



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT *of* EMPLOYMENT SECURITY



LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION FEEDBACK SURVEY RESULTS

PREPARED BY MDES AND EMPOWER MISSISSIPPI
WITH ASSISTANCE FROM THE NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING & ANALYSIS
RESEARCH CENTER (NSPARC) AT MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY AND
DR. COURTNEY TAYLOR AT ACCELERATE MISSISSIPPI

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NARRATIVE

The Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) regularly engages in activities that help Mississippians get jobs. These regular efforts can directly impact the Labor Force Participation Rate. During 2024, with the assistance of the National Strategic Planning and Research Center at Mississippi State University (NSPARC), MDES identified individuals who had reported wages during at least one of the first three quarters of 2023 but did not have reported wages in the fourth quarter of calendar year 2023. MDES intended to determine what could be done to get these Mississippians, who were clearly ready, willing, and able to work in early 2023, back into the workforce.

MDES, with the assistance of Empower Mississippi, created a survey to specifically target this known population to determine the circumstances causing each person's lack of employment in the fourth quarter and identify opportunities to better serve the individual's needs. The survey was distributed by email to 42,764 prime age (age 25-54) individuals (see page 5, Map 1).

Nine hundred forty-four or approximately 2.2% percent of the population surveyed responded (see page 6, Table 1). Of the respondents, 863 (91.4%) have remained in Mississippi (see page 6, Table 1). Of the 863 participants in Mississippi, 313 (36.3%) have secured employment, 7 (.8%) did not confirm employment status, leaving 543 (62.9%) still unemployed as of June 2025 (see page 6, Table 2).

The tables and charts shown below summarize the survey totals as well as a breakdown of the education levels, barriers, and other demographics of the 543 Mississippians who remain unemployed.

Significant observations from the 543 Unemployed respondents are as noted:

1. 83.1 % of the Unemployed population had an education level less than a bachelor's degree (see page 8, Table 3)
 - a. 31.4 % of the Unemployed had a professional certification or some college (see page 8, Table 3)
 - b. 51.7 % had either completed high school, G.E.D., or did not complete high school (see page 8, Table 3)

