

Youth Disconnection in The Rapides Foundation Service Area, 2023

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Measure of America is a project of the century-old nonprofit, nonpartisan Social Science Research Council. It was founded in 2007 to create easy-to-use yet methodologically sound tools for understanding well-being and opportunity in America. Through reports, interactive apps, and custom-built dashboards, Measure of America works with partners to breathe life into numbers, using data to identify areas of highest 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. The period of young adulthood is critical in developing the capabilities required to live a good 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. Measure of America is thus concerned with addressing youth disconnection because it stunts human development, closing off some of life's most rewarding and joyful paths and leading to a future of limited horizons and unrealized potential. In addition to producing annual reports about youth disconnection, Measure of America works with partners to conduct local, customized research, develop goals, and track progress.

YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN TRFSA

The years of emerging adulthood are a critical time for young people to develop skills, earn credentials, and have experiences that set them on a path to a fulfilling life. For some youth, though, this path is rocky; it is marked by spells of separation from school and work, institutions that are fundamental to the transition to adulthood. The presence of many disconnected youth—young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor in school—in a community is a sign of limited opportunity and results in high costs to society. Research by Measure of America has shown that young adults who experience periods of disconnection go on to earn less and are less likely to be employed, own a home, or be in good health by their thirties. In The Rapides Foundation Service Area (TRFSA), more than one in five young people are disconnected.

This report presents the latest available data on youth disconnection in a region designated by the US Census Bureau that covers seven of the nine parishes in TRFSA and one parish outside it. A version of this report was previously released in 2019 using data from 2017. This report is an update on the current status of youth disconnection in TRFSA, using data from 2021 (the most recent data available from the US Census Bureau). Natchitoches and Allen Parishes are not included in this report, while Concordia Parish, which is outside of TRFSA, is included. All told, the eight parishes included in this report, hereafter referred to as TRFSA, are: Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, Grant, LaSalle, Rapides, Vernon, and Winn Parishes. This analysis shows that the rate of youth disconnection is relatively high in TRFSA, particularly in rural areas. Generating effective solutions requires understanding which groups of young people are disconnected and why. This analysis of youth disconnection at the local level will allow The Rapides Foundation (TRF) as well as policymakers, advocacy organizations, and youth service providers, among others, to identify areas and populations with the highest need while helping to set and track collective goals.

KEY FINDINGS

The first section of the report looks at youth disconnection among all youth in order to understand how the region compares to the state and nation.

TRFSA: The Rapides Foundation Service Area disconnection rate in 2021 is 23.9 percent, double the national rate (12.1 percent) and roughly 6 percentage points higher than the rate in Louisiana as a whole (17.7 percent). This translates to roughly 8,450 young people cut off from crucial pathways to a fulfilling life.

Rurality: Rural youth in TRFSA have particularly high disconnection rates. For the purpose of this report, TRFSA is divided into two sections, one containing Rapides and Vernon Parishes and one containing Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, Grant, LaSalle, and Winn Parishes. The disconnection rate in Rapides and Vernon Parishes is 17.6 percent. The disconnection rate in the other, more rural subregion is 28.3 percent. These subregion estimates use 5-year pooled data from 2017-2021.

*The second section of the report looks at disparities among different groups of youth in the region. Two groups, youth in the military and institutionalized youth, are transient and often transplants whose status does not necessarily reflect the challenges and opportunities that the region affords its young people. Since these two groups are very localized—based in a particular location and not spread across a region—their presence can have an outsized impact on local-level youth disconnection calculations. For this reason, the second section of the report removes these two groups from the analysis and looks only at civilian, noninstitutionalized youth. See **BOX 7** for more on these categories and their impact on youth disconnection analysis.*

From this point on in the Executive Summary, the disconnection rates only include civilian, noninstitutionalized youth and use pooled estimates from 2017–2021. This enables reliable demographic and other disaggregation.

TRFSA: Looking only at the civilian, noninstitutionalized population, the rate of disconnection in TRFSA for 2017–2021 is 21.3 percent, similar to the 2013–2017 rate of 21.4 percent. The 2017–2021 civilian noninstitutionalized rate is essentially equivalent to the rate among the whole population for the same 5-year period: 21.4 percent.

Rurality: Looking only at the civilian, noninstitutionalized population, the disconnection rate in Rapides and Vernon Parishes is 19.3 percent, 2.0 percentage points lower than the rate among the whole population. The rate in the more rural subregion (Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, Grant, LaSalle, and Winn Parishes) is 24.5 percent, 3.2 percentage points higher than the rate among the whole population.

Gender and Race: The disconnection rates for young men and young women are similar, 20.3 percent and 22.2 percent, respectively. The disconnection rate for white young people is 20.6 percent, and the disconnection rate for Black young people is 19.8 percent—the rates are on par with each other. In Louisiana and the country as a whole, Black youth have a markedly higher disconnection rate than white youth.

Educational Attainment: Youth who do not graduate high school face severe barriers; by their early twenties, 69.5 percent are disconnected. While a high school diploma certainly helps, it is not a cure-all; 36.4 percent of youth ages 22–24 with a high school diploma but no education beyond that are disconnected. Young adults 16–24 (high school graduates without postsecondary education) make up more than half of all disconnected youth in the region. While college education can reduce the incidence of disconnection, fewer than one in six disconnected youth has started or completed college. Since 2017, PUMA 600 has shown a significant reduction in disconnection rates for young people with some college education, evidencing the benefit of access to further educational opportunities. These results suggest that while a high school diploma is necessary, in many cases it is not sufficient. Focusing not just on high school graduation but also on a completed transition to higher education or the workforce is crucial.

Poverty: Poverty creates numerous barriers to connection in communities across the country, including in TRFSA. More than one in four youth (28.6 percent) living in poverty are disconnected, higher than the disconnection rate in the region overall. While the poverty rate is already high in the region, it is even higher among disconnected youth.

Motherhood: The disconnection rate of young mothers between the ages of 16 and 24 is 33.5 percent, far higher than that of other young women that age in the region, 20.0 percent. Disconnected young women in TRFSA are 1.8 times as likely to be mothers as connected young women are. Particularly concerning is the very high poverty rate among disconnected mothers—83.3 percent live in households below 200 percent of the poverty line.

Disability: Nearly half—46.7 percent—of all youth with a disability are disconnected in the region, 19.5 percentage points higher than the rate among youth with disabilities nationally. Programs designed to support disconnected youth should take into account the needs of youth with disabilities.

These findings suggest that youth in TRFSA do not all experience disconnection in the same ways or for the same reasons. Creating opportunities for disconnected youth will require not only understanding the differences between groups but also listening to and including youth in decision-making processes to develop viable, long-term solutions.

INTRODUCTION

The years of emerging adulthood have an outsized impact on the rest of our lives, for good and for ill. Young people who are in school or working during their late teens and early twenties are gathering credentials and contacts, learning cognitive skills and unspoken behavioral norms, developing agency and confidence, and finding out about themselves and others. But this is not the case for everyone. Disconnected youth are teenagers and young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor in school (see **BOX 1**). In 2021, there were 4.7 million disconnected youth nationwide, about one in eight young people (12.1 percent). These teens and young adults are cut off from the people, institutions, and experiences that would otherwise help them develop the knowledge, skills, maturity, and sense of purpose required to live rewarding lives as adults. The negative repercussions of youth disconnection extend beyond the individual and across the economy, the social sector, the criminal justice system, and the political landscape, affecting us all. For this reason, how the country’s young people are faring in their transition to adulthood is a fundamental indicator of societal progress and well-being.

The purpose of this report is to describe and analyze the landscape of youth disconnection in The Rapides Foundation Service Area (TRFSA) (see **BOX 3** for the definition of the region). While economic gains at the national level after the Great Recession contributed to declining youth disconnection rates nationally, the 2020 coronavirus pandemic resulted in an increase in youth disconnection rates—an upward spike that reversed a decade-long trend of falling rates. Despite the fluctuation in disconnection rates, the gaps across geographies and between racial and ethnic groups remain persistent. Addressing disconnection requires numerous stakeholders working in concert on multiple fronts. Learning from what has worked in other places is important, but addressing disconnection also requires learning about a region’s particular challenges; analysis of local data can highlight priority areas and help set common goals that guide collective work at the community level. Local conditions and resources have a direct impact on the opportunities and obstacles young people face, and those living in rural areas face outsized challenges. Measure of America’s *A Decade Undone* found that in 2018, rural counties as a whole tend to have the highest rates of youth disconnection (18.1 percent) while suburban counties had the lowest (10.4 percent).¹

BOX 1: Who Are Disconnected—or Opportunity—Youth?

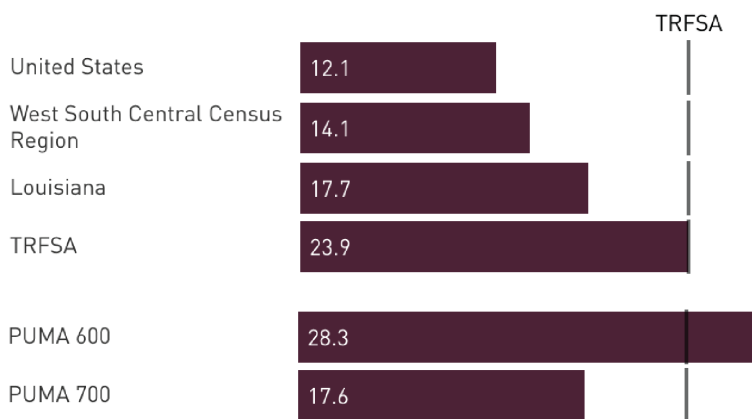
Measure of America (MOA) defines disconnected youth as teens and young adults ages 16 to 24 who are neither in school nor working. This is the definition that MOA has used in its data calculations and analysis on youth disconnection since its first report on the topic, *One in Seven*, published in 2012. It’s also the foundation for most other youth disconnection estimates. MOA’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.

Terms	American Community Survey (ACS) Definitions
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.

NATIONAL, REGIONAL & STATE CONTEXT

Over one-fifth (23.9 percent) of youth in TRFSA are neither working nor in school. This is nearly double the national rate, 12.1 percent, and translates to roughly 8,450 youth disconnected from crucial pathways to a fulfilling life. In this section, data for the United States, the West South Central region, Louisiana, and TRFSA are from 2021, the year of the most recent available American Community Survey. Data presented here for TRFSA's two constituent Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) are a 5-year pooled estimate from 2017 to 2021 (see **BOX 3**). In subsequent sections that cover characteristics of disconnection, 5-year pooled estimates are used for TRFSA as a whole. These 5-year rollups achieve greater reliability for smaller population sizes, whether geographic (TRFSA subregions) or demographic (race/ethnicity, gender, motherhood, and so on).

