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Immediately After the Embargo, Press Materials Will Be Available on the Web at www.collegeboard.com

Number and Diversity of SAT® Takers at All-Time High

New College Board Survey Shows Increased Focus on Writing in High Schools

A Word About Comparing States and Schools

Media and others often rank states, districts and schools on the basis of SAT® scores despite repeated warnings that such rankings are invalid. The SAT is a strong indicator of trends in the college-bound population, but it should never be used alone for such comparisons because demographics and other nonschool factors can have a strong effect on scores. If ranked, schools and states that encourage students to apply to college may be penalized because scores tend to decline with a rise in percentage of test-takers. To illustrate the effect of that percentage, Table 3 lists states in order of participation.

Forty-eight percent of this year's 3.1 million high school graduates took the SAT. Eighty-eight percent of nonprofit colleges and universities without open admissions policies require the use of test scores in admissions, and many more use test scores for some or most applicants. As a group, this year's population of 1,494,531 SAT takers nearly equals the number of freshmen entering four-year colleges or universities.

The information presented in this press release is based on the number of students who responded to each corresponding question on the SAT Questionnaire, an optional questionnaire that most students complete when they register for the SAT. The number of students responding and the number not responding to each question are reported in the College-Bound Seniors Total Group Report, available at www.collegeboard.com/cbsrs07. (Reports will be available online beginning Aug. 28, 2007.)

The following page includes information on the use of aggregate scores. Page 18 contains information on the appropriate use of SAT scores in college admissions, and on the significance of score changes for schools and districts.

Using Aggregate Scores*

Educators, the media, and others should:

- Use aggregate scores in conjunction with other factors such as the number of courses taken in academic subjects, scores on other standardized tests, pupil/teacher ratios, teacher credentials, expenditures per student, participation rates, retention/attrition rates, graduation rates and other outcome measures for:
 - Evaluation of the general direction in which education in a particular jurisdiction is headed;
 - Curriculum development;
 - Faculty staffing;
 - Student recruitment;
 - Planning for physical facilities;
 - Student services such as guidance and placement; and
 - Monitoring teacher development and curricular effectiveness over time.
- Not rank or rate teachers, educational institutions, districts or states solely on aggregate scores derived from tests that are intended primarily as a measure of individual students.

A Note on the Use of Aggregate SAT Data

As measures of developed critical reading, mathematical and writing abilities important for success in college, SAT scores are useful in making decisions about individual students and assessing their academic preparation. Because of the increasing public interest in educational accountability, aggregate test data continue to be widely publicized and analyzed. Aggregate scores can be considered one indicator of educational quality when used in conjunction with a careful examination of other conditions that affect the educational enterprise.

However, it is important to note that many College Board tests are taken only by particular groups of self-selected students. Therefore, aggregate results of their performance on these tests usually do not reflect the educational attainment of all students in a school, district or state.

Useful comparisons of students' performances are possible only if all students take the same test. Average SAT scores are not appropriate for state comparisons because the percentage of SAT takers varies widely among states. In some states, a very small percentage of the college-bound seniors take the SAT. Typically, these students have strong academic backgrounds and are applicants to the nation's most selective colleges and scholarship programs. Therefore, it is expected that the SAT averages reported for these states will be higher than the national average. In states where a greater proportion of students with a wide range of academic backgrounds take the SAT, and where most colleges in the state require the test for admission, the scores are closer to the national average.

In looking at average SAT scores, the user must understand the context in which the particular test scores were earned. Other factors variously related to performance on the SAT include academic courses studied in high school, family background and education of parents. These factors and others of a less tangible nature could very well have a significant influence on average scores.

* From *Guidelines on the Uses of College Board Test Scores and Related Data*. © 2002 The College Board. All rights reserved.



News Release

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Number and Diversity of SAT[®] Takers at All-Time High

New College Board Survey Shows Increased Focus on Writing in High Schools

WASHINGTON — The College Board announced SAT[®] scores today for the class of 2007, the largest and most diverse class of SAT takers on record. Nearly 1.5 million students (1,494,531) in the class of 2007 took the SAT, and minority students comprised nearly four out of 10 test-takers.

“The record number of students, coupled with the diversity of SAT takers in the class of 2007, means that an increasing number of students in this country are recognizing the importance of a college education and are taking the steps necessary to get there,” said Gaston Caperton, president of the College Board. “I am encouraged by the greater numbers of students from all walks of life who are taking on the challenge of the SAT and college.”

This year’s average score in critical reading is 502, a 1-point decline compared to last year, or a change of 0.20 percent. The average scores in mathematics and writing declined 3 points each compared to a year ago, bringing the scores to 515 and 494, or a change of 0.58 percent and 0.60 percent, respectively.

SAT Takers in the Class of 2007

The SAT takers in the class of 2007 are the most diverse group on record, with minority students comprising 39 percent.

