

# High School Graduation Rate

## DEFINITION

*High school graduation rate* is the percentage of students who graduate from high school within four years of entering, calculated by dividing the number of students who graduate in four years or fewer by the total number of first-time entering ninth graders (adjusted for transfers in and transfers out during the four years).

## SIGNIFICANCE

High school graduation is the minimum requirement for college and most employment. In Rhode Island, adults without high school diplomas are more likely to be unemployed and have lower median incomes than adults with high school degrees.<sup>1,2</sup> In 2014, 12% of Rhode Island children lived in households headed by a non-high school graduate, lower than the national average of 14%.<sup>3</sup>

Children who attend high-quality preschool programs and read at grade level in elementary school are more likely to graduate from high school than their peers.<sup>4</sup> Early warning and intervention systems use early predictors of dropping out, such as poor attendance, behavior problems, and course failure in math and reading, to identify students who are off-track, so academic supports can be put in place to help students get “on track” for graduation.<sup>5</sup> Supports during the transition from middle to high school have been found to be particularly

important to preventing dropping out.<sup>6,7</sup>

Adopting student-centered learning practices at the high school level can increase achievement and engagement for students from a variety of backgrounds. These practices encourage deeper engagement with school by personalizing learning to a student’s interests, allowing students to take ownership over their work and continue learning outside of the classroom, and pacing learning to match the student’s mastery of the content.<sup>8</sup>

In order to graduate, Rhode Island students must complete at least 20 courses in core subject areas, two performance-based assessments, and starting with the Class of 2021, reach a minimum achievement level on the state assessment in content areas designated by the Board of Education. The Rhode Island Secondary School Regulations and high school graduation requirements are currently under revision.<sup>9</sup>

High School Graduation Rates	
2013-2014	
RI	81%
US	82%
National Rank*	34th
New England Rank**	6th

\*1st is best; 49th is worst

\*\*1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). Table 1. Retrieved February 26, 2016, from www.nces.ed.gov

## Rhode Island Four-Year High School Graduation and Dropout Rates, by Student Subgroup, Class of 2015

	COHORT SIZE	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% OF STUDENTS STILL IN SCHOOL	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Female Students	5,341	5%	1%	7%	86%
Male Students	5,564	8%	2%	10%	80%
English Language Learners	1,240	11%	<1%	12%	77%
Students With Disabilities	2,553	12%	2%	19%	68%
Students Without Disabilities	8,352	5%	1%	6%	88%
Low-Income Students	6,276	10%	2%	12%	76%
Higher-Income Students	4,629	2%	1%	4%	93%
White Students	6,889	5%	2%	7%	87%
Asian Students	366	6%	1%	5%	89%
Black Students	891	8%	2%	13%	77%
Hispanic Students	2,341	10%	1%	13%	76%
Native American	82	20%	1%	15%	65%
<b>ALL STUDENTS</b>	<b>10,905</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>83%</b>

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2015. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

◆ The Rhode Island four-year graduation rate for the Class of 2015 was 83%, up from 70% for the Class of 2007 (the first class for which the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) began calculating graduation rates using a cohort formula).<sup>10</sup>

◆ Poverty is associated with the likelihood of dropping out.<sup>11</sup> Almost one in eight students in Rhode Island’s four core cities drop out of high school (12% drop out rate) compared to about one in 20 students in the remainder of the state (5% drop out rate).<sup>12</sup>

## Rhode Island Five- and Six-Year High School Graduation Rates

◆ Rhode Island calculates five- and six-year graduation rates to recognize that graduation is an accomplishment regardless of the time it takes. Of the 11,425 Rhode Island students who enrolled in ninth grade in 2009, 9,150 (80.1%) graduated in four years in 2013, 435 (3.8%) graduated in five years in 2014, and 57 (<1%) graduated in six years in 2015.<sup>13</sup>

◆ Of the 435 students who graduated in five years in 2014, 45% were students with disabilities. Of the 57 students who graduated in six years in 2015, 65% were students with disabilities.<sup>14</sup>

# High School Graduation Rate

Table 52.