FIGURE 2: TRFSA in Context (%)



Source: US, state, TRFSA: Measure of calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021; PUMA: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017-2021

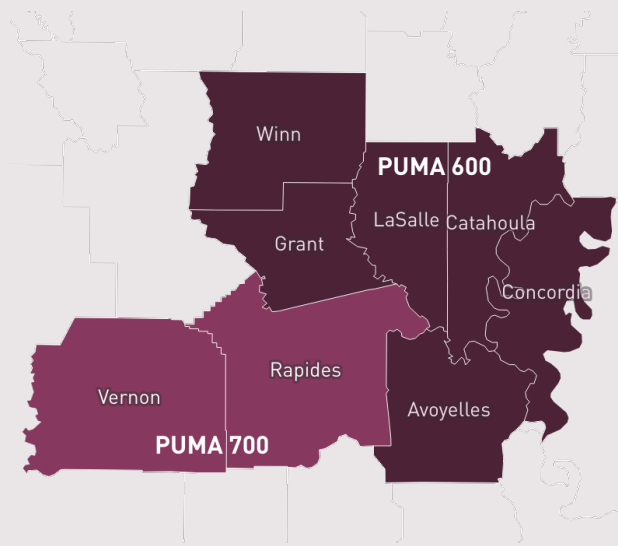
Youth disconnection rates vary widely in communities across the US; rates at the state level range from 7.0 percent in North Dakota to 20.5 percent in New Mexico. Among the nine regions of the country, the East South Central region (Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee) and the West South Central region (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas) are on par for the highest rates of youth disconnection, with 14.2 percent and 14.1 percent, respectively. The state of Louisiana has the second-highest rate in the country, 17.7 percent, after New Mexico. The youth disconnection rate in TRFSA is 7 percentage points higher than the state average (see **FIGURE 2**). While the West South Central

region and the state of Louisiana are large areas made up of many different types of communities, their rates provide important context and show that there is room for improvement in TRFSA.

TRFSA is not monolithic. The two PUMAs that make up the region have divergent outcomes for young people. The youth disconnection rate in PUMA 700, Rapides and Vernon Parishes, is 17.6 percent—on par with the statewide rate. In PUMA 600, however, more than one in four people (28.3 percent) is neither working nor in school, more than ten percentage points higher than the rate in Louisiana overall. This difference reflects the challenges faced by rural areas across the country—they are farther from the centers of economic activity and home to fewer colleges, universities, and career and technical programs, and as a result, employment and educational opportunities tend to be limited or difficult to access. PUMA 700 includes Alexandria, the largest city in the region, which likely contributes to its lower disconnection rate.

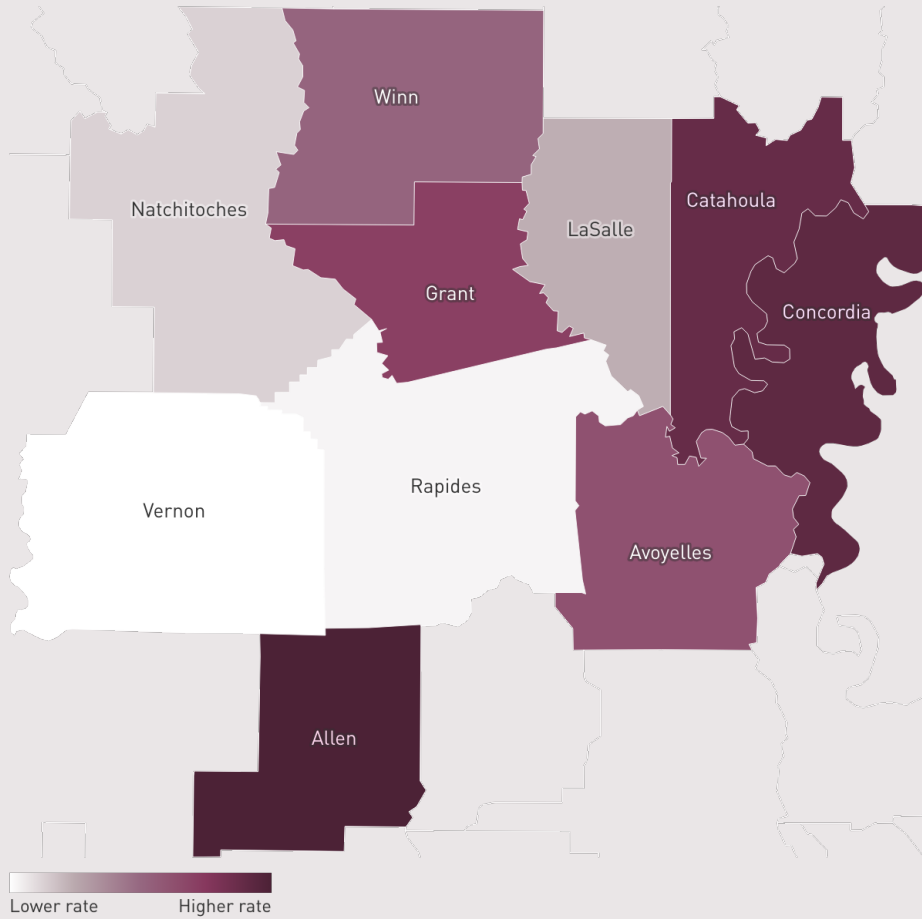
At the parish level, Vernon Parish has the lowest disconnection rate in TRFSA (14.6 percent), while Allen Parish has the highest (33.7 percent) (see **FIGURE 4**).² The gap between these parishes is 19.1 percentage points. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Health Statistics classifies the Allen Parish as rural, while Vernon Parish is in the town category. Nationally, rural counties tend to have higher rates of disconnection than those containing towns or cities.³ As mentioned above, in general, rural areas have fewer employment opportunities and a narrower range of educational options, and transportation can be a difficult-to-overcome barrier. TRFSA generally follows this pattern. **The rural parishes (Allen, Avoyelles, Catahoula, LaSalle, and Winn) have higher disconnection rates on average than those containing towns (Concordia, Natchitoches and Vernon) and small cities (Rapides and Grant).**

BOX 3: Note on Geographies



The data used in this study come from the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample. The data are provided in geographic units known as Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs). PUMAs are collections of counties or census tracts within counties. They are defined by the US Census Bureau and have populations of at least 100,000 people and typically fewer than 200,000. Two PUMAs cover seven of the nine parishes in TRFSA and one parish outside it: **PUMA 600, encompassing Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, Grant, LaSalle, and Winn Parishes; and PUMA 700, encompassing Rapides and Vernon Parishes.** These two PUMAs combined are referred to in this report as TRFSA. As a result of using the PUMAs, Natchitoches and Allen Parishes are not included in this report, while Concordia Parish, which is outside of TRFSA, is included. For more information, see the Methodological Note.

FIGURE 4: Youth Disconnection by Parish



Source: Custom Tabulations from US Census Bureau, ACS 2016–2020.
 Note: 2021 county data are not yet available from the US Census Bureau.
 Visit www.measureofamerica.org/DYinteractive for youth disconnection rates for each parish in the state.

All Youth (16-24)		(%)	(#)	Range (# of Disconnected Youth) Margin of Error at 90% confidence level
Concordia Parish	<i>Town</i>	32.2	770	609-931
Catahoula Parish*	<i>Rural</i>	31.5	280	174-386
Grant Parish*	<i>Small City</i>	28.2	655	447-863
Avoyelles Parish	<i>Rural</i>	26.5	1,160	860-1,460
Winn Parish	<i>Rural</i>	24.6	345	248-442
LaSalle Parish*	<i>Rural</i>	19.1	370	230-510
Rapides Parish	<i>Small City</i>	15.2	2,330	1,881-2,779
Vernon Parish	<i>Town</i>	14.6	1,175	948-1,402
Included in TRFSA but Not in Report Analysis				
Allen Parish	<i>Rural</i>	33.7	855	606-1,104
Natchitoches Parish	<i>Town</i>	17.1	1,255	928-1,582

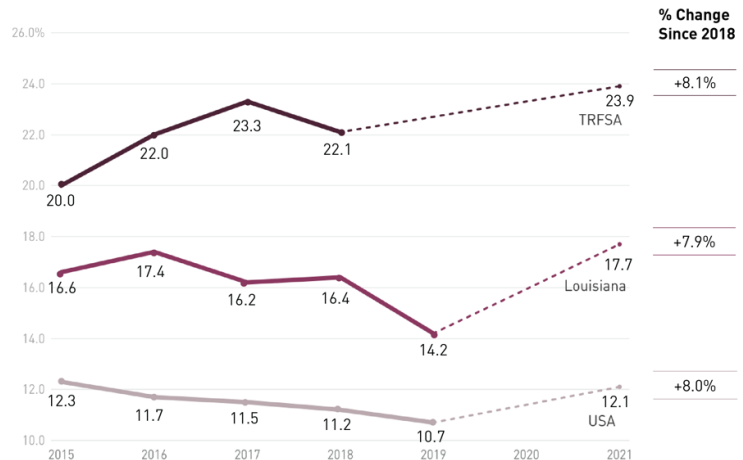
*Indicates less reliable estimates

CHANGE OVER TIME

The youth disconnection rate in TRFSA has remained relatively steady, varying within a range of 2 percentage points since 2016. While the youth disconnection rate has steadily declined nationwide since the Great Recession, as it has in Louisiana, this progress was substantially reversed since the onset of Covid. TRFSA did not see a large spike in the disconnection rate in 2021, but has lost youth population since the span of this analysis began in 2015. Data points for 2019 and 2020 are omitted in the change-over-time graphics in **FIGURES 5 & 6**. The Census data for 2020 were substantially affected by the pandemic and thus released with many caveats, and the youth disconnection data for 2019 for TRFSA appeared to suffer from a sampling error, with the data suggesting trends that did not correspond to other on-the-ground realities. Rural populations are more likely to experience sampling error in large-scale administrative surveys. For these reasons, the 2019 and 2020 data are not included in TRFSA trends analysis. For the purpose of trends analysis, **FIGURES 5 & 6** show 1-year estimates (just as in the earlier **NATIONAL, REGIONAL & STATE CONTEXT** section) while the rest of the report, aside from a second **CHANGE OVER TIME** section on **PAGE 18**, uses 5-year estimates.

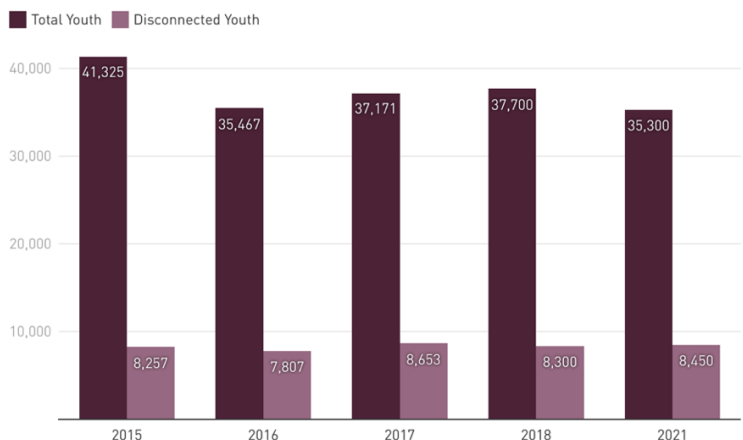
All that being said, comparing 2018 disconnection rates with 2021 disconnection rates shows that TRFSA saw a 1.8 percentage point increase in disconnection, compared to a 1.3 percentage point increase in Louisiana and a 0.9 percentage point increase nationwide. This comes out to roughly an 8 percent increase in youth disconnection rates from 2018 to 2021 across all three geographies.

FIGURE 5: Youth Disconnection Rate in TRFSA and Louisiana, 2015 to 2021 (%)



Source: Measure of America Calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2015-2021.

FIGURE 6: Disconnected Youth in TRFSA, 2015 to 2021



Source: Measure of America Calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2015-2021.

