

Preliminary Enrollment Estimates for Fall 2025 at New Jersey Colleges and Universities

The following report provides a first look at the shape of New Jersey higher education enrollment during the current fall 2025 semester. The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) is releasing this preliminary enrollment estimate of all degree-granting Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) in New Jersey (90 Institutional reporting units) that report data using NJIPEDS Form #20- [Preliminary Fall Enrollment](#). Finalized fall 2025 enrollment data are reported through the federal [Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System \(IPEDS\) Fall Enrollment Survey](#) in April 2026, with analyses and results typically made available sometime in June 2026.

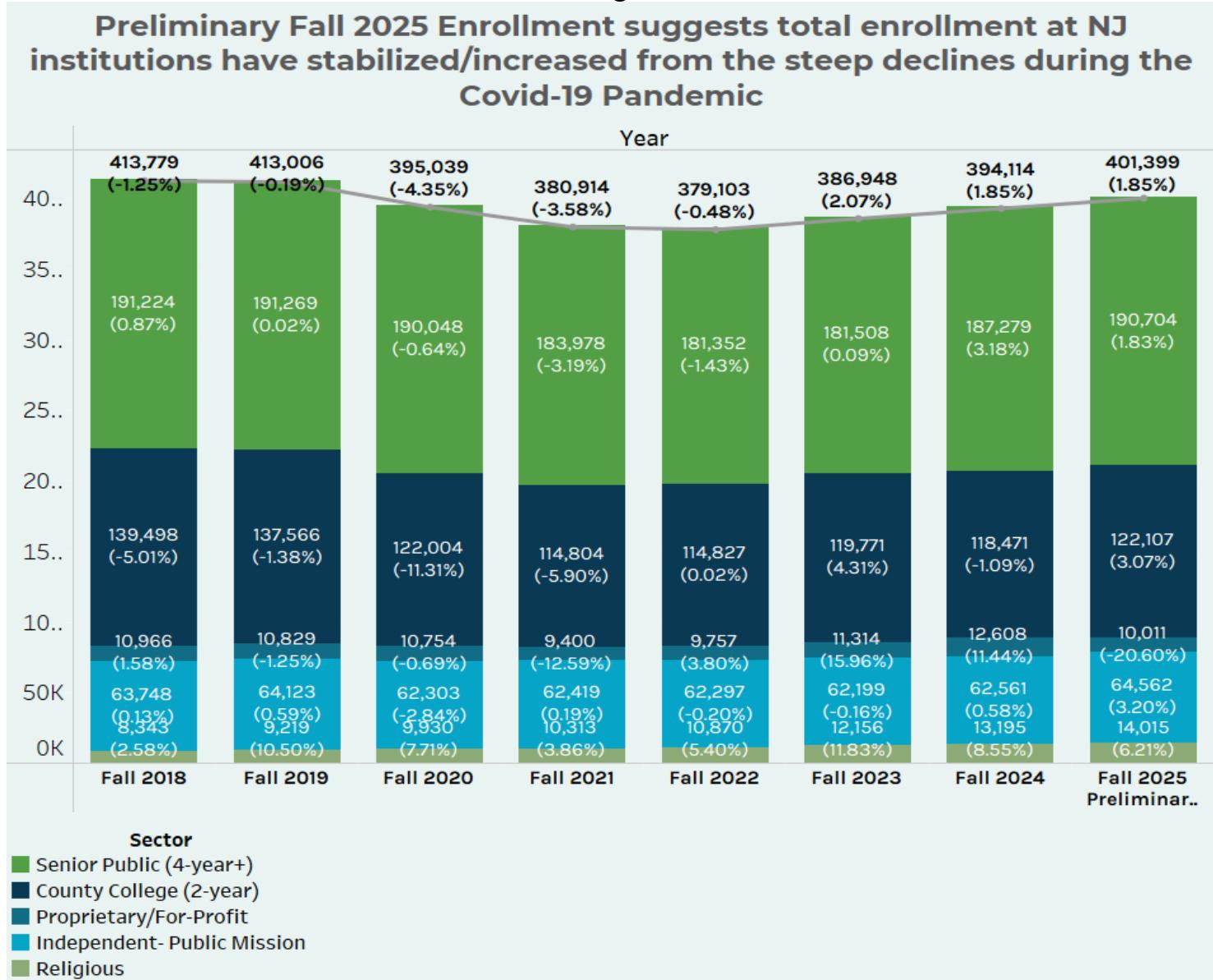
Fall 2025 enrollments at New Jersey colleges and universities held relatively steady and slightly increased compared to the prior year. Specifically:

- Preliminary Fall 2025 total enrollment (Undergraduate and Graduate/Professional) in New Jersey IHEs increased by about 1.85%;
- Undergraduate enrollment saw a 1.85% increase while Graduate enrollment grew at about the same rate as undergraduate (1.87%);
- Total enrollment at senior (four-year) public institutions increased the fourth most of any other institutional sector in New Jersey at a rate of 1.83%, which moderates the 3.18% increase from fall 2023 to fall 2024;
- Two-year public institutions (county colleges) continued to reverse over a decade of declining enrollment with a third year (since 2022) of increased enrollment (fall 2021 to fall 2022 was 0.02%, fall 2022 to fall 2023 was 4.31%, fall 2023 to fall 2024 was -1.09%, and fall 2024 to fall 2025 is 3.07%);
- Enrollment in the private non-profit sector (independent, public-mission) increased in fall 2025 by 3.2% which was the second most of all sectors this year;
- Enrollment at for-profit (independent, proprietary) Institutions declined the most at about -20.6%;
- The religious sector (seminaries and yeshivas) saw an increase in enrollment of just over six percent (6.2% increase).
- Total first-time undergraduate enrollment decreased after four years of increases (-2.9% for fall 2025). The decrease in first-time students (full-time and part-time) will need to be monitored and tracked to see if it's a single year anomaly or will turn to be persistent pattern year over year.

The relatively small increase and flattening of enrollments between fall 2020 through fall 2025 across all sectors follows a trend of declines in enrollment since fall 2017, which included two years of accelerated declines resulting from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the five-year period between fall 2020 and fall 2025, enrollment at four-year public institutions increased by 0.3%; two-year publics increased by 0.1%; and independent, public-mission institutions increased by 3.6%. Proprietary, degree-granting institutions declined by -6.9%, while religious institutions (specialty yeshivas, seminaries, etc.) increased enrollment by 41.1% (note: approximately four to five new yeshivas gained State licensure to operate as degree-granting institutions in the State of New Jersey over the last five years. Overall, enrollment at NJ Institutions of Higher Education

increased by 1.6% from fall 2020 (395,039 total enrollment) to fall 2025 (401,399 total enrollment) preliminary enrollment. Enrollment volatility is here to stay.

Figure 1



Source: OSHE Preliminary Enrollment NJIPEDS Form #20, Internal Analysis

New Jersey enrollment trends mirror enrollment trends at the national level in some ways and differ in other ways. Fall 2025 preliminary national estimates show total enrollment grew by 2.0% from fall 2024 (2.4% for undergraduate and 0.1% for graduate). For NJ IHEs, undergraduate enrollment grew by 1.8% slightly less than the national rate at 2.4%, and graduate enrollment grew at about 1.9% which was above the national estimate as of early estimates. National enrollment

growth was driven by Public 2-year (Community Colleges by 4.0%, 1.9% for public 4-year, and 0.9% for private, nonprofit 4-years) since last fall based on National Student Clearinghouse ([NSC first look as of Fall 2025](#)).

Enrollments in IHEs seem to be recovering after the effects of the pandemic. As of fall 2025, total enrollment in higher education across New Jersey is back above where it was in fall 2020 and just under where it was in fall 2019 (about a net loss of 11,607 students). Nationally, proprietary four-year institutions have been hit the hardest, with undergraduate enrollments declining by 7.6%. However, early national estimates suggest those institutions saw an increase of 6.4% in fall 2023 and another 4.9% in fall 2024. On the other hand, New Jersey independent, for-profit/proprietary institutions saw a one-year decline of about 20%. The NSC first look report suggested that enrollment increases for undergraduates are being driven by increases in students age 18 (3.2% increase) and large increases in dual enrollment students (students who are under the age of 17 and still in high school but enrolled in some college-level coursework +14.8%). In addition, national enrollment in short-term credentials or certificate programs extended a multiyear gain with a 6.6% increase for fall 2024 to fall 2025 preliminary estimates. Perhaps this trend will emerge in NJ once final fall 2025 enrollment data is available, as preliminary data is not disaggregated by degree/certificate type. Based on final 2023-2024 data in the federal IPEDs 12-month enrollment survey, dual enrollment (high school students taking college-level coursework at NJ IHEs) grew by 14% to over 45,000 students, which mirrors the national early estimate for fall 2025.

