

HEY Statistics: Employment Barriers for Current & Former Foster Youth

Data about youth in California and the San Francisco Bay Area

Unemployment is Detrimental to the Youth, and the Economy as a Whole

- Research shows that an individual who experiences early unemployment is more likely to have lower future earnings as well as repeated spells of joblessness.¹⁷
- Studies show the effects of prolonged unemployment on young people may lead to depression, as well as an increased likelihood of crime and drug-taking.¹⁸
- Nationally, 80% of foster youth did not earn enough to be fully self-supporting 4 years after leaving care.¹⁹
- 45% of California's emancipated youth are unemployed, 30% are on welfare.⁶
- 1/3 of former foster youth have incomes at, or below, \$6,000 per year - substantially below the federal poverty level of \$10,400 for a single individual.²⁰ An annual income of \$25,693 is needed for a single adult to be self sufficient in San Francisco.²¹
- Over 80% of young adults who are unemployed say they are in fair or poor financial shape.²²
- In 2008, 37% of young people reported having more than \$5,000 in debt, excluding amounts from mortgages and student loans.²²

Foster youth face many barriers to finding, getting and keeping employment, but advocates are fighting to improve their situation. San Francisco offers many programs to help foster and other at-risk youth stay employed, and advocates for their right to be recognized as an important demographic.

Foster youth often have more barriers to finding and keeping jobs than youth who are connected to a family, and the emotional and economic support they provide. In fact, studies have estimated that the average non-foster care youth receives assistance from their parents of approximately \$38,000 between the ages of 18 and 34.¹ Former foster youth, especially those who age out of the foster care system, do not often have access to these resources.

- In August 2009, there were 1,354 children in the San Francisco foster care system; 397 of whom were age 16 and over.²
- During FY08/09, 164 youth emancipated into independence.² During the last ten years, 1357 emancipated from the San Francisco foster care system.³

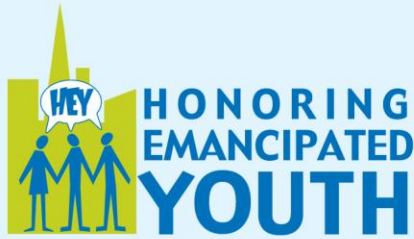
Foster Youth Have Barriers to Finding, Getting and Keeping Employment

Foster youth may endure trauma both prior to care and while living in the system. Often, foster youth come from communities which already experience disproportionate levels of high unemployment rates; such as low education rates, young parenthood, homelessness and incarceration.

- Foster care youth experience an overall developmental delay more than 6 times greater than the general population.⁴
- Almost 2/3 of young women who were formerly in foster care became mothers within 5 years of leaving foster care.⁵
- In California, 1 in 4 emancipated youth are homeless.⁶ Of emancipated youth in the Bay Area, it is estimated up to 44% have experienced homelessness.⁷
- As many as 4% of former foster youth are incarcerated in California; the general population's incarceration rate is about 0.13%.⁸

Finding a Job Is Difficult; In a Recession, the Problem Is Worse for Teenage Foster Youth

- Between 2000 and 2008, the teen unemployment rate fell by 15 percentage points.⁹ In 2009, teenagers ages 16-19 had a national unemployment rate of 24%.¹⁰
- The 2009 national employment rate for 16-19 year olds is the lowest ever post-World War II.⁹
- A study compared the outcomes of over 600 former foster youth to those of young adults in the general population and found that 19 year old former foster youth were nearly 3 times more likely than other youth to be out of work and school.¹¹



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All 20-24 Year Old Youth Have High Unemployment Rates; For Former Foster Youth, the Situation is Worse

- Among 20-24 year olds, employment rates in 2008 were almost 5% lower than in 2000.⁹ Nationally, their unemployment rate is 15.2%.¹²
- 20-24 year old males now have the lowest employment rates ever recorded⁹
- People under 30 face the highest unemployment rates of any age group. 19% of people under 30 are unemployed or looking for work compared to only 7% of adults ages 30 and over.¹³
- In a 2007 study of former foster youth, over 90% of the participants earned less than \$10,000 over the last year.¹⁴

Poor Youth of Color Are Overrepresented in the Foster Care System, and Disproportionately Un- and Under-Employed

- African American youth are overrepresented in the foster care system. African Americans make up 6.3% of the total California population but 25.6% of the foster children in California.¹⁵
- African-American youth were the most likely to be unemployed, at a rate of 36.5% in January 2009.¹⁶
- Nationally, employment rates of teens in 2008 were lowest among 16-17 year old males, African Americans and Asians, and low income youth.⁹
- Middle to upper income Whites and Hispanics are 3 time more likely to work than low income African American teens. Middle income African Americans are 2.3 times as likely to work as low income African Americans.⁹
- High school dropouts and graduates with no college have fared the worst in the labor market.⁹

What are HEY Statistics?

- HEY Statistics offer relevant information for any person interested in foster care, emancipation and transitional age youth in the Bay Area.
- HEY Statistics shows the most current statistics regarding foster youth in the Bay Area in many subject areas.