

## 1.1.a High School Graduation Rates

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

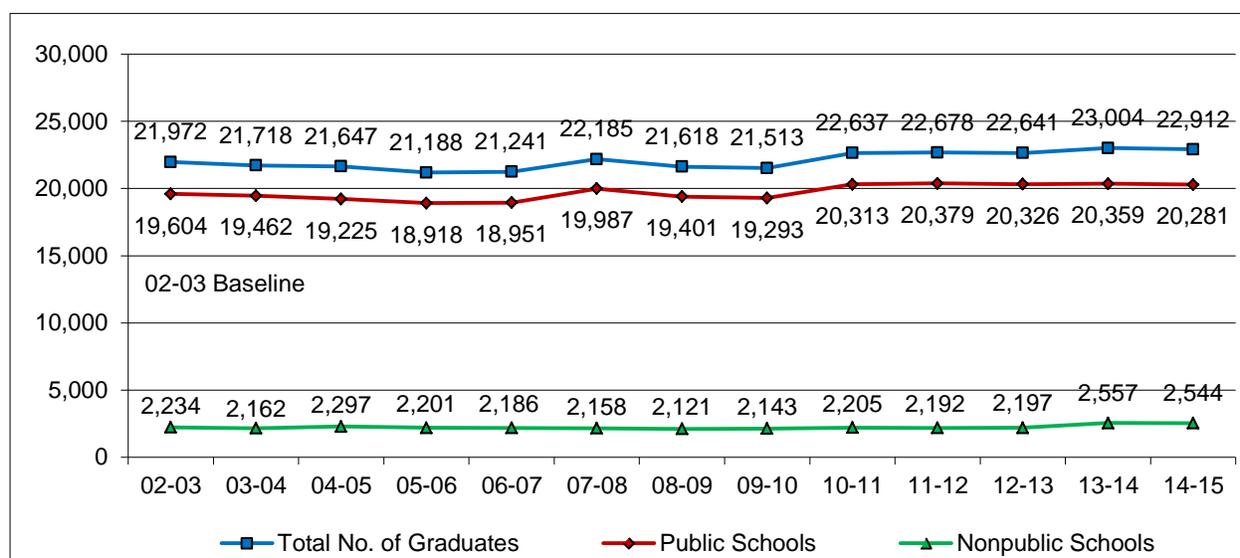
One strategic approach to increasing the number of students who enter postsecondary education in Nebraska is to increase the proportion of students who graduate from the state's high schools. In other words, increase Nebraska's high school graduation rate and, in the process, increase the pool of high 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](#), 21,972 students graduated from Nebraska high schools in 2002–2003, the latest year for which official data were available from the Nebraska Department of Education for the *2004 Baseline Report* for the LR 174 Higher Education Task Force.
- 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 number of graduates has increased or decreased only slightly between 2002–2003 and 2014–2015.
- As a result, only 940, or 4.3% more, students graduated from Nebraska high schools in 2014–2015 than in 2002–2003.
- Interestingly, between 2012–2013 and 2014–2015, the number of nonpublic high school graduates increased 15.8% (347 students) while the number of public high school graduates decreased 0.2% (45 students).

**Figure 1.1.a.1**

**Numbers of Nebraska Public and Nonpublic High School Graduates  
2002–2003 through 2013–2014**



*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 (2002–03 through 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), and January 2016 (2014–15 data).

- Between 2002–2003 and 2014–2015, the number of *public* high school graduates increased 3.5% to 20,281, while the number graduating from *nonpublic* (private) high schools increased 13.9% to 2,544.
- As shown in [Table 1.1.a.1](#), since 2002–2003, about 9 out of 10 Nebraska high school graduates have received their diplomas from public schools.

Type of School	Baseline 2002–2003		2013–2014		2014–2015	
	No. of Graduates	% of Graduates	No. of Graduates	% of Graduates	No. of Graduates	% of Graduates
Public	19,604	89.8%	20,359	88.8%	20,281	88.9%
Nonpublic	2,234	10.2%	2,557	11.2%	2,544	11.1%
Subtotal	21,838	100.0%	22,916	100.0%	22,825	100.0%
ESU & SO	134		88		87	
State Total	21,972		23,004		22,912	

*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 (2002–03 data), January 2015 (2013–14 data), and January 2016 (2014–15 data).

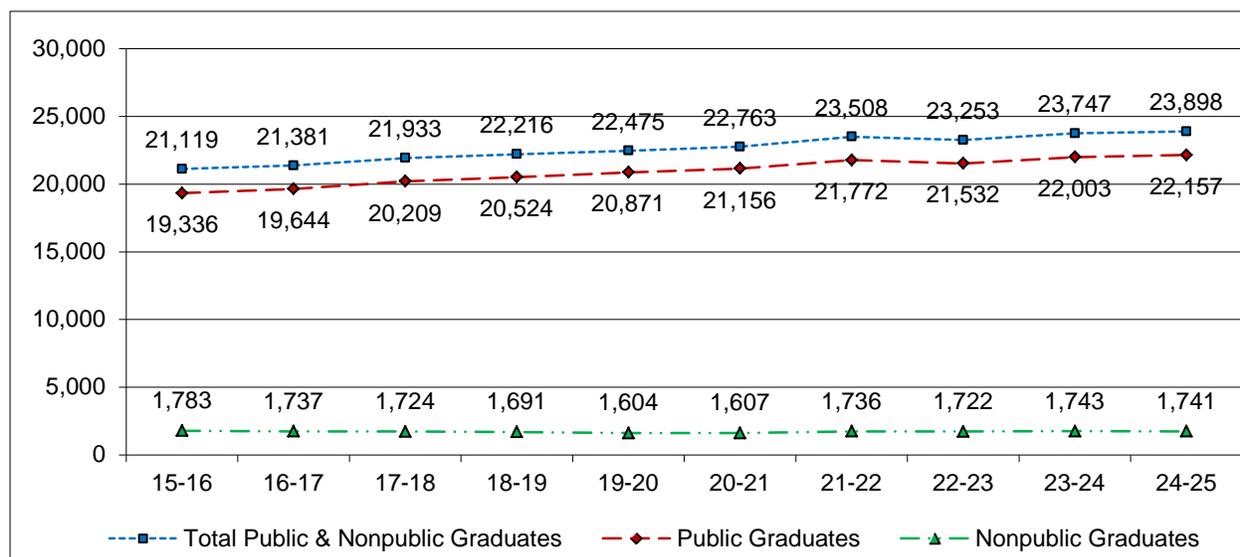
### **Projected Trends in the Number of Nebraska High School Graduates**<sup>7</sup>

