

BROAD RECOVERY, PERSISTENT INEQUITY

YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN AMERICA

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THE MEASURE OF AMERICA YOUTH DISCONNECTION SERIES
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As always, we are filled with gratitude for the Measure of America team for working with conscientiousness and creativity not just on this report but in all that they do.

Kristen and Alex



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MEASURE OF AMERICA

Measure of America is a project of the **Social Science Research Council**, a century-old independent nonprofit that mobilizes policy-relevant social and behavioral science for the public good. Measure of America creates easy-to-use and methodologically sound tools for understanding well-being and opportunity in America. Through reports, interactive websites and apps, and custom-built dashboards, Measure of America works with partners to breathe life into numbers, using data to identify areas of need, pinpoint levers for change, and track progress over time.

The root of this work is the human development and capabilities approach, the brainchild of Harvard professor and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen. Human development is about improving people's well-being and expanding their choices and opportunities to live freely chosen lives of value. Measure of America cares about youth disconnection because it hampers human development, closing off some of life's most rewarding and joyful paths and leading to a future of limited horizons and unrealized potential.

DESIGN

This document's design was adapted from that of our 2022 report, which was designed by our longtime collaborator, Humantific.

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BROAD RECOVERY, PERSISTENT INEQUITY

YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN AMERICA

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WHO ARE AMERICA'S DISCONNECTED YOUNG PEOPLE?

4,343,600

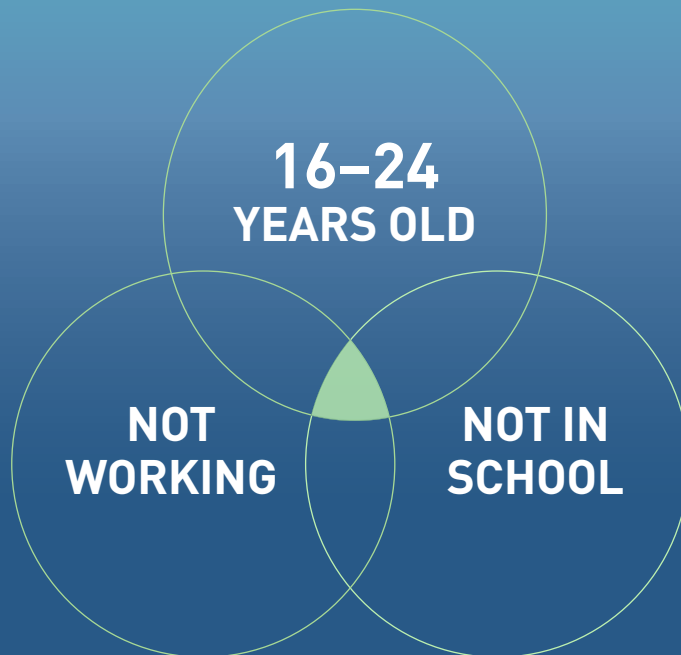
DISCONNECTED YOUTH

(Teens & Young Adults 16–24 Years Old Who Are Neither Working Nor in School)

OUT OF 39,830,300 TOTAL

10.9%

YOUTH DISCONNECTION RATE



Measure of America has used this definition in its data calculations and analysis on youth disconnection since its first report on the topic, *One in Seven*, published in 2012.

Introduction

Measure of America released its first report on youth disconnection, *One in Seven*, in 2012. We began this work because we believed that a community's youth disconnection rate—the share of young people ages 16–24 who are neither working nor in school—was a strong indicator of its resources and a telling gauge of its residents' well-being and access to opportunity. In 2012, data on youth disconnection was scarce. Unlike other affluent democracies, the United States did not release official statistics on this population—not for the country as a whole, not for different racial and ethnic groups, and not for states or metro areas. Concerned that not knowing the nature or extent of the problem was impeding efforts to address it, we launched a now decade-long research project to calculate the share of out-of-school, out-of-work young people annually, for the nation overall as well as for different places and groups. These data have helped us raise awareness of the challenges such young people face, investigate the main drivers of youth disconnection, make recommendations about how to improve the choices and opportunities available to this group of young people, and rally a variety of actors around a shared definition and understanding.

For a dozen years, we have charted the highs and lows of youth disconnection in America. Over the last decade, we clocked a steady decline in the national youth disconnection rate as the country recovered from the Great Recession, a sharp upward spike in 2020 caused by Covid-19, and a return in 2022 to near-prepandemic levels. The picture below the national level is more complicated, however. Four things stand out: first, stubborn gaps continue to separate racial and ethnic groups at the national, state, and metro area levels; second, though girls and young women have lower disconnection rates than boys and young men at the national level, in many places and among certain demographic groups, the female disconnection rate is higher than the male rate, a fact that gets too little attention; third, considerable variation exists among states and metro areas, with rates ranging from below 7 percent in greater Chattanooga, Boston, and Minneapolis-St. Paul to above 16 percent in Memphis, Bakersfield, and the McAllen-Edinburg-Mission metro area of Texas; and fourth, places differ sharply in terms of the progress made over the last decade. This report will focus on these four issues.

Disconnected youth or opportunity youth are young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor in school. Here in the United States, organizations that work with this population began to use the term *opportunity youth* in 2012 as an optimistic phrase “that calls attention to the opportunities these young people seek and that should be opened up for them.”¹ The term *opportunity youth*, while widely used among practitioners who work with this population, is not intuitive to people outside the field and thus requires explaining. We use both terms in this report. Internationally, the most commonly used term to describe this population is “NEETs,” an acronym that stands for “not in employment, education, or training.”

Of the nearly 40 million young people in the United States who fall within the 16–24-year age bracket, some **4.3 million are neither working nor in school—10.9 percent of American youth.** Lacking strong connections to school and the workplace during this period takes a toll on a young

person's well-being and casts a long shadow into their future. The late teens and early twenties, a period known as emerging adulthood, is when young people develop many of the capabilities required to live a flourishing life: knowledge and credentials, social skills and networks, a sense of mastery and agency, an understanding of their strengths and preferences, and the ability to handle stressful events and regulate their emotions, to name just a few. Research shows that we experience emotions more strongly during this period than at other times in our lives, making the joy of connection intensely fulfilling—and the isolation and loneliness that often accompany disconnection particularly distressing. Despite what conventional wisdom would have us believe—that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger—young people learn and grow through positive experiences and are particularly vulnerable to the effects of negative ones.²

Research also shows that the brain does not finish developing until the mid-to-late twenties, with the prefrontal cortex—the part of the brain that allows us to plan, weigh risk, and make sound decisions—the last to mature.³ At school and on the job, connected young people interact with adults who help them with these sometimes-challenging tasks. Teachers, coaches, mentors, guidance counselors, employers, and slightly older peers supplement what families are able to offer by helping young people understand the world and imagine what their place in it might be, visualize different routes to rewarding and well-paid careers, navigate various application processes, set short- and long-term goals, and lay the groundwork to realize them. Out-of-school, out-of-work youth have far less support to imagine in concrete terms what their futures might look like and to make their dreams and aspirations a reality. Unlike their more affluent peers, who walk along clearly marked pathways accompanied by knowledgeable guides in the transition to adulthood, this group of young people—who are disproportionately Native American, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (NHOPi), Black, and Latino and tend to live in low-income communities—often struggle to see a way forward.

The long-term effects of disconnection are striking. Using data from a large longitudinal study that has run for more than fifty years, Measure of America determined that by the time they reach their thirties, people who worked or were in school throughout their teens and early twenties earn \$38,400 more per year and are 45 percent more likely to own a home, 42 percent more likely to be employed, and 52 percent more likely to report excellent or good health than those who had been disconnected as young people.⁴ Research shows that youth disconnection is associated with lower levels of educational attainment, higher rates of substance use, and more criminal activity. For young people who are already parents, the chances that their children will grow up in poverty increase with disconnection.⁵

Research is clear that all young people share basic developmental needs that are essential for them to thrive, flourish, and fulfill their potential. These needs, identified by the UCLA Center for the Developing Adolescent, include the following:⁶

- safe ways to explore the world, take healthy risks, and try new things;
- real-life situations that allow young people to develop decision-making and emotional-regulation abilities;
- opportunities to develop a sense of meaning and purpose by contributing to the world around them;

- positive ways to earn respect and social status;
- experiences that help define personal values, goals, and a positive sense of identity; and
- warmth and support from caring adults.

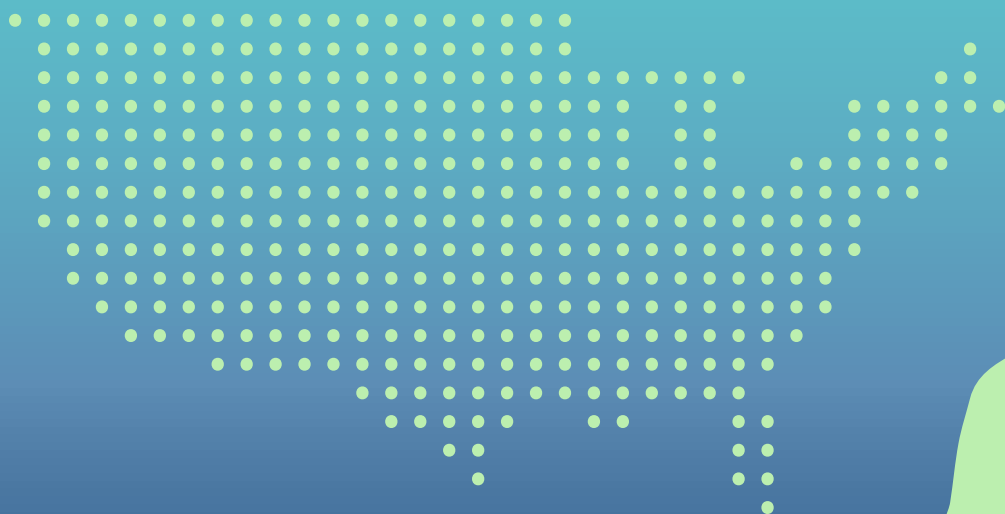
Structural issues like poverty, racism, sexism, and residential segregation mean that these needs go unmet for too many of our young people. Ensuring that all our young people have positive life experiences, ways to contribute to the world around them, and the loving support that everyone needs to thrive benefits all of us.

BOX 1 What Is the Source of the Data and Who Is Included?

Measure of America’s data come from the **American Community Survey (ACS)**. The survey’s main advantage over other sources is that its sample size is extremely large, making it possible to calculate youth disconnection rates nationally and by state, as well as for counties, metro areas, and even smaller geographic areas. The ACS also allows for disaggregation by race and ethnicity and by gender for geographies with sufficiently large populations.

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (ACS) DEFINITION	
IN SCHOOL	Part-time or full-time students who have attended school or college in the past three months.
WORKING	Those who had any full- or part-time work in the previous week.
NOT WORKING	Unemployed in previous week or not in labor force (not looking for a job).
LIVING IN “GROUP QUARTERS”	People in non-household living arrangements such as correctional facilities, residential health facilities, dorms, etc. If enrolled in educational programs, they are considered connected.
MEMBERS OF ARMED FORCES (Group Quarters)	Counted as employed and thus as connected.
HOMELESS (Group Quarters)	Surveyed but likely to be undercounted; surveying homeless people is difficult.

