

Economy pushes youth out of workforce

Written by

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Many Minnesota youth and young adults are struggling in this economy to find jobs and gain skills that will help them build their careers, according to a new [KIDS COUNT report](#) from the Annie E. Casey Foundation titled *Youth and Work*.

While Minnesota has youth employment levels better than the national average, the percent of employed youth ages 16 to 24 decreased from 73 percent in 2000 to 60 percent in 2011. Youth ages 16 to 19 have been particularly hard hit during the past decade with their employment rate dropping from 63 percent in 2000 to less than half (42%) employed in 2011.

The report estimates in Minnesota there are approximately 57,000 "disconnected" youth, meaning they are not in school and not working. These youth are at risk of being placed on a trajectory of reduced opportunities and earnings throughout their lifetime, which will affect their ability to support themselves and contribute to their communities and society. The report highlights solutions like flexible pathways to reengage disconnected youth and opportunities to gain experience for youth in school so they can move forward in their careers.

Gaining job experience has been key for Courtney Gallagher, a Youth Studies major at the University of Minnesota. "I thought this would be the easy part of my life," said Gallagher, who will be graduating this month." As a first generation college student, it's difficult to understand the higher education system when no one at home has been through it. I never realized that the struggle would continue even with a four-year degree."

Courtney was accepted into the Teach for America program as a gateway into a teaching career. She looked for other jobs while considering Teach for America but couldn't find anything that would allow her to gain experience in the field of education. Courtney considers herself lucky because she knows what she wants to do.

For youth who graduate from high school and are uncertain, it can be difficult if not impossible to afford college classes without a clear career goal. "Even with relevant work experiences and an above average GPA I feel the frustration of finding employment," Gallagher said. "I have made all the right decisions so far in my life, but still experience the affects of the economy. I can only imagine the struggles other youth face when they are unsure of what kind of work they'd like to do, and can't afford to pay for college to find out. It is my hope that more career pathways are created for youth, so low wage jobs or college are not the only options."

Youth and Work includes the latest youth employment data for every state, the District of Columbia and the nation. Additional information on disconnected youth and young adults is available in the [KIDS COUNT Data Center](#) which also contains the most recent national, state and local data on hundreds of indicators of child well-being. The Data Center allows users to generate rankings, maps and graphs for use in publications and on websites, and users can view information on mobile devices.

Additional Data:

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Minnesota County-level Youth Employment (16-24yrs)

County	Number	Percent
Anoka	24,818	66%
Carver	5,923	64%
Dakota	29,700	68%
Hennepin	90,873	66%
Olmsted	9,663	69%
Ramsey	47,768	65%
St. Louis	20,040	65%
Scott	9,282	72%
Stearns	19,949	70%
Washington	15,742	62%
Wright	7,995	65%

[These jobs are being lost by Minnesota's youth. How can we help them find work? | Minnesota Public Radio | Minnesota Public Radio](#)