

# The Condition of College & Career Readiness | 2011





ACT is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides assessment, research, information, and program management services in the broad areas of education and workforce development. Each year we serve millions of people in high schools, colleges, professional associations, businesses, and government agencies, nationally and internationally. Though designed to meet a wide array of needs, all ACT programs and services have one guiding purpose—helping people achieve education and workplace success.

A copy of this report can be found at  
**[www.act.org/readiness/2011](http://www.act.org/readiness/2011)**

# About *The Condition of College & Career Readiness*

Since 1959, ACT has collected and reported data on students' academic readiness for college. This report provides a college and career readiness snapshot of the ACT-tested high school class of 2011.<sup>1</sup>

## **What does ACT mean by “college and career readiness”?**

ACT has long defined college and career readiness as the acquisition of the knowledge and skills a student needs to enroll and succeed in credit-bearing first-year courses at a postsecondary institution (such as a two- or four-year college, trade school, or technical school) without the need for remediation.

## **How does ACT determine if students are college ready?**

Empirically derived, ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks are the minimum scores needed on the ACT subject area tests to indicate a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in corresponding first-year credit-bearing college courses. (See Notes for more information.)

Measuring academic performance in the context of college and career readiness—focusing on the number and percentages of students meeting or exceeding the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks—provides meaningful and compelling information about the academic readiness of students. *The Condition of College & Career Readiness* highlights that information.

<sup>1</sup>The data in this report are based on the *ACT Profile Report—National: Graduating Class 2011*, available at [www.act.org/readiness/2011](http://www.act.org/readiness/2011). Except for the graphs on pages 9 and 14, data related to students who did not provide information or responded “Other” to questions about gender, race/ethnicity, high school curriculum, etc., are not presented explicitly. Race/ethnicity categories are changed from previous reports to now reflect updated US Department of Education reporting requirements; trends to previous reports may not be available for all race/ethnicity categories.

# About *The Condition of College & Career Readiness*

*The Condition of College & Career Readiness* is organized into six sections:

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| <b>Policies &amp; Practices to Increase Readiness</b> —policies and practices states and schools can implement to improve the college readiness of students. . . . . | 20 |

ACT encourages educators to focus on trends (e.g., 3, 5, 10 years), not year-to-year changes, which can represent normal—even expected—fluctuations. Trend lines offer more insight into what is happening in a school, district, state, or the nation than can data from any single year.

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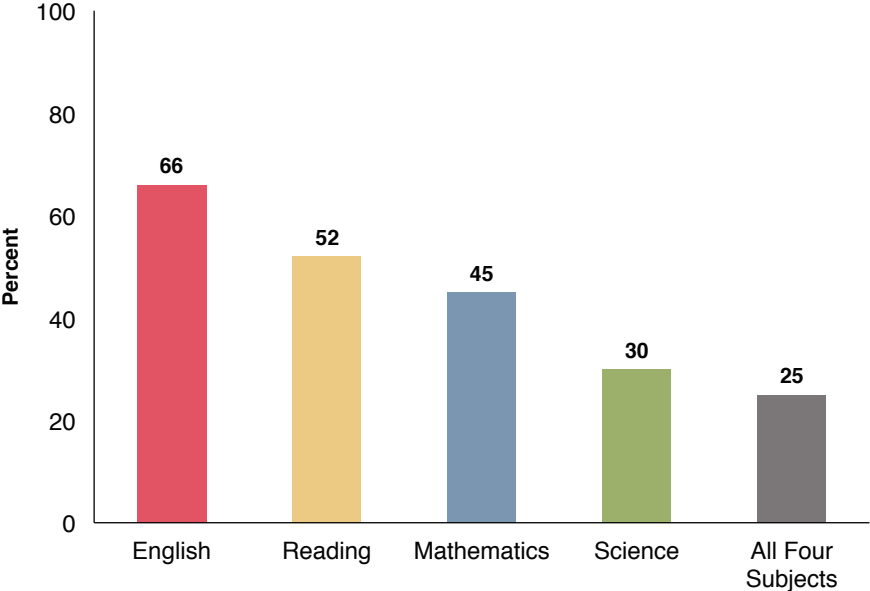
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# College Readiness

**Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject, 2011**



## **College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject**

Sixty-six percent of all ACT-tested high school graduates met the English College Readiness Benchmark in 2011. Just 1 in 4 (25%) met all four College Readiness Benchmarks.

In 2011, 52% of graduates met the Reading Benchmark, while 45% met the Mathematics Benchmark. Just under 1 in 3 (30%) met the College Readiness Benchmark in Science.

Graph reads: In 2011, 66% of ACT-tested high school graduates met the ACT College Readiness Benchmark in English.

## College Readiness Benchmarks Over Time

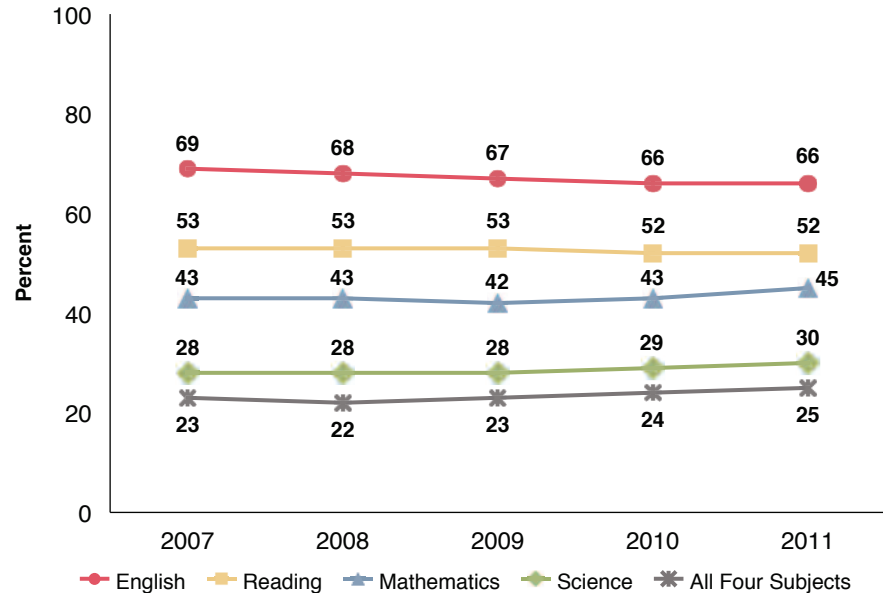
The percent of students meeting all four Benchmarks increased slightly between 2007 and 2011. About 1 in 4 ACT-tested high school graduates met all four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks in 2011, compared to 23% doing so in 2007.

Between 2007 and 2011, Benchmark attainment percentages remained relatively stable in Reading: 52% to 53% of ACT-tested graduates met the Reading Benchmark over this period. Slightly higher percentages of students met the Mathematics or Science Benchmark in 2011 than in 2007. In English, there was a decrease in the percentage of students meeting the Benchmark over this period.

Graph reads: Between 2007 and 2011, the percentage of ACT-tested high school graduates who met the College Readiness Benchmark in English decreased from 69% to 66%.