YOUTH DISCONNECTION **NATIONALLY**



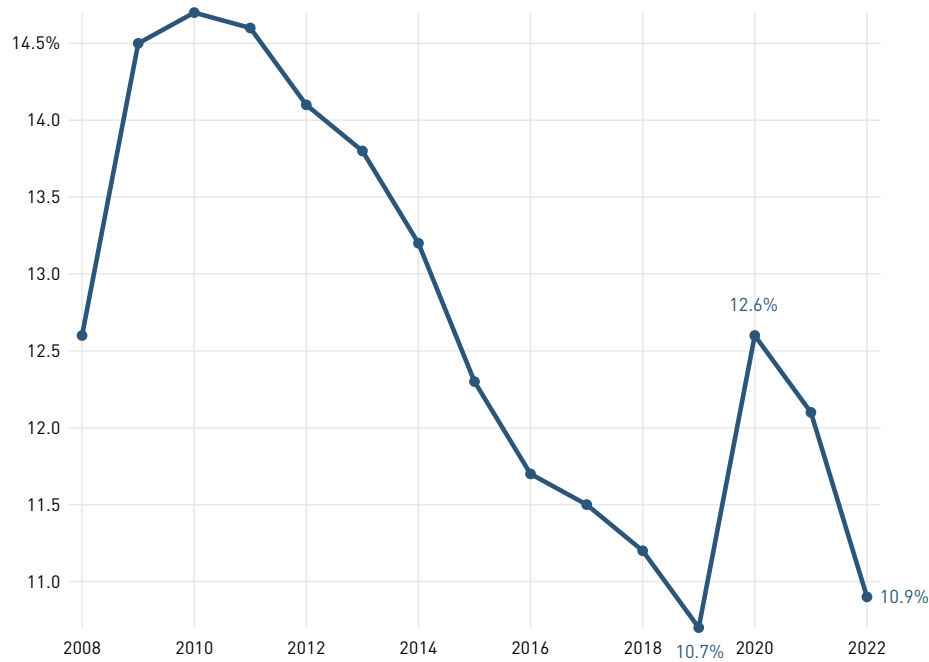
NATIONAL OVERVIEW

YOUTH DISCONNECTION
BY GENDER AND BY RACE
AND ETHNICITY

National Overview

The national youth disconnection rate in 2022 was 10.9 percent, or 4,343,600 young people; this rate represents a near-return to the pre-Covid rate of 10.7 percent in 2019. Despite the sharp-but-temporary pandemic-driven uptick in 2020 and 2021, the rate fell 22.7 percent between 2012 and 2022.









FIGURE 1 YOUTH DISCONNECTION, 2008–2022



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2008–2022.

The good news of a post-pandemic recovery masks the stubborn gaps that continue to separate racial and ethnic groups, however. It also fails to reflect the ways in which different circumstances make it more likely that a young person will find themselves cut off from educational and career opportunities. Compared to their connected peers, disconnected young people are twice as likely to be poor, nearly three times as likely to have a disability, and, for girls and young women, over four times as likely to be a mother; they need targeted support to overcome the specific barriers to connection that these characteristics create.

FIGURE 2 CHARACTERISTICS OF OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

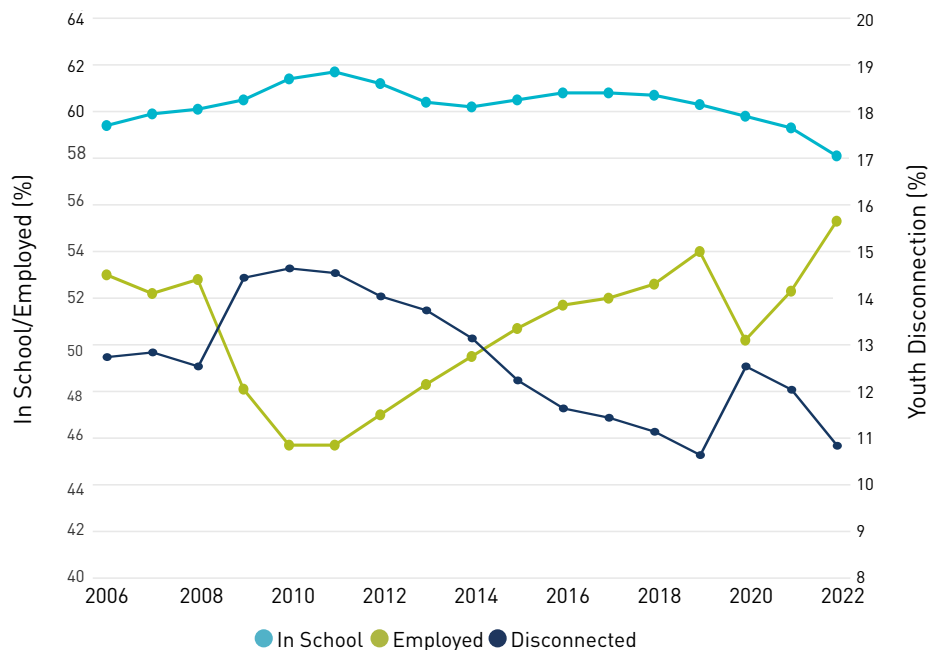
CHARACTERISTIC	SHARE OF YOUTH WITH THIS CHARACTERISTIC (%)		SOMEONE WHO IS DISCONNECTED IS	DISCONNECTED YOUTH (#)
Living in poverty	14.6	 CONNECTED YOUTH DISCONNECTED YOUTH	2.0 times as likely to live in a household below the poverty level	1,291,000
Has a disability	7.2	 CONNECTED YOUTH DISCONNECTED YOUTH	2.8 times as likely to have a disability	867,300
Young women with children*	4.6	 CONNECTED YOUTH DISCONNECTED YOUTH	4.3 times as likely to be a mother than other young women	404,100
Receives Medicaid	18.6	 CONNECTED YOUTH DISCONNECTED YOUTH	2.0 times as likely to receive Medicaid	1,641,800
No health insurance	9.6	 CONNECTED YOUTH DISCONNECTED YOUTH	2.3 times as likely to have no health insurance	942,200
Noncitizen	5.3	 CONNECTED YOUTH DISCONNECTED YOUTH	1.5 times as likely to be a noncitizen	333,800
Limited English Proficiency	4.3	 CONNECTED YOUTH DISCONNECTED YOUTH	1.7 times as likely to have limited english proficiency	325,200
Living in an Institution	0.2	 CONNECTED YOUTH DISCONNECTED YOUTH	20.0 times as likely to live in an institution	173,300

Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022.

*Estimates indicate share of young women, rather than share of all youth.

The component parts of youth disconnection—employment and school enrollment— do not always increase or decrease in lockstep with each other. Instead, spikes and declines in youth disconnection are driven in varying degrees by each of these underlying factors. In the midst of the Great Recession in 2009, school enrollment increased, even as the youth disconnection rate sharply rose. In this case, the rapidly contracting employment opportunities for young people coincided with a peak in disconnection. More recently, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the rise in the disconnection rate between 2019 and 2021 was accompanied by a decrease in both educational enrollment and employment. Though they both decreased, the employment rate dropped at a rate nearly double that of enrollment between these years (3.1 percent and 1.6 percent, respectively). In 2022, as the youth disconnection rate returned to nearly pre-pandemic levels, we can see that enrollment and employment are on different trajectories: the increase in employment is the mirror image of the decline in disconnection, even as school enrollment continues to decline, a marked departure from pre-pandemic trends.

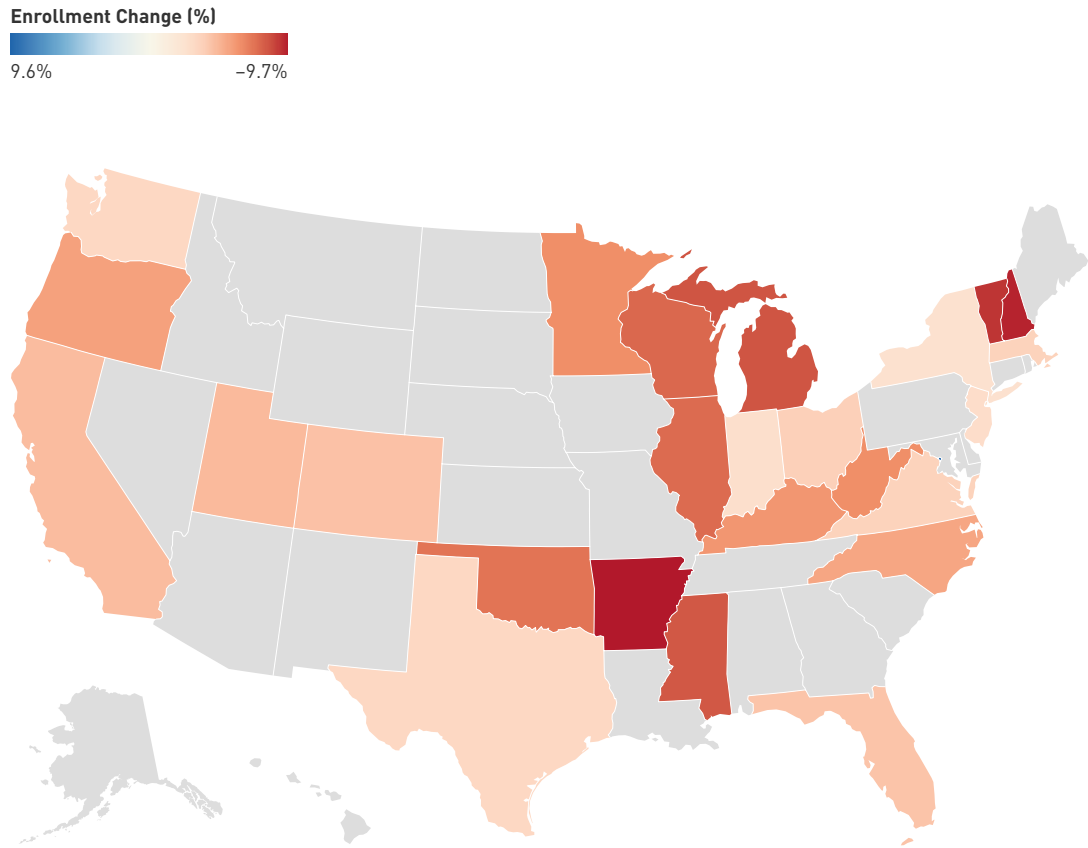
FIGURE 3 CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT AND EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH AGES 16-24, 2006-2022



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2006–2022.

Between 2019 and 2022, 26 states had significant changes in school enrollment for young people ages 16 to 24. Of those, **only one**—Washington, DC— **showed a significant increase in enrollment**, of 9.6 percent. The remaining **25 states suffered significant declines in enrollment** of between 2.5 percent and 9.7 percent (New York and Arkansas, respectively). These decreases show the continuing impacts of the Covid-fueled declines in school enrollment for young people.

**FIGURE 4 ENROLLMENT CHANGE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
16-24 BY STATE, 2019-2022**



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019-2022.

Youth Disconnection by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity

Gender

As in past years, at the national level, girls and young women are less likely to be disconnected than boys and young men, 10.6 percent versus 11.2 percent. The size and direction of the gender gaps vary by race and ethnicity and by place, however.

NHOPI young people have the largest gender gap in the youth disconnection rate of any racial or ethnic group—22.7 percent for NHOPI girls and young women, compared to 16.3 percent for their male counterparts. Black young people have the second-largest gender gap; the rate for girls and young women is 14.6 percent, for boys and young men, 18.9 percent. The gap is smallest for white young people; the rate for girls and young women is 8.7 percent, slightly lower than that of their male counterparts, 9.0 percent.

A note on gender: our data source, the American Community Survey, only allows respondents to identify as male or female. Thus, we are unable to calculate a rate for young people who identify as nonbinary.

