

Idaho Opportunity Scholarship

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Idaho Opportunity Scholarship program has expanded substantially over the last five years and is by far the largest scholarship program the state administers. Original appropriations for the scholarship has gone from \$5.1 million in 2016 to over \$20 million in 2020. The objective of the program has been to increase college accessibility and to encourage positive college outcomes for economically disadvantaged students in Idaho. It is not a purely need-based program, rather it considers both merit and need as part of the applicant selection process. Students who graduate from an accredited Idaho high school (or its equivalent) and meet a minimum grade point average (GPA) requirement (currently set at 2.7) are eligible to apply for the scholarship. Scholarships are then awarded based on the student's ranking and availability of funds. Ranking is weighted 70% towards a student's financial need and 30% towards merit.

Both college accessibility and outcomes need to be considered when evaluating the scholarship program. To evaluate accessibility, scholarship participants' demographics are compared to the demographics of a group meeting similar eligibility requirements (i.e. graduate from an Idaho high school in the same year with a 2.7 or higher GPA). To assess outcomes, scholarship participants are compared to a subset of the above eligible group with similar starting points in their postsecondary careers (i.e. go on to college immediately in the fall after graduating high school).

When it comes to college accessibility, there is a higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students who are eligible and apply for the scholarship as compared to overall eligible Idaho high school graduates. The economically disadvantaged portion of the eligible high school graduating class of 2019 was 41% compared to 47% participating in the Opportunity Scholarship program. Scholarship participants also differ across gender and race/ethnicity when compared to the underlying eligible population of high school graduates. Hispanics make up a larger percentage of scholarship participants than the underlying eligible population of high school graduates (15% compared to 12%). Males are underrepresented when it comes to scholarship participation (36% compared to 44%).

For those students who attend an Idaho institution in the fall immediately following high school graduation, scholarship participants go to one of Idaho's public 4-year institutions at a higher rate than their eligible counterparts. In looking at subsequent college outcomes, scholarship participants also show to be earning more credits than their counterparts during their college careers, which could be increasing their on-time Bachelor's degree completion rates. For the high school graduating class of 2016, 36% of the scholarship participant group completed a Bachelor's degree by the end of 2020 compared to 26% of the non-scholarship group completing a Bachelor's degree in the same amount of time.

Demographic differences between the above two groups is noteworthy. Economically disadvantaged students make up 45% of the scholarship participant group compared to 16% of the non-scholarship group and Hispanic students make up 15% of the scholarship participant group compared to 5% of the non-scholarship group. These differences are similar to those observed in accessibility measures, which suggests the scholarship is reaching its intended population. In other words, even though the scholarship participant group was composed of students more likely to be economically disadvantaged and more likely to be Hispanic than the non-scholarship group, the scholarship participant group saw better outcomes.

The discussion of these results does not attribute causation of the outcomes to scholarship participation, rather the purpose is to report on observed comparisons in outcomes across groups for use in gaining a better understanding of the different populations.

2 DISCUSSION OF DATA AVAILABILITY

The framework of this analysis is limited to the data available to form meaningful comparison groups. The first high school graduating class with sufficient available data is the 2016 graduating class. The most recent award period containing non-preliminary data is for the 2019-2020 school year, and the most recent complete period for college outcomes is for the 2019-2020 period. Therefore, the analysis focuses on the high school graduating classes of 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 and their scholarship eligibility for the period following high school graduation. For example, students in the high school graduating class of 2019 were eligible to apply and receive an award in the 2019-2020 period and their outcomes are limited to only those available in the 2019-2020 period. Each high school graduating class's outcomes is limited by the number of years that has elapsed up to the 2019-2020 period. Consequently, not all high school graduating classes will have all outcomes available for observation.

3 BACKGROUND

To be considered eligible for an Idaho Opportunity Scholarship, a student must have graduated from an accredited Idaho high school or its equivalent (i.e. homeschool, GED, etc.) and meet a minimum high school GPA requirement. The minimum high school GPA requirement has changed over time, impacting the underlying eligible population. From 2007 to 2017, the minimum high school GPA requirement was 3.0. In 2018, the requirement was changed to 2.7 for traditional students and 2.5 for adult learners with some credits and no degree.

4 IDAHO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES WITH AN ELIGIBLE HIGH SCHOOL GPA

What does this change in GPA eligibility mean when it comes to Idaho high school graduates? To answer this question, we need to first understand from a historical perspective the number of

students who were eligible based on their high school GPA before and after the policy change. The figure below shows a visible shift in the number and proportion of eligible students between years 2017 and 2018.

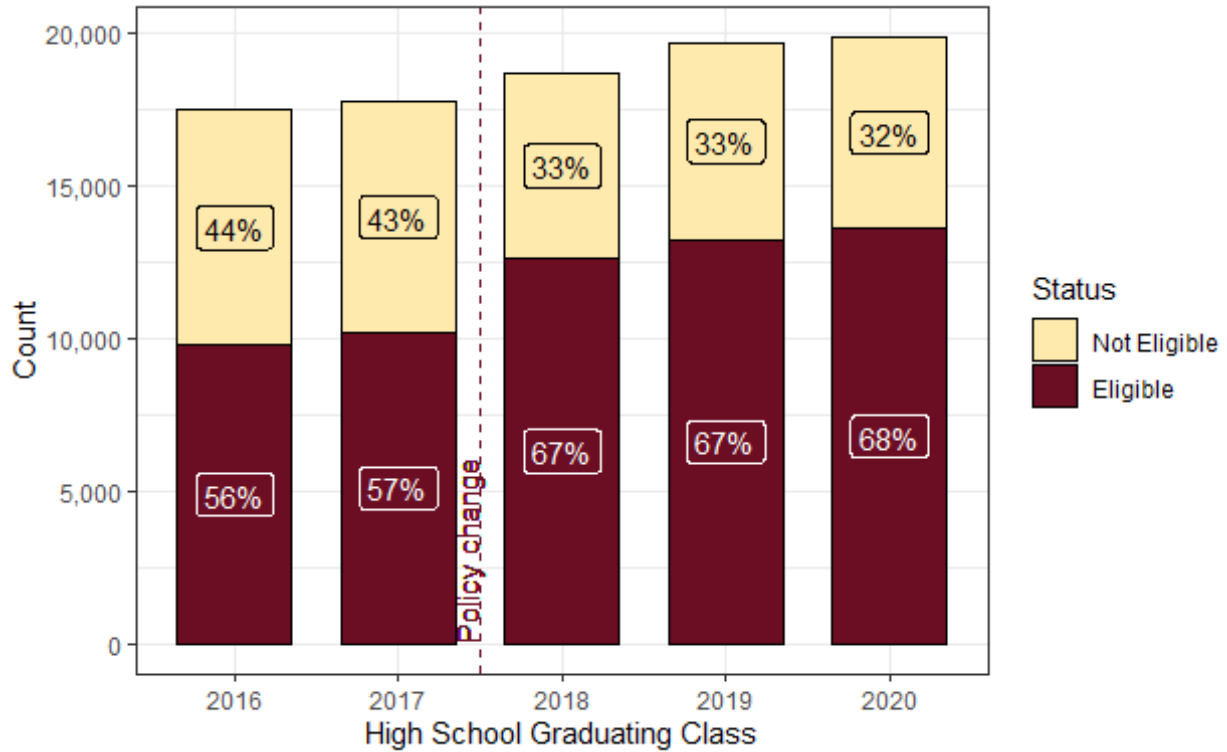


Figure 1. Percent of high school graduating class GPA eligible before and after policy change

Coupled with this expansion in eligibility was an increase in funds available for scholarship recipients. Over the five year period between fiscal years 2016 and 2020, original appropriations for the scholarship have gone from \$5.1 million to over \$20 million. These increases can be observed in the figure below.

Original Appropriations for Idaho Opportunity Scholarship program

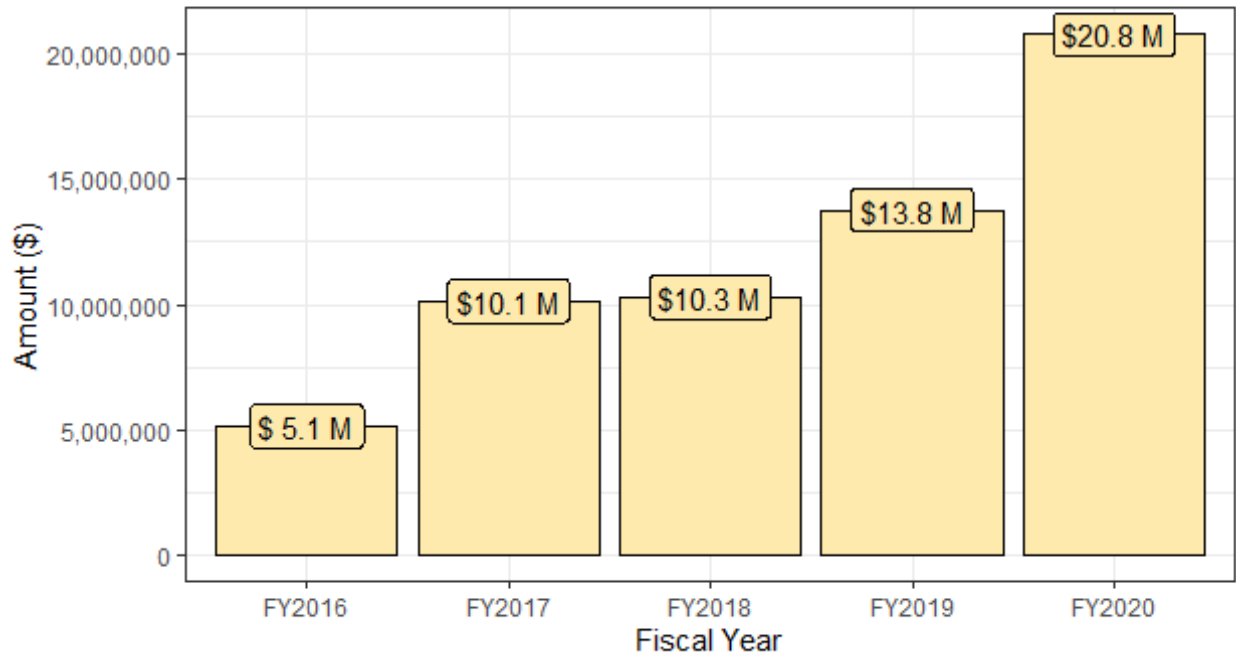


Figure 2. Original appropriations for Idaho Opportunity Scholarship

Also during this five year period was an increase in the maximum award amount from \$3,000 in 2016-2017 to \$3,500 in 2019-2020. This resulted in more awards being available to more eligible students. This increase can be observed in the figure below, with the largest increase of awards being seen in the 2019-2020 award year.

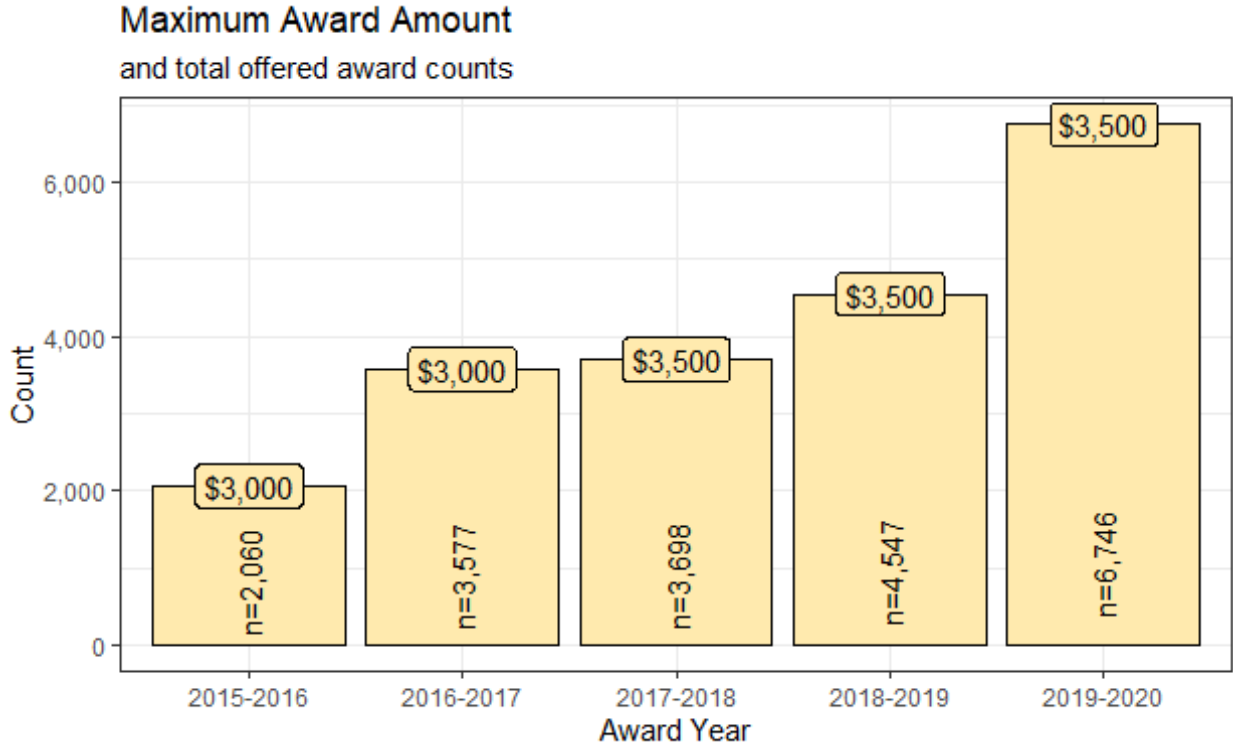


Figure 3. Total number of awards offered showing changes in maximum award amounts

Idaho Opportunity Scholarship awardees vary across award years, with some years having more new awards while others have more renewals. The funds available for new awards to be offered is dependent upon the number of awardees who are eligible to renew. The scholarship awards are a four-year award based on renewal requirements and availability of funds. Renewal awards are made prior to new awards. The figure below depicts the changing proportions of new and renewal award types over time.

