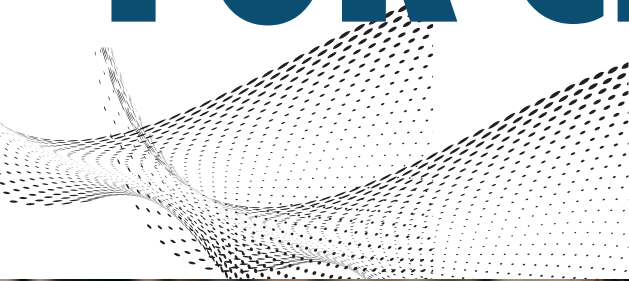


**Addressing Youth Disconnection
in the Los Angeles Region:**

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE



LAP3
HORIZONS 32K
STRATEGIC
PLAN



OYC
L.A. OPPORTUNITY
YOUTH COLLABORATIVE



COYN
CALIFORNIA OPPORTUNITY
YOUTH NETWORK



MARCH 2025

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While too many to list individually, there are hundreds of individuals over the last two decades who have contributed to the planning, organizing, and most importantly the implementation of programs and policies to enhance life opportunities of our next generation of Angelenos.

This continued data research of OY in Los Angeles is built on the foundation of the original research by Dr. Paul Harrington, and the current national research by Measure of America.

We want to thank the Alliance for Children’s Rights, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, The Aspen Forum for Community Solutions at the Aspen Institute, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, and Stuart Foundation for their continued support of this research.

Lastly, like to thank Lauri Collier, Farrah Parker, Melanie G. Ferrer-Vaughn, and all the other partners who contributed to the report.

Sincerely, Robert and Ari

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

All young people need to be plugged into resources, supportive relationships, and opportunities that support their well-being. Opportunity Youth – those between 16 through 24 years old who are neither in school nor working – lack these important connections. In 2023, over 123,000 youth experienced disconnection in Los Angeles County, 48,000 of whom lived in the City of Los Angeles, highlighting systemic barriers that persist despite post-pandemic recovery.

This challenge also presents a crucial opportunity to build data-driven, equity-centered solutions that can foster economic mobility, social well-being, and “holistic stability” – a term coined by Los Angeles Young Leaders to describe the integration of educational, economic, and emotional security as key to the success of young people.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Persistent Disconnection Rates:** LA County’s youth disconnection rate stood at 11.3%, while the city had a slightly lower rate of 11.0%, both of which remain consistent with pre-pandemic levels.
- **Age Disparities:** Young adults 19-24 years were significantly more affected (13% disconnection rate) compared to 5% among teens aged 16-18, underscoring the need for targeted support during the transition from adolescence to adulthood.
- **Racial and Ethnic Disparities:** Black and Hispanic/Latino youth faced the highest disconnection rates due to historic and systemic inequalities in education and workforce areas compared to their peers.
- **Geographic Disparities:** Specific neighborhoods, such as Lancaster, Westmont, Watts, and Van Nuys, exhibited disconnection rates exceeding 20%, far surpassing the county average – demonstrating the need for localized, community-driven solutions.
- **Economic and Educational Context:** Youth who experienced disconnection were more likely to lack a high school diploma and faced limited employment opportunities, reinforcing the need for stronger education to career pipelines.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A multi-sector, equity-driven approach is essential to addressing youth disconnection. Solutions should focus on both prevention and reconnection through targeted investments in:

- **Expanding Educational Access:** Increase the availability of dual enrollment, vocational training, and flexible learning models to support youth in completing their education.
- **Strengthening Workforce Development:** Foster employer partnerships to create pipelines for high-quality jobs, paid internships leading to employment, and mentorship programs tailored to serve Opportunity Youth.
- **Implementing Place-Based Strategies:** Focus resources on neighborhoods with high disconnection rates, tailoring strategies to align with community needs.
- **Supporting Vulnerable Subgroups:** Enhance services for young mothers, youth with disabilities, justice-involved and child welfare-involved youth, and other marginalized populations, addressing their unique barriers.
- **Integrating Cross-Sector Efforts:** Strengthen coordination between education, workforce, and social services to provide holistic support for Opportunity Youth.

CALL TO ACTION

Success in adulthood relies on early and sustained connections to education, employment, and supportive networks – Opportunity Youth need the same. Addressing the needs of Opportunity Youth is not just a moral imperative but an economic necessity. Policymakers, educators, and community leaders must work collectively to scale effective policies, invest in proven interventions, and ensure every young person has access to education, employment, and the support they need to thrive.

By leveraging existing frameworks and community-driven strategies, Los Angeles can serve as a national model for reducing youth disconnection and building a future where all young people have the opportunity to succeed and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Now is the time to act to ensure every young person realizes their full potential and contributes to a brighter, more equitable future.

KEY DEFINITIONS

To maintain clarity and consistency, this report includes key definitions for frequently used terms:

- **Opportunity Youth (OY):** Young Adults between the ages of 16-24 who are neither in school nor employed (i.e., disconnected). While the term generally refers to those outside the education system and workforce, locally it also includes youth who experience homelessness/ housing insecurity, child welfare involvement, and/or juvenile justice systems. These specific experiences, however, cannot be identified in American Community Survey (ACS) data--yet we know these populations are predictive indicators of disconnection. In this report, OY and disconnected youth refer to 16-24-year-olds who are neither in school nor working.
- **Disconnection Rate:** The percentage of youth within a specific sub-group who were disconnected (i.e., neither in school nor employed). This metric is used to gauge the prevalence of youth disconnection in a population.
- **Reconnection:** The act of re-engaging youth who experienced disconnection with education, employment, or training opportunities. Effective reconnection efforts include job training programs, academic support, career counseling, and mentorship, helping young people overcome barriers and build pathways toward economic and social mobility.
- **Workforce Development Programs:** Initiatives designed to improve the employability of individuals, particularly young people. These programs typically include job training, career counseling, internships, apprenticeships, and other forms of support aimed at helping youth transition into the workforce.
- **Youth Engagement:** The involvement of young people in meaningful activities such as education, employment, or community service, which contribute to their personal development and societal integration.



-
- **Employed:** Individuals who worked for pay or profit during the reference period, including those temporarily absent from work.
 - **Unemployed:** Individuals without a job who are actively seeking work and available to start.
 - **Not in the Labor Force:** Individuals who are neither employed nor actively looking for work, such as students, caregivers, or retirees.
 - **Socioeconomic Barriers:** Factors that hinder a young person's ability to stay connected to education or employment, such as poverty, lack of access to transportation, inadequate housing, or mental health challenges.
 - **Holistic Supportive Services:** Programs and resources provided to assist youth in overcoming barriers to education and employment. These might include mental health services, health services, childcare, transportation assistance, housing, relationship support, and/or financial aid, etc.
 - **Los Angeles Region:** In this report, the Los Angeles Region refers to the geographic area of Los Angeles County, not the Los Angeles County Workforce Development Board (WDB) or any local workforce development area. Similarly, the City of Los Angeles refers to its geographic boundaries, not the City of Los Angeles WDB or its service area.
 - **Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs):** All data in this report comes from the American Community Survey (ACS), which provides estimates at the county, city, and PUMA levels. PUMAs – non-overlapping statistical geographic units defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, each containing at least 100,000 residents – are smaller than counties but larger than census tracts, allowing for localized demographic, economic, and housing analysis while maintaining respondent confidentiality.

INTRODUCTION

All young people need to be plugged into resources and support that power their growth and success, but some young people lack those connections. We need to make sure young people who are not currently connected to school or work are fully plugged in. This is a critical challenge not only in Los Angeles County and the City of Los Angeles but across California. This report examines the prevalence, causes, and consequences of youth disconnection with a focus on age, race, ethnicity, and geography. It also highlights recent policy developments aimed at addressing these challenges and provides actionable insights to support youth reconnection.

Opportunity Youth face significant barriers to success, including systemic inequities, poverty, limited access to education and employment opportunities, and discrimination. Research underscores the severe consequences of disconnection:

- Lower lifetime earnings and higher unemployment rates
- Poorer health outcomes, including mental health challenges
- Increased likelihood of involvement in the criminal justice system

These challenges have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately impacted youth from low-income families, racial and ethnic minorities, youth from low-income families, and those with disabilities. These disparities make it imperative to implement systemic and sustainable solutions to support youth re-engagement and economic mobility.



Recent policy developments in California offer a renewed focus on addressing youth disconnection through systemic change.

- The closure of the Division of Juvenile Justice in 2023: a shift toward community-based rehabilitation models
- The establishment of the Office of Youth and Community Restoration (OYCR): aims to redesign youth justice systems and expand local resources.
- The SAFETY Act: proposes policies to provide employment opportunities for undocumented college students to reflect a broader commitment to fostering inclusive environments and reducing systemic barriers.
- Assembly Concurrent Resolution 16 (ACR 16): calls for statewide investments in education, workforce training, and social safety nets for Opportunity Youth.
- California Master Plan for Career Education - provides a framework for responding to the complex, multifaceted challenges confronting California's labor market and educational landscape)

These policy shifts, coupled with local collective impact initiatives like the Los Angeles Performance Partnership Pilot (LAP3), targeted partnerships with community-based organizations, and young adults who identify as Opportunity Youth, provide a foundation for reducing disconnection rates. However, persistent disparities among youth – particularly Black and Hispanic/Latino Opportunity Youth – highlight the need for targeted, community-based strategies.



This report leverages the most recent ACS data to provide an updated analysis of youth disconnection across the region.

- Disconnection rates, education and employment status, and demographic patterns in the Los Angeles Region
- A deeper analysis of youth disconnection in the City of Los Angeles
- Policy implications and strategic recommendations for reducing youth disconnection.

By expanding progressive policy efforts and scaling local interventions, Los Angeles County and the City of Los Angeles can position themselves as leaders in reconnecting Opportunity Youth. The solutions outlined in this report emphasize a collaborative, equity-focused approach that prioritizes educational access, workforce development, and holistic support systems – ensuring all young people have the resources they need to thrive and contribute meaningfully to their community.

THE LOS ANGELES PERFORMANCE PARTNERSHIP PILOT (LAP3) IS A COLLECTIVE IMPACT PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP WHOSE MISSION IS TO PROVIDE BOTH PREVENTION AND RECONNECTION EFFORTS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF OPPORTUNITY YOUTH IN THE LOS ANGELES REGION.



