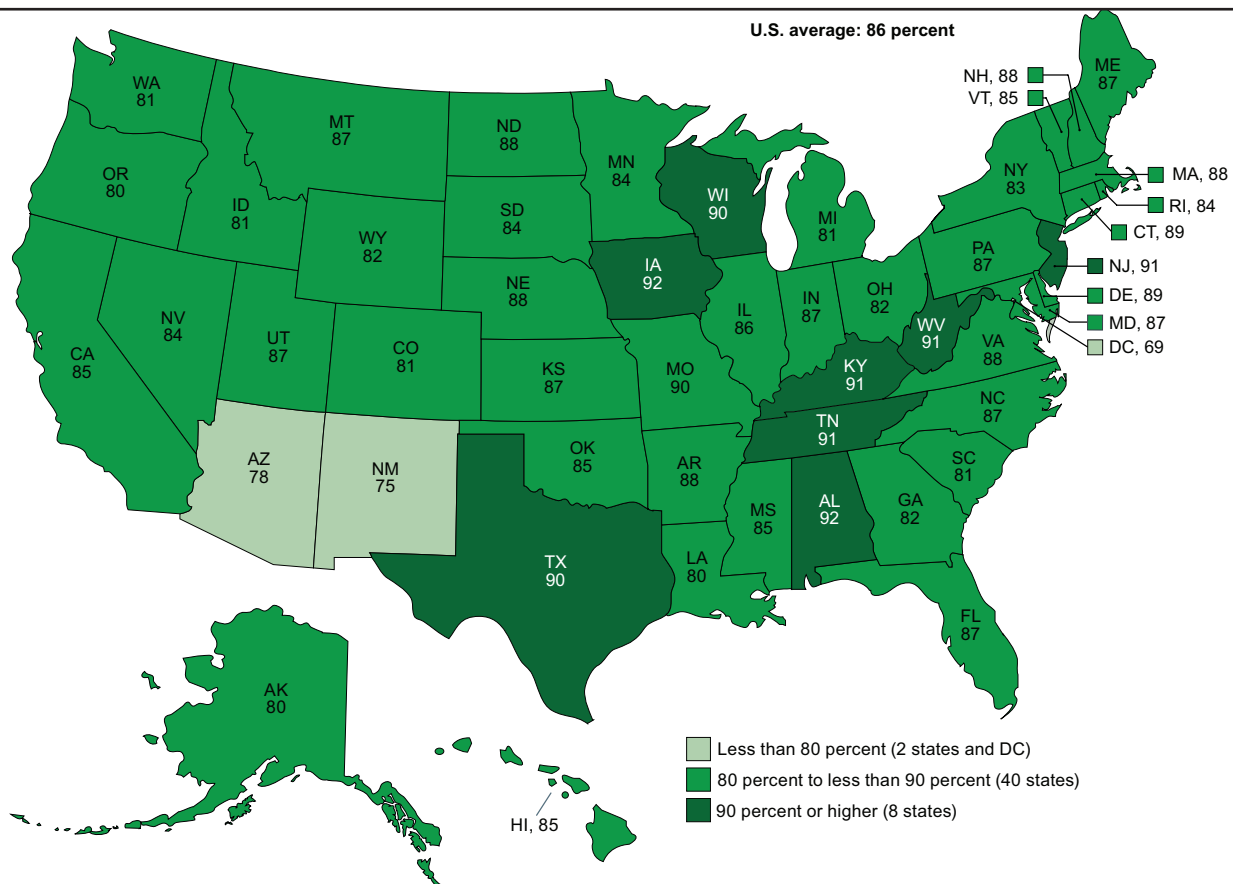# Public High School Graduation Rates

In school year 2018–19, the national adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for public high school students was 86 percent, the highest it has been since the rate was first measured in 2010–11. Asian/Pacific Islander students had the highest ACGR (93 percent), followed by White (89 percent), Hispanic (82 percent), Black (80 percent), and American Indian/Alaska Native (74 percent) students.

