

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. Increasing the state's college continuation rate is also one of the primary goals of Nebraska's P-16 Initiative. (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 or preceding summer of the academic year following their graduation from high school. 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 2012, providing a basis for estimating the college continuation rate for students who graduated from Nebraska high schools during the 2011–2012 school year. In this report, the estimated college continuation rate for fall 2012 is compared to estimates for previous years, including fall 2002, which is the baseline for this report.

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 about 96% of the college students in the United States.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. 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 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 2012–2013 school years, using data obtained from the National Student Clearinghouse. The findings of this research are summarized at the end of this section.

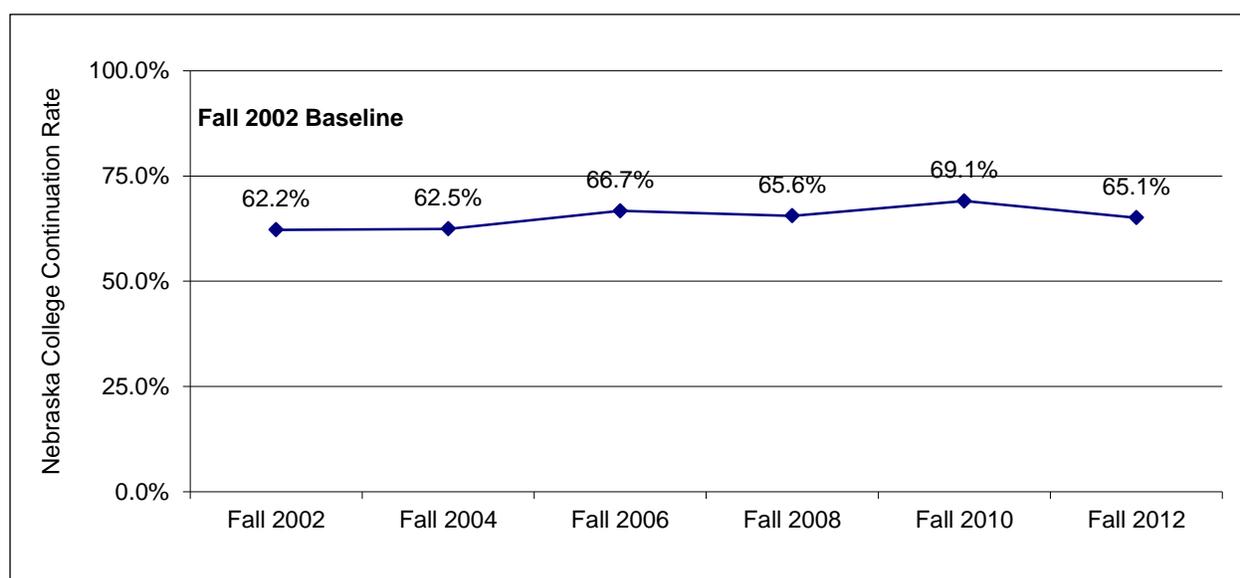
¹⁴ Data source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, Enrollment Coverage Workbook, updated November 20, 2014.

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 summer or fall term within 12 months of 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 rose from 62.2% in fall 2002, which is the baseline for this report, to 65.1% in fall 2012. While this estimate corresponds to an increase of 2.9 percentage points since baseline, it is also a decrease of 4.0 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
within 12 Months of High School Graduation
Fall 2002 – Fall 2012**

