

## 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

## Texas Key Findings

### Performance

- A record number of students—142,877—took the ACT in the Texas 2016 graduating class. This is a significant increase of 12.7%, or 18,113 students.
  - ~ Most of the growth in Texas came from the Hispanic/Latino population, which grew from 39% in 2015 to 41% in 2016, a total of 57,960 students. Nationally, this population represents 16% of the ACT testing population.
  - ~ The ACT Composite score in Texas dropped to 20.6 (-0.3 point). The national Composite score dropped to 20.8 (-0.2 point). ACT research predicts similar changes in performance with substantial increases in the test-taking population.
  - ~ Composite scores in Texas by subgroups:
    - White students' average score fell to 23.2 (-0.1), compared to the national level of 22.2.
    - Hispanic/Latino students' average score decreased to 18.4 (-0.3), compared to the national level of 18.7.
    - African American students' Composite scores remained steady at 17.6, significantly above the national Composite score of 17.0.
- In Texas, the percent of students meeting the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks were as follows:
  - ~ A 2% decrease in English, from 59% to 57%
  - ~ A 2% decrease in mathematics, from 44% to 42%; however, Texas continues to exceed the national average of 41%.
  - ~ A 1% decrease in reading, from 44% to 43%
  - ~ A 3% decrease in science, from 38% to 35%
  - ~ A 1% decrease in those meeting all four benchmarks, from 27% to 26%
  - ~ Of note in Texas, are the large number of students who fall within the score band ranges just below the Benchmark scores: for example, mathematics, where 34% of the students fell into the 16–19 score range.
- Student course-taking patterns have an impact on performance. 90% of Texas students reported taking a “core or more” curriculum. ACT considers “core” to be four or more years of English and three or more years of math, social studies, and natural sciences, respectively.
  - ~ Students taking “core or more” had an average Composite score of 20.9, compared to 17.6 for students taking “less than core.”

### STEM

- The STEM score is an average of the ACT mathematics and science scores and describes students' overall proficiency across the two subjects. The STEM Benchmark score is 26.
- The average ACT STEM score in Texas was 21.0, which exceeds the national average of 20.9.

## 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 Texas 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 Texas, 67% 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
  - ~ In comparison to their White counterparts, Texas Hispanic/Latino 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.
  - ~ In the 2016 Texas graduating class, 63% of students took the ACT one time, compared to 57% of students nationally. Texas students who took the ACT twice improved their scores by 2.4 points.
- Below are the top five colleges and universities to which Texas graduates sent their ACT scores:
  1. Texas A&M University (main campus)—22,673
  2. University of Texas—Austin—20,222
  3. Texas Tech University—13,401
  4. Texas State University—13,328
  5. Baylor University—11,445
- ACT's Educational Opportunity Service (EOS) opt-in rates
  - ~ EOS is a free service that allows students to learn about educational, scholarship, career, and financial aid opportunities from colleges, universities, financial aid and scholarship agencies, and other organizations that offer educational programs. 78.3% of Texas test takers opted into EOS. This is above the national average of 73.1%.

- ACT's "Get Your Name in the Game" campaign expands opportunity by helping students find colleges that would be a good fit. In Texas, 48,576 student names were accessed, with the largest order of 24,398 from Texas Christian University.
- Fee waiver usage
  - ~ ACT provides fee waivers for students who qualify for free and reduced lunch to use on national test dates. In Texas:
    - 71,823 fee waivers were issued.
    - 50,599, or 70.5%, were used; however, 29.6% were not used, compared to 21.9% nationally.
    - The unused waivers includes 14,772 waivers issued to Hispanic/Latino students.

## Pipeline

- The top five educational majors reported by the 2016 Texas graduating class are:
  - ~ Health Sciences and Technologies—26,505 students; average Composite score of 20.3
  - ~ Undecided—16,745 students; average Composite score of 21.2
  - ~ Business—15,939 students; average Composite score of 20.9
  - ~ Engineering—15,893 students; average Composite score of 22.9
  - ~ Social Sciences/Law—10,817 students; average Composite score of 20.2

## ACT Footprint

ACT Aspire® Summative	ACT Aspire® Periodic	ACT Engage®	ACT QualityCore®	PreACT™	ACT WorkKeys®
35,525	316	18,520	–	3,509*	15,339

