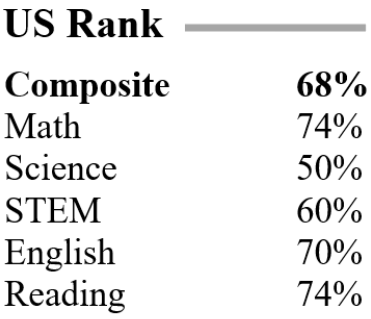
The 2026 PreACT® 9 Secure™ Norming Study

MinJeong Shin, Jing-Ru Xu, and Jeff Allen

This document describes the development of the PreACT 9 Secure norms used for reporting during the 2026–2027 testing year. Although PreACT products typically use a 3-year rolling dataset for norming analyses, 3 years of PreACT 9 Secure data are not yet available, so norm percentile ranks were developed using PreACT 9 Secure data from the spring 2025 and spring 2026 administrations.

The results of the norming study are used to report the percentile ranks associated with students' PreACT 9 Secure scale scores, as shown in Figure 1. The U.S. ranks allow students to understand how their performance compares to that of other students in the population. For example, a Composite rank of 68 indicates that a student's Composite score was as high as or higher than that of 68% of the students in the population.

Figure 1. Norm Percentile Rank in the Sample Student Report



Procedures for sample selection, weighting, estimation of weighted percentile ranks, national norms tables, and summary statistics are detailed in this document.

Samples

The norming sample consists of students who completed the PreACT 9 Secure test during the spring 2025 or spring 2026 administrations and received Composite scores. Because 99.9% of examinees were in Grade 9, a single Grade 9 spring norm group was used. The total sample size across the two administrations was 256,758.

Weighting Methodology

The sample was weighted to promote similarity in student- and school-level demographic variables across the different norming samples used for PreACT products. The sample was weighted to a common population, which we refer to as the ACT population. The ACT population includes students who took the ACT® test and completed high school in the spring of 2025. Because the PreACT 9 Secure samples are weighted to the demographic profile of the ACT population, differences in norms across grade levels and ACT products are more likely to reflect true differences in academic development instead of underlying differences in schools and demographics across samples. The PreACT 9 Secure test simulates the ACT testing experience and provides students with practice and preparation for the ACT. This intended use also supports using the ACT population as the target population for the development of the PreACT 9 Secure norms. The weighting variables included gender, race/ethnicity, and school category. School category is defined by public/nonpublic status and percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (FRL). While normally used for weighting in norming studies for PreACT products, geographic region was excluded from the norming analysis because there was insufficient variation in region for the norming sample.

For each combination of weighting variables, the sample and population percentages were first calculated. Then, the weight for each combination was calculated as the population percentage divided by the sample percentage ($weight = \frac{ACT\ percentage}{PreACT\ 9\ Secure\ percentage}$ for each combination of variables). Weights that were very large (greater than 5) or very small (less than 0.2) were truncated to be in the interval [0.2, 5.0]. The final weights were applied to all students within each combination. To compute weighted frequency tables, we used the wtd.table function in the R package questionr (Barnier et al., 2026).

Table 1 shows the distributions of the weighting variables for the ACT population and for the unweighted and weighted PreACT 9 Secure sample. Note that the sums of the percentages given in the table may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Table 1. Summary of the ACT Population and the Grade 9 PreACT 9 Secure Sample

Variable		ACT population (%)	PreACT 9 Secure	
			Unweighted (%)	Weighted (%)
Gender	Female	46.44	48.85	48.44
	Male	44.66	50.08	46.28
	Other	8.90	1.07	5.28
Race/ethnicity	African American	12.07	5.32	13.53
	Asian	4.00	2.09	4.14
	Caucasian	48.75	17.23	49.52
	Hispanic	18.11	1.06	6.09
	Other	6.45	5.70	7.39
	Unknown	10.62	68.58	19.33
School category	Nonpublic	10.14	2.23	6.50
	Public, 0%–10% FRL*	2.19	0.82	1.18
	Public, 10%–20% FRL	7.93	5.01	8.44
	Public, 20%–40% FRL	19.28	19.99	21.67
	Public, 40%–60% FRL	19.92	22.79	22.18
	Public, 60%–80% FRL	9.87	15.88	12.25
	Public, >80% FRL	11.81	11.58	8.65
	Public, FRL unknown	18.85	21.70	19.13
	Public total	89.86	97.77	93.50

* FRL = free and reduced-price lunch

Estimation of Weighted Percentile Ranks and Summary Statistics

The weighted norm samples were used to develop the PreACT 9 Secure norms for spring Grade 9. A five-degree polynomial smoothing method was applied to the empirical cumulative percentages to reduce sampling error. Note that score reports for students who take PreACT Secure after Grade 9 will also reflect the spring Grade 9 norms.

