Youth Employment Report

2019 — 2020

Washington Workforce Training & Education Coordinating Board

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Executive Summary

Recently, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) undertook a thorough "360 review" of its role and responsibilities. The new vision is clear: Every Washington community is thriving, inclusive, and economically resilient. To get there, the Board also adopted a new mission and values statements. In particular, the Board is focusing on parts of Washington, and populations that have struggled with higher unemployment, lower wages, and less economic security. This report aims to help explore the challenges youth face in finding employment and advancing in their careers. The Workforce Board approached this report by using visual data to display gaps in wages and employment, and, when possible, exploring the differences among different racial groups, to provide a clearer picture of potential policies and programs that can bring about true equity and inclusiveness.

Why this focus on youth?

Washington's young adults continue to struggle with significantly higher unemployment rates than older working adults. Youth tend to work in entry-level jobs with little room for growth, and limited career mobility. During recessionary events, young people tend to be hit harder than other age groups when the economy slumps. The impacts of unemployment on young adults are more severe than being unable to obtain "first rung" jobs in the workplace. These young adults end up in competition with the younger people coming up behind them. Because of this competition, young adults often "age out" of the running for entry-level positions, which provides a critical place for building a foundation of workplace skills. Additionally, older, experienced workers who have also been affected by economic slumps often compete for the same entry-level positions. As a result, opportunities for youth decrease in the short term, with long-term repercussions.

YOUTH REPORT COMPANION SITE:
As part of the 2020 edition of the Youth Employment Report, Workforce Board staff is excited to launch a new interactive "companion" website on youth employment. Explore the data in a deeper, more detailed format at https://bit.ly/wayouthemployment.

Young unemployed Washingtonians, stalled during a downturn, can face a lifetime of reduced income, lower earning potential, and reduced employability. The number of "disconnected" young adults—those who are neither in school nor employed—remains high. This group is effectively sitting on the sidelines, not actively gaining skills or credentials, and not building a resume through work experience. Nor are they earning a paycheck. The proportion of disconnected youth largely remains the same, year after year, despite programs and support to get them back into the labor market or into education and training.

Without addressing the needs of young, vulnerable Washingtonians now, we expose another generation to a potential "ten-year drift," putting their economic future, and the state's economic vitality, at risk. The Workforce Board has long worked to address the needs of disadvantaged populations, championing the term: "All means all." This is more important today than ever before.

This report presents a snapshot of the youth employment picture during the COVID-19 pandemic, and compares the impact we are seeing on the ground today with the documented impact of the Great Recession on young adults. These data highlight trends in historic unemployment rates, labor force participation, earnings, employment shares, youth disconnection rates, and labor force composition by generation. We include an in-depth examination of the number of unemployment claims filed during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic in each county, along with a breakdown by industry of those claims, and their relative concentration of young people.

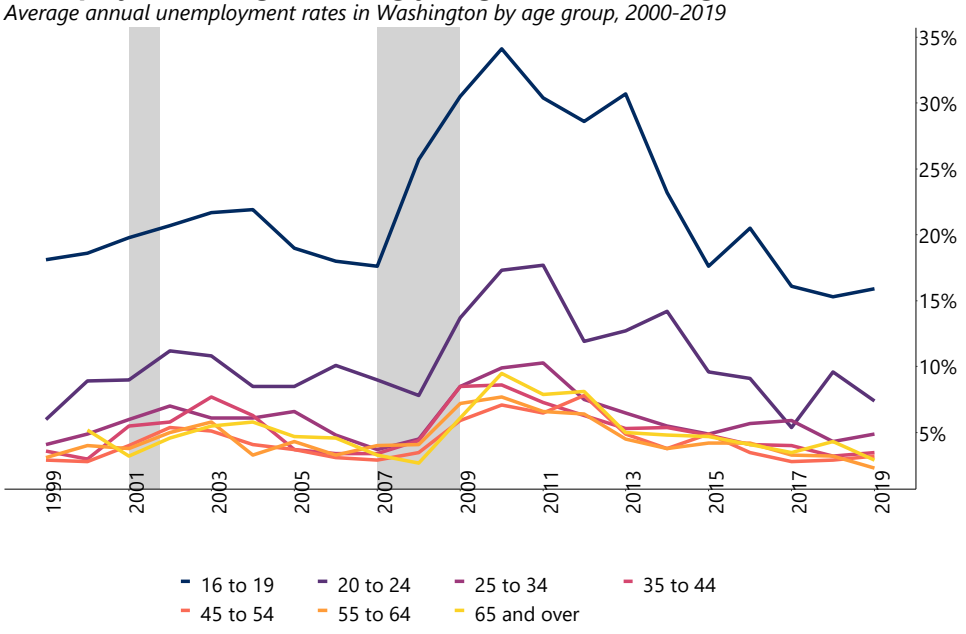
This report also offers key lessons in responding to economic slumps, by comparing Great Recession data with current trends. By identifying potential solutions learned during the previous recession, effective programs and services can be developed to help youth tackle today's challenges. Also included in this report is a focus on mapping and shoring up pathways to careers in healthcare and information technology (IT). Finally, the report also highlights the rise of automation and other changes expected to accelerate as part of the "Future of Work."

Washington Youth Employment during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Youth between the ages of 16-24 have traditionally faced higher unemployment rates compared with older working-age adults. Economic downturns tend to reinforce this employment imbalance even more. Washington youth were unemployed at much higher rates during the Great Recession of 2007-2009, and those employment challenges lasted for young people even as the state's economy began to recover. The current COVID-19 pandemic presents similar challenges for young Washingtonians. Washington was the first state to report a case of COVID-19, on January 21, 2020. By March, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of coronavirus a pandemic. Businesses and schools in the state were ordered to shut down, and any non-essential services were halted. These state-ordered shut-downs were particularly hard on Washington's young people, as closures centered on parts of the economy that hire the greatest proportion of youth, many with no options for working remotely. The pandemic caused a drastic, rapid decline in youth employment.[1] As shown in the following chart, Washington's young people have consistently experienced much higher unemployment rates than older age groups. This was true even through the end of 2019, when the state's economy had reached its peak.

Unemployment is higher among younger workers during recessions

Average annual unemployment rates in Washington by age group, 2000-2019



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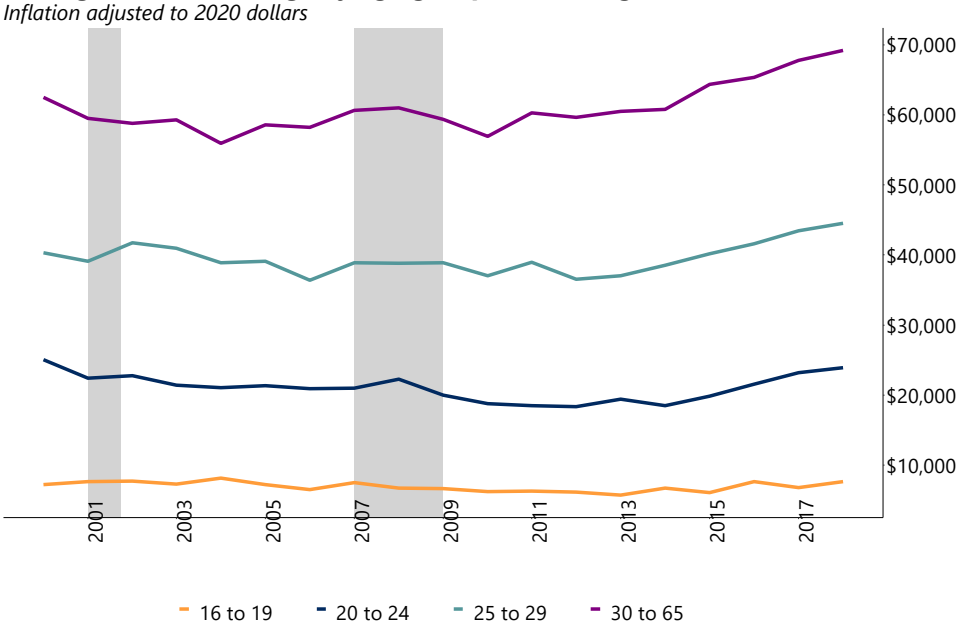
[1] Inanc, H. (2020). Breaking Down the Numbers: What Does COVID-19 Mean for Youth Unemployment?. *Mathematica Policy Research*.

The earning power of Washington workers is influenced by many factors—including education, experience, and age.[2] It isn't surprising that wage levels rise with age among youth, since younger cohorts will likely be in school and working only part time. However, there are other factors that influence the earning power and economic trajectory of young people, such as attainment of marketable credentials, work-based experiences in the chosen field, and early, entry-level employment in any field—the ability to "learn how to work." Youth ages 16-19 earn far less than older age groups. This group includes young people who are still in high school. Many work part-time while in school. Young adults ages 20-24 earn nearly three times as much as working teens. Some have completed higher education in their early 20s and are able to fill higher skill, higher-pay jobs. Many more live on their own and seek a living-wage, rather than part-time, lower-wage work. Even so, a greater proportion of Washington youth work within industries that include more entry-level jobs, and pay less than a living-wage. Opportunities such as internships and registered apprenticeships can help youth move into viable and secure positions at earlier ages.

Average annual earnings by age group in Washington, 2000-2018

Inflation adjusted to 2020 dollars



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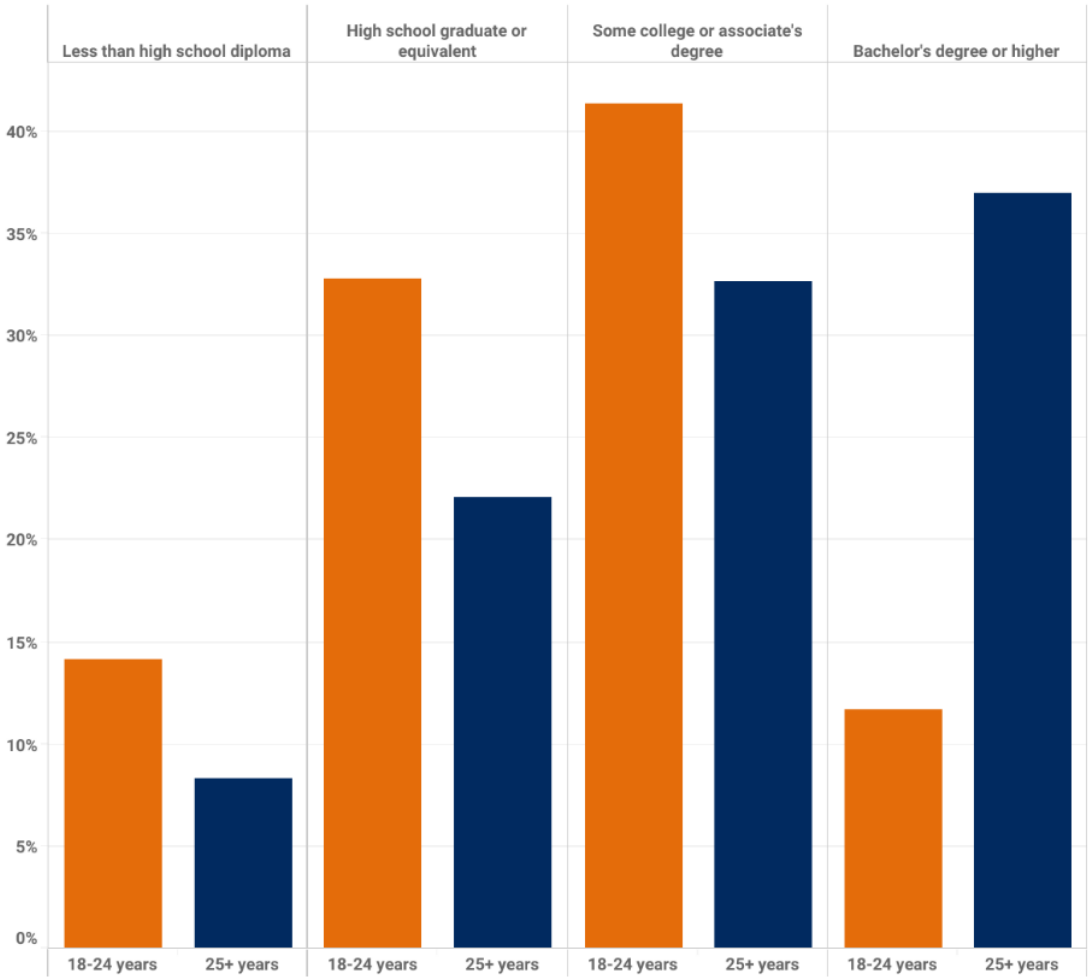
[2] Raurich, X., & Seegmuller, T. (2017). Income distribution by age group and productive bubbles [WP-Eco]. *UB Economics–Working Papers, 2017, E17/367*.

