

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 Education 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 nonpublic 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 postsecondary 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 postsecondary 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 2018, providing a basis for estimating the college continuation rate for

students who graduated from Nebraska high schools during the 2017-2018 school year. In this section, the estimated college continuation rates are analyzed for fall 2008 through fall 2018.

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 97.4% of the college students in the United States that attend Title IV, degree-granting institutions.¹²

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 2017-2018 school years, using data obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse. The findings of this research are summarized at the end of this section.

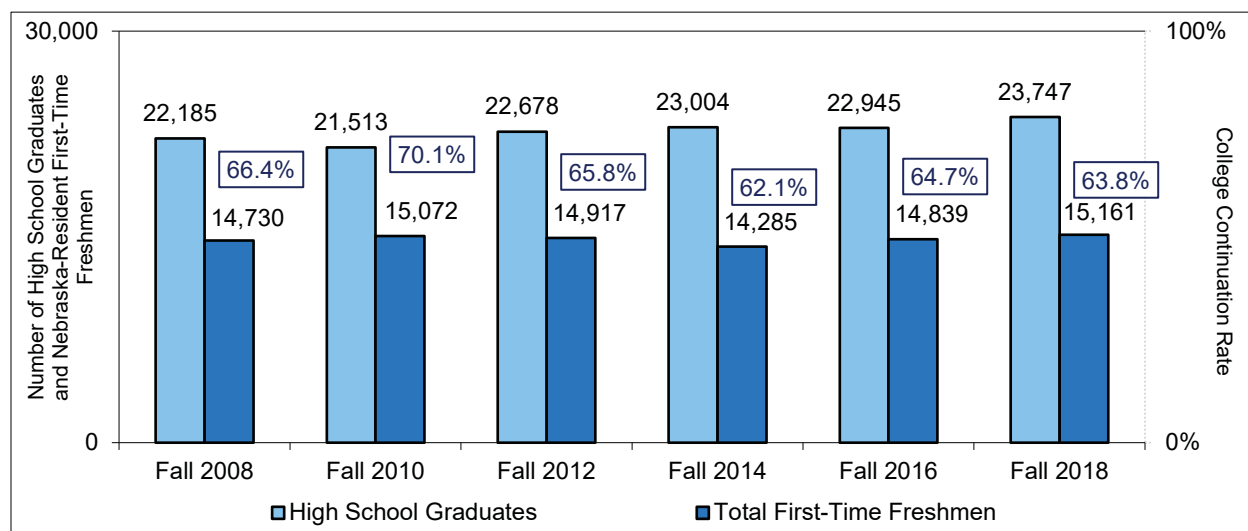
¹² Data source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, [Participating Enrollment Reporting Institutions](#), retrieved February 20, 2020.

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 illustrated in [Figure 1.1.c.1](#), the estimated college continuation rate for Nebraska students who graduated in the high school class of 2018 and attended college in fall 2018 was 63.8%, a decrease of 2.6 percentage points from the 66.4% continuation rate in fall 2008.

Figure 1.1.c.1
College Continuation Rate for Nebraska High School Graduates Who Attended Postsecondary Institutions in the Fall Term Following High School Graduation Fall 2008 through Fall 2018



Note. Includes full-time and part-time students who attended a postsecondary institution that reports data to IPEDS. See [Table A5.1](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data. Data sources: Nebraska Department of Education, January 2009, January 2011, December 2013, January 2015, December 2016, and December 2018, and the National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS fall 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018 surveys.

