

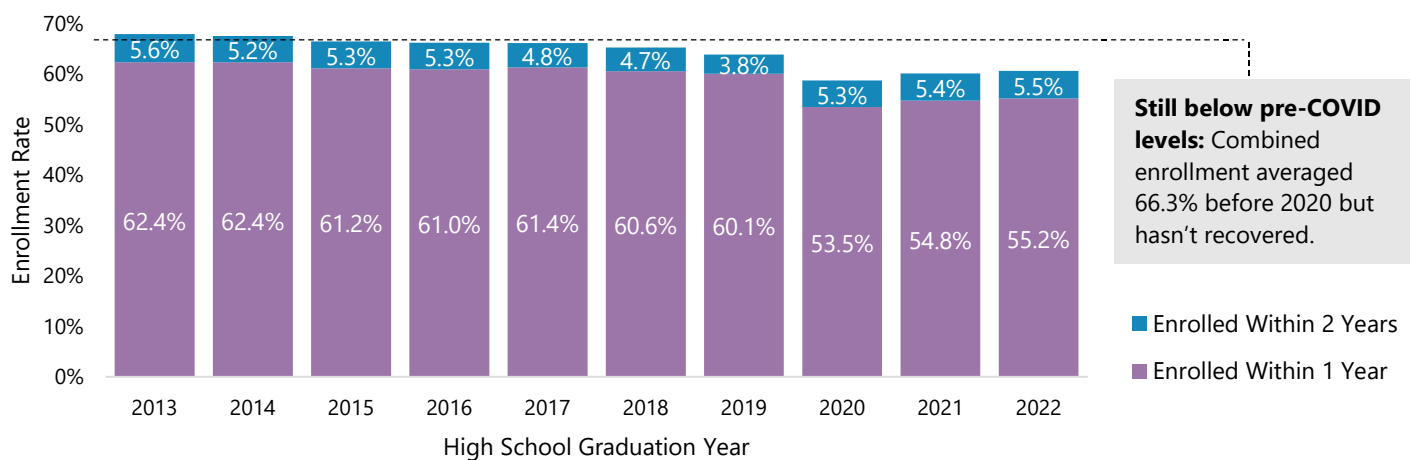
## Delayed Enrollment Digest

*This brief explores how student enrollment patterns have shifted in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. While more students are delaying college enrollment, that increase hasn't been enough to make up for the broader drop in post-secondary participation. Understanding these patterns can help inform policies and programs to support long-term student success.*

### Delayed enrollment increased since the COVID-19 but not enough to offset COVID-19 impacts.

The rate of students enrolling for the first time two years after high school graduation rose from 3.8% among the 2019 graduating class to 5.3% among the 2020, COVID-19 impacted, graduating class. The 2021 and 2022 graduating class also had similar two year delayed enrollment rates. [See Table 1: Enrollment Rates by Years After Graduation.](#)

**Figure 1 Delayed Enrollment Increased but Didn't Offset Overall Postsecondary Declines Since COVID-19**



### Five years after graduation, nearly 70% of high school graduates enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

For the most recent years available,<sup>1</sup> 61% of high school graduates enroll within a year of graduation. An additional 9% of high school graduates started their postsecondary education between two and five years after high school graduation.

### Students who delay enrollment are more likely to attend two-year institutions and participate in professional or technical training.

Students enrolling within a year of graduation are proportionally more likely to start at four-year institutions (62%) than two-year institutions (38%). With fewer barriers to entry and greater flexibility, students delaying enrollment students are more likely to enroll at two-year institutions (71%) than four-year institutions (29%) on average.<sup>2</sup>

At two-year institutions, students who delay enrollment are more likely to engage in professional or technical training than those who enroll immediately after high school on average.<sup>3</sup> At two-year institutions, 69% of students who enroll immediately after high school graduation enroll with the intent of transferring to a four-year institution and 21% enroll for professional or technical training on average. For students who delay enrollment, 51% enroll with the intent to transfer and 32% enroll for professional or technical training. [See Table 2: Enrollment Rates for Two-Year Institutions by Enrollment Intent and Years After Graduation.](#)

<sup>1</sup> Average cumulative enrollment rates five years after high school graduation for the 2017, 2018, and 2019 graduating classes.

<sup>2</sup> Average cumulative proportion of students enrolled two years after high school graduation by institutional sector for the 2020, 2021, and 2022 graduating classes.

<sup>3</sup> Average cumulative proportion of students enrolled at two-year institutions by kind of program for the 2020, 2021, and 2022 graduating classes.

### **Persistence rates lag for students who delay enrollment even for students in the same institutional sector.**

For the most recent years available,<sup>4</sup> 83% of students who enrolled within one year of high school graduation persist to the next academic year. For the same graduating classes, 64% of students who enrolled two years after graduation persisted in the next academic year on average. [See Table 2: Persistence Rates by Years After Graduation.](#)

Persistence rates are lower for students delaying enrollment at both two-year and four-year institutions. At two-year institutions, 71% of students who enrolled within a year after graduation persisted in the next academic year. At four-year institutions, 91% of students who enrolled within a year after graduation persisted to the next academic year. Students enrolling two years after high school graduation persist at lower rates at both two-year (61%) and four-year institutions (75%).

Persistence rates for students enrolling at four-year institutions two years after high school graduation (75%) lag students enrolling within a year of graduation (91%). Students enrolling at two-year institutions two years after graduation (61%) also lag students enrolling directly (71%).