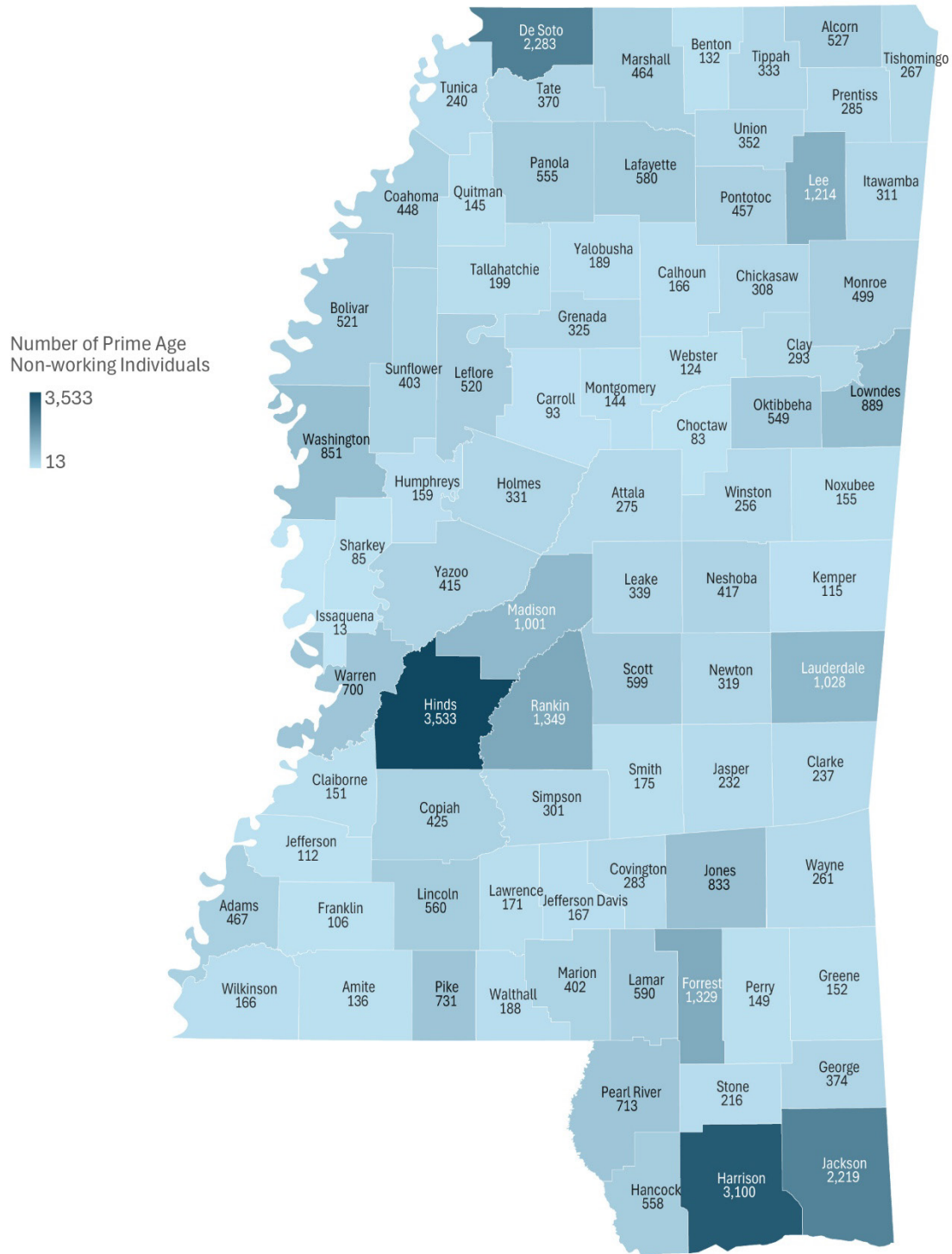
2. 70.2 % of the Unemployed respondents are female (see page 8, Table 3).
3. The most significant barriers (not mutually exclusive) identified were:
 - a. Low Income Individual (62.6%)*
 - b. Single Parent (46.6%)*
 - c. Long-term unemployed (36.1%)*
 - d. Disabled (20.1%)*
 - e. English Language Learner (15.8%)*

* See page 10, Table 5
4. Opportunities for significant impact on the Labor Force Participation Rate are identified by the barriers summarized by county as illustrated on pages 11-14 in Table 6 and Chart 5.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

1. Contact unemployed respondents to offer assistance addressing barriers identified both within and outside of MDES.
2. Identify programs for the barriers identified to improve the Labor Force Participation Rate.
3. Continue attempts to contact non-respondents.
4. Determine services rendered (if any) for the unemployed respondents to determine the effectiveness of services received.

Map 1: Mississippi Prime Age Population 25-54 Years Old
Non-working Individuals by County
Since 3rd Quarter of 2023 to 2nd Quarter of 2024



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RESPONDENT STATISTICS

Table 1: Statistics for All Survey Respondents

Description	Living in MS	Not Living in MS	Not Answered	Total Respondents
Female	593	43	2	638
Male	260	23	1	284
Not identified	2	1		3
Not Answered	8		11	19
Grand Total	863	67	14	944
% of Respondents	91.4%	7.1%	1.5%	100.0%

