

# FEBRUARY 2020

# FACT SHEET

## Social Determinants of Health: Education



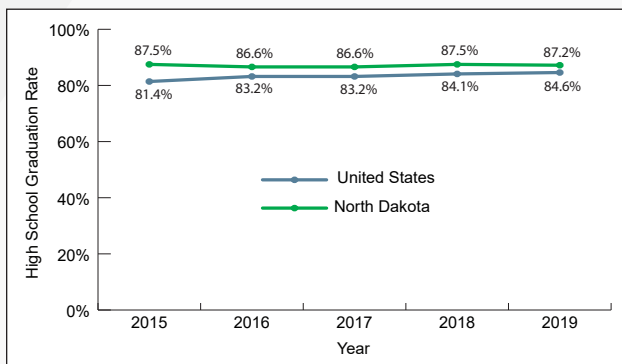
Education is an important facet of social determinants of health as obtaining an education can lead to increased job and economic opportunities. Some level of training or education is typically required for most jobs in today's market.

### Public Education

Public schools are an important aspect of the education system in the U.S. and North Dakota as a high school diploma is a standard requirement for most jobs and higher education opportunities. Some aspects worth examining when referring to education within the context of social determinants of health are graduation rates, support programs, enrollment, and internet access.

**Graduation Rate** – When comparing North Dakota to the U.S., findings indicate that North Dakota is doing better when it comes to graduation rates than the overall U.S. rate. In North Dakota, the cohort graduation rate was 87.2% in 2019, which exceeds the national rate of 84.6% (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> Further, about 7.5% of the North Dakotans age 25 or older have no high school diploma, which is far lower than the national number of 12.3%.<sup>2</sup>

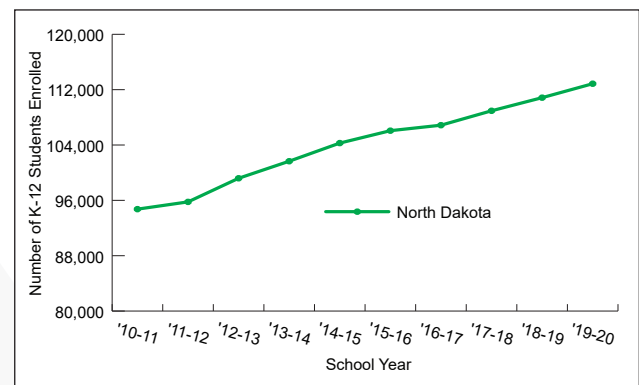
**Figure 1. N.D. and U.S. Graduation Rates, 2015-2019**



**Support Programs** - There are certain programs available that support school readiness in young children and support children as they progress through school. One such program is the Head Start Program, which supports school readiness for children up to age 5 that come from low-income families. There were 74 Head Start programs in North Dakota in 2019 or about 16.6 head start programs per 10,000 children.<sup>3</sup>

**Enrollment** - North Dakota has seen an increase in enrollment in public schools over the past decade. During the 2019-2020 school year there were a total of 112,858 K-12 students enrolled in public schools and 8,353 K-12 students enrolled in non-public schools. For public schools, this is a 19.1% increase compared to enrollment in the 2010-2011 school year (Figure 2).<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 2. Public School Enrollment in North Dakota**



**Internet Access** - There are some instances where schoolwork or classroom activity would need to be completed online at home or out of the traditional school environment, making internet access a priority. Based on the 2010 population estimate, about 97.4% of the population of North Dakota has access to download speeds of greater than 25 MBPS per second.<sup>5</sup> While broadband speeds may be available, rural residents make up a large portion lacking access to faster services. The Federal Communications Commission finds that about 24.7 million Americans lack access to quality broadband speed internet with roughly 19 million of those individuals living in rural areas.<sup>6</sup> In another study, Microsoft found that it is likely that 162.8 million Americans do not use broadband speed internet even if it is made available. This indicates a potential difference between availability of a service and its use.<sup>7</sup>

### Higher Education

Generally, obtaining a college degree provides more opportunities for employment. College degrees allow individuals to gain more specialized skills and knowledge within their chosen field, as well as learn the most up to date techniques and information. As degrees allow for

better employment, it is also important to examine the enrollment and retention of the students attempting to obtain these degrees.

**Degrees** - In North Dakota, 29.5% of individuals aged 25 or older have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>2</sup> North Dakota has a number of institutions of higher education that offer a variety of degrees and programs. There are five 2-year public colleges, four 4-year private colleges, five tribal colleges, four 4-year public colleges, and two research universities.<sup>3</sup>

**Enrollment** - Overall, the North Dakota higher education system had a retention rate of 75% and graduation rate of 51% in 2019. Community colleges can be a key component of the higher education system as they are a potentially affordable way for individuals to receive higher education or start their journey into higher education. In 2019, there were 16,350 students enrolled in community colleges across the state. Of those students, 14,271 were degree seeking, while 2,079 were non-degree seeking.<sup>9</sup>

### Conclusion

Education is an important aspect of social determinants of health. According to the data, North Dakota's public schools are doing very well, relative to the United States as a whole. Although the state is doing well comparatively to the country, online delivery methods have been implemented to varying degrees across the state, and this may influence the data. Thus, it will remain important to monitor data related to education in the coming years.

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