

NATIONAL OVERVIEW

ACT's Unique Value-Added

ACT is uniquely qualified to help states and school districts prepare more of their students for college and careers.

ACT has been measuring the academic achievement of 11th- and 12th-grade students since 1959, their career aspirations since 1969, and their academic preparation in high school since 1985.

ACT has built a data-monitoring system that includes each of these areas for 8th and 10th graders and has been monitoring student readiness and success through college for nearly two decades. Moreover, every 3 to 4 years, ACT surveys more than 20,000 high school and college educators to pinpoint the knowledge and skills needed for first-year college coursework.

ACT is the only not-for-profit organization with decades' worth of empirical data showing exactly what happens to high school graduates once they get to college or to work—based on how well they were prepared in middle and high school.

These unique data sets are an invaluable resource as ACT works closely with states and school districts to transform the nation's P-20 education system.



Measuring College and Career Readiness

The Class of 2009

State of College Readiness

Percentage of 2009 ACT-tested graduates meeting College Readiness Benchmarks



College Readiness Is Relatively Stable for 2009 U.S. High School Grads, Even as Number of Students Taking ACT® Test Climbs to New Heights

Other Key Findings:

- Percentage of graduates meeting all four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks increased even as the number of test-takers rapidly expands
- Expanded pool of test-takers includes virtually all high school graduates in five states
- Increase in statewide testing offers access and opportunity to new groups of students, some who had not seriously considered college
- Average national ACT Composite score for class of 2009 is 21.1, unchanged from last year

Five-Year Trends

ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks

The minimum ACT scores that indicate whether high school graduates are likely ready for college-level work are:

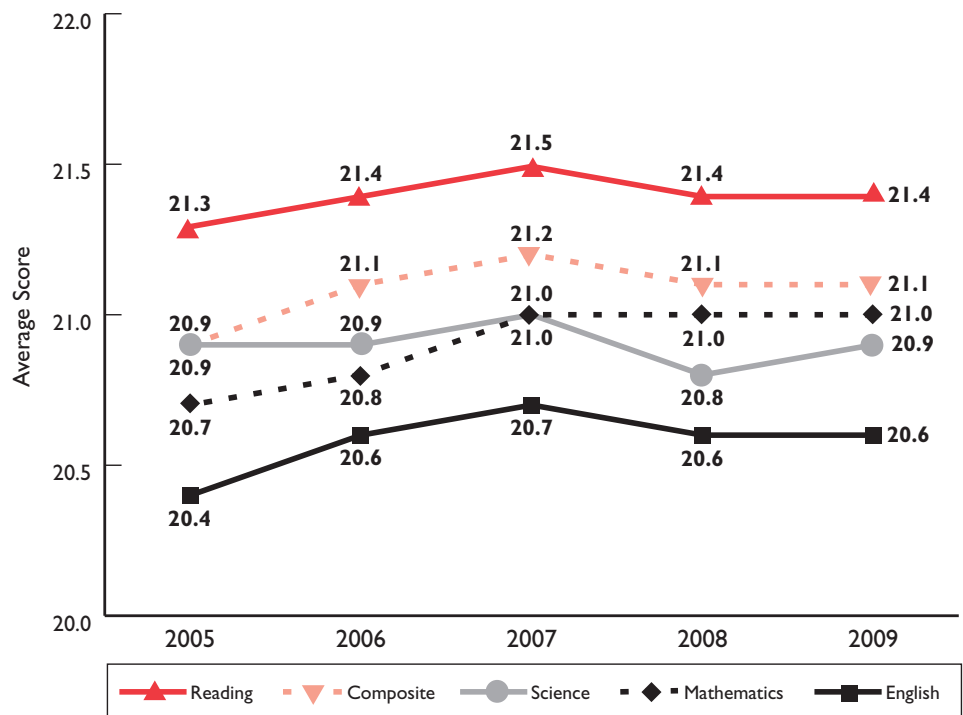
- English = 18
- Mathematics = 22
- Reading = 21
- Science = 24

These Benchmarks reflect the level of preparation needed for students to have at least a 50 percent chance of achieving a grade of B or higher, or at least a 75 percent chance of a grade of C or higher, in entry-level, credit-bearing college English Composition, College Algebra, Social Science (history, psychology, economics), and Biology courses. (The maximum ACT score is 36.)

