

Detroit Summer Youth Employment Program: Results of 2013 Youth Employee Exit Surveys

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April 2014

I. Introduction

In the summer of 2013, the Detroit Youth Employment Consortium helped coordinate the employment of around 3350 youth across the city of Detroit. Youth ages 14 to 21 years were employed for six weeks in a variety of positions, from urban forestry and environmental conservation to small business and pharmacy internships. The 2013 Detroit Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) represents the fifth consecutive year the public, private, and non-profit sectors have collaborated to bring high-quality opportunities for youth.

A. National Context of Youth Unemployment

While in many respects the American economy is recovering from the peak of the Great Recession in 2009, the employment situation among youth remains particularly dire, especially for minority youth in large metropolitan areas such as Detroit.

In 2013, the annual unemployment rate among the civilian, noninstitutionalized population was 7.4 percent. The rate among youth ages 16-19 was three times the national rate, 22.9 percent.¹ Youth have fewer employment options available, and are able to work fewer hours than adults, but even accounting for these obstacles youth seeking employment find it more difficult than adults.

It is no secret the Great Recession has been hard on Michigan, and especially hard on Detroit.² In 2013, the City filed for bankruptcy protection, the largest municipal filing in American history. The Bureau of Labor Statistics does not make unemployment estimates for youth at the state or municipal level, but in 2013 the unemployment rate for the civilian, noninstitutionalized population of Michigan was 8.8 percent,³ and 18.6 percent for Detroit (in 2012).⁴ If the national trends for youth hold, then the unemployment rate among youth in Detroit, Michigan, is even higher.

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics. Household Data Annual Averages. 5. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by sex, age, and race. Available at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat05.htm>.

²

http://www.mlive.com/news/index.ssf/2011/10/great_recession_leaves_michiga.html; <http://www.ibtimes.com/detroit-michigan-crippled-paralyzed-recession-309206>.

³ Bureau of Labor Statistics. Unemployment Rates for States. Unemployment rates for states annual average rankings: 2013. Available at <http://www.bls.gov/lau/lastrk13.htm>.

⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics. Unemployment Rates for the 50 Largest Cities. Unemployment rates for the 50 largest cities annual average rankings: 2012. Available at <http://www.bls.gov/lau/lacilg12.htm>.

B. Workforce Investment Act funding

Employment during youth is associated with many positive developmental outcomes; however, because of child labor restrictions, youth employment often requires a substantial government subsidy. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) provides a direct subsidy to youth employed during the summer months of June, July, and August. In order to qualify, youth must be between the ages of 14 and 21, and meet any of the following criteria⁵:

- Receives or resides in a household that receives public assistance.
- Received an income for the last six months, or resides in a household for the same period, that, did not exceed the poverty line, base on the size of the household.
- Qualifies as a homeless youth, or is currently in foster care.
- Has a disability or some other factor that is a significant barrier to employment.

C. Detroit Summer Youth Employment Program

WIA funds come to the City of Detroit, which partners with City Connect to administer the Detroit Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP for short). This is a substantial undertaking that requires recruiting employers to participate and determining the eligibility of youth who apply. There are often more applicants than there are available jobs, so even applicants who qualify are not guaranteed summer employment. Still, in 2013 SYEP employed 3,347 youth (1907 through Grow Detroit's Young Talent and 1440 through Youth Employment Solutions and Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation programs). Employers included the Detroit Police Department, local non-profit organizations, small businesses, and more. Youth engaged in a wide variety of activities on the job, including youth mentorship, greening and landscaping, office work, etc.

What evaluations of youth employment programs have shown is that quality programs have matched youth to sites based on interest, and have given youth opportunities to exhibit leadership and responsibility⁶. We used this literature as a starting point for evaluating SYEP.

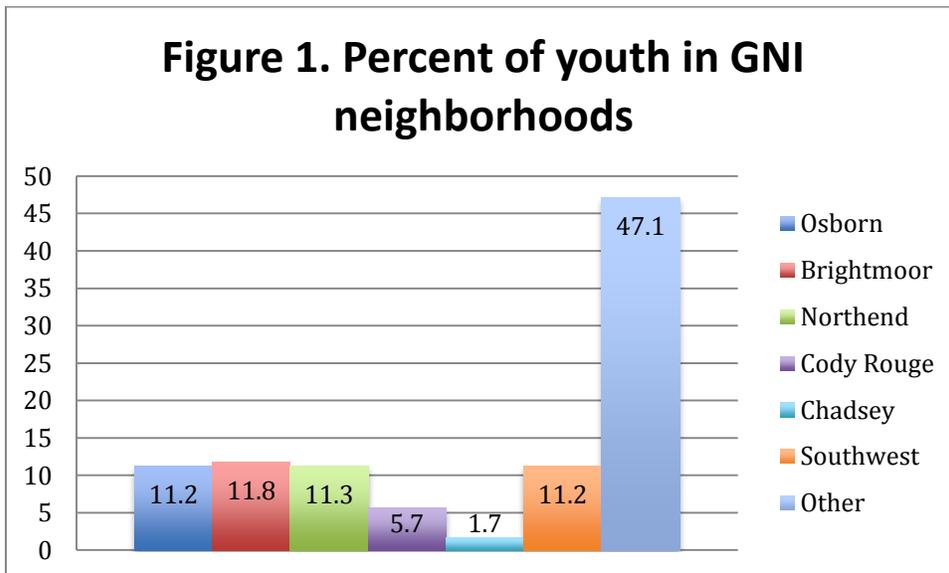
⁵ <http://www.doleta.gov/regions/reg02/documents/ETA-ASTD-Forum-2011/WIA%20Eligibility-%20Sorting%20Out%20Fact%20from%20Fiction.pdf>

⁶ Bellotti et al, 2010; Tandon et al 2008; Matsuba et al, 2007; Curnan & Hah, 2010

D. About This Report

What follows are responses from a questionnaire youth completed upon exiting the program in August of 2013. 2,083 responses were collected. Figures 1-30 present the distribution of responses to each item on the questionnaire. Additionally, we aggregate qualitative responses on several items, including youths' impressions of SYEP and their improvement recommendations. We also include an analysis of the data by gender, age group, and scholastic achievement.

II. Youth Employees End-of-Program Survey Results



N = 2083, Missing = 65

Other responses include:

Ecorse

Southfield

Wadsworth

Dexter

Warren

Pontiac

Redford

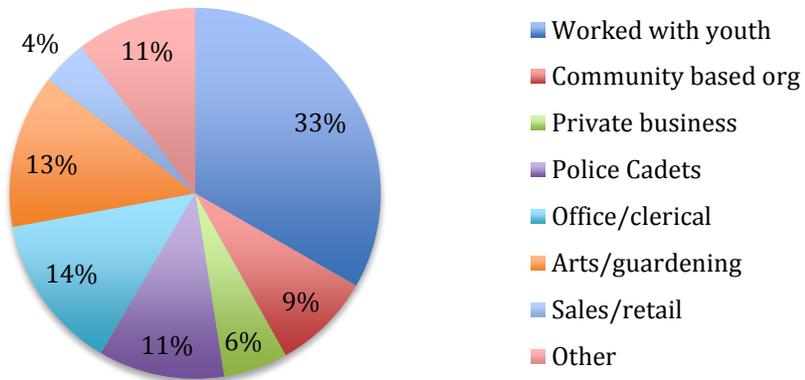
Highland park

Denby

6 Mile

7 Mile

Figure 2. Type of work



Missing = 29

Other responses include:

