

2025 KYP SO Annual Report

Insights and Impact



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Kentucky Post
School Outcomes

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Executive Summary

- In 2025, there were declines across all aspects of Indicator 14 (14A, 14B, 14C) from 2024. Indicator 14C declined the most (3.4%). Much of this was driven by a decrease in competitive employment rates (3.9%) in 2025. Changes in higher education enrollment rates were smaller (-0.9%). Respondents most commonly cited their postsecondary education and training as the reason they do not work more hours.
- Exiters who are not engaged in either work or education have been increasing since 2024 and are currently 32.5% of the total population.
- Respondents who identified as Hispanic/Latino went from having the highest rates of competitive employment to the lowest. At the same time, the percentage of individuals who identify as being two or more races has increased. It is possible that this change in identification has impacted shifts in racial/ethnic data. Continued monitoring is important.
- Significant disproportionality for outcomes continues to exist when disaggregated by disability type, with exiters labeled as Functional Mental Disability (FMD) having the lowest outcomes.
- Respondents continue to identify teachers/staff and classes as the most impactful part of their high school education.
- Research and our data continue to demonstrate that educational placement in the general education classes for 80% or more of the day has a positive correlation to postsecondary outcomes. When placement in general education classes for 80% or more of the day is viewed in the aggregate, the data are skewed positively. When disaggregated, exiters with multiple disabilities in general education classes had a dramatic decline.
- A fairly linear relationship was observed between the level of Career Technical Education (CTE) participation and competitive employment. The lower CTE enrollment rates among some populations are a concern.

Introduction

This report was prepared by the Kentucky Post School Outcomes Center (KYPSO) for the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to meet federal accountability requirements for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Indicator 14 and to support ongoing improvement of transition services for students with disabilities. It presents postschool outcome data for high school exiters with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), including federally required Indicator 14 data—collected one year after high school exit—as well as additional data identified by KDE to inform and strengthen transition supports across Kentucky. This report disaggregates data by areas of interest, identifies factors associated with successful transition outcomes, and makes recommendations for policymakers.

Methodology

KYPSO

KYPSO develops and oversees the Youth One Year Out (YOYO) former student interview, which collects valuable postschool outcome data for the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE). These data can be used to increase the capacity of Local Education Agencies (LEAs), teachers, parents, and adult service providers to

implement exemplary transition planning and increase postschool success for students with IEPs who graduated or exited high school a year ago. KYP SO works closely with these units as well as Special Education Regional Technical Assistance Centers (SERTACs) and KDE to provide data and training related to improving transition outcomes for youth with disabilities.

Participants

To distinguish between individuals who were enrolled in school and those who completed the YOYO a year after graduation, we will refer to those who were eligible to complete the YOYO as “exiters.” Exiters had an IEP when they left high school during the 2023-2024 school year. They might have graduated with a regular diploma or an alternative diploma. They might also have dropped out of school or aged out at 21. “Respondents” refers to those who have completed a YOYO interview.

Data Collection

Data is collected through the YOYO former student interview, developed by KYP SO and administered by district-level personnel whom KYP SO trains. Attempts were made in the spring and summer of 2025 to interview all eligible former students who exited a public high school in Kentucky during the 2023-2024 school year.

The YOYO is pre-populated with demographic information provided by the state and includes a series of questions related to postschool employment and education; factors contributing to an exiter's personal experiences; involvement with agencies; living arrangements; and community engagement.

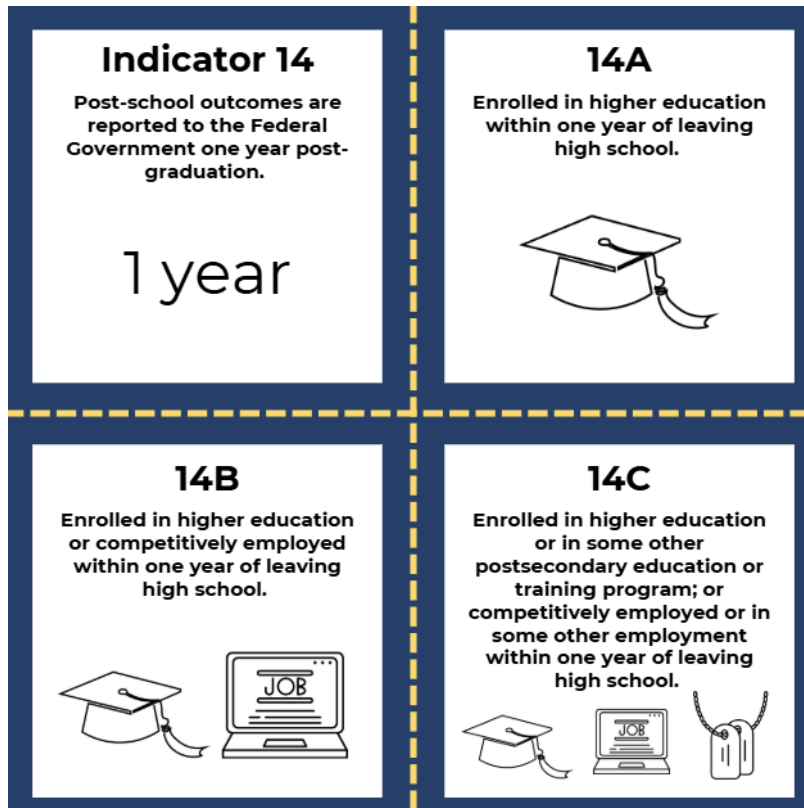
These data include measures of employment, postsecondary education, and training for students with disabilities one year after exiting high school. The employment data includes their experiences and the degree to which their work might be considered integrated and competitive. The YOYO also asks for general feedback regarding how former exiters' high schools prepared them for adult life.

These data are often used independently or combined with other data sources for research by both KYP SO and its partners, and to inform recommendations for supports, services, and professional development aimed at improving postschool outcomes for people with disabilities. Because the YOYO includes exiter identification numbers, KYP SO has the potential to link findings to other databases to identify malleable factors related to postschool success. These other databases include student placement in general education classes, pre-Employment Transition Services (pre-ETS), and Career and Technical Education (CTE) data, etc. To learn more about how KYP SO can help use YOYO data along with other databases to further investigate program effectiveness, contact Dr. Tony LoBianco, KYP SO's Principal Investigator and Project Director, at tflobi1@uky.edu.

Exiters:

- Had an IEP at the time of exit.
- Exited high school in 2023-2024.
- Could have exited with a:
 - Regular diploma,
 - Alternative diploma,
 - Dropped out,
 - Or aged out.

Indicator 14



Federal data collection requirements mandate that states report the "percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school, and were:

- a) Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school.
- b) Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school.
- c) Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program, or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school" (20 U.S.C. 1416(a) (3) (B))."

These are referred to as Indicator 14A, 14B, and 14C, respectively.

Definitions

- a) *Enrolled in higher education* means youth have been enrolled on a full- or part-time basis in a community college (2-year program) or college/university (4- or more year program) for at least one complete term, at any time in the year since leaving high school.
- b) *Competitive employment* means that youth have worked for pay at or above the minimum wage in a setting with others who are nondisabled for a period of 20 hours a week for at least 90 days at any time in the year since leaving high school and had similar wages, benefits, and opportunities for advancement as their coworkers without disabilities. This includes military employment.
- c) *Enrolled in other postsecondary education or training* means youth have been enrolled on a full- or part-time basis for at least 1 complete term at any time in the year since leaving high school in an education or training program (e.g., Job Corps, adult education, workforce development program, vocational-technical school which is less than a 2-year program).
- d) *Some other employment* means youth have worked for pay or been self-employed for a period of at least 90 days at any time in the year since leaving high school. This includes working in a family business (e.g., farm, store, fishing, ranching, catering services, etc.). It also includes those indicating that they work in a segregated setting or do not receive comparable wages, benefits, and opportunities for advancement as their non-disabled co-workers; otherwise known as "sheltered workshops".

Findings

Response Rate and Representativeness

The 2025 response rate is 61.8%, meaning that of 5,031 students, 3,109 provided answers to the YOYO. This response rate is slightly higher than in 2024 and 4.2% lower than in 2023. Response rates in this range are acceptable for telephone interviews with young adults, and Kentucky’s rates are favorable compared to other states.

To improve the response rate, KYPSO worked with KDE, the Kentucky Interagency Transition Council (KITC), and school districts to identify strategies for collecting more accurate and up-to-date contact information for exiting students. Each LEA is now encouraged to have students complete a new contact information card at the time of exit and use social media to announce the start of the survey. Frequent contact by KDE staff with district leaders regarding the importance of the YOYO has also been identified as an effective means of improving response rates.

Even within the aggregated response rate, it is important to recognize when a disaggregated population is under- or over-represented, as this can inform how one interprets data. The table below (Table 1) displays the relationship between the targeted group and the respondent rates. Respondents were representative (within three percentage points) of all targeted populations by gender and disability category. African American exiters and students who exited by dropping out of high school were underrepresented.

Table 1: Comparison of target vs. actual response rates by subgroup (Kentucky YOYO 2025)

Former Student Subgroup	% of All Exiters (Population)	% of Respondents (Sample)	Difference from Target
Female	33.5%	33.7%	0.2%
African American	13.2%	9.3%	-3.9%*~
Dropped Out	6.5%	2.4%	-4.1%*~
Mild Mental Disability	16.7%	17.2%	0.5%
Functional Mental Disability	5.1%	6.2%	1.1%
Emotional Behavioral Disability	7.8%	6.5%	-1.3%~
Specific Learning Disability	28.5%	27.9%	-0.6%

One asterisk (*) = 3% different from target group. The tilde (~) indicates a difference has continued for more than one year.

When data is representative of the population, it is possible to extrapolate information about the population in general. When the difference between the target group and the respondents exceeds 3%, the data are less representative of the target group, and we have marked this in Table 1 with one asterisk (*). If a gap has persisted for multiple years, we note it with a tilde (~) and should continue to monitor and

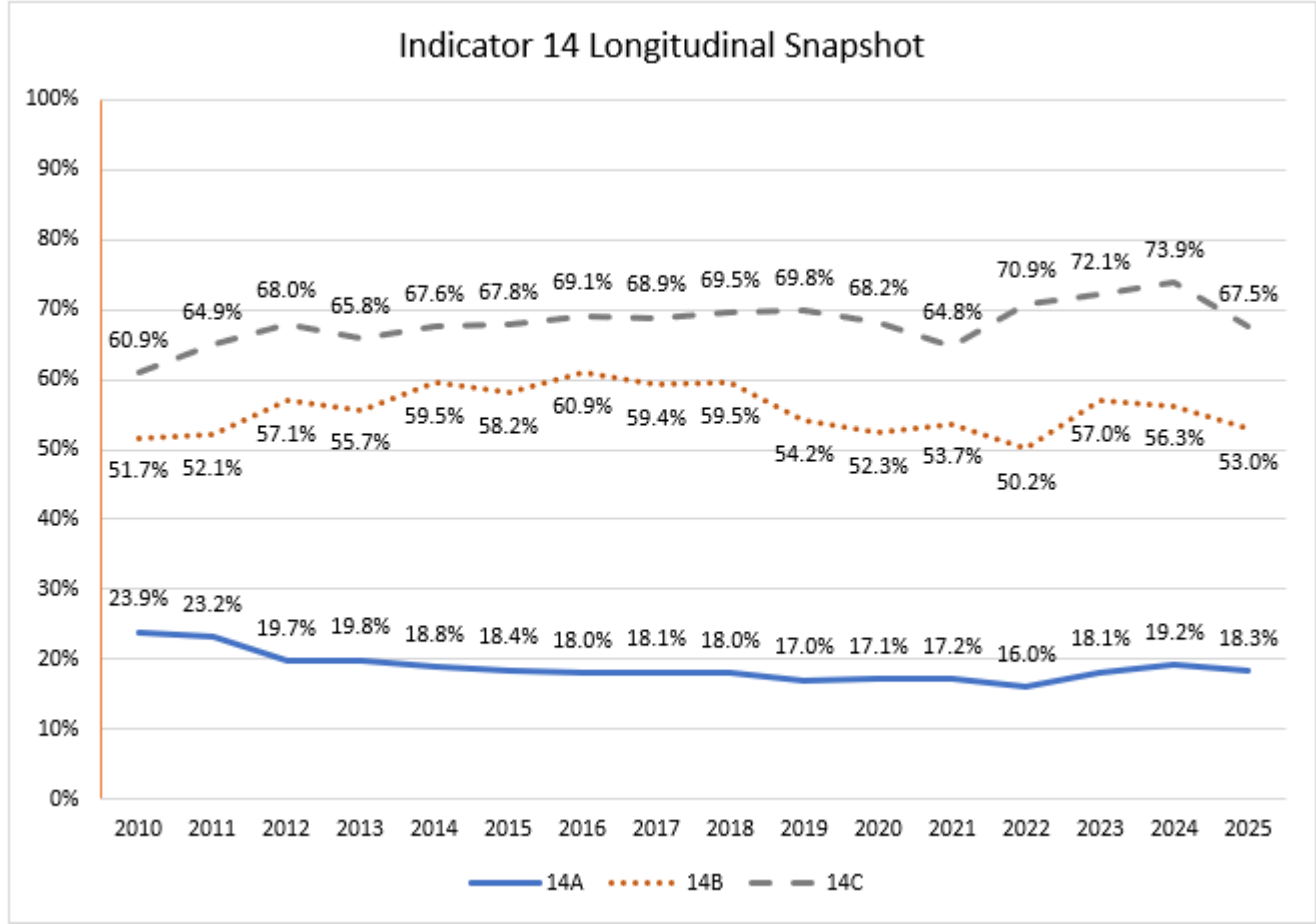
address it if it persists or grows larger. The gap for the dropout respondents decreased this year, though it remains larger than 3%.

Overall, the demographic representation of the YOYO respondents is reflective of the target exiter population of Kentucky. The data in this report related to African Americans and exiters who dropped out might be slightly better or worse than it really is. The objective of disaggregating data is to identify trends and determine potential inequities related to postschool outcomes.

Aggregated Indicator 14 Data

Across Kentucky, the 2025 YOYO data, based on all 3,109 respondents, is 18.3% for Indicator 14A, 53.0% for 14B, and 67.5% for 14C. These data continue a downward trend for Kentucky’s overall Indicator 14 data. Figure 1 shows how Indicator 14 data have changed since 2010.

Figure 1: Indicator 14 longitudinal trends over time (2010-2025)



Across all indicators, there has been a decline this year. Indicator 14A decreased .9% from 2024. Indicator 14B, which includes both higher education and competitive employment, decreased by 3.3% from 2024 and 4% from 2023. Indicator 14C is the percent of exiters with IEPs who go on to other employment and/or postsecondary education that is not a two or four-year college or university. This category has decreased by 6.4 percentage points in the past year.

The table below (Table 2) illustrates the intersection of education and employment outcomes. 18.3% of respondents went on to higher education. 36.8% (210/570) of these respondents were also competitively employed (n = 210), which was 6.8% of all respondents. 23.6% of those who were in higher education also had other employment (n = 135). This was 4.3% of all respondents.

Table 2: Employment by education outcomes (Kentucky 2025)

Education/Employment	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	No Employment	Education Totals
Higher Education	210 (6.8%)	135 (4.3%)	225 (7.2%)	570 (18.3%)
Other Education	101 (3.2%)	31 (1.0%)	72 (2.3%)	204 (6.6%)
No Postsecondary	977 (31.4%)	349 (11.2%)	1,009 (32.5%)	2,335 (75.1%)
Employment Totals	1,288 (41.4%)	515 (16.6%)	1,306 (42.0%)	3,109 (100%)

In total, 60.5% of exiters who went on to higher education were also employed in some manner. Most students (75.8%) who are competitively employed are not enrolled in any type of postsecondary education. Instructional personnel should ensure they prepare students who are heading to higher education for employment also.

Competitive employment rates across the past five years show a promising trend upwards after COVID-19, however, this year that trend ended. Figure 2 shows the competitive employment rates from 2021 to the present.

