**Fiscal Facts: Wisconsin students’ college readiness slips**

ACT scores released last fall show the share of Wisconsin high school juniors meeting college readiness benchmarks in 2018-19 was largely down or flat from the previous year, according to a Wisconsin Policy Forum analysis ofdata from the state Department of Public Instruction. The results cover nearly all subjects and almost all groups by race, ethnicity, or economic status.

Combined with previous Forum research showing the state’s working population shrinking, and more occupations requiring higher levels of education, these findings indicate additional challenges ahead for the state’s workforce and economy.

Wisconsin’s state average composite score was 19.6 for 2018-19, which is a slight decline from the state average of 19.8 the year before and 20 in 2014-15. This modest decrease, however, is masking potentially significant declines within individual subject areas that are relevant to students’ “college readiness”: English, Math, and Science. The fourth ACT subject area, Reading, was the only one for which Wisconsin’s share of students meeting college-readiness benchmarks increased.

Despite the stagnant scores, separate national data show Wisconsin doing relatively well on the ACT compared to other states that test all or nearly all students. Among the 19 states in which at least 98% of graduates took the ACT, Wisconsin graduates were second only to Minnesota in their composite scores and college readiness in English, reading, and science and placed sixth-highest for math.

The ACT, one of two major tests that colleges accept as part of students’ application, is the more popular choice in the Midwest, while the SAT is more popular on the coasts. The Forum’s analysis stems from the newly released second edition of our School DataTool, which includes a new measurement of Wisconsin students’ college readiness based on their scores on the ACT.

*This information is a service of the Wisconsin Policy Forum, the state’s leading resource for nonpartisan state and local government research and civic education. Learn more at wispolicyforum.org.*