

POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENTS REPORT:

2009-2016 North Carolina Public High School Graduates

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Individual educational attainment and barriers to attainment are not readily captured by a single indicator. Educational attainment is a process with multiple key steps. After completing high school, individuals must enroll in college and persist in their enrollment until degree completion. In a series of four data briefs, we use National Student Clearinghouse data to better understand key transition points and the college-going behaviors of North Carolina public high school graduates from 2009-2016. Specifically, we will examine:

CURRENT

1. **Access:** How many students are going to college?
2. **Persistence:** How many students are still enrolled in postsecondary after their first year?
3. **Success:** How many students persist in their postsecondary enrollments to successfully complete a degree or credential?
4. **Postsecondary Pathways and Barriers to Opportunity:** What are the most common pathways through postsecondary? What are the potential barriers to success suggested by pathways that end in stopout or dropout?

About the data

Of the 757,160 high school graduate records submitted to the NSC, 557,615 matched with at least one postsecondary institution. Of these, 7,306 were matched but blocked by requests for privacy under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), leaving 550,309 students with detailed postsecondary data from the NSC. In total, the data set contains 4,031,542 unique enrollment terms, with detailed information on enrollment timing, the institution of enrollment, intensity of enrollment, and declared major (reported by a subset of institutions). In addition to enrollment data, the NSC returned 243,520 detailed records of degrees and credentials received by North Carolina public high school graduates between July 1, 2009 and May 15, 2018.

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DATA BRIEF

In this report, we focus on the details related to college access among North Carolina high school graduates, examining enrollment timing, the characteristics of students who enroll, where students enroll, and whether they are enrolled full- or part-time.

Key findings

Between 2009 and 2016, 757,160 students graduated from North Carolina public high schools. As of May 2018, 72 percent of these students—546,167 individuals—had enrolled in a two- or four-year postsecondary institution.¹ Twenty-eight percent of high school graduates—nearly 211,000 students—had not enrolled in any two- or four-year program since graduation.^{2,3}

1. When do students enroll?

- Most students who transition to postsecondary enroll immediately (called on-time enrollment): 57 percent of 2009-2016 North Carolina high school graduates enrolled in a postsecondary program in the fall after graduation. Another 11 percent delayed enrollment but were enrolled within two years of high school graduation.
- Both on-time and delayed enrollment rates peaked during 2009-2010 and have since declined.

2. Who enrolls?

- Students from urban areas and counties with large research institutions (e.g., Appalachian State University) had the highest on-time enrollment rates.
- Female graduates were consistently more likely to enroll on time than male graduates. Asian and White graduates were consistently more likely to enroll on time than American Indian, Black, and Hispanic graduates, though delayed enrollments helped to close some of these gaps.
- Students with higher ACT scores were more likely to immediately enroll in postsecondary programs. Among 2014-2016 North Carolina high school graduates with reported ACT scores, 60 percent immediately transitioned to postsecondary. This ranged from 44 percent among students who met no college-readiness benchmarks on the ACT subtests to 85 percent among individuals who met all four college-readiness benchmarks.
- Nearly half of all high school graduates (49 percent) met no college-readiness benchmarks on the ACT. While this proportion was lower among individuals with on-time postsecondary enrollments, more than one in three—36 percent—of students who immediately enrolled in college met no college-readiness benchmarks on the ACT.



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3. Where do students enroll?

- Students who enrolled on time were most likely to attend a UNC institution (42 percent) followed by a North Carolina community college (39 percent) and in-state private institutions (10 percent).
- Students who delayed enrollment in postsecondary were most likely to enroll in a North Carolina community college.
- Enrollments at four-year, for-profit institutions were more common among students with longer delays between high school graduation and postsecondary enrollment.

4. What is the intensity of enrollment?

- Nearly three of every four (72 percent) students who enrolled on time were enrolled full time.
- Part-time enrollments were more common among students who delayed enrollment.
- Part-time enrollments were more common at two-year institutions than four-year institutions.

Next steps

Enrolling in a postsecondary program after high school is just the first step on the path to attainment. After successfully transitioning from high school to college, students must persist in their education until they complete a degree or a credential. In our next data brief, we will explore how first-year persistence varies by student characteristics and by the institution and intensity of first enrollment.

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Section 1. Enrollment timing: Statewide trends

KEY FINDINGS:

- Fewer North Carolina high school graduates are enrolling in postsecondary programs, reflecting declines in both on-time and delayed enrollment rates.
- On-time enrollment rates show early signs of rebound but delayed enrollment rates continue to decline.

On-time enrollment in college means that high school graduates enroll in a postsecondary institution in the fall semester immediately following high school graduation.⁴ This immediate college-going rate is an indicator of the share of graduates on a traditional postsecondary path. Though many individuals delay entry into postsecondary, immediate enrollment is the easiest point at which institutions and policy makers can intervene to increase overall college-going rates.⁵

Figure 1 shows the postsecondary enrollment rates by timing of enrollment for each graduating cohort over this period. On average, 56.9 percent of North Carolina high school graduates had on-time enrollments in postsecondary between 2009 and 2016. On-time enrollment rates peaked in 2009 at 59.1 percent and declined to a low of 55.7 percent in 2012. On-time enrollment rates rebounded to 57 percent in 2016 but remained 2.1 percentage points below their observed peak.

