



ACT[®]

GRADUATING CLASS 2026

UNITED STATES



ACT
Data
Included



PreACT
Data
Included



WorkKeys
Data
Included

A more complete picture of readiness

The annual ACT Graduating Class Release provides a snapshot of the college and career readiness of the nation's ACT-tested high school graduates. The 2026 ACT Graduating Class includes students who graduated in 2026 and took the ACT at least once between 10th and 12th grade. Results reflect each student's most recent ACT score.

The 2026 data also show how early signals, repeated opportunities to test, and measures of both college and workforce readiness can provide a more complete picture of students' preparation for what comes next.

THE 2026 ACT GRADUATING CLASS

1,463,293

Students in the ACT Graduating Class

19.2

Average ACT Composite score

23.1%

Met all three English, Math, and Reading College Readiness Benchmarks

38%

Projected graduates taking the ACT



EARLY SIGNALS

514,121 students in the 2026 graduating class took both a PreACT assessment and the ACT. Students who have had the opportunity to take a PreACT assessment on average have a Composite score **more than a point higher** than their peers who did not have that opportunity.

REPEATED CHANCES

31% of the ACT Graduating Class took the ACT more than once. Retesting in high school captures achievement gains, with an average Composite score gain of 1.1 points.

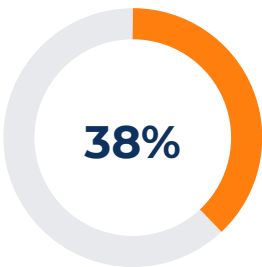
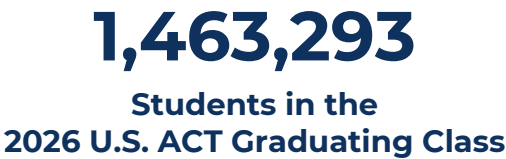
WORKFORCE READINESS

307,202 students in the 2026 graduating class took WorkKeys. Among these students, **58.5%** earned a National Career Readiness Certificate at the Silver level or higher.

The 2026 U.S. ACT Graduating Class

38% of projected U.S. high school graduates took the ACT.

The 2026 ACT Graduating Class includes students who graduated in 2026 and took the ACT between 10th and 12th grade. A total of 1,463,293 students in the 2026 U.S. ACT Graduating Class took the ACT, representing an estimated 38% of projected high school graduates. Participation increased from the 2025 graduating class.

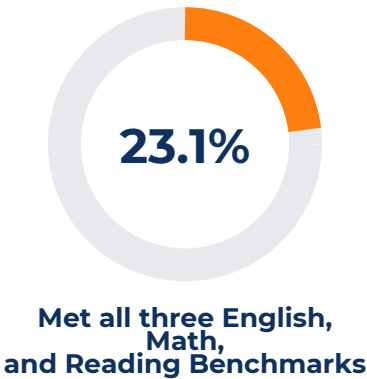
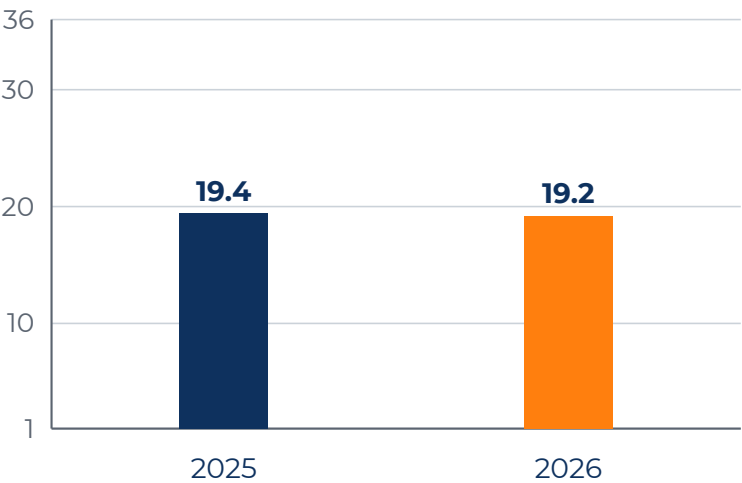


Took the ACT

The average ACT Composite score for the 2026 U.S. ACT Graduating Class was 19.2.

The average Composite score was about the same as the average score for the 2025 ACT Graduating Class. 23.1% of students met all three ACT College Readiness Benchmarks in English, Math, and Reading, about the same as in 2025.