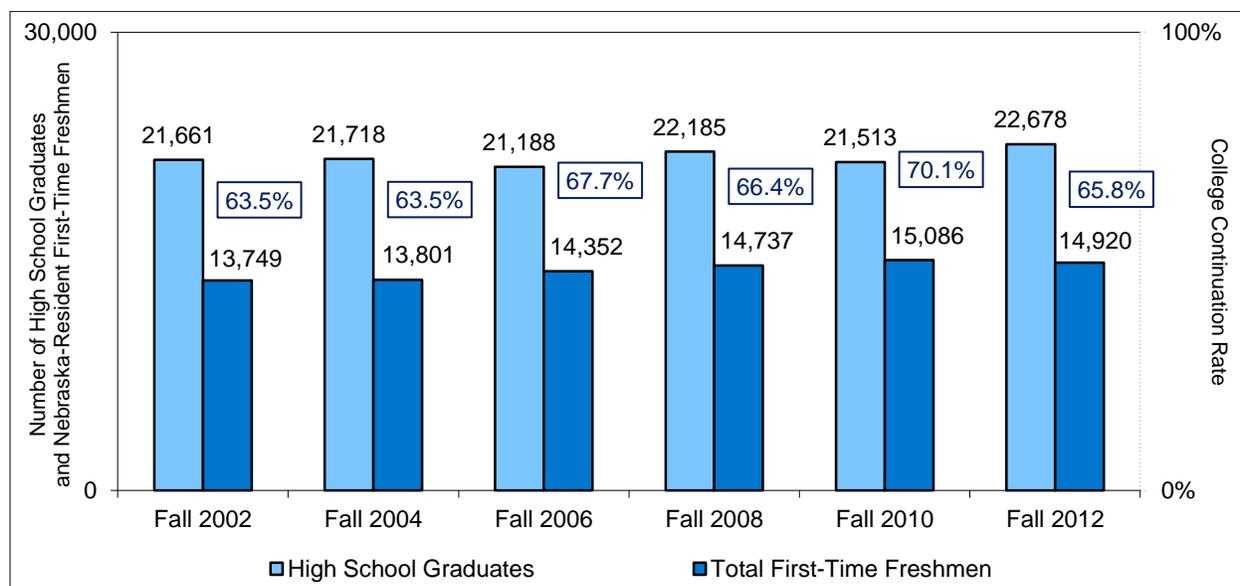


Note. Includes full-time and part-time students. See [Table A5.1](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data and a technical note. Data sources: Nebraska Department of Education, January 2007, January 2009, January 2011, and December 2013, and the National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS fall 2002– 2012 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 college continuation rate for Nebraska students who graduated in the high school class of 2012 and attended degree-granting and non-degree granting colleges in fall 2012 was 65.8%, an increase of 2.3 percentage points from the 63.5% continuation rate in 2002.

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 within 12 Months of High School Graduation Fall 2002 – Fall 2012



Note. Includes full-time and part-time students. See Table A5.1 in Appendix 5 for supporting data and a technical note. Data sources: Nebraska Department of Education, January 2007, January 2009, January 2011, and December 2013, and the National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS fall 2002– 2012 surveys.

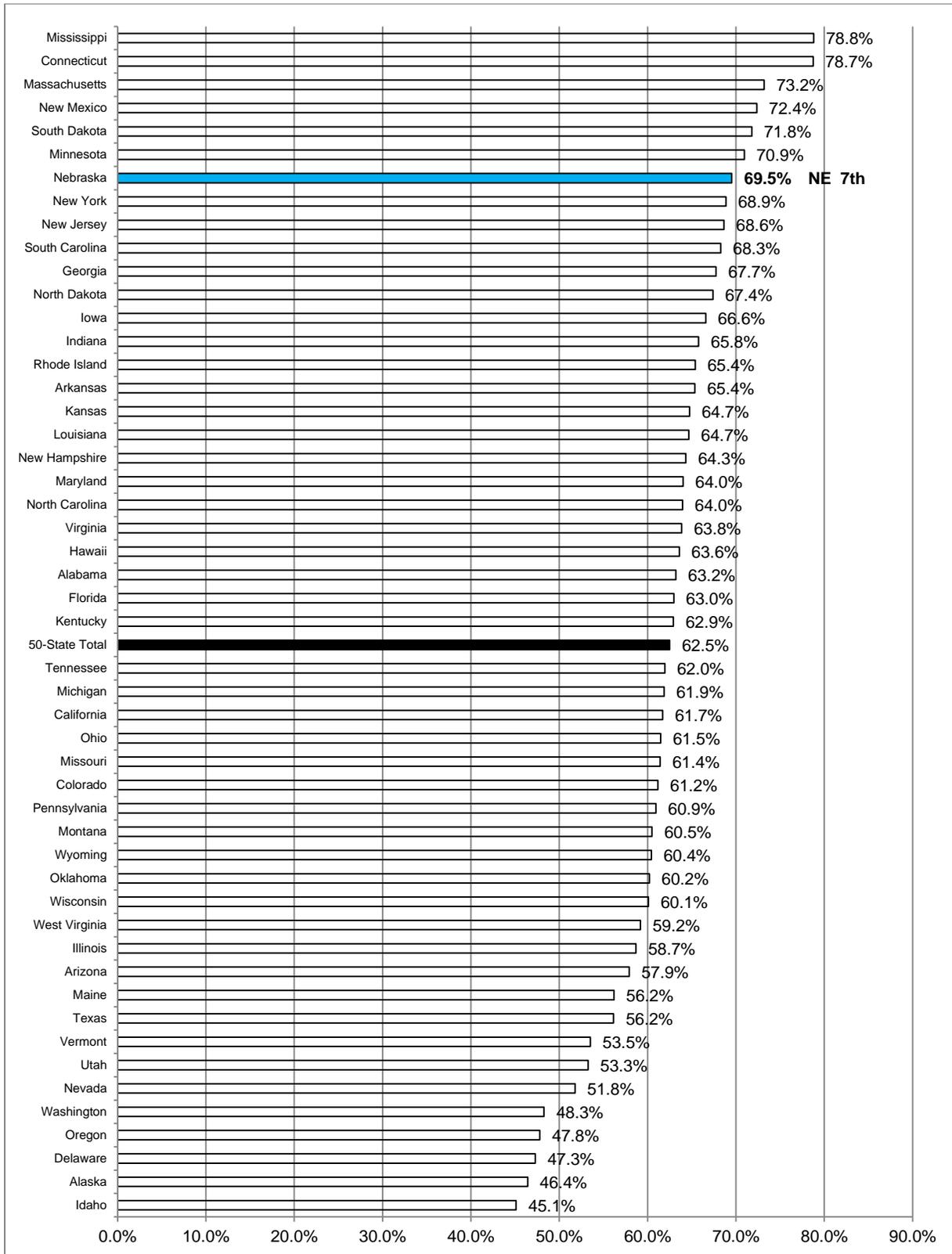
State-by-State College Continuation Rates

- The most recent national study of college continuation rates is limited to students who attended degree-granting institutions as first-time freshmen in fall 2010 after graduating from high school during the 2009–2010 school year.¹⁵
- As shown in Figure 1.1.c.3, Nebraska’s fall 2010 estimated college continuation rate of 69.5% was the 7th highest in the 50-state comparison and 7.0 percentage points above the 50-state average.¹⁶
- Nebraska having the 7th-highest college-going rate in fall 2010 was a noticeable improvement from fall 2008, when Nebraska’s college continuation rate was 65.5% and 18th highest among the 50 states.

