

Current and Aspiring Young Hispanic Workers

Latina Teens Least Likely to be in the Labor Market

Latinos* are among the fastest-growing minority groups and a population characterized by its youthfulness making them an increasingly important segment of the U.S. economy. Yet unemployment among young workers ages 16 to 24 is especially high for minorities, including Latinos. Youth and specifically Hispanic youth, face numerous obstacles to success in the labor market. These barriers serve as themes for further research and analysis in order to develop a comprehensive policy agenda to train and employ young workers, with specific attention to the needs of young Latinos. This *Monthly Latino Employment Report* offers an overview of current Latino youth unemployment trends and identifies employment barriers they face.

Latino Employment Statistics for April 2013

According to the [latest report](#) from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), April saw encouraging job growth compared to what was expected. Net job growth was 165,000 and the unemployment rate remained about the same at 7.5%. The Latino unemployment rate edged down to 9.0%, a slight decrease from March 2013 when it was 9.2%. Still, the Latino labor force participation rate, 65.7%, continues to be the highest of any demographic group.

Table 1. The Employment Situation for Latino Workers in April 2013

Indicators	Latinos, March 2013
Employed — <i>Working people over the age of 16, including those temporarily absent from their jobs</i>	22 million
Unemployed — <i>Those who are available to work, make an effort to find a job, or expect to be called back from a layoff but are not working</i>	2.2 million
Civilian Labor Force — <i>The sum of employed and unemployed people</i>	24 million
Not in the Labor Force — <i>People over the age of 16 classified as neither employed nor unemployed</i>	13 million
Unemployment Rate — <i>Share of the labor force that is unemployed</i>	9.0%
Labor Force Participation Rate — <i>Share of the population over the age of 16 that is in the labor force</i>	65.7%
Employment-Population Ratio — <i>Share of the population over the age of 16 that is working</i>	59.8%

* The terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau and throughout this document to refer to persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, Dominican, Spanish, and other Hispanic descent; they may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Status of the Hispanic or Latino Population by Sex and Age," *Current Population Survey*, <http://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab3.htm> (accessed May 3, 2013), Table A-3.

