

### 1.1.a High School Graduation Rates

**Increase the proportion of students who graduate from Nebraska high schools.**

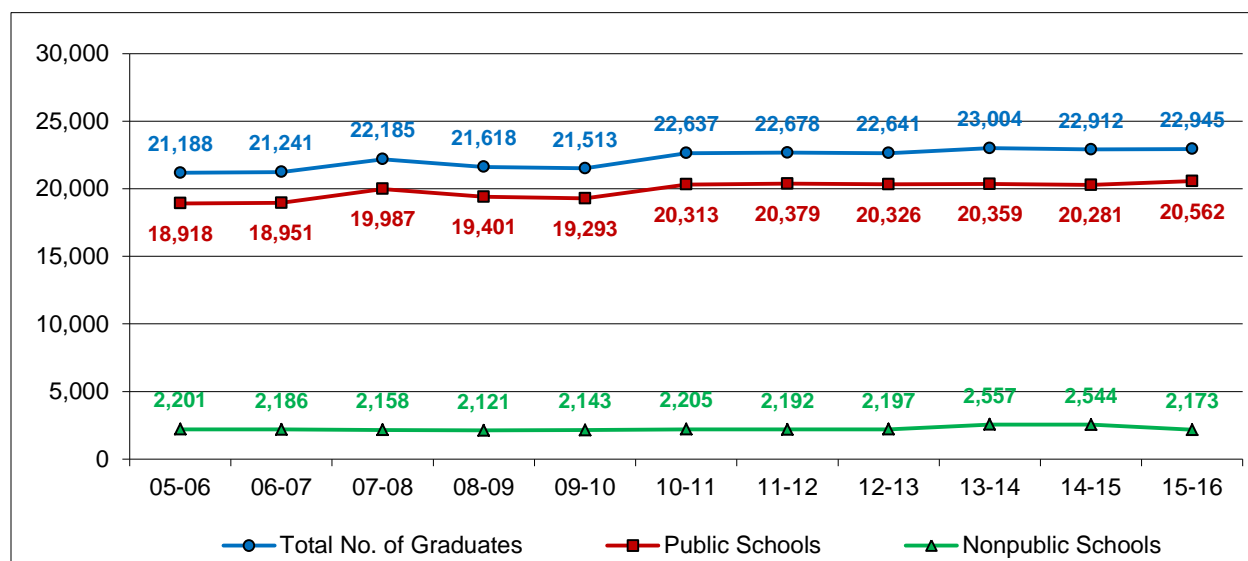
One strategic approach to increasing the number of students who enter postsecondary education in Nebraska is to increase the proportion of students who graduate from the state’s high schools. In other words, increase Nebraska’s high school graduation rate and, in the process, increase the pool of high school students who could potentially attend college.

#### Past and Present Trends in the Number of Nebraska High School Graduates

- As shown in [Figure 1.1.a.1](#), 22,945 students graduated from Nebraska high schools in 2015–2016, an increase of 8.3% (1,757 students) since 2005–2006.
- The number of students who graduated from Nebraska high schools increased 4.4% from 2006–2007 to 2007–2008, and there was a one-year increase of 5.2% in 2010–2011. Otherwise, the total number of graduates has increased or decreased only slightly between 2005–2006 and 2015–2016.
- Between 2005–2006 and 2015–2016, the number of public high school graduates increased 8.7% to 20,562, while the number graduating from nonpublic (private) high schools decreased 1.3% to 2,173.
- Notably, between 2014–2015 and 2015–2016, the number of public high school graduates increased 1.4% (281 students) while the number of nonpublic high school graduates decreased 14.6% (371 students).

**Figure 1.1.a.1**

**Numbers of Nebraska Public and Nonpublic High School Graduates  
2005–2006 through 2015–2016**



*Note.* Graduates do not include GED recipients or completers who did not receive regular diplomas. The total number of graduates includes graduates of public schools, nonpublic (private) schools, educational service units, and state-operated schools. See [Table A2.1 in Appendix 2](#) for supporting data. Data source: Nebraska Department of Education, December 2007 (2005–06 data), January 2009 (2006–07 data), February 2010 (2007–08 data), February 2011 (2008–09 and 2009–10 data), February 2012 (2010–11 data), December 2012 (2011–12 data), January 2014 (2012–13 data), January 2015 (2013–14 data), January 2016 (2014–15 data), and December 2016 (2015–16 data).

- As shown in [Table 1.1.a.1](#), since 2005–2006, about 9 out of 10 Nebraska high school graduates have received their diplomas from public schools.

Type of School	2005–2006		2014–2015		2015–2016	
	No. of Graduates	% of Graduates	No. of Graduates	% of Graduates	No. of Graduates	% of Graduates
Public	18,918	89.6%	20,281	88.9%	20,562	90.4%
Nonpublic	2,201	10.4%	2,544	11.1%	2,173	9.6%
Subtotal	21,119	100.0%	22,825	100.0%	22,735	100.0%
ESU & SO	69		87		210	
State Total	21,188		22,912		22,945	

*Note.* Graduates do not include GED recipients or completers who did not receive regular diplomas. ESU = Educational Service Units; SO = State-Operated Schools. Data source: Nebraska Department of Education, December 2007 (2005–06 data), January 2016 (2014–15 data), and December 2016 (2015–16 data).

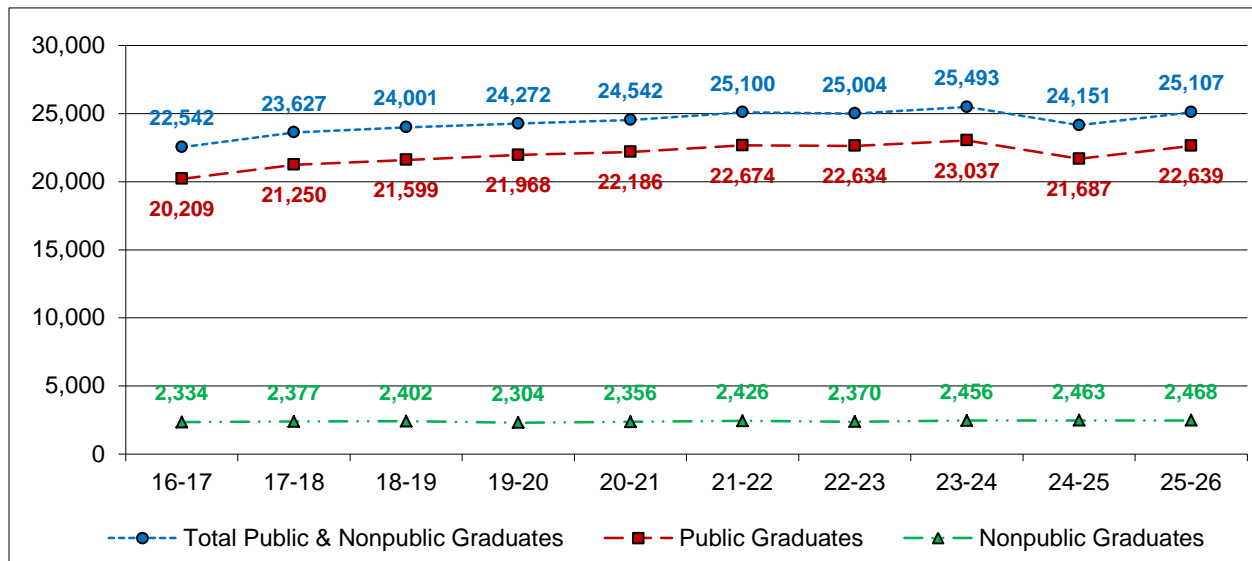
### **Projected Trends in the Number of Nebraska High School Graduates**<sup>7</sup>

