

WILMINGTON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT STUDY



By

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Executive Summary

Research supports the claim that unemployment affects the more vulnerable members of society - the youth, particularly the teenage group of 15-19 years. Along with age come the mitigating factors of inexperience, education, gender, and socio-economic status. In the State of Delaware, unemployment poses a particularly significant problem. Each year, thousands of young people are turned away from prospective employment with public, private, governmental, and non-profit organizations. Job-oriented summer programs are incapable of absorbing the youth population seeking employment. Moreover, because of their temporality, summer programs do not produce the long term benefits seen in regular employment.

The government of the State of Delaware is greatly concerned about engaging the youth in meaningful employment. To this end, People's Settlement Association, a non profit organization located in Wilmington, was mandated to conduct a study on employment. Known as the City of Wilmington Youth Employment Research Project, its objective was to "better understand the potential role of youth employment and its impact in our communities." This report presents the results of that study and provides a synopsis of (un)employment trends that may be extrapolated to other areas of the state.

The following is a summary of the major findings of the study.

(a) Employment and unemployment rates exhibit no differences, but unemployment soars at the rate of 50.26%, far exceeding the 3.3% rate of the general population in the state;

(b) Gender, ethnic, age, and educational factors impact upon employment.

- Male-female unemployment rates show no differences, but females (28.79%) experience more unemployment than their male counterparts (20.41%);
- Blacks and Hispanics (48.16%) are more likely not to hold jobs than members of other ethnic groups (1.57%);
- Unemployment affects younger teenagers (42.41%) than older teenagers (5.71%); consequently,
- Teenagers in lower grades (40.83%) experience more unemployment than those in higher grades (9.94%).

(c) Causes of unemployment include job scarcity, lack of experience/skills, underage, lack of transportation, poor job search methods, and lack of enthusiasm for work.

(d) Employed and unemployed youth prefer informal to formal strategies in their job searches, and employed youth perform more freelance type than employee type jobs.

(e) An overwhelming majority of employed and unemployed youth (94%) desire job training in order to enhance employability.

(f) Employed and unemployed youth demonstrate high motivation to graduate from high school, further their studies and/or seek employment.

In order to develop and implement a viable youth employment program, recommendations are made for programs that combine a regular educational curriculum with job skills training, stronger links between businesses and schools that incorporates work placement into the education programs, incentives that encourage the placement and retention of employees, and tax incentives for businesses located in high risk communities.

Introduction

The issue of youth employment constitutes a major concern in society today. Questions border not on the necessity for employment, but on the availability of jobs for the teen youth population and the consequences (individual and societal) arising from gainful experiences. A majority of young people are either unemployed or underemployed, that is seeking work. Youth from low socio-economic families tend to experience higher unemployment rates than those from more favorable circumstances (Porterfield and Winkler, 2006). From the ethnic perspective, White teenagers are more likely to be employed than their Black or Hispanic counterparts (Gardecki, 2001). Furthermore, teenagers, aged 15 to 19, are more likely to be unemployed than young adults in their early twenties (Fogg, Harrington & McCabe, 2005; International Labour Organization (ILO), 2004; National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2005). There also seems to be a correlation between juvenile crime and unemployment.

Many explanations have been proffered for youth unemployment trends. These views are often expressed in supply and demand terms. The demand side stresses the insufficiency of jobs for young people or workers in general. In other words, there are not enough jobs to meet the demand for work. The suggested solution to this problem is the creation of more jobs. The supply side, on the contrary, links unemployment to attitude, inexperience, lack of skills or qualifications, and undesirability. Some young people view work as burdensome and would rather collect unemployment pay in its place. Others have neither the training nor the skills required for the job. Furthermore, many employers see young people as a “transitional group” which does not provide the much needed stability to their companies; therefore, they do not hire them. Given the above considerations, “unemployed or underemployed youth are less able to contribute effectively to national development and have fewer opportunities to exercise their rights as citizens” (ILO, 2004, p. 2).

One of the consequences of unemployment is crime. Research shows that communities with high crime rates have persistently jobless rates (Bushway and Reuter, 2006). Education plays a mediating role in the relationship between unemployment and crime. The absence of education or the presence of low educational attainment exposes young people to frequent periods of unemployment and/or low paying or unsatisfactory jobs - a fact which in turn reinforces the attraction to more rewarding illegal activities (Bushway and Reuter, 2006). Therefore, in order to have better employment opportunities and reduce the time allotted to crime, young people need education to provide the qualifications and skills for the labor market. Other factors mediating between crime and unemployment include control, psychological, and labeling issues. Unemployment leads to a breakdown of positive social bonds for an individual who may fall into crime as a compensatory strategy. Frustration, low self esteem, income inequality, and discouragement may propel a person into risky behavior and crime (ILO, 2004). Furthermore, individuals with criminal records or activities acquire stigmatic labels and are denied employment opportunities as a result. Communities with a high population of such offenders also acquire the negative stigma and are unlikely to attract investments and jobs. Whatever the perspective may be - educational, social, psychological, and judicial, the cycle of unemployment and poverty continues and is

transmitted from generation to generation.

In the study of youth employment, therefore, three key facts stand out: inadequate/unsatisfactory jobs, a poorly educated/trained workforce, and high unemployment-related crime rates. The solutions to these problems seem obvious: providing more jobs, educating the workforce, and reducing the crime rates. However, programs aimed solely at improving an individual's employability or increasing the number of jobs in an area are vulnerable; graduates of such programs sometimes fail to find jobs, and achieving the goal of providing jobs is difficult (Bushway and Reuter, 2006). The age-old conundrum that *"you can't get a job without experience, but you can't get experience without a job a job"* still exists. This has been the experience of many young people in Wilmington (Delaware) and its environs. A major reason is that training often provides the individual with relevant qualifications but with negligible or no job experience. The need for programs which can provide both the theoretical information and also the practical application of learned skills cannot be overemphasized. In addition, stronger links between businesses and schools with emphasis on developing education programs that involve a substantial period of work placement could also have a significant impact. Nevertheless, employment by itself is not a catalyst for crime reduction. It is the benefits associated with getting a job - stability, commitment, high self esteem, responsibility, and better career prospects - that have crime reducing consequences. Short term employment or summer jobs do not offer these opportunities.

The study reported below examines youth employment in Wilmington, Delaware, and its surrounding areas. The focus group is low-income youth between ages 15 and 19 with little or no work experience and who may have other barriers to obtaining jobs and succeeding in society. Although Delaware has a 3.3% unemployment rate (compared with the 4.5% national rate) (Department of Labor, 2007), it is not clear what percentage constitutes youth unemployment for ages 15-19. The aim of this study is to provide a synopsis of youth (un)employment trends with a view to designing programs which will provide education and hands-on experience for gainful employment. The study is a preliminary one and paves a way for further research.

The Study

Methodology

The study was conducted in June/July, 2007 in Wilmington and surrounding areas. The summer months are the peak period when large numbers of youth take or search for work. Three hundred (300) survey questionnaires were randomly administered to youth aged 15-19 engaged in various summer activities. Two hundred and six (206) responses were returned out of which 15 were eliminated because the respondents failed to adhere to the stipulated age criterion. The results reported below reflect data obtained from the final one hundred and ninety one (191) responses.

The survey consisted of twenty-eight indicators which solicited personal, school, employment, and other information (See Appendix 1). Personal information included gender, ethnic background, residence, age, and household membership. School information included type of school, grade level, future plans, and after school activities. The employment section, the main focus of the survey, considered variables such as the presence/absence of employment, types of jobs, search methods, hours worked, transportation, career prospects, rejection, and job training. The survey also sought information on the respondents' contact with law enforcement and their overall plans for the future.

The Data

The statistics provided in this section are purely descriptive and do not include analyses of statistical significance. Non responses are not indicated because it is difficult to gauge if omissions are deliberate or not. For this reason, total values may not add up to 100% for some items on the survey. However, values for multiple answer-questions may be greater than 100%.

Subjects' characteristics

Table 1 and Figures 1 to 5 below present information on the gender, ethnic, residential, age, and household composition of the participants. As the data indicate, the population of female participants (54.97%) exceeded that of male participants (44.50%).

The ethnic composition was skewed in favor of Blacks who made up 90.57% of the subjects, while Caucasians, Asians, Hispanics, and other ethnicities comprised the remaining 9.43%. This is not surprising as more Blacks than other ethnic groups attended the various summer activities from which the participants were sampled. The high participation of Blacks in the summer activities may have been due in part to geographical location of activities, interest, or lack of jobs. In any case, the ethnic composition reflects that of the larger Wilmington community where most low socio-economic families are minority Blacks.

With regard to residential areas, the data indicate that most participants lived in area zip codes 19801 (29.32%) and 19802 (26.70%) which are also predominantly black (City-Data, 2007). Area zip code 19803 had the least number of residents (8.38%). A small proportion of the participants (8.38%) also resided in communities adjacent to Wilmington. The data further show that the number of subjects in each age group decreased as age increased. Fifteen year olds constituted slightly more than half (56.02%) of the population, while 18 and 19 year olds made up only 3.14% and 1%, respectively. 24.08% and 13.09% of the participants, respectively, were aged 16 and 17. These differences may stem from higher unemployability among younger than older teenagers, which made the former more readily available for alternative activities than their older counterparts who may have been working. In addition, most of the participants came from households of 2-4 members (65.97%). This reflects the average household size in Wilmington which is 2.4 people (City-Data, 2007). 26.70% of households in the study had 5-7 members. A household of one member (2.62%) seems to suggest that the respondent resided alone. There were five participants in this category. On the whole, the subjects constituted a fair representation of the general population given the different indicators.

Table 1: Subjects' Characteristics - Summary Statistics

		Youth	Population
TOTAL		191	Number Percent
GENDER	Male	85	44.50
	Female	105	54.97
ETHNICITY	Caucasian	1	1.00*
	Black	173	90.57
	Asian	1	1.00*
	Hispanic	6	3.14
	Other	9	4.17
RESIDENCE	19801	56	29.32
	19802	51	26.70
	19803	16	8.38
	19805	29	15.18
	19720	22	11.51
	Other	16	8.38
AGE	Fifteen	107	56.02
	Sixteen	46	24.08
	Seventeen	25	13.09
	Eighteen	6	3.14
	Nineteen	1	1.00*
HOUSEHOLD	One	5	2.62
	Two-Four	126	65.97
	Five-Seven	51	26.70
	Eight above	4	2.09

NB: * = These figures have been rounded up to whole numbers. Non responses are not reflected in the data; values may not add up to 100%.

