



College Going and the Class of 2021

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College Going and the Class of 2021

Data on the college-going patterns of Tennessee public high school graduates have historically been captured in the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's (THEC) annual *Tennessee Higher Education Fact Book* and *County Profiles*. To provide a more detailed look at these data, THEC has created the inaugural college-going report, *College Going and the Class of 2021*. This year's report presents several breakdowns of college-going data for the high school graduating class of 2021 and for prior classes. In addition to the data presented in this report, THEC has prepared a college-going data download, allowing users to view details by high school, including demographic information and college going to postsecondary institutions.

This year's report includes a special section with information from THEC's 2021 High School Senior Opinion Survey. This survey was administered to participating public high schools across the state and sought to collect insight into the class of 2021's plans after high school, perceptions of postsecondary education, and overall familiarity with financial aid programs. Because this survey is not administered annually, future reports on college going will not always include survey results. This inaugural report on college going provides additional insight to complement THEC's other reporting by focusing on efforts to enroll high school graduates into postsecondary education.

Executive Summary

Seamless college enrollment of high school graduates, or the college-going rate, represents an important element informing the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's (THEC) mission to increase the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential. This is the inaugural college-going report offering insight into college-going patterns over time and by student group.

College-going rate indicates the portion of public high school graduates who seamlessly enroll (i.e., immediately after high school) in postsecondary education. This rate has fluctuated over the past decade, increasing alongside the statewide implementation of Tennessee Promise, then declining in recent years with a notable drop in fall 2020 corresponding to overall postsecondary enrollment declines. Analyses of the college-going behaviors of the class of 2021 revealed the following:

- The college-going rate for the class of 2021 is 52.8%, down four percentage points from the college-going rate for the class of 2020 (**Figure 2**). Changes in college-going rate are not evenly distributed across the state, with some counties exhibiting large gains and others large decreases in college going (**Figure 4**).
- There are opportunities to improve gaps in college-going rate across gender and race groups. The college-going rate is higher for female students than for male students (**Figure 5**), and the college-going rate for Hispanic/Latino and Black or African American students is lower compared to the college-going rate for White students (**Figure 6**).
- Comparing college-going rates for the class of 2021 to the class of 2020 shows that the college-going rate declined to different degrees for different race-gender pairs. Black or African American female students (-4.6 percentage points), White female students (-5.3 percentage points), and Hispanic/Latino female students (-7.2 percentage points) experienced declines greater than the overall class of 2021 college-going rate decline (-4.0 percentage points) (**Figures 7, 8**).

This report also details the administration and results of the 2021 High School Senior Opinion Survey. This survey is administered every two to three years by THEC and the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC) to understand the aspirations and plans of high school seniors. This year's survey respondents were spring 2021 high school seniors from 103 public high schools, which corresponds to the college-going rate information presented above for the class of 2021. Analyses of survey results show the following:

- Most respondents, 68.7%, aspired to attend college (**Table 4**) and to one day earn a wide variety of credentials. Even if students do not enroll seamlessly after high school (evidenced in the overall class of 2021's college-going rate), survey responses suggested students may aspire to return to postsecondary education in the future. There were differences across gender and race in survey respondents' reported impacts of the pandemic (**Table 5**) and on plans for the fall after high school graduation (**Table 6**). These differences largely mirrored college-going rate disparities. Female respondents were more likely than males to say their plans for the fall after high school did not

change in response to the pandemic. African American or Black and Hispanic or Latino respondents said the pandemic changed their plans much more frequently than Caucasian or White respondents and those in the “Other” race category. Students whose responses indicated that they planned to attend college were more likely to be female, and respondents who did not plan to enroll were more likely to be male. Additionally, Caucasian or White respondents made up a larger proportion of college-intending respondents when compared to respondents with other plans for the fall following high school graduation.

- While respondents were generally familiar with Tennessee Promise, other financial aid programs did not show the same level of familiarity (**Figure 13**). Many respondents did not claim to be eligible for aid programs when, in fact, they may have qualified. Additionally, respondents tended to estimate the cost of attendance at a variety of institutions incorrectly (**Table 7**). Respondents generally tended to underestimate the cost to attend in-state public institutions, private regional universities, and for-profit colleges.

The findings in this report are a call to action. In May 2022, THEC will coordinate and convene stakeholders to identify recommendations and the path forward to improve the college-going rate and to increase postsecondary attainment. The sharp decline in the overall college-going rate and the observed disparities for traditionally underserved student populations demands a renewed focus on improving access to college and reengaging Tennesseans with education opportunities.

Privacy Notice

Throughout this report, THEC complies with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements to protect students’ personally identifiable information. Therefore, when tables are presented, individual observations containing fewer than ten observations are suppressed. The suppressed counts are included in table totals. All cases in which observations are suppressed are identified with a note directly beneath the respective table.

High School Seniors and College Going

The Drive to 55 is a campaign to raise the proportion of Tennessee’s working-age population (ages 25-64) with a postsecondary credential to 55 percent by the year 2025.¹ High school graduates who enroll in postsecondary education are a core group whose postsecondary attainment is critical to reaching the goal. As of 2019, Tennessee has a 46.8% postsecondary attainment rate.² While students in the high school class of 2021 will not reach age 25 by 2025, and thus will not impact the Drive to 55 specifically, their college going, as with other recent high school graduating classes, is critical to Tennessee’s long term attainment goals.

Figure 1 shows graduation cohort information from the Tennessee Department of Education. Graduation rates for the class of 2021 fell slightly to 88.7%. Notably, the cohort size of each graduating class has been declining since 2018, with the graduation cohort of 2021 two percent smaller than the graduation cohort of 2018.³

The Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education projects the number of public and private high school graduates across the United States as part of their Knocking at the College Door initiative. In December 2020, WICHE reported that the number of Tennessee public and private high school graduates would peak by 2026 due to shifting demographics and birth rates in the state and country.⁴ While the number of high school graduates that could potentially enroll in postsecondary education remains promising, realizing the educational attainment goals of the state also requires students to realize their own goals by continuing to and through postsecondary education. If the number of high school graduates in the enrollment pipeline decreases, ensuring that a higher proportion of those students enroll in postsecondary education and complete needed credentials will be a key part of realizing Tennessee’s attainment goals.

¹ For more information about the Drive to 55, see “Postsecondary Attainment in the Decade of Decision: The Master Plan for Tennessee Postsecondary Education, 2015-2025” at

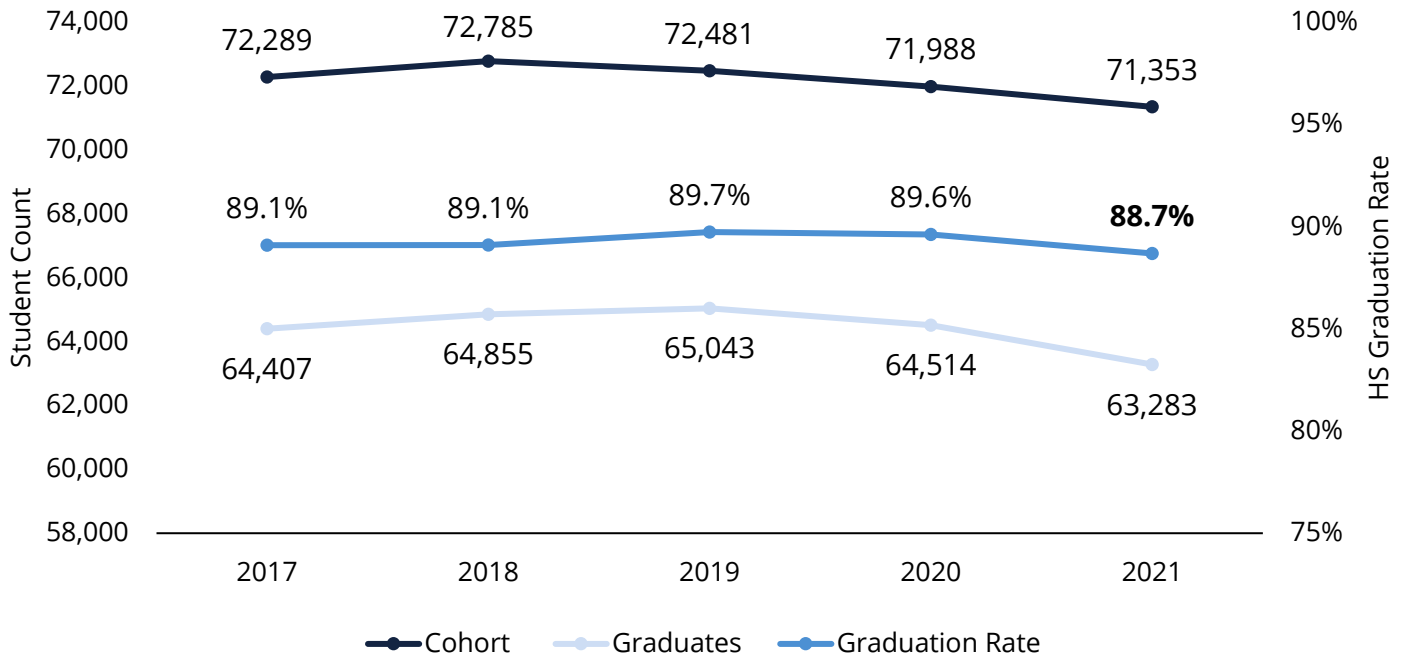
https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/the/bureau/research/other-research/master-plan/MasterPlan2025_0418.pdf.

² Data from the Lumina Foundation, <https://luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/static/downloads-data/nation-time.zip>; attainment rate includes short-term credentials, which encompass certifications and certificates. Current attainment rate for 2022 has not yet been calculated.

³ Statistics in this paragraph and figure 1 based on THEC calculations using data from the Tennessee Department of Education, <https://www.tn.gov/education/data/data-downloads.html>. Graduation rate is based on the count of students in the ninth-grade cohort who earn a regular high school diploma by the end of the fourth year.

⁴ For more information on the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education’s graduate count projections, see <https://knocking.wiche.edu/data/knocking-10th-data/>.

Figure 1: High School Graduation Cohorts, Graduates, and Graduation Rates



Note: Student counts are shown on the left vertical axis, and high school graduation rates are shown on the right vertical axis. For the class of 2021, 71,353 students made up the graduating class cohort, and 63,283 students graduated, yielding a graduation rate of 88.7%.

Section I:

College-Going Rate



College-Going Data and Methods

The college-going rate is a measure of the proportion of graduates in each high school cohort that seamlessly enroll in postsecondary education. More precisely, this metric counts public high school students in the Tennessee Department of Education’s ninth grade cohort who earn a regular high school diploma and enroll at a postsecondary institution the following summer or fall term after graduating high school. Cohorts of high school graduates are referred to by their high school graduation year in this report. The process is shown below using the example of the class of 2021.



Data Sources and Notes

The data in this section were sourced from the Tennessee Longitudinal Data System (also known as P20 Connect), the National Student Clearinghouse Student Tracker (NSC), and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission’s Student Information System (THECSIS). High school graduate data, from the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) pulled from P20 Connect, were matched to enrollment data from THECSIS and to National Student Clearinghouse Student Tracker data to present a complete picture of public high school graduates’ enrollment behaviors, whether they enrolled in-state or out-of-state, at public or private institutions. Throughout the college-going section, demographic groups are aligned with TDOE reporting and are not necessarily comparable to other THEC reporting.

College Going in Tennessee

Figure 2 presents the overall college-going rate of Tennessee’s public high school graduates over the last decade. Fall 2015 saw the implementation of the Tennessee Promise program statewide, which is reflected in an increase in college-going rate from fall 2014 to fall 2015. For the high school class of 2021 enrolling in postsecondary education in summer or fall 2021, the overall college-going rate dropped four percentage points from the prior class to 52.8%. This likely reflects the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students’ choices to enroll in postsecondary education, a topic which will be explored further in Section II of this report. **Table 1** shows counts of public high school graduates and postsecondary enrollees for the last decade.

