

*Information About the
School Dropout Issue
Selected Facts & Statistics*

compiled by

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School Dropout Information (Selected Facts & Statistics)

Since 1986, the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N) has conducted and analyzed research, sponsored extensive workshops, and collaborated with a variety of practitioners to further the mission of reducing America’s dropout rate by meeting the needs of youth in at-risk situations, including students with disabilities. The following related facts provide an indication of the dropout situation in the United States.

Dropout Rate Definitions

There are many different ways to calculate the dropout rate. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) promotes the use of the definitions below. Researchers are critical of NCES statistics and tend to develop their own formulas to calculate the dropout rate. It is extremely difficult to compare dropout rates at the local, state, and national level because of the different methods of calculation.

- **Event Rate**—Measures the percentage of young adults ages 15-24 who dropped out during the school year preceding the data collection.
- **Status Rate**—Measures the percentage of young adults ages 16-24 who are not enrolled in school and who have not completed a high school diploma or obtained a GED.
- **Cohort Rate**—Measures what happens to a group of students over a period of time.
- **Graduation Rate**—The number of students in a cohort who graduate with a regular diploma divided by the number of students in the cohort who should have graduated (Greene, & Forster, 2003).

Dropout Statistics

*High School Graduation Rate by Region and Race 2001**

Region	Total	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
Northeast	73%	56%	76%	45%	52%	79%
Midwest	77%	54%	82%	54%	53%	82%
South	65%	70%	83%	55%	57%	72%
West	69%	56%	81%	55%	57%	75%
National	70%	54%	79%	52%	51%	72%

*Not all states reported data (Greene & Forster, 2003.)

- Students from low-income families have an event dropout rate of 10.7%; students from middle-income families have a dropout rate of 5.4%; and 1.7% of students from high-income families drop out (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004a).
- Based on calculations per school day (180 days of seven hours each), one high school student drops out every nine seconds (Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, & Thompson, 2004).



- In 2001, the standard diploma graduation rate for students with disabilities age 14 and older was 47.62% (*Twenty-Fifth Annual Report to Congress*, 2003).
- The dropout rate for students with emotional/behavioral disabilities is approximately twice that of general education students (Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, & Thompson, 2004).
- The proportion of all 16-24-year olds who were dropouts declined between 1998 (12%) and 2004 (10%) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005).

Attrition Between Grades Nine and Ten Increasing

The rate at which students disappear (attrition rate) between grades nine and ten has **tripled** over the last 30 years. Approximately 11% of ninth graders in 1998-99 did not appear as tenth graders in 1999-2000. The states with the worst attrition rates are Florida, 23.8%; South Carolina, 22.7%; Georgia, 20.3%; Texas, 20%; and Nevada, 18.8%. The states with the highest graduation rates in 2000-01 are New Jersey, 86%; North Dakota, 84%; Utah, 83%; Iowa, 83%; and Minnesota, 79% (Haney et al., 2004, January).

Number and Percent of 18-24-Year-Olds With at Least a Ninth-Grade Education but No High School Credential, 2000

United States	21.3%	SREB States	22.9%
Mississippi	25.4%	Georgia	25.4%
Texas	24.9%	Louisiana	24.7%
Alabama	24.5%	Florida	24.0%
South Carolina	22.7%	Tennessee	22.3%
Kentucky	22.2%	Oklahoma	22.2%
Arkansas	21.5%	North Carolina	20.8%
West Virginia	19.8%	Delaware	19.0%
Virginia	18.0%	Maryland	17.7%

(Southern Regional Education Board, 2004)

Students With Disabilities

The graduation and dropout rates for students with disabilities vary widely based on type of disability, and ethnicity/race.

Percentage of Students Age 14 and Older Graduating With a Standard Diploma or Dropping Out 2000-2001

Disability	Graduated With a Standard Diploma	Dropped Out
Specific learning disabilities	53.6	38.7
Speech or language impairments	52.3	39.7
Mental retardation	35.0	34.3
Emotional disturbance	28.9	65.1
Multiple disabilities	41.6	26.7
Hearing impairments	60.3	24.5
Orthopedic impairments	57.4	27.0
Other health impairments	56.1	36.2
Visual impairments	65.9	21.1
Autism	42.1	20.8
Deaf-blindness	41.2	22.9



Traumatic brain injury	57.5	28.9
All disabilities	47.6	41.1

(Twenty-Fifth Annual Report to Congress, 2003)

Percentage of Students Age 14 and Older Graduating With a Standard Diploma or Dropping Out 2000-2001 by Race/Ethnicity

Race/ethnicity	Graduated With a Standard Diploma		Dropped Out	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
American Indian/Alaska Native	2,533	41.9	3,157	52.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	3,583	60.6	1,652	28.0
Black (not Hispanic)	27,999	36.5	34,085	44.5
Hispanic	24,087	47.5	22,073	43.5
White (not Hispanic)	132,714	56.8	79,220	33.9

(Twenty-Fifth Annual Report to Congress, 2003).