- As shown in [Figure 1.1.a.2](#), 25,107 students are forecast to graduate from Nebraska public and nonpublic high schools in 2025–2026, a projected increase of 10.4% (2,372 students) since 2015–2016.
- Public schools are projected to account for 90% to 91% of Nebraska’s high school graduates through the 2025–2026 school year.
- The numbers of graduates from Nebraska’s public high schools are projected to decrease 1.7% between 2015–2016 and 2016–2017 and then increase 12.0% from 2016–2017 to 2025–2026.
- The numbers of graduates from the state’s nonpublic (private) high schools are projected to increase 7.4% from 2015–2016 to 2016–2017 and then increase 5.7% from 2016–2017 to 2025–2026.

<sup>7</sup> Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates, 2016*. See [Table A2.2](#) in [Appendix 2](#) for supporting data. For 2015–2016, the actual number of public school graduates (20,562) was 0.1% higher than WICHE predicted in their 2016 report (20,372).

Figure 1.1.a.2

**Projected Numbers of Graduates from Nebraska Public and Nonpublic High Schools  
2016–2017 through 2025–2026**



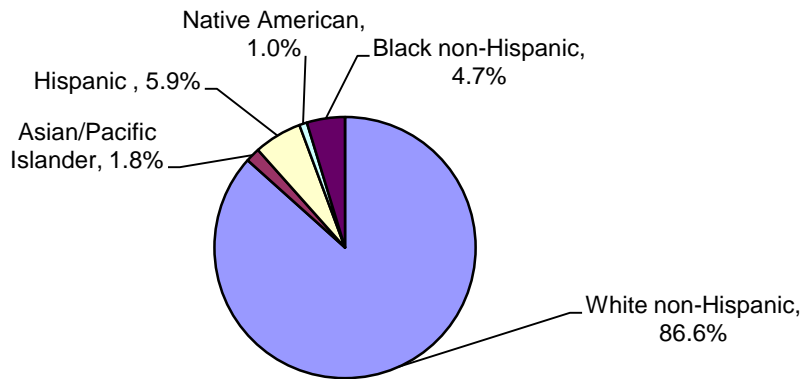
Note. Projections do not include graduates of educational service units or state-operated schools. Graduates do not include GED recipients or completers who did not receive regular diplomas. See [Table A2.2](#) in [Appendix 2](#) for supporting data. Data source: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates, 2016*.

**Projected and Recent Changes in Nebraska Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity**

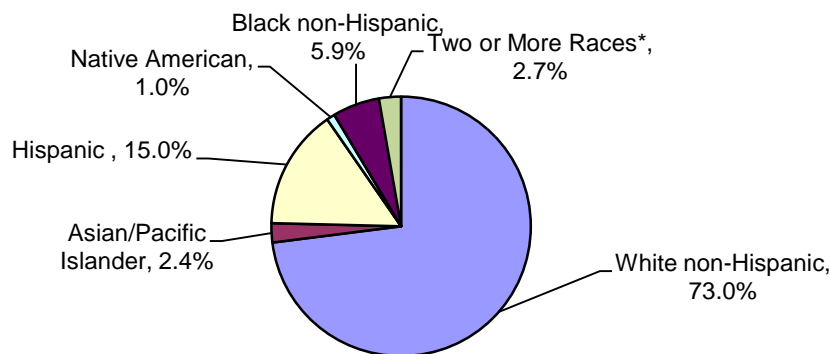
- As illustrated in [Figure 1.1.a.3](#), minority students, especially Hispanics, are projected to account for much higher percentages of the state’s public high school graduates in 2025–2026 than they did in 2005–2006.
- Actual changes in the racial/ethnic distribution of Nebraska’s public high school graduates over the past 11 years have been in the direction of the projected trend. Between 2005–2006 and 2015–2016, the number of public high school graduates in each of the major racial/ethnic groups changed as follows:
  - White non-Hispanics decreased 8.4% (from 16,389 to 15,007 graduates)
  - Asian/Pacific Islanders increased 46.6% (from 337 to 494 graduates)
  - Hispanics increased 175.4% (from 1,119 to 3,082 graduates)
  - Native Americans increased 16.6% (from 181 to 211 graduates)
  - Black non-Hispanics increased 35.2% (from 892 to 1,206 graduates)
  - Since 2010–2011, graduates also have been classified in the category of “two or more races.” In 2010–2011, there were 492 public high school graduates in this category. By 2015–2016, the number had increased 14.2% to 562 graduates.

**Figure 1.1.a.3**  
**By Race/Ethnicity: Actual and Projected**  
**Percentages of Nebraska Public High School Graduates**

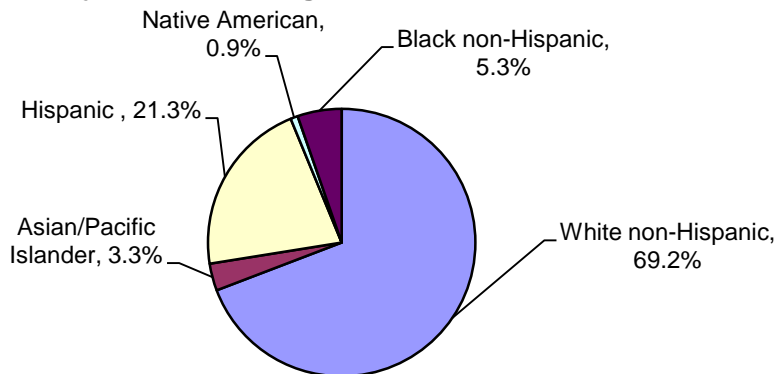
**Actual Percentages of Graduates: 2005-2006**



**Actual Percentages of Graduates: 2015-2016**



**Projected Percentages of Graduates: 2025-2026**



*Note.* Graduates do not include GED recipients or completers who did not receive regular diplomas. Actual counts and projections do not include graduates of educational service units or state-operated schools. \*\*‘Two or more races’ was not a racial/ethnic category until 2010–11. For projections, multiracial graduates are proportionally distributed to the four race categories (American Indian/Alaska Native (i.e., Native American), Asian/Pacific Islander, black non-Hispanic, and white non-Hispanic). See [Table A2.3](#) in [Appendix 2](#) for supporting data. Data sources: Nebraska Department of Education, December 2007 and December 2016 (actual number of graduates). Projection data obtained from Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates, 2016*.

