



NEW ENGLAND
SECONDARY SCHOOL
CONSORTIUM

Common Data Project

2013 Annual Report

School Year 2011–2012

Improving the Quality and Comparability of State Educational Data in New England

The New England Secondary School Consortium Common Data Project:

2013 Annual Report: School Year 2011-2012

This report was written by Research in Action, Inc. (d.b.a., The RIA Group) under contract with the Great Schools Partnership. The report was produced in collaboration with the departments and agencies of education in the New England Secondary School Consortium's five member states of Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

For questions related to the *2013 Annual Report: School Year 2012-2011*:

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ABOUT THE COMMON DATA PROJECT

Beginning in 2009, the five state education agencies (SEAs) participating in the New England Secondary School Consortium have been collecting, calculating, and reporting graduation rates, dropout rates, and postsecondary-enrollment and -persistence rates using consistent procedures and methodologies co-developed by a regional team of data specialists from the departments and agencies of education in Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. To our knowledge, the New England Secondary School Consortium's Common Data Project is the first initiative of its kind in the United States.

Recognizing the critical importance of high-quality data to effective school improvement, our five participating states decided to proactively address data quality, reliability, and comparability, rather than waiting for an outside entity to establish new guidance and regulations.

To promote more accurate and reliable data comparability across the five NESSC member states, the Common Data Project develops and implements standardized procedures designed to eliminate unwanted variance that may result from divergent data systems, the misinterpretation of agreed-upon rules, or computational errors. The Data Project has also created a series of quality-control mechanisms that further improve the reliability and comparability of state-reported data.

How the Project Works

- Data specialists from the participating SEAs, along with representatives from higher education and other data experts, meet several times throughout the year to discuss best practices, refine agreements, and coordinate the collection and reporting of data. Each participating SEA shares and discusses its data practices with other SEAs, and several refinements of in-state data procedures have resulted from lessons learned from other states.
- All five states use common metrics, procedures, and rules when compiling, calculating, and reporting data. A full description of these procedures can be found in the [Common Data Project 2013–2014 Procedural Guidebook](#). The goal is continual improvement of data reliability and comparability across the region.
- The common procedures and rules are published under a [Creative Commons license](#), which allows for the free use of all content, and other SEAs and educational organizations are encouraged to use and adapt our work.
- Each year, the NESSC produces a comprehensive report on graduation rates, dropout rates, and postsecondary enrollments and persistence for each of the five states. The NESSC, and its participating SEAs and partners, use these annual reports to help evaluate the impact of state policies and initiatives designed to improve secondary schools and student performance.
- Each year, the five SEAs publish the NESSC metrics on their websites, making the data available to the educators, policy makers, and the public.
- The common data procedures and metrics are compliant with all state and federal rules, regulations, and guidance related to data quality and reporting.
- The common-data reporting is used to track statewide and regional improvements in school and student-subgroup performance within and across states. The comparable data set—in place since the baseline year of 2009—allows for more reliable cross-state comparisons.

- A comprehensive “college-readiness index” that takes into account academic, socioeconomic, and behavioral data is currently under development. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University and the Center for Education Policy, Applied Research and Evaluation at the University of Southern Maine have been collaborating on the development of the index.

Project Innovations

- **Common Metrics:** The Common Data Project has produced a set of common formulas that are used to calculate secondary graduation rates, secondary dropout rates, and postsecondary-enrollment, -persistence, and -completion rates. A multiple-measure “college-readiness index” is currently under development.
- **Common Rules:** All five departments of education follow the same “business rules” and procedures when collecting, calculating, and reporting common data to improve consistency, comparability, and quality.
- **Common Definitions:** Each variable in the common regional data set is determined using consistently applied definitions. For example, all five departments of education follow the same definitions for economically disadvantaged students, English-language learners, students with disabilities, and other student subgroups.
- **Common Reporting Windows:** All five departments of education follow common data-collection and data-reporting timelines. Since most large-scale databases are continually updated, common reporting windows improve the consistency and comparability of multistate data sets.
- **Common Quality-Control Procedures:** The Common Data Project uses both internal (state-by-state controls) and external (third-party coordination and auditing) as part of its common quality-control framework. The redundant, multistage protocol is designed to improve data quality throughout the collection, calculation, and reporting cycle.

Selected Indicators

The New England Secondary School Consortium has established four performance goals to be achieved in each of the five states: (1) increase high school graduation rates, (2) decrease dropout rates, (3) increase the percentage of students enrolling in two- and four-year postsecondary programs or pursuing industry-certified and accredited postsecondary certificates, and (4) increase the percentage of students who graduate from high school college ready. The Data Team, in conjunction with external third parties, created five performance indicators using agreed-upon metrics. The common metrics, in conjunction with a standardized set of business procedures and rules, significantly increase the comparability of reported data on each indicator across the five Consortium states. To our knowledge, only the federal government, via the National Center for Educational Statistics, has attempted to provide the public with comparable metrics on key educational initiatives.

Graduation Rate [Status: Operational] [Baseline Year: 2009]

Graduation rates have been computed using the formula articulated in 34 C.F.R. §200.19. The rate relies on the identification and tracking of a four-year graduation cohort. All states in the Consortium currently report the federal graduation rate. The following formula is used for calculating the graduation rate:

$$\text{(# of Graduating Seniors)} \div \text{(# of First-time Freshman +/- Transfers In or Out)}$$

Dropout Rate [Status: Operational] [Baseline Year: 2009]

The Consortium dropout data is closely linked to the data used in calculating the adjusted cohort graduation rate. Data Team members recognize that, as the graduation rate and dropout rate have often been reported using disparate methods, a clearer relationship between these measures would be helpful. The National Governors Association offered guidance on the dropout rate by recommending that dropouts be counted as those students who have not completed high school and are no longer enrolled in high school. This rate is calculated as a cohort formula using the same adjusted freshman cohort used for the graduation rate. The following formula is used for calculating dropout rate:

$$\text{(# in Adjusted Freshman Cohort)} - \text{(Graduates + Students Still Enrolled + Other Completers)} \\ = \text{Dropouts} \mid \text{Dropout Rate} = \text{Dropouts} \div \text{Adjusted Freshman Cohort}$$

College Enrollment [Status: Operational] [Baseline Year: 2009]

The rationale for collecting postsecondary-enrollment data is to determine the percentage of students who go on to further education after completing high school. All five Consortium states use data collected by the National Student Clearinghouse. All reports using Clearinghouse data are run during a common reporting window to reduce variance associated with ongoing updating of the Clearinghouse's national database. The following formula is used for calculating postsecondary enrollment:

$$\text{(# of Students Enrolled in Postsecondary)} \div \text{(# of High School Graduates)}$$

