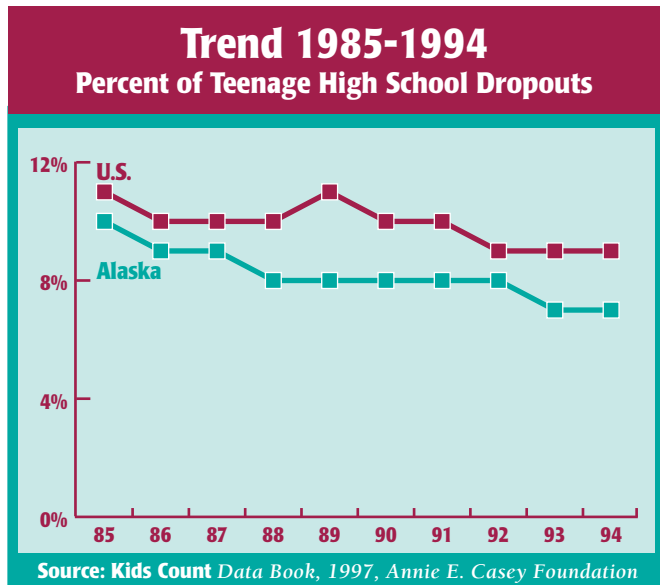




**Education**

# Teens Who Are High School Dropouts



## Impact

- The poverty rate for high school dropouts is ten times that of college graduates.<sup>1</sup>
- College graduates earn twice the annual income of adults with only high school diplomas and three times the income of high school dropouts.<sup>2</sup>
- In 1994 the dropout rate among kids from low-income families was five times as high as that among kids from more affluent families.<sup>3</sup>
- In poor school districts, 13-year-olds have math skills comparable to those of 9-year-olds in wealthier districts.<sup>4</sup>

- Between 1992 and 1993, 5.1 percent of high school dropouts fell into poverty, compared with only 1.8 percent among those with at least high school diplomas.<sup>5</sup>
- The average hourly rate (adjusted for inflation) of high school dropouts fell by 23 percent between 1973 and 1995.<sup>6</sup>
- In a lifetime, a male high school dropout will earn \$260,000 less than a high-school graduate; a female high-school dropout will earn \$200,000 less.<sup>7</sup>

- Each year's dropouts, over their lifetimes, cost the nation about \$260 billion in lost earnings and forgone taxes.<sup>8</sup>
- Dropouts require 35 percent more special services than high school graduates.<sup>9</sup>
- The estimated lifetime lost earnings from Alaska's 1991 dropouts will be over \$500 million.<sup>10</sup>
- Among U.S. prisoners, 82 percent are high school dropouts. In Alaska, the annual maintenance cost per prisoner in recent years has been \$35,000.<sup>11</sup>

## What About Alaska?

*Information for this section provided by the Teacher and Learning Support Division of the Alaska Department of Education*

As measured by the national dropout indicator, the percentage of high school dropouts in Alaska is below the national average. Alaska's rate declined in the early 1990s and held steady between 1993 and 1994.<sup>12</sup>

The Alaska Department of Education has several criteria for defining dropouts, including: students who have left school without graduating or completing an approved program; students who have moved out of the district or the state and are

## Definition

The graph above shows the percentage of teens, ages 16-19, who are not enrolled in school (either full time or part time) and who have not graduated.

## Significance

Graduating from high school is a stepping stone to both post-secondary education and good jobs. Students from lower-income families are more likely to drop out of school.

# Teens Who Are High School Dropouts (continued)

not known to be enrolled elsewhere; students who are attending schools not approved by the district or are in adult education programs; students who were suspended or expelled and haven't returned to school.

As shown in the table on page 33, about 5.6 percent of the 34,000 students enrolled in grades 9 through 12 in Alaska schools dropped out during the 1995-96 school year. Regional rates varied from 3 percent in Anchorage to 10 percent in the Interior.

Dropout rates among Native and Hispanic students are proportionately higher than their school enrollments, while White, Black, and Asian students drop out at lower rates. The table below shows dropout rates by ethnicity for grades 7 through 12.

