

# Deaf Youth: What Does the Data Tell Us?



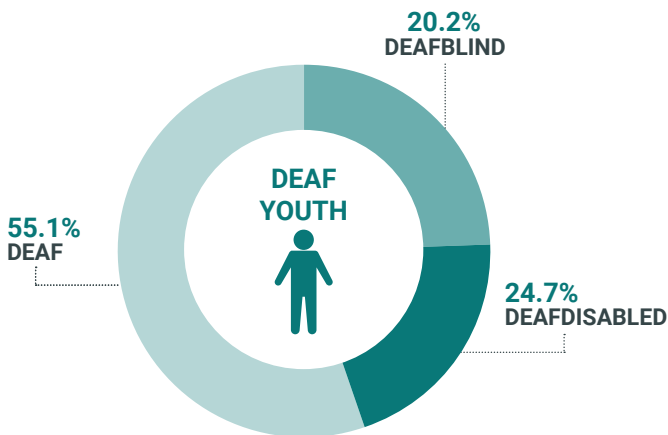
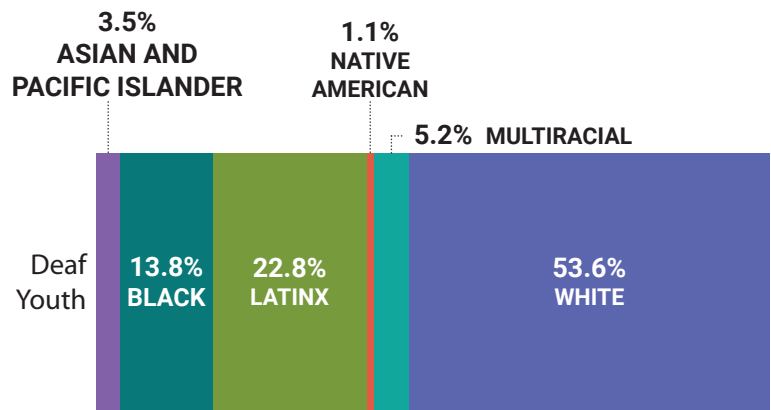
**NDC**  
National Deaf Center  
on Postsecondary Outcomes

There are about 280,000 deaf young people in the United States between the ages of 16 and 24.

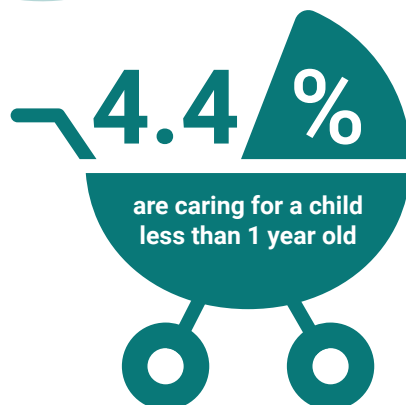
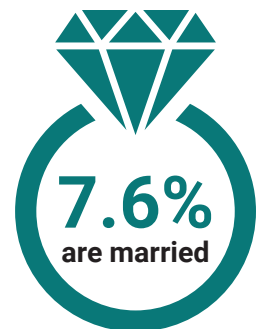
Deaf young people in the United States who are between the ages of 16 and 24 are a highly diverse group—while some of them are still in high school, many are working or continuing their education. However, more deaf youth are not working or going to school, compared to hearing people in the same age group. This is an opportunity to improve systems of support so more deaf youth have equitable access in school and the workplace.

## What Do We Know About Deaf Young People?

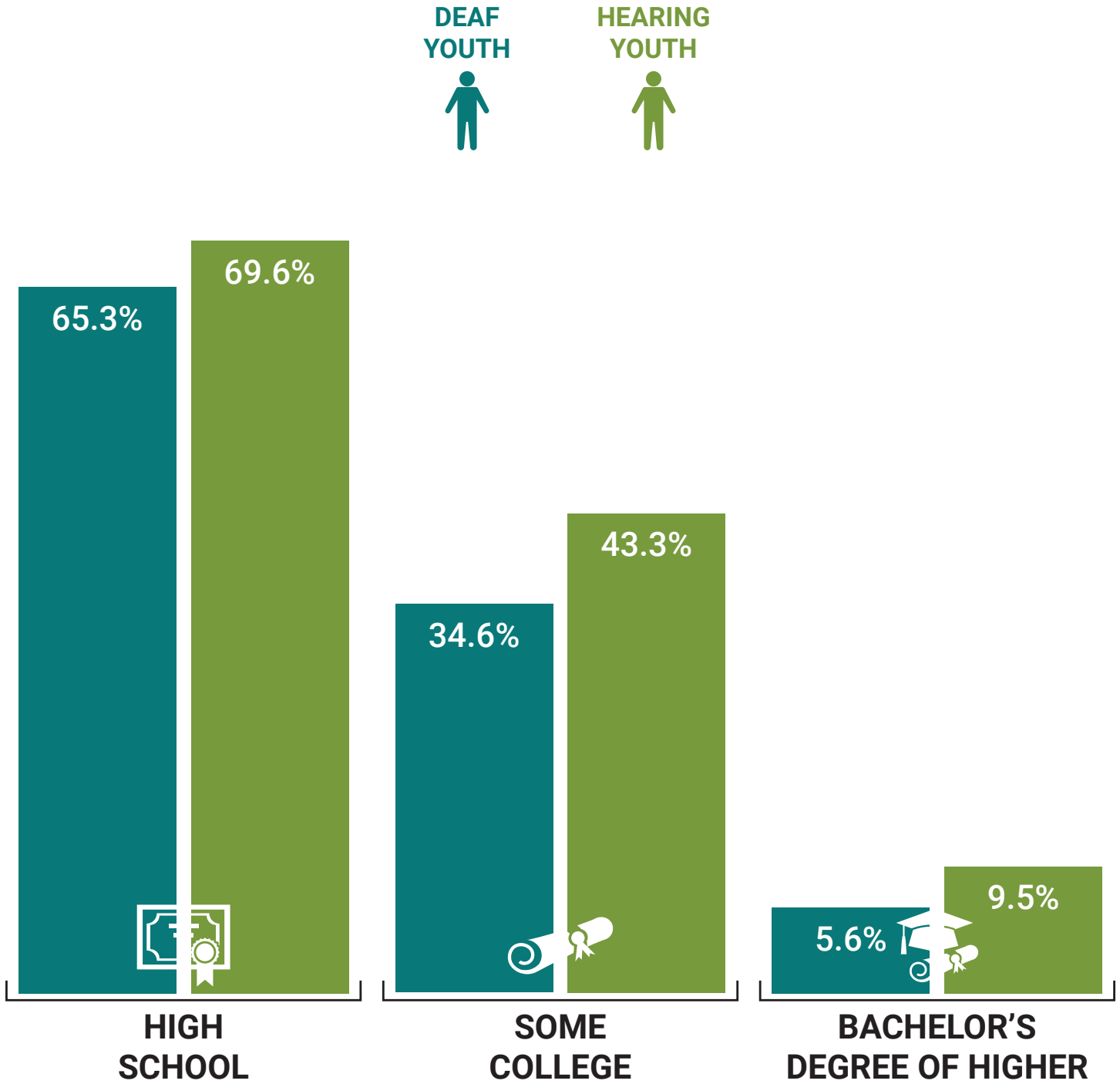
There are an estimated 280,000 deaf young people ages 16–24 living in the United States. They are more racially and ethnically diverse than older deaf people, are more likely than their hearing peers to live in households where no one is working, and nearly half have an additional disability.






