



U.S. Department of Education
Institute of Education Sciences
NCES 2007-026

Event Dropout Rates for Public School Students in Grades 9–12: 2002–03 and 2003–04

First Look Report



U.S. Department of Education
Institute of Education Sciences
NCES 2007-026

Event Dropout Rates for Public School Students in Grades 9–12: 2002–03 and 2003–04

May 2007

Chris Chapman
Lee Hoffman
National Center for
Education Statistics

U.S. Department of Education

Margaret Spellings
Secretary

Institute of Education Sciences

Grover J. Whitehurst
Director

National Center for Education Statistics

Mark Schneider
Commissioner

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is the primary federal entity for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to education in the United States and other nations. It fulfills a congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report full and complete statistics on the condition of education in the United States; conduct and publish reports and specialized analyses of the meaning and significance of such statistics; assist state and local education agencies in improving their statistical systems; and review and report on education activities in foreign countries.

NCES activities are designed to address high priority education data needs; provide consistent, reliable, complete, and accurate indicators of education status and trends; and report timely, useful, and high quality data to the U.S. Department of Education, the Congress, the states, other education policymakers, practitioners, data users, and the general public.

We strive to make our products available in a variety of formats and in language that is appropriate to a variety of audiences. You, as our customer, are the best judge of our success in communicating information effectively. If you have any comments or suggestions about this or any other NCES product or report, we would like to hear from you. Please direct your comments to:

National Center for Education Statistics
Institute of Education Sciences
U.S. Department of Education
1990 K Street NW
Washington, DC 20006-5651

May 2007

The NCES World Wide Web Home Page address is <http://nces.ed.gov>

The NCES World Wide Web Electronic Catalog address is <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>

Suggested Citation:

Chapman, C., and Hoffman, L. (2007). *Event Dropout Rates for Public School Students in Grades 9-12: 2002-03 and 2003-04* (NCES 2007-026). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC.

For ordering information on this report, write:

U.S. Department of Education
ED Pubs
PO Box 1398
Jessup, MD 20794-398

Call toll free 1-877-4ED-PUBS or order online at www.edpubs.org

Content Contact:

Chris Chapman
202-502-7414
chris.chapman@ed.gov

Acknowledgments

The authors appreciate the comments and suggestions of the NCES reviewers, Jack Buckley, Marilyn Seastrom, and Val Plisko. Terri Kennerly and Dell Gray of the U.S. Census Bureau were responsible for editing and verifying the data. Nick Gaviola of Quality Information Partners constructed the data files.

The greatest thanks are owed to the CCD Coordinators for the 50 states and 8 other jurisdictions who voluntarily report CCD data each year. This work is in addition to their other professional duties, and NCES is grateful for these Coordinators' efforts.

Contents

Acknowledgments.....	iii
List of Tables	vi
Summary of Findings.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Highlights 2002–03.....	2
Highlights 2003–04.....	2
Comparing 2003–04 and 2002–03	3
Technical Notes	6
References.....	8

List of Tables

Table 1. Event dropout rates for public school students in grades 9–12, by state: School years 2002–03 and 2003–04	4
--	---

Summary of Findings

Introduction

This report presents the event dropout rates for public school students in grades 9 through 12 for two years —2002–03 and 2003–04. Data used to develop these rates are taken from the Common Core of Data (CCD) 2002–03 and 2003–04 State-level Public School Dropout files. Data in these files were reported to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) by state education agencies (SEAs) and represent high school dropouts between October 1, 2002 and September 30, 2003 and between October 1, 2003 and September 30, 2004. All 50 states reported dropout counts for 9th- through 12th-grade students for 2002–03 as did most of the outlying areas. The District of Columbia and Guam did not report dropout data for 2002–03. Reporting was less consistent for 2003–04 when 48 states reported dropout data, with the District of Columbia, Oregon, and Wisconsin not reporting. All of the outlying areas reported in 2003–04.

The event dropout rate provides a measure of the percentage of high school students who drop out of high school over the course of a given school year. As such, it is useful for studying what happened to a particular group of high school students in a single year. The event dropout rate reported here focuses on public high school students in grades 9 through 12. As defined for CCD reporting, dropout is an individual who was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year, was not enrolled on October 1 of the current school year, and did not graduate from high school or complete some other district- or state-approved educational program (e.g., the General Educational Development certificate, or GED).¹

The state dropout rate is calculated by summing the number of dropouts for the state in a given year, and dividing this sum by the number of students enrolled at the beginning of that school year. For example, the 2002–03 grade 9–12 dropout rate for Alabama is the sum of dropouts in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 divided by the sum of students enrolled in these grades on October 1, 2002.

$$\text{Event dropout rate} = \frac{\sum \text{dropouts grades 9-12}_y}{\sum \text{enrollment grades 9-12}_y}$$

where y is a given year.

