



Employment Pattern and the Provision of Employment Services for Opportunity Youth



Prepared by CSUS ReLAY Institute

Los Angeles City and County 2016 – 2021

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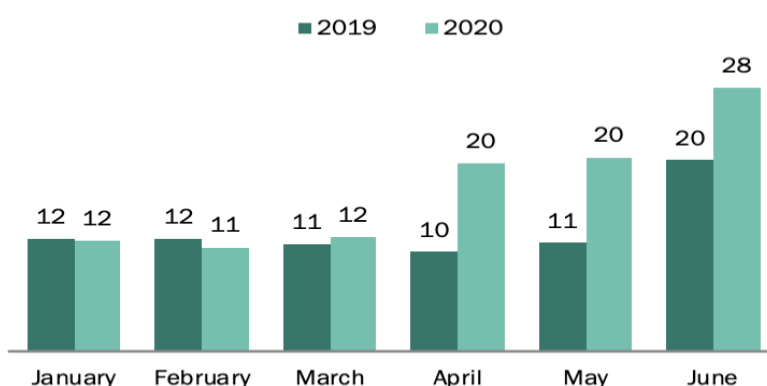
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Executive Introduction

For opportunity youth, COVID-19 has erased ten years of progress made by the City and County of Los Angeles. As of 2017, one in six of the County's 180,000 opportunity youth (or those between the ages of 16-24) were out of school and out of work. According to the Pew Research Center, the disconnection rate for these youth doubled in the second quarter of 2020; nearly one in three of this population segment are now classified as *disconnected* (neither employed nor in school). Compounding this, almost 40 percent of today's jobs will no longer exist by 2040, which will professionally displace one billion individuals worldwide.

By June 2020, nearly three-in-ten U.S. youths were neither in school nor working

% of 16- to 24-year-olds neither enrolled in school nor working



Note: Data relate to the employment and enrollment of 16- to 24-year-olds who are not employed in the armed forces. "Enrollment" includes those who were enrolled full- or part-time in high school or college.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2019 and 2020 Current Population Survey monthly files (IPUMS).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Los Angeles County is home to 22,362 foster youth, constituting 12.5 percent of youth in the County. Youth of color are disproportionately placed in foster care. Of foster youth, 56 percent are Latinx and 27 percent are Black. For perspective, L.A. County has a nine percent Black population, yet Black youth make up more than a quarter of the foster system. Over 4,000 foster youth are between the ages of 16 and 20 years old.

In addition to foster youth, L.A. County is also home to an estimated 3,029 transition-age homeless youth. As with the foster system, Black youth are disproportionately represented in this category – to an even higher degree, in fact. Of homeless youth in the County, 43 percent are Latinx and 38 percent are Black. Youth homelessness is most concentrated in South Los Angeles, Central Los Angeles, and the San Fernando Valley.

The County also has one of the highest youth incarceration rates in the nation. Approximately 9,952 youth are on probation, and nearly all of the County's justice-involved youth are youth of color. Black and Latinx youth make up 91 percent of juvenile felony arrests. Further, 100 percent of justice-involved students come from low-income households, and of these, 40 percent suffer from PTSD and 35 percent are English learners.