Table 2: Statistics for Survey Respondents Living in Mississippi

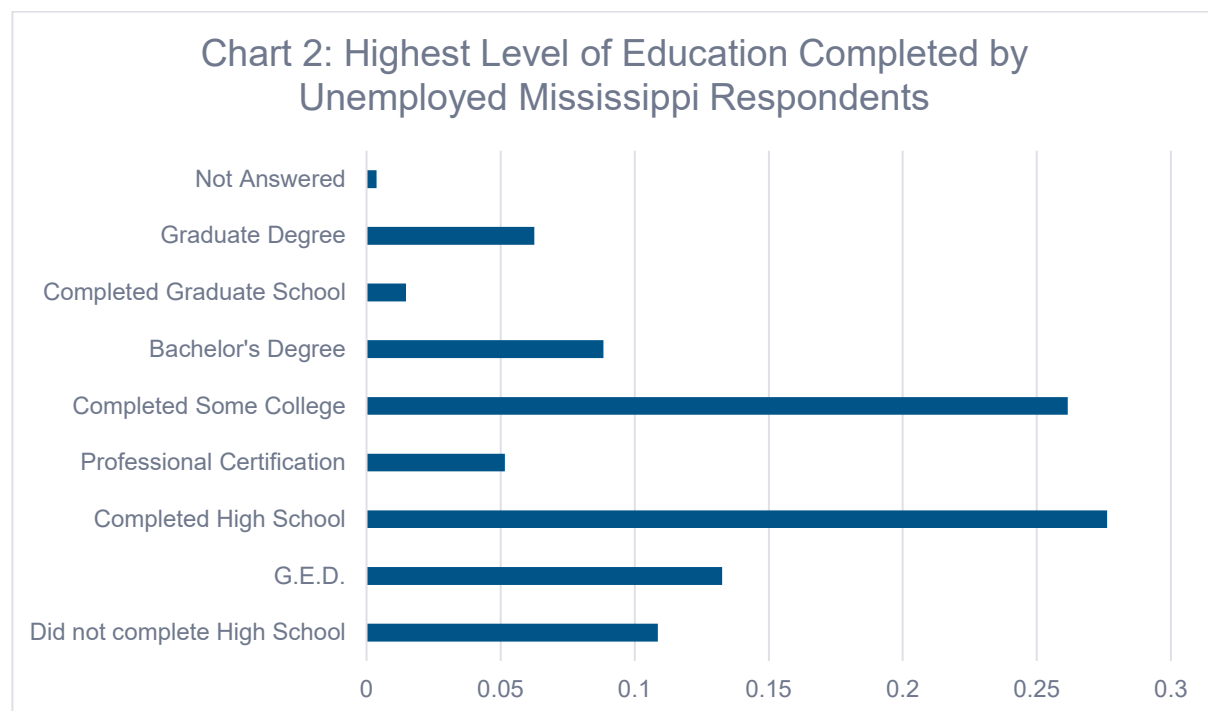
Description	Living in MS and Employed	% of Living in MS and Employed	Living in MS and Not Employed	% of Living in MS and Not Employed	Not Answered	% of Not Answered	Living in MS	% of Living in MS
Female	210	67.1%	381	70.2%	2	28.6%	593	68.7%
Male	101	32.3%	159	29.3%		0.0%	260	30.1%
Not identified	1	0.3%	1	0.2%		0.0%	2	0.2%
Not Answered	1	0.3%	2	0.4%	5	71.4%	8	0.9%
Grand Total	313	100.0%	543	100.0%	7	100.0%	863	100.0%
% of Respondents	36.3%		62.9%		0.8%		100.0%	

Chart 1: Unemployed Respondents by County

DATA FROM UNEMPLOYED SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Table 3: Highest Level of Education Completed

Description	Female	Male	Not Identified	Grand Total	% of Total
Did not complete High School	47	12		59	10.9%
G.E.D.	43	28	1	72	13.3%
Completed High School	101	49		150	27.6%
Professional Certification	21	7		28	5.2%
Completed Some College	107	35		142	26.2%
Bachelor's Degree	27	20	1	48	8.8%
Completed Graduate School	8			8	1.5%
Graduate Degree	25	8	1	34	6.3%
Not Answered	2			2	0.4%
Grand Total	381	159	3	543	100.0%
Percentage	70.2%	29.3%	0.6%		

