

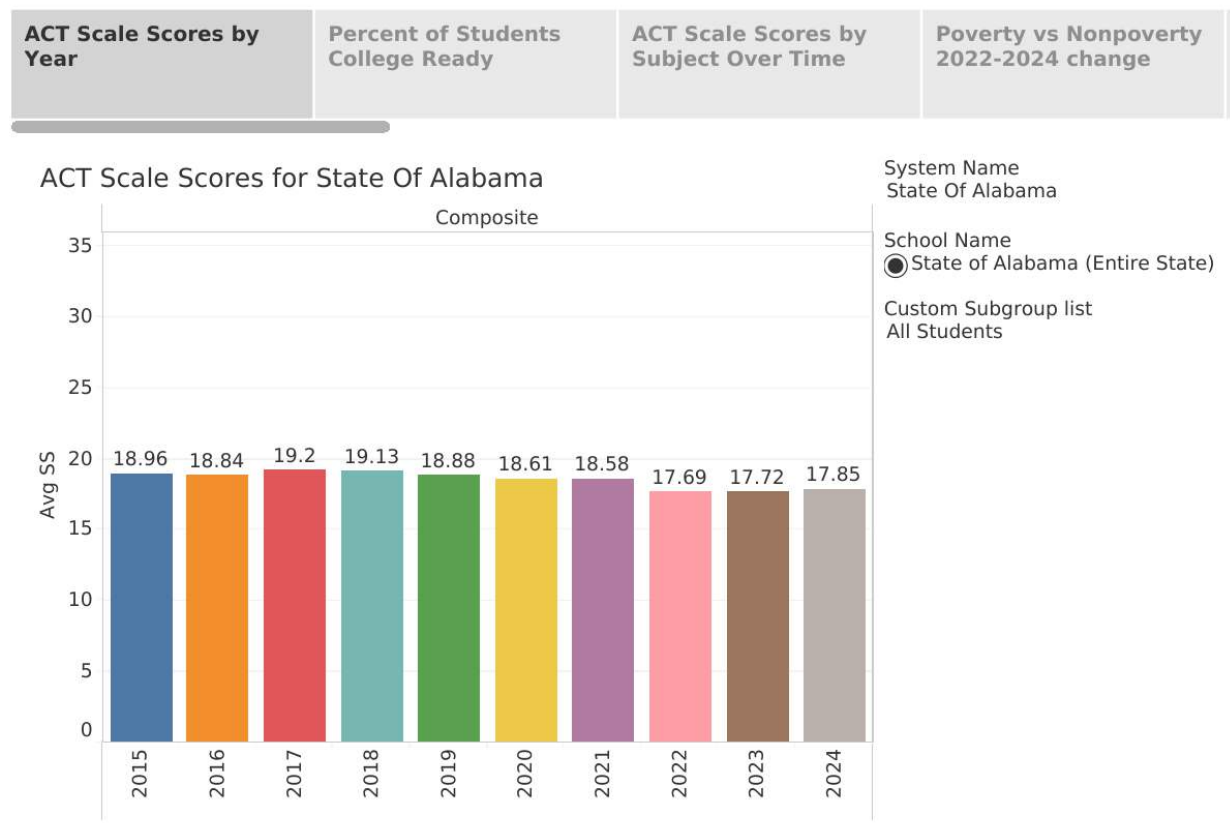


Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama®

Alabama High School Class of 2024 Improves on ACT

By Thomas Spencer, February 14, 2025

Alabama’s 2024 high school graduates posted improved performance on the ACT compared to prior years, continuing a positive trend at a time when scores have continued to drift down nationally. The ACT is a standardized test designed to measure a student’s readiness to succeed academically in college.



Nationally, the composite score was down again and so were scores in all four subjects. Though Alabama’s improvement was slight, it was across the board applying to the four tested subjects.

