

COLLEGE READINESS



**Mind the Gaps:
How College Readiness Narrows
Achievement Gaps in College Success**

What is an achievement gap?

- The achievement gap is defined as the difference on a number of educational measures between the performance of subgroups of students, especially subgroups classified by race/ethnicity, disability, or socio-economic status.

What does ACT mean by “college and career readiness”?

ACT has long defined college and career readiness as the acquisition of the knowledge and skills a student needs to enroll and succeed in credit-bearing first-year courses at a postsecondary institution (such as a two- or four-year college, trade school, or technical school) without the need for remediation.

How does ACT determine if students are college ready?

Empirically derived, ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks are the minimum scores needed on the ACT subject area tests to indicate a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in corresponding first-year credit-bearing college courses. (See Notes for more information.)

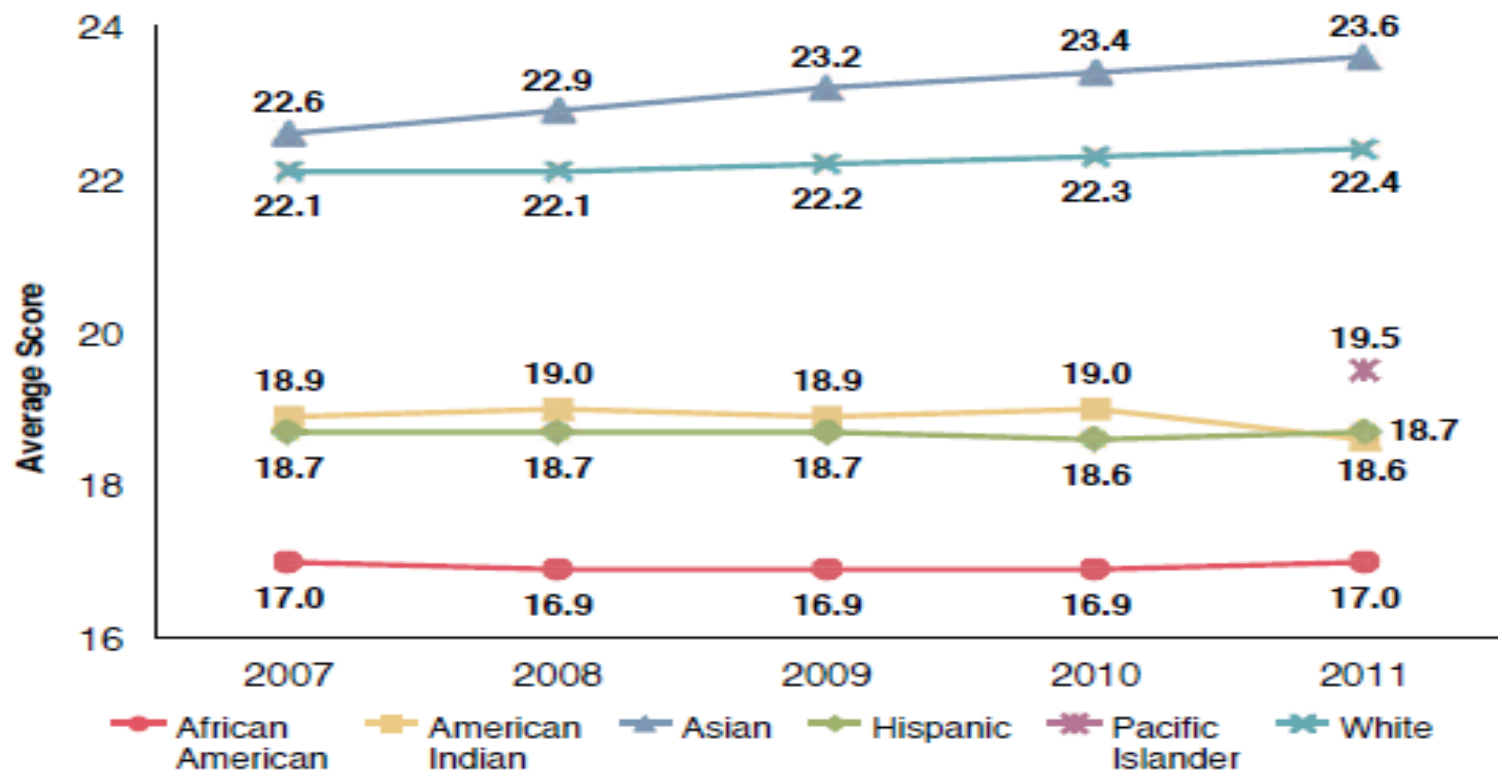
How do we define college and career readiness?

*College and Career Readiness refers to the level of student preparation (knowledge and skills) needed to be **ready to succeed**-without remediation- in an introductory –level course at a two or four year institution, trade school or technical school.*

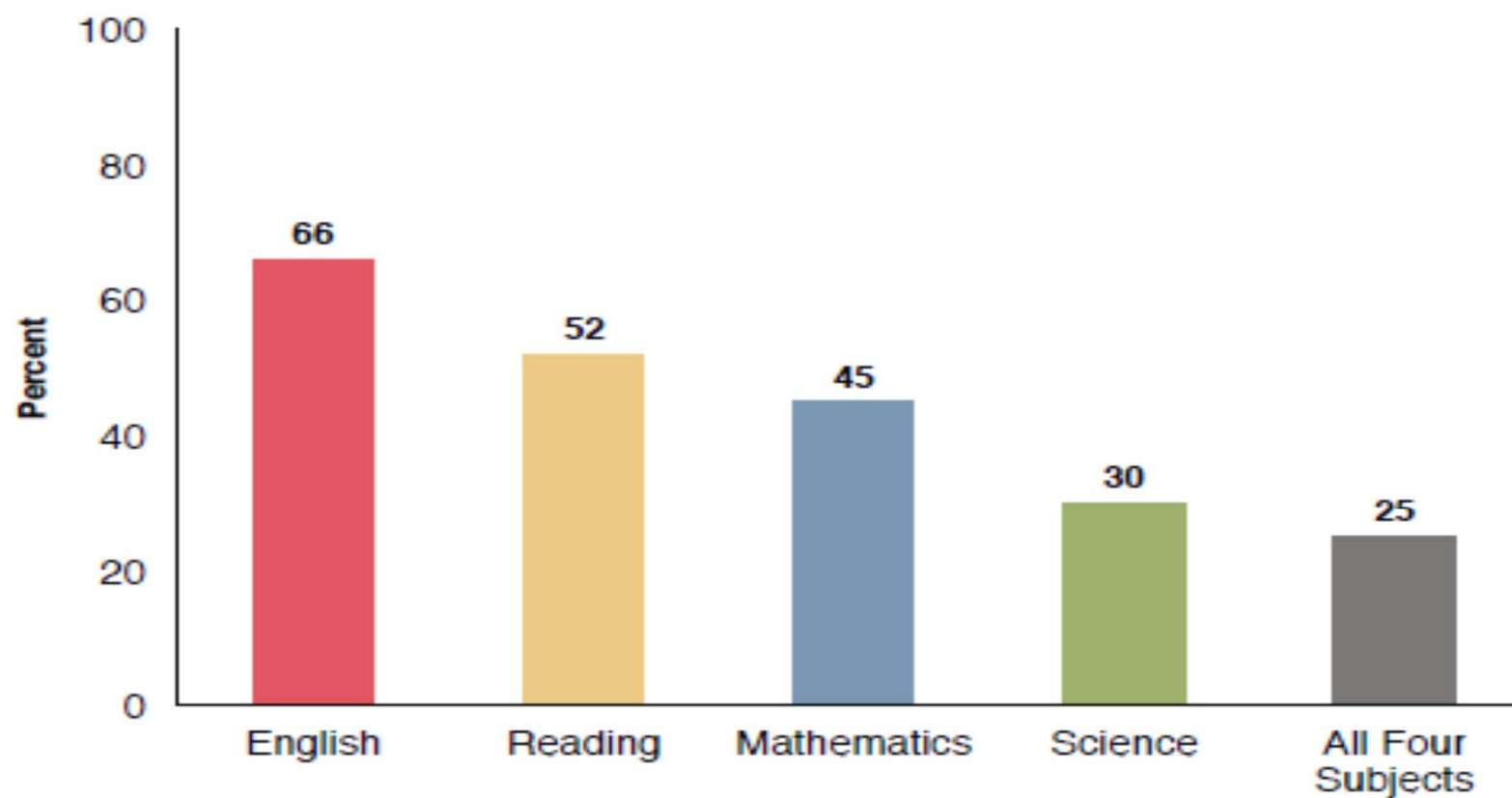
Test	College Course	EXPLORE Grade 8	EXPLORE Grade 9	PLAN Grade 10	ACT	Compass
English	English Composition	13	14	15	18	77
Math	College Algebra	17	18	19	22	52
Reading	Social Science	15	16	17	21	88
Science	Biology	20	20	21	24	NA