Figure 2: Longitudinal competitive employment rates (2021-2025)

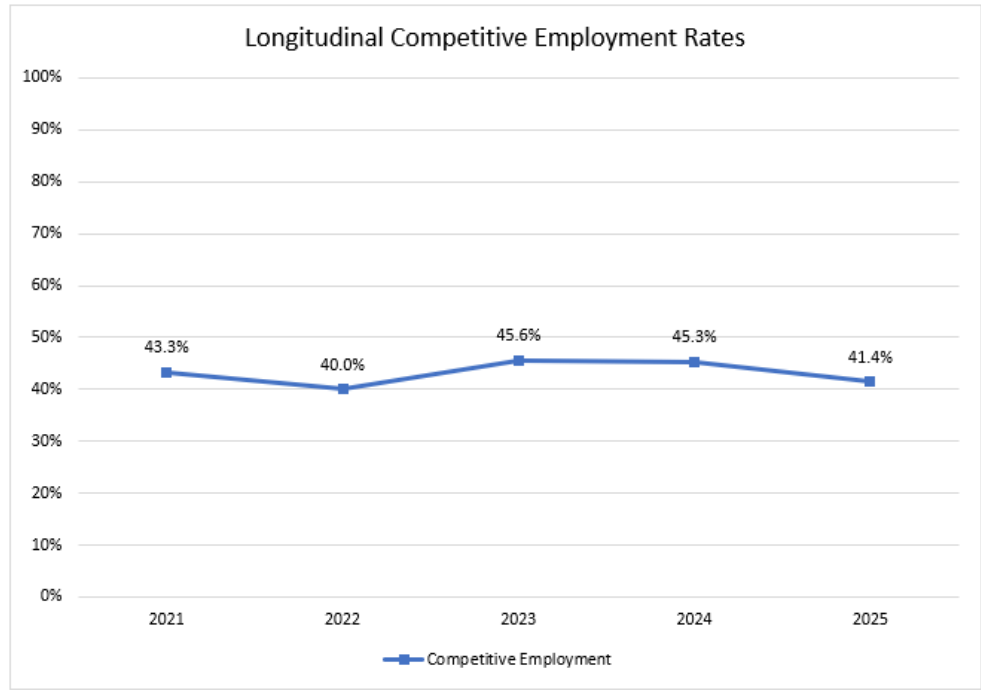
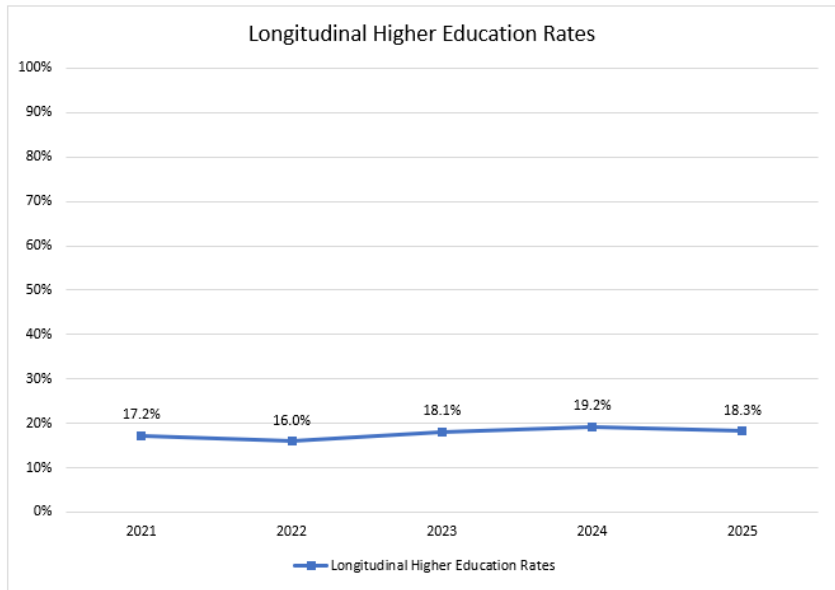


Figure 3 shows the longitudinal rates for the percentage of respondents in higher education.

Figure 3: Longitudinal higher education rates (2021-2025)

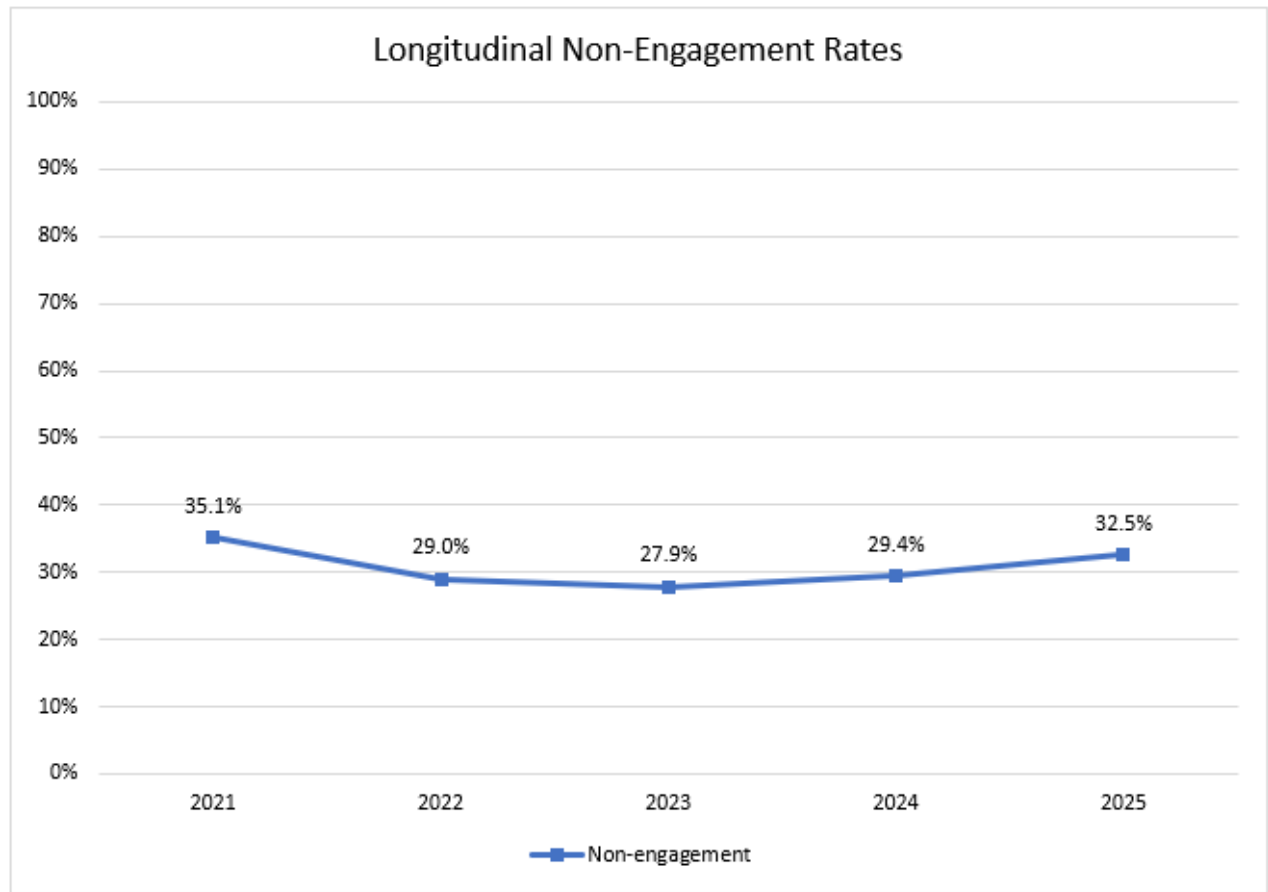


The rates for enrollment in higher education across all groups have remained similar since 2023. Though it did decline 0.9% in 2025, that small change would not be a cause for concern.

Some exiters are not engaged in any postschool activities related to education or employment. Non-engagement has continued to increase since 2023. It is up to 32.5% from 29.4%. In 2024, it increased slightly from 2023. In 2023, 27.9% of exiters were not engaged, while in

2024, 29.4% were not engaged. Figure 4 illustrates this increase.

Figure 4: Longitudinal non-engagement rates (2021-2025)

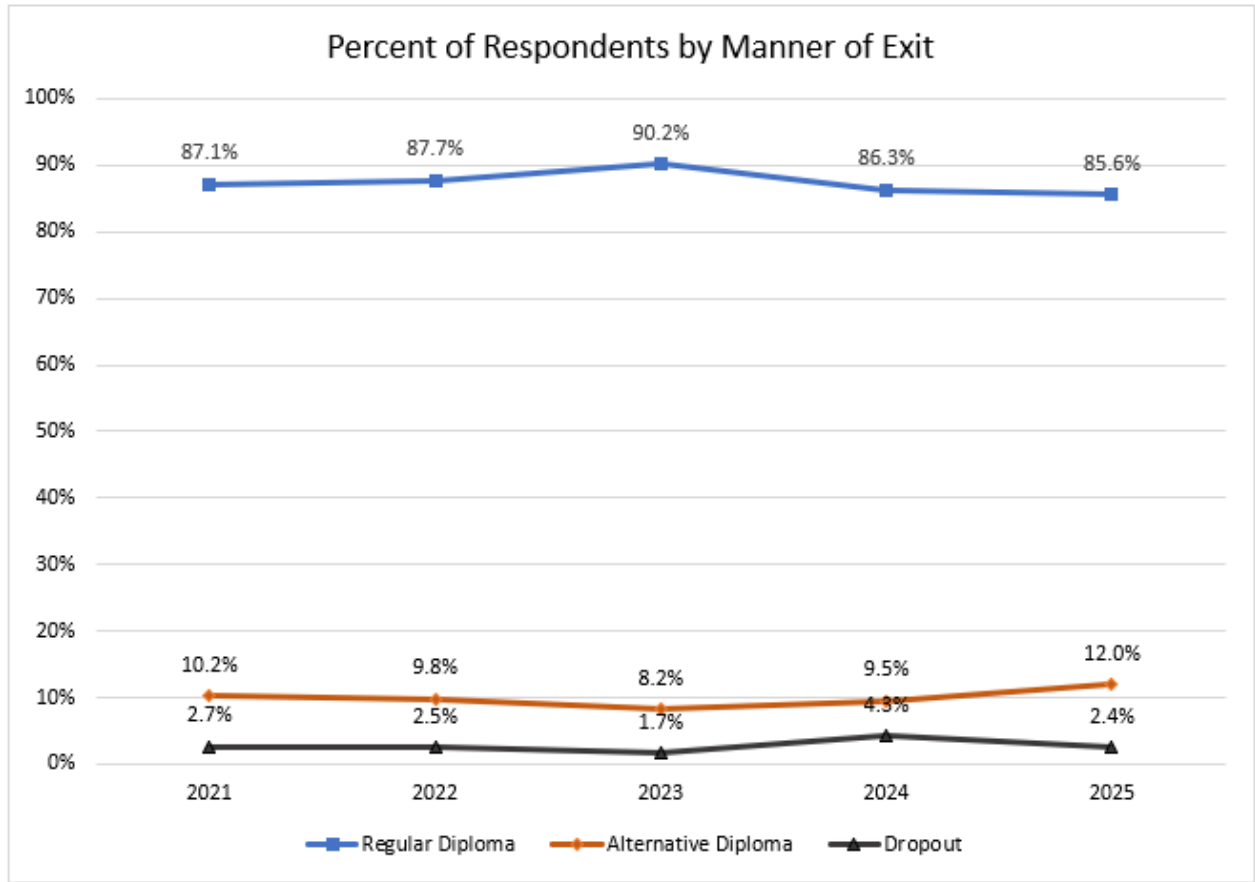


Non-engagement has increased 4.6% since 2023. This increase is concerning and should continue to be monitored. Next, we will examine how these data break out by different sub-categories of respondents.

Longitudinal Data by Manner of Exit

Knowing how students exit from high school is an important part of understanding program success. Figure 5 shows the longitudinal data of the percentage of respondents with a regular diploma, an alternative diploma, or who dropped out. These data are calculated differently from Indicators 1 and 2. The data we use to populate the YOYO is obtained from KDE’s exit data.

Figure 5: Longitudinal data by manner of exit (2021-2025)



The percentage of students who graduated with a regular diploma reached a high of 90.1% in 2023 and declined in 2024 and again in 2025. At the same time, students leaving school with an alternative diploma had its lowest point in five years in 2023 and has been increasing in 2024 and 2025. For students who dropped out, the highest rate was in 2024, with a high of 4.2%. There was a significant decrease in the proportion of students who dropped out in 2025 to 2.4%.

Disaggregated Outcomes

Whenever possible, KYSO disaggregates findings by demographics of interest. Disaggregating data is an important part of ensuring the education system is meeting the needs of a diverse set of exiters. This section reports on different population subsets from the YOYO data. The following tables and figures (Tables

3-6 and Figures 6-14) explore the categories used to create Indicator 14 data by gender, race/ethnicity, disability category, and manner of exit from high school.

Disaggregated Outcomes by Gender

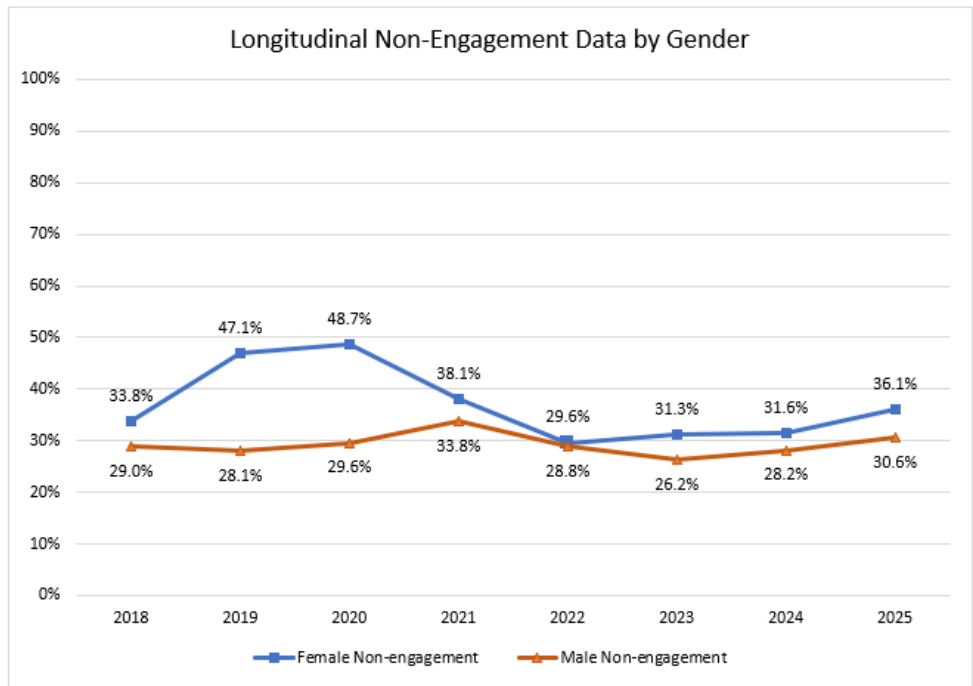
Table 3: Disaggregated postschool outcomes by gender

Gender	Higher Ed.	Other Ed.	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	Not Engaged	Total (3,109)
Male	15.9%	6.9%	43.8%	16.5%	30.6%	2,061
Female	23.1%	5.8%	36.8%	16.7%	36.1%	1,048

The percent of females enrolled in higher education decreased from 2024 but remains higher than it was in 2023. Competitive employment for females decreased by 3.7%, while other employment remained essentially unchanged (0.3% difference). Non-engagement for females increased by 4.9%. Males, too, demonstrated slight but concerning decreases in competitive employment and other employment, and a 2% increase in non-engagement. These shifts for males have continued for two years.

Comparing data trends over time is important. The chart in Figure 6 illustrates non-engagement trends across time disaggregated by gender.

Figure 6: Longitudinal non-engagement data by gender (2018-2025)



While female non-engagement has consistently been higher than male levels, the gap between the two seems to be increasing. This is not yet a trend, but it should be monitored closely.

