include only non-Hispanic whites. Blacks include only non-Hispanic blacks. Hispanics are of any race. The terms "labor force" and "work force" are used interchangeably.

Chapter 1: Long-term Unemployment in the Great Recession

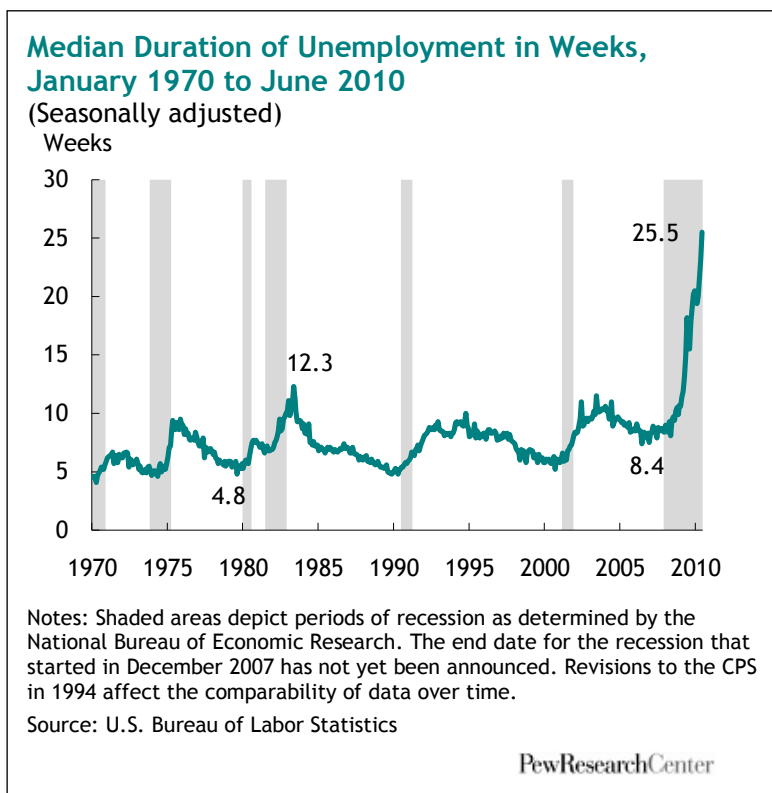
The Great Recession has the unhappy distinction of pushing long-term unemployment to historic highs. Long-term unemployment, generally defined as being out of work for more than six months, now accounts for 46% of all joblessness. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 6.8 million of 14.6 million unemployed workers were experiencing long-term unemployment in June 2010.³

The entrenching of long-term unemployment during this recession is most clearly reflected in the number of weeks the typical worker has been out of work. The median duration of unemployment stood at 25.5 weeks in June 2010, meaning nearly half of the unemployed have been looking for work for six months or more. At the start of the recession, in December 2007, the median was 8.4 weeks.

A review of other recessions in the post-WWII era reveals that the Great Recession is truly apart in elevating the duration of unemployment. The previous high, in May 1983, was 12.3 weeks, less than half the level today.⁴

A Portrait of the Long-term Unemployed

Have some groups of workers experienced larger increases in long-term unemployment than other groups? How does the typical spell of unemployment vary across groups of workers? Who are the long-term unemployed? Are they different from other unemployed workers?



³ These estimates are seasonally adjusted. Most other estimates in this report are for December 2007 and May 2010 and are non-seasonally adjusted.

⁴ The change in the duration of unemployment over time is partly affected by revisions to the Current Population Survey in 1994. BLS estimates show that if duration of unemployment in 1983 had been measured in the same way it is measured today, the median would have been somewhat higher than 12.3 weeks. This issue is discussed in greater detail in "[A Balance Sheet at 30 Months: How the Great Recession Has Changed Life in America](http://pewsocialtrends.org/pubs/759/how-the-great-recession-has-changed-life-in-america)," Social and Demographic Trends, Pew Research Center, June 30, 2010 (<http://pewsocialtrends.org/pubs/759/how-the-great-recession-has-changed-life-in-america>).

Answers to these questions reveal the breadth and depth of joblessness in the Great Recession. Every group of workers examined below—by race or ethnicity, age, gender, education, nativity and occupation—has experienced a dramatic increase in long-term unemployment. The differences across groups are more a matter of nuance—how much sharper the increase is or how much higher the rate is. By those second-order metrics, long-term unemployment has left a larger footprint among black workers, older workers and blue-collar occupations.

