



Key Facts About Postsecondary Education 2025

Shannon W. Gilkey, EdD, Commissioner

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About the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner

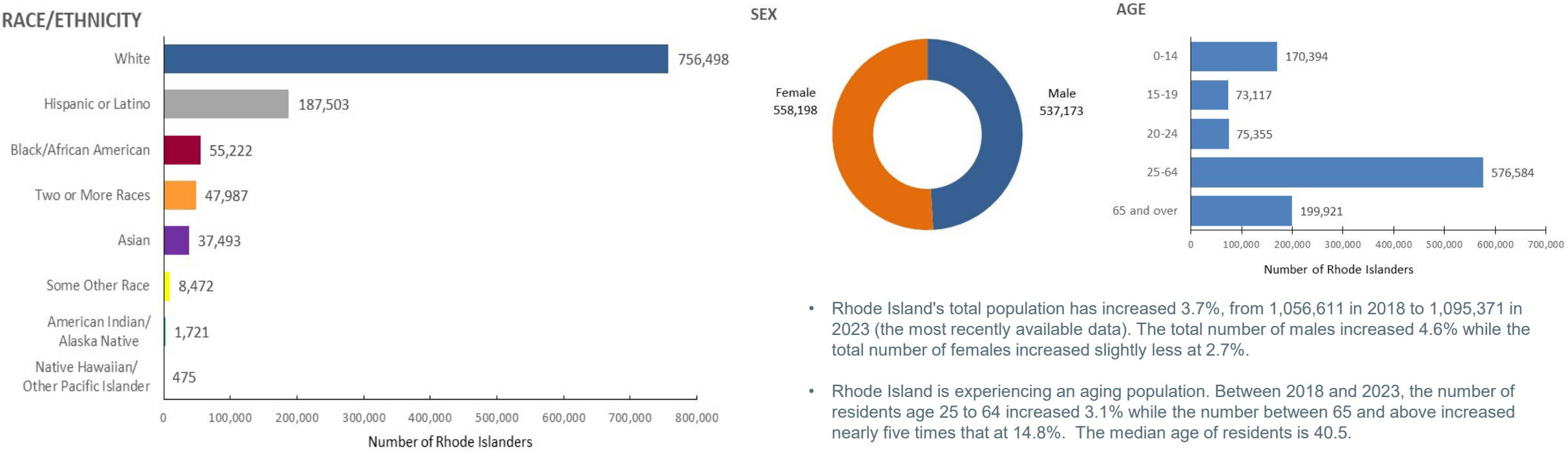


The mission of the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC) is to ensure, promote, and expand postsecondary attainment among all Rhode Islanders by providing an effective system of postsecondary education and workforce training that is high quality, equitable, accessible, affordable, and aligned to PK–12 education and the economy. Rhode Island’s system of postsecondary education should foster the economic, civic, social, and cultural growth of all Rhode Islanders, their communities, and the state. To fulfill its mission, OPC:

- Develops strategic plans to meet broad goals for the state’s higher education system that are aligned with the goals of the Board of Education and Council on Elementary and Secondary Education;
- Formulates policy to implement goals and objectives established by the Board of Education and the Council on Postsecondary Education;
- Performs data analysis and reporting to provide transparency about all aspects of postsecondary education in Rhode Island;
- Provides leadership on financial planning, budgeting compliance, and other issues related to fiscal policy for public higher education.
- Makes recommendations to the Council on Postsecondary Education regarding system policy and programmatic operations; and
- Administers the policies, rules, and regulations of the Council on Postsecondary Education.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POPULATION in Rhode Island

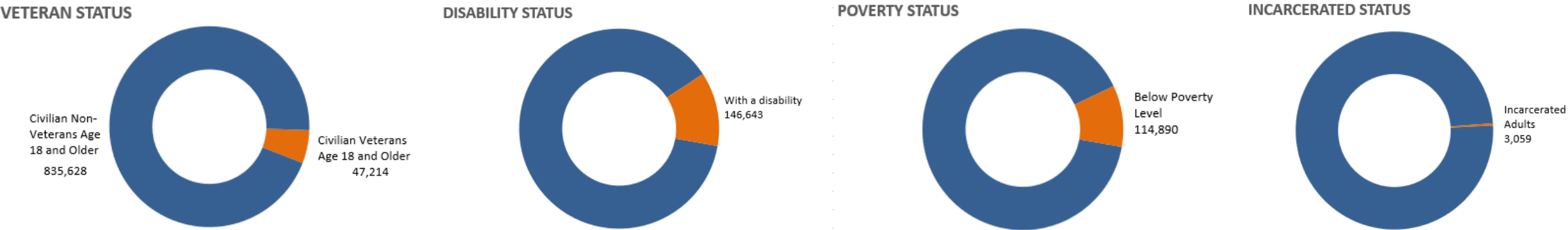
Rhode Island’s citizens represent a wide range of diverse backgrounds. Effectively providing the preparation, access, and resources our students need to achieve their postsecondary goals requires understanding who they are and what challenges they may face.



