# Public High School Graduation Rates

*In school year 2019–20, the U.S. average adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for public high school students was 87 percent, the highest it has been since the rate was first measured in 2010–11 (79 percent). Asian/Pacific Islander students had the highest ACGR (93 percent), followed by White (90 percent), Hispanic (83 percent), Black (81 percent), and American Indian/Alaska Native (75 percent) students.*

This indicator examines the percentage of U.S. public high school students[1] who graduate on time, as measured by the adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR). To calculate the ACGR, state education agencies first identify the "cohort" of first-time 9th-graders in a particular school year. The cohort is then adjusted by adding any students who immigrate from another country or transfer into the cohort after 9th grade and subtracting any students who subsequently transfer out, emigrate to another country, or die. The ACGR is the percentage of students in this adjusted cohort who graduate within 4 years of starting 9th grade with a regular high school diploma or, for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities,

a state-defined alternate high school diploma.[2] The U.S. Department of Education first collected the ACGR in 2010-11.[3]

This indicator focuses primarily on ACGR data for 2019-20. In 2019-20, some states may have changed their requirements for a regular high school diploma to account for the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. These changes were at the discretion of each state but may have resulted in less comparability in the ACGRs between 2019-20 and prior school years. State-level ACGR data for 2019-20 are available for 48 states and the District of Columbia.[4]