Department of Natural Resources

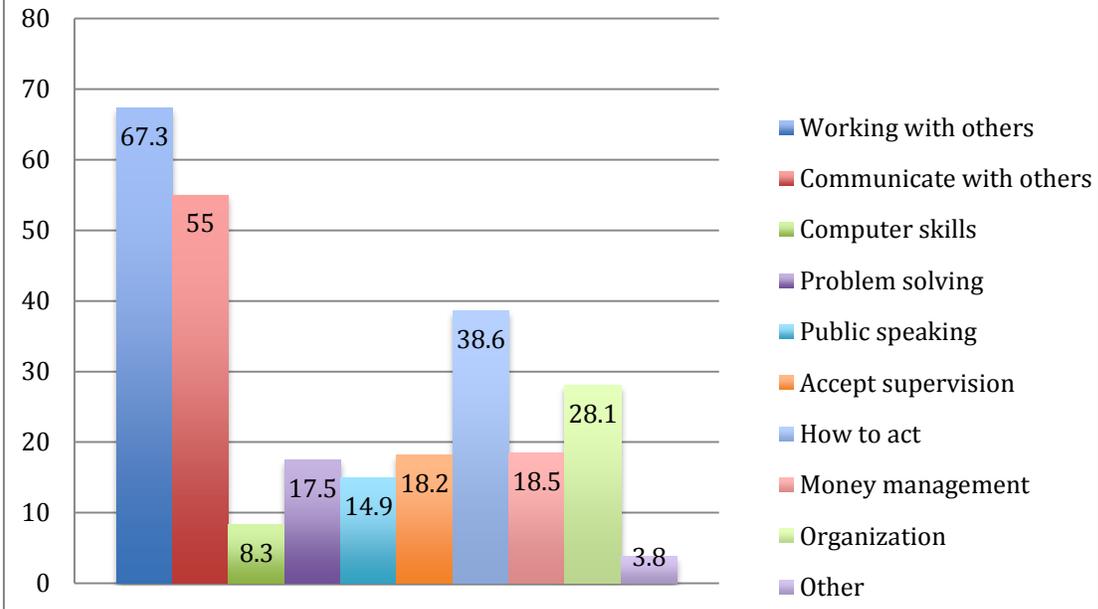
Cleaning

Computers

Receptionist

Painting

Figure 3. Employment skills learned during SYEP



Missing = 7

Other responses include:

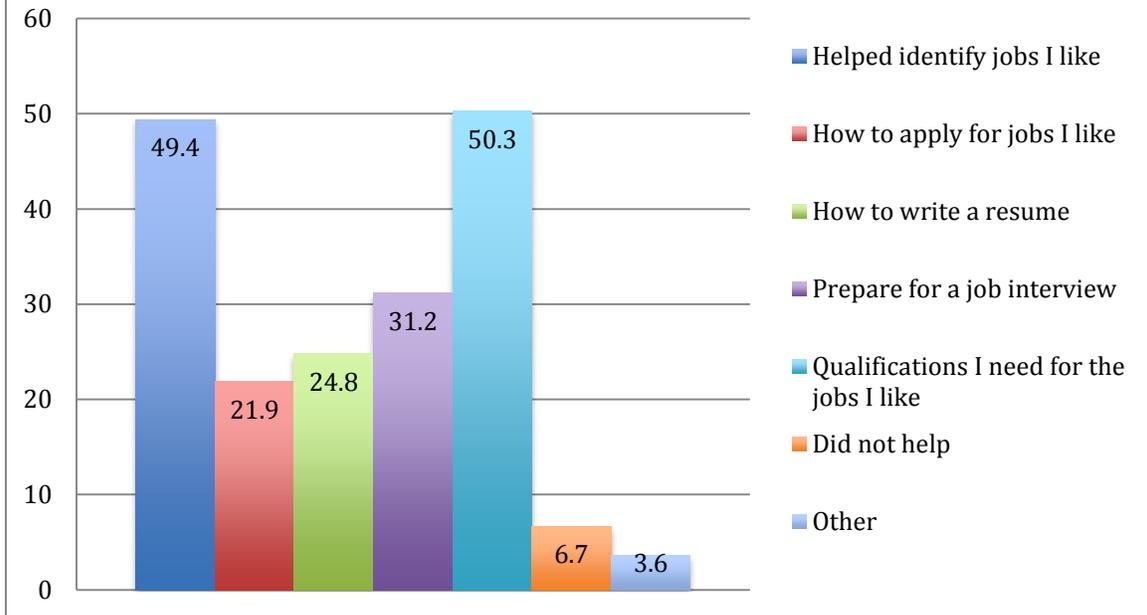
Dance technique

Teaching children various educational skills

Working with youth

Basic planning skills

Figure 4. Skills for future employment learned during SYEP

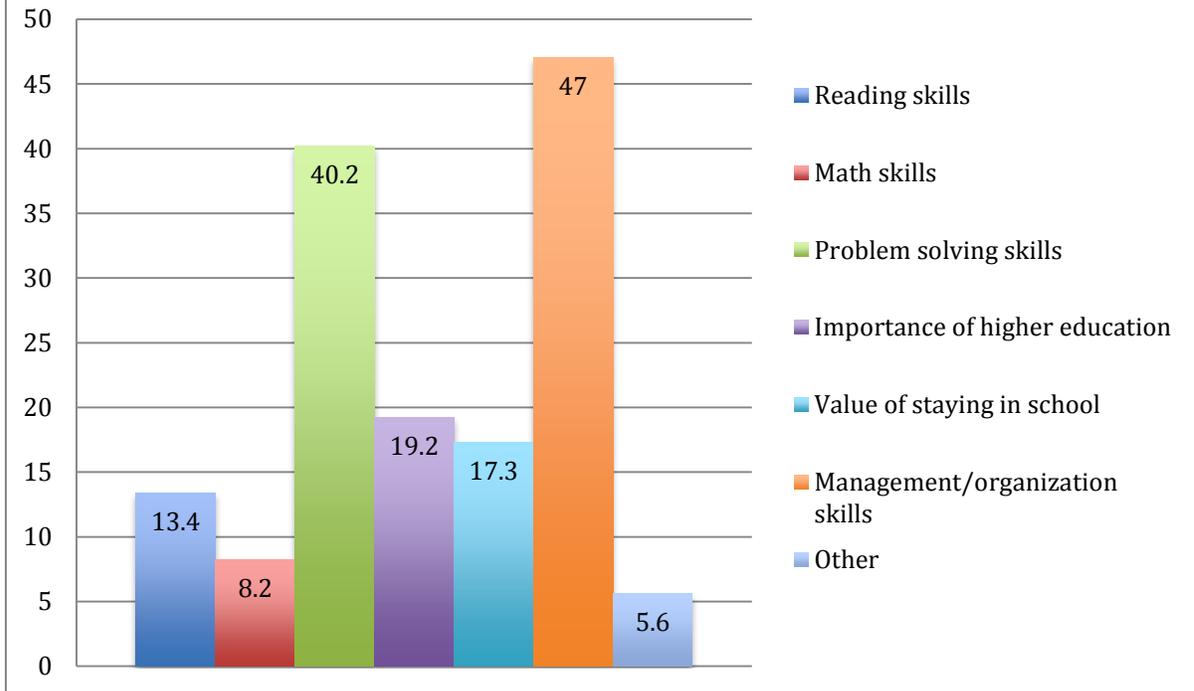


Missing = 13

Other responses include:

