



UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT

Meeting Segment Guide

Produced by the Policy and Advocacy Team
as part of the *Social Justice Stocktake*



Today, we're going to look at what it means for a person, and for society, when unemployment or underemployment are a part of their lives. Specifically, we're going to think about what this may look like in our community, and spend some time praying about these issues and what we can do about them

The following resources have been created to assist you to run a 5-8 minute segment in your Corps' or mission expression Meeting, Team Meeting, ALT Meeting or any space where you gather with other people.

These resources are ready to print and use in your Meeting. Below you'll find:



TALKING POINTS



**A PRAYER TIME GUIDE
(INCLUDING THREE WRITTEN PRAYERS)**



EXTENDED SEGMENT OPTIONS



LINKS TO FURTHER RESOURCES

For further support in connecting with issues in your local community, contact us at policy.advocacy@salvationarmy.org.au



Talking Points



INTRODUCTION

When you first meet someone, often one of the first questions you ask them is, “And what do you do?”

Employment is important – it underpins the economic output of a nation, and it enables people to support themselves, their families and their communities. For some people, what they “do” for work is closely linked to their identity. For many, work can give a sense of purpose and meaning.

Today, we’re going to look at what it means for a person, and for society, when unemployment or underemployment are a part of their lives. Specifically, we’re going to think about what this may look like in our community, and spend some time praying about these issues and what we can do about them.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT

- » **In September 2021, Australia's unemployment stood at 4.5 per centⁱ.** In addition to the people represented by this figure, some in society are considered to be ‘underemployed’ – that is, they work, but not enough hours per week to be considered actively ‘working’.
- » **Despite the common belief that most people work full-time,** only about half of employed Australians worked in a ‘standard’ job – that is, full-time, permanent waged positions with normal entitlements (like sick leave, annual leave, severance benefits and superannuation).ⁱⁱ
- » **It’s important to note that there are many reasons that a person may be unemployed or underemployed. For example:**
 - » The high competition for a limited number of jobs, with recent research revealing that there are 27 jobseekers competing for each entry-level jobⁱⁱⁱ
 - » The changing nature of the job-market
 - » The rapid technological change taking place in society, which impacts the number of jobs available
 - » The increased automation of work
 - » A lack of appropriate work available that fits around childcare or caring responsibilities; or
 - » They may be transitioning into new sectors meaning that skills, jobs and locations do not always match
- » **Some people groups experience additional barriers to being employed,** for example, migrants and refugees, people with a disability, youth, carers, people for whom English is a second language and more. Actions which seem simple for some – such as finding job advertisements, writing a résumé, traveling to an interview, taking part in an interview – become more challenging when other barriers are involved. Unfortunately, some people groups also experience significant discrimination upon applying for and maintaining employment.
- » **For many, unemployment, underemployment and casualised employment** can be a major source of stress that has the potential to compromise the health and wellbeing of individuals. The personal, social and economic issues associated with long-term unemployment are many and varied. The loss of income, skills and networks, the stigma of long-term unemployment, financial stress, and the anxiety of job seeking increase the difficulty of finding a job – and these things can erode confidence and self-esteem. These factors debilitate individuals, families and communities.

i. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (ABS) (2021, September 16). Employment and Unemployment. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment>.

ii. The Australian Institute. (2020). 2020 Year-End Labour Market Review: Insecure Work and the COVID-19 Pandemic. <https://australianinstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Labour-Force-2020-Briefing-Note.pdf>.

iii. Anglicare Australia 2021. Jobs Availability Snapshot 2021. Anglicare Australia: Canberra.



Talking Points



» **Long-term unemployment can also have an effect on long-term living standards** in retirement and can have inter-generational effects. It is psychologically and physically devastating not only for those who are experiencing it, but also for those who are dependent upon them.

» **The rate of the JobSeeker Payment is intended** to balance basic income needs with incentivising work. However, the security of income support is likely to outweigh any potential of higher earnings where job prospects are insecure, short-term or casualised. Also, the current JobSeeker payment is set at an unsustainably low level and forces many people to forego necessities or enter into debt.