Estimating Norms for Grade 8 and Fall Grade 9

While nearly all PreACT 9 Secure examinees have tested in spring Grade 9, we also anticipate some future examinees will test in Grade 8. We used the spring Grade 9 norms along with longitudinal data to estimate norms for fall Grade 8, spring Grade 8, and fall Grade 9.

We created a longitudinal dataset of 227,296 students who had taken PreACT® 8/9 in Grade 8 and Grade 9 or had taken PreACT® Secure™ in Grade 9 and Grade 10. Students were included in this sample if they took the tests approximately 1 year apart. Using this sample, we estimated the change in the cumulative percentage for each possible scale score point from 1 to 32. We then applied the estimated change to the spring Grade 9 norms to estimate norms for spring

Grade 8. Norms for fall Grade 8 and fall Grade 9 were also estimated using extrapolation and interpolation from the spring Grade 8 and spring Grade 9 norms. Consider this example for estimating the cumulative percentage for a math score of 16:

1) The cumulative percentage for spring Grade 9 for a math score of 16 is 51.4.

2) In the longitudinal data sample, the cumulative percentage for a math score of 16 was 60.5 for Year 1 and 50.4 for Year 2. Therefore, we expect the cumulative percentage for a math score of 16 to change by 10.1 percentage points after 1 year of schooling.

3) The estimated cumulative percentage for a spring Grade 8 math score of 16 is 61.5 (51.4 + 10.1 = 61.5).

4) The estimated cumulative percentage for a fall Grade 8 math score of 16 is 66.6. This is derived from the spring Grade 8 and spring Grade 9 norms and the assumption that the change in cumulative percentage from fall Grade 8 to spring Grade 8 is half the size of the change from spring Grade 8 to spring Grade 9.

5) The estimated cumulative percentage for a fall Grade 9 math score of 16 is 56.4. This is derived from the spring Grade 8 and spring Grade 9 norms and the assumption that the change from spring Grade 8 to fall Grade 9 is half the size of the change from spring Grade 8 to spring Grade 9.

Norming Results

Tables 2 to 7 present the cumulative percentages of students who scored at or below each scale score point for the English, mathematics, reading, science, STEM, and Composite scale scores. National norms tables are also available at the ACT Knowledge Hub.

Table 2. 2026 PreACT 9 Secure English Norms: Percentages of Students at or Below Each Scale Score

PreACT 9 Secure score	Grade level and season			
	8		9	
	Fall (%)	Spring (%)	Fall (%)	Spring (%)
1	1	1	1	1
2	1	1	1	1
3	1	1	1	1
4	1	1	1	1
5	2	1	1	1
6	4	3	3	3
7	7	7	6	6
8	13	12	12	11
9	18	18	17	17
10	28	26	25	23
11	37	34	32	30
12	45	42	39	37
13	52	49	46	43
14	61	57	53	49
15	66	62	59	55
16	73	69	65	61
17	78	74	70	66
18	83	79	75	71
19	87	83	79	76
20	91	87	83	80
21	93	90	86	83
22	95	92	89	87
23	96	94	92	89
24	98	96	94	91
25	98	97	95	93
26	99	98	96	95
27	99	98	97	96
28	100	99	98	97
29	100	99	98	98
30	100	99	99	98
31	100	100	100	99
32	100	100	100	100

Table 3. 2026 PreACT 9 Secure Mathematics Norms: Percentages of Students at or Below Each Scale Score

PreACT 9 Secure score	Grade level and season			
	8		9	
	Fall (%)	Spring (%)	Fall (%)	Spring (%)
1	1	1	1	1
2	1	1	1	1
3	1	1	1	1
4	1	1	1	1
5	1	1	1	1
6	1	1	1	1
7	1	1	1	1
8	1	1	1	1
9	1	1	1	1
10	1	1	1	1
11	2	1	1	1
12	5	5	4	4
13	15	13	12	11
14	26	25	24	23
15	49	45	41	37
16	67	62	56	51
17	76	72	67	63
18	86	81	76	71
19	90	85	81	77
20	94	89	85	81
21	95	91	87	83
22	97	93	89	85
23	97	94	90	87
24	97	95	92	89
25	97	95	92	90
26	97	95	93	91
27	98	96	94	93
28	98	97	95	94
29	99	98	97	96
30	99	99	98	97
31	100	100	99	99
32	100	100	100	100