This indicator examines the percentage of U.S. public high school students who graduate on time, as measured by the adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR). In this indicator, the United States includes public schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. State education agencies calculate the ACGR by identifying the "cohort" of first-time ninth-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 transfer out, emigrate to another country, or die. The ACGR is the percentage of students in this adjusted cohort who graduate within 4 years with a regular high school diploma. The U.S. Department of Education first collected the ACGR in 2010-11.[1]
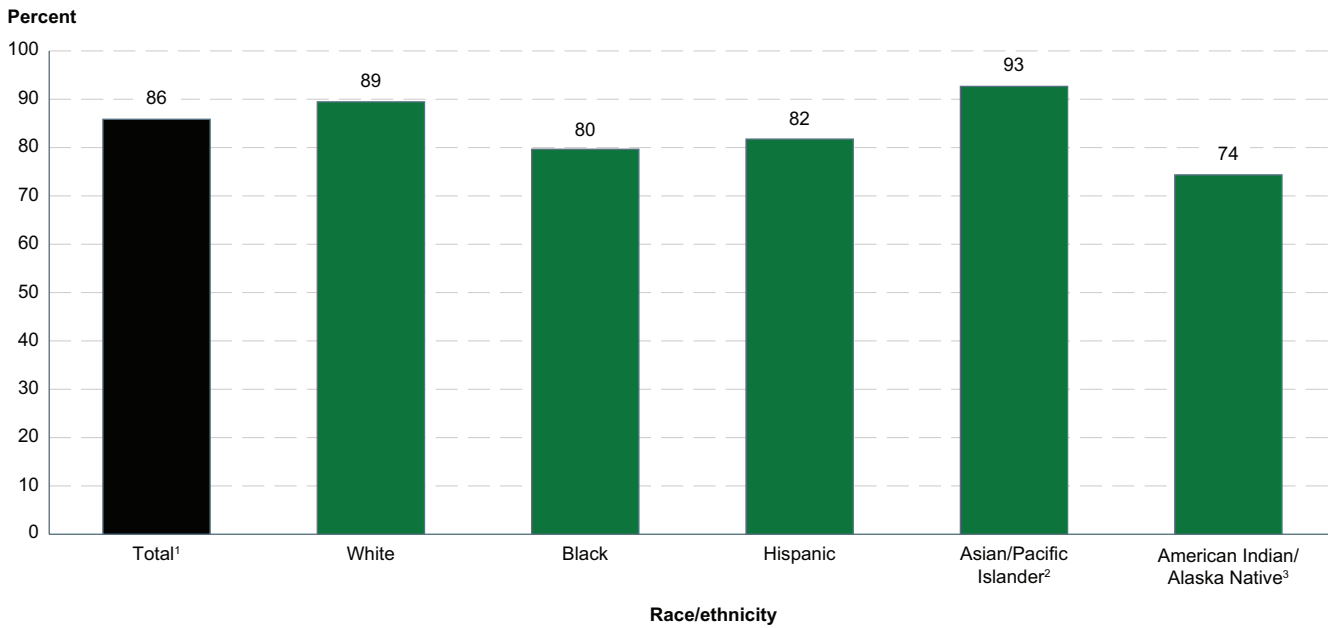
Figure 1. Adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for public high school students, by state and categorized into specific ranges: 2018–19

U.S. average: 86 percent

Less than 80 percent (2 states and DC)
80 percent to less than 90 percent (40 states)
90 percent or higher (8 states)

NOTE: The ACGR is the percentage of public high school freshmen who graduate with a regular diploma within 4 years of starting ninth grade. The U.S. average ACGR is for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The graduation rates displayed above have been rounded to whole numbers. Categorizations are based on unrounded percentages. The Alabama State Department of Education has indicated that their ACGR data for some years was misstated. For more information, please see the following press release issued by the state: 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, 2018–19; and National Center for Education Statistics, ED*Facts* file 150, Data Group 695, and ED*Facts* file 151, Data Group 696, 2018–19. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 219.46.

The U.S. average ACGR for public high school students increased from 79 percent in 2010-11 to 86 percent in 2018-19. In 2018-19, the ACGR ranged from 69 percent in the District of Columbia to 92 percent in Iowa and Alabama.[2] Forty states reported ACGRs from 80 percent to less than 90 percent.[3]

Figure 2.   Adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for public high school students, by race/ethnicity: 2018–19

