

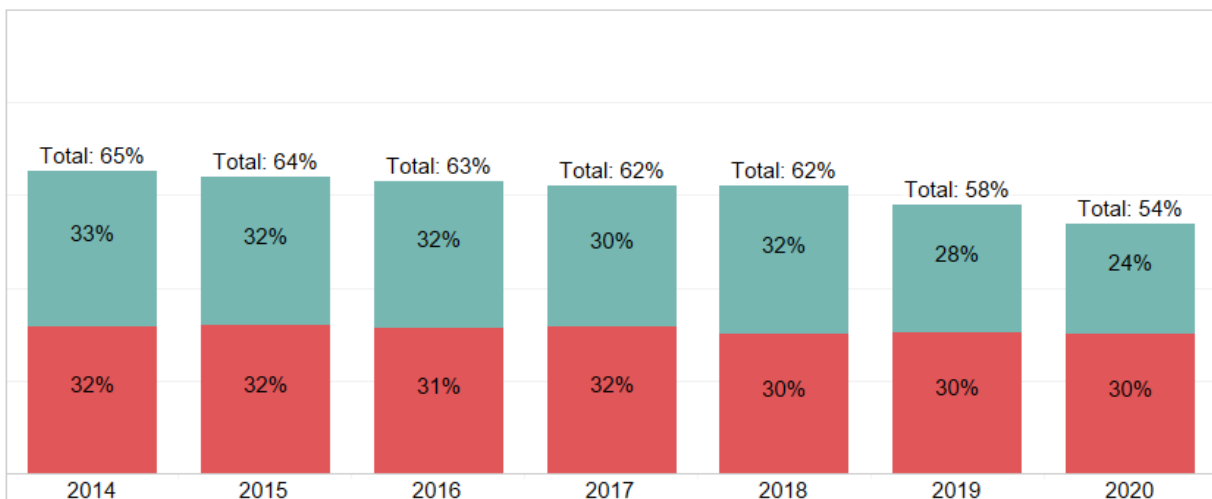


Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama

Alabama's College-Going Rate Down Again for Class of 2020

By [Thomas Spencer](#) on November 5th, 2021 in , [College and Career Readiness](#), [College-Going Rates](#), [Higher Education](#) : in [Education](#), [Education & Workforce Development](#), [Public Education](#), [Workforce Development](#)

Alabama High School Graduates' College Going Rates, 2014-2020



The college-going rate for Alabama public high school graduates declined substantially in 2020, reaching a seven-year low, more than 10% below the rate in 2014. A drop was expected considering the Covid-19 pandemic's disruption to normal operations.

According to new data from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE), only 54% of the Class of 2020 entered higher education in the 2020-2021 school year. That compares to 65% in 2014. The data is drawn from the National Student Clearinghouse and tracks college enrollment both in-state and out of state, at two-year and four-year public and private colleges and universities.

Since 2014, Alabama's high school graduation rate has climbed rapidly. That's led to a larger pool of graduates but also a growing share of individuals earning a high school diploma but not continuing on to college. In 2020, 23,369 out of the 50,514 high school graduates, or 46%, were not found to be enrolled in higher education the year following graduation.

Enrollment at four-year colleges and universities held up surprisingly well in 2020: 15,183 Class of 2020 graduates, or 30%, enrolled at a four-year school. That was despite the online classes and pandemic-related restrictions. That was down slightly in numeric terms, 193 students down from the 2019 total. It was down only slightly in percentage terms because the number of high school graduates was down as well.

The real drop came in the Alabama Community College System (ACCS). Only 24% of Alabama's 2020 high school graduates, or 11,858 students, enrolled at a two-year college. In the recent past 30% of graduates enrolled at community colleges. In 2018, a highwater mark, over 16,000 new high school graduates enrolled in community college after graduating high school.

Alabama College-Going Rates

Alabama College-Going Percentages by ..	Alabama College-Going Numbers by year	College-Going Snapshot by Individual School	College-Going and Destination after High Scho..	College-Going and Destination after High Scho..	College-Going Rates, by School	St ats b..
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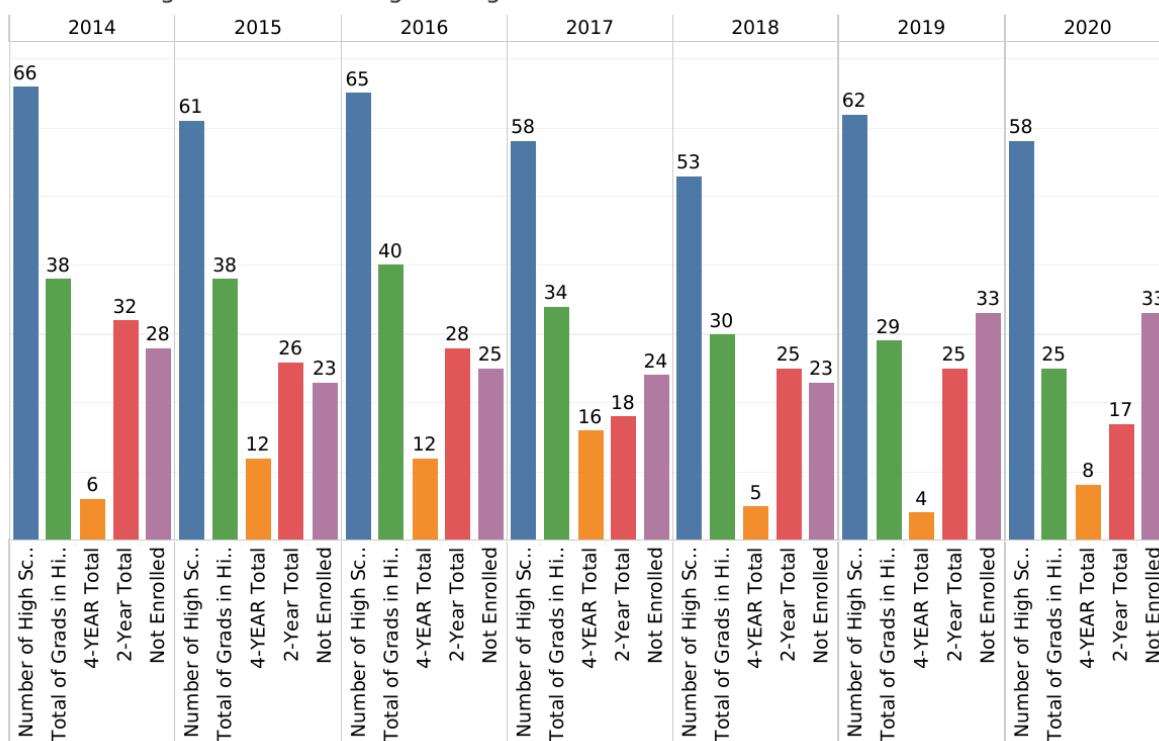
High School and System

Abbeville High School, Henry County

Measure Names

■ Number of High School Gra.. ■ Total of Grads in Higher Ed ■ 4-YEAR Total ■ 2-Year Total

Alabama High School to College Going Numbers



The enrollment declines at the community college level have been taking place [across the country](#). It may stem from the fact that a greater share of community college students are from economically disadvantaged households, and in 2020, the climate of economic uncertainty likely kept some from committing to embark on a college education.

Community colleges had already been experiencing lower enrollment numbers in the year preceding the pandemic but for the opposite reason: When the job market is strong, as it was in 2019, more graduates go straight into the workforce. When unemployment is high, enrollment tends to rise at community colleges, but that didn't happen in 2020. This fall community college enrollments hint at some recovery. Preliminary fall enrollment for 2021 points to some recovery at community colleges in Alabama, with total enrollment up 5.6% compared to 2020. But that's still down 7.8% compared to 2019.

