

2.1 Freshmen Retention Rates (Based on IPEDS Data)

Decrease the percentage of students who fail to persist beyond their first year(s) of enrollment.

The following analysis of freshmen retention rates is based on data reported by Nebraska institutions to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), beginning in fall 2004.¹ The NCES generally defines a retention rate as the percentage of the first-time freshmen who enrolled at an institution during the fall semester (or quarter) or the preceding summer of a given academic year and were enrolled at the same institution during the fall semester (or quarter) one year later. Separate retention rates are reported by institutions for their full-time and part-time students.

The latest available data to compare to fall 2004 freshmen retention rates are for fall 2007. Retention rates for fall 2008 will not be available until mid-2009 and will be reported in the *2010 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report*.

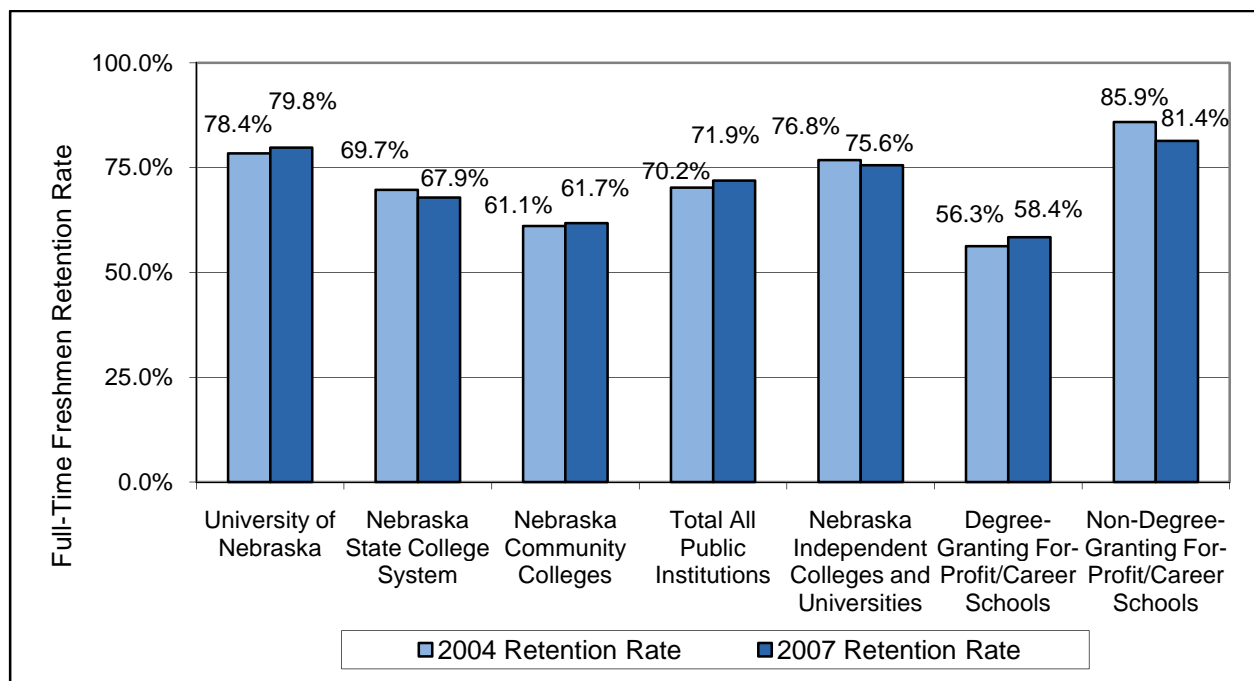
Full-Time Freshmen Retention Rates

- As shown in [Figure 2.1.1](#) on the next page, the overall full-time freshmen retention rates for each of the six sectors of higher education in Nebraska fluctuated only modestly with no general increase or decrease in retention rates across all of the sectors between fall 2004 and fall 2007.
- The only significant decline in retention rates was within the for-profit sector of non-degree-granting institutions, consisting primarily of career schools that focus on hair and skin care training. As evidenced in [Figure 2.1.1](#), the retention rate for this sector decreased from 85.9% in fall 2004 to 81.4% in fall 2007.
- Over the same period, the overall freshmen retention rates for the Nebraska State College System and Nebraska's independent (not-for-profit) colleges and universities also decreased, but only slightly, suggesting that the retention rates for these two sectors are relatively stable. In the case of the state colleges, the sector retention rate decreased from 69.7% to 67.9% between fall 2004 and fall 2007. For the independent institutions, the sector retention rate decreased from 76.8% to 75.6%.
