

Graduation in the United States

High School Completion Gains Momentum

Nearly 72 percent of all public school students in the nation graduated from high school with a regular diploma in the class of 2008, signaling a dramatic turnaround following two consecutive years of declines. Graduation rates also rose in three-quarters of the states. As the nation emerges from a two-year slump, the graduation rate has reached its highest level since the 1980s.

Over the past decade, graduation improved by 6 percentage points, with all racial and ethnic groups posting solid improvements since the late 1990s. The largest increases were found among black and white students, whose graduation rates have risen by about 6 and 8 percentage points, respectively, over this period. Gains for other minority students ranged between 4 and 5 points. Although all groups are improving, significant racial disparities persist nationwide, with a 29-percentage-point gap dividing Asian-American and Native American students, the groups with the highest and lowest graduation rates, respectively.

	10-YEAR GRADUATION TREND (ALL STUDENTS)			GRADUATION RATES FOR STUDENT SUBGROUPS, CLASS OF 2008						
	Class of 2008	Class of 1998	Change 1998 to 2008 (percentage point)	Male	Female	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
ALABAMA	64.8%	57.3%	+7.5	60.5%	69.7%	76.9%	75.4%	52.1%	53.9%	71.1%
ALASKA	66.3	64.5	+1.8	‡	‡	‡	‡	58.9	‡	75.5
ARIZONA	67.0	59.4	+7.6	64.2	69.1	55.4	83.6	55.9	69.7	74.2
ARKANSAS	69.7	68.3	+1.3	66.3	74.3	51.4	‡	61.5	63.5	73.2
CALIFORNIA	73.0	67.5	+5.5	67.2	75.7	‡	86.7	59.2	55.8	83.5
COLORADO	73.3	67.6	+5.7	69.7	77.1	49.3	82.7	52.0	61.7	80.6
CONNECTICUT	79.2	75.2	+4.0	76.1	82.0	30.4	81.7	54.3	63.6	86.1
DELAWARE	67.6	58.8	+8.8	61.8	73.2	‡	78.1	57.9	59.4	71.9
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	43.0	37.3	+5.7	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
FLORIDA	63.9	51.6	+12.4	59.5	68.4	58.1	83.2	60.7	53.9	69.0
GEORGIA	58.8	52.2	+6.6	54.0	63.7	40.7	80.3	42.9	49.1	67.5
HAWAII	65.8	60.1	+5.7	64.0	67.9	47.5	67.1	61.2	63.2	62.9
IDAHO	75.6	76.4	-0.8	73.4	79.2	44.4	‡	58.3	‡	78.4
ILLINOIS	78.8	71.2	+7.6	69.2	75.9	‡	93.1	72.2	64.2	85.1
INDIANA	72.8	69.6	+3.2	68.4	76.6	35.1	‡	54.9	51.8	76.0
IOWA	79.6	80.7	-1.2	77.3	81.1	49.8	76.8	58.5	51.4	82.3
KANSAS	75.8	72.1	+3.7	71.4	76.4	38.5	74.8	55.0	55.4	79.5
KENTUCKY	72.8	62.2	+10.6	67.1	76.1	43.8	80.6	61.6	64.5	72.1
LOUISIANA	59.6	56.0	+3.6	53.7	66.1	54.1	80.2	57.1	51.6	66.0
MAINE	76.5	71.6	+4.9	72.4	78.8	†	†	†	†	†
MARYLAND	76.8	78.9	-2.1	72.3	81.4	59.1	93.3	66.0	67.5	83.4
MASSACHUSETTS	77.5	72.6	+5.0	75.4	81.8	50.1	82.6	50.7	66.2	84.5
MICHIGAN	73.6	67.5	+6.2	69.7	76.0	53.7	83.8	51.3	47.2	78.6
MINNESOTA	78.0	78.5	-0.5	75.0	80.1	36.3	71.2	45.5	46.8	82.2
MISSISSIPPI	61.4	56.8	+4.6	55.8	67.8	75.2	‡	47.0	57.3	66.0
MISSOURI	76.9	70.0	+6.8	73.7	79.1	61.5	76.4	57.7	57.9	80.9
MONTANA	75.8	77.1	-1.3	72.3	77.4	49.9	‡	53.0	45.8	79.2
NEBRASKA	77.3	77.6	-0.2	72.8	79.6	‡	‡	57.4	47.4	82.3
NEVADA	44.3	68.9	-24.6	39.6	50.1	33.5	63.0	29.6	33.0	55.8
NEW HAMPSHIRE	78.2	72.2	+6.0	75.0	80.3	27.3	78.9	27.2	‡	78.3
NEW JERSEY	86.9	75.8	+11.1	85.3	86.6	57.9	89.9	68.0	72.6	90.9
NEW MEXICO	57.1	55.9	+1.2	53.5	61.6	53.3	71.8	51.9	59.0	68.0
NEW YORK	71.8	57.7	+14.1	68.0	73.8	‡	79.7	51.5	54.6	81.7
NORTH CAROLINA	72.8	57.4	+15.4	72.4	82.9	59.5	78.2	57.6	72.3	80.4
NORTH DAKOTA	80.2	81.3	-1.1	77.7	79.9	49.2	71.3	47.4	55.9	83.2
OHIO	74.3	67.3	+7.0	71.6	76.4	61.4	75.5	43.2	46.7	80.0
OKLAHOMA	70.0	69.7	+0.3	67.7	73.0	64.5	‡	56.7	59.9	71.9
OREGON	72.6	64.2	+8.4	68.8	75.2	47.7	81.8	61.0	58.9	73.8
PENNSYLVANIA	77.7	73.9	+3.8	75.8	79.9	34.8	81.6	53.5	55.2	83.0
RHODE ISLAND	69.7	69.3	+0.3	65.3	73.3	‡	66.5	56.1	57.4	74.3
SOUTH CAROLINA	58.6	50.8	+7.9	52.8	65.2	†	41.5	35.9	50.4	64.9
SOUTH DAKOTA	78.7	78.0	+0.7	74.8	79.0	32.3	‡	‡	77.7	84.4
TENNESSEE	76.9	56.9	+20.0	73.2	80.1	52.6	86.3	64.2	67.9	79.5
TEXAS	66.6	60.2	+6.5	64.0	69.5	52.0	89.2	58.2	58.8	76.3
UTAH	71.9	77.2	-5.3	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
VERMONT	82.7	75.5	+7.3	78.0	80.7	‡	‡	‡	‡	83.5
VIRGINIA	72.7	74.5	-1.8	67.8	77.5	65.6	88.6	57.0	59.0	78.4
WASHINGTON	65.6	67.8	-2.2	61.9	70.4	37.5	73.6	51.3	45.6	69.5
WEST VIRGINIA	71.7	72.3	-0.6	68.7	74.5	‡	70.4	47.3	61.3	72.1
WISCONSIN	81.3	75.6	+5.7	78.5	83.1	‡	82.6	56.2	50.7	86.0
WYOMING	71.3	71.9	-0.7	67.3	73.7	32.4	‡	55.4	‡	73.8
U.S.	71.7%	65.6%	+6.1	67.7%	74.7%	53.9%	82.7%	57.6%	57.0%	78.4%

† Value not calculated because necessary data field(s) not reported in the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data and not provided by state education agency.

‡ Value not reported because of insufficient data for reliable estimate.

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2011. See Page 30 for more information about the methodology used to calculate graduation rates for this report.