

# Maine High School Graduates: Trends in College-Going, Persistence, and Completion August 2015

This report summarizes data from the Maine Department of Education (DOE) and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) on college enrollment among recent Maine public high school graduates. It presents statistics at the state and superintendent region levels on initial college-going after high school graduation, persistence to the second year of college, and college degree completion. School-level data are available at the DOE's Data Warehouse website:

[http://dw.education.maine.gov/DirectoryManager/Web/Maine\\_report/MaineLanding.aspx](http://dw.education.maine.gov/DirectoryManager/Web/Maine_report/MaineLanding.aspx); select *Research & Reports*, then *College Going Reports*.

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# I. College-Going

## College-Going Overview

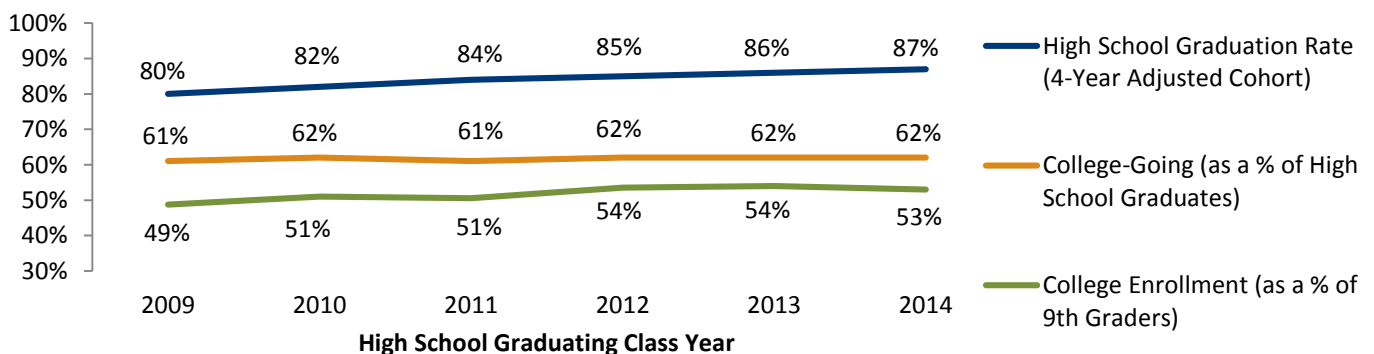
The proportion of Maine public high school graduates enrolling directly in college has increased from 57% of the class of 2006 to 62% of the class of 2014. Among college-going students, 71% enrolled in a Maine institution in 2014—up from 67% in 2006—and 29% enrolled in institutions outside Maine. Three-quarters of college-going students now enroll in four-year institutions, down from 79% in 2006, while the proportion matriculating into two-year institutions grew from 21% in 2006 to 25% in 2014. Roughly two-thirds of college-going Maine high school graduates enroll in public higher education institutions, while the other one-third enroll in private colleges and universities.

**Figure 1a: College-Going in the Fall Semester after High School Graduation  
State of Maine**

	High School Graduating Class Year									
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	
Total in the class	14,187	14,338	14,191	13,899	14,238	13,652	13,495	13,173	12,719	
Enrolled in college	8,075 57%	8,483 59%	8,735 62%	8,424 61%	8,693 62%	8,264 61%	8,347 62%	8,204 62%	7,828 62%	
4-year college	79%	79%	76%	76%	76%	77%	76%	75%	75%	
2-year college	21%	21%	24%	24%	24%	23%	24%	25%	25%	
Maine college	67%	69%	71%	69%	70%	70%	71%	72%	71%	
College outside Maine	33%	31%	29%	31%	30%	30%	29%	28%	29%	
Public institution	68%	68%	66%	65%	65%	66%	67%	67%	66%	
Private institution	32%	32%	34%	35%	35%	34%	33%	33%	34%	

Despite steady percentages of high school graduates enrolling in college since 2009, the increase in high school graduation rates means that a greater proportion of Maine’s ninth graders are ultimately enrolling in college, as shown below.<sup>1</sup> For instance, college enrollment of 2009’s high school graduating class represented 48.7% of 2005 9th graders. That figure rose to 53.2% for the 2014 graduating class, as a proportion of 2010 9th graders.