## **Nebraska High School Graduation Rates**

The Coordinating Commission monitors Nebraska high school graduation rates to determine if the proportion of Nebraska's high school students who graduate from high school is increasing, thereby potentially increasing the pool of students who are prepared to go on to college.

### *Four-Year High School Graduation Rates (2005–2006 through 2009–2010)*

Prior to the 2010–2011 school year, the Nebraska Department of Education used what has been called the **four-year high school graduation rate** to measure the proportion of high school students who receive regular diplomas.

- Nebraska's **state four-year graduation rate** was based on data that included graduates of educational service units, state-operated schools, nonpublic (private) schools, and public schools.
- In comparison, the **public four-year graduation rate** was also a statewide rate, but it was limited to data from Nebraska's public high schools.
- See Explanatory Note A3.1 in Appendix 3 for information on how four-year graduation rates were calculated and Table A3.1 in Appendix 3 for supporting data.

### *Cohort Four-Year High School Graduation Rates (2010–2011 through 2015–2016)*

With the 2010–2011 school year, the Nebraska Department of Education began using the **cohort four-year graduation rate** to measure the proportion of Nebraska's *public* high school students who earn regular diplomas.

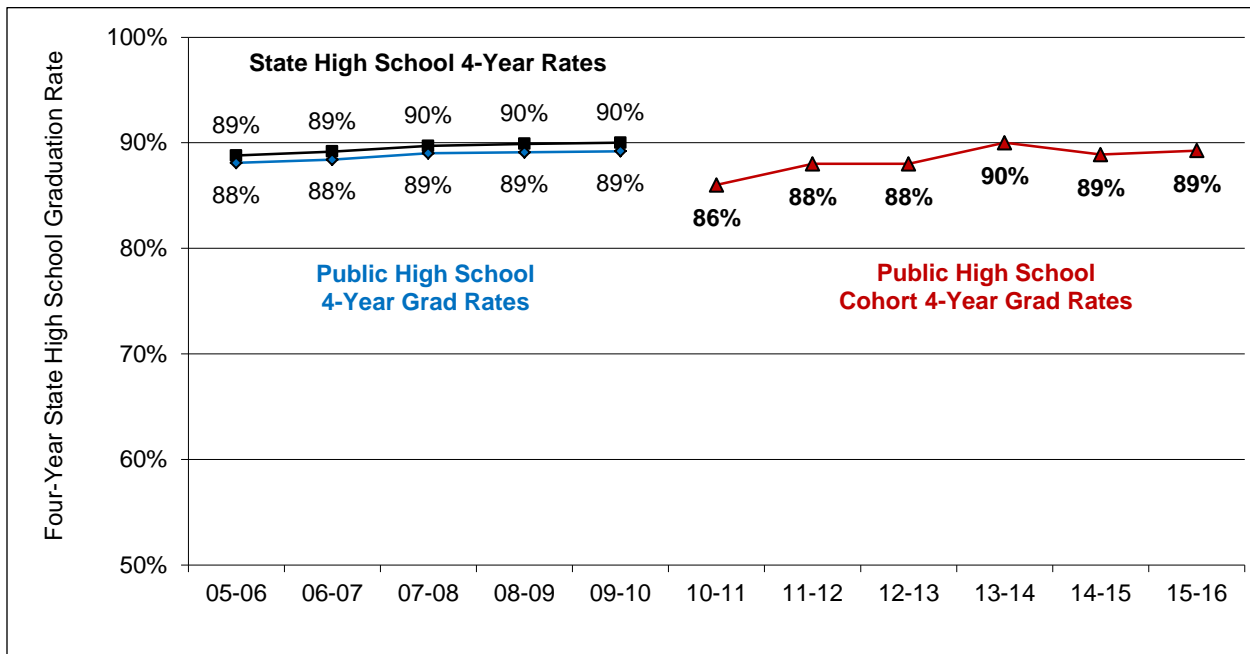
- Currently, data are not available to calculate a cohort four-year graduation rate for the nonpublic (private) high schools in Nebraska. Consequently, a statewide cohort four-year graduation rate for all public and nonpublic schools in Nebraska is not available.
- See Explanatory Note A3.2 in Appendix 3 for more information on how the cohort four-year graduation rates are calculated and Table A3.3 in Appendix 3 for supporting data.
- Because the cohort four-year graduation rate is calculated using an entirely different methodology, it is not comparable to the four-year graduation rates for previous school years. Consequently, **the 2011 cohort four-year graduation rate established a new baseline for future comparisons.**<sup>8</sup>
- As shown in Figure 1.1.a.4, the **cohort four-year graduation rate for Nebraska's public schools was 86% in 2011 (2010–2011) and 89% in 2016 (2015–2016)**, or three percentage points higher than the cohort rate for 2011.

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<sup>8</sup> With the adoption of the cohort four-year graduation rate, the Nebraska Department of Education is no longer using its previous methodology for calculating graduation rates.

Figure 1.1.a.4

**Nebraska State and Public High School Four-Year Graduation Rates  
2005–2006 through 2009–2010 and Nebraska Public High School  
Cohort Four-Year Graduation Rates 2010–2011 through 2015–2016**



