

# BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES IN NEW JERSEY

## DATA PREVIEW

MEASURE OF AMERICA & NEW JERSEY OPPORTUNITY YOUTH COALITION



# WHO ARE NEW JERSEY'S DISCONNECTED YOUNG PEOPLE?

**104,400**

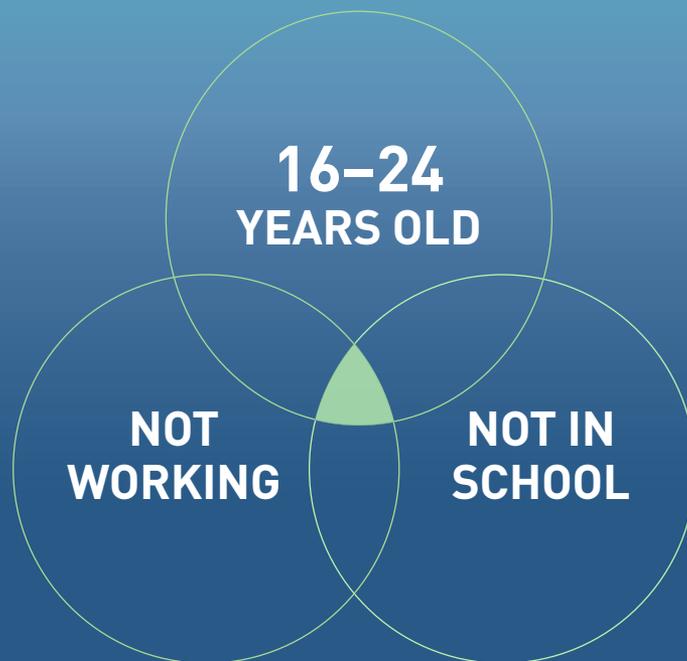
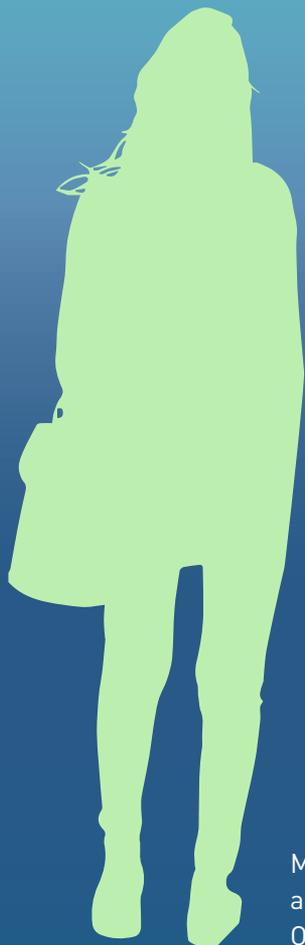
DISCONNECTED YOUTH

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

OUT OF 1,050,900 NEW JERSEY YOUNG PEOPLE

**9.9%**

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.

## Building Brighter Futures in New Jersey

Disconnected youth, also referred to as opportunity youth, are young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor in school. A community's youth disconnection rate is a strong indicator of its resources and a telling gauge of its residents' well-being and access to opportunity.

In 2024, the national youth disconnection rate was 10.7 percent; this rate was calculated using the most recent American Community Survey data from the U.S. Census Bureau, which was released this January. This rate is slightly higher than the 2023 rate of 10.6 percent and tied with the pre-COVID-19 rate in 2019 (10.7 percent). This rate represents 4,336,100 disconnected teens and young adults across the United States.

Of these young people who are out of school and out of work, **104,400 call New Jersey home.** The youth disconnection rate in New Jersey rose slightly from 2023 to 2024—from 9.4 percent to 9.9 percent—representing 9,400 additional young people not connected to opportunity.

