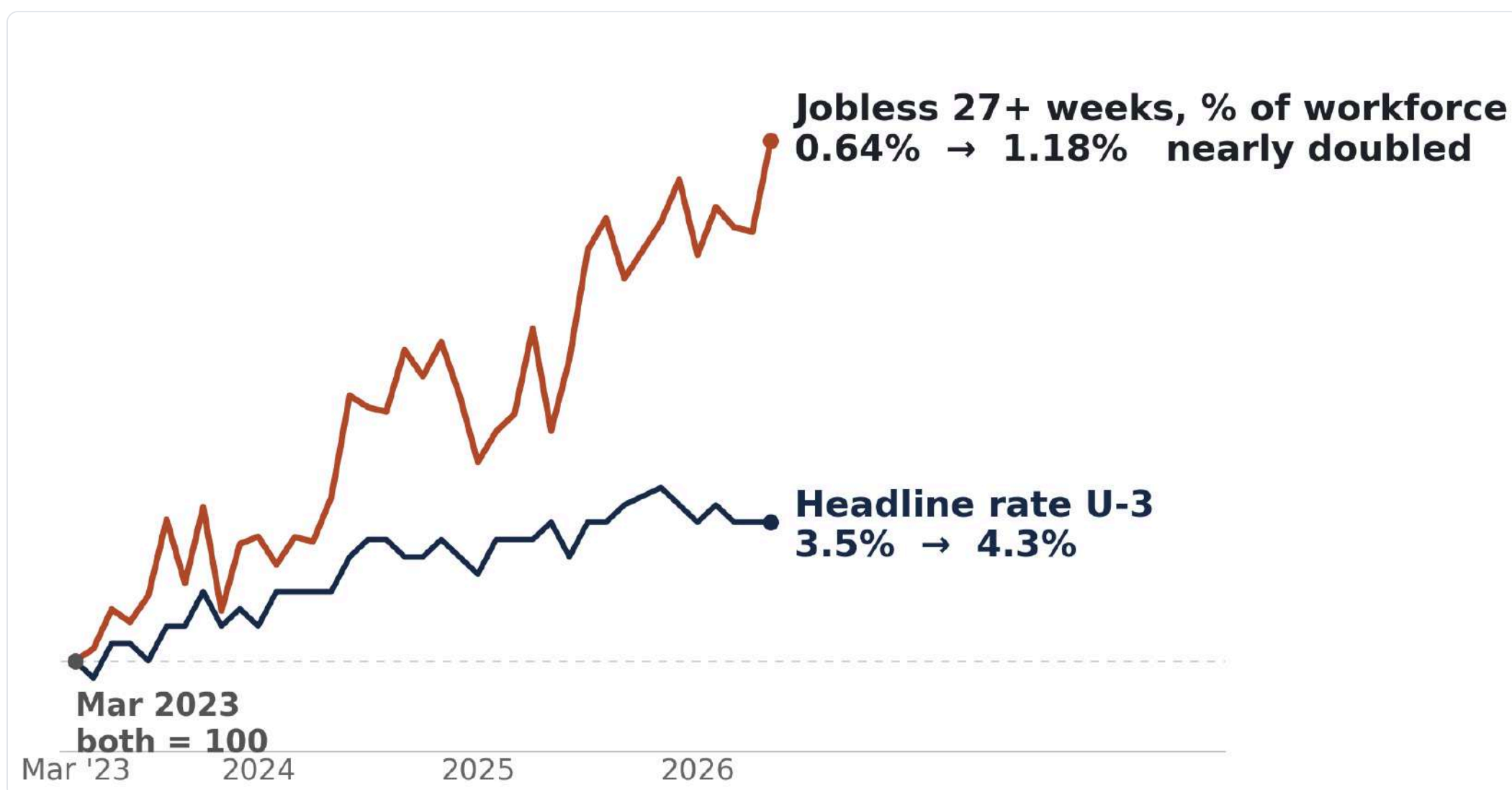


US UNEMPLOYMENT · MAY 2026 DATA

The 4.3% is hiding a problem

That 4.3% is the US unemployment rate. The headline curve looks like it is stabilising - it eased from 4.5% in November and has held at 4.3% since March. Underneath, long-term joblessness - people out of work over half a year - has nearly **doubled** since 2023: **2.0 million people**, and still climbing.

