The 2021 Youth Transition Report:
Outcomes for Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities
Acknowledgments

This report was produced by the Institute for Educational Leadership, Inc. (IEL) to examine the persistent gaps in educational and employment outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities in the United States. The report focuses on comparative data for youth and young adults with and without disabilities between the ages of 14 and 24, including those opportunity youth that education and workforce systems have failed to adequately support, to highlight the needs of this transition age population. This information can support practitioners, policymakers, and researchers to better understand and serve this population. The authors wish to thank Helen Janc Malone for her quality reviews of the report drafts and support for this work.
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Introduction

About the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL)

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) is a national expert in community-driven leadership development in the intersecting areas of education, employment, and health. The common thread in our work is supporting community and institutional leaders as they build systems around racial, disability inclusion, and economic equity goals. Since 1964, our journey and experiences have resulted in approaches, tools, and practices that reflect the needs of leaders no matter where they sit in communities. The authentic relationships that we build in the process shape the way we engage community leaders, do our work, and provide the foundation for deeper impact as we continue to address systemic challenges in the 400 plus communities that trust us as partners.

Purpose of This Report

The 2021 Youth Transition Report underscores the persistent and pernicious gap between youth and young adults with disabilities and those without disabilities on measures of success in education, employment, opportunity, and poverty. While data and reports exist for the working-age adult population and children with disabilities, IEL recognized a lack of information specific to the youth and young adult population in the 14-24 age group. IEL’s Youth Transition Report addresses this need by presenting an annual snapshot of the outcome gaps between youth and young adults with disabilities and those without disabilities, including those opportunity youth whom the education and workforce systems have not adequately served and supported. This report consists of the status of the selected population, education, employment, opportunity youth, and poverty indicators. IEL has also produced a supplemental Change Analysis report that can be found on our website: https://iel.org/iel-youth-transition-reports-outcomes-for-youth-and-young-adults-with-disabilities/.
Methods

Key population, education, employment, and opportunity youth indicators are derived from the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) population file (2015-2019 ACS 5-year estimates). IEL conducted a custom analysis of youth and young adults at both national and state levels. Therefore, the estimates in this report may be slightly different from the estimates presented in the US Census Bureau’s pre-made tables. We define youth as ages 14 to 17 years old and young adults as ages 18 to 24 years old. This report explores descriptive status of education and employment for youth and young adults at national and state levels. Meanwhile, we estimated the gaps in educational and workforce outcomes for youth and young adults with and without disabilities. All gaps displayed in this report are statistically significant gaps. The report also includes calculated data from the National Center for Education Statistics. The structure of the 2021 Youth Transition Report is similar to previous reports. In addition, we created a separate Change Analysis report that looks at the 3-year trends in state youth disability rates, high school achievement, college enrollment, and employment for the 2017–2019 period for youth and young adults with disabilities.

Suggested Citation

2021 Report Highlights

This report includes the analysis of key educational and employment indicators for youth and young adults with and without disabilities at both national and state levels. In cases where data is not available or applicable for the under 16 or under 18 population, we have noted the age ranges used.

Disability Rates: While the population of youth and young adults with disabilities varies by state, in those states with the highest rates of disability for 14-24 year-olds the rates are more than twice that of states with the lowest rates of disability. Disability prevalence for this age group ranges from a high of 10.8 percent in Maine to a low of 4.1 percent in Hawaii. The largest category of disability, which is self-reported through the U.S. Census, is cognitive difficulty (68.8 percent of youth with disabilities nationally). Cognitive difficulty is a broad category that includes youth and young adults with autism, Down Syndrome, traumatic brain injury, dementia, attention deficit disorder, specific learning disability, mental and emotional challenges.

High School Completion: Educational outcomes and attainment gaps between youth/young adults with and without disabilities vary by state. The difference in high school completion for students with disabilities vary from the highest rate of completion in Washington, DC (85.0 percent) to the lowest rate in South Dakota (65.9 percent). In addition, there remains a significant gap in high school attainment when comparing students with and without disabilities, with the widest gap at more than 21 percent. There is no state in which the high school attainment gap between students with and without disabilities is close to zero.

