Unemployment and Health

Healthy Communities Data and Indicators Project (HCI) Office of Health Equity

CA Unemployment Key Facts, 2018

- ❖ 6.7% unemployment rate—1.3 million Californians.[4]
- ❖ Highest in
  - o Imperial County (15.3%)
  - o Merced County (12.7%)
  - o Stanislaus County (10.5%)
- ❖ Lowest in
  - o Marin County (3.8%)
  - o San Mateo County (4.1%)
  - o San Luis Obispo Co. (4.6%)[4]
- ❖ Highest among American Indians/Alaska Natives (12.0%), and African Americans (11.5%) – about 2 times higher than Whites (5.6%).[5]

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

- ❖ More than 3 million Californians have lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic—more than any state.[6]
- ❖ Over a quarter of those who lost their jobs were ineligible for unemployment benefits.[6]
- ❖ 59% of unemployed Latinos were ineligible (vs. 21% of Whites), in part due to undocumented status.[6]

Disproportionate impact on low-wage workers

- o Low-wage workers in leisure and hospitality sectors are the hardest-hit.[7]
- o In the Great Recession (2007-09), middle-wage jobs in construction and manufacturing were the most impacted.[7]

Limitations to Measuring Unemployment

- o People who are working reduced hours or currently not looking for work are not included.

Visit the HCI website for more data on unemployment.

Questions? Suggestions? Please email: **HCIOHE@cdph.ca.gov**

Why Unemployment Matters to Health

Unemployment negatively affects health by limiting the ability to afford goods and services. Job loss can lead to losing benefits such as health insurance, paid sick leave, and parental leave, which can impact health outcomes. Unemployment is also associated with depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and overall poor health status.[1]

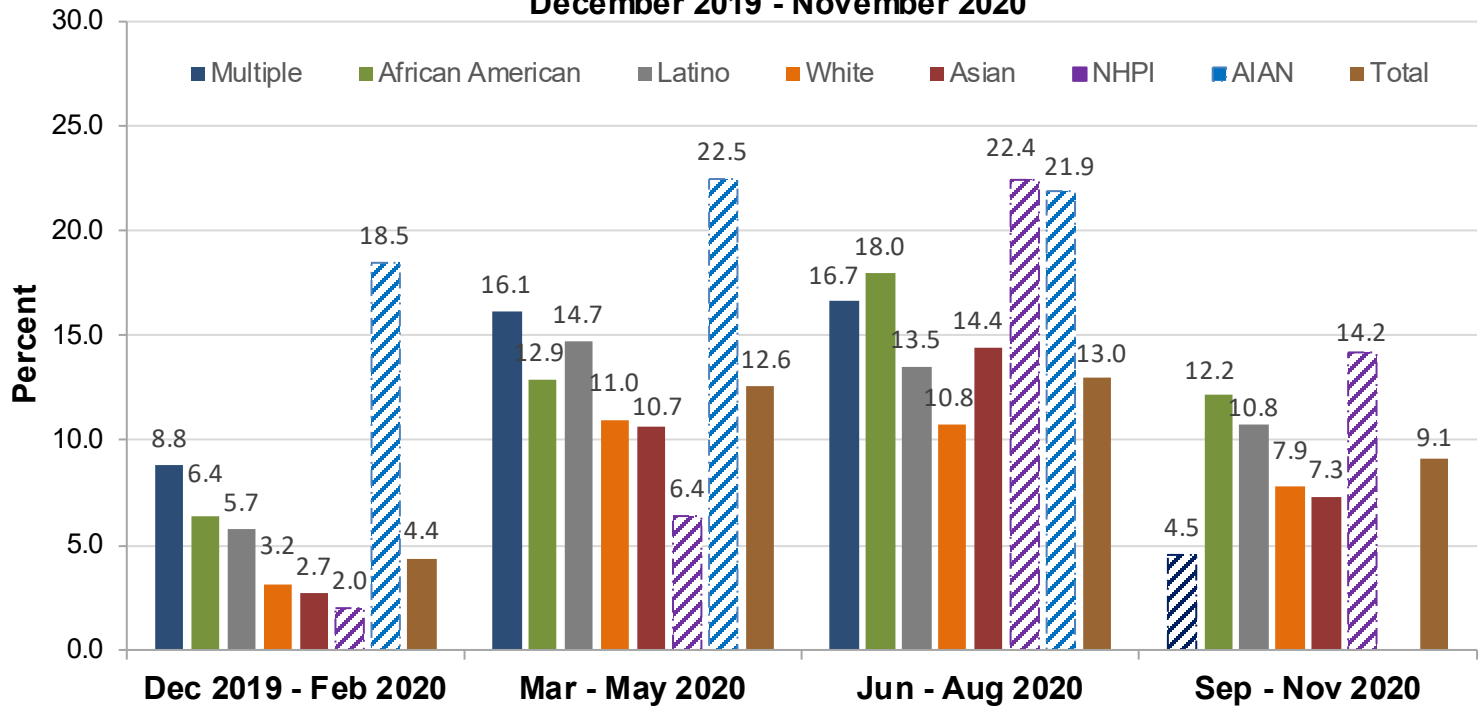## How is Unemployment Measured?

The percentage of the civilian, non-institutionalized labor force aged 16 years and older. Unemployed persons:

- Do not have a job, are
- Currently available for work, and
- Have actively looked for work in the previous month [2]

Disparities in Unemployment during COVID-19, Dec 2019–Nov 2020

- Unemployment peaked in Jun-Aug '20 (13.0%), with the largest racial/ethnic disparity between African Americans (18.0%) and Whites (10.8%) (Figure).
- Unemployment peaked earlier for Latinos and Whites (Mar-May '20) than other race/ethnicity groups (Jun-Aug '20).
- When comparing rates from peak to pre-lockdown (Dec '19-Feb '20), Asian Americans experienced the strongest increase with a rate ratio of 5.3.
- Post-peak (Sep-Nov '20) to peak ratios were higher in Latinos (0.73), Whites (0.72), and African Americans (0.67) than in Asians (0.51), suggesting a slower recovery.
- Unemployment is higher among women than men – this disparity widened during the unemployment peak (14.3% vs.11.8%).[3]

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Figure. Quarterly Unemployment Estimates by Race/Ethnicity in California, December 2019 - November 2020

Source: IPUMS CPS, Basic Monthly Data, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org
Note: AIAN: American Indian/Alaska Native and NHPI: Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander. Multiple race includes non-Latino individuals who identified as two races or more. No unemployment data available for AIAN, Sep – Nov 2020. Hatched bars represent statistically unstable estimates due to small sample size and should be interpreted with caution.

References

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4. Selected Economic Characteristics. U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year Estimates, 2014-2018, Table DP03.

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