College Persistence [Status: Operational] [Baseline Year: 2011]

Postsecondary persistence is determined by the number of high school graduates who attend two- or four-year institutions of higher education and graduate. This indicator will eventually include enrollment and completion data for students who attend one-year postsecondary professional certificate programs (e.g., LPN). The data reported by this indicator does not reflect all students starting and completing their postsecondary education "on time." For that reason, the college-persistence rate will be computed over a six-year period. All Consortium states use data collected by the National Student Clearinghouse. The following formula is used for calculating postsecondary success in four-year programs (the same formula is modified for two-year programs):

$$\text{(# of Students Completing Postsecondary within 6 Years)} \div \text{(Freshman College Cohort)}$$

College-Readiness Index (CRI) [Status: Pending] [Baseline Year: TBD]

Since college readiness is such a complex and important metric to capture, the Data Team recommended that the Consortium use multiple measures to create a "college-readiness index."

The Consortium's college-readiness index is currently under development, and the Data Team is collaborating with the Annenberg Center for School Reform at Brown University and the Center for Education Policy, Applied Research and Evaluation at the University of Southern Maine (for more information, see pages 15–16). The team agreed on a working definition of college readiness for the purposes of creating a college-readiness index that utilizes multiple measures. The following formula is used as a working definition of college readiness:

Completion of 24 credit hours of college coursework and a GPA of 2.5 or enrollment in a third semester of college (two- or four-year programs)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The enclosed data represent the initial reporting on five performance indicators adopted by the NESSC. The reported data focus on disaggregated graduation and dropout rates, while providing initial, aggregated data for college enrollment and persistence.

Key Findings

1. Graduation Rate

- No state has attained the NESSC's long-term graduation rate of 90.0 percent, in the aggregate.
- The performance of "at-risk" groups such as students with disabilities, students learning to speak English, and students from low income families is significantly below that of other students.
- All member states demonstrated improvements in graduation rates since the baseline year (2009).

2. Dropout Rate

- No state has attained the NESSC's long-term graduation rate of <1.0 percent, in the aggregate.
- The performance of "at-risk" groups such as students with disabilities, students learning to speak English, and students from low income families is significantly below that of other students.
- All member states have demonstrated decreased dropout rates since the baseline year (2009).

3. College Enrollment Rate

- No state rate has reached the original long-term goal of 80.0 percent.

4. College Persistence Rate

- All state rates have reached 80.0 percent.

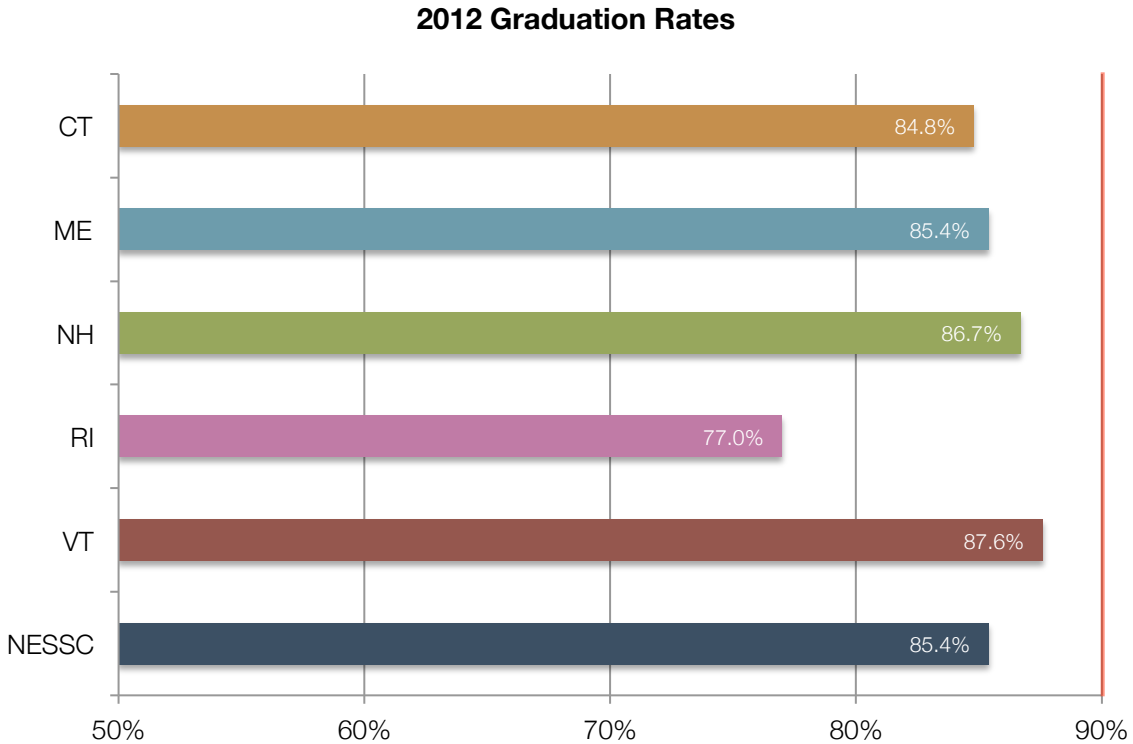
SECTION I

Graduation Rates

1.0 Graduation Rates: Cross-State Comparison

Guiding Question

How did the graduation rates in 2012 compare across the member states?



Major Findings

- Rates had a range of approximately 10.6 percentage points.
- The median rate was 85.4 percent; and the highest reported rate was 87.6 percent (Vermont).
- No rate reached the original long-term goal of 90.0 percent.