*ACGR by State*

**Figure 1. Adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for public high school students, by state: 2019–20**
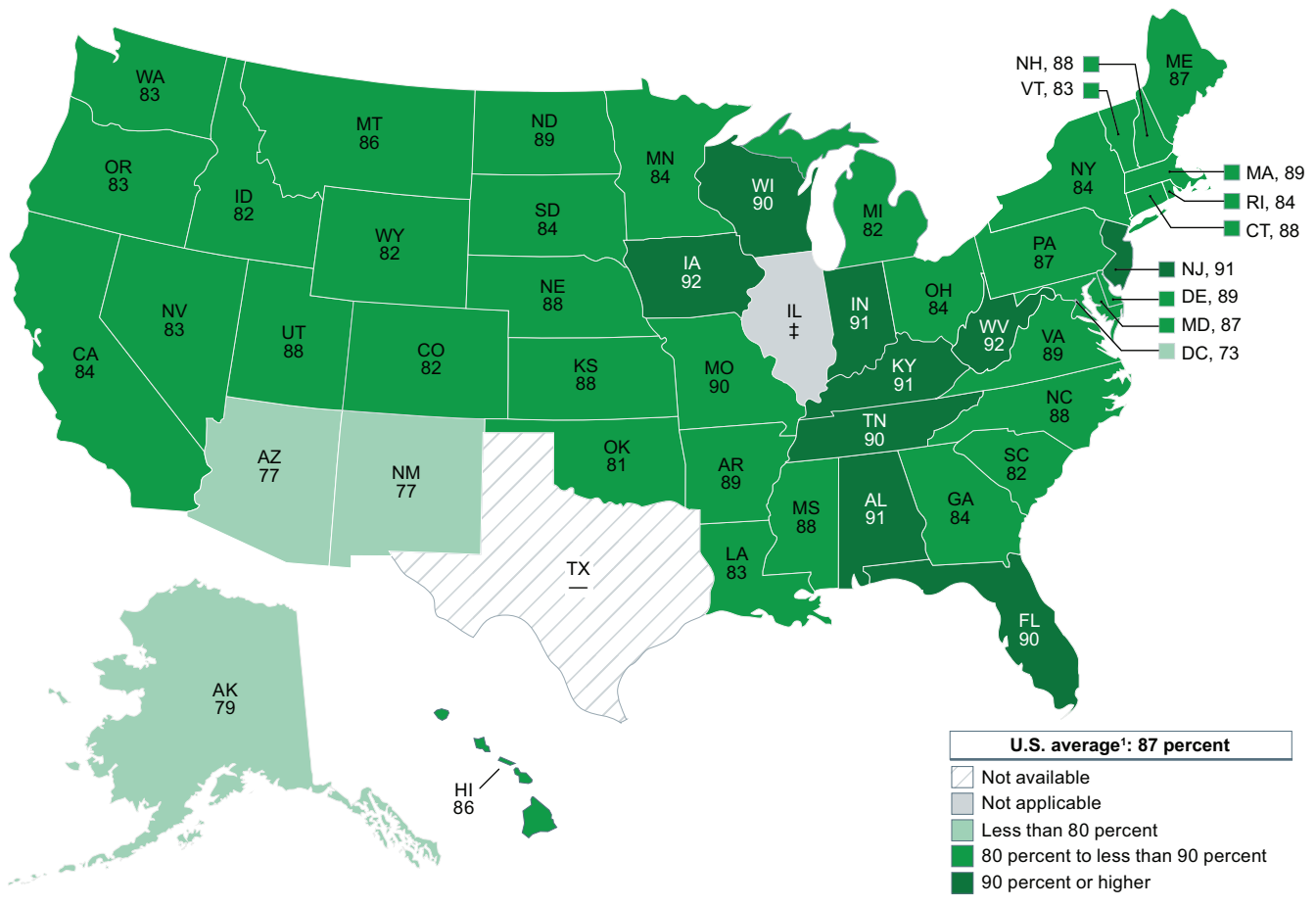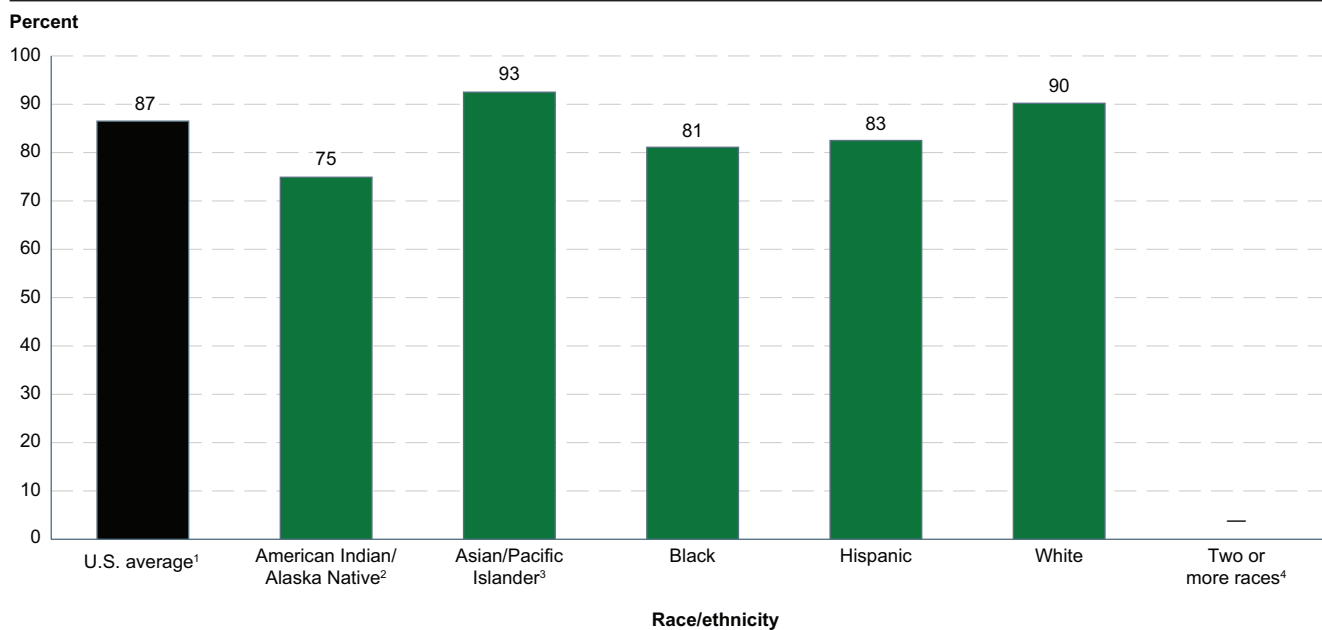


— Not available.