As is typically the case in New Jersey higher education, enrollment levels have varied by institution and within sectors. Among senior public institutions, New Jersey Institute of Technology and Bloomfield College of Montclair saw the largest enrollment declines (-7.0% and -18.4% respectively), followed by Thomas Edison State University (-4.4%) and Stockton University (-0.06%). Rowan University, Kean University, Rutgers- New Brunswick, and Rutgers-Newark all saw enrollment increases over 3% based on preliminary fall 2025 enrollment data. For County Colleges, Hudson, Warren, Raritan Valley, Ocean, Mercer, and Camden County College all saw declines of over 2.0%, while Middlesex, RCSJ- Cumberland and Gloucester County Campuses, Union College of NJ, and Essex County College saw increases of 5% or more. Readers can check out the [preliminary data dashboard](#) to look at these trends for specific institutions of interest.

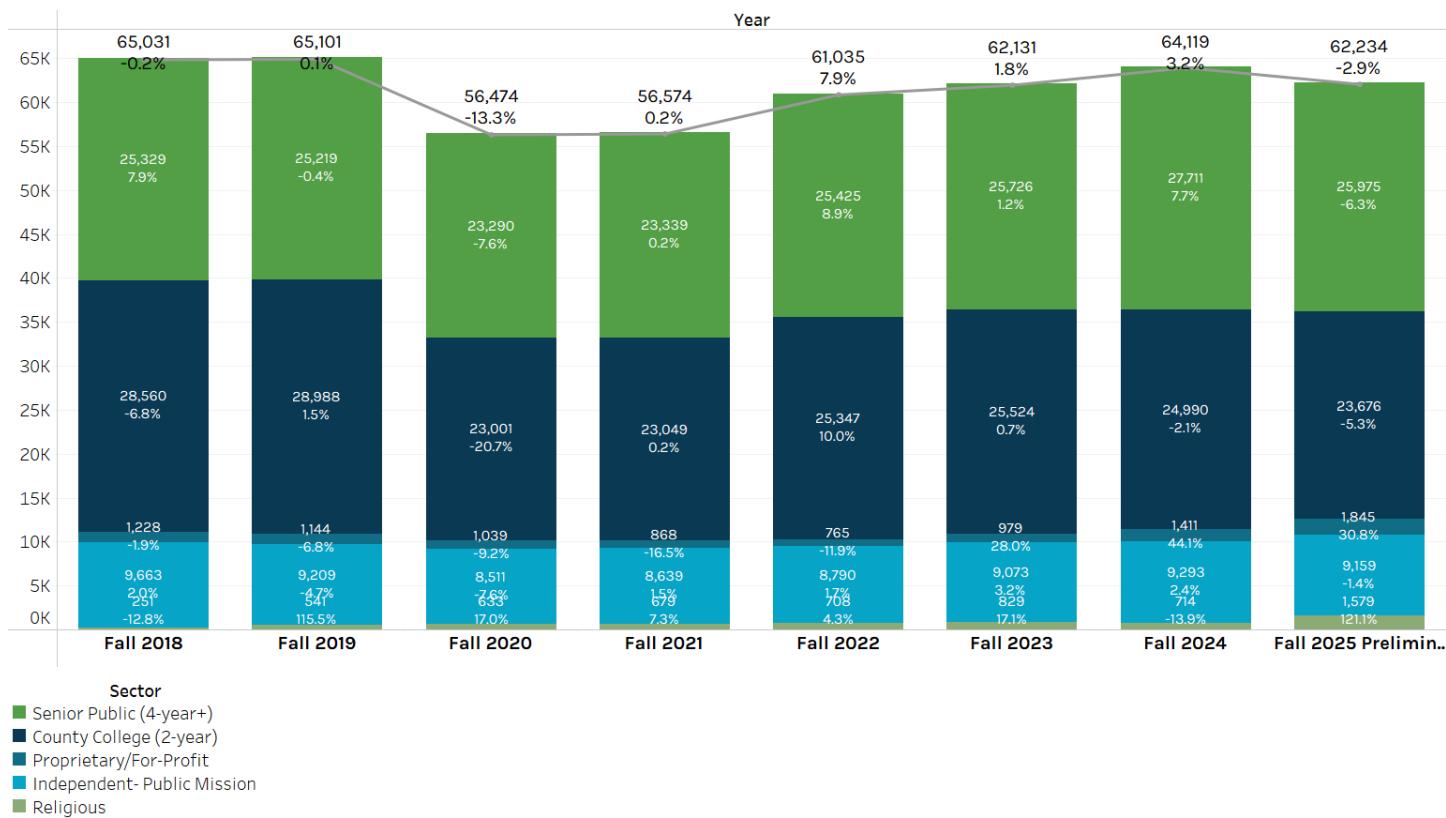
First Time Student Enrollment

While there are many ways to disaggregate enrollment trends, one important dimension is first-time students just beginning their postsecondary careers. This is important because it may project future enrollment levels. If there is an increase in the number of first-time students and persistence rates hold steady, then many of those students will continue growing total enrollments in future semesters and years. Between fall 2021 and fall 2023, the number of first-time, full-time students grew by 5,557 across the state, a 9.8% increase. For fall 2025, the preliminary number of first-time students decreased by 2.9% or by about 1,885 students compared with the previous fall term. It should be noted that not all institutions or sectors saw a decrease in first-time students; public, four-year institutions saw a 6.3% decrease, while county colleges saw a decline of over 5 percent (-5.26%); private, not-for-profit colleges/universities saw a slight decrease (-1.44%) from 9,293 to 9,159.

National estimates suggest that first-time enrollment at public two-year colleges declined by about 0.2% for fall 2025. However, note that for fall 2025, first-time enrollment at NJ county colleges declined by a higher percent (-5.3%), bringing the number of first-time students to a value larger than fall 2021 but less than fall 2023 and fall 2024. After four years of increasing first-time enrollment, this is a sobering trend and one that probably points to some of the changing demographics and how important it will be to maintain a focus on maximizing student success and retention to off-set what will likely be smaller number of new first-time in college students. This also points to the need to bolster the transfer student market. Institutions may need to continuously alter, update, and manage their enrollment management and admissions processes.

Figure 2

First-Time Undergraduate Student Enrollment (FT and PT)



Source: OSHE Preliminary Enrollment NJIPEDS Form #20, Internal Analysis

Overall, New Jersey independent, public-mission colleges/universities slightly decreased new first-time students by -1.44% for fall 2025, while last year, in fall 2024, they saw a larger increase of 2.4%.

As always, we invite readers to use OSHE's interactive dashboards on the [OSHE research and data website](#). A special interactive dashboard with [preliminary Fall 2025 enrollment data](#) complements this written report. Analyzing the enrollment levels by other dimensions may provide additional insights into the health of New Jersey's institutions of higher education. Dashboard users can also compare federal IPEDS data over multiple years, tuition and fees data for the last five academic years, New Jersey postsecondary degree trends, and other data dashboards.