# College Readiness

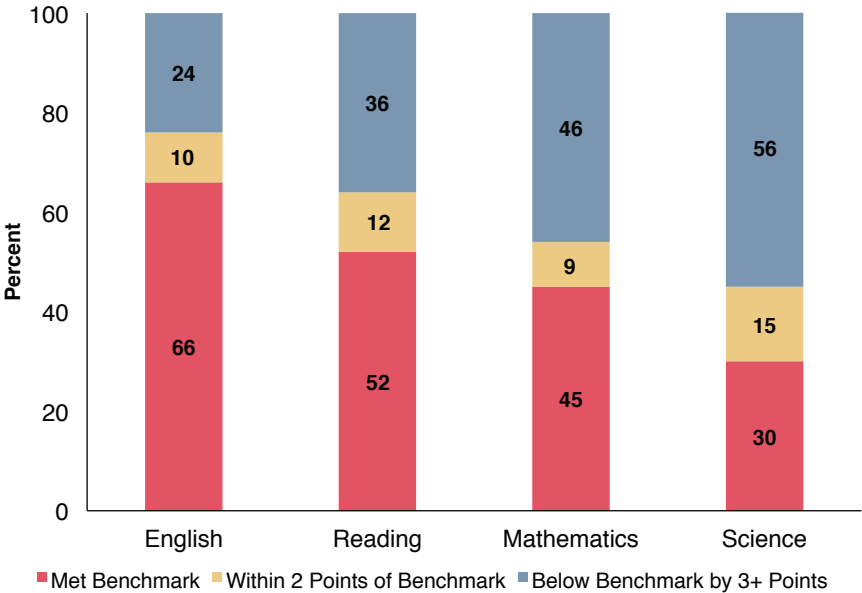
Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, 2007–2011





# College Readiness

Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Benchmark Attainment and Subject, 2011



## College Readiness Benchmarks—Attainment and Near Attainment

About 9% to 15% of graduates were within 2 scale points of meeting an ACT College Readiness Benchmark in 2011, depending on subject area. This represents approximately 148,000 to 236,000 additional students who were close to being college ready within a subject area.

In 2011, 45% of graduates met the Mathematics Benchmark, while another 9% were within 2 scale points of doing so. The percentages of students within 2 scale points of the respective College Readiness Benchmark in the other subject areas were greater, including 10% of graduates in English, 12% in Reading, and 15% in Science.

Graph reads: In 2011, 66% of ACT-tested high school graduates met the College Readiness Benchmark in English, while 10% scored 1 or 2 points below the Benchmark, and 24% scored 3 points or more below the Benchmark.

Note: Columns may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

## Number of College Readiness Benchmarks Attained

About 72% of all 2011 ACT-tested high school graduates met at least one of the four College Readiness Benchmarks in English, Reading, Mathematics, or Science.

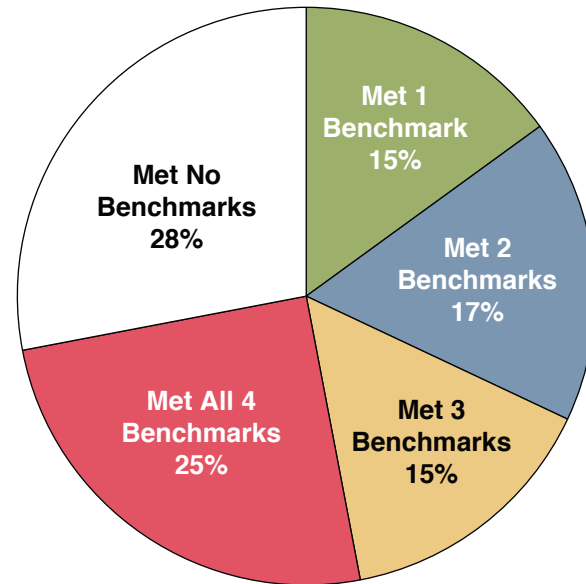
Fully 28% of all graduates did not meet any of the College Readiness Benchmarks, while 47% met between 1 and 3 Benchmarks. Twenty-five percent of all 2011 ACT-tested high school graduates met all four College Readiness Benchmarks, meaning that 1 in 4 were academically ready for college coursework in all four subject areas.

Graph reads: In 2011, 25% of ACT-tested high school graduates met all four College Readiness Benchmarks, 15% met 3 Benchmarks, 17% met 2 Benchmarks, 15% met 1 Benchmark, and 28% met none of the Benchmarks.

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

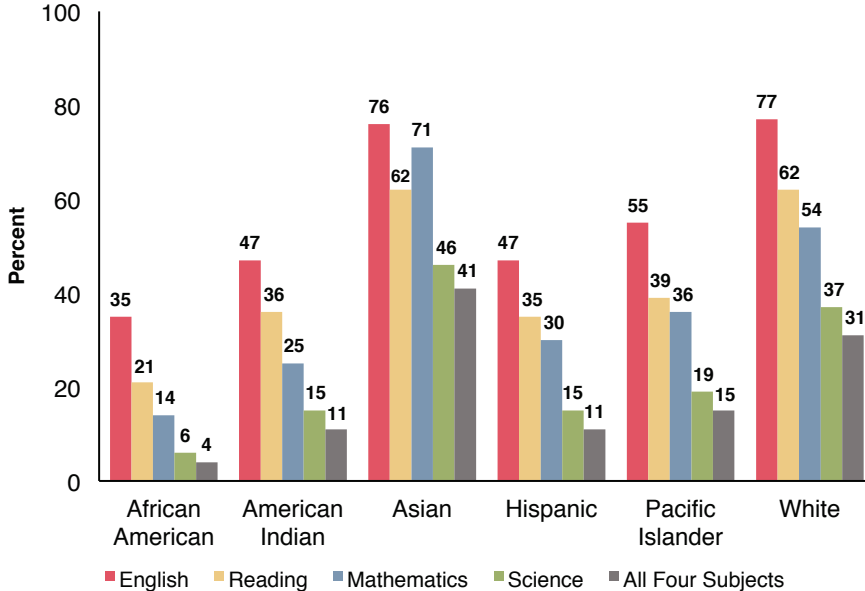
# College Readiness

Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks Attained, 2011



# College Readiness

Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity, 2011



## College Readiness Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity

Just over 4 in 10 (41%) Asian graduates met all four College Readiness Benchmarks in 2011, more than graduates from all other racial/ethnic groups. African American graduates were least likely to meet the Benchmarks—4% met all four.

Students from most racial/ethnic groups were most likely to meet the English Benchmark, followed in order by the Reading, Mathematics, and Science Benchmarks. In three of the four subject areas, Benchmarks were met by at least 50% of Asian and White students, while one was met by at least 50% of Pacific Islander students. None of the Benchmarks were met by at least 50% of African American, American Indian, or Hispanic students.

Graph reads: In 2011, 35% of ACT-tested African American high school graduates met the College Readiness Benchmark in English, while 21% did so in Reading.

Note: Race/ethnicity categories changed to reflect updated US Department of Education reporting requirements.

## College Readiness Benchmarks by Level of High School Preparation

Within a subject area, graduates who took at least a core curriculum in high school were more likely to meet the corresponding ACT College Readiness Benchmark in 2011 than graduates who took less than a core curriculum (defined as 4 years of English and 3 years each of mathematics, science, and social studies).