Total and Long-term Unemployment, 2007 and 2010 (Numbers in thousands; non-seasonally adjusted)						
	Unemployed, May 2010		Unemployed, December 2007		Ratio of 2010 to 2007	
	<i>All</i>	<i>More than six months</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>More than six months</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>More than six months</i>
All	14,444	6,675	7,474	1,299	1.9	5.1
White	8,257	3,769	4,103	705	2.0	5.3
Black	2,629	1,362	1,480	269	1.8	5.1
Hispanic	2,620	1,085	1,410	221	1.9	4.9
18 - 29	5,289	1,906	2,852	416	1.9	4.6
30 - 39	2,748	1,414	1,345	244	2.0	5.8
40 - 49	2,556	1,316	1,410	272	1.8	4.8
50 and older	3,254	1,898	1,411	333	2.3	5.7
Men	8,269	3,975	4,243	732	1.9	5.4
Women	6,175	2,699	3,232	567	1.9	4.8
Less than high school diploma	3,057	1,172	1,930	285	1.6	4.1
High school graduate	5,311	2,665	2,719	461	2.0	5.8
Some college	3,868	1,742	1,838	306	2.1	5.7
Bachelor's degree or above	2,208	1,095	988	247	2.2	4.4
Native born	12,356	5,703	6,332	1,083	2.0	5.3
Foreign born	2,088	972	1,143	216	1.8	4.5
Occupation						
Managerial and professional	2,470	1,154	1,062	226	2.3	5.1
Service	2,742	1,182	1,592	245	1.7	4.8
Sales and office	3,245	1,482	1,751	311	1.9	4.8
Construction and maintenance	2,273	1,056	1,203	183	1.9	5.8
Production, transportation, etc.	2,373	1,305	1,199	233	2.0	5.6

Note: "White" and "black" refer to their non-Hispanic components. Not all subgroups are shown within some categories, e.g., "other" is not shown within the racial and ethnic groups.
Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of Current Population Survey data.

As of May 2010, there were 14.4 million unemployed workers in the economy on a non-seasonally adjusted basis. That was nearly double the number of workers (7.5 million) unemployed at the start of the recession in December 2007.⁵

However, the increase in the number of long-term unemployed workers was much greater than the increase in overall unemployment. From December 2007 to May 2010, the number of workers without a job for more than six months rose from 1.3 million to 6.7 million, a fivefold increase.

The doubling of unemployment generally and the quintupling of long-term unemployment are standards that repeat across all groups of workers. Among the groups whose increases in long-term unemployment are higher than average are older workers (50 and older); men; those whose educational attainment is a high school diploma; and construction, maintenance, production and transportation workers. Long-term unemployment also increased more for native-born workers than for those who are foreign born.

The shares of unemployed workers who have been without work for more than six months are also high across all groups of workers.

Nationally, the share of long-term unemployed in overall unemployment increased from 17.4% in December 2007 to

Workers Unemployed for More than Six Months as Share of All Unemployed and Median Duration of Unemployment, 2007 and 2010

(Non-seasonally adjusted)

	Share Unemployed for More than 6 Months		Median Duration of Unemployment (weeks)	
	Dec. 2007	May 2010	Dec. 2007	May 2010
All	17.4%	46.2%	8	26
White	17.2%	45.6%	7	25
Black	18.2%	51.8%	11	30
Hispanic	15.7%	41.4%	7	22
18 - 29	14.6%	36.0%	8	17
30 - 39	18.1%	51.5%	8	30
40 - 49	19.3%	51.5%	8	30
50 and older	23.6%	58.3%	11	39
Men	17.3%	48.1%	8	26
Women	17.5%	43.7%	8	22
Less than high school diploma	14.8%	38.4%	7	21
High school graduate	17.0%	50.2%	8	28
Some college	16.7%	45.0%	8	24
Bachelor's degree or above	25.0%	49.6%	10	26
Native born	17.1%	46.2%	8	26
Foreign born	18.9%	46.5%	7	26
Occupation				
Managerial and professional	21.2%	46.7%	9	26
Service	15.4%	43.1%	8	22
Sales and office	17.7%	45.7%	9	25
Construction and maintenance	15.2%	46.5%	6	26
Production, transportation, etc.	19.4%	55.0%	9	34

Note: "White" and "black" refer to their non-Hispanic components. Not all subgroups are shown within some categories, e.g., "other" is not shown within the racial and ethnic groups.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of Current Population Survey data.

⁵ The comparison between December 2007 and May 2010 is partly affected by seasonal differences—employment in December is typically high because of the holiday season. This does not, however, affect comparisons across most groups because the seasonal impact is generally spread across demographic groups.

46.2% in May 2010. For most groups, the share of long-term unemployed is similar to the national share.

However, more than half (51.8%) of unemployed black workers have been seeking work for more than six months. The same is true for older workers—58.3% of workers 50 and older have been jobless for more than six months. That is the highest share across the various groups. Research from the BLS shows that older workers became less likely to drop out of the labor force during the Great Recession.⁶ That raised both their unemployment and long-term unemployment rates.

Production and transportation workers are not far behind older workers—55.0% of unemployed workers from those occupations are long-term unemployed. For almost all other groups of workers, the long-term unemployment rate is in the range of 40% to 50%.

The median number of weeks that workers have been unemployed has risen from eight weeks in December 2007 to 26 weeks in May 2010. The median duration is highest among black workers (30 weeks), older workers (39 weeks for workers 50 and older), and production and transportation workers (34 weeks).