Table 4. 2026 PreACT 9 Secure Reading Norms: Percentages of Students at or Below Each Scale Score

PreACT 9 Secure score	Grade level and season			
	8		9	
	Fall (%)	Spring (%)	Fall (%)	Spring (%)
1	1	1	1	1
2	1	1	1	1
3	1	1	1	1
4	1	1	1	1
5	1	1	1	1
6	1	1	1	1
7	1	1	1	1
8	2	1	1	1
9	4	3	3	3
10	7	7	6	6
11	13	12	11	10
12	18	18	17	17
13	28	27	26	24
14	38	36	34	32
15	49	46	43	41
16	58	55	52	49
17	67	63	60	56
18	74	70	66	62
19	79	75	71	67
20	83	79	75	71
21	86	82	78	75
22	89	85	81	78
23	90	87	83	80
24	92	88	85	82
25	92	89	86	84
26	93	91	88	85
27	94	91	89	87
28	96	93	91	88
29	96	94	92	90
30	96	95	93	92
31	98	97	96	95
32	100	100	100	100

Table 5. 2026 PreACT 9 Secure Science Norms: Percentages of Students at or Below Each Scale Score

PreACT 9 Secure score	Grade level and season			
	8		9	
	Fall (%)	Spring (%)	Fall (%)	Spring (%)
1	1	1	1	1
2	1	1	1	1
3	1	1	1	1
4	1	1	1	1
5	1	1	1	1
6	1	1	1	1
7	1	1	1	1
8	3	3	3	3
9	9	8	8	8
10	17	17	16	15
11	27	26	25	25
12	36	36	35	34
13	46	45	44	43
14	56	54	53	51
15	64	62	60	58
16	74	70	67	64
17	79	76	72	69
18	84	80	77	73
19	88	84	80	77
20	91	87	83	80
21	93	89	86	83
22	94	91	88	85
23	95	92	90	87
24	95	93	91	89
25	96	94	92	91
26	97	95	94	92
27	97	96	94	93
28	97	96	95	94
29	97	97	96	96
30	98	98	97	97
31	99	99	98	98
32	100	100	100	100

Table 6. 2026 PreACT 9 Secure STEM Norms: Percentages of Students at or Below Each Scale Score

