National Student Clearinghouse™ Research Center™

HIGH SCHOOL BENCHMARKS

September 19, 2023

National College Progression Rates

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

This report contains college enrollment, persistence, and completion outcomes of high school graduating students. The results presented in the report center on the following outcomes:

1) College enrollment in the
   - first fall after high school graduation
   - first year after high school graduation
   - first two years after high school graduation
2) Persistence from the first to the second year of college.
3) College completion within six years after high school graduation.

The outcomes are presented by type of college attended, including public and private institutions, two-year and four-year institutions, and in-state and out-of-state institutions. These characteristics are defined by IPEDS Institutional Characteristics data as of 2021-22. In-state designations are defined relative to the state in which the high school is located, not the residency of individual students.

The high school dataset used for this report is based on a voluntary sample and is not a nationally representative sample of schools or of high school graduates. High school diploma data are submitted to the National Student Clearinghouse (the Clearinghouse) by schools and districts that participate in the StudentTracker for High Schools (STHS) service. In general, the participating schools tend to have greater representation among schools with higher income, higher minority enrollments, and urban locales.

This report is based on the data submitted to the Clearinghouse on graduating classes of 2016, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022. The tables below show the number of participating high schools and high school graduates included in this report compared to the total number of US high schools and high school graduates. All types of high schools, including both public and private schools, participate in the Clearinghouse STHS service.

Table 1. Number of public, non-charter high schools and graduates included in the report

Academic year[1]	No. of participating high schools	Percent of all US public non-charter high schools[2]	Percent of US grade 12 enrollment represented[3]	No. of graduates in participating high schools
2015-2016	9,411	55.2%	63.6%	1,996,605
2018-2019	9,899	57.8%	67.7%	2,185,284
2019-2020	9,872	57.6%	67.2%	2,150,989
2020-2021	9,712	56.6%	65.7%	2,119,281
2021-2022	8,498	48.9%	56.7%	1,819,214

Table 2. Number of public, charter high schools and graduates included in the report

Academic year[1]	No. of participating high schools	Percent of all US public charter high schools[2]	Percent of US grade 12 enrollment represented[3]	No. of graduates in participating high schools
2015-2016	1,105	53.0%	53.3%	91,463
2018-2019	1,333	56.4%	52.3%	101,841
2019-2020	1,303	55.9%	53.3%	98,003
2020-2021	1,334	55.6%	52.9%	105,530
2021-2022	1,011	40.7%	40.5%	83,928

Table 3. Number of private high schools and graduates included in the report

Academic year[1]	Number of participating high schools	Percent of all US private high schools[2]	Percent of US grade 12 enrollment represented[3]	No. of graduates in participating high schools
2015-2016	238	4.8%	14.7%	32,212
2018-2019	260	4.8%	14.5%	35,188
2019-2020	223	4.3%	13.2%	28,616
2020-2021	152	2.9%	8.8%	19,225
2021-2022	125	2.4%	7.2%	15,680

[1] Academic year is defined as the period between September 1-August 31.

[2] The total number of schools used in the denominator of this calculation was obtained from NCES' Elementary and Secondary Information System (ELSi). The private school information is available from the Private School Survey, which is collected every two years through 2019-20. The number of private schools for intermediate years are estimates, equal to the number from the prior available year.

[3] The numbers used in both the denominator and numerator of this calculation were obtained from NCES' Elementary and Secondary Information System (ELSi). Grade 12 enrollment information is available from the Private School Survey, which is collected every two years through 2019-20. The numbers for intermediate years are estimates, equal to the numbers from the prior available year.

Definitions of Public, Non-Charter High School Categories

We used the Common Core of Data (CCD) to construct the sampling frame of schools. The CCD is the Department of Education's primary database on public elementary and secondary education in the United States. From the CCD, we created a sample frame that contains all regular public schools with a 12th grade.

To enable public, non-charter high schools to compare their own outcomes with those of similar high schools, the outcomes in this report are presented based on school-level characteristics: low-income and higher-income; high-minority and low-minority; and urban, suburban, or rural. Membership in these categories for each academic year is based on CCD data for the corresponding year.

Low-income schools are defined as schools where at least 50% of the entire student population (not just graduating seniors) is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Minority schools are defined as those schools where at least 40% of the students are Black or Hispanic. Locale is defined by the NCES urban-centric locale code. Schools with a code from 11 to 13 are defined as urban. Schools with a code from 21 to 23 are defined as suburban. And those with a code 31 to 43, covering both town and rural areas, are defined as rural.