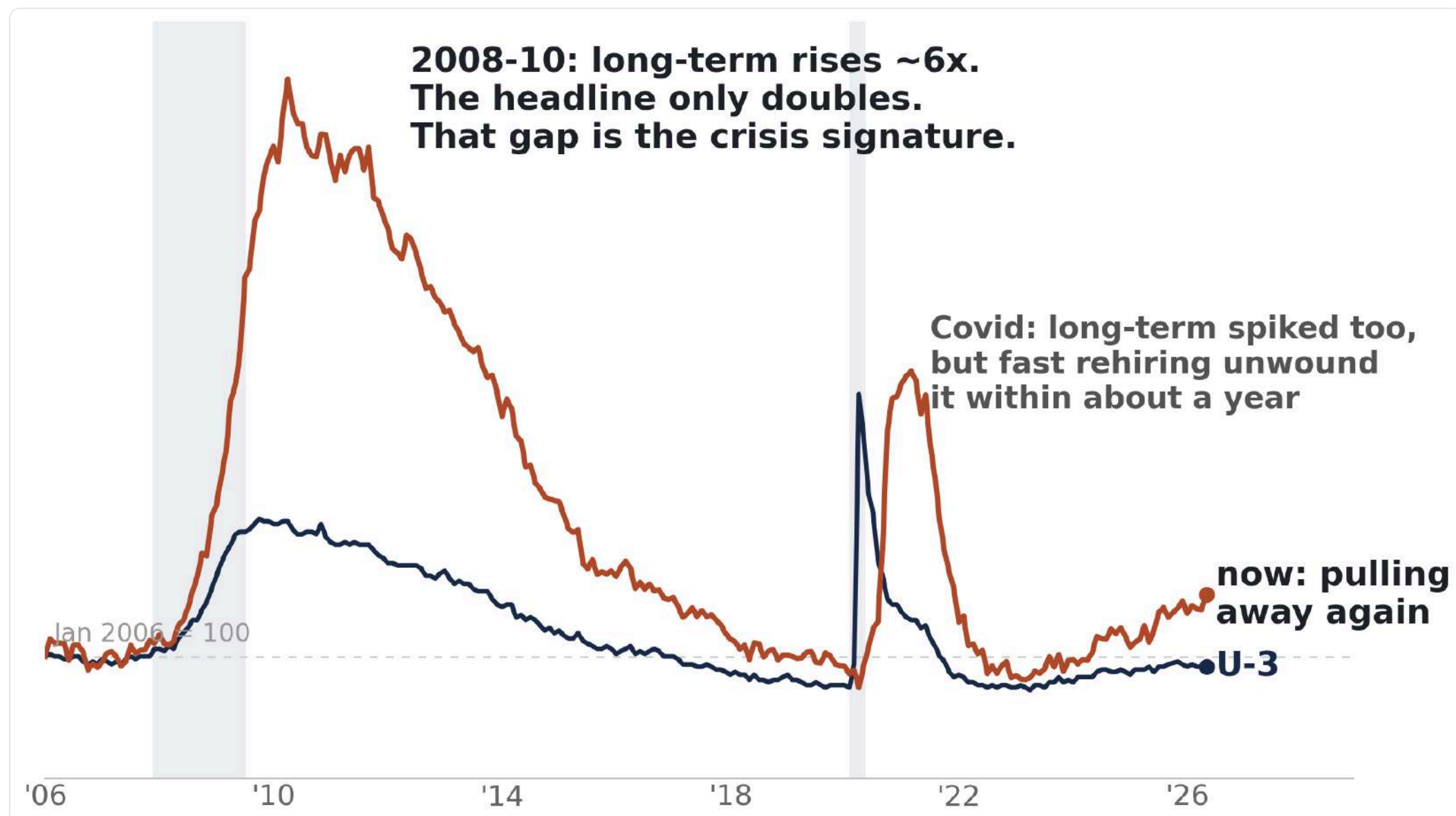


Both series rebased to March 2023 = 100, the long-term rate's low. Long-term = jobless 27+ weeks as a share of the workforce. Monthly BLS data through May 2026.

