

The Condition of College and Career Readiness

This report looks at the progress of the 2016 ACT®-tested graduating class relative to college and career readiness.

This year's report shows that **64%** of students in the 2016 US graduating class took the ACT test, up from 59% in 2015 and 49% in 2011. The increased number of test takers over the past several years enhances the breadth and depth of the data pool, providing a comprehensive picture of the current graduating class in the context of college readiness, as well as offering a glimpse at the emerging educational pipeline.

As a research-based nonprofit organization, ACT is committed to providing information and solutions to support the following:

- **Holistic view of readiness.** The 2014 ACT report, *Broadening the Definition of College and Career Readiness: A Holistic Approach*, shows academic readiness is only one of four critical domains in determining an individual's readiness for success in college and career. Cross-cutting capabilities, behavioral skills, and the ability to navigate future pathways are also important factors to measure and address. Together, these elements define a clear picture of student readiness for postsecondary education.
- **Providing meaningful data for better decisions.** ACT is focused on providing better data to students, parents, schools, districts, and states so that all can make more informed decisions to improve outcomes. We accomplish this goal by taking a holistic view and using consistent and reliable historical information so that individuals and institutions have a better context to make critical decisions about the journey they have undertaken.

The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2016

Alabama Key Findings

Performance

- Alabama, in its third year of census testing (began in 2013–14 with all juniors tested), continues to see an increase in the number of graduates taking the ACT. The 2016 data reflects a 1.4% increase in tested graduates from 2015 and a 42% increase from 2012.
- The percent of students meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks remained the same from 2015 to 2016 in mathematics, reading, and those meeting all four Benchmarks, while decreasing slightly in English and science:
 - ~ A 2% decrease in English from 53% to 51%, resulting in 726 fewer students college ready in English
 - ~ No change in mathematics, 23%, resulting in 173 more students college ready in math
 - ~ No change in reading, 34%, resulting in 255 more students college ready in reading
 - ~ A 1% decrease in science from 25% to 24%, resulting in 374 fewer students college ready in science
 - ~ No change in percent meeting all four Benchmarks, 16%, resulting in 120 more students college ready in all four subject areas
- In reviewing the five-year trend data, it is important to note that census testing is reflected starting with 2015 data. While prior data represented the majority of Alabama graduates, 2015 data established a new baseline.
 - ~ Even as the size of the state's graduating class taking the ACT has grown, with the Hispanic population seeing the largest increase, the average ACT Composite score has remained the same at 19.1, which currently lags behind the national average of 20.8. This is notable, as average scores tend to decrease with a broadening of the testing base.
 - ~ The achievement gap between Alabama and the nation is largest in mathematics, at 2.3 points. The smallest gap is shown in English.

STEM

- Alabama graduates who took advanced science and math courses show higher levels of achievement:
 - ~ Students who took physics earned significantly higher average science scores and were more likely to meet or surpass the ACT College Readiness Benchmark in science than those who did not.
 - ~ Students who took a fourth year of math in high school, regardless of course, significantly outperformed those students who did not, in both ACT mathematics scores and in Benchmark attainment.
- While the number of graduates tested has increased 42% since 2012, the percent of graduates meeting the STEM Benchmark score has only decreased by 2%. There are 1,036 more graduates meeting the STEM Benchmark in 2016 compared to 2012.

Career Readiness

- This year, for the first time, ACT has provided an indicator of career readiness based on ACT composite scores. Table 3.4 in the state ACT Profile Report details how ACT-tested Alabama graduates are progressing toward the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate™ (ACT NCRC®).
- Progress toward career readiness is based on research linking ACT Composite scores to ACT NCRC levels. The ACT Composite cut score for each ACT NCRC level corresponds to a 50% chance of obtaining that level. If a student's ACT Composite score surpassed the cut score for an ACT NCRC level, they are categorized as making progress towards the next higher ACT NCRC level. Attainment of ACT NCRC levels indicates workplace employability skills that are critical to job success.
- In Alabama, 55% of ACT tested graduates are considered making progress towards at least a gold ACT NCRC level. This compares to 68% nationally.

