

# 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's degree or bachelor's degree) within six years of enrollment.<sup>1</sup>

## SIGNIFICANCE

By 2020, 71% of jobs in Rhode Island will require post-secondary education beyond high school, and yet only 34% of Rhode Island adults between the ages of 25 and 64 have a bachelor's degree or higher, and an additional 29% have some college or an associate's degree.<sup>2,3</sup> Between 2012 and 2016 in Rhode Island, 9.7% of adults with a high school diploma were unemployed, compared to 6.2% of those with some college or an associate's degree and 3.4% of those with a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>4</sup> During that same period, the median annual income for adults with a high school diploma was \$31,658, compared to \$36,791 for adults with some college or an associate's degree and \$52,030 for adults with a bachelor's degree.<sup>5</sup>

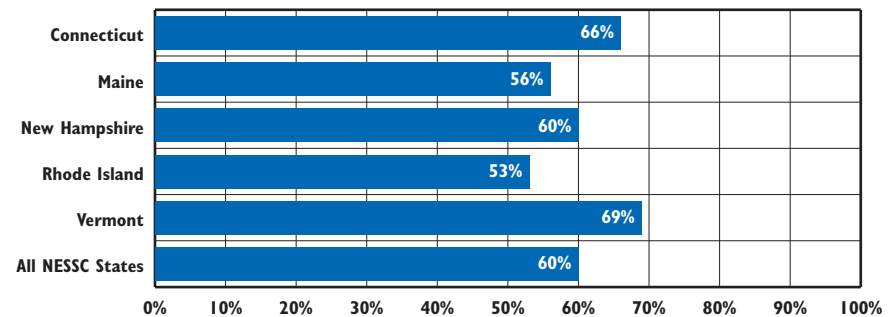
Students must complete college degrees to increase their income and reduce the risk of unemployment. While college enrollment rates have doubled in recent decades, there are still large gaps in the percentage of students who enroll in college, the types of

colleges students enroll in, and the percentage who attain college degrees across different income groups.<sup>6</sup>

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 college degrees.<sup>7</sup> There are also barriers to attainment for students of color. In the U.S., among students who started college in 2010, 63% of Asian students, 62% of White students, 46% of Hispanic students, and 38% of Black students completed a degree or certificate within six years.<sup>8</sup>

Low-income and first-generation college students often arrive at college less academically prepared than other students. They can benefit from a wide range of academic and social 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.<sup>9,10,11</sup>

**College Completion, New England Secondary School Consortium States (NESSC), 2010 Cohort**



Source: *Common Data Project: 2017 annual report, school year 2015-2016*. (2017). Retrieved February 27, 2018, from [www.newenglandssc.org](http://www.newenglandssc.org)

- ◆ Fifty-three percent of Rhode Island public high school graduates who enrolled in a two- or four-year college in 2010 earned a college diploma within six years. Rhode Island's completion rate is the lowest of all of the states in the New England Secondary School Consortium. In Rhode Island, there are large gaps in college completion between low-income and higher-income students, with 37% of low-income students completing college within six years, compared to 60% of higher-income students.<sup>12</sup>
- ◆ Many students who enroll in college do not complete their degree. Improving college access and completion will require that states make 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, aligning the K-12 education system with college and career expectations, simplifying the college admission process, making college affordable, and providing student support programs that increase college completion rates.<sup>13</sup> State policies that reward colleges for meeting performance goals, transform remediation practices, encourage full-time college attendance, help students balance work and school, and support on-time graduation could further increase college completion rates.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ Rhode Island's FY 2018 budget created the RI Promise Scholarship which covers the cost of two years of tuition and mandatory fees at the Community College of Rhode Island for qualifying Rhode Island students.<sup>15</sup>

# College Enrollment and Completion

Table 55.

