

Revised December 5, 2001

INCREASE IN UNEMPLOYMENT OVER PAST 12 MONTHS EXCEEDS INCREASE DURING ANY 12-MONTH PERIOD OF THE LAST RECESSION

by Wendell Primus and Jessica Goldberg

The increases in unemployment over the past year have been quite large.

- Some 2.2 million more workers were unemployed in October 2001 than in October 2000. This represents a larger 12-month increase in the number of unemployed workers than occurred during any 12-month period of the recession of the early 1990s.
- The number of unemployed workers increased by 40 percent over the past year. This is the largest percentage increase in the number of unemployed workers for any 12-month period in more than 20 years.

In short, while the national unemployment rate has not reached the six percent or seven percent rates experienced during the early 1990s, the *increases* in the level of unemployment have been greater so far in this recession than in the comparable period of the early 1990s. The increase in the number of unemployed over a given period of time is the best available measure of the increase during that period in the level of hardship the labor force is experiencing as a result of a downturn.

Number of Workers Exhausting Unemployment Benefits Also Is Rapidly Increasing

The number of unemployed workers exhausting unemployment benefits is now climbing to high levels.

- In the past three months, more than three-quarters of a million workers — 768,000 — exhausted their unemployment benefits
- Some 290,000 unemployed workers exhausted benefits in the month of October alone. This is the largest number of unemployed workers who exhausted regular unemployment benefits without qualifying for additional benefits since October 1991. A month later, in November 1991, legislation was enacted providing 13 to 20 additional weeks of benefits to workers who exhausted their regular benefits.
- The number of workers who exhausted benefits in October was up 69 percent over the number who exhausted benefits in October 2000, making this the sharpest percentage increase in any 12-month period since the period from November 1981 to November 1982. (See attached table, which includes state-by-state data).

**Number of Workers Exhausting Unemployment Benefits During Most Recent 3-Month Period
and Percentage Increase in Exhaustions Over Past Year**

	Total Number of Workers Exhausting Benefits, August-October 2001	Percentage Increase in Number Exhausting Benefits, Oct. 2000 to Oct. 2001
Alabama	9,643	49%
Alaska	2,928	0%
Arizona	10,308	44%
Arkansas	7,773	38%
California	112,194	60%
Colorado	8,575	108%
Connecticut	8,623	46%
Delaware	1,650	23%
DC	2,196	12%
Florida	35,162	38%
Georgia	19,953	128%
Hawaii	1,881	31%
Idaho	2,951	88%
Illinois	37,512	90%
Indiana	15,275	96%
Iowa	5,111	86%
Kansas	4,763	20%
Kentucky	7,504	72%
Louisiana	6,472	14%
Maine	1,840	83%
Maryland	8,511	52%
Massachusetts	20,114	80%
Michigan	32,179	122%
Minnesota	10,175	96%
Mississippi	6,133	82%
Missouri	13,029	57%
Montana	1,604	54%
Nebraska	2,758	53%
Nevada	6,497	41%
New Hampshire	n/a	n/a
New Jersey	34,447	47%
New Mexico	2,370	43%
New York	63,681	86%
North Carolina	20,705	103%
North Dakota	366	-2%
Ohio	23,446	115%
Oklahoma	6,248	62%
Oregon	13,553	84%
Pennsylvania	38,453	90%
Puerto Rico	18,950	15%
Rhode Island	3,551	40%
South Carolina	10,496	98%
South Dakota	245	240%
Tennessee	18,401	59%
Texas	59,989	69%
Utah	4,158	51%
Vermont	749	56%
Virginia	8,411	108%
Washington	18,173	59%
West Virginia	2,574	31%
Wisconsin	14,170	59%
Wyoming	403	-10%
USA	767,743	69%

Note: Data for New Hampshire are not comparable to data from other states.