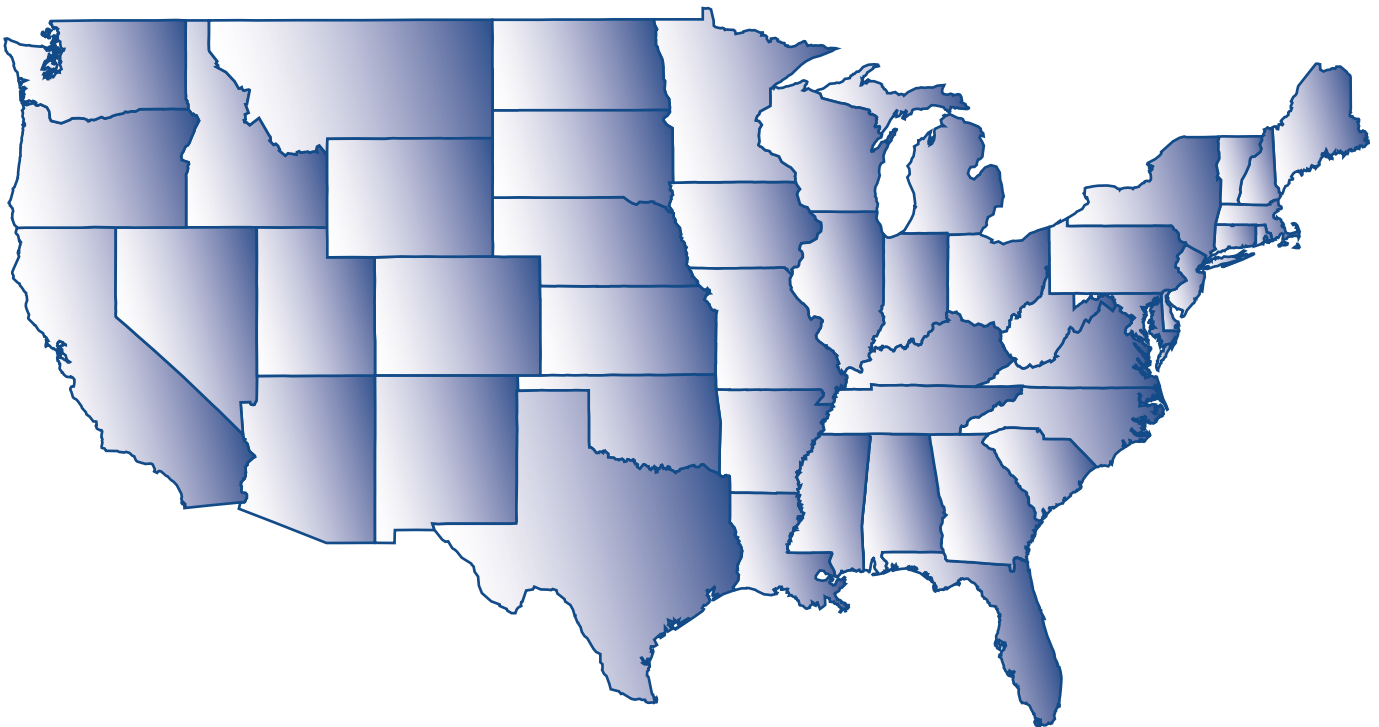


# The Local Area Unemployment Crisis



August 2001 **EMPLOYMENT  
POLICIES  
INSTITUTE**

# The local area unemployment crisis

During 2000, there was a distinct downturn in the economy nationwide, and some communities that were previously lagging fell even further behind. Residents in scores of counties and cities struggled through the year with unemployment rates from 9% to more than 20%. As the nation seems to be headed into recession, and jobs continue to dry up, the areas that are already the worst off will have little chance at improvement.

This study identifies 172 counties and cities (with populations of at least 10,000 people) experiencing unemployment rates that are more than twice the national average. The results of this study are based on annual average unemployment rates for 2000. For the nation as a whole, the unemployment rate in 2000 was 4.0%, down from 4.2% in 1999. In all of the cities cited here, local unemployment rates measured 9.0% or higher.

