



CONTACTS

James K. Pedderson, Director of Public Relations
Office: 312-422-5078
Mobile: 847-567-1463
jamespedderson@challengergray.com

Colleen Madden, Media Relations Manager
Office: 312-422-5074
colleenmadden@challengergray.com

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More Callers Long-Term Unemployed, Underemployed **CONFIDENCE REMAINS FLAT; AGE BIAS A FEAR**

CHICAGO, January 26, 2015 — As President Obama lauded the state of the economy and growth of the job market during last week's State of the Union address, a new survey shows that job seekers are not nearly as optimistic, with only 28 percent believing they can find new employment inside of three months.

Despite significant improvements in the job market in 2014, the percentage of job seekers confident about a short transition changed little from the previous year, when 23 percent said a new position could be found within three months.

The latest readings on job-seeker confidence are based on a survey conducted among the approximately 1,000 callers to an annual job-search advice helpline offered during the holidays by global outplacement and executive coaching firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

Just under 40 percent of callers felt their job search would take between four and six months, which is equal to the 40 percent of callers who said the same in 2013. The percentage saying it would take seven to nine months to find new employment actually went up, increasing from 16 percent in 2013 to 18 percent during the most recent call-in event.

While confidence remains flat, the problem of long-term unemployment seems only to have risen. Nearly half (46.6 percent) of callers said they have been out of work for a year or longer. That is up from the more than one-third (36 percent) of callers who reported they were in that position a year ago.

Meanwhile, among the job seekers who are currently employed, more indicated that they had settled for their current positions and consider themselves under-employed. Two-thirds of job seekers said they were underemployed compared to 44 percent in 2013 and 39 percent who said so in 2012.

While job seeker optimism seemed little changed from a year earlier, the survey showed that fewer job seekers were outright pessimistic. Just under 6 percent of job seekers thought it would take a year or more to find a new gig. That was down from 11 percent in 2013 and 15 percent in 2012, suggesting that at least some job seekers believe see improvement in the problem of long-term unemployment.

Job seekers will undoubtedly be helped by the increasing number of job openings, which exceeded 5,000,000 at the end of November, according the latest Job Openings and Labor Turnover report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. That was on top of the 5 million workers that were actually hired during the month.

More than half (54 percent) of the callers to Challenger's job-search advice helpline were jobless for more than six months. Of those, 32 percent were out of work for over a year and 14 percent were out of work for more than 2 years.

The uptick in long-term unemployed callers coincides with a year in which more callers expressed worries of age discrimination. Five percent of callers thought the most difficult part of the job search was that employers and hiring managers had biases against older workers.

While age discrimination is illegal, complaints filed with the EEOC have been on the rise since 15,785 were filed in 1997. In 2013, 21,396 complaints were filed, according to a report from AARP. In addition to EEOC data, anecdotal data suggests hiring authorities consider age as a factor.

"Our coaches often speak to job seekers who have been interviewed by recruiters who are half their age. In fact, one of the top frustrations conveyed to our counselors is that recruiters are so young. The more seasoned job seeker feels like that age difference puts him at a disadvantage," said John A. Challenger, CEO of global outplacement firm, Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

Age bias is definitely a concern in the job search, but there are steps job seekers can take to prepare and overcome any discrimination, according to Challenger.

"Every job seeker must be able to demonstrate that his or her skills and experience are fresh and relevant. This is even more important for older job seekers, in order to overcome the common misperception that they are unable or unwilling to learn new things. It is critical to keep skills up-to-date and relevant to the current job market, even if it means taking classes through a university or community college," said Challenger.

“The good news is that workplace veterans typically have a well-established network from which to draw professional contacts. Networking is the best way job seekers hear about and land their next positions.”

The hidden job market is the hardest to uncover, a frustration felt by many callers, nearly 30 percent of whom said the most difficult part of the job search is finding openings. In the same vein, another 26 percent said the biggest challenge is getting interviews.

“A big part of a successful job search is being in the right place, at the right time. To do this, you have to cast the widest net possible. Advertise your job loss to your network, which should include friends, family, former business associates, former college professors, fellow college alumni, etc. You basically need to broadcast to your entire universe of acquaintances that you are looking for a job,” said Challenger.

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2014 CHALLENGER CALL-IN SURVEY RESULTS

Gender	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Female	53%	61%	57%	54%	53%	50%
Male	47%	38%	43%	46%	47%	50%

Are you unemployed?	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Yes	71 %	68%	68%	77%	81%	81%
No	29%	32%	32%	23%	19%	19%

If employed, are you underemployed?	2014	2013	2012
Yes	61%	44%	38%
No	39%	56%	62%

If unemployed, how long have you been out of work	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
1 – 3 Months	25%	24%	23%	20%	19%
4 – 6 Months	26%	22%	18%	17%	18%
7 – 9 Months	9%	9%	9%	5%	8%
10 – 12 Months	7%	10%	11%	9%	7%
More than a year	47%	36%	39%	50%	48%

How long do you think it will take to find new position?	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
1 – 3 Months	28%	23%	23%	28%	18%
4 – 6 Months	40%	40%	32%	37%	21%
7 – 9 Months	18%	16%	19%	14%	6%
10 – 12 Months	9%	10%	12%	12%	2%
More than a year	6%	11%	15%	10%	4%

Top Most Difficult Part of the Job Search*	2014	2013	2012	2011
Preparing the resume	9%	9%	10%	5%
Networking	13%	14%	17%	12%
Getting interviews	26%	31%	28%	24%
Finding job openings	29%	29%	30%	27%
Interviewing well	7%	11%	8%	6%
Dealing with rejection	2%	4%	5%	4%
Filling out applications	1%	2%	1%	2%
Other	12%	N/A	N/A	N/A