These statewide figures mask wide variation by county and by demographic group. Boys and young men in New Jersey are more likely to be disconnected than girls and young women, echoing the pattern seen across the United States: 11.7 percent of young men across the state are disconnected, compared to 8.1 percent of young women. **These gender gaps, while significant, pale in comparison to the gaps between racial and ethnic groups and between counties in the state.**

Every young person deserves multiple chances to find their footing as they transition to adulthood; those with greater resources and wealth are afforded many opportunities to try, fail, and try again. Children who grow up in neighborhoods with few jobs and poor transit infrastructure and whose families have limited resources, less education, and fewer connections face greater barriers both to completing high school and to moving from high school to career and technical education, college, and careers. These disproportionate challenges are reflected in the gaps between demographic groups and places in New Jersey.

Black young people in New Jersey are the most likely of the state's major racial and ethnic groups to be neither working nor in school; 16.3 percent are disconnected, compared with 12.3 percent of Latino youth, 9.5 percent of young people who identify as two or more races or another race, 7.6 percent of white young people, and 5.5 percent of Asian youth.

### YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

Race / Ethnicity	Disconnected Youth (#)	Disconnected Youth (%)
<b>All New Jersey</b>	<b>104,400</b>	<b>9.9%</b>
Asian	5,600	5.5%
Black	21,700	16.3%
Latino	37,400	12.3%
White	34,700	7.6%
Two or more or other	5,000	9.5%

Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2024.

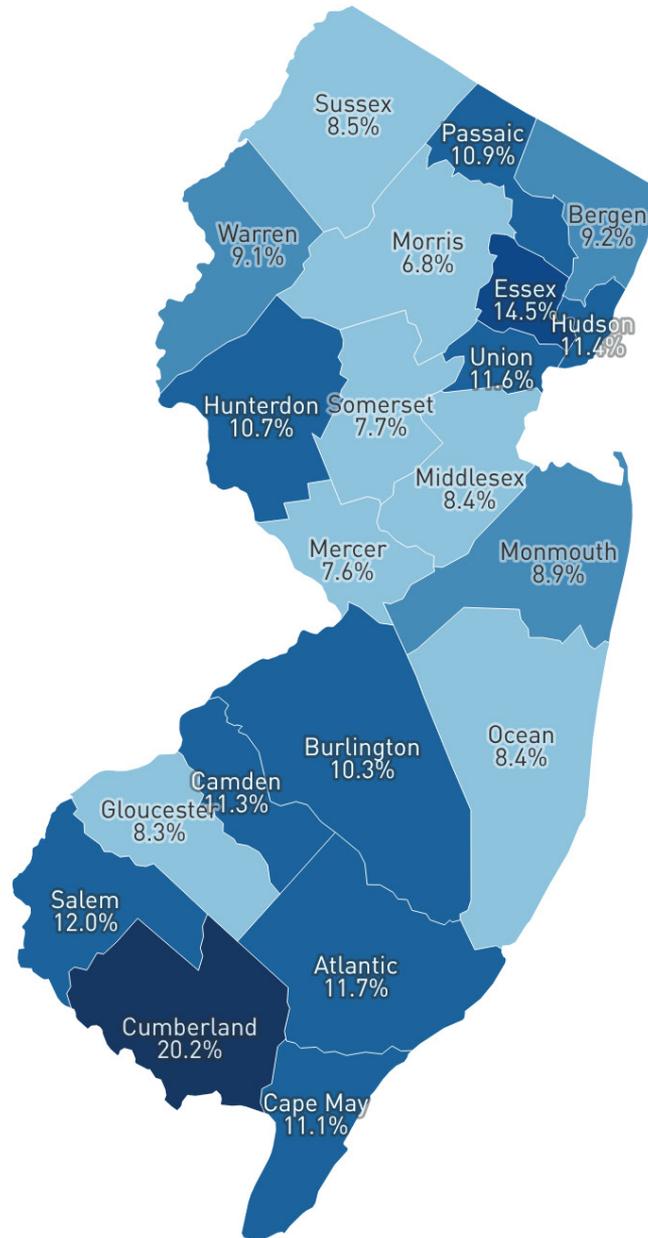
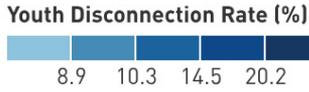
Young people’s connection to work and school varies dramatically across New Jersey, from Cumberland County, where one in five young people is not in school and not working (20.2 percent) to Morris County, where only 6.8 percent of young people are disconnected from work and school. Whereas Cumberland County has the highest youth disconnection rate by a large margin, Essex County, which has a much larger population, has the largest number of disconnected young people, 14,400.

**YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY COUNTY TABLE**

	County	Disconnected Youth (Rate) ▼	Disconnected Youth (Count)
1	Cumberland	20.2%	3,300
2	Essex	14.5%	14,400
3	Salem	12.0%	900
4	Atlantic	11.7%	3,700
5	Union	11.6%	7,300
6	Hudson	11.4%	7,700
7	Camden	11.3%	6,300
8	Cape May	11.1%	900
9	Passaic	10.9%	6,800
10	Hunterdon	10.7%	1,500
11	Burlington	10.3%	5,000
12	Bergen	9.2%	9,200
13	Warren	9.1%	1,100
14	Monmouth	8.9%	6,300
15	Sussex	8.5%	1,200
16	Middlesex	8.4%	8,700
17	Ocean	8.4%	5,300
18	Gloucester	8.3%	3,100
19	Somerset	7.7%	2,900
20	Mercer	7.6%	3,800
21	Morris	6.8%	3,800

Source: Custom Tabulations from US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019–2023.

### YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY COUNTY MAP



Source: Custom Tabulations from US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2019–2023.

**All of New Jersey stands to gain a great deal from addressing youth disconnection**—first and foremost, increased opportunity, better health, and greater well-being for more of its young people. In addition, reducing the youth disconnection rate would dramatically boost the region’s economy. Using data from the gold-standard longitudinal study that has run since 1968, the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, Measure of America determined that by the time young people reach their 30s, those who worked or were in school throughout their teens and early 20s earn \$41,200 more per year (in inflation-adjusted 2024 dollars) 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.<sup>1</sup>

Early successes, caring mentors, well-resourced institutions, and lucky breaks can set a young person on the path to a flourishing adulthood; closed doors, adverse events, underinvestment, and limited connections can block off a host of rewarding and joyful paths, leading to a future of limited horizons and unrealized potential. It’s in everyone’s interest to ensure that all of New Jersey’s young people have the opportunity not just to survive but to thrive.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Kristen Lewis and Rebecca Gluskin, Two Futures: The Economic Case for Keeping Youth on Track, Measure of America, October 9, 2018, <https://measureofamerica.org/psid/>.

## ABOUT THE TEAMS

### MEASURE OF AMERICA

Measure of America, a program of the nonpartisan Social Science Research Council, creates easy-to-use, methodologically sound tools for understanding well-being, inequality, and access to opportunity in America.

Since our founding in 2006, Measure of America has produced over 60 clear, accessible reports and interactive online mapping and data visualization tools based on our original research. Our work has touched every US state, county, city, and congressional district and guided hundreds of millions of dollars of federal, state, local, and philanthropic investments.

For more information, visit:  
<https://measureofamerica.org/>

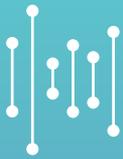
### NEW JERSEY OPPORTUNITY YOUTH COALITION

After decades of advocacy and providing services to opportunity youth, youth-serving community-based organizations throughout the state formalized their efforts by jointly founding the NJ OY Coalition. Newark Opportunity Youth Network (NOYN) now serves as the backbone of the Coalition and works to convene all member organizations and partners.

Since the time of the NJ OY Coalition's formal assembly, the Coalition has supported the passage and signing of both its targeted bills - the Disconnection Prevention Bill (S3080) and the NJ YouthBuild Act (S3781) - into law.

The Coalition remains committed not only to advocating in support of new legislation, but also to ensuring the Disconnection Prevention Bill and the NJ YouthBuild Act are implemented swiftly, and with fidelity.

For more information, visit:  
<https://www.njoyc.org/>



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