Helped me realize I like working with youth

Figure 5. Academic skills learned during SYEP



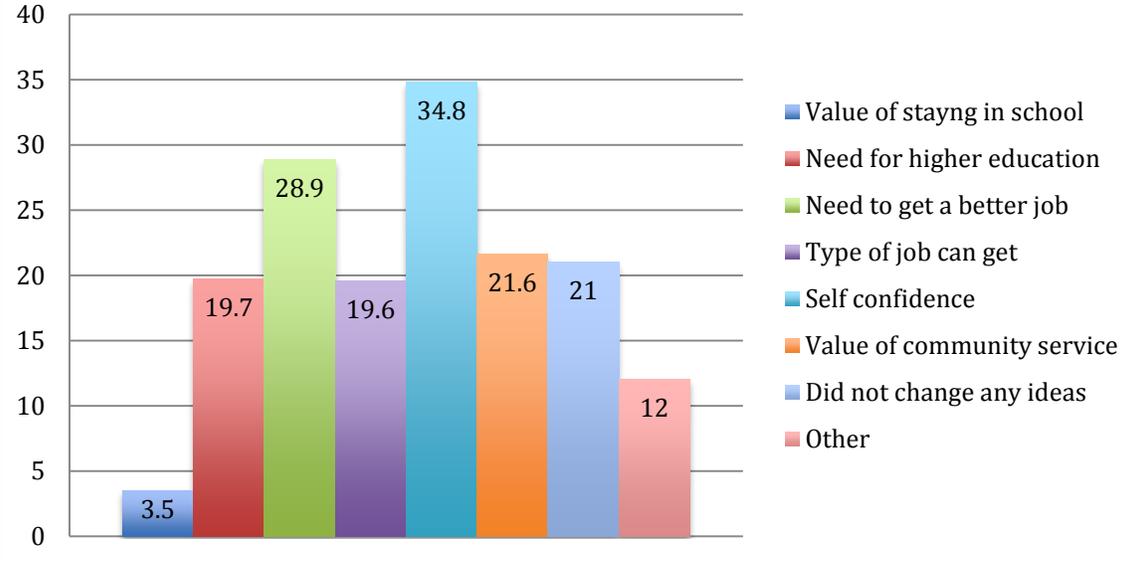
Missing = 60

Other responses include:

Computer skills

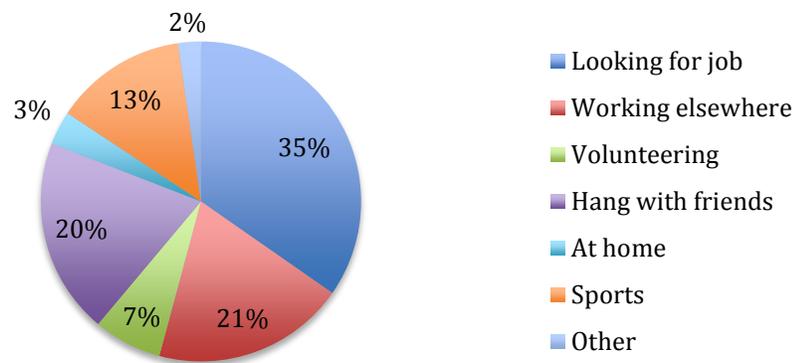
Inspired me to get ready for higher education

Figure 6. How have ideas about the future changed as a result of SYEP



Missing = 97

Figure 7. What else would you be doing if not in SYEP?



Missing = 190

Other responses include:

Vacationing

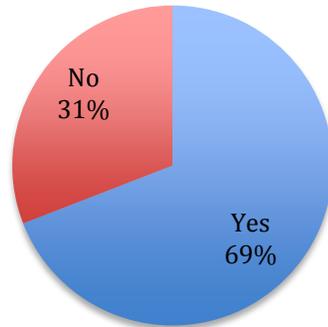
Still at the job I'm at

Getting ready for college

Spending time with family

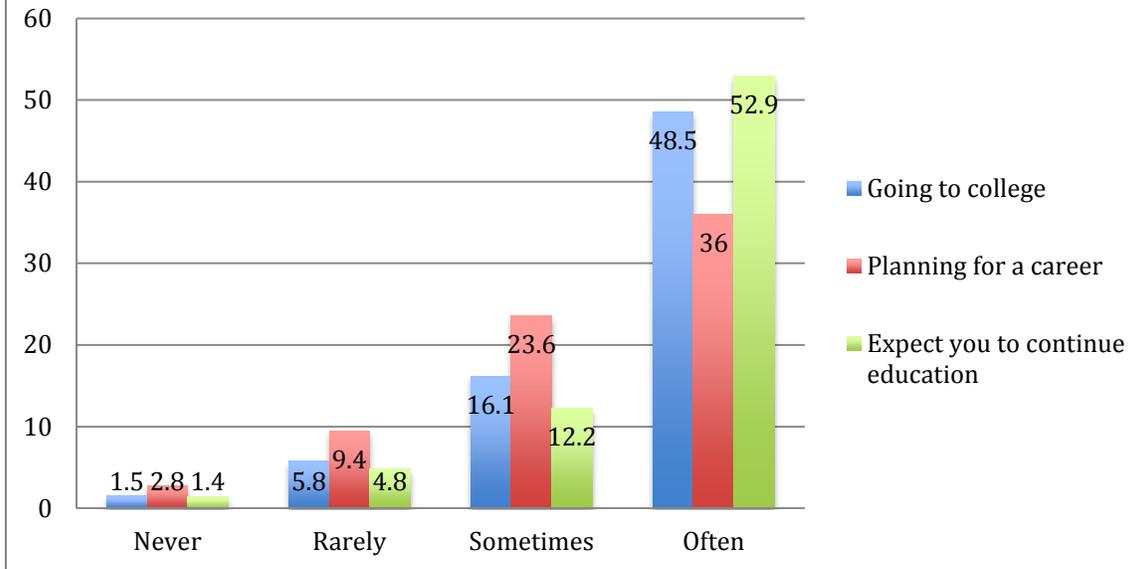
Taking courses at WCC

Figure 8. Were you able to identify an adult mentor during SYEP?



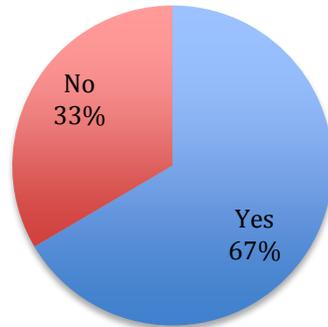
Missing = 44

Figure 9. How often does an adult in your life talk to you about the following?