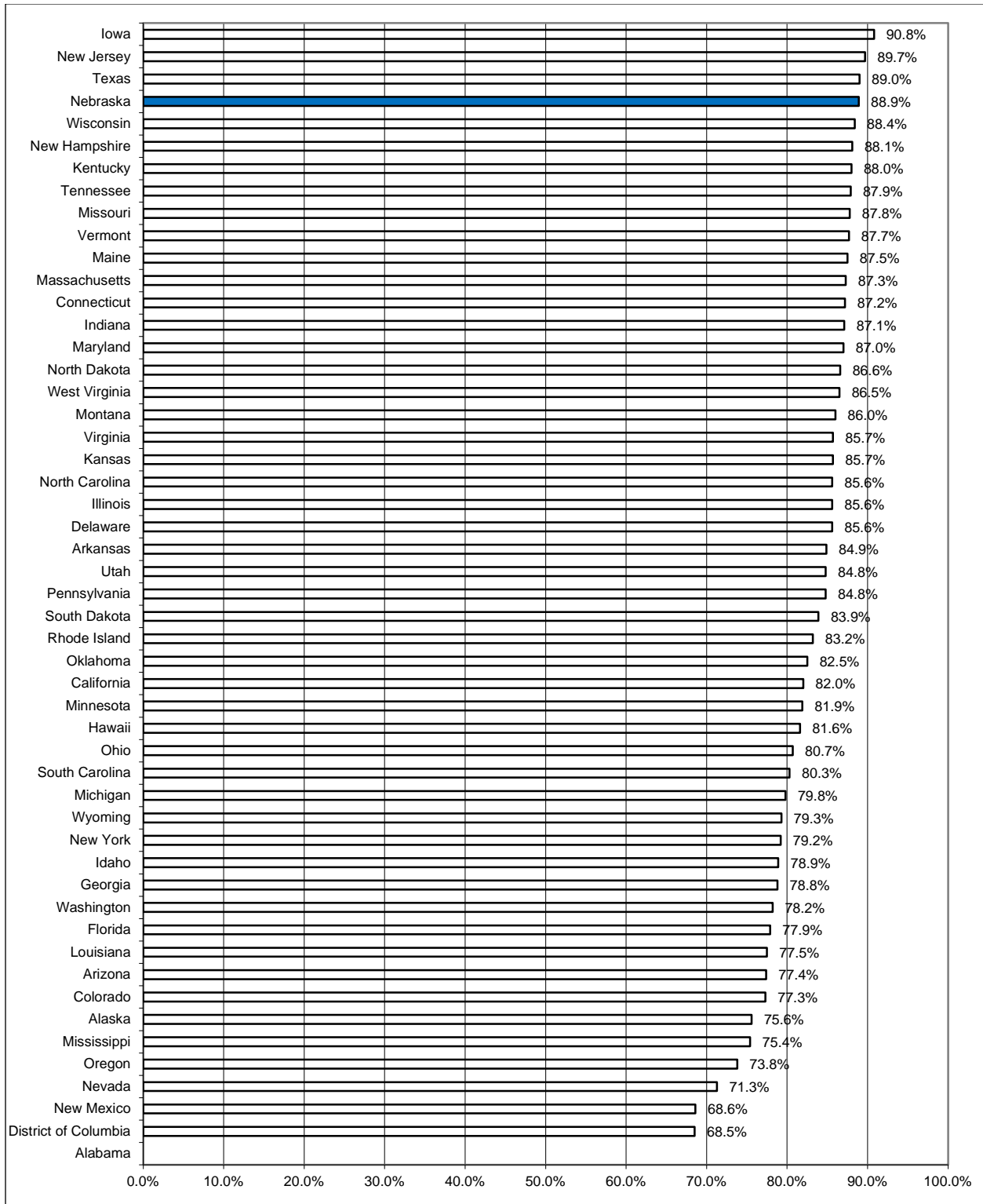
Note. See [Table A3.1](#) and [Table A3.3](#) in [Appendix 3](#) for supporting data. Data source: Nebraska Department of Education, January 2009 (2005–06 and 2006–07 data), February 2010 (2007–08 data), February 2011 (2008–09 and 2009–10 data); and Nebraska Department of Education, *2015–2016 Education Profile for State of Nebraska*, Cohort Graduation Data (2010–11 through 2015–16 data).

**Public High School Cohort Four-Year Graduation Rates by State**

[Figure 1.1.a.5](#) shows the state-to-state comparisons of the cohort four-year graduation rates calculated for the 2014–2015 cohort.

- As shown in [Figure 1.1.a.5](#), Nebraska’s 2014–2015 cohort four-year graduation rate was the fourth highest among the rates reported by 49 states and the District of Columbia.

**Figure 1.1.a.5**  
**By State: 2014–2015 Public High School**  
**Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate**



Note. Alabama's cohort graduation rate was misreported and is therefore not included in state rankings. Data source: U.S. Department of Education, ED Facts Data Groups 695 and 696, School year 2014–15; September 15, 2016.

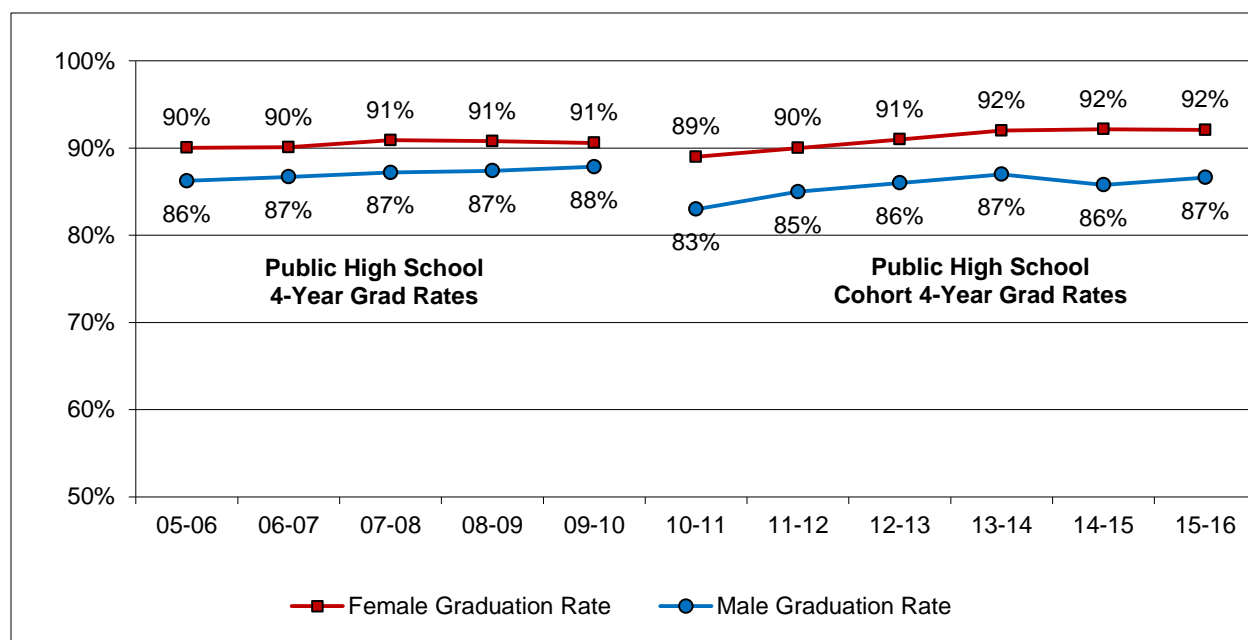
## Nebraska Public High School Graduation Rates by Gender

An analysis of the high school graduation rate data obtained from the Nebraska Department of Education reveals that females continue to have higher graduation rates than males who attend Nebraska’s public high schools, regardless of the methodology used to calculate them.

- As evidenced in [Figure 1.1.a.6](#), the four-year graduation rates for females were higher than the rates for males from 2005–2006 to 2009–2010. Both rates gradually increased during this time, and the gap between males and females decreased from four percentage points in 2005–2006 to three percentage points in 2009–2010.
- As explained previously, cohort four-year graduation rates (first reported in 2010–2011) are not comparable to the rates reported for previous school years. Consequently, the **89% graduation rate for females** and the **83% graduation rate for males in 2010–2011 established new baselines** for future comparisons.
- **The cohort graduation rate for females in 2015–2016 was 92%**, three percentage points higher than the rate for 2010–2011. **The cohort graduation rate for males in 2015–2016 was 87%**, four percentage points higher than the rate for 2010–2011.