Figure 1: Population by Gender

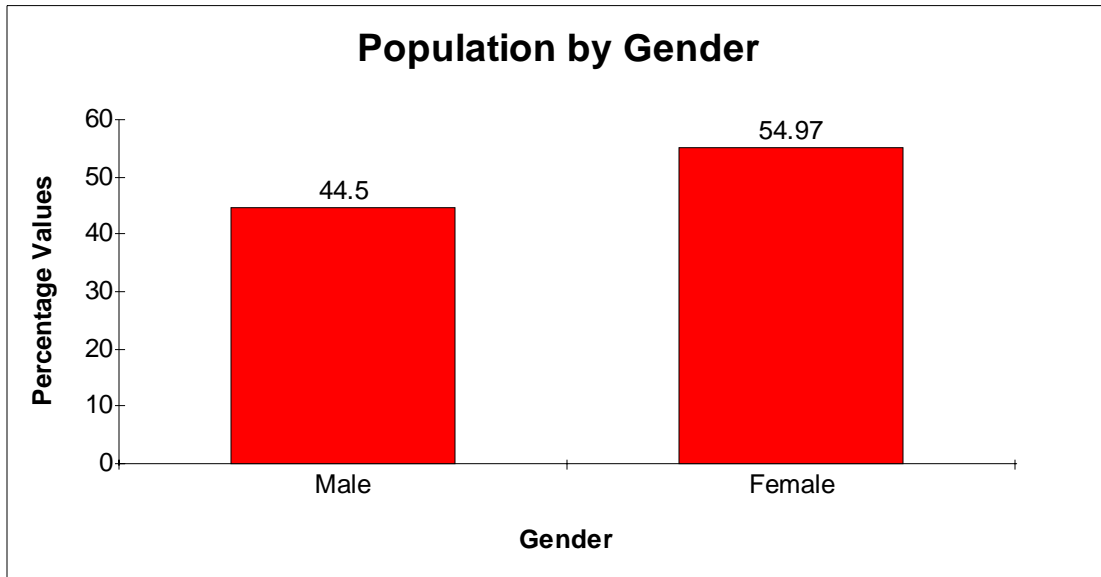


Figure 2: Population by Ethnicity

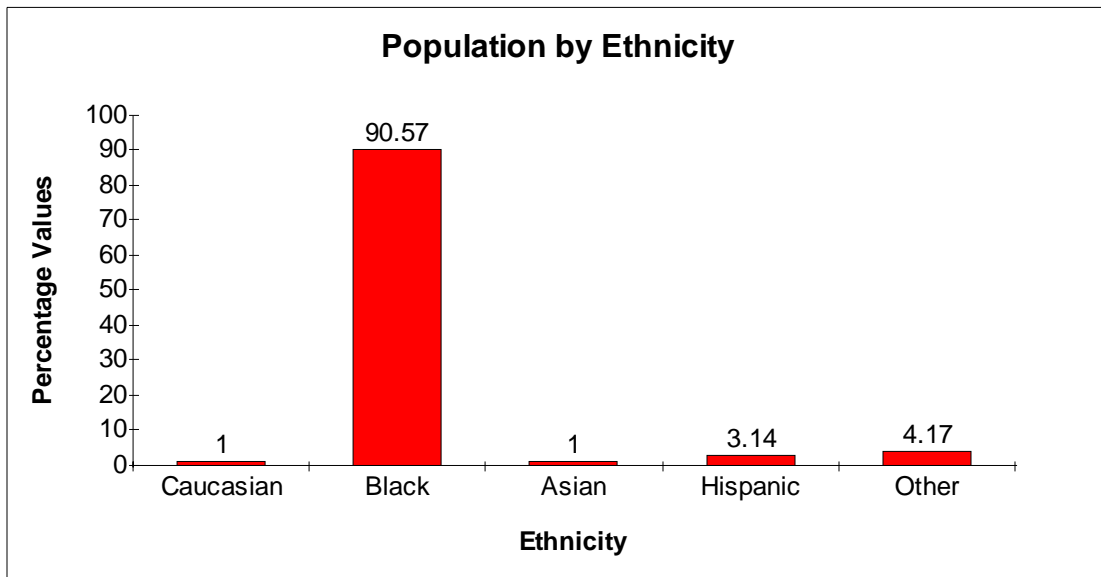


Figure 3: Population by Residence

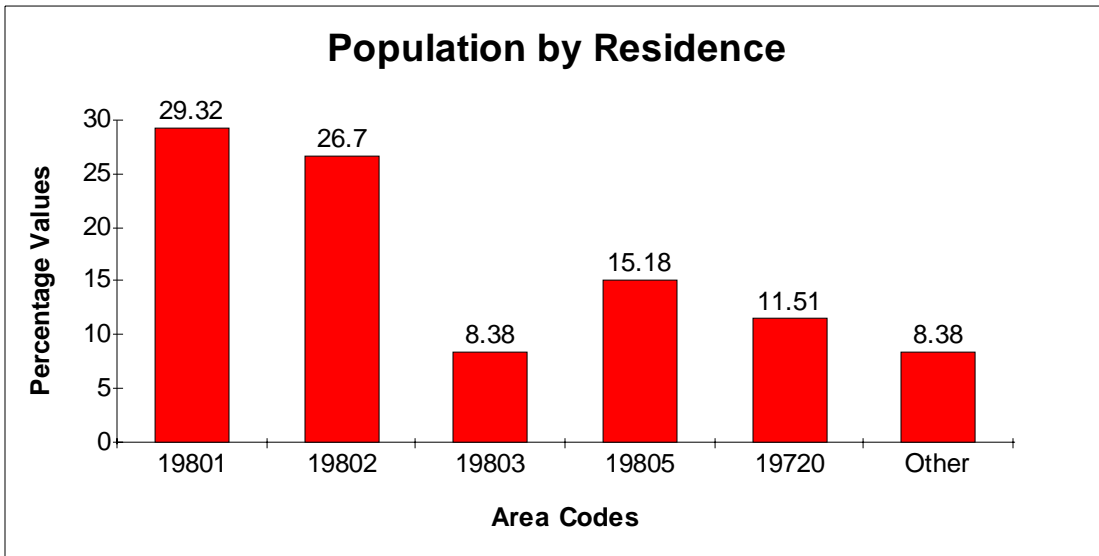


Figure 4: Population by Age

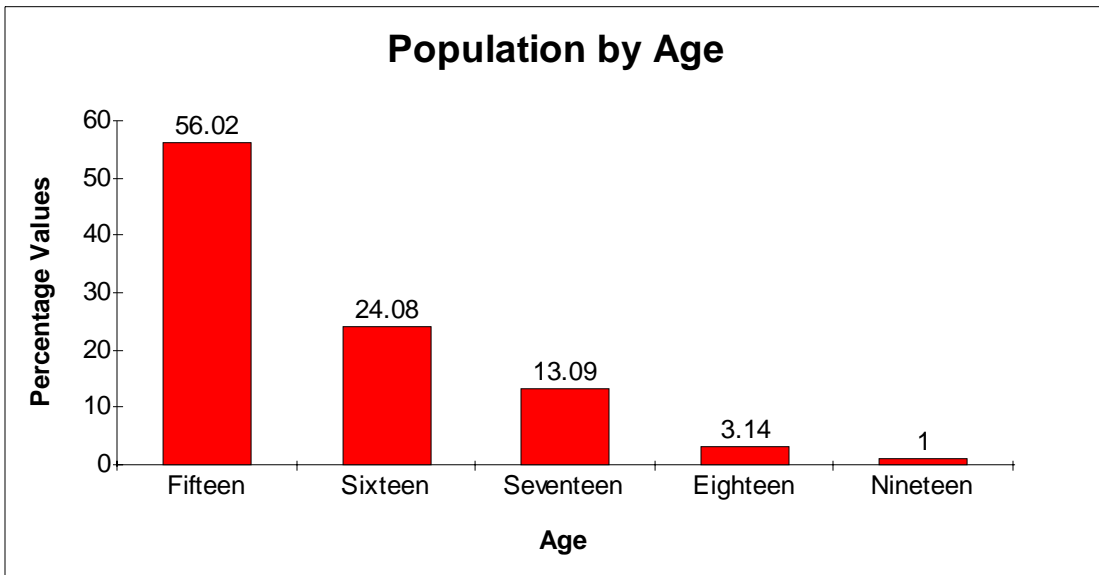
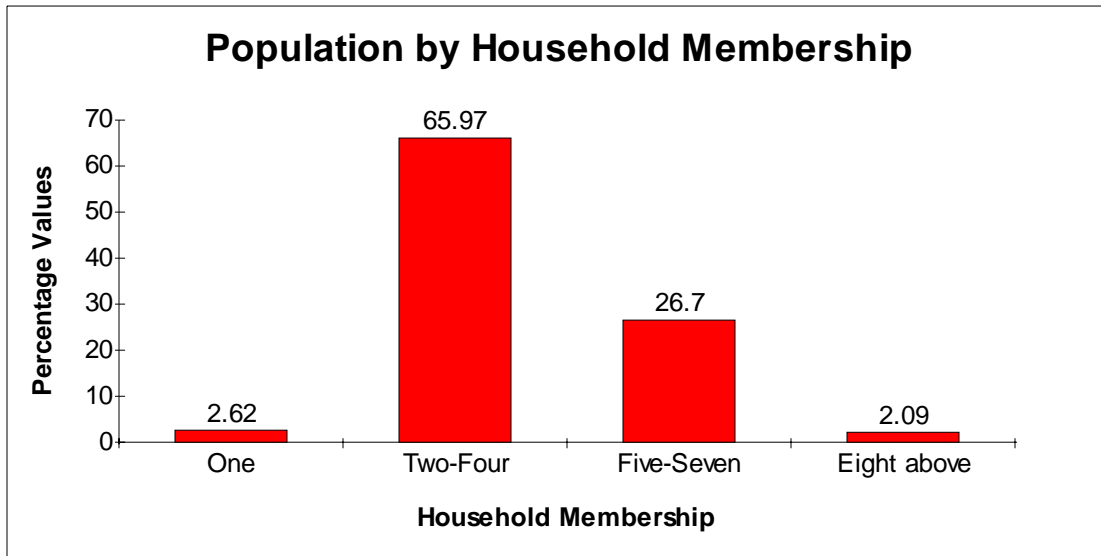


Figure 5: Population by Household Membership



School Information

Table 2 and Figures 6 to 9 below present the statistics on school information. As the results indicate, a large section of the participants (80.10%) attended public schools. Only 9.73% attended private or charter schools while 9.95% went to vocational and non traditional schools. The data for grade levels show that about two-thirds of the population (67.01%) were in grades Nine and Ten (Figure 7), an unsurprising fact given the skewed age composition in favor of younger teenagers. Eleventh and Twelfth graders comprised 18.85% and 10.99% of the population, respectively, and a very small number of subjects (1.05%) indicated that they had dropped out of school. When participants were asked about their plans to graduate from high school, an overwhelming majority (96.86%) responded positively (Figure 8). This degree of motivation on their part is an encouraging development given the high dropout rates in Delaware schools.

The survey also sought information on the subjects' extra-curricular activities during the regular school year and during the summer vacation (Figure 9). Since these were multiple-answer questions, the total values of the responses exceed 100% (See Table 2). Entertainment-based activities such as music/dance/parties (54.97%), sports (56.02%), and video games/computers (32.46%) showed high to moderate involvement

by participants. Employment (29.32%), church (26.18%), and studying (18.32%) were low on the scale, while community service (4.17%) and other activities (9.95%) showed the least involvement. These results are partially similar to those obtained in a 2001 survey of high school senior's recreational activities (NCES, 2005). While the said survey included a broader range of activities than the present one and studied older teenagers, it still showed high to moderate scores for watching TV (94%), sports (67.1%), and playing musical instruments and singing (44.2%), that is, for entertainment-based activities. However, parties or other social activities received a low score (38.2%) in the NCES study. With regard to summer activities, about half of the participants (54.45%) in the present study reported having the same activities during the school year and in summer. Others had slightly different or entirely different activities during the summer period.