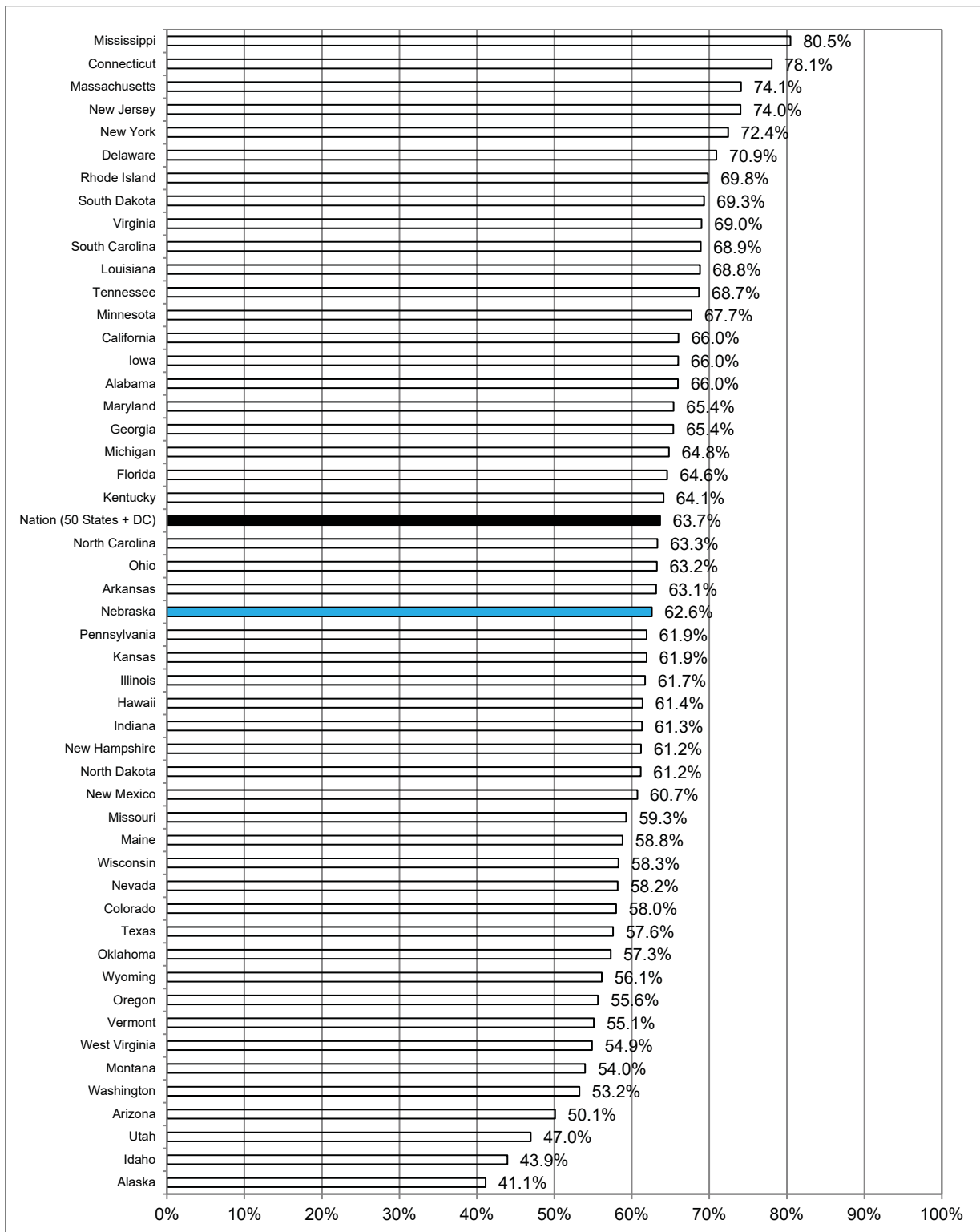
State-by-State College Continuation Rates

The most recent national study of college continuation rates includes students who attended postsecondary institutions in the United States as first-time freshmen in the 2018 fall term after graduating from high school during the 2017-2018 school year. National high school graduation data for the 2017-2018 school year has not yet been released by the National Center for Education Statistics. In place of this information, projections of 2017-2018 high school graduates were used to calculate fall 2018 college continuation rates by state. While the national college continuation rate data presented in this edition of the *Progress Report* is directly comparable to the data presented in the *2019 Progress Report*, it is not comparable to rates included in editions prior to 2018.

- As shown in [Figure 1.1.c.2](#), Nebraska's fall 2018 estimated college continuation rate of 62.6% was the 25th highest in the nation and 1.1 percentage points below the national rate.

Figure 1.1.c.2

College Continuation Rates for High School Graduates Who Attended Postsecondary Institutions in the United States in the Fall Term Following High School Graduation: Fall 2018