¹⁵ The national report of college continuation rates for fall 2012 was expected to be released in late 2014. However, as of press time, the U.S. Department of Education has not yet released the number of public high school graduates by state for 2012.

¹⁶ Data source: Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY, www.postsecondary.org, College Continuation Rate Comparisons by State included in the 2010 Chance for College spreadsheet, updated January 22, 2013. The 69.5% estimated college continuation rate for Nebraska in the 50-state study is 0.4 percentage points higher than the rate of 69.1% that the Coordinating Commission estimated for fall 2010, 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 2,004 for the 50-state study, whereas the Commission used the actual number of nonpublic high school graduates the Nebraska Department of Education reported to the Commission, which was 2,143. In both cases, the number of public high school graduates was 19,370.

Figure 1.1.c.3
Fall 2010 College Continuation Rate by State



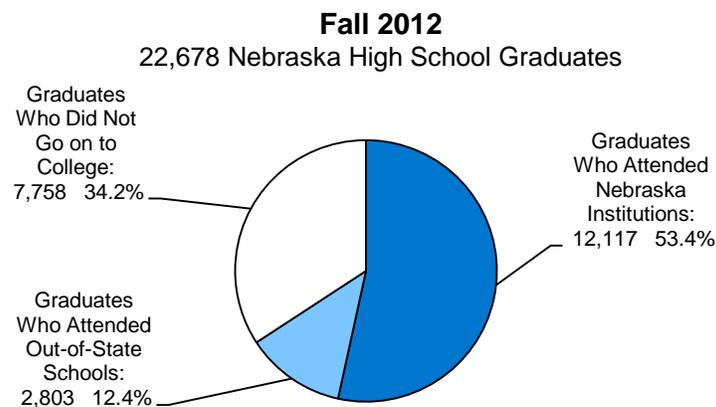
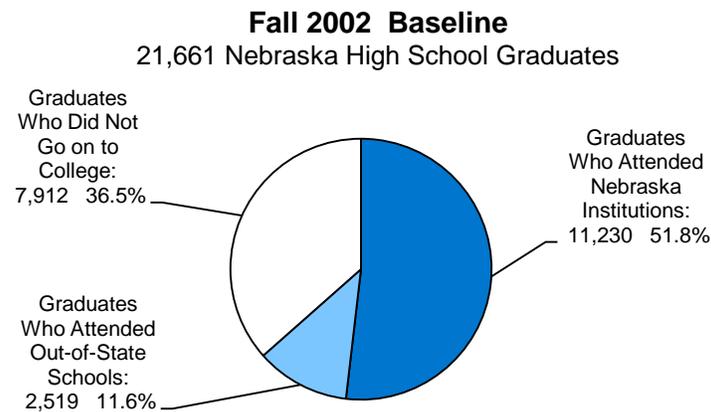
Data source: 2010 Chance for College by Age 19 Spreadsheet, updated January 22, 2013, Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY: www.postsecondary.org.

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 within 12 months of 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 within 12 months of graduating from high school.
- As illustrated in Figure 1.1.c.4, the Commission estimates Nebraska's in-state college continuation rate was 53.4% for the state's 2011–2012 high school graduates who attended degree-granting or non-degree-granting colleges. While this is an increase of 1.6 percentage points from 51.8% in fall 2002, it is a decrease of 5.3 percentage points since fall 2010. (See Table A5.2 in Appendix 5.)
- Meanwhile, the out-of-state college continuation rate for both degree-granting and non-degree-granting schools increased slightly, from 11.6% of the high school graduating class of 2001–2002 to 12.4% of Nebraska high graduates in 2011–2012.
- The net effect of these increases is that the estimated percentage of Nebraska high school graduates who did not go on to college within 12 months decreased from 36.5% of the high school graduating class of 2001–2002 to 34.2% of the graduates in 2011–2012.
- As evidenced in Table A5.2 in Appendix 5, the Commission estimates that the in-state college continuation rate for degree-granting institutions was 52.8% for Nebraska high school graduates in 2011–2012, (up from 50.6% for fall 2002). In comparison, the out-of-state college continuation rate for degree-granting institutions increased from 11.6% in fall 2002 to 12.3% in fall 2012.

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
within 12 Months of High School Graduation
Fall 2012 Compared to Fall 2002**



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 for 2001–02 high school graduates and December 2013 for 2011–12 graduates, and the National Center for Education Statistics, fall 2002 and fall 2012 IPEDS surveys.

