



Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama®

Graduation and College and Career Readiness

By Thomas Spencer, May 6, 2024

More Alabama high school students graduated ready for college or careers in 2023, according to data recently released by the Alabama Department of Education.

Students in the Class of 2023 made gains on all measures, bouncing back from the setbacks suffered during the pandemic and closing the gap between the percentage of students receiving a diploma and the percentage of students meeting the definition of college and career readiness: 91% of seniors graduated, 84% of seniors were college and career ready. That's the highest readiness rate ever recorded.

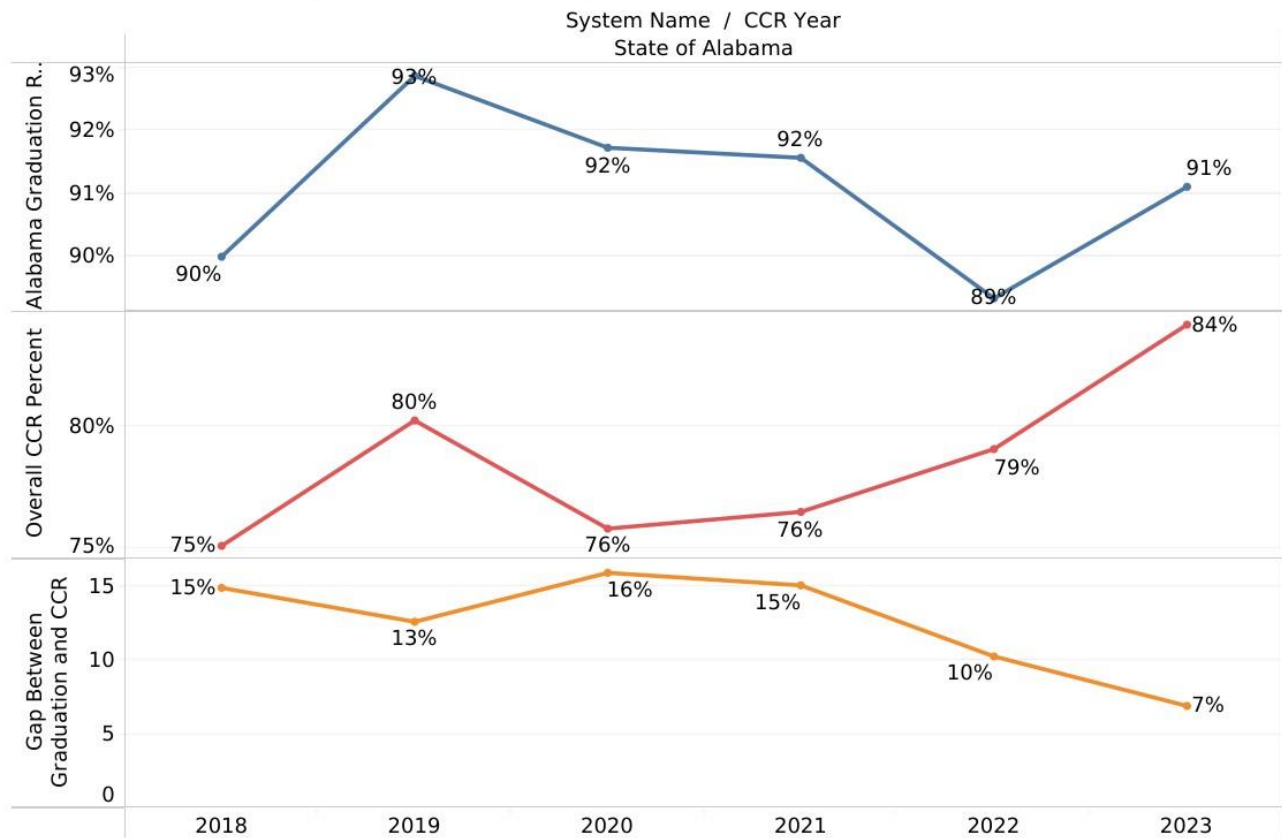
The results show progress toward a goal established by the state Legislature and [adopted by the State Board of Education](#) that all students demonstrate college and career readiness in order to graduate.