Conclusions

There are numerous factors that might explain why some enrollments are going up while others are going down. Economic uncertainty still exists, whether due to continued persistent inflation or the prospect of a potential economic recession. These factors, along with the varying and impending political, social, and economic impacts of the new US presidential administration, signal that the one certainty today is uncertainty. As is the case with human behavior, many confounding variables can, will, and do influence students' decisions to enroll and pursue a higher education. A few high-level observations from the preliminary Fall 2025 enrollment data are summarized below:

1. First-time student enrollment decreased by 2.9% and is just over the number of first-time undergraduate student enrollment in fall 2022.
2. Community College enrollment had an increase in enrollment from fall 2024 to fall 2025 of 3.07%. The increases over the last three years represent the first upward enrollment trend for community colleges in over a decade. Similar to national trends, NJ County Colleges may attribute some of this enrollment increase to dual-enrolled students. We will need to monitor these trends carefully over the next several years. Especially as the implementation of the new workforce Pell grants become available and operational in 2026-27 academic year.
3. Fall 2025 preliminary enrollment offers some encouraging news, given the total enrollment increase of 1.85%. However, enrollment will continue to be a concern, especially given the sharp decline of high school graduates expected in 2025-26 and the national decline in first-time students for fall 2025 based on NSC data.
4. Despite these concerns, educational attainment comes with economic and social benefits. College graduates earn higher wages, are more likely to have health insurance, pay taxes, vote, and volunteer, and are less likely to rely on public assistance. The New Jersey Statewide Data System (NJSDS) released a report in January of 2023 on the benefits of higher education in New Jersey and released an updated version of that report in February 2025, which can be found [here](#), empirically shows positive impacts and return on investment of higher education both for individuals and the State. The third iteration of this annual NJSDS report is currently being updated and expanded upon with new data and will be released sometime in 2026.

The New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education will continually monitor enrollment trends within higher education and provide updated data, reports, and analyses as new data become available.

Notes on Methodology

The OSHE NJIPEDS Preliminary Enrollment form asks institutions to capture enrollment counts earlier in the year before the counts become the official enrollment record for the fall semester as reported in the US DOE NCES IPEDS Fall Enrollment Survey. This matters because the initial weeks of a semester are very much in flux as students are able to add or drop classes without penalty.

Thus, for many of the institutions, federally-reported enrollment counts will differ from these preliminary estimates—sometimes significantly in both directions (more or less).