were born outside of the United States






Fewer deaf youth have completed high school, some college, or a bachelor's degree than their hearing peers.



**Deaf youth who are BIPOC, deafdisabled, and deafblind face more barriers in educational systems, as demonstrated by educational completion rates.**

	 HIGH SCHOOL	 SOME COLLEGE	 BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER
DEAF ASIAN	67.2%	44.8%	9.2%
DEAF BLACK	61.0%	30.5%	2.5%
DEAF LATINX	62.5%	25.5%	6.8%
DEAF NATIVE AMERICAN	55.9%	14.1%	0.56%
DEAF MULTIRACIAL	63.2%	30.7%	4.9%
DEAF WHITE	68.3%	28.5%	5.4%

	 HIGH SCHOOL	 SOME COLLEGE	 BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER
DEAFDISABLED	57.3%	24.5%	3.2%
DEAFBLIND	60.2%	28.4%	4.6%
DEAF WITHOUT ADDITIONAL DISABILITIES	70.7%	41.3%	6.9%

It's important to remember that **deaf youth are not all the same**—they have different backgrounds and experiences. Unfortunately, fewer deaf young people are completing high school, attending college, or earning a bachelor's degree compared to their hearing peers. This is even more challenging for deaf youth who are BIPOC, deafdisabled, or deafblind, as they face additional barriers in the education system, leading to lower completion rates. To support this diverse population, we need to find ways to ensure that our programs are inclusive and accessible. It's crucial to identify and address the gaps in our current support systems to ensure we are uplifting transition-age youth.

Among deaf youth between the ages of 16 and 24,

**24.2%** are enrolled in high school,

**53.1%** are in college or working, and

**22.7%** are not enrolled in school or currently working.

## How Engaged Are Deaf Youth in Postsecondary Experiences?

When young adults are neither enrolled in school nor employed, they are often referred to as “disconnected youth” or “opportunity youth.” Examining this group closely allows us to gain insights on how to effectively engage young people and provide them with equal opportunities for ongoing education and work experience.

**Deaf youth are disconnected at higher rates than the national average of 12.6%.**

## Who Are Disconnected Deaf Youth?

Deaf Black and Indigenous or Native American people, as well as deafblind and deafdisabled people, experience the highest rates of disconnection. Disconnected deaf youth are also likely to be a caregiver for an infant, rely on government assistance, and not have access to the internet.

It is crucial to understand that being disconnected during early adulthood has significant long-term impacts on earnings, education, and overall well-being. Deaf youth who are Black and Indigenous or Native American people, deafblind people, and deafdisabled people need more support getting reconnected with postsecondary opportunities. By addressing this issue and implementing strategies to support these people, we can help foster a more promising future for all young adults.

	EMPLOYED OR ENROLLED IN COLLEGE	NOT WORKING OR ENROLLED IN SCHOOL
DEAF ASIAN	60.8%	11.6%
DEAF BLACK	42.4%	30.3%
DEAF LATINX	49.5%	23.0%
DEAF NATIVE AMERICAN	38.5%	35.4%
DEAF MULTIRACIAL	53.0%	21.6%
DEAF WHITE	57.1%	21.3%
DEAFBLIND	44.1%	32.3%
DEAFDISABLED	38.2%	34.9%
DEAF WITHOUT ADDITIONAL DISABILITIES	63.1%	13.8%

## DEAF YOUTH: WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US?

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The data in this report comes from the American Community Survey (ACS), which is a yearly survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. It gives us the most up-to-date information about education trends for deaf people in the United States. We used survey participants who identified as deaf or having serious difficulty hearing to represent the deaf population in our analyses. These estimates are based on a sample of 12,181 deaf people between the ages of 16 and 24 from 2017 to 2021. For additional details, please refer to our [FAQs page](#), which provides more information about the ACS data.

## Recommended Citation

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