

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.¹² 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 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	
	2016-2017
RI	84%
US	85%
National Rank*	29 th
New England Rank**	6 th

*1st is best; 50th is worst

**1st is best; 6th is worst

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. (2018).

Table 1. Retrieved March 18, 2019, from

www.nces.ed.gov

Rhode Island Four-Year High School Graduation and Dropout Rates, by Student Subgroup, Class of 2018

	COHORT SIZE	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% OF STUDENTS STILL IN SCHOOL	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Female Students	5,037	7%	2%	4%	88%
Male Students	5,497	10%	2%	7%	81%
English Learners	968	20%	1%	7%	72%
Students With Disabilities	1,672	16%	2%	20%	62%
Students Without Disabilities	8,862	7%	2%	3%	88%
Low-Income Students	5,891	13%	2%	8%	77%
Higher-Income Students	4,643	3%	1%	3%	93%
White Students	6,270	6%	2%	4%	87%
Asian Students	308	4%	2%	3%	92%
Black Students	915	9%	1%	8%	83%
Hispanic Students	2,638	13%	2%	8%	77%
Native American	78	22%	0%	9%	69%
ALL STUDENTS	10,534	9%	2%	6%	84%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2018. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

◆ The Rhode Island four-year graduation rate for the Class of 2018 was 84%, up from 70% for the Class of 2008.^{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 11,053 Rhode Island students who enrolled in ninth grade in 2012, 9,227 (83%) graduated in four years in 2016, 352 (3%) graduated in five years in 2017, and 59 (1%) graduated in six years in 2018.¹⁴

◆ Of the 352 students who graduated in five years in 2017, 141 (40%) were students with disabilities and 45 (13%) were English learners. Of the 59 students who graduated in six years in 2018, 43 (73%) were students with disabilities and 2 (3%) were English learners.¹⁵

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Table 54.

High School Graduation Rates, Rhode Island, Class of 2018

FOUR-YEAR COHORT RATES					
SCHOOL DISTRICT	# OF STUDENTS IN COHORT	DROPOUT RATE	% COMPLETED GED	% STILL IN SCHOOL	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE
Barrington	294	1%	0%	2%	97%
Bristol Warren	221	5%	1%	7%	86%
Burrillville	183	11%	3%	3%	83%
Central Falls	184	16%	1%	8%	75%
Chariho	251	6%	2%	4%	88%
Coventry	367	4%	1%	2%	92%
Cranston	794	6%	3%	5%	86%
Cumberland	291	6%	4%	8%	82%
East Greenwich	185	1%	0%	2%	97%
East Providence	372	7%	2%	5%	86%
Exeter-West Greenwich	131	2%	1%	3%	95%
Foster-Glocester	175	5%	1%	2%	92%
Johnston	197	4%	2%	3%	92%
Lincoln	192	4%	5%	3%	88%
Middletown	140	6%	1%	6%	86%
Narragansett	120	6%	3%	5%	86%
Newport	178	13%	0%	3%	84%
North Kingstown	345	4%	3%	4%	89%
North Providence	246	6%	4%	5%	86%
North Smithfield	112	8%	0%	8%	84%
Pawtucket	480	14%	1%	6%	79%
Portsmouth	199	3%	2%	0%	96%
Providence	1,786	16%	1%	8%	75%
Scituate	112	4%	3%	3%	91%
Smithfield	161	3%	2%	2%	93%
South Kingstown	217	3%	<1%	2%	94%
Tiverton	137	5%	2%	4%	89%
Warwick	669	9%	3%	6%	83%
West Warwick	261	7%	3%	4%	85%
Westerly	191	8%	2%	7%	83%
Woonsocket	351	20%	<1%	8%	72%
<i>Beacon Charter High School for the Arts</i>	57	0%	0%	4%	96%
<i>Blackstone Academy</i>	74	5%	0%	4%	91%
<i>Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy</i>	64	3%	0%	8%	89%
<i>Paul Cuffee Charter School</i>	64	0%	0%	8%	92%
<i>The Greene School</i>	51	4%	0%	4%	92%
<i>Highlander Charter School</i>	39	8%	3%	10%	79%
<i>RI Nurses Institute Middle College</i>	33	9%	0%	9%	82%
<i>Sheila "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy</i>	76	42%	1%	42%	14%
<i>Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts</i>	25	0%	0%	0%	100%
<i>Village Green Virtual Public Charter School</i>	49	4%	2%	0%	94%
<i>William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School</i>	171	3%	0%	4%	93%
<i>DCYF Schools</i>	42	71%	14%	10%	5%
<i>Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center</i>	229	4%	1%	3%	92%
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	2,801	16%	1%	8%	75%
<i>Remainder of State</i>	6,752	6%	2%	4%	88%
<i>Rhode Island</i>	10,534	9%	2%	6%	84%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2018.

The 2018 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 2014-2015 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.

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

- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2013-2017. Table S2301.
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- The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org
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