



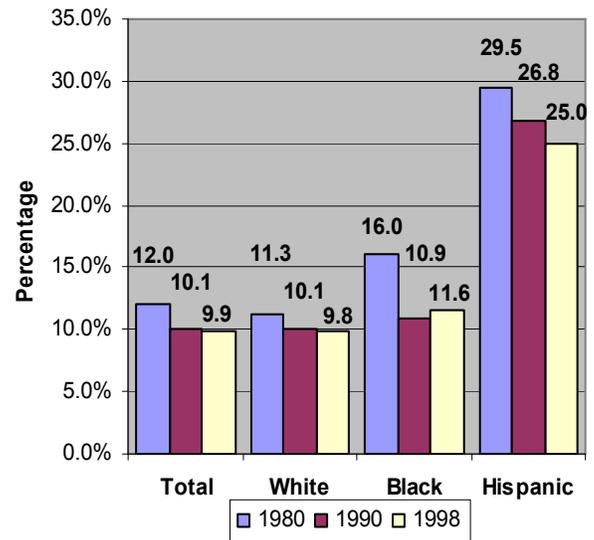
Student dropout and completion rates are key gauges of the success of an educational system. U.S. learning and job training institutions face the continuous challenge of retaining students long enough to ensure acquisition of needed skills and credentials. An understanding of the scope and demographics of dropout behavior provides a point of departure for constructing strategies to meet the needs of students and employers, improve retention, and measure success. This spotlight presents the demographics of dropouts and completers within the traditional education system as well as job training programs.

DROPOUTS

Dropout generally refers to persons who are not enrolled in, or do not complete a high school program.¹

- Dropout behavior from the 1970s to 2000 indicates marked racial variances with dramatically reduced attrition for Blacks over other groups. In contrast, Hispanic dropout rates are still above average, though slowly decreasing as well (Figure 1).
- Dropout rates have declined since 1980 and are likely to hold steady until 2010, when the 18-year-old population will peak. However, students drop out at increasingly younger ages every year.
- Inner city dropout rates are high; Chicago at 56%, and Miami, LA, NY and Houston range between 30% and 40%. Inner-city youth were significantly more likely to have dropped out of school between their sophomore and senior years in high school.
- Of convicted offenders (Oct.1999 to Sept. 2000) 45.7% had less than a high school diploma, though rates have improved since 1980.

Fig.1 Dropout Rates for Persons Aged 14 to 24



COMPLETION

The number of individuals graduating from public and private secondary institutions has remained constant since 1975.

- Approximately 2.75 million students graduated in 1970, nearly the same number as in 1998. However, by 2010-11 high school graduates will increase 11%.
- In 2000, 91.8% of Whites, 83.7% of Blacks, and 65.6% of Hispanics, 18 through 24 years old had completed high school.
- On the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey, 51% of all State and Federal prisoners had their high school diploma compared to a national average of 76% for the general population.
- 54.4% of convicted offenders (Oct.1999 to Sept. 2000) graduated high school or college.

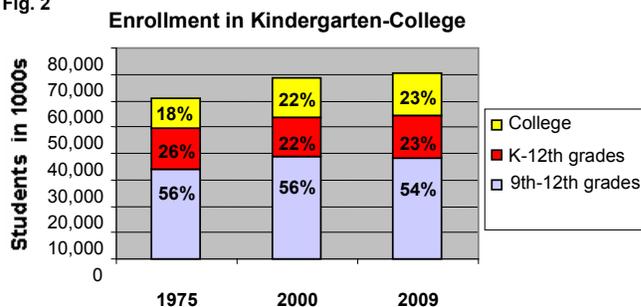
¹ The census measures dropout rates for distinct age groups, including 14-24, 16-24, and 18-26 year olds depending on the study. This report provides data from several of these age cohorts.

ENROLLMENT DISTRIBUTION

More people than ever before are attending educational institutions and attaining credentials (Figure 2). Significant growth in enrollment over the last 30 years occurred at the post secondary level.

- Compared to the 1970s greater numbers of students are participating in post secondary studies in order to meet the demands of the labor market.
- College students as a percentage of total enrollments increased to 22% from 18% in 1975, with the expectation of continued growth.

