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Here's How The Coronavirus Recession Compares To The Great Recession



Sarah Hansen Forbes Staff

Markets

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TOPLINE After the American economy clawed its way back to life in the years following the Great Recession (roughly December 2007 through 2009), unemployment reached a 50-year low and the stock market saw 11 straight years of gains—but now, with millions out of work and the economy entrenched in another recession caused by the coronavirus, here's how it compares to the earlier crisis:



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In the month of April, the unemployment rate shot up to 14.7% as the American economy ground to a ... [+] GETTY

KEY FACTS

- 800,000 jobs were eliminated in March 2009, during the height of the Great Recession; about **8.6 million jobs** were lost in total during that entire recession.
- More than **20 million jobs** were eliminated last month alone, and more than 33 million jobs have been lost since the 2020 crisis began.
- During the Great Recession, the highest that unemployment rate ever climbed was **10%** in October 2009; the unemployment rate for April clocked in at a staggering 14.7%.
- The stock market lost about **40% off** its peak value in the Great Recession; the S&P 500 is down just under 14% from its peak in February (though the crisis is far from over).
- In 2008 and 2009, lawmakers passed two stimulus packages worth \$700 billion and nearly \$800 billion (under Presidents Bush and Obama, respectively), which paved the way for controversial bank bailouts.
- Over the last two months alone, Congress has authorized some \$3 trillion in rescue spending to cushion the blow of the virus, with more almost certain to follow.

KEY BACKGROUND

It's important to remember that there's a critical difference between this economic crisis and what happened during the Great Recession. "The Great Recession was a result of financial imbalances—starting primarily in the housing sector," **writes** Louise Sheiner of the Brookings Institution. "This one is from a totally external factor, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)." But also, the unemployment rates for this crisis are almost certainly higher than the reported numbers, since the data doesn't take into account workers

unable to file claims and those who were laid off but are no longer active looking for work.

FURTHER READING

[The Great Depression Vs. Coronavirus Recession: 3 Metrics That Will Determine How Much Worse It Can Get \(Forbes\)](#)

[April Was The Worst Month For Jobs Since The Great Depression. Here's What The Numbers Tell Us About Recovery. \(Forbes\)](#)

[How Stocks Performed During The Past 6 Recessions \(Forbes\)](#)

[Trump's Job Losses Will Exceed The Great Recession's \(Forbes\)](#)

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Sarah Hansen

I'm a breaking news reporter for Forbes focusing on economic policy and capital markets. I completed my master's degree in business and economic reporting at New York... **Read More**

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