Declines in the on-time enrollment rate were not offset by increases in delayed enrollments; the proportion of students enrolling within two years declined steadily over this period. On average, 67.7 percent of North Carolina high school graduates enrolled at a postsecondary institution within two years of graduation. This share peaked in 2009 at 70.4 percent and declined to 65.9 percent in 2016.⁶

Delayed enrollment

Figure 2 shows trends in delayed enrollments by the length of the delay. The share of students with delayed enrollments has declined from peak observed rates for all delay durations:

- **Within 1 year** enrollment rates declined from 6.5 percent to 4.9 percent.
- **Within 1-2 year** enrollment rates declined from 5.4 percent to 4.0 percent.
- **Within 2-4 year** enrollment rates declined from 4.3 percent to 3.0 percent.
- **Within 4-6 year** enrollment rates declined from 2.3 percent to 1.7 percent.⁷

FIG. 1: POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT RATE OF NC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES BY TIMING (2009-2016)

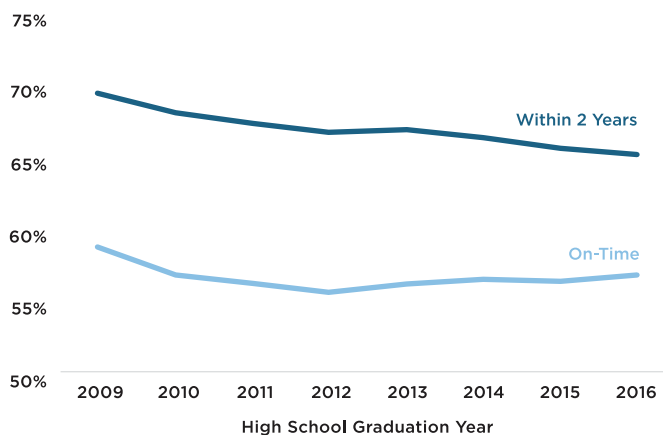
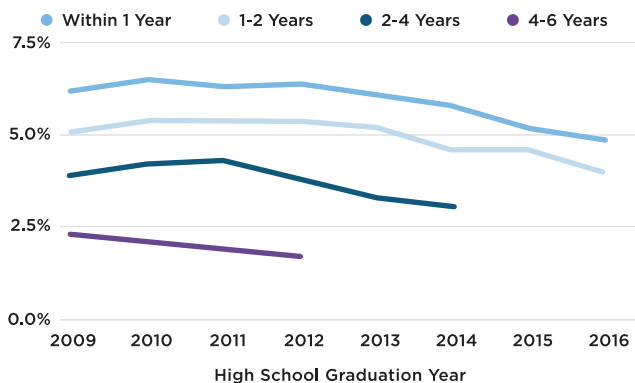


FIG. 2: DELAYED POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENTS BY TIMING OF ENROLLMENT (2009-2016)



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Section 2: How does enrollment timing vary across the state?

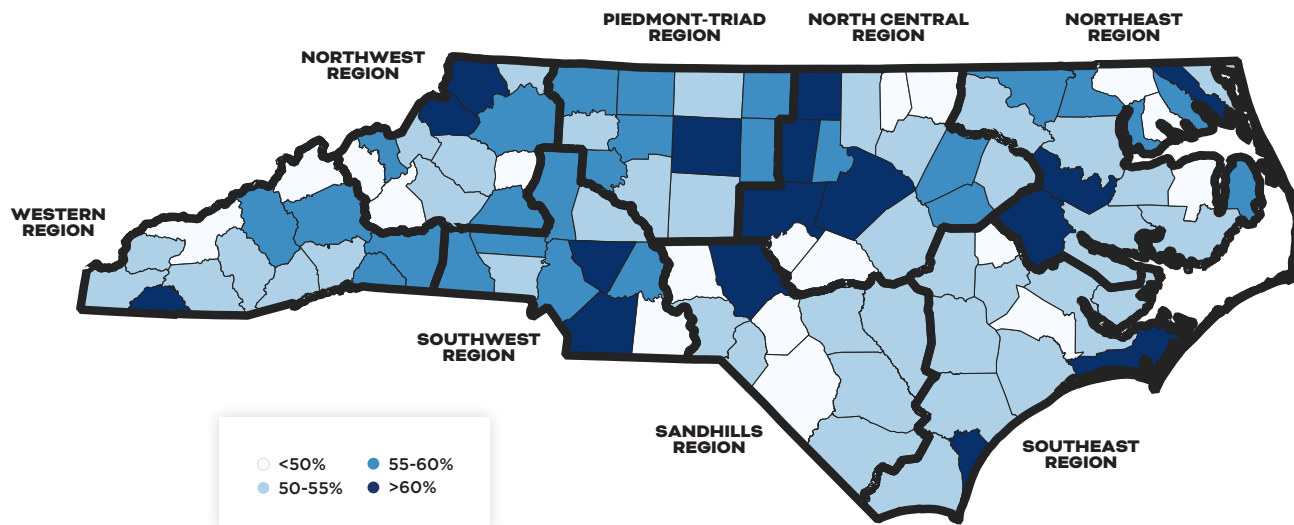
KEY FINDINGS:

- County on-time enrollment rates ranged from 17 percentage points below the state average to 9.7 percentage points above the state average.
- For all prosperity zones, on-time enrollment was higher among females compared to males and among Whites compared to Blacks and Hispanics, though the size of these gaps varied across the state. Delayed enrollments shrink these gaps but do not close them.
- More than one in three (36 percent) high school graduates who immediately transitioned to college in 2014-2016 met no college-readiness benchmarks on the ACT exam.

