

# Student Mobility

## DEFINITION

*Student mobility* is the number of students who enrolled in school after September 30 or withdrew from school before June 1 divided by the total enrollment for that school district.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Student mobility is associated with lower academic performance, social and psychological difficulties, lower levels of school engagement, and increased risk of dropping out of high school.<sup>1</sup> Changing schools disrupts learning, can result in children missing critical conceptual knowledge and skills, and can cause social upheaval for children. Student mobility also can lead to less active parent involvement in their children's schools.<sup>2,3</sup>

Students who change schools frequently are more likely to have lower math and reading skills, more likely to repeat a grade, more likely to be suspended, and less likely to graduate from high school than their non-mobile peers.<sup>4,5</sup>

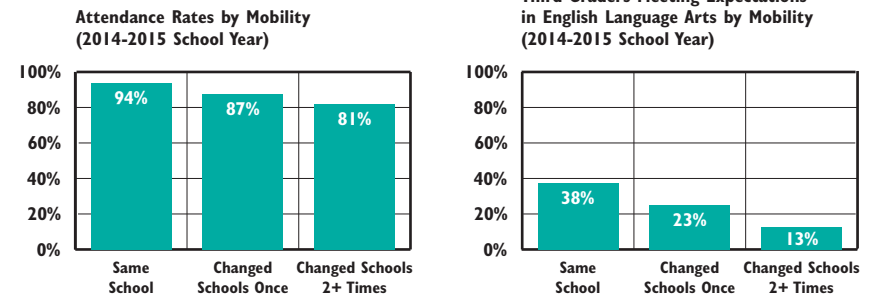
Low-income and minority children are more likely to be mobile than higher-income and White students. School mobility has a greater negative impact on the academic achievement of low-income students than it does on higher-income students. Students receiving special education services also are likely to be negatively impacted by changing schools.<sup>6</sup>

High mobility rates can negatively impact all students because teachers must slow curriculum progress, repeat lessons, and adjust to changing classroom dynamics and student needs. Within-year moves are particularly disruptive for students, teachers, and schools.<sup>7,8</sup>

Families may move their children to a different school because they are dissatisfied with the school, concerned about their child's safety, or because they are moving due to changes in family circumstances.<sup>9</sup> Changes in family circumstances can be either positive or negative factors, including eviction or foreclosure, divorce or marriage, job loss or job changes, death in the family, or a desire to improve quality of life. Mobile students in low-income and Black families are more likely to change schools due to family reasons than mobile students in higher-income and White families.<sup>10,11</sup>

Between 2010 and 2014 in Rhode Island, 11% of children ages five to 17 changed residence at least once during the previous year, 82% of whom moved within Rhode Island and 18% of whom moved from another state or abroad.<sup>12</sup> Nationally and in Rhode Island, people with incomes below the poverty line are more likely to move than higher-income residents. Between 2010 and 2014, 24% of low-income Rhode Islanders moved, compared with 10% of higher-income residents.<sup>13</sup>

## School Mobility and Education Outcomes in Rhode Island



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2014-2015 school year.

- ◆ Rhode Island students who change schools mid-year are absent more often than students who do not change schools. Rhode Island students who did not change schools had a 94% attendance rate, compared with 87% for those who changed schools once and 81% for those who changed schools two or more times during the 2014-2015 school year.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ Children who change schools mid-year also perform worse on standardized tests than children who have not experienced school mobility. During the 2014-2015 school year in Rhode Island, 38% of third-grade children who did not experience mobility met expectations in reading/writing on the *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)* state assessment, compared with 23% of students who moved once and 13% of students who moved two or more times.<sup>15</sup>
- ◆ School districts with high mobility rates can reduce the negative effects of mobility on students by providing immediate and comprehensive screening of entering students to ensure that students are properly placed. Districts also can identify those districts where students most frequently transfer to and from and align their curricula, programs, and policies to reduce disruption of learning.<sup>16</sup>
- ◆ Schools can help reduce the negative effects of mobility, but broader social policies may be needed to reduce student mobility. Increasing the availability of housing vouchers and access to public benefits, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and WIC, could help low-income families maintain their housing and reduce school mobility.<sup>17,18</sup>

## Student Mobility and Stability Rates

◆ Mobility rates are calculated by adding all children who enrolled after September 30 to all those who withdrew before June 1 and dividing the total by the total enrollment for that school district.<sup>19</sup>

◆ Stability rates measure the number of children who attended the same school the entire school year in a school district. The stability rate is calculated by dividing the number of children enrolled the whole year at the same school in the school district by total enrollment for that district. The stability rate for the four core cities was 79% in the 2014-2015 school year, compared with a stability rate of 91% in the remainder of the state.<sup>20</sup>

◆ Total enrollment for each district is cumulative over the course of the school year.<sup>21</sup>

