

Persisting Through the Pandemic and Beyond:

Trends in the college enrollment, persistence, and completion experiences of Boston Public Schools graduates



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Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Marsha Inniss-Mitchell, Executive Director of Postsecondary Initiatives, Boston Public Schools (BPS), for serving as the BPS research sponsor for this project. In addition, we are grateful to the BPS Office of Data & Accountability team for reviewing research proposals and for preparing the data files used in this research. This report would not be possible without support from the Boston Foundation. A special thanks to Antoniya Marinova for reviewing drafts and providing feedback to improve the final report. Last, but not least, a special thanks to our colleagues Inanna Pickering and Eliabeth McGinn for reviewing drafts and providing helpful comments and edits.

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The Boston Foundation

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Overview and Report Highlights



To help prepare and advise Boston Public Schools (BPS) students and recent graduates for postsecondary education and training, it is crucial to have current information on college enrollment, persistence, and completion outcomes. The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive update on college enrollment, persistence, and completion trends for BPS graduates from the Classes of 2015 to 2025. This report examines the recent trends in college enrollment of BPS graduates since the lows reached during the peak of the pandemic closures and shift to remote learning. The college completion analysis provides an update on the six-year college completion outcomes for the BPS Classes of 2018 and 2019. These class years are of particular interest because they had to persist through COVID-19 pandemic disruptions shortly after enrolling in college.

When interpreting the trends discussed in this study, it is important to note that there have been changes in the size and composition of BPS graduating classes over the past decade. One is that the

Recent Evidence on the Economic Returns to a College Education

Over the past decade, the general public's view on higher education has shifted. In 2015, 57% of Americans reported having significant confidence in higher education institutions compared to 42% in 2025, a decline of 15 percentage points.¹ The share with little to no confidence in higher education more than doubled over this period (10% to 23%). Americans mentioned the rising cost of college and labor market challenges of recent college graduates, as well as concerns about the political stances and agendas of colleges and their faculty members, as reasons for the decline in confidence.

In regard to the labor market concerns, the unemployment rate of young (22–27 years of age) college graduates has been higher than that of all workers for the past four to five years, a divergence from the trend of being lower for the previous three decades.² Yet, the projected workforce demand for college educated adults remains quite high in Massachusetts. Georgetown University's Center for Education and Workforce forecasts that 73% of Massachusetts' jobs in 2031 will require some type of postsecondary credential, with most requiring a four-year degree as a minimum for

entry.³ In fact, Massachusetts ranked third nationally in its share of jobs requiring a bachelor's degree.

When evaluating the cost of attending and the labor market benefits of a college degree, the long-term evidence remains quite favorable. In a 2025 article titled "Is College Still Worth It," Deitz and Abel found that the median return on a college degree after factoring in costs and labor market earnings is 12.5% per year and has been consistent over the past 30 years.⁴ This relatively high return is largely due to the substantial wage premium that bachelor's degree earners experience, with median earnings of \$80,000 compared to \$47,000 for those with only a high school degree in 2024, a difference of \$32,000 annually. A 2025 study by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education found a similar \$30,000 per year earnings premium for graduates from its four-year public colleges and approximately a \$20,000 premium for associate degree earners at two-year public institutions, compared to high school graduates in the state.⁵ This recent evidence on labor market demand and earnings outcomes of graduates suggests that a college degree still has a substantial economic payoff.

high school graduation rate for the district has risen from 70.7% for the Class of 2015 to 80–81% for the most recent years from Classes of 2023–2025, with the Class of 2025 marking an all-time high (81.3%). This means that a higher share of entering ninth grade cohorts is making it through to high school graduation and may need additional postsecondary advising and support to match the college enrollment rates of previous cohorts. Second, the district has experienced shifts in its race-ethnic composition and increase in English language learners. There has been substantial growth in the percentage of graduates identifying as Latino, rising consistently from 30% of the Class of 2015 to 44% for the Class of 2024, while the shares of Asian, Black, and White graduates have declined. Appendix A describes these changes in the demographic characteristics of graduates in more detail.

Report Highlights

The summary below highlights the main findings on college enrollment, persistence, and six-year college completion outcomes.

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT AND PERSISTENCE FINDINGS

- Similar to statewide and national trends, the college enrollment rates of BPS graduates in the first year after high school declined sharply in recent years, falling from a high of 69% for the Class of 2017 to 54.6% for the Class of 2020. First-year enrollment rates recovered to 57% for the Classes of 2023 and 2024 but remain approximately 10 percentage points below pre-COVID-19 trends for the BPS Classes of 2015–2018.
- The declines in college enrollment rates have been steepest for Black and Latino BPS graduates, widening race-ethnic differences in college enrollment during the pandemic-era and after. First-year college enrollment rates declined by 18 percentage points for Black and Latino graduates from 2017 to 2020/2021 and have increased by 5–6 percentage points since their pandemic lows. For the BPS Class of 2024, 57% of Black graduates and 49% of Latino graduates enrolled in college, down from 68% and 62%, respectively, for the BPS Class of 2017. In comparison, first-year college enrollment rates of Asian graduates declined 5 percentage points from 87% for the BPS Class of 2017 to 82% for the Class of 2024 and White graduates from the Class of 2024 maintained the same 77% first-year enrollment rate as White graduates from the Class of 2017.
- First-year college enrollment of BPS graduates has declined the most at two-year and four-year public institutions. The percentage share of BPS graduates enrolling at two-year public colleges fell from 19.1% for the Class of 2017 to 13.9% for the Class of 2024, a drop of 5 percentage points. The share of graduates enrolling at four-year public institutions fell from 26% for the Class of 2017 to 19% for the Class of 2024. The percentage share of graduates enrolled at a four-year private institution fell during the pandemic but is now back to 24%, slightly above the share for the BPS Class of 2017.
- Although MassEducate, the state's new tuition-free community college initiative, is still in its early stages, there has been no discernible uptick in the immediate fall enrollment of new BPS graduates attending two-year public institutions in 2024 and 2025. The BPS Class of 2024 would have graduated before this program was announced and thus the lack of changes in enrollment for this Class is not surprising. The preliminary data for 2025 fall semester enrollment shows that 407 or 11.1% of BPS Class

of 2025 graduates enrolled in a Massachusetts community college. This 11.1% immediate fall semester enrollment rate in community college was below the 11.7% rate for the BPS Classes of 2023 and 2024. There were 407 and 399 graduates from the BPS Classes of 2023 and 2024 that enrolled in a community college in the immediate fall semester.

...disparities often mirror statewide and national trends, particularly for urban school districts with a high share of economically disadvantaged students...

- This report tracked the one-year persistence rate of fall enrollees from the BPS Classes of 2015–2024. The one-year persistence rate of graduates enrolling at two-year public institutions fell from 58.8% for the Class of 2015 to a low of 48.7% for the Class of 2019 but has since recovered to 57.3% for the Class of 2024. One-year persistence rates for BPS graduates at four-year public institutions fell from a high of 88% for the Class of 2015 to a low of 81% for the Class of 2022 before climbing back to 85% for the Class of 2025. The percentage of BPS Class of 2024 first-year enrollees at four-year public institutions who reenrolled during the fall 2025 semester was the highest since prior to the pandemic. The recent increases in persistence rates of BPS Class of 2024 graduates enrolled at two-year and four-year public institutions are a promising sign for boosting college completion rates for this class year.

COLLEGE COMPLETION FINDINGS

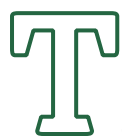
- Six-year college completion rates of BPS graduates who enroll in college during the year after high school have mostly hovered in the 52–54% range for the BPS Classes of 2011 to 2017.
- College completion rates dipped to 50–51% for first-year enrollees from the BPS Classes of 2018 and 2019, the class years that were in their first one to two years of college when COVID-19 pandemic disruptions led many colleges and universities to switch from in-person to remote and hybrid learning options. At the time, there were sharp increases nationally in the number of students withdrawing and taking a semester off, which led to some forecasts of a deepening dropout crisis.⁶ The fact that the six-year college completion rates of BPS graduates from the Classes of 2018 and 2019 fell by only 2–3 percentage points likely outperformed forecasts at the time of the pandemic. In addition, 211 or 9% of Class of 2019 first-year enrollees were still enrolled in pursuit of a credential as recently as the fall 2025 semester, six years after starting their college journey.
- As college completion rates stabilized in the 52–54% range until recently, gender and race-ethnic gaps in college completion persisted. Female BPS college enrollees from the Class of 2019 had a six-year college completion rate that was 10 percentage points above their male peers (55.1% vs. 44.9%). Across the four major race-ethnic groups, the six-year college completion rates of BPS Class of 2019 ranged from 37% and 41% for Black and Latino first-year college enrollees to 75% and 78% of Asian and White first-year enrollees, respectively.
- Similar to national trends, the six-year college completion rate of BPS graduates who were economically disadvantaged in high school trailed that of their more affluent peers (44% compared

to 63%). Postsecondary longitudinal research has found that high school students from low-income families have substantially lower college completion rates than their more affluent peers even when accounting for differences in academic test scores while in high school.⁷ Family income status is a strong predictor of college degree attainment.

- This study disaggregates college completion rates of BPS graduates by English language learner (ELL) status and disability status. Among BPS Class of 2019 first-year enrollees who were ELL in high school, 33.6% completed a postsecondary credential within six years versus 53% of non-ELL first-year enrollees from BPS. A similar six-year completion rate differential exists between students with disabilities and students without disabilities (31.7% vs. 52.8%).
- Starting with the first college completion study on the BPS Class of 2000, there have been substantial differences in the college completion experiences of exam and non-exam high school graduates. Given that the exam schools have selective admissions requirements based on academic test scores and grades, it is expected that graduates would have higher college enrollment and completion rates. For the Class of 2019, 78% of first-year enrollees from the district's three exam high schools completed a postsecondary credential with most earning four-year degrees. For first-year enrollees from non-exam high schools, the six-year completion rate was 36%.
- As is the case nationally, six-year college completion rates for BPS graduates vary considerably across types of institutions attended and their admissions selectivity. For the BPS Class of 2019, first-year enrollees who started at a two-year public institution had a 21% college completion rate. The six-year completion rate of first-year enrollees at four-year public institutions was 60%. The highest college completion rate was for those attending four-year private institutions (67.3%), many of whom attended very selective institutions.
- While most of the college completion rates in this report track the experiences of those who enrolled in college, another way to measure college completion is for the entire high school graduating class (enrollees and non-enrollees combined). The postsecondary credential attainment rate of all BPS graduates from the Classes of 2017 and 2018 matched a national average for public, non-charter, and urban city high schools. Nearly 37% of the BPS Classes of 2017 and 2018 had attained a postsecondary credential within six years, which was the same as that found for this comparison group of high schools from across the U.S.

While this report highlights some favorable developments in terms of improving college enrollment and persistence rates for the most recent graduates from BPS and the ability of earlier graduates to persist and complete postsecondary credentials through the pandemic, it also describes demographic and socioeconomic disparities in postsecondary experiences. These disparities often mirror statewide and national trends, particularly for urban school districts with a high share of economically disadvantaged students and populations of students that are traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

Data Sources



This descriptive research study is based on two primary data sources: BPS graduates' records and college enrollment and completion records from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). To conduct this longitudinal study, the PIC received a de-identified list of BPS graduates from the Classes of 2015 to 2025. This includes data on gender, race-ethnicity, graduating high school, and selected student characteristics, including disability, English language learner, and economically disadvantaged statuses. The college enrollment and completion analysis in this study disaggregates findings by these student characteristics. For race-ethnicity, the analysis is limited to four major groups: Black, Latino, White, and Asian. Over the 10 years of graduating classes analyzed in this report, on average, 74% of the graduates from each class were Black or Latino. Due to low numbers of graduates identified as "Native American" and "Mixed/Other" in the dataset, results will not be displayed separately, to protect the confidentiality of graduates. Appendix A provides an overview of the number of graduates in each of the class years included in this study and trends in the size and composition of these graduating classes by student characteristics.