DISPARITIES IN DISCONNECTION

Stubborn gaps in disconnection rates nationally among different youth populations suggest that economic growth is not enough; there are other barriers to school and work that must be addressed. This section explores how different groups of youth are faring with a view to identifying some of the drivers of disconnection in TRFSA. Two groups, youth in the military and youth in prison, are transient and often transplants whose status does not necessarily reflect the challenges and opportunities that the region affords its young people. Since these two groups are very localized—based in a particular location and not spread across a region—their presence can have an outsized impact on local-level youth disconnection calculations (see **BOX 7**). **For this reason, the remainder of this study will discuss youth disconnection among the civilian, noninstitutionalized population, removing these two groups from the sample.**

BOX 7: Institutionalized and Military Youth

One factor that can affect youth disconnection rates, especially in rural areas, is the presence of jails and prisons. In Measure of America’s national research, all youth are counted, including those living in institutional group quarters—the Census Bureau’s designation for institutional nonhousehold living arrangements, including prisons, detention centers, jails, group homes, residential treatment centers, and psychiatric hospitals. Most youth who are institutionalized are disconnected, so rates of youth disconnection can be quite high in a rural area with a large prison, for example.

In TRFSA, there are around 1,400 youth institutionalized throughout prisons, detention centers, jails, group homes, residential treatment centers, and psychiatric hospitals and 72.0 percent of them are disconnected. The majority are located in PUMA 600. Two state correctional facilities are located in TRFSA, in addition to local jails.⁴ While institutionalized youth are excluded from disconnection rate calculations in the second section of this report, it is important to note the barriers to connection that previously-incarcerated young people may face upon reentry. Lack of proficiency in math and reading skills as well as requirements to disclose incarceration history on education, housing, and employment applications can all present challenges to connection upon reentry.⁵

	Standard Measure of America Definition	Previous Section	This Section	Removing Group
Living in Institutional Group Quarters	Youth in nonhousehold institutional living arrangements such as correctional facilities, residential treatment centers, etc. If enrolled in educational programs, they are considered connected.	Included	Excluded	Decreases the youth disconnection rate
Members of Armed Forces	Counted as employed and thus as connected.	Included	Excluded	Increases the youth disconnection rate

Conversely, youth in the military are classified as employed and thus by definition are connected, so the presence of a military base can reduce a region’s youth disconnection rate. In TRFSA, all youth in the military (3,100 youth) are located in PUMA 700, where they make up 10.3 percent of the total youth population.

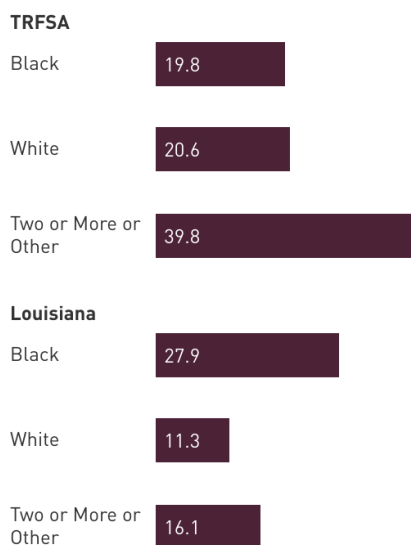
	YOUTH DISCONNECTION				
	All Youth (%)	All Youth (#)	Civilian, Noninstitutionalized Youth (%)	Civilian, Noninstitutionalized Youth (#)	Rate
TRFSA	21.4	7,650	21.3	6,700	Lower rate ↓
PUMA 600: Winn, Grant, LaSalle, Catahoula, Concordia, and Avoyelles Parishes	28.3	3,600	24.5	2,900	Lower rate ↓
PUMA 700: Rapides and Vernon Parishes	17.6	4,050	19.3	3,750	Higher rate ↑

The following estimates are based on 2017–2021 data on the civilian, noninstitutionalized population (see **BOX 7**). TRFSA overall youth disconnection rate among this group is 21.3 percent. The rate in PUMA 600 is 24.5 percent, and the rate in PUMA 700 is 19.3 percent. Throughout this section, references are made to 2021 disconnection rates in the US or Louisiana (which include military and institutionalized youth) to provide context.⁶

Gender

On average, young women and men in the region have similar rates of disconnection, 22.2 and 20.3 percent, respectively. In the more rural PUMA 600, 22.0 percent of young women are disconnected and 26.9 percent of young men are disconnected, corresponding to 1,300 women and 1,600 men. In PUMA 700, the disparity is greater, with 22.4 percent of women disconnected (2,200), compared to only 16.2 percent of men (1,550).

FIGURE 9: Disconnection Rates by Race in TRFSA vs. Louisiana (%)



Source: Louisiana: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021; TRFSA: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017-2021.

rates of disconnection than the statewide rate (see **FIGURE 9**), while youth who identify as two or more or other races exceed the state rate by more than double. White rates of disconnection in TRFSA also exceed the statewide rate.

BOX 8: What Do All These Numbers Mean?

In this section, percentages are presented in two ways.

1. Rate of Youth Disconnection among a Particular Group: How many young people in a particular group are disconnected?

$$\frac{\# \text{ of black youth who are disconnected}}{\text{total \# of black youth}} \times 100.$$

= 19.8% of all Black youth are disconnected

2. Rate of a Particular Attribute among Disconnected Youth: How many disconnected youth have a particular attribute?

$$\frac{\# \text{ of black youth who are disconnected}}{\text{total \# of disconnected youth}} \times 100$$

= 28.2% of all Black youth are disconnected

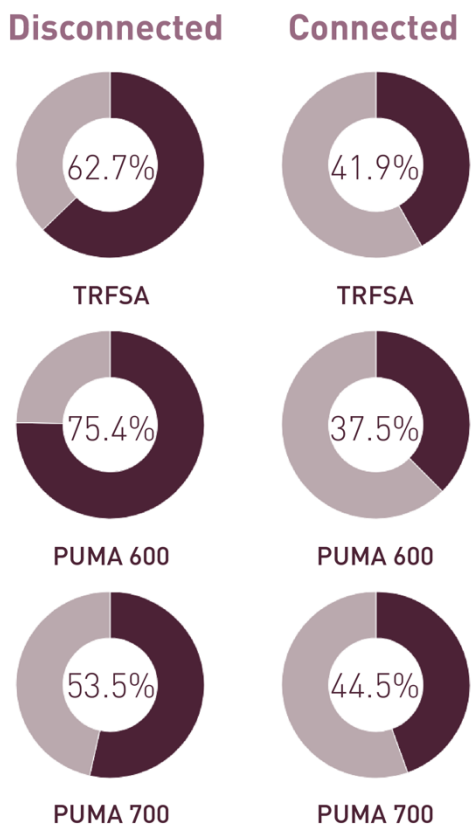
Race and Ethnicity

In TRFSA, the rate of disconnection for white youth, 20.6 percent, is slightly higher than the rate for Black youth, 19.8 percent (see **FIGURE 9**). White youth make up 59.0 percent of the total youth population and 57.0 percent of the disconnected youth population. Black youth make up 30.3 percent of the total youth population and 28.2 percent of the disconnected youth population. Young people who identified as two or more races or other had a high disconnection rate of 39.8 percent, though they made up only 11.1 percent of the disconnected youth population. In both PUMAs, there is no meaningful disparity between Black and white disconnection rates overall. In PUMA 600, though, the disconnection rate for young people who identified as two or more races or other was 56.2 percent, a rate more than 25 percent greater than that of PUMA 700.

Higher rates of disconnection for white youth stand in stark contrast to the national picture, in which Black youth face disproportionate barriers to remaining connected and typically have higher rates of disconnection. In Louisiana, as well, the rate of disconnection among Black youth, 27.9 percent, is more than twice that of white youth, 11.3 percent. For young people who identify as two or more or other races, the rate is 16.1 percent. In contrast, Black youth in TRFSA show lower

While rates may be similar, in crafting solutions, it is important to keep in mind that different groups of disconnected young people—for instance, young women and young men, Black young people and white young people—face different challenges. A one-size-fits-all solution that does not take into account issues like racial bias in policing or race and gender biases in hiring could lead to improvements that are not shared equally among all youth.

FIGURE 10: Rates of Connected and Disconnected Youth Living Below Poverty Line



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017-2021.

Poverty

Poverty creates many barriers to connection and has a systemic, intergenerational effect on limiting access to opportunities. For consistency with TRF’s previous work, youth in poverty are defined here and earlier in this report as those living in households below 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold. Poverty thresholds vary by household size; the threshold for a one-person household in 2021 is \$13,788, whereas the threshold for a five-person household is \$32,865. 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 2021 poverty threshold for a three-person household is \$21,559, meaning that three-person households below 200 percent of the poverty threshold have incomes of \$43,118 or less.⁷

In TRFSA, as in the US overall, living in poverty increases the likelihood that a young person will be disconnected. **Nearly three in ten of the region’s youth living in poverty are disconnected (28.6 percent), compared to 14.7 percent of youth in the region not living in poverty.** Among youth living in households that receive SNAP benefits, the disconnection rate is on par with that of youth living in poverty, 29.9 percent. While the rate of youth living in poverty is already quite high in the region (nearly half of all youth live below 200 percent of the poverty line), the poverty rate is even higher among disconnected youth (62.7 percent) (see **FIGURE 10**).

As noted in Measure of America’s 2020 national report on youth disconnection, “Poverty compounds a range of barriers to connection, among them the concentration of low-income families in neighborhoods with poor quality educational, health, and transportation services; the greater exposure of people living in poverty to violence and the resulting trauma; the lack of financial resources needed to cover the costs of college; and the cumulative impacts of intergenerational, concentrated poverty.”⁸

Research—including Measure of America’s—suggests that place matters for poverty and social mobility, and disparities between neighboring communities can be large.⁹ Looking at poverty and disconnection in TRFSA’s two PUMAs illustrates such disparities. PUMA 700 is home to Alexandria, the largest city in TRFSA, which likely provides more job opportunities. The differences in job markets between the two PUMAs are reflected in the

disconnection rate of men living in poverty—49.7 percent of young men in poverty in PUMA 600 are disconnected, compared to 15.6 percent of young men in poverty in PUMA 700. The disconnection rate of women in poverty is consistent across both PUMAs: 29.6 percent and 28.1 percent for PUMAs 600 and 700, respectively. In both PUMAs, youth living in poverty experience higher rates of disconnection than those not living in poverty. In PUMA 600, 38.2 percent of youth living in poverty are disconnected, 3.4 times the rate of those not living in poverty. In PUMA 700, 22.5 percent of youth in poverty are disconnected, 1.3 times the rate of those not in poverty. This wide gap in PUMA 600 is also reflected in the poverty rates of connected and disconnected youth (see **FIGURE 10**). The trend is echoed among youth receiving SNAP benefits: 38.1 percent of youth with SNAP are disconnected in PUMA 600, double the rate among youth without SNAP. But in PUMA 700, 23.0 percent of youth with SNAP are disconnected, only 1.3 times the rate of those without SNAP.

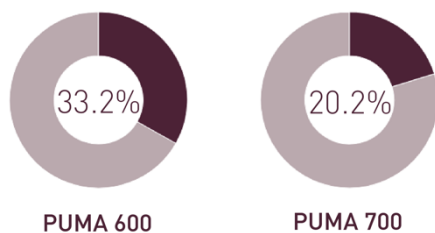
Health Insurance

In TRFSA, 9.4 percent of all youth do not have health insurance of any type. **These youth are nearly twice as likely to be disconnected as their insured peers—27.6 percent of those without insurance are disconnected, compared to 20.6 percent of those with insurance.**

In the region overall, the disconnection rate among youth with public insurance, a subset of those with health insurance, is 30.6 percent. But in PUMA 600, 51.1 percent of youth have public insurance, and 33.2 percent of those young people are disconnected, one of the highest rates among any of the subgroups this report looks at in either PUMA. In PUMA 700, 34.9 percent of youth have public insurance, and 28.3 percent of those young people are disconnected. During the height of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, the federal government launched the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which allowed Louisiana to continue the enrollment of nearly all people on Medicaid, one type of public insurance. The federal government ended the policy on March 31, 2023. In states returning to means-tested pre-covid eligibility requirements, the number of public insurance enrollees in years to come will decrease.¹⁰

Disability

FIGURE 11: Share of Disconnected Youth with Disabilities by PUMA (%)



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017-2021.