No respite in the data: **three straight years up** - the long-term rate has not given back a single year.

ANGLE 1 · THE CRISIS SIGNATURE

We have seen this shape before



Headline U-3 (navy) and the long-term rate (terracotta), both rebased to January 2006 = 100. Shaded bands = recessions.

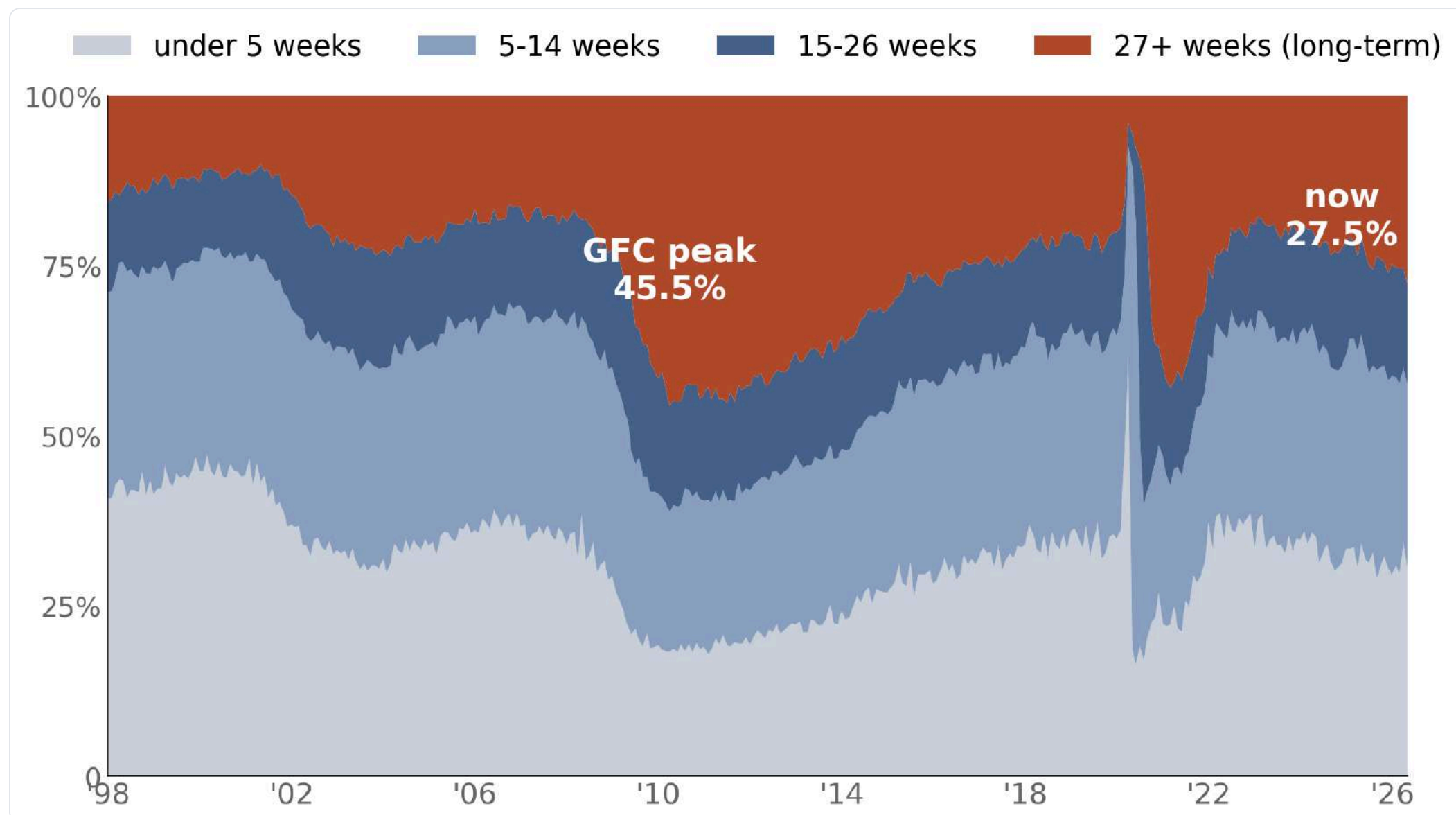
Into 2008 the long-term line did not just rise - it **towered** over the headline, about **6x** its pre-crisis level while U-3 only doubled. That divergence is the signature of a market where people stop getting re-hired.

