



## Teens losing the race for summer jobs

By Stephanie Armour, USA TODAY

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Teenagers are facing the worst summer job market in decades despite signs more companies are starting to hire.

The annual teen employment rate tumbled from 45% in 2000 to 37% last year — lowest since the figure was first tracked in 1948, according to an analysis by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University in Boston.

"Kids are doing worse this year than last," says Andrew Sum, the center's director. "The job growth hasn't filtered down. If anything like this happened to the adult workforce, you'd call it a depression. It's that severe."

Jobs losses for teens are more dramatic than in the early 1980s' recession, and this summer is expected to be the worst since the end of World War II.

The reasons: Companies are more likely to hire unemployed adults, seniors and new immigrants for entry-level jobs that have traditionally gone to teens. Also, many cash-strapped cities and states have cut funding for summer teen job programs.

Some employers already are seeing stiffer competition for available jobs. Example: Denver's Six Flags Elitch Gardens has gotten about 9,000 applications so far this year vs. 11,000 the entire season last year. A spokeswoman says most of those applications come from teens.

"Teens will compete with older workers more than they have in the past," says Jared Bernstein, an economist with the Economic Policy Institute. "Employers will hire back older workers who were laid off before they look for the usual summer hires."

The downturn in teen jobs has cut across all demographic groups in the USA, but males have been especially hard hit.

And while both high school and college students have faced job declines, the drop is much more severe for teens.

"It's incredibly difficult," says Peter Boose, 17, of San Jose, Calif., a high school junior looking for a part-time summer job to pay for gas and insurance for his car, a 1994 Buick. "Hardly any of my friends can find a job. It's really, really hard."

More than half of teens say their income is a necessity rather than a luxury, according to a March poll by Teens4Hire.org.