Average ACT Composite Score



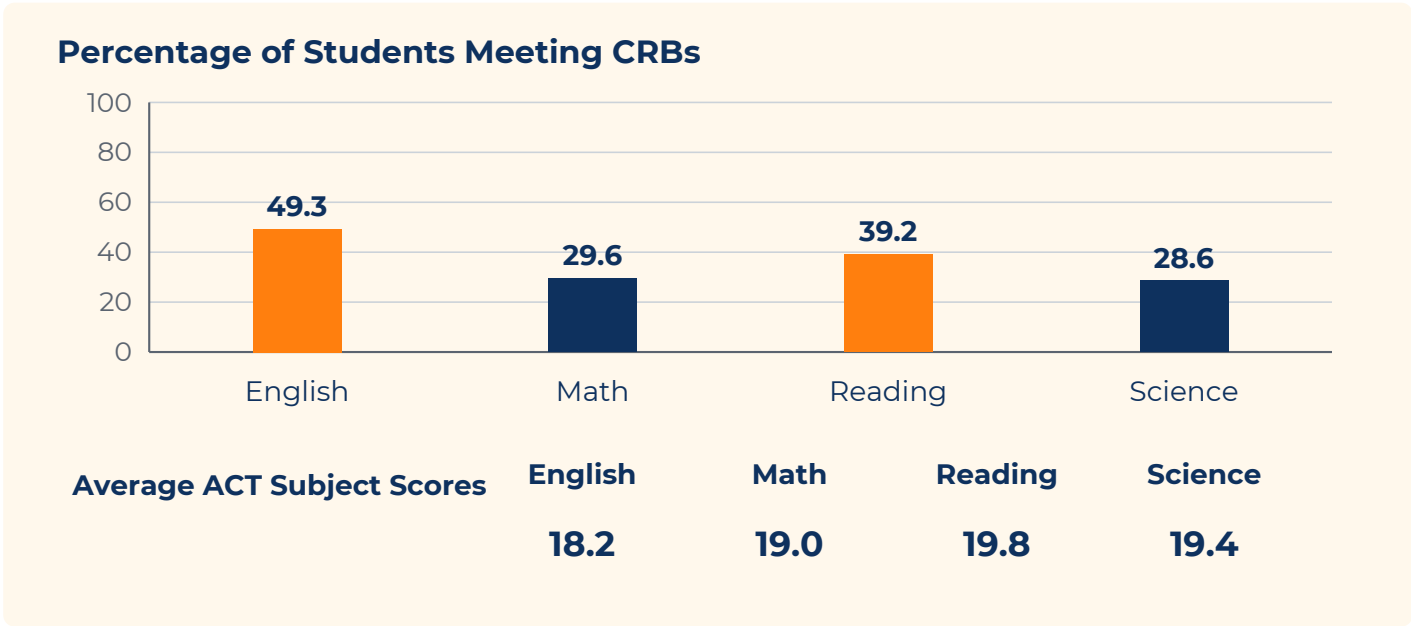
Met all three English, Math, and Reading Benchmarks

A closer look at ACT performance

ACT scores provide information about students' readiness in specific subject areas.

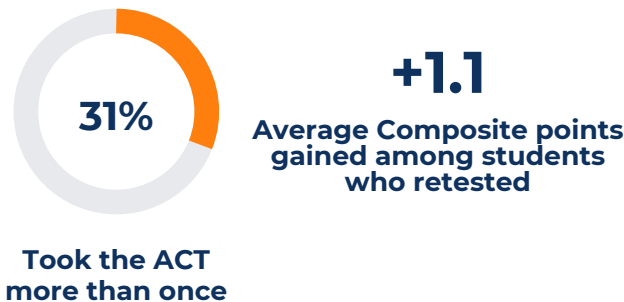
The ACT College Readiness Benchmarks are scores associated with a 50% chance of earning a B or higher and about a 75-80% chance of earning a C or higher in corresponding first-year, credit-bearing college courses. The benchmark score is 18 in English, 22 in Math and Reading, and 23 in Science.

In the United States, the highest percentage of students met the College Readiness Benchmark in English, while the lowest percentage met the benchmark in Science.



Retesting in high school captures achievement gains.

31% of students in the 2026 U.S. ACT Graduating Class took the ACT more than once. Between their first and most recent tests, these students improved their ACT Composite score by an average of 1.1 points.



ACT fee waivers help expand access to testing.

Eligible 11th- and 12th-grade students with demonstrated economic need can use ACT fee waivers to cover the cost of up to two ACT tests. Students who register with a fee waiver also receive access to free learning resources and other benefits.