Empirically derived scores needed on an ACT subject-area test to indicate a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher or a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in the corresponding first-year credit-bearing college course.

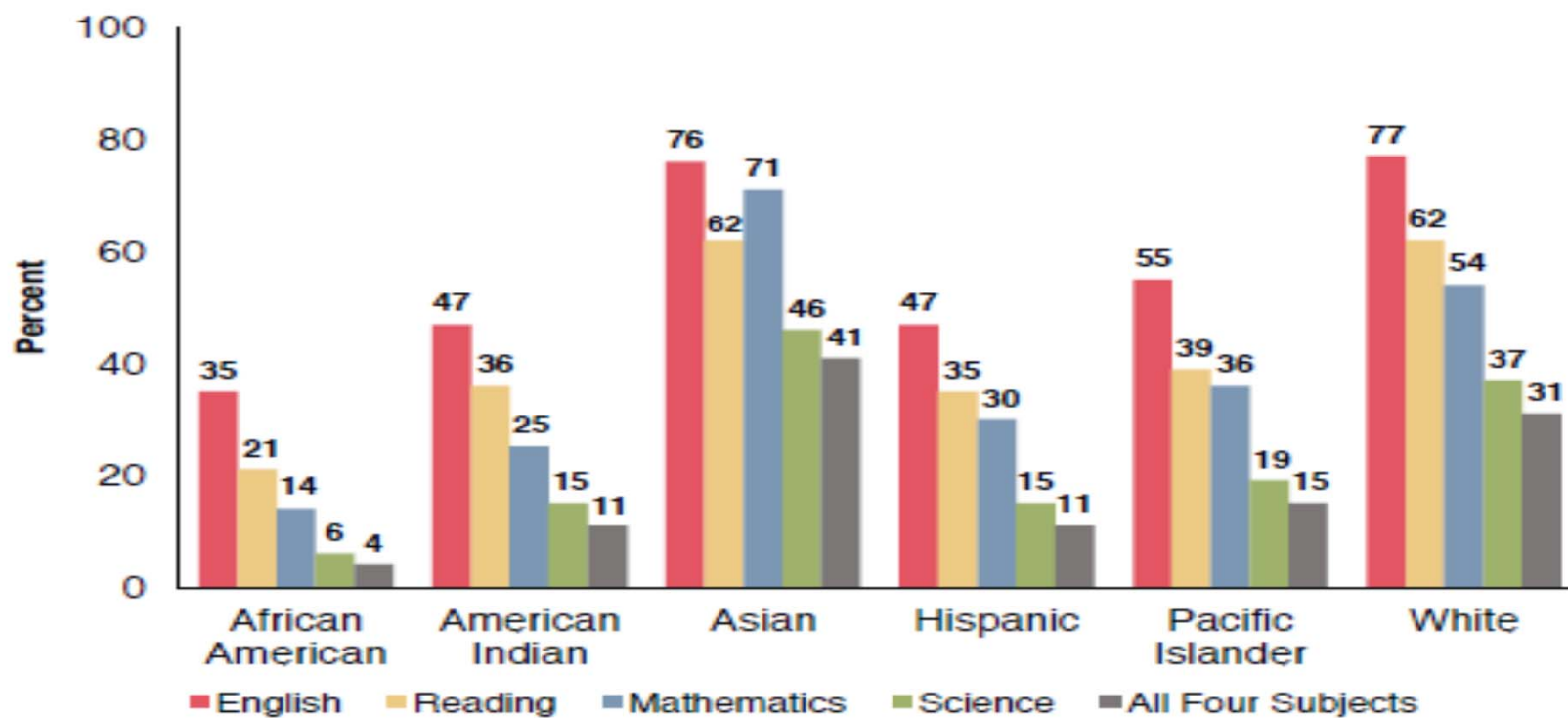
Average ACT Composite Test Scores by Race/Ethnicity, 2007–2011



Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject, 2011



Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity, 2011



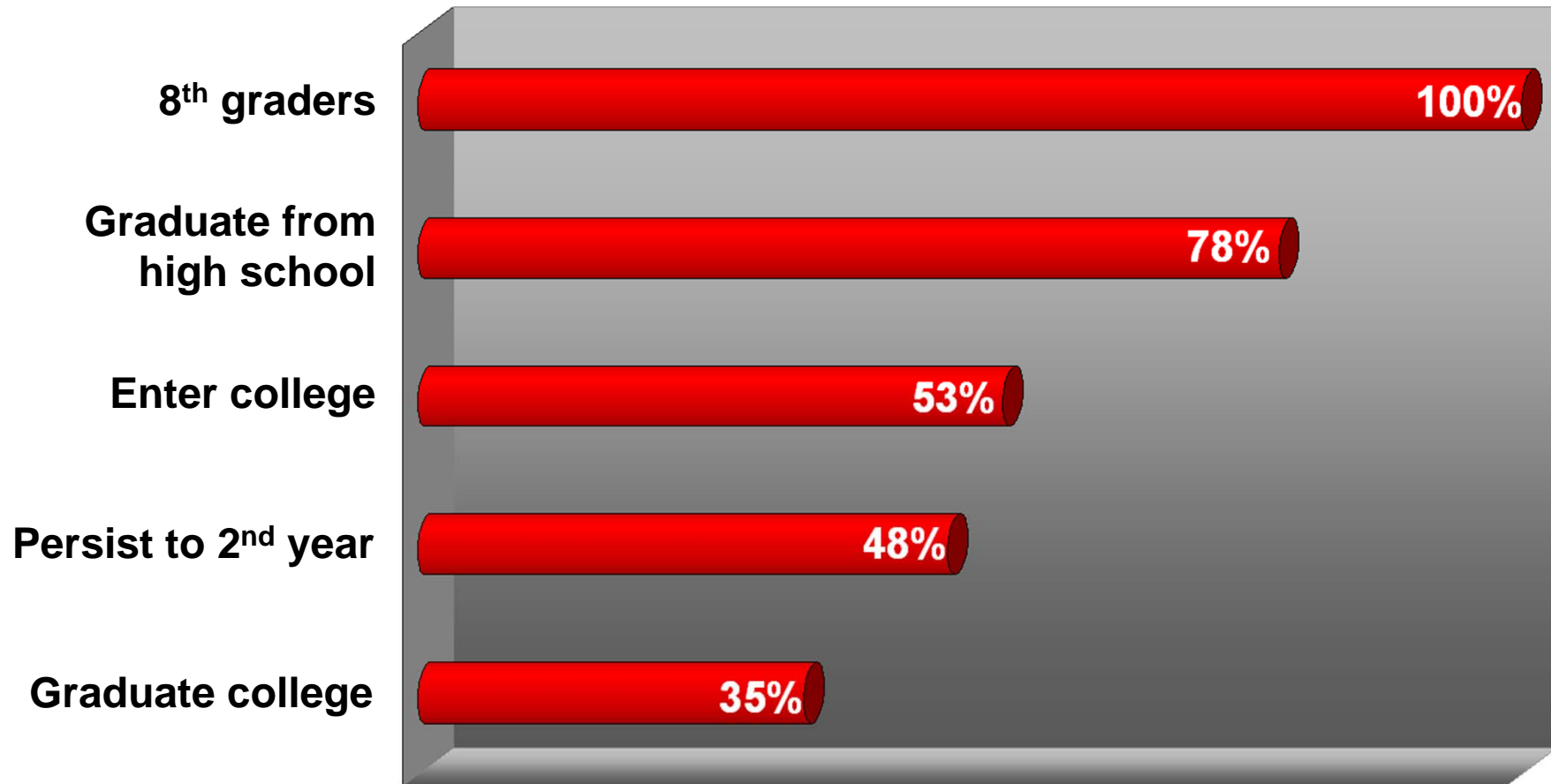
Our Challenge

Between 2008 and 2018...

- 29 million students will graduate from public high schools ...
- 34 million jobs will need to be filled due to retiring or transitioning workers...
- 10 million of the 29 million public high school graduates will be underrepresented students who traditionally have been underserved by K-12 education.

To fill workforce demands, it is critical that each student graduate from high school ready for college and career.

Leaky Educational Pipeline



(Business Roundtable, Nov. 2009)

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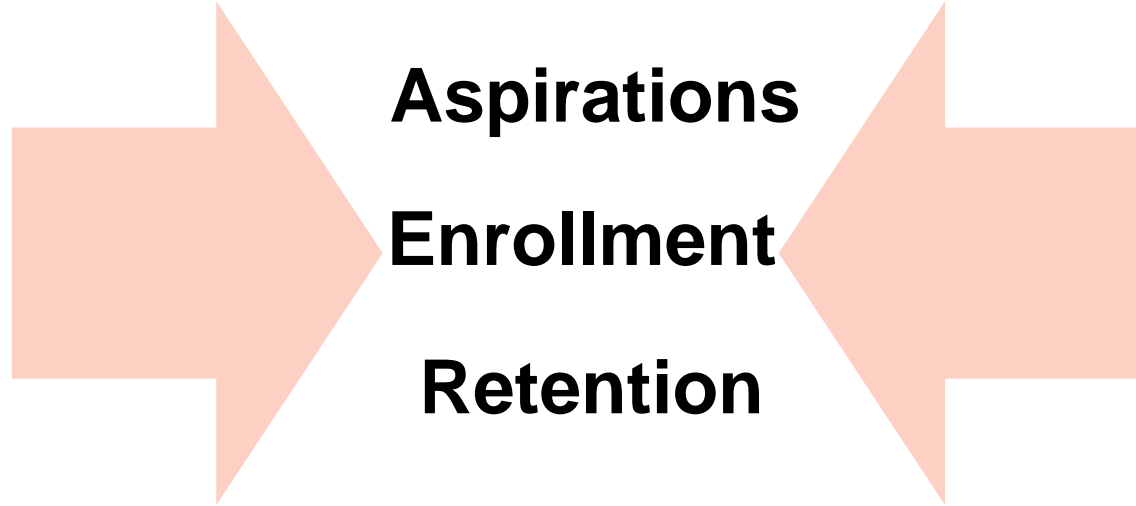


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ACT[®]

Barriers to College Access

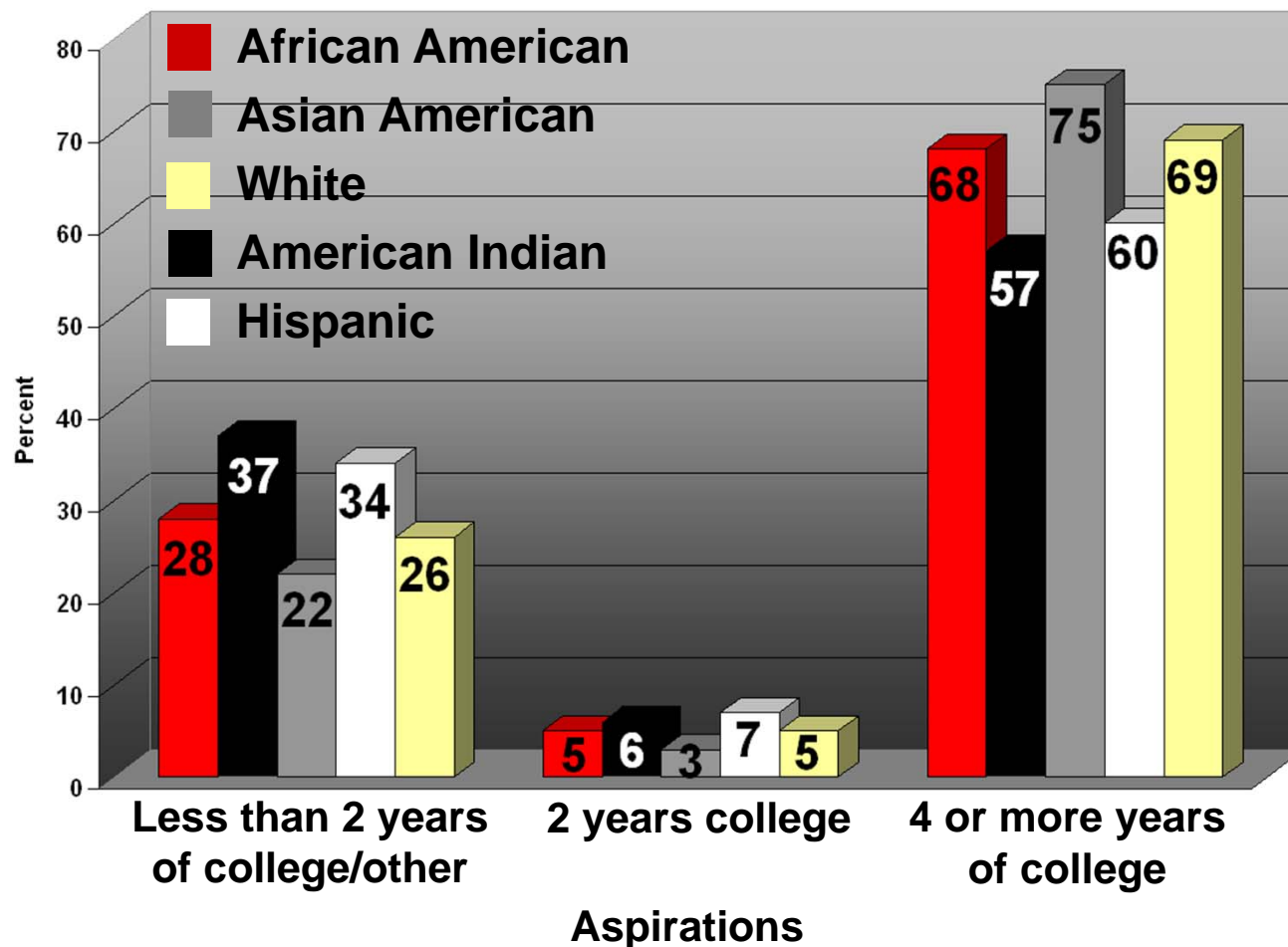
Three Major Gaps:



Gap 1 - Educational Aspirations

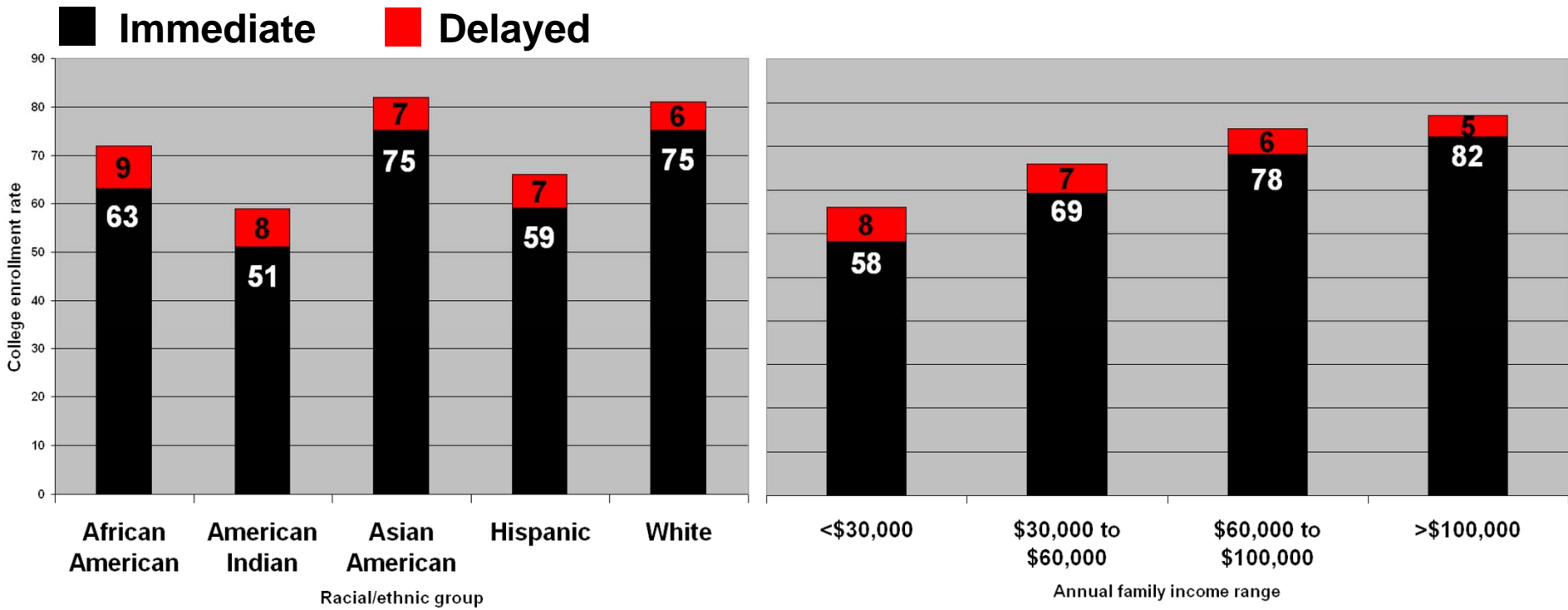
2008-09 PLAN-tested 10th Graders

Educational aspirations tend to be lower for under-represented minority and low-income students



Gap 2 - College Enrollment

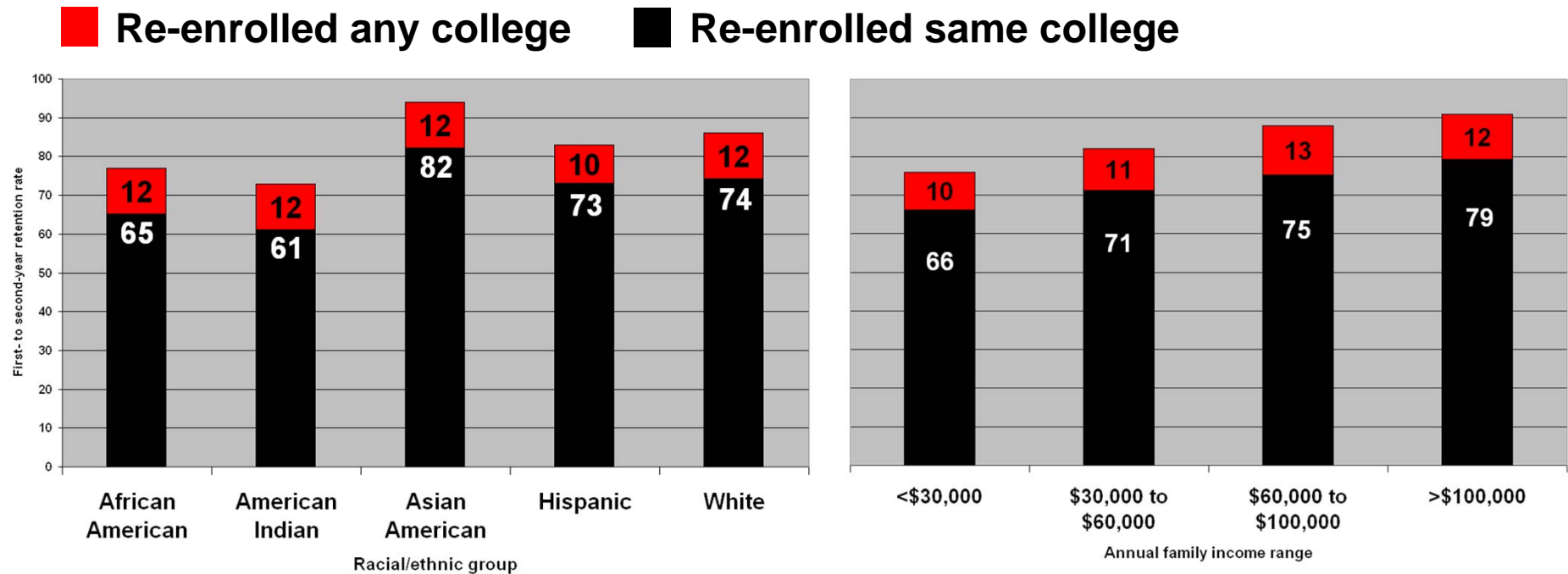
2007 ACT-tested High School Graduates



Actual college enrollment rates are lower among underrepresented and low income students.

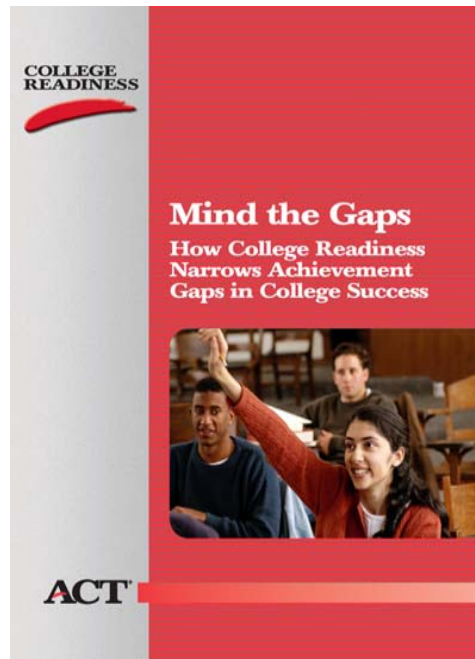
Gap 3 - College Retention

Retention Rates for 2007 ACT-tested Students



Underrepresented and low-income students tend to have lower college retention rates.