Since the late 1940's the national annual unemployment rate has averaged over 9% only twice, in 1982 and 1983. Since this time, national unemployment has never averaged above 8%, and has declined each year since 1992. However, conditions now appear to be headed in the opposite direction: between January and June 2001, every month had a higher

unemployment rate than the same month in 2000. Even through the extended good economy, the 172 communities reported here could not find a way out of their "localized depression."

## Policy Implications

These 172 counties and cities are encountering difficulty keeping many citizens productively employed. For national policymakers, these pockets of economic distress are important. All too often, federal policy takes a one-size-fits-all approach that assumes labor markets across the country are uniform, when in fact they are not. The counties and cities cited here could suffer enormous economic damage if the federal government implements policies that lack the flexibility needed to deal with local or regional economic variations.

Congressional proposals that increase labor costs would have a disproportionate impact in these areas. Likewise, federal policies targeted at boosting employment prospects would be extremely valuable in these counties and cities that need the most help. With any policy, Congress should make sure these communities do not wind up further behind than they already are.

Andre Neveu  
*Economist*

*August 2001*

*For more information on public policies affecting entry-level labor markets, visit [www.EPIONline.org](http://www.EPIONline.org).*

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# Counties and cities with populations greater than 10,000 and unemployment rates 9% or more

| County/City         | State | Pop.    | Annual Unemployment |
|---------------------|-------|---------|---------------------|
| YUMA COUNTY         | AZ    | 160,026 | 27.5                |
| IMPERIAL COUNTY     | CA    | 142,361 | 26.3                |
| LUNA COUNTY         | NM    | 25,016  | 22.9                |
| STARR COUNTY        | TX    | 53,597  | 22.3                |
| MAVERICK COUNTY     | TX    | 47,297  | 21.4                |
| HOLMES COUNTY       | MS    | 21,609  | 21.1                |
| COLUSA COUNTY       | CA    | 18,804  | 17.5                |
| LEWIS COUNTY        | KY    | 14,092  | 15.8                |
| JEFFERSON DAVIS CTY | MS    | 13,962  | 15.8                |
| WILLACY COUNTY      | TX    | 20,082  | 15.5                |
| TULARE COUNTY       | CA    | 368,021 | 15.4                |
| MARION COUNTY       | SC    | 35,466  | 15.4                |
| ZAVALA COUNTY       | TX    | 11,600  | 15.3                |
| MERCED COUNTY       | CA    | 210,554 | 14.4                |
| BIG HORN COUNTY     | MT    | 12,671  | 14.4                |
| FRESNO COUNTY       | CA    | 799,407 | 14.3                |
| KINGS COUNTY        | CA    | 129,461 | 14.0                |
| MAGOFFIN COUNTY     | KY    | 13,332  | 14.0                |
| SANTA CRUZ CTY      | AZ    | 38,381  | 13.8                |
| WEST CARROLL PARISH | LA    | 12,314  | 13.6                |
| HIDALGO COUNTY      | TX    | 569,463 | 13.6                |
| SUMTER COUNTY       | AL    | 14,798  | 13.2                |
| GLACIER COUNTY      | MT    | 13,247  | 13.2                |
| SOCORRO CITY        | TX    | 27,152  | 13.2                |
| MASON COUNTY        | WV    | 25,957  | 13.1                |
| SUTTER COUNTY       | CA    | 78,930  | 13.0                |
| LAWRENCE CTY        | TN    | 39,926  | 13.0                |
| FORT PIERCE CITY    | FL    | 37,516  | 12.9                |
| APACHE COUNTY       | AZ    | 69,423  | 12.8                |
| DIMMIT COUNTY       | TX    | 10,248  | 12.6                |

