

Graduation in the United States

Recent Gains at Risk of Eroding

About 69 percent of all public school students in the nation graduated from high school with a regular diploma in the class of 2006. Between 1996 and 2006, the nation's graduation rate increased by 2.8 percentage points, an average of less than one-third of a point annually. Graduation rates in the majority of states have also improved relative to the 1996 baseline. However, 2006 marked the first time in the past decade that the nation's graduation rate has posted a noticeable annual decline, falling more than 1 percentage point since 2005. Half of states showed a similar drop in 2006, signaling that the consistent improvements found for the nation and many states in recent years may be in jeopardy of eroding.

Results also show great variation in graduation rates across the nation. For the class of 2006, 35 percentage points separate the best-performing state (New Jersey) and the worst-performing (Nevada). Large disparities continue to be found across racial and ethnic groups, with a 29-percentage-point gap dividing Asian-American and Native American students, the groups with the highest and lowest graduation rates, respectively.

	TEN-YEAR GRADUATION TREND (ALL STUDENTS)				GRADUATION RATES FOR STUDENT SUBGROUPS, CLASS OF 2006						
	Class of 2006	Class of 1996	Change 1996 to 2006 (percentage point)	TREND PROFILE Marker shows whether rate for year is higher, lower, or same as 1996 baseline 1997 ————— 2006	Male	Female	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White
ALABAMA	61.4%	57.0%	+4.4		56.5%	68.0%	63.4%	66.9%	42.2%	51.3%	68.3%
ALASKA	65.9	66.1	-0.2		62.1	69.9	45.2	69.0	55.6	59.7	72.4
ARIZONA	68.6	56.6	+12.1		64.1	72.7	45.6	81.3	60.8	67.6	74.0
ARKANSAS	71.9	69.4	+2.5		67.7	76.0	50.3	‡	60.0	63.6	74.5
CALIFORNIA	67.5	67.5	0.0		63.5	70.6	49.6	80.2	56.9	54.6	77.1
COLORADO	72.7	71.5	+1.2		69.6	75.9	46.3	80.7	51.2	58.9	80.1
CONNECTICUT	78.9	76.1	+2.7		75.3	81.5	‡	80.4	55.3	63.2	85.0
DELAWARE	66.0	63.2	+2.8		59.3	71.1	‡	89.2	‡	53.8	71.1
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	48.8	49.7	-0.9		†	†	†	†	†	†	†
FLORIDA	57.5	57.5	0.0		50.4	58.9	58.5	81.7	53.7	43.0	58.6
GEORGIA	55.9	55.1	+0.7		51.5	61.9	37.9	79.8	40.8	45.6	65.1
HAWAII	63.9	59.0	+4.9		61.1	67.1	57.6	65.4	59.7	60.3	59.0
IDAHO	76.8	78.6	-1.7		73.9	80.9	50.9	‡	56.3	59.5	79.9
ILLINOIS	74.1	78.7	-4.6		70.1	77.0	30.1	86.5	56.7	51.0	83.2
INDIANA	73.3	69.8	+3.5		66.3	72.7	48.2	70.3	50.5	52.6	71.1
IOWA	80.7	79.1	+1.6		77.7	81.7	‡	73.3	56.0	52.6	82.4
