

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

South Carolina Key Findings

Performance

- This is the first South Carolina graduating class report that included the state testing cohort, causing the tested graduating class to nearly double.
- Whether transitioning to a new measure or expanding college and career readiness testing to all students, expect an impact on scores. But a decline in the average score is not a failure, nor does it represent a change in performance or achievement—it merely reflects the shift in expectations and the setting of a new state baseline for academic progress.
 - ~ The percent of students meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks dropped in every subject. In English, the number meeting the Benchmark dropped from 61% to 44%. In mathematics, it dropped from 38% to 25%. In reading, it dropped from 43% to 30%. In science, it dropped from 34% to 21%.
 - ~ Average subject area scores and the ACT Composite score also dropped. The Composite average dropped 1.9 points. The expected drop is 1.8 points, so South Carolina's results are right in line with what was expected.
- South Carolina has set a more meaningful baseline with the 2016 graduating class cohort.
- Even though the percent of students meeting all four Benchmarks dropped from 23% to 14% this year (which is an expected outcome), South Carolina saw an increase of 1,369 students meeting all four Benchmarks. This is a direct impact of census testing, as there are additional students identified as being college ready.
- 61% of South Carolina students reported taking “core or more.”
 - ~ Students who reported taking “core or more” significantly outperformed students who reported taking “less than core.”

STEM

- Students who took physics were much more likely to meet or exceed the Benchmark for science.
- Students who took four years of math (regardless of which four) in high school were much more likely to meet or exceed the Benchmark for mathematics.
- STEM Benchmark
 - ~ 10% of South Carolina students met the STEM Benchmark. This compares to 20% nationally. In 2015, the rates were 16% for South Carolina and 20% nationally.
 - ~ The average ACT mathematics score for students who met the STEM Benchmark was 28.0 and the average ACT science score was 28.3. These are unchanged from last year and are also slightly lower than the national averages.

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 South Carolina 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 South Carolina, 51% of ACT tested graduates are considered making progress towards at least a gold ACT NCRC level. This compares to 68% nationally.

Behaviors that Impact Access and Opportunity

- Testing patterns:
 - ~ South Carolina initiatives have changed behavior, resulting in increased access and opportunity for underserved learners. For example, 80.0% of African American students in the 2008 South Carolina graduating class took their first and only ACT test as a senior. In contrast, only 1.8% of African American students in the 2016 graduating class did so.
 - ~ 94.4% of Hispanic students who tested at least twice and who first tested in their junior year increased their score by 1.1 points and scored 4.6 points higher than 11th-grade Hispanic students who tested only once.
 - ~ 94.9% of African American students who tested at least twice and who first tested in their junior year increased their score by 1.0 points and scored 2.9 points higher than 11th-grade African American students who tested only once.
 - ~ Encourage students who are eligible for two fee waivers to use them, in addition to the statewide ACT administered to every junior in the spring. Students who test more than once generally improve their scores.
- Below are the top colleges and universities to which South Carolina graduates sent their ACT scores:
 1. Clemson University
 2. University of South Carolina
 3. Coastal Carolina University
 4. College of Charleston
 5. Winthrop University
- Duke University is the out-of-state school that receives the most scores from South Carolina students.
- ACT Educational Opportunity Service (EOS) Opt-In Rates
 - ~ EOS is a free service that allows for students to receive free exposure, for recruiting purposes, to scholarship agencies and colleges and universities. 79.1% of the students tested in South Carolina opted in to EOS, compared to 73.1% nationally.
- “Get Your Name In The Game” is an initiative that offers colleges, universities, and scholarship agencies unprecedented access to the names of underserved students participating in EOS. In South Carolina, the three schools that accessed the most names through this initiative were University of South Carolina Lancaster (14,819 names), College of Charleston (6,809 names), and Francis Marion University (5,263 names).
- Fee Waiver Usage
 - ~ In South Carolina, there were 7,087 fee waivers issued and 5,295 of those were used. This equates to a 74.7% usage rate. The national rate was 74.5%.
 - ~ 64.8%, or 1,161, of all unused fee waivers were issued to African Americans.
 - ~ ACT provides students fee waivers to provide more access and opportunity for students.

Pipeline

- Students who have aspirations of higher educational levels achieve higher ACT scores:
 - ~ Students who aspire to a graduate degree had an average Composite score of 21.7.
 - ~ Students who aspire to a bachelor’s degree had an average Composite score of 18.4.
 - ~ Students who aspire to a two-year degree had an average Composite score of 15.2.
- Student interest:
 - ~ The charts below show students’ interests (majors indicated on the ACT):

Student Interest (Majors)	
1	Health Science and Technologies
2	Business
3	Engineering
4	Arts: Visual and Performing
5	Social Sciences and Law

- Education as a major finished just outside the top five.
- “Undecided/No Response” was the most selected major category. Using ACT Profile starting at age 13 and PreACT™ in 10th grade will expose students to interest inventories at an earlier age and provide information to counselors to help guide career/major paths.