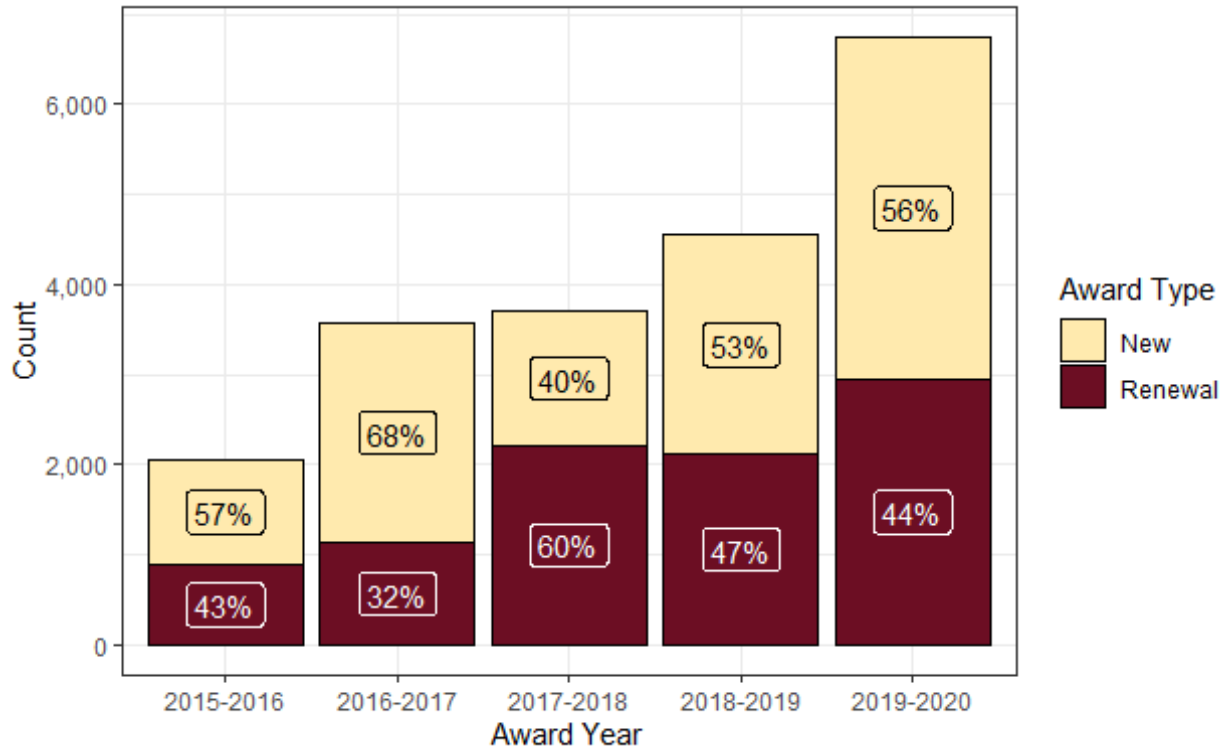


Figure 4. Percentage of new and renewal award types by award year

Both new and renewal awards are composed of Idaho high school graduates from different graduating classes. In the figure below, it can be seen that the majority of new awards go to those who have just graduated within the last year, comprising between 65% and 80% over the past five award years. To provide meaningful insights about the Idaho Opportunity Scholarship program, the target group for subsequent analyses and comparisons is composed of the new applicants who have graduated from high school within one year of applying for the scholarship.

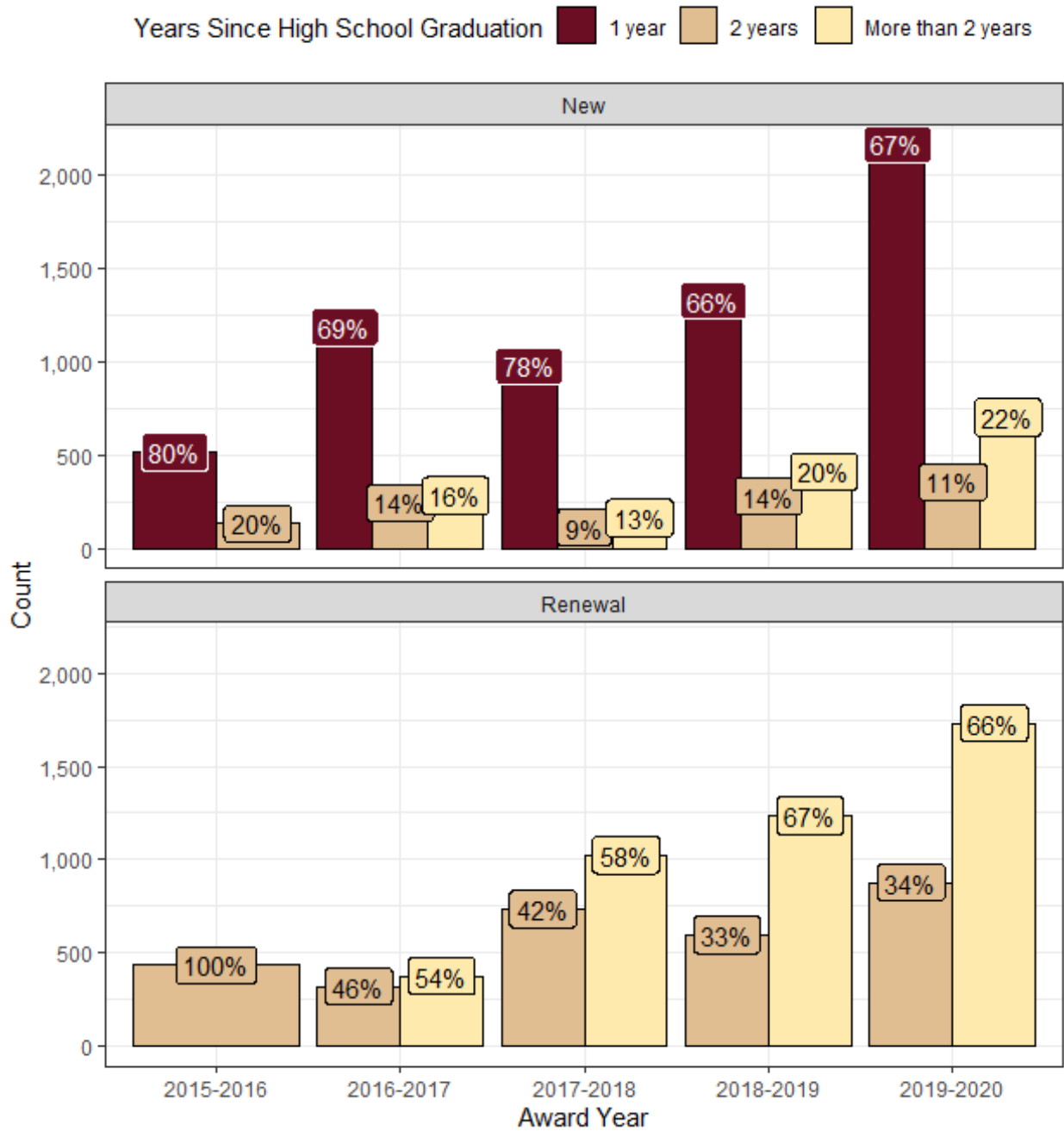


Figure 5. Composition of different high school graduating classes of new and renewals awards

Objectives of the Idaho Opportunity Scholarship include to: “provide access to eligible Idaho postsecondary education through funding to remove financial barriers;” “increase the opportunity for economically disadvantaged Idaho students;” and “incentivize students to complete a postsecondary education degree or certificate” (Idaho Code § 33-4304(1)(c)-(e)). Two broad themes emerge from this statement, the first being accessibility of college entry to economically disadvantaged students and the second being the outcomes of that target group of students. To form a better picture of how the Idaho Opportunity Scholarship may be reaching

these objectives, is to first look at the makeup of the underlying population of Idaho high school graduates who meet the minimum GPA requirements to be considered for the scholarship.

5 ACCESSIBILITY

To describe the underlying population and to compare it to scholarship applicants and recipients, the following demographics are used: economically disadvantaged status, gender, and race/ethnicity. First, it is important to understand what proportion of the GPA eligible graduating class applied for the scholarship over time.

5.1 What Percentage of the GPA Eligible High School Graduates Applied for the Scholarship?

Since the high school graduating class of 2016, the proportion of eligible graduates who apply for the scholarship increased from 22% to 30% and has remained between 35% and 36% for the last two graduating classes. This change is visible in the figure below between the 2017 and 2018 graduating class.

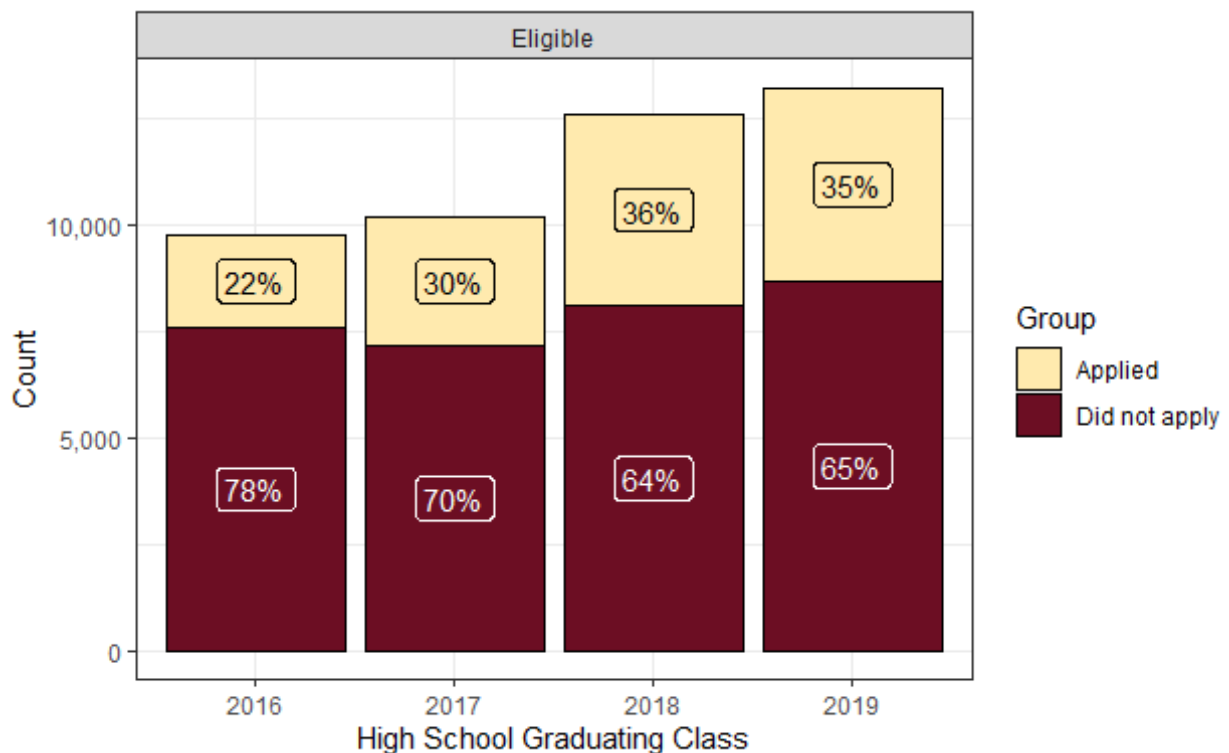


Figure 6. Eligible applicants who do and do not apply

5.2 How Many of the GPA Eligible High School Graduates were Economically Disadvantaged Compared to those who Applied?

The percentage of economically disadvantaged high school graduates has ranged from 39% in the 2016 graduating class to 41% in the 2019 graduating class. In comparison, the percentage who apply for the scholarship who are economically disadvantaged is greater, and has followed this trend from 2016 to 2019, as can be seen in the following figure.

