Career Outlook

BLS

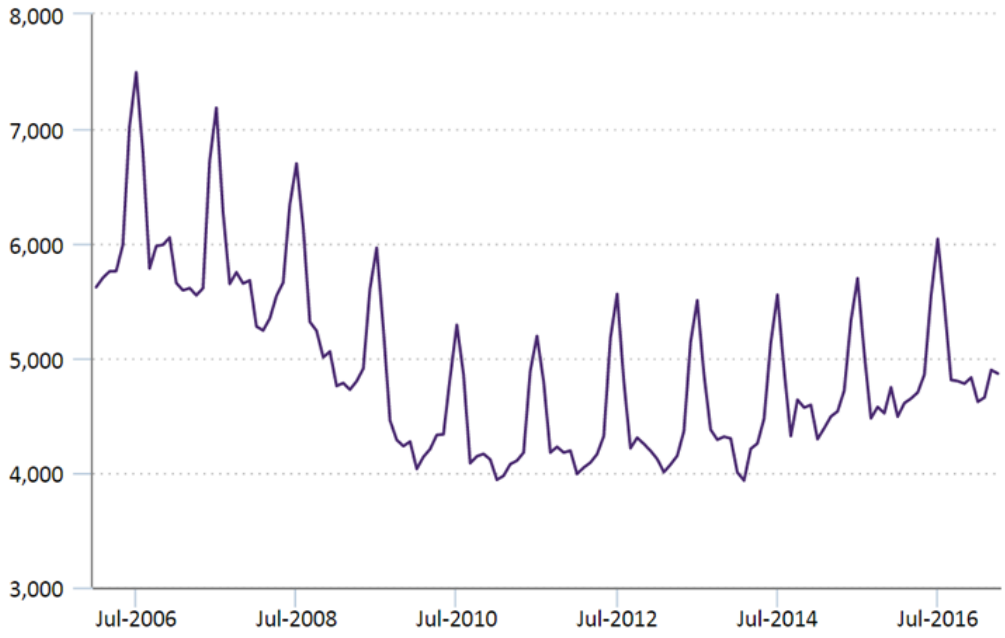
Summer employment: A snapshot of teen workers

Domingo Angeles | June 2017

Earning money, gaining experience, building confidence—these are just a few of the rewards for teens who work. And for millions of teens, the summer months mean summer jobs.

According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), employment typically rises for 16- to 19-year-olds during June, July, and August. Chart 1 shows that the number of working teens has fallen somewhat since 2006, but the uptick in employment during the summer months remains.

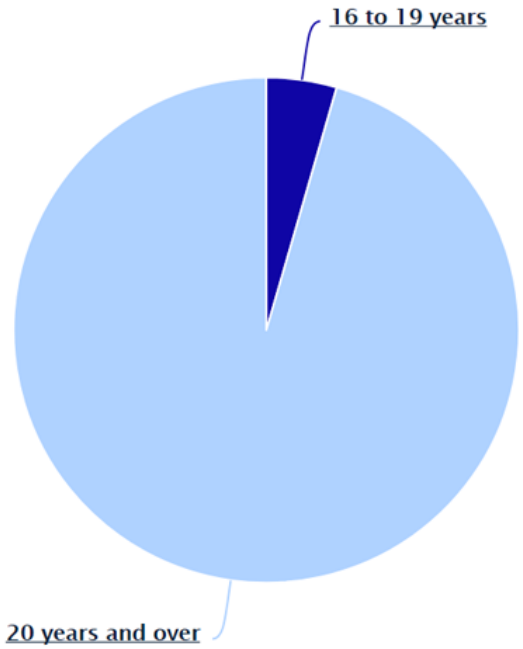
Chart 1. Employment of 16- to 19-year-olds, 2006–16 (in thousands)



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. Data not seasonally adjusted.

Even with summer spikes, teens represent a small portion of all workers. In July 2016, for example, BLS data show that teens ages 16 to 19 accounted for about 4.5 percent of the labor force—that is, people who were either working or looking for work. (See chart 2.) By clicking on the wedges in chart 2, you'll see that most of these young workers were part time, in contrast with other workers.

Chart 2. Workers' shares of labor force by age groups, July 2016



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. Data not seasonally adjusted.

Chart 3 compares teen employment with 20-and-older employment by selected major occupational group. The data show that in July 2016, 16- to 19-year-old workers were concentrated in food preparation and serving occupations and sales and related occupations. In contrast, occupations in the professional and related and the management, business, and financial operations groups were among those that had higher shares of workers ages 20 and older.