The next question becomes: does the increase in non-engagement stem from fewer students attending postschool education opportunities or from fewer students being employed? Figures 7 and 8

delve into this question. The data in Figure 7 shows that male and female postsecondary enrollment have been relatively parallel since 2018. While the male trend line has remained fairly flat, the female higher-education trend declined this year by 3.8 percentage points.

Figure 7: Longitudinal postsecondary education data by gender (2018-2025)

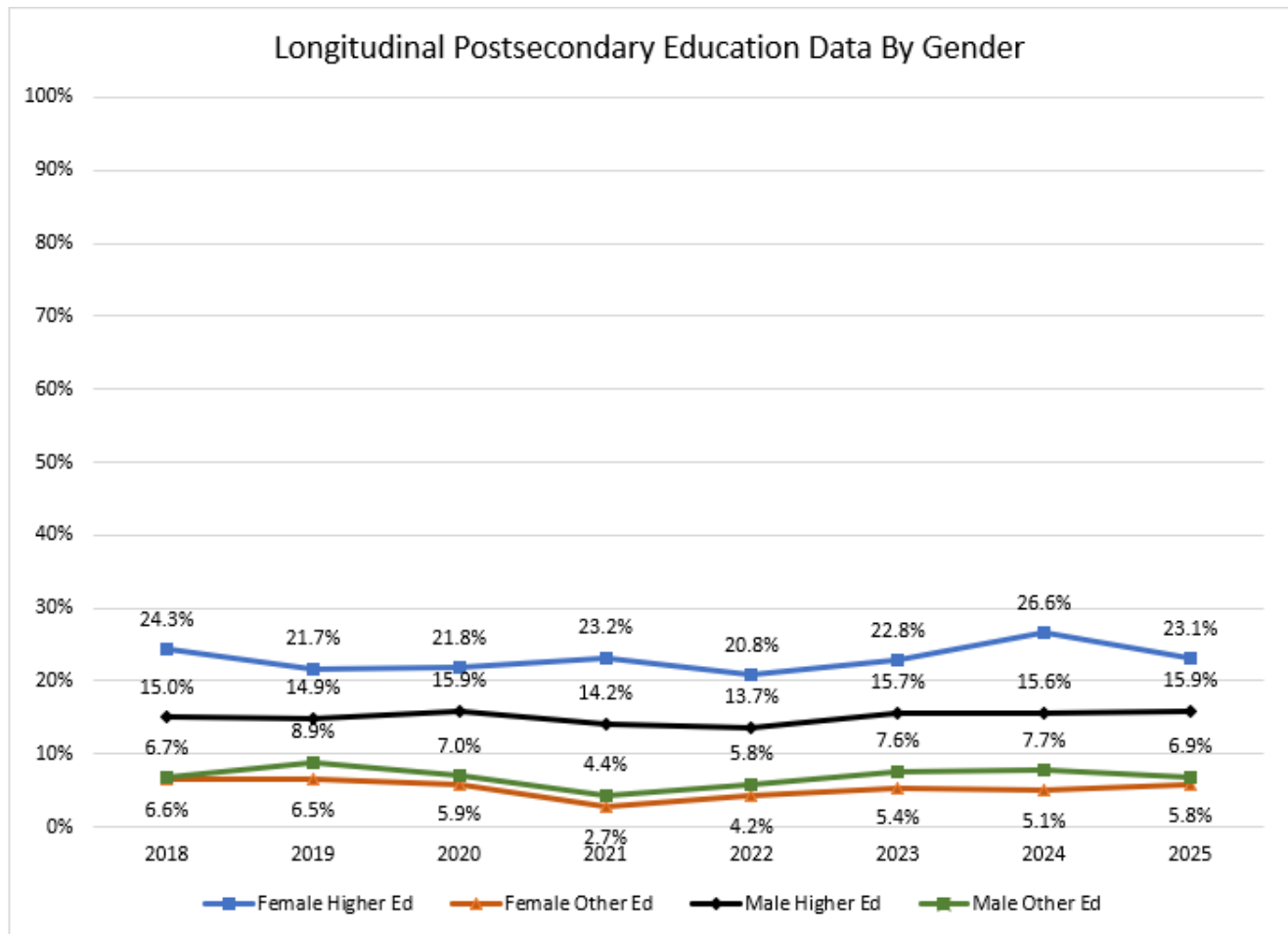
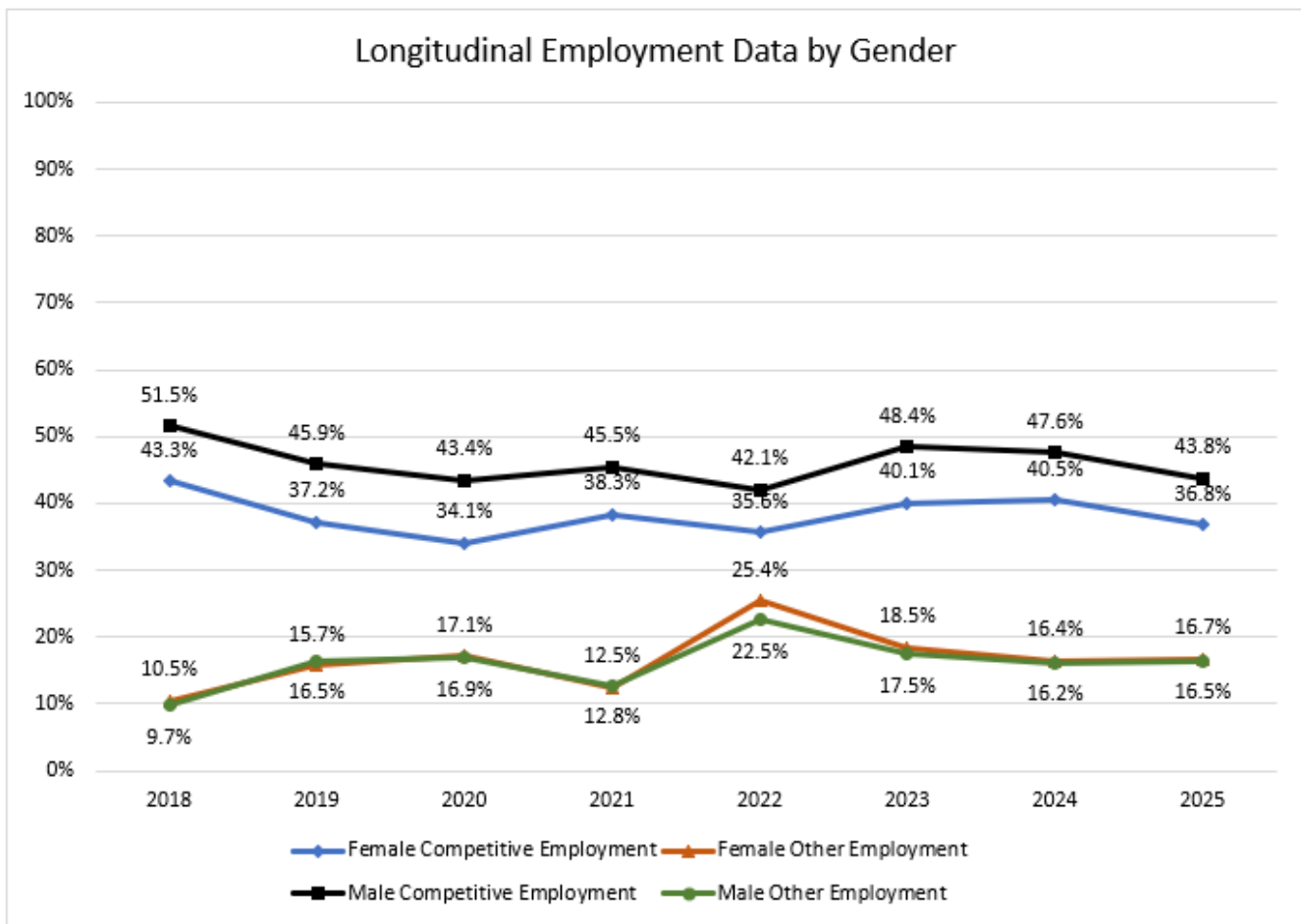


Figure 8 below demonstrates that for males and females, levels of other employment are very similar. "Other employment" can mean working on a farm or a family business; it also includes segregated settings and/or not receiving comparable wages, benefits, and opportunities for advancement as their non-disabled co-workers. In 2021, the rate of other employment across all categories was 12.7%, with an increase to 23.5% in 2022 and 17.8% in 2023. In 2024 and 2025, the rate has been 16.3-16.6%. This trend, down from 2022, is positive, as it shows that fewer young adults are engaged in non-competitive integrated employment. Historically, males are slightly more likely than females to be competitively employed one year out of high school. In 2025, the difference was 7%, similar to 2024.

Figure 8: Longitudinal employment data by gender (2018-2025)



Disaggregated Outcomes by Race/Ethnicity

This section disaggregates data by ethnicity and race. Data is only reported for groups of 20 or more exiters, meaning exiters who are Asian, Native American, or Pacific Islanders are not included in this disaggregated data. The population of exiters who identify as two or more races continues to increase. In 2023, 85 people identified as two or more races. In 2025, 125 people did so. Respondents who identified as Hispanic/Latino also continue to rise. This year, 187 respondents identified as Hispanic. The number of students who identified as African American/Black decreased from 335 to 291 this year. There were 2,450 respondents who identified as White. While the sample sizes are appropriate to the overall population of Kentucky, a change of a few exiters in groups with small sample sizes makes a disproportionately large difference in the percentages. Table 4 disaggregates outcomes by race and ethnicity.

Table 4: Disaggregated outcomes by race/ethnicity

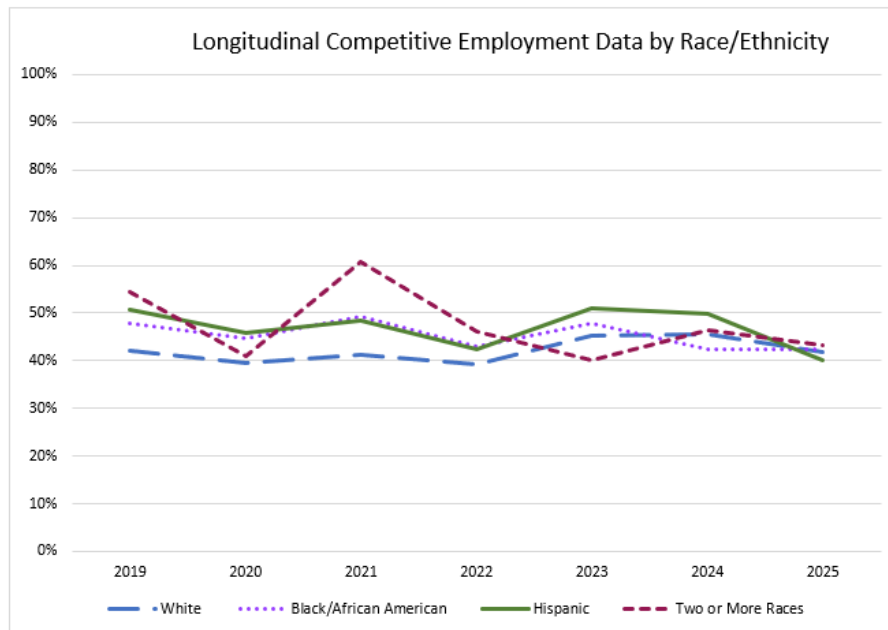
Race/Ethnicity	Higher Ed.	Other Ed.	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	Not Engaged	Total (3,109)
White	18.3%	7.1%	41.7%*	15.7%	33.0%	2,450
African American/Black	19.6%	3.8%	42.3%	18.6%	29.9%*	291
Hispanic and/or Latino	17.1%*	4.8%	40.1%*	21.4%	28.9%*	187
Two or more races	20.5%*	4.7%	43.3%	23.6%*	26.0%	127

* Indicates a decrease of 3 percent or more

Respondents who are Asian, Native American, Hawaiian Native, or Pacific Islander are excluded because the sample size is too small. The rates of non-engagement increased across all race/ethnic groups except those who identified as White. For respondents who identified as African American/Black, there was a 3.9% increase in non-engagement from 26.0% to 29.9%. For respondents who identified as Hispanic, there was a 9.4% increase from 19.5% to 28.9%; respondents who identified as two or more races had a 6.4% increase, from 32.4% to 26.0%. It is difficult to determine if those who identify as two or more races fit the same criteria as those who would have done so in the past. In other words, there might be some exiters from previous years who identified as a single racial/ethnic category and, given cultural changes, might now identify as two or more racial/ethnic groups.

When considering these increases in non-engagement, it is helpful to determine whether the changes stem from a decrease in employment or postsecondary education. Figures 9 and 10 compare the longitudinal employment and education data by race/ethnicity.

Figure 9: Longitudinal competitive employment data by race/ethnicity (2019-2025)

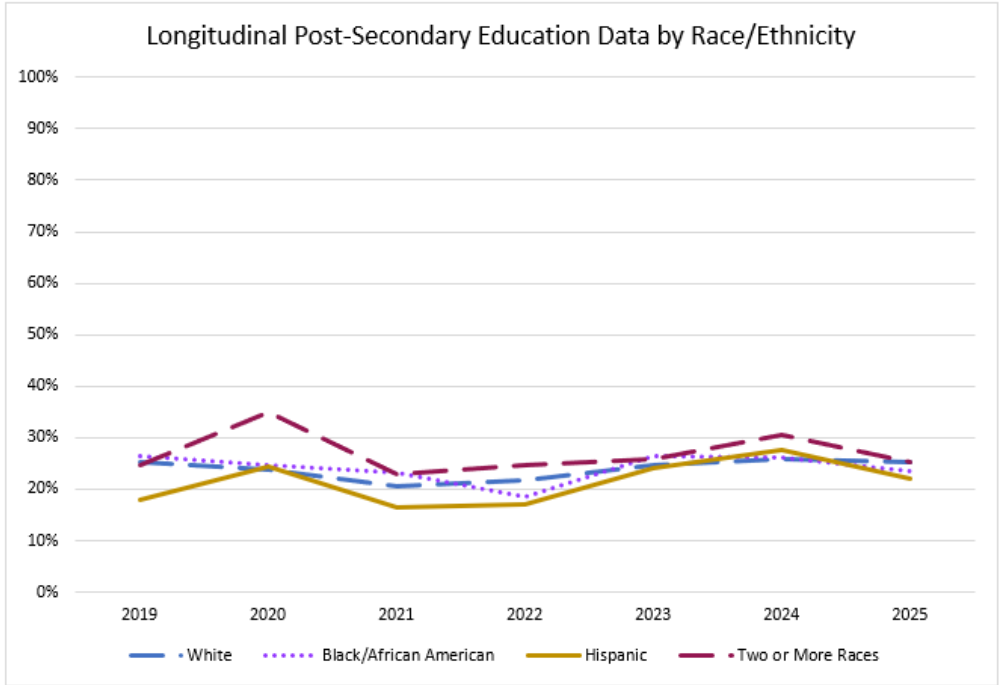


Competitive employment tends to provide adults with more financial freedom, while other employment could mean sheltered workshops or other jobs that pay less than minimum wage.

In 2023 and 2024, respondents who identified as Hispanic/Latino had the highest rate of competitive employment. In 2025, this subgroup has the lowest competitive employment rate (40.1%). This represents a 9.6% decrease in competitive employment. This change is

close to the increase in the percent of respondents who are non-engaged. Those who identify as White or two or more races also had decreases in competitive employment, though not to the same degree. African American/Black respondents had a minimal change of -.1%.

Figure 10: Longitudinal postsecondary education data by race/ethnicity (2019-2025)



Respondents who identified as Hispanic had the largest decrease in postsecondary education: Both higher education and other education. There was a 5.7% decrease for this population from 2024. Those who identified as two or more races experienced a similar decrease (5.4%). African American/Black respondents have a 3.1% decrease from 2024. Similar to employment, respondents who

identified as White had a minimal (-0.5%) decrease.

This decrease in competitive employment, along with the increase in non-engagement among Hispanic exiters, is concerning. This report will continue to disaggregate the data to identify other trends.