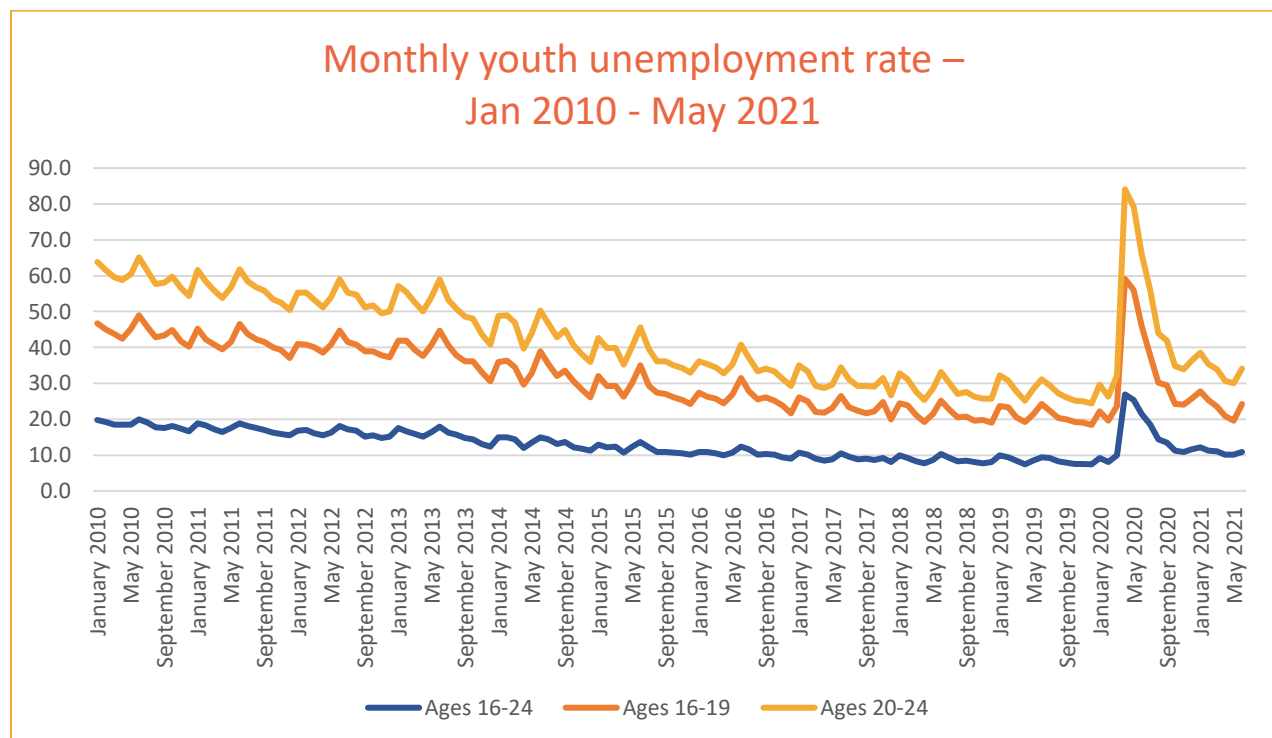
Approximately 68,947 youth between the ages of 16 to 24 are not working or enrolled in school. This is close to 14 percent of the County’s youth population. Together, nearly 79 percent of disconnected youths are Black and Latinx. South Los Angeles, Central Los Angeles, and the San Fernando Valley have a high number of disconnected youths. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 30,000 students left the Los Angeles United School District (LAUSD).

Employment Data

From 2016-2019, the City and County of Los Angeles considerably improved the employment trends of residents aged 16-24. Not only did unemployment decline by five percent over this period, but employment increased with it. Those aged 16-19 saw a two percent increase in employment; those aged 20-24, meanwhile, saw a 4.9 percent increase. Non-enrolled youth experienced the most profound improvement, with a five percent increase in employment.

Until the pandemic, California was making significant strides in reducing youth unemployment. From 2010-2019, in fact, the unemployment rates of opportunity youth plummeted from 25 percent to nine percent. As mentioned, however, COVID-19 rapidly upended this trend. Spurred by lockdowns and other systemic changes, the unemployment rate doubled early on in the pandemic, from nine percent to 18 percent, erasing many of the gains of the last decade.