Impact

- Based on the actual test volume and ACT score distributions of 2015 ACT-tested Alabama high school graduates, ACT research estimates that an increase of 0.1 in the state average ACT Composite score for the 2016 graduating class would result in:
 - ~ 121 more students would enroll in college
 - ~ 144 more students would persist to year 2
 - ~ 118 fewer students would need remedial English
 - ~ 229 fewer students would need remedial math
 - ~ 159 more students would persist to year 4
 - ~ 169 more students would earn a postsecondary degree within 6 years

Behaviors that Impact Access and Opportunity

- Testing patterns:
 - ~ Implementation of statewide ACT testing has significantly decreased the percent of Alabama students who take the ACT for the first time as seniors (African Americans down to 2.8% from 72% in 2008, Hispanics down to 2.9% from 67% in 2008, Whites down to 2.2% from 56% in 2008).
 - ~ The percent of Alabama ACT-tested graduates who took the exam only one time, 44%, is lower than the national average of 57%. These one-time test takers score substantially lower (16.2) than those students who tested multiple times (21.4).
- ACT Educational Opportunity Service (EOS) opt-in rates
 - ~ 83.2% of Alabama ACT-tested graduates opted in to EOS, compared to 73.1% nationally. By opting in, students allow colleges and universities to communicate with them about various academic majors, scholarships and student life opportunities.
 - ~ For students who opt into EOS, ACT has made many underserved students' names available to colleges free-of-charge. Six colleges and universities in Alabama accessed these students through the "Get Your Name in the Game" campaign.
- Below are the top five colleges and universities to which Alabama graduates sent their ACT scores:
 1. Auburn University
 2. University of Alabama
 3. University of Alabama at Birmingham
 4. Troy University
 5. University of South Alabama
- Mississippi State University is the out-of-state school that receives the most scores from Alabama students.
- Fee Waiver Usage
 - ~ In Alabama, there were 18,1028 fee waivers issued and 13,890 of those were used. This equates to a 76.7% usage rate. The national rate was 74.5%.
 - ~ 63.0%, or 2,655, of all unused fee waivers were issued to African American students.
 - ~ ACT provides students fee waivers to provide more access and opportunity for students.

Pipeline

- Only 5% of ACT-tested Alabama 2016 graduates expressed an interest in pursuing education as a major or career. Those students earned an average ACT Composite score of 19.3, just 0.2 higher than the state average of 19.1.
- Aspirations matter. Students in Alabama who aspire to a higher level of postsecondary education achieve higher ACT Composite scores:
 - ~ Graduates who aspire to a graduate degree earn an average Composite score of 22.4.
 - ~ Graduates who aspire to a bachelor's degree earn an average Composite score of 19.0.
 - ~ Graduates who aspire to an associate's degree earn an average Composite score of 15.5.

ACT Footprint

ACT Aspire® Summative	ACT Aspire® Periodic	ACT Engage®	ACT QualityCore®	PreACT™	ACT WorkKeys®
1,453,588	702,607	429	4,636	150*	153,870

* PreACT refers to preorders for FY17.

These are the number of each of these assessments delivered in the state and not reflective of the 2016 ACT-tested graduating class.

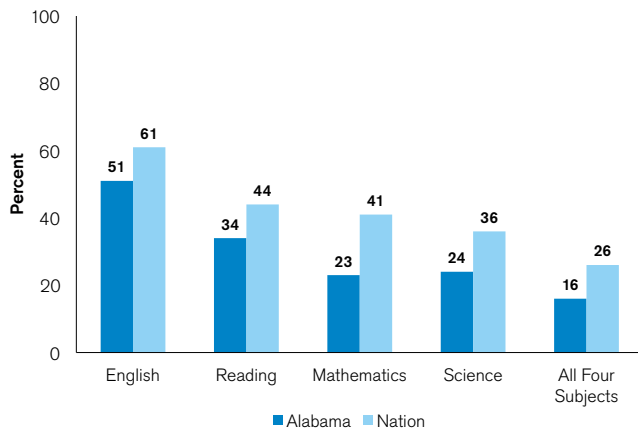
Special State Talking Points

- 2016 ACT College and Career Readiness Campaign Winners
 - ~ In 2016, ACT honored exemplars in 41 states as part of our College & Career Readiness Campaign. In Alabama, these honorees include:
 - Employer: Toray Carbon Fibers
 - Community College: Calhoun Community College
 - High School: Loveless Academic Magnet Program (LAMP) High School
 - Student: Elizabeth Meads, Zion Chapel High School
- Each December, the Alabama ACT State Organization hosts the Alabama College and Career Readiness Conference, which is attended by hundreds of Alabama educators and workforce leaders. The 2015 conference had nearly 400 participants.
- In Spring 2016, more than 30 private schools in Alabama participated in state and district testing.
- In the 2014–15 school year, the Alabama State Department of Education and the Alabama Community College System completed an agreement with ACT in which students will now earn an ACT NCRC when receiving qualifying scores on ACT WorkKeys. Previously, Alabama students earned an Alabama Career Readiness Certificate, which was not nationally recognized or transferable.
- Alabama has 10 Work Ready counties, and 221 jobs have been profiled in the state. (www.workreadycommunities.org)