Highest education level of labor force by age group



Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics: Expanded State Employment Demographics, 2019, analyzed by the Washington Workforce Board

High-demand industries typically call for a higher level of education.[3] And employers often prefer job candidates to have completed some form of higher education and training.[4] A higher proportion of youth work in front-line, entry-level jobs in industries where the education level does not affect how much they are paid. Even so, most young people aged 18-24 have completed high school, and some have some college credits or associate degrees. However, relatively few have bachelor's degrees or higher-level degrees.[5]

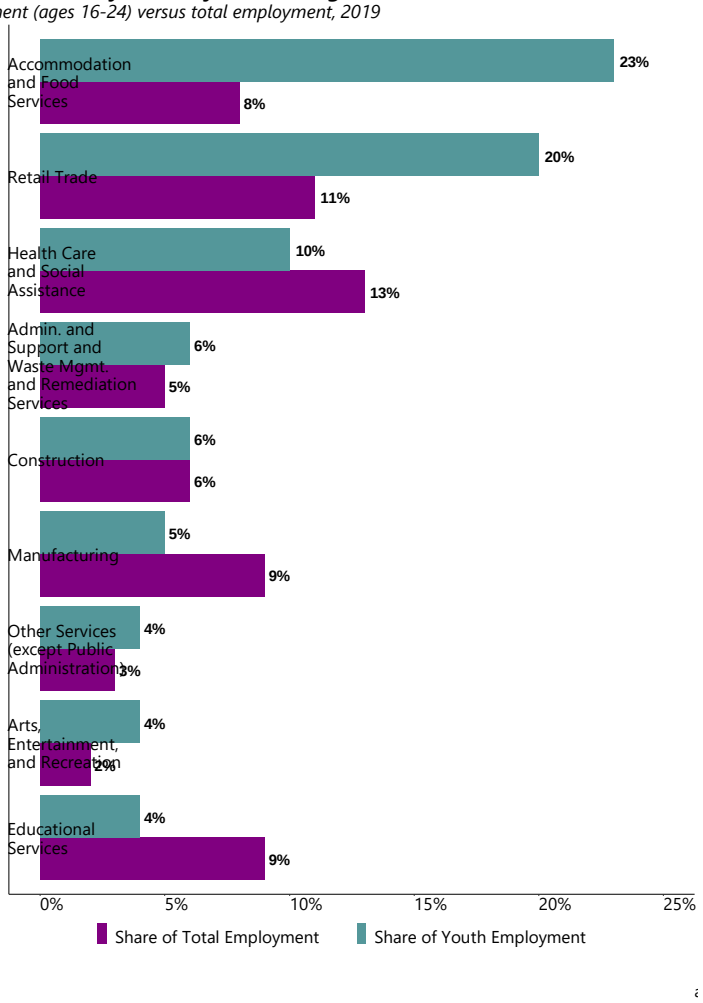
[3] Khurtsia, L., & Gaprindashvili, G. (2018). Education as a Factor of Employment and Income. *Globalization And Business N*, *6*, 165-168.
[4] Ross, M., & Holmes, N. (2019). Meet the millions of young adults who are out of work: local profiles of jobless young adults and strategies to connect them to employment.
[5] Washington Workforce Board (2020). Local Area Unemployment Statistics: Expanded by State Employment Demographics, 2019.

Avenues for learning have expanded beyond the traditional two- and four-year institutions to include certifications, “earn and learn” programs, and other online options. A 2019 report from Credential Engine, a nonprofit that tracks the credential marketplace the U.S., identified more than 738,000 unique credentials being offered in the U.S. Its count includes traditional degrees as well as badges, certificates, boot camps and other short-term credential types.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shut down many sources of more conventional, in-person instruction because of safety concerns. As a result, remote learning has taken the place of in-class learning throughout public schools and higher education, accelerating a trend toward online education. Youth that have them can open up their laptops and earn certificates, complete trainings in challenging fields, and attend college remotely with higher education with more flexible instruction. Compared to previous generations, youth in school now have more opportunities to complete their education with the opening of more online modalities that do not require them to travel, move, etc. This removes extra barriers to education. Later in the report, though, we discuss the digital inequity exacerbated by the pandemic.

Employment shares by industry in Washington

Youth employment (ages 16-24) versus total employment, 2019



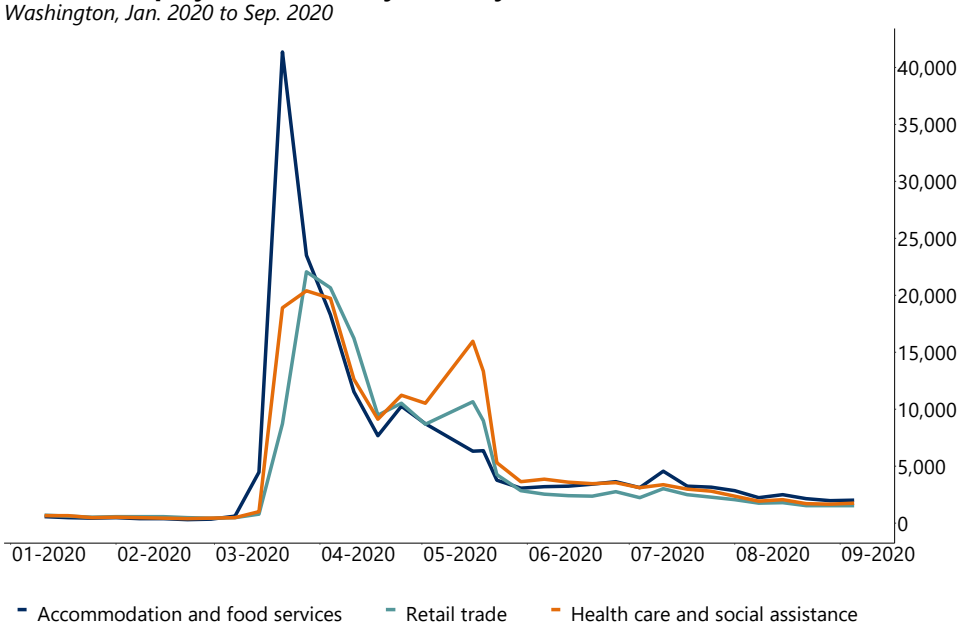
Some industries have suffered more from pandemic-shutdowns and changing consumer habits than others. Retail trade, accommodation and food services, and healthcare and social assistance, were among the hardest hit in Washington. Youth hold a disproportionately high number of jobs in these industries, and as a result were laid off in greater numbers.

These youth (especially those under age 24) lost their jobs, and had little work experience and education/credentials to apply for positions in other industries.[6] These economically battered industries are adapting to the new COVID-19 environment, with changing hours, increased personal protective equipment and hygiene requirements, and a new emphasis on hands-off delivery of goods and services. In some cases, jobs are also becoming more automated to meet consumer needs—further reducing openings.[7]

Some Washington young people who have been displaced from positions in these industries are moving towards 'gig' jobs, such as those in DoorDash, InstaCart, and Grubhub. But just as youth are switching to gig work, so are older displaced adults—increasing the competition over a limited customer base. However, these jobs offer relatively little opportunity for growth or career advancement, with pay and hours directly influenced by market demand.[8]

Unemployment claims by industry are highest in the industries which most commonly hire youth.[9] Jobs in these areas are less likely to reappear, as automation increases, and consumer habits change in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Already, it's clear there are fewer openings in these heavily impacted industries.

Initial unemployment claims by industry
Washington, Jan. 2020 to Sep. 2020



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And the number of unemployment claims for the three most hard-hit industries (retail, food, and hospitality) are likely to continue growing, as pandemic cases rise along with health and safety concerns.

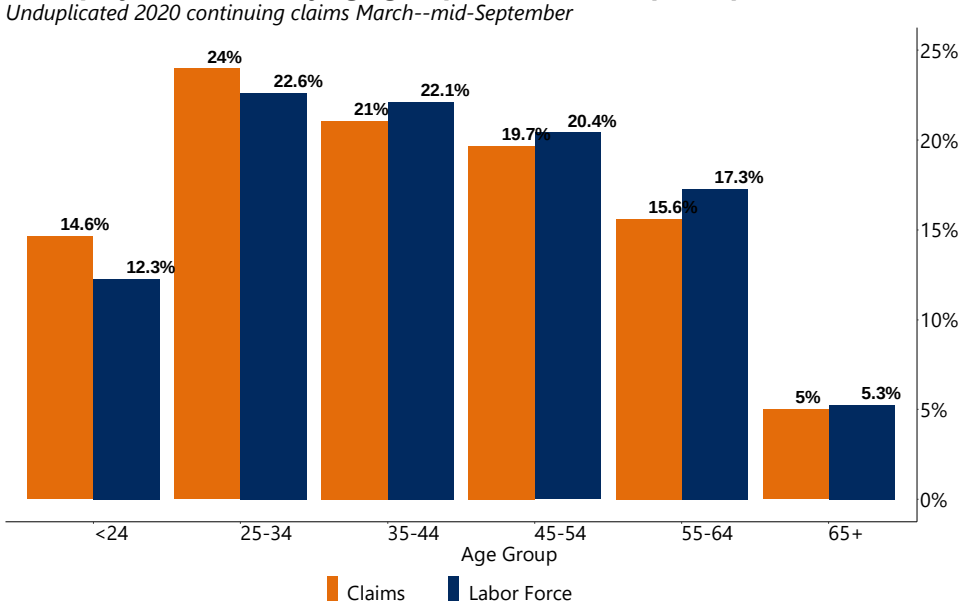
[6] Kochhar, R., & Barroso, A. (2020). Young workers likely to be hard hit as COVID-19-19 strikes a blow to restaurants and other service sector jobs. *Pew Research Center*.
[7] Bluestone, P., Chike, E. and Wallace, S., 2020. *The Future Of Industry And Employment: COVID-19-19 Effects Exacerbate The March Of Artificial Intelligence*. [online] Cslf.gsu.edu. Available at: <https://cslf.gsu.edu/download/covid-19-ai/?wpdmdl=6496041&refresh=5ea830afd2a471588080815>.
[8] Finley, B. (2020, August 11). *Summer Jobs for Young People are Vanishing with the Pandemic.* The Washington Times. <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/aug/11/summer-jobs-for-young-people-are-vanishing-with-th/>.
[9] Inanc, H., 2020. Trends in Youth Unemployment During COVID-19. [Blog] *Mathematica Progress Together*, <https://www.mathematica.org/commentary/trends-in-youth-unemployment-during-covid-19>.