BPS also provided the PIC with a de-identified version of the NSC's *StudentTracker* file, which is described below.⁸ Each file received has a unique ID to allow the PIC to create a de-identified longitudinal file containing demographic characteristics, graduating high school, and postsecondary enrollment and credential records. The NSC's *StudentTracker* file provides semester-by-semester enrollment information for students identified in its database, including dates of enrollment; name of the college or university; location of the college (state); level of the institution (less than two-year, two-year, four-year); whether the college is public, private (not for profit), or private (for profit); and students' full-time/part-time status. *StudentTracker* also identifies students reported by colleges and universities as graduates, and provides information on the date of graduation, type of certificate or degree earned, and field of study, if this detail is provided by the college or university to the NSC.

NSC covers 97% of U.S. college student enrollment. Despite the high institutional enrollment coverage rates, there are some limitations with NSC data. For example, college students may request information blocks under the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which means their college enrollment and degree outcome data would not be available in the *StudentTracker* detail report. The information block rate for enrollment at Massachusetts-based institutions averaged 2.9–3.1% for the 2020–21, 2021–22, and 2022–23 academic years, the most recent years with block rates available.⁹

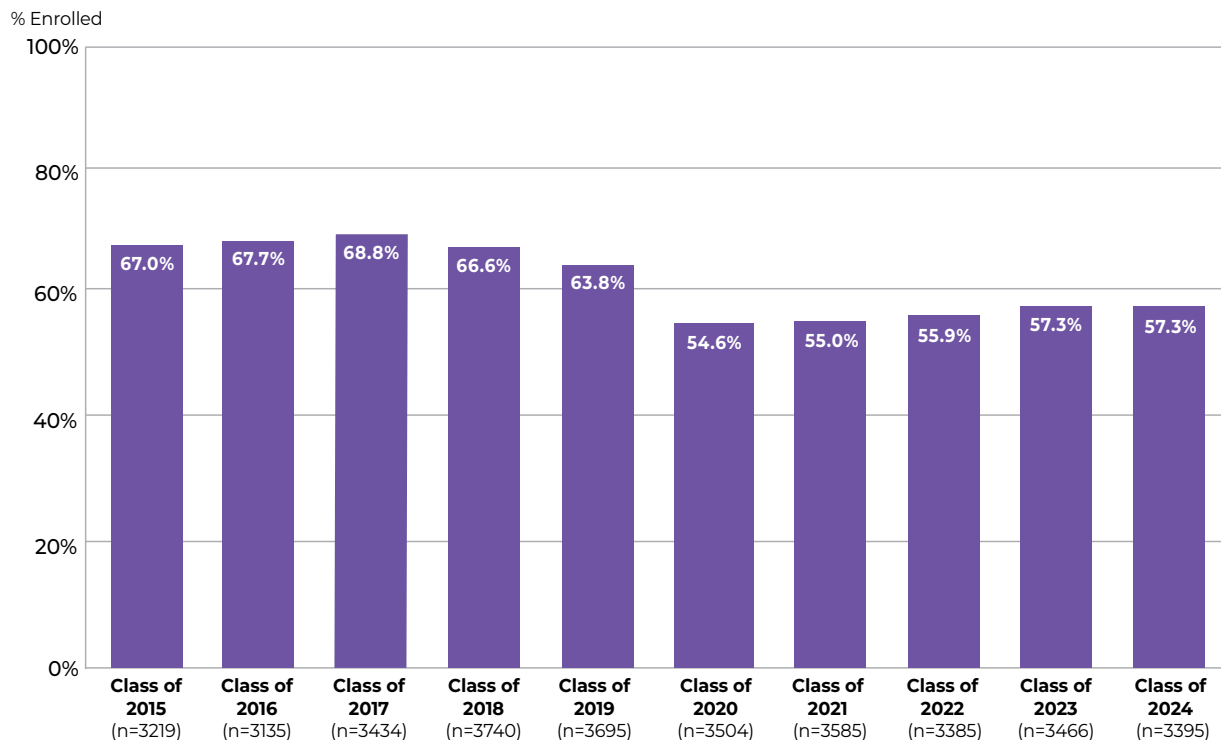
College Enrollment and Persistence Trends of BPS Graduates



This section examines trends in the first-year college enrollment rates of BPS graduating classes over the past decade. The first-year college enrollment rate is the percentage of high school graduates that enroll in a postsecondary institution during the immediate fall semester or the following winter/spring semester after graduating from high school.

Chart 1 (below) shows enrollment for the 10 BPS graduating classes between 2015 and 2024. First-year college enrollment rates of graduates ranged between 67% and 69% for the BPS Classes of 2015–2018. This continued an earlier trend with nearly two out of every three graduates enrolling in college from the BPS Class of 2009 onward. Starting with the Class of 2018, first-year college enrollment rates began to trend downward, falling from 69% for the Class of 2017 to 67% for the Class of 2018 and to 64% for the Class of 2019. Most BPS Class of 2019 graduates would have enrolled prior to school closures in March 2020, so the COVID-19 pandemic likely did not have a major impact on their first-year enrollment rate.

CHART 1
TRENDS IN FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE ENROLLMENT RATE OF BPS CLASSES OF 2015-2024



Note: n = the number of high school graduates in each class.
Source: PIC analysis of NSC records

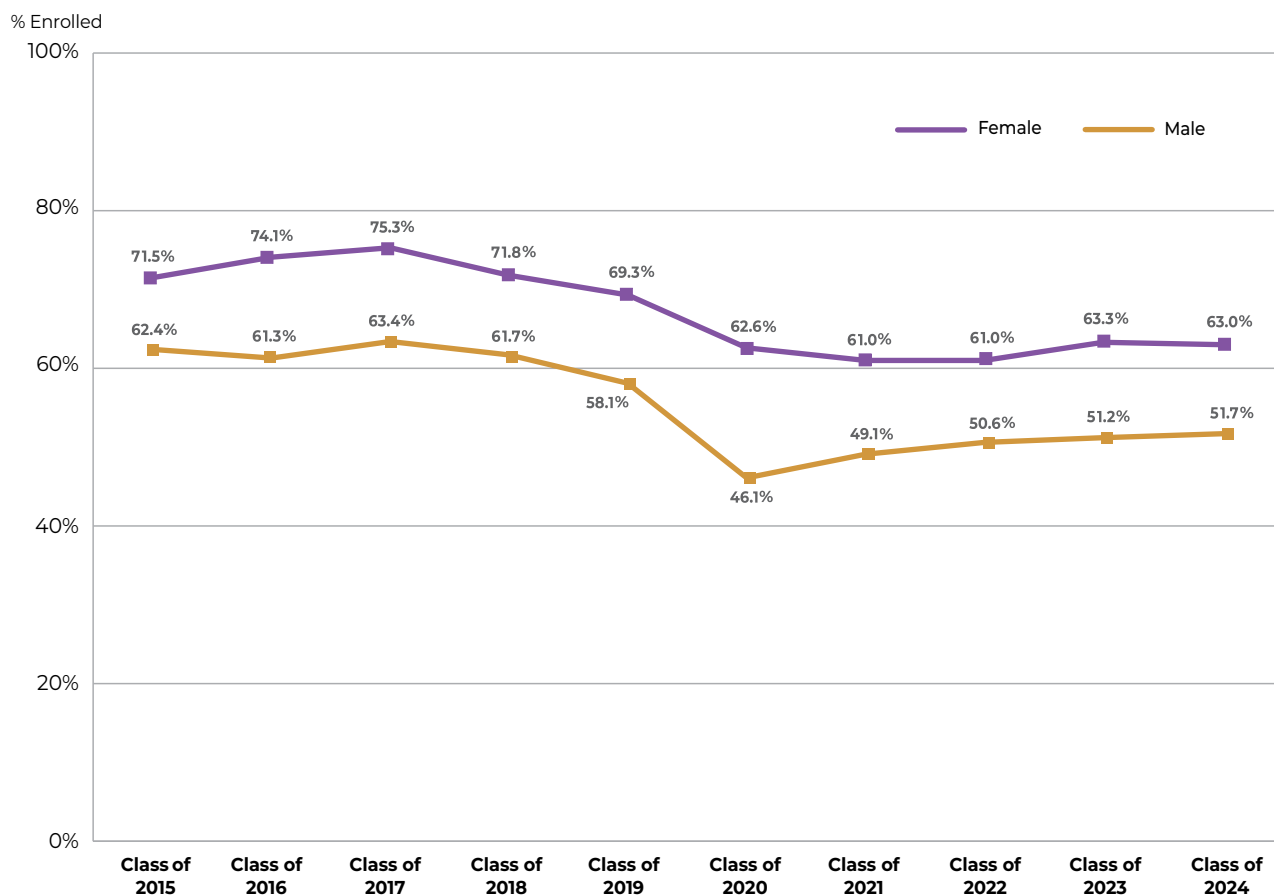
First-year enrollment rates fell more sharply to 54.6% for the BPS Class of 2020, the class that graduated from high school during the height of pandemic closures. Since reaching this pandemic low, first-year college enrollment rates have climbed back to 57% for the Classes of 2023 and 2024 (Chart 1). However, the first-year college enrollment rate remains 10 to 12 percentage points below the trend from 2015–2018. To put this decline in perspective, consider the following hypothetical scenario. If the college enrollment rate for the BPS Class of 2017 had not declined but instead held for the Class of 2024, there would have been 390 more BPS Class of 2024 graduates enrolled in college during the 2024–2025 academic year than the actual, which was 1,945.

College Enrollment Trends by Gender and Race-Ethnicity

College enrollment rates of BPS graduates vary by gender and race-ethnicity. For Class of 2024 graduates, 63% of females enrolled in college during the first year after high school compared to 52% of males. This gender gap in BPS graduates' college enrollment has been consistent over the past 10 years with the exception of widening to 16 percentage points for the Class of 2020 (**Chart 2**).

While the gender gap has been mostly consistent, Chart 2 shows that college enrollment rates for both male and female BPS graduates declined substantially over the past 10 years. First-year college

CHART 2
TRENDS IN THE FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE ENROLLMENT RATES BY GENDER, BPS CLASSES OF 2015-2024