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

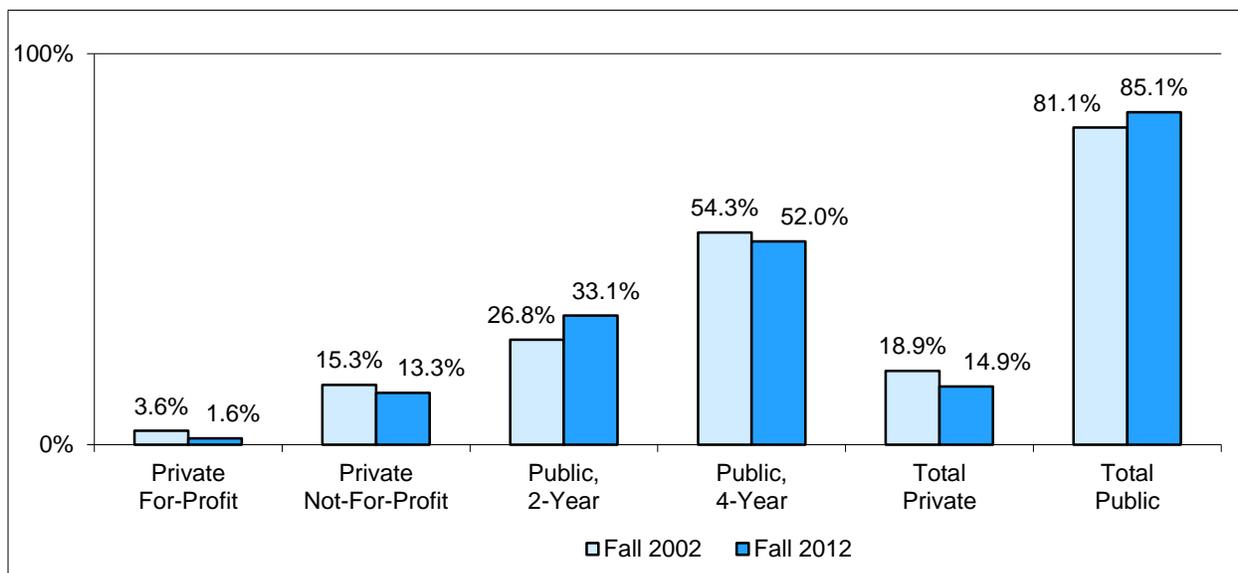
- Of related interest are the types of postsecondary institutions attended by recent graduates of Nebraska’s high schools. As shown in [Part A](#) and [Part B](#) of [Figure 1.1.c.5](#), the pattern of attendance of Nebraska-resident, first-time freshmen who go to college in Nebraska within a year of graduating from high school is different from the pattern of Nebraskans who go out of state to school their freshmen year.
- [Part A](#) of [Figure 1.1.c.5](#) shows that 85.1% of the fall 2012 first-time freshmen who stayed in state attended Nebraska’s public colleges or universities, compared to 14.9% who went to Nebraska’s private, for-profit or non-profit institutions.
- In contrast, [Part B](#) of [Figure 1.1.c.5](#) reveals that 58.9% of the fall 2012 first-time freshmen who went out of state attended public institutions, while 41.1% went to private institutions.

- [Figure 1.1.c.5](#) also shows that a higher percentage of Nebraska-resident first-time freshmen attended Nebraska’s public, two-year community colleges in fall 2012 (33.1%) than in fall 2002 (26.8%). This trend also is evident among the first-time freshmen from Nebraska who attended out-of-state institutions within 12 months of high school graduation.

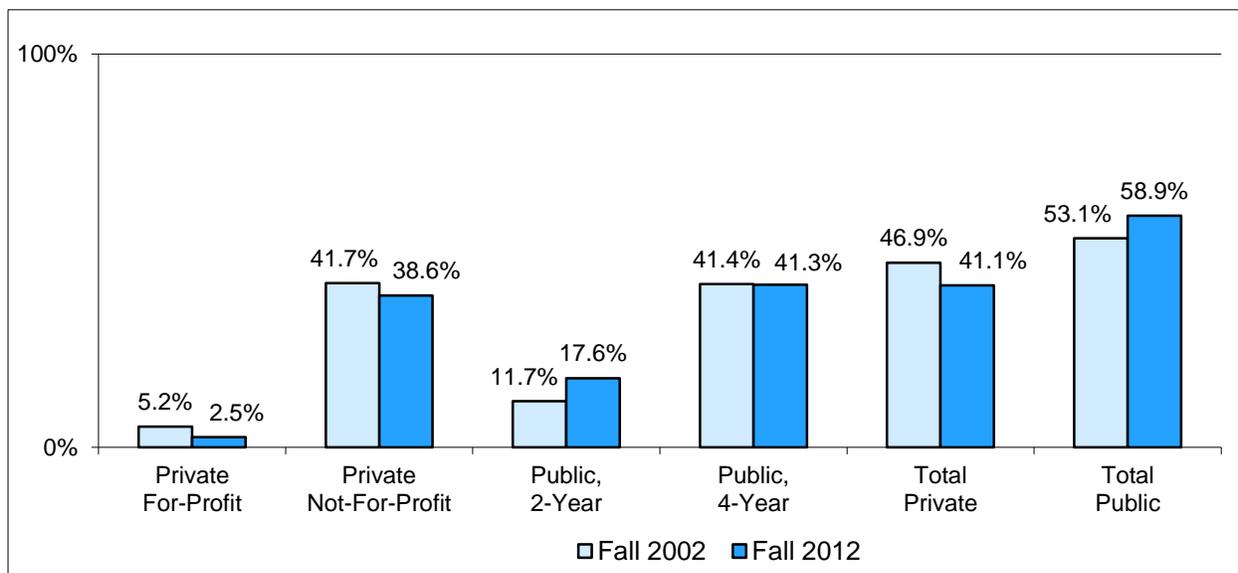
Figure 1.1.c.5

Percentages of First-Time Freshmen with Nebraska Residency Who Attended Nebraska and Out-of-State, Degree-Granting and Non-Degree-Granting Institutions Within 12 Months of High School Graduation Fall 2012 Compared to Fall 2002

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. FTF = first-time freshmen. See [Table A5.3](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data. Date source: National Center for Education Statistics, fall 2002 and fall 2012 IPEDS surveys.

