

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.¹

SIGNIFICANCE

Between 2020 and 2030, jobs requiring a postsecondary degree or certificate are projected to grow faster than jobs requiring less education, yet only 37% of Rhode Island adults ages 25 and 64 have a bachelor's degree or higher.^{2,3} Between 2016 and 2020 in Rhode Island, 6.5% of adults with a high school diploma were unemployed, compared to 2.7% with a bachelor's degree or higher.⁴ During that same period, the median annual income for adults with a high school diploma was \$36,472, compared to \$57,066 for adults with a bachelor's degree.⁵ 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 colleges students attend.⁶

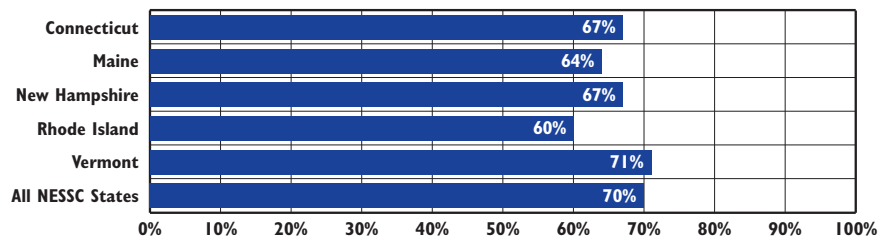
In the U.S., two-thirds of low-income students attend community colleges and for-profit institutions, many of which have low completion

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.⁷ There are also barriers to attainment for Students of Color. Addressing racial disparities can improve college completion outcomes.^{8,9}

Low-income students and Students of Color often arrive at college with academic potential but less academic preparation and social capital 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.^{10,11,12}

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.^{13,14,15,16}

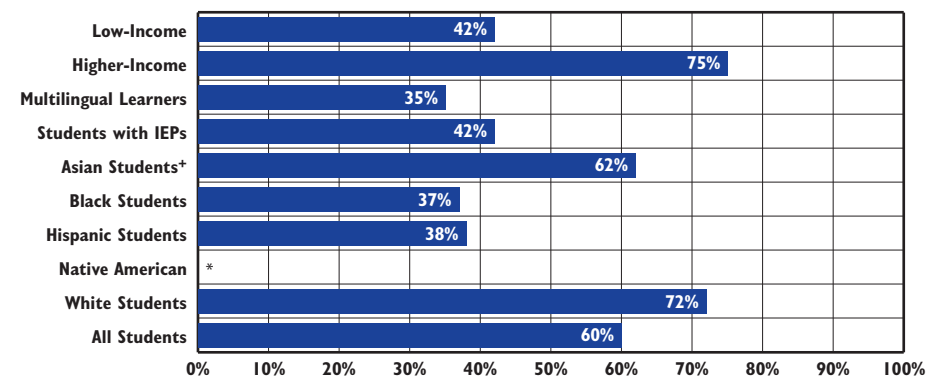
College Completion, New England Secondary School Consortium States (NESSC), 2014 Cohort



Source: New England Secondary School Consortium. (2021). *Common Data Project: 2021 annual report, school year 2019-2020*. Retrieved April 12, 2022, from www.newenglandssc.org

◆ Sixty percent of Rhode Island public high school graduates who enrolled in a two- or four-year college in 2014 earned a college diploma within six years.¹⁷

College Completion, by Family Income, Race, Ethnicity, 2014 Cohort, Rhode Island



Source: New England Secondary School Consortium. (2021). *Common Data Project: 2021 annual report, school year 2019-2020*. Retrieved April 12, 2022, from www.newenglandssc.org. ⁺Data for Asian students is not disaggregated by ethnic group. National research shows large academic disparities across Asian ethnic groups. * Fewer than 12 students are in this category. Data were not reported to protect student confidentiality.

◆ In Rhode Island, there are large gaps in college completion between low-income and higher-income students, with 42% of low-income students completing college within six years, compared to 75% of higher-income students. There are also large disparities by race and ethnicity, language status, and disability.¹⁸

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Table 56.