**Figure 1.1.a.6**

**By Gender: Nebraska Public High School Four-Year Graduation Rates 2005–2006 through 2009–2010 and Nebraska Public High School Cohort Four-Year Graduation Rates 2010–2011 through 2015–2016**



Note. See [Table A3.2](#) and [Table A3.3](#) in [Appendix 3](#) for supporting data. Data source: Nebraska Department of Education, January 2009 (2005–06 and 2006–07 data), February 2010 (2007–08 data), February 2011 (2008–09 and 2009–10 data); and Nebraska Department of Education, *2015–2016 Education Profile for State of Nebraska*, Cohort Graduation Data (2010–11 through 2015–16 data).



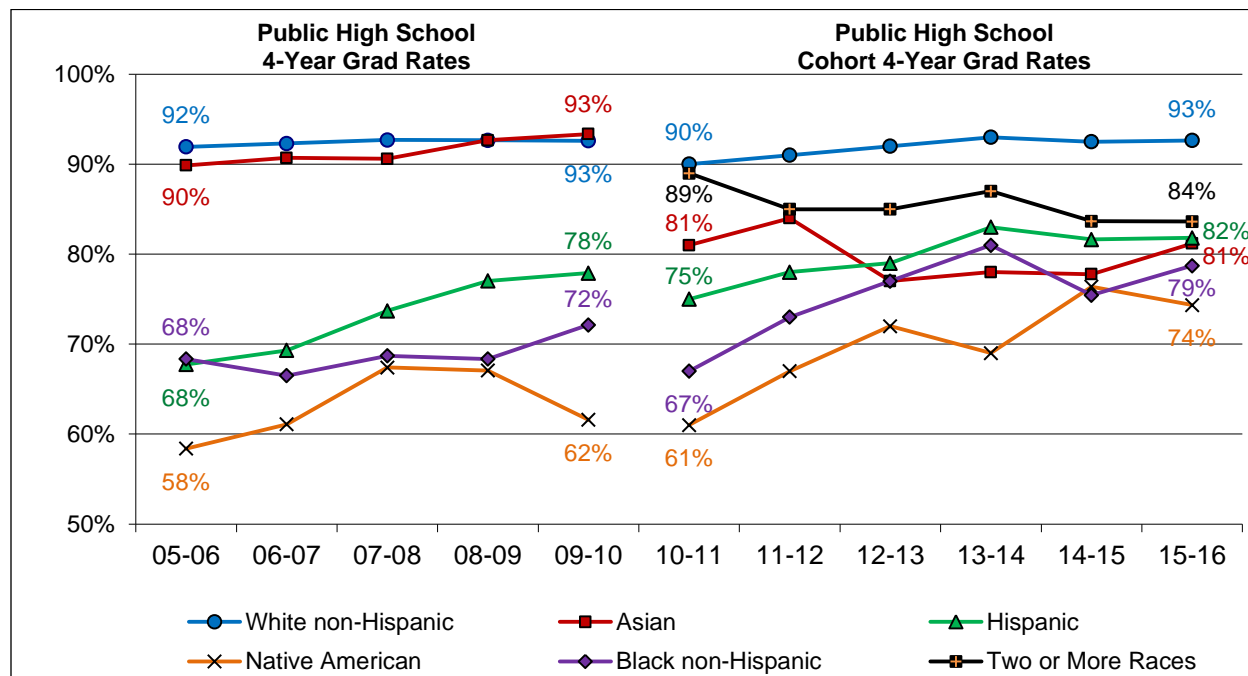
## Nebraska Public High School Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity

As illustrated in [Figure 1.1.a.7](#), high school graduation rates vary considerably by race/ethnicity, regardless of the methodology used to calculate them.

- The four-year high school graduation rates for each of the five reported racial/ethnic groups increased between 2005–2006 and 2009–2010. The largest percentage point increase in graduation rates during this time was evidenced among Hispanics, increasing from 68% to 78%.
- Four-year graduation rates for Hispanics, black non-Hispanics, and Native Americans were considerably lower than the four-year graduation rates for white non-Hispanics and Asians/Pacific Islanders from 2005–2006 to 2009–2010.
- Since they are not comparable to the rates previously calculated by the Nebraska Department of Education, **the cohort four-year graduation rate for each racial/ethnic group in 2010–2011 established new baselines** for future comparisons.
- Between 2010–2011 and 2015–2016, the cohort four-year graduation rates decreased five percentage points for multi-racial individuals. During this same time, cohort four-year graduation rates increased or remained unchanged for all other racial/ethnic groups, ranging from no change for Asians to a 13 percentage point increase for Native Americans.

Figure 1.1.a.7

### By Race/Ethnicity: Nebraska Public High School Four-Year Graduation Rates 2005–2006 through 2009–2010 and Nebraska Public High School Cohort Four-Year Graduation Rates 2010–2011 through 2015–2016



Note. Asian includes Pacific Islanders in the rates for 2002–2003 through 2009–2010. Cohort graduation rates are not shown for Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders. Graduation rates for multiracial students are not available prior to 2010–11. See Table A3.1 and Table A3.3 in Appendix 3 for supporting data. Data source: Nebraska Department of Education, January 2009 (2005–06 and 2006–07 data), February 2010 (2007–08 data), February 2011 (2008–09 and 2009–10 data); and Nebraska Department of Education, *2015–2016 Education Profile for State of Nebraska*, Cohort Graduation Data (2010–11 through 2015–16 data).

## **District-Level Analysis of Graduation Rates**

The Nebraska Department of Education provides the Commission with the distribution of the 2015–2016 cohort four-year graduation rates for Nebraska’s 250 public school districts, as shown in Table 1.1.a.2.

- 77 (30.8%) of Nebraska’s public school districts had cohort four-year graduation rates of 100%, and 201 districts (80.4%) had graduation rates equal to or higher than the statewide rate of 89.27% in 2015–2016.
- 49 (19.6%) of the districts had graduation rates that were lower than the statewide rate of 89.27% for public schools in 2015–2016, and seven districts had rates of less than 75.0%.
- The three districts with the largest number of cohort graduates were Omaha Public Schools with a graduation rate of 79.14% (2,591 graduates), Lincoln Public Schools with a graduation rate of 83.24% (2,120 graduates), and Millard Public Schools with a graduation rate of 91.94% (1,620 graduates).

<b>Table 1.1.a.2 Distribution of the Cohort Four-Year High School Graduation Rates for Nebraska <u>Public High School Districts</u> 2015–2016</b>			
Cohort Four-Year High School Graduation Rate	No. of School Districts	% of School Districts	Cumulative % of School Districts
100.00%	77	30.8%	30.8%
97.00% - 99.99%	16	6.4%	37.2%
94.00% - 96.99%	51	20.4%	57.6%
91.00% - 93.99%	41	16.4%	74.0%
89.27% - 90.99%	16	6.4%	80.4%
<b>89.27% Nebraska Public High School Rate</b>			
85.00% - 89.26%	30	12.0%	92.4%
75.00% - 84.99%	12	4.8%	97.2%
Less than 75.00%	7	2.8%	100.0%
All Public Districts	250		
Data source: Nebraska Department of Education, December 2016.			