ACCS officials said that because high school students didn't finish the 2020 school year physically present at school, two-year colleges missed a traditional window for recruiting students. Applications for federal financial aid (FAFSA) were down significantly, as well. With students away from school, k-12 counselors and community college representatives were unable to make a final push for completion. The resources the FAFSA process unlocks often is a deciding factor for students as to whether they can afford to attend.

As schools return to more normal operations, it is hoped that a yearlong push for FAFSA completion and a return to traditional models of student engagement and recruitment will increase college enrollment. ACCS is also partnering with the American Institutes for Research (AIR), the Alabama State Department of Education, Alabama Possible, and ACHE on an experiment testing whether text messages can help students enroll and succeed in college. The grant-funded project aims to keep high school seniors from dropping through the cracks in the summer between high school graduation and the fall semester of that year. Participating students will receive text messages reminding them to complete specific tasks related to college admission and course registration. The data will be analyzed to measure the impact of participation.

Importance for Attainment

The post-graduation trajectory of the state's high school graduates is important. Alabama has set a goal of improving its level of educational attainment. Producing college and career-ready graduates and propelling them into advanced technical training or toward college degrees is a key priority. The labor market is increasingly demanding higher levels of training and education. Higher levels of educational attainment are associated with higher incomes, lower unemployment, better health, and longer life.

See the college-going rate for [your local high school](#) or [school system](#), or see college-going rates on an [interactive map](#).

Where High School Graduates Go?

Alabama's high school graduation rate was 90.6% in 2020, down slightly from the record 92% in 2019. ACHE followed 50,410 high school graduates and found:

- 27,041, 54%, enrolled in higher education
- 15,183, 30%, enrolled in four-year colleges
- 11,858, 24%, enrolled in two-year colleges
- 23,369, 46%, were not found to have enrolled
- 90% of enrollees went to a college in Alabama
- 91% of enrollees went to a public college

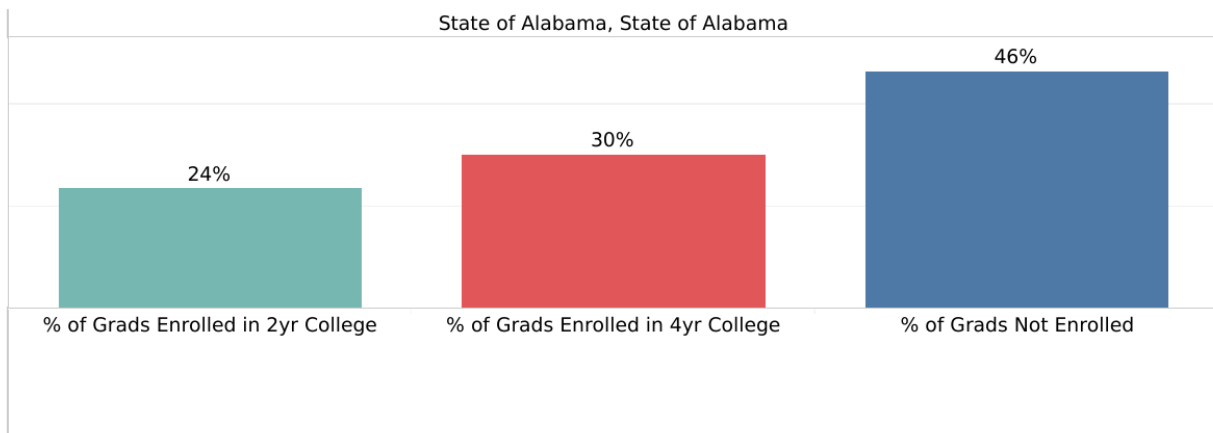
Alabama College-Going Rates

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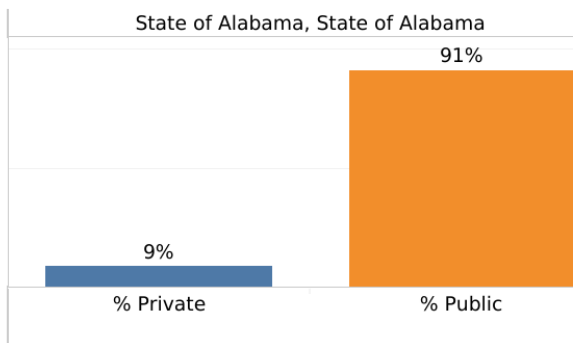
Class of: 2020

School and System State of Alabama, State of Alabama

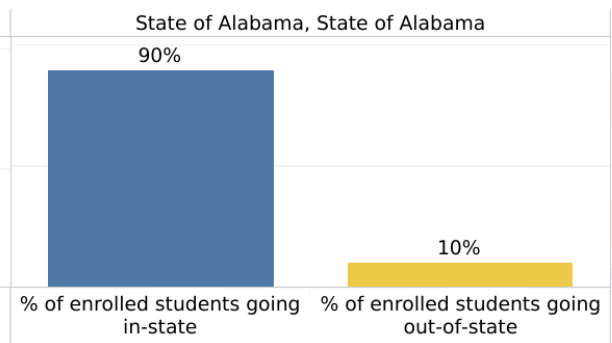
Destination of Graduates Class of 2020



Of Those Enrolled in College - Public vs. Private



Of Those Enrolled in College - In-State vs. Out-of-State



College-Going Patterns

- Magnet schools and suburban school systems send higher percentages of students to four-year colleges.
 - Birmingham's magnet high school, Ramsay, ranked No. 1 in the state with 93% of its graduates going to college in 2020, most to a four-year university. Three Montgomery County magnet high schools ranked in the top 10 for college-going. Suburban high schools like Mountain Brook, Vestavia-Hills, Hewitt-Trussville, Homewood, and Hoover also ranked in the top 10.
- Some rural and non-metro counties and systems achieved high college-going rates based on high enrollment in the local community college.
 - Muscle Shoals and Arab ranked in the top 20 for college-going due to the strength of their community college enrollments.
- Rural counties isolated from population centers and urban high schools in high poverty neighborhoods tended to have the lowest college-going rates.

Alabama College-Going Rates

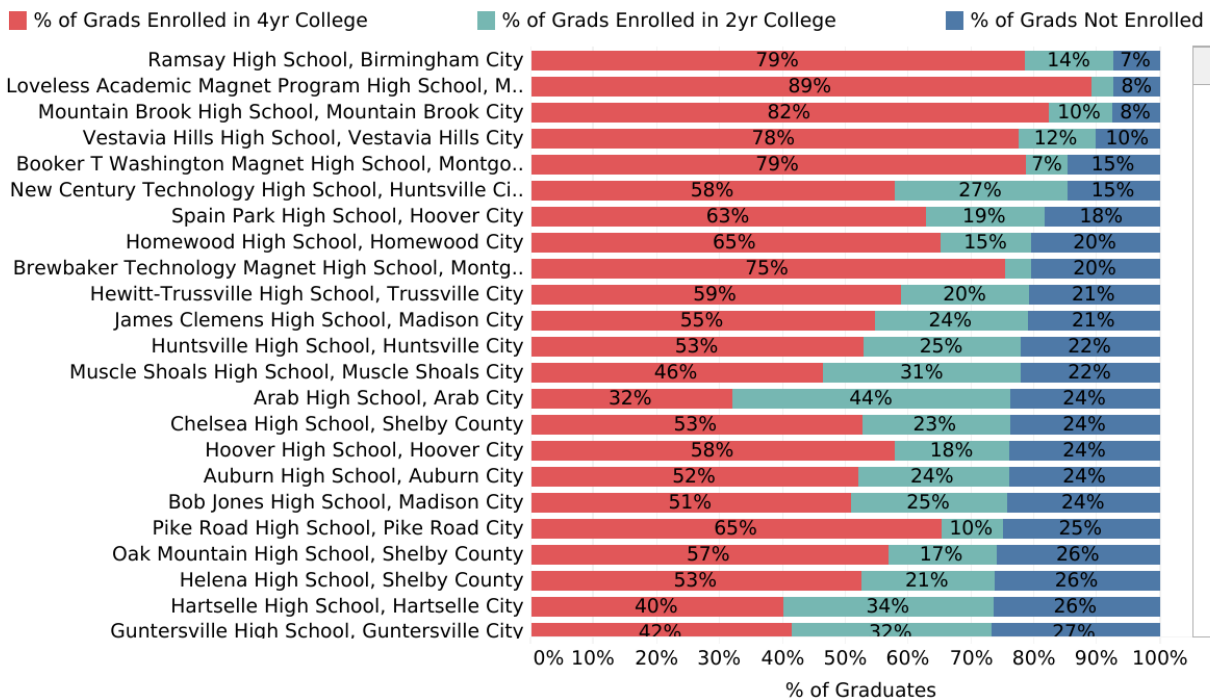
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Destination after High School

Graduating Class 2020

System Name All

High School Name All



See Appendix A on page 9 for a full list of destinations after high school by school.