- As shown in [Figure 1.1.a.2](#), 1,073 more students are forecast to graduate from Nebraska public and nonpublic high schools in 2024–2025 than graduated during the 2014–2015 school year, a projected increase of 4.7%.
- Public schools are projected to account for 92% to 93% of Nebraska’s high school graduates through the 2024–2025 school year.
- The numbers of graduates from Nebraska’s public high schools are projected to increase 1.6% between 2015–2016 and 2016–2017 and then increase 12.8% from 2016–2017 to 2024–2025.
- The numbers of graduates from the state’s nonpublic (private) high schools are projected to decrease 2.6% from 2015–2016 to 2016–2017 and then increase slightly, 0.2%, from 2016–2017 to 2024–2025.

<sup>7</sup> *Knocking at the College Door, Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity*, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), December 2012. See [Table A2.2 in Appendix 2](#) for supporting data. For 2014–2015, the actual number of public school graduates (20,281) was 6.3% higher than WICHE predicted in their 2012 report (19,075).

Figure 1.1.a.2

**Projected Numbers of Graduates from Nebraska Public and Nonpublic High Schools  
2015–2016 through 2024–2025**



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: *Knocking at the College Door*, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), December 2012.

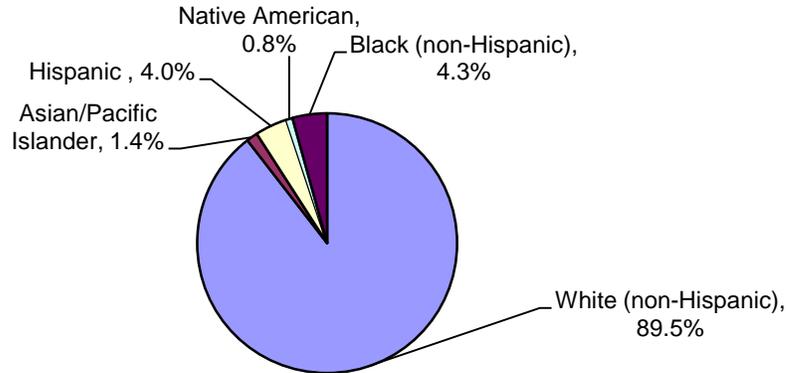
**Projected and Recent Changes in Nebraska Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity**

- 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 2024–2025 than they did in 2002–2003.
- 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.
  - The number of white non-Hispanic graduates decreased 15.5% from 2002–2003 to 2014–2015 (from 17,541 to 14,817 graduates). White non-Hispanics accounted for 73.1% of Nebraska’s public high school graduates in 2014–2015, down from 89.5% in 2002–2003.
  - Between 2002–2003 and 2014–2015, the number of public high school graduates in each of the major racial/ethnic groups changed as follows:
    - Hispanics increased 289.9% (from 776 to 3,026 graduates)
    - Asian/Pacific Islanders increased 80.3% (from 279 to 503 graduates)
    - Black non-Hispanics increased 32.2% (from 841 to 1,112 graduates)
    - Native Americans increased 36.5% (from 167 to 228 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 2014–2015, the number had increased 20.9% to 595 graduates.

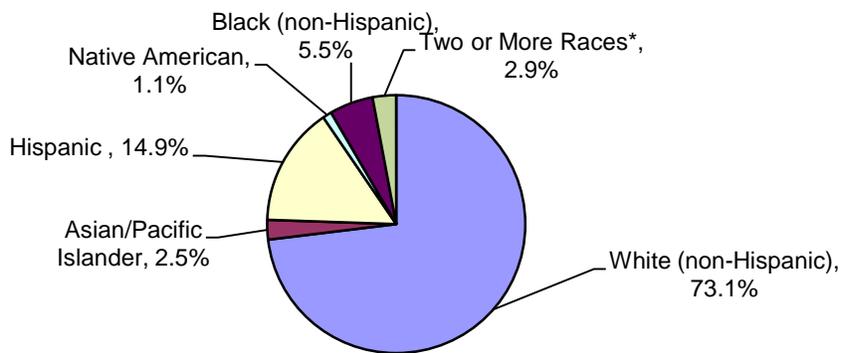
**Figure 1.1.a.3**

**By Race/Ethnicity: Actual and Projected Percentages of Nebraska Public High School Graduates**

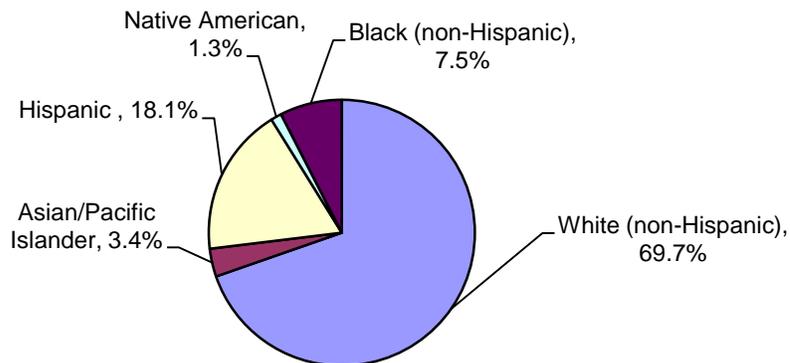
**Actual Percentages of Graduates: 2002–2003 Baseline**



**Actual Percentages of Graduates: 2014–2015**



**Projected Percentages of Graduates: 2024–2025**



*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 January 2016 (actual number of graduates). Projection data obtained from *Knocking at the College Door*, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, December 2012.