LA REGION OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

DISCONNECTION TRENDS AND RATES

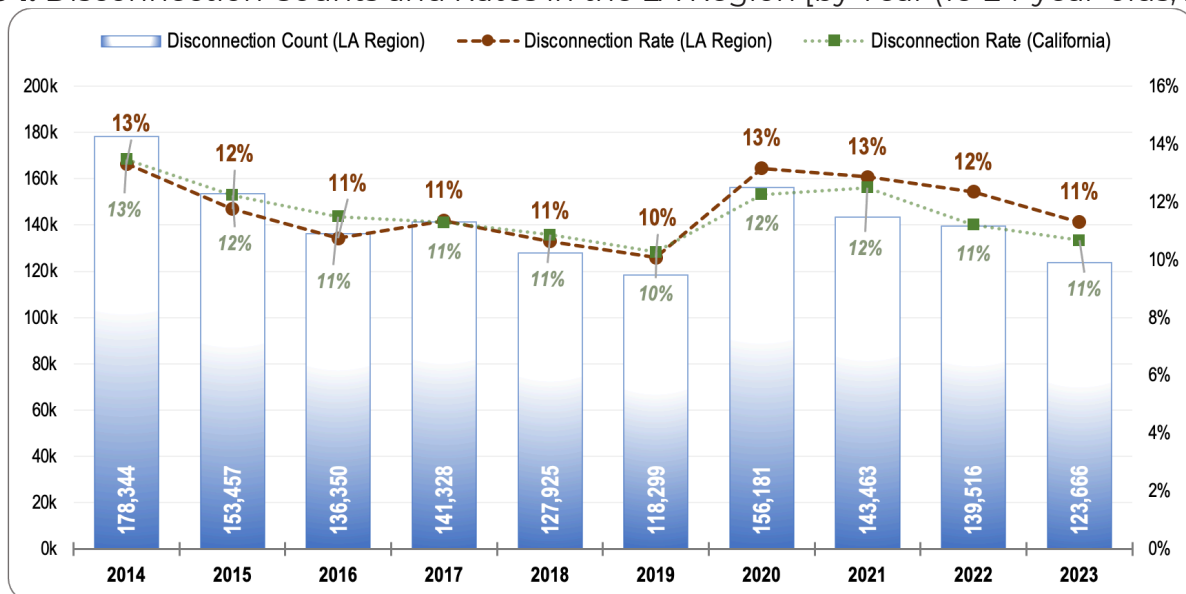
The county's youth disconnection rates from 2014 to 2023 are presented in Figure 1, alongside a comparison to California's rates for context. The data reveals a generally declining trend in disconnection rates over this period, with LA County consistently experiencing slightly higher rates than the state average.

In 2014, the disconnection rate in LA County stood at 13%, representing 178,344 opportunity youth. This figure was on par with the state average of 13%. Over the following years, the county rate steadily decreased, reaching a low of 10% (118,299 youth) in 2019, mirroring the state rate's decline to 10%. This promising trend suggests that efforts to engage youth in education and employment were having a positive impact.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, however, led to a notable increase in disconnection rates. LA County saw its rate rise to 13% (156,181 youth), while the state rate climbed to 12%. This surge can be attributed to the widespread disruptions in education and employment caused by the pandemic, which disproportionately affected vulnerable youth populations.

The most recent data from 2023 shows a decline in the disconnection rate to 11% (123,666 youth) in LA County and 11% statewide, indicating a recovery from the pandemic's impact. It is important to note, however, that the rates remained slightly higher than the pre-pandemic lows, emphasizing the need for continued efforts to support youth in reconnecting with education and employment opportunities.

Figure 1. Disconnection Counts and Rates in the LA Region [by Year (16-24-year-olds; 2014-23)]

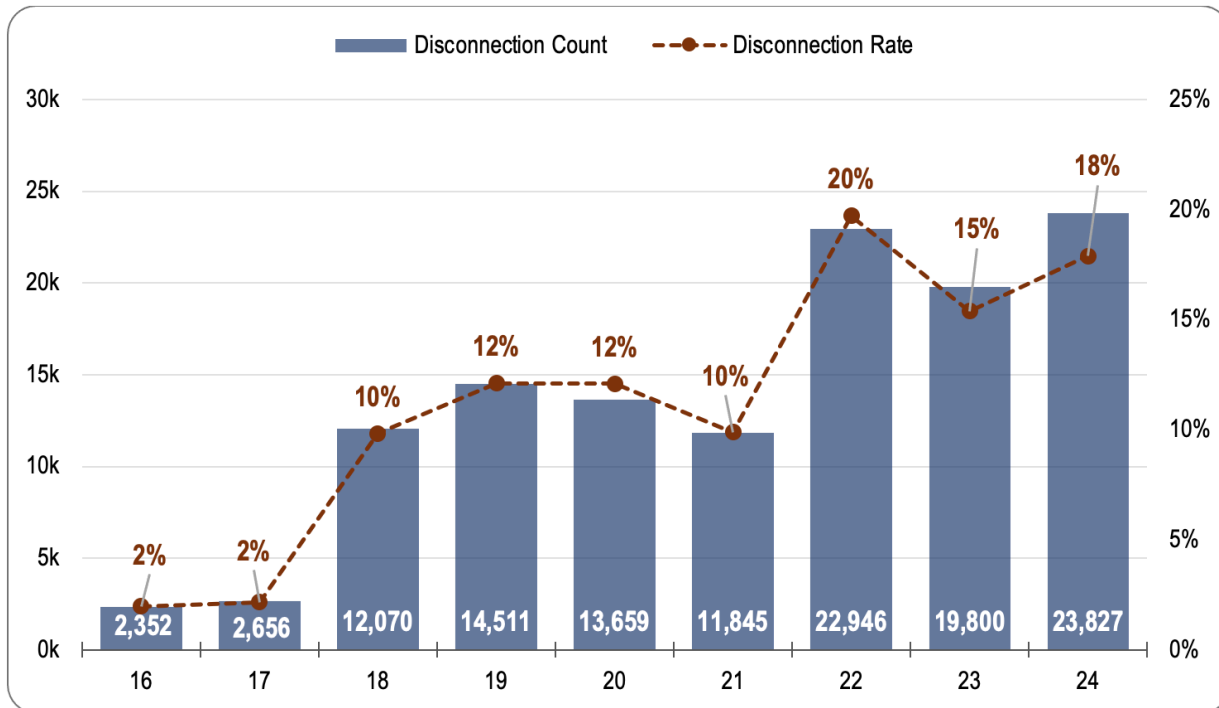


Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

A breakdown of disconnection rates by age in the LA Region is provided in Figure 2, revealing key trends. Specifically, the data shows increasing disconnection rates as youth age, with a sharp rise occurring during the transition from high school to postsecondary education or employment. While the disconnection rates for 16- and 17-year-olds remained relatively low at 2%, the rate jumped to 10% for 18-year-olds, highlighting the critical nature of this transition period.

Disconnection rates continued to climb in the early twenties, peaking at 20% for 22-year-olds before declining slightly to 18% for 24-year-olds. These high rates among older youth underscore the ongoing challenges they face in remaining connected to education and employment, even as they move further into adulthood.

Figure 2. Disconnection Counts and Rates by Age (LA Region, 2023)



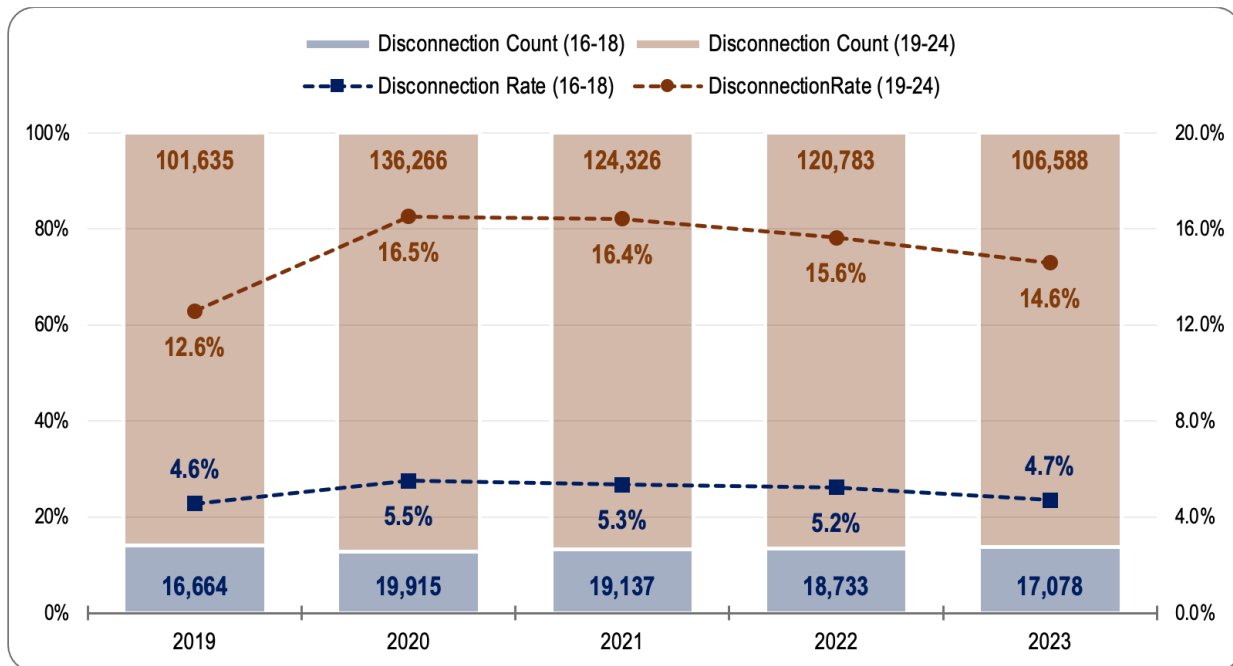
Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

Comparing the disconnection counts and rates for 16-18-year-olds (teens) and 19-24-year-olds (young adults) from 2019 to 2023, Figure 3 highlights important differences between these age groups. The data consistently shows a much higher disconnection rate for young adults experiencing rates more than three times higher than their younger counterparts. In 2023, the disconnection rate for young adults stood at 14.6% (106,588 youth), compared to 4.7% (17,078 youth) for teens.

The impact of the pandemic is evident in the increased disconnection rates for both age groups in 2020 and 2021. Young adults, however, experienced a more pronounced increase, with the rate climbing to 16.5% in 2020 before declining to 14.6% in 2023. In contrast, the rate for teens peaked at 5.5% in 2020 before falling to 4.7% in 2023.

These trends underscore the persistent challenges faced by older youth in remaining connected to education and employment, as well as the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on this age group. Targeted interventions and support services are needed to address the unique barriers faced by young adults and help them successfully transition to adulthood.

Figure 3. Disconnection Counts and Rates by Age Group (16-24-year-olds; 2019-23)



Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT STATUS

An overview of the education and employment status of the LA region's 16-24-year-olds in 2023 is shown in Table 1. Of the 1,094,187 youth in this age group, **63.5% (694,358) were enrolled in school, while 36.5% (399,829) were not in school.**

Among those in school, **30.0% were employed**, while **64.3% were unemployed** – they were actively seeking but had not secured work. An additional **5.7% were not in the labor force** – they were neither working nor looking for a job. Among those **not in school, 69.1% were employed, 21.8% were unemployed**, and **9.1% were not in the labor force.**

Table 1. Employment and Education Data (All 16-24-year-olds; 2023)

	In School	Not in School	Total
Employed	208,600	276,163	484,763
Unemployed	446,366	87,200	533,566
Not in Labor Force	39,392	36,466	75,858
Total	694,358	399,829	1,094,187

Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

Diving deeper into the education and employment data, Tables 2 and 3 break down the statuses separately for teens and young adults. Among teens, a high proportion (91.8%) were enrolled in school, reflecting the expectation that high school is the primary activity for this age group. Of those in school, only 10.9% were employed, while the vast majority (84.7%) were unemployed. Among the small proportion (8.2%) of teens not in school, 43.0% were employed, 48.7% were unemployed, and 8.3% were not in the labor force.