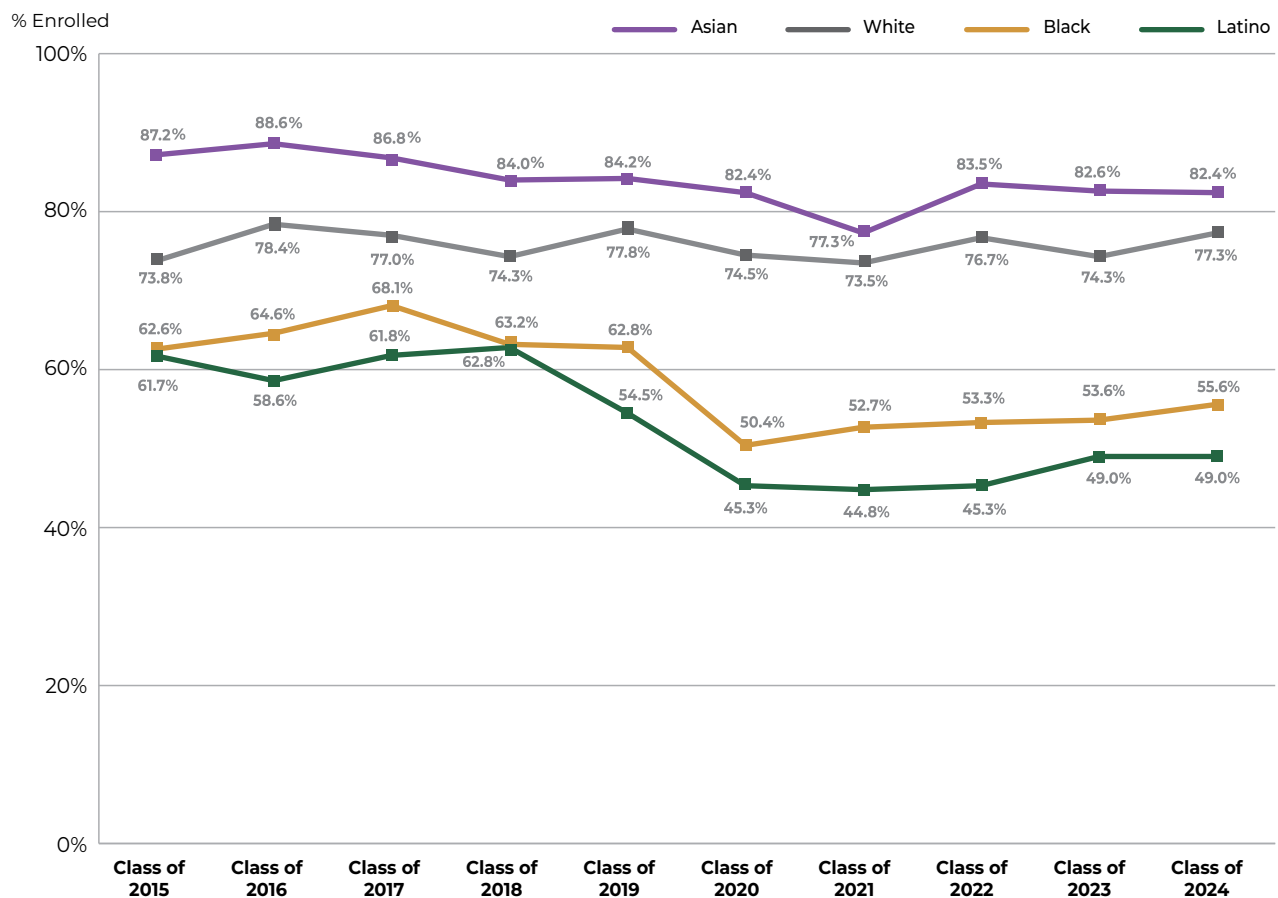
Source: PIC analysis of NSC records

enrollment rates for males fell from 63.4% for the Class of 2017 to 51.7% for the Class of 2024. Among female graduates, the first-year college enrollment rate for the Class of 2024 (63%) fell by 12 percentage points from its high point of 75.3% reached for the Class of 2017.

Chart 3 shows first-year college enrollment rates of BPS graduates by race-ethnicity. For the BPS Class of 2024, 82% of Asian graduates enrolled in college in the first-year followed by White (77.3%), Black (55.6%), and Latino (49.0%) graduates, a range of 33 percentage points from the top to bottom group.

While first-year college enrollment rates declined for all four major race-ethnic groups from the Classes of 2017 and 2018 to the Class of 2020, the reductions were steepest for Black (-18 percentage points) and Latino (-17 percentage points) graduates. First-year enrollment rates for Black and Latino graduates have risen since these lows but remain 12 percentage points below their pre-pandemic highs. Asian first-year enrollees quickly recovered from a drop for the Class of 2020 but remain 3–5 percentage points below earlier highs. The first-year college enrollment rate of White graduates has recovered to match highs prior to the pandemic. As a result, the White-Black and White-Latino college enrollment differences are higher today than for the BPS Classes of 2015–2018.

CHART 3
**TRENDS IN FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE ENROLLMENT RATES
 BY RACE-ETHNICITY, BPS CLASSES OF 2015-2024**



Source: PIC analysis of NSC records

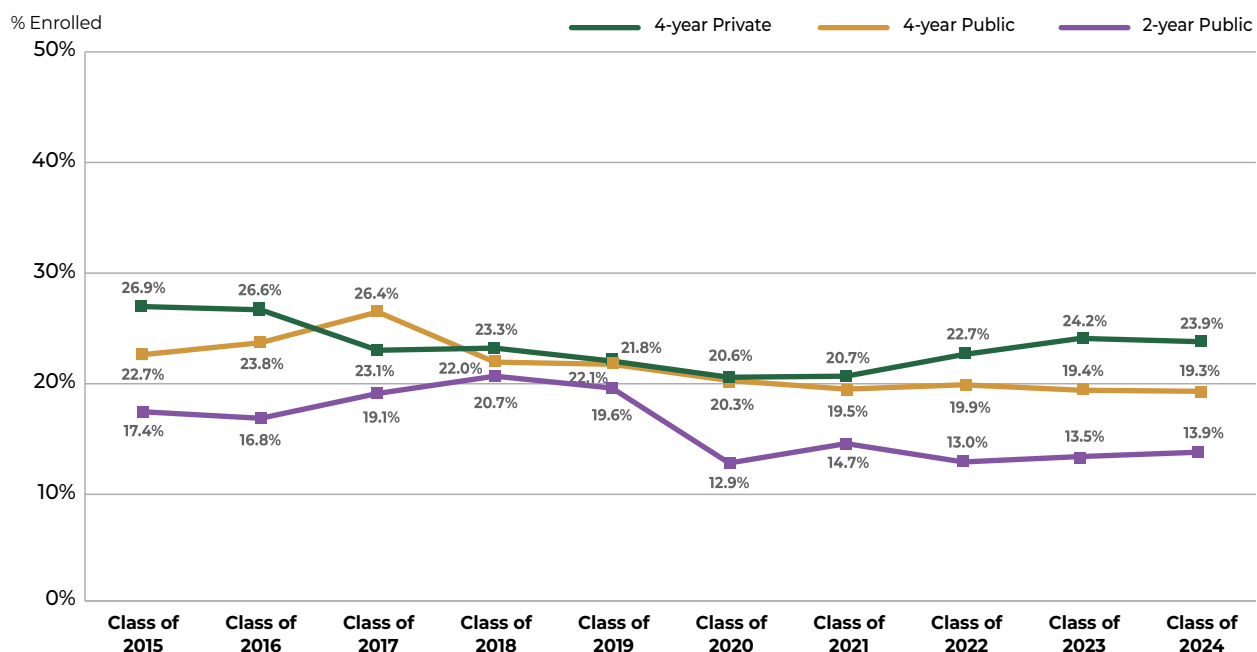
College Enrollment Trends of BPS Graduates by Type of Institution

Overall, college enrollment rates of BPS graduates have declined at each of the three major institutional sectors. Declines have been steepest at two-year and four-year public institutions, though still notable in the four-year private setting. For the BPS Classes of 2017, 2018, and 2019, approximately 20% or one in every five graduates enrolled in a two-year public institution, up from 17% for the BPS Classes of 2015 and 2016. The share attending two-year public institutions fell sharply during the pandemic and is down to 14% for the Classes of 2023 and 2024. Nationally, community college enrollment also declined during this post-pandemic period. One explanation for this is that community college enrollment tends to decline when the labor market is strong and real wages are rising, which was the environment in the initial recovery from it as employers experienced worker shortages.¹⁰

Community college enrollment tends to decline when the labor market is strong...

The share of BPS graduates attending four-year public institutions began dropping prior to the pandemic. Their percentage share appears to have stabilized at just below 20%, 2–3 percentage points below the Classes of 2018 and 2019 but substantially below the 26% share from the Class of 2017. The share of graduates attending four-year private institutions fell from 24% for the Class of 2017 to 21% for the Classes of 2020 and 2021. The share of graduates enrolled in four-year private colleges and institutions has recovered to 24%, similar to just before the pandemic.

CHART 4
**TRENDS IN FIRST-YEAR ENROLLMENT RATES
 BY TYPE OF POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS FIRST ATTENDED,
 BPS CLASSES OF 2015-2024**



Source: PIC analysis of NSC records

Community College Enrollment Trends After MassEducate Expansion

Beginning in 2023, Massachusetts launched two major initiatives to make community colleges more affordable to residents and increase enrollment in these institutions. The first initiative, MassReconnect, launched in 2023 as a tuition-free community college program for Massachusetts residents aged 25 years or older. A year later, the state announced the MassEducate program, expanding tuition-free community college to all Massachusetts residents without a bachelor's degree and allowing eligible high school graduates to enroll tuition- and fee-free at the state's community colleges.¹¹

With newly released NSC enrollment data for the fall 2025, we can track whether more BPS graduates are enrolling in community colleges following this expansion. The MassEducate expansion of free community college to all eligible graduates was announced in July 2024 after the Class of 2024 had graduated. While graduates from the Class of 2024 are eligible for the program and can still participate, they would not have known about it prior to graduating from high school. Thus, the BPS Class of 2025 is the first class whose graduates would have had the opportunity to learn about this initiative from counselors, teachers, and other advisors during their senior year of high school. To assess whether enrollment levels have changed since the launch of MassEducate, we compared the immediate fall enrollment trends for the Classes of 2023, 2024, and 2025 below in **Table 1**. This analysis is confined to immediate fall enrollment because we only have fall 2025 semester data on the Class of 2025 at the time of publication for this report.

The number and percent of BPS graduates enrolling in two-year community colleges in the immediate fall semester has not changed significantly over this three-year period. The number of BPS graduates enrolling in community college increased by only eight students from the Class of 2024 to 2025 despite the Class of 2025 being larger by 250 high school graduates. The two-year community college enrollment rate dipped slightly for the Class of 2025 to 11.1% compared to the 11.7% rate for the Classes of 2023 and 2024. Based on this analysis, we do not see net increases in BPS graduates enrolling in two-year community colleges after the launch of MassEducate. Though, it is important to note that public awareness of this initiative is still growing, and more Class of 2025 graduates may enroll in the winter/spring 2026 and subsequent semesters.

TABLE 1
**RECENT TRENDS IN THE NUMBER AND PERCENT
OF BPS GRADUATES ENROLLING IN TWO-YEAR
COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN THE IMMEDIATE FALL SEMESTER,
BPS CLASSES OF 2023-2025**

	Class of 2023	Class of 2024	Class of 2025
Fall Enrollees at MA Community Colleges	407	399	407
Number of BPS Graduates	3,466	3,403	3,654
Community College Enrollment Rate	11.7%	11.7%	11.1%

Source: PIC analysis of NSC records

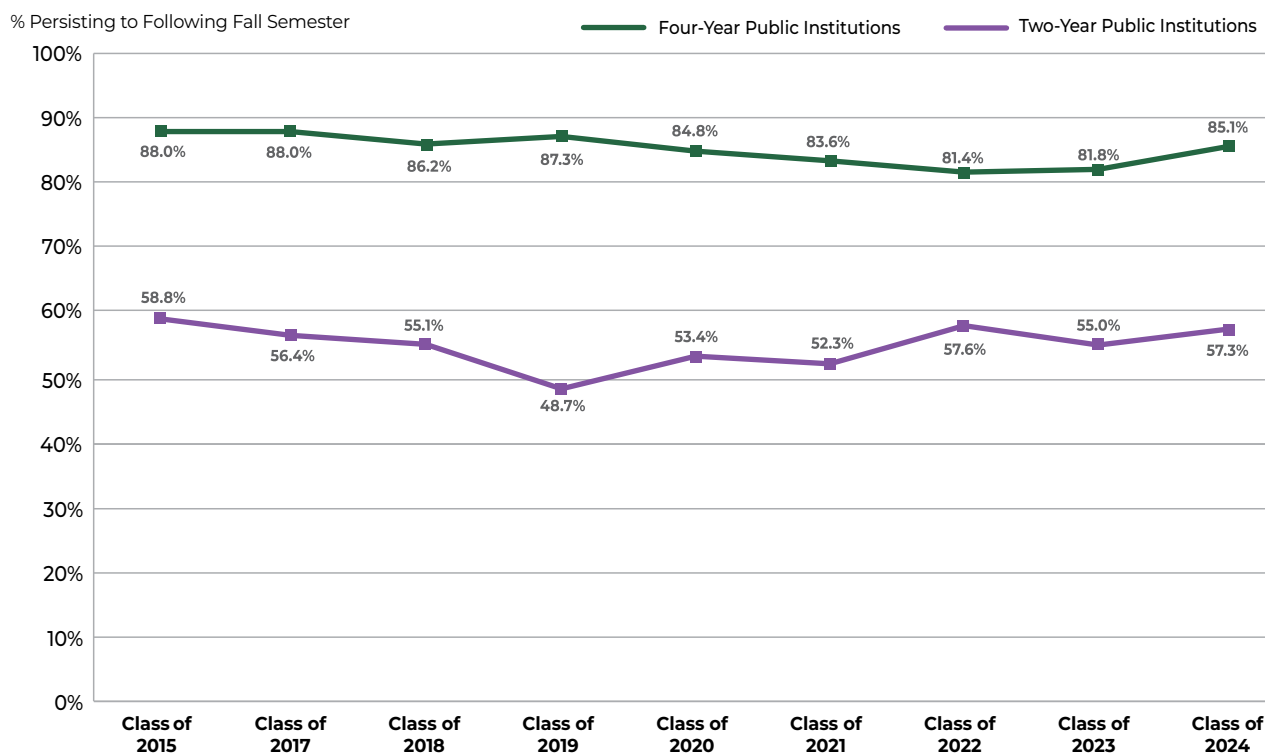
College Persistence: Trends in One-Year Persistence

College persistence is an important measure of college readiness and a leading indicator for anticipated college completion. This section presents one-year persistence rates for immediate fall enrollees by type of institution first attended. A student is considered to be “persisting” for one year if they are still enrolled in any college in the following fall or had obtained a college degree or certificate by the fall. For example, a student who graduates in June 2019, immediately enrolls in college in the fall 2019 semester, *and* reenrolls in fall 2020 at any institution would be counted as persisting for one year. In this fall-to-fall definition, their spring enrollment behavior is not factored into the persistence analysis.

