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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

How Are American Teens in 2022?

WILL LACKLUSTER SUMMER 2021 GAINS PORTEND THIS SUMMER'S TEEN JOB MARKET?

CHICAGO, April 19, 2022 – A perfect storm of current events affecting American teens might keep them from taking jobs this summer, according to a new outlook from global outplacement and business and executive coaching firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

Last summer, despite the availability of jobs teens typically fill, low COVID cases, and lifted restrictions, 41% fewer teens found jobs than in 2020, when the most teen jobs were added on record. Challenger analyzed data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics since 1998 (see table 1).

The firm predicts teens will gain 1.3 million jobs in 2022, on par with last year's teen job market.

“The most immediate concern for teens is their mental health. Teens are savvy. They know what is happening in the world, what's happening overseas, how divided many in the country are. They may even see that division firsthand at home,” said Andrew Challenger, Senior Vice President of Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

“Couple that with inflation concerns and supply chain disruptions that could keep hiring down for companies nationwide, and teens may not only opt out of work, but the jobs they would take might dry up,” he added.

In a new study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 44% of teens reported they experienced persistent thoughts of sadness or hopelessness in 2021, up from 26% in 2009. This rate was even higher for girls and LGBTQ+ youth last year, at 56% and 77% respectively.

News of the war in Ukraine is ubiquitous on social media, where 54% of teens get their news, according to a 2019 study by Common Sense Media. The war is a concern for 31% of companies [recently surveyed by Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.](#) and 92% of those respondents are primarily concerned with the mental well-being of their workers as they deal with the news.

“This concern for the mental health of employees is not just for adults. We know COVID-19 upended normal school routines for years. Teens who are entering college in the fall have not experienced a normal school year since they were sophomores,” said Challenger.

“Teens are contending with isolation, civil and social unrest. Employers who hire teens know they do not exist in a vacuum. Teens are under strain,” he added.

The war is also disrupting supply chains overseas, as are renewed COVID lockdowns in China. Meanwhile, inflation rose 8.5% in March, increasing the cost of gas, energy, and food.

“Companies might respond by slowing hiring, and teens might decide their wages and hours are not worth the higher costs to get to and from work,” said Challenger.

At least for now, jobs appear to be plentiful. According to the latest Job Opening and Labor Turnover Survey, there were 11.3 million job openings in February, with 32,000 new job openings in arts, entertainment, and recreation, industries traditionally popular for teen workers.

“Summer jobs could certainly boost the mental well-being of teen workers. However, just like with adults, it depends on the culture of the organization. If the teen works for an empathetic leader, is learning new skills, has a career trajectory, and has flexibility and purpose in the role, the job could be a welcome bright spot,” said Challenger.

In fact, in the most recent Challenger survey, HR executives ranked flexibility, empathetic leadership, career-pathing, and meaningful work as the most important worker priorities, even over compensation.

“Workers are quitting in droves for greener pastures and new opportunities. Many teens have reflected on what is important in their lives. While it might include summer employment, it could just as well mean taking up a new hobby, pursuing sports or volunteer opportunities, taking additional classes, or helping care for family members,” said Challenger.

“So many ever-shifting factors will go into teen employment this year. Will COVID cases rise to the point where restrictions limit the number of jobs available? Will inflation and the measures implemented to combat it prohibit many companies from hiring teens? Will consumers have the disposable income to spend at places that hire teen workers?” said Challenger.

“The jobs are available, but it remains to be seen if teens will take them,” said Challenger.

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SUMMER EMPLOYMENT GROWTH AMONG WORKERS AGED

Year	May	June	July	Summer Jobs Gained	Change from Prior Year
1998	270,000	1,058,000	675,000	2,003,000	
1999	415,000	750,000	852,000	2,017,000	0.70%
2000	111,000	1,087,000	311,000	1,509,000	-25.20%
2001	58,000	1,124,000	560,000	1,742,000	15.40%
2002	161,000	985,000	510,000	1,656,000	-4.90%
2003	152,000	859,000	458,000	1,469,000	-11.30%
2004	168,000	827,000	597,000	1,592,000	8.40%
2005	183,000	1,007,000	546,000	1,736,000	9.00%
2006	230,000	1,033,000	471,000	1,734,000	-0.10%
2007	62,000	1,114,000	459,000	1,635,000	-5.70%
2008	116,000	683,000	355,000	1,154,000	-29.40%
2009	111,000	698,000	354,000	1,163,000	0.80%
2010	6,000	497,000	457,000	960,000	-17.50%
2011	71,000	714,000	302,000	1,087,000	13.20%
2012	157,000	858,000	382,000	1,397,000	28.50%
2013	215,000	779,000	361,000	1,355,000	-3.00%
2014	217,000	661,000	419,000	1,297,000	-4.30%
2015	182,000	609,000	369,000	1,160,000	-10.60%
2016	156,000	691,000	492,000	1,339,000	15.40%
2017	75,000	1,023,000	190,000	1,288,000	-3.80%
2018	130,000	951,000	307,000	1,388,000	7.80%
2019	216,000	1,053,000	468,000	1,737,000	25.10%
2020	594,000	1,129,000	469,000	2,192,000	26.19%
2021	219,000	625,000	451,000	1,295,000	-40.92%
AVERAGE Since 1998	178,125	867,292	450,625	1,473,545	
AVERAGE Since 2006	169,200	822,664	397,449	1,391,444	

SOURCE: CHALLENGER, GRAY & CHRISTMAS, INC., WITH NON-SEASONALLY ADJUSTED DATA FROM THE BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS.

TIPS FOR TEEN JOB SEEKERS

Start Early: For teens seeking summer employment, June is traditionally the most popular month for teen hiring. However, teens who want to find work for the summer would be wise to start readying their resumes and applications in March or April.

Create and connect to your network: Many teens may not think they have a network, but that could not be further from the truth. Teens should reach out to their friends, parents, instructors – both current and past, coaches, and friends' parents to inquire about potential opportunities. They should also seek out the managers of places they frequent to see if they are hiring.

Create a resume: Teens should include extra-curricular activities, volunteer experience, or any other information that would show an employer you are able to work as part of a team, are a self-starter, or can manage a project.

Look in unexpected places: While summer camps, retail establishments, and theme parks or movie theaters come to mind for teens, in a period of expansion, many offices will need administrative staff who can organize files, take calls, or even manage social media profiles. Teens can also investigate summer paid internships in industries they find appealing or for which they are passionate. These are great avenues for teens to gain real work experience.