

# First-Fall Destinations for Baltimore City Schools Graduates in Brief

Rachel E. Durham & Juan B. Cortes

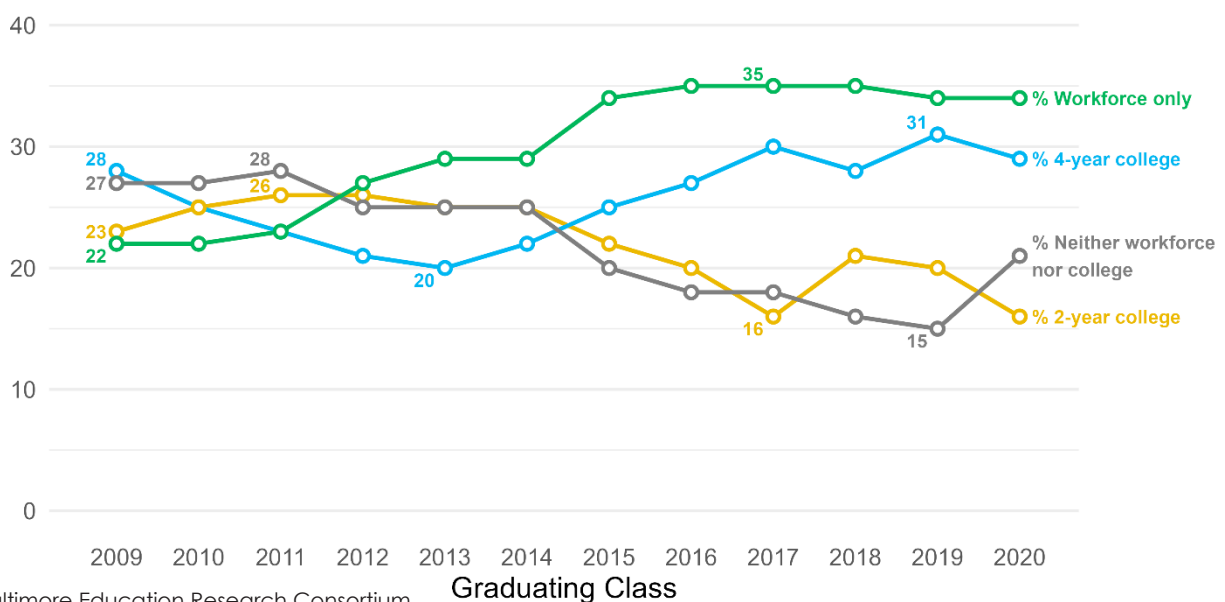
This brief offers an updated look at the postsecondary and workforce destinations during the first fall after high school among Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) graduates.<sup>1</sup> A [previous study published in 2018](#) examined outcomes for the class of 2009, showing that slightly over half of graduates were enrolled in some form of postsecondary education (2-year and 4-year colleges), about one-fifth were formally employed and not in college, and about one-quarter were neither enrolled in postsecondary education nor in the workforce.

Additionally, for the first time this brief offers a state-wide comparative look at the percent of high school graduates who in the fall following high school were neither enrolled in college anywhere in the United States nor found in the Maryland workforce. Specifically, we report this percentage for school districts in the Baltimore and Washington, D.C. metropolitan areas, Western Maryland, and the northern and southern eastern shore. All data in this brief pertain to the graduating classes of 2009 through 2020.

## FIRST FALL AFTER GRADUATION

Graduates from City Schools moved on to enroll in 4-year or 2-year colleges and into the Maryland workforce immediately after high school at different rates between 2009 and 2020 (Figure 1). There were two notable shifts in trends that occurred during this period. First, the share of graduates pursuing postsecondary education at 4-year colleges increased over time. There was an initial decline in 4-year college enrollment from 2009 to 2013 and then a steady increase starting in 2014 resulting in most college-enrolled graduates attending 4-year institutions. Second, the share of graduates who were not enrolled and not formally employed in Maryland during the first fall (six months) after graduation decreased significantly over time. Whereas 27% of the class of 2009 were neither enrolled nor employed in Maryland, the percentage decreased steadily each year to only 15% for the class of 2019. This was primarily driven by a larger share of graduates entering the workforce.

