

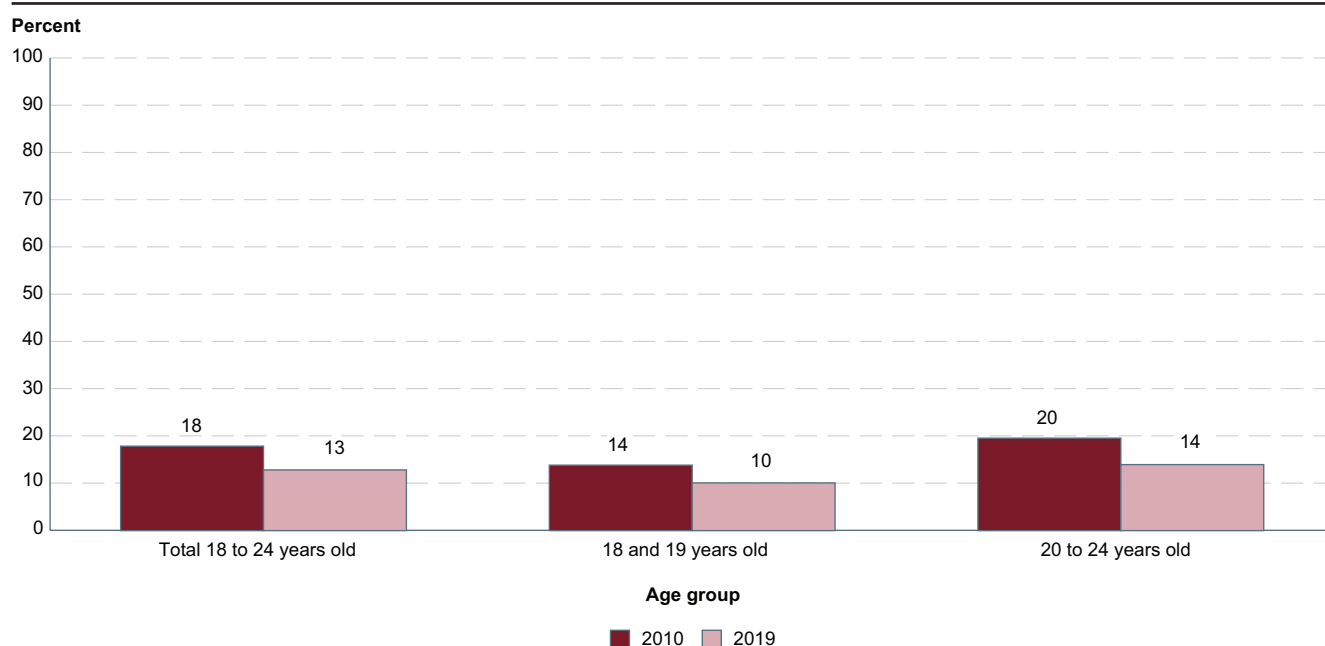
Young Adults Neither Enrolled in School nor Working

The percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds neither in school nor working decreased from 18 percent in 2010, the year immediately after the recession, to 13 percent in 2019.

Education and work are core activities in the transition from childhood to adulthood. Young adults who are detached from these activities, particularly if they are detached for several years, may have difficulty building a work history that contributes to future employability and higher wages.¹ Young adults who are neither enrolled in school nor working² may be detached from these

activities for a variety of reasons. For example, they may be seeking educational opportunities or work but are unable to find them, or they may have left school or the workforce temporarily or permanently for personal, family, or financial reasons. This indicator examines the rate at which 18- to 24-year-olds are neither enrolled in school nor working.

Figure 1. Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds who were neither enrolled in school nor working, by age group: 2010 and 2019



NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the entire population in the given age range residing within the United States, including the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Both noninstitutionalized persons (e.g., those living in households, college housing, or military housing located within the United States) and institutionalized persons (e.g., those living in prisons, nursing facilities, or other healthcare facilities) are included. Institutionalized persons made up 1 percent of all 18- to 24-year-olds in 2019. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

