

The early 2000s: a period of declining teen summer employment rates

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ABSTRACT

With many teens concentrating on academics, fewer are working during the summer; in recent years, teens also have faced a labor market weakened by recessions, a diminishing number of federally funded summer jobs, and competition from other groups for entry-level job opportunities.

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EXCERPT

Having a summer job has become a less common way for teenagers to spend their summers. The proportion of teens aged 16 to 19 years who are employed in the summer has been on a downward trend since 2000. The trend has encompassed younger teens and older teens and has spanned the genders and the major race and ethnicity groups. This article examines possible reasons behind this trend of lower summer employment rates for teens.

The data on employed persons used in the analysis that follows come from the Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly survey of about 60,000 households. Persons are counted as employed in the CPS if they did any work for pay or profit during the reference week of the survey.¹ Persons who are absent from their jobs due to reasons such as illness or vacations are still counted as employed. Unpaid family workers, defined as those who work 15 or more hours during the reference week without pay in a family-operated enterprise, also are counted as employed. The *employment population ratio*, or the employment rate, is the proportion of the civilian noninstitutional population that is employed; the terms "employment rate" and "employment population ratio" are used interchangeably in this article. The CPS data used in the analysis are not seasonally adjusted. Throughout the article, when the words "summer" and "summertime" are used as an adjective, they refer to the average for the period from June through August, inclusive. For example, "summer employment rate" refers to the

average employment rate for June, July, and August, and "summer 2009" refers to the average for those months in 2009.

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Footnotes

[1](#) The survey reference week is the calendar week that includes the 12th day of the month.

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