

College Preparation and Access

DEFINITION

College preparation and access is the percentage of Rhode Island high school seniors who graduate and go on to college (i.e., enroll in a two-year or four-year college) immediately or within six months of graduation.

SIGNIFICANCE

Between 2018 and 2028, jobs requiring a postsecondary degree or certificate are projected to grow faster than jobs requiring less education.¹ Between 2014 and 2018 in Rhode Island, adults with high school diplomas were almost three times more likely to be unemployed as those with bachelor's degrees or higher, and the median annual income for adults with high school diplomas was \$33,970, compared to \$54,565 for adults with bachelor's degrees.^{2,3}

Many students, especially low-income students, face barriers to college enrollment and success, such as insufficient academic preparation, difficulty navigating the application and financial aid processes, and the high cost of college. States can help address these barriers and improve college access by ensuring that all students have access to advanced coursework; take college entrance exams; complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); get adequate counseling to enroll in college and access financial aid;

and target financial aid strategically to students with the greatest needs.⁴

Students who participate in AP courses are likely to attend and succeed in college.⁵ In 2019, 6,572 Rhode Island public school students took an AP course, 30% more than in 2016.^{6,7}

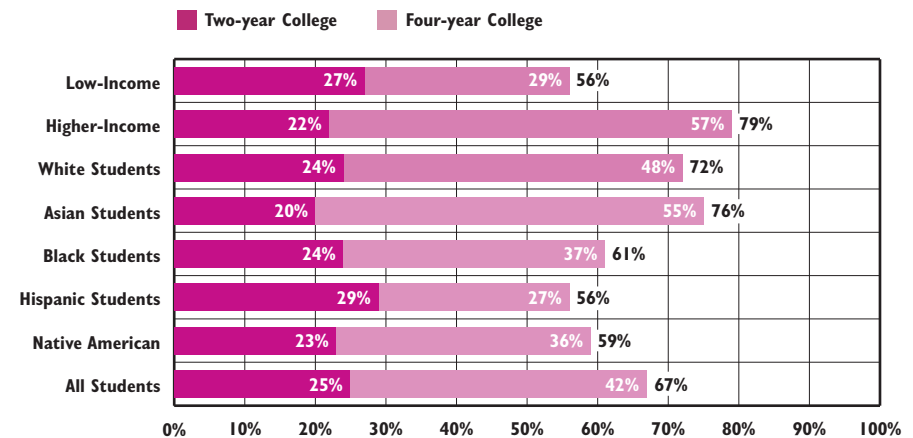
Rhode Island covers the cost for all public high school students to take the SAT during the school day in eleventh grade as a key strategy to increase college access.⁸ In 2019, 95% of 11th graders completed the SAT. Statewide, 51% of 11th graders met expectations in English language arts and 31% met expectations in math.⁹

Seniors who have completed a FAFSA by May and been accepted to a four-year college are 50% more likely to enroll than students who have not completed their FAFSA.¹⁰ During the 2018-2019 cycle, Rhode Island ranked eighth in the U.S. for the number of high school seniors completing the FAFSA.¹¹

Rhode Island's state *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* plan includes a Post-Secondary Success Indicator that will initially measure the percentage of students that graduate with a career and technical education industry-approved credential, college credits through dual or concurrent enrollment, and/or successful completion of AP tests. Starting with the Class of 2021, this indicator will be expanded to include the Seal of Biliteracy and the Pathway Endorsement.¹²



Immediate College Enrollment by Family Income, Race, Ethnicity, and Type of College, Class of 2018, Rhode Island



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2018. Percentages may not sum exactly due to rounding.