- The largest increase in retention rates was evidenced for the degree-granting, for-profit schools, including ITT Technical Institute, Myotherapy Institute and Vatterott College. However, the increase in the sector rate from 56.3% in fall 2004 to 58.4% in fall 2007 was due, almost entirely, to Kaplan University's Omaha campus and the Myotherapy institute. Many of the other institutions in this sector had to be excluded from the analysis because they did not report a retention rate, did not enroll freshmen, were not open in 2004, or closed before 2007. Consequently, further monitoring of the sector rate is necessary to come to any conclusion about the sector as a whole in terms of retention of full-time freshmen.

¹The analyses of freshmen retention rates included in the *2004 Baseline Report for the LR 174 Higher Education Task Force* and the *2005 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report for the LR 75 Legislative Evaluation Task Force* were based on the retention rates for full-time freshmen voluntarily reported to ACT, Inc. When more complete data, including the retention rates for part-time students, became available from the NCES, it was advisable to discontinue using data obtained from ACT, Inc. and change the baseline for comparisons to fall 2004, the first period for which the NCES required institutions to report retention rates for full-time and part-time freshmen.

- The overall full-time freshmen retention rate for the University of Nebraska also increased. As shown in [Figure 2.1.1](#), the university's retention rate increased from 78.4% in fall 2004 to 79.8% in fall 2007. However, the university's overall retention rate in fall 2005 was 81.6%.
- The net effect of these increases and decreases was that the estimated overall full-time retention rate for the three public sectors increased 1.7%, from 70.2% in fall 2004 to 71.9% in fall 2007, while the rate for all institutions in Nebraska increased 1.2%, from 71.4% in fall 2004 to 72.6% in fall 2007.
- See [Table A9.1](#) in [Appendix 9](#) for data related to the calculated sector and state retention rates for full-time freshmen and [Table A9.4](#) in [Appendix 9](#) for the full-time retention rates reported by institutions within each sector.

Figure 2.1.1
Full-Time Freshmen Retention Rates
of Nebraska Postsecondary Institutions by Sector
Fall 2007 Compared to Fall 2004 Baseline¹

