

The State of **North Carolina** Public Education, 2014

A CAROLINACAN RESEARCH REPORT



Table of contents

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Preface | 3 |
| The students | 4 |
| The system | 7 |
| Who's teaching | 7 |
| North Carolina education policies | 8 |
| Pre-K access | 12 |
| Charter school geography | 13 |
| The cost | 14 |
| How the system is working | 16 |
| Elementary school | 16 |
| Middle school | 27 |
| High school | 38 |
| College entrance exams | 45 |
| After graduation | 49 |
| College completion | 49 |
| Expected earnings | 52 |
| Conclusion | 54 |
| End notes | 55 |

Preface

Every year thousands of young North Carolinians enroll for the first time in our public schools, filled with excitement and potential. From the bonds they build on the playground to the tools they learn in the classroom, the school experience plays a key role in their development and pathway into adulthood. As a state, we must ensure our schools provide a solid foundation for all kids—no matter their race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status. And we know that it’s possible because we’re seeing it happen in schools across the state every day.

Each year we publish the State of North Carolina Public Education report to better understand where we are today, and where we can place additional focus to make our schools all they can be. We pull together a wide range of data, from local details to national comparisons, and compile it into one easy-to-use resource.

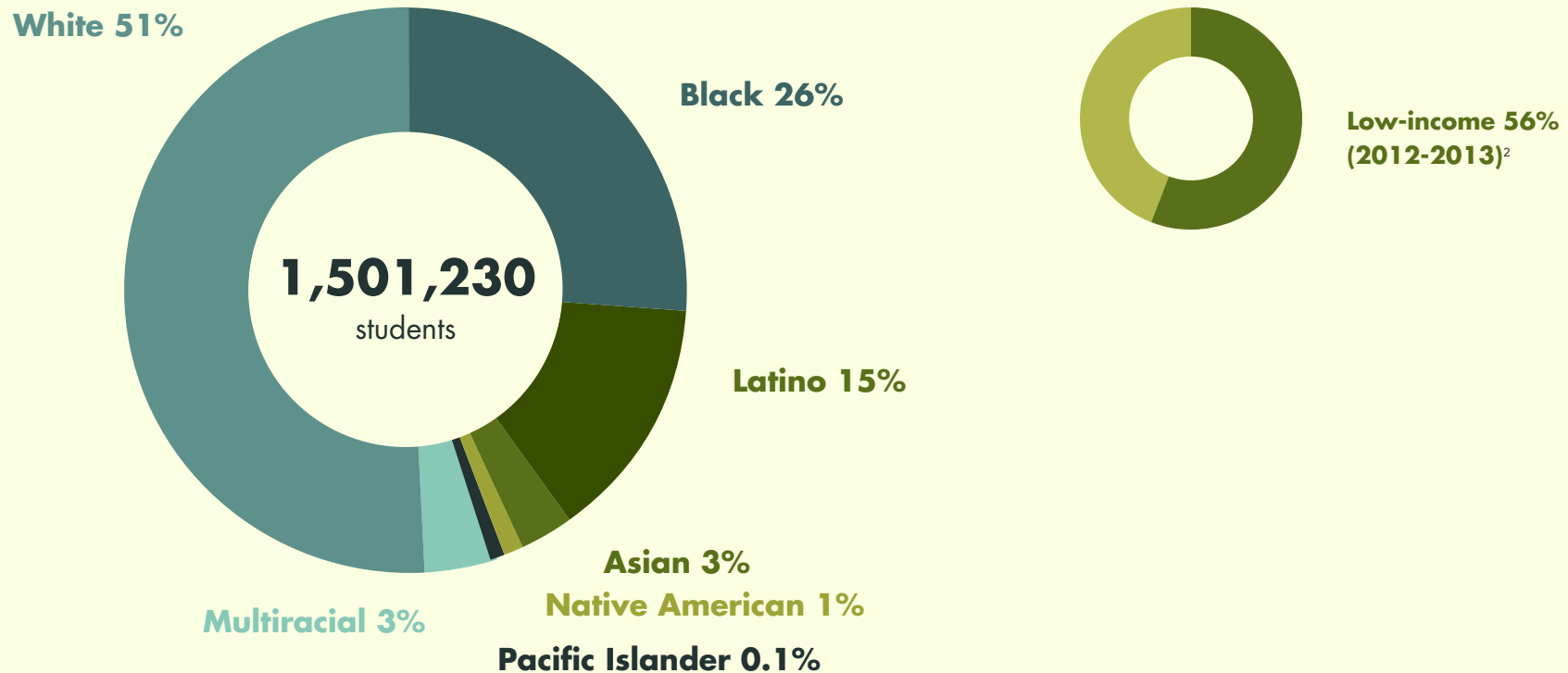
This report highlights gains and gaps, provides snapshot regional comparisons from our neighboring states to give a taste for where we stand and also reveals opportunities by pointing to some areas where concerted action might have a real impact. We must, for example, do even more to professionalize the teaching profession by creating an opportunity culture for teacher leaders throughout our state, and prioritize equity and excellence in our public charter schools to reach our most disadvantaged kids across North Carolina. We hope that this report can be more than just a data snapshot, but a truly useful tool to guide the policy decisions and investments we make as a state.

We invite you to explore our second annual State of North Carolina Public Education report, and use the findings both to celebrate our students’ progress and engage in the conversation about what we can do better. We’re eager to hear what opportunities you see to make great public schools available to all North Carolina students. By working together we can build a brighter future for North Carolina’s kids.

The students

The first step to understanding our school system is understanding who it serves. Find out more about the students who attend our schools, including their demographic breakdown and the kinds of schools they're enrolled in.

WHO WE'RE EDUCATING—DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN, 2013–2014¹





108
Public charter schools

2,418
Traditional public schools



50,001
Students in public charter schools

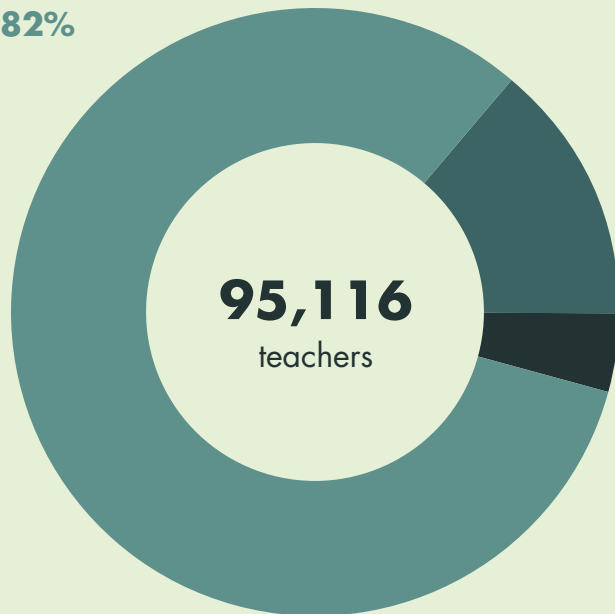
The system

Take a look at the system we've built for our students: how we prepare them for kindergarten, whom we've hired to fill our classrooms, the laws schools and educators must abide by, and how much we spend on it all.

WHO'S TEACHING—NORTH CAROLINA TEACHERS BY THE NUMBERS, 2013–2014

Demographic breakdown⁵

White 82%



Black 14%

Other 4%

Gender

Female 80%

Male 20%



WHERE WE NEED MORE TEACHERS

Areas on the critical shortage list, 2014-2015⁶

Mathematics (Grades 9-12)

Science (Grades 6-8 and 9-12)

Special Education: Adapted Curriculum and General Curriculum

Teacher evaluation

North Carolina teachers are evaluated annually⁷ based on six standards: leadership, establishing a respectful environment, content knowledge, facilitating learning, reflecting on practice and contributing to the academic success of their students through demonstrated student growth.⁸ Classroom observations are required. Teachers receive an overall rating of highly effective, effective or in need of improvement, and a teacher may only receive an effective rating if he or she achieves expected student growth. In years when a career-status (tenured) teacher is not renewing his or her license, the principal may decide to conduct an abbreviated evaluation focused on three standards: leadership, facilitating learning and demonstrated student growth (although the teacher may request a full evaluation).⁹

In addition to assessing teacher performance, the evaluation system is designed to help teachers grow professionally. As a result, teachers are required to develop growth plans based on their evaluation results.¹⁰

Teacher tenure

In 2013, the North Carolina legislature passed a law ending teacher tenure. The legislation requires districts to employ teachers on one-year contracts during their first three years and on one-, two- or four-year contracts thereafter.¹¹ To be eligible for a two- or four-year contract, teachers must demonstrate proficiency on the first five standards of the teacher evaluation system (demonstrating student growth is not required).¹²

However, implementation of the law is currently stalled after a 2014 court ruling found parts of the legislation unconstitutional. Newly hired teachers and those who had not attained career status (tenure) prior to the law's passage are still subject to its requirements, but teachers who had attained career status prior to the law's passage will keep career status while the law's implementation is under court injunction.¹³ Both the state and the teachers union have filed appeals, and an appellate court is expected to rule on the case in 2015.¹⁴

Teacher compensation

North Carolina teachers are paid according to a state salary schedule, although districts may provide a local salary supplement.¹⁵ In 2014, the legislature passed a budget that included a seven percent average pay increase for teachers, bringing the state from near the bottom in teacher salary rankings up to 32nd nationally.¹⁶ The legislature also appropriated money to help districts establish differentiated pay programs for teachers. Districts may apply for state funding to establish programs that provide salary increases to teachers rated highly effective under the state evaluation system and that provide bonuses to teachers who teach in hard-to-staff subjects or schools or who take on additional academic responsibilities and leadership roles.¹⁷

Teacher certification

To become licensed to teach in North Carolina, candidates must complete a state-approved teacher education program from a regionally accredited college or university,¹⁸ pass three basic skills tests in reading, writing and math and, if applicable, pass a subject-area test.¹⁹ Alternatively, candidates may qualify for lateral entry. Lateral entry candidates must have a bachelor's degree and meet one of several combinations of qualifications demonstrating core academic skills and content knowledge in the subject area in which the candidate will teach.²⁰ While teaching, lateral entry candidates must undertake an individual plan of study at a college or university with an approved teacher education program or at a Regional Alternative Licensing Center (RALC) in North Carolina.²¹

Evaluations of teacher effectiveness are not considered in licensure advancement decisions.²²

Public charter school cap

There are no statutory caps on the number of charter schools in North Carolina.

Authorizers

North Carolina has one statewide authorizer. The North Carolina Charter Schools Advisory Board does an initial review of applications and sends its recommendations to the State Board of Education, which makes the final authorizing decisions.

Accountability

North Carolina charter schools operate under the terms of a written contract signed by the school operator and the state authorizer. State law does not require a performance framework.

Initial charters may be granted for up to 10 years, and the authorizer is required to evaluate schools at least once every five years.

Charter schools may be closed for failure to meet stated performance goals, but there are no default closure provisions under North Carolina law.

Facilities

The North Carolina Capital Facilities Finance Authority may issue bonds on behalf of charter schools. Under state law, charter schools also may request to lease facilities from local boards of education. The board may choose to allow charter schools to use facilities free of charge, but the charter schools are responsible for maintenance and insurance costs. If a charter school and local board are unable to come to agreement related to facilities use, the board of county commissioners will hear the appeal and has final decision making authority.

Funding

State law provides that charter schools should receive the same per pupil finding as the local administrative unit except for the amount received for students with disabilities and English language learners. A separate formula, adopted by the State Board of Education, determines that amount that charter schools receive for these two student groups. Charter schools in North Carolina do not receive equivalent transportation funding.

According to a recent study, when all funding streams are considered, the average district school receives \$9,999 in per pupil funding, while the average charter school receives \$8,277 per pupil (17.2 percent less).²⁴

Comparison of states

More than 40 states have adopted the Common Core State Standards in English and math, and one state—Minnesota—has adopted the English standards only.

Adoption

North Carolina adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010.

