

## 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

## California Key Findings

### Performance

- 127,225 students, representing 32.5% of the California graduating class of 2016, took the ACT at least once. This is a 4.4% increase over the class of 2015. This is consistent with year-over-year testing that has seen a 23.5% increase in ACT-tested students since 2012.
- Hispanic/Latino students were the largest demographic testing with the ACT, representing 39% of 2016 graduates. In comparison, White students made up 28% of the testing group.
- In California, 2016 graduates had an increase or equaled the percentage of students meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks in all four tested subjects, compared to 2015 graduates. The California data compared to national data (Benchmark score in parentheses):
  - ~ English—72% met Benchmark with an average score of 22.1; nationwide, 61% met Benchmark with an average score of 20.1
  - ~ Mathematics—56% met Benchmark with an average score of 22.7; nationwide, 41% met Benchmark with an average score of 20.6
  - ~ Reading—55% met benchmark with an average score of 22.9; nationwide, 44% met Benchmark with an average score of 21.3
  - ~ Science—45% met Benchmark with an average score of 22.1; nationwide, 36% met Benchmark with an average score of 20.8
  - ~ 37% of California students met all four Benchmarks, compared to 26% nationally.
  - ~ ACT Composite score—California average Composite score is 22.6, while the national average is 20.8.
- Students who indicated a "core or more" curriculum outscored students with "less than core" in all categories:
  - ~ English—74% compared to 62%; average score of 22.5 compared to 20.6
  - ~ Mathematics—58% compared to 45%; average score of 23.0 compared to 21.3
  - ~ Reading—56% compared to 46%; average score of 23.1 compared to 21.5
  - ~ Science—47% compared to 36%; average score of 22.4 compared to 20.8
  - ~ Composite—39% compared to 28%; average score of 22.9 compared to 21.2
  - ~ STEM—32% compared to 23%; average score of 22.9 compared to 21.3

### STEM

- California graduates who took advanced science and math courses show higher levels of achievement.
  - ~ Students who took physics earned significantly higher average ACT science scores and were more likely to meet or surpass the ACT College Readiness Benchmark in science than those who did not.
  - ~ The highest performing students in mathematics took a combination of four or more years of classes, including those who took geometry, trigonometry, calculus, or other advanced math courses.
- STEM Benchmarks
  - ~ 31% of California students met the STEM Benchmark in 2016.
    - The California average ACT STEM score was 22.6. The national average score was 20.9.
    - The California average ACT mathematics score was 29.5. The national average score was 28.7. (The ACT STEM mathematics Benchmark is 27.)
    - The California average ACT science score was 28.7. The national average score was 28.6. (The ACT STEM science Benchmark is 25.)

### 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 California 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 California, 78% 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:
  - ~ The data are clear: In California, a majority of Hispanic, White, and African American students tested only once. However, data show that students in all three groups who tested at least twice scored 1.2 to 1.9 points higher than their peers who tested only once.
  - ~ Of the ACT-tested 2016 graduates testing during their 10th-, 11th-, or 12th-grade years:
    - In comparison to their White counterparts, California Hispanic and African American students are much more likely to wait until their senior year to test and to test only once, limiting their postsecondary access and opportunities.
    - However, there has been a decrease from 2014 to 2016 in the percent taking their first and only test as seniors among White, Hispanic, and African American students.
- Twenty-eight of the top 30 schools selected by students were in California. The University of Oregon was 30th. The top five schools, the total number of students selecting the school, and the number selecting the school as their first choice are below:

	Institution	Total	1st Choice
1.	University of California-Los Angeles	7,995	2,586
2.	San Diego State University	7,116	2,205
3.	California State University-Long Beach	6,754	1,723
4.	University of California-Irvine	6,563	1,936
5.	University of California-Davis	6,426	2,203