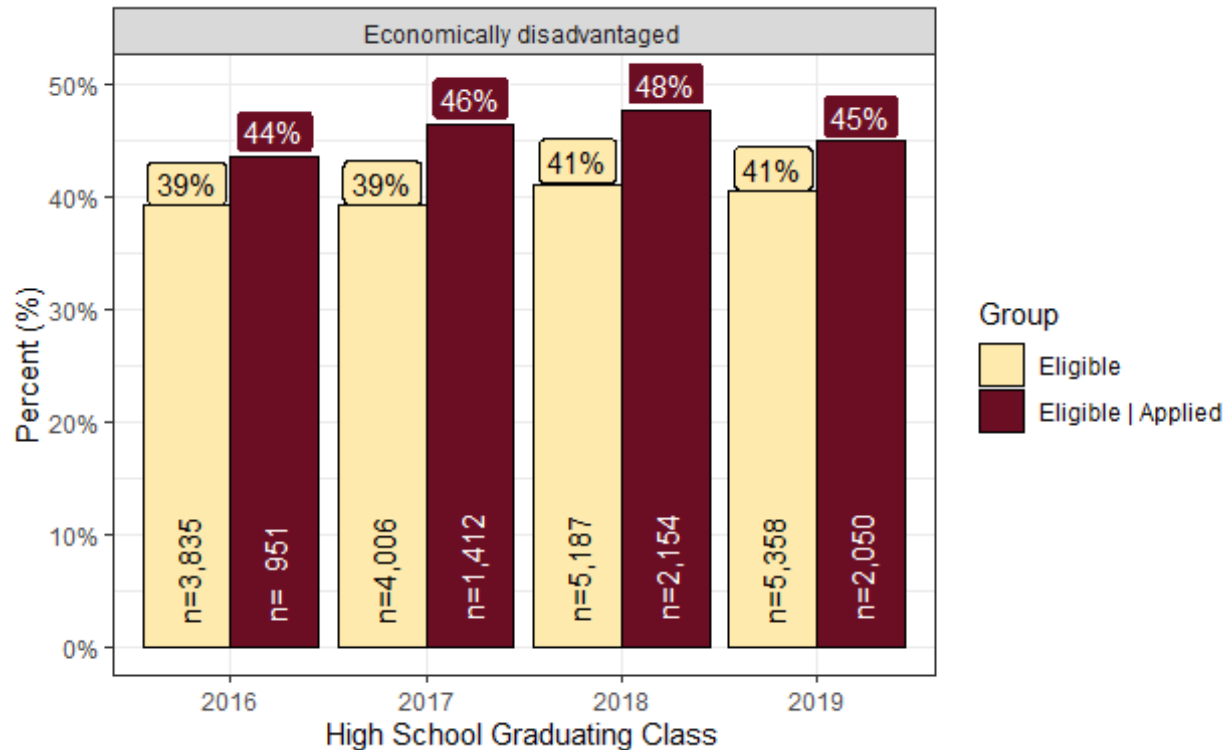


Figure 7. Comparison of eligible economically disadvantaged student proportions

5.3 How Many of the GPA Eligible High School Graduates were Male or Female Compared to those who Applied?

The proportion of males who apply for the scholarship has consistently been lower than the proportion of males in the underlying eligible population. This trend can be seen in the figure below where males represent between 34% and 37% of eligible applicants compared to between 42% and 45% who are eligible to apply.

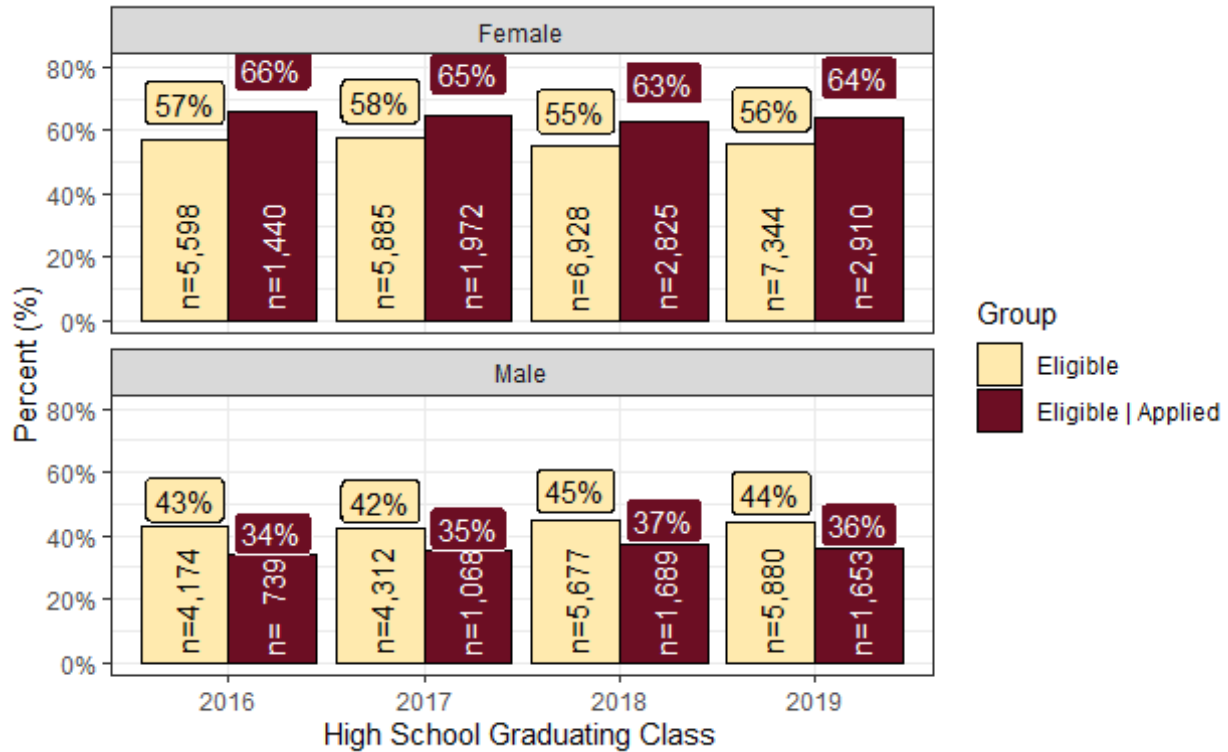


Figure 8. Comparison of eligible male and female student proportions

5.4 How Many of the GPA Eligible High School Graduates were Non-White?

The proportion of Hispanic students who apply for the scholarship has consistently been greater than the proportion of Hispanic students in the underlying eligible population. American Indian and Other¹ demographic groups tend to see similar proportions between applicants and the underlying eligible population (see figures below).