Dropouts By Ethnicity, Grades 7-12 , 1995-96 School Year		
Ethnicity	Percentage of Total Enrollment	Percentage of Total Dropouts
White	66.9	58.5
Alaska Native/ American Indian	21.6	29.5
Black	4.5	3.8
Hispanic	2.6	4.7
Asian	4.5	3.5

**Source:** Alaska Department of Education, Report Card to the Public, School Year 1995-96, April 1997

Average Annual GED Recipients, By Age, 1994-1996		
Age	Average Number of GED Examinations	Average Number of GED Recipients
16-19	1,474 (46%)	913 (50%)
20-24	716 (22%)	402 (22%)
25-29	323 (10%)	173 (9%)
30-34	266 (8%)	137 (8%)
35-39	211 (7%)	117 (6%)
40+	224 (7%)	98 (5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,214 (100%)</b>	<b>1,840 (100%)</b>

## Spotlight on Prevention: Adult Basic Education and Literacy Program

Information on GED (General Educational Development) was provided by Angie Binkley, Adult and Vocational Education, Alaska Department of Education

Alaskans who drop out of high school still have a chance to avoid the problems high school dropouts face. People 16 and over who are not enrolled in high school and who have no high school diploma are eligible to enroll in the Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Literacy Program offered by the Alaska Department of Education. There are currently 17 local and regional ABE

centers in 16 communities around the state. Course offerings include English as a second language, reading and literature, writing, math, science, social studies, and computer literacy. ABE courses also teach skills residents need to get jobs or become citizens.

All ABE centers offer testing for General Educational Development (GED) diplomas. The table above shows that an annual average of 1,840 applicants received GED certificates from 1994 to 1996. Certificates awarded to teens and young adults (16 to 24) account for a big share (more than 70 percent) of all certificates awarded.<sup>13</sup>

# Teens Who Are High School Dropouts (continued)



Alaska's High School Dropouts, 1995-96 School Year			
Region/District	Number of Dropouts 9-12	Number Enrolled 9-12	Dropout Rate 9-12
<b>Alaska State Total</b>	1907	34,234	5.6%
<b>Anchorage Schools</b>	392	12,543	3.1%
<b>Matanuska-Susitna Borough Schools</b>	252	3,514	7.2%
<b>Gulf Coast Region</b>			
Chugach Schools	3	39	7.7
Copper River Schools	4	169	2.4
Cordova City Schools	4	149	2.7
Kenai Peninsula Borough Schools	164	2,946	5.5
Kodiak Island Borough Schools	21	851	2.5
Valdez City Schools	12	235	5.1
<b>Regional Total</b>	208	4,389	4.7%
<b>Interior Region</b>			
Alaska Gateway Schools	8	156	5.1
Delta/Greely Schools	17	263	6.5
Denali Borough Schools	0	120	0
Fairbanks N. Star Borough Schools	499	4,284	11.6
Galena City Schools	2	30	6.7
Iditarod Area Schools	2	104	1.9
Kuspuk Schools	5	114	4.4
Nenana City Schools	5	47	10.6
Tanana Schools	0	25	0
Yukon Flats Schools	6	121	5.0
Yukon/Koyukuk Schools	5	168	3.0
<b>Regional Total</b>	549	5,432	10.1%
<b>Northern Region</b>			
Bering Strait Schools	17	370	4.6
Nome City Schools	1	192	.5
North Slope Borough Schools	30	358	8.4
Northwest Arctic Borough Schools	38	399	9.5
<b>Regional Total</b>	86	1,319	6.5%

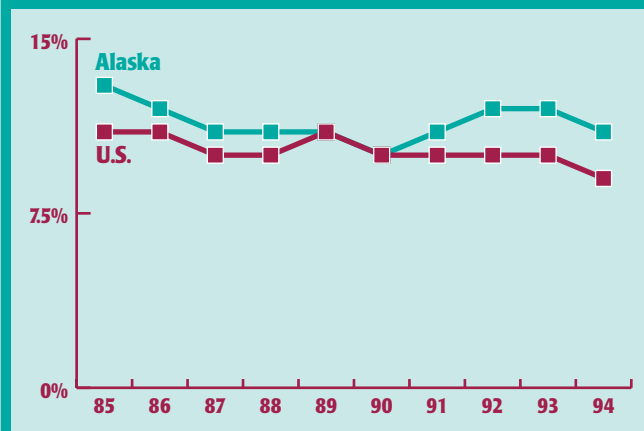
Alaska's High School Dropouts, 1995-96 School Year			
	Number of Dropouts 9-12	Number Enrolled 9-12	Dropout Rate 9-12
<b>Southeast Region</b>			
Alyeska Central School*	26	622	4.2
Annette Islands	3	140	2.1
Chatham Schools	8	91	8.8
Craig City Schools	0	110	0
Haines Borough Schools	3	155	1.9
Hoonah City Schools	5	83	6.0
Hydaburg City Schools	N/A	28	N/A
Juneau Borough Schools	88	1,574	5.6
Kake City Schools	4	51	7.8
Ketchikan Gateway Borough Schools	80	870	9.2
Klawock City Schools	4	66	6.1
Mt. Edgecumbe High School	1	282	.4
Pelican City Schools	0	7	0
Petersburg City Schools	1	204	.5
Sitka Borough Schools	42	528	8.0
Skagway City Schools	3	45	6.6
Southeast Island Schools	8	101	7.9
Wrangell City Schools	6	143	4.2
Yakutat City Schools	4	50	8.0
<b>Regional Total</b>	286	5,150	5.6%
<b>Southwest Region</b>			
Aleutian Region Schools	N/A	5	N/A
Aleutians East Borough Schools	9	88	10.2
Bristol Bay Borough Schools	1	73	1.4
Dillingham City Schools	13	115	11.3
Kashunamiut Schools	3	54	5.6
Lake and Peninsula Borough Schools	3	114	2.6
Lower Kuskokwim Schools	48	753	6.
Lower Yukon Schools	32	336	9.5
Pribilof Island Schools	3	37	81
Southwest Region Schools	11	114	9.6
Saint Marys Schools		23	0
Unalaska City Schools	4	81	4.9
Yupit Schools	7	94	7.4
<b>Regional Total</b>	134	1,887	7.1%