‡ Reporting standards not met.

[1] Includes imputed data for Illinois and Texas.

NOTE: The ACGR is the percentage of public school 9th-graders who graduate within 4 years of starting 9th grade with a regular diploma or, for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, a state-defined alternate high school diploma. The U.S. average ACGR is for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. In 2019–20, some states may have changed their requirements for a regular high school diploma to account for the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. These changes are at the discretion of each state but may have resulted in less comparability in the ACGRs between 2019–20 and prior school years. In 2019–20, reporting standards were not met for Illinois, and Texas data were unavailable. The graduation rates displayed above have been rounded to whole numbers. Categorizations are based on unrounded percentages. Interpret Alabama data with caution. The Alabama State Department of Education has indicated that their ACGR data for some years were misstated. For more information, please see https://www.alsde.edu/sec/comm/News%20Releases/12-08-2016%20Graduation%20Rate%20Review.pdf.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Consolidated State Performance Report, 2019–20; and National Center for Education Statistics, ED*Facts* file 150, Data Group 695, and ED*Facts* file 151, Data Group 696, 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 219.46.

The U.S. average ACGR for public high school students increased from 79 percent in 2010-11 to 87 percent in 2019-20. On average, the ACGR increased by about 1 percentage point per year over this period, including from 2018-19 to 2019-20.

In 2019-20, the ACGR ranged from 73 percent in the District of Columbia to 92 percent in Iowa and West Virginia. Thirty-six states reported ACGRs from 80 percent to less than 90 percent.[5] Of the 48 states and the District of Columbia that had data available in both 2018-19 and 2019-20, ACGR differed by about 1 percentage point or less between these years in 37 states.

*ACGR by Race/Ethnicity and State*

**Figure 2.   Adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for public high school students, by race/ethnicity: 2019–20**



— Not available.
[1] Includes imputed data for Illinois and Texas.
[2] Estimated assuming a count of zero American Indian/Alaska Native students for Hawaii.
[3] Reporting practices for data on Asian and Pacific Islander students vary by state. Asian/Pacific Islander data in this indicator represent either the value reported by the state for the "Asian/Pacific Islander" group or an aggregation of separate values reported by the state for "Asian" and "Pacific Islander." "Asian/Pacific Islander" includes the "Filipino" group, which only California and Hawaii report separately.
[4] Due to nonreporting in several states, data for students of Two or more races are not available at the national level.
NOTE: The ACGR is the percentage of public school 9th-graders who graduate within 4 years of starting 9th grade with a regular diploma or, for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, a state-defined alternate high school diploma.The U.S. average ACGR is for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. In 2019–20, some states may have changed their requirements for a regular high school diploma to account for the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. These changes are at the discretion of each state but may have resulted in less comparability in the ACGRs between 2019–20 and prior school years. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Consolidated State Performance Report, 2019–20; and National Center for Education Statistics, ED*Facts* file 150, Data Group 695, and ED*Facts* file 151, Data Group 696, 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 219.46.

In 2019-20, the ACGRs for American Indian/Alaska Native[6] (75 percent), Black (81 percent), and Hispanic (83 percent) public high school students were below the U.S. average ACGR of 87 percent. The ACGRs for Asian/Pacific Islander[7] (93 percent) and White (90 percent) students were above the U.S. average ACGR.

Across states, the ACGRs for American Indian/Alaska Native students
• ranged from 53 percent in South Dakota to 93 percent in Alabama;[8, 9] and
• were higher than the U.S. average ACGR of 87 percent in at least 10 states[10] (Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, New Jersey, Indiana, Arkansas, Virginia, Missouri, Connecticut, and Maryland).[11]

Across states, the ACGRs for Asian/Pacific Islander students
• ranged from 74 percent in Vermont to 98 percent in Florida;[12] and
• were higher than the U.S. average ACGR in the District of Columbia and in all states except Wyoming, Nebraska, Arkansas, South Dakota, Oklahoma, and Vermont.