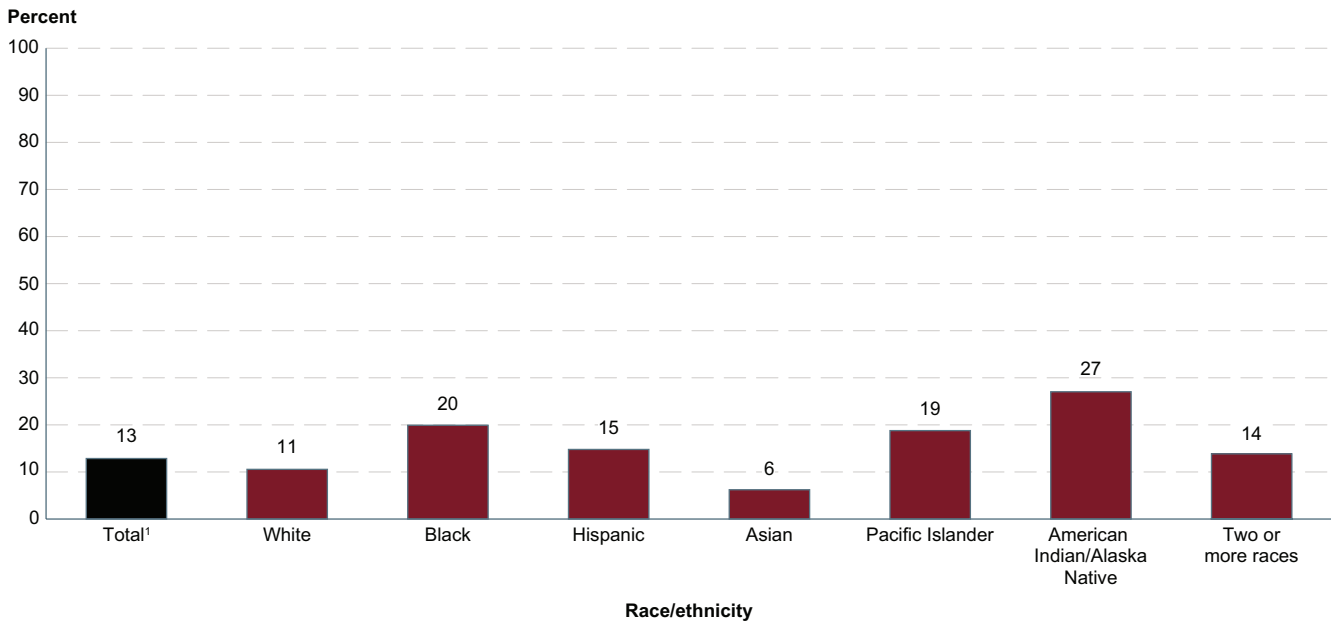
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2010 and 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 501.30.

In 2019, overall 13 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds were neither in school nor working. This percentage was higher for 20- to 24-year-olds (14 percent) than for 18- and 19-year-olds (10 percent).

The percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds neither in school nor working decreased from 18 percent in 2010, the year

immediately after the 2007-2009 recession,³ to 13 percent in 2019. This percentage decreased from 14 to 10 percent for 18- and 19-year-olds and from 20 to 14 percent for 20- to 24-year-olds.

Figure 2. Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds who were neither enrolled in school nor working, by race/ethnicity: 2019



¹ Includes respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.