| County/City       | State | Pop.    | Annual Unemployment |
|-------------------|-------|---------|---------------------|
| SWAIN COUNTY      | NC    | 12,968  | 12.5                |
| ROANE COUNTY      | WV    | 15,446  | 12.5                |
| TRINITY COUNTY    | CA    | 13,022  | 12.4                |
| ROLETTE COUNTY    | ND    | 13,674  | 12.4                |
| MORGAN COUNTY     | OH    | 14,897  | 12.4                |
| WILLIAMSBURG CTY  | SC    | 37,217  | 12.4                |
| WASHINGTON CTY    | AL    | 18,097  | 12.3                |
| MONROE COUNTY     | KY    | 11,756  | 12.3                |
| CATAHOULA PARISH  | LA    | 10,920  | 12.3                |
| CARROLL COUNTY    | TN    | 29,475  | 12.3                |
| PORT ARTHUR CITY  | TX    | 57,755  | 12.3                |
| CLAIBORNE COUNTY  | MS    | 11,831  | 12.1                |
| MARTINSVILLE CITY | VA    | 15,416  | 12.1                |
| WATSONVILLE CITY  | CA    | 44,265  | 11.9                |
| GLENN COUNTY      | CA    | 26,453  | 11.9                |
| WILKINSON COUNTY  | MS    | 10,312  | 11.9                |
| MORROW COUNTY     | OR    | 10,995  | 11.9                |
| LOWNDES COUNTY    | AL    | 13,473  | 11.8                |
| WILCOX COUNTY     | AL    | 13,183  | 11.8                |
| MADEA COUNTY      | CA    | 123,109 | 11.8                |
| YUBA COUNTY       | CA    | 60,219  | 11.8                |
| VINTON COUNTY     | OH    | 12,806  | 11.8                |
| PERRY COUNTY      | AL    | 11,861  | 11.7                |
| TALLAHATCHIE CTY  | MS    | 14,903  | 11.7                |
| NOXUBEE COUNTY    | MS    | 12,548  | 11.7                |
| HUMPHREYS COUNTY  | MS    | 11,206  | 11.7                |
| LINCOLN COUNTY    | MT    | 18,837  | 11.7                |
| CONCORDIA PARISH  | LA    | 20,247  | 11.6                |
| NAVAJO COUNTY     | AZ    | 97,470  | 11.5                |
| MOREHOUSE PARISH  | LA    | 31,021  | 11.5                |

## >Local Unemployment Crisis

| County/City         | State | Pop.    | Annual Unemployment |
|---------------------|-------|---------|---------------------|
| HIGHLAND PARK CITY  | MI    | 16,746  | 11.5                |
| CAMDEN CITY         | NJ    | 79,904  | 11.4                |
| BUTLER COUNTY       | AL    | 21,399  | 11.3                |
| DESHA COUNTY        | AR    | 15,341  | 11.3                |
| KERN COUNTY         | CA    | 661,645 | 11.3                |
| MARSHALL COUNTY     | MN    | 10,155  | 11.3                |
| ANNISTON CITY       | AL    | 24,276  | 11.2                |
| HENDRY COUNTY       | FL    | 36,210  | 11.1                |
| SHOSHONE COUNTY     | ID    | 13,771  | 11.1                |
| ST JAMES PARISH     | LA    | 21,216  | 11.1                |
| LAWRENCE COUNTY     | MS    | 13,258  | 11.1                |
| MCDOWELL COUNTY     | WV    | 27,329  | 11.1                |
| SUNFLOWER COUNTY    | MS    | 34,369  | 11.0                |
| NEWTON COUNTY       | TX    | 15,072  | 10.9                |
| OKANOGAN COUNTY     | WA    | 39,564  | 10.9                |
| LEFLORE COUNTY      | MS    | 37,947  | 10.8                |
| HARLAN COUNTY       | KY    | 33,202  | 10.7                |
| PICKENS COUNTY      | AL    | 20,949  | 10.6                |
| COMPTON CITY        | CA    | 93,493  | 10.6                |
| LETCHER COUNTY      | KY    | 25,277  | 10.6                |
| COLUMBUS COUNTY     | NC    | 54,749  | 10.6                |
| YAKIMA COUNTY       | WA    | 222,581 | 10.6                |
| DALLAS COUNTY       | AL    | 46,365  | 10.5                |
| MONTMORENCY CTY     | MI    | 10,315  | 10.5                |
| TAOS COUNTY         | NM    | 29,979  | 10.5                |
| MEIGS COUNTY        | OH    | 23,072  | 10.5                |
| DILLON COUNTY       | SC    | 30,722  | 10.5                |
| MARLBORO COUNTY     | SC    | 28,818  | 10.5                |
| KLICKITAT COUNTY    | WA    | 19,161  | 10.5                |
| STANISLAUS COUNTY   | CA    | 446,997 | 10.4                |
| STOCKTON CITY       | CA    | 243,771 | 10.4                |
| TOOMBS COUNTY       | GA    | 26,067  | 10.4                |
| WORCESTER COUNTY    | MD    | 46,543  | 10.4                |
| PRESQUE ISLE COUNTY | MI    | 14,411  | 10.4                |
| KEMPER COUNTY       | MS    | 10,453  | 10.4                |