Race and Ethnicity

While the country's five largest racial and ethnic groups saw declines in their youth disconnection rates between 2012 and 2022, spikes between 2019 and 2021, and a recovery in in 2022, the distance

FIGURE 5 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY (%)

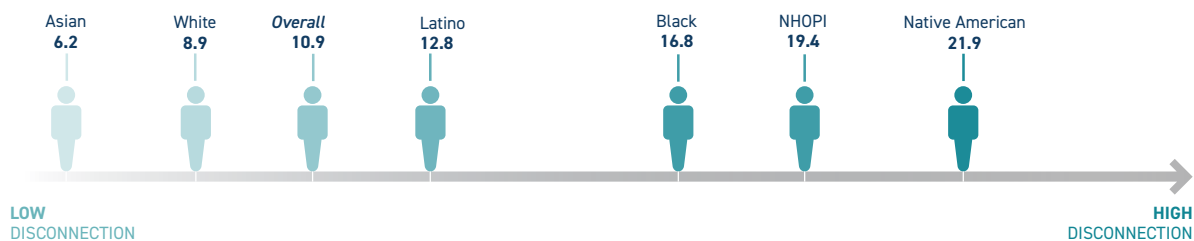
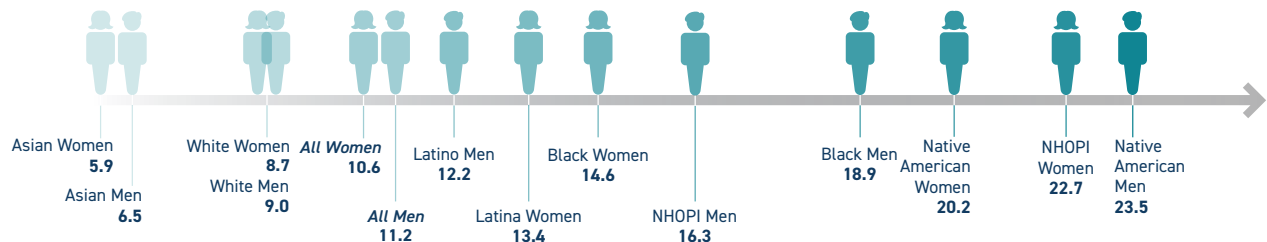


FIGURE 6 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY AND BY GENDER (%)



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022.

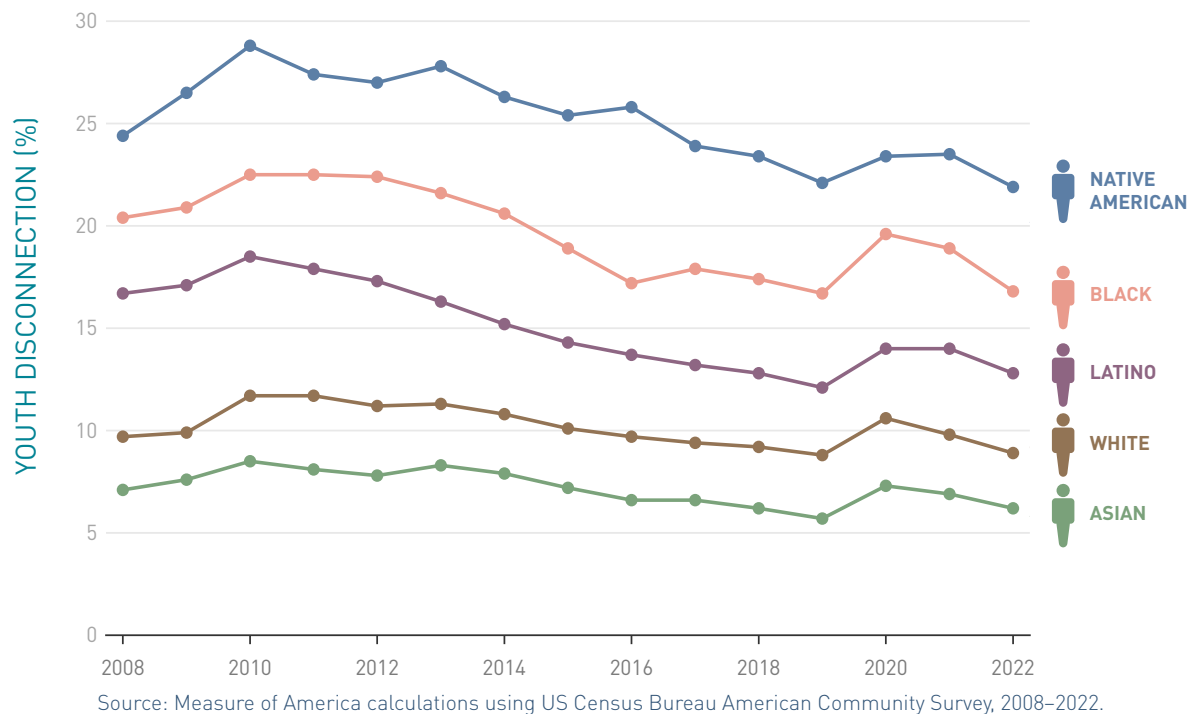
between groups remained large and strikingly durable. Native American young people continue to have the highest disconnection rate and Asian young people, the lowest; the Native American rate is 3.5 times higher than the Asian rate.

Native American Youth

The Native American youth disconnection rate is 21.9 percent, the highest of the six major racial and ethnic groups in the United States. This means that more than one in five Native American teens and young adults—approximately 50,800 young people—are neither working nor in school.

Native American teen boys and young men have the highest disconnection rate of any race/gender combination, 23.5 percent. Native American girls and young women have the second-highest female disconnection rate (after NHOPI girls and young women), 20.2 percent.

FIGURE 7 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2008–2022



In terms of change over the last decade, the Native American disconnection rate fell 18.9 percent between 2012 and 2022. The rate fell more for girls and young women than for boys and young men, 22.0 percent compared to 16.1 percent.

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI) Youth

NHOPI young people have the country's second-highest youth disconnection rate, 19.4 percent. Because the NHOPI population is the smallest of the six groups considered in this report (a total

of 77,400 young people), the number of NHOPi opportunity youth is likewise quite small, just 15,000 people. NHOPi young people have a large disconnection gender gap; the rate for boys and young men is 6.4 percentage points lower than for girls and young women. NHOPi young women have the highest rate for girls and young women and the second-highest rate for any race/gender combination.

The NHOPi population is often grouped with the Asian population under the API (Asian and Pacific Islander) banner; there are good reasons for doing so in some cases, but in this one, grouping NHOPi youth with Asian youth would mask the very high NHOPi disconnection rate. NHOPi includes Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Guamanian or Chamorro, Fijian, Tongan, and Marshallese peoples and encompasses the people within the US jurisdictions of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.⁷ The trajectory of NHOPi youth disconnection rates since the Great Recession is more variable due in part to its smaller population size and is not easily summarized.

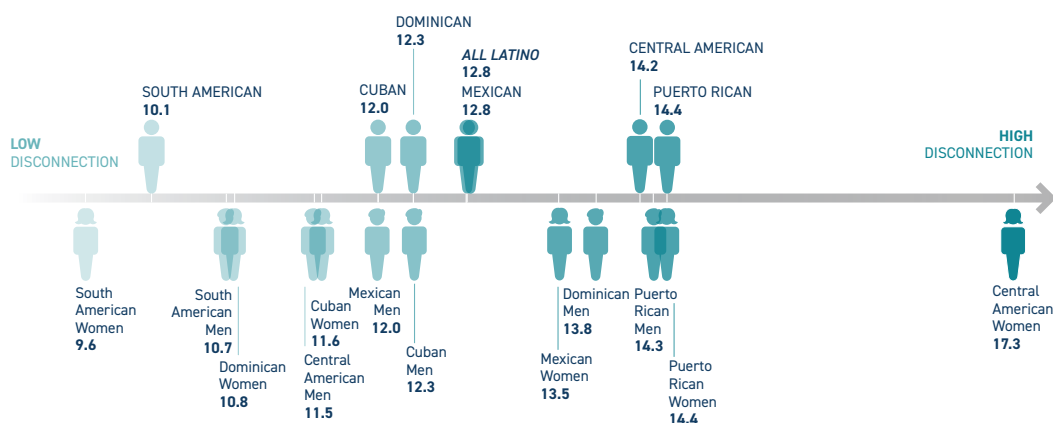
Black Youth

Black teens and young adults have the third-highest disconnection rate, 16.8 percent, which translates to 871,300 young people—about one in five opportunity youth are Black. Black boys and young men are much more likely than their female counterparts to be disconnected, 18.9 percent compared to 14.6 percent. A bright spot in the data is that both the Black female rate and the Black male rate fell more between 2012 and 2022 than the national rate as a whole—24.4 percent for girls and young women, 26.2 percent for boys and young men.

Latino Youth

The Latino youth disconnection rate stands at 12.8 percent, or 1,224,800 young people. About three in ten opportunity youth are Latino. As in years past, Latina girls and young women were slightly more likely than their male counterparts to be disconnected, 13.4 percent compared to 12.2 percent. Nonetheless, Latina girls and young women have made the fastest progress of all

FIGURE 8 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY LATINO SUBGROUP (%)



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022.

Youth Disconnection			Youth Disconnection		
Latino Subgroup	(%)	(#)	Latino Subgroup	(%)	(#)
Puerto Rican	14.4	114,300	Dominican	12.3	40,300
Men	14.3	58,000	Men	13.8	22,600
Women	14.4	56,300	Women	10.8	17,800
Central American	14.2	142,700	Cuban	12.0	29,600
Men	11.5	61,700	Men	12.3	15,600
Women	17.3	81,100	Women	11.6	14,000
Mexican	12.8	773,200	South American	10.1	55,600
Men	12.0	374,000	Men	10.7	29,900
Women	13.5	399,200	Women	9.6	25,600

Note: Subtotals may differ from sum of gender groups due to rounding.

Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022.

race/gender combinations in terms of reducing their youth disconnection rate, which fell 29.1 percent between 2012 and 2022. Rates vary by Latino subgroup. Puerto Rican young people have the highest rate, 14.4 percent, and young people who trace their origins to South America have the lowest, 10.1 percent.

White Youth

The disconnection rate for white youth is 8.9 percent. White teens and young adults make up the largest absolute number of opportunity youth, 1,797,700 people; four in ten opportunity youth are white. (Even though white young people have a lower-than-average disconnection rate, they make up slightly more than half of all people in the 16-to-24 age range.) White boys and young men are slightly more likely than their female counterparts to be disconnected, 9.0 percent versus 8.7 percent. Between 2012 and 2022, the female rate fell 19.4 percent, the male rate, 21.7 percent—both less than the overall decrease at the national level.

Asian Youth

Asian teens and young adults have the lowest disconnection rate, 6.2 percent, or 133,200 young people. Asian young women have the lowest disconnection rate of any race/gender combination, 5.9 percent; Asian young men have the second-lowest rate, 6.5 percent. Since 2012, the Asian disconnection rate has fallen 15.1 percent, less than any other racial or ethnic group. This is not surprising, however; a group that already has a very low disconnection rate doesn't have as much room for improvement and thus is unlikely to see large gains.

The category "Asian" is extremely broad, and rates vary widely by Asian subgroup. Young people

who identify as Korean (4.8 percent), Chinese (5.2 percent), or Indian (5.4 percent) have the lowest rates among Asian subgroups; those who trace their origins to Cambodia have the highest (17.6 percent).

FIGURE 9 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY ASIAN SUBGROUP (%)



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022.