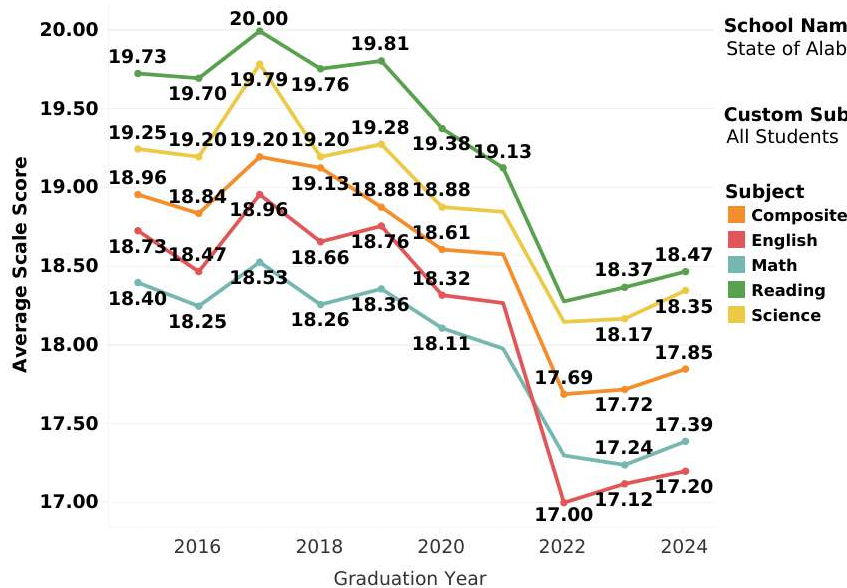
ACT Scale Scores by Year	Percent of Students College Ready	ACT Scale Scores by Subject Over Time	Poverty vs Nonpoverty 2022-2024 change	Rank Among 100 Percent States
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Average Scale Scores by Subject: State of Alabama (Entire State), State Of Alabama

System Name
State Of Alabama

School Name
State of Alabama (Entire State)

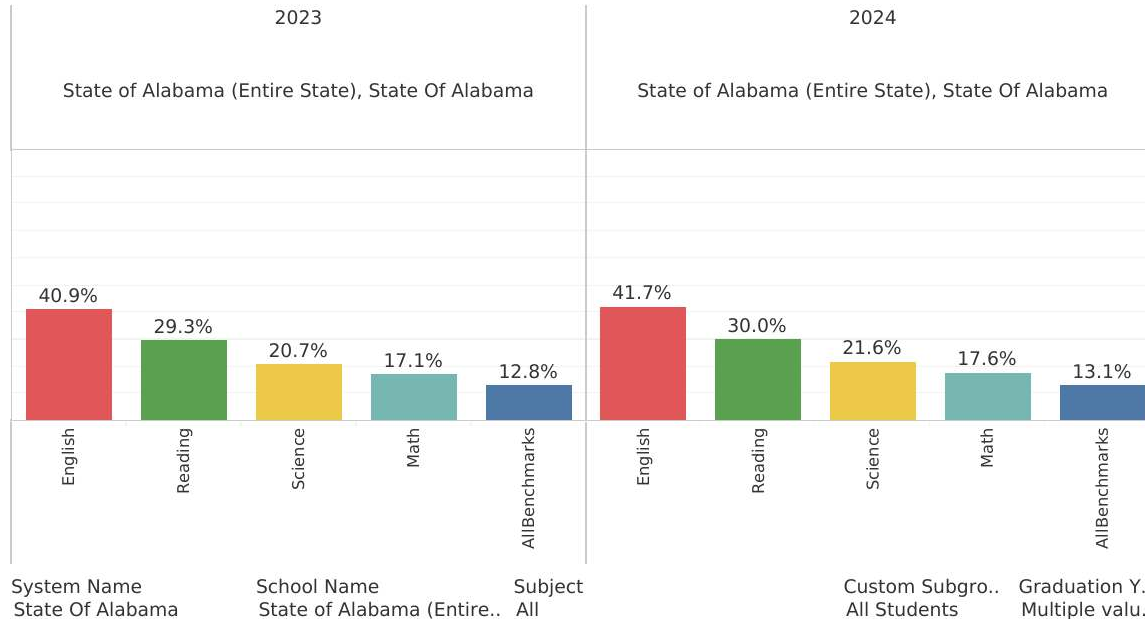
Custom Subgroup list
All Students



The percentage of Alabama students achieving benchmark scores also moved up in all four subjects and the percentage of students that benchmarked in all four subjects increased as well. ACT data from prior graduating classes shows that 84% of students who have met all four benchmarks graduate with postsecondary degrees within six years.

