

# AN UPDATE ON TEEN & YOUNG ADULT DISCONNECTION IN CALIFORNIA



**COYN**  
CALIFORNIA OPPORTUNITY  
YOUTH NETWORK



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Youth disconnection, defined as young people aged 16-24 who are neither in school nor employed, remains a critical challenge in California. This annual report aims to shed light on the prevalence of youth disconnection across California, with a particular focus on demographic, racial, ethnic, and geographic disparities. By examining these factors, the report seeks to inform policymakers and practitioners on the necessary interventions to reduce youth disconnection and support the public and private investment to re-engage our state's young people in educational and employment opportunities.

Recent research and our collective experience have documented the far-reaching consequences of disconnection from school and work during these critical development years. There is an urgent need for targeted interventions and policies to address this issue especially in Governor Gavin Newsom's proposed Master Plan for Career Education. Studies have consistently shown that disconnected youth, also referred to as "opportunity youth," face a range of adverse outcomes including lower lifetime earnings, higher rates of unemployment, poorer health, and increased involvement with the criminal justice system (Belfield et al., 2012; Hair et al., 2009).



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- ▲ **Updated Disconnection Rates:** As of 2022, California had 523,983 disconnected youth, representing 11.2% of the 16-24 age group. While this marks a decrease from the peak disconnection rate of 12.5% (572,756) in 2021, it is still higher than the pre-pandemic rate of 10.3% (480,923) in 2019. The fluctuation in these rates reflects the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth engagement and the ongoing challenges in re-engaging disconnected youth.
  - ▲ **Demographic Disparities:** Youth disconnection is influenced by several demographic factors, including age, gender, race, and ethnicity. Disconnection rates increase sharply as youth transition from adolescence to young adulthood, particularly among males, Black and Hispanic/Latino youth, and those living in poverty.
  - ▲ **Geographic Variation:** The rate of youth disconnection varies significantly across California's 12 most populous counties. In 2022, disconnection rates ranged from a low of 7.1% in San Francisco to a high of 17.2% in Kern County. While some counties saw decreases in disconnection rates from 2021 to 2022, others experienced increases, reflecting ongoing challenges in reconnecting youth post-pandemic.
  - ▲ **Educational Attainment:** There are stark disparities in educational outcomes among older disconnected young adults (22-24). Individuals who identified as Other Race (10%), Black (13%), and Hispanic/Latino youth (13%) were less likely to have higher levels of educational attainment (associate or bachelor's degrees or more) compared to their White (28%) and Non-Hispanic/Latino (31%) counterparts. These disparities highlight the critical need for educational interventions that support high school completion and access to higher education.
  - ▲ **From age 18 onwards,** the disconnection rate continues to climb, reaching 12.0% at age 19, 13.3% at age 20, and 12.2% at age 21. The rate peaked at age 24, where 17.2% individuals were disconnected. While 24-year-olds account for just 11% of the total 16-24 population, they constitute nearly 17% of the out-of-school, out-of-work youth population, indicating that they are disconnected at a disproportionate rate.

***Youth disconnection not only limits the future prospects of individuals but also has broader social and economic implications. This report calls for a coordinated, cross-sector approach to address youth disconnection and ensure that all young people in California can succeed.***



# INTRODUCTION

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Youth disconnection, a term referring to individuals ages 16 to 24 who are neither in school nor at work, is a significant concern in California, across the country, and around the globe. In 2022, close to 525,000 teens and young adults in California were disconnected from education and employment, resulting in a disconnection rate of 11.2%. While this figure represents an improvement from the 12.5% disconnection rate with # observed in 2021, it nonetheless underscores the persistent challenges faced by a substantial portion of California's youth population. Good news the numbers are trending in the right direction; bad news the trend of recovery is not equal or quick.

Recent research has shed light on the complex factors contributing to youth disconnection, its far-reaching consequences, and the urgent need for targeted interventions and policies to address this issue. Studies have consistently shown that disconnected youth, also referred to as "opportunity youth," face a range of adverse outcomes, including lower lifetime earnings, higher rates of unemployment, poorer health, and increased involvement with the criminal justice system (Belfield et al., 2012; Hair et al., 2009). These young people often encounter significant barriers to education and employment, such as poverty, discrimination, and limited access to support services (Carcillo et al., 2015; OECD, 2016a).

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The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the challenges faced by disconnected youth, disproportionately affecting marginalized groups, including racial and ethnic minorities, youth from low-income families, and those with disabilities (Lewis, 2020; Ong et al., 2020). The pandemic's impact on education and employment has heightened the risk of long-term disconnection for vulnerable youth, underscoring the need for targeted support and recovery efforts.

In response to this pressing issue, California has implemented various programs and initiatives aimed at supporting disconnected youth, such as the California For All which provided increased support for Conservation Corps, YouthBuild programs, and local youth workforce development initiatives. Additionally, the California State Assembly recently passed Assembly Concurrent Resolution 16 (ACR 16), which encourages the development of a statewide comprehensive plan to reduce persistent economic inequities and create pathways to success for opportunity youth. Moreover, Governor Gavin Newsom announced the allocation of \$31 million in California Opportunity Youth Apprenticeship (COYA) grants to 51 projects across the state, aiming to break down barriers and support young people in launching careers in various sectors. These efforts should be applauded, but these are many more opportunities for the state to provide leadership, namely the Governor's proposed Master Plan can be a strident vehicle to coordinate and align resources for the over half-million California Opportunity Youth.

This report provides an updated analysis of California's disconnected youth population using data from the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS). By examining trends, demographic characteristics, and geographic patterns, we aim to inform policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders about the current state of youth disconnection in the state and the urgent need for targeted interventions and policies. The report is structured as follows: the next section presents the findings on disconnection trends and rates, education and employment status, demographic characteristics, and geographical distribution; after the findings, the next section offers policy and operational recommendations to address youth disconnection; and the final section concludes the report, emphasizing California's commitment to ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to thrive.





# KEY DEFINITIONS

As California navigates the ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and its disproportionate impact on marginalized communities, addressing youth disconnection must remain a top priority. By leveraging the insights provided in this report and the momentum generated by recent policy initiatives, the state has the opportunity to continue its tradition of leading the way in developing effective strategies to reconnect over half-a-million youth to education, employment, and a brighter future.

To ensure clarity and consistency throughout the report, key definitions for frequently used terms are provided to clarify important concepts and terminology.

- **Disconnected Youth:** Youth aged 16-24 who are neither in school nor employed. This term is often used to describe young people who are not participating in the educational system or workforce, which can lead to long-term economic and social challenges.
- **Opportunity Youth:** Same definition as Disconnected Youth, and is used more frequently to convey a positive, futuristic outcome.
- **Connected Youth:** Youth aged 16-24 who are either in school, employed, or both. These individuals are considered to be actively engaged in activities that contribute to their education or economic self-sufficiency.
- **Disconnection Rate:** The percentage of youth within a specific age group who are disconnected, meaning they are neither in school nor employed. This metric is used to gauge the prevalence of youth disconnection in a population.
- **Teens:** Refers to individuals aged 16 to 18 years old. This group is primarily focused on completing secondary education and beginning to explore post-secondary options, whether in education or early career experiences.

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**Young Adults:** Refers to individuals aged 19 to 24 years old. This group is often in a transitional phase, navigating higher education, vocational training, or entry into the workforce, with a growing emphasis on long-term career development and financial independence.

**Reconnection:** The process of helping disconnected youth re-engage with education, employment, or training opportunities. Reconnection efforts might include interventions like job training programs, educational support, or mentorship.

**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.

**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.

**Support Services:** Programs and resources provided to assist youth in overcoming barriers to education and employment. These might include counseling, childcare, transportation assistance, and financial aid.



# FINDINGS

The following section presents a comprehensive analysis of the current state of youth disconnection in California. The findings are organized into four main subsections: disconnection trends and rates, education and employment status, demographic characteristics, and geographic distribution. All data presented in this brief are based on 1-year estimates from the American Community Survey.

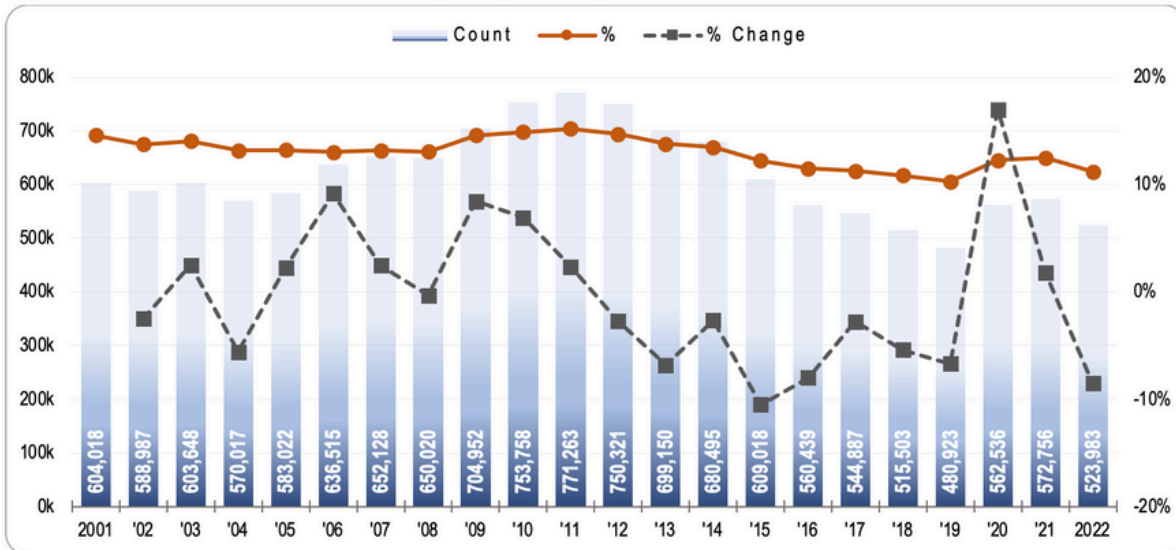
## Disconnection Trends and Rates

Understanding the trends and rates of youth disconnection is crucial for identifying the underlying factors that contribute to this issue and for developing targeted interventions to address it effectively.