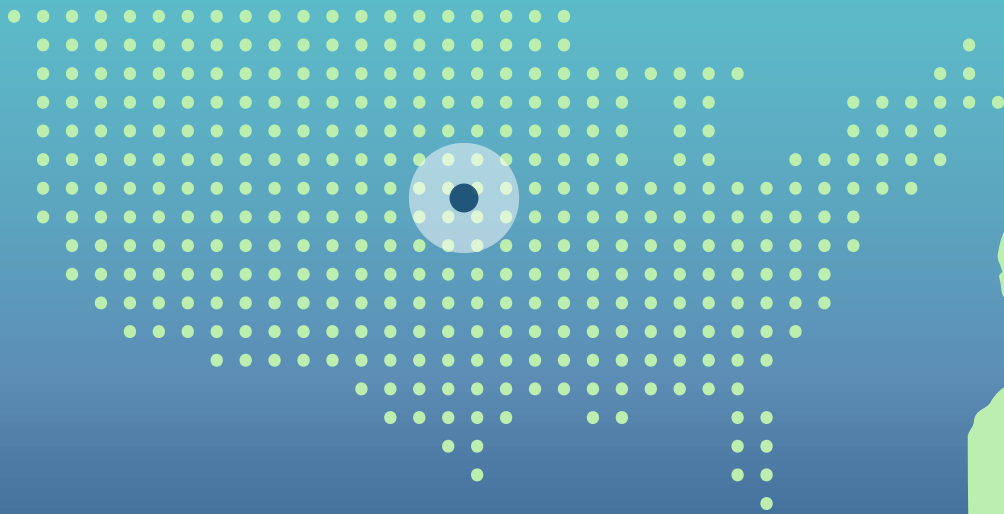
Youth Disconnection			Youth Disconnection		
Asian Subgroup	(%)	(#)	Asian Subgroup	(%)	(#)
Cambodian	17.6	6,100	Vietnamese	6.0	13,800
Men*	17.8	3,200	Men	6.7	8,200
Women*	17.4	2,900	Women	5.1	5,600
Bangladeshi*	10.5	3,300	Indian	5.4	23,700
Men*	5.2	900	Men	5.3	12,200
Women*	16.2	2,500	Women	5.5	11,500
Hmong	9.4	4,700	Chinese	5.2	26,800
Men*	8.3	2,000	Men	5.5	13,600
Women*	10.5	2,700	Women	5.0	13,200
Filipino	6.7	19,300	Two or More	4.8	4,000
Men	7.2	10,100	Men*	5.9	2,400
Women	6.3	9,100	Women*	3.8	1,600
Pakistani	6.6	4,900	Korean	4.8	6,800
Men*	7.2	2,700	Men	4.6	3,200
Women*	6.0	2,200	Women*	5.0	3,600

*The youth disconnection rates for these demographic groups have slightly higher margins of error than other groups due to the Census Bureau's sampling design as well as their relatively small disconnected youth populations.

Note: Subtotals may differ from sum of gender groups due to rounding.

Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022.

YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY PLACE



YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY
REGION, STATE, METRO AREA,
AND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

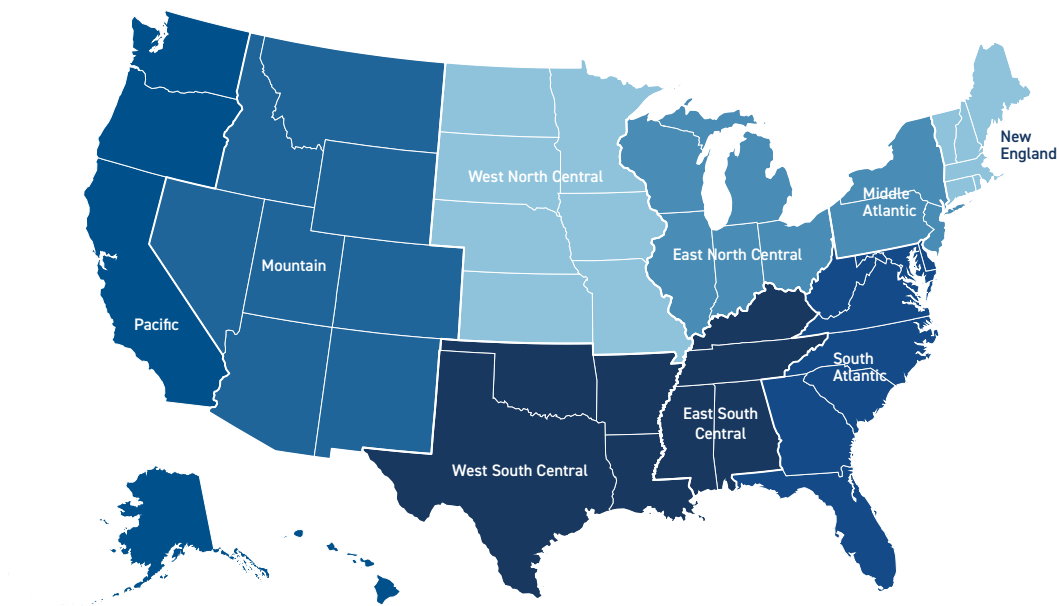
Youth Disconnection by Region, State, Metro Area, and Congressional District

Youth disconnection rates vary by place, and the largest gaps are found between the smallest geographies.

REGIONS

The Census Bureau divides the country into nine different regions. At 13.1 percent, the West South Central region, which comprises Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas, has the highest youth

FIGURE 10 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY REGION



REGION	OVERALL (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Asian (%)	Black (%)	Latino (%)	Native American (%)	White (%)
UNITED STATES	10.9	11.2	10.6	6.2	16.8	12.8	21.9	8.9
New England	8.4	9.6	7.1		14.3	13.3		7.1
West North Central	8.7	9.0	8.4		14.0	12.6	24.7	7.3
Middle Atlantic	10.0	10.9	9.1	5.6	16.3	12.5		8.0
East North Central	10.3	11.0	9.6	5.9	19.4	11.1		8.5
Mountain	10.8	10.7	10.9	7.1	15.7	13.6	24.5	8.1
South Atlantic	11.0	11.0	10.9	6.0	15.4	11.7	17.9	8.8
Pacific	11.3	11.7	10.7	6.5	17.8	12.7	22.5	10.0
East South Central	12.8	13.1	12.6		18.4	11.7		11.3
West South Central	13.1	12.5	13.6	7.6	17.8	14.1	16.0	10.9

Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022.

disconnection rate. The East South Central region, which includes Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee, has a comparable though slightly lower rate, 12.8 percent. In both of these adjacent regions, nearly one in five Black young people and one in nine white young people are disconnected.

New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont) has the lowest disconnection rate (8.4 percent), and the West North Central region (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota) is close on its heels (8.7 percent). New England has the lowest rates for girls and young women and for white young people. The West North Central region has the lowest Black youth disconnection rate (14.0 percent) as well as the lowest rate for boys and young men overall.

Latino young people are most likely to be disconnected in the West South Central region (14.1 percent). Native American young people are most likely to be disconnected in the Mountain region (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming), and the West North Central region, with very high rates of 24.5 percent and 24.7 percent, respectively. Asian young people are least likely to be disconnected in the Middle Atlantic region (New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, 5.6 percent), the most likely in the West South Central region (7.6 percent). There was only one region for which NHOPi disconnection rates could be reliably calculated: the Pacific region (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington), with a disconnection rate of 23.1 percent.

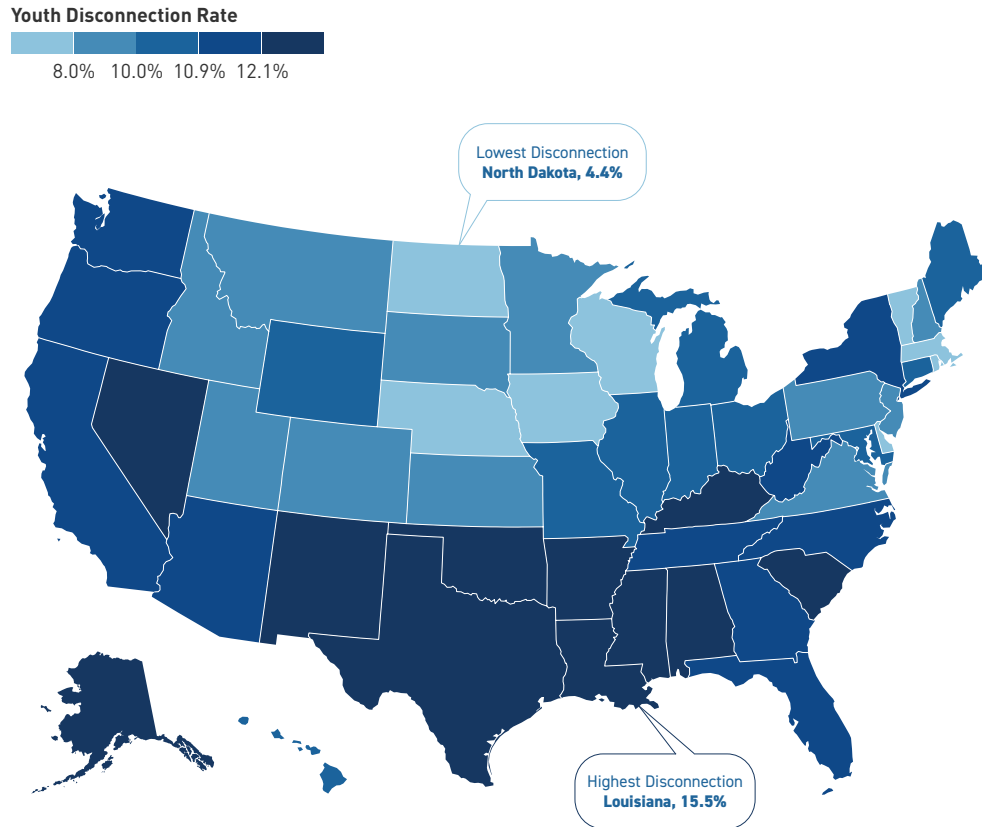
STATES

Louisiana (15.5 percent), Mississippi (15.4 percent), New Mexico (15.3 percent), Alaska (15.2 percent), Arkansas (15.2 percent), and Nevada (15.2 percent) have the country's highest youth disconnection rates. North Dakota (4.4 percent), Nebraska (6.4 percent), Washington, DC (6.9 percent), Delaware (7.0 percent), Rhode Island (7.3 percent), Massachusetts (7.5 percent), and Iowa (7.6 percent) have the lowest.

Though the female rate is lower than the male rate at the national level, it is important to keep in mind that in at least sixteen states, girls and young women are more likely to be disconnected than boys and young men. Alaska and Arkansas are home to the highest rates of female disconnection, 17.6 percent and 16.4 percent, respectively. In both these states, the female rate is higher than the male rate. West Virginia stands out for its large gender gap; the female rate (14.3 percent) is much higher than the male rate (9.7 percent). Such states should ensure that their policies and programs reflect the disproportionate challenges that their young women face.

Only nine states have an Asian youth population sufficiently large to allow for calculation of single-year disconnection rates. Of those states, Nevada has the highest rate (13.4 percent), and Washington, the lowest (4.4 percent).

Black young people in Nevada have a shockingly high disconnection rate, 26.4 percent, exactly double the state's white rate, 13.2 percent. Illinois and Michigan, which have overall disconnection rates on par with the national rate, have the second- and third-highest rates for Black young people; more than one in five young Black residents of these states are neither working nor in school. Also noteworthy is Nebraska; though it has the second-lowest state rate and the lowest rate for white youth, the Black rate is nearly four times the white rate, 16.5 percent compared to 4.4 percent. Many states have disconnection rates for Black youth much higher than the both

FIGURE 11 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY STATE

Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022.

the overall rate for Black young people in America and white young people in the state, including Louisiana, Washington, Wisconsin, Mississippi, Kentucky, and South Carolina. Massachusetts (11.4 percent), New Jersey (14.1 percent), and Maryland (14.1 percent) are home to the lowest disconnection rates for Black young people.

