

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

North Carolina Key Findings

Performance

- North Carolina has tested 397,648 graduates since the inclusion of census testing in the 2013 grad class.
- North Carolina students have shown an increase in ACT College Readiness Benchmark attainment in English, reading, science, and meeting all four Benchmarks over a four-year period.
- 18% (18,702) of North Carolina students met all four Benchmarks (same as 2015).
- ACT subject level scores have steadily increased in all subjects except mathematics:
 - ~ Reading and science lead in subject score increases (0.3 and 0.2 point, respectively).
 - ~ Mathematics scores decreased by 0.1.
- The average state ACT Composite score increased 0.4 point from 18.7 in 2013 to 19.1 in 2016. (2013 marked the first graduating class including census testers.) North Carolina's average Composite score in 2016 is 1.7 points lower than the national average of 20.8.

Call to Action:

- The percent of students meeting zero Benchmarks remains steady at 46.3%—approximately 48,000 students. What can we do to ensure these students move from this point to meeting Benchmarks?

Five Year Dashboard

Year	Number of Students N	Participation Rate	% Change	Percent Who Met College Readiness Benchmarks				
				0	1	2	3	Met All Four
2012	18,817	20.1%	N/A	23.8	12.6	15.7	18.0	29.9
2013	95,782	100.0%	409.0%	48.7	13.8	11.0	9.9	16.5
2014	97,443	100.0%	1.7%	47.5	14.9	11.7	9.5	16.5
2015	100,557	100.0%	3.2%	46.4	14.1	11.8	9.8	18.0
2016	103,902	100.0%	3.3%	46.3	14.2	11.7	9.8	18.0

STEM

- 27% of students who had a fourth science course or the addition of physics scored significantly higher than those who did not:
 - ~ Students who took biology, chemistry, and physics had an average score of 24.2.
 - ~ Students who took general science, biology, chemistry, and physics had an average score of 21.2.
 - ~ Students who took general science, biology, and chemistry had an average score of 19.9.
- North Carolina ACT STEM scores and the percent of students meeting the STEM Benchmark were both unchanged in 2016 compared to 2015.
- However, for students meeting the STEM Benchmark, the average ACT science score increased by 0.3 point over last year. North Carolina's average ACT science score of 28.3 is very close to nation's average ACT science score of 28.6.

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 North 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 North Carolina, 55% 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
 - ~ Among the graduating class of 2010, high percentages of White (51%), Hispanic (65%), and African American (66%) students took their first and only test as seniors. For the class of 2016, these figures are all below 2%. Engaging students earlier increases postsecondary awareness, access, and opportunity, as well as allowing for intervention prior to and during the senior year.
 - ~ The Hispanic population is the most rapidly growing population in the state with a 6% representation in 2012 to 12% in 2016.
 - 85% of Hispanic students tested only once.
 - Hispanic students who retested saw a 1.1 point increase in score and scored 4.2 points higher than Hispanic students who tested only once.
- Below are the top six colleges and universities to which 2016 North Carolina graduates sent their ACT scores:
 1. East Carolina University
 2. North Carolina State University
 3. University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill
 4. University of North Carolina–Charlotte
 5. Appalachian State University
 6. University of North Carolina–Wilmington
- ACT Educational Opportunity Service (EOS) opt-in rates: EOS is a database of high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors that is used by admissions and enrollment counselors at higher education institutions to find perfect-fit students looking for college opportunities.
 - ~ A very high percentage (80.9%) of North Carolina students opt in to receive information from colleges. By opting in, students allow colleges and universities to communicate with them about various academic majors, scholarships, and student life opportunities. The National rate was 73.1%.

- ~ One of the unintended consequences of data privacy laws in North Carolina is that postsecondary institutions' access to EOS data is impacted for those students testing through a statewide administration.
- Fee Waiver Usage
 - ~ In North Carolina, there were 7,858 fee waivers issued and 5,478 of those were used. This equates to a 69.7% usage rate. The national rate was 74.5%.
 - ~ ACT provides students fee waivers to provide more access and opportunity for students.

Pipeline

- In North Carolina, 20,660 students (average ACT Composite score of 19.3) indicated their planned educational major is Health Sciences and Technologies.
- 14% (14,672) of students did not respond to the question about planned major.
- In addition to the robust system of career development North Carolina has in place, students' exposure to the free ACT Profile would provide assistance in the areas of interest, values, and career planning.

ACT Footprint

ACT Aspire® Summative	ACT Aspire® Periodic	ACT Engage®	ACT QualityCore®	PreACT™	ACT WorkKeys®
3,786	20,559	2,977	–	460*	177,691

* 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.