- Fee Waiver Usage
  - ~ In California, there were 64,351 fee waivers issued and 48,960 of those were used. This equates to a 76.1% usage rate. The national rate was 74.5%.
  - ~ 71.0%, or 10,933, of all unused fee waivers were issued to Hispanic/Latino students.
  - ~ ACT provides students fee waivers to provide more access and opportunity for students.
- ACT Educational Opportunity Service (EOS) opt-in rates
  - ~ 74.5% of the 2016 California graduating class opted in to EOS, allowing postsecondary institutions to search for those students. The national average was 73.1%.
- “Get Your Name in the Game” initiative.
  - ~ In order to increase access to postsecondary education for traditionally underserved students, ACT provides postsecondary institutions with free access to the names of underserved students who opt in to EOS. Nationally, 725,000 students participate.
  - ~ In total, 13 California colleges and universities participated in this initiative, accessing 143,654 student names in 2015 and 2016.

## Pipeline

- Only 3% of ACT-tested California 2016 graduates expressed an interest in pursuing education as a major or career. Those students earned an average ACT Composite score of 20.3, lower than the state average of 22.6. In comparison, 11% expressed an interest in business.
- Aspirations matter. Students in California who aspire to a higher level of postsecondary education achieve higher ACT Composite scores:
  - ~ Graduates aspiring to a professional degree earn an average Composite score of 23.9.
  - ~ Graduates aspiring to a graduate degree earn an average Composite score of 24.5.
  - ~ Graduates aspiring to a bachelor’s degree earn an average Composite score of 21.1.
- 18% of students who took the ACT in California listed “Undecided” as their planned educational major—higher than the national average of 13%. This is a great opportunity to expose students to the ACT Interest Inventory at an earlier age with ACT Profile® and PreACT™, allowing students starting at age 13 to see the connection between their personal characteristics and potential majors/careers.

## ACT Footprint

ACT Aspire® Summative	ACT Aspire® Periodic	ACT Engage®	ACT QualityCore®	PreACT™	ACT WorkKeys®
117,248	5,136	1,086	–	9,228*	18,320

\* 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.*

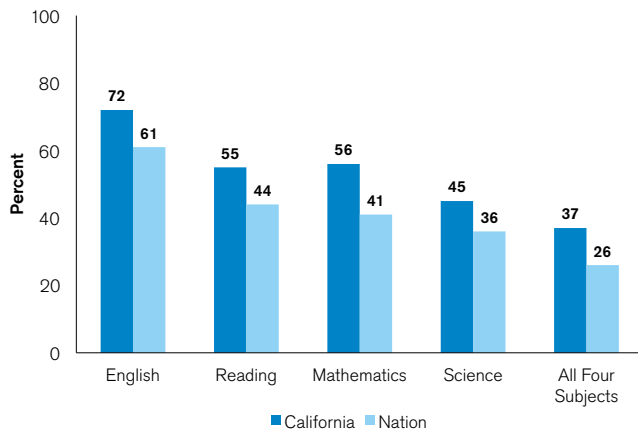
## Special State Talking Points

- 2016 California College & Career Readiness Campaign honorees:
  - ~ High School: Hawthorne Math and Science Academy
  - ~ Student: Irving Huerta, Mira Loma High School
- California ACT State Conference
  - ~ 218 educators attended the 2016 California ACT State Organization conference on February 26, 2016 at California State University-Fullerton.
- 2015–16 College and Career Readiness Workshops
  - ~ ACT provided College and Career Readiness Workshops in 15 cities throughout the state for 583 counselors and other educators in 2016.