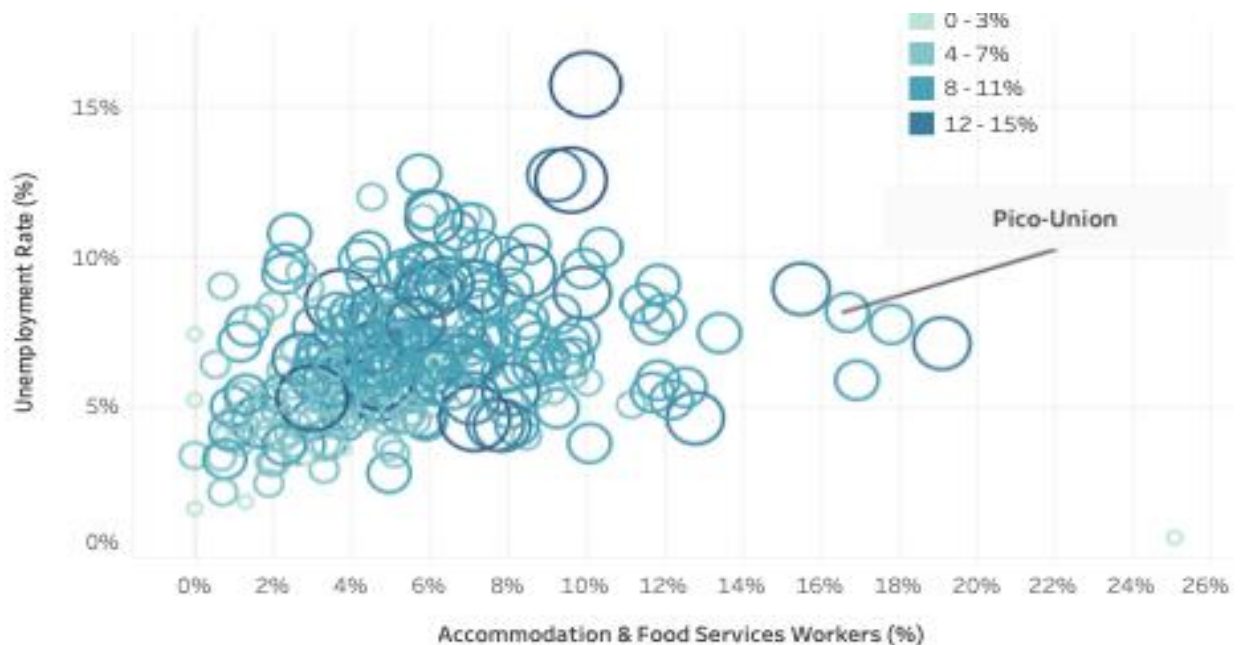
Between January and May of 2020, the County experienced a massive surge in unemployment, reaching rates higher than 30 percent. By December 2020, opportunity youth unemployment remained at 16 percent, on average.



Unemployment rate in Service Planning Area (SPA) in Los Angeles is divided into eight areas. The following five SPA areas had some of the highest unemployment rates: Central Los Angeles had an average youth unemployment rate of 9.96 percent; South Los Angeles averaged 13.85 percent; West Los Angeles averaged 6.88 percent; the San Fernando Valley averaged 9.3 percent; and South Bay/Harbor averaged 9.96 percent. Unemployment rates among youth rose steeply after the outbreak of COVID-19. This was attributed to youth concentration in fast food, retail, and hospitality jobs that were affected by mandates to contain the virus, and youth inability to telework in these jobs.

In only a matter of months, youth unemployment soared to the peak rates of the Great Recession. However, even though the economy is still recovering, youth unemployment is declining more rapidly than it did after the Great Recession. Following the peak in April 2020, unemployment declined somewhat during the summer months; however, the pace of this downward trend was uneven. Unemployment among White male youth declined considerably over the summer, yet rates among Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) youth, as well as female youth, did not drop below 20 percent until the fourth quarter. In March 2020, opportunity youth experienced an unemployment rate of 25 percent, an increase of 18.3 percent from 6.7 percent.

Los Angeles is home to 26 percent of the State’s accommodation and food service jobs and 8.3 percent of all hospitality jobs. Young workers make up 24 percent of employment in these industries nationwide and will therefore be disproportionately affected by COVID-19 layoffs. Pico-Union is a neighborhood in the City of Los Angeles. As of July 27, Pico-Union ranked in the top 10 neighborhoods for total deaths due to COVID-19, with a death rate of 185 per 100,000 persons. Additionally, while only six percent of L.A. County’s workforce is employed in the accommodation and food services industry, 17 percent of Pico-Union’s employed population works in this industry. Further, over 10 percent of Pico Union’s population are between the ages of 18 and 24. Prior to the onset of the pandemic and subsequent economic crisis, Pico-Union had a higher rate of unemployment (8.5%) compared to the rest of the County (6.8%). This is mainly due the population of Pico Union being employed in fast-food industry.