| County/City             | State | Pop.    | Annual Unemployment |
|-------------------------|-------|---------|---------------------|
| WINSTON COUNTY          | AL    | 24,843  | 10.3                |
| MONROE COUNTY           | MS    | 38,014  | 10.3                |
| ADAMS COUNTY            | OH    | 27,330  | 10.3                |
| ADAMS COUNTY            | WA    | 16,428  | 10.3                |
| BARBOUR COUNTY          | WV    | 15,557  | 10.3                |
| KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH | AK    | 49,691  | 10.2                |
| TELFAIR COUNTY          | GA    | 11,794  | 10.2                |
| IDAHO COUNTY            | ID    | 15,511  | 10.2                |
| CHEBOYGAN COUNTY        | MI    | 26,448  | 10.2                |
| QUITMAN COUNTY          | MS    | 10,117  | 10.2                |
| MATAGORDA COUNTY        | TX    | 37,957  | 10.2                |
| MISSISSIPPI COUNTY      | AR    | 51,979  | 10.1                |
| ST MARY PARISH          | LA    | 53,500  | 10.1                |
| RICHLAND PARISH         | LA    | 20,981  | 10.1                |
| MADISON PARISH          | LA    | 13,728  | 10.1                |
| EAST CLEVELAND CITY     | OH    | 27,217  | 10.1                |
| FENTRESS COUNTY         | TN    | 16,625  | 10.1                |
| BROWNSVILLE CITY        | TX    | 139,722 | 10.1                |
| GRANT COUNTY            | WA    | 74,698  | 10.1                |
| WASHINGTON COUNTY       | MS    | 62,977  | 10.0                |
| WAYNE COUNTY            | TN    | 16,842  | 10.0                |
| BETHEL CENSUS AREA      | AK    | 16,006  | 9.9                 |
| BULLOCK COUNTY          | AL    | 11,714  | 9.9                 |
| BELL GARDENS CITY       | CA    | 44,054  | 9.9                 |
| GRAYS HARBOR CTY        | WA    | 67,194  | 9.9                 |
| BRAXTON COUNTY          | WV    | 14,702  | 9.9                 |
| COAHOMA COUNTY          | MS    | 30,622  | 9.8                 |
| SHANNON COUNTY          | SD    | 12,466  | 9.8                 |
| JASPER COUNTY           | TX    | 35,604  | 9.8                 |
| CLAY COUNTY             | WV    | 10,330  | 9.8                 |
| KODIAK ISLAND BOROUGH   | AK    | 13,913  | 9.7                 |
| MONTEREY COUNTY         | CA    | 401,762 | 9.7                 |
| PERRY COUNTY            | IL    | 23,094  | 9.7                 |
| BOONE COUNTY            | WV    | 25,535  | 9.7                 |
| LINCOLN COUNTY          | WV    | 22,108  | 9.7                 |