Disaggregated Outcomes by Primary Disability Category

Differences in outcomes based on a former exiter's disability are striking. Due to exiter population size, we have included the seven largest disability categories in Table 5, as other disability categories had too few respondents to make meaningful inferences about their outcomes for this report. Where differences are greater than 3%, we have marked positive changes with two asterisks (**) and negative changes with one asterisk (*). In many cases, the positive change indicates a higher number than the previous year, but in some cases, it is lower. For instance, we want to see the data increase (positive change) for enrollment in postsecondary education, while we do not want to see an increase (negative change) for non-engagement rates.

Table 5: Disaggregated outcomes by disability category

Disability Category	Higher Education	Other Education	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	Not Engaged	Total (3,109)
Autism	18.2%	7.4%	15.1%*	15.1%	54.3%	352
EBD	14.1%	6.8%	40.0%*	18.0%**	34.1%	205
FMD	0.0%	4.6%	7.2%	8.8%	81.4%	194
Hearing or Vision	39.1%*	4.3%	32.6%*	17.4%	30.4%**	46
MMD	10.7%	5.0%	43.2%	14.8%	35.9%*	535
Multiple Disability	7.0%	5.8%	12.8%	3.5%*	72.1%	86
OHI	19.7%	6.3%	49.5%*	19.1%	22.0%	776
SLD	25.5%	8.2%	55.8%*	18.6%	15.7%	869
Speech/Language	71.4%**	0%	42.9%*	19.0%*	9.5%**	21

One asterisk (*) = 3% or more percentage points worse than last year.

Two asterisks (**) = 3% or more percentage points better than last year.

Sensory and Speech/Language Disabilities

Categories with lower total populations are more susceptible to big shifts in percentages because one or two students make a proportionally larger difference. The significant increase in non-engaged respondents with hearing and vision disabilities from 9.3% in 2024 to 30.4% in 2025 is not as alarming as it might initially seem, given the sample size of 46. Certainly, these data should continue to be tracked and compared. Similarly, the jump from 52.9% to 71.4% of exiters with speech or language impairments who attended higher education is good news, but not as dramatic as it would be in a category with hundreds of students rather than only 21.

While respondents with speech or language impairments had the highest enrollment rate in higher education this year, those with sensory impairments continue to have a high proportion attending. This enrollment increased from 44.2% to 56.5% between 2024 and 2025. Competitive employment for this group decreased from 37.2% to 32.6%, but combined with the increase in higher education enrollment, that is not concerning in itself.

Learning Disabilities

Respondents with learning disabilities who were competitively employed decreased from 60.7% to 55.2%. The percentage of respondents with learning disabilities who enroll in higher education continues an upward trend from 18% in 2022 to 23.7% in 2024 and now 26.0% in 2025. This steady upward trend is promising.

Postsecondary Education

While the percentage of respondents with Functional Mental Disability (FMD) who moved on to higher education has never been large, this year it was 0%. Given the range and number of postsecondary programs aimed at this population, this bears further investigation. Similarly, fairly low percentages of respondents with other reportable labels (e.g., autism, mild mental disabilities) continue this year. The only category with a sample size larger than 50 that had any increase in higher education enrollment was respondents with emotional and behavioral disorders. This group increased from 13.7% to 17.2%. The changes in enrollment in other education changed less than 3% in any disability category.

Employment

Competitive employment rates decreased the most for respondents with emotional and behavioral disorders (5%). Respondents labeled as other health impaired had a 4.5% decrease in competitive employment and a 4.3% increase in other employment from 2024. The only category with over 50 respondents that showed an increase in competitive employment rates was those with multiple disabilities, and this change was less than 3%. Another noteworthy finding was the decrease in other employment for respondents with multiple disabilities. The decrease from 9.5% to 3.5% should be monitored, though these findings should be viewed in conjunction with the relatively low sample size of 75 respondents.

Non-engagement

The highest rates of non-engagement continue to be those individuals with FMD (81.4%), multiple disabilities (72.1%), and autism (54.3%). The rate for respondents with FMD is stagnant, changing by less than half a percent. The increase in non-engagement for exiters with multiple disabilities or autism is less than 3%. This increase represents a slower increase than the 6.3% increase between 2023 and 2024. The largest increase for a disability category with over 100 members was 3.5% for respondents with mild mental disabilities. Unlike when disaggregated by race/ethnicity, when disaggregated by primary disability category, there is not a single category that has demonstrated disproportional change. However, the continued high rates of non-engagement for respondents with FMD, multiple disabilities, and autism are very concerning and should be addressed by identifying key barriers to or supports of success for these populations.

Primary Disability Category and Race/Ethnicity

Next, we examined subcategories using two factors to identify patterns within persistent problem areas (e.g., non-engagement among respondents with FMD, multiple disabilities, and autism) or concerning new data (e.g., disproportionately negative outcomes among respondents who are Hispanic). Unfortunately, there were not enough Hispanic respondents labeled as having FMD, multiple disabilities, or autism to report. Hispanic respondents who were labeled as other health impaired did the same or better than the state average across all categories, except other employment. For instance, competitive employment rates for this group was 51.1% compared to 49.7%. Hispanic respondents with learning disabilities, on the other hand, on average had lower rates of higher education, competitive employment, and non-engagement than the state average.

Disaggregated Outcomes by Manner of High School Exit

Manner of exit is the final way in which KYP SO disaggregates outcomes. Because exiters who exited by aging out or by receiving an alternative diploma are indistinguishable based on how districts collect data, we combine them into a single category. It is reasonable to assume that all members of this group are on the alternative diploma track.

Table 6: Disaggregated outcomes by manner of high school exit

Manner of Exit	Higher Education	Other Education	Competitive Employment	Other Employment	Not Engaged	Total (3,109)
Regular Diploma	21.3%	6.6%	46.5%*	17.7%	25.4%	2,662
Alternative Diploma	0.3%	5.9%	7.0%	8.3%*	80.1%	372
Dropped Out	1.3%	8.0%**	33.3%	16.0%	45.3%*	75

*Indicates a decrease of 3% or more from 2024

**Indicates an increase of 3% or more

There was a 3.9% decrease in competitive employment for the full population. Respondents who left school with an alternative diploma had similar outcomes to those in 2024. The largest shift was in the percent of respondents who engaged in other employment, with a 4% decrease in 2025. Respondents who dropped out had a 4.1% increase in engaging in other education this year and a 3.1% decrease in non-engagement. These findings are positive.

Employment

It is notable that there was an increase of 76 students in the alternative diploma category and a similar decrease in the number of respondents who dropped out from 131 in 2024 to 75 in 2025. Given how relatively small the alternative diploma and dropout populations are, the changes in population size should be investigated, especially since the changes are so similar (76 and 75). Additionally, in 2024, there was a 156% increase in the dropout population from 2023.

Employment trends across years by manner of exit are shown in Figure 11. This figure includes aggregated data for all types of employment.

Figure 11: Longitudinal trends in employment by manner of exit (2020-2025)

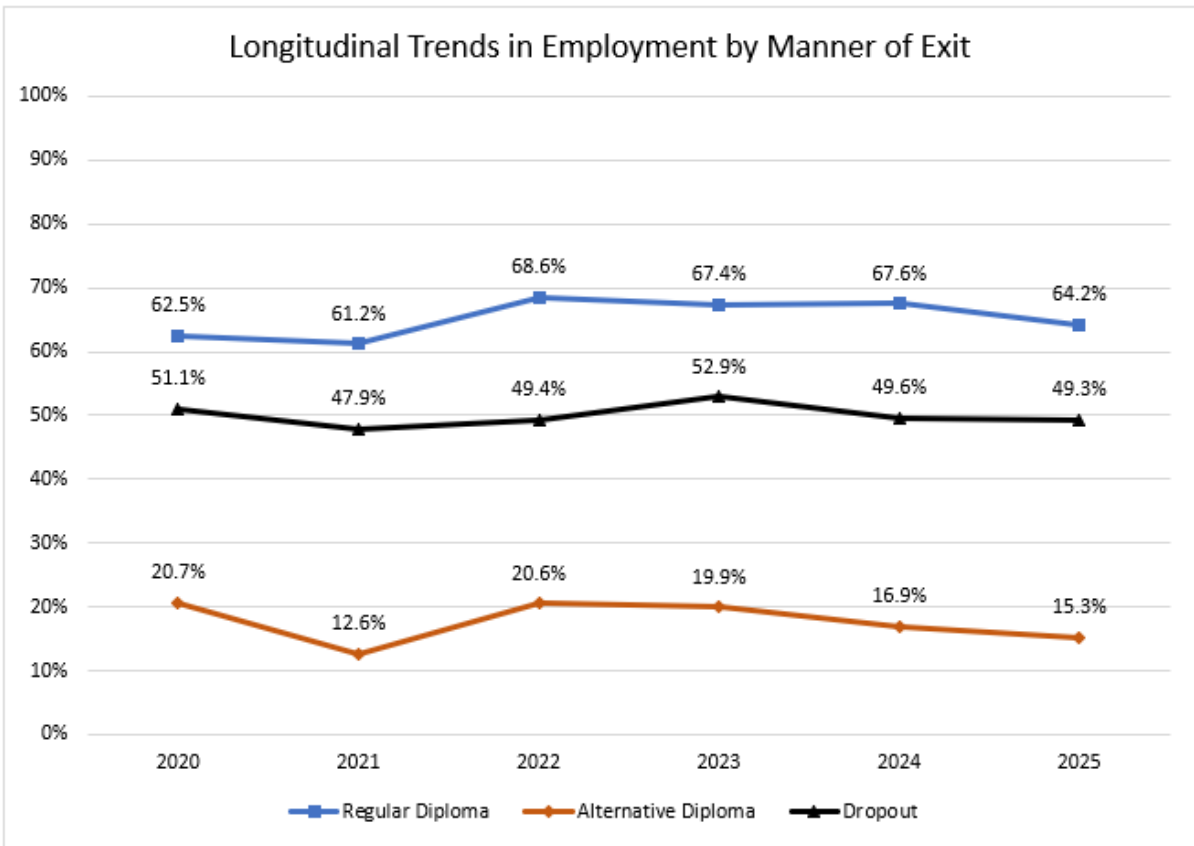
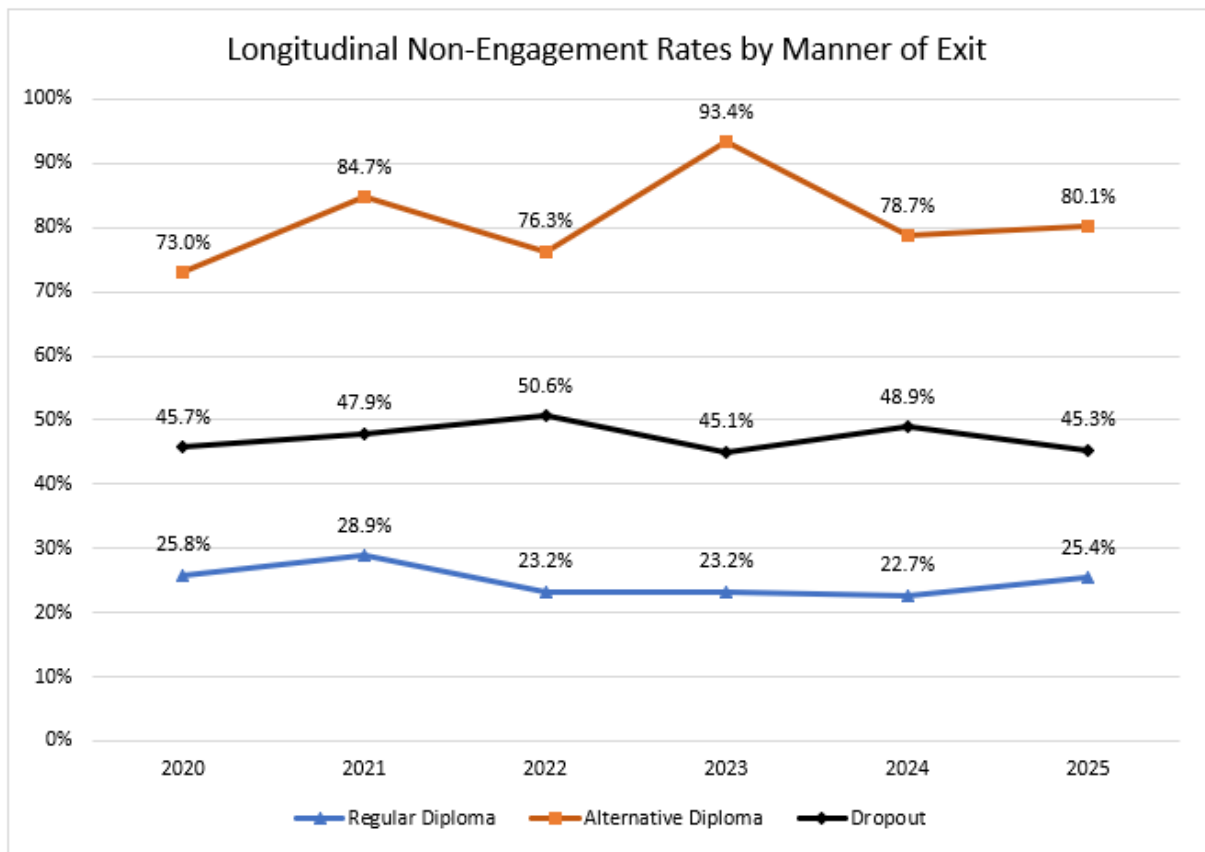


Figure 11 includes data for all types of employment. Students who leave school with a regular diploma are the most likely to be employed, while those who graduate with an alternative diploma are the least likely. For those who exited with a regular diploma, the employment rate this year dropped compared with the consistent trend since 2022. While all categories had slight drops, the drop for respondents with regular diplomas is statistically significant. However, the continued downward trend since 2023 is concerning.

Examining Non-Engagement

Figure 12 shows consistent differences in non-engagement by manner of exit. Respondents who drop out have maintained a non-engagement rate between 45-50% for five years. The dropout non-engagement rate has remained poor but consistent. Students who leave with an alternative diploma have consistently had very high non-engagement rates (ranging from 73.0% to 93.4%). This year, the non-engagement rate for respondents with an alternative diploma was 80.1%.

Figure 12: Longitudinal non-engagement rates by manner of exit (2020-2025)



This high percentage of non-engaged respondents might reflect the presence or absence of certain indicators of postschool success, such as inclusion in general education, high expectations, paid work experience, or self-determination skills. The disparity in non-engagement rates by manner of exit is striking. Access to additional data (e.g., Individualized Learning Plan (ILP), pre-ETS, IEP reviews, etc.) would allow KYP SO to probe more deeply into factors that may positively or negatively impact these non-engagement rates.

Data Disaggregated by Manner of Exit and Race/Ethnicity

Figures 13 and 14 further disaggregate the data by manner of exit and race/ethnicity. These tables do not include data for subgroups of less than 20.

When disaggregated by manner of school exit and race/ethnicity, respondents who identified as Hispanic had a 3.9% lower non-engagement rate, a 1.7% lower competitive employment rate, and more respondents had other employment (5.6% higher rate than for all students who graduate with a regular diploma).