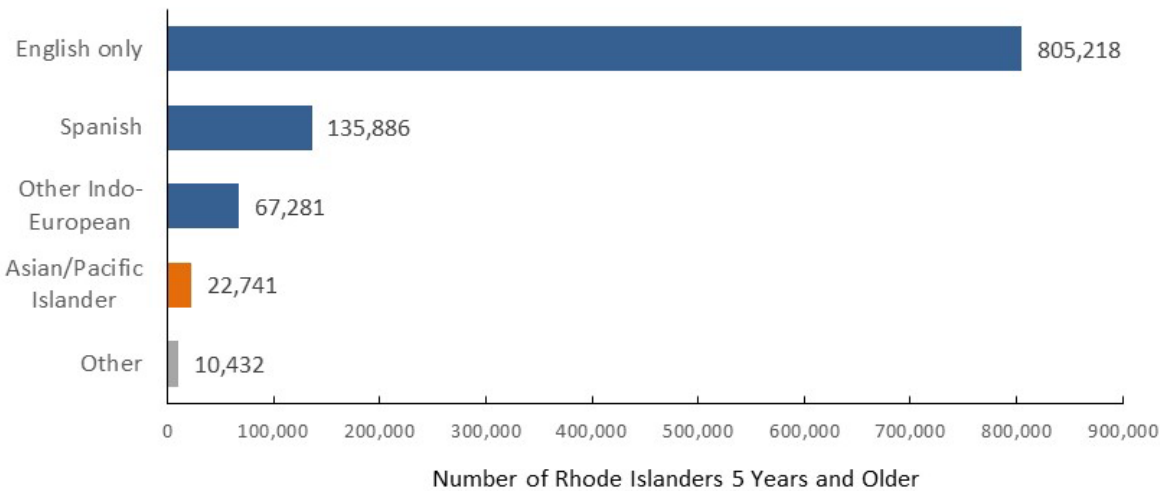
- Rhode Island's total population has increased 3.7%, from 1,056,611 in 2018 to 1,095,371 in 2023 (the most recently available data). The total number of males increased 4.6% while the total number of females increased slightly less at 2.7%.
- Rhode Island is experiencing an aging population. Between 2018 and 2023, the number of residents age 25 to 64 increased 3.1% while the number between 65 and above increased nearly five times that at 14.8%. The median age of residents is 40.5.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POPULATION in Rhode Island



LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME



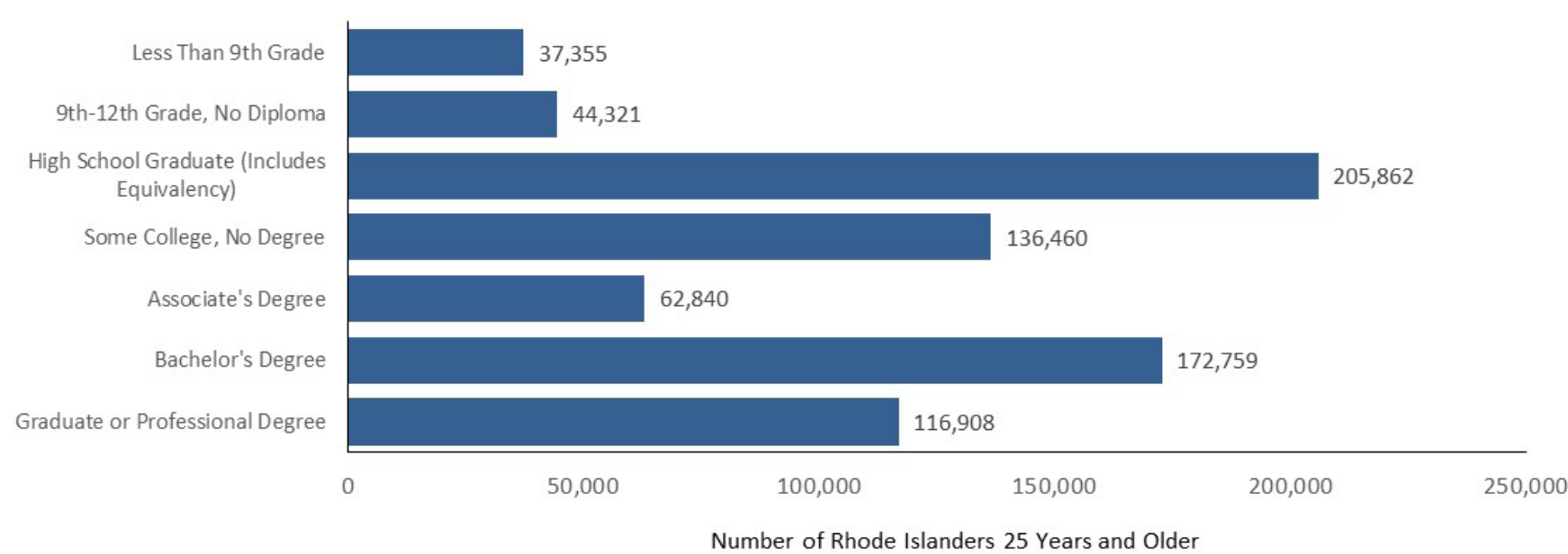
- While all Rhode Islanders need access to educational and workforce opportunities, that access often depends on the availability of supportive services. Removing barriers such as lack of childcare, housing instability, and food insecurity is essential to helping students become educated, engaged, and employed.
- The proportion of urban core residents living below poverty level (18.6%) is significantly higher than that of RI overall (10.9%).
- Among those who are incarcerated, approximately one-third (34.0%) have a high school diploma or equivalent while 30.4% have some college or associate's degree.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT in Rhode Island

Rhode Island’s attainment goal is for 70% of working-age residents to have a postsecondary degree or credential by 2030. This goal cannot be accomplished by any single agency or institution. Instead, Rhode Island must establish collective ownership and work together to provide resources and supports to Rhode Islanders as they pursue postsecondary education.

OVERALL ATTAINMENT



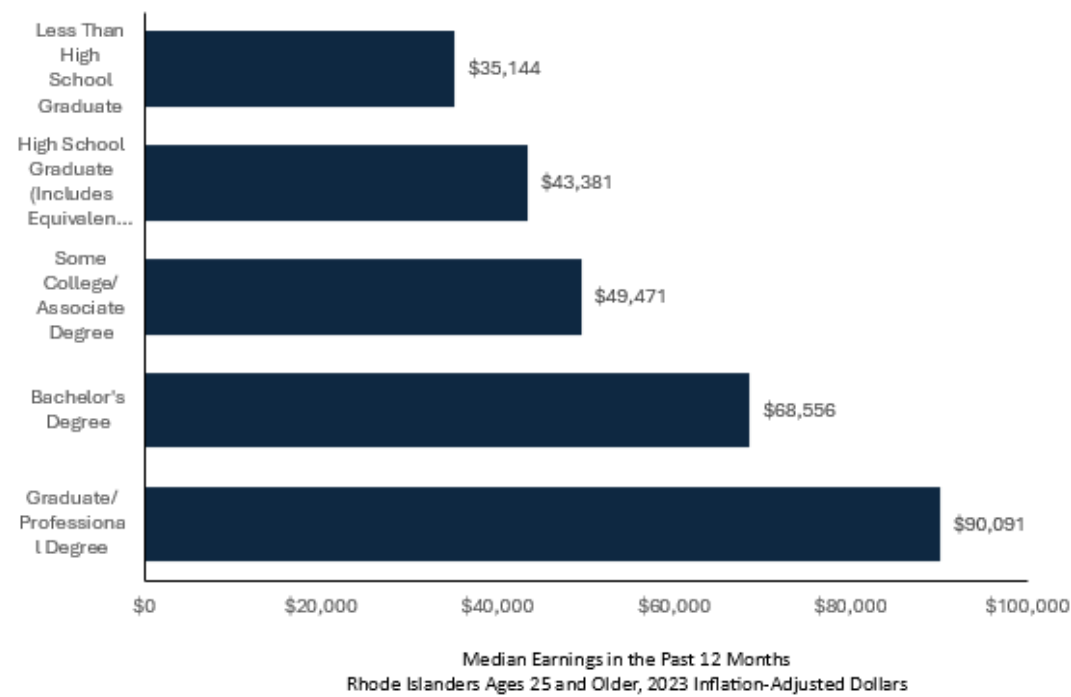
- Among **working-age** Rhode Islanders (ages 25-64), 55.2% have a postsecondary degree *or* credential. Of the 6.6% who hold a short-term credential, 2.2% have certificates while 4.4% have certifications.