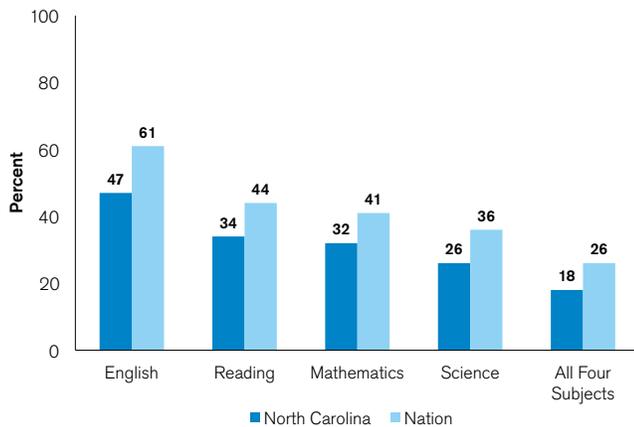
Special State Talking Points

- In 2016, ACT honored exemplars in 41 states as part of our ACT College & Career Readiness Campaign. In North Carolina, these honorees include:
 - ~ Community College: Davidson Community College
 - ~ High School: Clinton High School
 - ~ Student: Dedreon Davis, John T. Hoggard High School
- In the 2016–17 school year, North Carolina will transition from ACT Plan® to the use of PreACT™ for sophomores to prepare and practice for the ACT.

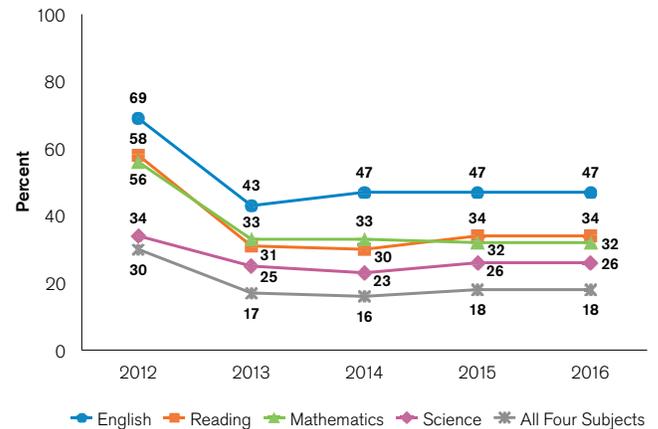
Your State College and Career Readiness Attainment, Participation, and Opportunity

North 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.

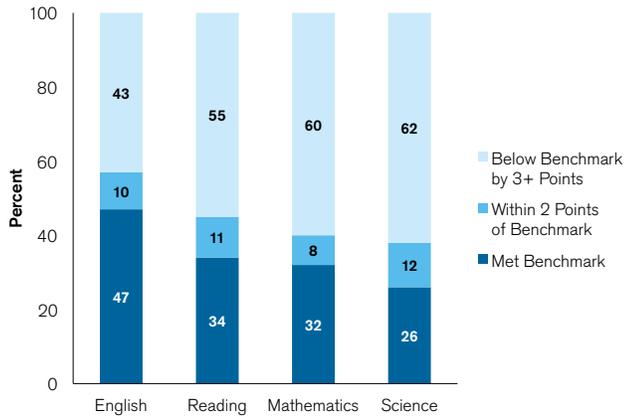
Student Data Trends

- Between 2012 and 2016, the number of students taking the ACT in North Carolina increased by 452.2%.

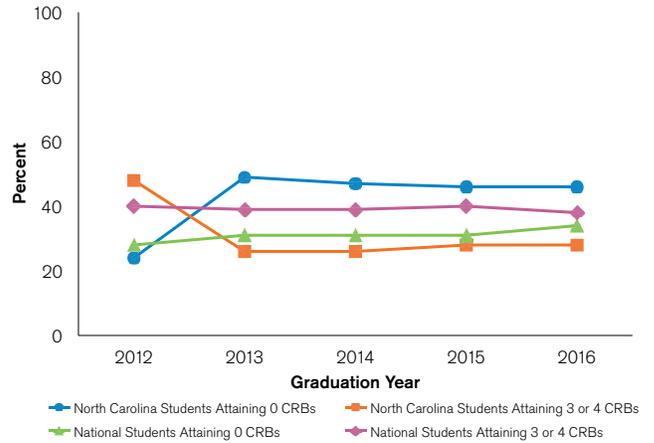
Student Condition Data Interest Trends: 2012–2016, State vs. Nation