### Overall Youth Disconnection in California (2001-2022)

Figure 1 presents the overall youth disconnection rates in California from 2001 to 2022 for individuals aged 16 to 24. The data reveals that the disconnection rate has fluctuated over this five-year period, with a notable increase during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2018, there were approximately 515,000 disconnected youth – a disconnection rate of 10.9%. This rate decreased slightly to 10.3% (~481,000 youth) in 2019, indicating a modest improvement in youth engagement in education and employment.

Figure 1. Youth Disconnection in California (16-24; 2001-22)



\*Note: According to Measure of America, 2020 data is likely to underestimate the number of OY. Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.





# SURGE IN DISCONNECTION

The onset of the pandemic in 2020, however, led to a significant surge in the disconnection rate, reaching 12.3% (562,536 youth). This sharp increase can be attributed to the widespread disruptions in education and employment caused by the pandemic, as well as the disproportionate impact on vulnerable youth populations. The disconnection rate remained high in 2021 at 12.5% (572,756 youth), suggesting that the effects of the pandemic continued to pose challenges for young people in terms of staying connected to school and work.

The most recent data from 2022 shows a decline in the disconnection rate to 11.2% (523,983 youth). While this decrease is encouraging, it is important to note that the rate remains higher than pre-pandemic levels. The persistence of elevated disconnection rates underscores the need for sustained efforts to support youth in reconnecting with education and employment opportunities, particularly as the state continues to navigate the long-term impacts of the pandemic.

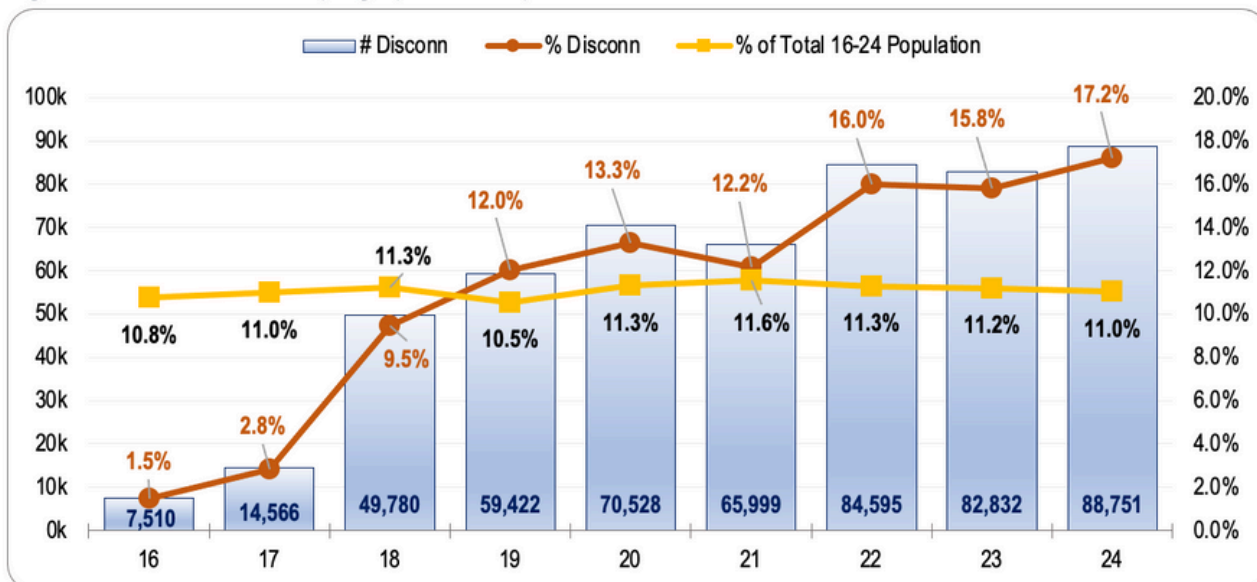
# DISCONNECTION RATES BY AGE (2022)

The data shown in Figure 2 reveals a clear trend in disconnection rates across different ages in 2022. The disconnection rate started relatively low at age 16 (1.5%; 7,510) and increases slightly at age 17 (2.8%; 14,566). By age 18, however, the disconnection rate more than triples to 9.5% (49,780). This significant rise suggests that the transition from high school to postsecondary education or employment is a critical juncture where many young people face challenges and may become disconnected.

From age 18 onwards, the disconnection rate continues to climb, reaching 12.0% at age 19, 13.3% at age 20, and 12.2% at age 21. The rate peaked at age 24, where 17.2% individuals were disconnected. While 24-year-olds account for just 11% of the total 16-24 population, they constitute nearly 17% of the out-of-school, out-of-work youth population, indicating that they are disconnected at a disproportionate rate.

Overall, this trend highlights the increasing difficulties that young people may encounter as they progress into their early twenties, including factors such as family responsibilities, financial constraints, or a lack of support services. The findings underscore the importance of targeting interventions and support services during the critical transition from high school to postsecondary education or employment. Additionally, the persistently high disconnection rates among older youth suggest a need for ongoing support and resources to help them overcome barriers and maintain connections to education and employment.

Figure 2. Disconnection by Age (ACS 2022)



Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).

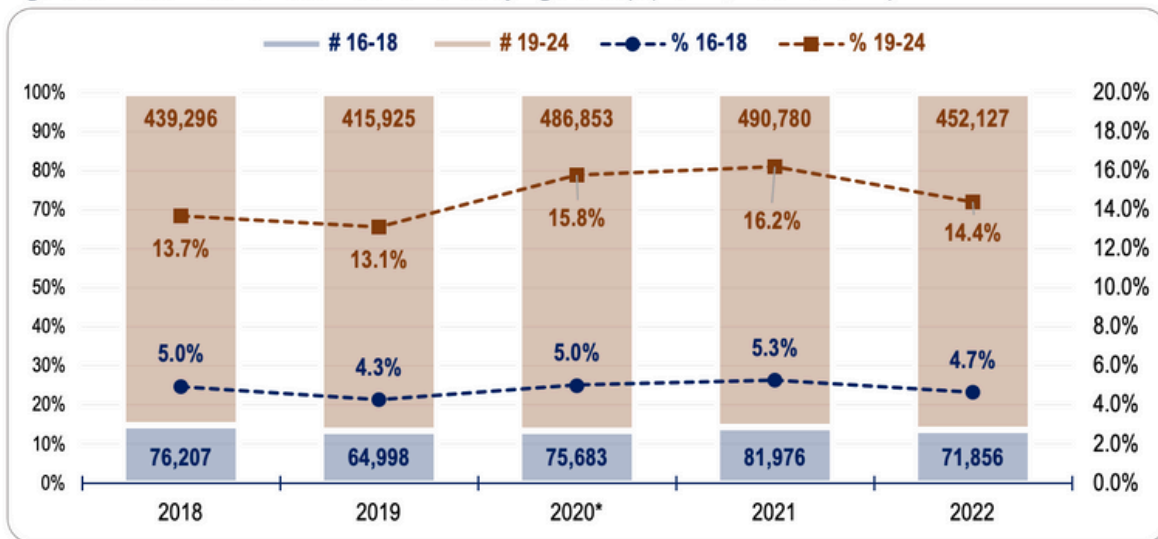
# DISCONNECTION RATES BY AGE GROUP (2018-2022)

Figure 3 illustrates the disconnection rates for two age groups, 16-18 and 19-24, over the five-year period from 2018 to 2022. These data provides valuable insights into how disconnection trends differ between younger and older youth, highlighting the evolving challenges faced by these groups. Throughout this period, the disconnection rate for the older age group (19-24) consistently exceeded that of the younger group (16-18). In 2022, approximately one-in-seven young adults were disconnected (14.4%) – a rate more than three times higher than the 4.7% disconnection rate of their younger peers. This significant disparity underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions that specifically address the challenges older youth face in staying connected to education and employment.

The data also reveal fluctuations in disconnection rates for both age groups, particularly during the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021. For 16- to 18-year-olds, the disconnection rate increased from 4.3% (64,998 individuals) in 2019 to 5.3% (81,976 individuals) in 2021, before slightly declining to 4.7% in 2022. Similarly, the rate for 19- to 24-year-olds rose from 13.1% (415,925 individuals) in 2019 to a peak of 16.2% (490,780 individuals) in 2021, then decreased to 14.4% in 2022.

