



# News Release

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## A Word About Comparing States and Schools

Media and others often rank states, districts and schools on the basis of SAT<sup>®</sup> 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 schools to apply to college may be penalized because scores tend to decline with a rise in percentage of test-takers.

For Release: Aug. 25, 2009

## **2009 College-Bound Seniors Are Most Diverse Group Ever to Take SAT<sup>®</sup> As More Minority Students Prepare for Higher Education** *Hispanic students taking the test have more than doubled in the last 10 years.*

NEW YORK — The College Board announced today that this year's graduating class has the most college-bound students taking the SAT<sup>®</sup> in history, and this class also stands out as having the most diverse participation in SAT history.

More than 1.5 million students (1,530,128) in the class of 2009 took the SAT, the most widely used and researched standardized college admission test. Of those, 40.0 percent were minority students. This is an increase from 38.0 percent in 2008 and 29.2 percent in 1999, reflecting the steady growth in SAT minority participation rates.

Hispanic students represent the largest and fastest-growing minority group taking the SAT and now account for 13.5 percent (206,584) of all SAT takers compared to 7.8 percent (94,677) 10 years ago, showing that the number of Hispanics taking the test has more than doubled in the last 10 years.

"We are tremendously encouraged by the increasing diversity of participation in the SAT," said Gaston Caperton, president of the College Board. "The College Board will continue working together with educators nationwide to ensure all students have the opportunity to confidently pursue their college dreams. As the equity gap narrows, more than ever, the SAT reflects the diversity of students in our nation's classrooms."

On a long-term basis, students' mathematics scores have experienced an upward trend and are now four points higher than a decade ago; conversely, critical reading scores have declined somewhat and are now four points below what they were 10 years ago. This year's college-bound seniors averaged 501 in critical reading, 515 in mathematics and 493 in writing. In 2008, the average score in critical reading was 502; in mathematics, 515; and in writing, 494. The

writing section of the SAT was introduced in 2005. In 2006, the first year the writing scores were reported for the college-bound seniors cohort, the average writing score was 497.

In 2009, Hispanic students scored an average of 454 in critical reading, 460 in mathematics, and 447 in writing. In 1999, the average scores were 457 in critical reading and 458 in mathematics. In 2006, the average writing score for Hispanic students was 451.

“Almost all of our nation’s colleges and universities accept the SAT as an integral part of the admission process, and most that require the submission of the SAT do so because they know they can make better admission decisions if they have as much data as possible about every student applicant,” said James Montoya, a former dean of admissions and vice president for Higher Education at the College Board. “The college admission process is like most other activities in our increasingly complex society: The more data and information we have available, the better decisions we can make.”

### **2009 College-Bound Seniors At a Glance**

- The most diverse group of college-bound seniors taking the SAT on record, this year’s minority participation totaled 612,666 students.
- **Language diversity** is increasing as more 2009 SAT takers report that English is \ not exclusively, their first language learned compared to previous years — 25.2 percent versus 18.3 percent in 1999. Of Hispanic students, 30 percent say English is not their first language learned; 41 percent said they learned another language along with English.
- For 61 percent of Hispanic students, they will be the **first in their immediate family to go to college**.
- According to Hispanic students, 31 percent of their **parents had obtained a bachelors degree** or higher.
- As far as **intended areas of study** for Hispanics, health emerged as the top pick at 20 percent, business was second at 13 percent and engineering in third place at 8 percent.
- More than a third of Hispanic **students aspire to a master’s degree** while nearly a quarter plan on a doctoral degree.
- Across all SAT takers, students taking **Spanish classes in high school** increased from 68 percent in 1999 to 71 percent in 2009.
- **California** has the highest number of Hispanics taking the test at 59,700 or 29 percent of that state’s total.
- Of the states with the highest number of Hispanics, those in **New York** demonstrated the greatest point advantages in critical reading and writing scores between students who took AP or honors English and those who did not (101 and 105 points, respectively) and between students who took AP or honors math and those who did not (133 points).
- The number of Hispanic students in **Texas** taking the SAT has grown by almost 105 percent since 1999 (from 20,854 to 42,695).

