

**Employment Security Department  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – July 28, 2011  
#11-044**

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## **Report: Thousands out of benefits, still out of work**

OLYMPIA – A recent survey of Washington workers who failed to find work before running out of unemployment benefits revealed that three out of every four of them were still out of work.

In April, the state’s Employment Security Department emailed a survey to individuals who had run out of unemployment benefits since November 2009, and 5,065 responded. The claimants had access to as many as 99 weeks of unemployment benefits.

Employment Security sought to find out if exhaustees have returned to work, the employment services they’re using and the barriers they’re running into while looking for new jobs. Employment Security Commissioner Paul Trause said the survey findings shed valuable insight on what is happening to workers who run out of unemployment benefits.

“The survey contradicts the perception that unemployed workers wait until their benefits run out, then quickly find work,” Trause said. “We know there aren’t enough jobs to go around right now, but there may be additional factors that keep employers from hiring these workers.”

The survey was conducted in support of the Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board’s “Retooling Washington” initiative. State and local partners in the state’s workforce-development system are identifying ways to help get the unemployed back to work faster.

“The Retooling initiative is focusing on ways our federal, state and local system of employment training and services can better connect employers and workers,” said Eleni Papadakis, executive director of the Workforce Board. “We cannot claim genuine economic recovery until those who lost their jobs during the recession are working again.”

Here are some highlights from the survey of exhaustees.

- The survey was sent to 31,744 exhaustees in April, and 5,065 responded.
- Nearly 25 percent have returned to work.
- 80 percent of those back at work are earning less than in their former jobs – on average, about 29 percent less.
- Of those who returned to work, about 19 percent found jobs out of state.

- Of those who haven't found work, about 13 percent have stopped looking.
- Nearly half said age is the toughest barrier to overcome in their effort to get back to work, while more than one-quarter pointed to the sluggish economy as a factor in their inability to find work.
- Nearly 58 percent of exhaustees who have returned to work were age 45 or older.
- Nearly 90 percent of the exhaustees said they have visited a WorkSource career center, and nearly half of the reemployed exhaustees said WorkSource services helped them find employment.

WorkSource offers a variety of employment and training services for job seekers, including free help with interviewing skills, résumés and job referrals. Locations of local WorkSource offices are listed online at [www.go2worksource.com](http://www.go2worksource.com) and in the blue pages of phone books.

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**Exhaustee survey report:**

[http://www.workforceexplorer.com/admin/uploadedPublications/11296\\_ExhausteeSurveyReport\\_July2011.pdf](http://www.workforceexplorer.com/admin/uploadedPublications/11296_ExhausteeSurveyReport_July2011.pdf)

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