Figure 6: Population by School Type

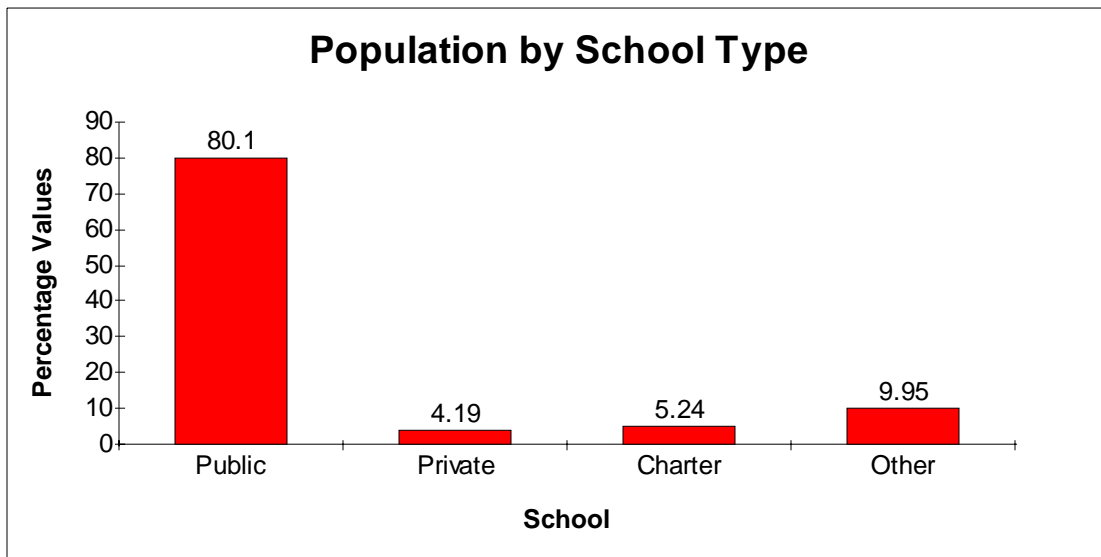


Table 2: School Information - Summary statistics

		191	Number	Percent
			Youth	Population
TOTAL		191	Number	Percent
SCHOOL TYPE	Public		153	80.10
	Private		8	4.19
	Charter		10	5.24
	Other		19	9.95
GRADE LEVEL	Nine		68	35.60
	Ten		60	31.41
	Eleven		36	18.85
	Twelve		21	10.99
	Dropout		2	1.05
GRADUATION PLAN	Yes		185	96.86
	No		1	1
	Not sure		1	1
ACTIVITIES	Music/Dance/Parties		105	54.97
	Sports		107	56.02
	Job		56	29.32
	Study		35	18.32
	Club meetings		25	13.09
	Community service		9	4.17
	Church		50	26.18
	Video games/Computers		62	32.46
	None of the above		16	8.38
	Other		19	9.95
SUMMER ACTIVITIES	Same as above		104	54.45
	Very different		29	15.18
	Somewhat different		49	4.71

NB: * = These figures have been rounded up to whole numbers. Non responses are not reflected in the data; values may not add up to 100%.

Figure 7: Population by Grade Level

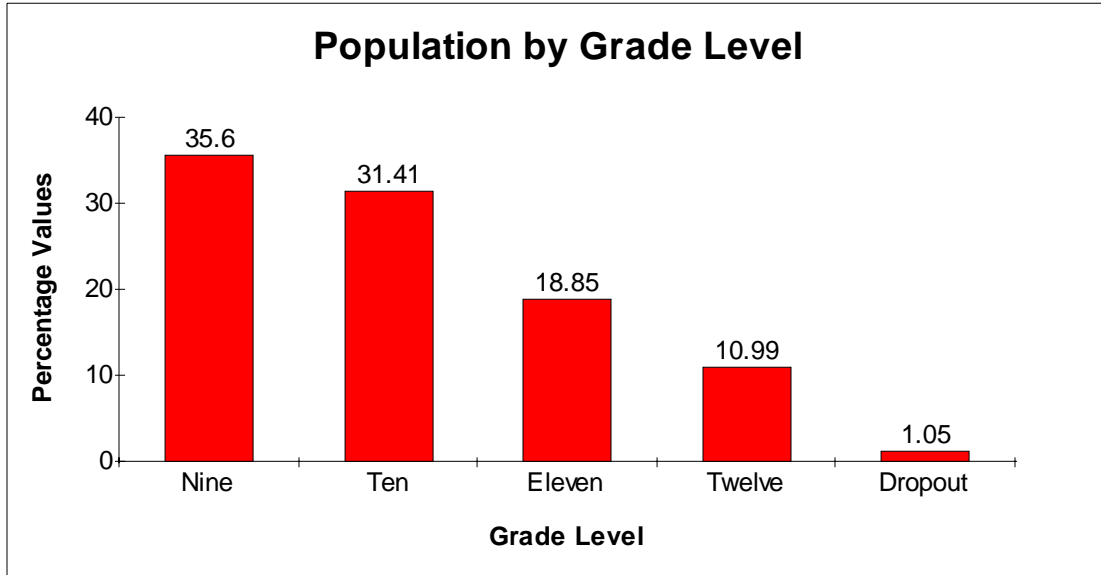


Figure 8: Graduation Plan

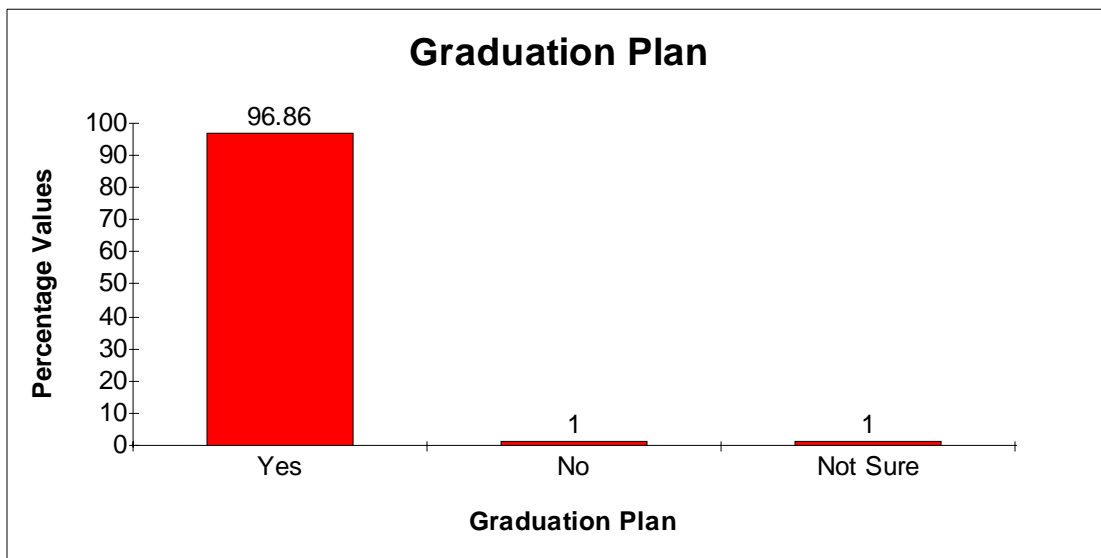
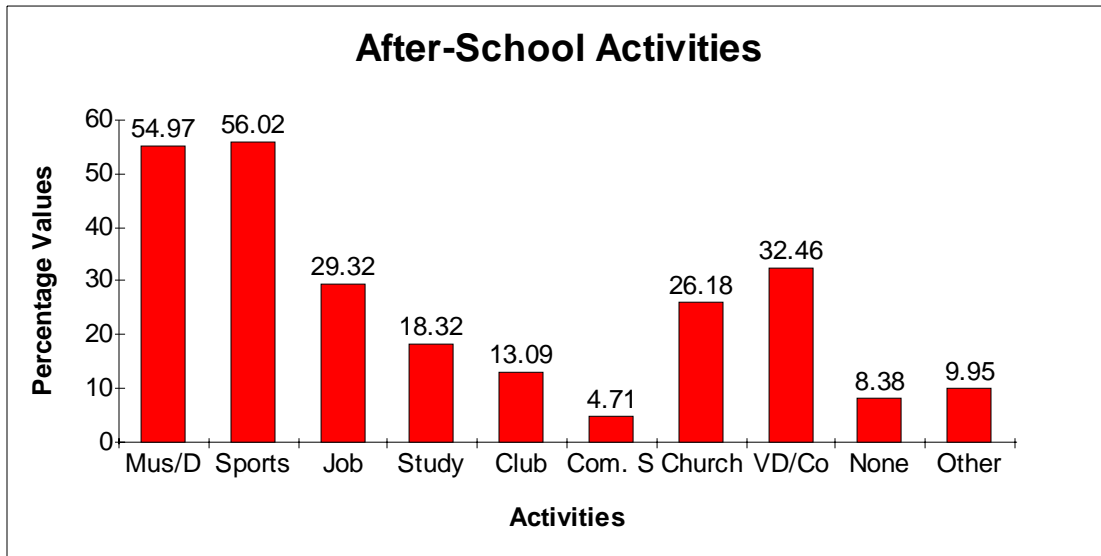


Figure 9: After-School Activities



Employment demographics

Tables 3 and 4 and Figures 10 to 15 below present a summary of overall employment rates together with rates for gender, ethnicity, age, grade level, and household membership. While the data show no real difference between the number of employed (49.73%) and unemployed (50.26%) youth, they do confirm the high level of unemployment among them (Figure 10). Only half of the population ever worked or were employed at the time of the study. Among those employed, there was very little difference between the sexes - 24.08% for females and 25.65% for males (Figure 11). However, unemployment affected more females (28.79%) than males (20.41%). These results seem to contradict some of the trends in other research. For example, the NCES statistics for 2003 show greater male (19.3%) than female (15.6%) unemployment among youth aged 16-19 (NCES, 2005). It must be noted, though, that the present study had a larger female than male population, which may explain the difference in rates with the NCES statistics.

From the ethnic perspective, there was greater employment than unemployment among Caucasians, Asians and other groups, with the combined rates of 5.14% for

Table 3 : Youth Employment - Summary Statistics

		Employed Youth	Unemployed Youth
		(%)	(%)
TOTAL		49.73	50.26
GENDER	Male	24.08	20.41
	Female	25.65	28.79
ETHNICITY	Caucasian	1.00*	0.00
	Black	44.50	46.07
	Asian	1.00*	0.00
	Hispanic	1.05	2.09
	Other	3.14	1.57
AGE	Fifteen	21.99	34.03
	Sixteen	15.70	8.38
	Seventeen	8.38	4.71
	Eighteen	2.62	1.00*
	Nineteen	1.00*	0.00
GRADE LEVEL	Nine	11.52	24.08
	Ten	14.66	16.75
	Eleven	12.57	6.28
	Twelve	7.33	3.66
	Dropout	1.05	0.00

NB: * = These figures have been rounded up to whole numbers. Non responses are not reflected in the data; values may not add up to 100%.

employed youth and 1.57% for unemployed youth (Figure 12). The trend was reversed for Blacks and Hispanics who experienced more unemployment than employment. There were 46.07% unemployed Blacks against 44.50% employed ones, and 2.09%

unemployed Hispanics against 1.05% employed counterparts. In spite of skewed ethnic demographics, the results support other research which demonstrate more employment for other ethnicities than Blacks or Hispanics (Gardecki, 2001).

Age also affected employment trends as the younger teenagers experienced more unemployment than the older ones (Figure 13). There was 34.03% unemployment among 15 year olds and 8.38%, 4.71%, 1% and 0% unemployment, respectively, among 16, 17, 18 and 19 year olds. However, the data also indicate that more 15 year olds than other age groups had jobs. That the younger teenagers constituted over half the study population probably explains this deviation from the norm. With regard to grade level, there was greater unemployment in lower grades than higher grades (Figure 14). 24.08% were unemployed students in grade 9, while only 3.66% were in grade 12. Intermediate ranges included 16.75% and 6.28% for grades 10 and 11, respectively. The small fraction of dropouts (1.05%) did not affect the general trends observed.

