

"When employers see I have been unemployed for this long, they won't even look at me." (Unemployed 20 year old)

**citizens
advice
scotland**

Young people and employment



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Citizens Advice Scotland's latest report, *Being Young Being Heard*, outlines the impact of the recession on young people in Scotland in their own words. Key findings include:

- One in five young people are now unemployed - more than three times the unemployment rate among older workers.
- In the three years up to August 2010, the number of young people claiming Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) in Scotland increased by 79%, and more than doubled in seven local authorities.¹
- The highest pockets of youth claimant rates are found in the West of Scotland, particularly in North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire, and Inverclyde. However, the biggest increases in youth unemployment during the recession occurred in East Lothian, Midlothian, and East Renfrewshire.²

The experience of unemployment

"I want to work, yet it's like nobody will give me a chance. It's making me depressed and has knocked my confidence big time." (Unemployed 20 year old)

Young people in the research recorded the impact of unemployment on their lives. The longer they remain unemployed, the greater the impact on their confidence, wellbeing, and opportunities later in life. Unemployment can have a severe effect on the mental health of young people. According to research conducted by the Prince's Trust, 42% of unemployed young people feel their life lacks direction and 32% feel depressed.³ Future effects of unemployment at a young age include homelessness and a risk of becoming unemployable.

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Difficulties finding employment

Young people in the survey felt that a lack of experience is holding them back in the job market, and yet the only way they can get experience is by getting a job. As a result, many young people are finding the jobmarket more difficult to enter than previous generations have experienced.

Recent graduates are having to fight for diminishing numbers of graduate level jobs, and as a result often have to take unpaid internships, minimum wage employment, or face unemployment. This has a knock on effect on other young people looking for work.

Recruitment freezes in the private sector and public sector cuts impact most severely on young people entering the jobmarket. Young people are competing for a reduced number of jobs against tens of thousands of recently unemployed workers with more experience.

Redundancies and dismissals

Young people have been disproportionately affected by redundancies and dismissals in the economic downturn. In the first half of the recession, the increase in youth unemployment was over twice the rate experienced by adults aged 25-49 and three times as much as those aged over 50.⁴ A number of factors make young people more vulnerable to redundancy:

- Employers can view young workers as less skilled and experienced
- Younger workers may be cheaper to make redundant due to fewer years worked
- Young people can be disproportionately affected by a 'last in; first out' redundancy policy

In work problems

Young people, like many adults, experience problems at work. However, some of these in work problems can be more severe because of a lack of knowledge about employee rights.

Citizens advice bureaux regularly advise young people who are paid below the national minimum wage despite not being an apprentice.

Young people report that they have had their hours of work and/or wage reduced, which has led to financial difficulties.

Young people report of employers who disregard their employment rights, with practices including withholding pay, forcing them to work long hours, and unfair dismissal.

CAS recommends that:

- The UK Government ensure that targeted and personalised support for young people is provided in the Work Programme.
- A Fair Employment Commission be established to oversee employer activity, investigate complaints, and take enforcement action against rogue employers.

A West of Scotland CAB reports of a 22 year old client who was laid off after more than five years employment. The client was told that the reason for the lay off was that he was the "last in" to the company, and therefore the first out. The client maintains that others in the company started their employment after him.

A West of Scotland CAB reports of a 23 year old client who experienced financial difficulties after his hours of work were reduced from 30 hours to 12.5 hours per week. The client now has debts of over £5,000 and he is unable to meet his contractual payments. He is incurring interest and charges on his overdraft, credit card and loan accounts.

¹ NOMIS

² NOMIS

³ The Cost of Exclusion: Counting the cost of youth disadvantage , Princes Trust (2010)

⁴ TUC Recession Report (May 2009)