

# In Spain, a Soaring Jobless Rate for Young Workers

New York Times

By [NELSON D. SCHWARTZ](#)

Published: December 31, 2009

MADRID — Like hundreds of thousands of other young people, Jesus Pesquero Peñas dropped out of school to go to work when the Spanish economy was booming. But since he was laid off from his construction job two years ago, he has been living on unemployment benefits.

Now Mr. Peñas finds himself part of a lost generation in Spain, where unemployment among people ages 16 to 24 is 42.9 percent, the highest in Europe, and more than double the overall rate.

“I went to work because the money was good, the lifestyle was good and I really wanted to get out of school,” Mr. Peñas, 25, said as he waited on a long line snakeing down the block from an employment office in suburban Madrid.

“I totally regret it now,” Mr. Peñas said, who has a 5-year-old daughter by a former girlfriend who is also out of work.

Spain is the extreme, but the experience of younger workers here reflects similar problems in the United States, as well as other European countries still struggling to emerge from the recession.

In the last 12 months, the jobless rate in the United States among workers ages 16 to 24 has risen to 19.1 percent from 13.9 percent. Economists expect the rate to remain high even as the overall jobless rate in the United States — now 10 percent — begins to shrink.

That is because the sectors that employ young people in the greatest numbers — fast food, construction, retail — are expected to take the longest to recover. ([...])