

# UNEMPLOYMENT

FACT SHEET - APRIL 2019

## SEVERITY

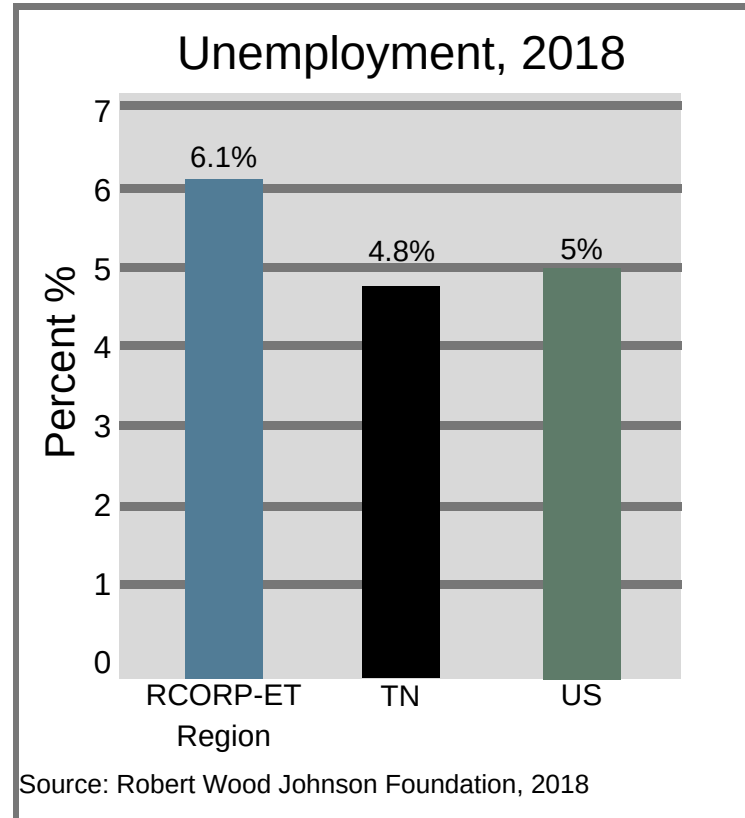
### *Size of the Problem*

Over 360,000 people live in the RCORP-ET region in East Tennessee.<sup>1</sup> Based on numerous social determinants of health, the RCORP-ET region is at much greater risk of health challenges—especially Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)—than Tennessee overall.

Compared to the state, the RCORP-ET region has a larger percentage of residents who experience higher rates of unemployment (6.1% v. 4.8%). The significance of the RCORP-ET regional disparities compared to the state are particularly startling given that Tennessee's overall health status is dismally ranked 45th in the<sup>2</sup> nation.

### *Seriousness*

- Unemployment hinders the ability of an individual to provide their family with educational opportunities, quality childcare, healthier homes, safe neighborhoods, and nutritious foods.<sup>3</sup>
- Over 50% of people who are unemployed are likely to have fair or poor health. In addition, 83% of unemployed persons are more likely to develop a stress-related condition. This can lead to unhealthy coping conditions, such as continued<sup>4</sup> opioid-use.
- People without employment have less access to preventative care, increasing existing barriers to OUD treatment.<sup>5</sup>



## RIPPLE EFFECT

As unemployment can have vast short-term and long-term detriments on health, strategies to alleviate unemployment should be prioritized.<sup>6</sup> Overcoming the barriers unemployment brings to the RCORP-ET region can help decrease the impact of OUD.

### References

- 1 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "County Health Rankings and Roadmaps." Accessed July 22, 2018.
- 2 America's Health Rankings. Accessed July 13, 2018.
- 3 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "Work Matters for Health 2008" Accessed March 6th, 2019.
- 4 Employment Situation Summary 2012, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- 5 Job Loss and Health in the U.S. Labor Market 2009, Journal of Demography.
- 6 Chapman, Larry S. "Meta-evaluation of worksite health promotion economic return studies." *American Journal of Health Promotion* 17.3 (2003): 1-10.

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## FEASIBILITY

There are few resources available in the RCORP-ET region to aid with unemployment for affected individuals. There are recovery resources such as the Addictions Recovery Program and Oxford Houses that help individuals with transitional housing and transportation which are indirectly related to unemployment.

An opportunity for the local public health system that was mentioned was ensuring that the public health and personal healthcare workforce was competent. Participants involved in this assessment emphasized that individuals should be empowered by receiving job training that sets them up for success in the workforce. Leadership and customer service skills such as punctuality and relationship building were a couple of the suggestions. It was noted that emphasis on justice-involved individuals needed to be a priority to promote success and future employment.

Two programs to incentivize hiring includes the Federal Bonding program (Insurance provision) and the work opportunity tax credit for employees who hire vulnerable people such as veterans, persons with disabilities, or ex- felons.

## COMMUNITY VIEW

The RCORP-ETC conducted a Community Themes and Strengths Assessment, focusing on the community members' perspectives on what the strengths and challenges related to OUD and community health promotion. Of the 710 participants, 16.3% of the people associated with the 10-county region viewed unemployment as a challenge related to OUD. Specifically, this was the 4th greatest challenge identified in the RCORP-ET Region. Finally, in addition to unemployment, the guided discussions to select the vision for the RCORP- ETC revealed the members' concern for underemployment and being underpaid.

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