## **Nebraska Public High School Cohort Extended Graduation Rates**

Figure 1.1.a.8 shows extended five- and six-year graduation rates for the 2013–2014 cohort (Part A) and extended five-year graduation rates for the 2014–2015 cohort (Part B).

- As evidenced in Part A of Figure 1.1.a.8, the 2013–2014 cohort **six-year** graduation rate for Nebraska’s public school was 93%, three percentage points higher than the cohort four-year graduation rate.
- As shown in Part B of Figure 1.1.a.8, the overall **five-year** graduation rate for the 2014–2015 cohort was three percentage points higher than the cohort four-year graduation rate.

### *Extended Graduation Rates by Gender*

Extending cohort graduation rates to five and six years narrows the gap between graduation rates for males and females. In other words, males are more likely than females to take five or six years to graduate from high school.

- For the 2013–2014 cohort, the four-year graduation rate was 87% for males and 92% for females, a gap of five percentage points. However, extending the graduation rate out to six years reveals the gap narrowed to four percentage points (91% for males and 95% for females).
- For the 2014–2015 cohort, the five-year graduation rate was 94% for females (up from 92% for four years) and 89% for males (up from 86% for four years).

### *Extended Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity*

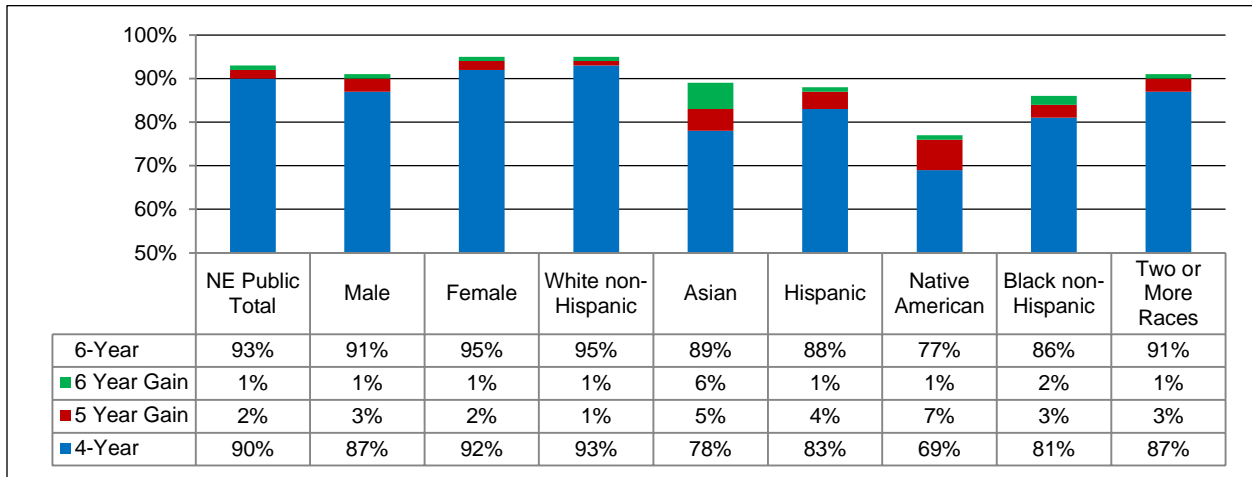
Extending cohort graduation rates to five and six years also narrows the gaps between graduation rates for various racial/ethnic groups.

- The 2013–2014 cohort graduation rates for Asians increased 11 percentage points when extended from four to six years while the cohort graduation rates for Native Americans increased eight percentage points when extended from four to six years.
- For the 2014–2015 cohort, the largest increases reported were for Asians and for black non-Hispanics (eight percentage point increase for both racial groups). Asians increased from 78% to 86% while black non-Hispanics increased from 75% to 83%.

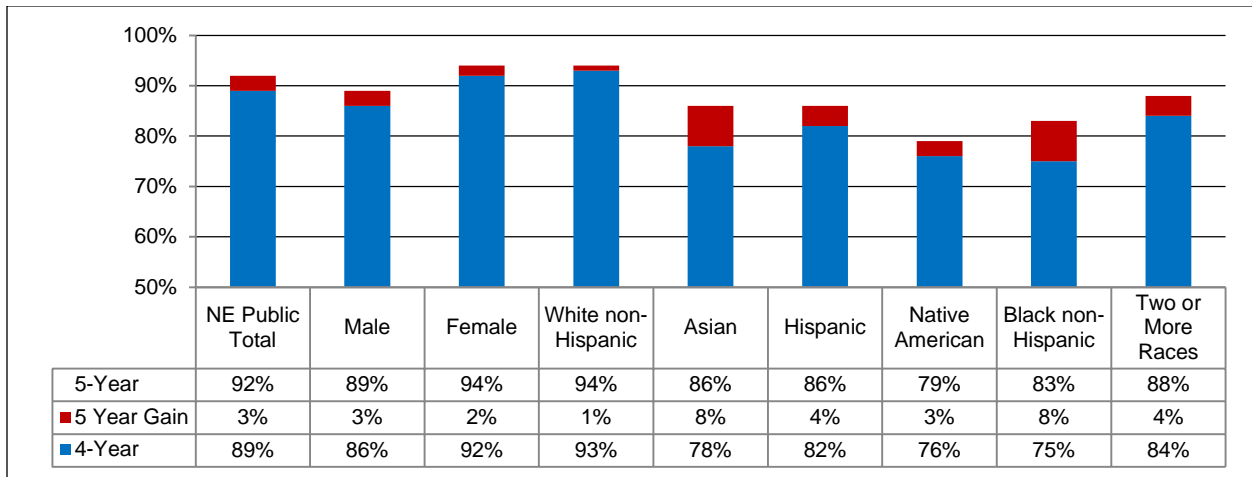
Figure 1.1.a.8

**By Gender and By Race/Ethnicity: Nebraska Public High School Cohort Extended Graduation Rates for 2013–2014 and 2014–2015**

Part A: 2013–2014 Cohort



Part B: 2014–2015 Cohort



Note. Graduates do not include GED recipients or completers who did not receive regular diplomas. Cohort graduation rates are not shown for Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders. See Table A3.3 in Appendix 3 for supporting data. Data source: Nebraska Department of Education, 2015–2016 Education Profile for State of Nebraska, Cohort Graduation Data.