On-time enrollment rates by county

On-time enrollment rates ranged from 39.9 percent to 66.3 percent across North Carolina's 100 counties compared to the statewide average of 56.9 percent. **Figure 3** illustrates the average on-time enrollment rates for each county with prosperity zone boundaries highlighted.^{8,9}

FIG. 3: **ON-TIME ENROLLMENT RATES BY COUNTY** (2009-2016 avg)



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Twenty-seven counties had higher on-time enrollment rates than the state for 2009-2016. The three counties with the highest rates were home to UNC institutions in large and growing urban areas: Wake (NC State University) and Orange (UNC-Chapel Hill) in the Triangle and New Hanover (UNC-Wilmington). (See **Table 1.**)

Figure 4 shows the change in average on-time enrollment rates between the first four high school cohorts (2009-2012 graduates) and the last four high school cohorts (2013-2016 graduates).¹⁰ Statewide, average on-time enrollment rates decreased from 57.1 percent in 2009-2012 to 56.7 percent in 2013-2016. At the county level, changes in the on-time enrollment rate ranged from a decrease of 6.5 percentage points in Bladen to an increase of 6.6 percentage points in Hertford. (See **Table 2.**)

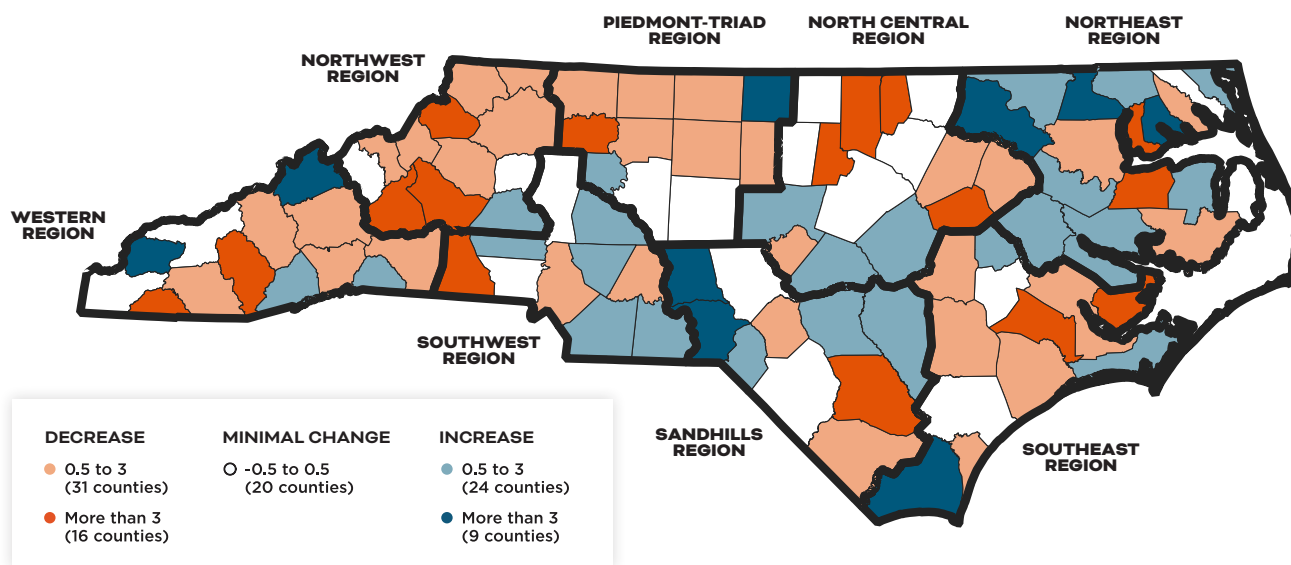
TABLE 1: TOP 5 COUNTIES HIGHEST/LOWEST AVERAGE ON-TIME ENROLLMENT RATES (2009-2016)

Highest Average Rates	Lowest Average Rates
1. Wake County (66.3%)	1. Anson County (39.9%)
2. Orange County (65.4%)	2. Robeson County (40.7%)
3. New Hanover County (64.3%)	3. Montgomery County (42.0%)
4. Watauga County (63.5%)	4. Hoke County (42.7%)
5. Union County (63.4%)	5. Jones County (42.8%)

TABLE 2: TOP 5 COUNTIES INCREASING/DECREASING ON-TIME ENROLLMENT RATES, 2009-2012 VS. 2013-2016 (percentage point change)

Greatest Increases	Greatest Decreases
1. Hertford County (6.6)	1. Bladen County (-6.5)
2. Graham County (5.4)	2. Yadkin County (-5.7)
3. Montgomery County (4.6)	3. Granville County (-5.5)
4. Richmond County (4.3)	4. Chowan County (-5.3)
5. Caswell County (3.7)	5. McDowell County (-5.2)

FIG. 4: ON-TIME ENROLLMENT RATES BY COUNTY, 2009-2012 VS. 2013-2016 PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE



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On-time enrollments by demographic characteristics

Table 3 presents average on-time enrollment rates for North Carolina high school graduates between 2009 and 2016 by demographic characteristics, as well as the change in the on-time enrollment rate between 2009 and 2016.

