

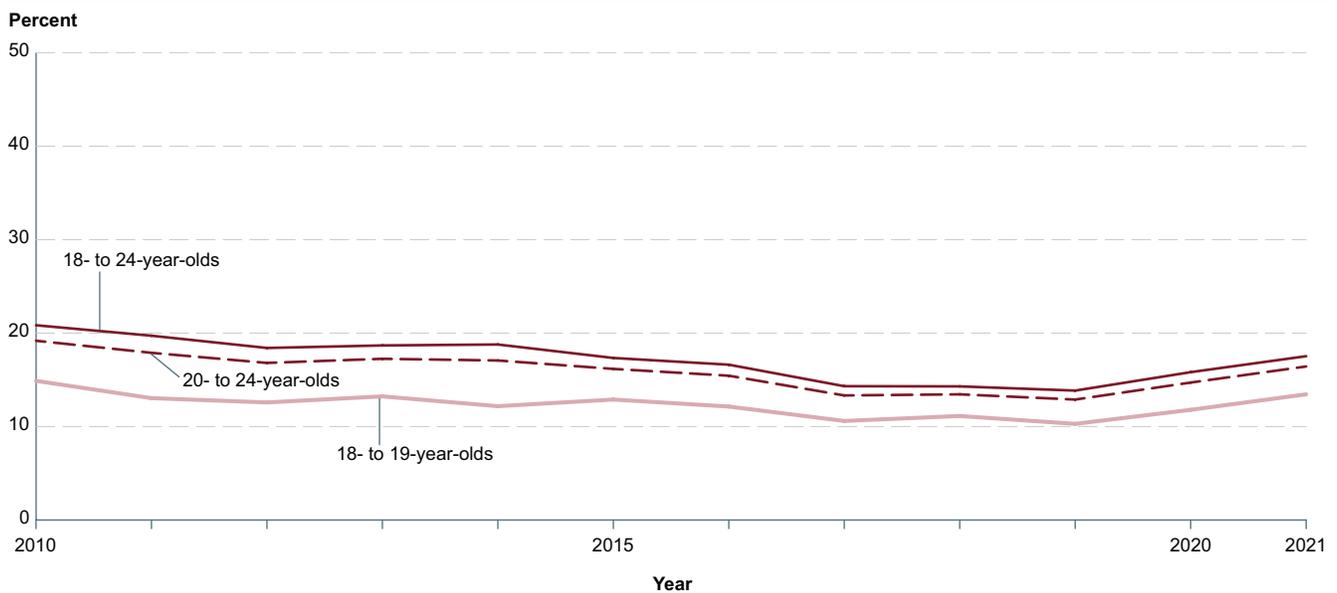
Young Adults Neither Enrolled in School nor Working

The percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds neither enrolled in school nor working decreased from 19 percent in 2010 to 13 percent in 2019, the year before the coronavirus pandemic started to disrupt American society. The percentage then increased, reaching 16 percent in 2021.

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. Using data collected in the March supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS), 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 through 2021