Implementation

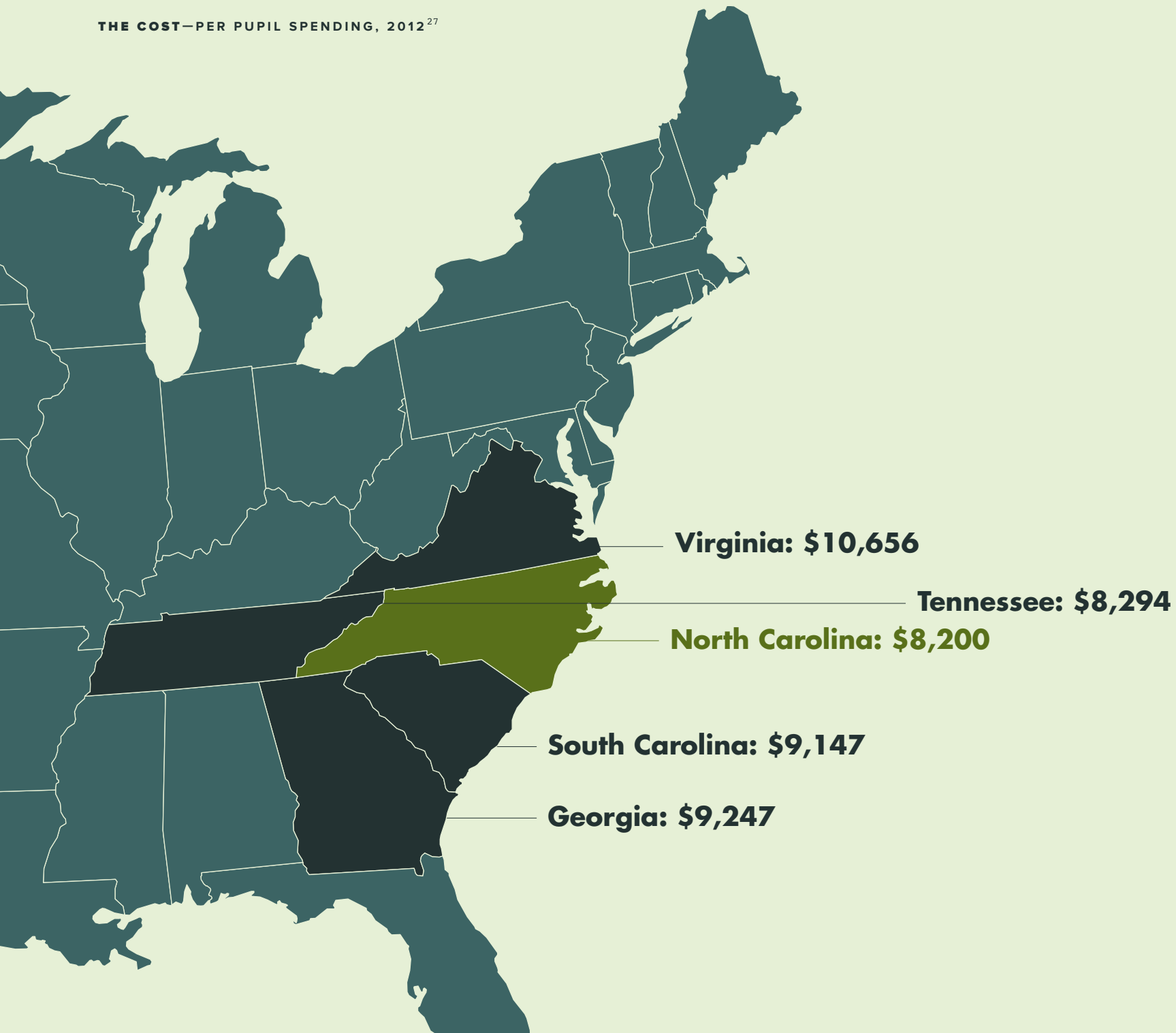
The standards were fully implemented by the 2012-2013 school year.

PRE-K ACCESS—A GLIMPSE AT PRE-K ACCESS IN NORTH CAROLINA

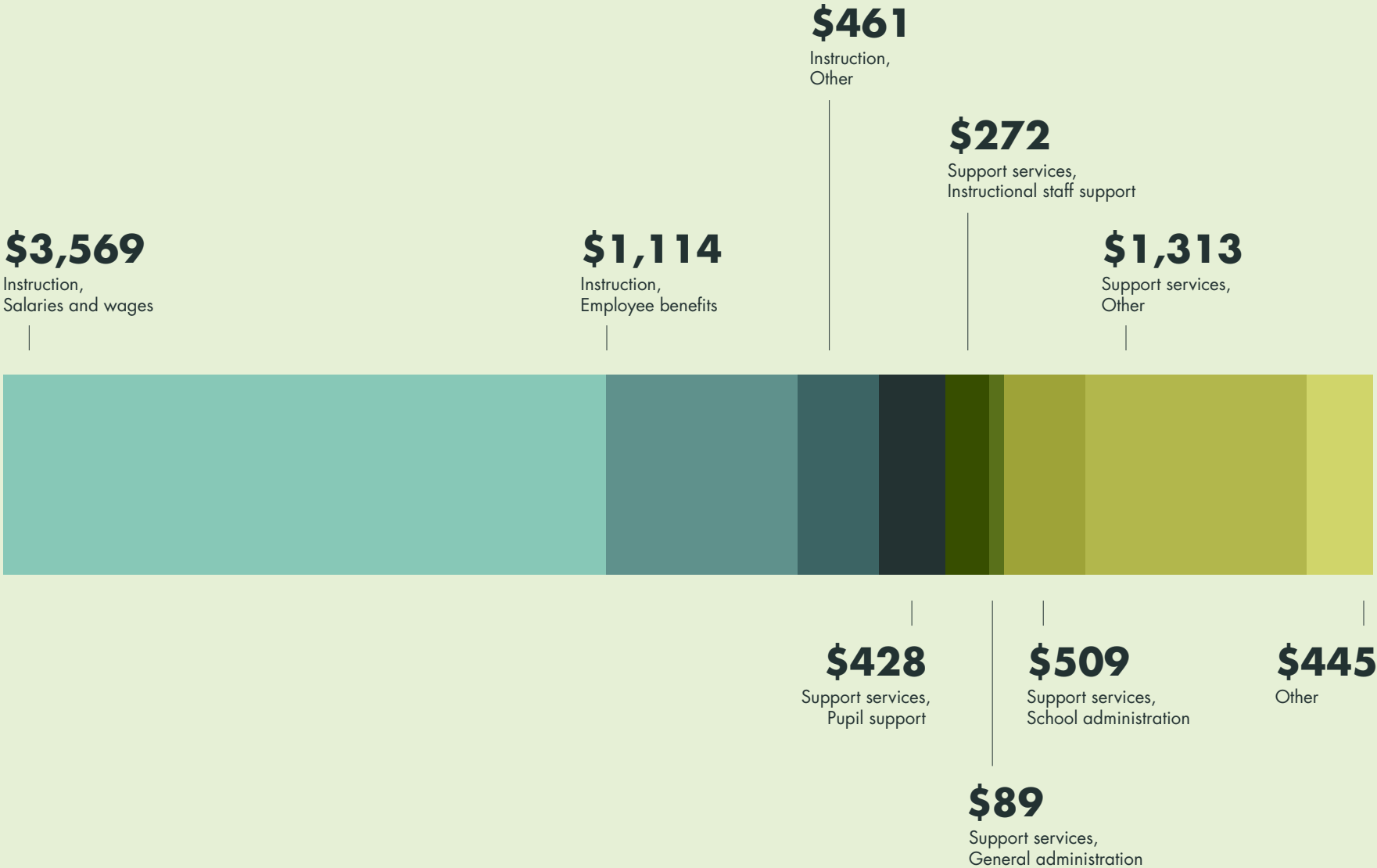
National Institute of Early Education Research: The State of Preschool, 2013²⁶

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <div>29,572</div> <div>Total state program enrollment</div> | <div>18,037</div> <div>Number of students enrolled in federally funded Head Start programs</div> | <div>0</div> <div>Number of students enrolled in state-funded Head Start programs</div> |
| <div>0%</div> <div>Percentage of 3-year-olds enrolled in state pre-K programs</div> | <div>5%</div> <div>Percentage of 3-year-olds enrolled in Head Start programs</div> | <div>N/A</div> <div>(Non served) National Institute for Early Education Research's access ranking for 3-year-olds</div> |
| <div>23%</div> <div>Percentage of 4-year-olds enrolled in state pre-K programs</div> | <div>9%</div> <div>Percentage of 4-year-olds enrolled in Head Start programs</div> | <div>20/41</div> <div>National Institute for Early Education Research's access ranking for 4-year-olds</div> |

THE COST—PER PUPIL SPENDING, 2012²⁷



HOW PER PUPIL FUNDING WAS ALLOCATED IN 2012²⁸



How the system is working

We now know who our students are and what kind of school system we've given them.

But is that system working? Take a journey through North Carolina's K-12 system and find out how well students are learning each step of the way.

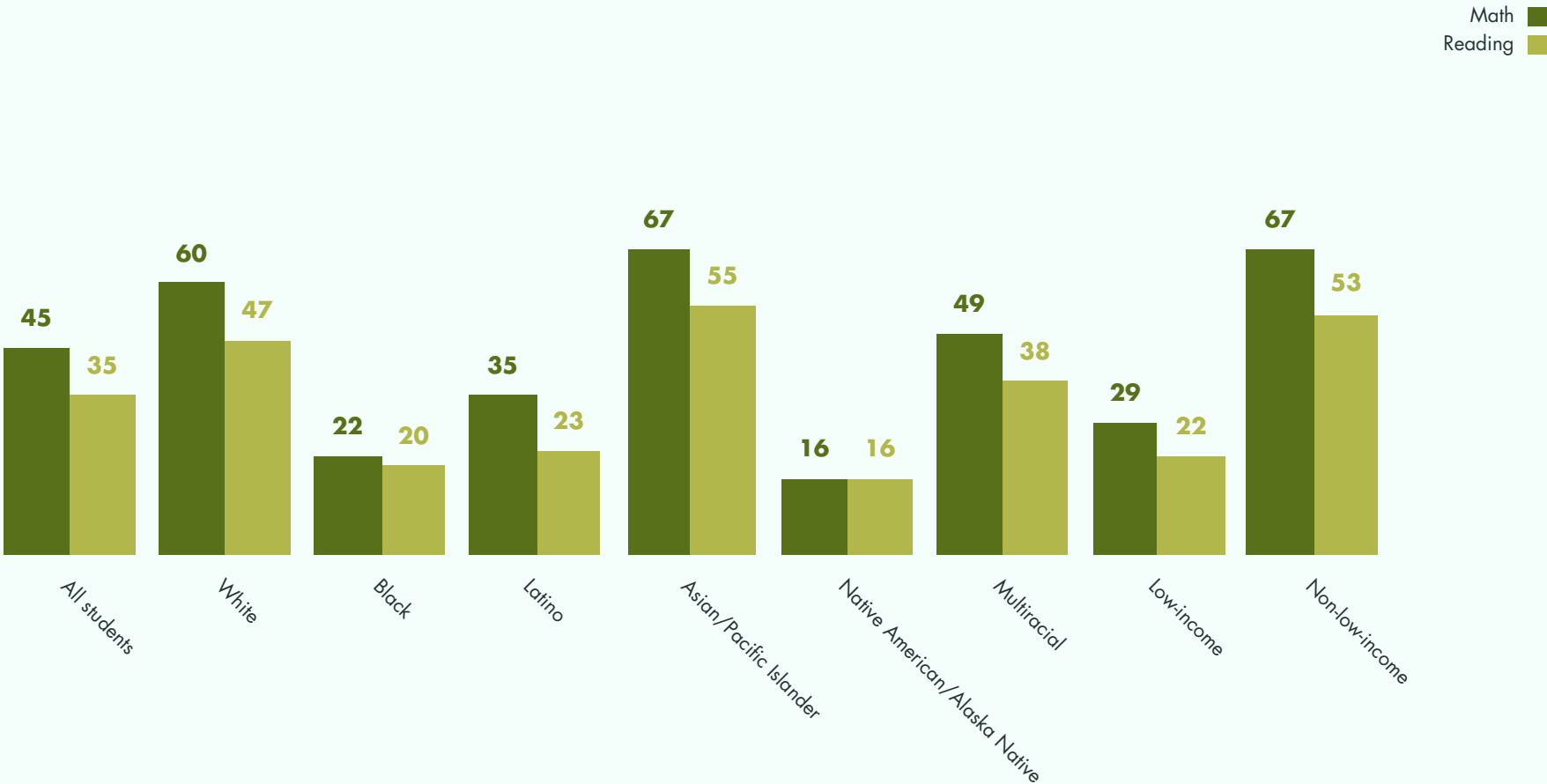
Elementary school

Over the last decade, student achievement has improved across the board for almost all elementary school students on the Nation's Report Card, but only modestly. Since 2003, average student performance across all fourth-graders has increased by four percentage points in math and two percentage points in reading.