- Female students (62 percent) immediately enrolled in college at higher rates than male students (51 percent), a gap of 11 percentage points. Between 2009 and 2016, on-time enrollment rates declined for both males and females, with larger declines for male students (-3.4 percentage points) than female students (-0.5 percentage points).
- Asian (67 percent) and White (63 percent) students had on-time enrollment rates above the state average of 57 percent.¹⁰ Hispanic (38 percent), American Indian (45 percent), and Black (51 percent) students had lower on-time enrollment rates than the statewide rate.
- Between 2009 and 2016, on-time enrollment rates increased for Hispanic (7.6 percentage points) and Asian (4.7 percentage points) students and decreased for American Indian (-0.8 percentage points), Black (-1.5 percentage points), and White (-1.6 percentage points) students.¹¹

TABLE 3: **ON-TIME ENROLLMENT RATES BY SEX AND RACE/ETHNICITY** (2009-2016)

	Avg. On-Time Enrollment Rate	2016 vs. 2009 Percentage Point Change
NC TOTAL:	57%	-2.1
Sex		
Female	62%	-0.5
Male	51%	-3.4
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian	45%	-0.8
Asian	67%	4.7
Black	51%	-1.5
Hispanic	38%	7.6
White	63%	-1.6



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Gaps in on-time enrollment rates

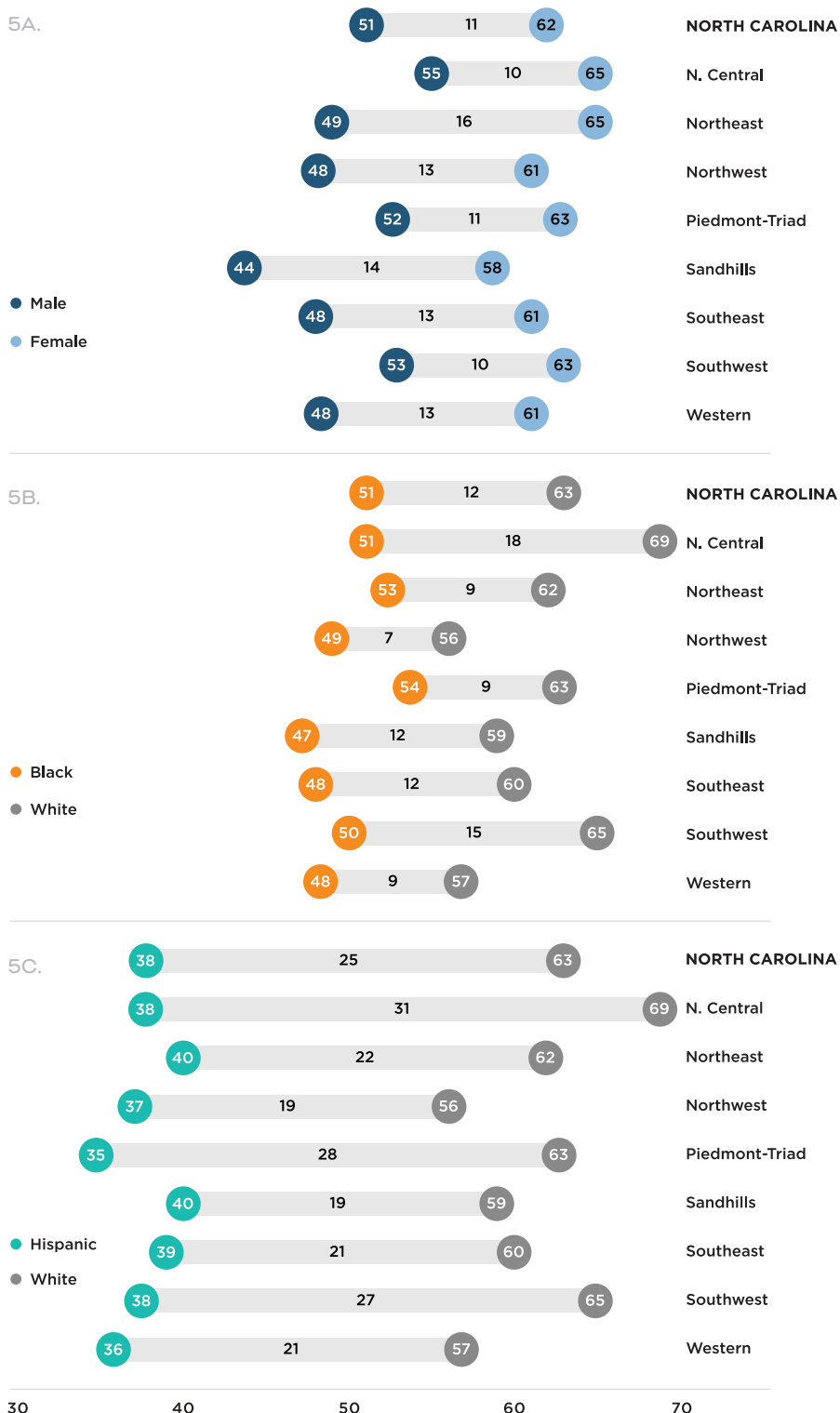
Across all prosperity zones, on-time enrollment was higher among females compared to males and among Whites compared to Blacks and Hispanics (**Figure 5**) though the size of these gaps varied.¹²

Between 2009-2016, the statewide immediate enrollment rate for female students (62 percent) was 11 percentage points higher than the statewide immediate enrollment rate for male students (51 percent). The male-female gap varied across prosperity zones, ranging from 10 percentage points in the Southwest and North Central to 16 percentage points in the Northeast. (**5A**)