Data reflects that youth have contributed to a large number of unemployment claims—two percentage points higher than their share of the labor force. Breaking these claims down by region, the effects of COVID-19 on unemployment are widespread but more pronounced in some areas than others. From March through mid-September, King County had the highest number of claims (41,922), with youth (under age 24) representing almost 13 percent of the total. On the other end of the spectrum, sparsely populated Whitman County had a far lower number of claims (1,135), but with an even higher percentage of claims coming from youth, at 29 percent. These disparities can be explained, at least in part, by differences between rural and urban areas of the state. It appears that rural areas, equipped with fewer resources, lack sufficient broadband internet, childcare, job opportunities, and PPE. These same resource constraints also affect school participation rates, which are lower for rural youth than their urban peers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has left thousands of Washington workers, youth and adults, without jobs. But history tells us that young people will have a much harder time reconnecting to the labor force than adult workers. Without intervention and support, youth displaced by the pandemic will face the same "10-year drift" that their Great Recession counterparts experienced.

Unemployment claims by age group vs. labor force participation

Unduplicated 2020 continuing claims March--mid-September



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While this is bad news in the short term, the pandemic's closures may provide a strong incentive for youth to consider in-demand, higher-paying industries that lead to more secure economic futures. Programs geared to improving youth employment need to be oriented towards steering young

Washingtonians toward these promising career paths. Failure to connect youth with these opportunities can result in an ongoing struggle to obtain livable wage jobs and maintain a solid income.[10]

Higher-wage, high-demand occupations in healthcare and IT are good options for youth—and the need for younger workers is clear as the state's supply of trained workers ages and retires. The pandemic provides opportunities to encourage youth to connect with these and other industries through additional education and training. Internships and job shadows can help youth explore these career options—although some of this exploration will now need to be virtual.

One way to point youth in promising directions is through summer jobs. A June 2020 report authored by youth employment scholar, Paul Harrington, the Director for the Center of Labor Markets and Policy and Professor in the School of Education – Higher Education at Drexel University, reviewed the long-term national youth labor force participation rates and employment rates (1999-2019) with a focus on summer employment trends. The report also compares access to summer jobs across gender, race and ethnicity, family income, and urban vs. rural youth. Harrington and his team have been following trends in youth summer jobs since 2011. The 2020 report observed the COVID-19 pandemic and the outlook for American teens seeking summer jobs.[11]

Based on the data, youth employment is an important issue because:

- The more young people work earlier in their lives, the more likely they are to work in the future. This has significant implications on the long-term labor supply.
- The more time teens and young adults spend disconnected from employment and education, the more likely they will be jobless, poor, or dependent on government assistance programs.
- Lower teen labor force participation reduces future productivity, and harms future GDP growth.
- Work experience provides young people with social skills, and helps them to navigate various professional relationships while at work.
- Early work experience helps young workers move beyond entry-level jobs, gain experience in different workplace settings, and knowledge of specific occupational skills.
- Summer jobs help keep teens from engaging in risky behavior when they're away from school.
- Working in high school is correlated with better economic futures than those who don't work.

The Benefit of Postsecondary Education

The pandemic, in general, has impacted those with low education levels much worse than those with higher education levels.[12] Individuals who earned a high school diploma or equivalent as their highest education credential had the greatest number of unemployment claims during the COVID-19 downturn. Far fewer youth under age 24 had earned a college certificate or degree, which provides pathways to

[10] Inanc, H. (2020). Breaking Down the Numbers: What Does COVID-19 Mean for Youth Unemployment?. *No. 3ba094f7d75b48dbb9b63e16a768cb7d). Mathematica Policy Research*.

[11] Harrington, P., Fogg, N. and Khatiwada, I., 2020. *The COVID-19 Economic Shutdown And The 2020 Summer Jobs Outlook For American Teens*. [ebook] Drexel University- Center for Labor Markets and Policy. <https://int.nyt.com/data/documenthelper/7047-covid-19-and-the-teen-summer-j/4abc425917116702d3fb/optimized/full.pdf#page=1>.

[12] Parkinson, C. (2020). COVID-19, educational attainment, and the impact on American workers.

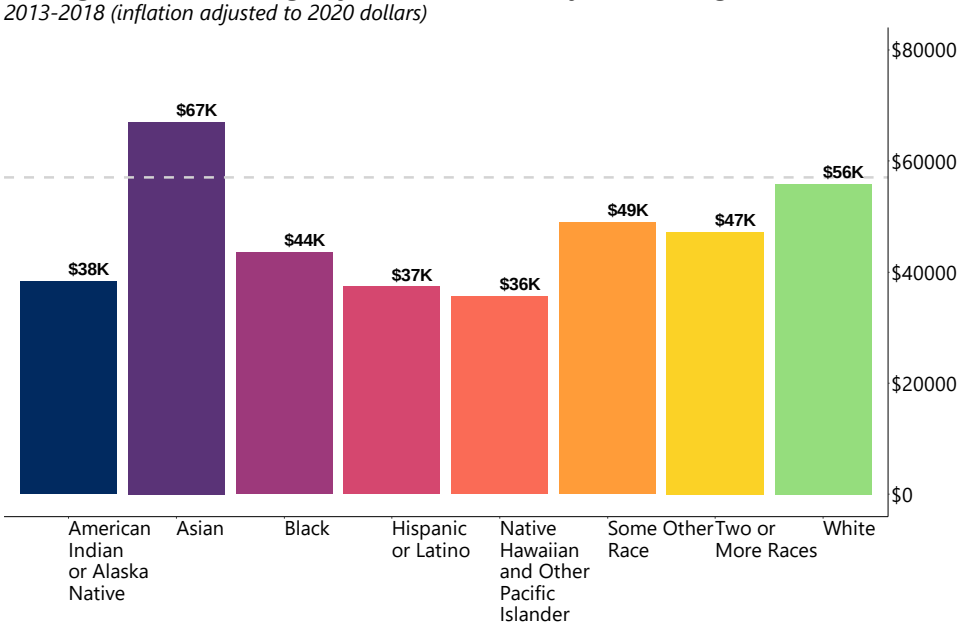
higher paying, more secure employment. Those with higher levels of education tend to hold positions that involve less interpersonal contact—which has proved to be a significant plus during a pandemic where telework is the new normal. For young people who did lose their jobs during the pandemic, many appear to have left the labor force.[13]

Both history and data seem to reflect a strong correlation between educational attainment and earnings.[14] Generally, those with more education have higher earnings.[15]

However, when viewed through the lens of race and ethnicity, the data skews this correlation. Even with a higher level of educational attainment, Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islanders earn less as compared to Whites and Asians with similar education levels. Along with lower wages, they have less access to healthcare, personal resources, and other supports responding to COVID-19. This uneven, unequal foundation among races—and among rural vs. urban residents—must be considered when developing new youth employment measures that address inequities and structural barriers and biases.

Average annual earnings by race and ethnicity in Washington

2013-2018 (inflation adjusted to 2020 dollars)



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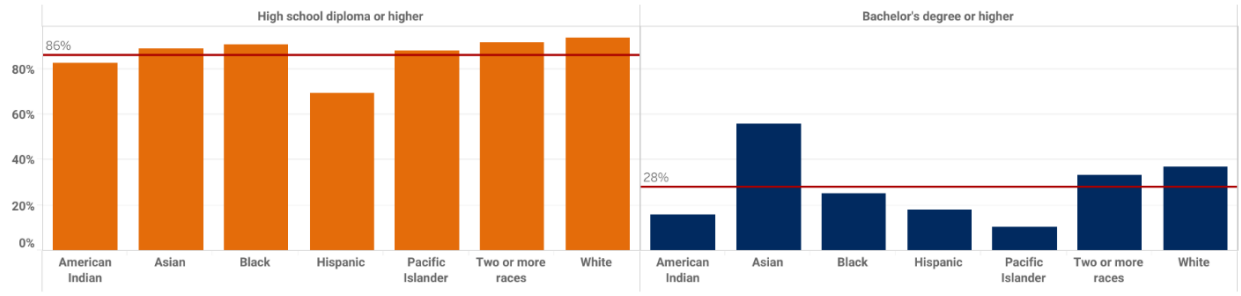
[13] Daly, M., Buckman, S. and Seitelman, L., 2020. *The Unequal Impact Of COVID-19: Why Education Matters*. Frbsf.org. <https://www.frbsf.org/economic-research/publications/economic-letter/2020/june/unequal-impact-covid-19-why-education-matters/>.

[14] Aliprantis, D. and Zenker, M., 2011. *Educational Attainment and Employment*. Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. <https://www.clevelandfed.org/en/newsroom-and-events/publications/economic-trends/2011-economic-trends/et-20110302-educational-attainment-and-employment.aspx#:~:text=Labor%20market%20experiences%20can%20be,decades%20in%20the%20United%20States.>.

[15] Employment Projections. 2019. *Unemployment Rates And Earnings By Educational Attainment*. <https://www.bls.gov/emp/chart-unemployment-earnings-education.htm>.

Educational attainment of labor force by race and ethnicity



Source: Washington Employment Security Department/LMEA and Local Area Unemployment Statistics: Expanded State Employment Demographics, 2019, analyzed by the Washington Workforce Board

Young people from marginalized and under-represented races and backgrounds have tremendous assets to support Washington's economy and its communities. But structural barriers, multi-generational poverty, and systemic disenfranchisement and disempowerment have resulted in numerous challenges to educational and economic success for these young people. Helping all of Washington's youth overcome these challenges isn't just the right thing to do; it's the financially responsible thing to do, if we want to boost economic vitality in every corner, and population, in the state.

Lessons from the Great Recession: Avoiding the "10-Year Drift"

Employment data from the Great Recession show youth ages 16-19, and young adults ages 20-24, had much higher rates of unemployment when compared to older, working-age adults, and offers many lessons for today's policymakers to avoid repeating this cycle for today's young people. In this time period, seasoned workers, worried about their finances, diminished stock portfolios, and under-valued homes, continued working, making it that much more difficult for youth to gain a foothold in first jobs. For too many young Washingtonians, this resulted in what was called a "10-year drift." Lacking work experience, and often equipped with little education beyond high school, these young people were frequently unemployed, not in school, and unsure of what to do about it. Data shows that it wasn't until about 2018, nearly 10 years after the start of the Great Recession, when they were more successful in landing jobs, earning higher wages, purchasing homes, starting families, and moving forward on a career path.

The Great Recession offers valuable lessons in preventing another "10-year drift." The economic vitality of the state is at risk if another drift does occur, as Generation Z youth and Millennials will make up over half the working population within the next 10 years.

