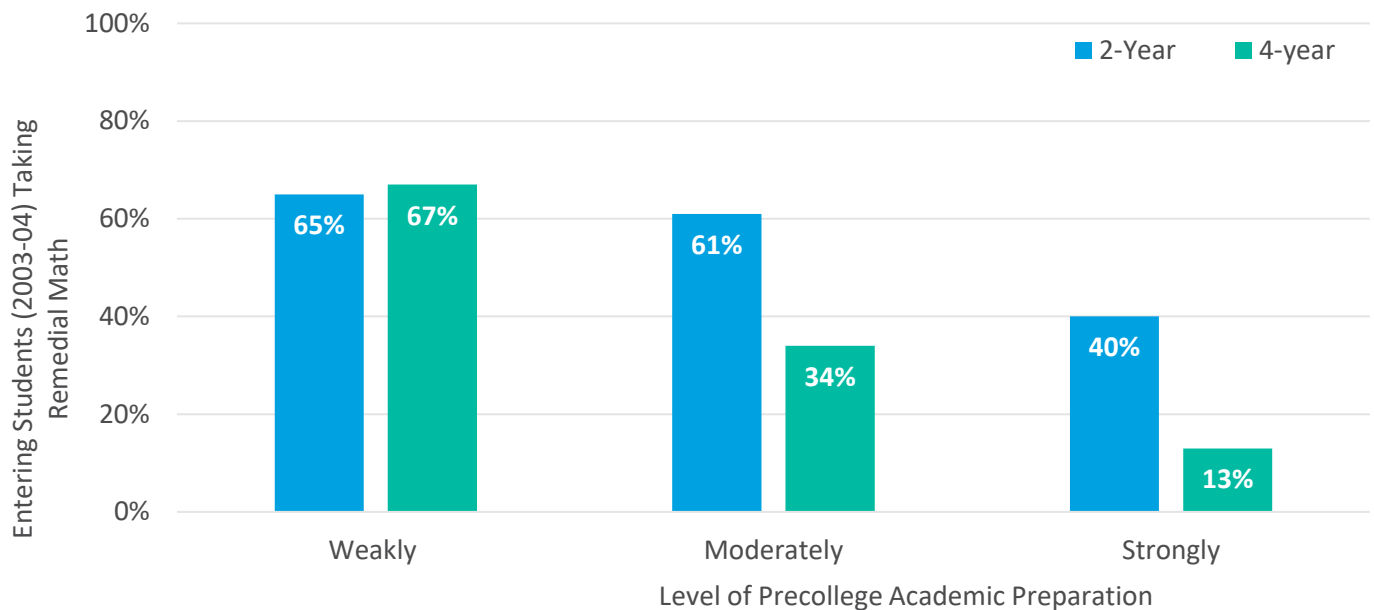


# A Math Course-taking Quandary

*Moderately and strongly prepared students taking remedial math varies*



Source: Chen, X. (2016). [Remedial Coursetaking at U.S. Public 2- and 4-Year Institutions: Scope, Experiences, and Outcomes](#) (NCES 2016-405). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Note (from Figure 1 in source document): "Precollege academic preparation is a composite measure derived from three pre-college indicators: high school GPA, the highest mathematics course taken in high school, and college admission test scores (ACT or SAT). Information for this variable is only available for students under age 24 (87 percent of the study sample)."

Using data from a nationally-representative sample of students entering college in 2003-04, researchers from the National Center for Education Statistics examined remedial (developmental) course-taking. Within the report one finding stands out: there is an inexplicable difference in math placement for students with similar levels of pre-college academic preparation attending public two- and four-year institutions. Specifically, 61% of moderately-prepared students at two-year institutions took developmental math as compared to 34% at four-year institutions; a 27% difference. For strongly-prepared students, three times as many students took developmental math at public two-year than public four-year institutions (40% compared to 13%). In terms of long-term impacts, figure 3 in the study shows fewer students passed developmental math courses at two-year institutions even though more moderately- and strongly-prepared students enrolled in these classes.

While many institutions have reformed the course-taking paths for students since the data for this study was published (new data is not readily available), others have yet to act.

For more information, contact the authors of the study or Christopher M. Mullin at [cmullin@strongstart.org](mailto:cmullin@strongstart.org).

June 19, 2018