

# National Summary

## Next Steps Life After Special Education



A Special Supplement to *Education Week's*  
DIPLOMAS COUNT 2015



EDUCATION WEEK  
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National Graduation Brief 2015

A special supplement to *Education Week's Diplomas Count 2015*

*Next Steps: Life After Special Education*

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Published by:  
Editorial Projects in Education Inc.  
6935 Arlington Road, Suite 100  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
Phone: (301) 280-3100  
[www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org)

## About *Diplomas Count*

Editorial Projects in Education is continuing to track high school graduation and issues related to late-secondary schooling and the transition to postsecondary education and employment. As part of this work, EPE publishes an annual special edition of *Education Week* devoted to critical issues facing efforts to improve the nation's high schools.

The 2015 installment of *Diplomas Count* focuses on students with disabilities, examining the challenges and opportunities awaiting them as they transition from K-12 schooling to postsecondary education and the workplace. *Education Week* journalists profile students with a range of disabilities and investigate the postsecondary accommodations and self-advocacy skills that can help such youths succeed after high school.

To complement the report's journalism, the Education Week Research Center compiled federal data in order to shed light on the high school achievement and post-high school outcomes of students with special needs. The results highlight key patterns regarding the educational status of this population.

As always, *Diplomas Count* also includes the latest data on high school graduation. This 10th edition of the report marks the first time the Education Week Research Center has used the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) —the calculation method states are federally required to employ— as its primary source of graduation data. The report provides a national perspective on graduation rates for students with disabilities, including state-by-state results.

To view the full *Diplomas Count* report online, visit [www.edweek.org/go/dc15](http://www.edweek.org/go/dc15). Beyond the contents of the print edition, the online-only features of *Diplomas Count 2015* include state-specific policy reports ([www.edweek.org/go/dc15/sgb](http://www.edweek.org/go/dc15/sgb)) and an interactive map ([www.edweek.org/go/dc15/map](http://www.edweek.org/go/dc15/map)), which allows users to explore graduation rates across the nation.

Education Week Research Center

June 2015

## About Editorial Projects in Education

**Editorial Projects in Education (EPE)** is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization based in Bethesda, Md. Its primary mission is to help raise the level of awareness and understanding among professionals and the public of important issues in American education. EPE covers local, state, national, and international news and issues from preschool through the 12th grade. Editorial Projects in Education publishes *Education Week*, America's newspaper of record for precollegiate education, the online *Teacher*, *Digital Directions*, and *Industry & Innovation* channels, and the TopSchoolJobs employment resource. It also produces periodic special reports on issues ranging from technology to textbooks, as well as books of special interest to educators.

The **Education Week Research Center** conducts policy surveys, collects data, and performs analyses that appear in *Education Week* and its special reports. The center also conducts independent research studies and maintains the Education Counts data resource.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

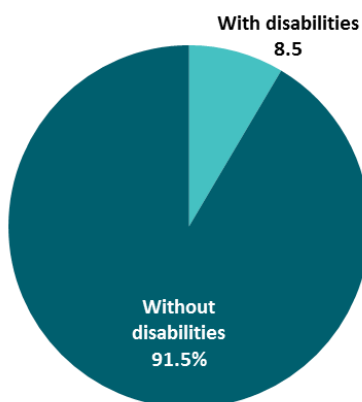
## Students with Disabilities in School and Work

Nearly 6 million students with disabilities attend public schools in the United States. Roughly half of those students are in an age group traditionally served by secondary schools. The Education Week Research Center compiled data from the U.S. Department of Education in order to shed light on the high school achievement and post-high school outcomes of students with special needs. The results highlight key patterns regarding the educational status of this population.

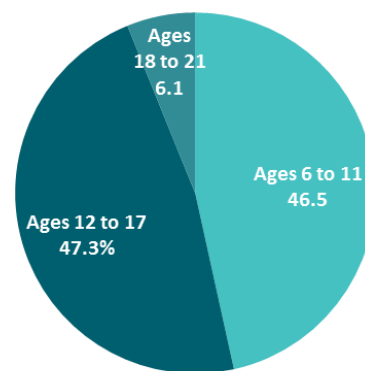
## Population Profile

Students receiving special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act make up roughly nine percent of all 6-to-21-year-olds. Nearly half of the students served by IDEA programs are between the ages of 12 and 17, an age range customarily associated with secondary education. The share of students with disabilities who are of secondary school age mirrors the general education population.

