



National College Progression Rates

*For high schools participating in the National Student Clearinghouse
StudentTracker service*

October 15, 2013

This report provides high school-to-college transition rates for graduates of public high schools. The rates are reported for students from six categories of high schools, based on the school-level demographic and geographic characteristics.

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Introduction

Recent years have seen increased interest in the secondary to postsecondary education link, particularly for students from low income and minority populations traditionally not well served by higher education. With the current administration's call for every American to have at least one year of postsecondary education (Obama, 2009), it has become particularly important for educators and policymakers to have timely and comprehensive data on the high school-to-college transition of students.

Previous research has shown that low income students, even those with high academic performance levels, are less likely to enroll in college, more likely to attend two-year colleges when they do enroll, and less likely to apply to more selective institutions compared to their more advantaged peers with similar academic preparation (Dillon & Smith, 2013; Hill & Winston, 2010; Hoxby & Avery, 2012; Pallais & Turner, 2006; Roderick, Coca & Nagaoka, 2011). While financial barriers are often viewed as one of the possible reasons for this (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance [ASCFA], 2006), research has also shown that high school context may also play a role, leading students to make different educational choices (Engberg & Wolniak, 2010; Hurwitz, Smith, Howell, & Pender, 2012; McDonough, 1997; Roderick, Coca & Nagaoka, 2011).

Students rely on their families as the primary source of information while making a college choice. However, schools can also become an important source of information in making postsecondary education plans (Bell, Rowan-Kenyon, & Perna, 2009; Hossler, Schmidt, & Vesper, 1999). School-based resources are especially important for those students who come from families in which no adults have attended college. Notwithstanding the effects of individual-level factors on postsecondary education decisions, research has found that what high schools do to help their students navigate the college-going process has significant implications on their students' postsecondary outcomes (Hill, 2008). For example, through case studies of individuals' college choice processes, McDonough (1997) concluded that in some schools, "the information and attitudes conveyed to students result in behavior that predominantly gets students into four-year colleges" and in other schools "...information and expectations channel the majority of students into two-year colleges" (McDonough, 1997, p. 109).

Given the projected demographic shifts among high school graduates in the next few years (Prescott & Bransberger, 2012), we need a better understanding of how schools with higher percentages of low income and minority students perform in terms of their students' college access and persistence, compared to schools with a lower percentage of low income and minority students.

Some data on the college-going rates of high school students at the national level are available (Aud et al., 2013), and many schools and districts now have access to timely reports on the college access and persistence rates of their own graduates through the StudentTrackerSM service of the National Student Clearinghouse. However, high schools typically do not have a way of benchmarking their students' outcomes to those of other schools with similar proportions of low income and minority students. This report is designed to provide that comparison, so that high schools and districts can place their own StudentTracker results into context with the college access and persistence rates for schools with similar student populations, in similar locales, across the country.

This is a descriptive study. No causal inferences should be made based on these results alone. The data on which this report is based do not comprise a nationally representative sample of schools or of high school graduates. Yet, it is a large and broad sample, covering more than 2.3 million students over three years, or about a quarter of all U.S. high school graduates each year from all 50 states, and over 15 percent of all public high schools in the U.S. In addition to providing reasonable benchmarks for individual schools and districts using StudentTracker reports, we believe it also makes a significant

contribution to discussions about equitable access to and persistence in postsecondary education for practitioners and policymakers at the school, district, state, and national levels.

What to Find In This Report

This report provides high school-to-college transition rates for public high school graduates. The rates are reported for students from six categories of high schools based on the school-level demographic and geographic characteristics:

- Low income, high minority, urban
- Low income, low minority, urban
- Low income, rural
- Higher income, high minority, urban
- Higher income, low minority, urban
- Higher income, rural

For the purpose of this report, low income schools are defined as schools where at least 50 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Minority schools are defined as those schools where at least 40 percent of the students are black or Hispanic. Urban/rural is defined by the NCES urban-centric locale code: city, suburb, and town schools are defined as urban and schools in rural areas are defined as rural.

This report presents postsecondary outcomes for high school graduating classes from 2010 through 2012. The tables and figures present:

- Total college-going rate for each of the six categories of high schools, including:
 - Enrollment in the first fall after high school graduation
 - Enrollment in the first year after high school graduation
 - Enrollment in the first two years after high school graduation
- Persistence from first to second year of college

For each outcome the results are calculated for the most recent graduating classes for which data are currently available for that outcome. Thus, the first fall outcome has been calculated for the classes of 2011 and 2012, the first year outcome for the classes of 2011 and 2012, and the persistence and first two years outcomes for the class of 2010. Results are also broken down by the type of college attended: public and private institutions, two-year and four-year institutions, as well as in-state and out-of-state institutions.

A complete explanation of definitions can be found in Appendix A.

Important Note on the Data

The data on high school graduates for this report were drawn from a voluntary sample of high schools participating in the StudentTrackerSM for High Schools service (STHS) administered by the National Student Clearinghouse (The Clearinghouse). High schools participating in this service pay a small annual fee (typically \$425) to receive an extensive set of analytic data reports, three times per year, detailing the postsecondary access and success outcomes for up to eight cohorts of their graduating classes. This is not a nationally representative sample of schools or of high school graduates. Compared to all U.S. high schools, participating STHS schools tend to have greater representation among schools with more low income students, more minority enrollments, and more urban locales.

All types of high schools, including both public and private schools, can participate in the Clearinghouse STHS service. However, only public high schools were included in the report. The sample includes schools from all 50 states and from the

majority of the 100 largest districts in the U.S., with a total of 2,315,982 high schools graduates or about one quarter of all public high school graduates each year (for more detailed information about the sample, see Appendix A).

The data on college enrollments for this report, and for the STHS reports that the participating high schools receive, were drawn from the National Student Clearinghouse. The National Student Clearinghouse is the nation's trusted source for education verification and student educational outcomes research.

Section 1: National Results

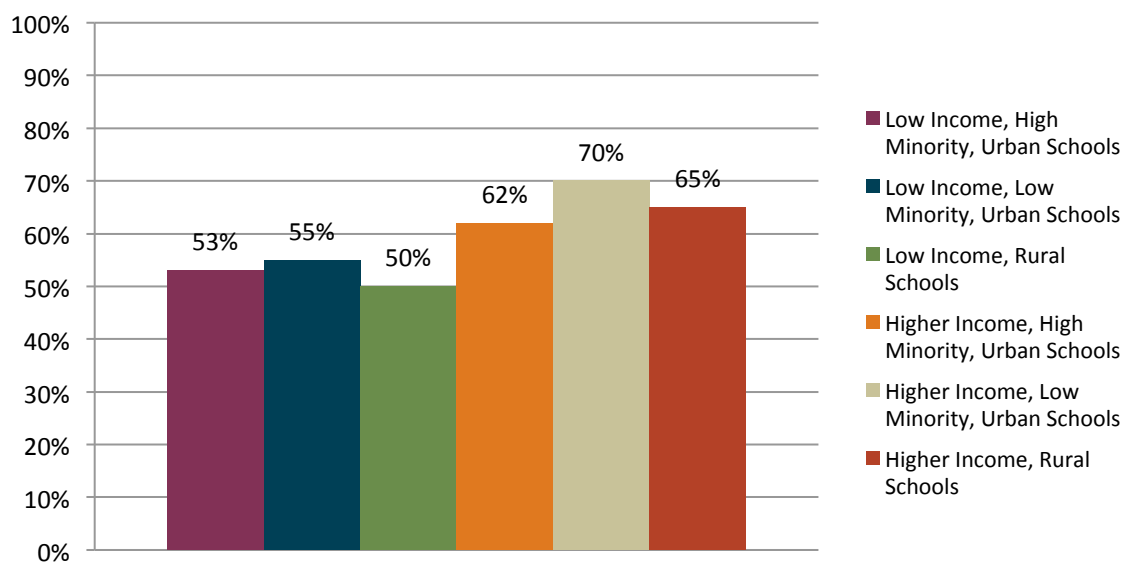
College Enrollment and Persistence Rates for High School Graduates

The first outcome of interest for high schools is: “what percent of our graduates are going to college?” The answer depends on the timing of the question. Most high school graduates who are headed to college will enroll immediately, but there are also significant numbers who wait a year or longer. **Figure A** shows the rates of immediate college enrollment in the first fall after high school graduation for the high school graduating class of 2012. These are students who transition immediately to college with no gap after high school.

Among the three school characteristics considered, the poverty level, measured by the proportion of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, was the most important correlate to college enrollment rates. High schools with a larger number of low income students (more than 50% eligible for free or reduced price lunch) had lower college enrollment rates than schools with mostly higher income students, regardless of the minority or geographic category that the school fell into.

Students from higher income, low minority, urban high schools had the highest college enrollment rate. Seventy percent of students who graduated from these high schools in 2012 enrolled in college immediately after high school graduation, in fall 2012. Students from higher income, rural schools had the next highest enrollment rate, with 65 percent attending college in the first fall. The enrollment rate for students from higher income, high minority, urban schools was close behind, at 62 percent. Students from low income schools had lower college enrollment rates, ranging from 50 percent for students from low income, rural schools, to 55 percent for students from low income, low minority, urban schools.

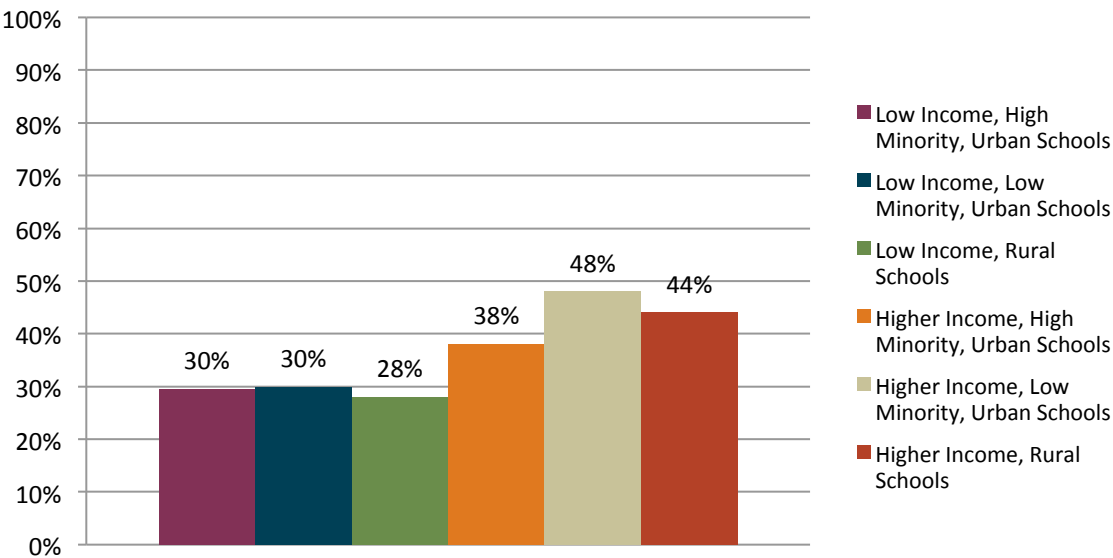
Figure A. College Enrollment Rates in the First Fall after High School Graduation, Class of 2012



This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 1.

Many high schools are also interested in what type of college their graduates are attending, whether public or private, or whether a two-year college or a four-year. The overall pattern does not change when looking at enrollments in public vs. private institutions (see Appendix C, Table 1). There were larger differences between higher income and low income high schools, however, when looking at enrollment rates by the institution level. Enrollment rates at four-year colleges and universities ranged from 28 percent for the graduates from low income, rural schools to 48 percent for the graduates from higher income, low minority, urban schools (see **Figure B**). By contrast, there was very little variation in the rates of enrollment at two-year colleges. Students from all six groups of high schools had a similar enrollment rate in two-year institutions: between 21 percent and 25 percent of each group (see Appendix C, Table 1).

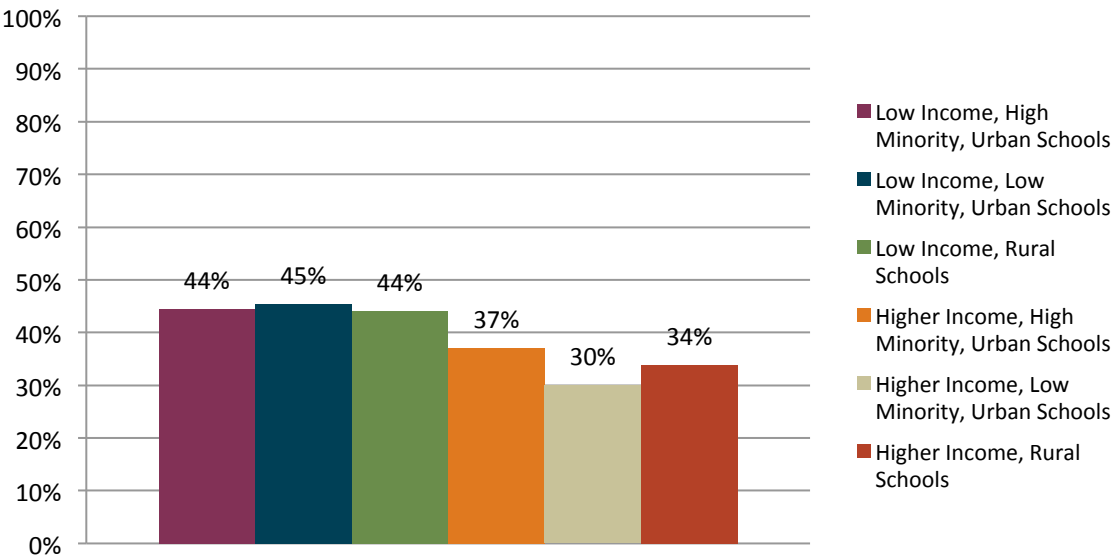
Figure B. College Enrollment Rates in Four-Year Institutions in the First Fall after High school Graduation, Class of 2012



This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 1.