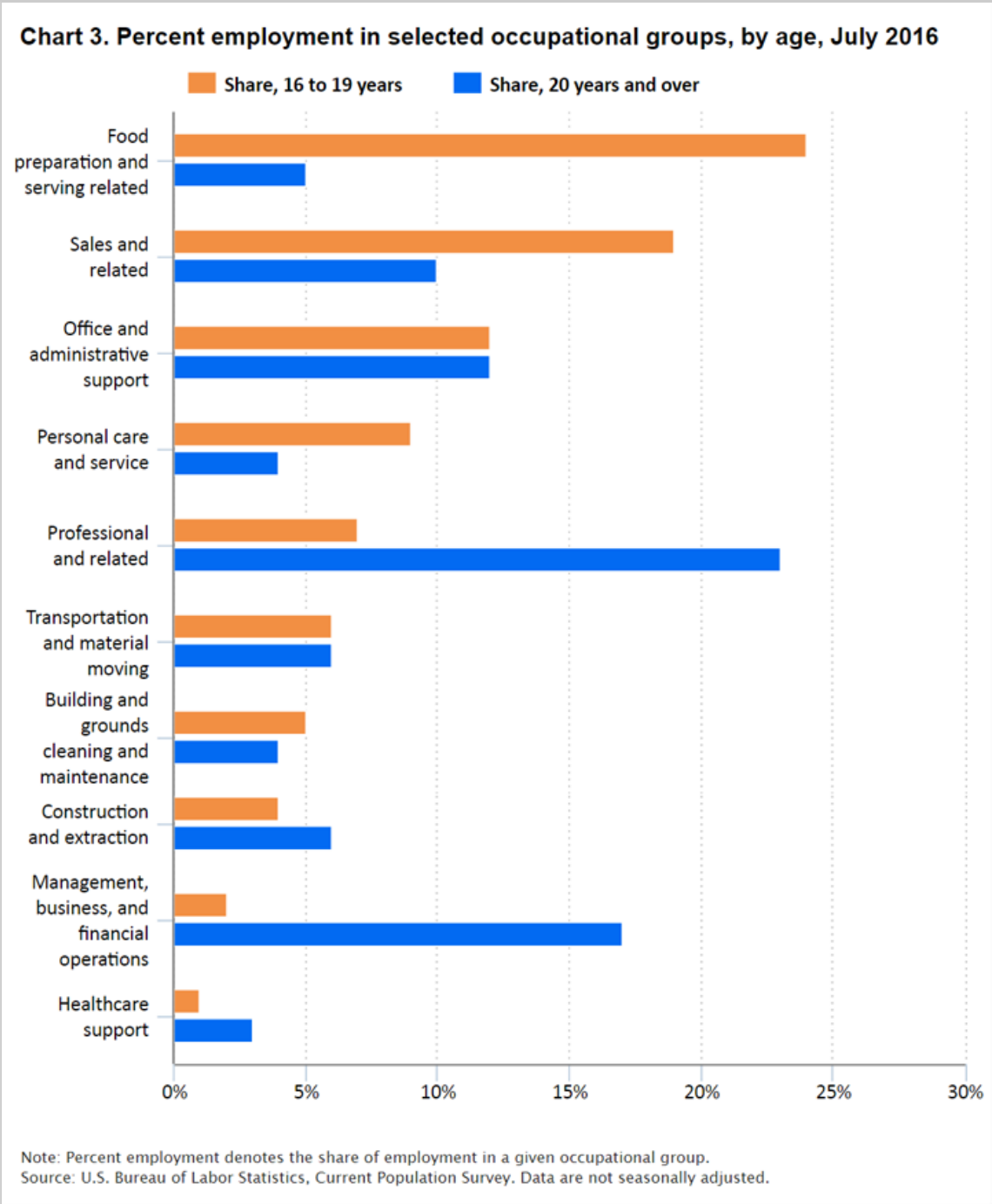


Table 1 shows a primary reason for these concentrations: Occupations that employed large numbers of young workers typically require no formal educational credential or experience to enter, and none usually require more than 1 month of on-the-job training to attain competency. That means most 16- to 19-year-olds, who are still in school and usually haven't had as much work experience or job-related training as the rest of the labor force, often qualify to enter these occupations.

Table 1. Employment and education, experience, and training typically needed in selected occupations that employed the largest numbers of young workers in 2016

Occupation	Annual employment, 2016, workers ages 16-19 [1]	Education typically needed for entry	Work experience in a related occupation	On-the-job training typically needed to attain competency [2]
See footnotes at end of table.				
Cashiers	738,000	No formal educational credential	None	Short-term
Waiters and waitresses	326,000	No formal educational credential	None	Short-term
Retail salespersons	290,000	No formal educational credential	None	Short-term
Food preparation workers	187,000	No formal educational credential	None	Short-term
Hosts and hostesses, restaurant, lounge, and coffee shop	156,000	No formal educational credential	None	None
Customer service representatives	152,000	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Short-term
Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	138,000	No formal educational credential	None	Short-term
Stock clerks and order fillers	135,000	No formal educational credential	None	Short-term
Childcare workers	129,000	High school diploma or equivalent	None	Short-term
Counter attendants, cafeteria, food concession, and coffee shop	108,000	No formal educational credential	None	Short-term

Footnotes:

[1] Detailed occupational data are not available for summer employment. Data shown are annual averages.

[2] Short-term on-the-job training is assigned to occupations in which workers can attain competency during 1 month or less of on-the-job experience and informal training.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (employment) and Employment Projections program (education, experience, and training).

These employment data are from the Current Population Survey, a monthly national household survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for BLS and the source of the official unemployment rate. Education, experience, and training assignments are from the BLS Employment Projections program, which also produces the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*.

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SUGGESTED CITATION:

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