Percent of U.S. population ages 6 to 21



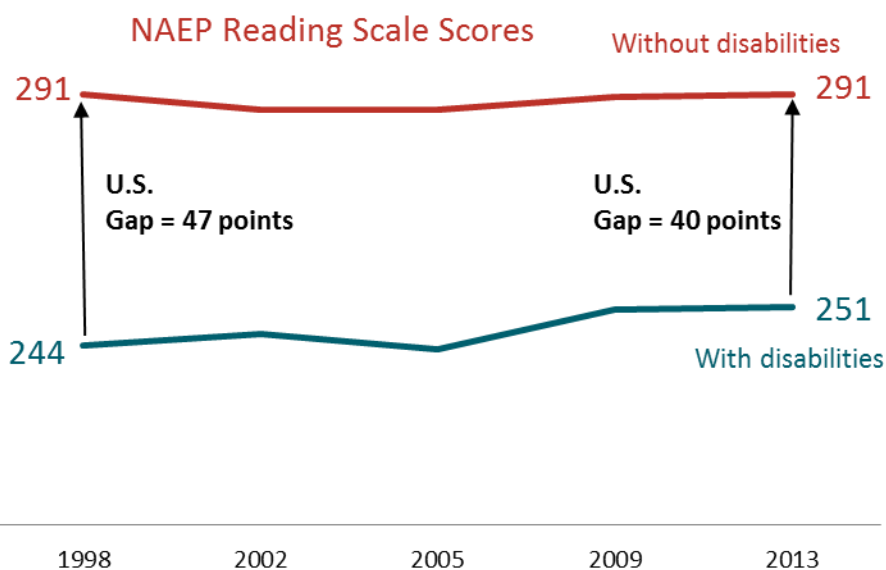
Percent of U.S. students with disabilities by age



SOURCE: Education Week Research Center, 2015.  
Analysis of data from U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs and U.S. Census Bureau (2013).

## Gains on Tests, but Gaps Remain

While reading and math results on the 12th grade National Assessment of Educational Progress have improved for students with disabilities over time, their scores remain substantially lower than those of their peers without disabilities. In 2013, students with disabilities scored 40 points lower than their counterparts in reading, with a similar gap in math.

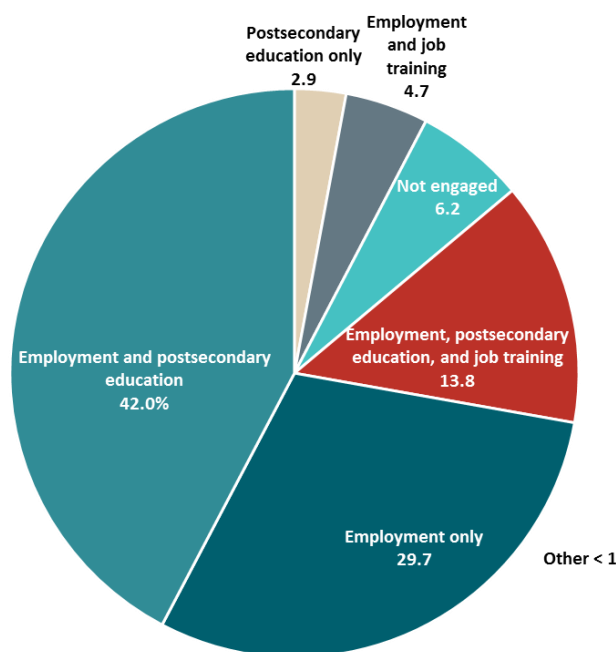


SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)