As a result, two-year colleges made up a much smaller share of the total first fall enrollments for students graduating from higher income high schools, compared to low income schools. **Figure C** shows enrollment at two-year institutions as a proportion of the total college-going rate. Less than one-third of all enrollments from higher income, low minority, urban high schools attended two-year institutions, compared to almost one half (44 to 45 percent) of all first fall enrollments of graduates from low income schools.

Figure C. Enrollment in Two-Year Institutions as Proportion of Total College-Going Rate, First Fall after High School Graduation, Class of 2012

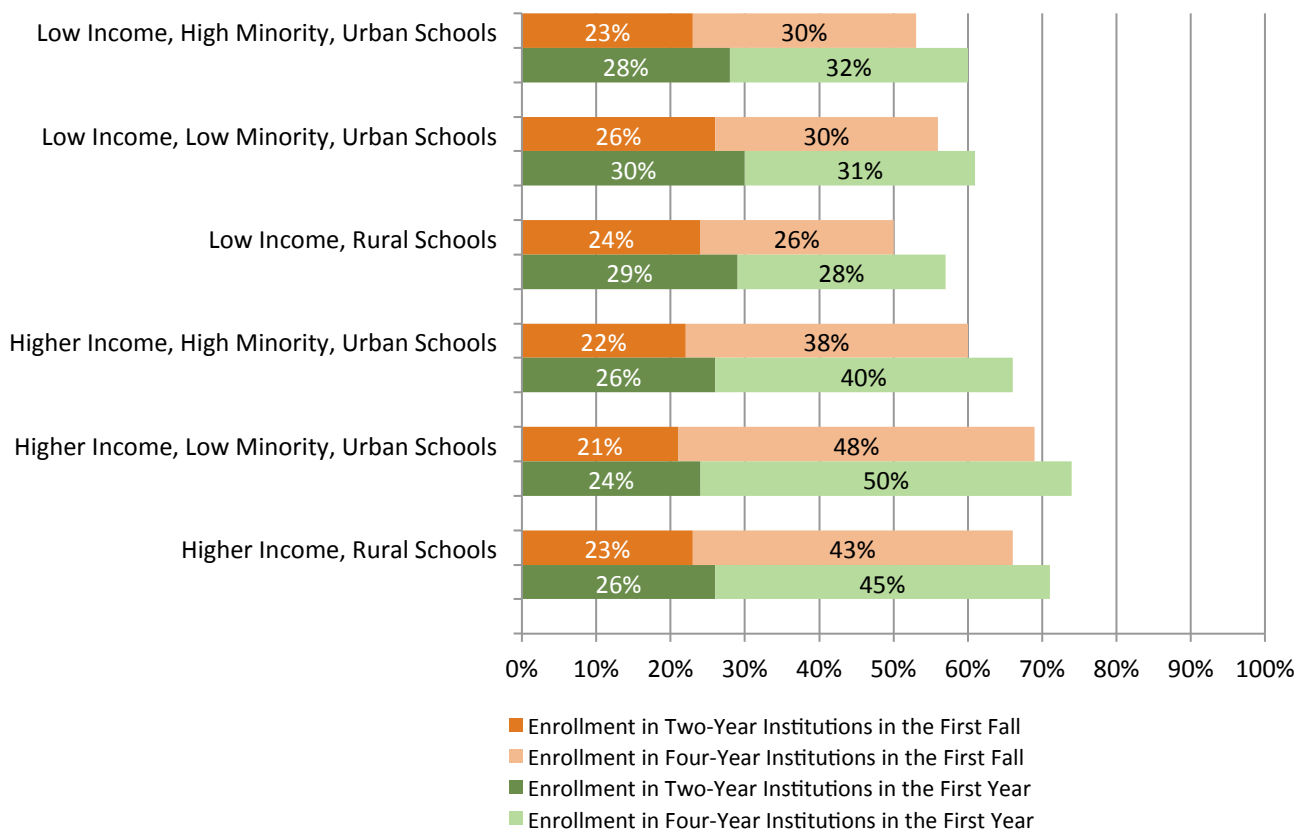


This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 1.

Similarly, enrollments at out-of-state institutions as a proportion of all enrollments were also higher, by up to twice as high, for students from higher income high schools. Sixteen to 23 percent of the college-going graduates from higher income schools enrolled at out-of-state institutions, compared to just 10 to 11 percent of those from low income high schools (see Appendix C, Table 1).

Some students do not make it to college in the fall immediately after high school, but do enroll in the following winter, spring, or even summer terms. **Figure D** shows rates of college enrollment at any time in the first year after high school graduation, for students in the class of 2011. Across all groups, enrollment rates increased from the first fall enrollment. These increases were slightly higher among low income high schools, where an additional six to seven percent of students enrolled after the fall term, compared to higher income schools, where an additional four to six percent enrolled later in the year. The increases were driven mostly by students attending two-year institutions. This is not surprising because two-year institutions allow more flexibility in start times. However, notable differences existed within this pattern as well. For students from low income, rural high schools the vast majority (83 percent) of the additional enrollments in the first year occurred in two-year institutions. For students from all other groups of high schools about two-thirds to three-quarters of the additional enrollments in the first year were in two-year institutions.

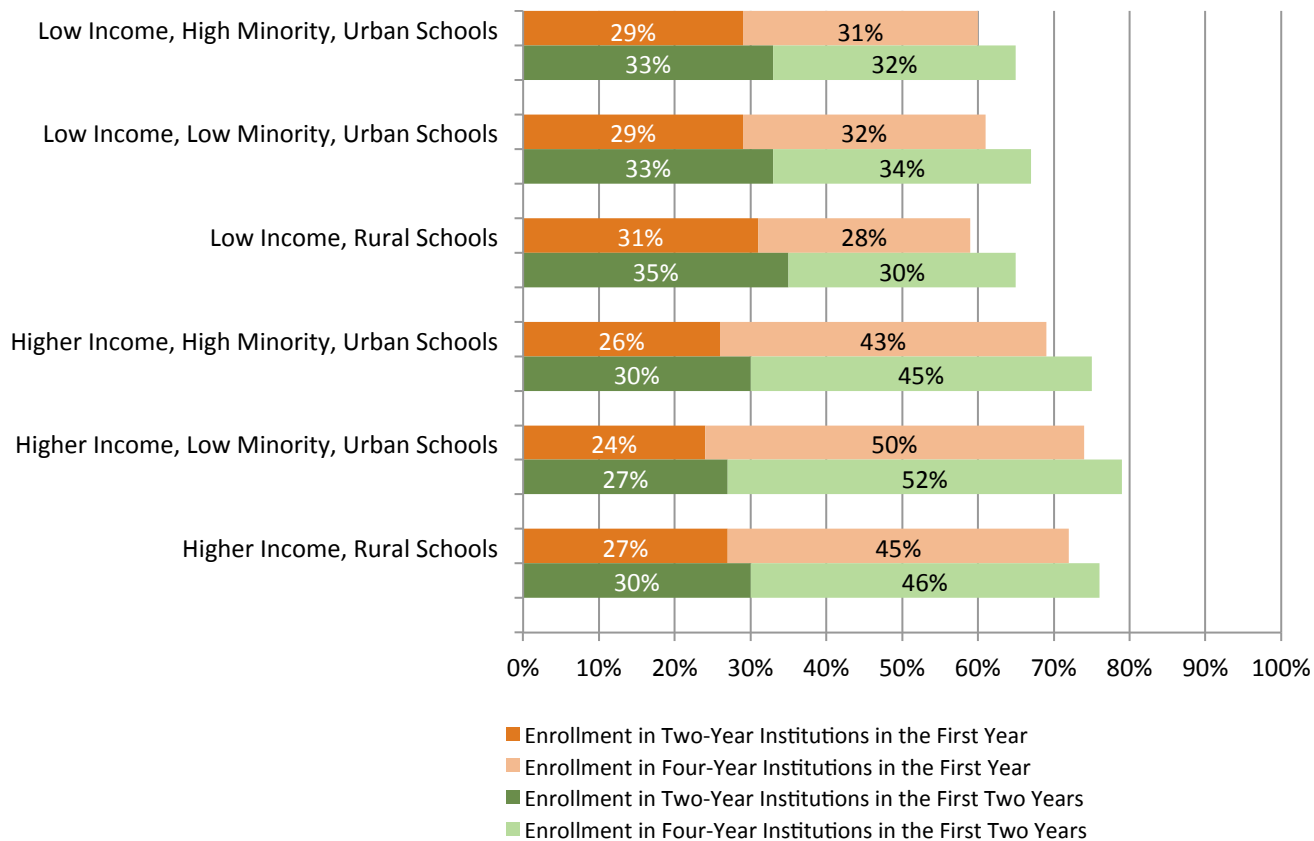
Figure D. Changes in Enrollment Rates from the First Fall to the First Year after High School Graduation for Class of 2011



This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Tables 2 and 3.

Figure E presents the rates of college enrollment in the first two years after high school graduation for the high school graduating class of 2010. Similar to increases from the first fall to the first year, college enrollments in the second year after high school graduation increased total college enrollment rates by an additional four to six percentage points, compared to the first-year enrollments. The pattern remained consistent in the sense that the majority of additional enrollments in the second year after high school graduation were in two-year institutions.

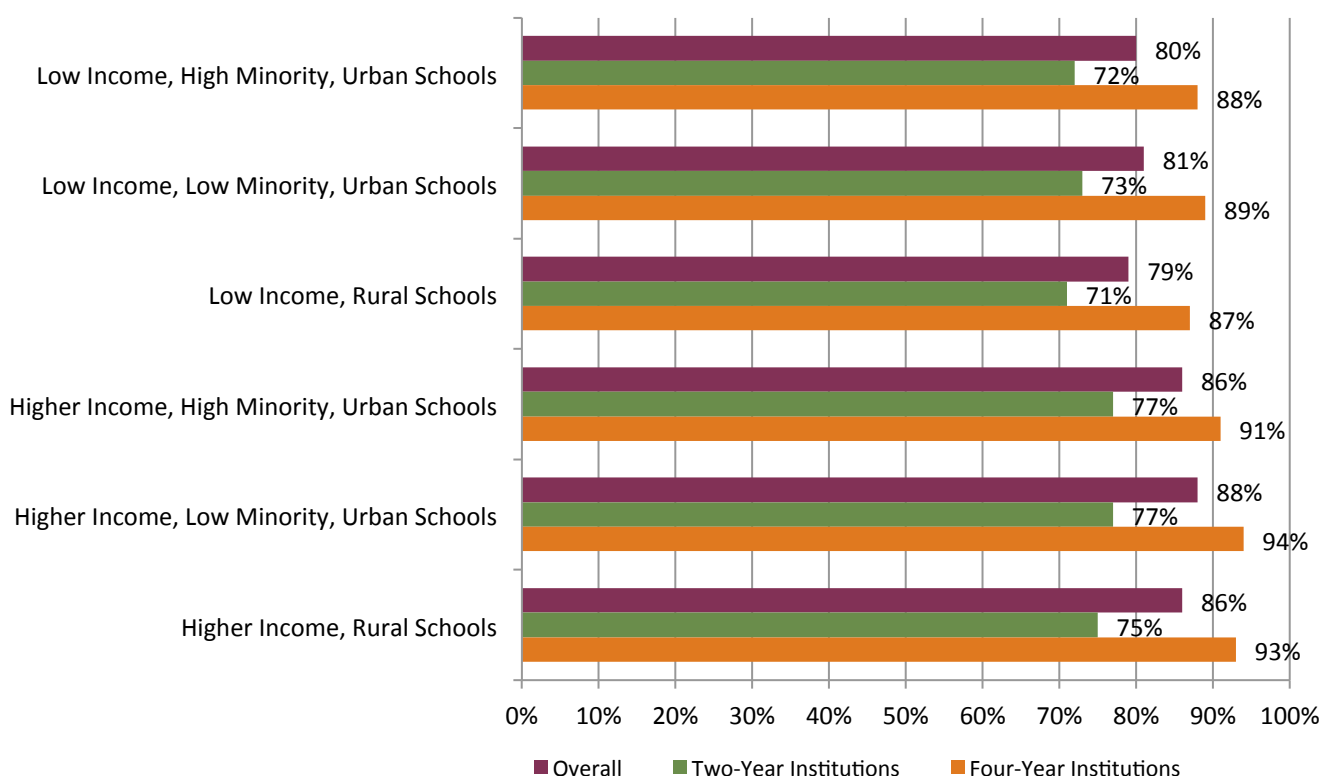
Figure E. Changes in Enrollment Rates from First Year to the First Two Years after High School Graduation for Class of 2010



This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Tables 4 and 5.

