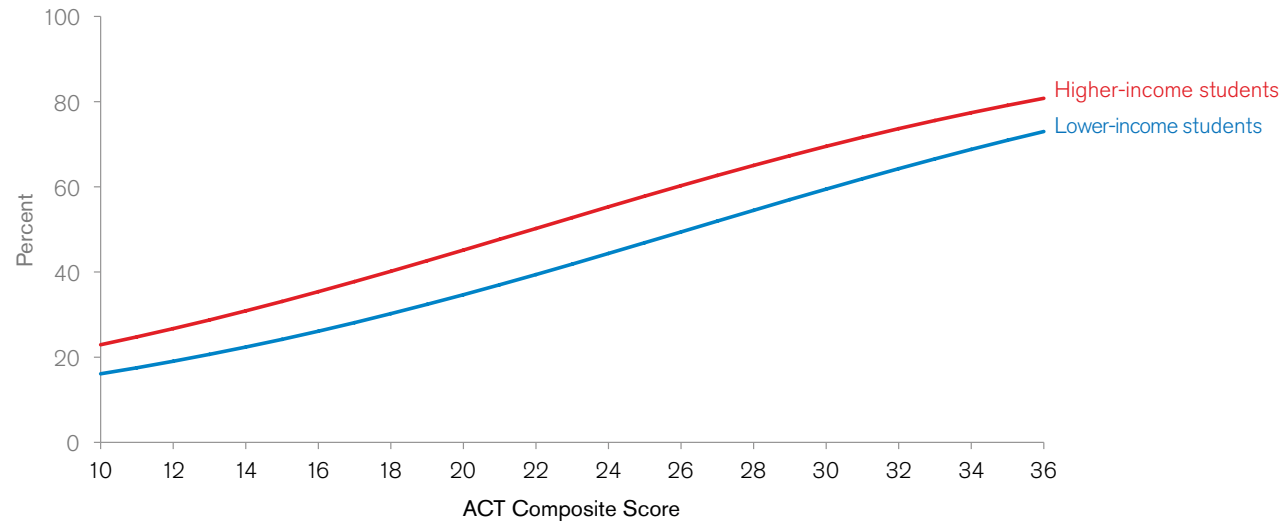


# Bachelor's Degree Completion by ACT Composite Score and Economic Status

## Among Students Enrolled in a Four-Year Postsecondary Institution

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Students' Chances of Completing a Bachelor's Degree within Six Years of Enrolling in a Four-Year Postsecondary Institution by ACT Composite Score and Family Income Range



Note: Students with a family income of less than \$30,000 a year are defined as lower-income students. Students with a family income of more than \$60,000 a year are defined as higher-income students. Results based on data from nearly 126,000 ACT-tested students who enrolled in a four-year postsecondary institution as new students in fall 2000 through 2003. More than 60 institutions were represented. Degree completion from initial institution was tracked. For a more detailed description of the study, see [ACT Research Report 2013-5](#).

A recent ACT study<sup>1</sup> that included data from more than 60 four-year postsecondary institutions found that the typical six-year bachelor's degree completion rate across institutions was 14 percentage points higher for higher-income students than for lower-income students (47% versus 33%, respectively).

Although slightly smaller than this, gaps in degree completion rates between higher- and lower-income students persisted when students' academic achievement levels (as measured by Composite score on the ACT® college readiness assessment) were taken into account. For example, for students with an ACT Composite score of 25, higher-income students had a 58% chance of completing a bachelor's

degree from their initial institution, compared to a 47% chance for lower-income students (a difference of 11 percentage points).

These findings suggest that there are factors besides academic achievement contributing to differences in degree completion rates between higher- and lower-income students, even among those who are better prepared academically for college. These factors might include nonacademic obligations, such as the need to work, that can influence students' study habits and chances of college success. ■

<sup>1</sup> Justine Radunzel and Julie Noble, *Differential Effects on Student Demographic Groups of Using ACT College Readiness Assessment Composite Score, ACT Benchmarks, and High School Grade Point Average for Predicting Long-Term College Success through Degree Completion*, ACT Research Report 2013-5 (Iowa City, IA: ACT, Inc., 2013). [http://www.act.org/research/researchers/reports/pdf/ACT\\_RR2013-5.pdf](http://www.act.org/research/researchers/reports/pdf/ACT_RR2013-5.pdf)

For both lower- and higher-income students enrolling in a four-year postsecondary institution, students' chances of completing a bachelor's degree within six years increased as their ACT Composite score increased.

Differences in six-year bachelor's degree completion rates between higher- and lower-income students were slightly reduced when students' academic achievement levels were taken into account.