College Continuation Rates for Male and Female Low-Income and Non-Low-Income Nebraska Public High School Graduates Based on National Student Clearinghouse Data

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, the Coordinating Commission 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 2012–2013 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 2012–2013.¹⁷ 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 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.

- 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 numbers of male and female low-income graduates from the total numbers of graduates provided by the NDE. The non-low-income students in this study included 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 Nebraska Department of Education, low-income students in the non-low-income category cannot be identified and excluded for the purposes of analysis.

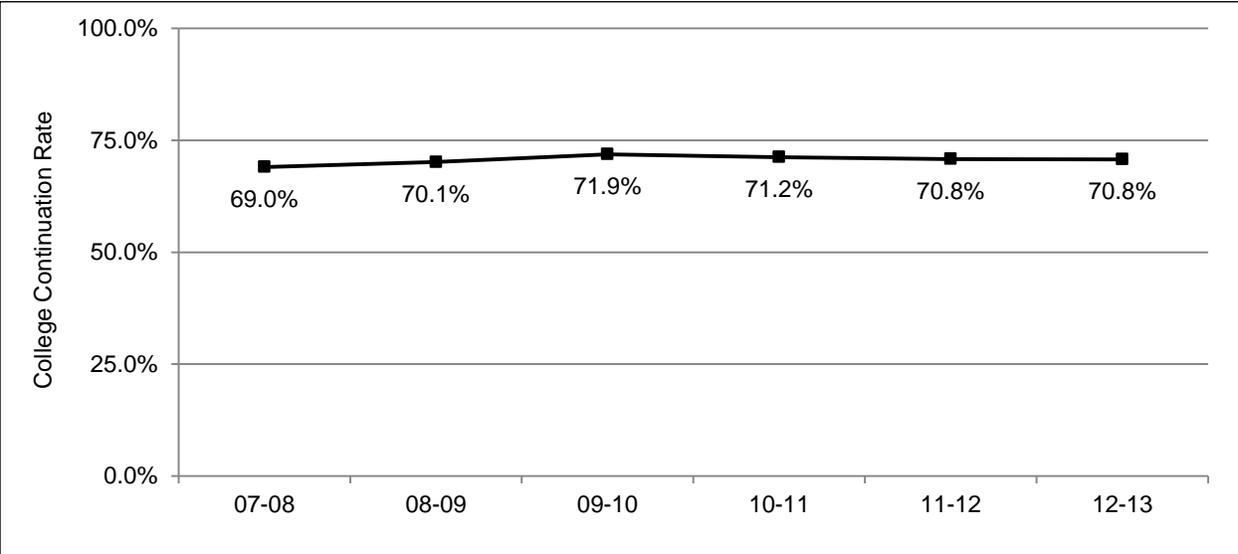
The Commission’s analysis of the college enrollment records received from the Clearinghouse indicated that these records did not include a few hundred students who continued on to college from Nebraska high schools each year. These students were not included because they attended private, not-for-profit 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.**

¹⁷ 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 “Data Collection, Reports and Presentations” section of the Commission’s website, www.ccpe.ne.gov, in the subsection titled “Nebraska College-Going Rates.”

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 70.8% for the graduating class of 2012–2013, 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 or preceding summer, 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 2012–2013



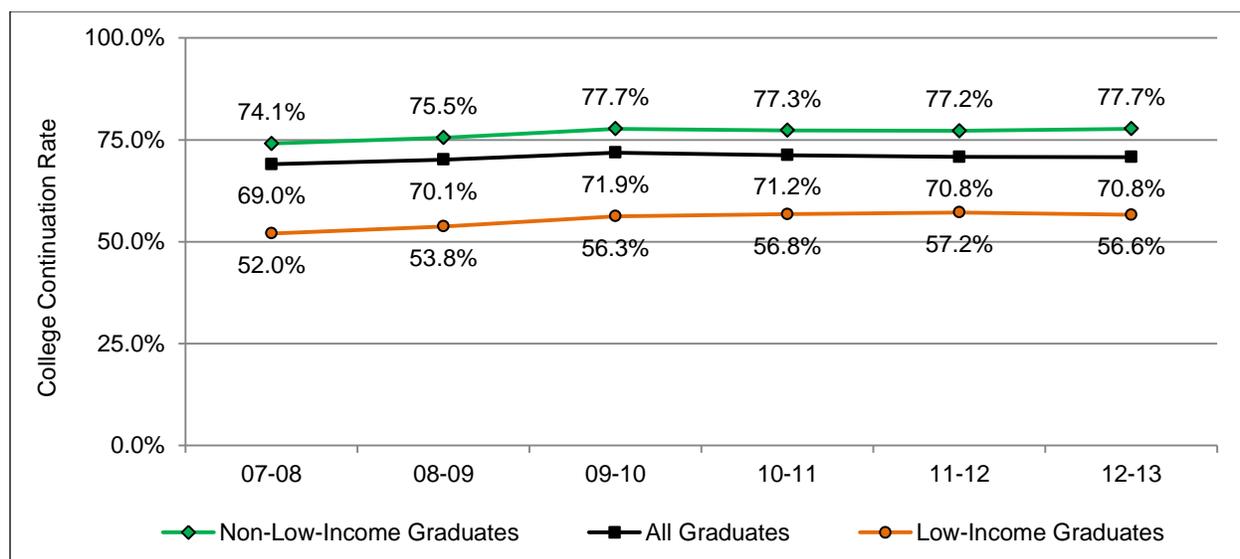
Note. See [Table A5.4](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data. Data sources: For high school graduates, Nebraska Department of Education, April 2009, April 2010, April 2011, April 2012, April 2013, and April 2014; for number of graduates who enrolled in college, National Student Clearinghouse, April 2009, April 2010, April 2011, April 2012, August 2013, and April 2014.