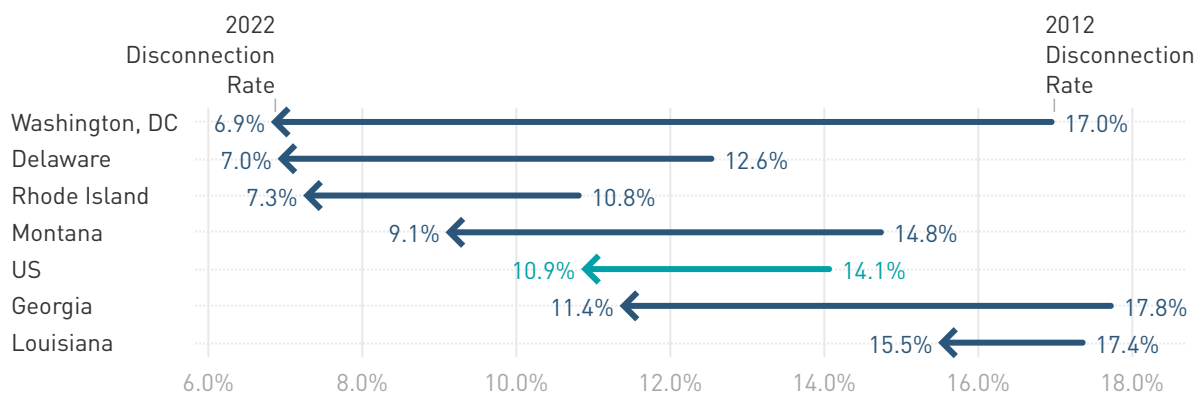
For Latino young people, Louisiana (19.1 percent), Arkansas (18.7 percent), South Carolina (17.6 percent), Connecticut (16.5 percent), and New Mexico (15.6) have the highest rates. Connecticut stands out; its state rate is lower than the national average, but its Latino rate is well above the national Latino rate of 12.8 percent, at 16.5 percent. Alabama, Virginia, and Wisconsin have the lowest Latino rates, all below 10.0 percent.

Just six states have a sufficiently large Native American population to allow for single-year youth disconnection calculations. The highest Native American disconnection rate is found in Arizona (27.3 percent, more than three and a half times the white rate of 7.4 percent), the lowest in Oklahoma, 15.4 percent.

Arkansas, Alaska, and Kentucky are home to the highest disconnection rates for white young people, 14.4 percent, 14.1 percent, and 14.0 percent, respectively. The lowest white youth disconnection rates are found in Nebraska (4.4 percent), Wisconsin (6.1 percent), and Massachusetts (6.2 percent).

As mentioned above, the national youth disconnection rate fell 22.6 percent between 2012 and 2022. In four states and Washington, DC, the rate fell more substantially, at least 10 percentage points more than the national rate's decline. These places include Washington, DC, Delaware, Montana, Georgia, and Rhode Island, all of which saw decreases of at least 32 percent, with DC doing the best by far with a nearly 60 percent decline. In Louisiana, the decline in youth disconnection lagged the national decrease by more than 10 percentage points. Its rates were among the highest in the country in both 2012 and 2022.

FIGURE 12 SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY STATE, 2012-2022



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2012 and 2022.

TABLE 1 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY STATE

	State	Youth Disconnection		Change Since 2012 (%)	Youth Disconnection by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity (%)						
		(%)	(#)		Women	Men	Asian	Black	Latino	Native American	White
1	North Dakota	4.4	4,500		3.1	5.5					
2	Nebraska	6.4	15,900		5.7	7.1		16.5			4.4
3	Washington, DC	6.9	5,500	-59.6							
4	Delaware	7.0	7,700	-44.7	7.7						
5	Rhode Island	7.3	10,000	-32.8		10.7					6.4
6	Massachusetts	7.5	64,400	-18.9	6.1	8.9		11.4	12.9		6.2
7	Iowa	7.6	30,900		7.2	7.9					6.6
8	Vermont	7.7	6,200								7.9
9	Wisconsin	7.9	56,800	-24.1	7.7	8.1		19.1	9.6		6.1
10	Minnesota	8.0	52,700		7.7	8.3			12.0		6.7
11	New Hampshire	8.0	12,000		7.5	8.3					8.2
12	Colorado	8.5	59,100	-27.7	8.8	8.3			13.3		6.4
13	Utah	8.5	44,100	-27.3	8.7	8.2			11.6		7.6
14	Pennsylvania	9.0	136,500	-30.5	8.0	10.0		16.1	13.1		7.1
15	Idaho	9.1	22,800	-30.3	7.5	10.6					9.4
16	Montana	9.1	11,700	-38.1	9.5	8.8					8.4
17	New Jersey	9.4	96,500	-25.3	8.8	9.9	7.1	14.1	11.4		7.5
18	Kansas	9.5	37,200		10.3	8.8			14.6		7.6
19	South Dakota	9.7	10,600			8.7				27.0	7.3
20	Virginia	9.9	105,000	-16.5	10.4	9.5	5.0	15.1	9.1		8.6
21	Maine	10.0	13,800			12.7					10.2
22	Wyoming	10.0	6,700			10.5					9.8
23	Connecticut	10.1	44,800		9.8	10.5		18.3	16.5		7.1
24	Indiana	10.1	89,100	-24.3	9.7	10.5		16.7	10.5		9.2
25	Maryland	10.1	69,100	-21.8	9.2	11.0		14.1	10.5		7.6

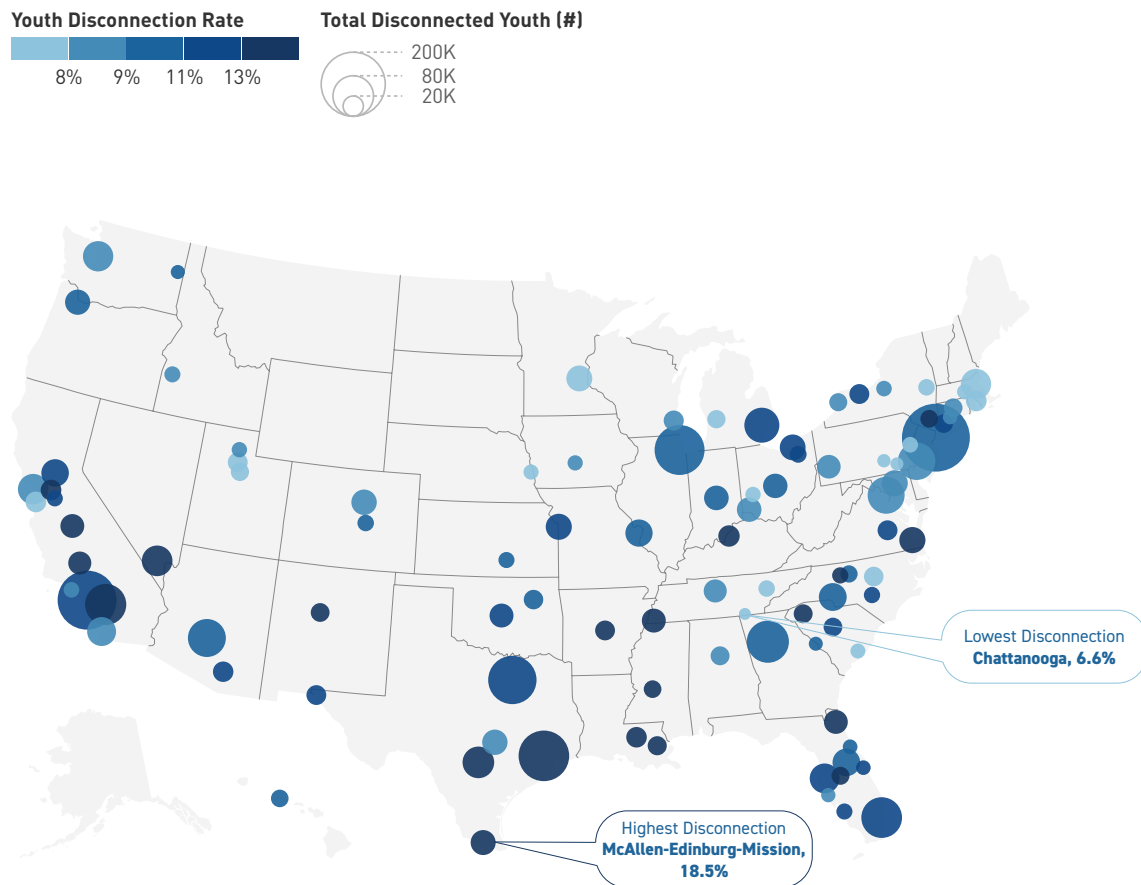
TABLE 1 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY STATE, CONTINUED

	State	Youth Disconnection		Change Since 2012 (%)	Youth Disconnection by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity (%)						
		(%)	(#)		Women	Men	Asian	Black	Latino	Native American	White
26	Hawaii	10.7	16,000	-24.0	12.5	9.3					
27	Michigan	10.7	127,800	-24.7	10.5	10.8		21.1	10.5		8.6
28	Missouri	10.7	78,800	-15.2	9.8	11.5		15.2	15.0		9.7
29	Illinois	10.8	163,100	-17.3	9.9	11.7	5.5	21.2	11.5		8.1
30	Ohio	10.8	148,600	-20.9	9.4	12.1		17.4	11.8		9.4
31	New York	10.9	246,100	-19.9	9.9	11.9	5.0	17.4	12.9		9.1
32	North Carolina	10.9	141,800	-28.6	11.5	10.4	8.9	15.2	10.8	18.1	9.0
33	Washington	11.0	94,400	-22.5	11.5	10.5	4.4	19.3	11.3		11.2
34	California	11.2	524,000	-23.8	10.5	11.9	6.7	17.9	12.8	21.6	9.2
35	Florida	11.3	266,900	-28.3	10.7	12.0		15.7	12.4		9.0
36	Georgia	11.4	157,600	-35.5	11.2	11.7		15.5	11.1		8.9
37	Tennessee	11.5	95,600	-28.5	11.5	11.5		18.4	13.5		9.8
38	Arizona	11.7	106,700	-31.0	12.3	11.2		14.5	14.4	27.3	7.4
39	Oregon	11.7	54,000	-21.9	10.3	13.0			12.5		11.4
40	West Virginia	11.9	24,300		14.3	9.7					12.0
41	Alabama	12.1	75,100	-25.4	11.5	12.7		18.0	9.1		10.0
42	South Carolina	12.1	76,100	-28.8	13.4	10.9		18.5	17.6		8.6
43	Texas	12.5	485,600	-15.5	13.1	11.9	7.2	16.7	13.9		9.7
44	Oklahoma	12.8	65,300	-16.6	13.6	12.1		16.3	13.4	15.4	12.1
45	Kentucky	13.9	74,700	-18.4	14.2	13.7		18.6			14.0
46	Alaska	15.2	13,300		17.6	13.1					14.1
47	Arkansas	15.2	57,400	-19.2	16.4	14.2		17.6	18.7		14.4
48	Nevada	15.2	52,700		14.8	15.5	13.4	26.4	13.7		13.2
49	New Mexico	15.3	39,300	-18.8	14.9	15.8			15.6	24.7	11.0
50	Mississippi	15.4	58,100	-20.5	14.7	16.1		18.7			12.6
51	Louisiana	15.5	86,900	-10.7	15.2	15.9		20.6	19.1		11.7

METRO AREAS

A metropolitan area is a central city and its surrounding towns, suburbs, and exurbs. Communities within metro areas are bound together by strong economic, social, and environmental ties, even when they span state lines. Metro areas are key units of analysis for understanding youth disconnection rates, as labor markets, and to a lesser degree postsecondary education options, can be more aligned with metro areas than state or county lines. For this study, we calculated youth disconnection rates for the 99 most populous metro areas (Portland, ME—the 100th—had an unreliable estimate of youth disconnection).

