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A copy of the new Brookings report is available at
http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2011/0331_recession_garr.aspx.

AFTER RECESSION, UNEMPLOYMENT, FOOD STAMP USE GREW FASTEST IN AMERICAN SUBURBS

*New Brookings report shows recovery hasn't reached millions of Americans,
recommends better coordination of services*

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Nearly two years into the recovery, metropolitan areas across America, who felt the effects of the recession most strongly, continue to struggle with high unemployment and strains on the social safety net, according to a new report from the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program.

“Millions of Americans are still out of work, and the largest growth in our unemployed population is happening in our suburbs,” said Emily Garr, author of the report. “The sheer size and persistence of this trend makes it all the more important to focus on how to connect people with needed social services while the recovery takes hold.”

“The Landscape of the Recession” is the third in a series of Metropolitan Policy Program papers analyzing trends in unemployment and use of safety net services like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (or SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) in America’s 100 largest metros. The report finds large metro areas, particularly in the West and Florida, accounted for more than two-thirds of the country’s net increase in unemployment between 2007 and 2010, and suburban areas have seen the most rapid unemployment growth.

“Demand for jobs and safety net services remain high, three years after the start of the Great Recession,” said Elizabeth Kneebone, a Senior Research Associate with the Program. “It will require metropolitan-level strategies and collaboration to ensure that city and suburban residents alike are connected to critical services and job opportunities as the recovery progresses.”

Among the report’s findings:

- **Ninety-nine U.S. metros accounted for more than two-thirds of the net increase in American unemployment between December, 2007, and December, 2010, and most of that growth was concentrated in suburbs.** During that time, the number of unemployed in suburbs increased by 3.1 million, compared to 1.5 million in cities.

- **Metro areas in the West, such as Las Vegas, Stockton, Fresno, and Riverside, experienced the highest increases in unemployment in the three years since the recession began.** In these areas, unemployment rates in both cities and suburbs increased by more than seven percent. Between December, 2009, and December, 2010, unemployment rates fell in every broad U.S. region except the West.
- **Growth in the use of SNAP was faster in suburban areas between July, 2007 and July, 2010.** Urban areas still account for more than 60 percent of SNAP enrollment in metropolitan areas, but suburban counties saw a 73 percent increase in enrollments compared to a 61 percent increase in urban counties.
- **Higher-density and mature suburbs experienced the greatest growth in their unemployed populations among US suburban communities.** Older, denser suburbs saw jobless populations more than double in the three years following the start of the recession.

The “Landscape” report also notes that developing more effective programs for connecting people with jobs and necessary services would be easier with consistent, comprehensible, and timely data. For example, standard measures of unemployment do not capture those who are under-employed—people who want to work full-time but can only find part-time jobs—nor are under-employment data available below the state level.

“There is a new geography of poverty emerging in our country,” Garr said. “Our findings are a strong signal that unemployment and service delivery are truly regional challenges, and that these challenges will not disappear any time soon.”

The Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings *provides decision-makers with cutting-edge research and policy ideas for improving the health and prosperity of metropolitan areas, including their component cities, suburbs, and rural areas. To learn more, please visit: www.brookings.edu/metro.*

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