

# College Enrollment and Completion

## DEFINITION

College enrollment and completion is the percentage of Rhode Island public high school students who enroll in a two- or four-year college and earn a college diploma (an associate degree or bachelor's degree) within six years of enrollment.<sup>1</sup>

## SIGNIFICANCE

Between 2019 and 2029, jobs requiring a postsecondary degree or certificate are projected to grow faster than jobs requiring less education, yet only 36% of Rhode Island adults ages 25 and 64 have a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>2,3</sup> Between 2015 and 2019 in Rhode Island, 6.6% of adults with a high school diploma were unemployed, compared to 2.6% with a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>4</sup> During that same period, the median annual income for adults with a high school diploma was \$36,009, compared to \$56,642 for adults with a bachelor's degree.<sup>5</sup> Students who complete college are more likely to be employed and have higher incomes. While college enrollment rates for low-income students have doubled in recent decades, there are still large gaps in the percentage of students who enroll in and complete college and the types of college students attend.<sup>6</sup>

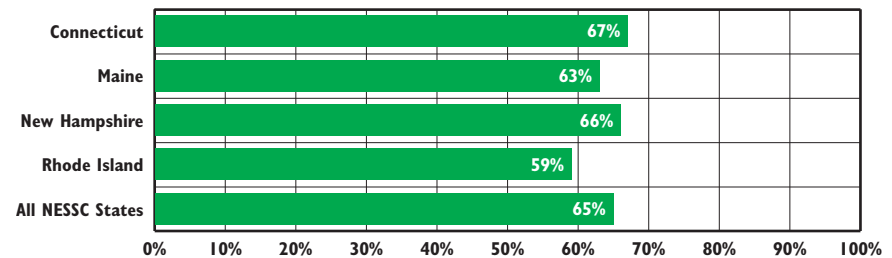
In the U.S., two-thirds of low-income students attend community colleges and for-profit institutions,

many of which have low completion rates. Low-income students are also more likely to delay going to college and to have breaks in enrollment, both of which lower their chances of completing their college degrees.<sup>7</sup> There are also barriers to attainment for Students of Color. Addressing racial disparities can improve college completion outcomes.<sup>8,9</sup>

Low-income and first-generation college students often arrive at college less academically prepared than other students. They can benefit from a wide range of supports, including comprehensive assessment and placement, summer transition programs, peer-mentored and peer-facilitated programs that offer tutoring and other academic support, learning communities that allow a group of students to enroll in two or more classes together so they can establish peer relationships that support their success, personal and career counseling, mentoring, and/or referrals to social services.<sup>10,11,12</sup>

Improving college access and completion will require states to make improvements at all points in the early education to college system, including increasing access to high-quality preschool, implementing research-driven early intervention and dropout prevention programs, aligning the K-12 education system with college demands, making college affordable, and providing student support programs.<sup>13,14,15,16</sup>

  
**College Completion, New England Secondary School Consortium States (NESSC), 2013 Cohort**



Source: New England Secondary School Consortium. (2020). *Common Data Project: 2020 annual report, school year 2018-2019*. Retrieved April 11, 2021, from [www.newenglandssc.org](http://www.newenglandssc.org)

◆ Fifty-nine percent of Rhode Island public high school graduates who enrolled in a two- or four-year college in 2013 earned a college diploma within six years. In Rhode Island, there are large gaps in college completion between low-income and higher-income students, with 41% of low-income students completing college within six years, compared to 72% of higher-income students. There are also large disparities by race and ethnicity, language status, and disability.<sup>17</sup>

  
**Impact of COVID-19 on College Completion**

◆ Nationally, one-third of college students considered withdrawing from courses because of COVID-19.<sup>18</sup> The financial stability, academic performance, and educational plans of many college students, especially of Students of Color, were impacted by the pandemic.<sup>19</sup>

◆ Black and Hispanic college students were more likely than white college students to report that the pandemic impacted their ability to complete their degree.<sup>20</sup>

◆ Nationally, Black and first-generation college students were least likely to have access to mental health and financial services during the pandemic.<sup>21</sup>

# College Enrollment and Completion

Table 56.