Living with a disability is still a barrier to full participation in society for too many Americans. Almost half (46.7 percent) of all youth with a disability in TRFSA are disconnected. This is 19.5 percentage points higher than the rate in the US overall, 27.2 percent. The Census Bureau considers a person to have a disability if they report difficulty with hearing, seeing even with glasses, walking, climbing stairs, dressing, bathing, doing errands alone, concentrating, remembering, or making decisions. This designation is based on people’s responses to the ACS and does not necessarily indicate a medical diagnosis. **In TRFSA, youth with disabilities make up a quarter of the disconnected youth population (25.8 percent), and only 11.8 percent of the total youth population.** This proportion is similar to that of the US overall, where youth with disabilities make up 17.7 percent of the disconnected youth population and 7.8 percent of the

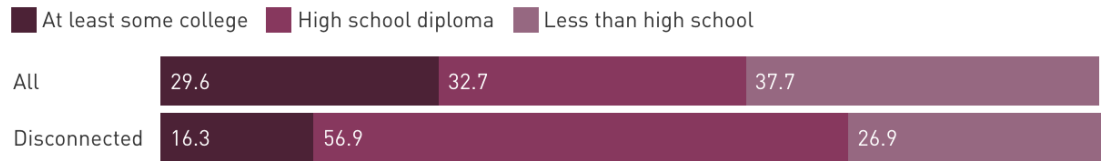
total youth population. In PUMA 700, youth with disabilities make up 20.2 percent of the disconnected youth population. In PUMA 600, they make up 33.2 percent, a rate that is more than ten percentage points higher than that of PUMA 700 (see **FIGURE 11**). The population of youth with disabilities in TRFSA increased by more than 54.5 percent since 2017, or by 1,500 youth, while the total population of youth decreased by 8.4 percent.

Nationally, the number of young people with disabilities increased significantly following Covid. Between 2019 and 2021, the youth population increased by 0.6 percent while the disabled youth population increased by 18.4 percent. The increase was greatest among youth with cognitive disabilities.¹¹ Long Covid’s impact on cognitive functioning, mental health impacts of lockdowns, and greater awareness of disabilities may have contributed to these increases.¹²

Educational Attainment

Among all youth ages 16–24 in TRFSA, roughly one-third have not yet finished high school, one-third have a high school diploma but no further education,

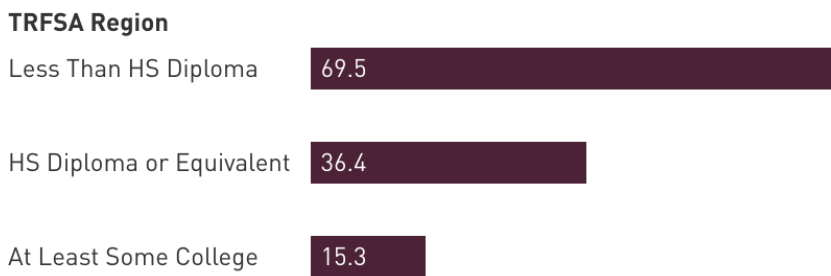
FIGURE 12: Educational Attainment among TRFSA Youth (%)



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017-2021.

and one-third have at least some post-secondary education. Among disconnected youth, the majority (56.9 percent) have a high school diploma but no further education, and only 16.3 percent have started or completed college (see **FIGURE 12**). But the fact that so many disconnected youth do have a high school diploma also points to a need for more accessible pathways for high school graduates—be they higher education, apprenticeships, technical education, or work that does not require a four-year degree. In the United States overall, disconnected youth have higher levels of educational attainment: 52.2 percent of disconnected youth have a high school diploma but no further education, and 25.2 percent have started or completed college.

FIGURE 13: Disconnection Rates for Youth Ages 22-24 by Educational Attainment (%)

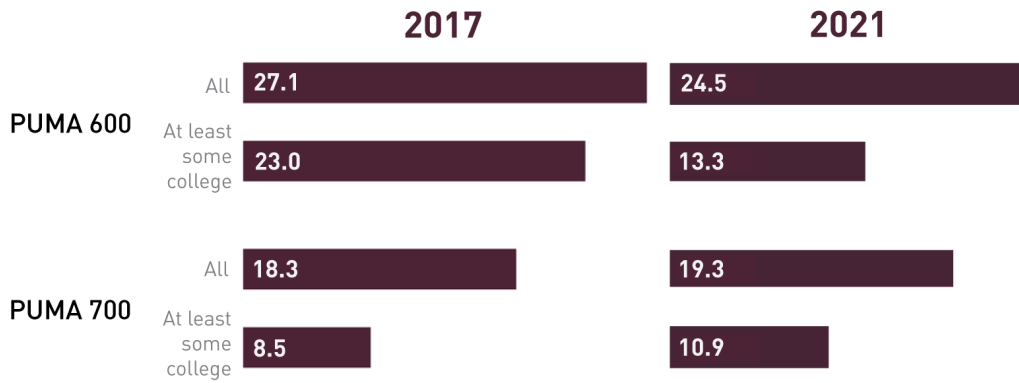


Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017-2021.

The impact of having a lower level of educational attainment becomes clear when looking at the outcomes of youth ages 22–24. At this age, many if not most young adults have finished their formal schooling. At this point, disconnection is most common among youth with lower levels of education. Over two-thirds of youth ages 22–24 who have less than a high school diploma are disconnected (69.5 percent), compared to 36.4 percent of those with a high school diploma but

no further education and 15.3 percent of those who have at least some college-level education (see **FIGURE 13**). Higher educational attainment results in more opportunities for employment, and the data clearly reflect this. Helping youth continue their education reduces the chance that they will be disconnected in the future. These findings also highlight the need for opportunities for youth who haven’t completed college as well as alternatives to higher education that put young people on the path to well-paying jobs.

FIGURE 14: Disconnection Rates among College-Educated Youth by PUMA over Time (%)



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2013-2017, 2017-2021.

At the time of the previous 2019 report on youth disconnection in TRFSA, disconnection and educational attainment interacted in different ways in PUMA 600 and PUMA 700. In the more rural PUMA 600, in 2017, having some college education did not meaningfully reduce the incidence of disconnection, in contrast to the protective effect of higher educational attainment in PUMA 700 (Rapides and Vernon Parishes). Since then, there has been a significant reduction in the disconnection rate for youth with at least some college education in Winn, Grant, LaSalle, Catahoula, Concordia, and Avoyelles Parishes. Now, 13.3 percent of youth in PUMA 600 who have started college are disconnected, 11.2 percentage points lower than the overall rate (see **FIGURE 14**). In PUMA 700, only 10.9 percent of youth who have started college are disconnected, 8.4 percentage points lower than the rate among all youth in the PUMA, 19.3 percent. While there appear to be opportunities for youth who have at least started college both PUMAs, the same is not true for youth with a high school diploma. The disconnection rates among youth with a high school diploma are similar in the two PUMAs, 40.2 percent for PUMA 600 and 34.9 percent for PUMA 700.

BOX 15: Who are Disconnected Youth with a High School Diploma?

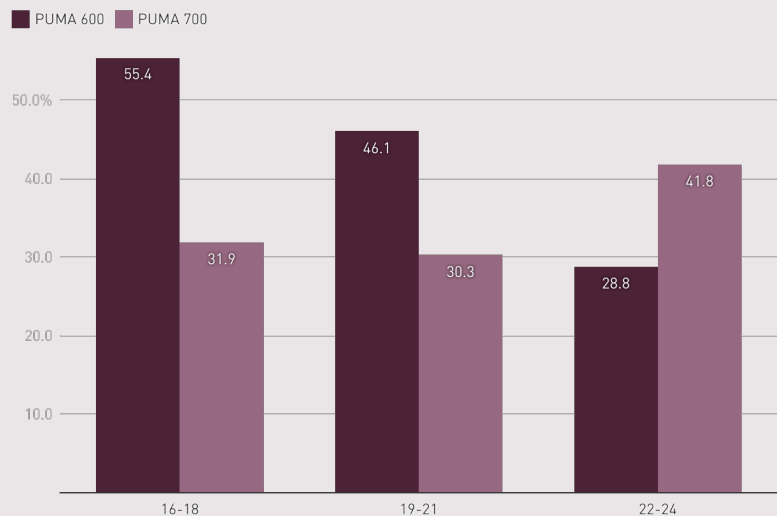
A large share of disconnected youth in TRFSA—more than half—have high school diplomas but have not begun any further education. The fact that 37.0 percent of youth with only a high school diploma are neither working nor in school may come as a surprise to many readers. Who are these disconnected diploma-holders?

First, they are more likely to be young women than young men. Young women who complete high school and do not continue on to higher education are more likely to be disconnected (43.6 percent) than their male counterparts (31.8 percent). This difference is especially stark among white youth; white women are 1.6 times as likely to be disconnected as white men in this group (44.5 percent vs. 28.2 percent). What could explain this higher disconnection rate among women? There is a slight difference in labor force participation between genders in this cohort: 66.1 percent of young men whose highest educational credential is a high school diploma participate in the labor force (meaning they have a job or are looking for work), compared to 60.0 percent of young women. In terms of looking for and finding a job, there is a stark difference by gender: 23.5 percent of young women with just a high school diploma looking for work are unemployed, compared to 12.0 percent of young men. This difference in labor market success could be due to the concentration of jobs that don't require a college degree in male-dominated industries such as construction.¹³

For both women and men, limited access to higher education, especially in rural areas of TRFSA, may keep many young people from continuing their educations beyond high school. Further, while a high school degree was once sufficient for a living-wage job, the labor market now heavily favors those with education beyond high school, in the form of a bachelor's or associate degree or a professional certification of some kind. Today, high school is less an educational capstone than a stepping stone to further education and training.

There is significant regional variation in disconnection for young adults with just a high school education in the TRFSA. In PUMA 600, more than half of young adults ages 16–18 with just a high school education are disconnected (55.4 percent), compared to 31.9 percent in PUMA 700. A similar pattern exists for those ages 19–21: 46.1 percent of those with just a high school diploma in PUMA 600 are disconnected, compared to 30.3 percent in PUMA 700. The transition from high school to either employment or higher education is significantly more fraught in PUMA 600.

Disconnection Rates for High School Diploma Holders by Age (%)



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017–2021.

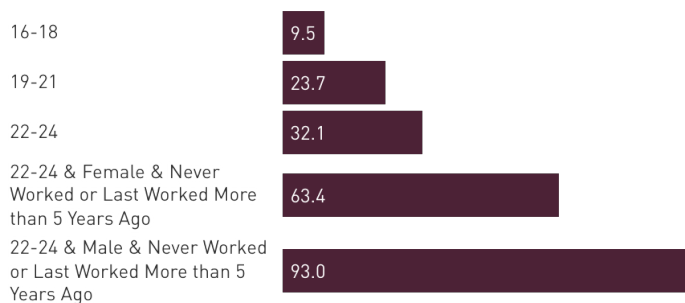
Note: The difference between the PUMAs for the 22–24 age group is not statistically significant.