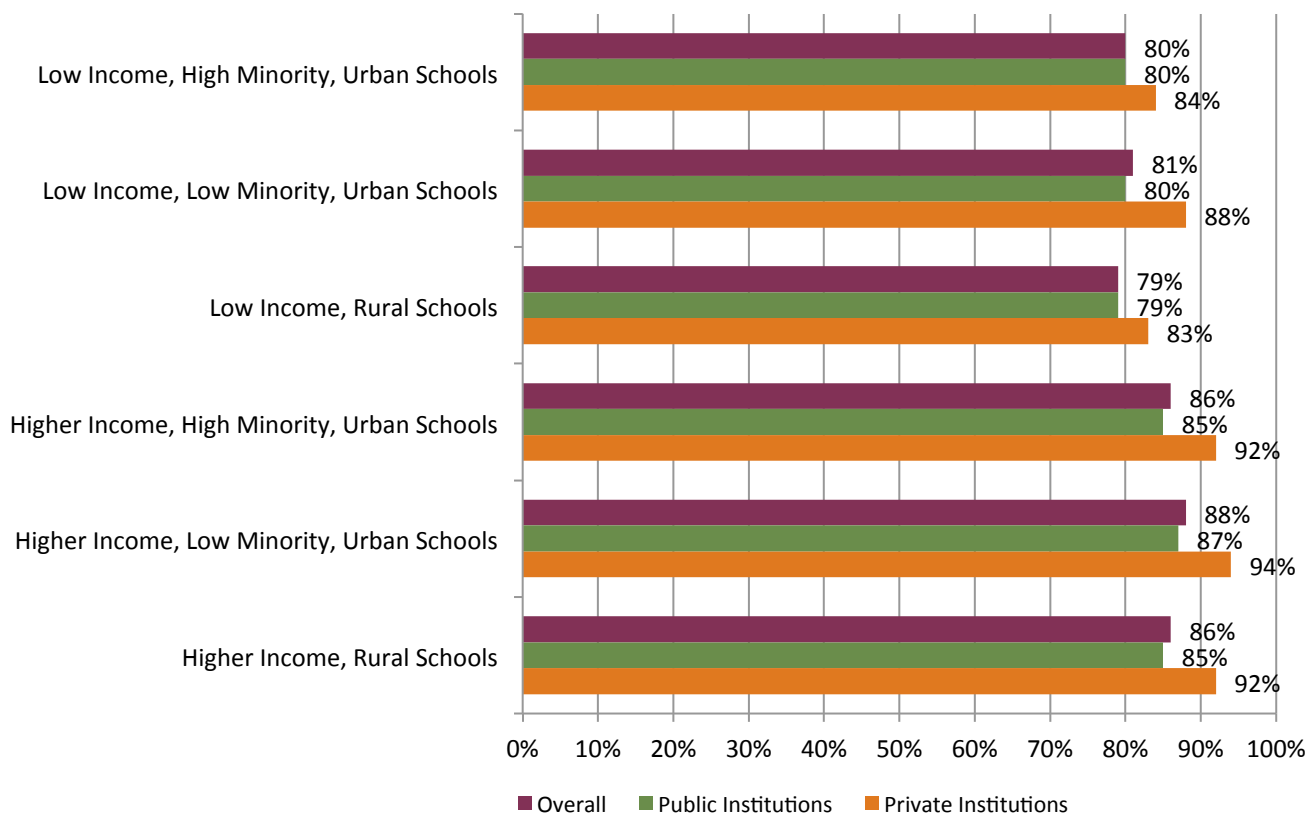
In terms of college preparedness, how well a high school equips students to succeed in college is perhaps more important than how well it prepares students to enroll. **Figures F and G** present the rates of college persistence from the first to the second year for the high school graduating class of 2010. This is the percentage of students enrolled in the first year after high school graduation who *remained* enrolled in postsecondary education in the second year. It includes students who may have re-enrolled at a different institution from where they started. While in general, persistence rates for graduates of all high schools were high (79 percent to 88 percent), some differences did exist across groups. Students from higher income high schools had higher persistence rates than those from low income high schools. Regardless of high school type, persistence rates among students who enrolled in private colleges and universities were higher than those in public institutions. Persistence rates for all students were also higher in four-year institutions than in two-year institutions.

Figure F. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010 by Institutional Level



This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 6.

Figure G. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010 by Institutional Type



This figure is based on data shown in Appendix C, Table 6.

Section 2: Category Results

The second part of the results section shows each of the college outcomes for each category of high schools separately. This section is designed to enable individual schools and districts to compare their own StudentTracker results to the national benchmarks. By placing their results into the context of the aggregate rates for schools with similar student populations in similar locales across the country, practitioners can better understand the meaning of their own students' college access and persistence outcomes.

Outcomes for Students from Low Income, High Minority, Urban High Schools

Table 1. College Enrollment Rates in the First Fall after High School Graduation for Classes 2011 and 2012

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2011	218,792	53%	46%	7%	23%	30%	47%	6%
2012	191,672	53%	47%	6%	24%	30%	47%	6%

Figure 1. College Enrollment Rates in the First Fall after High School Graduation for Classes 2011 and 2012

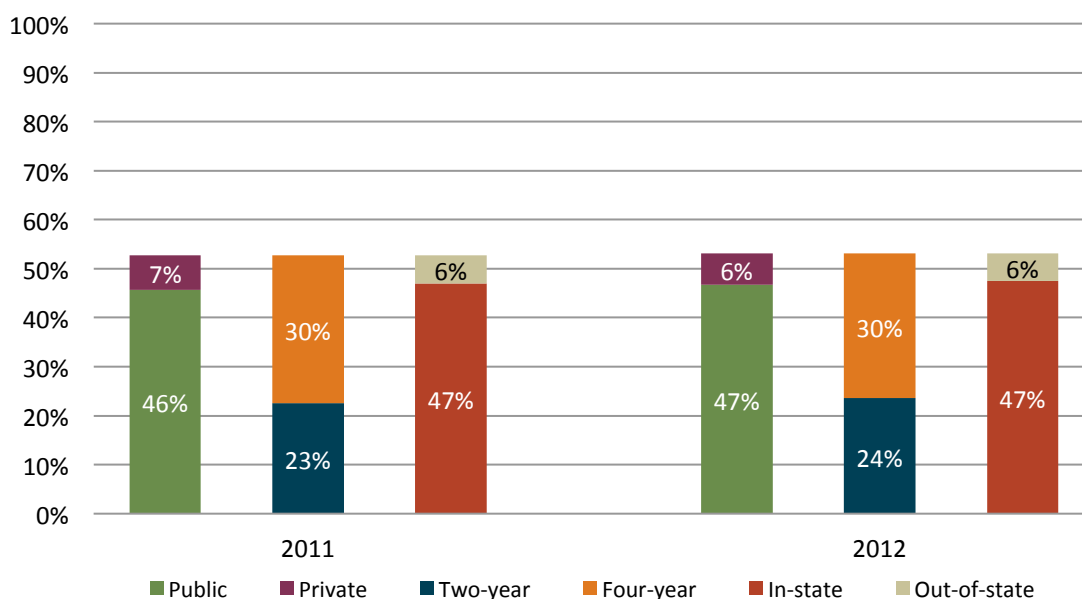


Table 2. College Enrollment Rates in the First Year after High School Graduation for Classes 2010 and 2011

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	213,076	60%	52%	8%	29%	31%	54%	6%
2011	218,792	60%	52%	8%	28%	32%	54%	6%

Figure 2. College Enrollment Rates in the First Year after High School Graduation for Classes 2010 and 2011

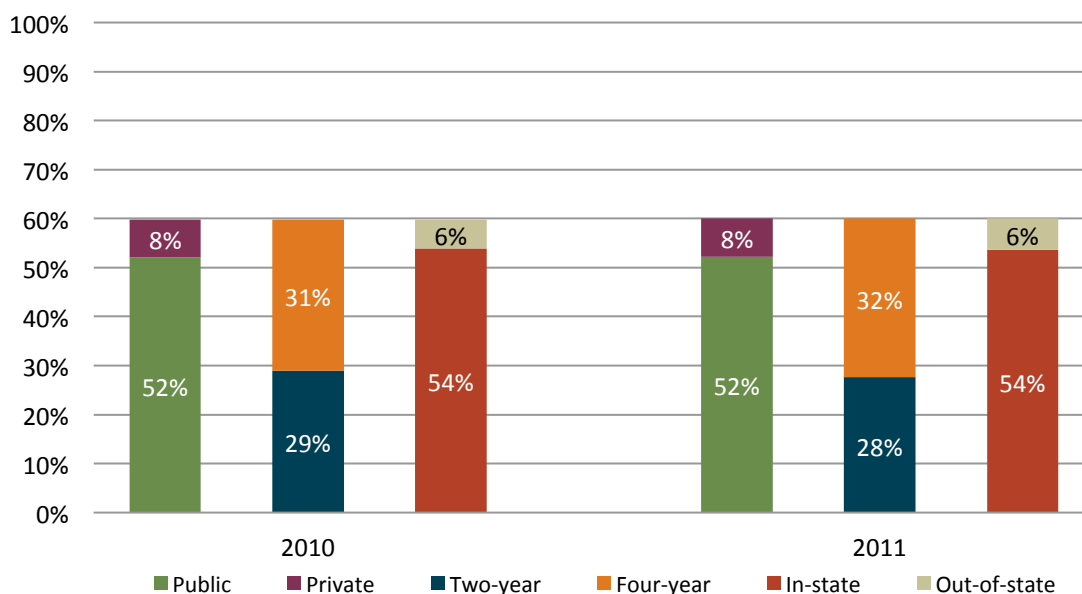


Table 3. College Enrollment Rates in the First Two Years after High School Graduation for Class of 2010

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	213,076	66%	57%	9%	33%	32%	59%	7%

Figure 3. College Enrollment Rates in the First Two Years after High School Graduation for Class of 2010

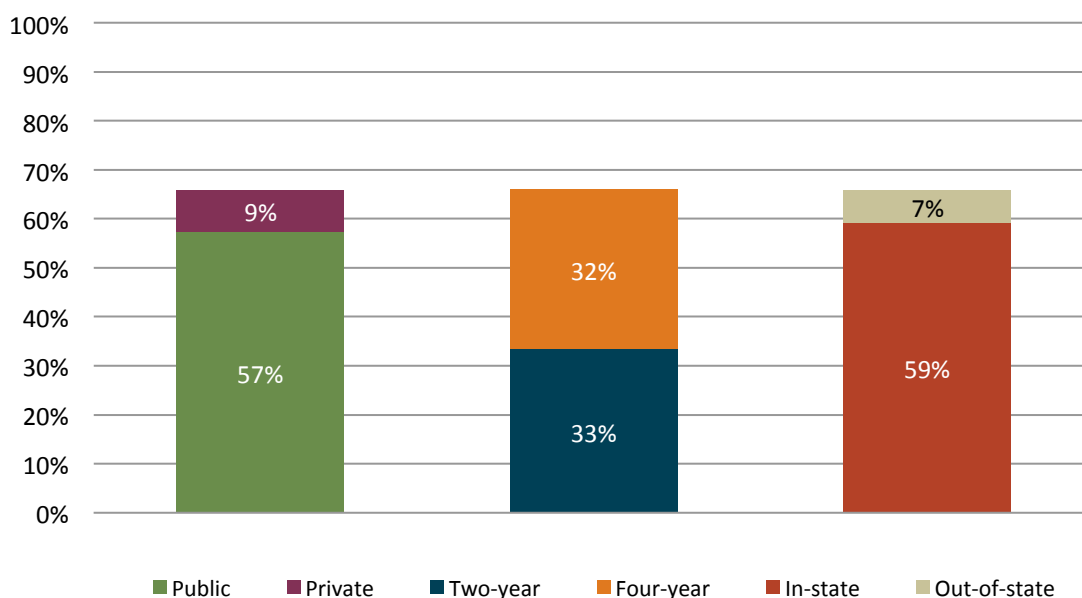
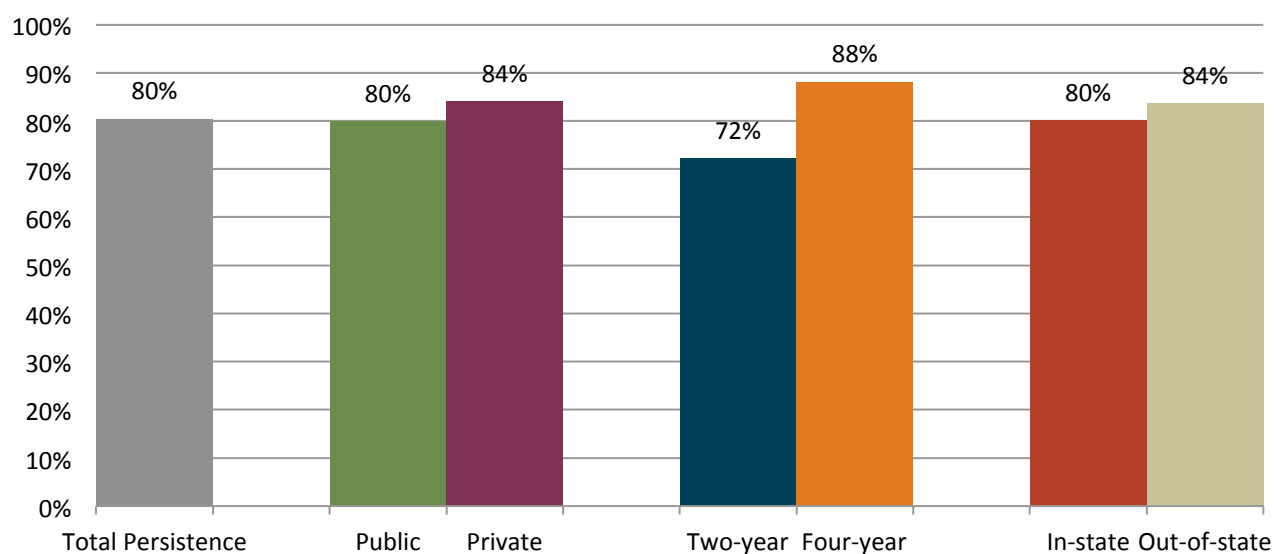