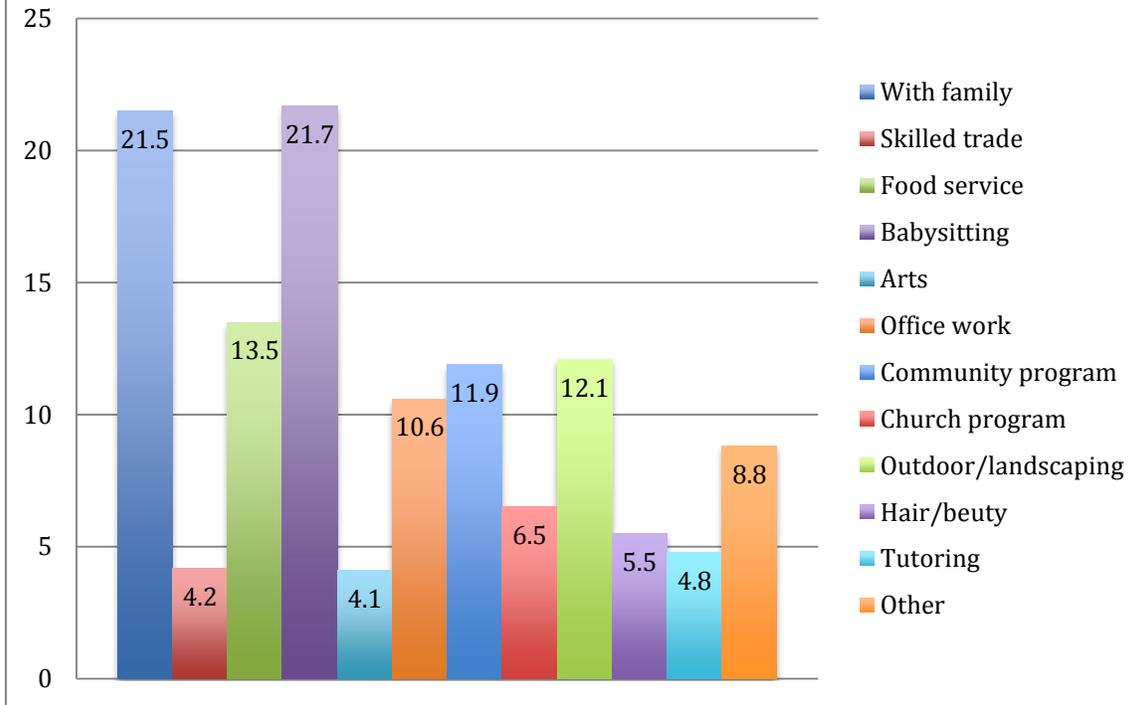
Missing = 19

Figure 10. Have you worked for pay in the past?



Missing = 12

Figure 11. What kind of work have you done in the past?



Missing = 407

Other responses include:

Non-profit work

Police Department

Chores

Caddying

LGBTQ social justice work

Hands of Hope

Lawn/yardwork

Trinity

Gymnastics coach

Maintenance

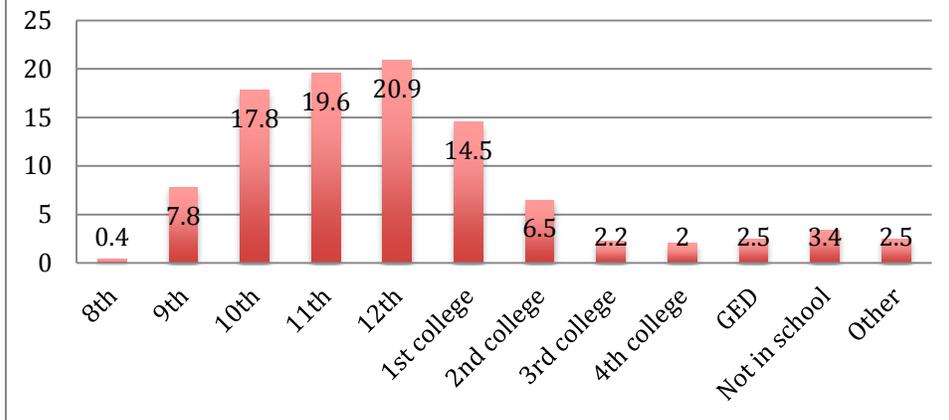
CNL/CNC

Movie theater

Car wash

Hardware store

Figure 12. What grade will you be in the fall?



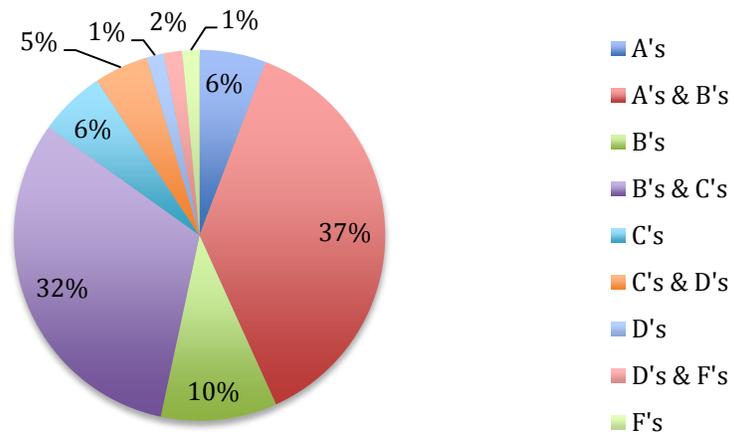
Missing = 12

Other responses include:

Finished school

Air Force

Figure 13. Typical grades in school

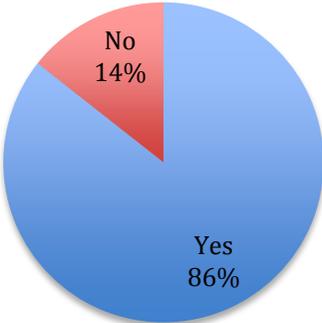


Missing = 21

Question 14: What type of job/career would you like to be doing in 10 years?

1.4	Culinary arts
2.8	Veterinarian
12.5	Doctor: pediatrician, surgeon, psych
8.7	Nurse: pediatric, neonatal
0.7	Pharmacist
1.4	Physical therapist
1.4	Film industry
3.5	Actor
0.7	Public relations
1	Business: Real estate, management
0.3	Writer
0.7	Sports science
3.5	Teacher: elementary, math, science
7.6	Law: Lawyer, paralegal, criminal justice
1.4	Politics, government
2.1	Scientist: zoology, biology, anthropology
4.5	Entrepreneur/own business
2.8	Music producer
3.8	Singer/musician
4.2	Artist: art, photography, gaming
0.3	Mechanic
5.2	Professional athlete
1	Broadcasting
1	Athletic trainer
5.9	Engineer: medical, electrical, chemical
2.1	Social worker
0.7	Therapist
2.1	Dance
2.1	Crime scene investigator
1.4	Journalist
0.7	Electrician
3.5	Law enforcement
0.7	Interpreter
3.5	Designer: fashion, graphic
0.7	Modeling, cosmetology
0.7	Armed forces
1	Architect
2.1	Accountant
2.4	Construction, landscaping
1.4	Non-profit work
2.1	Don't know

Figure 14. Need to finish college for ideal job?



Missing = 27

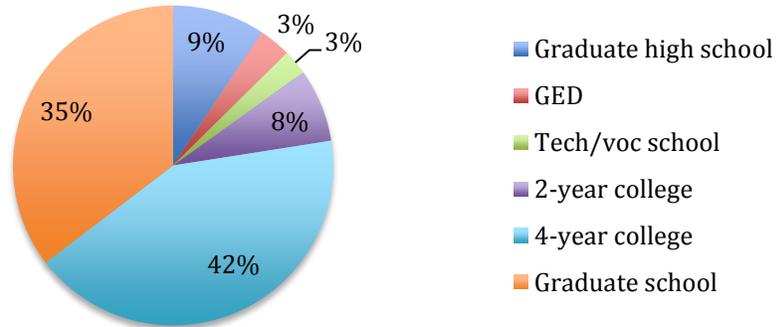
Question 16: What are you doing to achieve this job?