» **The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the issues associated with unemployment and underemployment.** Existing vulnerabilities have been exposed and inequalities entrenched. Many

of those with the most limited means have been the least able to protect themselves. Low paid workers, many of whom are women, have been exposed to the full force of the health and jobs crisis^{iv} As the number of people unemployed or with reduced hours skyrocketed, more of us saw, and then many of us lived, the experience of financial hardship.

» **People who had never had to deal with Centrelink** before suddenly found themselves forming a queue. Indeed, here at The Salvation Army, around 40 per cent of people seeking financial support from us were asking for help for the very first time. Our Employment Plus services saw an increase in people looking for jobs.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

If Youth Unemployment is a specific issue in your area, you may like to share the below additional information.

Youth unemployment has been increasing over the past few years in Australia. Unemployment among young people aged 15 to 24 reached a 23-year high of 16.4% in July 2020. This represents approximately 337,224 young Australians unable to find work^v. Many young people are also underemployed, or working in casual and part-time jobs, but wanting or needing more stable, full-time work. Current rates of unemployment and underemployment mean that one in three young people in the labour force is unable to get enough hours of work to make ends meet.

Poor employment prospects can substantially impact a young person's wellbeing. Being unemployed can limit access to a wide range of services and opportunities, including housing, transportation and covering basic needs. Unemployment at a young age can also lead to poverty, exposing young people to isolation and exclusion from society, and can significantly reduce the person's long-term potential in life.

Unemployment barriers among young people are often linked to social and economic disadvantage, primarily the lack of a stable home, lack of training or skills development, the absence of entry-level employment opportunities, and disengagement with education in general. The extremely low rate of the Youth Allowance payment means that employment, or access to intergenerational wealth, is the only way to avoid poverty.

iv. Duckett, S. and Mackey, W. (2020, August 27). COVID-19 hits the poor and vulnerable hardest. <https://grattan.edu.au/news/covid-19-hits-the-poor-and-vulnerable-hardest/>.

v. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2021). Australia's youth: Engagement in education or employment. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/engagement-in-education-or-employment>



Talking Points



- » **As Christians, we know that God places a high value on work** and, therefore, so should we. Scripture shows God as working in creation (Genesis 1) and as making work part of life (Genesis 2:8, 15). All our work is an integral part of our Christian living.
- » **Sadly, in our materialistic society, there is a tendency to assess a person's value** by the status of their work and the level of their income. However, Scripture gives us another set of values to follow, which show us that a person should not be defined by their work or income. God has a higher standard than that and so should we (James 2:2-5).
- » **In our society, some people have responsibilities which do not allow regular paid employment.** Others are preparing for work, unable to find a job, or lack the ability to work for a variety of reasons. All of these people are of value to society, and they should be respected and valued. It is this value that we place on all people which encourages us to support those who are looking for employment to find it.
- » **Although we as individuals are not defined by work roles,** those roles are important to our self-esteem. We all need to feel that we are filling a worthwhile role in society. The Salvation Army regards work as honourable and God-ordained. It is vital that society be structured so that there is a worthwhile role for each member.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

- » **The Salvation Army's Employment Plus is an employment service provider** operating to connect jobseekers with jobs and provide training opportunities to equip them in the workforce. Working in conjunction with mental health advisors, homelessness and Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Services and community partnerships, Employment Plus is able to address some of the issues facing the long-term unemployed. Employment Plus also works closely with local Corps and mission expression initiatives such as hospitality and barista training in corps-based coffee shops. Salvos Stores also encourages volunteering opportunities and offers training in job roles such as retail service, packing, storing and driving.
- » **The local church can be instrumental in alleviating the stresses on individuals and families** of the long-term unemployed by offering free activities such as playgroups, social gatherings, craft and hobby groups, as well as English classes, personal development courses, and clothing and necessities to equip the jobseeker for employment. We each have a part to play in this, and in doing so, can value people for who God created them to be.



Video

Show the video ['Elizabeth's Story'](#) (2:16).

(You can also find a selection of alternative videos in the 'For an extended segment' section of this Resource.)



Prayer Time



Play one of the following songs, and ask people to spend some time in silent, individual prayer while the song plays. Ask them to pray for people experiencing unemployment or underemployment in your community.

