



JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

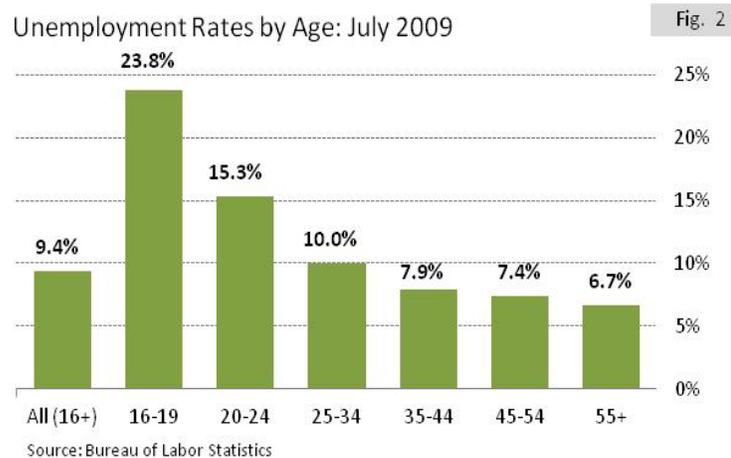
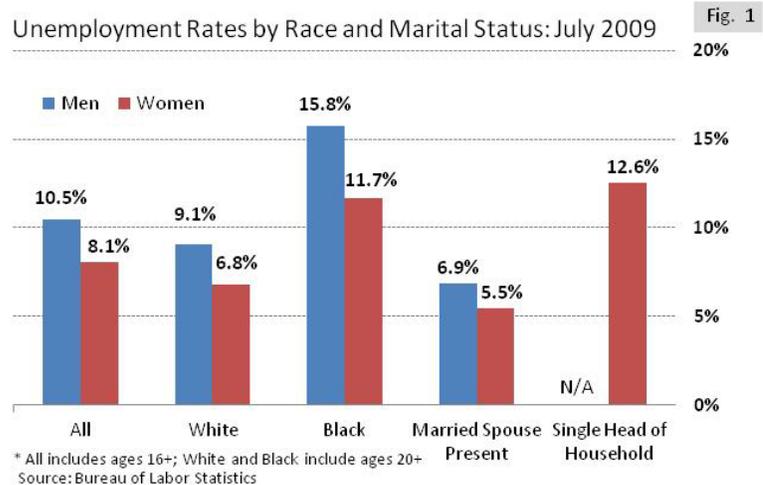
Senator Sam Brownback, Ranking Republican

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Job Losses in the Current Recession: Who Has Been Hit the Hardest?

The current recession has caused widespread hardship, especially for those who have lost their jobs. Since the start of the recession in December 2007, the economy has shed nearly 6.7 million jobs, with losses spanning across nearly all sectors of employment. While no particular group has been immune to the sizeable job losses, some have experienced greater job losses than others.

Regardless of the economic climate, unemployment rates tend to vary by factors such as sex, race, and age. In general, men have higher unemployment rates than women (figure 1), blacks have higher unemployment rates than whites (figure 1), and young workers have higher unemployment rates than older workers (figure 2).



Although particular groups tend to have higher or lower rates of unemployment, the differences in these rates do not capture the impact of the current recession on each category of individuals. To determine which groups have fared better or worse, in terms of job losses in the current recession, it is helpful to look at the increase in unemployment within each group. The increase in unemployment since the start of the recession, represented as a percentage of the pre-recession level of unemployment, reveals the relative magnitude of job losses among each group.

Figure 3 displays the percent increase in the number of unemployed workers, showing that men have borne the brunt of job losses in the current recession. As measured by the Household Survey, the number of unemployed men has increased 109% (4.5 million) while the number of unemployed women has risen 71% (2.4 million).

Further breaking down increases in unemployment by race and marital status shows that the discrepancy between male and female unemployment has been most pronounced among white men and white women, and among married men and married women. For example, the rise in unemployment has been nearly twice as high for married men (162%) as for married women (85%).

Among women, both married women and single women who are heads of households have experienced similar increases in unemployment since the start of the recession (85% for married women and 89% for single heads of household). The relatively smaller increase in unemployment among all women (71%) is evidence that childless, unmarried women have experienced a smaller increase in unemployment than married women or single women with children.

In addition to variation in unemployment based on sex and race, age also plays a role in unemployment. In terms of unemployment rates, younger workers tend to have higher rates of unemployment (figure 2), but in terms of the increase in unemployment during the current recession, older workers have experienced significantly larger increases in unemployment (figure 4). The increase in the number of unemployed workers in the oldest, age

55+ group (133%) has been more than four times that of the youngest, age 16-19 group (30%). Workers in the middle age groups (ages 25-54), which tend to have the highest labor force participation rates, have all experienced unemployment increases in excess of 100%, meaning that there were twice as many unemployed workers in July 2009 as in December 2007.