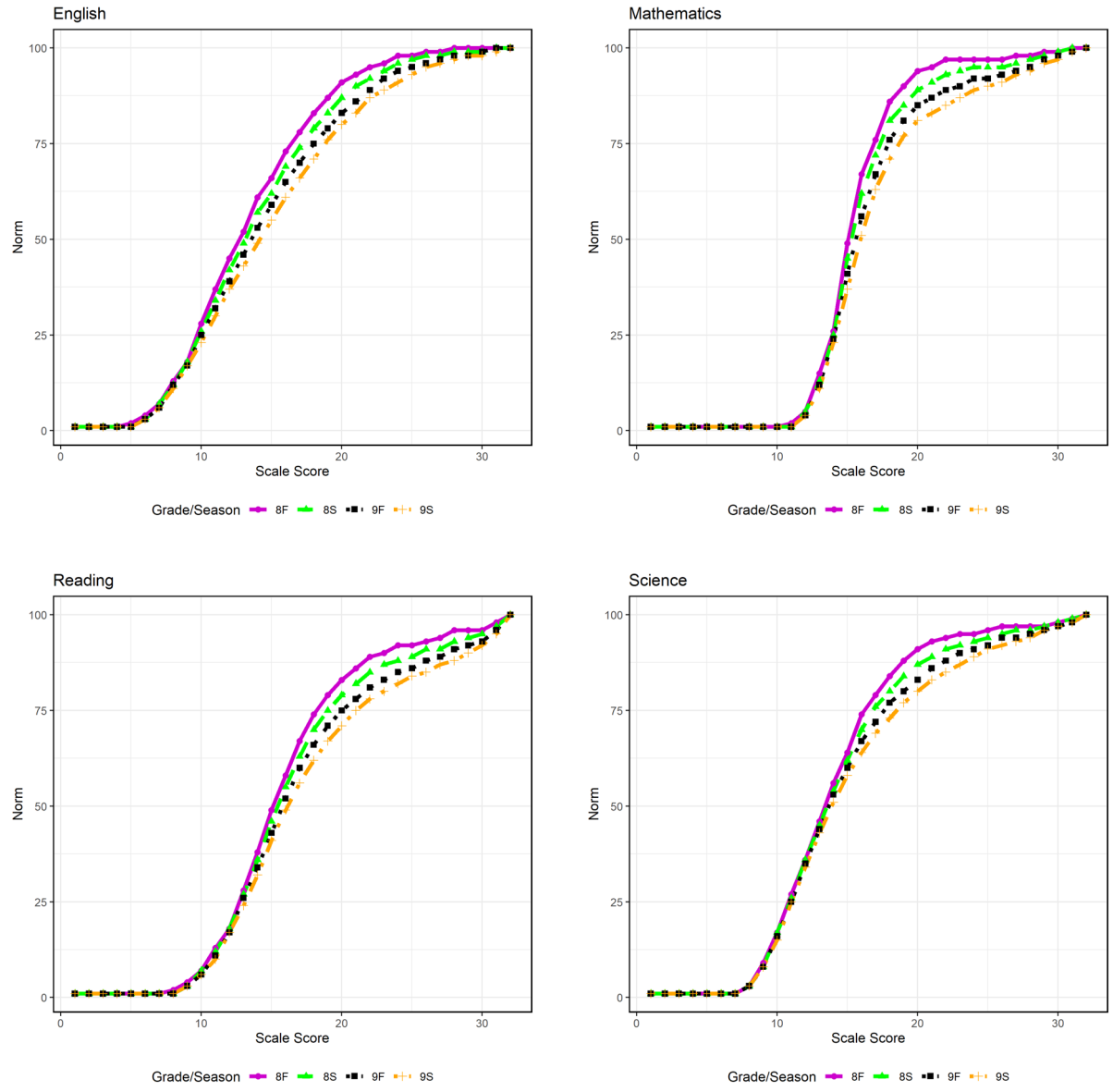
PreACT 9 Secure score	Grade level and season			
	8		9	
	Fall (%)	Spring (%)	Fall (%)	Spring (%)
1	1	1	1	1
2	1	1	1	1
3	1	1	1	1
4	1	1	1	1
5	1	1	1	1
6	1	1	1	1
7	1	1	1	1
8	1	1	1	1
9	1	1	1	1
10	2	1	1	1
11	6	6	6	6
12	17	17	16	15
13	31	30	29	28
14	46	45	43	42
15	61	58	55	53
16	72	69	65	61
17	81	76	72	67
18	86	81	77	72
19	90	85	81	76
20	92	88	84	79
21	94	90	86	82
22	95	92	88	85
23	96	93	90	87
24	97	95	92	90
25	98	96	94	92
26	98	97	95	93
27	99	97	96	95
28	99	98	97	96
29	99	98	98	97
30	99	99	98	98
31	100	100	99	99
32	100	100	100	100

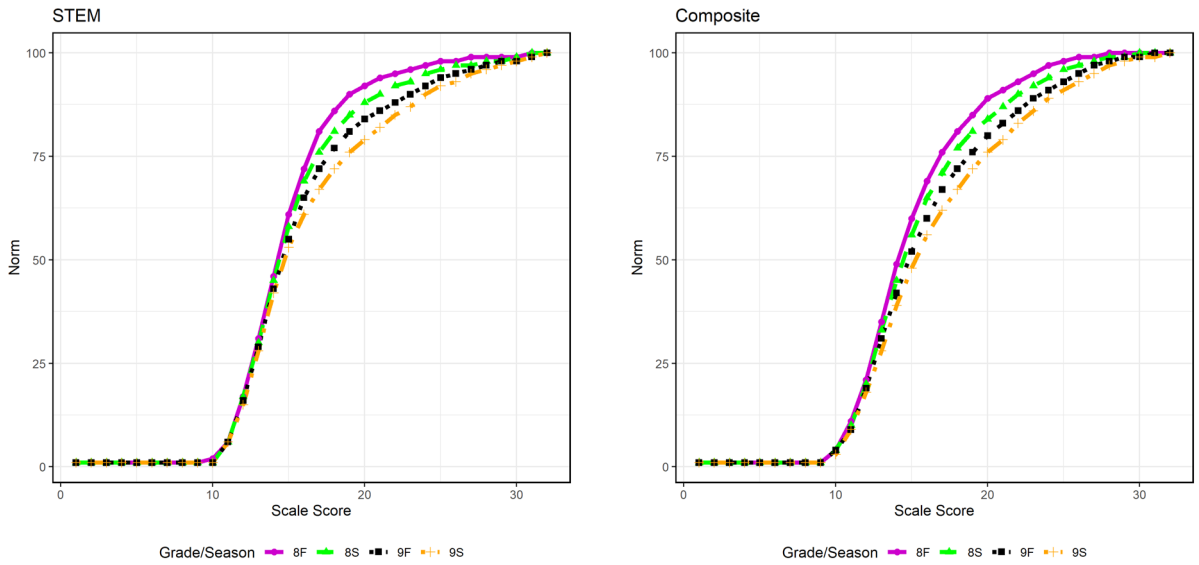
Table 7. 2026 PreACT 9 Secure Composite Norms: Percentages of Students at or Below Each Scale Score