College Enrollment: College enrollment rates for young adults aged 18-24 with disabilities in the U.S. is 27.3 percent compared to the national average of 43.4 percent for young adults without disabilities. States vary from the highest rate of college enrollment at 39.2 percent in Rhode Island to the lowest rate of enrollment at 10.2 percent in Alaska for young adults with disabilities. The average gap for college enrollment between
young adults with and without disabilities was about 16 percent nationally; no state has closed the gap in college enrollment.

**College Completion:** College completion at the bachelor's degree level is another measure of success for young adults with disabilities. Academic success varies among states from the highest rate of completion in Washington, DC (15 percent) to the lowest rate of completion in Wyoming (0.6 percent). The gap between those college students with and without disabilities was 7.4 percent. The narrowest gap in bachelor's degree attainment at 1.2 percent is in Alaska, yet the state also has the lowest enrollment rate of college students with disabilities at 10.2 percent.

**Employment:** Nationally, youth and young adults with disabilities (ages 14–24) are about 16 percent less likely to be employed than their peers without disabilities. North Dakota has the highest employment rates for youth and young adults with disabilities at 41.5 percent compared to the lowest rates of employment in West Virginia at 19.3 percent. Of those youth and young adults with disabilities who are employed, the patterns of employment are similar, with young people most likely to be employed by a private for-profit company or business.

**Opportunity Youth:** Opportunity youth and young adults are commonly defined as those ages 14-24 who are neither in school nor employed. Our report examines the opportunity youth who are not in school and *not in the labor force*, which represents a true disconnection from systems. Opportunity youth with disabilities represent 19.7 percent of the national population compared to only 5.6 percent of opportunity youth without disabilities.

**Poverty:** Youth and young adults with disabilities are also more likely to live in poverty than their peers without disabilities. Poverty rates in some states such as West Virginia, Kentucky, New Mexico, and Mississippi are more than 30 percent compared to a national average of 24.2 percent for youth with disabilities; those rates are also higher than the national average poverty rate for youth without disabilities at 17.8 percent.
Disability Prevalence

The rate of disability for youth and young adults ages 14-24 is 6.3 percent (see Table A1 in Appendix A for detailed information). Figure 1 demonstrates that the prevalence of disability increases with age as people acquire disabilities over a lifetime. These data are similar to patterns of disability rates in the previous year (see 2020 Youth Transition Report).

**FIGURE 1.** Disability Rates by Age in the U.S.: 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Population with Disabilities</th>
<th>Population without Disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-13</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>96.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-24</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>93.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>87.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>81.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample
The prevalence of disability varies by state. The following map (Figure 2) displays the distribution of disability rates for youth and young adults.

**FIGURE 2.** Disability Rates of Youth and Young Adults (Ages 14-24) by State: 2019
For youth and young adults with disabilities, this prevalence rate ranges from 4.1 percent in Hawaii to 10.8 percent in Maine. As shown in Table 1, states with the highest rates of disability for this age group show about twice the prevalence as those states with the lowest rates of disabilities.

**TABLE 1.** Five Highest and Lowest Disability Rates of Youth and Young Adults (Ages 14-24) by State: 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States with Highest Rates of Disability</th>
<th>States with Lowest Rates of Disability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Maine, 10.8%</td>
<td>1. Hawaii, 4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Vermont, 8.8%</td>
<td>2. California, 5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. West Virginia, 8.7%</td>
<td>3. New Jersey, 5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Idaho, 8.6%</td>
<td>4. Illinois, 5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Kentucky, 8.5%</td>
<td>5. Colorado, 5.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.

The U.S. Census defines six types of disability including self-care difficulty, hearing difficulty, vision difficulty, independent living difficulty, ambulatory difficulty, and cognitive difficulty. The highest rates of reported disability are cognitive difficulties (68.8 percent), which may include youth and young adults with autism, Down Syndrome, traumatic brain injury, dementia, attention deficit disorder, specific learning disability, mental and emotional or other challenges.
Among youth and young adults with disabilities, 12.4 percent have a self-care difficulty, 11.3 percent have a hearing difficulty, 17.5 percent have a vision difficulty, 34.6 percent have an independent living difficulty, 14 percent have an ambulatory difficulty, and 68.8 percent have a cognitive difficulty. Figure 3 demonstrates the types of disability among youth and young adults with disabilities.