Table 2. Employment and Education Data (All 16-18-year-olds; 2023)

	In School	Not in School	Total
Employed	36,211	12,878	49,089
Unemployed	282,774	14,589	297,363
Not in Labor Force	14,634	2,489	17,123
Total	333,619	29,956	363,575

Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

In contrast, among young adults, a smaller proportion (49.4%) were enrolled in school. Of those in school, 47.8% were employed, 45.3% were unemployed, and 6.9% were not in the labor force. Among the 50.6% of young adults not in school, 71.2% were employed, 19.6% were unemployed, and 9.2% were not in the labor force.

Table 3. Employment and Education Data (All 19-24-year-olds; 2023)

	In School	Not in School	Total
Employed	172,389	263,285	435,674
Unemployed	163,592	72,611	236,203
Not in Labor Force	24,758	33,977	58,735
Total	360,739	369,873	730,612

Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

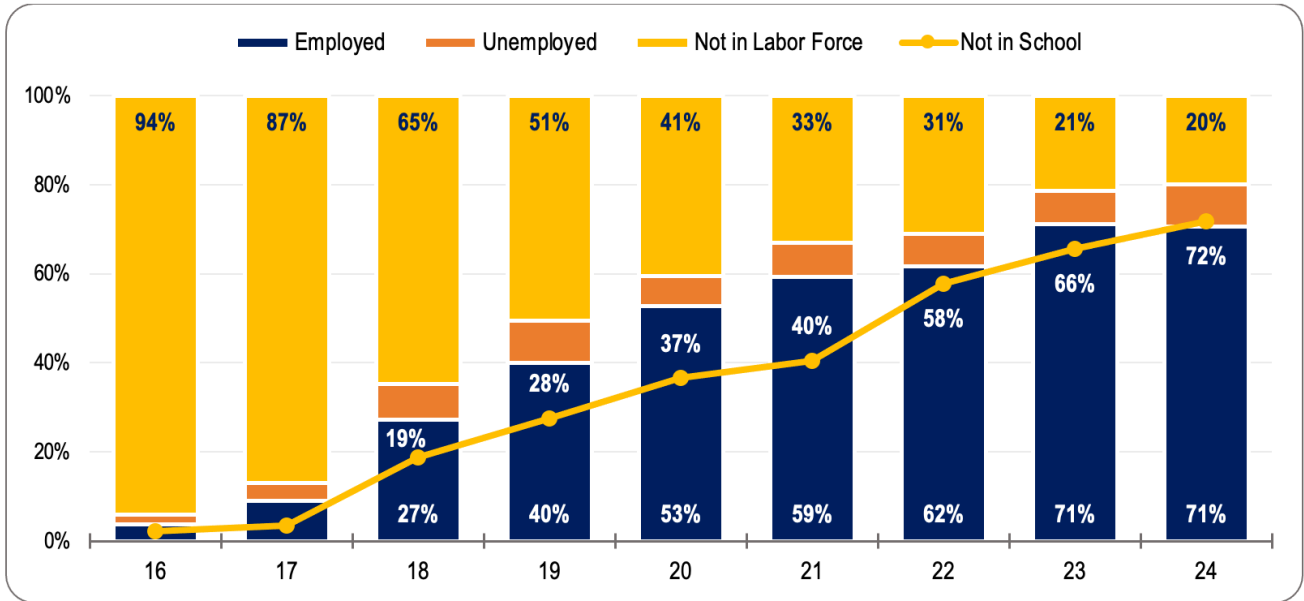
The changes in education and employment status by age for all 16-24-year-olds in 2023 are illustrated in Figure 4. The data reveals clear trends as youth transition from adolescence to young adulthood. The proportion of youth not in school increased steadily with age, from just 2% at age 16 to 72% by age 24. This trend reflects the gradual transition from secondary to postsecondary education and eventual entry into the workforce.

Concurrent with the decline in school enrollment, employment rates rose with age. While only 4% of 16-year-olds were employed, this figure increased to 27% by age 18 and continued to climb steadily, reaching a peak of 71% at ages 23 and 24. Unemployment rates remained relatively low and stable across the age range, fluctuating between 2% and 9%. The proportion of youth not in the labor force decreased dramatically with age, from 94% at age 16 to just 20% by age 24.



These age-based trends underscore the critical transitions that define the pathway from adolescence to adulthood. The shifts from school to work, and from being outside the labor force to actively participating in it, highlight the importance of supporting youth through these key junctures. Ensuring access to quality education, training, and employment opportunities is crucial to promoting positive outcomes and reducing the risk of disconnection.

Figure 4. Employment and Education Status by Age (All 16-24-year-olds)



Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

Table 4 presents data on educational enrollment and attainment for various age groups in the LA region from 2014 to 2023. Among teens, the proportion not enrolled in school remained relatively stable, ranging from 8% to 10%. For young adults, the data shows a more complex picture. The proportion without a high school diploma declined significantly, from 17% in 2014 to 10% in 2023, reflecting improvements in high school completion rates. However, the percentage with only a high school diploma also decreased, indicating a shift towards higher levels of educational attainment.

Indeed, the data reveals an increase in postsecondary enrollment among young adults, from 74% in 2014 to a peak of 76% in 2017, before declining slightly to 70% in 2023. Among 23-24-year-olds, the proportion with some college education but no degree decreased notably, from 19% in 2014 to 12% in 2023. While this decline may suggest more young adults are completing degrees, it is important to note a limitation of the data – the ACS does not capture vocational training, industry certifications, or other non-degree credentials. Therefore, individuals classified as having 'some college, no degree' may have completed workforce training programs or earned industry-recognized credentials that are not reflected in these data.

Overall, the data paint a picture of improving educational outcomes for youth in the LA region over the past decade. The stability in high school enrollment, coupled with increases in high school completion and postsecondary attendance, suggest that efforts to promote educational attainment are bearing fruit.

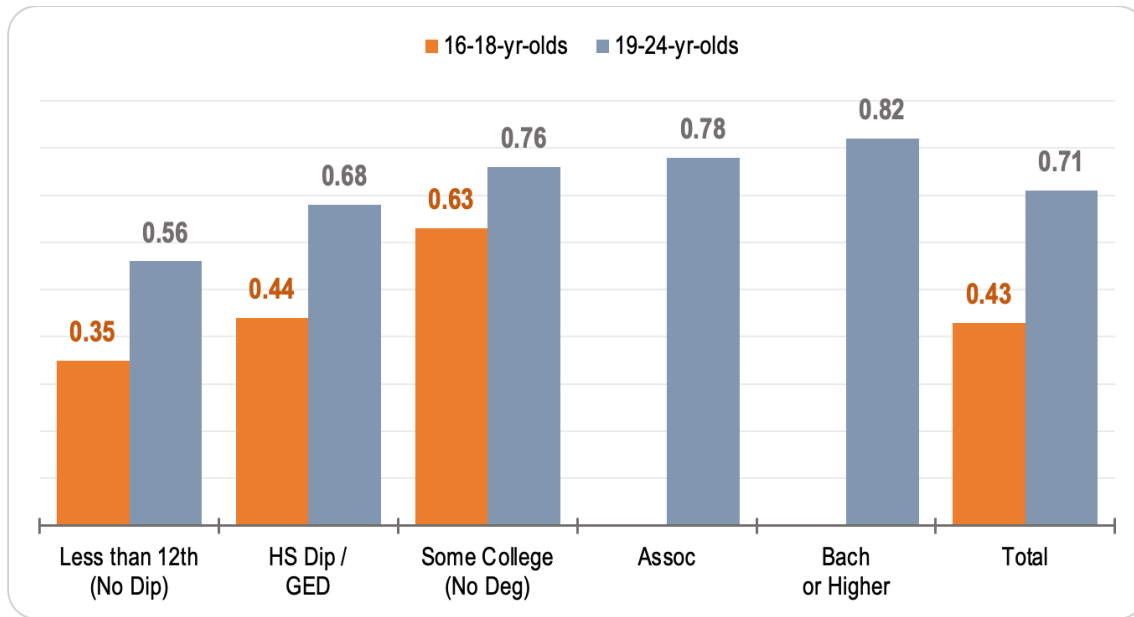
Table 4. Educational Enrollment and Attainment of Opportunity Youth (2014-23)

Year	Enrollment for OY		Attainment for OY			
	Not in School‡	Post-Secondary§	No HS Dip¶	HS Dip¶	Some College (No Deg)*	Bach+*
2014	32,014	452,934	103,914	237,360	112,434	104,135
2015	33,559	446,325	88,589	233,605	114,647	102,385
2016	31,333	446,403	83,126	226,965	98,013	102,915
2017	35,682	438,126	67,415	214,391	99,928	108,667
2018	30,730	412,871	63,763	214,342	94,633	115,000
2019	27,019	407,598	64,139	211,623	87,546	116,157
2020	28,666	419,286	55,840	227,599	88,517	127,915
2021	29,013	362,997	57,416	225,208	78,527	113,422
2022	30,527	344,337	62,063	240,322	67,296	128,967
2023	29,956	347,754	54,623	219,643	64,926	121,677

Note: ‡16-18-year-olds; §19-24-year-olds; ¶23-24-year-olds; *21-24-year-olds. Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

Employment-to-population ratios by educational attainment for out-of-school youth in 2023 are displayed in Figure 5. The data reveals a clear positive relationship between higher levels of education and employment. Among out-of-school teens, the employment ratio increased from 0.35 for those with less than a 12th-grade education to 0.63 for those with some college education. For out-of-school young adults, the ratio climbed steadily from 0.56 for those with less than a 12th-grade education to 0.82 for those with a bachelor's degree or higher. These findings underscore the critical role of education in promoting employment outcomes for out-of-school youth.

