

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 median incomes than adults with high school degrees.¹² In 2019, 9% of Rhode Island children lived in households headed by a non-high school graduate, lower than the national average of 12%.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 off-track, so academic 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 up through the Class of 2020 must demonstrate proficiency in English language arts, math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology and complete at least 20 courses and two performance-based assessments.⁸ Students in the Class of 2021 and later must complete one performance-based assessment and can earn Council designations, including a Seal of Biliteracy, Commissioner’s Seal, and Pathway Endorsements.^{9,10}

High School Graduation Rates	
2017-2018	
RI	84%
US	85%
National Rank*	32nd
New England Rank**	6th

*1st is best; 50th is worst

**1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). Table 1. Retrieved April 7, 2021, from www.ncces.ed.gov



Rhode Island Four-Year High School Graduation and Dropout Rates, by Student Subgroup, Class of 2020

	COHORT SIZE	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% OF STUDENTS STILL IN SCHOOL	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Female Students	5,388	6%	1%	6%	88%
Male Students	5,997	10%	2%	9%	80%
Multilingual/English Learners	1,278	19%	<1%	12%	69%
Students Receiving Special Education Services	1,762	14%	3%	21%	63%
Students Not Receiving Special Education Services	9,623	7%	1%	5%	87%
Low-Income Students	6,238	12%	2%	11%	76%
Higher-Income Students	5,147	3%	1%	3%	93%
Students in Foster Care	37	11%	3%	30%	57%
Homeless Students	197	21%	3%	19%	57%
Asian Students+	343	4%	<1%	4%	92%
Black Students	1,038	8%	1%	11%	80%
Hispanic Students	3,014	13%	1%	11%	76%
Native American	101	19%	1%	11%	69%
White Students	6,481	5%	2%	5%	88%
ALL STUDENTS	11,385	8%	1%	7%	84%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2020. 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 2020 was 84%, up from 76% for the Class of 2010. 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.^{11,12}



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 10,518 Rhode Island students who enrolled in ninth grade in 2014, 8,837 (84%) graduated in four years in 2018, 229 (2%) graduated in five years in 2019, and 50 (<1%) graduated in six years in 2020. Of the 229 students who graduated in five years in 2019, 115 (50%) were students receiving special education services and 35 (15%) were Multilingual Learners.¹³

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High School Graduation Rates, Rhode Island, Class of 2020

SCHOOL DISTRICT	FOUR-YEAR COHORT RATES				
	# OF STUDENTS IN COHORT	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% STILL IN SCHOOL	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Barrington	313	1%	0%	3%	96%
Bristol Warren	227	5%	<1%	4%	90%
Burrillville	190	6%	1%	4%	90%
Central Falls	215	18%	1%	13%	69%
Chariho	262	3%	3%	10%	84%
Coventry	396	7%	1%	4%	88%
Cranston	856	6%	2%	7%	85%
Cumberland	365	6%	1%	6%	87%
East Greenwich	167	1%	0%	4%	96%
East Providence	358	7%	1%	7%	85%
Exeter-West Greenwich	132	1%	2%	4%	94%
Foster-Glocester	170	4%	1%	3%	92%
Johnston	240	9%	3%	3%	85%
Lincoln	228	4%	3%	3%	90%
Middletown	176	9%	3%	3%	85%
Narragansett	95	0%	0%	3%	97%
New Shoreham	14	0%	0%	7%	93%
Newport	177	19%	3%	14%	64%
North Kingstown	369	5%	2%	2%	91%
North Providence	288	4%	1%	6%	89%
North Smithfield	134	8%	2%	4%	87%
Pawtucket	504	10%	1%	12%	77%
Portsmouth	250	2%	1%	5%	92%
Providence	2,019	14%	1%	11%	75%
Scituate	96	1%	1%	6%	92%
Smithfield	198	3%	1%	3%	94%
South Kingstown	227	1%	1%	3%	95%
Tiverton	146	5%	1%	5%	89%
Warwick	691	6%	2%	6%	86%
West Warwick	238	5%	1%	9%	85%
Westerly	196	5%	5%	5%	86%
Woonsocket	442	17%	1%	9%	73%
<i>Beacon Charter School</i>	59	9%	2%	7%	83%
<i>Blackstone Academy</i>	88	3%	0%	9%	88%
<i>Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy</i>	85	2%	0%	4%	94%
<i>Paul Cuffee Charter School</i>	66	6%	0%	6%	88%
<i>The Greene School</i>	43	5%	0%	0%	95%
<i>Highlander Charter School</i>	37	8%	3%	8%	81%
<i>RI Nurses Institute Middle College</i>	57	12%	2%	11%	75%
<i>Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy</i>	77	30%	0%	48%	22%
<i>Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts</i>	31	0%	0%	0%	100%
<i>Village Green Virtual Public Charter School</i>	52	0%	0%	2%	98%
<i>William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School</i>	192	5%	0%	8%	87%
<i>DCYF Schools</i>	33	55%	24%	21%	0%
<i>Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center</i>	179	2%	0%	3%	96%
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	3,180	14%	1%	11%	74%
<i>Remainder of State</i>	7,200	5%	2%	5%	88%
<i>Rhode Island</i>	11,385	8%	1%	7%	84%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2020.

The 2020 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 2016-2017 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.

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 includes students attending DCYF alternative schools.

Rhode Island School for the Deaf is 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, 2015-2019. Table S2301.
- ² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015-2019. 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*. Retrieved April 7, 2021, from www.americaspromise.org

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