**FIGURE 3.** Types of Disability among Youth and Young Adults (14-24) with Disabilities: 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive difficulty</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent living difficulty</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision difficulty</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambulatory difficulty</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-care difficulty</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing difficulty</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: People may have more than one type of disability so that the sum of the percentages will be over 100.*

*Data Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.*
Education and Disability

High School Attainment

Young adults with disabilities ages 18 to 24 complete high school and postsecondary education at lower rates than those without disabilities. Among young adults with disabilities in the U.S. in 2019, 75.7 percent attained a high school diploma compared to 88.2 percent of their peers without disabilities. The high school attainment rate of young adults with disabilities ranges among states from a low of 65.9 percent in South Dakota to a high of 85 percent in Washington D.C. Table 2 displays the states with the five highest and five lowest rates of high school attainment for young adults with disabilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States with Highest Rates of High School Diploma Attainment</th>
<th>States with Lowest Rates of High School Diploma Attainment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Washington, D.C. 85.0%</td>
<td>1. South Dakota, 65.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. North Dakota, 83.2%</td>
<td>2. Louisiana, 66.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hawaii, 82.5%</td>
<td>3. Indiana, 69.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Nebraska, 82.1%</td>
<td>4. Georgia, 70.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Virginia, 81.9%</td>
<td>5. Florida, 70.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.

1. Since most youth (ages 14-17) may not have high school or post-secondary credential, this section focuses on young adults (ages 18-24) when addressing issues in educational attainment.
The data also show a gap in high school attainment between young adults with and without disabilities. The national difference in high school attainment was 12.5 percent\(^2\) in 2019. Comparing the high school attainment for young adults with and without disabilities, we find an attainment gap that ranges from the highest gap of 21.3 percent in South Dakota to the lowest gap of 6.6 percent in Delaware (see Table B1 in Appendix B for detailed information). Figure 4 demonstrates the high school attainment gap between young adults with and without disabilities by state.

In addition, students with disabilities are more likely to drop out before completing high school than their non-disabled peers. The national dropout rate for students with disabilities was more than double the rate for students without disabilities, 12.1 and 5.0 percent\(^3\), respectively.

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2. A percentage point or percent point is the unit for the arithmetic difference of two percentages. The gaps displayed in this report are percentage point difference between individuals with and without disabilities. For ease of reading we are using the term “percent” throughout the report to represent “percentage point” calculation.

FIGURE 4. High School Attainment Gap Between Young Adults (18-24) with and without Disabilities, by State: 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Disability Rate</th>
<th>Non-Disability Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.
College Enrollment and Attainment

College enrollment is an early indicator to show whether youth and young adults are moving toward postsecondary attainment. In our analysis of college data for young adults ages 18-24, we found that students with disabilities have lower rates of entry into college than those without disabilities. National college entry rates for young adults with disabilities in 2019 was 27.3 percent compared to 43.4 percent of their peers without disabilities. Table 3 shows the differences between states with the highest and lowest levels of college entry. Rhode Island shows the highest rate of college entry at 39.2 percent and Alaska shows the lowest rate of college entry at 10.2 percent (see Table B2 in Appendix B for detailed information).

### TABLE 3. States with Highest and Lowest Rates of College Enrollment for Young Adults (Ages 18-24) with Disabilities: 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States with Highest Rates of College Enrollment</th>
<th>States with Lowest Rates of College Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rhode Island, 39.2%</td>
<td>1. Alaska, 10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Washington, D.C. 36.6%</td>
<td>2. West Virginia, 18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Massachusetts, 36.2%</td>
<td>3. Nevada, 19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. California, 35.0%</td>
<td>4. Tennessee, 21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Connecticut, 34.2%</td>
<td>5. Mississippi, 21.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.

