

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 2020 and 2030, jobs requiring a postsecondary degree or certificate are projected to grow faster than jobs requiring less education.¹ Between 2016 and 2020 in Rhode Island, adults with high school diplomas were twice as likely to be unemployed as those with bachelor's degrees or higher, and the median annual income for adults with high school diplomas was \$36,472, compared to \$57,066 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 and target financial aid strategically to students with the greatest needs.⁴

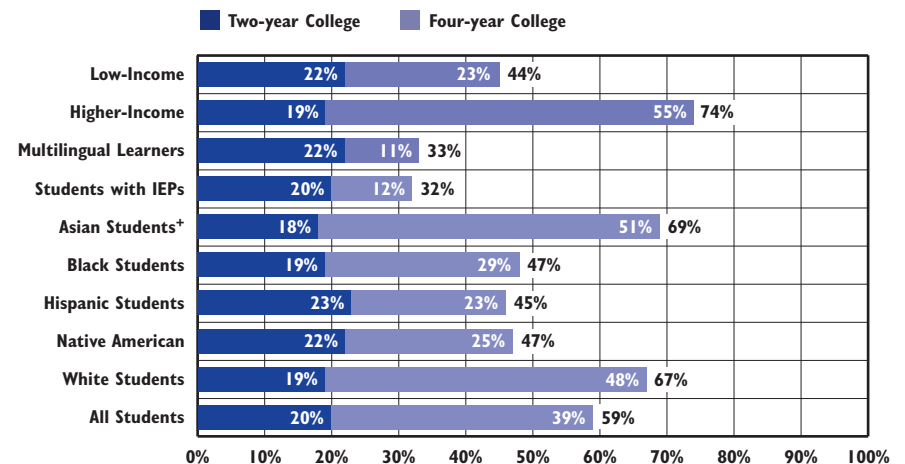
Students who participate in AP courses or dual or concurrent enrollment courses are likely to attend and succeed in college.^{5,6} In Rhode Island, 23% of graduates in the Class of 2020 earned AP credits and 37% earned dual or concurrent enrollment college credits.⁷

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 2021, 86% of 11th graders completed the SAT. Statewide, 48% of 11th graders met expectations in English language arts and 26% 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 2021-2022 cycle, Rhode Island ranked sixth in the U.S. for the number of high school seniors completing the FAFSA.¹¹

Rhode Island's *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* state plan includes a Post-Secondary Success Indicator that measures 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. Beginning with the Class of 2021, this indicator was 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 2021, Rhode Island



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2021. Percentages may not sum exactly due to rounding. *Data for Asian students is not disaggregated by ethnic group. National research shows large academic disparities across Asian ethnic groups.

◆ After increasing when the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship was made available, the college enrollment rate declined during the COVID-19 pandemic from 67% for the Class of 2019 to 61% for the Class of 2020 to 59% for the Class of 2021. There continue to be large gaps in college access, particularly four-year college enrollment, between low- and higher-income students as well as by race and ethnicity, language status, and disability.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. 2020	% OF GRADE 12 STUDENTS PLANNING TO ATTEND COLLEGE, 2021	% OF STUDENTS WHO FILLED OUT THE FAFSA, 2021	% OF GRADE 11 STUDENTS TAKING THE SAT DURING THE SCHOOL DAY, 2021	% OF SAT TAKERS PROFICIENT IN ELA, 2021	% OF SAT TAKERS PROFICIENT IN MATH, 2021
Barrington	298	99%	72%	94%	84%	65%
Bristol Warren	279	94%	61%	93%	48%	23%
Burrillville	186	68%	47%	86%	48%	30%
Central Falls	223	68%	22%	76%	10%	<5%
Charlton	263	83%	61%	92%	63%	39%
Coventry	360	89%	60%	91%	48%	24%
Cranston	892	85%	56%	91%	48%	22%
Cumberland	361	91%	66%	96%	58%	34%
East Greenwich	216	96%	64%	94%	92%	67%
East Providence	356	81%	49%	82%	39%	17%
Exeter-West Greenwich	148	85%	59%	94%	59%	48%
Foster-Glocester	217	92%	64%	91%	62%	31%
Johnston	232	86%	54%	90%	45%	19%
Lincoln	225	91%	61%	89%	60%	45%
Middletown	120	96%	63%	92%	56%	34%
Narragansett	110	80%	59%	90%	70%	49%
New Shoreham	13	82%	69%	NA	NA	NA
Newport	187	88%	39%	78%	34%	16%
North Kingstown	378	94%	67%	92%	83%	55%
North Providence	297	92%	59%	85%	50%	25%
North Smithfield	130	85%	60%	91%	64%	37%
Pawtucket	579	73%	32%	79%	27%	8%
Portsmouth	238	93%	66%	83%	74%	59%
Providence	1,680	73%	55%	80%	30%	13%
Scituate	104	83%	58%	92%	66%	31%
Smithfield	167	86%	63%	96%	66%	40%
South Kingstown	243	87%	61%	84%	73%	54%
Tiverton	143	83%	63%	92%	55%	35%
Warwick	594	79%	49%	79%	49%	21%
West Warwick	253	81%	49%	82%	51%	24%
Westerly	213	87%	58%	95%	56%	29%
Woonsocket	392	72%	38%	73%	24%	7%
<i>Beacon Charter High School</i>	62	82%	44%	86%	55%	8%
<i>Blackstone Academy</i>	97	89%	64%	86%	25%	8%
<i>Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy</i>	89	88%	76%	90%	52%	38%
<i>Charette Charter School</i>	40	100%	75%	89%	8%	<5%
<i>Paul Cuffee Charter School</i>	67	82%	72%	94%	17%	8%
<i>The Greene School</i>	50	78%	66%	90%	43%	16%
<i>Higblander Charter School</i>	54	86%	50%	72%	18%	<5%
<i>RI Nurses Institute Middle College</i>	79	95%	57%	92%	17%	<5%
<i>Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy"</i>	47	67%	51%	60%	16%	<5%
<i>Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts</i>	35	89%	86%	93%	32%	<5%
<i>Village Green Virtual Public Charter School</i>	39	81%	79%	97%	20%	<5%
<i>William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical Center</i>	200	80%	52%	94%	52%	15%
<i>DCYF</i>	10	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<i>Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center</i>	211	76%	58%	91%	23%	<5%
<i>RI School for the Deaf</i>	12	50%	NA	NA	NA	NA
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	2,874	72%	45%	78%	27%	11%
<i>Remainder of State</i>	7,223	87%	59%	89%	58%	34%
<i>Rhode Island</i>	11,190	83%	55%	86%	48%	26%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Total 12th grade enrollment is from the Rhode Island Department of Education as of October 1, 2020.