Combinations of these characteristics results in seven groups of high schools. Thus, the outcomes are presented for the following categories of high schools:
- Low-income schools
- Higher-income schools
- Low-minority schools
- High-minority schools
- Urban schools
- Suburban schools
- Rural schools

Table 4. Number of public, non-charter high schools and public, non-charter high school graduates included in the report by category of high schools

Group	Academic year	Number of participating high schools	Percent of US grade 12 enrollment represented	Number of states represented	Total N (No. of graduates in sample)
Low-income Schools	2015-2016	3,495	58.9%	47	716,896
	2018-2019	3,649	65.9%	45	796,492
	2019-2020	3,637	65.0%	47	787,683
	2020-2021	2,929	62.5%	42	667,005
	2021-2022	2,555	55.9%	38	578,340
Higher-income Schools	2015-2016	5,916	66.5%	51	1,279,709
	2018-2019	6,250	68.8%	51	1,388,792
	2019-2020	6,235	68.6%	51	1,363,306
	2020-2021	6,783	67.2%	49	1,452,276
	2021-2022	5,943	57.1%	47	1,240,874
High-minority Schools	2015-2016	2,733	64.1%	40	760,624
	2018-2019	3,024	71.1%	42	906,769
	2019-2020	3,046	70.9%	46	911,003
	2020-2021	3,022	69.7%	42	902,935
	2021-2022	2,628	58.0%	43	755,774
Low-minority Schools	2015-2016	6,678	63.2%	50	1,235,981
	2018-2019	6,875	65.5%	51	1,278,515
	2019-2020	6,826	64.8%	51	1,239,986
	2020-2021	6,690	63.0%	50	1,216,346
	2021-2022	5,870	55.8%	49	1,063,440
Urban Schools	2015-2016	2,018	69.0%	51	582,723
	2018-2019	2,144	74.0%	51	641,311
	2019-2020	2,166	73.9%	51	648,189
	2020-2021	2,120	72.1%	49	636,120
	2021-2022	1,903	62.8%	47	547,463
Suburban Schools	2015-2016	2,685	69.2%	48	898,551
	2018-2019	2,865	74.2%	48	988,124
	2019-2020	2,830	73.4%	48	956,486
	2020-2021	2,761	71.6%	47	941,962
	2021-2022	2,436	61.6%	44	808,416
Rural Schools	2015-2016	4,708	51.6%	47	515,331
	2018-2019	4,890	54.0%	49	555,849
	2019-2020	4,876	53.6%	49	546,314
	2020-2021	4,831	52.6%	48	541,199
	2021-2022	4,159	45.1%	45	463,335

The numbers used in both the denominator and numerator of the percent of US grade 12 enrollment represented in Table 4 were obtained from NCES' Elementary and Secondary Information System (ELSi). The denominator is the number of grade 12 enrollments for all schools in a particular category of high schools. The numerator is the number of grade 12 enrollments for participating public high schools in the category. Grade 12 enrollment information is available from the Common Core of Data through 2021-22.

In addition to our standard results for schools in low-income and higher-income categories, the report also presents postsecondary outcomes for graduates from a subset of low-income schools defined as high-poverty schools and a subset of higher-income schools defined as low-poverty schools. High-poverty schools are defined as those where at least 75% of the student population is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Low-poverty schools are defined as those where less than 25% of the student population is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Table 5. Number of public, non-charter high schools and public, non-charter high school graduates in high-poverty and low-poverty schools included in the report by category

Group	Academic year	Number of participating high schools	Percent of US grade 12 enrollment represented	Number of states represented	Total N (No. of graduates in sample)
High-poverty Schools	2015-2016	1,448	66.0%	40	272,694
	2018-2019	1,572	70.3%	40	317,358
	2019-2020	1,573	69.6%	37	315,724
	2020-2021	1,481	69.7%	35	321,713
	2021-2022	1,341	62.4%	31	277,557
Low-poverty Schools	2015-2016	2,003	73.1%	49	551,865
	2018-2019	2,029	74.2%	46	563,140
	2019-2020	2,000	74.3%	46	558,838
	2020-2021	1,653	69.0%	37	446,214
	2021-2022	1,904	64.9%	37	502,621

The numbers used in both the denominator and numerator of the percent of US grade 12 enrollment represented in Table 5 were obtained from NCES' Elementary and Secondary Information System (ELSi). The denominator is the number of grade 12 enrollments for all schools in a particular category of high schools. The numerator is the number of grade 12 enrollments for participating public high schools in the category. Grade 12 enrollment information is available from the Common Core of Data through 2021-22.