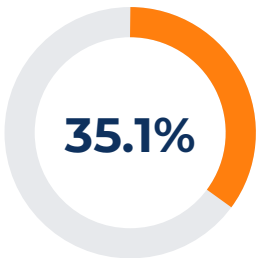
176,476
Fee waivers used

Preparing U.S. students for success with PreACT

Among students in the 2026 U.S. ACT Graduating Class, 514,121 took the PreACT test before taking the ACT.

514,121

Students took PreACT before taking the ACT



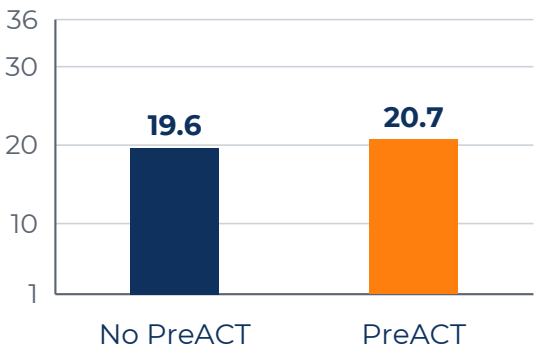
Took PreACT before ACT

64.9% did not take PreACT before ACT

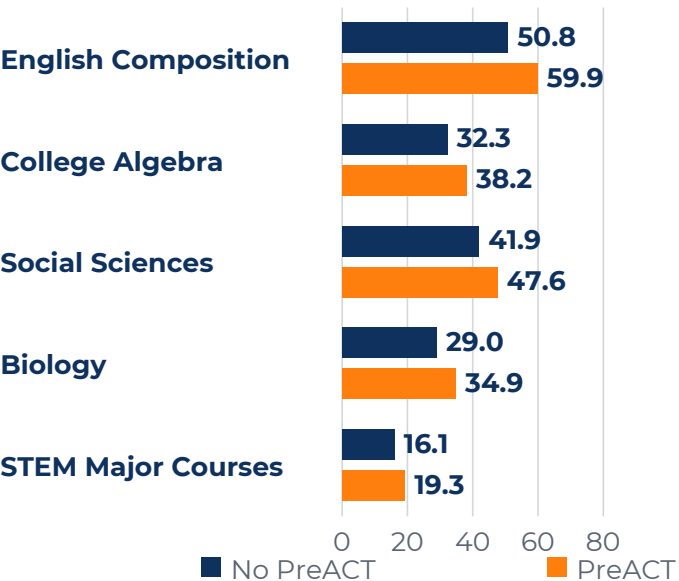
U.S. students who take the PreACT score higher on the ACT.

The average ACT score for students who took PreACT was higher than the average score for students who did not. The students in the U.S. graduating class of 2026 who took PreACT scored 1.1 points higher on the ACT, on average, than those who did not take PreACT. Accordingly, students who took PreACT are more likely to be ready for first-year college courses.