Figure 13: 2025 regular diploma outcomes disaggregated by race/ethnicity

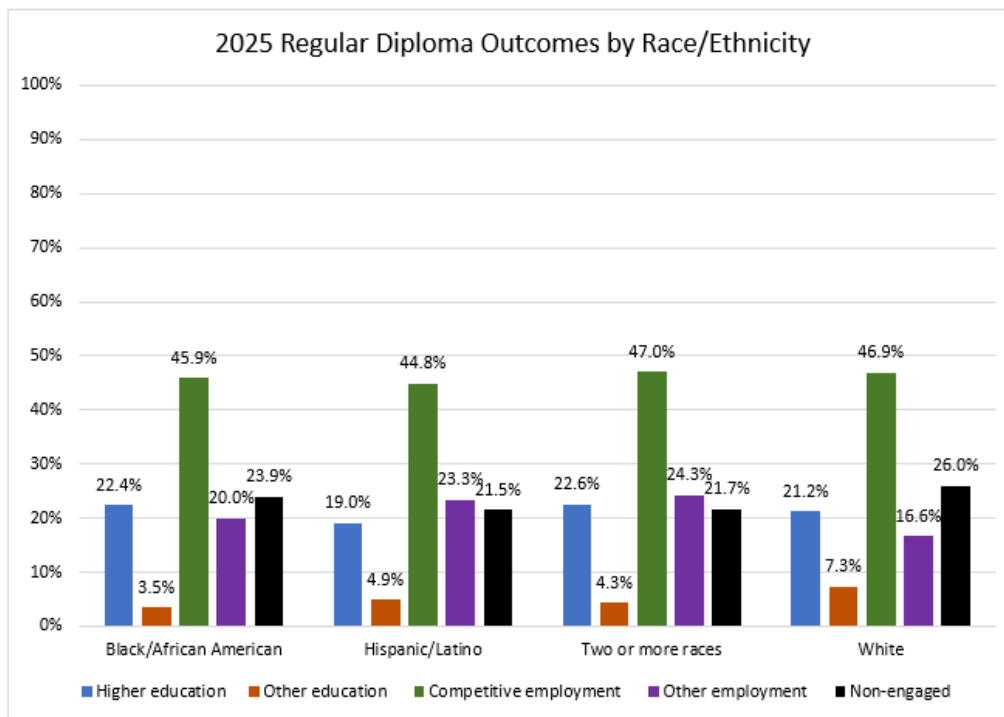
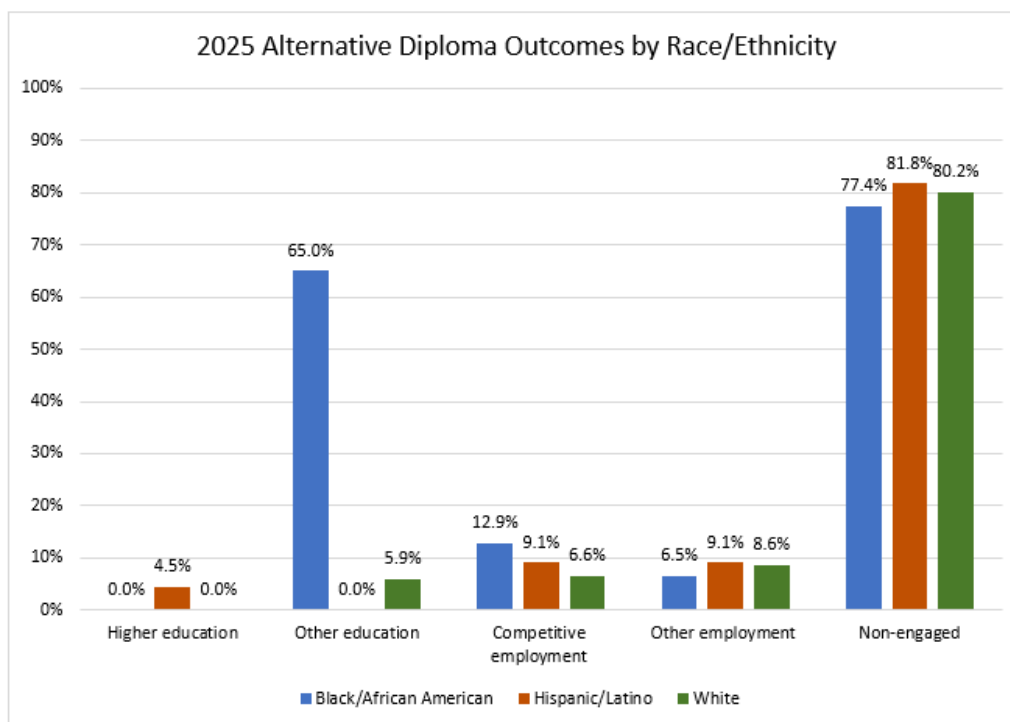


Figure 14: 2025 alternative diploma outcomes disaggregated by race/ethnicity



Across all subgroups, those who graduated with an alternative diploma had the highest rates of non-engagement. Students who left high school with an alternative diploma and identify as Hispanic had

minimal differences from the total population, and given the low number of students in this population, inferences are not recommended. When disaggregated by race/ethnicity and only accounting for subgroups of more than 20 people, Hispanic/Latino respondents had a slightly higher non-engagement rate than their peers.

Follow-Up Questions

One of the strengths of the YOYO is that it enables us to probe deeper into a young person's outcomes, allowing us to evaluate services more effectively and identify their needs. We achieve this by asking a series of follow-up questions to gain a deeper understanding of one's high school experiences, employment outcomes, postsecondary education, and community involvement. Each question is depicted in Tables 7-10. Note that the sample size for each question varies. We will examine the follow-up questions in greater depth.

Table 7: Potential number of responses for high school experience follow-up questions

High School Experiences	Number of Potential Responses
What are the reasons you left high school without graduating?	75
What might have helped you stay in school?	75
Please name the most important thing during high school that helped you in your life right now (e.g., high school programs, classes, agencies).	3,109

Table 8: Potential number of responses for unemployment/underemployment follow-up question

Unemployment/Underemployment	Number of Potential Responses
What is the main reason that you are not working, or not working more hours?	2,060

Table 9: Potential number of responses for postsecondary education follow-up questions

Postsecondary Education	Number of Potential Responses
If you faced any problems in your postsecondary school/training program, please let us know what they were.	774
What would you say is the main reason you did not go on to postsecondary education?	2,335

Table 10: Potential number of responses for additional comments follow-up question

Additional Comments	Number of Potential Responses
Is there anything else you would like to add about how things have been going for you since you left school?	3,109

High School Dropouts

Reasons for dropping out

Students who dropped out were asked why they left high school without graduating. Of the five response options given, the “Other, please specify” option received the highest percentage of responses (42.7%). These were analyzed separately and reported below. Respondents were free to select multiple answers. Of the given response options, “didn’t like school” was the highest (30.7%), followed by “was failing classes” (13.3%), “had to work” (10.7%), “health reasons” (9.3%), “had a baby” (5.3%), and “was bullied” (1.3%).

Among the “other” responses, themes identified based on previous years’ data and by coding the current year’s data were mental health reasons, substance abuse, family/home issues, personal issues, jail, entry into another program, insufficient information/other. Table 11 presents the given response options, the sample size, and the percentage of students who selected each option. Table 12 provides the “other” response option, its descriptions, the sample size, and the percentage of students who selected this option.

Table 11: Reported reasons for dropping out of high school (N and %)

Reasons Given for Dropping Out	N	%
Didn’t like school	23	30.7%
Was failing classes	10	13.3%
Had to work	8	10.7%
Health reasons	7	9.3%
Had a baby	4	5.3%
Was bullied	1	1.3%
Other	32	42.7%

Table 12: Reported “other” reasons for dropping out of high school (N and %)

“Other” Reason Given	Description	N	%
Mental/Physical Health	Mental health, anxiety, anger, depression, behavior, and physical health	5	6.6%
Substance Use	Substance use, addiction, drugs, alcohol	0	0%
Family/Home Issues	Family, home, mother, father, grandpa, grandma, brother, sister, guardian	8	10.6%
Personal Issues/Trouble	Personal, trouble, anger, moving, life	11	14.6%
Jail	Jail, detention center, prison, incarceration, department of corrections	5	6.6%
Other Program	Job Corps, homeschool, Penn Foster	3	4.0%
Insufficient Info/Other	Unclear or insufficient information	2	2.6%

The most prevalent “other” reason for dropping out was personal issues and trouble (14.6%), while 10.6% reported family or home issues. Mental or physical health issues and jail/incarceration both had 6.6% of the responses. This year, there were no students who reported dropping out due to drugs or alcohol.

What Would Have Helped You Stay in School?

Similar to the other item asked of dropouts, we asked what would have helped them stay in school. Again, the “other” option was the most frequently selected (72%). This was followed by “more flexible hours” (10.7%), “classes that would have helped me” (9.3%), and “teachers/counselors who encouraged me.”

When we include the “other” responses, 24.8% cited personal circumstances, compared with 39.9% in 2024. Reasons included moving, being in jail, and struggling due to being new to the country. The existence of external supports that would have been helpful was noted by 8.3% of respondents. At the same time, 8.3% of the respondents stated nothing could have been done.

“He said he got sent off to juvenile detention center and foster care.

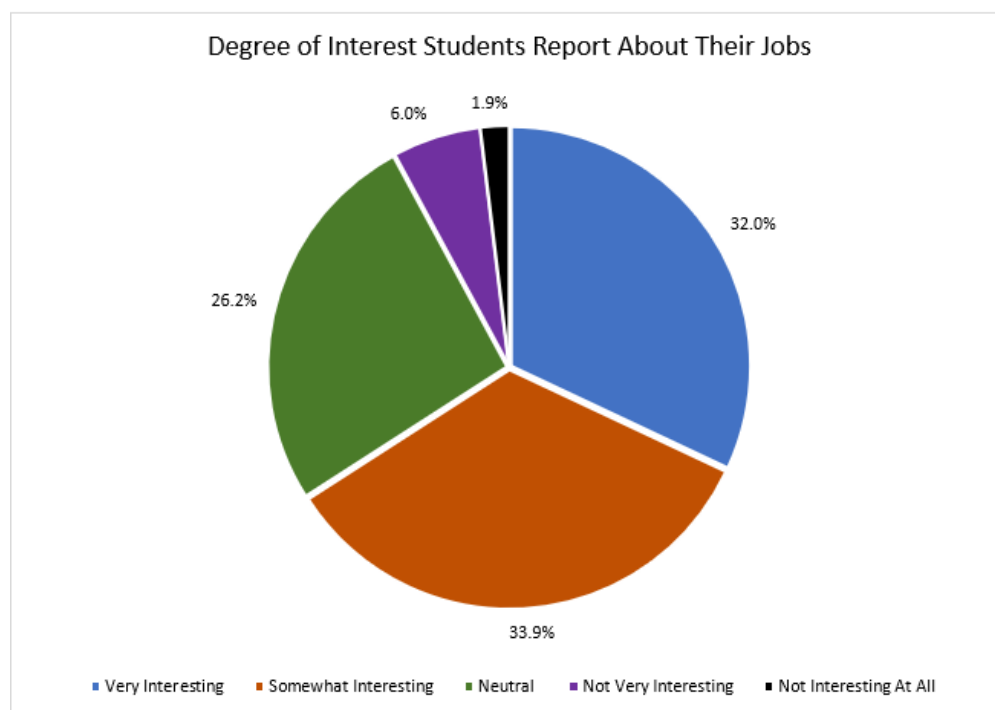
He said they did not do any schooling at the detention center because he was too close to 18.”

A suggestion for further research would involve more detailed analyses as to what may have influenced the reduction in the drop-out rate and whether these exiters participated in vocational classes, pre-ETS, and/or CTE courses prior to dropping out.

Degree of Interest Students Report About Their Jobs

We also asked employed respondents to what degree they found their jobs interesting (Figure 15).

Figure 15: To what degree employed respondents found their jobs interesting



Most employed respondents (33.9%) found their work somewhat interesting, followed by 32.0% who found their jobs very interesting. Less than 2% of students found their jobs not interesting at all, and 6.0% found their work not very interesting. The remaining 26.2% reported feeling neutral about their jobs. These findings are within tenths of the responses from 2024.

Disclosure and Accommodations

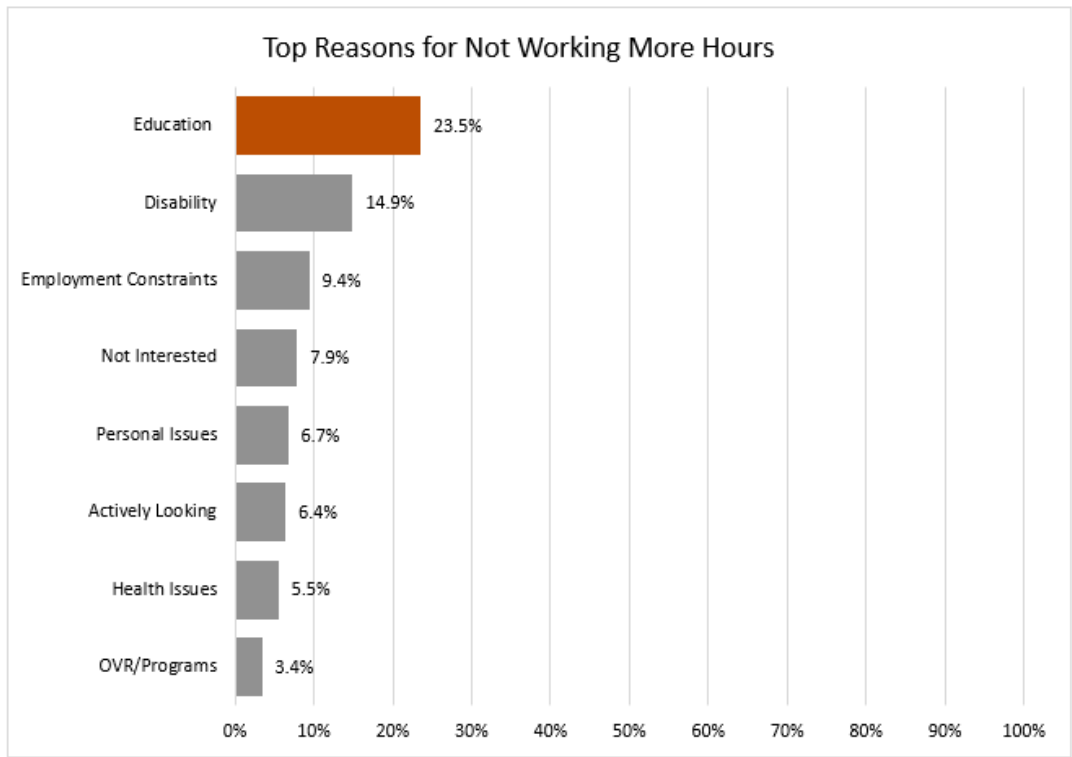
For a young person with a disability, finding and maintaining a job can be dependent upon employment supports. At the same time, there are serious concerns about disclosing whether one has a disability. Historically, the highest noted accommodation (from a very limited field of options) was a job coach. This accommodation was still only reported by approximately 10% of the population across years. Personal assistant and special equipment have historically been noted by less than 1% of respondents.

Additional Employment Details

Most respondents (98.7%) who were employed earned at least minimum wage. Of the 23 who did not earn minimum wage, 92% graduated with a regular diploma and 8% with an alternative diploma, a significant shift from the 70/30 split in 2024. Of all exiters with an alternative diploma who reported being employed, 96.2% reported making minimum wage. This finding increases opportunities for these exiters to be included in their communities, to be financially stable, and to have a greater chance of escaping the poverty that typically corresponds with this population. It is a dramatic shift from previous years, and those who work with this population of students should be commended for their work preparing these students for more than subminimum wage jobs.

Exiters who reported that they were not employed, had not been employed for at least 90 days since exiting high school, or worked less than full time were asked an additional question, "What is the main reason you are not working or not working more hours?" (Figure 16). Each respondent could indicate multiple reasons. There were 2,050 respondents for this question and 2,223 responses. Most responses (23.5%) indicated they did not work more hours due to their enrollment in postsecondary education programs or training. Next, 14.8% of the responses specifically noted their disability or a perceived lack of skills (e.g., money sense) as a reason why they could not work or work more hours. 7.8% of respondents stated they were not working or were not working more hours because they were just not interested in doing so. Some respondents (6.7%) stated they did not work or have more hours due to personal issues such as caring for a child or dealing with legal trouble. In addition, 4.2% of respondents identified transportation as a barrier to work, which is an increase from 2.9% from 2024.

