

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 2016, 10% of Rhode Island children lived in households headed by a non-high school graduate, lower than the national average of 14%.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 high school 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 up through the Class of 2020 must demonstrate proficiency in English language arts, math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology and complete at least 20 courses and two performance-based assessments.⁸ Students in the class of 2021 and later must complete one performance-based assessment and can earn Council designations, including a Seal of Biliteracy, Commissioner’s Seal, and Pathway Endorsements.^{9,10}

High School Graduation Rates	
	2015-2016
RI	83%
US	84%
National Rank*	31st
New England Rank**	6th

*1st is best; 50th is worst

**1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). Table 1. Retrieved March 5, 2018, from www.nces.ed.gov

Rhode Island Four-Year High School Graduation and Dropout Rates, by Student Subgroup, Class of 2017

	COHORT SIZE	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% OF STUDENTS STILL IN SCHOOL	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Female Students	4,856	5%	2%	5%	88%
Male Students	5,097	10%	2%	8%	80%
English Learners	764	18%	1%	9%	72%
Students With Disabilities	1,626	13%	3%	21%	63%
Students Without Disabilities	8,327	6%	2%	4%	88%
Low-Income Students	5,319	12%	3%	10%	76%
Higher-Income Students	4,634	3%	1%	3%	93%
White Students	6,179	5%	2%	5%	88%
Asian Students	277	5%	1%	4%	89%
Black Students	870	8%	2%	9%	81%
Hispanic Students	2,249	13%	2%	9%	76%
Native American	74	12%	3%	12%	73%
ALL STUDENTS	9,953	7%	2%	6%	84%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2017. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

- ◆ The Rhode Island four-year graduation rate for the Class of 2017 was 84%, up from 70% for the Class of 2007 (the first class for which the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) began calculating graduation rates using a cohort formula).^{11,12}
- ◆ The highest dropout rates and lowest high school graduation rates were among English learners, students with disabilities, low-income students, and Hispanic and Native American students.¹³

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 10,866 Rhode Island students who enrolled in ninth grade in 2011, 9,090 (84%) graduated in four years in 2015, 346 (3%) graduated in five years in 2016, and 71 (1%) graduated in six years in 2017.¹⁴
- ◆ Of the 346 students who graduated in five years in 2016, 135 (39%) were students with disabilities and 62 (18%) were English learners. Of the 71 students who graduated in six years in 2017, 51 (72%) were students with disabilities and 9 (13%) were English learners.¹⁵

High School Graduation Rate

Table 53.

High School Graduation Rates, Rhode Island, Class of 2017

FOUR-YEAR COHORT RATES					
SCHOOL DISTRICT	# OF STUDENTS IN COHORT	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% STILL IN SCHOOL	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Barrington	248	<1%	<1%	4%	96%
Bristol Warren	213	4%	2%	5%	90%
Burrillville	165	8%	2%	2%	88%
Central Falls	173	14%	0%	8%	78%
Chariho	326	6%	1%	3%	90%
Coventry	350	5%	2%	3%	90%
Cranston	751	5%	2%	7%	86%
Cumberland	317	7%	3%	3%	87%
East Greenwich	139	1%	1%	1%	97%
East Providence	342	10%	3%	5%	82%
Exeter-West Greenwich	133	5%	2%	3%	90%
Foster-Glocester	147	3%	1%	3%	93%
Johnston	208	9%	6%	7%	78%
Lincoln	194	5%	1%	6%	89%
Middletown	152	2%	3%	5%	91%
Narragansett	96	1%	1%	4%	94%
Newport	138	13%	1%	6%	80%
North Kingstown	325	4%	2%	4%	90%
North Providence	215	4%	1%	5%	91%
North Smithfield	116	6%	1%	2%	91%
Pawtucket	534	10%	1%	7%	82%
Portsmouth	246	3%	<1%	1%	96%
Providence	1,479	15%	1%	9%	75%
Scituate	105	1%	1%	1%	97%
Smithfield	190	4%	1%	5%	91%
South Kingstown	239	3%	1%	1%	94%
Tiverton	133	7%	3%	6%	84%
Warwick	625	5%	4%	5%	86%
West Warwick	211	8%	1%	7%	84%
Westerly	215	2%	1%	9%	87%
Woonsocket	374	19%	2%	12%	67%
<i>Beacon Charter High School for the Arts</i>	55	2%	0%	7%	91%
<i>Blackstone Academy</i>	43	0%	2%	9%	88%
<i>Paul Cuffee Charter School</i>	60	2%	0%	2%	97%
<i>The Greene School</i>	45	0%	0%	2%	98%
<i>Highlander Charter School</i>	20	5%	0%	15%	80%
<i>Sheila "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy</i>	77	31%	10%	39%	19%
<i>Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts</i>	27	0%	0%	4%	96%
<i>Village Green Virtual Public Charter School</i>	67	0%	0%	1%	99%
<i>William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School</i>	160	4%	1%	13%	81%
<i>DCYF Schools</i>	36	0%	81%	6%	14%
<i>Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center</i>	203	4%	1%	5%	90%
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	2,560	14%	1%	9%	75%
<i>Remainder of State</i>	6,547	5%	2%	4%	89%
<i>Rhode Island</i>	9,953	7%	2%	6%	84%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2017.

The 2017 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 2013-2014 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.

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 Nurses Institute Middle College is not reported because these students generally complete their course of study in more than four years. New Shoreham and Rhode Island School for the Deaf are not reported because there are fewer than 10 students in these cohorts. These students are included in the state total.

References

- ¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2016. Table S2301.
- ² U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2016. Table B20004.
- ³ The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org
- ⁴ Epstein, D. J. & Barnett, W.S. (2012). Early education in the United States. In R. C. Pianta (Ed.), *Handbook of early childhood education* (pp. 3-21). New York, NY: The Guildford Press.

(continued on page 189)