Looking Back at the Most Recent Great Recession and Youth Employment

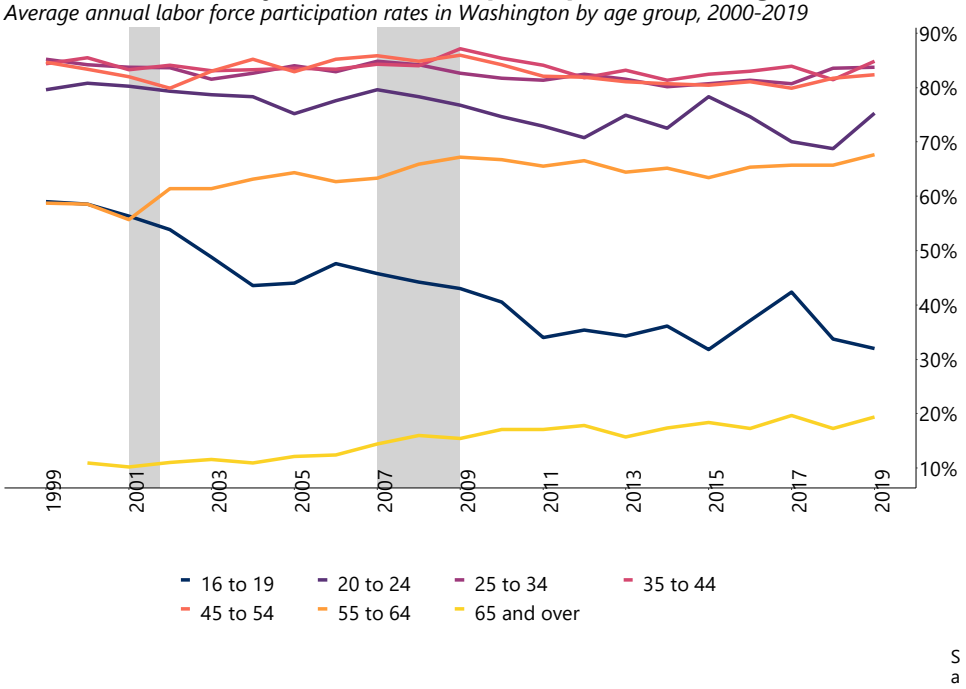
Though smaller in scale as compared to the COVID-19 economic crisis, the Great Recession, which officially occurred at the end of 2007 and lasted through the middle of 2009, placed similar challenges on Washington's workforce system during those years, and for several years after. The economic downturn occurred after the "housing bubble" burst, exposing a subprime mortgage crisis that, in turn, spawned a global financial crisis. The number of displaced workers during this time nearly doubled, when compared to the two years leading up to the recession. By 2010, only half the number of workers displaced from their jobs since 2007 had been reemployed.[16] Youth, particularly those of younger ages, faced even greater challenges as more senior workers stayed in the workforce to compensate for lost savings and de-valued homes. With many entry-level positions filled by older, more experienced, workers, youth were left on the sideline of the labor market, with fewer opportunities to enter the workforce.[17]

[16] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

[17] Bell, D. N., & Blanchflower, D. G. (2011). Young people and the Great Recession. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, *27*(2), 241-267.

Persistent decline in youth labor force participation following recessions

Average annual labor force participation rates in Washington by age group, 2000-2019



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**Note: Labor force participation for those aged 16-19 years has been on a year-over-year decline since 2000. Those aged 16-19- and 20-24-years experienced drops in labor force participation following the Great Recession. Labor force participation for the 20-24 years old age group has struggled to recover. Labor force participation has seen a year-over-year increase for those aged 55-64 and 65 and over.*

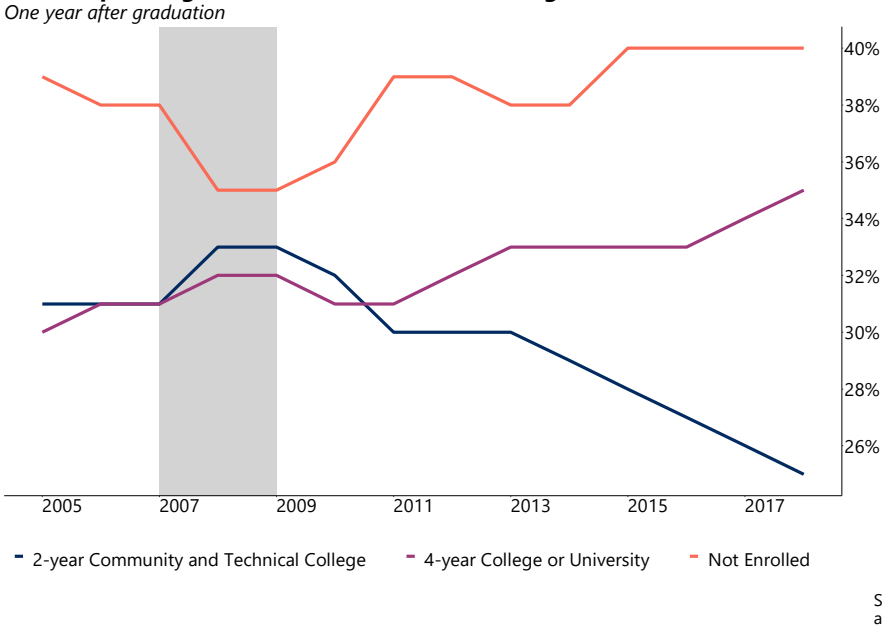
In both the Great Recession and the current COVID-19 recession, youth have been hammered with higher unemployment levels than their overall share of the labor force for a variety of reasons, including education level, type of job they hold, and other factors. In both economic recessions, a majority of displaced youth have worked in the hardest hit industries. However, since 2008, the number of "disconnected" youth aged 16-25 (neither working or in school) has remained about the same—regardless of whether the economy was booming or in decline.

According to data from the state's Education Research & Data Center, 89 percent of Washington students attending four-year institutions continued past the first year of enrollment—a 2 percent decrease from 2005.[18] Some 63 percent of community and technical college students continued after the first year of enrollment—a one percent decrease from 2005. Strikingly, the enrollment data over the past 10 years since the Great Recession show a marked decline in two-year community and technical college enrollment: in 2009, a peak of 34 percent of post-high school enrollment occurred at community and technical colleges, down a full third to 25 percent in 2018.

[18] Washington Education Research & Data Center. 2020. *High School Graduate Outcomes | Washington State Education Research & Data Center*. [online] Available at: <https://erdc.wa.gov/data-dashboards/high-school-graduate-outcomes>.

Historic post-high school enrollment in Washington, 2005-2018

One year after graduation



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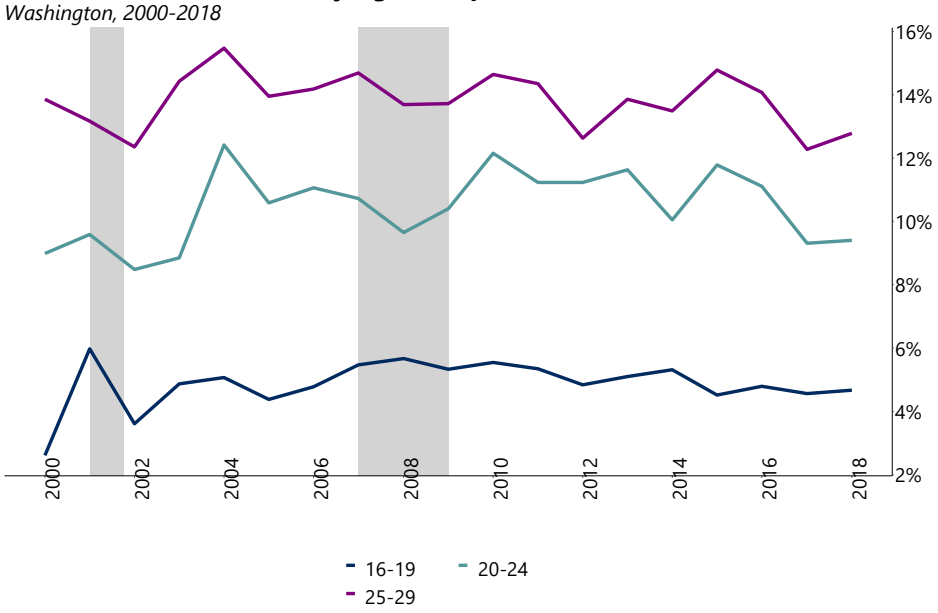
Note: Recessions denoted in light grey.

These data reveal that the percentage of disconnected youth has largely remained the same through the years.

Disconnected Youth Rate by Age Group

Washington, 2000-2018



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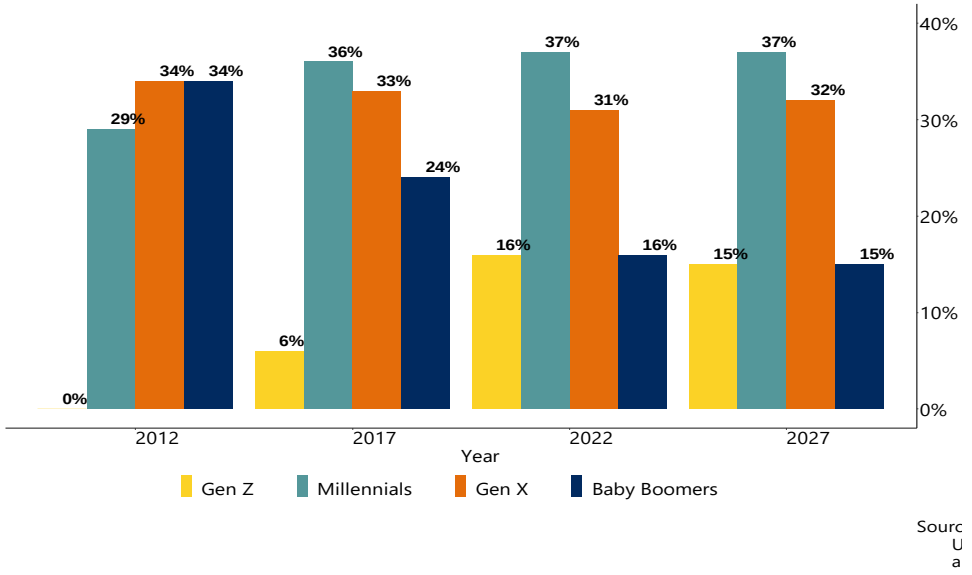
**Note: Disconnected youth rates shows the percent of the civilian non-institutional population of young adults that are both not in school and not in the labor market. Persistent gaps in post-high school and post-college age groups are troubling. Limited opportunities during the COVID-19 recovery period could exacerbate these gaps.*

Youth participation in the labor force has remained low over the years. In the Great Recession, youth participation (ages 16-19 & 20-24) declined further as young people competed with older, working-age Washingtonians for the same jobs. Even so, youth labor market participation was on the upswing through 2019. But once the COVID-19 pandemic struck, youth employment rates have plummeted. This generation of young people represent a growing slice of Washington's workforce, and their falling employment rates, coupled with a lack of work experience, may harm the state's economy for years to come if nothing is done to reconnect these young people now.[19] This is only becoming more difficult. Washington workers of all ages have become increasingly hesitant to head back to work for fear of contracting the virus.[20]

Gen. Z (born in the mid 1990s through early 2010s) and Millennial youth (born in the early 1980s through mid 1990s) will make up an increasingly large segment of Washington's workforce in the coming years. Youth must be engaged in more career pathways and work-based opportunities. Without opportunities to gain work experience, explore career paths, and gain momentum on education and career pathways that lead to living-wage jobs, they are likely to face a "10-year drift."

Washington labor force composition by generation



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**Note: Gen Z, those born between the mid-to-late 1990s and early 2010s, are rapidly entering into the workforce during the Pandemic recession and recovery period. Millennials, those born between the early 1980s and early-to-mid 1990s, experienced a similar challenge –resulting in well-documented arrested development of traditional adult milestones.*

[19] Alba, S. A. and F. (2020, September 10). *Unemployment among young workers during COVID-19*. Brookings.
[20] COVID-19 Stay Home, Stay Healthy Extension, 20-25.1 (2020).

Other Factors Influencing the Youth Employment Picture

Public and non-profit workforce development organizations have developed a range of programs and policy initiatives to strengthen the pipeline of career exploration and work-based learning opportunities available to young people. The following section provides a sampling of some of the major initiatives and policy issues to consider.

Rising Costs of Childcare

The cost of childcare—and its relative availability—impacts a parent's ability to work outside the home. Families who are priced out of childcare, or who cannot find providers, must tend to their own children. That can have negative effects on family finances, as well as the economy.[21] A family's inability to afford childcare reduces the supply of qualified workers (most often women) who are forced to work in the home, unpaid. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed down the number of children attending daycare, and along with that, the number of operating daycares, which now must contend with low enrollment and high costs in hygiene and safety equipment. A survey from the National Association for the Education of Young Children predicts 40 percent of all childcare businesses will close permanently without government investments.[22] Additionally, many young adults have had to step into the role of childcare provider for younger siblings because their parents needed to find alternative work arrangements during the pandemic, or to accommodate remote school schedules.[23]

Survey Data from Next100 and GenForward reveal that nearly 81 percent of Millennials and Gen Z individuals found affordable and high-quality childcare to be an important issue, with 72 percent stating that the high costs of childcare poses threats to achieving professional goals. Millennials, in their 20s and 30s, make up a large portion of the workforce. They are starting and raising families. For these people who have been hit by two recessionary events, the costs of childcare presents yet another challenge, in addition to high levels of student loan debt and a lack of affordable housing.[24]

The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed labor force participation even lower. Some 865,000 American women left the labor force from August to September of 2020, and another 216,000 men also dropped

[21] 2019. *The US and The High Price Of Child Care: An Examination Of A Broken System*. [ebook] ChildCare Aware of America. <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/3957809/2019%20Price%20of%20Care%20State%20Sheets/Final-TheUSandtheHighPriceofChildCare-AnExaminationofaBrokenSystem.pdf?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.childcareaware.org%2F>.