College Continuation Rates for Public High School Graduates by Income Status

- Students from low-income households accounted for 33.0% of the Nebraska public high school graduates in 2012–2013, up from 22.9% in 2007–2008.
- As shown in [Figure 1.1.c.7](#), the college-going rate for low-income graduates was considerably lower than the continuation rate for non-low-income graduates for the classes of 2007–2008 through 2012–2013.
- The college-going rate for the low-income students increased 4.6 percentage points, from 52.0% in 2007–2008 to 56.6% in 2012–2013. In comparison, the college continuation rate for the students from non-low-income households increased 3.6 percentage points, from 74.1% in 2007–2008 to 77.7% in 2012–2013.

Figure 1.1.c.7

**College Continuation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Graduates
2007–2008 through 2012–2013 by Student Income Status**



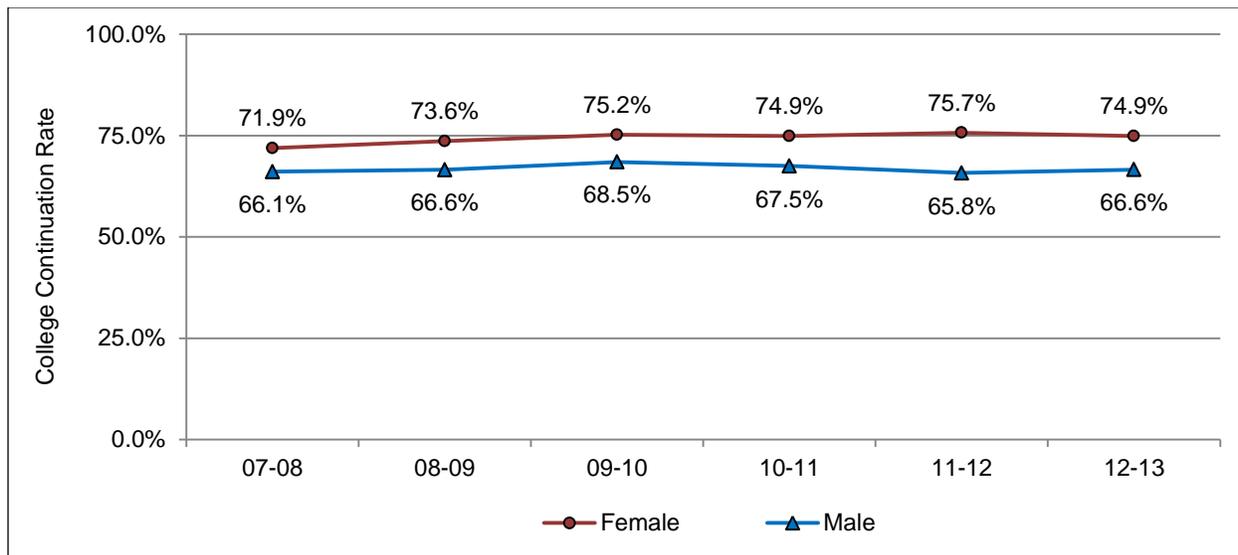
Note. See Table A5.4 in Appendix 5 for supporting data. Data sources: For high school graduates, Nebraska Department of Education, April 2009, April 2010, April 2011, April 2012, April 2013, and April 2014; for number of graduates who enrolled in college, National Student Clearinghouse, April 2009, April 2010, April 2011, April 2012, August 2013, and April 2014.

Gender Differences Between Statewide Public High School College Continuation Rates

- Female and male students each accounted for about half of the graduates of Nebraska’s public high schools from 2007–2008 through 2012–2013.
- However, 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 74.9% in 2012–2013, the college-going rate for males increased from 66.1% in 2007–2008 to 66.6% in 2012–2013.
- Between 2007–2008 and 2012–2013, the difference between the college-going rates of male and female graduates increased from 5.8 percentage points in 2007–2008 to 8.3 percentage points in 2012–2013.
- Interestingly, between 2011–2012 and 2012–2013, the college-going rate decreased 0.8 percentage points for females but increased 0.8 percentage points for males.