Figure 2: Statewide College-Going Rate

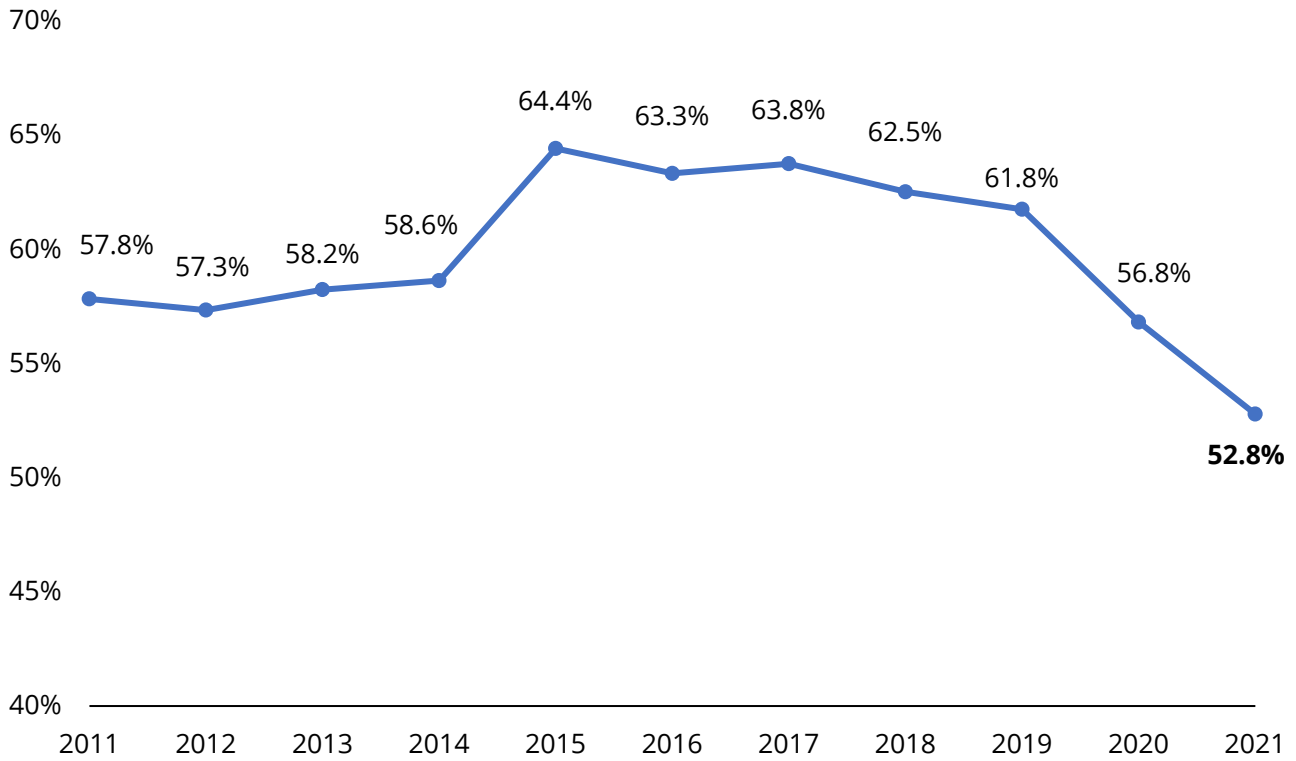


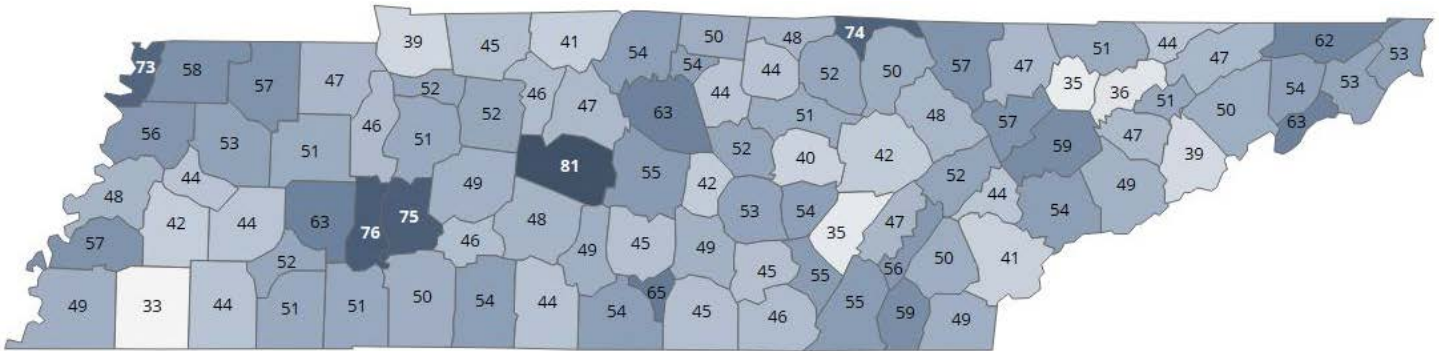
Table 1: Public High School Graduates and Postsecondary Enrollees

HS Class	Public HS Grads	Postsecondary Enrollees	College-Going Rate
2011	59,795	34,585	57.8%
2012	59,956	34,383	57.3%
2013	59,573	34,699	58.2%
2014	59,860	35,104	58.6%
2015	60,599	39,044	64.4%
2016	62,339	39,485	63.3%
2017	63,486	40,480	63.8%
2018	63,912	39,967	62.5%
2019	64,061	39,568	61.8%
2020	63,519	36,095	56.8%
2021	62,238	32,856	52.8%

Figure 3 shows a heat map of college-going rate by county for the class of 2021. Darker blue counties have a higher college-going rate, and lighter colored counties have a lower college-going rate. College going

ranges from 32.6% in Fayette County to 81.3% in Williamson County. Sixty-three of Tennessee's 95 counties have a college-going rate below the statewide rate of 52.8% for the class of 2021. More detailed data on college-going rate by county over the last five years is available in **Appendix A**.

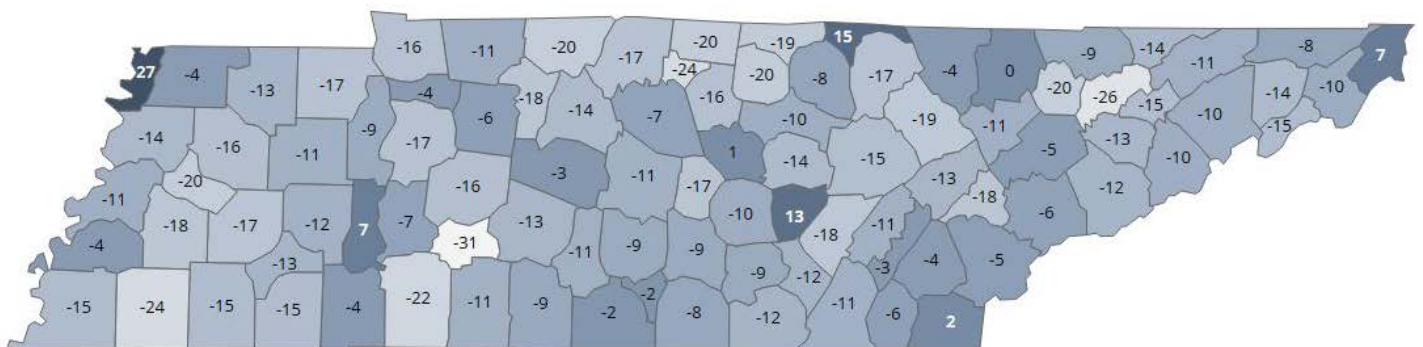
Figure 3: Class of 2021 College-Going Rate



Note: Numbers shown in reach county represent county college-going rate (in %) for the class of 2021.

Figure 4 shows the 5-year percentage point change in college-going rate by county, comparing the college-going rate of the class of 2017 with the class of 2021. Counties with the highest percentage point increase are darker blue, and counties with the highest percentage point decrease are lighter. Lewis County had the largest decline in college-going rate (30.6 percentage points), while Lake County demonstrated the greatest increase in college-going rate (27.4 percentage points). Both counties have small student populations, with approximately 100 or fewer high school graduates in the years considered. Such counties may experience more volatile changes in college going over time. Eight counties experienced increases in their college-going rate, and are pictured in dark blue, while lighter colored counties saw various levels of decreases in college-going rate. More detailed data on college-going rate by county over the last five years is available in **Appendix A**.

Figure 4: College-Going Rate Change, 2017-2021



Note: Numbers shown in each county represent county percentage point change in college-going rate for the class of 2017 compared to the class of 2021.

Just as college-going rate varies by county, postsecondary enrollment behavior varies by gender and race. **Table 2** shows college-going rates by gender and by race for the class of 2021. Females have a higher

college-going rate than males, and students in the “Other” race category have the highest college-going rate, followed closely by White students. The “Other” race category includes American Indian or Native Alaskan, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Two or More Races; students who identify as Asian or as Two or More races make up most of this category. Black or African American and Hispanic/Latino students enrolled in postsecondary at a much lower rate than the rest of their class.

These college-going rates represent a within-group rate, comparing students in a race or gender demographic with other students in the same demographic. Some groups are notably smaller in Tennessee. Historically and in the class of 2021, White students represent the largest share of college-going students, as well as the largest share of Tennessee’s overall postsecondary enrollment. **Table 2** reflects the sizes of these groups for the class of 2021. Over the 5-year period shown in subsequent figures, the share of high school graduates in the Hispanic/Latino and “Other” race categories has grown while the shares of Black or African American students and White students have decreased. The shares of male and female high school graduates have remained relatively stable over that time.

Table 2: College-Going Rates of Class of 2021

	Public HS Grads	College-Going Rate
Gender		
<i>Female</i>	31,356	59.0%
<i>Male</i>	30,882	46.5%
Race		
<i>Black or African American</i>	12,683	44.0%
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	5,801	35.0%
<i>Other</i>	3,603	59.2%
<i>White</i>	40,151	57.6%
Race-Gender		
<i>Female Black or African American</i>	6,620	50.0%
<i>Female Hispanic/Latino</i>	2,282	40.4%
<i>Female Other</i>	1,191	64.1%
<i>Female White</i>	19,994	64.2%
<i>Male Black or African American</i>	6,063	37.5%
<i>Male Hispanic/Latino</i>	2,919	29.7%
<i>Male Other</i>	1,693	53.7%
<i>Male White</i>	20,207	51.0%

Note: The “Other” race category includes American Indian or Native Alaskan, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Two or More Races.

Figure 5 shows college-going rates over the last five years by gender. Females have consistently higher college-going rates than their male counterparts, despite experiencing a larger decline in college going year to year from 2020 to 2021. Notably, the college-going rate for males decreased more sharply between the classes of 2019 and 2020 than the college-going rate for females and declined more overall over five years (-11.6 percentage points compared to -10.5 percentage points).