¹ Other category includes Black, Two or More, Asian, Hawaiian

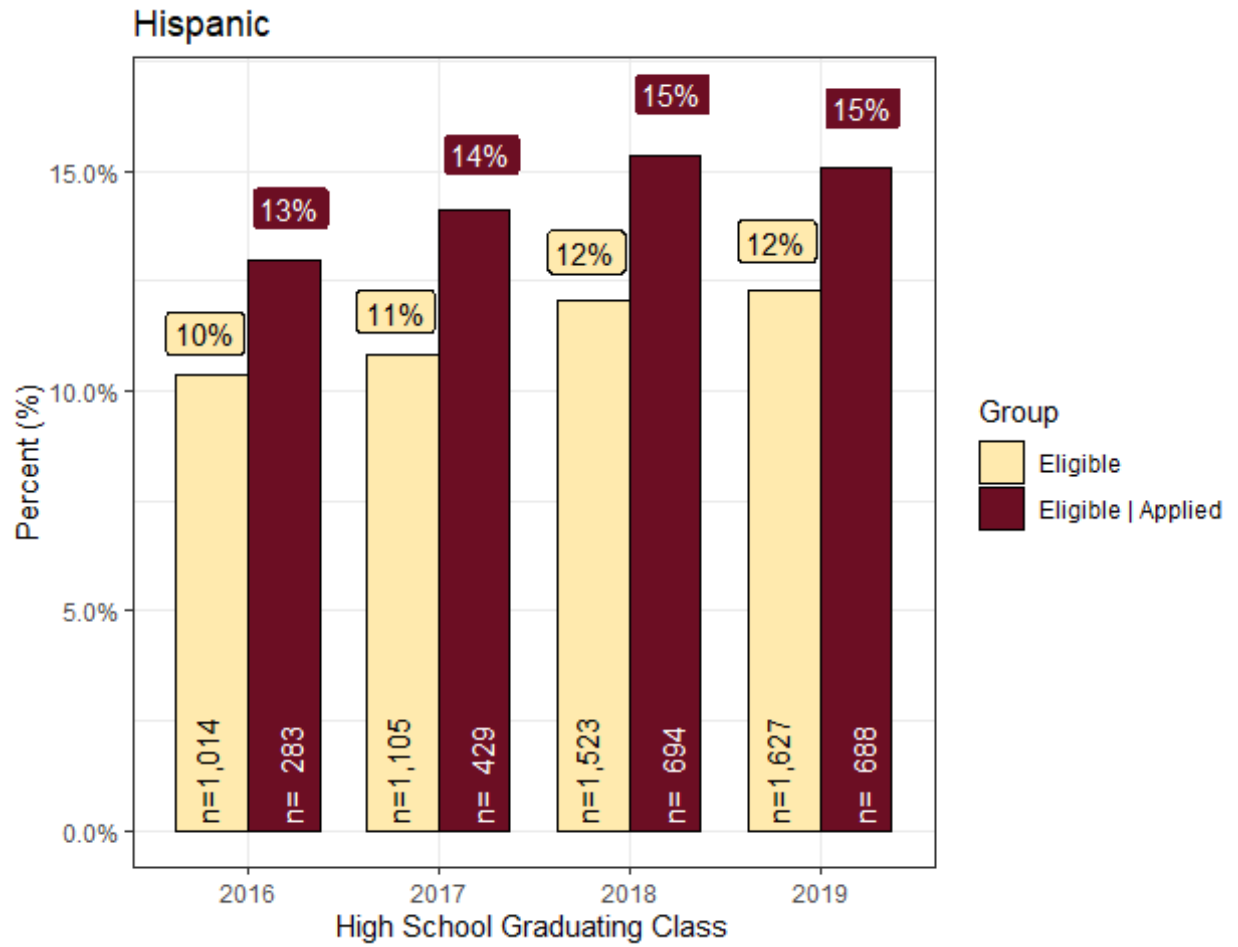


Figure 9. Comparison of eligible Hispanic student proportions

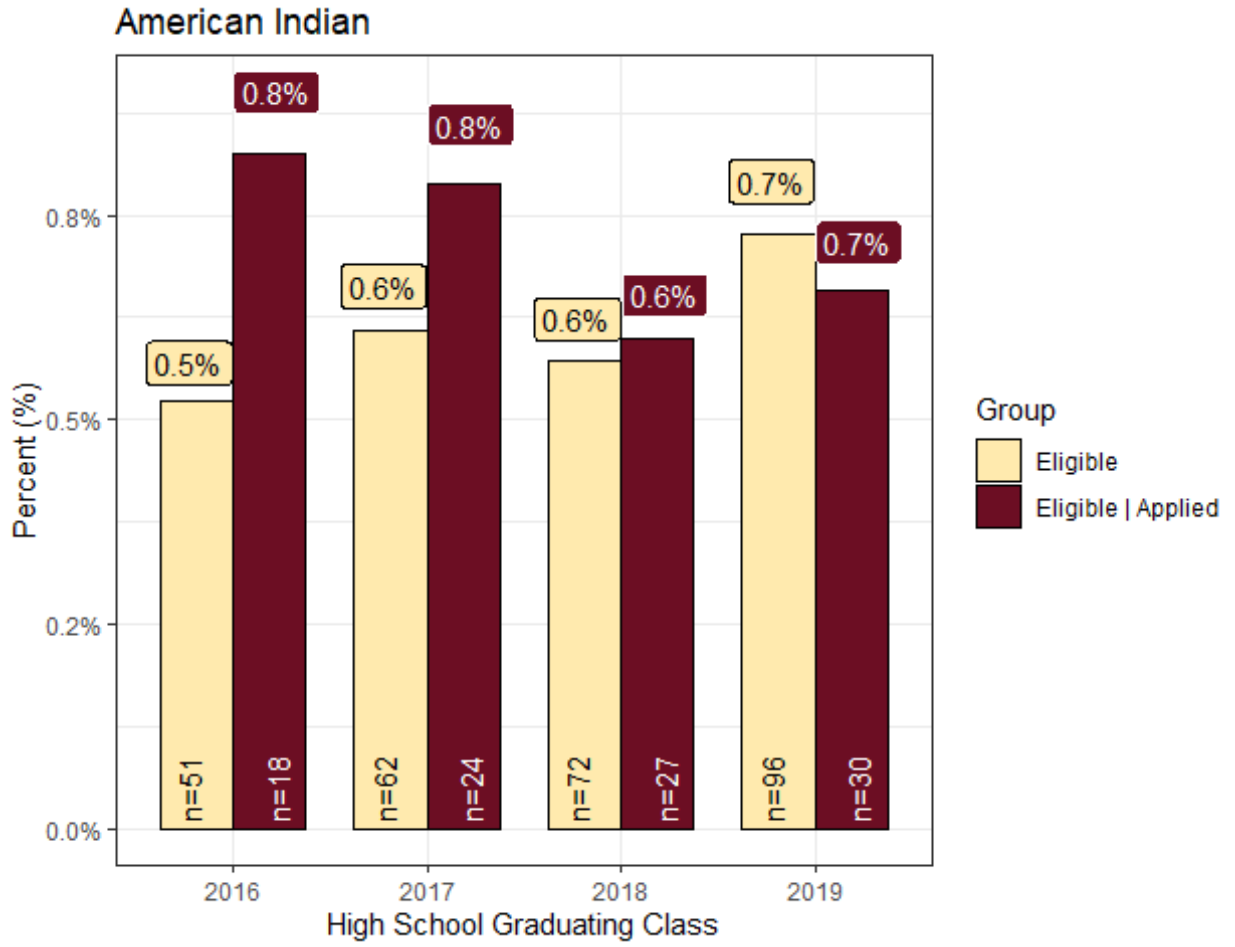


Figure 10. Comparison of eligible American Indian student proportions

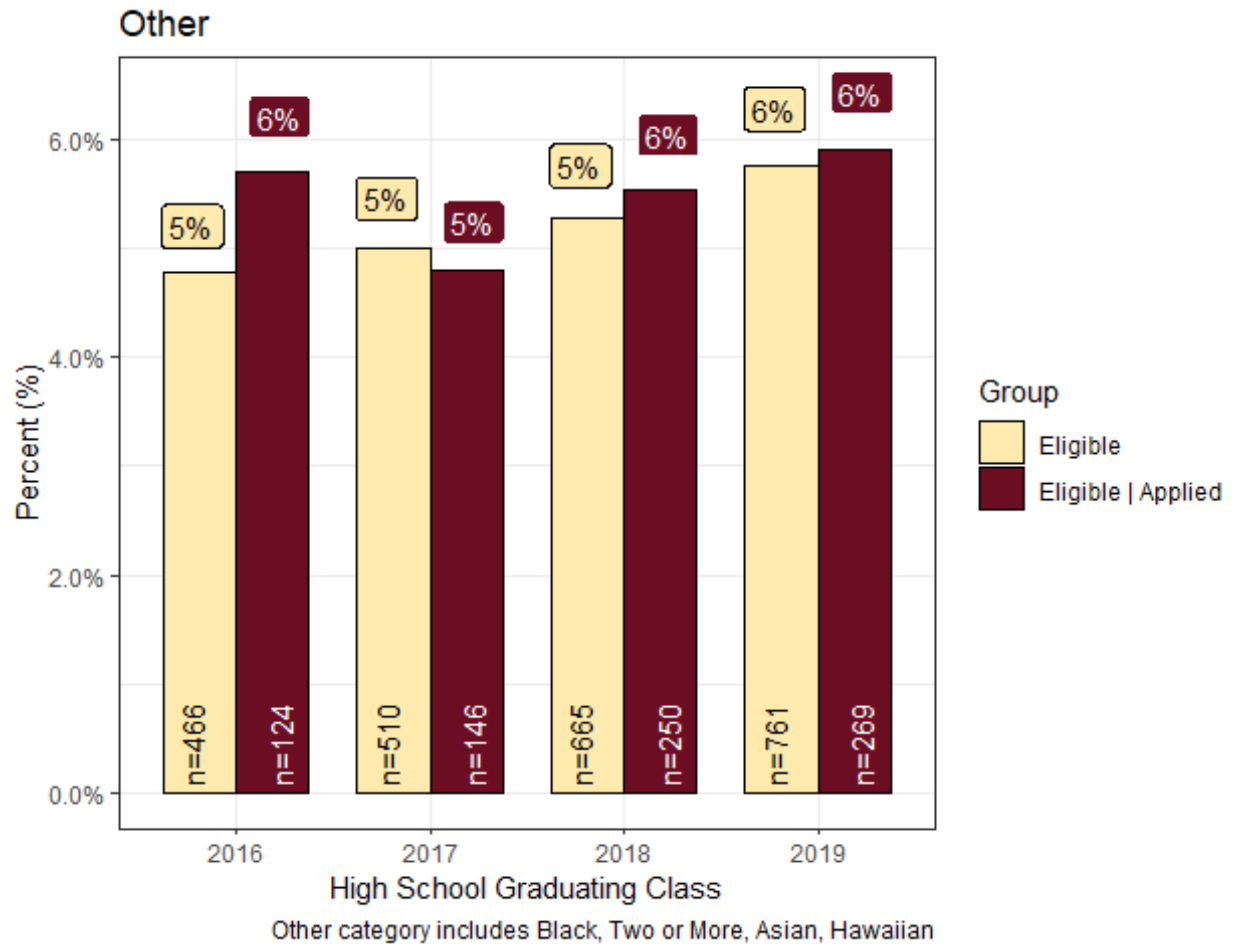


Figure 11. Comparison of eligible Other student proportions

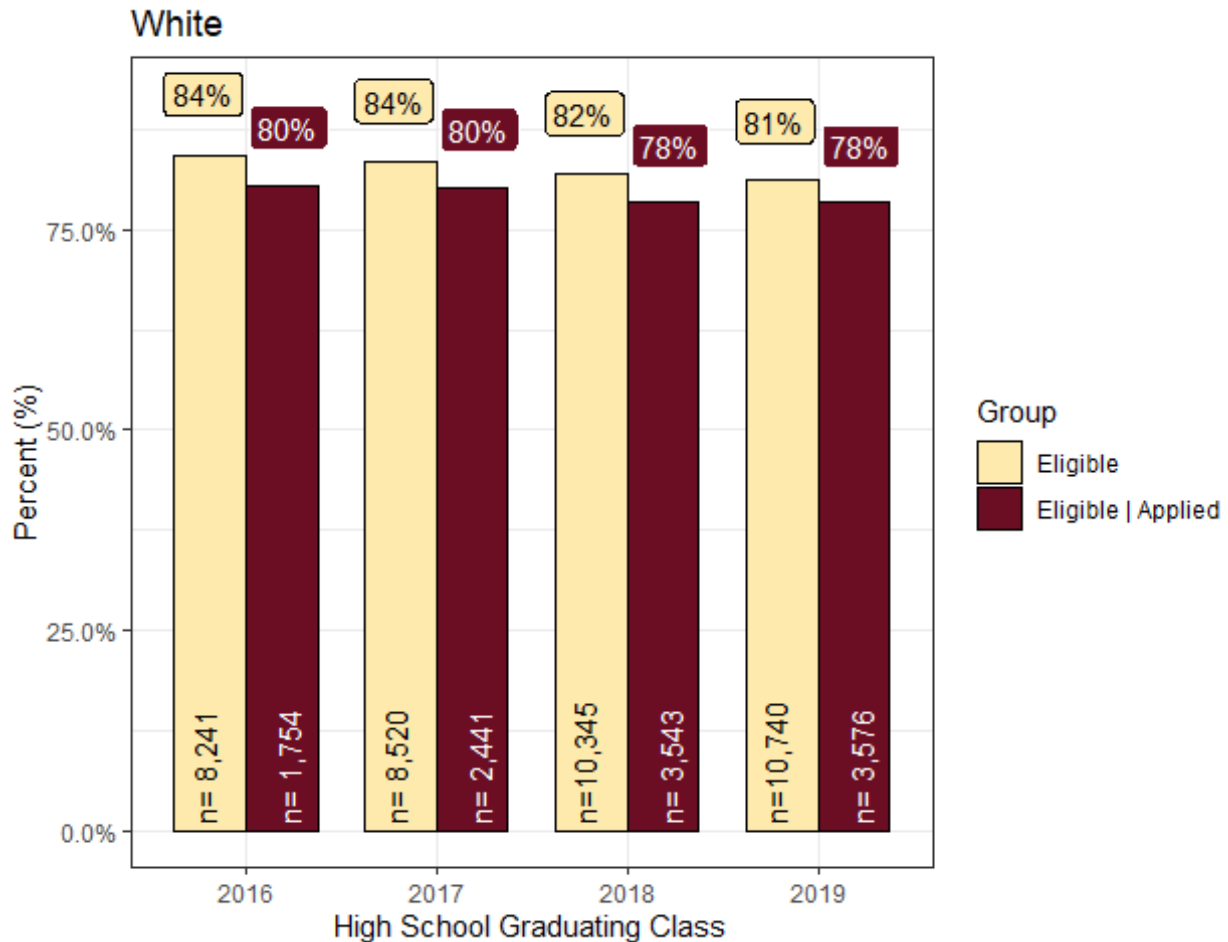


Figure 12. Comparison of eligible White student proportions

The Idaho Opportunity Scholarship appears to do well at serving economically disadvantaged and Hispanic students when looking at the composition of the eligible comparison group. Males, however, are a group that is underrepresented. The under-representation of males is not unique to the Opportunity Scholarship, as a gender gap is present in go on rates previously published by the Office of the State Board of Education.

6 OUTCOMES

To gauge the college outcomes of Idaho Opportunity Scholarship recipients, it is important to compare those outcomes against an appropriately similar population. In each of the following sections, the comparison groups will be explained and then their results discussed.

6.1 Go On: Fall Immediate

One important college outcome is the rate at which high school graduates attend college in the fall immediately after graduating high school. This measure is referred to as “Go On

Immediate". For this outcome measure, the GPA eligible high school graduates are compared to those who were eligible and applied for the Idaho Opportunity Scholarship in their senior year of high school. In the figure below, it is apparent that those who are eligible and apply for the scholarship go on immediately at a higher rate than those who are eligible to apply but do not apply. For the graduating class of 2019, those who are eligible and apply for the scholarship go on immediately at a rate of 75%² versus 56% who are eligible and do not apply for the scholarship. This trend can be seen in the following figure.

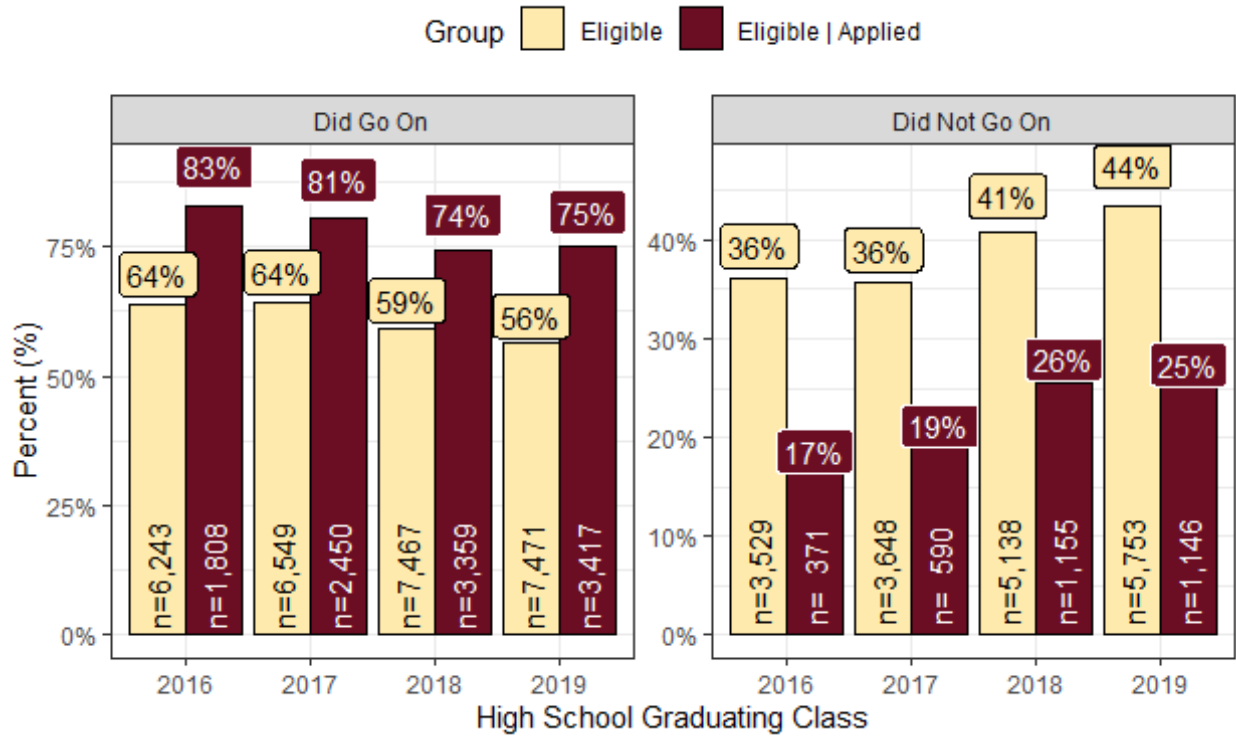


Figure 13. Comparison of Go On Immediate rates

For other college outcome measures discussed in the following sections, the comparison groups are composed of a subset of the above comparison groups. The GPA eligible high school graduates comparison group is limited to only those who went on to college in the immediate fall after high school graduation (Go On Immediate). The Idaho Opportunity Scholarship comparison group is composed of those who were eligible, applied and were awarded in the year following high school graduation. This means that they went on to college in the same time span as the comparison group.