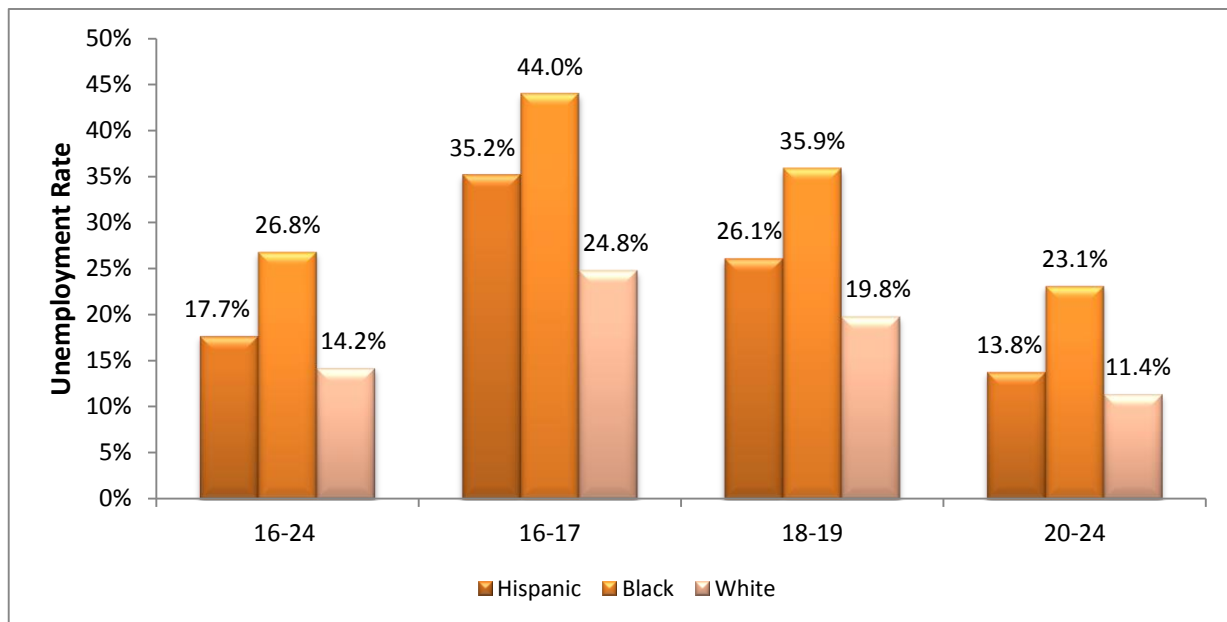
The Case for Youth Employment

Youth employment, even while going to high school or college, has not only short-term but also long-term positive consequences. For many young people, a paycheck can strengthen their livelihood and the ability to contribute and support their family income, particularly in the case of Latinos. New [research by the Urban Institute](#) shows that Hispanics' wealth fell 44% from 2007 to 2010. Additionally, having a job can increase the accessibility and affordability to postsecondary education or training. [Research shows](#) that Hispanics who enroll in postsecondary education often receive less financial aid, placing an even greater burden on Latino college students to work to finance their own education or to drop out of college. Getting an early start on employment builds work experience which improves a young worker's future career prospects. Like all workers, the ability to acquire skills through vocational training and network with individuals in a range of industries can increase a young person's human capital and boost their advantage in the labor market.

Young Latinos Face 18% Unemployment Rate

As documented in [Young Latinos in the Workforce](#), unemployment rates are higher for workers ages 16 to 24 compared to their older counterparts. In fact, over the last decade [unemployment has been rising](#) for all young people, regardless of race and ethnicity. Yet, the situation is worse for youth of color who want to work but cannot find a job. Figure 1 shows that across the 16 to 24 age category, young Black and Latino workers have higher unemployment rates compared to young White workers.

Figure 1. Unemployment Rate by Age, Race, and Ethnicity, 2012 Annual Averages

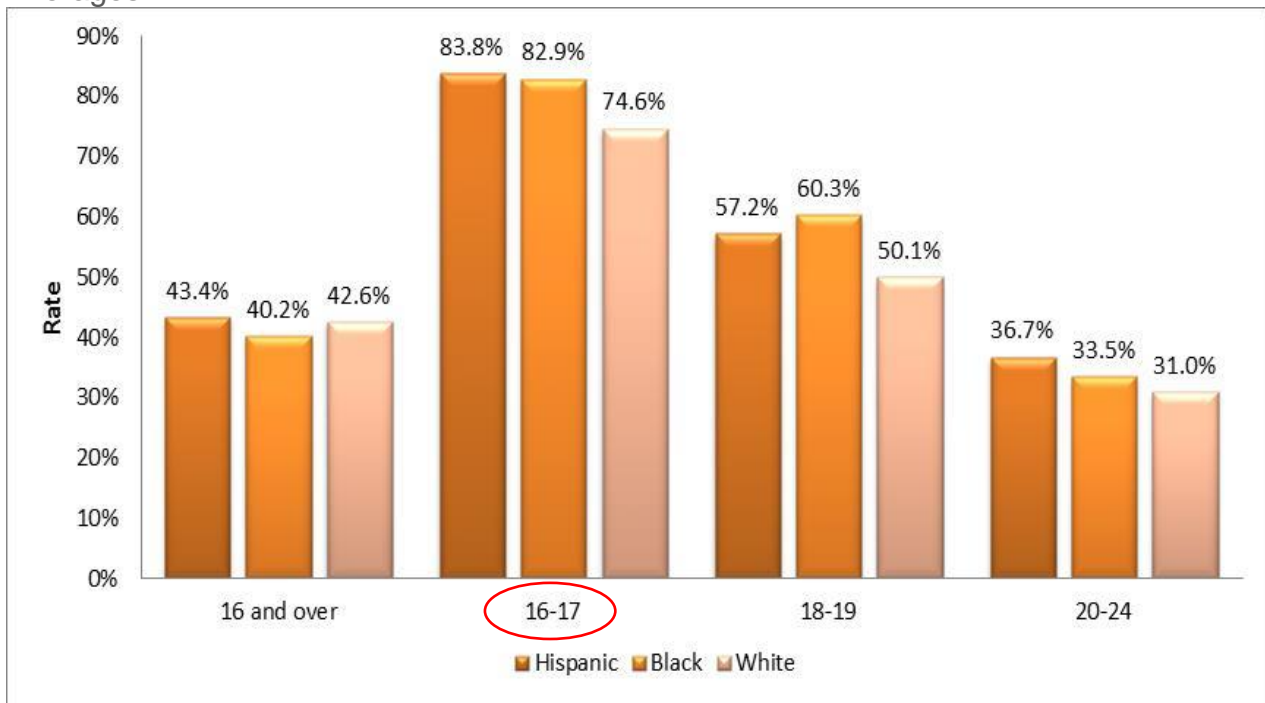


Latina Teens Outside of the Labor Force

One characteristic unique to young Hispanic women is that they are more likely than their peers