Closing The Gaps



Academic Factors Influencing College Success:

1. College Readiness
2. Taking the Right Courses
3. Course Rigor

Factor 1: College Readiness

Students who are ready for college (meet the ACT CCR benchmarks) are more likely to:

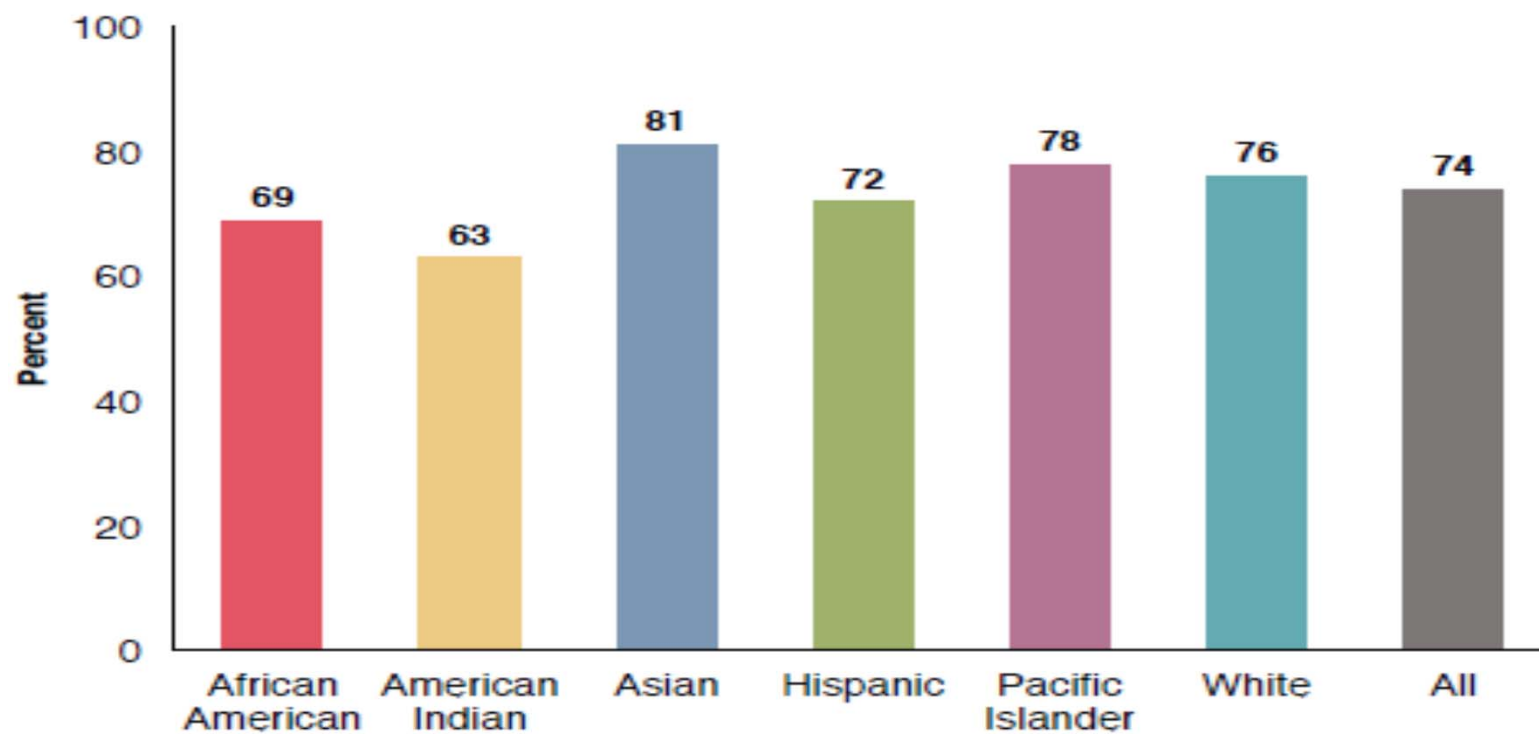
- **Enroll in college the fall following high school graduation**
- **Persist to a second year at the same institution**
- **Earn a grade of B or higher in first-year college courses**
- **Earn a first-year college GPA of 3.0 or higher**
- **Less likely to take remedial courses**

Factor 2: Taking the Right Courses

Students who take challenging courses are more likely to be successful in college.

- **Students who take the ACT-recommended core curriculum in high school significantly increase their chances for success in college.**
- **Students who take higher-level courses in high school are significantly more likely to have higher levels of achievement in college.**

Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Who Completed a Core Curriculum by Race/Ethnicity, 2011