Alabama Graduation and College and Career Readiness, Class of 2023

Alabama Graduation and CCR Rates and Gap	Individual School or System Trend	Trends in CCR	Comparing CCR and Graduation Rates	Alabama Graduation Rate and CCR Rate, by System	Alabama Grad and CCR Rate, by School	Gap Between Grad...
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System Name
State of Alabama

Graduation and College and Career Ready Rates



More seniors graduated in 2023, even though this cohort of seniors was smaller than the Class of 2022. Alabama’s college and career readiness rate (CCR) increased by five percentage points over the levels recorded in 2022.

In percentage terms, student readiness increased on every measure. However, college readiness, as measured by scores on the ACT, is still lower for the Class of 2023 than it was for graduating classes before the pandemic.

Still, improved performance on the ACT accounted for the biggest gains in the number of students reaching the CCR benchmark. [Follow this link for PARCA’s analysis of ACT Scores for the Class of 2023.](#)

Close behind were big gains in the number of students earning the CCR by successfully completing career-oriented courses taught at high schools, vocational centers, or community colleges, courses known as career technical education. Also, the number and percentage of students earning a career-ready score on ACT's WorkKeys test increased. A deeper dive into 2023 WorkKeys results is available here. The number of students earning credit through dual enrollment courses at community colleges or universities also increased.

Alabama Graduation and College and Career Readiness, Class of 2023

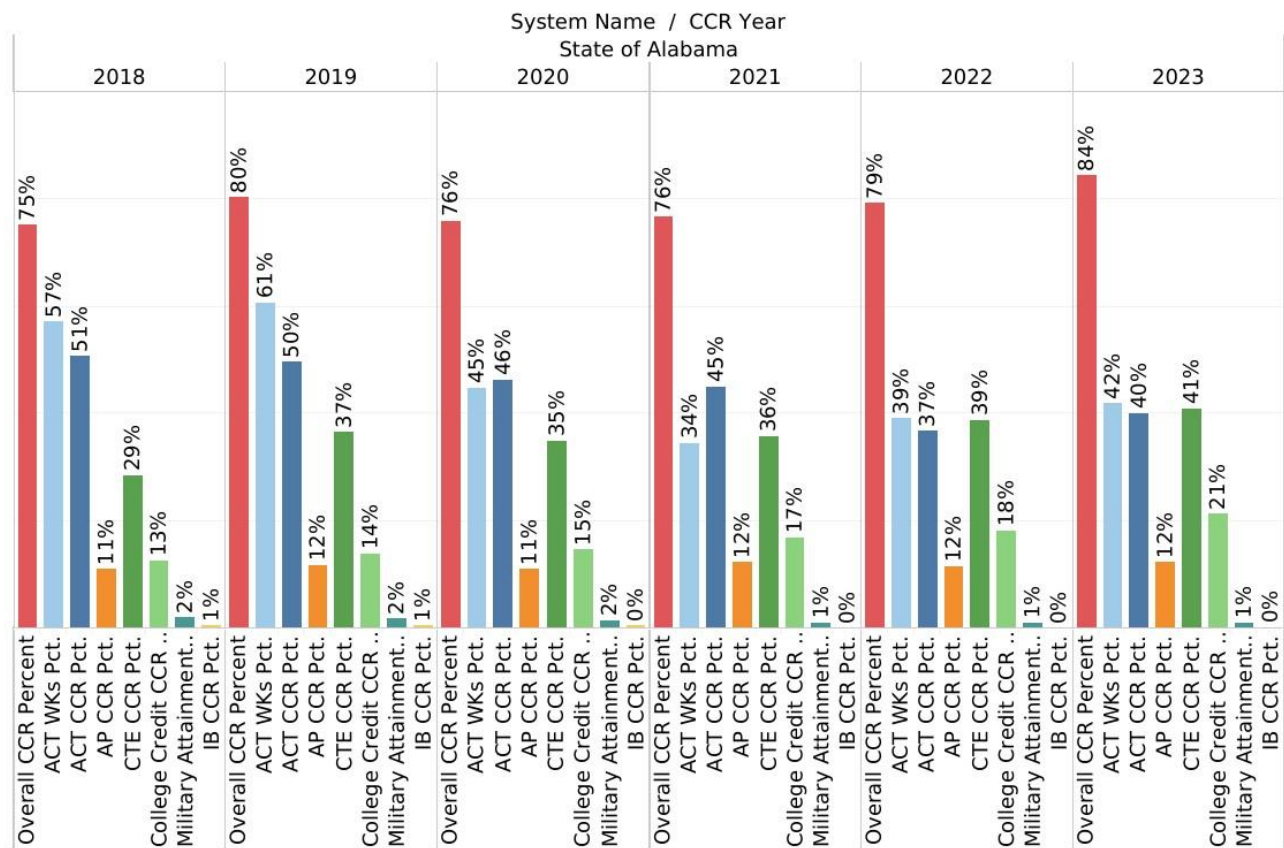
Alabama Grad and CCR Rate, by School	Gap Between Graduation Rate and College and Career Readiness Rate	Graduation and CCR by Subgroup	CCR Rates by Measure	CCR Numbers by Measure	Sortable list of CCR Measures	U.S. Comparative Grad Rates Over Time
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System Name
State of Alabama