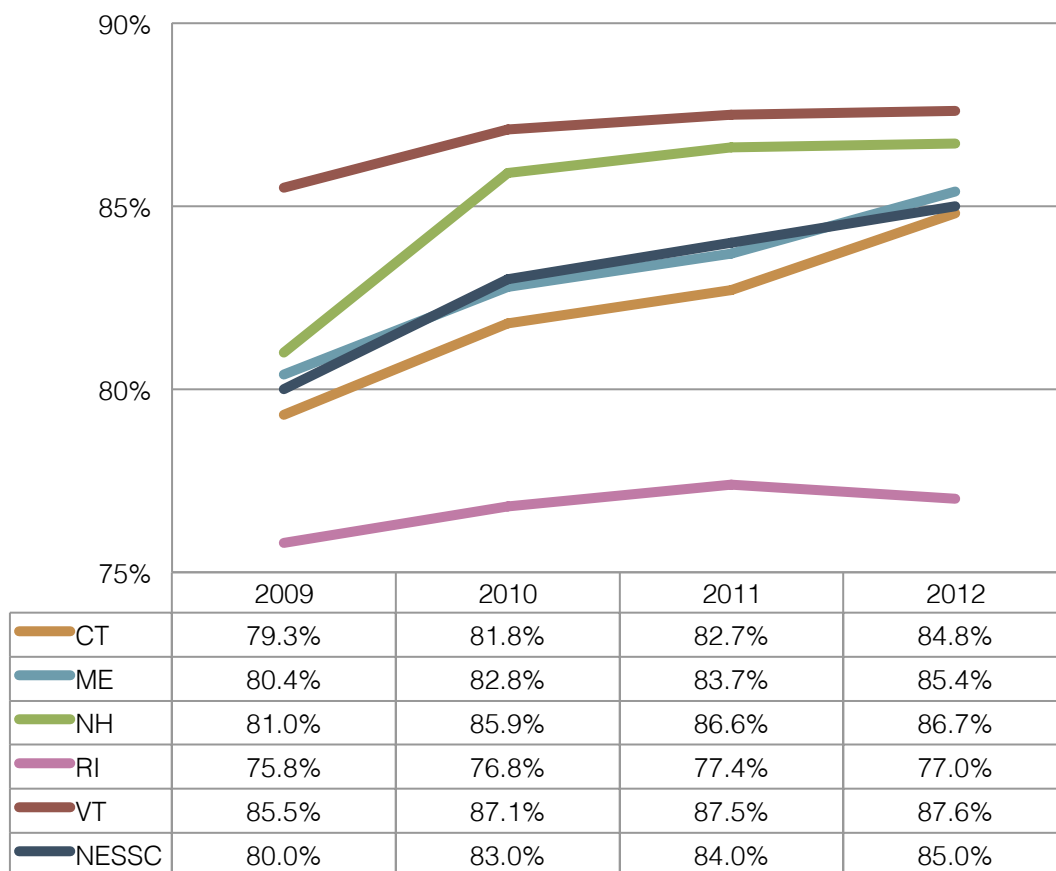
*NOTE: National graduation rate as reported by the NCESS was 85.3 percent. Throughout this report, the “NESSC” value represents the median rate.

1.1 Graduation Rates: Four-Year Trend

Guiding Question

To what degree did graduation rates improve over the past four years?

Graduation Rates: Four-Year Trend



Major Findings

- Change rates had a range of approximately 4.5 percentage points.
- The median change rate was 5.0 percentage points; and the largest change rate was 5.7 percentage points (New Hampshire).
- All member states demonstrated improvements in graduation rates since the baseline year (2009).

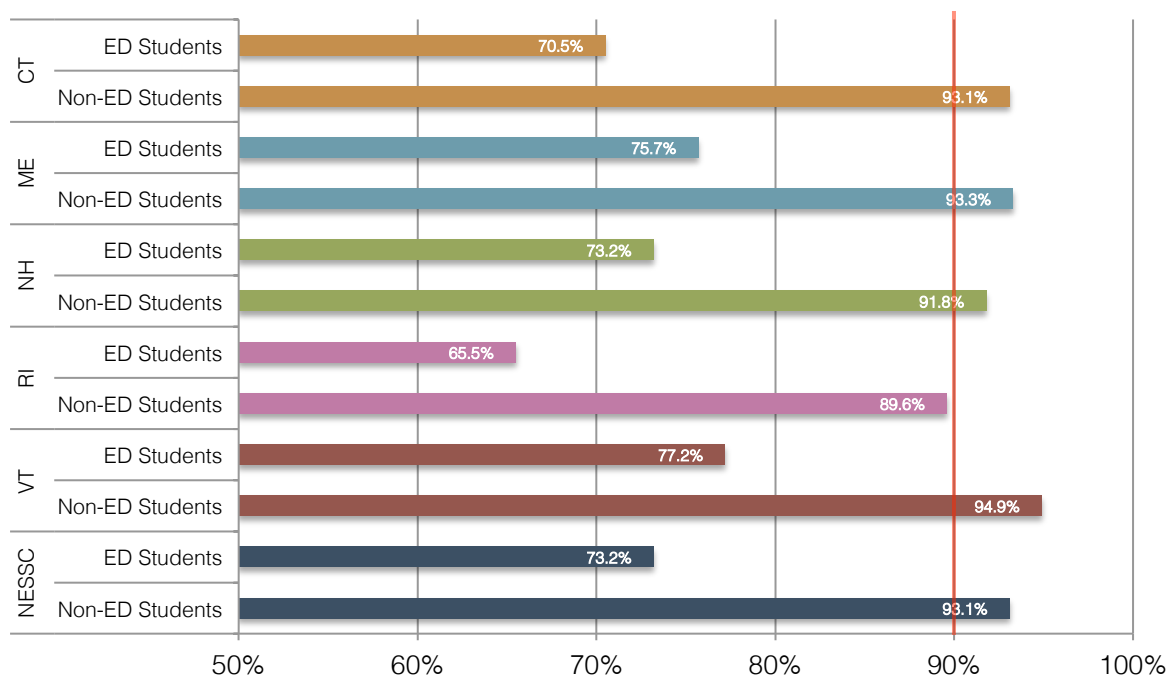
*NOTE: New Hampshire 2009 data were estimated and Connecticut 2009 data may not be comparable with other years.

1.2 Graduation Rates: Economically Disadvantaged Students

Guiding Question

How did the 2012 graduation rates for economically disadvantaged (ED) students compare across the member states?