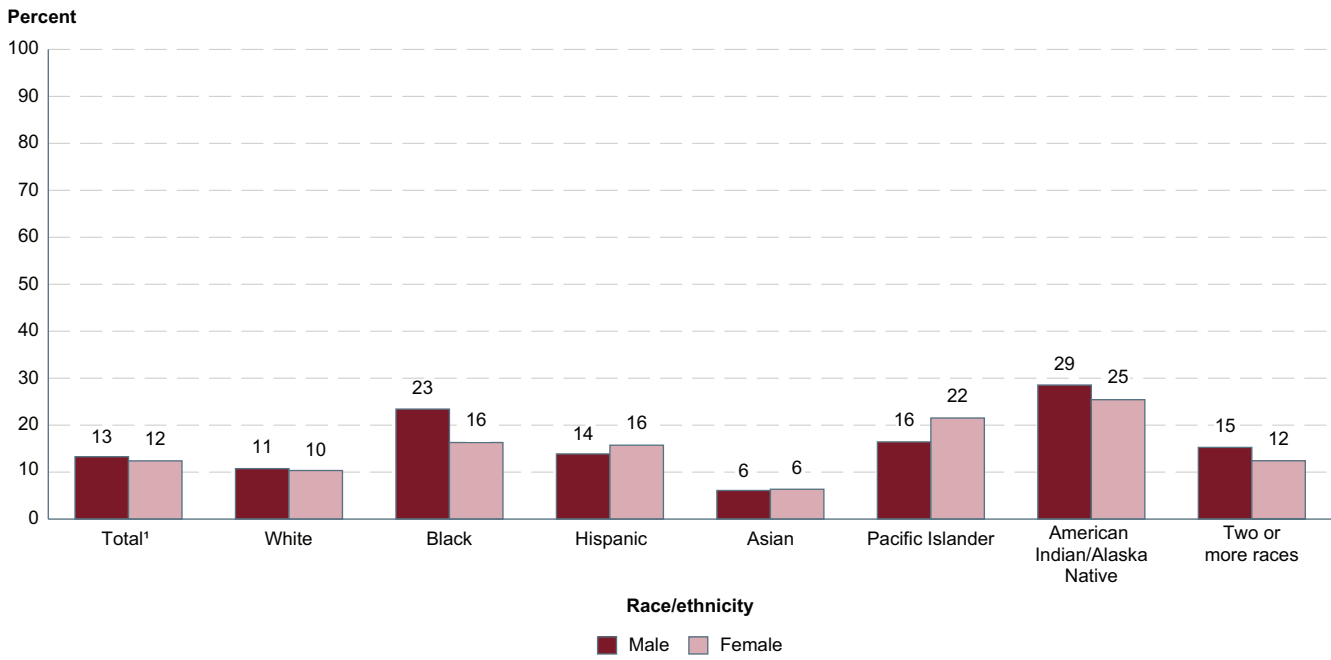
NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the entire population in the given age range residing within the United States, including the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Both noninstitutionalized persons (e.g., those living in households, college housing, or military housing located within the United States) and institutionalized persons (e.g., those living in prisons, nursing facilities, or other healthcare facilities) are included. Institutionalized persons made up 1 percent of all 18- to 24-year-olds in 2019. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 501.30.

In 2019, the percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds neither in school nor working varied by race/ethnicity. The percentage neither in school nor working was highest for those who were American Indian/Alaska Native (27 percent); it was lowest for those who were Asian (6 percent) and second lowest for those who were White

(11 percent). In addition, this percentage was lower for those who were of Two or more races (14 percent) than for their Pacific Islander (19 percent) and Black (20 percent) peers; the percentage was also lower for those who were Hispanic (15 percent) than for their Black peers.

Figure 3. Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds who were neither enrolled in school nor working, by race/ethnicity and sex: 2019