Figure 5. Out-of-School Teen & Young Adult Employment-to-Population Ratios by Educational Attainment (2023)

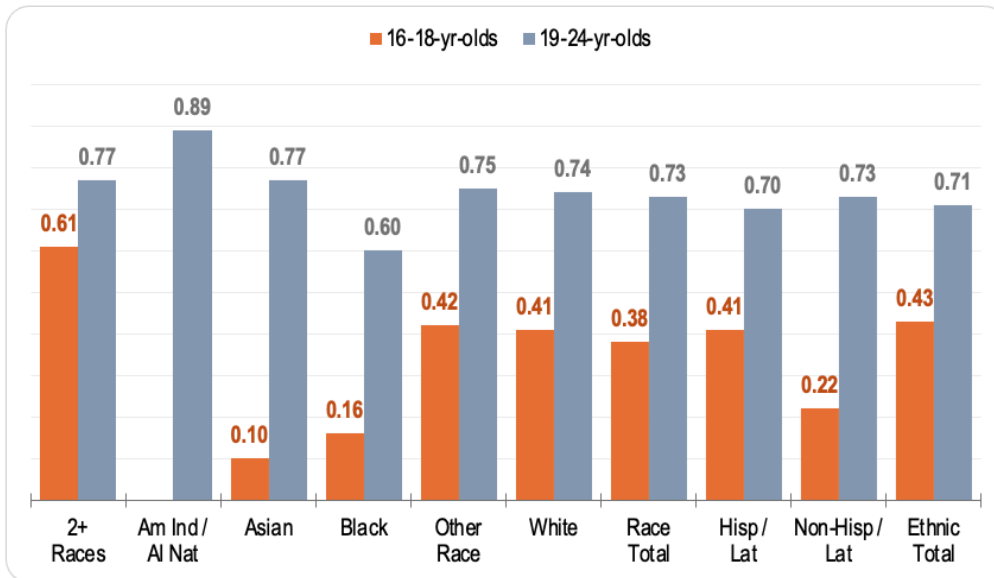


Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

Shifting the focus to employment-to-population ratios by race and ethnicity, Figure 6 highlights significant differences in employment outcomes among out-of-school teens and young adults. Among teens, American Indian/Alaska Native youth had the highest employment ratio (0.89), while Black and Asian youth had the lowest (0.16 and 0.10, respectively). Employment rates were generally higher among young adults across all groups, but disparities persisted, with Black young adults having the lowest ratio (0.60) and American Indian/Alaska Native young adults the highest (0.89).

When examining employment ratios by ethnicity, Hispanic/Latino out-of-school teens had a higher ratio (0.41) than their non-Hispanic/Latino counterparts (0.22). However, this gap narrowed for the 19-24 age group, with ratios of 0.70 and 0.73, respectively. These findings underscore the complex interplay of race, ethnicity, and age in shaping employment outcomes for out-of-school youth.

Figure 6. Out-of-School Teen & Young Adult Employment-to-Population Ratios by Race and Ethnicity (2023)



Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

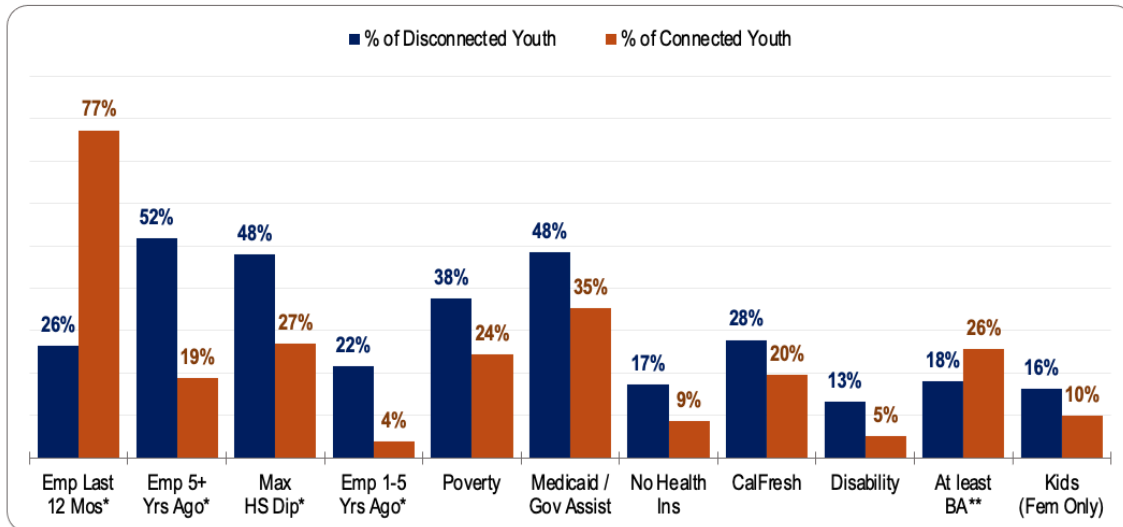
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Figure 7 compares various life circumstances between opportunity youth and their peers aged 16-24 in LA County for 2023, highlighting the significant disparities they faced. Among young adults, only 26% of opportunity youth had worked within the last 12 months, compared to 77% of their connected peers. Additionally, 52% of opportunity youth had last worked over 5 years ago or had never worked, in contrast to just 19% of their peers youth. These figures underscore the severe barriers to employment faced by Opportunity Youth.

Educational attainment was another area of stark contrast. Nearly half (48%) of opportunity youth had no education beyond a high school diploma, compared to 27% of their peers in the same age range. Economic hardship was more prevalent among opportunity youth, with 38% living in poverty compared to 24% of connected youth. Opportunity youth also relied more heavily on public assistance, with 48% receiving MediCal (Medicaid) or government assistance and 28% receiving CalFresh (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP) benefits.

Healthcare access and disability status were additional areas of disparity. Seventeen percent of opportunity youth lacked health insurance, compared to 9% of their peers. Opportunity youth were also more likely to have a disability (13% vs. 5%). Among female youth aged 16-24, 16% of those who experienced disconnected had children of their own, compared to 10% of their peer females, underscoring the unique barriers faced by young mothers.

Figure 7. Comparing and Contrasting Disconnected and Connected Youth (ACS 2023)



Note: *19-24, 21-24. **Source:** Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

The composition of the opportunity youth population in 2023 by age group, race, and ethnicity is detailed in Table 5. Among teens, Black youth had the highest disconnection rate (6%), followed by Chinese (6%), American Indian/Alaska Native (5%), and youth of other races (6%). For young adults, racial disparities were even more pronounced. Black young adults had the highest disconnection rate (25%), followed by American Indian/Alaska Native (17%), other race (17%), and two or more races (16%) youth.

Ethnic disparities were also evident. Among teens, Hispanic/Latino youth had a higher disconnection rate (6%) than non-Hispanic/Latino youth (4%), compared to their peers, the gap was slightly smaller but still notable, with 16% of Hispanic/Latino youth experiencing a disconnected compared to 13% of non-Hispanic/Latino youth. Hispanic/Latino youth were overrepresented among the opportunity youth population, comprising 55% of teens who experience and 50% of young adults who experience a disconnection.



Table 5. Opportunity Youth by Age Group, Race, and Ethnicity (2023)

Race & Ethnicity	OY Teens (ages 16 through 18)				OY Young Adults (ages 19 through 24)			
	Disconn #	Disconn %	Share of Disconn	% of All	Disconn #	Disconn %	Share of Disconn	% of All
2 Major Races	3,633	5%	21%	22%	23,674	16%	22%	21%
3+ Major Races	130	2%	1%	2%	1,444	14%	1%	1%
Am Ind / Al Nat	378	5%	2%	2%	1,965	17%	2%	2%
Black	1,591	6%	9%	8%	13,102	25%	12%	7%
Chinese	749	6%	4%	3%	2,124	7%	2%	4%
Japanese	0%	0%	0%	0%	45	2%	0%	0%
Other Asian/Pac Is	428	2%	3%	7%	3,795	6%	4%	8%
Other Race	6,563	6%	38%	32%	37,789	17%	35%	31%
White	3,606	4%	21%	24%	22,650	12%	21%	26%
Total	17,078	5%	100%	100%	106,588	15%	100%	100%
Hispanic/Lat	9,408	6%	55%	46%	52,978	16%	50%	45%
Non-Hispanic/Lat	7,670	4%	45%	54%	53,610	13%	50%	55%
Total	17,078	5%	100%	100%	106,588	15%	100%	100%

Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

Zooming in on educational attainment among opportunity youth adults ages 19 through 24, Table 6 provides a revealing look at differences by race and ethnicity. These data reveal the significant challenges faced by one of the subgroups most in need of targeted strategies: young adults who were not in school, unemployed, and had less than a high school diploma. Across all racial and ethnic groups, this subgroup had the lowest levels of educational attainment.

There were, however, notable disparities between groups. Among Black opportunity young adults, 24% had less than a high school diploma, compared to just 7% of their Asian counterparts. Similarly, 24% of American Indian/Alaska Native opportunity youth in this age range lacked a high school diploma, underscoring the substantial educational barriers faced by these groups.

Even among those with a high school diploma or GED, there were significant differences by race and ethnicity. While 56% of Hispanic/Latino and American Indian/Alaska Native opportunity young adults had a high school diploma or GED as their highest level of education, this figure was only 23% for Asian youth in the same category.

The attainment of higher education degrees also varied considerably. Nearly half (48%) of Asian opportunity young adults had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to just 3% of American Indian/Alaska Native youth and 4% of other race youth. White and Hispanic/Latino opportunity youth in this age range also had relatively low rates of bachelor's degree attainment, at 26% and 7%, respectively.

Table 6. Educational Attainment of Opportunity Young Adults by Race and Ethnicity (19-24-year-olds; 2023)

Race & Ethnicity	Total N	No HS Dip	HS Dip/GED	Some Coll (No Deg)	Assoc	Bach or Higher
White	22,650	10%	39%	19%	5%	26%
Black	13,102	24%	44%	20%	3%	10%
Asian	5,964	7%	23%	18%	4%	48%
Am Ind / AI Nat	1,965	24%	56%	18%	0%	3%
Other Race	37,789	21%	56%	17%	2%	4%
2+ Major Races	25,118	21%	53%	16%	1%	10%
Hispanic / Lat	70,197	19%	56%	17%	2%	7%
Non-Hispanic / Lat	36,391	16%	33%	20%	4%	26%

Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

These findings highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions and support services that address the unique barriers faced by opportunity youth young adults, particularly those from disadvantaged racial and ethnic backgrounds. Efforts to promote high school completion, access to postsecondary education, and workforce development must take into account the disparate experiences and challenges of these subgroups to effectively promote educational equity and economic opportunity.

The table below presents disconnection rates for teens and young adults in the LA region, broken down by age, gender, race, and ethnicity. These data offer a detailed view of the persistent disparities across demographic groups, highlighting the systemic barriers certain populations face in accessing education and employment opportunities.

Disconnection rates generally increased with age, peaking at 40% for 22-year-olds before slightly declining to 18% for 24-year-olds. These trends underscore the significant challenges older youth faced in maintaining connections to education and employment as they transitioned into adulthood.

Gender disparities were clear, with males consistently experiencing higher disconnection rates than females across all age groups. This gap was most pronounced at age 22, when 21% of males and 18% of females were disconnected. These findings suggest that young men faced unique barriers requiring tailored outreach and support strategies.

Racial and ethnic disparities were also stark. Black youth had the highest disconnection rates across all age groups, peaking at 47% for Black males aged 22 and 36% for Black females aged 22. Hispanic/Latino youth exhibited consistently high rates, particularly among 22-year-olds, where 20% of both males and females were disconnected. In contrast, Asian youth had the lowest rates overall, ranging from 0% for 17-year-olds to 14% for 24-year-olds, reflecting comparatively better access to or retention in education and employment systems.

The intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender revealed even more pronounced disparities. Black males exhibited the highest disconnection rates, with 47% at age 22 and 25% at age 23. Hispanic/Latino males and females also displayed notable rates, underscoring the need for culturally responsive interventions. These findings highlight the critical importance of addressing systemic inequities and developing targeted, community-based initiatives to support these populations.

Table 7. Disconnection Rates by Age and Subgroup Characteristics (2023)

Sub-Group	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Female	2%	2%	9%	11%	13%	8%	18%	16%	19%
Male	2%	3%	11%	13%	11%	12%	21%	15%	17%
Hisp/Lat	2%	3%	12%	14%	14%	13%	20%	18%	19%
Non-Hisp/Lat	2%	1%	7%	9%	9%	6%	20%	12%	16%
Black	6%	2%	8%	28%	22%	14%	40%	29%	20%
White	2%	2%	9%	9%	8%	4%	17%	13%	19%
Asian	3%	0%	5%	2%	3%	2%	10%	8%	14%
Hisp/Lat Female	1%	2%	11%	11%	17%	11%	20%	19%	22%
Non-Hisp/Lat Female	3%	1%	6%	10%	8%	4%	16%	10%	15%
Hisp/Lat Male	2%	4%	13%	18%	12%	14%	20%	16%	17%
Non-Hisp/Lat Male	2%	0%	7%	7%	10%	8%	23%	14%	18%
Black Female	14%	4%	5%	36%	24%	6%	28%	32%	18%
White Female	1%	1%	12%	6%	7%	2%	16%	9%	16%
Asian Female	2%	0%	2%	1%	2%	2%	9%	8%	15%
Black Male	0%	1%	10%	17%	19%	26%	47%	25%	22%
White Male	2%	3%	7%	13%	9%	6%	19%	17%	21%
Asian Male	4%	0%	9%	2%	3%	2%	12%	9%	13%

Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

While the LA Region as a whole provides valuable insight into youth disconnection trends, examining the City of Los Angeles separately is crucial given its unique demographic, economic, and geographic characteristics. As the county's largest city, it accounts for a substantial portion of Opportunity Youth, yet also faces distinct challenges and opportunities. The following section shifts focus to the City of Los Angeles, highlighting its specific youth disconnection patterns and how they compare to broader countywide trends.

CITY OF LOS ANGELES OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

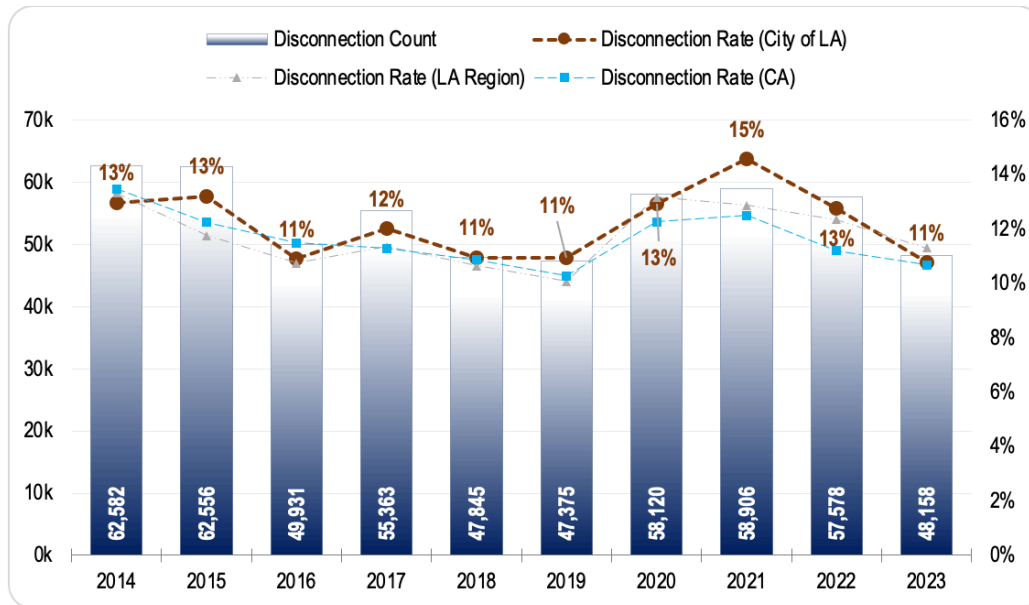
Following the in-depth examination of youth disconnection trends, rates, and characteristics across the county, this section of the report narrows its focus to the City of Los Angeles. As the most populous city within the county, the City of LA warrants a closer look to identify any unique patterns or challenges faced by its opportunity youth population.

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH & TRENDS

Youth disconnection rates in the City of LA fluctuated significantly between 2014 and 2023, reflecting both progress and setbacks. In 2014, 13% (62,582 youth) were disconnected, with the rate steadily declining to 11% (47,375 youth) by 2019. However, the COVID-19 pandemic reversed these gains, with rates spiking to 13% in 2020 and peaking at 15% (58,906 youth) in 2021. By 2023, disconnection had returned to 11% (48,158 youth), signaling a recovery to pre-pandemic levels.

Although the city’s rates aligned closely with the county and state, they consistently remained slightly higher, reflecting the unique challenges of a diverse and densely populated urban environment. These patterns emphasize the ongoing need for localized strategies to support youth reconnection.

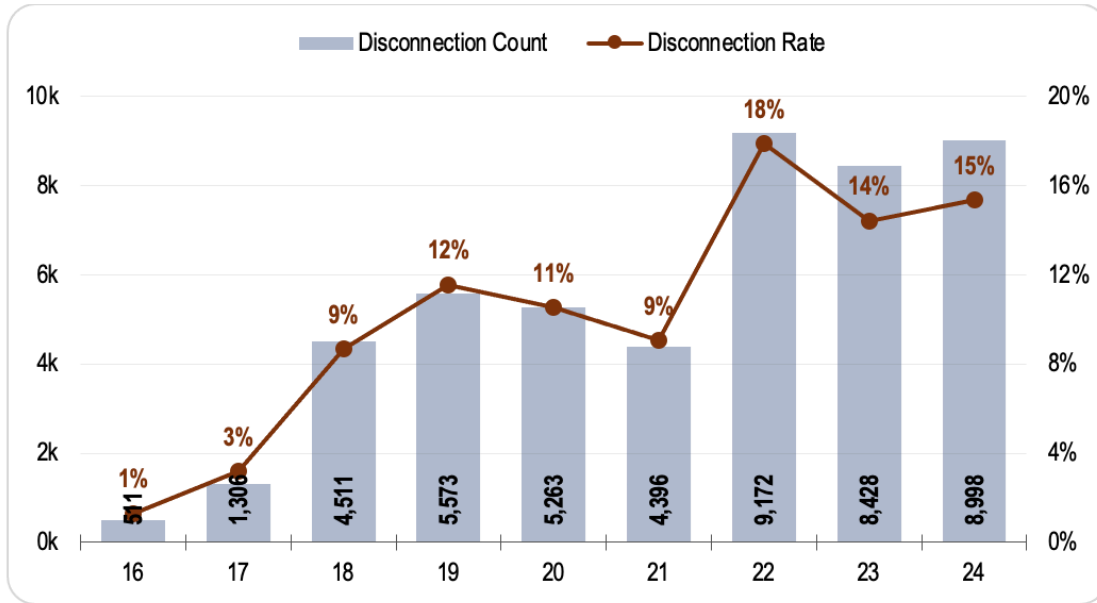
Figure 8. Youth Disconnection in the City of LA (16-24-year-olds; 2014-23)



Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

In 2023, disconnection rates among 16-24-year-olds in the City of Los Angeles showed a sharp increase with age. While only 1% of 16-year-olds (511 youth) and 3% of 17-year-olds (1,306 youth) were disconnected, rates rose significantly to 9% (4,511 youth) by age 18 and peaked at 18% (9,172 youth) by age 22. Although rates declined slightly to 14% (8,428 youth) for 23-year-olds and 15% (8,998 youth) for 24-year-olds, older youth remained disproportionately affected. These trends highlight the critical need for targeted support during the transition to adulthood, particularly for young adults aged 19-24.

Figure 9. Disconnection by Age (2023)

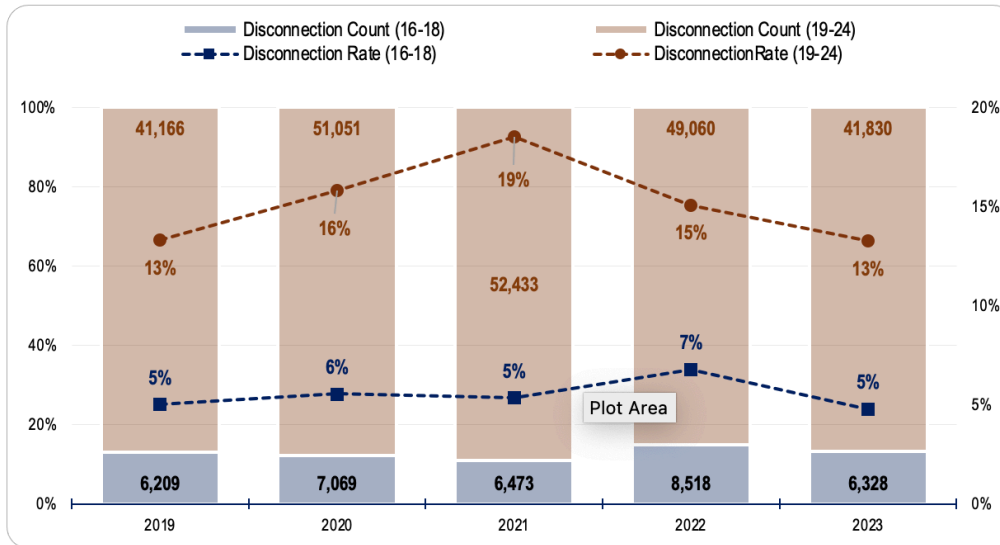


Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

Disconnection rates for teens and young adults in the City of LA from 2019 to 2023 reveal stark differences between these age groups. While rates for 16-18-year-olds remained consistently low at 5-7%, the rates for their older counterparts were significantly higher, peaking at 19% in 2021. By 2023, disconnection rates returned to pre-pandemic levels for both groups, with 5% (6,328 youth) of teens and 13% (41,830 youth) of young adults disconnected. These patterns underscore the heightened vulnerability of young adults and the need for age-specific interventions to address their challenges.



Figure 10. Disconnection Counts and Rates by Age Group (16-24-year-olds; 2019-23)



Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Employment and education data for 16-24-year-olds in the City of Los Angeles in 2023 highlight distinct patterns of engagement across subgroups. Among youth in school, 30% (82,306) were employed, while 64% (177,209) were not in the labor force, reflecting limited workforce participation. In contrast, youth not in school demonstrated greater labor force engagement, with 72% (121,681) employed and only 20% (33,257) outside the labor force.