Across states, the ACGRs for Black students
• ranged from 66 percent in Wyoming to 88 percent in Alabama; and
• were higher than the U.S. average ACGR in 3 states (Alabama, Delaware, and Florida).

Across states, the ACGRs for Hispanic students
• ranged from 64 percent in the District of Columbia to 93 percent in West Virginia; and
• were higher than the U.S. average ACGR in 6 states (West Virginia, Florida, Indiana, Alabama, Arkansas, and Missouri).
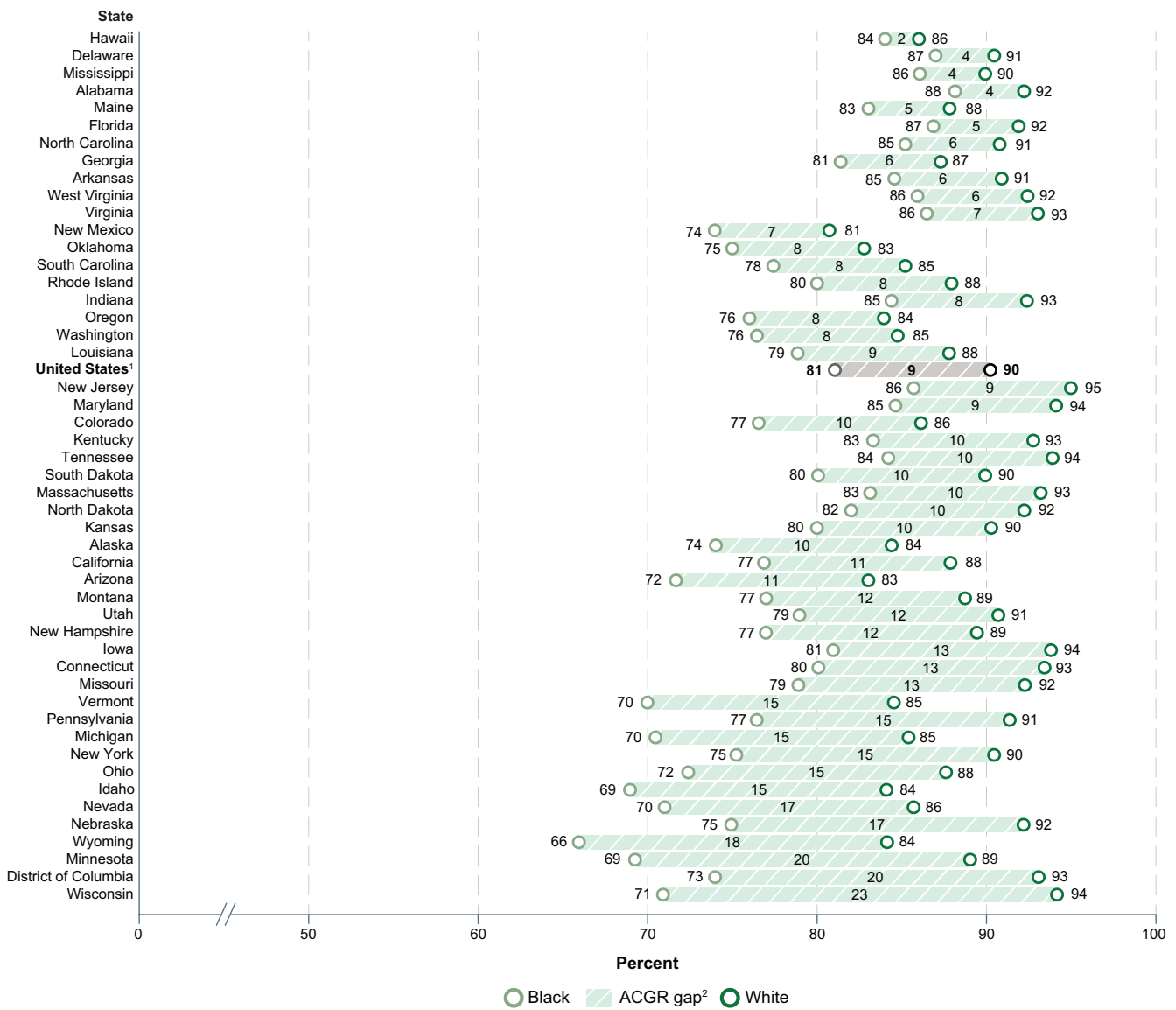
Across states, the ACGRs for White students
• ranged from 81 percent in New Mexico to 95 percent in New Jersey; and
• were higher than the U.S. average ACGR in 34 states and the District of Columbia.