◆ Sixty-seven percent of Rhode Island students who graduated from high school in the Class of 2018 immediately enrolled in college. However, there are large gaps in college access, particularly four-year college enrollment, between low- and higher-income students as well as by race and ethnicity. Compared to the class of 2016, before the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship was available, the overall college enrollment rate has increased from 59% to 67%, the two-year college enrollment rate has increased from 16% to 25%, and the four-year college enrollment rate has decreased from 43% to 42%.¹³

◆ School counselors have an important role to play in setting students on a path to postsecondary success. In particular, Black students identify their school counselor as the person who had the most influence on their thinking about college.¹⁴ Rhode Island has 420 students for every school counselor, far above the recommended ratio of 250 to one.¹⁵

◆ For states, improving college access will require improvements at all points in the early education to college education system, including increasing access to high-quality preschool, implementing research-driven dropout prevention programs, improving the quality of the K-12 education system and aligning it with college admission requirements and career expectations, simplifying the college admission process, and making college affordable.¹⁶

Table 55.

College Preparation and Access, Rhode Island

| SCHOOL DISTRICT | TOTAL GRADE 12 ENROLLMENT OCT. 2018 | % OF GRADE 12 STUDENTS PLANNING TO ATTEND COLLEGE, 2019 | % OF STUDENTS WHO FILLED OUT THE FAFSA, 2019 | % OF GRADE 11 STUDENTS TAKING THE SAT DURING THE SCHOOL DAY, 2019 | % OF SAT TAKERS PROFICIENT IN ELA, 2019 | % OF SAT TAKERS PROFICIENT IN MATH, 2019 |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|---|--|
| Barrington | 274 | 94% | 71% | 99% | 89% | 77% |
| Bristol Warren | 252 | 88% | 50% | 98% | 67% | 40% |
| Burrillville | 223 | 79% | 58% | 97% | 57% | 37% |
| Central Falls | 177 | 70% | 46% | 93% | 14% | 6% |
| Chariho | 269 | 81% | 67% | 98% | 70% | 53% |
| Coventry | 367 | 85% | 60% | 98% | 59% | 38% |
| Cranston | 909 | 88% | 58% | 98% | 49% | 24% |
| Cumberland | 370 | 89% | 66% | 97% | 67% | 42% |
| East Greenwich | 203 | 94% | 72% | 99% | 85% | 76% |
| East Providence | 369 | 84% | 58% | 96% | 41% | 16% |
| Exeter-West Greenwich | 113 | 95% | 69% | 100% | 73% | 60% |
| Foster-Glocester | 197 | 89% | 68% | 97% | 58% | 39% |
| Johnston | 236 | 90% | 54% | 98% | 42% | 20% |
| Lincoln | 220 | 92% | 70% | 98% | 69% | 39% |
| Middletown | 162 | 92% | 60% | 95% | 59% | 38% |
| Narragansett | 123 | 90% | 58% | 93% | 65% | 43% |
| New Shoreham | 15 | 67% | 40% | 93% | 69% | 31% |
| Newport | 135 | 82% | 73% | 94% | 43% | 23% |
| North Kingstown | 348 | 94% | 67% | 98% | 82% | 61% |
| North Providence | 248 | 91% | 63% | 98% | 50% | 26% |
| North Smithfield | 115 | 94% | 67% | 97% | 69% | 55% |
| Pawtucket | 496 | 85% | 52% | 90% | 28% | 9% |
| Portsmouth | 211 | 91% | 71% | 98% | 74% | 56% |
| Providence | 1,679 | 84% | 68% | 91% | 26% | 15% |
| Scituate | 100 | 95% | 73% | 100% | 68% | 46% |
| Smithfield | 185 | 95% | 76% | 99% | 66% | 49% |
| South Kingstown | 241 | 87% | 62% | 93% | 75% | 63% |
| Tiverton | 135 | 92% | 62% | 96% | 64% | 43% |
| Warwick | 708 | 92% | 54% | 94% | 51% | 25% |
| West Warwick | 243 | 86% | 65% | 93% | 50% | 21% |
| Westerly | 237 | 86% | 65% | 98% | 59% | 43% |
| Woonsocket | 361 | 82% | 50% | 86% | 33% | 12% |
| <i>Beacon Charter High School</i> | <i>61</i> | <i>80%</i> | <i>70%</i> | <i>100%</i> | <i>55%</i> | <i>27%</i> |
| <i>Blackstone Academy</i> | <i>88</i> | <i>96%</i> | <i>77%</i> | <i>99%</i> | <i>22%</i> | <i>6%</i> |