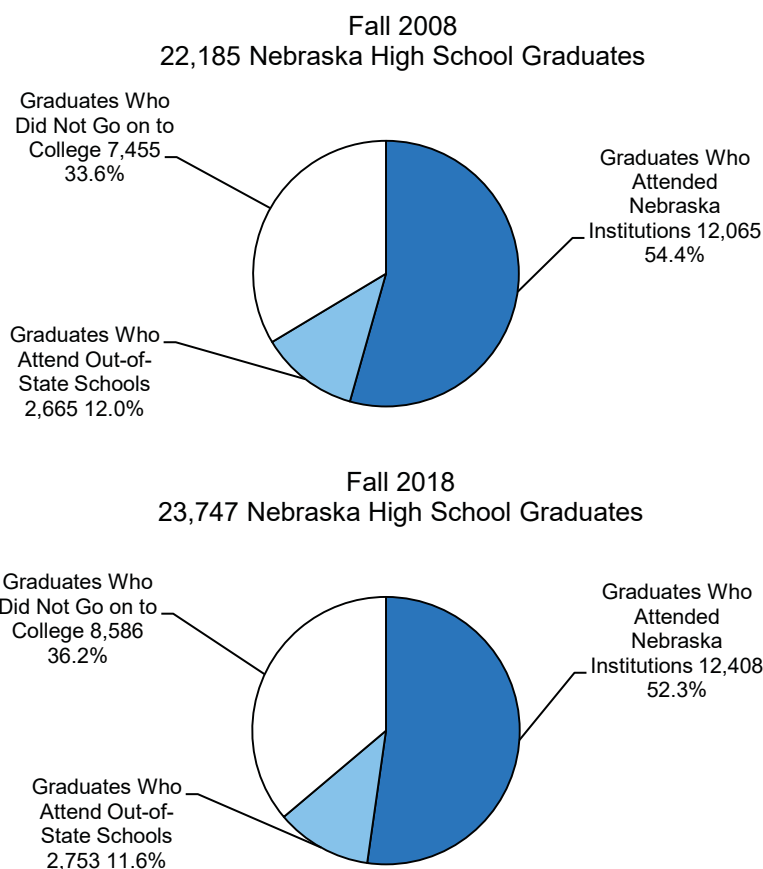
Data sources: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates*, 2016, and the National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS fall 2018 survey. College continuation rates obtained from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), February 2020.

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 attended 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 continued on to college at out-of-state institutions in the fall term following high school graduation.
- As illustrated in Figure 1.1.c.3, the Commission estimates Nebraska's in-state college continuation rate was 52.3% for the state's 2017-2018 high school graduates who attended college. This is a decrease of 2.1 percentage points since fall 2008.
- Meanwhile, the out-of-state college continuation rate decreased, from 12.0% of the high school graduating class of 2007-2008 to 11.6% of Nebraska high graduates in 2017-2018.

Figure 1.1.c.3

In-State and Out-of-State College Continuation Rates for Nebraska High School Graduates Who Attended Postsecondary Institutions and the Percentage Who Did Not Go on to College in the Fall Term Following High School Graduation Fall 2018 Compared to Fall 2008



Note. Includes full-time and part-time students who attended a postsecondary institution that reports data to IPEDS. 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 2009 and December 2018, and the National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS fall 2008 and 2018 surveys.

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

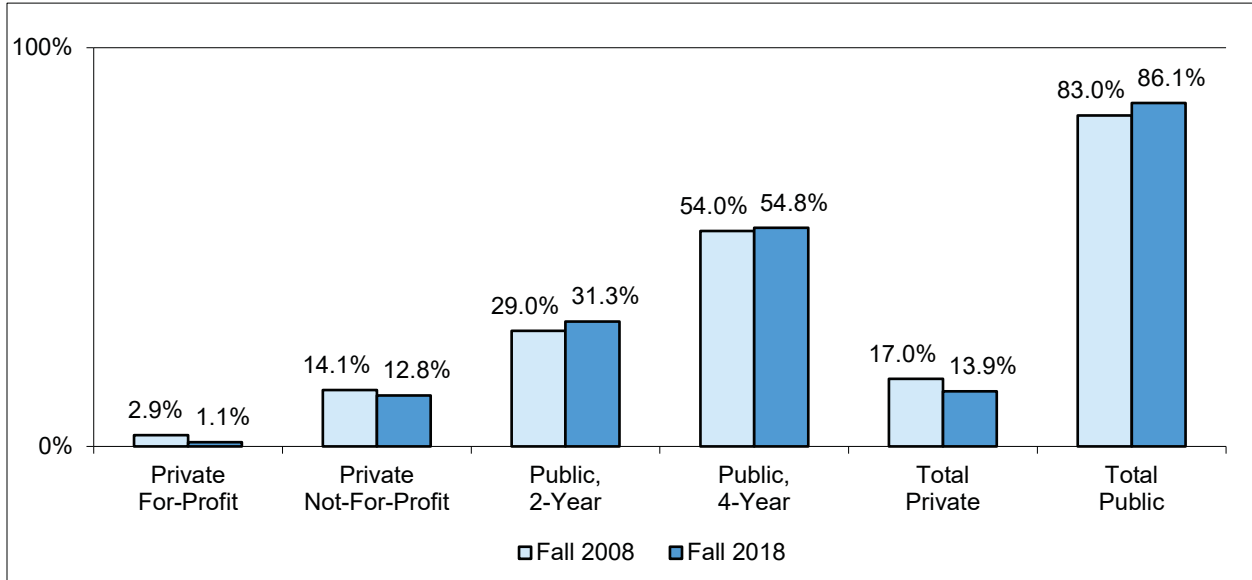
Of related interest are the types of postsecondary institutions attended by recent graduates of Nebraska’s high schools. As shown in [Part A](#) and [Part B](#) of [Figure 1.1.c.4](#), the pattern of attendance of Nebraska-resident, first-time freshmen who go to college in Nebraska in the fall term following 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.4](#) shows that 86.1% of the fall 2018 first-time freshmen who stayed in state attended Nebraska’s public colleges or universities, compared to 13.9% who went to Nebraska’s private, for-profit or not-for-profit institutions.
- In contrast, [Part B](#) of [Figure 1.1.c.4](#) reveals that 62.4% of the fall 2018 first-time freshmen who went out of state attended public institutions, while 37.6% went to private institutions.