Figure 5: College-Going Rates by Gender

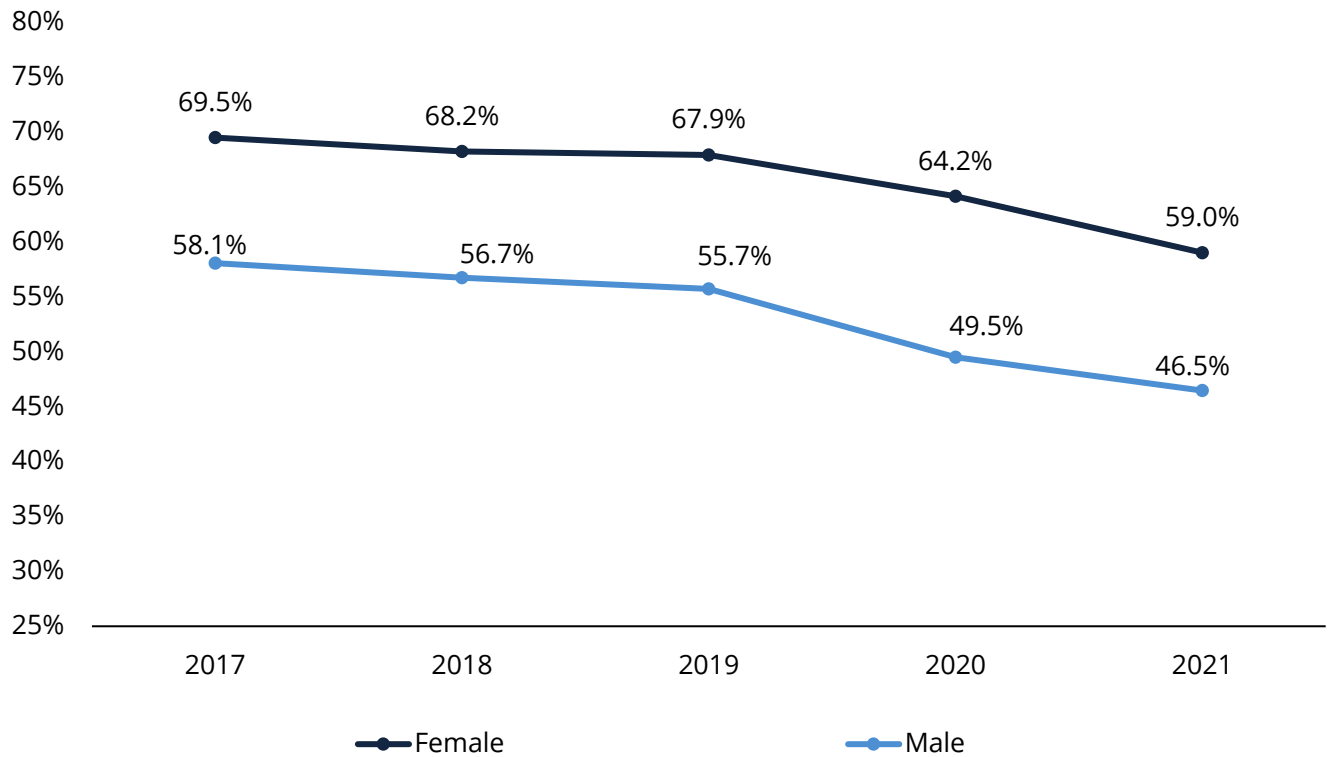
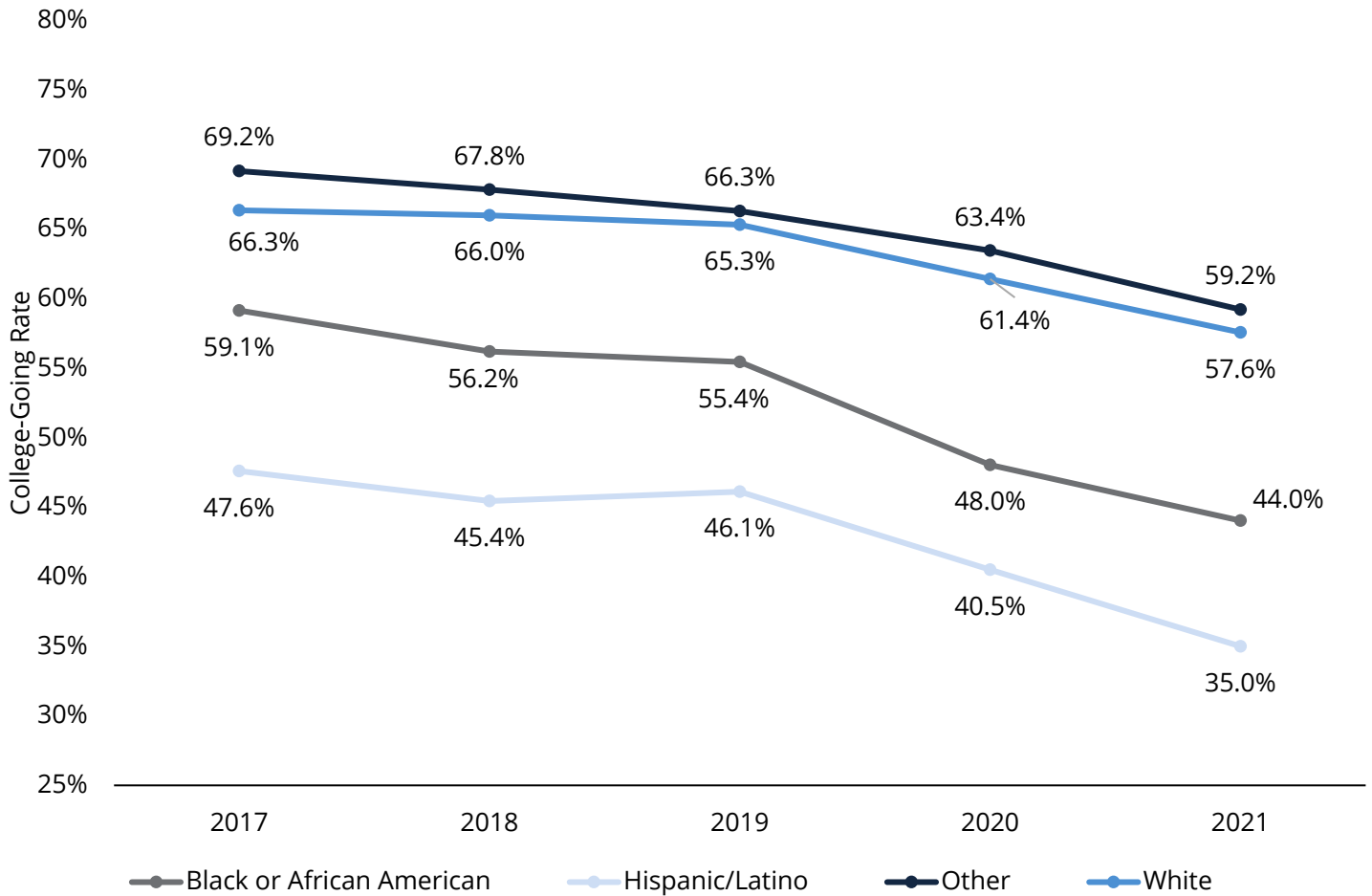


Figure 6 shows college-going rates over the last five years by race. Hispanic/Latino students have the lowest college-going rates, while students in the “Other” race category have the highest college-going rates. Comparing the class of 2021 to the class of 2020, Hispanic/Latino students saw the greatest decline in college-going rate, at 5.5 percentage points decline, while White students saw the smallest decline of only 3.8 percentage points.

Figure 6: College-Going Rates by Race

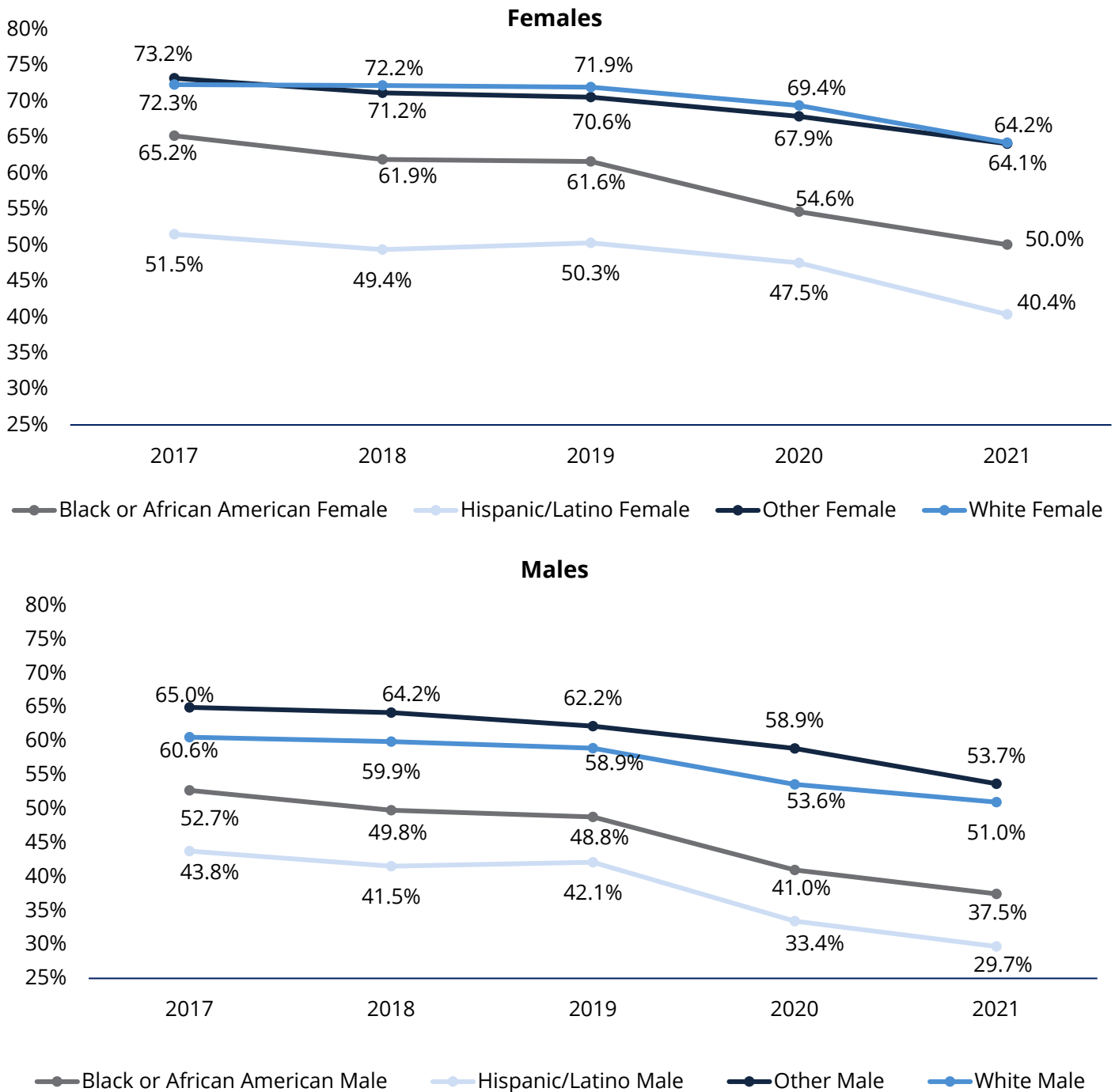


Note: The “Other” race category includes American Indian or Native Alaskan, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Two or More Races. Here and throughout the college-going data, demographic groups are aligned with Tennessee Department of Education reporting and are not necessarily comparable to other THEC reporting.

Figure 7 shows college-going rates by race-gender pairs for the last five years. Female students by race are shown in the top graph, while male students by race are shown in the bottom graph. White females and females in the “Other” race category have similar college-going rates while “Other” males have higher college-going rates than White males. Further, the gap between female and male college-going rates for students of the same race is particularly pronounced for Black or African American students and White students.⁵

⁵ For more on THEC’s work to increase postsecondary attainment for Black Male students in Tennessee, see the *Black Male Success Initiative Taskforce Report* at <https://www.tn.gov/thec/bureaus/academic-affairs-and-student-success/academic-programs/bmsi.html>.

Figure 7: College-Going Rate by Race-Gender Pairs



Note: The "Other" race category includes American Indian or Native Alaskan, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Two or More Races.

Figure 8 compares college-going rates for the class of 2021 to rates for the class of 2020 and shows that college-going rate declined to different degrees for different race-gender pairs. Females in the "Other" race category, Hispanic/Latino males, Black or African American males, and White males have declines lower than the overall class of 2021 college-going rate decline of 4.0 percentage points. Meanwhile, Black or African American females, males in the "Other" race category, White females, and Hispanic/Latino females have declines greater than the overall class of 2021 college-going rate decline, with female Hispanic/Latino college-going rate declines particularly pronounced. Smaller student groups may see more volatility in

college-going rates over time, as those rates are based on a smaller number of high school graduates in that demographic group.

Figure 8: College-Going Rate Declines, 2020 to 2021

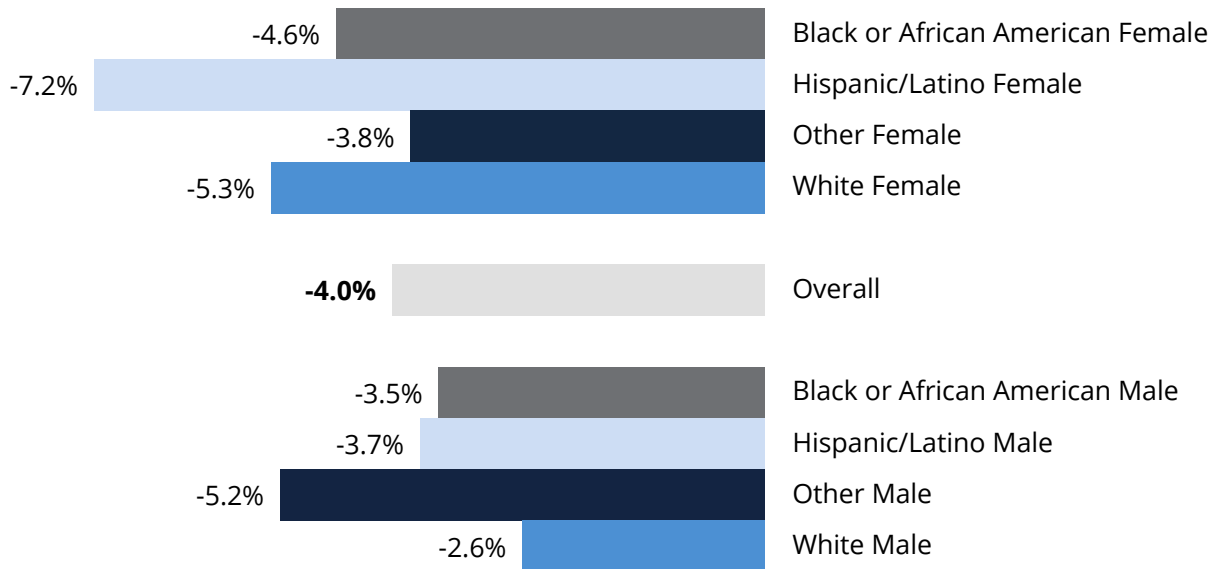
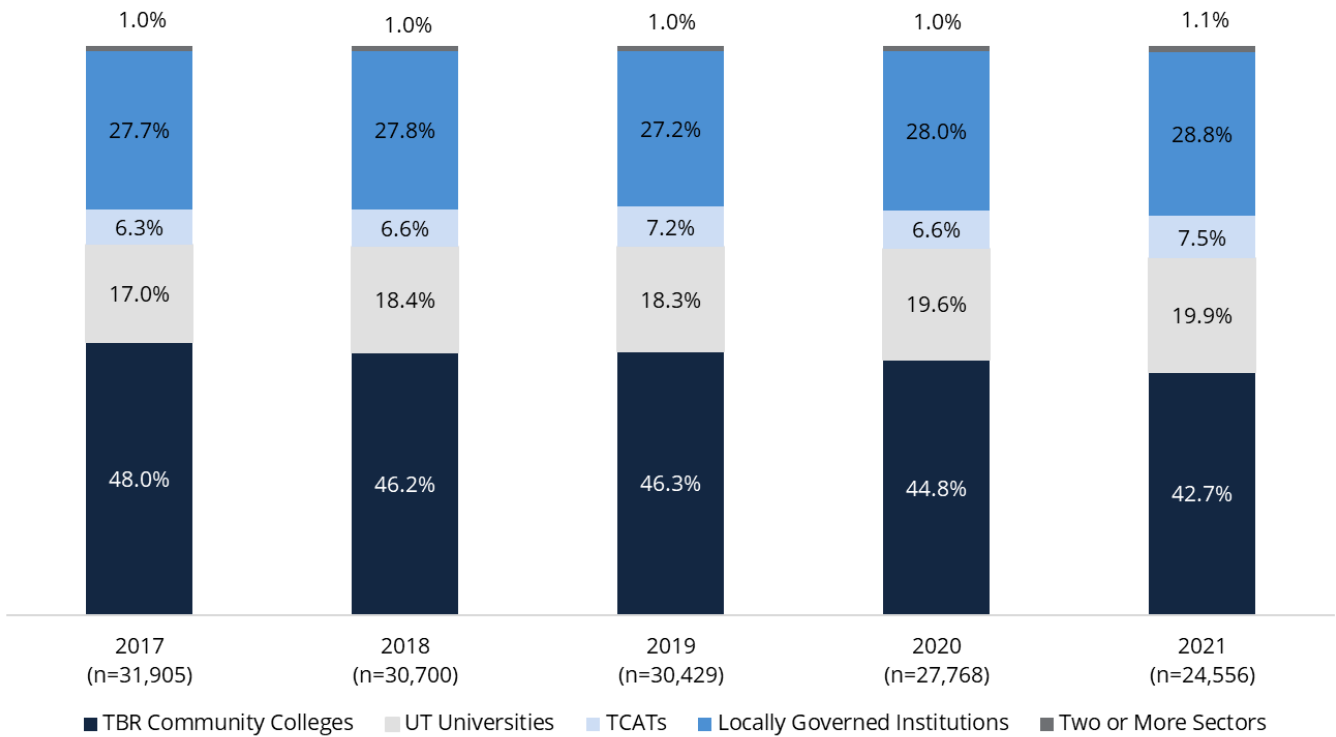