Figure 10: Employed and Unemployed Youth

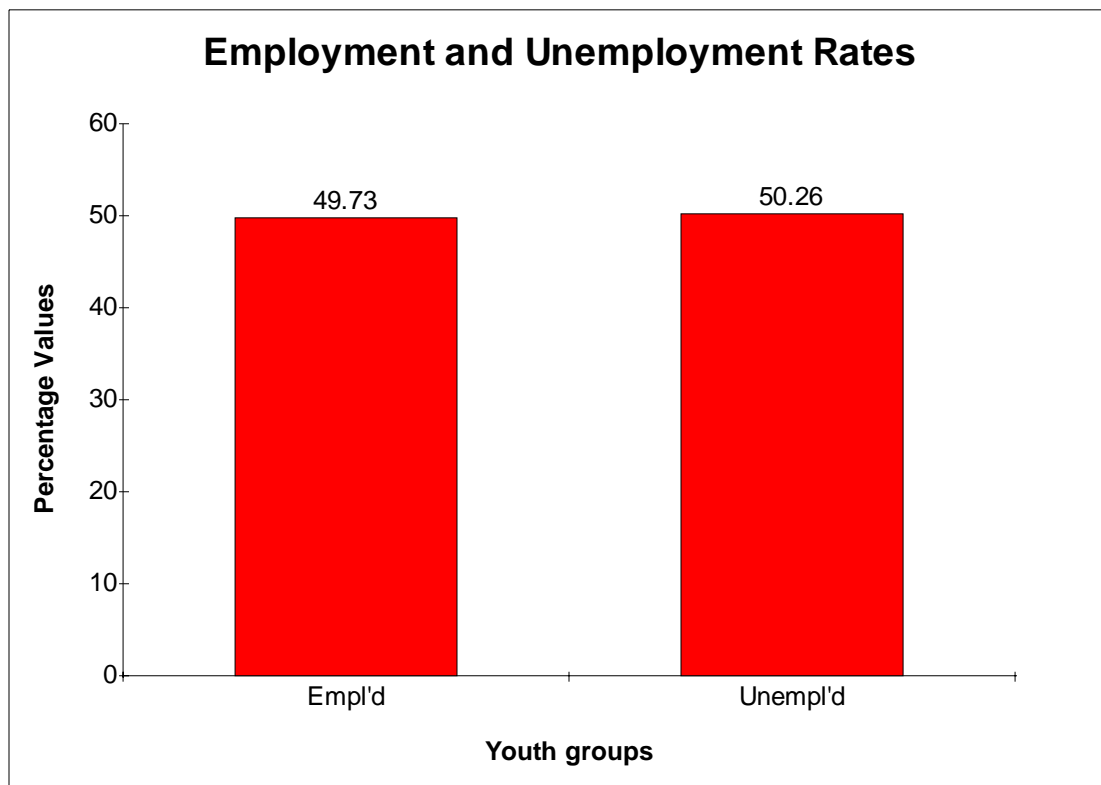


Figure11: Employment by Gender

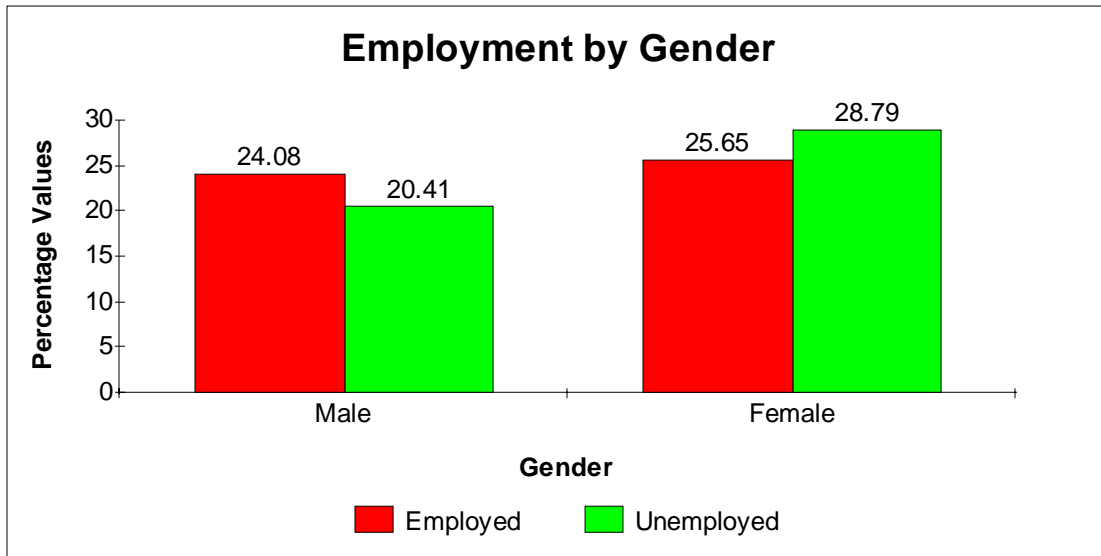


Figure 12: Employment by Ethnicity

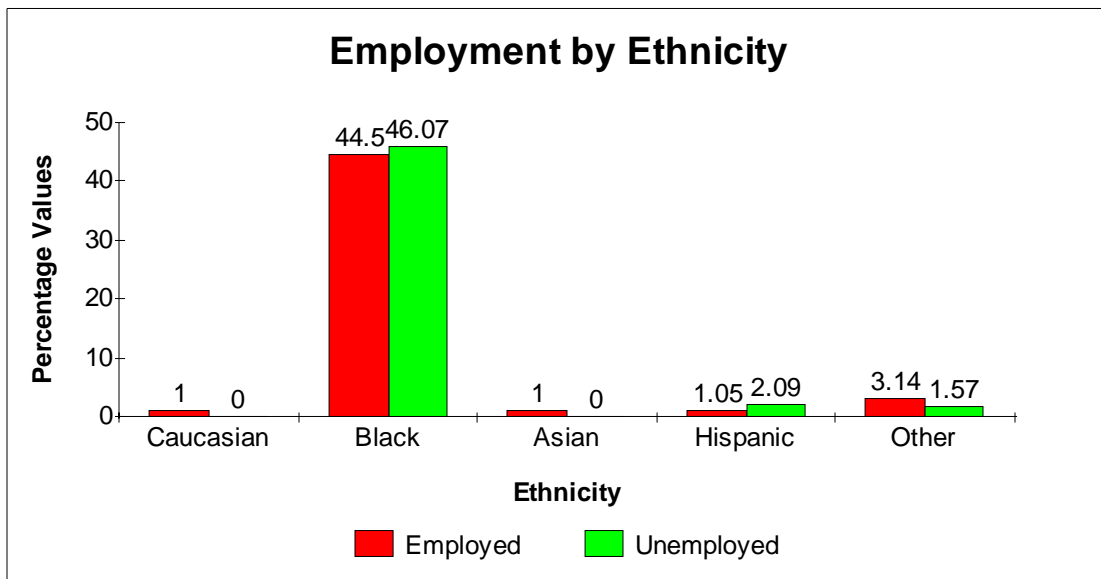


Figure 13: Employment by Age



Figure 14: Employment by Grade Level

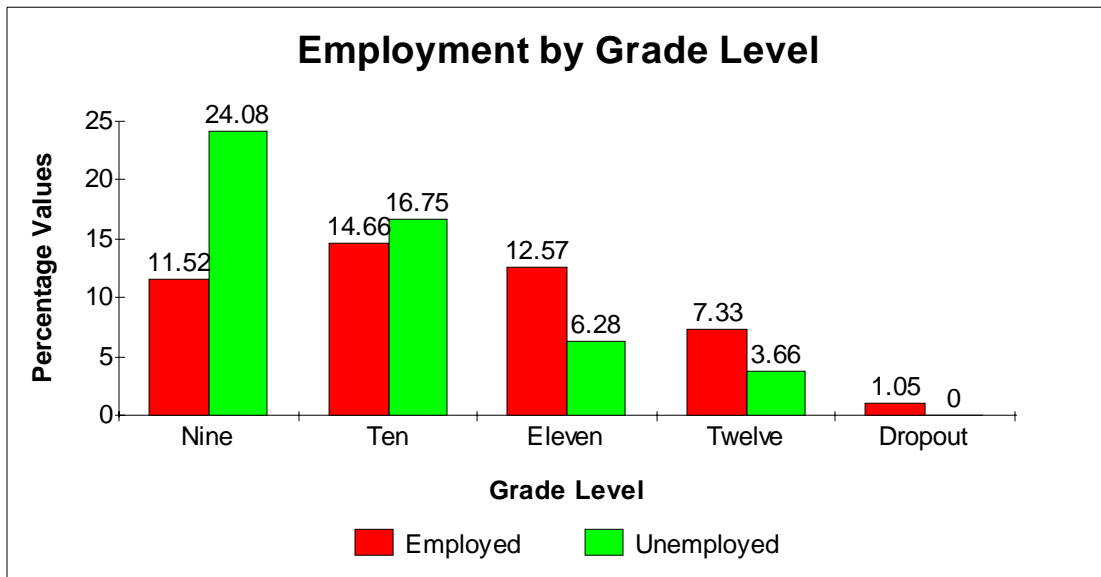


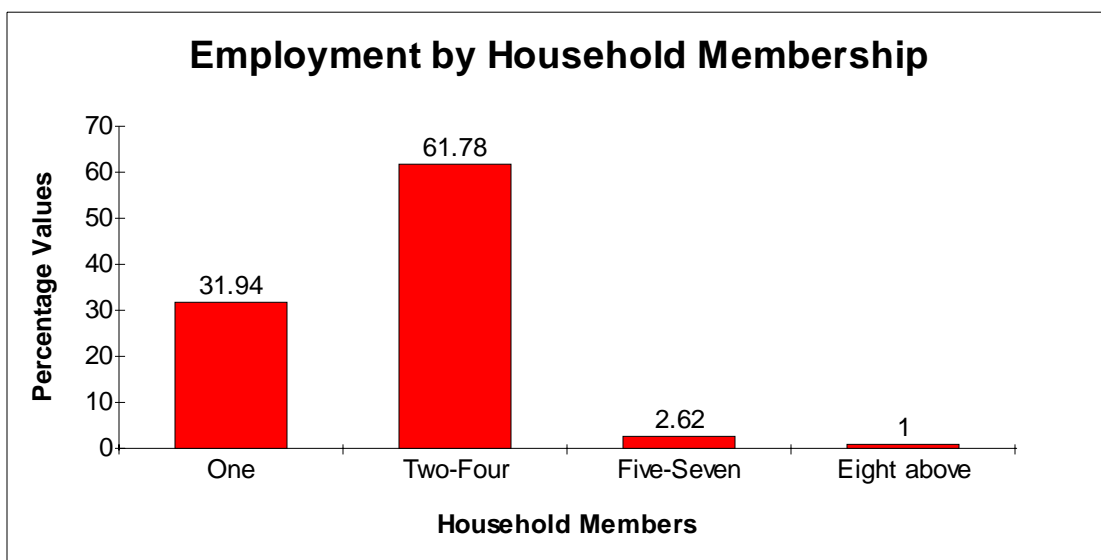
Table 4 below shows that more than half of the households (61.78%) had 2-4 employed members. About one third (31.94%) had only 1 employed member, a fact which may further underscore the poverty level of many of the participants, especially those from single parent homes. A small proportion of households (2.62%) reportedly had more than 5 employed members.

Table 4: Employment Statistics for Household Members

HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS EMPLOYED	Number	Percent
1	61	31.94
2-4	118	61.78
5-7	5	2.62
8 and above	1	1.00*

NB: * = These figures have been rounded up to whole numbers. Non responses are not reflected in the data; values may not add up to 100%.

Figure 15: Employment by Household Membership



In summary, the data show high unemployment among the participants with

variable patterns observed for individual indicators. In order to provide more information on employment, it was necessary to examine how different factors impacted upon the two groups of employed and unemployed participants.

Employed Youth

Tables 5 to 7 and Figures 16 to 23 below present the summary statistics for employed youth according to employment type, search strategies, hours worked, transportation, family needs, career prospects, and job training. As the data indicate, the most popular jobs were childcare/babysitting (51.58%) (Figure 16). Food service came next at 16.54%. Only 8.42% and 6.32% of the participants reported having sales and community center jobs, respectively. Temporary agency and clerical/administrative work followed closely at 5.26% each. Nobody reported working in the automotive sector or corporations. However, some participants engaged in other forms of employment (16.84%). When grouped as broad job types - employee types (most jobs) and freelance types (childcare/babysitting) - the data show that about half of the participants had freelance jobs. Gardecki (2001) stresses the viability of such jobs for many teenagers due to their sporadic nature, low hours requirements, and non subjection to the Fair Labor Standards Act (which requires maximum hours and parental permission). In other words, freelance jobs gain popularity among teenagers because of their less stringent requirements. Gardecki also stresses the age and gender biases in holding freelance jobs: being younger or female correlates positively with having freelance jobs. In the present study, most female participants held childcare/babysitting jobs. The relationship between age and freelance jobs, however, was not established.

