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## State employment drops again

By [Paul J. Nyden](#)

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- In West Virginia, employment in non-farm jobs dropped for the fourth straight month, including a loss of 1,900 jobs in April and May.

The overall state unemployment rate increased slightly to 6.9 percent, the first increase in seven months, according to the May 2012 edition of "Jobs Count," a monthly newsletter published by the West Virginia Center on Budget & Policy.

The newsletter is available at: [www.wvpolicy.org/jobscount](http://www.wvpolicy.org/jobscount).

Construction employment continued to grow, adding 800 jobs in May. But construction employment, now 35,300, is still 2,800 jobs below pre-recession levels back in December 2007.

Mining and logging employment has risen by 8.3 percent since December 2007, but posted losses this year. In May, 31,200 West Virginia were still working in mining or logging.

After being fairly stable in 2011, manufacturing employment experienced large losses this year, including 400 jobs in May, "Jobs Count" pointed out.

Between December 2007 and May 2012, Mountain State manufacturing jobs dropped by 16.4 percent, from 57,800 jobs to 48,300 jobs.

Manufacturing jobs — in jobs such as steel, aluminum and glass production — have always tended to pay employees wages and provide benefits above the state average.

More and more West Virginians continue to work after reaching 65, during the recession.

The percentage of seniors still working grew from 9 percent in 2006 to a record high of 13.9 percent in 2010. It fell slightly to 13.9 percent last year.

Senior citizens, "Jobs Count" said, are more likely to continue working if their pension funds lose money.

"Retirees with defined contribution plans, in which funds are typically invested in the volatile stock market, saw their retirement savings lose value ... .

"With the rapid demise of the more secure defined benefit pensions [provided directly by employers] of the past, an increasing percentage of seniors for years to come are likely to find themselves in a precarious state as they approach retirement."

The two age groups losing the most employment since the recession began are workers between 16 and 19, and between 20 and 24 years old.

Both groups experienced increased employment between 2003 and 2008, then saw it decrease sharply once the recession began.

A recent Bureau of Labor Statistics study, "Jobs Count" reports, suggested Americans between the ages of 16 and 24 may be looking for alternatives to work, including: summer school, community service work and unpaid internships.

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