

1.1.c College Continuation Rates

Increase the proportion of Nebraska high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary education.

One strategic approach to increasing the total number of students who enroll at Nebraska's postsecondary institutions is to increase the state's college continuation rate, or the percentage of Nebraska high school graduates who go to college. (Since a college-going rate is the same as a college continuation rate, the two terms are used interchangeably in this report.)

Introduction: Two Measures of Nebraska's College Continuation Rates

This section of the *Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report* provides estimates of the state's college continuation rate based on two different approaches to data collection and analysis. The first approach relies on data collected every two years through the Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS) maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the U.S. Department of Education. The second approach is an annual study that is based on data obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) in cooperation with the Nebraska Department of Education.

College Continuation Rates Based on IPEDS Data

The Coordinating Commission estimates Nebraska's college continuation rates using IPEDS data that are collected every other year in the fall. The Nebraska Department of Education provides the total number of students who graduated from Nebraska public and private high schools during the school year preceding IPEDS data collection. Given the number of high school graduates, the Commission uses IPEDS data to estimate how many of these Nebraskans continued on to college at degree-granting and non-degree-granting institutions throughout the United States.

Using available data from IPEDS, college continuation rates are estimated only for first-time freshmen who start college in the fall term of the academic year following their graduation from high school. First-time freshmen enrolled in the fall term who attended college for the first time in the prior summer term are also included. First-time freshmen who wait to start college until after the fall term are not included. College continuation rates do not account for these students because the NCES does not require institutions to report when each of the students in this category graduated from high school.

Another limitation of the college continuation rates based on IPEDS data is that they cannot be calculated for any subgroups based on gender, race/ethnicity, household income, or any other demographic or socioeconomic variable. Using IPEDS data, a college continuation rate can be estimated only for the total number of students who graduated from Nebraska high schools during a given school year.

An important advantage of using IPEDS data is that the National Center for Education Statistics has consistently collected these data for a number of years, allowing the Commission to calculate and publish statewide college continuation rates for degree- and non-degree-granting institutions for an extended period of time. In addition, IPEDS data are currently the only source that research organizations can use to calculate a national college continuation rate and make state-to-state comparisons of college-going rates.

The latest available IPEDS data were reported by institutions for first-time freshmen who started college in fall 2014, providing a basis for estimating the college continuation rate for

students who graduated from Nebraska high schools during the 2013–2014 school year. In this section, the estimated college continuation rates are analyzed for fall 2004 through fall 2014.

College Continuation Rates Based on National Clearinghouse Data

An approach to estimating college continuation rates that overcomes major limitations of using IPEDS data is to use data available from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC). The NSC is a not-for-profit organization that serves as a central repository of postsecondary student enrollment, degree, and diploma data voluntarily submitted by more than 3,600 colleges and universities. These institutions enroll an estimated 96.7% of the college students in the United States that attend Title IV, degree-granting institutions.¹⁴

Since the beginning of 2009, the Coordinating Commission has worked in cooperation with the Nebraska Department of Education to obtain and analyze data from the NSC to estimate the college continuation rates for male and female low-income and non-low-income students who have graduated from Nebraska's public high schools. Additionally, college continuation rates are analyzed by race/ethnicity, gender, and student income status. Currently, students who have graduated from Nebraska's nonpublic (or private) high schools are not included in the analysis. However, this research has the important advantage of providing estimates and comparisons of college continuation rates by race/ethnicity, gender, and student income status. Another advantage is that this research is conducted in the spring of the year following high school graduation. As a result, students who do not start college in the summer or fall immediately following high school graduation but who instead wait to begin college until the winter or spring are included in the count of the state's public high school graduates who continued on to college.

The Coordinating Commission has estimated college continuation rates for the students who graduated from Nebraska's public high schools during the 2007–2008 through 2014–2015 school years, using data obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse. The findings of this research are summarized at the end of this section.

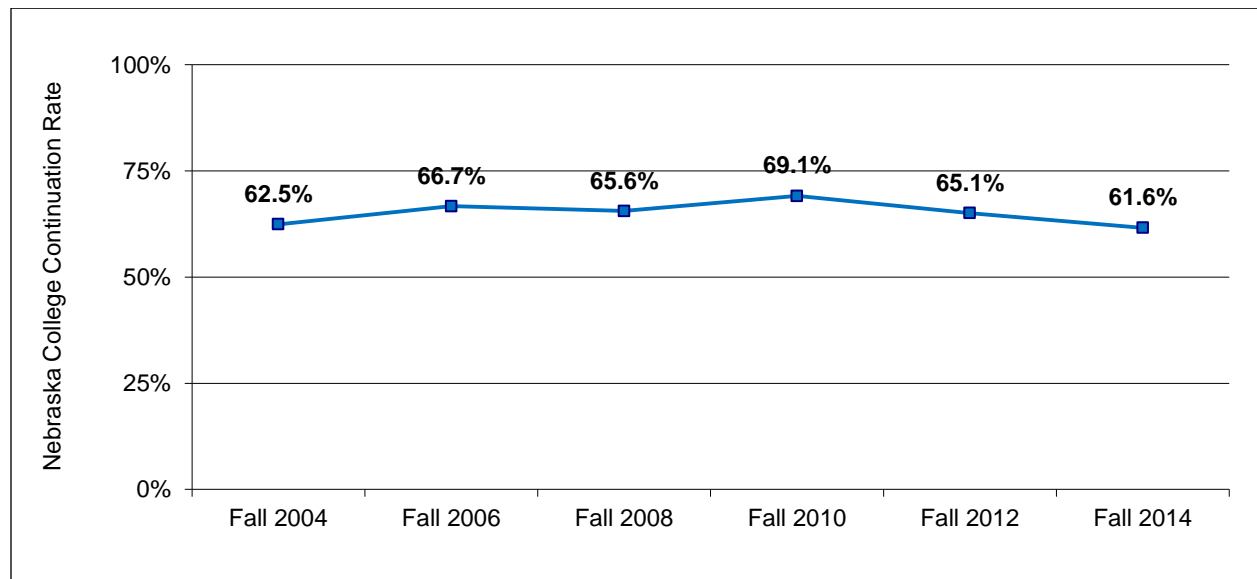
¹⁴ Data source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, Enrollment Coverage Workbook, updated December 22, 2015.