50.7	Continuing education
5.9	Research on jobs, colleges
4.5	Employment
5.5	Volunteer work
0.7	Sports
1.4	Family resources
13.9	Practice: reading, music
6.9	Grades
2.1	Training
0.3	Finances
3.5	Networking
6.9	Doing the right thing, focus
1	Nothing

Question 17: Any barriers that might keep you from reaching your goals?

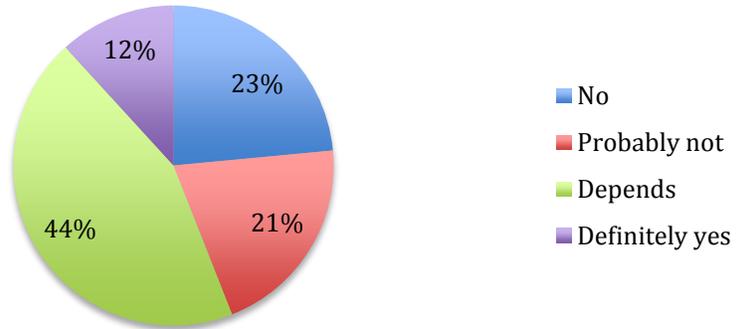
1.4	Don't know
21.5	Nothing
10.8	Finances
19.1	Distractions: lack of focus, peer pressure
1.7	Job market
3.8	Confidence: stress
1	Competition
4.2	Friends
0.3	Pregnancy
0.7	Alcohol, drugs, smoking
15.9	School: bad grades, dropping out
0.3	Boyfriend
1.4	Gender
4.2	Family: children, neighborhood
3.8	Enemies , haters
2.1	Transportation
0.3	Immigration status
0.3	Jail
1	Network, resources
1.7	Health

Figure 15. How much further do you expect to go in school?



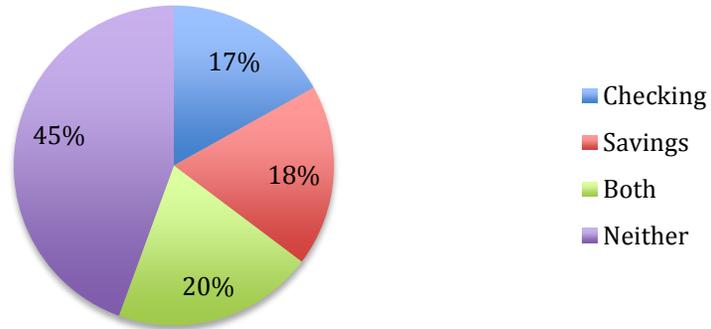
Missing = 37

Figure 16. Do you expect to be living in Michigan in five years?



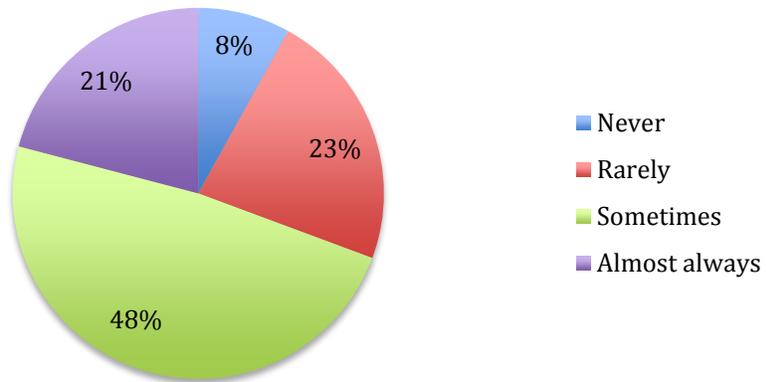
Missing = 34

Figure 17. What type of account do you have?



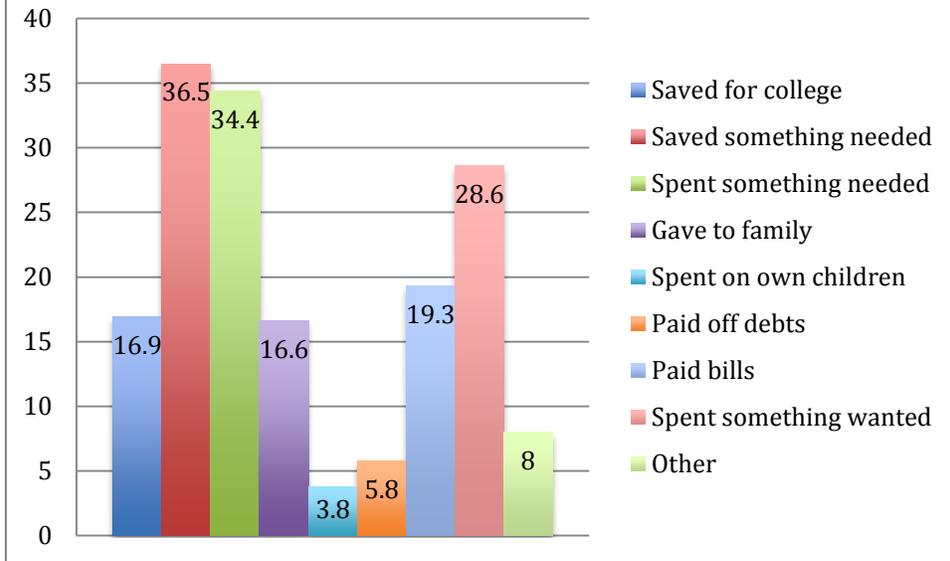
Missing = 35

Figure 18. How often do you save?



Missing = 36

Figure 19. What did you do with the money earned during SYEP?



Missing = 44

Other responses include:

Saved it

Mom for gas

Spent on my mother

Rent

School supplies

Back to school shopping

School clothes

College things

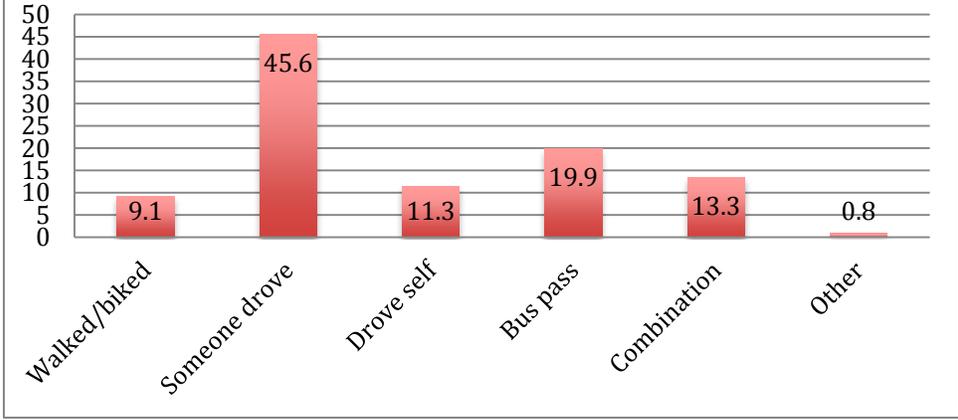
Getting car fixed

Haven't spent yet

Saved some, spent some

Save for my daughter

Figure 20. How did you get to and from your job site?