Across states, the ACGRs for students of Two or more races
• ranged from 73 percent in Arizona and Minnesota to 92 percent in Virginia, Alabama, Maryland, and New Jersey;[13] and
• were higher than the U.S. average ACGR in 16 states and the District of Columbia.[14]

**Figure 3. Adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for White and Black public high school students, by state: 2019–20**



Black ⬭   ACGR gap[2]   White ◯

[1] Includes imputed data for Illinois and Texas.
[2] Although only whole percentages are displayed in this figure, the ACGR gaps are calculated using the most precise graduation rates available for public use, which include some rates rounded to one decimal place and some rates rounded to whole numbers to protect student privacy. Gaps presented in this figure may vary slightly from those that would be calculated using rates with more precision.
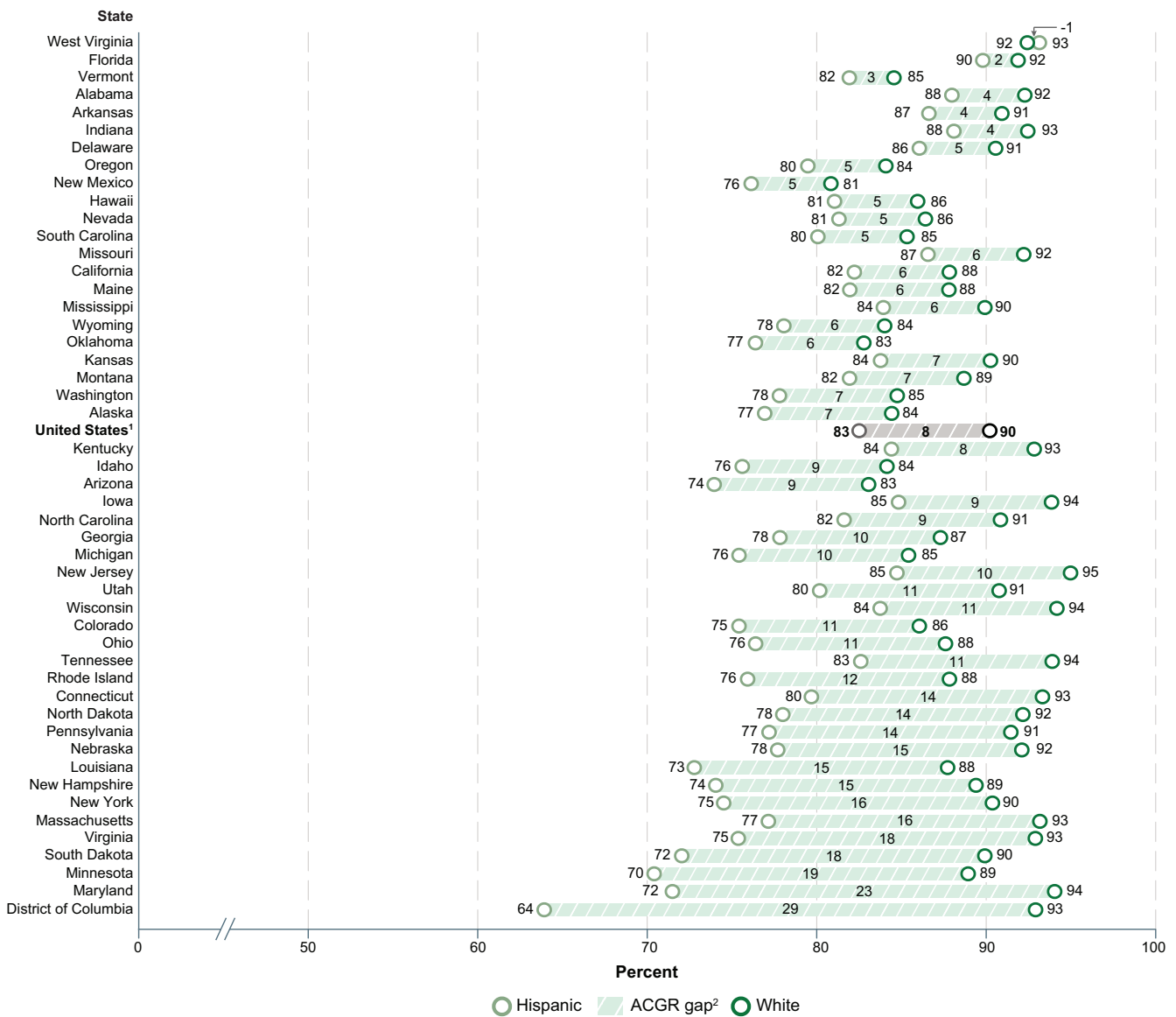NOTE: The ACGR is the percentage of public school 9th-graders who graduate within 4 years of starting 9th grade with a regular diploma or, for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, a state-defined alternate high school diploma. The U.S. average ACGR is for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. In 2019–20, some states may have changed their requirements for a regular high school diploma to account for the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. These changes are at the discretion of each state but may have resulted in less comparability in the ACGRs between 2019–20 and prior school years. In 2019–20, reporting standards were not met for Illinois, and Texas data were unavailable. Interpret Alabama data with caution. The Alabama State Department of Education has indicated that their ACGR data for some years were misstated. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Detail may not sum to totals due to rounding.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Consolidated State Performance Report, 2019–20; and National Center for Education Statistics, ED*Facts* file 150, Data Group 695, and ED*Facts* file 151, Data Group 696, 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 219.46.