## Post-High School Engagement

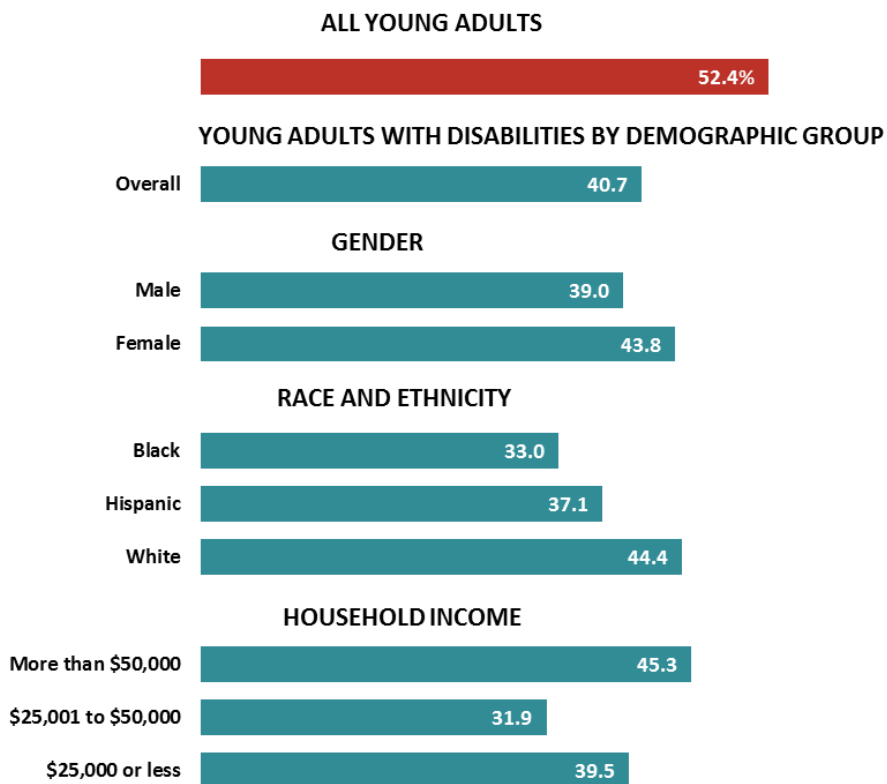
Most young adults with disabilities have been employed, participated in job training, or attended a postsecondary school following high school. Researchers for the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 report that a large share of those young adults had been engaged in some combination of those activities. For instance, 42 percent had both worked and been enrolled in postsecondary education. Only 6.2 percent had not been engaged in any type of educational or job-related activity.



Percent reporting type of post-high school engagement (U.S.)

## Postsecondary Completion

Completion of a postsecondary program can be an important pathway to careers and a range of other opportunities. According to information from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2, 40.7 percent of young postsecondary students with special needs completed a program, compared with 52.4 percent of all postsecondary students their age. When disaggregated by demographic characteristics, study results for students with disabilities indicate that no more than 45 percent of any gender, racial and ethnic, or household-income group finished a postsecondary school.



Percent completing postsecondary school (U.S.)

SOURCE: SRI International and U.S. Department of Education, 2011

## STATE PROFILE – SPECIAL EDUCATION

### Enrollment by Disability: Fall 2013

	Top State	Bottom State	U.S. Total
Number of students with disability	Number of Students	Number of Students	Number of Students
Specific learning disability	168,266 (CA)	2,156 (VT)	1,357,594
Other health impairment	36,811 (CA)	40 (IA)	439,875
Emotional disturbance	16,127 (CA)	385 (AK, WY)	217,992
Intellectual disability	17,260 (TX)	247 (WY)	207,604
Autism	26,736 (CA)	203 (DC)	197,550
Percent of disabled students in disability category	National Average (%)	National Average (%)	National Average (%)
Specific learning disability	65.7 (NV)	26.1 (KY)	50.0
Other health impairment	25.6 (WA)	0.1 (IA)	16.2
Emotional disturbance	21.0 (VT)	2.0 (AR)	8.0
Intellectual disability	24.1 (KY)	2.5 (NJ)	7.7
Autism	13.0 (MN)	1.1 (IA)	7.3
Students in regular classroom over 40 percent of day	National Average (%)	National Average (%)	National Average (%)
Specific learning disability	98.5 (SD)	83.2 (NM)	92.6
Other health impairment	96.1 (SD)	77.5 (DC)	87.9
Emotional disturbance	86.4 (IA)	42.3 (DC)	64.6
Intellectual disability	86.3 (IA)	24.5 (CA)	45.6
Autism	87.2 (IA)	34.5 (DC)	62.5

— Data not available

SOURCE: Education Week Research Center, 2015. Analysis of data from U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (2013).

## ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

## Reading and Math Scores

	Top State	Bottom State	National Average
NAEP (Percent Proficient and Above)	(%)	(%)	(%)
<b>4<sup>th</sup> grade Reading</b>			
With disabilities	28.1 (MD)	3.8 (NM)	11.1
Without disabilities	54.0 (MA)	22.7 (MS)	37.1
<b>4<sup>th</sup> grade Math</b>			
With disabilities	30.5 (MN)	7.0 (HI)	17.9
Without disabilities	64.6 (MA)	27.4 (MS)	44.7
<b>8<sup>th</sup> grade Reading</b>			
With disabilities	16.3 (MD)	1.8 (AL)	8.2
Without disabilities	54.7 (MA)	20.6 (DC)	37.5
<b>8<sup>th</sup> grade Math</b>			
With disabilities	16.5 (MA)	1.9 (DC)	8.3
Without disabilities	61.9 (MA)	21.4 (AL)	37.9
<b>Achievement Gains</b>			
<b>4<sup>th</sup> grade Reading – Scale-score change on NAEP (2003-2013)</b>			
With disabilities	+21.5 (MD)	-30.3 (SC)	-0.4
Without disabilities	+21.4 (DC)	-1.9 (SD)	+5.8
<b>4<sup>th</sup> grade Math – Scale-score change on NAEP (2003-2013)</b>			
With disabilities	+24.3 (DC)	-10.8 (SC)	+4.3
Without disabilities	+25.1 (DC)	2.8 (MI)	+8.0
<b>8<sup>th</sup> grade Reading – Scale-score change on NAEP (2003-2013)</b>			
With disabilities	+23.3 (MD)	-14.3 (WV)	+6.8
Without disabilities	+11.7 (DC)	-2.4 (ND)	+4.9
<b>8<sup>th</sup> grade Math – Scale-score change on NAEP (2003-2013)</b>			
With disabilities	+25.2 (DC)	-8.4 (SC)	+6.4
Without disabilities	+24.8 (DC)	+0.9 (IA)	+7.9

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

# HIGH SCHOOL OUTCOMES

## High School Exit Status: 2012-13

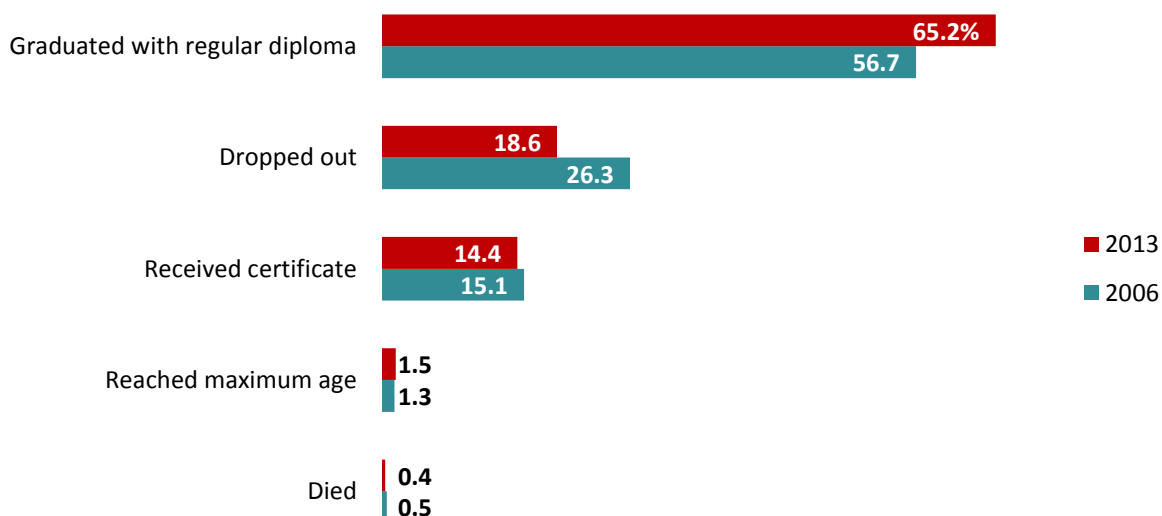
	Top State	Bottom State	Nation*
	(%)	(%)	(%)
<b>Students with disabilities (ages 14-21)</b>			
Graduated with regular high school diploma	88.0 (MN)	28.8 (MS)	65.2
Received a certificate	61.0 (MS)	0.0 (IA)	14.4
Dropped out	8.5 (IN)	45.0 (NV)	18.6
Reached maximum age	0.1 (OK)	9.1 (SD)	1.5
Died	0.2 (UT)	1.0 (SD)	0.4

— Data not available

\*National average includes U.S. territories and Bureau of Indian education schools.