Trends in Student Performance

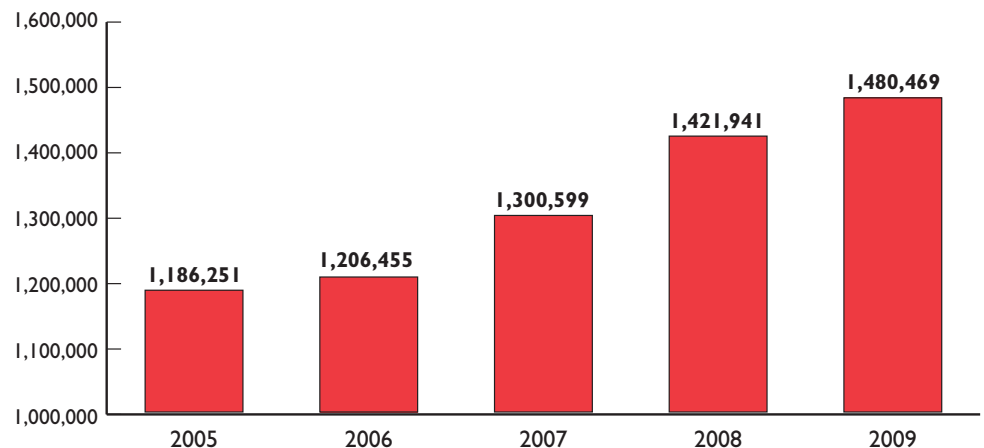
ACT scores, 2005–09

Five-year trends show the extent to which student performance is increasing and whether more students are getting the access and opportunity they need to participate in postsecondary education.



Continued Increase in Participation

Number of U.S. high school graduates who took the ACT



College Readiness

Core Curriculum

ACT defines the high school core curriculum as at least four years of English and at least three years each of mathematics, social studies, and natural sciences (4-3-3-3).

A sample core mathematics course sequence includes Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry. A sample core science course sequence includes Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. Many course options and sequences are possible, but the key is whether the courses are based on rigorous standards that prepare students for success after high school, whether students enter college or workforce training programs.

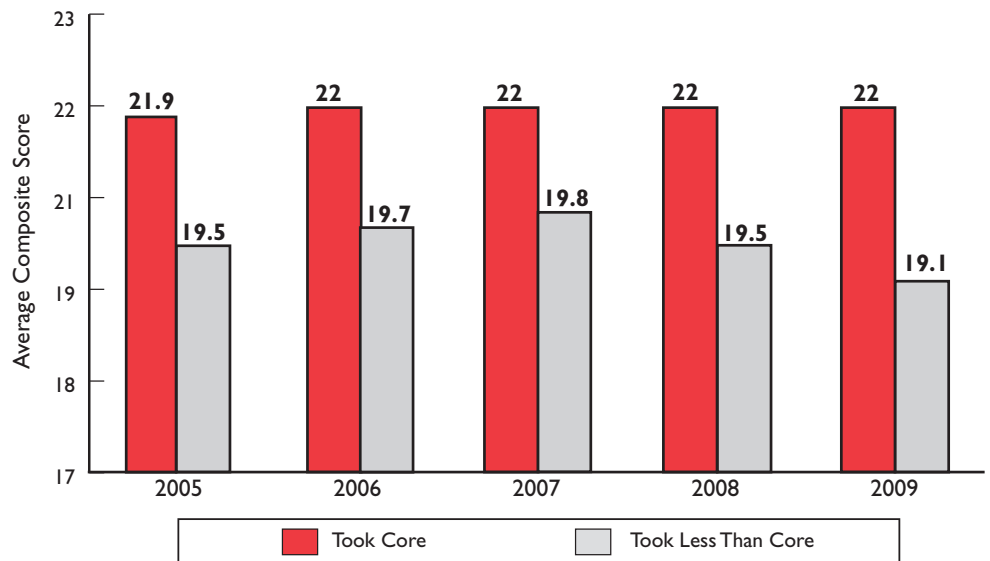
ACT research validates that students who take a core curriculum in high school are more likely to meet the College Readiness Benchmarks and, as a result, are more likely to:

- Persist to a second year at the same postsecondary institution
- Earn a B or higher in first-year college courses
- Earn a first-year college GPA of 2.5 or higher
- Progress toward a college degree
- Complete a college degree