The main job search methods were parents (32.63%) and friends (23.16%) (Figure 17). Participants also obtained job information from advertisements (10.53%), schools (9.47%), and employment agencies (5.26%). The Labor Department trailed behind at 4.21%. These results support earlier research findings that informal job search methods such as friends, acquaintances, relatives, or neighbors are more frequently used by job seekers than formal search methods such as advertisements, schools, employment

Table 5: Employed Youth - Type of Employment and Job Search Methods

	Number	Percent
TOTAL	95	
TYPE OF JOB		
Temporary Agency		
Temporary Agency	5	5.26
Food Service	16	16.84
Auto	0	0.00
Sales	8	8.42
Childcare/Babysitting	49	51.58
Clerical/Administrative	5	5.26
Community Center	6	6.32
Mall	4	4.21
Corporation	0	0.00
Other	16	16.84
SEARCH METHOD		
Employment Agency	5	5.26
School	9	9.47
Labor Department	4	4.21
Friend	22	23.16
Advertisement	10	10.53
Parents	31	32.63
Others	20	21.05

NB: Non responses are not reflected in the data; values may not add up to 100%.

agencies, welfare offices, community organizations, and private agencies (Henly, 2000; Holzer, 1987). Although the present study did not consider the relationship between search strategy and job offer, Henly (2000) and Holzer (1987) found that informal methods produced the most job offers (in the low wage labor market), while formal methods produced the least job offers. These trends, however, impacted negatively upon African Americans who were often the least hired.

Figure 16: Type of Employment

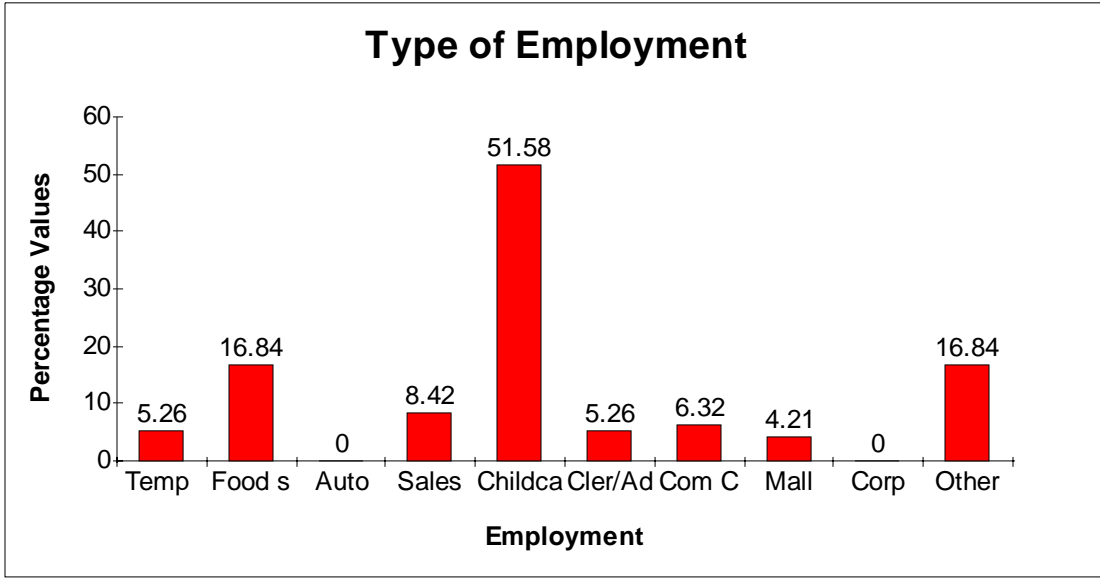
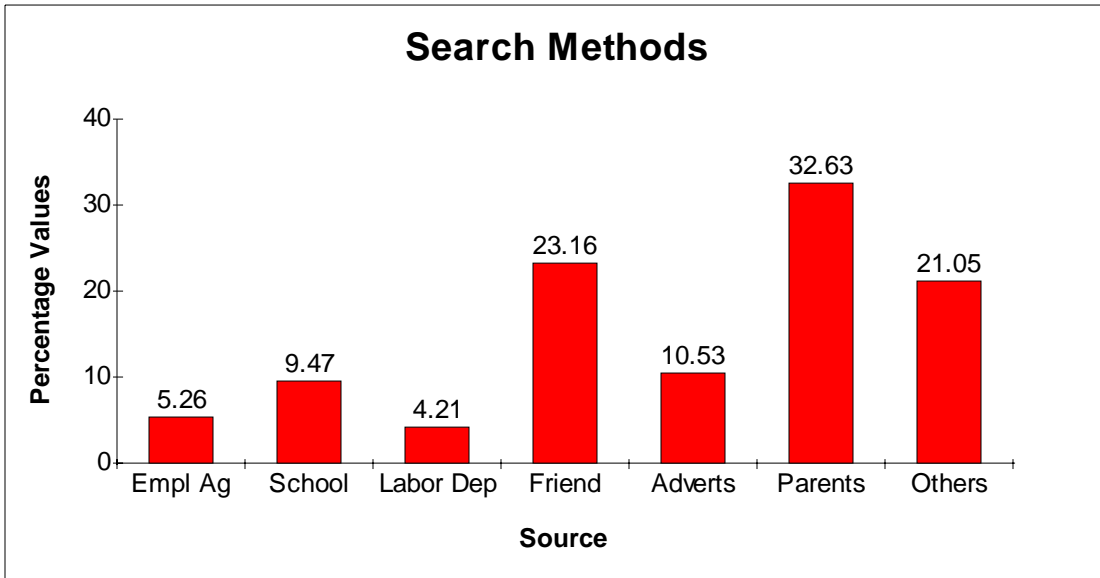


Figure 17: Search Methods



The time spent on the jobs polarized at both ends of the continuum as shown in

Table 6 and Figure 18. 35.79% of the participants worked over twenty hours per week while 31.58% worked the least number of hours - two to six hours. Only 12.63% and 10.53% spent seven to eleven and seventeen to twenty hours, respectively, at their jobs. 8.42% reported working twelve to sixteen hours per week. As the data show, a third of the subjects exceeded twenty hours of work per week, a trend commonly observed among teenagers in economically disadvantaged families (Porterfield and Winkler, 2006). These teenagers often have to compensate for their families' financial inadequacies by working long hours. As Johnson and Lino (2000) point out, there may be negative consequences such as lower educational attainment. This in turn may accelerate the dropout rates among the teenagers, a major cause for concern in the future.

With regard to transportation, the bus (34.74%) was the preferred means of getting to work (Table 6 and Figures 19). Some participants walked (27.37%), and others used their own transportation - car (21.05%) and bicycle (3.16%). Only a relatively small proportion went by train (1.05%) or with a co-worker (2.11%). Some participants, though, did use more than one form of transportation. Possible factors affecting the choice of transportation include commute distance to work, job location, economic considerations, and convenience. When asked if their earnings helped pay for family expenditures, more than half the participants (55.79%) responded negatively, while 44.21% responded positively (Figure 20). However, it is not clear what proportion of the latter's earning contributed to family necessities. Johnson and Lino (2000) observe that teenagers, irrespective of their economic status, do not contribute significantly toward family expenses. Rather, they use their wages on work-related activities and for personal needs. The lack of contribution by teenagers negatively affects low socio-economic families who need more financial support than advantaged families who can do without additional income from their teenage members.

Table 6: Employed Youth - Weekly Hours, Transportation, and Family Needs

TOTAL	95	Number	Percent
WEEKLY HOURS			
Two-Six		30	31.58
Seven-Eleven		12	12.63
Twelve-Sixteen		8	8.42
Seventeen to Twenty		10	10.53
Over Twenty		34	35.79
TRANSPORTATION			
Own Car		20	21.05
Bus		33	34.74
Train		1	1.05
Bicycle		3	3.16
Walk		26	27.37
Co-Worker		2	2.11
Other		14	14.74
FAMILY NEEDS			
Yes		42	44.21
No		53	55.79

NB: Non responses are not reflected in the data; values may not add up to 100%.