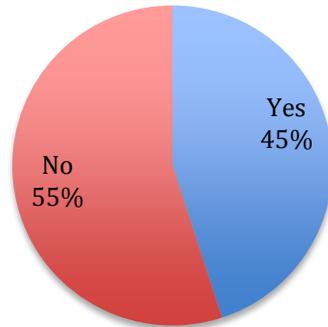


Missing = 21

Other responses include:

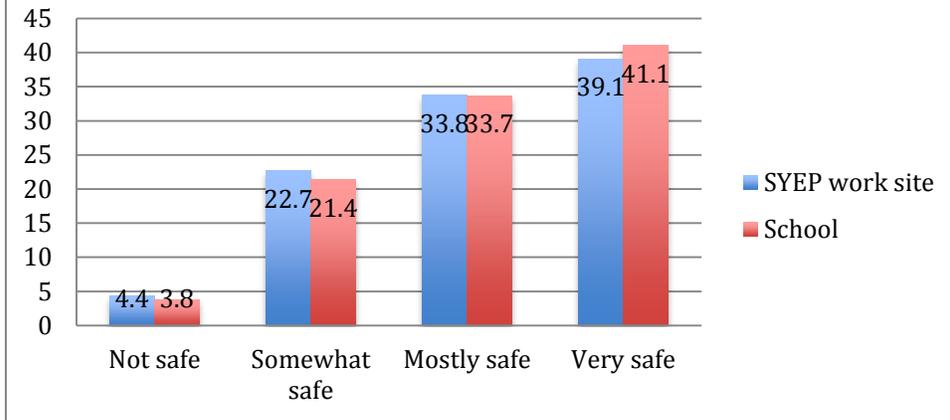
Team 313 pick up

Figure 21. Did you use your free bus pass?



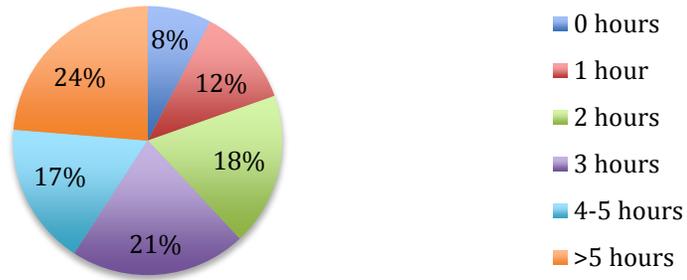
Missing = 28

Figure 22. How safe do you feel getting to and from the following?



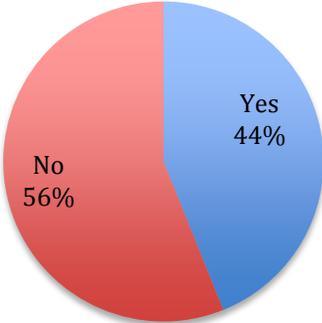
Missing = 21

Figure 23. How many hours per day are you using electronic entertainment?



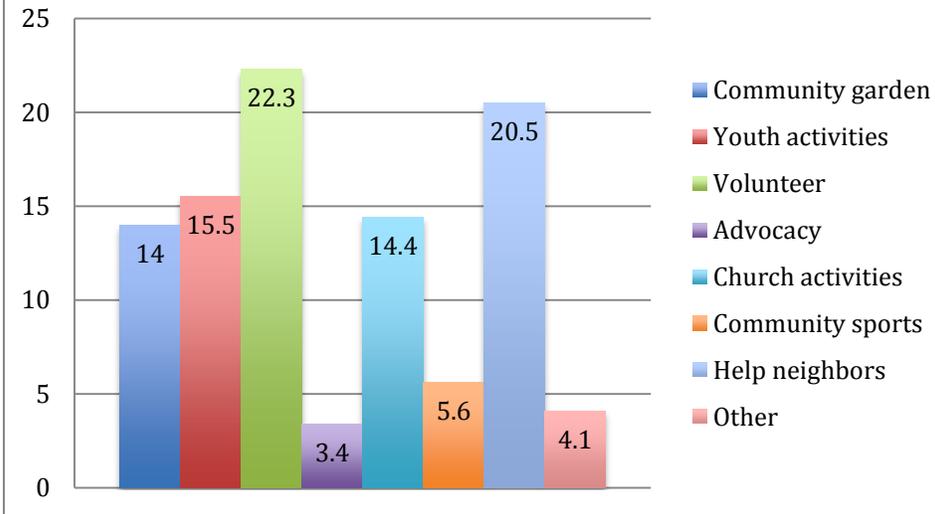
Missing = 43

Figure 24. Are you actively involved in your neighborhood?



Missing = 40

Figure 25. If yes, how are you involved in your neighborhood?



Missing = 1,184, only if answered Yes to previous question

Other responses include:

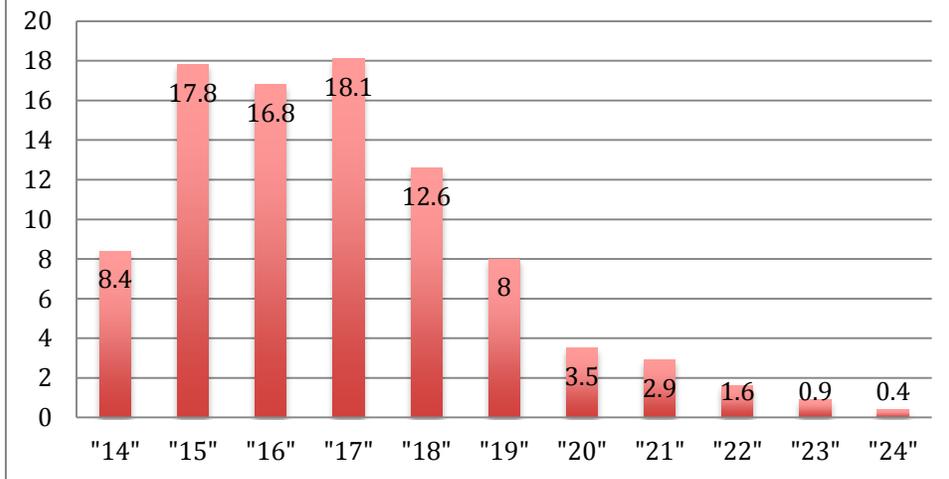
Trans*justice activism

Small business

Yard work

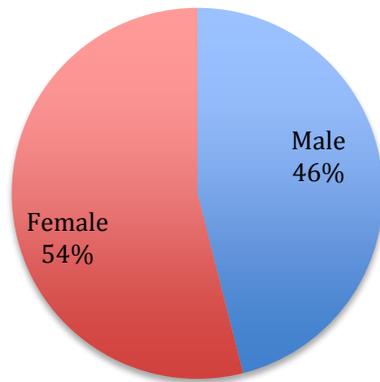
Hanging out

Figure 26. Age of participants



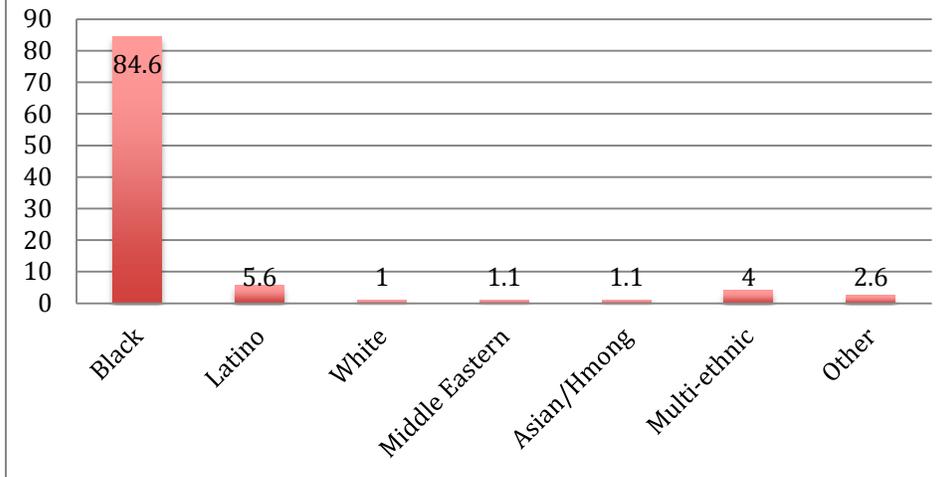
Missing = 187

Figure 27. Gender of participants



Missing = 150

Figure 28. Race of participants



Missing = 71

Other responses include:

Black Cuban American

Cuban

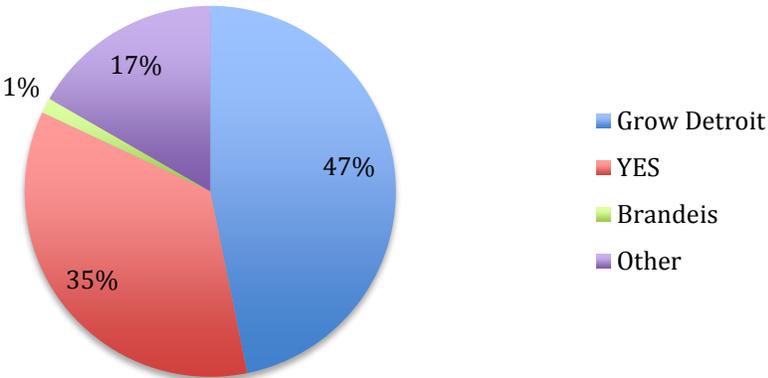
Indian

Bi-racial

Mixed

B.W.I.

Figure 29. Sponsoring program

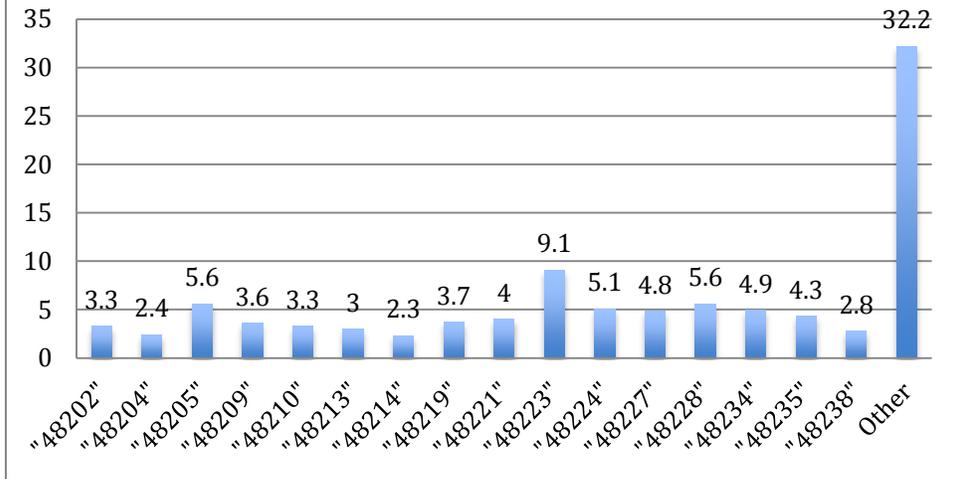


Missing = 78

Other responses include:

- SER Metro
- Trinity
- Police Cadet
- NXT LVL, Inc.
- City Connect
- Midnight golf
- Senior citizens
- The Youth Connection
- I don't know

Figure 30. Zip codes of participants



Missing = 216

Question 35: In a few words, how can we make SYEP better next year?

- Many participants say they like the program the way it is.
- Large emphasis on increased pay rate, being allowed to work more hours including overtime, and having requirements based on age and year in school for each.
 - It was also noted that participants preferred to be paid weekly instead of bi-weekly.
- Participants placed emphasis on having better, more fun, and relatively close (to their place of residence) job options.
 - Many also wanted to be allowed to choose their own employer as opposed to one being randomly chosen or assigned.
- Many recommendations were made to begin the program in June or extend the program so that it may be year round.
- Organizational issues of SYEP were called into question by some participants with regards to activities, scheduling, timesheets, and method of payment.
- Participants inquired about having more knowledge about the program, their role within the program and what is expected of them.
- Lunches: have better quality lunches, allow students to take a lunch break, and others inquired about providing lunches for students or informing them that they should have to bring their own.
- Policies surrounding dress code were called into question with regards to the amount of shirts they receive, the color of the shirts, and getting rid of the dress code altogether.
- More activities and field trips were requested.
- Participants reported the lack of publicity and advertisement made it harder for other youth know about the program.
- Participants reported that the program needed funding and should consider hosting fundraising events with the assistance of the youth.
 - As well as obtaining sponsorships and partnerships with DPS schools and other local businesses.
- Inquiries made about changing the age requirements for the program.
- ID's and dress code prevented many students from boarding buses to get to their work sites.
- Creating a screening process for the beginning and the end of the program.
- A few difficult or hostile work environments were reported.
- Participants reported not being paid until the very end of the program.

Question 36: Share any job skills you would have liked to have learned but didn't.

- Participants wanted to obtain skills specific to their field of interest.
- Many participants reported learning all that they wanted to learn.
- Computer skills were the highest reported skill that participants would have liked to have learned.
- A few participants reported that they didn't learn anything.
- Communication skills, money management, resume creation and maintenance, public speaking, teamwork, and time management were among the highly reported skills that participants would have liked to learn.
- Participants reported a necessity to learn how to work with others, lead others and work under others.

Question 37: Share any additional comments you have about your job site or SYEP?

- More than half of the participants did not answer this question
- Participants identified a specific teacher, mentor or supervisor in their response
- A large portion of participants reported that they will return next year or at least try to.
- Participants reported that they were appreciative of the program because it gave them something to do in the summer.
- Many participants reported a form of joy from their co-workers, their work site or their supervisor.
- Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of participants that responded reported having fun in the program and/or learning from the program.
- Participants wrote about their job site and/or their overall experience.
- Participants reported feelings of entitlement to being employed after the program as well as higher positions.

III. Statistical Results

In previous years, we have found females to get more out of SYEP than males. Similarly, older youth have more substantial work histories, and are at a different developmental stage than younger youth; we should expect to see differences between these groups. Finally, it may be that those who get the most out of the program are also the highest achieving; we wish to examine this possibility. The analyses follow.

