

**Advanced Placement (AP) Policy:
Comparison of Academic Outcomes at 4-Year University Main Campuses:
AP Credit Recipients & Students without AP Tests**

Ohio Public Institutions of Higher Education

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Comparison of Academic Outcomes: Advanced Placement (AP) Credit Recipients & Students without AP Tests

This note compares selected indicators of academic outcome over time between two groups of first-time freshman students attending Ohio's public 4-year university main campuses. The students in the first group are eligible to receive college credit for AP tests; they received passing scores – 3, 4 or 5 – in AP tests. The students in the second group, also first-time, freshman students, did not take AP tests.

- AP tests, conducted by the College Board, are an important form of accelerated learning for college bound high school students in the nation; in 2013, more than a million public high-school students appeared in at least one of the 30-plus AP tests annually offered by the College Board. In Ohio, 26,670 public high-school students took at least one AP test the same year.
- The Ohio Department of Higher Education, formerly known as the Ohio Board of Regents, implemented its AP policy in 2009-10.
 - The AP policy guarantees college credit for students with passing scores in AP tests. The policy also specifies that credits received for AP tests apply to meeting graduation requirements, and transfer among institutions (subject to transfer policy rules).
- The early accumulation of college credit for AP tests, as guaranteed by the AP policy, is expected to help students save resources, both time and money, by reducing their course-load and shortening the required length of time for graduation.

Why do we compare academic outcomes between students with and without AP credit?

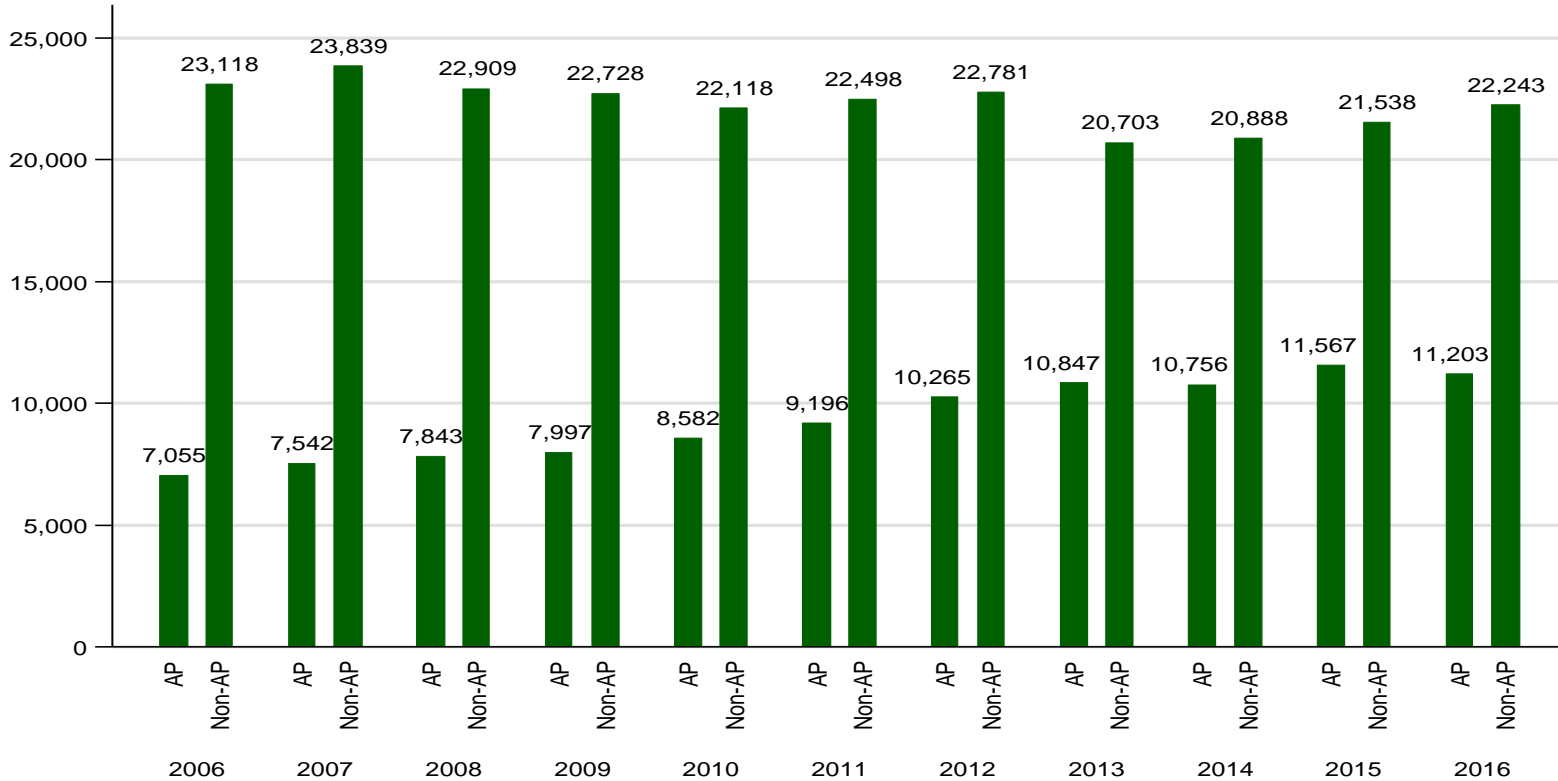
- A fundamental assumption of the AP policy, the *Equivalency of Learning Outcomes*, states that learning outcomes associated with AP test scores of 3, 4 and 5 are equivalent to the learning outcomes associated with the successful completion of corresponding college courses. The comparison of academic outcomes between the two groups helps in validating the assumption.
- If no change, minor changes, or small fluctuations without a clear trend characterize the comparison of academic outcomes between the two groups, it provides strong support for the validity of the assumption, and for the AP policy itself.
- However, if average academic outcomes for AP credit recipients decline relative to the outcomes for students without AP credit in a pronounced manner after the policy implementation (in 2009-10), the *equivalency of learning outcomes* is brought into question.