Table 4. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010

	Students Enrolled in First Year	Total Persistence	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	127,316	80%	80%	84%	72%	88%	80%	84%

Figure 4. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010

Outcomes for Students from Low Income, Low Minority, Urban High Schools

Table 5. College Enrollment Rates in the First Fall after High School Graduation for Classes 2011 and 2012

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2011	35,134	56%	49%	8%	26%	30%	50%	6%
2012	33,902	55%	47%	7%	25%	30%	49%	6%

Figure 5. College Enrollment Rates in the First Fall after High School Graduation for Classes 2011 and 2012

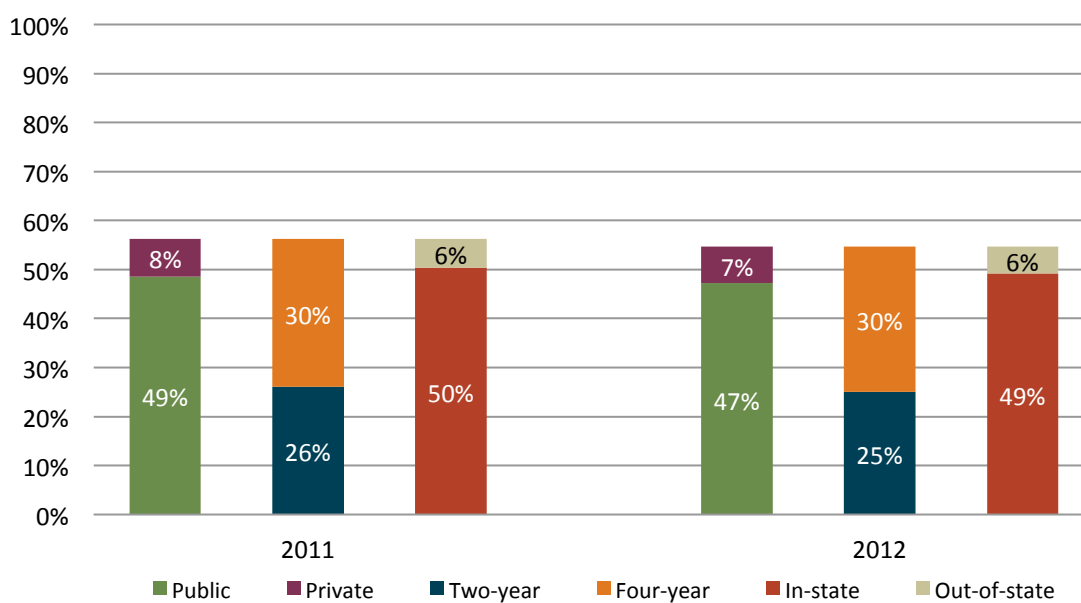


Table 6. College Enrollment Rates in the First Year after High School Graduation for Classes 2010 and 2011

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	35,861	62%	52%	10%	29%	32%	55%	6%
2011	35,134	62%	53%	8%	30%	31%	55%	6%

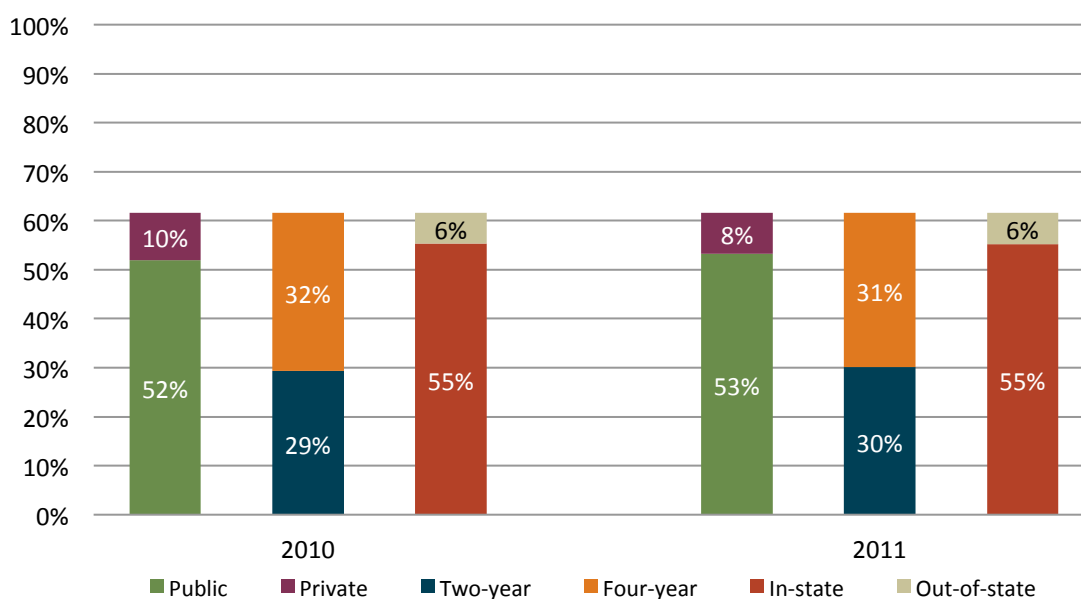
Figure 6. College Enrollment Rates in the First Year after High School Graduation for Classes 2010 and 2011

Table 7. College Enrollment Rates in the First Two Years after High School Graduation for Class of 2010

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	35,861	67%	57%	10%	33%	34%	60%	7%

Figure 7. College Enrollment Rates in the First Two Years after High School Graduation for Class of 2010

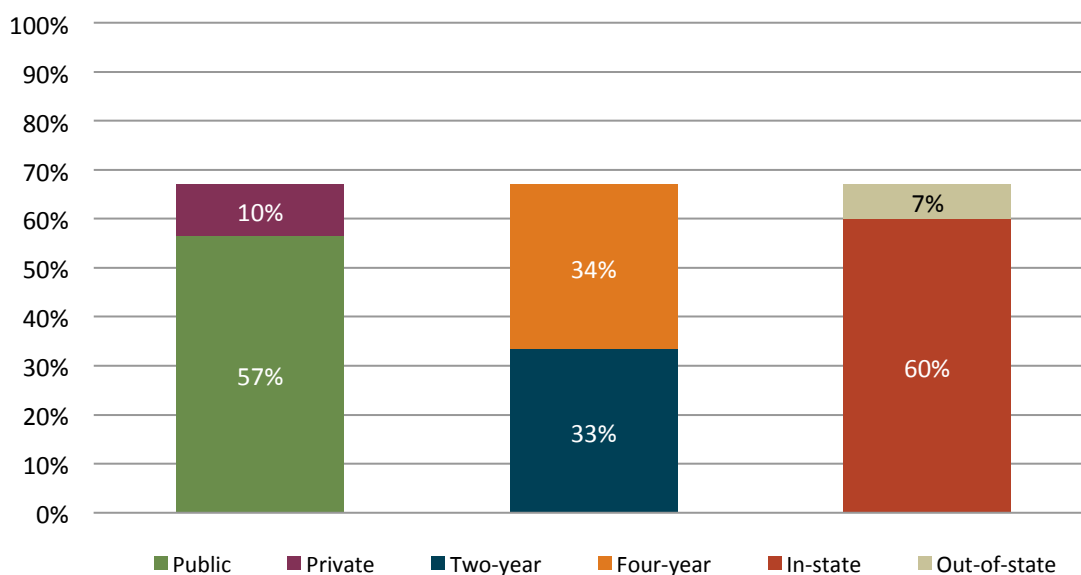
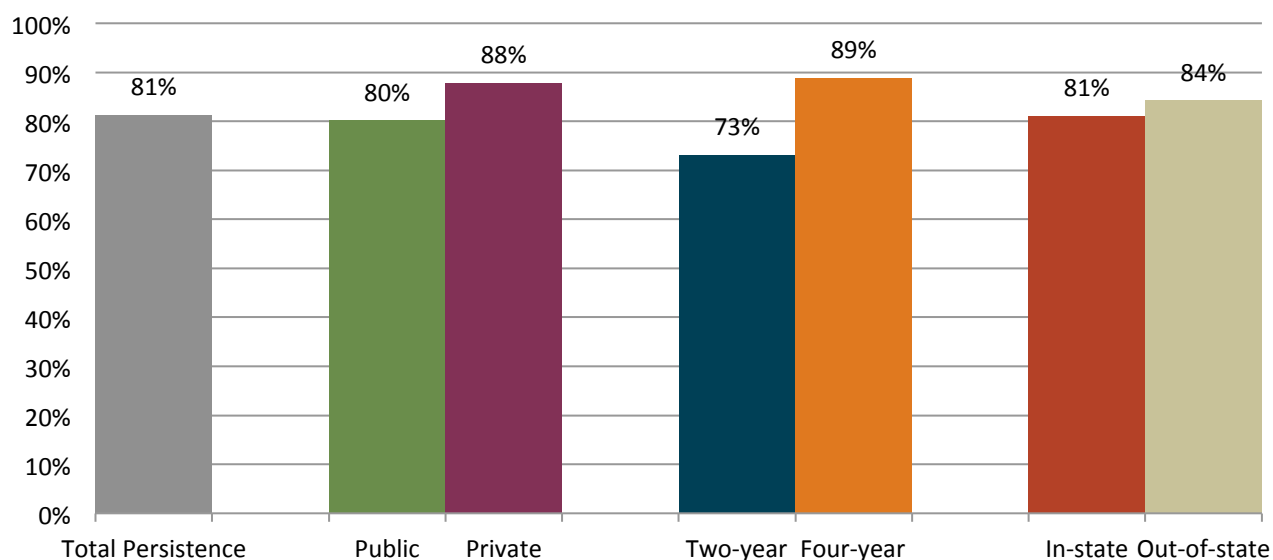


Table 8. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010

	Students Enrolled in First Year	Total Persistence	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	22,108	81%	80%	88%	73%	89%	81%	84%

Figure 8. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010



Outcomes for Students from Low Income, Rural High Schools

Table 9. College Enrollment Rates in the First Fall after High School Graduation for Classes 2011 and 2012

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2011	26,360	51%	44%	6%	24%	26%	46%	5%
2012	24,374	50%	44%	6%	22%	28%	45%	5%

Figure 9. College Enrollment Rates in the First Fall after High School Graduation for Classes 2011 and 2012

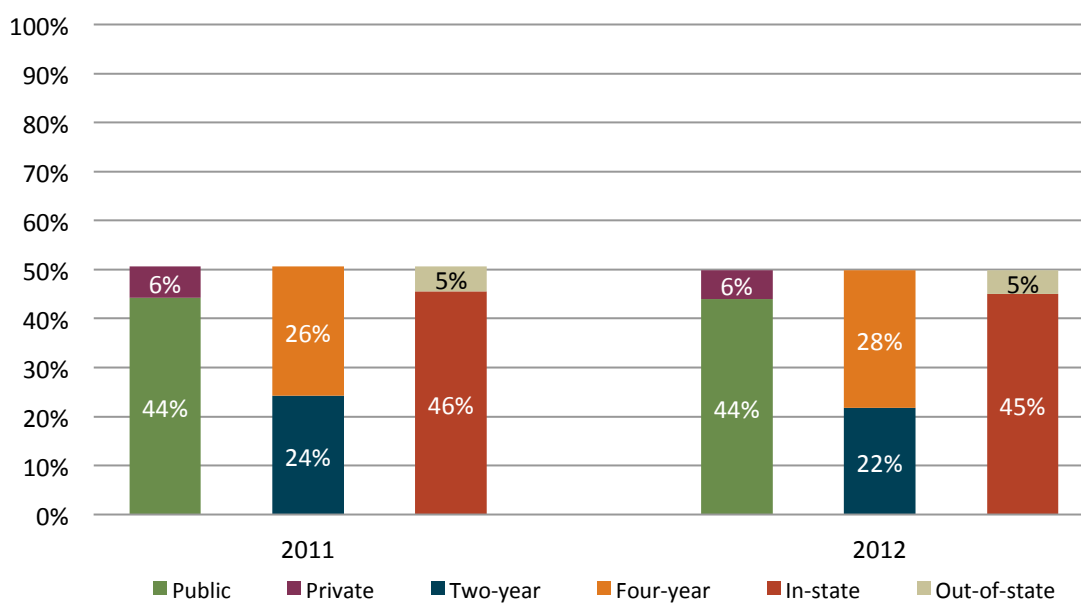


Table 10. College Enrollment Rates in the First Year after High School Graduation for Classes 2010 and 2011

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	24,299	59%	52%	7%	31%	28%	53%	5%
2011	26,360	57%	50%	7%	29%	28%	51%	6%

Figure 10. College Enrollment Rates in the First Year after High School Graduation for Classes 2010 and 2011

