

CONTACT:

Dewey Blanton, SSRC Communications
718-517-3721
blanton@ssrc.org

THE NATIONAL YOUTH DISCONNECTION RATE CONTINUES TO FALL, BUT PROGRESS HAS SLOWED AND
THE RATE FOR BLACK YOUTH HAS INCREASED

Making the Connection: Transportation and Youth Disconnection Highlights Transportation Barriers that Fuel Youth Disconnection, Especially for Black, Latino, and Native American Young People and Youth Living in Poverty

BROOKLYN, NY (April 25, 2019) – [Measure of America](#), a project of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), today released *Making the Connection: Transportation and Youth Disconnection*, its latest report on youth disconnection. Disconnected youth, also referred to as Opportunity Youth, are teens and young adults ages 16–24 who are neither working nor in school. *Making the Connection* reports that although the US youth disconnection rate fell to 11.5 percent in 2017, the seventh consecutive annual decline, the pace of improvement slowed and the rate for black young people increased.

The report, which was supported by the Schultz Family Foundation and debuted at the [Aspen Institute Opportunity Youth Forum](#) convening in Philadelphia, is the seventh report in the Measure of America Youth Disconnection series that began in 2012. As public awareness of the problem of youth disconnection has grown and economic conditions have improved, the youth disconnection rate has fallen steadily. Nonetheless, challenges remain. [Research](#) released last year found that if we assisted all 4.5 million disconnected youth, more businesses would prosper, and a city like Atlanta could see an extra \$150 million in annual revenue.

Among the report's key findings are:

- Nationally, the youth disconnection rate continued its decline to 11.5 percent in 2017, the seventh consecutive annual decline from its peak of 14.7 percent in 2010. The current rate of 11.5 percent is lower than the 2008 pre-recession rate.
- The rate of decline is slowing, however, indicating a leveling out of progress in youth employment and suggesting that economic growth is necessary but not sufficient to address the obstacles that young people who remain disconnected face.
- The national disconnection rate for black young people increased between 2016 and 2017, from 17.2 percent to 17.9 percent, despite remaining flat or falling for all other groups. Black young men have a much higher disconnection rate than black young women, 20.8 percent as compared to 14.8. Disconnection rates for black young people are astonishingly high in Nevada (26.6 percent), Wisconsin (26.0 percent), and Arkansas (24.5 percent).

- Native American teens and young adults have the highest rate of disconnection, 23.9 percent, close to one in four. Asian American young people have the lowest rate of youth disconnection, 6.6 percent, though the rate varies by Asian subgroup.
- Latino young people have far outpaced other groups when it comes to increased connection; the Latino disconnection rate fell 28.7 percent between 2010 and 2017, compared to the decrease of 22.1 percent for the country as a whole.
- Minnesota has the lowest rate of youth disconnection (6.2 percent), followed by Iowa (7.0 percent) and Massachusetts (7.1 percent). West Virginia has the highest rate, 17.0 percent, followed by New Mexico (16.5 percent) and Mississippi (16.4 percent).
- Metro area youth disconnection rates range from just 5.6 percent in greater Grand Rapids, Michigan, to 18.0 percent in the Memphis metro area, which includes parts of Tennessee, Mississippi, and Arkansas.

In many metro areas, disconnection is closely linked to poor access to transportation. The history of redlining, residential segregation, and disinvestment in central cities continues to hamper access to quality jobs and education for black and brown young people.

“The national slowdown in improvement is seen more clearly when you zoom in to certain regions, metro areas, and racial and ethnic groups,” said Kristen Lewis, director of Measure of America. “Racial discrimination, residential segregation, gender bias, and regional transportation systems built for suburban car owners: these historical barriers hold back too many young people today. Investments in transportation that connects disadvantaged young people to better schools and jobs can create an infrastructure of opportunity that will benefit everyone.”

The report ends with a synopsis of Measure of America’s key research findings and recommendations. Addressing the unequal conditions of daily life to prevent disconnection from happening in the first place is key. This means ensuring high-quality early care and education and K–12 schooling for all children; supporting at-risk children and teens as well as their parents with wrap-around services; acting on early signs of potential drop out; developing meaningful school-to-work pathways for all young people, not just for the college bound; and ending punitive school discipline, which is disproportionately aimed at black children. Coming together to reconnect youth who are unmoored from school and work is also critical. Doing so requires stakeholders to set concrete goals and work toward them collaboratively, to build long-term relationships with vulnerable young people, and to address practical barriers to disconnection like transportation.

“Measure of America has been a leader in data and analysis about this critical population since its first report on the topic in 2012,” said Alondra Nelson, president of the Social Science Research Council. “This report exemplifies the SSRC’s commitment to research on critical social issues that advances the public good and informs public debate.”

“At the Schultz Family Foundation, we believe every young person has the potential to succeed, and we’re committed to using research and data to inform both our efforts and the larger field of practice. Today’s report from Measure of America reinforces the importance in investing in this next generation of young people,” said Daniel Pitasky, Executive Director of the Schultz Family Foundation.

“Young people are the future of America. This could not be any clearer based upon the Measure of America report. Bias against any racial, ethnic, or regional group that impedes the growth and

development of this crucial segment of America's population is not only cruel and unfair; it threatens the future social and economic prosperity and well-being of the nation," said James S. Jackson, Daniel Katz Distinguished University Professor of Psychology at the University of Michigan. "We must do all we can to make sure that all of America's youth stay connected. It is not only the right thing to do; it is the smart course of action for our nation's leaders."

An interactive website with data by state, metro area, and race and ethnicity can be found at www.measureofamerica.org/DYinteractive.

Making the Connection was supported by the Schultz Family Foundation.

About the Social Science Research Council

The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) is an independent, international nonprofit with the mission of mobilizing social science for the public good. Founded in 1923, the SSRC fosters research innovation, nurtures new generations of researchers, deepens inquiry within and across disciplines and sectors, and mobilizes necessary knowledge on important public issues. For more information on the SSRC and its programs, please visit www.ssrc.org.

About Measure of America

An initiative of the Social Science Research Council, [Measure of America](http://www.measureofamerica.org) provides easy-to-use yet methodologically sound tools for understanding the distribution of well-being and opportunity in America and stimulating fact-based dialogue about issues we all care about: health, education, and living standards. Measure of America has been the go-to resource for data and analysis on youth disconnection in America since 2012.

About Schultz Family Foundation

The Schultz Family Foundation, established in 1996 by Sheri and Howard Schultz, aims to unlock America's potential, one individual and one community at a time. It creates opportunities for populations facing barriers to success to ensure that their place in life isn't determined by zip code, race, religion, gender, or sexual identity. Investing in innovative, scalable solutions, and partnerships, the Foundation focuses its efforts on two communities with enormous promise: the 4.6 million youth and young adults aged between 16 and 24 who are out of school and out of work, and the 3.8 million post-9/11 veterans and approximately 250,000 service members who transition to civilian life each year. Visit <https://SchultzFamilyFoundation.org> for more information.