Outliers

While generalizations about performance can be made, some schools are outliers. The chart below compares Alabama high schools' college-going rate (the vertical axis) with the student body's poverty rate (the horizontal axis). The higher a school is on the chart, the higher the percentage of students who leave high school and enter college—the farther to the right on the chart, the lower the level of poverty. The slanted line in the middle is the average of the values, which forms a line of prediction. In general, the college-going rate rises as the student body poverty rate gets lower.

However, some schools outperform the level at which they would be predicted to perform based on the economic status of students. In 2020, examples included high schools like Amelia L Johnson High School in Marengo County (94% qualifying for free lunch; 63% of graduates entering higher education), Pickens County High (76% free and 61% in higher education), and Sweetwater High, also in Marengo County, (50% free and 72% entering higher education).

Alabama College-Going Rates

Col leg e..	College-Going Rates, by School	Stats by System	Stats by School	Change in College-Going Percentage	College-Going and Poverty Percentage	Map of College-Going By System and Cou..
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This chart presents the college-going rate of Alabama high schools in the context of the poverty percentage at each school. The higher on the chart a school appears, the higher the percentage of its graduates enrolled in college. The farther to the right a school is positioned, the lower the percentage of students in poverty at that school. The poverty measure used is the percentage of students who directly qualified for a free lunch under the National School Lunch Program. Students from low-income households enter college at a lower rate than nonpoverty students. ..

Class of 2020 College Going in the Context of Poverty Rates



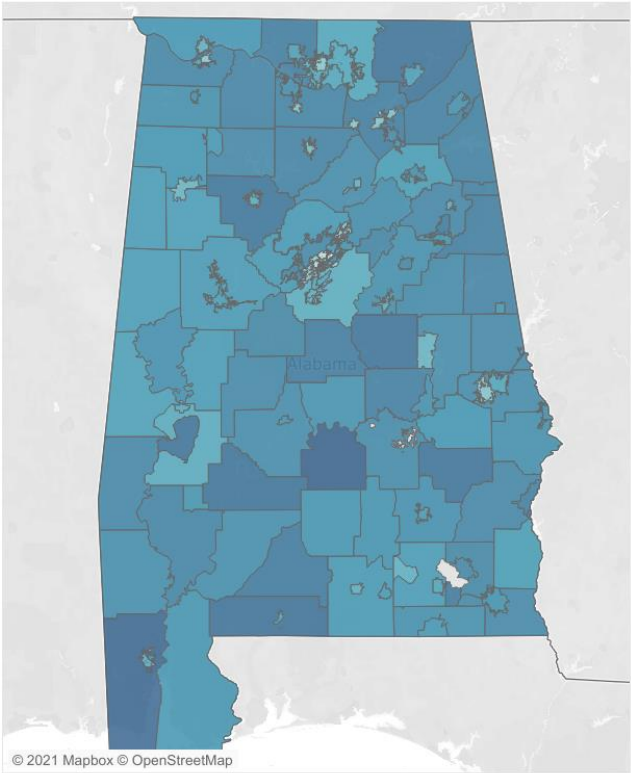
- System
All
- High School
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- Highlight High School
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Alabama College-Going Rates

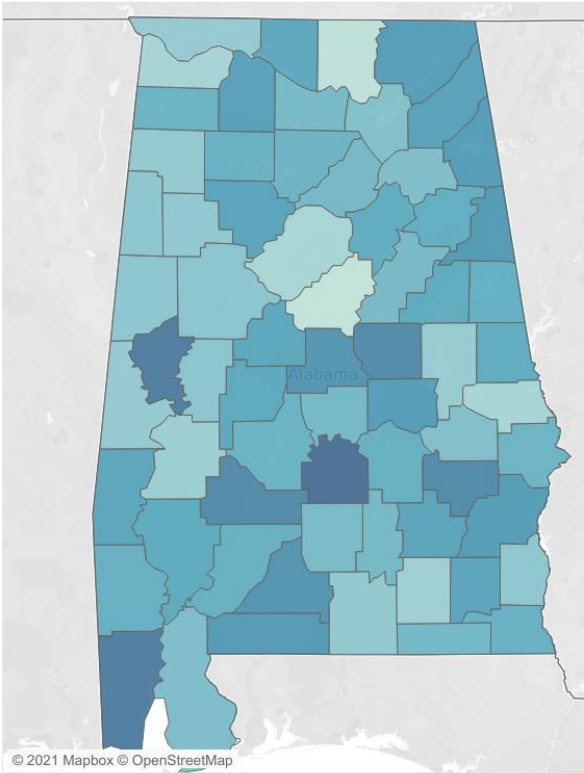
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College-Going Stats
% of Graduates Not Enrolled

By System, 2020



By County, 2020



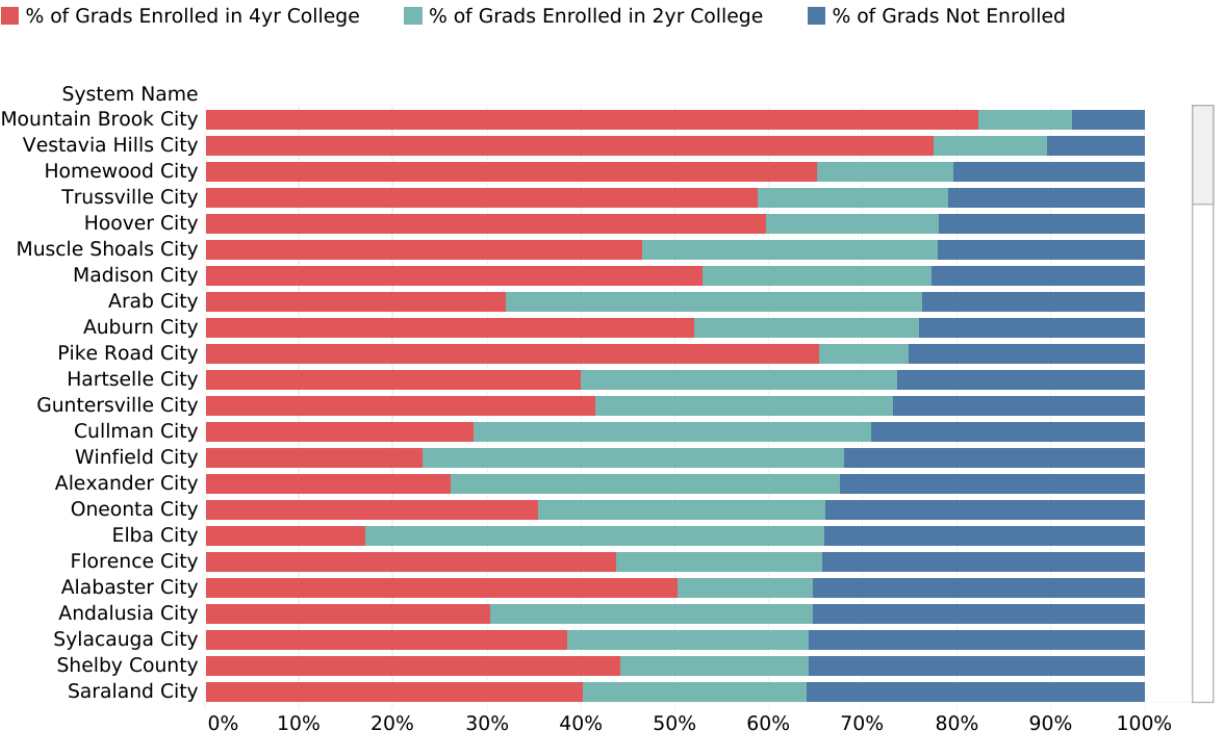
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Destination after High School by System