Rankings based on unrounded figures.

### High school exit status (ages 14-21)



NOTE: Due to methodological differences in calculations, data on high school exit status shown here are not comparable to ACGR graduation rates presented elsewhere in this report.

SOURCE: Education Week Research Center, 2015. Analysis of data from U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (2005-06, 2012-13).



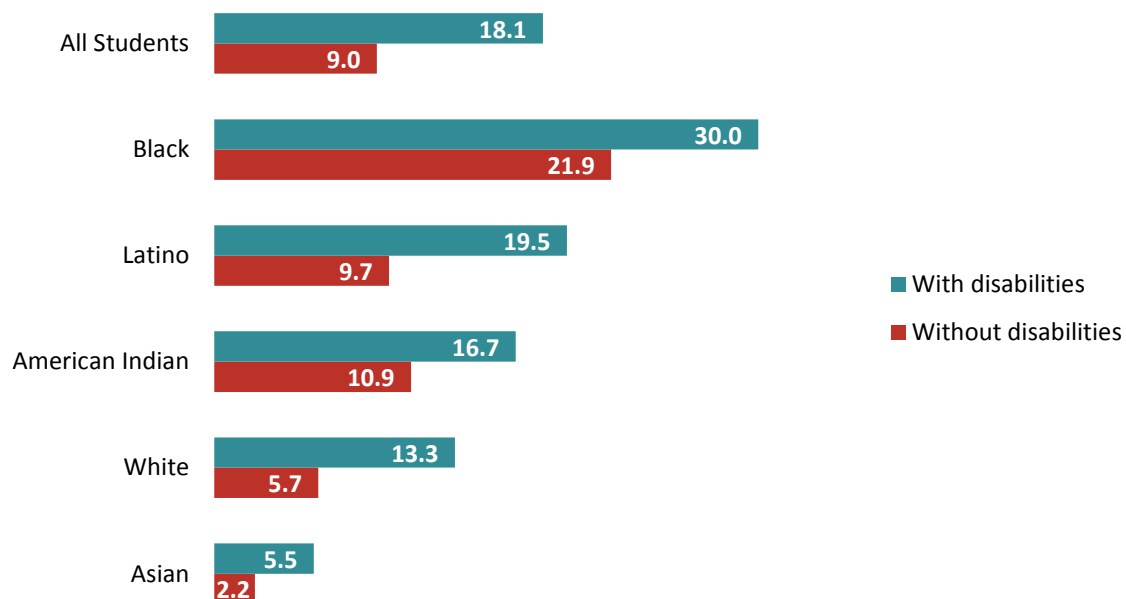
## DISCIPLINE DISPARITIES

## Secondary School Suspensions

Suspension rates of students	With disabilities (%)		Without disabilities (%)	
	Top State	Bottom State	Top State	Bottom State
All students	4.9 (ND)	37.1 (FL)	3.0 (ND)	17.4 (DC)
American Indian	0.0 (MS, WV)	33.3 (FL)	1.5 (PA)	20.7 (NC)
Asian	0.0 (11 states)	16.0 (RI)	0.0 (MT, ND)	6.8 (RI)
African American	3.1 (ND)	55.3 (NV)	4.6 (MT)	30.8 (FL)
Latino	2.9 (ND)	55.0 (FL)	1.5 (VT)	18.7 (RI)
White	3.6 (ND)	29.5 (FL)	1.9 (DC)	12.2 (WV)

— Data not available

## U.S. Suspension Rates by Disability Status



SOURCE: The Center for Civil Rights Remedies at the Civil Rights Project, UCLA, 2015. Analysis of Civil Rights Data Collection (2011-12).