6.2 Go On: Fall Immediate Behaviors

² Not all of the eligible students who apply for the scholarship receive or accept an award, therefore this group's go on rate is less than 100%.

Scholarship recipients attend in-state institutions at a higher rate than their eligible high school graduate counterparts because acceptance of the award is contingent upon attending an eligible Idaho institution. This can be seen in the figure below, showing that those who do not receive a scholarship do indeed attend out-of-state institutions.

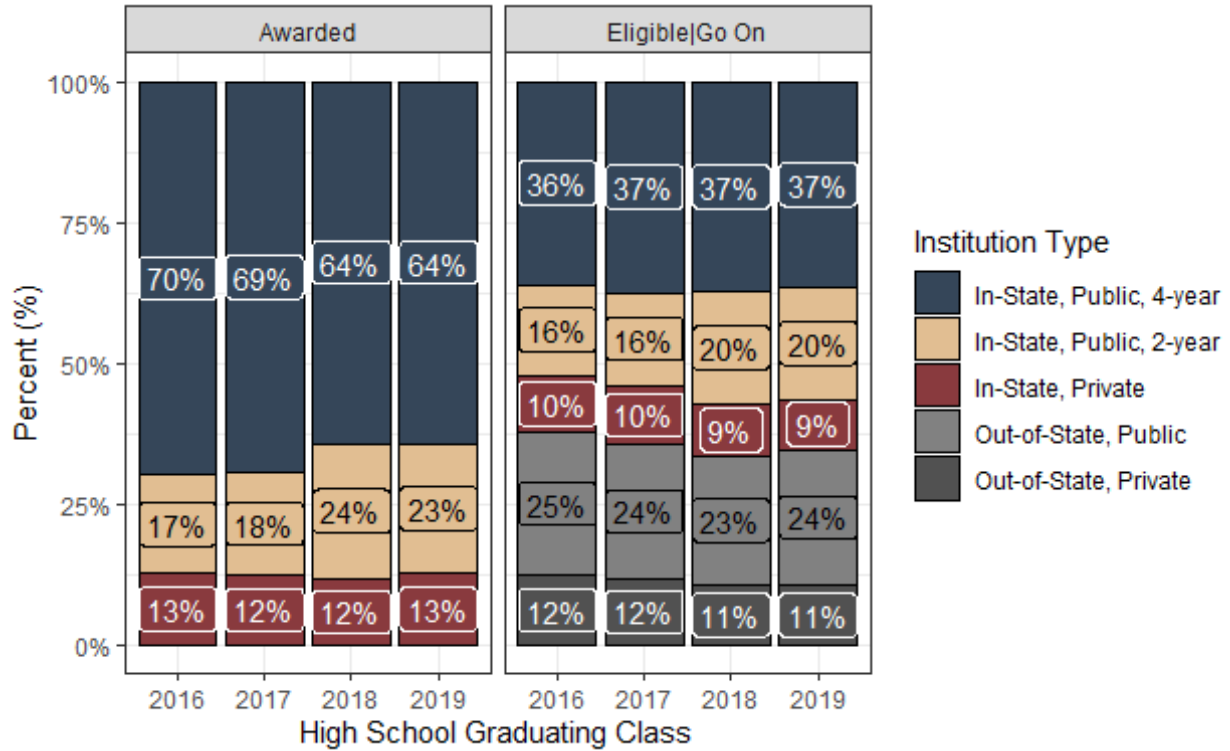


Figure 14. Comparison of Go On Immediate attendance by type of institution

Looking only at those students who go on to attend an Idaho institution, scholarship recipients are more likely to attend one of the public, 4-year universities compared to their counterparts. In both groups, however, moderate increases can be seen in attendance of the public 2-year institutions for the past several high school graduating classes, which can be seen in the figure below.

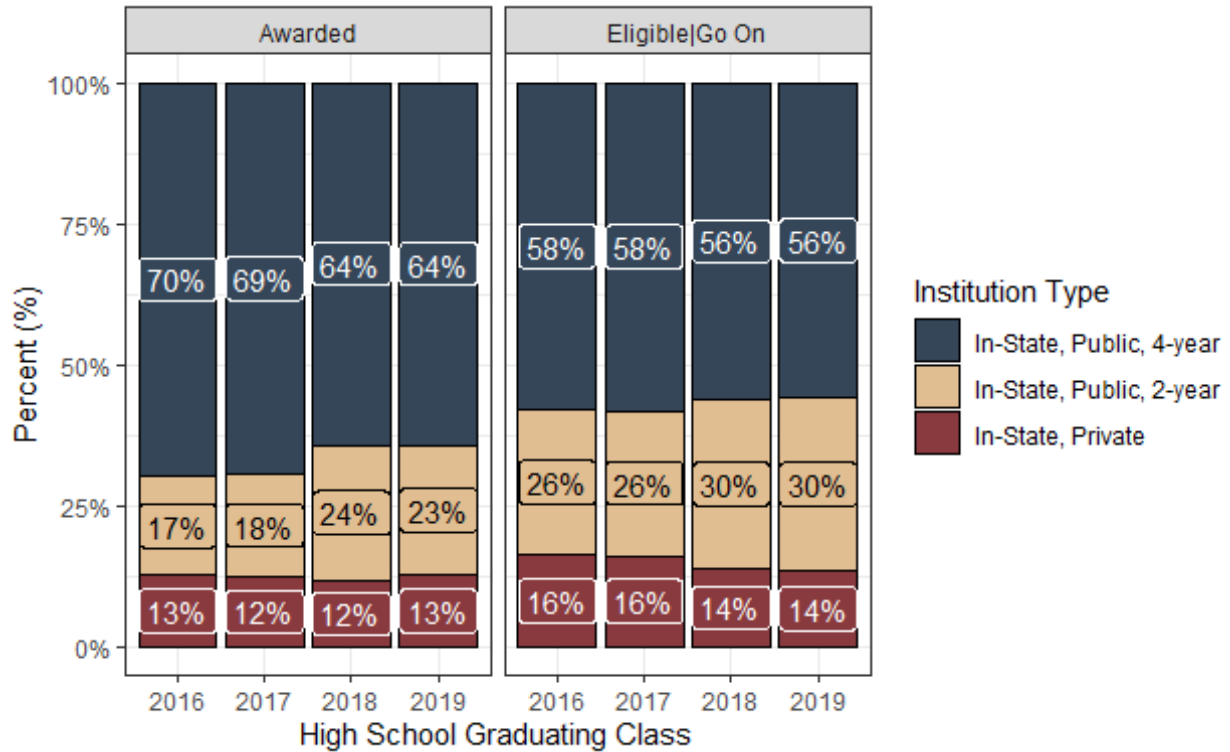


Figure 15. Comparison of Go On Immediate attendance in Idaho institutions by type of institution

6.3 College Credits³

Some of the ways to gauge student progress toward degree completion are to look at credits taken per year as well as credits accumulated over the course of college attendance. It is common for a minimum of 60 credits to be required for an Associate’s degree (over at least two years) and 120 credits to be required for a Bachelor’s degree (over at least four years). While not true in all cases, these credit minimums and time spans provide a useful point of comparison when assessing progress to degree completion.

Using the above credit benchmarks and time spans, a student would need to take and accumulate 30 credits every year to earn a degree within the common time spans associated with Associate’s and Bachelor’s degrees. The Opportunity Scholarship credit requirements for renewal and four-year time frame are designed to incentivize students to earn their credential within the four-year period. In the following figures, the scholarship recipients take more credits each year and therefore accumulated more credits than their eligible counterparts. The largest gap can be seen in the first year, where scholarship recipients tend to take about three more

³ College credit outcomes are limited to only those taken at one of the Idaho public institutions as college credit data is not available for students who attend out-of-state or private institutions. Degree completion data, however, is available for students attending out-of-state and private institutions.

credits than the comparison group. This gap lessens in following years, but it does not close by year four, when scholarship recipients have accumulated nine more credits on average than their counterparts. The impact of this credit gap may also be observed when looking at degree completions.

6.3.1 Median Credits Taken per Year

The following four graphs show a comparison of the median credit load students have taken on a per year basis. These figures do not show how many credits were accumulated over the students' college careers; rather, they are representative of annual full-time or part-time credit taking behaviors.

