

ENSURING AN EQUITABLE RECOVERY

ADDRESSING COVID-19'S IMPACT ON EDUCATION

Kristen Lewis

THE MEASURE OF AMERICA
YOUTH DISCONNECTION SERIES

2023



SSRC

To all our readers,

Measure of America first set out to formalize study of youth disconnection in 2012 without a funding source. Since then, our publications have been referenced and used by national, state, and local government entities, service providers, philanthropies, the media, and young adults themselves to measure and ameliorate youth disconnection in the United States. Across these 12 years and 11 reports, **only three of our annual reports on youth disconnection have been funded**—by the Schultz Family Foundation, Gap Inc., and Opportunity Nation—support for which we are very thankful. However, the intermittent nature of this funding threatens our ability to continue doing this work at the level that the importance of the issue demands. Measure of America, a nonpartisan nonprofit project of the century-old think tank the Social Science Research Council, is entirely project-funded and this year's report, typically released by April each year, has been pushed back to October as our funded work has taken precedence. It is difficult to overstate how much we would welcome sustained support for this work, which would enable us to deepen and prioritize the opportunity youth-focused research, analysis, and data tool development that so many diverse individuals and organizations across the country have come to depend on to target, tailor, and track their efforts. Partnership with a single funder would make a huge difference in our ability to continue working on this critical issue, and if a few foundations—especially those whose grantees rely on this work—were to join forces, relatively modest investments from each would put our opportunity youth program on stable, sustainable financial footing. **We welcome conversations with interested parties.**

Sincerely,

The Measure of America Team

Acknowledgments

Sincere thanks to our Social Science Research Council colleagues Anna Harvey, Fredrik Palm, Brandi Lewis, Christina Alli, Lisa Yanoti, Stephanie Mondestin-Duncan, Calvin Chen, Eugene Pak, and Zachary Zinn for their support of Measure of America's vision and programming.

We would be lost without Clare McGranahan and are beyond thankful for her thoughtful editorial contributions. We are also exceedingly grateful to Bob Land for his painstaking, eagle-eyed proofreading.

As always, I am 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.

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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.

HUMANTIFIC is an internationally recognized SenseMaking for ChangeMaking firm located in New York and Madrid. Humantific has pioneered the integration of visual sensemaking into multi-disciplinary innovation. Humantific helps multi-disciplinary teams and organizations innovate and build inclusive innovation cultures. Their focus is operationalizing cross-disciplinary innovation, making it understandable, teachable and real. Their hybrid approach integrates the best of human-centered design, strategic problem solving, and information visualization.

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ENSURING AN EQUITABLE RECOVERY

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WHO ARE AMERICA'S DISCONNECTED YOUNG PEOPLE?

38,823,100

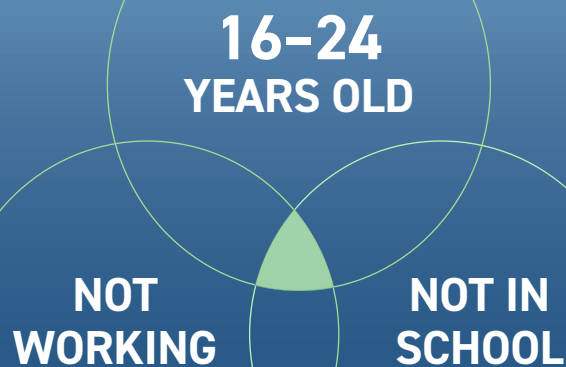
UNITED STATES YOUTH POPULATION
(Teens & Young Adults 16-24 Years Old)

4,680,900

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

12.1%

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

The youth disconnection rate—the share of young people ages 16–24 who are neither working nor in school—is a strong indicator of a community’s resources and a telling gauge of its residents’ access to opportunity. Of the roughly 39 million young people in the United States who fall within that age bracket, some 4.7 million meet this definition of disconnected—12.1 percent of American youth.

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 one’s strengths and preferences, and the ability to handle stressful events and regulate one’s emotions, to name just a few.

At school and on the job, connected young people come into contact with adults who help them imagine their futures, get their minds around the many different routes to rewarding and well-paid careers, set short- and long-term goals, and lay the groundwork to realize them. Out-of-school, out-of-work youth, who are disproportionately Native American, Black, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI), and Latino and tend to live in low-income communities, also have dreams and aspirations but have far less support to make them a reality. Unlike their more affluent peers, who walk along clearly marked pathways accompanied by knowledgeable guides to help them navigate the transition to adulthood, these young people often struggle to see a way forward.

Disconnected 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, a term coined by the White House Council for Community Solutions.¹ Internationally, the most commonly used term to describe this population is “NEETs,” an acronym that stands for “not in employment, education, or training.”

Covid-19’s harmful and potentially persistent effects on young people cannot be underestimated. The pandemic not only robbed young people of important milestones, experiences, and opportunities, it also reversed nearly a decade of progress in reducing youth disconnection. Though Covid-19 affected everyone, its burden fell disproportionately on low-income communities of color, which are also disproportionately home to the highest rates of youth disconnection. And there are reasons to be concerned about the future: recent research suggests that Covid-19 could continue to fuel youth disconnection in years to come. Nationwide testing data reveal a disturbing pattern: low-income, Black, and Latino students disproportionately remain behind where they would have been were it not for the pandemic. Middle school students have struggled the most,² which is particularly worrisome given that

Disconnected youth are young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor in school.

difficulties with core academic classes during middle school constitute a risk factor for dropping out of high school.

Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows that 9-year-olds' test scores declined 5 points in reading and 9 points in math, the largest drop in three decades; that students who were already struggling saw the greatest declines; and that the Black-white test score gap grew from 25 points in 2020 to 33 points in 2022.³ Without a strong foundation in reading by age 9, subsequent years become increasingly difficult as classroom instruction shifts from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." The most recent NAEP, administered October to December of the 2022–23 school year, found that, compared to the 2019–20 school year, the average scores for 13-year-olds declined 4 points in reading and 9 points in mathematics; compared to 10 years ago, the average scores declined 7 points in reading and 14 points in mathematics.⁴ Students who performed most poorly on these tests also exhibited the greatest learning loss.

The school district children attend also made a difference in terms of Covid-19 learning loss. Research by the [Education Recovery Scorecard](#) project showed that by 2022, the typical student in the country's poorest school districts had lost three-quarters of a year in math learning, twice the decline seen in the richest districts, and also lost more ground in reading than their more affluent peers; these sharp losses worsened the wide and long-standing gap in outcomes between rich and poor districts and, if not successfully addressed, may result in higher rates of high school dropout, fewer students transitioning from high school to postsecondary education, and fewer entry-level workers with the skills needed for many jobs in the coming years. (You can find your school district [here](#).) The true impact of the pandemic on youth disconnection may lie latent and fully emerge in the years to come, unless we take steps to ward it off ahead of time.

Increasing numbers of young people who are neither working nor in school means more adults whose long-term well-being and economic security are at risk. Using data from a large longitudinal study that has run for more than 50 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.⁵ Research shows that youth disconnection is associated with lower levels of educational attainment, higher rates of substance use, worse health, less stable relationships, and more criminal activity. For young people who are already parents, the chances that their children will grow up in poverty increase with disconnection.⁶

Increasing numbers of young people who are neither working nor in school means more adults whose long-term well-being and economic security are at risk.

How Covid-19 Affected Data Collection in 2020 and 2021

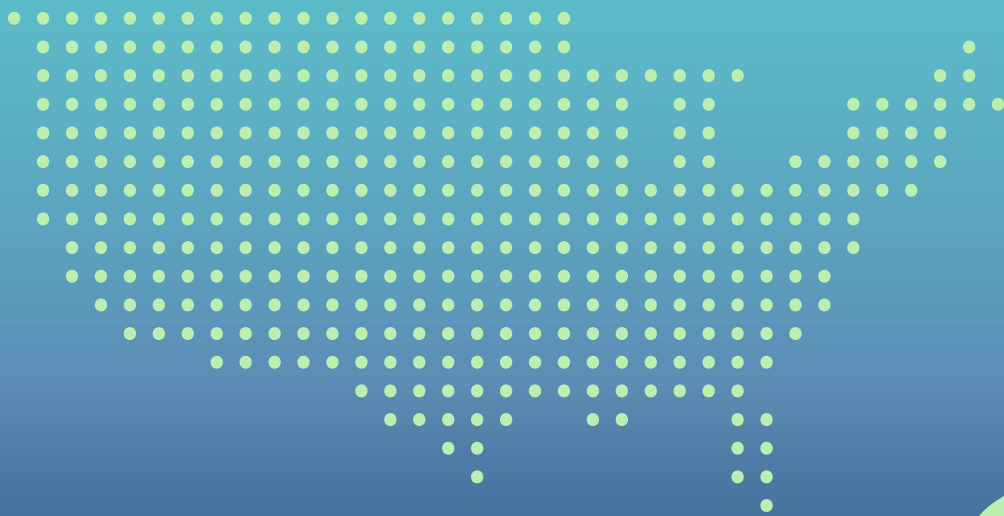
The 2020 onset of the Covid-19 pandemic severely disrupted the federal statistical collection and curation processes for the American Community Survey, the source of data for Measure of America's youth disconnection calculations. These disruptions resulted in lower American Community Survey response rates not only from the very groups most likely to be out of school and work, such as low-income, Black, and Latino households, but also during the initial months of the pandemic, a period when the economy shed literally millions of jobs, sending the youth disconnection rate through the roof.⁷

Although the Census Bureau took several steps to shore up the 2020 survey data by cross-referencing additional government data sources, the Bureau nonetheless released these data with a host of caveats and urged users to exercise caution when making comparisons to previous years' data. We used this data in last year's report, [A Disrupted Year: How the Arrival of Covid-19 Affected Youth Disconnection](#), flagging the Bureau cautions and noting that our 2020 calculations were likely underestimates of the true extent of Covid-19's impact on young people's participation in school and work.

Fortunately, the Census Bureau was able to adapt its data collection processes to address the continuing reality of Covid-19 by the time it administered the 2021 American Community Survey. The Bureau released the 2021 ACS data, upon which this report is based, without cautions or caveats. Typically in our reports, we compare current rates with those of previous years. **For this report, other than for the national rate, we will largely set the less certain 2020 figures to the side, making comparisons instead between pre-pandemic 2019 rates and post-Covid-onset 2021 rates.** Doing so allows us to see the continuing effect of Covid-19 in the year following the pandemic onset.



YOUTH DISCONNECTION NATIONALLY

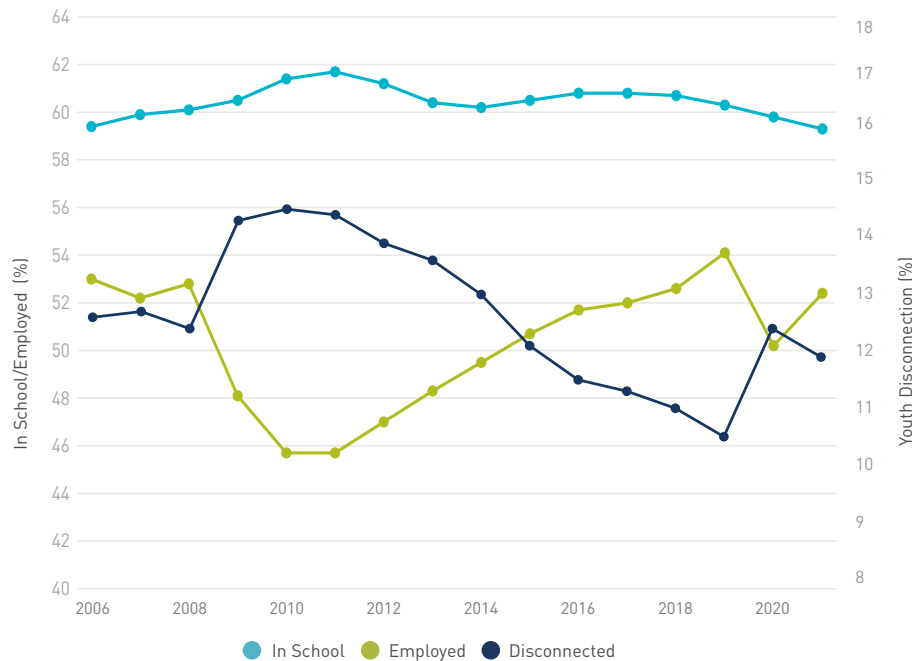


CHARACTERISTICS OF
DISCONNECTED YOUTH

YOUTH DISCONNECTION
BY GENDER AND BY RACE
AND ETHNICITY

The 2021 youth disconnection rate for the country as a whole is **12.1 percent, or 4,690,900 young people**. The 2021 figure is an improvement on the 2020 rate, 12.6 percent, but still falls far short of the pre-pandemic 2019 rate of 10.7 percent. Between 2010 and 2019, the youth disconnection rate fell 27 percent, driven largely by the steady increase in youth employment in the years following the Great Recession. On the eve of the Covid-19 pandemic, the youth disconnection rate was lower than it had been in over a decade. But between 2019 and 2021, the rate increased 13.1 percent. This increase is similar in magnitude to the spike in disconnection during the Great Recession, when disconnection increased 15.2 percent from 2008 to 2009.