\* 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.*

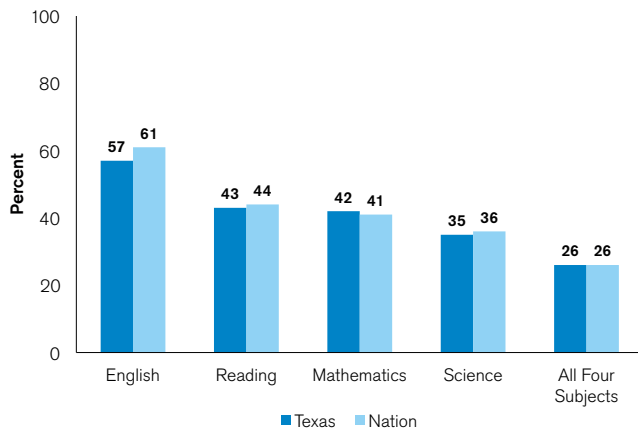
## Special State Talking Points

- The Texas ACT Council recognized several honorees in 2016:
  - ~ San Jacinto Community College
  - ~ Trinidad Garza Early High School at Mountain View
  - ~ Diana Ramirez, Venus High School
- ACT conducted 17 College and Career Readiness Workshops across the state.

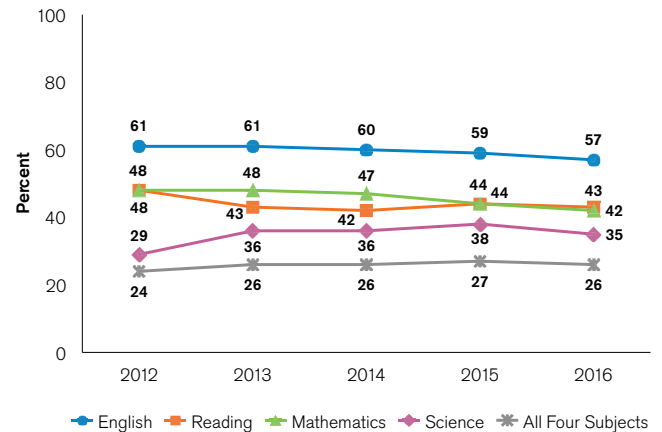
# Your State College and Career Readiness Attainment, Participation, and Opportunity

## Texas

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.

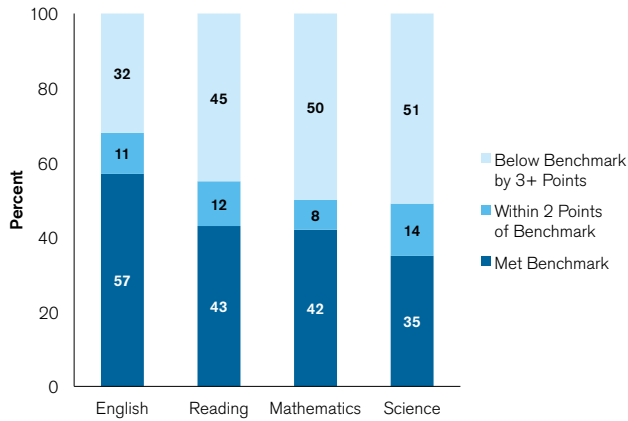
## Student Data Trends

- Between 2012 and 2016, the number of students taking the ACT in Texas increased by 29.7%.

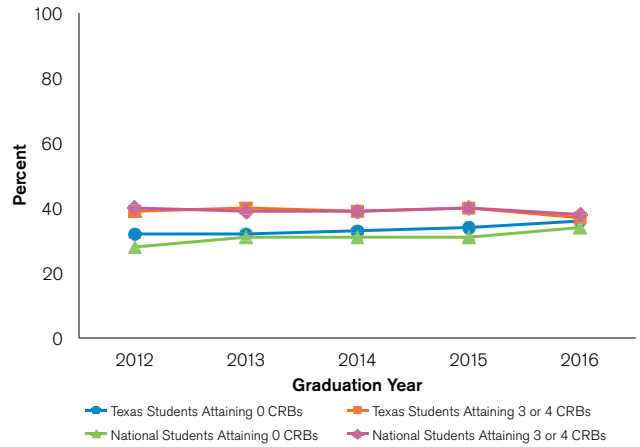
Student Condition Data Interest Trends: 2012–2016, State vs. Nation

