



MEASURE OF AMERICA

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NEWS RELEASE

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Measure of America Releases *One in Seven: Ranking Youth Disconnection in the 25 Largest Metro Areas*

Study shows Boston with lowest rates of out-of-school and out-of-work youth, Phoenix with highest, and startling gaps among America's neighborhoods, cities, races and ethnicities

Washington, D.C.—[Measure of America](#) today released *One in Seven: Ranking Youth Disconnection in the 25 Largest Metro Areas*. The report examines 16- to 24-year-olds who are not in school and not working—5.8 million youth or an astonishing one in seven young people nationwide—and reveals startling gaps among neighborhoods, cities, and racial and ethnic groups. While the Boston metro area tops the list with the lowest overall rate of youth disconnection at 9%, Phoenix ranks last at 18.8%. African Americans have the highest rate of youth disconnection, a startling 22.5%, nearly twice the national average, and women generally fare better than men.

“One in Seven is a wake-up call to this country,” says Sarah Burd-Sharps, co-author of the study. *“At precisely the time in life when young people form their adult identities and move towards self-sufficiency, 5.8 million young Americans are adrift at society’s margins. Disconnection can affect everything from earnings and financial independence to physical and mental health, and even marital prospects.”*

As youth disconnection in America rises, so do the costs to society. Last year alone, youth disconnection cost taxpayers \$93.7 billion in government support and lost tax revenue.

“Today we are paying for failure,” Burd-Sharps explains. *“In an environment where everyone is looking to reduce spending, we can invest in success by pinpointing the groups and places being left behind, and taking action to build connections between communities and both educational and employment opportunities.”*

Kristen Lewis, co-author of *One in Seven*, adds, *“In the next five years, more than 29 million job openings will need to be filled by workers with some college or a certificate, but not necessarily a four-year degree.”* She explains, *“In today’s economy, everyone needs some education beyond high school, but as a society, we need to rethink the ‘college-for-all’ mantra that devalues and stigmatizes career and*

technical education. Instead, we should provide robust pathways to postsecondary certificates or associate degree programs for those who choose this route.”

Among the key findings from *One in Seven*:

- Nationwide, more than 5.8 million young people between the ages of 16 and 24—about one in seven—are neither working nor in school. The number of disconnected youth swelled by more than 800,000 from 2007 to 2010, a result of the Great Recession.
- Of the country’s major racial and ethnic groups, African Americans have the highest rate of youth disconnection—22.5 percent—while the national rate is 14.7 percent. Pittsburgh has the greatest disparity between African Americans and whites—26.3% of African American youth there are disconnected, while only 9.4% of white youth are.
- Boston tops the ranking overall, but has one of the highest rates of Latino youth disconnection among America’s biggest cities. Phoenix ranks last, although not everyone there is struggling. In fact, the white youth disconnection rate there is lower than the national disconnection rate for all youth.
- Where a person lives is highly predictive of his or her likelihood of disconnection. In New York, the metro area with the widest youth disconnection gap between neighborhoods, disconnection rates range from 4% in parts of Long Island to a shocking 36% in parts of the South Bronx.

Among the report’s key recommendations:

- Prevention is the best cure. Investing in success is cheaper by any measure and easier than reconnecting those who have fallen out of the mainstream. Research shows that a high-quality preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds leads to higher rates of high school completion and greater job market participation for at-risk kids.
- In the next five years, 29 million job openings will need to be filled by workers with some college or a certificate but not necessarily a four-year degree. Rethinking the college-for-all ideal will allow us to provide robust pathways to postsecondary certificates or associate degree programs for those who choose alternative routes. At the same time, students with the desire and ability to succeed in bachelor’s degree programs need more from us than exhortations; they need hands-on assistance in learning about college, applying for admission and financial aid, and paying for their education.
- We can heed lessons from other affluent democracies, such as Finland, Germany and Norway. These countries build strong bridges between schooling and the knowledge and experience needed in the labor market, and offer young adults a wide variety of well-regarded pathways to a productive adulthood, which has led to lower rates of youth disconnection.
- Building a shared national responsibility to address the deep historical inequalities that persist in our society will help remove the obstacles that prevent many families from providing their children with the tools they need to realize their full potential.

Measure of America is an initiative of the nonpartisan [Social Science Research Council](#) that seeks to use metrics on health, education, and living standards to provide deeper insights into American well-being than GDP reveals. This study was made possible by the generous support of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

About Measure of America and the American Human Development Index

An initiative of the Social Science Research Council, [Measure of America](#) provides easy-to-use yet methodologically sound tools for understanding the distribution of well-being and opportunity in America and stimulating fact-based dialogue about issues we all care about: health, education, and living standards.

The hallmark of this work is the [American Human Development Index](#). GDP tells us how the economy is doing. The American Human Development Index tells us how people are doing and empowers communities with a tool to track progress over time. The Index is comprised of health, education, and income indicators and allows for well-being rankings of the 50 states, 435 congressional districts, county groups within states, women and men, and racial and ethnic groups.

About the Authors

Sarah Burd-Sharps and Kristen Lewis are co-directors of Measure of America and authors of the Measure of America series of national and state reports. Previously, Sarah worked with the United Nations for more than two decades, most recently as Deputy Director of the Human Development Report Office of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Prior to this, she worked in China and in a number of African countries on gender issues and economic empowerment. Sarah holds an M.I.A. from Columbia University. Kristen also comes from an international development policy background, having worked primarily in the areas of gender equality, governance, environment, and water and sanitation. Kristen is co-author, under the leadership of Jeffrey Sachs' Millennium Project, of the 2005 book, *Health, Dignity and Development: What Will It Take?* She worked at the United Nations for some ten years and has served as a consultant for many international development organizations. Kristen also holds an M.I.A. from Columbia University.