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Why discuss the historical development of the types of economic systems and describe modern economies?

"99 Weeks Later, Jobless Have Only Desperation," the headline said. It was August 2010, and the unemployment rate in the United States had climbed to 9.5%. Around the country, millions of people were out of work, and many had lost their unemployment insurance benefits, which ordinarily last 26 weeks but, thanks to Congressional action, were extended to 60 or 99 weeks based on a state's unemployment rate. An estimated 1.4 million had now exceeded the 99-week limit. For the many people in this group who had been getting benefits, dubbed the "99ers," according to a news report, their "modest payments were a lifeline that enabled them to maintain at least a veneer of normalcy, keeping a roof over their heads, putting gas in their cars, paying electric and phone bills." One 99er was a 49-year-old woman who used to work as director of client services for a small technology company but now expected to be living in her car after being unable to find a job, despite many applications, being unable to pay her rent, and facing eviction. As she drove away from her apartment for good, she sobbed and later recalled, "At one point, I thought, you know, what if I turned the wheel in my car and wrecked my car?" Ironically, she had also fallen behind on her loan payments on her car, which was about to be repossessed. (Luo, 2010)^[1]

This story is one example of the profound impact that work and the economy can have on an individual and a society. Following the 2008 Recession, many blamed the economic system for contributing to the failings that led to the housing crash and precipitated the rise in unemployment, the sudden drop in housing prices and stock market prices, as well as the sharp increase in national debt. In our modern, connected world, the crash in the United States also prompted a global recession.

An estimated 3.2 billion of the world's 7.3 billion people are in traditional jobs, but lots of others are engaged in unpaid care, creative work, voluntary work, or other activities. Around the world, the nature of work is changing as the economy become increasingly globalized. The United Nations 2015 Human Development Report argues that the modern workplace needs to account for increased technological progress, aging societies, and environmental challenges.^[2]

Watch It

Watch the following video to see how the Human Development Report is taking a broader look at work and human development.



[See this interactive in the course material.](#)

In this module, you'll examine the nature of economies and come to understand the differences between capitalism and socialism. You'll learn about the theories behind these economic systems, then study how economies and the workforce are changing because of globalization. Finally, you'll analyze trends in the current workforce in the United States.

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1. Luo, M. (2010, August 3). 99 weeks later, jobless have only desperation. The New York Times , p. A1. [_](#)
 2. UN Human Development Report (2015). Retried from <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hdr/2015-human-development-report.html>. [_](#)

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- Introduction by Selim Jahan, lead author of the 2015 Human Development Report.
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