Graduat-
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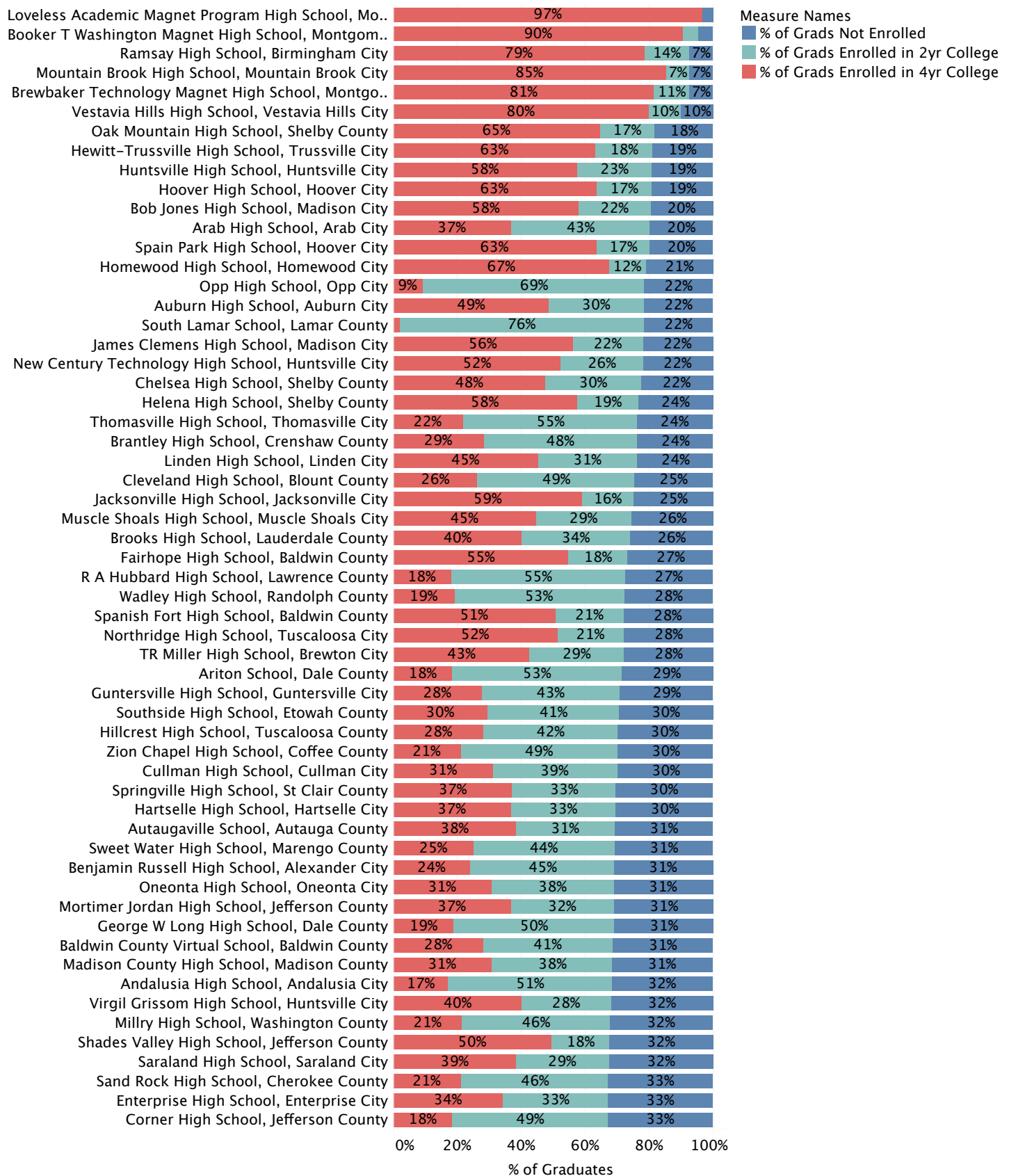
System All



See Appendix B on page 16 for a full list of destinations after high school by system.