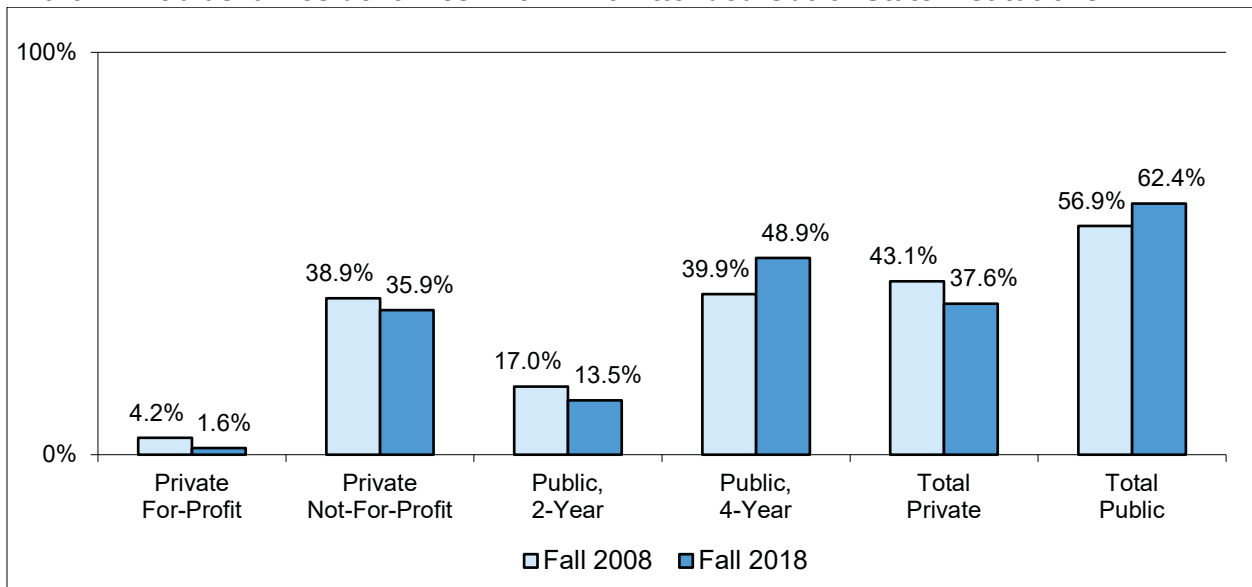
Figure 1.1.c.4

**Percentages of First-Time Freshmen with Nebraska Residency Who Attended
Nebraska and Out-of-State Postsecondary Institutions
in the Fall Term Following High School Graduation
Fall 2018 Compared to Fall 2008**

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 who attended a postsecondary institution that reports data to IPEDS. See Table A5.3 in Appendix 5 for supporting data. Date source: National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS fall 2008 and 2018 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 2017-2018 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 2017-2018.¹³ 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 within a year of high school graduation, 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 calculated 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 2017-2018.

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 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.

