

Youth Disconnection in The Rapides Foundation Service Area, 2025

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YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN TRFSA

The transition to adulthood represents a critical period for developing the skills, credentials, and experiences that shape long-term life outcomes. Yet this path proves challenging for many young people, particularly those who experience periods of disconnection from the two key institutions that facilitate this transition: school and work. Disconnected youth—those ages 16–24 who are neither enrolled in education nor employed—reflect both individual struggles and broader community challenges. When significant numbers of young people remain disconnected from these foundational institutions, it signals limited opportunity structures and generates substantial societal costs. Research by Measure of America demonstrates the lasting consequences of disconnection periods. Young adults who experience this disengagement earn less by their thirties, face lower employment rates, and are less likely to own homes or maintain good health. These findings reveal how temporary disconnection can evolve into persistent disadvantage. In The Rapides Foundation Service Area (TRFSA), 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. The most recent version of this report was previously released in 2023 using data from 2021. This report is an update on the current status of youth disconnection in TRFSA, using data from 2023 (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 high in TRFSA, particularly in rural areas. Developing effective interventions requires understanding which young people face disconnection and the underlying factors driving their disengagement. This local-level analysis of youth disconnection patterns will enable The Rapides Foundation (TRF), alongside policymakers, advocacy organizations, and youth service providers, to identify the communities and populations experiencing the greatest need, harness strategies that have led to successful student outcomes, and track progress toward meaningful change.

KEY FINDINGS

The first section of the report looks at youth disconnection among all youth to understand how the region compares to the state and nation; it also uses one-year estimates in contrast to the deep dive later in this report.

TRFSA: The disconnection rate in TRFSA is 21.7 percent, about 11 percentage points higher than the national rate (10.6 percent) and nearly 7 percentage points higher than the rate in Louisiana as a whole (14.9 percent). **This translates to roughly 6,800 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 16.3 percent. The disconnection rate in the other, more rural subregion is 27.6 percent.

*The second section of the report looks at disparities among different groups of youth in the region. Two groups, youth in the military and youth in institutions, may be transient residents whose status does not necessarily reflect the challenges and opportunities that a region affords its young people. Since these two groups tend to be 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 6** for more on this designation.*

From this point on in the Executive Summary, the disconnection analysis only includes civilian, noninstitutionalized youth and uses pooled estimates from the years 2019–2023. This enables reliable demographic and other disaggregation.

TRFSA: Looking only at the civilian, noninstitutionalized population, the rate of disconnection in TRFSA for 2019–2023 is 19.9 percent, slightly lower than the 2017–2021 rate of 21.3 percent for the same population. The 2019–2023 civilian noninstitutionalized rate is essentially equivalent to the rate among the whole population for the same 5-year period: 20.4 percent, a 0.5-percentage-point difference. What this means is that 6,150 young people in TRFSA are cut off from work and school: one in five youth.

Rurality: The disconnection rate in Rapides and Vernon Parishes is 17.4 percent. The rate in the more rural subregion (Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, Grant, LaSalle, and Winn Parishes) is 23.9 percent. In TRFSA, the more rural subregion tends to have a higher disconnection rate than the more urban subregion.

Gender and Race: The disconnection rates for young women are higher than for young men, 22.3 percent and 17.5 percent, respectively. The disconnection rate for white young people is 18.4 percent, while the disconnection rate for Black young people is 19.6 percent. The Hispanic population and the population of young people who identify as “two or more” or “other” races in TRFSA are too small to calculate reliable disconnection data.

Educational Attainment: Youth who do not graduate high school face severe barriers; by their early twenties, 59.2 percent are disconnected. A high school diploma certainly helps, however, it is not a cure-all; 27.3 percent of youth ages 22 to 24 with a high school diploma but no education beyond that are disconnected. Young adults ages 16 to 24 who have graduated high school but not attended any postsecondary institution make up more than half of all disconnected youth in the region; the same is true for the United States as a whole. While there has been a reduction in disconnection rates for high school diploma holders since the time of the last report, the disconnection rate is still high relative to other groups. 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 the transition into higher education of some kind or on pipelines to 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 (28.1 percent) living below 200 percent of the poverty line are disconnected, markedly higher than the disconnection rate in the region overall. Despite the region’s already high poverty levels, poverty is even more prevalent among disconnected youth.

Motherhood: The disconnection rate of young mothers between the ages of 16 and 24 is 31.1 percent, far higher than that of other young women in that age group in the region, 20.6 percent.

Disability: More than one-third (38.6 percent) of all youth with a disability are disconnected in the region, 15.0 percentage points higher than the rate among youth with disabilities nationally. Programs designed to support disconnected youth should consider the needs of youth with disabilities (mental and physical).

Middle-Skill Jobs: Of the 18,540 young adults ages 16 to 24 in TRFSA who have at least a high school diploma but no bachelor's or higher degree, 2,200 have jobs that earn more than \$40,000 annually. A whopping 84.1 percent of these well-paying middle-skill jobs are held by young men, and 15.9 percent are held by young women.

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

INTRODUCTION

The transition to adulthood brings both exciting independence and weighty new responsibilities, creating a challenging period for young people. This developmental stage requires a delicate balance. Young adults must simultaneously gather credentials and build networks, master both cognitive skills and social norms, develop confidence and personal agency, and discover who they are in relation to others. For some, maintaining this balance proves difficult, and their equilibrium can be easily disrupted through no fault of their own.

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 2023, there were 4.2 million disconnected youth nationwide, about one in ten young people (10.6 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 these reasons and more, how the country’s young people are faring in their transition to adulthood is a fundamental indicator of societal progress and well-being.

This report examines the complex landscape of youth disconnection within The Rapides Foundation Service Area (TRFSA) (see **BOX 3** for the definition of the region), highlighting how national trends interact with local realities. While post-Great Recession recovery led to declining disconnection rates nationwide, the 2020 pandemic caused a sharp reversal, disrupting a decade of progress. However, beneath these fluctuations, persistent disparities remain entrenched across geographies and between racial and ethnic groups. Addressing disconnection demands coordinated, localized action given that local conditions and resources have a direct impact on the opportunities and obstacles that young people face, and that overall, those living in rural areas face outsized challenges. Measure of America’s *A Decade Undone* found that rural counties tend to have the highest rates of youth disconnection while suburban counties had the lowest.¹ While insights from successful programs elsewhere are valuable, sustainable solutions must emerge from careful analysis of regional data to identify priority areas and establish common goals. This tailored approach recognizes that resources, obstacles, and opportunities vary dramatically, requiring specific strategies rather than one-size-fits-all solutions.

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

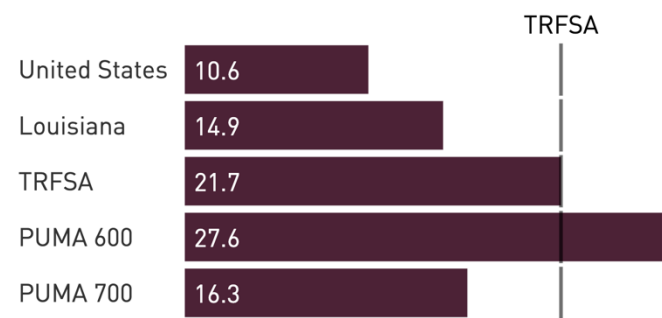
Measure of America (MOA) defines disconnected youth as teens and young adults ages 16 to 24 who are neither in school nor working. This is the definition that MOA has used in its data calculations and analysis on youth disconnection since its first report on the topic, *One in Seven*, published in 2012.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