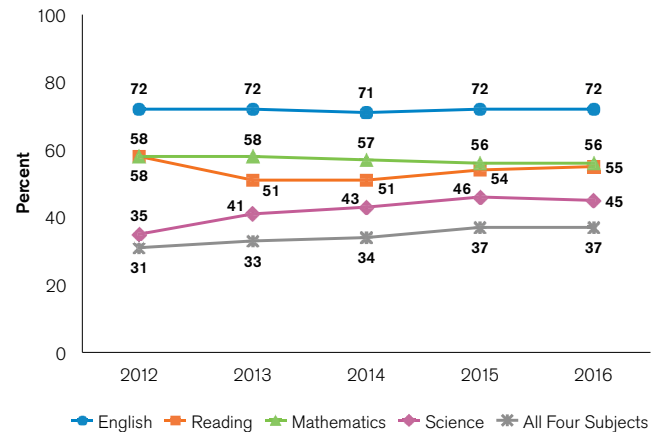
# Your State College and Career Readiness Attainment, Participation, and Opportunity

## California

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.

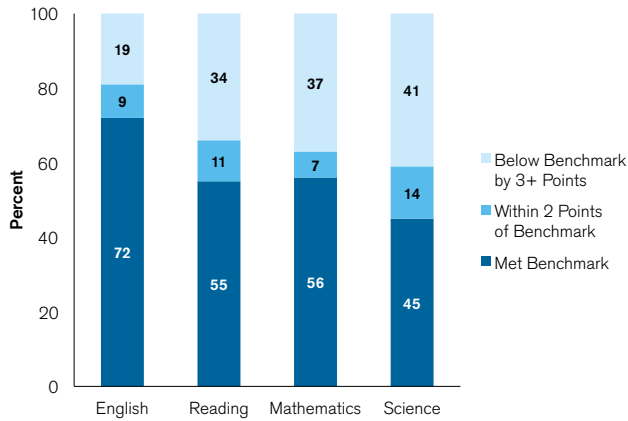
## Student Data Trends

- Between 2012 and 2016, the number of students taking the ACT in California increased by 23.5%.

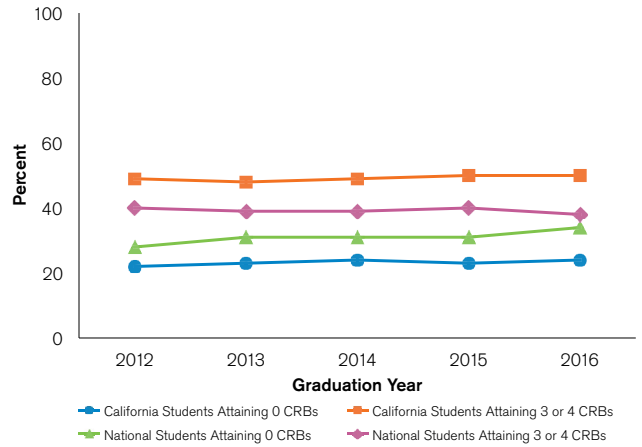
Student Condition Data Interest Trends: 2012–2016, State vs. Nation

Outcome	Cohort	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Percent Tested	California	25%	26%	29%	30%	33%
	Nation	52%	54%	57%	59%	64%
N Tested	California	103,024	107,243	113,732	121,815	127,225
	Nation	1,666,017	1,799,243	1,845,787	1,924,436	2,090,342
Average English Score	California	21.6	21.6	21.8	22.1	22.1
	Nation	20.5	20.2	20.3	20.4	20.1
Average Reading Score	California	22.1	22.3	22.3	22.6	22.9
	Nation	21.3	21.1	21.3	21.4	21.3
Average Mathematics Score	California	22.8	22.8	22.8	22.7	22.7
	Nation	21.1	20.9	20.9	20.8	20.6
Average Science Score	California	21.5	21.5	21.7	22	22.1
	Nation	20.9	20.7	20.8	20.9	20.8
Average Composite Score	California	22.1	22.2	22.3	22.5	22.6
	Nation	21.1	20.9	21	21	20.8