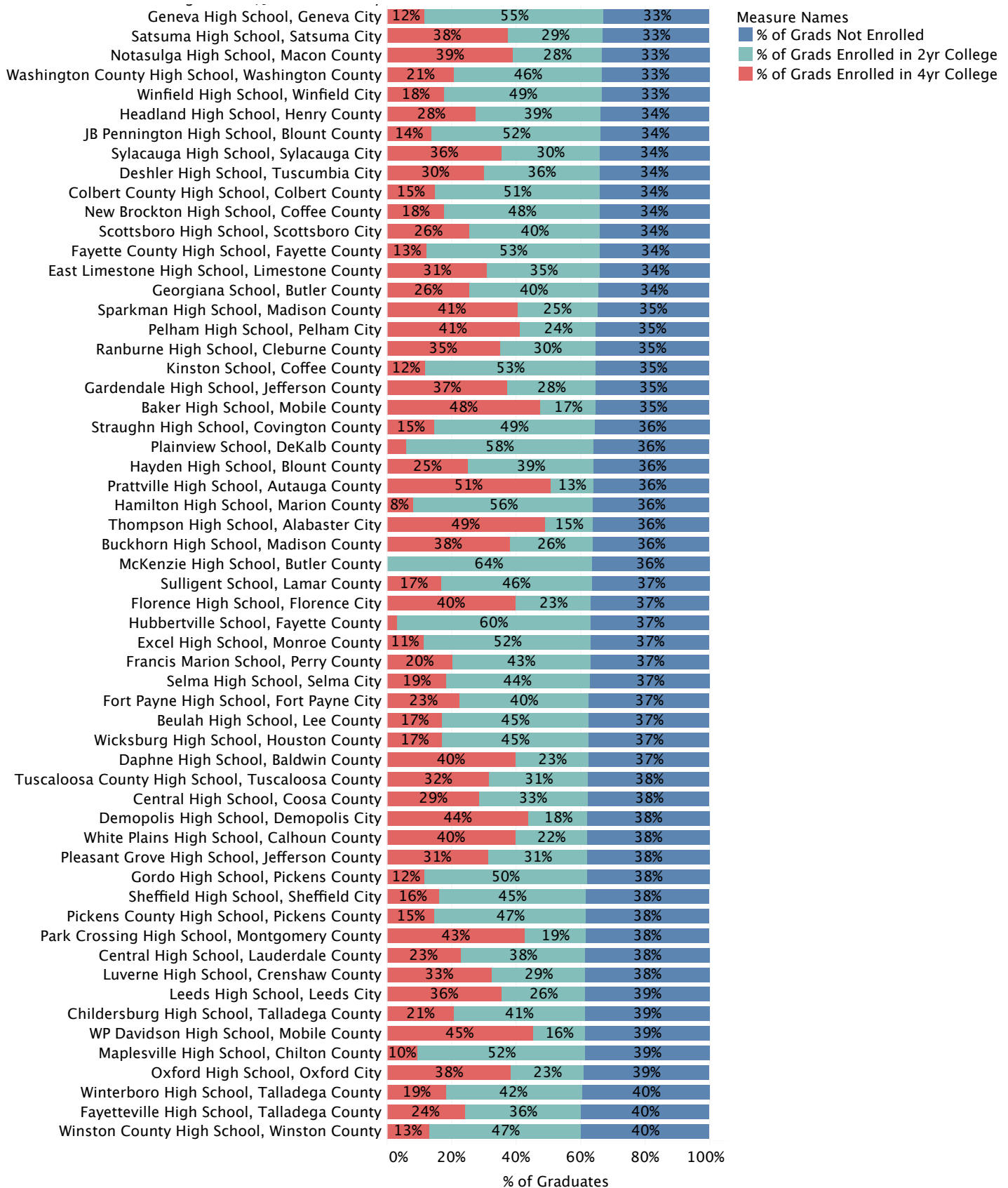
Appendix A

Destination after High School by School



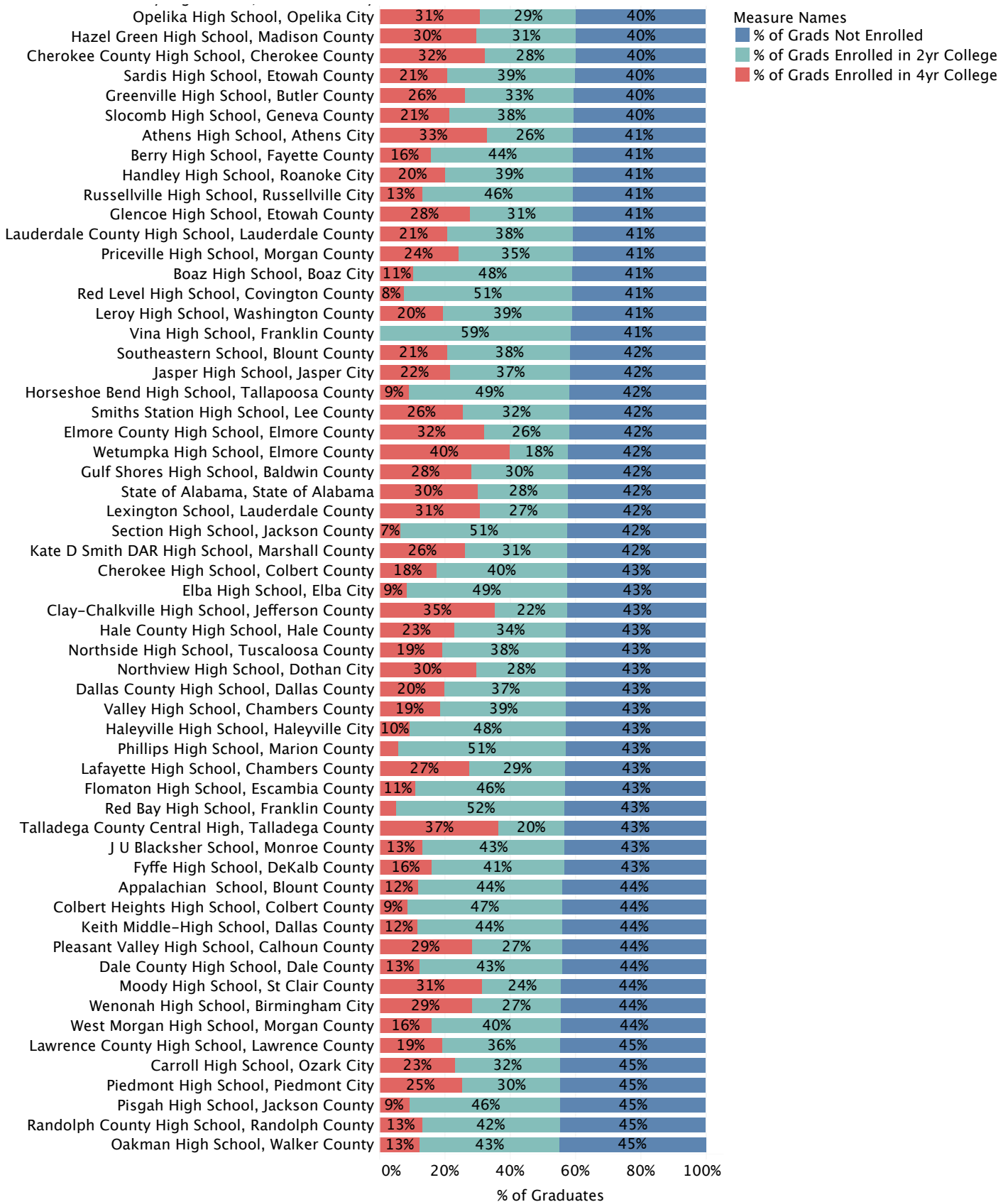
% of Grads Not Enrolled , % of Grads Enrolled in 2yr College and % of Grads Enrolled in 4yr College for each High School and System. Color shows details about % of Grads Not Enrolled , % of Grads Enrolled in 2yr College and % of Grads Enrolled in 4yr College. Details are shown for System Name. The data is filtered on High School Name and Graduating Class. The High School Name filter keeps 373 of 373 members. The Graduating Class filter keeps 2019. The view is filtered on System Name, which keeps 140 of 140 members.

