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## Nearly half of young Black men in Chicago out of work, out of school: report [Chicago Tribune]

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Jan. 25--Nearly half of young black men in Chicago are neither in school nor working, far exceeding the share nationally and in comparable big cities, according to a new report.

Forty-seven percent of 20- to 24-year-old black men in Chicago, and 44 percent in Illinois, were out of school and out of work in 2014, according to the report from the University of Illinois at Chicago's Great Cities Institute that was commissioned by the Alternative Schools Network.

The report was to be presented Monday at an annual hearing on youth unemployment hosted by the Chicago Urban League.

The high rates of unemployment locally compare with 32 percent of young black men nationwide and 30.8 percent in New York and Los Angeles. Among young black women in Chicago, 35.3 percent were neither working nor in school, also higher than the national average of 24.7 percent and jobless rates in New York and Los Angeles.

Counting both men and women together, 41 percent of black 20- to 24-year-olds were out of work and out of school in Chicago, compared to 18.7 percent of Hispanics and 6.7 percent of whites in the same age group.

The highest concentration of youth unemployment was seen in neighborhoods on Chicago's South and West sides, including Fuller Park, Englewood, East Garfield Park and North Lawndale, areas that are also home to high rates of poverty and crime.

"We are losing a generation of youth who have no opportunity to work in their neighborhoods," Teresa Cordova, director of the Great Cities Institute, said in a news release. "It is a tragedy for those youth and it is a tragedy for the communities they live (in) and the city as a whole."

At the hearing, a panel of several dozen state, county and city legislators is expected to hear testimony from young people and leaders of agencies concerned about shaky state and federal funding for youth employment programs.

"We are seeing the results of this monumental policy failure every day, as the shootings mount up and the funerals multiply," said Jack Wuest, executive director of the Alternative Schools Network, a nonprofit that supports education programs for people who live in the inner city. "The new data that's being presented draws a straight line between the unemployment crisis for youth and the escalating

violence in Chicago's hardest-hit neighborhoods."

The racial divisions are also reflected among teenagers. Among 16- to 19-year-olds in Chicago, 14.3 percent of blacks are neither working nor in school, with boys much more affected than girls, compared to 6.8 percent of Latinos and 6 percent of whites.

Overall, 18 percent of 16- to 24-year-olds in Chicago are out of school and out of work, compared to 13.7 percent nationally, 16.4 percent in New York and 13.1 percent in Los Angeles.

Declines in youth employment across all races and ethnicities over the last decade have raised alarms that young people aren't getting early experience that helps them secure better jobs and higher wages down the road. Declines in teen employment have been particularly steep, recovering only nominally since bottoming out during the Great Recession. Nationally, the employment rate among 16- to 19-year-olds was 28.8 percent in 2014, compared to 36.7 percent in 2005. In Chicago, teen employment last year was 16.4 percent, down from 21.6 percent in 2005. White and Hispanic teens saw the largest drop.

To address the problem, the organizations behind the hearing propose convening a task force. They also are calling for a national commitment to employ 2 million jobless youths during the summer. The group also calls for a state commitment to employ 35,000 jobless youths and commitments from Cook County and Chicago to each employ 10,000 jobless youth.

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