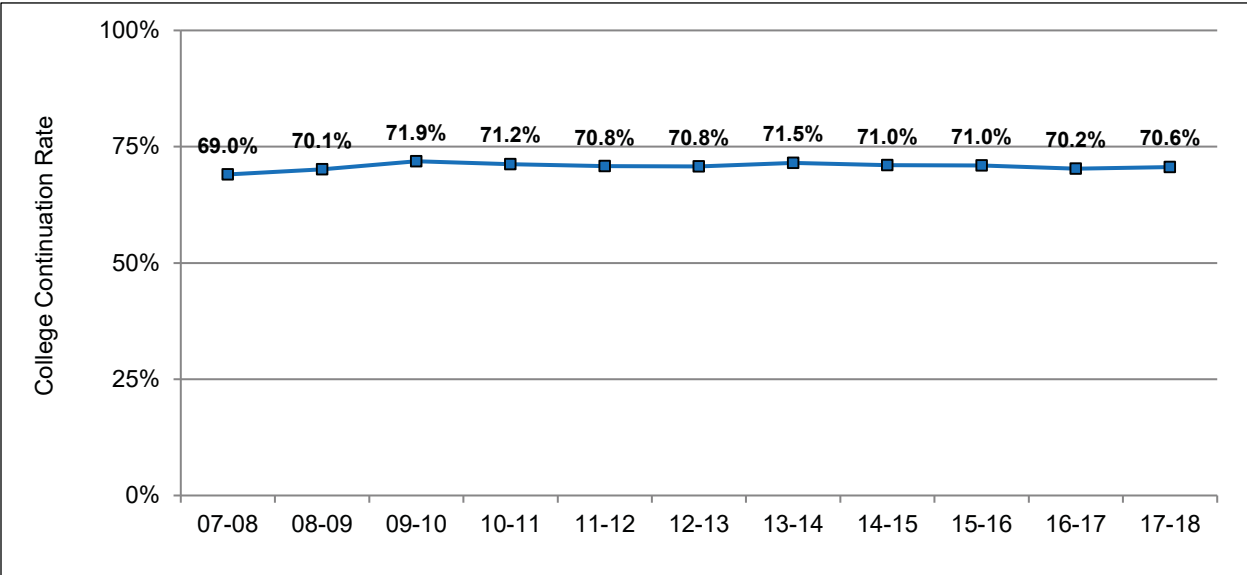
Since the Commission relies on college enrollment records from the Clearinghouse, students who continue on to college at non-NSC-reporting institutions are classified as not continuing on to college. **As a result, the college continuation rates reported in this section are underestimated to some degree.**

¹³ 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 data dashboard and downloadable Excel workbook for each of these analyses is available on the Commission’s website, ccpe.nebraska.gov/reports.

Statewide Public High School College Continuation Rate

- As shown in [Figure 1.1.c.5](#), the estimated statewide public high school college continuation rate was 70.6% for the graduating class of 2017-2018, up from 69.0% for the students who graduated in 2007-2008.
- The statewide rates reported in [Figure 1.1.c.5](#) 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.5
College Continuation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Graduates
2007-2008 through 2017-2018**



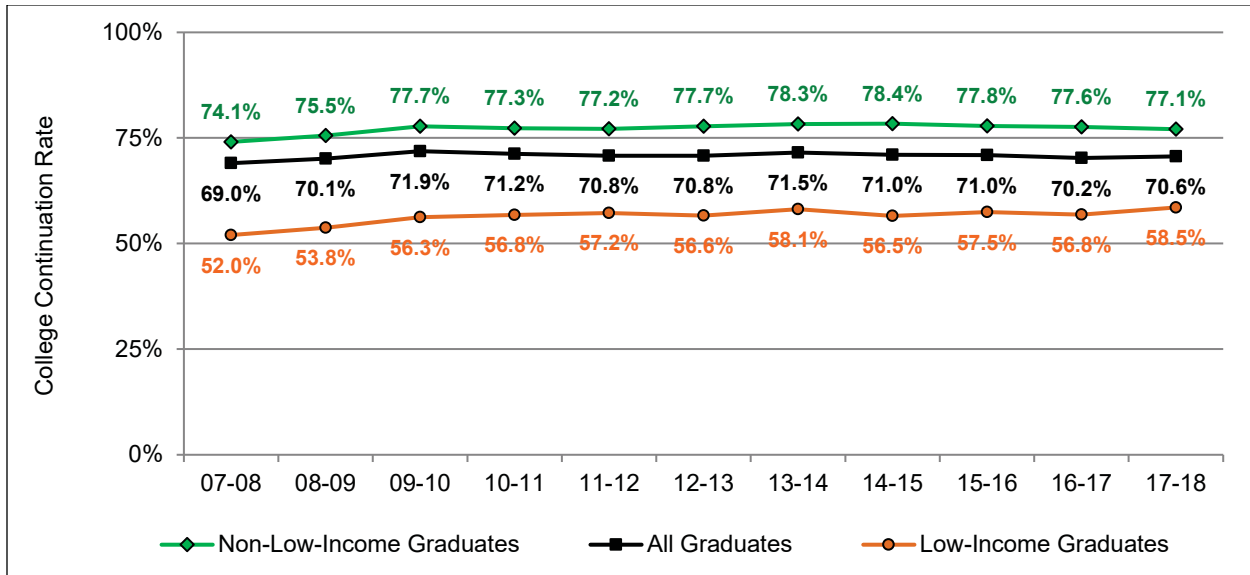
Note. See [Table A5.4](#) and [Table A5.5](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data. Data sources: National Student Clearinghouse (college continuation data), May 2019; and Nebraska Department of Education (public high school graduate data) May 2019.

