



MOST CONNECTICUT STUDENTS CHOOSE CONNECTICUT COLLEGES

Contrary to popular perception, Connecticut retains most of its recent high school graduates who go directly on to college. In 2004, the latest figures available, 58 percent stayed in-state to attend college (Figure 1). This percentage has been increasing steadily after surpassing the 50 percent mark in 2000. And although the state still exports more freshmen than it imports from other states, net exports (migration) have declined significantly to just 2,352, or barely half of what it was in 1992 (Figure 2). Most of the freshman who do leave the state stay remarkably close to home (Table 2)¹.

FIGURE 1: IN-STATE RETENTION RATE

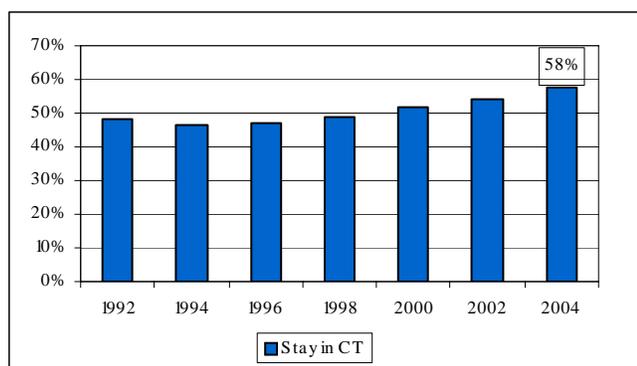
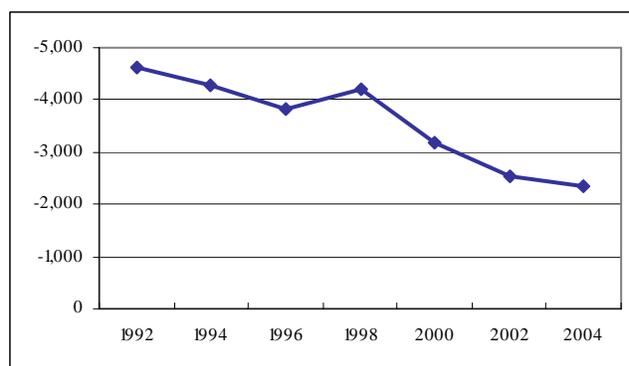


FIGURE 2: NET MIGRATION RATE



RESIDENCE/MIGRATION². Preliminary data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) show that 25,268 Connecticut residents graduating from high school (both public and private) in 2004 enrolled as freshmen in U.S. colleges in fall 2004. Of those, 14,533 (58%) entered a Connecticut college, while the other 10,735 enrolled elsewhere. The 58 percent in-state retention rate in 2004 compares to rates of 54 percent in 2002, 52 percent in 2000, and 47-49 percent during the 1990s.

As shown in Table 1, Connecticut colleges enrolled a total of 22,916 new high school graduates in fall 2004. Since 14,533 were from Connecticut, the state “imported” the remaining 8,383 from other states. Importing 8,383 freshmen into Connecticut, while exporting 10,735 Connecticut freshmen to other states, yields a net export of 2,352, or barely half of the net export of 4,617 students in 1992.

The state has experienced a remarkable 51 percent increase in the number of recent high school graduates who enroll in Connecticut colleges over these 12 years. The greatest success was in retaining our own, up 52 percent from 9,550 to 14,533. The number of freshman from other states grew by 50 percent, from 5,601 to 8,383 over the same time period.

TABLE 1: RESIDENCE/MIGRATION, RECENT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	Change 92-04
Connecticut Residents: Recent H.S. Graduates Who Enrolled as Freshmen in the U.S.								
Total in the U.S.	19,768	19,343	19,577	21,399	22,812	23,528	25,268	28%
Remaining in Connecticut	9,550	9,011	9,202	10,429	11,824	12,796	14,533	52%
Attending elsewhere in U.S. (EXPORTED)	10,218	10,332	10,375	10,970	10,988	10,732	10,735	5%
Percent remaining in Connecticut	48%	47%	47%	49%	52%	54%	58%	
Freshmen Enrolled in Connecticut: Recent H.S. Graduates								
Total enrolled in Connecticut	15,151	15,055	15,754	17,208	19,613	20,995	22,916	51%
Connecticut Residents	9,550	9,011	9,202	10,429	11,824	12,796	14,533	52%
From elsewhere in U.S. (IMPORTED)	5,601	6,044	6,552	6,779	7,789	8,199	8,383	50%
Net Migration: Imported Minus Exported	-4,617	-4,288	-3,823	-4,191	-3,199	-2,533	-2,352	

