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Embargoed until 10:30 a.m. (Eastern Time) Tuesday, August 30, 2005
Immediately after the embargo, press materials will be available on the Web at www.collegeboard.com

SAT® Math Scores for 2005 Highest on Record

College Board Offers Glimpse of New SAT with Writing for Upcoming Class of '06

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-nine percent of this year's 2.98 million high school graduates took the SAT, and nearly 80 percent of non-profit colleges and universities without open admissions policies use SAT scores in admissions. As a group, this year's population of 1,475,623 SAT takers nearly equals the number of freshmen entering four-year colleges.

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/cbsrs05. (Reports will be available online beginning August 30, 2005.)

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 for 2005 Data

As measures of developed verbal and mathematical 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 verbal and mathematical 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.

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College Board Offers Glimpse of New SAT with Writing for Upcoming Class of '06

Washington, D.C.— The College Board announced SAT® scores today for students in the class of 2005, the last to take the former version of the SAT featuring math and verbal sections. The College Board also previewed results from the first three administrations of the new SAT. The new SAT features higher-level math, additional reading passages, and a new writing section with an essay.

For the class of 2005, the average SAT math scores continued their strong upward trend increasing from 518 in 2004 to 520 this year, 14 points above 10 years ago and an all-time high. Math scores for 2005 among females rose by 3 points over last year to 504 while male scores rose by 1 point to 538 over the same time period.

Average verbal scores, increasing only fractionally, remained at 508, for no change compared to last year. Even though there was no change overall, women's verbal scores rose by 1 point to 505 and men's scores also rose by 1 point to 513. The actual increase in verbal scores for both women and men was less than a full score point, but due to rounding their scores increased 1 point each.

"I am encouraged by the improvement demonstrated in math, a fundamental skill that students need to succeed in college and, later, in a highly competitive global marketplace," said Gaston Caperton, president of the College Board. "However, the relatively flat trend in verbal scores indicates what we have observed for years: the need to redouble efforts to emphasize the core literacy skills of reading and writing in all courses across the curriculum starting in the earliest grades."

Math Improvement Widespread
The improvement in math capabilities is widespread with both males and females and all racial/ethnic groups showing increases. The scores are 14 points higher than 10 years ago, from 506 in 1995 to 520 today. Males and females advanced about equally over the decade, 13 points for males (525 in 1995 to 538 in 2005) and 14 points for females (490 in 1995 to 504 in 2005). Just as it was a decade ago, males continue to perform better than females: 538 to 504. In math, all racial/ethnic groups registered increases compared to 1995 although some of the gains were minimal, especially among those with the fastest growth in the numbers of test-takers. Asian American students outperformed other racial/ethnic groups, scoring 580 in math in 2005. This is a 25-point gain since 1995, the largest among racial/ethnic groups.

Growth Related to More Demanding Math Course Work
These math gains were accompanied by more students taking demanding courses such as Precalculus, Calculus, and Physics. Since 1995 there has been an 11 percentage point increase in the number of students taking Precalculus (37 to 48 percent), and a 5 percentage point increase in Calculus (22 to 27 percent), as well as in Physics (46 to 51 percent). There were comparable increases in participation in these courses among males and females as well as an increase among all racial/ethnic groups.

Verbal Scores Growth Trend Yet to Be Established
Although verbal scores at 508 are 4 points higher than 10 years ago, they were essentially unchanged for 7 years before falling briefly, but then have held steady for the past 3 years.

Number of SAT Takers Reaches All-Time High
The number of SAT takers among the high school class of 2005 rose to an all-time high of 1,475,623. This marks the fifteenth year in a row that the total number of test-takers has risen. SAT volume increased by 57,000 students or +4 percent in the past year. Over the past decade, volume increased by 408,000 students, or +38 percent—more than twice the growth rate for graduating seniors in the United States. According to a recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* report using U.S. Census Bureau data, "the number of college students rose 15 percent in the decade ending in 2003." SAT volume grew more than twice as fast—35 percent—over that same period (1993–2003).