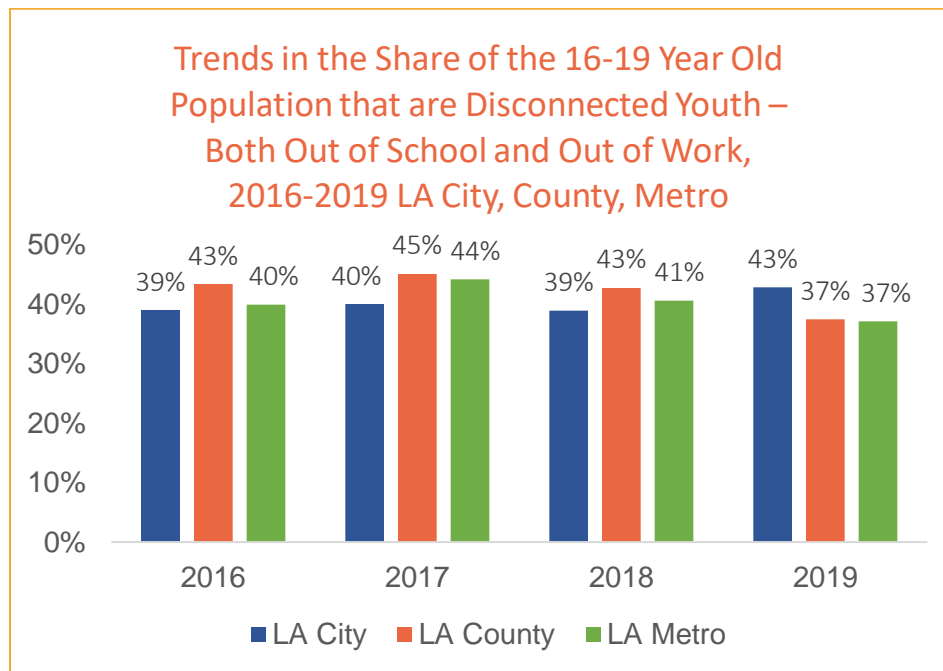
According to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, there are approximately 26,000-27,000 restaurants in L.A. County. Sixteen percent of youth between the ages of 16-18 work in the fast-food industry and 45 percent are between the ages of 19-24, respectively. Overall, 72 percent of fast-food restaurant employees use private vehicles, 17 percent use public transportation, and eight percent use bicycles or walk. Over 57 percent of fast-food workers have a high school education or less. Fast-food positions create more instability for the youth to be able to attend school and higher-education institutions. Many youth face challenging scheduling practices in the fast-food industry, including lack of advanced (less than two weeks' notice) of work schedules, fluctuating hours and schedules that vary week by week, and on-call shifts. The vast majority (96%) of workers experience at least one challenging scheduling practice and more than a third experience all three. More than 40 percent of young workers experience two challenging scheduling practices, while just 16 percent experience only one.

As of 2020, in the unincorporated area of Westmont, where nearly half of residents are Black, 27.1 percent of workers are now unemployed. In Willowbrook, 27.7 percent of workers are unemployed. Hawthorne has a 24.4 percent Black population and a 23.2 percent unemployment rate. Black workers with a high school education or less experience unemployment at almost double the rate of White workers at the same education level.

Black people in Los Angeles are significantly more educated than previous generations, yet experience a lower labor participation rate and a significantly higher unemployment rate than White workers. Black youth are almost twice as likely as White youth to be *disconnected*—neither employed nor in school. People who live in communities with high unemployment, pronounced poverty, and a generally low socioeconomic status are more likely to experience mental distress, crime, child maltreatment, childhood obesity, and higher levels of biological wear and tear from chronic stress. In Los Angeles County, one out of 10 White workers and three out of 10 Black workers between ages 18 and 24 are out of school and out of work.

Educational Data

The average high school dropout rate among opportunity youth in Service Planning Area (SPA) shifted dramatically during the pandemic. Los Angeles is divided into eight areas, and the following five SPA areas had some of the highest high school dropout rates: Central Los Angeles saw an average rate of 11.9 percent; South Los Angeles averaged 19.14 percent; West Los Angeles averaged 2.36 percent; the San Fernando Valley averaged 9.06 percent; South Bay/Harbor averaged 12.69 percent; and East Los Angeles averaged 27.86, the highest by far.



In the past ten years, the LAUSD has seen a continuous decline in enrollment. From the 2012-13 academic year to 2021-22, LAUSD's enrollment decreased by 84,986 students. This sharp drop will significantly impact the future of work in Los Angeles County, with an inevitable effect on youth unemployment.

Around 120,000 students in the LAUSD are English learners. This is close to 20 percent of the district's total enrollments. In spring 2020, fewer than half of these learners in middle and high school participated in distance learning each week – a gap of about 20 percent compared to students who are proficient in English.