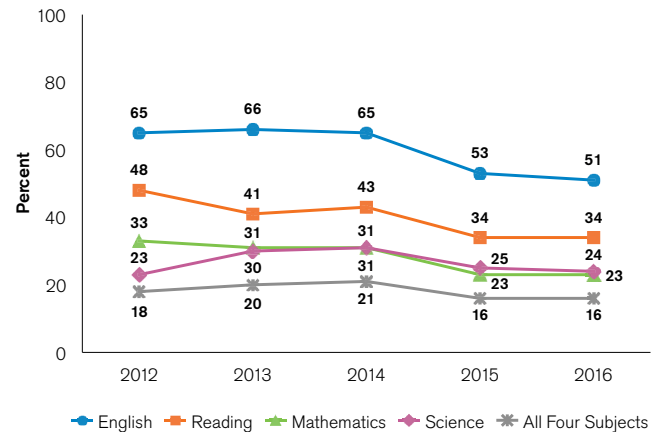
Your State College and Career Readiness Attainment, Participation, and Opportunity

Alabama

Percent of 2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject



Percent of 2012–2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks*



Note: Percents in this report may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

* ACT College Readiness Benchmarks in reading and science were revised in 2013.

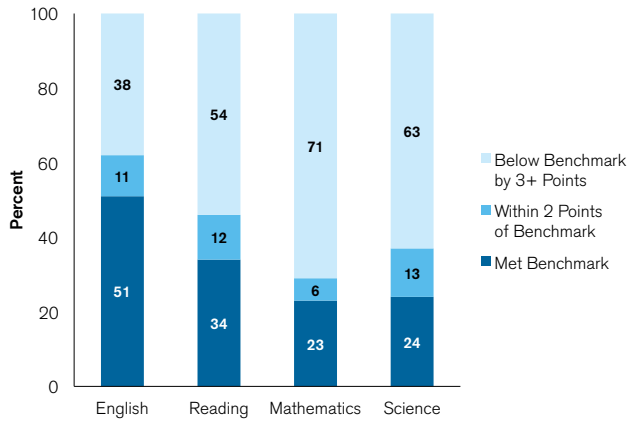
Student Data Trends

- Between 2012 and 2016, the number of students taking the ACT in Alabama increased by 42%.

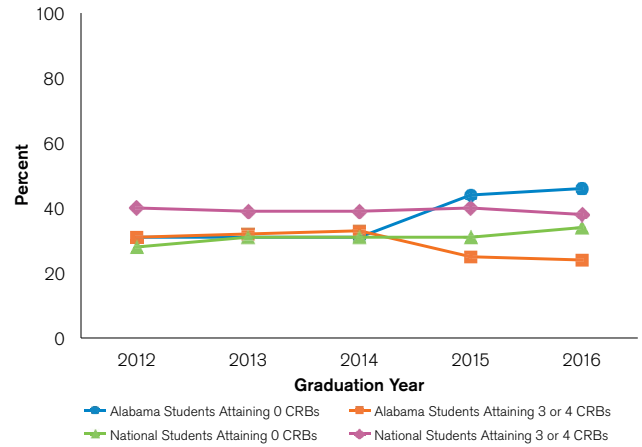
Student Condition Data Interest Trends: 2012–2016, State vs. Nation

Outcome	Cohort	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Percent Tested	Alabama	86%	78%	80%	100%	100%
	Nation	52%	54%	57%	59%	64%
N Tested	Alabama	39,565	38,122	37,985	55,427	56,178
	Nation	1,666,017	1,799,243	1,845,787	1,924,436	2,090,342
Average English Score	Alabama	20.3	20.5	20.7	18.8	18.7
	Nation	20.5	20.2	20.3	20.4	20.1
Average Reading Score	Alabama	20.7	21	21.3	19.7	19.7
	Nation	21.3	21.1	21.3	21.4	21.3
Average Mathematics Score	Alabama	19.6	19.5	19.5	18.4	18.3
	Nation	21.1	20.9	20.9	20.8	20.6
Average Science Score	Alabama	20.1	20.2	20.4	19.1	19.1
	Nation	20.9	20.7	20.8	20.9	20.8
Average Composite Score	Alabama	20.3	20.4	20.6	19.1	19.1
	Nation	21.1	20.9	21	21	20.8