## Dropouts from Nebraska Public Schools

Previous editions of this report have shown that black non-Hispanics, Hispanics, and Native Americans account for disproportionately high percentages of the students who drop out of public high schools in Nebraska, compared to their representation among the graduates of these schools. This is an important finding because minorities—Hispanics in particular—are projected to account for higher percentages of Nebraska’s high school students in the future.

It is essential to examine students who drop out of Nebraska’s public schools because these are students who have dropped out of the “pipeline” of students who potentially can go on to college and earn degrees or other awards.

In its *Nebraska Education Profile* report, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) publishes only the cohort four-year graduation rate and the corresponding number of students in the cohort who earned regular diplomas within four years, including the summer following their fourth year of high school. A **cohort four-year dropout rate** *cannot* be calculated simply by subtracting the cohort four-year graduation rate from 100 percent. Additionally, the number of students in a cohort who drop out of school *cannot* be calculated by subtracting the number of regular diploma recipients from the total number of students in the cohort. Such calculations are invalid because the number of students in a cohort who did not receive regular diplomas includes students who are still in school, received other certificates, awards and diplomas, such as the GED, as well as students who dropped out of school.

Although cohort four-year dropout rates by gender or race/ethnicity are not available for analysis, the Commission obtains membership and dropout data from NDE for students in the 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. This information is provided by gender and race/ethnicity.

Table 1.1.a.3 compares Nebraska public school fall membership for 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders to the number of students in the 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades who dropped out in 2015–2016.

- White non-Hispanics accounted for 69.2% of fall membership for 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders but only 43.2% of dropouts.
- Meanwhile, compared to their white non-Hispanic classmates, all other racial/ethnic groups accounted for disproportionately higher percentages of the students who dropped out of school relative to the percentages of students included in fall membership counts for 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders in 2015–2016.
- While fall membership increased 1.6% from 2014–2015 to 2015–2016 (134,691 vs. 136,837), the number of dropouts increased 11.7% (1,468 vs. 1,640). (See Table A3.4 in Appendix 3 for corresponding data.)

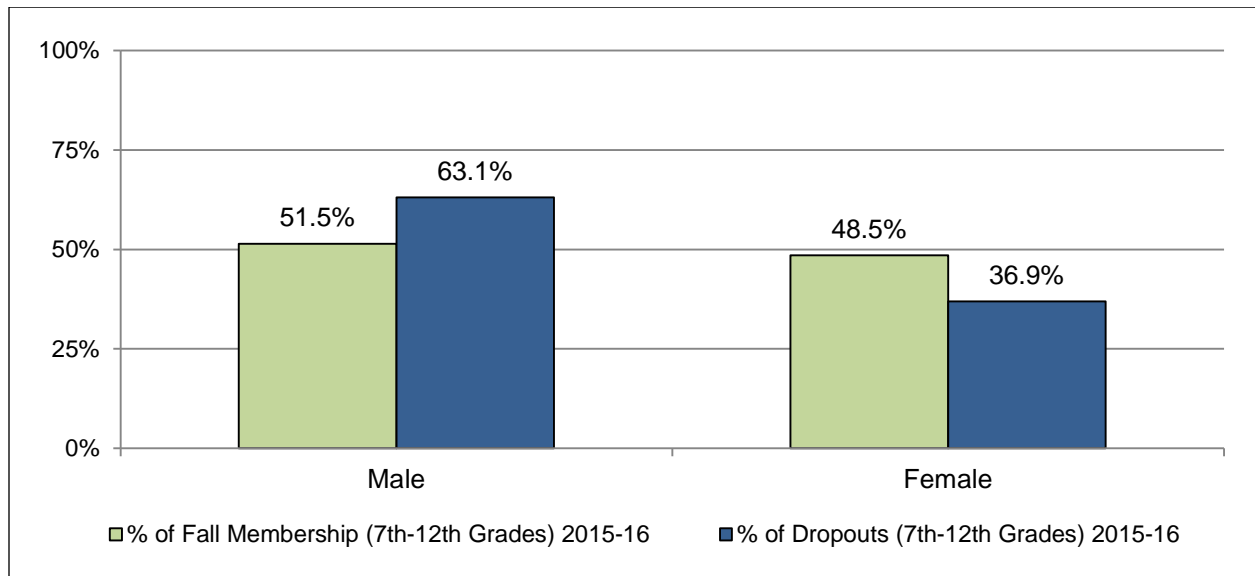
**Table 1.1.a.3  
Distributions of Public School Fall Membership and Total Dropouts  
from the 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> Grades by Race/Ethnicity  
2015–2016**

Race/Ethnicity	Fall Membership 7th - 12th Grade Students	% of Fall Membership	Number of 7th - 12th Grade Dropouts	% of Dropouts	Dropouts / Fall Membership
White non-Hispanic	94,752	69.2%	709	43.2%	0.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3,529	2.6%	75	4.6%	2.1%
Hispanic	23,641	17.3%	517	31.5%	2.2%
Native American	1,819	1.3%	59	3.6%	3.2%
Black non-Hispanic	8,888	6.5%	203	12.4%	2.3%
Two or More Races	4,208	3.1%	77	4.7%	1.8%
Public Total	136,837	100.0%	1,640	100.0%	1.2%

*Note.* See Table A3.4 in Appendix 3 for supporting data. Data source: Nebraska Department of Education, Data Reporting System, Quick Facts, December 2016 (fall membership); Nebraska Department of Education, December 2016 (dropouts).

- Based on the same type of analysis by gender, as evidenced in Figure 1.1.a.9, males accounted for 51.5% of 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade fall membership at Nebraska’s public schools in 2015–2016, but 63.1% of the students in the 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades who dropped out of school.

**Figure 1.1.a.9  
Percentages of Public School Fall Membership and Total Dropouts  
from the 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> Grades by Gender  
2015–2016**

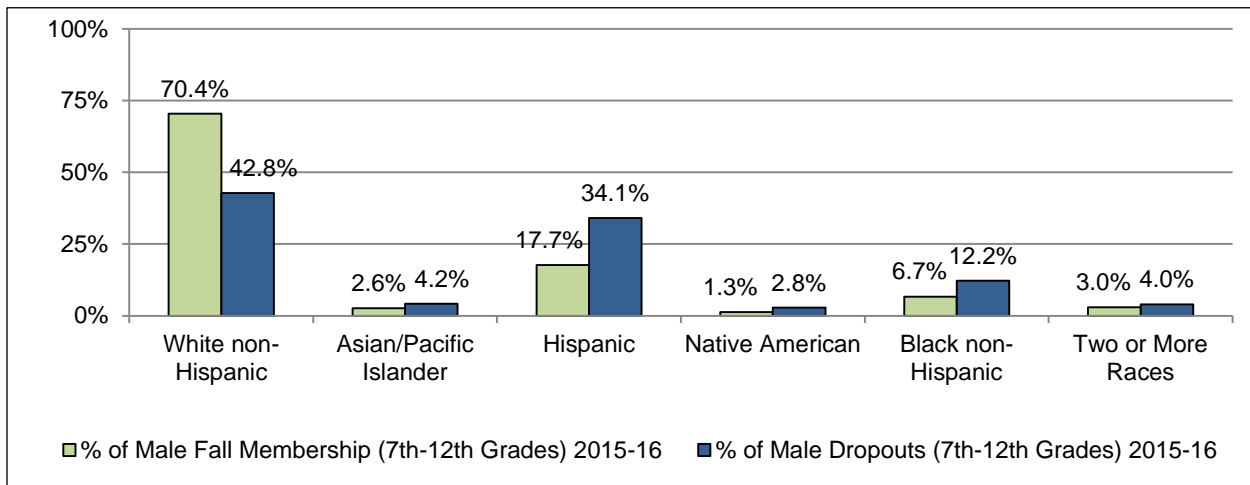


*Note.* See Table A3.4 in Appendix 3 for supporting data. Data source: Nebraska Department of Education, Data Reporting System, Quick Facts, December 2016 (fall membership); Nebraska Department of Education, December 2016 (dropouts).

