

Student Mobility

DEFINITION

Student mobility is the number of students who either enrolled in or withdrew from Rhode Island public schools during the school year divided by the total school enrollment numbers.

SIGNIFICANCE

Families move for a variety of reasons that may include changes in household structure, parental employment status, cost of housing, health, dissatisfaction with neighborhood conditions or to improve the overall quality of family life.¹

Nationally, 14% of school-age children moved between 2005 and 2006.² Mobility can adversely affect children's academic performance. Changing schools disrupts learning and can result in children missing parts of the core curriculum.³ Delays in the transfer of student records often present challenges for administrators in correctly placing students in classes. This problem can be particularly damaging for students with special needs or behavior problems who may not receive needed services in a timely manner.⁴

High mobility rates in a school can also negatively impact non-mobile students because teachers often slow curriculum progress and spend extra time helping new students "catch up."⁵ The higher the mobility in a school, the more often teachers have to interrupt,

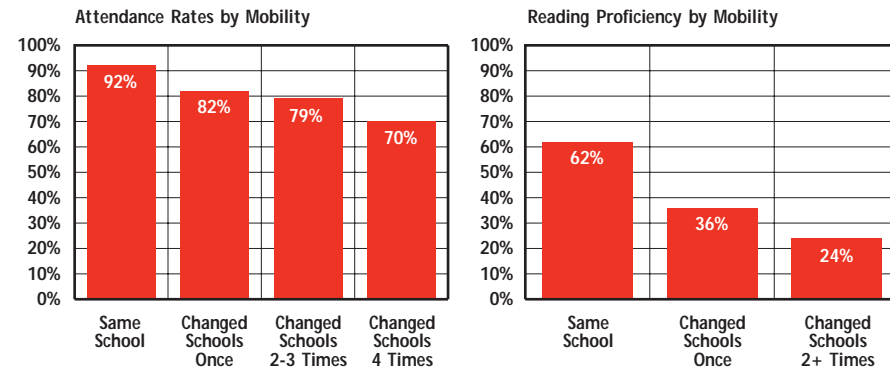
change or completely abandon current lessons. Teachers in these schools often spend time helping new students adjust to school rules and addressing their social concerns.⁶

Strong evidence exists that student mobility at all ages decreases student test scores and grade point averages and reduces the chance that a student will graduate.^{7,8} Mobility also has a strong relationship to child well-being, particularly for at-risk families. Frequent moves are correlated with negative outcomes such as depression and drug and alcohol use.⁹ Children who move three or more times are 60% more likely to repeat a grade and 80% more likely to be expelled or suspended than their less mobile peers.¹⁰

Nationally, children under age five, minority children, children living in low-income households, and children in renter households have higher rates of mobility than other children.^{11,12}

The overall school mobility rate for Rhode Island was 18% for the 2006-2007 school year. There was significant variation across school districts, from a high of 40% in Central Falls to a low of 1% in Little Compton. The core cities have a significantly higher mobility rate (29%) than districts in the remainder of the state (11%).¹³

Mobility and Education Outcomes in Rhode Island



Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Data Warehouse, 2005-2006 school year.

◆ **In Rhode Island, students who move are absent more often than students who do not move. Rhode Island students who did not change schools had a 92% attendance rate, compared with 82% for those who moved once, 79% for those who moved 2 or 3 times and 70% for those who moved 4 times.¹⁴**

◆ **Children who move also perform worse on standardized tests than children who have not experienced mobility. In 2005-2006 in Rhode Island, 62% of 4th grade children who did not experience mobility met the reading proficiency standard on the New England Common Assessment Program exam, compared with 36% of students who moved once and 24% of students who moved twice or more.¹⁵**

Mobility among Rhode Island Children

◆ **In 2006 in Rhode Island, 14% of children ages 5 to 19 changed residency at least once during the previous year, with the majority (9%) moving within the same county, 1% moving within Rhode Island from another county, 4% moving from a different state, and 1% moving from abroad.¹⁶**

◆ **Individuals living below the federal poverty threshold were more likely to change residency in Rhode Island in 2006. For the population ages 1 year and older, 19% of the population living below the poverty threshold moved within the same county or within the state, compared to 9% of the population living above the poverty threshold.¹⁷**

Table 38.