College Enrollment and Completion, Rhode Island

| SCHOOL DISTRICT   | # OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL IN 2019 | # OF 2019 HS GRADUATES WHO ENROLLED IN COLLEGE WITHIN 6 MONTHS | % OF 2019 HS GRADUATES WHO ENROLLED IN COLLEGE WITHIN 6 MONTHS | # OF STUDENTS WHO ENROLLED IN COLLEGE IN 2018-2019 | # OF 2018-2019 COLLEGE ENROLLEES WHO PERSISTED (ENROLLED FOR A THIRD SEMESTER) | % OF 2018-2019 COLLEGE ENROLLEES WHO PERSISTED (ENROLLED FOR A THIRD SEMESTER) |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Barrington  | 247  | 217  | 88%  | 262  | 238  | 91%  |
| Bristol Warren  | 218  | 139  | 64%  | 171  | 140  | 82%  |
| Burrillville  | 197  | 142  | 72%  | 141  | 113  | 80%  |
| Central Falls   | 145  | 63   | 43%  | 91   | 43   | 47%  |
| Chariho   | 253  | 172  | 68%  | 196  | 155  | 79%  |
| Coventry  | 339  | 243  | 72%  | 333  | 246  | 74%  |
| Cranston  | 787  | 561  | 71%  | 604  | 462  | 76%  |
| Cumberland  | 334  | 269  | 81%  | 211  | 175  | 83%  |
| East Greenwich  | 191  | 167  | 87%  | 170  | 159  | 94%  |
| East Providence   | 338  | 223  | 66%  | 259  | 191  | 74%  |
| Exeter-West Greenwich   | 102  | 79   | 77%  | 108  | 87   | 81%  |
| Foster-Glocester  | 174  | 123  | 71%  | 127  | 103  | 81%  |
| Johnston  | 186  | 136  | 73%  | 162  | 129  | 80%  |
| Lincoln   | 208  | 160  | 77%  | 152  | 124  | 82%  |
| Middletown  | 144  | 99   | 69%  | 114  | 95   | 83%  |
| Narragansett  | 105  | 74   | 70%  | 95   | 81   | 85%  |
| New Shoreham  | 15   | *  | 47%  | *  | *  | 67%  |
| Newport   | 134  | 75   | 56%  | 118  | 79   | 67%  |
| North Kingstown   | 300  | 246  | 82%  | 290  | 255  | 88%  |
| North Providence  | 222  | 155  | 70%  | 187  | 144  | 77%  |
| North Smithfield  | 106  | 88   | 83%  | 87   | 74   | 85%  |
| Pawtucket   | 384  | 204  | 53%  | 317  | 202  | 64%  |
| Portsmouth  | 200  | 155  | 78%  | 182  | 148  | 81%  |
| Providence  | 1,561  | 839  | 54%  | 1,075  | 739  | 69%  |
| Scituate  | 95   | 72   | 76%  | 90   | 78   | 87%  |
| Smithfield  | 185  | 150  | 81%  | 154  | 132  | 86%  |
| South Kingstown   | 220  | 165  | 75%  | 199  | 173  | 87%  |
| Tiverton  | 110  | 74   | 67%  | 109  | 91   | 83%  |
| Warwick   | 624  | 414  | 66%  | 486  | 352  | 72%  |
| West Warwick  | 234  | 155  | 66%  | 172  | 120  | 70%  |
| Westerly  | 197  | 131  | 66%  | 138  | 115  | 83%  |
| Woonsocket  | 296  | 154  | 52%  | 194  | 128  | 66%  |
| <i>Beacon Charter High School</i>                               | 56   | 32   | 57%  | 40   | 28   | 70%  |
| <i>Blackstone Academy</i>                                       | 80   | 63   | 79%  | 66   | 50   | 76%  |
| <i>Blackstone Valley Prep</i>                                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <i>Mayoral Academy</i>  | 68   | 57   | 84%  | 52   | 44   | 85%  |
| <i>Paul Cuffee Charter School</i>                               | 57   | 46   | 81%  | 50   | 38   | 76%  |
| <i>The Greene School</i>  | 51   | 38   | 75%  | 38   | 32   | 84%  |
| <i>Highlander Charter School</i>                                | 35   | 26   | 74%  | 22   | 17   | 77%  |
| <i>RI Nurses Institute Middle College</i>                       | 47   | 32   | 68%  | 40   | 29   | 73%  |
| <i>Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy</i>               | 28   | *  | 18%  | 17   | 11   | 65%  |
| <i>Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts</i>                  | 32   | 20   | 63%  | 17   | *  | 47%  |
| <i>Village Green Virtual Public Charter School</i>              | 41   | 28   | 68%  | 41   | 30   | 73%  |
| <i>William M. Davies Jr. Career &amp; Technical High School</i> | 173  | 101  | 58%  | 129  | 88   | 68%  |
| <i>Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center</i>        | 200  | 122  | 61%  | 157  | 102  | 65%  |
| <i>Four Core Cities</i>   | 2,386  | 1,260  | 53%  | 1,677  | 1,112  | 66%  |
| <i>Remainder of State</i>                                       | 6,467  | 4,692  | 73%  | 5,323  | 4,263  | 80%  |
| <i>Rhode Island</i>   | 9,726  | 6,523  | 67%  | 7,676  | 5,853  | 76%  |

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

# of students who graduated from high school in 2019, # of 2019 high school graduates who enrolled in college within six months, # of students who enrolled in college in 2018, and # of 2018 college enrollees who persisted (were enrolled for a third semester) are all from Rhode Island Department of Education. The # of 2018 college enrollees who persisted may include students enrolled directly after high school or afterwards. Percentages may not sum exactly due to rounding.

Four 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.

DCYF and Rhode Island School for the Deaf are not reported because there are fewer than 10 students in these cohorts.

\* Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These numbers are still counted in remainder of state and Rhode Island totals.

## References

- New England Secondary School Consortium. (2020). *Common Data Project: 2020 procedural guidebook*. Retrieved April 11, 2021, from [www.newenglandssc.org](http://www.newenglandssc.org)
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). *Employment, wages, and projected change in employment by typical entry-level education*. Retrieved April 10, 2021, from [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)
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- Miller, A., Valle, K., Engle, J., & Cooper, M. (2014). *Access to attainment: An access agenda for 21st century college students*. Washington, DC: Institute for Higher Education Policy.

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