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The Big Lie: 5.6% Unemployment

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Anyone with at least two firing neurons in their brain has known for years that the “Government numbers” for unemployment are a big lie. It is nice to see a mainstream opinion piece that admits it. – Shorty Dawkins, Associate Editor

[This opinion piece, by Jim Clifton, comes from the Gallup.com website.](#)

Opinion by Jim Clifton

Here’s something that many Americans — including some of the smartest and most educated among us — don’t know: The official unemployment rate, as reported by the U.S. Department of Labor, is extremely misleading.

Right now, we’re hearing much celebrating from the media, the White House and Wall Street about how unemployment is “down” to 5.6%. The cheerleading for this number is deafening. The media loves a comeback story, the White House wants to score political points and Wall Street would like you to stay in the market.

None of them will tell you this: If you, a family member or anyone is unemployed and has subsequently given up on finding a job — if you are so hopelessly out of work that you’ve stopped looking over the past four weeks — the Department of Labor doesn’t count you as unemployed. That’s right. While you are as unemployed as one can possibly be, and tragically may never find work again, you are not counted in the figure we see relentlessly in the news — currently 5.6%. Right now, as many as 30 million Americans are either out of work or severely underemployed. Trust me, the vast majority of them aren’t throwing parties to toast “falling” unemployment.

There’s another reason why the official rate is misleading. Say you’re an out-of-work engineer or healthcare worker or construction worker or retail manager: If you perform a minimum of one hour of work in a week and are paid at least \$20 — maybe someone pays you to mow their lawn — you’re not officially counted as unemployed in the much-reported 5.6%. Few Americans know this.

Yet another figure of importance that doesn’t get much press: those working part time but wanting full-time work. If you have a degree in chemistry or math and are working 10 hours part time because it is all you can find — in other words, you are severely underemployed — the government doesn’t count you in the 5.6%. Few Americans know this.

There’s no other way to say this. The official unemployment rate, which cruelly overlooks the suffering of

the long-term and often permanently unemployed as well as the depressingly underemployed, amounts to a Big Lie.

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