



*The Commission on*  
**INDEPENDENT**  
*Colleges & Universities*  
*in New York*

*Lola W. Brabham*  
President

# First-Time College Student Migration in New York State

---

MAY 2025

THE COMMISSION ON INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES  
17 ELK STREET | ALBANY, NEW YORK 12207  
(518) 436-4781 | [www.cicu.org](http://www.cicu.org)

## Table of Contents

<i>Background.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>High School Trends.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Destination State and Sector For New York State High School Graduates Who Enroll in 4-Year Colleges and Universities .....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Origin of First-Time Students Attending New York’s 4-Year Colleges and Universities.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Top States from Which New York’s Independent Sector Attracts Students .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Percentage of Students Who Stay in New York After Earning Their Degree.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Conclusion .....</i>	<i>9</i>

## Background

This report provides an in-depth analysis of college student migration patterns, with a specific focus on New York State. By examining high school enrollment trends and the destinations of New York graduates, we gain insight into the state's outflow of students. Conversely, by analyzing the origins of students entering New York's four-year colleges, particularly within the independent sector, we understand the state's ability to attract talent. This dual perspective is essential for comprehending the dynamics of student movement.

This analysis also extends to the crucial aspect of student retention, investigating the percentage of graduates who remain in New York after earning their degrees. This metric is vital for evaluating the state's success in capitalizing on its educational investments and fostering a skilled workforce.

The migration of first-time<sup>1</sup> college students has become a prominent feature of contemporary higher education. Millions of young people leave their home states each year to attend colleges and universities located elsewhere. This migration, often driven by a complex set of factors, has profound implications for students, institutions, and states.

There are many reasons why students leave their home state to attend college. Advantages include:

- Access to specialized programs and renowned faculty
- Exposure to diverse cultures and perspectives
- Greater independence and self-reliance
- Potential for lower costs of living or more generous financial aid
- Proximity to job markets in certain fields

This report centers on the migration patterns specific to New York State's 4-year colleges and universities.<sup>2</sup>

## High School Trends

- High school enrollment in New York State declined by 5 percent between 2012 and 2022 (842,000 to 796,000).
- High school enrollment in the state is projected to decline by an additional 18 percent between 2022 and 2031 (796,000 to 654,000).

The decline in high school student enrollment in New York State is part of a broader demographic trend affecting much of the United States. Factors contributing to this include declining birth rates, which began notably after the 2008 recession, and shifts in population distribution. In addition, the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated these trends, with disruptions to education potentially leading to higher dropout rates or delayed graduations. Reports indicate that New York, along with other high-population states, is projected to experience a significant portion of the overall national decline in high school graduates.<sup>3</sup>

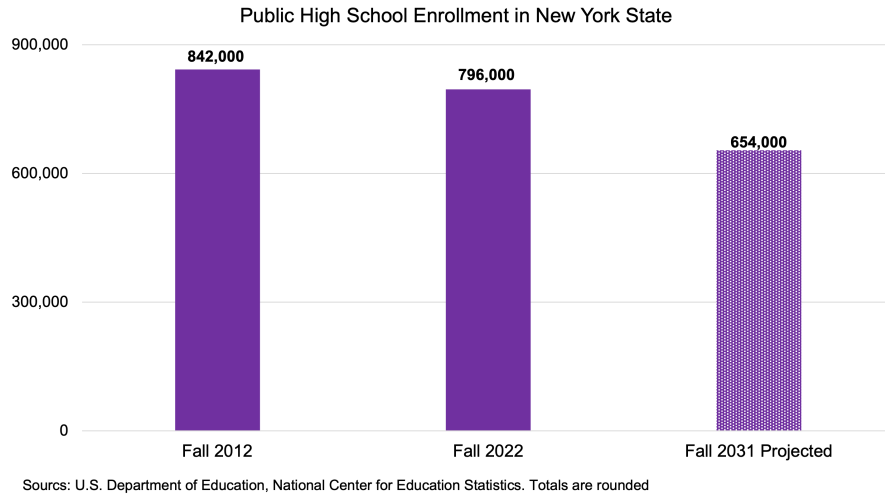
---

<sup>1</sup> First-time students are those who have no prior postsecondary experience; they are attending a college or university for the first time at the undergraduate level as defined in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

<sup>2</sup> Source: IPEDS, student migration data, fall 2022. Note, this data is collected in even-numbered years only and includes first-time, full-time and part-time students. Totals throughout the report are rounded for clarity.