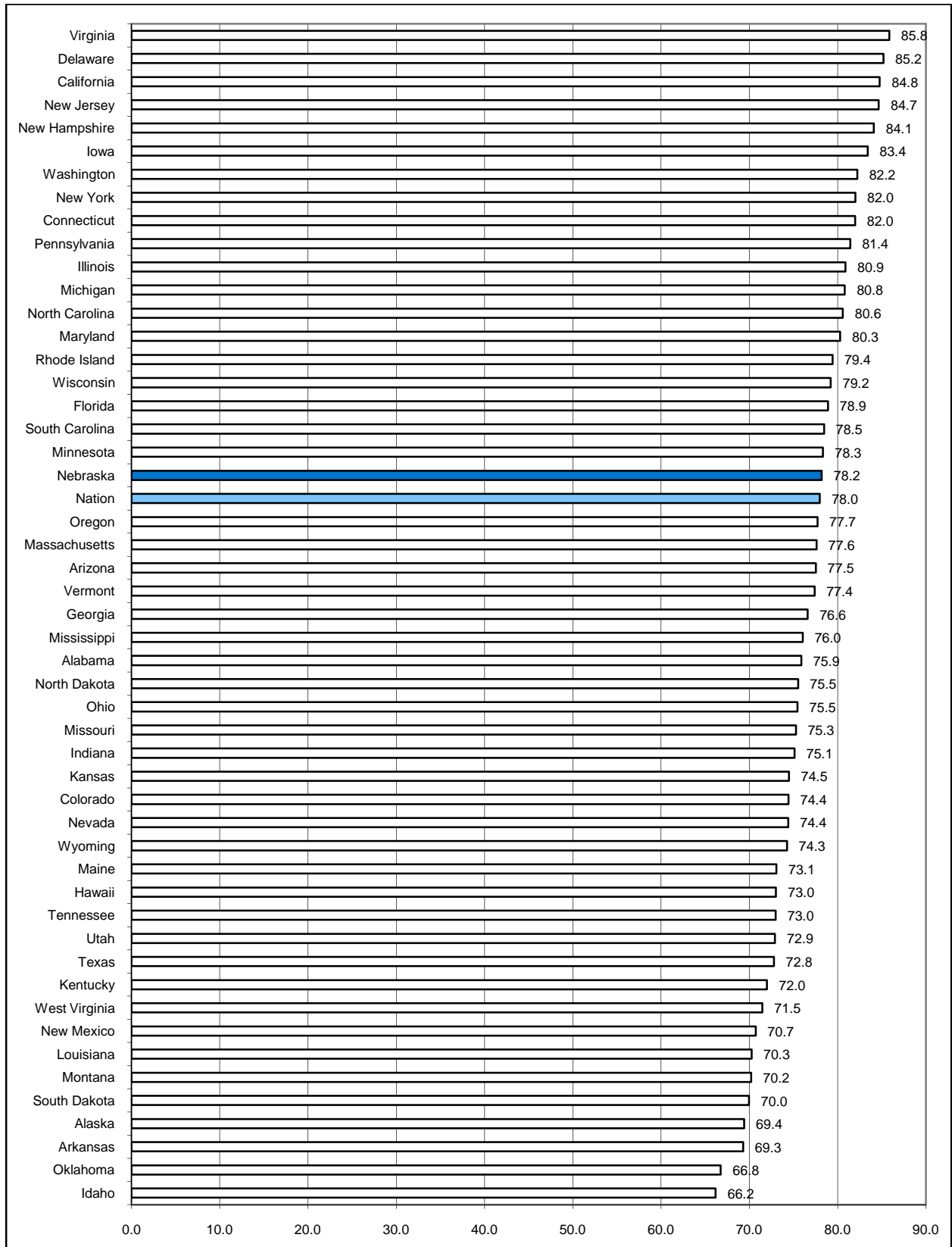


¹Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), fall 2004 and 2007 surveys. See [Table A9.1](#) in [Appendix 9](#) for supporting data.

- [Figure 2.1.2](#) and [Figure 2.1.3](#) on the next two pages reveal that the fall 2007 retention rates for full-time freshmen enrolled at Nebraska’s public four-year institutions and two-year community colleges were above national full-time retention rates based on data for comparable institutions across the country.
- As shown in [Figure 2.1.2](#), the overall full-time retention rate for Nebraska’s public four-year institutions—the University of Nebraska at Kearney, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and the three institutions in the Nebraska State College System—was 78.2% in fall 2007, compared to a 78.0% retention rate for the nation.
- The difference between Nebraska’s full-time retention rate and the national average rate has been declining over the past two years. In 2005, Nebraska ranked 17th, with a retention rate of 79.4%, 1.7% above the national average. In 2006, the difference was 0.5% as Nebraska ranked 18th with a rate of 78.2%, compared to a national rate of 77.7%. In 2007, the difference between Nebraska and the national average decreased to 0.2% and Nebraska ranked 20th among the 50th states. Between fall 2006 and fall 2007, the national average increased to 78.0%, while Nebraska’s full-time retention rate for four-year public institutions remained unchanged at 78.2%.¹
- In [Figure 2.1.3](#), the overall full-time freshmen retention rate for Nebraska’s six community colleges is compared to the state and national rates for all two-year public colleges. These colleges include public-supported tribal colleges and technical colleges, as well as community colleges. Consequently, retention data for the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture at Curtis (NCTA-Curtis) and the Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC), which is federally supported, are included in the computation of the national full-time retention rate for all two-year public colleges. Data for the NCTA-Curtis and the NICC are not included in the calculation of the full-time retention rate for Nebraska’s six community colleges.
- As shown on the chart, the overall full-time retention rate for Nebraska’s community colleges in fall 2007 was 61.7%, compared to a national retention rate for all two-year public colleges of 59.0%. Including the NCTA-Curtis (which had a full-time retention rate of 69%) and the NICC (which had a full-time retention rate of 15%), the retention rate for Nebraska’s eight public, two-year institutions was 61.9%, making Nebraska’s rate the eighth-highest among the 50 states.
- As a point of reference, the overall full-time retention rate for Nebraska’s community colleges was 64.8% in fall 2006, compared to a national retention rate for all two-year public colleges of 58.5%, placing Nebraska’s rate as fourth-highest among the 50 states.
- See [Table A9.3](#) in [Appendix 9](#) for the data used to calculate the fall 2006 and fall 2007 full-time retention rates for Nebraska public, four-year institutions and two-year community colleges.

