

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.^{1,2} 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 must demonstrate proficiency in English language arts, math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology and complete at least 20 courses. Students must also complete one performance-based assessment and can earn Council designations, including a Seal of Biliteracy, Commissioner’s Seal, and Pathway Endorsements.^{8,9}

High School Graduation Rates	
	2018-2019
RI	84%
US	86%
National Rank*	35th
New England Rank**	6th

*1st is best; 50th is worst

**1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). Table 1. Retrieved March 30, 2022, from www.nces.ed.gov

Rhode Island Four-Year High School Graduation and Dropout Rates, by Student Subgroup, Class of 2021

	COHORT SIZE	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% OF STUDENTS STILL IN SCHOOL	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Female Students	5,448	6%	1%	6%	87%
Male Students	5,749	9%	1%	9%	80%
Multilingual/English Learners	1,175	18%	<1%	12%	69%
Students Receiving Special Education Services	1,817	12%	1%	23%	65%
Students Not Receiving Special Education Services	9,384	7%	1%	5%	87%
Low-Income Students	5,990	11%	1%	11%	76%
Higher-Income Students	5,211	4%	1%	3%	92%
Students in Foster Care	63	17%	2%	32%	49%
Homeless Students	210	18%	2%	19%	61%
Asian Students [†]	315	6%	1%	5%	88%
Black Students	1,006	8%	<1%	10%	82%
Hispanic Students	3,047	12%	1%	10%	77%
Native American	72	13%	0%	11%	76%
White Students	6,346	5%	1%	6%	88%
ALL STUDENTS	11,201	8%	1%	8%	84%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2021. 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 2021 was 84%, up from 77% for the Class of 2011. 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.^{10,11}

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 11,255 Rhode Island students who enrolled in ninth grade in 2015, 9,451 (84%) graduated in four years in 2019, 243 (2%) graduated in five years in 2020, and 41 (<1%) graduated in six years in 2021. Of the 243 students who graduated in five years in 2020, 98 (40%) were students receiving special education services and 55 (23%) were Multilingual Learners.¹²

High School Graduation Rate

Table 54.

High School Graduation Rates, Rhode Island, Class of 2021

SCHOOL DISTRICT	FOUR-YEAR COHORT RATES				
	# OF STUDENTS IN COHORT	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% STILL IN SCHOOL	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Barrington	278	1%	0%	2%	97%
Bristol Warren	260	3%	<1%	7%	90%
Burrillville	170	5%	0%	4%	91%
Central Falls	209	19%	<1%	15%	65%
Chariho	269	4%	1%	9%	87%
Coventry	369	9%	1%	4%	86%
Cranston	861	9%	1%	7%	83%
Cumberland	359	4%	1%	6%	89%
East Greenwich	205	4%	0%	2%	94%
East Providence	377	7%	1%	7%	85%
Exeter-West Greenwich	144	4%	1%	5%	90%
Foster-Glocester	209	4%	0%	2%	93%
Johnston	223	7%	4%	<1%	89%
Lincoln	226	5%	<1%	4%	90%
Middletown	146	16%	0%	3%	80%
Narragansett	107	1%	2%	5%	93%
New Shoreham	12	0%	0%	0%	100%
Newport	181	10%	0%	8%	82%
North Kingstown	368	5%	3%	3%	89%
North Providence	286	6%	1%	3%	90%
North Smithfield	129	2%	1%	11%	86%
Pawtucket	510	12%	<1%	16%	72%
Portsmouth	222	3%	1%	1%	95%
Providence	1,865	12%	<1%	10%	78%
Scituate	101	5%	2%	0%	93%
Smithfield	167	3%	0%	3%	94%
South Kingstown	238	2%	<1%	6%	92%
Tiverton	129	2%	2%	6%	91%
Warwick	591	6%	2%	12%	81%
West Warwick	269	3%	2%	11%	84%
Westerly	198	2%	3%	4%	91%
Woonsocket	436	22%	1%	13%	64%
<i>Beacon Charter School</i>	61	3%	2%	11%	84%
<i>Blackstone Academy</i>	85	0%	0%	8%	92%
<i>Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy</i>	87	0%	0%	13%	87%
<i>Charette Charter School</i>	40	8%	0%	10%	83%
<i>Paul Cuffee Charter School</i>	67	0%	1%	9%	90%
<i>The Greene School</i>	54	0%	0%	4%	96%
<i>Highlander Charter School</i>	56	14%	0%	30%	55%
<i>RI Nurses Institute Middle College</i>	58	3%	0%	12%	84%
<i>Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy</i>	72	35%	4%	43%	18%
<i>Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts</i>	36	0%	0%	0%	100%
<i>Village Green Virtual Public Charter School</i>	47	0%	0%	0%	100%
<i>William M. Davies Jr.</i>					
<i>Career & Technical High School</i>	195	7%	0%	4%	90%
<i>DCYF Schools</i>	11	55%	27%	18%	0%
<i>Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center</i>	213	3%	<1%	4%	92%
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	3,020	14%	<1%	12%	74%
<i>Remainder of State</i>	7,099	5%	1%	6%	88%
<i>Rhode Island</i>	11,201	8%	1%	8%	84%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2021.

The 2021 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 2017-2018 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.

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

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

(continued on page 191)