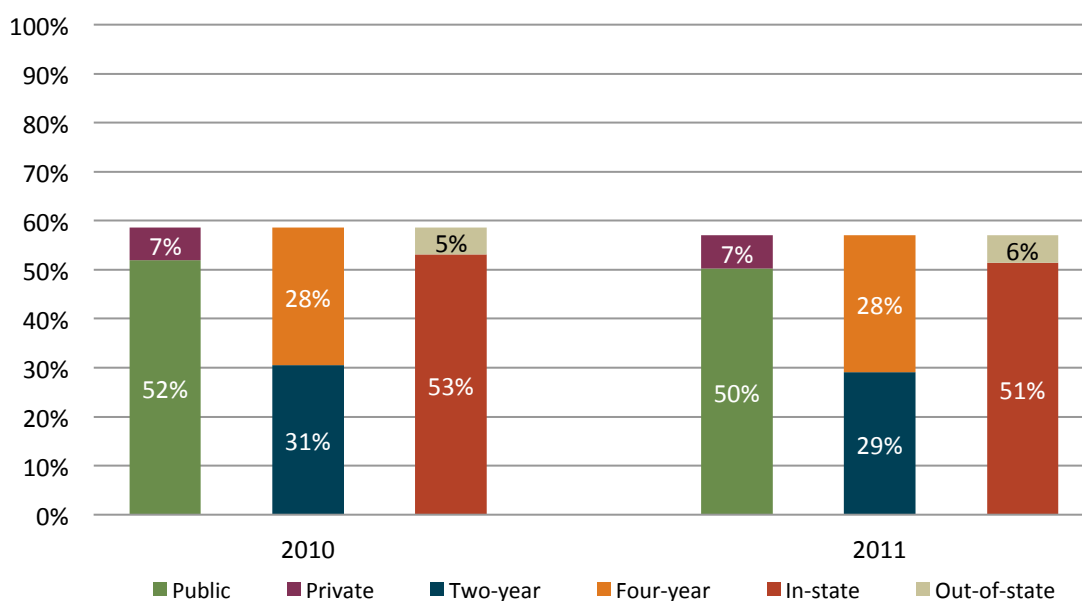


Table 11. College Enrollment Rates in the First Two Years after High School Graduation for Class of 2010

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	24,299	64%	57%	7%	35%	30%	58%	6%

Figure 11. College Enrollment Rates in the First Two Years after High School Graduation for Class of 2010

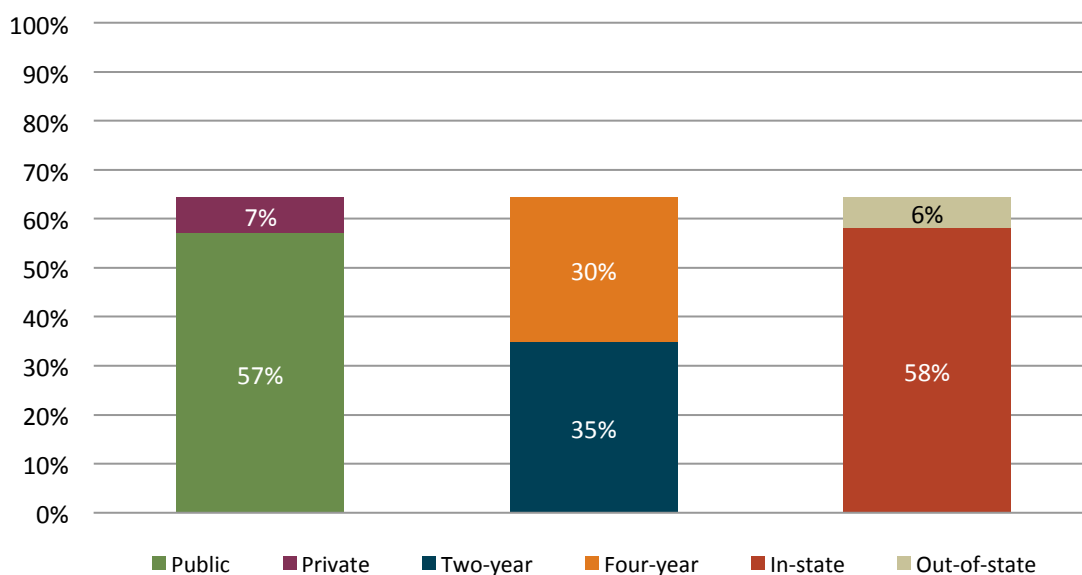
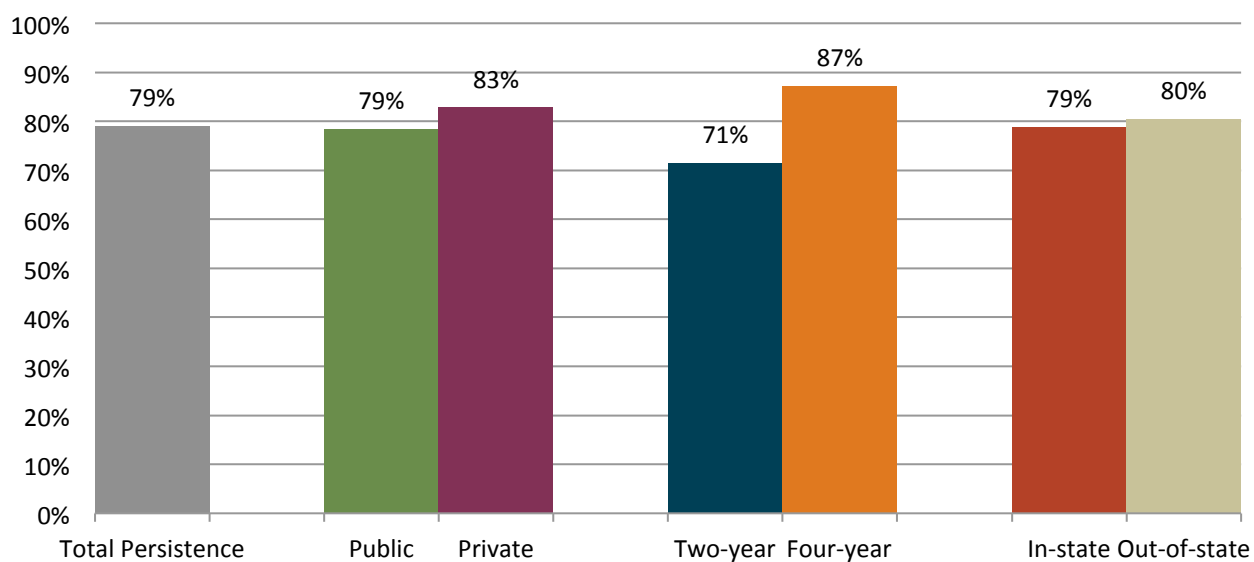


Table 12. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010

	Students Enrolled in First Year	Total Persistence	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	14,235	79%	79%	83%	71%	87%	79%	80%

Figure 12. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010

Outcomes for Students from Higher Income, High Minority, Urban High Schools

Table 13. College Enrollment Rates in the First Fall after High School Graduation for Classes 2011 and 2012

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2011	96,593	60%	51%	9%	22%	38%	51%	10%
2012	87,695	62%	52%	9%	23%	38%	52%	10%

Figure 13. College Enrollment Rates in the First Fall after High School Graduation for Classes 2011 and 2012

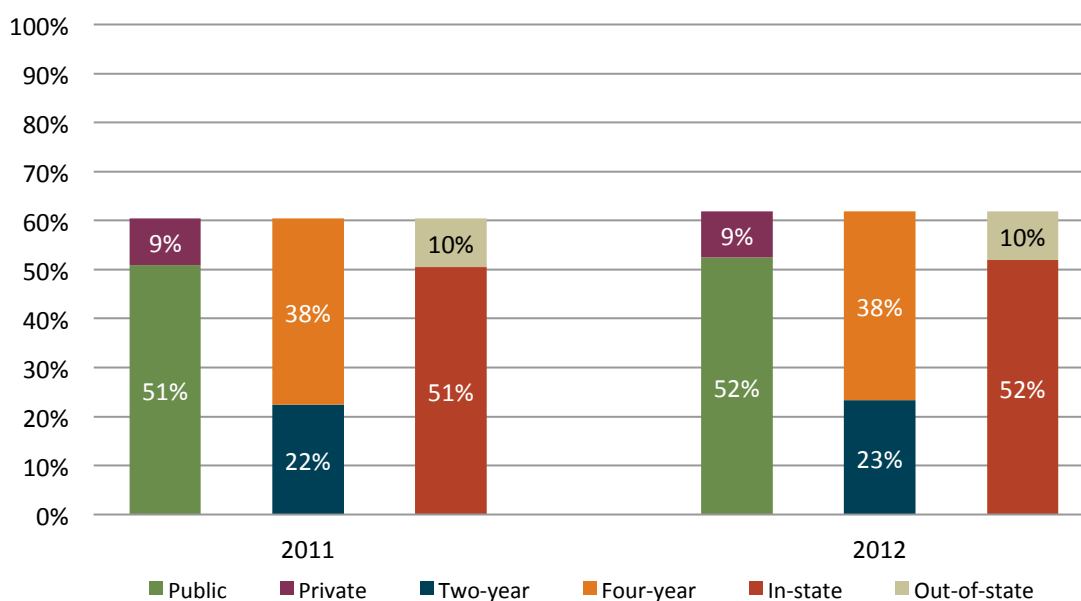


Table 14. College Enrollment Rates in the First Year after High School Graduation for Classes 2010 and 2011

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	110,645	70%	59%	11%	26%	43%	59%	11%
2011	96,593	66%	57%	10%	26%	40%	56%	10%

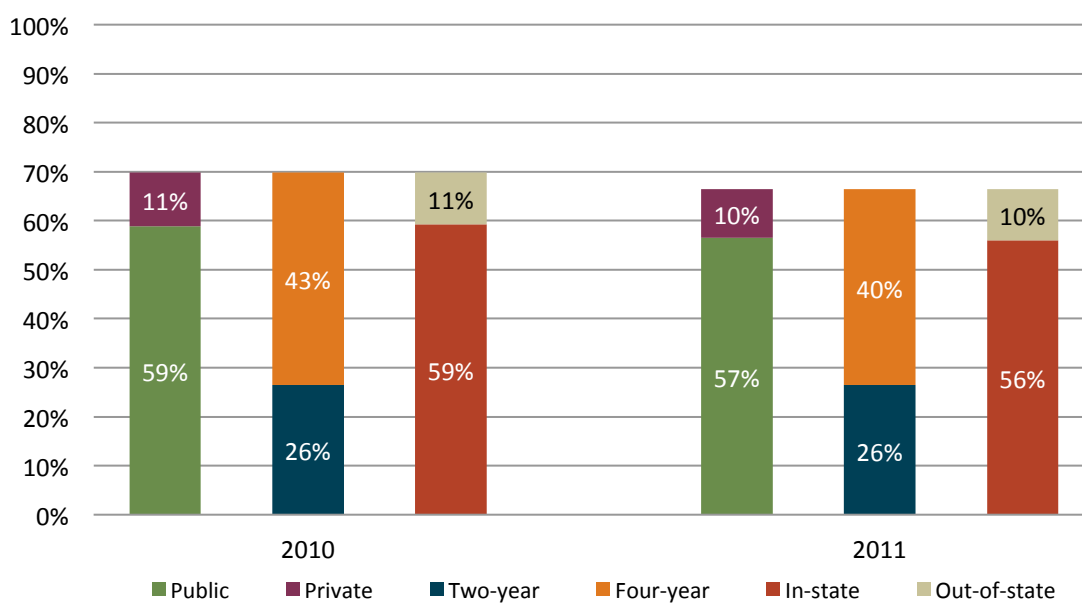
Figure 14. College Enrollment Rates in the First Year after High School Graduation for Classes 2010 and 2011

Table 15. College Enrollment Rates in the First Two Years after High School Graduation for Class of 2010

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	110,645	75%	64%	12%	30%	45%	64%	11%

Figure 15. College Enrollment Rates in the First Two Years after High School Graduation for Class of 2010

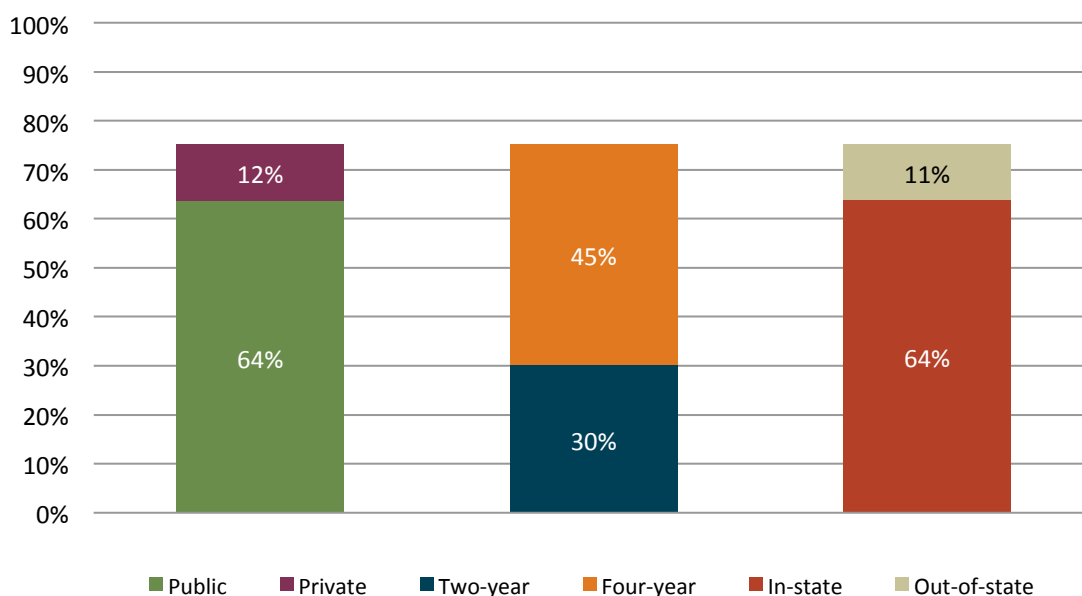
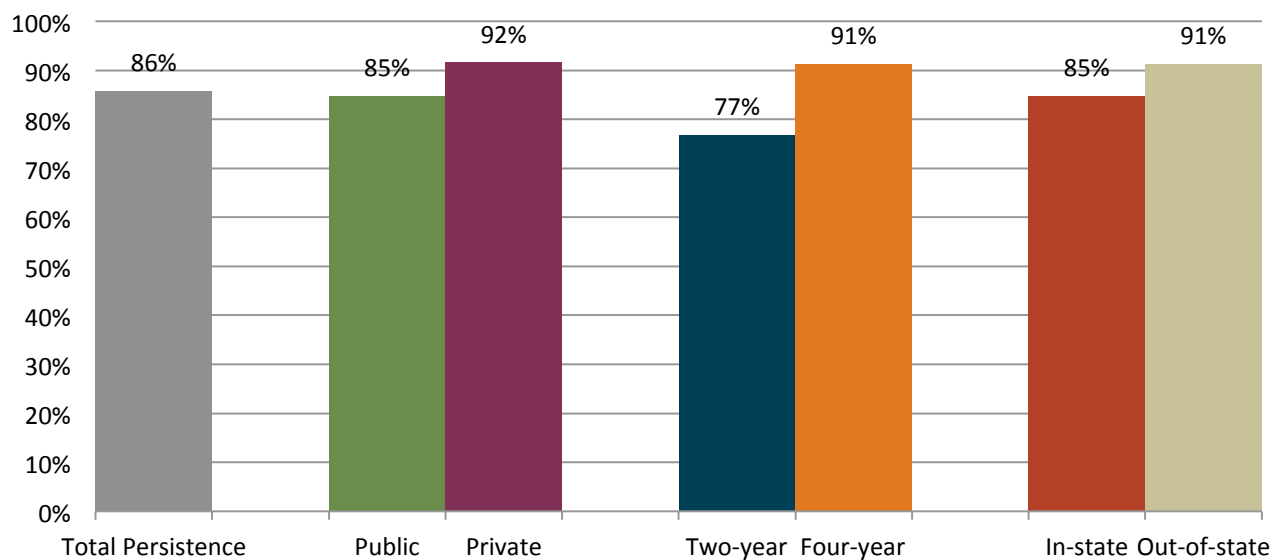


