



## Class of 2011 faces worst job market on record, EPI report finds

The unemployment rate for young workers was the worst on record in 2010, a new Economic Policy Institute (EPI) Briefing Paper finds. High school and college students graduating in 2011 will thus enter a labor market that already contains a backlog of un- and underemployed 2009 and 2010 graduates.

### NEWS FROM EPI

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[The Class of 2011: Young workers face a dire labor market without a safety net](#) by EPI researchers Heidi Shierholz and Kathryn Anne Edwards finds that the Great Recession has been disastrous for young workers. In 2010 the unemployment rate averaged 18.4% for 16- to 24-year-old workers, compared to 9.6% for U.S. workers overall. The unemployment rate for young workers was the highest it has ever been in the years since 1948, when the government began tracking the data.

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The unemployment rate for high school graduates under the age of 25 who are not enrolled in school increased from 12.0% in 2007 to 22.5% in 2010. For college graduates under the age of 25, the unemployment rate increased from 5.4% in 2007 to 9.3% in 2010. The picture becomes grimmer when accounting for disparities among race and ethnicity. The average unemployment rate for white high school graduates in 2010 was 20.3% (up from 10.2% in 2007), 22.8% for Hispanics (up from 10.1%) and 31.8% for black graduates (up from 21.3%).

Young workers have not waited out the economic downturn by enrolling in school. While enrollment rates increased slightly in 2008 (+0.5 percentage points), 2009 (+0.9) and 2010 (+1.0), the increase did not differ much from the average 0.7 point increase in enrollment that has occurred each year since 1985. Furthermore, the data suggests that students who have been able to “shelter in school” have been offset by those who are unable to afford to attend school due to an inability to find work. The rate of “disconnected youth,” or 16- to 24-year-olds who are neither employed nor enrolled in school increased from an average of 14.5% in 2007 to 17.6% in 2010.

Finally, young workers often lack an individual safety net, such as savings accrued from years of employment. They often have significant amounts of debt as well, particularly those who have recently graduated from college. Furthermore, young workers are often not eligible for the public safety net programs that older workers can access, like unemployment insurance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and food stamps.

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*The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank that researches the impact of economic trends and policies on working people in the United States and around the world. EPI's mission is to inform people and empower them to seek solutions that will ensure broadly shared prosperity and opportunity.*