Nebraska Statewide College Continuation Rates Based on IPEDS Data

- Using IPEDS data, the college continuation rate is the number of Nebraska-resident, first-time freshmen who enrolled in college in the fall term following their high school graduation, divided by the number of students who graduated from Nebraska high schools during the previous school year.
- As evidenced in [Figure 1.1.c.1](#), the estimated college continuation rate for Nebraska high school graduates who attended degree-granting institutions anywhere in the United States decreased from 66.7% in fall 2004 to 61.6% in fall 2014. Notably, the estimated college continuation rate has declined 7.5 percentage points since fall 2010.

Figure 1.1.c.1

**College Continuation Rate for Nebraska High School Graduates Who Attended
Degree-Granting Institutions in the United States
in the Fall Term Following High School Graduation
Fall 2004 through Fall 2014**

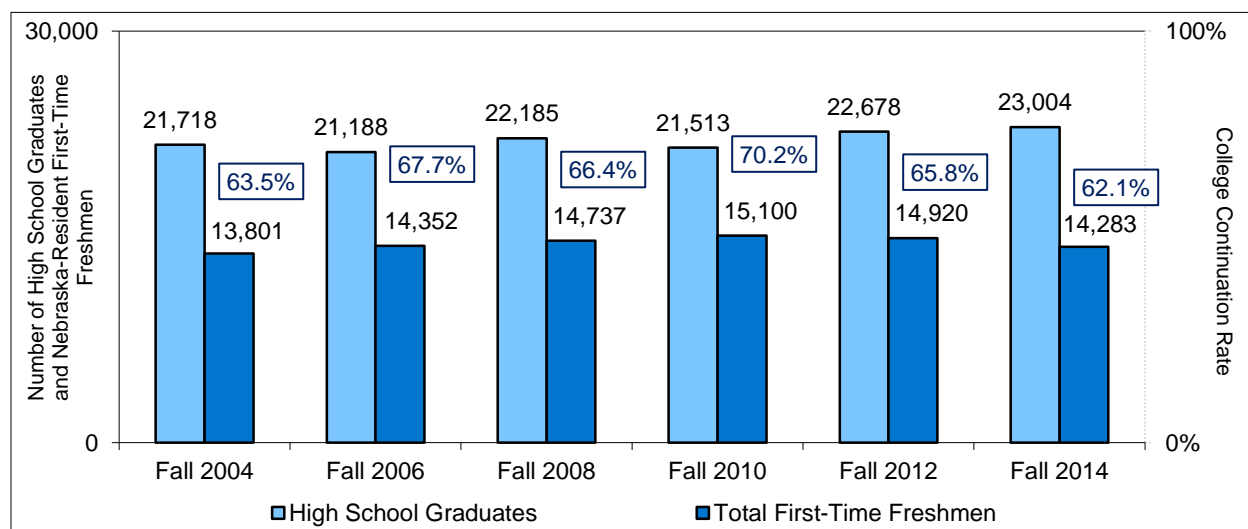


Note. Includes full-time and part-time students. See [Table A5.1](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data. Data sources: Nebraska Department of Education, January 2007, January 2009, January 2011, December 2013, and January 2015, and the National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS fall 2004 through 2014 surveys.

- Adding the number of high school graduates who attended non-degree-granting institutions slightly increases the estimated college continuation rate for Nebraska.
- As illustrated in [Figure 1.1.c.2](#), the estimated college continuation rate for Nebraska students who graduated in the high school class of 2014 and attended degree-granting and non-degree-granting colleges in fall 2014 was 62.1%, a decrease of 1.4 percentage points from the 63.5% continuation rate in fall 2004.

Figure 1.1.c.2

College Continuation Rate for Nebraska High School Graduates Who Attended Degree-Granting and Non-Degree-Granting Institutions in the United States in the Fall Term Following High School Graduation Fall 2004 through Fall 2014



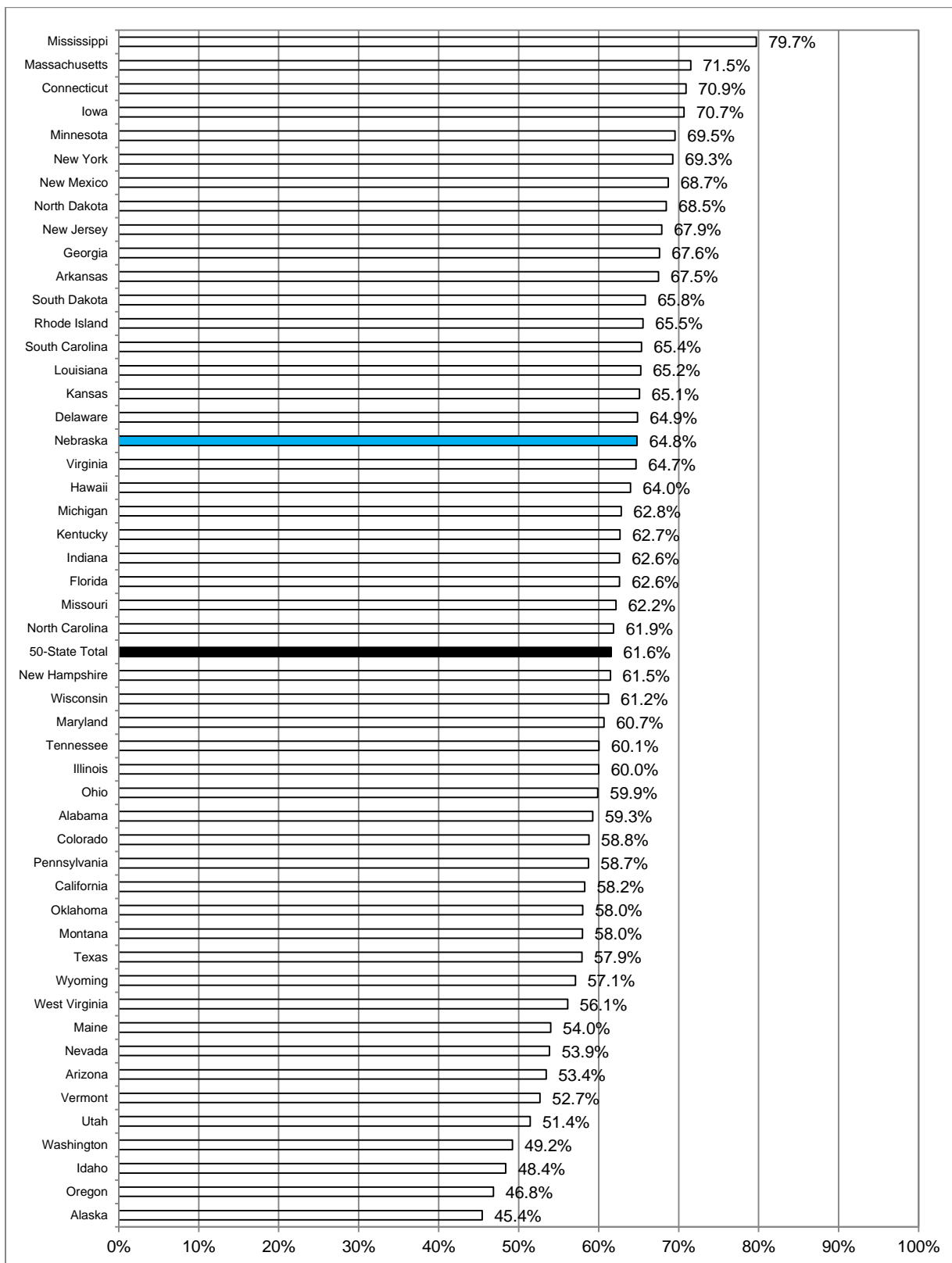
Note. Includes full-time and part-time students. See Table A5.1 in Appendix 5 for supporting data. Data sources: Nebraska Department of Education, January 2007, January 2009, January 2011, December 2013, and January 2015, and the National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS fall 2004 through 2014 surveys.