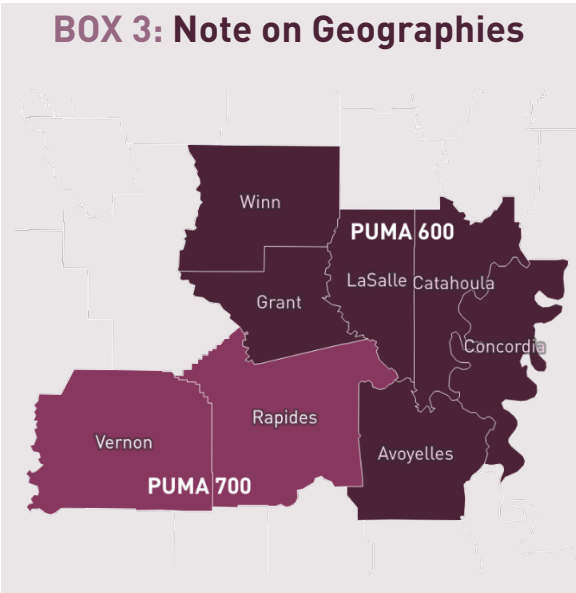
Over one-fifth (21.7 percent) of youth in TRFSA are neither working nor in school. This translates to roughly 6,800 youth disconnected from crucial pathways to a fulfilling life. The TRFSA disconnection rate is about 11 percentage points higher than the national rate: 10.6 percent. In this section, data for the United States, Louisiana, and TRFSA are from 2023, 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 2019 to 2023 (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 Disconnection in Context (%)



Source: US, state, TRFSA: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2023; PUMA: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019–2023.

disconnection rate in PUMA 700, Rapides and Vernon Parishes, is 16.3 percent. In PUMA 600, however, more than one in four people (27.6 percent) are neither working nor in school, nearly 13.0 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; as a result, employment and educational opportunities are more difficult to access.



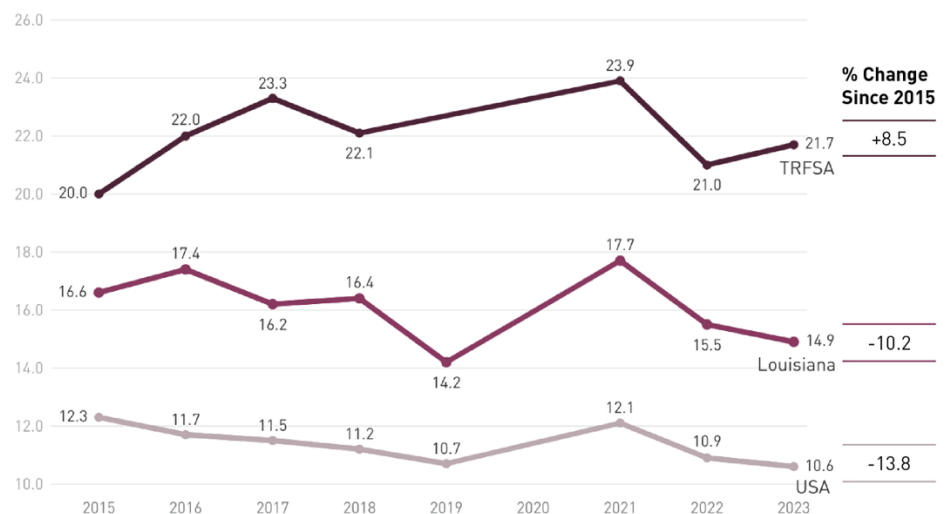
The data used in this study come from the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample. The data are provided in geographic units known as Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs). PUMAs are collections of counties or census tracts within counties. They are defined by the US Census 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 it outside of TRFSA, is included. For more information, see the Methodological Note.

CHANGE OVER TIME

The youth disconnection rate in TRFSA has remained relatively steady, varying within a range of 4.0 percentage points since 2015 and remaining persistently elevated above the Louisiana disconnection rate. 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 has experienced a population decrease of 10,000 young adults since this analysis began in 2015. Change-over-time graphs on this page include the institutionalized and military populations; change-over-time analysis on [PAGE 15](#) excludes these two groups. For the purpose of trends analysis, [FIGURES 4 & 5](#) 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 15](#), uses 5-year estimates.

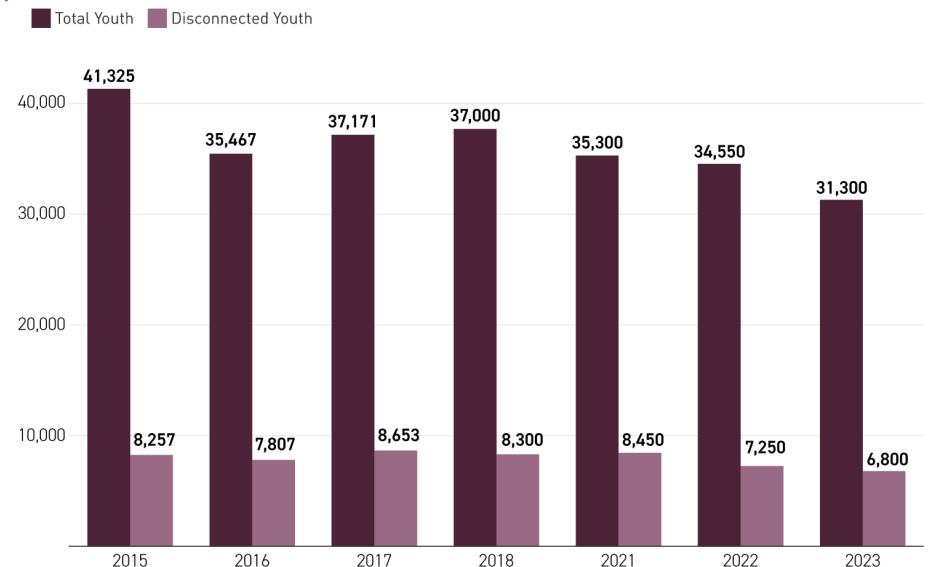
Comparing 2021 disconnection rates with 2023 disconnection rates shows that TRFSA saw a 2.2-percentage-point decrease in disconnection, compared to a 2.8-percentage-point decrease in Louisiana and a 1.5-percentage-point decrease nationwide.

FIGURE 4: Youth Disconnection Rate in TRFSA and Louisiana, 2015–2023 (%)



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2015–2023. Data for 2020 omitted; so are data for 2019 for TRFSA.²

FIGURE 5: Disconnected Youth and All Youth in TRFSA, 2015–2023



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2015–2023.

DISPARITIES IN DISCONNECTION

Persistent disparities in disconnection rates across youth populations reveal a fundamental truth: economic growth alone cannot bridge the structural divides that separate young people from opportunity. 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 institutions, 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 6**). **For this reason, the remainder of this study discusses youth disconnection among the civilian, noninstitutionalized population, removing these two groups from the sample.**

BOX 6: 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 1,100 youth institutionalized throughout prisons, detention centers, jails, group homes, residential treatment centers, and psychiatric hospitals, and 79.3 percent of them are disconnected. The majority are located in PUMA 600. One state correctional facility, the Raymond Laborde Correctional Center, sits in PUMA 600, in addition to local jails. The Allen Correctional Center, located in Allen Parish, is not part of the two PUMAs and is not included in the report analysis.³ While institutionalized youth are excluded from disconnection rate calculations in the second section of this report, previously incarcerated young people may face significant barriers to connection 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.⁴

	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 2,400 youth in the military are located in PUMA 700, where they make up 10.8 percent of the total youth population.

	YOUTH DISCONNECTION				
	All Youth (%)	All Youth (#)	Civilian, Noninstitutionalized Youth (%)	Civilian, Noninstitutionalized Youth (#)	Rate
TRFSA	20.4	7,000	19.9	6,150	Lower rate ↓
PUMA 600: Winn, Grant, LaSalle, Catahoula, Concordia, and Avoyelles Parishes	27.6	3,450	23.9	2,800	Lower rate ↓
PUMA 700: Rapides and Vernon Parishes	16.3	3,550	17.4	3,350	Higher rate ↑

The following estimates are based on 2019–2023 data on the civilian, noninstitutionalized population (see **BOX 6**). TRFSA overall youth disconnection rate among this group is 19.9 percent. The rate in PUMA 600 is 23.9 percent, and the rate in PUMA 700 is 17.4 percent. Throughout this section, references are made to 2023 disconnection rates in the United States (which include military and institutionalized youth) to provide context.⁵ References made to Louisiana are based on 2019–2023 data on the civilian, noninstitutionalized population.