**Figure 1b: High School Graduation and College Enrollment of Entering High School Cohort  
State of Maine**

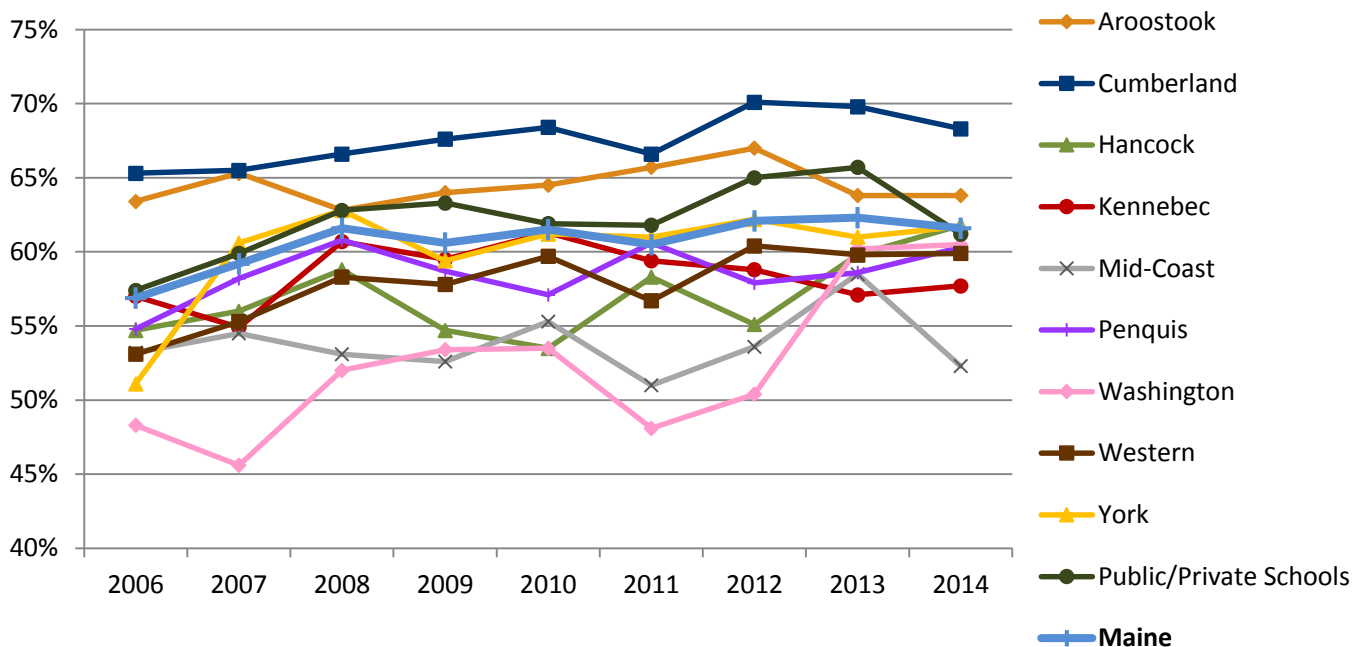


### College-Going by Superintendent Region

Among Maine’s nine Superintendent Regions<sup>2</sup>, Aroostook and Cumberland consistently have above-average college-going rates. In 2014, graduates from the Hancock and York regions enrolled in college at rates close to the Maine average, while college-going among graduates from the Kennebec, Mid-Coast, Penquis, Washington, and Western regions was below the state’s rate. College-going among publicly funded private schools fell below the Maine state average for the first time in recent years, and college-going in Hancock County – where rates have historically been below average – exceeded the state average for the first time.

**Figure 2: College-Going in the Fall Semester after High School Graduation  
Maine Superintendent Regions**

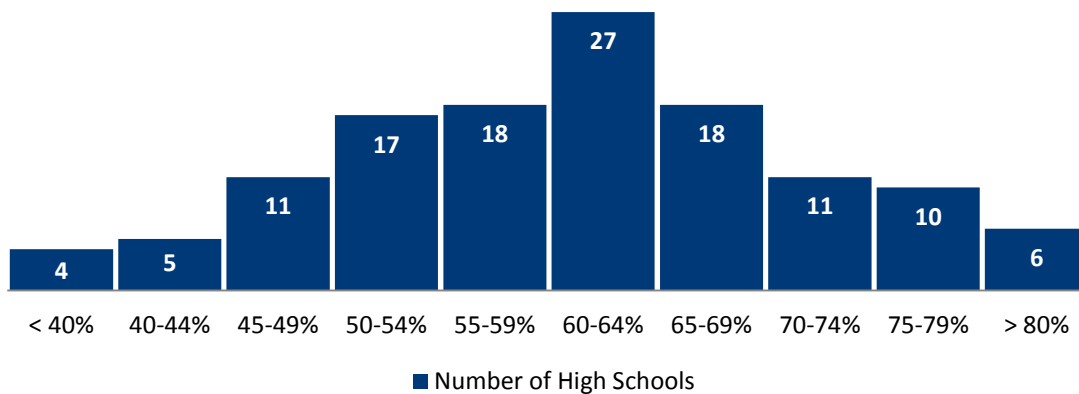
Superintendent Region	High School Graduating Class Year								
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Aroostook County	63.4%	65.3%	62.8%	64.0%	64.5%	65.7%	67.0%	63.8%	63.8%
Cumberland County	65.3%	65.5%	66.6%	67.6%	68.4%	66.5%	70.1%	69.8%	68.3%
Hancock County	54.7%	56.0%	58.8%	54.7%	53.5%	58.3%	55.1%	59.8%	61.8%
Kennebec Valley	57.0%	54.9%	60.7%	59.5%	61.3%	59.4%	58.8%	57.1%	57.7%
Mid-Coast	53.2%	54.5%	53.1%	52.6%	55.3%	51.0%	53.6%	58.5%	52.3%
Penquis	54.8%	58.2%	60.8%	58.7%	57.1%	60.6%	57.9%	58.6%	60.3%
Washington County <sup>3</sup>	48.3%	45.6%	52.0%	53.4%	53.5%	48.1%	50.4%	60.2%	60.5%
Western Maine	53.1%	55.3%	58.3%	57.8%	59.7%	56.7%	60.4%	59.8%	59.9%
York County	51.1%	60.6%	62.8%	59.4%	61.2%	61.0%	62.0%	61.0%	61.7%
Public/Private Schools <sup>4</sup>	57.4%	59.9%	62.8%	63.3%	61.9%	61.8%	65.0%	65.7%	61.2%
<b>Maine</b>	<b>56.9%</b>	<b>59.2%</b>	<b>61.6%</b>	<b>60.6%</b>	<b>61.5%</b>	<b>60.5%</b>	<b>62.1%</b>	<b>62.3%</b>	<b>61.6%</b>



### College-Going by High School

The college-going rates at Maine schools vary widely, as demonstrated in Figure 3. In 2014, 16 high schools enrolled at least three-quarters of their graduating classes in college, while 20 high schools sent less than half. Size of school does not appear to correlate with college-going rates.

