

## 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

## Illinois Key Findings

### Performance

- The average ACT scale scores (reportable) in Illinois increased in three areas from 2015 to 2016:
  - ~ English and reading both increased by 0.2 point.
  - ~ ACT Composite score increased by 0.1 point.
  - ~ Science stayed the same.
  - ~ Mathematics decreased by 0.1 point
  - ~ All of the average national ACT scale scores decreased:
    - English dropped by 0.3.
    - Mathematics and Composite dropped by 0.2.
    - Reading and science dropped by 0.1.
- The percent meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks for Illinois compared to the national testing populations:
  - ~ English—3% over the national performance
  - ~ Mathematics, science, and meeting all four Benchmarks—same as the national performance
  - ~ Reading—2% less than the national performance
- The percent of students who took the ACT with extended time impacts the reported scores. In 2015, 11% of the students took the ACT with extended time. That decreased to 10% in 2016. Nationally, 4% took the ACT with extended time in 2015 and 5% took the ACT with extended time in 2016.
- When we compare standard time scores between 2015 and 2016:
  - ~ Reading—score increased by 0.2 and matched the national reading score.
  - ~ English—score increased by 0.1 and exceeded the national English score by 0.8.
  - ~ Mathematics—score decreased by 0.1 and exceeded the national mathematics score by 0.3.
  - ~ Composite—score increased by 0.1 and exceeded the national Composite score by 0.3.
  - ~ Science—score remained the same and exceeded the national science score by 0.1.

### STEM

- This year, for the first time, ACT is providing a STEM score based on student performance in the ACT mathematics and science tests.
  - ~ The Illinois STEM score average was 20.9, same as the national average of 20.9.
  - ~ 20% of Illinois and national ACT-tested students met/exceeded the ACT STEM Benchmark of 26.

### 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 Illinois 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 Illinois, 67% of ACT tested graduates are considered making progress towards at least a gold ACT NCRC level. This compares to 68% nationally.

## Impact

- The 0.1 increase in the Illinois ACT Composite score translates to the following specific impacts on student success:
  - ~ 316 more students would enroll in college.
  - ~ 380 more students would persist to year 2.
  - ~ 283 fewer students would need remedial English because of the 0.2 point increase in English.
  - ~ 433 more students would persist to year 4.
  - ~ 472 more students would earn a postsecondary degree within 6 years.

## Behaviors that Impact Access and Opportunity

- Testing patterns
  - ~ 57% percent of Illinois ACT-tested graduates took the exam only once, which is the same as the national rate.
- Eight of the top ten colleges where Illinois students submitted their ACT scores were Illinois public universities:
  - ~ University of Illinois–Urbana Champaign
  - ~ University of Illinois Chicago
  - ~ Illinois State University
  - ~ Northern Illinois University
  - ~ Southern Illinois University at Carbondale
  - ~ Western Illinois University
  - ~ Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville
  - ~ Eastern Illinois University
- The remaining two of the top ten colleges where Illinois students submitted their ACT scores were:
  - ~ DePaul University
  - ~ Loyola University in Chicago
- The top out-of-state colleges where students submitted their ACT scores are:
  - ~ University of Iowa
  - ~ University of Wisconsin
  - ~ University of Missouri
  - ~ Michigan State University
  - ~ Purdue University
- The ACT Educational Opportunity Service (EOS) opt-in rates
  - ~ EOS is a free service that allows students to receive free exposure, for recruiting purposes, to scholarship agencies and colleges/universities. Nationally, 73.1% opt in to this service.
- In Illinois, the following percents of ACT-tested subgroups opted in to EOS:
  - ~ African American—80.0%
  - ~ White—69.2%
  - ~ Hispanic/Latino—80.6%
- Fee Waiver Usage
  - ~ In Illinois, there were 29,355 fee waivers issued and 22,082 of those were used. This equates to a 75.2% usage rate. The national rate was 74.5%.
  - ~ Nearly 6,000 waivers for African Americans and Hispanics went unused.
  - ~ ACT provides students fee waivers to provide more access and opportunity for students.

## Pipeline

- Over the last five years, the racial/ethnic makeup of the ACT-tested population in Illinois has remained fairly stable:
  - ~ The White population decreased from 75,985 students in 2012, or 52%, to 72,851 students in 2016, or 47% of the ACT-tested students in Illinois—a decrease of 3,134 students. The ACT Composite average from 2012 to 2016 fluctuated between 22.3 and 22.7 but in the end remained the same at 22.7.
  - ~ The African American population has remained relatively stable from 20,978 in 2012 to 20,724 in 2016. The ACT Composite average shows a 0.1 point increase from a 17.1 in 2012 to a 17.2 in 2016.
  - ~ The Hispanic/Latino population increased from 26,434 students, or 18%, in 2012, to 31,759 students, or 20%, in 2016—an increase of 5,325 students. Despite this increase in students, the ACT Composite average for Hispanic/Latino students increased by 0.3 points from 18.5 to 18.8.
- The top educational majors for Illinois students are:
  - ~ All
    - Health Sciences and Technologies
    - Business
    - Engineering
    - Social Science–Law
    - Arts–Visual/Performing
  - ~ Planning two years of college or less
    - Repair, Production, and Construction
    - Community, Family, and Personal Service
    - Arts–Visual/Performing
    - Health Sciences and Technologies
    - Business
  - ~ Planning four years of college or more
    - Health Sciences and Technologies
    - Business
    - Social Service–Law
    - Engineering
    - Arts–Visual/Performing