[1] Includes other race/ethnicity categories not separately shown.
[2] 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.
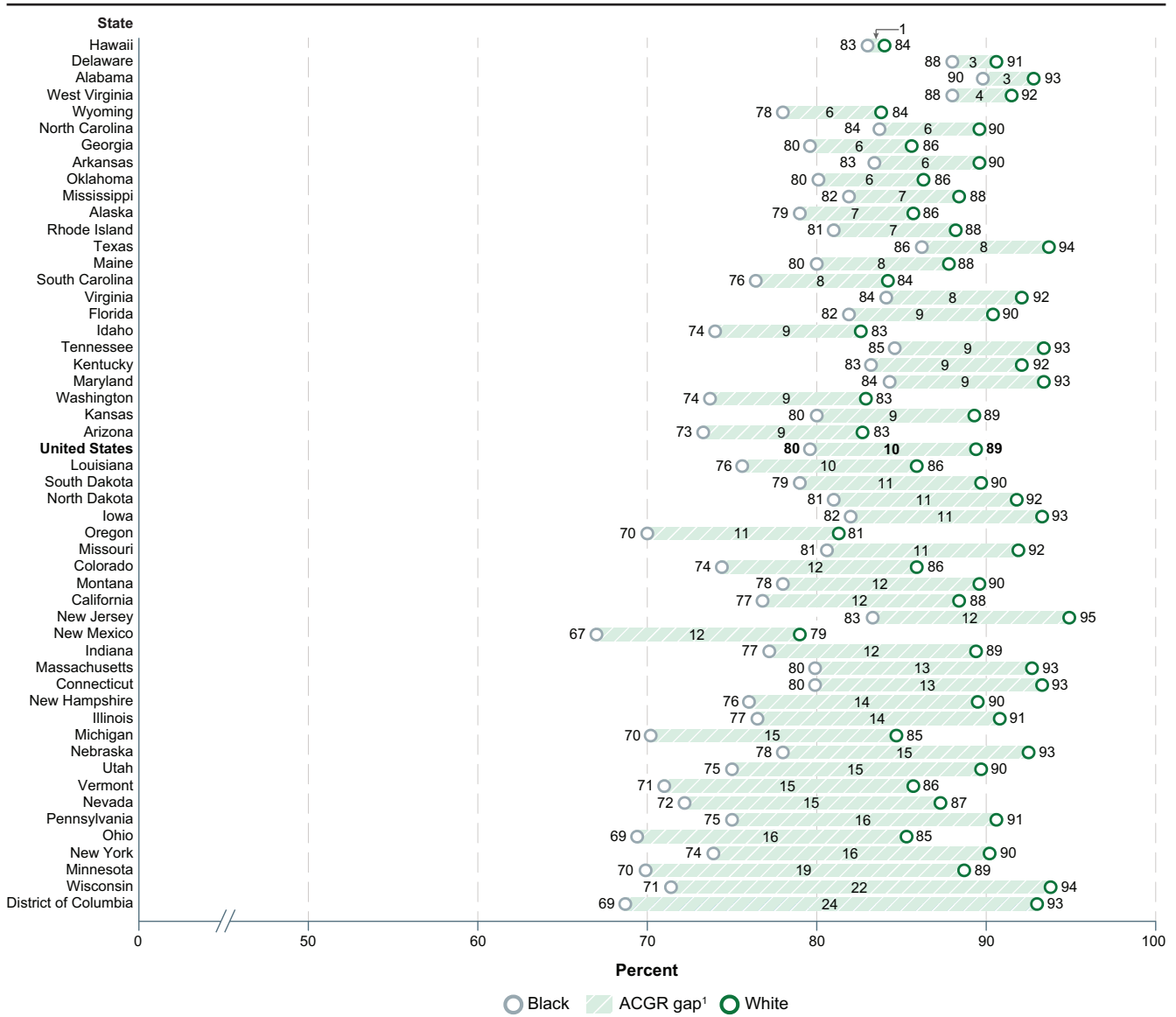[3] Estimated assuming a count of zero American Indian/Alaska Native students for Hawaii.
NOTE: The ACGR is the percentage of public high school freshmen who graduate with a regular diploma within 4 years of starting ninth grade. The total ACGR is for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Consolidated State Performance Report, 2018–19; and National Center for Education Statistics, ED*Facts* file 150, Data Group 695, and ED*Facts* file 151, Data Group 696, 2018–19. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 219.46.

In 2018-19, the ACGRs for American Indian/Alaska Native[4] (74 percent), Black (80 percent), and Hispanic (82 percent) public high school students were below the U.S. average of 86 percent. The ACGRs for White (89 percent) and Asian/Pacific Islander[5] (93 percent) students were above the U.S. average. Across states, the ACGRs for White students ranged from 79 percent in New Mexico to 95 percent in New Jersey, and were higher than the U.S. average ACGR of 86 percent in 37 states and the District of Columbia. The rates for Black students ranged from 67 percent in New Mexico to 90 percent in Alabama. Texas, Delaware, West Virginia, and Alabama were the only four states in which the rates for Black students were higher than the U.S. average ACGR. The ACGRs for Hispanic students ranged from 60 percent in the District of Columbia to 91 percent

