

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

Delaware Key Findings

Performance

- Use of the ACT in Delaware continues to grow every year.
- In Delaware, the percent of students meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks increased in three subject areas:
 - ~ A 2% increase in mathematics, from 59% to 61%
 - ~ A 1% increase in both English and reading
 - ~ The percentage of Delaware students meeting all four Benchmarks increased from 42% to 44%; that percentage has been increasing for the last five years.
 - ~ The percentage of students meeting zero Benchmarks decreased from 16.4% to 15.9%; that percentage has been declining for the last four years.
- Relative to ACT Composite scores, Delaware saw the following:
 - ~ Even as the size of the state's graduating class taking the ACT has grown, the average ACT Composite score has increased from 23.5 to 23.6. This is notable, as average scores tend to decrease with a broadening of the testing base.
 - ~ The average state Composite score, 23.6, currently exceeds the national average of 20.8.
 - ~ The average Composite score of African American graduates increased from 2015, up 0.8 points.
- Delaware 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.
 - ~ Students who took a fourth year of math in high school, regardless of course, significantly outperformed those students who did not, in both ACT mathematics scores and in Benchmark attainment.
 - ~ Those students who reported taking Advanced Placement, accelerated, or honors courses scored significantly higher than their peers.

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 Delaware 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 Delaware, 85% 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

- 67.2% of Delaware ACT-tested graduates took the exam only once—higher than the national average of 57%.
- For Delaware graduates, 68.1% African American students sat for their first and only test in 12th grade, compared to 36.7% of White students. Note that underserved learners are less likely to test, less likely to test early, and less likely to retest, limiting opportunities for intervention and postsecondary access.
- The ethnic breakdown of test takers in the last few years has been consistent, while the number of test takers has steadily increased.
- Below are the top five colleges and universities to which Delaware graduates sent their ACT scores:
 1. University of Delaware
 2. Pennsylvania State University (University Park campus)
 3. Temple University
 4. Drexel University
 5. University of Maryland College Park
- Receiving information was very important to Delaware graduates; 67.2% opted in to the ACT Educational Opportunity Service (EOS). Colleges use that service to contact students who appear to be good matches and to jump-start the recruitment process.
- Fee Waiver Usage
 - ~ In Delaware, there were 265 fee waivers issued and 203 of those were used. This equates to a 76.6% usage rate. The national rate was 74.5%.
 - ~ ACT provides students fee waivers to provide more access and opportunity for students.

Pipeline

- Only 4% of ACT-tested Delaware 2016 graduates expressed an interest in pursuing education as a major or career. Those students earned an average ACT Composite score of 20.5, lower than the state average of 23.6. In comparison, 19% expressed an interest in pursuing Health Sciences and Technologies.
- The chart below shows students' interest (jobs/majors):

Student Interest	
1	Health Sciences and Technologies
2	Engineering
3	Business
4	Sciences: Biological and Physical
5	Social Sciences and Law

- Aspirations matter. Students in Delaware who aspire to a higher level of postsecondary education achieve higher ACT Composite scores:
 - ~ Graduates who aspire to a graduate degree earn an average Composite score of 24.2.
 - ~ Graduates who aspire to a bachelor's degree earn an average Composite score of 21.8.
 - ~ Graduates who aspire to an associate's degree earn an average Composite score of 18.5.

ACT Footprint

ACT Aspire® Summative	ACT Aspire® Periodic	ACT Engage®	ACT QualityCore®	PreACT™	ACT WorkKeys®
295	–	271	–	275*	165

* 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.

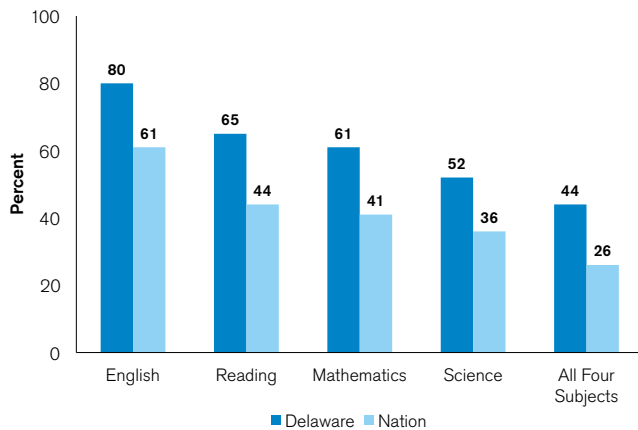
Special State Talking Points

- Delaware State University continues to prepare for a major testing event in October as part of their First in the World (FITW) Grant. This should have a significant impact on the size of the ACT test-taking population in Delaware in future years.