<sup>3</sup> Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

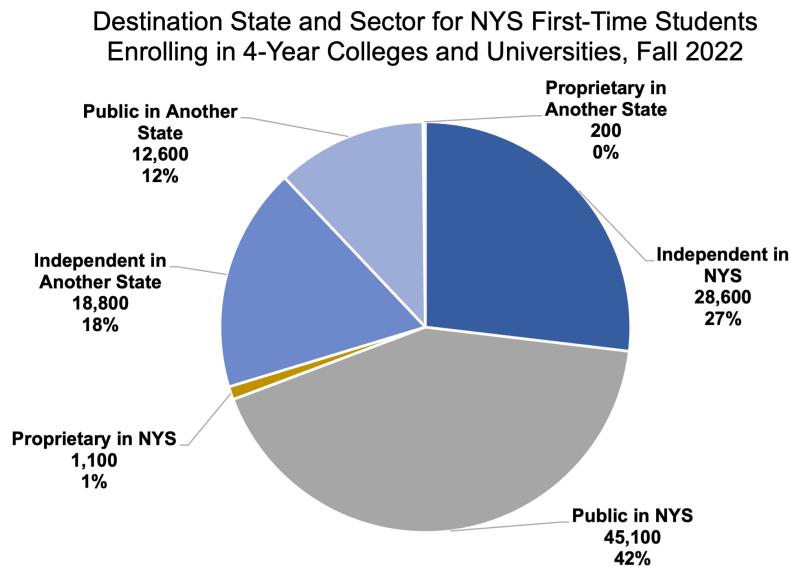
With fewer students in New York’s high school pipeline, the state’s colleges and universities will increasingly need to attract students from other states and countries, while providing an attractive alternative to recent high school graduates from New York who are inclined to enroll in a college or university in another state.



### Destination State and Sector For New York State High School Graduates Who Enroll in 4-Year Colleges and Universities

In fall 2022, 106,300 students who had graduated from New York State high schools enrolled in four-year colleges and universities in New York or in another state. Seventy percent of these students chose to attend college in New York and 30 percent enrolled in an out-of-state college.

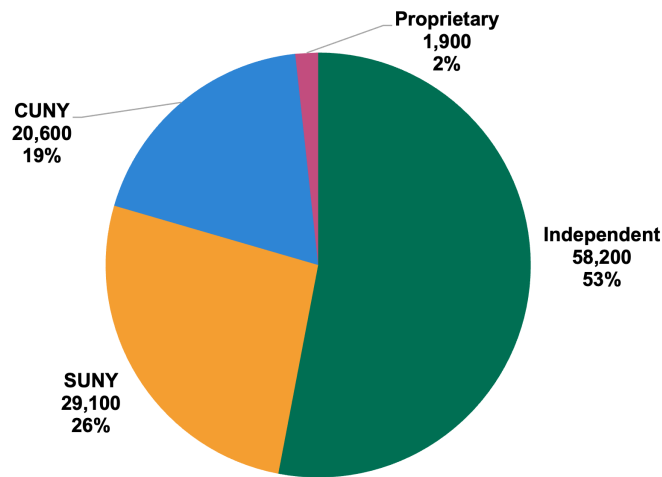
Considering all the possible options for these students, 27 percent of them remained in New York to attend a private nonprofit (independent) college or university while 18 percent left the state to attend an independent institution. Forty-two percent remained in New York to attend a public institution and 12 percent left New York to enroll in a public institution.



## Origin of First-Time Students Attending New York's 4-Year Colleges and Universities

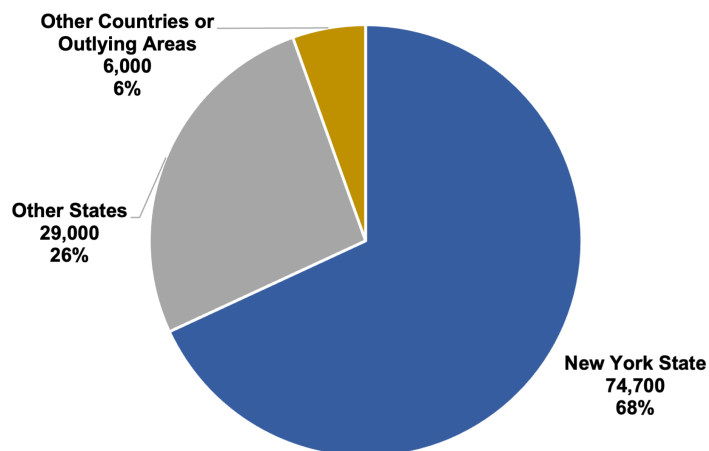
In fall of 2022, there were 110,000 first-time students enrolled in New York State's 4-year colleges and universities (from any state, country, or U.S. territory). Fifty-three percent (58,200) attend 4-year independent colleges and universities in New York State.

