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WNYC News Blog

Hundreds of Thousands of Youth in Metro Area Adrift: Report

Monday, October 22, 2012 - 04:00 AM

By [Cindy Rodriguez](#)

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Youth in the Bronx (Stephen Nessen/WNYC)

There are approximately 350,000 young people in the New York metro area not in school or working, according to a report by Measure of America, a project by the Brooklyn-based Social Science Research Council.

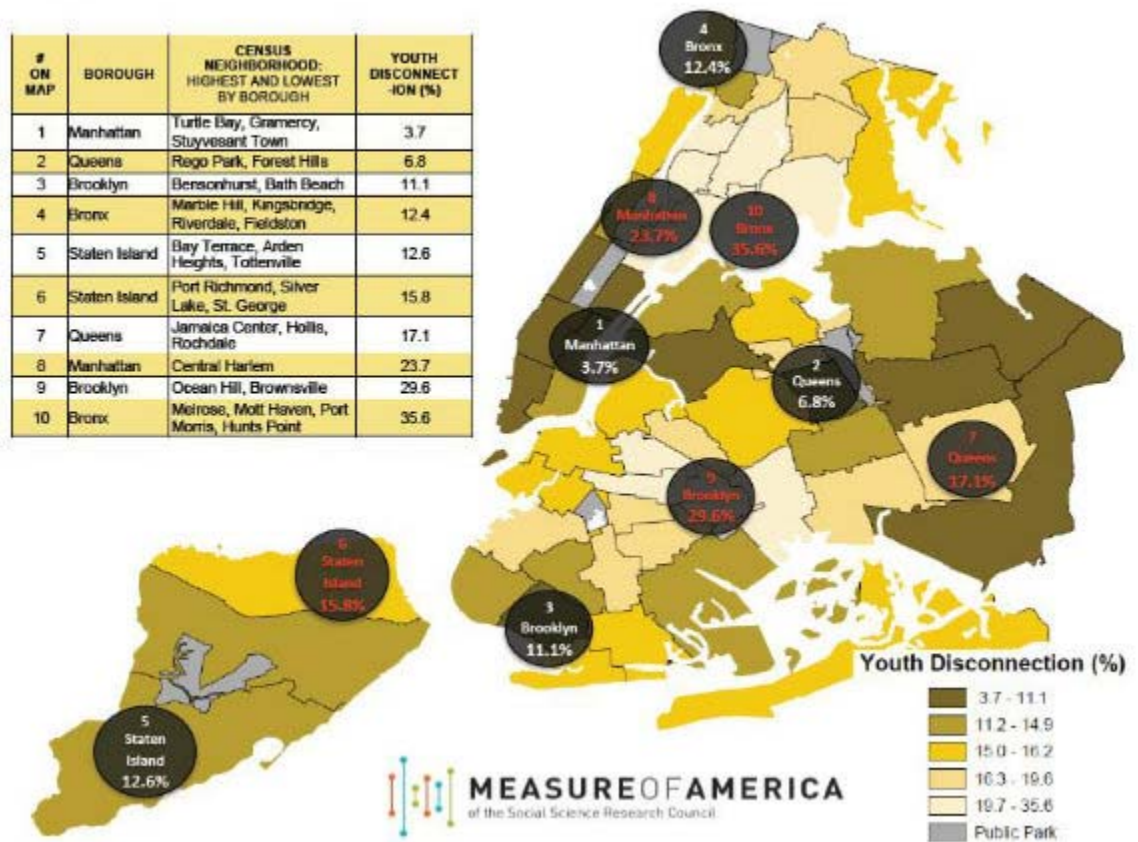
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“These young people...are pretty much adrift at the margins of society and they’re missing out on the knowledge and the skills but also the purpose and identity that school and work offer,” said Sarah Burd-Sharps, co-director of Measure of America. “The cost of disconnection is really high. It can leave scars that last their entire life time.”

Policy experts and advocates say youth who lack a connection to school or work are more likely to end up incarcerated, with health problems related to substance abuse and in need of welfare.

According to the report, New York’s rate of disconnected youth is roughly 15 percent — the ninth highest rate among the 25 most populous metro areas nationally.

Highs and Lows of Youth Disconnection in NYC



Burd-Sharps said New York also stands out because of the extreme differences in rates by neighborhood. The report shows that in areas in the Bronx — Melrose, Mott Haven and Hunts Point — 35.6 percent of youth are no longer going to school or working. In Oceanhill and Brownsville, Brooklyn, 29.6 percent of youth are disconnected. Both communities stand in stark contrast to Turtle Bay, Tudor City and Stuyvesant Town in Manhattan where 3.7 percent of youth don’t work or go to school.

Kathy Gordon works with many of these disconnected youth at Good Shepherd Services in Brooklyn, where she oversees kids who are behind academically and have dropped out of regular schools. She said many young people are dealing with several obstacles.

“Homelessness, drug issues, mental health issues, the responsibility of taking care of younger siblings or ailing parents...kids who have gotten caught up in gang activity,” Gordon said. “These are young people that we’re kind of losing and they have great potential.”

Measure of America recommends a more robust system of vocational and technical schools as alternatives to 4-year colleges to help disconnected youth.

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