



Economic Policy Institute

Issue Brief Supplement | May 22, 2012

ASIAN AMERICANS CONTINUED TO SUFFER THE MOST FROM LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT IN 2011

BY ALGERNON AUSTIN

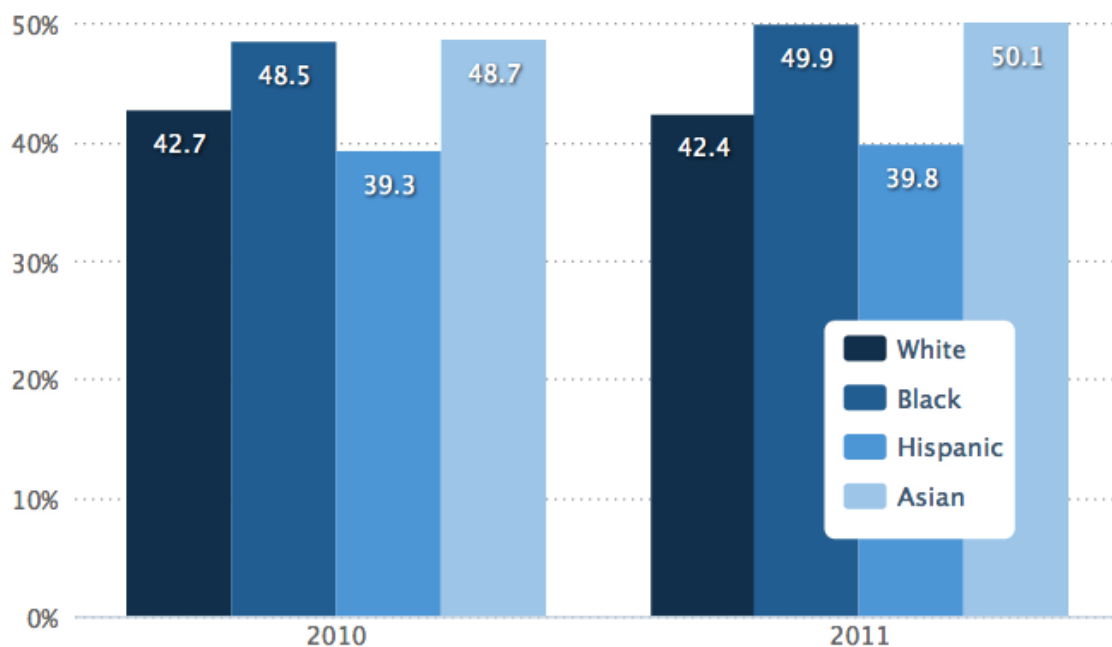
In April 2012, EPI released Issue Brief No. 323, *Unfairly disadvantaged? Asian Americans and unemployment during and after the Great Recession (2007–10)*, by Marlene Kim. This supplement updates the issue brief with data through 2011 and finds that the major patterns documented in the issue brief continued to hold true last year. In particular, Asian Americans still had the highest share of unemployed workers who were unemployed long term (for more than half a year) when compared with white, black, and Hispanic workers—despite having higher education levels than these other racial/ethnic groups. In addition, highly educated Asian Americans continued to have a higher overall unemployment rate than similarly educated whites.

Long-term unemployment

Last year marked the second year in a row that Asian Americans had the largest share of unemployed workers who were unemployed long term (i.e., for six months or more). In 2011, 50.1 percent of the Asian American unemployed were unemployed long term, up from 48.7 percent in 2010 (**Figure A**). In both of these years, the Asian American share slightly exceeded the African American share.

FIGURE A

Share of unemployed who have been unemployed 27 weeks or more, by race and ethnicity, 2010–2011



Notes: The data for whites, blacks, and Asians exclude biracial or multiracial individuals and Hispanics. Data refer to workers age 16 and over.

Source: Author's analysis of basic monthly Current Population Survey microdata

The Asian American labor force is the most highly educated labor force by race (Kim 2012), and yet Asian Americans' long-term unemployment share remains very high. That their long-term unemployment share increased from 2010 to 2011 is yet another illustration that a lack of jobs—not a lack of skills—underlies the country's persistently high unemployment rate.

