HALVE THE GAP BY 2030
YOUTH DISCONNECTION IN AMERICA'S CITIES

by KRISTEN LEWIS and SARAH BURD-SHARPS

Disconnected Youth -- Napa County -- 19.1% - 36.5%
Marin is 9.2% - 12%

Youth Disconnection by Race and Ethnicity:

The San Francisco metro area is comprised of five counties, San Francisco, Alameda, Marin, Contra Costa, and San Mateo. *(These counties are the closest indicators to Napa County. Napa County does not rank as high in all categories)* Among the twenty-five most populous metro areas in the United States, SanFrancisco has the fifth-best ranking, with a disconnection rate of 12.3 percent, about two percentage points better than the national average. Nonetheless, this represents almost 60,000 young people adrift at society's margins, not attached to either school or work. While it bests Los Angeles and Riverside–San Bernardino, San Francisco struggles slightly more with youth disconnection than San Diego.

KEY WELL-BEING INDICATORS

HD Index: 6.69 out of 10

HD Index ranking: 2nd out of 24

Total population: 4,396,918

Adult unemployment rate: 8.5%

Adults with at least bachelor's degree: 43.9%

Poverty rate: 11.9%

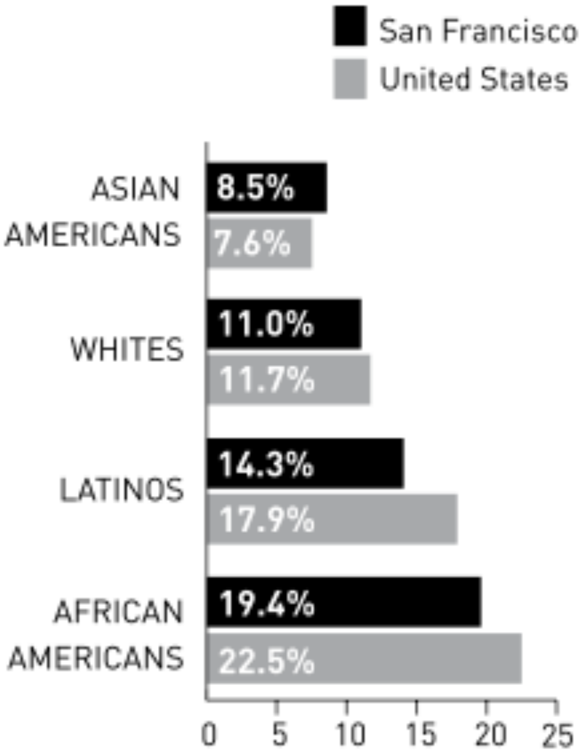
Youth unemployment rate (ages 16–24): 21.1%

School enrollment rate (ages 16–24): 67.2%

Sources: *Measure of America 2013-2014* and U.S. Census Bureau, 2011.

Youth disconnection by race and ethnicity in the San Francisco metro area follows the national trend: Asian American youth have the lowest rates of disconnection (8.5 percent); African American youth have the highest, 19.4 percent; and whites and Latinos fall between the two extremes, with 11 percent and 14.3 percent respectively. Only San Francisco's African Americans have a higher youth disconnection rate than the national average for all youth; nearly one in every five African American youth in San Francisco is disconnected. The racial and ethnic gap in youth disconnection outcomes in San Francisco is 10.9 percentage points—nearly as big a gap as the overall rate for all white young people in the metro area.

Sources:
Measure of America 2013-2014
and U.S. Census Bureau, 2011.



Youth Disconnection by Gender:

The likelihood of San Francisco youth being not in the workforce and not in school is nearly equal for both genders: 12.4 percent for young men, and 12.1 percent for young women. San Francisco's large Asian American population—nearly one in four, compared to just under one in twenty nationwide—may account for some measure of its gender parity, since Asian Americans are the most likely racial or ethnic group to close the gender gap in youth disconnection.

Youth Disconnection by Neighborhood

The San Francisco metro area is made up of thirty-three neighborhood clusters. Among these districts, the youth disconnection rates range from 3.8 percent in Berkeley to 23.5 percent in Elmhurst, Oakland, a more than six-fold difference between communities that are only about ten miles apart. Youth disconnection by neighborhood in the San Francisco area demonstrates the strong correlation observed between adult educational attainment and youth disconnection. In the three areas with the highest youth disconnection, fewer than about one in five adults has completed a bachelor's degree. In the three most connected areas, more than 60 percent or better than three in five adults has at least a bachelor's degree.

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Most Connected Neighborhood Clusters

NEIGHBORHOOD	RATE OF YOUTH DISCONNECTION (%)
Berkeley, CA	3.8
Moraga and Walnut Creek, Contra Costa County, CA	4.1
San Ramon, Contra Costa County, CA	6.5

Least Connected Neighborhood Clusters

NEIGHBORHOOD	RATE OF YOUTH DISCONNECTION (%)
San Pablo and Richmond, Contra Costa County, CA	21.3
Pittsburg, Contra Costa County, CA	21.4
Elmhurst, Oakland, CA	23.5

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Bank profits have reached their highest levels in years.