# GRADUATION PROFILE FOR THE CLASS OF 2013

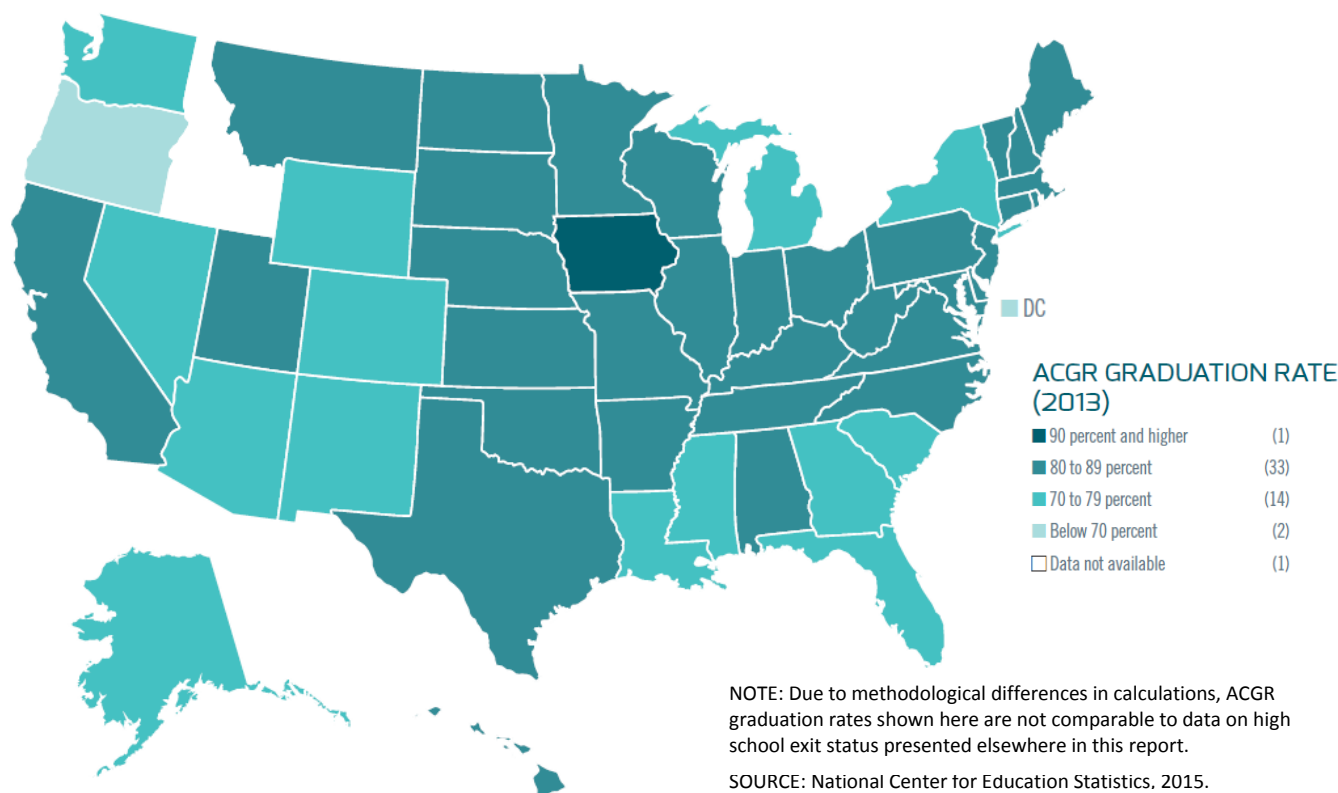
## Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) by Student Group

	Top State (%)	Bottom State (%)	National Average (%)
<b>All Students</b>	90 (IA)	62 (DC)	81
<b>By Race and Ethnicity</b>			
American Indian	86 (AL, IN, TX)	41 (WY)	70
Asian	96 (NJ)	77 (AK, NE)	89
Latino	85 (TX)	59 (MN)	75
Black	84 (TX)	57 (NV, OR)	71
White	93 (NJ, TX)	71 (OR)	87
<b>By Subgroup</b>			
Students with disabilities	80 (AR)	23 (MS)	62
Economically disadvantaged	85 (KY, TX)	59 (DC)	73
Limited English proficient	83 (WV)	20 (AZ)	61

— Data not available

>= Greater than or equal to. Results have been top coded to protect the confidentiality of individual student data.