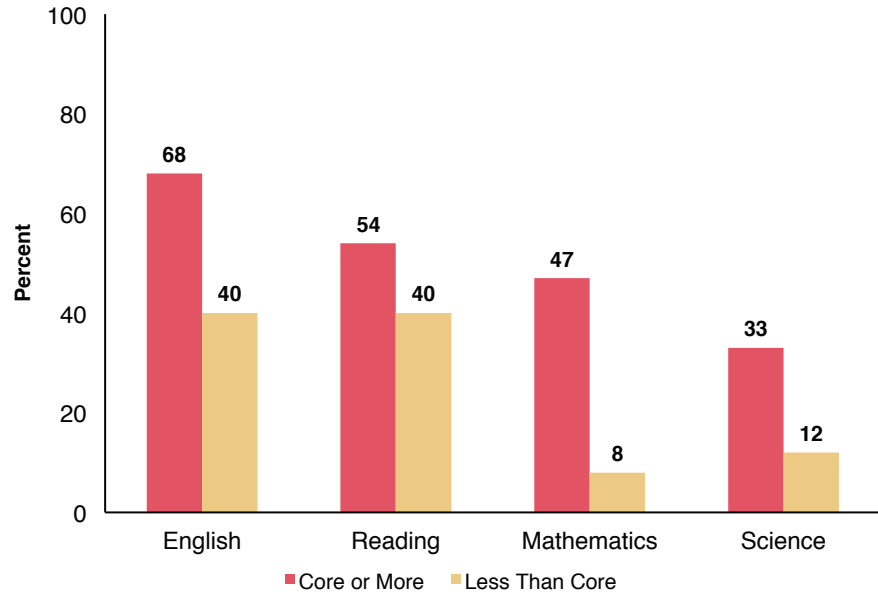
The largest curriculum-based difference in Benchmark attainment rates was in Mathematics. Graduates who completed 3 or more years of mathematics were more likely to meet the Mathematics Benchmark than graduates who took less than 3 years of mathematics, by 39 percentage points.

Graph reads: In 2011, 68% of ACT-tested high school graduates who took at least a core high school curriculum in English met the College Readiness Benchmark in English, whereas 40% of graduates who took less than a core curriculum in English did so.

Note: Data reflect subject-specific curriculum. For example, English "Core or More" results pertain to students who took at least 4 years of English, regardless of courses taken in other subject areas.

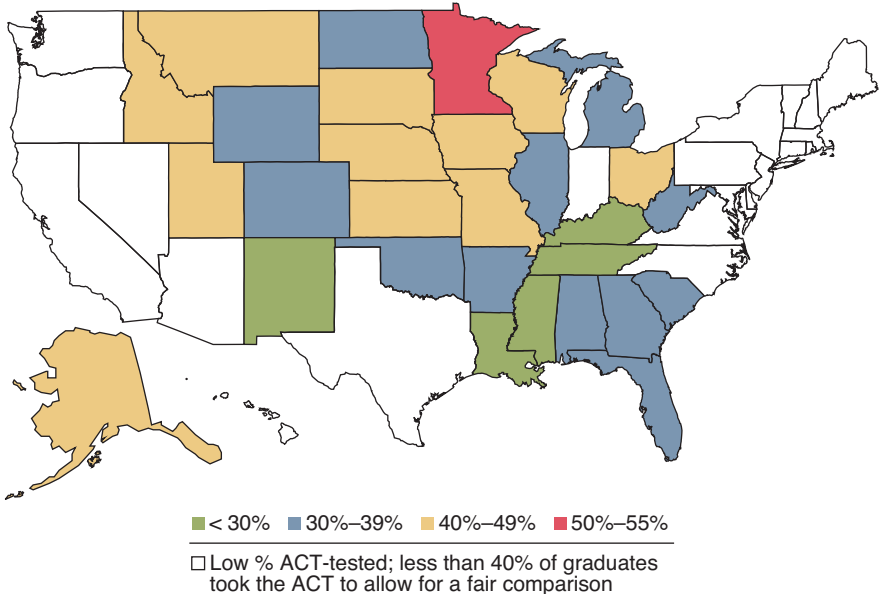
# College Readiness

Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Number of Years of Courses Taken Within Subject, 2011



# College Readiness

**Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting Three or Four College Readiness Benchmarks by State, 2011**



## College Readiness Benchmarks by State

Of the 29 states where at least 40% of all 2011 high school graduates took the ACT, in only 1 state did more than half of the graduates meet at least three of the four College Readiness Benchmarks. In another 11 states, 40%–49% of graduates met three or four Benchmarks.

In 12 of the 29 states, 30%–39% of graduates met at least three of the four College Readiness Benchmarks in 2011, while less than 30% of graduates did so in 5 states. In no state did more than 55% of ACT-tested graduates meet three or four Benchmarks.

Graph reads: In 2011, less than 30% of ACT-tested high school graduates in 5 states (e.g., New Mexico) met three or four College Readiness Benchmarks. Results are not shown for 21 states (e.g., California) within which less than 40% of graduates took the ACT.

## College Readiness Benchmarks—On Target and Attained

A quarter (25%) of 2011 ACT®-tested graduates met all four College Readiness Benchmarks, while only 18% of 2010–11 PLAN®-tested 10th graders and 13% of 2010–11 EXPLORE®-tested students did so. Across the grade levels, only the English Benchmark was met by more than 50% of all tested students.

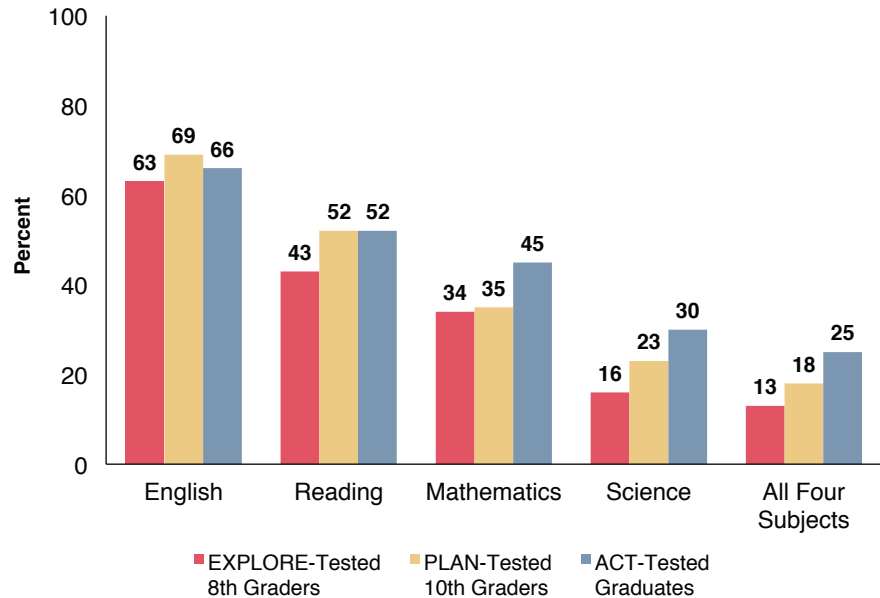
For all subjects, the percentages of 10th graders meeting the Benchmarks were higher than the corresponding percentages of 8th graders. With the exception of English, the percentages of high school graduates meeting the Benchmarks were equal to or higher than the corresponding percentages of 10th graders.

Graph reads: In 2011, 63% of 2010–11 EXPLORE-tested students met the College Readiness Benchmark in English, while 69% of 2010–11 PLAN-tested students and 66% of 2011 ACT-tested graduates did so.

Note: Data here are cross sectional and not longitudinal, reflecting three different groups of students.