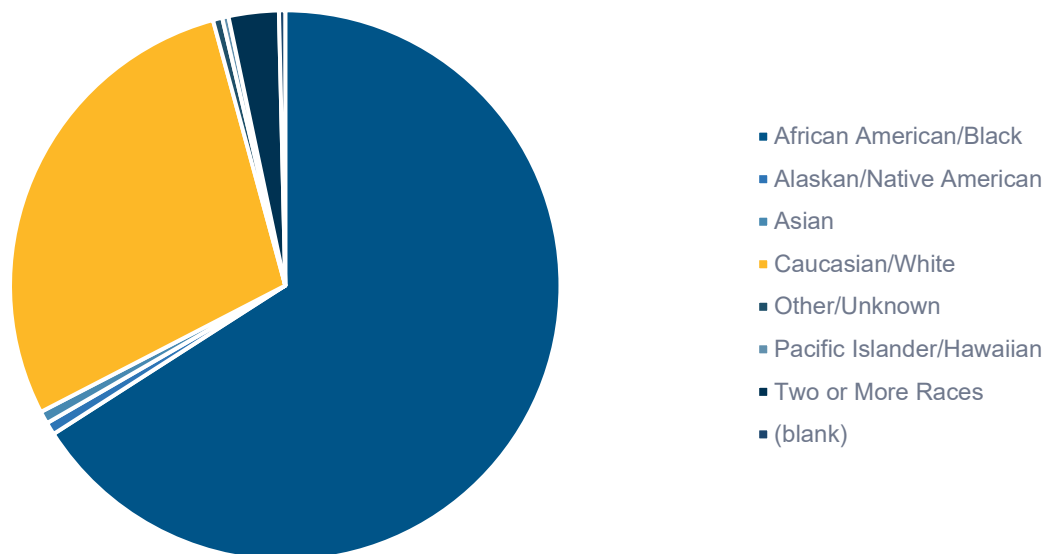


DATA FROM UNEMPLOYED SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Table 4: Race

Description	Female	Male	Not identified	Grand Total	% of Total
African American/Black	262	96		358	65.9%
Alaskan/Native American	1	3		4	0.7%
Asian	2	2		4	0.7%
Caucasian/White	104	49	1	154	28.4%
Other/Unknown	1	2		3	0.6%
Pacific Islander/Hawaiian	2			2	0.4%
Two or More Races	8	7	1	16	2.9%
(blank)	1		1	2	0.4%
Grand Total	381	159	3	543	100.0%