School Name
Entire System

Sub Population
All students

CCR Rates By Year, By Type, by System



Alabama's high school graduation rate is among the highest in the country, though that is a relatively recent phenomenon. In 2012, Alabama's high school graduation rate was 75%, trailing the national average of 80%. By 2018, Alabama's graduation rate had climbed to 90%, exceeding the U.S. rate of 85%. In 2022, the most recent

available year for comparison, Alabama's graduation rate was tied with the U.S. at 88%.

With the sharp rise in the graduation rate came concerns that some students were being awarded diplomas but weren't prepared for the next step. In 2018, despite that 90% graduation rate, Alabama's college and career readiness rate was still at 75%.

Pressure to close that gap between graduation and college and career readiness has been building. Last year, the Legislature passed a requirement that by 2026, all students, in order to graduate, must have met one of the Alabama Board of Education's definitions of college and career readiness. The Legislature subsequently provided \$25 million in FY 2024 to support schools in expanding opportunities for college and career readiness. Last year, Gov. Ivey's Commission on Teaching and Learning recommended allocating \$25 million in ongoing support for the grant program.

Students can demonstrate that they are ready for college or the workforce in several ways:

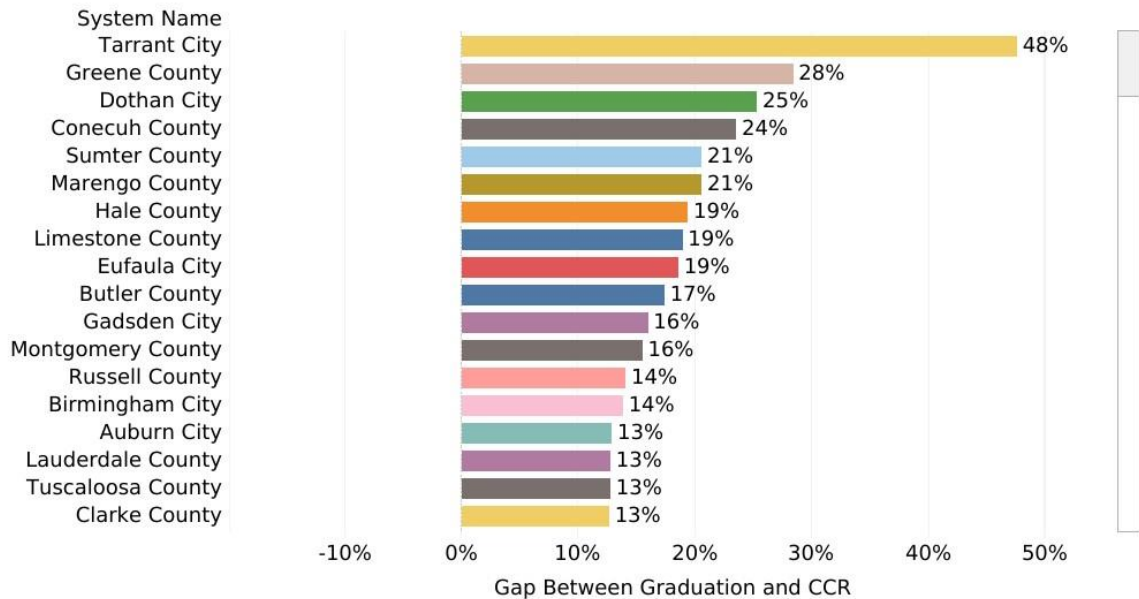
1. Achieve a benchmark score in one subject on the ACT. Benchmarking on the ACT indicates that a student is likely to succeed in a college class in that subject.
2. Earn a Silver Certification or above on the ACT WorkKeys test. WorkKeys is a test of knowledge, communication, and comprehension as they are applied in the workplace. Scoring Silver or above indicates a student is ready to enter the workforce in most career fields.
3. Earn college credit through Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses taken in high school.
4. Earn college credit through dual enrollment. A high school student can complete courses at a community college or university while in high school. These can be academic or career-related courses.
5. Complete a progression of Career Technical Education courses in a field.
6. Earn an Industry Recognized Credential as part of a career technical education course.
7. Participate successfully in an In-School Youth Apprenticeship Program approved by the Alabama Office of Apprenticeship.
8. Successfully enlist in the military.