## **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 (2002–2003 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 2013–2014)*

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.

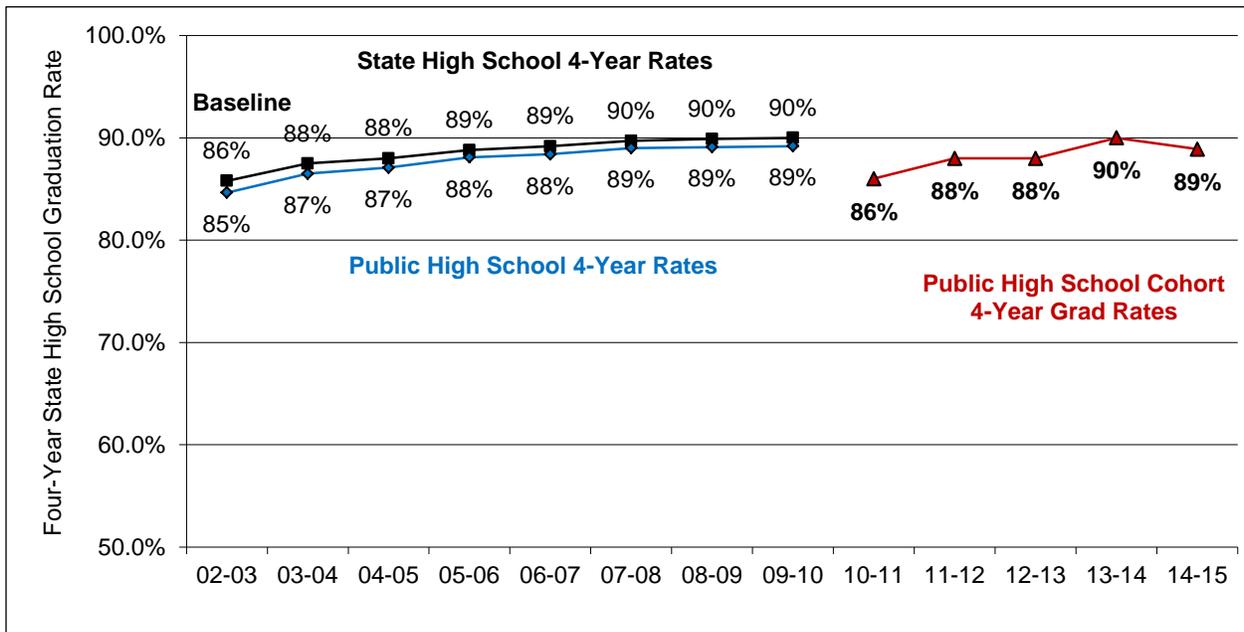
- Currently, data are not available to calculate a cohort four-year graduation rate for the nonpublic (private) high schools in Nebraska. Consequently, a statewide cohort four-year graduation rate for all public and nonpublic schools in Nebraska is not available.
- See Explanatory Note A3.2 in Appendix 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 2015 (2014–2015)**, 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  
2002–2003 through 2009–2010 and Nebraska Public High School  
Cohort Four-Year Graduation Rates 2010–2011 through 2014–2015**



