

## PROMISING GAINS, PERSISTENT GAPS YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN AMERICA

Measure of America's 2017 report on youth disconnection, *Promising Gains, Persistent Gaps: Youth Disconnection in America*, builds on three earlier research and advocacy reports on this topic. The report provides new data and analysis on disconnection rates and counts nationally, by state, race/ethnicity, metro area, and for rural, suburban, and urban counties. It ranks ninety-eight of the nation's one hundred most populous metropolitan areas—and racial and ethnic groups within those areas—in terms of the percentage of young people ages 16 to 24 who are neither working nor in school. This note describes the methods and definitions used to calculate these youth disconnection rates as well as other indicators presented in *Promising Gains, Persistent Gaps*.

### Who Is Considered a “Disconnected Youth”?

Youth disconnection rates in this report are calculated by Measure of America using employment and enrollment data from the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) of the US Census Bureau. Disconnected youth are people 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 official data sources exist that can be used for calculating youth disconnection. As a result, researchers working with different data sets, or different definitions of what constitutes disconnection, may arrive at different numbers for this indicator. A good summary of these various definitions can be found on a Huffington Post blog piece from October of 2016 [here](#).

Measure of America uses the ACS as its source for calculating youth disconnection data for four main reasons: (1) the ACS is reliable and updated annually; (2) it allows for calculations by state and metro area as well as by race and ethnicity, gender, and more granular census-defined neighborhood clusters within these geographic 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

Disconnected youth rates and numbers in *Promising Gains, Persistent Gaps* are Measure of America calculations from the US Census Bureau's annual American Community Survey. State, congressional district, and metro area data are from 2015. Time series data are one-year estimates from the relevant year. County data are from 2010–2014.

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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 one place or group and another on any indicator should be made with caution since these differences may not be statistically significant.

In order to arrive at the youth disconnection rate, the total number of disconnected young people and the total number of young people overall are calculated for each metro 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 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**

Due to changes over time by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in the definitions of metro areas, findings from this report for specific metro areas are not directly comparable to findings from Measure of America's three earlier reports on youth disconnection: [Zeroing In on Place and Race: Youth Disconnection in America's Cities](#), [Halve the Gap by 2030: Youth Disconnection in America's Cities](#), and [One in Seven: Ranking Youth Disconnection in the 25 Largest Metro Areas](#).

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 built up by Measure of America from the Census Bureau's Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) that make up metro areas. In cases where a PUMA falls partially within two or more metro areas, it is included in the metro area where it has the largest population. If a PUMA falls partly in and partly outside a metro area, it is included in the metro area.

The US Census Bureau FactFinder online tool provides a list of Metro Statistical Areas (MSAs) by population size. The population estimates used in this report are from the FactFinder of July 1, 2015—in order to match the 2015 data in the report. The top one hundred MSAs include Madison, Wisconsin, and Durham–Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Because the standard errors of the youth disconnection estimates for these two metro areas were too large to provide reliable estimates, however, these two MSAs cannot be included in this report.

## Congressional District Youth Disconnection

The employment and enrollment data necessary for calculating youth disconnection for US congressional districts are not available directly by congressional district from the ACS. In order to calculate youth disconnection by district, congressional districts were first built up by Measure of America from the US Census Bureau's Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs). PUMAs were allocated to 114th Congressional District boundaries using the Missouri Census Data Center's MABLE/Geocorr14 application. For PUMAs that fall into more than one congressional district, disconnected youth were assigned proportionally to the share of the PUMA's 2010 Census population in each congressional district.

## Residential Segregation and Disconnected Youth

In order to examine the important relationship between residential segregation by race, ethnicity, and income and youth disconnection, youth disconnection rates were overlaid on a map containing data on segregation obtained from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD has defined Racially/Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty (R/ECAPs) as census tracts with a (non-Latino) white population of less than 50 percent, and where either 40 percent or more of individuals are living at or below the poverty line or where the poverty rate is three or more times the average for the metropolitan area. These classifications are based on data from the 2010 decennial census and the 2010 five-year ACS. In order to understand the relationship between both areas of high poverty and high wealth, on the one hand, and youth disconnection on the other, as well as proportion of white residents, we created a measure to represent the converse of the R/ECAPS—white concentrated areas of wealth, which we call Anti-R/ECAPS. Using data from the 2010 five-year ACS, we have identified census tracts where the white population is greater than 50 percent, and where 40 percent or more of households have an income of \$200,000 or more. We have created an interactive tool on the relationship between youth disconnection and both the R/ECAPs and Anti-R/ECAPS for the New York City and Los Angeles metro areas [here](#). These maps help to visualize the relationship between residential segregation and disconnected youth but they are not a substitute for rigorous investigation. This report uses the maps as an introductory illustration but does not provide further analysis.