Between 2009-2016, the statewide immediate enrollment rate for White students (63 percent) was 12 percentage points higher than the statewide immediate enrollment rate for Black students (51 percent). The Black-White gap varied across prosperity zones, ranging from seven percentage points in the Northwest to 18 percentage points in North Central. (**5B**)

Between 2009-2016, the statewide immediate enrollment rate for White students (63 percent) was 25 percentage points higher than the statewide immediate enrollment rate for Hispanic students (38 percent). The Hispanic-White gap varied across prosperity zones, ranging from 19 percentage points in the Northwest and Sandhills regions to 31 percentage points in North Central. (**5C**)

FIG. 5: ON-TIME COLLEGE ENROLLMENT RATES FOR FEMALE, MALE, BLACK, WHITE & HISPANIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES, BY PROSPERITY ZONE (2009-2016)



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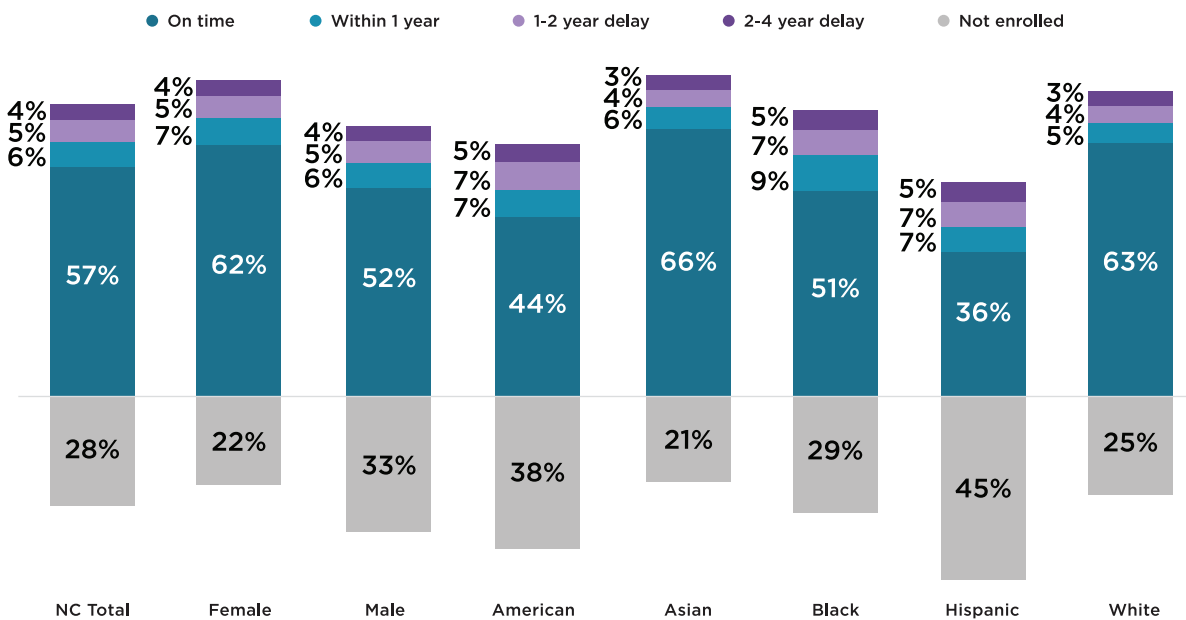


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FIG. 6: POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT WITHIN 4 YEARS OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION BY TIMING OF ENROLLMENT (2009-2013 graduates)



Delayed enrollments help to shrink the gap in on-time enrollment rates

Figure 6 presents enrollments within four years of high school graduation for the 2009-2013 high school graduating cohorts by sex and racial/ethnic identification. This includes all individuals with on-time and delayed enrollments (within 1 year, 1-2 years, and 2-4 years).

- Four years after high school graduation, the male-female gap in postsecondary enrollments remained 11 percentage points, largely driven by the difference in on-time enrollments (62 percent for females, 52 percent for males).
- High delayed enrollment rates among Black students closed the Black-White gap in enrollment from 12 percentage points to four percentage points: 71 percent of Black students enrolled in college within four years compared to 75 percent of White students.
- Higher delayed enrollment rates among Hispanic students narrowed the Hispanic-White gap from 27 percentage points for immediate enrollment to 20 percentage points for enrollment within four years.

On-time enrollments by academic preparation

Since 2013, all North Carolina 11th graders have taken the ACT exam, which means that college-readiness indicators are available for most high school graduates beginning with the 2014 cohort.¹³

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ACT College Readiness Benchmark Scores:

- English: 18
- Mathematics: 22
- Reading: 22
- Science: 23

Source: ACT, Inc.

The ACT exam is comprised of four main subtests: English, mathematics, reading, and science. ACT, Inc. has established a set of benchmark scores for each of these subtests that indicate the likelihood that an individual will earn a C or higher in a related first-year college course.¹⁴ Students who met more benchmarks on the ACT were more likely to enroll in a postsecondary program after graduation (Figure 7). The average on-time enrollment rate for 2014-2016 graduates with ACT scores in all four subtests was 60 percent: on-time enrollment rates ranged from 44 percent for students who met no ACT benchmarks to 85 percent for students who met all four ACT benchmarks.

Academic preparation by enrollment status

Statewide, 15 percent of graduates met all four college-readiness benchmarks and nearly half of all graduates (49 percent) met no benchmarks (Figure 8). Graduates who immediately enrolled in postsecondary were more likely to have met all four benchmarks (22 percent) and less likely to have met no benchmarks (36 percent). In contrast, just 6 percent of graduates who did not enroll on time met all four benchmarks and more than two-thirds (69 percent) met no benchmarks.