2012 Graduation Rates: Economically Disadvantaged Students



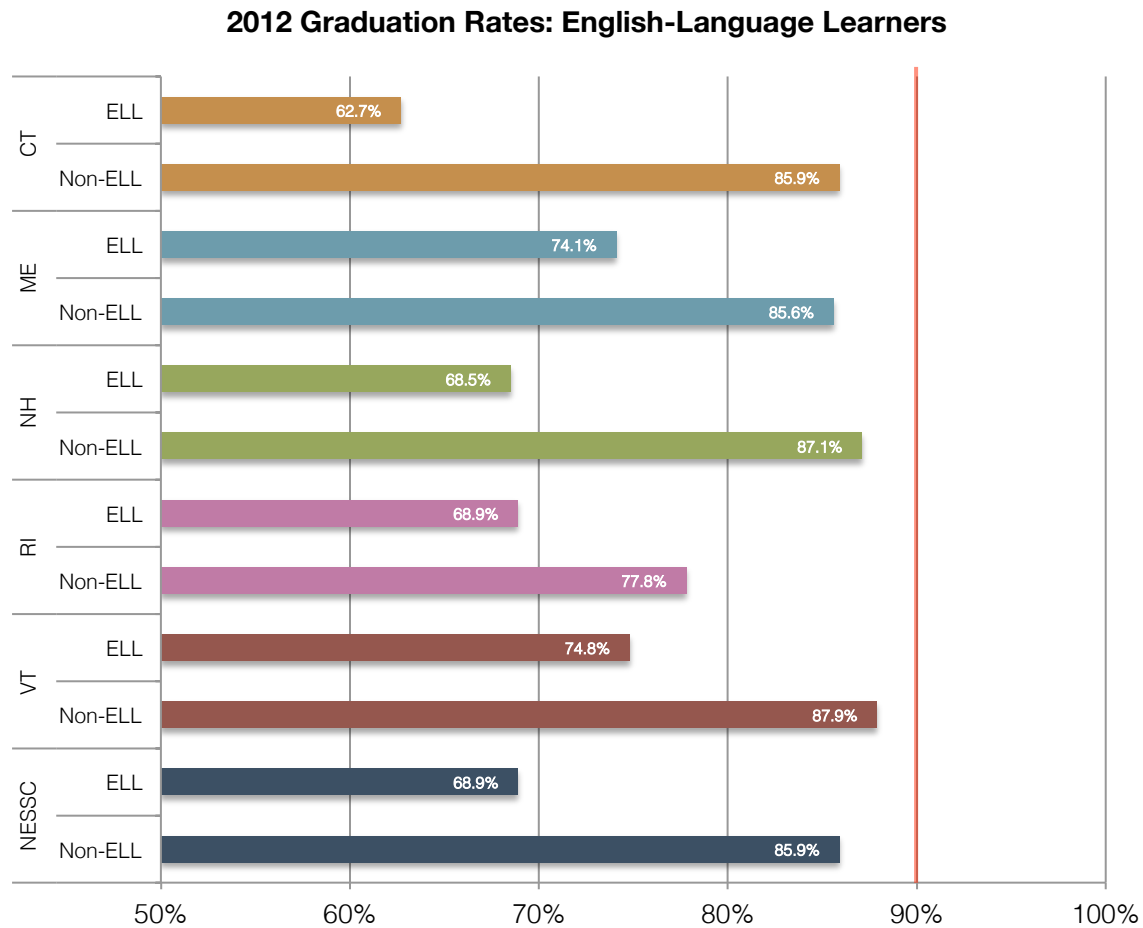
Major Findings

- The rates had a range of approximately 11.7 percentage points.
- The median rate for ED students was 73.2 percent; and the highest reported ED graduation rate was 77.2 percent (Vermont).
- No ED graduation rate reached the original long-term goal of 90.0 percent; however, four (4) out of five (5) states had non-ED rates meeting the goal.

1.3 Graduation Rates: English-Language Learners

Guiding Question

How did the 2012 graduation rates for English-language learners (ELLs) compare across the member states?



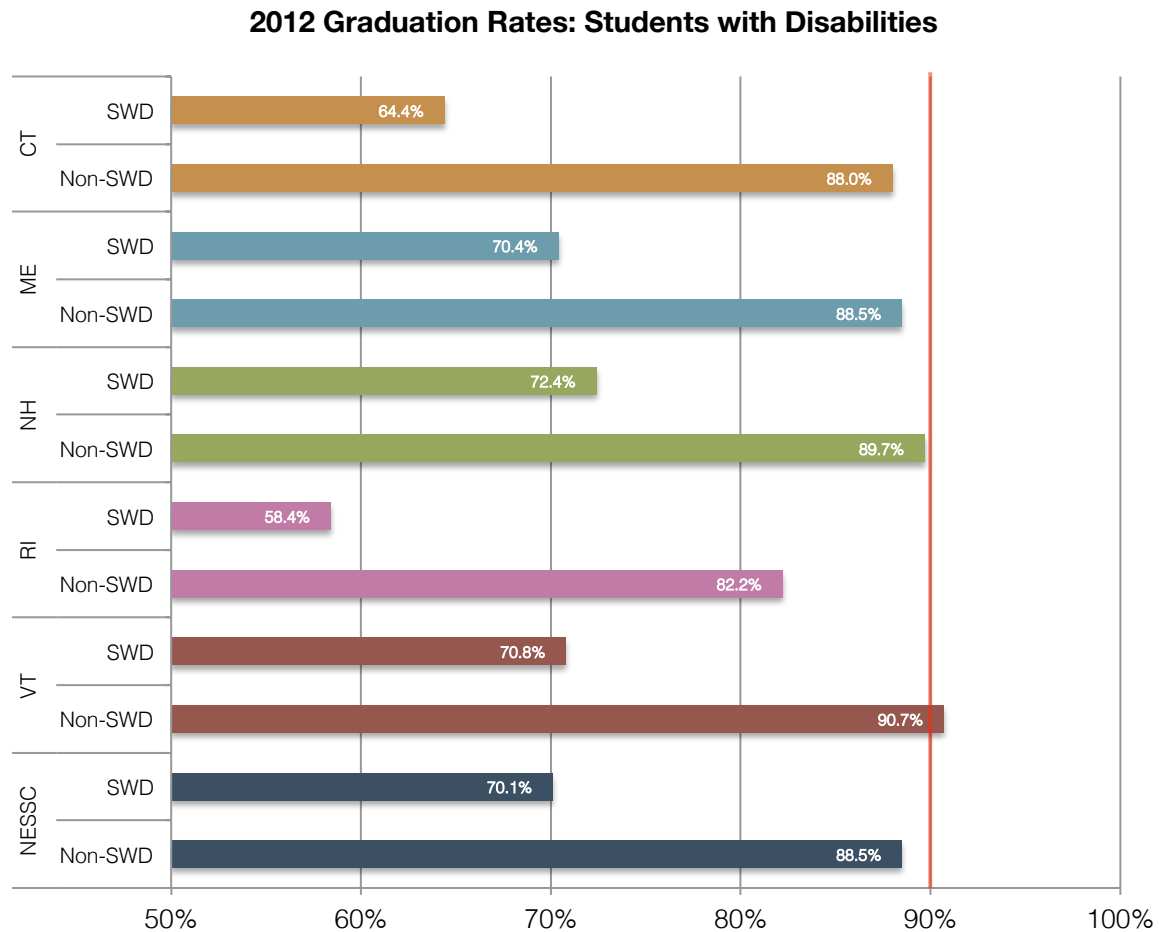
Major Findings

- The rates had a range of approximately 12.1 percentage points.
- The median rate for ELL students was 68.9 percent; and the highest reported ELL graduation rate was 74.8 percent (Vermont).
- No ELL graduation rate reached the original long-term goal of 90.0 percent.