The college enrollment gap between young adults with and without disabilities was 16.1 percent in 2019. Figure 5 demonstrates the college enrollment gap between young adults with and without disabilities by state. The gap ranges from 10.5 percent in Arizona to 22.2 percent in West Virginia.
**FIGURE 5.** College Enrollment Gap Between Young Adults (Ages 18-24) with and without Disabilities, by State: 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Gap (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.*
In addition to college enrollment, another key educational indicator for earnings and career opportunities is attaining a four-year college degree. The average national rate for college degree attainment remains low for young adults with disabilities at 4.3 percent compared to the rate of their peers without disabilities (11.7 percent). This completion rate for a bachelor’s degree ranges across states from 0.6 percent in Wyoming to 15 percent in Washington, DC. Table 4 shows the top five states with the highest rates of college completion for students with disabilities and the five states with the lowest rates of college completion (see Table B3 in Appendix B for detailed information).

**TABLE 4. States with Highest and Lowest Rates of College Degree Attainment for Young Adults (Ages 18-24) with Disabilities: 2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States with Highest Rates of Post-Secondary Degree Attainment</th>
<th>States with Lowest Rates of Post-Secondary Degree Attainment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Washington, D.C., 15%</td>
<td>1. Wyoming, 0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. New York, 6%</td>
<td>2. Oklahoma, 2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Illinois, 5.9%</td>
<td>2. New Mexico, 2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Connecticut, 5.8%</td>
<td>2. Maine, 2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Nebraska, 5.8%</td>
<td>5. Nevada, 2.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample*

The college degree attainment gap between young adults with and without disabilities in the U.S. was 7.4 percent in 2019. Figure 6 demonstrates the college degree attainment gap between young adults with and without disabilities by state. Massachusetts has the largest attainment gap (13.4 percent) and Alaska has the smallest attainment gap (1.2 percent).
FIGURE 6. College Degree Attainment Gap Between Young Adults (Ages 18-24) with and without Disabilities, by State: 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Gap (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.
Since 2014, federal and state policies have increased their focus on improving employment outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities. Part- or full-time employment, participation in internships and apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities offer youth and young adults with disabilities an entry into employment and self-sufficiency. As Figure 7 shows, youth and young adults with disabilities were employed at 27.1 percent, which is less than the 43.1 percent of their peers without disabilities. Youth and young adults with disabilities were also less likely to be in the labor force (47.9 percent) and more likely to be unemployed (7.6 percent) in 2019. The employment gap between youth and young adults with and without disabilities was 16 percent. Note that in Figure 7, the employment status is shown for individuals ages 14-24; however, for youth under age 16, employment status is not captured by the U.S. Census Bureau.

**FIGURE 7.** Employment Status for Youth and Young Adults (Ages 14-24) with and without Disabilities, 2019

Source: Calculations based on the U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample
Although most youth and young adults with and without disabilities are not in the workforce, for those ages 14-24 who were working in 2019, the majority were employed by a private for-profit company or business at 36.9 percent compared to 47.8 percent of their peers without disabilities. Employment other than for-profit companies and nonprofit organizations was 5.3 percent (see Table 5 for detailed information).

**TABLE 5.** Class of Worker for Youth and Young Adults (Ages 14-24) with and without Disabilities, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of Worker</th>
<th>With Disabilities (%)</th>
<th>Without Disabilities (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not in universe</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee of a private for-profit company or business</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee of a private not-for-profit</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government employee (city, county, etc.)</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State government employee</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal government employee</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed in own not incorporated business</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed in own incorporated business</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working without pay in family business or farm</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*Note about “not in universe”: In addition to individuals who are between 16 and 24 years old and not in the labor force, the denominator includes youth who are 14 and 15 years old. Employment status for youth under 16 years old is not captured by the Census Bureau.*

*Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.*
The employment to population⁴ rate for youth and young adults (ages 14-24) in the U.S. in 2019 was 27.1 percent. The employment rate by state ranges from a low of 19.3 percent in West Virginia to a high of 41.5 percent in North Dakota. Table 6 displays the states with highest and lowest employment rates for youth and young adults with disabilities (see Table C1 in Appendix C for detailed information).