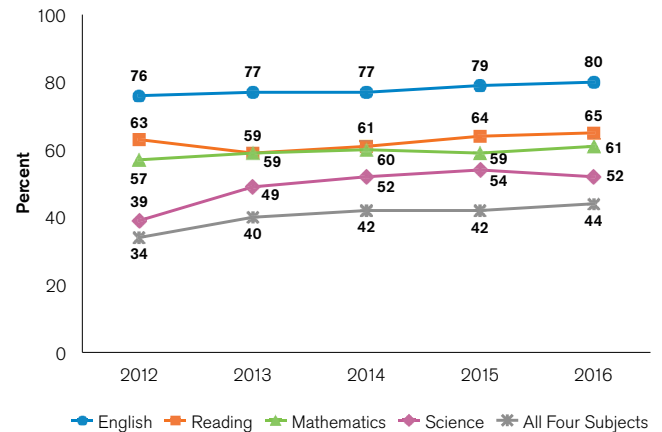
Your State College and Career Readiness Attainment, Participation, and Opportunity

Delaware

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.

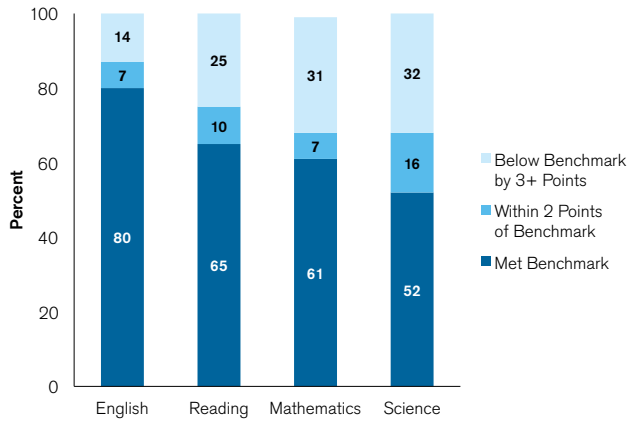
Student Data Trends

- Between 2012 and 2016, the number of students taking the ACT in Delaware increased by 43.8%.

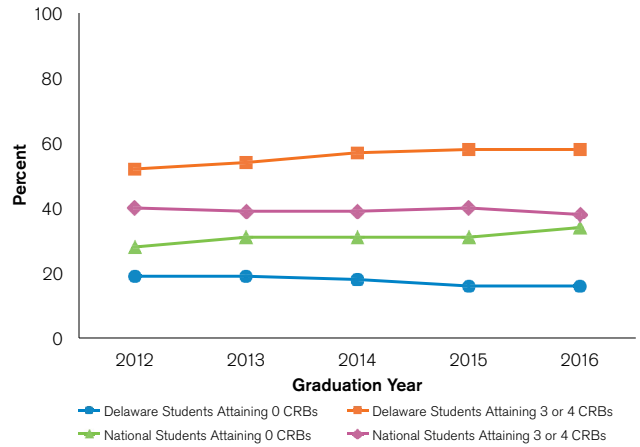
Student Condition Data Interest Trends: 2012–2016, State vs. Nation

Outcome	Cohort	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Percent Tested	Delaware	14%	15%	18%	21%	21%
	Nation	52%	54%	57%	59%	64%
N Tested	Delaware	1,328	1,423	1,647	1,869	1,910
	Nation	1,666,017	1,799,243	1,845,787	1,924,436	2,090,342
Average English Score	Delaware	22.3	22.5	22.7	23.2	23.3
	Nation	20.5	20.2	20.3	20.4	20.1
Average Reading Score	Delaware	23	23.4	23.7	24.1	24.3
	Nation	21.3	21.1	21.3	21.4	21.3
Average Mathematics Score	Delaware	22.4	22.8	23.2	23	23.2
	Nation	21.1	20.9	20.9	20.8	20.6
Average Science Score	Delaware	22.1	22.4	22.9	23.1	23.2
	Nation	20.9	20.7	20.8	20.9	20.8
Average Composite Score	Delaware	22.6	22.9	23.2	23.5	23.6
	Nation	21.1	20.9	21	21	20.8