These trends suggest that while the pandemic had a broad impact on youth disconnection, older youth may have experienced more pronounced and enduring challenges. As California continues to tackle youth disconnection, it is critical to consider the specific needs of these distinct age groups. Developing targeted strategies that promote reconnection and sustained support for youth across all age groups will be essential for reducing disconnection and enhancing overall youth well-being.

Figure 3. Disconnection Counts and Rates by Age Group (16-24; ACS 2018-22)



\*Note: According to Measure of America, 2020 data is likely to underestimate the number of OY. Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

# EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Table 1 provides an overview of the education and employment status of young people aged 16-24 in 2022. Of the nearly 4.7 million teens and young adults in California, 2,872,835 (61.4%) were enrolled in school, while 1,804,848 (38.6%) were not in school. Among those in school, 1,040,423 (36.2%) were employed, 133,770 (4.7%) were unemployed, and 1,698,642 (59.1%) were not in the labor force. Of those not in school, 138,655 (7.7%) were unemployed and 385,328 (21.3%) were not in the labor force. It was this group of over half-a-million individuals who, in 2022, comprised the disconnected youth population in California.

*Table 1. Employment and Education Data (16-24; ACS 2022)*

	In School	Not in School	Total
<b>Employed</b>	1,040,423	1,280,865	<b>2,321,288</b>
<b>Unemployed</b>	133,770	138,655	<b>272,425</b>
<b>Not in Labor Force</b>	1,698,642	385,328	<b>2,083,970</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,872,835</b>	<b>1,804,848</b>	<b>4,677,683</b>

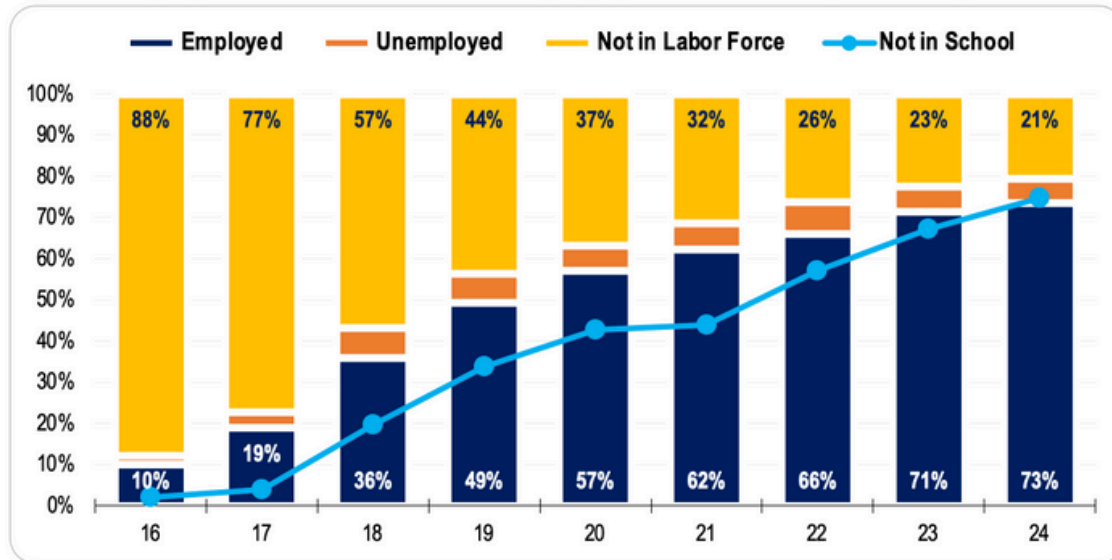
**Source:** Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).

Figure 4 provides a detailed breakdown of the educational and employment status of California youth by age, highlighting several key trends as they progress from adolescence to young adulthood:

- The percentage of youth not in school increased consistently with age, starting from just 2% at age 16 and rising sharply to 75% by age 24. Notably, the largest jumps occurred between ages 17 and 18 (an increase from 4% to 20%) and between ages 22 and 23 (from 57% to 67%).
- Employment rates also showed a steady increase, beginning at 10% for 16-year-olds and peaking at 73% by age 24. Significant increases in employment are observed between ages 18 and 19 (from 36% to 49%) and between ages 20 and 21 (from 57% to 62%).
- Unemployment rates remained relatively stable across the age spectrum, fluctuating slightly between 2% and 8%, with the highest rate of 8% occurring at age 22.
- The proportion of youth not in the labor force decreases dramatically with age, starting at 88% for 16-year-olds and dropping to just 21% by age 24. The most notable reductions occur between ages 16 and 17 (from 88% to 77%) and ages 18 and 19 (from 57% to 44%).

These findings underscore the dynamic transition from adolescence to young adulthood, marked by increasing engagement with the labor market and a gradual departure from the educational system. The data highlights the critical importance of supporting youth through this transitional period as they face the challenges of balancing education, employment, and other life responsibilities. The significant changes from one age to the next again emphasize the need for targeted interventions at key developmental stages to ensure successful outcomes for all youth.

Figure 4. Employment and Education Status by Age (All 16-24-Yr-Olds; ACS 2022)



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

To understand the broader context of youth disconnection, it's essential to examine not just employment and education status by age but also the patterns in educational enrollment and attainment over time. The following subsection delves into these trends, providing insights into how educational pathways have evolved for California's youth and highlighting the ongoing challenges they face in accessing and completing post-secondary education. The data on educational enrollment and attainment for California youth from 2007 to 2022 highlights several key trends:

- **Stable High School Enrollment:** The percentage of teens (16-18) not enrolled in school has remained relatively consistent, fluctuating between 8% and 11%. In 2022, 9% of teens were not in school, slightly up from 8% in 2019.
- **Fluctuations in Post-Secondary Enrollment:** Among 19- to-24-year-olds, post-secondary enrollment increased from 42% in 2007 to a peak of 49% in 2019 but then declined to 45% in 2022. This recent decrease likely reflects the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education access.

- **Improvement in High School Completion:** The percentage of 19-to 24-year-olds without a high school diploma has decreased significantly, from 15% in 2007 to 7% in 2022, indicating progress in high school completion rates.
- **Challenges in College Completion:** The percentage of 23- and 24-year-olds with some college but no degree peaked at 35% in 2015 before falling to 26% in 2022, suggesting ongoing challenges in completing post-secondary education.
- **Increase in Bachelor’s Degree Attainment:** The percentage of 21- to 24-year-olds with a bachelor's degree or higher increased from 14% in 2007 to 20% in 2022. However, there was a slight decline from 23% in 2020 to 20% in 2022, possibly due to pandemic-related disruptions.

These trends illustrate both the progress made in educational attainment among California youth and the areas where challenges remain, particularly in post-secondary education.

*Table 2. Educational Enrollment and Attainment*

Year	ENROLLMENT		ATTAINMENT			
	Not in Sch <sup>†</sup>	Post-Sec <sup>‡</sup>	No HS Dip <sup>§</sup>	HS Dip <sup>§</sup>	Some Coll (No Deg) <sup>*</sup>	Bach+ <sup>‡</sup>
2007	11%	42%	15%	32%	28%	14%
2011	9%	46%	13%	27%	34%	14%
2015	8%	47%	9%	28%	35%	16%
2019	8%	49%	7%	30%	32%	20%
2021	9%	47%	7%	32%	29%	21%
2022	9%	45%	7%	34%	26%	20%

<sup>†</sup>16-18-year-olds; <sup>‡</sup>19-24-year-olds; <sup>\*</sup>23-24-year-olds; <sup>‡</sup>21-24-year-olds; **Source:** Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).

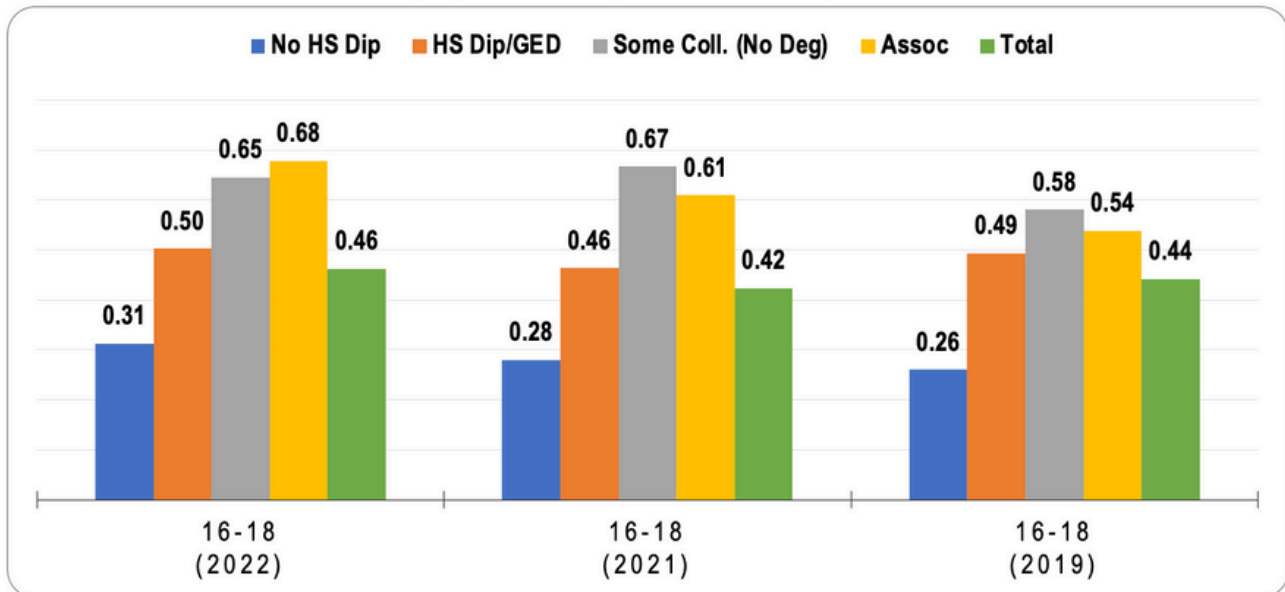
Figures 5 and 6 present the employment-to-population ratios for out-of-school youth in California, broken down by educational attainment for the years 2019, 2021, and 2022. These figures highlight the relationship between education and employment outcomes for teens (16-18) and young adults (19-24).

