

## Youth Unemployment

In January 2014, the Washington State seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 6.4 percent. This was well below the January 2013 rate of 7.5 percent, and even further below the January 2012 rate of 8.5 percent. The state rate is just below the national rate of 6.6 percent for January 2014.

In Washington State, approximately 23.2 percent of those youth (16 to 19 years old) seeking employment were unemployed in 2014 – this is below the 2013 youth unemployment rate for our state (30.6 percent).

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) summer news release (July 2014): “The number of unemployed youth in July 2014 was 3.8 million, compared with 4.0 million a year ago. The youth unemployment rate was 16.3 percent in July 2013.”

The month of July is typically the summertime peak for youth employment – from April through July of each year, the number of youth age 16 to 24 years old seeking employment grows sharply, as a large number of high school and college students search for or take summer jobs, and many graduates enter the labor market to begin or look for permanent employment. In the news release, it was noted: “The labor force participation rate for all youth—the proportion of the population 16 to 24 years old working or looking for work—was 60.5 percent in July, the same as the July value in the prior two summers. Taking a longer-term perspective, the July 2014 participation rate was 17.0 percentage points below the peak rate for that month in 1989 (77.5 percent).”

The BLS further summarized that youth labor force participation was highest for white youth (63.2 percent). By contrast, the rate was 52.9 for black youth, 48.5 percent for Asian youth, and 56.2 percent for Hispanic youth. These labor force participation rates (the proportion of the population 16 to 24 years old working or looking for work) were “little different from last year.”

A new Washington State study (February 2014) conducted by the state’s Education Research and Data Center at the Office of Financial Manage-

ment shows Washington college graduates who earn a bachelor’s degree “earn 20 percent more in the first 2 years after graduation compared to those who did not pursue a college degree.” This confirms one of the widely accepted beliefs about education: a college degree will boost a person’s earnings. The study, Earnings Premium Estimates for Bachelor’s Degrees in Washington, also confirms the earnings gap between men and women – “After controlling for many factors, women still earn about 20 percent less than men after college graduation.”

The full report can be found at [www.erdc.wa.gov/briefs/pdf/201503.pdf](http://www.erdc.wa.gov/briefs/pdf/201503.pdf).

**TABLE 24**  
**Juvenile Unemployment**  
**for 16-19 Year Olds**  
**2005-2014**

Year	Approximate Number Unemployed	Approximate Unemployment Rate
2014	28,000	23.2%
2013	37,000	30.6%
2012	36,000	28.6%
2011	38,000	30.4%
2010	45,000	34.1%
2009	44,000	30.5%
2008	39,000	25.7%
2007	28,000	17.6%
2006	31,000	18.0%
2005	29,000	18.9%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, retrieved from: <http://www.bls.gov/lau/#ex14>; retrieved 8/24/15