Destination after High School by School



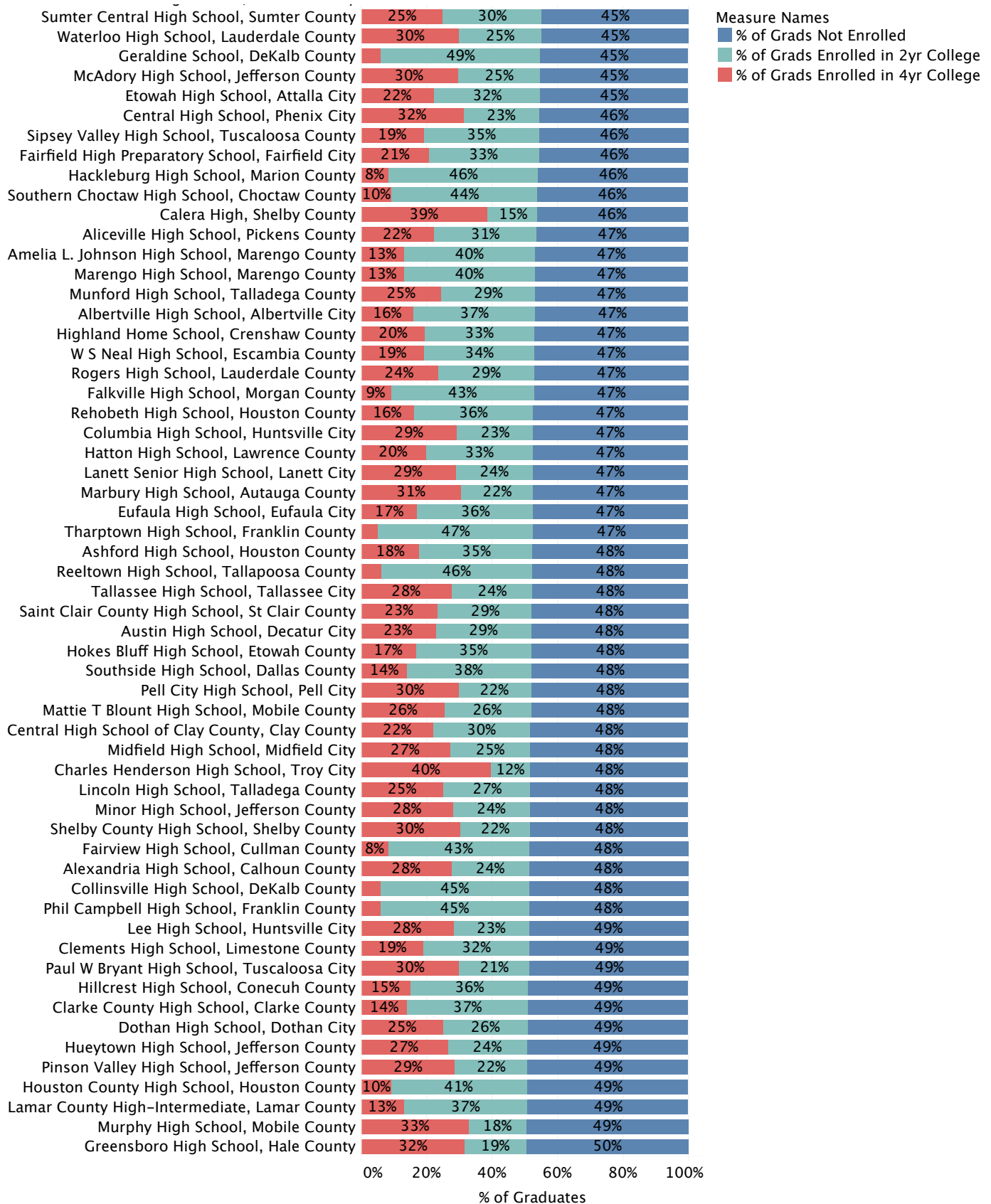
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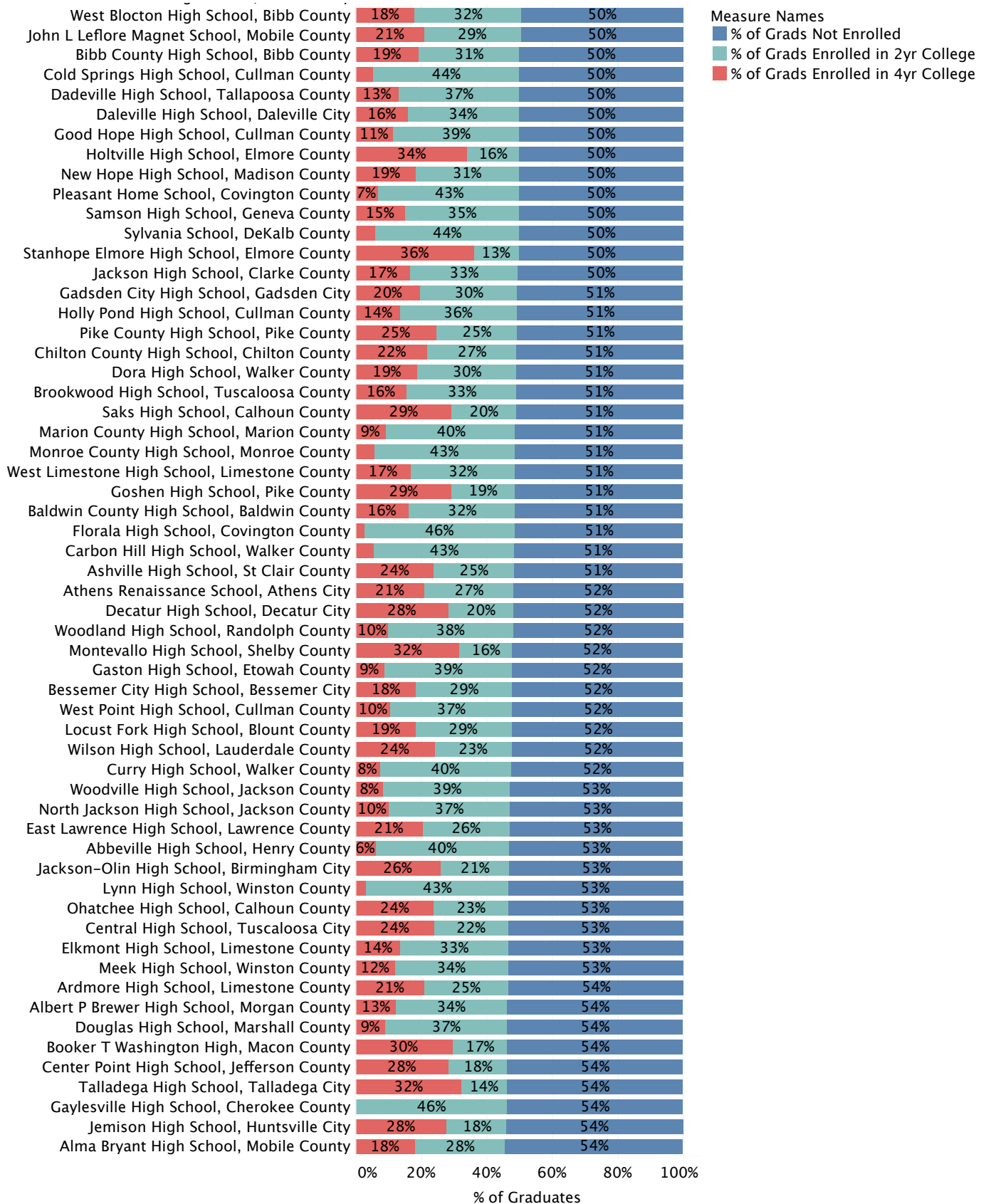
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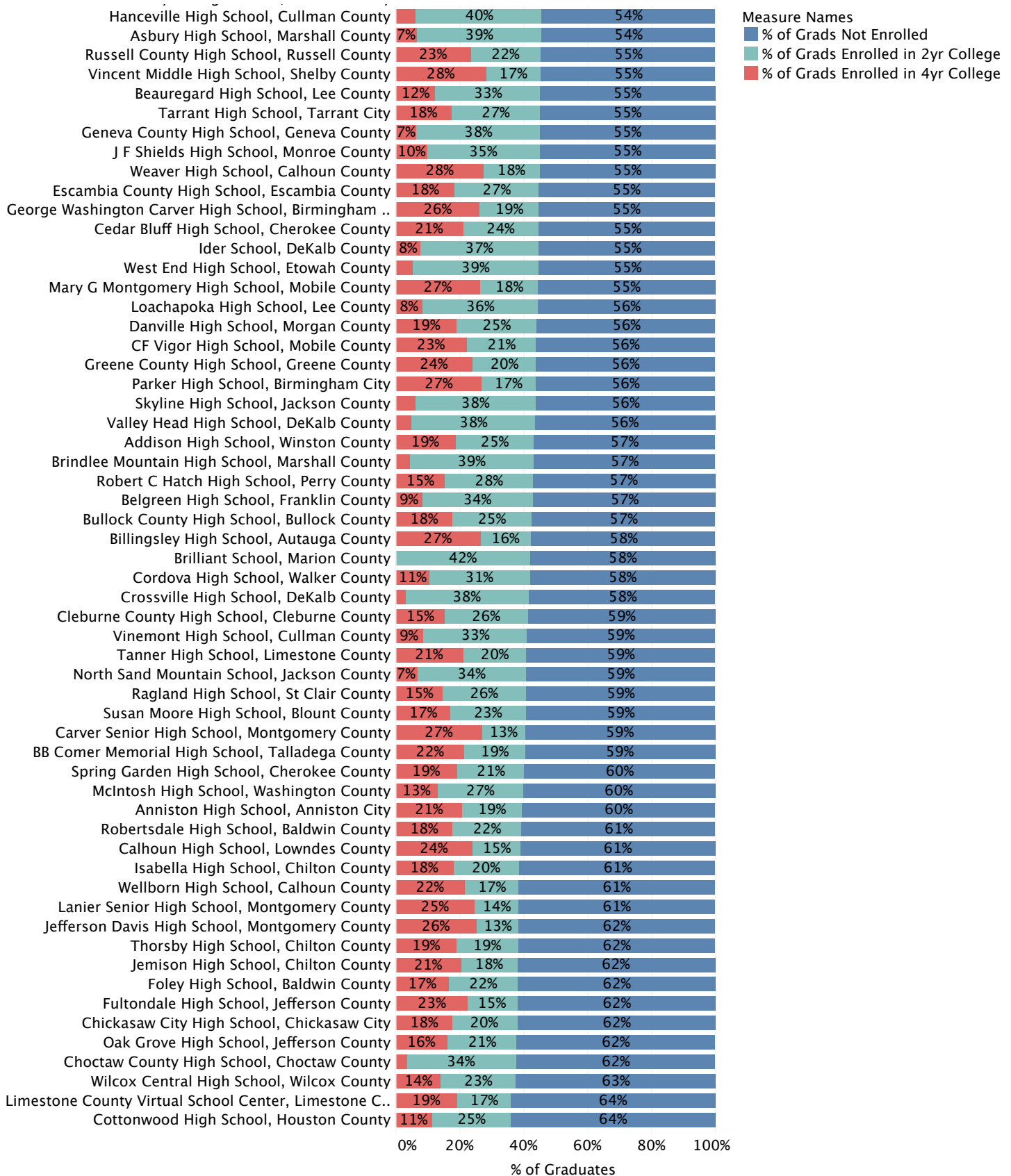
