



NEW REPORT SHOWS SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN YOUTH WHO ARE OUT OF SCHOOL & JOBLESS RISING ECONOMIC NUMBERS HIDING WORSENING JOB PROSPECTS FOR TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS

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Rising numbers of Chicago's young adults, age 20-24, are out of school and out of work, reflecting a national trend that is more acute in Chicago and some downstate rural areas than in most of the nation, according to a new report using 2017 data, the latest available. Part of a series commissioned by the Alternative Schools Network, the report was released today at an anti-violence rally in downtown Chicago.

In perhaps the most disturbing finding, almost half, 45.2 percent, of Chicago's 20-24 year old black males were out of school and out of work, despite a supposedly booming economy. It is a big jump from the 36.6 percent in 2016 that was heralded as an encouraging trend when reported last year.

"We know how to reduce the violence," said Jack Wuest, executive director of ASN. "We know what works. All it takes is the political will to fund the programs that will get these young people back in school, give them experience on the job and put them to work."

The connection between violence and young people who have nothing to do is obvious and well documented, Wuest noted. "Right now, jobless and out-of-school youth urgently need summer youth employment and education programs. Gov. Rauner killed that program, and the results have been tragic."

The youth at the rally will voice their support for the efforts of Gov. J.B. Pritzker, House Speaker Mike Madigan and Senate President John Cullerton and many members of the General Assembly, to provide more funding to solve this problem through more educational and employment opportunities. The rally aims to expedite this process for equity for the youth in Chicago and across Illinois that need these opportunities to become successful adults.

"Now Gov. Pritzker is backing such a program and state House Speaker Madigan and state Senate President Cullerton are supporting it," Wuest said. "But we have to get it done, now. Summer is coming."

Nationally the out of school and jobless number for blacks 20-24 was still disturbingly high at 23.7 percent. But that figure fit into a historic trend that shows black unemployment double that of whites, whose jobless and out of school rate was at 12.5 percent.

In Chicago, with 7.4 percent of white 20-24 year olds out of school and out of work, the ratio stands at an appalling six to one.

Chicago isn't the only place where black young adults are at a steep disadvantage. The report looked at rural Illinois, creating four groups of counties. In the group that comprised Monroe, Randolph, Washington, Jefferson, Marion, Montgomery, Bond, Clinton, Fayette, Effingham Clark, Jasper, Crawford, Lawrence, Richland, Clay, and Wayne counties, 63.7 percent of Black men and women were out of school and jobless. That compared to 16.7 percent of whites.

The report by the Alternative Schools Network, ***Out Of School and Jobless: A Continuing Crisis for Youths in Chicago and Beyond***, uses data assembled by the University of Illinois at Chicago Great Cities Institute. It covered percent and number of out of school, out of work youths in the United States as a whole, Illinois, four groupings of downstate counties, Cook County and Chicago, broken down by gender, race and ethnicity and three age ranges, 16-19, 20-24 and 16-24. The data source was GCI tabulation of 2017 American Community Survey public use data. For the rural counties it was GCI tabulation of 2013-2017 American Community Survey public use data.

It was released at a student-led anti-violence rally at the James R. Thompson Center in downtown Chicago, where students from community-based high schools in the Alternative Schools Network organized around the message **No More! No Mas! Our Youths Should Grow Old, Not Die Young**. ASN students were aiming to show the schoolmates, friends and family of those teens who have been killed in the city's ongoing eruption of violence that they are not alone.

In just the last four weeks three teens who were students at ASN schools have been murdered, just an indicator of what is going on in the city, where in the period between April 9 and April 22 there were 50 shootings recorded by police.

The report is the latest in an ASN-commissioned series on the youth employment crisis. Some key findings include:

Most Illinois groups beat national averages, but blacks 20-24 were the exception

- Across the board, 16-19 year olds in Illinois were better off than the average for their counterparts nationwide. Some 6.2 percent were out of school and out of work statewide, compared to 6.8 percent in the United States overall. Black males 16-19 were the worst off, at 11.5 percent, but still better than the nationwide average of 12.2 percent. And all but 3.3 percent of white females were either in school or working. For Latinx that age, 7.4 percent were out of school and out of work, compared to 8.3 percent nationwide.
- For 20-24 year olds, 11 percent of Illinois whites were out of school and out of work, but for blacks it was triple that number at 33.8 percent, compared to 23.7 percent in that group nationwide. Just over 14 percent of Latinx young adults were out of school and jobless, significantly better than the national average of 17.1 percent.
- The huge bulge in black 20-24 year olds brought Illinois' total for out of school and out of work to 15.3 percent, slightly above the national average of 15.1 percent. But for 16-24 overall, 11.3 percent of Illinois youths were jobless and out of school, compared to 11.5 percent nationally.