Gender

On average, young women in the region have higher rates of disconnection than young men, 22.3 and 17.5 percent, respectively. This differs from the last report, when young men and young women had relatively similar rates of disconnection.

BOX 7: 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?

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

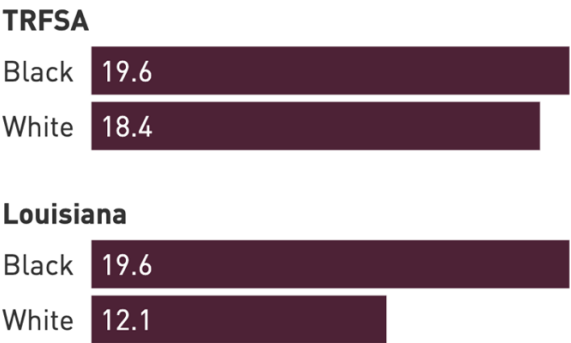
= 19.6% of all Black youth are disconnected

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

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

= 30.0% of all disconnected youth are Black

FIGURE 8: Disconnection Rates by Race in TRFSA vs. Louisiana (%)



Source: Louisiana: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019–2023; TRFSA: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019–2023.

people who identify as “two or more” or “other” races in TRFSA are too small to calculate reliable disconnection data.

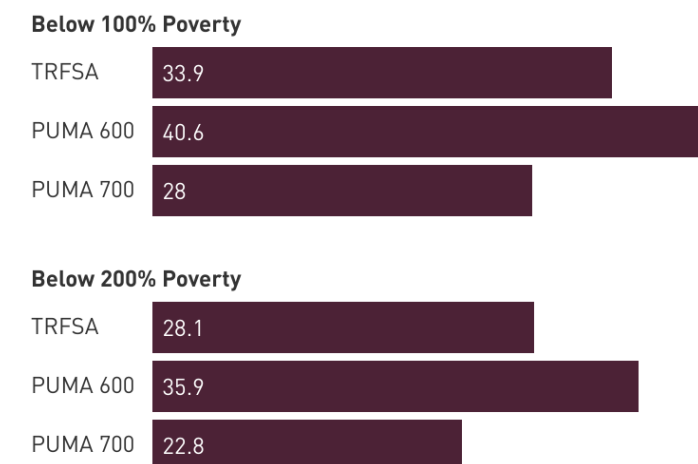
Race and Ethnicity

In TRFSA, the rate of disconnection for white youth, 18.4 percent, is similar to the rate for Black youth, 19.6 percent (see **FIGURE 8**).

Similar rates of disconnection for Black and 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, the rate of disconnection among Black youth is 19.6 percent, higher than that of white youth, 12.1 percent. In contrast, Black youth disconnection in TRFSA is on par with the statewide rate (see **FIGURE 8**), while white youth disconnection in TRFSA significantly exceeds the statewide rate. The Hispanic population and the population of young

While disconnection rates may appear similar across racial and ethnic groups, the similarities mask profound differences in the underlying barriers that shape young people's trajectories. The pathways to disconnection—and the solutions needed to address them—may vary across demographic lines, requiring intervention strategies that account for the distinct challenges facing different populations. Solutions that ignore these realities risk perpetuating the very systems that create disconnection rather than expanding and opportunity.

FIGURE 9: Disconnection Rates below 100% and 200% of the Poverty Line



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019–2023.

Poverty

Poverty functions as a fundamental barrier to connection, creating cascading effects that limit access to educational and economic opportunities across generations. For consistency with The Rapides Foundation’s other work, this report defines youth in poverty as those living in households below 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold—a measure that captures both officially poor and near-poor populations. This threshold varies by household composition and is calculated by doubling the official poverty line for each household size. For example, the average US household consists of three people, and the 2023 poverty threshold for a three-person household is \$24,230, meaning that three-person households below 200 percent of the poverty threshold have incomes of \$48,460 or less annually.⁶

In TRFSA, as in the United States overall, living in poverty increases the likelihood that a young person will be disconnected. **Of the region’s youth living below 200 percent of the poverty line, 28.1 percent are disconnected, compared to 12.9 percent of youth in the region living at or above the 200 percent line.** The disconnection rate for young people living below 200% of the poverty line is on par with the rate the 2021 rate, 28.6 percent. Among youth living in households that receive SNAP benefits, the disconnection rate is similar to that of youth living below 200 percent of the poverty line, 31.1 percent. In many cases, this is because the youth who are living below the poverty line are the same youth who are eligible for SNAP. While the rate of youth living in poverty is already quite high in the region (44.3 percent of all youth live below 200 percent of the poverty line), the poverty rate is even higher among disconnected youth (63.5 percent).

As noted in Measure of America’s 2020 national report on youth disconnection on page 18, “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.”⁷

Research—including Measure of America’s—suggests that place matters for poverty and social mobility, and disparities between neighboring communities can be large.⁸ 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 provides more job opportunities. In both PUMAs, youth living in poverty experience higher rates of disconnection than those not living in poverty. In PUMA 600, 35.9 percent of youth living below 200 percent of the poverty line are disconnected. In PUMA 700, 22.8 percent of youth below 200 percent of the poverty line are disconnected.

Health Insurance

In TRFSA, 9.5 percent of all youth do not have health insurance of any type. Nearly one in three, or **29.0 percent of those without insurance, are disconnected**. The disconnection rate among youth with public health insurance is similar, 27.3 percent. For those with private health insurance, the disconnection rate is 11.5 percent. Organizations working with the uninsured or those on public insurance can use this information as a proxy to help identify youth who are disconnected from work and school.

Disability

FIGURE 10: Disconnection Rates by Disability Status



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019–2023.

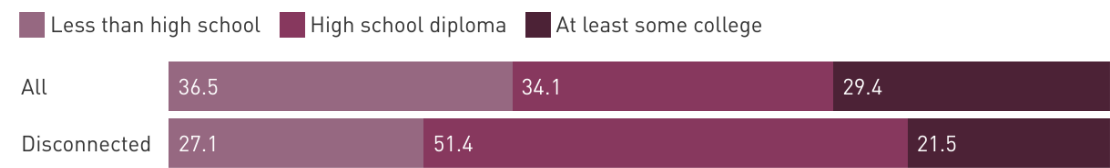
Living with a disability is still a barrier to full participation in society for too many Americans. **Of young people with a disability in TRFSA, 1,400 (38.6 percent) are disconnected**. This is 15.0 percentage points higher than the rate in the United States overall, 23.6 percent. For young people living below 200 percent of the poverty line and

with a disability, the rate of disconnection is even higher: 50.8 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 census and does not necessarily indicate a medical diagnosis. In TRFSA, youth with disabilities make up nearly a quarter of the disconnected youth population (22.8 percent), and only 11.7 percent of the total youth population. This pattern is similar to that of the United States as a whole, where youth with disabilities make up 19.1 percent of the disconnected youth population and 8.6 percent of the total youth population.