Figure 2.1.2

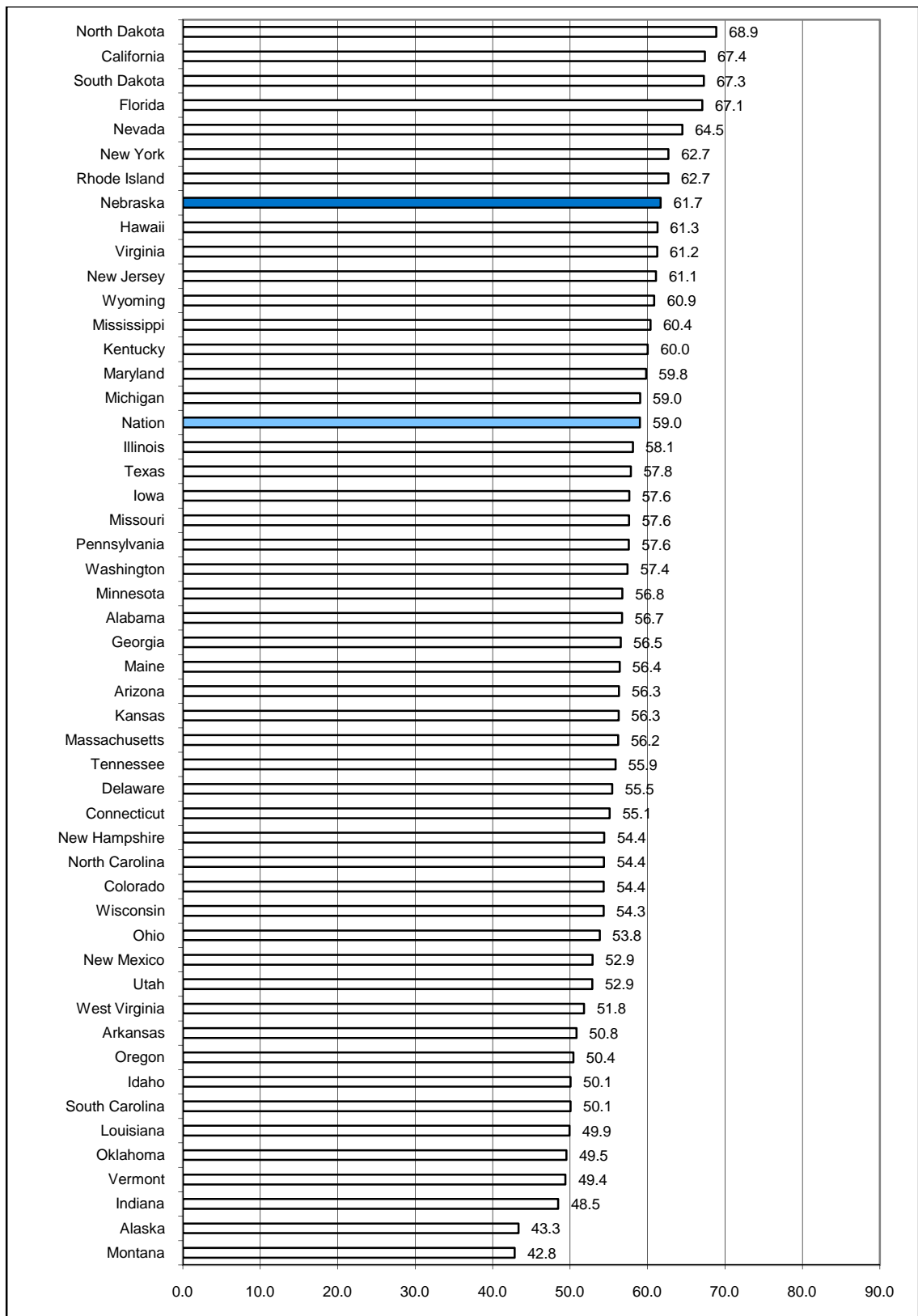
2007 Full-Time Freshmen Retention Rates for Four-Year Public Institutions by State