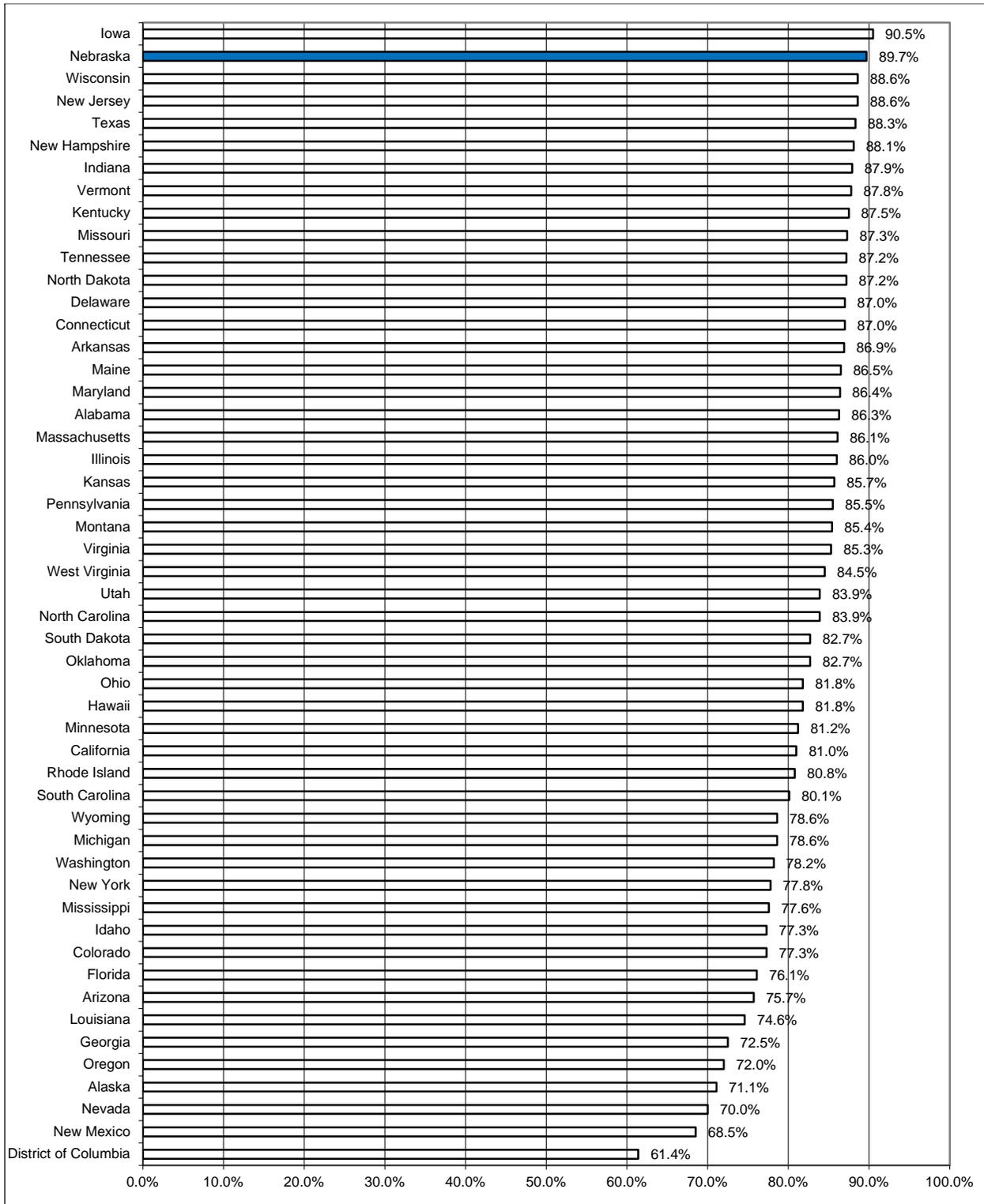
Note. See [Table A3.1](#) and [Table A3.3](#) in [Appendix 3](#) for supporting data. Data source: Nebraska Department of Education, December 2007 (2002–03 through 2005–06 data), January 2009 (2006–07 data), February 2010 (2007–08 data), February 2011 (2008–09 and 2009–10 data), and January 2016 (2010–11 through 2014–15 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 2013–2014 school year.

- As shown in [Figure 1.1.a.5](#), Nebraska’s 2013–2014 cohort four-year graduation rate was the second highest among the rates reported by 50 states and the District of Columbia. Iowa was the only state that reported a higher public high school graduation rate than Nebraska.

**Figure 1.1.a.5**  
**By State: 2013–2014 Public High School**  
**Four-Year Regulatory Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate**



Data source: U.S. Department of Education, Consolidated State Performance Report 2013–2014, October 19, 2015.

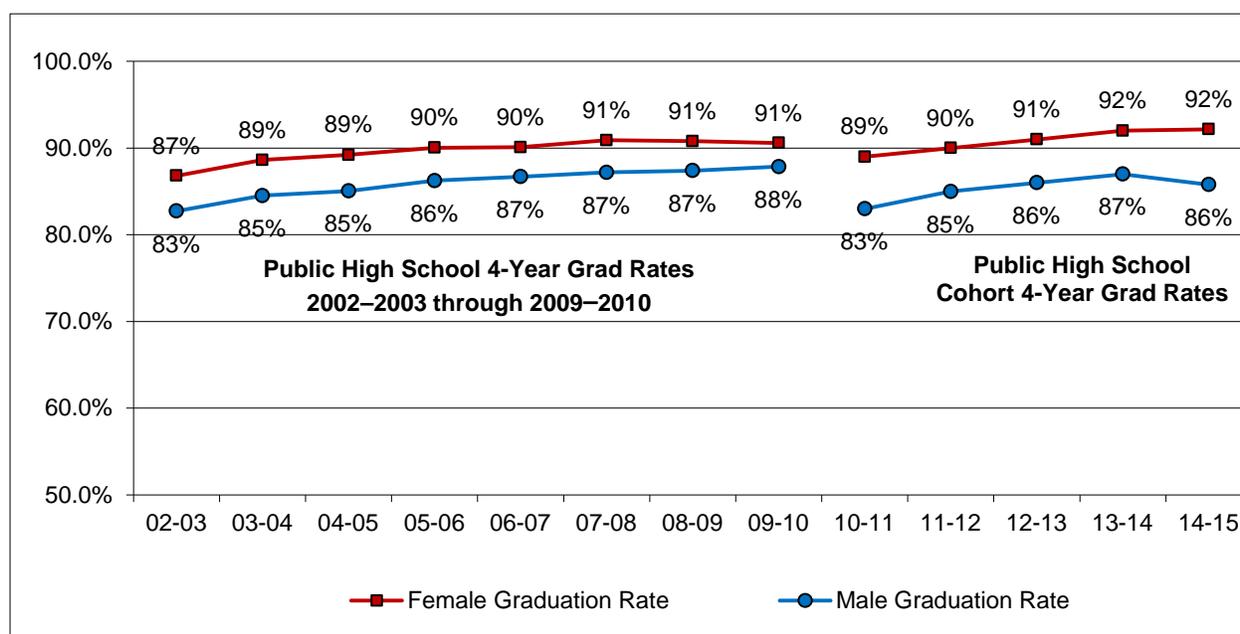
## Nebraska Public High School Graduation Rates by Gender

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 2002–2003 to 2009–2010. Both rates gradually increased during this time, and the gap between males and females decreased from four percentage points in 2002–2003 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 2014–2015 was 92%**, three percentage points higher than the rate for 2010–2011. **The cohort graduation rate for males in 2014–2015 was 86%**, three percentage points higher than the rate for 2010–2011.
- In 2010–2011 and 2013–2014, the gap between male and female cohort graduation rates was six percentage points.