1.4 Graduation Rates: Student with Disabilities

Guiding Question

How did the 2012 graduation rates for students with disabilities (SWDs) compare across the member states?



Major Findings

- The rates had a range of approximately 14.1 percentage points.
- The median rate for SWD students was 70.1 percent; and the highest reported SWD rate was 72.4 percent (New Hampshire).
- No SWD graduation rate reached the original long-term goal of 90.0 percent; however, one state (Vermont) reached the long-term goal for non-SWD students.

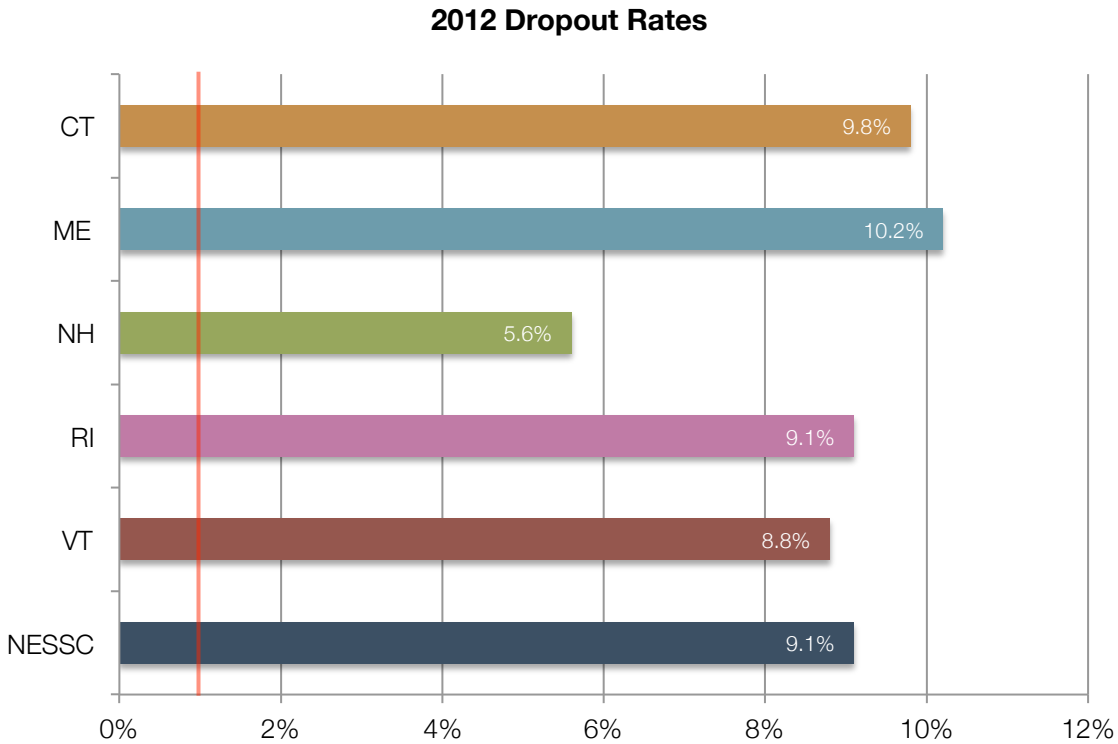
SECTION II

Dropout Rates

2.0 Dropout Rates: Cross-State Comparison

Guiding Question

How did the dropout rates in 2012 compare across the member states?



