

Student Mobility

DEFINITION

Student mobility is the number of students who enrolled in school after September 30 or withdrew from school before June 1 divided by the total enrollment for that school district.

SIGNIFICANCE

Student mobility is associated with lower academic performance, behavior difficulties, lower levels of school engagement, and increased risk of dropping out of high school. Changing schools can disrupt learning, negatively impact a student's achievement, and cause social upheaval for children. Student mobility also can lead to less active parent involvement in their children's schools.^{1,2}

Students who change schools frequently are more likely to have lower math and reading skills, more likely to repeat a grade, more likely to be suspended, and less likely to graduate from high school than their non-mobile peers.^{3,4}

Regardless of income status and ethnicity, mobility can negatively affect student achievement. However, low-income children and Children of Color are more likely to be mobile and experience greater negative impacts on their academic achievement than higher-income and white students. Students receiving special education services also are likely to be negatively impacted by changing schools.^{5,6,7}

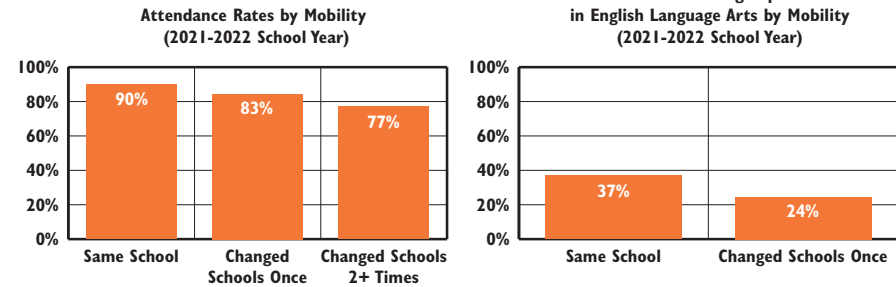
High mobility rates in schools can negatively impact all students because teachers must slow curriculum progress, repeat lessons, and adjust to changing classroom dynamics and student needs. Within-year moves are particularly disruptive for students, teachers, and schools.^{8,9}

Families may move their children to a different school because they are dissatisfied with the school, concerned about their child's safety, or moving due to changes in family circumstances. Changes in family circumstances can be either positive or negative, including eviction or foreclosure, divorce or marriage, job loss or job changes, death in the family, or a desire to improve quality of life. Mobile students who are low-income and Students of Color are more likely to change schools due to negative life events than mobile students who are higher-income and white.^{10,11}

Between 2017 and 2021 in Rhode Island, 9% of children ages five to 17 changed residence at least once during the previous year, 73% of whom moved within Rhode Island and 27% of whom moved from another state or abroad.¹² Nationally and in Rhode Island, people with incomes below the poverty line are more likely to move than higher-income residents. Between 2017 and 2021, 18% of Rhode Islanders living below the poverty line moved, compared with 9% of higher-income residents.¹³



School Mobility and Education Outcomes in Rhode Island



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2021-2022 school year.

- ◆ Rhode Island students who change schools mid-year are absent more often than students who do not change schools. Rhode Island students who did not change schools had a 90% attendance rate, compared with 83% for those who changed schools once and 77% for those who changed schools two or more times during the 2021-2022 school year.¹⁴
- ◆ Children who change schools mid-year also perform worse on standardized tests than children who have not experienced school mobility. During the 2021-2022 school year in Rhode Island, 37% of third-grade children who did not experience mobility met expectations in reading/writing on the *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)* state assessment, compared with 24% of students who moved once.¹⁵
- ◆ School districts with high mobility rates can reduce the negative effects of mobility on students by providing immediate and comprehensive screening of entering students to ensure that students are properly placed. Districts also can identify other districts where students most frequently transfer to and from and align their curricula, programs, and policies to reduce learning disruption.¹⁶
- ◆ One-third of children in foster care will experience five or more school changes before they turn age 18, and such changes often result in lost academic progress. The federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* includes provisions to give children in foster care more educational stability by allowing students to stay in their school of origin if it is in their best interest and providing transportation to that school.¹⁷

Table 45. Student Mobility and Stability Rates by District, Rhode Island, 2021-2022 School Year

