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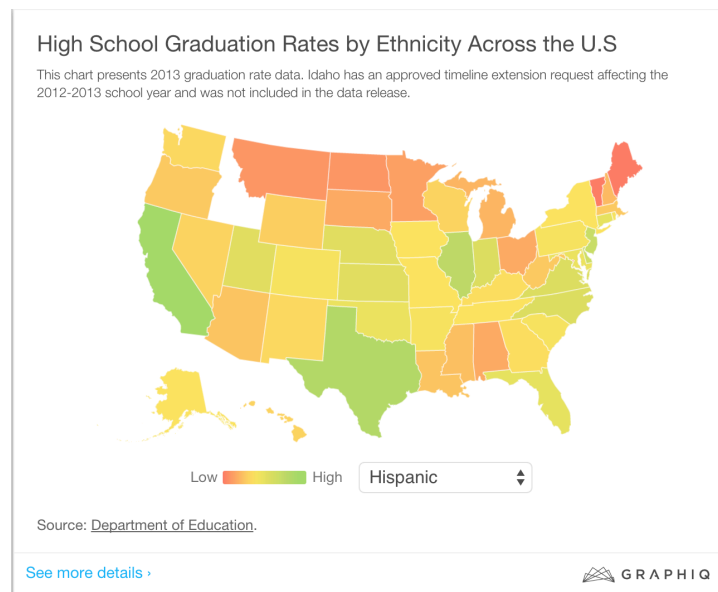
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Ethnicity: a Factor in High School Graduation Rates

Every year, as seniors across the country are getting ready to finish up their final year of high school, most are focused on the excitement of graduation. However, many of their peers will not be getting their diplomas alongside them. While many factors affect whether a student will graduate from high school, ethnicity is a substantial one.

Looking at four states from different geographic locations – Connecticut, Texas, California, and Illinois – Caucasian students have the highest graduation rates, according to the Department of Education. The graduation rate is 78 percent and above in these states, and the lowest rate is 64.6 percent in Oregon.



(This graph has four more accompanying views that can be found here:
<https://w.graphiq.com/w/bLYLqDywrTD>)

Native Americans have the lowest graduation rates, with none of these four states reaching above 60 percent. Native Americans also have the single lowest rate of any

ethnicity in any state, coming in at 46.9 percent in Colorado. For Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians, the lowest graduation rate is 50 percent in various northern states, with their median rates in the 60 and 70 percent range.

But why?

What does a student's ethnicity have to do with the odds of them graduating high school, going on to a college or university, and finding a successful job?

When you look underneath the umbrella of ethnicity at socioeconomic backgrounds and the expectations placed upon these students, it has everything to do with their education.

Not only does a student's socioeconomic background greatly affect graduation rates, but the background of the school's community does as well. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), "Research indicates that children from low-SES [socioeconomic status] households and communities develop academic skills more slowly compared to children from higher SES groups." These schools are also "less likely to have qualified teachers," which puts students at a disadvantage.

In data the APA pulled from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), they noted that, "In 2007, the high school dropout rate among persons 16-24 years old was highest in low-income families (16.7 percent) as compared to high-income families (3.2 percent)." If these low-income families are all together in one district, then chances are the school doesn't receive as much funding as other schools either, thereby increasing the gap.

Joseph Kobza, the principal of Masuk High School in Monroe, Conn., agrees that socioeconomic issues play a large role in graduation rates. While Masuk – boasting an

average graduation rate of 99 percent – tends to lose its one percent of students to substance usage, just nearby in the City of Bridgeport is a “totally different world.”

“I think some of the other factors, in addition to substance usage, is a lot of socioeconomic factors, a lot of broken homes. It’s kids getting involved in the city, getting involved in gangs, and kids growing up without positive role models. There are a lot of factors that put them at that greater risk,” said Kobza.

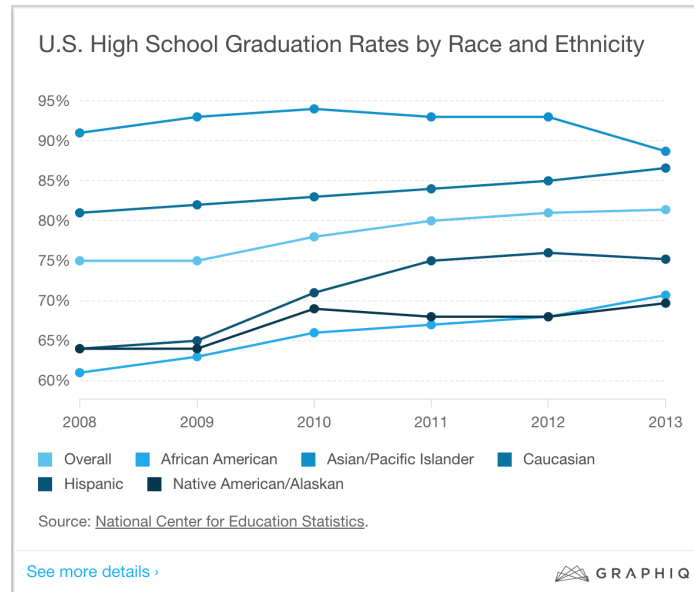
In 2012, states across the country were granted No Child Left Behind waivers in order to set different scores for meeting proficiency on state exams. Some states, however, like Virginia, took this leeway a bit far.

“... under the new rules, schools are expected to have 78 percent of white students and 89 percent of Asian students passing Virginia’s Standards of Learning math tests but just 57 percent of black students, 65 percent of Hispanic students and 59 percent of low-income students,” wrote Andrew Rotherham in his article “Virginia’s ‘together and unequal’ standards” for *The Washington Post*.

Setting different expectations for different ethnicities does not help the problem at hand, though. The issue is that students from diverse backgrounds sometimes need more help and resources than other students, but it does not mean they are not capable of achieving the same scores with that extra help. To lower the standards for these students puts them at a disadvantage, which is part of why we see certain ethnic groups graduating at much lower rates than others.

When graduation rates are looked at as a whole across the United States with information from NCES, Asian/Pacific Islander students had the highest graduation rates from 2008-2013, though in 2013, that group was just 1.1 percent higher than Caucasian

students. With the overall graduation rate hovering between 75 and 80 percent, Asian and Caucasian students remain well above, while African American, Hispanic, and Native American/Alaskan students – while improving – are below the average rate.



Setting different standards will not help these students keep improving, but rather it will set them back more when they are unable to get into the same universities as their Asian and Caucasian peers, and it will certainly not help when they cannot obtain the same well-paying jobs. This effectively creates a never-ending cycle of students who cannot get ahead because of their socioeconomic background and, ultimately, their ethnicity.