State-by-State College Continuation Rates

- The most recent national study of college continuation rates is limited to students who attended degree-granting institutions as first-time freshmen in the 2012 fall term after graduating from high school during the 2011–2012 school year. High school graduation data for the 2013–2014 school year will not be available from the National Center for Education Statistics until late spring 2017. Therefore, state-by-state college continuation rates for fall 2014 will be reported in the *2018 Progress Report*.
- As shown in [Figure 1.1.c.3](#), Nebraska’s fall 2012 estimated college continuation rate of 64.8% was the 18th highest in the 50-state comparison and 3.2 percentage points above the 50-state average.¹⁵
- In comparison, Nebraska’s fall 2002 estimated college continuation rate of 59.9% was the 14th highest in the 50-state comparison and 3.2 percentage points above the 50-state average of 56.7%.

¹⁵ Data source: Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY, College Continuation Rate Comparisons by State included in the 2012 Chance for College spreadsheet, updated February 3, 2016. The 64.8% estimated college continuation rate for Nebraska in the 50-state study is 0.3 percentage point lower than the rate of 65.1% that the Coordinating Commission estimated for fall 2012, as shown in [Figure 1.1.c.1](#). This difference is due to the fact the number of Nebraska nonpublic (private) high school graduates was estimated to be 2,304 for the 50-state study, whereas the Commission used the actual number of nonpublic high school graduates the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) reported to the Commission, which was 2,192. In addition, the Commission used the number of public high school graduates the NDE reported to the Commission, 20,486, while the 50-state study used a slightly lower number of 20,464 public high school graduates, obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics.

Figure 1.1.c.3
Fall 2012 College Continuation Rates by State



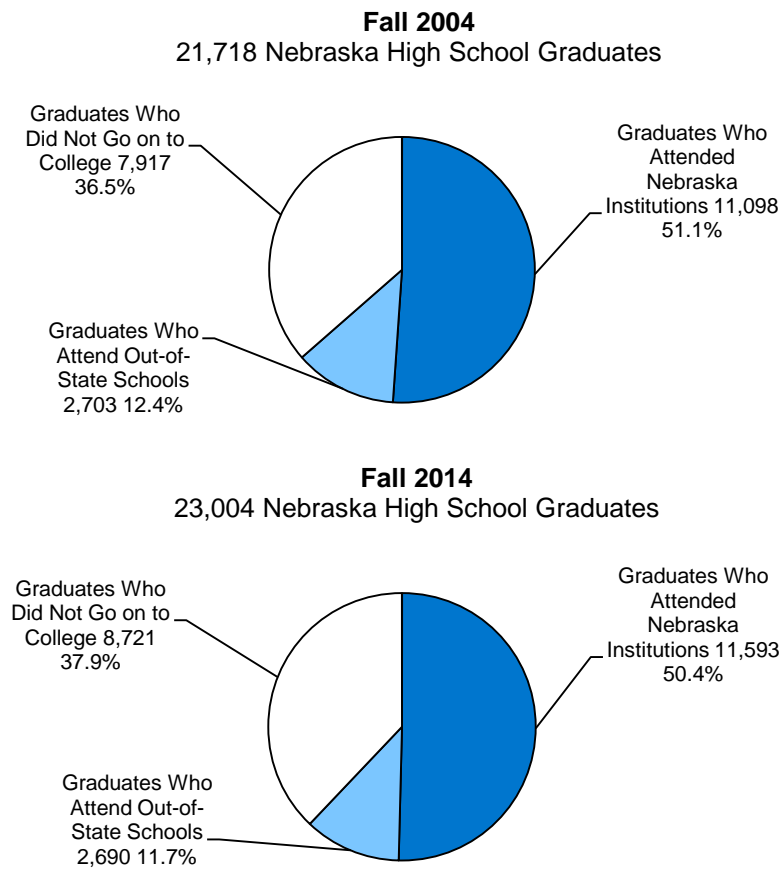
Data source: Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY, 2012 Chance for College by Age 19 Spreadsheet, updated February 3, 2016.

In-State and Out-of-State College Continuation Rates

- The statewide college continuation rate for Nebraska high school graduates can be partitioned into two rates:
 - In-state college continuation rate: the percentage of Nebraska high school graduates who attend postsecondary institutions in Nebraska in the fall term following high school graduation.
 - Out-of-state college continuation rate: the percentage of Nebraska high school graduates who continue on to college at out-of-state institutions in the fall term following high school graduation.
- As illustrated in Figure 1.1.c.4, the Commission estimates Nebraska's in-state college continuation rate was 50.4% for the state's 2013–2014 high school graduates who attended degree-granting or non-degree-granting colleges. This is a decrease of 0.7 percentage points since fall 2004.
- Meanwhile, the out-of-state college continuation rate for both degree-granting and non-degree-granting schools decreased, from 12.4% of the high school graduating class of 2003–2004 to 11.7% of Nebraska high graduates in 2013–2014.
- As evidenced in Table A5.2 in Appendix 5, the Commission estimates that the in-state college continuation rate for degree-granting institutions was 49.9% for Nebraska high school graduates in 2013–2014, (down from 50.1% for fall 2004). In comparison, the out-of-state college continuation rate for degree-granting institutions decreased from 12.3% in fall 2004 to 11.7% in fall 2014.

