

# Student Mobility

## DEFINITION

*Student mobility* is the number of students who enrolled in school after September 30 or withdrew from school before June 1 divided by the total enrollment for that school district.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Student mobility is associated with lower academic performance, social and psychological difficulties, lower levels of school engagement, and increased risk of dropping out of high school. Changing schools can disrupt learning, can negatively impact a student's achievement, and can cause social upheaval for children. Student mobility also can lead to less active parent involvement in their children's schools.<sup>1,2</sup>

Students who change schools frequently are more likely to have lower math and reading skills, more likely to repeat a grade, more likely to be suspended, and less likely to graduate from high school than their non-mobile peers.<sup>3,4</sup>

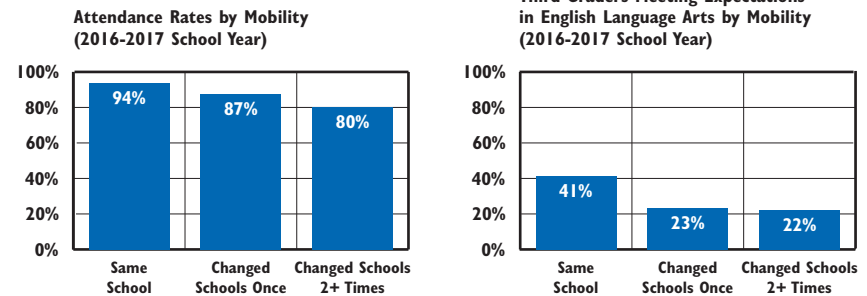
Regardless of income status and ethnicity, mobility can negatively affect student achievement. However, low-income children and children of color are more likely to be mobile and experience greater negative impacts on their academic achievement, than higher-income and White students. Students receiving special education services also are likely to be negatively impacted by changing schools.<sup>5,6</sup>

High mobility rates in schools can negatively impact all students because teachers must slow curriculum progress, repeat lessons, and adjust to changing classroom dynamics and student needs. Within-year moves are particularly disruptive for students, teachers and schools.<sup>7,8</sup>

Families may move their children to a different school because they are dissatisfied with the school, concerned about their child's safety, or because they are moving due to changes in family circumstances.<sup>9</sup> Changes in family circumstances can be either positive or negative factors, including eviction or foreclosure, divorce or marriage, job loss or job changes, death in the family, or a desire to improve quality of life. Mobile students in low-income and Black families are more likely to change schools due to family reasons than mobile students in higher-income and White families.<sup>10,11</sup>

Between 2012 and 2016 in Rhode Island, 11% of children ages five to 17 changed residence at least once during the previous year, 80% of whom moved within Rhode Island and 20% of whom moved from another state or abroad.<sup>12</sup> Nationally and in Rhode Island, people with incomes below the poverty line are more likely to move than higher-income residents. Between 2012 and 2016, 24% of Rhode Islanders living below the poverty line moved, compared with 11% of higher-income residents.<sup>13</sup>

## School Mobility and Education Outcomes in Rhode Island



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2016-2017 school year.

- ◆ **Rhode Island students who change schools mid-year are absent more often than students who do not change schools.** Rhode Island students who did not change schools had a 94% attendance rate, compared with 87% for those who changed schools once and 80% for those who changed schools two or more times during the 2016-2017 school year.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ **Children who change schools mid-year also perform worse on standardized tests than children who have not experienced school mobility.** During the 2016-2017 school year in Rhode Island, 41% of third-grade children who did not experience mobility met expectations in reading/writing on the *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)* state assessment, compared with 23% of students who moved once and 22% of students who moved two or more times.<sup>15</sup>
- ◆ **School districts with high mobility rates can reduce the negative effects of mobility on students by providing immediate and comprehensive screening of entering students to ensure that students are properly placed.** Districts also can identify other districts where students most frequently transfer to and from and align their curricula, programs, and policies to reduce learning disruption.<sup>16</sup>
- ◆ **One-third of children in foster care in the U.S. will experience five or more school changes before they turn age 18, and such changes often result in lost academic progress.** The federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* includes provisions to give children in foster care more educational stability by allowing students to stay in their school of origin if it is in their best interest and providing transportation to that school.<sup>17</sup>

## Student Mobility and Stability Rates

◆ Mobility rates are calculated by adding all children who enrolled after September 30 to all those who withdrew before June 1 and dividing the total by the total enrollment for that school district.<sup>18</sup>

◆ Stability rates measure the number of children who attended the same school the entire school year in a school district. The stability rate is calculated by dividing the number of children enrolled the whole year at the same school in the school district by total enrollment for that school district. The stability rate for the four core cities was 80% in the 2016-2017 school year, compared with a stability rate of 91% in the remainder of the state.<sup>19</sup>

