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Youth Employment in Oregon and Linn County

Earlier this year the Oregon Employment Department released a new special report looking at the participation of youth in Oregon's labor force. The report, *Endangered: Youth in the Labor Force* can be found at <http://www.qualityinfo.org/pubs/youth.pdf>

The report looks in to detail at the reasons the share of teens and young adults participating in the labor force has been in a sharp decline since 2001. It is not a trend that is unique to Oregon; the U.S. has been showing a similar drop in the share of youth participating in the labor force. The focus of the report is mostly looking at statewide and national data.

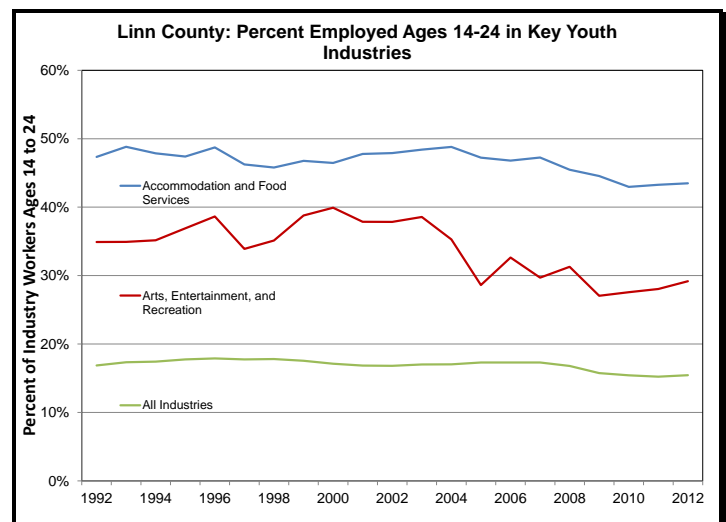
One chart in the report that caught my eye was on page 17 of the report, it shows the share of employment young workers comprise in several key industries which employ a large share of youth. It uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau's local employment dynamics program, which allows us to look at how the counties in the Willamette Valley compare to the state as a whole.

Linn County Youth Employment

Back in the 1990s, about 40 percent of Oregon's workers in accommodation and food services were between the ages of 14 and 24. In recent years that has dropped to less than one-third.

In Linn County in the early 1990s, nearly 50 percent of the county's workers in accommodation and food services were between the ages of 14 and 24. Linn County has followed the statewide decline, but not as dramatically. In 2012 about 43 percent of workers were ages 14 to 24. That remains higher than the statewide average, but it shows a decline over the two decades.

Oregon's arts, entertainment and recreation showed a similar decline in



the share of young workers in the industry. In Linn County's arts, entertainment and recreation sector, youth employment has seen a few more ups and downs than we find statewide, but it is trending in the same direction. The high point was in 2000 when 4 percent of workers in the industry were between the ages of 14 and 24. In recent years that has dropped to less than 30 percent.

Looking across all industries in Linn County, workers between the ages of 14 and 24 comprised roughly 17 percent of all workers in the early 1990s. That level held fairly steady until 2008. In 2012 the share of youth has dropped to 15 percent of all workers. Statewide, in 2012 only 12 percent of workers are between the ages of 14 and 24; a sharp drop from 15 percent in the early 1990s.

In Oregon youth employment has been declining over several decades, and the Great Recession has accelerated that trend since 2008. In Linn County, we have seen a decline in the share of youth working in several key industries that employ a large share of youth. However, across all industries the share of young workers in Linn County was fairly stable until 2008. One thing that Oregon and Linn County have in common is they have both seen the share of youth employment declining sharply since 2008 in the wake of the Great Recession.