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[Law](#), [Crime](#)



Kiera Scott Social Issues — MOD 4A 03/ 06/ 13 ISSUE #9 ESSAY Is the underclass the major threat to American ideals? The underclass is not a major threat to American ideals because as of 1997, more than 1. 8 million people were in prisons, jails and juvenile facilities, because they have been a menace to their fellow citizens. It is a major accomplishment that crime has gone down. It has been achieved not by socializing the underclass, but by putting large numbers of its members behind bars. Unemployment rates have dropped. Suppose we turn instead to a less-publicized statistic, but one of the most significant in trying to track the course of the underclass, the percentage of young males not in the labor force. When young men neither work nor look for work, most are living off the underground economy or on handouts, periodically, getting a job, then quitting or getting fired, consigning themselves to a life at the margins of the economy. The increase in labor force dropout is largest among young black males. The proportion that are not working or looking for work averaged 17% during the 1980's. As of 1997, it stood at 23%. That these increases in labor-force dropout have occurred despite a sustained period of high demand for workers at all skill levels is astonishing and troubling. Illegitimacy ratio is another factor. It is the percentage of babies who are born to unmarried women. The black illegitimacy ratio as of 1997 stood at a catastrophic 69%. So therefore, no.