FIGURE 1 CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT AND EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH AGES 16-24, 2006-2021

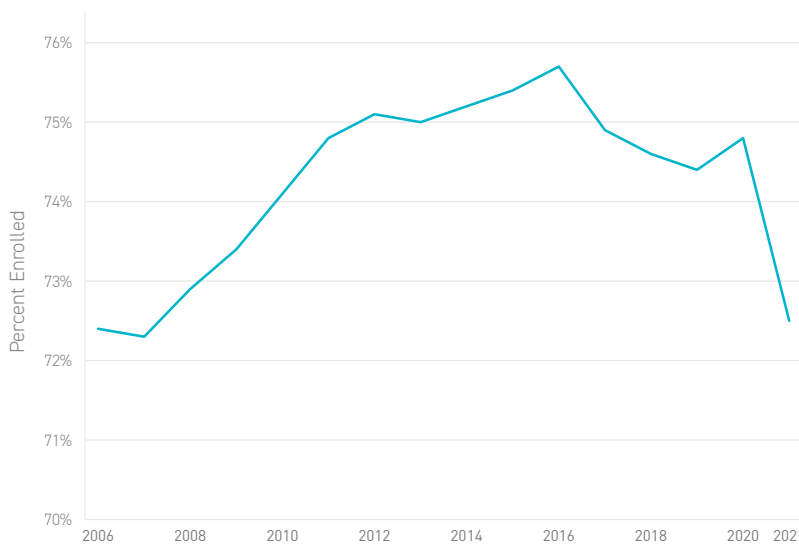


Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2006-2021.

These disconnection spikes differ in important ways, however. As shown above in **FIGURE 1**, disconnection increased in 2009 despite an increase in school enrollment, and the decrease in disconnection following 2010 is mirrored by an increase in employment for the population 16-24 years of age. In the aftermath of Covid-19, both school enrollment and employment rates for young adults decreased in tandem, with employment decreasing at roughly double the rate of enrollment: youth employment decreased 3.1 percent and enrollment decreased 1.6 percent from 2019 to 2021.

While a decline of 1.6 percent might not seem like a lot in isolation, it is a marked departure from the past. School enrollment for youth ages 16–24 stood at 59.3 percent in 2021; the last time school enrollment was below 60 percent was in 2007. Declining enrollment is especially notable for young people in the 18–19-year age bracket: school enrollment decreased 2.6 percent from 2019 for this cohort, a drop unprecedented in our analysis going back to 2006 (see **FIGURE 2**). School enrollment in this age range—72.5 percent in 2021—now stands at levels last seen in 2007. Even though the majority of students beginning degree-granting programs no longer neatly fit the “traditional” model of an 18-year-old embarking on a four-year, full-time college experience, school enrollment for 18- and 19-year-olds is a bellwether with broader implications for young adults’ educational attainment and integration into the workforce.

FIGURE 2 PERCENTAGE OF 18–19-YEAR-OLDS ENROLLED IN SCHOOL, 2006–2021

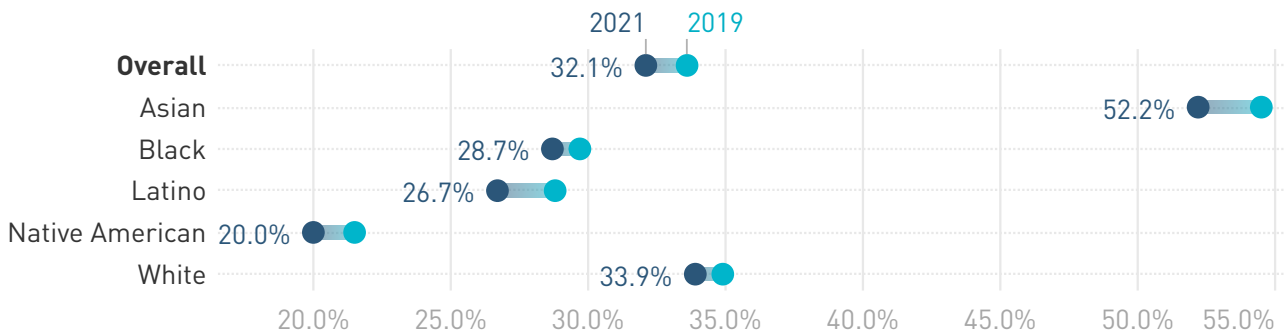


Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2006–2021.

These declines in enrollment are not evenly distributed by gender or by race and ethnicity. The enrollment rate for 18–19-year-old young men decreased slightly more than the enrollment rate for young women, decreases of 2.8 percent and 2.4 percent, respectively. The gender gap in enrollment for this age group is the widest it has been in Measure of America’s analysis (which begins in 2006): the gender gap stands at 7.7 percentage points, with 76.4 percent of young women enrolled in school compared to 68.7 percent of young men.

Enrollment rates dropped most acutely for Latino and Native American young adults: postsecondary enrollment for these groups dropped 7.1 and 6.9 percent, respectively, compared to a 4.3 percent decrease for Asian youth, a 3.2 percent decrease for Black youth, and 3.1 percent decrease for white youth (see **FIGURE 3**). Latino and Native American young adults already had the lowest rates of postsecondary enrollment before Covid, making it doubly concerning that they experienced the largest enrollment drops.

FIGURE 3 POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT FOR YOUTH AGES 16-24 BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2019-2021



Note: Includes enrollment in undergraduate as well as graduate institutions.

Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019 and 2021.

BOX 4 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 and 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 the homeless is difficult.

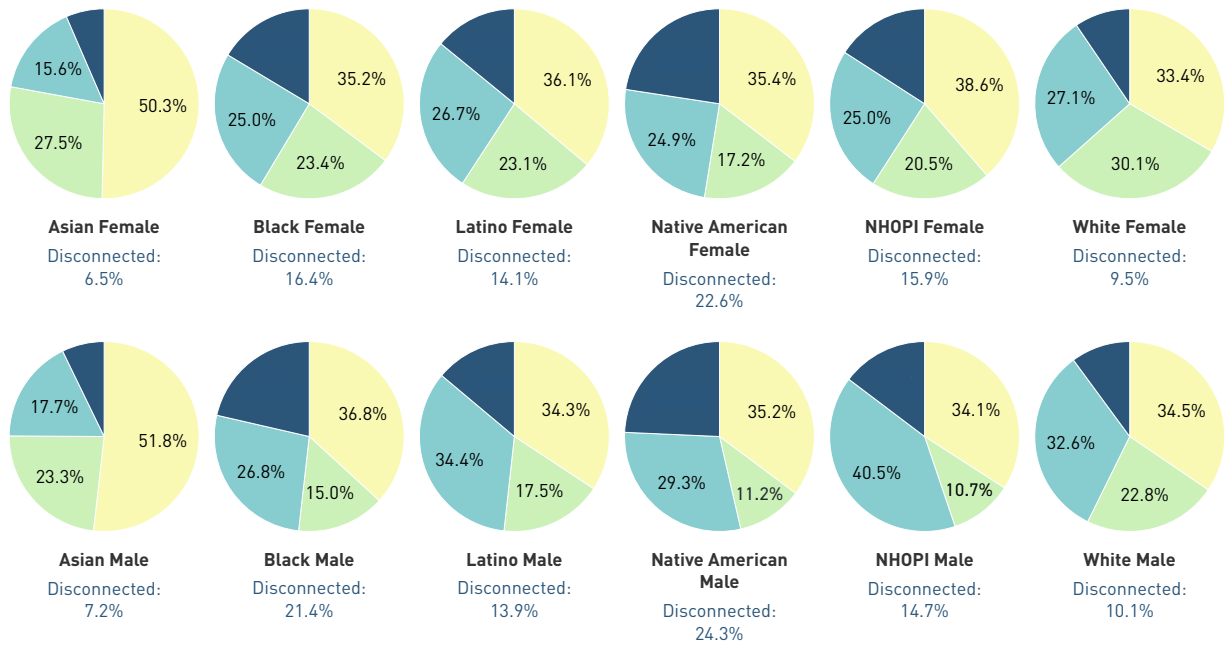
BOX 5 What about Other Young People?

Of all young people in the 16–24-year age bracket, the largest group, nearly 14 million youth, attend school and don't work. The second-largest group, slightly more than 11 million, work and do not go to school. Slightly more than nine million are both working and attending school, whereas about 4.7 million are neither working nor in school—disconnected or opportunity youth.

All Youth 16–24 Years Old	38,823,100
Youth in School (and not working)	13,813,100
Youth Working (and not in school)	11,111,300
Youth Both in School and Working	9,217,700
Youth Not Working or in School (Disconnected)	4,680,900

Just as disconnection rates vary by race and ethnicity and by gender, so, too, does the composition of the youth population overall. About half of all Asian young people are attending school and not working, the largest share by far; in other groups, around a third of young people attend school and don't work. White young women (30.1 percent) are the most likely to be both attending school and working, followed closely by Asian young women (27.5 percent). NHOPI young men are more likely than other groups to be working and not in school (40.5 percent), followed by Latino young men (34.4 percent).

■ In School
 ■ In School and Working
 ■ Working
 ■ Disconnected



Characteristics of Disconnected Youth

Poverty

Overall, 21.8 percent of youth living below the poverty threshold are disconnected, a 16.0 percent increase over 2019. The disconnection rate for young people living in poverty increased more than the disconnection rate overall. Disconnected young people are about twice as likely to be living below the poverty line as connected young people.

Poverty increases the likelihood of disconnection; about half of all disconnected young people live in households below 200 percent of the poverty line, and the disconnection rate for young people at or below 200 percent of the poverty line is 18.3 percent. Just 8.7 percent of youth living in families at 250 percent of the poverty threshold are disconnected.