## The Urban and Rural Divide

There are multiple definitions used by different federal agencies of urban and rural areas in the United States. For the purposes of this report, Measure of America chose to use the taxonomy developed by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Their schema places each of the 3,154 counties in the US into one of six categories: large central metro, large fringe metro, medium metro, small metro, micropolitan, and non-core. Further details on this classification are [here](#). For ease of communication, these six categories have been renamed to commonly used terms: urban centers, suburbs, medium-sized cities, small cities, towns, and completely rural areas. The table below contains the definitions used by NCHS in classifying counties.

<b>TYPE OF COUNTY</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
<b>URBAN CENTERS</b> (large central metro)	Counties within metro areas with populations 1,000,000 or more
<b>SUBURBS</b> (large fringe metro)	Counties within metro areas with populations 1,000,000 or more that are not urban centers
<b>MEDIUM-SIZED CITIES</b> (medium metro countries)	Counties within metro areas with populations between 250,000 and 999,999
<b>SMALL CITIES</b> (small metro)	Counties within metro areas with populations between 50,000 and 249,999
<b>TOWNS</b> (micropolitan)	Counties containing cities with populations between 10,000 and 49,999
<b>COMPLETELY RURAL AREAS</b> (non-core)	Counties with no cities larger than 10,000

Based on the most recent NCHS county categorizations (2013), each US county was assigned to a category following the above schema. Using county-level estimates from the 2010–2014 ACS prepared for MOA by the Census Bureau, we calculated an average disconnected youth rate for each of the six county classifications. All differences noted in the report are significant at the .000 level using a two-tailed t-test. In the discussion of regional differences in rural and urban disconnected youth rates, we use the four regions of the United States (Midwest, Northeast, South, and West) as defined by the US Census Bureau.

### **Race, Poverty, and Disconnected Youth**

The discussion about the impact of poverty and race on disconnected youth contained in the report is based on a mixed-effects logistic regression model. Given a young person’s race, the model predicts the likelihood of their being disconnected at their given income level. The dependent variable in this model is the disconnected youth dummy variable. The independent variables include the income level of the individual as a percentage of the Federal Poverty Level and dummy variables for race using white youth as a base for comparison. Six dummy variables were included for the following groups: Asian, Black, Latino, Native American, and multiracial youth, and one encompassing other racial groups. The income variable is reported between 0 percent and 500 percent of the Federal Poverty Level with all incomes above the upper limit, which is top-coded at 500 percent.

The regression results suggest that youth disconnection rates fall as income levels rise regardless of the race of the individual, but at a given income level, black and Native American youth have a higher likelihood of youth disconnection than do white youth. Latino youth fall in between black and white youth while Asian youth have the lowest likelihood of youth disconnection at any given income level.

## 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 individual's ability to work or to perform basic required tasks without assistance. This is self-reported; individuals who report having such a condition in the ACS are counted as having a disability. Those who do not are counted as not having a disability.

**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 noninstitutional 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 counts young people living in both types of 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.

**Racial and Ethnic Groups** – Racial and ethnic groups in this report are based on definitions established by the OMB and used by the US Census Bureau and other government entities. Since 1997, the OMB has recognized five racial groups and two ethnic categories. The racial groups include African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, and whites. 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 Asians, blacks, Native Americans, and whites include only those who are non-Latino.

Native Americans and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders constitute two of the five racial groups recognized by the OMB. Due to the very small population sizes of these groups in most states and metropolitan areas, however, and the even-smaller population of those ages 16 to 24, we cannot always present reliable estimates of youth disconnection for these groups. In addition, for this same reason, we are unable to present estimates for some of the four major racial ethnic groups for some metro areas. These are denoted in the report's tables.

In recognition of the fact that these racial groups are not monolithic, for the first time, this report includes youth disconnection rates for the nine largest Asian subgroups in the United States. The selection of the top ten groups is based on national population estimates from the 2015 one-year ACS. The top ten Asian subgroups includes Cambodians, but because the standard error of the youth disconnection estimate for this group was too large to provide reliable estimates, this group is not included in the report.

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