There are many predictors and variables associated with dropouts. There are two main categories: *status variables* are stable and *alterable variables* are subject to intervention. For example:

Status and Alterable Variables Associated With Dropouts

Status Variables	Alterable Variables
Age	Grades
Gender	Disruptive behavior
Socioeconomic background	Absenteeism
Ethnicity	School policies
Native language	School climate
Region	Parenting
Mobility	Sense of belonging
Ability	Attitudes toward school
Disability	Educational support in the home
Parental Employment	Retention
School size and type	Stressful life events
Family structure	

(Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, & Thompson, 2004)

A study in Philadelphia found that a sixth-grade student having one of the following risk factors has a 10% chance of graduating from high school on time, and a 20% chance of graduating one year late.:

- Attendance below 80%
- Poor behavior
- Failing math grade
- Failing English grade (Philadelphia Education Fund, 2005)

Truancy

Research studies suggest six variables as predictors for absentee students:

- Perceive school unfavorably
- Perceive parental discipline as lax or inconsistent
- Believe parents are attempting to exert more control over them



- Feel academically inferior
- Experience family conflict
- Feel socially incompetent in class (Railsback, 2004).

Risk and protective factors have an impact on truancy. Risk factors are often related to safety: fear of harm, fear of victimization, and abuse in the home. Other common risk factors are frequent problems with schoolwork, substance abuse, and mental health problems. Patterns of absenteeism can be identified as early as first grade and potential dropouts recognized (Colorado Foundation, 2003).

Students give the following reasons for not attending school:

- Classes viewed as boring, irrelevant, and a waste of time
- Did not have positive relationships with teachers
- Did not have positive relationships with students
- Was suspended too often
- Did not feel safe at school
- Could not keep up with schoolwork or was failing
- Classes not challenging enough, and students can miss class days and still receive credit
- Couldn't work and go to school at the same time (Railsback, 2004).

Safe Learning Environments

Approximately 160,000 students per day miss school because they fear physical harm (Educational Development Center, 1996). It is obvious that a safe learning environment has a big impact on school attendance. A welcoming environment is particularly important for those students who are struggling in school and need extra support.

Percentage of Public Schools With Specific Crimes: 1999-2000

Crimes	Percentage
Physical attack or fight without a weapon	64%
Threats of physical attack without a weapon	52%
Vandalism	51%
Theft or larceny	46%
Possession of a knife or sharp object	43%
Sexual harassment	36%
Possession or use of alcohol or illegal drugs	27%

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2004b)

Percentage of Public Schools That Reported Selected Discipline Problems at School as Serious: 1999-2000

Serious discipline problems	Percentage
Student bullying	29%
Student acts of disrespect for teachers	19%
Undesirable gang activities	19%
Student verbal abuse of teachers	13%

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2004b)





Economy

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, improving high school graduation rates could produce significant wage increases resulting in stronger state economies. If half of the students who drop out of school were to stay in school and graduate in four years, the state economy would incur significant increases.

State	Graduation Rate	% Not Graduating in 4 Years	Increase in Earnings with High School Diploma	Increase in Earnings with Some Postsecondary Education	Increase in Earnings with Bachelor's Degree
Alabama	58%	42%	\$ 94,838,688	\$ 189,677,376	\$ 305,591,328
California	67%	33%	\$556,178,400	\$1,112,352,912	\$1,792,124,136
Colorado	71%	28%	\$ 58,731,120	\$ 117,462,240	\$ 189,244,720
Florida	59%	42%	\$316,541,484	\$ 633,082,968	\$1,019,967,004
New York	64%	36%	\$321,300,432	\$ 642,600,864	\$1,035,301,392
Ohio	78%	22%	\$121,158,576	\$ 242,371,152	\$ 390,399,856
Texas	68%	32%	\$404,055,936	\$ 808,111,872	\$1,301,958,016

(Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005, April 11).