TABLE 6 CONNECTED AND DISCONNECTED YOUNG PEOPLE DIFFER IN IMPORTANT WAYS

	SHARE OF DISCONNECTED YOUTH WITH ATTRIBUTE (%)	SHARE OF CONNECTED YOUTH WITH ATTRIBUTE (%)
LIVING IN POVERTY	31.1	16.0
LIVING WITH A DISABILITY	17.7	6.5
LIVING IN AN INSTITUTION	4.4	0.3
DID NOT COMPLETE HIGH SCHOOL*	22.5	31.3
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA/NO FURTHER EDUCATION*	52.2	24.5
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER	6.9	10.4
WOMEN WITH CHILDREN	20.4	4.7
MARRIED	8.9	5.1
NONCITIZEN	6.6	4.9
LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY	6.4	4.0
UNINSURED	23.0	10.4
HAS PUBLIC HEALTH INSURANCE †	36.6	18.0

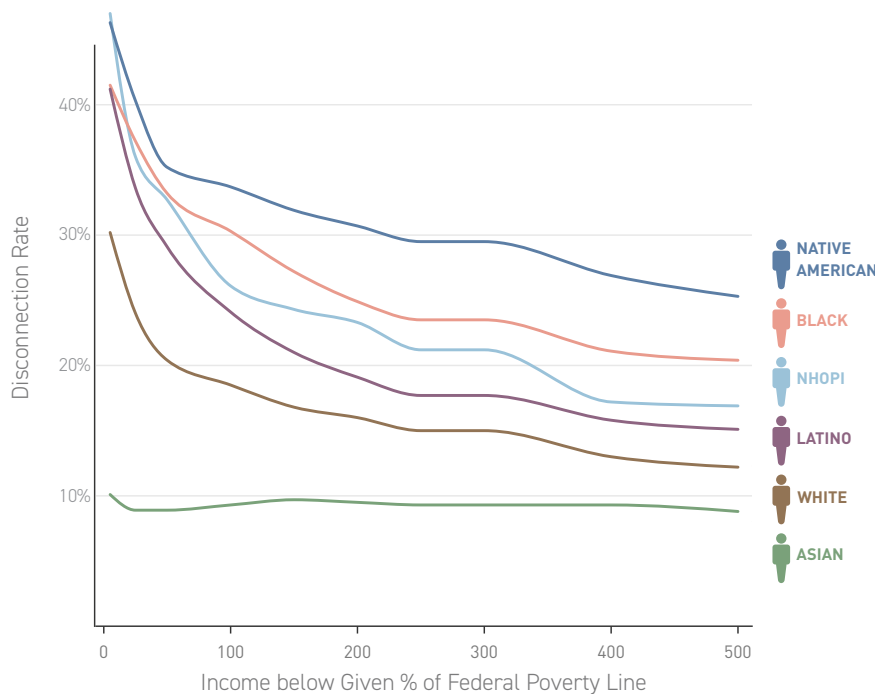
*Connected individuals in these cohorts may currently be pursuing a higher education; for instance, the sizable share of connected youth that did not complete high school are largely still in high school—not high school dropouts.

†Public health insurance includes primarily Medicaid, as well as Medicare and VA health care.

Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021.

Poverty interacts with race and ethnicity to create strikingly different outcomes. Among Asian young people living below the poverty threshold, 9.4 percent are disconnected. In contrast, among Native American young people living in poverty, 33.7 percent are disconnected, and even Native young people living in better-off households (those at 250 percent of the poverty line or higher) still have a rate much higher than the national average, 15.9 percent. Native American young men living below the poverty threshold have the highest disconnection rate of any race/gender combination, 38.5 percent. Among young people living below the poverty threshold, the white rate is 18.5 percent, the Latino rate is 24.0 percent, the NHOPI rate is 25.2 percent, and the Black rate is 30.3 percent.

FIGURE 7 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY PERCENT OF FEDERAL POVERTY LINE



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021.

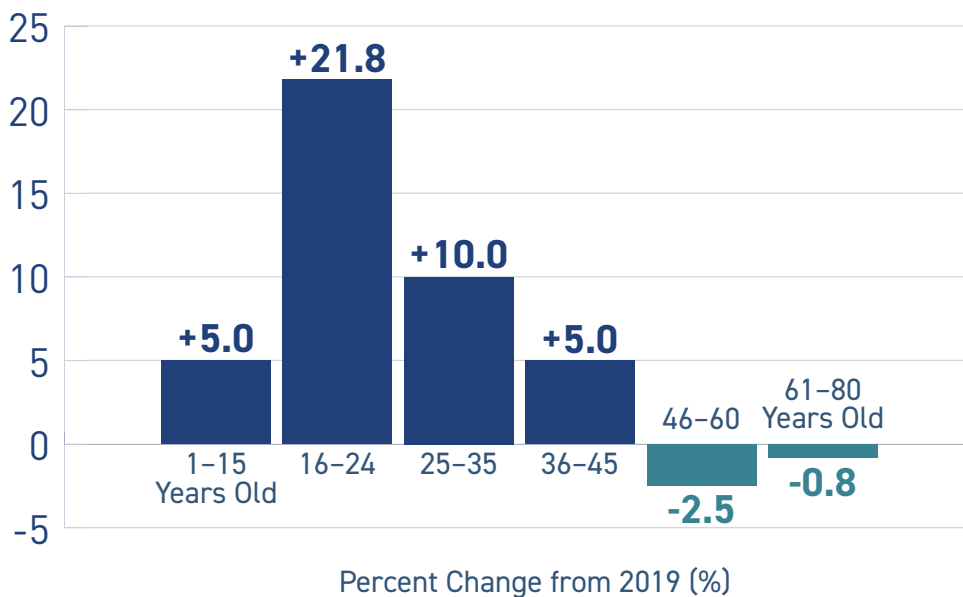
BOX 8 What Does 200 or 250 Percent of the Poverty Threshold Mean?

Poverty thresholds vary by household size; the threshold for a one-person household is \$14,580, whereas the threshold for a five-person household is \$35,140. To arrive at 200 percent of the poverty threshold for a given household, you double the poverty threshold. For example, the average US household consists of three people, and the 2023 poverty threshold for a three-person household is \$24,860, meaning that three-person households below 200 percent of the poverty threshold have incomes of \$49,720 or less.⁸

Disability

Nationally, 27.2 percent of young people with at least one disability are disconnected, compared to 10.8 percent of young people without a disability. The number of disabilities a young person experiences strongly affects his or her likelihood of disconnection: the rate for youth with one disability is 20.5 percent; for those with two disabilities, 33.3 percent; and for those with three or more disabilities, 44.6 percent. Those with difficulties related to self-care (44.9 percent), ambulatory difficulties (41.8 percent), and difficulties related to independent living (37.6 percent) have the highest rates of disconnection among youth with disabilities.

FIGURE 9 CHANGE IN SHARE OF POPULATION WITH COGNITIVE DISABILITIES BY AGE GROUP, 2019-2021 (%)



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019 and 2021.

A striking finding is that the share of all young people with at least one disability increased sharply between 2019 and 2021. In 2019, 6.7 percent of young adults ages 16-24 had a disability; in 2021, 7.8 percent of young adults did: 3,045,000 individuals. Due to the increased share of disability in young adults, an additional 457,400 young adults were disabled in 2021. This dramatic increase was driven by increased cognitive disability, defined by the Census Bureau as follows: “because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, [this person has] serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions.” The cognitive disability rate for young adults in this age group increased 21.8 percent from 2019, far more sharply than it did for other age groups (see **FIGURE 9**). Covid-19 or Covid-associated mental health challenges are the likely

culprits. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that roughly one in five American adults who had Covid-19 continued to suffer its effects in the form of long Covid, in which Covid-19 symptoms like intense fatigue and brain fog continue for more than three months.⁹ Though older people are more likely than younger ones to suffer from long Covid, youth are not immune, and young adults have suffered from Covid-era depression more acutely than older cohorts.¹⁰ The increase in young adults ages 16–24 with any disability is fairly broad based: disability rates increased at least 10 percent for all racial or ethnic groups with the exception of NHOPI, with Latino and Native American youth seeing the sharpest increases in disability (28.6 and 26.0 percent increases, respectively).

Motherhood and Marriage

Thirty-six percent of young mothers are out of school and work—more than one in three—compared to 9.8 percent of young women who are not mothers. Among different racial and ethnic groups, there is little variation in the disconnection rate of young mothers with the exception of those who are Native American; nearly half of Native American young mothers are disconnected. Poverty and disconnection are strongly associated among young motherhood; young mothers above the poverty threshold have a disconnection rate of 30.2 percent; those below it, 48.3 percent.

Among connected young women, just 4.7 percent are mothers; among disconnected young women, 20.4 percent are mothers, a more than fourfold difference. Nearly one in five married young people (19.3 percent) are disconnected, compared to 11.6 percent of unmarried young people.

Age

Young people 16–18 years old are the least likely youth to be disconnected, 4.9 percent. Older youth ages 22–24 are the mostly likely, 17.1 percent, and they also saw the greatest increase since 2019, 17.1 percent (these two numbers are the coincidentally the same).

FIGURE 10 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY AGE GROUP, 2021

Age Category	Total Youth (#)	Disconnected Youth (#)	Disconnected Youth (%)	DY Rate Change since 2019
Overall	38,823,100	4,680,900	12.1%	13.1%
16–18	13,135,700	641,100	4.9%	6.5%
19–21	13,063,800	1,887,100	14.4%	13.4%
22–24	12,623,600	2,152,700	17.1%	17.1%

The largest share of disconnected young people are in the 22–24-year age range (2,152,700 people), and the second-largest are in the 19–21-year age range (1,887,100 people). The fewest disconnected young people are ages 16–18 (641,100). Compulsory school attendance laws, which vary by state, keep most 16- and 17-year-olds in school.

Language Proficiency and Citizenship Status

While 11.8 percent of young people who are fluent in English are disconnected, 18.1 percent of those with limited English fluency are. The disconnection rate for noncitizen youth is 15.7 percent, compared to 11.9 percent for young people who are citizens. This disconnection rate for noncitizens increased 17.2 percent between 2019 and 2021, much more than that for citizens.

Institutionalization

Nearly seven in 10 young people who are institutionalized are disconnected—meaning that they are not taking part in an educational program or working while living in a juvenile detention facility, jail, prison, mental health facility, or other group quarters. While only 4.4 percent of disconnected young people are living in an institution, this rate is more than 14 times higher than the share of connected youth who are institutionalized (0.3 percent).

Limited Education

Sorting 22–24-year-olds by degree attainment shows the striking effects of education on the likelihood of disconnection. (Except for those with advanced or professional degrees, most people have completed their formal educations by the time they turn 25.) Young people in this age group who lack a high school degree have a very high disconnection rate, 43.6 percent. Those whose formal educations stopped after they earned their high school diplomas have the second-highest rate, 26.5 percent. The high disconnection rate among high school graduates who

FIGURE 11 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR 22–24-YEAR-OLDS, 2021

Category	Total Youth (#)	Disconnected Youth (#)	Disconnected Youth (%)
Overall	38,823,100	4,680,900	12.1%
Less Than a High School Diploma	883,400	384,800	43.6%
High School Diploma or Equivalent	3,655,200	967,300	26.5%
Some College, No Degree	3,397,500	412,000	12.1%
Associate Degree	1,089,800	84,600	7.8%
Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	3,597,800	304,000	8.5%

did not continue their educations illustrates the increasing need for some kind of postsecondary credential in today's labor market. Associate-degree-holders have the lowest disconnection rate, 7.8 percent, followed by young people with bachelor's degrees, 8.5 percent. It may seem counterintuitive that youth with associate degrees have a slightly slower disconnection rate than those with four-year bachelor's degrees; a possible reason is that associate degree programs tend to focus on preparing their students for a specific type of job, allowing them to quickly transition to employment upon graduation.

Last Worked

While some young people pass relatively quickly through periods of disconnection, for others the condition is more lasting. Among young people who worked in the past year, just 5.6 percent are disconnected, whereas for young people who last worked between one and five years ago, 42.4 percent are disconnected.

Military

Differences among civilians and veterans at first glance seem counterintuitive: 12.2 percent of civilian youth are disconnected, compared to 18.8 percent of youth who are veterans. The reason for this is that young people who are veterans have recently left their employment—being in the armed forces—and it takes some time for them to find a job in the civilian labor force or apply to and begin an educational program.¹¹

While some young people pass relatively quickly through periods of disconnection, for others the condition is more lasting.

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, 11.5 percent versus 12.6 percent. The size and direction of the gender gap vary by race and ethnicity, however, as well as by place. Covid-19 increased the gap between young women and young men at the national level: between 2019 and 2021, the male disconnection rate increased by 14.5 percent, the female disconnection rate by 11.7 percent.