Since long-term unemployment is nearly the norm for the Great Recession, it is not surprising that the characteristics of those who are long-term unemployed are like the characteristics of all unemployed. Only one group—workers 50 and older—truly stands out as being overly represented among the long-term unemployed. Workers 50 and older are 22.5% of all unemployed but 28.4% of long-term unemployed.

A handful of workers—blacks, middle-age workers, men, those with only a high school diploma, and production and transportation workers—are slightly more represented among the long-term unemployed than among all unemployed. Hispanics, workers ages 18 to 29, women and those without a high school diploma are slightly underrepresented among the long-term unemployed. By and large, however, the face of

Characteristics of Unemployed Workers, May 2010 (% distribution; non-seasonally adjusted)

	Distribution of Unemployed Workers	
	All	More than six months
<i>White</i>	57.2%	56.5%
<i>Black</i>	18.2%	20.4%
<i>Hispanic</i>	18.1%	16.3%
<i>18 - 29</i>	36.6%	28.6%
<i>30 - 39</i>	19.0%	21.2%
<i>40 - 49</i>	17.7%	19.7%
<i>50 and older</i>	22.5%	28.4%
<i>Men</i>	57.2%	59.6%
<i>Women</i>	42.8%	40.4%
<i>Less than high school diploma</i>	21.2%	17.6%
<i>High school graduate</i>	36.8%	39.9%
<i>Some college</i>	26.8%	26.1%
<i>Bachelor's degree or above</i>	15.3%	16.4%
<i>Native born</i>	85.5%	85.4%
<i>Foreign born</i>	14.5%	14.6%
<i>Occupation</i>		
<i>Managerial and professional</i>	17.1%	17.3%
<i>Service</i>	19.0%	17.7%
<i>Sales and office</i>	22.5%	22.2%
<i>Construction and maintenance</i>	15.7%	15.8%
<i>Production, transportation, etc.</i>	16.4%	19.5%

*Note: Shares may not total 100 because of rounding and omission of some subgroups. "White" and "black" refer to their non-Hispanic components.
Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of Current Population Survey data.*

⁶ Issues in Labor Statistics. "[Long-term Unemployment Experience of the Jobless](#)," U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Summary 10-05, June 2010.

long-term unemployment is a reflection of unemployment generally.

Chapter 2: Problems of the Long-term Unemployed

As weeks without a job become months, the problems mount for the unemployed and their families. Even relatively short spells of unemployment bring financial and emotional hardships. But those who have been out of work for six months or longer face particularly difficult challenges, according to the Pew Research Center survey.

Not surprisingly, unemployment is correlated with a decline in overall financial well-being. A clear majority (56%) of all long-term unemployed say their family income declined during the recession, compared with 44% of those who were unemployed three to five months and 42% of those who were jobless for less than three months.

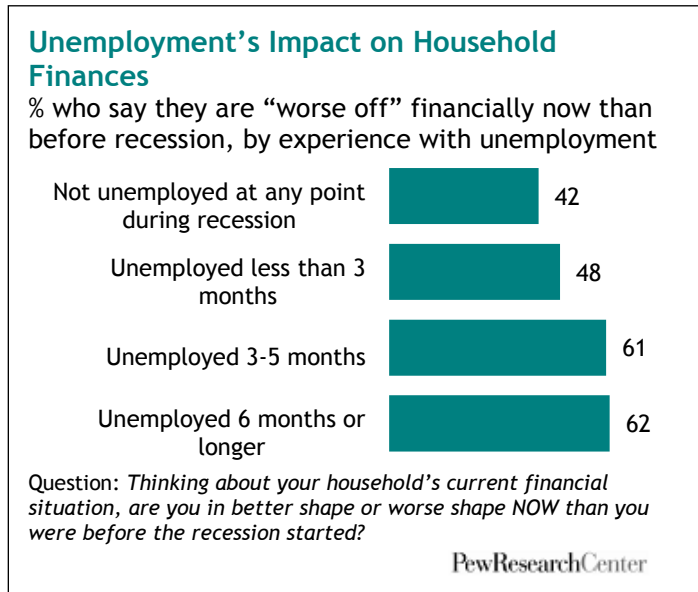
A slightly different pattern emerges when those who are or were unemployed during the recession were asked in the survey to evaluate their overall family finances. More than six-in-ten (62%) of those unemployed for six months or more at some point during the recession report they are in worse shape financially than they were before the recession, compared with 48% of those who are currently or were jobless for less than three months and 61% who were unemployed for three to five months.

However, among those who report a decline in their financial situation, the long-term unemployed are more likely to say their financial standing now is “much worse” (48%) than are those who were out of work three to five months (32%) or less than three months (30%).

Coping with Unemployment

The long-term unemployed are somewhat more likely to say they increased their credit card debt to meet expenses (24% vs. 15% of those unemployed less than three months). But in other ways, the survey found that length of unemployment is not closely associated with the likelihood that an individual would have experienced a number of other financial problems tested in the survey.