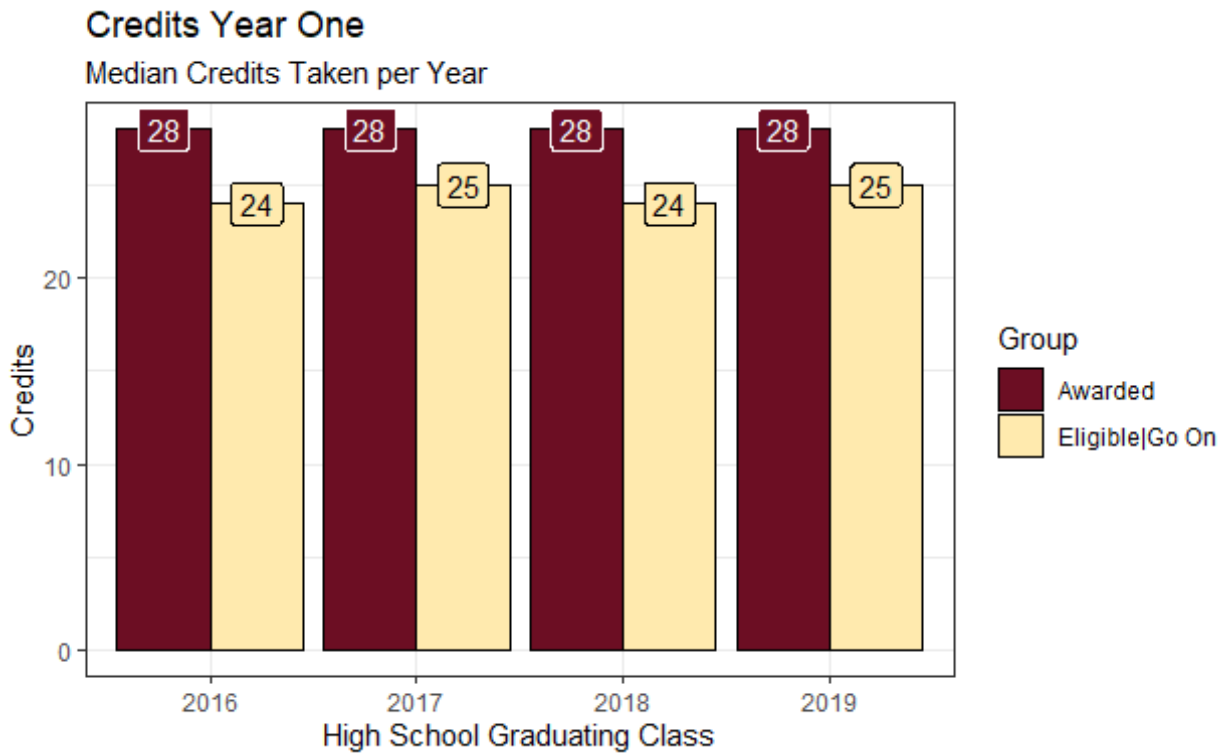


Figure 16. Comparison of median credits taken per year, year one

Credits Year Two

Median Credits Taken per Year

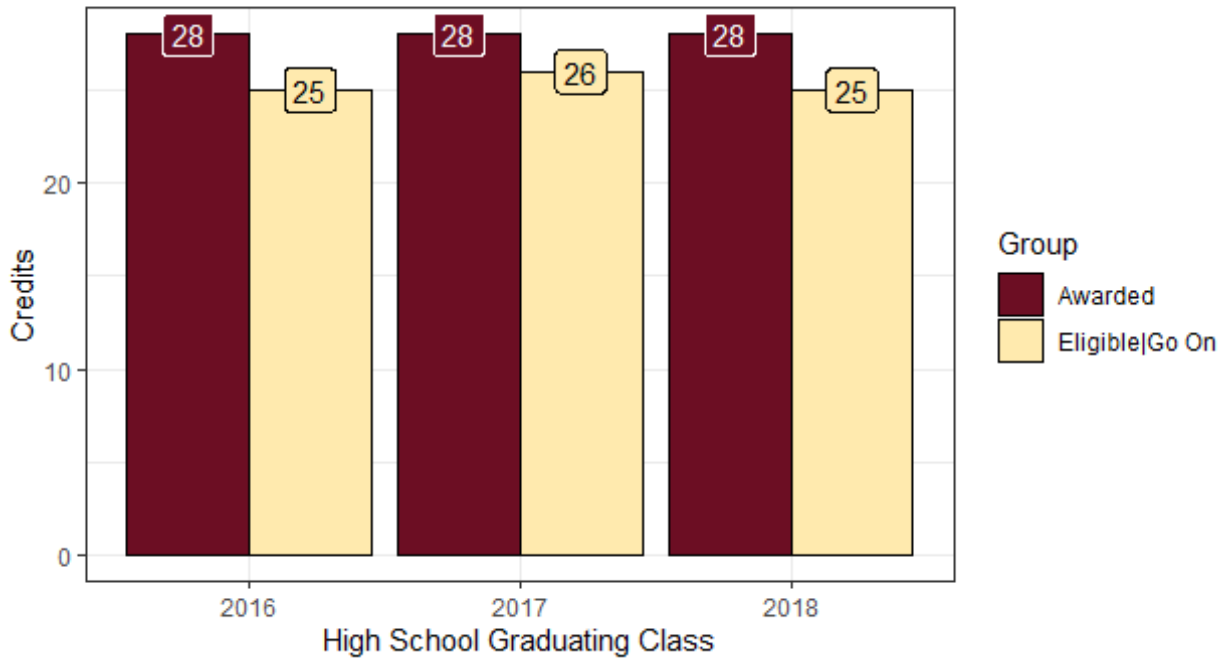


Figure 17. Comparison of median credits taken per year, year two

Credits Year Three

Median Credits Taken per Year

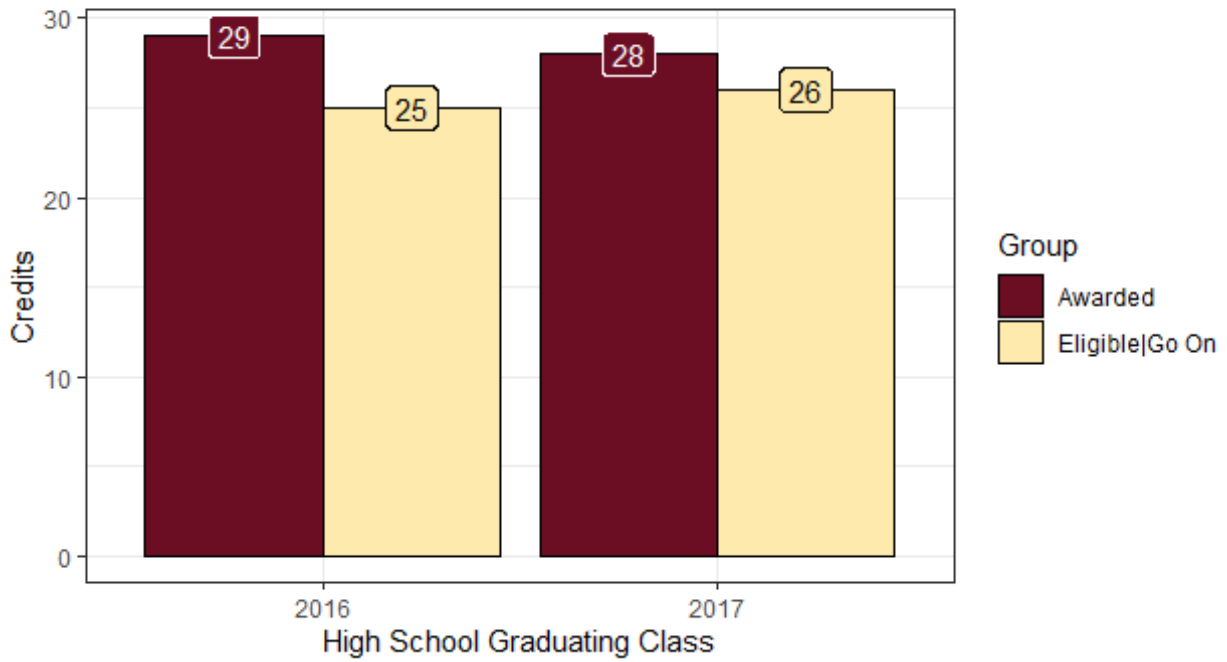


Figure 18. Comparison of median credits taken per year, year three

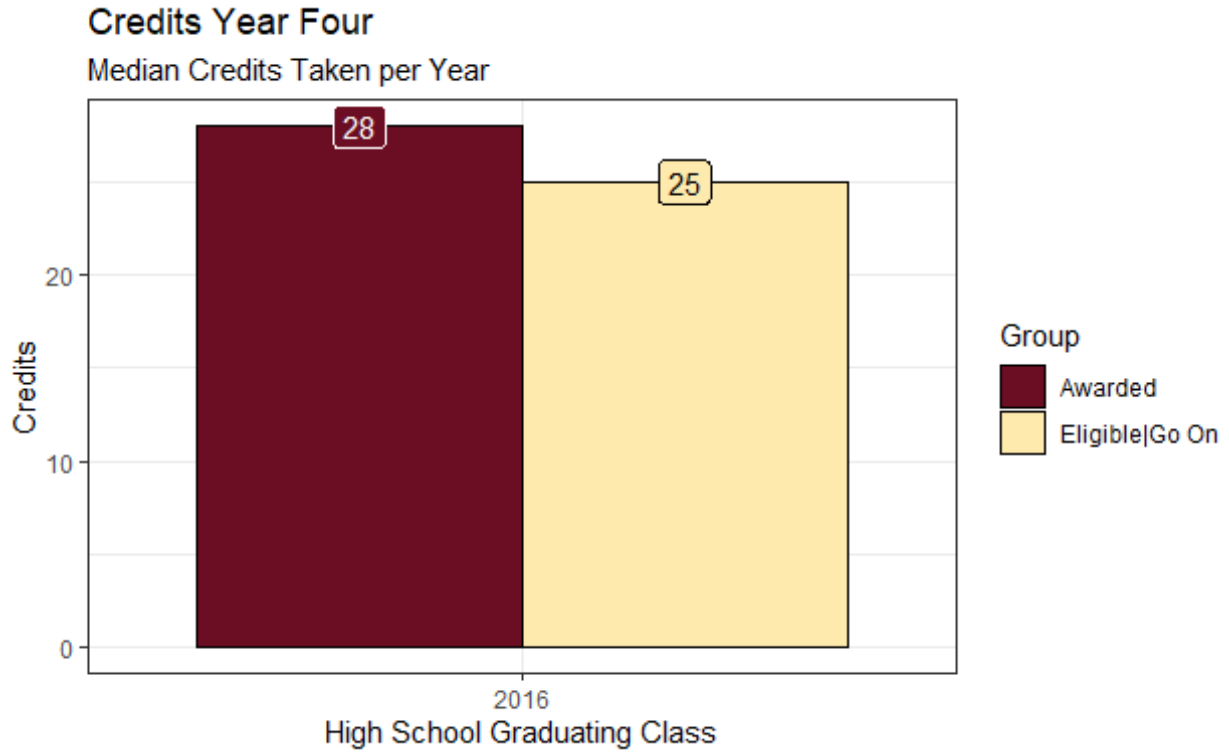


Figure 19. Comparison of median credits taken per year, year four

6.3.2 Median Credits Accumulated by Year End

The following four graphs show a comparison of the median credit accumulation of students over their college careers. These graphs are representative of how students are progressing toward credit requirements for degree completion.