Figure 1.1.c.4

**In-State and Out-of-State College Continuation Rates for
Nebraska High School Graduates Who Attended Degree-Granting and Non-Degree-
Granting Institutions and the Percentage Who Did Not Go on to College
in the Fall Term Following High School Graduation
Fall 2014 Compared to Fall 2004**



Note. Includes full-time and part-time students. Percentages do not always add to 100.0% due to rounding. See [Table A5.2](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data. Date sources: Nebraska Department of Education, January 2007 and January 2015, and the National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS fall 2004 and 2014 surveys.

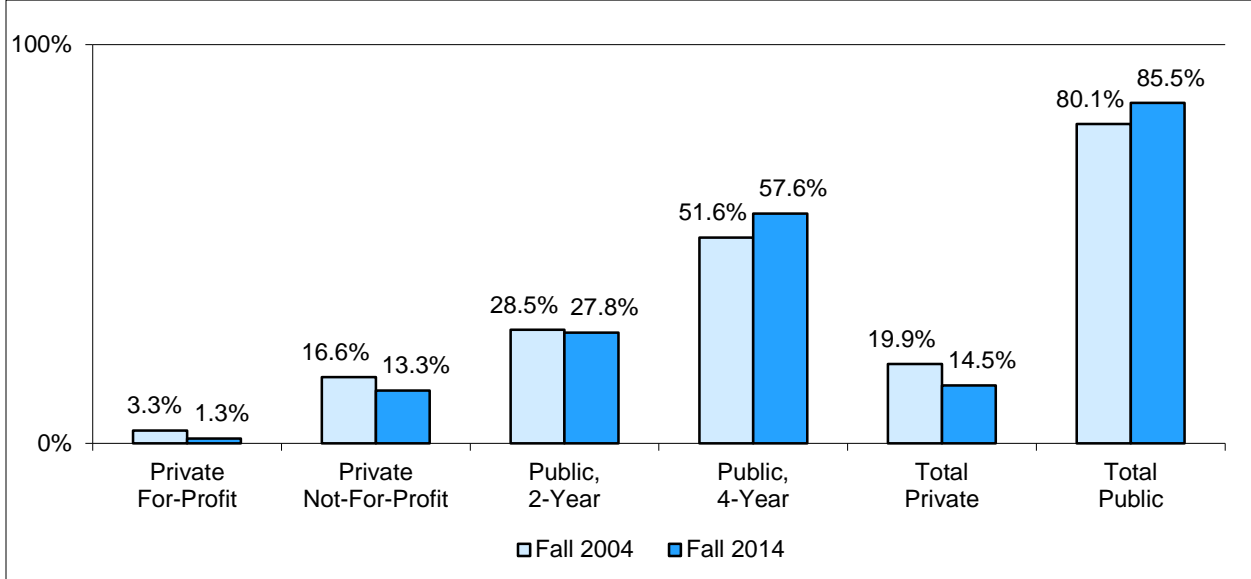
Percentages of Students Who Continue Their Education at Public and Private Institutions

- Of related interest are the types of postsecondary institutions attended by recent graduates of Nebraska's high schools. As shown in [Part A](#) and [Part B](#) of [Figure 1.1.c.5](#), the pattern of attendance of Nebraska-resident, first-time freshmen who go to college in Nebraska in the fall term following high school graduation is different than the pattern of Nebraskans who go out of state to school their freshmen year.
- [Part A](#) of [Figure 1.1.c.5](#) shows that 85.5% of the fall 2014 first-time freshmen who stayed in state attended Nebraska's public colleges or universities, compared to 14.5% who went to Nebraska's private, for-profit or not-for-profit institutions.
- In contrast, [Part B](#) of [Figure 1.1.c.5](#) reveals that 62.5% of the fall 2014 first-time freshmen who went out of state attended public institutions, while 37.5% went to private institutions.

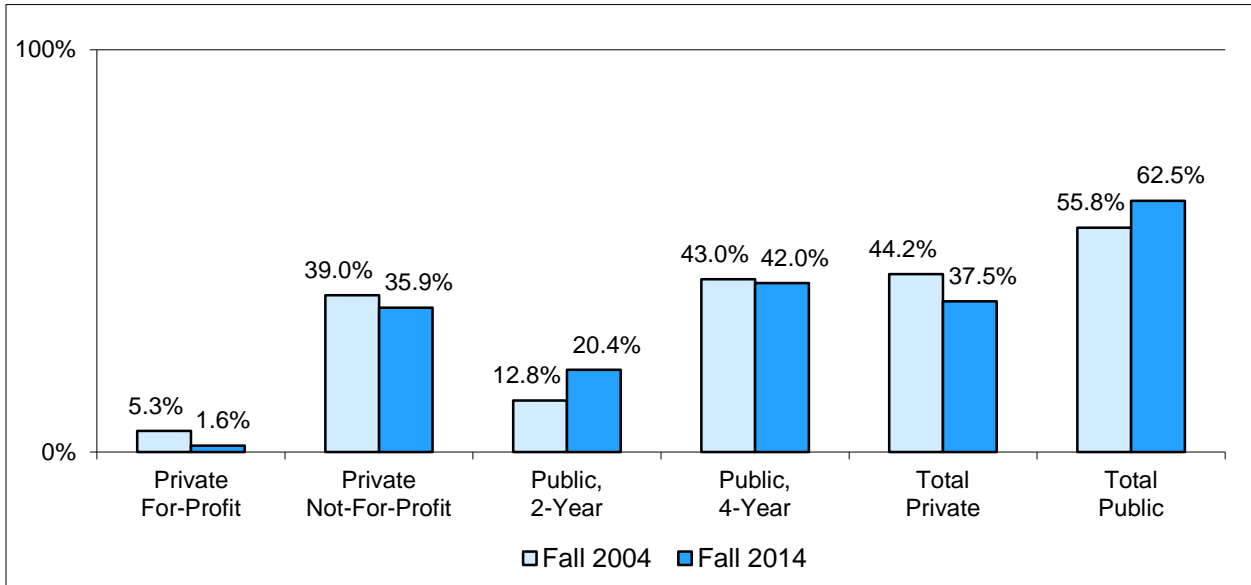
Figure 1.1.c.5

Percentages of First-Time Freshmen with Nebraska Residency Who Attended Nebraska and Out-of-State, Degree-Granting and Non-Degree-Granting Institutions in the Fall Term Following High School Graduation Fall 2014 Compared to Fall 2004

Part A: Nebraska-Resident Freshmen Who Attended Nebraska Institutions



Part B: Nebraska-Resident Freshmen Who Attended Out-of-State Institutions



Note. Includes full-time and part-time students. See [Table A5.3](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data. Date source: National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS fall 2004 and 2014 surveys.