KANSAS	75.4	72.8	+2.5		74.7	78.6	61.3	83.5	55.1	58.9	81.0
KENTUCKY	72.0	62.9	+9.0		64.9	75.3	‡	82.7	55.4	59.2	70.3
LOUISIANA	61.9	54.0	+7.8		55.4	68.7	‡	74.1	73.5	51.2	69.3
MAINE	76.3	75.1	+1.2		72.8	78.5	40.5	‡	‡	‡	76.1
MARYLAND	73.5	73.5	0.0		68.7	78.1	59.1	92.9	65.4	62.7	79.8
MASSACHUSETTS	75.9	75.2	+0.7		72.8	78.8	37.2	79.9	50.9	56.3	81.6
MICHIGAN	69.6	69.0	+0.5		65.9	72.8	49.4	75.5	43.5	38.4	76.5
MINNESOTA	79.2	77.1	+2.1		77.2	83.2	39.8	73.3	37.3	‡	84.2
MISSISSIPPI	60.5	54.5	+6.0		54.0	67.2	37.1	57.1	43.2	54.9	66.1
MISSOURI	74.4	70.4	+4.0		71.4	77.2	58.2	77.8	53.9	52.6	78.7
MONTANA	76.1	76.2	0.0		73.7	77.7	48.3	‡	54.8	44.5	79.5
NEBRASKA	78.7	79.3	-0.6		74.5	79.7	38.3	‡	50.9	46.9	84.1
NEVADA	47.3	70.5	-23.2		42.7	52.8	37.9	72.1	36.3	34.5	54.0
NEW HAMPSHIRE	77.0	71.3	+5.6		74.4	78.5	†	†	†	†	†
NEW JERSEY	82.1	83.1	-1.0		79.7	83.3	‡	86.7	66.8	67.3	85.8
NEW MEXICO	56.0	55.3	+0.8		53.2	61.3	49.5	64.7	51.6	49.2	67.8
NEW YORK	68.3	61.1	+7.2		63.8	71.0	39.6	75.7	45.8	47.4	79.0
NORTH CAROLINA	63.3	61.9	+1.4		55.1	65.1	43.6	73.7	49.5	45.4	69.8
NORTH DAKOTA	79.0	80.9	-1.9		76.7	81.5	39.9	‡	27.7	‡	83.7
OHIO	74.3	67.8	+6.6		71.9	77.5	31.3	76.0	48.3	47.3	80.3
OKLAHOMA	70.6	67.0	+3.6		68.7	73.4	64.1	79.7	57.1	54.9	73.2
OREGON	74.9	66.0	+8.9		†	†	39.1	72.7	57.6	54.4	73.1
PENNSYLVANIA	77.6	74.8	+2.8		75.0	80.0	36.4	79.1	49.7	49.3	83.9
RHODE ISLAND	72.8	69.0	+3.8		68.6	76.3	40.2	60.7	60.4	63.4	76.5
SOUTH CAROLINA	66.3	53.2	+13.1		‡	71.2	‡	72.3	‡	‡	69.5
SOUTH DAKOTA	77.1	77.6	-0.5		74.2	76.8	33.5	58.0	41.8	53.0	81.7
TENNESSEE	69.5	56.7	+12.8		65.0	73.8	‡	73.5	51.7	58.1	73.0
TEXAS	65.3	58.5	+6.8		61.7	68.9	51.7	85.2	56.3	52.7	75.7
UTAH	72.2	78.5	-6.3		†	†	†	†	†	†	†
VERMONT	78.7	75.2	+3.5		75.8	79.3	41.7	‡	‡	‡	81.7
VIRGINIA	69.2	73.4	-4.2		64.4	75.3	52.8	83.7	56.5	55.0	75.8
WASHINGTON	62.4	68.0	-5.5		60.1	67.6	37.9	71.7	49.3	46.1	66.8
WEST VIRGINIA	71.8	75.7	-4.0		69.1	75.3	26.7	78.0	‡	61.1	72.7
WISCONSIN	81.7	77.0	+4.7		78.3	83.8	55.4	78.0	53.8	49.4	85.9
WYOMING	73.2	75.9	-2.7		69.7	75.2	25.8	‡	‡	‡	76.7
U.S.	69.2%	66.4%	+2.8		64.9%	72.2%	50.0%	78.9%	55.0%	51.2%	76.1%

† Value not calculated because necessary data field(s) not reported in the Common Core of Data, the U.S. Department of Education database used for this analysis.
‡ Value not reported because of insufficient data for reliable estimate.

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2009. See Page 38 for more information about the methodology used to calculate graduation rates for this report.