[22] 2020. *From the Front Lines: The Ongoing Effect Of The Pandemic In Child Care*. [ebook] National Association for the Education of Young Children. Available at: <https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/topics/naeyc_coronavirus_ongoingeffectsonchildcare.pdf>.

[23] Kirsch, Z. "When Siblings Become Teachers: It's Not just the Parents Who Find Themselves Thrust into the Demanding Role of At-Home Educators." *The 74 Million*. <https://www.the74million.org/article/when-siblings-become-teachers-its-not-just-parents-who-find-themselves-thrust-into-the-demanding-role-of-at-home-educators/>.

[24] Bohanan, L. and Cohen, C., 2020. *Millennials And Gen Z Want Affordable Child Care: Findings From Next100 And Genforward – Next100*. [online] Next100. <https://thenext100.org/millennials-and-gen-z-want-affordable-child-care/>.

out.[25] According to a recent study by the Pew Research Center, the share of employed women is at its lowest in 35 years, and is a record low for the share of employed men.[26] With the closure of schools and childcare centers, including summer camps, more pressure has fallen upon parents to juggle work and caring for their children. With many public schools closed to in-class instruction and providing remote learning, many parents must also serve as teachers and counselors to their stay-at-home kids. The percentage of mothers and fathers who were not employed increased at nearly double the rate of 2019. Without adequate childcare, or open schools, many parents cannot go to work, and many families have become increasingly financially insecure.

Increasing Use and Adoption of Technology as a Core Workplace Skill

The pandemic has caused a huge change in how education is delivered –from kindergartners learning via Zoom, to college students attending virtual classes from the family home. Communities with less access to the internet and necessary technology risk falling behind.[27] Racial disparities in education and earnings will widen further if these essential supports are lacking.

Automation and the increasing use of AI is disrupting jobs traditionally performed by humans across a wide range of fields, including some jobs that few could imagine a robot or computer performing just a decade ago. The exact number of jobs affected by the implementation of new technology, and when these disruptions will occur, is a matter of debate. But what has become increasingly clear is that the nature of many jobs, if not most, will significantly change in the future. Some jobs will go away, while new jobs will be created. For many other jobs, technology will replace some routine tasks, freeing employees to focus on other tasks requiring more creative and critical thinking skills.

While studies and analyses vary on the number of tasks, skills and jobs that will become automated in the future, they do agree that minorities, men, and the young will be the most affected. According to a 2019 study by the Brookings Institution, 49 percent of jobs were susceptible to automation for 16-24-year-olds, far more than any other age group.[28]

Improved Labor Market Data and Credentialing Transparency

Our public systems currently do not have access to reliable, up-to-date information about the direction of our state's businesses, including their financial viability, or their prospects for growth or contraction. It has therefore been difficult to target businesses for either lay-off aversion or to support business growth or technology transformation. To be meaningful, the system needs real-time data from most, if

[25] Day Cares on the Brink, Nov. 2, 2020, Time Magazine (Page 55).
[26] Kochhar, R., 2020. *Fewer Mothers And Fathers In U.S. Are Working Due To COVID-19 Downturn; Those At Work Have Cut Hours*. [online] Pew Research Center. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/10/22/fewer-mothers-and-fathers-in-u-s-are-working-due-to-covid-19-downturn-those-at-work-have-cut-hours/>.
[27] Francis, D. and Weller, C., 2020. *The Black-White Wealth Gap Will Widen Educational Disparities During The Coronavirus Pandemic - Center For American Progress*. [online] Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2020/08/12/489260/black-white-wealth-gap-will-widen-educational-disparities-coronavirus-pandemic/>.
[28] <https://www.brookings.edu/research/automation-and-artificial-intelligence-how-machines-affect-people-and-places/>.

not all, employers about the specific job make-up and competitive outlook for each firm. The system must improve the availability of informative consumer data, and build stronger partnerships with industry to map new career and credential pathways with long-term labor market value.

Currently, credentials are the coin of the realm at the intersection between workers and employers. Degrees have historically been viewed as proxy for the skills and competencies required on the job or for career advancement. Yet, we know that "credential as proxy" is also a structural barrier for many who could not afford or were deterred in other ways from considering college. Our state's credentialing systems—education, training, occupational, and professional licenses, must be modernized, and made transparent, portable and permeable. Credentials can provide real economic momentum for traditionally marginalized populations when those credentials are deconstructed by skills, competencies, and experiences; when they can validate mastery; when they stack towards higher order credentials, and when they recognize and value all learning equally—in the classroom, on the job, and on one's own.

Washington's postsecondary providers have made great progress in designing new pathway models to improve access and completion rates for students. However, there is more room for improvement, especially in serving adult workers and marginalized populations. Working across silos, and with cultural understanding, systems can expand access for a wider range of student groups, accelerate economically meaningful credential acquisition, and improve lifetime workforce and economic outcomes.

Credentialing learning that occurs on the job or through life experience can be an educational lifeline for many people who have not chosen or have been unable to take advantage of traditional postsecondary pathways. High School Plus (HS+) is a program of the Basic Education for Adults division of the community and technical college system, which recognizes and grants credit for prior learning. HS+ has substantially boosted high school diploma attainment for adults, many of whom have moved into college programs. The model should be expanded across postsecondary systems.

Competency-based education also needs to be expanded in our public postsecondary education system. Like HS+, competency-based credentialing can accelerate the attainment of degrees and other meaningful credentials. Sitting in a classroom from 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. on weekdays for 11-15 weeks at a time does not fit all adult workers' lives—or businesses' schedules—and inhibits access and credentialing for many. For those who complete a registered apprenticeship program, military training, and other programs where skill and competency attainment are well documented, crosswalks to transferable college credit should be automatic and systematized.

The increase in distance learning across instructional programs that has been caused by COVID has forced most colleges to adapt to online instruction. With added support for faculty, staff, and students, this can become normalized and with it, enable students to take coursework asynchronously at their own pace, moving as quickly as they can to demonstrate mastery of subject matter, and to completion/credential.

Technology can help create a competency-based credentialing system that supports workers and businesses, while increasing attainment of traditional degrees. Digitization of credentials, or interoperable digital credential "wallets" are proving to support economic mobility and momentum for

workers and employers. Use of a common language and linked open credential data is also allowing for education mobility. New Hampshire's higher education system, for example, has seen high levels of course-taking across institutions, but low levels of degree attainment, in part because too few credits transfer from one institution to another. That state has created, and is piloting, an artificial intelligence (AI)-based, data system that is interoperable, and therefore able to be shared among different systems across all campuses. This enables individuals to pool their credits and coursework towards degrees and other credentials.

The Workforce Board is continuing in its efforts to enhance Career Bridge,[29] a career exploration and education planning tool provided for free. It also serves as a "consumer report card" on thousands of education and training programs, indicating the completion and employment rate of program graduates, as well as their earning level. Users can also learn the demographic make-up of past program participants, such as age, gender, race, and prior education level.

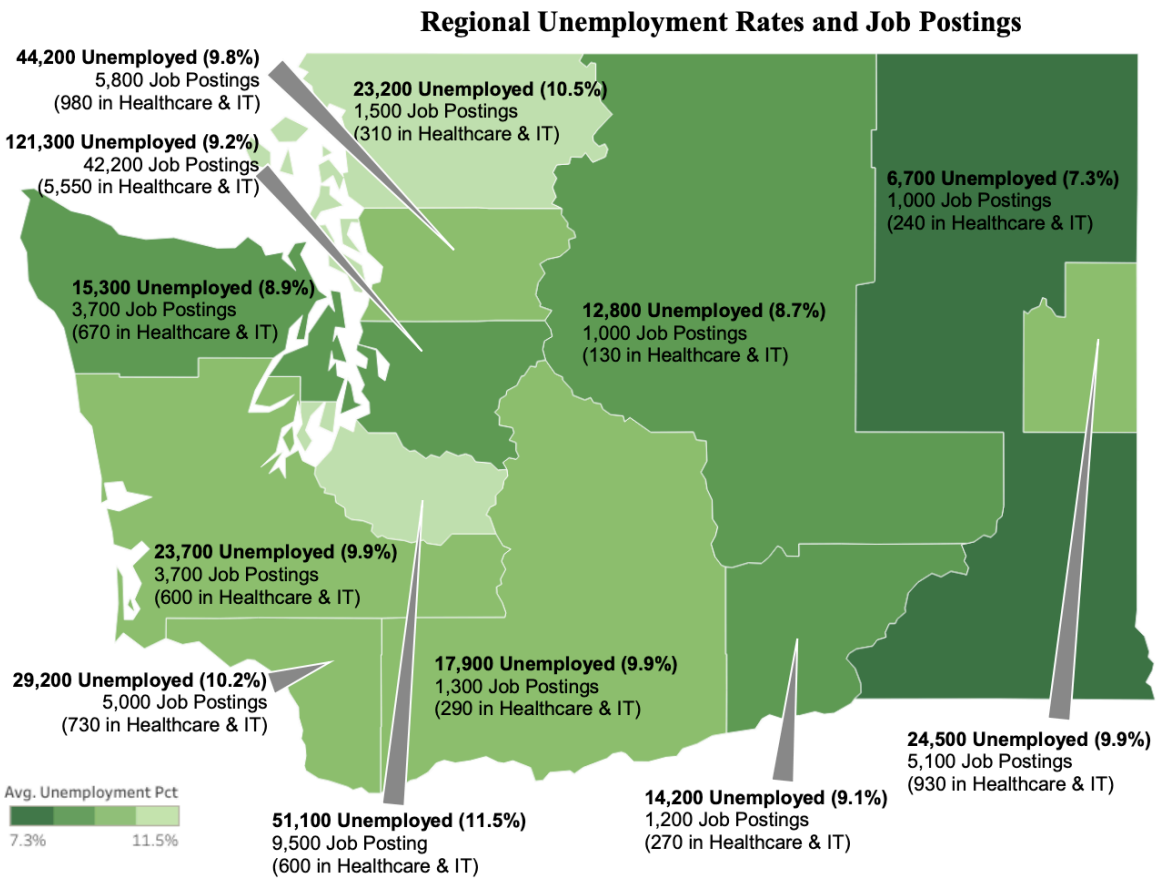
Additionally, Governor Inslee signed HB 2308 into law after the 2020 legislative session, which requires all businesses in Washington to submit one additional piece of employee data to the state to better understand and track changes in the job composition of the state's labor market. The addition of a standard occupation classification (SOC) code that identifies an employee's job title, and any subsequent shifts in job role, will provide critical information on which occupational areas need further workforce training investments.

This occupation-level data will help better measure the outcome of the state's education and training programs by tracking which jobs participants enter into after completing a program. By tracking this information, the state can now identify and support programs that provide workers with quality jobs and provide employers with employees who have needed skills. Improved access to occupation data will greatly increase the ability to gauge how successfully education and training programs are preparing students for their desired career. In the future, these data snapshots could also be used to carry out longitudinal workforce studies on emerging trends such as technological disruption, economic disturbance, and globalization. These data will also help identify and quantify the gap between employer demand, and the availability of a skilled workforce.

