

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, behavior 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}

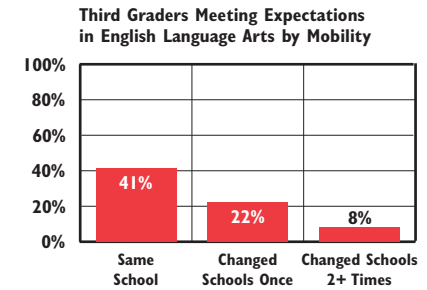
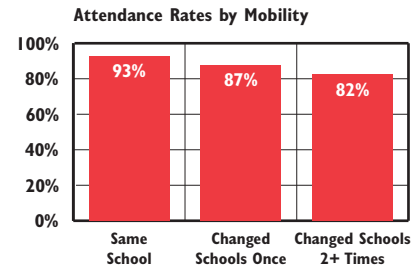
Regardless of income status and ethnicity, mobility can negatively affect student achievement. However, low-income and children of color are more likely to be mobile and experience greater negative impacts on their academic achievement, than higher-income and White students. Students receiving special 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 2013 and 2017 in Rhode Island, 11% of children ages five to 17 changed residence at least once during the previous year, 79% of whom moved within Rhode Island and 21% 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 2013 and 2017, 23% 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, 2017-2018



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, 2017-2018 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 93% attendance rate, compared with 87% for those who changed schools once and 82% for those who changed schools two or more times during the 2017-2018 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 2017-2018 school year in Rhode Island, 41% of third-grade children who did not experience mobility met expectations in reading/writing on the *Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS)* state assessment, compared with 22% of students who moved once and 8% 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
- ◆ One-third of children in foster care will experience five or more school changes before they turn age 18, and such changes often result in lost academic progress. The federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* includes provisions to give children in foster care more educational stability by allowing students to stay in their school of origin if it is in their best interest and providing transportation to that school.¹⁷

Table 46. Student Mobility and Stability Rates by District, Rhode Island, 2017-2018 School Year

SCHOOL DISTRICT	CUMULATIVE ENROLLMENT FOR 2017-2018	# ENROLLED THE WHOLE YEAR	# ENROLLED AFTER SEPT. 30	# EXITED BEFORE JUNE 1	STABILITY RATE	MOBILITY RATE
Barrington	3,440	3,305	80	57	96%	4%
Bristol Warren	3,408	3,063	112	255	90%	11%
Burrillville	2,321	2,166	77	84	93%	7%
Central Falls	3,009	2,215	457	408	74%	29%
Charlho	3,252	3,016	96	153	93%	8%
Coventry	4,819	4,470	158	201	93%	7%
Cranston	11,007	9,792	567	726	89%	12%
Cumberland	4,849	4,374	226	279	90%	10%
East Greenwich	2,497	2,394	43	65	96%	4%
East Providence	5,488	4,995	187	337	91%	10%
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,667	1,568	40	67	94%	6%
Foster	270	256	*	*	95%	5%
Foster-Glocester	1,287	1,231	23	34	96%	4%
Glocester	544	518	16	11	95%	5%
Jamestown	488	454	15	21	93%	7%
Johnston	3,347	3,044	151	163	91%	9%
Lincoln	3,163	2,911	114	145	92%	8%
Little Compton	245	230	*	*	94%	6%
Middletown	2,318	2,023	135	180	87%	14%
Narragansett	1,313	1,224	37	57	93%	7%
New Shoreham	129	114	*	*	88%	12%
Newport	2,386	1,990	180	245	83%	18%
North Kingstown	4,006	3,698	147	180	92%	8%
North Providence	3,743	3,375	177	218	90%	11%
North Smithfield	1,759	1,629	54	81	93%	8%
Pawtucket	9,530	8,003	798	834	84%	17%
Portsmouth	2,504	2,317	73	119	93%	8%
Providence	27,497	21,779	2,841	3,490	79%	23%
Scituate	1,315	1,240	40	38	94%	6%
Smithfield	2,423	2,311	51	66	95%	5%
South Kingstown	3,125	2,901	107	137	93%	8%
Tiverton	1,886	1,736	61	95	92%	8%
Warwick	9,191	8,377	363	489	91%	9%
West Warwick	3,921	3,261	299	411	83%	18%
Westerly	2,842	2,556	123	186	90%	11%
Woonsocket	6,729	5,362	662	849	80%	22%
Charter Schools	8,184	7,459	313	434	91%	9%
State-Operated Schools	2,015	1,628	226	260	81%	24%
UCAP	156	115	16	26	74%	27%
Four Core Cities	46,765	37,359	4,758	5,581	80%	22%
Remainder of State	94,953	86,539	3,773	5,123	91%	9%
Rhode Island	152,073	133,100	9,086	11,424	88%	13%

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.¹⁸

◆ 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 80% in the 2017-2018 school year, compared with a stability rate of 91% in the remainder of the state.¹⁹

◆ Total enrollment for each district is cumulative over the course of the school year.²⁰

◆ The overall Rhode Island student mobility rate was 13% in the 2017-2018 school year. The four core cities had a higher mobility rate (22%) than districts in the remainder of the state (9%).²¹

◆ During the 2017-2018 school year, Rhode Island high schools had higher mobility rates (16%) than elementary schools (13%) and middle schools (11%).²²

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Education, 2017-2018 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

- ¹⁸ Herbers, J. E., Reynolds, A. J., & Chen, C. (2013). School mobility and developmental outcomes in young adulthood. *Development and Psychopathology*, 25(2), 501-515.
- ^{24,58} Scherrer, J. (2013). The negative effects of student mobility: Mobility as a predictor, mobility as a mediator. *International Journal of Education Policy & Leadership*, 8(1), 1-14.
- ⁷ 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.

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