Credits Year One

Median Credits Accumulated by Year End

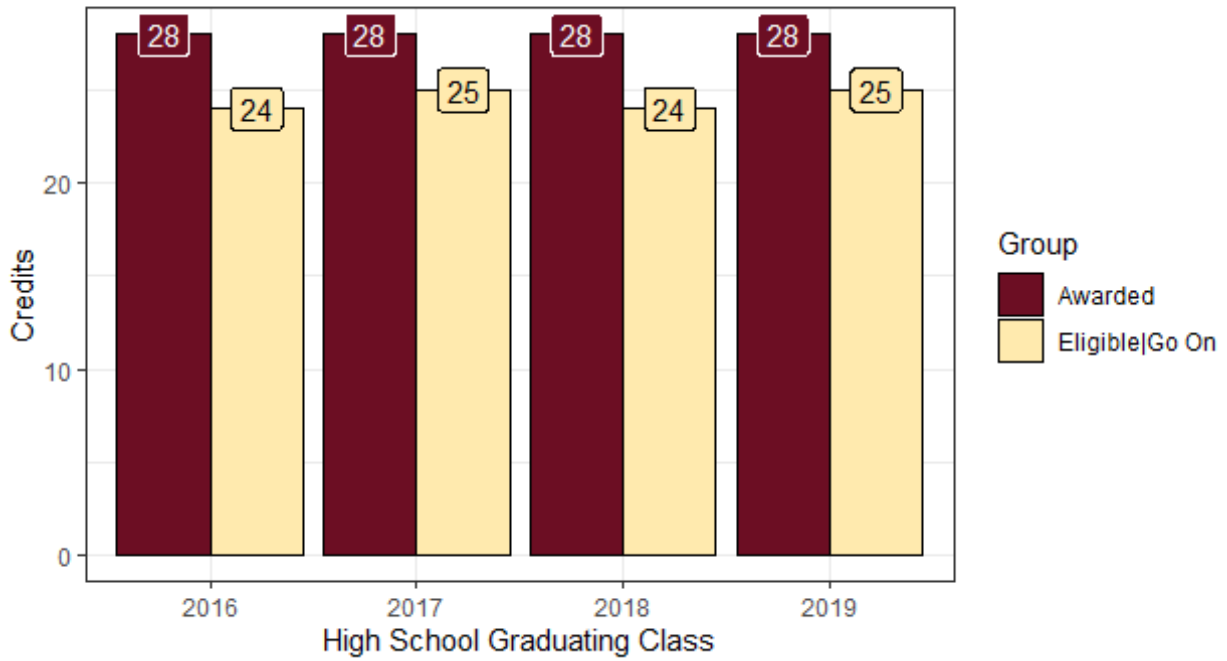


Figure 20. Comparison of median credits accumulated by end of year one

Credits Year Two

Median Credits Accumulated by Year End

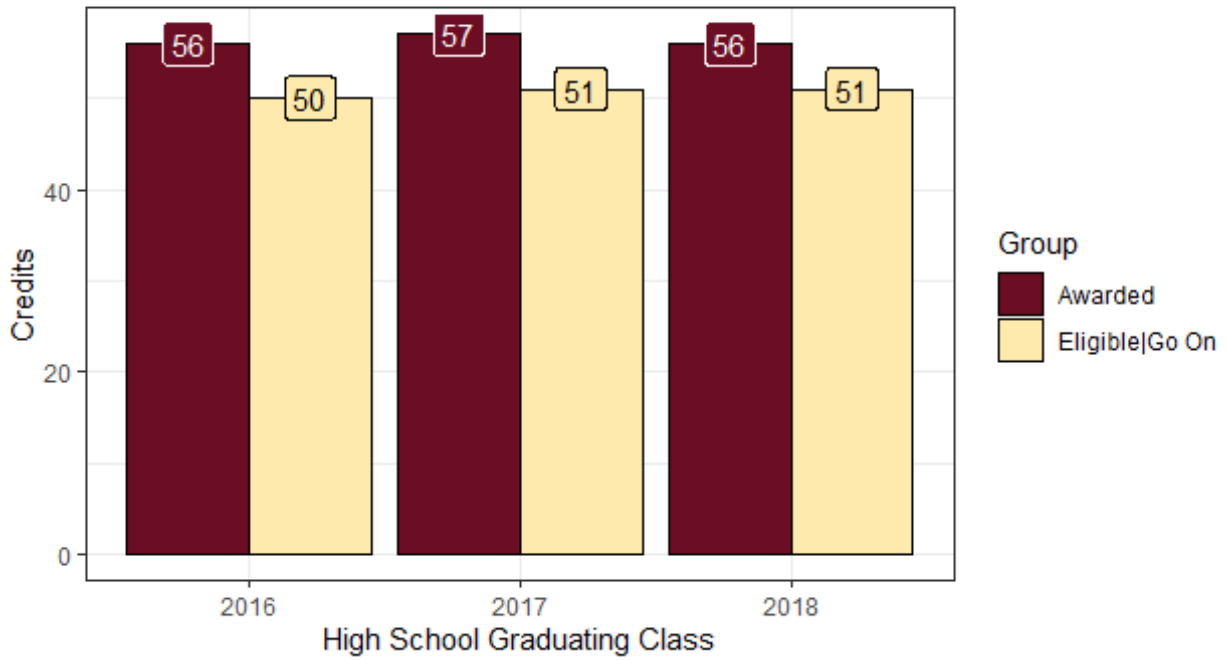


Figure 21. Comparison of median credits accumulated by end of year two

Credits Year Three

Median Credits Accumulated by Year End

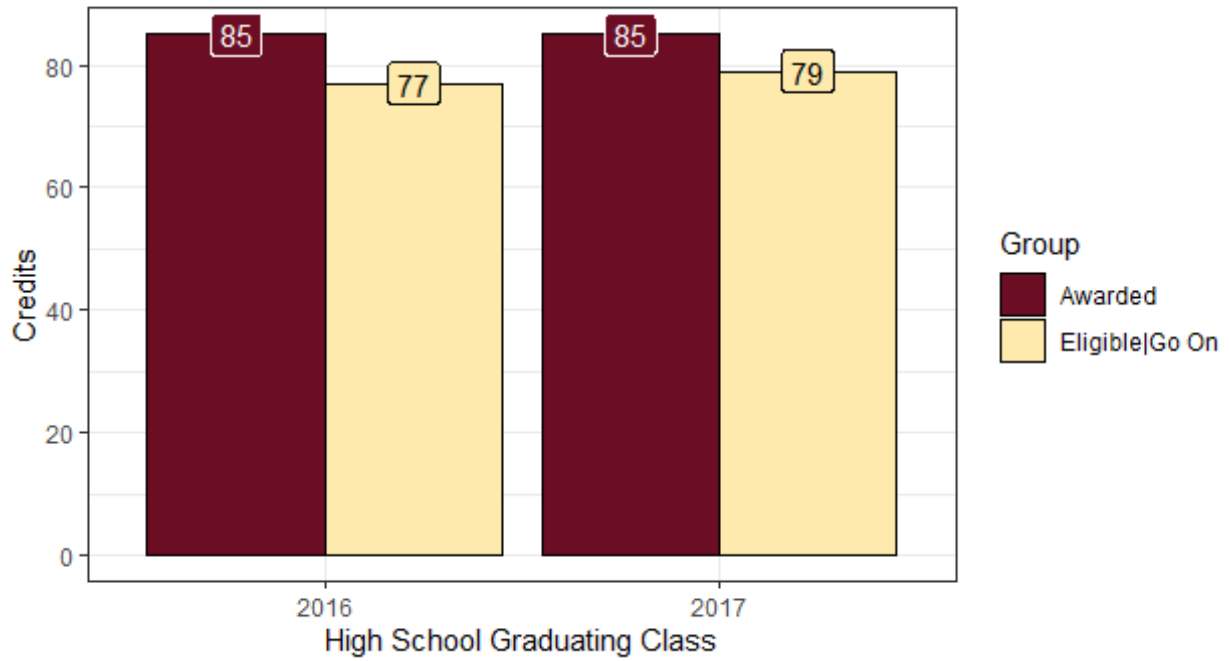


Figure 22. Comparison of median credits accumulated by end of year three

Credits Year Four

Median Credits Accumulated by Year End

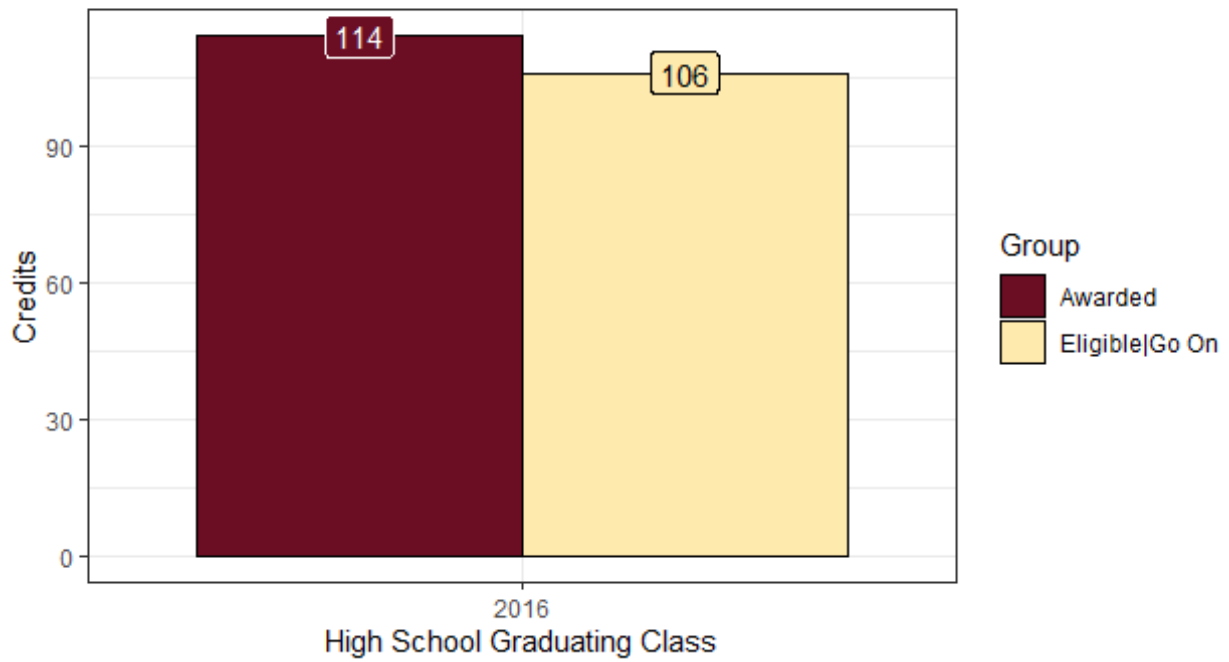


Figure 23. Comparison of median credits accumulated by end of year four

6.4 Degree Completion

Earning an Associate's degree is not always the end of a student's education, but can be seen as an intermediate point on the way to Bachelor's degree completion. Not all students receive an Associate's degree before earning their Bachelor's degree, but it is still valuable to look at Associate's degree completion rates. Idaho Opportunity Scholarship recipients tend to earn Associate's degrees at a higher rate than their eligible high school graduate counterparts, as seen in the figure below.

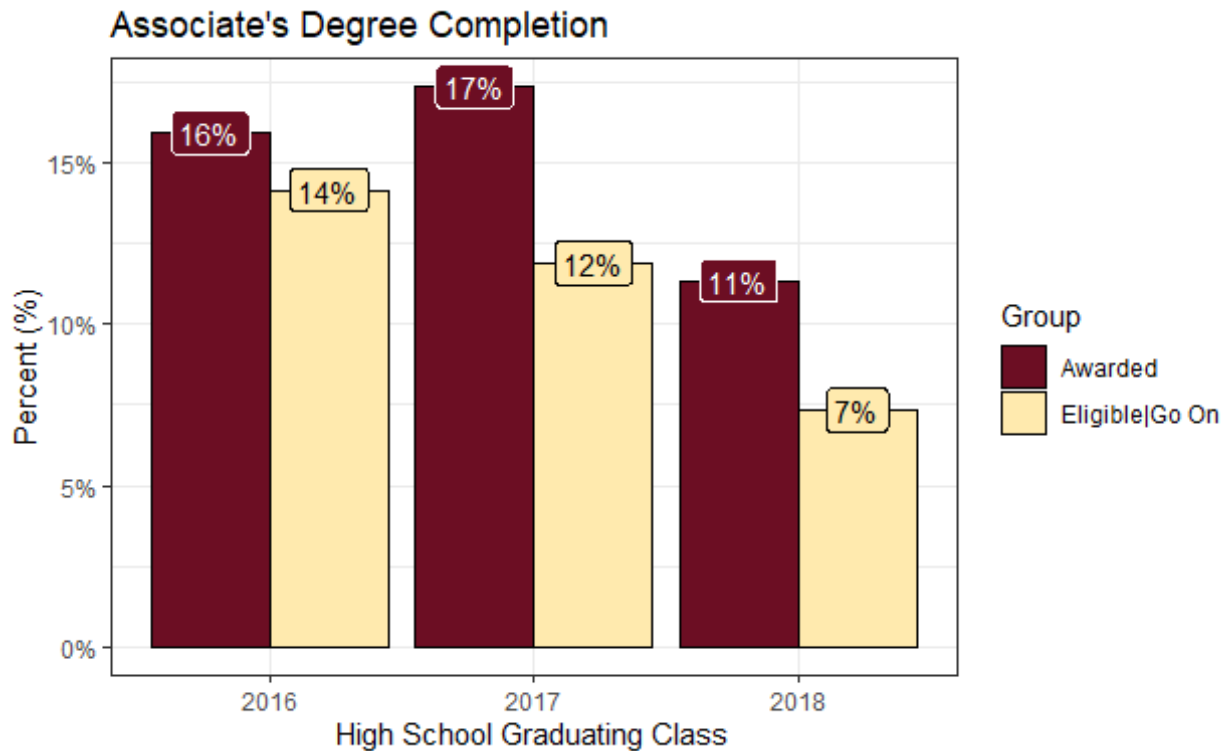


Figure 24. Comparison of Associate's degree completion rates

6.4.1 Bachelor's Degree Completers

The 2016 high school graduates have seen enough time elapsed to evaluate their progress toward Bachelor's degree completion. By the end of their fourth year⁴ of postsecondary education, 36% of the scholarship recipients have received a Bachelor's degree compared to 26% of the eligible high school comparison group (see figure below).

⁴ The end of the fourth year of postsecondary education is most closely related to on-time or 100% of time graduation rate measures for Bachelor's degree seekers.

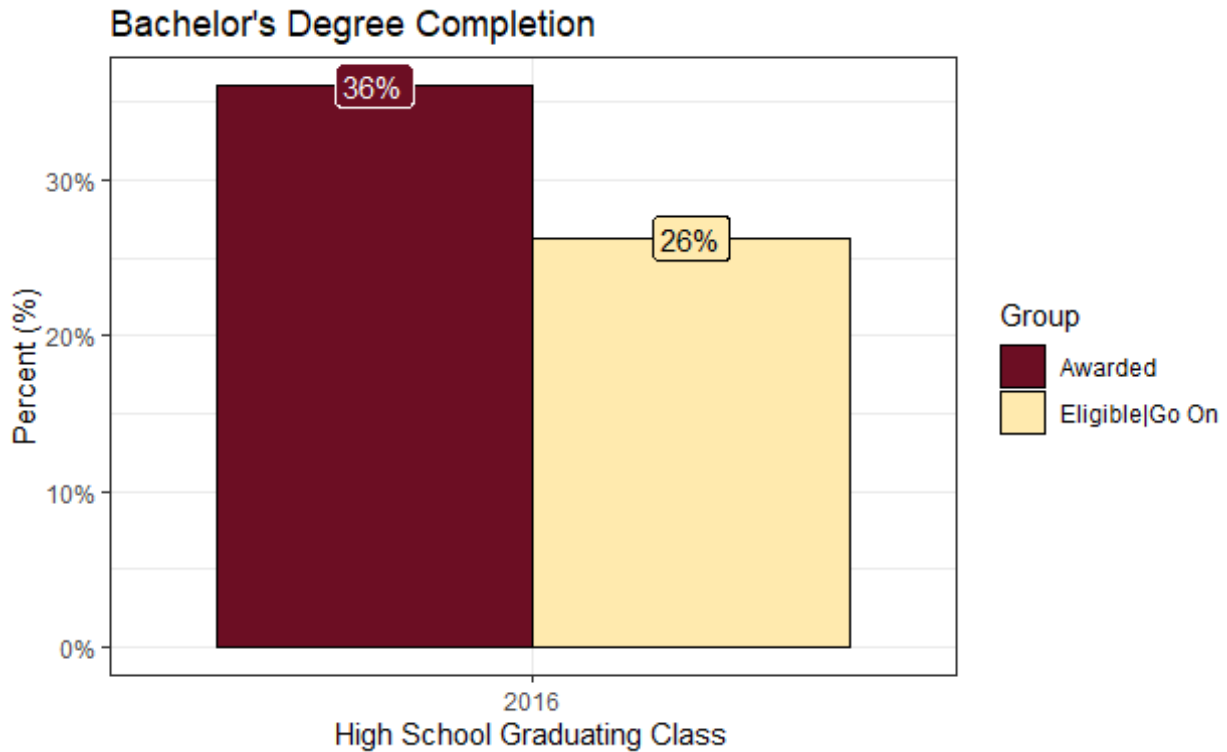


Figure 25. Comparison of Bachelor's degree completion rates

The scholarship recipient group of Bachelor's degree completers is made up of a higher percentage of economically disadvantaged and Hispanic students than the comparison group. This pattern was observed in the previous Accessibility section and holds true through Bachelor's degree completion, at least for the high school graduating class of 2016. The following figures show Bachelor's degree completions across the different demographic groups of economically disadvantaged status, gender, and race/ethnicity.

The difference between Bachelor's degree completion rates of economically disadvantaged students between the two groups is notable. Earlier, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the GPA eligible high school graduating class of 2016 was 39% compared to 44% who were eligible and applied for the scholarship. Contrast this with the composition of the Bachelor's degree completers below where economically disadvantaged students make up 45% of the scholarship group and only 16% of the comparison group.