And when we breakdown the data by subgroups, those numbers are even worse. Less than 25 percent of black fourth-graders in North Carolina scored a proficient or above in math or reading on the Nation's Report Card. This means that more than 75 percent of black fourth-graders are already lagging behind before they enter middle school. Similarly, low-income fourth-graders in North Carolina, trail their wealthier peers by over 30 percentage points in math and reading on the Nation's Report Card, resulting in a wide proficiency gap early on in their educational lives.






NATION'S REPORT CARD PROFICIENCY, 4TH GRADE

Percentage of NC 4th-graders proficient or advanced, 2013²⁹



REGIONAL COMPARISON

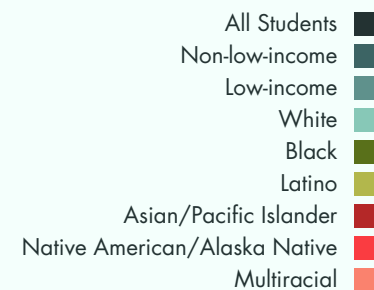
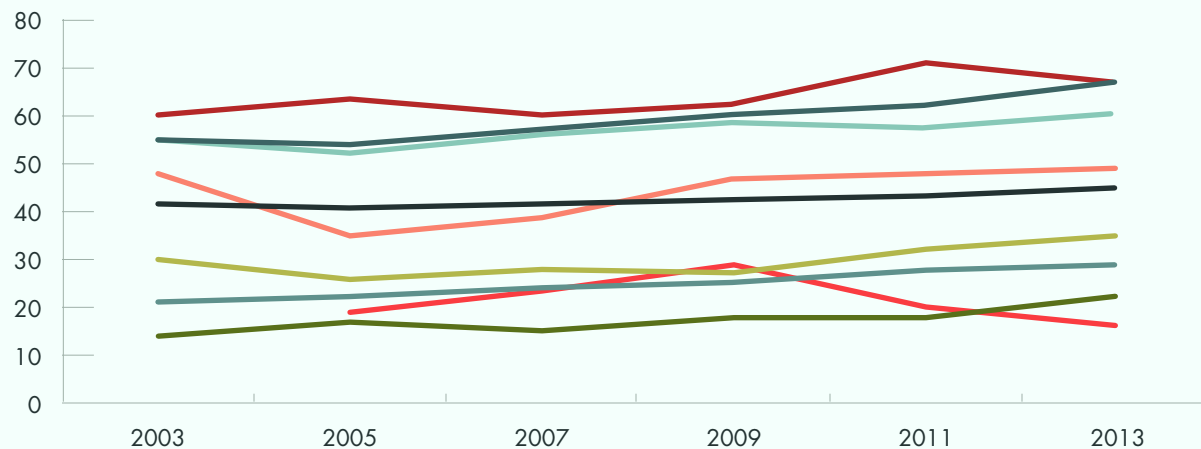
Percentage of 4th-graders proficient or advanced on the Nation’s Report Card, 2013

| | North Carolina | Georgia | South Carolina | Tennessee | Virginia |
|---------|---|---|---|---|---|
| |  |  |  |  |  |
| Math | 45 | 39 | 35 | 40 | 47 |
| Reading | 35 | 34 | 28 | 34 | 43 |

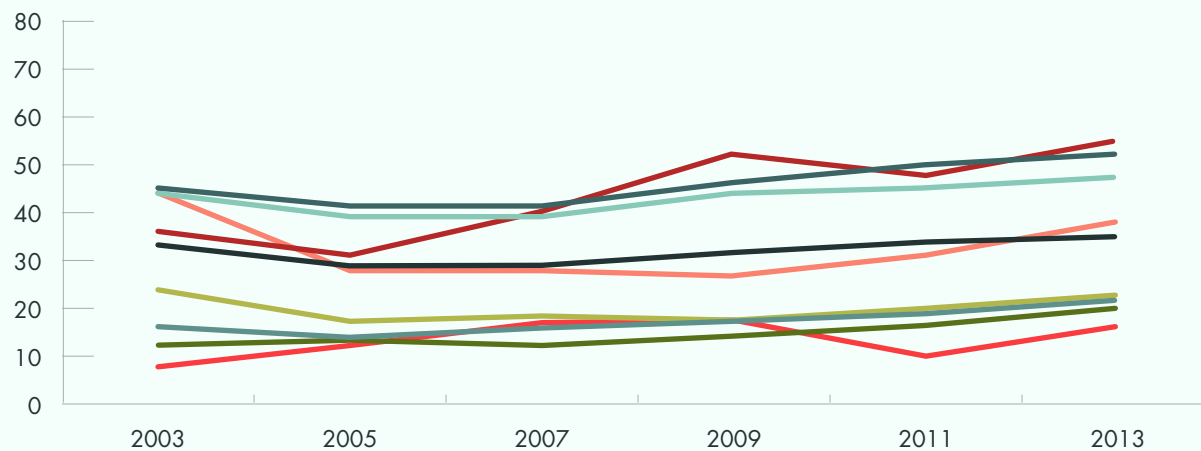
NATION'S REPORT CARD TRENDS

Percentage of NC 4th-graders proficient or advanced, 2013

Math

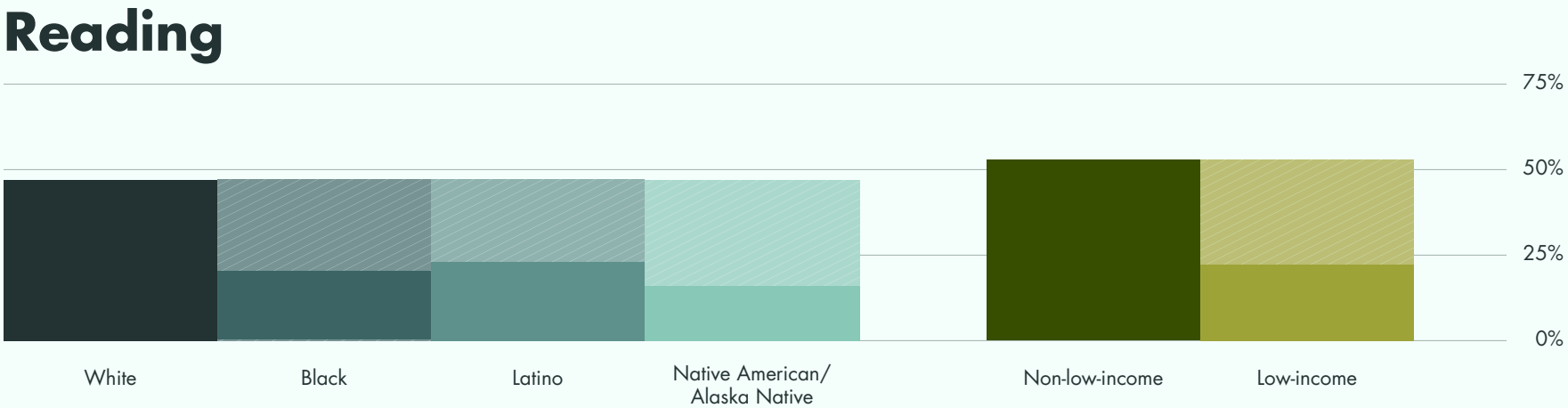
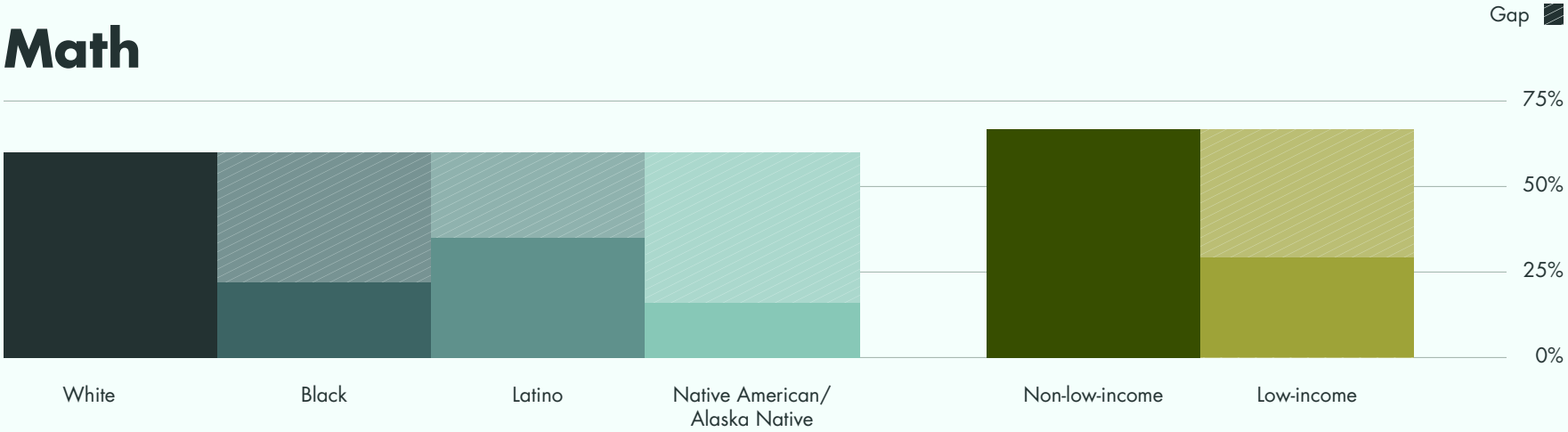


Reading



NATION'S REPORT CARD PROFICIENCY GAP, 4TH GRADE

The difference in proficiency rates between white students and students of color, and low-income students and non-low-income students (in percentage points)



Proficiency gaps:

A proficiency gap represents the difference in proficiency rates between two groups of students. In North Carolina, for example, a much higher proportion of white students score proficient or advanced on state and national tests compared to their black peers: the proportion of white fourth-graders who score at least proficient in math on the Nation’s Report Card exceeds the proportion of black fourth-graders scoring proficient by a whopping 38 percentage points.

NATION'S REPORT CARD ACHIEVEMENT GAP, 4TH GRADE

The scale score difference in student achievement between white students and students of color, and low-income students and non-low-income students

| | White/Black | White/Latino | White/Native American | Low-income/Non-Low-income |
|---------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Math | 23.7 | 15 | 28.7 | 24.1 |
| Reading | 22.7 | 22.3 | 26.8 | 26.4 |

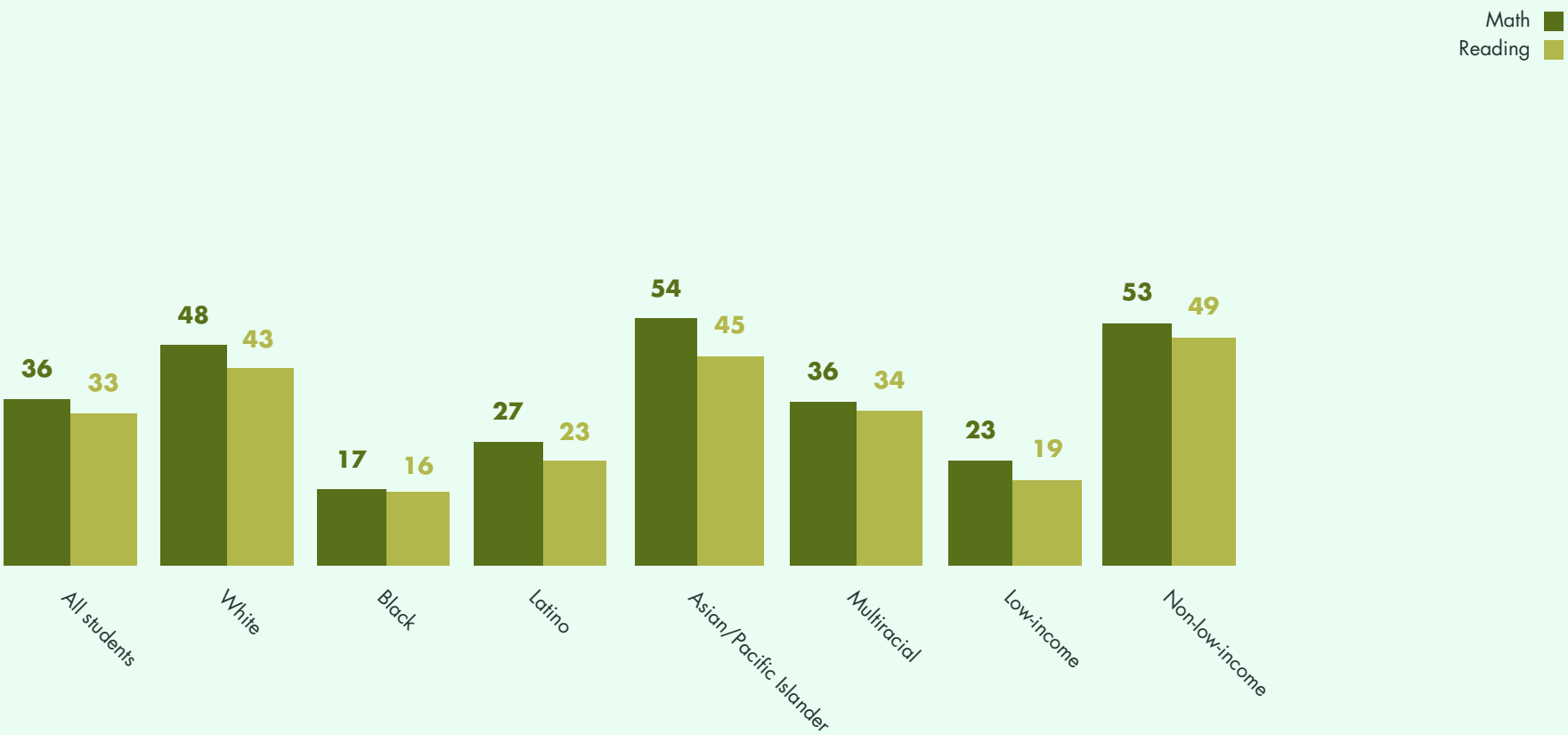
Achievement gaps:
Achievement gaps show the difference in average student performance on the Nation’s Report Card (also known as “scale scores”) between different subgroups. In North Carolina, average low-income student performance in fourth-grade reading trails behind that of their wealthier peers by over 26 points.