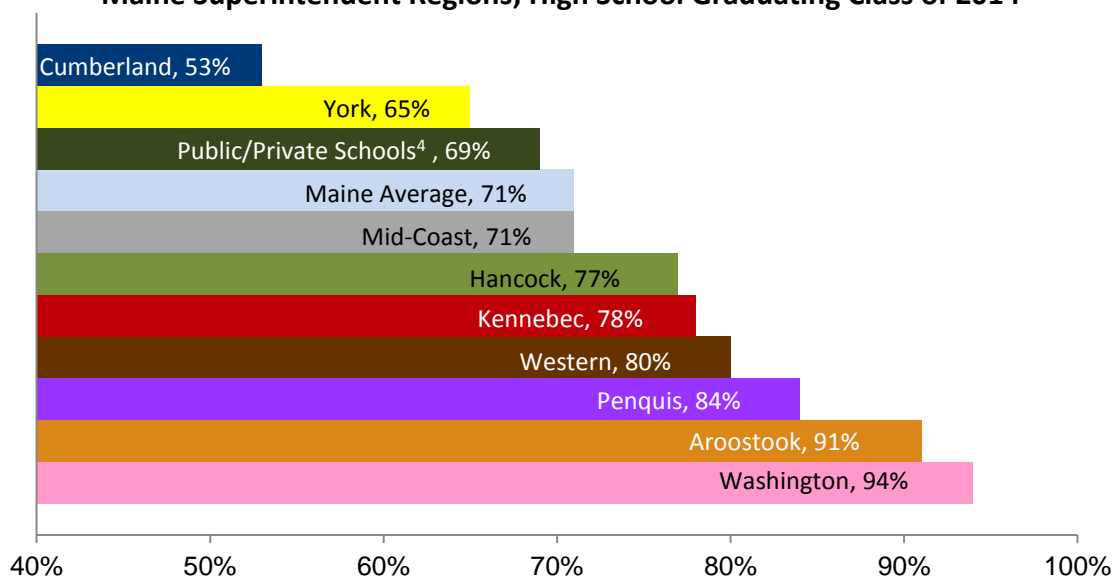
**Figure 3: College-Going in the Fall Semester after High School Graduation  
Maine Schools, High School Graduating Class of 2014**



### In-State and Out-of-State Enrollment

In-state enrollment is the proportion of college-going students who enroll at a postsecondary institution in Maine. In 2014, in-state enrollment was the lowest among graduates of the southernmost Superintendent Regions (Cumberland and York) and the publicly funded private schools. In the far northern and eastern regions of the state, in-state enrollment rates were the highest: 91% in Aroostook and 94% in Washington.

**Figure 4: In-State Enrollment in the Fall Semester after High School Graduation  
Maine Superintendent Regions, High School Graduating Class of 2014**



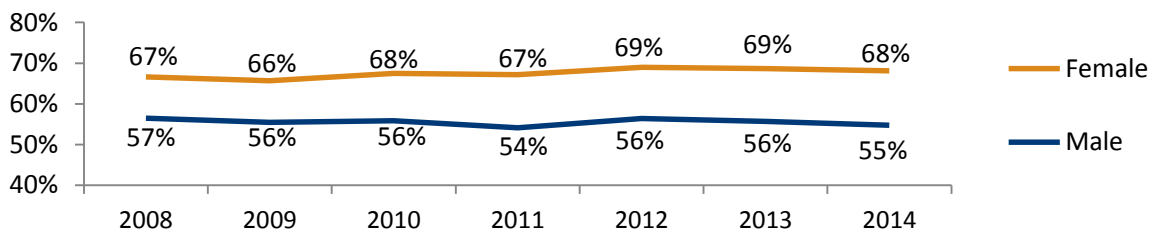
## College-Going by Student Demographics

College enrollment data are now available disaggregated based on students' gender, economic status, and race or ethnicity. As shown in the following charts, the biggest disparity in college-going is between economically disadvantaged students and their higher-income peers. The Appendix on pages 10-11 shows student counts and includes a chart comparing the latest college-going, persistence, and completion rates for each group.

### College-Going by Gender

Female students graduating from public high schools in Maine are more likely to enroll in college than are male students, a gap that has grown from 10 to 13 percentage points since 2008.

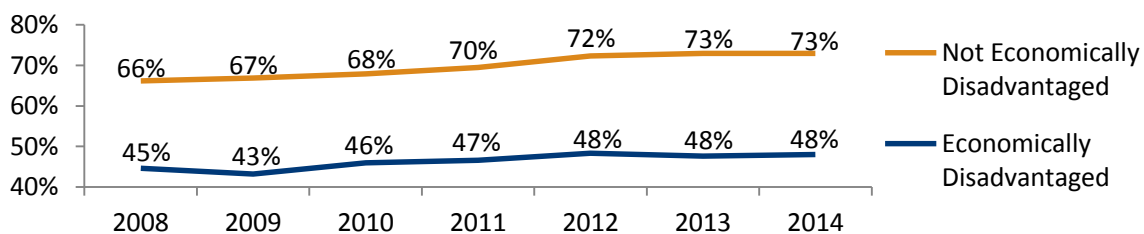
**Figure 5: College-Going in the Fall Semester after High School Graduation by Gender**



### College-Going by Economic Status

Students are considered economically disadvantaged if their family income qualifies them for free or reduced-price school meals.<sup>5</sup> Economically disadvantaged Maine students are much less likely to go to college than their higher-income peers. While enrollment for both groups has increased since 2008, the gap also grew—from 21 to 24 percentage points (see Figure 6). At the same time, the proportion of economically disadvantaged students has increased. The number of economically disadvantaged Maine high school graduates grew from 3,078 in the class of 2008 to 5,724 in 2014—from 22% to 45% of their graduating classes.