Opportunities Available in a Recovery Economy, In Particular Healthcare and IT-Skills Based Careers
For Washington to recover, it's important to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the job landscape in the near-term and in the future. In a recent cross-agency effort in the summer of 2020 to apply for federal Reimagine Workforce Preparation Grant (RWG) funds, the Workforce Board used state and federal data sources, data from commercial vendors, such as Dun & Bradstreet, Burning Glass, and Help Wanted On Line, from recent industry association surveys (Association of Washington Business, Washington Technology Industry Association, and Impact Washington), and from Microsoft and LinkedIn to identify high-demand jobs that pay, or lead quickly, to livable wages. Two high-demand industry sectors—IT and healthcare—were chosen for this proposal for their statewide reach, including into Washington's under-served communities (opportunity zones and rural areas). These two sectors also

[29] <www.careerbridge.wa.gov>.

have the highest numbers of job listings in the state. The following map shows the statewide distribution of these jobs during August of 2020.



While the RWG application was not successful, interested partners continue to work on this issue. To address statewide demand in these living-wage career pathways, including building pipelines for young people to enter these fields, investment is needed to offer reliable predictability to dislocated workers via career pathway programs that are accessible, easily navigable, and include identifiable wage progression. Employers, in turn, will have greater confidence in the people they hire, once competencies are understood and highlighted. When possible, programs should adopt an "earn and learn" approach so economically vulnerable workers can prepare for good jobs at livable wages from the start.

Registered apprenticeships are a gold standard, due to rigorous learning requirements, and the codesign and co-investment of hiring employers. Future initiatives and investments should build on current models, like Career Connect Washington, which include employers in curriculum design and mapping pathways towards career, credential, and wage progress, as well as paid work experience whenever possible. Partners recommended that pathway programs should ideally include an oversight council of local employers to affirm current or projected hiring needs.

Promising Momentum in IT Skills Pathway Development

With more workers than ever before telecommuting from home in the face of the pandemic, information technology as both an industry and occupational sector are flourishing. Most jobs in the labor market today require IT skills—and the proportion of IT to non-IT functions is expected to continue to grow.

In April 2020, the Workforce Board began convening a work group representing all segments of postsecondary education and training, both public and private, and the workforce development system to explore new pathways to livable wage re-employment for dislocated workers. The group developed a plan to boost digital literacy across Washington, and create more accessible, navigable pathways to IT careers. They devised a three-pronged strategy for all sectors of higher education, registered apprenticeship, and career-connected learning, and expanded their reach in partnership with the state's libraries, community-based organizations, and the workforce development system. Recently, the group's plan was bolstered by Microsoft's "25 Million Worker" initiative to provide free high-demand digital skills training to 25 million people worldwide, and the company's commitment to bring its resources to the table. The workgroup's three-pronged strategy includes:

Prong 1: Expanding and Facilitating Access to IT Career Pathways

Partners identified a need to map education and training resources, and connect them with IT-based occupations across Washington. Doing so would identify and ensure appropriate pathways exist to all IT-based, living-wage jobs in every Washington community. These partners also proposed establishing a transparent credentialing system that recognizes and values all learning towards IT-based careers, and connects to higher education, more advanced jobs, and better wages. A skill, competency, and credential map would be constructed, using a nationally recognized common credential mapping language, the Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL).

Once gaps are identified, contractors would develop and implement the programs. In addition to the state's colleges and universities, local providers, such as libraries, WorkSource Centers, and community-based organizations, could help extend education and training offerings to under-served communities. Information about non-proprietary curriculum and credential details would help more regions replicate what's offered in other places. Meanwhile, non-competition parameters would help prevent over-saturation or financial harm to institutions or programs.

Already, a critical IT training gap for "controller and sensor installation and upkeep" jobs has been identified in Washington. Job listings are growing for technicians skilled at installing, programming, and maintaining systems that integrate controllers and sensors. However, this new occupational field lacks a federal occupation code (SOC), making it more difficult to track supply and demand, and connect with education and training programs. However, Washington's building and construction, food processing, warehousing and distribution, and maritime industries, are all seeking job candidates with these skills. To address this demand, partners know they will need to expand and scale the state's newly approved Controls Technician registered apprenticeship program.

Prong 2: Create Equitable Access to IT Hardware, and Related Skills
Many college computer science programs have shifted to developing software and internet competencies, and away from hardware engineering. Yet, a review of Glass Door and Jobrapido, and information from the WTIA, shows employers searching for individuals with IT skills to support their hardware needs as more computer scientists retire.

In Prong 2, partners recommended that the state develop and invest in basic training for participants in how computers work, including the refurbishment of computers and devices to provide to under-resourced populations. Students could be trained to repair previously owned hardware. Ideally the programs would be situated at a college or university with a computer science program and available workshop space, selected via competitive procurement. These facilities would additionally serve as a re-use center for donated equipment that meets modern standards of functionality. Dislocated workers, IT Service Corps members (see Prong 3), and students in computer science programs would learn to build, maintain, refurbish, and upgrade computer hardware, specifically for use by targeted populations. Trainees would learn how to perform quality control and user reliability testing. Both are desirable skill sets in IT.

Prong 3: Establish a Washington IT Service Corps
Partners also recommended establishing a new IT Service Corps, within Washington's AmeriCorps (Washington Service Corps-WSC). The IT Service Corps would provide IT training and work opportunities, a monthly living allowance, and entry points to career pathways. WSC would administer the program using the successful AmeriCorps structure, and fund a portion of the cost of each slot. Participants would be assigned to community health providers, senior services, schools and colleges, government agencies, and community-based organizations. Workforce Development Councils in or near opportunity zones or rural areas would recruit marginalized displaced workers, including youth. Corps members, with support from industry mentors, will share newfound skills with service populations of their host organizations.

The proposed project would launch with a 50-participant cohort, focusing first on those with little or no digital literacy skills. Service periods could last up to 10 months, but will likely average around 6 months to maximize the number of participants. If successful, the program could be expanded to enroll up to 200 participants each year.

Impactful Investment in Livable-Wage, High-Demand Pathways to Health Careers
Health occupation training is consistently a top choice of dislocated career-changers, but rarely do they choose entry-level options. The time, effort, and resources needed to reach livable wages, is often beyond the means of the jobseeker. These barriers are especially pronounced for young people just getting their footing in the workforce.

Workforce development partners have been collaborating over the summer of 2020 on developing an apprenticeship program from entry-level long-term care (LTC) to licensed practical nurse (LPN). The need for workers at every level in LTC is growing as the population ages. Vacancy levels were high prior to the pandemic, but the onset of COVID-19 caused critical shortages across the state. Initially, a lack of

awareness caused widespread transmission at a number of facilities, affecting both residents and workers. Skilled nursing facilities and home health agencies are recruiting heavily, but grapple with the perception of a high-risk, low-reward job. With an LPN apprenticeship program, dislocated workers will learn about LTC's employment stability and the ability to move into a professional LPN position, and higher-level nursing positions. Washington already has navigable, articulated education pathways from LPN through Advanced Practice Registered Nurse.

The state's Nursing Commission is finalizing an LPN-tech certification to allow LPN students to practice, and be compensated accordingly, for working up to the scope of the education they've received and mastered. The LPN-tech role also creates a needed second-tier or ladder rung on the path to LPN licensure. This opens the door to create an attractive registered apprenticeship program. While LTC employers do not need a registered apprenticeship program to utilize the LPN-tech position in their workplace, registered apprenticeship provides an important signal to workers that the path to higher wages is standardized, supported, and predictable.

This new apprenticeship would be developed and implemented in partnership with the Washington Nursing Commission, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, Washington's Apprenticeship Council, Washington's Department of Health, Aging and Long-Term Support Administration, SEIU 1199NW and SEIU 775, Allied Health Center of Excellence, the state's Health Workforce Council (HWC), and the Health Care Apprenticeship Committee (HCAC). The HWC is a statutory body representing Washington's major subsectors of healthcare delivery and all aspects of the talent pipeline development system, to ensure Washington has the workforce necessary to provide quality patient care in every region of the state. Council members would continue to meet with the partnership members to develop other potential pathway programs to livable wage health careers. Another important partner is the newly established Virtual Healthcare Institute (VHI), which is pioneering the use and evaluation of virtual reality and simulation tools in distance learning. SEIU 1199NW Labor/Management Training Fund sponsors the HCAC and operates the VHI.

Washington College Grant Opens Access to Postsecondary Opportunity

The 2019 Legislature targeted education funding to link Washington youth to career-connected learning opportunities that prepare them for high-demand, high-wage jobs. The Workforce Education Investment Act is one of the most progressive higher education investments in the country. With appropriations totaling $375 million, and a nearly $1 billion investment planned over the first four years, the act guarantees financial aid for more than 110,000 qualified students in Washington to attend college and registered apprenticeships for free or at a discounted rate. Washington is the first state in the nation to include the student costs of registered apprenticeships as an option for students who quality for a financial aid program of this magnitude.

Uniquely, Washington's program has no age limit. This financial aid can serve an 18-year old traditional student seeking a four-year degree, or a 45 year old mid-career worker seeking retraining or upskilling opportunities to keep pace with technology changes in their workplace – making it a key tool to prepare our workforce for the future of work at any stage in life. In addition, the act also created and funded the Career Connect Washington framework.

The Washington College Grant can be used for a wide range of education programs, including registered apprenticeship, community and technical colleges, public four-year colleges, and many private colleges and career schools. Award rates range, depending on the type of institution a student is attending, family size, and their income as measured against the state's median family income. The top award covers the full tuition (or equivalent) at one of our state's public four-year institutions.

The passage of the Washington College Grant provides an important link in the support for Washington's low and middle-class students, by ensuring that the cost of tuition is not a barrier for entry to postsecondary education.

Spotlight: Current Initiatives Connecting Youth to Postsecondary Opportunity

- Work-Integrated Learning Advisory Committee
- Career Connect Washington
- Guided Pathways Expansion in the Community and Technical Colleges
- Registered Apprenticeships
- Post-Graduation Support for Students with Disabilities
- Equity Focus on Youth Experiencing Homelessness & Foster Youth
- Dropout Prevention & Reengagement: Open Doors and High School+
- I-BEST and Ability to Benefit Waiver Expansion
- Local Programs Directory
- Spotlight: Tacoma Jobs 253 Retooling to Meet Pandemic Challenges

The Workforce Board is statutorily charged (RCW 28C.18.060) with conducting research on workforce development programs designed to reduce the unemployment rate of those between 18-24 years old, as well as include demographic and income data for young adults. This report was reframed to reflect the severe economic challenges brought by an international pandemic that has shuttered schools and businesses. Because many existing programs have had to temporarily pause, or retool to meet COVID-19 protocols, it's not clear what the future will look like, but it is important to identify programs and practices which may serve as an example of what methods may be utilized in addressing youth employment. Local workforce development councils across the state are currently updating a directory of youth workforce development programs they offer, which will launch with this report in late 2020. Nonetheless, there are promising developments in youth career exploration and preparation to highlight, as well as promising industry sector growth opportunities that offer strong potential pathways for young people, notably in healthcare and with IT-related skills.

Work-Integrated Learning Advisory Committee Established

The Workforce Board has long championed a multiple pathways approach to postsecondary opportunity, in particular learner-centric, work-integrated learning models. Of particular note during the past two years is the creation of the Work-Integrated Learning Advisory Committee (WILAC) in the 2018 Legislative Session (E2SHB 1600). The Workforce Board is a member of WILAC, which is tasked to advise the Legislature and education and workforce training sectors on opportunities for students to explore and understand a wide range of career-related opportunities through applied learning, engage with industry mentors, and plan for career and college success. Additionally, the WILAC advises the Superintendent of Public Instruction on the development of new work-integrated learning models, reviews investments into Career Connect Washington programs (see below), and identifies opportunities to enhance the connection between High School and Beyond Planning and work-integrated learning opportunities. The WILAC will continue to convene through mid-2022 and will issue a report of its final recommendations to the Legislature in July 2022.