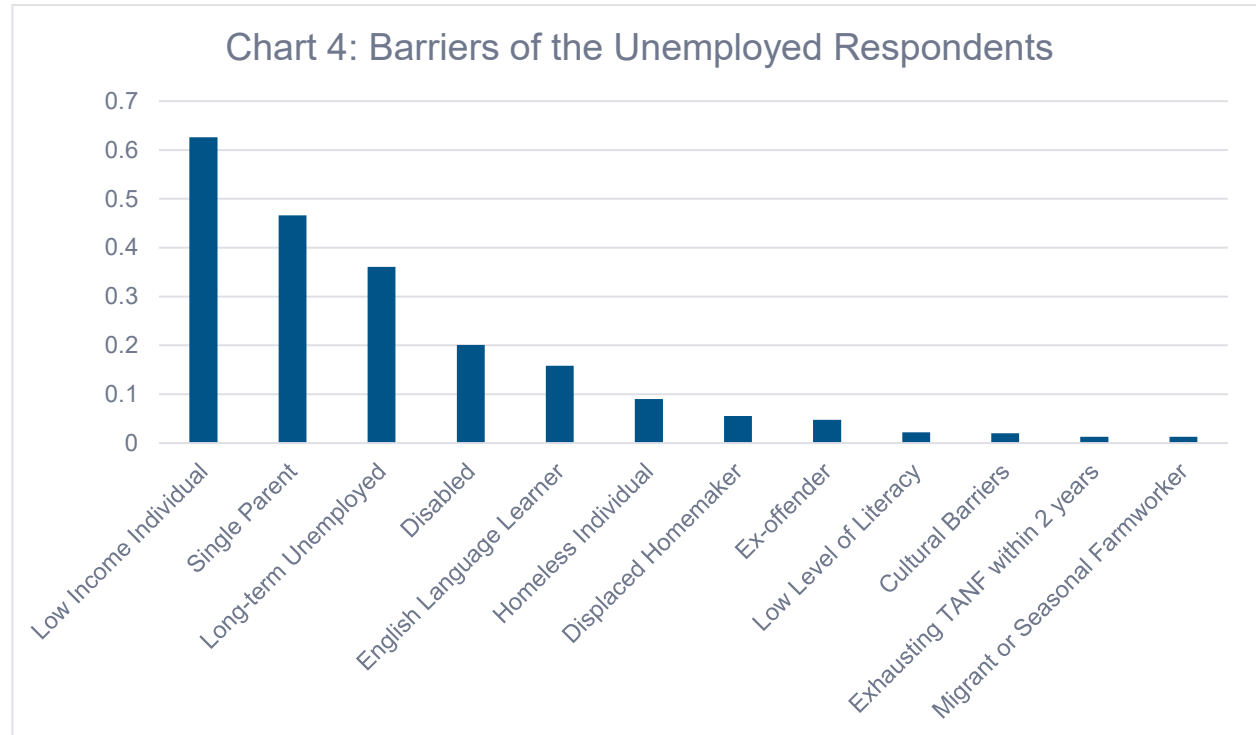
Chart 3: Race of Unemployed Respondents



DATA FROM UNEMPLOYED SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Table 5: Barriers for Employment

Description	Female	Male	Not identified	Total	%
Low-Income Individual	247	91	2	340	62.6%
Single Parent	216	35	2	253	46.6%
Long-term Unemployed	136	60		196	36.1%
Disabled	77	29	3	109	20.1%
English Language Learner	72	14		86	15.8%
Homeless Individual	27	21	1	49	9.0%
Displaced Homemaker	24	5	1	30	5.5%
Ex-offender	15	11		26	4.8%
Low Level of Literacy	5	7		12	2.2%
Cultural Barriers	5	6		11	2.0%
Exhausting TANF within 2 years	4	2	1	7	1.3%
Migrant or Seasonal Farmworker	2	5		7	1.3%



DATA FROM UNEMPLOYED SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Table 6: Barriers by County for Unemployed Survey Respondents Remaining in Mississippi

County	Low-Income	Single Parent	Long-term Unemployed	Disabled	English Language Learner	Homeless	Displaced Homemaker	Ex-offender	Low Level of Literacy	Cultural Barriers	Exhausting TANF within 2 Years	Migrant or Seasonal Farmworker	Grand Total	% of Total Barriers	% of State Population
Hinds	54	51	29	21	17	11	6	3	3	1	1		197	17.78%	7.20%
Harrison	25	12	18	13	4	3	5	2	2	1			85	7.67%	7.26%
Desoto	24	19	14	5	9	3	2			2	1		79	7.13%	6.66%
Forrest	15	11	9	3	4	3	1	1	1	1			49	4.42%	2.67%
Lauderdale	11	6	6	4	5	3	1	1					37	3.34%	2.40%
Jackson	12	5	5	6	4	3		1					36	3.25%	4.99%
Bolivar	10	10	4	1	2		1						28	2.53%	0.96%
Lee	7	5	8	2	1	1	1	3					28	2.53%	2.82%
Jones	8	8	7		1	2						1	27	2.44%	2.24%
Lowndes	7	8	5	1	2			1			1		25	2.26%	1.94%
Grenada	5	7	3	2	3	2	1			1			24	2.17%	0.71%
Lincoln	8	6	4	2	1	1	1				1		24	2.17%	1.19%
Rankin	8	5	2	5	3								23	2.08%	5.46%
Coahoma	5	4	3	2	5								19	1.71%	0.68%
Copiah	5	3	5	2	1	1	1	1					19	1.71%	0.94%
Attala	4	5	3	2	2	1	1						18	1.62%	0.59%
Pearl River	5	1	3		2	1	1	1	2	1			17	1.53%	2.01%
Adams	5	5	1	3	1								15	1.35%	0.97%
Yazoo	5	3	1	2	1			1			1	1	15	1.35%	0.78%
Madison	6	4	2	1	1								14	1.26%	3.88%
Panola	3	2	2	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	14	1.26%	1.11%
Pike	5	3	2	1	1	1							13	1.17%	1.32%
Clay	4	1	4	1		1		1					12	1.08%	0.62%
Hancock	5	2	2	1			1		1				12	1.08%	1.58%
Holmes	5	4	2		1								12	1.08%	0.53%