Slightly less than half of all adults who were jobless at some point during the recession say they had to withdraw money from their savings accounts, 401(k) or other retirement accounts to pay their bills. Duration of unemployment appears to have little impact on this behavior. Slightly more than half (54%) of those who were unemployed less than three months and 55% of those who were out of work at least six months reported dipping into their savings or retirement nest eggs. Similar proportions of the long-term unemployed say they borrowed money from family members or friends to pay bills. Length of unemployment also is not closely



associated with the likelihood that the unemployed experienced problems getting or paying for medical care, or had difficulties paying their rent or mortgage, the survey found.

One cautionary note: The survey asked individuals if they had experienced each hardship during the recession but it did not ask the frequency or relative seriousness of the problem. That means that a survey respondent who was unemployed for a month and missed one rent payment and someone who was out of work for a year and consistently fell behind in paying the rent or mortgage would both answer “yes” to the question even though they had very different experiences.

Rethinking their Careers

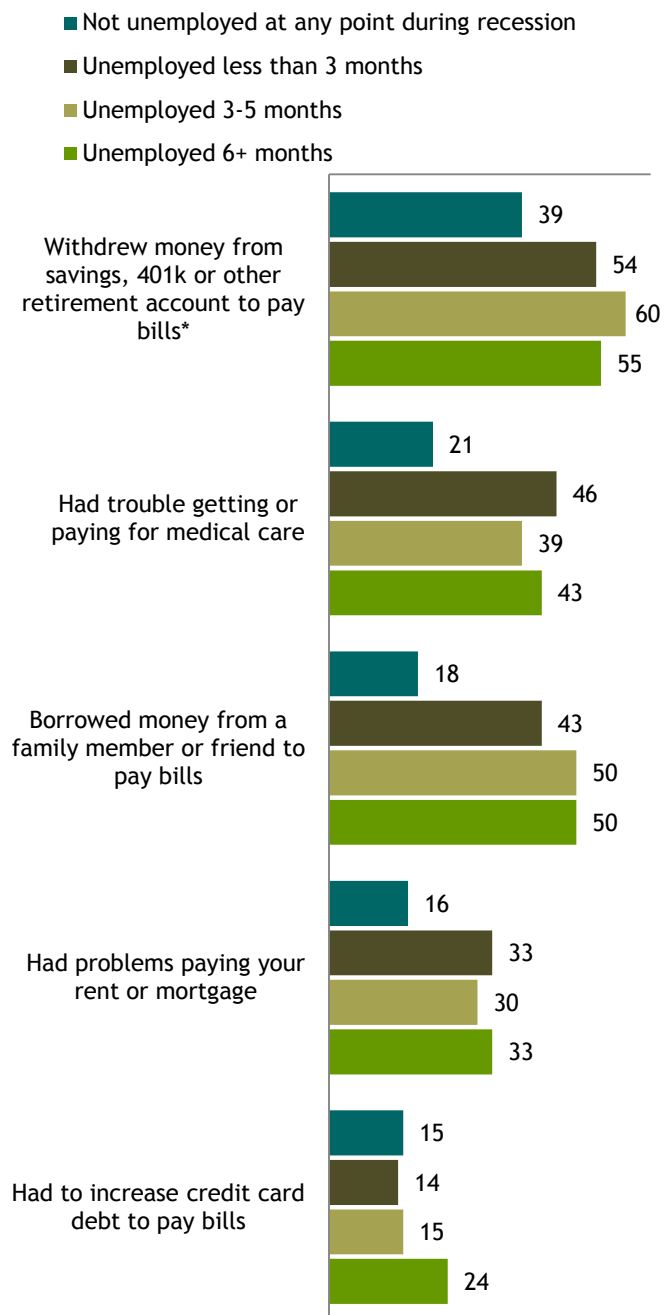
For many long-term unemployed, the period they have been out of a job has been were out of a job was a time to reflect on their careers and make plans for a new work life.

According to the survey, nearly seven-in-ten (68%) long-term unemployed say they changed their careers or job fields or seriously thought about doing so, compared with less than half of those (45%) who had been out of work less than three months.

The long-term unemployed also were more likely to pursue job retraining programs or other educational opportunities while out of work (43% among those unemployed six or more months vs. 25% of those unemployed less than three months).

Dealing with Hard Times

% who say they have done the following things during the recession, by duration of unemployment



*Based on those 18-64 who have a checking, savings, 401(k) or other retirement account, n=654.

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The Emotional Cost of Being Unemployed

No matter what the duration of unemployment, it's tough being out of work, emotionally as well as financially. The survey documents the emotional burden—from fretful nights to family fights and dwindling self-respect—that jobless workers face.

Nights are especially hard. Almost half of adults (48%) who have been unemployed at some point during the recession (regardless of the duration) say they had difficulty sleeping or lost sleep while they were jobless.

The survey also found that unemployment often weakened ties to family and friends at perhaps a time when the unemployed most needed support. Four-in-ten unemployed report they lost contact with close friends while jobless.

Roughly the same proportion (42%) report strained relations with their families. A third (33%) lost some self-respect.