**TABLE 6. States with Highest and Lowest Employment Rates for Youth and Young Adults (ages 14-24) with Disabilities: 2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States with Highest Employment Rates</th>
<th>States with Lowest Employment Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. North Dakota, 41.5%</td>
<td>1. West Virginia, 19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. South Dakota, 40.5%</td>
<td>2. Mississippi, 20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Minnesota, 39.8%</td>
<td>3. Hawaii, 21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Wyoming, 38.5%</td>
<td>3. Louisiana, 21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Utah, 38.2%</td>
<td>5. New Mexico, 22.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.*

In the U.S. in 2019, the gap between the employment rates for individuals (ages 14-24) with and without disabilities was 16 percent. At the state level, the employment rate gap ranges from a low of 9.5 percent in Wyoming to a high of 24.6 percent in Maine for youth and young adults with and without disabilities. Figure 8 displays the gaps by states.

---

⁴ The “employment to population rate” is an analysis that takes into account the people who are not in the labor force.
FIGURE 8. Employment Rate Gap Between Youth and Young Adults (Ages 14-24) with and without Disabilities, by State: 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Rate Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.
Opportunity Youth with Disabilities

Opportunity youth and young adults are those ages 14-24 who are neither in school nor employed. Given the significant proportion of youth and young adults who are not in the labor force, we present an analysis of opportunity youth who are neither in school nor in the labor force (not in the labor force means those youth are unemployed and are not currently seeking employment). This analysis offers a view of the current state of youth disconnection from the labor market and education system.

Opportunity Youth and Young Adults

In the U.S. in 2019, 19.7 percent of youth and young adults (ages 14-24) with disabilities were neither in school nor in the labor force, compared to 5.6 percent of their peers without disabilities (see Table D1 in Appendix D). At the state level, the proportion of opportunity youth and young adults with disabilities ranges from 11 percent in Vermont to as high as 29.2 percent in West Virginia. Table 7 displays the highest and lowest disconnected rate for youth and young adults with disabilities.
In a comparison between the opportunity youth and young adults with and without disabilities in 2019, the national gap is 14.1 percent. At the state level, the gap ranges from 6.3 percent in South Dakota to 21.5 percent in West Virginia. Figure 9 displays the gaps by state and the national average. See Table D2 in Appendix D.

### Table 7. States with Highest and Lowest Rates of Opportunity Youth and Young Adults (ages 14-24, not in the labor force) with Disabilities: 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States with Highest Rates of Opportunity Youth and Young Adults</th>
<th>States with Lowest Rates of Opportunity Youth and Young Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. West Virginia, 29.2%</td>
<td>1. Vermont, 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mississippi, 26.3%</td>
<td>2. South Dakota, 11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. New Mexico, 25.8%</td>
<td>3. Connecticut, 14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Alabama, 24.5%</td>
<td>3. Minnesota, 14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Arkansas, 24.5%</td>
<td>5. Utah, 15.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.
### FIGURE 9. Opportunity Youth Rates Gap between Youth and Young Adults (Ages 14-24) with and without Disabilities, by State: 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Gap without Disability (%)</th>
<th>Gap with Disability (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
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<td>13.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
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<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.
Poverty and Disability

As with the education and employment outcomes, the data on poverty by household underscore disparities between youth and young adults with and without disabilities. The poverty rate for households of youth and young adults with disabilities (ages 14-24) in the U.S. in 2019 was 24.2 percent compared to 17.8 percent of their peers without disabilities. The poverty rate for youth and young adults with disabilities by state ranges from a low of 13.4 percent in Alaska to a high of 32.3 percent in West Virginia. Table 8 displays the states with highest and lowest rates of poverty for youth and young adults with disabilities (see Table E1 in Appendix D for detailed information).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States with Highest Rates of Poverty for Youth and Young Adults</th>
<th>States with Lowest Rates of Poverty for Youth and Young Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. West Virginia, 32.3%</td>
<td>1. Alaska, 13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Kentucky, 31.9%</td>
<td>2. New Jersey, 16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. New Mexico, 31.8%</td>
<td>3. Maryland, 17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mississippi 30.5%</td>
<td>4. Utah, 18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Alabama, 29.5%</td>
<td>5. Massachusetts, 19.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.

