

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

Nebraska Key Findings

Performance

- The average ACT scale scores (reportable) in Nebraska decreased in all areas from 2015 to 2016:
 - ~ English and mathematics decreased by 0.2 point.
 - ~ Composite, reading, and science decreased by 0.1 point.
 - ~ All the average national ACT scale scores decreased:
 - English dropped 0.3
 - Mathematics and Composite dropped by 0.2
 - Reading and science dropped by 0.1
 - ~ Nebraska surpassed national scores in all areas:
 - English—Nebraska was 0.8 point higher than the national score.
 - Mathematics—Nebraska was 0.2 point higher than the national score.
 - Reading—Nebraska was 0.5 point higher than the national score.
 - Science—Nebraska was 0.7 point higher than the national score.
 - Composite—Nebraska was 0.6 point higher than the national score.
- Percent meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks for Nebraska vs. national:
 - ~ English—percent meeting the Benchmark decreased by 1%; nationally, the percent meeting the English Benchmark decreased by 3%. Nebraska students exceeded the national percent meeting the English Benchmark by 7%.
 - ~ Mathematics—percent meeting the Benchmark decreased by 1%; nationally, the percent meeting the mathematics Benchmark decreased by 1%. Nebraska students exceeded the national percent meeting the mathematics Benchmark by 2%.
 - ~ Reading—percent meeting the Benchmark decreased by 2%; nationally, the percent meeting the reading Benchmark decreased by 1%. Nebraska students exceeded the national percent meeting the reading Benchmark by 4%.
 - ~ Science—percent meeting the Benchmark decreased by 2%; nationally, the percent meeting the science Benchmark decreased by 2%. Nebraska students exceeded the national percent meeting the science Benchmark by 4%.
 - ~ All four Benchmarks—percent meeting all four Benchmarks decreased by 2%; nationally, the percent meeting all four Benchmarks decreased by 1%. Nebraska students exceeded the national percent meeting all four Benchmarks by 2%.
- The percent of Nebraska students who took the ACT with extended time impacts the reported scores. In 2015, 3% of the students took the ACT with extended time. That increased to 4% in 2016. Nationally, 4% took the ACT with extended time in 2015 and 5% took the ACT with extended time in 2016.

STEM

- This year, for the first time, ACT is providing a STEM score based on the student performance in the ACT mathematics and science tests.
 - ~ The Nebraska STEM score average was 21.4, compared to the national average of 20.9.
 - ~ 20% of Nebraska students and 20% of ACT-tested students nationwide met/exceeded the ACT STEM Benchmark of 26.

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 Nebraska 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 Nebraska, 74% 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
 - ~ 35% percent of Nebraska ACT-tested graduates took the exam only once, compared with 57% nationally.
- The top ten colleges to which Nebraska students sent ACT score reports are all Nebraska institutions:
 - ~ University of Nebraska Lincoln
 - ~ University of Nebraska Omaha
 - ~ University of Nebraska Kearney
 - ~ Wayne State University
 - ~ Creighton University
 - ~ Nebraska Wesleyan University
 - ~ Doane College
 - ~ Southwest Community College-Lincoln
 - ~ Metropolitan Community College
 - ~ Northeast Community College
- The top out-of-state colleges to which Nebraska students submitted their ACT scores include:
 - ~ Iowa State University
 - ~ University of Kansas
 - ~ Northwest Missouri State University
 - ~ Kansas State University
- The ACT Educational Opportunity Service (EOS) opt-in rates
 - ~ ACT EOS is a free service that allows students to receive free exposure, for recruiting purposes, to scholarship agencies and colleges/universities. Nationally, 73.1% opt into this service.
 - ~ In Nebraska, the following percents of ACT-tested subgroups opted in to EOS:
 - African American—85.1%
 - White—72.7%
 - Hispanic/Latino—81.0%
- Fee Waiver Usage
 - ~ In Nebraska, there were 4,422 fee waivers issued and 3,619 of those were used. This equates to a 81.8% usage rate. The national rate was 74.5%.
 - ~ ACT provides students fee waivers to provide more access and opportunity for students.

Pipeline

- Over the last five years, the racial/ethnic makeup of the ACT-tested population in Nebraska has seen some changes:
 - ~ The number of African American students taking the ACT has remained stable.
 - ~ The number of Hispanic students taking the ACT has increased substantially.
- The top educational majors for Nebraska students are:
 - ~ All students tested
 - Health Sciences and Technologies
 - Business
 - Education
 - Social Science—Law
 - Arts—Visual/Performing
 - ~ Planning two years of college or less
 - Repair, Production, and Construction
 - Health Sciences and Technology
 - Agriculture and Natural Resources Conservation
 - Business
 - Arts—Visual/Performing
 - ~ Planning four years of college or more
 - Health Sciences and Technologies
 - Business
 - Education
 - Social Service—Law

ACT Footprint

ACT Aspire® Summative	ACT Aspire® Periodic	ACT Engage®	ACT QualityCore®	PreACT™	ACT WorkKeys®
3,613	24	133	–	1,324*	410

* 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.