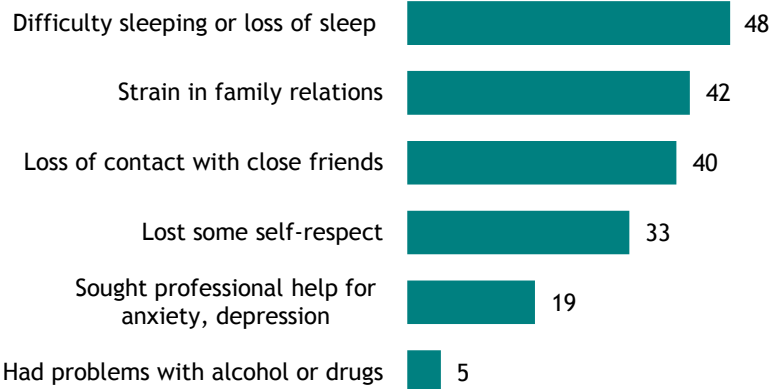
To deal with these and other emotional issues, about two-in-five (19%) of those who are or were unemployed report they sought professional help. A small proportion acknowledged that they had problems with alcohol or drugs (5%) during the time they were jobless.

But the survey also found that life without a job was not unremittingly bleak. Fully three-quarters made the best of their bad situation by spending more time with their families, while more than two-thirds reported they did more household chores or helped out with child care. A majority (56%) also say they spent more time on hobbies or interests. Nearly half (45%) acknowledged that they enjoyed not having to work—at least for a while.

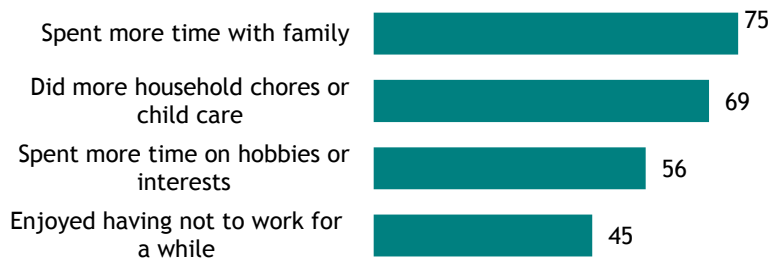
The Two Sides of Unemployment

% who experienced each of the following while out of work ...*

Problems experienced while unemployed



Not all experiences during unemployment were negative



*Figures based on respondents ages 18-64 who are currently unemployed or who were unemployed sometime during the recession, n=810

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Long-term Unemployment and Experiences with Emotional Problems

A clear pattern emerges when experiences with emotional problems are broken down by how long an individual was or is unemployed. Few significant differences are evident between workers who were unemployed less than three months and those who were jobless for three to five months. But among those unemployed for six months or longer, experiences with emotional problems increased dramatically.

For example, slightly less than three-in-ten adults who were unemployed less than three months (29%) and those jobless for three to five months (28%) say they lost some self-respect while they were not working. That proportion rises somewhat to 38% among those unemployed for six months or longer. The long-term unemployed also are twice as likely as those unemployed less than six months to have sought professional help to deal with depression and other emotional issues (24% vs. 12%).

Who Experiences the Most Problems?

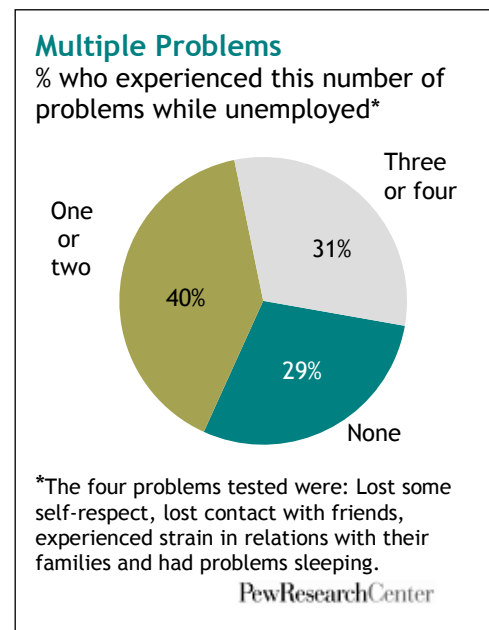
Among the ranks of those who are or were unemployed during the recession, blacks and less well-educated adults are disproportionately likely to have faced multiple personal problems. That's not surprising given the historical vulnerability of these groups during periods of recessions.

To examine the pervasiveness of personal hardships during periods of unemployment, four questions were combined into a scale and the result broken down by demographic groups. The questions covered whether they experienced strained relations with their families, lost some self-respect, lost some contact with friends or had problems sleeping while they were out of work.⁷

Nearly a third (31%) of all adults who are or were unemployed during the recession say they experienced at least three of the four problems tested in the survey. Slightly fewer (29%) report none of the problems, while 40% experienced one or two.

Blacks are more likely than whites to have faced multiple personal problems while out of work. Among those who are or were unemployed, fully four-in-ten blacks (40%) but only 25% of whites report they experienced at least three of the four problems.