In the U.S. in 2019, the gap in poverty rates between households of individuals (ages 14-24) with and without disabilities was 6.3 percent. At the state level, the poverty rate gap ranges from a reverse gap of -0.8 percent in Alaska to a high of 11 percent in Kentucky. Figure 10 displays the gaps by states. In Alaska, the poverty rate gap between
households of youth with and without disabilities (-0.8 percent) indicates that individuals without disabilities have slightly higher poverty rate than their peers with disabilities.

Meanwhile, when compare the poverty gap ranking to the disability population ranking, we discovered that states with higher rates of youth and young adults with disabilities might have larger poverty gaps between households of youth with disabilities and their peers without disabilities. For instance, Kentucky had a high rate of poverty in households of youth and young adults with disabilities (8.5%) and the poverty gap (11%) was the highest among all states. This might indicate that states with higher rates in disabilities will need additional support and resources to address poverty issues statewide.

5. Pearson’s Correlation was applied to test if the disability rates of youth and young adults with disabilities correlate with the poverty gaps between youth with and without disabilities. The Pearson correlation coefficient, r, is 0.3110, which indicates a moderate correlation. The level of statistical significance (p-value) of the correlation coefficient in this test is 0.0264, which means the correlation is statistically significant of .05 level.
FIGURE 10. Poverty Gap for Youth and Young Adults (Ages 14-24) with and without Disabilities, by State: 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Poverty Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>-0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.
Discussion

In the third annual Youth Transition Report, data continue to show a significant gap between youth and young adults (ages 14-24) with and without disabilities. Among all youth and young adults, 6.3 percent have disabilities. They are less likely than their peers without disabilities to complete high school, enter and complete college, enter the workforce, and attain financial success. Patterns of youth and young adults with disabilities that are unemployed or not in the labor force mirror those for working age adults with disabilities (ages 25-64) and point to the need for a greater focus on transition age youth to prepare them for career success and civic engagement.

A clear line can be drawn from low educational outcomes to low employment outcomes, including low wages and disengagement from the workforce. What begins as a 12.5 percent gap in high school attainment between youth with and without disabilities results in a poverty rate among people with disabilities that is more than twice the rate of those without disabilities\(^6\). States with larger disability populations require more resources dedicated to supporting financial independence for their residents.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021 impacted students with disabilities by changing the way they engage in school and challenging their support systems, particularly those students who lack access to technology, broadband, and digital skills. Employment also fell for people with and without disabilities. In some cases, people with disabilities found that the new flexibility in working from home benefited them, while others lost jobs and wages. During this pandemic recovery period, our nation faces a recession, massive changes in the workforce, and significant social change. History has shown that while people with disabilities eventually recover jobs,

outcomes remain low and the gap between those with and without disabilities remains disheartening.

These continued gaps between young people with and without disabilities result from inequities in the education and workforce systems. In 2019, NCLD reported that only 17 percent of general education teachers felt highly prepared to teach children with learning disabilities, even though more than 63 percent of students with disabilities were in general education classrooms more than 80 percent of the time. All educators and leaders from the K-12, college, and career pathways systems must be prepared to engage and include learners with disabilities. Systemic change is needed to achieve this shared national goal. That includes policies that fully fund the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), increased training for all teachers, inclusion practices embedded into preparation of youth service providers, and supports for youth in out-of-school and recreational programming.

Despite national debates about the value of a postsecondary education, the data are clear—a college degree, even some college, will lead to higher wages. Yet, colleges and universities are often unprepared to help students with disabilities to succeed by relying heavily if not solely on disability support services on campus rather than addressing disability inclusion as a campus wide equity opportunity.

In addition, disability stigma and misperceptions about workers with disabilities among employers prevents young people from finding jobs. Low employment and labor force participation outcomes


culminate in a lifetime of lost wages and lost tax benefits for state and local communities. In turn, these potential workers rely on national and state support services and social safety nets. More importantly, the national workforce loses out on the creativity and contributions of people with disabilities.