Middle school

The good news is North Carolina has seen gains on the Nation's Report Card at the middle school level over the last decade as well. Since 2003, math and reading proficiency have increased by four percentage points overall. However, proficiency gaps remain enduring and alarmingly high for our middle school students. There is a more than 20-percentage point gap in proficiency between students of color and white students and a 30-percentage point gap between low-income students and their wealthier peers in both reading and math. While proficiency gaps are smaller at the middle school level than in elementary school, these gaps are still far too wide and continue to plague so many of our students.






NATION'S REPORT CARD PROFICIENCY, 8TH GRADE

Percentage of NC 8th-graders proficient or advanced, 2013



REGIONAL COMPARISON

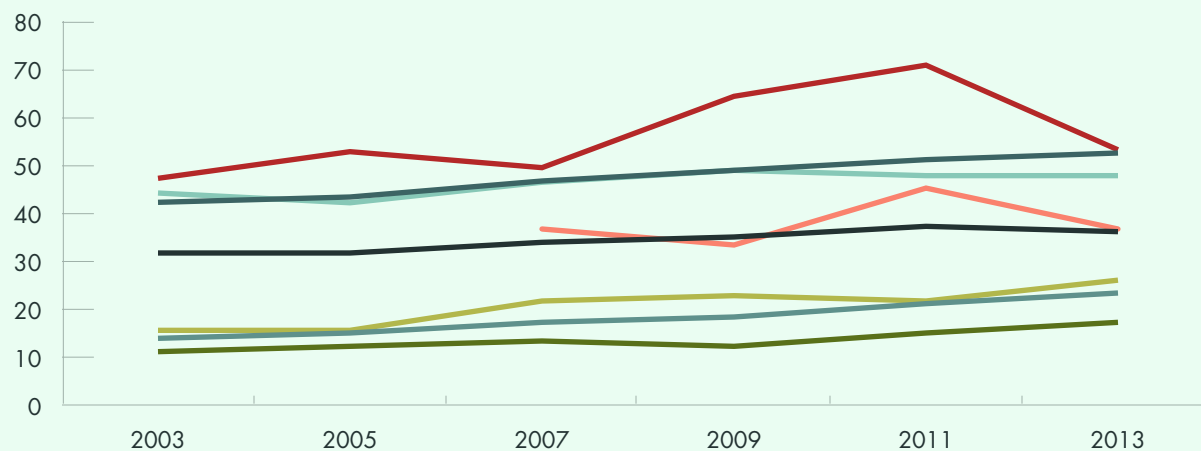
Percentage of 8th-graders proficient or advanced, 2013

| | North Carolina | Georgia | South Carolina | Tennessee | Virginia |
|---------|---|---|---|---|---|
| |  |  |  |  |  |
| Math | 36 | 29 | 31 | 28 | 38 |
| Reading | 33 | 32 | 29 | 33 | 36 |

NATION'S REPORT CARD TRENDS

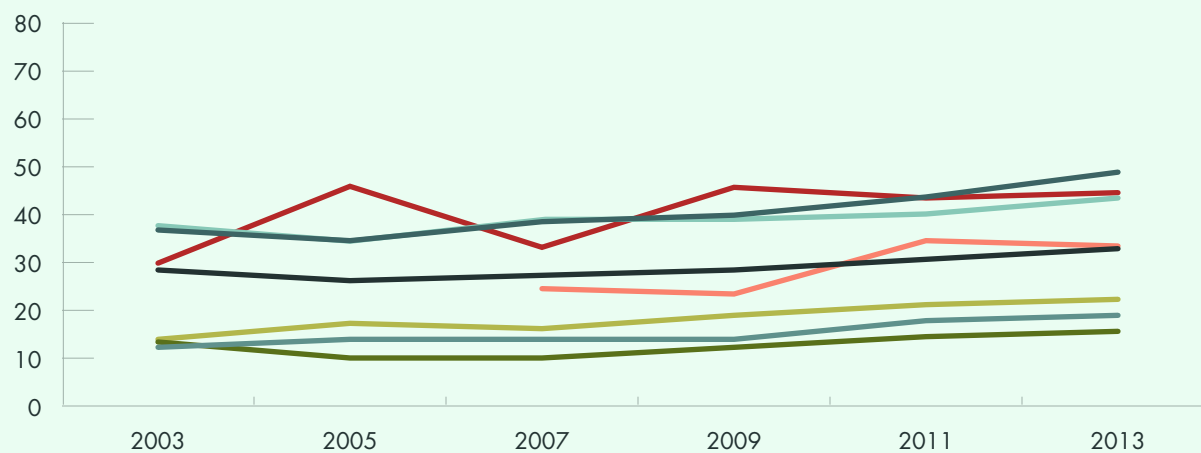
Percentage of 8th-graders proficient or advanced, 2013

Math



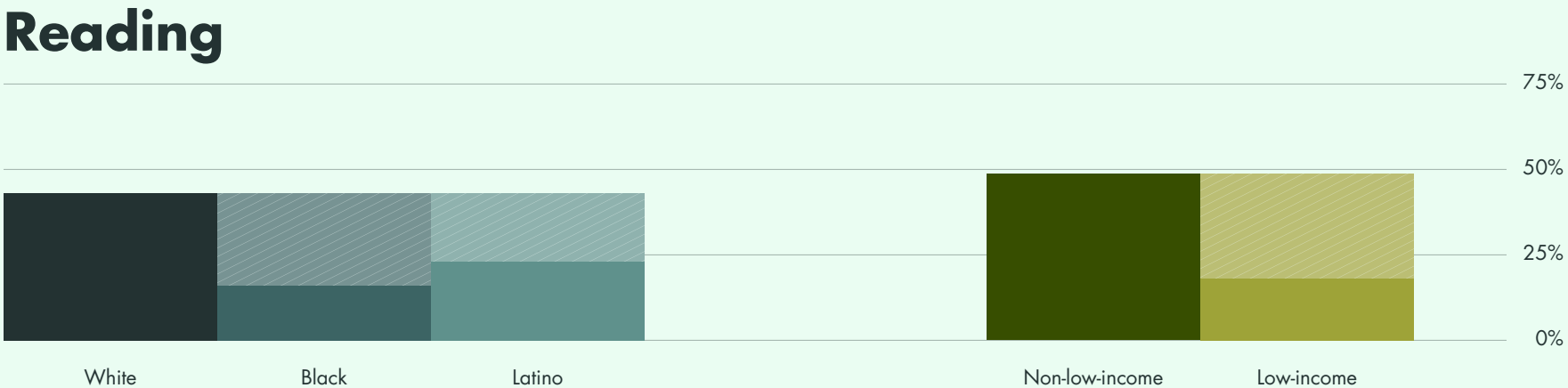
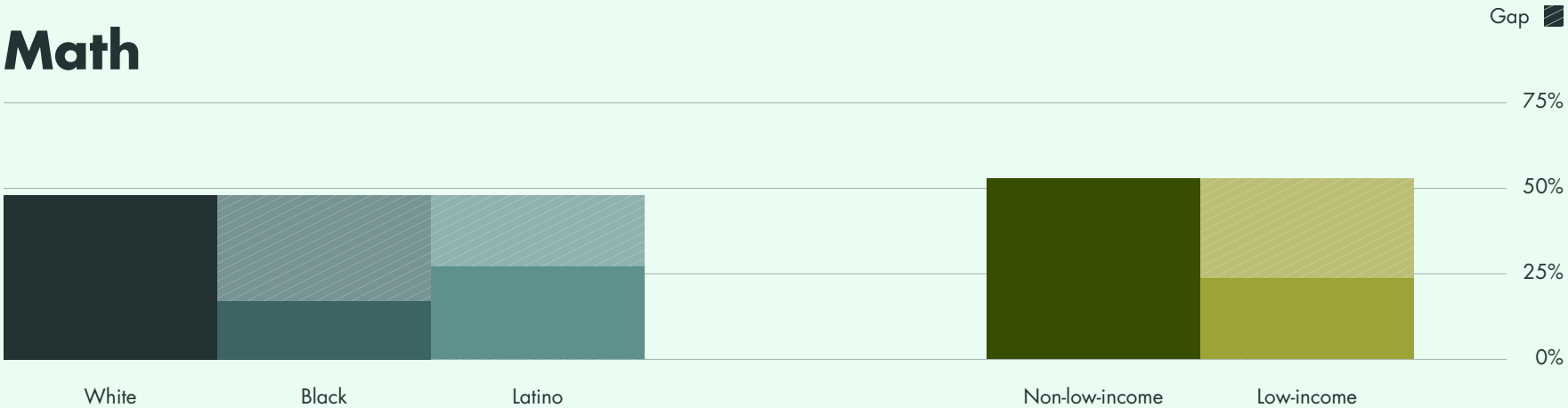
All Students
 Non-low-income
 Low-income
 White
 Black
 Latino
 Asian/Pacific Islander
 Multiracial

Reading



NATION'S REPORT CARD PROFICIENCY GAP, 8TH GRADE

The difference in proficiency rates between white students and students of color, and low-income students and non-low-income students (in percentage points)



NATION'S REPORT CARD ACHIEVEMENT GAP, 8TH GRADE

The scale-score difference in student achievement between white students and students of color, and low-income students and non-low-income students