College Enrollment and Completion, Rhode Island

SCHOOL DISTRICT	# OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL IN 2016	# OF 2016 HS GRADUATES WHO ENROLLED IN COLLEGE WITHIN 6 MONTHS	% OF 2016 HS GRADUATES WHO ENROLLED IN COLLEGE WITHIN 6 MONTHS	# OF STUDENTS WHO ENROLLED IN COLLEGE IN 2015	# OF 2015 COLLEGE ENROLLEES WHO PERSISTED (ENROLLED FOR A THIRD SEMESTER)	% OF 2015 COLLEGE ENROLLEES WHO PERSISTED (ENROLLED FOR A THIRD SEMESTER)
Barrington	207	171	83%	232	224	97%
Bristol Warren	225	150	67%	198	162	82%
Burrillville	149	84	56%	98	70	71%
Central Falls	148	55	37%	84	47	56%
Chariho	254	156	61%	223	187	84%
Coventry	355	219	62%	250	197	79%
Cranston	735	481	65%	591	470	80%
Cumberland	307	216	70%	234	211	90%
East Greenwich	196	143	73%	164	152	93%
East Providence	365	191	52%	219	165	75%
Exeter-West Greenwich	135	96	71%	126	112	89%
Foster-Glocester	167	107	64%	114	97	85%
Johnston	223	142	64%	138	97	70%
Lincoln	236	156	66%	193	166	86%
Middletown	133	97	73%	127	113	89%
Narragansett	87	47	54%	96	85	89%
Newport	141	67	48%	67	52	78%
North Kingstown	312	239	77%	280	256	91%
North Providence	257	148	58%	135	98	73%
North Smithfield	132	89	67%	103	91	88%
Pawtucket	472	200	42%	290	219	76%
Portsmouth	215	161	75%	209	184	88%
Providence	1,415	637	45%	890	614	69%
Scituate	124	101	81%	104	94	90%
Smithfield	184	136	74%	117	99	85%
South Kingstown	268	202	75%	131	114	87%
Tiverton	131	92	70%	76	67	88%
Warwick	640	386	60%	474	395	83%
West Warwick	228	104	46%	136	102	75%
Westerly	191	132	69%	148	125	84%
Woonsocket	295	133	45%	157	110	70%
<i>Beacon Charter High School for the Arts</i>	57	40	70%	40	27	68%
<i>Blackstone Academy</i>	44	29	66%	19	16	84%
<i>Paul Cuffee Charter School</i>	60	35	58%	42	27	64%
<i>The Greene School</i>	33	20	61%	20	19	95%
<i>RI Nurses Institute Middle College</i>	35	15	43%	31	27	87%
<i>Sheila "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy</i>	26	*	19%	*	*	25%
<i>Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts</i>	24	13	54%	0	NA	NA
<i>Village Green Virtual Public Charter School</i>	45	22	49%	0	NA	NA
<i>William M. Davies Jr. Career &amp; Technical High School</i>	180	83	46%	109	77	71%
<i>Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center</i>	193	80	41%	127	81	64%
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	2,330	1,025	44%	1,421	990	70%
<i>Remainder of State</i>	6,605	4,318	65%	4,986	4,188	84%
<i>Rhode Island</i>	9,644	5,685	59%	6,800	5,453	80%

## Source of Data for Table/Methodology

# of students who graduated from high school in 2016, # of 2016 high school graduates who enrolled in college within six months, # of students who enrolled in college in 2015, and # of 2015 college enrollees who persisted (were enrolled for a third semester) are all from Rhode Island Department of Education. Percentages may not sum exactly due to rounding.

Four core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

New Shoreham, 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 district totals and in the four core cities, remainder of the state, and state total.

NA Schools did not have students graduating in this year.

Charter schools include Beacon Charter School for the Arts, Blackstone Academy, Paul Cuffee Charter School, The Greene School, Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College Charter School, Sheila "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy, Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts, and the Village Green Virtual Public Charter School. State-operated schools include William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School, DCYF, Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center, and Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> *Common Data Project: 2017 procedural guidebook*. (2017). Retrieved February 28, 2018, from [www.newenglandssc.org](http://www.newenglandssc.org)
- <sup>2</sup> Carnevale, A. P., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2013). *Recovery: Job growth and education requirements through 2020 (State report)*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce.
- <sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2016. Table B23006.
- <sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2016. Table S2301.
- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2016. Table B20004.

(continued on page 189)