

# High School Graduation Rate

## DEFINITION

*High school graduation rate* is the percentage of the ninth-grade class that is expected to graduate, based on the existing drop-out incidence among 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students. The rate is computed using fall enrollment data and the number of students who dropped out between October 2, 2000 and October 1, 2001. It is a four-year cumulative rate, and represents the probability of an individual student graduating from high school.

## SIGNIFICANCE

A high school diploma should represent acquisition of the basic reading, writing, and mathematics skills a person needs to function in modern society.<sup>1</sup> Student achievement and graduation rates can be improved when schools have high expectations for all students; have effective and up-to-date curricula and teaching methods; prepared and sufficiently supported teachers; strong home/school linkages; adequate accountability systems; and effective and equitable allocation of resources.<sup>2</sup>

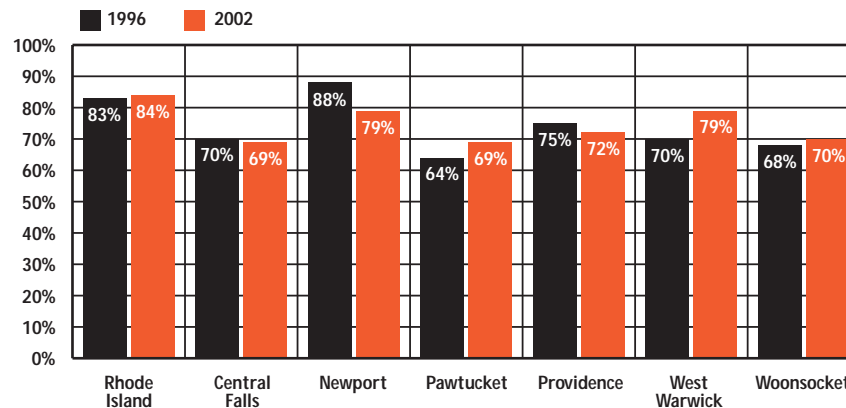
Several factors contribute to a student's decision to leave school. Ongoing patterns of absenteeism, poor grades, and poor achievement on tests are linked to dropping out. Schools with high concentrations of low-

achieving students and less-qualified teachers have higher dropout rates.<sup>3</sup> Students can benefit from access to a broad range of community supports that address academic issues, health problems, inadequate nutrition, neighborhood and family violence, and other factors that can disrupt school performance.<sup>4</sup>

In 2002 in Rhode Island, 87% of White students, 83% of Asian students, 76% of Black students, and 72% of Latino students graduated from high school.<sup>5</sup> Nationally, low-income students are three times more likely to drop out than middle-income students.<sup>6</sup>

Youth who drop out of school are more likely to rely on public assistance as adults.<sup>7</sup> In 1999, over half of the people over 25 who did not have a high school diploma or GED reported no earnings during that year.<sup>8</sup> In 2000, people without a high school diploma who found employment earned a median income of \$10,838 compared to \$18,571 for people with a high school degree or equivalent.<sup>9</sup> Female dropouts are much more likely to live in poverty than male dropouts of the same racial or ethnic group.<sup>10</sup> Young women who drop out of school are more likely to have children at younger ages and more likely to be single parents than high school graduates.<sup>11</sup>

High School Graduation Rate,  
Core Cities and Rhode Island, 1996-2002



Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

◆ Between 1996 and 2002, the graduation rate in Rhode Island did not improve significantly. Of the six communities with the highest child poverty rates, three (Central Falls, Newport and Providence) experienced a decrease in the percentage of students graduating from high school and three (Pawtucket, West Warwick, and Woonsocket) experienced improvements.<sup>12</sup>

◆ National research on dropout prevention programs highlights the importance of children's early education.<sup>13</sup> High quality early care and education and smaller class sizes in early elementary school are shown to improve academic achievement and high school completion later in life.<sup>14</sup> At-risk students benefit most from ongoing support, remediation, and counseling in the early elementary school grades.<sup>15</sup>

## The Role of the GED in Rhode Island

◆ The General Educational Development (GED) certificate offers a valuable alternative for youth and adults lacking a high school diploma. In 2001, over 655,000 Americans, including 2,369 Rhode Islanders, earned their GED credential.<sup>16</sup> While the GED improves access to jobs, studies show that the GED has less value than a traditional diploma as a tool for pursuing advanced education and employment opportunities.<sup>17,18</sup>

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Table 35.