Table 16. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010

	Students Enrolled in First Year	Total Persistence	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	77,275	86%	85%	92%	77%	91%	85%	91%

Figure 16. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010

Outcomes for Students from Higher Income, Low Minority, Urban High Schools

Table 17. College Enrollment Rates in the First Fall after High School Graduation for Classes 2011 and 2012

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2011	296,886	70%	56%	14%	21%	48%	55%	15%
2012	286,189	70%	57%	13%	21%	48%	54%	16%

Figure 17. College Enrollment Rates in the First Fall after High School Graduation for Classes 2011 and 2012

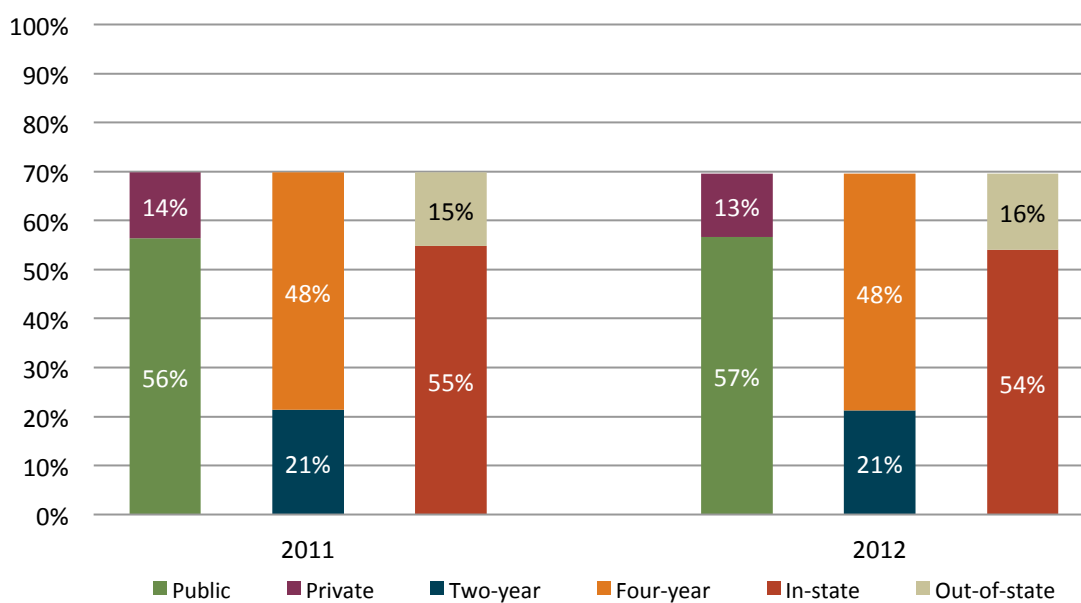


Table 18. College Enrollment Rates in the First Year after High School Graduation for Classes 2010 and 2011

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	370,129	75%	60%	15%	24%	50%	59%	15%
2011	296,886	74%	60%	14%	24%	50%	58%	16%

Figure 18. College Enrollment Rates in the First Year after High School Graduation for Classes 2010 and 2011

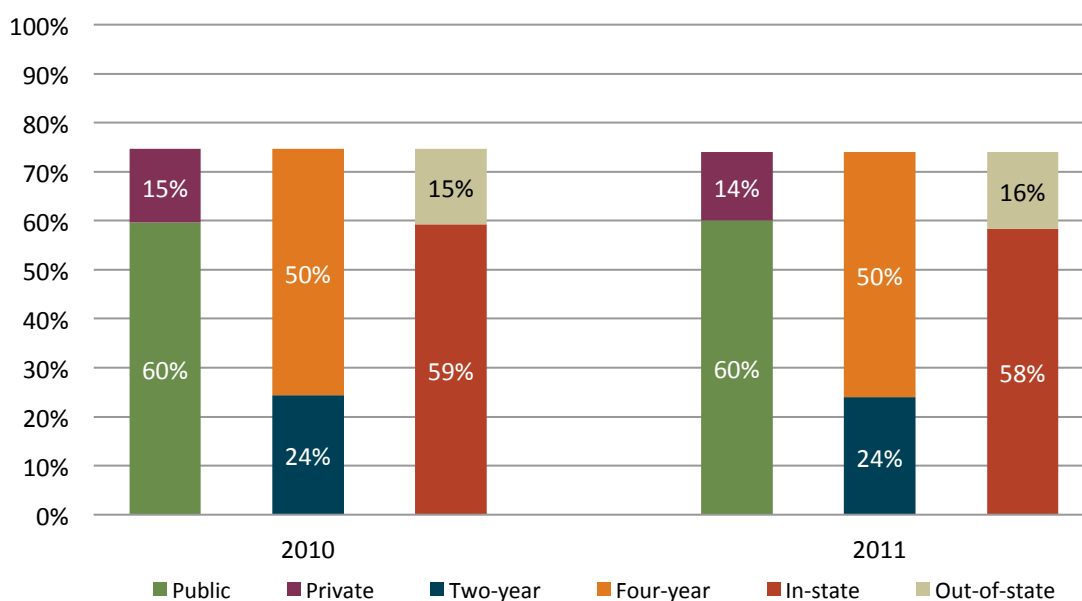


Table 19. College Enrollment Rates in the First Two Years after High School Graduation for Class of 2010

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	370,129	79%	63%	16%	27%	52%	63%	16%

Figure 19. College Enrollment Rates in the First Two Years after High School Graduation for Class of 2010

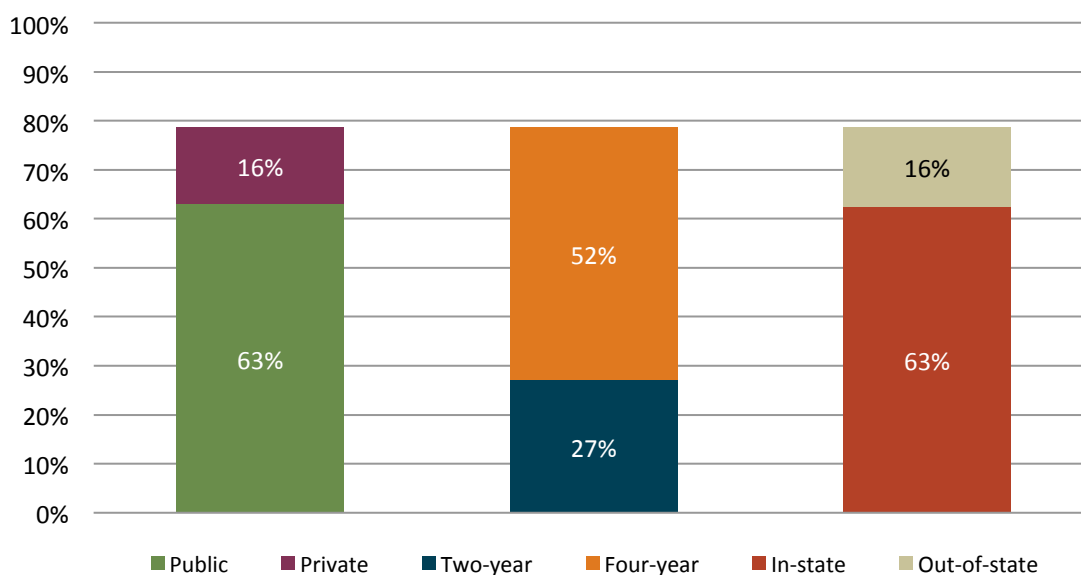
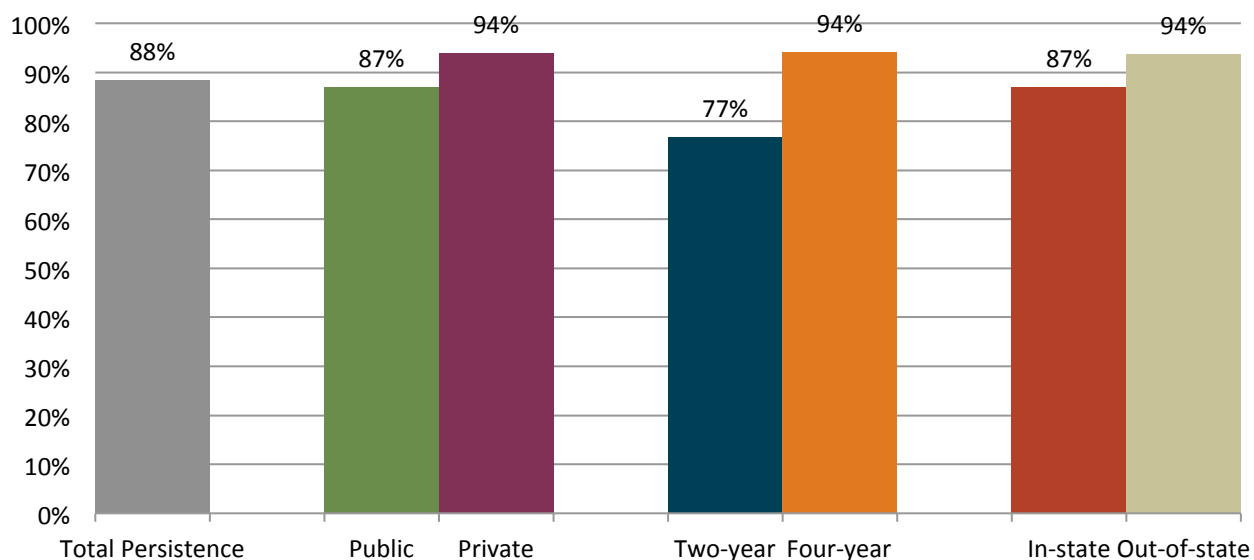


Table 20. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010

	Students Enrolled in First Year	Total Persistence	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	276,274	88%	87%	94%	77%	94%	87%	94%

Figure 20. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010

Outcomes for Students from Higher Income, Rural High Schools

Table 21. College Enrollment Rates in the First Fall after High School Graduation for Classes 2011 and 2012

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2011	86,054	66%	55%	11%	23%	43%	54%	11%
2012	81,394	65%	55%	11%	22%	44%	53%	12%

Figure 21. College Enrollment Rates in the First Fall after High School Graduation for Classes 2011 and 2012

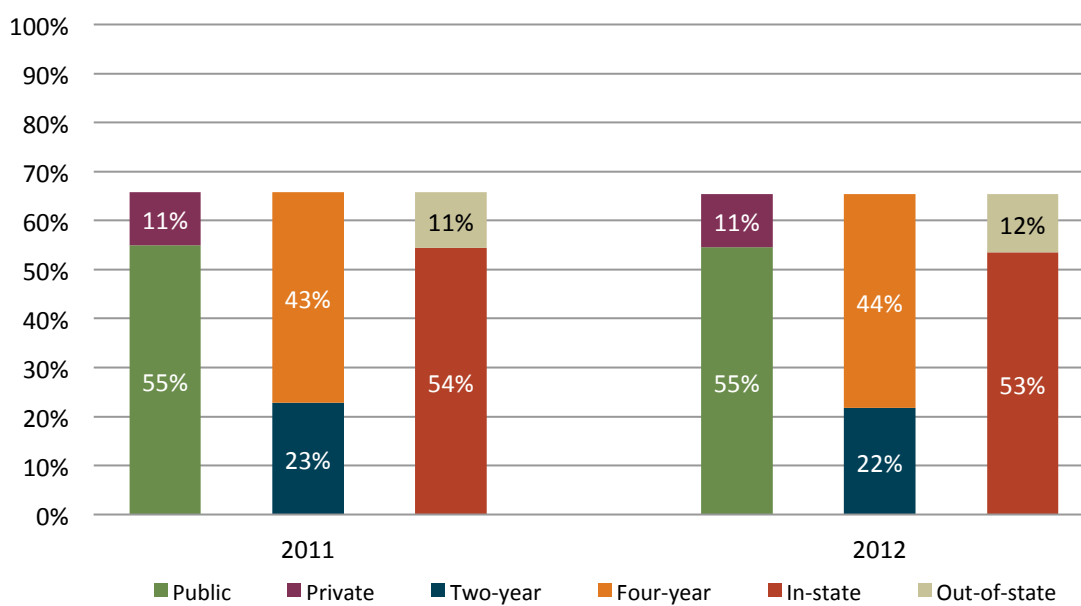


Table 22. College Enrollment Rates in the First Year after High School Graduation for Classes 2010 and 2011