Other dropout rates have been developed for different purposes. NCES has published several such rates including status dropout rates and cohort dropout rates. Status dropout rates report the percentage of individuals in a given age range who are not in school and have not earned a high school diploma or equivalency credential,

¹ For more details on how dropouts are defined for CCD reporting purposes, please see appendix D in, “Instructions for Completing the Nonfiscal Surveys of the Common Core of Data: School Universe Survey, Agency Universe Survey, State Nonfiscal Survey—2004–05,” at <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/datamanual.asp>.

irrespective of when they dropped out and can be used to study general population issues (e.g., see Laird, DeBell, and Chapman 2006). Cohort dropout rates are designed to measure the percentage of students in a given cohort or class who drop out over a period of time (e.g., see McMillen 1997).

Highlights 2002–03

- For the 2002–03 school year, event dropout rates for public high school students ranged from a low of 1.8 percent in New Jersey to a high of 8.5 percent in Arizona (table 1).
- In 2002–03, the state rates show that event dropout rates were less than 3 percent in 8 states. In addition to New Jersey, these states were: Iowa, 1.9 percent; Wisconsin, 2.0 percent; Connecticut, 2.1 percent; North Dakota, 2.2 percent; Indiana, 2.2, percent; Kansas, 2.4 percent; and Maine, 2.8 percent.
- Five states had event dropout rates in 2002–03 of over 6 percent. In addition to Arizona, these states included: Nevada, 6.1 percent; Washington, 6.2 percent; Louisiana, 7.5 percent; and Alaska, 7.6 percent.
- Combined, the event dropout counts for the 50 states in 2002–03 indicate that nearly 550,000 9th- through 12th-grade students dropped out of public schools over the course of this single school year.

Highlights 2003–04

- For the next school year, 2003–04, the event dropout rates for public high school students in the reporting states ranged from a low of 1.8 percent in Connecticut and New Jersey to a high of 7.9 percent in Louisiana.
- In 2003–04, in addition to New Jersey and Connecticut, 10 states had event dropout rates of less than 3 percent that year. These states were: North Dakota, 2.0 percent; Iowa, 2.1 percent; Kansas, 2.2 percent; Indiana, 2.5 percent; Maine, 2.7 percent; Vermont, 2.8 percent; Nebraska, 2.8 percent; Virginia, 2.8 percent; Pennsylvania, 2.9 percent; and Mississippi, 2.9 percent.
- In addition to Louisiana, 4 other states had rates over 6 percent in 2003–04: Delaware, 6.1 percent; Washington, 6.5 percent; Arizona, 6.7 percent; and Alaska, 7.0.
- Looking at the 48 reporting states, these rates translate into a count of just over 545,000 9th- through 12th-grade students who dropped out of public high schools during the 2003–04 school year.

Comparing 2003–04 and 2002–03

- Rates for 2003–04 were lower than rates for 2002–03 in 22 states and higher in 19 states. Changes ranged from a decline of 1.8 percentage points in Arizona to an increase of 1.9 percentage points in Colorado.²

² Several states have changes that round to 0.0 percentage points, which are identified with the # symbol in the table. Missouri, North Carolina, and Texas had declines of less than 0.05 percentage points, and Florida, Kentucky, New Hampshire, and Wyoming had increases of this magnitude.

Table 1. Event dropout rates for public school students in grades 9–12, by state: School years 2002-03 and 2003-04