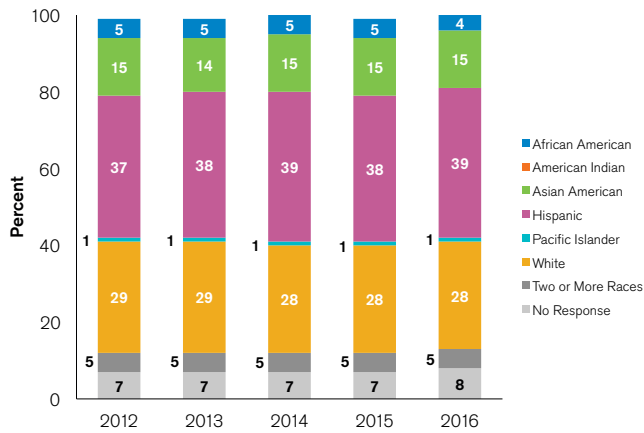
**Percent of 2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment and Subject**



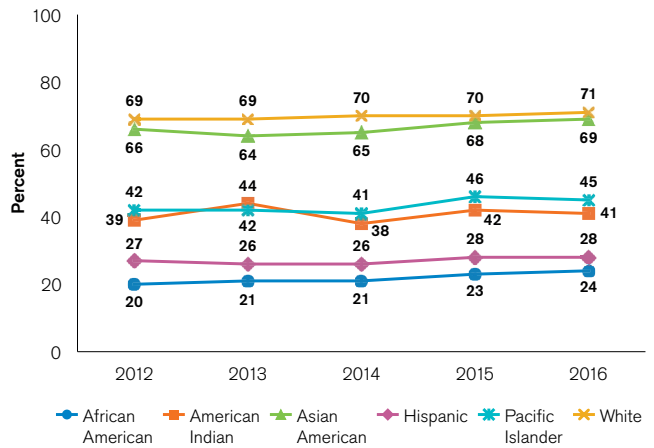
**Trends in Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks (CRBs) Attained**



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

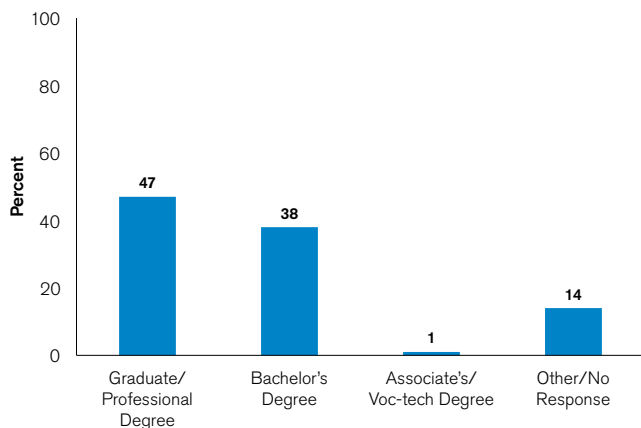


**Percent of 2012–2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting Three or More Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity**



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 86% of California's 2016 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 86% of California's 2015 ACT-tested graduating class aspired to enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 82% who actually did enroll. If we fully closed the aspirational gap, an additional 4,807 of the 2015 ACT-tested graduates from California 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<sup>®</sup>

- Enhancements to ACT Score Reports starting in September 2016
- Introduction of ACT Kaplan Online Prep Live in September 2016
- New Score Reports

### Pre-ACT<sup>™</sup>

- 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<sup>®</sup> 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<sup>®</sup> Aspire<sup>®</sup>

- 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

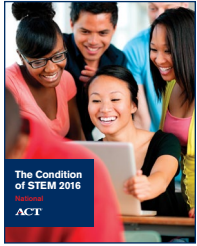
### ACT<sup>®</sup> Engage<sup>®</sup>

- 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<sup>®</sup> WorkKeys<sup>®</sup>

- 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

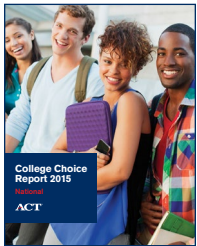
## Key ACT Research



### **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."