Interestingly, a significant majority of youth, 62% (277,657), were enrolled in school, underscoring the importance of educational institutions as critical spaces for outreach and support. However, 48,158 youth aged 16-24, representing 11% of the population, were neither in school nor employed, highlighting the persistent challenges faced by a substantial segment of the youth population.

Table 8. Employment and Education Data in the City of LA (16-24-year-olds; 2023)

	In School	Not in School	Total
Employed	82,306	121,681	203,987
Unemployed	18,142	14,901	33,043
Not in Labor Force	177,209	33,257	210,466
Total	277,657	169,839	447,496

Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

The employment and education data for teens reflect substantial differences in workforce participation between those in school and those not in school. Among in-school youth, only 11% (12,820) were employed, while a significant majority, 84% (101,940), were not in the labor force. In contrast, youth not in school demonstrated a higher workforce engagement, with 44% (4,985) employed and only 48% (5,418) not participating in the labor force.

Overall, the data reveal that 91% (120,876) of teens were enrolled in school, illustrating the primacy of education for this age group. The relatively low employment rates among in-school youth, however, suggest limited opportunities or time for workforce engagement during these critical developmental years. This underscores the need for accessible work-based learning opportunities that complement educational pursuits.

Table 9. Employment and Education Data in the City of LA (16-18-year-olds; 2023)

	In School	Not in School	Total
Employed	12,820	4,985	17,805
Unemployed	6,116	910	7,026
Not in Labor Force	101,940	5,418	107,358
Total	120,876	11,313	132,189

Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

For 19-24-year-olds, the data reveal a notably different pattern of workforce participation compared to their younger counterparts. Among those in school, 44% (69,486) were employed, and 48% (75,269) were not in the labor force. Young adults not in school exhibited even greater workforce engagement, with 74% (116,696) employed and only 18% (27,839) not participating in the labor force.



The total population of 19-24-year-olds was nearly evenly split between those in school (50%, 156,781) and those not in school (50%, 158,526). This balance highlights the critical need for policies and programs that support both educational attainment and meaningful employment pathways, particularly for out-of-school youth who exhibit higher labor force participation but often lack access to stable, quality jobs. These findings emphasize the importance of bridging education and employment to ensure long-term stability for this age group.

Table 10. Employment and Education Data in the City of LA (19-24-year-olds; 2023)

	In School	Not in School	Total
Employed	69,486	116,696	186,182
Unemployed	12,026	13,991	26,017
Not in Labor Force	75,269	27,839	103,108
Total	156,781	158,526	315,307

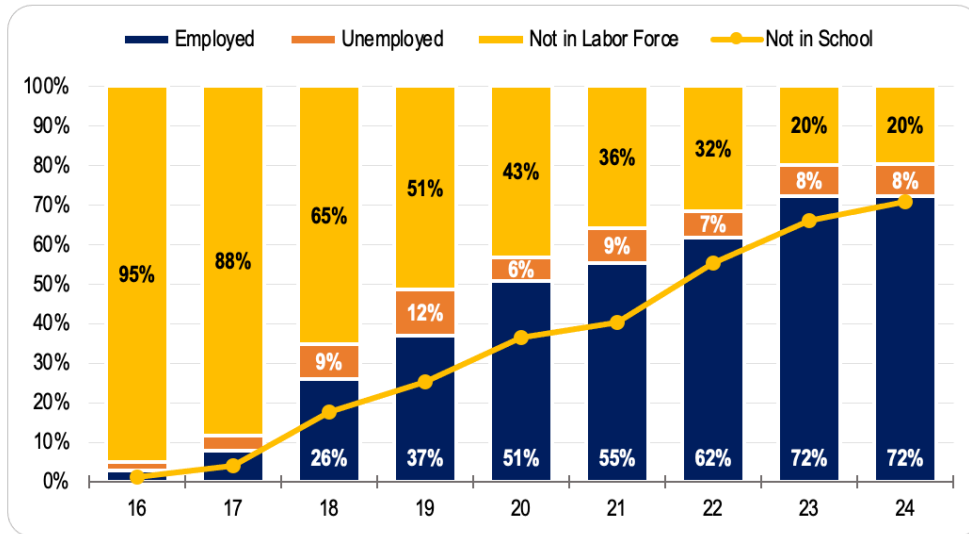
Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

The data below reveal significant changes in employment and labor force participation as youth transition from their teenage years to young adulthood. Among 16-year-olds, 95% were not in the labor force, with only 3% employed. By age 18, employment rose to 26%, and the proportion not in the labor force dropped to 65%. For young adults, employment steadily increased, peaking at 72% by ages 23 and 24, while the share not in school reached 71% by age 24.

These trends highlight critical transition points, particularly at ages 18-20, where many youth leave school and enter the labor force, underscoring the need for support in bridging education and employment during this period.



Figure 11. Employment and Education Status by Age (All 16-24-year-olds; 2023)



Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

The data from 2014 to 2023 show notable trends in educational enrollment and attainment for and young adults. Among teens, the percentage not enrolled in school remained relatively stable, fluctuating between 8% and 10%. For young adults, postsecondary enrollment peaked at 50% in 2016 and 2020 but declined to 44% in 2021 and 2022 before rebounding to 48% in 2023.

Educational attainment for young adults reflected a gradual improvement over the decade. The share with no high school diploma dropped from 14% in 2014 to 8% in 2023, while the percentage with a bachelor's degree or higher rose from 17% to 28%. Among older young adults (23-24-year-olds), the proportion with some college but no degree decreased significantly, from 34% in 2014 to 23% in 2023, suggesting progress in degree completion.

These trends highlight progress in educational outcomes over time, particularly in reducing the share of youth without a high school diploma and increasing higher education attainment. However, the fluctuations in postsecondary enrollment emphasize the need for consistent support to maintain and expand access to education, particularly for young adults.

Table 11. Educational Enrollment and Attainment of Opportunity Youth (2014-23)

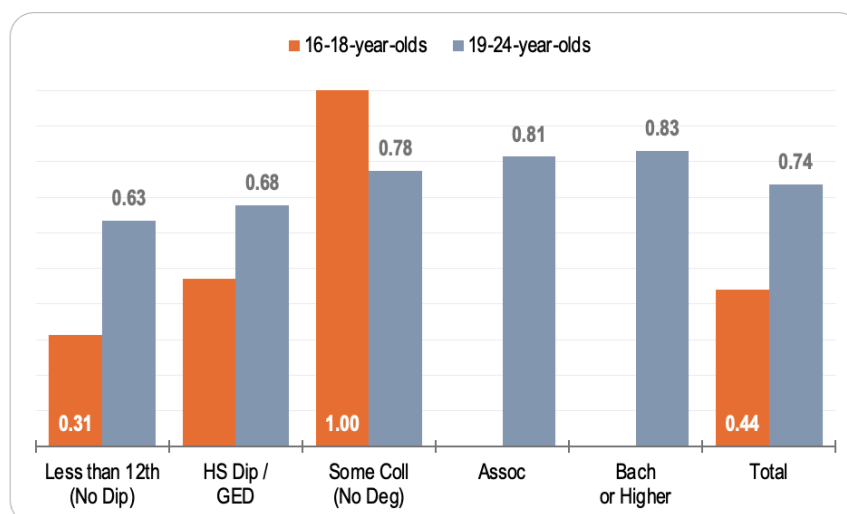
Year	Enrollment		Attainment			
	Not in School‡	Post-Secondary§	No HS Dip*	HS Dip*	Some Coll (No Deg)*	Bach+‡
2014	8%	46%	14%	25%	34%	17%
2015	9%	46%	12%	27%	37%	17%
2016	8%	50%	11%	25%	31%	19%
2017	9%	49%	9%	26%	33%	20%
2018	9%	48%	9%	26%	33%	20%
2019	8%	47%	11%	25%	31%	20%
2020	8%	50%	8%	26%	27%	23%
2021	9%	44%	11%	28%	27%	23%
2022	10%	44%	10%	29%	20%	26%
2023	9%	48%	8%	27%	23%	28%

Note: ‡16-18-year-olds; §19-24-year-olds; *23-24-year-olds; †21-24-year-olds

The data presented Figure 12 reveal significant differences in employment outcomes for out-of-school teens and young adults based on educational attainment. For teens, employment-to-population ratios ranged from 0.31 for those without a high school diploma to a perfect 1.00 for those with some college but no degree. Among young adults, ratios improved across all educational levels, peaking at 0.83 for individuals with a bachelor’s degree or higher and 0.81 for those with an associate degree.

These figures underscore the critical role of education in promoting workforce engagement, particularly for young adults. Teens without a high school diploma faced the greatest challenges in securing employment, while young adults with higher educational credentials demonstrated significantly stronger workforce participation.

Figure 12. Out-of-School Teen & Young Adult Employment-to-Population Ratios by Educational Attainment (2023)

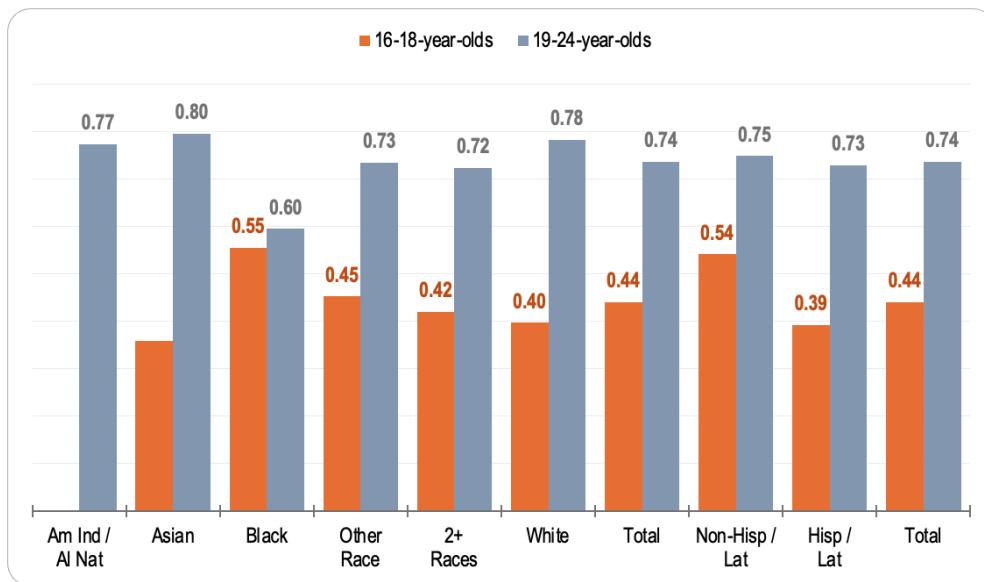


Source: Authors’ compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

Employment outcomes for out-of-school youth in 2023 varied widely across racial and ethnic groups. Among 16-18-year-olds, Black teens had the highest employment-to-population ratio (0.55), while Asian and White teens showed lower ratios at 0.36 and 0.40, respectively. For young adults aged 19-24, American Indian/Alaska Native youth achieved the highest ratio (0.77), followed closely by Asians (0.80) and Whites (0.78). Hispanic/Latino young adults (0.73) displayed slightly lower ratios compared to their non-Hispanic/Latino peers (0.75).