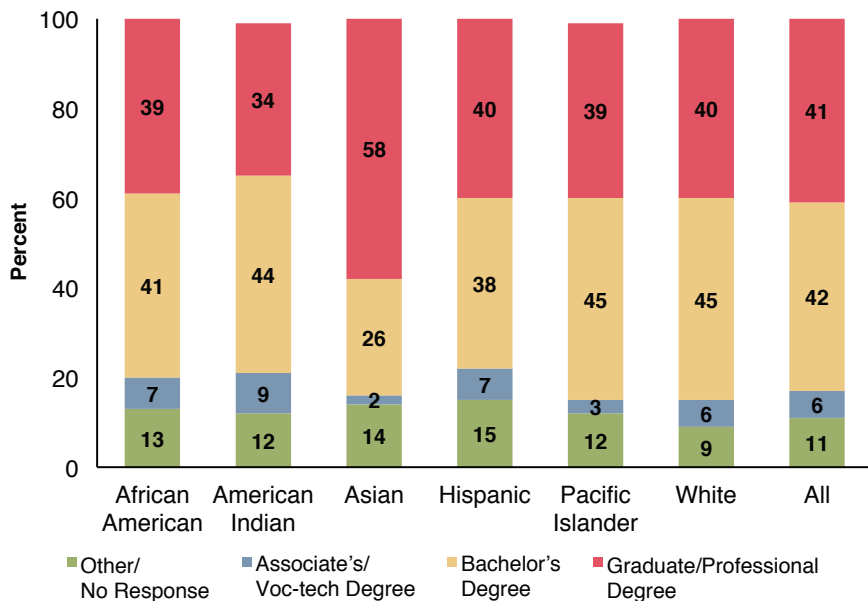
# College Readiness

Percent of 2010–11 EXPLORE-Tested 8th Graders, 2010–11 PLAN-Tested 10th Graders, and 2011 ACT-Tested Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, 2011



# Educational/Career Aspirations & Economic Development

Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity and Educational Aspirations, 2011



## Educational Aspirations by Race/Ethnicity

About 89% of all 2011 ACT-tested high school graduates aspired to attain at least a 2-year postsecondary degree, regardless of race/ethnicity.

About 84% of Asian graduates aspired to earn at least a bachelor's degree, with 58% aspiring to continue their formal education beyond a 4-year degree. American Indian graduates (34%) were the least likely to aspire to a graduate or professional degree; 39%–40% of African American, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, or White graduates aspired to a graduate or professional degree.

Graph reads: In 2011, 39% of ACT-tested African American high school graduates aspired to a graduate or professional degree, 41% to a bachelor's degree, 7% to an associate's or voc-tech degree, and 13% to another degree type (or provided no response).

Note: Columns may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Race/ethnicity categories changed to reflect updated US Department of Education reporting requirements.

## Career Interests & Projected Job Openings

The five fastest-growing career fields based on 2008–18 annual projected job openings account for 56% of the demand for jobs calling for at least a 2-year degree. The percentage of 2011 ACT-tested high school graduates interested in careers in these fields was less than the projected demand.

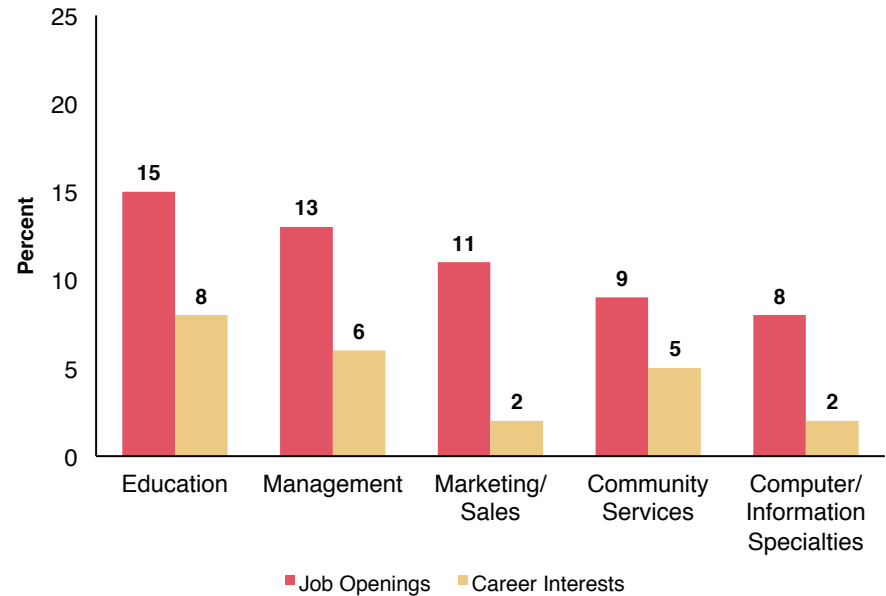
In all five fields, the projected demand was nearly twice that of the potential supply, or more. In Marketing/Sales and Computer/Information Specialties fields, the projected demand was substantially greater than the potential supply.

Graph reads: In 2011, Education was projected to be one of the five fastest-growing career fields, accounting for 15% of all job openings in 2018. About 8% of all 2011 ACT-tested high school graduates indicated a career interest in Education.

Note: 2008–18 projected job openings data are from the US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

# Educational/Career Aspirations & Economic Development

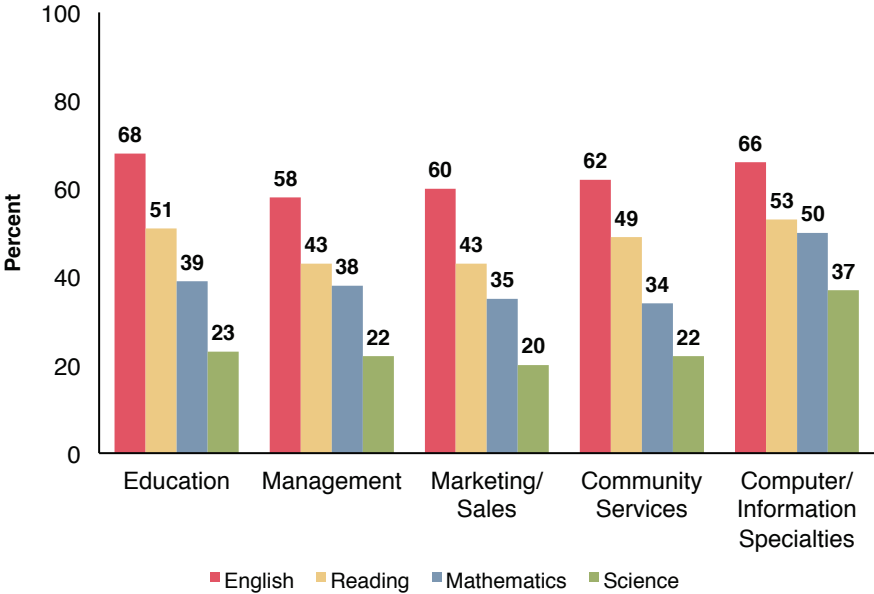
Percent of 2011 ACT-Tested High School Graduates with Career Interests and Projected 2018 Annual Job Openings by Career Field





# Educational/Career Aspirations & Economic Development

Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Career Field, 2011



## College Readiness Benchmarks by Career Field

For each of the 2018 projected five fastest-growing career fields, less than half of the 2011 high school graduates interested in careers in these fields met the ACT College Readiness Benchmark in Science, and in only one field, Computer/Information Specialties, did 50% or more meet the Mathematics Benchmark. For none of the five career fields did at least 50% of the 2011 graduates meet all four Benchmarks.

Across all five career fields, graduates were most likely to meet the English Benchmark, followed by meeting the Reading and Mathematics Benchmarks, respectively. Graduates were least likely to meet the Science Benchmark in all five career fields.

Graph reads: In 2011, 68% of all ACT-tested high school graduates who indicated a career interest in Education met the College Readiness Benchmark in English.