Data from the National Center for Education Statistics, fall 2007 survey, obtained from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), November 2008.

Figure 2.1.3

2007 Full-Time Freshmen Retention Rates for Two-Year Public Institutions by State
(Nebraska Rate for Nebraska Community Colleges Only)

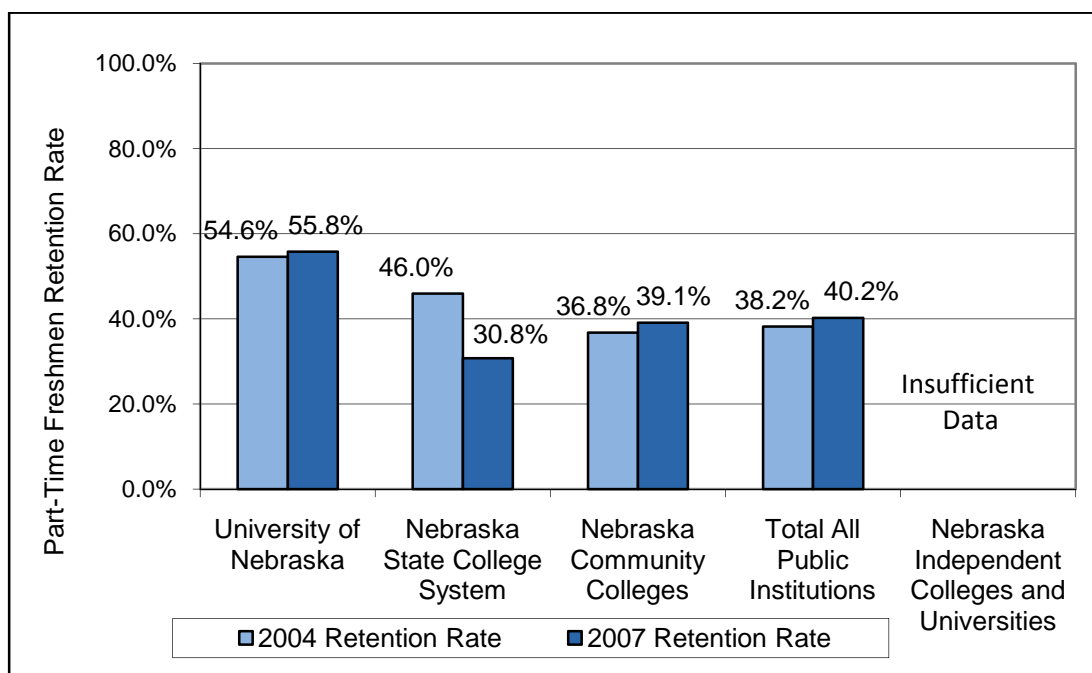


¹Data from the National Center for Education Statistics, fall 2007 survey, obtained from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), November 2008.

