

Ignore the Spin - Australia Unemployment Still Up, Says ACTU

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The Australian Bureau of Statistics ([ABS](#)) released unemployment figures for the month of October, and in its monthly labour force survey on Thursday revealed an increase of one-tenth of one per cent nationwide, bringing the figure up to an even 7.0 per cent.

The agency, in [announcing the figures and trends](#), have made it sound like it's a negligible change from the month of September.

However, in the words of legendary politically-charged hip-hop group Public Enemy and its leader Chuck D, don't believe the hype.

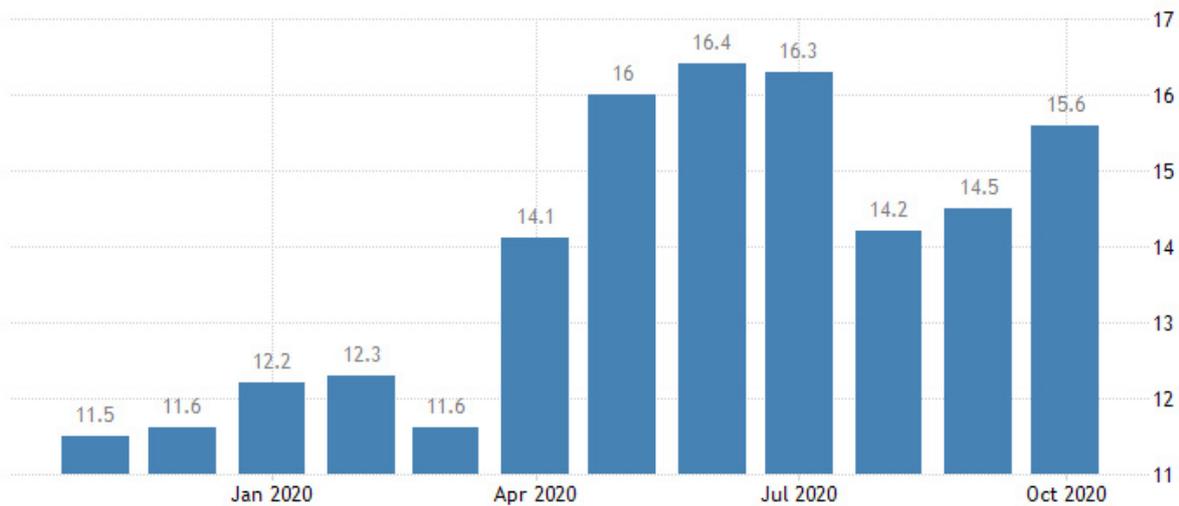
The Australian Council of Trade Unions ([ACTU](#)) insists that while a small rise in unemployment has occurred, it's still an upward trend, and other statistics such as those relating to youth unemployment and under-employment still lingering in the double-digits.

"This data shows just how hard it is to find a job for the huge numbers of working people who have fallen into unemployment during this crisis," said Sally McManus, the ACTU's secretary, in reaction to the ABS's announcement of the figures.

[A closer examination](#) of the ABS's raw data justifies points made by McManus and the ACTU:

- *One-tenth of one per cent still amounts to an additional 25,500 people having lost their jobs over the previous month's time;*
- *Under-employment may have dipped by one full percentage point to 10.4 per cent - however, that still represents more than 10 per cent of the workforce struggling for hours or struggling to get out of insecure work;*
- *And the youth unemployment figures are even worse - [6 per cent](#) for the month of October, denoting a 1.1 per cent rise from September and a 3.4 per cent increase since the start of 2020.*

Even taking this year's global COVID-19 pandemic and a national recession into account, from when the pandemic was declared in March, youth unemployment has risen by four per cent in the seven-month interval for when data has been collected, under-employment figures are 1.6 per cent higher since March, and the total number of unemployed persons is still 33 per cent higher in the last 12 months.



SOURCE: TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

2020's youth unemployment figures, month by month (Image from tradingeconomics.com, via the ABS)

And while Australia's monthly unemployment figures have topped the current seven-per cent mark just five times since 2000, [four of those](#) have occurred this year - in May, June, July, and now in October.

McManus maintains that no matter how badly - or desperately - the statistics for October are spun, manipulated, or applied by the Morrison government or any of its agencies, it is not good news for the nation's unemployed coming towards the end of the year.

And even worse for those on subsidies such as JobKeeper or JobSeeker, despite the recent announcement by the government and treasurer Josh Frydenberg that [each of those will be extended](#) until the end of March.

"We have 1.4 million people reliant on JobSeeker and more than three million on JobKeeper - we need to be investing now to make sure that when JobKeeper ends there are jobs for people to move into," McManus said.

While the ACTU calls for the government to come up with a concrete jobs plan to stimulate the economy and quell unemployment figures into a downward trend, Brendan O'Connor, Labor's shadow minister for employment, continues to [ring the doom-and-gloom bell](#) for the opposition's interpretations of the ABS's October employment figures.

"The story is worse around the country - with youth unemployment up 3.6 per cent in Victoria, 2.9 per cent in South Australia, and 2.4 per cent in the Northern Territory," said O'Connor.

"[And] youth under-utilisation is at 33.5 per cent - meaning one in three young Australians are looking for work or more work," he added, while echoing McManus's demands for more solid plans for work schemes for young people aged 16-24 years.

"Labor continues to call on the Morrison government to urgently develop a COVID-19 Youth Recovery Strategy, that is co-designed with young people and outlines clear short, medium and long term goals," said O'Connor.

In light of the revelation that the government's JobMaker employer subsidy will only create [a](#)

[mere ten per cent](#) of its initial goal of 450,000 jobs for youth, Labor's scheme [Youth Recovery Strategy](#) would, according to shadow minister for youth Amanda Rishworth, consist of a design that takes the input of young people themselves into account, an open and honest discussion of how its policies would impact young people, and provide an outline for short-, medium- and long-range goals for jobs and careers alike for young people, with regular reporting to Parliament a must.

"It is hard to overstate the severity of the challenges facing our young people now and into the future. They are looking down the barrel of years, if not decades, of hardship," said Rishworth back in August.

"Trying to address the interrelated challenges facing young people with isolated, band-aid solutions will fail. It is critical the government takes a holistic, coordinated approach," she added.

And with just six weeks until Christmas, McManus reminded the government that the clock continues to tick with regard to getting more people of all ages into jobs as a means of stimulating spending to kick-start the economy.

"Unemployment is projected to keep increasing to Christmas," she said.

"The government should be doing everything it can to create secure jobs and put money in the hands of working people so they can spend and restart the economy," McManus added.

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