Figure 5 displays the employment-to-population ratios for out-of-school teens in California, segmented by educational attainment for the years 2019, 2021, and 2022. The data reveal a clear positive relationship between education and employment outcomes.

In 2022, only 31% of teens without a high school diploma were employed. This figure increased to 50% for those with a high school diploma or GED and further to 65% for teens with some college education. The highest employment ratio was observed among those with an associate degree, at 68%. Overall, the total employment-to-population ratio for this age group was 46% in 2022. This marks a recovery from 2021, where the ratio had dipped to 42%, likely due to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The ratio in 2022 aligns closely with the 2019 level, which was 44%.

The consistent trend across all three years highlights the critical role of educational attainment in improving employment prospects for teens, even those who are not currently enrolled in school.

Figure 5. Out-of-School Teen Employment-to-Population Ratios by Educational Attainment



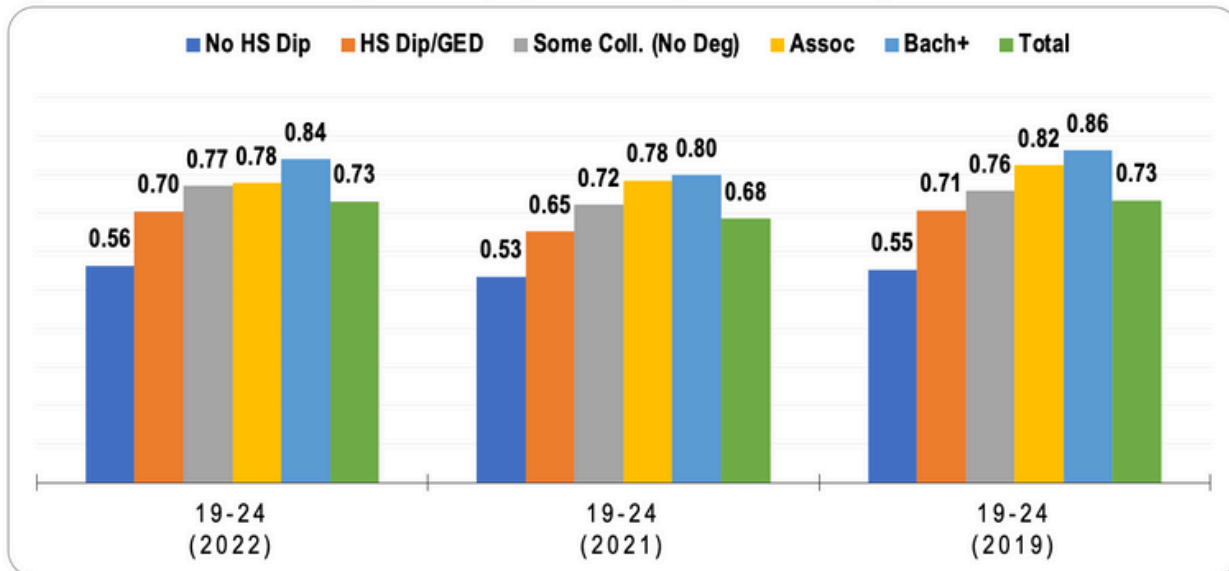
Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).

Figure 6 presents the employment-to-population ratios for out-of-school young adults in California, also categorized by educational attainment for the years 2019, 2021, and 2022. The data show a strong positive correlation between higher education levels and employment rates.

In 2022, the employment rate for young adults without a high school diploma stood at 56%. This rate increased significantly for those with a high school diploma or GED (70%), some college education (77%), and peaked for those with a bachelor's degree or higher (84%). The overall employment-to-population ratio for young adults was 73% in both 2019 and 2022, indicating stability despite a dip to 68% in 2021, again likely related to the broader economic disruptions caused by the pandemic.

These findings reinforce the substantial returns to education for young adults in terms of employment opportunities. They also suggest that while the pandemic temporarily affected employment rates, the recovery has been stronger among those with higher educational attainment.

Figure 6. Out-of-School Young Adult Employment-to-Population Ratios by Educational Attainment



Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).

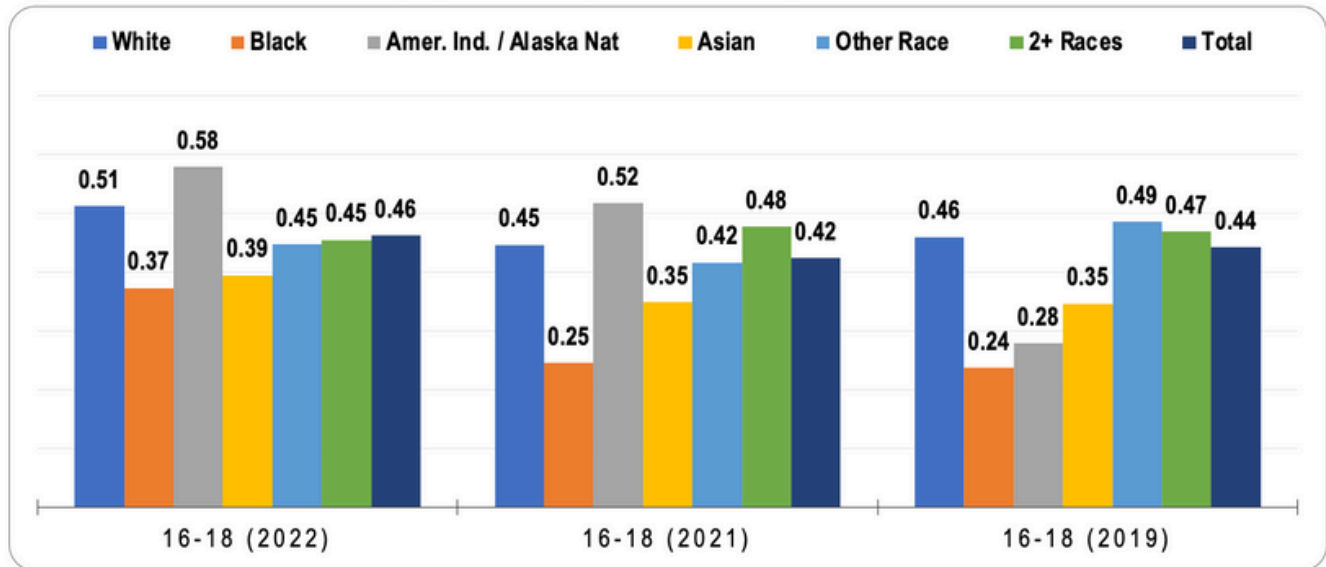


Figure 7 presents the employment-to-population ratios for out-of-school teens in California, broken down by race and ethnicity for the years 2019, 2021, and 2022. The data reveals significant disparities in employment outcomes across different racial groups.

In 2022, the overall employment-to-population ratio for teens aged 16-18 was 0.46, meaning 46% of out-of-school teens were employed. However, this overall figure masks considerable variation by race. American Indian/Alaska Native teens had the highest employment-to-population ratio at 0.58, a substantial increase from 0.28 in 2019. White teens followed with a ratio of 0.51, while Black and Asian teens had the lowest ratios at 0.37 and 0.39, respectively. Teens of other races and those identifying as two or more races had ratios close to the overall average, with slight fluctuations across the three years analyzed.

Notably, Black teens consistently had the lowest employment-to-population ratios over the three years, with a significant dip in 2021 to 0.25, likely reflecting the heightened barriers to employment they faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, American Indian/Alaska Native teens saw a marked improvement, particularly in 2022, surpassing other racial groups in employment outcomes.

