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Florida jobs deficit still near 1 million

Two years after the official end of the recession, Florida still has a jobs deficit of nearly 981,000 jobs, and some groups of workers are faring far worse than others in the economy, according to the annual *State of Working Florida* report to be released on Sunday by the Research Institute on Social and Economic Policy at Florida International University.

In 2010 almost 20% of the labor force was underemployed, with younger, less educated, male, and African American or Hispanic workers more likely to fall into this group. Unemployment continued to increase for nearly all groups in 2010, with the exception of workers with a Bachelor's degree who actually experienced a slight decrease in unemployment.

Half of those out of work were unemployed at least six months or more, an extremely high figure even during a recession, and this was a particular problem for older workers. Persistent high unemployment has hurt wages for some groups, particularly African American workers whose wages have dropped over the recession, while wages for Hispanic and Non-Hispanic White workers have increased.

Some signs point to companies paying their workers more rather than hiring, particularly in higher wage industries. Wages were up for middle and high earners in 2010, although employment in higher paying industries was still down. In contrast wages for the lowest-wage earners were down, even with employment gains in some low-wage sectors.

Although the state had hopeful job growth during the first part of 2011, that growth slowed and turned to losses by July due to losses in construction, government, and leisure and hospitality.

"The lack of jobs should be a concern for everyone in the state, however it is beginning to look like some groups will see recovery quicker – the best educated have gotten jobs first, unemployment for White workers is leveling off, and higher wage earners have still had wage growth. On the other hand, young workers are unemployed at twice the rate of older workers, the less educated have a very hard time finding jobs, and wages for the lowest-wage earners decreased," said report author Emily Eisenhauer. "We hope that the job growth Florida saw earlier in the year strengthens and spreads to industries that are still languishing, but at this rate it will take a long time to bring everyone back into the economy in the absence of policies specifically designed to do so."

The report will be released on Sunday, September 4. To receive a copy under embargo please contact Emily at Emily.Eisenhauer@fiu.edu