College Continuation Rates for Public High School Graduates by Income Status

- Students from low-income households accounted for 34.9% of the Nebraska public high school graduates in 2017-2018, up from 22.9% in 2007-2008.
- As shown in [Figure 1.1.c.6](#), 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 2017-2018.
- The college-going rate for low-income students increased 6.5 percentage points, from 52.0% in 2007-2008 to 58.5% in 2017-2018. In comparison, the college continuation rate for students from non-low-income households increased 3.0 percentage points, from 74.1% in 2007-2008 to 77.1% in 2017-2018.

Figure 1.1.c.6

College Continuation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Graduates by Student Income Status: 2007-2008 through 2017-2018



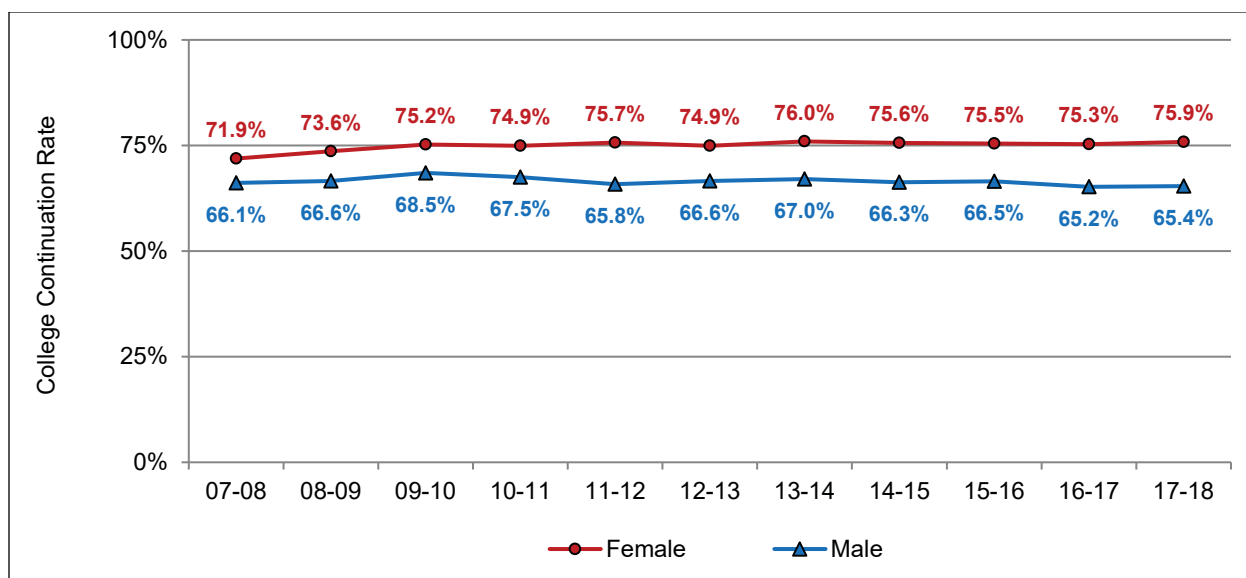
Note. See Table A5.4 and Table A5.5 in Appendix 5 for supporting data. Data sources: National Student Clearinghouse (college continuation data), May 2019; and Nebraska Department of Education (public high school graduate data) May 2019.

