Opportunity Youth are ‘disconnected’ young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither enrolled in school nor participating in the labor market.

In 2020, the estimated number of opportunity youth in the United States was 6 Million. Disconnection has serious impacts on the lives of young people.

Disconnected young adults are...
- 2x more likely to live in poverty
- 3x more likely to have a disability
- 9x more likely not to complete high school
- 4x more likely to become young parents than their peers

In addition, many more young adults are at risk of being disconnected from school or work.

Additionally, 3 in 9 young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 are barely attached (e.g. underemployed) to school and work.

This disconnection has significant consequences, both for young people and our society.

Only 1% of disconnected young adults will earn an associate’s degree or higher compared to 36% of the general population.

However, between the 2008 recession and the 2020 Covid recession, the number of opportunity youth decreased dramatically, due to increased investment in this group and the hard work of communities across the United States.

From 2010 to 2019, the number of opportunity youth in the United States decreased by more than 1 million young adults, a reduction of nearly 25%.

From 2010

From 2019
Part of this success story is the Opportunity Youth Forum (OYF), which has been working since 2012 to improve the success and well-being of youth through increased education and workforce attainment.

OYF member communities are leading the way in helping young adults attain important life outcomes, with a specific focus since the start on supporting young adults of color.

Racial equity is at the core of OYF work and we emphasize supports for young adults of color.

While 56% of all OY in the U.S. are people of color...

- 77% of OY in OYF communities are people of color
- 88% of those in OYF partner direct services are people of color

The OYF’s engagement of young adults results in big dividends for young people...

Since almost 50% of opportunity youth in direct services attain significant outcomes, we estimate $2B in direct savings to taxpayers over the lifetimes of those young adults (and another $4 billion in reduced social costs)

The Forum for Community Solutions, as the facilitator of the OYF, provides funding opportunities, convenings and other learning opportunities, data, research and evaluation support to OYF member sites. For more information about OYF, visit www.aspencommunitysolutions.org