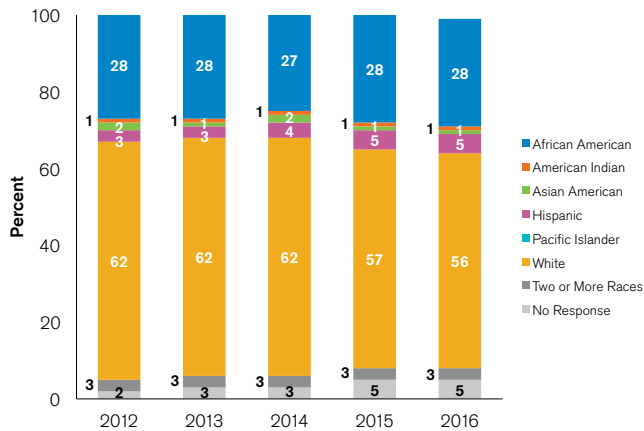
Percent of 2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment and Subject



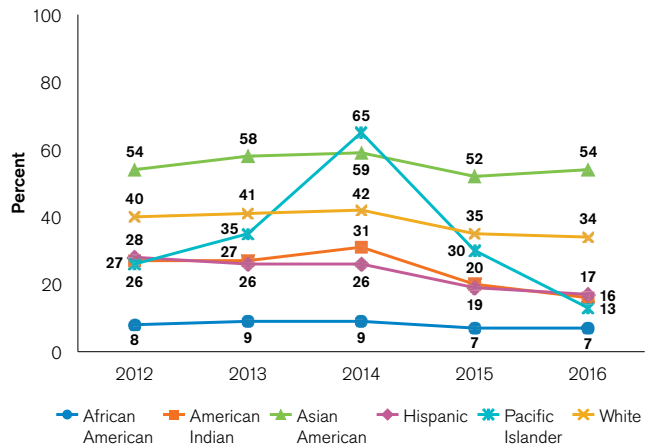
Trends in Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks (CRBs) Attained



Percent of 2012–2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity

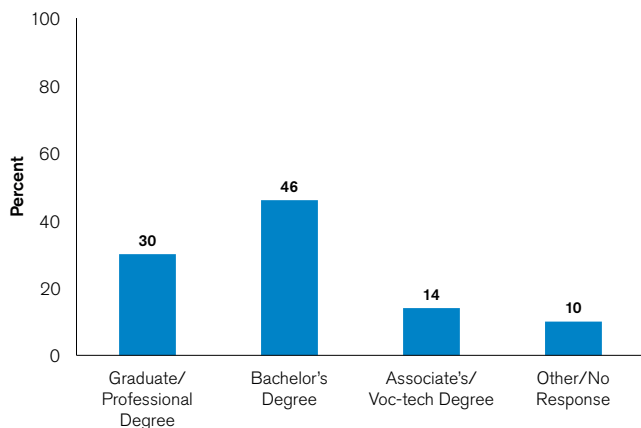


Percent of 2012–2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting Three or More Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity



Note: Values less than 0.5% will not appear.

Percent of 2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Educational Aspirations



There is good news in that 90% of Alabama's 2016 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 90% of Alabama's 2015 ACT-tested graduating class aspired to enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 53% who actually did enroll. If we fully closed the aspirational gap, an additional 20,551 of the 2015 ACT-tested graduates from Alabama would have enrolled in postsecondary education.

What You Need to Know

At ACT, we are inspired every day to make a positive difference. Here are a few ways we are making an impact each day in the lives of students, teachers, education, policy makers, and workforce leaders.