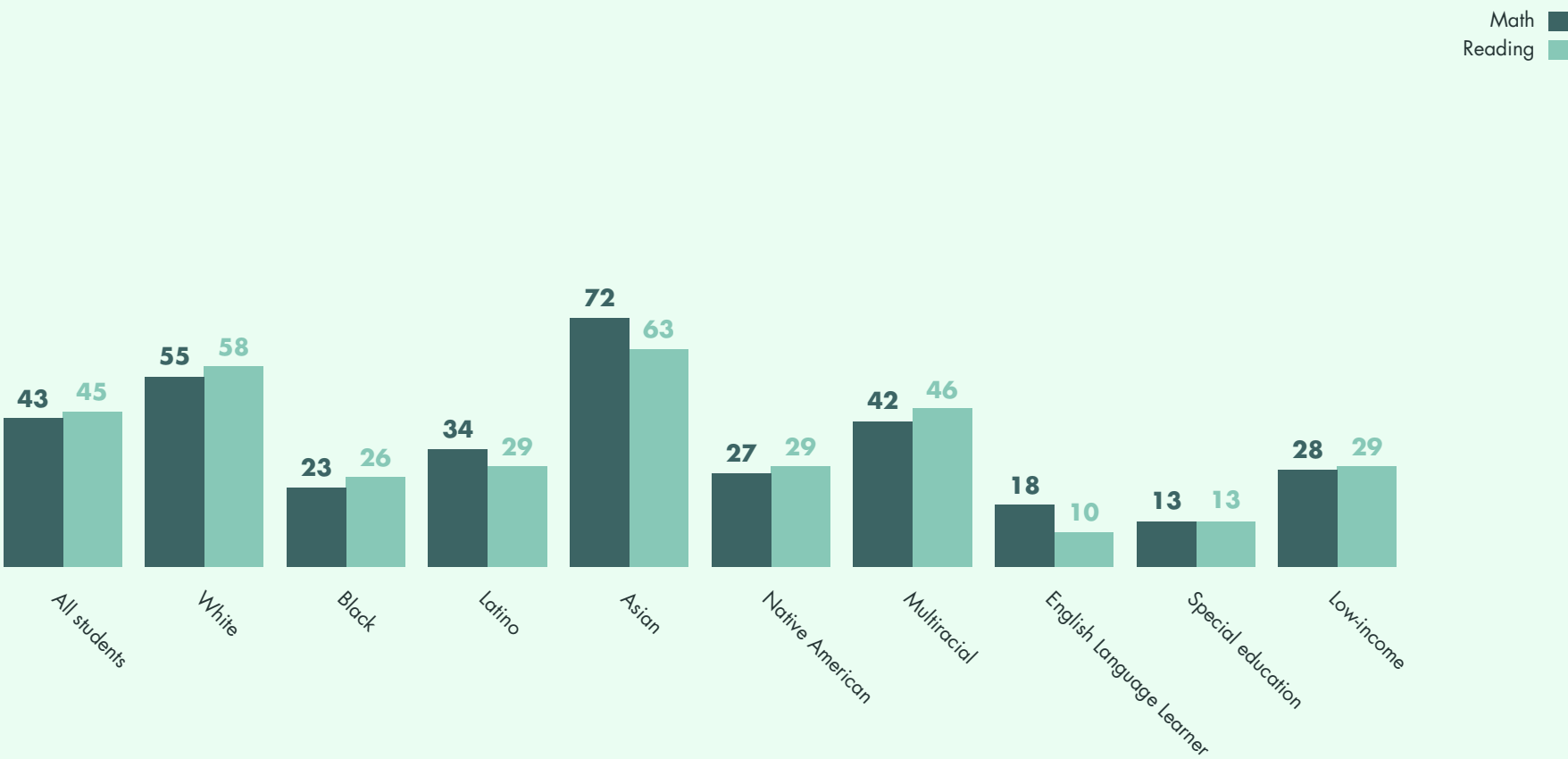
| | White/Black | White/Latino | Low-income/Non-Low-income |
|---------|-------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Math | 27.8 | 17.2 | 25.3 |
| Reading | 22.7 | 15.5 | 25.3 |

End-of-Grade Assessments (Grades 3-8)

Mirroring Nation's Report Card data and now aligned with the Common Core State Standards, the End of Grade Assessments reveal similar achievement disparities along racial and income lines. Only 23 percent of black students scored a proficient or above on the math assessment, compared to 55 percent of their white peers. Similarly in reading, just 26 percent of black students in grades 3-8 scored proficient or above in 2014, while 58 percent of their white classmates achieved the same result.

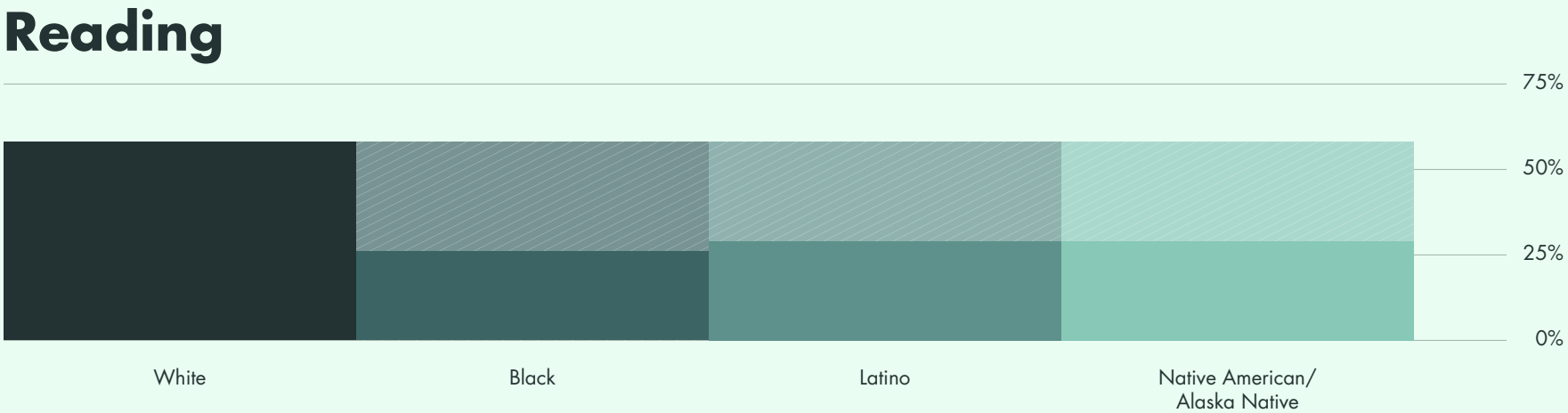
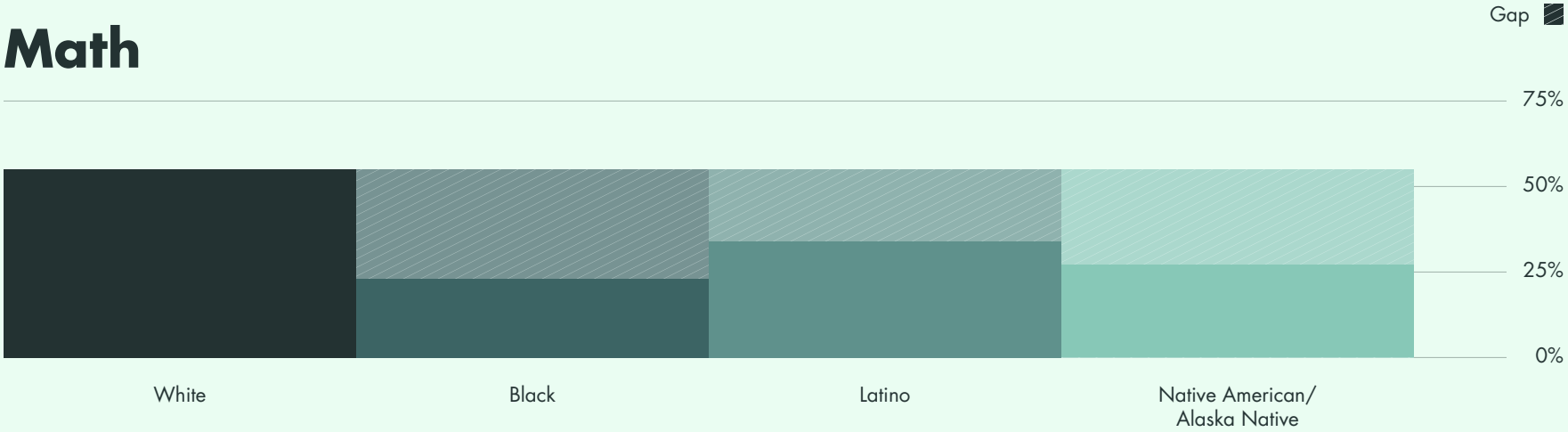
NORTH CAROLINA END-OF-GRADE ASSESSMENT PROFICIENCY RATES³⁰

Percentage of NC students proficient or advanced in 2014, grades 3–8



END-OF-GRADE ASSESSMENT PROFICIENCY GAPS, 3RD-8TH GRADE

The difference in proficiency rates between white students and students of color, and low-income students and non-low-income students (in percentage points)



High school

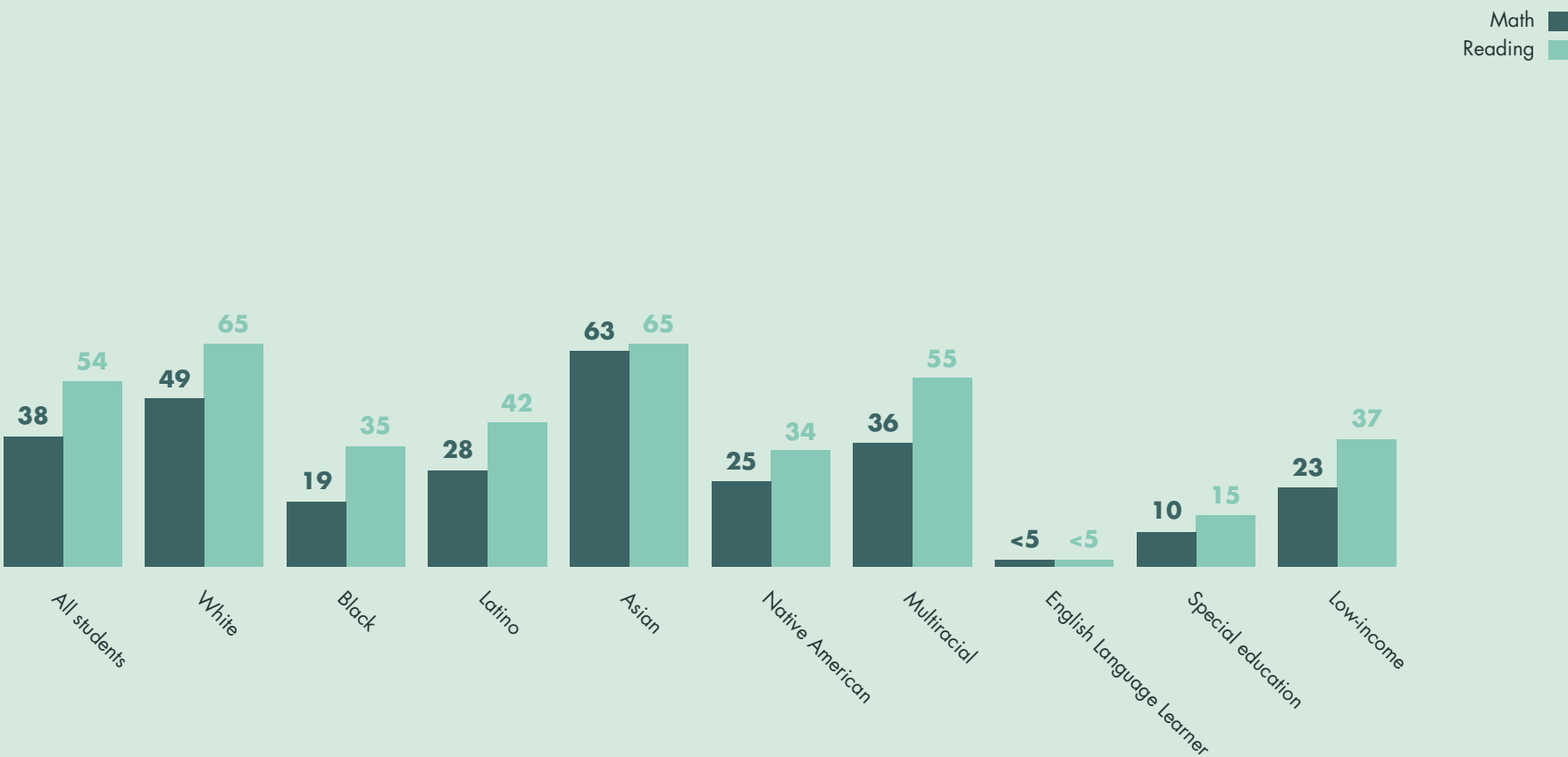
Unfortunately, the achievement disparities only continue for North Carolina high school students from graduation rates to AP exam participation and success. In the class of 2013, 87 percent of white graduated in four years compared to lower 80 percent of black students and 77 percent of Latino students.

Disparities on the AP exam tell a similar story. While 24 percent of white students in the class of 2013 scored a three or higher on at least one AP exam during high school, only 6 percent black students and 13 percent of Latino achieved the same result.

However, we should celebrate our rising graduation rate – Since 2007, the four-year cohort graduation rate among North Carolina high school seniors has increased by 14 percentage points overall. This means that more students than ever before are earning their high school diploma and preparing for the next phase of their lives.