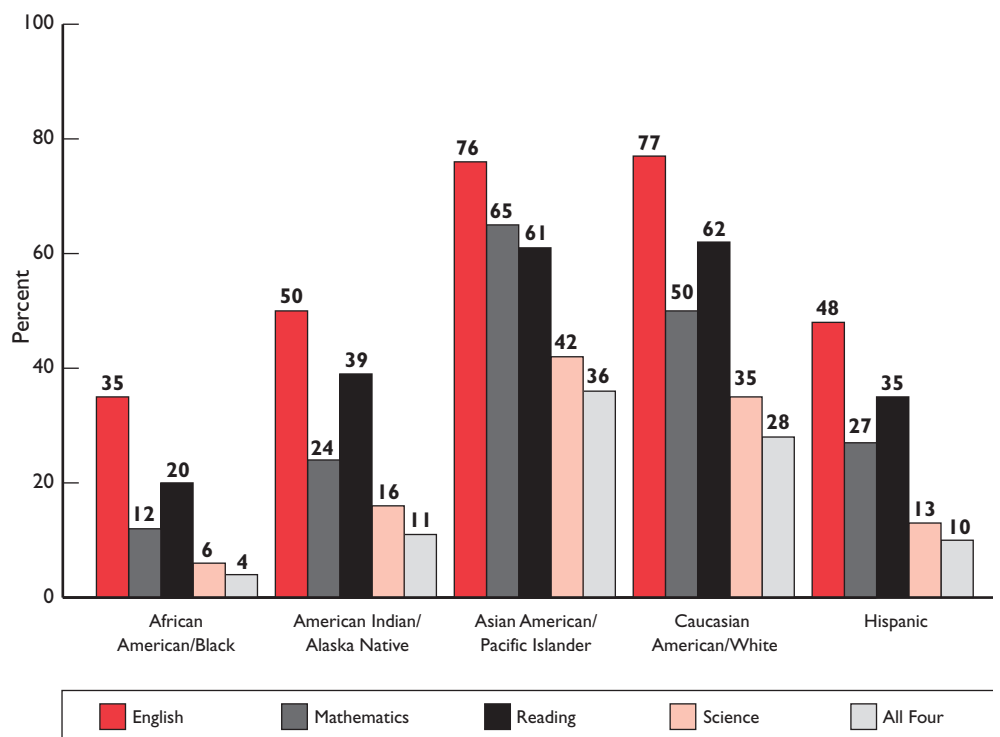
Students who take a core curriculum, or more, perform better than students who do not

Average Composite scores of 2009 ACT-tested graduates who took a core curriculum and those who did not



College Readiness Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity

Percent of students meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by race/ethnicity, 2009



Access and Opportunity

ACT's National Curriculum Survey

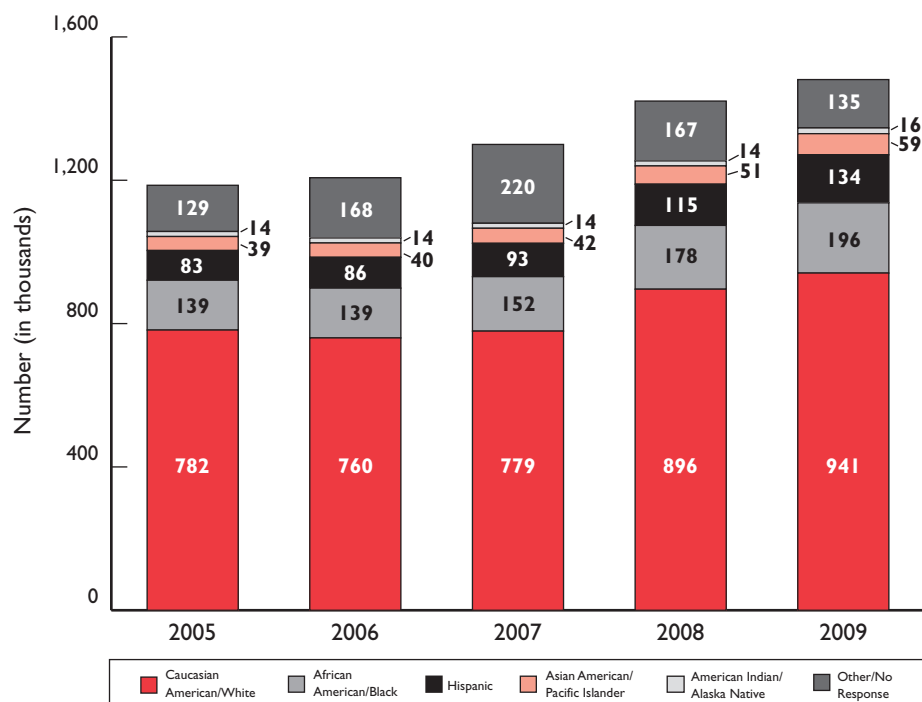
ACT conducts a one-of-a-kind nationwide survey every 3 to 4 years of 20,000 postsecondary and K–12 educators. The survey compares the knowledge and skills postsecondary institutions require of their entering students to what middle and high school teachers are teaching.

States are using this information to align their standards and close the expectations gap.

Look for the new release of ACT's National Curriculum Survey in the fall of 2009.

Level of participation

Number of ACT test-takers by race/ethnicity, 2005–09



Numbers rounded to nearest thousand.

Additional Information and Resources

Each year, ACT reports information about students in the current graduating class who took the ACT. Detailed state profile reports, interactive charts, and other helpful resources are available to the public on www.act.org.

2009 National Profile Report Homepage

<http://www.act.org/crr/2009>

2009 State-Specific Profile Reports

<http://www.act.org/news/data/09/statemenu.html>

2009 Interactive Charts

<http://www.act.org/news/data/09/charts/index.html>



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