(Complete chart is available at http://www.all4ed.org/press/pr_040405.html#Chart)

- The estimated tax revenue loss from every male between the ages of 25 and 34 years of age who did not complete high school would be approximately \$944 billion, with cost increases to public welfare and crime at \$24 billion (Thorstensen, 2004).
- A cost of \$10,038 for after-school programs produces benefits of \$89,000 to \$129,000 per participant (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003d).
- One dollar invested in high-quality early childhood education programs by policymakers results in a return of seven dollars in preventative costs associated with incarceration, truancy, school dropout, and teen pregnancy (Schweinhart, 2003).
- Increasing minority students' participation in college to the same percentage as that of white students would create an additional \$231 billion in GDP and at least \$80 billion in new tax revenues (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003e).

Personal Income & Employment

- High school graduates, on the average, earn \$9,245 more per year than high school dropouts (Doland, 2001).
- A woman with a high school diploma earns a salary just above the poverty line for a family of three (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003c).
- In 2000, the median earnings for black females with a high school diploma and no college was \$20,000 less than the median earnings for black females with a bachelor's degree or higher (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003c).
- In 2002, the unemployment rate of blacks ages 20-24 with no high school diploma was 32% compared to 6% for those with a bachelor's degree or higher (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003c).



- In today's workplace, only 40% of adults who dropped out of high school are employed, compared to 60% of adults who completed high school and 80% for those with a bachelor's degree (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003c).

Average Earnings in 2003 by Educational Attainment, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for all Workers, 18 Years and Over

Characteristic	Not a High School Graduate	High School Graduate	Some College or Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree
Men	\$21,447	\$33,266	\$43,462	\$63,084	\$76,896
Women	\$14,214	\$21,659	\$29,537	\$38,447	\$48,205
White alone	\$19,110	\$28,708	\$36,881	\$52,259	\$62,981
Black alone	\$16,201	\$23,777	\$31,415	\$42,968	\$57,449
Asian alone	\$19,558	\$25,704	\$30,177	\$48,334	\$62,334
Hispanic	\$18,349	\$23,472	\$31,032	\$43,676	\$56,486

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2005)

- Employment projections indicate that jobs requiring only a high school degree will grow by just 9% by the year 2008 while those requiring a bachelor's degree will grow by 25% (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003e).
- Between October 2001 and October 2002, about 400,000 persons dropped out of high school. The unemployment rate for this group was 29.8 %—almost 13 percentage points higher than the unemployment rate for recent high school graduates who were not enrolled in college (United States Department of Labor, 2003).

Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment, 2000

Doctoral degree	1.6%
Master's degree	2.8%
Bachelor's degree	3.1%
Associate's degree	4.0%
Some college	4.8%
High school degree	5.3%
Less than high school	8.5%

(Southern Regional Education Board, 2004)

Crime

- Seventy-five percent (75%) of America's state prison inmates are high school dropouts (Harlow, 2003).
- Fifty-nine (59%) of America's federal prison inmates did not complete high school (Harlow, 2003).
- High school dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested in their lifetime (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003a).
- A 1% increase in high school graduation rates would save approximately \$1.4 billion in incarceration costs, or about \$2,100 per each male high school graduate (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003a).
- A one-year increase in average education levels would reduce arrest rates by 11% (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003a).



Literacy

The cost to taxpayers of adult illiteracy is \$224 billion per year (National Reading Panel, 1999).

- U.S. companies lose nearly \$40 billion annually because of illiteracy (National Reading Panel, 1999).
- If literacy levels in the United States were the same as those in Sweden, the U.S. GDP would rise by approximately \$463 billion and tax revenues would increase by approximately \$162 billion (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003e).
- For juveniles involved in quality reading instruction programs while in prison, recidivism was reduced by 20% or more (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003a).

Health

- Teen girls in the bottom 20% of basic reading and math skills are five times more likely to become mothers over a two-year high school period than teen girls in the top 20% (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003b).
- Male and female students with low academic achievement are twice as likely to become parents by their senior year of high school compared to students with high academic achievement (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003b).
- The U.S. death rate for those with fewer than 12 years of education is 2.5 times higher than the rate of those with 13 or more years of education (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003b).

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