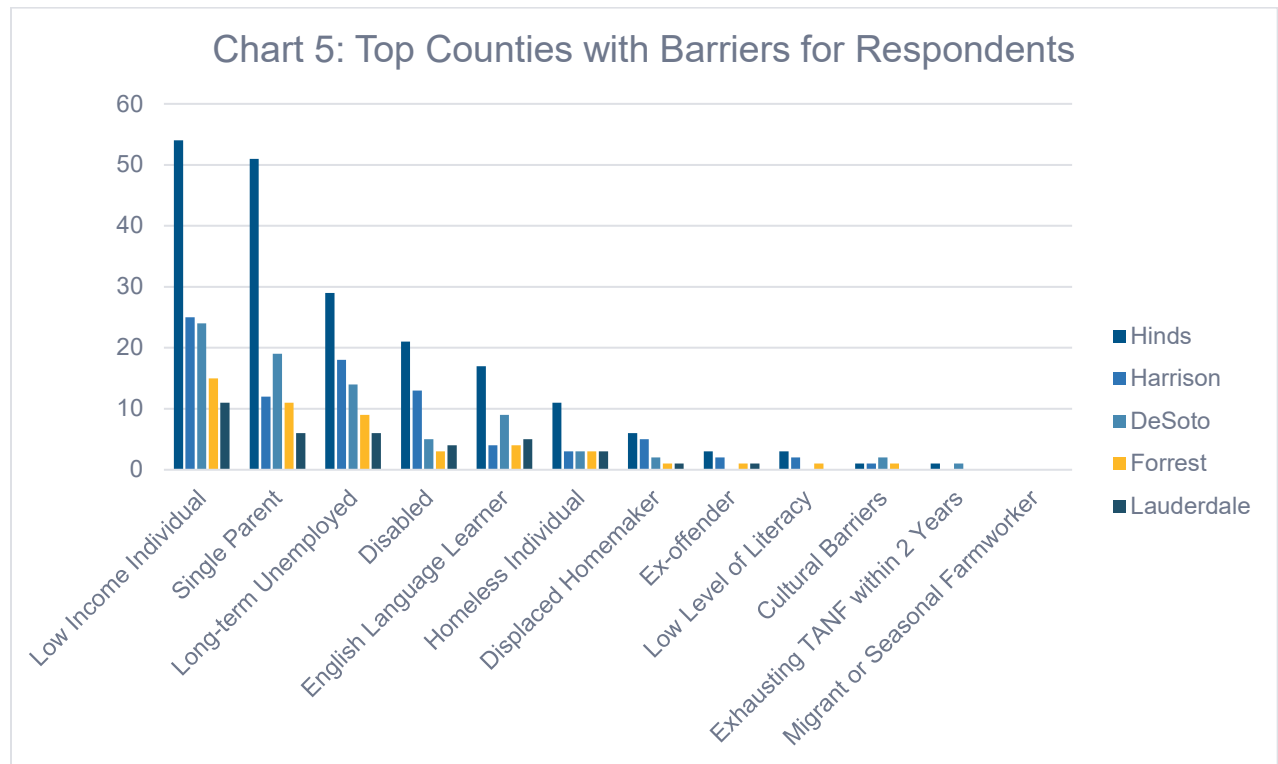
DATA FROM UNEMPLOYED SURVEY RESPONDENTS

County	Low-Income	Single Parent	Long-term Unemployed	Disabled	English Language Learner	Homeless	Displaced Homemaker	Ex-offender	Low Level of Literacy	Cultural Barriers	Exhausting TANF within 2 Years	Migrant or Seasonal Farmworker	Grand Total	% of Total Barriers	% of State Population
Jasper	4	4	3			1							12	1.08%	0.54%
Leflore	5	4			2							1	12	1.08%	0.89%
Oktibbeha	3	3	2	2	1			1					12	1.08%	1.77%
Simpson	4	4	2	1	1								12	1.08%	0.87%
Warren	3	3	3	1	1			1					12	1.08%	1.43%
Lamar	5	3	2		1								11	0.99%	2.27%
Marshall	4	1	3	1		1					1		11	0.99%	1.17%
Tate	2	2	4	1	1		1						11	0.99%	0.97%
Pontotoc	2	2	1	2		1			1	1			10	0.90%	1.09%
Union	2	3	1	1		1	2						10	0.90%	0.96%
Jefferson Davis	1	1	1		1		1		1	1		2	9	0.81%	0.38%
Newton	3	1	3	2									9	0.81%	0.72%
Tishomingo	2		2	1		1		2					8	0.72%	0.63%
Wayne	4	2	1	1									8	0.72%	0.67%
Covington	3	2	1		1								7	0.63%	0.61%
Leake	4	1	1	1									7	0.63%	0.73%
Sunflower	3	1	1	1	1								7	0.63%	0.78%
Greene	3	1	1			1							6	0.54%	0.46%
Scott	2	2					1					1	6	0.54%	0.94%
Washington	2	2		1	1								6	0.54%	1.40%
Jefferson	1	2	1		1								5	0.45%	0.23%
Smith	1	2	1	1									5	0.45%	0.48%
Tunica	1	1	1	2									5	0.45%	0.31%
Walthall	2	2	1										5	0.45%	0.47%
Yalobusha	1	1	1		1	1							5	0.45%	0.42%
Carroll	1		1	1		1							4	0.36%	0.32%

DATA FROM UNEMPLOYED SURVEY RESPONDENTS

County	Low-Income	Single Parent	Long-term Unemployed	Disabled	English Language Learner	Homeless	Displaced Homemaker	Ex-offender	Low Level of Literacy	Cultural Barriers	Exhausting TANF within 2 Years	Migrant or Seasonal Farmworker	Grand Total	% of Total Barriers	% of State Population
Claiborne	1	1	1	1									4	0.36%	0.28%
Franklin	1	1		1			1						4	0.36%	0.26%
Perry	1		1	1		1							4	0.36%	0.39%
Tallahatchie	1	1	2										4	0.36%	0.37%
Alcorn	1	1						1					3	0.27%	1.16%
Chickasaw	1	1	1										3	0.27%	0.57%
Humphreys	1	1	1										3	0.27%	0.24%
Monroe	1	1						1					3	0.27%	1.14%
Stone	1		1					1					3	0.27%	0.66%
Amite	1		1										2	0.18%	0.42%