Figure 9 shows the distribution of college-going public high school graduates who enroll in Tennessee’s public institutions by system. This is a subset of all postsecondary enrollees. A smaller portion of the class of 2021 enrolled at Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) community colleges than previous cohorts, a trend continuing over time. The proportion of the class of 2021 enrolling at Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs) and in the University of Tennessee (UT) system increased compared to the previous class.

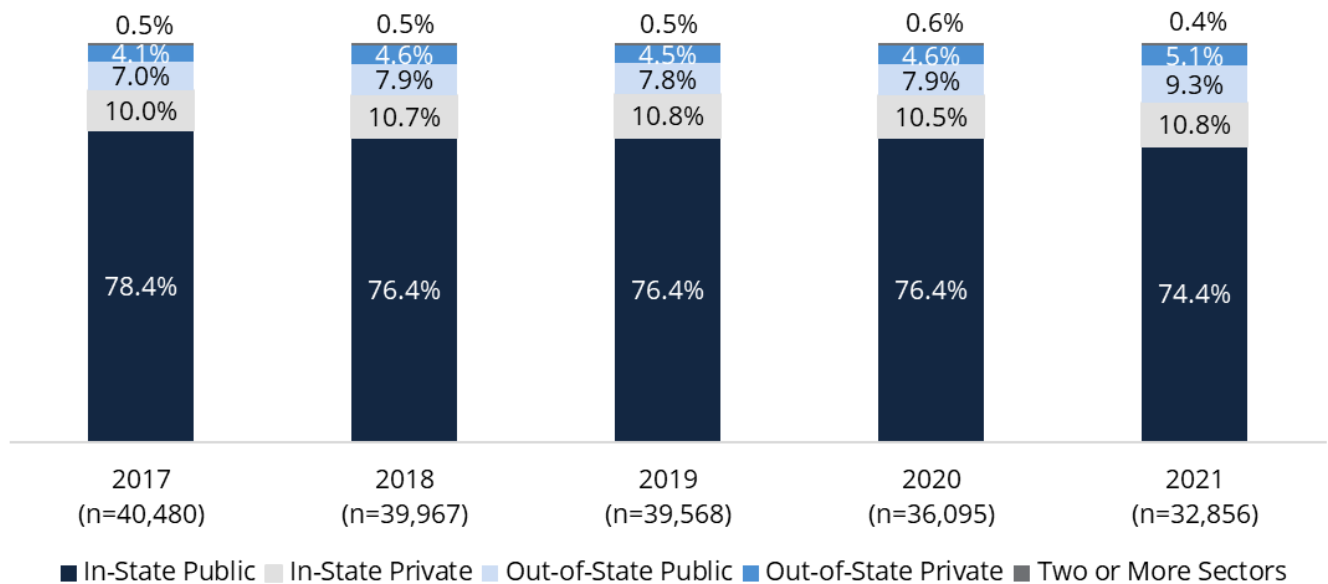
Figure 9: Public In-State High School Graduate Enrollment by System



Note: The class of 2021 includes UT Southern in the UT Universities proportion.

Figure 10 shows the distribution of college-going public high school graduates who enroll in any college according to their sector of enrollment. While the majority of students enroll at in-state public institutions, the class of 2021 has an increased share of enrollments at out-of-state institutions, both public and private, compared to previous cohorts.

Figure 10: Public In-State High School Graduate Enrollment by Sector



Note: The class of 2021 includes UT Southern in the In-State Public proportion.

These tables and figures highlight important changes in college going over time. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the overall decline in enrollment across sectors are reflected in declining college going in the state and shifting in where students enroll. Finally, these data demonstrate areas for improved equity in access to higher education across gender, race, and geographic groups.

The next section of the report, which analyzes survey data from Tennessee public high school seniors, examines possible explanations for the change in college-going rate.

Section II:

High School Senior Opinion

Survey



2021 High School Senior Opinion Survey

The High School Senior Opinion Survey is administered by THEC/TSAC to inform K-12 staff, TSAC Outreach Specialists, TN Pathways Regional Coordinators, and other stakeholders of student attitudes, plans, and preparation for college. THEC/TSAC has administered this survey every two to three years in participating schools across the state during the spring term of a student's senior year. The purpose of the survey is to understand students' thoughts and perceptions around the decision to enroll in college and the factors that influence that decision.

About the High School Senior Opinion Survey

THEC/TSAC administered the High School Senior Opinion Survey in March and April 2021.⁶ The survey included questions about students' plans for the fall following high school graduation, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on those plans, details about students' college search and application process, financial aid and paying for college, the perceived benefits of college, students' high school exposures to postsecondary education, and student demographics. A copy of the survey is available in **Appendix B**.

Survey Recruitment

THEC/TSAC identified and recruited 103 public high schools from across the state to participate in the survey. **Table 3** provides detail on the representativeness of these schools. Schools were instructed by researchers to make every reasonable effort to administer the survey to all students in the senior class, regardless of whether the student was graduating in spring 2021. Students were given the option to opt-out of the survey, and students could skip any question they preferred to not answer.

Survey Administration

Schools were given the option to select from two survey delivery types: a paper-and-pencil survey, which required the participating schools to collect data in person and mail the completed questionnaires to THEC/TSAC's vendor for processing; and an online survey, administered through QuestionPro, which provided an anonymized link for schools to share with their students and could be administered in a distance education/remote learning setting, with responses automatically shared back with THEC/TSAC. Surveys were identical across administration types.⁷ Paper survey administration required students to complete the survey in a scannable form with blue or black ink or pencil. Online survey administration required students to access the survey with appropriate technology via an internet survey platform. Eighty-seven percent of valid responses came from online survey administrations and 13% from paper surveys.

⁶ Originally scheduled for spring 2020, this administration of the survey was postponed to spring 2021 and adjusted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁷ The paper survey administration included directions for respondents to skip particular questions based on previous responses. The online survey administration automatically showed respondents only relevant questions based on previous responses. In analysis, paper survey responses have been limited to only valid responses, where questions that should have been skipped are dropped out of each student's response set.

For both administration types, survey proctors were asked to provide students with their high school's ACT code to identify high school-level responses⁸, and the survey administration instructions clarified that questions referring to "college" meant any type of postsecondary institution (e.g., community colleges, technical colleges, universities, etc.) unless explicitly stated otherwise. In total, 103 high schools registered to participate in the survey, yielding 5,216 valid survey responses.

Data Note

Responses provided, including demographic labels, reflect the survey language (as seen in **Appendix B**). Students who did not consent to participate were removed. Students who did not provide any additional responses beyond consent to participate were also removed from analysis. Data were cleaned to ensure standardized coding between responses to the paper survey administration and the online survey administration, and responses from both were merged into one dataset. This yielded 5,216 valid survey responses.

To maximize the data analyzed, THEC employed a pairwise deletion, meaning that students who did not provide a response to the question being analyzed were dropped from consideration. If analysis examines more than one question, only students who provided a valid response to all questions in that analysis are included. Therefore, the number of responses in each analysis varies. Students who did not provide a response or were not shown a question (based on the skip logic of the survey described above) were considered missing; response options such as "No" or "I don't know" were considered valid responses. The count of missing responses to a single question ranges from zero to 3,018 (high numbers of missing responses are found on questions that were not asked of all respondents due to the survey's skip logic), but missing responses may be higher for analyses that examine more than one question. The percentages shown are based on the number of valid responses in that particular analysis. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Respondents may not be representative of all Tennessee public school seniors. Results of the 2021 High School Senior Opinion Survey are for informational purposes and may not be able to be extrapolated beyond survey respondents. While survey respondents provide insight and suggest areas of improved outreach, the experiences shared in the survey are not all-inclusive of all student experiences in the class of 2021 or beyond.

Demographics of Respondents

Table 3 shows the self-reported demographics of survey respondents. Respondents were more likely to be female than male and more likely to be Caucasian or White than any other racial demographic group. Fewer than half of respondents identified as first generation (42.6%, n=1,948), meaning that they reported the highest level of education earned by either parent or guardian was "some college, no degree", "high

⁸ Ultimately, ACT code responses were not reliable, and high school-level response sets could not reliably be identified. Of the 103 high schools that participated in survey administration, only 77 high schools could be reliably identified through matching ACT codes in student responses.

school diploma or equivalent (GED or HiSET)”, or “less than high school”. While the survey asked for estimated family income, the most common response was “I am unsure”, so financial information is not a demographic included in analysis.

This table also demonstrates the representativeness of survey respondents by comparing respondent demographics to the demographics of the 2021 graduate cohort at schools that participated in the survey and statewide. Female students, African American or Black students, and students in the “Other” race category are overrepresented in survey results compared to the 2021 graduating cohort. Male students, Caucasian or White students, and Hispanic or Latino students are underrepresented in survey results.⁹

Table 3: Demographics of 2021 Survey Respondents Versus 2021 Graduating Cohort

	Survey Respondents	Participating HS Graduate Cohort	Statewide Graduate Cohort
Gender			
<i>Female</i>	53.7%	49.3%	49.0%
<i>Male</i>	43.6%	50.7%	51.0%
<i>Prefer not to answer</i>	2.7%	-	-
Race			
<i>African American or Black</i>	32.8%	31.5%	24.2%
<i>Caucasian or White</i>	49.4%	56.3%	62.0%
<i>Hispanic or Latino</i>	8.0%	9.7%	10.6%
<i>Other</i>	7.5%	2.6%	3.2%
<i>Prefer not to answer</i>	2.3%	-	-

Note: For survey respondents, the “Other” race category includes American Indian or Native American, Asian American or Pacific Islander, Multiracial, and Other. For participating high school and statewide graduate cohorts, the “Other” race category includes American Indian or Native Alaskan, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Participating high school data includes the 77 high schools that could be identified through matching ACT codes in student responses. Participating HS graduate cohort and statewide graduate cohort data sourced from the Tennessee Department of Education, <https://www.tn.gov/education/data/data-downloads.html>. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Respondents’ College-Going Plans

Table 4 shows the distribution of survey respondents’ plans for the fall after graduating from high school. One question asked respondents about their plans before the COVID-19 pandemic, and one question asked about their plans for the fall at the time of survey administration. College-going intentions over this time dropped by about one percentage point, or 390 respondents, who shifted from intending to go to college to intending to go to work, join the military, take a gap year, or other or unknown plans. Additionally, 338 respondents who did not initially intend to enroll in college shifted their response over this time, indicating that they now planned to go to college or technical college in the fall. Most respondents whose plans were unknown before the COVID-19 pandemic indicated that they intended to go to college or to

⁹ Statistics in this paragraph and Table 3 based on THEC calculations using “Graduation Cohort” data from the Tennessee Department of Education, <https://www.tn.gov/education/data/data-downloads.html>.

work full-time. These results do not suggest a clear impact of the COVID-19 pandemic overall on students' plans after graduating high school.

Table 4: Respondents' Plans for the Fall After Graduating High School

	<i>"Before the COVID-19 pandemic, what did you plan to do in the fall after graduating from high school?"</i>	<i>"What will you do in the fall after graduating from high school?"</i>
Go to college or a technical college (e.g., TCAT)	69.7%	68.7%
Get a new job or continue working at my current job full-time	7.4%	10.5%
Enlist in the military	3.8%	3.7%
Take time off and enroll in a college or technical college within a year of graduating high school	8.3%	7.2%
Other	4.4%	4.6%
I did not/do not know what I was/am going to do after graduation	6.4%	5.1%
Total Valid Responses	5,046	5,046

Note: Responses are limited to students who provided a valid answer to both questions. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

The survey also directly asked students about the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on their plans. Twenty percent of respondents said that the pandemic had changed their plans for the fall after graduating from high school, and another 18% responded they were unsure if the pandemic had changed their plans, for a total of 1,952 respondents answering "yes" or "unsure" to the question.