Black young people have the largest gender gap in the youth disconnection rate of any racial or ethnic group—16.4 percent for Black girls and young women, compared to 21.4 percent for their male counterparts. The gap is smallest for Latino young people; the rate for girls and young women is 14.1 percent, slightly higher than that of their male counterparts, 13.9 percent.

23.5%
of Native American youth are disconnected, the highest rate of any US racial and ethnic group.

FIGURE 12 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY (%)

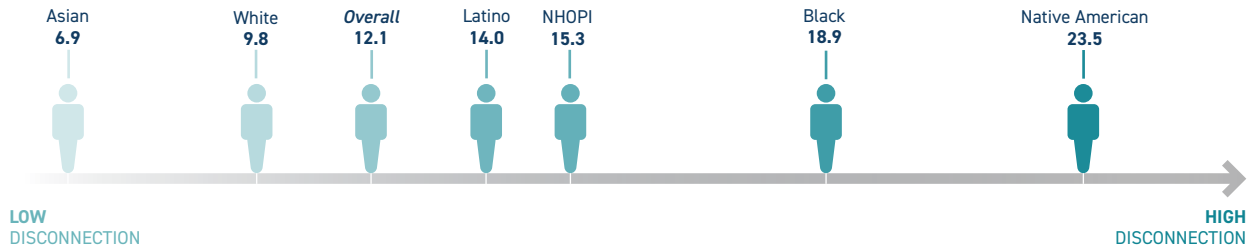
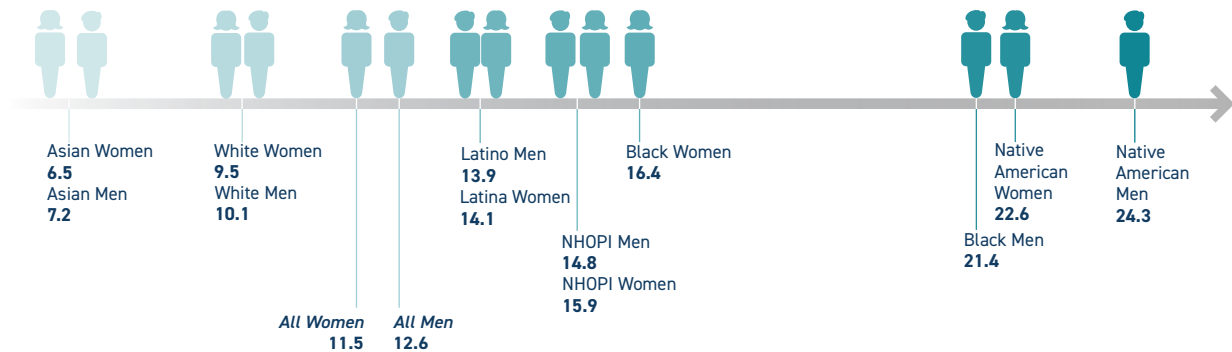


FIGURE 13 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY AND BY GENDER (%)



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021.

Race and Ethnicity

While all groups saw declines in the youth disconnection rate between 2010 and 2019 and spikes between 2019 and 2021, the distance between groups remained large and strikingly durable. Native American young people have the highest disconnection rate, and Asian young people, the lowest; a nearly threefold difference separates them.

6.9%
of Asian youth are disconnected, the lowest rate of any US racial and ethnic group.

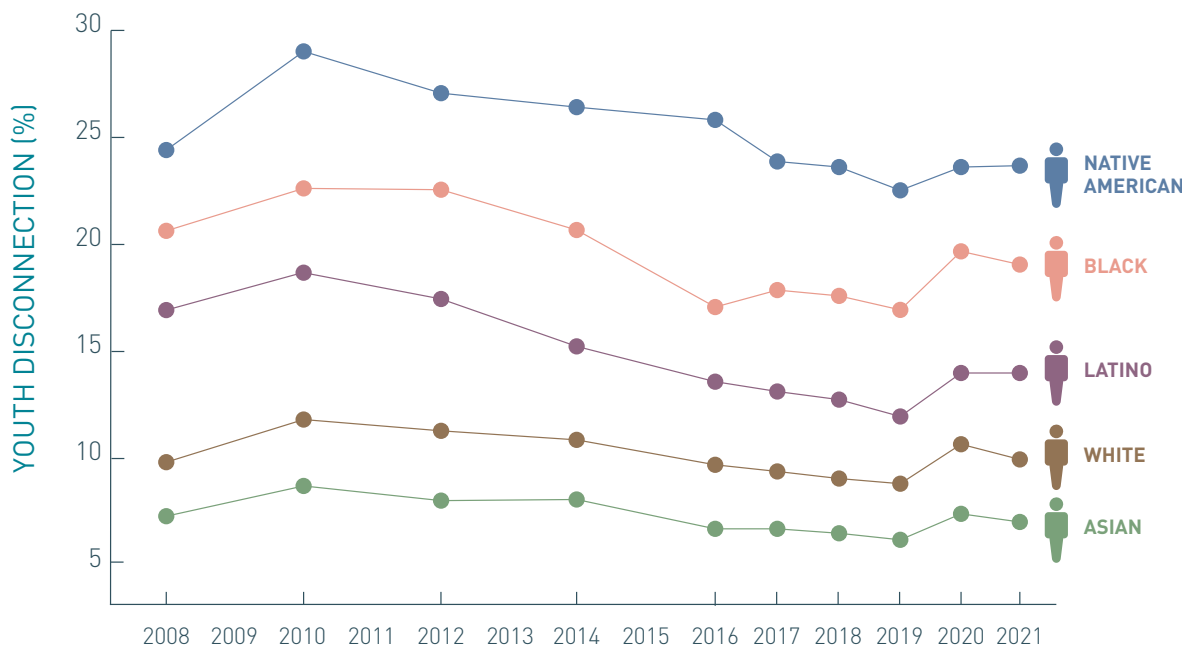
Native American Youth

Nearly one in four Native American teens and young adults are neither working nor in school. The Native American youth disconnection rate is 23.5 percent, the highest of the United States' five major racial and ethnic groups. The 2019 rate was 22.1 percent. Because the Native American population is the smallest of the five groups, the number of Native American disconnected youth is likewise the smallest, approximately 60,000 young people. Native American teen boys and young men have the highest disconnection rate of any race/gender combination, 24.3 percent. Native American girls and young women have the highest female disconnection rate, 22.6 percent.

Black Youth

Black teens and young adults have the second-highest disconnection rate, 18.9 percent, or 966,300 young people, a 13.2 percent increase over 2019. About one in five disconnected young people are Black. As mentioned above, Black boys and young men are much more likely than their female counterparts to be disconnected, 21.4 percent compared to 16.4 percent, the largest gender gap of any racial or ethnic group. Covid-19

FIGURE 14 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2008-2021



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2008-2021.

had a more negative impact on the school and workforce participation of Black girls and young women, however; the female disconnection rate increased by 19.7 percent between 2019 and 2021, the male rate by 9.7 percent.

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI) Youth

NHOPI young people are often grouped with Asian young people in statistical exercises like this one under the moniker Asian and Pacific Islander (API) or Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI). Doing this can obscure important differences. The NHOPI youth disconnection rate is 15.3 percent, more than double the Asian rate. NHOPI young women are more likely than their male counterparts to be out of school and work, 15.9 percent compared to 14.8 percent. NHOPI includes Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Guamanian or Chamorro, Fijian, Tongan, or Marshallese peoples and encompasses the people within the US jurisdictions of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.¹² This is the first year Measure of America has calculated rates for this group.

Latino Youth

The Latino youth disconnection rate stands at 14.0 percent, or 1,286,200 young people. Slightly more than one in four disconnected young people are Latino. In past years, Latina girls and young women were slightly more likely than their male counterparts to be disconnected, and in 2021, this remained true, but only slightly: 14.1 percent as compared to 13.9 percent. The Latino rate increased 14.8 percent between 2019 and 2021, the second-largest increase. The male rate shot up 20.9 percent; the female increased 9.3 percent, less than the nationwide increase of 13.1 percent.

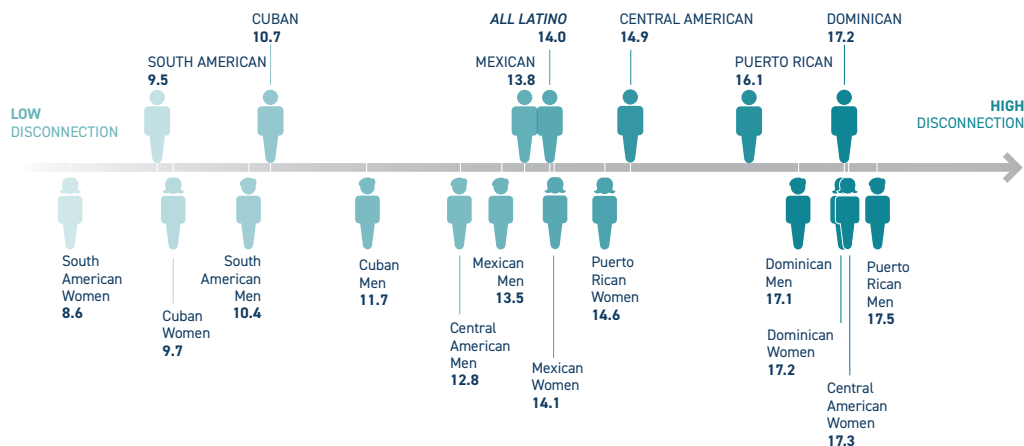
Rates vary by Latino subgroup. Dominican young people have the highest rate, 17.2 percent, and young people who trace their origins to South America, the lowest, 9.5 percent.

YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY LATINO SUBGROUP

LATINO SUBGROUP	%	#
SOUTH AMERICAN	9.5	49,400
Men	10.4	26,900
Women	8.6	22,500
CUBAN	10.7	26,500
Men	11.7	14,800
Women	9.7	11,700
MEXICAN	13.8	809,200
Men	13.5	404,400
Women	14.1	404,800
CENTRAL AMERICAN	14.9	135,900
Men	12.8	60,400
Women	17.3	75,500
PUERTO RICAN	16.1	124,800
Men	17.5	69,000
Women	14.6	55,800
DOMINICAN	17.2	57,800
Men	17.1	29,600
Women	17.2	28,200

Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021.

FIGURE 15 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY LATINO SUBGROUP (%)



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021.

White Youth

The disconnection rate for white teens and young adults is 9.8 percent, an increase of 11.4 percent over 2019. White teens and young adults make up the largest absolute number of disconnected youth, 1,946,500 people (even though whites have a lower-than-average rate, they make up more than half of all people in the 16-to-24 age range and roughly four in 10 disconnected young people). White boys and young men are more likely than their female counterparts to be disconnected, 10.1 percent and 9.5 percent, respectively.

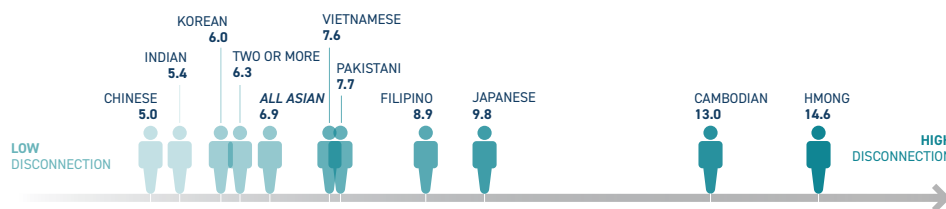
Asian Youth

Asian teens and young adults have the lowest disconnection rate, 6.9 percent, or 140,000 young people. Asian young women have the lowest disconnection rate, 6.5 percent, of any race/gender combination; Asian young men have the second-lowest rate, 7.2 percent. Though they have the lowest youth disconnection rate, they saw the sharpest increase between 2019 and 2021. The overall Asian rate increased 27.8 percent between the pre- and post-Covid period; the male rate increased 35.8 percent, more than any other race/gender combination, and the female rate increased 20.4 percent.