College Enrollment and Completion, Rhode Island

SCHOOL DISTRICT	# OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL IN 2021	# OF 2021 HS GRADUATES WHO ENROLLED IN COLLEGE WITHIN 6 MONTHS	% OF 2021 HS GRADUATES WHO ENROLLED IN COLLEGE WITHIN 6 MONTHS	# OF STUDENTS WHO ENROLLED IN COLLEGE IN 2020	# OF 2020 COLLEGE ENROLLEES WHO PERSISTED (ENROLLED FOR A THIRD SEMESTER)	% OF 2020 COLLEGE ENROLLEES WHO PERSISTED (ENROLLED FOR A THIRD SEMESTER)
Barrington	280	228	81%	236	220	93%
Bristol Warren	236	169	72%	169	119	70%
Burrillville	158	93	59%	158	120	76%
Central Falls	144	48	33%	93	44	47%
Chariho	240	155	65%	200	158	79%
Coventry	328	225	69%	271	210	77%
Cranston	737	462	63%	663	493	74%
Cumberland	328	225	69%	307	248	81%
East Greenwich	194	158	81%	180	162	90%
East Providence	330	170	52%	272	187	69%
Exeter-West Greenwich	130	93	72%	92	77	84%
Foster-Glocester	201	141	70%	147	113	77%
Johnston	201	138	69%	153	122	80%
Lincoln	208	153	74%	183	155	85%
Middletown	119	77	65%	131	100	76%
Narragansett	100	76	76%	85	65	76%
New Shoreham	13	*	54%	*	*	100%
Newport	161	72	45%	98	60	61%
North Kingstown	331	265	80%	285	242	85%
North Providence	263	164	62%	182	129	71%
North Smithfield	115	88	77%	98	90	92%
Pawtucket	386	161	42%	274	158	58%
Portsmouth	215	159	74%	178	156	88%
Providence	1,562	666	43%	1,082	664	61%
Scituate	97	63	65%	82	67	82%
Smithfield	162	118	73%	160	135	84%
South Kingstown	222	160	72%	189	150	79%
Tiverton	119	80	67%	90	68	76%
Warwick	488	303	62%	482	354	73%
West Warwick	233	121	52%	171	123	72%
Westerly	189	120	63%	149	122	82%
Woonsocket	293	95	32%	202	115	57%
Beacon Charter High School	55	29	53%	40	26	65%
Blackstone Academy	85	44	52%	71	55	77%
Blackstone Valley Prep						
Mayoral Academy	77	58	75%	58	47	81%
Charette Charter School	36	19	53%	NA	NA	NA
Paul Cuffee Charter School	62	43	69%	54	33	61%
The Greene School	52	30	58%	41	26	63%
Highlander Charter School	32	20	63%	27	15	56%
RI Nurses Institute Middle College	51	32	63%	48	31	65%
Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy	26	*	19%	13	*	38%
Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts	35	24	69%	24	12	50%
Village Green Virtual Public Charter School	41	15	37%	46	26	57%
William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School	181	85	47%	128	81	63%
Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center	203	95	47%	151	90	60%
Four Core Cities	2,385	970	41%	1,651	981	59%
Remainder of State	6,398	4,283	67%	5,421	4,255	78%
Rhode Island	9,724	5,752	59%	7,778	5,685	73%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

of students who graduated from high school in 2021, # of 2021 high school graduates who enrolled in college within six months, # of students who enrolled in college in 2020, and # of 2020 college enrollees who persisted (were enrolled for a third semester) are all from Rhode Island Department of Education. The # of 2020 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.

NA Schools did not have students graduating in this year.

References

- New England Secondary School Consortium. (2021). *Common Data Project: 2021 procedural guidebook*. Retrieved April 12, 2022, from www.newenglandssc.org
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2022). *Employment, wages, and projected change in employment by typical entry-level education*. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from www.bls.gov
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- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020. Table S2301.
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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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