in Alabama and West Virginia, and they were higher than the U.S. average ACGR in six states (Delaware, Florida, Missouri, Texas, Alabama, and West Virginia). For Asian/Pacific Islander students, ACGRs ranged from 83 percent in Vermont to 97 percent in New Jersey,[6] and they were higher than the U.S. average ACGR in 47 states and the District of Columbia. Vermont, Nebraska, and Hawaii were the only three states in which the rates for Asian/Pacific Islander students were lower than the U.S. average ACGR. The ACGRs for American Indian/Alaska Native students ranged from 51 percent in Minnesota to 94 percent in Alabama, and were higher than the U.S. average ACGR in eight states (Texas, Virginia, Louisiana, Tennessee, Connecticut, New Jersey, Alabama, and Kentucky).[7,8]

Figure 3. Adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) of White and Black public high school students, by state and the United States: 2018–19

State	Black	ACGR gap[1]	White
Hawaii	83	1	84
Delaware	88	3	91
Alabama	90	3	93
West Virginia	88	4	92
Wyoming	78	6	84
North Carolina	84	6	90
Georgia	80	6	86
Arkansas	83	6	90
Oklahoma	80	6	86
Mississippi	82	7	88
Alaska	79	7	86
Rhode Island	81	7	88
Texas	86	8	94
Maine	80	8	88
South Carolina	76	8	84
Virginia	84	8	92
Florida	82	9	90
Idaho	74	9	83
Tennessee	85	9	93
Kentucky	83	9	92
Maryland	84	9	93
Washington	74	9	83
Kansas	80	9	89
Arizona	73	9	83
United States	**80**	**10**	**89**
Louisiana	76	10	86
South Dakota	79	11	90
North Dakota	81	11	92
Iowa	82	11	93
Oregon	70	11	81
Missouri	81	11	92
Colorado	74	12	86
Montana	78	12	90
California	77	12	88
New Jersey	83	12	95
New Mexico	67	12	79
Indiana	77	12	89
Massachusetts	80	13	93
Connecticut	80	13	93
New Hampshire	76	14	90
Illinois	77	14	91
Michigan	70	15	85
Nebraska	78	15	93
Utah	75	15	90
Vermont	71	15	86
Nevada	72	15	87
Pennsylvania	75	16	91
Ohio	69	16	85
New York	74	16	90
Minnesota	70	19	89
Wisconsin	71	22	94
District of Columbia	69	24	93