College Continuation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Graduates by Gender, Student Income Status, and Race/Ethnicity, Based on National Student Clearinghouse Data

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, the Coordinating Commission has worked with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) to estimate the college continuation rates for students who graduated from Nebraska public high schools during the 2007–2008 through 2014–2015 school years.

- These estimates included only “on-time” graduates—students who graduated from high school in four years or less.
- In addition, students who graduated from Nebraska’s nonpublic (private) high schools were not included in this research.

Using student records from the NDE and enrollment data from the Clearinghouse, the Coordinating Commission estimated the college continuation rate for all public high school students who earned regular diplomas between 2007–2008 and 2014–2015.¹⁶ In addition, the Commission asked the NDE to determine the number of male and female low-income students in these graduating classes and to determine how many of these students continued on to college by the following April, based on enrollment records obtained from the Clearinghouse. Using the counts provided by the NDE, the Commission estimated the college continuation rates for male and female low-income and non-low-income students who graduated from Nebraska’s public schools.

Additionally, the Commission has obtained college continuation rates by race/ethnicity, gender, and student income status, for all public high school students who earned regular diplomas between 2011–2012 and 2014–2015.

Low-income students are defined as students who are approved to receive free or reduced-price school lunches.

Non-low-income students are students who are not approved for free or reduced-price school lunches. The numbers of non-low-income graduates in each class were determined by subtracting the number of low-income graduates from the total number of graduates provided by the NDE. The non-low-income students in this study include at least some students who lived in low-income households but who did not apply for free or reduced-price school lunches. Since participation in the free or reduced-price school lunch program is the only indicant of household income in the student records maintained by the NDE, low-income students in the non-low-income category cannot be identified and excluded for the purposes of analysis.

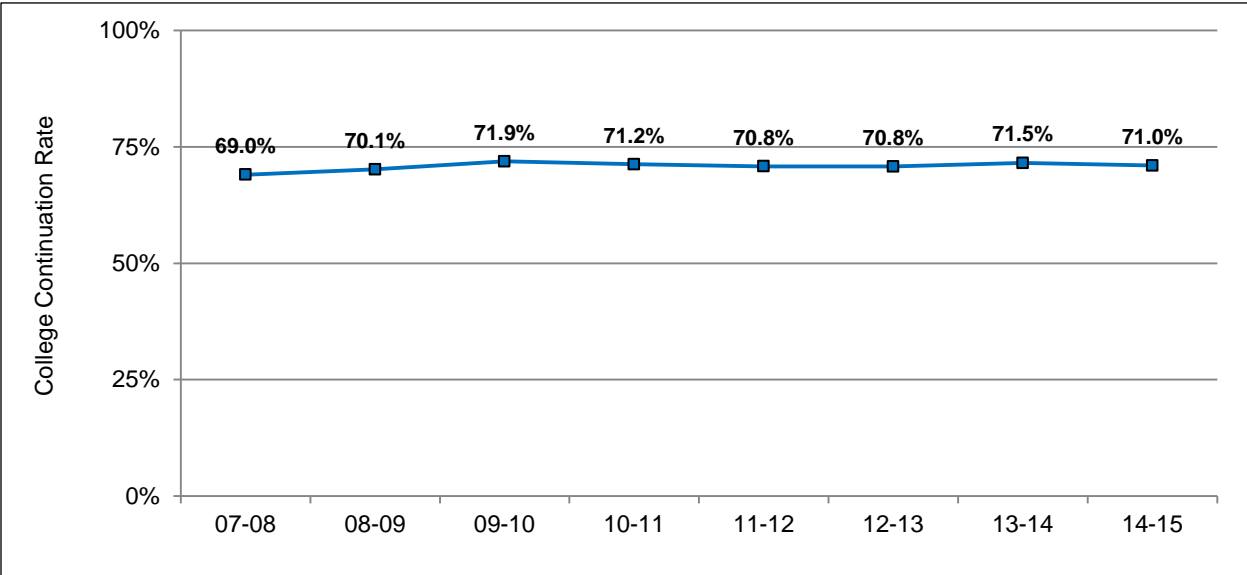
The Commission’s analysis of the college enrollment records received from the Clearinghouse indicates that these records do not include a few hundred students who continued on to college from Nebraska high schools each year. These students are not included because they attended private, not-for-profit colleges or for-profit colleges and career schools that do not submit enrollment records to the Clearinghouse. **As a result, the college continuation rates reported in this section are underestimated to some degree.**

¹⁶ The Commission has also estimated the college continuation rates for each of the public high schools in Nebraska that award regular high school diplomas. A report or downloadable Excel workbook for each of these analyses is available in the “Reports” section of the Commission’s website, ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports.

Statewide Public High School College Continuation Rate

- As shown in [Figure 1.1.c.6](#), the estimated statewide public high school college continuation rate was 71.0% for the graduating class of 2014–2015, up from 69.0% for the students who graduated in 2007–2008.
- The statewide rates reported in [Figure 1.1.c.6](#) are based on Clearinghouse data and are higher than the Nebraska statewide college continuation rates based on IPEDS data. This is primarily because students who enrolled in the spring, but not in the fall, are included in National Student Clearinghouse enrollment records.