ACT Footprint

ACT Aspire® Summative	ACT Aspire® Periodic	ACT Engage®	ACT QualityCore®	PreACT™	ACT WorkKeys®
39,445	–	1,705	3,391	–*	229,333

* 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.

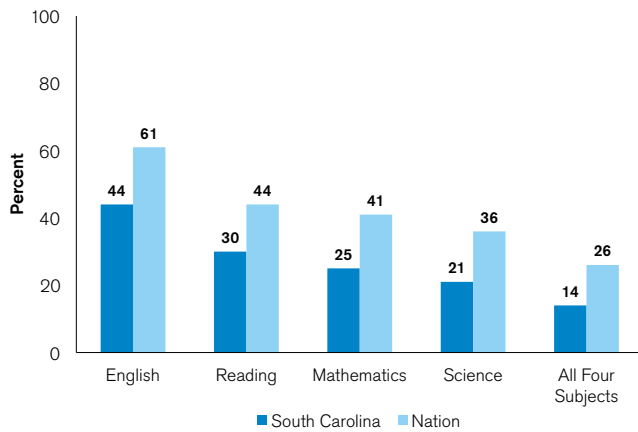
Special State Talking Points

- 2015–2016 ACT College & Career Readiness Campaign Honorees for South Carolina:
 - ~ Employer—Capsugel (national semifinalist)
 - ~ Community College—University of South Carolina Sumter
 - ~ High School—Fort Dorchester High School (Dorchester 2 District)
- Student—Jerrold Rolack, Woodland High School (national semifinalist—will attend Clemson University)
- College and Career Readiness Workshops
 - ~ Each year ACT conducts College and Career Readiness Workshops throughout every state. This past year, 437 educators from across South Carolina attended a workshop.

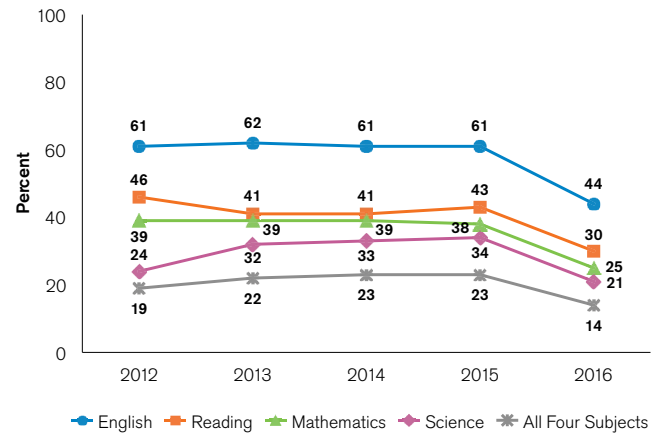
Your State College and Career Readiness Attainment, Participation, and Opportunity

South Carolina

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.

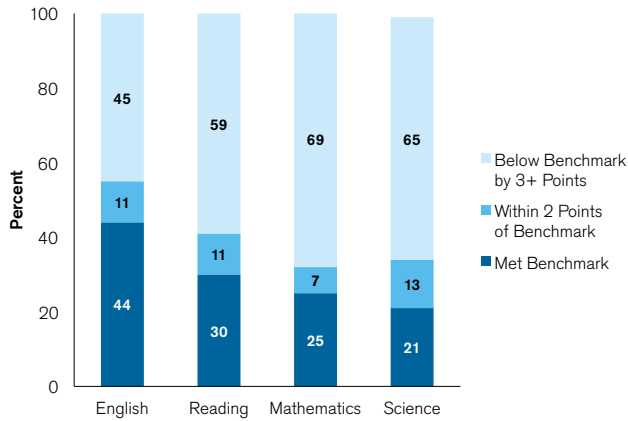
Student Data Trends

- Between 2012 and 2016, the number of students taking the ACT in South Carolina increased by 141.7%.

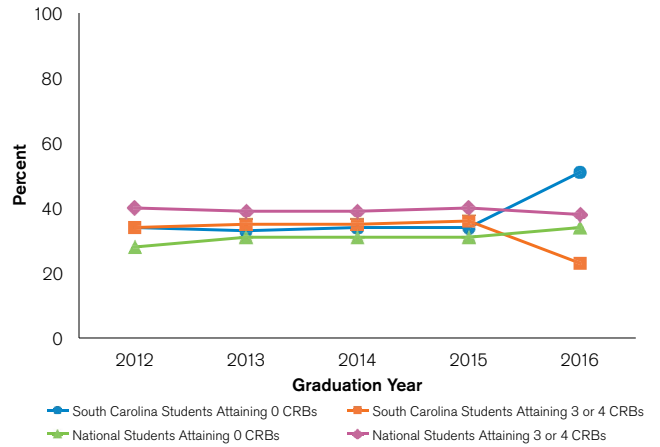
Student Condition Data Interest Trends: 2012–2016, State vs. Nation