The ACT[®]

- Enhancements to ACT Score Reports starting in September 2016
- Introduction of ACT Kaplan Online Prep Live in September 2016
- New Score Reports

Pre ACT[™]

- Affordable cost—\$12 per student tested for schools, districts, and states
- Flexible administration—Schools, districts, and/or states may administer on any date between September 1, 2016 and June 1, 2017
- Structured test environment—Similar to what the student will experience when taking the ACT test

Online Prep Live

ACT[®] KAPLAN

- A virtual classroom experience that delivers all the benefits of ACT Online Prep, plus an interactive teaching experience
- Live learning experiences available at no cost to students who register for the ACT using a fee waiver
- Recorded sessions available on demand to provide maximum flexibility to students

ACT[®] Aspire[®]

- New Performance Level Descriptors coming in August 2016
- More than 5 million ACT Aspire online assessments administered to US students since January 2016, a major milestone for the program and up by more than 130% compared to the previous year
- New Score Reports

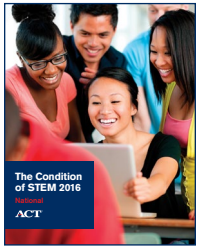
ACT[®] Engage[®]

- Helps schools face the challenge of preparing students for success after high school. Read the latest white paper, *Identifying Skills to Succeed in School, at Work, and in the "Real World."*
- New Score Reports

ACT[®] WorkKeys[®]

- Updated versions of the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (ACT NCRC) assessments and credential coming in summer 2017
- Fully updated ACT WorkKeys curriculum and test prep available in summer 2017 to support the updated ACT NCRC assessments
- Will include a new test delivery platform that will introduce features and functionality important to ACT WorkKeys customers

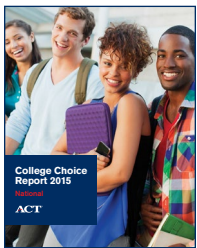
Key ACT Research



The Condition of STEM 2016— Releasing November 2016

This report provides national and state data about the 2016 graduating class in

the context of STEM-related fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) to determine student interest levels in specific STEM fields and, more importantly, readiness in math and science of those interested in STEM careers.



College Choice Report 2015

This report follows the ACT-tested high school graduating class of 2015, focusing on specific testing behaviors that

may expand college opportunities available to students. This is an important topic for enrollment managers and admissions officers to consider, as students' participation in these testing behaviors have implications for colleges' chances to recruit, advise, and place these prospective students.

Recommendations

1. Create an assessment model that measures a variety of skill domains and competencies required for college and career success.

Historically, college and career readiness assessments have focused only on academic skills. ACT research has clearly established areas of competency important for college and career readiness success. While our research shows that ACT solutions independently measure key components of college AND career readiness, we and others have begun to realize that no single solution can measure the full breadth of this readiness, nor should it. Simply put, the ACT alone is not enough to measure the full breadth of career readiness. A more holistic assessment model, incorporating multiple domains and specific skills associated with career clusters or occupations, will typically be most appropriate for describing and evaluating student readiness for college and career.

2. Optimize opportunities to influence awareness and engagement of underserved learners.

Initiatives designed to aid underserved learners are only as effective as they are visible. We must inform advocates and ALL underserved learners about the available and effective programs designed for this purpose. For example, in the 2015–2016 academic year, approximately 730,000 students registered to take the ACT using fee waivers valued at more than \$36 million. Yet, not all eligible students took advantage of this offer. Similarly, institutions must use data to inform intervention strategies if they are going to help underserved students be prepared for postsecondary success.

3. Take the guesswork out of STEM.

It is critically important to align STEM initiatives to capitalize on performance, measured interest, and expressed interest. Essential to this effort is expanding and nurturing interest in STEM, which will impact the emerging pipeline of STEM majors, teachers, and workers. This requires capturing a wider range of students and employing concrete measures to inform intervention and programming. To do so, states and districts must look for partnering opportunities from K–12 to postsecondary education to the workplace.

4. Focus on the implementation of fewer, higher, clearer, standards in K–12 classrooms to raise the bar for all students.

No matter the adopted standards, proper implementation must focus on the most critical component for increasing readiness—effective, high-quality teaching. This requires investment in postsecondary teaching programs, professional development, and state-level collaboration among K–12 and higher education.

5. Don't over test students.

When states, schools, and districts build an assessment strategy that recognizes the limits and promise of test scores, they will reduce the likelihood of over testing. Used ethically and appropriately, assessments can inform decisions at individual and institutional levels. Misunderstood, misused, or abused, assessments cause confusion, can be perceived as punitive, or result in ill-conceived strategies. To quote ACT founder E.F. Lindquist, "Assessment is valuable to the extent it bridges teaching and learning."