In 2019-20, the U.S. average ACGR for Black public high school students (81 percent) was 9 percentage points lower than that of White students (90 percent) and 11 percentage points lower than that of Asian/Pacific Islander students (93 percent). Black students had lower ACGRs than both White and Asian/Pacific Islander students in every state and the District of Columbia. Wisconsin reported the largest gap between the ACGRs for Black and White students (23 percentage points). Michigan reported the largest gap between the ACGRs for Black and Asian/Pacific Islander students (23 percentage points).

**Figure 4.  Adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for White and Hispanic public high school students, by state: 2019–20**



○ Hispanic   ▨ ACGR gap[2]   ◉ White
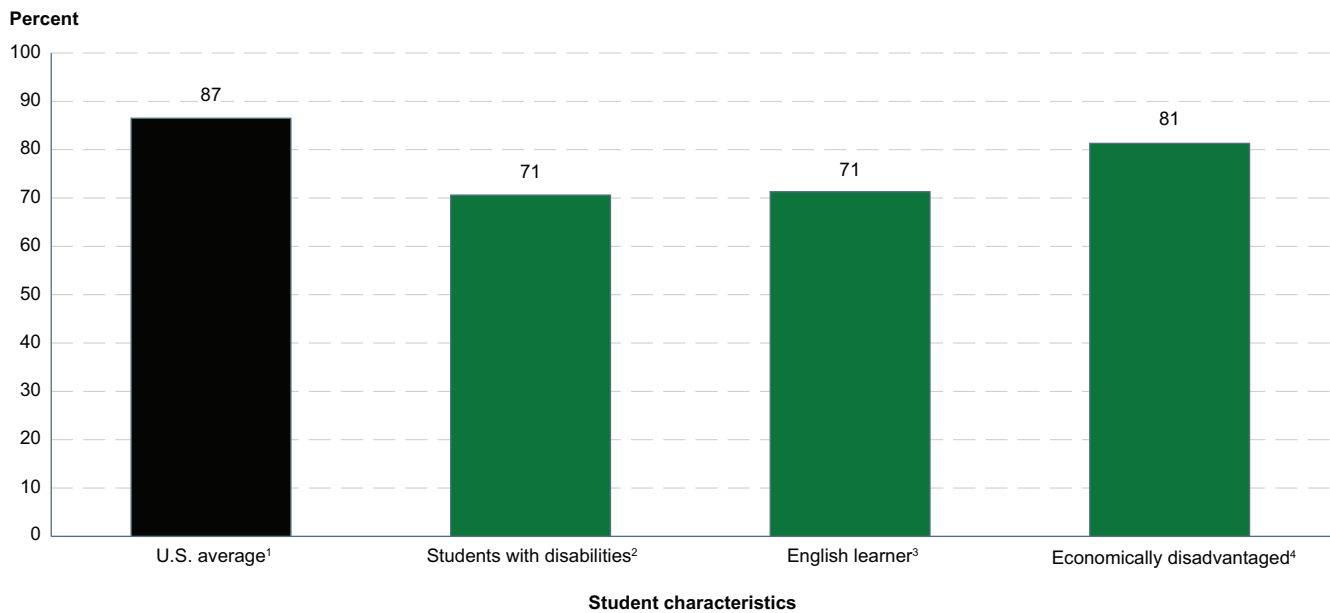
[1] Includes imputed data for Illinois and Texas.