Educational Attainment

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

FIGURE 11: Educational Attainment among TRFSA Youth (%)



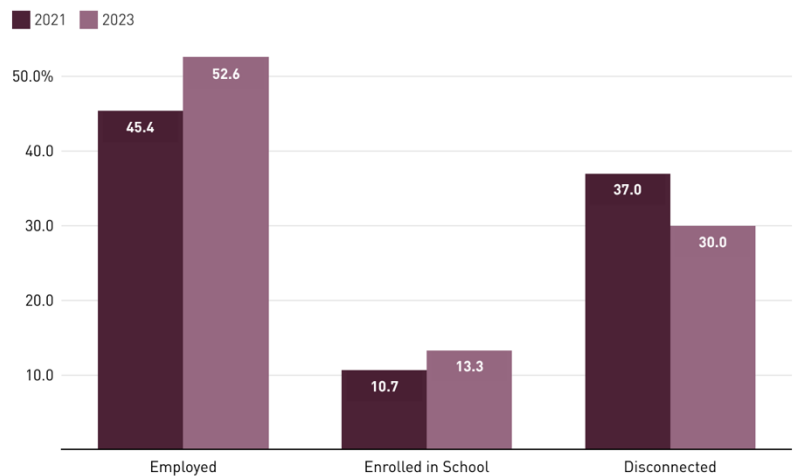
Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019–2023.

and one-third have at least some postsecondary education. Among disconnected youth, the majority (51.4 percent) have a high school diploma but no further education, and only 21.5 percent have started or completed a two- or four-year postsecondary program (see **FIGURE 11**). In part, this is because disconnected youth tend to be older and past the age of mandatory schooling. 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—higher education, apprenticeships, technical education, or work that does not require a four-year degree. This is fairly

similar to the picture nationally: in the United States overall, 54.3 percent of disconnected youth have a high school diploma but no further education, and only 22.5 percent have started or completed college.

One bright spot in TRFSA is that since the publication of the last report, the disconnection rate for young people with a high school diploma or equivalent has decreased from 37.0 in 2021 to 30.0 in 2023, a 19 percent decrease. Since 2021, a greater share of high school diploma holders have found employment. In 2023, 52.6 percent of high school diploma holders were working, compared to 45.4 percent in 2021. This population has also seen a slight uptick in school enrollment: 13.3 percent in 2023, compared to 10.7 percent in 2021. Still, just over half (51.7 percent) of all disconnected youth in the region have a high school diploma but no further education.

FIGURE 12: Outcomes for High School Graduates in TRFSA

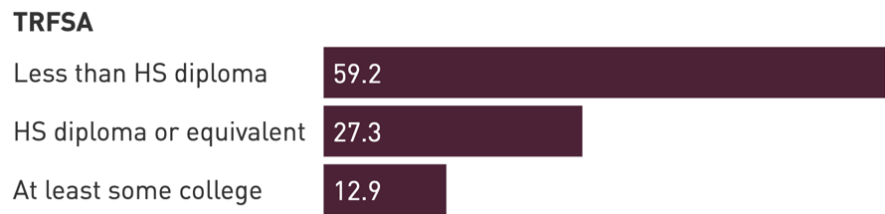


Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2017–2021 & 2019–2023

Across TRFSA, young adults ages 22 to 24 face more difficulty connecting to school or work than their younger peers. One in four (25.0 percent) of young adults 22 to 24 in TRFSA are disconnected from work and school, compared to 27.2 percent of those ages 19–21 and 9.0 percent of those ages 16 to 18 (here and across the nation, this age range is relatively more connected due to compulsory high school education).

The impact of having a lower level of educational attainment becomes clear when looking at the outcomes of young people in this age range. At this age, many if not most young adults have finished their formal schooling. By ages 22 to 24, disconnection is most common among youth with lower levels of education. Well over half of young people in this age range who have less than a high school diploma are disconnected (59.2 percent), compared to 27.3 percent of those with a high school diploma but no further education and 12.9 percent of those who have at least some college-level education (see **FIGURE 13**).

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



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019–2023.

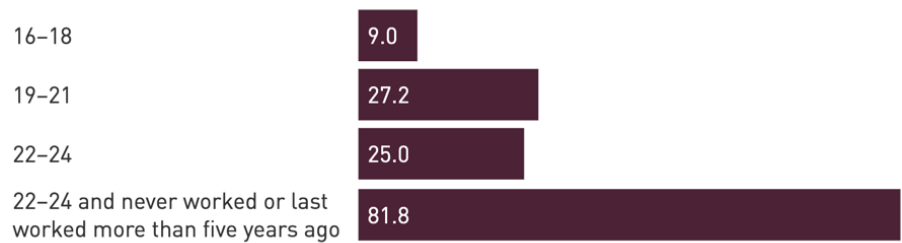
Higher educational attainment results in more opportunities for employment. While a high school degree was once sufficient for a living-wage job, the labor market now heavily favors those with education beyond high school, in the form of a bachelor’s or associate degree or a professional certification of some kind.

Today, high school is less an educational capstone than a stepping-stone to further education and training. 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.

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 and those who are not looking for work, also known as being “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 4,500 disconnected youth who are out of the labor force and not enrolled in school and are not looking for work, and 1,650 disconnected youth who are in the labor force and not enrolled in school and but are looking for work. For TRFSA overall, 73.2 percent of disconnected youth are out of the labor force. The 4,500 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.

FIGURE 14: Disconnection Rates by Age, Gender, and Work Experience (%)



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019–2023.

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, 62.2 percent of disconnected youth have not worked in the past five years or ever.

Since 2021, the share of young people who hadn’t worked in the last five years has decreased by 11.3 percent. In 2021, there were 14,550

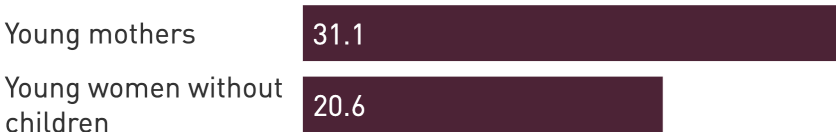
young people with no recent work experience; in 2023, there were 12,900 young people with no recent work experience. Nonetheless, this group still makes up a significant share of the overall youth population in TRFSA, 41.7 percent.

In the region overall, the disconnection rate for those 22 to 24 who have never worked or last worked more than five years ago is 81.8 percent. **These 1,450 relatively older youth who are out of school and with no recent work experience face significant barriers to connection. They make up 23.4 percent of all disconnected youth in TRFSA.** Difficulty finding and securing quality entry-level job opportunities could contribute to the high disconnection rates for young people in this category.

Motherhood and Marriage

The rate of disconnection among young women who are mothers, 31.1 percent, is much higher than that of all women, 22.3 percent, and the rate of women without children, 20.6 percent. Compared to the United States overall, mothers are overrepresented in the disconnected youth population in TRFSA. In the United States, 19.1 percent of disconnected women are mothers; in TRFSA, 22.7 percent of disconnected young women are mothers.

FIGURE 15: Disconnection Among Young Women with and Without Children



Source: Measure of America Calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019–2023.

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, whether to raise children or for some other reason, limits later career trajectories and earnings.⁹

The rate of disconnection among married young people, 23.6 percent, is higher than that among unmarried youth, 19.4 percent.