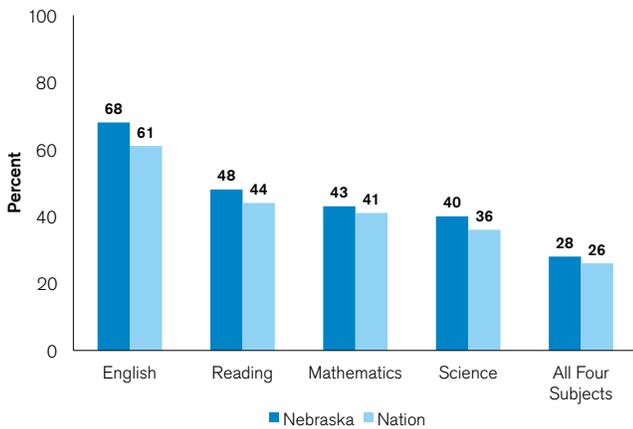
Special State Talking Points

- In 2016, ACT honored exemplars in 41 states as part of our College & Career Readiness Campaign. In Nebraska, these honorees include:
 - ~ Student—Justin Hennessy, Waverly High School (nominated)

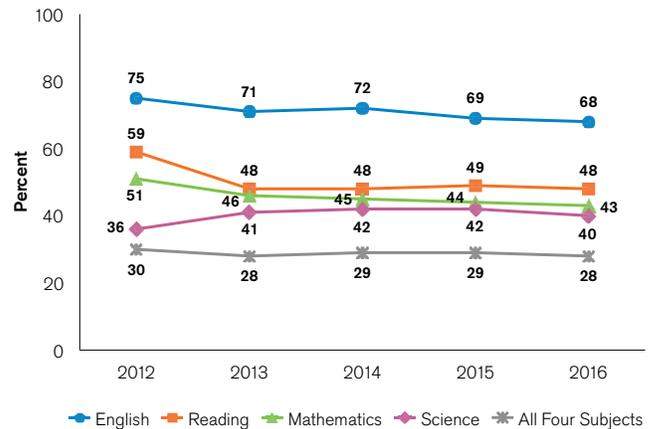
Your State College and Career Readiness Attainment, Participation, and Opportunity

Nebraska

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.

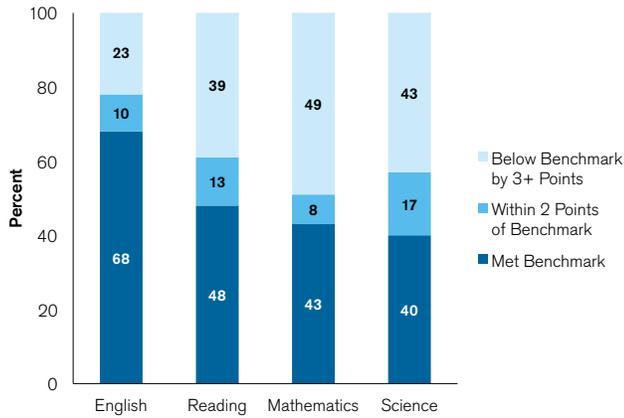
Student Data Trends

- Between 2012 and 2016, the number of students taking the ACT in Nebraska increased by 12.2%.

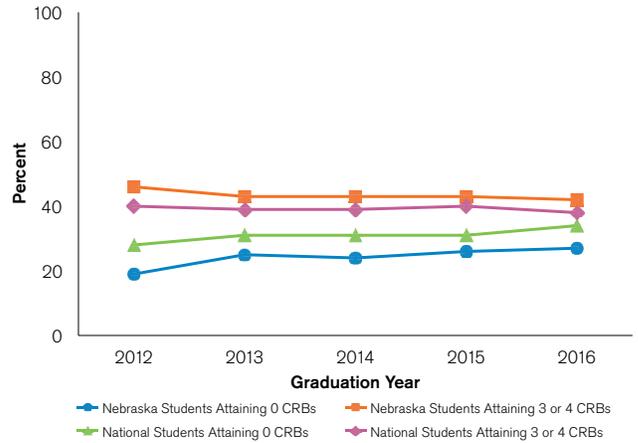
Student Condition Data Interest Trends: 2012–2016, State vs. Nation