Percentage of First-Time Students in New York State's 4-Year Colleges and Universities by Sector, Fall 2022



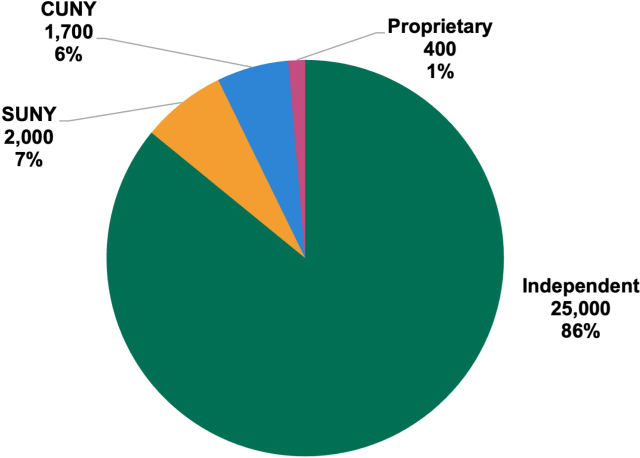
First-time students attending 4-year institutions in New York are primarily New York State residents, with 68 percent (74,700 of 110,000) having graduated from a high school in the state. Twenty-six percent (29,000 of 110,000) came to New York from other states, and 6 percent came from other countries or U.S. territories (5,800 from other countries and 200 from outlying territories).

Origin of First-Time Students in New York State's 4-Year Colleges and Universities, Fall 2022



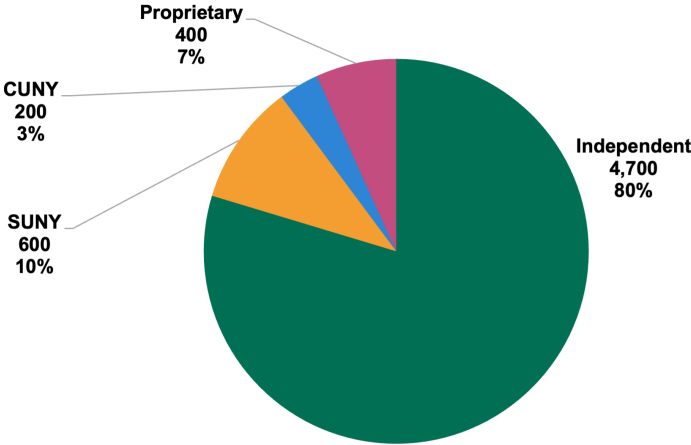
The majority of the 29,000 first-time students from other states that enroll in New York’s 4-year institutions choose an independent college or university (25,000 of 29,000, or 86 percent).

When First-time Students From Other States Enroll in New York’s 4-Year Colleges and Universities, Fall 2022



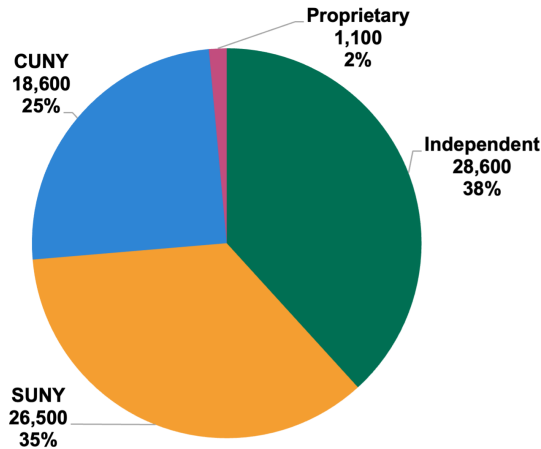
As with out-of-state students who enroll in New York State’s colleges and universities, most first-time international students choose independent colleges and universities (4,700 of 6,000, or 80 percent).