Labor Force Participation and Work Experience

Youth who are disconnected may be spending their time in any number of ways, including actively seeking employment. The survey data distinguish between youth who are unemployed and actively looking for work as “in the labor force” and those who are not looking for work as “out of the labor force.” Also included in the definition of “out of the labor force” are individuals who are enrolled in school full-time and are not looking for work. All told, there are 4,950 disconnected youth who are “out of the labor force” – by definition, are not enrolled in school and are not looking for work; while 1,750 disconnected youth are “in the labor force” – are not enrolled in school and are looking for work. For TRFSA overall, 74.0 percent of disconnected youth are out of the labor force. The 4,950 disconnected young people out of the labor force may be discouraged workers who have given up seeking employment, they may be caring for children or other family members, or they may be doing something else. **Notably, the disconnection rate of young men out of the labor force varies significantly between the two PUMAs of the region.** In PUMA 700 (Rapides and Vernon), the disconnection rate of men that are out of the labor force is 26.3 percent, but in PUMA 600, the disconnection rate is 40.8 percent (constituting 1,250 young men, or 43.2 percent of all disconnected youth in Winn, Grant, La Salle, Catahoula, Concordia, and Avoyelles Parishes). This likely reflects a large contingent of discouraged job-seekers that have dropped out of actively searching for a job in PUMA 600. As mentioned in the previous section on poverty, the differences in these disconnection rates may reflect regional differences in job markets.

Across TRFSA, young adults that are ages 22 to 24 face more difficulty connecting to school or work than their younger peers. One in three (32.1 percent) of young adults 22–24 in TRFSA are disconnected from work and school, compared to 23.7 percent of those ages 19–21 and 9.5 percent of those ages 16–18 (here and across the nation, this age range is relatively more connected due to compulsory high school education) (See **FIGURE 16**). The total population for of the 22-24 cohort has decreased more rapidly than younger cohorts in TRFSA since 2013–2017 (see **APPENDIX TABLE 5**); it is possible (although beyond the scope of this analysis) that young adults with more labor market power in this age group are readily leaving the region for job opportunities elsewhere.

FIGURE 16: Disconnection Rates by Age, Gender, and Labor Force Participation (%)



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017-2021.

While some disconnected youth have previously held a job, many have not, and a lack of work experience often makes it difficult for youth to obtain employment. In TRFSA, 65.8 percent of disconnected youth have not worked in the past five years.

In the region overall, the disconnection rate for those 22 to 24 that have never worked or last worked more than five years ago is 79.6 percent. **These 1,800 relatively older youth that are out of school and with no recent work experience face significant barriers to connection. They make up one-fourth (26.6 percent) of all disconnected**

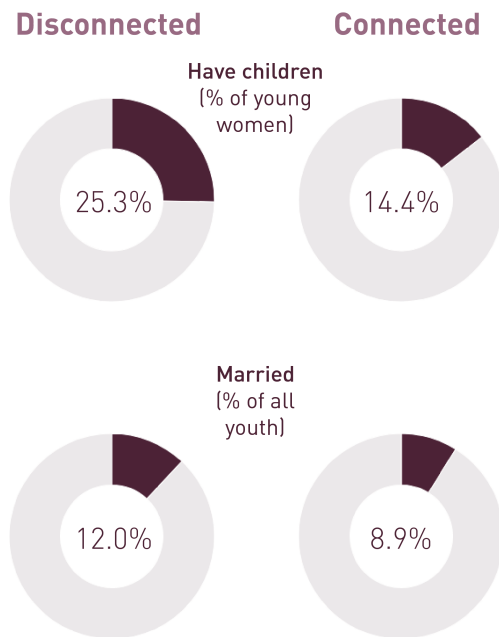
youth in TRFSA. There are notable gender differences for this population as well. The disconnection rate for women between the ages of 22 and 24 who never worked or last worked more than five years ago is 63.4

percent. For men in that category, the rate is even higher: an astounding 93.0 percent, or 1,150 young adults. Difficulty finding and securing quality entry level job opportunities could contribute to disconnection rates for young men and women in this category.

Motherhood and Marriage

The rate of disconnection among mothers, 33.5 percent, is much higher than that of all women, 22.2 percent. Compared to the US overall, mothers are overrepresented in the disconnected youth population in TRFSA. In the US, 20.4 percent of disconnected women are mothers; in TRFSA, 25.3 percent of disconnected young women are mothers. In the region, disconnected young women are 1.8 times as likely to be mothers as connected young women (see **FIGURE 17**).

FIGURE 17: Motherhood and Marriage Among Connected & Disconnected Youth



Source: Measure of America Calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017-2021.

Similar to the situation for mothers, the rate of disconnection among married young people, 26.7 percent, is higher than that among unmarried youth, 20.7 percent. Some married partners may choose to divide household responsibilities in such a way that one person works for pay and the other does not. While the partner who is not working for pay may be doing valuable domestic or child-rearing work, research shows that, on average, being out of the workforce, be it to raise children or for some other reason, limits later career trajectories and earnings.¹⁴

In Louisiana, the cost of childcare has surged 11.4 percent between 2018 and 2022.¹⁵ Burdensome childcare costs can be a significant barrier for young mothers' ability to work or attend school. When childcare costs are high and the cost of childcare approaches parity with the post-tax wage someone can earn, women are less likely to enter or remain in the labor force.

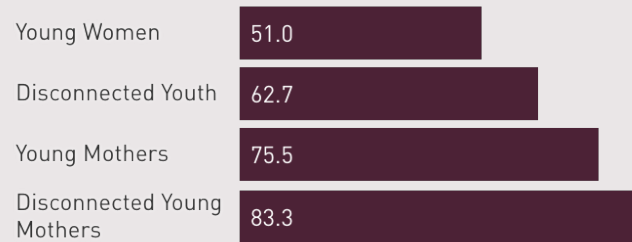
BOX 18: Who Are Disconnected Mothers?

Early motherhood is much more common in TRFSA than in the United States as a whole. Only 6.5 percent of all young women between the ages of 16 and 24 are mothers nationally, compared to 16.8 percent in TRFSA. Women in TRFSA who have children are more likely to be disconnected (33.5 percent) than those who do not (20.0 percent).

Disconnected young mothers differ from those who are connected in some ways; they are, for example, more likely to be white, to be married, and to live in poverty. Among the most striking findings of this report is how pervasive poverty is among young mothers in the region—75.5 percent of all young mothers, and an alarming 83.3 percent of disconnected young mothers, live in poverty. These poverty rates are far higher than those of young women as a whole in the region (51.0 percent, compared to 41.5 percent of young men) and even surpass that of disconnected youth as a whole (62.7 percent). It is worth noting that the poverty line takes into account the number of individuals in a household, so if a family grows but their income remains the same, the household moves closer to the poverty line as this family now has the additional expenses of raising a child. **It is deeply concerning that more than eight in ten disconnected young mothers are living in poverty, parenting young children while struggling to cover the very basic costs of living—shelter, food, transportation, utilities, and the like—an extremely stressful combination.** This high rate of poverty among young mothers also has negative impacts on their children’s current and future well-being. Research shows that living in poverty in early childhood has severe health, educational, and employment repercussions later in life.¹⁶

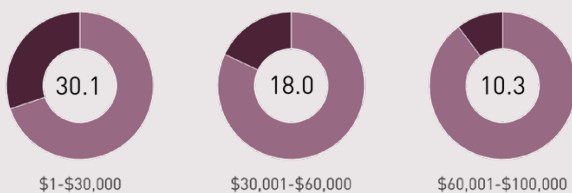
Becoming a mother is a common life experience; 86 percent of US women have at least one child by the end of their reproductive years.¹⁷ But the timing for doing so varies sharply for connected and disconnected women. Connected young women tend to postpone parenthood to pursue other options in their teens and early twenties, such as continuing their educations or building their careers. For young women who lack such options, having a child may offer a rewarding role and an attainable route to adult standing.¹⁸ Unintended pregnancies also play a role; we know that disparities in unintended pregnancies by income and educational attainment in the United States are large but narrowing.¹⁹

Below 200% of Poverty Line (%)



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017-2021.

Motherhood by Household Income (%)



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017-2021.

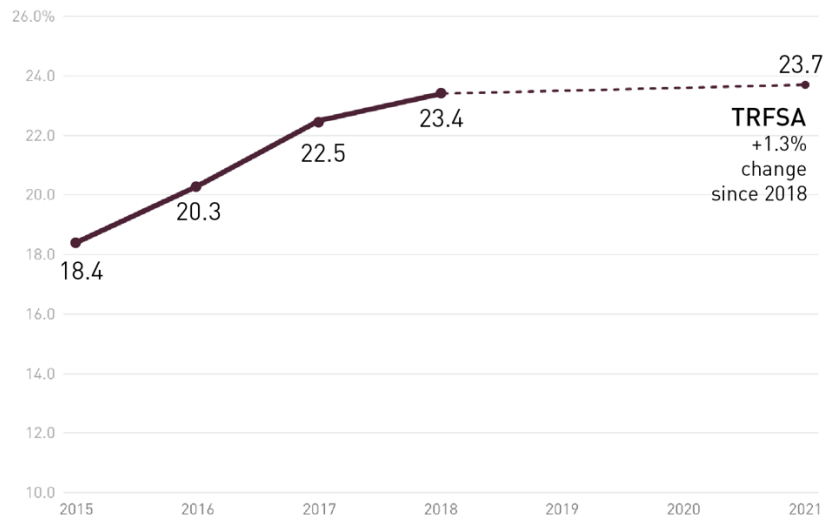
Within TRFSA, for girls and young women ages 16–24 whose household income ranges from \$1–\$30,000, 30.1 percent are mothers. For young women in households earning \$30,001–\$60,000, 18.0 percent are mothers; of young women in households earning \$60,001–\$100,000, 10.3 percent are mothers. Almost half (48.1 percent) of all young mothers ages 16 to 24 in TRFSA are part of households earning \$1 to \$30,000 annually. For young women in households earning over \$100,000, an even smaller share are mothers (an exact estimate is not available due to a smaller sample size).

The point of this discussion is not to imply that there is a right or wrong time to have a child, but rather to acknowledge that having a baby affects educational and career prospects, that educational and career prospects affect the decision to have a baby, and that disconnection during emerging adulthood, no matter the reason, affects long-term economic prospects.

