

# HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS

## DEFINITION

This indicator reports the annual number and percent of early exit non-graduates who were not identified as either passing the General Educational Development (GED) test or enrolled in college. The definition excludes students who were homeschooled, suspended, temporarily expelled, truant, incarcerated, or who completed a high school program (diploma or certificate), transferred to another high school, or died. The rate is calculated by dividing the number of students who dropped out before graduation by the October 1 enrollment count plus students who dropped out before October 1 (New Hampshire Department of Education).

## CONTEXT

The individual and societal costs of students dropping out of high school before graduation are well-documented. Over their lifetime, dropouts are less likely than graduates to obtain employment and, if they do, will earn lower wages. In 2012, the median income of an individual without a high school diploma was \$20,241, while the median income for a high school graduate was \$30,627 (U.S. Census, 2012). Over a lifetime, this amount translates into approximately \$750,000 in lost earning potential, which impacts the economy through lower tax contributions and a higher reliance on public assistance (Levin and Belfield, 2007).

In addition to a higher rate of unemployment and lower wages, high school dropouts are also less likely to engage in positive civic activities such as voting, while their involvement in criminal behavior and incarceration rates are higher. Additionally, they are more likely to become unmarried parents or marry early and give birth in their teenage years. Dropouts are more likely to have poor physical and mental health and to live shorter lives, as they often lack the resources to obtain good health care (Hauser and Koenig, 2011).

Nationally, the high school dropout rate has continued to steadily decline over the last thirty years, from the 6 percent range in the 1970s to 3.3 percent in the 2011–2012 school year (Stetser and Stillwell, 2014). New Hampshire has reported a marked decline in recent years. In 2000, the dropout rate was 5.3 percent, higher than the national rate of 4.8 percent. By the 2012–2013 school year, the rate was down to 1.3 percent, well below the national average (NH DOE, 2014).

## High School Dropout Rates by County, 2012-2013

	TOTAL ENROLLED	TOTAL DROPPED OUT	ANNUAL DROPOUT RATE
<b>STATE TOTAL</b>	<b>187,957</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>1.3%</b>
Belknap	8,983	25	0.9%
Carroll	5,863	13	0.7%
Cheshire	9,335	26	1.0%
Coos	4,186	15	1.2%
Grafton	11,226	38	1.0%
Hillsborough	61,146	364	1.8%
Merrimack	19,702	93	1.6%
Rockingham	46,275	96	0.6%
Strafford	15,937	82	1.7%
Sullivan	5,304	28	1.7%

NOTE: Data not displayed for cities/schools with fewer than 5 reported student dropouts.

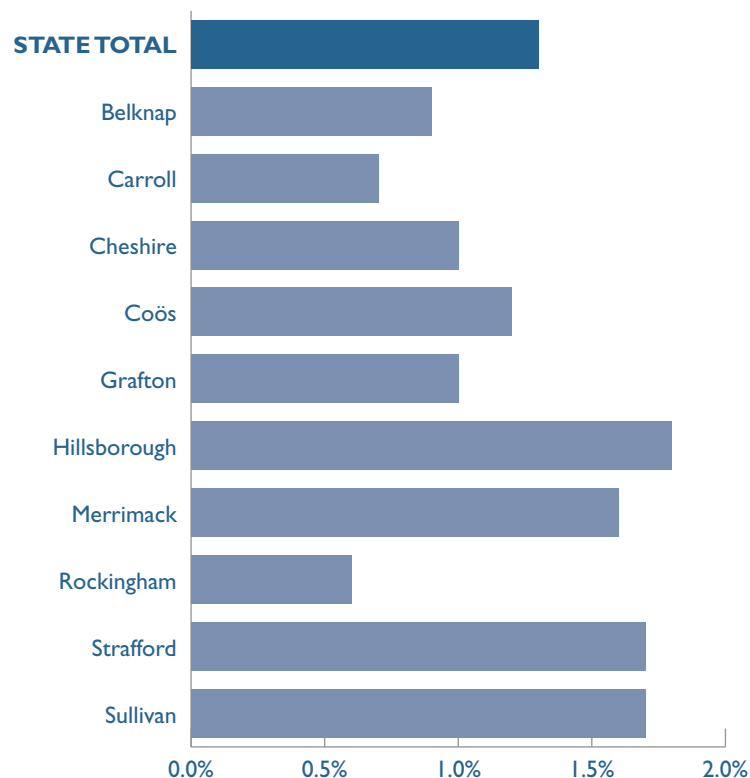
New Hampshire's dropout rate is now one of the lowest in the nation. This low rate may be a reflection of a law that was passed in New Hampshire in 2007 that raised the age for compulsory school attendance from 16 to 17 years (New Hampshire Senate Bill 18-FN, 2007). After the law was phased in over a three year period, the state's dropout rate declined by over half to 1.7 percent during the 2008–2009 school year, reaching a low of less than one percent (0.97) in 2009–2010. Since that time, the dropout rate has remained stable at the state level at just above 1 percent.

## NEW HAMPSHIRE FINDINGS

All counties experienced a decline in dropout rates between the 2008–2009 and 2009–2010 school years, which coincides with the passing of Senate Bill 18-FN. The lower rates have remained relatively stable since the 2009–2010 school year.

## Annual Dropout Rates

by County, 2012-2013



The highest countywide annual dropout rate was reported by Hillsborough County at 1.8 percent; it is home to New Hampshire's largest city's school district, Manchester, which had a dropout rate of 4.4 percent. Among New Hampshire's most populous towns' and cities' school districts, the next highest dropout rates were found in Rochester (3.5 percent) and Claremont (3 percent), located in Strafford and Sullivan Counties, respectively; the lowest rates were found in Conway (0.2 percent) located in Carroll County, followed by Hanover (0.3 percent) and Lebanon (0.4 percent) in Grafton County, and Salem (0.4 percent) in Rockingham County.

### SOURCE OF DATA FOR ILLUSTRATION/METHODOLOGY

New Hampshire Department of Education, August 25, 2014.

### REFERENCES

Hauser, R.M. and J.A. Koenig, Editors (2011). *High School Dropout, Graduation, and Completion Rates: Better Data, Better Measures, Better Decisions*. National Research Council and National Academy of Education. Washington, DC: National Academic Press.

Levin, H.M. and C.R. Belfield (2007). Educational Interventions to Raise High School Graduation Rates. In C.R. Belfield and H.M. Levin (Editors), *The Price We Pay: Economic and Social Consequences of Inadequate Education* (pp. 177–199). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

New Hampshire Senate Bill 18-FN (2007). *An Act raising the age of required attendance of children in school*.

► [www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2007/sb0018.html](http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2007/sb0018.html)

Stetser, Marie C. and Robert Stillwell (2014). *Public High School Four-Year On-Time Graduation Rates and Event Dropout Rates: School Years 2010–11 and 2011–12*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

► <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014391.pdf>