Outcome	Cohort	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Percent Tested	South Carolina	57%	51%	58%	62%	100%
	Nation	52%	54%	57%	59%	64%
N Tested	South Carolina	21,142	20,868	23,232	25,151	51,098
	Nation	1,666,017	1,799,243	1,845,787	1,924,436	2,090,342
Average English Score	South Carolina	19.5	19.7	19.7	19.8	17.3
	Nation	20.5	20.2	20.3	20.4	20.1
Average Reading Score	South Carolina	20.4	20.8	20.9	20.9	19
	Nation	21.3	21.1	21.3	21.4	21.3
Average Mathematics Score	South Carolina	20.2	20.3	20.3	20.2	18.5
	Nation	21.1	20.9	20.9	20.8	20.6
Average Science Score	South Carolina	20.1	20.3	20.4	20.4	18.6
	Nation	20.9	20.7	20.8	20.9	20.8
Average Composite Score	South Carolina	20.2	20.4	20.4	20.4	18.5
	Nation	21.1	20.9	21	21	20.8

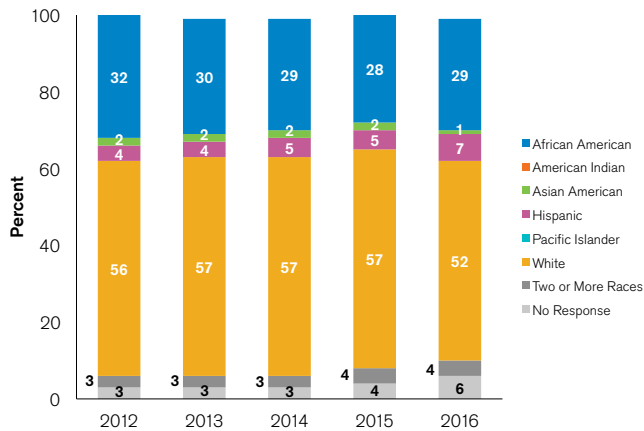
Percent of 2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment and Subject



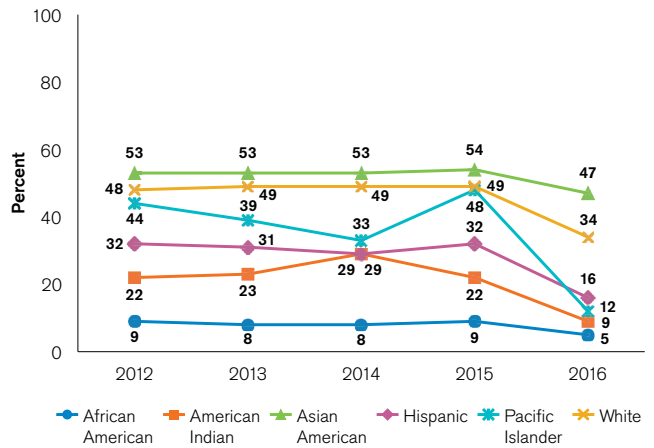
Trends in Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks (CRBs) Attained



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

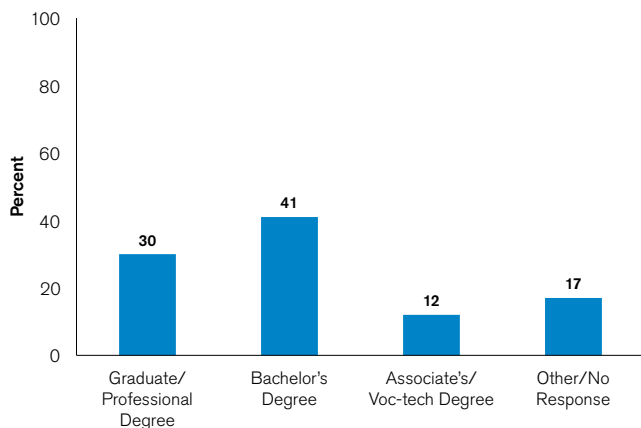


Percent of 2012–2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting Three or More Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity



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 83% of South Carolina's 2016 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 88% of South Carolina's 2015 ACT-tested graduating class aspired to enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 77% who actually did enroll. If we fully closed the aspirational gap, an additional 2,809 of the 2015 ACT-tested graduates from South Carolina 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

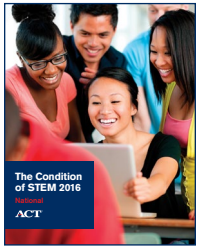
ACT[®] Engage[®]

- 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

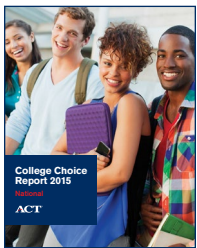
Key ACT Research



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."