Postsecondary Data

College enrollment, persistence, and completion outcomes are determined by matching the graduate files received from high schools each year, to the postsecondary enrollment data held by the National Student Clearinghouse. The National Student Clearinghouse is a unique and trusted source for higher education enrollment and degree verification. Currently, Clearinghouse data include 3,600 postsecondary institutions and 97 percent of U.S. postsecondary enrollments. Because the database is comprised of student-level data, researchers can use it to link concurrent as well as consecutive enrollments of individual students at multiple institutions — a capability that distinguishes the Clearinghouse data from national databases built with institution-level data.

To preserve comparability to the reports that schools and districts receive on their graduates' college access, persistence, and completion rates through the Clearinghouse's StudentTracker service, results have not been adjusted to account for a student's outcome not being captured due to noncoverage by Clearinghouse data.

Table 6. Postsecondary Data Coverage

Institution Type	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
National Coverage	96.7%	96.8%	96.8%	97.3%	97.4%	97.4%
Four-Year Public	99.5%	99.4%	99.5%	99.6%	99.6%	99.6%
Four-Year Private Nonprofit	95.8%	95.7%	95.9%	96.2%	96.3%	96.5%
Four-Year Private For-Profit	81.7%	81.7%	85.3%	88.4%	87.1%	87.2%
Two-Year Public	99.4%	99.4%	98.1%	99.7%	99.8%	99.8%
Two-Year Private Nonprofit	40.4%	37.7%	28.9%	37.5%	37.8%	39.0%
Two-Year Private For-Profit	26.7%	24.5%	14.0%	13.7%	11.8%	12.5%
PAB	*	*	96.9%	97.1%	97.7%	97.7%

PABs are Primarily Associate Degree Granting Baccalaureate Institutions. These institutions are four-year schools that primarily educate and award degrees at the associate level.

We identify these institutions based on their Carnegie Classification, either code 14 (Baccalaureate/Associate Colleges: Associate Dominant) or 23 (Baccalaureate/Associate Colleges: Mixed Baccalaureate/Associate). NSC coverage for PABs starts in 2017.

Definitions of Outcomes

College enrollment in the first fall after high school graduation: Percentage of high school students who enrolled in a two- or four- year postsecondary institution in the fall semester immediately following graduation. The fall semester immediately following graduation is defined as any enrollment that occurs between August 15 and October 31.

College enrollment in the first year after high school graduation: Percentage of high school students who enrolled in a two- or four-year postsecondary institution in the academic year immediately following graduation. The first year after high school includes any enrollment that occurs between August 15 of the graduation year and August 14 of the following year.

College enrollment in the first two years after high school graduation: Percentage of high school students who enrolled in a two- or four-year postsecondary institution in the first two years following graduation. The first two years after high school includes any enrollment that occurs between August 15 of the graduation year and August 14 of the second year. Persistence from first to second year of college: Percentage of students enrolled in the first year after high school graduation who remained enrolled in postsecondary education in the second year. This is the percentage of students who re-enrolled at any postsecondary institution, not necessarily the same one they started in. Thus, it is different from the typical measure of retention at the same institution.

College completion within six years after high school graduation: Percentage of high school students who attained a degree in a two- or four-year postsecondary institution in the six academic years immediately following graduation. Only associate's, bachelor's, and advanced degrees are counted in these rates. Certificates are not included.

STEM College Completions

Analysis is based on degree records that were awarded to students within six years of high school graduation. Only associate, bachelor's, and advanced degrees are considered. Certificates are not included. The field of study, whenever reported by the postsecondary institution, is mapped to the NCES' Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code. NCES classifies instructional programs by a six-digit CIP code at the most granular level and organizes them into CIP families by their two-digit prefix.

The definition of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) used in this analysis is based on a listing of six-digit CIP codes used by the National Science Foundation, and it includes the following disciplines:
- Biological and Agricultural Sciences
- Computer Sciences
- Earth, Atmospheric, and Ocean Sciences
- Engineering
- Mathematics
- Physical Sciences
- Psychology
- Social Sciences

If a student is awarded more than one degree and at least one of them is in a STEM discipline, the earliest STEM degree is considered for this analysis.

Suggested Citation

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