to not be in the labor force. According the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), “not in the labor force” refers to people neither employed nor unemployed, such as retirees, students, and those taking care of a child or family member, as well as others who are neither working nor seeking work. The disparity between Latinas and Whites is the greatest among young females in the 16 to 17 age category; as Figure 2 illustrates, the share of Latinas not in the labor force is 9.1 percentage points higher than young White females. It is not surprising that the vast majority (83.8%) of teens in this age group are not working, since most are high-school age. However, it is well documented that a significant portion of Latino youth is [neither in secondary education nor in the labor force](#). This disconnectedness increases the risk of school dropout, incarceration, low employment prospects, teen pregnancy, and alcohol and substance abuse. The conspicuous absence of Latina teens from the labor force is a topic that deserves further exploration.

Figure 2. Females Not in the Labor Force by Age, Race, and Ethnicity, 2012 Annual Averages



Employment Challenges for Latino Youth

Each year, more and more Hispanic youth turn working age. As outlined above, there are important short-term and long-term benefits to workers who gain employment experience at a young age; however, Latinos face significant barriers and difficult life circumstances that place them at a greater disadvantage in the labor market. Many teens, like Vanessa Velasquez, whose story follows, are faced with pressure to work, such as from needing to help support family in the midst of facing many obstacles, one being not having a high school diploma.

Vanessa’s story helps shed light on many employment barriers for young workers ripe for further study. Low educational attainment, especially persistently high dropout rates, limits a significant portion of Latino youth from accessing full-time, well-paying jobs with career paths. Unfortunately, only 58% of Latino youth graduate with a high school diploma, compared to a

graduation rate of 78% for White students, and an estimated [28% of Latino students ages 16–24 permanently drop out](#) of public high schools.

[High levels of poverty \(28.2%\)](#) found among a majority of Hispanic households increases the need for many young Latinos to seek employment in order to help provide for their families. Their need to secure paid opportunities often limits youth, particularly young people of color, from pursuing unpaid internships or other training opportunities which could strengthen their experience in the labor market. In fact, research on unpaid internships conducted by the Economic Policy Institute highlights that low-income students frequently [must take on significant debt](#) in order to participate in these experiences.

Many local community-based youth-serving institutions and programs, such as the Maryland Multicultural Youth Center described in Vanessa’s story below, are essential for serving the needs of high needs youth, particularly Latinos. Community-based organizations are one of several systems, such as primary and secondary education, workforce development, and juvenile justice, which have an effect on employment outcomes for Latino youth.

A Portrait of a Young Latina: “I want to loosen the stress off my parent’s shoulders”



Vanessa Velasquez, originally from El Salvador, is an 18-year-old who currently serves as a paid intern with the Puente Leadership Program at the [Maryland Multicultural Youth Center](#) (MMYC). She has spent the past three years applying for numerous jobs in her community but has only gotten three interviews, none which have resulted in a job offer. Vanessa explains her motivation to get a job stems from her desire to, “help my family with income to help pay rent. I want to help loosen the stress off my parent’s shoulders and be more independent.”

Vanessa came to MMYC after she realized that not having a high school diploma and her lack of work experience was weakening her chances of getting a job. As a two-year participant with the Puente Leadership Program, she has gained more experience and job readiness training, which has strengthened her resume, interviewing skills, and overall confidence. According to Vanessa, her internship “is going to open a lot of doors and opportunities for me, and I’m hopeful that it will help prepare me for future academic and work experiences.”

Many youth like Vanessa are determined to get a job but require additional support to pursue a brighter future. Vanessa thinks her situation is “common among the young people I know, both inside and outside my family. Nobody wants to give us a chance. But I hope that after my internship and training experience at MMYC I will be able to get a job soon.”

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