Covid was the exception: millions did cross 27 weeks, but rehiring was so fast the surge unwound within about a year. **Today's rise has the slow-grind 2008 shape.**

The gap is opening again - with no recession to blame. That is the red flag.

ANGLE 2 · COMPOSITION

The mix is moving to the part that scars



Every unemployed person, split by how long they have been jobless. Each month adds to 100%. The terracotta band (27+ weeks) is the story.

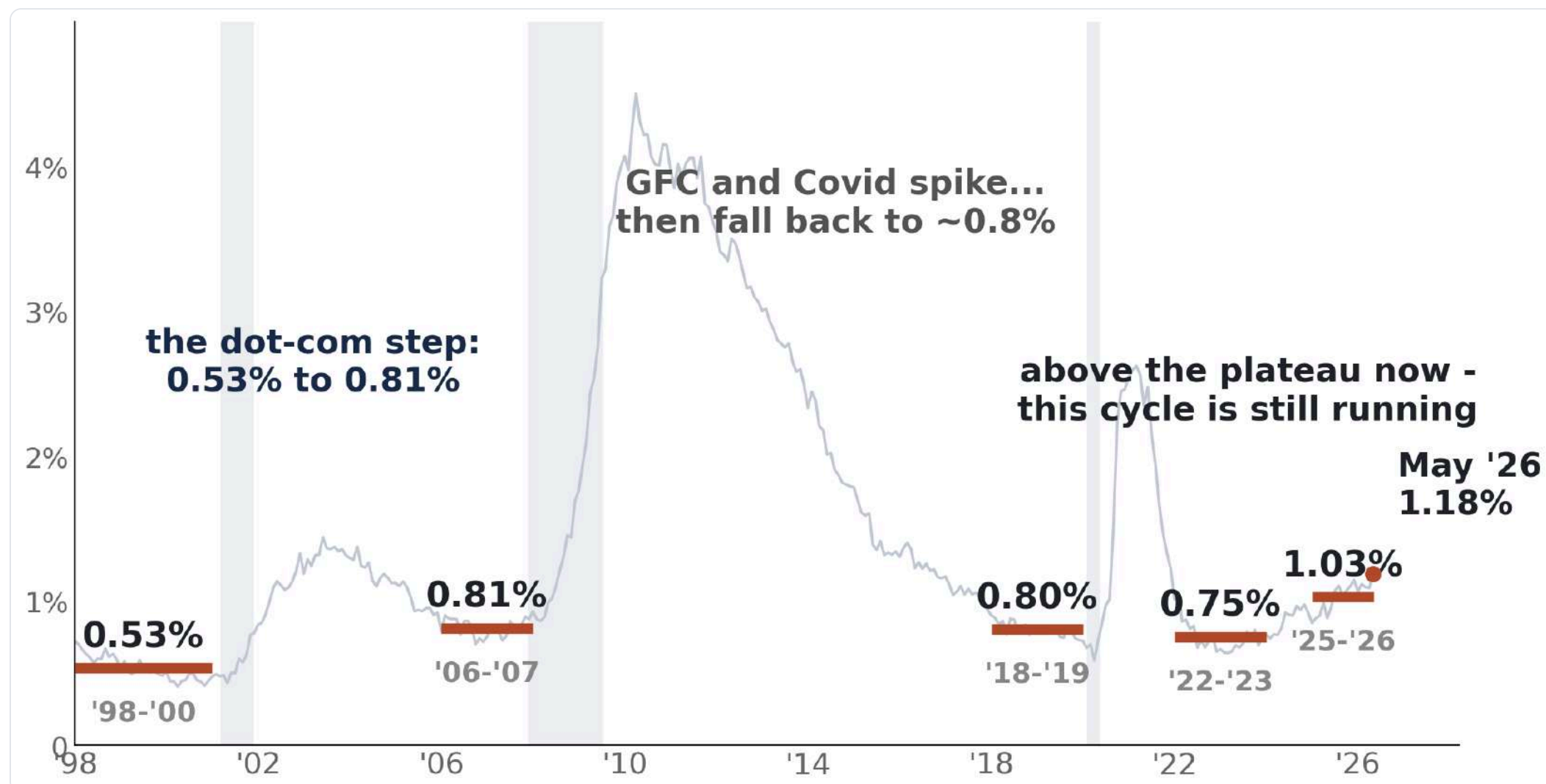
When the terracotta band widens, it means the people who lost their jobs months ago are still searching - re-hiring has stalled. That is exactly what it has been doing since 2023.