What do we learn from the comparison between AP credit recipients and students without AP tests?

- Among first-time, freshman students attending Ohio public 4-year university main campuses, the number of AP credit recipients increased substantially over time: from 7,542 in 2005-06 to 11,203 in 2015-16.
- Relative to students without AP tests, AP credit recipients record substantially higher first-year grade point average (GPA), the number of attempted hours, course completion rates, and first-to-second year persistence rates. The differences in the indicators of academic outcome between the two groups also remain almost constant over time, including in the period after AP policy implementation.
- **The AP policy, therefore, does not influence academic outcomes of AP credit recipients but helps them save time and money.**

The Ohio Articulation and Transfer Network (OATN) presents similar findings on the effectiveness of the AP policy from detailed investigations of the policy impact on GPA, the number of attempted hours, overall course completion rates, and completion rates in higher level courses, all from the first year of attendance, and on long-term indicators including graduation rates. Please see the following link for the reports:
<https://www.ohiohighered.org/transfer/research>

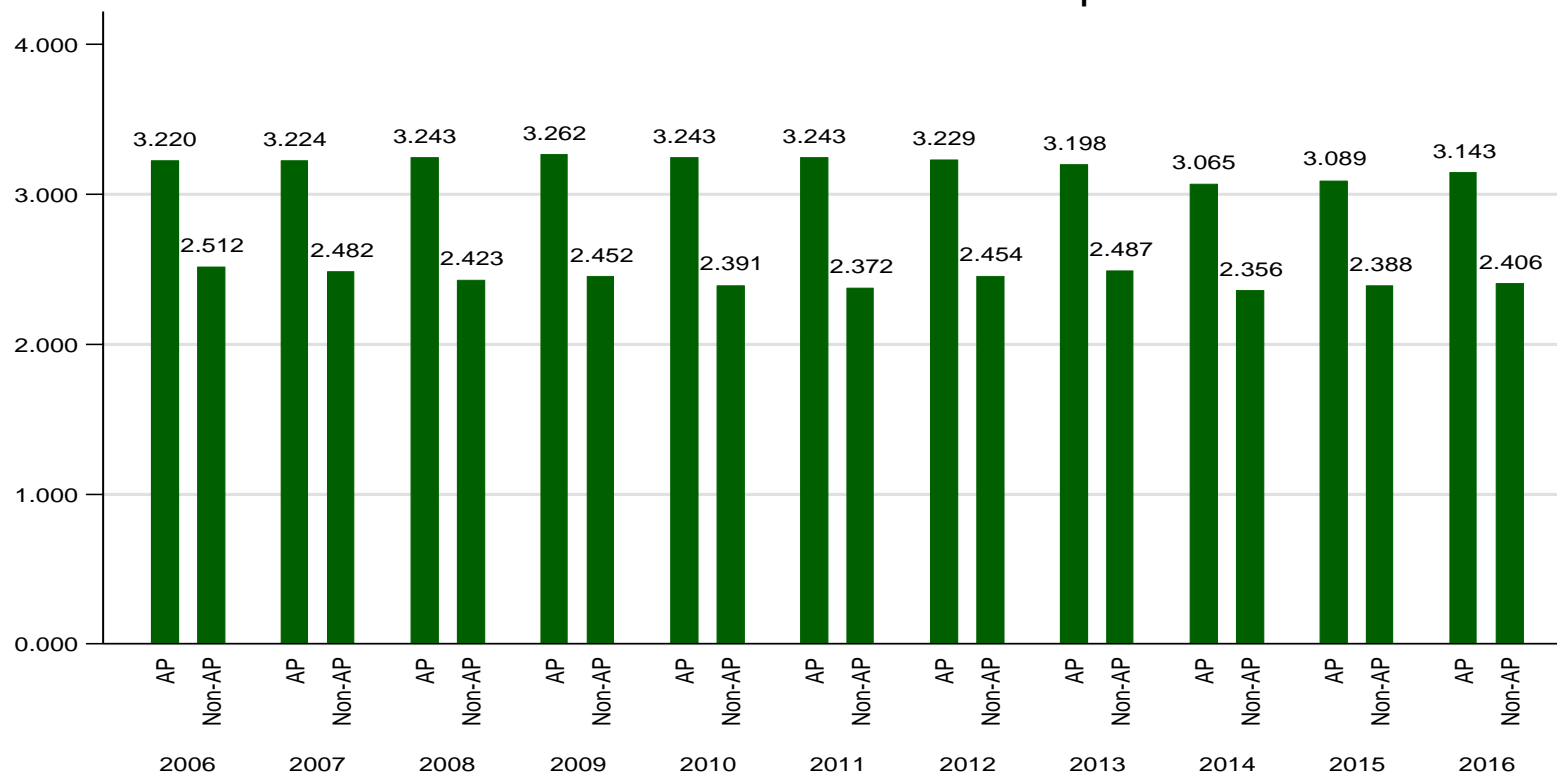
Number of Freshman Students: By AP Credit Status Ohio Public 4-Year Main Campuses



Note: Years **2006 to 2009** represent the pre-AP policy period, while years **2010 to 2016** represent the after-policy period.

- The number of AP credit recipients increased substantially among freshman students – from 7,055 in 2005-06 to 11,203 in 2015-16.
- There was a decline in the number of freshman students without AP tests between 2011-12 and 2012-13. Data on first-time, freshman student headcounts from the Higher Education Information (HEI) information system of the Ohio Department of Higher Education also show a large decline in the first-time, freshman cohort size between the same two years.