State or jurisdiction	2002-03			2003-04			Rate change (percentage point)
	Event rate (percent)	Grade 9-12 enrollment	Grade 9-12 dropouts	Event rate for (percent)	Grade 9-12 enrollment	Grade 9-12 dropouts	
Reporting states	3.9	13,986,717	548,020	3.9	13,806,520	545,266	#
Alabama ¹	3.5	203,117	7,067	3.3	205,907	6,842	-0.2
Alaska	7.6	39,984	3,045	7.0	40,238	2,814	-0.6
Arizona ¹	8.5	273,872	23,242	6.7	307,935	20,533	-1.8
Arkansas	4.6	132,138	6,091	4.7	133,008	6,236	0.1
California	3.2	1,828,426	59,045	3.3	1,874,309	62,286	0.1
Colorado	3.5	217,133	7,673	5.4	220,870	11,963	1.9
Connecticut	2.1	164,008	3,479	1.8	168,826	3,009	-0.3
Delaware	5.5	34,121	1,862	6.1	34,770	2,108	0.6
District of Columbia	—	16,595	—	—	17,874	—	—
Florida ¹	3.4	729,149	24,542	3.4	755,199	25,513	#
Georgia	5.8	407,451	23,828	5.4	419,430	22,632	-0.5
Hawaii	4.7	52,950	2,496	4.8	53,541	2,575	0.1
Idaho	3.9	75,241	2,917	3.1	76,335	2,395	-0.7
Illinois ¹	5.7	598,237	34,364	5.3	610,317	32,445	-0.4
Indiana	2.2	289,148	6,467	2.5	293,876	7,481	0.3
Iowa	1.9	154,827	3,014	2.1	153,738	3,222	0.1
Kansas	2.4	147,983	3,504	2.2	147,224	3,265	-0.2
Kentucky	3.3	184,083	6,042	3.3	185,171	6,163	#
Louisiana	7.5	193,332	14,507	7.9	191,292	15,056	0.4
Maine	2.8	62,679	1,741	2.7	62,636	1,682	-0.1
Maryland ¹	3.6	255,194	9,062	4.1	262,036	10,659	0.5
Massachusetts	3.3	281,939	9,389	3.7	288,329	10,633	0.4
Michigan	4.5	527,100	23,489	4.6	522,530	23,991	0.1
Minnesota	3.8	279,190	10,691	3.2	278,805	8,846	-0.7
Mississippi	3.7	130,527	4,859	2.9	130,861	3,830	-0.8
Missouri	3.3	270,522	9,049	3.3	272,303	9,090	#
Montana	3.6	48,901	1,782	3.4	48,325	1,655	-0.2
Nebraska	3.1	90,289	2,813	2.8	90,125	2,526	-0.3
Nevada	6.1	98,321	5,987	6.0	104,810	6,302	-0.1
New Hampshire	3.8	64,220	2,441	3.8	65,561	2,500	#
New Jersey ¹	1.8	389,888	7,199	1.8	403,883	7,223	-0.1
New Mexico	4.7	95,767	4,501	5.2	97,034	5,009	0.5
New York ¹	5.5	836,689	45,732	5.6	855,600	47,929	0.1
North Carolina	5.2	371,987	19,424	5.2	386,190	20,025	#
North Dakota	2.2	35,136	760	2.0	34,363	679	-0.2
Ohio	3.0	553,272	16,342	3.3	566,351	18,890	0.4
Oklahoma	4.0	175,444	7,011	3.9	175,765	6,827	-0.1
Oregon	4.4	169,589	7,439	—	173,269	—	—
Pennsylvania	3.2	573,753	18,329	2.9	584,258	16,780	-0.3
Rhode Island	4.0	46,661	1,882	3.4	47,812	1,639	-0.6
South Carolina	3.2	191,743	6,231	3.4	196,519	6,667	0.1
South Dakota	3.3	40,598	1,339	4.2	39,522	1,669	0.9
Tennessee ¹	3.2	251,203	8,079	3.3	256,794	8,434	0.1
Texas	3.6	1,180,108	42,447	3.6	1,199,136	42,979	#
Utah	3.9	145,235	5,594	3.8	145,626	5,518	-0.1

See notes at end of table.

Table 1. Event dropout rates for public school students in grades 9–12, by state: School years 2002-03 and 2003-04 — Continued

State or jurisdiction	2002-03			2003-04			Rate change (percentage point)
	Event rate (percent)	Grade 9-12 enrollment	Grade 9-12 dropouts	Event rate for (percent)	Grade 9-12 enrollment	Grade 9-12 dropouts	
Vermont ¹	3.5	31,846	1,111	2.8	32,196	901	-0.7
Virginia	3.0	346,082	10,376	2.8	354,981	10,033	-0.2
Washington	6.2	317,607	19,721	6.5	322,101	20,980	0.3
West Virginia	3.7	82,505	3,055	4.3	82,382	3,570	0.6
Wisconsin	2.0	289,333	5,686	—	290,019	—	—
Wyoming	4.5	28,190	1,274	4.6	27,701	1,262	#
Outlying areas							
American Samoa	2.0	4,102	81	2.4	4,073	97.0	0.4
Guam	—	—	—	9.1	9,021	825.0	—
Northern Marianas	2.6	2,895	74	2.8	3,073	87.0	0.3
Puerto Rico	0.9	166,345	1,580	1.0	165,527	1599.0	#
Virgin Islands	2.8	5,550	157	7.7	5,078	392	4.9

— Not available. These states do not report dropouts that are consistent with the NCES definition.

Rounds to zero. The differences are 0.01 for Florida, 0.046 for Kentucky, -0.01 for Missouri, 0.01 for New Hampshire, -0.04 for North Carolina, -0.01 for Texas, and 0.04 for Wyoming.