**Figure 6: College-Going in the Fall Semester after High School Graduation by Economic Status**

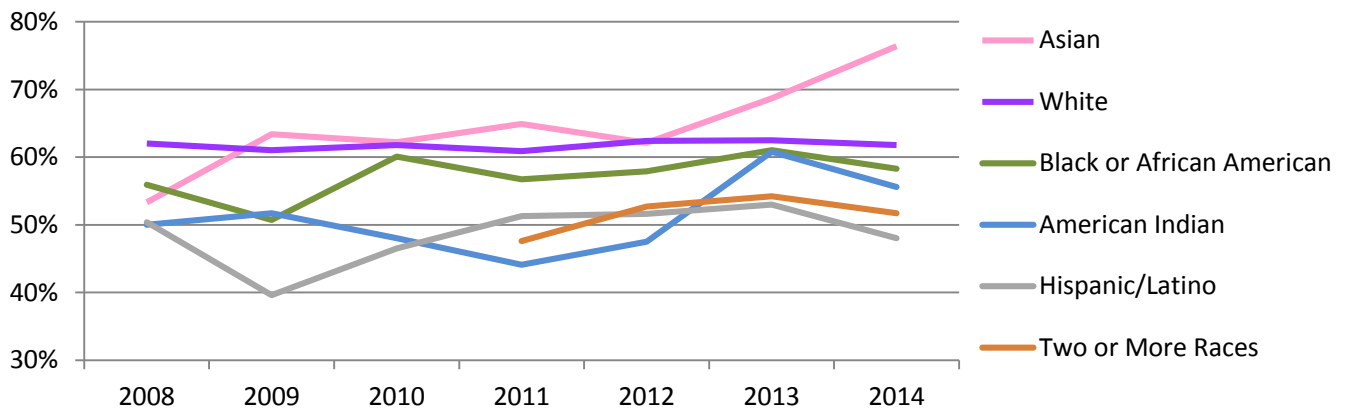


### College-Going by Race and Ethnicity

White students, the vast majority of Maine high school graduates, have college-going rates equal to the state average. From 2008 to 2014, the number of nonwhite high school graduates in Maine increased from 711 to 1,011 students—and from 5% to 8% of their high school graduating classes. While college-going rates have consistently been below average among American Indian, Black, and Hispanic/Latino students, as well as students of two or more races, Asian students’ college-going has been at or above the Maine average since 2009, as shown in Figure 7. From 2013 to 2014, college-going among Asian students increased by 7 percentage points, while college-going declined among all other racial and ethnic groups. The Appendix includes student counts for each race and ethnicity as well as college persistence and completion rates.

**Figure 7: College-Going in the Fall Semester after High School Graduation by Race and Ethnicity<sup>6</sup>**

Race or Ethnicity	High School Graduating Class Year						
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
American Indian	50%	52%	48%	44%	48%	61%	56%
Asian	53%	63%	62%	65%	62%	69%	76%
Black or African American	56%	51%	60%	57%	58%	61%	58%
Hispanic/Latino	50%	40%	47%	51%	52%	53%	48%
White	62%	61%	62%	61%	62%	63%	62%
Two or More Races	N/A	N/A	N/A	48%	53%	54%	52%



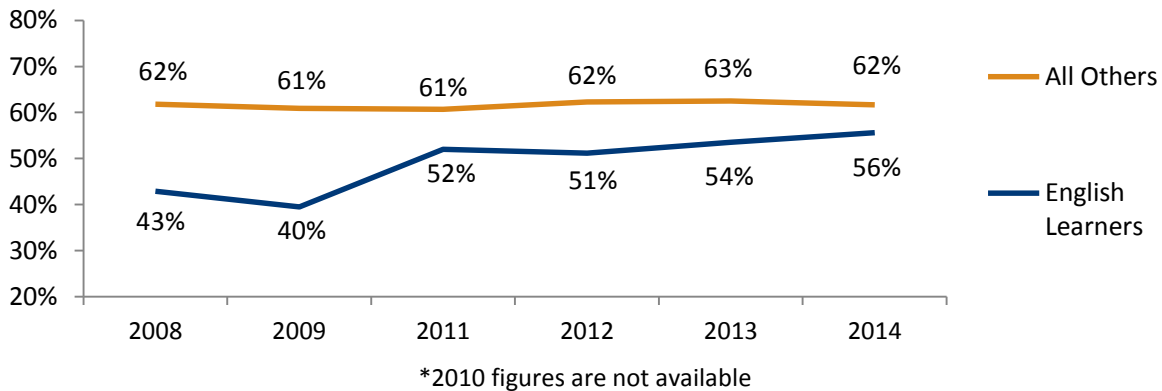
## College-Going by Academic Characteristics

The National Student Clearinghouse also reports on college enrollment for English learners, students eligible for special education services, and by academic performance on Maine standardized tests. Student counts and comparisons of college-going and persistence for these characteristics are available in the Appendix on pages 10-11.

### College-Going by English Learners

English learner status is determined using an assessment that identifies limited English language proficiency. While English learners are less likely to go to college than their counterparts, this gap is narrowing. In 2014, 56% of English learners enrolled in college – compared 43% in 2008.