ACT Scale Scores by Year	Percent of Students College Ready	ACT Scale Scores by Subject Over Time	Poverty vs Nonpoverty 2022-2024 change
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Percent College Ready, by Subject

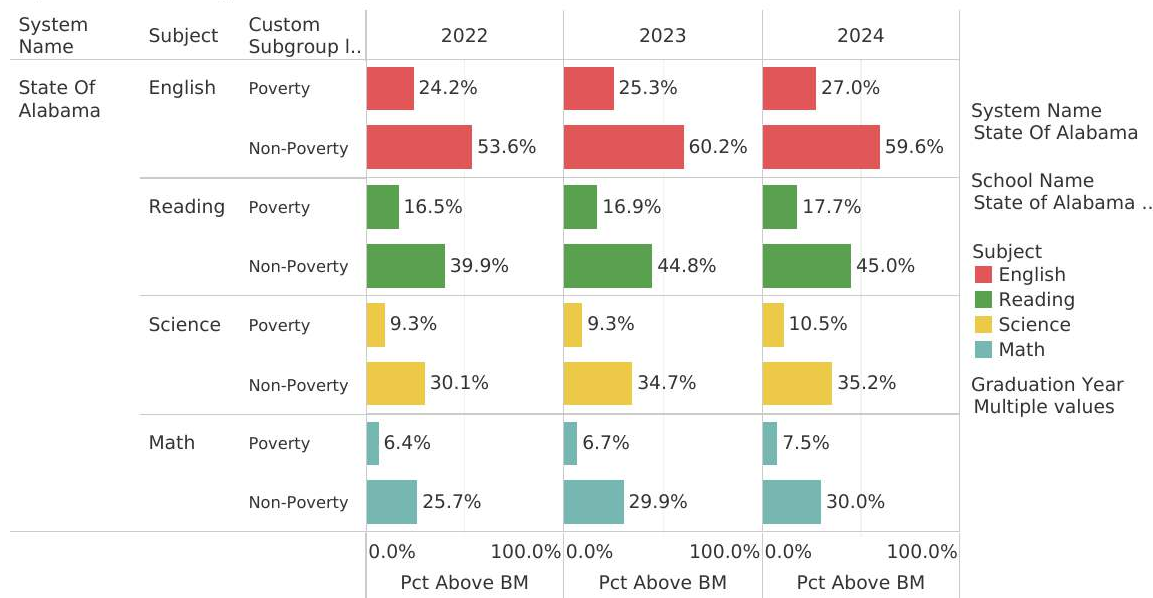


In Alabama, the composite scores for Asians, Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics [all ticked up](#). Economically disadvantaged students posted improved scores, as well. One exception to the upward trend was a decrease in the percentage of nonpoverty students achieving the benchmark in English, from 60.2% to 59.6%. Economically disadvantaged students improved in English by 27%, exceeding the benchmark in English, which was 25.3% in 2023.

Percent of Students College R..	ACT Scale Scores by Subject Over Time	Poverty vs Nonpoverty 2022-2024 change	Rank Among 100 Percent States	System Level Average Sc..
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Change in Percentage Meeting the Benchmark, Poverty vs. Non-Poverty, By Year and Subject

