



FACTS & STATS

Postsecondary Access, Retention, and Graduation among Former Foster Youth

Foster youth have the desire to attend postsecondary education.



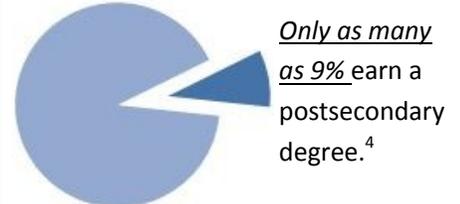
Surveys report that at least 70% of youth in foster care desire a college experience.*^{1, 2}

Although a portion of foster youth enroll in postsecondary education...



Around 40% complete some form of postsecondary education by their mid-20s.³

Former foster youth are not earning postsecondary degrees.



Only as many as 9% earn a postsecondary degree.⁴

Foster youth must be adequately prepared to perform at the postsecondary level.

Only 15% of foster youth are likely to be involved in **college preparatory classes** compared to 32% of students not in foster care.⁵

A study of youth in foster care in Washington State found that they scored **15-20 percentile points below other students** on standardized tests, and that their **foster care status alone accounted for a 7-8 percentile-point decrease** in scores.⁶

Based on a review of studies examining high school graduation rates among foster youth, about **half of foster youth complete high school by age 18.**⁷

Many former foster youth need additional academic preparation for postsecondary education: **31% of former foster youth surveyed** in the Midwest who reported being currently enrolled in college or graduate school also reported that they **needed remedial courses** at the postsecondary level.⁸

Former foster youth face a number of barriers to earning postsecondary degrees.

One study found that the most common reason for former foster youth dropping out was the need to work full time. Of the youth surveyed in this study who had ever dropped out, **61% said they needed to work full time.**⁹

Financial concerns, however, are not the only challenges former foster youth face. A study of Michigan State undergraduates found that those who had been in foster care were **almost twice as likely to have dropped out as first generation, low income undergraduates who had not been in foster care.**¹⁰

Housing instability is a unique barrier that former foster youth face in trying to succeed at the postsecondary level: research suggests that **over 1/5 of young adults who leave foster care experience homelessness** sometime after age 18.¹¹

Research has found that former foster youth in their early twenties are **more than twice as likely to be parents** as others of the same age in the general population. In a study that surveyed former foster youth, **37% indicated dropping out of postsecondary education because of childcare responsibilities.**^{12, 13}

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