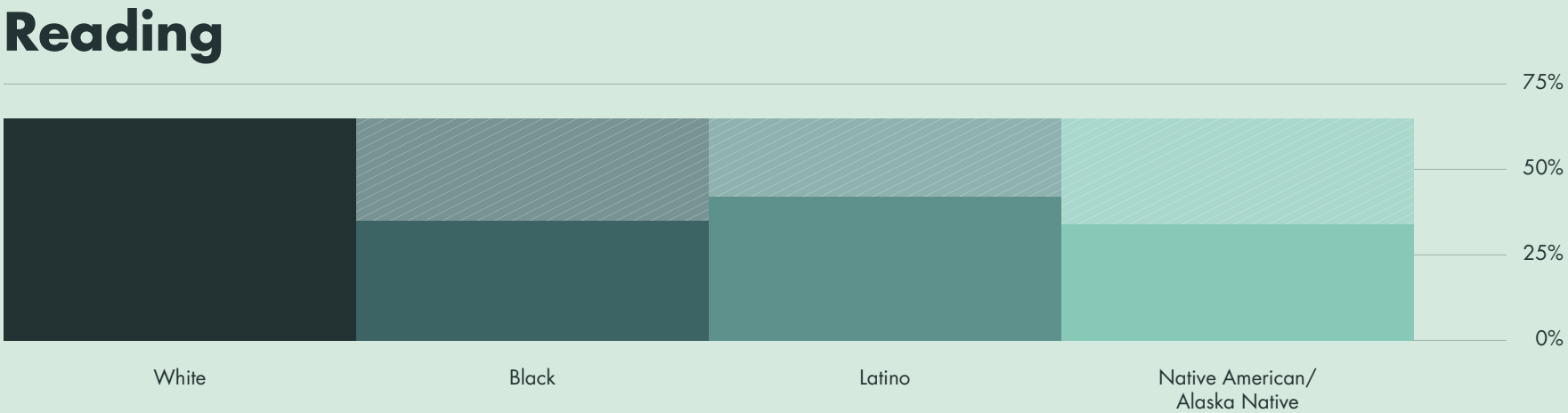
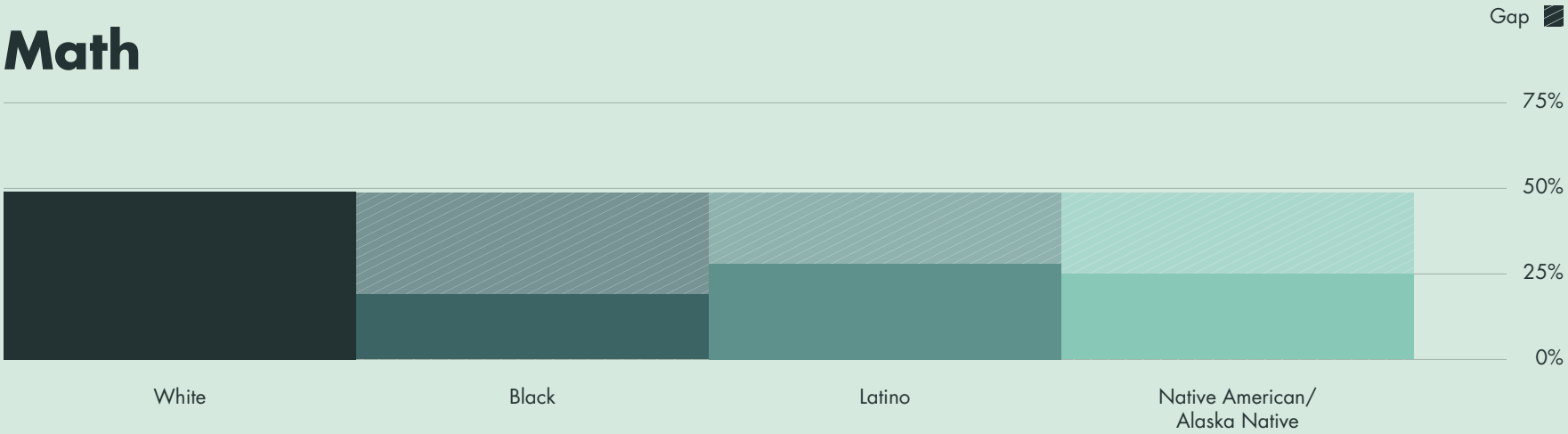
END-OF-COURSE ASSESSMENT PROFICIENCY RATES ³¹

Percentage of NC 10th-graders scoring proficient or advanced, 2014



END-OF-COURSE ASSESSMENT PROFICIENCY GAPS

The difference in proficiency rates between white students and students of color, and low-income students and non-low-income students (in percentage points)



4-YEAR COHORT GRADUATION RATE, CLASS OF 2014³²

Percentage of students who graduated on time, by subgroup



4-YEAR COHORT GRADUATION RATE³³

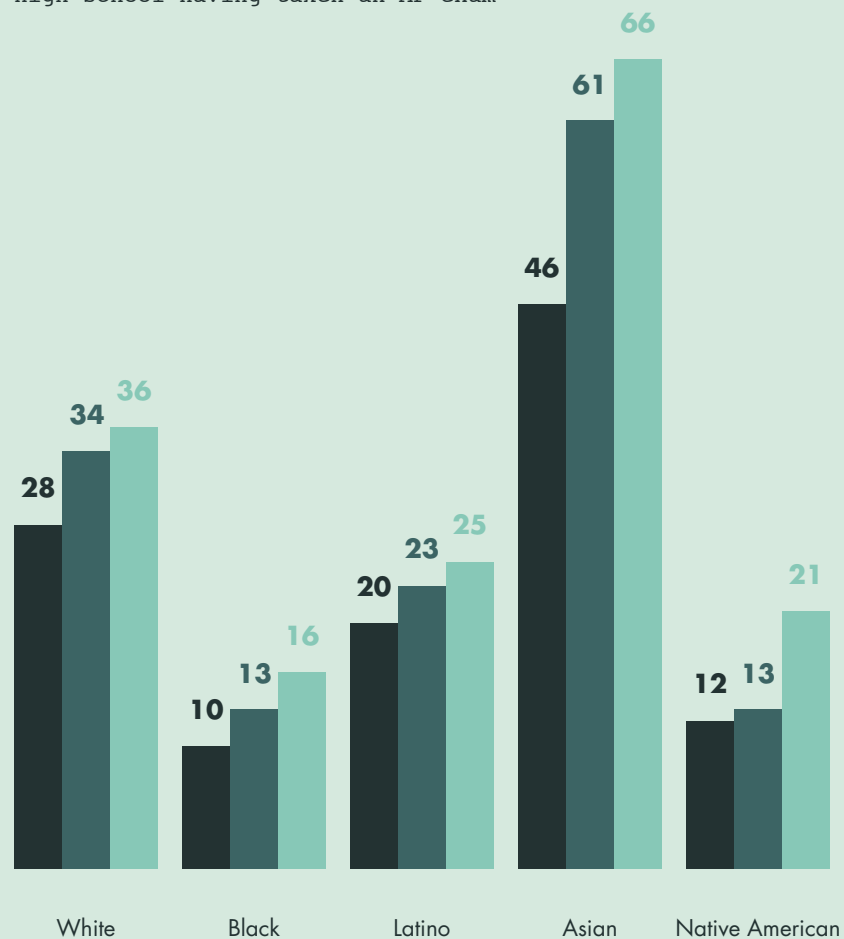
Percentage of students who graduated on time, by year



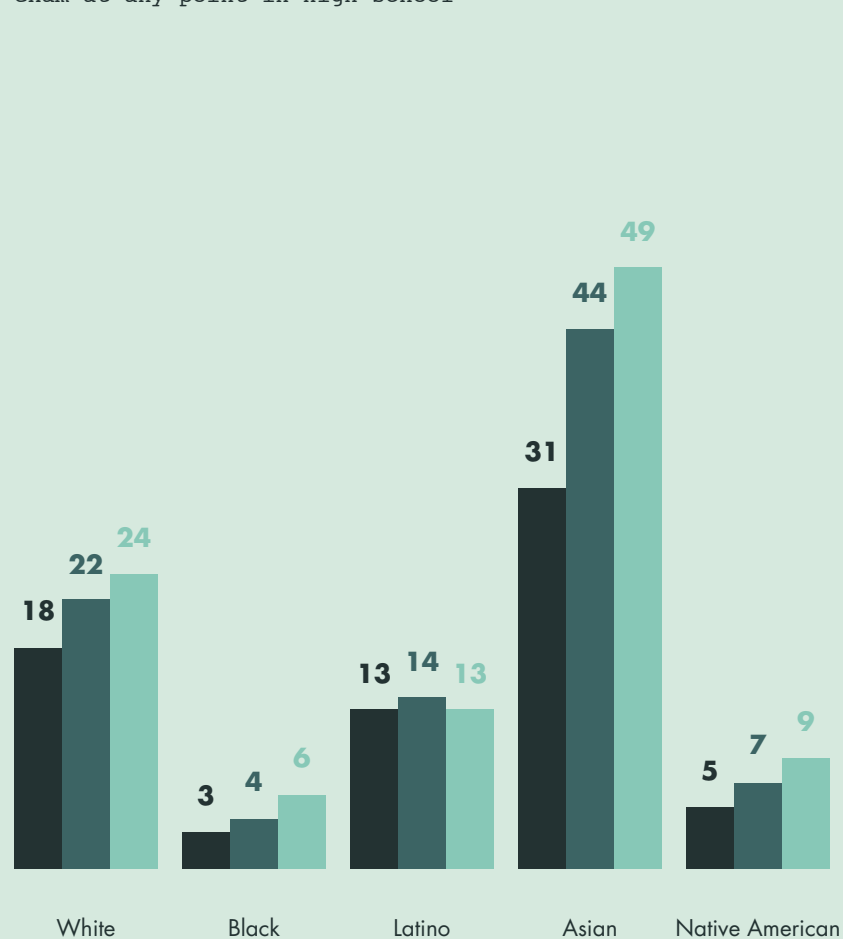
STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION AND SUCCESS ON ADVANCED PLACEMENT EXAMS, 2013³⁴⁻³⁶

2003 ■
2008 ■
2013 ■

Percentage of graduates leaving high school having taken an AP exam

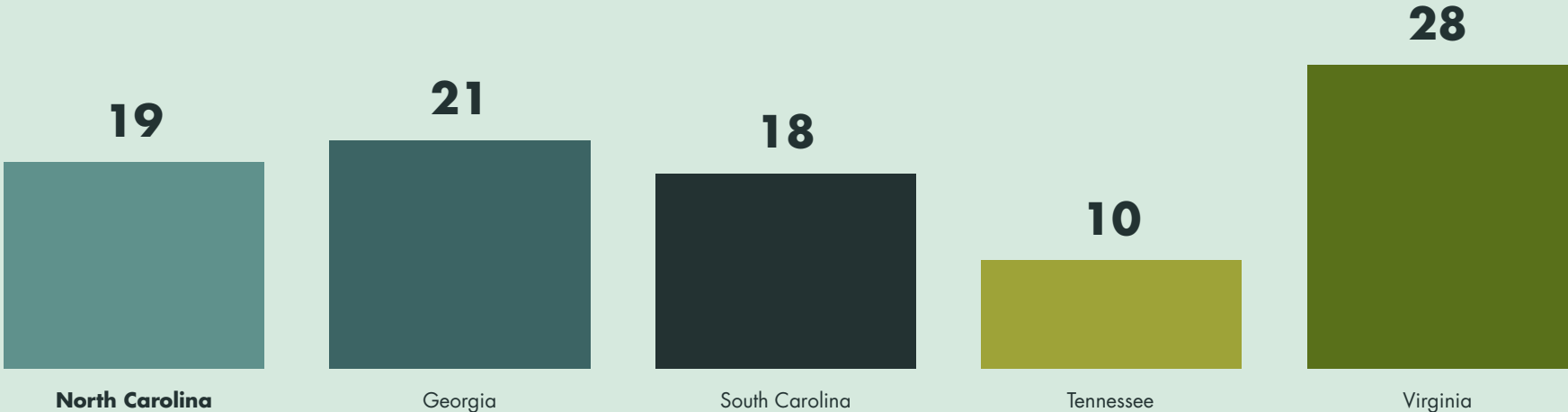


Percentage of graduates scoring 3+ on an AP exam at any point in high school



ADVANCED PLACEMENT EXAMS, REGIONAL COMPARISON³⁷⁻⁴¹

Percentage of the class of 2013 scoring a 3 or higher on an Advanced Placement Exam in high school



