



National Student Clearinghouse™
Research Center™

HIGH SCHOOL BENCHMARKS



September 2026

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 cover the following outcomes:

- 1) [College enrollment](#) in the
 - first fall after high school graduation (immediate)
 - first year after high school graduation
 - first two years after high school graduation
- 2) [Persistence](#) from the first year 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:

- Public and private institutions
- Two-year and four-year institutions
- In-state and out-of-state institutions.

These characteristics are defined by IPEDS Institutional Characteristics data as of 2023-24. 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.

This report is based on the data submitted to the Clearinghouse on graduating classes of 2018, 2019, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025. 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.

Each edition of the High School Benchmarks report is non-comparable to prior editions, even where the same outcome is covered for the same graduating class across report years. This is due to differences in the timing of submission of high school data, which leads to variable coverage for the same high school class across different editions. Readers are discouraged from comparing findings in this year's report with those in prior editions or from using results across editions to create longer-term time trends. This is particularly important for this year's report due to an increase in high school and grade 12 coverage across graduating classes compared to prior years. The coverage increase is the result of the migration of the Clearinghouse's high school data to the new StudentTracker 3.0 platform. As a result, more states and school systems are in the dataset, leading to more robust coverage and more reliable estimates. Coverage statistics by high school type (public non-charter, public charter, private) and graduating class—are given in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

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
2017-18	12,202	71.3%	75.2%	2,424,871
2018-19	12,213	71.3%	75.6%	2,439,393
2021-22	12,752	73.4%	77.4%	2,485,265
2022-23	12,831	73.6%	77.2%	2,469,201
2023-24	12,816	73.4%	76.3%	2,463,357
2024-25	12,023	68.8%	72.4%	2,394,081

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
2017-18	1,403	61.2%	59.7%	112,165
2018-19	1,400	59.2%	56.4%	109,689
2021-22	1,528	61.4%	57.3%	118,684
2022-23	1,570	61.4%	57.4%	121,320
2023-24	1,622	62.4%	58.0%	126,577
2024-25	1,555	58.6%	54.6%	124,422

¹Academic 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, where data is available as recently as 2019-20. The number of private schools for intermediate years are estimates, equal to the number from the most recently available data (2019-20).

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
2017-18	318	5.9%	14.2%	34,459
2018-19	315	5.8%	14.2%	34,490
2021-22	238	4.6%	11.1%	24,144
2022-23	249	4.8%	11.8%	25,570
2023-24	245	4.7%	11.4%	24,742
2024-25	221	4.2%	10.2%	22,137

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, where data is available as recently as 2019-20. The numbers for intermediate years are estimates, equal to the numbers from the most recently available data (2019-20).

Definitions of Public, Non-Charter High School Categories

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 the Common Core of Data (CCD) for the corresponding year.

The CCD is the Department of Education's primary database on public elementary and secondary education in the United States. We used CCD data on all regular public schools with a 12th grade to categorize the income, poverty, minority status and locale (urbanicity) of public, non-charter high schools in this report.

Income-based Metrics

Low-income schools are defined as schools where at least 50% of the entire student population (not just graduating seniors) are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

In addition to 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.

NOTE: In 2020, the USDA allowed schools to provide free lunches to students through the [Summer Food Service Program](#) rather than the National Student Lunch Program (NSLP). As a result, fewer lunches were provided to students through the NSLP, and thus fewer students were reported as qualifying for a free or reduced lunch through the NSLP. Due to this shift in how students were reported, the number of high schools classified as low income and high poverty dropped for the 2021 and 2022 high school graduating

classes nationally and in the high schools analyzed for this report (see Table 4). This policy was not renewed for the 2022-2023 school year and some schools returned to reporting students qualifying for free and reduced lunch under the NSLP. This led to another shift in the number of high schools classified as low income, increasing the 2023 numbers and bringing them in line with pre-pandemic levels. This shift in income classification has continued for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 academic years. Due to the fluctuation in income classification, please use caution when interpreting income-related year-over-year changes for high school graduating classes between 2020 and 2025. More details are in Tab 5 in the report [dashboard](#).

Minority-based Metrics

High-minority schools are defined as schools where at least 40% of the Grade 12-enrolled students are either Black or Hispanic.

Locale-Based Metrics (Urbanicity)

Locale (urbanicity) 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 from 31 to 43, covering both town and rural areas, are defined as rural.