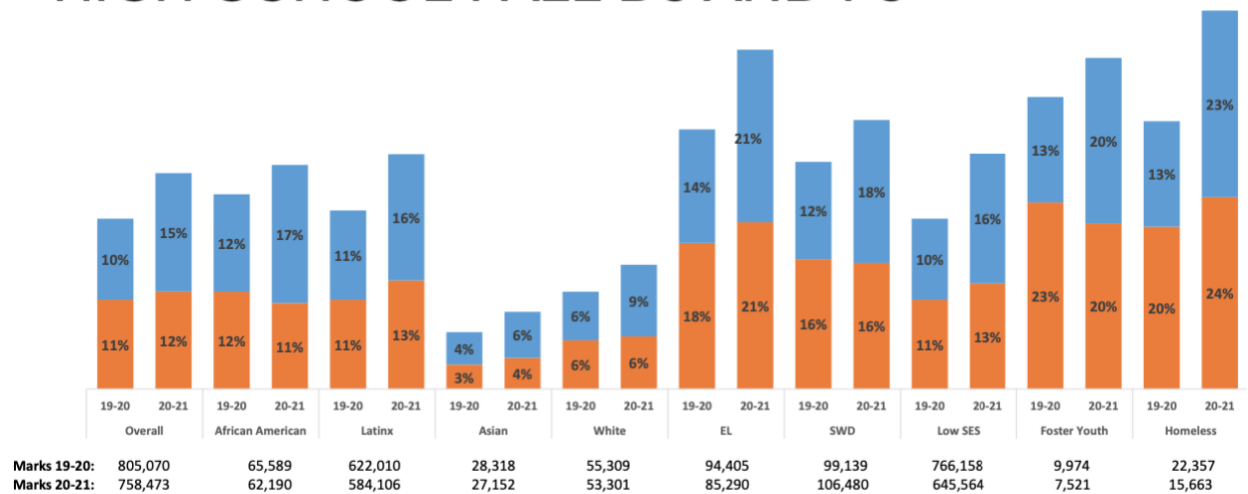
In California, the graduation rate for English learners in 2020 was about 69 percent, compared with 84 percent overall, reflecting a gap that has persisted for years.

The district reported that 42 percent of grades earned by English learners in high school were Ds and Fs, an increase of 10 percent from the prior year – greater than any other group except homeless youth. Middle schoolers saw a 12-percent increase in Ds and Fs. And fall interim assessment results indicate that more than 94 percent of the district’s English learners in middle and high school were not on grade level in reading and math.

In L.A. Unified District, which is preparing to reopen some campuses in mid-April, only about 40 percent of parents in the heavily immigrant and Latino communities of Boyle Heights, MacArthur Park, South Central, and Pico-Union opted to return their children to campus, according to survey results released in March, compared with West L.A., where 82 percent were choosing to return. The reasons parents have for keeping children home are complicated: schedules, transportation, fear. “There are some families that have lost parents and grandmas and aunties,” shared Maria Alejandra Monroe, Principal of Foster Elementary School (Esquivel, 2021).

Simultaneously, in Los Angeles County, access to internet and computers has played a role in hindering student access to educational opportunities. In certain neighborhoods, such as East Compton, 12 percent of households do not have access to a computer, 32 percent do not have access to internet, and another 12 percent have limited English fluency. In East Los Angeles communities, 23 percent of households do not have access to a computer, 35 percent do not have access to internet, and 25 percent are limited English learners. Finally, in the Watts community, 20 percent of households do not have access to a computer, 38 percent do not have access to internet, and 15 percent have limited English fluency.