## ACT Footprint

ACT Aspire® Summative	ACT Aspire Periodic	ACT Engage®	ACT QualityCore®	PreACT™	ACT WorkKeys®
189,192	145,256	1,647	–	2,365*	15,845

\* 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.*

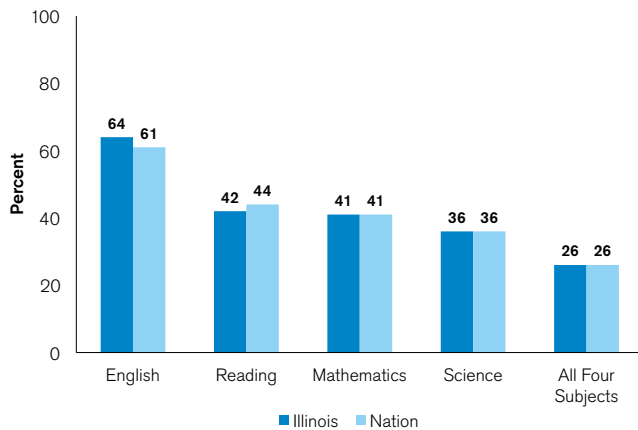
## Special State Talking Points

- In 2016, ACT honored exemplars in 41 states as part of our College & Career Readiness Campaign. In Illinois, these honorees include:
  - ~ Student—Alexander Feldmeier, Naperville Central High School
  - ~ High School—O'Fallon High School (Nominated)
  - ~ Two-Year School – Elgin Community College (Award Winner)
- In December 2014, 395 educators participated in the Illinois State Organization conference. In December 2015, 173 educators participated in the Illinois State Organization conference.

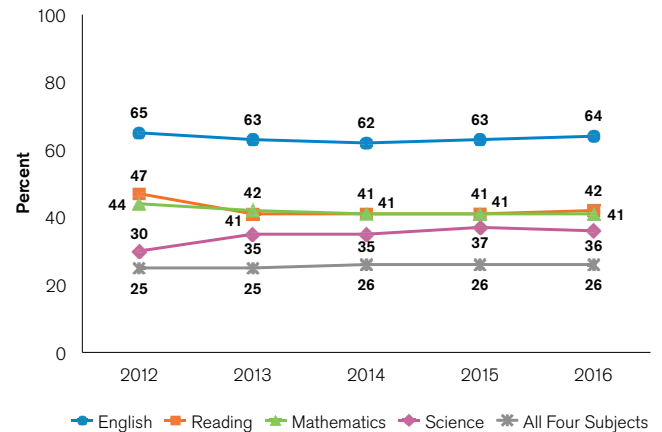
# Your State College and Career Readiness Attainment, Participation, and Opportunity

## Illinois

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.

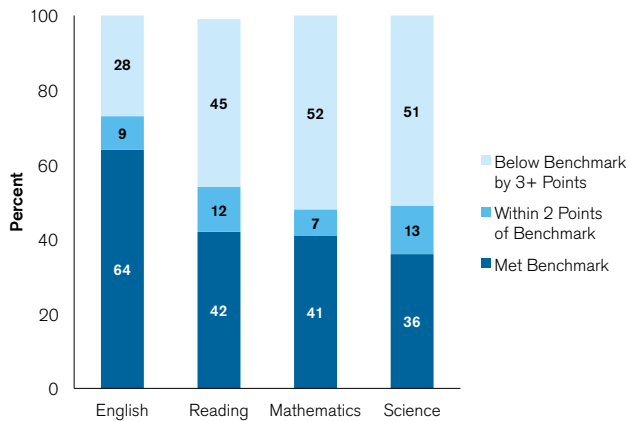
## Student Data Trends

- Between 2012 and 2016, the number of students taking the ACT in Illinois increased by 6.5%.

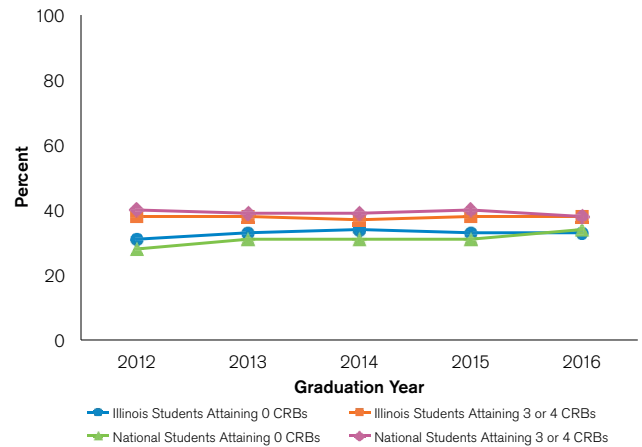
Student Condition Data Interest Trends: 2012–2016, State vs. Nation

