Youth Disconnection in the Pandemic

The latest data on young San Diegans’ access to education and employment

Reducing youth disconnection and the barriers to economic opportunity is critically important. Reaching our youth at this critical point in their lives with support, services and hope is life-changing. Data on youth disconnection can help us understand the challenges young people face, and is essential for designing and implementing interventions and opportunities that lead to meaningful change.

The Workforce Partnership uses data on youth disconnection to inform our spending priorities and program strategy so that our efforts are focused on those who need the most support. If you are interested in analysis like this for your region or institution, visit workforce.org/researchrequest.

We wish to thank the Public Consulting Group for sponsoring this report.

We provide equal opportunity for our programs, services and employment. Auxiliary aids and services for individuals with disabilities are available upon request.
An update on our region-wide goal to reduce the number of youth age 16–24 who are both not in school and not working. These numbers are drawn from the most recent available Census data—the 2020 American Community Survey. (About 75% of this data was collected in or after mid March, when unemployment spiked due to COVID-19.)

**40,000 disconnected youth in 2020**

(10.1% of the 401,000 San Diegans aged 16–24)

Source: 2020 American Community Survey (ACS)

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Three factors make it difficult to assess unemployment rates since the onset of the pandemic. First, the most recent data on youth unemployment is from the US Census Bureau’s 2020 American Community Survey (ACS), but unemployment has decreased significantly since it peaked in 2020. Second, the pandemic caused lower response rates and sample sizes in the 2020 ACS, especially among people who are Black, Hispanic, or living in group quarters. The Census uses statistical techniques to account for these issues, but these are imperfect.

Third, the unemployment rate changed dramatically over the course of 2020 (see chart), so the “average” rate doesn’t reflect the range of unemployment rates youth experienced that year.

Unemployment insurance claims filed Mar 2020–Sep 2021 in SD County, by age (as % of labor force)


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A child’s zip code should not determine their future. To reduce the gap in disconnection between rich and poor areas we must act intentionally—connecting youth to education, internships, employment and transportation, and addressing structural barriers like racism and intergenerational poverty. When we work together as a community with these shared values, we can provide hope for all youth.

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**COVID-19 & DATA QUALITY**

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**PANDEMIC RECESSION & YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT**

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