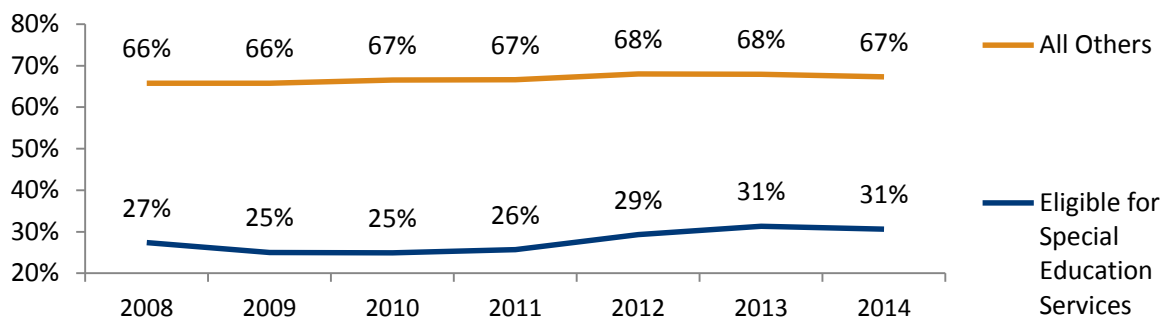
**Figure 8: College-Going in the Fall Semester after High School Graduation by English Learner Status\***



### College-Going by Eligibility for Special Education Services

The proportion of graduating Maine high school students who are eligible for special education services is increasing, from 11% in 2008 to 16% in 2014. Students eligible for special education services enrolled in college at a rate of 31% in 2014 – up from 27% in 2008.

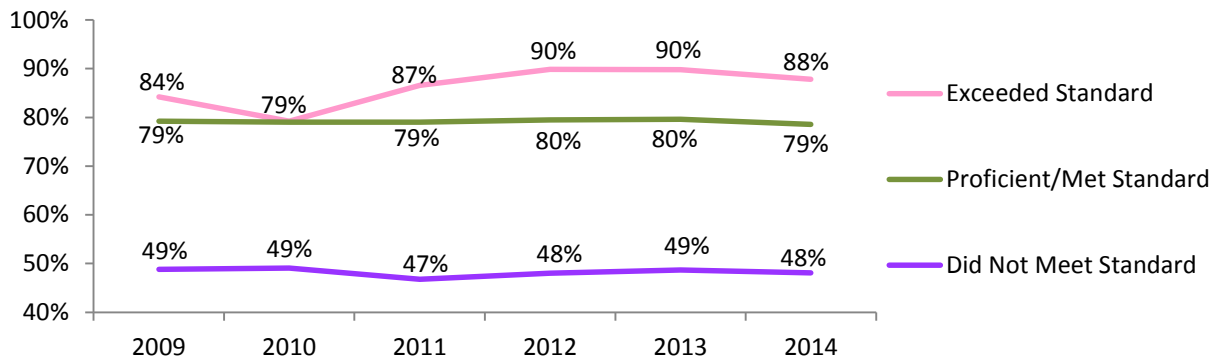
**Figure 9: College-Going in the Fall Semester after High School Graduation by Eligibility for Special Education Services**



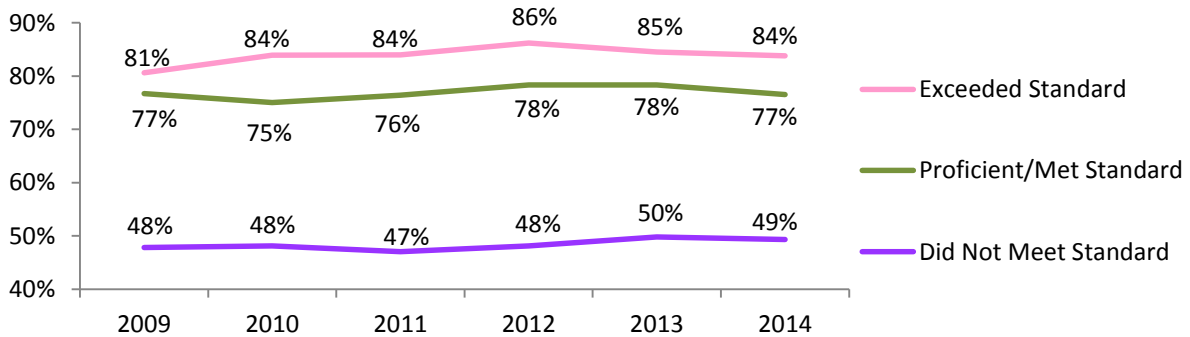
### College-Going by Academic Performance

The NSC also reports college-going by academic performance, as measured by scores on the Maine High School Assessment. Students who meet or exceed the state math and reading standards in 11<sup>th</sup> grade are much more likely to enroll in college than are those who do not meet the standards, as shown in Figures 10 and 11. For 2014, the top college-going rate of any of the student subgroups is 88% among students who exceeded the high school math standard, followed by students who exceeded the reading standard (84%). Nearly one-half of students who do not meet Maine High School Assessment standards enroll in college. Student counts for these standards are shown in the Appendix.

