

Cautions on the Use of State Aggregate ACT Scores

The ACT Assessment comprises four curriculum-based achievement tests designed to assess critical reasoning and higher-order thinking skills in English, mathematics, reading and science. These tests reflect students' skills and achievement levels as products of their high school experience and serve as critical measures of their preparation for academic coursework beyond high school. ACT Assessment results are used by postsecondary institutions across the nation for admissions, academic advising, course placement and scholarship decisions.

The accompanying list of average scores should not be interpreted as providing grounds for an explicit or implicit ranking of the various states' educational systems. Students who take the ACT Assessment are self-selected and do not represent the entire student population. Further, the percentages of students taking the ACT Assessment vary a great deal from state to state, as do those students' backgrounds and characteristics. Many factors--among them, motivation and the desire to learn, parental support, the quality of teaching, socioeconomic status and extracurricular experiences--contribute to individual and group student achievement. However, a core college-preparatory program can be identified as one significant precondition to success on the ACT Assessment and in postsecondary studies. ACT defines a core college-preparatory program as four years of English and three or more years each of mathematics (starting with Algebra I), science and social studies courses.

For a state with a high percentage of ACT-tested graduates, comparing the percentages and the ACT composite quartile values of the core and noncore completers reveals not only the range of achievement within each category but also the overall difference in achievement related to academic preparation. The 50th percentile (median) is the value that separates the distribution of scores into two equal halves: half of the students have scores higher than the median and half have scores lower. The 75th percentile means that 75 percent of the students had scores at or below that value (or 25 percent had scores higher than that value). Fifty percent of all scores lie between the 25th and 75th percentiles.

In general, for states with a high percentage of ACT-tested graduates, large differences exist in overall achievement, as measured by the ACT Assessment, and in levels of academic preparation. For states with a low percentage of ACT-tested students, however, the differences in achievement between core and non-core completers are not as definitive.

NOTICE: In April 2002 all public high school eleventh graders in the States of Colorado and Illinois were tested with the ACT Assessment as required by each state. The ACT Assessment was administered in each state in accordance with ACT's national test date administration guidelines. Consistent with ACT's reporting policies the test results for these students who are in the 2003 graduating class are included in the national, Colorado and Illinois state norms.

ACT Average Composite Scores by State 2003 ACT-Tested Graduates

State	Average Composite Score	Total				Core Completers				Non-Core Completers				No Course Data
		% of Graduates Tested †	Quartile Values			% of Total Tested †	Quartile Values			% of Total Tested †	Quartile Values			Percent of Total Tested †
			25th	50th	75th		25th	50th	75th		25th	50th	75th	
Alabama	20.1	73	16.6	19.6	23.1	65	17.6	20.6	24.0	31	15.3	17.6	20.5	4
Alaska	21.1	32	17.2	21.1	25.0	37	20.4	23.7	27.1	29	17.4	20.5	24.3	34
Arizona	21.4	27	17.8	21.2	24.6	63	18.6	21.8	25.3	30	16.6	19.8	23.3	8
Arkansas	20.3	73	16.7	19.9	23.5	71	17.6	20.7	24.1	19	14.7	16.9	19.9	9
California	21.5	15	17.7	21.4	25.2	56	18.3	22.0	25.7	32	16.3	19.8	23.8	12
Colorado	20.1	100	16.3	19.8	23.5	46	18.5	21.8	25.2	42	14.9	17.9	21.3	12
Connecticut	22.1	7	18.5	22.2	25.7	35	19.3	22.7	26.1	35	17.4	21.3	25.0	30
Delaware	20.8	5	16.8	20.5	24.5	59	17.5	20.8	24.5	32	15.6	18.8	24.0	9
Washington DC	17.5	30	13.7	16.1	20.3	48	14.3	16.7	20.6	30	13.4	15.4	19.5	21
Florida	20.5	41	17.0	20.1	23.6	59	17.8	20.9	24.3	30	15.7	18.5	22.0	11
Georgia	19.8	22	16.2	19.3	23.0	65	16.9	19.9	23.6	23	14.5	17.1	20.9	11
Hawaii	21.8	16	18.3	21.5	25.3	66	18.8	22.0	25.5	26	16.9	20.3	24.8	8
Idaho	21.2	60	17.8	20.8	24.3	47	19.2	22.3	25.6	45	16.7	19.4	22.7	7
Illinois	20.2	100	16.1	19.7	23.9	41	18.9	22.4	26.0	49	14.9	17.8	21.4	11
Indiana	21.6	21	18.0	21.2	24.9	59	18.8	22.0	25.5	30	16.8	19.8	23.3	10
Iowa	22.0	66	18.8	21.7	25.0	66	19.8	22.7	25.8	30	16.9	19.7	22.7	4
Kansas	21.5	76	18.1	21.3	24.7	66	19.3	22.2	25.5	29	16.3	19.1	22.2	6
Kentucky	20.2	73	16.7	19.7	23.2	59	17.6	20.6	24.0	38	15.6	18.3	21.7	4
Louisiana	19.6	80	16.1	19.3	22.5	70	17.1	20.2	23.3	25	14.4	16.4	19.5	5
Maine	22.5	7	19.1	22.5	26.0	43	19.8	23.2	26.8	40	18.6	22.0	25.8	17
Maryland	20.7	12	16.6	20.4	24.6	58	17.3	21.0	25.0	30	15.1	18.5	23.3	12
Massachusetts	22.3	10	18.9	22.3	25.7	36	19.2	22.5	25.7	40	18.5	21.9	25.7	24
Michigan	21.3	69	17.8	21.1	24.6	55	19.1	22.4	25.7	41	16.6	19.4	22.5	4
Minnesota	22.0	67	18.8	21.8	25.1	64	19.7	22.6	25.8	29	17.1	19.9	23.1	7
Mississippi	18.7	88	15.3	17.9	21.3	53	16.4	19.3	22.9	44	14.5	16.5	19.1	3
Missouri	21.4	69	17.9	21.0	24.7	58	19.1	22.3	25.8	37	16.5	19.1	22.3	5