- There are more African-American, Asian-American and Hispanic SAT takers in the class of 2007 than in any previous class.
- Hispanic students represent the largest and fastest growing minority group.
- There are also more SAT takers in this year’s class for whom English is not exclusively their first language learned, compared to previous years’ SAT takers. In the class of 2007, 24 percent of students did not have English exclusively as their first language, compared to 17 percent in 1997, and 13 percent in 1987.
- Thirty-five percent of this year’s class will be the first in their families to attend college.
- Females comprise 54 percent of SAT takers and males comprise 46 percent.

Of additional interest, during the past two years, among all students taking the SAT, there has been a 31 percent increase in the number of students receiving SAT fee waivers. Over the past year among all

students taking the SAT, nearly 324,000 students, or one out of every nine, received a fee waiver and qualified to take the SAT at no charge. A student's eligibility for a fee waiver is primarily determined using the USDA income eligibility chart for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program.

SAT Score Trends and Course Taking

While the long-term trend for critical reading scores has been essentially flat, some racial/ethnic groups saw score increases in critical reading this year. Asian-Americans (+4), Mexican-Americans (+1), Other Hispanics (+1) and Other (+3) students all saw gains in critical reading scores compared to last year. Critical reading scores for females held steady at 502, while scores for males slipped by 1 point to 504 compared to a year ago. Over the last 10 years, the gap favoring males on the critical reading section has narrowed from a high of 9 points in 2003 to 2 points this year.

The long-term trend in mathematics scores is up, rising from 501, 20 years ago to 511, 10 years ago to 515 this year. Mathematics scores hit an all-time high of 520 in 2005, before slipping in 2006 and 2007. When compared to 10 years ago, more students are taking precalculus and calculus. In 2007, 53 percent of students reported taking precalculus, compared to 40 percent 10 years ago. The percentage of students taking calculus rose from 23 percent to 30 percent during the same time period. While both males and females are taking more challenging math courses, a greater proportion of males continue to enroll in these courses and the score gap in mathematics persists. In 2007, females scored 499 on the mathematics section and males scored 533.

This year marks the second year of scores for the writing section on the SAT, thus it is too soon for a long-term trend to be established. Sixty-six percent of 2007 college-bound seniors reported taking English Composition in high school. The average writing score for these students is 521, 27 points higher than this year's average writing score. The score gap on the writing section favors females by 11 points, with females scoring 500 and males scoring 489.

New Writing Survey

The results of a new College Board writing survey demonstrate that the addition of a required writing section to the SAT is contributing to an increased focus on writing in the classroom.

Conducted approximately two years after the writing section was introduced on the SAT, the College Board's writing survey canvassed almost 5,000 teachers and 800 administrators nationwide to gauge their thoughts on the importance of writing in the curriculum, and if (and how) the writing section on the SAT had contributed to a change in their K-12 classrooms.

The findings show that of teachers surveyed:

- Sixty-eight percent report that the SAT writing section has been a factor in changing writing priorities, attitudes and expectations.
- Sixty-one percent report that the SAT writing section has been a factor in changing the overall importance placed on writing.
- More than half (53 percent) report that the SAT writing section has been a factor in changing learning related to writing.

In addition, 76 percent of teachers and 81 percent of administrators say that over the last three years there has been an increase in the focus on writing in the classroom.

For the same time period, far fewer teachers and administrators report an increase in allocation of resources for writing (34 percent of teachers and 55 percent of administrators) and time devoted to grade writing assignments (7 percent of teachers and 13 percent of administrators).

“It has always been our belief that writing skills are essential for postsecondary success, and these points show that the introduction of the SAT writing section is leading to tangible and valuable change in the classroom,” said Caperton. “Even though we’re heading in the right direction, we must do a better job of providing teachers with the time and tools they need to teach writing well.”

The full report on the findings of the writing survey will be released in the fall.

New College Enrollment Data

The College Board, in partnership with National Student Clearinghouse, is now able to track college-enrollment patterns of SAT takers at the state and national level.

Available for the first time this year is the percentage of 2006 college-bound seniors from public schools enrolled in college and the percentage that chose to enroll in-state or out-of-state. Information on enrollment by race/ethnicity and type of institution attended (two year, four year, public, private) is also available. The College Board will be able to follow each class of SAT takers so that in future years, additional information, including the percentage of students successfully completing each year of college, as well as graduation rates, will be available.

“Not only is it important for students to gain admission to college, they must also have the tools to succeed when they get there,” said Caperton. “This data will be invaluable as we continue our efforts to address concerns about college retention rates nationwide.”

The College Board: Connecting Students to College Success

The College Board is a not-for-profit membership association whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the association is composed of more than 5,200 schools, colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. Each year, the College Board serves seven million students and their parents, 23,000 high schools, and 3,500 colleges through major programs and services in college admissions, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Among its best-known programs are the SAT[®], the PSAT/NMSQT[®], and the Advanced Placement Program[®] (AP[®]). The College Board is committed to the principles of excellence and equity, and that commitment is embodied in all of its programs, services, activities, and concerns.

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