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The Perks of Being Finely Aged

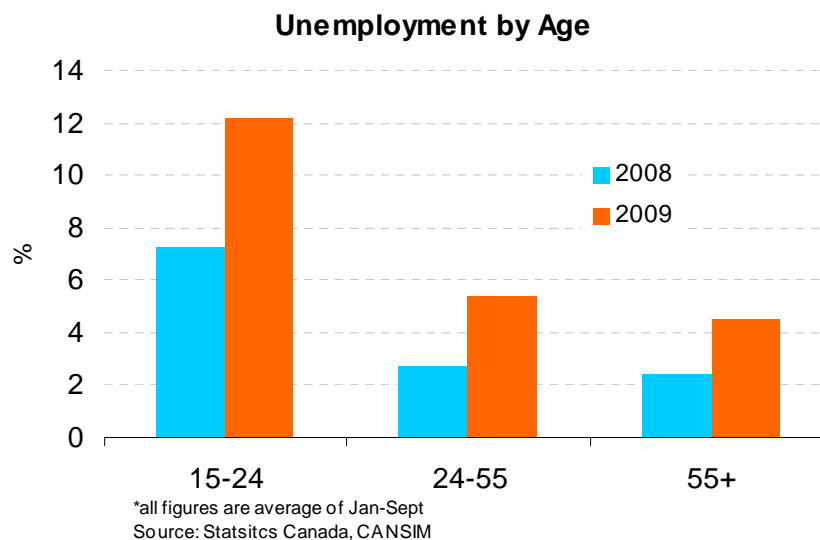
Many people consider youth to be a blessing, but according to data from the most recent Statistics Canada *Labour Force Survey* it's not all fun and games, as the 2008/'09 recession has been toughest on Alberta's young workers.

The average unemployment rate in 2009 among Albertans aged 15-24 was a lofty 12.2% (average for January to September, not seasonally-adjusted), up substantially from the average for the same period in 2008 (7.3%), just before the recession hit full-force.

The same statistic for Albertans aged 25-55 was 2.8% in 2008, rising to 5.4% in 2009. Workers aged 55 and over were the least adversely affected by the recession: 2.4% unemployment in 2008 rising to 4.6% in 2009.

Although unemployment rose in every age category, the reasons for the increase varied. For youth, it was a sheer collapse in the labour market as over 25,000 jobs were lost. But for middle-age workers it was both a drop in employment (-9,300) and an increase in the labour force that drove unemployment higher. Most interestingly, for older workers, despite employment increasing by 15,800, the unemployment rate still grew by over 2% as more people entered the labour force in that category.

Although youth unemployment is always the highest, the differential is usually not so stark. These statistics serve to underscore that recessions rarely impact the population evenly and often certain groups end up bearing the brunt of a downturn.



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