\*State-run correspondence school with students statewide.  
 Source: Alaska Department of Education, Division of Teacher Learning and Support

# Teens Not Working and Not in School



**Trend 1985-1994: Percent of Teens Not Attending School and Not Working**



Source: Kids Count Data Book, 1997, Annie E. Casey Foundation

## Definition

This indicator reflects the percentage of teenagers, 16-19, who are not enrolled in school (full-time or part-time), are not in the labor force, and are not in the military.

## Significance

Young people who spend extended periods without going to school, holding jobs, or enlisting in the military are without any positive path to independent adulthood. These have been described as America's "disconnected" youth.<sup>14</sup>

## Impact<sup>15</sup>

- One in three Americans between the ages of 16 and 23 stumble on the road to adulthood, spending a half year or more disconnected from society.
- Nearly 90 percent of those who are without jobs and out of school in late youth (ages 20 to 23) were first disconnected as teens.
- An estimated 37 percent of young women and 35 percent of young men who have been disconnected from society for three or more years are at risk of giving birth to or fathering a child before age 18.

- Long-term disconnected young people are 13 times more likely to be poor as young adults (ages 26-28). Poverty rates among the disconnected are 44 percent for men and 56 percent for women, as compared with 3 to 4 percent among men and women who have kept their connections to society through jobs or school or the military.

## What About Alaska?

Alaska's share of teens not working and not in the labor force is above the national average—11 percent as compared with 9 percent—but it did decline between 1993 and 1994.

The most recent regional data for this indicator is from the 1990 U.S. census. At that time, regional percentages of Alaska teens not in school and not in the labor force ranged from 6 (in Interior Alaska) to 13.4 (in Southwest Alaska).<sup>16</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Reported in *1997 Kids Count Book*, p.5 (from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996, “Money Income in the United States, 1995” *Current Population Reports*, Series P 60-193, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., September, Table 9).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Reported in *1997 Kids Count Book*, p. 6 (from U.S. Department of Education, 1996, *Dropout Rates in the United States 1994*, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Washington, DC, p. 10).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Reported in *1997 Kids Count Book*, p.16 (L.Mishel, J. Bernstein, and J. Schmitt, 1996, *The State of Working America 1996-97*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, N.Y., p.169).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> *Alaska’s adolescents: A plan for the future*, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, 1994, p.79.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> *Kids Count Data Book*, 1997.

<sup>13</sup> Alaska Department of Education (April 1997), *Summary of Alaska’s Public School Districts, Report Cards to the Public*, School year 1995-96, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> B.V. Brown, *Who are America’s disconnected youth?* Final report prepared for the America Enterprise Institute, March 1996.

<sup>15</sup> The impact statements below are based on the study by B. V. Brown, cited in note 14. That study uses a more conservative definition of “disconnectedness” than Kids Count does. It includes not only teenagers not enrolled in school (full-time or part-time), not in the labor force, and not in the Armed Forces, but also teenagers not married to someone in school or working.

<sup>16</sup> Our calculation of this indicator for Alaska differs somewhat from the national measure—partly because in order to do regional comparisons we used a different source of information (the U.S. census instead of the Current Population Survey) and partly because we excluded unemployed teens.