Figure 7. Out-of-School Teen Employment-to-Population Ratios by Race



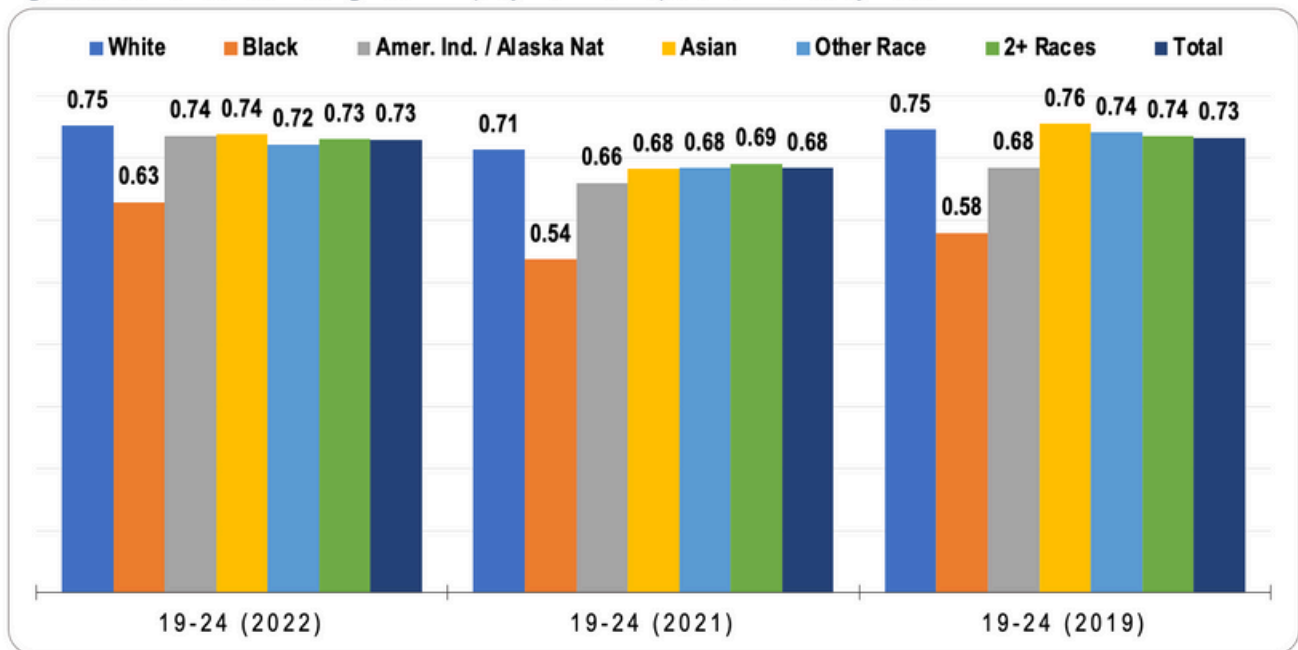
Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).

Figure 8 shows the employment-to-population ratios for out-of-school young adults in California, also by race and ethnicity, for the years 2019, 2021, and 2022. The data indicates a generally higher employment rate for this age group compared to teens, though racial disparities persist.

In 2022, the overall employment-to-population ratio for young adults aged 19-24 was 0.73. White young adults had the highest ratio at 0.75, closely followed by American Indian/Alaska Native and Asian youth, both at 0.74. Youth identifying as two or more races had a ratio of 0.73, while those of other races had a ratio of 0.72. Black young adults had the lowest employment-to-population ratio at 0.63, although this was an improvement from 0.54 in 2021.

While the overall trend shows stability across most racial groups from 2019 to 2022, the consistently lower ratios for Black youth highlight ongoing challenges in achieving employment equity. The slight recovery in 2022 suggests some improvement in employment opportunities, yet the persistent gap underscores the need for targeted interventions to support Black youth in the labor market.

Figure 8. Out-of-School Young Adult Employment-to-Population Ratios by Race



Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).

Figure 9 illustrates the employment-to-population ratios for out-of-school teens and young adults in California, broken down by ethnicity (Hispanic/Latino and Non-Hispanic/Latino) for the years 2019, 2021, and 2022.

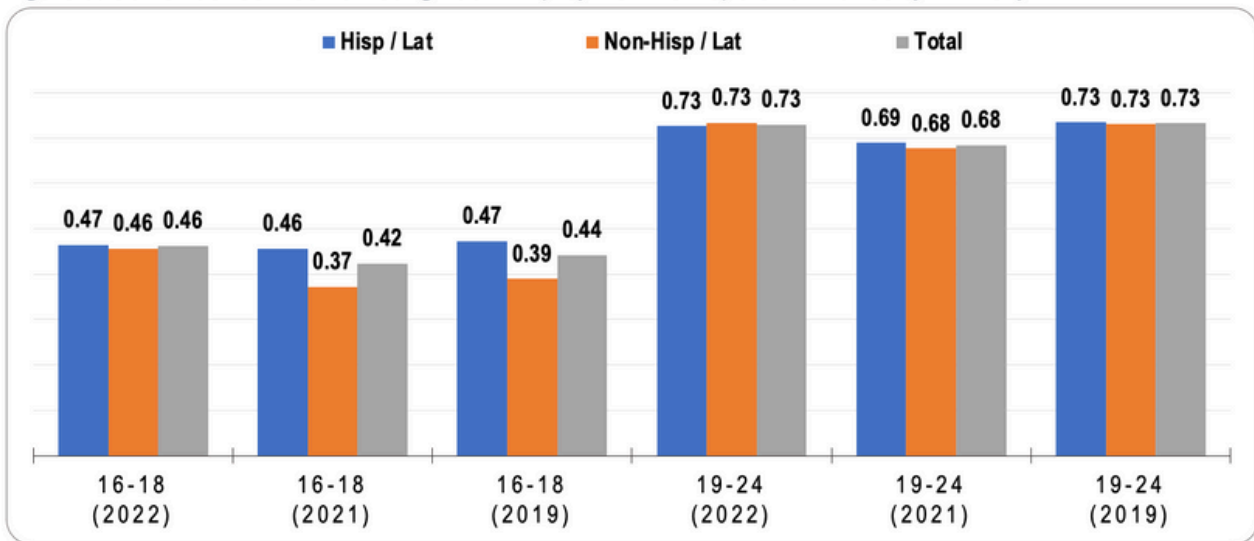
In 2022, the employment-to-population ratios were nearly identical for both ethnic groups across the two age ranges. For teens, the ratio was 0.47 for Hispanic/Latino youth and 0.46 for Non-Hispanic/Latino youth. For young adults, both groups had a ratio of 0.73.

Previous years, however, reveal slight variations between these groups. In 2021, Hispanic/Latino teens had a higher employment-to-population ratio (0.46) compared to Non-Hispanic/Latino teens (0.37). Conversely, in 2019, Non-Hispanic/Latino teens had a slightly higher ratio (0.39) compared to Hispanic/Latino teens (0.47). Among young adults, the ratios were consistent across both ethnic groups and years, with both groups showing stability around 0.73 in 2019 and 2022, despite a slight dip in 2021.

These findings suggest that while there were differences in employment outcomes by ethnicity, particularly among teens, these disparities tended to even out as youth transition into young adulthood. The consistent employment ratios among young adults across ethnic groups highlight a more stable employment landscape, though the vulnerabilities among teens, especially during economic disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasize the need for continued support and targeted interventions.

This analysis highlights the nuanced experiences of disconnected youth in California’s labor market. Understanding these differences is crucial for developing effective strategies that promote equitable access to employment opportunities, support services, and job training programs, ensuring that all youth, regardless of their ethnic background, have the resources they need to succeed.

Figure 9. Out-of-School Teen & Young Adult Employment-to-Population Ratios by Ethnicity



Source: Authors’ compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).



# DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

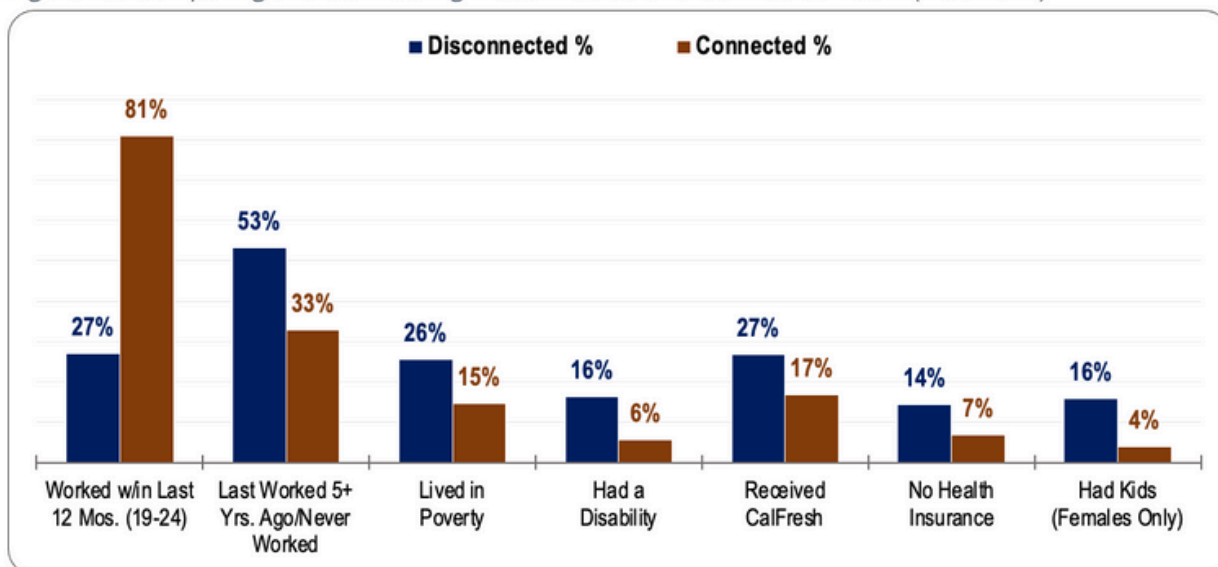
Figure 10 compares various life circumstances between disconnected and connected youth aged 16-24 in California for 2022, highlighting the significant disparities they face.