[2] Although only whole percentages are displayed in this figure, the ACGR gaps are calculated using the most precise graduation rates available for public use, which include some rates rounded to one decimal place and some rates rounded to whole numbers to protect student privacy. Gaps presented in this figure may vary slightly from those that would be calculated using rates with more precision.

NOTE: The ACGR is the percentage of public school 9th-graders who graduate within 4 years of starting 9th grade with a regular diploma or, for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, a state-defined alternate high school diploma. The U.S. average ACGR is for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. In 2019–20, some states may have changed their requirements for a regular high school diploma to account for the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. These changes are at the discretion of each state but may have resulted in less comparability in the ACGRs between 2019–20 and prior school years. In 2019–20, reporting standards were not met for Illinois, and Texas data were unavailable. Interpret Alabama data with caution. The Alabama State Department of Education has indicated that their ACGR data for some years were misstated. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Detail may not sum to totals due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Consolidated State Performance Report, 2019–20; and National Center for Education Statistics, ED*Facts* file 150, Data Group 695, and ED*Facts* file 151, Data Group 696, 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 219.46.

In 2019-20, the U.S. average ACGR for Hispanic public high school students (83 percent) was about 8 percentage points lower than that of White students (90 percent) and 10 percentage points lower than that of Asian/Pacific Islander students (93 percent). Hispanic students had lower ACGRs than White students in the District of Columbia and every state except for West Virginia. The District of Columbia reported the largest gap between the ACGRs for Hispanic and White students (29 percentage points). The ACGRs were lower for Hispanic students than for Asian/Pacific Islander students in the District of Columbia and every state except for Vermont and Arkansas. The District of Columbia and Maryland reported the largest gap between the ACGRs for Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander students (24 percentage points each).

*ACGR by Other Student Characteristics and State*

**Figure 5.   Adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for public high school students, by selected student characteristics: 2019–20**



[1] Includes imputed data for Illinois and Texas.
[2] Students identified as children with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
[3] Students who met the definition of English learner as outlined in the ED*Facts* workbook. For more information, see https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/eden-workbook.html.
[4] Students who met the state criteria for classification as economically disadvantaged.
NOTE: The ACGR is the percentage of public school 9th-graders who graduate within 4 years of starting 9th grade with a regular diploma or, for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, a state-defined alternate high school diploma. The U.S. average ACGR is for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. In 2019–20, some states may have changed their requirements for a regular high school diploma to account for the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. These changes are at the discretion of each state but may have resulted in less comparability in the ACGRs between 2019–20 and prior school years. The time when students are identified as having certain characteristics varies by state. Depending on the state, a student may be included in a category if the relevant characteristic is reported in 9th-grade data, if the characteristic is reported in 12th-grade data, or if it is reported at any point during the student's high school years. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Consolidated State Performance Report, 2019–20; and National Center for Education Statistics, ED*Facts* file 150, Data Group 695, and ED*Facts* file 151, Data Group 696, 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 219.46.

