



New State Data Highlight Progress, Sobering High School Graduation Gaps for Large Groups of Students

Dozens of States Graduate Less than 70 Percent of Low-Income Students, Students of Color, English-Language Learners and Students with Disabilities

Brief Includes First-Time Release of GradNation State Progress Reports

WASHINGTON, D.C. (January 21, 2016) – While U.S. high school graduation rates continue to rise, new data released today by Civic Enterprises and the Everyone Graduates Center, as part of the [GradNation campaign](#), highlight sobering gaps for key student populations in dozens of states.

The nation has reached a high school graduation rate of 82.3 percent for the 2013-14 school year, but there are still a large number of states graduating less than 70 percent of English-language learners, students with disabilities, Hispanic/Latino students, African American students and low-income students.

- **33 states** graduate less than 70 percent of their students with disabilities; seven of those states graduate less than 50 percent of students with disabilities.
- **11 states** graduate less than 70 percent of Hispanic/Latino students.
- **17 states** graduate less than 70 percent of African American students.
- **16 states** graduate less than 70 percent of low-income students. In those states, researchers estimate that nearly 191,000 low-income students did not graduate on time with a regular diploma.
- **35 states** graduate less than 70 percent of English-language learners; **seven** of those states have ELL graduation rates under 50 percent.
- **10 states** graduate less than 70 percent of all five subgroups. They are Colorado, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, and Washington.

The new *Building a Grad Nation Data Brief: Overview of 2013-14 High School Graduation Rates* is based on the most recent graduation rate data from the National Center for Education Statistics at the U.S. Department of Education.

“High school graduation rates continue to climb thanks to the work of millions of students and adults, but low graduation rates for large groups of students still plague all regions of the nation,” said [Robert Balfanz](#), director of the Everyone Graduates Center and co-author of the data brief. “Our goal is a 90 percent graduation rate for all groups of students.”

“These numbers tell a cautionary story of tremendous progress and sobering challenge,” added [John Bridgeland](#), CEO of Civic Enterprises, also a co-author. “Yes, we are making national progress, but too many students are being left behind in today’s economy. Without a high school diploma, they won’t have a chance at the American dream.”

The Road to 90. The 2013-14 graduation rate marks the first time in four years that the country is not on track to reach its goal of a 90 percent on-time high school graduation rate by 2020. To stay on track, the national graduation rate must increase by 1.3 percentage points annually. This year’s rate is up just .9 percent.

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“Having data for all groups of students gives us critical insights into where our efforts are working – and where we have a great deal of work left to do,” said [John Gomperts](#), president & CEO of America’s Promise Alliance. “Leaders from the statehouse to the principal’s office must use these data to set goals, then redouble efforts to reach them.”

Low-income students. Nearly half of all public school students come from low-income families. New data show that nationally **74.6 percent** of low-income students graduated on time compared to 89 percent of non-low-income students—a **14.4 percentage point gap**. Overall, nearly two-thirds of the states have student populations that were at least 40 percent low-income.

The graduation gap between low-income and non-low-income students ranges from a high of 25.6 percentage points in South Dakota to a low of 4 percentage points in Indiana. In nearly half of all states, the gap between low-income students and their more affluent peers is 15 percentage points or greater.

Students with disabilities. Making up approximately 13 percent of all public school students nationwide, students with disabilities graduate at a rate of 63.1 percent nationally while their general population peers graduate at a rate of 84.8 percent—a **gap of more than 21 percentage points**. The gap between students with disabilities and those without ranges from 4.2 percentage points in Arkansas to 54.5 percent in Mississippi.

Students of color. African American and Hispanic/Latino students continue to be key drivers of the increase in the national graduation rate. Still, less than 80 percent of these groups graduated in 2014 – 76.3 percent of Hispanic/Latino and 72.5 percent of Black students. While narrowing, the gap between graduating White and Hispanic/Latino students is **10.9 percentage points**. Between White and African American students, the gap is **14.7 percentage points**.

States. In 2014, Iowa became the first state to pass the national goal with a 90.5 percent graduation rate. Twenty-nine states in all equaled or exceeded the national average of 82.3 percent, and four of those states – Nebraska, New Jersey, New Hampshire and Texas – are within two percentage points of the 90 percent goal. Fifteen states, however, have graduation rates between 70 and 80 percent and New Mexico, now the lowest ranking state, remains more than 13 points behind the national average with 68.5 percent of students graduating.

Dropout Factories. There are now about **1,000** low-graduation rate schools (which promote less than 60 percent of students from ninth to twelfth grade) left across the nation, compared to 2,000 in 2002. Enrollment in these remaining schools totals **roughly 1 million students**, at least 1.6 million fewer than in 2002. In these schools, 65 percent of students are from low-income homes and 63 percent are African American or Hispanic/Latino.

“Compared to high school dropouts, high school graduates are less likely to be unemployed, less likely to tangle with the criminal justice system, and more likely to have positive life outcomes,” said [Bob Wise](#), president of the Alliance for Excellent Education, author of the Graduation Effect which explores the [economic impact](#) of graduation rates. “Still, it is important to remember that a high school diploma is not an end point, but a jumping off point to greater things.”

About the *Building a Grad Nation* Data Brief. The Data Brief lays the foundation for the more comprehensive analysis provided in the annual *Building a Grad Nation* report to be published in the spring. In its second year, the Data Brief highlights state high school graduation rate trends and the progress being made to raise graduation rates for key student subgroups across the country. For the first time, this year’s Data Brief is being released along with individualized state progress reports, providing state-by-state graduation data.

Authors & Sponsor. The 2016 *Building a Grad Nation Data Brief* is co-authored by [Civic Enterprises](#) and the [Everyone Graduates Center](#) at Johns Hopkins University School of Education and released in partnership with [America's Promise Alliance](#) and the [Alliance for Excellent Education](#). The 2016 Data Brief is presented by sponsor [AT&T](#).

About GradNation: The GradNation campaign, launched by America's Promise Alliance, and led by the four organizations above, focuses on raising the on-time high school graduation rate to 90 percent by the Class of 2020, with no school graduating fewer than 80 percent of its students on time. GradNation also aims for dramatic increases in postsecondary enrollment and graduation.

About AT&T Aspire: AT&T Aspire is AT&T's signature philanthropic initiative driving innovation in education to promote student success in school and beyond.

Download the Data Brief, State Progress Reports and Graphics. To access the Data Brief, State Progress Reports, appendices and sharable graphics visit: <http://www.gradnation.org/report/2016-building-grad-nation-data-brief>.

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The **Everyone Graduates Center** at the Center for Social Organization of Schools at the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University seeks to identify the barriers to high school graduation, develop strategic solutions to overcoming these barriers and build local capacity to implement and sustain the solutions so that all students graduate prepared for adult success. www.every1graduates.org

America's Promise Alliance leads an alliance of organizations, communities and individuals dedicated to making the promise of America real for every child. As its signature effort, the GradNation campaign mobilizes Americans to increase the on-time high school graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020 and prepare young people for postsecondary enrollment and the 21st century workforce. www.AmericasPromise.org

The **Alliance for Excellent Education** is a Washington, DC-based national policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all students, particularly those who are traditionally underserved, graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship. www.all4ed.org

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