**The Salvation Army Songbook No. 938 –
We Have Caught The Vision Splendid ([lyrics](#))**

[For the One](#) – Bethel Music

**The Salvation Army Songbook No. 944 –
What Can I Say To Cheer a
World of Sorrow ([lyrics](#))**

[God Of This City](#) – Chris Tomlin

Following this time of individual prayer, you may like to have three different people lead the group in the below prayers. These prayers are printed on separate pages for ease of distribution to your readers.





Prayer Time



Prayer for our community

Dear Lord,

Today we bring before you all people in our community who are struggling with unemployment or underemployment.

For those who want to work – but can't.

For those who have been looking for work for a long time – but have not found it.

For those who are trying to support themselves, or their families, in jobs that are unstable or not.

For those who are in jobs that they do not enjoy.

For those who believe they were made for more.

For all these people, we pray that you will provide the hope and the future you promise them in your Word.

Lord, help us to see your face in the eyes of every person who is experiencing unemployment or underemployment, so that we may be empowered through word and deed, and through the political means we have, to bring justice and peace to this world.

In your name we pray,

Amen.



Prayer Time



Prayer for Australia

Dear God,

As we take time to reflect on the effect of long-term unemployment on people in our country, we ask for forgiveness for the times when we have turned a blind eye to the struggles being experienced by others.

Lord God, as a nation may we continually strive to do more to help individuals and families who are caught in cycles of unemployment. We pray for all those in our country who are trying to make a difference – from government officials, elders, community groups and policy makers, to support workers – grant them peace and strength for this challenging work.

We pray for the leaders of our country – that you would give them new ideas about how to address Australia’s employment issues, and that you would give them the means to make the changes necessary. Give us wisdom and courage to have conversations with our community and our leaders to bring about structural and social change.

Help us, by your Spirit, to gain a vision for your kingdom. We ask for your grace and compassion to have conversations with those in our community who need to experience your love and grace. Help us to love kindness, do justice and walk humbly with you.

Amen.



Prayer Time



Prayer for the world

Loving God,

We recognise in this moment that this world is not as you intended it to be. We acknowledge that you love all people equally, and that your intention is that we all experience the fullness of life that only you can bring.

We ask that you would move within the hearts of those who have much. Help us to share graciously, to love more deeply, and to show compassion more freely.

Help us to work together as a global community to make this world more like you want it to be. Help us, as citizens of the world, to think globally and speak up for those who are struggling wherever they may be, recognising that every single person is important to you.

In the name of the One who was sent to minister to all nations,

Amen.



For an extended segment



If you would like to present an extended segment (that goes for longer than 10 minutes), here are some ideas that may take people deeper:

- » Share information about how your Corps/mission expression/ ALT is assisting people who are experiencing unemployment or underemployment within your community. Be sure to protect the privacy of specific people.
- » Share one of the below videos:
 - » [‘The Flower Club Natasha’ \(3:18\)](#)
 - » [‘Ben’s Story’ \(1:17\)](#)
- » Invite someone from your local Employment Plus to share their insight on what this issue looks like in your local community. Alternatively, you could do some research into the prevalence of this issue in your local community and share your insights.

USEFUL SONGS:

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[God Of This City](#) – Chris Tomlin
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[The Salvation Army Songbook No. 944 – What Can I Say To Cheer a World of Sorrow \(lyrics\)](#)
.....

[The Salvation Army Songbook No. 1003 – O Lord, Whose Human Hands Were Quick \(lyrics\)](#)
.....

[The Salvation Army Songbook No. 938 – We Have Caught The Vision Splendid \(lyrics\)](#)
.....

[For The One](#) – Bethel Music
.....

[The Salvation Army Songbook Hallelujah Chorus 43 – Just One \(lyrics\)](#)
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Further Resources



For more information on this issue, and for further resources, head to:

Read The Salvation Army's ['A Pathway to Social Justice'](#) Report

To find your nearest Employment Plus office, click ['Find your nearest office'](#)

If you'd like any further information on this resource please contact the Policy and Advocacy Team at policy.advocacy@salvationarmy.org.au

Every person can make a difference.

Together, we can make an even greater difference.





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