**Figure 10: College-Going in the Fall Semester after High School Graduation by High School Math Proficiency**



**Figure 11: College-Going in the Fall Semester after High School Graduation by High School Reading Proficiency**





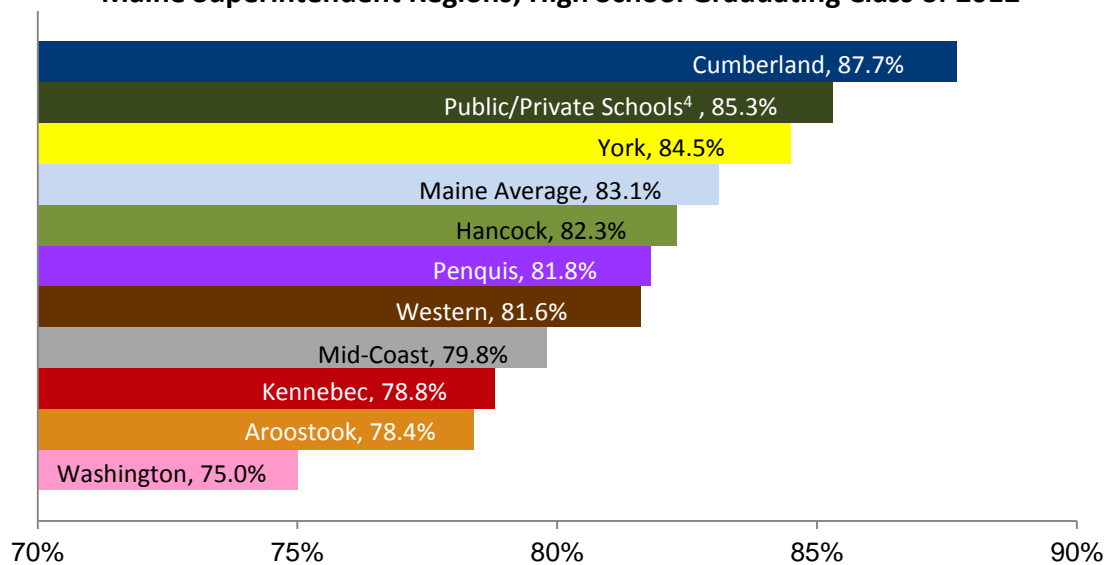
## II. College Persistence

The National Student Clearinghouse reports college persistence when students return to college at any institution for a second year, as a percentage of those who enrolled in college within one year after graduating from high school. Statewide, freshman to sophomore persistence has dropped slightly, from a high of 84.7% in the class of 2007 to 83.1% in the class of 2012. College persistence varies considerably for students from different regions of Maine, as shown in Figure 12. Likewise, persistence varies across demographic and academic traits (see Appendix).

**Figure 12a: Freshman-to-Sophomore College Persistence  
Maine Superintendent Regions**

Superintendent Region	High School Graduating Class Year						
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Aroostook County	79.4%	83.8%	84.2%	84.0%	80.6%	77.8%	78.4%
Cumberland County	87.9%	89.1%	88.1%	88.7%	89.2%	88.2%	87.7%
Hancock County	81.5%	81.2%	74.8%	78.3%	80.7%	78.9%	82.3%
Kennebec Valley	82.5%	84.6%	86.3%	82.1%	84.4%	80.7%	78.8%
Mid-Coast	83.8%	86.9%	83.3%	80.1%	83.5%	79.9%	79.8%
Penquis	82.4%	81.6%	81.8%	81.4%	83.4%	82.4%	81.8%
Washington County <sup>3</sup>	81.5%	79.9%	79.0%	77.2%	71.1%	82.8%	75.0%
Western Maine	79.2%	81.1%	83.7%	83.2%	83.0%	80.5%	81.6%
York County	87.0%	85.4%	82.1%	82.9%	84.5%	83.3%	84.5%
Public/Private Schools <sup>4</sup>	86.2%	83.7%	86.2%	83.8%	81.8%	87.8%	85.3%
<b>Maine</b>	<b>84.0%</b>	<b>84.7%</b>	<b>84.4%</b>	<b>83.8%</b>	<b>84.5%</b>	<b>83.3%</b>	<b>83.1%</b>

**Figure 12b: Freshman-to-Sophomore College Persistence  
Maine Superintendent Regions, High School Graduating Class of 2012**



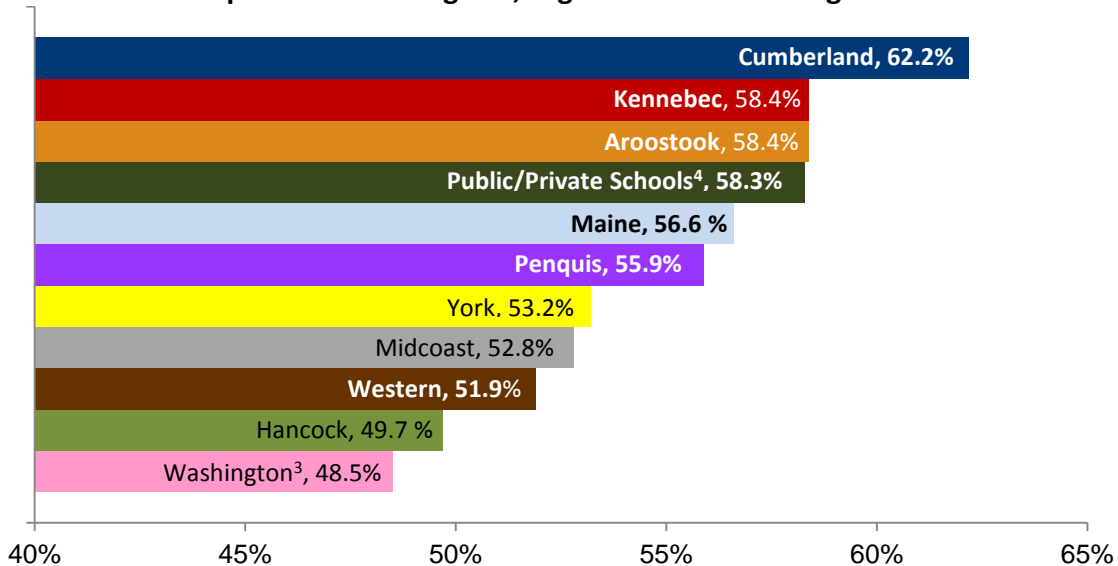
### III. College Completion

The National Student Clearinghouse reports college completion as the number of college degrees earned by members of each high school graduating class within six years (150% of normal program time for a bachelor’s degree). By this definition, of Maine students who graduated high school in 2008 and enrolled in college within two years, 57% completed college. Students from Cumberland County are more likely than students from any other Superintendent Region to complete college, as shown in Figure 13. College completion rates by demographic characteristics for the Class of 2008 are available in the Appendix.