Adults with only a high school education or less also were hard-hit: nearly four-in-ten (37%) experienced three or more problems while unemployed, compared with 25% of college graduates.



⁷ These problems were used because they were asked of the entire sample of those who are or were unemployed while the remaining hardships were asked only of half-samples.

Why did these two demographic groups experience disproportionately more personal problems during spells of unemployment? The sample of those who are or were unemployed is too small to say with certainty. Differences between these demographic groups in their incomes, the presence of a second breadwinner, and overall wealth may matter, as each of these factors could provide a buffer from emotional as well as financial distress.

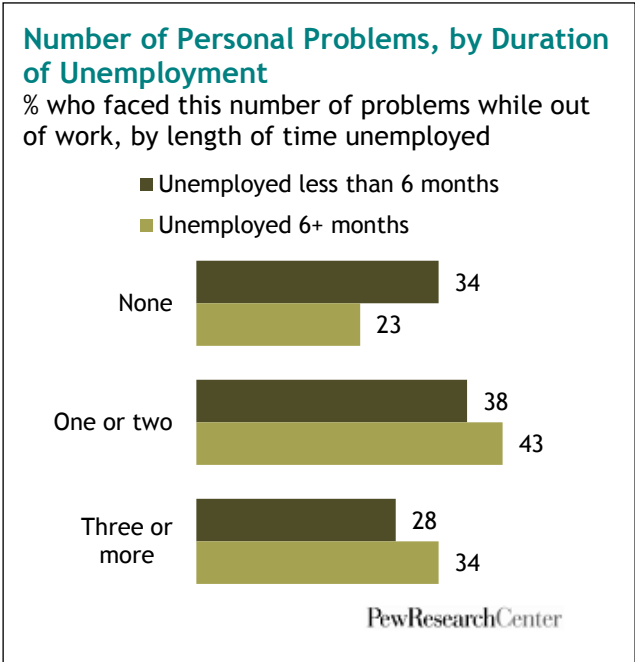
Experience with multiple spells of unemployment may also play a role. According to the survey, less well-educated adults are somewhat more likely to have been unemployed more than once during the recession than the college-educated; perhaps problems mount as the number of short-term spells of joblessness increase.

Another obvious explanation is that blacks and the less-well educated are among the groups unemployed longer, as jobs data reported earlier in the report show. The survey results offer some support for this explanation. When these results are broken down by duration of unemployment, those who were unemployed less than six months were significantly more likely to have experienced none of the four problems tested in the survey (34% vs. 23%).⁸

Who Faced the Most Problems
% of those who faced this number of problems while out of work...

	None %	One or two %	Three or four %
Total	29	40	31
Gender			
Men	30	40	30
Women	28	40	31
Age			
18-29	32	37	31
30-49	23	43	34
50-64	34	42	24
Race/Ethnicity			
White	29	46	25
Black	23	37	40
Hispanic	34	29	37
Education			
College grad	28	47	25
Some college	32	44	24
HS grad or less	28	35	37

Note: Problems tested were: lost some self-respect, lost contact with friends, experienced strain in relations with their families and had difficulty sleeping.



⁸ One caveat: The survey measured whether an individual experienced each problem while unemployed, not the frequency or severity of the problem.

Chapter 3: Confidence in Finding a Job

Will I ever hold a good job again? It’s a question that looms larger in the minds of jobless Americans the longer they remain unemployed.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the survey finds a modest correlation between length of unemployment and people’s confidence that they would soon get a job as good as the one they lost.

Among those currently out of work less than six months, nearly two-thirds (65%) say they are “very” or

“somewhat” confident that their new job will at least be as good as their old one. But among those unemployed for six months or more, a slim majority (54%) are reasonably sure about their prospects while nearly as many (46%) are doubtful.

