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Report: Chicago's Youth Hit Hard By Unemployment

Chicago's youth are facing some of the highest rates of joblessness in the nation, according to a [new report](#).

Nearly 23 percent of Chicago youth aged 20 to 24 were both out of school and work in 2014.

By contrast, that figure was 18.2 percent at the national level, 17.1 percent in Illinois, 21.1 percent in New York City and 16.4 percent in Los Angeles, according to the report, commissioned by the Alternative Schools Network and developed by the University of Illinois at Chicago's Great Cities Institute.

Among black 20- to 24-year-olds, 41 percent were jobless and out of school in Chicago in 2014. That's "nearly 7 percent higher than the rate in Illinois, nearly 50 percent higher than New York City, nearly 40 percent higher than Los Angeles, and nearly 44 percent higher than the U.S. rate," the report reads.

In 2014, black 20- to 24-year-old men in Chicago were both out of school and work at a rate of 47 percent.

"In the process of assembling, organizing and analyzing this data, one thing became very clear to us," Great Cities Institute Director Teresa Cordova said in a news release. "We are losing a generation of youth who have no opportunity to work in their neighborhoods. It is a tragedy for those youth and it is a tragedy for the communities they live in and the city as a whole."

Overall, the report shows Chicago's black and Hispanic youth fare the worst in terms of their employment status.

"Among 20- to 24-year-olds, 59.2 percent of blacks, 37 percent of Hispanic or Latinos and 26 percent of whites (non-Hispanic or Latinos) were out of work in Chicago in 2014," reads the report.

The situation was even bleaker for Chicago's black and Hispanic teens aged 16 to 19. In this age group, the jobless rates were 88 percent for black and 85 percent for Hispanic teens in 2014.

Employment rates among 16- to 19-year-olds in Chicago were 12.4 percent among blacks, 15 percent among Hispanics and 24.4 percent among whites in 2014. Nationwide, the 2014 employment rate among all teens aged 16 to 19 was 28.8 percent.

"Across all groups in Chicago, Illinois and the U.S., the percentages of 16 to 19 year olds employed have dropped from 2005 to 2014, suggesting a long-term downward trend for employment of teens," the report says.

Lawmakers, agency leaders and young people discussed the report's findings and youth employment solutions at a hearing held Monday at the Chicago Urban League.

"We are seeing the results of this monumental policy failure every day, as the shootings mount up and the funerals multiply," Jack Wuest, executive director of the Alternative Schools Network, said in a statement. "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. I've said it before, but it is worth repeating: Investments in creating meaningful work for these youth will pay dividends immediately and for years to come. A failure to do so has had and will continue to have dire consequences for our city and our state."