Fig. 2

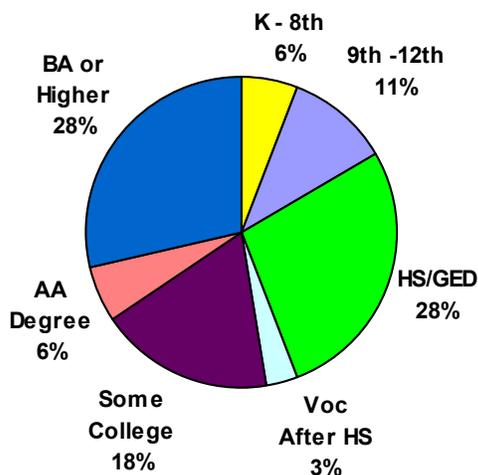


EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The majority (55%) of persons 17 years old and older engaged in post-secondary level programs in 1999. Figure 3 shows that 28% completed high school and did not pursue post-secondary education. An equivalent 28% acquired at least a BA degree. Far fewer took vocation or technical training classes.

- Graduates from high schools with a college preparatory focus (the majority of credits earned in academic rather than vocational subjects) tend to earn higher wages due to the stronger literacy skills gained while completing academic work.

Fig. 3 1999 Educational Attainment for those 17 Years Old and Older



- In 1972, 31% of high school seniors reported enrollment in general high school studies and 43% in academic college prep courses. By 1992, 40% of seniors pursued general studies and 45% academic studies.
- Meanwhile, enrollment in vocational training dropped from 22% in 1972 to 12% in 1992.
- Enrollment distributions at secondary schools from 1970 to 1990 indicate waning participation in vocational training programs. Some occupations will become obsolete with automation displacing workers. Vocational training programs will need to follow emerging industry trends to meet the changing labor market demands effectively.
- The 3.5 million vocational certificates issued in 1970 declined 50% to 1.6 million by 1999.
- In 2000, 10% of the 16 million high school students engaged in technical programs.

GED

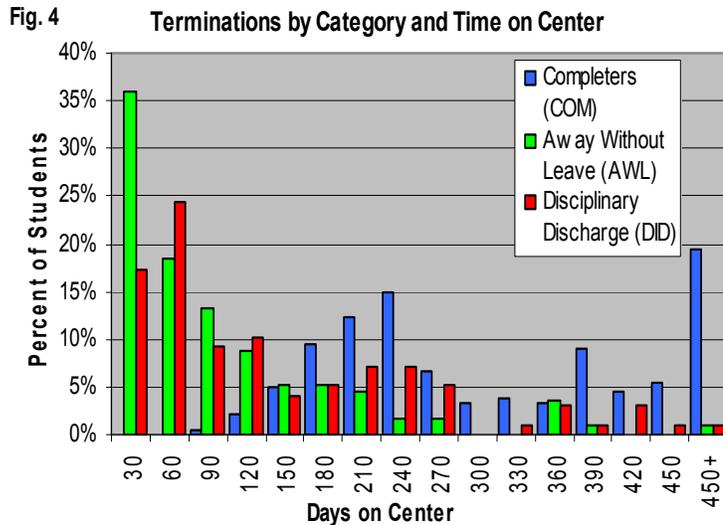
Earning a GED has a positive effect on income.

- A GED provides substantial advantage in earnings relative to high school dropouts. A GED yields 21% higher wages for men and 18% higher for women compared to dropouts.
- A positive relationship exists between GED certificate holders and labor force participation. GED holders are more likely than dropouts to be employed.
- In 1975, 342,000 GEDs were issued; by 2001, the number increased to 658,000. The 24% increase in GED testing from 2000 to 2001 may reflect a push to complete before the release of new GED 2002 version.
- In 2001, 10,344 federal inmates took the GED battery, with 71.9% passing. During 2001, 836 MTC inmates obtained a GED with a 70.7% passing rate.

The findings presented in this report on Job Corps are based on MTC terminations for PY 2001 and additional data selected from a random sample of 448 terminations (during a one-week period in PY 2001).

RETENTION IN JOB CORPS

Figure 4 shows patterns for students terminating from MTC Job Corps centers, program year 2001, as completers, Absent Without Leave (AWL) status or separation for disciplinary infractions (DID). These three categories are the most common reasons for terminating, although completions predominate. AWL and DID are most prevalent during the initial 60 days on center. In contrast, most students will complete their program if they remain on center past 120 days.



