

Teens Not in School and Not Working

DEFINITION

Teens not in school and not working is the percentage of teens ages 16 to 19 who are not enrolled in school, not in the Armed Forces, and not employed. Teens who are recent high school graduates and who are unemployed, and teens who have dropped out of high school and are unemployed are included.

SIGNIFICANCE

School and work help teens acquire the skills, knowledge, experience, and supports they need to become productive adults. Youth who drop out of school and do not become a part of the workforce are at risk of experiencing negative outcomes as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. Teens in low-income families, teens who drop out of school, young mothers, and teens with disabilities have the highest rates of disconnection from both school and work.^{1,2} Disconnected youth are more likely to live in poverty, experience poor physical and mental health, have low educational attainment, have a disability, commit a crime, experience difficulties maintaining employment, earn low wages, and need public benefits to make ends meet.^{3,4,5}

Adult mentoring, civic engagement, volunteering, out-of-school programs, job training, and school-to-career

programs build skills and relationships that lessen the likelihood of teens becoming disconnected from school and work.^{6,7,8} Youth who are consistently connected to work and school make the transition to adulthood better than those who are initially connected, later connected, or never connected, regardless of race, ethnicity, or immigration status.⁹

Between 2012 and 2016, an estimated 3,604 (5.8%) youth ages 16 to 19 in Rhode Island were not in school and not working. Of the youth who were not in school and not working, 56% were males and 44% were females. Fifty-three percent of these youth were high school graduates, and 47% had not graduated from high school.¹⁰

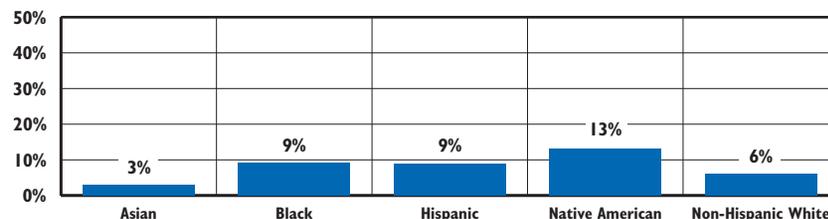
Teens Not in School and Not Working	
	2016
RI	3%
US	7%
National Rank*	1st
New England Rank**	1st

*1st is best; 49th is worst

**1st is best; 5th is worst

Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org

Percentage of U.S. Youth Ages 16 to 19, Not in School and Not Working, by Race and Ethnicity, 2016



Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org

◆ In the U.S., youth of color (with the exception of Asian youth) are more likely to be disconnected from school and work than White youth.¹¹ In 2016 among U.S. youth ages 16 to 19, 13% of Native American youth, 9% of Black youth, and 9% of Hispanic youth were not in school and not working, compared to 6% of White youth and 3% of Asian youth.¹²

◆ The economic recession had a negative impact on the job market for youth and young adults. In 2015, there were almost 10.2 million young people ages 16-29 in the U.S. who were neither working nor enrolled in school.¹³

◆ While Rhode Island has a low overall youth disconnection rate, there are striking racial and ethnic disparities. In 2015 in Rhode Island, the Latino youth disconnection rate of 18.5% was nearly triple the White youth disconnection rate of 6.7%.¹⁴

Compulsory School Attendance

◆ Rhode Island requires school attendance until age 18. Rhode Island students over age 16 may obtain a waiver from the attendance requirement if they have an alternative learning plan for obtaining a diploma. Plans can include independent study, private instruction, community service, or online coursework and must be developed in consultation with the student, school guidance counselor, school principal, and at least one parent or guardian. Alternative learning plans must be approved by the district superintendent.¹⁵

◆ As of 2015, 24 states (including Rhode Island) had compulsory attendance to age 18, 11 states to age 17, and 15 states to age 16.¹⁶

Connecting Youth to School and Work

- ◆ Education has a positive impact on the likelihood of finding and maintaining employment. Between 2012 and 2016, the unemployment rate for Rhode Island adults ages 25 to 64 with a bachelor's degree or higher was 3.4%, compared with 9.7% for high school graduates and 12.8% for those with less than a high school diploma.¹⁷
- ◆ Successful strategies to connect youth to work and school must be comprehensive, including high-quality preschool and K-12 public schooling, attention to community engagement in schools, targeted workforce development programs, and multiple pathways to high school graduation and employment.^{18,19}
- ◆ Programs and alternative schools that enable students to earn college credits while working towards their high school degrees can improve high school graduation rates and better prepare students for college completion and high-skill careers.²⁰

Youth Work Experience

- ◆ Work experience during the teen years increases academic achievement, employability, and wages into early adulthood.²¹
- ◆ Public and private investment in summer work programs helps keep adolescents attached to constructive youth development activities, increases employment rates, and helps reduce youth violence.^{22,23}
- ◆ Expanding work-based learning opportunities can help more youth in Rhode Island successfully transition into college and careers. These types of programs can help to motivate students, teach them critical skills, connect them with mentors and positive adult role models, as well as help them to make informed decisions about their future. Many work-based learning internship programs allow youth to receive school credit and/or earn money, while gaining important workplace experience.^{24,25}

References

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