Percent

○ Black   ▨ ACGR gap[1]   ○ White

[1] 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.
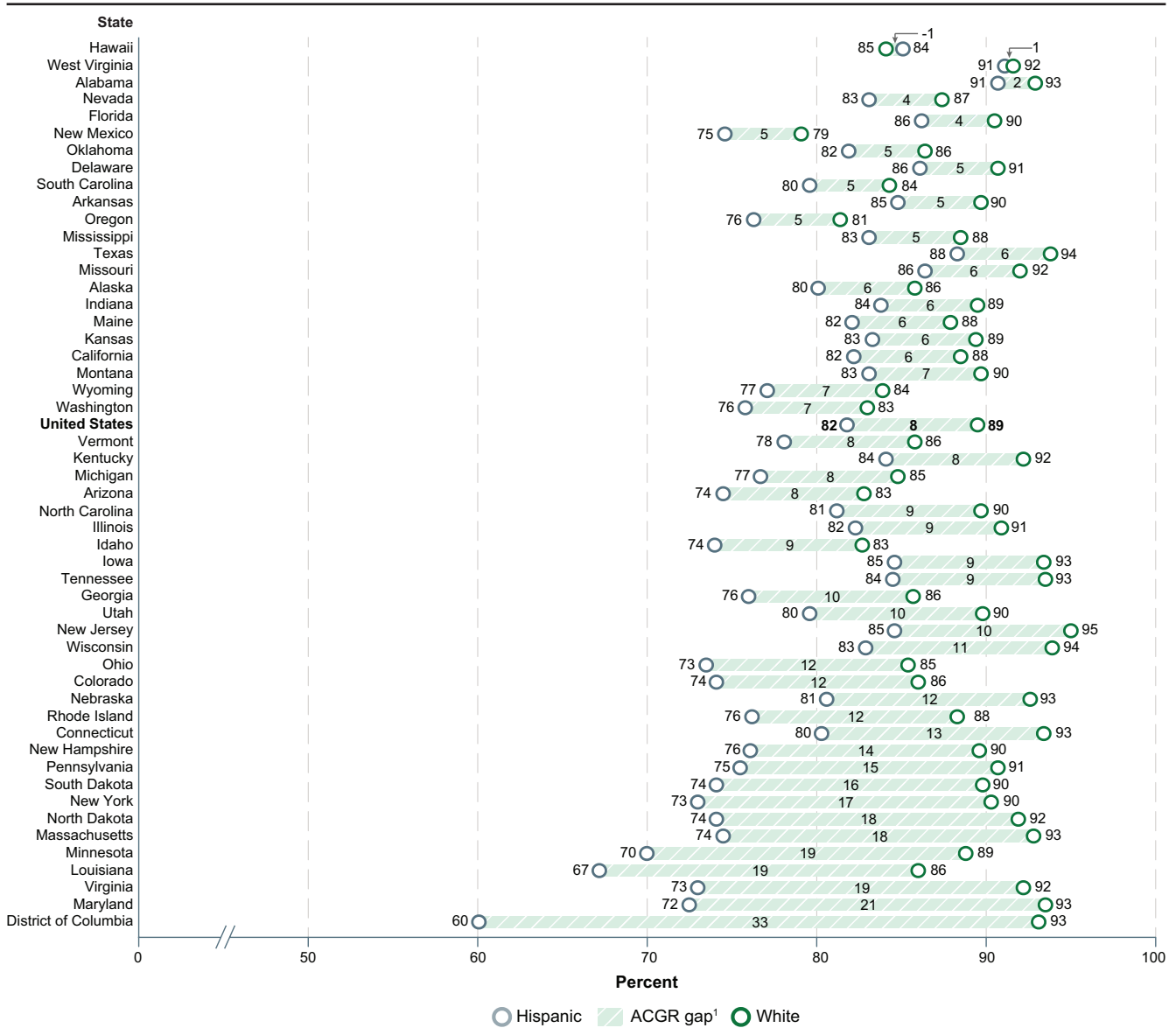NOTE: The ACGR is the percentage of public high school freshmen who graduate with a regular diploma within 4 years of starting ninth grade. The U.S. average ACGR is for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Consolidated State Performance Report, 2018–19; and National Center for Education Statistics, ED*Facts* file 150, Data Group 695, and ED*Facts* file 151, Data Group 696, 2018–19. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 219.46.

The U.S. average ACGR for White public high school students (89 percent) was 10 percentage points higher than the U.S. average ACGR for their Black peers (80 percent) in 2018-19.[9] White students had higher ACGRs than Black students in every state and the District of Columbia. Wisconsin and the District of Columbia reported the largest gaps between the ACGRs for White and Black students (22 and 24 percentage points, respectively).

Figure 4. Adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) of White and Hispanic public high school students, by state and the United States: 2018–19

[1] 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 high school freshmen who graduate with a regular diploma within 4 years of starting ninth grade. The U.S. average ACGR is for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Consolidated State Performance Report, 2018–19; and National Center for Education Statistics, ED*Facts* file 150, Data Group 695, and ED*Facts* file 151, Data Group 696, 2018–19. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 219.46.

The U.S. average ACGR for White students (89 percent) was 8 percentage points higher than the U.S. average ACGR for Hispanic students (82 percent) in 2018-19.[9] The ACGRs for White students were higher than the ACGRs for Hispanic students in the District of Columbia and every state except for Hawaii, where the ACGR for Hispanic students was higher than the ACGR for White students (85 vs. 84 percent). The District of Columbia reported the largest gap between the ACGRs for White and Hispanic students (33 percentage points).

Endnotes:

[1] Although a relatively new graduation rate measure, 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.

[2] Throughout this indicator, interpret Alabama data with caution. The Alabama State Department of Education has indicated that their ACGR data for some years was misstated. For more information, please see the following press release issued by the state: https://www.alsde.edu/sec/comm/News%20Releases/12-08-2016%20Graduation%20Rate%20Review.pdf.

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

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

[5] 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.

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

[7] Discussion of ACGRs for American Indian/Alaska Native students excludes data for the District of Columbia, Hawaii, and Vermont. The American Indian/Alaska Native data are suppressed for the District of Columbia and Vermont to protect student privacy and are unavailable for Hawaii.

[8] The ACGR for American Indian/Alaska Native students was 90 percent or higher in Kentucky. This value has been "blurred" to protect student privacy.

[9] Although only whole percentages are displayed in this indicator, the calculations are based on 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 indicator may vary slightly from those that would be calculated using rates with more precision.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, 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