The progress between 2002 and 2004 was especially great, with the number of resident freshmen remaining in-state jumping almost 14 percent. This compares to the total number of freshmen from Connecticut which grew by just 7.4 percent overall. Put another way, of the total *increase* in the number of Connecticut high school graduates entering college over the last two years (1,740), 1,737 stayed in-state and only three left the state. Perhaps most heartening was the fact that the number of exported students was only five percent above 1992 levels.

WHERE DO CONNECTICUT FRESHMEN GO? Almost everywhere in the U.S. In 1996, 1998, and 2000, at least one Connecticut resident freshman enrolled in every state and D.C.; in 2002, they went to all but South Dakota; and in 2004, they went everywhere except the two Dakotas and Nebraska. On average, Connecticut resident freshmen enter about 840 colleges a year, or about one-fourth of all U.S. colleges. (Note: The college-by-college data are not available for 1992 and 1994.)

TABLE 2: GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF CONNECTICUT RESIDENT FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN

Most of them, however, stay close to home (Table 2). As noted, 58 percent of Connecticut resident freshmen in 2004 stayed in Connecticut. Another 21 percent enrolled in the three adjacent states; 10 percent matriculated in five nearby states, and the remaining 12 percent went elsewhere in the U.S.

	1996	2004
Connecticut	47%	58%
Adjacent States (MA, NY, RI)	26%	21%
Rest of New England (ME, NH, VT) and Northeast (NJ, PA)	11%	10%
Subtotal: New England and Northeast	85%	88%
Remainder of U.S. (41 states and DC)	15%	12%
Grand Total	100%	100%

The increase in the in-state resident share over the last eight years has come primarily from the adjacent and more distant states where the percentages dropped from 26 percent to 21 percent and 15 percent to 12 percent, respectively.

TABLE 3: OUT-OF-STATE COLLEGES ENROLLING THE MOST CONNECTICUT RESIDENT FRESHMEN (AVERAGE PER YEAR, 1996-2004 EVEN-NUMBERED YEARS)

A similar geographic pattern appears in the top 10 out-of-state colleges which enroll Connecticut resident freshmen (Table 3).

Northeastern University (MA) ³	280	Boston College (MA)	175
Boston University (MA)	240	Roger Williams University (RI)	161
University of Rhode Island	209	Marist College (NY) ³	152
Johnson & Wales University (RI)	193	University of Vermont	141
Keene State College (NH)	182	University of Massachusetts-Amherst	139

Eight of the top 10 colleges are in adjacent states and the remaining two (Keene State College and University of Vermont) are just one state removed from Connecticut. George Washington University in D.C. is the highest-ranked college outside the adjacent or nearby states (#15, averaging 111 Connecticut resident freshmen a year).

In 2004, Johnson & Wales led the pack with 257 Connecticut resident freshmen, which put it ahead of all but three of the 22 independent in-state colleges (University of Hartford's 315, Quinnipiac's 281 and University of New Haven's 268) and seven of the 21 public colleges. Johnson & Wales enrolled almost as many Connecticut resident freshmen in 2004 than the 290 combined at the four Connecticut national independents — Yale, Wesleyan, Trinity and Connecticut College.

TABLE 4: CONNECTICUT RESIDENT FRESHMEN, 2004 BY INSTITUTIONAL TYPE

The largest difference between Connecticut resident freshmen who stayed in-state and those who left the state is by institutional sector

	Public 4-Year	Public 2-Year	Independent 4-Year	Independent 2-Year	Total
Connecticut	48%	36%	15%	2%	100%
Out-of-State	26%	1%	71%	1%	100%

(Table 4). In 2004, public institutions represented just under 84 percent of the in-state enrollments, but only 27 percent of the out-of-state ones. Four-year institutions were 63 percent of the in-state enrollments and 97 percent of the out-of-state ones.