**Figure 1.1.a.6**

**By Gender: Nebraska Public High School Four-Year Graduation Rates 2002–2003 through 2009–2010 and Nebraska Public High School Cohort Four-Year Graduation Rates 2010–2011 through 2014–2015**



*Note.* See [Table A3.2](#) and [Table A3.3](#) in [Appendix 3](#) for supporting data. Data source: Nebraska Department of Education, December 2007 (2002–03 through 2005–06 data), January 2009 (2006–07 data), February 2010 (2007–08 data), February 2011 (2008–09 and 2009–10 data), and January 2016 (2010–11 through 2014–15 data).

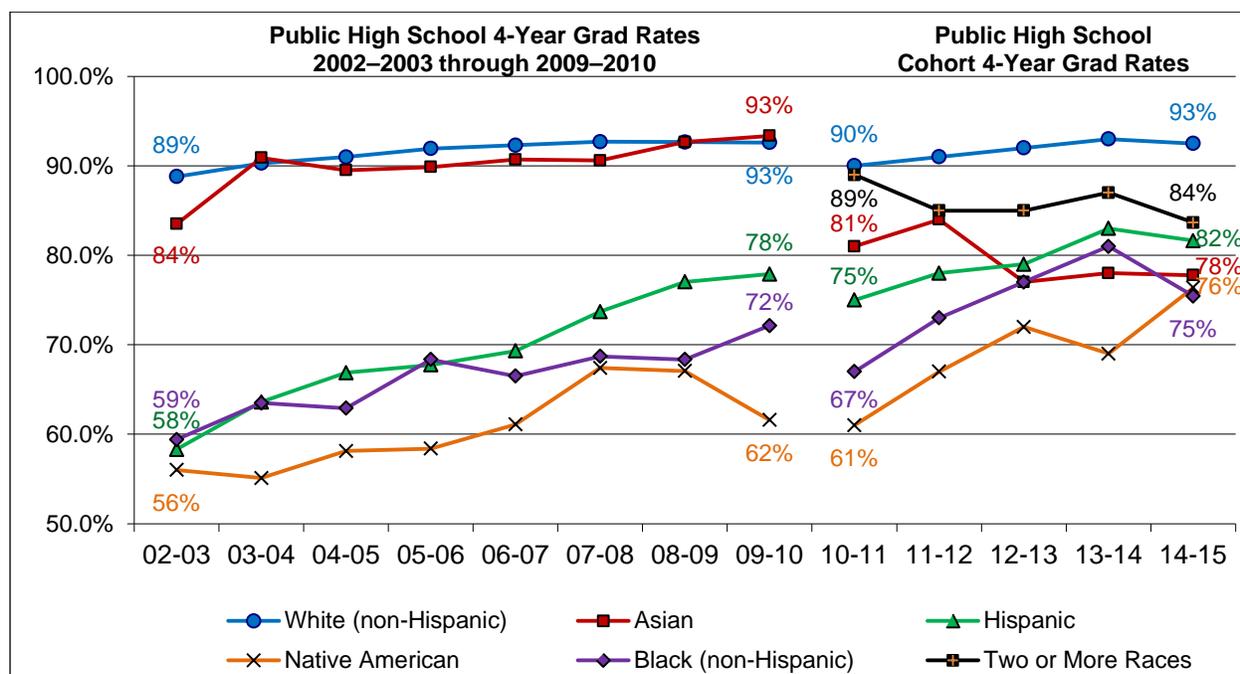
## Nebraska Public High School Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity

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 2002–2003 and 2009–2010. The largest percentage point increase in graduation rates during this time was evidenced among Hispanics, increasing from 58% 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 2002–2003 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 2014–2015, the cohort four-year graduation rates decreased three percentage points for Asians and five percentage points for multi-racial individuals. During this same time, cohort four-year graduation rates increased for all other racial/ethnic groups, ranging from a three percentage point increase for white non-Hispanics to a 15 percentage point increase for Native Americans.

Figure 1.1.a.7

### By Race/Ethnicity: Nebraska Public High School Four-Year Graduation Rates 2002–2003 through 2009–2010 and Nebraska Public High School Cohort Four-Year Graduation Rates 2010–2011 through 2014–2015



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, December 2007 (2002–03 through 2005–06 data), January 2009 (2006–07 data), February 2010 (2007–08 data), February 2011 (2008–09 and 2009–10 data), and January 2016 (2010–11 through 2014–15 data).

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

The Nebraska Department of Education provides the Commission with the distribution of the 2014–2015 cohort four-year graduation rates for Nebraska’s 250 public school districts, as shown in Table 1.1.a.2.

- 82 (34.4%) of Nebraska’s public school districts had cohort four-year graduation rates of 100%, and 209 districts (83.6%) had graduation rates equal to or higher than the statewide rate of 88.89% in 2014–2015.
- 41 (16.4%) of the districts had graduation rates that were lower than the statewide rate of 88.89% for public schools in 2014–2015, and nine 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 78.24% (2,581 graduates), Lincoln Public Schools with a graduation rate of 82.36% (2,077 graduates), and Millard Public Schools with a graduation rate of 94.33% (1,647 graduates).