- 22.4% of students leave prior to the 60-day mark.
 - The majority of pre-60 day separations are Absent Without Leave (AWL).
 - AWL terminators average 24 days on center. High incidents of AWL occur on day 2, and peak between days 6 and 25. Students rarely separate under AWL status after 240 days.
- One third of terminations prior to 60 days separate for disciplinary reasons (DID).
 - The highest incidence of DID takes place during the first 60 days on center; subsequently 38% of DID occurs between 120 and 270 days.
- The ethnic composition of MTC Job Corps students is 47% Black, 29% White, 18% Hispanic, and 6% Other.

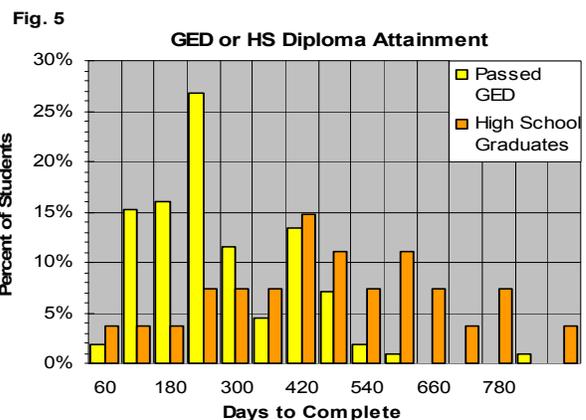
Data shows that students who remain at Job Corps 61 days or more have an 80.5% chance of completing a vocation, high school diploma, or GED at Job Corps.

- 65.6% of students leave with a high school diploma, vocational trade, or GED.
- 60.2% complete a trade, high school diploma or GED at Job Corps centers.
- Of completers, 80% require 180 or more days to finish: 2% complete in 90-120 days, 14% in 120-180 days, 27% in 180-240 days, 17% in 240-360 days, 15% in 360-480 days, and a smaller fraction beyond that point.
- 42% of White students, 41% of Black students, 39% of Hispanic students, and 46% of Other students complete.

GED AND HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA COMPLETION ON CENTER

Students on average take 400 days to complete a high school diploma. GED completion is faster, averaging 240 days. Appreciably higher numbers of students in 2001 took the GED battery rather than graduating with the high school diploma (Figure 5).

- 26% of students passed the GED on center.
- 6% failed the GED test on center.
- 6% obtained a high school diploma in 2001 on center.
- 19% entered Job Corps with a high school diploma or GED.
- Approximately 12% attended a two-year college, and about 3% attended a four-year college.



VOCATIONAL TRAINING AT MTC CENTERS

Students in Job Corps receive technical training with academic or general instruction. Most vocational terminations occur at 200 days. Of students completing all the requirements for a trade, 72% graduated from the program.

- Those completing vocational requirements can graduate from Job Corps (COM), go AWL, resign (RES), leave for medical reasons (MED), administrative discharge (ADD), or disciplinary discharge (DID).
- Of vocational credit recipients, the highest numbers of terminations occur between 300 and 400 days (25%). Between 200 and 300 days, 23% terminate and between 500 and 600 days, 12%.

The marketplace is demanding a workforce with higher levels of education. While jobs for dropouts will continue to exist, most students are completing high school/GED programs in order to be competitive in the better paying job market. Retention is a central concern for educational and training institutions because the chance of students successfully entering and continuing in the job market diminishes when they leave before completion.

Sources

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AN EYE TO THE FUTURE . . .



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Student retention and completion is an issue affecting our nation's educational institutions. The MTC Institute recently completed a study on improving student retention in the Job Corps program, and has dedicated this issue of the Data Spotlight to "Student Drop Out and Completion." For further information, contact institute@mtctrains.com. We wish you a happy holiday season.

Management & Training Corporation (MTC) is an international private contractor that manages and operates Job Corps centers and correctional facilities.

MTC Institute is dedicated to examining data and projecting trends relevant to job training and corrections programs.

The Data Spotlight is a periodic publication highlighting issues that impact the future of young people and inmates.

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