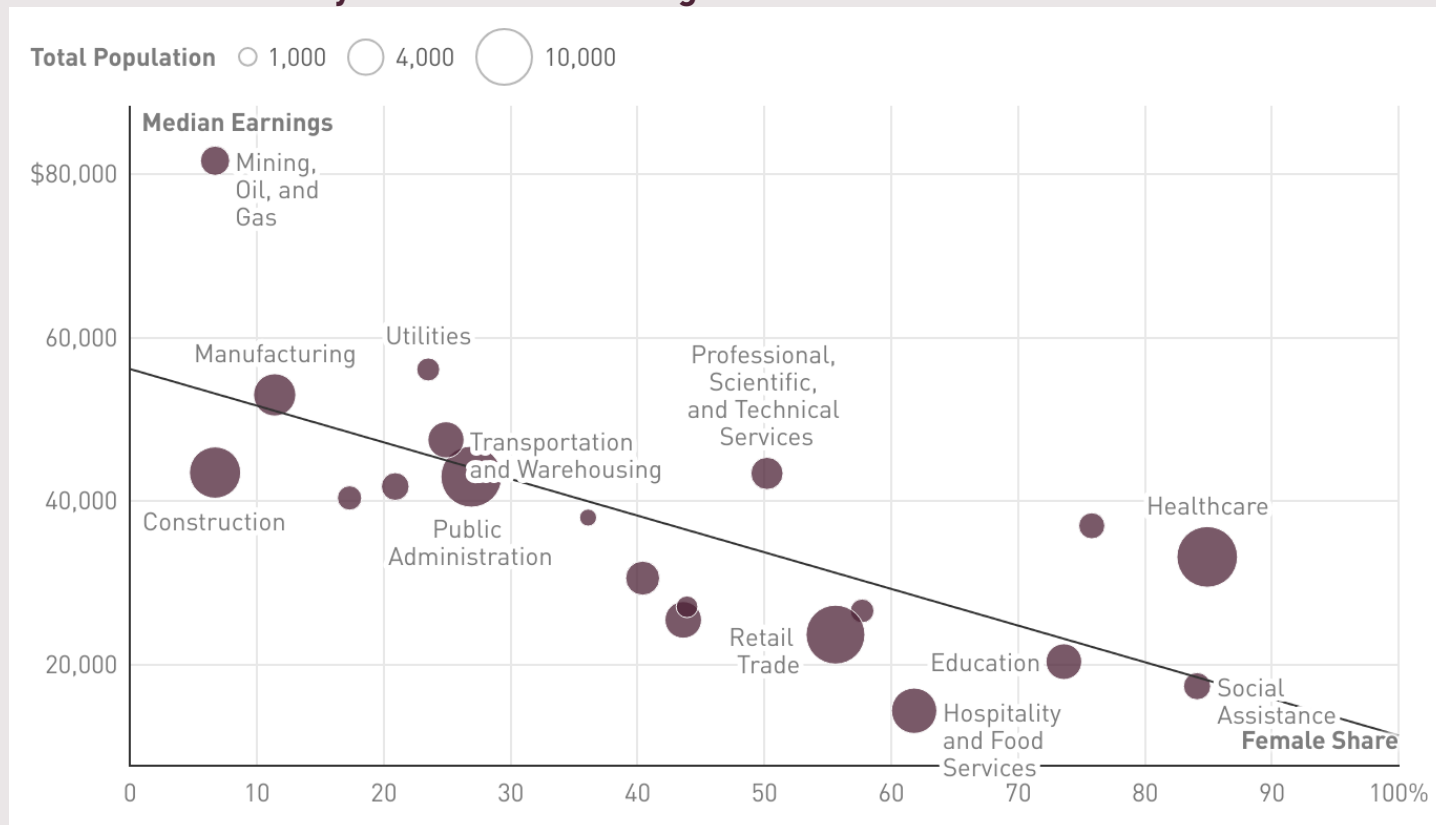
In Louisiana, the cost of childcare surged 11.4 percent between 2018 and 2022.¹⁰ Burdensome childcare costs can be a significant barrier for young mothers’ ability to work or attend school. When childcare costs are high and the cost of childcare approaches parity with the post-tax wage someone can earn, women are less likely to enter or remain in the labor force. For more information on young mothers, see **BOX 18** in the 2023 edition of this report.

BOX 16: Middle-Skill Jobs

Middle-skill jobs are commonly defined as jobs that require education or training beyond high school but not a four-year college degree. This could consist of an associate degree, a professional certification, an apprenticeship, or moderate- to long-term on-the-job training. For the purposes of this analysis, we look at labor market outcomes for young adults ages 16 to 24 who have a high school diploma or GED but no bachelor's or higher degree and make more than \$40,000 annually.¹¹

A study from the St. Louis Federal Reserve found that more than half of all jobs in southern states are considered to be middle-skill jobs.¹² Of the 18,540 young adults ages 16 to 24 in TRFSA who have at least a high school diploma but no bachelor's or higher degree, 2,200 have jobs that earn more than \$40,000 annually. A whopping 84.1 percent of these well-paying middle-skill jobs are held by men, and 15.9 percent are held by women—**more than five times as many young men as young women are employed in these well-paying middle-skill roles.**

Middle-Skill Jobs by Gender and Earnings for All Adults in TRFSA



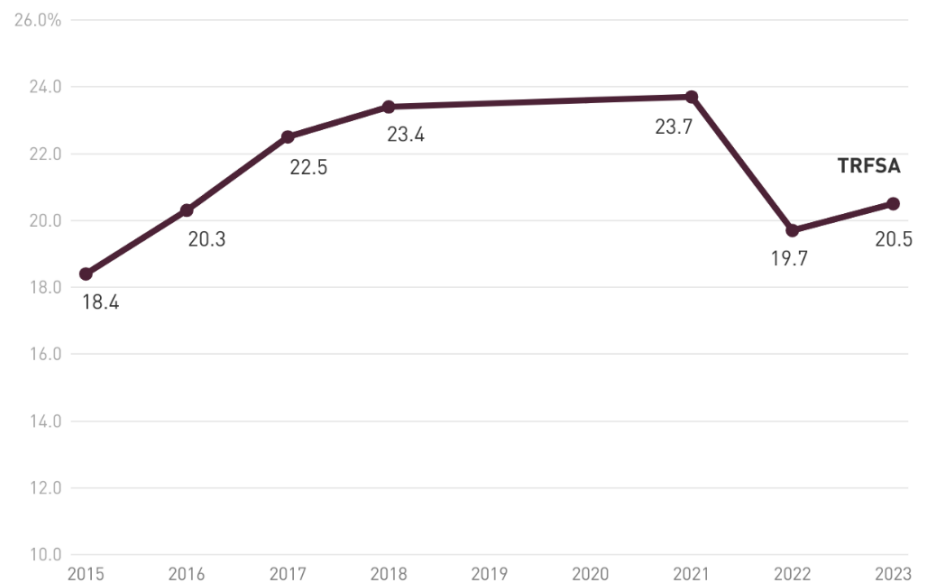
Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019–2023.

The chart above shows the relationship between industrial sectors, earnings in these sectors, and the share of each sector's workforce that is female. A clear pattern emerges: the highest earning and male-dominated middle-skill jobs are in industries in the top left corner, including construction, manufacturing, and resource extraction. Jobs in these sectors pay better on average than those in female-dominated sectors of healthcare, education, and social assistance in the bottom right-hand corner of the figure. It's important that workforce development programs prepare youth for *quality* jobs that are in demand, not just *any* jobs that are in demand. **Finding and creating employment and well-paying pathways for young adults without advanced degrees, particularly in middle-skill jobs, is crucial to promoting their connection.** Special attention needs to be paid to ensuring that these jobs are open to women.