Part-Time Freshmen Retention Rates

- The University of Nebraska enrolled 174 part-time, first-time freshmen in fall 2003 and 144 part-time freshmen in fall 2006. As shown in [Figure 2.1.4](#), the retention rate for freshmen enrolled part-time at the University of Nebraska increased from 54.6% for the students returning in fall 2004 to 55.8% for the students returning in fall 2007, or by 1.2%.¹
- The Nebraska State College System enrolled 62 part-time, first-time freshmen in fall 2003, 29 in fall 2006. The number of part-time students enrolled decreased, as did the system's retention rate, from 46.0% to 30.8% between fall 2004 and fall 2007. This variability is due, in part, to the relatively small number of freshmen enrolled on a part-time basis.
- In comparison, Nebraska's six community colleges enrolled 2,357 part-time, first-time freshmen in fall 2003 and 1,737 in fall 2006, or 81% of the state total in 2006. At the community colleges, the part-time freshmen retention rate increased by 2.3 percentage points, from 36.8% in fall 2004 to 39.1% in fall 2007. This is down from their combined retention rate of 43.3% in 2006.

Figure 2.1.4
Part-Time Freshmen Retention Rates
of Nebraska Postsecondary Institutions by Sector
Fall 2007 Compared to Fall 2004 Baseline¹



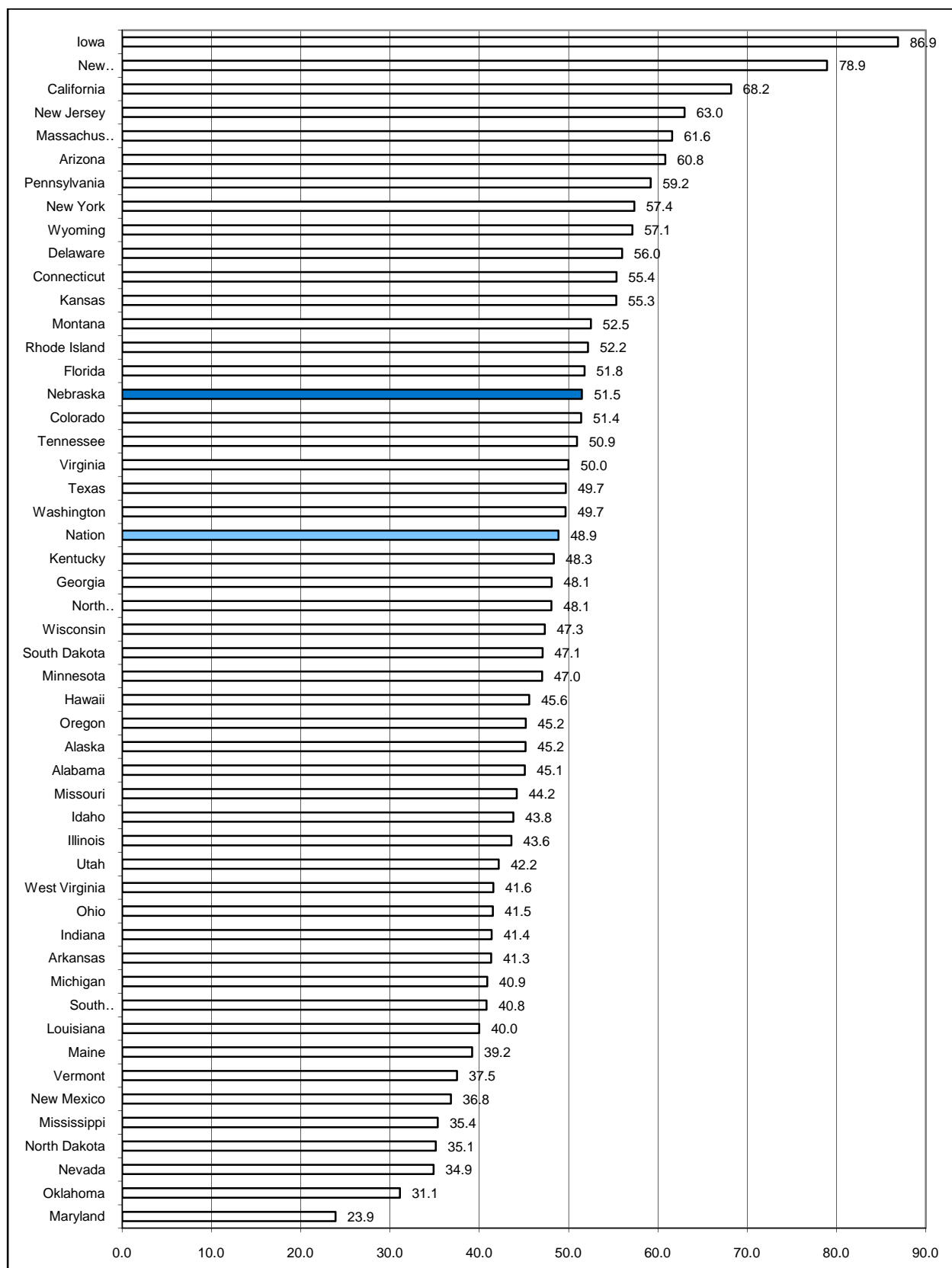
¹Data Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), fall 2004 and 2007 surveys. See [Table A9.2](#) in [Appendix 9](#) for supporting data.