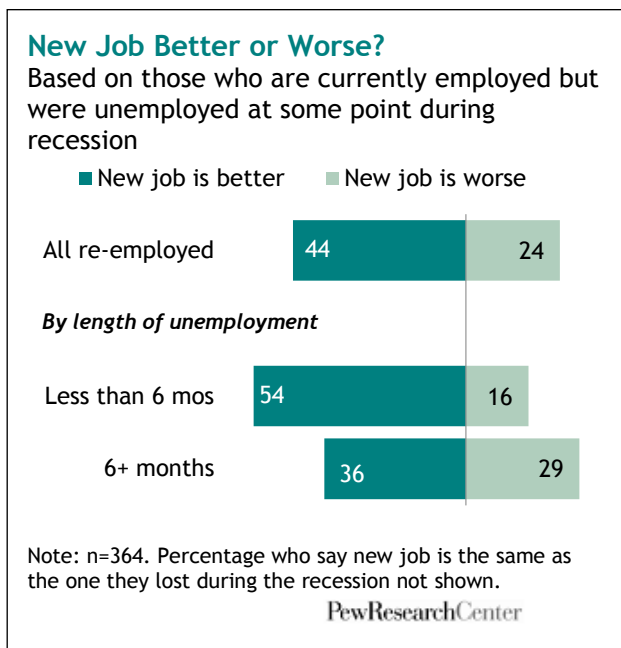
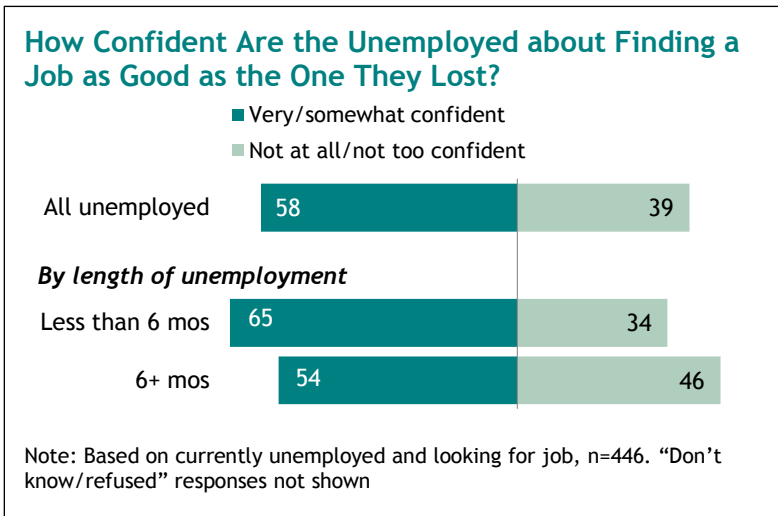
But what about those who found work after periods of unemployment? How good were the jobs they ultimately found? The survey suggests that reality roughly comports with the expectations of job seekers.

When the “re-employed”—those currently working who were unemployed sometime during the recession—were asked about their new jobs, striking differences emerged by the length that an individual was out of work.

Overall, about three-quarters of the re-employed say their current job is better than their former job (44%) or about as good (30%). Only 24% say it’s worse.

But these results differ dramatically by duration of unemployment. By more than a three-to-one ratio, those out of work for less than six months say their new job is better than say it is worse (54% vs. 16%).

The verdict is more measured among those who were jobless six months or longer. Among this group, about three-in-ten (29%) say their new job is worse, while 36% say it is better and the remainder report it is about the same.



PEW SOCIAL & DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS
JUNE 2010 LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED REPORT TOPLINE
MAY11-MAY 31, 2010
TOTAL N=810 ADULTS AGES 18-64 UNEMPLOYED AT SOME TIME DURING RECESSION⁹

NOTE: ALL NUMBERS ARE PERCENTAGES. THE PERCENTAGES GREATER THAN ZERO BUT LESS THAN 0.5 % ARE REPLACED BY AN ASTERISK (*). COLUMNS/ROWS MAY NOT TOTAL 100% DUE TO ROUNDING. UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ALL TRENDS REFERENCE SURVEYS FROM SOCIAL & DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS.

UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED, RESULTS ARE BASED ON RESPONDENTS AGES 18-64 WHO WERE UNEMPLOYED AT SOME TIME DURING THE RECESSION. THIS INCLUDES THOSE WHO ARE CURRENTLY UNEMPLOYED, WANT A JOB, ARE AVAILABLE TO WORK, AND ARE LOOKING FORWORK, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO WERE UNEMPLOYED SOMETIME DURING RECESSION BUT ARE CURRENTLY EMPLOYED. [N=810]

ASK ALL:

Q17 Has the recession caused major changes in the way YOU live, minor changes, or hasn't the recession changed the way you live one way or another?

38	Major
41	Minor
20	Hasn't changed the way you live
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK ALL:

Q20 Thinking about your household's current financial situation, are you in better shape or worse shape NOW than you were BEFORE the recession started?

24	Better
59	Worse
16	No different/stayed the same (VOL.)
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK ALL:

Q34 For each of the following, please tell me whether or not it is something that has happened to you during the recession....Have you **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE; OBSERVE FORM SPLITS]**?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>(VOL.)</u> Does not apply	<u>(VOL.)</u> DK/Ref
a. Had trouble getting or paying for medical care for yourself or your family	44	55	1	*
b. Had problems paying your rent or mortgage	32	63	5	1
c. Borrowed money from a family member or friend to help pay the bills	48	52	*	0
d. Cut back or cancelled vacation travel	72	26	2	*

⁹ Figures in this topline are based on a sample of two groups of adults ages 18 to 64 who were interviewed as part of a representative national survey of 2,967 adults conducted May 11-31 2010 by the Pew Research Center. The first group is made up of those who are currently unemployed and say they want to work, are able to work and are actively looking for a job (n=446). The second group is composed of individuals who are currently working full- or part-time and who say they were unemployed and looking for work at some point during the recession began (n=364). Margin of sampling error for results based on this sample of 810 is plus or minus 4.2 percentage points and larger for results based on a portion of this sample. Margin of sampling error for the overall survey of 2,967 is plus or minus 2.2 percentage points.

Q34 CONTINUED...

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	(VOL.) Does not <u>apply</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
e. Bought less expensive brands or shopped more at discount stores	78	21	1	1

No item f.