Table 5 shows how responses to this question vary by student demographics. By gender, females and males were almost equally likely to say the pandemic did change their plans; however, females were more likely than males to say their plans did not change, with 65% of 2,453 females responding "no" compared to 60% of 1,990 male respondents. Responses to this question varied widely by race. African American or Black (27.8%) and Hispanic or Latino (24.7%) respondents, as well as those who said they preferred not to identify their race (25.5%), said the pandemic changed their plans much more frequently than Caucasian or White respondents and those in the "Other" race category. First generation respondents were also more likely to say the pandemic had changed their plans than respondents who would not be first generation. These disparate impacts mirror the declines in college-going rates discussed in the previous section of this report.

Table 5: Pandemic Impacts by Demographics

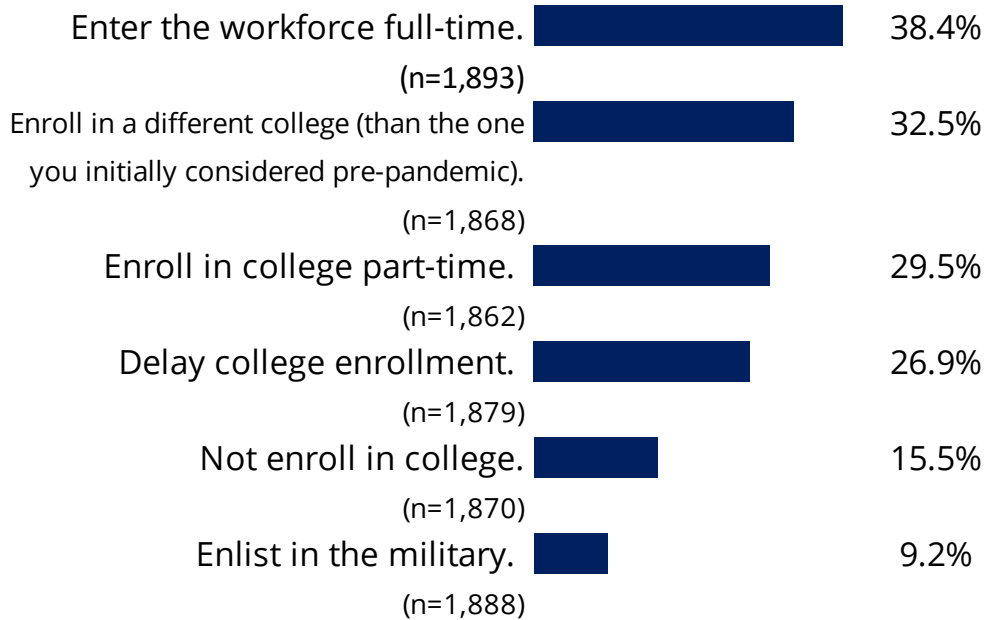
<i>Has the pandemic changed your plans for the fall after graduating from high school?</i>	Yes	Unsure	No	Total Valid Responses
Gender				
<i>Female</i>	19.9%	15.0%	65.1%	2,453
<i>Male</i>	19.5%	20.4%	60.1%	1,990
<i>Prefer not to answer</i>	15.7%	25.6%	58.7%	121
Race				
<i>African American or Black</i>	27.8%	18.1%	54.2%	1,501
<i>Caucasian or White</i>	13.2%	16.5%	70.3%	2,253
<i>Hispanic or Latino</i>	24.7%	22.8%	52.4%	368
<i>Other</i>	19.6%	15.8%	64.6%	342
<i>Prefer not to answer</i>	25.5%	26.4%	48.1%	106
First Generation				
<i>Yes</i>	22.5%	19.3%	58.2%	1,942
<i>No</i>	17.6%	16.5%	65.9%	2,601
Overall	20.1%	18.1%	61.8%	5,113

Note: The "Other" race category includes American Indian or Native American, Asian American or Pacific Islander, Multiracial, and Other. First generation status is based on student's self-report of the highest level of education earned by either parent or guardian. Percentages shown are based on row totals and may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

The respondents who said that they were impacted or were unsure if their plans had been impacted by the pandemic were then asked about how likely they were to make specific decisions after graduating high school. **Figure 11** shows the percentage of respondents who indicated their plans had changed or who were unsure and said they were "likely" or "highly likely" to make one of these choices because of the pandemic. Each item also shows the count of valid responses to the item. Entering the workforce or enrolling in a different college were the most likely decisions, and few respondents said they were likely to enlist in the military or to not enroll in college altogether as a result of the pandemic. Respondents could select "likely" or "highly likely" for more than one choice.

Figure 11: Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Respondents' Plans

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, how likely are you to make the following decisions related to your plans after graduating from high school?



Note: This survey question was asked to the 1,952 students who responded “yes” or “unsure” to the previous question: *Has the pandemic changed your plans for the fall after graduating high school?* Students could respond “likely” or “highly likely” to more than one choice.

There were some demographic disparities between respondents who indicated that their current (at time of survey administration) plans for the fall were to go to college or technical college and respondents who answered with some other plan for the fall. **Table 6** shows the demographic differences between these groups, with counts of valid responses shown for each demographic group. Respondents who planned to attend college were more likely to be female, and respondents who did not plan to enroll were more likely to be male. Additionally, Caucasian or White students made up a larger proportion of college-intending respondents, at 53.5%, than of respondents with other plans (40.3%). Finally, respondents who would be first generation college students made up a smaller proportion of respondents who planned to enroll than of respondents who did not plan to enroll. These disparities within race and gender groups echo the actual demographic makeup of the members of the class of 2021 who did enroll in postsecondary education, as demonstrated in **Table 2**.

Table 6: Fall Plans by Demographics

<i>What will you do in the fall after graduating from high school?</i>	Go to college or a technical college	All other responses
Gender	3,123	1,454
<i>Female</i>	60.1%	40.0%
<i>Male</i>	37.8%	56.0%
<i>Prefer not to answer</i>	2.0%	4.1%
Race	3,124	1,459
<i>African American or Black</i>	30.2%	38.4%
<i>Caucasian or White</i>	53.5%	40.3%
<i>Hispanic or Latino</i>	7.2%	9.8%
<i>Other</i>	7.1%	8.3%
<i>Prefer not to answer</i>	1.9%	3.2%
First Generation	3,105	1,451
	39.5%	49.3%
Overall	3,466	1,580

Note: The "Other" race category includes American Indian or Native American, Asian American or Pacific Islander, Multiracial, and Other. First generation status is based on student's self-report of the highest level of education earned by either parent or guardian. For a list of other responses, see **Appendix B**, question 7, Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

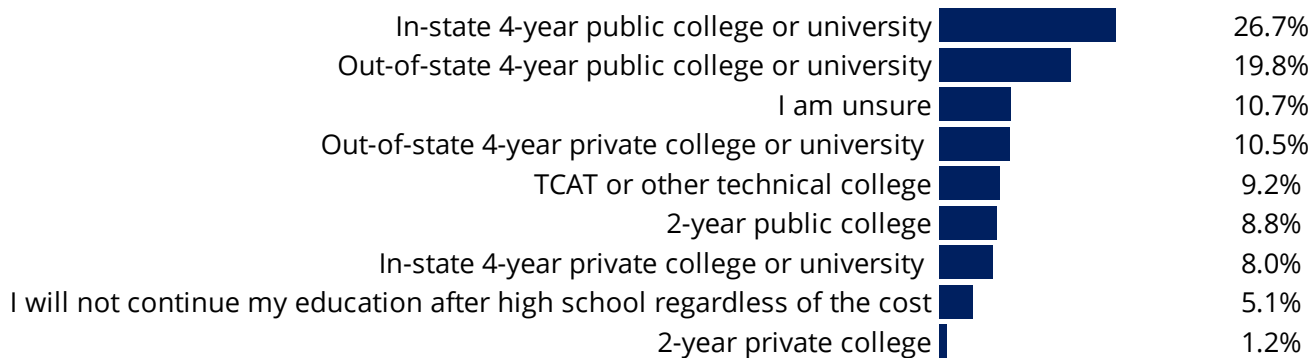
These survey responses combined with the college-going rate information presented in the first section of this report highlight an interesting disconnect between respondents' intentions and their actual enrollment behaviors come fall 2021. While 68.7% of survey respondents from the class of 2021 indicated on the High School Senior Opinion Survey that they intended to enroll in postsecondary education in the fall following high school graduation, only 52.8% of Tennessee public high school graduates were found in enrollment records in fall 2021. This disconnect may be attributed to many things, including summer melt of students who changed enrollment plans after graduating high school. Additionally, survey results may be skewed, if those who completed the survey were respondents who were already more likely to attend college, or if survey respondents felt a social desirability bias to report that they intended to go to college. While survey respondents may not be representative of all Tennessee public school seniors, this finding demonstrates that respondents value college and, even if they did not ultimately enroll, suggests some respondents may return to postsecondary education in the future.

Respondents who intended to enroll in college were also asked where they planned to attend. Respondents expressed plans to attend a 4-year college or university at high rates, with 60.2% of college-bound respondents saying that is the type of college where they planned to enroll in the fall, and fewer respondents reporting plans to attend community colleges (24%) or technical colleges (12.1%).

The survey also asked all respondents, regardless of fall plans, where their first choice to enroll would be if money were not an issue. **Figure 12** shows 4,697 valid responses. While not directly comparable to the responses about actual enrollment plans for the fall, both demonstrate that most respondents would choose a 4-year college or university. Community colleges are not shown here to be many respondents' first choice, suggesting that other factors play into their decisions regarding actual (rather than ideal) enrollment, like cost, location, or course schedule offerings.

Figure 12: Respondents' First-Choice Institution

If money were not an issue, what would be your first-choice institution?



Note: Percentages based on n=4,697 valid responses.

Further, 79.8% of survey respondents indicated that they intend to earn some level of postsecondary credential in their lifetime, from a technical certificate to a Ph.D. or advanced professional degree. Students who took the survey also appeared to recognize the value of a postsecondary credential; 71.5% said a college education was either “very important” or “important” for finding a well-paying, stable career. This suggests that students do not lack motivation to attend college or recognition of the value of college, but that other factors may impact their college-going behavior.

All respondents were also asked to estimate the cost of attendance¹⁰ at various colleges for one year, before financial aid or scholarships, including the cost of tuition, housing, meal plans, and/or books. **Table 7** shows the distribution of these responses. Most respondents correctly estimated the cost of attendance at a private research university like Vanderbilt, Harvard, or Stanford (61.7%) and at an out-of-state public university like Ole Miss or University of Alabama (62.4%). Respondents were less accurate in estimating the cost to attend in-state public institutions, private regional universities (like Freed-Hardeman or Lipscomb), and for-profit colleges (like University of Phoenix or South College). Respondents tended to underestimate the cost to attend these types of institutions.

¹⁰ Cost of attendance data is sourced from US Department of Education College Scorecard, <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/>.

Table 7: Respondents' Estimated College Costs

Without financial aid or scholarships, how much do you think it costs to attend each of these colleges per year?
 ("Cost" includes tuition, housing, meal plans, and/or books).