Source: Lumina Foundation, *A Stronger Nation* 2025.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS in Rhode Island

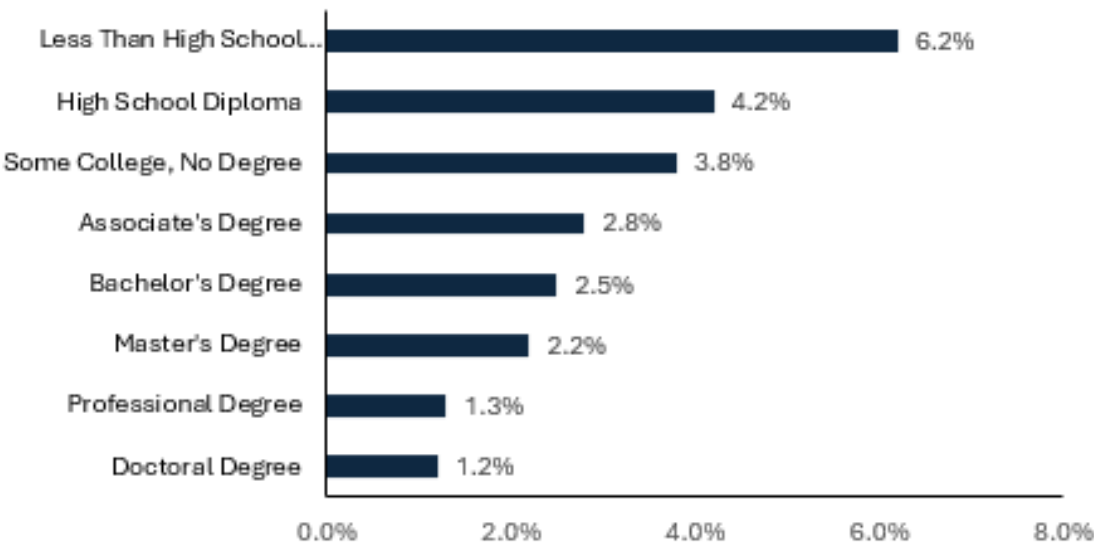
RHODE ISLAND EARNINGS BY ATTAINMENT LEVEL



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

It is estimated that by 2031, 72% of jobs in the U.S. and 67% of jobs in RI will require some postsecondary education. (Source: Carnevale, A. P., et al. (2023). *After Everything: Projections of Jobs, Education, and Training Requirements through 2031*. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.)

U.S. 2024 UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY ATTAINMENT LEVEL



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over.

