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One in Seven: Ranking Youth Disconnection in the 25 Largest Metro Areas

RESEARCH, REPORTS & DATA | SEPTEMBER 26, 2012 | MEASURE OF AMERICA | [SHARE](#)

Disconnected youth, young people who are neither working nor in school, cost taxpayers billions of dollars and can suffer a lifetime of poor outcomes. A September 2012 brief by Measure of America ranks the country's 25 largest metropolitan areas in terms of youth disconnection and provides recommendations for connecting youth to meaningful opportunities. The paper focuses particularly on young people who lack the resources necessary to foster independence and success.

The report examines the 5.8 million 16- to 24-year-olds who are not in school and not working. When youth are detached from structures that provide knowledge, skills, identity and purpose, they miss out on the opportunity to move toward self-sufficiency. Long-term consequences can include lower earnings, poor marital prospects and poor physical and mental health. Of the 25 largest metropolitan areas ranked, Boston and Minneapolis-St. Paul have the fewest disconnected youth, with fewer than 1 in 10 young people adrift. Phoenix has the highest rate of disconnection, with nearly 1 out of every 5 young people disengaged.

Significant variation exists within metro areas by race and ethnicity. Black and Latino youth are disproportionately represented among the ranks of disconnected youth; black youth have the highest rate of disconnection at 22.5 percent nationally.

After a decade of relatively stable rates, the number of disconnected youth increased by more than 800,000 from 2007 to 2010. Young women were slightly more likely to be disconnected than young men, but by the end of the recession, disconnected men outnumbered young women.

According to the report, preventing disconnection and reconnecting those currently adrift are critical. Measures to prevent disconnection include: supporting at-risk parents, improving access to high-quality early education programs and offering wraparound services to youth faces daunting challenges like homelessness. The report emphasizes the importance of developing meaningful school-to-work options for all young people, such as technical and vocational training. Possible solutions for reconnecting youth include social assistance programs that would require youth to enter training and education programs in order to receive benefits and engaging possible employers by offering tax credits.

The data are from the U.S. Census and American Community Survey.

Measure of America, a project of the Social Science Research Council, provides tools for understanding well-being and opportunity metrics in the U.S.

[Read the report \(pdf\).](#)

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