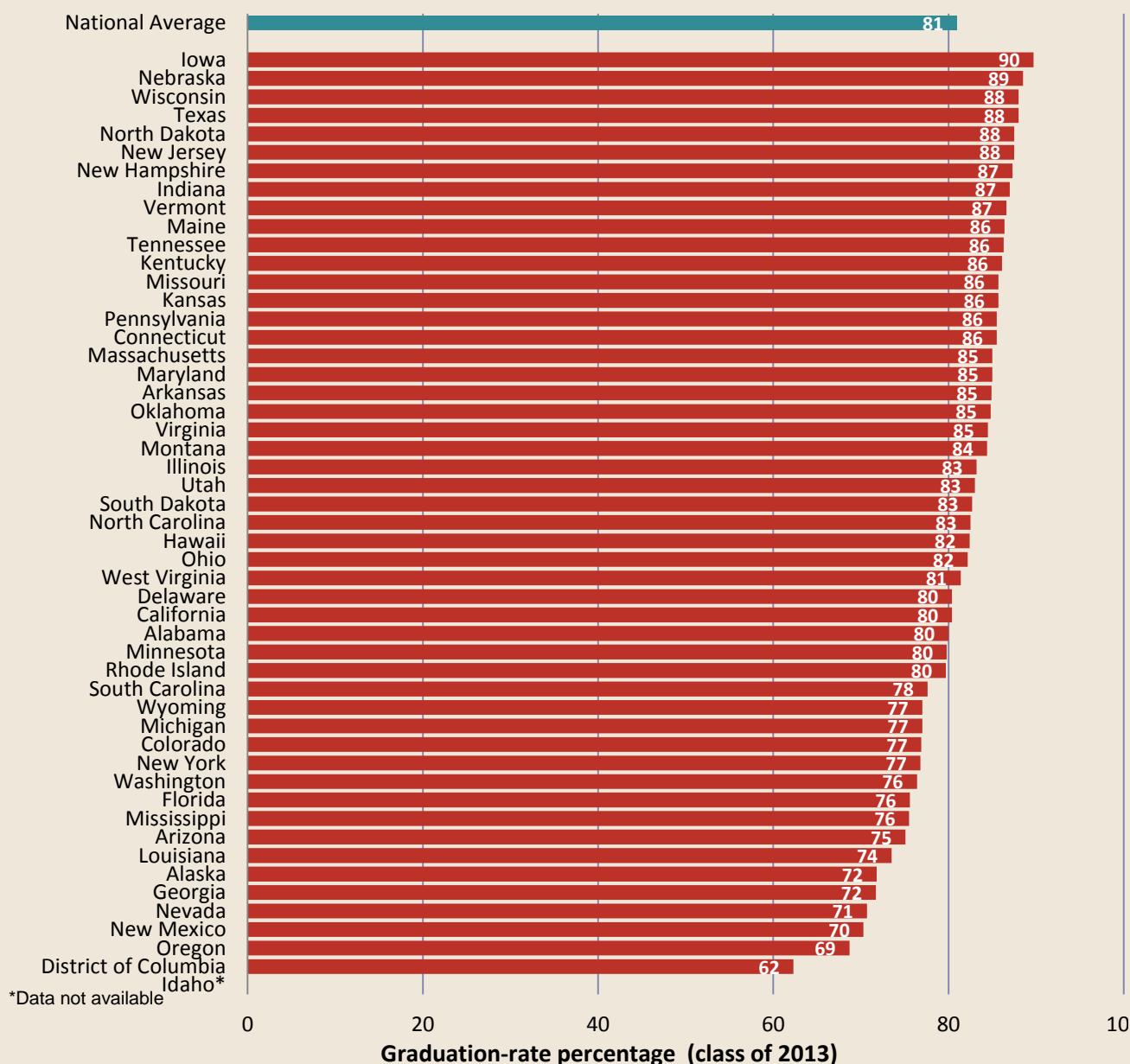
<> Data were suppressed to protect the confidentiality of individual student data.



## Graduation in the United States

More than 8 in 10 public high school students in the United States are graduating with a diploma. Beginning with the class of 2011, federal regulations required each state to calculate graduation rates using a method known as the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR). With the exception of Idaho, all states and the District of Columbia have reported ACGR rates. Based on that state-reported data, the U.S. Department of Education indicates that the nation's graduation rate stands at 81 percent for the class of 2013.

Graduation rates vary substantially across the nation. A gap of 28 percentage points separates the best-performing and worst-performing states.



NOTE: Due to methodological differences in calculations, ACGR graduation rates shown here are not comparable to data on high school exit status presented elsewhere in this report.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, 2015.

## A Long-Term View Of Graduation

From 2011 to 2013, the national graduation rate increased by 2 percentage points. Graduation rates also rose in 40 states during this period. Three states lost ground over this period of time.