¹The Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA) reported two part-time, first-time freshmen in fall 2003, but the school did not report a retention rate for these students in fall 2004. Consequently, for the purposes of this report, NCTA is excluded from the calculation of a total part-time freshmen retention rate for the University of Nebraska.

- Due to insufficient data from institutions in the independent and for-profit sectors, an overall part-time retention rate for the state cannot be computed for these sectors. However, it can be estimated that the overall part-time retention rate for the three public sectors—the University of Nebraska, the Nebraska State College System and Nebraska’s community colleges—increased by 2.0%, from 38.2% in fall 2004 to 40.2% in fall 2007.
- See [Table A9.2](#) in [Appendix 9](#) for data related to the calculated sector rates for part-time freshmen and [Table A9.5](#) in [Appendix 9](#) for part-time retention rates by institution.
- [Figure 2.1.5](#) and [Figure 2.1.6](#) on the next two pages show the fall 2007 overall retention rates for part-time freshmen enrolled at Nebraska’s public four-year institutions and two-year community colleges, compared to the retention rates for other states and the nation.
- As shown in [Figure 2.1.5](#), the overall part-time retention rate for Nebraska’s public four-year institutions—the University of Nebraska at Kearney, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and the three institutions in the Nebraska State College System—was 51.5%, compared to a national average of 48.9%. As a result, Nebraska ranked 16th among the 50 states in fall 2007, compared to eighth in fall 2006 when the part-time retention rate for Nebraska’s public four-year institutions was 55.8% and the national rate was 47.1%.
- In [Figure 2.1.6](#), the overall part-time freshmen retention rate for Nebraska’s six community colleges is compared to state and national part-time rates for all two-year public colleges. Since these colleges include public-supported tribal colleges and technical colleges, as well as community colleges, the retention rates for the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture at Curtis (NCTA-Curtis) and the Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC) are included in the computation of the national retention rate for part-time students. However, retention data for the NCTA-Curtis and the NICC are not included in the part-time retention rate calculated for Nebraska’s six community colleges.
- As shown in [Figure 2.1.6](#), the overall part-time retention rate for Nebraska’s community colleges was 39.1% in fall 2007, compared to a 40.0% part-time retention rate for all two-year public colleges in the United States.
- The NCTA-Curtis did not report a part-time retention rate for fall 2007, and the NICC reported a rate of 10%. Including the NICC, the retention rate for Nebraska’s public two-year institutions was 38.8%, making Nebraska’s rank 30th among the 50 states.
- See [Table A9.3](#) in [Appendix 9](#) for the data used to calculate the retention rates for part-time students enrolled at Nebraska public four-year institutions and two-year community colleges, which are compared to the national rates shown in [Figure 2.1.5](#) and [Figure 2.1.6](#).