Subject Set
All

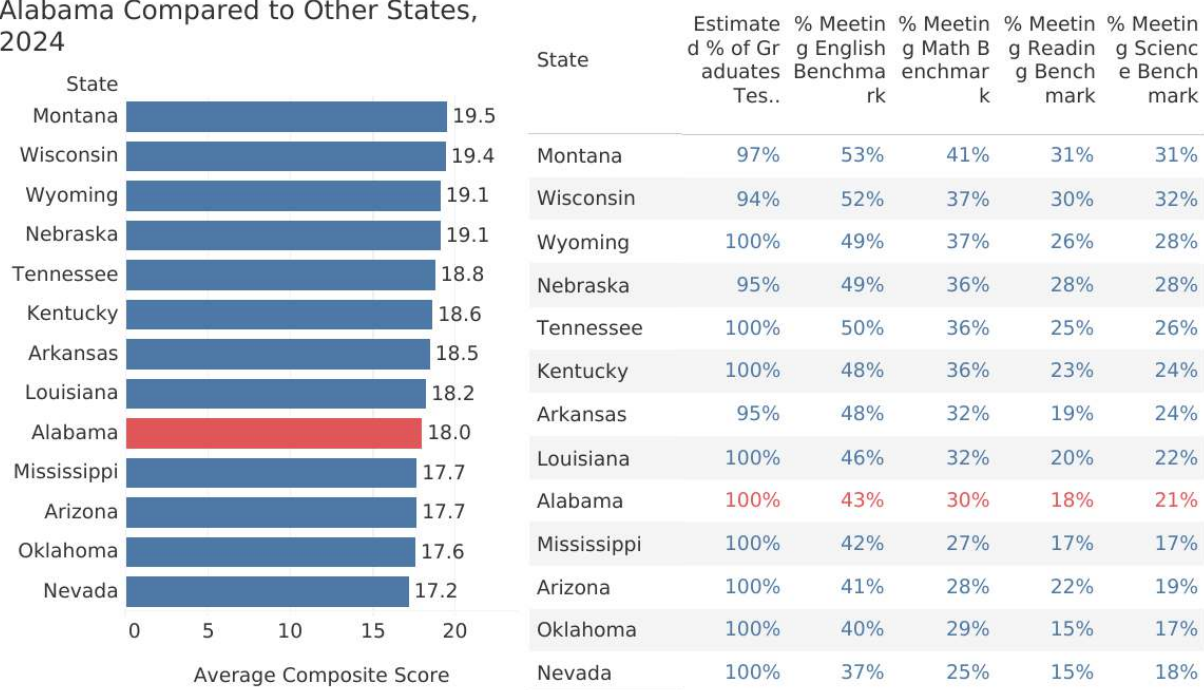


Still, scores are still well behind where they were pre-pandemic. And both in the state and nationally, scores are well behind 2017, which was the peak of performance. Some academic research links the decline to lingering effects of the Great Recession, which led to cuts in education spending. ACT scores peaked in 2007.

The national average composite score was 19.4 in 2024 (down from 19.5 in 2023). That's higher than Alabama's public school average of 17.85. However, the two scores should not be compared. Alabama is one of 9 states that tests all high school students, whether they are college-bound or not. In much of the country, only students applying to a four-year college take the ACT. Despite progress, Alabama high school graduates still have room to improve compared to other states where a comparable percentage of students are tested.

ACT Scale Scores by Subject O..	Poverty vs Nonpoverty 2022-2024 change	Rank Among 100 Percent States	System Level Average Scale Score	School Level Average Scale Score
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Alabama Compared to Other States, 2024