Figure 1.1.c.6
College Continuation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Graduates
2007–2008 through 2014–2015



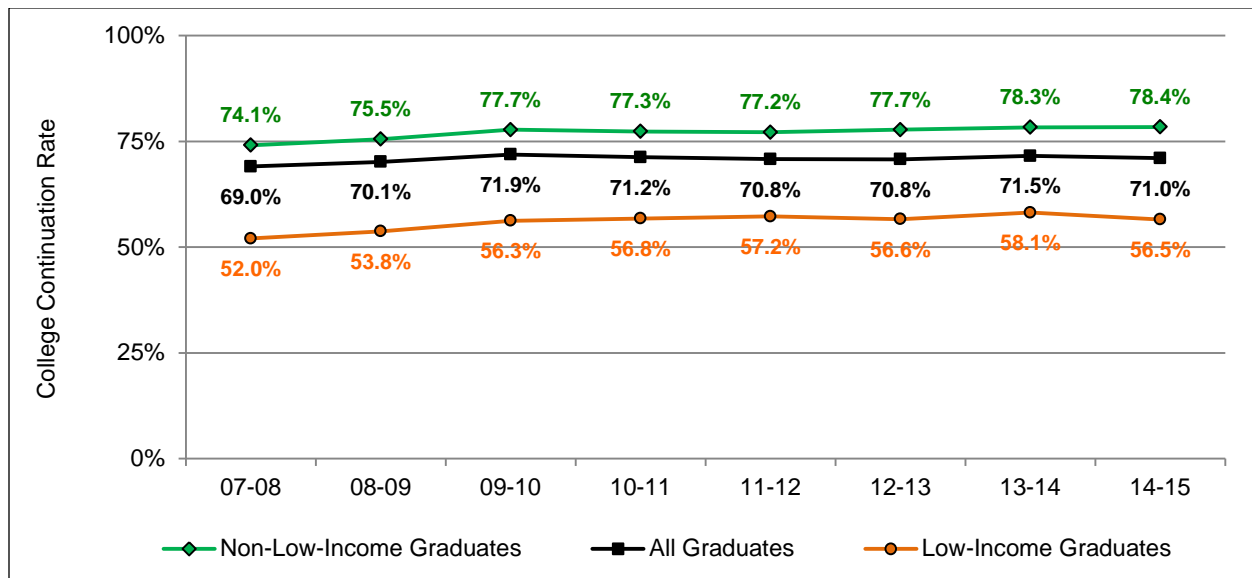
Note. See [Table A5.4](#) and [Table A5.5](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data. Data sources: National Student Clearinghouse (college continuation data), May 2016; and Nebraska Department of Education (numbers of high school graduates) April 2016.

College Continuation Rates for Public High School Graduates by Income Status

- Students from low-income households accounted for 33.8% of the Nebraska public high school graduates in 2014–2015, up from 22.9% in 2007–2008.
- As shown in [Figure 1.1.c.7](#), the college continuation rate for low-income graduates was considerably lower than the college continuation rate for non-low-income graduates for the classes of 2007–2008 through 2014–2015.
- The college-going rate for the low-income students increased 4.5 percentage points, from 52.0% in 2007–2008 to 56.5% in 2014–2015. In comparison, the college continuation rate for the students from non-low-income households increased 4.3 percentage points, from 74.1% in 2007–2008 to 78.4% in 2014–2015.

Figure 1.1.c.7

**College Continuation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Graduates
by Student Income Status: 2007–2008 through 2014–2015**



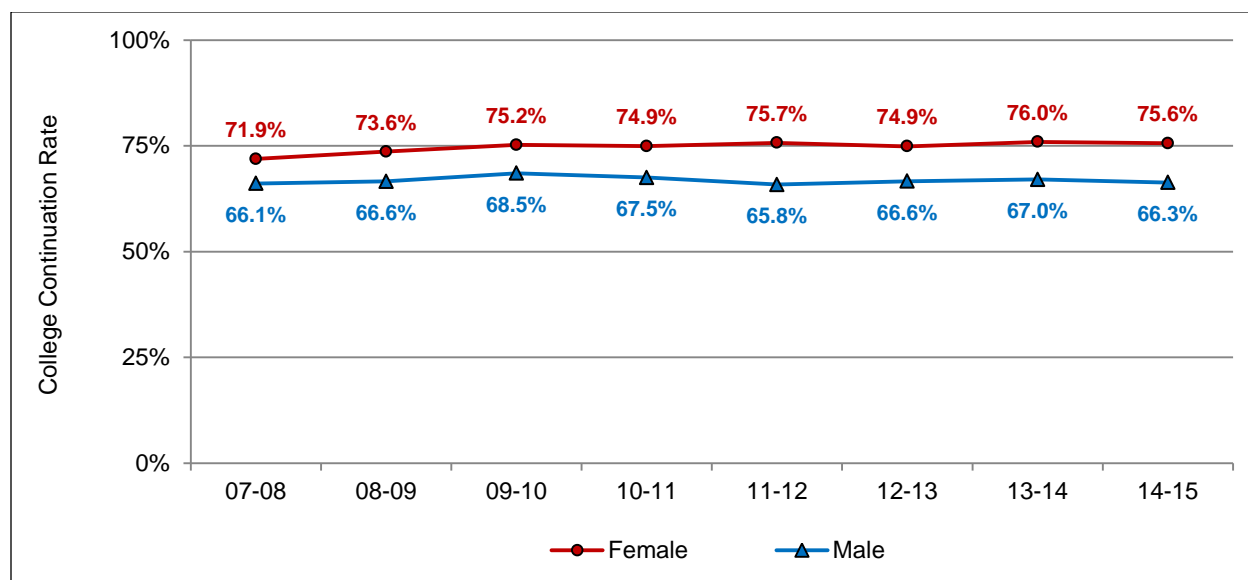
Note. See [Table A5.4](#) and [Table A5.5](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data. Data sources: National Student Clearinghouse (college continuation data), May 2016; and Nebraska Department of Education (numbers of high school graduates) April 2016.

College Continuation Rates for Public High School Graduates by Gender

- Female and male students each accounted for about half of the graduates of Nebraska’s public high schools from 2007–2008 through 2014–2015.
- As shown in [Figure 1.1.c.8](#), the college continuation rate for female students in each of these graduating classes was considerably higher than the college continuation rate for their male classmates.
- While the college-going rate for females increased from 71.9% in 2007–2008 to 75.6% in 2014–2015, the college-going rate for males increased from 66.1% in 2007–2008 to 66.3% in 2014–2015.
- Between 2007–2008 and 2014–2015, the difference between the college-going rates of male and female graduates increased from 5.8 percentage points in 2007–2008 to 9.3 percentage points in 2014–2015.