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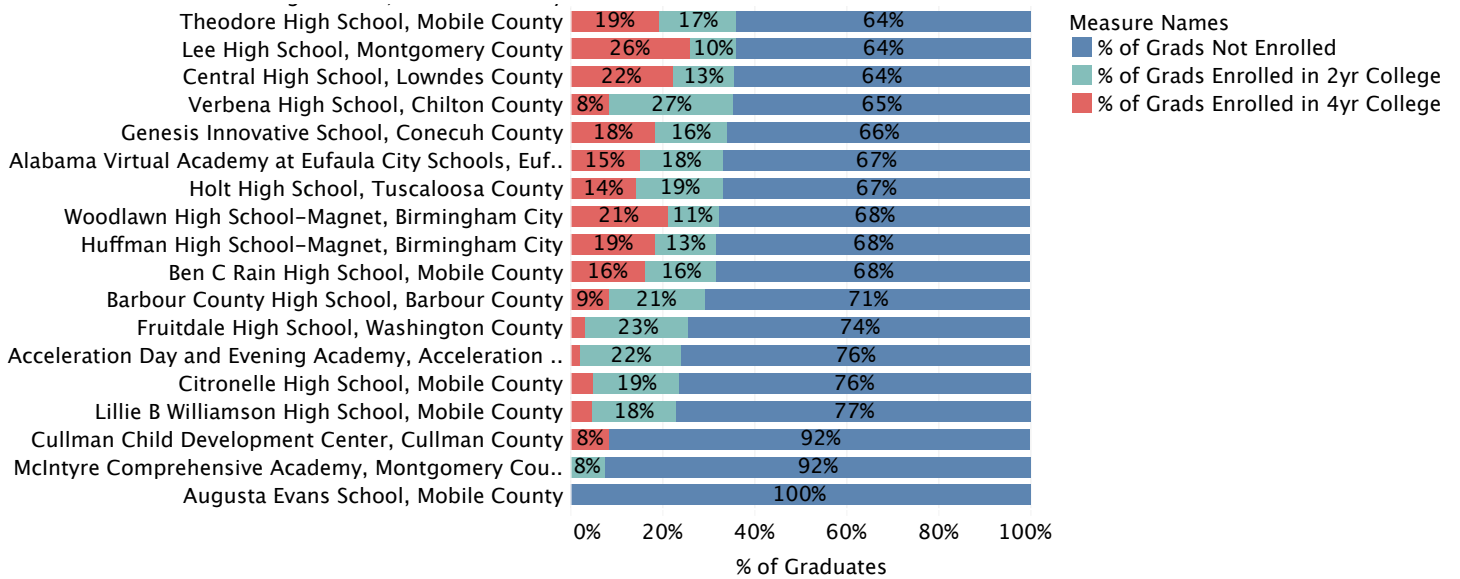
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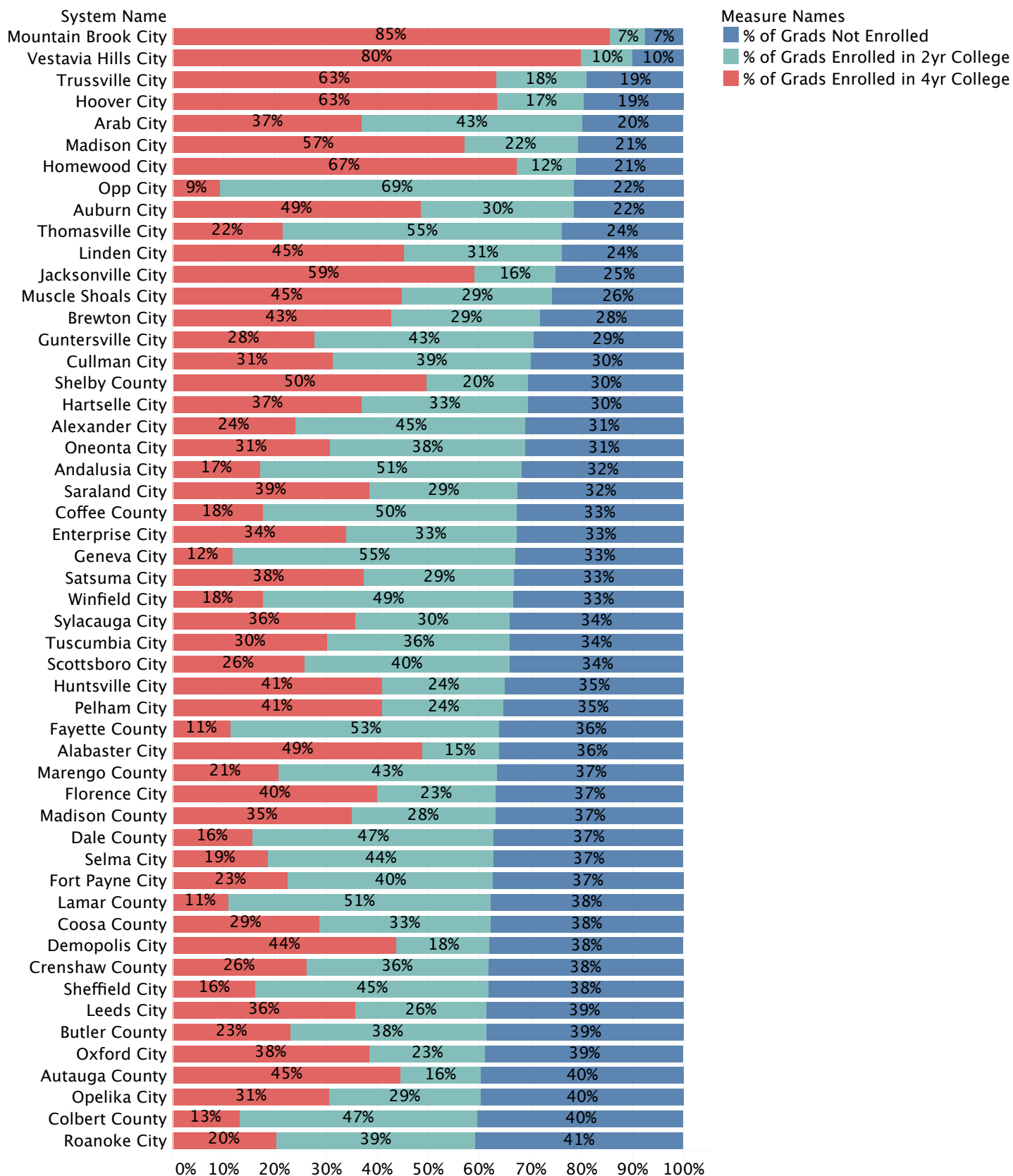
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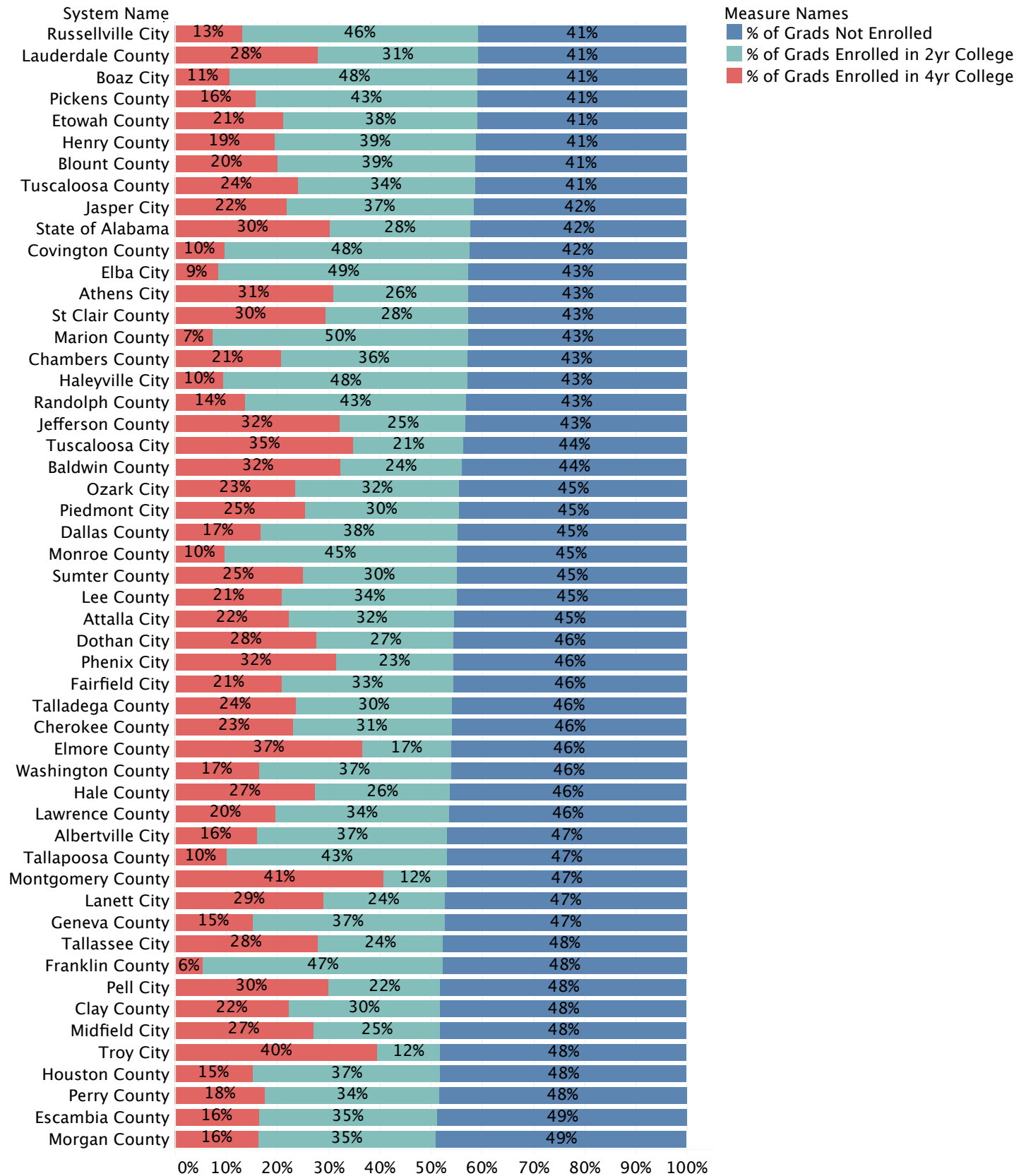
Appendix B

