Alabama’s underperformance in educating its young population could limit the state’s access to a competitive workforce and weaken the state’s economy.

- Eighth graders perform very poorly in math, science, reading, and writing.
- High school students have improved on college entrance exams, but their scores remain low.

College opportunities for young and working-age adults are poor.

- The likelihood of enrolling in college by age 19 is low, primarily because the state has one of the lowest high school graduation rates in the country.
- Thirty-three percent of black young adults are enrolled in college, compared with 37% of whites.

Higher education has become less affordable for students and their families.

- Poor and working-class families must devote 51% of their income, even after aid, to pay for costs at public four-year colleges.
- Financial aid to low-income students is low. For every dollar in Pell Grant aid to students, the state spends only five cents.

Like all states, Alabama receives an “Incomplete” in Learning because there is not sufficient data to allow meaningful state-by-state comparisons.
This page reflects Alabama’s performance and progress since the early 1990s on several key indicators.

**PREPARATION**
The percentage of young adults in Alabama who earn a high school diploma has increased slightly since the early 1990s. High school completion is below the U.S. average and well below the top-performing states.

**PARTICIPATION**
College enrollment of young adults in Alabama has improved since the early 1990s. The state is slightly above the national average but below the top states in the percentage of young adults enrolled.

**AFFORDABILITY**
The share of family income, even after financial aid, needed to pay for college has risen substantially. To attend public two- and four-year colleges in Alabama, students and families pay more than the U.S. average and more than those in the best-performing states.

**COMPLETION**
The number of undergraduate credentials and degrees awarded in Alabama, relative to the number of students enrolled, has remained stable since the early 1990s. Alabama is below the U.S. average and the top states on this measure.**

**BENEFITS**
The percentage of residents who have a bachelor’s degree has increased in Alabama, but remains well below the U.S. average and the top states.

**PARTICIPATION**
The enrollment of working-age adults, relative to the number of residents without a bachelor’s degree, has declined in Alabama—as it has nationally and in the best-performing states. The percentage attending college in Alabama is slightly below the U.S. average and well below the top states.

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*Key indicator for the category.
** Completion data for 1999–2000 includes the Community College of the Air Force, which primarily serves students who reside outside Alabama.