Average ACT Composite Score



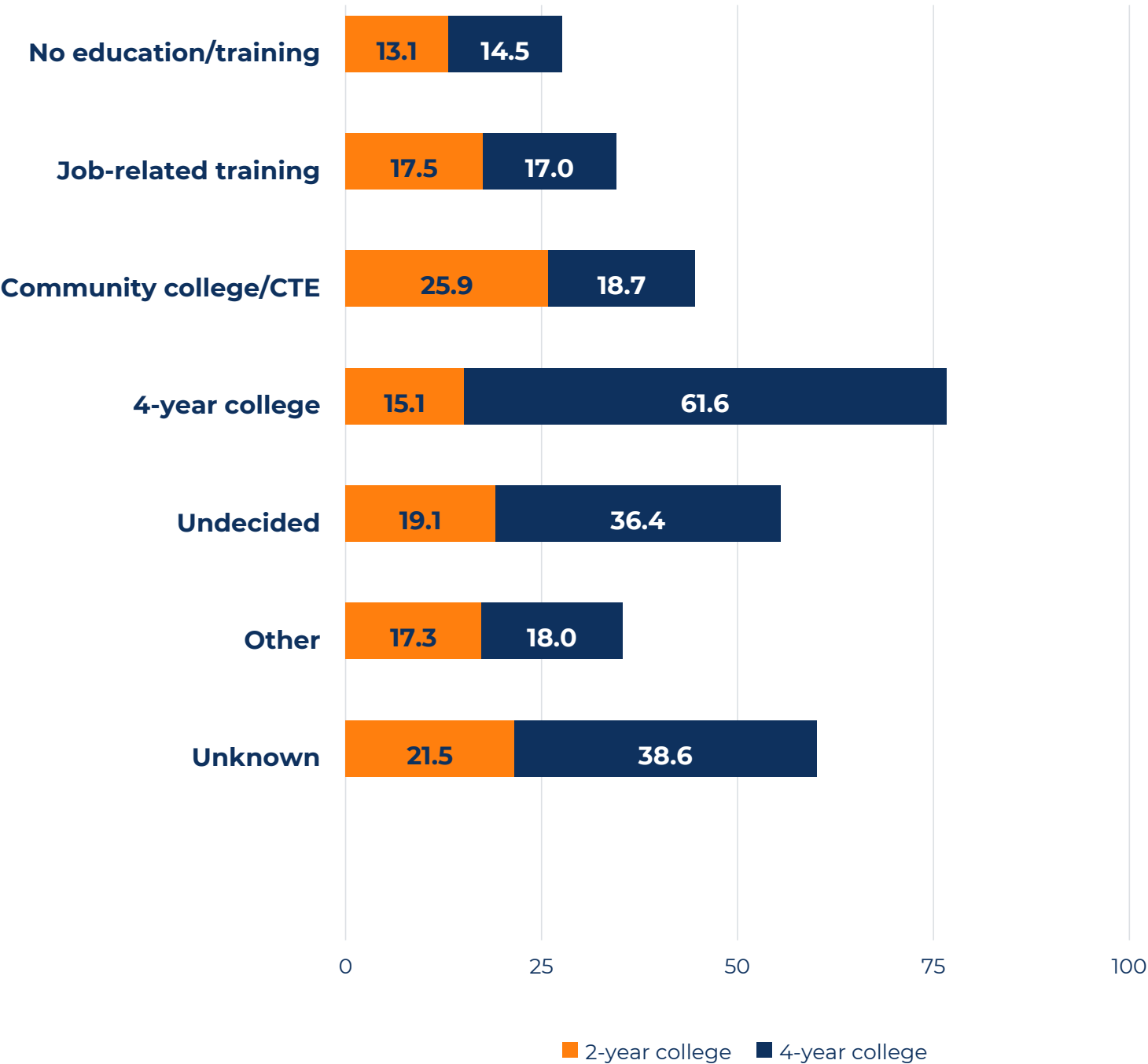
Percent Ready for First-Year College Courses



PreACT and ACT test results help students plan their futures.

United States students who take PreACT are surveyed about their educational plans. We connected their responses with college enrollment data to see the enrollment rate for each educational-plan group. The data show that even 27.6% of students who had no plans for education or training after high school ended up on a college pathway. Having a PreACT or ACT result helps to inform all students about their options.

Postsecondary Enrollment by Educational Plans Reported on PreACT



WorkKeys provides another measure of students' readiness

The ACT WorkKeys assessments measure foundational skills required for success in the workplace.

The assessments use passages taken from workplace situations, and all passages are evaluated for workplace realism. The National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) is a portable, evidence-based credential earned by completing three WorkKeys multiple-choice assessments: ACT® WorkKeys® Applied Math, Graphic Literacy, and Workplace Documents. The NCRC certifies essential work skills required for success in a wide range of industries and occupations. It measures the skills people use to apply mathematical reasoning and problem solving to work-related challenges, to read and use written documents to do a job, and to comprehend information presented in graphical format and then use that information to solve a problem.

UNDERSTANDING NCRC LEVELS



Bronze

Minimum Level 3
on each assessment



Silver

Minimum Level 4
on each assessment



Gold

Minimum Level 5
on each assessment



Platinum

Minimum Level 6
on each assessment

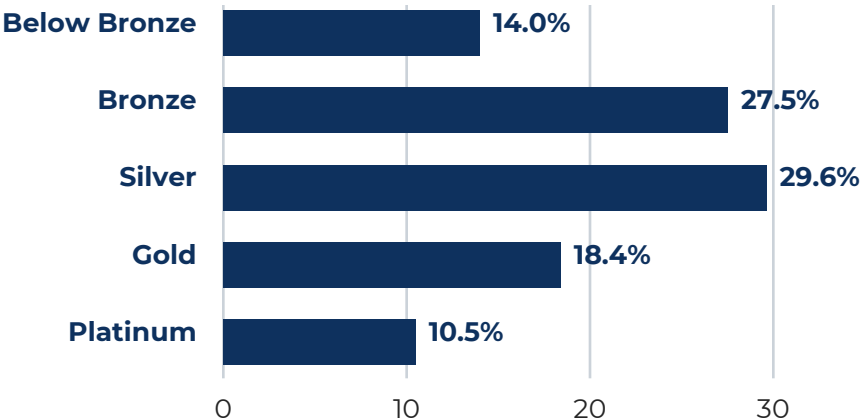
The American Council on Education recommends that colleges award credit for NCRC attainment at the Silver, Gold, and Platinum levels.