FIGURE 12 YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN AMERICA'S MOST POPULOUS METRO AREAS



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022.

Chattanooga, TN-GA (6.6 percent), boasts the lowest youth disconnection rate of any metro area in the country. It also saw the greatest decline in its youth disconnection rate over the last decade. Minneapolis–St. Paul–Bloomington, MN-WI, and Boston–Cambridge–Newton, MA-NH, come next with rates of 6.7 percent, followed by Omaha, NE-IA, and Worcester, MA, both at 7.3 percent.

The highest youth disconnection rate can be found in McAllen–Edinburg–Mission, TX (18.5 percent), followed by Bakersfield–Delano, CA (17.2 percent), Memphis, TN-MS-AR (16.5 percent), Little Rock–North Little Rock–Conway, AR (15.6 percent), Las Vegas–Henderson–North Las Vegas, NV (15.6 percent), and Stockton–Lodi, CA (15.5 percent).

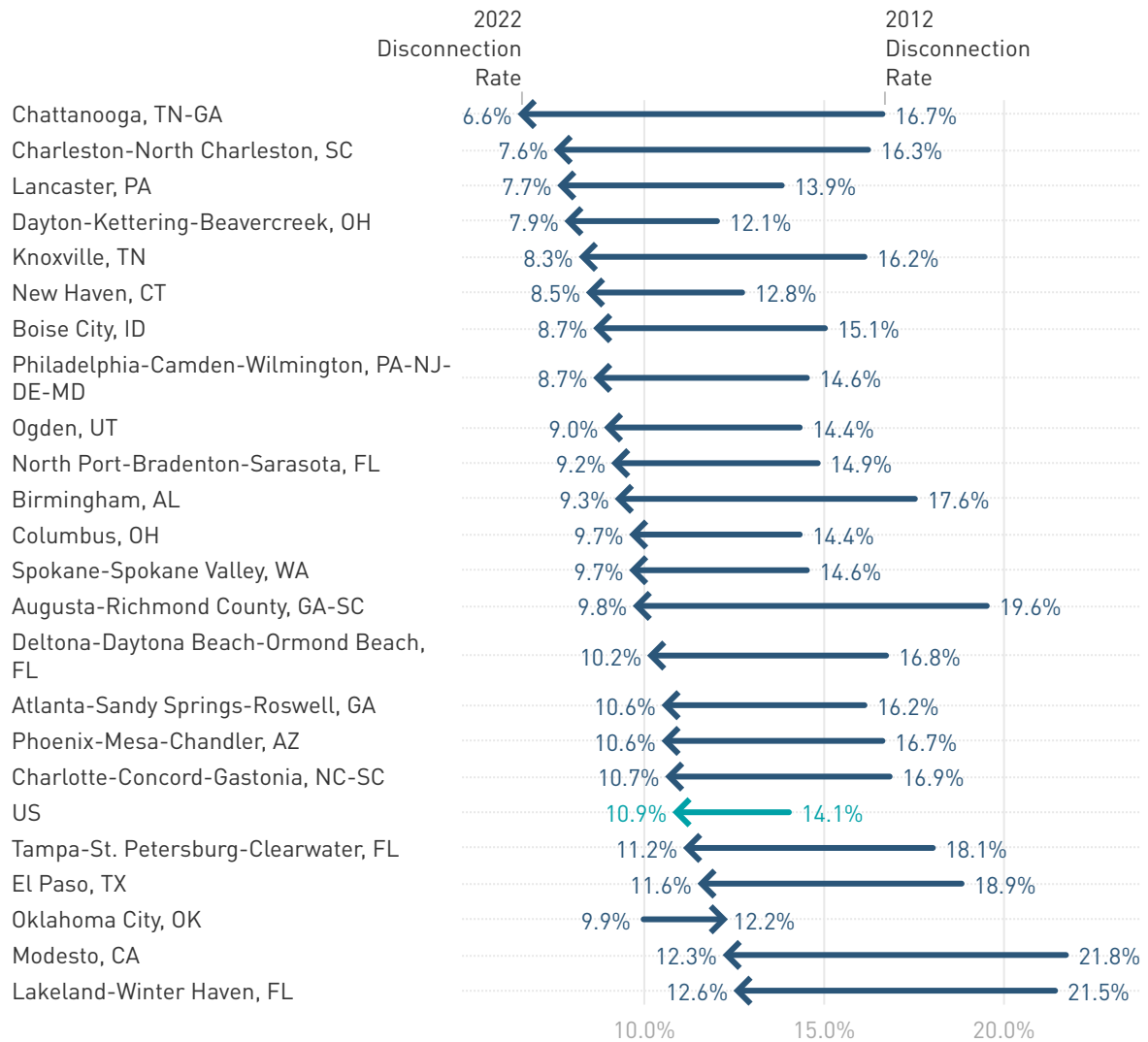
The last decade has brought heartening progress to some metro areas, little change in others, and a worsening situation in one.

In twenty-two metro areas, the youth disconnection rate fell significantly more between 2012 and 2022 than did the rate in the county as a whole—at least 10 percentage points more. Some metro areas in the South show remarkable improvement: leading the pack is Chattanooga, TN, where the rate fell over 60 percent. The greater metro areas of Charleston, Augusta, Knoxville, and Birmingham all saw drops of about 50 percent. Lancaster, Modesto, Boise, Lakeland–Winter Haven, and Philadelphia saw declines of 40 percent or more.

One metro area ran counter to national trends and experienced increases in their youth disconnection rates over the past decade. This was Oklahoma City, where the rate rose from 9.9 percent 2012 to 12.2 percent in 2022, a 23.6 percent increase.

A large share of metro areas in America have had no significant change in youth disconnection rates since 2012. For some metros with already low rates of disconnection, this is understandable. For metros with high rates of disconnection in 2012 and 2022, this should be a call to action: they have missed out on the substantial gains of the last decade and more attention and resources are needed to ensure that their young residents can flourish.

**FIGURE 13 SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN YOUTH DISCONNECTION RATE
BY METRO AREA, 2012-2022**



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2012 and 2022.

TABLE 2 YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN AMERICA'S MOST POPULOUS METRO AREAS

	Metro Area	Youth Disconnection		Change Since 2012 (%)	Youth Disconnection by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity (%)				
		(%)	(#)		Women	Men	Black	Latino	White
1	Chattanooga, TN-GA	6.6	4,000	-60.4					7.7
2	Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH	6.7	39,200		5.7	7.6		9.7	5.6
3	Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI	6.7	27,400	-31.5	6.2	7.3			5.8
4	Omaha, NE-IA	7.3	7,500			7.4			5.1
5	Worcester, MA	7.3	7,500	-29.5		7.5			
6	Harrisburg-Carlisle, PA	7.5	5,400						
7	San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA	7.5	16,200	-28.9	6.4	8.6		9.4	
8	Charleston-North Charleston, SC	7.6	7,300	-53.3					
9	Lancaster, PA	7.7*	5,000	-44.5					
10	Grand Rapids-Wyoming-Kentwood, MI	7.8	12,000	-24.4	8.0	7.6			6.9
11	Albany-Schenectady-Troy, NY	7.9	9,400			9.8			
12	Dayton-Kettering-Beavercreek, OH	7.9	7,800	-34.5		8.9			7.8
13	Providence-Warwick, RI-MA	7.9	16,200	-30.3	4.7	11.1		10.9	6.6
14	Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton, PA-NJ	8.0	8,200	-28.6		9.4			
15	Provo-Orem-Lehi, UT	8.1	12,000		8.2	8.1			7.3
16	Knoxville, TN	8.3	9,300	-48.6	7.7	8.8			8.7
17	Raleigh-Cary, NC	8.3	14,100	-26.7	8.0	8.7	15.4		7.6
18	Salt Lake City-Murray, UT	8.3	14,700	-29.8	9.2	7.5			7.7
19	Milwaukee-Waukesha, WI	8.4	15,100	-30.4		10.1			
20	Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin, TN	8.4	20,900	-32.1	8.6	8.2	14.9		6.4
21	Oxnard-Thousand Oaks-Ventura, CA	8.4	8,100	-29.7		9.2		7.2	
22	New Haven, CT	8.5	6,500	-33.5					
23	Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN	8.6	24,200	-26.3	8.0	9.2			7.3
24	Denver-Aurora-Centennial, CO	8.6	26,200	-26.2	8.2	9.0		13.2	6.0
25	Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	8.6	60,900	-25.3	8.6	8.6	14.0	9.4	5.8

TABLE 2 YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN AMERICA'S MOST POPULOUS METRO AREAS, CONTINUED

	Metro Area	Youth Disconnection		Change Since 2012 (%)	Youth Disconnection by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity (%)				
		(%)	(#)		Women	Men	Black	Latino	White
26	Boise City, ID	8.7	8,700	-42.3		10.8			8.8
27	Buffalo-Cheektowaga, NY	8.7	11,600		7.7	9.6			7.6
28	Des Moines-West Des Moines, IA	8.7	7,600						
29	Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford, CT	8.7	12,700		6.3	11.1		15.0	
30	Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	8.7	62,800	-40.3	7.0	10.4	14.8	10.4	6.1
31	Pittsburgh, PA	8.7	22,100		7.7	9.6			7.5
32	San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad, CA	8.7	35,200	-28.7	9.1	8.3		11.3	7.0
33	Syracuse, NY	8.7	8,000			8.6			8.0
34	Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos, TX	8.8	26,100	-23.2	8.5	9.1		10.0	7.6
35	San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA	8.9	39,800	-27.0	8.8	8.9	14.9	10.8	8.5
36	Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD	9.0	27,600	-26.1	8.3	9.6	13.0		6.4
37	Ogden, UT	9.0	7,800	-37.7					
38	North Port-Bradenton-Sarasota, FL	9.2	6,500	-38.4		10.2			
39	Birmingham, AL	9.3	13,000	-47.1	7.0	11.7	16.7		5.5
40	Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	9.3	39,200	-25.5	10.2	8.4		10.9	8.6
41	Indianapolis-Carmel-Greenwood, IN	9.5	24,300	-27.3	9.0	10.0			7.2
42	Colorado Springs, CO	9.6	9,300	-30.4					
43	Columbus, OH	9.7	23,900	-32.8	9.4	10.0	17.5		7.7
44	Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL	9.7	31,700	-22.6	8.1	11.3	14.0	10.8	6.2
45	Spokane-Spokane Valley, WA	9.7	6,200	-33.6					10.1
46	Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC	9.8	6,100	-50.0					
47	St. Louis, MO-IL	9.9	30,700	-23.1	8.2	11.4	14.8		8.5
48	Urban Honolulu, HI	10.0	10,900	-22.4	11.1	9.1			
49	Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA	10.1	25,700	-28.3	8.5	11.8		12.8	9.1
50	Deltona-Daytona Beach-Ormond Beach, FL	10.2	6,900	-39.3		11.0			8.7

