

# B | Metropolitan Policy Program at BROOKINGS

For release: May 24, 2016

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Report: [Employment and disconnection among teens and young adults: The role of place, race, and education](#)

## Young adults with lower levels of education, hurt by the recession, still struggle in the labor market

Washington, D.C. — Three million young people are neither in school nor working, finds a report released today by the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program. These “disconnected youth” are primarily people of color. In some metros, black and Latino youth are up to six times more likely to be disconnected than young whites.

The report, “[Employment and disconnection among teens and young adults: The role of place, race, and education](#),” by Brookings Fellow Martha Ross and former Brookings Research Analyst Nicole Prchal Svajlenka analyzes the employment and unemployment rates of teens, young adults, and prime-age workers in each of the 100 largest metropolitan areas in the United States in addition to providing data on disconnected youth.

The report finds that:

- Among teens and young adults, whites typically have the highest employment and lowest unemployment rates. Among prime-age workers, Asians have the lowest unemployment rates and whites the highest employment rates.
- Blacks have consistently lower employment rates and higher unemployment rates than other groups. Unlike Asians, their low employment and high unemployment rates as young people do not improve with age.
- Disparities by education are greater than disparities by race. People without post-secondary credentials do much worse in the labor market.
- Nationally, an estimated 3 million young people aged 16-24 (7.6 percent) are disconnected. The majority of these young people are aged 20-24, suggesting that the problem becomes more acute after young people are of an age to have graduated high school. Although this population is racially and ethnically diverse, it is primarily made up of people of color.

The low employment rates among black teens and young adults are concerning, particularly since their rates continue to lag behind other groups as adults. Among the largest metropolitan areas, black-white disparities in employment and disconnection are smallest in Dallas and Houston, and larger in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles.

“These findings highlight the roles of place, race, and education in shaping young people’s experiences in the labor market, and show that not all young people are positioned equally for success,” said Martha Ross.

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