Figure 18: Employed Youth - Weekly Hours

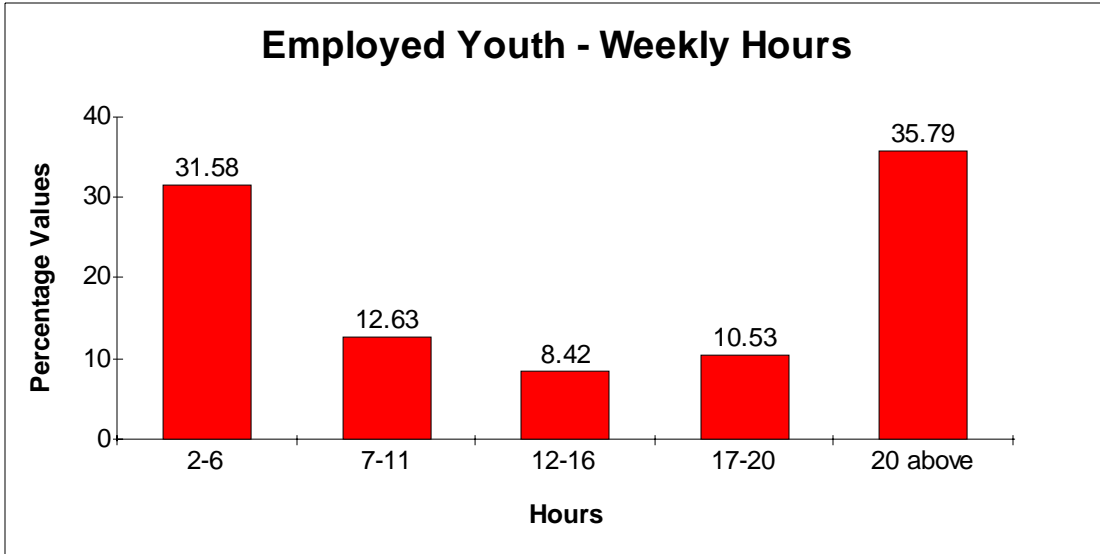


Figure 19: Employed Youth - Transportation

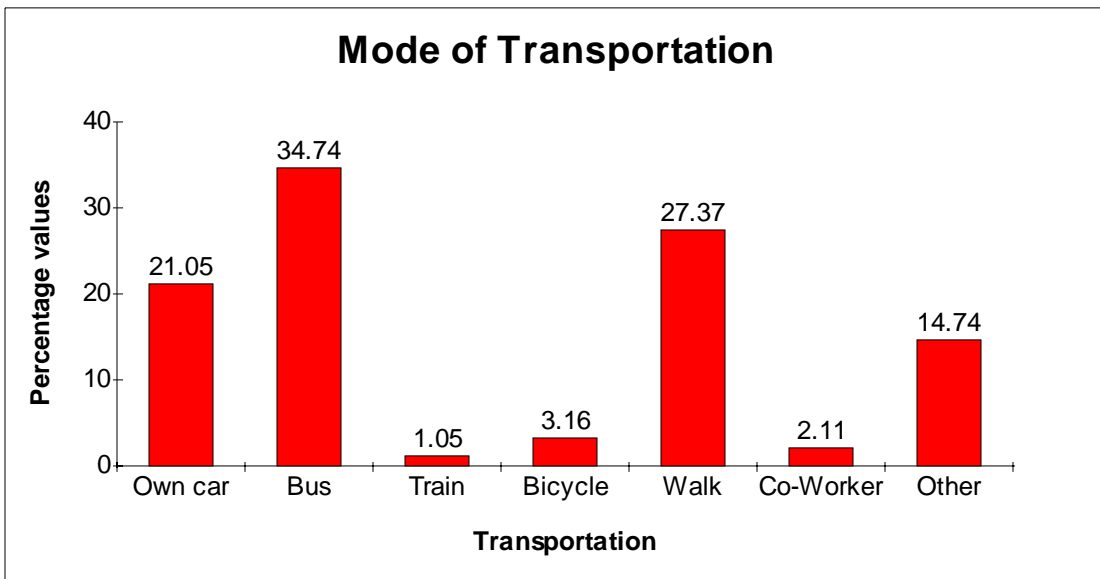
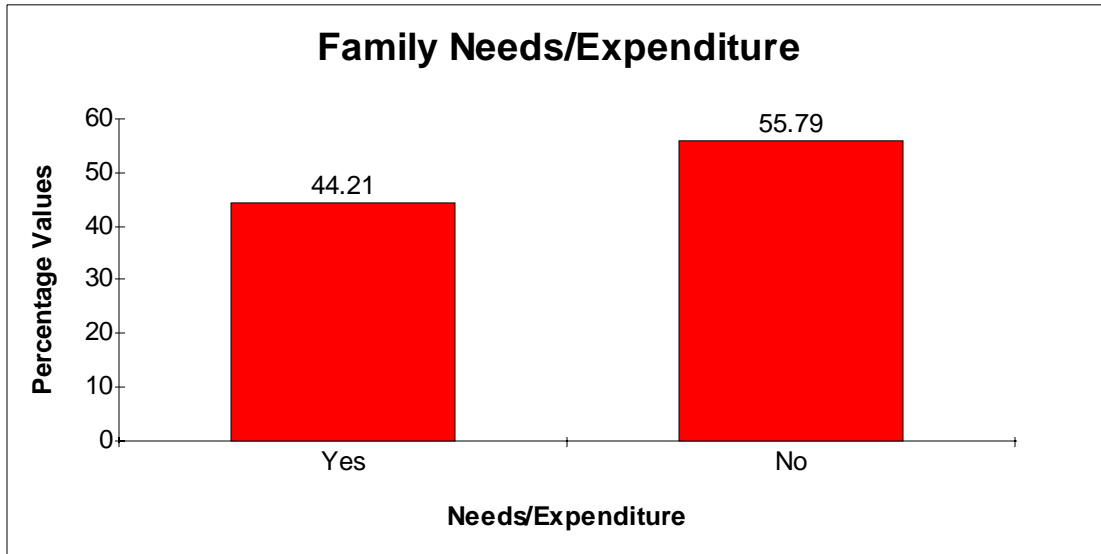


Figure 20: Employed Youth - Family Needs/Expenditure



With regard to career prospects, 48.42% expressed optimism that their employment would lead to better careers or employment. 36.84% were unsure, and 10.53% saw no career prospects (Table 7 and Figure 21). These differences in opinion may depend on the presence or absence of motivating factors such as good working conditions, prospects for advancement, good wages, and interest. Finally, the job training data show that less than half of the participants (43.16%) received no job training, a majority (95.12%) of whom expressed the desire for further training (Table 7 and Figures 22 and 22). Acquiring the necessary skills is important for viable future employment.

In summary, employed youth performed more freelance than employee type jobs and used more informal than formal strategies to find jobs. They worked various weekly hours, with many exceeding the twenty hour limit, and generally used public transportation to work. A good proportion saw career prospects from their jobs, and many desired job training in order to enhance such opportunities.

Table 7: Career Prospects and Job Training

	Number	Percent
TOTAL	95	
CAREER PROSPECTS		
Yes	46	48.42
No	10	10.53
Not Sure	35	36.84
Not Applicable	3	3.16
JOB TRAINING		
Yes	53	55.79
No	41	43.16
NEED FOR TRAINING		
Yes	39	95.12
No	1	2.44

NB: Non responses are not reflected in the data; values may not add up to 100%.

Figure 21: Employed Youth - Career Prospects

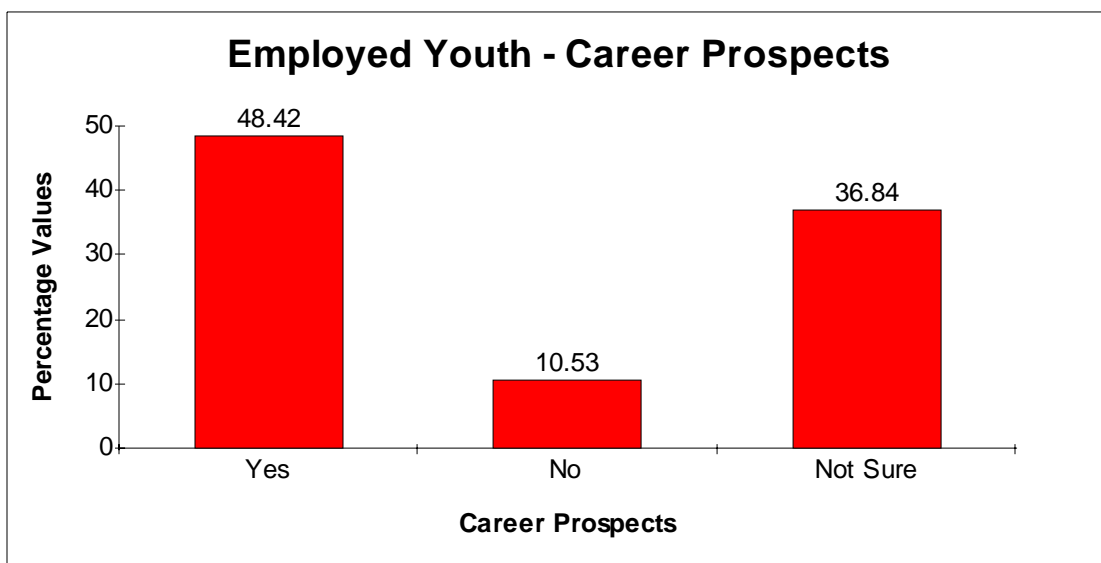
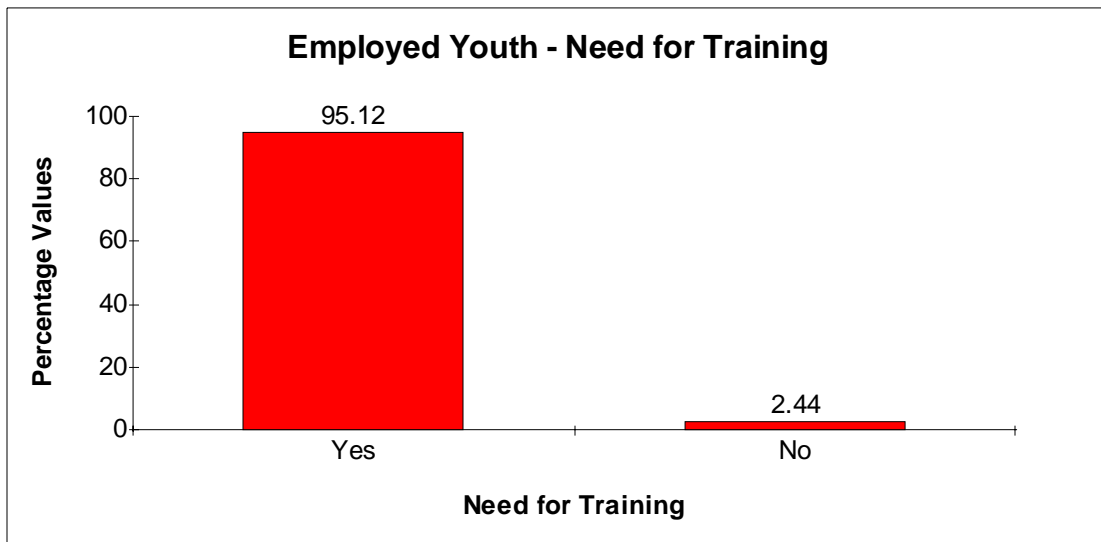


Figure 22: Employed Youth - Job Training



Figure 23: Employed Youth - Need for Training



Unemployed Youth

Tables 8 to10 and Figures 24 to 28 present the summary statistics for unemployed participants. It will be recalled that the overall unemployment rate was 50.26%. As the data below indicate, only 55.21% (i.e. 53 out of 96) reported making any job search efforts; 30.21% (29 out of 96) did not look for work (Figure 24). It is not clear why the latter group did not seek employment; possible explanations may range from lack of enthusiasm to scarcity of jobs to laziness, other interests, and inexperience. Among the job seekers, the most popular search place was businesses (22.64%)(Figure 25). The least used job search methods were the Labor Department (7.55%), corporations (7.55%), city/county offices (5.66%) and employment agencies (3.77%). Community centers (13.21%), newspapers (11.32%), and the sales sector (11.32%) ranked second and third and participants also used other search methods which included some networking among friends and family.

Among the reasons for not being hired included underage (37.74%), no openings (16.98%), and no job experience (15.09%) (Table 9 and Figure 26). 13.32% of the youth also experienced rejection for lack of transportation and 15.09% for other reasons. Porterfield and Winkler (2006), from their findings, conclude that less access to transportation, fewer networking opportunities, and fewer job opportunities account for unemployment among economically disadvantaged teens. In relation to job training, 27.08% of the subjects reported having had training, while 52.08% indicated receiving no training (Table 10 and Figure 27). Of the later, 94% expressed the desire for job training, and 2% did not want training (Figure 28).

On the whole, the study demonstrates that unemployment stemmed from various factors: age, job scarcity, inexperience, lack of transportation, poor job search methods, and failure to look for work. As more than half the subjects lacked job training, the provision of skills training to them cannot be overemphasized.

Table 8: Unemployed Youth - Job Search Attempts and Methods

	Number	Percent
JOB SEARCH ATTEMPTS		
Yes	53	55.21
No	29	30.21
SEARCH METHODS		
Employment Agency	2	3.77
Labor Department	4	7.55
City/County Offices	3	5.66
Businesses	12	22.64
Corporations	4	7.55
Sales	6	11.32
Community Centers	7	13.21
Newspapers	6	11.32
Other	16	30.19

NB: Non responses are not reflected in the data; values may not add up to 100%.

Table 9: Reasons for Job Refusals.

Reason	Number	Percent
No Job Experience	8	15.09
No Qualifications	0	0.00
No Openings	9	16.98
No Transportation	7	13.21
Underage	20	37.74
Other	8	15.09

NB: Non responses are not reflected in the data; values may not add up to 100%.

Table 10: Unemployed Youth - Job Training

	Number	Perfect
JOB TRAINING		
Yes	26	27.08
No	50	52.08
NEED FOR TRAINING		
Yes	47	94.00
No	1	2.00

NB: Non responses are not reflected in the data.