Institution	\$0 to \$2,499	\$2,500 to \$4,999	\$5,000 to \$9,999	\$10,000 to \$14,999	\$15,000 to \$19,999	\$20,000 to \$29,999	\$30,000 or more	Total valid responses
Nashville State Community College	16.8%	17.5%	21.6%	20.2%	12.4%	7.5%	3.9%	4,466
TCAT Murfreesboro	17.3%	20.7%	23.5%	18.9%	11.0%	5.0%	3.5%	4,480
For-profit college	7.9%	8.5%	15.7%	20.8%	18.1%	16.9%	12.2%	4,449
Austin Peay State University	7.9%	9.2%	15.9%	23.6%	20.3%	15.7%	7.4%	4,498
Tennessee State University	6.0%	6.9%	15.9%	24.2%	21.8%	17.0%	8.2%	4,475
University of Tennessee, Martin	5.4%	6.0%	16.7%	26.1%	22.8%	16.4%	6.6%	4,488
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	5.3%	5.1%	10.9%	19.5%	20.6%	24.0%	14.5%	4,497
Out-of-state public university	4.8%	3.1%	5.2%	10.8%	13.7%	23.2%	39.2%	4,504
Private regional university	5.4%	4.3%	8.1%	13.7%	16.0%	24.7%	27.9%	4,489
Private research university	5.0%	3.3%	4.1%	7.0%	7.3%	11.6%	61.7%	4,504

Note: **Bold** percentages represent respondents who correctly estimated cost of attendance. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

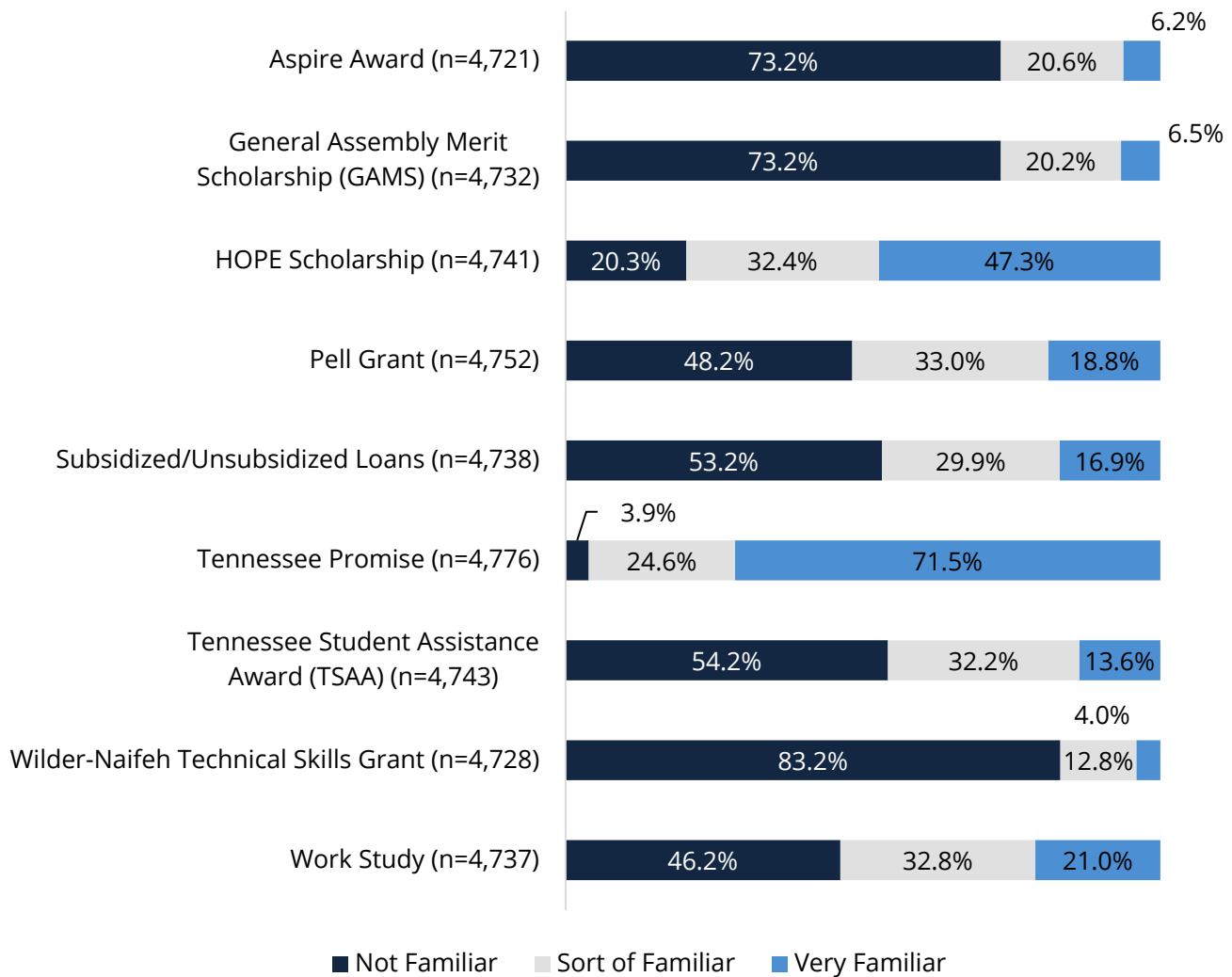
Respondents' Financial Aid Familiarity

Figure 13 shows the degree to which survey respondents were familiar with various types of financial aid. These questions were asked of all respondents, regardless of their plans after high school. Respondents rated Tennessee Promise as the financial aid type they were most familiar with; only 3.9% of respondents said they were not familiar with Tennessee Promise. Most respondents also said they were familiar with the HOPE Scholarship, with 79.7% of respondents saying they were "somewhat familiar" or "very familiar". However, supplements to the HOPE Scholarship like the Aspire Award and the General Assembly Merit Scholarship (GAMS) did not show similar levels of familiarity, suggesting that additional awareness should be brought to the distinctions between the HOPE base scholarship and the supplemental award amounts, as well as the qualifications for those supplements. The Tennessee Student Assistance Award (TSAA), which is the state's need-based aid program, as well as the Federal Pell Grant, student loans, and work study all

showed similar levels of familiarity. Finally, respondents were largely unfamiliar with the Wilder-Naifeh Technical Skills Grant, a financial aid source specifically for students enrolling at the Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology.

Figure 13: Respondents' Familiarity with Financial Aid Sources

The following question lists different types of financial aid (scholarships, grants, loans, etc.). For each type of financial aid, please indicate your familiarity with the program.



Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

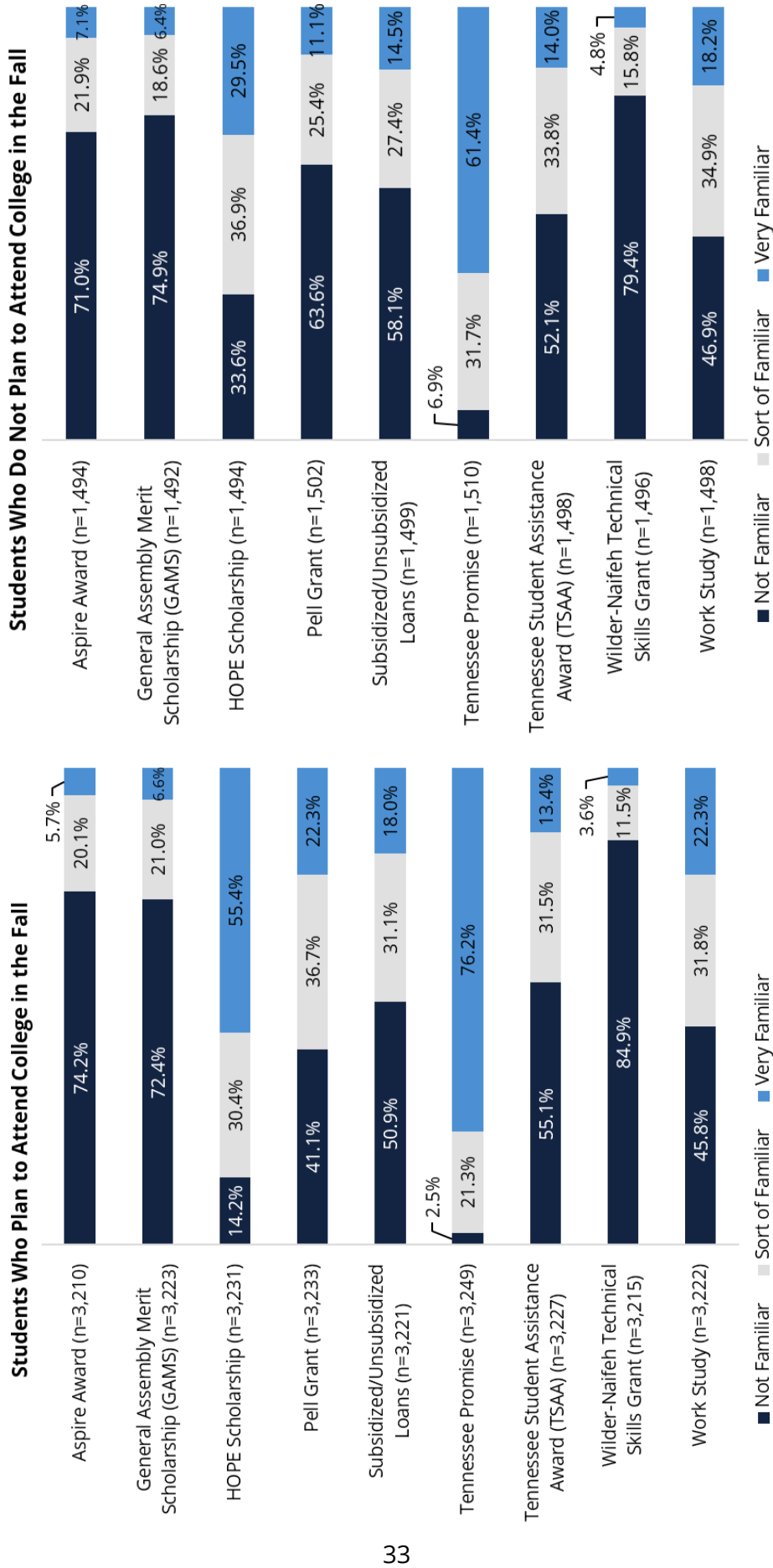
One possible reason for respondents to lack familiarity with these types of financial aid may be that they do not intend to enroll in college. For students who do not plan to go to college, acquiring knowledge about financial aid options may not make sense. **Figure 14** shows the same distributions of financial aid familiarity split by respondents who said they planned to attend college or technical college in the fall after high school graduation compared to respondents who did not say they planned to attend college (see **Table 4** for a full list of other responses). Respondents who did not plan to attend college in the fall were less familiar with the HOPE base scholarship than respondents who did plan to attend college, with 85.8%

of college-bound respondents expressing some familiarity compared to 66.4% of non-college-bound respondents. Those who did not plan to enroll also responded that they were less familiar with Pell Grants and with subsidized/unsubsidized loans. Of note, a higher percentage of respondents who did not plan to attend college expressed familiarity with the Wilder-Naifeh Technical Skills Grant (20.6%) than did respondents who planned to attend (15.1%). While familiarity is low for both groups, this suggests that some respondents who ultimately do not plan to attend college had been informed of opportunities that may fit their career plans at TCATs. The Wilder-Naifeh Technical Skills Grant is available to students who enroll at a TCAT any time, not just immediately following high school, so awareness may benefit students whose college-going plans change in the future.

To unpack respondents' financial aid familiarity further, the survey asked respondents if they are eligible, or expect to be eligible, to receive a Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship (TELS), including HOPE, GAMS, Aspire Award, and Wilder-Naifeh Technical Skills Grant. This question was asked of all respondents, not just those who reported plans to attend college. Very few respondents indicated that they expected to be eligible for each of these scholarships, and 40.6% reported they were unsure. As shown above, despite respondents' claims of familiarity with TELS (79.7% were "sort of familiar" or "very familiar" with the HOPE scholarship), respondents may not know what constitutes program eligibility, and thus do not expect to be eligible themselves. Additionally, respondents were asked how their eligibility for a TELS scholarship influenced their decision to go to college. Most respondents (77.3%) said they will attend college with or without the lottery scholarship. While the number of respondents who said they expected to be eligible for one or more TELS programs is small, familiarity with the TELS program was generally rated more highly among those who expected to receive the scholarships than it was by the full set of respondents. The small number of respondents who expected to receive these scholarships suggests more work should be done to inform students about the scholarships available to them, how they can become eligible, and what these scholarships may mean for the cost of college.

Figure 14: Respondents' Familiarity with Financial Aid Sources by Fall Plans

The following question lists different types of financial aid (scholarships, grants, loans, etc.). For each type of financial aid, please indicate your familiarity with the program.



Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

High School Senior Opinion Survey Summary Results

In conclusion, the 2021 administration of the High School Senior Opinion Survey represented an exciting new improvement, as survey administration included an online option and expanded participation to include more high schools and students than in previous years. Future administrations of the survey will continue to build on these improvements and include collaboration with THEC and TSAC outreach teams to improve the content of the survey and provide critical feedback on THEC/TSAC's efforts across the state. One important improvement for future surveys will be to increase the representativeness of survey respondents to more closely mirror statewide demographics.

Respondents in this survey showed that most aspired to attend college and earn a wide variety of credentials. Despite evidence of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on college-going rates, students surveyed appeared to be undeterred by the pandemic in pursuing their post-high school plans. However, important differences among gender and race groups in both reported impacts of the pandemic and in post-high school plans highlight opportunity areas. Finally, asking respondents about their familiarity with and expectation to receive various state and federal financial aid programs reveals areas for growth. While students were generally familiar with Tennessee Promise, progress can be made to increase familiarity with the full suite of financial aid options available to students to help them pursue a postsecondary education.

Conclusion

College-going rate is a key indicator of progress in THEC/TSAC's mission to increase the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential. Public high school graduates who enroll in the state's community colleges, universities, and TCATs make up a core of Tennessee's college access, success, and completion efforts. The purpose of this inaugural report on college going in Tennessee was to present a more detailed, longitudinal view of seamless enrollment and to contextualize the class of 2021 through the most recent High School Senior Opinion Survey.

Less than fifty-three percent of the class of 2021 enrolled in postsecondary education immediately after graduating high school, which is four percentage points lower than the college-going rate for the class of 2020 (**Figure 2**). Changes in college-going rate have not been evenly distributed across the state (**Figure 4**) or across gender and race groups (**Figure 5, 6, 7, 8**). These equity gaps and decreased statewide college going present an urgent opportunity to promote college access.

In May 2022, THEC will convene stakeholders to embark on the path forward to improving the college-going rate with the long-term goal of increasing educational attainment.