Outcome	Cohort	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Percent Tested	Nebraska	78%	84%	86%	88%	88%
	Nation	52%	54%	57%	59%	64%
N Tested	Nebraska	16,581	17,745	17,768	18,347	18,598
	Nation	1,666,017	1,799,243	1,845,787	1,924,436	2,090,342
Average English Score	Nebraska	21.8	21.1	21.3	21.1	20.9
	Nation	20.5	20.2	20.3	20.4	20.1
Average Reading Score	Nebraska	22.3	21.8	22	21.9	21.8
	Nation	21.3	21.1	21.3	21.4	21.3
Average Mathematics Score	Nebraska	21.7	21.1	21.1	21	20.8
	Nation	21.1	20.9	20.9	20.8	20.6
Average Science Score	Nebraska	21.9	21.5	21.7	21.6	21.5
	Nation	20.9	20.7	20.8	20.9	20.8
Average Composite Score	Nebraska	22	21.5	21.7	21.5	21.4
	Nation	21.1	20.9	21	21	20.8

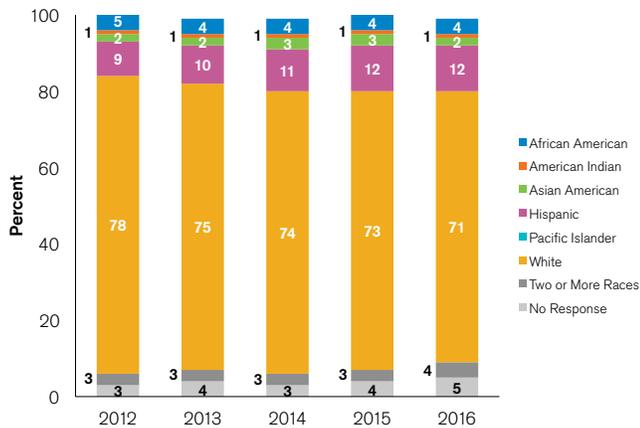
Percent of 2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment and Subject



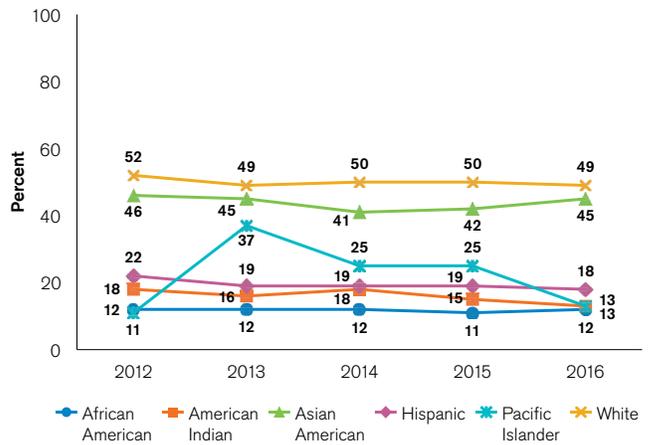
Trends in Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks (CRBs) Attained



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

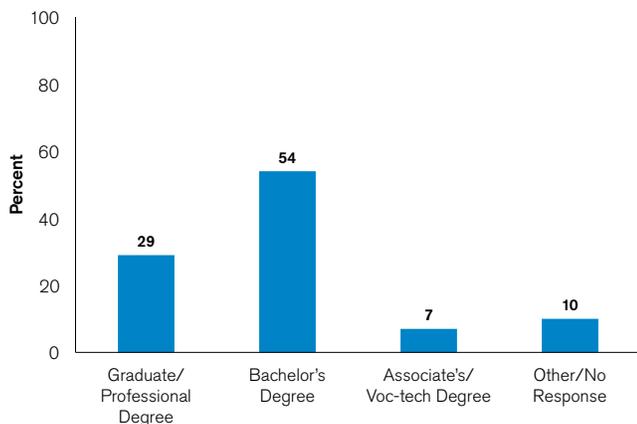


Percent of 2012–2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting Three or More Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity



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 90% of Nebraska's 2016 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 92% of Nebraska's 2015 ACT-tested graduating class aspired to enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 73% who actually did enroll. If we fully closed the aspirational gap, an additional 3,380 of the 2015 ACT-tested graduates from Nebraska 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

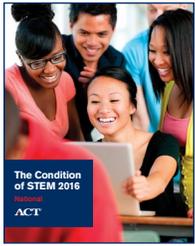
ACT[®] Engage[®]

- 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

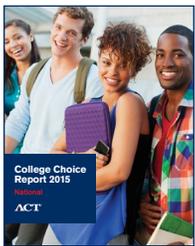
Key ACT Research



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."