COMPARATIVE DATA, IN-STATE RETENTION. Connecticut's 54 percent of resident freshmen remaining in-state in 2002 (2004 data for other states are not yet available) compares to 81 percent for the U.S., and ranges from a low of 29 percent (D.C.) to a high of 93 percent (Mississippi). Connecticut was the fifth lowest "state" in retaining its resident freshmen who are recent high-school graduates. If the other states maintain their 2002 retention rate in 2004, Connecticut would drop from fifth to seventh lowest.

The nine states keeping the smallest share of their resident freshmen (the 10th state was much higher, at 64%) in 2002 appear in Table 5. What do these nine states have in common? Except for Alaska, the other states are the ones with a plethora of good out-of-state colleges within a very narrow circle of the states' largest population centers. For example, there are 453

out-of-state colleges within a 120-mile radius of downtown Hartford (or nine out-of-state colleges for every in-state college), while there are no out-of-state colleges within a 120-radius of Miami, Phoenix, San Antonio or San Francisco. In short, these eight states (unlike most of the nation) have many good out-of-state choices within a two-hour drive. It is not surprising that they traditionally have a harder time keeping most of their freshmen, given the desire of many 18-year-olds to experience life away from home.

TABLE 5: STATES WITH SMALLEST SHARE OF RESIDENT FRESHMEN RETAINED, 2002

District of Columbia	29%	Alaska	55%
Vermont	43%	New Jersey	57%
New Hampshire	52%	Maine	58%
Delaware	54%	Rhode Island	58%
Connecticut	54%		

IMPLICATIONS. The partial stemming of the “brain drain” (i.e., a smaller share of Connecticut resident freshmen leaving the state) is good news, as is the fact that most émigrés do not stray far from Connecticut and thus may return to the state and contribute to its economy after completing college.

One area of concern is the net export of 2,352 freshmen in 2004. The net export, however, is barely half of the 1992 level of 4,617, largely because of a 50 percent increase in imports and an only five percent increase in exports over those 12 years. Also as noted above, Connecticut as a small state is close to many good out-of-state colleges (e.g., 90% of colleges within 120 miles of Hartford are out-of-state ones) and should not be expected to keep an overwhelming large share of its high school graduates who go directly to college.

Perhaps the best news is that the higher in-state retention may serve as a buffer after the expected peak in 2008 of public high school graduates in Connecticut. That peak reflects the peak in U.S. births in 1990, as the end of the “Baby Boom Echo” or “Baby Boomlet,” which was mostly the children of the original 1946-1964 “Baby Boom.” The reduction in the overall pool of in-state high school graduates would tend to reduce the ranks of Connecticut resident freshmen staying here, unless Connecticut either increases its in-state retention of those freshmen OR increases the college-participation rate of high school graduates. The former seems to be happening.

ENDNOTES

1. Connecticut residents who became first-time college freshmen (either full- or part-time) after graduating from high school (whether in-state or out-of-state) in the last 12 months. Report references to “freshmen” generally are to first-time freshmen graduating from high school during the previous 12 months.
2. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released final data on fall 2002 freshmen residence and migration in January 2005. (NCES collects this data only for even-numbered years.) Preliminary fall 2004 data for Connecticut are now on a password-protected NCES website. (The final 2002 data were within 0.3% of the preliminary 2002 data, and we assume that the final 2004 data also will not vary much from the preliminary figures here.)
3. Northeastern and Marist did not report the high school graduation status of their 2004 freshmen, so their data are the average of 1996-2002, even numbered years. Having two of the top 10 schools not report how many freshmen graduated from high school in the last 12 months artificially inflates the in-state retention in 2004. If no other college moved into or out of the non-reporting category (which is not a reasonable assumption) and substituting the 2002 data for Northeastern and Marist, the retention rate drops 1.03 percentage points from 57.52 percent to 56.49 percent (or from 58% to 56% rounded) and the net export increases to 2,811.