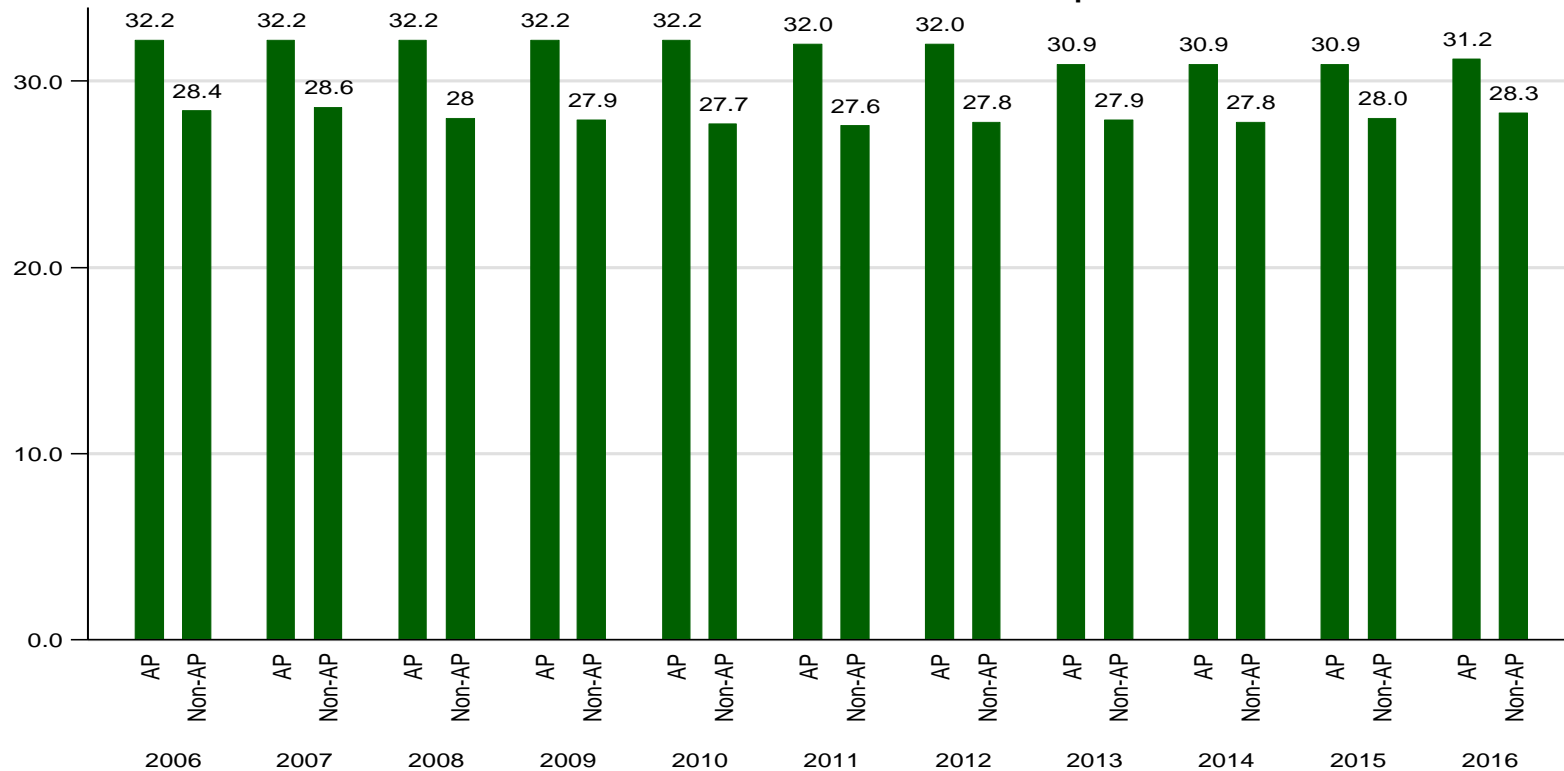
Average First-Year Grade Points: By AP Credit Status Ohio Public 4-Year Main Campuses



Note: Years **2006 to 2009** represent the pre-AP policy period, while years **2010 to 2016** represent the after-policy period.

- On average, AP credit recipients have substantially higher GPA relative to students without AP credit.
- Between 2005-06 and 2015-16, the average GPA declined marginally for both groups.
- With the exception of stray fluctuations, the difference in GPA between the two groups remained mostly constant over time.