Change Over Time

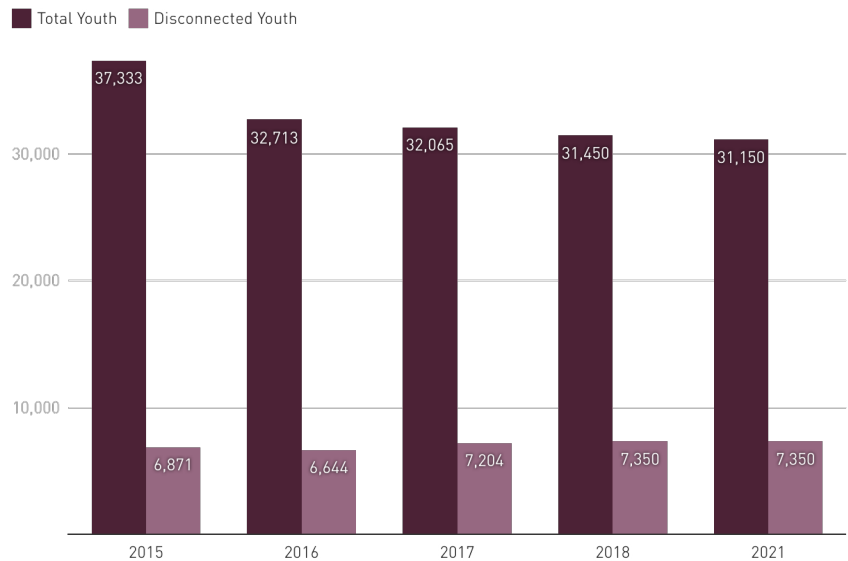
As opposed to the previous Change Over Time charts, these charts exclude institutionalized youth and youth in the military. The youth disconnection rate in TRFSA, absent institutionalized and military youth, increased steadily from 2015 to 2017 and has roughly plateaued since 2018, despite the impact of Covid. Data points for 2019 and 2020 are omitted in the change-over-time graphics in **FIGURES 19 & 20**. The Census data for 2020 were substantially affected by the pandemic and thus released with many caveats, and the youth disconnection data for 2019 for TRFSA appeared to suffer from a sampling error, with the data suggesting trends that did not correspond to other on-the-ground realities. Rural populations are more likely to experience sampling error in large-scale administrative surveys. For these reasons, the 2019 and 2020 data are not included in the trends analysis. For the purpose of trends analysis, **FIGURES 5 & 6** show 1-year estimates (just as in the earlier **NATIONAL, REGIONAL & STATE CONTEXT** section) while the rest of the report, aside from a second **CHANGE OVER TIME** section on **PAGE 18**, uses 5-year estimates.

FIGURE 19: Youth Disconnection in TRFSA, 2015 to 2021 (%)



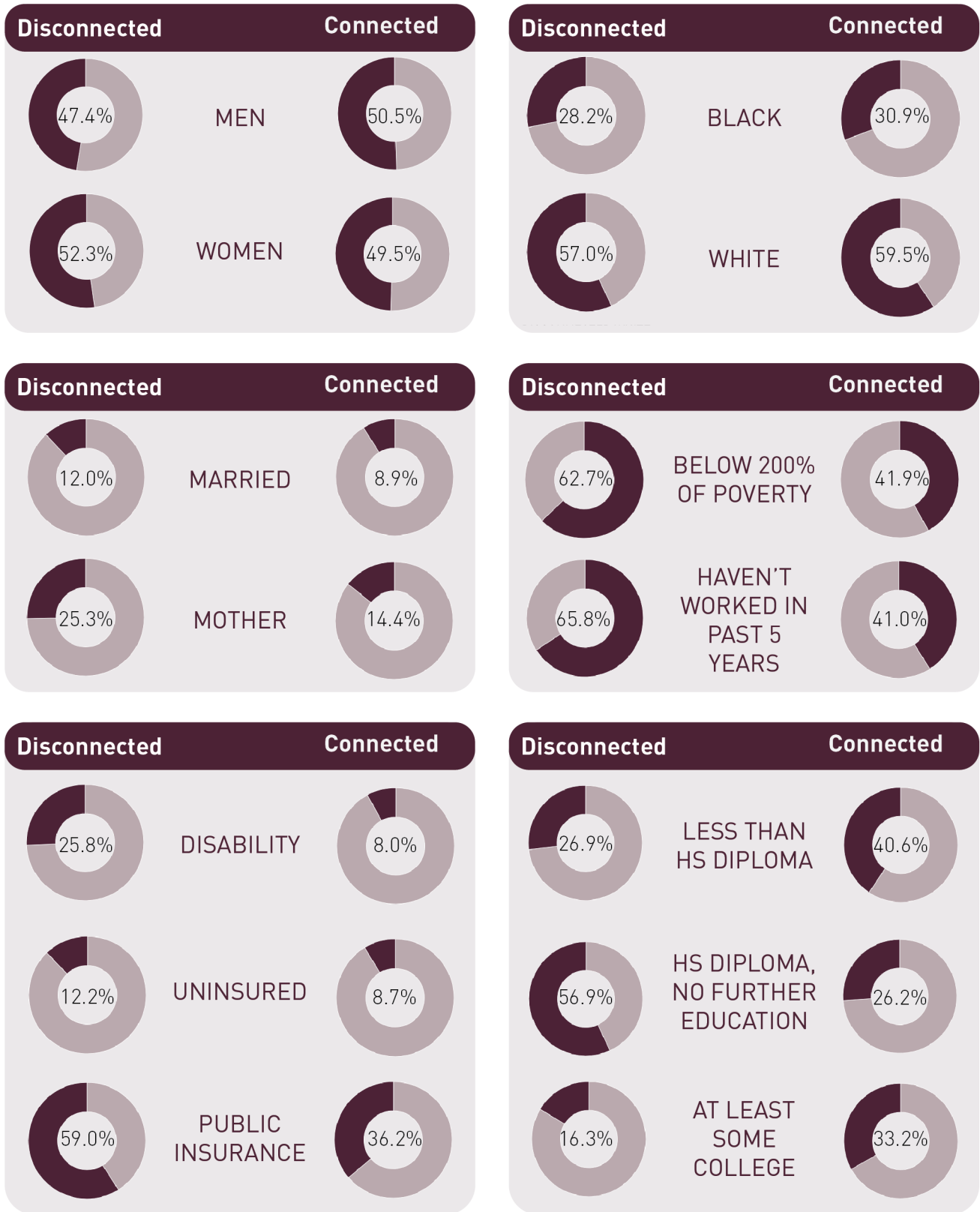
Source: Measure of America Calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2015-2021.

FIGURE 20: Disconnected Youth in TRFSA, 2015 to 2021



Source: Measure of America Calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2015-2021.

FIGURE 21: Contrasting Profiles: A Snapshot of Connected & Disconnected Youth in the TRFSA Region



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017-2021.

Note: These numbers refers to the proportion of the overall disconnected or connected civilian, non-institutionalized youth population with this particular attribute.

Data Summary

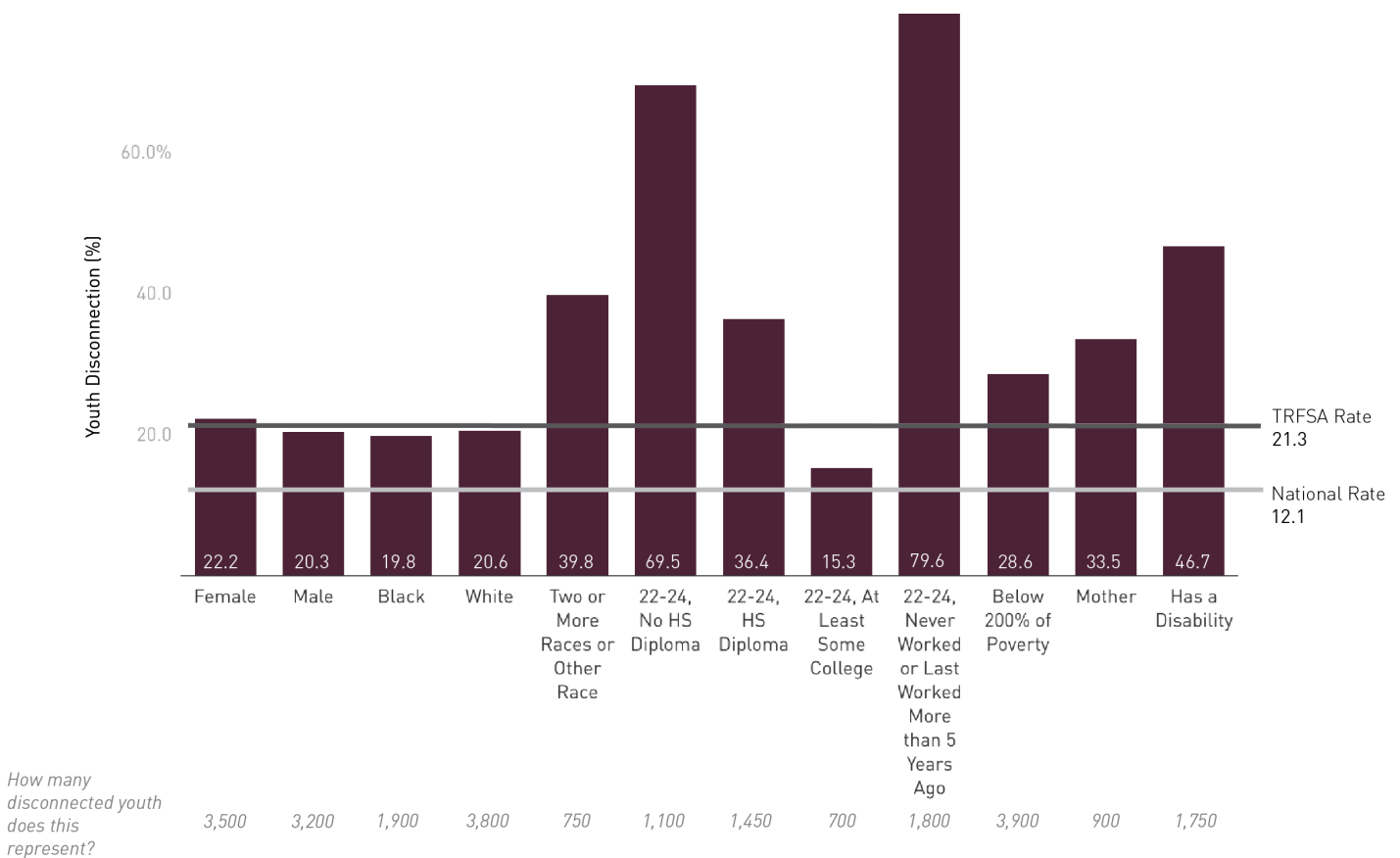
Of the groups addressed in this study, those with the highest rates of youth disconnection in the region overall are 22- to 24-year-olds that have never worked or last worked more than 5 years ago (79.6 percent), 22- to 24-year-olds who don't have a high school diploma (69.5 percent), and youth with disabilities (46.7 percent). These rates are all more than double the region-wide average for all youth: see **FIGURE 22**. The highest rates of disconnection in PUMA 600 were found among those who identified as two or more or other races (56.2 percent), youth with disabilities (47.2 percent), and youth whose highest degree is a high school diploma (40.2 percent). In PUMA 700, the highest rates were among youth with disabilities (46.0 percent), mothers (37.6 percent), and youth whose highest degree is a high school diploma (34.9 percent).

These findings indicate a few priority areas for focus and further investigation:

- **Prioritize high school completion.** Within TRFSA, 16.6 percent of adults aged 25 and above lack a high school diploma, in contrast to 14.8 percent statewide.²⁰ Young adults that do not complete high school face substantial challenges. By their early twenties, a staggering 69.5 percent are neither employed nor attending school. Initiatives that encourage graduation and provide chances to finish high school following periods of disconnection are crucial.
- **Plan around what comes after high school.** In both PUMAs, over one-third (37.0 percent in TRFSA) of youth with a high school diploma are disconnected. Young people need programs and support in high school and in their communities that help them figure out and take their next step, whether that means vocational training, volunteer or employment opportunities to build on professional skills, or college application guidance. Special emphasis should be placed on ensuring continuing support for young students—building pipelines to college are a necessary component of youth reengagement but not a silver bullet. For every 10 TRFSA residents ages 22-24 with an associate degree or higher, there are 19 that have taken some college credits but not received a degree. There is a higher share of TRFSA young adults with incomplete college educations than for Louisiana as a whole: for every 10 Louisianans ages 22-24 with an associate degree or higher, there are 13 that have some college credit and no degree.
- **Maintain a focus on youth in poverty.** The intertwined nature of poverty and disconnection is evident, and strategies to mitigate poverty and its ensuing challenges can minimize disconnection. Disconnection rates are particularly high among youth beneficiaries of Medicaid or SNAP, both proxies for severe poverty.
- **Reconnect discouraged young adults to the labor market.** Across TRFSA, 65.8 percent of disconnected youth have not worked in the past five years. To address this, it could be pivotal to establish targeted employment and training programs, especially for those who are on the older end of the 16–24 range, without high school diplomas, and without recent work experience. Such initiatives should focus on providing practical work experience (perhaps through skills-focused volunteer programs), bridging educational gaps, and revitalizing hope in discouraged job-seekers. This is particularly crucial for the 22–24-year-olds who haven't worked in the last five years and have strikingly high rates of disconnection, and constitute one in four disconnected youth across the region.