When First-time Students From Other Countries or U.S. Territories Enroll in New York’s 4-Year Institutions, Fall 2022



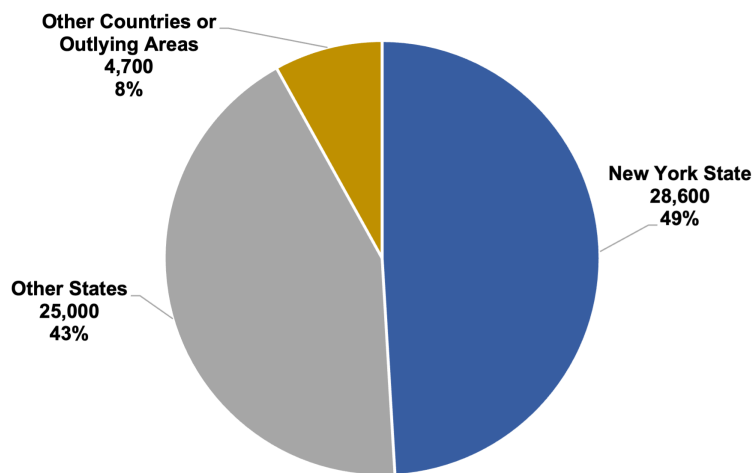
When first-time students from New York State remain in New York to attend a 4-year institution, 38 percent choose the Independent Sector (28,600 of 74,700). Sixty percent of these students choose one of New York's public colleges or universities: 25 percent enroll at CUNY and 35 percent enroll at SUNY institutions.

When First-time Students From New York State Enroll in New York's 4-Year Colleges and Universities, Fall 2022



Within the Independent Sector, nearly half of the first-time students are from New York State (28,600 of 58,200), 43 percent are from other states (25,000 of 58,200) and 8 percent (4,700 of 58,200) are from other countries or U.S. territories.

Origin of First-Time Students in New York State's Independent 4-Year Colleges and Universities, Fall 2022



## Top States from Which New York’s Independent Sector Attracts Students

Nearly 25,000 students came to New York from other states to attend 4-year independent colleges and universities in fall 2022. Three-quarters of these students are from the top 10 states, with New Jersey sending the most students to New York’s 4-year independent institutions.

From State	Count of First-time Students in Fall 2022	% of Total
New Jersey	4,040	16%
California	3,180	13%
Massachusetts	2,620	11%
Pennsylvania	1,940	8%
Connecticut	1,860	7%
Maryland	1,150	5%
Texas	1,140	5%
Florida	1,120	4%
Virginia	760	3%
Illinois	730	3%
<i>Top 10 State Total</i>	<i>18,530</i>	<i>74%</i>
<i>Other State Total</i>	<i>6,420</i>	<i>26%</i>
<b>Grand Total from Out-of-State</b>	<b>24,950</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Percentage of Students Who Stay in New York After Earning Their Degree

Sixty-five percent of Independent Sector students remain in New York State after graduation where they pursue their career goals and contribute to the state’s economy.<sup>4</sup>

Retaining college graduates within New York State offers significant economic advantages. These graduates contribute to increased tax revenue through higher earnings and spending, boost the state’s GDP by fueling innovation and productivity, and stimulate job creation through their specialized skills and entrepreneurial endeavors. Their spending on local goods and services further invigorates the state’s economy, creating a positive feedback loop of growth.

Beyond economic benefits, retaining graduates strengthens the state’s social fabric. Research suggests a positive correlation between educational attainment and five key areas: volunteerism, charitable giving, good health, voting, and economic mobility.<sup>5</sup> An educated populace contributes to a more informed and engaged citizenry, leading to improved public policy and services, ensuring the state benefits from its investment in higher education.

<sup>4</sup> This estimate is specific to state of residence five years after graduation. It’s derived by analyzing publicly available data on college and university alumni webpages from LinkedIn. Years of attendance are self-reported by LinkedIn account holders. The self-reported profile information includes a geographic component that is aggregated at the state level.

<sup>5</sup> “Postsecondary Education Linked to Volunteerism, Better Health” by Jeffrey M. Jones. Data from *U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Voting Supplement*, November 2020 and November 2022. “Education and Economic Mobility” By Ron Haskins, The Brookings Institution.



## **Conclusion**

This report analyzed college student migration patterns in New York State, revealing a complex interplay of student outflow and inflow. While New York produces a significant number of college-bound high school graduates, a notable portion chooses to attend 4-year institutions in other states. Conversely, the state attracts students from diverse regions, demonstrating its continued appeal. The independent sector, in particular, exhibits success in recruiting from specific states. However, the critical issue of post-graduation retention highlights the challenge of maintaining educated talent within New York's workforce.

The findings underscore the need for strategic interventions to address student out-migration and enhance post-graduation retention. While New York remains a prominent player in higher education, targeted policies are essential to ensure the state's long-term economic and intellectual competitiveness.