One-year persistence rates for BPS graduates first enrolling in two-year public institutions were trending downward between 2015 and 2018 and fell sharply to 49% for the Class of 2019 (**Chart 5**). One-year persistence rates of those first enrolling in two-year public institutions have trended back upward since 2020 and are near recent 10-year highs. The one-year college persistence rate of Class of 2024 graduates first enrolling in two-year public institutions is 57.3%.

For BPS graduates enrolling in four-year public institutions in the immediate fall after graduation, one-year persistence rates have also climbed in recent years, rising from lows of 81–82% for the Classes of 2022 and 2023 to 85% for the Class of 2024. However, this 85% one-year persistence rate for BPS enrollees at four-year public institutions remains below the trend for 2015–2018, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

CHART 5
TRENDS IN ONE-YEAR COLLEGE PERSISTENCE RATES OF IMMEDIATE FALL ENROLLEES BY FIRST COLLEGE TYPE ATTENDED, BPS CLASSES OF 2015-2024



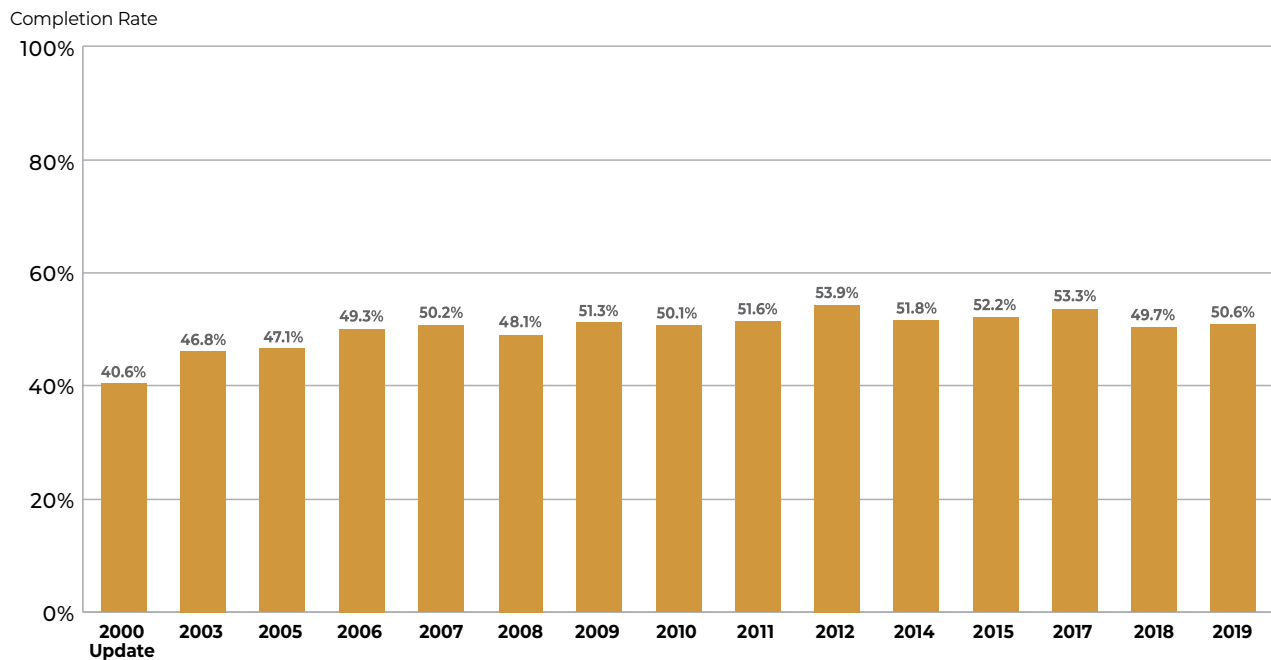
Source: PIC analysis of NSC records

College Completion Experiences of BPS Graduates

In partnership with the Boston Public Schools (BPS), the Boston Private Industry Council (PIC) and the former Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University first began using the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to track the college enrollment and completion experiences of the BPS Class of 2000. The first study released by the Boston Foundation in 2008, *Getting to the Finish Line*, found that only 35% (later revised to 39%) of college enrollees from the BPS Class of 2000 had completed a degree within seven years of high school.¹² The findings led to the launch of Success Boston, the city’s college completion initiative, and the goal to double the college completion rate to 70%. In May 2022, Success Boston and 15 higher education institutions re-committed to a 70% college completion target for all demographic groups that enroll in college.¹³

This section analyzes the progress made toward that aspirational goal—overall and for major demographic groups, specifically for those graduates enrolling in a college or university. The trends in the six-year college completion rates for first-year enrollees from BPS graduating classes are displayed in **Chart 6**. A student is considered a college completer if they earned a certificate, associate degree, or bachelor’s degree during the six-year period following high school graduation. First-year enrollees are the cohort tracked for measuring six-year completion because they would have had approximately six

CHART 6
TRENDS IN THE SIX-YEAR COLLEGE COMPLETION RATE OF FIRST-YEAR ENROLLEES, SELECTED BPS CLASSES, 2000–2019



Sources: (i) Getting Closer to the Finish Line (2013); (ii) PIC analysis of NSC data for the Classes of 2007-2019

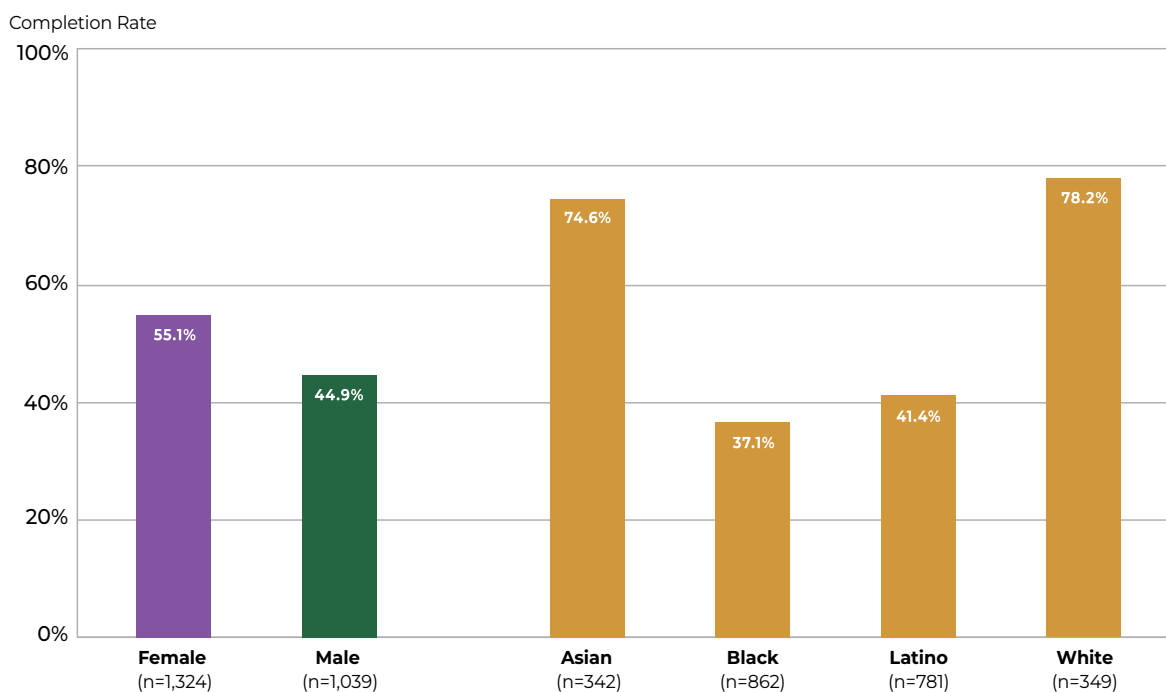
years to complete from their point of initial enrollment in a college or university. Appendix B displays six-year completion rates for BPS graduates from the Classes of 2017–2019 who enrolled in a postsecondary institution within a year of high school.

The BPS Class of 2000 was the first high school class tracked using the NSC database and serves as the baseline for Success Boston’s college completion goals. The six-year completion rate of first-year college enrollees from the Class of 2000 was 40.6%.¹⁴ The college completion rates of first-year enrollees increased 6 percentage points to 46.8% for the Class of 2003 and continued to rise to a range of 48–50% for the Classes of 2006–2008. The Class of 2009, the class with a 52% six-year completion rate goal target, reached a 51.3% completion rate. College completion rates have hovered in the 52–54% range for the Classes of 2011–2017. For the Classes of 2018 and 2019, college completion rates dipped slightly below this trend to 49.7% and 50.6%, respectively. The COVID-19 pandemic closures in spring 2020 would have interrupted these graduates’ first and second years of college, and likely were a factor in the slight decline in six-year college completion rates.