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	96,927	72%	58%	13%	27%	45%	59%	12%
2011	86,054	71%	59%	11%	26%	45%	59%	12%

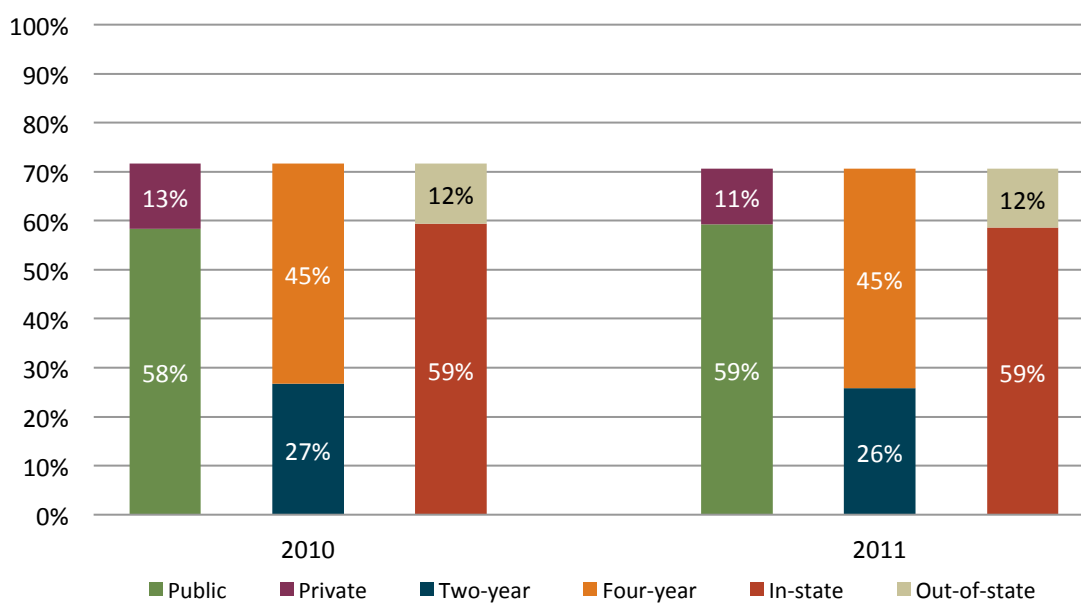
Figure 22. College Enrollment Rates in the First Year after High School Graduation for Classes 2010 and 2011

Table 23. College Enrollment Rates in the First Two Years after High School Graduation for Class of 2010

	Total N	Total Enrollment	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	96,927	76%	62%	14%	30%	46%	63%	13%

Figure 23. College Enrollment Rates in the First Two Years after High School Graduation for Class of 2010

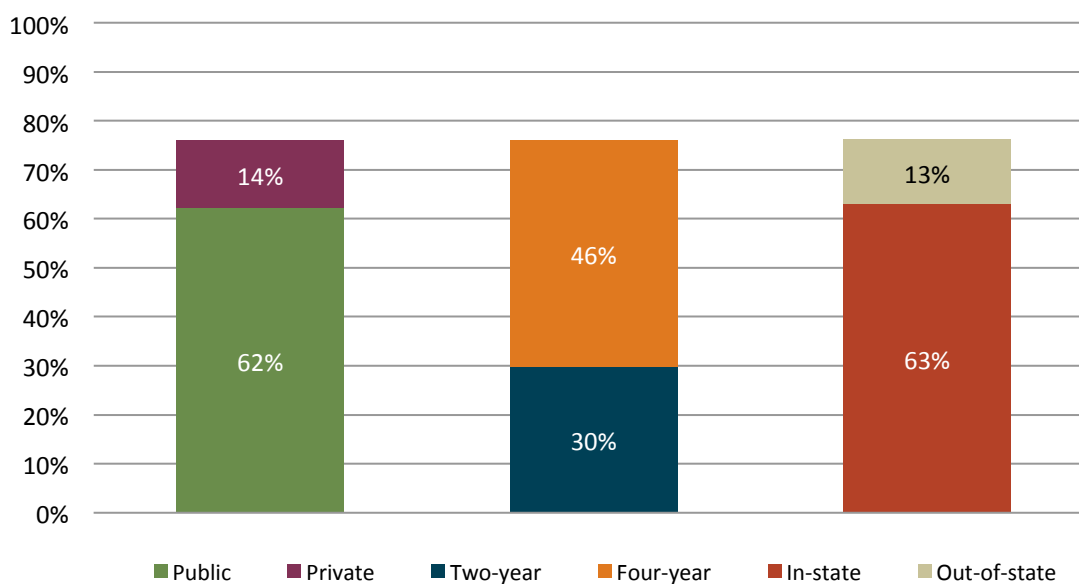
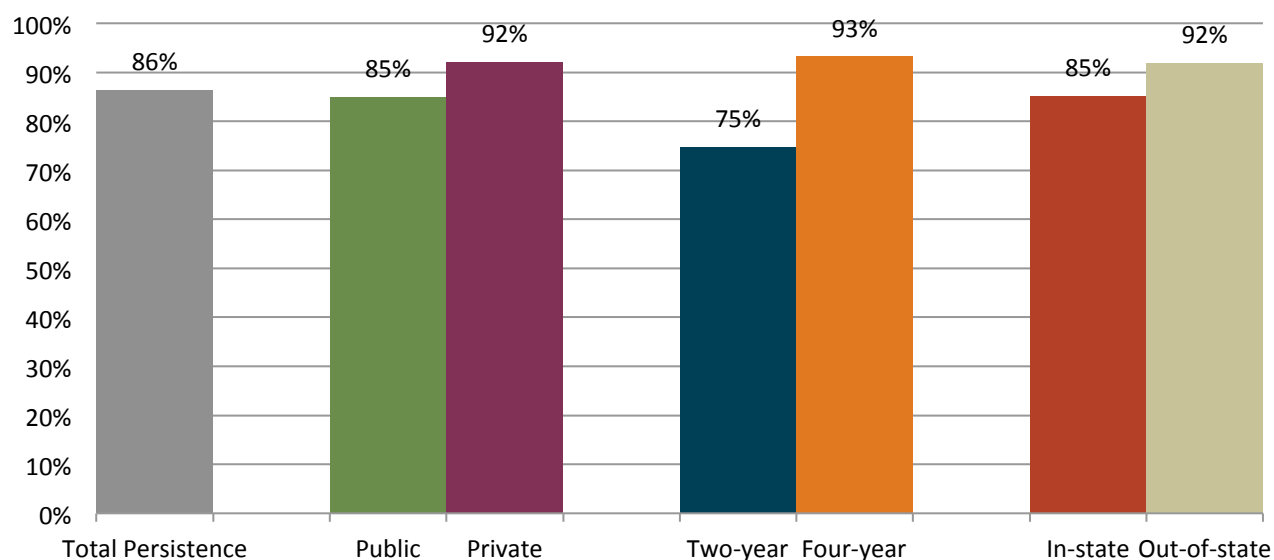


Table 24. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010

	Students Enrolled in First Year	Total Persistence	Public	Private	Two-year	Four-year	In-state	Out-of-state
2010	69,452	86%	85%	92%	75%	93%	85%	92%

Figure 24. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010

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Appendix A: Methodological Notes

This report contains college enrollment and persistence outcomes for high school graduating classes 2010 through 2012. The results presented in the report center on the following outcomes:

1. College enrollment in the
 - i. first fall after high school graduation;
 - ii. first year after high school graduation; and
 - iii. first two years after high school graduation.
2. Persistence from the first to the second year of college.

The outcomes are presented by type of college attended, including public and private institutions, two-year and four-year institutions, and in-state and out-of-state institutions. These characteristics are defined by IPEDS Institutional Characteristics data as of 2010. In-state designations are defined relative to the state in which the high school is located, not the residency of individual students.

High School Graduates Data

The high school dataset used for this report is based on a voluntary sample and is not a nationally representative sample of schools or of high school graduates. High school diploma data are submitted to the National Student Clearinghouse (the Clearinghouse) by schools and districts that participate in the StudentTracker for High Schools (STHS) service. High schools participating in this service pay a small annual fee (typically \$425) to receive an extensive set of analytic data reports, three times per year, detailing the postsecondary access and success outcomes for up to eight cohorts of their graduating classes. In general, the participating schools tend to have greater representation among schools with lower income, higher minority enrollments, and urban locales.

This report is based on the data submitted to the Clearinghouse on graduating classes 2010 through 2012. Table A1 shows the number of participating high schools and high school graduates included in this report compared to the total number of U.S. high schools and high school graduates. All types of high schools, including both public and private schools, participate in the Clearinghouse STHS service. However, only participating regular public high schools were included in the report.

Table A1. Number of High Schools and High School Graduates Included in the Report*

Academic Year ¹	Number of Participating High Schools	Percent of All U.S. Public High Schools ²	Total N (Number of graduates in participating high schools)	Percent of All U.S. Public High School Graduates ³
2009-2010	3,086	17.0%	850,937	27.7%
2010-2011	2,711	15.0%	759,819	24.5%
2011-2012	2,789	15.4%	705,226	23.1%

**The number of high schools participating in the Clearinghouse STHS service is larger than what is indicated here because only participating regular public high schools were included in the report.*

¹ Academic year is defined as the period between September 1 and August 31.

² The total number of schools used in the denominator of this calculation was obtained from NCES' Elementary and Secondary Information System (ELSi). The public school information is available from the Common Core of Data only through 2010-11. The number of public schools for 2011-12 is an estimate, equal to the number from 2010-11.

³ The total number of high school graduates used in the denominator of this calculation is an estimate provided in Prescott, B. T., & Bransberger, P. (2012). Knocking at the college door: Projections of high school graduates (8th ed.). Boulder, CO: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

Definitions of High School Categories

We used the Common Core of Data (CCD) to construct the sampling frame of schools. The CCD is the Department of Education's primary database on public elementary and secondary education in the United States. From the CCD, we created a sample frame that contains all regular public schools with a 12th grade.

In order to enable high schools to compare their own outcomes with those of similar high schools, the outcomes in this report are presented on the basis of school-level characteristics: low income and higher income, high minority and low minority, as well as urban and rural. Membership in these categories for each academic year is based on CCD data for the corresponding year with one exception: for the academic year of 2011-2012, the categories are based on the information from the same source for 2010-2011.

Low-income schools are defined as schools where at least 50% of the entire student population (not just graduating seniors) is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Minority schools are defined as those schools where at least 40 percent of the students are black or Hispanic. Urban/rural is defined by the NCES urban-centric locale code. Schools with a code from 11 to 33 (covering city, suburb, and town) are defined as urban; those with a code from 41 to 43 (covering three types of rural areas) are defined as rural.

Using all combinations of these characteristics would result in eight groups of high schools. However, due to relatively lower sample participation among rural schools (see Table A2), the four groups of rural schools were combined into two by dropping the minority category. Thus, the outcomes are presented for the following six groups of high schools:

- Low income, high minority, urban
 - Low income, low minority, urban
 - Low income, rural
 - Higher income, high minority, urban
 - Higher income, low minority, urban
 - Higher income, rural
-

Table A2. Number of High Schools and High School Graduates Included in the Report by High School Category

Group	Academic Year	Number of Participating High Schools	Percent of U.S. Grade 12 Enrollment Represented*	Number of States Represented	Total N (Number of graduates in sample)
Low Income, High Minority, Urban Schools	2009-10	872	41.5%	38	213,076
	2010-11	927	37.8%	39	218,792
	2011-12	775	34.0%	37	191,672
Low Income, Low Minority, Urban Schools	2009-10	162	30.1%	31	35,861
	2010-11	155	25.5%	30	35,134
	2011-12	149	25.1%	29	33,902
Low Income, Rural Schools	2009-10	138	12.3%	26	24,299
	2010-11	142	11.9%	30	26,360
	2011-12	280	11.4%	30	24,374
Higher Income, High Minority, Urban Schools	2009-10	355	33.7%	24	110,645
	2010-11	287	33.3%	29	96,593
	2011-12	258	30.8%	28	87,695
Higher Income, Low Minority, Urban Schools	2009-10	1,096	29.5%	46	370,129
	2010-11	850	25.0%	47	296,886
	2011-12	843	24.2%	50	286,189
Higher Income, Rural Schools	2009-10	463	16.8%	45	96,927
	2010-11	350	15.0%	42	86,054
	2011-12	484	14.7%	45	81,394

The numbers used in both the denominator and numerator of this calculation were obtained from NCES' Elementary and Secondary Information System (ELSi). The denominator is the number of grade 12 enrollments for all schools in a particular high school category. The numerator is the number of grade 12 enrollments for participating public high schools within the category. Grade 12 enrollment was used because the information on the number of graduates for each high school category created for this report is not available. Grade 12 enrollment information is available from the Common Core of Data only through 2010-11. The numbers for 2011-12 are estimates, equal to the numbers from 2010-11.

