

High School Graduation Rate

DEFINITION

High school graduation rate is the percentage of students who graduate from high school within four years of entering, calculated by dividing the number of students who graduate in four years or fewer by the total number of first-time entering ninth graders (adjusted for transfers in and transfers out during the four years).

SIGNIFICANCE

High school graduation is the minimum requisite for college and most employment. In Rhode Island, adults without high school diplomas are more likely to be unemployed and have lower incomes than adults with high school degrees.^{1,2} In 2021, 12% of Rhode Island children lived in households headed by a non-high school graduate, similar to the national average of 11%.³

Children who attend high-quality preschool programs and read at grade level in elementary school are more likely to graduate from high school than their peers.⁴ Early warning and intervention systems use early predictors of dropping out, such as poor attendance, behavior problems, and course failure in math and reading, to identify students who are at risk, so supports can be put in place to help students get “on track” for graduation.⁵

Adopting student-centered learning practices at the high school level can

increase achievement and engagement for all students. These practices encourage deeper engagement by personalizing learning, allowing students to take ownership over their work, and pacing learning to match the student’s mastery of the content.⁶ Providing students with high-quality postsecondary and workforce engagement opportunities can also increase high school graduation rates and college and career readiness.⁷

In order to graduate, Rhode Island students must demonstrate proficiency in English language arts, math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology, complete at least 20 courses, and complete one performance-based assessment. Students can earn Council designations, including a Seal of Biliteracy, Commissioner’s Seal, and Pathway Endorsements. In 2022, Rhode Island adopted new graduation requirements which will require students beginning with the Class of 2024 to demonstrate proficiency in financial literacy and beginning with the Class of 2028 to also demonstrate proficiency in world languages, lab sciences, college preparation coursework, civics, and computer science.⁸



Rhode Island Four-Year High School Graduation and Dropout Rates, by Student Subgroup, Class of 2022

	COHORT SIZE	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% OF STUDENTS STILL IN SCHOOL	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Female Students	5,405	7%	1%	5%	87%
Male Students	5,906	12%	1%	7%	80%
Multilingual/English Learners	1,216	24%	<1%	9%	68%
Students Receiving Special Education Services	1,794	14%	2%	18%	66%
Students Not Receiving Special Education Services	9,527	9%	1%	4%	87%
Low-Income Students	5,992	14%	1%	8%	76%
Higher-Income Students	5,329	4%	1%	3%	92%
Students in Foster Care	66	29%	3%	17%	52%
Homeless Students	207	24%	2%	10%	64%
Asian Students ⁺	336	2%	0%	5%	92%
Black Students	1,055	12%	<1%	8%	80%
Hispanic Students	3,151	14%	1%	8%	77%
Native American	99	27%	0%	4%	69%
White Students	6,220	7%	1%	4%	87%
ALL STUDENTS	11,321	10%	1%	6%	83%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2022. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

⁺Data for Asian students is not disaggregated by ethnic group. National research shows large academic disparities across Asian ethnic groups.

◆ The Rhode Island four-year graduation rate for the Class of 2022 was 83%, up from 77% for the Class of 2012. The lowest graduation rates were among Multilingual Learners, students receiving special education services, students in foster care, students experiencing homelessness, low-income students, and Hispanic and Native American students.^{9,10}



Rhode Island Five- and Six-Year High School Graduation Rates

◆ Rhode Island calculates five- and six-year graduation rates to recognize that graduation is an accomplishment regardless of the time it takes. Of the 11,344 Rhode Island students who enrolled in ninth grade in the Fall of 2016, 9,529 (84%) graduated in four years in 2020, 227 (2%) graduated in five years in 2021, and 50 (<1%) graduated in six years in 2022. Of the 234 students who graduated in five years in 2021, 100 (43%) were students receiving special education services and 57 (24%) were Multilingual Learners.¹¹

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Table 53.