Career Connect Washington: A Strong Platform for Youth Career Exploration and Experience

Governor Inslee created the Career Connect Washington Task Force in 2017. Made up of leaders from business, government, labor, non-profit, and education industries, the Task Force discussed how best to connect Washington students with higher education and careers. Through these efforts, Career Connect Washington (CCW) was formally launched in April 2019 (via E2SHB 2158). CCW recognizes the need to scale up higher-quality career-connected learning opportunities to address persistent educational opportunity gaps, and meet the talent needs of employers. The initiative aligns academic instruction with avenues to explore and pursue career interests by building awareness, exposure, and preparation for a range of careers.

CCW has developed a statewide coalition consisting of regional networks, intermediaries, industry associations, career-connected learning coordinators in the K-12 system, and industry champions. This also includes a program endorsement process, and a grant program to expand earn-and learn opportunities for Washington youth. Over 150 programs are currently serving thousands of students across the state across the. The programs fall into categories within the career connected learning continuum, codified in E2SHB 2158: Career Explore, Career Prep, and Career Launch. Career Explore encourages early exposure opportunities to different careers and options. Career Prep provides career-specific instruction at a worksite or in classrooms for academic credit. Finally, Career Launch combines paid, meaningful work experiences with aligned classroom learning so students can receive a credential and become competitive job candidates. This includes Registered Apprenticeships and Career Launch programs in the K-12, CTC, and four-year systems.

CCW by the numbers:[30] Nine Regional Networks serve as career-connected learning hubs, and regional Educational Service Districts have hired Learning Coordinators to assist their K-12 partners in increasing student participation. Across the state, 10,000 participants are enrolled in Career Launch-level programs, including Registered Apprenticeships. An estimated 1,800 new enrollees under the age of 30 are projected for 2019-20, of which 1,145 are new apprentices. 228 students under the age of 30 have enrolled in Career Launch programs within the first two quarters. 22 Intermediaries have been funded to expand and develop programs in various fields including manufacturing, agriculture, food processing, automotive maintenance, construction, healthcare, hospitality, information technology, and maritime trades, creating 400+ Career Launch slots in the first year of implementation, and over 800 in the second year. 21 new apprenticeship programs were approved by the Washington State Training and Apprenticeship Council,[31] and 28 new Career Launch programs have been endorsed by the cross-sector Career Launch Endorsement Review committee.

Since the program's inception, approximately $14.4 million has been distributed to regions to expand career-connected learning. Over 150 employers have engaged in Career Explore, Career Prep, and Career Launch programs.

[30] Office of the Governor, Career Connect Washington.

[31] Apprenticeship numbers reflect total growth, influenced by a variety of factors, including economic expansion prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person instruction was stopped, and students were sent home to continue their education online. In response, CCW created CareerConnect@Home, which connected students in grades 7-12 with employers to learn about career opportunities. Every weekday, over six weeks in May and June, a livestream featured a conversation with different employers, who talked about their career, industry, related skills and challenges, and answered questions from students. More than 30 employers from across the state participated. The conversations were recorded, viewed more than 8,500 times, and are still available online at CareerConnectatHome.org, along with educational resources for teachers, parents, and students.

Expansion of Guided Pathways in the Community and Technical College System

Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 2158 (2019) provided funding for all 34 community and technical colleges in Washington to implement Guided Pathways, an evidence-based, equity-focused strategy to increase student completion rates and increase access to education opportunity to all communities.

The Guided Pathways strategy calls on colleges to increase investment in advising, technology integration, data analytics, and curricular redesign to build clear, navigable pathways from K-12 education to employment, or on to further postsecondary education. Guided Pathways emphasizes four elements: clear pathways chosen by students with guidance from advisors and career counselors; program and degree maps created by faculty that chart learning outcomes for entire programs and connect students to careers or further postsecondary opportunity; eliminating or accelerating remediation by focusing on increasing the rate of students completing college-level English and math in their first year; and enhanced intake and advising practices that help students identify and map a path early and provide a regular advising schedule thereafter.

The launch of Guided Pathways across the Washington community and technical college system follows several years of successful guided pathway pilot projects, eventually growing to 12 institutions which had adopted and refined the strategy by 2018. E2SHB 2158 provided $32.1 million to the community and technical college system to begin implementation across all institutions. A Guided Pathways Advisory Council, comprised of presidents and other leaders from across the community and technical college system, have prioritized the following: closing equity gaps and improving completion rates in college-level math and English; building sustainable, evidence-based advising models designed to close equity gaps and improve retention and completion rates; and integrating, in partnership with a student advisory council, professional development to support equity-minded and anti-racist implementation of Guided Pathways.

Supporting Registered Apprenticeships through the Pandemic

Since 1998, for as long as the Workforce Board has been evaluating the net impact of public investments in workforce development, the registered apprenticeship sector when taken as a whole has proven to show the greatest returns to taxpayers and participants, compared to all other education and training options.[32] In an ROI analysis, it is important to note that most apprenticeship programs receive very

[32] Workforce Training Results. <https://www.wtb.wa.gov/research-reports/workforce-training-results/>.

little taxpayer support, and in most instances the apprentice pays little to no tuition to be able to participate. Also, the apprentice generally starts earning income soon after starting in the program.

Particular disciplines in traditional education pathways do show a greater ROI than apprenticeship as a whole. For example, baccalaureate computer science and engineering programs have better employment and earning outcomes than registered apprenticeships. But overall employment and earnings resulting from apprenticeship participation outpace traditional education pathways after program exit, and even a few years past exit, with no discernable debt load incurred by the apprentice.

Another consistent positive finding is that employment and earning rates are better for noncompleters of registered apprenticeship programs than non-completers of traditional education and training. This coincides with the high satisfaction rates reported by employers who hire both non-completer apprentices and journey-level professionals from registered programs (according to Workforce Board's periodic customer satisfaction surveys and Workforce Training Results). Registered apprenticeship programs require that a job be available throughout training, because the majority of learning occurs on the job. Apprentices are paid wages while training on the job, and progressive wage gains align with a schedule of learning gains and increases in job responsibilities. Apprentices are rigorously taught and supervised by journey-level professionals, with almost full-time supervision in the first stages of apprenticeship, and increasing levels of apprentice autonomy at the later stages. Apprentices are also taught to become supervisors at the journey level, which maintains a virtuous cycle of work-based learning, with faculty always up to date with industry standards.

The Workforce Board recommends that career pathway programs be developed using the core tenets of the registered apprenticeship model, and business, labor and legislative policymakers should consider new registered apprenticeships whenever possible. Registered Apprenticeship can be an equalizer for economically vulnerable populations, with access and participation supports at each stage of participation. Currently, registered apprenticeship program participation rates for racial minorities and women vary greatly but system averages in some industries fall below overall population density. However, because of Registered Apprenticeship requirements to achieve diversity and inclusion, numbers have been steadily improving over the past 15 years.

The Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council (WSATC) has a legal obligation to focus on equitable access across our diverse population. The WSATC sees this as a priority and continues to work with Apprenticeship Sponsors and the Apprenticeship Division of the Department of Labor and Industries to modify program development and oversight protocols. The WSATC also recognizes a growing number of preparatory programs with articulated pathways to Registered Apprenticeship, further promoting models proven to increase diversity, equity and inclusion.

Washington policymakers have also shown that Apprentice Utilization requirements on public and private work can increase the number of work hours available to apprentices and the number of businesses participating in registered apprenticeship programs. Apprentice labor hour requirements currently exist across most state public works projects and a host of local municipality projects. State

policy makers should look to contracting and procurement practices to drive registered apprenticeship development to new industry sectors.

Enhancing Supports for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may create Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to provide support for specialized instruction and the completion of their education in alignment with their High School and Beyond Plans (HSBP). The IEP describes the amount of time allocated for specialized instruction, related services, and behavioral and academic goals/expectations for the school year.[33] These plans are intended to support a disabled student's transition into adult life. However, once students with disabilities have transitioned out of high school, few supports are available to them.

The Center for Change in Transition Services, based at Seattle University, releases a post-school survey to students one year after they have left high school.[34] From the 2016-2017 year data (the most recent full-year cohort available), approximately one quarter of students who have IEPs did not participate in any form of education, training, or employment the year after leaving high school.[35] The post-school outcome data and transition Plans for disabled students are imperative in determining if they are receiving the proper resources and support to transition to adult life and engage in school/employment. And again, in the 2017-2018 year, of the 6,825 respondents to the post-school survey, nearly three quarters were considered as "engaging" in higher education, competitive employment.[36] Outcome data is further broken out by category to highlight key patterns among these students.

The Legislature recently directed in Senate Bill 6032 (2018) that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in collaboration with DSHS's Developmental Disabilities Administration and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, will "explore the development of an implementation plan to build statewide capacity among school districts to improve transition planning for students in special education who meet the criteria for services, and shall provide all school districts with an opportunity to participate." This plan is being developed at the same time as this report and is expected to be submitted to the Legislature in November 2020.[37]

Focusing on Equity for Youth Experiencing Homelessness and Foster Youth

Homeless youth and those in foster care face significant challenges in keeping up in school and,

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[33] Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2019). *Guidelines for Aligning High School & Beyond Plans and IEP Transition Plans* [PDF]. Retrieved from <https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/specialed/programreview/monitoring/secondarytransition/Guide-Align-HSBP-IEP-Transition.pdf>.

[34] The Center for Change in Transition Services is a Washington State Needs Project funded by OSPI Special Education with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) state-level discretionary dollars. Collectively, the State Needs Projects (SNPs) provide statewide professional development, technical assistance, consultation, and training for parents, families, and educators.

[35] *Washington's Cross Agency Transition Collaborative*. (2020). Presentation.

[36] Center for Change in Transition Services, Seattle University. (2020). *Indicator B14 Post School Outcome Report-Washington State, 2017-208 lever year*. Retrieved from <https://www.seattleu.edu/media/ccts/post-schoolsurveyandoutcomes/reports/PSO_Report_STATE_FINAL_20200128.pdf>.

[37] <http://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2017-18/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Passed%20Legislature/6032-S.PL.pdf?q=20201110115736>.

eventually, graduating high school. These youth face challenges in homes and schools, emotional difficulties, and trauma and loss.[38] It's difficult to assess how much these youth have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Youth Employment dashboard[39] accompanying this report will attempt to quantify this as data is compiled, to evaluate the number of homeless and foster youth across education levels, and their high school completion rates.

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), OSPI, Office of Homeless Youth, Washington Student Achievement Council, and aligned nonprofit organizations were directed by the Legislature in 2018 to "create a plan for children and youth experiencing foster care and homelessness to facilitate educational equity with their general student population peers and to close the disparities between racial and ethnic groups by 2027." This group is known as the Project Education Impact workgroup. Since 2018, the group has worked to improve success in school among youth facing the added pressures of homelessness and foster care. Two years ago, the workgroup published a report addressing the educational outcomes of youth in foster care and experiencing homelessness, and included recommendations for DCYF and the state legislature in addressing these concerns. Based on data from 2017, the report reveals that: Youth in these challenging conditions are absent from school one-third of the school days of the year; 22 to 30 percent are less likely to stay enrolled in the same school the whole year; are less likely to meet math and English standards; less likely to graduate with a high school diploma as compared to their peers; and less likely to enroll in a higher education institution within two years of graduating. These youth were disproportionately youth of color, were generally older compared to their same grade-level peers, and required some special education services at higher rates.