The 2021 High School Senior Opinion Survey results presented provide additional insight for postsecondary education stakeholders. Survey respondents generally aspire to attend college (**Table 4**) and to earn a wide variety of credentials. However, college intentions for survey respondents show inequities that mirror those seen in statewide college-going statistics (**Table 6**). Survey respondents also reveal important areas for improving students' knowledge and understanding of the robust suite of state-funded financial aid programs offered to Tennessee students (**Figure 13**). While THEC/TSAC, partnering organizations, high schools, and other stakeholders have made the Tennessee Promise program widely known, information gaps persist. Students can be equipped with greater knowledge of all the supports available to them as they consider their postsecondary education options and affordability, allowing all Tennessee students to pursue these opportunities and meet their aspirations.

Appendix A: College-Going Rate by County, 2017 to 2021

County	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Anderson	67.9%	68.2%	66.2%	62.5%	57.0%
Bedford	54.0%	56.0%	48.5%	47.4%	44.7%
Benton	55.3%	59.9%	57.9%	51.0%	46.1%
Bledsoe	53.3%	63.5%	58.0%	41.7%	35.2%
Blount	60.5%	64.0%	61.7%	58.8%	54.1%
Bradley	65.0%	65.0%	65.2%	63.5%	59.1%
Campbell	46.6%	57.3%	56.5%	47.3%	46.9%
Cannon	59.5%	54.5%	59.5%	45.0%	42.0%
Carroll	61.7%	66.1%	63.8%	70.1%	50.5%
Carter	62.4%	57.8%	61.2%	57.7%	52.8%
Cheatham	63.7%	55.2%	58.1%	56.0%	46.0%
Chester	64.3%	53.6%	60.8%	58.5%	51.7%
Claiborne	59.7%	56.8%	61.2%	45.8%	50.7%
Clay	67.2%	62.9%	62.0%	60.3%	47.9%
Cocke	49.1%	49.6%	49.1%	40.2%	38.8%
Coffee	58.2%	55.2%	57.0%	52.2%	49.0%
Crockett	63.8%	59.7%	64.0%	56.3%	44.0%
Cumberland	57.5%	53.1%	53.0%	49.8%	42.1%
Davidson	61.0%	56.2%	56.9%	51.6%	46.7%
Decatur	69.0%	72.5%	78.9%	71.6%	76.1%
DeKalb	51.6%	41.8%	53.2%	50.3%	52.2%
Dickson	57.5%	57.6%	57.4%	57.8%	51.9%
Dyer	70.1%	67.2%	68.0%	66.1%	56.3%
Fayette	56.4%	47.1%	55.4%	45.7%	32.6%
Fentress	67.1%	56.5%	55.9%	51.8%	50.3%
Franklin	53.4%	58.0%	57.3%	56.6%	45.1%
Gibson	69.0%	66.7%	63.5%	57.8%	53.0%
Giles	53.0%	51.5%	48.2%	48.7%	44.3%
Grainger	62.2%	52.4%	56.5%	51.9%	35.9%
Greene	59.9%	57.5%	62.3%	57.8%	49.5%
Grundy	53.9%	58.8%	54.5%	56.7%	45.0%
Hamblen	66.6%	61.3%	64.3%	51.7%	51.2%
Hamilton	65.9%	63.7%	63.3%	59.5%	54.7%
Hancock	57.4%	50.0%	47.3%	53.6%	43.8%
Hardeman	59.0%	65.0%	55.1%	46.5%	43.9%
Hardin	55.3%	56.4%	51.0%	51.9%	51.3%
Hawkins	58.4%	58.2%	60.2%	51.5%	47.4%
Haywood	59.5%	59.6%	63.7%	51.4%	41.6%
Henderson	74.2%	72.2%	68.9%	65.0%	62.6%
Henry	64.0%	60.4%	68.9%	52.0%	47.1%
Hickman	65.0%	57.0%	66.0%	56.4%	48.9%
Houston	55.3%	53.5%	44.1%	40.7%	51.7%
Humphreys	67.8%	62.9%	63.6%	55.7%	51.1%
Jackson	64.0%	63.0%	50.0%	45.6%	44.3%

College-Going Rate by County, 2017-2021 (continued)

County	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Jefferson	59.9%	60.9%	52.6%	44.6%	46.6%
Johnson	46.3%	64.5%	48.4%	59.2%	53.4%
Knox	64.2%	64.6%	61.6%	63.7%	59.5%
Lake	45.1%	58.5%	62.8%	48.8%	72.5%
Lauderdale	58.6%	53.5%	62.2%	47.3%	47.9%
Lawrence	65.3%	69.1%	66.5%	59.4%	53.9%
Lewis	76.2%	52.6%	57.8%	49.5%	45.5%
Lincoln	56.1%	62.0%	65.5%	59.8%	54.1%
Loudon	61.5%	60.6%	52.4%	53.5%	43.8%
Macon	69.6%	59.2%	56.7%	51.0%	50.0%
Madison	61.1%	59.8%	60.6%	53.9%	43.8%
Marion	58.2%	63.0%	50.6%	51.8%	45.9%
Marshall	60.5%	54.8%	55.7%	50.8%	49.5%
Maury	60.8%	62.3%	62.0%	51.7%	48.0%
McMinn	54.1%	56.2%	59.1%	50.2%	49.9%
McNairy	66.2%	68.3%	65.4%	54.7%	51.0%
Meigs	59.3%	55.7%	50.0%	47.7%	55.9%
Monroe	46.1%	45.1%	47.2%	42.4%	40.9%
Montgomery	56.2%	56.6%	53.7%	50.6%	45.4%
Moore	66.7%	67.6%	72.7%	80.4%	64.9%
Morgan	66.5%	57.7%	59.4%	49.6%	47.6%
Obion	62.2%	64.2%	66.4%	55.7%	57.9%
Overton	59.2%	67.7%	64.9%	57.8%	51.7%
Perry	82.4%	87.7%	85.5%	67.6%	75.5%
Pickett	59.0%	68.3%	66.7%	63.0%	73.8%
Polk	47.5%	49.7%	53.3%	53.7%	49.3%
Putnam	61.1%	63.5%	60.1%	53.1%	50.8%
Rhea	58.5%	55.8%	56.4%	54.2%	47.2%
Roane	65.3%	68.1%	57.6%	63.0%	52.5%
Robertson	61.3%	60.9%	58.2%	48.4%	41.4%
Rutherford	66.2%	64.6%	63.5%	59.5%	55.0%
Scott	61.2%	62.9%	59.1%	51.0%	57.4%
Sequatchie	67.1%	62.3%	56.9%	50.0%	54.8%
Sevier	61.2%	56.6%	58.6%	51.1%	48.7%
Shelby	63.9%	62.2%	60.1%	52.7%	49.2%
Smith	60.2%	60.4%	57.8%	54.1%	43.9%
Stewart	55.7%	54.5%	54.9%	43.6%	39.3%
Sullivan	69.1%	68.1%	71.8%	62.3%	61.5%
Sumner	70.5%	68.3%	65.3%	59.1%	53.9%
Tipton	61.1%	62.4%	64.3%	60.3%	57.4%
Trousdale	77.7%	76.9%	80.9%	58.5%	53.7%
Unicoi	77.5%	64.9%	62.7%	57.7%	62.5%
Union	55.0%	43.6%	43.9%	44.9%	34.6%
Van Buren	40.9%	55.4%	53.4%	52.7%	53.6%

College-Going Rate by County, 2017-2021 (continued)

County	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Warren	62.5%	55.0%	60.5%	55.6%	52.6%
Washington	68.1%	64.6%	66.2%	61.8%	53.9%
Wayne	72.2%	71.4%	62.8%	56.8%	49.7%
Weakley	69.8%	67.9%	69.3%	60.5%	57.3%
White	54.9%	53.1%	46.6%	43.5%	40.5%
Williamson	84.2%	85.3%	84.9%	80.6%	81.3%
Wilson	69.4%	67.5%	66.7%	65.3%	62.5%
Tennessee	63.8%	62.5%	61.8%	56.8%	52.8%
Statewide Public HS Grads	63,486	63,912	64,061	63,519	62,238
Statewide College Enrollees	40,480	39,967	39,568	36,095	32,856

Appendix B: 2021 High School Senior Opinion Survey Instrument

Purpose of Study

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) and Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC) would like to learn more about your thoughts and feelings about your decision to enroll in college and the factors that influence that decision.

Why is this research being done? The purpose of this research study is to understand your thoughts and feelings about the decision to enroll in college.

What will I do in this study? This survey includes a series of questions about your college-going decisions. This survey should take roughly 20-25 minutes to complete.

Can I say “No”? Yes, being in this study is up to you.

Are there any risks to me? We don't know of any risks to you from being part of this study.

Directions

1: Please read each question and all responses carefully before selecting your answer.

2: If you are completing a paper survey, please completely fill in the bubble for each answer you provide.

3: Please provide only ONE response for each question unless instructed otherwise.

4: Please respond thoughtfully. The results from this survey will be used to understand the opinions of high school seniors across the state.

5: Your responses are voluntary and will remain anonymous. Responses will not be identified by individual student.

1. Please select an option below. By selecting “I Agree”, you are agreeing to be in this study.
 - a. I agree
 - b. I do not agree

IF YOU RESPONDED “I DO NOT AGREE” TO QUESTION 1, PLEASE TURN YOUR SURVEY IN TO YOUR SURVEY PROCTOR

2. What is your ACT school code? Your survey proctor has provided your ACT school code in the opening instructions. _____
3. **Before the COVID-19 pandemic**, what did you plan to do in the fall after graduating from high school?
 - a. Go to college or a technical college (e.g., Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT))
 - b. Get a new job or continue working at my current job full-time
 - c. Enlist in the military (Navy, Army, Marines, etc.)
 - d. Take time off and enroll in a college or technical college within a year of graduating high school
 - e. Other
 - f. I did not know what I was going to do after graduation

4. Has the pandemic changed your plans for the fall after graduating from high school?
 - a. Yes
 - b. Unsure
 - c. No

**IF YOU RESPONDED YES OR UNSURE TO QUESTION 4, PLEASE COMPLETE QUESTION 5.
IF YOU RESPONDED NO, PLEASE SKIP TO QUESTION 6.**

5. **Because of the COVID-19 pandemic**, how likely are you to make the following decisions related to your plans after graduating from high school? For each item below, select a response.

	Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Unsure/Too Soon to Say	Likely	Highly Likely
Enter the workforce full-time.	1	2	3	4	5
Delay college enrollment.	1	2	3	4	5
Not enroll in college.	1	2	3	4	5
Enroll in a different college (from the one you initially considered pre-pandemic).	1	2	3	4	5
Enroll in college part-time.	1	2	3	4	5
Enlist in the military.	1	2	3	4	5

6. What is the highest degree you hope to earn in your lifetime?
 - a. High school diploma or equivalent (HiSET)
 - b. Technical certificate
 - c. 2-year certificate or college degree
 - d. 4-year college degree
 - e. Master's degree
 - f. Ph.D. or an advanced professional degree (law, medicine, etc.)
 - g. I am unsure.

7. What will you do in the fall after graduating from high school?
 - a. Go to college or a technical college (e.g., TCAT)
 - b. Get a new job or continue working at my current job full-time
 - c. Enlist in the military (Navy, Army, Marines, etc.)
 - d. Take time off and go back to a college or technical college within a year
 - e. Other
 - f. I do not know what I am going to do after graduation

IF YOU DO NOT PLAN TO ATTEND COLLEGE AFTER GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL, PLEASE SKIP TO QUESTION 20. IF YOU SELECTED "Go to college or a technical college (e.g., TCAT)" IN QUESTION 7, PLEASE CONTINUE.

8. What type of college do you plan to attend directly after high school?
 - a. Community College
 - b. Technical College (e.g., TCAT)
 - c. 4-year College or University
 - d. I am unsure.

9. When did you begin to think about going to a 4-year, 2-year, or technical college (e.g. TCAT) after you graduate from high school?
- Before 6th grade
 - Between 6th and 8th grade
 - Freshman year of high school
 - Sophomore year of high school
 - Junior year of high school
 - Senior year of high school
10. What types of colleges have you considered? **Select all that apply.**
- Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCAT) or other technical colleges
 - 2-year public college
 - 2-year private college
 - In-state 4-year public college or university
 - In-state 4-year private college or university
 - Out-of-state 4-year public college or university
 - Out-of-state 4-year private college or university
11. Where are you in the college search and application process? **Select all that apply.**
- I plan to attend college.
 - I have visited a college.
 - I have applied to TN Promise.
 - I have filed the FAFSA.
 - I have applied to a college.
 - I have been accepted to a college.
 - I have made a final decision about which college I'll attend.
12. Do you plan to attend college full-time or part-time?
- Full-time (12 or more credit hours per semester or 432 clock hours or more per trimester)
 - Part-time (fewer than 12 credit hours per semester or fewer than 432 clock hours per trimester)
 - I am unsure.
13. When you enter college, which of the categories below best matches your intended major or area of study?
If you are planning to double major, please select your **primary major**.
- Arts and Humanities (Arts, English, Languages, Philosophy, etc.)
 - Business
 - Health and Medicine
 - Multi-/ Interdisciplinary Studies (Area Studies, Family Science, Liberal Arts, Parks and Recreation, etc.)
 - Public and Social Services (Law and Legal Studies, Military, Public Administration, Protective Services, Religious Studies, etc.)
 - Science, Math, and Technology (Agriculture, Architecture, Biology, Communication Technologies, Computer and IT, Engineering, Engineering Tech, Math, Natural Resources, Physical Sciences, Science Technologies, etc.)
 - Social Sciences (Communication, Education, History, Library Science, Psychology, etc.)
 - Trades and Personal Services (Construction Trades, Mechanic and Repair Technologies, Personal and Culinary Services, Precision Production, Transportation, etc.)
 - Other
 - Undecided

14. How many colleges have you applied to?

- a. 0
- b. 1
- c. 2
- d. 3
- e. 4
- f. 5 or more

15. **Because of the COVID-19 pandemic**, how concerned are you about the following items? For each, please select a response.