◆ The overall Rhode Island student mobility rate was 14% in the 2014-2015 school year. The four core cities had a higher mobility rate (22%) than districts in the remainder of the state (10%).<sup>22</sup>

◆ During the 2014-2015 school year, Rhode Island high schools had higher mobility rates (16%) than elementary schools (14%) and middle schools (11%).<sup>23</sup>

Table 44. Student Mobility and Stability Rates by District, Rhode Island, 2014-2015 School Year

SCHOOL DISTRICT	CUMULATIVE ENROLLMENT FOR 2014-2015	# ENROLLED THE WHOLE YEAR	# ENROLLED AFTER SEPT. 30	# EXITED BEFORE JUNE 1	STABILITY RATE	MOBILITY RATE
Barrington	3,376	3,238	74	68	96%	4%
Bristol Warren	3,522	3,238	116	184	92%	9%
Burrillville	2,416	2,348	68	0	97%	3%
Central Falls	3,200	2,417	453	422	76%	27%
Charlho	3,531	3,150	190	219	89%	12%
Coventry	5,060	4,710	159	215	93%	7%
Cranston	11,111	9,943	551	673	89%	11%
Cumberland	4,769	4,408	180	196	92%	8%
East Greenwich	2,506	2,372	87	49	95%	5%
East Providence	5,637	5,055	255	348	90%	11%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,721	1,591	67	77	92%	8%
Foster	288	276	*	*	96%	4%
Foster-Glocester	1,145	1,089	16	40	95%	5%
Glocester	544	512	*	27	94%	6%
Jamestown	525	483	22	21	92%	8%
Johnston	3,351	3,021	177	168	90%	10%
Lincoln	3,217	2,959	140	122	92%	8%
Little Compton	258	244	*	10	95%	5%
Middletown	2,471	2,124	162	212	86%	15%
Narragansett	1,401	1,300	57	48	93%	7%
New Shoreham	121	113	*	*	93%	7%
Newport	2,322	1,887	230	233	81%	20%
North Kingstown	4,300	3,965	158	196	92%	8%
North Providence	3,841	3,357	240	278	87%	13%
North Smithfield	1,882	1,703	97	113	90%	11%
Pawtucket	10,096	8,415	811	1,002	83%	18%
Portsmouth	2,691	2,452	114	135	91%	9%
Providence	28,086	22,088	2,802	3,778	79%	23%
Scituate	1,472	1,382	48	45	94%	6%
Smithfield	2,475	2,333	92	64	94%	6%
South Kingstown	3,486	3,205	136	171	92%	9%
Tiverton	1,942	1,784	68	99	92%	9%
Warwick	9,841	8,788	492	617	89%	11%
West Warwick	3,795	3,213	299	337	85%	17%
Westerly	3,174	2,899	137	158	91%	9%
Woonsocket	6,900	5,461	624	920	79%	22%
Charter Schools	5,658	5,267	122	279	93%	7%
State-Operated Schools	2,109	1,627	272	331	77%	29%
UCAP	149	131	*	10	88%	13%
Four Core Cities	48,282	38,381	4,690	6,122	79%	22%
Remainder of State	98,191	89,142	4,449	5,135	91%	10%
Rhode Island	154,389	134,548	9,541	11,877	87%	14%

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, 2014-2015 school year.

\*Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These students are still counted in district totals and in the four core cities, remainder of the state, and state totals.

Charter Schools include: Achievement First Rhode Island, Beacon Charter High School for the Arts, Blackstone Academy, Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, The Compass School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, The Greene School, Highlander Charter School, Hope Academy, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, The Learning Community, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College, Segue Institute for Learning, Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, South Side Elementary Charter School, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and The Village Green Virtual Public Charter School. State-operated schools include DCYF Schools, Metropolitan Regional Career & Technical High School, William M. Davies Career & Technical High School and the Rhode Island School for the Deaf. UCAP is the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

### References

- <sup>1,5,9</sup> Reynolds, A. J., Chen, C., & Herbers, J. E. (2009). *School mobility and educational success: A research synthesis and evidence on prevention*. Paper presented at the National Research Council Workshop on the Impact of Mobility and Change on the Lives of Young Children, Schools and Neighborhoods, Washington, DC.
- <sup>2,4,6,7,10</sup> Burkam, D. T., Lee, V. E., & Dwyer, J. (2009). *School mobility in the early elementary grades: Frequency and impact from nationally-representative data*. Paper presented at the National Research Council Workshop on the Impact of Mobility and Change on the Lives of Young Children, Schools and Neighborhoods, Washington, DC.
- <sup>3,8,11</sup> Turner, M. A. & Berube, A. (2009). *Vibrant neighborhoods, successful schools: What the federal government can do to foster both*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

(continued on page 184)