

Graduation Rate

Definition

High school graduation is the number and rate of students graduating within four years of entering high school and students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for graduation in more than four years.

Data in context

All young people need a strong education to succeed in today's economy, and graduating from high school is a critical step. High school graduates earn an average annual salary of \$29,448, compared to \$19,915 for workers without high school diplomas.¹ High school graduates contribute about twice as much in taxes, are less likely to access public assistance, are much less likely to serve time in prison, and have better health outcomes and life expectancies than young adults who do not complete high school.²

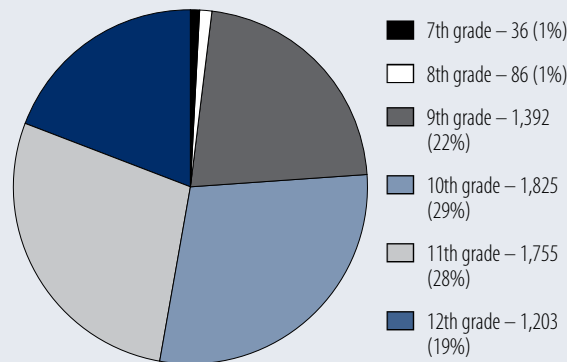
In Kentucky, 8 percent of youth in 2007 were not attending school and did not have a high school degree, compared to 7 percent nationally.³ Though the rate has improved since 2000, Kentucky ranks 36th among all states on this measure.⁴

Recent studies have shown that the national graduation rate is lower than previously thought, with only 7 out of 10 high school students leaving with a diploma.⁵ Young people in the United States today are less likely than their parents to have completed high school, a fact that distinguishes us from all other industrialized countries.⁶

States currently use many different methods to calculate graduation rates. Along with 32 other states, Kentucky counts the percentage of students leaving school with a high school diploma, and tends to undercount dropouts.⁷ For instance, Kentucky's reported SY 2005 graduation rate was estimated to be inflated by about 11 percentage points.⁸ According to new requirements under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act, all fifty states must adopt a uniform formula by 2012, which will track students over the course of their high school careers and give policymakers a more accurate picture of educational outcomes.⁹

Kentucky's official graduation rate increased from 79 percent in SY 2003 to 84 percent for SY 2007. Graduation rates improved in 75 percent of Kentucky's school districts with high schools between SY 2003 and 2007, led by Dayton

Students Dropping Out by Grade, 2007



Source: Kentucky Department of Education, 1993–2007 Nonacademic Briefing Packet.

Independent and Breathitt County School Districts. While nine school districts reported a 100 percent graduation rate, eight school districts reported that at least one quarter of their students did not graduate.

Dropout rates are influenced by multiple factors at the community, school, family, and individual levels.¹⁰ Students who struggle academically and who are disengaged from their teachers and peers are at risk of dropping out.¹¹ Disproportionate access to quality schools means students who are low-income and students of color are disproportionately impacted.¹² For example, 8 percent of non-Hispanic White youth ages 16 to 19 were not attending school and had no high school degree in 2006 in Kentucky, compared to 10 percent of Black/African-American youth.¹³

Research shows that regardless of individual risk factors, high schools with smaller enrollments, better interpersonal relationships among students and adults, teachers who are more supportive of students, and a rigorous and focused curriculum have lower dropout rates.¹⁴ Quality data systems that can identify at-risk students early offer schools an opportunity to intervene to keep students in school.¹⁵ Kentucky can also take concrete steps to encourage graduation by pairing efforts to support at-risk students with the expectation that they stay in school until they reach age 18 or graduate.¹⁶

Data Source: Kentucky Department of Education.

Data Note: Independent school districts are listed after the school district for the county in which they are located. For the rate calculation, dropouts from the graduating class include students from the class that dropped out at any point during the four years.

Rate Calculation: $(\text{Number of on-time high school graduates in school year 2003} * 100) / (\text{Total number of high school graduates in school year 2003} + \text{dropouts from graduating class})$
 $(\text{Number of on-time high school graduates in school year 2007} * 100) / (\text{Total number of high school graduates in school year 2007} + \text{dropouts from graduating class})$