College Completion Experiences of BPS Class of 2019 Graduates by Gender, Race-Ethnicity, and Selected Student Populations

This section analyzes six-year college completion rates by student subgroup. The analysis is for the BPS Class of 2019, which is the most recent class year with six years of postsecondary data available. Consistent with trends from the past decade, the gender gap in college completion of first-year enrollees was substantial for the Class of 2019 (**Chart 7**). Beginning with the initial study on the BPS Class of 2000,

CHART 7
SIX-YEAR COLLEGE COMPLETION RATES OF FIRST-YEAR ENROLLEES BY GENDER AND RACE-ETHNIC GROUP, BPS CLASS OF 2019



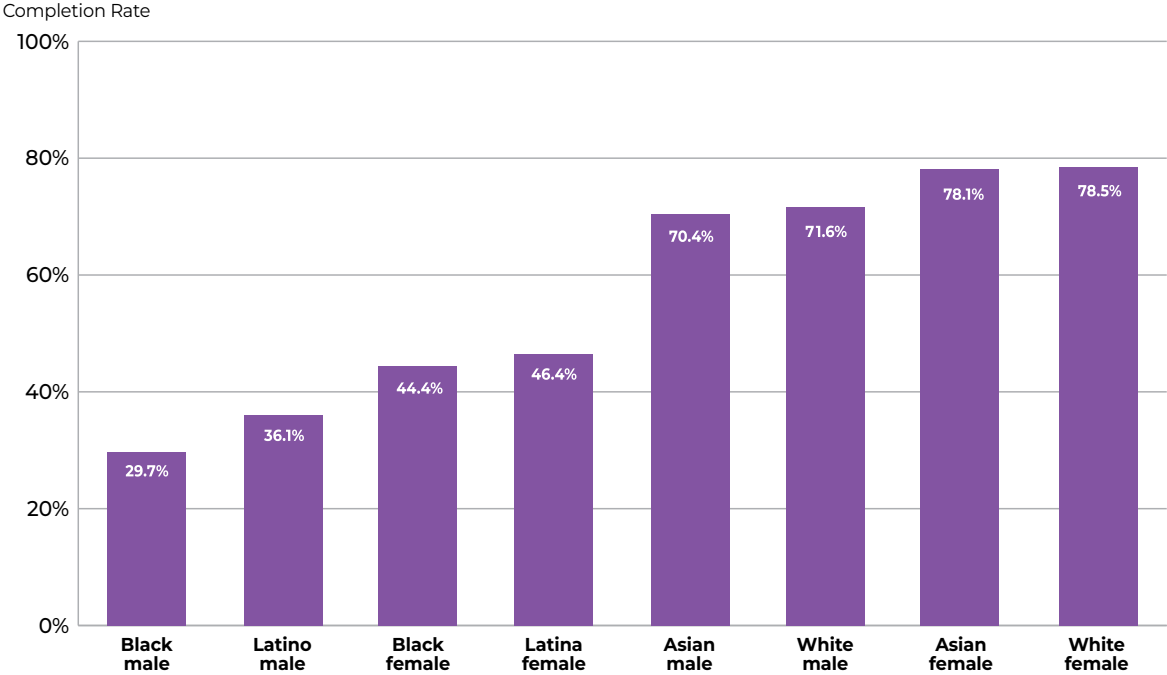
Source: PIC analysis of NSC records

female enrollees have been completing college credentials at higher rates than males. The college completion rate of Class of 2019 female first-year enrollees was 55.1% compared to 44.9% for males, a difference of 10.2 percentage points. These differences in both college enrollment and completion rates translate to 285 more female college graduates than male college graduates from the Class of 2019.

Previous postsecondary longitudinal research from the Boston Private Industry Council has also found large differences in college completion rates of BPS graduates across race-ethnicity.¹⁵ A similar pattern persists for the Class of 2019. Six-year college completion rates for first-year enrollees from Class of 2019 ranged from highs of 78.2% and 75.6% among White and Asian first-year enrollees to 41.4% and 37.1% among Latino and Black first-year enrollees, a 41 percentage point difference from highest to lowest (Chart 7).

Chart 8 displays college completion rates of first-year enrollees for eight gender/race-ethnic subgroups for the Classes of 2018 and 2019 combined, ranked from lowest to highest. Two-year averages were used to smooth out annual fluctuations due to smaller cohort sizes at this level of disaggregation. White and Asian males and females had the four highest college completion rates, with each of these four gender-race-ethnic subgroups meeting or exceeding 70%. Black and Latina females had six-year college completion rates of 44% and 46%, respectively. The six-year completion rate of Black and Latino males from the Classes of 2018 and 2019 were 30% and 36%, respectively. Females graduated from college at higher rates than males within each race-ethnic group, with the gap between Black females and males being the largest at nearly 15 percentage points.

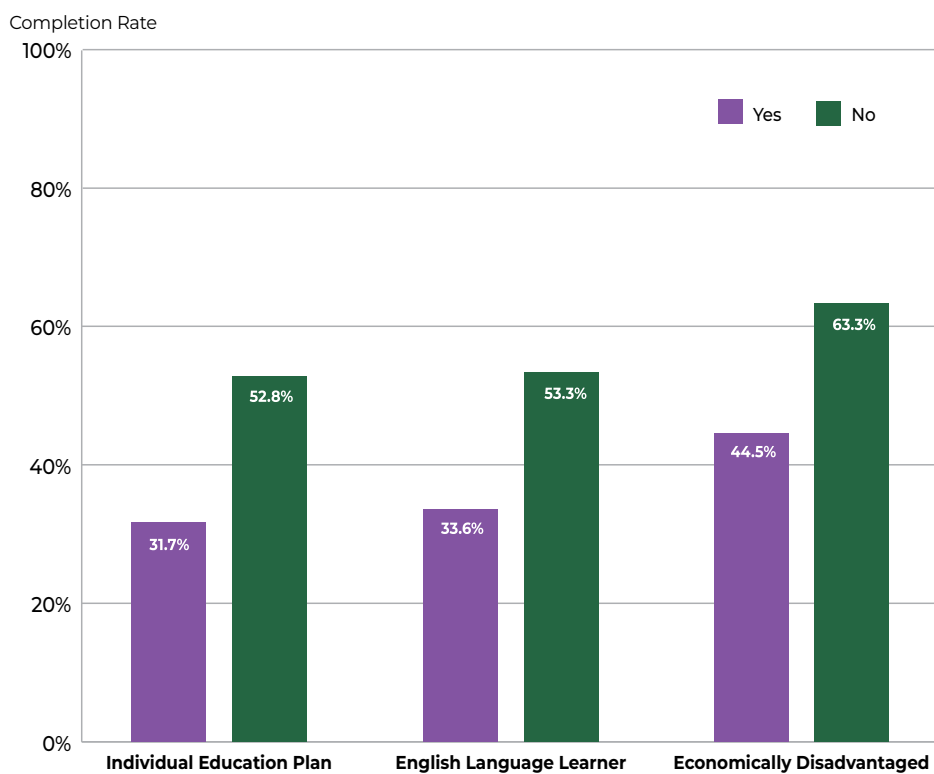
CHART 8
SIX-YEAR COLLEGE COMPLETION RATES BY GENDER AND RACE-ETHNIC SUBGROUP, BPS CLASSES OF 2018 AND 2019



Source: PIC analysis of NSC records

Six-year college completion rates also vary across other student characteristics. **Chart 9** displays college completion rates for BPS Class of 2019 first-year enrollees for students with or without a disability as measured by having an individual education plan (IEP), and by English language learner (ELL) and economically disadvantaged statuses.¹⁶ First-year enrollees who had an IEP in high school had a six-year college completion rate of 31.7% compared to 52.8% for their peers who did not have one. Approximately 34% of first-year enrollees who were ELL in high school completed a college credential compared to 53.3% of those that were non-ELL. Lastly, researchers have found that students' family income status in high school is a strong predictor of not only college enrollment, but also completion outcomes.¹⁷ Among Class of 2019 first-year enrollees, those who were economically disadvantaged in high school had a six-year college completion rate of 45% versus 63% for their more affluent peers (Chart 9).

CHART 9
**SIX-YEAR COLLEGE COMPLETION RATES OF BPS CLASS OF 2019
 FIRST-YEAR ENROLLEES BY SELECTED STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS**



Source: PIC analysis of NSC records

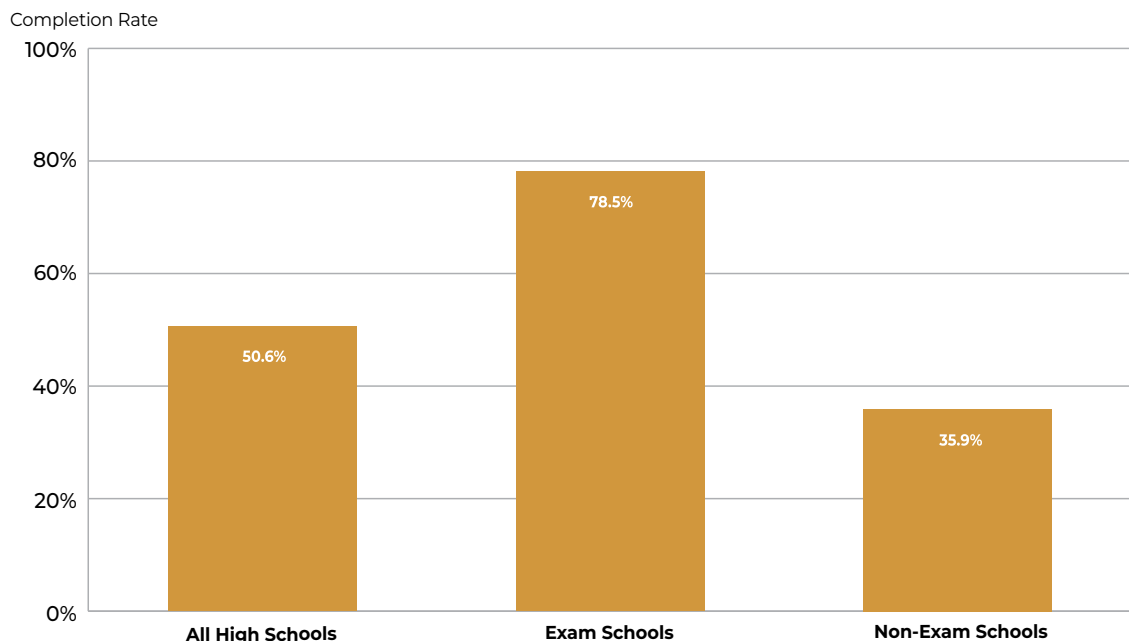
College Completion by Type of High School

BPS has three exam schools that accept students in the 7th and 9th grades. The exam schools have a competitive admissions process. To be eligible for consideration, students must have at least a “B” grade point average and take the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment.¹⁸ Previous research studies on the college completion outcomes of BPS graduates have disaggregated the findings for high schools into two categories: exam and non-exam high schools.¹⁹ These studies have found substantial

differences in the college enrollment and completion experiences of exam high school graduates and their peers from non-exam high schools. Given that the exam schools have selective academic admission requirements, it is expected that students from these high schools would enroll in and graduate from college at higher rates, on average, than their peers from non-exam high schools. The findings in this section are not intended for evaluating the comparative effectiveness of exam and non-exam high schools in preparing students for postsecondary education as students' academic backgrounds prior to high school will influence these outcomes.

Exam school graduates from the BPS Class of 2019 continued to fare well in terms of completing college. For the Class of 2019, college completion of first-year enrollees from exam high schools was 78.5%, more than double the completion rate of 35.9% for first-year enrollees from all other high schools or non-exam high schools (**Chart 10**). These differences in completion rates have held steady over the past several years.²⁰

CHART 10
**SIX-YEAR COLLEGE COMPLETION RATES BY HIGH SCHOOL TYPE,
BPS CLASS OF 2019**



Source: PIC analysis of NSC records

Given the differences in college completion outcomes across types of high school, we disaggregated further to look at how gender and race-ethnic groups fared within each high school type for the BPS Class of 2019. The results are in **Table 2** (next page).

Nearly 83% of female first-year enrollees from BPS exam high schools completed college compared to 73% of males from exam schools, a gender gap of 10 percentage points and similar to the districtwide gap. White and Asian first-year enrollees from exam schools both had college completion rates of 86%. Six-year college completion rates of Black and Latino first-year enrollees from exam high schools were

TABLE 2
**SIX-YEAR COLLEGE COMPLETION OUTCOMES OF
 BPS CLASS OF 2019 FIRST-YEAR ENROLLEES BY HIGH SCHOOL
 TYPE, GENDER, AND RACE-ETHNICITY**

Type of High School, Gender, and Race-Ethnicity	First-Year Enrollees	College Completers	Six-Year College Completion Rate
Exam Schools			
All	815	640	78.5%
Female	465	384	82.6%
Male	350	256	73.1%
Asian	219	189	86.3%
Black	158	98	62.0%
Latino	154	108	70.1%
White	264	227	86.0%
Non-Exam Schools			
All	1548	555	35.9%
Female	859	345	40.2%
Male	689	210	30.5%
Asian	123	66	53.7%
Black	704	222	31.5%
Latino	627	215	34.3%
White	85	46	54.1%

Source: PIC analysis of NSC records

62% and 70%. The race-ethnic gaps in college completion of enrollees are narrower within BPS exam schools than shown earlier for all first-year enrollees regardless of high school type.

Six-year college completion rates for non-exam high school graduates by gender and race-ethnicity appear at the bottom of Table 2. Of the female non-exam graduates who enrolled in college during the year after high school, 40.2% completed a postsecondary certificate or degree. The six-year college completion rate of males from non-exam school was 30.5%. Across race-ethnicity, six-year college completion rates of non-exam first-year enrollees range from 32% and 34% for Black and Latino first-year enrollees, respectively, to 54% each for White and Asian first-year enrollees.

