

[**America's Job Hunt**](http://money.cnn.com/news/specials/jobs/?iid=EL)

**The Great Recession's lost generation**

By Chris Isidore @[CNNMoney](http://twitter.com/CNNmoney%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) May 17, 2011: 5:30 PM ET

Brittney Winters graduated from Princeton, but couldn't find a teaching job. She's taken various jobs -- including a stint at a video store -- to make ends meet.

NEW YORK (CNNMoney) -- The brutal job market brought on by the recession has been hard on everyone, but especially devastating on the youngest members of the labor force. About 60% of recent graduates have not been able to find a full-time job in their chosen profession, according to job placement firm Adecco. And for those just entering the workplace, a bout of long-term unemployment can affect their career plans for years to come.

Meghan O'Halloran was one of those who had her career derailed by the timing of her graduation.She left Cornell University with a degree in architecture and six summers of internships at top firms in New York, Milan and London. "I thought getting a job would be a snap," she said. But after graduating in December 2008, just as job losses in the economy were reaching a high point, she was confronted with a very cold reception into the labor force. She followed her boyfriend to China for a year, and found architecture work plentiful in the building boom there. But when she returned home at the end of 2009, not much had improved, and no one was hiring. "I've applied for temporary work," she said. "The answer is always the same, 'We wish we could hire you.'" She's decided to leave behind her hopes for a career as an architect and has started her [**own business**](http://www.enroutestudio.com/) making custom fabric, carpets and furniture.

[**Ivy League degree, no job**](http://money.cnn.com/galleries/2011/news/economy/1105/gallery.lost_generation/index.html?iid=EL)

O'Halloran's experience is not unique. Last year, the unemployment rate for college graduates age 24 and younger rose to 9.4%, the highest since the Labor Department began keeping records in 1985. One reason is because recent hires with limited experience have the toughest time competing in a job market flooded with experienced candidates. "We know that young people coming out of college have the least experience," said Kathy Kane, senior vice president of talent management at Adecco. "And these entry-level jobs can be the easiest for companies to reduce. "But long stretches of unemployment are only part of the problem young job seekers face.0:00 / 3:17 Go to class at midnight Adecco also found that 18% of recent grads have been forced to turn to full-time jobs outside their field of study, often jobs for which a college degree is not required.Many others are underemployed, or working part-time or temporary jobs and internships. And the lack of steady income can also delay the start of their lives as independent adults. About a third of recent graduates are still living with their parents, Adecco found, with 17% saying they are financially dependent on their parents. Almost one in four say they are in debt.

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Brittney Winters, 23, graduated from Princeton University in 2009 and can't find a teaching job, despite graduating from a top school. "When you go to an Ivy League school, you figure this degree will mean something -- that it will guarantee you a job," she said. Winters has taken on other "survival" jobs to get by, including working at a video rental store.She now works for a public relations firm in Chicago. But the job is a long commute from her parents' home, and she's struggling to fill the gas tank each week.

**A long recovery**

With hiring on the rise, this year's college grads will find a somewhat [**better job market**](http://money.cnn.com/2011/02/10/pf/college_graduates_salaries/index.htm?iid=EL) awaiting them after graduation. But those already hurt by the recession might not bounce back so quickly. According to one study performed by Till von Wachter, an economics professor at Columbia University, the drag on income lasts for 10 years, on average. The outlook could be even worse for the class of '09 or '10, von Wachter said, since the worse the recession, the longer it takes to get earnings and a career back on track. "In the bad recessions in the past, the graduates recovered in 10 to 15 years. But we've never had such a strong recession," he said. Princeton grad Winters said she's finding an increasing number of job openings she can apply for this year, but she's still having trouble explaining her résumé of the last two years.But she's hopeful she'll soon have her career back on track. "I like to think it was only a minor detour, not a roadblock," she said.

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