The category “Asian” is extremely broad, however, and rates vary widely by Asian subgroup. Young people who identify as Chinese (5.0 percent) and Indian (5.4 percent) have the lowest rates among Asian subgroups; those who trace their origins to Southeast Asia, the highest. The youth disconnection rate increased the most for Japanese young people, a striking 172.2 percent, doubled for Cambodian young people, and jumped 47.1 percent for Chinese young people (change-over-time rates are not available for all groups).

What underlies this trend in Asian disconnection rates is unclear. Research on the impact of the pandemic on the United States shows Asian workers (of all ages) were disproportionately affected in the initial stages of the pandemic and that long-term unemployment was highest and rose most sharply for Asians in 2020. Explanations include the concentration of the Asian population in states with lengthier lockdowns, a higher representation of Asians in professions severely affected by the pandemic, and increased anti-Asian prejudice after the onset of Covid, which may have contributed to worse labor market outcomes.¹³

FIGURE 16 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY ASIAN SUBGROUP (%)



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021.

YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY ASIAN SUBGROUP

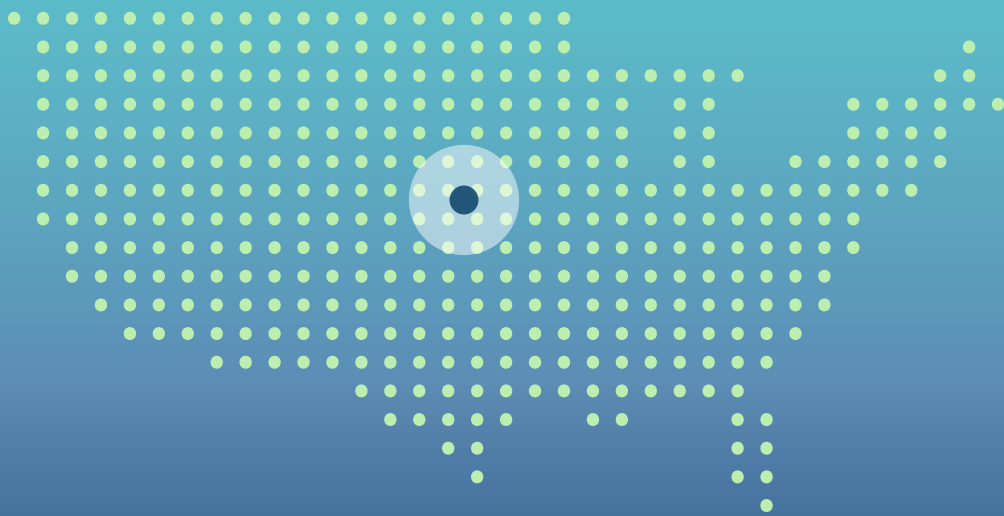
ASIAN SUBGROUP	%	#
CHINESE	5.0	23,800
Men	5.3	12,200
Women	4.7	11,600
INDIAN	5.4	22,900
Men	4.9	10,800
Women	6.0	12,100
KOREAN	6.0	8,200
Men	8.4	6,000
Women	3.4*	2,100
TWO OR MORE	6.3	4,400
Men	8.1*	3,000
Women	4.4*	1,400
VIETNAMESE	7.6	17,400
Men	8.7	10,000
Women	6.4	7,300
PAKISTANI	7.7	5,700
Men	6.0*	2,200
Women	9.4	3,500
FILIPINO	8.9	26,400
Men	9.1	13,600
Women	8.8	12,800
JAPANESE	9.8	3,700
Men	9.1*	1,800
Women	10.5*	1,900
CAMBODIAN	13.0	3,900
Men	13.5*	2,000
Women	12.6*	1,900
HMONG	14.6	7,800
Men	17.6	4,600
Women	11.7	3,200

* Estimates with an asterisk have a higher degree of uncertainty.

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

Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021.

YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY PLACE



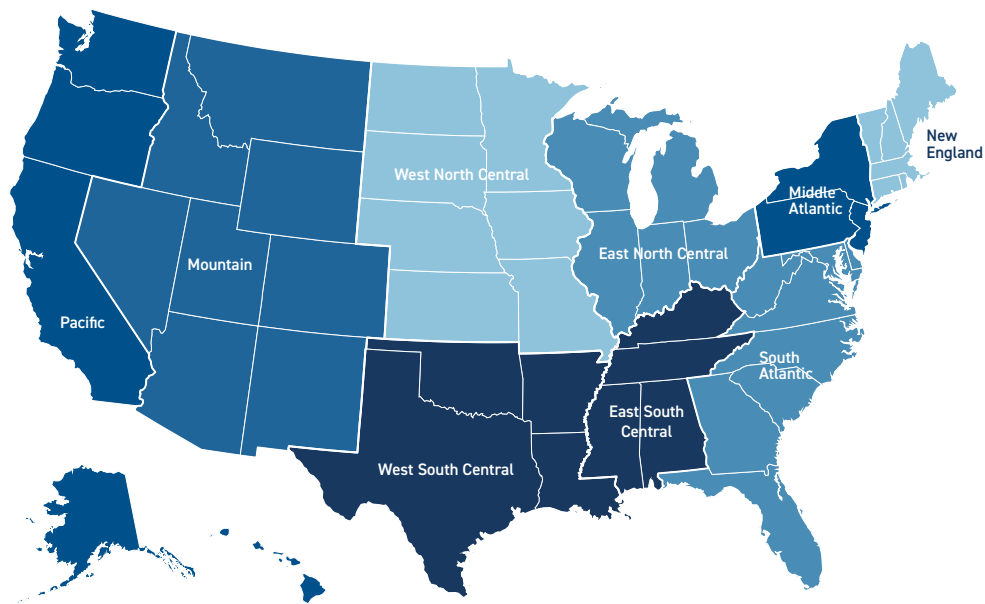
YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY
REGION, STATE, METRO AREA,
AND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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

REGIONS

The Census Bureau divides the country into nine different regions. The East South Central region, which includes Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee, has the highest disconnection rate of any region in the United States, 14.2 percent. At 14.1 percent, the West South Central region, which comprises Arkansas, Louisiana,

FIGURE 17 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY REGION



REGION	OVERALL (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	White (%)	Latino (%)	Black (%)
UNITED STATES	12.1	12.6	11.5	9.8	14.0	18.9
New England	8.9	9.8	7.9	8.1	12.6	11.3
West North Central	8.9	9.6	8.2	7.6	11.4	15.1
East North Central	11.6	12.2	10.9	9.4	12.4	22.5
South Atlantic	11.8	12.4	11.3	9.8	12.0	16.5
Mountain	12.0	12.0	11.9	9.1	15.4	15.2
Middle Atlantic	12.1	13.4	10.7	8.9	16.9	20.4
Pacific	12.6	13.1	12.0	11.5	13.5	22.1
West South Central	14.1	13.9	14.4	11.6	15.1	20.0
East South Central	14.2	14.6	13.7	11.9	12.9	21.8

Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021.

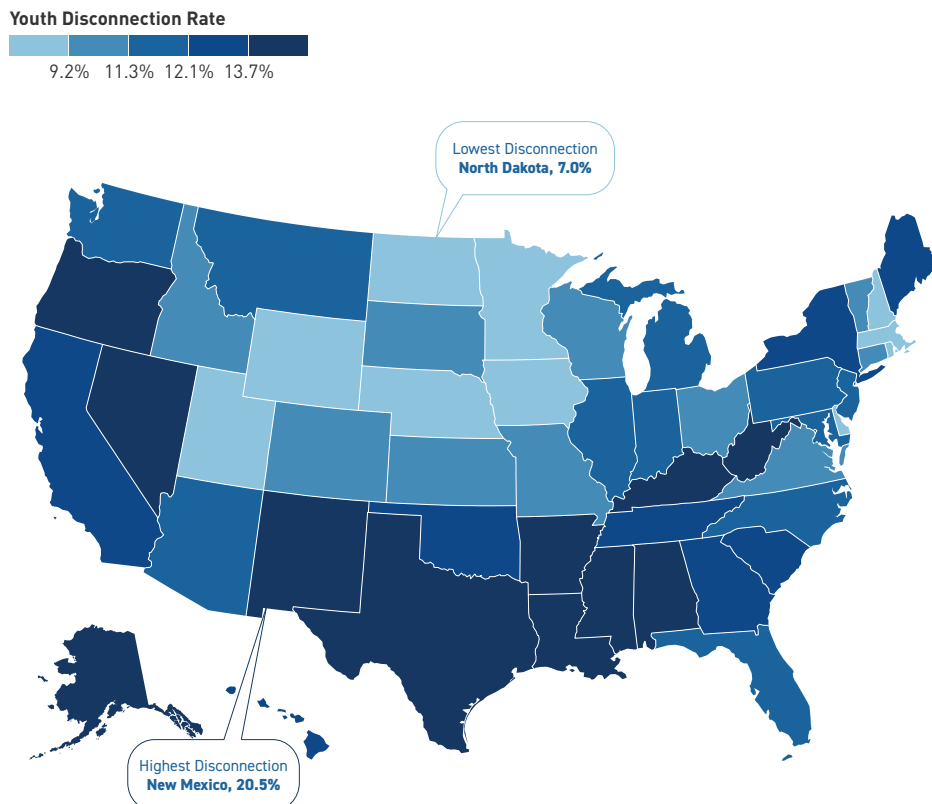
Oklahoma, and Texas, has a comparable though slightly lower rate. In both of these adjacent regions, roughly one in five Black young people are disconnected and one in eight white people are disconnected.

New England and the West North Central region are tied for the **lowest disconnection rate**, 8.9 percent. New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont) has the lowest rates for Black (11.3 percent) and Asian (3.2 percent) young people. The West North Central region is home to seven states: Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. This region has the lowest white youth disconnection rate, 7.6 percent, and the lowest Latino rate, 11.4 percent.

Latino young people are most likely to be disconnected in the Middle Atlantic region (New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania). Native American young people are most likely to be disconnected in the Pacific region (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington) and the Mountain region (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming), where the rates are astonishingly high, 28.1 percent and 28.6 percent, respectively. These areas are home to the lion's share of Native American people.

STATES

FIGURE 18 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY STATE



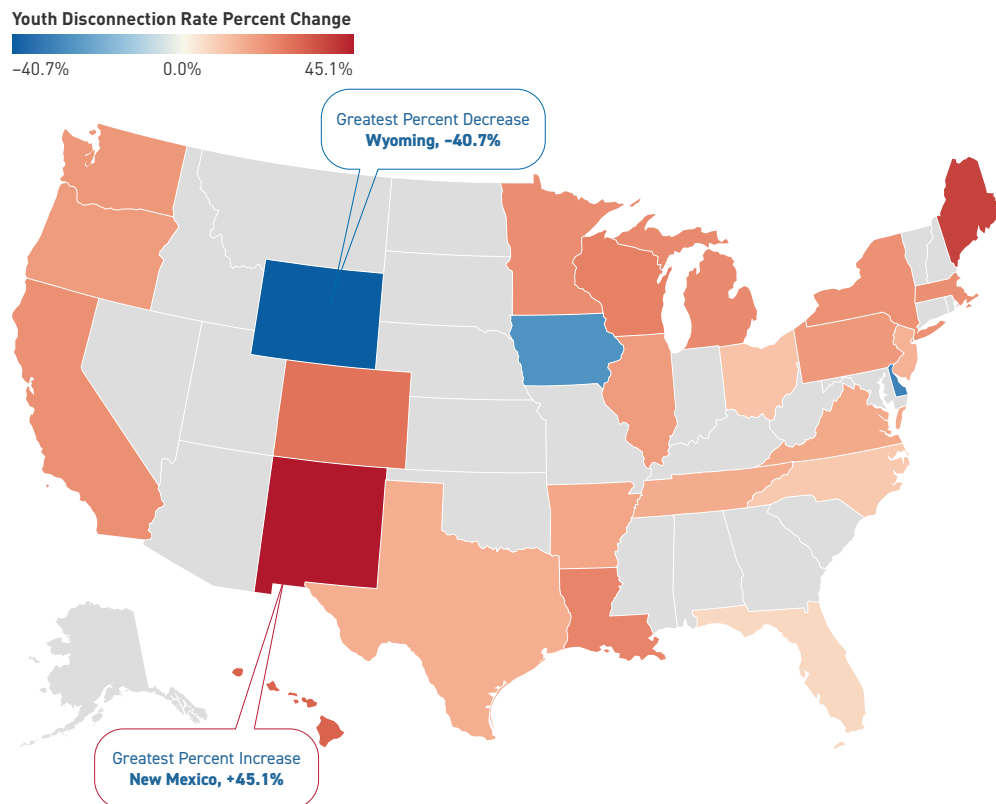
Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021.