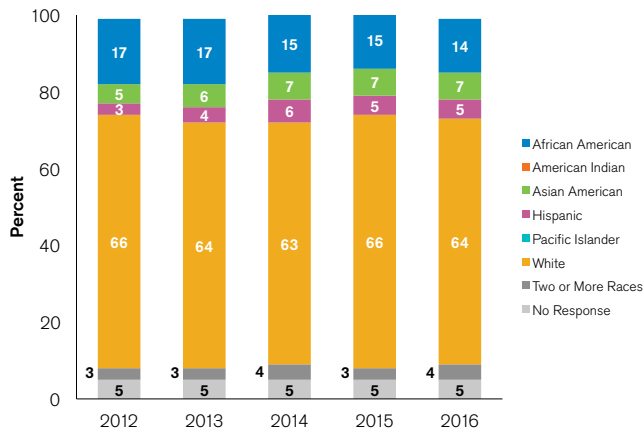
Percent of 2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment and Subject



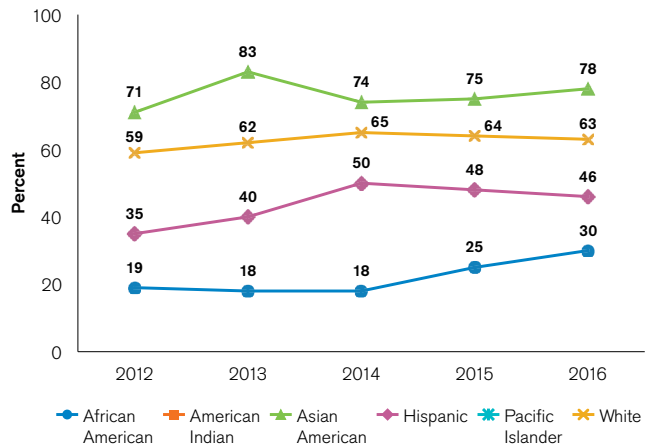
Trends in Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks (CRBs) Attained



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



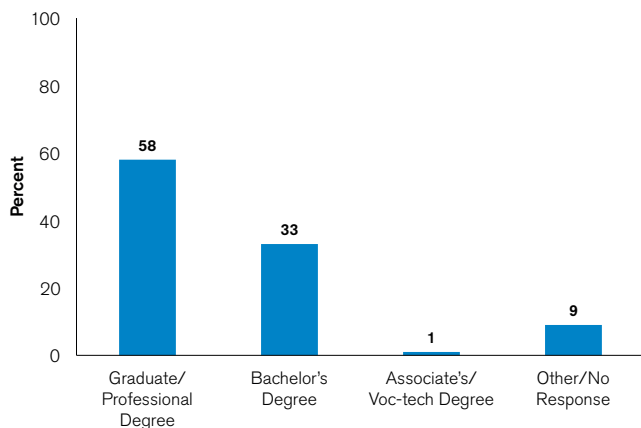
Percent of 2012–2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting Three or More Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity



Note: Values less than 0.5% will not appear.

Note: Groups having fewer than 10 students in a year are not represented.

Percent of 2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Educational Aspirations



There is good news in that 91% of Delaware's 2016 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 90% of Delaware's 2015 ACT-tested graduating class aspired to enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 87% who actually did enroll. If we fully closed the aspirational gap, an additional 54 of the 2015 ACT-tested graduates from Delaware 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

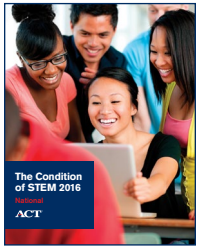
ACT[®] Engage[®]

- 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

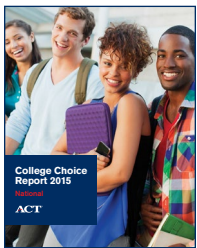
Key ACT Research



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."