

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 number of students in the fall school enrollment. Percentages are reported for each school district overall as well as for their elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools.

SIGNIFICANCE

One in six third grade students in the U.S. has attended at least three schools since the beginning of the first grade.¹ Student mobility affects both the student and the classrooms they attend. Changing schools causes a disruption in a child's learning experience and may accentuate learning difficulties especially if the child enters a classroom at a different point in the curriculum than in their previous school.²

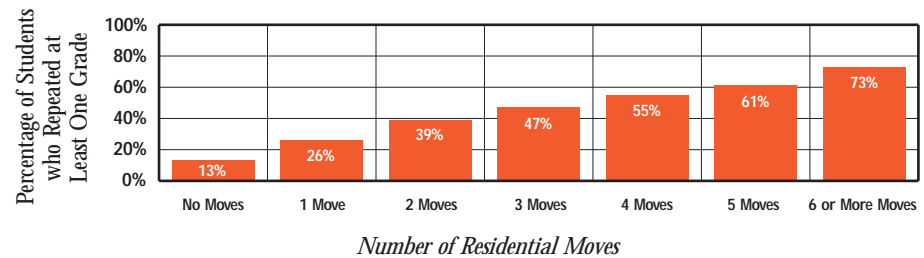
Research shows that frequent moves can have a negative affect on school performance and behavior and may affect other areas of child well-being.^{3,4} Teachers in schools with highly mobile students are more likely to have difficulty accurately assessing the needs of new children, determining their past educational experiences and being able to build on the student's knowledge and skills.⁵

Nationally, children of color, children living in low-income households or renter households and immigrants have the highest rates of mobility.⁶ Children who are English Language Learners (ELL) are more than twice as likely to change schools frequently as are non-ELL students.⁷ Rhode Island ELL students are highly concentrated in three communities with high rates of school mobility: Central Falls, Providence and Pawtucket.⁸

The overall school mobility rate for Rhode Island was 17% for the 2001-2002 school year.⁹ There was significant variation across school districts, from a high of 40% in Central Falls to a low of 3% in Jamestown.¹⁰ The core cities, those cities with greater than 15% children living in poverty, have a significantly higher mobility rate (28%) than schools in the remainder of the state (12%).¹¹

Residential mobility has a strong relationship to child well-being. Frequent moves are often correlated with such negative outcomes as dropping out of school, delinquency, depression and teen births.¹² Families move for a variety of reasons that may include changes in household structure, parental employment status, an inability to pay the rent, dissatisfaction with neighborhood conditions or a desire to improve overall quality of family life.^{13,14}

Students Who Repeated at Least One Grade by Number of Residential Moves, Providence, 1987 - 2001



Source: *Development and Use of Neighborhood Health Analysis: Residential Mobility in Context* (October 30, 2002). Providence, RI: The Providence Plan. Data represent the 57,641 children who were enrolled in Providence Schools between 1987 and 2001.

- ◆ Students in Providence who have at least one residential move are more likely to repeat a grade. As the number of moves increases, the likelihood of repeating a grade increases. Almost half (47%) of Providence students who moved 3 times had repeated a grade at least once. Almost three-quarters (73%) of children who moved 6 times had repeated a grade at least once.¹⁵
- ◆ Students with high mobility rates are less likely to meet proficiency standards in reading and math and are absent more often than those who do not move.¹⁶

Mobility Among Young Children Under Age 6 in Rhode Island

- ◆ Of all young children in Rhode Island, those born to teen mothers, single mothers or mothers with less than a high school diploma are most likely to experience residential mobility. Children living in the core cities are almost twice as likely to move as children living in the remainder of the state.¹⁷
- ◆ A study of Rhode Island children under age 6 found that residentially-mobile children have fewer office visits, less contact with a physician, and are more likely to see multiple physicians than other children.¹⁸

Table 30.

School Mobility by District, Rhode Island, School Year 2001-2002

DISTRICT	ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	MIDDLE / JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS	HIGH SCHOOLS	TOTAL DISTRICT MOBILITY
Barrington	3%	4%	6%	4%
Bristol-Warren	16%	7%	14%	13%
Burrillville	15%	17%	6%	12%
Central Falls	41%	37%	41%	40%
Charlton	10%	10%	4%	9%
Coventry	10%	5%	8%	8%
Cranston	16%	13%	19%	16%
Cumberland	7%	7%	7%	7%
East Greenwich	6%	5%	5%	6%
East Providence	17%	24%	12%	17%
Exeter-West Greenwich	6%	7%	14%	8%
Foster	6%	NA	NA	6%
Foster-Glocester	NA	16%	7%	11%
Glocester	6%	NA	NA	6%
Jamestown	3%	4%	NA	3%
Johnston	8%	9%	NA	6%
Lincoln	10%	9%	17%	12%
Little Compton	10%	NA	NA	10%
Middletown	27%	14%	17%	20%
Narragansett	10%	8%	11%	10%
New Shoreham	23%	23%	23%	23%
Newport	33%	23%	24%	28%
North Kingstown	31%	11%	9%	19%
North Providence	15%	13%	13%	14%
North Smithfield	15%	13%	13%	14%
Pawtucket	31%	21%	35%	30%
Portsmouth	17%	21%	14%	17%
Providence	31%	27%	20%	28%
Scituate	4%	4%	5%	4%
Smithfield	8%	4%	6%	7%
South Kingstown	10%	9%	7%	8%
Tiverton	9%	6%	NA	5%
Warwick	19%	10%	13%	15%
West Warwick	18%	19%	13%	17%
Westerly	13%	4%	12%	11%
Woonsocket	21%	32%	31%	26%
Core Cities	30%	27%	26%	28%
Remainder of State	13%	11%	11%	12%
Rhode Island	19%	16%	15%	17%

Sources

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 fall enrollment for that school district. If a child left one school within the district and entered another school in the same district during the school year, the child would be counted twice in the district's mobility rate. Because each district has different school configurations, mobility rates for elementary, middle/junior high and high school are not exactly comparable by grade across districts. Only schools that reported data are included in the mobility calculations for the district.

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2001 - 2002 School Year.

References for Indicator

- ^{1,5,7} *Elementary School Children: Many Change School Frequently; Harming Their Education* (February 1994). Washington, DC: U.S. General Accounting Office.
- ² Kerbow, D. (October 1996). *Patterns of Urban Student Mobility And Local School Reform: A Technical Report*. Baltimore, MD: Center for the Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University.
- ³ *Kids Mobility Project Report*. (January 2002). Minneapolis, MN: Family Housing Fund.
- ⁴ Scanlon, E. and Devine, K. (March 2001). "Residential Mobility and Youth Well-Being: Research, Policy and Practice Issues" in *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, Vol. XXVIII, Number 1.
- ⁶ *Geographical Mobility - Population Characteristics: March 1999 to March 2000* (May 2001). Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- ^{8,9,10,11} Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *InfoWorks 2001-2002*.
- ¹² *Trends in the Well-Being of America's Children and Youth* (2001). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.
- ¹³ *Why People Move: Exploring the March 2000 Current Population Survey: March 1999 to March 2000* (May 2001). Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- ¹⁴ *Counting on Ourselves: The Providence Demography Initiative/A First Portrait: Schools* (1999). Providence, RI: The Providence Blueprint for Education (PROBE) and The Providence Plan.
- ^{15,16,17,18} *Development and Use of Neighborhood Health Analysis: Residential Mobility in Context* (October 30, 2002). Providence, RI: The Providence Plan. Data represent The Providence Plan's analysis of data from the Providence School Department student enrollment databases, the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education standardized test scores and the Rhode Island Department of Health Kidsnet databases.