North Dakota has the lowest youth disconnection rate (7.0 percent), followed by Iowa (7.1 percent) and Delaware (7.3 percent). Iowa's rate fell 26.8 percent since 2019, and Delaware's fell 31.2 percent. Wyoming saw the largest drop between 2019 and 2021, 40.7 percent; its youth disconnection rate is now 8.1 percent. Wyoming has the country's smallest youth population, and relatively small changes in the number of young people who are out of work or school can have an outsized impact in states with small populations.

New Mexico has the highest disconnection rate (20.5 percent), followed by Louisiana (17.7 percent) and Alaska (16.5 percent). New Mexico also had the greatest increase in the youth disconnection rate from 2019 to 2021, a striking 45.1 percent. Maine and Hawaii had the next-largest increases, 38.3 percent and 31.2 percent, respectively. California, Colorado, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Washington, and Wisconsin all had increases of at least 20 percent, well above the national increase of 13.1 percent over the same time period.

The highest disconnection rates for **young men** are in New Mexico (19.2 percent), Washington, DC (19.1 percent), and Louisiana (17.5 percent). In Washington, DC, the disconnection rate for young men is 7.5 percentage points higher than the rate for young

FIGURE 19 SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY STATE, 2019–2021



Note: States are grayed out where the change from 2019 to 2021 is not statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level.
 Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019 and 2021.

women (11.6 percent), the largest male-female gap among the states. The lowest male rates are found in Iowa (7.6 percent), Delaware (7.8 percent), and Rhode Island (8.3 percent).

Young women are most likely to be disconnected in New Mexico (21.7 percent), Alaska (21.1 percent), and Louisiana (17.8 percent). In Alaska, the disconnection rate for young women is nearly 8 percentage points higher than the rate for young men (13.2 percent), the largest female-male gap among the states. Young women are least likely to be disconnected in Minnesota (6.3 percent), Iowa (6.5 percent), and tied for third place with a 6.8 percent disconnection rate in Delaware, New Hampshire, and Connecticut. The lowest disconnection rate of any gender/state combination is for young women living in Minnesota; the highest is for young women living in New Mexico.

Only 10 states have a sufficiently large **Asian** youth population to allow for the calculation of youth disconnection estimates. Illinois has the lowest Asian youth disconnection rate, 4.7 percent, the lowest combination of any racial or ethnic group and state, and North Carolina has the highest, 11.7 percent.

Only one state has a large enough **NHOPI** population for a reliable estimate—Hawaii—where the NHOPI disconnection rate is 19.6 percent. Hawaii also has the second-highest rate of youth disconnection among Asians, 11.3 percent.

Arizona has the lowest share of **Black** disconnected young people, 10.6 percent, which is lower than the state rate of 11.7 percent. Washington, DC has the highest, an astonishing 31.4 percent, which is more than double the rate for the District as a whole.

For **Latinos**, the lowest share of disconnected young people can be found in Virginia, 8.0 percent, and the highest in New Mexico, 21.2 percent.

Six states have a large enough **Native American** population to produce reliable estimates for youth disconnection. Oklahoma has the lowest share of Native American young people who are disconnected, 19.3 percent, whereas New Mexico has the highest, an alarming 35.2 percent, easily the highest disconnection rate for any state and demographic group combination.

In South Dakota, 6.1 percent of **white** youth are disconnected, compared to 17.7 percent of white youth living in Alaska.

TABLE 20 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY STATE

Rank	State	Youth Disconnection (%)	Youth Disconnection (#)	Youth Disconnection by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity (%)						
				Men	Women	Asian	Black	Latino	Native American	White
1	North Dakota	7.0	7,400							
2	Iowa	7.1	28,400	7.6	6.5					6.3
3	Delaware	7.3	7,900	7.8	6.8					6.2
4	New Hampshire	8.0	12,400	9.0	6.8					7.7
5	Massachusetts	8.1	69,400	8.9	7.4		11.0	14.6		6.3
6	Rhode Island	8.1	11,500	8.3	7.9					7.4
7	Wyoming	8.1	5,300							7.8
8	Nebraska	8.2	19,600	8.4	7.9					6.9
9	Minnesota	8.4	54,600	10.4	6.3			11.6		6.9
10	Utah	8.9	43,600	8.5	9.3			13.9		7.4
11	South Dakota	9.2	10,600	10.5	7.9				27.8	6.1
12	Connecticut	9.3	40,900	11.6	6.8		12.8	10.3		9.0
13	Virginia	9.4	96,900	10.7	7.9		15.4	8.0		8.1
14	Idaho	10.1	23,000	11.2	9.0			15.2		9.3
15	Missouri	10.1	73,200	10.2	10.0		16.7			9.2
16	Kansas	10.4	38,800	10.6	10.2			15.5		8.9
17	Colorado	10.6	71,200	10.1	11.1			14.2		8.9
18	Wisconsin	10.6	74,100	11.1	10.1		27.5	10.5		8.6
19	Vermont	10.9	8,700							11.9
20	Ohio	11.1	150,700	11.6	10.5		17.7	12.4		9.7
21	New Jersey	11.3	114,500	12.3	10.2	5.4	17.4	14.9		8.6
22	Pennsylvania	11.4	161,800	12.8	9.9		23.1	16.3		9.0
23	Maryland	11.5	79,500	12.3	10.8		16.1	13.7		8.4
24	Indiana	11.6	97,600	12.4	10.8		23.3	13.7		10.1
25	Arizona	11.7	102,300	12.1	11.3		10.6	13.6	27.6	9.4

TABLE 20 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY STATE, CONTINUED

Rank	State	Youth Disconnection (%)	Youth Disconnection (#)	Youth Disconnection by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity (%)						
				Men	Women	Asian	Black	Latino	Native American	White
26	Montana	11.7	15,300	15.2	8.1					9.5
27	Florida	11.8	265,500	12.1	11.5	6.7	16.2	12.1		9.9
28	Illinois	12.0	177,100	12.5	11.4	4.7	24.4	11.9		9.0
29	Washington	12.0	102,300	12.2	11.7	5.7	21.7	12.1	25.5	11.5
30	Michigan	12.1	143,100	13.1	11.0	9.6	23.5	14.3		9.3
31	North Carolina	12.1	155,000	12.2	12.0	11.7	15.9	12.2	22.5	10.1
32	California	12.5	572,800	13.2	11.7	8.0	23.1	13.6		10.6
33	Maine	12.5	17,600	11.0	14.1					13.0
34	South Carolina	12.5	75,500	13.7	11.2		16.2	14.9		10.5
35	New York	12.9	285,900	14.3	11.4	8.6	20.4	18.2		9.0
36	Georgia	13.0	174,100	13.5	12.5		17.5	12.6		10.4
37	Oklahoma	13.3	67,000	12.8	13.9		18.3	12.1	19.3	12.0
38	Hawaii	13.4	20,000	13.6	13.3	11.3		16.8		
39	Tennessee	13.5	108,000	14.4	12.5		22.9	13.4		11.5
40	Oregon	13.7	62,200	13.5	13.8			11.5		14.4
41	Texas	13.7	506,100	13.5	13.9	5.9	17.4	15.4		10.9
42	Alabama	14.2	84,300	15.1	13.2		21.5			10.9
43	Kentucky	14.3	77,000	14.0	14.7		26.8			13.3
44	Arkansas	14.9	55,000	13.9	16.1		16.4	12.3		14.8
45	District of Columbia	15.0	11,300	19.1	11.6		31.4			
46	West Virginia	15.2	30,700	13.5	17.0					15.3
47	Mississippi	15.3	57,400	15.1	15.5		19.4			12.2
48	Nevada	15.8	52,800	16.3	15.2		27.3	17.0		11.6
49	Alaska	16.5	14,300	13.2	21.1					17.7
50	Louisiana	17.7	96,000	17.5	17.8		27.9	11.5		11.3
51	New Mexico	20.5	50,500	19.2	21.7			21.2	35.2	14.6

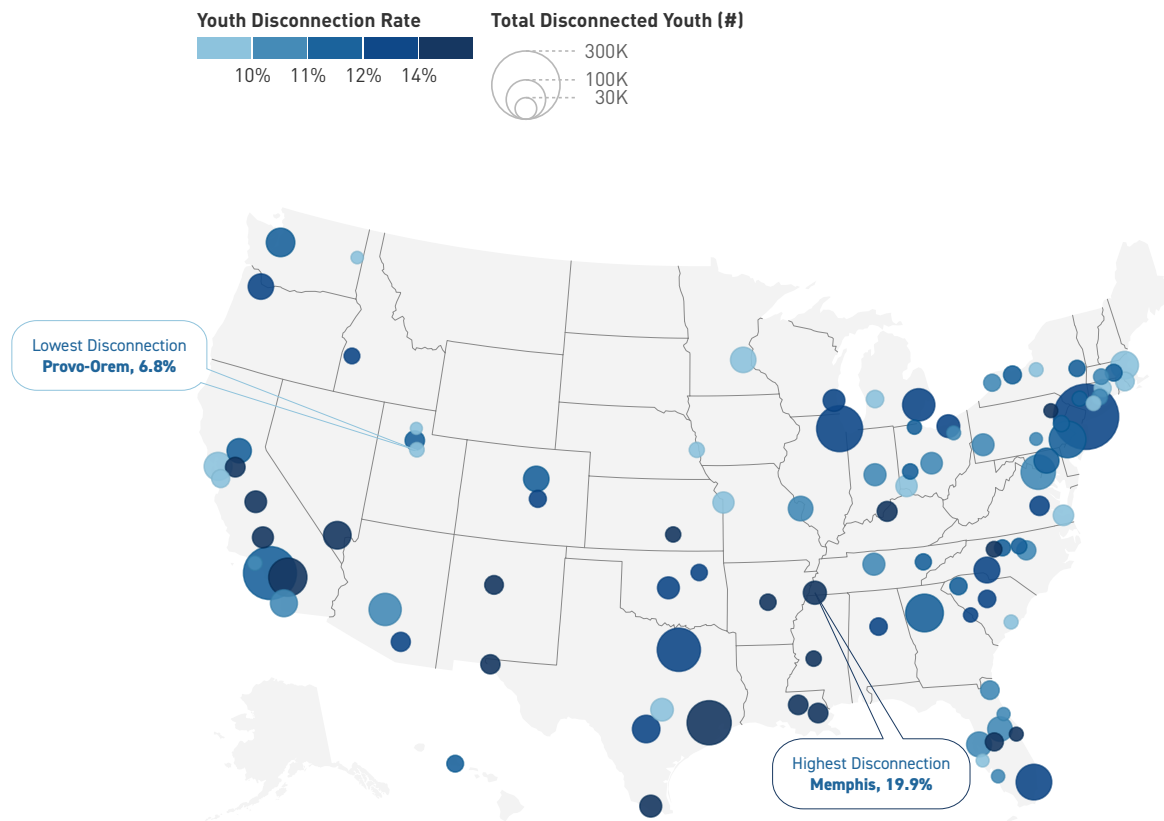
Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021.