% of 12th grade students planning to attend college is from the 2020-2021 administration of *Survey Works!*, 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 2021-2022 cycle through June 2021. Retrieved April 4, 2022, 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, 2020.

% of SAT takers proficient in ELA and math and % of 11th graders taking the SAT is from the Rhode Island Department of Education. % of students taking the SAT varied by district and may have impacted district results. Take caution when comparing between districts.

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. These students are included in the remainder of the state and state 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. (2022). *Employment, wages, and projected change in employment by typical entry-level education*. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from www.bls.gov

² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020. Table S2301.

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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

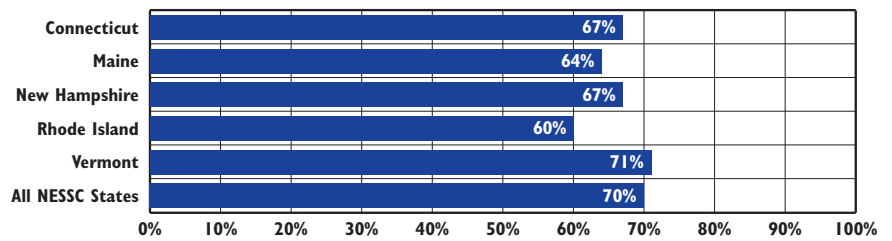
In the U.S., two-thirds of low-income students attend community colleges and for-profit institutions, many of which have low completion

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}

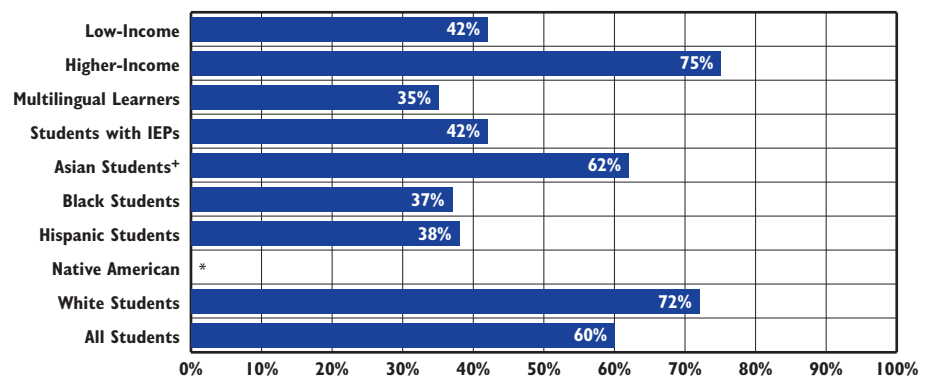
College Completion, New England Secondary School Consortium States (NESSC), 2014 Cohort



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

College Enrollment and Completion

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
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