



COMMONWEALTH CORPORATION

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Research Provides a Snapshot of Massachusetts Youth

Commonwealth Corporation, in partnership with the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, will soon release a Research and Evaluation Brief that provides a profile of the teenage population (ages 16-19) in Massachusetts at the time of the 2000 Census. Researchers looked at such things as school enrollment, family poverty, and employment to draw a picture that can inform workforce development policy and planning in the Commonwealth. The following is selected material from that brief.

In this study, the term “poor” refers to those living below the federal poverty level. “Low income” is defined as those living below twice the poverty level. The study refers to others households in relation to this same federal poverty level.

At the time of the 2000 Census, the estimated number of 16-19 year-old teenagers in Massachusetts was just under 334,000. Of this group, 197,170 or 59% were enrolled

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CommCorp's Youth Intern

This summer, Commonwealth Corporation has a new intern. Paul Marsh is spending July and August at CommCorp, helping out with anything from program research to observing meetings to administrative support. He learned about the paid internship at Youth Opportunity in Roxbury, one of CommCorp's many partners dedicated to empowering youth to succeed through educational opportunities, job training and job readiness, and social and recreational activities. Since Paul started here this past July, he says he has already gained valuable skills—he has mastered the switchboard, increased his computer skills, and is learning countless other things related to the day-to-day operation of the organization. Paul will complete the Math portion of the GED this September, at which time he will be looking for full-time work. He would like to work with kids. This internship has been a learning experience for all involved, as his supervisor, Florrie Reddish put it, “I, for one, am getting the better deal supervising him. He is teaching me a lot!”



Paul Marsh

Massachusetts Youth

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in junior high or high school, another 87,400 or 26% were enrolled in a post-secondary educational institution, and 49,000 or 15% were out of school.

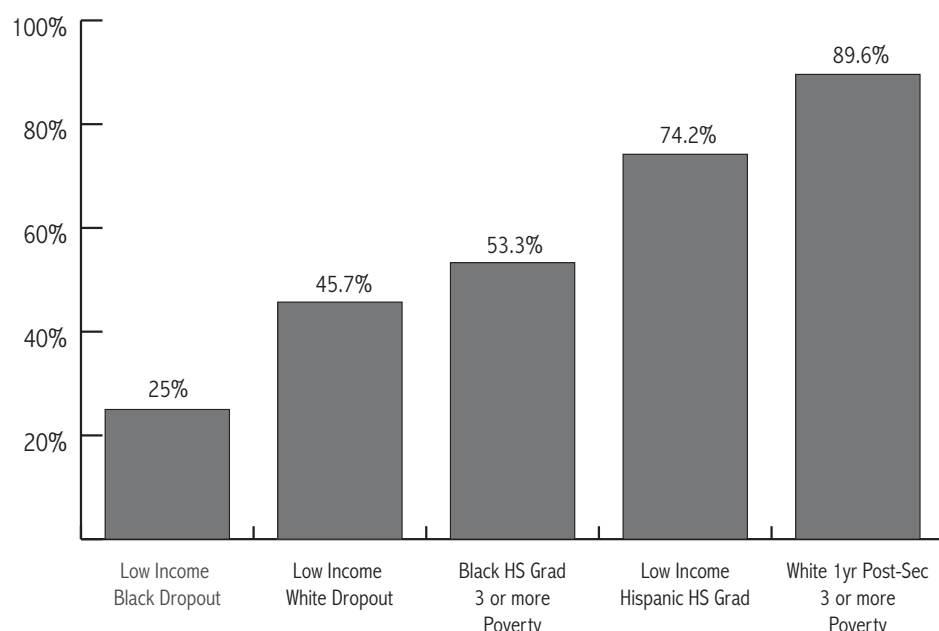
The economic well-being of teens' families varied tremendously at the time of the 2000 Census, with one of every eight teenagers in Massachusetts being "poor," and somewhat more than one in four being "low income." At the same time, just under 47% of the state's teens were living at four or more times the poverty line.

The employment rate of all high school students was 43%, varying considerably by their family income. Only 28% of "poor" high school youth worked versus 31% of those in "low-income" families and 45% to 47% of those twice the poverty level and above. While the employment patterns for Massachusetts are similar to those for the nation, they are troubling based on national research that has shown that work experience in high school can help facilitate the transition from school to work and keep economically disadvantaged youth in school.

Slightly more than one-fifth of all out-of-school youth were "poor" and 41% were "low income." About 30% lived in families with incomes that were four or more times the poverty line. Out-of-school youth in the lower income groups were far more likely to be school dropouts than their peers in higher income groups. Nearly 6 of every 10 out-of-school "poor" youth were school dropouts. In contrast, fewer than one-third of the out-of-school youth living in families with incomes three or more times the poverty level were school dropouts.

The likelihood of an out-of-school teen being employed was strongly associated with his/her educational attainment, race-ethnic characteristics, and family income. Only 48% of dropouts were employed versus 74% of high school graduates and 82% of those youth completing at least one year of post-secondary schooling. Only 41 of every 100 "poor" dropouts were employed. While 48% of "poor," out-of-school youth held a job, 64% of those with family incomes between one and three times the poverty line did so as did 70% to 77% of their peers with family incomes three or more times the poverty line.

**Employment/
Population Ratios
of Selected
Subgroups of
Out-of-School
Teens in
Massachusetts,
Spring 2000**



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