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 cross state lines. Metro areas are a key unit of analysis for understanding youth disconnection rates, as they frame labor markets, which can be more aligned with metro areas than state or county lines, and, to a lesser degree, postsecondary education options.

Provo-Orem, UT (6.8 percent), boasts the lowest youth disconnection rate of any metro area in the country, followed by Ogden-Clearfield, UT (also 6.8 percent due to rounding but nonetheless a hair behind Provo-Orem), and Boston-Cambridge-Newton MA-NH (7.0 percent). The highest youth disconnection rate can be found in Memphis, TN-MS-AR (19.9 percent), followed by Stockton, CA (19.8 percent), and McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX (19.3 percent).

FIGURE 21 YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN AMERICA'S MOST POPULOUS METRO AREAS



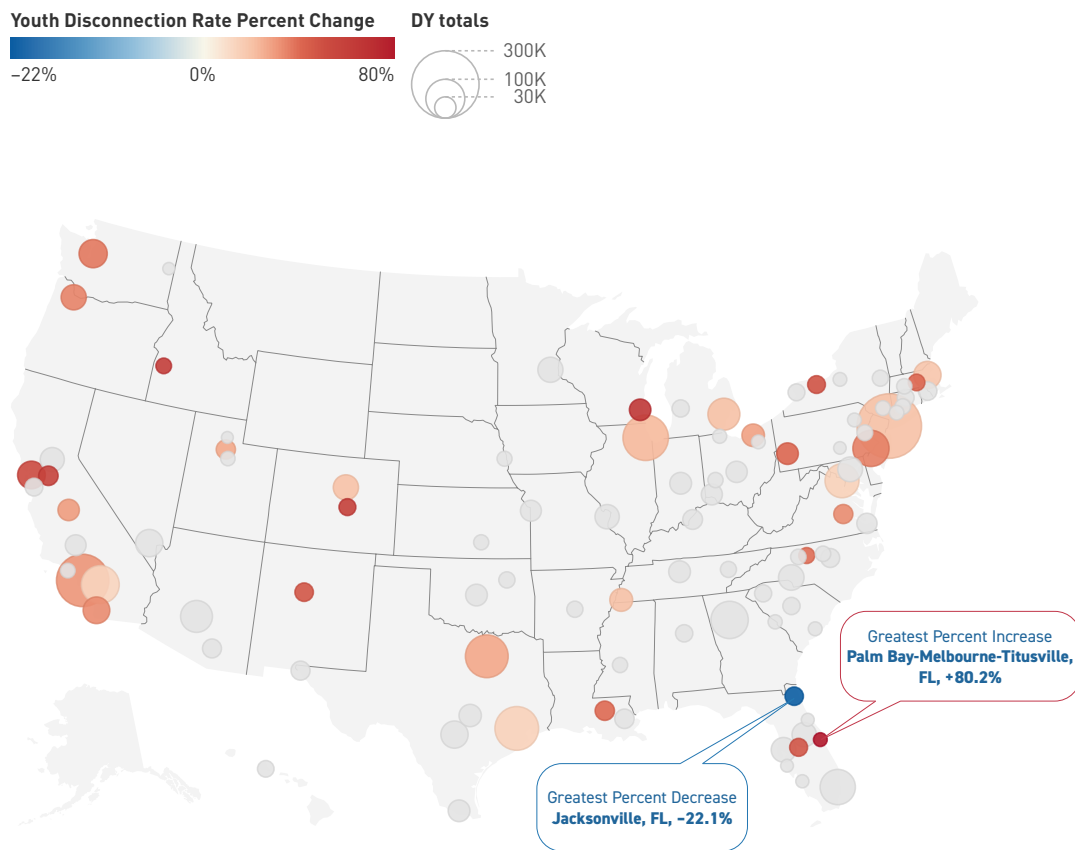
Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021.

Eleven metro areas registered 2021 disconnection rates that were at least 40 percent higher than their 2019 rates. They are listed below.

TABLE 22 METRO AREAS WITH GREATEST INCREASE IN DISCONNECTION

Metro Area	Percent Increase between 2019 and 2021
1 Pittsburgh, PA	40.0
2 Worcester, MA-CT	40.1
3 Albuquerque, NM	43.1
4 Lakeland-Winter Haven, FL	43.7
5 Rochester, NY	46.2
6 San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley, CA	52.3
7 Stockton, CA	57.4
8 Colorado Springs, CO	59.2
9 Boise City, ID	60.2
10 Milwaukee-Waukesha, WI	65.0
11 Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville, FL	80.2

FIGURE 23 SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN YOUTH DISCONNECTION RATE BY METRO AREA, 2019-2021



Note: Metro areas are grayed out where the change from 2019 to 2021 is not statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level.
 Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019 and 2021.

TABLE 24 YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN AMERICA'S MOST POPULOUS METRO AREAS

Rank	Metro Area	Youth Disconnection (%)	Youth Disconnection (#)	Youth Disconnection by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity (%)				
				Men	Women	Black	Latino	White
1	Provo-Orem, UT	6.8	9,200	6.2	7.4			6.9
2	Ogden-Clearfield, UT	6.8	5,500					6.8
3	Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH	7.0	42,700	8.2	5.8	8.8	14.0	5.5
4	San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA	7.7	15,500	7.3	8.1		9.2	9.5
5	Providence-Warwick, RI-MA	8.3	17,100	8.6	8.1		11.7	7.7
6	Omaha-Council Bluffs, NE-IA	8.3	10,200	8.4	8.1			6.2
7	Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk, CT	8.3	9,300	11.0				7.8
8	Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN	8.5	23,300	10.2	6.8			7.8
9	Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI	8.6	35,200	11.5	5.6			6.6
10	Hartford-East Hartford-Middletown, CT	8.7	13,800	9.9	7.4			7.9
11	Syracuse, NY	9.0	8,100	11.1	6.8			8.4
12	Kansas City, MO-KS	9.2	23,000	10.1	8.4			7.9
13	Charleston-North Charleston, SC	9.3	8,300	10.8				
14	Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown, TX	9.4	26,800	8.8	10.0		11.7	7.8
15	North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton, FL	9.4	6,700					
16	Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC	9.5	21,200	9.4	9.5	15.4		7.8
17	Grand Rapids-Kentwood, MI	9.7	14,400	11.2	8.0			7.0
18	San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley, CA	9.7	43,900	10.3	9.1	22.3	12.2	7.1
19	Spokane-Spokane Valley, WA	9.7	6,000					
20	Columbus, OH	9.8	23,800	11.0	8.5	17.3		8.6
21	Akron, OH	9.8	8,200	11.3				7.5
22	Oxnard-Thousand Oaks-Ventura, CA	9.9	9,600	11.0	8.7		11.2	
23	Jacksonville, FL	10.0	16,900	10.0	10.0			9.1
24	Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	10.1	69,400	11.4	8.8	17.1	10.3	6.7
25	San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad, CA	10.1	40,300	10.4	9.7		11.7	8.0

TABLE 24 YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN AMERICA'S MOST POPULOUS METRO AREAS, CONTINUED

Rank	Metro Area	Youth Disconnection (%)	Youth Disconnection (#)	Youth Disconnection by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity (%)				
				Men	Women	Black	Latino	White
26	Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin, TN	10.1	25,100	9.4	10.8			9.1
27	Deltona-Daytona Beach-Ormond Beach, FL	10.1	6,900	12.4				
28	Springfield, MA	10.2	10,800	11.8	8.8			8.1
29	Raleigh-Cary, NC	10.3	18,100	10.8	9.9			8.0
30	Cape Coral-Fort Myers, FL	10.3	7,200					
31	Harrisburg-Carlisle, PA	10.3	6,400					
32	Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ	10.4	60,200	10.7	10.2	11.0	11.8	9.3
33	Pittsburgh, PA	10.5	24,700	12.5	8.5	26.0		9.0
34	Indianapolis-Carmel-Anderson, IN	10.5	25,200	10.3	10.8	19.7		8.9
35	New Haven-Milford, CT	10.5	11,100	13.5				9.6
36	Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	10.6	33,700	11.9	9.4	12.8	10.1	9.9
37	St. Louis, MO-IL	10.6	32,600	11.8	9.4	19.9		8.1
38	Buffalo-Cheektowaga, NY	10.6	13,700	10.6	10.7			8.7
39	Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL	10.6	32,600	10.3	10.9	14.8	12.9	7.0
40	Durham-Chapel Hill, NC	10.7	10,900	12.8	8.6	14.6		
41	Poughkeepsie-Newburgh-Middletown, NY	10.7	9,800	12.3	8.9			11.9
42	Dayton-Kettering, OH	10.7	10,600	10.8	10.6			10.2
43	Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD	10.8	33,800	12.1	9.6	16.7		7.5
44	Albany-Schenectady-Troy, NY	10.9	12,200	13.5				8.0
45	Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO	11.0	35,400	11.8	10.2		15.7	8.2
46	Toledo, OH	11.0	8,700	11.5				
47	Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA	11.1	45,800	11.3	10.7		11.9	11.1
48	Salt Lake City, UT	11.1	18,800	11.2	11.0		16.0	7.8
49	Worcester, MA-CT	11.1	13,200	10.8	11.3			8.0
50	Knoxville, TN	11.2	12,100	12.6	9.8			11.3

TABLE 24 YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN AMERICA'S MOST POPULOUS METRO AREAS, CONTINUED

Rank	Metro Area	Youth Disconnection (%)	Youth Disconnection (#)	Youth Disconnection by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity (%)				
				Men	Women	Black	Latino	White
51	Sacramento-Roseville-Folsom, CA	11.4	31,900	11.2	11.6		12.7	10.7
52	Greensboro-High Point, NC	11.5	11,900	13.2	9.9			14.2
53	Greenville-Anderson, SC	11.5	14,200		11.2			11.5
54	Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Alpharetta, GA	11.6	85,100	11.2	12.1	15.0	12.7	9.4
55	Rochester, NY	11.7	15,500	14.9	8.4			8.8
56	Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	11.7	79,700	13.2	10.2	21.5	15.9	7.4
57	Urban Honolulu, HI	11.8	13,100	10.9	12.9			
58	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA	12.0	177,000	12.9	11.1	21.2	12.8	9.1
59	Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton, PA-NJ	12.0	11,700	15.8			23.3	7.1
60	Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI	12.1	130,800	13.0	11.2	25.1	12.2	7.8
61	Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC	12.1	36,500	12.4	11.9	18.7	13.0	8.8
62	Birmingham-Hoover, AL	12.2	14,500	14.7	9.7	20.4		
63	Columbia, SC	12.2	14,500	13.3	11.0	19.3		7.5
64	Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	12.2	75,200	12.6	11.9	18.3	11.4	8.2
65	Tucson, AZ	12.3	18,100	13.4	11.2		16.9	6.8
66	Boise City, ID	12.3	11,300	15.0				10.3
67	Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	12.4	114,600	12.1	12.6	17.5	14.2	9.5
68	Tulsa, OK	12.4	12,400	11.2	13.6			11.0
69	Richmond, VA	12.6	18,500	14.9	10.5	20.2		8.2
70	Oklahoma City, OK	12.6	25,000	12.2	13.0			10.2
71	Cleveland-Elyria, OH	12.7	27,300	12.5	13.0	22.9		9.1
72	Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC	12.9	8,800	16.3				
73	New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA	13.1	274,700	14.3	11.9	19.4	17.7	8.3
74	Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI	13.2	60,500	12.6	13.8	22.7	13.8	9.4
75	Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA	13.3	35,300	13.4	13.2		9.6	13.6