Among youth aged 19-24, only 27% of disconnected individuals had worked within the last 12 months, compared to 81% of their connected peers. Additionally, 53% of disconnected youth had last worked over 5 years ago or had never worked, in contrast to 33% of connected youth. These figures underscore the severe barriers to employment faced by disconnected youth, pointing to a need for targeted job training and workforce development programs.

Economic hardship is also more prevalent among disconnected youth, with 26% living in poverty compared to 15% of connected youth. This emphasizes the cycle of disconnection, where poverty both contributes to and is exacerbated by a lack of education and employment opportunities.

The data further shows that disconnected youth are more likely to have disabilities and rely on public assistance. Sixteen percent of disconnected youth had a disability, compared to just 6% of connected youth. Additionally, 27% received CalFresh benefits, versus 17% of connected youth, reflecting greater reliance on public support for basic needs.

Figure 10. Comparing and Contrasting Disconnected and Connected Youth (ACS 2022)



Source: Authors' compilation based on IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).

Health care access is another area of disparity, with 14% of disconnected youth lacking health insurance, compared to 7% of connected youth. This gap has serious implications for their overall health and ability to access essential services.

For female youth, 16% of disconnected individuals had children, compared to only 4% of their connected counterparts. This highlights the unique challenges faced by young mothers who are disconnected from education and employment, such as the need for affordable childcare and flexible schedules.


These findings paint a clear picture of the complex challenges faced by disconnected youth in California. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach that not only improves access to education and employment but also provides comprehensive support services to meet their diverse needs.

Building on the analysis of demographic characteristics and life circumstances, it's essential to examine the racial and ethnic composition of disconnected youth in California. Understanding the disproportionate impact of disconnection on specific racial and ethnic groups enables policymakers to develop targeted, culturally responsive interventions.

Table 3 presents the breakdown of disconnected youth by race and ethnicity for 2022, categorized by age group (16-18 and 19-24). The data reveals significant disparities in disconnection rates across different racial and ethnic groups, as well as notable differences in the composition of the disconnected youth population compared to the overall youth population.

*Table 3. Disconnected Youth by Age Group, Race, and Ethnicity (ACS 2022)*

Race	DISCONNECTED: 16-18				DISCONNECTED: 19-24			
	#	%	% of Total Disconn	% of All 16-18	#	%	% of Total Disconn	% of All 19-24
White	17,595	3.7%	24.5%	31.1%	130,676	12.6%	28.9%	33.1%
Other Race	22,239	6.0%	30.9%	24.1%	128,265	17.0%	28.4%	24.1%
2+ Races	20,737	5.2%	28.9%	25.8%	106,507	15.4%	23.6%	22.1%
Black	5,354	7.1%	7.5%	4.9%	38,955	22.0%	8.6%	5.7%
Other Asian / Pac Isl	3,128	2.2%	4.4%	9.3%	29,668	9.9%	6.6%	9.6%
Am Ind / Alaska Nat	1,327	5.9%	1.8%	1.5%	8,682	17.0%	1.9%	1.6%
Chinese	1,368	2.9%	1.9%	3.0%	8,388	7.6%	1.9%	3.5%
Japanese	108	2.1%	0.2%	0.3%	986	8.6%	0.2%	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>71,856</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>452,127</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Hispanic / Lat	45,470	5.6%	63.3%	52.3%	258,452	16.4%	57.2%	50.3%
Non-Hispanic / Lat	26,386	3.6%	36.7%	47.7%	193,675	12.4%	42.8%	49.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>71,856</b>	<b>4.7%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>452,127</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



Among teens aged 16-18, Black youth had the highest disconnection rate at 7.1%, followed by American Indian/Alaska Native teens at 5.9%. In contrast, Japanese and other Asian/Pacific Islander teens had the lowest disconnection rates at 2.1% and 2.2%, respectively. White teens had a disconnection rate of 3.7%, while those of other races had a rate of 6.0%.

Notably, Black teens comprised only 4.9% of the total 16-18 age group but represented 7.5% of the disconnected population, indicating a disproportionate impact. Similarly, teens of other races represented 24.1% of the total population but accounted for 30.9% of disconnected teens.

For young adults aged 19-24, the disparities were even more pronounced. Black young adults had the highest disconnection rate at 22.0%, followed by American Indian/Alaska Native young adults at 17.0%. Japanese and Chinese young adults had the lowest disconnection rates at 8.6% and 7.6%, respectively.

As with teens, the composition of the disconnected young adult population differed from the overall population. Black young adults made up 5.7% of all 19- to 24-year-olds but accounted for 8.6% of the disconnected population. White young adults represented 33.1% of the total population but only 28.9% of the disconnected group.

When examining disconnection rates by ethnicity, Hispanic/Latino youth had higher disconnection rates compared to their Non-Hispanic/Latino peers. Among teens, 5.6% of Hispanic/Latino youth were disconnected compared to 3.6% of Non-Hispanic/Latino youth. For young adults, the disparity widened, with 16.4% of Hispanic/Latino youth disconnected compared to 12.4% of Non-Hispanic/Latino youth.

Moreover, Hispanic/Latino youth were overrepresented among the disconnected population. They comprised 52.3% of all teens and 50.3% of all young adults in California, yet accounted for 63.3% and 57.2% of the disconnected populations in these age groups, respectively. This overrepresentation underscores the need for targeted interventions that address the unique challenges faced by Hispanic/Latino youth in accessing education and employment opportunities.

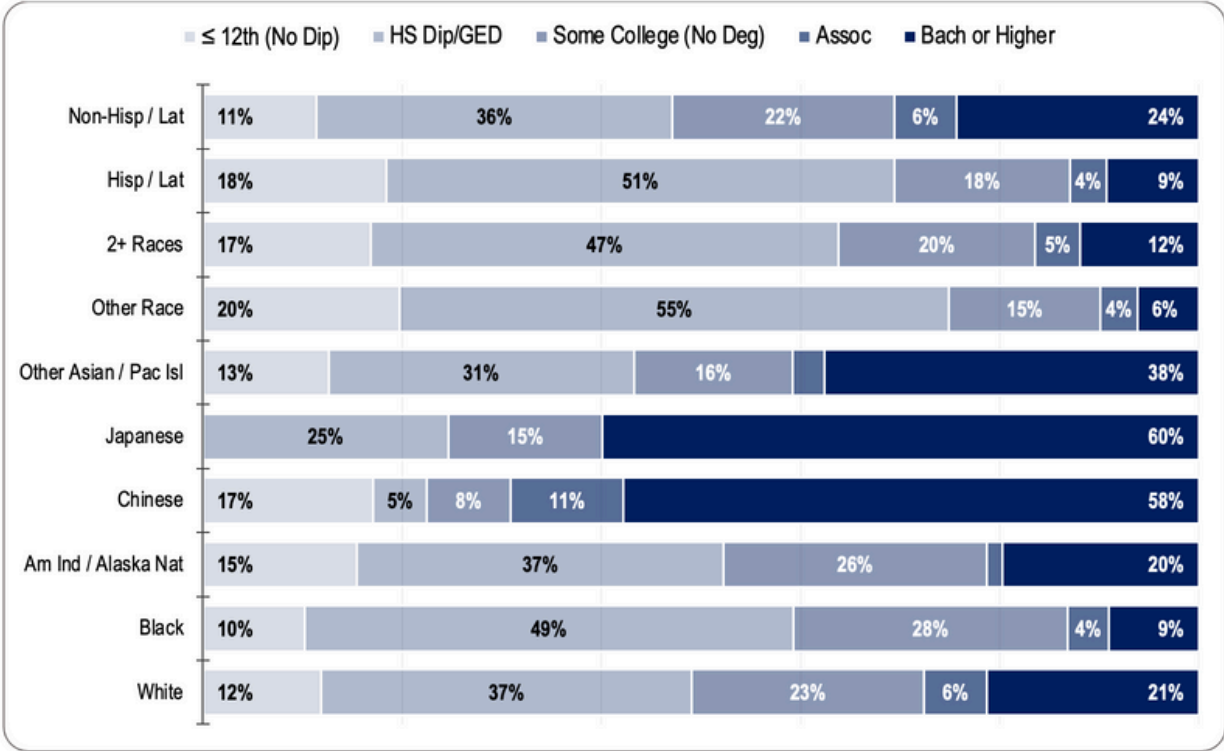
These findings highlight the critical importance of addressing racial and ethnic disparities in youth disconnection rates in California. Policymakers must develop culturally responsive interventions that consider the specific barriers faced by different communities, such as language access, discrimination, and limited resources. Engaging directly with communities of color in designing and implementing these programs is essential to creating effective, sustainable solutions that support the reconnection of youth from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

# RACIAL & ETHNIC DISPARITIES

To better understand the racial and ethnic disparities in youth disconnection, it is essential to examine the educational attainment levels of disconnected young adults across different racial and ethnic groups. Educational attainment plays a critical role in determining future employment prospects and overall well-being, and disparities in educational outcomes can perpetuate cycles of disconnection within certain communities.