Figure 24: Unemployed Youth - Job Search Attempts

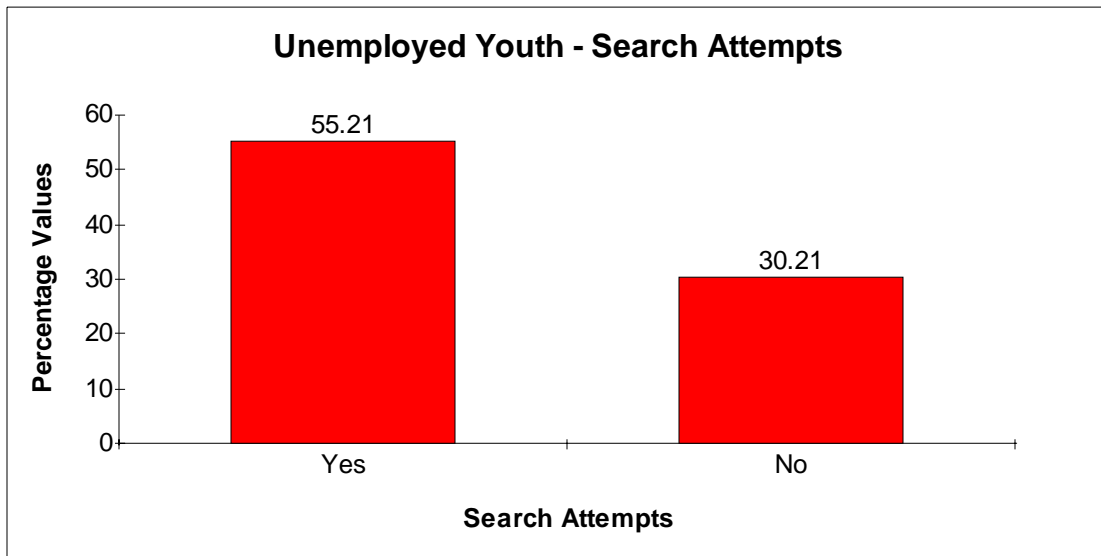


Figure 25: Unemployed Youth - Search Methods

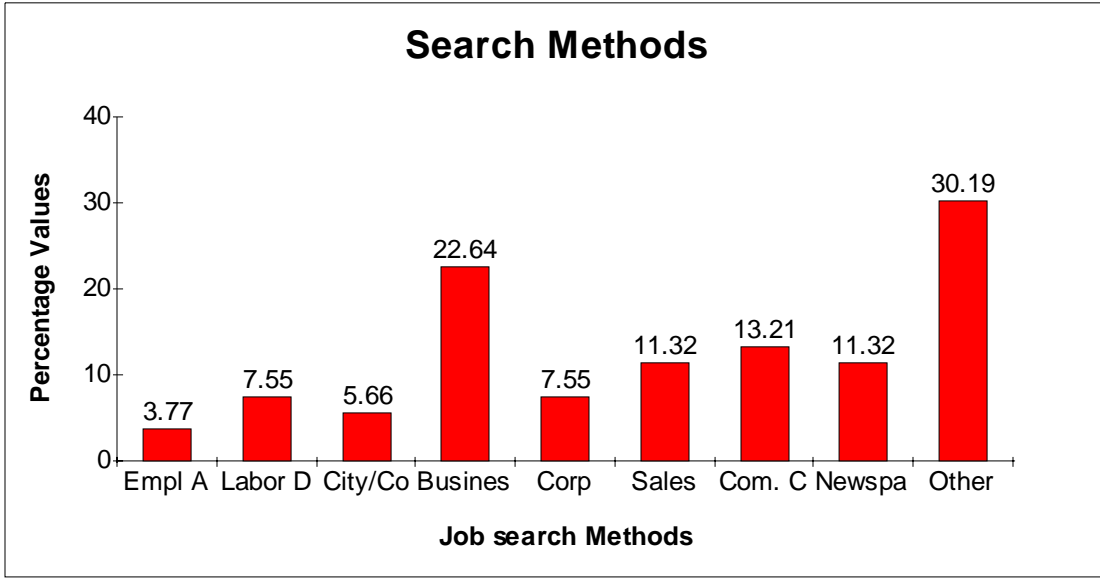


Figure 26: Unemployed Youth - Reasons for Refusal

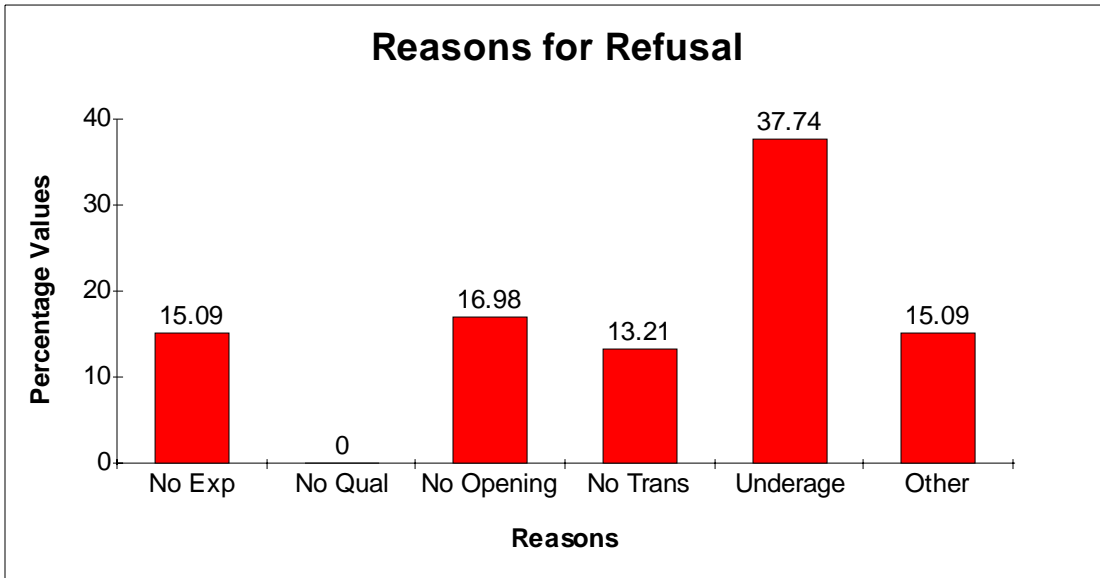
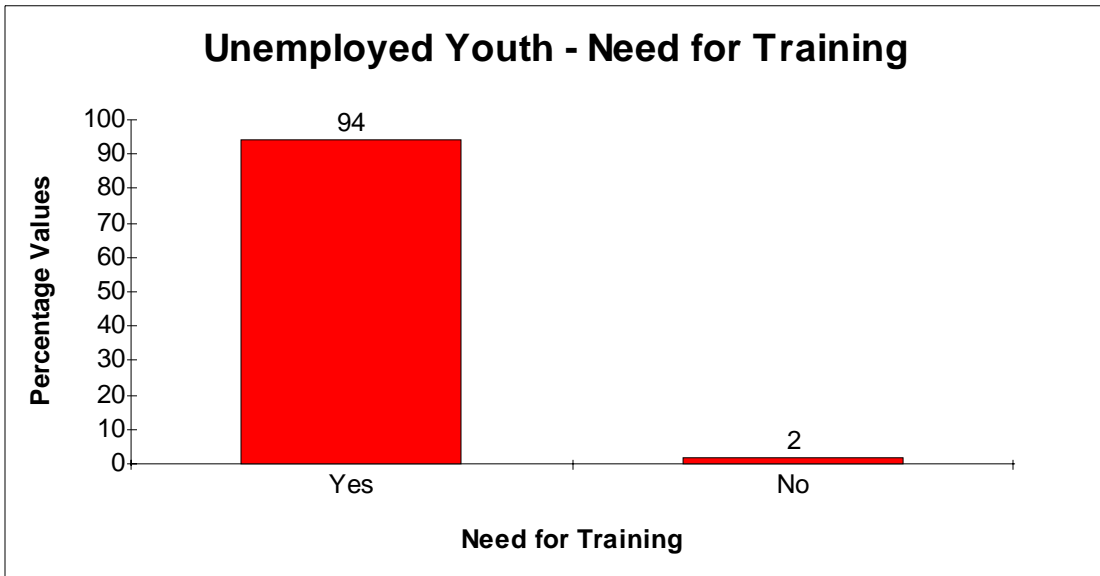


Figure 27: Unemployed Youth - Job Training



Figure 28: Unemployed Youth - Need for Training



Other Information

The survey also sought information from the participants regarding contacts with law enforcement and their plans for the future. In Table 11 and Figure 29 below, 20.42% reported contacts with the police, while 57.07% reported no such contacts. About a fifth of the participants did not respond, perhaps, by omission or for fear of self implication. The nature of involvement varied from arrests to probations to accidents, and disorderly behavior (Table 11 and Figure 30). 28.21% of the subjects experienced arrests. 20.51% of contacts each were for accidents and disorderly behavior. School related incidents and probations, respectively, accounted for 15.38% and 12.82% of contacts. 10.26% reported having been convicted. DUI accounted for only 2.56% of contacts. A further analysis of the data revealed that just under one-third of the “offenders” (30.77%) were unemployed, and about two-thirds (69.23%) were employed. Because of underreporting by the participants, these statistics cannot be viewed as contradicting the general claim that unemployment leads to crime or risky behavior. Other mitigating factors would have to be considered and assessments made in order to establish which of the cases were unemployment related. Table 12 and Figure 31 indicate that two-thirds of the participants planned to graduate (65.45%) and go to college (63.35%), while 30.37% considered job training/employment as an option. 42.93%, a majority of whom were females, had plans for marriage. A small proportion (10.47%) considered joining the family business.

In summary, one fifth of the participants had some involvement with law enforcement. This is a large proportion of young people, and the probability of repeat offenses and their repercussions remains a cause for concern. On the bright side, the participants seemed to be highly motivated as a majority desired to further their education and/or get employment.

Table 11: Police Contact Information

	Number	Percent
POLICE CONTACT		
Yes	39	20.42
No	109	57.07
TYPE OF CONTACT		
Arrest	11	28.21
Conviction	4	10.26
Probation	5	12.82
Ticket	2	5.13
Accident	8	20.51
DUI	1	2.56
Disorderly Behavior	8	20.51
School	6	15.38
Other	5	12.82

NB: Non responses are not reflected in the data; values may not add up to 100%.

Table 12: Future Plans

	Number	Percent
FUTURE PLANS		
Graduation	125	65.45
Job Training/Employment	58	30.37
College	12	63.35
Marriage	82	42.93
Travel	49	25.65
Family Business	20	10.47
Other	21	10.99

NB: Non responses are not reflected in the data; values may not add up to 100%.