- 1 U.S. Census Bureau (2007). *Earnings Gap Highlighted by Census Bureau Data on Educational Attainment*. Press release. Available at <http://www.census.gov>. Accessed September 2008.
- 2 Dynarski, M., Clarke, L., Cobb, B., Finn, J., Rumberger, R., and Smink, J. (2008). *Dropout Prevention: A Practice Guide* (NCEE 2008–4025). Available at <http://ies.ed.gov>. Accessed September 2008.
- 3 Annie E. Casey Foundation website. KIDS COUNT Data Center. Available at <http://www.kidscount.org>. Accessed October 2008.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Swanson, C. (2008). *Cities in Crisis: A Special Analytic Report on High School Graduation Rates*. Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. Available at <http://www.americaspromise.org>. Accessed October 2008.
- 6 Habash, E. (2008). *Counting on Graduation: An Agenda for State Leadership*. The Education Trust. Available at <http://www.edtrust.org>. Accessed October 2008.
- 7 EPE Research Center (2008). "Diplomas Count 2008." *Education Week*, vol. 27. no. 40.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Kingsbury, K. (2008). "No Dropouts Left Behind: New Rules on Grad Rates." *Time*. October 30, 2008.
- 10 Hammond, C., Smink, J., Drew, S., and Linton, D. (2007). *Dropout Risk Factors and Exemplary Programs: a Technical Report*. National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. Available at <http://www.dropoutprevention.org>. Accessed September 2008.
- 11 Jerald, C. (2006). *Identifying Potential Dropouts: Key Lessons for Building an Early Warning Data System*. Achieve, Inc. Available at <http://www.achieve.org>. Accessed October 2008.
- 12 Annie E. Casey Foundation (2006). "Unequal Opportunities in Education." *Race Matters Toolkit*. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed October 2008.
- 13 Annie E. Casey Foundation website. KIDS COUNT Data Center. Available at <http://www.kidscount.org>. Accessed October 2008.
- 14 Jerald, C. (2006). *Identifying Potential Dropouts: Key Lessons for Building an Early Warning Data System*. Achieve, Inc. Available at <http://www.achieve.org>. Accessed October 2008.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Bridgeland, J., DiIulio, J., and Streeter, R. *Raising the Compulsory School Attendance Age: The Case for Reform*. Civic Enterprises. Available at <http://www.civicerprises.net>. Accessed November 2008.

High school graduation (number & percent of all students)

	SY 2003		SY 2007	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Kentucky	36,379	79	38,364	84
Adair Co.	141	66	165	83
Allen Co.	194	74	202	88
Anderson Co.	227	88	253	90
Ballard Co.	66	83	83	92
Barren Co.	235	80	237	78
Caverna Ind.	41	79	40	85
Glasgow Ind.	109	79	115	83
Bath Co.	89	67	92	77
Bell Co.	173	69	182	82
Middlesboro Ind.	83	67	98	73
Pineville Ind.	28	85	29	74
Boone Co.	899	91	1,031	91
Walton Verona Ind.	74	99	80	100
Bourbon Co.	168	90	180	90
Paris Ind.	48	91	53	100
Boyd Co.	229	86	223	89
Ashland Ind.	184	86	198	83
Fairview Ind.	43	88	60	97
Boyle Co.	178	82	212	92
Danville Ind.	98	85	111	94
Bracken Co.	77	92	73	79
Augusta Ind.	16	100	20	100
Breathitt Co.	110	50	137	86
Jackson Ind.	28	82	16	100
Breckinridge Co.	173	79	188	92
Cloverport Ind.	22	100	20	100
Bullitt Co.	627	81	656	81
Butler Co.	141	89	153	92
Caldwell Co.	146	85	124	87
Calloway Co.	189	90	207	95
Murray Ind.	118	99	132	96
Campbell Co.	303	85	308	89
Bellevue Ind.	47	85	67	96
Dayton Ind.	36	54	64	100
Fort Thomas Ind.	180	97	186	98
Newport Ind.	142	87	114	81
Silver Grove Ind.	15	94	12	100
Southgate Ind.	*	*	*	*
Carlisle Co.	58	88	51	81
Carroll Co.	89	70	113	90
Carter Co.	273	84	270	89
Casey Co.	134	82	155	88
Christian Co.	475	75	481	80
Clark Co.	280	69	348	80