While progress is being made, gaps remain.

Alabama Graduation and College and Career Readiness, Class of 2023

Comparing CCR and Graduation Rates	Alabama Graduation Rate and CCR Rate, by System	Alabama Grad and CCR Rate, by School	Gap Between Graduation Rate and College and Career Readiness Rate	Graduation and CCR by Subgroup	CCR Rates by Measure	CCR Numbers by Measure
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Gap between Graduation Rate and CCR Rate, 2023



In 29 school systems, all graduates were college and/or career-ready. In 20 of those systems, more seniors were college and career-ready than graduated.

On the other hand, in six school systems, the CCR rate was 20 percentage points lower than the graduation rate, indicating that 20% or more of the students who received diplomas hadn't demonstrated readiness for college or the workforce.

The gaps in graduation rates between subgroups within the school population are relatively narrow: 93% of White students graduate compared to 89% of Black Students and 87% of Hispanic students. Gaps are wider when it comes to college and career readiness: 89% of White students graduate college and career-ready, but only 76% of Blacks and 79% of Hispanics do. Looking at the individual CCR measures, the gap between Blacks and Whites is highest in the percentage of students benchmarking on the ACT. It's narrowest in terms of the percentage of students earning credit through career technical education. In that category, Black and Hispanic students have a higher CCR rate than Whites.

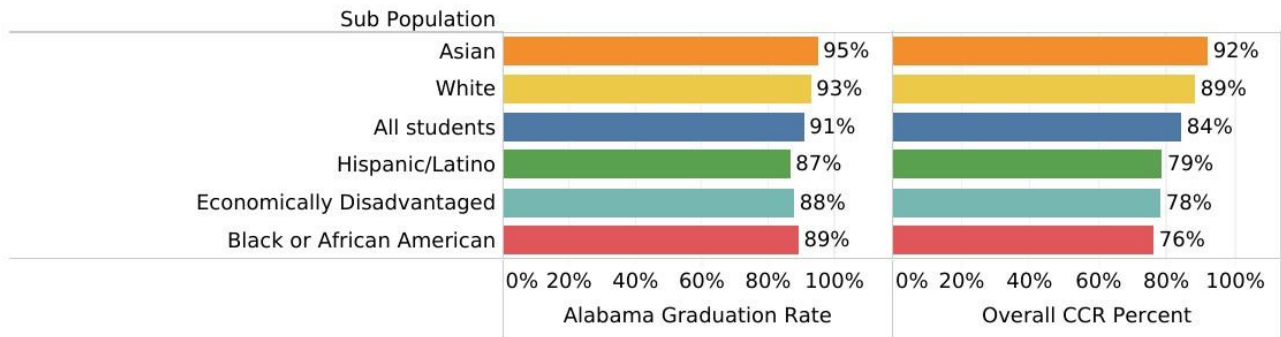
Alabama Graduation and College and Career Readiness, Class of 2023