## >Local Unemployment Crisis

| County/City             | State    | Pop.          | Annual Unemployment |
|-------------------------|----------|---------------|---------------------|
| LAMAR COUNTY .....      | AL ..... | 15,904 .....  | 9.6                 |
| JACKSON COUNTY .....    | AR ..... | 18,418 .....  | 9.6                 |
| MACON COUNTY .....      | GA ..... | 14,074 .....  | 9.6                 |
| PANOLA COUNTY .....     | MS ..... | 34,274 .....  | 9.6                 |
| PEND OREILLE CTY .....  | WA ..... | 11,732 .....  | 9.6                 |
| HUNTINGTON PARK CITY .. | CA ..... | 61,348 .....  | 9.5                 |
| SISKIYOU COUNTY .....   | CA ..... | 44,301 .....  | 9.5                 |
| EMANUEL COUNTY .....    | GA ..... | 21,837 .....  | 9.5                 |
| HANCOCK COUNTY .....    | GA ..... | 10,076 .....  | 9.5                 |
| FLINT CITY .....        | MI ..... | 124,943 ..... | 9.5                 |
| ROOSEVELT COUNTY .....  | MT ..... | 10,620 .....  | 9.5                 |
| MARTIN COUNTY .....     | NC ..... | 25,593 .....  | 9.5                 |
| FRANKLIN COUNTY .....   | WA ..... | 49,347 .....  | 9.5                 |
| STEVENS COUNTY .....    | WA ..... | 40,066 .....  | 9.5                 |
| MINGO COUNTY .....      | WV ..... | 28,253 .....  | 9.5                 |
| HARVEY CITY .....       | IL ..... | 30,000 .....  | 9.4                 |
| GARY CITY .....         | IN ..... | 102,746 ..... | 9.4                 |
| MONROE COUNTY .....     | OH ..... | 15,180 .....  | 9.4                 |
| DUVAL COUNTY .....      | TX ..... | 13,120 .....  | 9.3                 |
| COVINGTON COUNTY .....  | AL ..... | 37,631 .....  | 9.2                 |
| CHICOT COUNTY .....     | AR ..... | 14,117 .....  | 9.2                 |
| LYNWOOD CITY .....      | CA ..... | 69,845 .....  | 9.2                 |
| JEFFERSON COUNTY .....  | GA ..... | 17,266 .....  | 9.2                 |

| County/City              | State    | Pop.          | Annual Unemployment |
|--------------------------|----------|---------------|---------------------|
| NORTH CHICAGO CITY ...   | IL ..... | 35,918 .....  | 9.2                 |
| YAZOO COUNTY .....       | MS ..... | 28,149 .....  | 9.2                 |
| COLUMBUS CITY .....      | MS ..... | 25,944 .....  | 9.2                 |
| NIAGARA FALLS CITY ..... | NY ..... | 55,593 .....  | 9.2                 |
| SAN JUAN COUNTY .....    | UT ..... | 14,413 .....  | 9.2                 |
| BELL CITY .....          | CA ..... | 36,664 .....  | 9.1                 |
| CARTER COUNTY .....      | KY ..... | 26,889 .....  | 9.1                 |
| GEORGE COUNTY .....      | MS ..... | 19,144 .....  | 9.1                 |
| BERTIE COUNTY .....      | NC ..... | 19,773 .....  | 9.1                 |
| REEVES COUNTY .....      | TX ..... | 13,137 .....  | 9.1                 |
| MONROE COUNTY .....      | AL ..... | 24,324 .....  | 9.0                 |
| MAYWOOD CITY .....       | CA ..... | 28,083 .....  | 9.0                 |
| BONNER COUNTY .....      | ID ..... | 36,835 .....  | 9.0                 |
| ASSUMPTION PARISH .....  | LA ..... | 23,388 .....  | 9.0                 |
| GREENE COUNTY .....      | MS ..... | 13,299 .....  | 9.0                 |
| ROBESON COUNTY .....     | NC ..... | 123,339 ..... | 9.0                 |
| ORANGE COUNTY .....      | TX ..... | 84,966 .....  | 9.0                 |
| LOGAN COUNTY .....       | WV ..... | 37,710 .....  | 9.0                 |
| WETZEL COUNTY .....      | WV ..... | 17,693 .....  | 9.0                 |

*Note: Annual unemployment numbers are available from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Population numbers are available from the U.S. Census Bureau.*

*For a complete list of counties organized by state go to [www.EPIONline.org](http://www.EPIONline.org)*