Figure 16: Top reasons for not working more hours, led by education (23.5%)



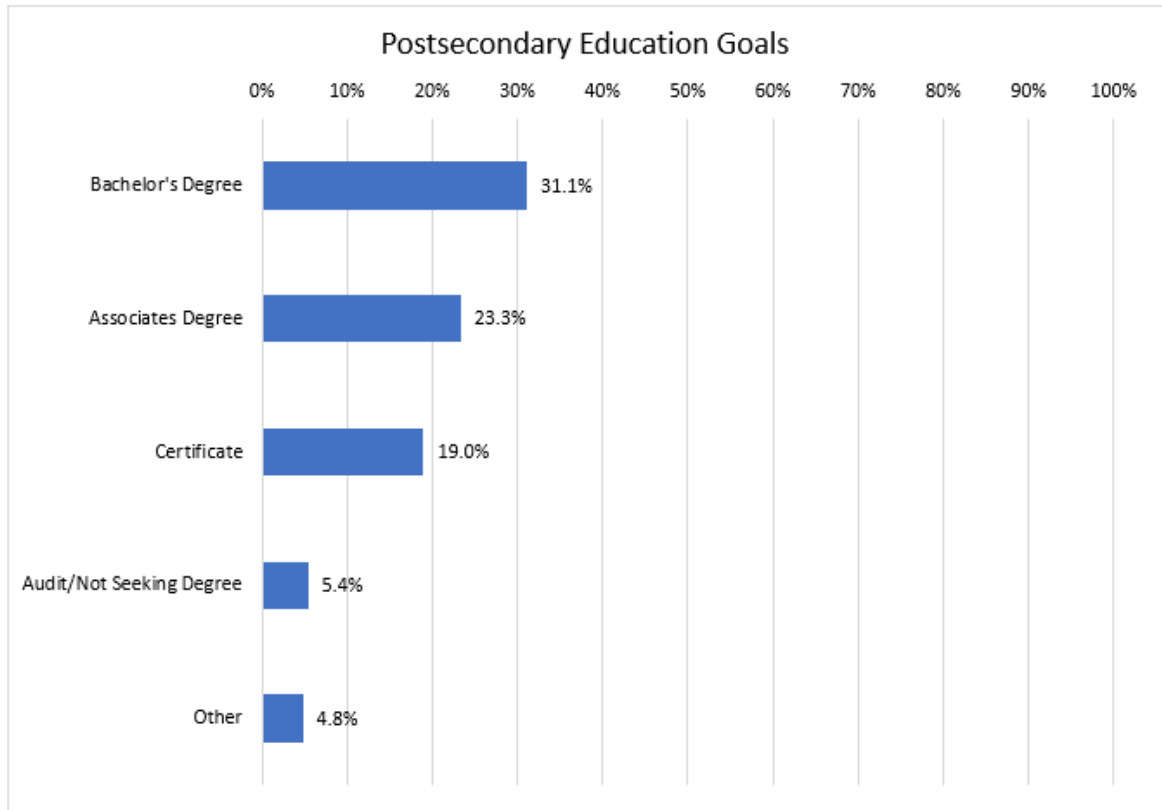
Examples of skills respondents mentioned as missing or not in place by graduation included coping and anxiety regulation skills, math skills, and a lack of identification documents. There was also a trend of respondents leaving jobs or not finding jobs they felt were interesting.

Postsecondary Education

Of the 924 respondents who indicated that they had gone on to some form of postsecondary education, most went on to a 2-year college or university 31.7%. The next highest percentage of respondents (30%) attended a four-year college. This is a shift from 2024, when most respondents who answered this question attended a four-year college instead of a two-year one. In 2024, 12.7% of respondents attended a vocational/technical program, while in 2025, 13% did.

Figure 17 illustrates the types of postsecondary goals those who responded to these questions were pursuing. 31.1% were pursuing a bachelor’s degree, compared to 32.4% in 2024. 2025 also saw an increase in the percentage of respondents pursuing an associate degree (19.4% in 2024 and 23.3% in 2025). The rate of respondents who were completing a certificate program remains fairly steady at 19% in 2025, rather than 5% in 2024.

Figure 17: Postsecondary education goals, with a bachelor’s degree most reported (31.1%)



Only 5.4% of respondents noted they were auditing their education/training opportunities or not seeking a degree. 4.8% responded “other”.

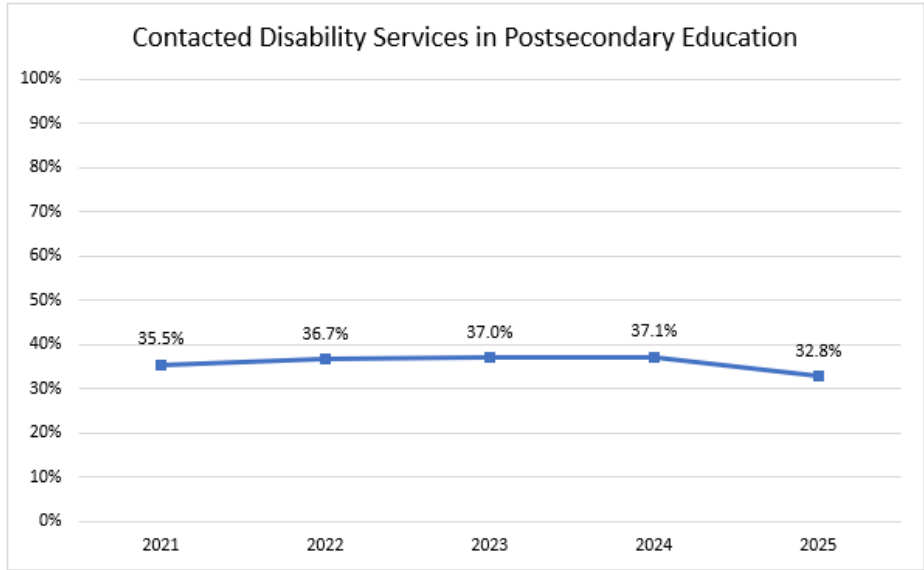
Community Engagement and Postsecondary Education

There was an increase in the percentage of respondents who lived with their families while in school. In 2024, 54.8% did so; in 2025, 57%. While it is tempting to believe that "going to college" involves a residential experience whereby young persons might learn valuable social skills (e.g., independent living in a relatively safe environment), educators should be aware that for those who attend a postsecondary education program other than a four-year college, this is most likely not their experience.

"He did not talk to the disabilities coordinator, because he didn't think he would need it. He is currently on academic suspension, but might go back."

Finally, we wanted to know whether an exiter who was pursuing further education had contacted the Disability Services Coordinator (DSC). This is important because it has been shown to help students stay in school and to indicate self-advocacy. Figure 18 illustrates the longitudinal data related to this question.

Figure 18: Longitudinal rates of contact with disability services in postsecondary education (2021-2025)

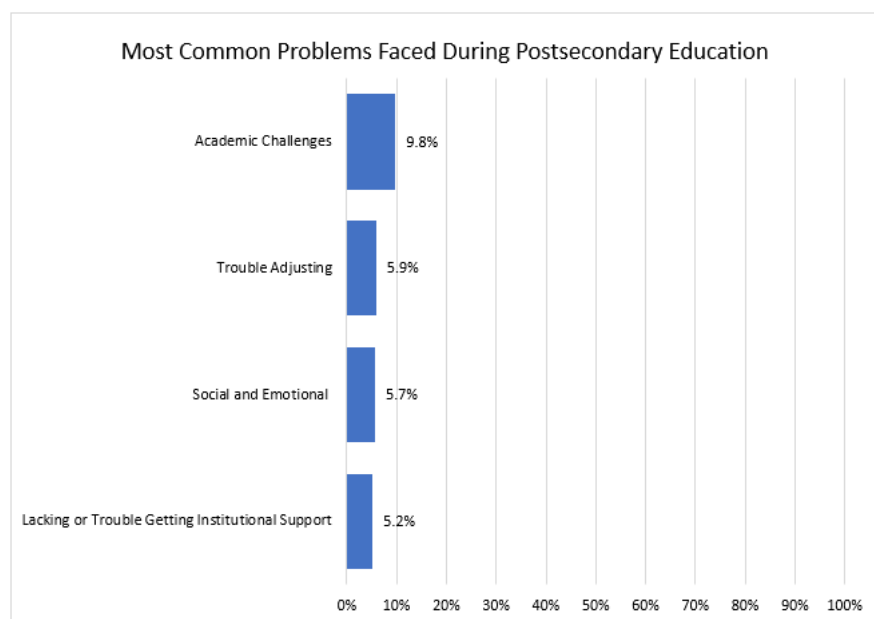


Identifying patterns in struggles or strengths related to the transition to postsecondary education can help align services and programs with student needs. A total of 541 people answered the question of whether they faced any problems with postsecondary school/training. Of those, 53.6% reported no difficulties, an increase of 6.6% points since 2024.

Some of the areas where YOYO

participants indicated they were struggling included reading level, material difficulty, and other academic challenges. Other issues identified included not knowing how to get additional help, missing home, difficulty balancing school, work, and/or social life, and anxiety. More information is available in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Most common problems faced during postsecondary education, with academic challenges most reported (9.8%)



The percentage of respondents who struggled to obtain institutional support indicates that additional support or guidance might be helpful for exiters as they explore their college or postsecondary options. Many of the difficulties reported by students (i.e., academic and social-emotional struggles, and adjustment to college demands) can be mitigated through self-advocacy skills and connections to appropriate supports.

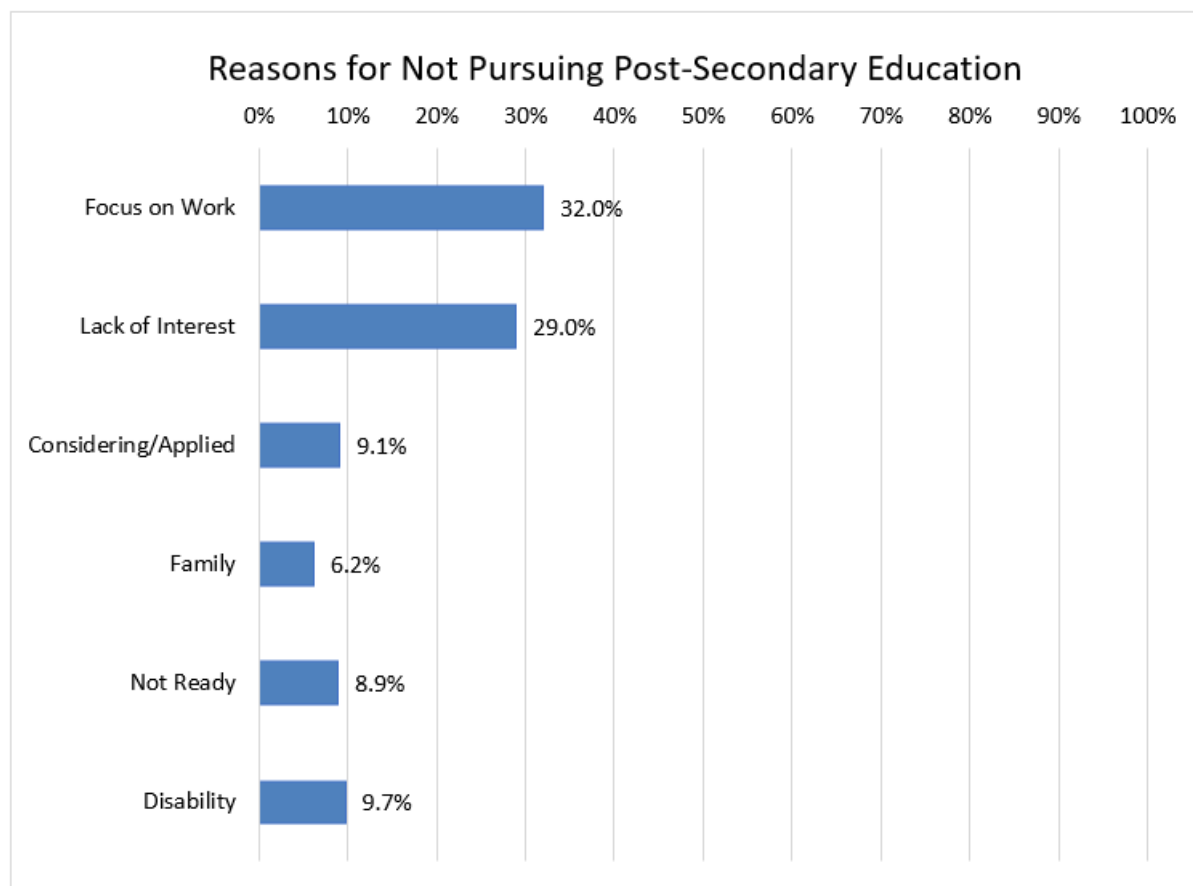
Deciding whether to disclose a disability can be difficult.

Disclosing that one has a disability might result in receiving supports and accommodations. However, it could also feel freeing to some postsecondary students not to disclose. However, having access to needed services and accommodations can mean the difference between a successful postsecondary career and an unsuccessful one. Students need to be taught during secondary school, if not earlier, how to advocate for themselves, what supports and services best meet their needs, and how to access them.

Not Pursuing Postsecondary Education/Training

For respondents who did not pursue postsecondary education, we followed up by asking about the reasons for not continuing their education (Figure 20). Among the 2,005 respondents who answered this question, the majority (32.0%) indicated they wanted to focus on working. The next most prominent reason for not pursuing postsecondary education/training was a lack of interest (29.0%). After that, 9.1% indicated they were considering or had already applied, 9.7% said they could not due to their disability, and 8.9% said they were not yet ready. Taking care of family members, including their children, their grandparents, or their parents, was the reason given by 6.2% of respondents.

Figure 20: Reasons for not pursuing postsecondary education, with focus on work most commonly reported (32.0%)



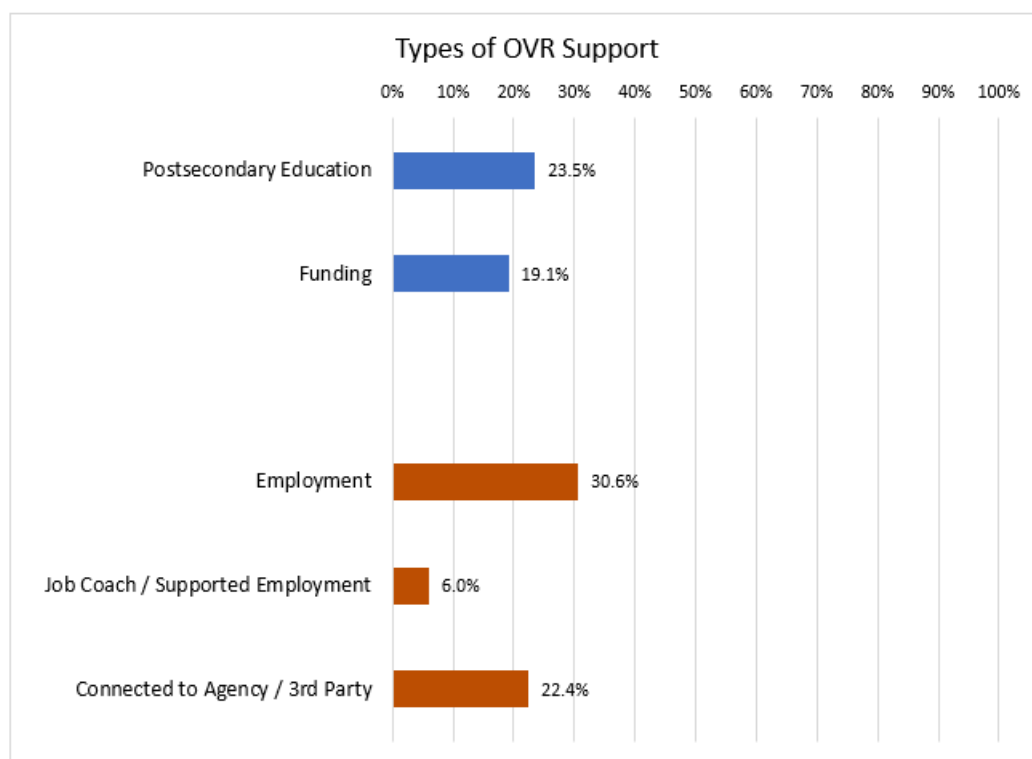
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

KYPSO also asked respondents if they had contact with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) since leaving high school. 396 people reported having contact with OVR, and 366 reported the type of support they received. 42.3% of respondents mentioned OVR being helpful, while 6.8% noted it was a difficult process to navigate. Figure 21 provides information about the most common types of support reported.