College entrance exams

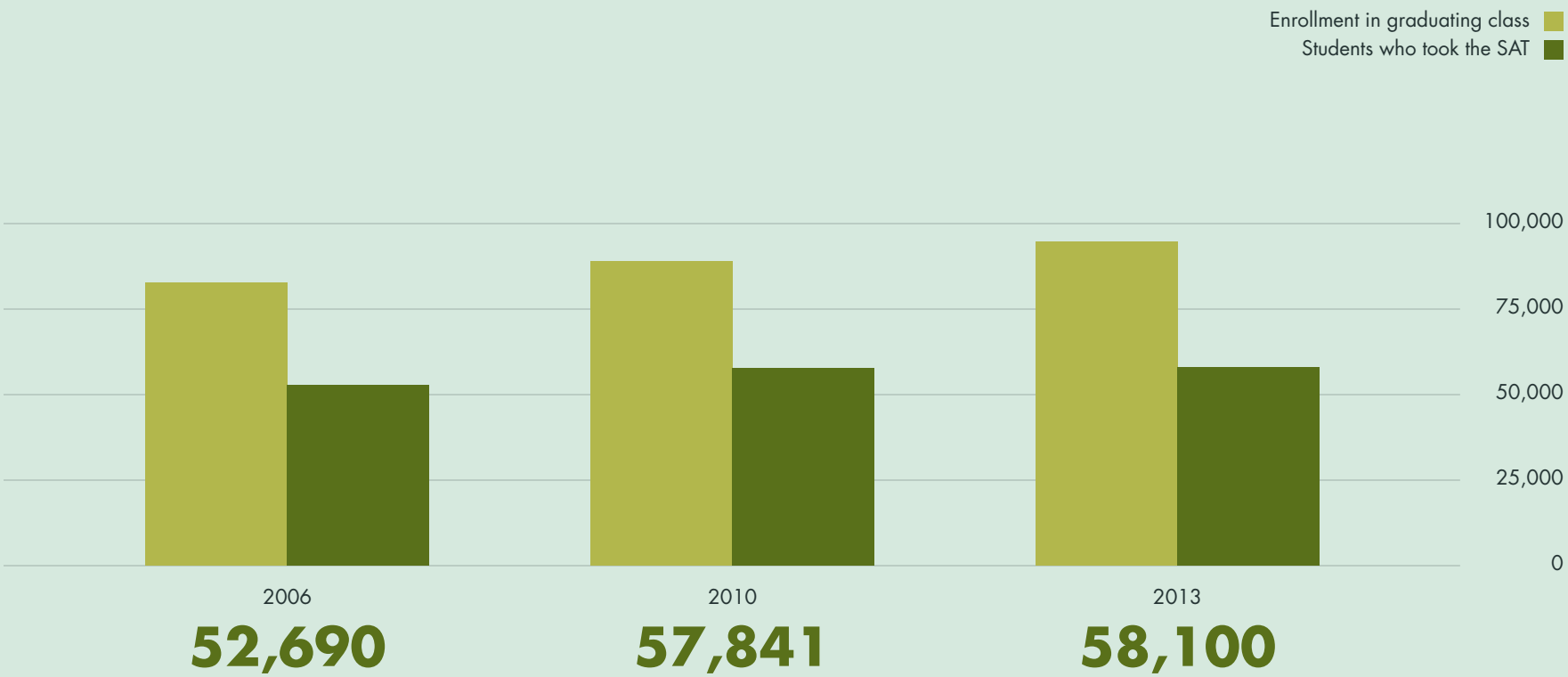
Just as there are gaps between the academic performance of white students and students of color, there are also gaps in the likelihood that those students will take—and do well on—college entrance exams. In 2013, the percent of white students who met the four college readiness benchmarks on the ACT was over seven times the rate of black students.

But lacking college readiness knowledge is not just a problem that plagues communities of color — it's a problem statewide. A mere 17 percent of all seniors who took the ACT in 2013 met all four college readiness benchmarks. This means that over 80 percent of seniors who hope to go to college are not ready for rigorous college material.

Similarly, our average score on the SAT in 2013 was 1479 — 71 points shy of the 1550 college and career-readiness benchmark set by the College Board.

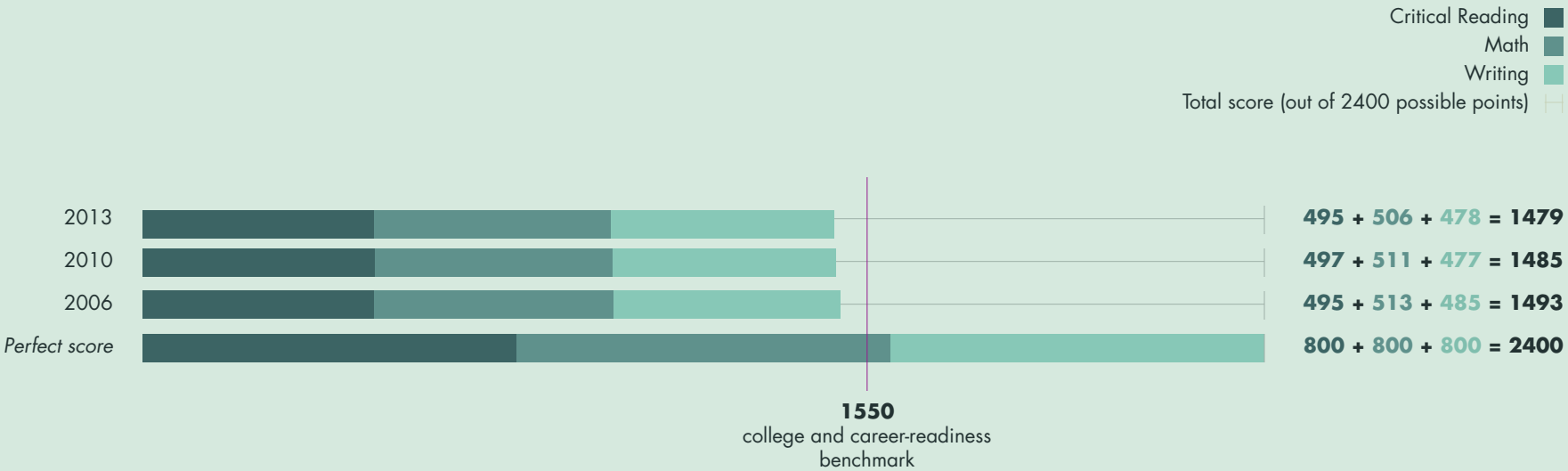
TRENDS IN SAT PARTICIPATION⁴²⁻⁴⁵

Total number of students in graduating class who took the SAT at any point in high school

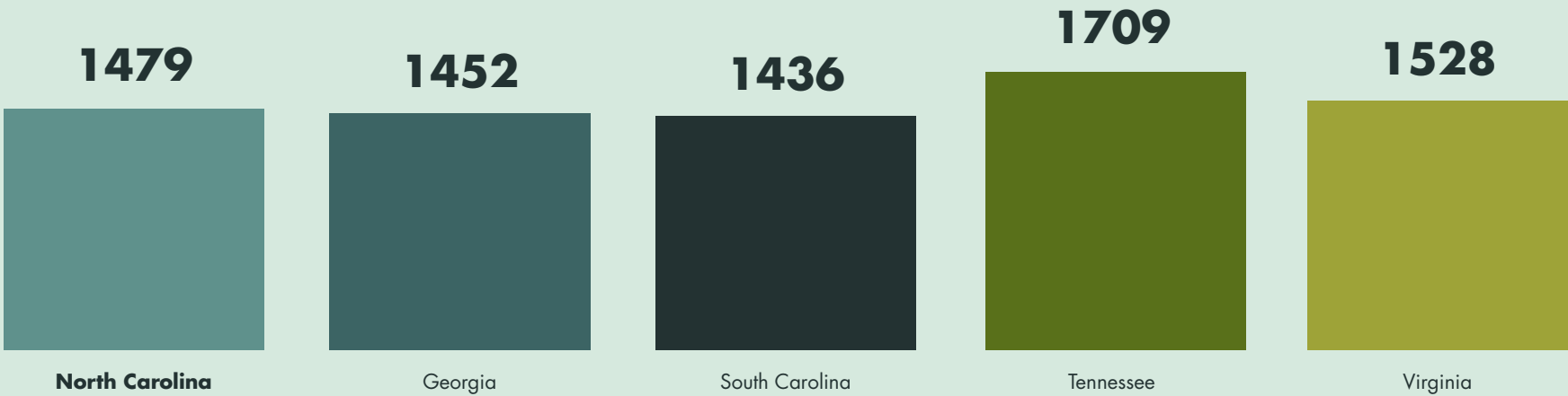


TRENDS IN SAT SCORES⁴⁶⁻⁴⁸

(1550 is the college and career-readiness benchmark total score)

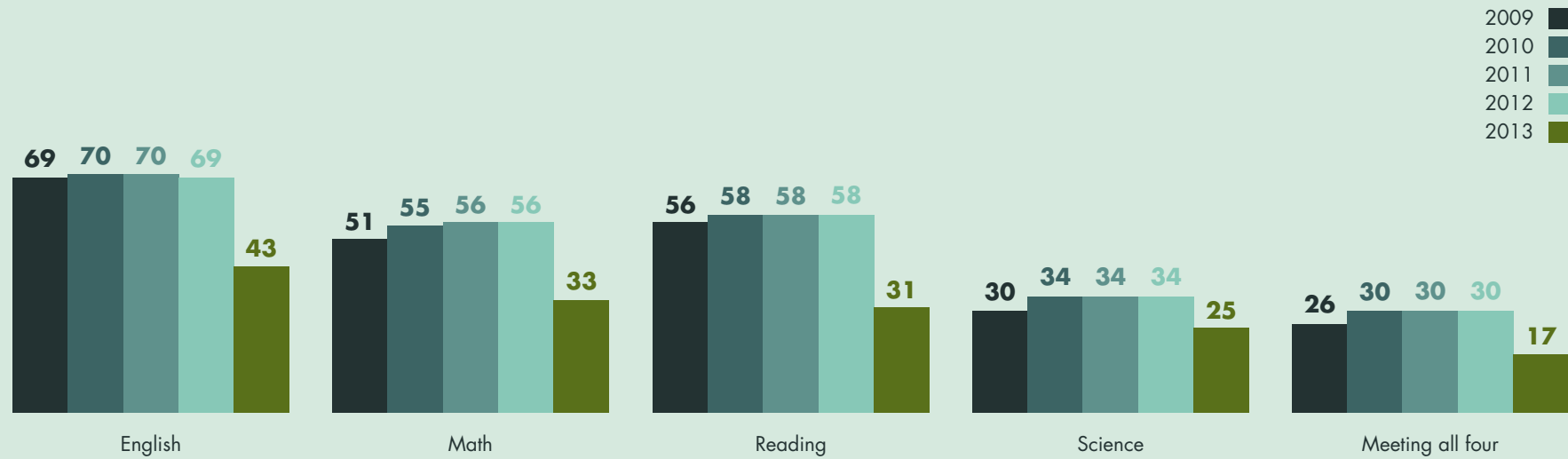


REGIONAL COMPARISON OF SAT PERFORMANCE, 2013⁴⁹⁻⁵³

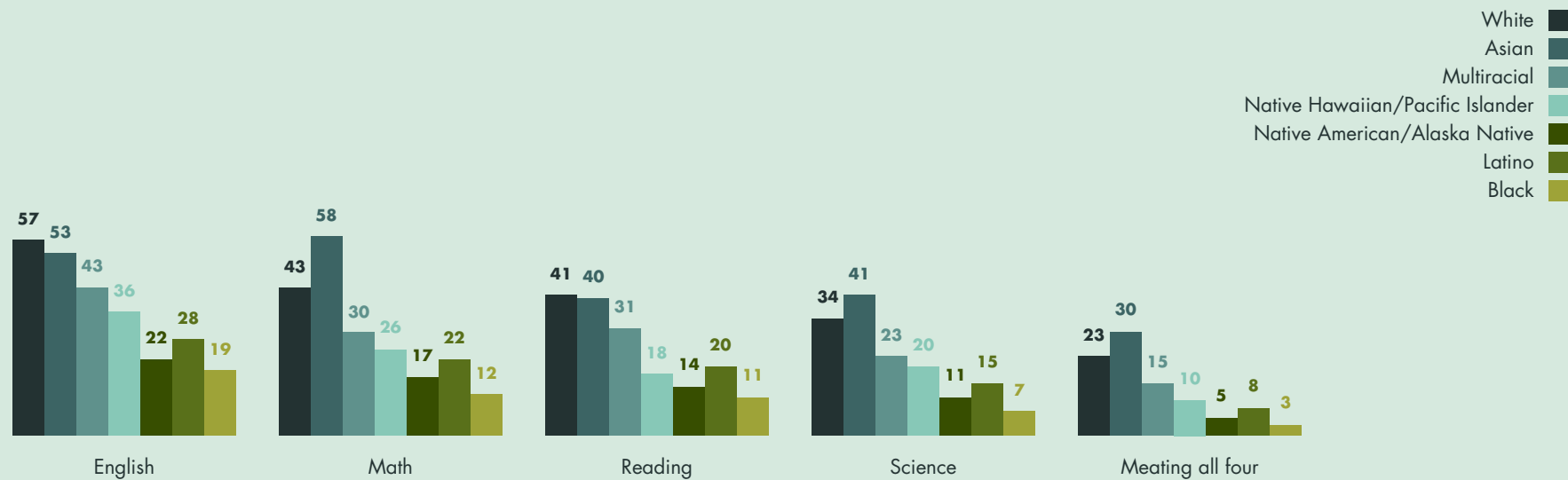


ACT

Percentage of North Carolina test takers meeting college readiness benchmarks, by year⁵⁴



Percentage of North Carolina test takers meeting college readiness benchmarks by race, 2013⁵⁵



After graduation

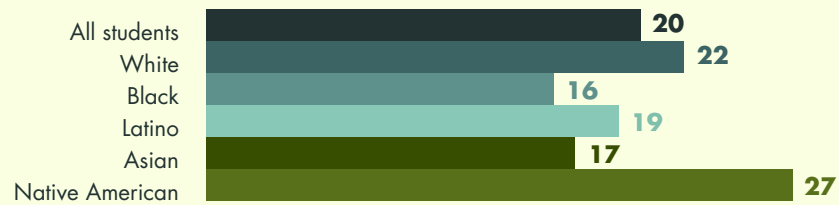
The ultimate goal of North Carolina's school system is to prepare all of its graduates to thrive in the post-high school world—whether they're going first to college or entering the workforce straightaway. So, are we meeting that goal? To find out, we look at how well North Carolina students do on college entrance exams, the rate at which they graduate from college, and what they can expect to earn in their lifetimes.