College Completion by Type of College Attended

Nationally, and in Massachusetts, college completion rates vary considerably by level of postsecondary institution. Two-year public colleges, which have open admissions policies and serve a high share of economically disadvantaged students, typically have lower college completion rates than four-year public and private institutions. This section describes how BPS Class of 2019 first-year college enrollees fare at different types of institutions. Similar to the analysis of high school types, this disaggregation is not intended to compare effectiveness of two-year, four-year public, and four-year private colleges and universities. The demographic characteristics, academic backgrounds, and motivations of BPS

College completion rates were substantially higher for those BPS graduates first enrolling in four-year public and private institutions during the year after high school.

graduates will differ across institution types. These background characteristics independently influence the graduation rates of students at these types of institutions.²¹ However, understanding the differences in college completion rates of BPS graduates by type of college is critical for unpacking the aggregate results and for assessing progress toward citywide college completion goals.

The college completion rate analysis below is based on the type of institution that BPS Class of 2019 graduates first attended. For example, if a BPS graduate started at a two-year community college but transferred to a four-year institution before earning a degree at the

two-year public institution and later graduated from the four-year institution within six years, then the student would count as a college completer in the two-year public category. Thus, a completion is “awarded” to the first institution type attended by a student. The NSC also uses this approach when disaggregating completion rates by level of institution. The intent of this is to acknowledge the roles played by the first institution, often a two-year college, in preparing students to transfer and complete degrees at another institution.

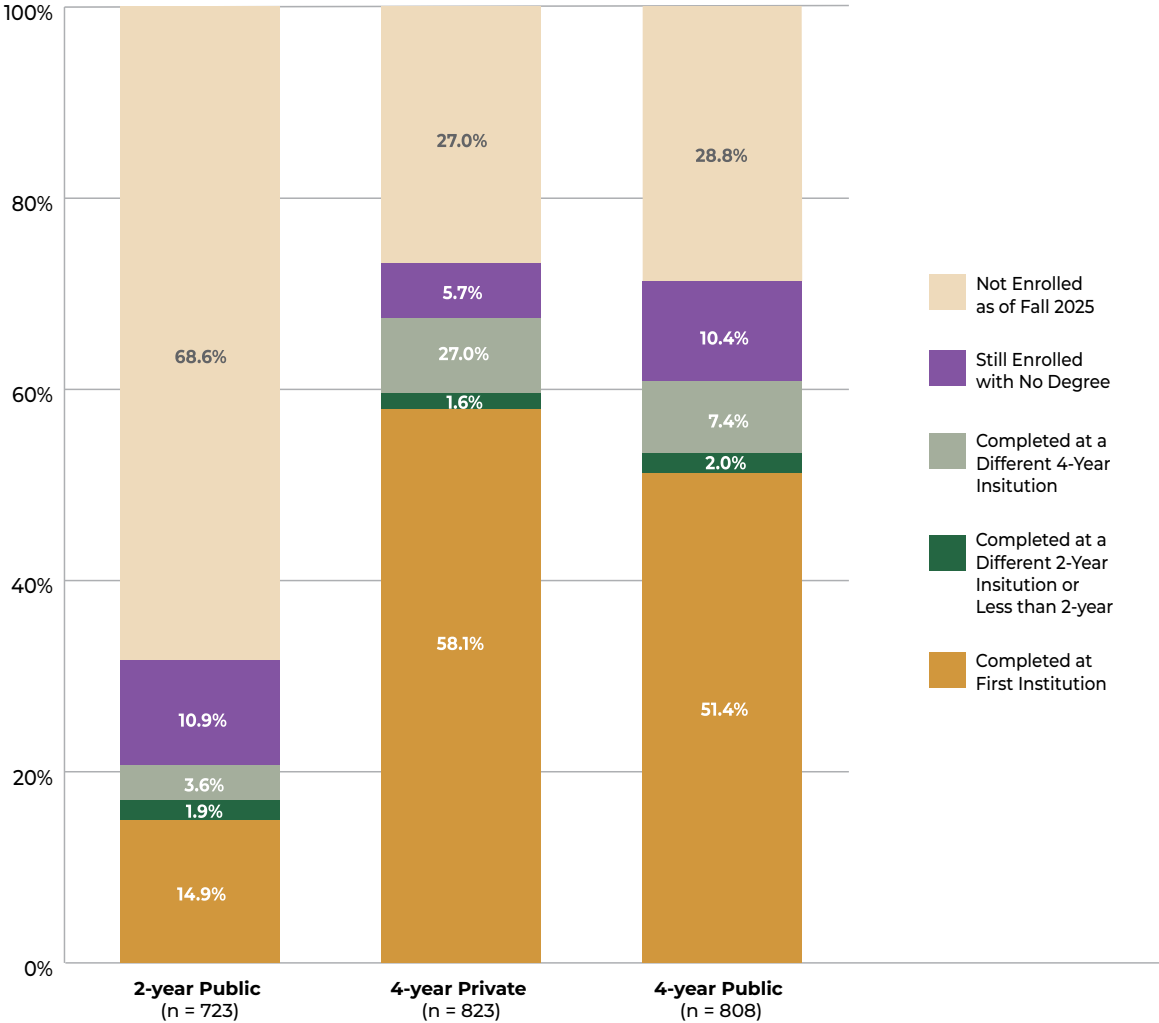
Chart 11 displays six-year college completion outcomes of first-year enrollees from the BPS Class of 2019 by type of college. For first-year enrollees attending two-year public institutions, 15% graduated from the institution that they started at, another 2% transferred and completed at a different two-year or less than two-year public institution, and nearly 4% transferred and completed at four-year college or university. The combined six-year college completion rate for first-year enrollees that started at a two-year public institution was 20.6%.

College completion rates were substantially higher for those BPS graduates first enrolling in four-year public and private institutions during the year after high school. For the BPS Class of 2019, 51% of first-year enrollees who enrolled in a four-year public institution completed a credential at that college, another 2% graduated from a different two-year or less than two-year institution, and 7% graduated from a different four-year institution than the one they started at. Combined, 60% of those that first enrolled in a four-year public institution earned a credential or degree at any institution within six years. Six-year college completion rates were highest for those that started at four-year private institutions, with 58.6%

graduating from their first institution, 1.6% graduating from a two-year public or less than two-year institution, and 7.6% completing at another four-year institution. The combined six-year college completion rate for BPS graduates starting at four-year private institutions was 67.3%.

Chart 11 also shows the percentages of BPS enrollees who had not yet completed and were still enrolled as of the fall 2025 semester. At two-year public and four-year public institutions, there were, respectively, 10% and 11% of first-year enrollees who were still enrolled in fall 2025 and working toward their first credential or degree. The share was 6% at four-year private institutions. Altogether, there were 211 BPS Class of 2019 graduates still enrolled without a credential. If they complete credentials, they will boost the overall college completion rate of their class.

CHART 11
**SIX-YEAR COLLEGE COMPLETION RATES OF BPS CLASS OF 2019
 FIRST-YEAR ENROLLEES BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION FIRST ATTENDED**



Note: n= Number of BPS Class of 2019 first-year enrollees at each institution type.
 Source: PIC analysis of NSC records

National Comparisons: BPS College Completion Rates and U.S. Completion Rates



To provide additional context on the college completion experiences of enrollees from BPS graduating classes, we analyzed national data available from the NSC. In the *Yearly Progress and Completion* report, the NSC's research center publishes college completion trends for national fall semester cohorts of college enrollees overall, by demographic group, and by type of college.²² A second report, *High School Benchmarks*, allows researchers to compare findings for individual school districts with those of similar high school types. This section utilizes these national reports to compare college completion outcomes of BPS graduates to two national cohorts:

- i) Fall 2019 semester enrollees, under 21 years of age, who were starting college for the first time in fall 2019.
- ii) Classes of 2017 and 2018 high school graduates from public, non-charter high schools in urban cities.

The six-year college completion rates of immediate fall enrollees from the BPS Class of 2019 are compared to a national cohort of under-21-year-old first-time, fall enrollees in **Chart 12**. Of course, this comparison is

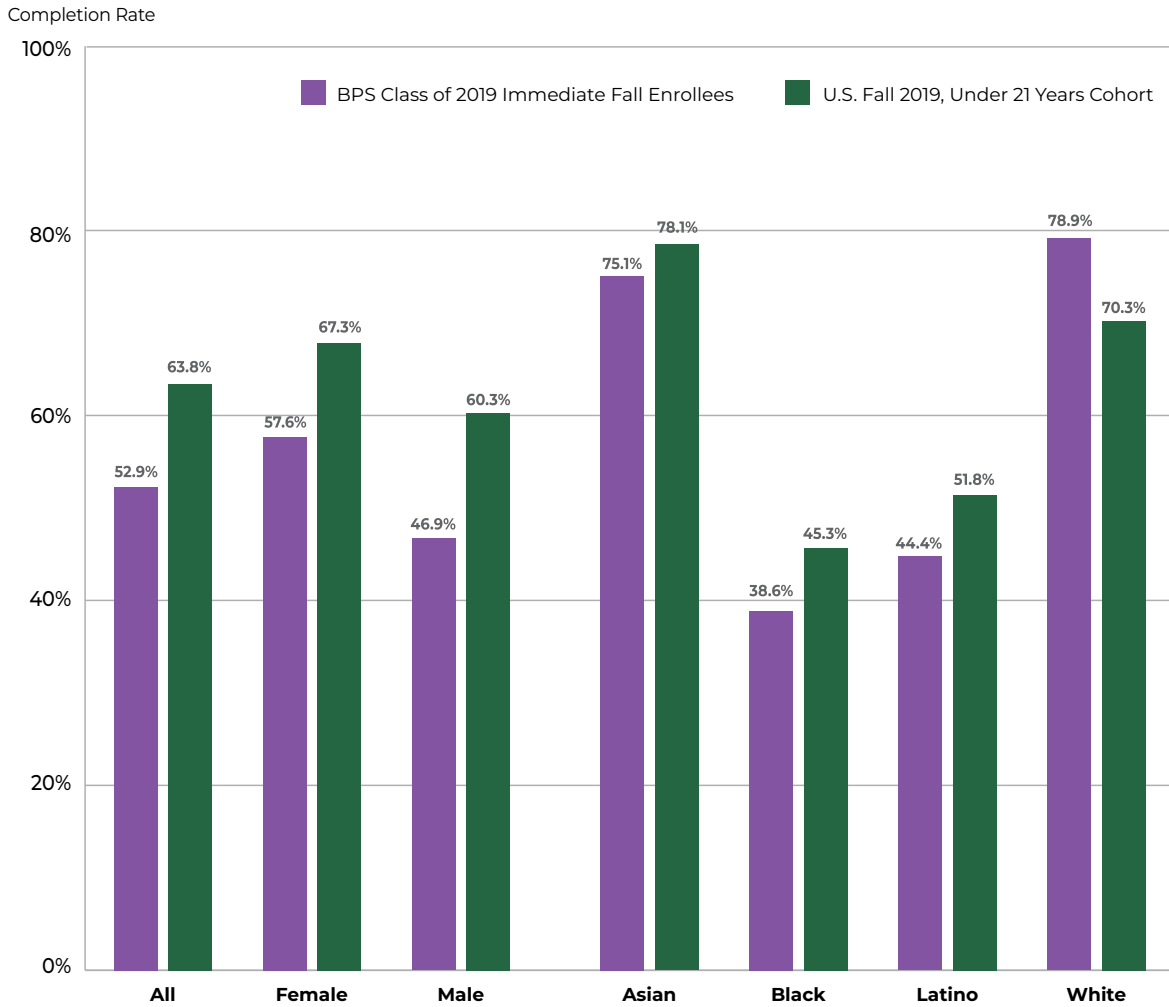
BPS is more racially diverse and has a much higher share of low-income students, English language learners, and first-generation college students than the full national cohort of college enrollees starting college in fall 2019 for the first time.

not intended to be an “apples to apples” comparison. BPS, like other central city school districts, is more racially diverse and has a much higher share of low-income students, English language learners, and first-generation college students than the full national cohort of college enrollees starting college in fall 2019 for the first time.