PreACT 9 Secure score	Grade level and season			
	8		9	
	Fall (%)	Spring (%)	Fall (%)	Spring (%)
1	1	1	1	1
2	1	1	1	1
3	1	1	1	1
4	1	1	1	1
5	1	1	1	1
6	1	1	1	1
7	1	1	1	1
8	1	1	1	1
9	1	1	1	1
10	4	4	4	3
11	11	10	9	9
12	21	20	19	18
13	35	33	31	28
14	49	45	42	39
15	60	56	52	48
16	69	65	60	56
17	76	71	67	62
18	81	77	72	67
19	85	81	76	72
20	89	84	80	76
21	91	87	83	79
22	93	90	86	83
23	95	92	89	86
24	97	94	91	89
25	98	96	93	91
26	99	97	95	93
27	99	98	97	95
28	100	99	98	97
29	100	99	99	98
30	100	100	99	99
31	100	100	100	99
32	100	100	100	100

Figure 2 shows the comparison of norms across grade levels and seasons. For each scale score point, the cumulative percentage decreases with grade level and season, meaning that overall achievement level increases from fall Grade 8 to spring Grade 9.

Figure 2. 2026 PreACT 9 Secure Norms (Cumulative Percentage)





For spring Grade 9, the weighted mean and standard deviation (*SD*) of each subject scale score are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. 2026 Spring Grade 9 PreACT 9 Secure Norms: Scale Score Means and Standard Deviations

N	Statistic	English	Math	Reading	Science	STEM	Composite
256,758	Mean	15.5	17.8	18.3	15.9	16.9	16.9
	SD	6.0	4.7	6.3	5.9	5.0	5.2

PreACT 9 Secure scores are classified into one of three readiness levels:

1. **On Target.** Students scoring in this range are predicted to meet or exceed the ACT® College Readiness Benchmark in Grade 11 or Grade 12. The PreACT 9 Secure Readiness Benchmark is the score associated with a 50% chance of meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmark in Grade 11 or Grade 12 and is the minimum score of the On Target range.

2. **Close to Target.** Students scoring in this range have a 25%–50% chance of meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmark.

3. **In Need of Intervention.** Students scoring in this range have less than a 25% chance of meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmark.

The PreACT 9 Secure Readiness Levels predict whether students are on target to meet the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by the time they complete high school. Table 9 provides the percentages of students in each PreACT 9 Secure Readiness Level for each subject (English, mathematics, reading, science, and STEM) based on the estimated norms for spring

Grade 9 shown in Tables 2 to 7. Table 10 provides the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks and the scale score ranges for the Readiness Levels.

Table 9. 2026 Spring Grade 9 PreACT 9 Secure Norms: Percentages of Students Categorized by PreACT 9 Secure Readiness Level

Subject	PreACT 9 Secure Readiness Level	Percentage
English	In Need of Intervention	17
	Close to Target	20
	On Target	63
Mathematics	In Need of Intervention	37
	Close to Target	25
	On Target	37
Reading	In Need of Intervention	41
	Close to Target	21
	On Target	38
Science	In Need of Intervention	64
	Close to Target	9
	On Target	27
STEM	In Need of Intervention	76
	Close to Target	6
	On Target	18

Note. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Table 10. ACT College Readiness Benchmarks and the Scale Score Ranges for PreACT 9 Secure Readiness Levels

Subject	ACT Benchmark	Grade level and season	PreACT 9 Secure Readiness Level		
			In Need of Intervention	Close to Target	On Target
English	18	9, spring	1–9	10–12	13–32
Mathematics	22	9, spring	1–15	16–17	18–32
Reading	22	9, spring	1–15	16–18	19–32
Science	23	9, spring	1–16	17–18	19–32
STEM	26	9, spring	1–19	20–21	22–32

References

Barnier, J., Briatte, F., & Larmarange, J. (2026). *questionr: Functions to make surveys processing easier* (R package version 0.8.0). https://CRAN.R-project.org/package=questionr

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