College completion

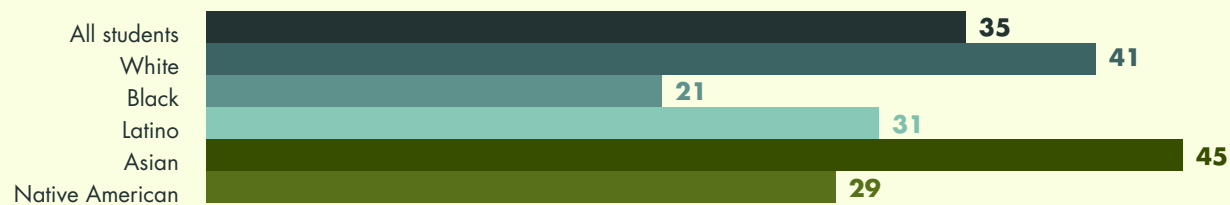
The proportion of North Carolina students who graduate on time from four-year public universities is higher than many of our neighboring states as well as the national average. However, just as we've seen in all aspects of our education system, black and Latino students are far less likely to graduate from four-year universities on time than their white peers. Across all groups, the graduation rate for two-year public colleges is significantly lower than the graduation rate for four-year public universities.

GRADUATION RATE⁵⁶⁻⁵⁸

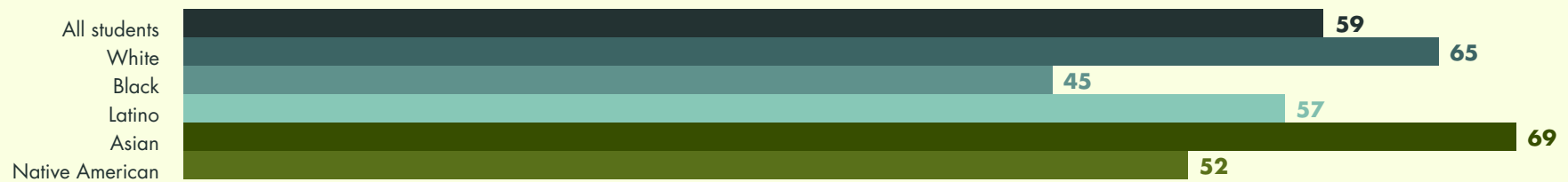
Graduation rate, two-year public colleges—Percentage of students who graduated within 3 years, 2010



Graduation rate, four-year public universities—Percentage of students who graduated within 4 years, 2010

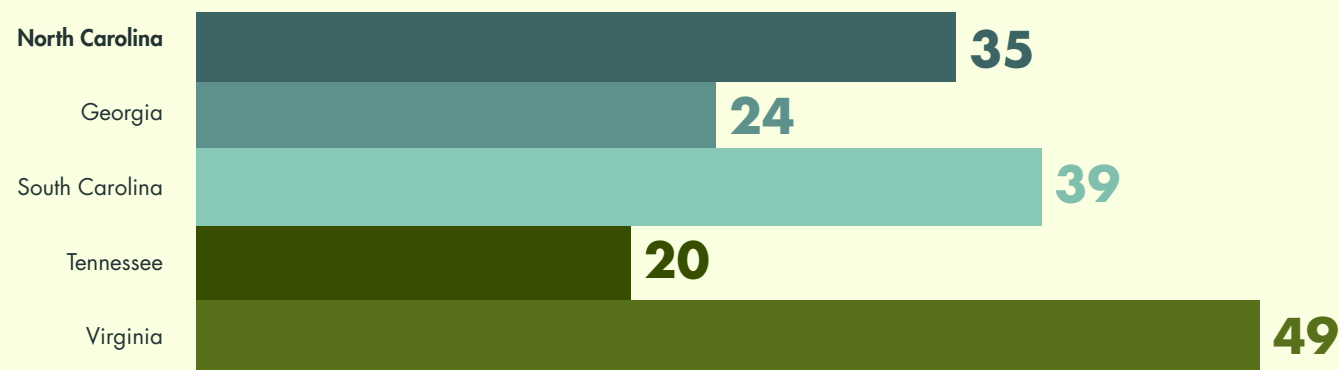


Graduation rate, four-year public universities—Percentage of students who graduated within 6 years, 2010



REGIONAL GRADUATION RATE⁵⁹

Graduation rate, four-year public universities—Percentage of students who graduated within 4 years, 2010



Expected earnings & jobs

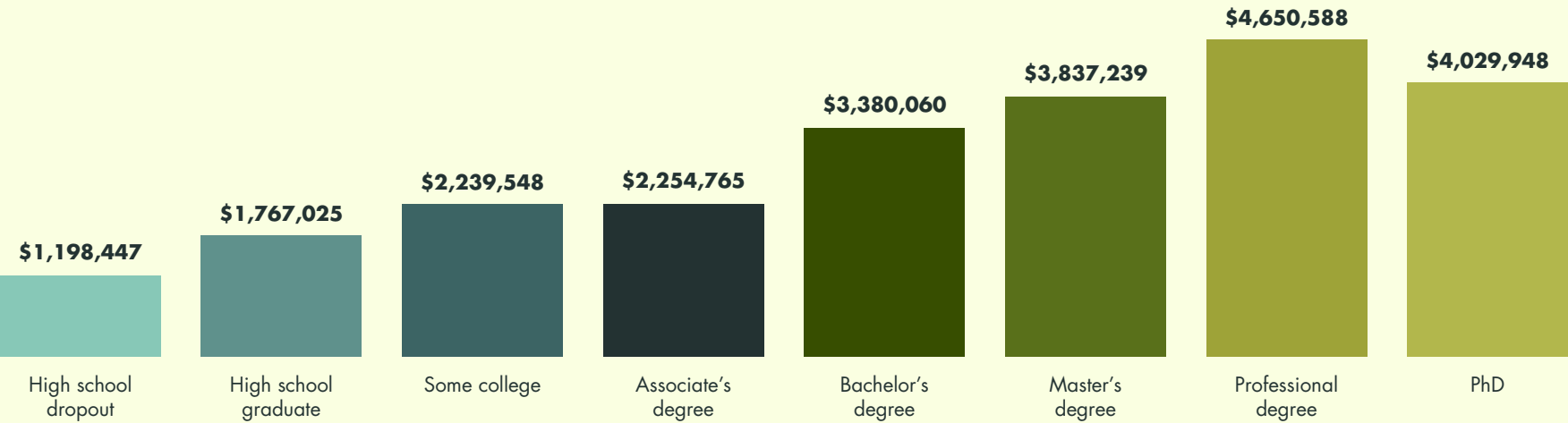
In general, the more education you’ve had, the more you’re likely to make—which is why it is so important to set our students up for success after high school. In North Carolina those with a bachelor’s degree take home an annual salary that is, on average, more than double what those who have not gone beyond high school earn.

AVERAGE YEARLY EARNINGS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN NORTH CAROLINA⁶⁰

Data from 2011 Census

| | High School dropout | High School graduate | Some college | Bachelor’s degree and above |
|----|---------------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| \$ | 9,605 | 23,055 | 29,671 | 57,714 |

U.S. AVERAGE LIFETIME EARNINGS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2008⁶¹

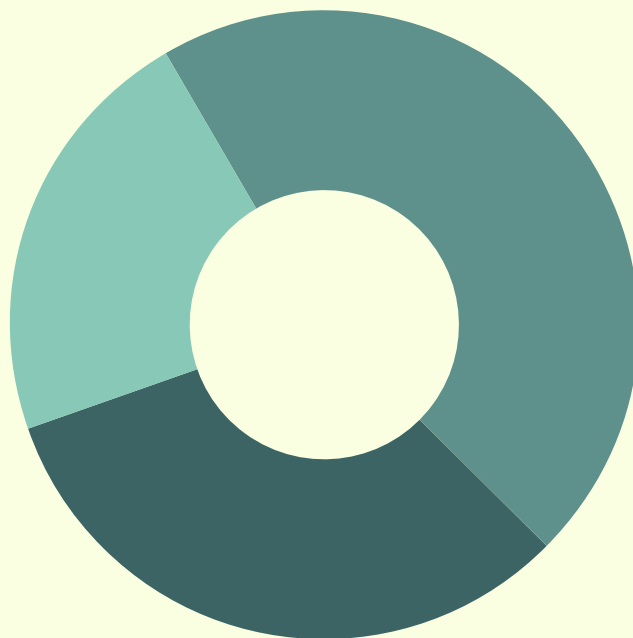


NORTH CAROLINA JOB OPENINGS⁶²

By skill level in 2010–2020 (projected)

Low-skill: 18%

Does not require
a post-secondary degree



82%

of job openings will require
a middle or high-skill level

Middle-skill: 51%

Requires more than a high school degree,
but not a four-year degree

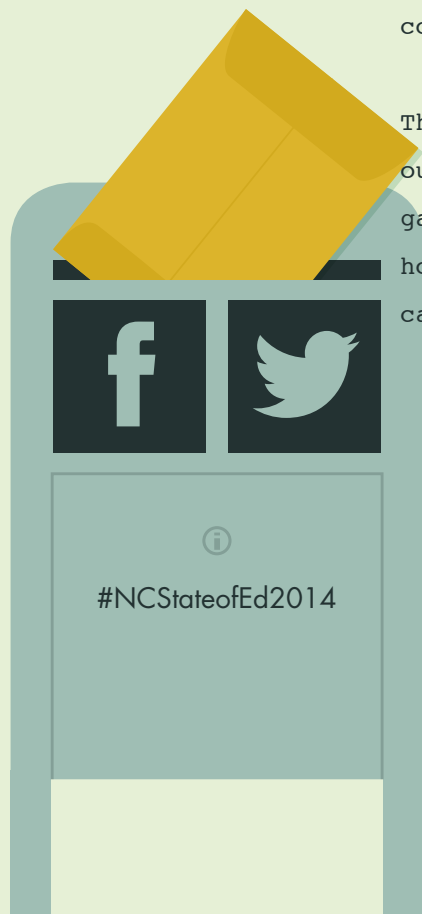
High-skill: 31%

Requires a four-year degree
or higher

Conclusion

This report makes one thing clear: we must do more to help all students reach their full potential, in school and beyond. The good news is that we have more than just data. We have success stories and best practices from changing-the-odds public schools across the state, and we have educators, school administrators and policymakers dedicated to passing and implementing commonsense policies to increase academic achievement for all students. As a state, we have a long tradition of innovation and excellence and a deep, collective, unwavering commitment to our kids.

There's just one thing we still need to take swift and comprehensive action to improve our schools: you. We need you to explore and share this report, see that meaningful gains are possible and understand that our lingering gaps must be tackled head on. We hope you will join us in our deep belief that all kids can succeed, that great schools can be the agents of change, and that it's in our reach for the kids of today.



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