### **Students who delay enrollment are less likely to complete their program of study.**

Completion rates differ by institutional sector and the timing of first enrollment. Of students starting at four-year institutions within a year of high school graduation, 77% complete a post-secondary degree or certificate within six years. Of students starting at a two-year institution, 48% will complete a degree or certificate in the same time frame. Students enrolling for the first time two years after graduation complete a program at lower rates at both four-year (60%) and two-year (37%) institutions. [See Tables 3a and 3b: Achievement Rates by Postsecondary Sector and Years After Graduation.](#)

#### **Technical Notes**

- Years after enrollment is based on the first academic year a student enrolls in any post-secondary institution. The institutional sector is based on the highest level of enrollment in the first enrollment 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.
- The persistence rate is the percentage of students who enroll in any post-secondary institution in any quarter of the academic year immediately following the first year of enrollment.
- Achievement rates count all students completing any post-secondary certificate or degree program within 150% of normal four-year graduation time or six academic years from first post-secondary enrollment year.
- Students attending Washington public two-year institutions can declare multiple reasons for enrollment. To avoid duplicating counts, the transfer intent category includes any student with the intent to transfer regardless of other intentions. This includes students who intend to transfer as well as earn a professional/technical achievement. The professional/technical intent category includes only students with professional/technical or other intent. All other students, excluding adult basic education, are counted in the other/unknown intent category. The analysis excludes students exclusively in adult basic education programs.
- Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI): Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) — For data on high school graduates.
- Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) — For data on enrollment, persistence, and completion at Washington state two-year institutions
- Public Centralized Higher Education Enrollment System (PCHEES) housed at the Office of Financial Management (OFM) — For data on course enrollment, persistence, and completion at Washington state public four-year institutions.
- National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) — For data on enrollment, persistence, and completion after high school at Washington state private and tribal institutions as well as out-of-state institutions.

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<sup>4</sup> Average cumulative achievement rates for the 2013, 2014, 2015 graduating classes.

## Tables

**Table 1: Enrollment Rates by Years After Graduation**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1 year after	62.4%	62.3%	61.2%	61.0%	61.4%	60.6%	60.1%	53.5%	54.8%	55.2%	55.7%
2 years after	5.6%	5.2%	5.3%	5.3%	4.8%	4.7%	3.8%	5.3%	5.4%	5.5%	
3 years after	2.6%	2.5%	2.5%	2.4%	2.4%	2.0%	2.0%	2.5%	2.7%		
4 years after	1.4%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%	1.7%			
5 years after	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%	1.0%	1.1%	1.2%				

**Table 2a: Enrollment Rates for Two-Year Institutions by Transfer Intent and Years After Graduation**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1 year after	72.0%	71.4%	71.9%	72.7%	71.3%	68.2%	67.7%	69.3%	70.2%	68.2%	68.6%
2 years after	50.5%	52.0%	55.0%	53.8%	47.1%	48.3%	49.8%	51.4%	52.2%	51.1%	
3 years after	42.9%	41.4%	40.3%	39.8%	40.4%	38.8%	38.8%	42.1%	44.8%		
4 years after	40.5%	38.1%	35.5%	33.8%	38.3%	34.3%	37.6%	37.4%			
5 years after	33.3%	30.7%	27.6%	35.0%	29.7%	31.4%	36.6%				

**Table 2b: Enrollment Rates for Two-Year Institutions by Professional/Technical Training Intent and Years After Graduation**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1 year after	20.1%	21.5%	20.2%	19.9%	21.5%	24.5%	24.7%	22.1%	20.3%	20.6%	21.9%
2 years after	35.9%	33.2%	31.6%	33.0%	38.0%	35.5%	32.6%	32.3%	29.3%	33.4%	
3 years after	36.8%	39.3%	38.9%	43.6%	40.3%	39.2%	39.1%	34.5%	34.8%		
4 years after	39.6%	43.2%	45.9%	43.4%	38.7%	43.0%	37.4%	41.5%			
5 years after	43.3%	47.9%	43.9%	41.1%	45.3%	42.1%	40.9%				

**Table 2c: Enrollment Rates for Two-Year Institutions by Other/Unknown Intent and Years After Graduation**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1 year after	7.9%	7.1%	8.0%	7.4%	7.2%	7.3%	7.6%	8.6%	9.5%	11.1%	9.5%
2 years after	13.7%	14.8%	13.4%	13.2%	14.9%	16.2%	17.6%	16.3%	18.5%	15.6%	
3 years after	20.2%	19.4%	20.9%	16.6%	19.3%	22.0%	22.1%	23.4%	20.4%		
4 years after	19.9%	18.7%	18.7%	22.8%	23.0%	22.7%	25.0%	21.1%			
5 years after	23.4%	21.5%	28.5%	23.9%	25.0%	26.5%	22.6%				

**Table 3: Persistence Rates by Years After Graduation**

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
1 year after	85.2%	85.2%	84.8%	85.7%	84.5%	84.8%	81.9%	83.1%	84.5%	84.0%
2 years after	62.0%	63.4%	65.2%	63.2%	64.9%	61.3%	62.6%	65.9%	65.6%	
3 years after	64.3%	65.0%	63.0%	65.2%	61.8%	63.5%	64.8%	63.3%		
4 years after	64.5%	63.3%	60.9%	62.1%	61.4%	61.0%	64.0%			
5 years after	64.2%	62.5%	64.1%	61.5%	63.6%	63.2%				

**Table 4a: Achievement Rates by Two-Year Institution and Years After Graduation**

	2013	2014	2015	2016
2-year institution				
1 year after	47.5%	47.4%	47.8%	47.5%
2 years after	30.6%	31.1%	31.5%	
3 years after	32.3%	34.2%		
4 years after	31.1%			

**Table 4b: Achievement Rates by Four Year Institution and Years After Graduation**

	2013	2014	2015	2016
1 year after	78.0%	77.2%	76.9%	77.2%
2 years after	45.7%	60.2%	59.2%	
3 years after	54.2%	51.2%		
4 years after	37.3%			