Figure 1.1.c.8

**College Continuation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Graduates
2007–2008 through 2012–2013 by Gender**



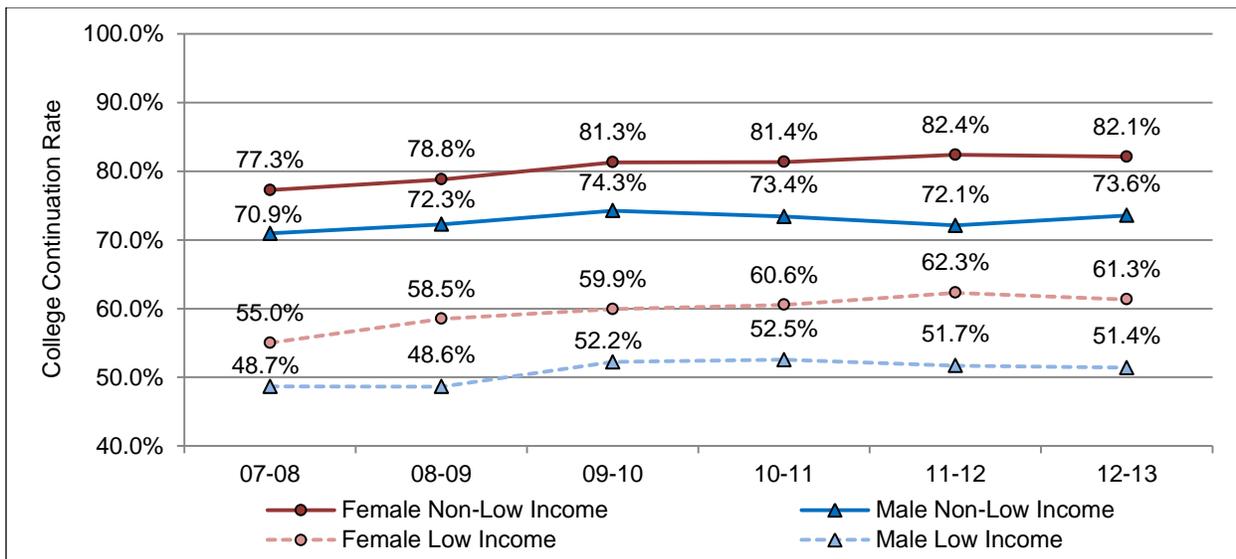
Note. See Table A5.4 in Appendix 5 for supporting data. Data sources: For high school graduates, Nebraska Department of Education, April 2009, April 2010, April 2011, April 2012, April 2013, and April 2014; for number of graduates who enrolled in college, National Student Clearinghouse, April 2009, April 2010, April 2011, April 2012, August 2013, and April 2014.

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 2012–2013.
 - 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 2012–2013, 61.3% of females continued on to college, compared to 51.4% 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 2012–2013, 82.1% of females continued on to college, compared to 73.6% of males.
- Interestingly, between 2011–2012 and 2012–2013, college-going rates increased for male non-low-income high school graduates 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 has 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.
- See [Table A5.4](#) in [Appendix 5](#) for supporting data.

Figure 1.1.c.9

**College Continuation Rates for Nebraska Public High School Graduates
2007–2008 through 2011–2012 by Student Income Status and Gender**



Note. See Table A5.4 in Appendix 5 for supporting data. Data sources: For high school graduates, Nebraska Department of Education, April 2009, April 2010, April 2011, April 2012, April 2013, and April 2014; for number of graduates who enrolled in college, National Student Clearinghouse, April 2009, April 2010, April 2011, April 2012, August 2013, and April 2014.

Nebraska Statewide Public High School College Continuation Rates Compared to U.S. Rates by Gender

Figure 1.1.c.10 shows Nebraska’s college continuation rates for male and female graduates of the state’s public high schools in 2012–2013 compared to estimates of the college continuation rates for male and female students who graduated from all high schools in the United States in 2013.

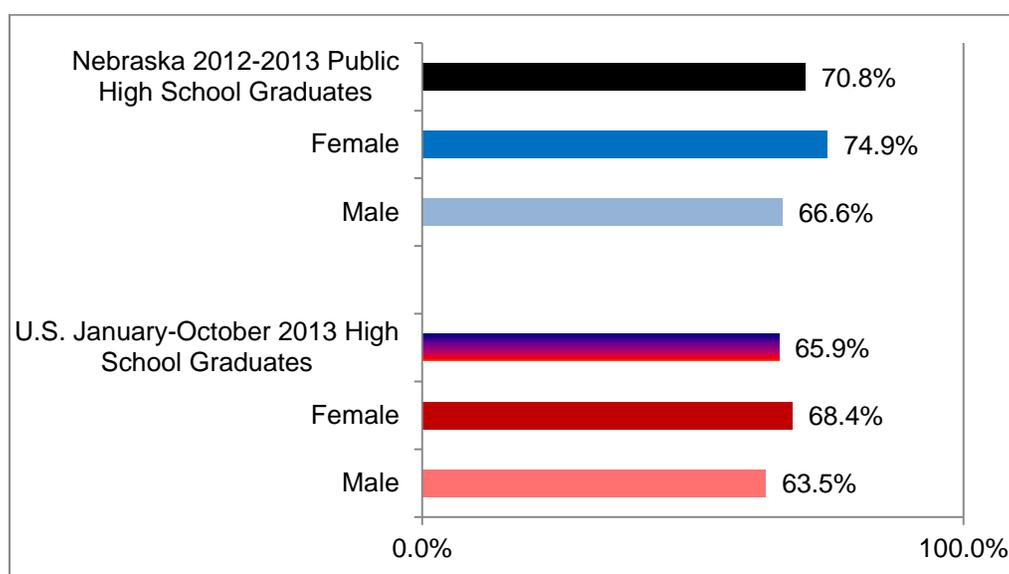
The national estimates shown in Figure 1.1.c.10 are based on data obtained from a supplement to the October 2013 Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a monthly survey of about 60,000 households that provides information about the labor force, employment, and unemployment in the United States. 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 annual BLS report on college enrollment and work activity of high school graduates is the only available source for estimated national college continuation rates by gender and race/ethnicity. The latest BLS report, released in April 2014, provides estimates of the college continuation rates of students who graduated from high school during the period from January through October 2013.