Alabama Graduation Rate and CCR Rate, by System	Alabama Grad and CCR Rate, by School	Gap Between Graduation Rate and College and Career Readiness Rate	Graduation and CCR by Subgroup	CCR Rates by Measure	CCR Numbers by Measure	Sortable list of CCR Measures
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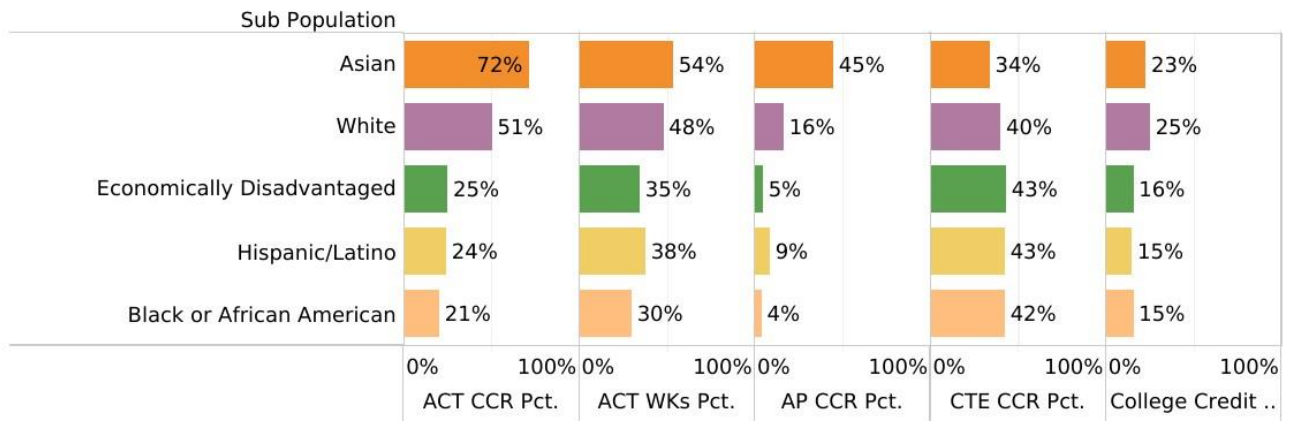
System Name
State of Alabama

School Name
Entire System

Graduation and CCR by Subgroup, State of Alabama, Entire System, 2023



CCR by Subgroup, 2023

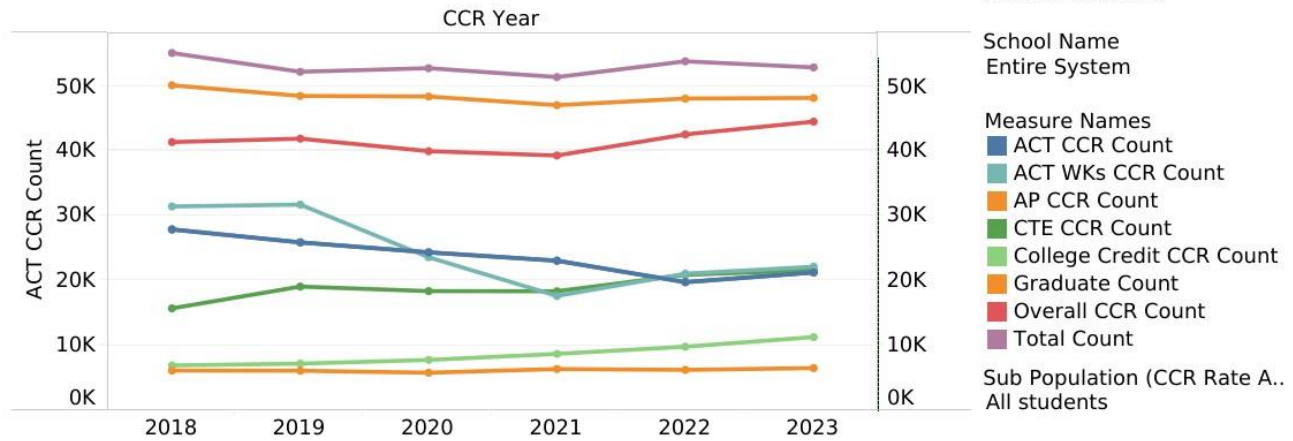


Using the tabs and menus in the visualization [online](#), you can explore the results for individual schools and school systems.

Alabama Graduation and College and Career Readiness, Class of 2023

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Trends in College and Career Readiness



CCR Trend By Year, By Type, By System

	System Name / CCR Year					
	State of Alabama					
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Count	55,151	52,256	52,809	51,440	53,869	52,928
Graduate Count	50,167	48,529	48,441	47,105	48,124	48,225
Overall CCR Count	41,408	41,936	40,006	39,340	42,592	44,563
ACT WKs CCR Count	31,478	31,760	23,636	17,676	21,106	22,175
ACT CCR Count	27,929	25,934	24,391	23,110	19,796	21,293
CTE CCR Count	15,753	19,115	18,415	18,398	20,925	21,640
College Credit CCR Count	6,956	7,220	7,798	8,732	9,836	11,324
AP CCR Count	6,153	6,132	5,825	6,398	6,265	6,538
Military Attainment CCR Count	1,129	900	797	519	590	558
IB CCR Count	308	302	204	2	48	131

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