◆ Total enrollment for each district is cumulative over the course of the school year.<sup>20</sup>

◆ The overall Rhode Island student mobility rate was 14% in the 2016-2017 school year. The four core cities had a higher mobility rate (22%) than districts in the remainder of the state (10%).<sup>21</sup>

◆ During the 2016-2017 school year, Rhode Island high schools had higher mobility rates (17%) than elementary schools (13%) and middle schools (11%).<sup>22</sup>

Table 45. Student Mobility and Stability Rates by District, Rhode Island, 2016-2017 School Year

SCHOOL DISTRICT	CUMULATIVE ENROLLMENT FOR 2016-2017	# ENROLLED THE WHOLE YEAR	# ENROLLED AFTER SEPT. 30	# EXITED BEFORE JUNE 1	STABILITY RATE	MOBILITY RATE
Barrington	3,397	3,284	29	52	97%	2%
Bristol Warren	3,408	2,995	191	246	88%	13%
Burrillville	2,386	2,211	78	110	93%	8%
Central Falls	2,953	2,225	396	388	75%	27%
Charlho	3,338	3,075	120	161	92%	8%
Coventry	4,794	4,415	183	211	92%	8%
Cranston	11,081	9,743	605	804	88%	13%
Cumberland	4,782	4,316	240	248	90%	10%
East Greenwich	2,543	2,408	66	75	95%	6%
East Providence	5,479	4,917	246	340	90%	11%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,657	1,554	59	48	94%	6%
Foster	278	253	13	14	91%	10%
Foster-Glocester	1,186	1,140	22	30	96%	4%
Glocester	567	530	23	19	93%	7%
Jamestown	477	446	13	18	94%	6%
Johnston	3,327	2,942	199	207	88%	12%
Lincoln	3,061	2,825	112	135	92%	8%
Little Compton	243	235	*	*	97%	3%
Middletown	2,312	2,067	119	139	89%	11%
Narragansett	1,318	1,232	43	50	93%	7%
New Shoreham	124	108	*	11	87%	13%
Newport	2,349	1,964	197	221	84%	18%
North Kingstown	4,100	3,790	128	194	92%	8%
North Providence	3,661	3,249	213	229	89%	12%
North Smithfield	1,751	1,618	75	78	92%	9%
Pawtucket	9,693	8,195	751	870	85%	17%
Portsmouth	2,555	2,329	111	126	91%	9%
Providence	27,532	21,539	2,983	3,643	78%	24%
Scituate	1,343	1,254	37	54	93%	7%
Smithfield	2,439	2,296	87	70	94%	6%
South Kingstown	3,152	2,950	106	111	94%	7%
Tiverton	1,920	1,743	61	118	91%	9%
Warwick	9,404	8,502	440	527	90%	10%
West Warwick	3,700	3,184	231	325	86%	15%
Westerly	2,921	2,625	142	177	90%	11%
Woonsocket	6,603	5,274	646	793	80%	22%
Charter Schools	7,377	6,702	285	420	91%	10%
State-Operated Schools	2,057	1,609	279	301	78%	28%
UCAP	158	125	11	22	79%	21%
Four Core Cities	46,781	37,233	4,776	5,694	80%	22%
Remainder of State	95,053	86,200	4,235	5,150	91%	10%
Rhode Island	151,426	131,869	9,586	11,587	87%	14%

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, 2016-2017 school year.

\*Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These students are still counted in district totals and in the four core cities, remainder of the state, and state totals.

Charter Schools include: Achievement First Rhode Island, Beacon Charter High School for the Arts, Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, The Compass School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, The Greene School, Highlander Charter School, Hope Academy, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School, Segue Institute for Learning, Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, South Side Elementary Charter School, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and the Village Green Virtual Public Charter School. State-operated schools include DCYF Schools, Metropolitan Regional Career & Technical High School, William M. Davies Career & Technical High School and the Rhode Island School for the Deaf. UCAP is the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program.

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

### References

- <sup>13</sup> Herbers, J. E., Reynolds, A. J., & Chen, C. (2013). School mobility and developmental outcomes in young adulthood. *Development and Psychopathology*, 25(2), 501-515.
- <sup>2,4,5,8</sup> Scherrer, J. (2013). The negative effects of student mobility: Mobility as a predictor, mobility as a mediator. *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership*, 8(1), 1-14.
- <sup>6,7,10</sup> Burkam, D. T., Lee, V. E., & Dwyer, J. (2009). *School mobility in the early elementary grades: Frequency and impact from nationally-representative data*. Paper presented at the National Research Council Workshop on the Impact of Mobility and Change on the Lives of Young Children, Schools and Neighborhoods, Washington, DC.

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