	Not concerned at all	Not too concerned	Indifferent	Somewhat concerned	Very concerned
Paying for tuition and fees.	1	2	3	4	5
Taking full-time coursework. ¹	1	2	3	4	5
Paying for housing and food.	1	2	3	4	5
Paying for transportation.	1	2	3	4	5
Paying for technology/internet.	1	2	3	4	5
Caring for family members.	1	2	3	4	5
Connecting with campus resources (e.g., advisors or financial aid).	1	2	3	4	5
Taking coursework online.	1	2	3	4	5
Health and safety protocols on campus (e.g., mask wearing, social distancing, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
Personal well-being.	1	2	3	4	5

¹Full time is defined as enrolling in 12 or more credit hours per semester or 432 clock hours or more per trimester.

16. Please identify the importance of each factor in your decision about where to attend college from Not Important to Very Important. Then please select the **TOP THREE FACTORS** that are **MOST IMPORTANT**.

Factors in College Choice	Not Important	Hardly Important	Important	Very Important	Most Important
The cost to attend (including scholarships and financial aid the college offered)	1	2	3	4	5
The city or environment where the college is located	1	2	3	4	5
The size of the college	1	2	3	4	5
The academic reputation of programs in which I'm interested	1	2	3	4	5
My friends attend or will attend there	1	2	3	4	5
How close the college is to my home	1	2	3	4	5

The social life at the college (Greek life, parties, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
The college's sports teams	1	2	3	4	5
Special academic programs (study abroad, honors, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
My parents, siblings, or other mentors attended	1	2	3	4	5
My parents want me to go there	1	2	3	4	5
The availability of multiple course delivery methods (e.g., online or hybrid)	1	2	3	4	5
The college's religious affiliation	1	2	3	4	5
The racial/ethnic diversity of the campus	1	2	3	4	5

17. Do you have any concerns about your ability to pay for college?
- No, I know that I will have enough resources to pay for college.
 - Somewhat, I might have enough resources to pay for college.
 - Yes, I am doubtful I will have enough resources to pay for college.

18. The following question lists different ways that families and students may choose to pay for college. For each option, please indicate whether you plan to pay for college using this method.

Source of Funding for College	Yes, I plan to pay for college this way.	No, I do not plan to pay for college this way.	I don't know
Scholarships from the college	1	2	3
My parent or guardian's income	1	2	3
Friend or relative's income	1	2	3
College savings fund	1	2	3
Part-time/full-time job while in college	1	2	3
Federal student aid (Pell grant)	1	2	3
Federal student loans	1	2	3
Private student loans	1	2	3
Credit cards	1	2	3
My personal savings	1	2	3
State-funded scholarships (TN Promise, HOPE, GAMS, etc.)	1	2	3

19. If you plan to take out federal student loans or private student loans to finance your education, how much money do you plan to borrow in your first year?
- \$5,000 or less
 - \$5,001 - \$15,000
 - \$15,001 - \$25,000
 - \$25,001 - \$35,000
 - \$35,001 or more
 - I am unsure.
 - I do not plan to take out loans to pay for my education.

NOW SKIP TO QUESTION 21

20. Please identify the importance of each factor in your decision to **NOT** attend college from Least Important to Very Important. Then please select the **TOP THREE FACTORS** that are **MOST IMPORTANT**.

Reasons why I chose NOT to attend college	Least Important	Hardly Important	Important	Very Important	Most Important
I am concerned about the pandemic.	1	2	3	4	5
I am tired of school.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't need more education to do my job.	1	2	3	4	5
The cost of college.	1	2	3	4	5
I need to work rather than go to school.	1	2	3	4	5
I need to support my family.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't think I would do well in college.	1	2	3	4	5
No one told me how to apply.	1	2	3	4	5
I have missed deadlines to apply and enroll.	1	2	3	4	5
No one has talked to me about going to college.	1	2	3	4	5
High school staff member(s) told me I shouldn't go to college.	1	2	3	4	5
My parents told me I shouldn't go to college.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't know anyone who went to college.	1	2	3	4	5
I want to join the military.	1	2	3	4	5

Financial Aid Awareness and Information

21. The following question lists different types of financial aid (scholarships, grants, loans, etc.). For each type of financial aid, please indicate your familiarity with the program.

Type of Financial Aid	Not Familiar	Sort of Familiar	Very Familiar
Pell Grant	1	2	3
Tennessee Promise	1	2	3
HOPE Scholarship	1	2	3
ASPIRE	1	2	3
General Assembly Merit Scholarship (GAMS)	1	2	3
Tennessee Student Assistance Award (TSAA) Grant	1	2	3
Wilder-Naifeh Technical Skills Grant	1	2	3
Work Study	1	2	3
Subsidized/Unsubsidized Loans	1	2	3

22. Have you completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)?

- a. Yes, I have completed the FAFSA.
- b. No, I have not completed the FAFSA but plan to do so.
- c. No, I have not completed the FAFSA and do not plan to do so.
- d. No, I am not familiar with the FAFSA.

23. Are you eligible, or do you expect to be eligible, to receive a Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship (e.g., HOPE, GAMS, ASPIRE, Wilder-Naifeh Technical Skills Grant, etc.)? **Select all that apply.**

- a. No
- b. Yes, but I'm not sure which one
- c. Yes, HOPE Scholarship
- d. Yes, HOPE Scholarship with Aspire
- e. Yes, General Assembly Merit Scholarship
- f. Yes, Wilder-Naifeh Technical Skills Grant
- g. I am unsure.

24. Based on your answer to **Question 23 above**, how did your eligibility for a Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship influence your decision to go to college?

- a. I never planned to attend college.
- b. I will attend college with or without the lottery scholarship.
- c. I do not plan to attend college but would if I received a lottery scholarship.
- d. I will not attend college without the lottery scholarship.

25. Have you applied for the Tennessee Promise?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know

IF YOU RESPONDED NO OR I DON'T KNOW TO QUESTION 25, PLEASE SKIP TO QUESTION 28.

26. Please indicate which steps in the Tennessee Promise application process you have completed. **Select all that apply.**

- a. Submitted the Tennessee Promise application by December 1, 2020
- b. Completed the FAFSA by March 1, 2021

27. Please indicate which steps in the Tennessee Promise application process you plan to complete. **Select all that apply.**

- a. View the mandatory meeting webinar
- b. Apply to a community college or TCAT
- c. Complete and report 8 hours of community service by July 1, 2021

28. If money were not an issue, what would be your first-choice institution?

- a. I will not continue my education after high school regardless of the cost
- b. Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) or other technical college
- c. 2-year public college
- d. 2-year private college
- e. In-state 4-year public college or university
- f. In-state 4-year private college or university
- g. Out-of-state 4-year public college or university
- h. Out-of-state 4-year private college or university
- i. I am unsure.

29. Without financial aid or scholarships, how much do you think it costs to attend each of these colleges per year? ("Cost" includes tuition, housing, meal plans, and/or books).

Types of Colleges	\$0	\$2,500	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$30,000
	to \$2,499	to \$4,999	to \$9,999	to \$14,999	to \$19,999	to \$29,999	or more
Austin Peay State University	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A private research university (e.g., Vanderbilt, Harvard, or Stanford)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Nashville State Community College	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) - Murfreesboro	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A private regional university (e.g., Freed-Hardeman, Christian Brothers, Cumberland, Lee, or Lipscomb)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
University of Tennessee, Martin	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A for-profit college (e.g., University of Phoenix or South College)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tennessee State University	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Out-of-state public university (e.g., Ole Miss, University of Alabama, or Louisiana State University)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

30. **If you do not attend college**, how much money do you think you will make per year by **age 25**? (“College” refers to all types of institutions, such as community colleges, technical colleges (TCATs), and universities)
- \$20,000 or less
 - \$20,001 - \$40,000
 - \$40,001 - \$60,000
 - \$60,001 - \$80,000
 - \$80,001 - \$100,000
 - More than \$100,000
31. **If you attend and graduate from college**, how much money do you think you will make per year by **age 25**? (“College” refers to all types of institutions, such as community colleges, technical colleges (TCATs), and universities)
- \$20,000 or less
 - \$20,001 - \$40,000
 - \$40,001 - \$60,000
 - \$60,001 - \$80,000
 - \$80,001 - \$100,000
 - More than \$100,000
32. How important is a college education for finding a well-paying, stable career?
- Very Important
 - Important
 - Somewhat Important
 - Not at all important
 - Unsure

33. For the three statements below complete the phrase, “When I finish my education (high school or college)...”

	Yes	Unsure/Maybe	No
I expect to continue living in TN.	1	2	3
I expect to work in TN.	1	2	3
I expect to find a job in my chosen profession in TN.	1	2	3

High School Information

34. How many events related to continuing your education after high school (e.g., presentations, speakers, college fairs, meeting with school counselors) have you participated in during the past school year (virtual or in-person)?
- 0
 - 1
 - 2-4
 - 5-7
 - 8 or more
35. In the last year, how often have you discussed continuing your education after high school with anyone?
- Never
 - One or two times a year
 - Once a month
 - Twice a month
 - Once a week
 - More than once a week

36. In the last year, how often have you and a school counselor discussed continuing your education after high school?
- Never
 - One or two times a year
 - Once a month
 - Twice a month
 - Once a week
 - More than once a week
37. Please indicate whether you have ever discussed the following topics with your high school counselor.

Topics discussed with high school counselor	Yes	No
Whether or not to go to college	1	2
Different types of institutions (technical colleges, community colleges, 4-year universities, public versus private institutions, etc.)	1	2
College choice and fit	1	2
The cost of college	1	2
Possible majors in college	1	2
Career options (with or without college)	1	2
Financial aid available to pay for college (scholarships, grants, loans, etc.)	1	2
What classes to take to prepare for college	1	2
How to fill out the FAFSA	1	2

38. How prepared do you feel for what you have chosen to do upon graduation from high school?
- Very prepared
 - Prepared
 - Somewhat prepared
 - Not prepared at all
39. What is your best estimate of your current unweighted GPA (0.00 - 4.00)? An unweighted GPA does not take the difficulty of your courses into account. _ . _ _
40. What is your highest ACT Composite score (English, Math, Reading, and Science combined)? _ _
If you have not taken the ACT, please bubble in "00"
If you scored a 9 on the ACT, please bubble in "09"
If you scored a 19 on the ACT, please bubble in "19"
41. What types of Early Postsecondary Opportunities (EPSOs) does your high school offer? EPSOs are courses or exams that allow you to earn college credit while in high school. **Check all that apply.**
- Dual Enrollment
 - Dual Credit
 - Advanced Placement (AP) courses
 - International Baccalaureate (IB) courses
 - Industry Certification
 - College Level Examination Program (CLEP exam)

- g. I am unsure.
42. How many Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses have you attempted?
- a. 0
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3-4
 - e. 5 or more
43. How many dual enrollment courses (courses taken through a technical college, community college or university for college credit) have you attempted?
- a. 0
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3-4
 - e. 5 or more
44. How well have high school faculty and staff informed you about dual enrollment opportunities?
- a. Very well, I know what dual enrollment courses are and how to take them.
 - b. Somewhat, I know what dual enrollment courses are but not how to take them.
 - c. Not well, I do not know what dual enrollment courses are or how to take them.

Demographic Information

45. What is your gender?
- a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Prefer not to answer
46. What is your race or ethnicity?
- a. African American or Black
 - b. American Indian or Native American
 - c. Asian American or Pacific Islander
 - d. Caucasian or White
 - e. Hispanic or Latino
 - f. Multiracial
 - g. Other
 - h. Prefer not to answer
47. Are you employed during the school year? If so, how many hours do you work per week?
- a. No, 0 hours
 - b. Yes, 1 - 10 hours
 - c. Yes, 11 - 20 hours
 - d. Yes, 21 - 30 hours
 - e. Yes, 31 or more hours
48. What is your best estimate of your family's total income from last year?
- a. \$20,000 or less
 - b. \$20,001 - \$40,000
 - c. \$40,001 - \$60,000

- d. \$60,001 - \$80,000
- e. \$80,001 - \$100,000
- f. More than \$100,000
- g. I am unsure.

49. Are you the parent/legal guardian of any children?

- a. Yes
- b. No

50. What is the highest level of education earned by either of your parents or guardians?

- a. Less than high school
- b. High school diploma or equivalent (GED)
- c. Some college, no degree
- d. Technical certificate
- e. 2-year certificate or college degree
- f. 4-year college degree
- g. Master's degree or other advanced degree
- h. I am unsure.

END OF SURVEY - THANK YOU

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