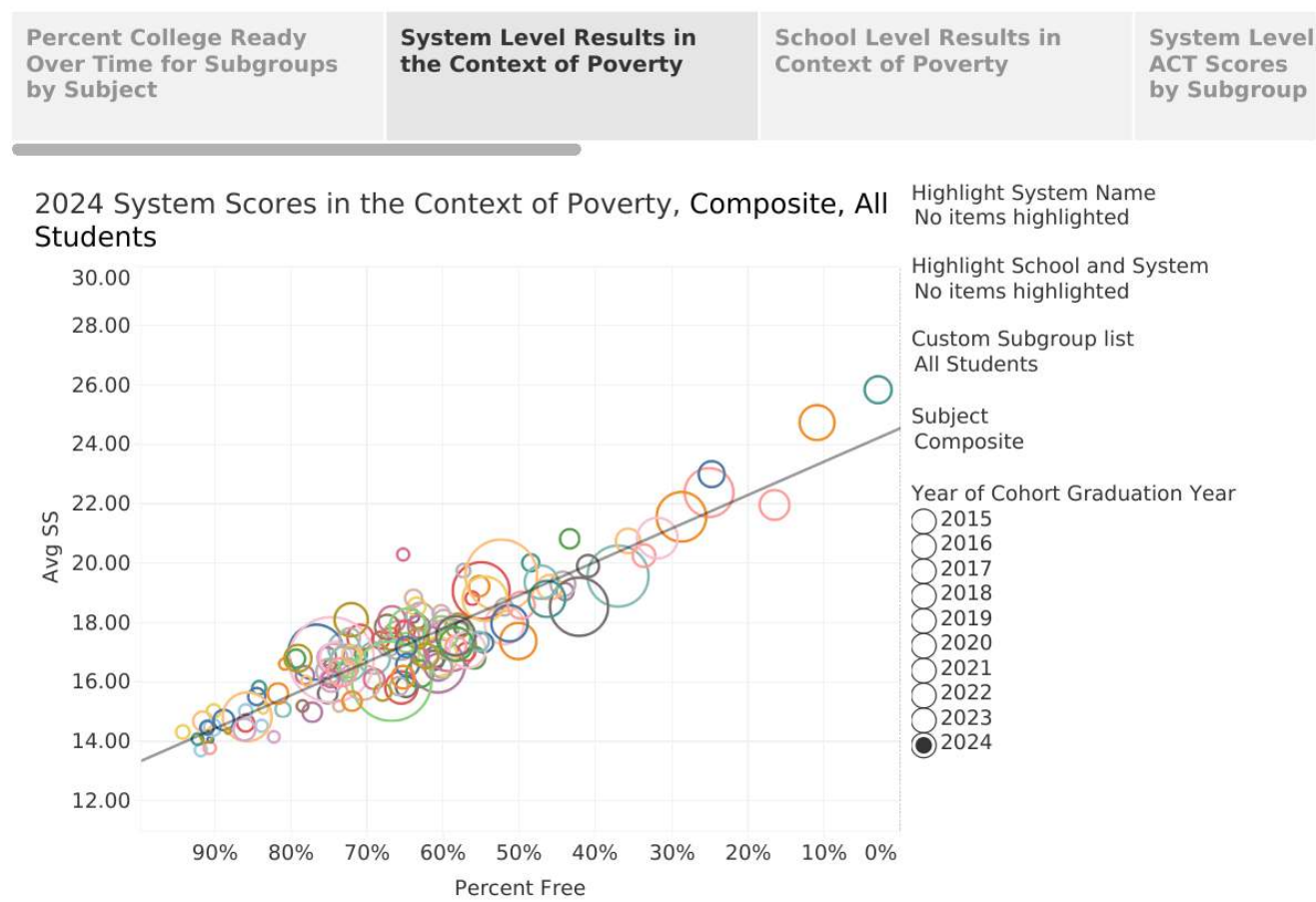


Alabama gives the test to all high school juniors. It serves as a gauge of academic performance for schools. Students who earn a benchmark score in at least one of the four subjects qualify as college—and career-ready, one of ten options for achieving that designation. Students must meet one of those ten college—and career-readiness markers in order to graduate.

During the pandemic, the number of test takers dropped, and the importance of the ACT was somewhat diminished as many schools made the test-optional for admission. However, more recently, many colleges have returned to requiring the test.

Using the tabs and menus, you can explore the data in various ways, including [comparing system](#) and [school-level results](#). It's important to remember that ACT scores tend to correlate with economic advantages and disadvantages. The scatterplot chart below arrays systems by the percentage of economically disadvantaged students from the left to right. The systems with the lowest percentages of economically disadvantaged students are on the right. Systems are positioned vertically based on their average composite score. The higher the circle, the higher the score. The line that slants up from left to right traces a correlation between test scores that rise as the percentage of economic disadvantage declines. The size of each system's circle represents the enrollment of the system.

When systems are clustered close along that line, that indicates there is a strong correlation between the two values. Systems that fall above the line of prediction are exceeding expectations. An example is the Piedmont City School system. In 2024, 65% of students in that system qualified for a free school lunch due to their family income level. And yet the average scale score for Piedmont students far exceeded many school systems where economic disadvantage rates are lower.



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