Outcome	Cohort	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Percent Tested	Texas	39%	37%	40%	41%	46%
	Nation	52%	54%	57%	59%	64%
N Tested	Texas	110,180	109,841	116,547	124,764	142,877
	Nation	1,666,017	1,799,243	1,845,787	1,924,436	2,090,342
Average English Score	Texas	19.6	19.8	19.8	19.8	19.4
	Nation	20.5	20.2	20.3	20.4	20.1
Average Reading Score	Texas	20.8	21	21.1	21.1	21
	Nation	21.3	21.1	21.3	21.4	21.3
Average Mathematics Score	Texas	21.4	21.5	21.4	21.1	20.7
	Nation	21.1	20.9	20.9	20.8	20.6
Average Science Score	Texas	20.8	20.9	21	21	20.7
	Nation	20.9	20.7	20.8	20.9	20.8
Average Composite Score	Texas	20.8	20.9	20.9	20.9	20.6
	Nation	21.1	20.9	21	21	20.8

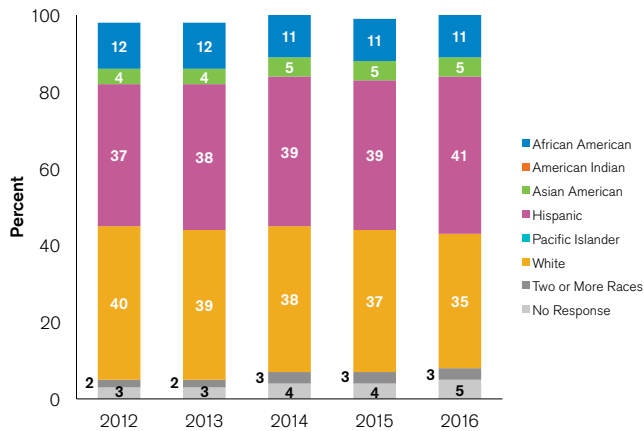
**Percent of 2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates by ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment and Subject**



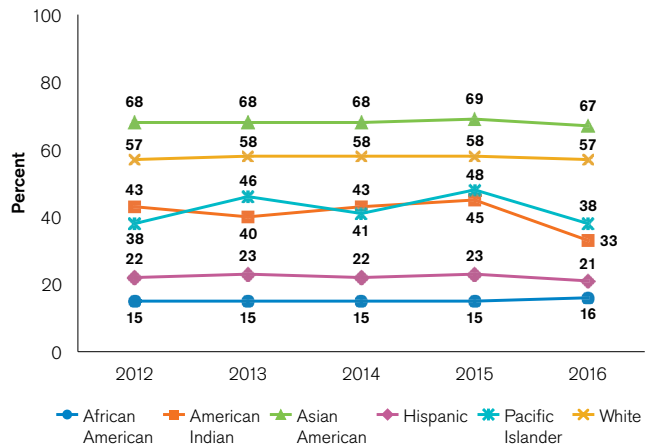
**Trends in Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Number of ACT College Readiness Benchmarks (CRBs) Attained**



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

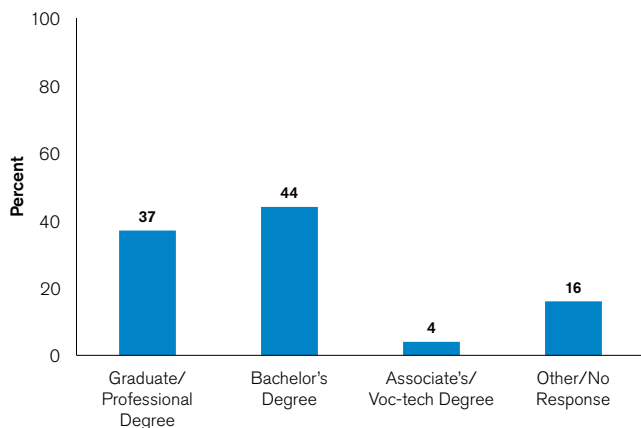


**Percent of 2012–2016 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting Three or More Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity**



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 84% of Texas's 2016 ACT-tested graduates aspired to postsecondary education. Interestingly enough, 85% of Texas's 2015 ACT-tested graduating class aspired to enroll in postsecondary education, compared to 72% who actually did enroll. If we fully closed the aspirational gap, an additional 15,729 of the 2015 ACT-tested graduates from Texas 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

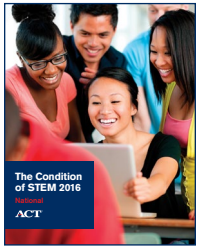
### ACT<sup>®</sup> Engage<sup>®</sup>

- 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

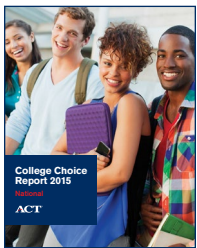
## Key ACT Research



### **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."