

# College best option for young people during times of high unemployment

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From a health perspective, going to college is the best option for young people during times of mass unemployment, says a senior researcher in an editorial published on [bmj.com](http://bmj.com) today.

Unemployment is bad for [health](#), writes Danny Dorling, Professor of Human Geography at the University of Sheffield.

In the UK, we know much about the detrimental health effects of [unemployment](#). For example, studies show that deaths doubled among men aged 40-59 in the five years after redundancy in 1980, while research during the early 1990s found that unemployment increased rates of depression, particularly in the young who are usually most badly hit when jobs are few.

The direct effect of reducing unemployment has been estimated to prevent up to 2,500 premature deaths a year, says Dorling, but health benefits vary according to the method used.

For example, youth opportunity-type schemes are almost as detrimental to psychological health as is unemployment itself. Temporary employment is slightly better but not as good as a properly rewarded and organised apprenticeship. Secure work is better than all these options, but the best option for men and women aged 16-24 in the 1980s and 1990s was going to college, which was associated with lower suicide risks.

The most highly valued education is university education, writes Dorling. If three extra [young people](#) per 100 this summer go to university and are out of the job market, another three people could fill those jobs that the first three might have taken, another three percentage points come off the dole queue and fewer youngsters compete with older workers who have recently been made redundant.

More importantly, says Dorling, this approach recognises that unemployment is bad for health, and that the best way of alleviating it is to show faith in and respect for the young, because they are always worst hit by unemployment.

More university students does not need to mean more debt for young people, he adds. It is just a case of priorities and recognising when the time is right for someone to be there to help.

Source: British Medical Journal

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