In 2019-20, the ACGRs for students with disabilities[15] (71 percent), English learner students[16] (71 percent), and economically disadvantaged students[17] (81 percent) were below the U.S. average ACGR (87 percent).

Across states, the ACGRs for students with disabilities
• ranged from 55 percent in Mississippi to 88 percent in Oklahoma; and
• were higher than the U.S. average ACGR in 1 state (Oklahoma).

Across states, the ACGRs for English learner students
• ranged from 39 percent in New York to 95 percent or higher in West Virginia; and
• were higher than the U.S. average ACGR in 2 states (West Virginia and Indiana).

Across states, the ACGRs for economically disadvantaged students
• ranged from 62 percent in the District of Columbia to 90 percent in Indiana; and
• were higher than the U.S. average ACGR in 5 states (Indiana, Kentucky, Oklahoma, West Virginia, and Florida).

**Endnotes:**

[1] Includes students in public schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

[2] Before 2017-18, the definition of ACGR included regular high school diplomas only.

[3] The ACGR is considered the most accurate measure available for reporting on-time graduation rates. For more information, see Seastrom, M., Chapman, C., Stillwell, R., McGrath, D., Peltola, P., Dinkes, R., and Xu, Z. (2006). *User's Guide to Computing High School Graduation Rates, Volume 2: Technical Evaluation of Proxy Graduation Indicators* (NCES 2006-605). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved March 18, 2021, from https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006605.

[4] In 2019-20, reporting standards were not met for Illinois, and Texas data were unavailable. Therefore, neither state is discussed in this indicator. However, the U.S. average ACGR for 2019-20 includes imputed data for both states.

[5] Throughout this indicator, counts of states are based on unrounded graduation rates.

[6] Estimated assuming a count of zero American Indian/Alaska Native students for Hawaii.

[7] Reporting practices for data on Asian and Pacific Islander students vary by state. Asian/Pacific Islander data in this indicator represent either the value reported by the state for the "Asian/Pacific Islander" group or an aggregation of separate values reported by the state for "Asian" and "Pacific Islander." "Asian/Pacific Islander" includes the "Filipino" group, which only California and Hawaii report separately.

[8] The ACGR for American Indian/Alaska Native students was 50 percent or higher in the District of Columbia and Vermont. This value has been "blurred" to protect student privacy.

[9] Throughout this indicator, interpret Alabama data with caution. The Alabama State Department of Education has indicated that their ACGR data for some years were misstated. For more information, please see https://www.oversight.gov/report/ed/calculating-and-reporting-graduation-rates-alabama.

[10] The ACGR for American Indian/Alaska Native students was 80 percent or higher in West Virginia. This value has been "blurred" to protect student privacy. Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether the ACGR in West Virginia is higher than the U.S. average and it has been excluded from this count of 10 states.

[11] Because data from Hawaii were unavailable, discussion of ACGRs for American Indian/Alaska Native students excludes Hawaii.

[12] The ACGR for Asian/Pacific Islander students was 95 percent or higher in West Virginia. This value has been "blurred" to protect student privacy.

[13] The ACGR for students of Two or more races was 90 percent or higher in the District of Columbia. This value has been "blurred" to protect student privacy.

[14] Data were not available for students of Two or more races in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Tennessee. Reporting standards were not met for New Mexico for students of Two or more races.

[15] This includes students identified as students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

[16] This includes students who met the definition of English learner as outlined in the ED*Facts* workbook. For more information, see https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/eden-workbook.html.

[17] Refers to students who met the state criteria for classification as economically disadvantaged.

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**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 219.46

**Related indicators and resources:** Educational Attainment of Young Adults; High School Status Completion Rates [*Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups*]; Status Dropout Rates; *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States*

**Glossary:** Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR); Gap; High school completer; High school diploma; Public school or institution; Racial/ethnic group