TABLE 24 YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN AMERICA'S MOST POPULOUS METRO AREAS, CONTINUED

Rank	Metro Area	Youth Disconnection (%)	Youth Disconnection (#)	Youth Disconnection by Gender and by Race and Ethnicity (%)				
				Men	Women	Black	Latino	White
76	San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX	13.3	42,200	12.4	14.3		14.9	10.9
77	Colorado Springs, CO	13.6	13,700		19.6			13.6
78	Milwaukee-Waukesha, WI	13.7	24,500	15.2	12.1	32.1		7.5
79	Jackson, MS	14.0	10,600	13.3		16.3		
80	Louisville/Jefferson County, KY-IN	14.1	20,000	15.4	12.7	29.2		10.9
81	Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway, AR	14.2	12,300	10.0	18.2			17.7
82	Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	14.2	119,800	13.6	14.8	19.9	14.5	12.7
83	Wichita, KS	14.2	10,400	13.7				12.8
84	Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville, FL	14.2	8,200		18.1			14.7
85	Scranton-Wilkes-Barre, PA	14.4	8,200	16.1				15.0
86	Winston-Salem, NC	14.5	11,100	13.9	15.1		20.8	12.3
87	New Orleans-Metairie, LA	14.9	19,200	16.0	13.7	25.2		
88	Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA	15.0	87,700	16.4	13.5	27.7	14.8	14.5
89	El Paso, TX	15.0	18,300	15.0	15.1		15.3	
90	Baton Rouge, LA	16.5	19,000	14.7	18.2	27.0		
91	Albuquerque, NM	16.6	17,100	16.5	16.6		16.7	
92	Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, NV	17.2	42,500	18.1	16.3	29.3	18.5	11.3
93	Bakersfield, CA	18.3	22,600	20.5	15.7		15.9	28.2
94	Fresno, CA	18.8	24,200	17.5	20.1		19.1	
95	Lakeland-Winter Haven, FL	18.9	15,800	19.8	17.9		22.6	16.0
96	McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX	19.3	25,000	16.7	21.9		19.8	
97	Stockton, CA	19.8	19,300	24.4	14.7		16.5	18.5
98	Memphis, TN-MS-AR	19.9	28,300	23.5	16.3	27.3		10.8

Note: Two of the country's 100 most populous metro areas (Des Moines-West Des Moines, IA, and Madison, WI) had unreliable estimates, so they are not included in this list.

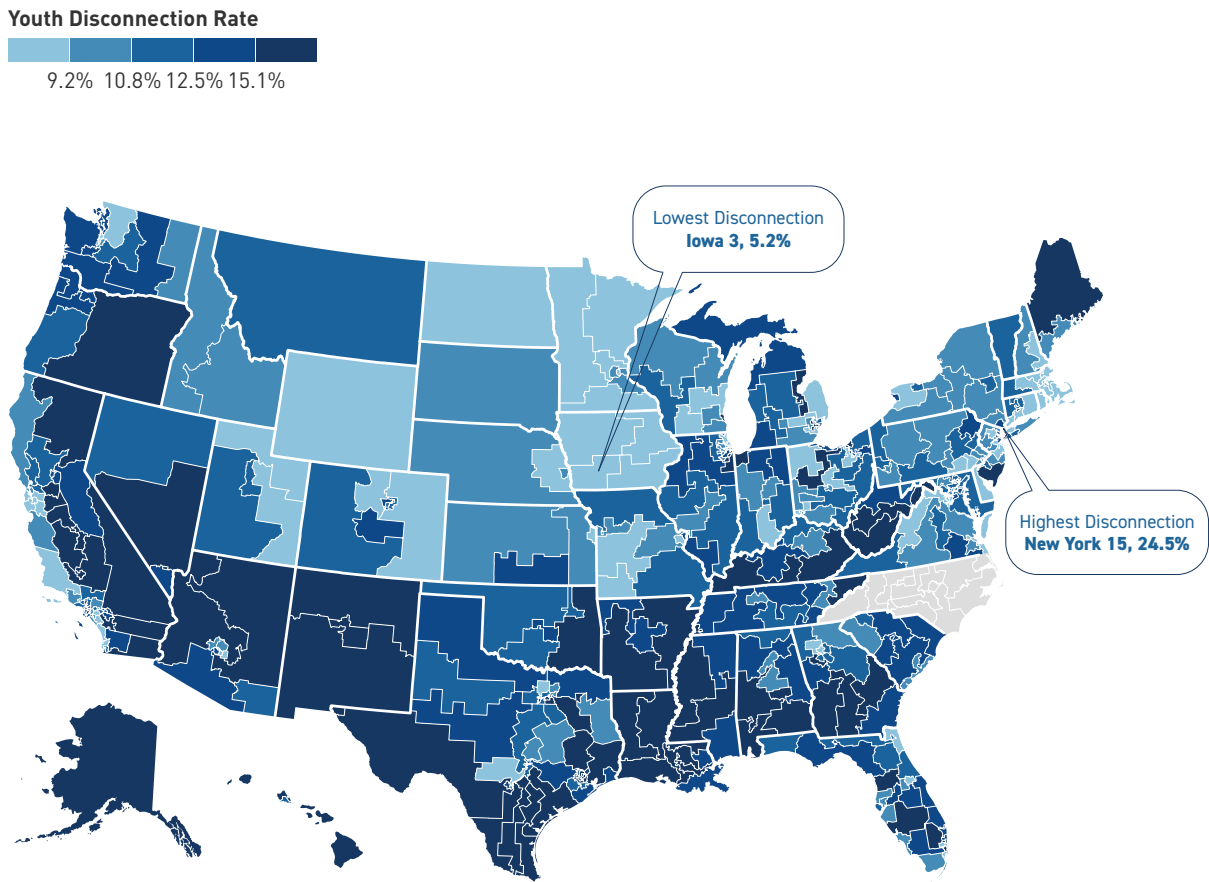
Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021.

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS

As is the case with the other geographies examined in this section, the youth disconnection rate varies widely by congressional district. Iowa's 3rd Congressional District, which includes Des Moines and the southwestern portion of the state, has the lowest youth disconnection rate, 5.2 percent. The 10 best-performing districts all have disconnection rates of 6.0 percent or less.

New York's 15th Congressional District, which includes New York City's South Bronx as well as western portions of the Bronx, is home to the highest youth disconnection rate, 24.5 percent; it is also the poorest of the country's 435 Congressional Districts. In the 10 districts with the highest rates, at least one in five young people are neither working nor in school.

FIGURE 25 YOUTH DISCONNECTION BY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT



Note: North Carolina is omitted due to substantial redistricting in the 117th Congress.
Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021.

TABLE 26 TOP- AND BOTTOM-SCORING CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS

10 LOWEST-DISCONNECTION DISTRICTS		
District	Youth Disconnection (%)	Youth Disconnection (#)
1 Iowa 3	5.2	5,010
2 California 18	5.4	4,350
3 Virginia 8	5.5	3,960
4 California 52	5.7	5,370
5 Arizona 5	5.8	5,510
6 Colorado 2	5.9	7,390
7 Utah 1	5.9	7,070
8 Massachusetts 5	6.0	5,330
9 Nebraska 1	6.0	5,460
10 New Hampshire 1	6.0	4,730

10 HIGHEST-DISCONNECTION DISTRICTS		
District	Youth Disconnection (%)	Youth Disconnection (#)
414 Texas 34	19.9	19,800
415 Michigan 14	20.0	15,300
416 Louisiana 4	20.6	17,930
417 Tennessee 9	20.8	16,690
418 New Mexico 2	20.9	18,950
419 Nevada 1	21.2	17,370
420 Louisiana 5	22.5	20,930
421 New Mexico 3	23.7	17,750
422 Pennsylvania 2	23.8	17,010
423 New York 15	24.5	24,090

Note: North Carolina is omitted due to substantial redistricting in the 117th Congress.

Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



KEY POINTS:

- Direct resources to areas with the highest rates of youth disconnection.
- Address the Covid-19-fueled learning loss.

The purpose of calculating youth disconnection rates is to understand which communities and groups of young people are most affected. Ideally, understanding the nature and extent of youth disconnection will inform the work of policymakers at all levels, 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 areas with the highest rates of youth disconnection.**

In past years, we have made a core set of recommendations for evidence-based approaches that could contribute to reducing the youth disconnection rate. They include: high-quality preschool; 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, all risk factors for high school dropout; more guidance counselors and others to assist in the transitions between middle and high school and high school and postsecondary pathways; wraparound services and one-stop service delivery for vulnerable youth; more accessible and robust apprenticeship and career and technical education programs; tailored interventions that meet the specific needs of communities and individuals experiencing disconnection; and more. These areas continue to be priorities.

In the immediate term, however, **addressing the Covid-19-fueled learning loss** that set already vulnerable young people further behind their peers and at risk of being permanently scarred by lost educational opportunities is critical. Catching up after falling behind, though extremely difficult, is possible. Evidence suggests that tutoring is key to addressing learning loss, stemming the widening gap in student achievement, and improving student outcomes. A meta-analysis by J-PAL of scores of 96 randomized evaluations of tutoring programs shows that supplemental, one-on-one, or small group instruction is a proven strategy that policymakers can be confident will work; such programs have “consistently large, positive impacts on students.”¹⁴

Successful tutoring programs share several characteristics: they are run by teachers, other school employees, or students studying to be teachers rather than by parents or other volunteers; they are conducted during school hours rather than after school; and they are held three times per week rather than just once or twice. Tutoring's effectiveness lies in the increased instructional time given to students, the ways in which tutors are able to customize content and instructional methods to meet individual student needs, and the bonds and connections students and tutors often form.

The American Rescue Plan provided over \$100 billion to school districts; it was to be used by September 2023 for a wide range of purposes. Addressing learning loss was the thrust of the program and tutoring a key strategy, but expenditures on the school's physical plant, improved WiFi, technology, maintenance of normal operations, and

Addressing the Covid-19-fueled learning loss that set already vulnerable young people further behind their peers and at risk of being permanently scarred by lost educational opportunities is critical.

projects identified by the school principal were also allowed. It is unclear as yet how schools spent this money. What is clear is that learning loss continues, and its effects will compound as this generation of students progresses through school—unless it is addressed. Federal, state, and county governments should allocate additional, targeted funds to specifically support tutoring programs for young people who have fallen behind. Schools should partner with education programs to bring on education students to serve as tutors, and retired or former teachers should be enticed back to run tutoring programs. The current teacher shortage poses a significant challenge, but every effort should be made to implement this evidence-based approach to helping young people catch up, thrive in school, and lay the groundwork for a flourishing adulthood.

Two other especially concerning developments are apparent in the 2021 data. One is the **decline in 18- and 19-year-olds in school, paired with the disproportionate postsecondary enrollment decline among Native American and Latino young people.** The labor market increasingly demands workers with some form of postsecondary education, be it career and technical education programs that offer professional credentials or associate and bachelor's degree programs. Helping young people transition from high school to postsecondary education is more important than ever. The other is the **sharp rise in the share of young people who report having a disability, particularly a cognitive disability.** Again, Latino and Native American youth are disproportionately affected, and have experienced the sharpest increases in disability since 2019. While it is possible that the disability rate will fall as we move further away from the most difficult years of the Covid-19 pandemic, when mental health challenges spiked, this statistic deserves careful monitoring and should motivate urgent action in the short term.

What is clear is that learning loss continues, and its effects will compound as this generation of students progresses through school—unless it is addressed.

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 2021 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, state, congressional district, and metro area levels use 2021 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 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 population data from the 2020 decennial census.

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 2019 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 six 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*; and *A Disrupted Year: How the Arrival of Covid-19 Affected Youth Disconnection*.

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. 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 Asians, Blacks, Native Americans, NHOPI, and whites 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 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 the 10 largest Asian subgroups and the six largest Latino/a subgroups in the United States. The selection of these groups is based on national population estimates from the 2021 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 0.2 are considered unreliable and are omitted from the report.

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