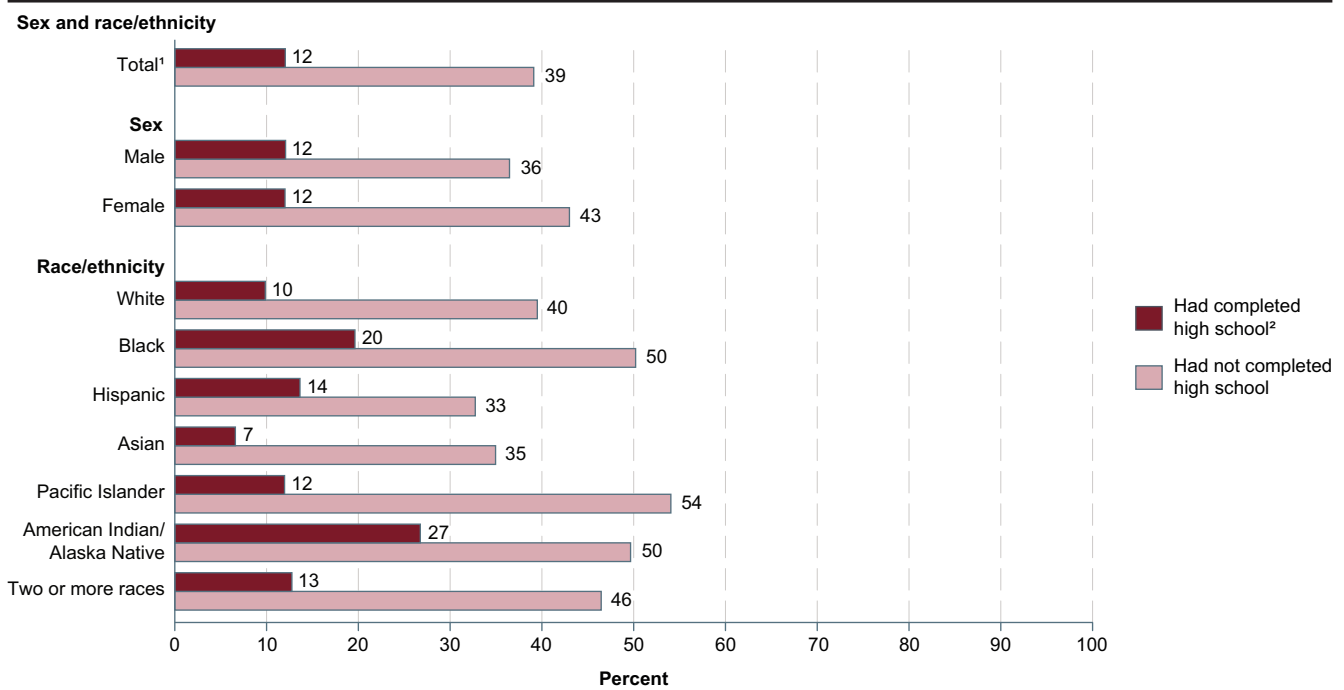


¹ Includes respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.
 NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the entire population in the given age range residing within the United States, including the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Both noninstitutionalized persons (e.g., those living in households, college housing, or military housing located within the United States) and institutionalized persons (e.g., those living in prisons, nursing facilities, or other healthcare facilities) are included. Institutionalized persons made up 1 percent of all 18- to 24-year-olds in 2019. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 501.30.

The percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds who were neither in school nor working in 2019 was higher for males than for females overall (13 vs. 12 percent). This pattern was also observed for those who were White (11 vs. 10 percent), of

Two or more races (15 vs. 12 percent), and Black (23 vs. 16 percent). In contrast, for those who were Hispanic, the percentage neither in school nor working was lower for males than for females (14 vs. 16 percent).⁴

Figure 4. Percentage of 20- to 24-year-olds who were neither enrolled in school nor working, by sex, race/ethnicity, and high school completion status: 2019



¹ Includes respondents who wrote in some other race that was not included as an option on the questionnaire.

² Includes respondents who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.

NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the entire population in the given age range residing within the United States, including the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Both noninstitutionalized persons (e.g., those living in households, college housing, or military housing located within the United States) and institutionalized persons (e.g., those living in prisons, nursing facilities, or other healthcare facilities) are included. Institutionalized persons made up 1 percent of all 18- to 24-year-olds in 2019. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2019. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 501.30.

In 2019, the percentage of 20- to 24-year-olds⁵ who were neither in school nor working was higher for those who had not completed high school⁶ (39 percent) than for those who had completed high school (12 percent). These differences by high school completion status were observed for males and females as well as for all racial/ethnic groups. However, the gap by high school

completion status was narrower for males (24 percentage points) than for females (31 percentage points). In addition, the gap by high school completion status was narrower for those who were Hispanic (19 percentage points) than for those who were Asian (28 percentage points), White (30 percentage points), Black (31 percentage points), and of Two or more races (34 percentage points).

Endnotes:

¹ Fernandes-Alcantara, A.L. (2015). *Disconnected Youth: A Look at 16 to 24 Year Olds Who Are Not Working or In School* (CRS Report No. R40535). Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service. Retrieved December 7, 2020, from <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R40535.pdf>.

² Also called “not in education, employment, or training (NEET)” in the social and educational literature. See Holte, B.H. (2018). Counting and Meeting NEET Young People: Methodology, Perspective and Meaning in Research on Marginalized Youth. *Young*, 26(1): 1-16. Retrieved December 20, 2020, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1103308816677618>.

³ National Bureau of Economic Research. (2020). *U.S. Business Cycle Expansions and Contractions*. Retrieved November 9, 2020,

from <https://www.nber.org/research/data/us-business-cycle-expansions-and-contractions>.

⁴ The seemingly large difference between males and females for American Indian/Alaska Native 18- to 24-year-olds (29 vs. 25 percent) was not measurably different, nor was the male-female difference for their Pacific Islander peers (16 vs. 22 percent).

⁵ The narrower 20- to 24-year old range was chosen to reduce the number of high school students in this analysis.

⁶ High school completion includes those persons who graduated from high school with a diploma as well as those who completed high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 501.30

Glossary: Gap; High school completer; Racial/ethnic group

Related indicators and resources: [College Enrollment Rates](#); [Employment and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment](#); [Immediate College Enrollment Rate](#); [Youth and Young Adults Neither Enrolled in School nor Working](#) [*Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups*]