† Totals for graduating seniors were obtained from *Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity 1996-2012*, Copyright © by Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, February, 1998.

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		% of Graduates Tested †	Quartile Values			% of Total Tested †	Quartile Values			% of Total Tested †	Quartile Values			Percent of Total Tested †
			25th	50th	75th		25th	50th	75th		25th	50th	75th	
Montana	21.7	52	18.3	21.5	24.9	51	20.2	23.2	26.0	43	16.9	19.6	22.9	6
Nebraska	21.7	73	18.3	21.5	24.8	67	19.5	22.4	25.6	29	16.6	19.4	22.5	4
Nevada	21.3	34	17.9	21.0	24.3	59	18.7	21.8	25.0	35	16.7	19.7	22.9	6
New Hampshire	22.2	8	18.9	22.1	25.4	47	19.4	22.8	25.9	32	17.6	20.8	24.8	20
New Jersey	21.2	6	17.5	20.9	24.5	30	18.4	21.7	25.0	54	16.9	20.3	24.0	16
New Mexico	19.9	62	16.3	19.4	23.0	52	17.5	20.7	24.2	42	15.3	18.0	21.2	5
New York	22.3	15	18.9	22.2	25.7	56	20.1	23.3	26.5	30	17.0	20.1	23.7	14
North Carolina	19.9	15	16.1	19.4	23.2	51	17.6	20.8	24.5	40	14.9	17.4	20.9	9
North Dakota	21.3	80	18.0	21.0	24.4	59	19.7	22.5	25.6	37	16.1	18.5	21.4	4
Ohio	21.4	64	17.9	21.0	24.5	60	19.1	22.1	25.4	34	16.4	19.0	22.4	6
Oklahoma	20.5	69	17.0	20.1	23.6	59	18.2	21.3	24.7	35	15.8	18.3	21.3	6
Oregon	22.6	12	19.2	22.5	26.0	52	20.3	23.6	26.6	37	18.0	21.1	24.8	11
Pennsylvania	21.5	8	17.7	21.4	25.1	62	18.7	22.1	25.5	27	16.3	19.7	24.0	11
Rhode Island	21.7	6	18.4	21.8	25.2	35	19.4	22.9	26.0	44	19.0	21.9	25.1	22
South Carolina	19.2	34	15.8	18.6	22.1	68	16.3	19.1	22.6	23	14.6	16.9	20.3	9
South Dakota	21.4	70	18.2	21.1	24.4	60	19.3	22.1	25.1	36	16.6	19.3	22.6	4
Tennessee	20.4	74	16.7	19.9	23.5	62	17.7	20.9	24.4	34	15.5	18.1	21.4	4
Texas	20.1	33	16.5	19.6	23.3	72	17.0	20.2	23.7	19	15.0	17.6	21.0	9
Utah	21.3	67	17.9	21.0	24.4	42	19.1	22.1	25.4	52	17.2	20.1	23.5	6
Vermont	22.5	11	18.9	22.5	26.1	40	20.1	22.9	26.8	37	17.7	21.7	25.3	23
Virginia	20.6	12	17.1	20.3	23.9	66	17.6	20.7	24.3	19	15.3	18.6	22.6	15
Washington	22.5	16	19.0	22.4	25.9	47	20.2	23.5	26.7	42	17.8	21.1	24.9	11
West Virginia	20.3	63	17.2	20.0	23.1	29	18.7	21.5	24.7	67	16.7	19.3	22.3	4
Wisconsin	22.2	69	18.9	22.0	25.3	61	19.7	22.7	25.9	35	17.6	20.6	23.9	4
Wyoming	21.4	62	18.2	21.1	24.3	56	19.5	22.4	25.2	40	16.9	19.7	22.6	4
National	20.8	40	17.2	20.5	24.2	57	18.4	21.6	25.1	35	15.8	18.7	22.2	8

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