## Percent of US Graduates Who Took the ACT

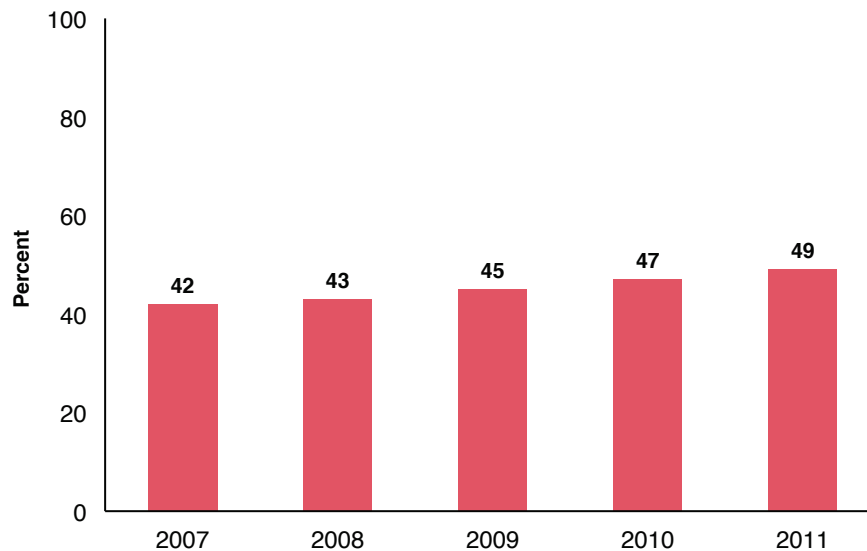
About 49% of all 2011 high school graduates in the United States took the ACT during high school, or about 1.62 million graduates.

From 2007 to 2011, the number of high school graduates who took the ACT increased by approximately 25%. This represents a 7 percentage point increase in the percent of all US high school graduates who took the ACT.

Graph reads: In 2007, 42% of all US high school graduates took the ACT test at least once during their sophomore, junior, or senior year.

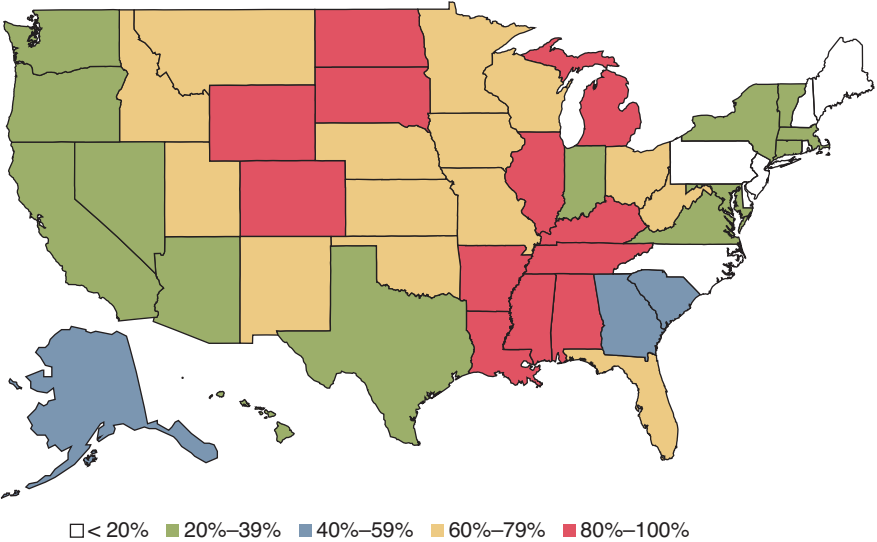
# Access & Preparation

Percent of US High School Graduates Who Took the ACT, 2007–2011



# Access & Preparation

**Percent of ACT-Tested  
High School Graduates by State, 2011**



## **Percent of Graduates Who Took the ACT by State**

At least 60% of all 2011 high school graduates took the ACT in 26 states. In 12 states, at least 80% of their high school graduates took the ACT.

In 3 states, between 40% and 59% of their 2011 high school graduates took the ACT during high school, while another 14 states saw between 20% and 39% of their high school graduates take the ACT. Less than 20% of 2011 graduates took the ACT in 7 states.

Graph reads: In 2011, less than 20% of the high school graduates in 7 states (e.g., Maine) took the ACT test at least once during their sophomore, junior, or senior year.

## Number of Graduates Who Took the ACT by Race/Ethnicity

About 322,000 more high school graduates completed the ACT in 2011 than in 2007, an increase of nearly 25%.

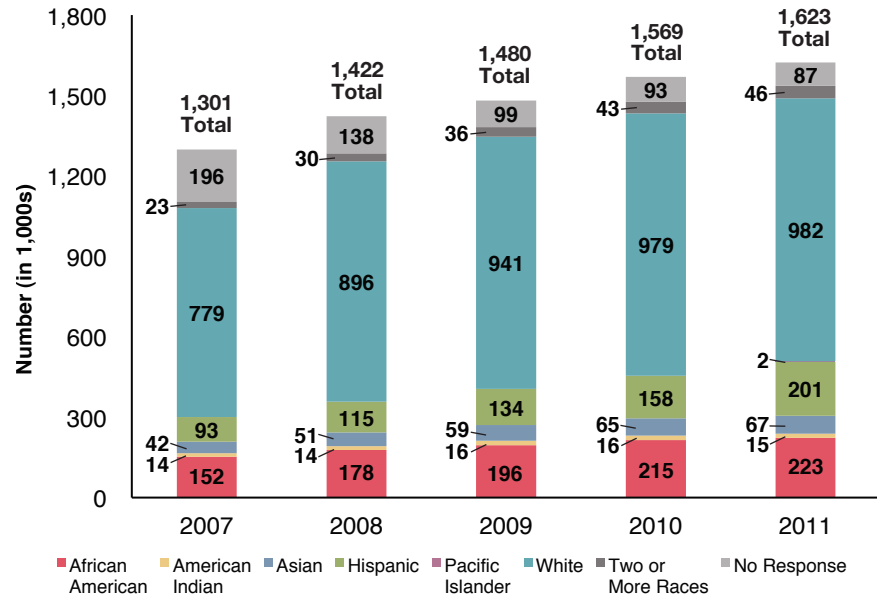
In 2011, about 60% of all ACT-tested graduates were White, 14% were African American, 12% were Hispanic, 4% were Asian, 3% were of Two or More Races, 1% were American Indian, less than 1% were Pacific Islander (about 2,000), and 5% were No Response. From 2007 to 2011, the number of ACT-tested high school graduates increased from 1,301 million to 1.623 million students. Substantial numerical increases occurred for White students (increase of about 203,000), Hispanic students (108,000), African American students (71,000), and Asian students (25,000). Proportionally, the largest increases were by Hispanic students (about 115%) and students of Two or More Races (100%).

Graph reads: In 2007, about 1,301,000 US high school graduates had taken the ACT test at least once during their sophomore, junior, or senior year; of which, about 152,000 were African American students and 14,000 were American Indian students.

Note: Counts by race/ethnicity might not sum to total counts due to rounding. Race/ethnicity categories changed to reflect updated US Department of Education reporting requirements.