Figure 2.1.5

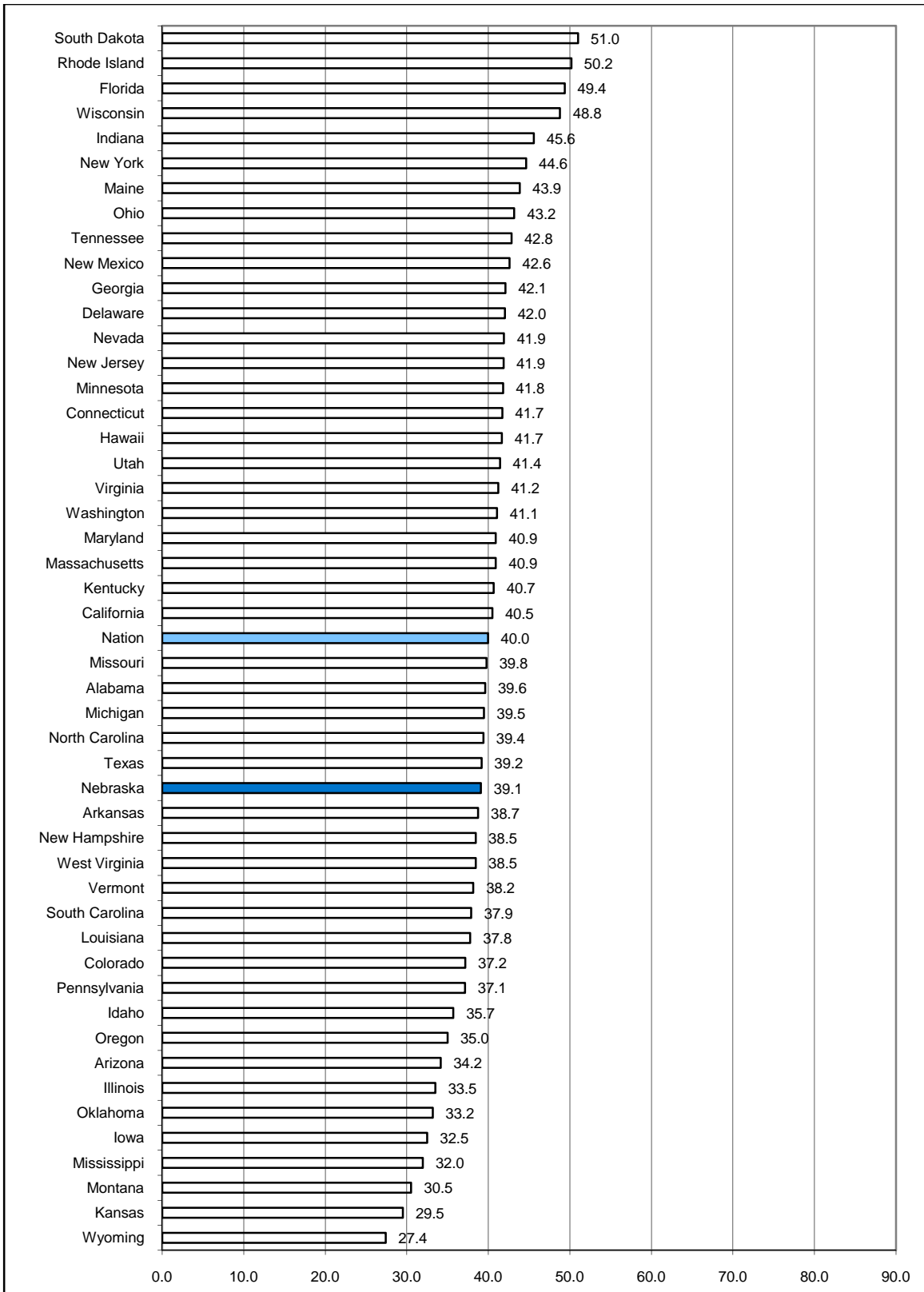
2007 Part-Time Freshmen Retention Rates for Four-Year Public Institutions by State



Data from the National Center for Education Statistics, fall 2007 survey, obtained from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), November 2008.

Figure 2.1.6

**2007 Part-Time Freshmen Retention Rates for Two-Year Public Institutions by State
(Nebraska Rate for Nebraska Community Colleges Only)**



¹Data from the National Center for Education Statistics, fall 2007 survey, obtained from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), November 2008.