A key factor in supporting and sustaining an educated workforce inclusive of people with disabilities is the vocational rehabilitation (VR) system, a state and federally funded system that is required to focus a significant portion of its funds (15 percent) on transition age youth. During program years 2017–2020¹⁰ the national VR system served an increasing proportion of youth services with some states such as Delaware serving 11 percent more youth over this timeframe. These data do not include the growing number of students with disabilities who receive pre-employment and training services from VR agencies. Policies and funding must address the need for VR services, particularly as the country learns about the needs of newly disabled individuals with long-COVID. Unfortunately, the general public remains unaware of the services available to them through VR and other workforce services.

The Youth Transition Report highlights the value of examining data to recognize whether we are accomplishing our goals as a nation to close achievement gaps and increase opportunities for youth and young adults with disabilities. The data shine a spotlight on how well states are meeting the challenge of addressing gaps between youth and young adults with and without disabilities to examine more closely the differences that national averages may obscure. States with the lowest gaps may offer ideas on policies and practices for all states to consider; however, no state has entirely achieved full equity for youth and young adults with disabilities. Achieving equity requires engagement

¹⁰. Direct communications with US Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, on November 9, 2021.
of youth and young adults with disabilities in not only informing the challenges, but also in problem-solving, to ensure full inclusion across the country.

The United States has a history of leading disability rights movements through the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Americans with Disabilities Act (and Amendments Act), and the recent Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act. Some states have shown leadership through policies to improve employment outcomes for residents with disabilities. Our national, collective approach must raise awareness of disability as a natural part of the human condition and promote people with disabilities who already serve as workers, leaders, creators, and inventors.
## APPENDIX A: TABLE A1
Youth and Young Adults (Ages 14 to 24) for the U.S. and States, by Disability Status: 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>WITH DISABILITY</th>
<th>WITHOUT DISABILITY</th>
<th>Population (14-24)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Estimate</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>2,998,859</td>
<td>6.3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>660,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AK</td>
<td>6,935</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>104,582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AZ</td>
<td>67,227</td>
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<td>AR</td>
<td>35,952</td>
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<td>CA</td>
<td>290,717</td>
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<td>5,537,341</td>
</tr>
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<td>501,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>8,510</td>
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<td>123,143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>6,555</td>
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<td>FL</td>
<td>159,828</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>1,765,215</td>
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<td>73,402</td>
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<td>951,896</td>
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</tr>
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<td>52,617</td>
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<td>18,404</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>WITH DISABILITY</td>
<td>WITHOUT DISABILITY</td>
<td>Population (14-24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Estimate</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MO</td>
<td>63,272</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
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<td>NE</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>NY</td>
<td>156,796</td>
<td>5.7</td>
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</tr>
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<td>NC</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ND</td>
<td>6,752</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>114,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OH</td>
<td>126,559</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>43,830</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>552,547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td>45,930</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>515,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>134,568</td>
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<td>1,665,751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI</td>
<td>11,055</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>151,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>47,537</td>
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<td>677,542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>WY</td>
<td>6,317</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.
### APPENDIX B: TABLE B1

Young Adults (Ages 18 to 24) with High School Diploma or Higher Degrees, by Disability Status: 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>WITH DISABILITY</th>
<th>WITHOUT DISABILITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Estimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>1,964,891</td>
<td>1,486,903</td>
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Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.
APPENDIX B: TABLE B2
Young Adults (Ages 18 to 24) Enroll in College Undergraduate Years, by Disability Status: 2019

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Data Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.
**APPENDIX B: TABLE B3**
Young Adults (Ages 18 to 24) with Bachelor or Higher Degrees, by Disability Status: 2019

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Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.
**APPENDIX C: TABLE C1**

Employment Rate for Youth and Young Adults (Ages 16 to 24) in U.S., by Disability Status: 2019

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Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.
## APPENDIX D: TABLE D1

Rates of Opportunity Youth and Young Adults (Ages 14 to 24) for the U.S. and States, by Disability Status: 2019

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*Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.*
### APPENDIX D: TABLE D2

Rates for Youth and Young Adults (Ages 14 to 24) in the Labor Force (Unemployed) and Not in School for the U.S. and States, by Disability Status: 2019

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Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.
## APPENDIX E: TABLE E1
Rates for Youth and Young Adults (Ages 14 to 24) in Poverty for the U.S. and States, by Disability Status: 2019

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<tr>
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<th>WITHOUT DISABILITY</th>
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Data Source: Calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.