Figure 1.1.c.8

College Continuation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Graduates
by Gender: 2007–2008 through 2014–2015



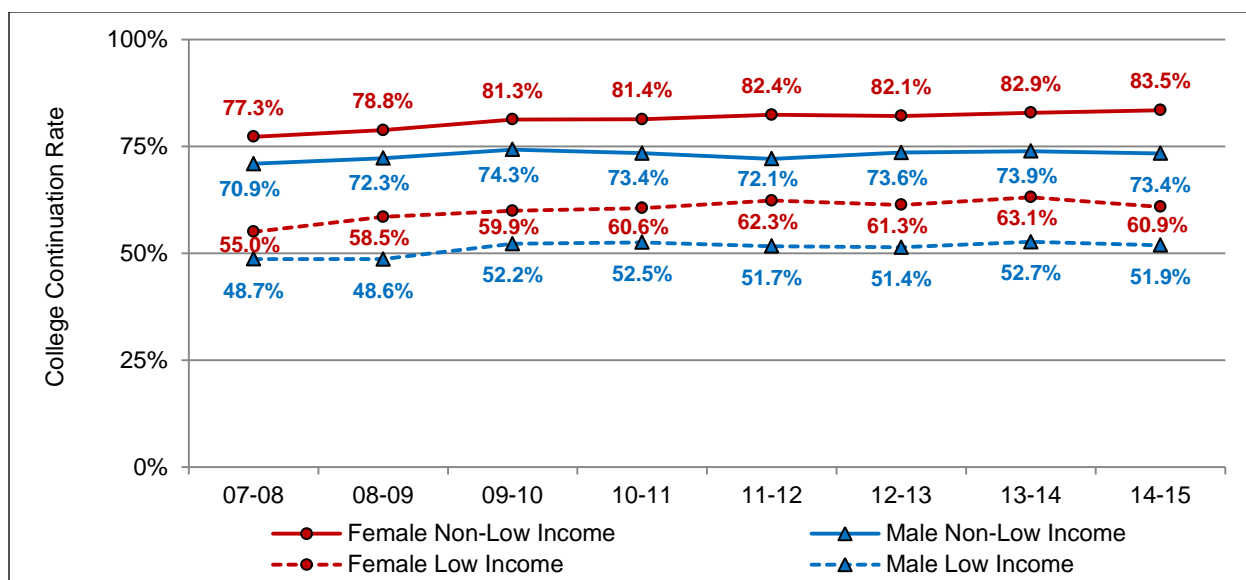
Note. See [Table A5.4](#) and [Table A5.5](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data. Data sources: National Student Clearinghouse (college continuation data), May 2016; and Nebraska Department of Education (numbers of high school graduates) April 2016.

College Continuation Rates for Public High School Graduates by Gender and Income Status

- As shown in [Figure 1.1.c.9](#), the college continuation rate for female graduates was higher than the rate for male graduates among both the low-income and non-low-income students who graduated between 2007–2008 and 2014–2015.
 - Among low-income graduates in 2007–2008, 55.0% of females continued on to college, compared to 48.7% of males. Among low-income graduates in 2014–2015, 60.9% of females continued on to college, compared to 51.9% of males.
 - Among non-low-income graduates in 2007–2008, 77.3% of females went to college, compared to 70.9% of males. Among non-low-income graduates in 2014–2015, 83.5% of females continued on to college, compared to 73.4% of males.
- Between 2013–2014 and 2014–2015, college-going rates increased for non-low-income females but decreased for the other three comparison groups.
- Directly comparing the students in the two income categories in [Figure 1.1.c.9](#) clearly shows the college continuation rates for low-income students have been considerably lower than the comparable rates for graduates from non-low-income households, regardless of gender.
- However, the lowest college continuation rates revealed by this research were for male high school graduates from low-income households.

Figure 1.1.c.9

College Continuation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Graduates by Gender and Student Income Status: 2007–2008 through 2014–2015



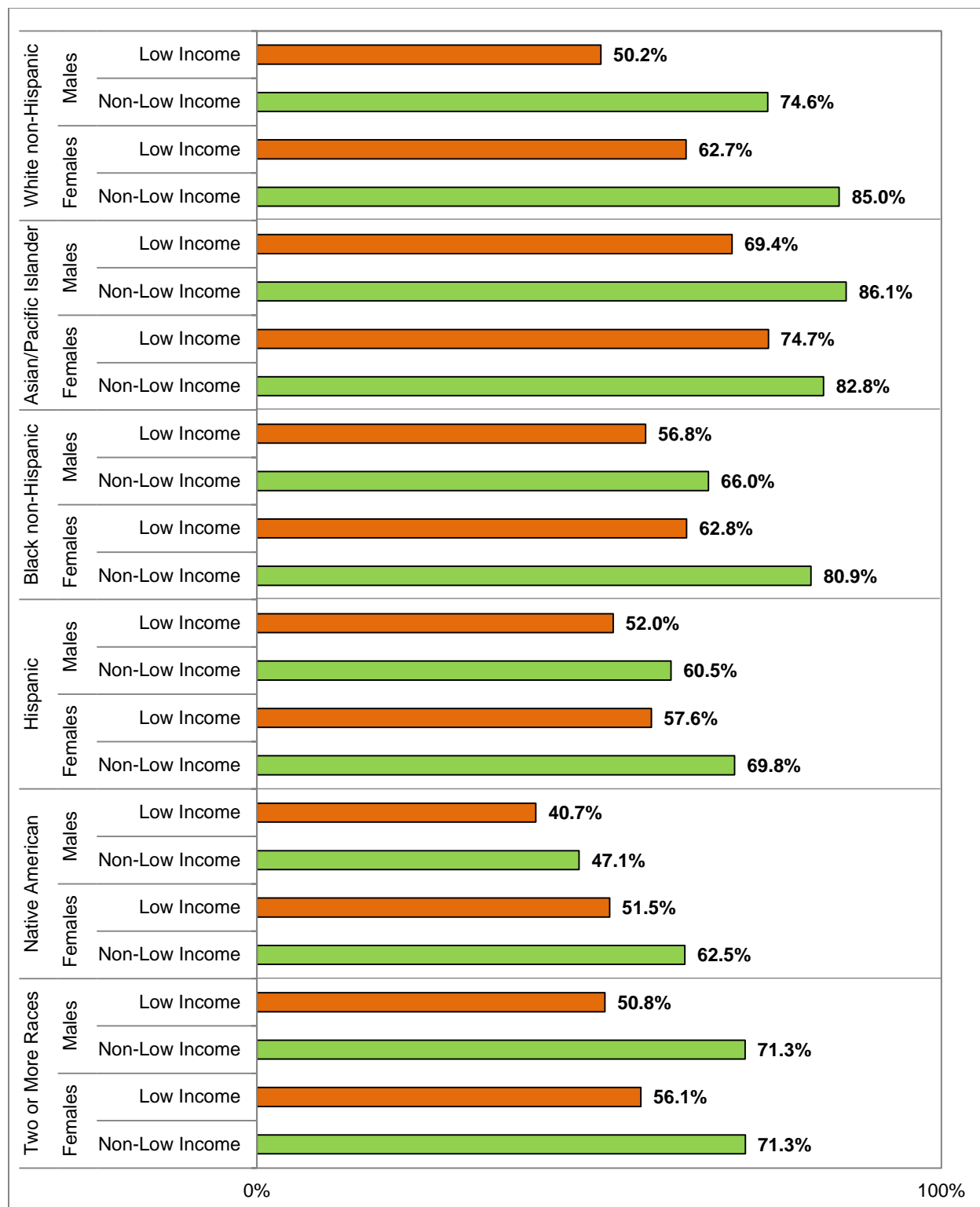
Note. See [Table A5.4](#) and [Table A5.5](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data. Data sources: National Student Clearinghouse (college continuation data), May 2016; and Nebraska Department of Education (numbers of high school graduates) April 2016.