**Figure 13a: College Degree Completion within Six Years  
Maine Superintendent Regions**

Superintendent Region	High School Graduation Year		
	2006	2007	2008
Aroostook County	55.5%	53.8%	58.4%
Cumberland County	62.2%	63.7%	62.2%
Hancock County	56.0%	53.9%	49.7%
Kennebec Valley	56.1%	58.7%	58.4%
Mid-Coast	53.7%	59.4%	52.8%
Penquis	54.1%	49.8%	55.9%
Washington County <sup>3</sup>	45.7%	46.5%	48.5%
Western Maine	53.6%	56.1%	51.9%
York County	63.3%	56.5%	53.2%
Public/Private Schools <sup>4</sup>	62.4%	59.4%	58.3%
<b>Maine</b>	<b>57.7%</b>	<b>57.5%</b>	<b>56.6%</b>

**Figure 13b: College Degree Completion within Six Years  
Maine Superintendent Regions, High School Graduating Class of 2008**



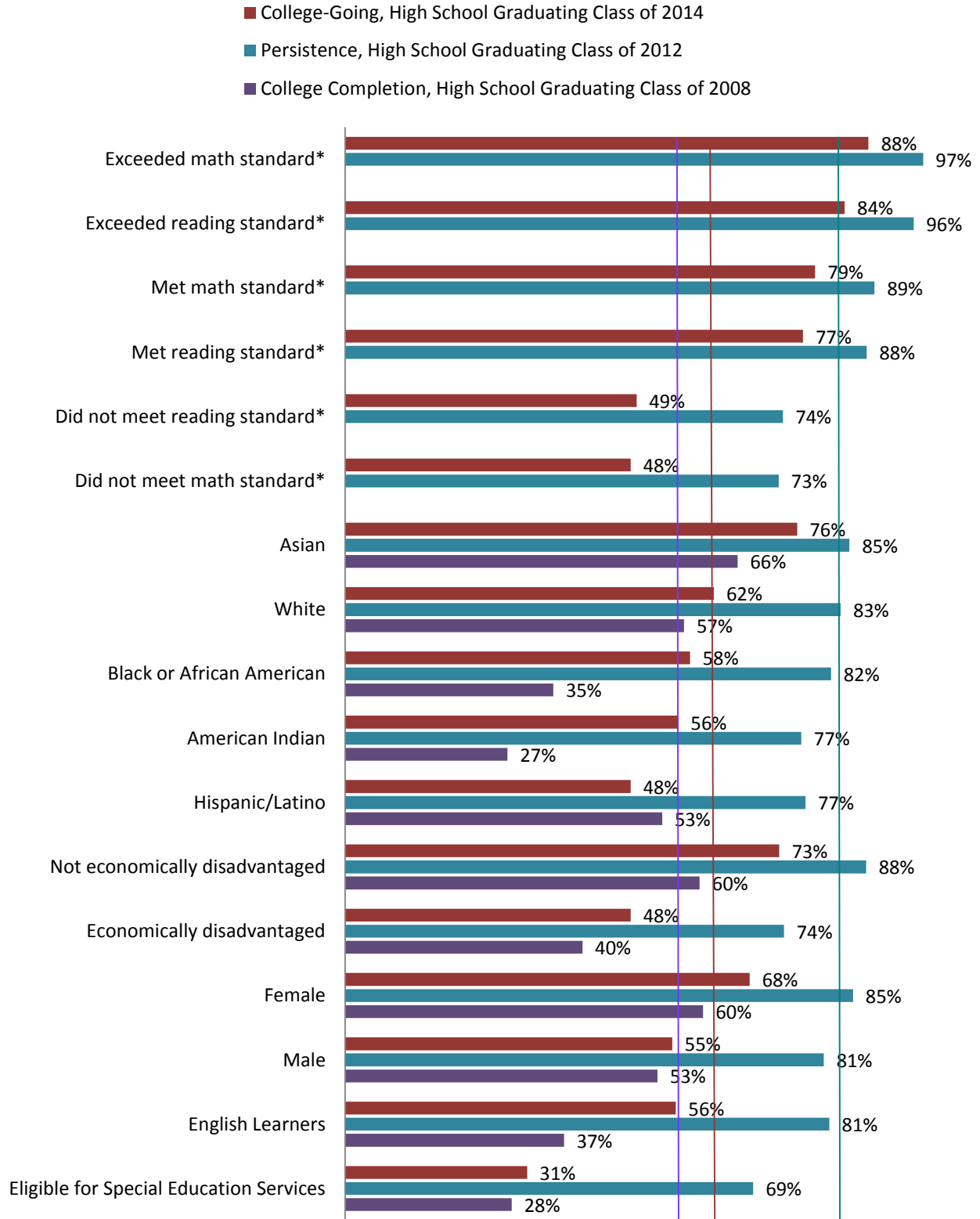
## IV. Appendix

### Student Counts by Subgroup

	High School Graduating Class						
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total in the class	14,191	13,899	14,113	13,634	13,255	13,173	12,719
<b>Gender</b>							
Female	7,101	6,983	6,896	6,743	6,397	6,511	6,429
Male	7,090	6,916	7,217	6,891	6,858	6,662	6,290
<b>Economic Status</b>							
Economically disadvantaged	3,078	3,665	4,075	5,327	5,425	5,418	5,724
Not economically disadvantaged	11,113	10,234	10,038	8,307	7,830	7,755	6,995
<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>							
American Indian	74	87	99	102	81	74	81
Asian	227	214	249	188	240	268	220
Black or African American	281	268	294	278	301	300	350
Hispanic/Latino	129	111	145	189	149	215	177
White	13,480	13,219	13,326	12,789	12,418	12,132	11,708
Two or more races <sup>6</sup>	N/A	N/A	N/A	88	66	184	183
<b>English Learner Status</b>							
English Learner	203	205	*	254	252	286	241
Not English Learner	13,988	13,694	*	13,398	13,243	12,887	12,478
<b>Eligibility for Special Education Services</b>							
Eligible for Special Education Services	1,559	1,777	1,698	2,032	2,067	2,022	1,990
Not eligible for Special Education Services	12,632	12,122	12,430	11,620	11,428	11,151	10,729
<b>Academic Performance: Math</b>							
Exceeded state math standard	N/A	665	595	524	557	588	591
Met state math standard	N/A	5,254	5,162	5,578	5,823	5,458	5,357
Did not meet state math standard	N/A	7,086	7,003	6,854	6,141	6,348	6,051
Unreported	N/A	894	1,353	687	734	779	720
<b>Academic Performance: Reading</b>							
Exceeded state reading standard	N/A	1,147	1,221	1,328	1,120	1,127	1,075
Met state reading standard	N/A	5,550	5,343	5,077	5,377	4,896	4,953
Did not meet state reading standard	N/A	6,179	6,080	6,517	6,030	6,374	5,968
Unreported	N/A	1,023	1,469	712	728	776	723

\*Data unavailable

## Comparing Student Subgroups: College-Going, Persistence, and Completion



Lines represent Maine averages

\*College Completion data by academic proficiency is unavailable for the Class of 2008.

## **Data Notes**

The National Student Clearinghouse is a college enrollment and degree verification service with records for more than 3,600 institutions of higher education. It is the primary provider of data on two-year and four-year college degree program enrollment to school districts, colleges, foundations, and state and federal governments. 92% of college students in the U.S. attend colleges and universities that report enrollment to the NSC. Many U.S. high schools pay to participate in its Student Tracker program, but the Maine Department of Education covers the cost for all Maine public high schools to receive these reports, using student data the schools have already reported to DOE.

The source for Maine high school graduation rates is Maine Department of Education, [www.maine.gov/education/gradrates/gradrates.html](http://www.maine.gov/education/gradrates/gradrates.html)