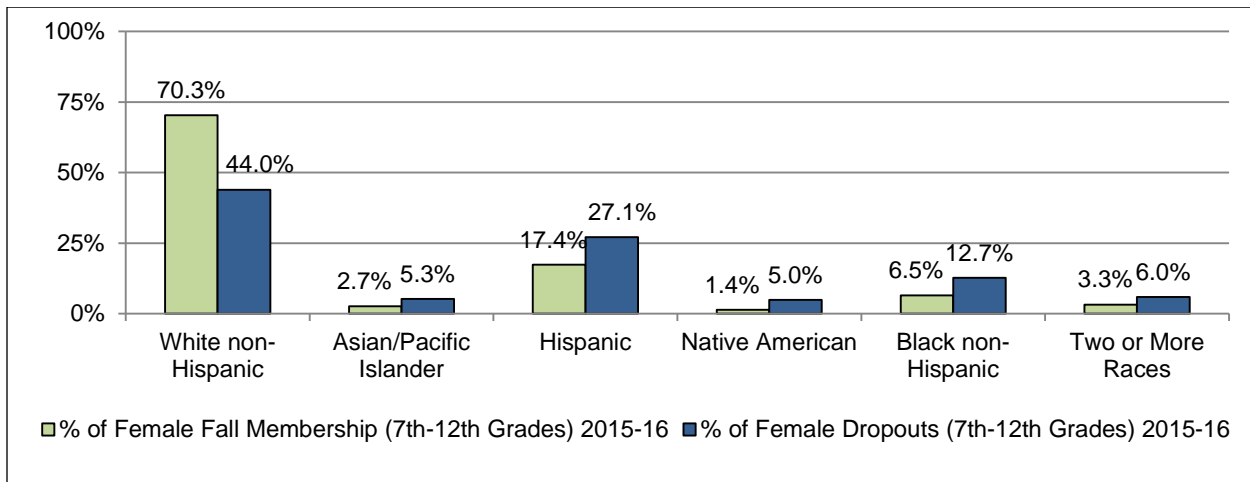
- [Figure 1.1.a.10](#) shows that disproportionately higher percentages of male and female students who are Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American, black non-Hispanic, or multiracial dropped out of school in 2014–2015, relative to their representation among 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade fall membership at Nebraska’s public schools in 2015–2016.

**Figure 1.1.a.10**  
**Percentages of Public School Fall Membership and Total Dropouts**  
**from the 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> Grades by Gender and Race/Ethnicity**  
**2015–2016**

**Part A: Males by Race/Ethnicity**



**Part B: Females by Race/Ethnicity**



*Note.* See Table A3.4 in [Appendix 3](#) for supporting data. Data source: Nebraska Department of Education, Data Reporting System, Quick Facts, December 2016 (fall membership); Nebraska Department of Education, December 2016 (dropouts).

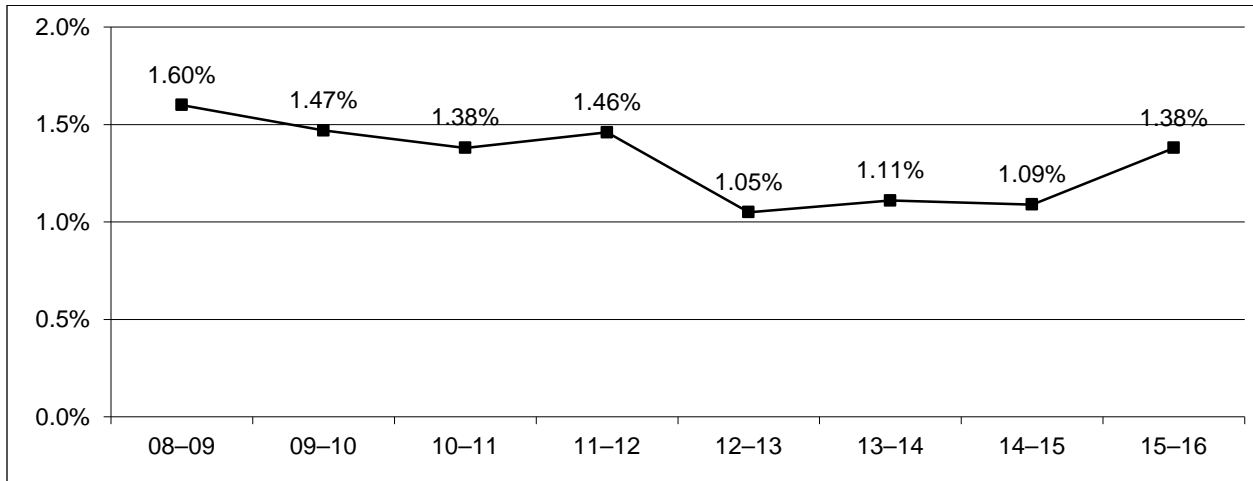
The findings reported in the preceding tables and charts clearly indicate that greater effort needs to be exerted to reduce the number of students who are dropping out of Nebraska’s public schools each year, regardless of their gender or race/ethnicity. At the same time, an even greater effort should be exerted to encourage minority students to stay in school and continue on to college or some form of postsecondary training.

## Nebraska Public Schools Dropout Rates

As shown in [Figure 1.1.a.11](#), dropout rates for 7th- to 12th-graders from Nebraska's public schools declined from 1.60% in 2008–2009 to 1.09% in 2014–2015 but increased to 1.38% in 2015–2016. See [Table A3.5](#) in [Appendix 3](#) for district dropout rates.

**Figure 1.1.a.11**

**State Dropout Rates for 7th- to 12th-Graders from Nebraska Public Schools  
2008–2009 through 2015–2016**



*Note.* See [Table A3.5](#) in [Appendix 3](#) for supporting data. Data source: Nebraska Department of Education, *2013–2014 State of the Schools* report and *2015–2016 Education Profile for State of Nebraska*, Dropout Rate Data.