SCHOOL DISTRICT	CUMULATIVE ENROLLMENT FOR 2021-2022	# ENROLLED THE WHOLE YEAR	# ENROLLED AFTER SEPT. 30	# EXITED BEFORE JUNE 1	STABILITY RATE	MOBILITY RATE
Barrington	3,403	3,286	58	62	97%	4%
Bristol Warren	3,022	2,787	101	143	92%	8%
Burrillville	2,163	2,000	77	90	92%	8%
Central Falls	2,923	2,272	312	356	78%	23%
Charlho	3,301	2,900	159	251	88%	12%
Coventry	4,470	4,045	174	273	90%	10%
Cranston	10,861	9,609	593	725	88%	12%
Cumberland	4,877	4,421	198	274	91%	10%
East Greenwich	2,554	2,455	52	49	96%	4%
East Providence	5,118	4,694	192	247	92%	9%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,538	1,441	44	53	94%	6%
Foster	212	204	*	*	96%	4%
Foster-Glocester	1,430	1,357	23	51	95%	5%
Glocester	578	540	24	16	93%	7%
Jamestown	444	407	18	22	92%	9%
Johnston	3,114	2,834	142	147	91%	9%
Lincoln	3,308	3,085	101	127	93%	7%
Little Compton	209	190	*	14	91%	10%
Middletown	2,178	1,896	115	174	87%	13%
Narragansett	1,167	1,091	31	49	93%	7%
New Shoreham	134	126	*	*	94%	7%
Newport	2,141	1,769	185	217	83%	19%
North Kingstown	3,947	3,665	122	170	93%	7%
North Providence	3,605	3,240	189	184	90%	10%
North Smithfield	1,644	1,527	56	68	93%	8%
Pawtucket	8,875	7,202	843	894	81%	20%
Portsmouth	2,319	2,127	89	108	92%	8%
Providence	23,886	19,456	2,503	2,263	81%	20%
Scituate	1,220	1,156	28	36	95%	5%
Smithfield	2,408	2,295	59	59	95%	5%
South Kingstown	2,668	2,481	85	112	93%	7%
Tiverton	1,717	1,590	64	71	93%	8%
Warwick	8,538	7,542	407	636	88%	12%
West Warwick	3,844	3,215	290	379	84%	17%
Westerly	2,415	2,200	103	130	91%	10%
Woonsocket	6,200	5,136	442	676	83%	18%
Charter Schools	10,995	10,113	395	515	92%	8%
State-Operated Schools	1,991	1,703	133	204	86%	17%
UCAP	157	101	43	16	64%	38%
Four Core Cities	41,884	34,066	4,100	4,189	81%	20%
Remainder of State	90,547	82,175	3,791	4,948	91%	10%
Rhode Island	145,574	128,158	8,462	9,872	88%	13%



Student Mobility and Stability Rates

◆ Mobility rates are calculated by adding all children who enrolled after September 30 to all those who withdrew before June 1 and dividing the total by the total enrollment for that school district.¹⁸

◆ 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 the total enrollment for that school district. The stability rate for the four core cities was 81% in the 2021-2022 school year, compared with a stability rate of 91% in the remainder of the state.¹⁹

◆ Total enrollment for each district is cumulative over the course of the school year.²⁰

◆ The overall Rhode Island student mobility rate was 13% in the 2021-2022 school year. The four core cities had a higher mobility rate (20%) than districts in the remainder of the state (10%).²¹

◆ During the 2021-2022 school year, Rhode Island elementary schools (12%) and middle schools (12%) had lower mobility rates than high schools (16%).²²

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, 2021-2022 school year.

*Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These students are still counted in district totals and in the four core cities, remainder of the state, and state totals.

Charter schools include: Achievement First Rhode Island, Beacon Charter High School for the Arts, Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, The Charette Charter School, The Compass School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, The Greene School, Highlander Charter School, The Hope Academy, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, Nuestro Mundo Public Charter School, Providence Preparatory Charter School, RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School, Segue Institute for Learning, Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, SouthSide Elementary Charter School, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and Village Green Virtual Public Charter School.

State-operated schools include William M. Davies Career & Technical High School, DCYF Schools, Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical High School, and the Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

UCAP is the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program.

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

References

- ¹³ Herbers, J. E., Reynolds, A. J., & Chen, C. (2013). School mobility and developmental outcomes in young adulthood. *Development and Psychopathology*, 25(2), 501-515.
- ^{24,5,8} Scherrer, J. (2013). The negative effects of student mobility: Mobility as a predictor, mobility as a mediator. *International Journal of Education Policy & Leadership*, 8(1), 1-14.
- ⁶ Rumberger, R. W. (2015). *Student mobility: Causes, consequences, and solutions*. Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Center.

(continued on page 189)