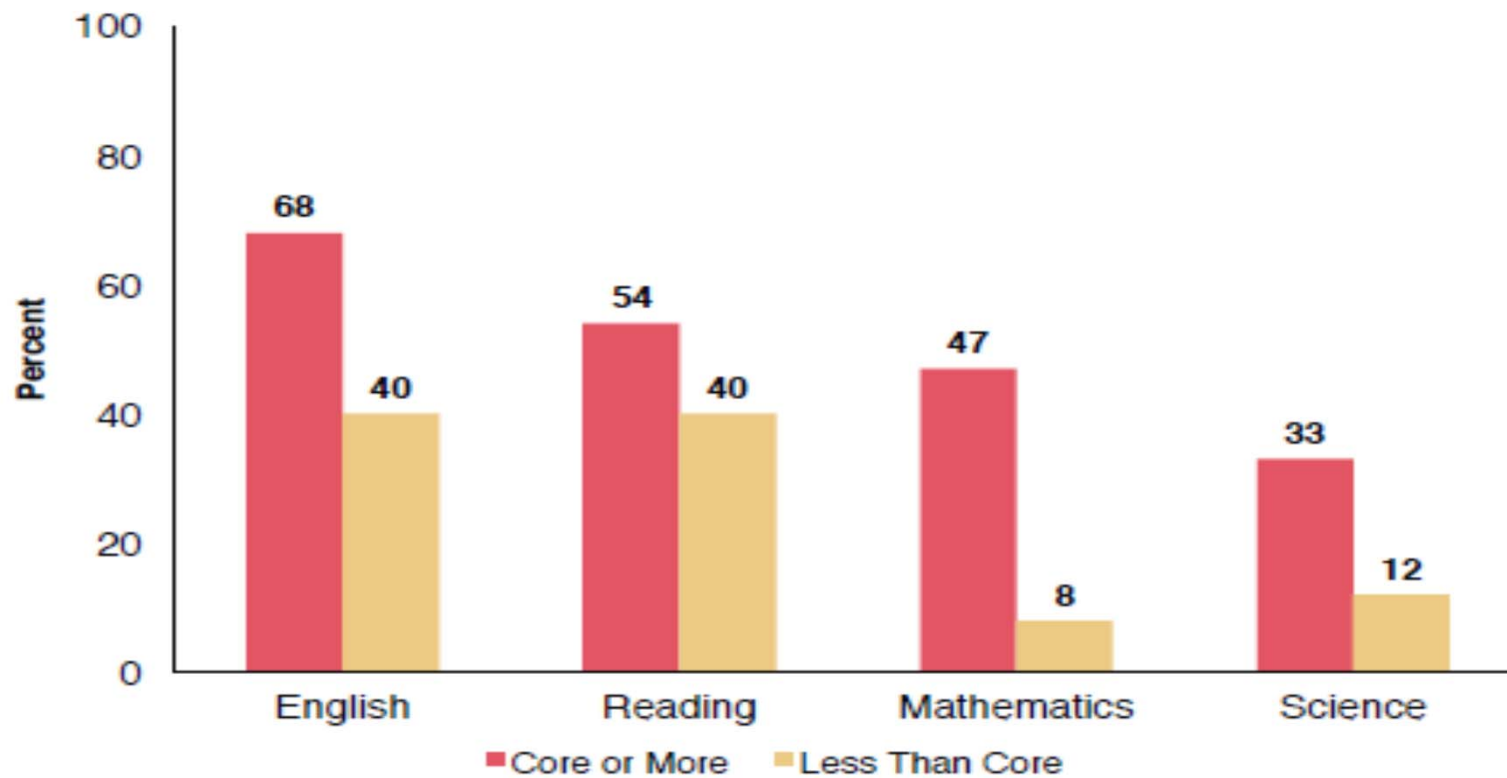


Factor 3: Course Rigor

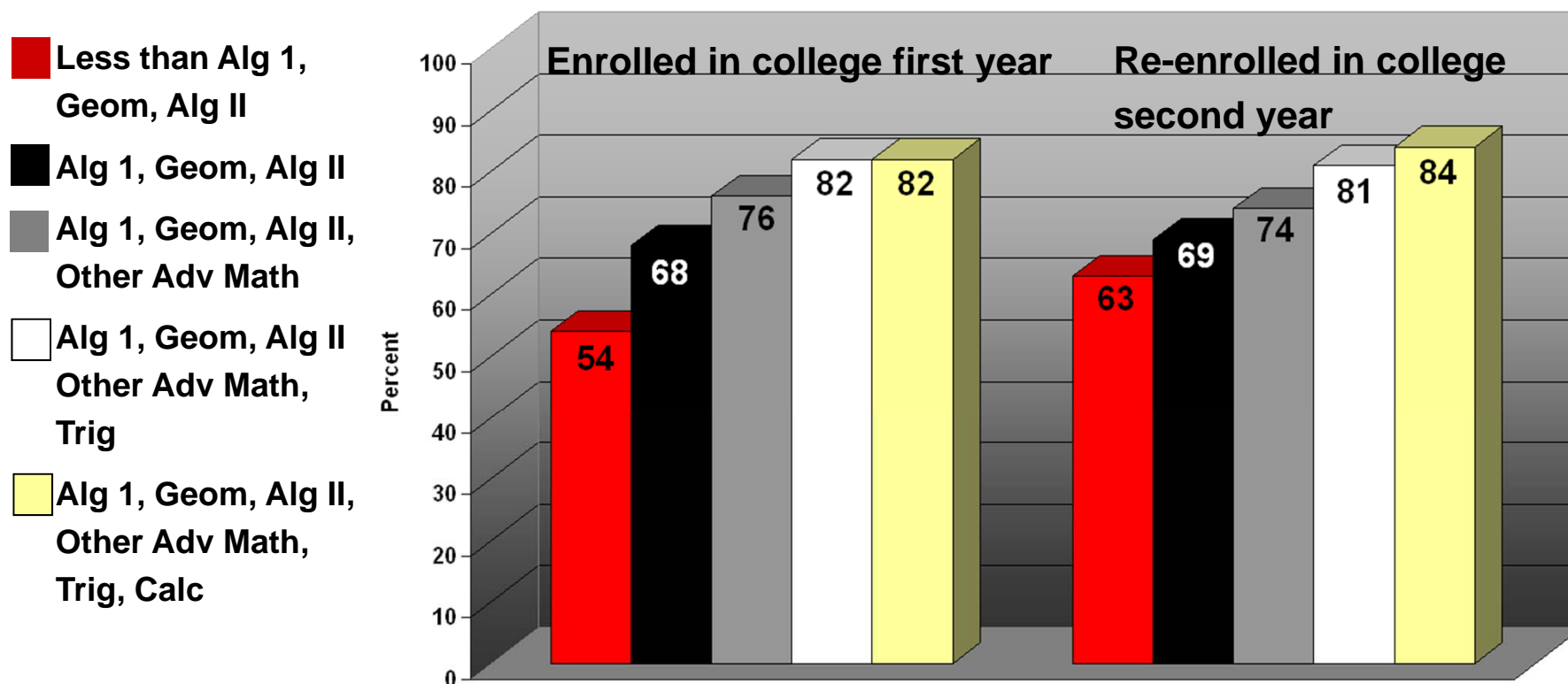
The nature of the courses students take in high school, especially in math and science, play a large role in college success.

- **Rigorous courses can positively influence college enrollment, retention and GPA.**
- **Course names do not equate to rigorous courses.**
- **Course curriculum, teacher effectiveness, and grading standards vary among high schools.**

Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Number of Years of Courses Taken Within Subject, 2011



College Enrollment/Retention Rates Math Course Sequence



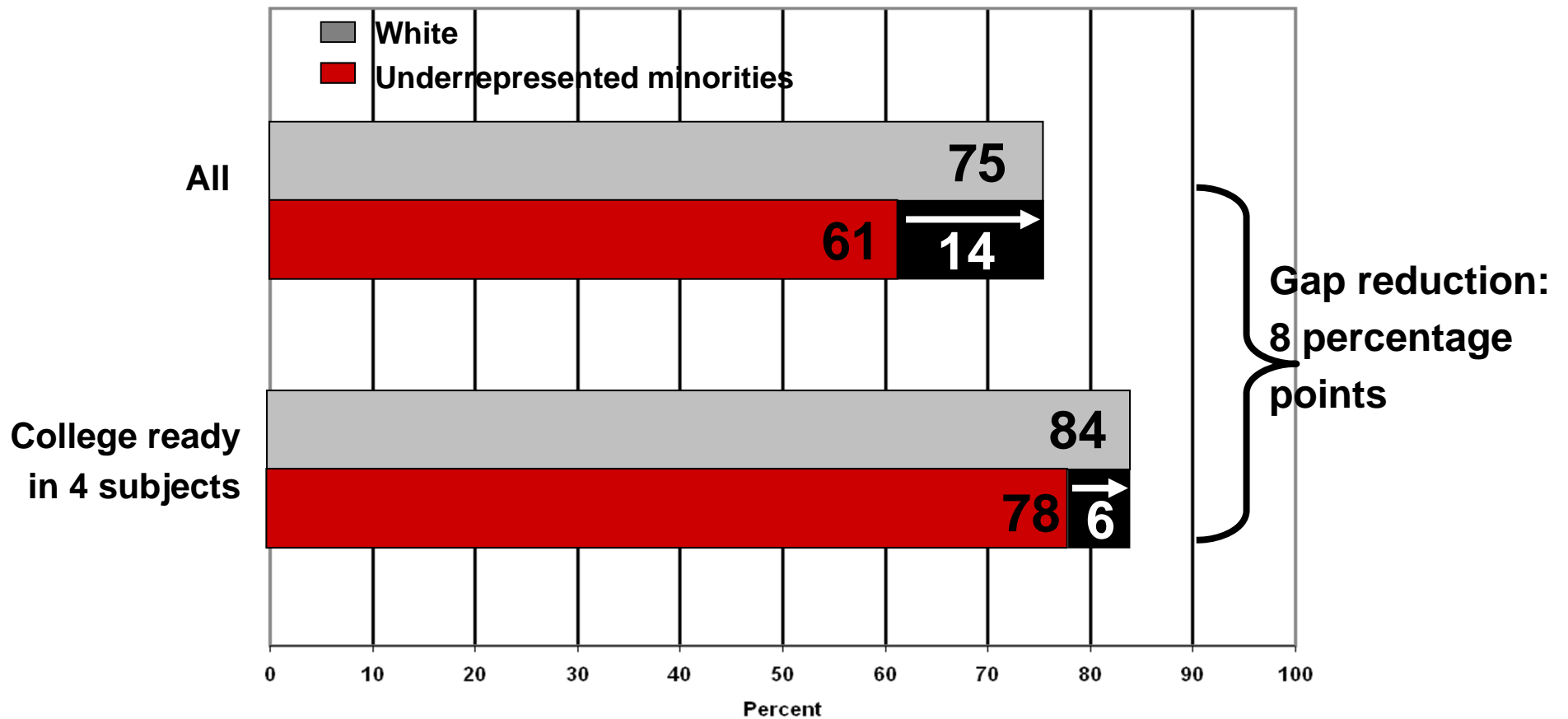
As the rigor of math courses increases, the chances of college enrollment/persistence also increase.