Figure 11 presents the educational attainment data for disconnected young adults in California by race and ethnicity for 2022. The data is segmented by age group: the first two categories (less than or equal to 12th grade with no diploma, and high school diploma or equivalent) include only 19- to 24-year-olds, while the remaining categories (some college with no degree, associate's degree, and bachelor's degree or higher) include only 22- to 24-year-olds.

Figure 11. Educational Attainment and Disconnection by Race and Ethnicity (Ages 22-24 only; ACS 2022)



†Ages 19-24 only; \*Ages 22-24 only

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The data reveals significant disparities in educational attainment among disconnected young adults across racial and ethnic groups:

- **Less than 12th Grade, No Diploma:** American Indian/Alaska Native young adults had the highest percentage without a high school diploma (22%), followed by other Asian/Pacific Islander (19%), other race (18%), and Hispanic/Latino youth (18%). In contrast, only 6% of Japanese and 9% of Black disconnected young adults fell into this category.
- **High School Diploma or GED:** Other race (61%), Hispanic/Latino (58%), and Black (55%) young adults had the highest rates of having a high school diploma or equivalent as their highest level of educational attainment. Notably, only 12% of Chinese disconnected young adults had a high school diploma or equivalent as their highest level of education.
- **Some College, No Degree:** Among disconnected young adults aged 22-24, the percentage with some college education but no degree varied, with Black young adults at the highest (28%) and Chinese young adults at the lowest (8%).
- **Associate's Degree:** The percentage of disconnected young adults with an associate's degree was low across all groups, with the highest rate among Chinese young adults (11%) and the lowest among Japanese young adults (0%) probably best to use back and Hispanic.
- **Bachelor's Degree or Higher:** Striking disparities are evident in the percentage of disconnected young adults with a bachelor's degree or higher. While 58% of Chinese and 60% of Japanese disconnected young adults had attained at least a bachelor's degree, this was true for only 6% of other race youth, 9% of Black and Hispanic/Latino youth, and 12% of young adults of two or more races.

These findings highlight the complex interplay between race, ethnicity, and educational attainment among disconnected young adults in California. The overrepresentation of certain racial and ethnic groups among those with lower levels of educational attainment underscores the need for targeted interventions and support services tailored to address the specific barriers these communities face in accessing and completing higher education.



Policymakers and practitioners must recognize that the challenges faced by disconnected young adults are not uniform across racial and ethnic groups. Strategies to promote reconnection must consider the unique educational needs and obstacles faced by different communities, such as limited access to quality education, financial constraints, and the need for culturally responsive support services.

These disparities underscore the importance of early intervention and support for youth at risk of disconnection, particularly those from disadvantaged racial and ethnic backgrounds. By investing in programs that promote high school completion, college readiness, and access to higher education, the racial and ethnic disparities in educational attainment can be reduced, providing all young adults with the tools they need to succeed in the workforce and beyond.

After analyzing educational attainment levels among disconnected young adults, it's essential to examine the broader demographic characteristics of California's disconnected youth. This provides a fuller understanding of the factors contributing to youth disconnection and highlights the need for targeted interventions.

Table 4 presents the demographic characteristics of disconnected youth in California for 2022. Of the 523,983 disconnected youth, 37.6% (196,832 individuals) were living in poverty, defined as having an income-to-poverty ratio of 1.5 or less. This underscores the strong link between economic disadvantage and youth disconnection, emphasizing the need for targeted support for low-income youth.

*Table 4. Characteristics of Disconnected Youth by Age Group (ACS 2022)*

Age Group	Count	< 150% Poverty	Male	Hisp. / Latino	White	Black	Asian	2+ Races	Other Race
16-19	71,856	27,383	43,224	45,470	17,595	5,354	4,604	20,737	22,239
20-24	452,127	169,449	243,324	258,452	130,676	38,955	39,042	106,507	128,265
<b>Total</b>	<b>523,983</b>	<b>196,832</b>	<b>286,548</b>	<b>303,922</b>	<b>148,271</b>	<b>44,309</b>	<b>43,646</b>	<b>127,244</b>	<b>150,504</b>
	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>37.6%</b>	<b>54.7%</b>	<b>58.0%</b>	<b>28.3%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>24.3%</b>	<b>28.7%</b>

The data also shows a gender disparity, with males making up 54.7% (286,548 individuals) of the disconnected population. This disparity is more pronounced among young adults (19-24), suggesting that young men face unique challenges in staying connected to education and employment as they transition into adulthood.



In terms of race and ethnicity, Hispanic/Latino youth represent the largest share of disconnected youth at 58.0% (303,922 individuals), followed by youth of other races at 28.7% (150,504 individuals) and those identifying with two or more races at 24.3% (127,244 individuals). White youth account for 28.3% (148,271 individuals) of the disconnected population, while Black and Asian youth represent 8.5% (44,309 individuals) and 8.3% (43,646 individuals), respectively.

These disparities underscore the importance of culturally responsive interventions that address the specific barriers faced by different communities. The data also highlights the need for age-specific strategies, as older disconnected youth (19-24) experience higher rates of poverty compared to younger teens, indicating that poverty alleviation strategies may be particularly critical for this group.

Overall, the demographic characteristics of disconnected youth in California highlight the multifaceted nature of youth disconnection. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that considers the intersectionality of poverty, gender, race, ethnicity, and age to develop effective strategies that promote the reconnection and well-being of all youth in California.

To gain a deeper understanding of youth disconnection in California, it's essential to examine how disconnection rates vary by age and across different subgroups defined by gender, race, and ethnicity. This analysis highlights the specific subgroups most vulnerable to disconnection at different stages of youth, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions.

Table 5 presents the disconnection rates by age and subgroup characteristics for California youth in 2022. The data shows that disconnection rates generally increase with age across all subgroups, with significant jumps occurring between ages 17 and 18 and again between ages 19 and 20. This pattern underscores the critical transitions from adolescence to young adulthood and the importance of targeted support during these periods.

*Table 5. Disconnection Rates by Age and Subgroup Characteristics (ACS 2022)*

Sub-Group	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Male	2%	3%	12%	13%	15%	12%	17%	17%	17%
Fem	1%	3%	7%	11%	12%	12%	15%	15%	18%
Hispanic / Latino	2%	4%	11%	15%	16%	14%	18%	17%	19%
Non-Hispanic / Latino	1%	2%	7%	9%	11%	10%	14%	14%	16%
Black	1%	5%	15%	14%	16%	23%	21%	29%	28%
White	1%	3%	7%	10%	13%	10%	14%	14%	15%
Asian	1%	1%	5%	5%	7%	7%	11%	13%	13%
Hispanic / Latino Male	2%	4%	13%	16%	17%	13%	19%	16%	17%
Non-Hispanic / Latino Male	1%	2%	10%	10%	13%	11%	15%	17%	16%
Black Male	2%	3%	24%	21%	20%	23%	24%	34%	32%
White Male	1%	3%	9%	10%	14%	10%	15%	14%	15%
Asian Male	0%	1%	6%	5%	8%	8%	10%	17%	14%
Hispanic / Latino Female	1%	3%	10%	15%	14%	15%	18%	18%	20%
Non-Hispanic / Latino Female	1%	2%	5%	7%	9%	9%	12%	12%	15%
Black Female	1%	7%	5%	9%	13%	24%	19%	23%	22%
White Female	1%	3%	5%	9%	11%	10%	13%	14%	15%

Gender differences are evident, with males generally having higher disconnection rates than females across all age groups. This gender gap is particularly notable at ages 18 and 19, where male disconnection rates reach 12% and 13%, compared to 7% and 11% for females.

Racial and ethnic disparities are also significant. Black youth consistently have the highest disconnection rates, peaking at 29% among 23-year-olds, while Asian youth have the lowest, peaking at 13% among 23- and 24-year-olds. Hispanic/Latino youth experience elevated disconnection rates, particularly in their late teens and early twenties, while White youth generally fall in the middle range.

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The intersection of gender, race, and ethnicity reveals even more pronounced patterns. Black males have the highest disconnection rates, reaching 34% among 23-year-olds. Hispanic/Latino males also experience high disconnection rates, consistently above 15% from age 19 onward. In contrast, Asian males and females have the lowest disconnection rates across all age groups.

These findings underscore the need for an intersectional approach to understanding and addressing youth disconnection. Targeted interventions must consider the complex interplay of age, gender, race, and ethnicity, and address the specific barriers faced by different subgroups. For example, support programs for Black and Hispanic/Latino males in their late teens and early twenties should address issues such as discrimination, limited access to quality education and employment opportunities, and the need for culturally responsive mentoring.

The data also highlights the importance of early intervention to prevent disconnection before youth reach critical transition points in their late teens and early twenties. Investing in programs that promote educational engagement, social-emotional development, and career readiness from an early age can help reduce disparities in disconnection rates and support all youth on a path to success.



# GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Understanding the geographical variation in youth disconnection across California is crucial for identifying where targeted interventions are most needed. Table 6 presents disconnection rates and counts for the 12 most populous counties in 2022, 2021, and 2019, highlighting significant disparities across regions.

