



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jeff Maclin
(212) 614-5538 (office)
(718) 309-2346 (cell)
jmaclin@cssny.org
www.cssny.org

CSS Report: Women, Blacks and Older Workers Struggle in Post-Recession NYC

New York, NY, August 15, 2012 — The recovery of private sector jobs lost in the recession has not benefitted women, blacks and older workers who are experiencing the highest rates of long-term unemployment. While jobs in low-wage industries and in high skills professional and technical service sectors increased during the post-recession period, workers with mid-level educational attainment, especially women, saw their unemployment rates go up.

A [new report](#) by the **Community Service Society of New York** outlining the scope and impact of long-term unemployment in New York City, from 2009 to 2011, found that women ages 55 to 64 who lost their jobs remained out of work longer than any other demographic group last year. Specifically, older women were jobless an average of 49 weeks, with 63 percent out of work more than six months. Among racial and ethnic groups, black New Yorkers had the longest average duration of unemployment (47 weeks) and the highest percentage of those who have been out of work long-term – 58 percent.

“We are in the grip of one of the worse stretches of sustained high unemployment in 36 years. Based on data from our recent report, half of the 380,000 city residents who are currently unemployed have been out of work for more than six months. A third of those have been out of work a year or more,” said David R. Jones, President and CEO of the Community Service Society. “Older women and minorities – who tend to hold jobs in the center of the labor market -- have fared the worse. The problem has been that most of the job creation efforts are concentrated in either low-wage or high-wage fields while mid-level jobs continue to shrink.”

From 2009 to 2011, the city shed more than 20,000 public sector jobs. Women and minorities have traditionally comprised large percentages of the city’s public sector workforce, which partly explains the disproportionate impact of long-term joblessness on these two groups. Indeed, half of discouraged workers in the city, who stopped looking for work because they believe there aren’t jobs available for them, are black.

Recommendations for addressing the city’s long-term unemployment problem are outlined in the report, “[Women, Blacks and Older Workers Struggle in Post-Recession New York City](#).” They include pressing the city and state to do more to support job creation for mid-skill jobs; passing

legislation in the City Council prohibiting hiring discrimination against the unemployed; and initiating a state re-employment benefits program similar to the one in Georgia which allows unemployment benefits to be used as an incentive for employers to hire the long-term unemployed. Under the New York program, unemployment benefits would be converted into temporary wage subsidies for permanent hires.

The report examines the 2009-2011 recovery period and unemployment among different demographic groups in the city. Data used in the report comes from the U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey (CPS). During this period, the unemployment rate in the city declined – from 9.6 percent to 9.0 percent. At the same time, however, the city's labor force actually contracted, with the number of both employed and unemployed New Yorkers decreasing.

In terms of gender, the unemployment rate for women rose during the period while the overall unemployment rate for men went down. A partial explanation for this can be attributed to the drop in the labor participation rate for men, primarily younger and older men. Latinas and Asian women, along with women with mid-level educational attainment, experienced increases in their unemployment rates between one and two percentage points. Black women comprised half of newly discouraged workers. The report also found a substantial decline in the labor participation rate for Asian women.

“The most telling aspect of the findings is that women seem to be sticking it out despite the torpid job environment while some men have chosen to leave the labor market,” said Michelle Holder, author of the report and CSS Senior Labor Market Analyst. “Now that the private sector is rebounding the city's workforce is feeling the effect of a contracting government sector, and that effect has mostly been borne by women who comprise the majority of public sector workers. Women, on average, have fewer resources than men, and if they are out of work for six months to a year, their children are also affected.”

###

The [Community Service Society of New York](#) (CSS) draws on a 169-year history of excellence in addressing the root causes of economic disparity. We respond to urgent, contemporary challenges through applied research, advocacy, litigation, and innovative program models that strengthen and benefit all New Yorkers.