

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

Student mobility is associated with lower academic performance, social and psychological difficulties, lower levels of school engagement and behavioral problems.¹ Changing schools disrupts learning, can result in children missing critical conceptual knowledge and skills and can cause social upheaval for children. Student mobility also can lead to less active parent involvement in their children's schools.^{2,3}

Students who change schools frequently are more likely to have lower math and reading skills, are more likely to repeat a grade, are more likely to be suspended than their less-mobile peers, and are less likely to graduate from high school than their non-mobile peers.^{4,5}

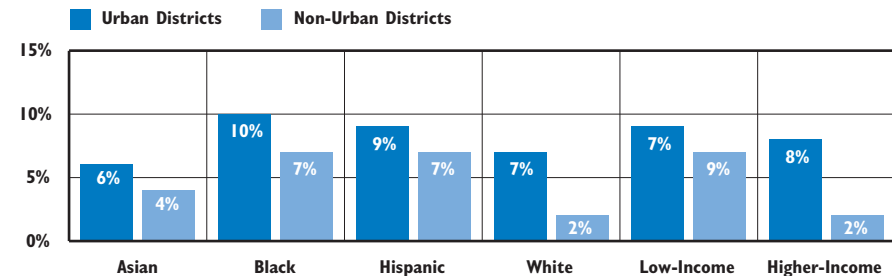
Low-income and minority children are more likely to be mobile than higher-income and White students. School mobility has a greater impact on the academic achievement of low-income students than it does on higher-income students. Students receiving special education services also are likely to be negatively impacted by changing schools.⁶

High mobility rates in schools can have a negative impact on 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.^{7,8}

Families may move their child 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.⁹ Changes in family circumstances can be either positive or negative factors including divorce or marriage, job loss or job changes, death in the family, as well as a desire to improve quality of life. Mobile students in low-income and minority families are more likely to change schools due to family reasons than mobile students in higher-income and White families.¹⁰

Between 2006 and 2008 in Rhode Island, 11% of children ages five to 17 changed residency at least once during the previous year, three-quarters (75%) of whom moved within the same county, 7% moved within the state to a different county, and 19% moved from another state or abroad.¹¹ During this period, 26% of Rhode Islanders over age one living below the poverty line moved, compared with 10% of higher-income residents.¹²

Rhode Island School Year In-Mobility Rates*, Grades 9-12, Urban** and Non-Urban Districts, 2007-2008 School Year



*School year in-mobility rate is the percentage of students enrolled at the end of the 2007-2008 school year who changed schools at least once after October 1, 2007 and who were still enrolled at the end of the school year. **The five urban districts used in this analysis include Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence and Woonsocket.

◆ High school students in urban districts in Rhode Island are more likely than those in non-urban districts to be mobile, regardless of race, ethnicity or income. These differences are particularly large for White and higher-income students. Twenty-two percent of students in grades one through five who lived in Rhode Island's urban districts changed schools at least once during the school year between October 2006 and October 2008, compared with 10% of students in the rest of the state.

◆ Rhode Island students who change schools mid-year are absent more often, suspended more often and perform worse in both reading and math than students who do not change schools.

Source: The Providence Plan analysis of data from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Impact of Foreclosures on Student Mobility

◆ The high cost of housing has caused greater levels of residential and school mobility among low-income families. The U.S. foreclosure crisis has increased residential mobility among families across the income spectrum and among homeowners as well as renters.¹³

◆ The insecurity, stress, and financial problems associated with foreclosures can impact child well-being and academic success. Communities with the highest foreclosure rates may experience unprecedented levels of student mobility, affecting non-mobile students as well as mobile students.¹⁴

Table 42.