Year-by-year trends	U.S. Average
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2013	<b>81</b>
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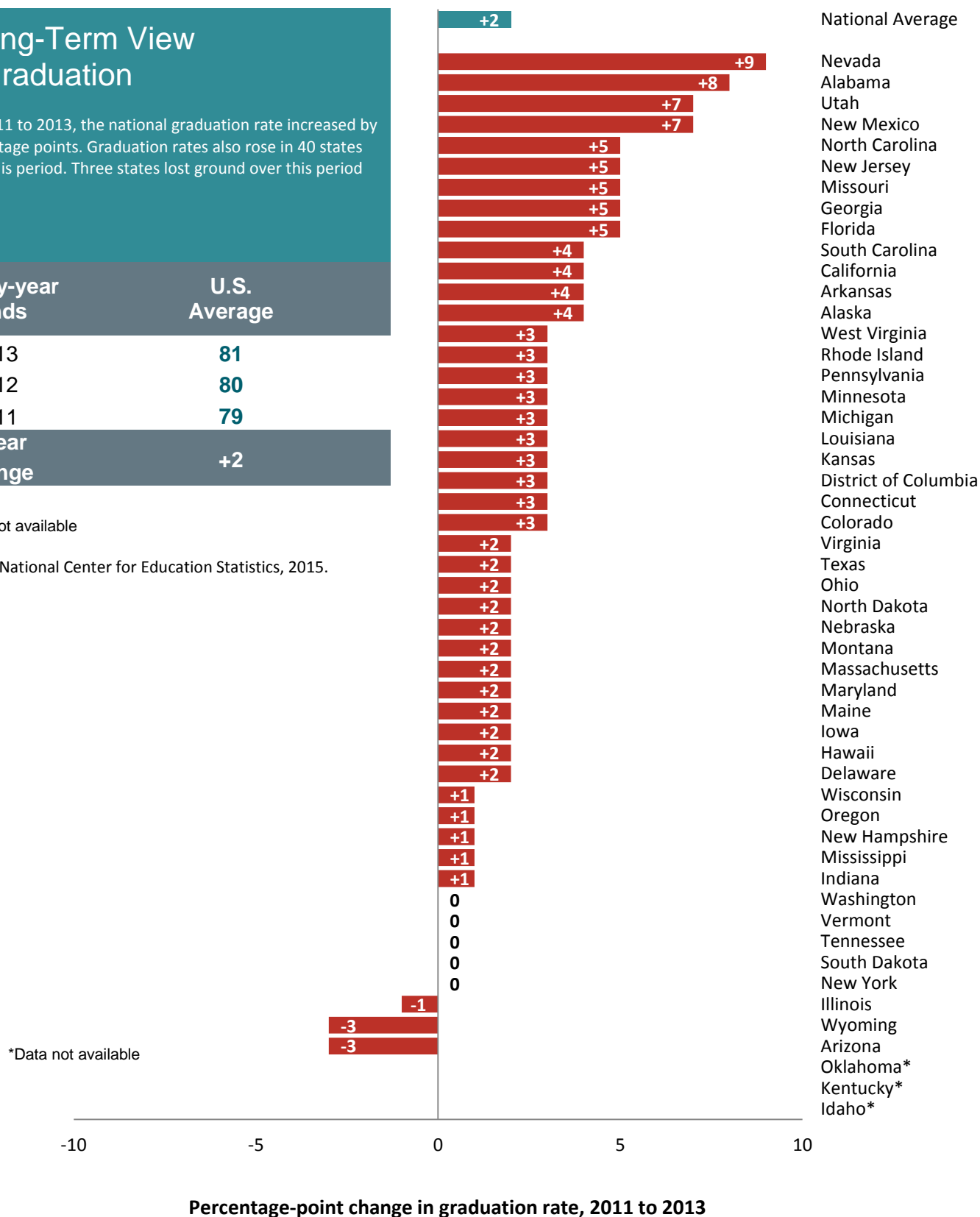
2012	<b>80</b>
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2011	<b>79</b>
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<b>3-Year Change</b>	<b>+2</b>
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— Data not available

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, 2015.



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## The Education Week Research Center

is the research arm of Editorial Projects in Education, which houses a full-time staff of researchers, analysts, and librarians that conducts policy surveys, collects data, and performs analyses that appear in the *Quality Counts*, and *Diplomas Count* annual reports. The center also produces independent research reports, contributes original data and analysis to special coverage in *Education Week* and [edweek.org](http://edweek.org), and maintains the Education Counts online data resource.

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