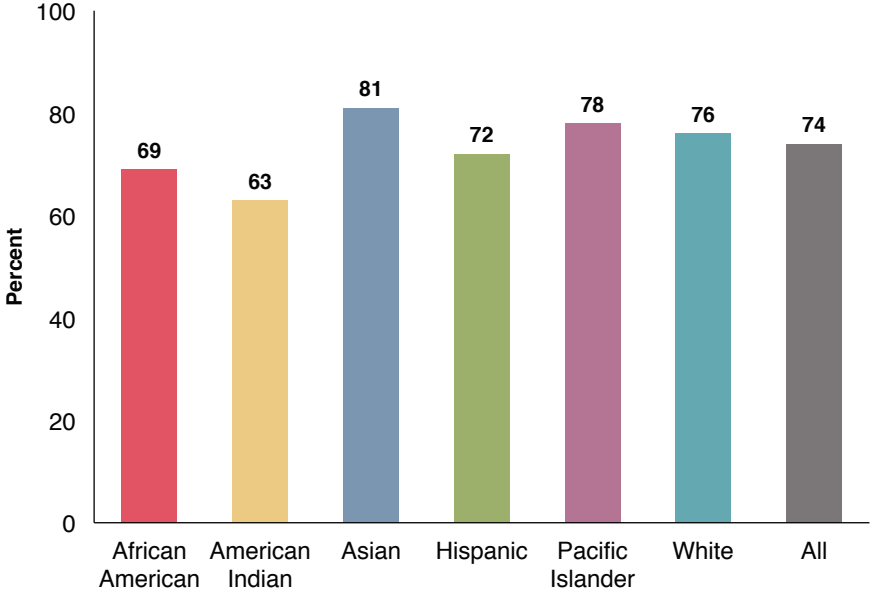
# Access & Preparation

Number of ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, 2007–2011



# Access & Preparation

**Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Completed a Core Curriculum by Race/Ethnicity, 2011**



## **Percent of Graduates Who Took a Core Curriculum by Race/Ethnicity**

Seventy-four percent of all 2011 ACT-tested high school graduates took at least a minimum core high school curriculum to prepare them for college.

Asian students (81%) were most likely to complete a core curriculum, while 78% of Pacific Islander and 76% of White students did so. Smaller percentages of African American (69%), American Indian (63%), and Hispanic (72%) students completed a core curriculum.

Graph reads: In 2011, 69% of all African American high school graduates who had taken the ACT test had completed, or had planned to complete, at least a core curriculum.

Note: Race/ethnicity categories changed to reflect updated US Department of Education reporting requirements.

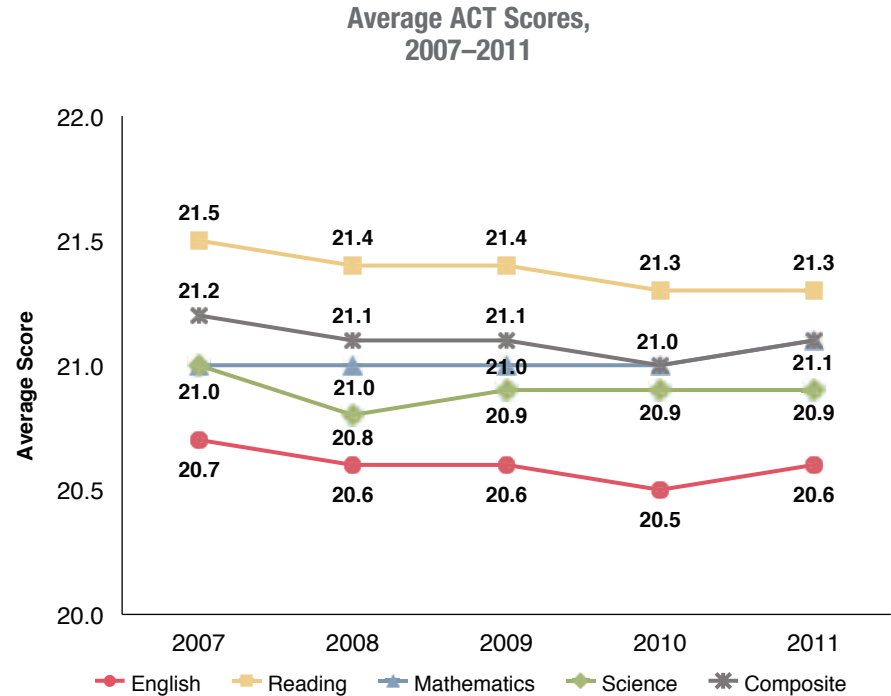
## ACT Scores Over Time

Test scores remained essentially the same between 2007 and 2011 even though nearly 25% more high school students took the ACT over this period and the tested population of students became more diverse.

Composite score averages ranged between 21.0 and 21.2 points during this time. The four subject score averages (English, Reading, Mathematics, and Science) showed similar changes in absolute value ranging between 0.1 and 0.2 point depending on the subject area.

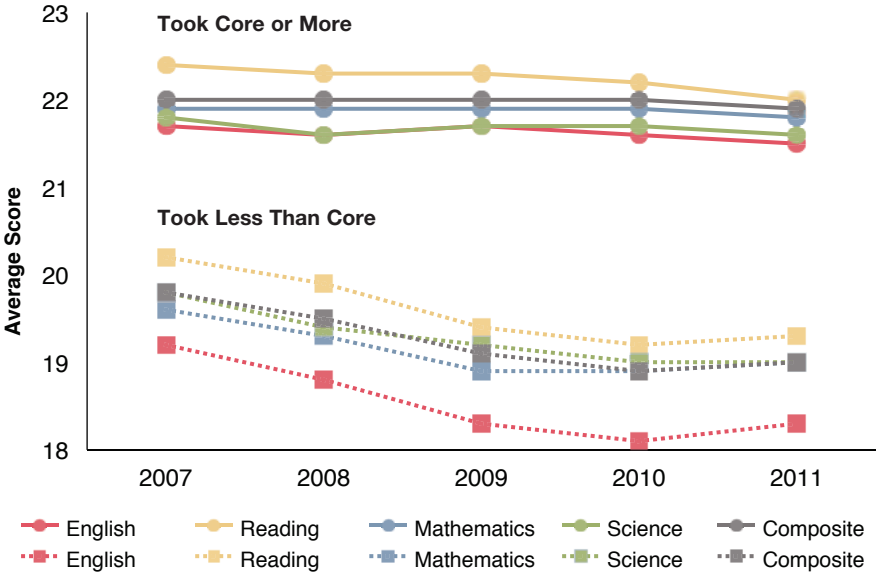
Graph reads: Between 2007 and 2011, the average ACT Reading score for all high school graduates decreased slightly from 21.5 to 21.3.

# Academic Performance



# Academic Performance

Average ACT Scores by Core Curriculum Completion Status, 2007–2011



## ACT Scores Over Time by Level of High School Preparation

For each year from 2007 to 2011, ACT Composite and subject scores were higher for students who took a core curriculum or more in high school than for students who did not.

On average, high school graduates who completed at least a core curriculum earned Composite test scores 2.2 to 3.1 points higher than the scores of students who did not take a core curriculum. Similar ranges of higher scores for core or more curriculum completers are noted for each subject test: English (2.5 to 3.5 points), Reading (2.2 to 3.0), Mathematics (2.3 to 3.0), and Science (2.0 to 2.7).

Graph reads: Between 2007 and 2011, the average ACT Reading score for high school graduates who had completed or had planned to complete at least a core curriculum remained about the same and was higher than that of graduates who had not completed or had not planned to complete a core curriculum.

## ACT Scores Over Time by Race/Ethnicity

Average ACT Composite scores for Asian and White graduates increased between 2007 and 2011. African American and Hispanic graduates' average ACT Composite scores remained essentially the same, while that of American Indian graduates declined by 0.3 scale point.