Student Mobility and Stability Rates by District, Rhode Island, 2008-2009 School Year

School 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 any school in the district and dividing the total by the total enrollment for that school district.¹⁵

◆ 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.¹⁶

◆ Total enrollment for each district is cumulative over the course of the school year.¹⁷

◆ The overall Rhode Island student mobility rate was 16% in the 2008-2009 school year. The core cities had a significantly higher mobility rate (26%) than districts in the remainder of the state (9%).¹⁸

◆ The average length of time between enrollments for mobile students in Rhode Island during the 2007-2008 school year was ten days.¹⁹

SCHOOL DISTRICT	CUMULATIVE ENROLLMENT FOR 2008-2009	# ENROLLED THE WHOLE YEAR	# ENROLLED AFTER OCT. 1	# EXITED AFTER OCT. 1	STABILITY RATE	MOBILITY RATE
Barrington	3,506	3,398	53	56	97%	3%
Bristol Warren	3,649	3,350	138	175	92%	9%
Burrillville	2,740	2,466	115	182	90%	11%
Central Falls	3,727	2,803	428	564	75%	27%
Charlho	3,836	3,503	160	194	91%	9%
Coventry	5,740	5,271	183	312	92%	9%
Cranston	11,433	10,195	632	702	89%	12%
Cumberland	5,249	4,871	166	224	93%	7%
East Greenwich	2,474	2,345	75	60	95%	5%
East Providence	6,220	5,518	291	451	89%	12%
Exeter-West Greenwich	2,009	1,879	76	64	94%	7%
Foster	261	247	13	1	95%	5%
Foster-Glocester	1,518	1,393	24	105	92%	8%
Glocester	658	617	23	20	94%	7%
Jamestown	505	468	20	19	93%	8%
Johnston	3,447	2,983	199	301	87%	15%
Lincoln	3,392	3,247	143	4	96%	4%
Little Compton	313	307	2	4	98%	2%
Middletown	2,604	2,211	187	229	85%	16%
Narragansett	1,530	1,420	68	54	93%	8%
New Shoreham	145	119	12	14	82%	18%
Newport	2,326	1,896	202	258	82%	20%
North Kingstown	4,649	4,309	159	206	93%	8%
North Providence	3,265	3,105	141	21	95%	5%
North Smithfield	1,958	1,821	78	82	93%	8%
Pawtucket	10,016	7,764	971	1,463	78%	24%
Portsmouth	3,060	2,761	149	184	90%	11%
Providence	28,237	21,000	3,095	4,768	74%	28%
Scituate	1,742	1,671	27	44	96%	4%
Smithfield	2,638	2,491	85	73	94%	6%
South Kingstown	3,959	3,546	144	292	90%	11%
Tiverton	2,078	1,828	127	135	88%	13%
Warwick	11,475	10,244	532	774	89%	11%
West Warwick	4,265	3,315	342	675	78%	24%
Westerly	3,398	3,067	162	193	90%	10%
Woonsocket	6,804	5,420	616	917	80%	23%
Charter Schools	2,079	1,930	29	120	93%	7%
State-Operated Schools	2,110	1,450	402	423	69%	39%
UCAP	160	123	19	22	77%	26%
Core Cities	55,375	42,198	5,654	8,645	76%	26%
Remainder of State	99,451	90,651	4,184	5,175	91%	9%
Rhode Island	159,175	136,352	10,288	14,385	86%	16%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2008-2009 school year.

Charter Schools include: Highlander Charter School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, International Charter School, Blackstone Academy, The Compass School, Beacon Charter School, and The Learning Community. State-operated schools include: The MET School, DCYF, Davies Career and Tech and the Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

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

References

- ^{1,5,9} Reynolds, A. J., Chen, C. & Herbers, J. E. (2009, June). *School mobility and educational success: A research synthesis and evidence on prevention*. 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.
- ^{2,4,6,7,10} Burkam, D. T., Lee, V. E. & Dwyer, J. (2009, June). *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.
- ^{3,8,13,14} Turner, M. A. & Berube, A. (2009). *Vibrant neighborhoods, successful schools: What the federal government can do to foster both*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- ¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2008. Table B07001.
- ¹² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006-2008. Table B07012.
- ^{15,16,17,18} Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2008-2009 school year.
- ¹⁹ The Providence Plan analysis of 2007-2008 school year data from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.