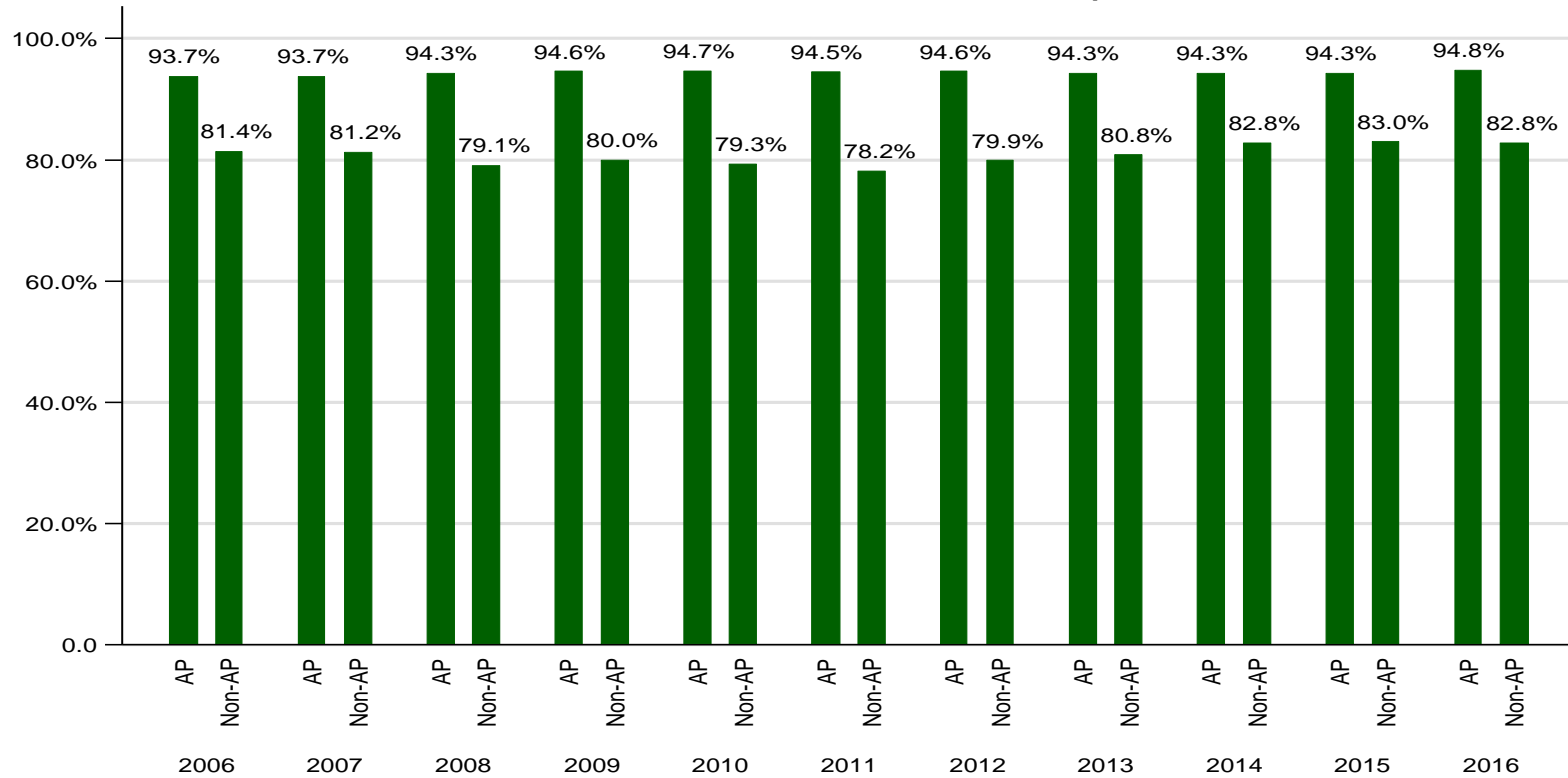
Average First-Year Attempted Hours: By AP Credit Status Ohio Public 4-Year Main Campuses



Note: Years **2006 to 2009** represent the pre-AP policy period, while years **2010 to 2016** represent the after-policy period.

- Relative to students without AP credit, the AP credit recipients attempted approximately 4.0 extra hours in the first year of attendance.
- Between 2005-06 and 2015-16, the number of average attempted hours declined for the AP credit recipients, but remained almost constant for students without AP tests. As a result, the difference in the average number of attempted hours between the two groups declined from 3.8 hours in 2005-06 to 2.9 hours in 2015-16.
- Because the AP policy guarantees college credit for AP tests with scores of 3, 4 and 5, the small decline in the difference of attempted hours between the two groups shows that AP credit recipients replaced approximately 1.0 hour of on-campus credit with AP credit.

