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## **Full Nest Syndrome: More than half of America's 18-24-year-olds live with parents.**

**New York City** - One in seven young adults is emerging from adolescence disconnected from any pathway leading to financial and economic independence in adulthood.

Reaching adulthood used to mean getting married and having children; today it means completing school, living independently and/or having a full-time job – but that's increasingly difficult say researchers at the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), who say the trend has resulted in more young adults than ever before who are still living with their parents.

“The transition to adulthood is becoming increasingly protracted and delayed,” says Vanessa Wight, PhD, a senior research associate at NCCP, a poverty think tank at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health. “Children are living at home longer than they were 30 years ago.”

In 1970, according to a new NCCP report analyzing data from the U. S. Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, March 2010, 47.3 percent of young adults aged 18 to 24 were living at home. By 2009 52.8 percent were living at home. In 1970 less than 30 percent were enrolled in school; by 2008, the percentage had increased to 45.5 percent.

NCCP also found that:

- Young adults are also delaying marriage and childbearing. In 1970, the median age at first marriage was 20.8 for women and 23.2 for men. By 2009, median age had increased by about five years for both women and men to 25.9 and 28.1, respectively.
- The average age of mothers at first birth has increased from 21.4 years in 1970 to 25 years in 2006.

“Amidst the backdrop of these dramatic changes in school enrollment, marriage, and childbearing, there is a growing number of young adults for whom the transition is considerably more difficult,” write the report's authors. “If one of the primary goals of a successful transition to adulthood is the ability to be self sufficient apart from parents, then a growing share of the young adult population... ..is not connected to any of the various activities that might lead to economic independence, such as being in school, working, or serving in the military.”

Disconnection varies by age, race, ethnicity, and nativity say the researchers.

- Disconnection is highest among young adults aged 19 to 21.
- The rate of disconnection is highest among American Indian and Alaska Native young adults (28.8 percent).

- Black, Hispanic, and other young adults also face a high likelihood of being disconnected relative to their white and Asian counterparts.
- Asian young adults have the lowest rate of being disconnected at 7.4 percent.
- The likelihood of being disconnected is higher among young adults who were born outside the U.S. (18.8 percent) compared with their native-born counterparts (14.4 percent).

Disconnected young adults, when compared with their connected counterparts, are more likely to experience a range of factors that only amplify their precarious economic standing. They are more likely than connected young adults to be poor, to have a child and to be raising the child outside of a marital union, to be uninsured, and not surprisingly, to be receiving some kind of public assistance.

Since a large number of young adults who wind up disconnected are in school until at least the eleventh grade (the majority receives a high-school diploma), NCCP says high schools can play a role as important sites of intervention and recommends that states take steps to increase school-connectedness and mentorship programs along with providing school-based behavioral health screening and services.

Beyond high school, community colleges and other two-year institutions are positioned to provide educational development and employment training to young adults who might otherwise be barred from pursuing higher education due to academic under-preparation or financial and time constraints.

Another opportunity to improve access to and success in higher education, according to NCCP, is through significant reforms to the current financial aid system. Policymakers can improve the effectiveness of academic financial aid by increasing performance-based scholarships, reevaluating and reorganizing the grants, loans, and text credits programs, and simplifying their application processes to ensure that assistance reaches those students most in need.

The publication can be accessed free online at: [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub\\_979.html](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_979.html)

*The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) is the nation's leading public policy center dedicated to promoting the economic security, health and well-being of America's low-income families and children. Part of Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, NCCP uses research to inform policy and practice with the goal of ensuring positive outcomes for the next generation.*