Change Over Time

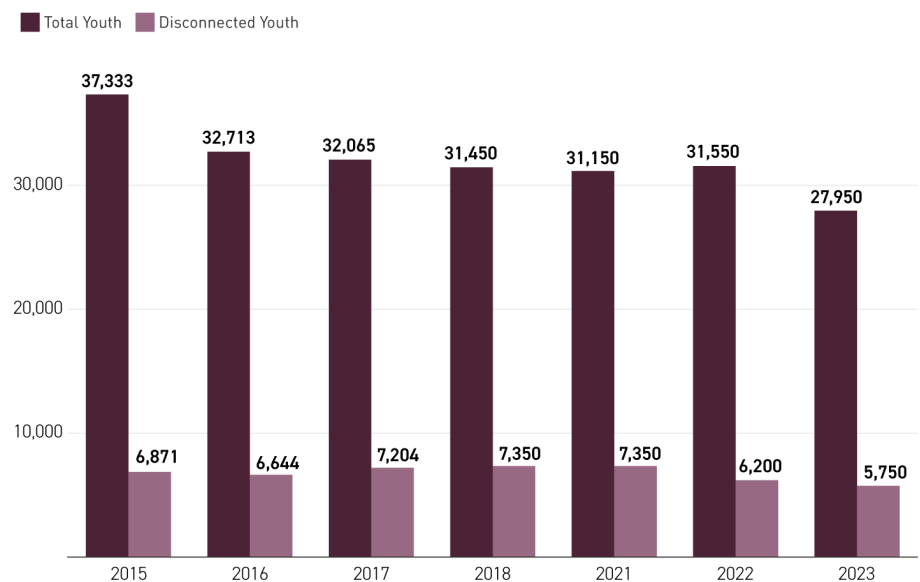
As opposed to the previous Change Over Time charts, these charts exclude institutionalized youth and youth in the military. The youth disconnection rate in TRFSA, absent institutionalized and military youth, increased steadily from 2015 to 2017 and roughly plateaued from 2018 to 2021, despite the impact of Covid. In 2022 and 2023, there was a slight decrease in disconnection rate relative to before the pandemic. For the purpose of trends analysis, **FIGURES 17 & 18** show 1-year estimates (just as in the earlier **NATIONAL, REGIONAL & STATE CONTEXT** and **CHANGE OVER TIME** sections) while the rest of the report uses 5-year estimates.

FIGURE 17: Youth Disconnection in TRFSA, 2015–2023 (%), Not in Military or Institutions



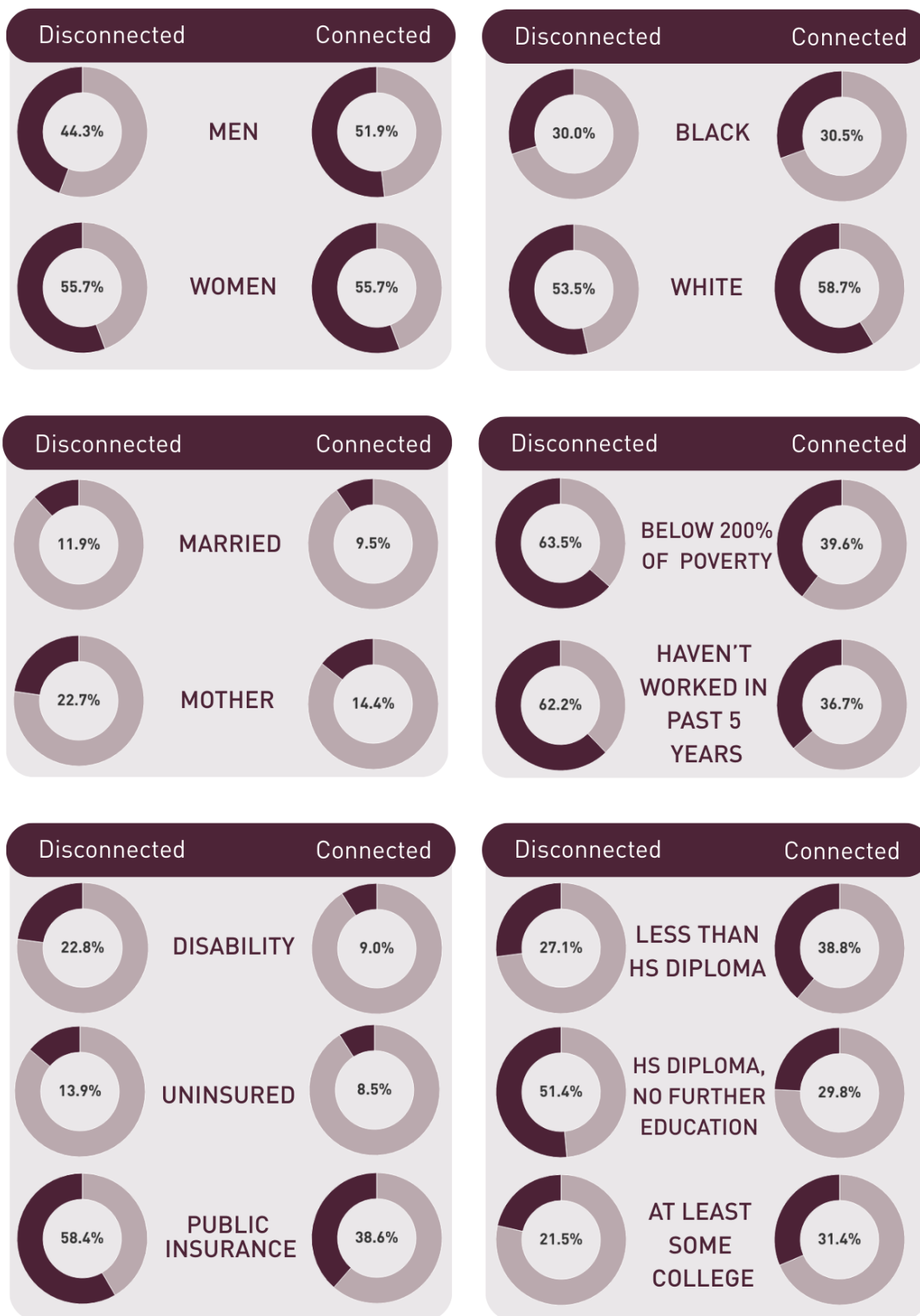
Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2015–2023. Data for 2020 omitted; so are data for 2019 for TRFSA.²

FIGURE 18: Disconnected Youth and All Youth in TRFSA, 2015–2023, Not in Military or Institutions



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2015–2023.

FIGURE 19: Contrasting Profiles: A Snapshot of Connected & Disconnected Youth in TRFSA



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019–2023.

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

Data Summary

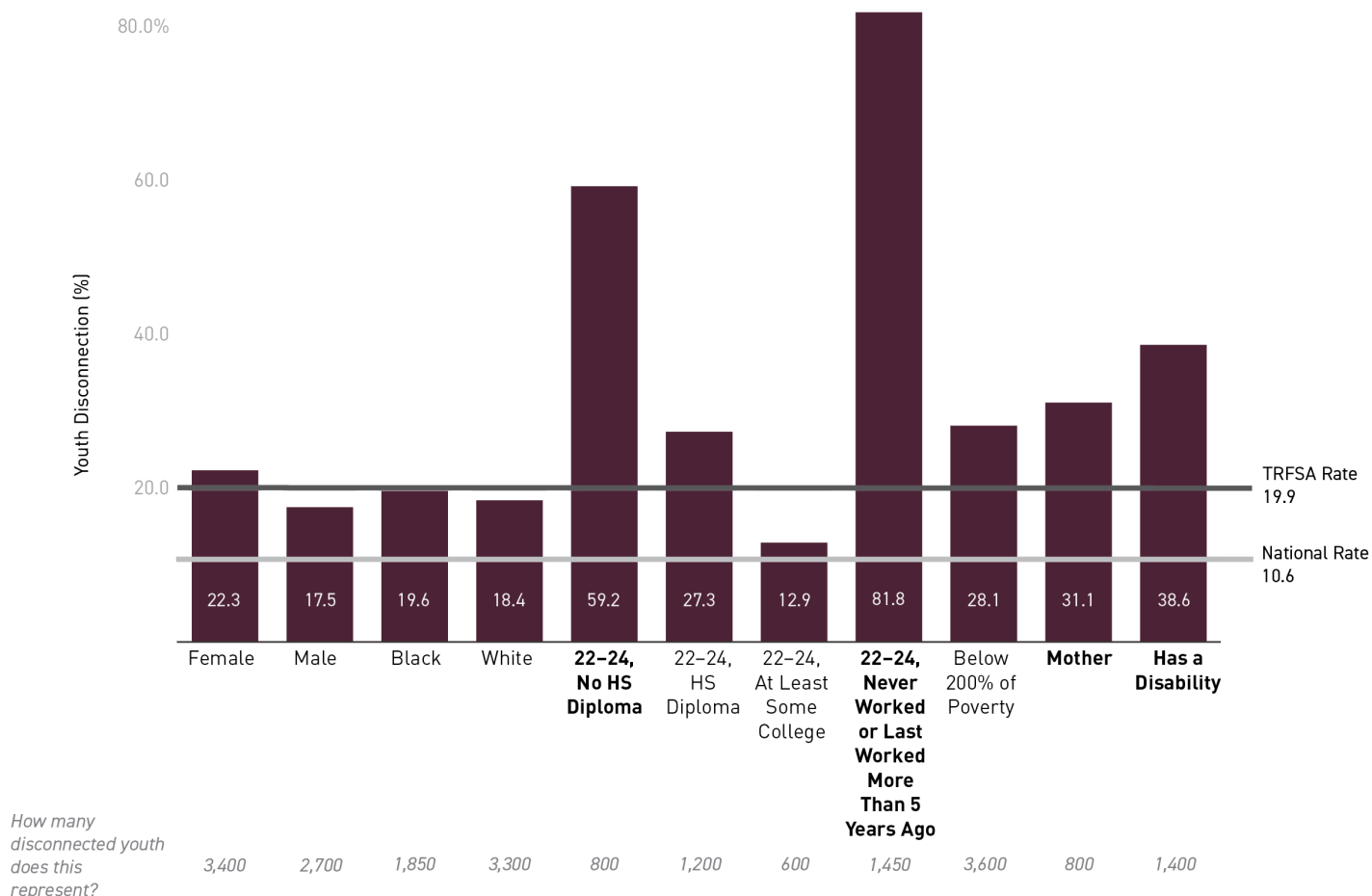
Of the groups addressed in this study, several priority groups stand out because of their high rates of disconnection and overrepresentation in the region's disconnected youth population. These groups are 22- to 24-year-olds who have never worked or last worked more than five years ago (81.8 percent), 22- to 24-year-olds who don't have a high school diploma (59.2 percent), youth with disabilities (38.6 percent), and young mothers (31.1 percent). These rates are all more than one and a half times the regionwide average for all youth: see **FIGURE 20**. In this figure, these priority groups are bolded.