These disparities reflect the complex interplay of race, ethnicity, and access to workforce opportunities. While some groups exhibited strong workforce engagement, others, particularly teens, faced greater challenges in connecting to employment. These findings highlight the importance of targeted strategies to address barriers for underrepresented groups and ensure equitable access to job opportunities.

Figure 13. Out-of-School Teen Employment-to-Population Ratios by Race and Ethnicity (2023)



Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.



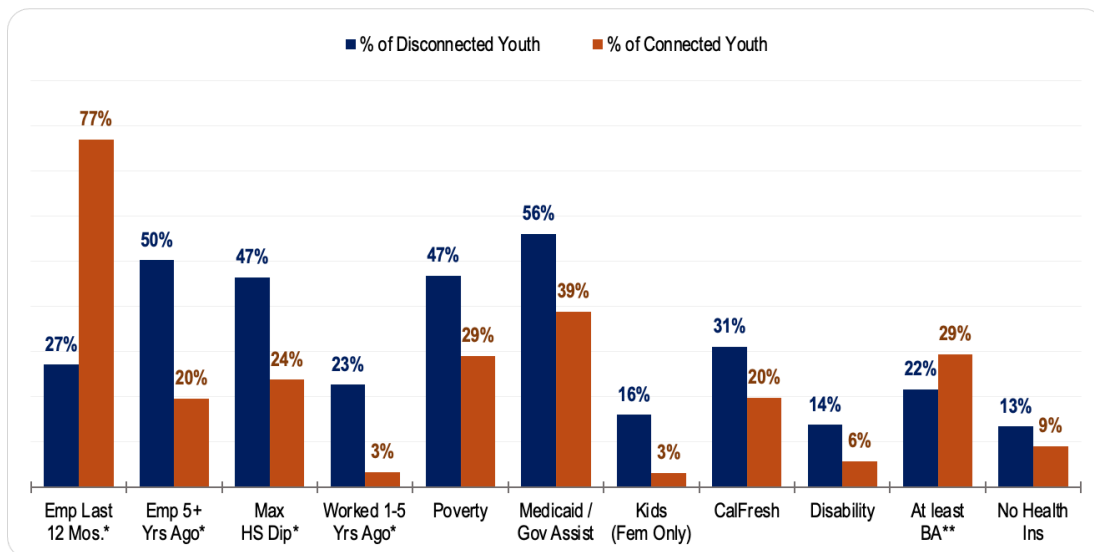
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

As shown in Figure 14 below, significant disparities exist between Opportunity Youth and connected youth:

- **Employment:** Only 27% of Opportunity Youth were employed in the past 12 months, compared to 77% of connected youth. Half of Opportunity Youth (50%) had not worked in over five years, far higher than the 20% among connected peers.
- **Education:** Opportunity Youth were more likely to have a high school diploma as their highest level of education (47%) compared to connected youth (24%). Fewer Opportunity Youth held a bachelor’s degree or higher (22% vs. 29%).
- **Economic Challenges:** Opportunity Youth experienced higher poverty rates (47% vs. 29%) and greater reliance on public assistance, with 56% using Medicaid or government aid (compared to 39%) and 31% receiving CalFresh benefits (compared to 20%).
- **Health and Disability:** Opportunity Youth were more likely to lack health insurance (13% vs. 9%) and have a disability (14% vs. 6%).
- **Parenting:** Among females, 16% of Opportunity Youth had children, compared to just 3% of connected youth.

These disparities highlight the pressing need for targeted interventions to address poverty, educational gaps, and health barriers, while supporting disconnected youth with pathways to education and employment.

Figure 14. Comparing and Contrasting Disconnected and Connected Youth (2023)



Note: *19-24, 21-24. Source: Authors’ compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

The data in Table 12 explores the disconnection rates, numbers, and demographic breakdowns of youth across racial and ethnic groups, segmented by age. There are notable differences in disconnection rates and characteristics across racial and ethnic subgroups. Among teens, Hispanic/Latino youth accounted for 73% of all disconnected youth, with a 6% disconnection rate. Black youth had the second-highest share at 13%, with a 7% disconnection rate. White teens also represented 20% of disconnected youth, with a disconnection rate of 5%.

Among young adults, the disconnection rate rose across all subgroups, particularly for Black youth (23%) and Hispanic/Latino youth (16%), who together represented 79% of disconnected young adults. Other racial groups, including American Indian/Alaska Native and youth of two or more races, also demonstrated elevated rates of disconnection in this age group. These disparities emphasize the need for targeted interventions to address systemic barriers for marginalized groups.

Table 12. Opportunity Youth by Age Group, Race, and Ethnicity (2023)

Race & Ethnicity	Teens				Young Adults			
	Disconn #	Disconn %	Share of Disconn	% of All	Disconn #	Disconn %	Share of Disconn	% of All
2 Major Races	1,282	4%	20%	22%	9,021	15%	22%	19%
3+ Major Races	81	6%	1%	1%	670	19%	2%	1%
Am Ind / Al Nat	213	8%	3%	2%	660	15%	2%	1%
Black	792	7%	13%	9%	5,640	23%	13%	8%
Chinese	181	6%	3%	2%	858	6%	2%	4%
Japanese	0	0%	0%	0%	0	0%	0%	0%
Other Asian/Pac Is	0	0%	0%	7%	1,256	4%	3%	9%
Other Race	2,534	5%	40%	37%	15,328	15%	37%	31%
White	1,245	5%	20%	21%	8,397	10%	20%	26%
Total	6,328	5%	100%	100%	41,830	13%	100%	100%
Hisp/Lat	4,635	6%	73%	63%	27,794	16%	66%	55%
Non-Hisp/Lat	1,693	3%	27%	37%	14,036	10%	34%	45%
Total	6,328	5%	100%	100%	41,830	13%	100%	100%

Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.



The educational outcomes of Opportunity Youth are presented in Table 13, showcasing attainment levels across racial and ethnic subgroups. Opportunity Youth exhibited stark differences in educational attainment based on race and ethnicity. Asian youth were the most likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher (62%), followed by White youth (33%). Conversely, Hispanic/Latino and Black youth were more likely to have only a high school diploma or less, with 77% and 50% respectively not progressing beyond secondary education. Youth of two or more races and those categorized as "Other Race" also showed significant challenges, with 58% of the latter group having a high school diploma or less. These trends underscore the critical role of education in addressing disconnection and reducing inequities.

Table 13. Educational Attainment of Opportunity Youth by Race and Ethnicity (19-24-year-olds; 2023)

Race & Ethnicity	Total N	No HS Dip	HS Dip / GED	Some Coll (No Deg)	Assoc	Bach or Higher
White	8,397	11%	39%	12%	5%	33%
Black	5,640	17%	33%	32%	0%	18%
Asian	2,114	2%	14%	16%	6%	62%
Am Ind / AI Nat	660	1%	70%	28%	0%	0%
Other Race	15,328	23%	58%	12%	2%	5%
2+ Major Races	9,691	17%	47%	25%	2%	9%
Hisp / Lat	27,794	20%	55%	17%	1%	7%
Non-Hisp / Lat	14,036	11%	30%	21%	4%	34%

Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.



Table 14 highlights the intersection of gender, race, and age in shaping disconnection rates for youth. Opportunity Youth rates varied widely across gender, race, and age. Young females experienced higher disconnection rates than males at certain ages, particularly at 23 and 24, where their rates exceeded 19%. Hispanic/Latino youth consistently had higher rates across age groups, peaking at 17% for ages 22-23. Black youth faced the highest disconnection rates overall, with peaks of 24% at age 22 and 20% at age 24. Asian youth, despite overall lower disconnection rates, saw a sharp increase with age, peaking at 34% by age 24. These patterns reveal the compounded impact of gender, race, and age on disconnection trends.

Table 14. Disconnection Rates by Age and Subgroup Characteristics (2023)

Sub-Group	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Fem	1%	1%	6%	9%	15%	8%	20%	19%	21%
Male	1%	5%	12%	14%	7%	10%	18%	16%	17%
Hisp/Lat	1%	4%	10%	11%	13%	13%	17%	17%	16%
Non-Hisp/Lat	2%	0%	9%	12%	7%	2%	24%	18%	25%
Black	3%	0%	10%	19%	10%	3%	24%	12%	20%
White	3%	1%	8%	14%	3%	1%	19%	27%	25%
Asian	0%	0%	8%	5%	10%	0%	28%	16%	34%
Hisp/Lat Fem	0%	0%	20%	11%	4%	4%	20%	32%	9%
Non-Hisp/Lat Fem	4%	0%	5%	15%	12%	1%	21%	12%	29%
Hisp/Lat Male	6%	6%	4%	31%	4%	0%	8%	22%	20%
Non-Hisp/Lat Male	1%	0%	11%	10%	3%	1%	26%	24%	24%
Black Fem	5%	0%	5%	27%	18%	3%	16%	11%	15%
White Fem	3%	0%	13%	8%	3%	2%	28%	18%	26%
Asian Fem	0%	0%	0%	3%	11%	0%	13%	23%	50%
Black Male	0%	0%	14%	12%	3%	3%	31%	13%	24%
White Male	3%	2%	5%	18%	2%	0%	13%	32%	24%
Asian Male	0%	0%	17%	7%	9%	0%	45%	8%	15%

Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing youth disconnection is critical to ensuring equitable access to education, employment, and social mobility for all young people in Los Angeles County and the City of Los Angeles. This section outlines key findings, policy implications, actionable recommendations, and next steps to reduce disconnection rates and support youth in their transition to adulthood.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This report provides important insights into the state of Opportunity Youth in the county and the city. While disconnection rates in the city and the state have fallen below pre-pandemic levels, the county as a whole still exceeds its 2019 rate, indicating systemic barriers that continue to hinder youth from accessing education and employment opportunities.


In both the county and the city, young adults aged 19-24 were significantly more likely to be disconnected compared to their teenage counterparts. This age group faces unique challenges, particularly in transitioning from high school to postsecondary education or employment. Black and Hispanic/Latino youth remained disproportionately affected by disconnection, reflecting ongoing racial and ethnic inequities. These disparities were compounded by socioeconomic challenges, such as higher poverty rates, limited health insurance coverage, and lower levels of educational attainment among Opportunity Youth.

Geographically, certain areas within the county, such as Van Nuys, Watts, and Westmont, had disconnection rates well above the regional average, emphasizing the need for targeted, place-based interventions. Similarly, within the city, neighborhoods like Boyle Heights and Baldwin Hills had notably high concentrations of Opportunity Youth. These geographic disparities highlight the critical importance of localized strategies that address the specific needs of communities with concentrated challenges.