High School Graduation Rates, Rhode Island, Class of 2015

SCHOOL DISTRICT	FOUR-YEAR COHORT RATES				
	# OF STUDENTS IN COHORT	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% STILL IN SCHOOL	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Barrington	284	2%	<1%	2%	95%
Bristol Warren	248	4%	<1%	10%	86%
Burrillville	183	4%	4%	3%	89%
Central Falls	224	5%	3%	11%	81%
Chariho	317	3%	2%	4%	90%
Coventry	377	4%	<1%	5%	91%
Cranston	826	4%	2%	9%	85%
Cumberland	360	4%	0%	8%	88%
East Greenwich	195	2%	1%	4%	94%
East Providence	390	6%	2%	9%	82%
Exeter-West Greenwich	142	5%	4%	8%	83%
Foster-Glocester	161	2%	1%	6%	92%
Johnston	199	8%	1%	7%	84%
Lincoln	264	4%	<1%	3%	93%
Middletown	186	8%	4%	6%	82%
Narragansett	121	4%	1%	2%	93%
Newport	142	15%	1%	6%	79%
New Shoreham	13	0%	0%	15%	85%
North Kingstown	340	4%	3%	4%	89%
North Providence	244	<1%	1%	4%	95%
North Smithfield	148	3%	0%	9%	89%
Pawtucket	535	10%	2%	8%	81%
Portsmouth	221	2%	0%	2%	96%
Providence	1,649	11%	1%	13%	75%
Scituate	118	2%	0%	4%	94%
Smithfield	160	3%	0%	2%	96%
South Kingstown	243	5%	<1%	6%	88%
Tiverton	134	2%	2%	2%	93%
Warwick	738	8%	4%	8%	81%
West Warwick	239	7%	0%	8%	85%
Westerly	244	3%	1%	5%	91%
Woonsocket	456	20%	2%	16%	63%
<i>Beacon Charter High School for the Arts</i>	56	2%	2%	5%	91%
<i>Blackstone Academy</i>	40	3%	0%	15%	83%
<i>The Greene School</i>	34	0%	0%	24%	76%
<i>William M. Davies Jr. Career &amp; Technical High School</i>	205	4%	<1%	8%	87%
<i>Paul Cuffee Charter School</i>	63	2%	0%	5%	94%
<i>Rhode Island School for the Deaf</i>	16	19%	0%	81%	0%
<i>DCYF Schools</i>	59	17%	39%	34%	10%
<i>Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center</i>	216	3%	<1%	7%	90%
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	2,864	12%	1%	12%	75%
<i>Remainder of State</i>	7,237	5%	1%	6%	88%
<i>Rhode Island</i>	10,905	7%	2%	9%	83%

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2015.

The 2015 four-year cohort graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four years or fewer divided by the total number of students in the cohort. The cohort is calculated as the number of first-time entering ninth graders in 2011-2012 adjusted for transfers in and transfers out during the course of the four years. The cohort dropout rate is calculated the same way as the graduation rate, but the numerator is the number of students who drop out or whose status is unknown at the end of four years. Separate rates are calculated for the percentage of students who are retained in high school and therefore are taking more than four years to graduate and for the percentage of students who received their GED within four years instead of graduating with a traditional diploma.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

Students from Little Compton attend high school in Portsmouth, and students from Jamestown attend high school in North Kingstown. DCYF includes students attending DCYF alternative schools.

Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College and the Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy are not reported separately because these students generally complete their course of study in more than four years. These 115 students are, however, included in the state total.

## References

- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2014. Table S2301.
- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2014. Table B20004.
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, [datacenter.kidscount.org](http://datacenter.kidscount.org)
- <sup>4,7,11</sup> Shore, R. & Shore, B. (2009). *KIDS COUNT indicator brief: Reducing the high school dropout rate*. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- <sup>5,6</sup> Balfanz, R., et al. (2014). *Building a grad nation: Progress and challenge in ending the high school dropout epidemic*. Retrieved February 18, 2015, from [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org)

(continued on page 185)