

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 youth with disabilities have high rates of disconnection from both school and work.¹² Disconnected youth are more likely to live in poverty, experience poor physical and mental health, have a disability, be involved with the child welfare system, experience difficulties finding and maintaining employment, earn low wages, and need public benefits to make ends meet. Young people disconnected from both work and school are disproportionately people of color.^{3,4,5}

Programs that offer post-secondary education or job training; provide high-quality early work experiences, adult mentoring, and youth development opportunities; and address root causes of inequity all decrease the likelihood of youth disconnection.^{6,7,8} There is a real cost to youth disconnection. If we were to connect all youth, the federal government would gain an estimated \$55 billion in annual tax revenue.⁹

Between 2013 and 2017, an estimated 3,479 (5.7%) 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, 54% were males, and 46% were females. Fifty-eight percent of these youth were high school graduates, and 42% had not graduated from high school.¹⁰

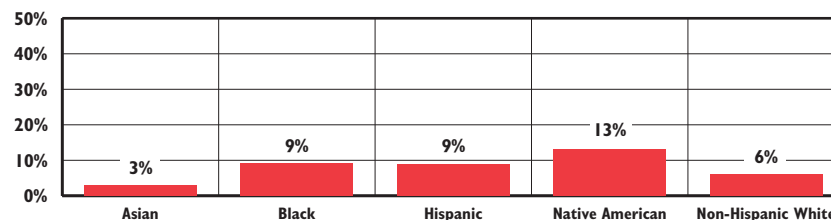
Teens Not in School and Not Working	
	2017
RI	6%
US	7%
National Rank*	16th
New England Rank**	6th

*1st is best; 50th is worst

**1st is best; 6th 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

◆ While Rhode Island has a low overall youth disconnection rate, there are striking racial and ethnic disparities. In 2015, 18.5% of Latino young adults ages 16 to 24 in Rhode Island were not in school and not working, which is nearly triple the White rate of 6.7%.¹³

◆ Youth disconnection has declined in recent years. In the U.S. in 2017, 7% of youth ages 16 to 19 reported being disconnected; compared to 10% in 2014. Older youth are more likely to be out of work and school than younger teens. In 2017, 11% of 18 to 19-year-olds were disconnected, compared to 4% of 16 to 17-year-olds.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 2017, one state has compulsory attendance to age 19, 24 states (including Rhode Island) have compulsory attendance to age 18, 10 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 2013 and 2017, the unemployment rate for Rhode Island adults ages 25 to 64 with a bachelor's degree or higher was 2.9%, compared with 8.7% for high school graduates and 10.6% for those with less than a high school diploma.¹⁷
- ◆ Successful strategies to prevent youth disconnection must be comprehensive, including adequately funded K-12 public schooling, restorative discipline, a focus on healthy youth development and support services, multiple pathways to employment, and targeted post-secondary education and workforce development programs.^{18,19,20}
- ◆ Programs and alternative schools that enable students to earn college credits while working toward their high school degrees can improve high school graduation rates and better prepare students for college completion and high-skill careers.²¹

Youth Work Experience

- ◆ Work experience during the teen years increases academic achievement, employability, and wages into early adulthood.²²
- ◆ 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.^{23,24}
- ◆ 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, and 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.²⁵

References

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- ¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017. Table B14005.
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- ¹⁴ *Disconnected youth*. (2018). Bethesda, MD: Child Trends
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- ¹⁶ National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *Table 5.1. Compulsory school attendance laws, minimum and maximum age limits for required free education, by state: 2017*. Retrieved January 7, 2019, from nces.ed.gov
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