

Teens are the first out and the last back

The Great Recession hit workers ages 14 to 18 harder than any other age group in Allegheny County, and teen employment is still below its 2008 level. Since 2000, teen jobs have fallen 36%.

28%

decline in teen employment, 2007 to 2011. More than 2x the decline of any other age group.

12%

gap between 2008 and 2025 teen employment levels. Teen jobs have yet to recover from the Great Recession.

2.9%

county jobs held by teens in 2025, down from 4.4% in 2000.

YOUTH LEARN TO WORK BY WORKING

Allegheny teens lost more ground than the overall workforce



Employment indexed to 2000 (2000 = 100). Shading marks the Great Recession, December 2007 to June 2009.

Fewer jobs, not just fewer teens

From 2000 to 2024, the county's population ages 15 to 19 fell 9%, while teen jobs fell 35%. A smaller teen population accounts for about one-quarter of the lost jobs.

Population: Census 2000; 2024 ACS one-year estimate.

GRADUATION IS THE STARTING LINE

Considerations for policymakers

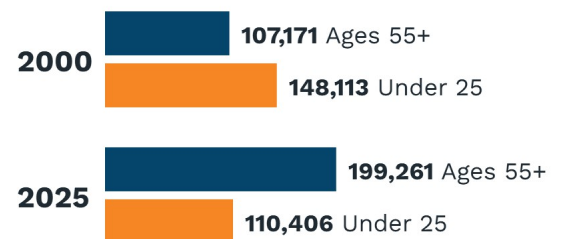
- Treat youth employment as an investment in Pennsylvania's future workforce; fund it to hold steady in downturns, when private hiring of teens contracts first and recovers last.
- Build career-connected learning in industries with large retirement exposure and few teen workers. Two-thirds of teens work in just three industries: retail, food service, and arts and recreation.
- Support the public workforce system in expanding education and training beyond high school, across all pathways and throughout a career.
- Invest in the data and systems needed to follow young people from first jobs into careers.
- Contact Kaylee Shockley, kshockley@partner4work.org.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators, Allegheny County, release R2026Q3. Employment: jobs held at any time in the quarter (EmpTotal), all employers; summer = third quarter. Industry: all employers, Q3 2025.

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The pipeline behind the current workforce is narrowing



Jobs held by workers ages 55 and older and under 25, annual average. In 2000, younger workers outnumbered older workers. In 2025, older workers led 1.8 to 1.

Learn & Earn fills part of the gap

1,000	350	\$1.5M
youth employed each summer	youth employed year-round	youth wages paid each year