George	1			1									2	0.18%	0.88%
Kemper	1	1											2	0.18%	0.29%
Marion	1		1										2	0.18%	0.82%
Prentiss	1	1											2	0.18%	0.87%
Quitman	1		1										2	0.18%	0.19%
Sharkey		1		1									2	0.18%	0.11%
Winston	1		1										2	0.18%	0.59%
Benton	1												1	0.09%	0.26%
Lafayette				1									1	0.09%	2.03%
Neshoba					1								1	0.09%	0.98%
Noxubee	1												1	0.09%	0.33%
Grand Total	337	250	193	107	85	47	30	24	11	10	7	7	1,108	100.00%	

DATA FROM UNEMPLOYED SURVEY RESPONDENTS



DEFINITIONS

WIOA Barriers to Employment Definitions ¹	
Barrier	WIOA Definition
Cultural Barriers ²	<p>Cultural attitudes and behaviors related to job hunting may affect the search due to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-Promotion 2. Directness of Communication 3. Self-Disclosure 4. Career Self-Awareness 5. Individual Responsibility in Finding Employment 6. Language Barriers 7. Two-Way Stereotypes 8. Informality 9. Punctuality
Disabled	<p>(A) IN GENERAL.—The term “individual with a disability” means an individual with a disability as defined in section 3 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12102).</p> <p>(B) INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.—The term “individuals with disabilities” means more than one individual with a disability.</p>
Displaced Homemaker	<p>The term “displaced homemaker” means an individual who has been providing unpaid services to family members in the home and who—</p> <p>(A)(i) has been dependent on the income of another family member but is no longer supported by that income; or</p> <p>(ii) is the dependent spouse of a member of the Armed Forces on active duty (as defined in section 101(d)(1) of title 10) and whose family income is significantly reduced because of a deployment (as defined in section 991(b) of title 10 or pursuant to paragraph (4) of such section), a call or order to active duty pursuant to a provision of law referred to in section 101(a)(13)(B) of title 10, a permanent change of station, or the service- connected (as defined in section 101(16) of title 38) death or</p>