**Figure 1. Percentage of Baltimore City Graduates Enrolled in College or Employed in Maryland the Fall after High School, Classes of 2009 through 2020**



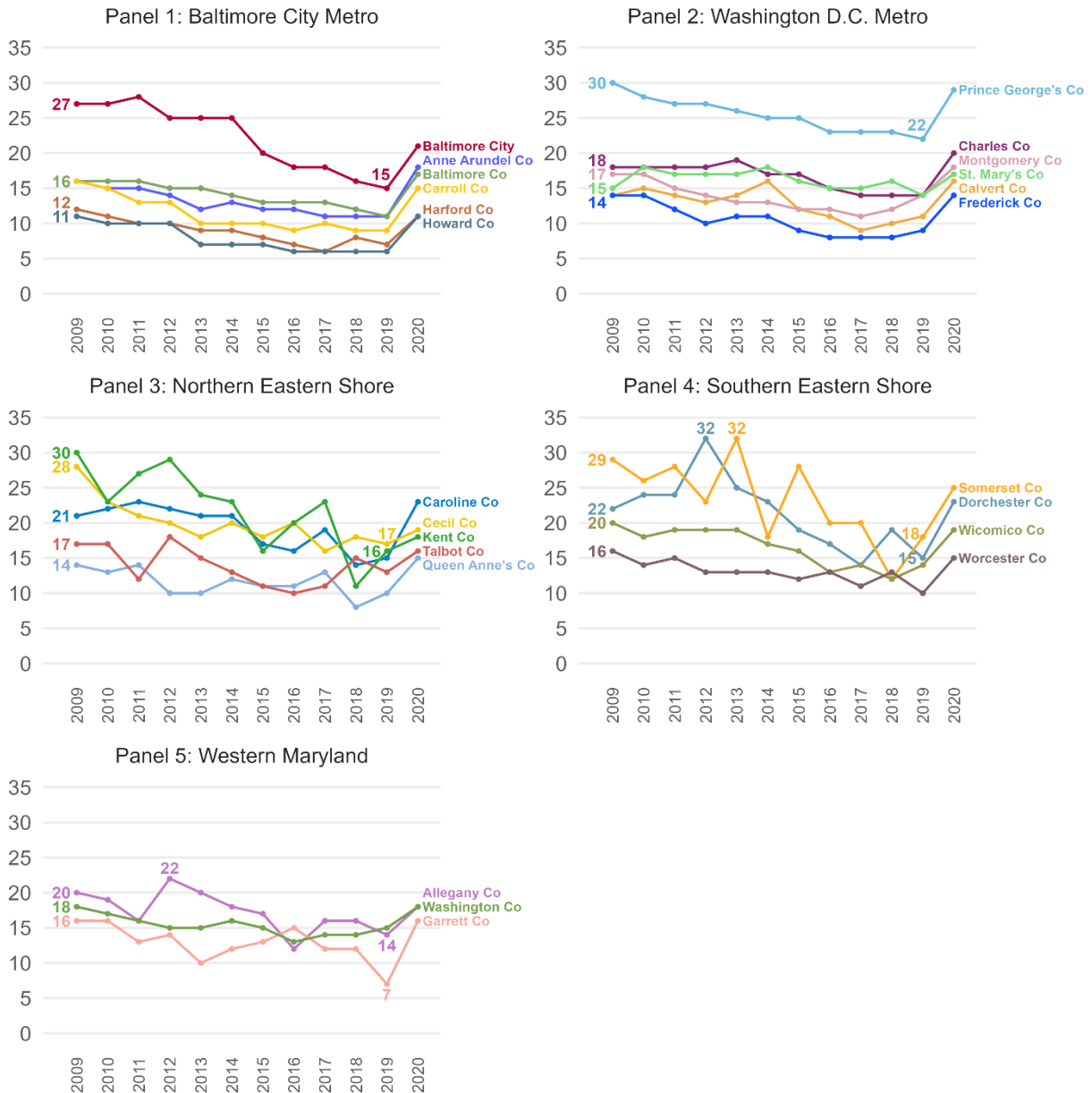
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Data for the class of 2020 may be anomalous due to COVID-19 shutdowns in fall 2020. The data suggest that COVID-19 altered the trend for college enrollment, particularly at 2-year institutions, resulting in an increased share of graduates neither enrolled in college nor working. More research will be needed to determine whether data for the class of 2021 and later cohorts returned to pre-2020 trends following COVID-19 recovery. Nevertheless, the overall trends suggest a promising reduction in the percentage of graduates either not enrolled in postsecondary education nationally or not engaged in formal work in Maryland following high school.