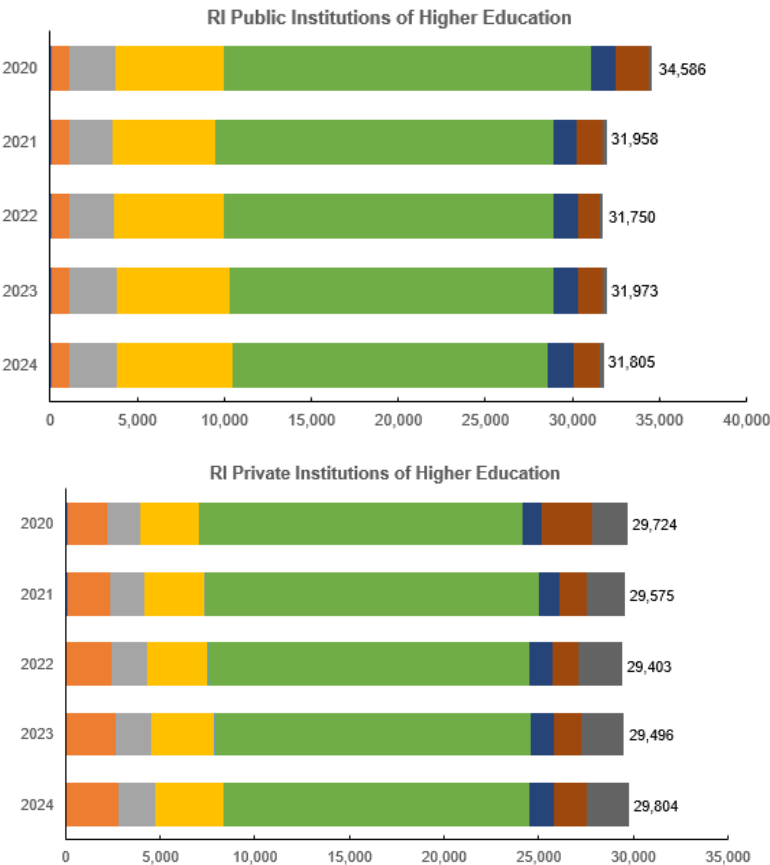
Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Individuals who have earned a postsecondary degree are more likely to experience lower unemployment rates and higher median earnings.

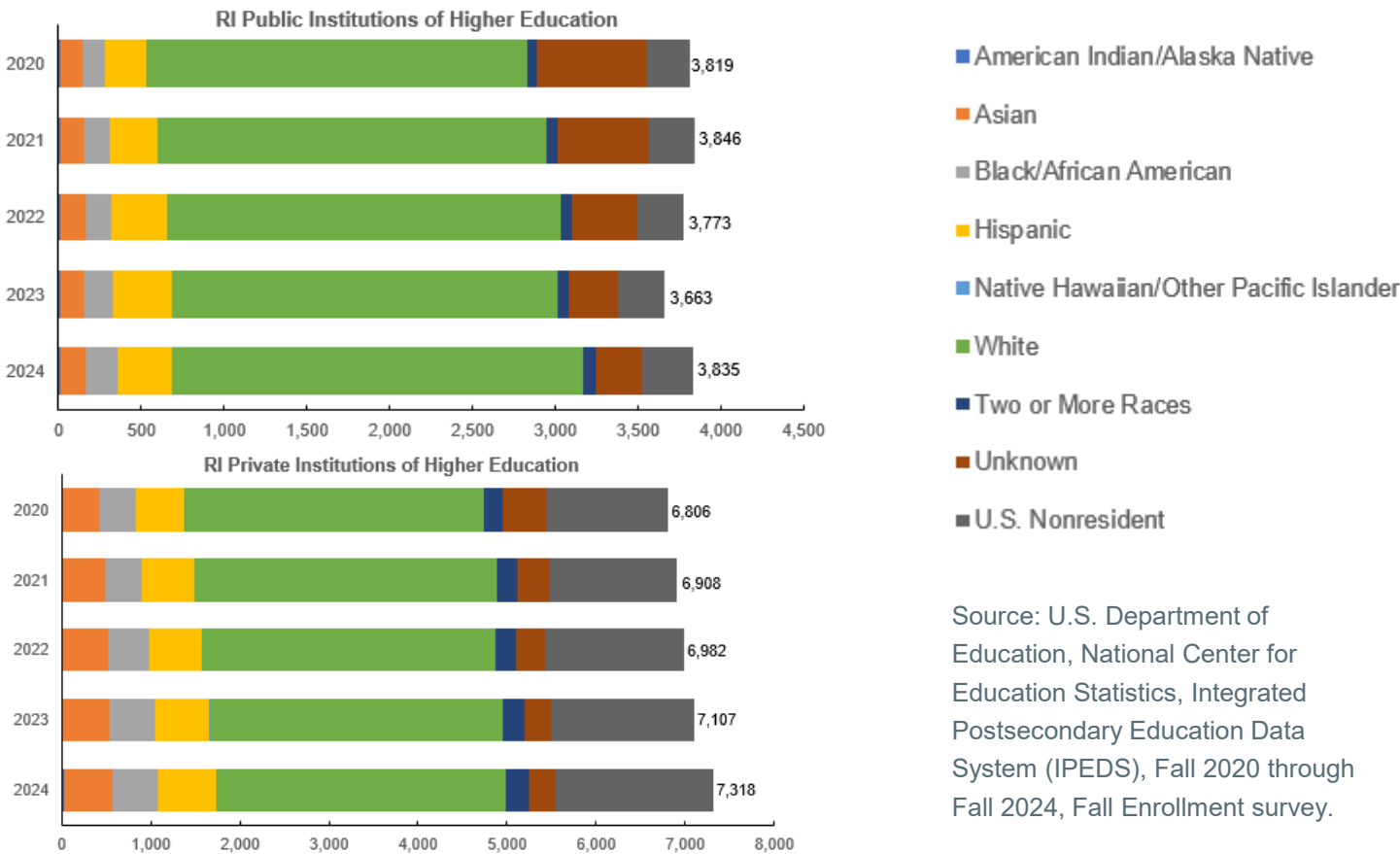
ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION in Rhode Island Colleges and Universities

The Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner strives to implement solutions that will remove barriers to access, participation, and completion of a postsecondary degree or credential. From administering programs such as Rhode Island Reconnect to the management of a portfolio of state-funded scholarships, we are committed to meeting postsecondary attainment goals and helping all Rhode Islanders prosper.

Fall Undergraduate Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



Fall Graduate Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

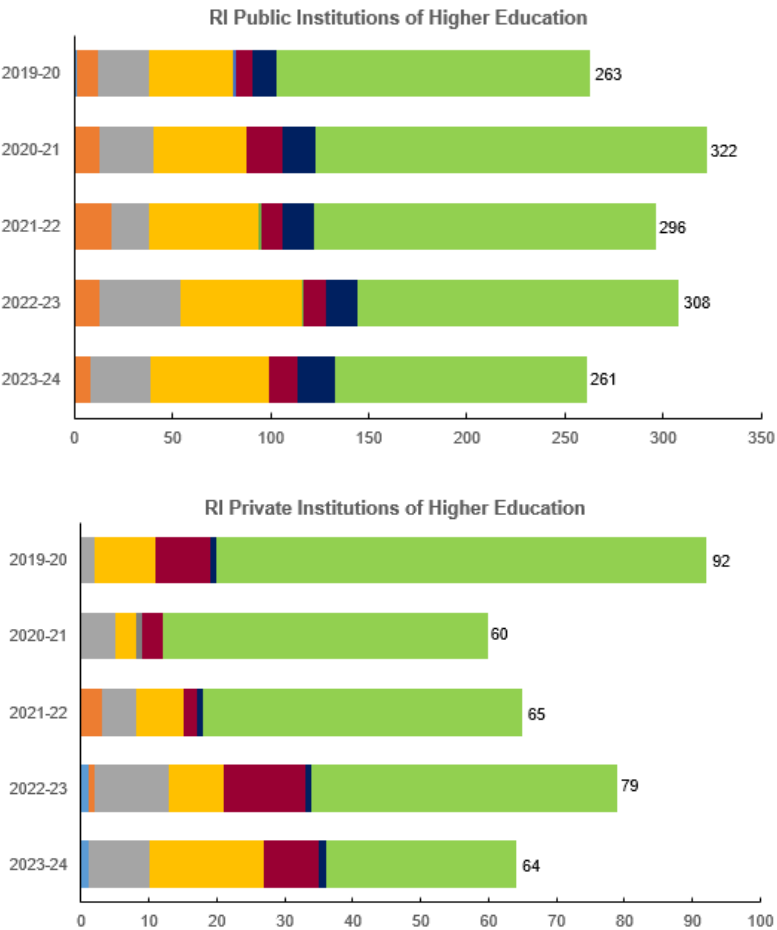


Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2020 through Fall 2024, Fall Enrollment survey.