BPS graduates who enrolled in college in the immediate fall have lower six-year college completion rates than the national average for first-time fall enrollees. The six-year college completion rate of immediate fall enrollees from the BPS Class of 2019 is 52.9% (slightly higher than that for first-year enrollees presented in earlier sections). The national cohort of fall 2019 enrollees under 21 years old had a 63.8% six-year college completion rate, more than 10 percentage points higher than the BPS class cohort.

CHART 12

COMPARISON OF SIX-YEAR COLLEGE COMPLETION RATES OF BPS FIRST-TIME, FALL COLLEGE ENROLLEES TO THE NATIONAL COHORT OF FIRST-TIME, FALL ENROLLEES, UNDER 21 YEARS OF AGE, FALL 2019 COHORTS



Source: National Student Clearinghouse

The gender and race-ethnic differences in BPS college completion rates tend to mirror the national trends. Nationally, females also have high college completion rates compared to males (67.3% vs. 60.3%). Female BPS enrollees trailed their national counterparts by 10 percentage points and male BPS enrollees were 13 percentage points below the national average for males (Chart 12).

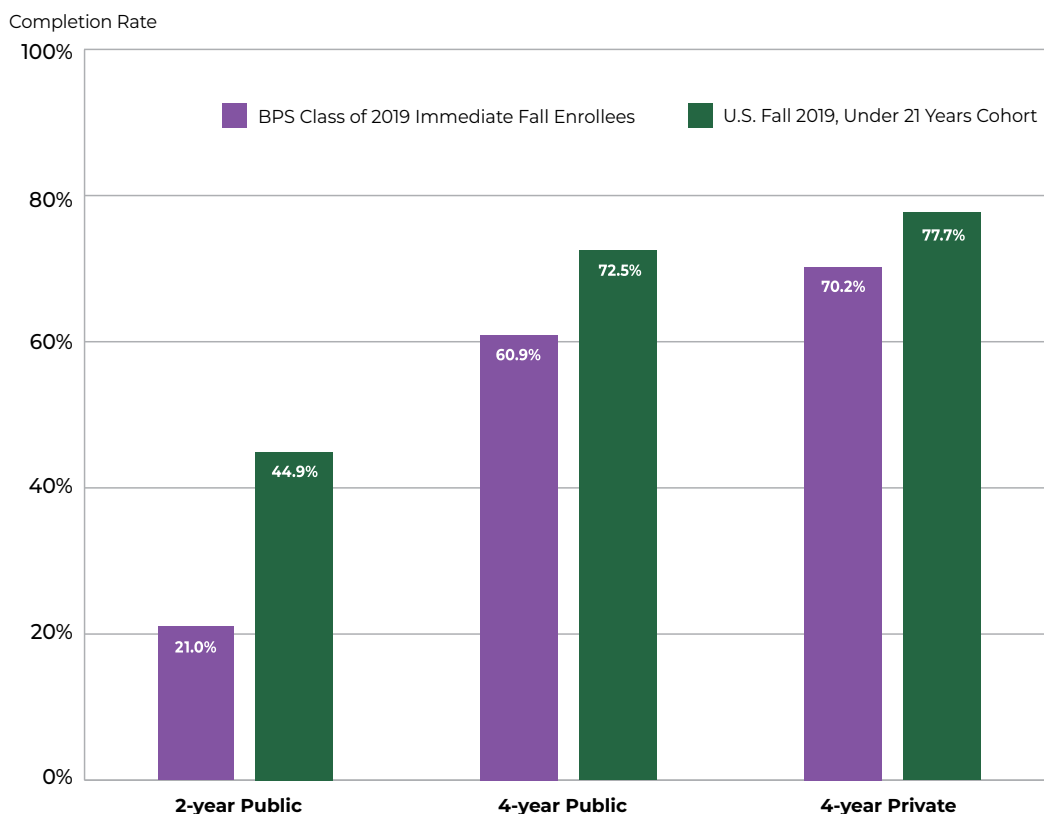
Six-year college completion rates also vary widely by race-ethnicity for the nation’s fall 2019 cohort, ranging from highs of 78.1% and 70.3% for Asian and White enrollees to 51.3% and 45.3% of Latino and Black fall 2019 college enrollees. For the nation’s fall 2019 cohort, Black and Latino college enrollees completed college at rates that were 25 to 30 percentage points below their Asian and White peers. These race-ethnic differences in college completion rates are similar to those of BPS graduates. When

comparing immediate fall enrollees from the BPS Class of 2019 to national averages for the four major race-ethnic groups, White BPS graduates, who are heavily concentrated in the district's exam high schools, were the only group to outperform the national average (78.9% to 70.3%) and Asian BPS graduates came within 3 percentage points of their national average. Black and Latino BPS graduates trailed the national averages for Black and Latino students by 6 to 9 percentage points.

Chart 13 shows the national comparison of college completion rates for the three types of postsecondary institutions that most BPS graduates attend. Among two-year public college fall enrollees, the college completion rate of BPS graduates is substantially lower than the national average. Nationally, 45% of first-time, two-year public college enrollees graduated from some type of college in six years versus 21% of immediate fall enrollees from the BPS Class of 2019, a difference of 24 percentage points.

BPS Class of 2019 fall enrollees attending four-year public colleges trailed their national peers by 11.5 percentage points in college completion (72.5% vs. 60.9%). Although college completion rates for BPS immediate fall enrollees from Class of 2019 are highest at four-year private institutions, they trailed the national average by 7 percentage points (77.7% vs. 70.2%) for first-time, under-21-year-old enrollees.

CHART 13
SIX-YEAR COLLEGE COMPLETION RATES OF BPS CLASS OF 2019 FALL ENROLLEES BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION COMPARED TO U.S. AVERAGES FOR FIRST-TIME, FALL 2019 ENROLLEES (UNDER 21 YEARS OF AGE)



Source: National Student Clearinghouse

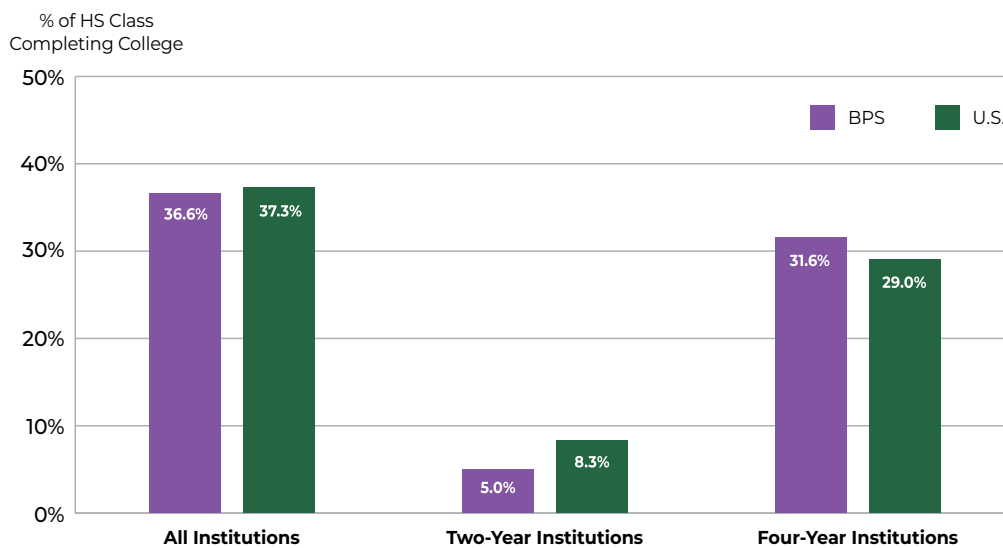
The second comparison of college completion to national averages analyzes the percentage of a high school class earning a degree within six years of high school, including all graduates whether or not they ever enrolled in college. The NSC prepares a *High School Benchmarks* report for school districts to utilize to assess how well their graduates are faring in transitioning to and completing college relative to national comparisons.²³ In September 2025, the NSC published updated six-year college completion rates for high school graduates from the Classes of 2017 and 2018. College completion benchmarks are available for several different types of high schools.

Overall, 37% of BPS graduates from the Classes of 2017 and 2018 combined have earned a college credential within six years, tied with the credential attainment rate of national peers.

Chart 14 compares six-year college completion rates for the nation's classes of 2017 and 2018 graduates from public, non-charter, and urban city high schools to that of the BPS Classes of 2017 and 2018 combined.

Overall, 37% of BPS graduates from the Classes of 2017 and 2018 combined have earned a college credential within six years, tied with the credential attainment rate of national peers. The share of BPS graduates earning a credential from a four-year institution exceeded the national rate: 31.6% to 29%, respectively. The share of BPS graduates completing a credential at a two-year institution was 5%, below the national average of 8%. Overall, the six-year college completion experiences of BPS graduates from the Classes of 2017 and 2018 are similar to national peers from public, non-charter, and urban city high schools across the U.S.

CHART 14
SIX-YEAR COLLEGE CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT RATES OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES FROM THE CLASSES OF 2017 AND 2018: BPS CLASSES AND U.S. AVERAGE FOR PUBLIC, URBAN CITY HIGH SCHOOLS



Source: National Student Clearinghouse

Discussion: Current Strategies and Implications for Future Policy and Practice



he previous section revealed that the differences in college enrollment and completion rates of BPS graduates across student subpopulations and type of college attended are similar to national trends. Across the country, education leaders and policymakers are implementing reforms to improve college enrollment and completion outcomes and close longstanding demographic and socioeconomic disparities. This is also the case for Boston Public Schools and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Several of the local and statewide initiatives designed to improve college access and success are described in this section.

Boston Public Schools has established a “Vision of a Graduate” with key elements of how graduates will be prepared for education after high school and achieve success in life. The vision articulates that BPS graduates will have the academic knowledge to engage in rigorous coursework and an understanding of college and career pathways and the skills needed to pursue them.²⁴ The vision focuses on not only academic skill development, but on improving socio-emotional and life skills.

The district’s Office of College, Career and Life Readiness leads a set of strategies to achieve this vision. These include expansion of the district’s My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP) curriculum to ensure high school students learn about college and career pathways and seniors graduate with their own postsecondary plan. BPS has launched new Early College pathways and increased dual enrollment programs with college partners to provide more high school students with opportunities to access college-level coursework. The Early College expansion is especially timely as college enrollment rates of BPS graduates fell sharply during the pandemic, as described in earlier sections of this report. Based on the findings from a new study on how high schools affect long-term outcomes, these efforts to boost academic skills, teach socio-emotional skills, and raise college aspirations are research-proven strategies to increase not only college completion but labor market earnings outcomes in the long term.²⁵

As part of the New Skills Boston initiative, BPS and its partners have been working to implement “seamless advising,” a strategy to improve students’ transition from high school into college and/or the workforce. BPS has embarked on several approaches to help seniors and recent graduates access college support services and workforce training opportunities. These include efforts to boost FAFSA completion and connect graduates attending local colleges with nonprofit and community-based partners that provide college coaching and advising. In partnership with the Boston Private Industry Council, the city’s MassHire Workforce Board, the district is also supporting seniors and recent graduates who plan to pursue non-college training options by connecting them with MassHire career center services and training programs.

Success Boston, convened by Opportunity Boston, continues to organize two communities of practice: one of postsecondary coaches and advisors from nonprofit organizations, high schools, and colleges across the city, and another of local higher education institutions. In January 2026, Opportunity Boston convened a forum with over 50 participants from higher education institutions to better understand current enrollment and completion data trends following the pandemic. In addition, several local colleges and universities have strengthened partnerships with the city's public high schools to improve access and success in college. These include, but are not limited to, UMass Boston's and Bunker Hill Community College's Future Beacons Joint Admissions program, Northeastern University's Valedictorian Scholarships and Foundation Year programs, Boston College's Messina College, and early college program expansions at UMass Boston, Wentworth Institute of Technology, Bunker Hill Community College, Roxbury Community College, and Benjamin Franklin Cummings Institute of Technology.