Student Mobility Rate by District, Rhode Island, 2006-2007 School Year

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	ENROLLED WHOLE YEAR	CHILDREN ENROLLED & EXITED DURING YEAR	STABILITY RATE	MOBILITY RATE
Barrington	3,657	3,428	235	94%	6%
Bristol-Warren	3,701	3,346	380	90%	10%
Burrillville	2,742	2,466	296	90%	11%
Central Falls	4,796	3,007	1,905	63%	40%
Charlho	3,990	3,602	412	90%	10%
Coventry	5,969	5,398	609	90%	10%
Cranston	12,293	10,328	2,059	84%	17%
Cumberland	5,555	4,953	630	89%	11%
East Greenwich	2,476	2,345	136	95%	5%
East Providence	6,075	5,548	548	91%	9%
Exter-West Greenwich	2,144	1,983	175	92%	8%
Foster	309	300	11	97%	4%
Foster-Glocester	1,629	1,514	121	93%	7%
Glocester	726	653	74	90%	10%
Jamestown	518	489	30	94%	6%
Johnston	3,793	2,978	850	79%	22%
Lincoln	3,470	3,341	129	96%	4%
Little Compton	315	311	4	99%	1%
Middletown	2,976	2,228	773	75%	26%
Narragansett	1,584	1,487	104	94%	7%
New Shoreham	161	131	31	81%	19%
Newport	2,918	2,051	911	70%	31%
North Kingstown	4,842	4,383	483	91%	10%
North Providence	3,503	3,160	366	90%	10%
North Smithfield	1,979	1,834	171	93%	9%
Pawtucket	11,470	7,993	3,680	70%	32%
Portsmouth	3,265	2,933	366	90%	11%
Providence	29,893	22,177	8,416	74%	28%
Scituate	1,864	1,769	102	95%	5%
Smithfield	2,697	2,558	155	95%	6%
South Kingstown	4,042	3,683	385	91%	10%
Tiverton	2,217	2,035	192	92%	9%
Warwick	11,915	10,668	1,362	90%	11%
West Warwick	4,132	3,401	773	82%	19%
Westerly	3,638	3,274	392	90%	11%
Woonsocket	7,149	5,727	1,575	80%	22%
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>1,794</i>	<i>1,691</i>	<i>103</i>	<i>94%</i>	<i>6%</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>162</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>74%</i>	<i>27%</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>2,528</i>	<i>1,538</i>	<i>1,317</i>	<i>61%</i>	<i>52%</i>
<i>Core Cities</i>	<i>60,358</i>	<i>44,356</i>	<i>17,260</i>	<i>73%</i>	<i>29%</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>104,045</i>	<i>93,126</i>	<i>11,581</i>	<i>90%</i>	<i>11%</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>168,887</i>	<i>140,831</i>	<i>30,304</i>	<i>83%</i>	<i>18%</i>

Calculating Mobility and Stability Rates

◆ **Mobility rates are calculated by adding all children who entered any school within the school district to all those who withdrew from a school in the district and dividing the total by the total enrollment for that school district.**

◆ **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.**

◆ **Total enrollment for each district is cumulative over the course of the school year.**

Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007.

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2006-2007 School Year.

Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

References

- ¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2006 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. *Table 31: Reason for move by sex, age, race and Hispanic origin, education, marital status, labor force status, tenure, poverty status, and household income in 2005 (all categories): 2005 to 2006.*
- ² U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2006 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. *Table 1: General mobility by region, sex, and age: 2005-2006.*
- ^{3,5,7} American Youth Policy Forum. (2002). *Forum Brief: Addressing the causes and consequences of high student mobility: The role of school systems and communities.* Retrieved December 18, 2007 from www.aypf.org/forumbriefs/2002/fb030102.htm
- ^{4,6} Sanderson, D. R. (2003). Engaging highly transient students. *Education*, 123(3), 600-605.
- ^{8,9} Scanlon, E. & Devine, K. (2001). Residential mobility and youth well-being: Research, policy and practice Issues. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, XXVIII(1), 119-138.
- ¹⁰ Rhodes, V. L. (2005). Kids on the move: The effects of student mobility on NCLB school accountability ratings. *Urban Education Journal*, 3(3).
- ¹¹ Schacter, J. (2001). *Geographical mobility - population characteristics: March 1999 to March 2000.* Current Population Reports. Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- ¹² *Trends in the well-being of America's children and youth.* (2002). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.
- ¹³ Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2006-2007 school year.
- ^{14,15} Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2005-2006 school year.
- ¹⁶ U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2006. Table B07001.
- ¹⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2006. Table B07012.