Gender

Employment and Academic Skills:

On average females reported learning significantly ($p < 0.001$) more employment related skills (Mean 2.74, SD 0.03) than males (Mean 2.58, SD 0.03). Similarly, females reported learning significantly ($p < 0.05$) more academic skills (Mean 0.48, SD 0.02) at their employment sites than did males (Mean 0.42, SD 0.02).

Education:

In addition to reporting greater academic skills acquired on the job, females also self-reported earning significantly ($p < 0.001$) higher grades in school (Mean 3.01, SD 0.04) than males (Mean 3.47, SD 0.05), while at the same time expressing a significantly ($p < 0.001$) greater desire to go further in school (Mean 4.98, SD 0.04) than males (Mean 4.60, SD 0.05). Perhaps owing to this forward-looking view, females were also significantly ($p < 0.001$) more likely to express a desire to leave Michigan in five years (Mean 2.58, SD 0.03) than males (Mean 2.33, SD 0.03).

Employment Experience and Community Involvement:

Males were significantly ($p < 0.001$) more likely to report having worked for pay in the past (70.2%) than were females (62.9%). Similarly, males were significantly ($p < 0.001$) more involved in their communities than females, with 51.8% reporting involvement in their neighborhood to 36.7% for females.

	Male (N=890)	Female (N=1043)
Grades: A's & B's	29.9%	45.0%***
Expect to attend graduate school	29.7	42.2***
Definitely expect live in Michigan	15.3***	9.3
Almost always save	20.8	21.1
>5 hours of electronics	21.4	26.0
Identify a mentor	69.2	68.9
Worked for pay before	70.2***	62.9
Involved in neighborhood	51.8***	36.7
** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$		

Age

Education:

Younger youth were more enthusiastic about school than older youth. A significantly ($p < 0.05$) greater percentage (43.85) of 14-15 year-olds reported earning mostly A's and B's, than those 20+ years of age (30.57). Likewise, a greater percentage of 20+ year-olds reported earning mostly C's (38.34) than 14-15 year-olds (31.93). Similarly, 46.1% of 16-17 year-olds expect to go to a four-year college, versus 27.6% among 20+ year-olds. Perhaps aided by such optimism, a higher percentage of 14-15 year-olds expressed a desire to leave Michigan (21.8%) than 20+ year-olds (15.5%).

Saving:

Older youth are clearly more concerned with managing their money than younger youth. A significantly ($p < 0.01$) greater percentage of 20+ year-olds report always saving (28.5%) than 14-15 year-olds (16.0%). Similarly, only 16.6% of 20+ year-olds report rarely saving, versus 22.5% among 14-15 year-olds.

Employment Experience:

For the majority of younger youth, those 14-15 years of age, SYEP represented their first employment experience (52.2%). As age increases, the percentage of those who have worked before increases as well; 87.5% of 20+ year-olds indicate they have worked before.

	14-15	16-17	18-19	20+
Grades: A's & B's*	43.9%	35.9%	37.3%	30.6%
Expect to attend graduate school***	43.3	33.9	31.8	39.1
Definitely expect to live in Michigan*	10.2	11.5	10.4	19.2
Almost always save**	16.1	20.2	24.6	28.5
>5 hours of electronics***	28.8	24.0	21.0	15.5
Identify a mentor	67.0	66.6	72.1	71.0
Worked for pay before***	47.8	65.8	81.7	87.5
Involved in neighborhood	42.7	43.9	45.5	43.5
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$				

Grades

Education:

For those with poor academic records, there is some indication SYEP is especially beneficial. For example, among those who report earning mostly D's and F's, 29.6% report learning four skills necessary for future employment, which is a significantly ($p < 0.05$) greater percentage than those who report earning mostly A's and B's (16.9%). Similarly, among those who earn D's and F's, 40.9% report acquiring at least one academic skill on the job, versus 30.7% among those who earn A's and B's. However, a significantly greater ($p < 0.001$) percentage of those earning A's and B's expect to go further in school than those earning D's and F's. For example, 86% of A's and B's expect to attend either four-year college or graduate school, while 62% of D's and F's expect to do so.

Saving:

Among those earning A's and B's there is significantly ($p < 0.001$) greater attention to money management than among those earning D's and F's. 24% of A's and B's report always saving, while the percentage is 18.60 among those with D's and F's.

	A's & B's	B's & C's	D's & F's
Expect to attend graduate school***	43.0%	27.9%	29.6%
Definitely expect to be in Michigan	10.5	13.7	7.0
Almost always save***	23.9	17.2	18.6
>5 hours of electronics	22.8	24.7	25.6
Identify a mentor	69.8	68.4	67.4
Worked for pay before	67.2	65.8	61.4
Involved in neighborhood	44.9	43.0	34.1
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$			

Lessons and Implications

- SYEP offers young people in Detroit the opportunity to work and gain new skills. . Many report learning problem solving and organizational skills. Although the majority report learning general employment readiness skills, such as how to work and communicate with others as well as how to act, few report learning more specific ones such as public speaking and computer skills. In the qualitative responses, youth say they would have liked to learn more specific skills such as how to work with computers.
- About 21% said they would be working elsewhere if not in SYEP. This is a slightly higher percentage than in previous years. Even if it is true that employment prospects are improving for young people in Detroit, the SYEP program can continue to respond to local needs and promote that it helps prepare youth for a meaningful career.
- More than two thirds of participants reported that they were able to identify an adult mentor during SYEP. This is a positive finding and the program can continue to be intentional about training and supporting mentors to ensure that even more young people connect with a mentor in the future.
- A solid majority of youth report that adults talk to them about going to college and continuing their education, but less have adults that talk to them about planning for a career. This is a niche that the SYEP can fill.
- The majority of participants are still in high school, but about a quarter will be going to college in the Fall. Perhaps attention can be given to encouraging and supporting this group so that they don't just enroll in college, but successfully complete and earn a degree.
- Forty-five percent of respondents report having neither a checking account nor savings account, meaning that they are unbanked. This is slightly higher than in the past. If the program is using an alternative to checks, such as debit cards, some instruction on using the cards appropriately and adding an option for saving might be helpful in addition to general money management information.
- Although only 45% of respondents said they used the free bus pass, about a fifth used it exclusively—meaning they might not have had other reliable means of transportation.
- Very few participants reporting feeling unsafe getting to and from their SYEP work site. However, it might be helpful to provide a means of reporting any safety problems that do arise.
- For the first time the survey offered participants the opportunity to identify their sponsoring program, although some could not answer the question. If branding is an important goal or the Consortium wants to be able to examine specific program improvements, this identification can be made more explicit.

Recommendations

- 1) *Continue to define and implement a quality summer employment experience.*
This might include: doing better assessments up front based on participants' abilities and career goals that can be used to inform job placement and training; requiring the assignment of an adult mentor, better coordination between programs and across summers if youth participate more than once.
- 2) *Given that young people are earning money, some for the first time, build in money management instruction and incentives to save.* If some work sites are already doing this well, consider sharing materials and best practices. Also build upon work being done in other places around financial education and savings incentives (i.e. Washington, DC and San Francisco).
- 3) *For the organizations that follow-up with youth participants after the summer work experience, document links between work and school and build strong supports for academic achievement.* All programs are busy in the summer, but perhaps after the employment experience ends, a coordinated approach to tracking academic achievement and supporting academic might be beneficial. At first, this might just mean sharing what is being done, but over time programs can begin to learn from one another and work to strengthen this area.

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