

Data Digest · High School Graduate Direct Enrollment, 2023

The Big Picture: As recently noted by the [Washington Student Achievement Council](#), the direct enrollment rate¹ in Washington has declined by 9 percentage points between 2019 and 2021. The direct enrollment rate is comprised of the number of high school graduates who directly enroll in college the year after they graduate divided by the overall number of high school graduates. The total number of students who directly enrolled decreased by 4,200 students, and the number of high school graduates² increased by 3,000 students. These changes both contribute to changes in direct enrollment rate.

Class of 2021: 37,167 Direct Enrollments / 74,063 HS Graduates = 50% Direct Enrollment Rate

The Data: The number of high school graduates in Washington has increased by nearly 13,000 students since 2005. The number of graduates in 2020 increased by 2,422 students compared to 2019, then by an additional 642 students in 2021. One policy change of note during this period is that in July 2021, the State Board of Education passed rules allowing districts and State-Tribal Education Compacts to offer [waivers of certain graduation requirements](#) on an individual student basis during certain emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

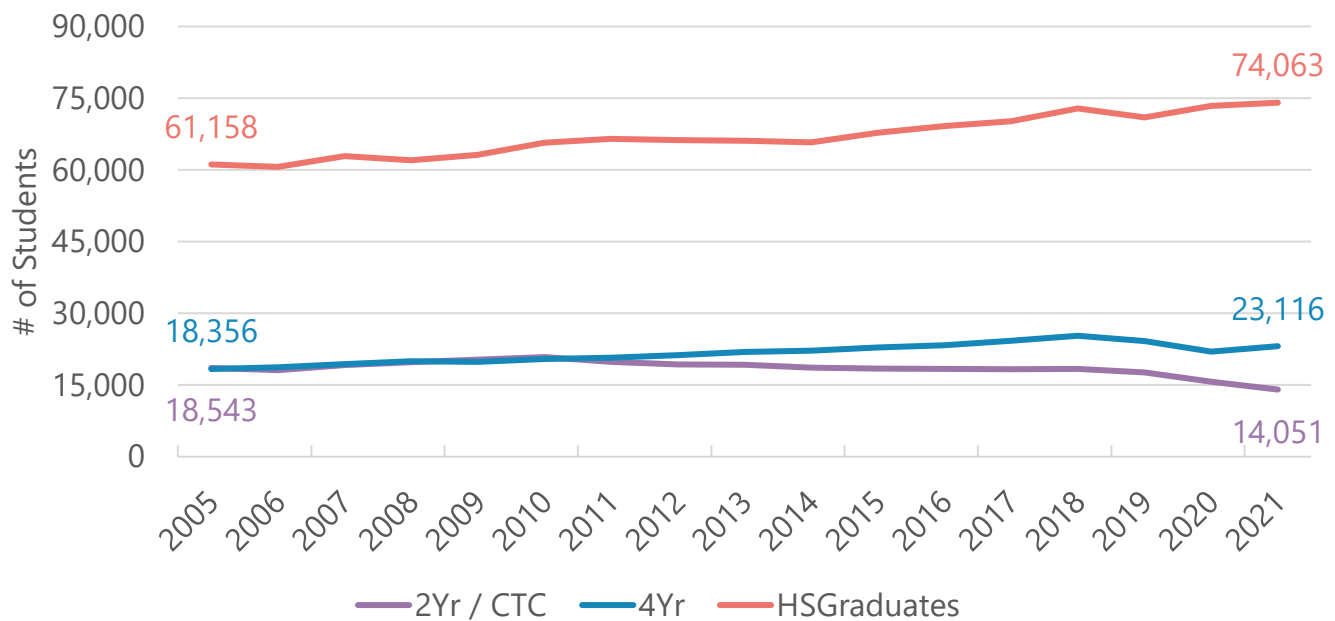
The number of high school graduates that enroll directly into two-year community and technical colleges³ has decreased by nearly 4,500 students since 2005. Direct enrollment numbers declined nearly every year between 2010 and 2021. However, the declines over the last two academic years represent the largest declines in the past 17 years.

The number of high school graduates that enroll directly into four-year institutions⁴ has increased by over 4,700 students since 2005. However, the total number of students that directly enrolled into four-year institutions dropped between 2019 and 2021. This number partially rebounded in 2021, with an additional 1,132 students choosing to directly enroll in four-year universities compared to 2020.

Table 1: WA Public K-12 Graduates Direct Enrollment Totals, 2005-2021

Grad. Year	Total HS Graduates	Year-to-Year Difference	Two-Year Direct Enroll	Year-to-Year Difference	Four-Year Direct Enroll	Year-to-Year Difference	Total Direct Enroll	Direct Enroll Rate
2005	61,158	--	18,543	--	18,356	--	36,899	60%
2006	60,629	-529	18,121	-422	18,702	+346	36,823	61%
2007	62,878	+2,249	19,204	+1,083	19,393	+691	38,597	61%
2008	61,994	-884	19,806	+602	19,954	+561	39,760	64%
2009	63,186	+1,192	20,320	+514	19,878	-76	40,198	64%
2010	65,691	+2,505	20,849	+529	20,467	+589	41,316	63%
2011	66,492	+801	19,852	-997	20,720	+253	40,572	61%
2012	66,241	-251	19,308	-544	21,258	+538	40,566	61%
2013	66,115	-126	19,249	-59	21,895	+637	41,144	62%
2014	65,735	-380	18,655	-594	22,183	+288	40,838	62%
2015	67,776	+2,041	18,420	-235	22,826	+643	41,246	61%
2016	69,152	+1,376	18,379	-41	23,337	+511	41,716	60%
2017	70,198	+1,046	18,310	-69	24,269	+932	42,579	61%
2018	72,886	+2,688	18,365	+55	25,309	+1,040	43,674	60%
2019	70,999	-1,887	17,652	-713	24,201	-1,108	41,853	59%
2020	73,421	+2,422	15,724	-1,928	21,984	-2,217	37,708	51%
2021	74,063	+642	14,051	-1,673	23,116	+1,132	37,167	50%

Figure 1: WA Public K-12 Graduate & Direct Enrollment Totals



The Fine Print:

¹ Direct Enrollment is defined as having an enrollment record at a postsecondary institution at some point in academic year following graduation, which is defined as the summer term immediately following graduation through spring term of the next calendar year. If a student enrolled at a two-year and a four-year institution in the year, they are categorized as a four-year enrollee.

² Exercise caution when comparing ERDC's graduation rates to OSPI's. For the ERDC dashboards we use all students who graduate in a year, so ERDC counts contain students who graduate in four, five, six, or seven years. OSPI graduation rates report students who graduate in four years, so those counts are lower than ERDC's counts.

³ Two-Year Community & Technical Colleges (CTC's) includes all Washington and out-of-state private and publicly funded two-year institutions. This uses the NSC data for private and out-of-state two-year institutions and the SBCTC data for the publicly funded two-year Washington institutions.

⁴ Four-year Institutions includes all Washington and out-of-state, private, and publicly funded four-year institutions. This uses the NSC data for private and out-of-state four-year institutions and the PCHEES data for the publicly funded four-year Washington institutions.

To view more statewide, district, and school data, visit our
High School Graduate Outcomes Dashboard:
<https://erdc.wa.gov/data-dashboards/high-school-graduate-outcomes>