

# Many lower-skilled men find employment precarious

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The U.S. unemployment rate of about 8 percent masks a far greater problem: the precarious situation of working-age men with modest education and few job skills, new analysis from the La Follette School of Public Affairs suggests.

"Twenty percent of American [men](#) ages 25 to 54 are not working, compared to less than 5 percent in the 1950s," says economist Robert Haveman, one of the authors. "Thirty-five percent of those men lack high school diplomas. More than 30 percent of [black males](#) ages 16 to 24 are unemployed, and the rate is even higher for the teenagers in this group. These figures don't count those who have given up on finding work."

Haveman and his co-authors explore the background of the high unemployment for these men in an article published in the spring 2012 La Follette Policy Report. Haveman's co-authors are Timothy Smeeding, a La Follette School professor who is director of the Institute for Research on Poverty, and Carolyn Heinrich, a public affairs scholar who formerly taught at La Follette and who is now at the University of Texas at Austin.

The authors note that wage gaps between higher- and lower-skilled workers have increased, due to falling demand for modest-skilled workers and the failure of the nation's [higher education system](#) to generate the more highly educated and [skilled workers](#) needed for the growing high-skilled sector. The authors discuss European policies that might help U.S. workers, including training, job-search assistance and employment subsidies.

Their article is drawn from research published in 2012 in the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.

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