"Former student was able to get his CDL (paid by OVR) and he is working as a truck driver now."

Two primary categories of support were noted: employment (30.6%) and postsecondary education/training opportunities (23.5%). Figure 21 provides details about the most common types of support noted within those two primary categories.

Figure 21: Types of OVR support received by respondents



Within the employment category, connecting people to an agency or third-party organization (e.g., Perkins, AspYre, sheltered workshops) was the most common objective (22.4%). Postsecondary education support included accommodations, assistive technology tools, and financial support. Funding support was most often cited under

postsecondary education (19.1%) and included connecting students with scholarship opportunities, as well as paying for tuition and books.

Community Participation

The YOYO format enables us to gather details on community participation, which, along with employment and postsecondary education, provides a broader picture of respondents' postschool outcomes. Two items relevant to community participation addressed in the YOYO are whether a young person has a driver's license and is registered to vote.

"Better communication needed between community resources and students/parents, especially community programs with long waiting lists."

Although the national trend for young persons with driver's licenses has been dropping for years, and the rate of our respondents has consistently been below the overall (young persons with and without disabilities) national average, that gap is getting smaller. In 2024, 49% of respondents

indicated that they had a driver's license. This year, only 46.9% of respondents had a license.

Respondents to the YOYO indicated that they are slightly less likely to be registered to vote than the general population. According to the 2024 United States Census, in Kentucky, 75.3% of people with disabilities reported being registered voters. However, among eligible people aged 18-24, 53.5% are registered to vote. Comparatively, 54.6% of YOYO respondents had registered to vote. While there remains room for

improvement, it is a good sign that so many YOYO respondents are registered. While many people register to vote when getting their licenses, 19.5% of the respondents with licenses were not registered to vote.

As will be discussed later in the report, whether an exiter has a guardian is directly correlated with outcomes. In this case, when looking at voting and driving status in relation to guardianship, the data showed that respondents who identified as having a guardian were much less likely than those without a guardian to vote or drive. Among respondents without guardians, 48.1% had a license, and 47.4% were registered to vote. For respondents with guardians, only 6.3% had a license, and 10.1% were registered to vote.

Living Situation

Another question asked in the YOYO regarding community participation is where respondents have lived for most of the past year. The vast majority (79.8%) indicated living with their family, while 3.6% indicated living alone. Another 3.8% indicated they lived with friends, and 4.4% lived with a significant other. 6.1% lived in a college dorm, the military housing, or another dormitory housing situation. 1.2% indicated that they lived in a foster home, group home, shelter, or correctional facility. This is a return to the lower rates from 2023.

Free Time for Non-Engaged Respondents

Respondents who had not been employed or enrolled in further education since high school were asked how they spent their time. They were able to choose multiple options. Of the 1,194 exiters who responded to the question, the majority, 62.6%, indicated that they spend their time "at home" with or without others. Last year, 96% of respondents (n = 703) did so. Considering that these respondents were otherwise not engaged in work, postsecondary training, or school, this is a concerning finding. Respondents also indicated whether they engaged in unpaid family chores or cared for family members. 21.7% of the respondents chose this option.

Being an active member of the community and enjoying a higher quality of life often involves having hobbies and participating in community or religious groups. Of those who responded, only 44.6% reported being engaged in the community or having a hobby, similar to the 2024 findings. Other responses included spending time at appointments (15.4%) and working without pay outside the home (4.6%). These percentages have remained similar over the last several years. When disaggregated by guardianship status, there were minor differences in the rates of respondents with hobbies. Respondents with guardians were less likely to indicate they had no hobbies compared with those without guardians (18.8% vs. 36.2%). This finding might indicate that guardians are supporting hobby development.

Exiters' Perceptions of Effective High School Practices

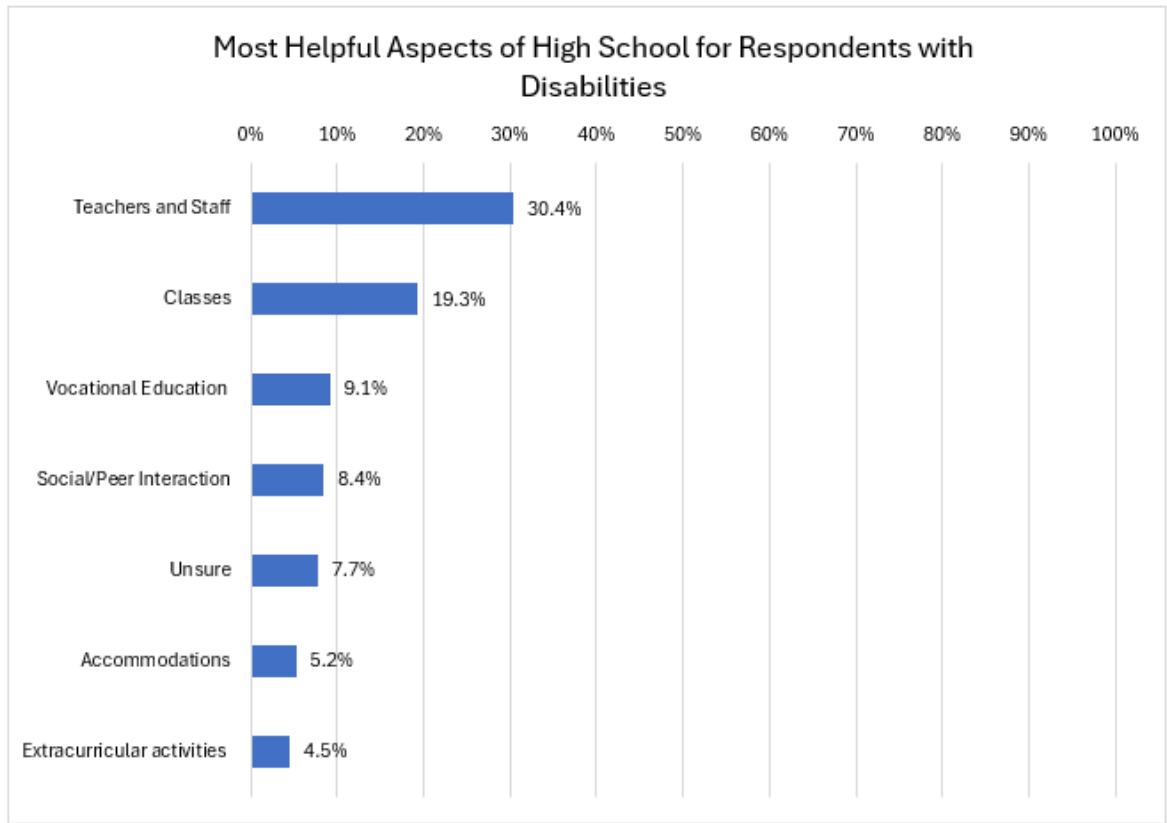
To gather more information about the exiters' experiences in high school, respondents were asked to "Name the most important thing during high school that helped you in your life right now" (Figure 22). 2,480 respondents answered this question with a response rate of 79.7%. The

"My teachers having high expectations for me and believing in my success."

largest category respondents called out as being important was teachers and staff (30.4%). The second most common response was specific classes mentioned by 19.3% of respondents, and 9.1% specifically named

vocational education courses as the most important part of high school. 8.4% of respondents stated that social experiences with their friends made the most difference.

Figure 22: Most helpful aspect of high school reported by respondents with disabilities



Qualitative Data for Respondents who Exited with an Alternative Diploma

Three hundred and four respondents who exited high school with an alternative diploma and were not engaged in work or postsecondary education/training answered the question about how they spent their time. Of these respondents, 58.8% indicated they had hobbies they engaged in. 75.0% indicated they were home either alone or with someone, and 23.0% indicated they did unpaid work at home, such as chores. Only 0.6% indicated they were engaged in unpaid work outside the home. Respondents who left with an alternative diploma noted teachers, Community Based Instruction (CBI), computer classes, vocational classes, and work opportunities as important to their postschool success.

It is important to clarify that exiters who did not specifically mention transition activities as the most helpful did not mean they did not participate in those programs. KYP SO has been interested in documenting the actual frequency with which exiters with IEPs take CTE courses and, more importantly, the impact that doing so has on their postschool outcomes. This year, KYP SO received CTE data directly from KDE to identify patterns of CTE and its effect on students with IEPs. This information can be found in the Findings from Data Synthesis section of this report.

Accessing Resources

At the end of the YOYO, the interviewer asks respondents whether they would like more information about the transition and transition services discussed throughout the survey. If so, they would provide corresponding contact information.

Interviewers then note what information was

shared. Of those who requested additional information, the majority (1,296 people) requested additional information about vocational rehabilitation services. The next most requested topic was a connection with a transition consultant (519 people), and 248 people requested information about supported employment. It should be considered if these exiters were aware of these services prior to exiting high school and not interested until now, or if these resources are new to them.

“I liked being able to go to the vocational school and taking the automotive classes. That made me want to go to school and get certification.”

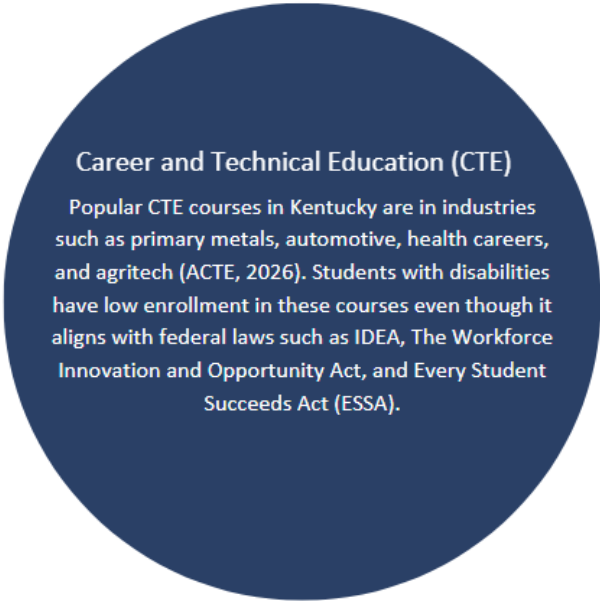
Findings from Data Synthesis

KYPSO continues to be interested in the impact of inclusion in the general education environment on postschool outcomes. This year marks the third year we have been able to measure this. To do so, we collected individual-level data on the amount of time exiters spent in general education classes. These data were provided to KYPSO by KDE. When viewed in aggregate, data regarding time spent in the general education classroom have been trending downward. Exiting students were found to have spent 80% or more of their school day in general education classes (over 70% in 2023, 69.9% in 2024, and 67.3% in 2025).

Higher incidence disabilities with large populations, such as Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and those with Other Health Impairment (OHI), skew these numbers to look favorable, although they have declined in the past year. 87.2% and 77.2% of exiters with these primary disability categories are included in general education classes for at least 80% of the school day. The time spent in the general education classes by those with multiple disabilities declined dramatically (21.2% for 2024 exiters vs 31.8% for 2023 exiters who spent at least 80% of their instructional time in general education classes). Another meaningful way to analyze this data is to examine time spent in general education by type of high school exit (our proxy for diploma track). Overall, of those who received regular diplomas, 75.7% spent at least 80% of their day in general education classes. This is down slightly from the previous year (78%). Among those who received alternative diplomas, only 4.7% spent at least 80% of their day in general education (down from 6.7%). Our own data, as well as established research, indicate that time spent in general education is a strong positive predictor of postschool employment. This is true for our full sample of students with IEPs (78% employment for students who spend 80% or more of their time in general education classes vs. 50% for students who spent less than 80% of their day in general education classes) and is also true for students exiting with alternative diplomas (7% vs. 4%). While these numbers are lower than ideal, they do show an improvement from last year. As stakeholders examine the causes of the overall drop in employment among students with IEPs between 2024 and 2025, time spent in general education classes should be noted as a possible factor.

Career and Technical Education

In previous years, KYPSO obtained Career and Technical Education (CTE) data from the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS). These data were provided in aggregate form, which limited our ability to fully disaggregate CTE participation levels across different student populations in our sample. This year, however, we obtained student-level CTE data directly from the KDE, which allowed for a more detailed examination of the relationship between CTE participation and postschool employment outcomes. CTE participation was categorized into four levels: No CTE coursework; CTE explorers (students who completed at least one CTE course); CTE concentrators (students who completed at least two CTE courses); and CTE completers (students who completed all coursework within a specific CTE pathway).



It is noteworthy that there are considerable differences in CTE participation rates between cohorts. Among 2023 exiters, 30% were identified as CTE completers and 32% as concentrators. In contrast, the 2024 cohort included 22% CTE completers and 30% concentrators, indicating a decline in higher levels of CTE engagement.

A fairly linear relationship was observed between the level of CTE participation and competitive employment. Among the current cohort, 33% of students with no CTE coursework were competitively employed, compared to 50% of CTE completers. In the prior year, this relationship appeared somewhat stronger, with competitive employment rates ranging from 21% among students with no CTE participation to 55% among completers.

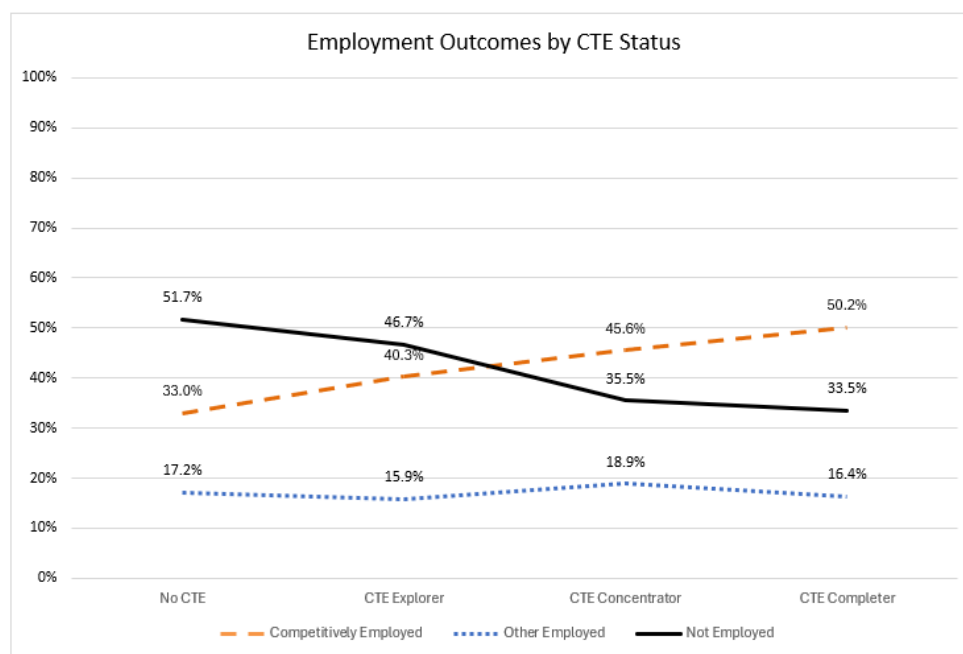
The combination of a smaller observed effect of CTE participation on employment outcomes and a lower overall rate of CTE completion suggests conditions that may contribute to reduced competitive employment outcomes. This pattern is reflected in the 2025 YOYO data, where overall competitive employment rates declined relative to the previous year.

Table 13 shows the relationship between CTE coursework and employment outcomes, as well as the percentage of students in each group for students with IEPs.

Table 13: Employment outcomes by CTE status

Employment Outcomes by CTE Status	Competitively Employed	Other Employed	Not Employed	% of Total
CTE Completer	50.2%	16.4%	33.5%	21.7%
CTE Concentrator	45.6%%	18.9%	35.5%%	30.5%
CTE Explorer	40.3%%	15.9%	43.8%	14.1%
No CTE	33.0%%	15.3%	51.7%	33.7%

Figure 23: Employment outcomes by CTE status



Because this is the first year KPSO has had access to student-level CTE data, we are now able to examine CTE participation and outcomes across key subpopulations. One important group of interest is students with low incidence disabilities.

Within this population, participation in CTE coursework was substantially lower than in the overall sample. A majority of students (54%) had not taken any CTE

coursework, while only 12% met the criteria for being considered CTE completers. This distribution highlights a notable gap in access to, or participation in, advanced CTE pathways for students with low incidence disabilities.