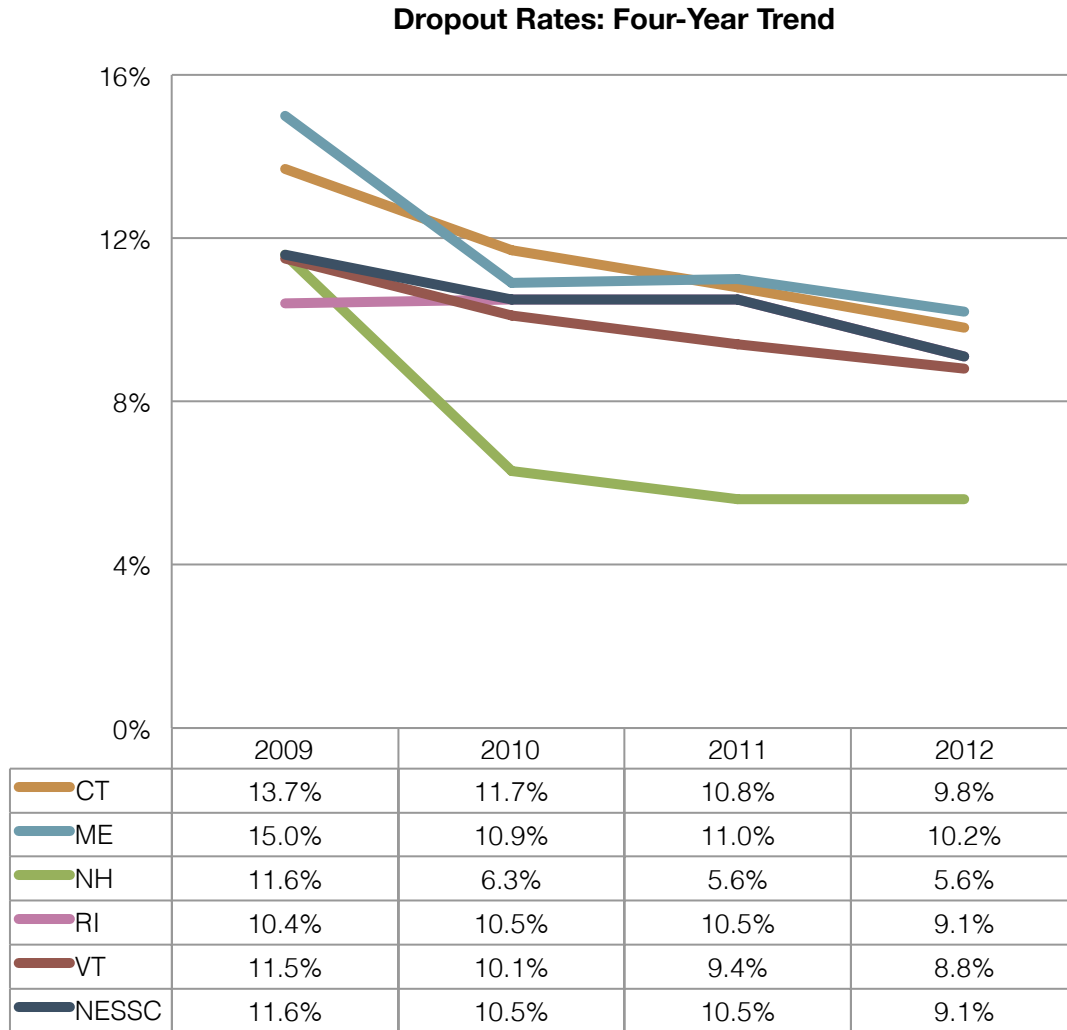
Major Findings

- Rates had a range of approximately 4.6 percentage points.
- The median rate was 9.1 percent, with the lowest reported rate at 5.6 percent (New Hampshire).
- No rate reached the original long-term goal of <1.0 percent.

2.1 Dropout Rates: Four-Year Trend

Guiding Question

To what degree did dropout rates decrease over the past four years?



Major Findings

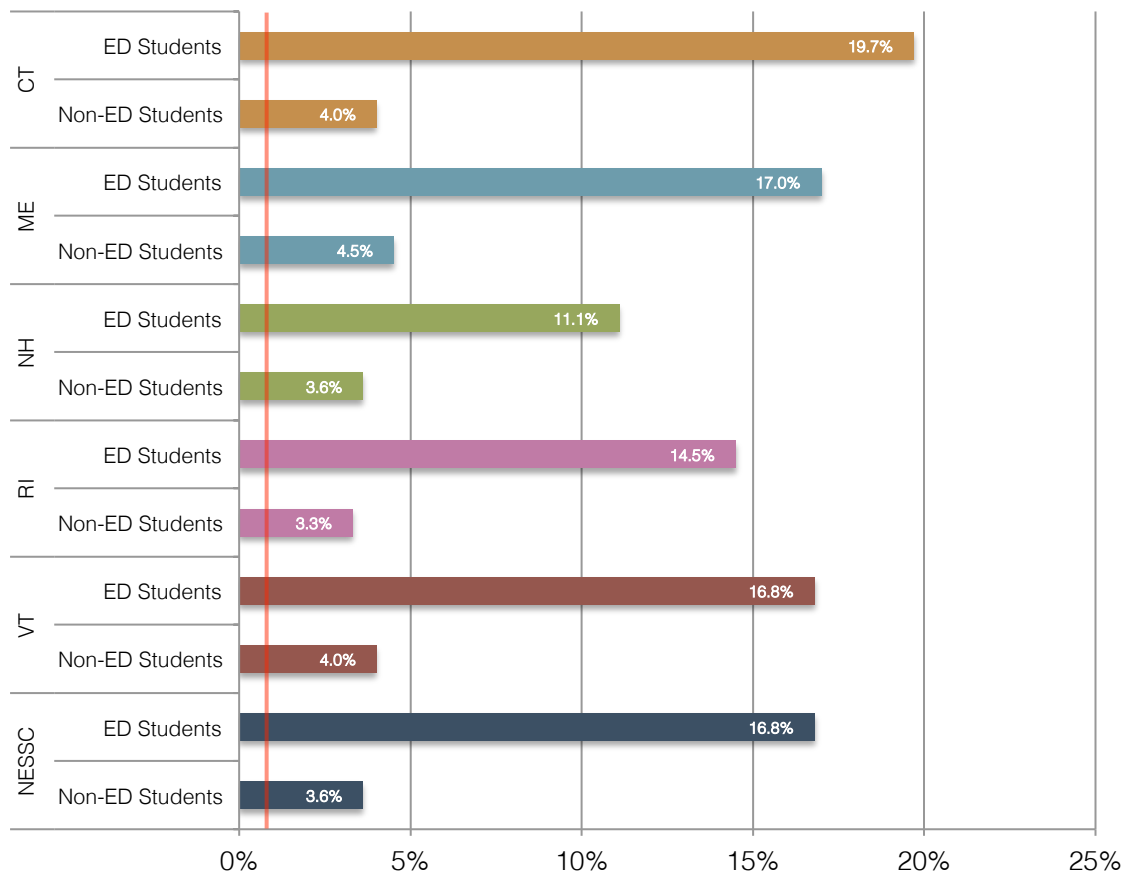
- Change rates had a range of approximately 5.0 percentage points.
- The median change rate was 3.9 percentage points; and the largest change rate was 6.3 percentage points (New Hampshire).
- All member states have demonstrated decreased dropout rates since the baseline year (2009).

2.2 Dropout Rates: Economically Disadvantaged Students

Guiding Question

How did the 2012 dropout rates for economically disadvantaged (ED) students compare across the member states?