- **Support youth with disabilities.** With the proper support, many youth with disabilities can succeed in school and have fulfilling careers. Due to the increase in youth with disabilities following Covid, it is essential to ensure that the needs of youth with disabilities are not overlooked in interventions.
- **Support programs and policies that enable young mothers to pursue their educational and career goals.** Engage with disconnected mothers to understand their needs, whether it's evening courses, affordable child care, or adaptable working hours. To support their employment, special emphasis should be placed on guiding young women toward better paying male-dominated fields, ensuring that they have pathways to these industries that also supply a greater share of jobs that don't require advanced degrees, such as the construction, manufacturing, and transportation/warehousing industries. Industry gender balances are not set in stone, for instance, women once dominated the field of computer programming. In the Alexandria Regional Labor Market Area, which encompasses most of TRFSA, four of the top ten occupational areas with the greatest number of job openings that only require vocational post-secondary education had average annual wages greater than \$30,000.²¹ Of these four occupational areas, two are dominated by men (trucking and correctional officers), one has a slight male majority (supervisors of retail workers), and one is dominated by women (licensed practical or vocational nurses). Finding and creating employment pathways for young women and mothers without advanced degrees is crucial to promoting their connection.

FIGURE 22: Who is Disconnected in TRFSA?



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017-2021

Conclusion

Each and every young adult deserves the opportunity to build skills and begin a career that puts them on the path to a freely chosen life of value.

Data in this report show that disconnected young people share many challenges but also differ in important ways. Across the United States, youth disconnection rates are broadly higher in rural areas than in urban areas. Youth disconnection in the Rapides Foundation Service Area follows this pattern: a larger share of youth are disconnected in TRFSA rural Parishes than in Rapides and Vernon Parishes, which in turn have higher rates of youth disconnection than in the New Orleans MSA.

Efforts to reconnect youth need to take this broad backdrop into account, but it is important to keep in mind that different young people may face different obstacles. Tailoring interventions to the specific needs of communities and individuals experiencing disconnection should be front of mind for policymakers, philanthropists, advocates, and researchers. Creating opportunities for all youth to thrive requires a delicate balance of top-down and bottom-up engagement, where multi-sector actors work together alongside disconnected youth and community residents to promote solutions that are bold, systematic, and collaborative.

The literature and evidence of “what works” to address the challenges and opportunities facing disconnected youth in rural contexts is an emerging area. As new evidence becomes available, the challenge will be not only diffusing information on what works but also ensuring the infrastructure is in place to support potential program updates and changes. There is no silver bullet to reengage disconnected youth. However, using current knowledge about effective and evaluated practices to inform local implementation strategies can help generate measurable positive results.

Maintaining a focus on the priority areas addressed in the Data Summary above, with place- and population-based programming, will help reach those most affected by or prone to disconnection. Prioritizing high school completion, building pipelines to jobs and further education paired with support to excel in jobs and complete postsecondary programs, focusing on youth in poverty, reconnecting discouraged young adults to the labor market, supporting youth with disabilities, and enabling young mothers to pursue their educational and career goals are all worthy objectives in and of themselves and will have a positive effect on improving youth connection.

In addition to these steps, above all, at-risk youth need the kind of support from communities and institutions that other young people take for granted: safe places to live and food on the table; caring adults to help them navigate the often-bewildering transition from child to adult; opportunities to try new things, to fail, and to try again; and experiences that build self-knowledge, agency, and confidence as well as hard and soft skills. They need encouragement, trust, kindness, and love—not harsh discipline and not zero-tolerance. They need society to give them what it gives more fortunate young people, not just “a” chance, but many chances.

APPENDIX A: INDICATOR TABLES

Table 1: 2021 TRFSA Rates

	Youth Disconnection	
	(%)	(#)
1-Year Estimates		
United States	12.1	4,680,900
Louisiana	17.7	96,000
TRFSA (All youth)	23.9	8,450
TRFSA (Civilian, non-institutionalized)	23.7	7,350
5-Year Estimates		
GENDER		
Female	22.2	3,500
Male	20.3	3,200
AGE GROUP		
16-18	9.5	1,100
19-21	23.7	2,400
22-24	32.1	3,200
RACE		
Black	19.8	1,900
White	20.6	3,800
Two or More or Other Races	39.8	750
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
Less than HS Diploma	15.2	1,800
HS Diploma or Equivalent	37.0	3,800
Some College, No Degree	11.7	1,100
MARRIAGE		
Married	26.7	800
Not Married	20.7	5,900
MOTHERHOOD		
Mothers	33.5	900
Not Mothers	20.0	2,600
DISABILITY		
Has a Disability	46.7	1,750
Does Not Have a Disability	17.9	4,950
HEALTH INSURANCE		
Uninsured	27.6	800
Has Public Health Insurance	30.6	3,950
Has Private Health Insurance	12.4	1,900
POVERTY		
Below 200% of Poverty Line	28.6	3,900
At or Above 200% of Poverty Line	14.7	2,300
LAST WORKED		
Worked in the Past Year	9.2	1,450
1-5 Years Ago	71.8	850
>5 Years Ago or Never	30.2	4,400
SNAP BENEFITS		
Receiving SNAP Benefits	29.9	2,250
Not Receiving Snap Benefits	18.6	4,450

Sources: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017, 2021, 2017-2021.

Table 2: 2021 vs. 2017 TRFSA Rates

	Youth Disconnection	
	2017 (%)	2021 (%)
1-Year Estimates		
United States	11.5	12.1
Louisiana	16.2	17.7
TRFSA (All youth)	23.3	23.9
5-Year Estimates		
TRFSA (Civilian, non-institutionalized)	21.4	21.3
GENDER		
Female	22.4	22.2
Male	20.5	20.3
AGE GROUP		
16-18	12.3	9.5
19-21	24.9	23.7
22-24	28.2	32.1
RACE		
Black	18.8	19.8
White	22.8	20.6
Two or More or Other Races*	20.5	39.8
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
Less than HS Diploma	16.6	15.2
HS Diploma or Equivalent	34.9	37.0
Some College, No Degree	13.5	11.7
MARRIAGE		
Married	36.1	26.7
Not Married	19.9	20.7
MOTHERHOOD		
Mothers	40.2	33.5
Not Mothers	17.9	20.0
DISABILITY		
Has a Disability	48.5	46.7
Does Not Have a Disability	19.5	17.9
HEALTH INSURANCE		
Uninsured	34.0	27.6
Has Public Health Insurance	30.2	30.6
Has Private Health Insurance	13.3	12.4
POVERTY		
Below 200% of Poverty Line	26.1	28.6
At or Above 200% of Poverty Line	15.7	14.7
LAST WORKED		
Worked in the Past Year	11.8	9.2
1-5 Years Ago	72.2	71.8
>5 Years Ago or Never	27.9	30.2
SNAP BENEFITS		
Receiving SNAP Benefits	30.5	29.9
Not Receiving Snap Benefits	18.8	18.6

Sources: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017, 2021, 2013-2017, 2017-2021.

*Two or More or Other Races has shown a statistically significant increase in disconnection rate since 2017, by 94.1%.

Table 3: Disconnected Youth by Parish, 2013–2017 to 2016–2020

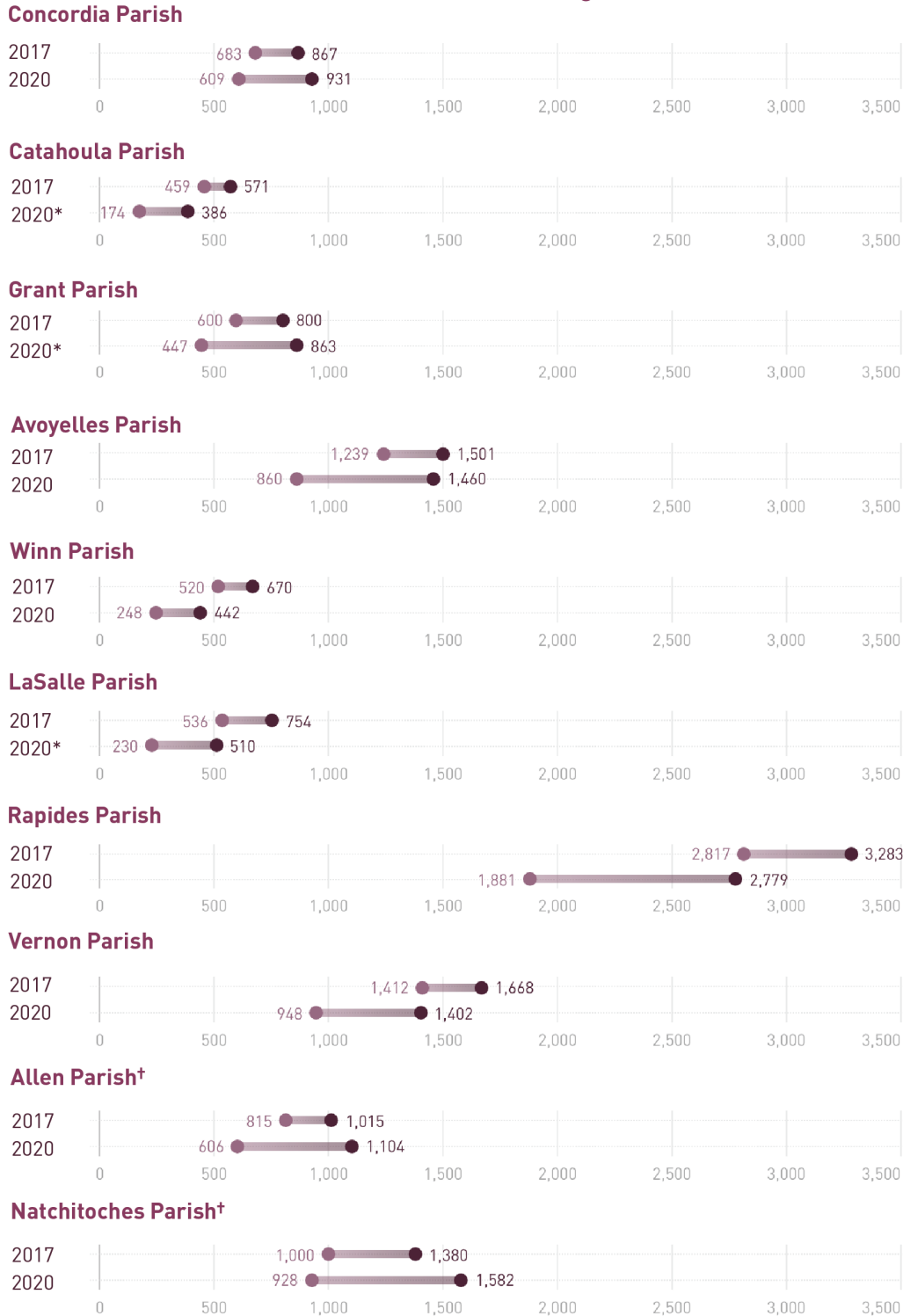
		Youth Disconnection					
		2017 Rates			2020 Rates		
		(%)	Estimate (#)	Range (# of DY based on Margin of Error)	(%)	Estimate (#)	Range (# of DY based on Margin of Error)
Concordia Parish	<i>Town</i>	32.9	775	683-867	32.2	770	609-931
Catahoula Parish	<i>Rural</i>	43.3	515	459-571	31.5*	280*	174-386*
Grant Parish	<i>Small City</i>	36.8	700	600-800	28.2*	655*	447-863*
Avoyelles Parish	<i>Rural</i>	30.6	1,370	1,239-1,501	26.5	1,160	860-1,460
Winn Parish	<i>Rural</i>	35.2	595	520-670	24.6	345	248-442
LaSalle Parish	<i>Rural</i>	36.8	645	536-754	19.1*	370*	230-510*
Rapides Parish	<i>Small City</i>	19.0	3,050	2,817-3,283	15.2	2,330	1,881-2,779
Vernon Parish	<i>Town</i>	17.9	1,540	1,412-1,668	14.6	1,175	948-1,402
Included in TRFSA but Not in Report Analysis							
Allen Parish	<i>Rural</i>	35.0	915	815-1,015	33.7	855	606-1,104
Natchitoches Parish	<i>Town</i>	15.9	1,190	1,000-1,380	17.1	1,255	928-1,582

Source: Measure of America/ US Census Bureau ACS 2013-2017, 2016-2020.