Figure 29: Police Contact

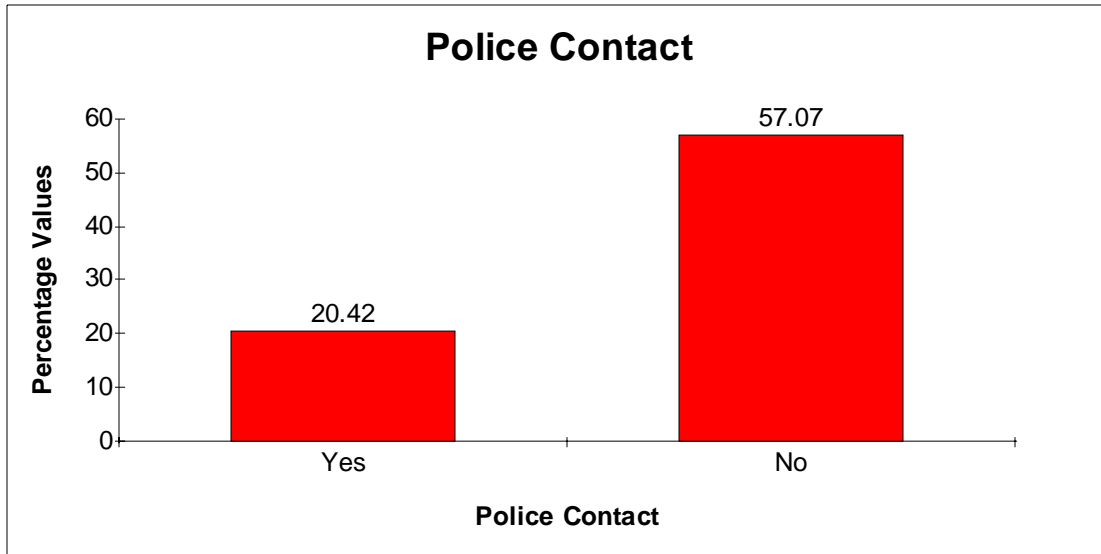


Figure 30: Type of Contact

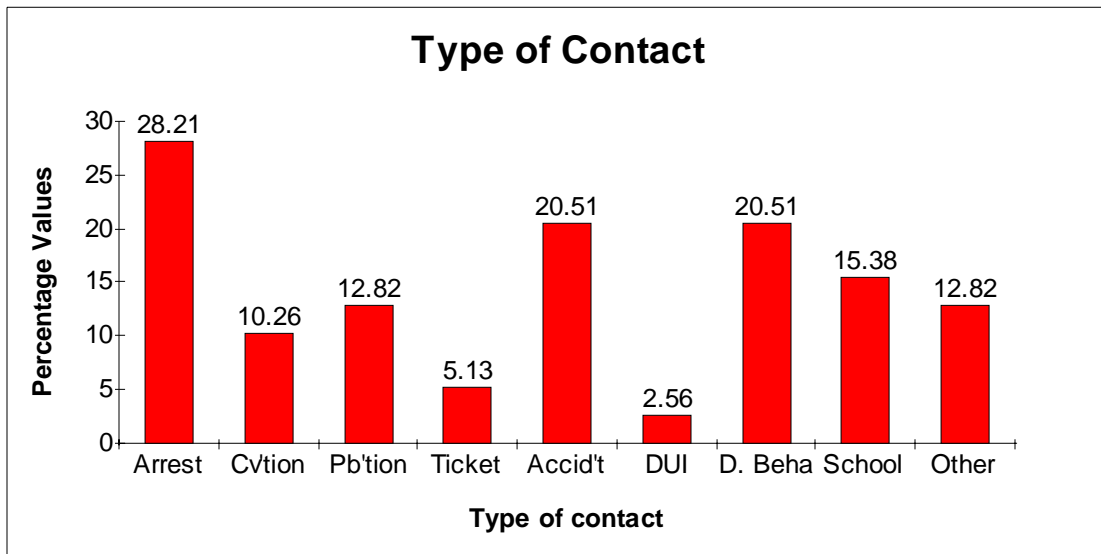
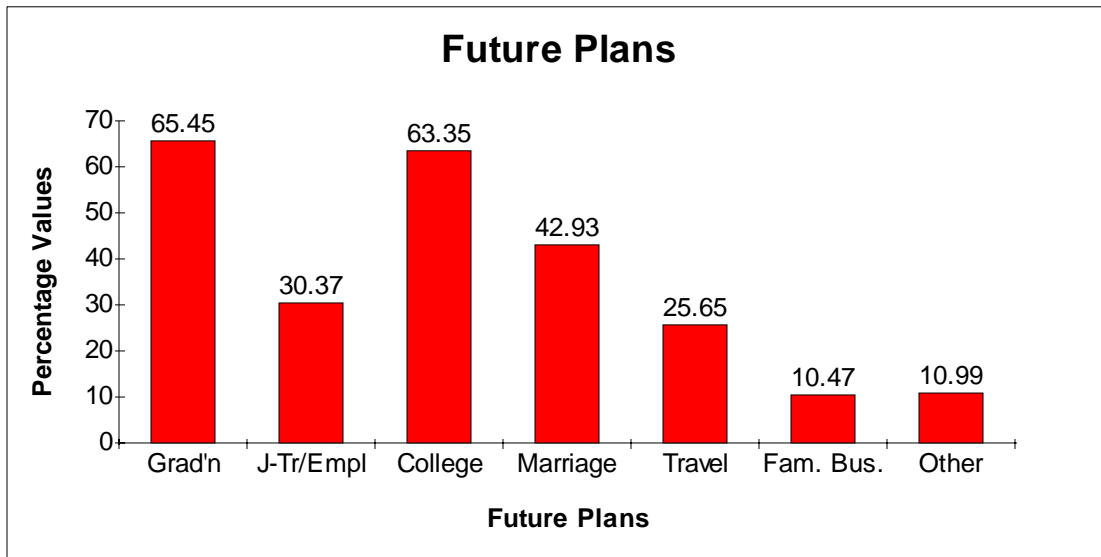


Figure 31: Future Plans



Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined employment trends among low-income youth aged 15-19, residing in Wilmington and surrounding areas. Although no major differences were found between employed and unemployed youth, the study confirms that youth unemployment constitutes a significant problem in the area; half the teenagers did not have jobs at the time of the study. At a 50% rate, youth unemployment exceeds, by far, the unemployment rate (3.3%) of the general population in the State of Delaware. Furthermore, the study confirms that gender, ethnic, age, and educational considerations impact upon employment. Male-female rates for employment remain almost equal, but females suffer more unemployment than males. Black and Hispanic youth are more likely to be jobless than their counterparts from other ethnicities. In addition, unemployment affects younger teenagers than older ones, and youth in lower grades than those in higher grades.

A closer examination of employed youth indicates that they engage in freelance type jobs more than employee type ones and prefer informal to formal search methods. Unfortunately, a third of them exceed the maximum number of working hours (20) allowed young workers. Also, the public transportation system (especially the bus) seems to be the preferred means of commuting to work. Contributing to family expenditure,

however, does not constitute a priority for many. Almost half the employed youth express optimism about future advancements in their jobs, and a majority would acquire job training to enhance employment opportunities.

With unemployed youth, inadequacy of jobs and lack of experience/skills still rank among the main reasons for unemployment. About a third of the youth are rejected by prospective employers because there are no openings and because the teenagers have no job experience. In fact, more than half report having no job training at all. These results underscore the need to provide training that would enhance employability for all youth. Another important cause of unemployment is age as indicated above; more than one third of the teenagers experience rejection because they are too young for the jobs. For the most part, employers prefer older teenagers to younger ones. Also contributing to unemployment are lack of transportation and lack of enthusiasm by some to look for work. Many jobs require personal transportation, and employers may not hire workers without transportation. Some teenagers do not seek employment for personal or other reasons. Furthermore, employability or the lack thereof depends on the search strategies applied, with informal methods yielding more positive results than formal ones. With regard to unemployment-crime relationships, no firm conclusions are drawn from this study due to underreporting. This does not exclude the existence of such relationships within the study; more research is required to establish the links. However, the number of youth already involved with the law raises concern about future problems which potential unemployment could exacerbate.

Given the above considerations, it is expedient to implement strategies that would ensure a productive, vibrant, and educated generation of young people - a future workforce that would contribute effectively to national development. In light of this, the following broad recommendations apply.

1. Establish programs that combine regular education with job skills training. These include sponsorship, apprenticeship, traineeship, cadetship, or internship programs. Job Corps provides a good model of such programs with its intensive residential training for economically disadvantaged youth.
2. Establish stronger links between businesses and schools with emphasis on developing education programs that involve a substantial period of work placement in

participating businesses.

3. Provide incentives such as wage subsidization to employers to encourage placement and retain employees.
4. Reduce cost and provide tax incentives for companies/businesses willing to locate in low-income, high-risk communities.

More specific strategies for developing and implementing successful youth employment programs include.

1. Assigning youth to case managers where they develop academic, personal, and employment skill-related goals.
2. Developing youth performance contracts to ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of goals, expectations and rewards for doing well, and also help measure progress in the program.
3. Providing classes to gain or make-up high school credit, help pass standardized tests, build basic writing and math skills, and assist with homework.
4. Providing support groups and monthly activities such as career exploration workshops, job fairs, field trips, violence prevention workshops, and other related events to inspire youth to stay focused on their future.
5. Providing bus passes, vouchers for work clothes, and other financial assistance as needed.
6. Assigning eligible youth to paid internships where their work hours, progress, and attainment of skills are measured through evaluation tools and regular contact with worksite training supervisors.
7. Providing youth resources on information related to college, apprenticeship programs, jobs, and/or referral to other services as needed (including specialized counseling services such as alcohol or drug counseling).
8. Contacting parents or guardians to keep them informed of their youth's progress.
9. Assisting with developing post high school transition programs.

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Appendix 1

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SURVEY

Purpose: The purpose of this survey is to get information from the youth that will assist in designing programs which will provide education and hands-on experience for gainful employment.

Instructions: Please take some time to read and answer the following questions. You must be 15 years or older to participate in this survey. Complete each question by checking the most suitable answer(s). *Do not write your name on the survey.*

A. Personal Information

1. Indicate whether you are male or female.

(a) Male ___ (b) Female ___

2. What is your ethnic background?

(a) Caucasian ___ (b) Black ___ (c) Asian ___ (d) Hispanic ___ (e) Other ___

3. Where do you live? Indicate zip code:

(a) 19801 ___ (b) 19802 ___ (c) 19803 ___ (d) 19805 ___ (e) 19720 ___ (f) Other ___

4. What is your age?

(a) 15 ___ (b) 16 ___ (c) 17 ___ (d) 18 ___ (e) 19 ___ (e) 20 and older ___

5. How many people live in your household?

(a) 1 ___ (b) 2-4 ___ (c) 5-7 ___ (d) 8 and over ___

6. How many household members are employed?

(a) 1 ___ (b) 2-4 ___ (c) 5-7 ___ (d) 8 and over ___

B. School Information

7. What type of school do you attend?

(a) Public ___ (b) Private ___ (c) Charter ___ (d) Other ___

8. What is your grade level?

(a) 9 ___ (b) 10 ___ (c) 11 ___ (d) 12 ___ (e) dropout ___

9. Do you plan to graduate?

(a) Yes ___ (b) No ___ (c) Not sure ___

10. What are your after-school and weekend activities/hobbies?

(a) Music/Dance/Parties ___ (b) Sports ___ (c) Job ___ (d) Study ___

(e) Club meetings ___ (f) Community Service ___ (g) Church ___ (h) Video

Game/Computers ___ (i) None of the above ___ (j) Other ___

11. Are they the same in the summer?

(a) Yes ___ (b) No ___ (c) Somewhat Different ___

C. Employment Information

12. Have you ever had a job?

(a) Yes ___ (b) No ___

If yes, answer Questions 13 to 20. If no, answer Questions 21 to 25.

13. If yes, what kind of job?

(a) Temp Agency ___ (b) Food service ___ (c) Auto ___ (d) Sales ___

(e) Childcare/babysitting ___ (f) Clerical/administrative ___ (g) Community Center ___ (h) At the Mall ___ (i) Corporation (banking, finance, etc.) ___ (j) Other ___

14. How did you find your job?

(a) Employment agency ___ (b) School ___ (c) Labor Department ___

(d) Friend ___ (e) Advertisements ___ (f) Parents ___ (g) Other ___

15. How many hours do/did you work per week?

(a) 2-6 ___ (b) 7-11 ___ (c) 12-16 ___ (d) 17-20 ___ (e) More than 20 ___

16. How do/did you get to work?

(a) Own car ___ (b) Bus ___ (c) Train ___ (d) Bicycle ___ (e) Walk ___ (f) Co-worker ___ (g) Other ___

17. Does/did your paycheck help pay for family bills and needs?

a) Yes ___ (b) No ___

18. Will your present job lead to a career or better employment?

(a) Yes ___ (b) No ___ (c) Not sure ___ (d) Not applicable ___

19. Have you ever received job training?

a) Yes ___ (b) No ___

20. If no, would you attend job training that would lead to a career or better employment?

a) Yes ___ (b) No ___

21. Have you tried to get a job?

a) Yes ___ (b) No ___

22. If yes, where did you look for a job?

(a) Employment agencies ___ (b) Labor Dept. ___ (c) City/County offices ___

(d) Businesses ___ (e) Corporations ___ (f) Sales ___ (g) Community Centers ___ (h) Newspaper ___ (i) Other ___

23. Why did you not get hired?

(a) No job experience ___ (b) No qualifications ___ (c) No openings ___ (d) No transportation ___ (e) Underage ___ (f) Other ___

24. Have you ever received job training?

a) Yes ___ (b) No ___

25. If no, would you attend job training that would lead to a career or better employment?

a) Yes ___ (b) No ___

D. Other Information

26. Have you ever had contact with the police?

a) Yes ___ (b) No ___

27. If yes, check all that apply.

(a) Arrest ___ (b) Conviction ___ (c) Probation ___ (d) Ticket ___ (e) Accident ___
(f) DUI ___ (g) Disorderly behavior ___ (h) School ___ (i) Other ___

28. What are your plans for the future? Check all that apply.

(a) Graduation ___ (b) Job training/employment ___ (c) College ___
(d) Marriage ___ (e) Travel ___ (f) Family business ___
(g) Other ___