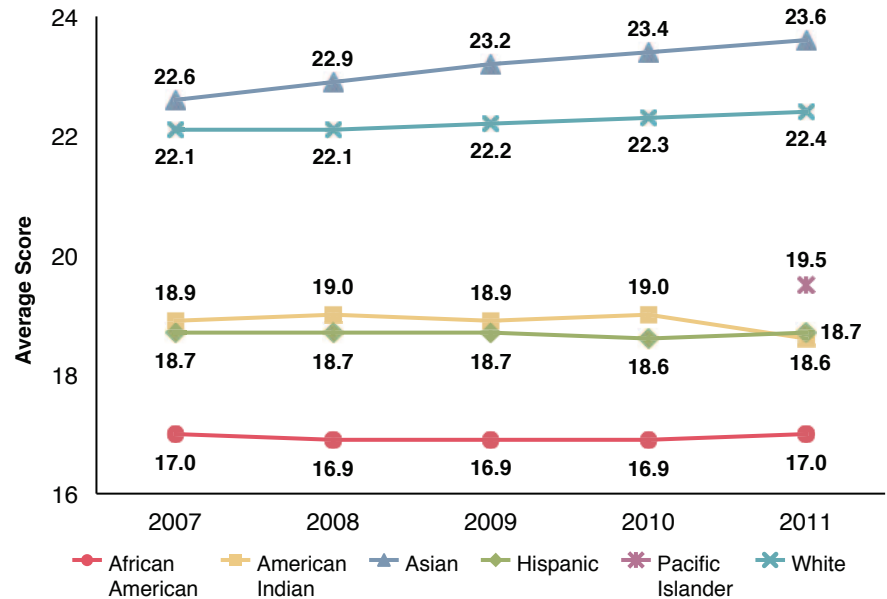
Asian graduates had the highest average ACT Composite scores and the largest score increase (+1.0 scale point). Average ACT Composite scores for White graduates increased by 0.3 point. These score changes have occurred as more students from each racial/ethnic group have taken the ACT.

Graph reads: Between 2007 and 2011, the average ACT Composite score for Asian high school graduates increased from 22.6 to 23.6.

Note: Race/ethnicity categories changed to reflect updated US Department of Education reporting requirements.

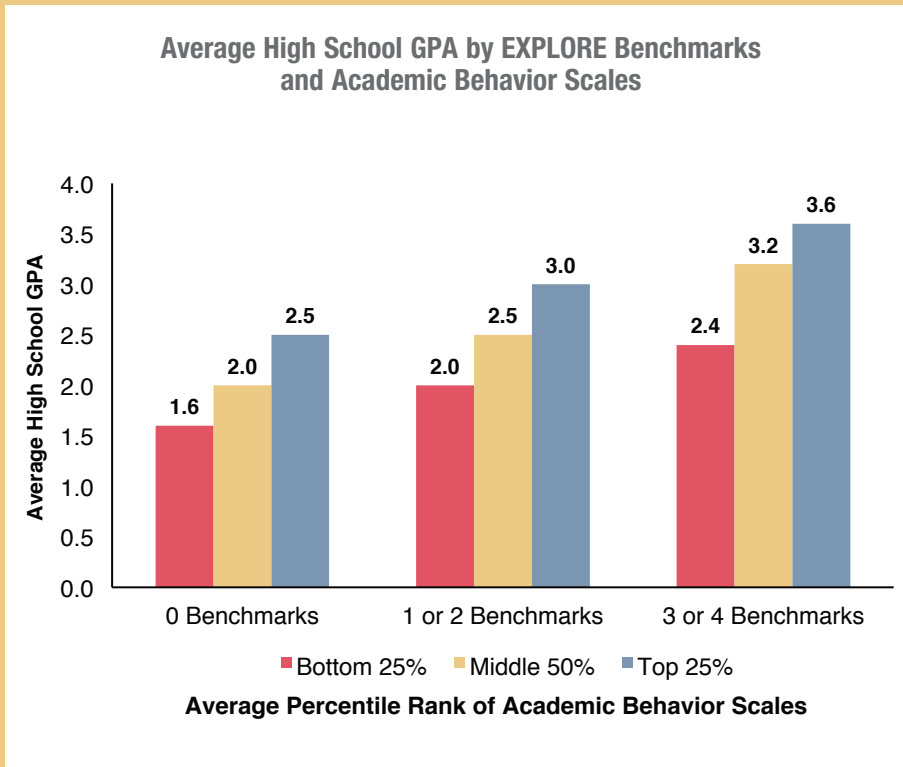
# Academic Performance

Average ACT Composite Test Scores by Race/Ethnicity, 2007–2011





# Academic Achievement & Academic Behaviors



## Impact of Academic Behaviors on High School Performance

ACT research based on a large sample shows that the combination of middle school academic achievement (as measured with EXPLORE) and academic behaviors (as measured with ENGAGE™) provide the strongest prediction of high school academic performance and success. This chart highlights the need to address students' academic behaviors to improve academic performance across all achievement levels.

Across all three EXPLORE Benchmark attainment levels, students with higher academic behavior levels had higher high school GPAs than students with lower academic behavior levels.

Note: Data are on 3,289 students in 22 middle schools across eight states who were tested with EXPLORE and ENGAGE, an assessment of academic behaviors. Most students in this sample completed high school in 2011. **These data do not reflect the entire 2011 ACT-tested high school graduate cohort.**

# Policies & Practices to Increase Readiness

## How to Increase Readiness

Approximately 28% of all 2011 ACT-tested high school graduates did not meet any of the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, meaning they were not prepared academically for first-year college courses in English Composition, College Algebra, Biology, and social sciences. States and schools can implement six policies and practices that can systemically increase the percentage of their students who are ready for college-level work.

**Essential Standards.** Since ACT first released *Making the Dream a Reality* in 2008, we have called for states to adopt education standards that prepare all students for the rigors of college or career training programs. With the adoption of the Common Core State Standards by 45 states and the District of Columbia, most states have taken that first step on the road to ensuring all students are ready for college or career. It is imperative now that policymakers and practitioners continue this process by aligning all aspects of their systems to college and career readiness.

**Common Expectations.** All states—especially those that have adopted the Common Core State Standards—should be aligning college and career readiness standards to a rigorous core curriculum for *all* high school students whether they are bound for college or work. The levels of expectation for college readiness and workforce training readiness should be comparable. To ensure students master the knowledge and skills to succeed after high school, ACT supports the core curriculum recommendations of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, specifically, that students take a core curriculum consisting of at least four years of English and three years each of mathematics, science, and social studies.

# Policies & Practices to Increase Readiness

**Clear Performance Standards.** States must define “how good is good enough” for college and career readiness. In addition to a consistent, rigorous set of essential K–12 *content* standards, states must define performance standards so that students, parents, and teachers know how well students must perform academically to have a reasonable chance of success at college or on the job. Based on decades of student performance data, ACT defines “college readiness” as students having a 50% chance of earning a grade of B or higher or about a 75% chance of earning a grade of C or higher in first-year college English Composition; College Algebra; Biology; or History, Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, or Economics.

**Rigorous High School Courses.** Having appropriate and aligned standards, coupled with a core curriculum, will adequately prepare high school students *only* if the courses are truly challenging. That is, taking the right *kinds* of courses matters more than taking the right *number* of courses. Students who take a rigorous core curriculum should be ready for credit-bearing first-year college courses without remediation.

**Early Monitoring and Intervention.** We know from our empirical data that students who take challenging curricula are much better prepared to graduate high school ready for college or career training opportunities. If students are to be ready for college or career when they graduate, their progress must be monitored closely so that deficiencies in foundational skills can be identified and remediated early, in upper elementary and middle school. In addition, age-appropriate career assessment, exploration, and planning activities that encourage students to consider and focus on personally relevant career options should be a part of this process so that students can plan their high school coursework accordingly.

# Policies & Practices to Increase Readiness

**Data-Driven Decisions.** States have been hard at work in developing longitudinal P–16 data systems—this work must continue and accelerate. If states are serious about ensuring more of their students are prepared for college and work in the 21st century, they must develop systems that allow schools and districts to closely monitor student performance at every stage of the learning pipeline, from preschool through the elementary, middle, and high school grades, all the way through college. Use of a longitudinal data system enables educators to identify students who are in need of academic interventions at an early stage, thus giving teachers and students more time to strengthen these skills before graduation. Longitudinal data systems provide a tool to schools to ensure all their students take and complete the right number and kinds of courses before graduation. Using a longitudinal assessment system also permits schools to evaluate the value added by each core course in helping students to become ready for college and career. Such systems also allow colleges to offer feedback reports to high schools that examine how well prepared each high school's graduates are for college. These reports can be used to strengthen high school curricula.