WorkKeys in the 2026 U.S. graduating class

307,202 students in the 2026 U.S. graduating class took WorkKeys.

NCRC ATTAINMENT

Percent of students



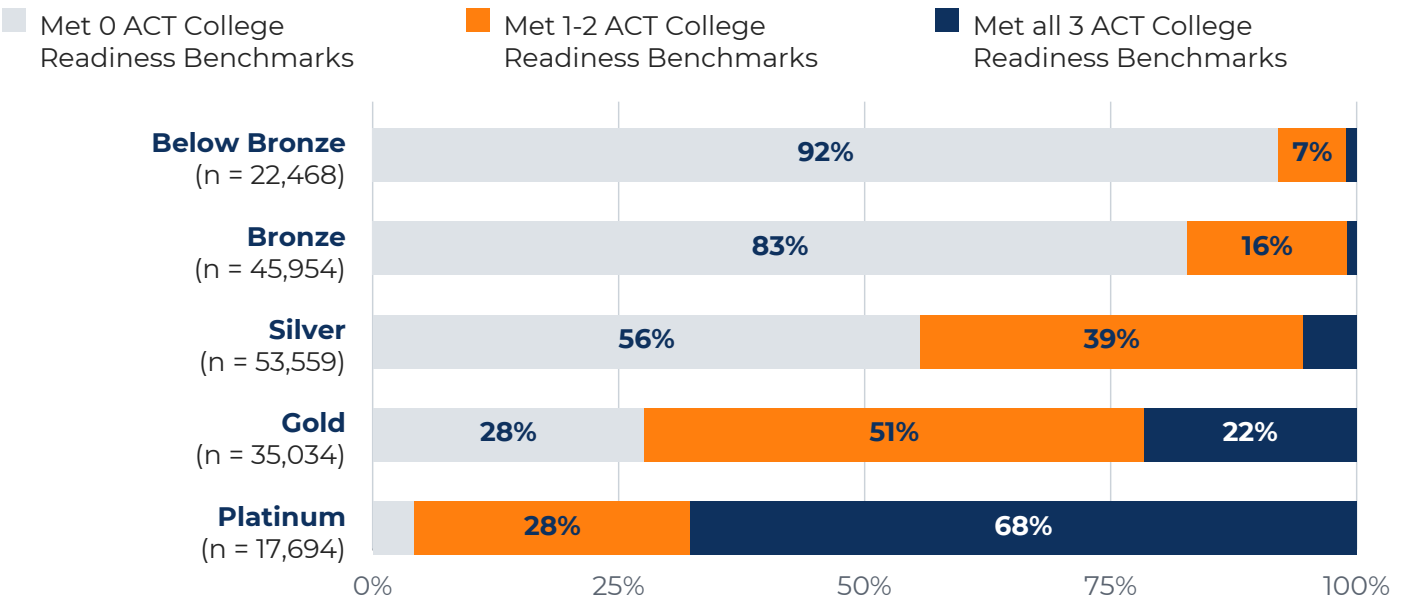
58.5%
of students earned an NCRC
Silver or higher.

ACT and WorkKeys provide multiple measures of students' readiness

ACT and WorkKeys measure related but distinct dimensions of readiness. Examining results from students who took both assessments provides a more complete picture of the skills they have demonstrated across college and workforce contexts.

174,709 students in the 2026 U.S. graduating class took both the ACT and WorkKeys.

ACT COLLEGE READINESS BENCHMARKS MET, BY NCRC LEVEL



* Results are suppressed when fewer than 40 students are represented.

MULTIPLE MEASURES REVEAL ADDITIONAL READINESS

40.7%

earned an NCRC Silver or higher

99,008 students who took both ACT and WorkKeys met none of the three ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. Of these students, 40,254 — 40.7% — earned an NCRC Silver or higher.

This illustrates how multiple measures can identify demonstrated skills that may not be captured by college readiness benchmarks alone.