Postsecondary Enrollments Data

College enrollment and persistence outcomes are determined by matching the graduate files received from high schools each year to the postsecondary enrollment data held by the National Student Clearinghouse. The National Student Clearinghouse is the nation's trusted source for education verification and student educational outcomes. Currently, Clearinghouse data include more than 3,400 postsecondary institutions covering 95 percent of all enrollments in U.S. Title IV degree-granting postsecondary institutions (for detailed coverage of postsecondary enrollments see Appendix B). Because the database is comprised of student-level data, researchers can use it to link concurrent as well as consecutive enrollments of individual students at multiple institutions — a capability that distinguishes the Clearinghouse data from national databases built with institution-level data.

In order to preserve comparability between this report and the reports that schools and districts receive on their graduates' college access and persistence rates through the Clearinghouse's StudentTracker service, we did not adjust the results to account for the possibility that a student's enrollment outcome was not captured due to noncoverage of Clearinghouse data.

Definitions of Outcomes

College enrollment in the first fall after high school graduation: Percentage of high school students who enrolled in a two- or four-year postsecondary institution in the fall semester immediately following graduation. The fall semester immediately following graduation is defined as any enrollment that occurs between August 15 and October 31.

College enrollment in the first year after high school graduation: Percentage of high school students who enrolled in a two- or four-year postsecondary institution in the academic year immediately following graduation. The first year after high school includes any enrollment that occurs between August 15 of the graduation year and August 14 of the following year.

College enrollment in the first two years after high school graduation: Percentage of high school students who enrolled in a two- or four-year postsecondary institution in the first two years following graduation. The first two years after high school includes any enrollment that occurs between August 15 of the graduation year and August 14 of the second year.

Persistence from first to second year of college: Percentage of students enrolled in the first year after high school graduation who remained enrolled in postsecondary education in the second year. This is the percentage of students who re-enrolled at any postsecondary institution, not necessarily the same one they started in. Thus, it is different from the typical measure of retention at the same institution.

Appendix B: Postsecondary Coverage Tables

National Student Clearinghouse Coverage of Postsecondary Enrollments by Institution Type (Title IV, Degree-Granting Institutions)

Institution Type	Fall 2010 (%)	Fall 2011 (%)	Fall 2012 (%)
National	93.06	93.98	95.20
Four-Year Public	99.32	99.54	99.57
Four-Year Private	84.94	86.44	89.82
Two-Year Public	97.28	97.72	98.60
Two-Year Private	14.82	25.43	26.69

Appendix C: Tables for Section 1: National Results

Table 1. Rates of College Enrollment in the First Fall after High School Graduation for Class of 2012

	Low Income Schools			Higher Income Schools		
	Urban Schools		Rural Schools	Urban Schools		Rural Schools
	High Minority Schools	Low Minority Schools	All Schools	High Minority Schools	Low Minority Schools	All Schools
Total N	191,672	33,902	24,374	87,695	286,189	81,394
Total	53%	55%	50%	62%	70%	65%
Public	47%	47%	44%	52%	57%	55%
Private	6%	7%	6%	9%	13%	11%
Two-year	24%	25%	22%	23%	21%	22%
Four-year	30%	30%	28%	38%	48%	44%
In-state	47%	49%	45%	52%	54%	53%
Out-of-state	6%	6%	5%	10%	16%	12%

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure A. College Enrollment Rates in the First Fall after High School Graduation for Class of 2012, Figure B. College Enrollment Rates in Four-Year Institutions the First Fall after High School Graduation for Class of 2012, and Figure C. Rates of College Enrollment in Two-Year Institutions in the First Fall after High School Graduation as Proportion of Total College-Going Rate for Class of 2012.

Table 2. Rates of College Enrollment in the First Fall after High School Graduation for Class of 2011

	Low Income Schools			Higher Income Schools		
	Urban Schools		Rural Schools	Urban Schools		Rural Schools
	High Minority Schools	Low Minority Schools	All Schools	High Minority Schools	Low Minority Schools	All Schools
Total N	218,792	35,134	26,360	96,593	296,886	86,054
Total	53%	56%	51%	60%	70%	66%
Public	46%	49%	44%	51%	56%	55%
Private	7%	8%	6%	9%	14%	11%
Two-year	23%	26%	24%	22%	21%	23%
Four-year	30%	30%	26%	38%	48%	43%
In-state	47%	50%	46%	51%	55%	54%
Out-of-state	6%	6%	5%	10%	15%	11%

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure D. Changes in Enrollment Rates from First Fall to the First Year after High School.

Table 3. Rates of College Enrollment in the First Year after High School Graduation for Class of 2011

	Low Income Schools			Higher Income Schools		
	Urban Schools		Rural Schools	Urban Schools		Rural Schools
	High Minority Schools	Low Minority Schools	All Schools	High Minority Schools	Low Minority Schools	All Schools
Total N	218,792	35,134	26,360	96,593	296,886	86,054
Total	60%	62%	57%	66%	74%	71%
Public	52%	53%	50%	57%	60%	59%
Private	8%	8%	7%	10%	14%	11%
Two-year	28%	30%	29%	26%	24%	26%
Four-year	32%	31%	28%	40%	50%	45%
In-state	54%	55%	51%	56%	58%	59%
Out-of-state	6%	6%	6%	10%	16%	12%

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure D. Changes in Enrollment Rates from First Fall to the First Year after High School.

Table 4. Rates of College Enrollment in the First Year after High School Graduation for Class of 2010

	Low Income Schools			Higher Income Schools		
	Urban Schools		Rural Schools	Urban Schools		Rural Schools
	High Minority Schools	Low Minority Schools	All Schools	High Minority Schools	Low Minority Schools	All Schools
Total N	213,076	35,861	24,299	110,645	370,129	96,927
Total	60%	62%	59%	70%	75%	72%
Public	52%	52%	52%	59%	60%	58%
Private	8%	10%	7%	11%	15%	13%
Two-year	29%	29%	31%	26%	24%	27%
Four-year	31%	32%	28%	43%	50%	45%
In-state	54%	55%	53%	59%	59%	59%
Out-of-state	6%	6%	5%	11%	15%	12%

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure E. Changes in Enrollment Rates from First Year to the First Two Years after High School Graduation for Class of 2010.

Table 5. Rates of College Enrollment in the First Two Years after High School Graduation for Class of 2010

	Low Income Schools			Higher Income Schools		
	Urban Schools		Rural Schools	Urban Schools		Rural Schools
	High Minority Schools	Low Minority Schools	All Schools	High Minority Schools	Low Minority Schools	All Schools
Total N	213,076	35,861	24,299	110,645	370,129	96,927
Total	66%	67%	64%	75%	79%	76%
Public	57%	57%	57%	64%	63%	62%
Private	9%	10%	7%	12%	16%	14%
Two-year	33%	33%	35%	30%	27%	30%
Four-year	32%	34%	30%	45%	52%	46%
In-state	59%	60%	58%	64%	63%	63%
Out-of-state	7%	7%	6%	11%	16%	13%

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure E. Changes in Enrollment Rates from First Year to the First Two Years after High School Graduation for Class of 2010.

Table 6. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010

	Low Income Schools			Higher Income Schools		
	Urban Schools		Rural Schools	Urban Schools		Rural Schools
	High Minority Schools	Low Minority Schools	All Schools	High Minority Schools	Low Minority Schools	All Schools
Total N	127,316	22,108	14,235	77,275	276,274	69,452
Total	80%	81%	79%	86%	88%	86%
Public	80%	80%	79%	85%	87%	85%
Private	84%	88%	83%	92%	94%	92%
Two-year	72%	73%	71%	77%	77%	75%
Four-year	88%	89%	87%	91%	94%	93%
In-state	80%	81%	79%	85%	87%	85%
Out-of-state	84%	84%	80%	91%	94%	92%

Data from this appendix table are displayed in the report in Figure F. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010 by Institutional Level and Figure G. Persistence Rates from First to Second Year of College for Class of 2010 by Institutional Type.

High School Benchmarks Report FAQs

1. What is the High School Benchmarks Report? What are its goals and purposes?

The High School Benchmarks Report, from the National Student Clearinghouse® Research Center™, is a descriptive study released annually on the national college progression rates of high schools that participate in the National Student Clearinghouse's StudentTrackerSM service. As StudentTracker participants, many schools and districts now have access to timely reports on the college access and persistence rates of their own graduates. While some data on the college-going rates of high school students at the national level are available, typically, high schools cannot benchmark their students' outcomes to those of other schools that have similar proportions of low income and minority students. This report, the first in the annual series, provides the comparison high schools and districts need to place their StudentTracker results into context with the college access and persistence rates of schools with similar student populations and in similar locales across the country.

The data on which this report is based do not comprise a nationally representative sample of schools or high school graduates. Yet, it is a large and broad sample covering more than 2.3 million students over three years, or about a quarter of all U.S. high school graduates each year from all 50 states, and over 15 percent of all U.S. public high schools. While no causal inferences should be made based on these results alone, we believe they provide reasonable benchmarks for individual schools and districts using StudentTracker reports, and also make a significant contribution to discussions about equitable access to and persistence in postsecondary education for practitioners and policymakers at the school, district, state, and national levels.

2. How do I know to which category I should compare my high school's StudentTracker results?

We determined the high school categories for each year of the study based on school-level data in the Common Core of Data (CCD) at the National Center for Education Statistics. Since CCD data for 2012 had not been released during the period that the report was prepared, we used the 2011 school characteristics for the class of 2012.

3. My StudentTracker report shows the college enrollment rates for each racial and ethnic group of my students. Should I compare my non-minority students to the benchmark for low minority high schools?

The benchmarks are calculated based on school-level, not student-level characteristics. You should compare your school's overall results to the benchmark for the high school category most appropriate for your school.

4. How does the Clearinghouse get its data?

The high school data for this report comes from high schools that participate in the StudentTracker for High Schools service administered by the National Student Clearinghouse. Participating high schools pay a small annual fee to receive an extensive set of analytic data reports, three times per year, detailing the postsecondary access and success outcomes for up to eight cohorts of their graduating classes.

The data on college enrollments for this report, and for the StudentTracker reports that participating high schools receive, were drawn from the National Student Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse receives enrollment information from its participating colleges and universities several times per term. Participation is voluntary and provides important cost-saving benefits and efficiencies to institutions.

5. What about data coverage?

All types of high schools, including both public and private schools, participate in StudentTracker. However, only regular public high schools were included in the report. This is not a nationally representative sample of schools or high school graduates. Compared to all U.S. high schools, participating StudentTracker schools tend to have greater representation among schools with more low income students, minority enrollments, and urban locales. The sample, which includes schools from all 50 states and most of the 100 largest U.S. districts, covers about one-quarter of all public high school graduates each year.

College enrollment and persistence outcomes are determined by matching the graduate files received from high schools each year to the postsecondary enrollment data held by the National Student Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse is the nation's trusted source for education verification and student educational outcomes. Currently, Clearinghouse data include more than 3,400 postsecondary institutions covering 95 percent of all enrollments in U.S. Title IV degree-granting postsecondary institutions. Because the database is comprised of student-level data, researchers can use it to link concurrent as well as consecutive enrollments of individual students at multiple institutions — a capability that distinguishes the Clearinghouse data from national databases built with institution-level data.

6. What is the cohort for this study?

This report is based on data submitted to the Clearinghouse for high school graduating classes of 2010 through 2012.

7. How are the different categories of high schools defined in this study?

Report outcomes are based on school-level categories: low income and higher income, high minority and low minority, as well as urban and rural. Inclusion of schools in these categories for each academic year is based on information from the Common Core of Data at the National Center for Education Statistics.

- **Low-income** schools are defined as schools where at least 50 percent of the entire student population (not just graduating seniors) is eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch.
- **Minority** schools are defined as those schools where at least 40 percent of the students are black or Hispanic.
- **Urban/rural** is defined by the urban-centric locale code. Schools with a code from 11 to 33 (covering city, suburb, and town) are defined as urban; those with a code from 41 to 43 (covering three types of rural areas) are defined as rural.

8. Why are suburban and urban schools lumped together?

The number of high schools in the sample limited our ability to disaggregate the category groupings and still provide meaningful results. We hope to be able to provide more detailed breakdowns in future reports, as the number of participating high schools grows.

9. How are the various outcomes defined in this study?

Study outcomes are defined to match the college access and persistence rates that participating schools and districts receive for their own graduates through the Clearinghouse's StudentTracker service:

- **College enrollment in the first fall after high school graduation:** Percentage of high school students who enrolled in a two- or four-year postsecondary institution in the fall semester immediately following graduation. The fall semester immediately following graduation is defined as any enrollment that occurs between August 15 and October 31.
- **College enrollment in the first year after high school graduation:** Percentage of high school students who enrolled in a two- or four-year postsecondary institution at any time in the academic year immediately

following graduation. The first year after high school includes any enrollment that occurs between August 15 of the graduation year and August 14 of the following year.

- **College enrollment in the first two years after high school graduation:** Percentage of high school students who enrolled in a two- or four-year postsecondary institution at any time in the first two years following graduation. The first two years after high school includes any enrollment that occurs between August 15 of the graduation year and August 14 of the second year.
- **Persistence from first to second year of college:** Percentage of students enrolled in the first year after high school graduation who remained enrolled in postsecondary education in the second year. This is the percentage of students who re-enrolled at any postsecondary institution, not necessarily the same one they started in. Thus, it is different from the typical measure of retention at the same institution.

10. Does in-state and out-of-state college enrollment refer to the student's residency?

In-state enrollment means that the postsecondary institution is located in the same state as the high school.

11. How can I get a copy of the full report?

The High School Benchmarks Report is available at <http://nscresearchcenter.org>.

12. How can I learn more about the Clearinghouse data and best practices for its use?

For more information on the Clearinghouse data and how to work with it, please visit <http://nscresearchcenter.org> or contact research@studentclearinghouse.org.