Outcome	Cohort	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Percent Tested	North Carolina	20%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Nation	52%	54%	57%	59%	64%
N Tested	North Carolina	18,817	95,782	97,443	100,557	103,902
	Nation	1,666,017	1,799,243	1,845,787	1,924,436	2,090,342
Average English Score	North Carolina	21	17.1	17.5	17.6	17.8
	Nation	20.5	20.2	20.3	20.4	20.1
Average Reading Score	North Carolina	22.2	18.8	19	19.2	19.5
	Nation	21.3	21.1	21.3	21.4	21.3
Average Mathematics Score	North Carolina	22.3	19.6	19.6	19.5	19.4
	Nation	21.1	20.9	20.9	20.8	20.6
Average Science Score	North Carolina	21.4	18.7	18.9	19	19.2
	Nation	20.9	20.7	20.8	20.9	20.8
Average Composite Score	North Carolina	21.9	18.7	18.9	19	19.1
	Nation	21.1	20.9	21	21	20.8

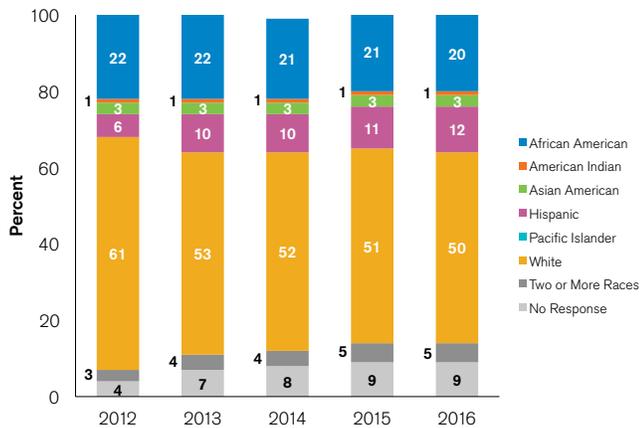
Percent of 2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment and Subject



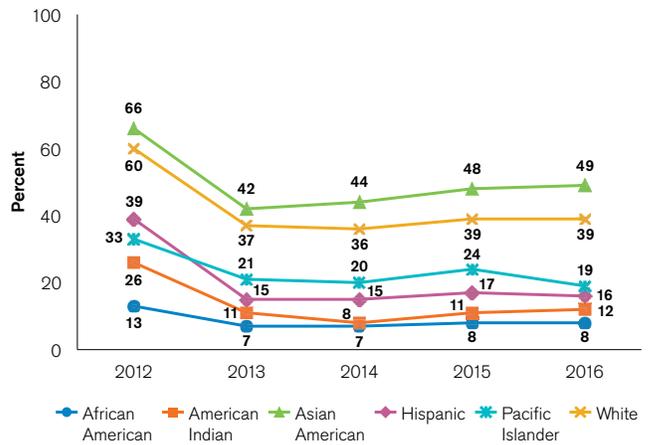
Trends in Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks (CRBs) Attained



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

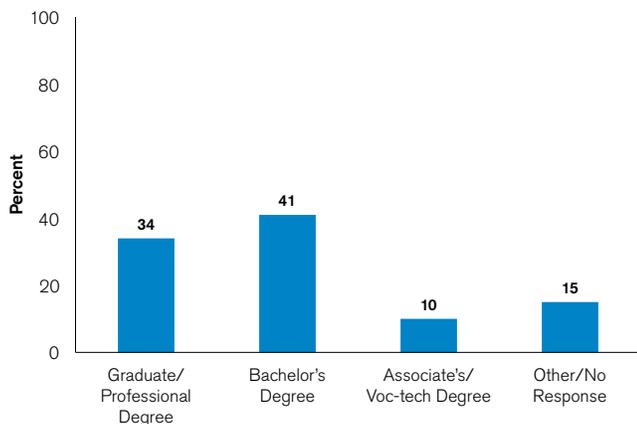


Percent of 2012–2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting Three or More Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity



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 85% of North Carolina's 2016 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 88% of North Carolina's 2015 ACT-tested graduating class aspired to enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 53% who actually did enroll. If we fully closed the aspirational gap, an additional 34,771 of the 2015 ACT-tested graduates from North 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

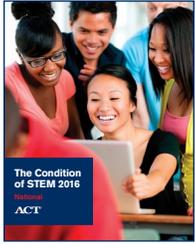
ACT[®] Engage[®]

- 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

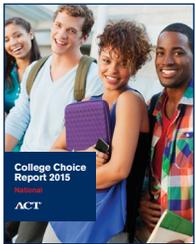
Key ACT Research



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."