Note: 2021 county data are not yet available from the US Census Bureau. Allen Parish (33.7 percent) and Natchitoches Parish (17.1 percent) are not included in the two PUMAs that make up the region covered in this report. Visit www.measureofamerica.org/DYinteractive for youth disconnection rates for each parish in the state.

*Indicates less reliable estimates

Figure 4: Disconnected Youth Totals, Parish Ranges: 2013–2017 to 2016–2020



Source: Measure of America/ US Census Bureau ACS 2013–2017, 2016–2020.

Note: 2021 county data are not yet available from the US Census Bureau. Allen Parish (33.7 percent) and Natchitoches Parish (17.1 percent) are not included in the two PUMAs that make up the region covered in this report. Visit www.measureofamerica.org/DYinteractive for youth disconnection rates for each parish in the state.

*Indicates less reliable estimates

† Indicates a parish that is included in TRFSA but not in the report analysis

Table 5: TRFSA Demographic Profile, 2013–2017 to 2017–2021

Year	Category	2013–2017 Total Youth (#)	2017–2021 Total Youth (#)	Percent Change Since 2017
The Rapides Foundation Service Area				
	All Youth Ages 16-24	39,150	35,850	-8.4%
Gender				
	Female	17,200	16,200	-5.8%
	Male	21,950	19,650	-10.5%
Race/Ethnicity				
	Black	12,300	10,700	-13.0%
	Hispanic/Latino	2,150	2,200	2.3%
	White	22,900	20,850	-9.0%
	Two or more or other	1,800	2,050	13.9%
Educational Attainment				
	Less than HS Diploma	14,100	12,800	-9.2%
	HS Diploma or Equivalent	13,400	12,500	-6.7%
	Some College No Degree; Associate Degree, Bachelor's Degree, or Postsecondary Degree	11,650	10,550	-9.4%
	Some College No Degree	9,500	8,450	-11.1%
	Associate, Bachelor's, or Postsecondary Degree	2,150	2,050	-4.7%
Age				
	16-18	12,700	11,550	-9.1%
	19-21	12,700	12,500	-1.6%
	22-24	13,750	11,800	-14.2%
Marriage				
	Married	4,200	3,850	-8.3%
	Not Married	34,950	32,000	-8.4%
Mothers				
	Women that are mothers	3,400	2,700	-20.6%
	Women that are not mothers	13,800	13,500	-2.2%
Disability				
	Does not have a disability	36,400	31,600	-13.2%
	Has a disability	2,750	4,250	54.5%
Health Insurance				
	Has Private Health Insurance	22,300	18,800	-15.7%
	Has Public Health Insurance	8,800	13,350	51.7%
	Uninsured	8,050	3,700	-54.0%
Poverty at 200% of Poverty Line				
	At or Below 200% of Poverty Line	17,400	15,250	-12.4%
	Above 200% of Poverty Line	17,550	16,100	-8.3%
	Poverty Status Not Determined	4,250	4,500	5.9%
Institutionalized				
	Institutionalized	1,750	1,400	-20.0%
	Not Institutionalized	37,400	34,450	-7.9%
Military Status				
	Civilian	36,000	32,150	-10.7%
	On Active Duty	2,600	3,100	19.2%
	Veteran	600	600	0.0%

Sources: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2013-2017, 2017-2021.

APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY

BLACK	Non-Hispanic Black. 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.
DISABILITY	A person is considered to have a disability if they report difficulty with hearing, seeing even with glasses, walking, climbing stairs, dressing, bathing, doing errands alone, concentrating, remembering, or making decisions. This is based on responses to the ACS and does not necessarily imply a medical diagnosis.
DISCONNECTED YOUTH	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 are not considered disconnected. Youth who are actively looking for work are considered disconnected.
HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	Includes young people with GED.
HISPANIC/LATINO	People of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity may be of any race. In this report, members of Black, White, and Two or More or Other groups include only non-Hispanic members of these groups.
INSTITUTIONAL GROUP QUARTERS	Non-household institutional living arrangements such as correctional facilities, residential treatment centers, etc. If enrolled in educational programs, youth in institutional group quarters are considered connected. Institutionalized youth are excluded from the second part of the analysis in this report.
MILITARY	Youth in the military are counted as employed and thus as connected. Youth in the military are excluded from the second part of the analysis in this report.

NOT IN SCHOOL	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. The ACS is designed to evenly distribute survey months over the entire calendar year.
NOT WORKING	Either unemployed or not in the labor force at the time they responded to the survey.
POVERTY	Living in household below 200% of the federal poverty threshold.
PUMA	Public Use Microdata Areas are geographic units designated by the US Census Bureau. PUMAs have populations of at least one hundred thousand and generally less than two hundred thousand.
SNAP	Youth living in a household that receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.
TWO OR MORE OR OTHER	Refers to combinations of two or more of the following race categories: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, OR Some Other Race. Does not include Hispanic combinations.
WHITE	Non-Hispanic white.

APPENDIX C: METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

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 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 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 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 on a Huffington Post blog piece from October of 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 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 geography 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.

In the second section of this report (Disparities in Disconnection) the studied population is limited to civilian, noninstitutionalized youth. Civilian youth are those who are not on active military duty. Noninstitutionalized youth are those who are not residing in ‘institutional group quarters’, the Census Bureau’s designation for nonhousehold living arrangements such as correctional or supervised medical facilities. See the definitions section below for more information. The table below summarizes the populations and years of data used for estimates in the two data sections of the report.

GEOGRAPHY	FIRST SECTION (National, State & Regional Context)	SECOND SECTION (Disparities in Disconnection)
US	Full population, 2021	Full population, 2021
State	Full population, 2021	Full population, 2021
Census Region	Full population, 2021	Full population, 2021
TRFSA	Full population, 2021	Civilian noninstitutionalized population, 2017-2021
PUMAs	Full population, 2017-2021	Civilian noninstitutionalized population, 2017-2021

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.

Geographies

Data from the Public Use Microdata Sample is provided in geographic units known as Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs). There are two PUMAs that cover most of TRFSA: PUMA 600 (Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, Grant, LaSalle, and Winn Parishes) and PUMA 700 (Rapides and Vernon Parishes). These two areas combined are referred to in this report as TRFSA. Allen and Natchitoches Parishes are served by The Rapides Foundation, but they fall outside the boundaries of the PUMAs used in this analysis and are therefore excluded. Concordia Parish is not served by TRF but it is part of PUMA 600 and is therefore included in the analysis.

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 report any mental or physical difficulties are counted as not having a disability.

Educational Attainment – The US Census Bureau's American Community Survey collects data on educational attainment with the following question: "What is the highest degree or level of school this person has completed?" It does not capture attainment of vocational/educational certifications, certificates, and licenses.

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 or military bases. Read more about these categorizations here.

Poverty – Throughout this report a threshold of 200 percent of the federal poverty line is used to designate youth living in households below poverty.

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, 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 Black and white youth include only those who are non-Latino. Due to the small population sizes of some of the racial and ethnic groups, we cannot always present reliable estimates of youth disconnection for these groups.

Unreliable – Estimates with a coefficient of variance of greater than 0.25 are considered unreliable and are omitted from the report.

ENDNOTES

¹ Lewis, *A Decade Undone: Youth Disconnection in the Age of Coronavirus*.

² Custom Tabulations provided by special arrangement with the US Census Bureau, 2017–2021. View youth disconnection rates by county for the US at www.measureofamerica.org/DYinteractive.

³ Burd-Sharps and Lewis, *More Than a Million Reasons for Hope: Youth Disconnection in America Today*.

⁴ “Department Facilities.” Louisiana Department of Public Safety & Corrections.

⁵ Agus-Kleinman, Salomon, and Weber, *On Track: How Well Are States Preparing Youth in the Juvenile Justice System for Employment?* (New York: The Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2019).

⁶ In the United States, institutionalized youth represent 0.8 percent of the overall youth population, while military youth represent 1.2 percent. In Louisiana, institutionalized youth represent 1.5 percent of the overall youth population, while military youth represent 1.1 percent.

⁷ “Poverty Thresholds for 2021.”

⁸ Lewis, *A Decade Undone: Youth Disconnection in the Age of Coronavirus*.

⁹ Chetty and Hendren, “The Impacts of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility I: Childhood Exposure Effects;” Chetty and Hendren, “The Impacts of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility II: County-Level Estimates;” Lewis and Burd-Sharps, *Zeroing In on Place and Race: Youth Disconnection in America’s Cities*.

¹⁰ Jones, Paula. “What Do New Medicaid Changes Mean? Where Can People Find Help?”

¹¹ In the Census, Cognitive difficulty was derived from question 18a, which asked respondents if due to physical, mental, or emotional condition, they had “serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions.” Prior to the 2008 ACS, the question on cognitive functioning asked about difficulty “learning, remembering, or concentrating” under the label “Mental disability.”

¹² Covid lockdowns impacted youth mental health far more severely than other older cohorts, see Fig 2 here.

¹³ Sutton, Bosky, and Muller, “Manufacturing Gender Inequality In The New Economy: High School Training For Work In Blue Collar Communities.”

¹⁴ Buchmann and McDaniel, “Motherhood and the Wages of Women in Professional Occupations.”

¹⁵ Mitchell, “Why Is Child Care so Expensive in Baton Rouge? Here’s What the Data, Experts Say.”

¹⁶ Duncan and Magnuson, “The Long Reach of Early Childhood Poverty.”

¹⁷ Geiger, Livingston, and Bialik, “6 Facts about U.S. Moms.”

¹⁸ Edin and Kefalas, *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*.

¹⁹ Finer and Zolna, “Declines in Unintended Pregnancy in the United States, 2008–2011.”

²⁰ *Community Health Needs Assessment*

²¹ The Alexandria Regional Labor Market Area includes Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, Grant, La Salle, Rapides, and Winn Parishes—only Vernon Parish is missing from TRFSA; *Louisiana Workforce Information Review 2020*; “Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity;” US Bureau of Labor Statistics data on gender ratios by occupation are calculated on the national level

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