Types of Dropout Data Defined

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The U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is the principal federal agency responsible for the collection, analysis and reporting of data on the condition of education in the United States. Dropout data from NCES surveys includes within-school graduation or exit rates among students enrolled in grades nine through twelve, across gender, race, and other racial-ethnic groups, and across states and geographic regions. NCES defines the various types of dropout rates as stated below.

The five NCES rates: (1) averaged freshman graduation rate, (2) adjusted cohort graduation rate, (3) the event dropout rate, (4) the status dropout rate, and (5) the status school completion rate, along with other national-level measures, such as the attrition rate and cohort dropout rates, provide unique information about high school dropouts, completers and graduates. Different states use various measures.

Though much rate has different naming and calculation methods, each provides unique information that is important for assessing schools’ success in educating students and helping dropout. All in these types of data are underlying. A portion of A-include in the report. For example, are students who drop out to each (S) to count as dropouts? Are students who complete their own work and are defined as a diploma for failing to pass a state test, not counted as dropouts?

Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate

Averaged freshman graduation rate: describes the proportion of high school freshman who graduate with a regular diploma five years after starting ninth grade. This rate measures the extent to which schools are graduating students on time. The first school year for which NCES provides averaged freshman graduation rate is 1995-96.

Event Dropout Rate (or Annual Dropout Rate)

Event dropout rate: describes the percentage of private and public high school students who are not in high school any time during the school year. This rate is also referred to as the annual dropout rate. The Texas Education Agency reports the event rate (in addition to other rates). Definitions for TFA rates can be found on the TFA website.

Status Completion Rate

High school status completion rate: describes the proportion of individuals in a given age range who are not in high school and who are not in a high school dropout in a given year. This is also referred to as the “dropout completion rate” (the positive way of expressing the status dropout rate).

Status Dropout Rate

Status dropout rates: describe the rate at which individuals are enrolled in school any time during the school year. These rates, which are higher than event rates because they include all dropouts, reveal the extent of the dropout problem in the population. (These rates focus on an overall age group or cohort rather than an individual.)

Attrition Rate

Attrition rates measure the number of students lost from enrollment between two points in time (e.g., 9th-grade and 12th-grade enrollment or four years later). These data are useful in cohort data. Each year for the state of Texas, TDA reports simple attrition rates, while IDEA reports adjusted attrition rates (that account for fluctuations in school enrollment and student retention).

Cohort Rate

Cohort rates measure what happens to a cohort of students over a period of time. These rates provide repeated measures of a group of students starting at a specific grade and leaving over time. These measures provide longitudinal data on a specific group of students, including background and contextual characteristics.

Graduation Rate

Graduation rates measure the percentage of students who graduate from a cohort of students. The graduation or exit rates are also referred to as the “class completion rate” (the positive way of expressing the status dropout rate).