College Continuation Rates for Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Income Status

- As shown in [Figure 1.1.c.10](#), segmenting college continuation rates by race/ethnicity, gender, and student income status results in college continuation rates for 24 subgroups.
- Among graduates in 2014–2015, the highest college continuation rate among these 24 subgroups was for non-low-income, Asian/Pacific Islander, male graduates (86.1%). Meanwhile, the lowest college continuation rate among these 24 subgroups was for low-income, Native American, male graduates (40.7%).
- Overall, college continuation rates by race/ethnicity ranged from 49.8% for Native Americans to 79.4% for Asian/Pacific Islanders. (See [Table A5.5](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data.)
- College continuation rates by gender, student income status, and race/ethnicity for the graduating classes of 2010–2011 through 2014–2015 can be found in [Table A5.5](#) in [Appendix 5](#).

Figure 1.1.c.10

**College Continuation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Graduates
by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Student Income Status: 2014–2015**



Note. See Table A5.5 in Appendix 5 for supporting data. Data sources: National Student Clearinghouse (college continuation data), May 2016; and Nebraska Department of Education (numbers of high school graduates) April 2016.

U.S. College Continuation Rates

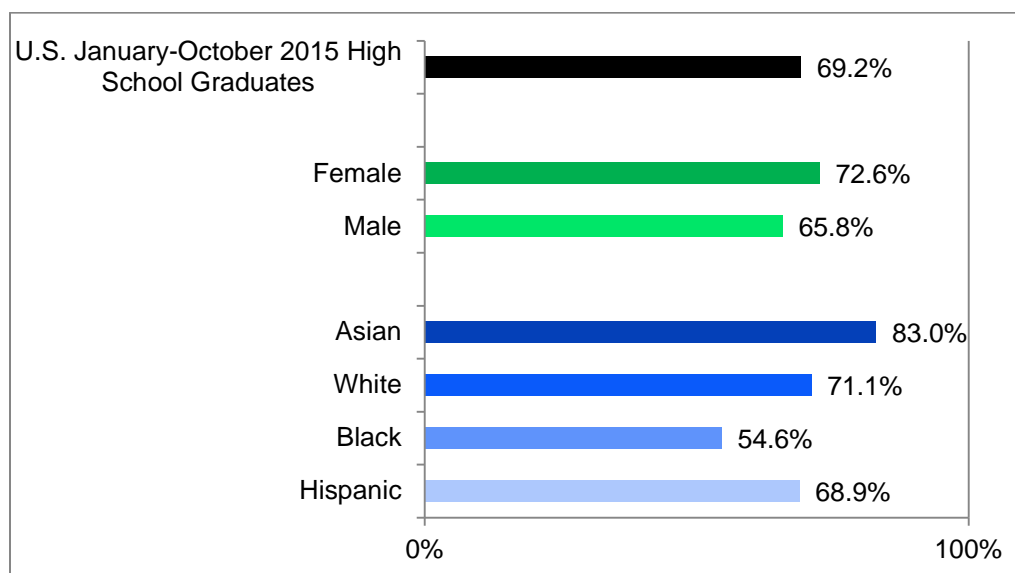
The national estimates shown in [Figure 1.1.c.11](#) are based on data obtained from a supplement to the October 2015 Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a monthly survey of about 60,000 households that provides information about the labor force, employment, and unemployment in the United States. Each October, a supplement to the CPS gathers more detailed information about school or college enrollment. The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the October CPS supplement for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in the U.S. Department of Labor. The latest BLS report, released in April 2016, provides estimates of the college continuation rates of students who graduated from high school during the period from January through October 2015.

The national estimates do not include 2015 high school graduates who started college after the Current Population Survey (CPS) was conducted in October 2015. Also, since these estimates are based on data collected through the CPS, these statistics are subject to both sampling and non-sampling errors. As a result, the nation's college-going rates for high school graduates in the class of 2015 may actually be higher or lower than those reported in [Figure 1.1.c.11](#).

The national estimates in [Figure 1.1.c.11](#) are not comparable to the Nebraska college continuation rates based on National Student Clearinghouse data, discussed previously in this section, for two main reasons. First, the Nebraska rates are limited to on-time public high school graduates while the national estimates include recent high school graduates from public and private high schools. Second, the Nebraska study allows students essentially a year to continue on to college while the national estimates are obtained in October and therefore do not include students who started college after the Current Population Survey was conducted in October 2015.

Figure 1.1.c.11

Estimated National College Continuation Rates for 2015 High School Graduates



Data source: October 2015 Current Population Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *College Enrollment and Work Activity of 2015 High School Graduates*, April 2016.

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