2012 Dropout Rates: Economically Disadvantaged Students



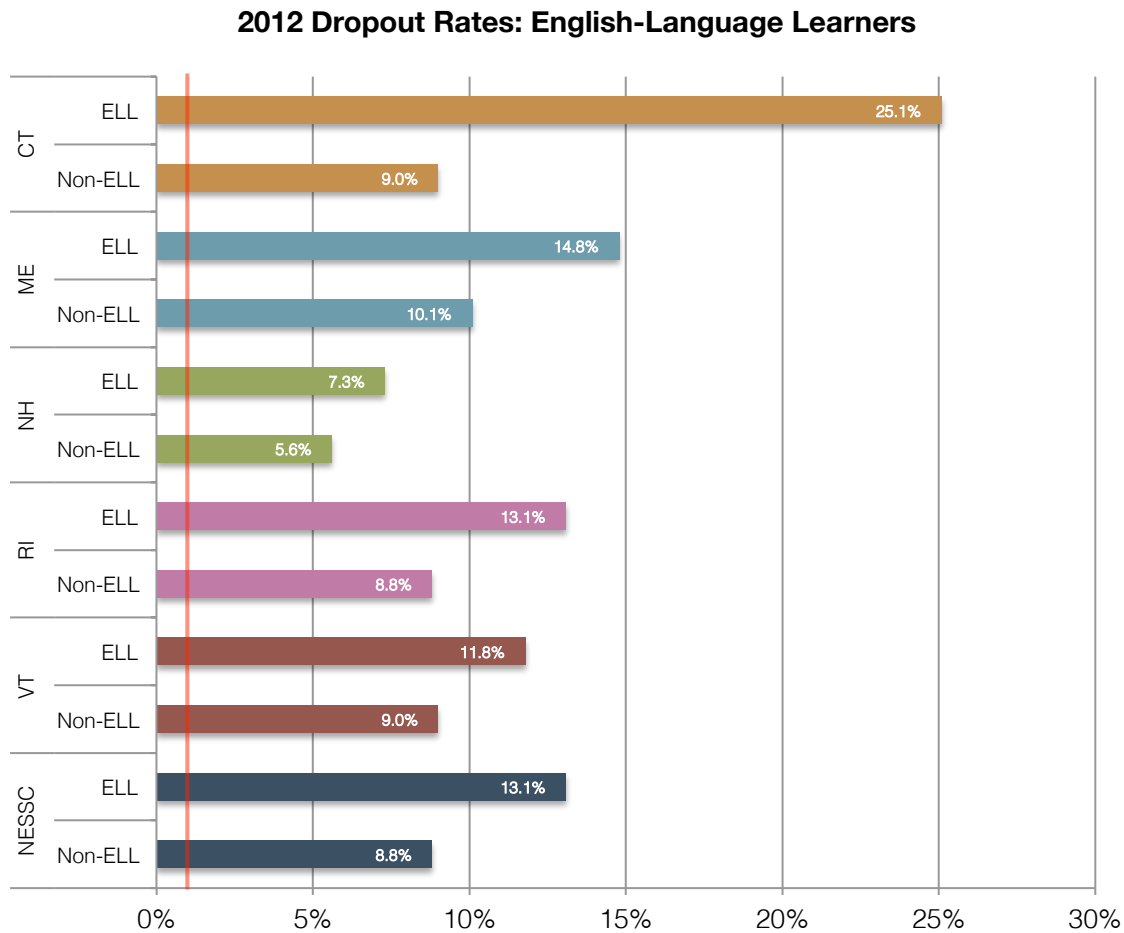
Major Findings

- The rates had a range of approximately 15.2 percentage points.
- The median rate for ED dropouts was 16.8 percent; and the lowest reported ED dropout rate was 11.1 percent (New Hampshire).
- No ED rate reached the original long-term goal of <1.0 percent.

2.3 Dropout Rates: English-Language Learners

Guiding Question

How did the 2012 dropout rates for English-language learners (ELLs) compare across the member states?



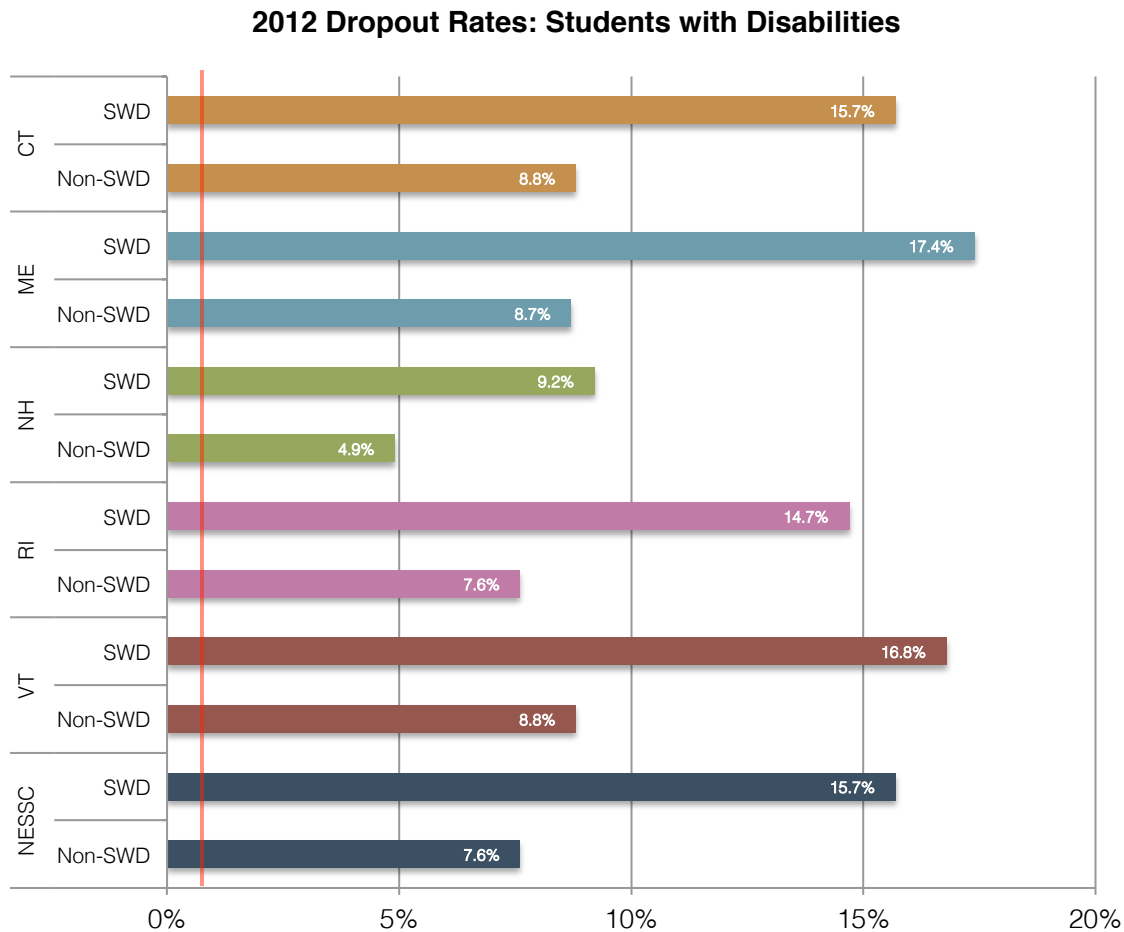
Major Findings

- The rates had a range of approximately 15.0 percentage points.
- The median rate for ELL dropouts was 13.1 percent; and the lowest reported ELL dropout rate was 7.3 percent (New Hampshire).
- No ELL dropout rate reached the original long-term goal of <1.0 percent.

2.4 Dropout Rates: Students with Disabilities

Guiding Question

How did the 2012 dropout rates for students with disabilities (SWDs) compare across the member states?



Major Findings

- The rates had a range of approximately 8.6 percentage points.
- The median rate for SWD dropouts was 15.7 percent; and the lowest reported SWD rate was 9.2 percent (New Hampshire).
- No SWD dropout rate reached the original long-term goal of <1.0 percent.