Closing the Gaps

Gaps in college enrollment, first-year success, and GPA are reduced for students who are ready for college (meeting all four of ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks, particularly for underrepresented and low-income students).

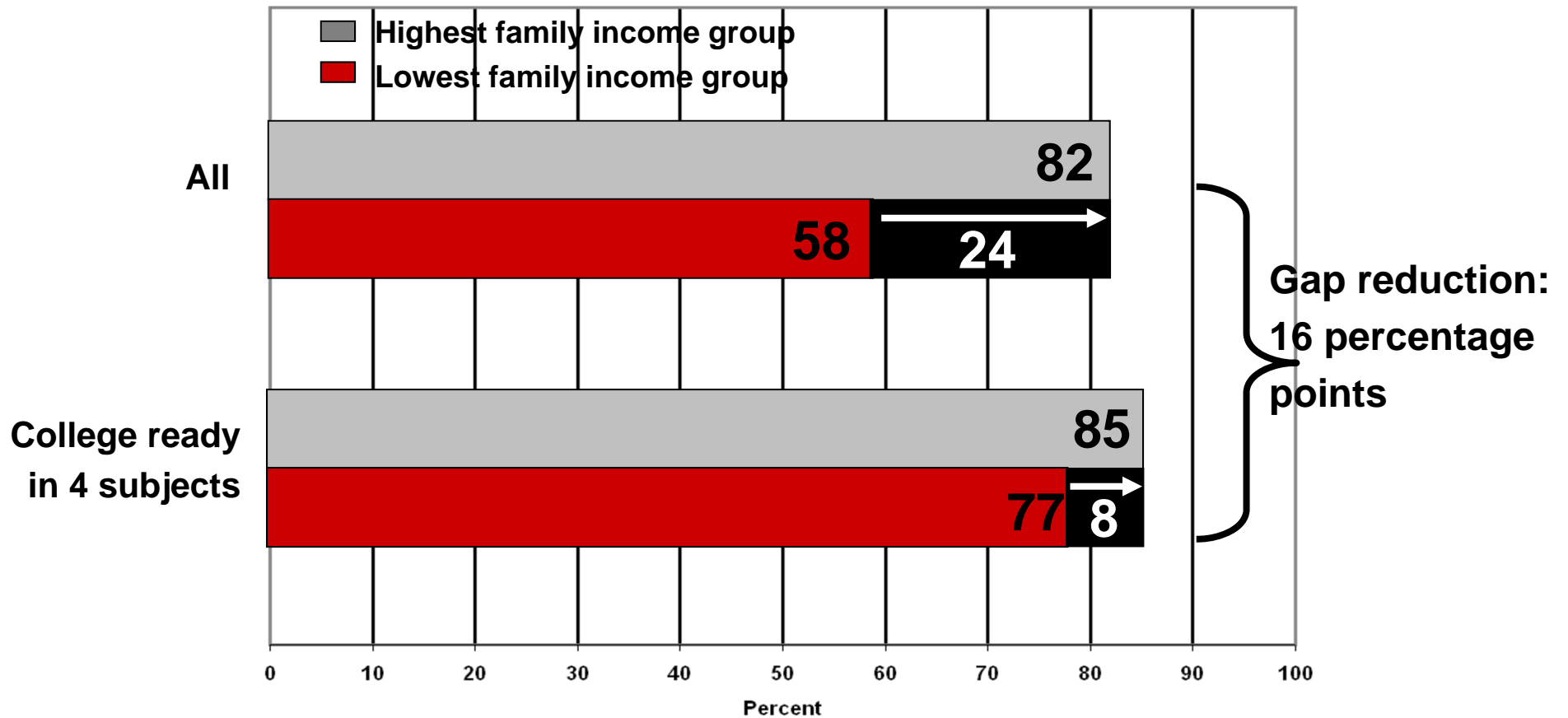
Reductions in Racial/Ethnic Gaps in College Enrollment Associated with Meeting All Four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks

Enrolled in college first year



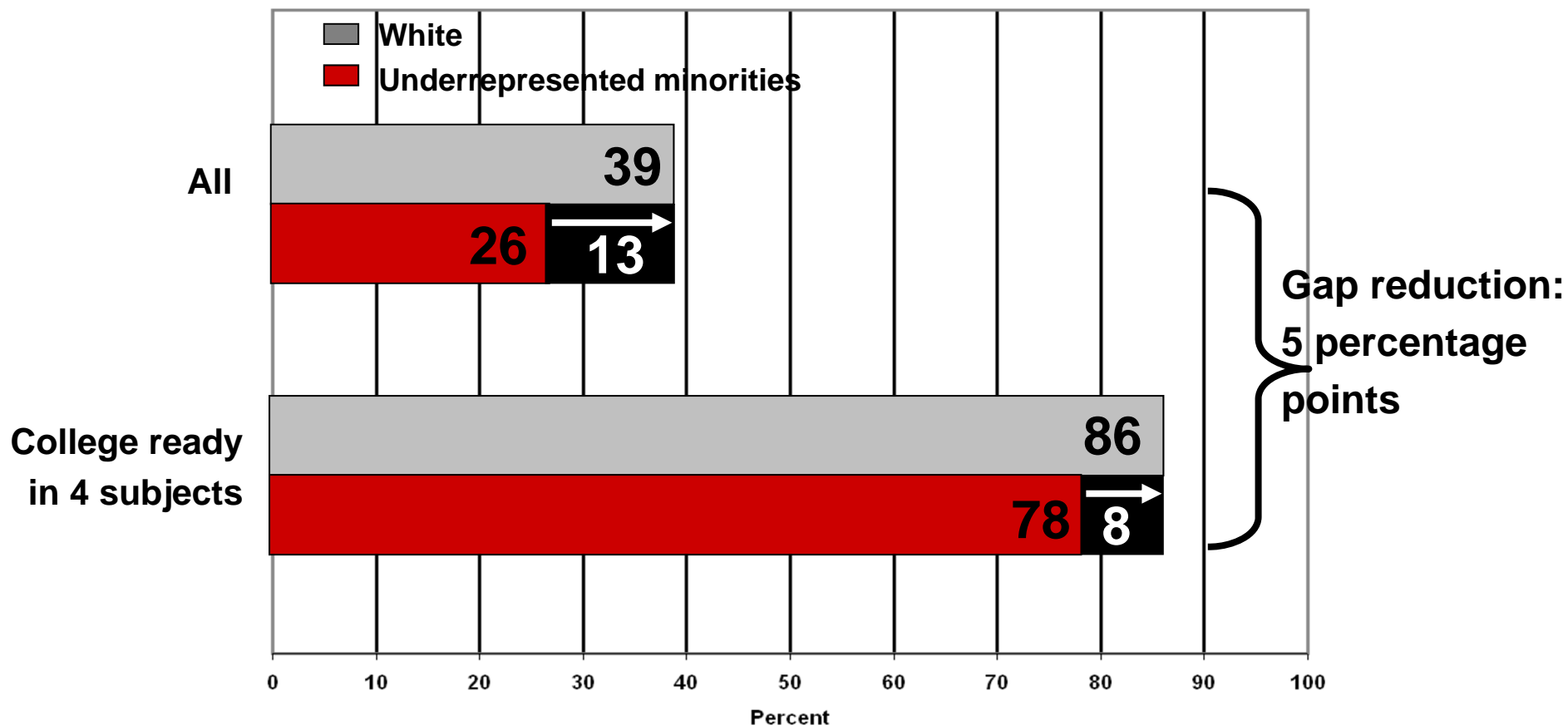
Reductions in Family Income Gaps in College Enrollment Rates Associated with Meeting All Four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks

Enrolled in college first year



Reductions in Racial/Ethnic Gaps in 4-Year College Degree Completion Rates Associated with Meeting All Four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks

Re-enrolled in college second year



Recommendation 1

Close the gap between student aspirations and high school course plans by ensuring that all students take at least a core curriculum in high school.

- *Reach out to students in middle school*
- *Create opportunities for conversations about aspirations and the importance of high school course preparation*
- *Create the expectation of going to college or preparing for the workforce for all students*
- *Create the expectation that all students take a core curriculum—at a minimum*

ACT National Curriculum Survey 2009

Do secondary instructors reduce expectations for students they perceive are not college bound?

Reduce academic expectations:

94%

Reduce completely or a great deal:

42%

Not at all:

6%

Recommendation 2

Close the gap in alignment of high school courses by focusing those courses on what students need for college and career after high school: college and career readiness standards/Common Core State Standards.

- *Create opportunities for faculty/departmental conversations about curricular alignment and expectations for the knowledge and skills students need for academic success.*
- *Course content must tie directly to postsecondary educational expectations (2-yr, 4-yr, trade, technical) and expectations for workforce training programs.*
- *Reinforce academic discipline qualities—the most predictive of the non-cognitive factors for college success.*

ACT National Curriculum Survey 2009

Are students prepared for college-level work in their content area?

High School Teachers:

91%

Postsecondary Instructors

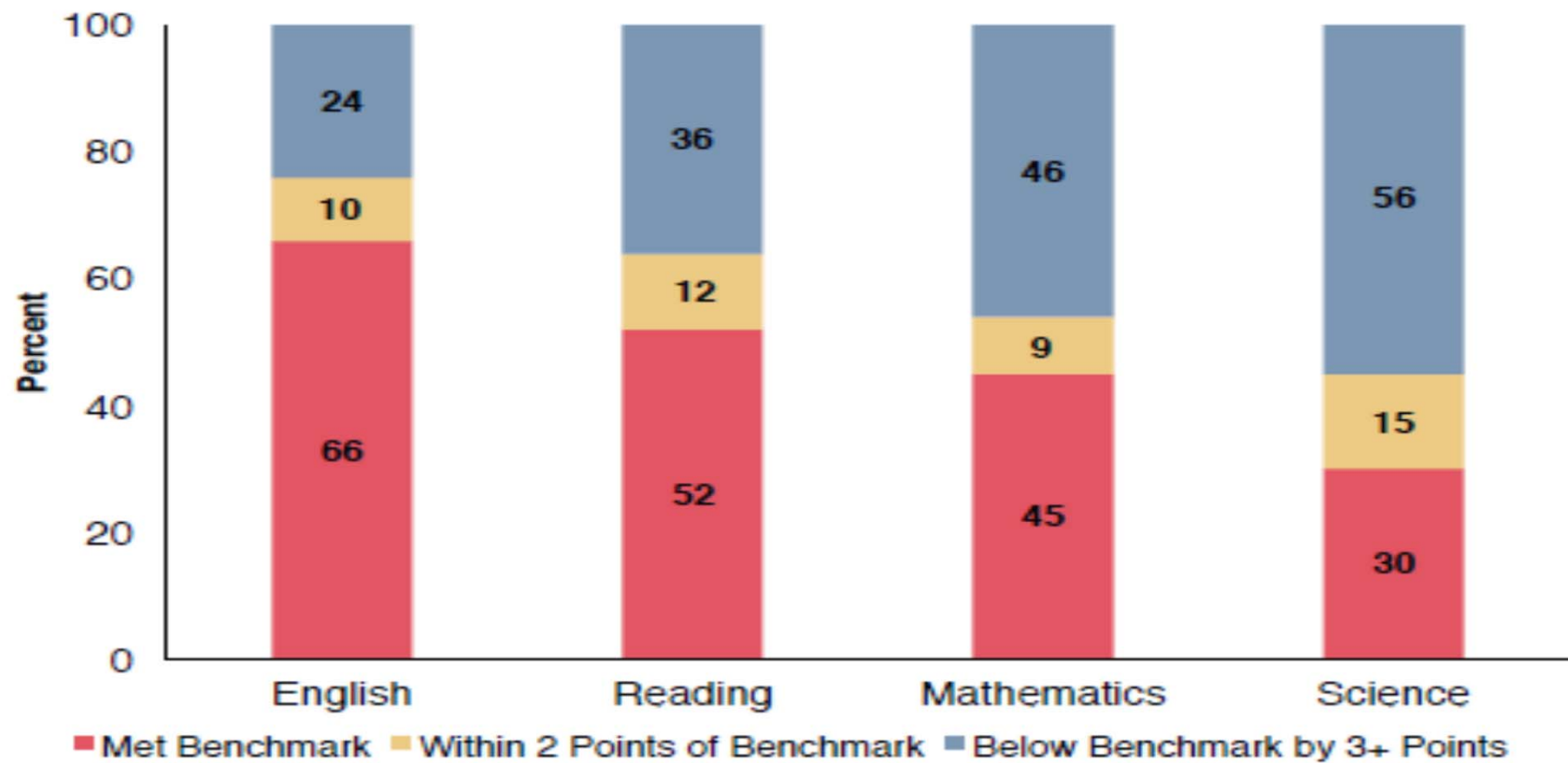
26%

Recommendation 3

Close the gap in the quality of high school courses by covering the essential knowledge and skills needed for college and career in sufficient depth and intensity for all students.

- *Equal access*
- *Highly effective teachers*
- *Make supplemental instruction available*

Percent of ACT-Tested High School Graduates by Benchmark Attainment and Subject, 2011



Implications

K-12: Help all high school students become college and career ready by graduation.

Postsecondary: Reinforce the need for entering students to be college and career ready to maximize their chances for college success.

As a nation, we need ALL high school graduates ready for college, ready for workforce training programs, and ready to meet the needs of the 21st century workforce.

Presentation Materials

The Condition of College & Career Readiness Class of 2010

http://www.act.org/news/data/10/index.html?utm_campaign=cccr10&utm_source=researchpolicy_leftnav&utm_medium=web

ACT Profile Report

http://www.act.org/news/data/10/profilereports.html?utm_campaign=cccr10&utm_source=data10_leftnav&utm_medium=web

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<http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/reports/index.html>

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