<b>Table 1.1.a.2 Distribution of the Cohort Four-Year High School Graduation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Districts 2014–2015</b>			
Cohort Four-Year High School Graduation Rate	No. of School Districts	% of School Districts	Cumulative % of School Districts
100.00%	82	34.4%	34.4%
97.00% - 99.99%	13	5.2%	39.6%
94.00% - 96.99%	50	20.0%	59.6%
91.00% - 93.99%	44	17.6%	77.2%
88.89% - 90.99%	16	6.4%	83.6%
<b>88.89% Nebraska Public High School Rate</b>			
85.00% - 88.88%	20	8.0%	91.6%
75.00% - 84.99%	12	4.8%	96.4%
Less than 75.00%	9	3.6%	100.0%
<b>All Public Districts</b>	<b>250</b>		
Data source: Nebraska Department of Education, January 2016.			

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

Figure 1.1.a.8 shows extended five- and six-year graduation rates for the 2012–2013 cohort (Part A) and extended five-year graduation rates for the 2013–2014 cohort (Part B).

- As evidenced in Part A of Figure 1.1.a.8, the 2012–2013 cohort **six-year** graduation rate for Nebraska’s public school was 92%, four 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 2013–2014 cohort was two 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 2012–2013 cohort, the four-year graduation rate was 86% for males and 91% for females, a gap of five percentage points. However, extending the graduation rate out to six years reveals the gap narrowed to three percentage points (91% for males and 94% for females).
- For the 2013–2014 cohort, the five-year graduation rate was 94% for females (up from 92% for four years) and 90% for males (up from 87% for four years).

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

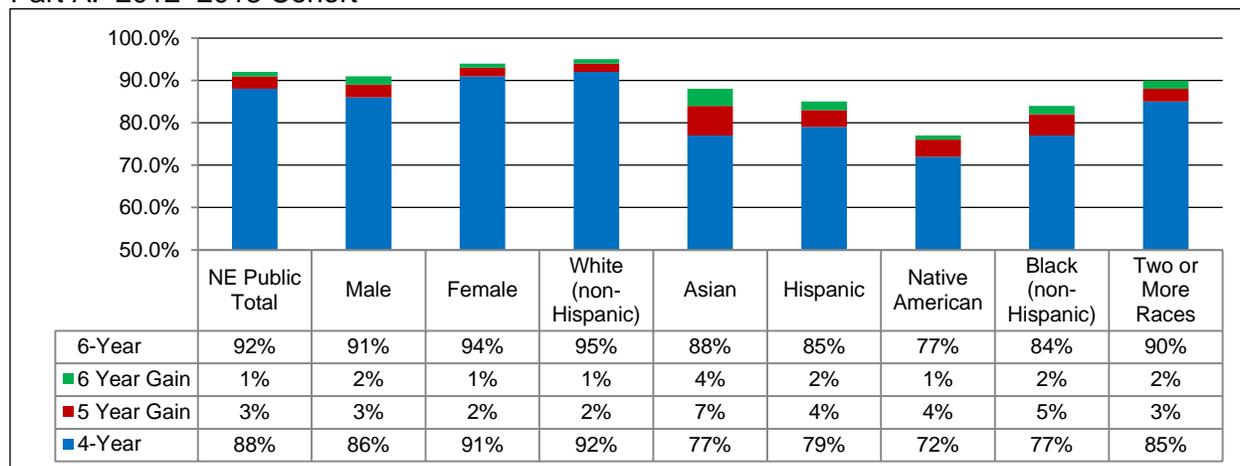
Extending cohort graduation rates to five and six years also narrows the gaps between graduation rates for various racial/ethnic groups.

- The 2012–2013 cohort graduation rates for Asians increased 11 percentage points when extended from four to six years while the cohort graduation rates for black non-Hispanics increased seven percentage points when extended from four to six years.
- For the 2013–2014 cohort, the largest increase reported was for Native Americans, who increased seven percentage points in just one year (69% four-year graduation rate vs. 76% five-year graduation rate).

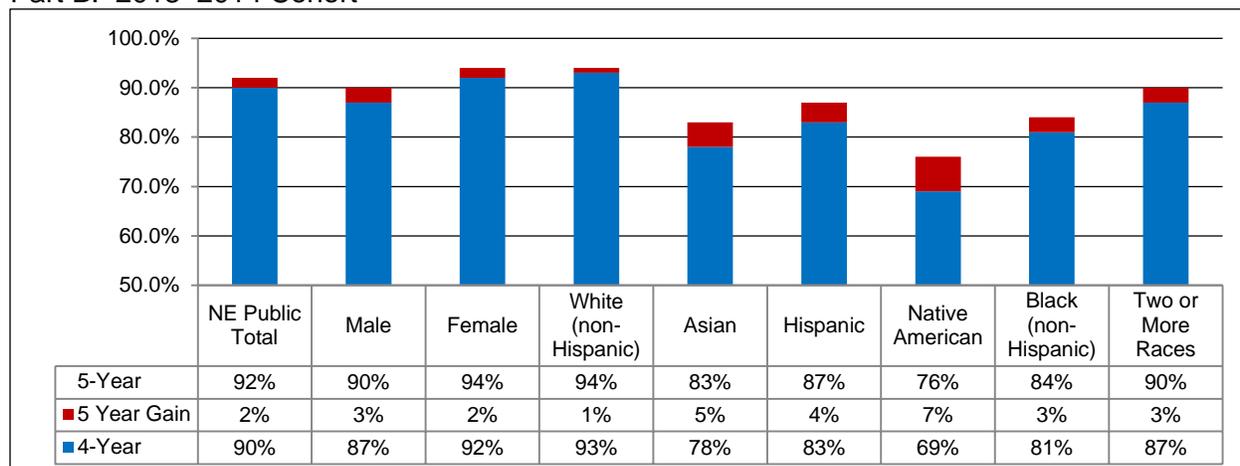
Figure 1.1.a.8

**By Gender and By Race/Ethnicity: Nebraska Public High School Cohort Extended Graduation Rates for 2012–2013 and 2013–2014**

Part A: 2012–2013 Cohort



Part B: 2013–2014 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, 2014–2015 State of the Schools Report.

