Employment in the Chemical Enterprise

Since 2008, nearly 25,000 jobs—including thousands in research and development (R&D) — have been lost in chemical manufacturing companies in the United States, and layoffs continue. For the past 20 years, a clear job loss trend is evident in Bureau of Labor Statistics data that suggests the loss of approximately 300,000 full-time chemist jobs in the U.S. Patterns of hiring are also changing. Chemical companies with more than 500 employees are hiring significantly fewer new graduates than in the past, while small businesses are hiring more, albeit at slower rates. While no single factor explains these recent job losses or trends, higher input costs, shrinking margins of large companies, and growing aversion to the risks and costs of investment in longer-term R&D appear to play significant roles.

Unemployment Rate of Chemists U.S. Average and Chemists, 1972 to 2010

The unemployment rate for chemists in 2009 was the highest since ACS started collecting employment data in 1971 at 3.9%. The unemployment rate improved slightly in 2010 to 3.8%.

The current recession has hit new chemistry graduates the hardest. The unemployment rate for recent chemistry graduates (all degree levels) is now 11.4%, which has nearly tripled over the last 10 years. It can be said that, the higher the level of educational attainment, the lower the unemployment rate. The same can be said regarding years since graduation. Among minority populations, people identifying as African American or Black have been hit the hardest with Hispanic/Latino people not far behind.

Perhaps the most alarming news is that the current job recovery rate is much slower than observed for past recoveries following economic recessions. Since the Great Depression, the longest recovery was 39 months—following the 2001 recession. At the current rate of job creation, the U.S. job recovery is projected to take more than 5 years.
Providing the tools, training and development to empower ACS members to successfully manage their careers over a lifetime

- Career Consulting
- Career Workshops
- Career Fairs
- Jobs Database
- Job Search Guides
- Statistics & Trends
- ACS Career News/Blog
- Leadership Courses
- Technical/Business Courses

Preparing students and postdoctoral scholars to enter a challenging job market

- Developing Skills
- Scholarships
- Internships
- Student Organizations
- Workshops
- Teacher Training

Special benefits for unemployed members

- Dues Waivers
- Training Discounts
- Free or Discounted Meeting Registration
- Free Career Consulting
- Continued Access to ACS Publications
- C&EN Online
- Salary Guidelines
- Premium Waivers on Member Insurance

Connecting you with subject matter experts and global thought leaders in chemical sciences, management, and business

- Career Channel
- Professional Growth Channel
- Business Innovation Channel
- Entrepreneurial Series
- On Demand Archives
- ACS Network Forums

Helping chemists get back to work and getting our economy back on track

- Entrepreneurial Training
- Small Business Resources
- Peer Mentoring
- Local Social Events

Members helping members get back to work by sharing information and advice

- Online Networking
- Job Leads
- Congressional Briefings & Visits
- Act4Chemistry Alerts and Network

Educating policy makers and the public on the key role that chemistry plays in our economy and in our lives

For more information, please contact ACS Member Services at service@acs.org, +614-447-3776, +800-333-9511