**DISENGAGED GRADUATES: HOW DOES BALTIMORE CITY COMPARE TO OTHER MARYLAND DISTRICTS?**

The notable reduction in the percentage of City Schools graduates not pursuing postsecondary education nor formal Maryland employment after high school warrants further contextualization. To determine whether Baltimore City is unique in this trend, Figure 2 displays this data for all Maryland public school districts.

**Figure 2. By School District: Percentage of Graduates Neither Enrolled in College nor Employed in Maryland the Fall after High School, Classes of 2009 through 2020**



While Figure 2 displays a generally declining trend in disengaged graduates across school districts in Maryland, the figure highlights the comparatively dramatic decline among Baltimore City graduates from 2009 to 2019. Several other districts also witnessed large decreases (e.g., Kent and Dorchester), but their graduating cohorts were much smaller. Whereas Baltimore City graduates around 4,000 students per year, Kent and Dorchester graduate on average about 150 and 275 each year, respectively. Their smaller size makes long-term trends more volatile than for larger districts.

## CONCLUSION

While we cannot say with certainty what caused this shift in Baltimore, several efforts led by City Schools may have contributed to the uptick in graduates' college and workforce participation. In 2015 City Schools opened a Reengagement Center, which works to connect graduates with family-supporting work and training opportunities. Grads2Careers, which launched in 2018, also provides support to those seeking a credential in high-growth occupations. Simultaneously, since 2017 City Schools has prioritized postsecondary planning, wherein all students are encouraged to set goals for their lives after high school in accordance with their interests, whether that be college, career training, full-time employment, or military enlistment. The combination of these and related efforts are likely responsible for supporting more graduates to find productive activity after high school.

## METHODOLOGICAL DETAILS

<sup>i</sup> This research was conducted using de-identified individual-level data from the Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) and with the technical support of the MLDS Center Staff. Data were prepared September 2022. The conclusions of this research do not reflect the opinion of the State of Maryland, MLDS Center, the MLDS Governing Board, or its partner agencies.

MLDS sources of college enrollment data included the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). MHEC provides dates of enrollment and degree completion at institutions of higher education within the state of Maryland. The NSC reports dates of enrollment and degrees completed at postsecondary institutions across the United States. NSC data represent 98% of enrollments at U.S. Title IV-eligible and degree-granting institutions. Enrollments at some types of colleges may be underrepresented in NSC data, particularly small religious schools, arts conservatories, or small specialty colleges.

Regarding workforce participation, the MLDS provided data from the Maryland Department of Labor, specifically, quarterly records of gross wages earned from employers and businesses in Maryland, as well as work study opportunities in college. Full-time and part-time employment intensity are not reported. Wage data do not include military pay, federal employment, self-employment, informal labor, or employment outside Maryland. Unobserved wages from these types of employment may bias results.

First-fall status was determined by comparing students' high school graduation date with date of college enrollment or quarterly wage records. For employment, first-fall workforce participation refers to wage records observed in either the third or fourth calendar quarter. Fall college enrollments were defined as enrollment events from July through December of the same calendar year during which high school graduation occurred. Students who graduated from high school outside the typical June graduation window are designated as fall enrollees if they were enrolled in college the next fall, regardless of whether they enrolled in college during an earlier season. Enrollment intensity (full-time, part-time, etc.) is not consistently reported by all colleges, so all enrollment events are treated equally in the analyses.