## **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 *State of the Schools* 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, NDE provides the Commission with the **total number of students in the 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades who dropped out of school** during the school year. In addition, NDE provides this information by race/ethnicity and by gender. Membership data is downloaded by the Commission from the NDE website for 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students by gender and by 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 2014–2015.

- While fall membership increased 1.6% from 2013–2014 to 2014–2015 (132,594 vs. 134,691), the number of dropouts decreased 0.3% (1,473 vs. 1,468).
- As evidenced in Table 1.1.a.3, white non-Hispanics accounted for 640, or 43.6%, of the students in the 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades who dropped out in 2014–2015.
- However, 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 2014–2015.

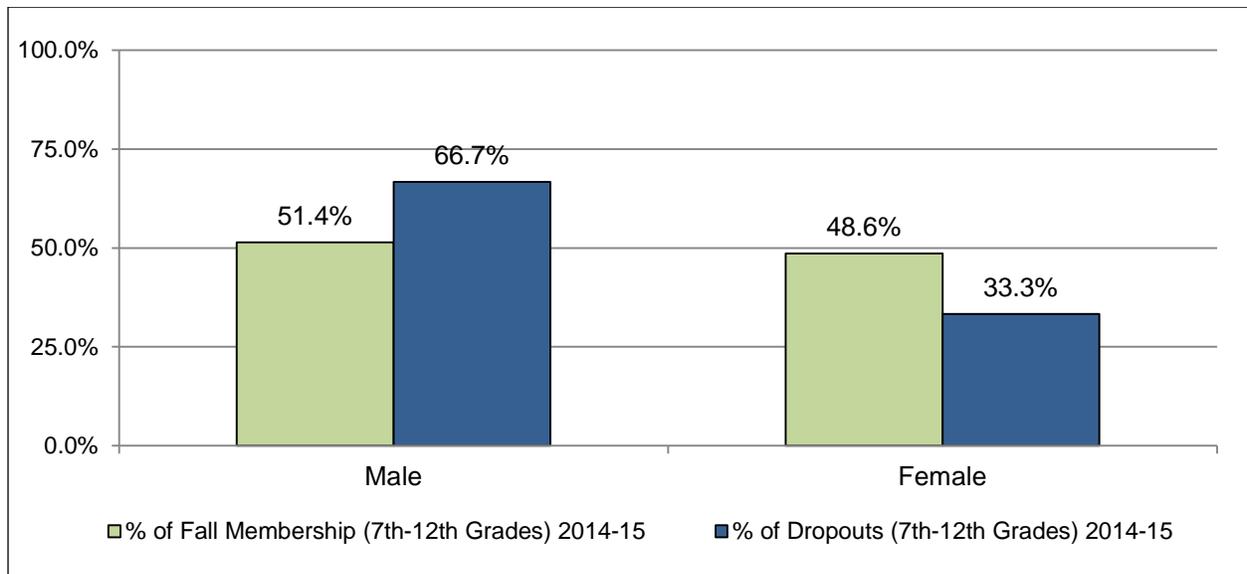
**Table 1.1.a.3  
Distributions of Public School Fall Membership and Total Dropouts  
from the 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> Grades by Race/Ethnicity  
2014–2015**

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)	94,174	69.9%	640	43.6%	0.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3,373	2.5%	53	3.6%	1.6%
Hispanic	22,632	16.8%	460	31.3%	2.0%
Native American	1,851	1.4%	44	3.0%	2.4%
Black (non-Hispanic)	8,623	6.4%	200	13.6%	2.3%
Two or More Races	4,038	3.0%	71	4.8%	1.8%
Public Total	134,691		1,468		1.1%

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

- Based on the same type of analysis by gender, as evidenced in Figure 1.1.a.9, males accounted for 51.4% of 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade fall membership at Nebraska’s public schools in 2014–2015, but 66.7% 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  
2014–2015**