Despite these differences in participation, the relationship between CTE involvement and employment outcomes remains evident. Because students in this group are more likely to be employed in non-competitive settings, we report rates of students who were not employed at all, by level of CTE participation. A strong relationship was evident.

Among students with low incidence disabilities who completed a CTE pathway, 54% were not employed. While still high, this rate is considerably lower than the 84% of students with no CTE coursework who were not employed. A linear pattern is again evident across levels of CTE participation, with 72% of CTE explorers and 69% of CTE concentrators reporting no employment.

These findings suggest that, even within populations with higher support needs and lower baseline employment rates, increased engagement in CTE coursework is associated with improved postschool employment outcomes.

We also examined differences in CTE coursework by gender. Neither the distribution of CTE involvement nor its effect appeared to be substantially different for males and females, although females tended to have lower employment rates overall, as was consistent in our general findings.

We also examined differences in CTE participation across student racial and ethnic groups. Notable variation was observed in the proportion of students reaching CTE completer status. 22.5% of White students were identified as CTE completers. In comparison, 17.2% of Black students, 19.9% of Hispanic students, and 19.7% of multiple races met the criteria of CTE completers. Differences in the effect of CTE completion were not meaningfully different based on ethnicity.

Homelessness

We continue to examine outcomes for respondents experiencing homelessness. Approximately 5.3% of all exiters with IEPs in Kentucky are reported as being homeless. This is nearly a 1% increase from our previous year's data (4.4%). We use the definition given by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This includes any exiter who does not have a fixed, stable, and adequate nightly residence. As we found in previous years, homeless exiters were just as likely, if not more so, to respond to the YOYO as those not considered homeless. As in 2024, response rates were not meaningfully different for homeless respondents – a counterintuitive but consistent finding that speaks highly of our interviewers' abilities to contact youth that might be considered hard to reach.

We examined trends in employment for homeless respondents. Among homeless respondents, 38% reported being competitively employed within one year of exiting high school, which is lower than the 41.8% of non-homeless respondents who were competitively employed. This continues a downward trend in employment for homeless respondents.

Education outcomes among the homeless were also poorer than those of the non-homeless. Among homeless respondents, 13.5% went on to higher education, compared to 18.8% of the housed. The McKinney-Vento program assists with completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) forms and aims to promote postsecondary education among homeless youth. This is noteworthy, as declines in Indicator 14 have primarily been associated with declines in employment. This pattern has been remarkably consistent across the subgroups that we have examined. However, for the homeless population, education is declining more rapidly than employment.

Guardianship

The "school to guardianship pipeline" has been frequently noted in recent literature (American Bar Association 2025; Martinis et al. 2024; Smith-Hill et al. 2022), with the consensus being that alternatives to guardianship, such as Supported Decision-Making, foster greater self-determination, leading to more positive outcomes. We again asked the YOYO respondents whether they had a legal guardian. Understanding that this could be a difficult question for young people to answer, we instructed interviewers to note whether the respondent did not know the answer and to mark the interview accordingly.

As was the case last year, only about 5% of respondents responded to this question by saying they did not know whether they had a legal guardian. Meanwhile, 71% indicated that they did not have a legal guardian, while 24% stated that they did. There was a huge variation between disability types in who did and did not report having a legal guardian. Table 14 provides a full breakdown by disability category regarding who reported having a legal guardian. The questions do not delve into whether the guardianship was full, limited, or involved some form of conservatorship. Nevertheless, the findings regarding the outcomes of exiters who reported having legal guardians are striking.

Table 14: Percent of respondents reporting having a guardian by disability category

Disability Category	% Reported Having Guardian
Autism (N=352)	42.9%
Emotional Behavioral Disability (N=205)	23.9%
Functional Mental Disability (N=194)	65%
Hearing Impairment (N=24)	20.8%
Mild Mental Disability (N=535)	16.7%
Multiple Disabilities (N=8,695)	65.1%
Orthopedic Impairment (N=10)	50%
Other Health Impairment (N=776)	16.4%
Specific Learning Disability (N=869)	15.2%
Speech or Language Impairment (N=1,721)	19.1%
Traumatic Brain Injury (N=13)	46.2%
Visual Impairment (N=2,224)	22.7%
Total (N=3,109)	24.3%

Because guardianship is a phenomenon most closely associated with more severe disabilities, most of our analysis of postschool outcomes and guardianship focuses on those students who exited with alternative diplomas. Upon request, we could also examine other disability categories or breakdowns; however, we believe the diploma track is the most robust proxy for disability severity. It also allows us to make a close comparison between similar respondents with and without guardians. Among those who exited high school with an alternative diploma, 69% reported having guardians, while 27% did not. This is a decrease in guardianship from last year.

Earlier in this report, we discussed the low levels of employment for students who have exited on the alternative diploma. The discrepancy between respondents on the alternative diploma who go on to competitive employment one year after high school varies greatly between those with and without guardians. For those with guardians (who, again, represent 69% of this group), less than 3% obtained competitive employment. Of the 27% of respondents on the alternative diploma who reported not having guardians, 19% achieved competitive employment within a year after exiting high school. While the prevalence of guardianship has not changed over the past year, those without guardians saw a 6% increase in competitive employment. This is one of the few subgroups that had better employment outcomes than in 2024. While we do not suggest that guardianship is the sole or causal factor influencing a young person's likelihood of achieving competitive employment, the data indicate a notable association. Specifically, the rate of competitive employment is more than four times higher among respondents without guardianship compared to a similar group of those with guardians. This pattern has remained consistent across the two years in which this question has been asked.

Simulated Predictions Based on Malleable Factors

We have discussed our findings regarding several factors related to postschool outcomes. We now think it would be a useful exercise to demonstrate how Indicator 14 numbers might change if modest improvements were made to certain predictors of transition outcomes. We consider three predictors: increased time spent in general education classes for 80% or more of the day, greater involvement in CTE, and a reduction in guardianship. For each, we estimate the effects of each predictor on each of the three Indicator 14 indicators (A, B & C) and then use a statistical model to estimate what a modest increase would mean for each outcome.

Time Spent in General Education Classes

As noted above, 67% of respondents in the 2023–24 school year spent at least 80% of their school day in general education classes. In absolute terms, this represents 2,091 out of 3,109 former students who responded to the YOYO survey.

To better understand the potential impact of expanding access to general education classes, we examined what would happen if 10% more of the students who currently spend less than 80% of their day in general education classes moved into the 80% or more category.

We used logistic regression models in Statistical Analysis System (SAS) to estimate average marginal effects (AMEs), representing changes in the predicted probability of postschool outcomes (Indicator 14A, 14B, and 14C), controlling for CTE participation, guardianship status, and diploma track. These estimates were then used to simulate the impact of increasing time spent in general education classes statewide.

The results indicate that even a modest increase in general education class participation is associated with meaningful improvements in postschool outcomes.

Table 15: Projected changes in Indicator 14 outcomes after a 10% increase in time spent in general education classes

Indicator	Current	After +10% time increase	Change
14A	18.3%	19.1%	0.8
14B	53.0%	54.3%	1.3
14C	67.5%	68.8%	1.3

Career and Technical Education

We can conduct a similar analysis to estimate the potential impact of increased participation in Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. However, this analysis is structured somewhat differently from the

analysis of time spent in general education classes for two key reasons. First, CTE participation is measured across four categories (no CTE participation, Explorers, Concentrators, and Completers), rather than as a binary indicator, as was done for time spent in general education classrooms (i.e., $\geq 80\%$ vs. not).

It has been noted that CTE participation levels were higher in the previous year than among students exiting in 2023–24. Therefore, we model a scenario in which the distribution of CTE participation observed in the prior year is applied to the current cohort.

Using logistic regression models estimated on the current year’s data, we calculate average marginal effects (AMEs) representing changes in the predicted probability of postschool outcomes (Indicator 14A, 14B, and 14C), controlling for time spent in general education classes, guardianship status, and diploma track. We then apply these estimates to simulate how Indicator 14 outcomes would be expected to change if the statewide distribution of CTE participation were to reflect the levels observed in the prior year.

CTE and Students with Disabilities: Recommendations

- Review their state and local systems to ensure policies, practices, accountability, and assessment align with the expectation that all students will be enrolled in CTE courses.
- Support collaboration between CTE instructors and special education teachers.
- Involve CTE professionals in IEP teams and meetings.

~Harvey et al., 2020

Table 16: Current and projected Indicator 14 outcomes based on 2022-23 CTE distribution

Indicator	Current Rate (2023–24)	Projected Rate (Prior-Year CTE Distribution)	Change (percentage points)
14A	18.3%	19.9%	1.6
14B	53.0%	54.2%	1.2
14C	67.5%	68.5%	1

Guardianship Status

We can also conduct a similar analysis to estimate the potential impact of changes in guardianship status. Guardianship rates vary substantially across the population, particularly for students with high support needs. Overall, 25.53% of students in the sample have a legal guardian (755 out of 2,957 students). In contrast, among students exiting on the Alternative Diploma, 71.83% (255 out of 355 students) have a legal guardian.

To better understand the potential impact of this difference, we examined what would happen if the rate of guardianship among students with high support needs were reduced to match the overall statewide rate of students with IEPs. This represents a substantial shift for this subgroup, while leaving the remainder of the population unchanged.

We used logistic regression models in SAS to estimate average marginal effects (AMEs), representing changes in the predicted probability of postschool outcomes (Indicator 14A, 14B, and 14C), controlling for time spent in general education classes, CTE participation, and diploma track. These estimates were then

used to simulate the impact of reducing guardianship among students on the Alternative Diploma at the statewide level.

The results indicate that reducing guardianship among students with high support needs is associated with moderate improvements in postschool outcomes.

Table 17: Current and adjusted effect of matching guardianship rates for alternative diploma students to that of all students with IEPs

Indicator	Current	Adjusted Guardianship Rate	Change
14A	18.3%	18.5%	0.2
14B	53.0%	53.8%	0.8
14C	67.5%	68.2%	0.7

Conclusion

Reviewing data trends and specific yearly data helps improve the effectiveness and validity of using the data to make programmatic decisions. Looking at Indicator 14 data for one year is less helpful than looking at data over time. In 2022, there was a noticeable drop in Indicator 14 data. The rates had been rebounding since then, but this year, they decreased. While they are not at the 2022 low levels, this drop is noted, and we will continue to track it. KYPSO will also work with the Kentucky Interagency Transition Council (KITC) to identify any programmatic or other changes that might have caused this drop.

Competitive employment declined significantly this year, from 45.3% to 41.4%. This 3.9% decline is a cause for concern. Given the changes in the percentage of students with some form of engagement, it is likely that this drop led to more respondents being unengaged. In 2024, the non-engagement rate was 29.4%; this year, it rose to 32.5%. This is nearly the same level as in 2021, which was negatively affected by COVID-19.

Postsecondary data had a slight drop in respondents who went on to higher education or other training/education opportunities. Slight fluctuations are expected from year to year, and at this time, this change does not appear to be a concern.

Two areas have a large impact on employment and postsecondary education: CTE and time spent in general education classes. Enrollment in CTE courses has dropped considerably in the last year, which may help identify a major cause of the decline in indicator 14 numbers. The overall time students with disabilities spent in general education classes has declined somewhat from last year as well, which also correlates highly with a drop in Indicator 14. Finding ways to increase participation in CTE and the percentage of students in general education classes for core instruction, as well as music, PE, etc., could have a significant positive impact on Indicator 14 data for all exiters.

Disparities continue to exist in many outcomes related to race/ethnicity, disability type, and diploma track, though there has been a shift in which subgroups had better rates than others. Competitive employment rates dropped across all subgroups, but respondents who identified as White and Hispanic/Latino experienced the largest declines compared with 2024 data. Hispanic/Latino competitive employment rates had the largest drop. This year, respondents who identified as two or more races had the highest competitive employment rate (43.3%).

Consistently across the country, students with high incidence disabilities, such as learning disabilities, and those with a label of Other Health Impaired (OHI), have better outcome data than those with low incidence disabilities. Low incidence disabilities include students who have a label of Functional Mental Disability (FMD) or multiple disabilities.

For many years, the items related to the accommodations respondents had in their jobs were insufficient to gather data useful for making meaningful instructional changes. As a result, this year, we worked with KITC to identify areas they felt were important to know about accommodations. From these conversations, we developed new accommodation items that will be in place for the 2026 YOYO survey. These data will allow us to provide more actionable recommendations for teachers and related service providers to help improve exiters' ability to advocate for themselves and their accommodation needs.

KYPSO Support

Our staff has collaborated with SERTACs and districts to utilize the new reporting system, analyze the results, and make data-driven decisions to enhance transition programs and instruction. Through our individual meetings with SERTAC leaders, we have helped build capacity for understanding and using data to review programs. We are also supporting capacity building by highlighting specific key data points and best practices tailored to each SERTAC through monthly data dives.

KYPSO is always looking for new ways to improve our data reporting process and the use of data for meaningful change at the school level. We have continued to highlight service providers, innovative initiatives, and SERTAC highlights so that students receive excellent transition support regardless of where they live in Kentucky. We could further this focus if we had the ability to collect and analyze data at one and five years out of high school. Five years was determined because many students who entered postsecondary education programs/training should be done with them, or almost done, and those who are taking a year to address personal issues have time to adjust to adult life. Reflecting on the data between year one out of high school and year six out of high school allows for a more complete picture of outcomes.

If you would like to discuss the findings presented in this report, please contact Tony LoBianco, KYPSO Project Director, at tflobi1@uky.edu.

Recommendations

Based on research, Kentucky's specific needs and trends, parent surveys, and conversations with educators and service providers, KYPSO has the following recommendations for consideration to improve Indicator 14 data.

1. It would be helpful to compare CTE enrollment across SERTACS to identify best practices and areas of need at the SERTAC level. Those SERTACS with high levels of enrollment for all students, regardless of disability type, could be shared.
2. This year, KYPSO rolled out a new data reporting system. The Kentucky Department of Education's current initiatives that use YOYO data and the KYPSO reporting system to support action planning for transition program improvements offer an excellent opportunity to improve the reporting system itself. It would be powerful to share any suggested changes or strengths from the new reporting system with KYPSO. KYPSO can then update the reporting system to better meet

stakeholders' needs.

3. Across Kentucky, students with disabilities spent less time in general education classes compared to in 2024. In this report, we demonstrate the effectiveness of inclusive practices for those on the alternative diploma track. Thus, similar to the CTE data, it could be helpful to explore rates across SERTACS to identify and share best practices. KYPSO can also help facilitate conversations during KITC meetings to identify current practices and increase the use of best practices.
4. The lack of a communication system remains a significant barrier to opportunities to learn for some students. The resources and trainings developed through the Teaching Age Appropriate Learning through Communication (TAALC) project remain available and could be highlighted by KDE to help improve Indicator 14 data.
5. Research has consistently identified predictors of post-school success in community education, employment, and independent living. The Kentucky state YOYO reports have regularly demonstrated that students who take the alternate assessment have less access to these opportunities and poor post-school outcomes. There is a clear disconnect between research and practice that should be investigated using qualitative data to expand upon the quantitative data in this report. This data could include activities such as focus groups with families and their children who are in this track, or IEP processes and document audits to examine this disconnect and identify ways to eradicate it.
6. With the recent passage of Kentucky's House Bill 562 that goes into effect in the 2027-2028 school year, it will be important to carefully consider and monitor decisions and participation of this new assessment option. Previous attempts to develop a federal three-tiered large-scale assessment system revealed challenges related to participation criteria and item development (Lazarus, et al. 2015). Two sources in particular might be considered when designing the implementation plan for this new assessment structure:
 - a. An Analysis of the Rise and Fall of the AA-MAS Policy by Lazarus et al, (2015)
 - b. Jamgochian, E. M., & Ketterlin-Geller, L. R. (2015). The 2% Transition. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 48(1), 28–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059915594781>

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*Artificial intelligence tools were used to support initial data analysis and to assist with editing and proofreading in the preparation of this report; all outputs were subsequently reviewed and validated by project staff.