Post High School Destination by System



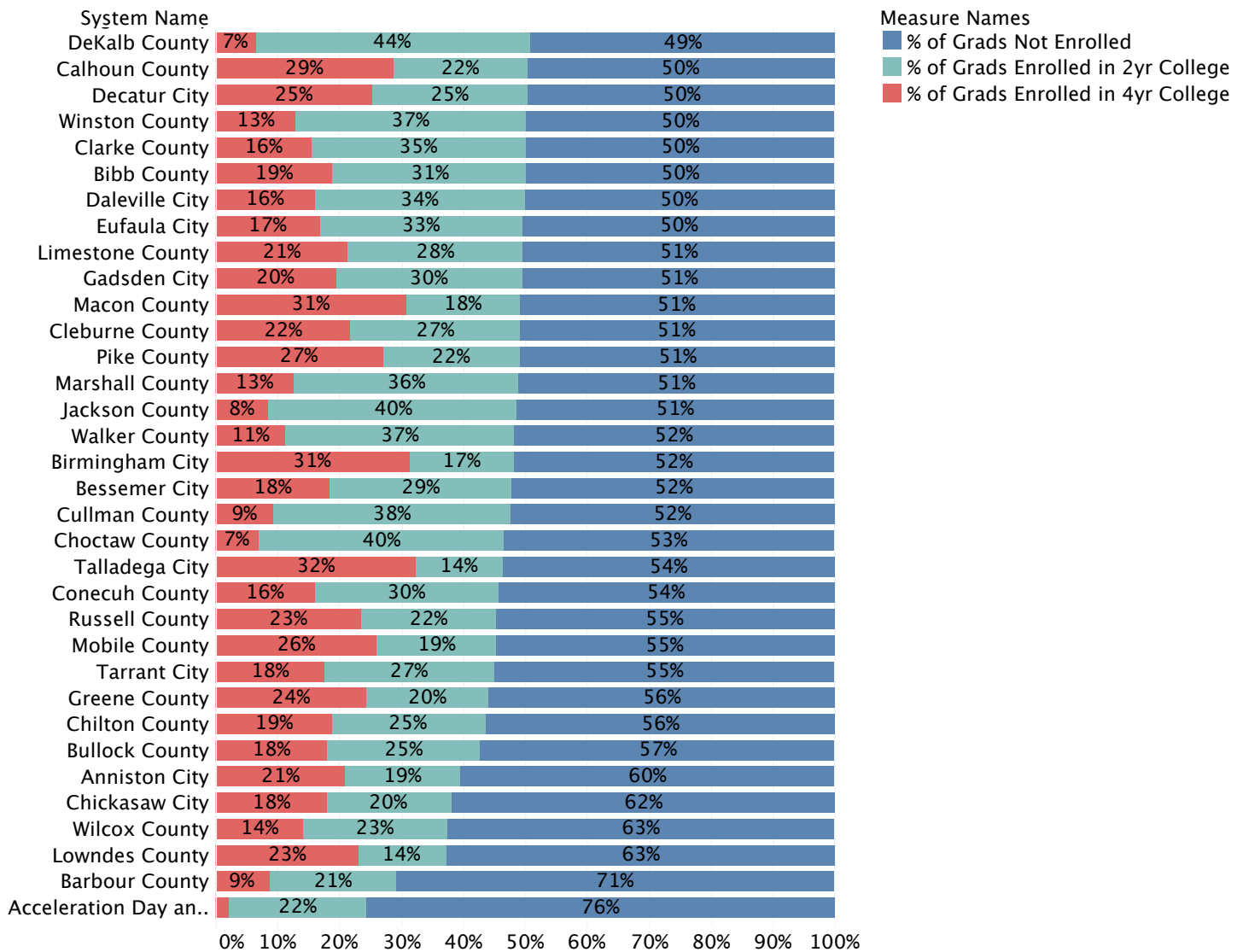
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Post High School Destination by System



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