State- and school-level college enrollment data are available for nine high school graduating classes: 2006 through 2014. High school graduation rates calculated with comparable methodology are available for 2009 through 2014. College enrollment details for demographic groups begin with the graduating class of 2008, and for academic characteristics, with the class of 2009. The latest available college persistence data are for the class of 2012, and college completion data are now available for the classes of 2006 through 2008.

## **About the Mitchell Institute**

With personal knowledge of the importance of higher education, Senator George J. Mitchell established the Mitchell Institute in 1995, with a goal of increasing educational opportunity for all Maine students. Today, the Mitchell Institute awards an \$8,000 scholarship to one college-going senior from each of Maine's 130 public high schools every year. With a preference for first-generation college students, the Institute seeks Mainers who have clear financial need, have made an impact in their communities, and demonstrate academic promise. Our research has shown that in addition to financial assistance, personal support dramatically increases scholars' chances of attaining a degree and future success. In response, we offer mentoring and leadership development opportunities, both during and after college. Our unique comprehensive approach has led to outstanding results: 85% of Mitchell Scholars complete college and achieve a degree, compared with 55% of students nationally.

## **About Plimpton Research**

Plimpton Research helps organizations measure and document outcomes, assess strengths, and communicate results. Skilled at collecting data and combining quantitative and qualitative analysis to provide context, insight, and direction, Lisa Plimpton translates data into meaningful information and communicates findings clearly. Plimpton Research offers a range of consulting services to nonprofit, public, and education organizations of all sizes.

## Acknowledgements

The authors of this report are Lisa Plimpton of Plimpton Research and Mitchell Institute Research Intern Mariette Aborn of Bowdoin College.

Thanks to the Mitchell Institute Staff for their valuable contributions, and to Bill Hurwitch, Director of the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and his team at the Maine Department of Education.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> High school graduation is the percentage of entering ninth graders who complete high school within four years. College-going is the percentage of those high school graduates who enroll in college the following semester.

<sup>2</sup> For a full list of schools in each Superintendent Region, see [www.medms.maine.gov/medms\\_public](http://www.medms.maine.gov/medms_public).

<sup>3</sup> NSC data for 2006 through 2012 do not include Washington County Community College enrollments, primarily affecting Washington County figures for those years. When WCCC joined the National Student Clearinghouse in 2013, the Washington County college-going rate jumped by nine percentage points.

<sup>4</sup> “Public/Private Schools” is the average of Maine’s eleven 60% publicly-funded private high schools, which are not part of Superintendent Regions: Erskine Academy, Foxcroft Academy, Fryeburg Academy, George Stevens Academy, Lee Academy, Lincoln Academy, John Bapst Memorial High School, Maine Central Institute, Maine School of Science and Mathematics (state-operated), Thornton Academy, and Washington Academy.

<sup>5</sup> For 2014-2015, students eligible for subsidized school meals had family incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty guideline, or about \$44,000 per year for a family of four.

<sup>6</sup> “Two or more races” was first included as a category in 2011.