

High School Transitions to Workforce: Workforce Participation by High School Outcomes

What do the MLDS data show?

Students who dropout or persistⁱ in high school participate in the workforce at lower rates than students who graduate with a high school diploma. High school persisters have the lowest workforce participation rates overallⁱⁱ.

67% Of high school *graduates* who participated in the Maryland workforce 1 year after high school.

50% Of high school *dropouts* who participated in the Maryland workforce 1 year after high school.

30% Of high school *persisters* who participated in the Maryland workforce 1 year after high school.

Why is this important?

Students who do not complete high school and do not participate in the workforce have limited future prospects. Disengagement from school or work prevents students from building an education and work history that contributes to higher wages and better employment. Further, this group tends to impose significant social costsⁱⁱⁱ: they have poorer health outcomes^{iv}, higher rates of engagement with the criminal justice system^v, and increased reliance on social support and welfare benefits than high school graduates^{vi}.

Next Steps

Using data from the MLDS allows us to examine workforce participation among high school graduates, dropouts, and persisters for students who had reported wages for 4 quarters. This allows trends and patterns to be established which in turn help to inform policymakers about the need for interventions. For example, school-based programs that keep students in school could enable more students to graduate from high school while community-based programs could guide students in workforce participation.

Learn more about this topic by reviewing the dashboard: [High School Transitions to Workforce: Workforce Participation by High School Outcomes](#).

<https://mldscenter.maryland.gov/>

Contextual Information

Direct comparisons between Maryland and national statistics are not available; however, in October 2016 the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) released a report^{vii} on the rates of college enrollment and work activity of 2016 high school graduates^{viii}. The survey found that 72% of young adults between 18-24 years who graduated from high school but did not enroll in college were participating in the labor force. The labor force participation rate for youth who dropped out of high school was 51%.

Notes

ⁱ Persisters are defined as students who did not formally withdraw from high school, nor earn a regular diploma after attending four or five years of high school.

ⁱⁱ The data presented here include all recorded wages. Students are counted if they worked only one quarter or all quarters in the year.

ⁱⁱⁱ Belfield, C. R., Levin, H. M., and Rosen, R. (2012). *The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth*. Corporation for National and Community Service. Paper in association with Civic Enterprises for the Corporation for National and Community Service. Retrieved from http://www.civicerprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/econ_value_opportunity_youth.pdf.

^{iv} Wong, M. D., Shapiro, M. F., Boscardin, W. J., and Ettner, S. L. (2002). Contribution of major diseases to disparities in mortality. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 347(20), 1585-1592.

^v Maynard, B. R., Salas-Wright, C. P., and Vaughn, M. G. (2015). High school dropouts in emerging adulthood: Substance use, mental health problems, and crime. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 51(3), 289-299.

^{vi} Belfield, C. R., Levin, H. M., and Rosen, R. (2012). *The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth*. Corporation for National and Community Service. Paper in association with Civic Enterprises for the Corporation for National and Community Service. Retrieved from http://www.civicerprises.net/MediaLibrary/Docs/econ_value_opportunity_youth.pdf.

^{vii} The report was based on the Current Population Survey (CPS). CPS is a nationwide survey of about 60,000 households that provides information on employment and unemployment. Each October, a supplement to the CPS gathers more detailed information about school enrollment, such as full- and part-time enrollment status. MLDS calculated the labor force participation rates using data from the Maryland State Unemployment Insurance. The data included all high school graduates, dropouts, and persisters who had a wage record in that academic year. The Maryland wage data do not include wages for federal employees, military employees, individuals who are self-employed, or private contractors.

^{viii} The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) only identified high school graduates and dropouts, not persisters. The BLS identified the population of interest, young adults, as persons between the ages of 18 to 24. High school graduate status was obtained through self-report and based on the year they graduated (high school graduate) or the last year attended if they did not graduate (dropout). Recent high school dropouts were identified as individuals who were not enrolled in school when the survey was administered, attended school the year prior, and did not possess a high school diploma. Recent high school graduates were identified as individuals completing high school the same calendar year of the Current Population Survey (January- October 2016). College enrollment was indicated by self-report. Individuals were classified as full-time college students if they were enrolled for 12+ hours at the undergraduate level and 9+ hours at the graduate level. Part-time status was considered as taking less than 12 hours at the undergraduate level or less than 9 hours at the graduate level. The BLS identified individuals as employed if they were paid for work by an employer, were self-employed, or worked 15+ hours in a family business. Individuals were excluded from being in the labor force if they were not employed or unemployed (actively seeking work).