

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. Changing schools can disrupt learning, can negatively impact a student's achievement, and can cause social upheaval for children. Student mobility also can lead to less active parent involvement in their children's schools.^{1,2}

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.^{3,4}

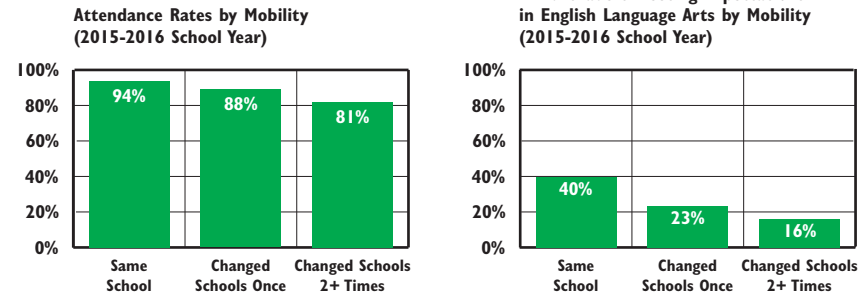
Regardless of income status and ethnicity, mobility can negatively affect student achievement. However, low-income and minority children are more likely to be mobile and experience greater negative impacts on their academic achievement, than higher-income and White students. Students receiving special education services also are likely to be negatively impacted by changing schools.^{5,6}

High mobility rates in schools 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.^{7,8}

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.⁹ 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.^{10,11}

Between 2011 and 2015 in Rhode Island, 11% of children ages five to 17 changed residence at least once during the previous year, 81% of whom moved within Rhode Island and 19% of whom moved from another state or abroad.¹² Nationally and in Rhode Island, people with incomes below the poverty line are more likely to move than higher-income residents. Between 2011 and 2015, 24% of Rhode Islanders living below the poverty line moved, compared with 10% of higher-income residents.¹³

School Mobility and Education Outcomes in Rhode Island



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2015-2016 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 88% for those who changed schools once and 81% for those who changed schools two or more times during the 2015-2016 school year.¹⁴
- ◆ **Children who change schools mid-year also perform worse on standardized tests than children who have not experienced school mobility.** During the 2015-2016 school year in Rhode Island, 40% 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 16% of students who moved two or more times.¹⁵
- ◆ **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 other districts where students most frequently transfer to and from and align their curricula, programs, and policies to reduce learning disruption.¹⁶
- ◆ **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.^{17,18}

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.¹⁹

◆ 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 school district. The stability rate for the four core cities was 79% in the 2015-2016 school year, compared with a stability rate of 91% in the remainder of the state.²⁰

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

◆ The overall Rhode Island student mobility rate was 14% in the 2015-2016 school year. The four core cities had a higher mobility rate (23%) than districts in the remainder of the state (10%).²²

◆ During the 2015-2016 school year, Rhode Island high schools had higher mobility rates (16%) than elementary schools (14%) and middle schools (12%).²³

Table 46. Student Mobility and Stability Rates by District, Rhode Island, 2015-2016 School Year

SCHOOL DISTRICT	CUMULATIVE ENROLLMENT FOR 2015-2016	# ENROLLED THE WHOLE YEAR	# ENROLLED AFTER SEPT. 30	# EXITED BEFORE JUNE 1	STABILITY RATE	MOBILITY RATE
Barrington	3,359	3,248	54	58	97%	3%
Bristol Warren	3,533	3,167	131	251	90%	11%
Burrillville	2,482	2,332	75	87	94%	7%
Central Falls	3,168	2,371	423	434	75%	27%
Charlho	3,379	3,123	134	133	92%	8%
Coventry	5,047	4,594	222	252	91%	9%
Cranston	11,023	10,003	524	558	91%	10%
Cumberland	4,794	4,399	190	227	92%	9%
East Greenwich	2,537	2,423	47	69	96%	5%
East Providence	5,688	5,033	282	406	88%	12%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,707	1,574	55	84	92%	8%
Foster	292	274	11	*	94%	7%
Foster-Glocester	1,183	1,115	20	54	94%	6%
Glocester	578	544	18	17	94%	6%
Jamestown	520	478	21	22	92%	8%
Johnston	3,435	3,077	167	215	90%	11%
Lincoln	3,123	2,903	124	107	93%	7%
Little Compton	271	234	23	16	86%	14%
Middletown	2,444	2,125	139	197	87%	14%
Narragansett	1,374	1,271	46	61	93%	8%
New Shoreham	124	108	*	*	87%	15%
Newport	2,422	1,994	238	233	82%	19%
North Kingstown	4,211	3,885	165	178	92%	8%
North Providence	3,827	3,381	227	262	88%	13%
North Smithfield	1,843	1,676	100	88	91%	10%
Pawtucket	10,063	8,296	901	986	82%	19%
Portsmouth	2,611	2,370	111	139	91%	10%
Providence	28,023	21,889	3,126	3,640	78%	24%
Scituate	1,431	1,329	44	62	93%	7%
Smithfield	2,472	2,335	70	78	94%	6%
South Kingstown	3,390	3,121	118	169	92%	8%
Tiverton	1,963	1,750	64	155	89%	11%
Warwick	9,755	8,714	545	578	89%	12%
West Warwick	3,828	3,253	297	324	85%	16%
Westerly	3,077	2,749	147	191	89%	11%
Woonsocket	6,768	5,321	610	930	79%	23%
Charter Schools	6,502	6,089	158	262	94%	6%
State-Operated Schools	2,031	1,615	253	274	80%	26%
UCAP	152	125	10	19	82%	19%
Four Core Cities	48,022	37,877	5,060	5,990	79%	23%
Remainder of State	97,723	88,582	4,418	5,289	91%	10%
Rhode Island	154,430	134,288	9,899	11,834	87%	14%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, 2015-2016 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, RISE Prep Mayoral Academy, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School, 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

- ¹³ Herbers, J. E., Reynolds, A. J., & Chen, C. (2013). School mobility and developmental outcomes in young adulthood. *Development and Psychopathology*, 25(2), 501-515.
- ^{24,5,8,17} Scherrer, J. (2013). The negative effects of student mobility: Mobility as a predictor, mobility as a mediator. *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership*, 8(1), 1-14.
- ^{6,7,10} 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.

(continued on page 188)