**The ACT® test**, one component of ACT's College and Career Readiness System that also includes **EXPLORE®** and **PLAN®**, measures students' academic readiness to make successful transitions to college and work after high school. Like EXPLORE (typically taken in 8th and 9th grades) and PLAN (typically taken in 10th grade), the ACT is first and foremost an achievement test. It is a measure whose tasks correspond to recognized high school learning experiences, measuring what students are able to do with what they have learned in school. The ACT is the most widely accepted and used test by postsecondary institutions across the United States for college admission and course placement.

**ACT National Curriculum Survey®**. Every three to four years, ACT conducts its National Curriculum Survey, in which we ask more than 20,000 educators nationwide across grades 7–14 to identify the knowledge and skills that are important for students to know to be ready for college-level work. We also examine the standards for instruction in grades 7–12 for all states. We then analyze the information to refine the scope and sequence for each section of the ACT. In this way, rather than imposing a test construct without empirical support, the ACT is able to represent a consensus among educators and curriculum experts about what is important for students to know and be able to do. ACT also uses this data to identify and define for educators and policymakers the content and skill alignment gaps that currently exist in the important transition from high school to college. For example, the most recent ACT National Curriculum Survey revealed that what postsecondary instructors expect entering college students to know is far more targeted and specific than what high school teachers view as important.

# Notes

**ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks.** Benchmarks are scores on the ACT subject area tests that represent the level of achievement required for students to have a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in corresponding credit-bearing first-year college courses. These college courses include English Composition, College Algebra, Biology, and an introductory social science course. Based on a nationally representative sample, the Benchmarks are median course placement values for these institutions and as such represent a *typical* set of expectations. The ACT College Readiness Benchmarks are:

| College Course      | Subject Area Test | EXPLORE Benchmark | PLAN Benchmark | ACT Benchmark |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|
| English Composition | English           | 13                | 15             | 18            |
| Social Sciences     | Reading           | 15                | 17             | 21            |
| College Algebra     | Mathematics       | 17                | 19             | 22            |
| Biology             | Science           | 20                | 21             | 24            |

**ACT's College Readiness Standards™** are precise descriptions of the essential skills and knowledge that students need to become ready for college and career, beginning in grade 8 and continuing through grade 12. Informed by the National Curriculum Survey, the College Readiness Standards are validated by actual student academic performance data through their alignment with the College Readiness Benchmarks. With the Benchmarks, the College Readiness Standards represent a single academic expectation for all students, regardless of whether they go on to college or career after high school.

**Career Fields and Projected Job Openings.** Data on the 2008–2018 projected job openings come from the US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. The following are example occupations for the five highest-growth career fields, nationally:

- Education—secondary school teachers, secondary school administrators

- Management—hotel/restaurant managers, convention planners

- Marketing/Sales—insurance agents, buyers

- Community Services—social workers, school counselors

- Computer/Information Specialties—computer programmers, database administrators

For more information on interpreting data in this report, or to learn how ACT can help your students increase their readiness for college and the workplace, go to [www.act.org/readiness/2011](http://www.act.org/readiness/2011).

# Resources

## ACT Research

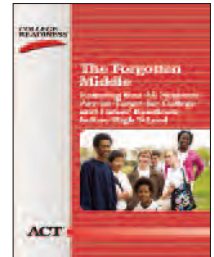
As a not-for-profit educational research organization, ACT is committed to producing research that focuses on key issues in education and workforce development. Our goal is to serve as a data resource. We strive to provide policymakers with the information they need to inform education and workforce development policy and to give educators the tools they need to lead more students toward college and career success. What follows are some of ACT's recent and most groundbreaking research studies. To review these studies, go to [www.act.org/research/summary](http://www.act.org/research/summary).

### **A First Look at the Common Core and College and Career Readiness**

Forty-five states have adopted the Common Core State Standards. Now, efforts to implement the standards take on primary importance. ACT provides this first look at student performance relative to the Common Core State Standards and college and career readiness.

### **The Forgotten Middle**

This report examines the factors that influence college and career readiness. The percentage of 8th graders on target to be ready for college-level work by the time they graduate from high school is so small that it raises questions not just about the prospect that these students can eventually be ready for college and career but also about whether they are even ready for high school.



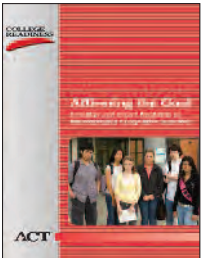


# Resources



## Mind the Gaps

In the research report *Mind the Gaps: How College Readiness Narrows Achievement Gaps in College Success*, ACT looks at steps that can be taken to improve college and career readiness and success among underserved populations. As a nation, we must close the achievement gap across racial/ethnic and family income groups. The report shows the types of policies that work to improve college and career readiness and success.



## Affirming the Goal

In our most recent research report, *Affirming the Goal: Is College and Career Readiness an Internationally Competitive Standard?*, we examine how performance standards in reading and math on PLAN compare to performance on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a worldwide assessment of 15-year-old students' academic achievement.



## Rigor at Risk

Among the motivations behind the federal government's publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 were the desire to see more students graduate from high school prepared for college and work and the need for more students to attend and graduate from college. *A Nation at Risk* proposed that every US high school require graduates to take a “core” curriculum—a minimum number of courses that would provide students with a “foundation of success for the after-school years.” Nearly a quarter-century later, in a climate in which US workers are dealing with new forms of technology and facing the challenges of a global economy, it is not only reasonable but increasingly urgent to ask: Have we succeeded in fulfilling the goals of *A Nation at Risk*?

# Resources

## On Course for Success

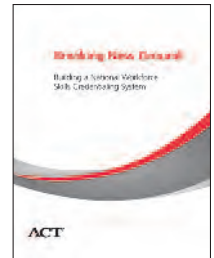
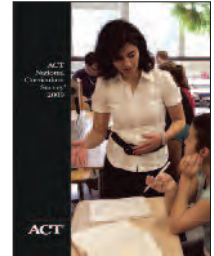
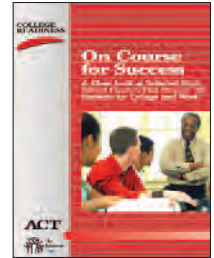
In *On Course for Success*, ACT and The Education Trust examine ten high schools with challenging student populations that have overcome the odds by fostering greater access to college. We found that when students are provided with high-level courses, qualified and experienced teachers, teaching that is flexible and responsive to students, and extra support when they need it, all students can be prepared to succeed.

## ACT National Curriculum Survey

Obtained every three to four years from middle, secondary, and postsecondary educators, this study collects data about what entering college students should know and be able to do to be ready for college-level coursework in English, math, reading, and science. The survey results inform ongoing efforts to develop, refine, and update common academic standards such as the Common Core State Standards, as well as to inform policymakers and educators. Results are also used to guide development of ACT's curriculum-based assessments to ensure they meet the needs of college and career readiness.

## Breaking New Ground

*Breaking New Ground: Building a National Workforce Skills Credentialing System* introduces the need and associated benefits for establishing a national workforce credentialing system. The report outlines the importance of bringing together a critical mass of state, national, and public and private workforce leaders to co-construct this foundational framework to address our national workforce challenges.





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