High School Graduation Rates, Rhode Island, Class of 2022

FOUR-YEAR COHORT RATES					
SCHOOL DISTRICT	# OF STUDENTS IN COHORT	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% STILL IN SCHOOL	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Barrington	239	<1%	<1%	3%	96%
Bristol Warren	222	7%	0%	4%	89%
Burrillville	162	8%	1%	4%	87%
Central Falls	236	31%	0%	10%	59%
Charlho	282	6%	2%	5%	87%
Coventry	371	9%	1%	3%	86%
Cranston	925	8%	<1%	8%	84%
Cumberland	361	4%	1%	4%	91%
East Greenwich	205	1%	0%	2%	96%
East Providence	375	9%	1%	7%	83%
Exeter-West Greenwich	125	2%	0%	6%	92%
Foster-Glocester	234	5%	1%	2%	93%
Johnston	182	9%	3%	10%	77%
Lincoln	256	7%	2%	1%	90%
Middletown	175	7%	0%	4%	89%
Narragansett	129	5%	2%	1%	92%
Newport	180	14%	3%	3%	80%
North Kingstown	382	4%	4%	2%	90%
North Providence	299	8%	3%	3%	86%
North Smithfield	138	2%	1%	6%	91%
Pawtucket	559	19%	1%	11%	69%
Portsmouth	214	4%	1%	1%	94%
Providence	1,859	14%	<1%	7%	78%
Scituate	92	3%	1%	3%	92%
Smithfield	184	2%	1%	3%	95%
South Kingstown	237	3%	1%	4%	92%
Tiverton	123	2%	1%	3%	94%
Warwick	651	10%	2%	5%	82%
West Warwick	224	10%	1%	4%	84%
Westerly	193	3%	5%	3%	90%
Woonsocket	435	27%	1%	9%	64%
<i>Beacon Charter School</i>	58	10%	3%	5%	81%
<i>Blackstone Academy</i>	83	0%	1%	10%	89%
<i>Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy</i>	79	1%	0%	3%	96%
<i>Charette Charter School</i>	42	2%	0%	14%	83%
<i>Paul Cuffee Charter School</i>	71	3%	1%	11%	85%
<i>The Greene School</i>	45	0%	0%	2%	98%
<i>Highlander Charter School</i>	56	9%	2%	23%	66%
<i>RI Nurses Institute Middle College</i>	51	10%	2%	8%	80%
<i>Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy</i>	60	45%	0%	32%	23%
<i>Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts</i>	25	0%	0%	0%	100%
<i>Village Green Virtual Public Charter School</i>	57	0%	0%	2%	98%
<i>William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School</i>	198	7%	1%	6%	86%
<i>Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center</i>	224	4%	0%	1%	95%
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	3,089	18%	18%	0%	73%
<i>Remainder of State</i>	8,231	6%	1%	5%	87%
<i>Rhode Island</i>	11,320	10%	1%	6%	83%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2022.

The 2022 four-year cohort graduation rate is the number of students who graduate in four years or fewer divided by the total number of students in the cohort. The cohort is calculated as the number of first-time entering ninth graders in 2018-2019 adjusted for transfers in and transfers out during the course of the four years. The cohort dropout rate is calculated the same way as the graduation rate, but the numerator is the number of students who drop out or whose status is unknown at the end of four years. Separate rates are calculated for the percentage of students who are retained in high school and therefore are taking more than four years to graduate and for the percentage of students who received their GED within four years instead of graduating with a traditional diploma.

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

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

Students from Little Compton attend high school in Portsmouth, and Jamestown students can choose to attend high school in Narragansett or North Kingstown.

Rhode Island School for the Deaf, DCYF, and New Shoreham are not reported because there are fewer than 10 students in this cohort. These students are included in the state total.

References

- ¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-2021. Table S2301.
- ² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-2021. Table S2001
- ³ The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org
- ⁴ Fiester, L. (2013). *Early warning confirmed: a research update on third-grade reading*. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- ⁵ DePaoli, J. L., Balfanz, R., Bridgeland, J., Atwell, M., & Ingram, E. S. (2017). *Building a grad nation: Progress and challenge in raising high school graduation rates*.

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