The long-term share fell to **17.8%** after Covid (Feb 2023). It is back to **27.5%** now. The GFC extreme was 45.5%.

Short-term unemployment is healthy churn. Long-term is the part that **scars** - skills fade, employers screen it out. More than one in four of the unemployed are now past that line.

ANGLE 3 · THE STRUCTURAL QUESTION

Is AI the next dot-com?



The long-term rate (grey line) with its average in each calm stretch between crises (terracotta bars). One step up, then a 15-year plateau.

Measured against the *whole workforce*, long-term joblessness has stepped up **once** in 25 years: from 0.53% to 0.81% in the dot-com era, when work moved to the web. The GFC and Covid spiked and fell back - cyclical episodes, both of them.

This cycle has not played out: **1.18%** in May and still rising - it has not topped out, let alone settled.

Too early to call. The test comes when this cycle finally turns: does the rate settle back near **0.8%**, or on a new, higher floor? **That is the chart to watch.**

PREVIOUS ANALYSIS · SOURCES & METHOD

PREVIOUS ANALYSIS - THIS SERIES

[Markets at a record while the economy hurts](#) - peak valuations, record-low consumer sentiment. 8 Jun 2026.

[Irrational exuberance: S&P at 7,400](#) - the last two times this setup held, the index halved. 17 May 2026.

[Are we headed for stagflation-lite?](#) - the Fed caught between inflation and weak jobs. 28 Mar 2026.

THE DATA TOOLS

U-1 (15+ weeks), U-3 and U-6 are live on [tigzig.com](#) → [Tremor](#) - a macro early-warning dashboard, 100+ indicators with validation built in. The 27+ duration series came via FRED.

Agent-first portal with MCP servers and free APIs: [agents.tigzig.com](#) - point your AI at it.

SOURCES & METHOD

BLS household survey, via FRED: U-3 [UNRATE](#) · duration [UEMPLT5](#) [UEMP5TO14](#) [UEMP15T26](#) [UEMP27OV](#) (27+ wks = "long-term"). Pulled 10 June 2026; cross-checked to the [BLS Employment Situation](#).

27+ share = long-term ÷ total unemployed. **27+ rate** = long-term ÷ workforce.

BLS seasonally adjusts each duration series independently, so the buckets sum to total unemployment with a small residual. The survey samples ~60,000 homes, so single months are noisy. October 2025 has no reading (government shutdown).