The state's Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) analyzed educational outcomes among youth experiencing homelessness and foster youth during 2012 and again in 2017 to identify significant differences and effects on educational attainment.[40] The same characteristics among homeless youth were identified during both evaluation years. Because of factors beyond their control, these youth are disproportionately affected by constant changes and a lack of stability, and struggle to achieve successful academic outcomes. The Office of Homeless Youth noted several strategies and actions to improving education and employment outcomes among homeless youth, including legislation that requires school districts to provide supports to help these students graduate on time, establishing programs that support transitions to adulthood, connecting homeless Youth and Young Adult (YYA) to work-based learning and internships, supporting them in accessing and completing higher education, and creating supports to help YYA to obtain and keep their jobs. Homeless youth are, of course, also a

[38] Project Education Impact Workgroup. (2019). *Project Education Impact: Achieving Educational Success for Washington's Children, Youth and Young Adults in Foster Care and/or Experiencing Homelessness* [PDF]. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED595805.pdf>.
[39] <https://www.wtb.wa.gov/research-reports/youth-employment/>.
[40] Chen, V., Pyle, K., & Aldrich, T. (2018). *ESSB 6032 Proviso Measures: Education Outcomes of Children and Youth in Foster Care and Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness - Report on Child/Youth Experiencing Homelessness* [Ebook] (pp. 29-55). Education Research Data Center. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED595805.pdf>.

part of the generational cohort that will make up a majority of the workforce in the next few years.[41] Their inability to connect with jobs, keep their jobs, and maintain financial security, can impact not only their own lives, but the economic outcome of the state.

A Thriving Network of Options for Dropout Prevention and Reengagement

Washington has been a national leader in creating new pathways to postsecondary opportunity, particularly those that either reengage dropouts or prevent dropouts and support credential attainment.

In the past year, the well-known "High School 21+" program was renamed "High School+", reflecting that the program is now available to a younger cohort of opportunity youth that seek to begin a postsecondary pathway and achieve high school equivalency at the same time. High School+ is offered by community and technical colleges, often in partnership with community-based organizations and available to adults who are at least 18 years old and need a high school diploma.

Upon entering the High School+ program, each student works with an advisor to assess what the student has already learned through life, work, school or military experience. Together, they develop a plan to complete the rest of what the student needs to complete a diploma. Students can demonstrate their knowledge — and receive high school credits — in several ways. These include a traditional placement test, high school and college transcripts, or a written portfolio. Students then complete any remaining credits by taking adult basic education courses that teach basic skills in reading, writing, math and English language within more rigorous, high school-level material, and substituting college classes for the remaining high school requirements. If a student is enrolled in a college-level class and masters a subject area required for a high school diploma, the student's credits can be applied to both the program of study and the diploma. This dual-credit approach saves students time and money. Additionally, High School+ participants receive help in becoming eligible for federal job-training funds. Students who complete High School+ receive a Washington state high school diploma from their community or technical college.

Roughly a decade ago, the state Legislature tasked the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction with creating a statewide system to reengage older, credit-deficient youth who had dropped out or who had no chance to graduate from high school on time. It was the Legislature's intent to encourage partnerships among school districts, community and technical colleges, and community-based organizations to provide appropriate instruction and services that enable students to become productive members of their community.

From this effort sprung "Open Doors" youth reengagement programs, developed to provide multiple pathways to demonstrate career and college readiness. Students can earn their GED and participate in postsecondary or work readiness education (GED plus), earn a high school diploma or earn college credits/certificates or a two-year degree. Open Doors addresses the needs of students who were

[41] Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection - Department of Commerce. (2018). *2018 Progress Report* [PDF]. Retrieved from < http://www.commerce.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/OHY-2018-Progress-Report-V6.pdf>.

disproportionately unsuccessful in traditional K-12 systems by allowing them to participate in an outcome-based education model that does not rely on seat time for funding, and allows multiple pathways for success. It provides educational opportunities to any student between 16 and 21 years of age who is credit deficient, and to students who have dropped out of the K-12 education system. Open Doors partners with a range of education service providers (community and technical colleges, educational service districts, community-based organizations, skills centers, workforce development councils, Job Corps, for-profit online providers and correctional facilities) to provide access to high school diplomas, high school equivalency, college credits, associate degrees, certificate completion and job training.

The state's ERDC issued a 2019 study of demographics and outcomes among Open Doors program participants.[42] Participants were more likely to be male than their high school peers, and represented a higher-aged cohort than their high school peers. They were also disproportionately more likely (when compared with their high school peers) to be black/African American or Hispanic/ Latino and disproportionately less likely to be Asian or white. They were also more likely to be from a lower-income group, but less likely to have participated in special education. Most participants (59 percent) in the Open Doors program were still enrolled in high school when they were enrolled in the reengagement program, with a substantial minority already coded as having dropped out of high school. It is important to note that this represents the status of the student at the time of enrollment in the reengagement program, not their final outcome. This indicates that Open Doors is successfully targeting students before they have left high school as well as engaging students who have already left.

While only some Open Doors participants successfully completed their high school diploma within two years of their enrollment, most participants were either employed or enrolled in a postsecondary institution by the end of the second year. The most recent cohort of participant data studied by ERDC, from the 2015-16 school year, found students with a graduation requirement year of 2015 who dropped out and then enrolled in Open Doors in 2015 had higher high school graduation rates than those who did not enroll in Open Doors. In addition, 43 percent of those who enrolled in Open Doors were enrolled in a postsecondary institution two years later, while only 19.4 percent of those who did not enroll in Open Doors were so enrolled. This means that dropouts who participated in Open Doors were more than twice as likely to enroll in a postsecondary institution, whether or not they received a high school diploma.

Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST)

Washington's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Program (I-BEST) is nationally well-regarded for quickly teaching students literacy, work, and college-readiness skills so they can move through school and into living wage jobs faster. Developed by Washington's community and technical colleges, I-BEST uses a team-teaching approach: Students work with two teachers in the classroom, one providing job-training, and the other teaching basic skills in reading, math, or English language.

[42] <https://erdc.wa.gov/publications/student-outcomes/outcomes-open-doors-youth-reengagement-program>.

I-BEST challenges the traditional notion that students must move through a set sequence of basic education or pre-college (remedial) courses before they can start working on certificates or degrees. The combined teaching method allows students to work on college-level studies right away, clearing multiple levels with one leap. An increasing number of students are turning to I-BEST to increase their skills and wages. The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges requires I-BEST programs to lead to jobs with a minimum starting wage of $13 per hour ($15 per hour in King County).

Recent Ability to Benefit and BFET Changes Increase Access to Postsecondary Education and Training Opportunities

Access to financial aid plays a critical role in a student's ability to access, persist and complete a postsecondary education. This is especially true for students without a high school diploma or equivalent. In December 2014, Congress restored the Ability to Benefit (ATB) provision of the Higher Education Act. (The provision had been dropped in July 2012 as part of federal budget cuts.) Under the ATB provision, otherwise-eligible students—who do not have a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent, but are enrolled in Title IV eligible programs—may qualify for federal financial aid. In addition to participating in an eligible career pathway program, eligible students only need to pass an approved test, successfully complete six hours of college credit, or enroll in a High School+ or an I-BEST Program.

ATB provides a great opportunity for thousands of students to pursue postsecondary education and training and credentials needed for careers in high-demand occupations, both at community and technical colleges and at four-year institutions. In mid-2020, Washington successfully obtained a federal waiver that allows even high-school aged I-BEST students without a diploma to access the ATB pathway, creating a stable onramp to access to financial aid even while students work towards completion of a diploma and their I-BEST program.

Additionally, in fall 2020, the state received approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to offer for a limited time a waiver that allows enrollment in a transfer program at a community and technical college to satisfy the job search requirements related to receiving basic food assistance. Previously, participants in the Basic Food Employment and Training program could only satisfy their job search requirements by – among other avenues – enrolling in a workforce education program offered by the colleges. This change has broadened the community and technical college system's ability to provide targeted assistance to vulnerable students in all programs, including those on the transfer degree path, who might benefit from Basic Food Employment and Training services including limited childcare funding.

Local Youth Program Directory

As part of the biennial Youth Employment Report, the state Workforce Board staff is updating the current catalogue of active youth workforce development programs, which will be available at the Workforce Board's website (www.wtb.wa.gov). As noted previously in this report, the difficulty of retooling a program model during the COVID-19 pandemic to serve youth remotely has forced some programs to go temporarily dormant. The current youth program catalog will identify which programs are being offered in a social distanced manner.

Spotlight on Retooling to Meet Social Distancing Challenges: Tacoma Summer Jobs 253

Tacoma Summer Jobs 253 is a career preparation program that was colleges developed in 2013 for the students attending Tacoma Public Schools. In an effort to respond to President Obama's challenge to create summer opportunity programs for youth, the mayor's office worked closely with Tacoma Public Schools to create summer jobs within the community. Summer Jobs 253 was developed to help students stay on the path to graduation, with a focus on students who are behind in credits to prepare them for the workforce. The program is competitive, and students from eleven high schools compete to earn summer internships. These internships are a combination of on-the-job experience, instruction, guidance in financial literacy and connection to financial institutions, and soft skills development.

The target population for the program is high school juniors and seniors who are on the track to graduating and may need more aid to successfully complete education, and be prepared for careers. Students are selected based on the criteria of financial need, academic status, and persuasive essays on their motivations and interests. Interns participate in a 96-hour, ten-week summer program, including a 20-hour orientation on financial literacy and soft skills. Students work 16 hours per week, as well as one hour in classroom activities which supports the internship structure. Based on a student's areas of interest, mentors are matched to them who can provide guidance and support in completion of the program and career pathway exploration. An estimated 200 students are placed in internships per year. Students may receive two high school academic and one elective credit towards high school completion. Those students who are still credit-deficient attend summer school to receive general education credits, and those on track to graduate have the opportunity to participate in Microsoft Imagine Academy.[43] Dual enrollment also opens opportunities for students to receive both high school and college credit through Tacoma Community College.

Tacoma Summer Jobs 253 is a partnership between the Tacoma School District, Tacoma Community House, and local employers. It is funded through a braided funding model of a blend of public and private grant funds with contributions from the employers. The program is also funded through the City of Tacoma's General Fund, various other grants (juvenile justice & vocational rehabilitation), and criminal justice tax funds.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the program was modified to support 67 Tacoma Public School students who still met the required criteria. Participants received Occupational Education credits and stipends of up to $1,000 based on the completion of an individualized community service project. The modified version of Summer Jobs 253 supports financial literacy, entrepreneurial development, and project management by holding virtual team meetings from leaders in the business community. Participating businesses included cultural centers, food banks, care centers/hospitals, sports camps, farms, etc. Student-selected projects met social distancing protocols, and provided credits and funding to students. This project was so popular that a 2.0 program is to be released for the fall semester, with completion in the winter. Summer Jobs 253 is an example of program resiliency and flexibility during the pandemic.

[43] Imagine Academy: Technology Skills & Certification | Microsoft Education. (2020). Retrieved from <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/imagine-academy>.

Under the modified program, students are encouraged to be active members within the community, and develop projects which provide services and enhance community livelihood.

Get More Information

Washington has made large-scale, ambitious, and concerted investments into career exploration and preparation over the past decade, with an eye to creating more economic opportunity for young people as they seek to enter the workforce. It is clear from the data that there is more work to be done, even before taking into account the massive effect displacements related to the COVID-19 pandemic will have on young people seeing work experience. In spite of the inherent challenges for young workers in this economy, there are "green shoots" of opportunity, particularly in healthcare and in IT skill-based careers that should be cultivated and brought to scale for young people, in clearly articulated, stackable credential pipelines.

We invite readers to visit the companion website for this report and explore the interactive dashboards on youth employment, as the data picture during the current economic period is fast-changing. The companion website is available at: **https://bit.ly/wayouthemployment**.

The Workforce Board staff will continue to update this online resource with timely data as it becomes available.