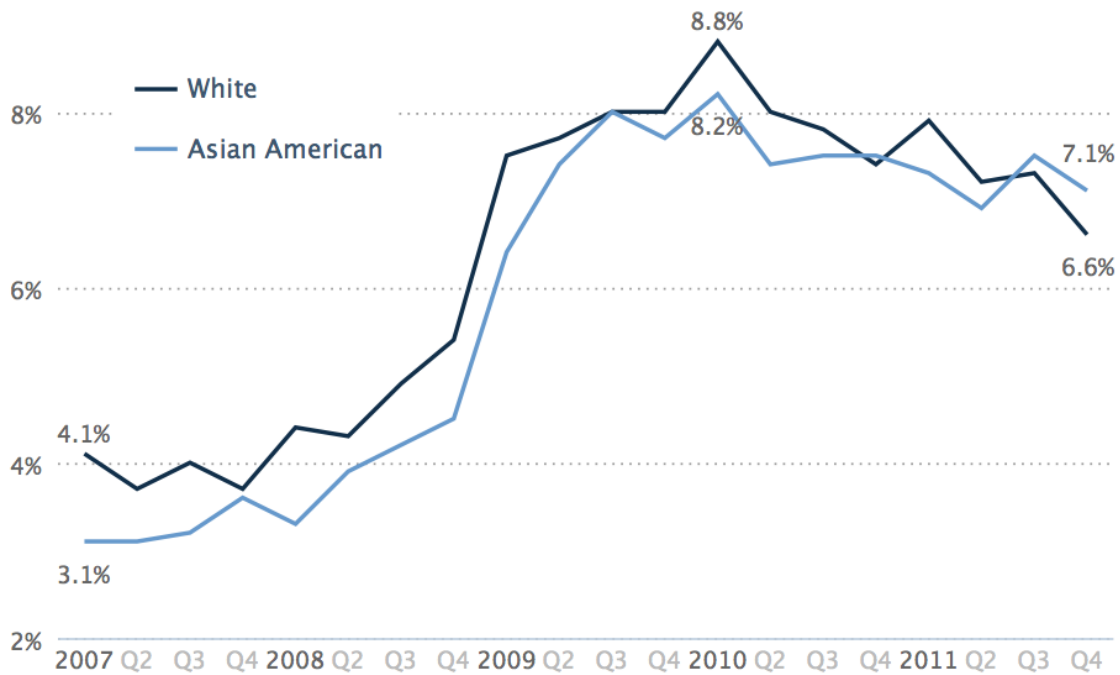
Overall unemployment

As far as overall unemployment is concerned, 2011 was largely a continuation of recent years. The Asian American unemployment rate continued to closely track the white rate, as it did from 2007 to 2010 (**Figure B**). While the Asian American rate was consistently lower than the white rate from 2007 through 2008, the Asian American rate sometimes equaled and even exceeded the white rate during some quarters in 2009, 2010, and 2011. In the final quarter of 2011, the Asian American unemployment rate exceeded the white rate by 0.5 percentage point.

In 2011, highly educated Asian Americans continued to have a higher unemployment rate than similarly educated whites. As *Unfairly disadvantaged?* noted, this is significant because the majority of the Asian American labor force has at least a college degree (57.2 percent of the age 25-and-over population, as of 2010), compared with less than two-fifths (38.6 percent) of the white labor force (Kim 2012).

FIGURE B

White and Asian American unemployment rates, by quarter, 2007–2011



Notes: These data are not seasonally adjusted and exclude biracial or multiracial individuals and Hispanics. Data refer to workers age 16 and over.

Source: Author's analysis of basic monthly Current Population Survey microdata

Overall, Asian Americans with a college degree had an unemployment rate of 6.4 percent in 2011, while whites with the same degree had an unemployment rate of 4.3 percent (Table 1, top panel). The unemployment rate of those with an advanced degree was 3.6 percent for Asian Americans, compared with 3.0 percent for whites. The disparity also existed among those with some college but less than a college degree. In this group, the Asian American unemployment rate was 7.3 percent, compared with a white rate of 6.7 percent. In contrast, Asian Americans with a high school education or less fared better than similarly educated white workers.

Conclusion

As the [issue brief explained](#), these patterns in unemployment rates and long-term unemployment shares are likely in part due to nativity (i.e., the fact that Asian Americans are more likely to be foreign born) and racial bias. In addition, Asian Americans' high long-term unemployment shares are likely partially the result of geography; about one-third of the Asian American labor force resides in California, a state with high long-term unemployment rates (Kim 2012).

TABLE 1

Unemployment rates of Asian Americans and whites, by nativity and education, 2011 (age 25+)

		Asian	White	Difference (Asian-White)*
All	All	6.3%	6.2%	0.1
	Less than high school	9.7%	13.8%	-4.1
	High school diploma or GED	7.6%	8.0%	-0.4
	Some college	7.3%	6.7%	0.6
	College degree	6.4%	4.3%	2.2
	Advanced degree	3.6%	3.0%	0.6
U.S.-born	All	6.4%	6.2%	0.2
	Less than high school	10.5%	14.0%	-3.5
	High school diploma or GED	6.8%	8.0%	-1.2
	Some college	7.8%	6.7%	1.0
	College degree	6.1%	4.1%	2.0
	Advanced degree	4.5%	2.8%	1.7
Foreign-born	All	6.3%	7.1%	-0.7
	Less than high school	9.6%	11.1%	-1.5
	High school diploma or GED	7.8%	8.3%	-0.5
	Some college	7.1%	7.4%	-0.3
	College degree	6.5%	6.7%	-0.2
	Advanced degree	3.4%	4.7%	-1.3

* Calculations represent the percentage-point difference between the Asian American and white populations. Percentage-point change figures may not sum properly due to rounding.

Note: These data exclude biracial or multiracial individuals and Hispanics.

Source: Author's analysis of basic monthly Current Population Survey microdata

References

Current Population Survey basic monthly microdata. Various years. Survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics [machine-readable microdata file]. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau. http://www.bls.census.gov/cps_ftp.html#cpsbasic

Kim, Marlene. 2012. *Unfairly Disadvantaged? Asian Americans and Unemployment During and After the Great Recession (2007–10)*. Economic Policy Institute, Issue Brief No. 323. <http://www.epi.org/files/2012/ib323.pdf>