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 2017-2018.
- As shown in [Figure 1.1.c.7](#), 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 75.9% in 2017-2018, the college-going rate for males decreased from 66.1% in 2007-2008 to 65.4% in 2017-2018.
- The difference between the college-going rates of male and female graduates increased from 5.8 percentage points in 2007-2008 to 10.5 percentage points in 2017-2018.

Figure 1.1.c.7

College Continuation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Graduates by Gender: 2007-2008 through 2017-2018



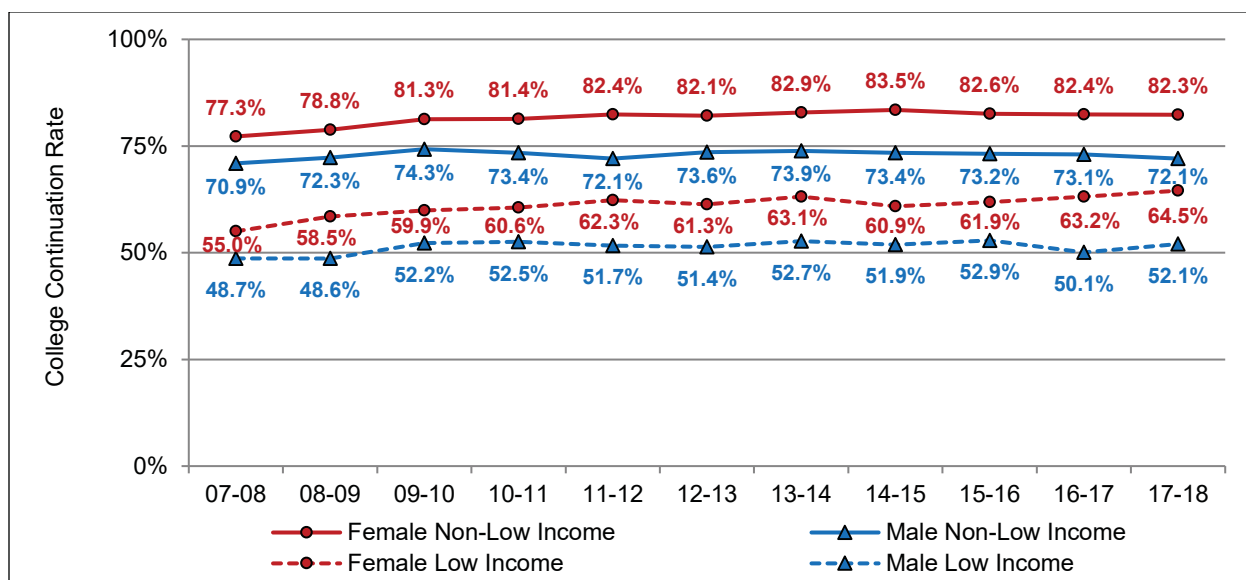
Note. See Table A5.4 and Table A5.5 in Appendix 5 for supporting data. Data sources: National Student Clearinghouse (college continuation data), May 2019; and Nebraska Department of Education (public high school graduate data) May 2019.

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

- As shown in Figure 1.1.c.8, 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 2017-2018.
 - 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 2017-2018, 64.5% of females continued on to college, compared to 52.1% 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 2017-2018, 82.3% of females continued on to college, compared to 72.1% of males.
- Between 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, college-going rates decreased for non-low-income males and low-income females. Meanwhile, college-going rates increased for both male and female low-income graduates.
- Directly comparing the students in the two income categories in Figure 1.1.c.8 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.8

College Continuation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Graduates by Gender and Student Income Status: 2007-2008 through 2017-2018