The market for luxury goods is rebounding.

Bloomberg News reported in August, "Sales of homes priced at more than $1 million jumped an average 37 percent in 2013's first half from a year earlier to the highest level since 2007, according to DataQuick."

A report last week in The New York Times says that developers are turning 57th Street in Manhattan into "Billionaires' Row," with apartments selling for north of $90 million each.

And there's no shortage of billionaires. Forbes's list of the world's billionaires has added more than 200 names since 2012 and is now at 1,426. The United States once again leads the list, with 442 billionaires.

It's a great time to be a rich person in America. The rich are raking it in during this recovery.

But in the shadow of their towering wealth exists a much less rosy recovery, where people are hurting and the pain grows.

This is the slowest post-recession jobs recovery since World War II. The unemployment rate is falling, but for the wrong reason: an increasing number of people may simply be giving up on finding a job. The labor force participation rate — the percentage of people over 16 who either have a job or are actively searching for one — fell in August to its lowest rate in 35 years.

This disconnecting is particularly acute among young people. Measure of America, a project of the Social Science Research Council, recently released a study finding that a staggering 5.8 million young people nationwide — one in seven of those ages 16 to 24 — are disconnected, meaning not employed or in school, "adrift at society's margins," as the group put it.
Median household income continues to fall, according to recent data from the Census Bureau. The data showed, "In 2012, real median household income was 8.3 percent lower than in 2007, the year before the most recent recession."

And according to an April Pew Research Center report, "During the first two years of the nation's economic recovery, the mean net worth of households in the upper 7 percent of the wealth distribution rose by an estimated 28 percent, while the mean net worth of households in the lower 93 percent dropped by 4 percent."

The dire statistics take on even more urgency when we consider what they mean for America's most vulnerable: our children.

According to First Focus, a bipartisan advocacy organization focusing on child and family issues: "The 1,168,354 homeless students enrolled by U.S. preschools and K-12 schools in the 2011-2012 school year is the highest number on record, and a 10 percent increase over the previous school year. The number of homeless children in public schools has increased 72 percent since the beginning of the recession."

A report last month by the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire bemoaned the stagnation of the child poverty rate in this country, saying, "These new poverty estimates released on Sept. 19, 2013, suggest that child poverty plateaued in the aftermath of the Great Recession, but there is no evidence of any reduction in child poverty even as we enter the fourth year of 'recovery.' "
Nearly one in four American children live in poverty.

A report last year from the National Poverty Center estimated "that the number of households living on $2 or less in income per person per day in a given month increased from about 636,000 in 1996 to about 1.46 million households in early 2011, a percentage growth of 130 percent."

And yet, the value of aid for those families is shrinking and under threat.

A report this week by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities found, "Cash assistance benefits for the nation's poorest families with children fell again in purchasing power in 2013 and are now at least 20 percent below their 1996 levels in 37 states, after adjusting for inflation."

The number of Americans now enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is near record highs, and yet both houses of Congress have passed bills to cut funding to the program. The Senate measure would cut about $4 billion, while the House measure would cut roughly ten times as much, dropping millions of Americans from the program.

Next week, lawmakers will start trying to find a middle ground between the two versions of the farm bills that include these cuts.

There is an inherent tension — and obscenity — in the wildly divergent fortunes of the rich and the poor in this country, especially among our children. The growing imbalance of both wealth and opportunity cannot be sustained. Something has to give.

A version of this op-ed appears in print on October 26, 2013, on page A21 of the New York edition with the headline: Billionaires' Row and Welfare Line:
The Article: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/26/opinion/blow-billionaires-row-and-welfare-lines.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20131026

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Please read the Comments: for example:
NYT Pick
Thank you for this article. While New York is far more dramatic than much of the country the dynamic described here is very real in other places. Here in Southeastern Vermont we see exactly the same dynamic, just not at the same amplitude. We have both a rising poverty rate and a rising rate of wealth measuring by proportion of personal income from products of wealth. There are, as Charles notes, political consequences to this economic structure: first, there are not enough skilled workers at all education levels for our businesses, there is resistance to infrastructure investment particularly as measured against social benefits, there is resistance to economic development that will disturb the pastoral scene wealthy immigrants (people from away) who harbor here, there are rising taxes and a declining grand list. While stresses are real now the next ten to twenty years will bring very, very difficult decisions and undoubtedly some serious conflict over public choices. We have already lost jobs and will lose more which will made the divide even worse. New York is just SE Vermont writ large. And I suspect there are more than a few other places in the US with similar dynamics. We are far past the time when Republican theories of 'freeing the economy' can be effective. We are at the edge of a crisis that demands creative, innovative leadership.