Outcome	Cohort	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Percent Tested	Illinois	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Nation	52%	54%	57%	59%	64%
N Tested	Illinois	146,822	160,066	158,037	157,047	156,403
	Nation	1,666,017	1,799,243	1,845,787	1,924,436	2,090,342
Average English Score	Illinois	20.5	20.2	20.3	20.3	20.5
	Nation	20.5	20.2	20.3	20.4	20.1
Average Reading Score	Illinois	20.7	20.4	20.8	20.8	21
	Nation	21.3	21.1	21.3	21.4	21.3
Average Mathematics Score	Illinois	21	20.7	20.7	20.7	20.6
	Nation	21.1	20.9	20.9	20.8	20.6
Average Science Score	Illinois	20.8	20.5	20.5	20.6	20.6
	Nation	20.9	20.7	20.8	20.9	20.8
Average Composite Score	Illinois	20.9	20.6	20.7	20.7	20.8
	Nation	21.1	20.9	21	21	20.8

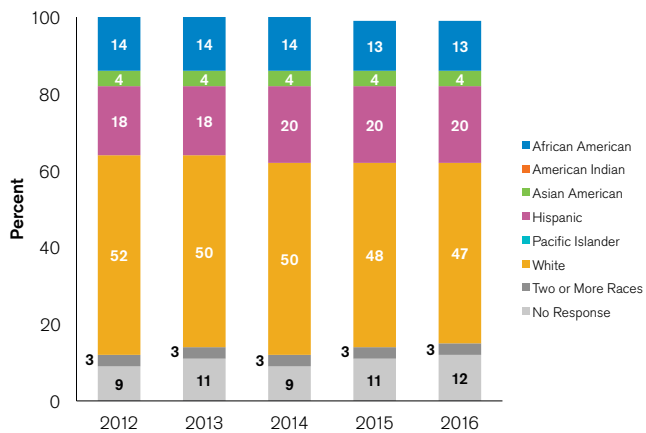
**Percent of 2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment and Subject**



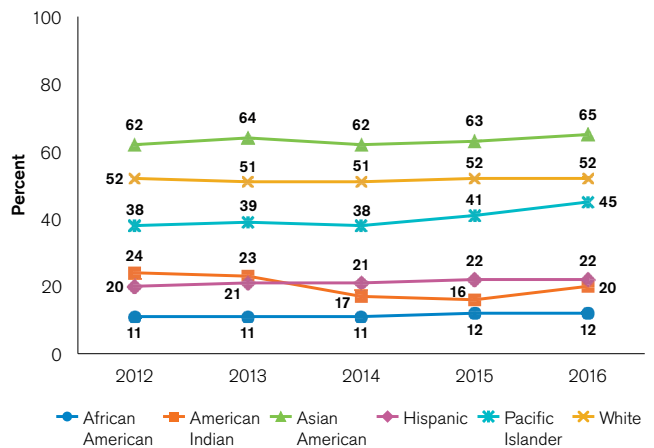
**Trends in Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks (CRBs) Attained**



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

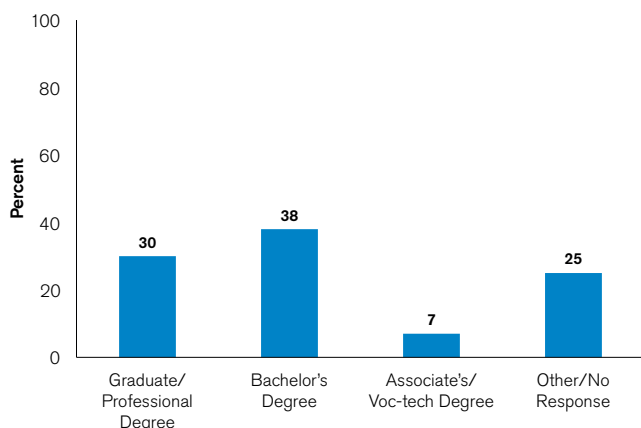


**Percent of 2012–2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting Three or More Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity**



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 75% of Illinois's 2016 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 79% of Illinois's 2015 ACT-tested graduating class aspired to enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 62% who actually did enroll. If we fully closed the aspirational gap, an additional 27,241 of the 2015 ACT-tested graduates from Illinois 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<sup>®</sup>

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

### Pre ACT<sup>™</sup>

- 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<sup>®</sup> 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<sup>®</sup> Aspire<sup>®</sup>

- 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

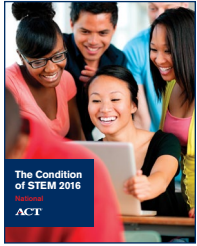
### ACT<sup>®</sup> Engage<sup>®</sup>

- 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<sup>®</sup> WorkKeys<sup>®</sup>

- 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

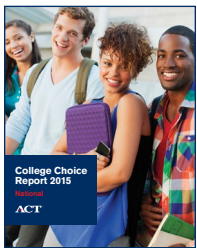
## Key ACT Research



### **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."