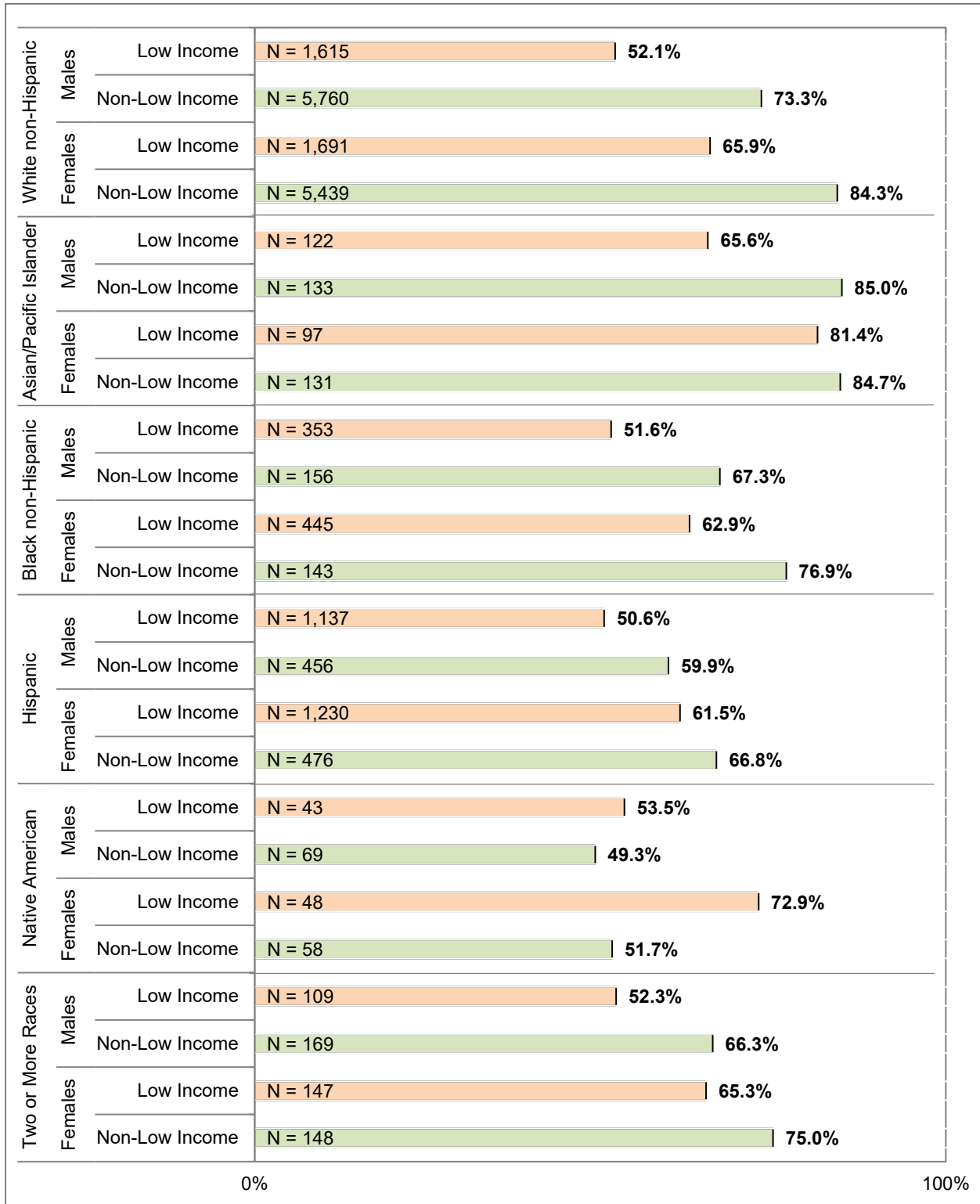
Note. See [Table A5.4](#) and [Table A5.5](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data. Data sources: National Student Clearinghouse (college continuation data), May 2019; and Nebraska Department of Education (public high school graduate data) May 2019.

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

- As shown in [Figure 1.1.c.9](#), segmenting college continuation rates by race/ethnicity, gender, and student income status results in college continuation rates for 24 subgroups.
- Among graduates in 2017-2018, the highest college continuation rate among these 24 subgroups was for non-low-income, Asian/Pacific Islander, male graduates (85.0%). Meanwhile, the lowest college continuation rate among these 24 subgroups was for non-low-income, Native American, male graduates (49.3%).
- Overall, college continuation rates by race/ethnicity ranged from 56.0% for Native Americans to 79.3% for Asian/Pacific Islanders. (See [Table A5.5](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data.)
- Between 2011-2012 and 2017-2018, the number of white non-Hispanic high school graduates decreased 2.5% while the number of minority high school graduates increased 26.1%. Unless efforts are focused to increase college continuation rates for minority students, Nebraska's college continuation rate will likely decrease as the state becomes more racially/ethnically diverse.
- College continuation rates by gender, student income status, and race/ethnicity for the graduating classes of 2010-2011 through 2017-2018 can be found in [Table A5.5](#) in [Appendix 5](#).

Figure 1.1.c.9

College Continuation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Student Income Status: 2017-2018



Note. N = the number of public high school graduates within each subgroup. See Table A5.5 in Appendix 5 for supporting data. Data sources: National Student Clearinghouse (college continuation data), May 2019; and Nebraska Department of Education (public high school graduate data) May 2019.