¹ <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/careertech/educators/adult-education-and-family-literacy/local-providers/forms/wioa-barriers-to-employment-definitions.pdf>

² Student Success Center at James Madison University, Harrisburg, VA, 22807

	<p>disability of the member; and</p> <p>(B) is unemployed or underemployed and is experiencing difficulty in obtaining or upgrading employment.</p>
Low-Income Individuals	<p>LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUAL.—</p> <p>(A) IN GENERAL.—The term “low-income individual” means an individual who—</p> <p>(i) receives, or in the past 6 months has received, or is a member of a family that is receiving or in the past 6 months has received, assistance through the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.), the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families program under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.), or the supplemental security income program established under title XVI of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1381 et seq.), or State or local income-based public assistance;</p> <p>(ii) is in a family with total family income that does not exceed the higher of—</p> <p>(I) the poverty line; or</p> <p>(II) 70 percent of the lower living standard income level;</p> <p>(iii) is a homeless individual (as defined in section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, H. R. 803—12 (42 U.S.C. 14043e–2(6))), or a homeless child or youth (as defined under section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2)));</p> <p>(iv) receives or is eligible to receive a free or reduced price lunch under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.);</p> <p>(v) is a foster child on behalf of whom State or local government payments are made; or</p> <p>(vi) is an individual with a disability whose own income meets the income requirement of clause (ii), but who is a member of a family whose income does not meet this requirement.</p> <p>(B) LOWER LIVING STANDARD OF INCOME LEVEL.— The term “lower living standard income</p>

	level” means that income level (adjusted for regional, metropolitan, urban, and rural differences and family size) determined annually by the Secretary of Labor based on the most recent lower living family budget issued by the Secretary.
English Language Learner	The term "English language learner" when used with respect to an eligible individual, means an eligible individual who has limited ability in reading, writing, speaking, or comprehending the English language, and- (A) whose native language is a language other than English; or (B) who lives in a family or community environment where a language other than English is the dominant language.
Ex-Offender	No further detail is included in WIOA regarding ‘Ex-offender’, but ‘offender’ is defined. OFFENDER.—the term “offender” means an adult or juvenile— (A) who is or has been subject to any stage of the criminal justice process, and for whom services under this Act may be beneficial; or (B) who requires assistance in overcoming artificial barriers to employment resulting from a record of arrest or conviction
Exhausting TANF Within Two Years	Individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.).
Foster Care Youth	Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system.
Homeless	Defined in section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e–2(6))), or homeless children and youths (as H. R. 803—10 defined in section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2))

Long Term Unemployed	Long-term unemployed refers to students who have been unemployed for 27 or more consecutive weeks. The term “unemployed individual” means an individual who is without a job and who wants and is available for work. The determination of whether an individual is without a job, for purposes of this paragraph, shall be made in accordance with the criteria used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor in defining individuals as unemployed.
Low Literacy Levels	No further detail is included in WIOA
Migrant Farmworker	The term “eligible migrant farmworker” means— (A) an eligible seasonal farmworker described in paragraph (3)(A) whose agricultural labor requires travel to a job site such that the farmworker is unable to return to a permanent place of residence within the same day; and (B) a dependent of the farmworker described in subparagraph (A).
Seasonal Farmworker	The term “eligible seasonal farmworker” means— (A) a low-income individual who— (i) for 12 consecutive months out of the 24 months prior to application for the program involved, has been primarily employed in agricultural or fish farming labor that is characterized by chronic unemployment or underemployment; and (ii) faces multiple barriers to economic self-sufficiency; and (B) a dependent of the person described in subparagraph (A).
Single Parent or Guardian	Single parents (including single pregnant women).



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