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‘Chronic’ Unemployment Of Young People Of Color Tied To Crime: Study

By **Stephen Gossett**

A study released on Monday indicates a strong connection between violent crime and joblessness, which runs alarmingly high among young black men in Chicago. Among certain age ranges, it is the worst in the nation, the report found.

Prepared by the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Great Cities Institute, the report was presented on Monday at the Chicago Urban League among officials such as U.S. Sen Dick Durbin, U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky and Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. Perhaps the most alarming conclusion in the report, titled *Abandoned in their Neighborhoods: Youth Joblessness Amidst the Flight of Industry and Opportunity*, is that joblessness among black 20 to 24-year-olds rose to 60.2 percent in 2015, up from 58.7 percent the year prior. Black men and women within that age range both had a higher jobless rate (roughly 60 percent for either gender) than New York (50.3), Los Angeles (48.4), the state of Illinois (51.6) at large and the country overall (45.2).

Young Latinos meanwhile have had a particularly difficult job of rebounding from the recession. Latinos in Chicago, ages 16 to 19, actually continued to decline after 2010.

Joblessness among young people of color in Chicago is “chronic and concentrated,” the report found. The decline in available jobs is directly tied the decline of manufacturing sector in Chicago and “the emptying out of jobs from neighborhoods,” a contrast from the professional level services” downtown, the report notes.

Forty-three percent of black men between the ages of 20 and 24 are neither employed nor attending school, researchers found. That’s a sobering contrast to when Chicago’s manufacturing employment thrived decades ago: In 1960, only 22.3 percent of black man within the age range were



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unemployed or out of school.

While proposed anti-violence solutions in Chicago tend to revolve around tougher sentencing and increasing police stops, researchers argue that the chronic unemployment options for young people of color are a significant influence as well.

“While rampant joblessness may not completely explain violence, we learn from young people that it is no doubt a contributing factor and conversely, providing a job can mitigate the conditions that lead to criminal activities,” the report states.

For the full report by the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Great Cities Institute, *Abandoned in their Neighborhoods: Youth Joblessness Amidst the Flight of Industry and Opportunity* - www.asnchicago.org/youth-employment-hearing-2017