Section 3. Institution of enrollment

KEY FINDINGS:

- Most (91 percent) of on-time enrollments were in state, with 42 percent of students attending a UNC school, 39 percent attending a community college, and 10 percent attending a private, in-state institution.
- Students who delayed enrollment were most likely to attend a two-year program, primarily at a North Carolina community college.
- Enrollment at four-year, out-of-state institutions was more common among delayed enrollments and increased as delay length increased, largely reflecting an increase in enrollments at for-profit institutions (e.g., University of Phoenix).

FIG. 7: ON-TIME ENROLLMENT RATE BY NUMBER OF ACT BENCHMARKS MET (2014-2016 graduates)

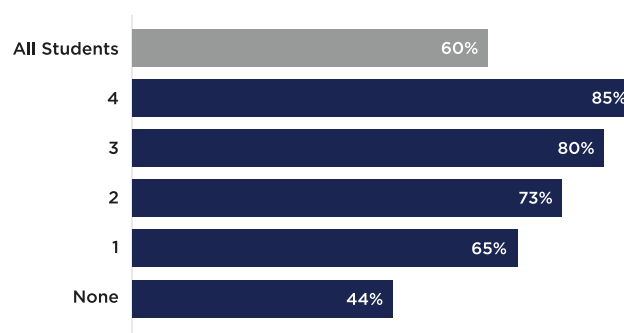
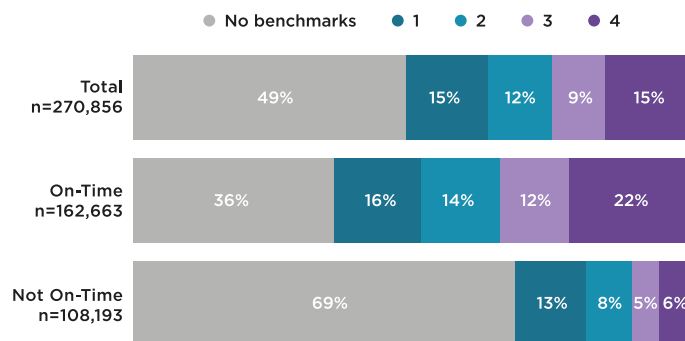


FIG. 8: NUMBER OF ACT COLLEGE-READINESS BENCHMARKS MET BY ON-TIME ENROLLMENT STATUS (2014-2016 graduates)



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Institution type

The charts in **Figure 9** show the share of enrolled students at different types of institutions by timing of enrollment.

- Most (91 percent) of on-time enrollments were in state, with the largest share of students attending a UNC (42 percent) or NC Community College System (NCCCS) (39 percent).
- Students who delayed enrollment were most likely to attend a two-year program:
 - 77 percent of students who enrolled within two years of graduation were at a two-year program: 72 percent at NCCCS and 5 percent out of state.
 - 70 percent of students who delayed enrollment more than two years were at a two-year program: 60 percent at NCCCS and 10 percent out of state.
 - The increase in attendance at out-of-state institutions as delay length increased may be because individuals move to other states after high school graduation and enroll in community colleges in their new state of residence.
- Enrollment at four-year, out-of-state institutions increased as delay length increased, largely reflecting an increase in enrollments at for-profit institutions (**Table 4**).

FIG. 9: SHARE OF ENROLLMENTS AT EACH INSTITUTION TYPE, BY TIMING OF ENROLLMENT (2009-2016 graduates)

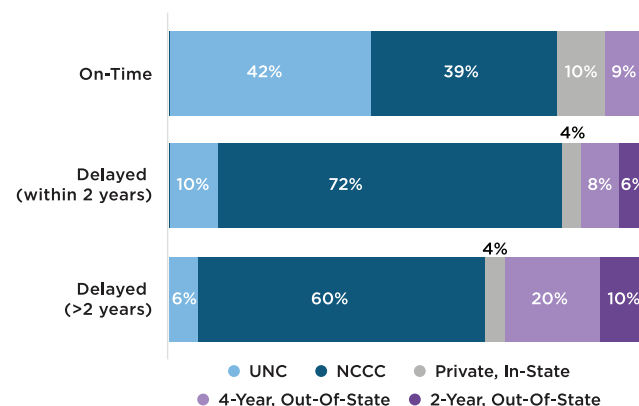


TABLE 4: TOP INSTITUTIONS OF ENROLLMENT BY TIMING OF ENROLLMENT & INSTITUTIONAL TYPE (Two-year vs. four-year)

FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS		TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS	
ON-TIME	% OF ENROLLMENTS	ON-TIME	% OF ENROLLMENTS
East Carolina University	9.2%	Central Piedmont Community College	9.9%
North Carolina State University	9.1%	Wake Technical Community College	9.2%
UNC - Charlotte	8.6%	Guilford Technical Community College	5.6%
Appalachian State University	7.1%	Pitt Community College	5.5%
UNC - Chapel Hill	6.8%	Cape Fear Community College	4.0%
DELAYED (WITHIN 2 YEARS)		DELAYED (WITHIN 2 YEARS)	
UNC - Charlotte	7.0%	Central Piedmont Community College	10.1%
UNC - Greensboro	5.3%	Wake Technical Community College	9.6%
Appalachian State University	5.2%	Guilford Technical Community College	6.2%
North Carolina State University	4.0%	Forsyth Technical Community College	4.1%
North Carolina A&T State University	3.9%	Fayetteville Technical Community College	3.9%
DELAYED (> 2 YEARS)		DELAYED (> 2 YEARS)	
American Public University System	5.4%	Wake Technical Community College	7.5%
Strayer University - Washington DC	5.3%	Central Piedmont Community College	7.2%
University of Phoenix	4.8%	Guilford Technical Community College	4.9%
University of Maryland - University College	3.8%	Fayetteville Technical Community College	4.8%
UNC - Charlotte	3.7%	Forsyth Technical Community College	3.4%

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Top institutions

Table 4 shows the top five four- and two-year institutions by timing of enrollment. While the top four-year institutions changed with increasing delay, the top two-year institutions were relatively consistent, regardless of delay.

