

High School Dropout Rate

DEFINITION

This indicator reports the four-year cumulative dropout rate, which is the estimated percentage of current students who will drop out before reaching graduation if the annual rate does not change. A high school dropout is an early exit nongraduate who has not received a Graduate Education Diploma (GED) or been enrolled in college.

Dropouts are one of three types of early exit non-graduates. The other two are those who have earned their GED or who have enrolled in college. In 2008-2009 in New Hampshire there were 1,505 early exit non-graduates of whom 352 earned their GED, 26 were enrolled in college and 1,127 were classified as dropouts.

New Hampshire data exclude these students from the definition of early exit non-graduates: students who were home schooled, suspended, temporarily expelled, truants, incarcerated, or who completed a high school program (diploma or certificate), transferred to another high school or died (New Hampshire Department of Education, 2008-2009 Early Exit and Dropout Rates for Grades 9-12).

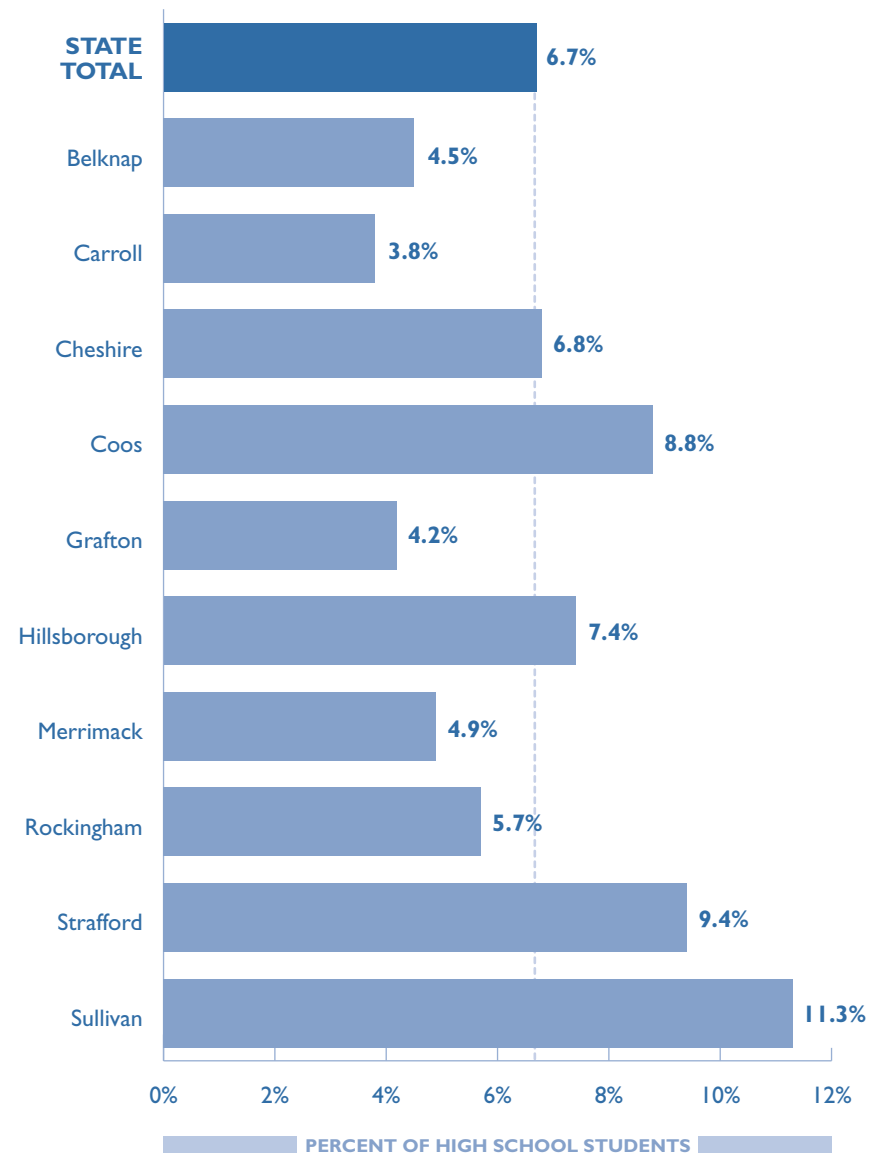
Over time, states across the country, including New Hampshire, have changed how they defined and calculated high school dropouts. For this reason it is problematic to compare high school dropout rates over time. New Hampshire's current definition was adopted in 2007-2008. Beginning in 2010, New Hampshire is making a further change in the way it calculates the high school dropout rate. It will begin using four years of actual data rather than estimating four-year cumulative dropout rates based on one year of data. This new method is referred to as a cohort method (New Hampshire Department of Education 2010, 4).

CONTEXT

The importance of graduating from high school has never been greater for young people in the United States. Many studies have shown that those without a high school diploma earn much less over their lifetimes—for males, nearly a half million dollars—than those who do have a high school diploma (Annie E. Casey 2009, 2). The economic return from a Graduate Education Diploma (GED) is less than from a regular high school diploma, but better than the return from not having earned a GED.

In 2007, the New Hampshire legislature enacted SBI 8, which raised the age for compulsory school attendance from 16 to 18; the change was phased in over a three-year time period.

High School Dropout Rates
By County, 2008-2009



NEW HAMPSHIRE FINDINGS

The four-year cumulative dropout rate in New Hampshire in 2008-2009 was 6.7 percent, which corresponds to an annual rate of 1.7 percent. In 2007-2008 the four-year cumulative dropout rate was 9.7 percent (New Hampshire Department of Education 2009). Governor John Lynch, the New Hampshire Board of Education and the New Hampshire Department of Education have the stated goal of reducing New Hampshire's high school dropout rate to zero by 2012 (New Hampshire Department of Education 2008). A recent report on high school dropout rates across the country reported that New Hampshire and Vermont were the only states without a "dropout factory" high school, meaning a school in which senior class enrollment is 60 percent or less of freshman class enrollment (Buckland 2010, B1).

Dropout rates vary considerably across the state. Sullivan County has the highest dropout rate at 11.3 percent and Carroll County, the lowest, at 3.8 percent. When reviewed by individual high schools, the range is even greater: Manchester Central High School reports the highest dropout rate at 14.6 percent while Moultonborough Academy reports a zero percent dropout rate. Ten high schools in the state accounted for 44 percent of the high school dropouts in 2008-2009. They are, in alphabetical order: Alvirne High School (serving Hudson), Dover Senior High School, Manchester Central High School, Manchester Memorial High School, Manchester West High School, Nashua High School North, Nashua High School South, Pinkerton Academy (serving Chester, Derry and Hampstead), Spaulding High School (serving Rochester and Wakefield), and Winnacunnet High School (serving Hampton, Hampton Falls, North Hampton and Seabrook). (see chart on previous page)

SOURCE OF DATA FOR ILLUSTRATION/METHODOLOGY

New Hampshire Department of Education, 2008-2009 *Early Exit and Dropout Rates for Grades 9-12*. www.education.nh.gov/data/documents/dropouts08_09.pdf. See Appendix for methodology of calculating county dropout rates.

REFERENCES

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