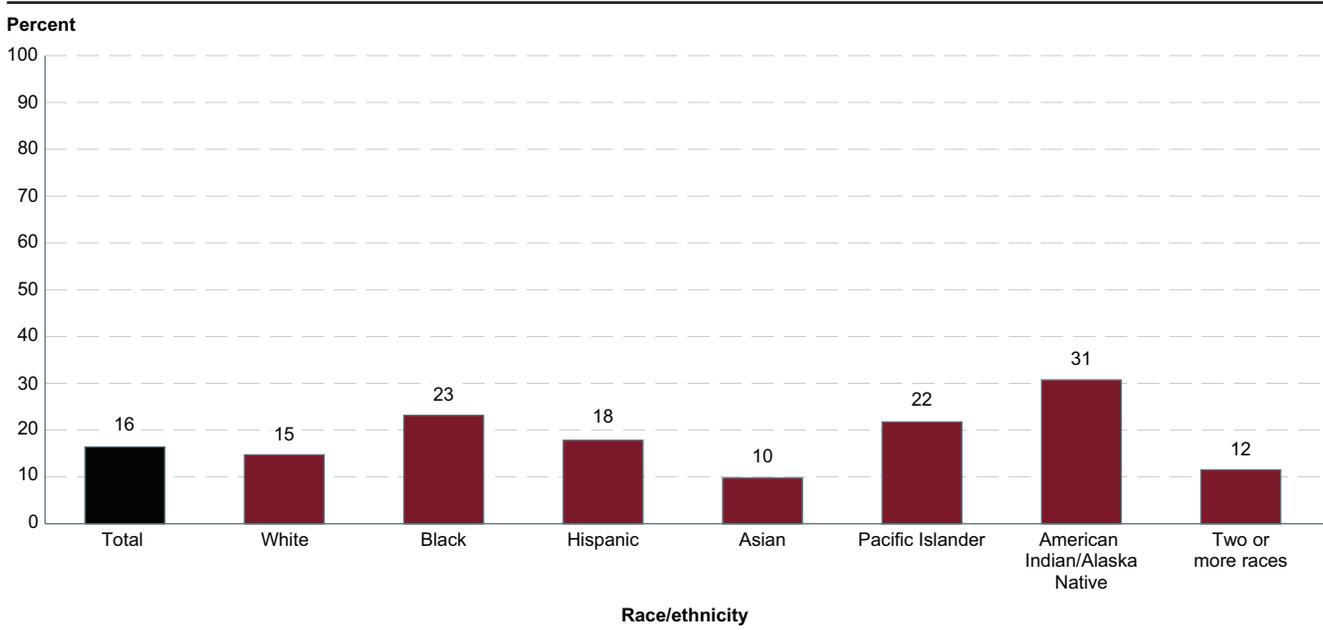
NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities); data include military personnel who live in households with civilians but exclude those who live in military barracks. Caution should be used when comparing 2020 and 2021 estimates to those of prior years due to the impact that the coronavirus pandemic had on interviewing and response rates. For additional information about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the Current Population Survey data collection, please see <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar21.pdf>. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2010 through 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 501.30.

In 2021, some 16 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds were neither enrolled in school nor working. This percentage was higher for 20- to 24-year-olds (18 percent) than for 18- and 19-year-olds (13 percent).

The percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds who were neither enrolled in school nor working decreased from 19 percent

in 2010, the year immediately after the 2007-2009 recession,³ to 16 percent in 2021. Within this time period, this percentage reached a low of 13 percent in 2019, the year before the coronavirus pandemic started to disrupt American society. Since 2019, the percentage who were neither enrolled in school nor working increased, reaching 16 percent in 2021.

Figure 2. Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds who were neither enrolled in school nor working, by race/ethnicity: 2021