Table 6. Disconnected Teens and Young Adults in California's 12 Most Populous Counties

County	2022		2021		2019		2021 to 2022		2019 to 2021	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	Δ	% Change	Δ	% Change
Los Angeles	139,516	12.3	143,463	12.9	118,299	10.1	-3,947	-3%	25,164	21%
Riverside	37,980	12.1	47,843	15.8	36,605	12	-9,863	-21%	11,238	31%
San Diego	35,174	8.7	40,332	10.1	31,267	7.6	-5,158	-13%	9,065	29%
San Bernardino	39,206	13.7	39,808	14.1	42,382	14.8	-602	-2%	-2,574	-6%
Orange	27,422	7.3	33,514	9.3	23,413	6.3	-6,092	-18%	10,101	43%
Fresno	18,986	14.2	24,232	18.8	18,179	14.6	-5,246	-22%	6,053	33%
Kern	20,855	17.2	22,550	18.3	18,479	16.5	-1,695	-8%	4,071	22%
Sacramento	22,039	12.5	22,542	13	22,488	12.8	-503	-2%	54	0%
Santa Clara	16,215	7.5	15,454	7.7	13,526	6.6	761	5%	1,928	14%
Contra Costa	11,803	9.6	14,891	12	7,783	6.3	-3,088	-21%	7,108	91%
Alameda	14,666	8.7	14,661	8.9	11,701	6.7	5	0%	2,960	25%
San Francisco	4,657	7.1	6,312	9.4	3,500	4.8	-1,655	-26%	2,812	80%

In 2022, disconnection rates varied widely, from 7.1% in San Francisco to 17.2% in Kern County. Los Angeles had the highest number of disconnected youth (139,516), followed by San Bernardino (39,206) and Riverside (37,980). However, Kern County had the highest disconnection rate at 17.2%, followed by San Bernardino (13.7%) and Fresno (14.2%).

Comparing 2021 and 2022, most counties saw a decrease in the number of disconnected youth, with notable declines in San Francisco (-26%), Fresno (-22%), Riverside (-21%), and Contra Costa (-21%). These decreases likely reflect recovery efforts following the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Santa Clara and Alameda counties experienced slight increases.

Looking at the 2019 to 2021 period, which includes the height of the pandemic, most counties experienced significant increases in disconnected youth. Contra Costa had the largest percentage increase (91%), followed by San Francisco (80%), Orange (43%), and Fresno (33%). This surge highlights the pandemic's disproportionate impact on youth disconnection.



These findings underscore the need for targeted, place-based strategies that consider the unique challenges of each region. Collaborative efforts among local governments, schools, employers, and community organizations are essential to addressing the specific needs of disconnected youth in different counties. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of disconnection rates at the county level will be vital to ensure that resources are effectively allocated and that progress toward reducing youth disconnection is sustained.

By understanding these regional disparities and adapting interventions accordingly, California can work towards a more equitable recovery that supports the reconnection of all youth, regardless of where they live. Youth disconnection data for all counties in California is provided in Appendix A, offering a comprehensive view of regional variations and identifying areas where additional resources and interventions may be required.



# CURRENT AND RECOMMENDED POLICIES & INITIATIVES

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California has been at the forefront of addressing youth disconnection through a variety of targeted policies and programs. These initiatives are designed to tackle the root causes of disconnection and provide comprehensive support to the state's most vulnerable youth. By leveraging legislative action, educational reform, and community-based programs, California has made significant strides in reconnecting young people to education and employment. We believe it is critical that state policymakers continue this progress and move with haste and purposefulness in developing a comprehensive systemic approach to addressing the needs of the over 500,000 young people who are not in school and not in work.

## **ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 16 (ACR-16):**

ACR-16 represents a significant milestone in recognizing the urgency of reconnecting disconnected youth across the state and calling for the state to develop a comprehensive plan for serving OY and reducing persistent economic inequities. In addition to establishing a coordinated statewide effort to address the issue, ACR 16 sets the stage for future policies and actions that aim to reduce youth disconnection. While the legislation was signed into law in August 2023, we are still waiting on the state to initiate this important planning process.

## **GOVERNOR NEWSOM'S MASTER PLAN**

The Governor's Master Plan for Career Education attempts to build a comprehensive plan for all workers and learners to create more equitable access to living wage, fulfilling work. It is important that the Plan include a specific focus on Opportunity Youth to ensure their needs are effectively accommodate as the state seeks to align resources and programs.

## **EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS) CORPS:**

EMS Corps was developed in Alameda County as a paid, five-month training program for OY for careers in the emergency medical services field. State funding to replicate the successful pilot program across California is critical to creating new pathways to self-sustaining work for OY.

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## **CALIFORNIA OPPORTUNITY YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP (COYA) GRANTS:**

The COYA grants are a promising initiative aimed at reengaging disconnected youth through apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships. These grants provide youth with the skills and opportunities necessary for meaningful employment, helping to bridge the gap between education and the workforce. This program is a shining example of how the state can reach the Opportunity Youth population with a viable path to the middle class and funding must continue to be preserved and expanded despite the state's fiscal challenges.

## **CALIFORNIA'S LOCAL CONTROL FUNDING FORMULA (LCFF):**

LCFF gives school districts greater flexibility in using state funds to address the unique needs of their students, particularly high-needs groups such as economically disadvantaged students, English learners, and foster youth. By targeting resources to these vulnerable populations, LCFF plays a crucial role in reducing educational inequities and preventing youth disconnection.

## **CALIFONIANSFORALL YOUTH JOBS CORPS:**

The CaliforniansForAll Youth Jobs Corps program provides critical resources to local government to increase employment opportunities for underserved youth including OY, develop meaningful public service career pathways, and enhance local government capacity to address challenges in key areas. The program was launched with federal economic stimulus funding and has since been sustained with state general fund dollars.

## **CALIFORNIA JOBS FIRST:**

Originally known as the Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF), the California Jobs First Program provides funding to regional economies across the state to create family-supporting jobs in priority industry sectors with future growth. Despite state fiscal challenges, state policymakers ensured continued funding for this important program in the coming year.



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## **CALIFORNIA WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) PROGRAMS:**

Under WIOA, California has implemented various programs designed to provide education, training, and employment services to youth, especially out-of-school youth. These programs aim to reengage youth by offering career pathways, apprenticeships, and other workforce development opportunities, contributing to a reduction in disconnection rates.

## **YOUTH EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS - INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM (YESS-ILP):**

YESS-ILP supports foster youth, particularly those aging out of the foster care system, in their transition to adulthood. The program offers education, employment, housing, and life skills training, which are critical in preventing disconnection for this vulnerable population.

## **CALIFORNIA'S COMMUNITY SCHOOLS INITIATIVE:**

This initiative seeks to transform schools into community hubs that offer not only education but also social services, health care, and family support. By addressing the broader needs of students, community schools help prevent youth disconnection by providing a comprehensive support system.



# RECOMMENDED POLICY & OPERATIONAL ENHANCEMENTS

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While California has implemented several effective policies and initiatives to address youth disconnection, there remains a need for additional measures to fully realize the potential of these efforts. The following recommendations aim to enhance existing programs and introduce new strategies that can further reduce disconnection rates and improve outcomes for all youth across the state.

- **OY Strategies in Governor’s Master Plan for Career Education:** While we are excited by the promise of the Governor’s Master Plan for Career Education, its final report should directly address the education, workforce and health needs of this young adult population. While there are many positives in the initial draft report, the report does not directly or adequately address the need to reconnect this population to school and work.
- **Expand Access to Targeted Education and Job Training Programs:** Increase funding for programs like COYA and LCFF that provide pathways to high school completion, vocational training, and higher education, especially for marginalized groups. Develop job training programs aligned with regional labor market demands, focusing on sustainable career opportunities.
- **Enhance Support Services for Disconnected Youth:** Implement comprehensive, culturally responsive support services addressing mental health, housing stability, and access to childcare. Integrate these services into existing frameworks like the Community Schools Initiative to ensure they reach those most in need.
- **Promote Early Intervention and Prevention Strategies:** Invest in early intervention programs that identify and support at-risk youth before they become disconnected. Strengthen collaboration between schools, community organizations, and local governments to create prevention strategies during critical transition periods.
- **Strengthen Data Collection and Monitoring:** Improve data collection at local and state levels to track youth disconnection rates and outcomes across demographics. Use this data to inform policy decisions and resource allocation, and to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- **Foster Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Encourage partnerships across educational institutions, employers, government agencies, and community organizations. Support place-based strategies that leverage local assets and resources to address the unique needs of disconnected youth in different regions of California.

# CONCLUSION

Addressing youth disconnection is a critical challenge that requires ongoing commitment and innovative strategies. California's current policies and initiatives, such as ACR-16, COYA grants, CaliforniansForAll, California Jobs First, EMS Corps and the LCFF, provide a solid foundation for tackling this issue. However, to fully realize the potential of these efforts and ensure that all youth have the opportunity to succeed, additional enhancements are necessary.

By expanding access to education and job training, strengthening support services, promoting early intervention, improving data collection, and fostering cross-sector collaboration, California can build a more inclusive and supportive environment for its youth. These efforts are not just investments in the future of individual young people but are also vital for the overall economic and social health of the state. As California continues to lead the way in addressing youth disconnection, it must remain adaptable and responsive to the evolving needs of its young population, ensuring that every young person has the resources and opportunities to thrive. Appendix available [here](#).

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**COYN**  
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