¹ These states used an alternative calendar for each year shown, reporting students who drop out between one July and the next. The rates from both calendar approaches are comparable (see Winglee et al. 2000).

NOTE: These event dropout rates measure the percentage of public school students in grades 9–12 who dropped out of school between one October and the next. Data are reported by states to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State-Level Public School Dropouts," School Years 2002-03 and 2003-04, Version 1a.

Technical Notes

Overview

Dropout data included in the Common Core of Data (CCD) are obtained through annual reports from state education agencies (SEAs) that include the numbers of dropouts at the local education agency level by gender and race/ethnicity for each of grades 7 through 12. The CCD is a voluntary data collection. NCES does not publish data reported by states that do not conform to the CCD dropout definition and reporting procedures. The definitions and reporting procedures can be found in appendix D of *Instructions for Completing the Nonfiscal Surveys of the Common Core of Data: School Universe Survey, Agency Universe Survey, State Nonfiscal Survey—2004–05* at <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/datamanual.asp>. For the 2002–03 school year, all 50 states and Puerto Rico, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands reported dropout data in agreement with the CCD definition. The District of Columbia did not report. For 2003–04, 48 states, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands reported. The District of Columbia, Oregon, and Wisconsin did not report. Dropout data for a given school year are reported to the CCD in the following school year. The numbers of 2002–03 school year dropouts were reported in the 2003–04 CCD. These numbers are the basis of the *State-Level Public School Dropouts* data files for school years 2002–03 and 2003–04 used in this report. The dropout data are reported as part of the *Local Education Agency Universe Survey* each year. Before release, disclosure analyses are conducted and data suppression implemented though this does not affect the state-level dropout counts. Enrollment data included in the dropout files are taken annually from the *Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey*.

The CCD defines a dropout as an individual who was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year, was not enrolled on October 1 of the current school year, and did not graduate from high school or complete some other district- or state-approved educational program. Students who transfer to another elementary or secondary public or private school, who leave the United States, or who are out of school due to illness, are not considered dropouts. Students who complete a grade but do not return for the subsequent school year are counted as dropouts for the year and grade in which they fail to enroll. Dropouts who are not in a traditional grade (ungraded students) are assigned by states to the grades most appropriate for their age.

Students who are not in a traditional grade are assigned to specific grades by NCES for purposes of adjusting the denominator of the rate. This is done by (1) calculating the total enrollment for all grades, prekindergarten through grade 12; (2) computing the proportion of the graded prekindergarten through grade 12 enrollment accounted for by each particular grade, and (3) incrementing the enrollment for each grade by its corresponding proportion of the ungraded enrollment. For example, if 6 percent of all students in prekindergarten through grade 12 were enrolled in grade 10, 6 percent of the ungraded enrollment would be added to grade 10.

Data Limitations

The CCD does not collect data from private schools. It includes only public education system data as reported to NCES by the individual SEAs. Some states include nontraditional agencies, such as Departments of Corrections, in their CCD reports while others do not, and states vary in terms of treatment of alternative completion programs, such as credentials awarded for completion of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and GED programs.

There is variation in the degree of rigor with which SEAs verify their dropout data. NCES requires SEAs to confirm whether they comply with the CCD dropout definition and to confirm or amend any numbers that appear considerably out of line with other states or with data from previous years. However, NCES does not audit a state's or school district's dropout data.

Not all states reported dropout information. However, when information is missing for no more than 15 percent of cases across the United States, NCES calculates totals and identifies them as totals for "reporting states," rather than for the United States, and column headings are labeled accordingly. For example, the District of Columbia did not report dropout counts for 2002–03, so the total number of dropouts shown at the top of the table is for the reporting states and not for all dropouts in the entire United States.

For More Information

For more information about data sets used in this report, contact Lee Hoffman, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 K Street NW, Washington, DC 20006-5651; or call 202-502-7356; fax 202-502-7475; or email lee.hoffman@ed.gov. Visit the Common Core of Data website for downloading files and documentation at <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd>.

References

- Laird, J., DeBell, M., and Chapman, C. (2006). *Dropout Rates in the United States: 2004* (NCES 2007-024). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- McMillen, M. (1997). *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1996* (NCES 98-250). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2004). *Instructions for Completing the Nonfiscal Surveys of the Common Core of Data: School Universe Survey, Agency Universe Survey, State Nonfiscal Survey—2004–05*. Retrieved April 22, 2007 from (<http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/datamanual.asp>).
- Winglee, M., Marker, D., Henderson, A., Aronstamm Young, B., and Hoffman, L. (2000). *A Recommended Approach to Providing High School Dropout and Completion Rates at the State Level* (NCES 2000-305). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.