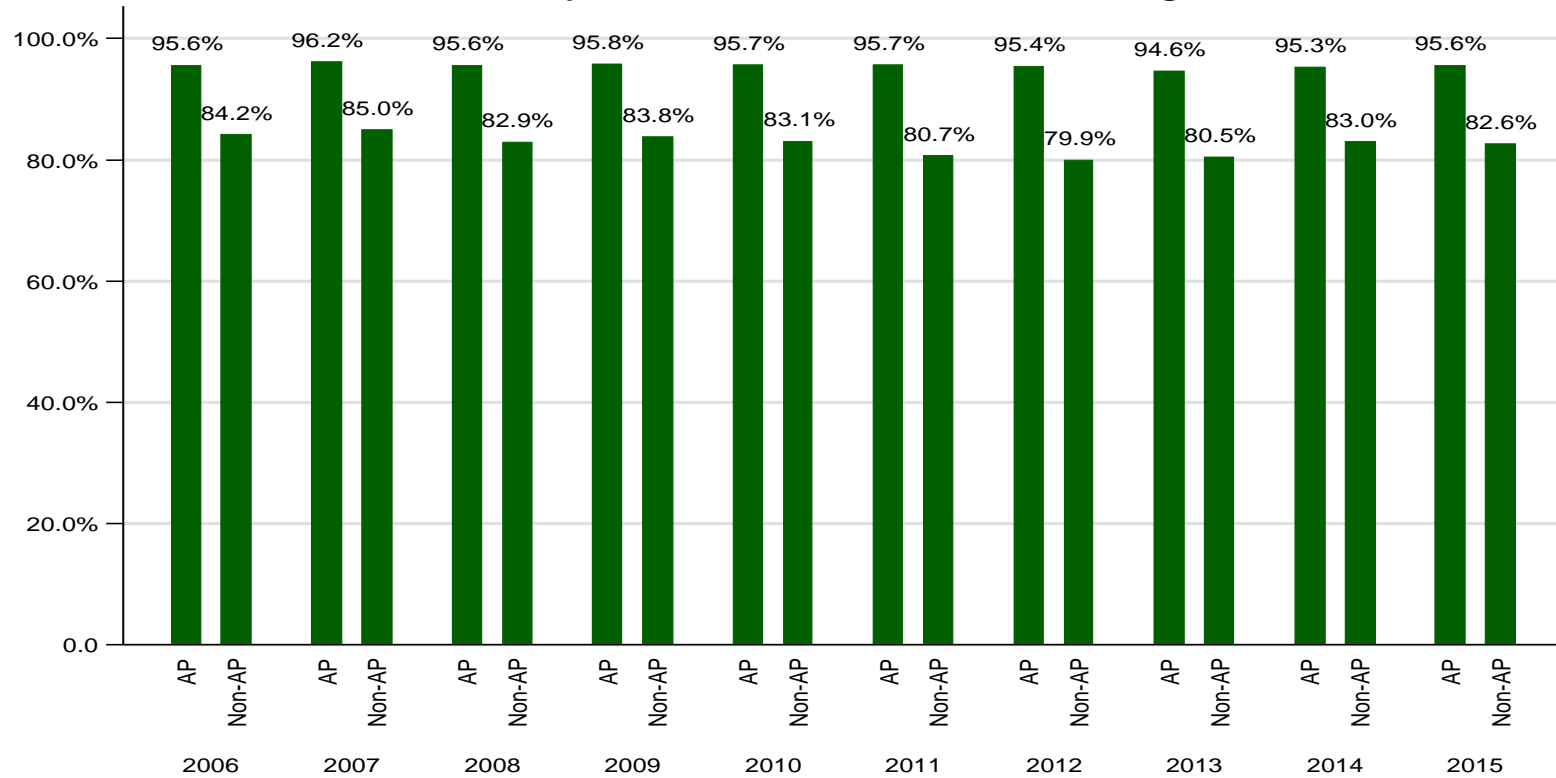
Average First-Year Course Completion Rates: By AP Credit Status Ohio Public 4-Year Main Campuses



Note: Years **2006 to 2009** represent the pre-AP policy period, while years **2010 to 2016** represent the after-policy period.

- Average course completion rates for AP credit recipients are substantially higher.
- Between 2005-06 and 2015-16, average course completion rates remained approximately constant for the AP credit recipients.
- For students without AP credit, course completion rates went through minor fluctuations – declined initially and increased subsequently.
- Consequently, the difference in first-year course completion rates between the two groups initially increased and then declined by a small margin. Importantly, the small decline in the difference is due entirely to rising completion rates among students without AP tests.