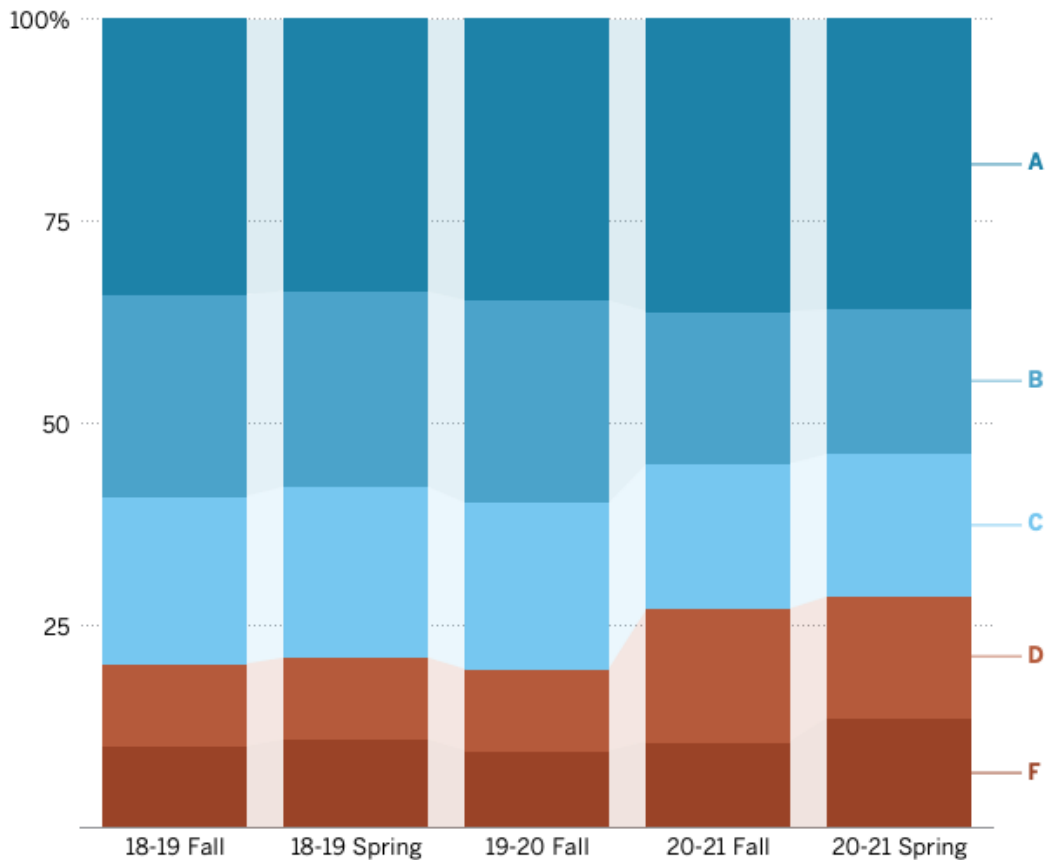
HIGH SCHOOL FALL Ds AND Fs



In the LAUSD class of 2021, 30,173 students are off-track in Tier 3. Tier 3 is defined as individual or small groups of students who need intensive individualized interventions. Most frequently, this means assessment and a narrowly focused curriculum – unless alternate core protocol is used. This constitutes 3.8 percent of the LAUSD population.

Grades dropped at LAUSD

Students in sixth through 12th grades received more Ds and Fs in 2020-2021 academic year.



Spring 2019-2020 grades are not comparable because Fs were not issued during this semester when school first closed.

LAUSD

Iris Lee LOS ANGELES TIMES

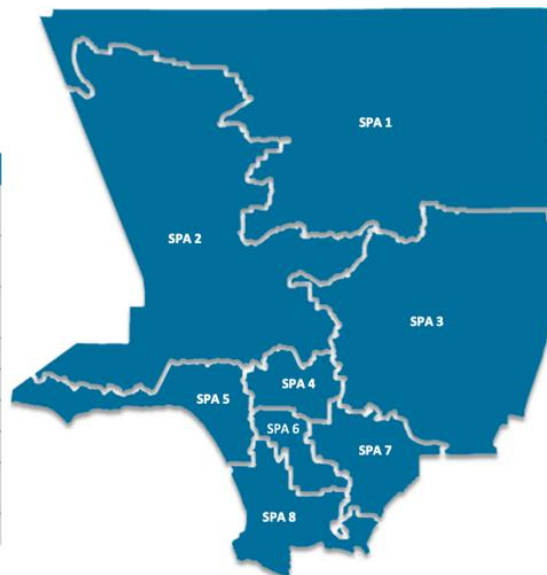
The above graph shows a decline in Bs and Cs and an increase in Ds and Fs assigned to students. The data shows the largest decline in reading among the Latinx and Black student populations, with Latinx students declining from 51 percent to 43 percent and Black students declining from 48 percent to 42 percent (between 2019 and 2021). According to the data, only one in three middle and high school students are on grade level in reading and math. LAUSD data shows that, starting in 2021, 6,000, or 20 percent of the population, won't graduate without significant intervention, and these numbers will grow to 13,000 (or 43%) by 2022; 11,000 (or 37%) by 2023; and, finally, to 9,000 (or 30%) by 2024.

