

Pell Institute Fact Sheet
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HIGH SCHOOL STATUS COMPLETION

Background/History

89.9% of 18-to 24-year-olds not in high school had received a high school diploma or equivalent credential in 2008, and many positive benefits have been associated with high school completion including higher income, higher employment, and better health than individuals who dropout of high school.¹ The data in this fact sheet is reported in terms of the status completion rate and the averaged freshman graduation rate from 2008. The status completion rate shows the percentage of individuals in a given age range who are not in high school and have earned a high school diploma or alternative credential (i.e. a GED), irrespective of when that credential was earned. The rate is calculated using Current Population Survey (CPS) data.

Status completion is different than the high school graduation rate, which is 74.9% for public high school students (2008). The averaged freshman graduation rate estimates the proportion of public high school freshman who graduate with a regular diploma four years after starting ninth grade. The rate is calculated from the Common Core of Data (CCD).

Facts and Figures: Status Completion Rates

- National figures - 89.9% of 18-to 24-year-olds not in high school had received a high school diploma or equivalent credential.
- Gender differences
 - Males: 89.3%
 - Females: 90.5%
- Racial differences
 - Hispanic: 75.5%
 - American Indians/Alaska Natives: 82.5%
 - Black: 86.9%
 - White: 94.2%
 - Asian/Pacific Islanders: 95.5%
 - Two or more races: 94.2%
- Notable historical trends
 - From 1972 to 2008, status completion rates have trended upward from 82.8% to 89.9%.
- Notable regional differences
 - West: 88.7%
 - South: 89.1%
 - Midwest: 90.3%
 - Northeast: 92.7%

Summary

The national status completion rates show an upward trend since 1972; however, the rates are not equivalent across racial differences or regions. The data shows lower completion rates for students from the Western and Southern regions of the United States as well as for Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Black populations. Females had a higher completion rate than males by 1.2%.

Data Reference

Chapman, C., Laird, J., and KewalRamani, A. (2010). Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972–2008 (NCES 2011-012). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.