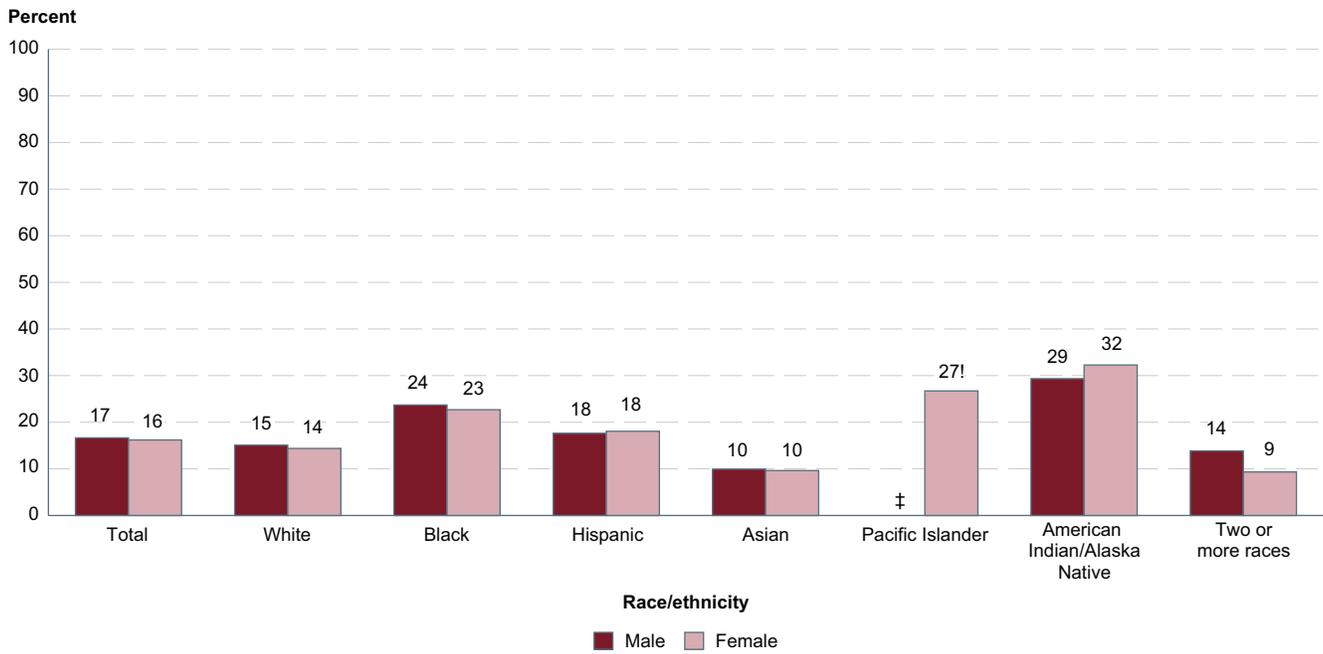


NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities); data include military personnel who live in households with civilians but exclude those who live in military barracks. The coronavirus pandemic impacted the interviewing and response rates of the Current Population Survey. For additional information, please see <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar21.pdf>. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 501.30.

In 2021, the percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds who were neither enrolled in school nor working varied by race/ethnicity. The percentage who were neither enrolled in school nor working was higher for those who were American Indian/Alaska Native (31 percent), Black (23 percent), and Hispanic (18 percent) than for those

who were White (15 percent), of Two or more races (12 percent), and Asian (10 percent). In addition, this percentage was higher for those who were Pacific Islander (22 percent) and White than for those who were Asian.

Figure 3. Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds who were neither enrolled in school nor working, by race/ethnicity and sex: 2021



! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

‡ Reporting standards not met. Either there are too few cases for a reliable estimate or the coefficient of variation (CV) is 50 percent or greater.