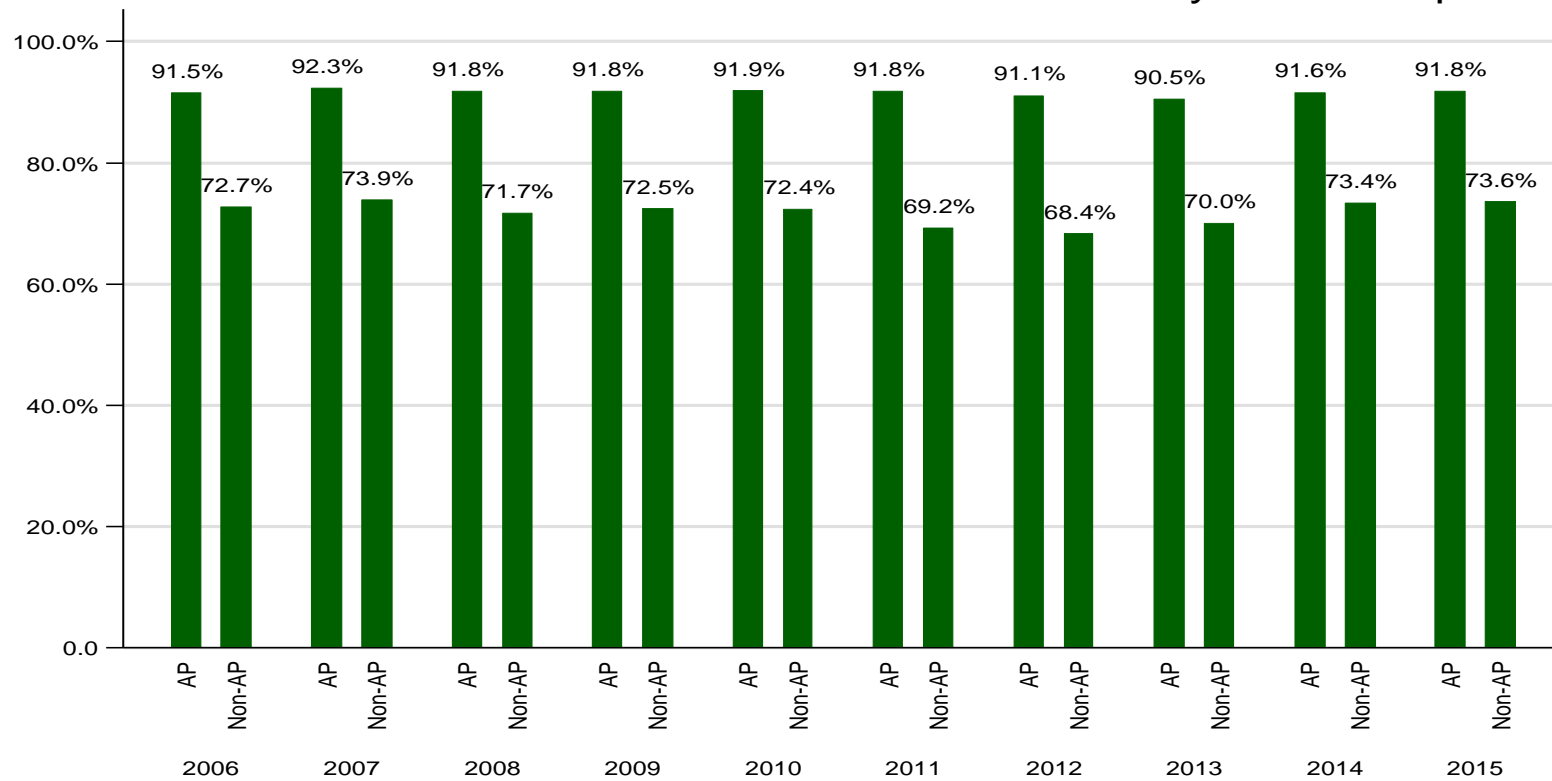
First-to-Second Year Persistence Rate: By AP Credit Status Persistence at any Ohio Public Institution of Higher Education



Note: Years **2006 to 2009** represent the pre-AP policy period, while years **2010 to 2016** represent the after-policy period.

- Average persistence rates (any campus) for AP credit recipients are substantially higher relative to the rates for students without AP credit: Mid 90% to Low 80%.
- Between 2005-06 and 2015-16, persistence rates remained constant for AP credit recipients but declined slightly for students without AP tests, driving the difference in persistence rates between the two groups slightly higher.

First-to-Second Year Persistence Rate: By AP Credit Status Persistence at Same Ohio 4-Year Public University Main Campus



Note: Years **2006 to 2009** represent the pre-AP policy period, while years **2010 to 2016** represent the after-policy period.

- Average persistence rates (same campus) for AP credit recipients are substantially higher relative to the rates for students without AP credit: Low 90% to Low 70%.
- Between 2005-06 and 2015-16, persistence rates remained constant for AP credit recipients but fluctuated slightly for students without AP tests, driving the difference in persistence rates between the two groups slightly higher in 2010-11 and 2011-12 and slightly lower in 2014-15 and 2015-16.