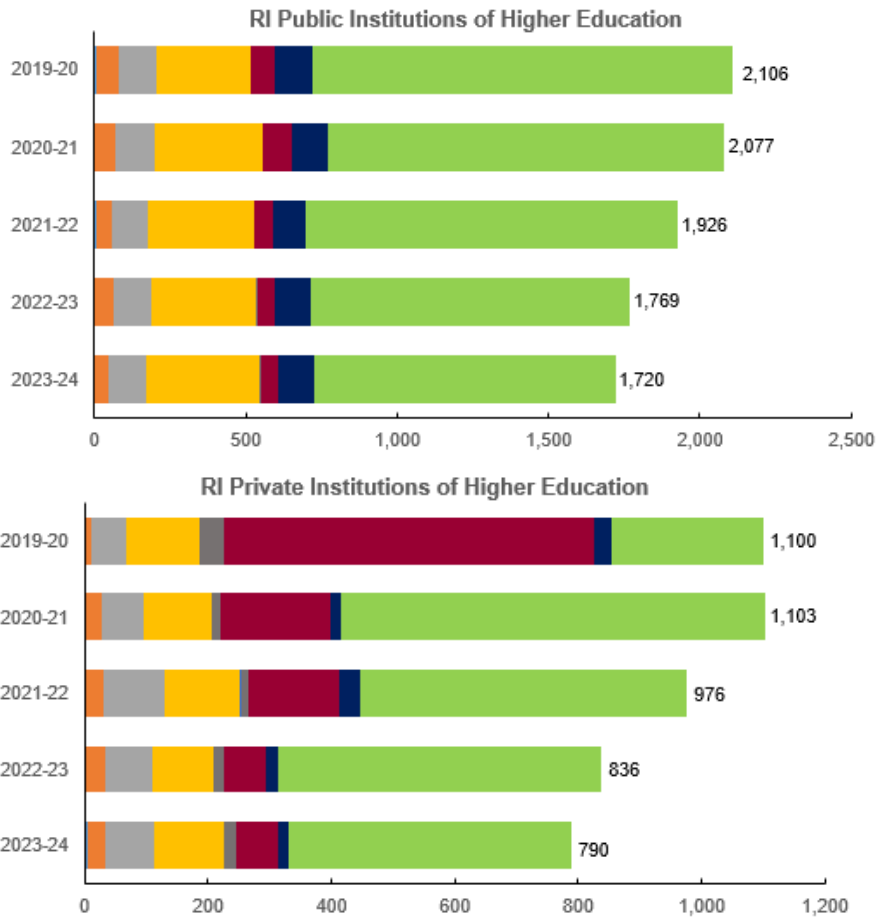
ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION in Rhode Island Colleges and Universities