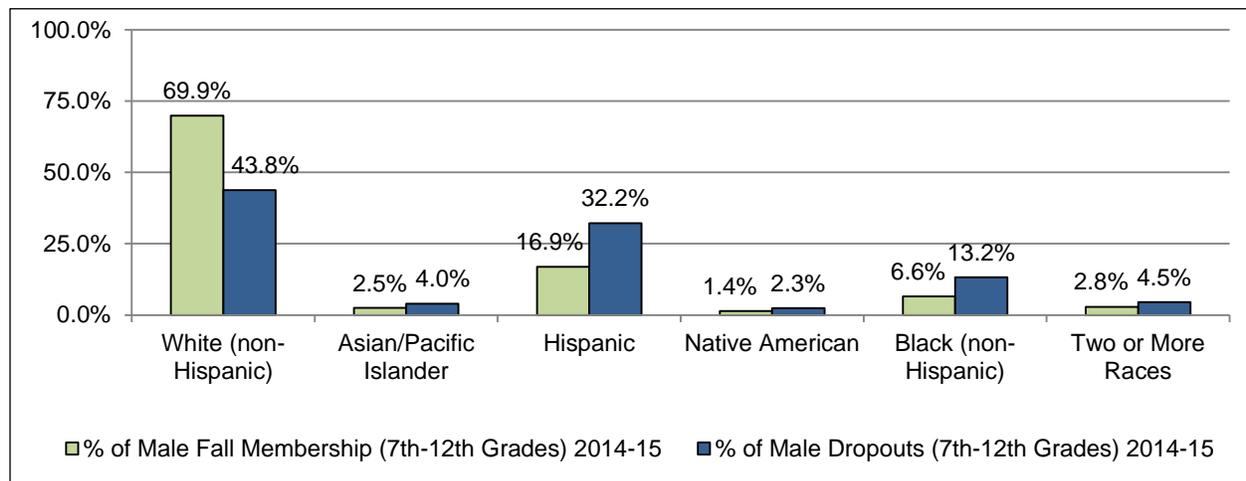


*Note.* See Table A3.4 in Appendix 3 for supporting data. Data source: Nebraska Department of Education, Data Reporting System, Quick Facts, January 2016 (fall membership); Nebraska Department of Education, January 2016 (dropouts).

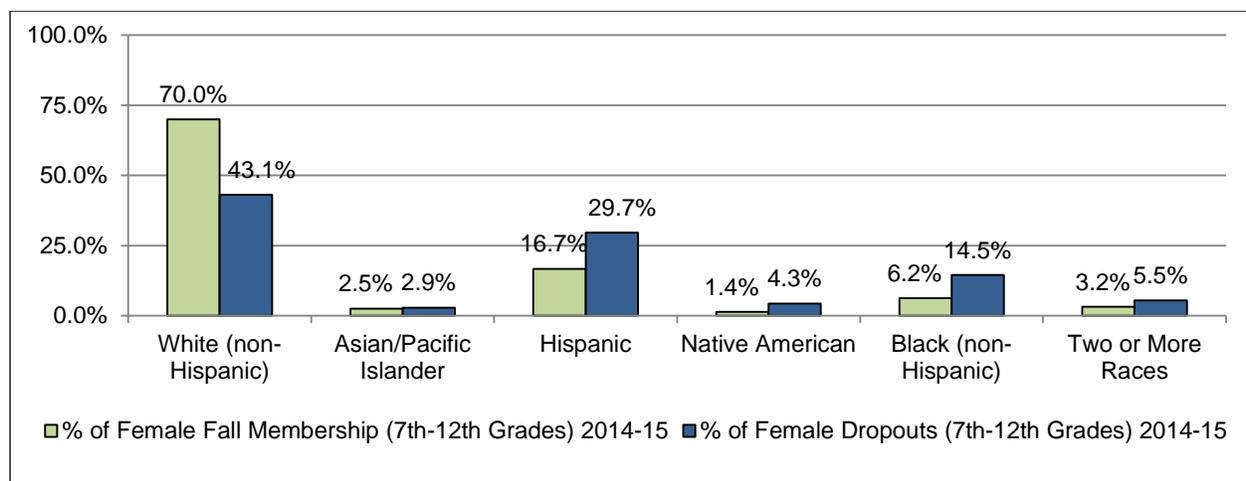
- [Figure 1.1.a.10](#) shows that disproportionately higher percentages of male and female students who are Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Native American, black non-Hispanic, or multiracial dropped out of school in 2014–2015, relative to their representation among 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>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

**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**  
**2014–2015**

**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, January 2016 (fall membership); Nebraska Department of Education, January 2016 (dropouts).

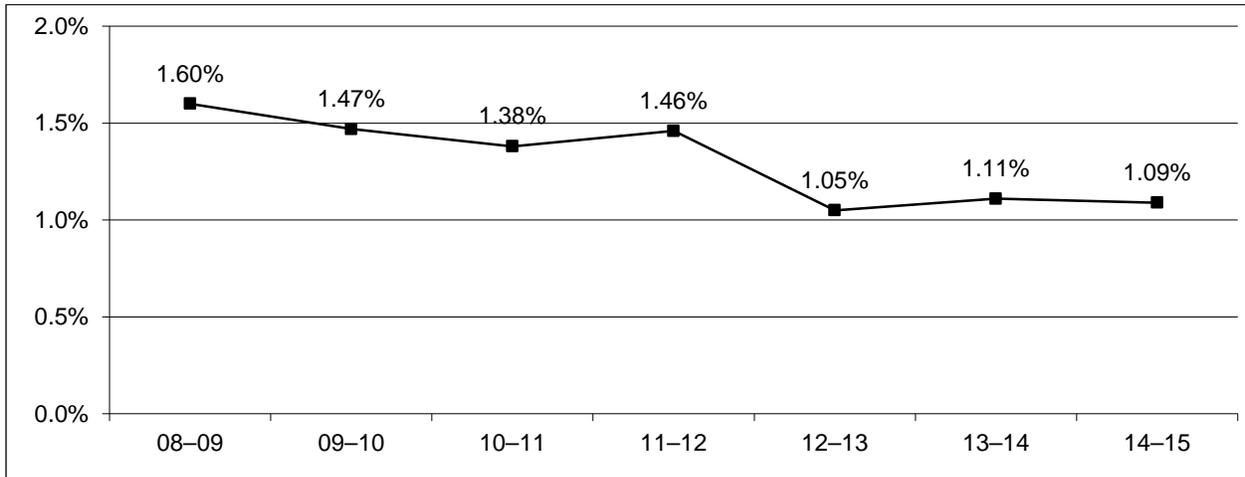
The findings reported in the preceding tables and charts clearly indicate that greater effort needs to be exerted to reduce the number of students who are dropping out of Nebraska’s public schools each year, regardless of their gender or race/ethnicity. At the same time, an even greater effort should 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 have declined from 1.60% in 2008–2009 to 1.09% in 2014–2015. 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 2014–2015**



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