Despite these challenges, some encouraging trends have emerged. The city saw its disconnection rate drop below its pre-pandemic level, demonstrating the potential for progress when targeted efforts align with community needs. This progress underscores the importance of scaling effective programs and policies to sustain and expand their impact.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

The findings from this report emphasize that reducing youth disconnection requires a multi-faceted, equity-focused approach that addresses systemic barriers and prioritizes inclusivity. Education systems must adapt to provide accessible, flexible pathways that meet diverse needs. Workforce development programs should emphasize quality jobs and meaningful opportunities, particularly for marginalized populations. Place-based strategies must prioritize communities with the highest rates of disconnection, and service delivery models should be designed to address the unique challenges faced by young adults aged 19-24.



Additionally, the importance of global best practices cannot be overstated. Drawing from international frameworks, policies must foster trust in youth capabilities and prioritize capacity-building initiatives that empower young people as change agents. Integrating civic education and creating inclusive spaces for youth participation are essential components of any long-term solution.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

Effective strategies to support Opportunity Youth must address the multifaceted challenges they face, including barriers to education, employment, and social services. By targeting systemic inequities and leveraging community assets, these recommendations aim to create comprehensive solutions that empower young people and foster lasting change.

- **Expand Access to Education and Training:** Invest in programs that provide flexible and accessible educational pathways, including dual-enrollment options, online learning, and vocational training programs tailored to local labor market demands.
- **Promote Equitable Workforce Opportunities:** Develop partnerships with local businesses to create pipelines for employment, particularly in high-demand sectors. Ensure these programs include mentorship, on-the-job training, and opportunities for career advancement.
- **Implement Place-Based Interventions:** Prioritize resources and tailored strategies in neighborhoods with the highest disconnection rates, such as Westmont, Watts, and Boyle Heights. Collaborate with local organizations to deliver culturally relevant and community-specific solutions.
- **Support Young Mothers and Youth with Disabilities:** Provide targeted services, such as childcare subsidies, transportation assistance, and accessible training programs, to address unique barriers these groups face.
- **Enhance Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Strengthen partnerships across education, workforce development, social services, and justice systems to deliver integrated support and reduce fragmentation in service delivery.
- **Incorporate Global Best Practices:** Adapt successful international approaches by fostering civic engagement, emphasizing equity, and promoting youth leadership within local policies and programs.

CALL TO ACTION AND NEXT STEPS

The urgency of addressing youth disconnection in Los Angeles County and the City of Los Angeles cannot be overstated. This report demonstrates that targeted, equity-driven strategies can yield significant progress, but sustained effort and collaboration are essential for achieving long-term success.

To move forward:

- **Solidify support for the LA Opportunity Youth Collaborative and LAP3 regional collaboratives:** Utilize the Horizons 32k report as a guide for community-based organizations, youth with lived expertise, public sector, and philanthropy voices to coalesce around policies and programs impacting youth who experience disconnection.
- **Scale Proven Interventions:** Expand programs that have demonstrated success in reconnecting youth to education and employment, particularly in high-disconnection areas.
- **Secure Sustainable Funding:** Advocate for increased investment at the state and federal levels to support comprehensive initiatives for Opportunity Youth.
- **Co-designing with Youth Leadership:** Engage young people in the development and implementation of policies and programs, ensuring their voices and perspectives guide decision-making.
- **Measuring Impact:** Develop clear metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and ensure accountability.

By prioritizing these actions, Los Angeles can set a national example of how to effectively address youth disconnection. The opportunity to create a brighter future for thousands of young people is within reach, but it requires bold leadership and a collective commitment to change.

Since 2014, the Los Angeles Opportunity Youth Collaborative, convened by its backbone organization, the Alliance for Children's Rights, together with its partner UNITE-LA, has implemented innovative, collaborative solutions for Opportunity Youth. The heart of our unique model is grounded in partnership with youth, to become change agents in the LA community and shape youth-centered solutions that are based on a shared understanding of what success looks like for the young people our systems are intended to serve.

APPENDIX A – OPPORTUNITY YOUTH BY PUMA IN THE LA REGION

Geographic disparities in youth disconnection across **LA County’s 71 Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs)** highlight critical areas for targeted interventions. The highest numbers of Opportunity Youth are in **Lancaster (4,556), Westmont (4,403), and Van Nuys & North Sherman Oaks (4,041), collectively accounting for over 10% of the county’s Opportunity Youth.**

Disconnection rates also vary widely, with Long Beach (SW & Port) at 24.3%, Lancaster at 22.0%, and Van Nuys & North Sherman Oaks at 21.5%, compared to low rates in Palos Verdes (1.6%) and West Los Angeles, Century City & Palms (2.5%).

Some PUMAs, like **Lancaster and Westmont**, have disproportionately high youth disconnection relative to their total population, emphasizing the need for **place-based strategies**. Targeting **education, workforce, and social services** in these high-need areas can strengthen support networks and improve youth outcomes. **A data-driven, equity-focused approach** will help ensure all young people have access to opportunity, regardless of where they live.

Opportunity Youth and Young Adults in the LA Region

PUMA	Disconnected Count	TOTAL (16-24)	Disconnected Rate	Share of Disconn
Lancaster	4,556	20,708	22.0%	3.7%
Westmont	4,403	25,383	17.3%	3.6%
Van Nuys & N Sherman Oaks	4,041	18,776	21.5%	3.3%
Watts	3,953	25,358	15.6%	3.2%
West Adams & Baldwin Hills	3,693	18,336	20.1%	3.0%
Central City & Boyle Heights	3,552	21,647	16.4%	2.9%
South Gate & Lynwood	3,327	20,062	16.6%	2.7%
Palmdale	3,290	25,331	13.0%	2.7%
Gardena, Lawndale, & W Athens	3,073	16,757	18.3%	2.5%
Compton & W Rancho Dominguez	3,064	18,906	16.2%	2.5%
Arleta, Pacoima, & San Fernando	2,864	17,779	16.1%	2.3%
Huntington Park, Florence-Graham, & Walnut Park	2,692	17,099	15.7%	2.2%
Long Beach (SW & Port)	2,563	10,541	24.3%	2.1%
La Puente & Industry	2,513	12,234	20.5%	2.0%
Whittier & Hacienda Heights	2,504	18,316	13.7%	2.0%
Pomona	2,446	15,654	15.6%	2.0%
Silver Lake, Echo Park, & Westlake	2,272	20,224	11.2%	1.8%
East LA	2,226	14,207	15.7%	1.8%
Chatsworth & Porter Ranch	2,144	22,008	9.7%	1.7%
Castaic	2,118	12,452	17.0%	1.7%
E Vernon	2,091	18,817	11.1%	1.7%
Inglewood	2,060	12,391	16.6%	1.7%
El Monte & S El Monte	2,038	13,170	15.5%	1.6%
Granada Hills & Sylmar	2,002	15,663	12.8%	1.6%
Baldwin Park, Azusa, Duarte, & Irwindale	1,961	22,232	8.8%	1.6%
Bell Gardens, Bell, Maywood, Cudahy, & Commerce	1,940	17,181	11.3%	1.6%

Hawthorne				
Long Beach (N)	1,887	19,398	9.7%	1.5%
Mission Hills & Panorama	1,790	16,133	11.1%	1.4%
North Hollywood & Valley Village	1,787	13,219	13.5%	1.4%
Bellflower & Paramount	1,764	18,605	9.5%	1.4%
Pico Rivera & Montebello	1,757	12,928	13.6%	1.4%
Covina & Walnut	1,672	11,230	14.9%	1.4%
La Mirada & Santa Fe Springs	1,587	15,392	10.3%	1.3%
Pasadena	1,579	11,533	13.7%	1.3%
Encino & Tarzana	1,516	13,361	11.3%	1.2%
Norwalk	1,483	11,058	13.4%	1.2%
USC & Expo Park	1,409	29,548	4.8%	1.1%
Carson	1,406	12,266	11.5%	1.1%
Hollywood	1,382	14,040	9.8%	1.1%
Arcadia, San Gabriel, & Temple City	1,284	16,060	8.0%	1.0%
Burbank	1,281	9,425	13.6%	1.0%
Glendale	1,268	17,319	7.3%	1.0%
Torrance	1,265	9,850	12.8%	1.0%
San Pedro	1,241	18,104	6.9%	1.0%
Marina del Rey, Westchester, & Culver City	1,219	16,123	7.6%	1.0%
West Covina	1,197	12,132	9.9%	1.0%
Santa Clarita (N)	1,188	15,135	7.8%	1.0%
Mt Wash, Highland & Glassell Parks	1,170	14,810	7.9%	0.9%
Lakewood, Cerritos, Artesia, & Hawaiian Gardens	1,128	16,908	6.7%	0.9%
Sunland, Sun Valley, & Tujunga	1,122	14,834	7.6%	0.9%
Downey	1,081	9,963	10.9%	0.9%
Santa Clarita (S)	1,074	8,882	12.1%	0.9%
Westwood & West LA	1,059	34,483	3.1%	0.9%
Monterey Park & Rosemead	1,023	9,729	10.5%	0.8%
Canoga Park, Winnetka, & Woodland Hills	967	14,578	6.6%	0.8%
Long Beach (Central & Signal Hill)	928	19,333	4.8%	0.8%
Koreatown	880	13,848	6.4%	0.7%
Calabasas, Agoura Hills, Malibu, & Westlake Village	859	14,624	5.9%	0.7%
Long Beach (E)	811	13,991	5.8%	0.7%
San Gabriel Valley Region (N)	694	8,289	8.4%	0.6%
Central LA	669	7,344	9.1%	0.5%
Hancock Park & Mid-Wilshire	635	11,172	5.7%	0.5%
Diamond Bar, La Habra Heights, & Rowland Heights	580	8,587	6.8%	0.5%
Glendora, Claremont, San Dimas, & La Verne	550	21,391	2.6%	0.4%
Redondo, Manhattan, & Hermosa	522	10,400	5.0%	0.4%
Alhambra & South Pasadena	513	9,096	5.6%	0.4%
West Hollywood & Beverly Hills	407	7,809	5.2%	0.3%
West LA, Century City, & Palms	297	11,908	2.5%	0.2%
Santa Monica	270	5,808	4.6%	0.2%
Palos Verdes	181	11,428	1.6%	0.1%
Total	123,666	1,094,187	11.3%	100.0%

APPENDIX B – OPPORTUNITY YOUTH BY PUMA IN THE CITY OF LA

Opportunity Youth and Young Adults in the City of LA

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Koreatown	880	13,848	6.4%	1.8%
Central LA	669	7,344	9.1%	1.4%
Hancock Park & Mid-Wilshire	635	11,172	5.7%	1.3%
W LA, Century City, & Palms	297	11,908	2.5%	0.6%
TOTAL	48,158	447,496	10.8%	100.0%

NEW WAYS BUILDS POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, AND WELL-BEING OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG ADULTS.



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