Four-year institutions:

- The top five institutions for on-time and delayed enrollments within two years were all members of the UNC system.
- Among delayed enrollments of more than two years, three of the top five were private, for-profit schools:
 - American Public University System
 - Strayer University (Washington, DC)
 - University of Phoenix

Two-year institutions:

- NC community colleges were the top institutions for all enrollment groups
- Schools consistently in the top five, *regardless of timing*:¹⁵
 - Central Piedmont Community College
 - Wake Technical Community College
 - Guilford Technical Community College
- Schools consistently in the top five, but *only among delayed enrollments*:
 - Fayetteville Technical Community College
 - Forsyth Technical Community College

Section 4. Intensity of enrollment

KEY FINDINGS:

- 72 percent of North Carolina high school graduates who immediately enrolled in a postsecondary program after graduation were enrolled full time.
- Part-time enrollments were more common among individuals who postponed entry into postsecondary.
- Students enrolled at two-year institutions were more likely to be enrolled part-time than students enrolled at four-year institutions.

Enrollment intensity indicates whether a student begins postsecondary studies on a full-time or part-time basis.¹⁶ Full-time enrollment is generally associated with on-time completion. However, various constraints, including college readiness, finances, and other obligations may require a student to enroll only part time. Overall, 65 percent of NC high school students enrolled in postsecondary education on a full-time basis and 17 percent enrolled on a part-time basis; enrollment intensity was not reported for 18 percent of students.

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Figure 10 shows enrollment intensity patterns by the timing of first enrollment. Full-time enrollment was most common among on-time enrollers (72 percent). Delayed enrollers were much more likely to attend on a part-time basis.

Enrollment intensity also varied by institution type (**Figure 11**). Among on-time enrollers, most students who attended four-year institutions were enrolled on a full-time basis:

- UNC (96 percent)
- Private, in state (93 percent)
- four-year, out of state (86 percent)

Students who enrolled on-time at two-year institutions had high levels of non-reported enrollment intensity (36 percent of NCCCS and 30 percent of out-of-state enrollments). According to the reported data, 40 percent of NC community college students were enrolled full time and 24 percent were enrolled part time, while 47 percent of out-of-state students at two-year institutions were enrolled full time and 24 percent were enrolled part time.

FIG. 10: **ENROLLMENT INTENSITY BY TIMING OF ENROLLMENT**

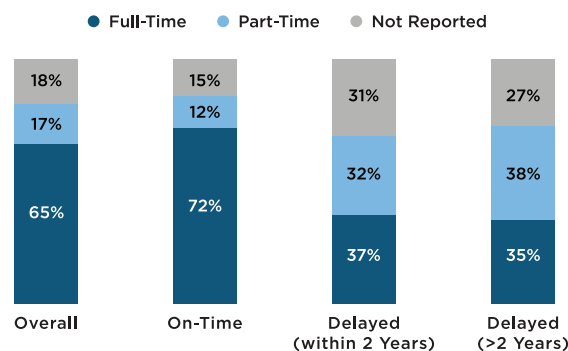
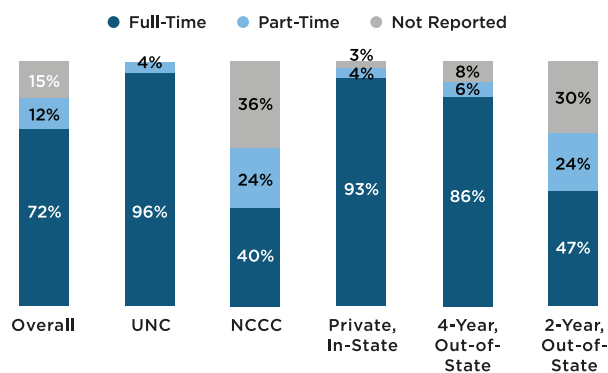


FIG. 11: **ENROLLMENT INTENSITY OF ON-TIME ENROLLERS, BY INSTITUTION TYPE**



References

1. A small number of students (396 or 0.05 percent of all graduates) had their first reported enrollment at a less than two-year institution. For the purposes of this analysis, less than two-year institutional enrollments were included with two-year institutions.
2. This report uses postsecondary enrollment records from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to examine the postsecondary outcomes of North Carolina high school graduates. The NSC is a nonprofit organization that provides postsecondary enrollment data and verification for more than 3,750 colleges and universities in the United States. Collectively, these institutions serve 97 percent of all postsecondary students nationwide and 98 percent of students in North Carolina.