The Commonwealth has also pursued several strategies to boost college access and persistence. In 2021, Massachusetts created the SUCCESS Fund to provide more wraparound supports and services to community college students and recently expanded funding to increase student support services at four-year public colleges. As described in earlier sections of this report, Massachusetts launched two major initiatives, MassReconnect and MassEducate, to make community college free to residents and increase enrollment in these institutions. The state also expanded financial aid resources to make four-year public higher education more affordable for middle-class families. Beginning in 2025, the University of Massachusetts system offers tuition-free bachelor's degree paths to eligible Massachusetts residents with family incomes below \$75,000.

Massachusetts
launched two
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MassReconnect and
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free to residents and
increase enrollment
in these institutions.

The MassReconnect program has led to substantial gains in enrollment at community colleges throughout the state, especially among the targeted population of 25 and older adults, according to a Wheelock Education Policy Center report released in March 2026.²⁶ However, based on an analysis of enrollment trends for the Classes of 2024 and 2025 presented in this study, BPS graduates are not enrolling immediately after high school in community colleges at higher rates yet after the expansion of MassEducate. Future research will be needed to determine how well BPS high school graduates are benefiting from the state's free community college investments.

With the exception of the SUCCESS Fund, much of the recent policy and programmatic developments in the state's higher education sector tend to be more focused on broadly improving access to college through Early College pathways, free community college, and increased financial aid at four-year colleges than targeted approaches to boosting completion rates. To make substantial gains in the college completion rates of BPS graduates, which have plateaued over the past decade, policymakers, education leaders, and private sector employers will likely need to collaborate on additional strategies

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•
•
• The evidence suggests
• that college students
• are more likely to
• persist to completion
• when they participate
• in educationally
• purposeful activities
• such as work-based
• learning.
•
•
•

to improve completion and post-graduation employment outcomes.

One evidence-based model for boosting completion rates at community colleges is the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) model. ASAP has been found to double the completion rate at the City University of New York’s community college and has now been replicated at more than 39 campuses across seven states.²⁷ A 2025 study on the eight year outcomes for students participating in ASAP programs in Ohio found that not only were they more likely to graduate but they also earned about 14% more than a control group.²⁸ A second promising but less studied model is apprenticeship to degree programs, which can provide

an alternative path to traditional degree programs. With support from the Richard and Susan B. Smith Foundation, apprenticeship to degree pathways across an array of fields were recently launched at six community colleges in Massachusetts.²⁹ Third, the recent expansion of federal Pell funding to cover short-term workforce training programs could provide more postsecondary training paths for college stopouts or those who are unable to commit to longer-term academic degree programs.

These latter two pathways rely on engaging employers in work and learning models to help students realize the connection between education and careers. With the growth of career-connected learning initiatives, there will be more opportunities for employers to offer engaging work-based learning experiences.³⁰ The evidence suggests that college students are more likely to persist to completion when they participate in educationally purposeful activities such as work-based learning.³¹

Conclusion

This study provided updates on college enrollment, persistence, and completion trends of BPS graduates from the Classes of 2015–2024. First-year college enrollment rates of BPS graduates have trended up for the Classes of 2023 and 2024. Despite recent increases, college enrollment remains below pre-COVID trends even though a high share of high school graduates plan to attend as indicated in senior exit survey responses.

The six-year college completion rates for the BPS Classes of 2018 and 2019 declined slightly to 50% and 51%. This study found that long-standing gender and race-ethnic gaps persist in college enrollment and completion. College completion rates of Black and Latino graduates, many of whom attend non-exam high schools and two-year public colleges, will need to increase substantially to reach the North Star goals established by citywide initiatives.

The college completion experiences of BPS graduates were compared to two national benchmarks. The first comparison found that BPS Class of 2019 graduates who enrolled in college in the immediate fall following high school have lower six-year college completion rates than the national average for first-time fall 2019 semester enrollees, under the age of 21. The six-year college completion rate of immediate fall enrollees from the BPS Class of 2019 was 52.9%. The national cohort of fall 2019 enrollees under 21 years old had a 63.8% six-year college completion rate, 10 percentage points higher than the BPS class cohort. This benchmark can also be used for demographic comparisons and shows that the gender and race-ethnic differences in BPS college completion rates tend to mirror the national trends.

The second benchmark measures college completion outcomes for the entire high school graduating class (college enrollees and non-enrollees combined) and likely provides a closer match to the student population in BPS. The postsecondary credential attainment rate of all BPS graduates from the Classes of 2017 and 2018 matched a national average for public, non-charter, and urban city high schools. Nearly 37% of the BPS Classes of 2017 and 2018 had attained a postsecondary credential within six years, which was the same as that found for this comparison group of high schools from across the U.S.

The previous section described several promising initiatives designed to improve postsecondary enrollment, persistence, completion, and post-graduation employment outcomes. These new initiatives can support current BPS high school students and recent graduates who are pursuing postsecondary credentials, and those who would like to return to college or training. However, future research and evaluation is needed to understand the long-term impacts of these new policies and programs on the college access, completion, and labor market outcomes of BPS graduates.

Appendix A:
**Number and Demographic and Socioeconomic
 Characteristics of BPS Graduating Classes**

This appendix provides additional background on trends over the past decade in BPS high school graduates' demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. The district has experienced shifts in its race-ethnic composition. There has been a large increase in the percentage share of graduates identifying as Latino, rising consistently from 30% of the Class of 2015 to 44% for the Class of 2024. The percentage share of Black graduates has declined about 10 percentage points from 42% of the Class of 2015 to 32% for the Class of 2024. Asian graduates' percentage share of each class has ranged more narrowly in the 11% to 12% range before dropping to 8.9% for the Class of 2024. The share of White graduates has trended slightly downward from 14% in the Classes of 2015 and 2016 to 11–12% in recent years.

TABLE A-1
**TRENDS IN THE NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF
 BPS GRADUATES BY RACE-ETHNICITY AND SELECTED STUDENT
 CHARACTERISTICS, CLASSES OF 2015-2024**

Student Group	BPS GRADUATING CLASS									
	2015	2016*	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
All	3,219	3,135	3,434	3,740	3,695	3,504	3,585	3,385	3,466	3,395
Asian	12.8	12.6	11.5	11.4	11.0	10.8	11.9	11.1	10.8	8.9
Black	41.8	40.5	37.7	41.4	36.9	35.4	33.6	32.0	31.2	31.8
Latino	29.9	31.8	33.6	34.3	38.8	39.4	41.1	42.7	43.3	44.4
White	14.5	14.4	13.7	11.6	12.1	11.6	12.4	11.0	12.2	12.0
Multi-Racial and Other Race-Ethnicities	1.0	0.7	3.6	1.2	1.2	2.7	1.0	3.2	2.5	3.0
Graduates with an IEP	13.3	13.7	11.9	13.1	13.7	14.2	14.4	14.6	14.9	14.9
English Language Learners	14.6	14.1	15.5	17.8	20.9	21.1	21.3	19.9	20.7	18.5
Economically Disadvantaged**	66.4	68.4	66.6	69.5	71.6	74.3	73.3	68.0	69.4	65.2

Source: Boston Public Schools' graduation and demographic records.

Notes:

*The number of Class of 2016 graduates is low due to not having NSC data on close to 400 students because their high schools were not submitted to the NSC for that year. For this reason, the report excludes the Class of 2016 from the college completion rate trend analysis.

**The definition and data sources used to measure economically disadvantaged status changed twice over this 10-year period. The most recent change occurred for the Class of 2022. The decline in the percentage of students since this change may be entirely due to definitional changes.

The de-identified data files received for this study identified the special education, English language learner, and economically disadvantaged status of students with a “1” indicating that the student had this characteristic and a “0” indicating they did not. The percentage share of graduates with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) has increased approximately 1 percentage point from 13% to 14% over this period. The population of English language learners has grown considerably from 14% of graduates to 20–21% in most recent years. The share of graduates from economically disadvantaged backgrounds based on state data has ranged from 65% to 74% over this period though the definition used for economically disadvantaged changed twice, which makes it hard to interpret trends over time.

The changing size and composition of the BPS graduating classes provides important context for this study of postsecondary outcomes. The increase in high school graduates from 2015 through 2021 has been driven by growth in student groups that are historically underrepresented in postsecondary institutions and have had lower college completion rates. These changes need to be factored into historical comparisons of college enrollment and completion rates.

Appendix B:

Six-Year College Completion Rates by Time of First Enrollment

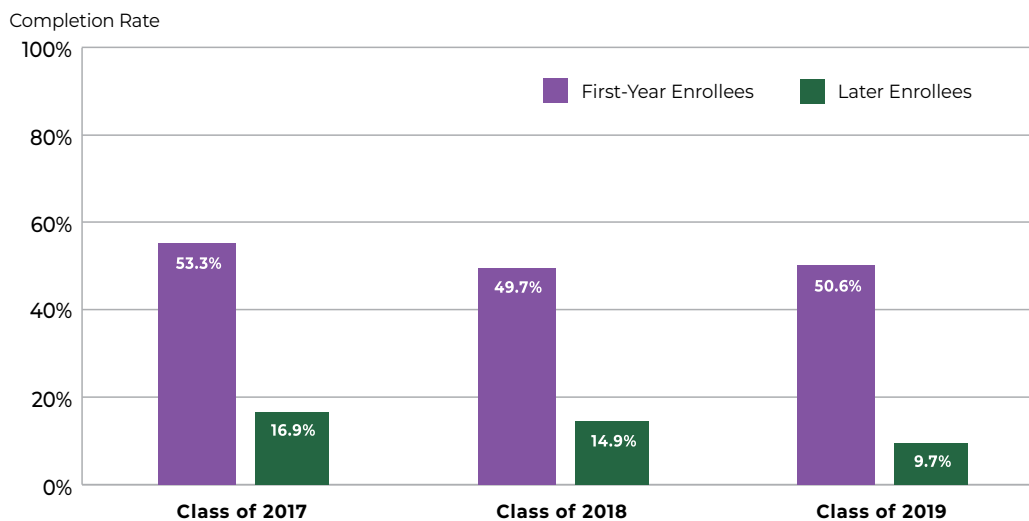
The college completion findings in this study focused on the six-year college completion experiences of BPS graduates who enrolled in college during the first year after high school. The purpose of tracking completion outcomes for this group of enrollees is to allow for approximately six years after initial enrollment to complete a certificate or degree. This six-year timeframe conforms to completion timeline measures used by the NSC and U.S. Department of Education and thus allows for national comparisons of BPS graduates.

However, it is also possible to track six-year outcomes for later enrollees. **Chart B-1** compares the six-year college completion rates of first-year enrollees from BPS graduating classes to their counterparts that enrolled later. For the BPS Class of 2017, first-year enrollees had a six-year completion rate of 53.3% compared to 16.9% for those who enrolled after the first year and any time up to six years after high school. For the BPS Class of 2018, first-year enrollees had a six-year college completion rate of 49.7% vs. 14.9% for later enrollees. For the BPS Class of 2019, the six-year completion rate of first-year enrollees was 50.6%, more than five times the rate for later enrollees, which was 9.7%.

The differences in completion rates are not just due to the timing of enrollment. It is true that later enrollees would have less time to complete a degree from their start of college to six years after high school. However, later enrollees also differ from first-year enrollees in that they are more likely to enroll in two-year colleges than their first-year enrollee cohorts. There are also demographic and socioeconomic differences between first-year and later enrollees. Future research is needed to learn more about the college enrollment experiences of later enrollees to identify strategies to help more complete a college credential.

CHART B-1

COMPARISON OF SIX-YEAR COLLEGE COMPLETION RATES OF BPS GRADUATES BY TIME OF FIRST ENROLLMENT, CLASSES OF 2017-2019



Source: PIC analysis of NSC records

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