TABLE 2 YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN AMERICA'S MOST POPULOUS METRO AREAS, CONTINUED

	Metro Area	Youth Disconnection		Change Since 2012 (%)	Youth Disconnection by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity (%)				
		(%)	(#)		Women	Men	Black	Latino	White
51	Tulsa, OK	10.4	14,000		11.8	9.2			8.7
52	Wichita, KS	10.5	8,700						
53	Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA	10.6	81,000	-34.4	10.2	11.0	14.1	10.7	7.8
54	Greensboro-High Point, NC	10.6	10,400	-25.7	8.9	14.4			8.8
55	New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ	10.6	224,700	-22.9	9.5	11.7	16.1	12.8	8.1
56	Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ	10.6	64,500	-36.5	11.3	10.0		13.4	7.0
57	Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC	10.7	32,300	-36.7	13.4	8.0	13.1	10.6	9.0
58	Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN	10.8	117,000	-19.8	9.8	11.7	21.0	11.6	6.9
59	Kansas City, MO-KS	10.9	27,800		11.8	10.0		17.8	8.2
60	Richmond, VA	10.9	14,700	-18.0	11.0	11.2	14.7		
61	Tucson, AZ	10.9	15,700	-19.2	10.3	10.6		14.9	
62	Cape Coral-Fort Myers, FL	11.0	8,700	-29.2		11.2		16.2	
63	Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, AR	11.0	9,000		12.0				10.7
64	Sacramento-Roseville-Folsom, CA	11.0	31,400	-22.8	7.4	14.3		10.3	10.1
65	Bridgeport-Stamford-Danbury, CT	11.1	12,500		12.6	9.5		15.6	
66	Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	11.1	109,200	-16.1	11.5	10.8	16.4	11.7	8.7
67	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA	11.1	166,900	-18.6	10.4	11.7	23.2	12.4	8.1
68	Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	11.2	37,700	-38.2	10.5	11.9	17.1	10.8	10.3
69	Akron, OH	11.3	9,800		12.6	10.1			
70	Columbia, SC	11.3	12,700	-24.9	13.7				6.4
71	Rochester, NY	11.3	14,700		10.2	12.4			7.8
72	Cleveland, OH	11.5	27,100	-14.5	8.8	14.1	22.4		7.3
73	Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville, FL	11.5	6,800	-29.9					11.5
74	Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI	11.6	54,000	-30.7	11.6	11.6	21.4		7.8
75	El Paso, TX	11.6	14,600	-38.6	13.0	10.5		11.3	

TABLE 2 YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN AMERICA'S MOST POPULOUS METRO AREAS, CONTINUED

	Metro Area	Youth Disconnection		Change Since 2012 (%)	Youth Disconnection by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity (%)				
		(%)	(#)		Women	Men	Black	Latino	White
76	Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL	12.0	75,200	-14.6	11.6	12.4	13.0	13.3	9.7
77	Oklahoma City, OK	12.2	22,800	23.6	13.1	11.2		14.1	11.9
78	Modesto, CA	12.3	8,600	-43.6	14.6	10.2		12.7	
79	Louisville/Jefferson County, KY-IN	12.5	17,500		13.8	11.4	22.1		10.6
80	New Orleans-Metairie, LA	12.5	13,300	-19.9	11.2	13.7	14.4		10.9
81	Jacksonville, FL	12.6	22,600	-28.0	12.4	12.8	19.9		8.9
82	Kiryas Joel-Poughkeepsie-Newburgh, NY	12.6	11,200		13.2	12.0			13.5
83	Lakeland-Winter Haven, FL	12.6	11,500	-41.3	14.6	10.7		13.3	7.3
84	Virginia Beach-Chesapeake-Norfolk, VA-NC	12.7	28,000		13.4	12.1	19.3		9.1
85	Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA	12.8	77,200	-32.0	12.1	13.6	12.2	13.6	11.3
86	Greenville-Anderson-Greer, SC	12.9	13,000		17.0	9.0	20.6		11.9
87	San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX	12.9	43,100		13.5	12.3	11.4	14.5	9.8
88	Winston-Salem, NC	13.1	8,900	-27.0	15.0	12.0			
89	Houston-Pasadena-The Woodlands, TX	13.3	120,300		14.3	12.4	16.6	14.5	10.7
90	Baton Rouge, LA	13.4	15,900		12.4	14.3	23.7		
91	Albuquerque, NM	13.9	12,800	-23.5	12.3	16.3		17.3	
92	Jackson, MS	14.4	11,000			16.0	17.0		
93	Fresno, CA	14.6	22,600	-28.6	14.6	14.6		15.6	12.4
94	Stockton-Lodi, CA	15.5	16,100	-24.9	16.8	14.4		17.3	
95	Las Vegas-Henderson-North Las Vegas, NV	15.6	40,100		15.5	15.7	27.1	12.9	14.3
96	Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway, AR	15.6	14,600		16.5	14.6			16.2
97	Memphis, TN-MS-AR	16.5	22,800		13.9	19.1	20.8		
98	Bakersfield-Delano, CA	17.2	20,900	-20.0	18.4	16.0		14.9	18.0
99	McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX	18.5	25,200		17.0	20.0		18.8	

*The youth disconnection rate for Lancaster, PA is less reliable.

Note: One of the country's 100 most populous metro areas (Portland-South Portland, ME) had an unreliable estimate, so it is not included in this list.

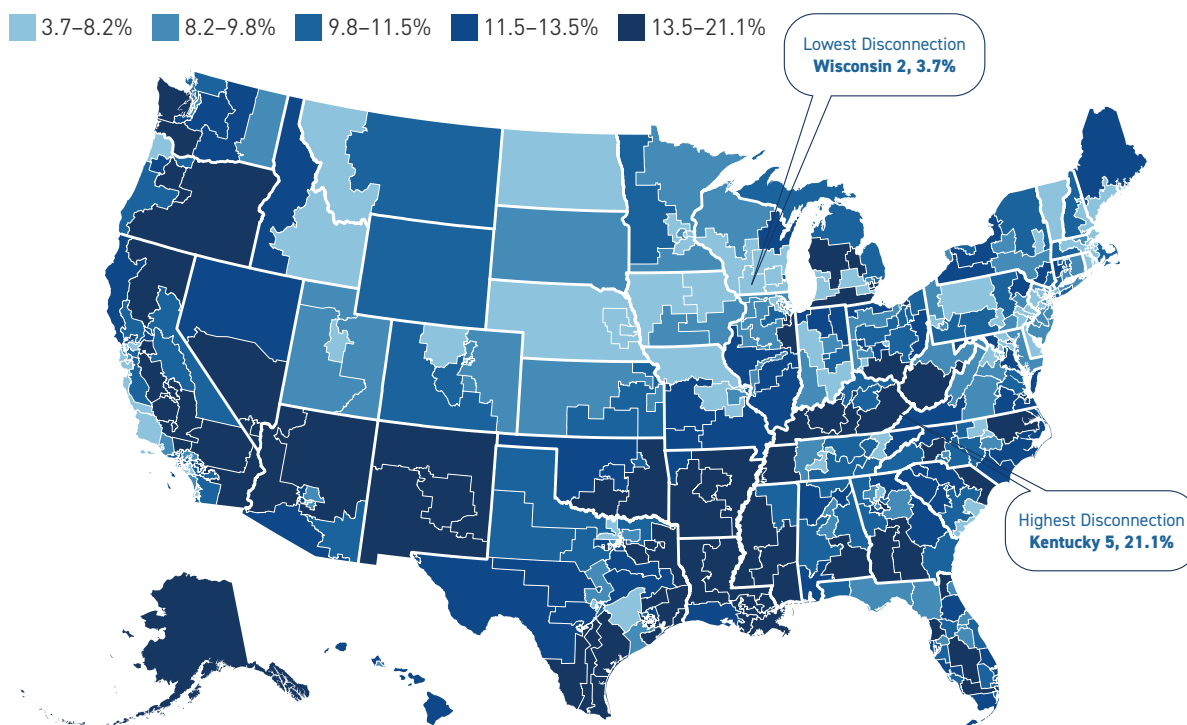
Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022.

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS

Disconnection rates vary widely by congressional district, ranging from 3.7 percent in Wisconsin District 2, which includes state capital Madison and its surrounding suburbs and towns as well as the University of Wisconsin, to 21.1 percent in Kentucky District 5, which encompasses rural Appalachia's Southeastern Kentucky.

The country's 435 congressional districts and Washington, DC have an average population of 764,400 people.⁸ The size of the out-of-school, out-of-work youth population ranges from a high of 22,700 opportunity youth in Texas Congressional District 34, which includes Gulf Coast towns from Brownsville to Kingsville as well as parts of McAllen, to 3,400 opportunity youth in New York Congressional District 12, which includes Manhattan's Upper East and Upper West Sides.

FIGURE 14 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022, 118th Congress.

TABLE 3 TOP- AND BOTTOM-SCORING CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS

TEN LOWEST-DISCONNECTION DISTRICTS			
District		Youth Disconnection (%)	Youth Disconnection (#)
1	Wisconsin 2*	3.7	4,100
2	Nebraska 1	4.4	4,300
3	North Dakota At-Large*	4.4	4,500
4	Pennsylvania 1*	4.7	3,800
5	Colorado 2	5.0	5,800
6	California 47	5.1	4,900
7	Michigan 6	5.2	5,900
8	Colorado 1*	5.2	3,900
9	Massachusetts 5	5.3	4,500
10	Massachusetts 7	5.3	7,100

TEN HIGHEST-DISCONNECTION DISTRICTS			
District		Youth Disconnection (%)	Youth Disconnection (#)
427	New York 8	17.5	14,100
428	Nevada 4	17.7	16,600
429	Texas 29	18.0	18,900
430	Texas 34	18.0	22,700
431	Louisiana 5	18.3	17,600
432	California 13	18.3	19,500
433	Louisiana 4	18.4	17,500
434	Alabama 2	18.6	15,400
435	New York 15	19.1	17,200
436	Kentucky 5	21.1	16,400

*The youth disconnection rates for these congressional districts have slightly higher margins of error than other districts due to the Census Bureau's sampling design as well as these areas' relatively small disconnected youth populations.

Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022, 118th Congress.

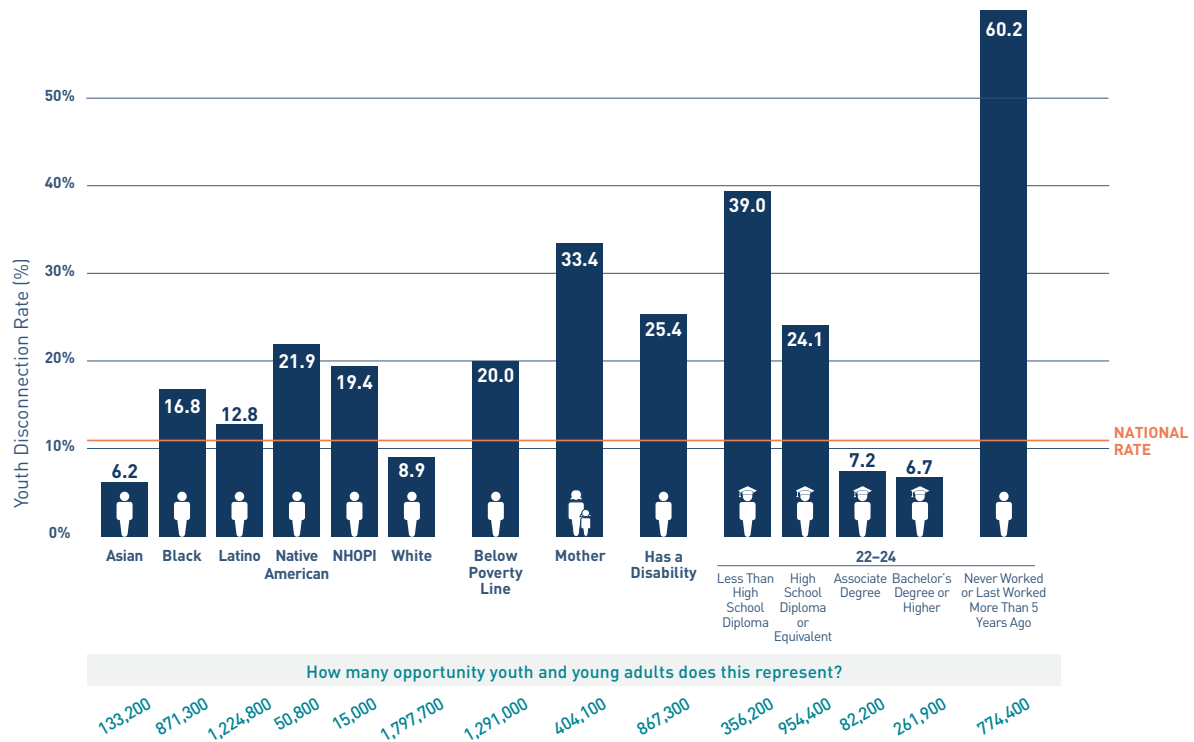
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



The purpose of calculating youth disconnection rates is to shine a light on which communities and groups of young people face the greatest obstacles to well-being and opportunity and to provide a yardstick for measuring improvements. It is our hope that understanding the nature and extent of youth disconnection across the country will inform the work of policymakers, philanthropic organizations, service-delivery organizations, school districts, community colleges, and other institutions and individuals whose priorities and decisions shape young people's choices and opportunities. Thus, as always, we encourage these actors to use the data in this report to **direct resources to demographic groups and places with the highest youth disconnection rates**.