## High School Graduation Rate, Rhode Island, 2002

SCHOOL DISTRICT	COMMUNITY CONTEXT						2001 GRADUATION RATE
	% CHILDREN IN POVERTY	% ADULTS COMPLETING HIGH SCHOOL	NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED	% LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY	% MINORITY ENROLLMENT	% OF STUDENTS TAKING THE SAT	
Barrington	4%	92%	3,286	<1%	4%	86%	90%
Bistol-Warren	12%	NA	3,810	4%	4%	58%	82%
Burrillville	5%	80%	2,749	<1%	2%	58%	87%
Central Falls	37%	49%	3,638	30%	74%	35%	69%
Chariho	6%	NA	3,887	<1%	3%	57%	94%
Coventry	8%	83%	5,785	<1%	3%	53%	90%
Cranston	8%	79%	11,155	4%	16%	55%	84%
Cumberland	3%	81%	5,373	3%	6%	61%	93%
East Greenwich	5%	93%	2,440	1%	5%	91%	97%
East Providence	9%	71%	6,566	5%	18%	56%	80%
Exeter-W. Greenwich	5%	NA	2,152	1%	3%	64%	93%
Foster	6%	88%	402	0%	4%	NA	NA
Foster-Glocester	4%	NA	1,632	0%	1%	62%	89%
Glocester	8%	87%	802	0%	3%	NA	NA
Jamestown	3%	93%	588	<1%	3%	NA	NA
Johnston	9%	78%	3,381	2%	8%	71%	91%
Lincoln	6%	82%	3,706	1%	6%	71%	99%
Little Compton	1%	91%	350	0%	0%	NA	NA
Middletown	9%	91%	2,856	1%	14%	70%	90%
Narragansett	10%	91%	1,742	<1%	5%	73%	89%
New Shoreham	11%	95%	130	2%	6%	NA	NA
Newport	24%	87%	2,937	3%	38%	73%	79%
North Kingstown	11%	92%	4,501	1%	5%	77%	92%
North Providence	9%	77%	3,476	3%	14%	45%	85%
North Smithfield	2%	82%	1,861	<1%	2%	75%	94%
Pawtucket	21%	66%	9,833	12%	45%	45%	69%
Portsmouth	3%	91%	2,888	<1%	4%	79%	97%
Providence	37%	66%	27,159	23%	84%	79%	72%
Scituate	4%	87%	1,772	0%	2%	69%	91%
Smithfield	4%	85%	2,733	0%	2%	75%	92%
South Kingstown	6%	91%	4,344	1%	10%	84%	91%
Tiverton	3%	80%	2,222	0%	2%	81%	87%
Warwick	8%	85%	12,222	1%	5%	61%	93%
West Warwick	18%	76%	3,795	2%	11%	61%	79%
Westerly	11%	82%	3,691	2%	7%	57%	92%
Woonsocket	27%	64%	6,760	6%	38%	50%	70%
<b>Core Cities</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>54,122</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Remainder of State</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>102,502</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>156,624</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>84%</b>

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

% children in poverty is from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Population Estimates, Children Ages 5-17, 1999. % of adults completing high school or higher is from Census 2000. All other data are from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2001-2002 school year.

The denominator for the indicator is the number of children enrolled in 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades in the fall of 2001. NA: Community has a regional high school.

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

### References

- <sup>1</sup> *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being 2002* (2002). Washington, DC: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics.
- <sup>2</sup> *Years of Promise: A Comprehensive Learning Strategy for America's Children* (1996). New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.
- <sup>3,15,17</sup> *Understanding Dropouts: Statistics, Strategies, and High-Stakes Testing* (2001). Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- <sup>4</sup> *Reducing the High School Dropout Rate* (July 2002). Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- <sup>5,12</sup> Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- <sup>6,11</sup> *Dropout Rates in the United States: 2000* (2001). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics.
- <sup>7</sup> Brown, B. (August 2001). *Teens, Jobs, and Welfare: Implications for Social Policy*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- <sup>8</sup> Greene, J. (November 2001). *High School Graduation Rates in the United States*. New York, NY: Black Alliance for Educational Options and the Center for Civic Innovation at the Manhattan Institute.
- <sup>9</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Income in 1999 by Educational Attainment for People 18 Years Old and Over, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: March 2000*. Revised October 2002.
- <sup>10</sup> Phillips, L. (1998). *The Girls Report: What We Know and Need to Know About Growing Up Female*. New York, NY: National Council for Research on Women.
- <sup>14</sup> Redd, Z., et al. *Educating America's Youth: What Makes a Difference* (August 2002). Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- <sup>16</sup> *Who Took the GED? GED 2001 Statistical Report* (2002). Washington, DC: American Council on Education, GED Testing Service.
- <sup>18</sup> Murnane, R. and Tyler, J. "The Increasing Role of the GED in American Education" *Education Week* Vol. 19, No. 34 (May 3, 2000). Bethesda, MD: Editorial Projects in Education Inc.