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

- **Prioritize high school completion.** Within TRFSA, 15.6 percent of adults ages 25 and above lack a high school diploma, in contrast to 12.2 percent statewide.¹³ Young adults who do not complete high school face substantial challenges. By their early twenties, a staggering 59.2 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.** Though the disconnection rate for young people with a high school diploma in TRFSA has decreased, nearly one-third (30.0 percent) of youth with a high school diploma are still 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 is a necessary component of youth reengagement but not a silver bullet.
- **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, 62.2 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- to 24-year-old age range, without high school diplomas, and without recent work experience. Such initiatives should focus on providing practical work experience, bridging educational gaps, and revitalizing hope in discouraged jobseekers.¹⁴ This is particularly crucial for the 22- to 24-year-olds who haven't worked in the last five years or ever and have strikingly high rates of disconnection—and constitute one in five disconnected youth across the region.
- **Support youth with disabilities.** With proper support, many youth with disabilities can succeed in school and achieve fulfilling careers. It is crucial that interventions address the holistic needs of these young adults, ensuring that both their physical and mental health are fully considered.
- **Support programs and policies that enable young women to pursue their educational and career goals.** Engage with young women and young mothers to understand their needs, whether it's evening courses, affordable childcare, or adaptable working hours. To support young women's employment,

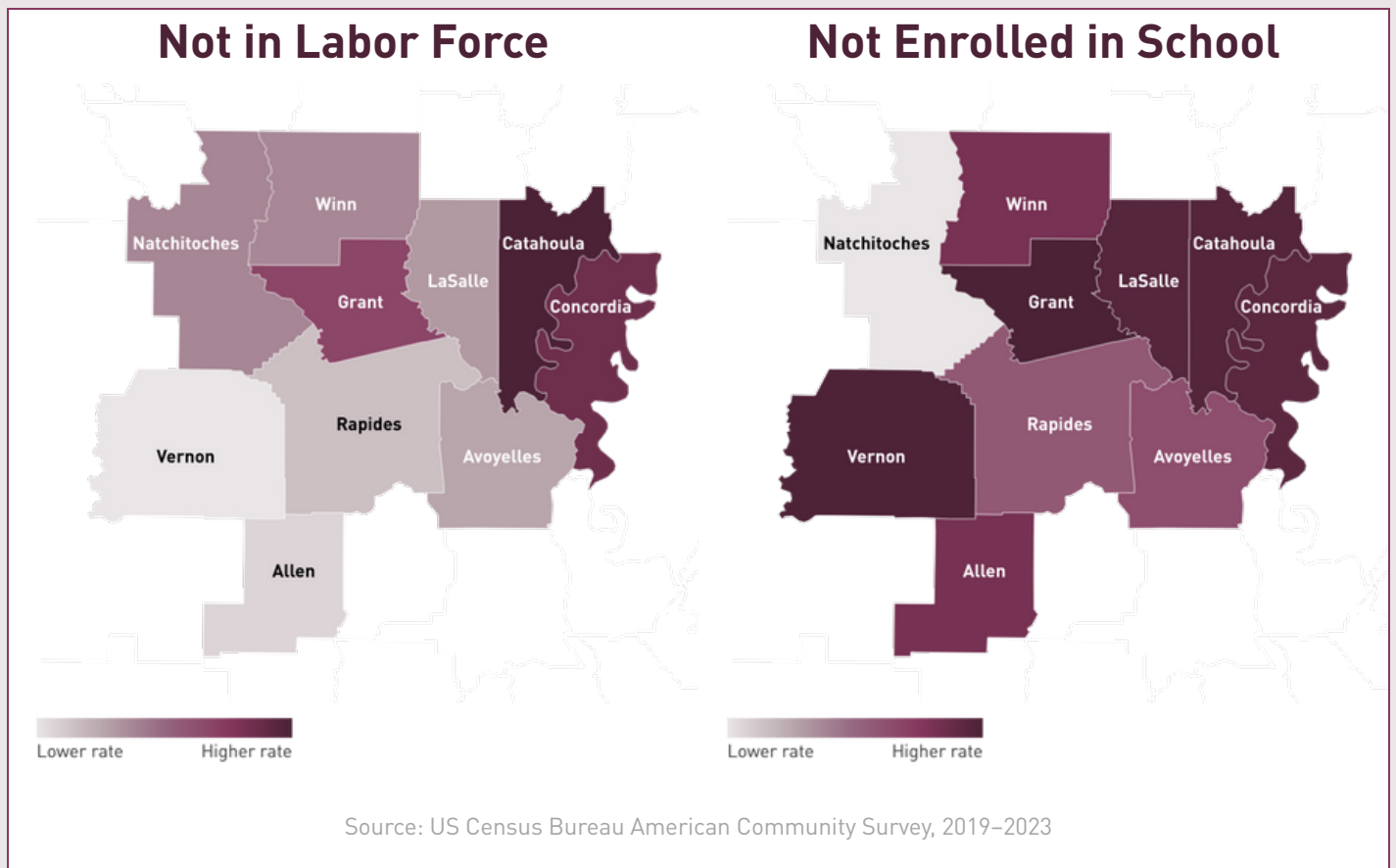
special emphasis should be placed on guiding them toward better-paying male-dominated fields, ensuring that they have pathways to these industries that also supply a greater share of jobs that don't require advanced degrees, such as the manufacturing, construction, and transportation/warehousing industries. Finding and creating employment pathways for young women and mothers without advanced degrees are crucial to promoting their connection.

FIGURE 20: Who Is Disconnected in TRFSA?



Source: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019–2023. One-year 2023 estimates are used for the national rate.