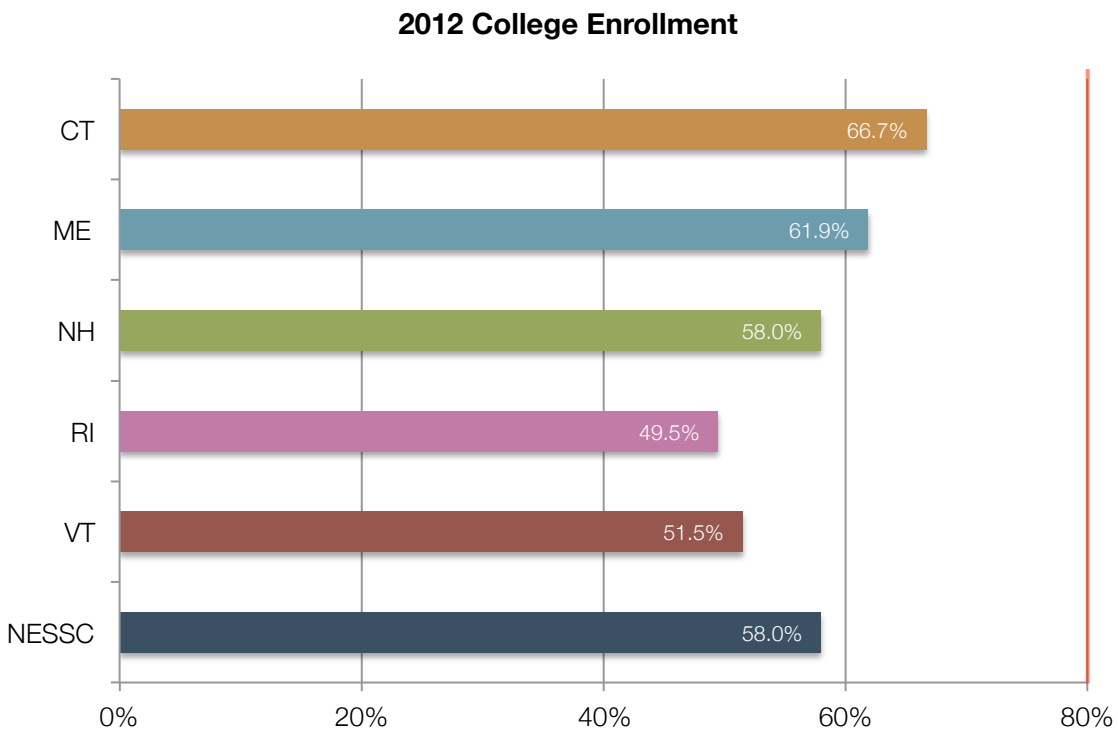
SECTION III

College-Enrollment Rates

3.0 College-Enrollment Rates: Cross State Comparison

Guiding Question

How did the college-enrollment rates in 2012 compare across the member states?



Major Findings

- The rates had a range of approximately 17.2 percentage points.
- The median rate was 58.8 percent; and the highest reported rate was 66.7 percent (Connecticut).
- No rates reached the long-term goal of 80.0 percent.

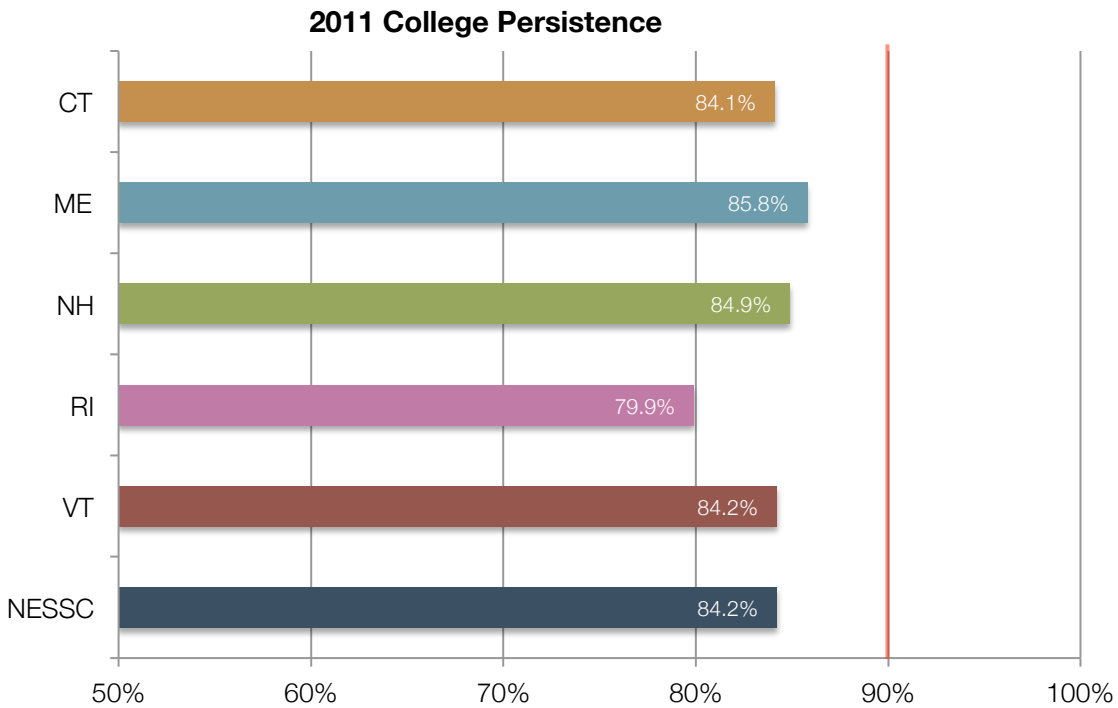
SECTION IV

College-Persistence Rates

4.0 College-Persistence Rates: Cross-State Comparison

Guiding Question

How did the college-persistence rates in 2011 compare across the member states?



Major Findings

- Rates had a range of approximately 5.9 percentage points.
- The median rate was 84.2 percent; and the highest reported rate was 85.8 percent (Maine).
- All rates reached the long-term goal of 80.0 percent.

*NOTE: These data are lagged to allow sufficient time for first-time freshman to attend college for three semesters.

About the Common Data Project

Recognizing the critical importance of high-quality data to effective school improvement, the five state education agencies from Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont have been collecting, calculating, and reporting graduation rates, dropout rates, and postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and success rates using consistent procedures and methodologies developed by a regional team of data specialists from the five departments of education. To our knowledge, the New England Secondary School Consortium's Data Project is the first initiative of its kind in the United States.

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