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**Sad summer ahead for teen employment**

**By John Wisely and Christina Hall, USA TODAY 6.22.11**

Seasonal job prospects are so tight that three out of four teens won't have a job this summer, according to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](http://content.usatoday.com/topics/topic/Organizations/Government%2BBodies/Bureau%2Bof%2BLabor%2BStatistics).EnlargeClose

"It's about as bad as it gets," says Joseph McLaughlin, senior research associate at the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University in Boston. "Last summer, we reached a postwar employment low for 16- to 19-year-olds."

McLaughlin doesn't expect much improvement this year.

The official teen unemployment rate is about 25%, but that figure doesn't count all the teens who aren't seeking work. When all teens are factored in, only 25% of them will actually have jobs. That level of discouragement or disinterest worries many economists.

"What concerns me most is when I see youth who are idle: not working and not going to school," says Betsey Stevenson, chief economist for the [U.S. Department of Labor](http://content.usatoday.com/topics/topic/U.S.%2BDepartment%2Bof%2BLabor). In July 2001, about 50% of 16- to 17-year-olds worked, she says.

McLaughlin says teen employment was high through the 1990s, fell in the recession of 2001 and never really bounced back. By 2007, employment rates for teens were falling again and now sit at historic lows.He says the end of [Recovery Act](http://content.usatoday.com/topics/topic/Recovery%2BAct) funding for summer jobs is one factor, but with consumer spending down, the retail sector, a traditional stronghold of teen employment, also has struggled. Tighter municipal budgets also mean fewer jobs at libraries, parks and pools.

"Jobs are more scarce, and that includes for students, as well," says Cris Robson, Workforce Investment Act youth specialist for the Macomb/St. Clair Workforce Development Board, in suburban Detroit.

She says the eligibility-based program will help about 400 teens find jobs this year, down from about 600 last summer.

Jamie Marchewka, 17, of [Chesterfield Township](http://content.usatoday.com/topics/topic/Chesterfield%2BTownship), Mich., landed her first job earlier this month. She'll earn $7.49 an hour as a playground assistant for the Parks and Recreation Department in neighboring [Clinton Township](http://content.usatoday.com/topics/topic/Clinton%2BTownship). She'll work four days a week through early August.

She applied over the winter, interviewed in April and was offered the job in May.

"I was thrilled," she says. "I came down the stairs saying, 'Mom, I got my first job.'"