HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS

Background/History
High school dropouts make up approximately 8% of non-institutionalized, civilian 16-to 24-year-olds living in the United States. Additionally, roughly 3.5% of high school students drop out of school annually. As we know, there are many negative outcomes associated with dropping out of school, including lower income, higher unemployment, and poorer health.[1] This fact sheet examines national status dropout rates and event dropout rates from 2008.

Facts and Figures – Status Dropout Rates
- The status dropout rate reports the number of individuals in a given age range who are not in school and have not earned a high school diploma or an alternative credential (i.e. a GED). The rate is calculated using Current Population Survey (CPS) data.
- National figures - 8% of non-institutionalized, civilian 16-to 24-year-olds living in the United States were not enrolled in high school and had not earned a high school diploma or alternative credentials (approximately 3 million people).
- SES differences[2]
  - Lowest income quartile: 16.4%
  - Middle low quartile: 9.4%
  - Middle high quartile: 5.4%
  - Highest income quartile: 2.2%
- Gender differences
  - Males: 8.5%
  - Females: 7.5%
- Racial differences
  - Hispanic: 18.3%
  - Black: 9.9%
  - White: 4.8%
  - Asian/Pacific Islanders: 4.4%
  - Two or more races: 4.2%
- Notable historical trends
  - From 1972 to 2008, dropout rates have trended downward from 14.6% to 8.0%.
- Notable regional differences
  - Northeast: 5.6%
  - South: 8.8%
  - West: 9.1%
- Age differences
  - 16-year-olds: 2.2%
  - 17-year-olds: 5.0%
  - 18-to 24-year-olds: 7.8% to 9.9%

Facts and Figures – Event Dropout Rates
- The event dropout rate estimates the percentage of high school students who left high school between the beginning of one school year and the beginning of the next year without earning a diploma or alternative credential. This rate is calculated from CPS data and the Common Core of Data (CCD).
- National figures - 3.5% dropout rate between 2007 and 2008.
- SES differences[3]
  - Low income: 8.7%
  - Middle income: 3.0%
  - High income: 2.0%
- Gender differences
  - Males: 3.1%
  - Females: 4.0%

- Racial differences
    - Hispanic: 5.3%
    - Black: 6.4%
    - White: 2.3%
    - Asian/Pacific Islanders: 4.0%
- Notable historical trends
    - From 1972 to 2008, dropout rates from year-to-year have trended downward from 6.1% to 3.5%.
- Notable regional differences
    - Northeast: 2.3%
    - West: 4.1%
    - South: 4.3%
- Age differences
    - 15-to 16-year-olds: 2.4%
    - 17-to 19-year-olds: 3.1% to 4.9%
    - 20-to 24-year-olds: 14.9%

Summary
Both the status dropout rates and the event dropout rates highlight the trend of decreasing dropout rates since 1972; however, it is important not to compare the rates to each other. The status rates are useful for looking at general population trends while the event dropout rates are better for tracking annual changes in dropout behavior of American high school students. Both sets of data show higher dropout rates for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and students from the Western and Southern regions of the United States. Higher drop out rates are also evident for Black and Hispanic populations as compared to Whites and Asian/Pacific Islanders. Differences in dropout rates were minimal between males and females.

References & Resources
1 - Chapman, C., Laird, J., and Kewalramani, A. (2010). Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972–2008 (NCES 2011-012). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch.

2 - *Table 109,* Digest of Education Statistics (2009). National Center for Education Statistics, institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_109.asp

3 - Low income refers to the lowest 20% of all family incomes and high income refers to the highest 20% of all family incomes.