The NSC data does not cover all institutional sectors equally, however. Nearly all students enrolled at a public institution are covered in the NSC data, as are the majority of students at four-year, non-profit private institutions. While NSC coverage of the for-profit sector has been improving, it remains less comprehensive: just 82 percent of enrollments at four-year for-profit institutions were covered in 2017 and this rate was even lower (25 percent) for two-year for-profit institutions. In addition to these coverage gaps, students can file requests for privacy under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) that prohibit the release of their enrollment records. As a result of missing data due to NSC coverage gaps and FERPA blocking, true college enrollment rates for North Carolina high school graduates are likely higher than those reported in this analysis.
3. Individuals who graduate from high school but do not enroll in a postsecondary institution may be working in the state. Full implementation of the State Longitudinal Data System known as the P-20W is necessary to enable analysis and understanding of the career and wage trajectories of individuals who graduate high school and do not immediately transition to postsecondary.
4. Students were classified as having an on-time enrollment if they were enrolled in a postsecondary institution on October 1st in the fall of their high school graduation year and did not have an enrollment status of "Withdrawn," "Leave of Absence," or "Deceased." For students with simultaneous enrollments at multiple institutions, they were assigned the characteristics of the institution at which they had the highest enrollment intensity (full-time, three-quarters time, half-time, or less). If they had the same enrollment intensity at more than one institution, they were assigned the characteristics of the institution at which they had the longest period of enrollment during the fall.
5. Research indicates that those who delay postsecondary enrollment are significantly less likely to earn a bachelor's degree within six years, are less likely to attend four-year institutions, and are at greater risk of later college dropout. This, however, may be more strongly associated with student characteristics than with enrollment timing; delayed enrollment is more common among students from lower-income backgrounds and first generation or immigrant students, who may need more guidance on navigating the college entry process.

Sources: Castleman, Benjamin L. and Lindsay C. Page. 2013. "A Trickle or a Torrent? Understanding the Extent of Summer 'Melt' Among College-Intending High School Graduates". *Social Science Quarterly*. 95(1); Horn, L., Cataldi, E. F., & Sikora, A. (2005). Waiting to attend college: Undergraduates who delay their postsecondary enrollment. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office; Niu, Sunny and Marta Tienda. 2013. "Delayed Enrollment and College Plans: Is There a Postponement Penalty?" *The Journal of Higher Education*. 84(1). Pg. 1-26.
6. These rates reflect our knowledge of postsecondary enrollments as of May 15, 2018. The rate for 2016 graduates may increase slightly if additional individuals enrolled in postsecondary between May 15, 2018, and June 30, 2018. Additional enrollments during this period are not expected to significantly impact the current estimates.
7. Enrollments with a delay of 6+ years are also lower for 2011 than 2009 graduates, though some of this decline may reflect that more recent graduates have had fewer years to possibly enroll in postsecondary.
8. Regional schools designated as Juvenile Justice and Residential Schools were not included in this analysis. Additionally, Kannapolis City School District was not included because this district straddles both Cabarrus and Rowan counties. The average on-time enrollment rate for Kannapolis City Schools was 45.2 percent and the change from 2009-2012 to 2013-2016 was 1.3 percentage points.
9. North Carolina's eight Prosperity Zones (PZs) were created as part of the 2014 legislation (HB 1031) that also created the public-private partnership Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC). The main goal of the PZs is to promote enhanced collaboration and cooperation between state, local, and regional entities. Each zone has a dedicated EDPNC representative and ranges in size from 10 to 17 counties each.
10. The four-year averages provide more reliable estimates for small communities than comparing single years.
11. Racial/ethnic classifications were provided by the student; the identification used here is from the NC Department of Public Instruction. Hispanic included those of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. All other groups are non-Hispanic. NSC data on Pacific Islanders were not disaggregated until 2011. This group was therefore combined with Asian for the purposes of this analysis. Multiracial students were included in overall calculations, but this group was not included in subgroup analysis due to small sample size and the considerable heterogeneity of its membership.
12. The state enrollment rate declined more than any individual racial/ethnic group over this time (-2.1 percentage points) due to demographic change. The largest gap in immediate college enrollment was for Hispanic students, averaging 19 percentage points lower than the state average over 2009 to 2016. In 2009, six percent of North Carolina's high school graduates identified as Hispanic. This proportion doubled to 12 percent in 2016 and though the on-time enrollment rates for this group are rising, the immediate college-going rates for Hispanic graduates remained 16 percentage points below the state average (41 percent vs. 57 percent statewide in 2016).
13. 91 percent of graduates from 2014 to 2016 had scores for all four ACT benchmarks.
14. The ACT exam college-readiness benchmarks are established by ACT, Inc. and "represent the level of achievement required for students to have a 50 percent chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75 percent chance of earning a C or higher in corresponding credit-bearing first-year college courses." (ACT, Inc. 2010. What Are ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks?).

ACT, Inc.'s College Readiness Benchmarks have been developed based on the actual performance of first-year college students. Through its Course Placement Service, the ACT has collected test score and course grade data on over 90,000 students across 98 two- and four-year institutions. These benchmark outcomes reflect the typical performance of a first-year college student.

More information on ACT college readiness standards and benchmarks is available at <https://www.act.org/content/act/en/college-and-career-readiness/standards.html>
15. The home counties—Mecklenburg, Wake, and Guilford—are the three largest North Carolina counties by population.
16. Enrollment intensity is defined by the institution at the beginning of the term, thus reflecting a student's intended workload for that term. These results should be interpreted with caution, as large and varied proportions of each analysis group had a "not reported" enrollment status.

All data and tables in this report are the authors' evaluation of NC DPI data matched with the National Student Clearinghouse.



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