	SY 2003		SY 2007	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Clay Co.	190	58	217	76
Clinton Co.	64	74	96	85
Crittenden Co.	98	90	75	82
Cumberland Co.	76	72	73	76
Daviess Co.	737	91	738	93
Owensboro Ind.	223	84	222	84
Edmonson Co.	138	84	139	86
Elliott Co.	76	78	69	85
Estill Co.	142	74	145	92
Fayette Co.	1,672	75	1,928	79
Fleming Co.	137	79	148	83
Floyd Co.	395	75	377	85
Franklin Co.	336	78	339	80
Frankfort Ind.	68	80	77	93
Fulton Co.	51	85	56	88
Fulton Ind.	37	86	34	94
Gallatin Co.	50	74	70	74
Garrard Co.	142	74	139	79
Grant Co.	212	79	199	78
Williamstown Ind.	41	77	60	92
Graves Co.	250	79	309	85
Mayfield Ind.	80	84	75	74
Grayson Co.	270	78	231	84
Green Co.	107	91	120	95
Greenup Co.	193	77	198	85
Raceland Ind.	70	99	68	96
Russell Ind.	158	95	152	92
Hancock Co.	83	98	95	96
Hardin Co.	876	80	913	83
Elizabethtown Ind.	167	85	139	87
West Point Ind.	*	*	*	*
Harlan Co.	327	75	241	67
Harlan Ind.	51	75	57	86
Harrison Co.	211	88	216	92
Hart Co.	140	84	156	78
Henderson Co.	424	74	433	86
Henry Co.	137	81	116	81
Eminence Ind.	18	86	28	97
Hickman Co.	45	82	36	84
Hopkins Co.	432	84	424	83
Dawson Springs Ind.	32	80	31	79
Jackson Co.	130	84	127	82
Jefferson Co.	4,610	69	4,817	73
Anchorage Ind.	*	*	*	*
Jessamine Co.	342	72	366	78

	SY 2003		SY 2007	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Johnson Co.	211	84	199	93
Paintsville Ind.	57	77	68	92
Kenton Co.	753	91	856	90
Beechwood Ind.	81	99	68	99
Covington Ind.	194	89	161	89
Erlanger-Elsmere Ind.	94	87	117	90
Ludlow Ind.	64	93	63	94
Knott Co.	153	72	130	82
Knox Co.	225	63	242	81
Barbourville Ind.	44	100	40	100
LaRue Co.	152	80	149	90
Laurel Co.	440	72	490	84
East Bernstadt Ind.	*	*	*	*
Lawrence Co.	164	76	161	81
Lee Co.	70	78	73	81
Leslie Co.	147	79	107	78
Letcher Co.	201	77	193	86
Jenkins Ind.	38	97	47	100
Lewis Co.	143	81	138	85
Lincoln Co.	240	71	257	80
Livingston Co.	87	89	95	86
Logan Co.	195	78	219	94
Russellville Ind.	85	89	78	89
Lyon Co.	64	86	71	93
McCracken Co.	415	91	433	91
Paducah Ind.	159	70	144	78
McCreary Co.	175	76	252	70
McLean Co.	114	85	108	86
Madison Co.	449	88	562	89
Berea Ind.	61	86	61	92
Magoffin Co.	144	72	121	89
Marion Co.	172	84	171	86
Marshall Co.	276	83	289	85
Martin Co.	151	79	121	74
Mason Co.	165	86	191	89
Meade Co.	323	81	307	88
Menifee Co.	98	74	68	85
Mercer Co.	152	94	203	93
Burkin Ind.	21	84	28	97
Harrodsburg Ind.	50	86	**	**
Metcalfe Co.	55	73	96	89
Monroe Co.	118	84	113	86
Montgomery Co.	203	79	232	85
Morgan Co.	150	78	140	84
Muhlenberg Co.	348	83	357	88

	SY 2003		SY 2007	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Nelson Co.	304	87	313	89
Bardstown Ind.	103	74	99	92
Nicholas Co.	69	85	80	82
Ohio Co.	244	89	252	91
Oldham Co.	612	93	736	96
Owen Co.	92	74	118	82
Owsley Co.	53	79	46	87
Pendleton Co.	185	91	198	84
Perry Co.	200	68	247	89
Hazard Ind.	77	88	68	97
Pike Co.	583	84	636	85
Pikeville Ind.	79	83	67	84
Powell Co.	125	68	157	83
Pulaski Co.	503	79	477	85
Science Hill Ind.	*	*	*	*
Somerset Ind.	91	85	105	88
Robertson Co.	14	82	23	82
Rockcastle Co.	185	77	203	93
Rowan Co.	171	80	179	86
Russell Co.	135	70	180	90
Scott Co.	332	77	403	86
Shelby Co.	305	78	328	81
Simpson Co.	167	87	216	86
Spencer Co.	131	89	161	94
Taylor Co.	204	90	162	92
Campbellsville Ind.	76	76	67	91
Todd Co.	127	85	116	82
Trigg Co.	109	78	126	83
Trimble Co.	92	87	110	89
Union Co.	147	81	166	82
Warren Co.	693	87	741	89
Bowling Green Ind.	208	87	215	88
Washington Co.	140	84	124	94
Wayne Co.	145	74	157	88
Monticello Ind.	48	81	52	87
Webster Co.	139	84	141	84
Providence Ind.	24	89	**	**
Whitley Co.	209	79	253	80
Corbin Ind.	158	91	154	97
Williamsburg Ind.	46	84	53	95
Wolfe Co.	84	76	66	99
Woodford Co.	245	86	262	91

* No high school in the district.

** District merged with county school district.