ASK FORM 1 QUALIFIED: [n=390]

g. Lost your house to foreclosure	4	93	4	0
h. Moved back in with your parents after living on your own	21	76	2	*
i. Had to increase your credit card debt to help pay the bills	19	72	9	0

ASK FORM 2 QUALIFIED: [n=420]

j. Loaned money to someone to help them with expenses or pay their bills	62	38	0	*
k. Postponed getting married or having a baby	25	68	6	1
l. Cut back spending on alcohol or cigarettes	45	34	21	*

ASK IF RESPONDENT HAS CHECKING OR SAVINGS ACCOUNT OR RETIREMENT SAVINGS: [n=654]

Q37a During the recession, did you have to withdraw money from your savings, 401K or other retirement accounts to meet expenses or pay your bills, or not?

56	Yes
43	No
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK IF UNEMPLOYED NOW OR UNEMPLOYED SOMETIME DURING RECESSION [n=364]:

Now I would like you to think of the job you had BEFORE you were last out of work.

Q57 Were you employed full-time or part-time?

70	Full-time
27	Part-time
2	Not employed/student/never employed (VOL.) [SKIP TO Q61]
*	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK IF EMPLOYED NOW BUT UNEMPLOYED SOMETIME DURING RECESSION: [n=364]

Q58 Does your new job pay more, less or about the same as your last job?

38	More
39	Less
21	Same
*	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK IF EMPLOYED NOW BUT UNEMPLOYED SOMETIME DURING RECESSION: [n=364]

Q59 Does your new job have better benefits, worse benefits or about the same benefits as your last job?

27	Better
28	Worse
39	Same
5	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK IF EMPLOYED NOW BUT UNEMPLOYED SOMETIME DURING RECESSION: [n=364]

Q60 Considering everything, is your new job better, worse or about the same as your last job?

44	Better
24	Worse
30	Same
2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK IF UNEMPLOYED:

Q64 At the moment, what is your current outlook on finding a new job in the near future? **(READ)**

RESULTS BASED ON RESPONDENTS WHO ARE NOT EMPLOYED, WANT A JOB, ARE AVAILABLE TO WORK, AND ARE LOOKING FORWORK: [n=446]

26	Very optimistic
36	Somewhat optimistic
19	Somewhat pessimistic [OR]
15	Very pessimistic
3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK IF UNEMPLOYED:

Q65 How confident are you that you will be able to find a job with approximately the same income and benefits you earned in your last job **(READ)**?

RESULTS BASED ON RESPONDENTS WHO ARE NOT EMPLOYED, WANT A JOB, ARE AVAILABLE TO WORK, AND ARE LOOKING FORWORK: [n=446]

24	Very confident
34	Somewhat confident
20	Not too confident [OR]
19	Not at all confident
2	Does not apply (retired, disabled, homemaker, etc.) (VOL.)
0	Other (VOL.)
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK IF UNEMPLOYED NOW OR UNEMPLOYED SOMETIME DURING RECESSION:

Q66 IF EMPLOYED NOW BUT UNEMPLOYED DURING RECESSION: Is this something that happened to you at any time when you were unemployed/ **IF UNEMPLOYED:** Is this something that happened to you while you have been unemployed [INSERT AND RANDOMIZE; OBSERVE FORM SPLITS]?

	Yes, happened <u>to me</u>	No, did not <u>happen</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
ASK ALL QUALIFIED: [n=810]:			
a. Difficulty sleeping or loss of sleep	48	52	*
b. Loss of contact with close friends	40	60	*
c. Strain in family relations	42	57	1
d. Lost some self-respect	33	66	*
ASK FORM 1 QUALIFIED: [n=390]			
e. Had problems with alcohol or drugs	5	95	0
f. Enjoyed not having to work for a while	45	53	2
g. Did more household chores or child care	69	31	0

No item h.

ASK FORM2 QUALIFIED: [n=420]

i. Spent more time with family	75	25	*
j. Spent more time on hobbies or interests	56	42	1
k. Sought professional help for anxiety, depression or other emotional issues	19	80	1

ASK ALL QUALIFIED (excluding fully disabled and not able to work):

Q67 Just your best guess: do you think the recession will have a big, small or no impact on your ability to achieve your long-term career goals?

37	Big
33	Small
29	No impact
*	Retired/Does not apply (VOL.)
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK IF UNEMPLOYED OR EMPLOYED NOW BUT UNEMPLOYED DURING RECESSION AND HAVE KIDS UNDER 18: [n=293]

Q68 How much have your children's lives changed as a result of your being unemployed – a lot, some, not much, or not at all?

27	A lot
24	Some
21	Not much
27	Not at all
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK IF CHILDREN'S LIVES HAVE CHANGED: [n=223]**Q69** Have these changes mostly been for the better or for the worse?

39	Better
50	Worse
6	Both/mixed
4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK ALL:**Q70** Compared to what it was before the recession, has your family income increased, decreased or stayed about the same?

16	Increased
49	Decreased
34	Stayed about the same
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)