### **The Value of Preparation in SAT Performance**

As in previous years, the strongest SAT performers in the class of 2009 on average had three things in common: They had completed a core curriculum, had taken their school's most rigorous courses and had familiarized themselves with the test.

"The SAT directly reflects what students have learned in school and how they use that knowledge," said Laurence Bunin, senior vice president of the SAT Program at the College Board. "That's why the latest research continues to validate that the SAT, when combined with high school grades, is the best predictor of college success."

Completing a core curriculum — four or more years of English, three or more years of mathematics, three or more years of natural science, and three or more years of social science and history — remains strongly related to SAT scores. Students in the class of 2009 who took core curricula scored an average of 46 points higher on the critical reading section, 44 points higher on the mathematics section, and 45 points higher on the writing section than those who did not.

Similarly, students in the class of 2009 who had taken the most demanding honors or Advanced Placement<sup>®</sup> courses had higher SAT scores on this year's test. The AP program consists of courses and exams that prepare students for college level work, enable students to earn college credit, obtain advanced placement, and stand out in the admissions process. Students who took AP<sup>®</sup> or honors English courses scored 60 points higher in critical reading and 59 points higher in writing than the average of all students nationwide. Similarly, students who took AP or honors math courses had a 79-point advantage compared to the average mathematics score nationwide.

Hispanic students who took more rigorous honors or Advanced Placement courses also tended to have higher SAT scores. For example, Hispanic students who took English honors or AP courses scored 86 points higher in critical reading and 85 points higher in writing than the average of Hispanic students who did not. Similarly, Hispanic students taking math honors or AP had a 106 point advantage compared to the average SAT mathematics score for students who did not.

Those students who practice more and familiarize themselves with the SAT are more likely to have higher average scores than those who do not. One way to practice is to take the PSAT/NMSQT<sup>®</sup>. The PSAT/NMSQT is a standardized test that provides firsthand practice for the SAT. It also gives students a chance to enter scholarship programs of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation and gain access to college and career planning tools. Among the class of 2009 SAT takers, students who had taken the PSAT/NMSQT had average scores of 513 in critical reading, 524 in mathematics and 505 in writing, compared to 470, 491 and 460, respectively, for those who did not — a combined difference of 121 points. Slightly more than 82 percent (82.4 percent) of 2009 college-bound seniors reported taking the PSAT/NMSQT.

"Data bear out the necessity for schools to renew efforts to provide the strongest core curriculum possible, including writing instruction, and to improve access to courses like AP that give students such advantages on the SAT and later in college," said Jim Montoya, a former dean and current vice president for Higher Education at the College Board.

Both College Board and independent validity studies continue to confirm that writing is the most predictive section of the SAT.

The College-Bound Seniors *Total Group Report* as well additional Spanish background materials are available at and the individual state reports are available at [www.collegeboard.com/cbseniors](http://www.collegeboard.com/cbseniors).

### **About the SAT**

Designed to measure what students have learned in high school, the SAT tests students' reading, writing and mathematics skills — the same skills they're learning in high school and that are essential to college success. It also shows how well students can apply their skills, which is critically important to colleges when evaluating undergraduate candidates. Each year, the SAT is administered to more than two million students in more than 6,000 test centers that are located in more than 170 countries.

### **The College Board**

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 College Board is composed of more than 5,600 schools, colleges, universities and other educational organizations. Each year, the College Board serves seven million students and their parents, 23,000 high schools, and 3,800 colleges through major programs and services in college readiness, college admission, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Among its best-known programs are the SAT<sup>®</sup>, the PSAT/NMSQT<sup>®</sup> and the Advanced Placement Program<sup>®</sup> (AP<sup>®</sup>). 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. For further information, visit [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

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