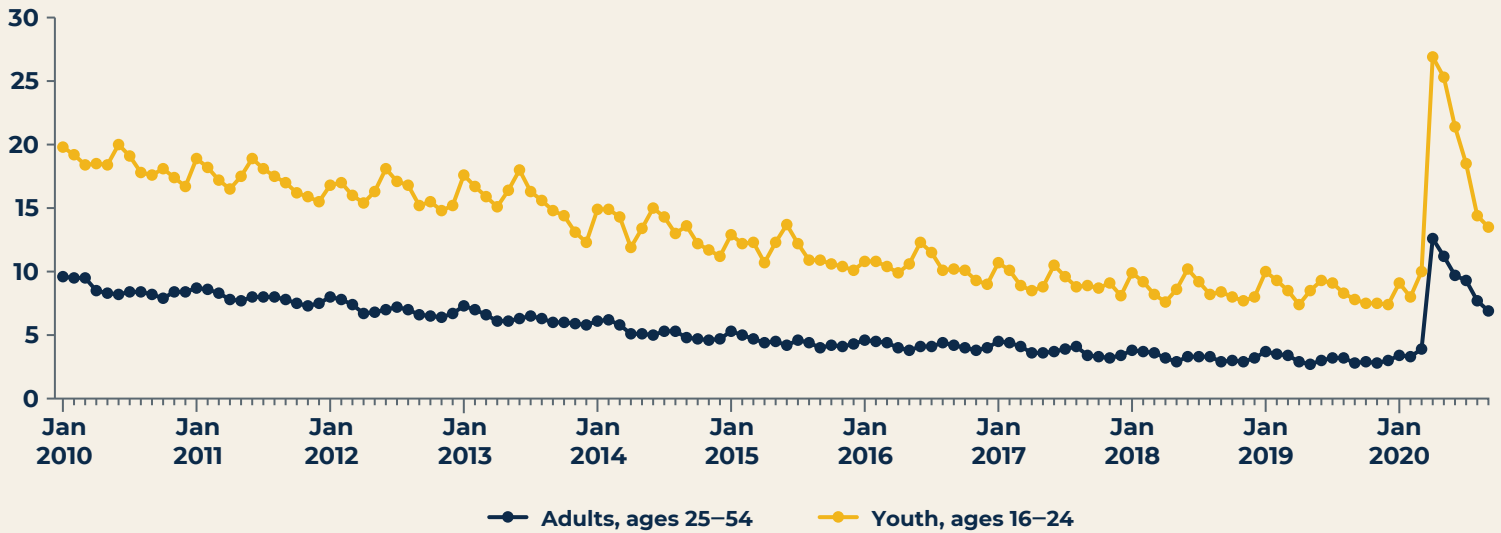


Unemployment Among Younger and Older Youth During the COVID-19 Pandemic

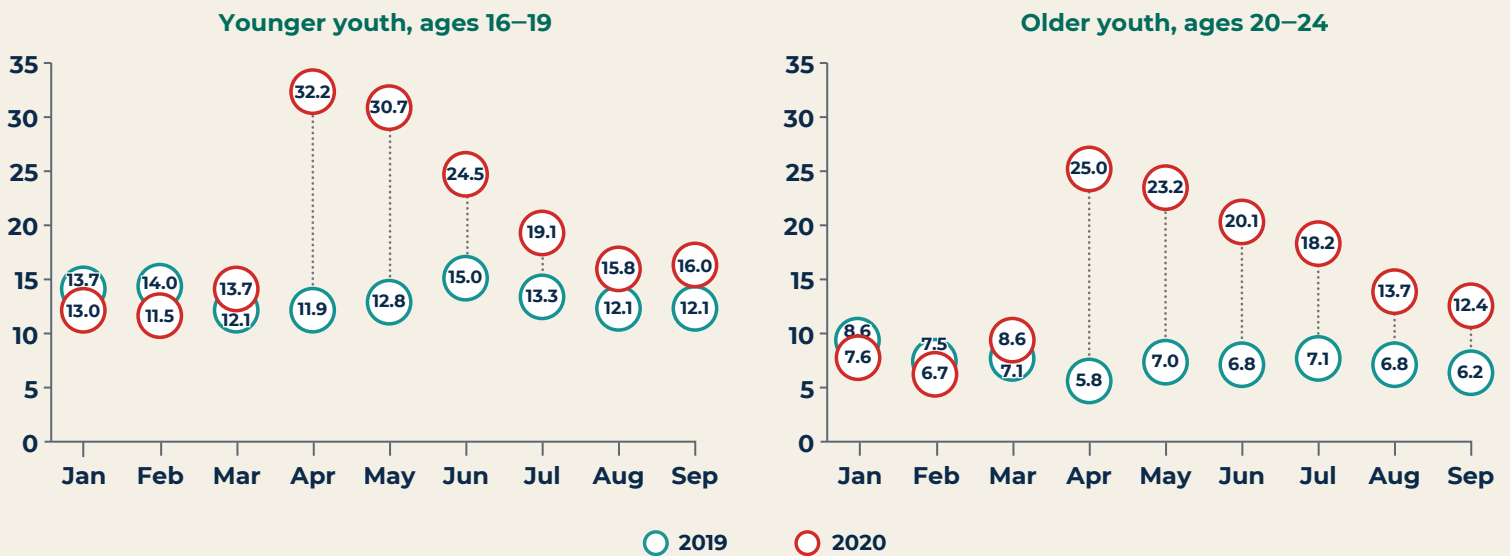
Youth ages 16 to 24 are traditionally more likely than the adult population to be unemployed. During the period following the Great Recession of 2007–2008, youth unemployment climbed to 18.4 percent in 2010—2.1 times higher than the unemployment rate among adults ages 25 to 54. Since then, unemployment has declined steadily for all age groups, reaching a low in 2019. However, the unemployment gap between youth and adults grew larger, with youth unemployment being 2.7 times higher than the unemployment rate for adults, indicating a slower recovery in employment opportunities for youth (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Trends in unemployment rate over the past decade (%)



The COVID-19 pandemic caused a further surge in youth unemployment when it hit the country in March 2020. Typically, as students start looking for employment between April and June, youth unemployment rates increase. In April 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of unemployed youth reached a level much higher than the same period in previous years. Among younger youth ages 16 to 19, the unemployment rate was 32.2 percent, almost three times higher than the rate the same month a year ago. Similarly, the unemployment rate among older youth ages 20 to 24 was 25.0 percent, more than four times higher than the rate the same month a year ago (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Monthly unemployment rate (%) among younger and older youth, 2019–2020



In September 2020, with schools opening either virtually or in person, the number of unemployed youth declined relative to the start of the pandemic. However, compared to this time last year, unemployment remains higher among older youth than among younger youth. Unemployment among older youth is twice as high as the rate a year ago (12.4 percent as opposed to 6.2 percent). The unemployment rate among younger youth declined to 16.0 percent, around 30 percent higher than the rate the same month a year ago (12.1 percent). The discrepancy in recovery patterns in unemployment may in part be due to a decline in undergraduate enrollment among college-aged youth (ages 20 to 24) compared to last year,¹ whereas younger youth (ages 16 to 19) are more likely to have returned to school.

Source: Mathematica compilation based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics' monthly Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey (<https://www.bls.gov/cps/data.htm>).

Notes: To learn more about youth unemployment during COVID-19, visit the project [website](#).

¹ National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. "Staying Informed with the Latest Enrollment Information." September 2020. Available at <https://nscresearchcenter.org/stay-informed/>. Accessed October 5, 2020.