Housing and Shelter

According to recent data, many Los Angeles County residents were displaced by the pandemic and its ensuing economic fallout. The Black workforce, in particular, experienced negative outcomes. Decades of economic restructuring – combined with diminished job opportunities, housing options, and gradual disinvestment – devastated Black residents, many of whom went on to leave the area. The table below represents the youth population shift across SPA region.

Youth Count Overview (SPA)

Region ID	Total Youth Count 2019	Total Youth Count 2020	Percent Change
SPA 1 – Antelope Valley	216	319	47.69%
SPA 2 – San Fernando Valley	689	1,138	65.17%
SPA 3 – San Gabriel Valley	201	227	12.94%
SPA 4 – Central LA	990	1,002	1.21%
SPA 5 – West LA	483	403	-16.56%
SPA 6 – South LA	644	1,094	69.88%
SPA 7 – East LA	563	333	-40.85%
SPA 8 – South Bay/Harbor	140	157	12.14%
CoC	3,926	4,673	19.03%



During 2020-2021, we have witnessed a greater level of disconnection among youth. L.A. County saw 9.2 percent disconnection. However, the County’s disconnection is not the highest in Southern California. San Bernardino, Riverside, and Bakersfield each saw drastic increases in disconnection, with 15.4 percent, 13.4 percent, and 16.5 percent, respectively. One explanation is that, because of the pandemic and economic distress, many families and disconnected youth have moved to adjacent counties. This poses new challenges with high school continuation and dropout rates as well as employment opportunities.

However, with a 9.2 percent disconnection rate among youth in L.A. City and County, not all communities saw the same impact. Among opportunity youth, Manchester Square, Watts, Gramercy Park, Florence-Firestone, and Green Meadows saw unemployment rates between 17.5 and 18.5 percent. High school dropout rates, meanwhile, were the highest in Historical South Central, Central Alameda, South Park, Chinatown, and Boyle Heights, standing between 27 percent and 32 percent.

Simultaneously, L.A. County saw a significant increase in homeless youth, with Latinx youth comprising 42.6 percent, Black youth 38.2 percent, and White youth 14.6 percent. Also, about one in five youth identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or gender non-conforming. Moreover, despite increased efforts by youth homeless services, the sheltered population rose by 20 percent (compared to 2019 rates). As of 2019, 4,021 sheltered and unsheltered youth lived in Los Angeles County; in 2020, the number reached 4,775, with 2,648 youth being unsheltered. Additionally, since 2019, the number of sheltered families has increased by 200, or 42 percent. There are now over 1,109 families utilizing shelters. Finally, the data suggests that 70.5 percent of L.A. County’s homeless population resided within the County, whereas 26 percent come from other

counties in Southern California. Sixty percent of the County's homeless population have been living on streets for more than 10 years.

The reasons for youth homelessness are manifold, including economic hardship (61%), weakened social networks (44%), disabling health conditions (7%), and systems discharge (12%). Moreover, two out of five sheltered youth have experienced homelessness more than once. Aging out of the foster care system and involvement with the justice system are drivers of youth homelessness. Twenty-five percent of homeless youth come from the foster system, 59 percent are justice-involved, and 14 percent are due to mandated, stay-in mental health facilities. An estimated 586 out of 2,585 unsheltered youth report being employed, compared to an estimated 1,120 who are reportedly seeking employment. Only 198 out of 2,585 of unsheltered youth report being enrolled in school.

Future of Work

The estimation from California Department Labor suggests that between 2018-2028, California will witness over 1.1 million job openings in the personal care aides area, with cashiers and laborers and freight operators following. At the same time, the fastest growing occupations between 2018-2028 is going to be solar installers, followed by statisticians, physician assistants, information security analysts, and personal care aides. There is a mismatch between the community college and university pipeline and the future of work in Los Angeles County. According to the California Employment Development Department, the fastest growing occupations are in data and computer sciences while the number of youths majoring in these fields is well below demand.

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Glossary

Disconnected Youth	Youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor in school; also referred to as Opportunity Youth .
SPA	LA County Department of Public Health Service Planning Areas; there are eight SPAs in LA County.
Transition-age Youth	Youth between the ages of 16 and 24 experiencing a wide variety of developmental transitions as they shift into adulthood; foster and housing insecure youth are especially vulnerable during this period as they age out of traditional support systems in place for children and face homelessness and a break or loss in support services.