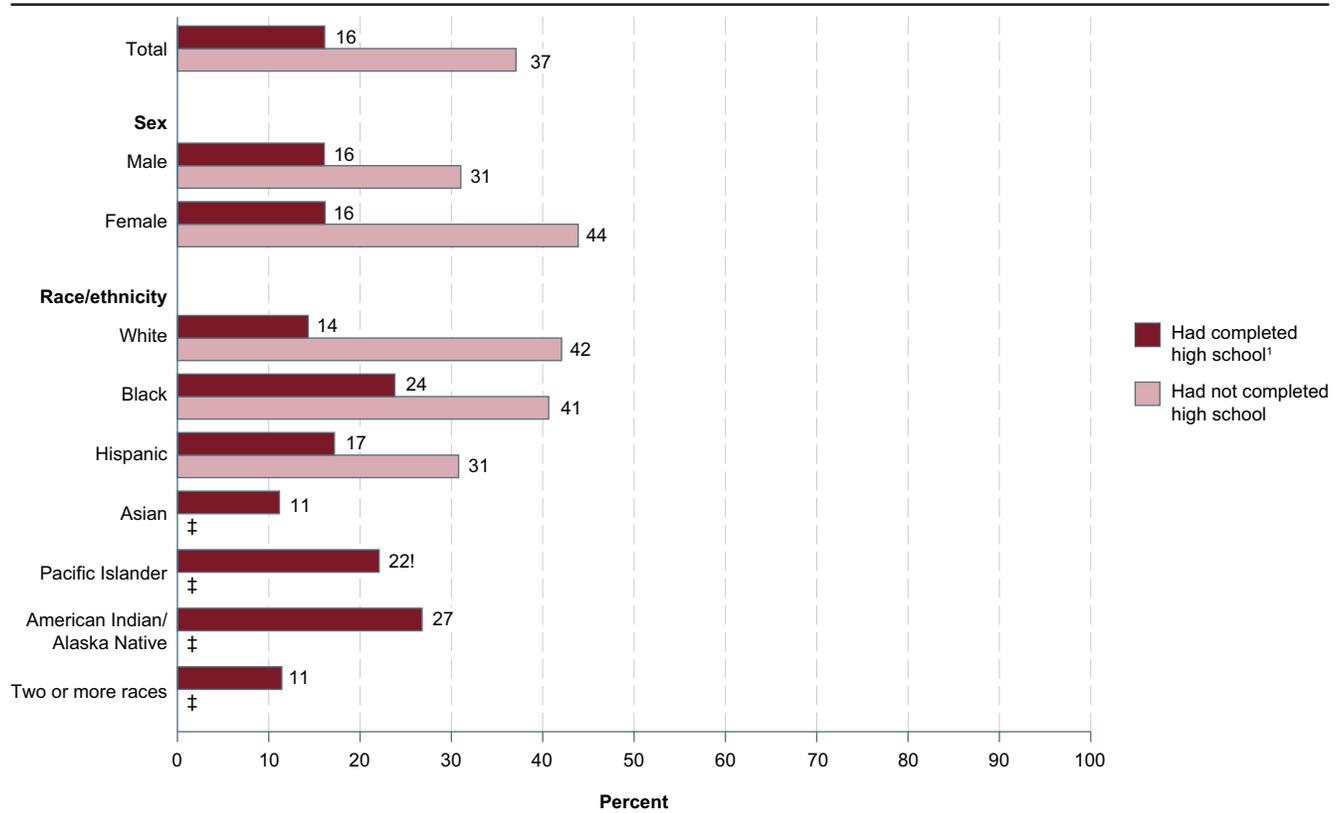
NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities); data include military personnel who live in households with civilians but exclude those who live in military barracks. The coronavirus pandemic impacted the interviewing and response rates of the Current Population Survey. For additional information, please see <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar21.pdf>. 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, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 501.30.

The percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds who were neither enrolled in school nor working in 2021 was not measurably different for males than for females

overall (17 vs. 16 percent). This percentage was also not measurably different between males and females for any of the racial/ethnic subgroups.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: 2021



! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

‡ Reporting standards not met. Either there are too few cases for a reliable estimate or the coefficient of variation (CV) is 50 percent or greater.

¹ Includes completion of high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.

NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the noninstitutionalized population, which excludes persons living in institutions (e.g., prisons or nursing facilities); data include military personnel who live in households with civilians but exclude those who live in military barracks. The coronavirus pandemic impacted the interviewing and response rates of the Current Population Survey. For additional information, please see <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/techdocs/cpsmar21.pdf>. 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, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2021. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 501.30.

In 2021, the percentage of 20- to 24-year-olds⁵ who were neither enrolled in school nor working was higher for those who had not completed high school⁶ (37 percent) than for those who had completed high school (16 percent). These differences by high school completion status were also observed for males and females and for racial/ethnic groups for whom data were

available (White, Black, and Hispanic). However, the gap by high school completion status was narrower for males (15 percentage points) than for females (28 percentage points) and narrower for those who were Hispanic (14 percentage points) than for those who were White (28 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 February 17, 2022, 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 February 17, 2022, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1103308816677618>.

³ National Bureau of Economic Research. (2020). *U.S. Business Cycle Expansions and Contractions*. Retrieved February 17, 2022,

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

⁴ This comparison was not made for 18- to 24-year-olds who were Pacific Islander because their male estimate did not meet reporting standards.

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 completion of high school through equivalency programs, such as a GED program.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 501.30

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*]

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