| <i>Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy</i> | <i>77</i> | <i>94%</i> | <i>79%</i> | <i>100%</i> | <i>52%</i> | <i>35%</i> |
| <i>Paul Cuffee Charter School</i> | <i>59</i> | <i>93%</i> | <i>78%</i> | <i>90%</i> | <i>43%</i> | <i>19%</i> |
| <i>The Greene School</i> | <i>52</i> | <i>86%</i> | <i>67%</i> | <i>98%</i> | <i>64%</i> | <i>36%</i> |
| <i>Highlander Charter School</i> | <i>41</i> | <i>100%</i> | <i>66%</i> | <i>81%</i> | <i>17%</i> | <i>10%</i> |
| <i>RI Nurses Institute Middle College</i> | <i>55</i> | <i>100%</i> | <i>62%</i> | <i>100%</i> | <i>20%</i> | <i>7%</i> |
| <i>Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy</i> | <i>39</i> | <i>84%</i> | <i>49%</i> | <i>52%</i> | <i><5%</i> | <i><5%</i> |
| <i>Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts</i> | <i>31</i> | <i>82%</i> | <i>97%</i> | <i>100%</i> | <i>34%</i> | <i>9%</i> |
| <i>Village Green Virtual Public Charter School</i> | <i>42</i> | <i>91%</i> | <i>100%</i> | <i>98%</i> | <i>22%</i> | <i>10%</i> |
| <i>William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical Center</i> | <i>185</i> | <i>84%</i> | <i>66%</i> | <i>98%</i> | <i>42%</i> | <i>16%</i> |
| <i>Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center</i> | <i>214</i> | <i>87%</i> | <i>58%</i> | <i>99%</i> | <i>40%</i> | <i>13%</i> |
| <i>DCYF</i> | <i>26</i> | <i>78%</i> | <i>NA</i> | <i>63%</i> | <i>13%</i> | <i><5%</i> |
| <i>Four Core Cities</i> | <i>2,713</i> | <i>84%</i> | <i>61%</i> | <i>90%</i> | <i>26%</i> | <i>13%</i> |
| <i>Remainder of State</i> | <i>7,210</i> | <i>89%</i> | <i>62%</i> | <i>97%</i> | <i>61%</i> | <i>40%</i> |
| <i>Rhode Island</i> | <i>10,903</i> | <i>87%</i> | <i>62%</i> | <i>95%</i> | <i>51%</i> | <i>31%</i> |

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Total 12th grade enrollment is from the Rhode Island Department of Education as of October 1, 2018.

% of 12th grade students planning to attend college is based on responses to the question, "What do you think you will do after you finish high school?" and includes students who responded that they planned to go to a community college, two-year college, or four-year college. Data are from the Rhode Island Department of Education.

The number of 12th graders completing the FAFSA is from U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid, Rhode Island school-level data from the 2019-2020 cycle through June 2019. Retrieved March 2, 2020, from studentaid.ed.gov. The percentage of 12th graders completing the FAFSA is calculated by dividing the number of students completing applications into the number of 12th graders enrolled on October 1, 2018.

% of SAT takers proficient in ELA and math and % of 11th graders taking the SAT is from the Rhode Island Department of Education.

NA indicates that data are not available either because data were not collected or reported or because the number of students was too small to report. DCYF, New Shoreham and Rhode Island School for the Deaf are not reported because data reported would reflect fewer than 10 students. These students are included in the remainder of state and Rhode Island totals as appropriate.

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

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

References

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2019). *Employment, wages, and projected change in employment by typical entry-level education*. Retrieved January 29, 2020, from www.bls.gov

² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014-2018. Table S2301.

³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014-2018. Table B20004.

(continued on page 189)