



Vulnerable Population: Disconnected Youth

The purpose of this document is to provide background information on Disconnected Youth.

Defining Disconnected

Disconnected youth (also referred to as opportunity youth) are defined as young people ages 14-24 who are homeless, in foster care, involved in the justice system, or are neither employed nor enrolled in an educational institution. ¹

Approximately least **6.7 million or seventeen percent** of all youth in the designated age range are currently disconnected, or opportunity youth.

Disconnected youth face difficulties supporting themselves, but also place a **political and economic strain** when they do not realize their full potential as contributing members of a society. This is because they are more likely to rely on government support and be involved in criminal activity.²

References

¹ [Reconnecting Youth](#)

Fast Facts on Disconnected Youth

Some **risk factors** for disconnected youth include household income, minority status, immigration status, parent education level, involvement in foster care or the juvenile justice system and community characteristics. ³

At the national level, rates of disconnection vary widely by metropolitan area and race, as Black and Latino youth are up to three to six times more likely to be disconnected than White youth. ⁴

Federal Laws Regarding Disconnected Youth [School-to-Work Opportunities Act](#)

² [The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth](#)

³ [Disconnected Youth and Reconnected Youth](#)

⁴ [Employment and Disconnection](#)