- Figure 1.1.c.10 shows the estimated overall college-going rate of 70.8% for Nebraska public high school students compared to the estimated rate of 65.9% for the United States.
- The estimated college continuation rate for females was 74.9% for Nebraska high school graduates, compared to an estimated national rate of 68.4% for female graduates.

- For males, the estimated college-going rate for males was 66.6% for Nebraska high school graduates, compared to 63.5% nationally.
- The national estimates shown in [Figure 1.1.c.10](#) did not include 2013 high school graduates who started college after the Current Population Survey (CPS) was conducted in October 2013. 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 male and female high school graduates in the class of 2013 may actually be higher or lower than those reported in [Figure 1.1.c.10](#).

Figure 1.1.c.10
College Continuation Rates
for 2012–2013 Nebraska Public High School Graduates by Gender
Compared to National Estimated Rates for 2013 High School Graduates



Data sources: For Nebraska data, Nebraska Department of Education, April 2014, and the National Student Clearinghouse, April 2014. For national data, October 2013 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, in "College Enrollment and Work Activity of 2013 High School Graduates," April 22, 2014.

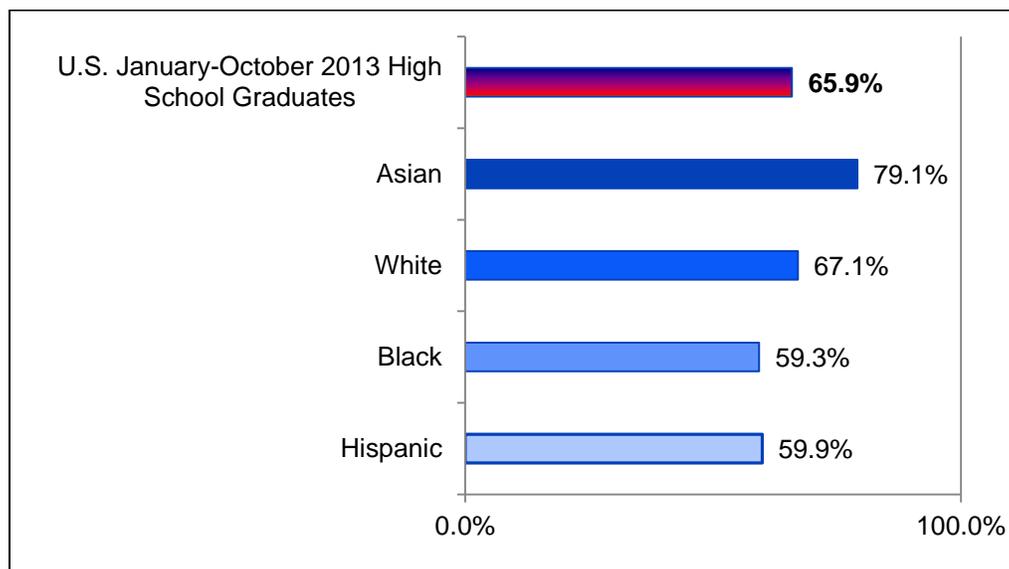
As explained earlier in this section, the Nebraska rates shown in [Figure 1.1.c.10](#) are based on data obtained from the Nebraska Department of Education and the National Student Clearinghouse. Since graduates of the state's nonpublic (private) high schools were excluded from the study and Clearinghouse files did not include enrollment records for some of Nebraska's public high school graduates, the Nebraska rates presented in [Figure 1.1.c.10](#) are at least slightly underestimated. Given that the Nebraska statistics are underestimated to some degree and the reported national rates are only good estimates, a reasonable conclusion is that Nebraska's college-going rates for male and female high school graduates are probably at least slightly higher than comparable national rates.

U.S. College Continuation Rates by Race/Ethnicity

No study has been conducted to estimate Nebraska's college-going rates by race/ethnicity, and there is no available set of national data for making state-to-state comparisons by race/ethnicity or gender. However, the annual report on college enrollment and work activity published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provides estimates of the national college-going rates for four racial/ethnic groups: white, Asian, black, and Hispanic. As mentioned previously, the BLS bases these estimates on data collected through the October supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS), which is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure 1.1.c.11 shows the estimated national college continuation rates of students who graduated from high school during the period from January through October 2013 by their race/ethnicity. The highest estimated rate was 79.1% for Asian high school graduates, down from 82.2% in 2012. Notably, the college-going rate of 59.9% for Hispanics was a decrease of 10.4 percentage points from the BLS 2012 estimate. Meanwhile, the college-going rates for both blacks and whites increased slightly between 2012 and 2013 (+ 0.9 percentage points for blacks and + 0.5 percentage points for whites).

Figure 1.1.c.11
Estimated National College Continuation Rates
for 2013 High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity



Data sources: October 2013 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, in "College Enrollment and Work Activity of 2013 High School Graduates," April 22, 2014.

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