Number of Certificates Awarded Below the Baccalaureate by Race/Ethnicity



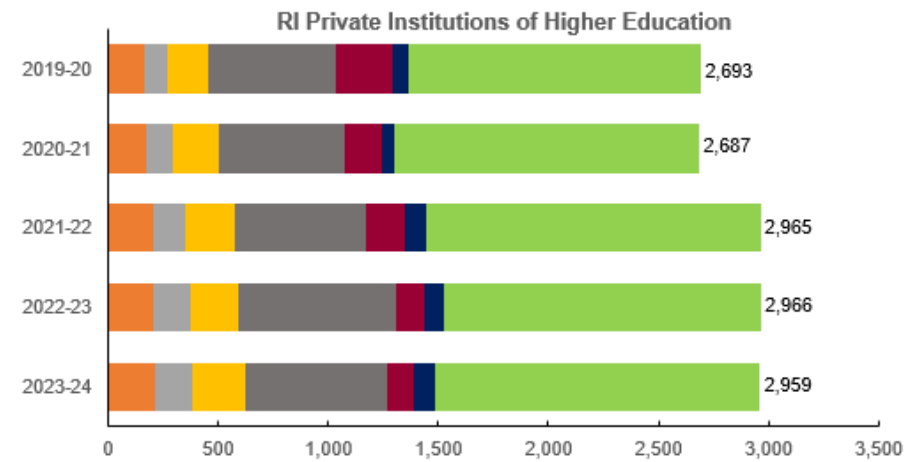
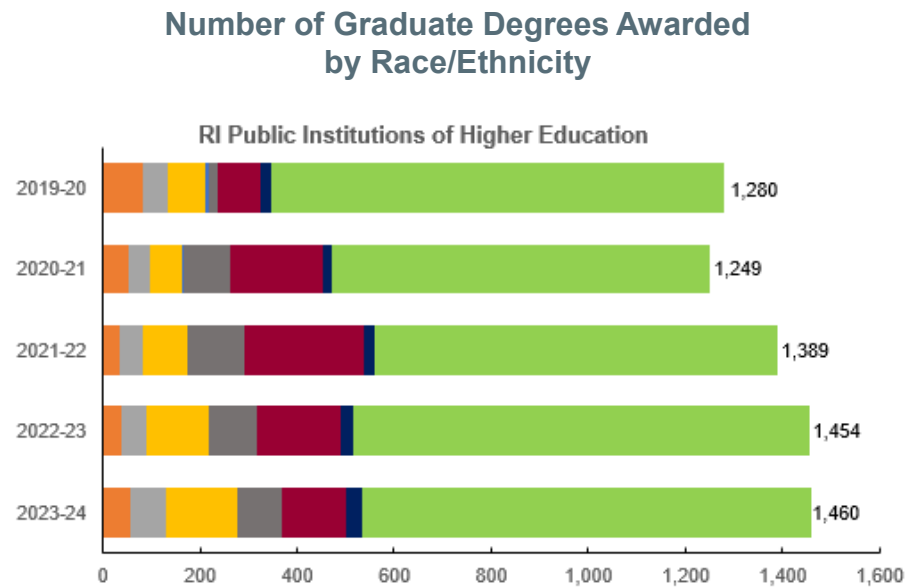
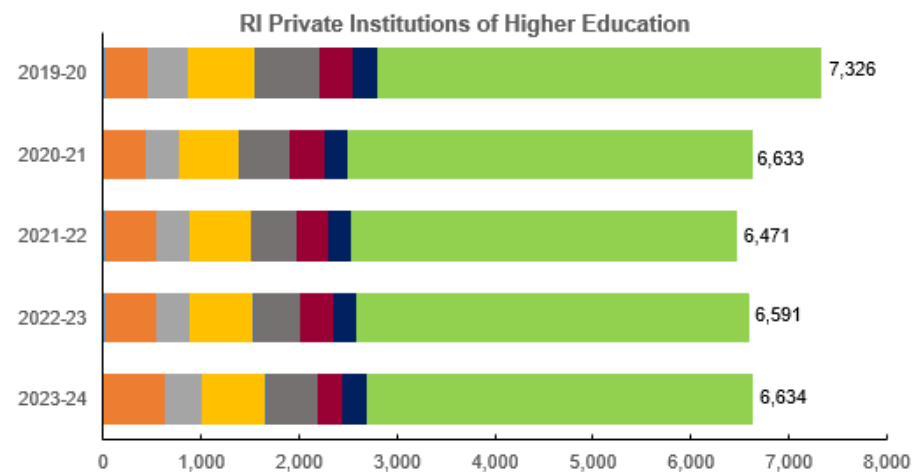
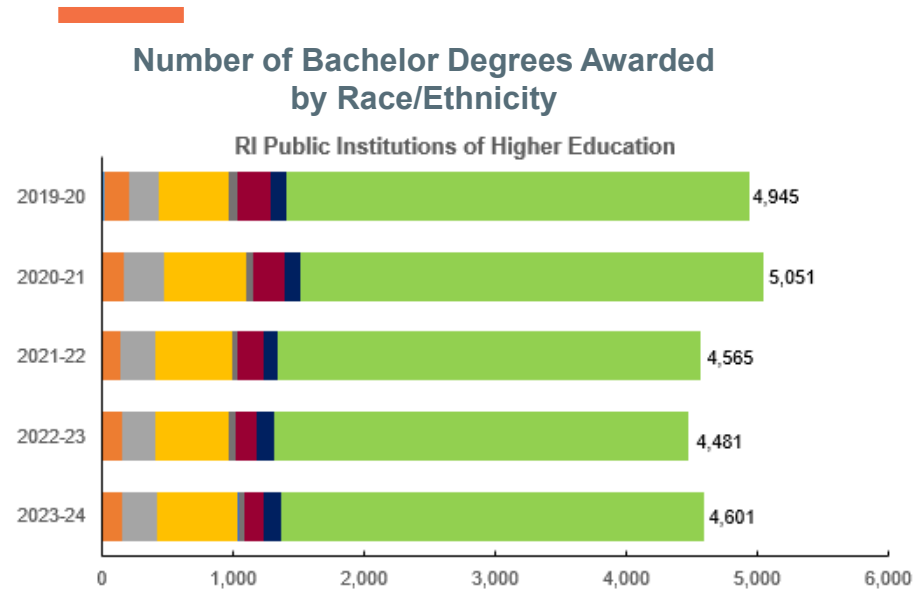
Number of Associate Degrees Awarded by Race/Ethnicity



- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black/African American
- Hispanic
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Two or More Races
- Unknown
- U.S. Nonresident

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2019-20 through 2023-24, Completions survey.

ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETION in Rhode Island Colleges and Universities



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