

Where did the U.S. summer jobs go?

By Karl Vick, Time

It's not like the jobs aren't there. The ice cream still needs scooping. A Tilt-a-Whirl doesn't run itself. And that floppy, weirdly heavy rubber frog that somersaults toward the rotating lily pads? Hit or miss, someone's got to bring it back to the catapult for the next lucky player. The work of an American summer remains, sticky and sweet as cotton candy, which doesn't sell itself either.

But when Jenkinson's Boardwalk went looking for seasonal employees last year, the response was not at all what the company expected. To fill some 1,200 summer vacancies, an Easter-time job fair drew just 400 people. Applications did bounce up this year, but not nearly enough to reverse a grave trend that summer employers have noticed well beyond the Jersey Shore.

"It is getting harder to find students that will work," says Toby Wolf, director of marketing at the boardwalk. "Each year it's getting harder and harder. None of us has been able to pinpoint why. Is it a change in society as a whole?"

The numbers are not encouraging. Forty years ago, nearly 60 percent of U.S. teenagers were working or looking for work during the peak summer months. Last year, just 35 percent were.

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