Economically Disadvantaged Status

Bachelor's Degree Completion

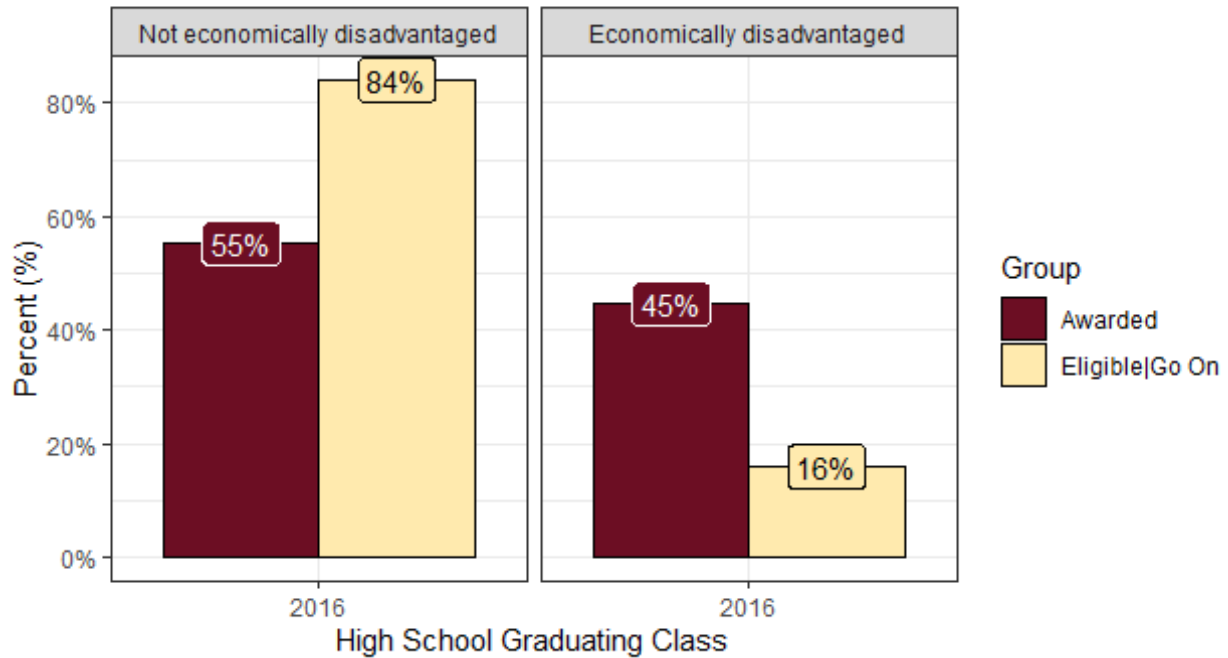


Figure 26. Comparison of Bachelor's degree completion rates by economically disadvantaged status

In the following figure, Hispanic students make up 15% of the scholarship participant group compared to 5% of the non-scholarship group. In comparison, the percentage of Hispanic students in the GPA eligible high school graduating class of 2016 was 10% compared to 13% who were eligible and applied for the scholarship.

Race/Ethnicity

Bachelor's Degree Completion

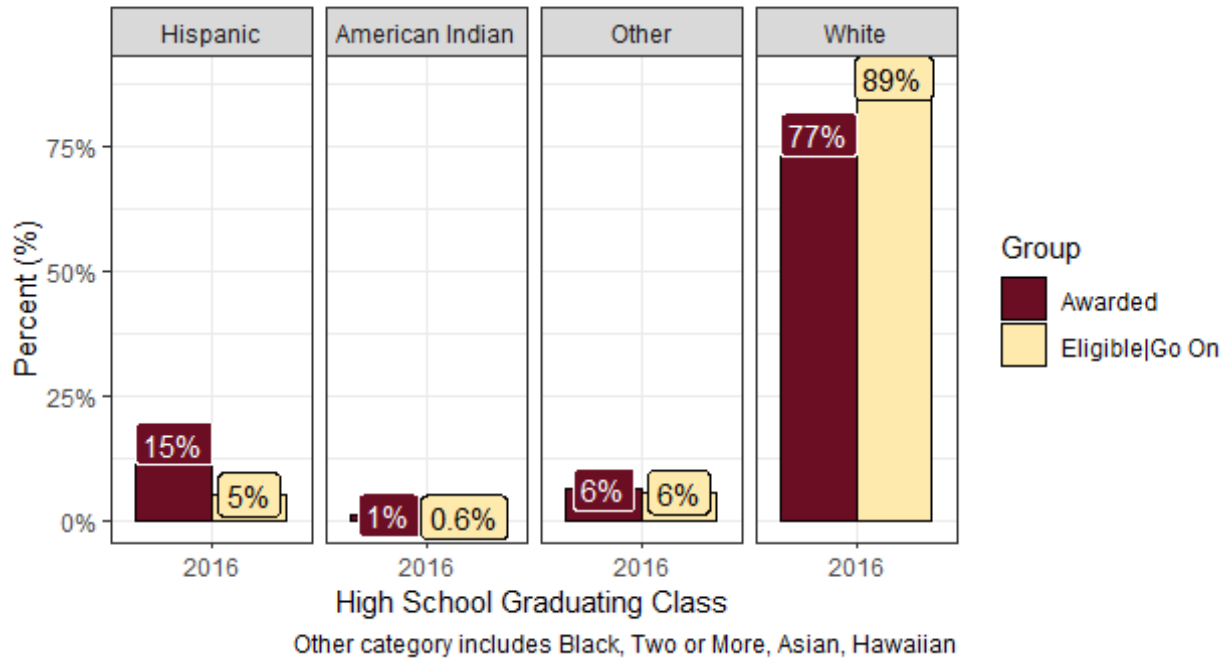


Figure 27. Comparison of Bachelor's degree completion rates by race/ethnicity

The trend in the gap between males and females is still apparent in Bachelor's degree completion across both groups, as can be seen in the following figure. Males in the scholarship group account for 29% compared to 34% in the non-scholarship group. In comparison, the percentage of males in the GPA eligible high school graduating class of 2016 was 43% compared to 34% who were eligible and applied for the scholarship.

Gender

Bachelor's Degree Completion

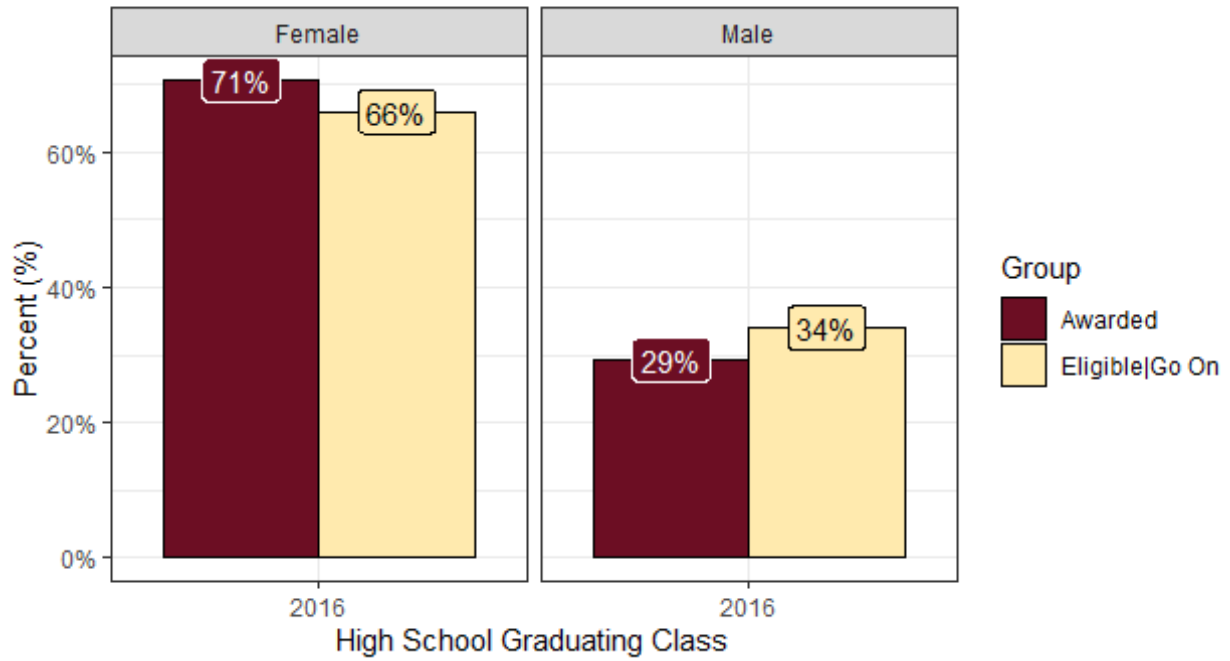


Figure 28. Comparison of Bachelor's degree completion rates by gender

7 OTHER SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

7.1 Applicants Awarded by Program

Overall, the Opportunity Scholarship makes up the majority of awarded scholarships across the award years 2015-2016 to 2019-2020. The Opportunity Scholarship for Adult Learners, which is a subset of the Idaho Opportunity Scholarship program, represents close to 2% of total awards and just finished its second award cycle in which it did see an increase. The GEAR UP Idaho Scholarship (now GEAR UP 2) represents the second largest program followed by Postsecondary Credit Scholarship and Armed Forces and Public Safety Officer Scholarship. The figure below summarizes the number of scholarships awarded across the award years, along with each program's percentage of total awards.

**Number of Scholarships Awarded
and Percent of Total Awarded**

Opportunity Scholarship-Traditional	1,764 (87%)	3,461 (95%)	3,739 (80%)	4,254 (74%)	6,301 (84%)
Opportunity Scholarship-Adult Learners	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	57 (1%)	115 (2%)
GEAR UP Idaho Scholarship	243 (12%)	157 (4%)	907 (19%)	1,333 (23%)	956 (13%)
Postsecondary Credit Scholarship	0 (0.0%)	16 (0.4%)	45 (1%)	79 (1%)	78 (1%)
Armed Forces and Public Safety Officer Scholarship	10 (0.5%)	10 (0.3%)	11 (0.2%)	13 (0.2%)	12 (0.2%)
	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020

Award Year

Figure 29. Number of awards and percent of total awards

The following table summarizes the total dollars awarded for each scholarship program across award years.

Table 1. Total dollars awarded by scholarship program

Program		2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Opportunity Scholarship	Opportunity Scholarship-Traditional	\$5,124,248	\$9,014,248	\$11,585,371	\$14,237,582	\$20,610,593
	Opportunity Scholarship-Adult Learners	-	-	-	\$104,564	\$348,670
GEAR UP Idaho Scholarship		\$1,707,675	\$1,537,934	\$1,590,354	\$2,679,543	\$2,697,098
Postsecondary Credit Scholarship		-	\$20,750	\$62,850	\$113,550	\$114,450
Armed Forces and Public Safety Officer Scholarship		\$176,000	\$152,038	\$174,497	\$185,627	\$156,966

7.2 Participating Eligible Institutions by Program

There are now 11 eligible Idaho institutions participating in Idaho scholarship programs. This includes all eight of Idaho’s public institutions along with three private, not-for-profit Idaho institutions: BYU-Idaho, The College of Idaho, and Northwest Nazarene University. The table below lists the institutions by sector (or institution type), name, and abbreviation.

Table 2. Listing of institutions by sector, name, and abbreviation

Sector	Institution Name	Institution Abbreviation
Private not-for-profit, 4-year or above	Brigham Young University-Idaho	BYUI
	The College of Idaho	COI
	Northwest Nazarene University	NNU
Public, 2-year	College of Eastern Idaho	CEI
	College of Southern Idaho	CSI
	College of Western Idaho	CWI
	North Idaho College	NIC
Public, 4-year or above	Boise State University	BSU
	Idaho State University	ISU
	Lewis-Clark State College	LCSC
	University of Idaho	UI

The following table summarizes the number of scholarship awards by scholarship and participating eligible institution for award years spanning 2015-2016 to 2019-2020.

Table 3.Scholarships awarded by program and participating eligible institution

Institution Abbreviation	Opportunity Scholarship-Traditional	Opportunity Scholarship-Adult Learners	GEAR UP Idaho Scholarship	Postsecondary Credit Scholarship	Armed Forces and Public Safety Officer Scholarship
BYUI	1,332	12	234	25	-
COI	305	-	36	7	-
NNU	225	-	13	6	-
CEI	130	-	20	-	-
CSI	847	15	398	15	-
CWI	817	13	200	-	-
NIC	424	7	169	10	-
BSU	3,482	82	199	35	10
ISU	1,679	16	292	36	6
LCSC	580	5	114	8	-
UI	2,697	-	233	40	6

7.3 Total Completions by Program

The following table summarizes the number of scholarship recipients who have completed a degree or certificate having first received a scholarship in one of the award years spanning 2015-2016 to 2019-2020.

Table 4.Completions by type and program

Completion Type	Opportunity Scholarship-Adult Learners	Opportunity Scholarship-Traditional	GEAR UP Idaho Scholarship	Postsecondary Credit Scholarship	Armed Forces and Public Safety Officer Scholarship
Bachelor's Degree	†	1,947	10	11	6
Associate's Degree	†	982	176	22	-
Certificate (2 Year)	-	323	68	†	-
Certificate (1 Year)	-	192	44	†	-

†: data suppressed at n < 5