

# Nevada: From fastest-growing state to highest jobless rate

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By Jeff DeLong and [Judy Keen](#), USA TODAY

RENO — Gina Hatheway needs a job. She had been laid off three times in five years before losing her administrative assistant job in February. Her condo association recently put a lien on her home for unpaid dues.

"I'm trying to hang in there, but I just seem to keep getting kicked down," says Hatheway, 50, a single mother. She plans to enroll at a community college in hopes that new skills will land her a new job.

Across [Nevada](#), the recession has been hard on people such as Hatheway. In 2007, the state had a flourishing economy and a jobless rate of about 5%. It was the USA's fastest-growing state. Now its unemployment rate is 14.2%, and the Census Bureau says more people are leaving than moving to the state. Nevada has replaced [Michigan](#), home of the ailing auto industry, as the state with the worst unemployment rate — the highest since the government began tracking it in 1976.

What happened? The recession that began in December 2007 triggered a housing slump, pinched tourism and brought a surge in construction to a halt.

Construction jobs shrank from 149,800 in June 2006 to 61,300 this June, the Nevada Department of Training, Employment and Rehabilitation says. "We were hit early, and we've been in this a long time," says Buzz Harris of the Nevada chapter of Associated General Contractors.

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Bob Potter, president of Affordable Concepts, a North Las Vegas general contractor, has laid off 10-15 employees. Last year, the company did about \$26 million worth of business — way off its \$50 million average before the slowdown, Potter says.

"Everybody is being hurt," he says, and competition for the projects that are proceeding is fierce. Public-works projects that used to attract three or four bidders now draw 15 or 20.

Courtesy of JB Goodwin