Combinations of these characteristics—including the additional income-based analyses based on poverty status—result in nine groups of high schools. Thus, the outcomes are presented for the following categories of high schools:

- Low-income schools
- Higher-income schools
- Low-poverty schools
- High-poverty 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

Characteristic	Academic year	Number of participating high schools	Percent of US grade 12 enrollment represented ⁴	Number of states represented	Total N (No. of graduates in sample)
Low-income Schools	2017-18	4,733	73.2%	46	887,428
	2018-19	4,716	73.9%	46	893,657
	2021-22	4,008	74.5%	40	770,429
	2022-23	5,451	75.4%	45	992,812
	2023-24	5,701	74.1%	43	1,026,662
	2024-25	5,179	72.4%	42	1,001,434
Higher-income Schools	2017-18	7,469	76.5%	51	1,537,443
	2018-19	7,497	76.6%	51	1,545,736
	2021-22	8,744	78.8%	50	1,714,836
	2022-23	7,380	78.4%	49	1,476,389
	2023-24	7,115	78.0%	50	1,436,695
	2024-25	6,844	72.4%	49	1,392,647
High-minority Schools	2017-18	3,405	75.3%	43	943,484
	2018-19	3,434	76.1%	43	970,258
	2021-22	3,813	77.8%	46	1,013,737
	2022-23	4,120	76.5%	46	1,039,838
	2023-24	4,306	75.6%	46	1,080,404
	2024-25	4,184	72.7%	44	1,100,627
Low-minority Schools	2017-18	8,797	75.2%	51	1,481,387
	2018-19	8,779	75.3%	51	1,469,135
	2021-22	8,939	77.2%	51	1,471,528
	2022-23	8,711	77.6%	50	1,429,363
	2023-24	8,510	76.9%	49	1,382,953
	2024-25	7,839	72.1%	49	1,293,454
Urban Schools	2017-18	2,349	77.6%	50	673,301
	2018-19	2,334	78.1%	50	676,940
	2021-22	2,637	82.4%	50	718,651
	2022-23	2,709	82.6%	49	714,740
	2023-24	2,768	81.0%	49	738,093
	2024-25	2,668	78.2%	48	729,205
Suburban Schools	2017-18	3,084	77.7%	48	1,031,767
	2018-19	3,108	78.2%	48	1,041,599
	2021-22	3,179	79.5%	48	1,042,330
	2022-23	3,188	79.5%	48	1,032,980
	2023-24	3,112	78.1%	48	1,018,637
	2024-25	2,992	74.3%	47	988,554
Rural Schools	2017-18	6,769	70.0%	48	719,803
	2018-19	6,771	70.0%	48	720,854
	2021-22	6,936	70.6%	49	724,284
	2022-23	6,934	69.7%	49	721,481
	2023-24	6,936	69.8%	49	706,627
	2024-25	6,363	64.7%	47	676,322

⁴The numbers used in both the denominator and numerator of this calculation were obtained from the 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 2023-24.

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

Characteristic	Academic year	Number of participating high schools	Percent of US grade 12 enrollment represented ⁵	Number of states represented	Total N (No. of graduates in sample)
High-poverty Schools	2017-18	1,897	75.1%	43	335,278
	2018-19	1,886	75.5%	43	340,751
	2021-22	1,958	78.4%	36	348,715
	2022-23	2,478	76.8%	42	408,487
	2023-24	2,542	75.6%	42	425,539
	2024-25	2,483	75.9%	37	464,108
Low-poverty Schools	2017-18	2,267	80.4%	45	606,033
	2018-19	2,309	80.9%	46	613,568
	2021-22	2,566	82.2%	40	637,222
	2022-23	1,998	83.1%	43	507,003
	2023-24	1,652	82.2%	41	435,690
	2024-25	1,542	75.4%	40	406,531

⁵The numbers used in both the denominator and numerator of this calculation were obtained from the 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 2024-25.

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 Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse is a unique and trusted source for higher education enrollment and degree verification. Currently, Clearinghouse data include over 3,600 postsecondary institutions and [97 percent of US 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 StudentTracker3.0 service, results have not been adjusted to account for a student’s outcomes not being captured due to noncoverage by Clearinghouse data.

Definitions of Postsecondary Outcomes

College Enrollment:

- First fall after high school graduation: Percentage of high school graduates 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.

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

Persistence

Persistence from the first to second year of college: Percentage of high school graduates who enrolled at any time in the first year after high school graduation and who remained enrolled in postsecondary education at any time in the second year following high school graduation. 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.

Completion

College completion within six years after high school graduation: Percentage of high school graduates who attained a degree in a two- or four-year postsecondary institution in the six academic years immediately following graduation. Students are included in this outcome regardless of whether they have enrolled in postsecondary education or not. Only associate, 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.

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