Cook County mostly follows national pattern

- Cook County's 16-19 year olds were near the national average for out of school and out of work at 6.6 percent, compared to 6.8 percent nationwide. Countywide, black males were better than the national average, at 10.8 percent versus 12.2 percent nationwide.
- One of the largest disparities for age 16-19 youths was between white females, 2 percent out of school and out of work and black females that age, 9.8 percent. Latinas were at 6.4 percent.
- Overall in the county, those 20-24 were slightly worse off than the national average with 15.3 percent out of school and out of work, compared to 15.1 percent nationwide. But, again, black males were the worst off, at 27.6 percent out of school and out of work, better than statewide averages but worse than national. Black young women were second worst in that age group at 19.7 percent and Latinas next at 18.8 percent.
- White young men, 20-24, in the county were the best off, but still at 12.3 percent out of school and out of work, compared to 12.2 percent statewide.

Significant disparities by race and sex in Chicago

- Chicago's 16-19 year olds are slightly better off than the national average, with 6.6 percent out of school and out of work, compared to 6.8 percent nationwide. But white females that age were at 3.3 percent out of school and out of work, while black males are at 8.7 percent, black females 7.5 percent, Latinas 6.6 percent and Latino youths at 5.6 percent. White males are 5.8 percent.
- The disparities for 20-24 year olds are even more dramatic with 5.7 percent of whites in Chicago out of school and out of work, while the numbers are 37.4 percent for blacks and 18.2 percent for Latinx.
- As noted above, almost half, 45.2 percent, of black males 20-24 are out of school and out of work, compared to 7.4 percent of white males and 18.3 percent of Latinos.

Downstate rural counties have pockets of deep depression for young people

- Rural, downstate counties were divided into four groups and the report used data for 2013-2017 averages of out of school and out of work numbers and percentages for each group.
- For 16-19 year olds, the average out of school and out of work figures ranged from 7.2 percent to 8.9 percent.

- For 20-24 year olds, the average out of school and out of work figures ranged from 16.6 percent to 26 percent.
- The highest out of school and out of work result was 63.7 percent for black young men 20-24 years old in Monroe, Randolph, Washington, Jefferson, Marion, Montgomery, Bond, Clinton, Fayette, Effingham Clark, Jasper, Crawford, Lawrence, Richland, Clay, and Wayne Counties.
- For 20-24 year old whites, the highest out of school and out of work rate was 22.5 percent in Alexander, Edwards, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, Saline, Union, Wabash, White, Jackson, Williamson, Franklin, and Perry Counties.
- Latinx 20-24 year olds were worse off in Monroe, Randolph, Washington, Jefferson, Marion, Montgomery, Bond, Clinton, Fayette, Effingham Clark, Jasper, Crawford, Lawrence, Richland, Clay, and Wayne Counties, at 36.4 percent out of school and jobless.

"This report confirms what we already knew," Wuest said, "that a significant portion of youths have been abandoned by our system."

The solution, he said, is expensive, but not as expensive as condemning large numbers of young people to lives that lead them to drugs, crime, violence, mental illness and incarceration. It includes getting young people who have dropped out or been expelled back into school; making sure they have mentors; funding programs that train them for and place them in entry-level jobs, so they learn how to show up every day on time and follow instructions from their supervisors; providing needed social services; emphasizing conflict resolution and restorative justice; and incentivizing reinvestment in neighborhoods that have been gutted and left behind.

"Young people should grow old," he said, "not die young."

ABOUT ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS NETWORK

The Alternative Schools Network (ASN) is a not-for-profit organization in Chicago working to provide quality education with a specific emphasis on inner-city children, youth and adults. Since 1973, ASN has been supporting community based and community-run programs to develop and expand training and other educational services in Chicago's inner-city neighborhoods. In addition to supporting direct services, ASN has been a consistent and effective advocate for community-based services whereby the people involved are active participants in developing and running programs – not passive recipients of services. To shape policies and programs, ASN has built an impressive track record of operating successful education, employment and support service programs. For more information please visit www.asnchicago.org.

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