FIGURE 21: Labor Force & Education Participation, Ages 20–24



Youth Ages 20-24		Not in Labor Force		Not Enrolled in School	
		(%)	(#)	(%)	(#)
Avoyelles Parish*	Rural	29.9	720	71.8	1,735
Catahoula Parish*	Rural	61.4	255	87.0	360
Concordia Parish	Town	55.1	725	85.6	1,125
Grant Parish	Small City	47.7	600	88.6	1,115
LaSalle Parish*	Rural	31.9	330	86.5	890
Rapides Parish	Small City	25.4	1,950	69.2	5,310
Vernon Parish	Town	18.8	830	88.1	3,885
Winn Parish*	Rural	34.8	280	79.9	645
Included in TRFSA but Not in Report Analysis					
Allen Parish*	Rural	21.8	270	80.1	1,000
Natchitoches Parish	Town	35.2	1,550	42.3	1,865
*Indicates less reliable estimates					

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. This report is the first assessment of youth disconnection in TRFSA to feature post-pandemic data; the enduring impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic continue to influence the experiences of young people in the region.

Efforts to reconnect youth need to take this disruption to young people's development into account, in addition to the unique obstacles young people may face. 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 multisector actors work together alongside disconnected youth and community residents to promote solutions that are bold, systematic, and collaborative. Addressing youth disconnection will foster a larger, more productive labor force, thereby encouraging greater investment in public infrastructure and benefiting society as a whole.

The literature and evidence of “what works” to address the challenges and opportunities facing disconnected youth in rural contexts are emerging areas. As new evidence becomes available, the challenge will be not only disseminating information on what works but also ensuring that 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 earlier in the Data Summary, 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 to work and school.

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 childhood to adulthood; 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: 2023 TRFSA Rates

	Youth Disconnection	
	(%)	(#)
1-Year Estimates		
United States	10.6	4,150,300
Louisiana	14.9	79,200
TRFSA (All youth)	21.7	6,800
TRFSA (Civilian, noninstitutionalized)	20.5	5,750
5-Year Estimates		
GENDER		
Female	22.3	3,400
Male	17.5	2,700
AGE GROUP		
16–18	9.0	1,000
19–21	27.2	2,550
22–24	25.0	2,600
RACE		
Black	19.6	1,850
White	18.4	3,300
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
Less Than HS Diploma	14.7	1,650
HS Diploma or Equivalent	30.0	3,150
Some College, No Degree	14.5	1,300
MARRIAGE		
Married	23.6	750
Not Married	19.4	5,400
MOTHERHOOD		
Mothers	31.1	800
Not Mothers	20.6	2,650
DISABILITY		
Has a Disability	38.6	1,400
Does Not Have a Disability	17.4	4,750
HEALTH INSURANCE		
Uninsured	29.0	850
Has Public Health Insurance	27.3	3,600
Has Private Health Insurance	11.5	1,700
POVERTY		
Below 200% of Poverty Line	28.1	3,600
At or above 200% of Poverty Line	12.9	2,100
LAST WORKED		
Worked in the Past Year	8.0	1,350
1–5 Years Ago	71.3	1,000
>5 Years Ago or Never	29.6	3,800
SNAP BENEFITS		
Receiving SNAP Benefits	31.1	2,300
Not Receiving SNAP Benefits	16.3	3,850

Sources: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2023, 2019–2023.

Table 2: 2023 vs. 2021 TRFSA Rates

	Youth Disconnection	
	2021 (%)	2023 (%)
1-Year Estimates		
United States	12.1	10.6
Louisiana	17.7	14.9
TRFSA (All youth)	23.9	21.7
5-Year Estimates		
TRFSA (Civilian, non-institutionalized)	21.3	19.9
GENDER		
Female	22.2	22.3
Male	20.3	17.5
AGE GROUP		
16–18	9.5	9.0
19–21	23.7	27.2
22–24*	32.1	25.0
RACE		
Black	19.8	19.6
White	20.6	18.4
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
Less Than HS Diploma	15.2	14.7
HS Diploma or Equivalent*	37.0	30.0
Some College, No Degree	11.7	14.5
MARRIAGE		
Married	26.7	23.6
Not Married	20.7	19.4
MOTHERHOOD		
Mothers	33.5	31.1
Not Mothers	20.0	20.6
DISABILITY		
Has a Disability	46.7	38.6
Does Not Have a Disability	17.9	17.4
HEALTH INSURANCE		
Uninsured	27.6	29.0
Has Public Health Insurance	30.6	27.3
Has Private Health Insurance	12.4	11.5
POVERTY		
Below 200% of Poverty Line	28.6	28.1
At or above 200% of Poverty Line	14.7	12.9
LAST WORKED		
Worked in the Past Year	9.2	8.0
1–5 Years Ago	71.8	71.3
>5 Years Ago or Never	30.2	29.6
SNAP BENEFITS		
Receiving SNAP Benefits	29.9	31.1
Not Receiving SNAP Benefits	18.6	16.3

Sources: Measure of America calculations using US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2021, 2023, 2017–2021, 2019–2023.

*The 22- to 24-year-old age group and HS Diploma or Equivalent have shown statistically significant decreases in disconnection rate since 2021, by 22.1 percent and 18.9 percent, respectively.

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	People are 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	Nonhousehold 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 homeschooled 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 percent 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	The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a public benefit program that provides assistance to low-income households for purchasing food.
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 following table summarizes the populations and years of data used for estimates in the two data sections of the report.

GEOGRAPHY	FIRST SECTION (National, State, and Regional Context)	SECOND SECTION (Disparities in Disconnection)
US	Full population, 2023	Full population, 2023
Louisiana	Full population, 2023	Full population, 2023
TRFSA	Full population, 2023	Civilian noninstitutionalized population, 2019–2023
PUMAs	Full population, 2019–2023	Civilian noninstitutionalized population, 2019–2023

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 are provided in geographic units known as Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs). Two PUMAs 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 nonhousehold 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 US Office of Management and Budget 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 are Asian, Black, Native American, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and white. The ethnic categories are Hispanic and not Hispanic. People of Hispanic ethnicity may be of any race. In this report, members of each of these racial groups include only non-Hispanic members of these groups. All references to Black and white youth include only those who are non-Hispanic. 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 0.20 are considered unreliable and are omitted from the report.

ENDNOTES

¹ Lewis, *A Decade Undone*.

² 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.

³ "Department Facilities," Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections.

⁴ Agus-Kleinman, Salomon, and Weber, *On Track*.

⁵ In the United States, institutionalized youth represent 0.6 percent of the overall youth population, while military youth represent 1.1 percent.

⁶ US Census Bureau, "Poverty Thresholds for 2023."

⁷ Lewis, *A Decade Undone*.

⁸ Chetty and Hendren, "The Impacts of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility I"; Chetty and Hendren, "The Impacts of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility II"; Lewis and Burd-Sharps, *Zeroing In on Place and Race*.

⁹ Buchmann and McDaniel, "Motherhood and the Wages of Women in Professional Occupations."

¹⁰ Mitchell, "Why Is Child Care So Expensive in Baton Rouge?"

¹¹ The US Census Bureau does not capture data on attainment of vocational/educational certifications, certificates, and licenses. For that reason, this analysis does not include these programs. \$40,000 is chosen as the benchmark as it is just above the median personal earnings for the population ages 16 years and older in Louisiana in 2023 (\$39,494). See more here: <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2023.S2001?q=earnings+in+louisiana><https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2023.S2001?q=earnings+in+louisiana>.

¹² "Southern States Lacking Middle-Skilled Workers Risk Falling Behind."

¹³ US Census Bureau, US Department of Commerce, "Educational Attainment." American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Subject Tables, Table S1501, 2023.

¹⁴ Recent changes by the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to expand students access to work-based learning initiatives are an important first step toward this goal. See more at <https://bese.louisiana.gov/about-bese/bese-news/2024/04/16/bese-boosts-value-of-work-based-learning-in-louisiana-s-education-accountability-system>.

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