Nationally, Native American, NHOPI, and Black young people have the highest disconnection rates, a situation largely unchanged for the last decade. Taking gender into account highlights the particular challenges faced by NHOPI girls and young women and Black boys and young men. Disaggregating the data by gender and by race and ethnicity is particularly important for designing programs at the state and metro area level. For instance, in Nevada, Illinois, Michigan, Louisiana, Washington, Wisconsin, Mississippi, Kentucky, and South Carolina, Black young people register much higher disconnection rates than both the white young people in those states and the national Black disconnection rate. Latino young people face disproportionate challenges in Louisiana, Arkansas, South Carolina, Connecticut, and New Mexico, as do girls and young women in Alaska, Arkansas, and West Virginia.

FIGURE 15 WHO IS DISCONNECTED?



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2022.

Understanding the specific characteristics of different groups of opportunity youth is a critical first step to helping them reconnect. For instance, at the national level, one in five young people in poverty, one in four young people with at least one disability, and one in three young mothers (and 45.5 percent of young mothers living in poverty) are disconnected. Creating programs designed to address different barriers to connection—such as enough money to cover transportation costs to a training program, accommodations that allow teens to thrive in high school, or safe, reliable childcare that allows young parents to work—is key. Creating strategies to find and support the three-quarters of a million older opportunity youth (age 22–24) who are not in school and have essentially never worked is a challenging task that we must embrace.

Preventing disconnection, though not always easy, is nonetheless easier than reconnecting young people who have already lost their links to school. The following are important to prepare small children for success in school, improve their experience and attachment once they are there, identify children who are at risk as early as middle school, and support high schoolers to reach the finish line of graduation:

- high-quality childcare and preschool for families living in poverty—being ready for school lays the groundwork for early school successes, which build skills and confidence and thus lead to greater success;
- improvements in quality and equity in K–12 education;
- early-warning systems that funnel support to middle schoolers who repeat a grade, fail core math and reading classes, or are frequently absent, which are all risk factors for high school dropout;
- more guidance counselors and others to assist in the transitions from middle to high school and high school to postsecondary pathways;
- wraparound services and one-stop service delivery for vulnerable youth;
- school environments that create a sense of belonging;
- more accessible and robust apprenticeship and career and technical education programs; and
- diversion programs that offer young people an alternative to incarceration and thus do not interrupt or end their educations.

While a high school degree is essential to succeeding in today's economy, graduation must be understood as a necessary but not sufficient step toward a thriving adulthood. Roughly one in four American young adults in the 22–24-year age range with a high school diploma (24.1 percent) are neither working nor in school, compared to 7.2 percent of their agetmates with an associate degree and 6.7 percent of those with at least a bachelor's degree.

Also critical is ensuring that jobs programs prepare young people not just for “in-demand” jobs but for good in-demand jobs—jobs with good wages, benefits, workplace protections, and career potential.⁹ Various industries report labor shortages; sometimes these shortages stem from a lack of workers with the requisite skills. Much can be done through partnerships between high schools, community colleges, service providers, and the private sector to ensure that young people graduate high school and postsecondary programs with the skills that employers need and are willing to reward with living wages and safe working conditions. But sometimes businesses can’t find or keep workers because the jobs they offer are untenable—they may not offer enough hours or pay high enough wages for a young person to support themselves; schedules may vary week by week in ways that make life impossible for caregivers; working conditions might be dangerous or dehumanizing; the jobs might be dead ends. Jobs programs that focus on what young people need for a flourishing life rather than just on what businesses want for their bottom line reflect the country’s shared national values of fairness and opportunity for all.

REFERENCES



METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

Who Are Considered “Disconnected Youth”?

Youth disconnection rates in this report are calculated by Measure of America using employment and enrollment data from the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) of the US Census Bureau. Disconnected youth, also referred to as opportunity youth, are teenagers and young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither in school nor working. Young people in this age range who are working or in school part-time or who are in the military are not considered disconnected. Youth who are actively looking for work are considered disconnected.

Several data sources exist that can be used for calculating youth disconnection. As a result, researchers working with different datasets—or using different definitions of what constitutes disconnection—can arrive at different numbers for this indicator. A good summary of these various definitions can be found at a piece we wrote for the Huffington Post in September 2016 [here](#).

Measure of America uses the Census Bureau’s ACS for four reasons: (1) it is reliable and updated annually; (2) it allows for calculations by state and metro area as well as by more granular census-defined neighborhood clusters within metro areas; (3) it includes young people who are in group quarters, such as juvenile or adult correctional facilities, supervised medical facilities, and college dorms; and (4) it counts students on summer break as being enrolled in school.

Methods

In this report the disconnected youth rates and numbers at the national, regional, state, congressional district, and metro area levels use 2022 data. Time series data are one-year estimates from the relevant year.

The ACS is an annual survey conducted by the Census Bureau that samples a subset of the overall population. As with any data drawn from surveys,

there is some degree of sampling and nonsampling error inherent in the data. Thus, comparisons between similar values on any indicator should be made with caution since these differences may not be statistically significant.

In order to arrive at the percentage of disconnected youth, the total number of disconnected young people and the total number of young people overall are calculated for each geographic area from the ACS Public Use Microdata Sample. Not in school means that a young person has not attended any educational institution and has also not been home schooled at any time in the three months prior to the survey date. Not working means that a young person is either unemployed or not in the labor force at the time they responded to the survey. Disconnected youth (opportunity youth) are young people who are simultaneously not in school and not working. This population cannot be estimated by simply adding the number of young people not enrolled in school to the number of young people not working because many students in this age range do not work and many young workers are not in school.

Calculating Metro Area Youth Disconnection and Identifying the Largest Metro Areas

The top 100 largest MSAs are determined using 2022 population data.

The employment and enrollment data needed to calculate youth disconnection for metro areas are not available directly by metro area from the ACS. Metro areas were custom built by Measure of America from the Census Bureau’s Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) that make up metro areas, aligned with the IPUMS/University of Minnesota methodology for metro area:PUMA correspondence. PUMAs are only included within metro areas if a majority of their population also falls in that metro area.

This methodological change will slightly affect

comparisons to past Measure of America report years. Measure of America recalculated its prior data using this new methodology in order to ensure consistent comparisons and change-over-time analysis for this report. Differences in youth disconnection rates caused by the methodology shift for the same year and metro area were generally on the order of a few tenths of a percentage point and occur more frequently for smaller metro areas. If you are interested in change-over-time analysis for your city, please reach out for more information.

Due to changes in the definitions of metro areas by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB), findings from this report for specific metro areas are not directly comparable to findings from Measure of America's first three reports on youth disconnection: *One in Seven: Ranking Youth Disconnection in the 25 Largest Metro Areas*; *Halve the Gap by 2030: Youth Disconnection in America's Cities*; and *Zeroing In on Place and Race: Youth Disconnection in America's Cities*. They are comparable to the previous seven reports: *Promising Gains, Persistent Gaps: Youth Disconnection in America*; *More Than a Million Reasons for Hope: Youth Disconnection in America Today*; *Making the Connection: Transportation and Youth Disconnection*; *A Decade Undone: Youth Disconnection in the Age of Coronavirus*; *A Decade Undone: 2021 Update*; *A Disrupted Year: How the Arrival of Covid-19 Affected Youth Disconnection*; and *Ensuring an Equitable Recovery: Addressing Covid-19's Impact on Education*.

DEFINITIONS

Disability – Disability status in this report refers to any enduring emotional, physical, or mental condition that makes everyday activities like walking, dressing, or remembering things difficult and restricts an individuals’ ability to work or to perform basic required tasks without assistance. Disability status is reported by whoever answers the Census survey for their household; this respondent indicates disability status for themselves and all other members of their household.

Group Quarters – The US Census Bureau refers to people who live in any kind of non-household living arrangement as living in “group quarters.” These can be institutional group quarters such as correctional or supervised medical facilities or non-institutional group quarters such as college or university dormitories, military bases, or group homes. One of the primary advantages of using the ACS as the data source for this research is that the survey includes young people living in group quarters.

Metro Area – Metro areas used in this report are formally known as Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), geographic areas defined by the OMB and used by the US Census Bureau and other government entities. MSAs constitute counties grouped around an urban center and include outlying suburban and exurban counties from which a substantial percentage of the population commutes to the urban center for work.

PUMA – [Public Use Microdata Areas](#), or PUMAs, are the smallest geographic unit of the Public Use Microdata Sample. They are defined by the US Census Bureau, are built out of census tracts and counties, and have populations of at least 100,000 people.

Racial and Ethnic Groups – Racial and ethnic groups in this report are based on definitions established by the OMB and used by the Census Bureau and other government entities. Since 1997, this office has recognized five racial groups and two ethnic categories. The racial groups include Asian, Black,

Native American, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI), and white. The ethnic categories are Latino and not Latino. People of Latino ethnicity may be of any race. In this report, members of each of these racial groups include only non-Latino members of these groups. All references to Asian, Black, Native American, NHOPI, and white young people include only those who are non-Latino. Due to the very small population sizes of some of the racial and ethnic groups in some states and metropolitan areas, we cannot always present reliable single-year estimates of youth disconnection for these groups. These are denoted in the report’s tables.

In recognition of the fact that these racial groups are not monolithic, this report includes youth disconnection rates for Asian and Latino subgroups for which opportunity youth data are reliable. The selection of these groups is based on national population estimates from the 2022 one-year ACS.

Two notes about how Latinos are measured in this analysis: first, Measure of America slightly deviates from the broad federal definition of Latino/Hispanic: people from Spain or Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America. Measure of America classifies individuals that mark their race/ethnicity as being from Spain and also being white as white, not Latino. Second, the Census slightly changed how they counted people who are Latino for their 2020 data products and afterwards. [It is estimated](#) that slightly more people are classified as Latino after the change, appearing to be 1 percent of Latinos or fewer.

Region – In the discussion of regional differences in disconnected youth rates, we use the four regions and nine divisions of the United States as defined by the [US Census Bureau](#).

Unreliable – Estimates with a coefficient of variance of greater than 0.25 are considered unreliable and are omitted from the report. Estimates between 0.2 and 0.25 are flagged as less reliable.

ENDNOTES

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