Glimpse of New SAT Results for March, May, and June
The next graduating class, the class of 2006, has begun taking a new SAT, the results of which will be reported in August of 2006. To date, three administrations of the new SAT have been offered, one each in March, May, and June, and nearly 1.4 million students have taken the new version of the SAT. Each essay was read, scored, and reported by two different professional readers (all high school or college teachers). Furthermore, 95 percent of the essays were read, scored, and reported within the 16-day scoring window as expected.

"The new SAT goes further than the old one in focusing on the twenty-first-century skills required for success in a more global economy," said Caperton. "The more advanced math, the greater focus on reading, and the new emphasis on writing will help promote the mastery of skills that our young people will need as we face increasing competition from other nations, including rapidly emerging ones. Developed reasoning skills and advanced literacy skills in both reading and writing are essential in a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected and digital."

SAT Snapshot

- 789,325 (53 percent) of SAT takers are female and 686,298 (47 percent) are male.

- Thirty-eight percent of SAT takers in the class of 2005 were minorities, the largest percentage of any class of SAT takers to date All racial/ethnic groups registered increases compared to 1995 although some of the gains were minimal, especially among those with the fastest growth in the numbers of test-takers.

- Thirty-six percent of SAT takers are first-generation college students. Fifty-eight percent of first-generation college students are female. This female dominance holds true for all the racial/ethnic groups.

- The amount and quality of academic preparation for college varies by racial/ethnic group, parental education, and family income. Precalculus, for example, was taken by:
-- 62 percent of Asian American students versus 34 percent of Puerto Ricans and 32 percent of African Americans;
-- 54 percent of students whose parents graduated from college versus 37 percent of those whose parents did not have high school diplomas; and
-- 52 percent of students with family incomes of $50,000 and above versus 40 percent of those with lower incomes.

- Similar to SAT scores, students' performance in high school varies by race/ethnicity. Mean high school GPAs' ranged from a high of 3.39 for Asian American students to 2.99 for African American students.

Thorough analyses of performance on the new SAT cannot be accomplished until next year, when an entire cohort of students has taken the new SAT, and average scores for the first class of students to take the new SAT will be reported in August 2006. However, the College Board offered a glimpse of preliminary performance on the new SAT by examining the performance of test-takers who took the test in March, May, or June of 2005 and comparing those scores to the scores of students who took the test in the spring administrations in the past five years (see table below). Furthermore, because the sample of new SAT test-takers is predominantly juniors, the numbers referenced are based on test-takers who were juniors during these spring administrations. It should be noted that juniors who take the SAT for the first time in the spring of their junior year are typically highly motivated students who are not representative of the College-Bound Seniors cohort. Therefore, the averages in these tables are higher than the cohort averages that the College Board has reported for the past several years.

New SAT math and critical reading score means for the spring 2005 administrations are in line with SAT math and verbal means from previous years, and the upward trend in math that is seen in the cohort is also seen in this data. No historical data are available for the writing section because it is a new section, but the table does indicate that the writing mean is slightly below the reading mean for this group of students.

Trend Data: The New SAT*

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Math	532	530	532	533	537
Verbal/ Critical Reading	518	519	519	521	519
Writing	---	---	---	---	516

- Math and critical reading score means for the spring 2005 administrations are consistent with SAT math and verbal means during the spring administrations from the past five years. A four-point increase in math continues an upward trend.

- No historical data are provided for the writing test because it is a new test. The writing mean is slightly below the reading mean for this group of students (516 vs. 519).

(*Comparisons across March, May, and June administration data for all years are based on test-takers who were juniors during these spring administrations.)

Professional Readers Scoring New SAT Essay

The professional readers who read and score the new SAT fulfill stringent requirements and bring with them substantial experience as high school and college teachers. Ninety-six percent are current teachers while 4 percent are retired. Of those currently teaching, 44 percent teach at the high school level while 56 percent teach at the postsecondary level. In terms of years of experience, 44 percent have had 11 or more years experience teaching, 27 percent 6–10 years of experience, and 29 percent 3–5 years experience in the teaching profession.

College Board Vice President Jim Montoya, who is responsible for managing the SAT Program, stressed that readers are trained to score essays "holistically"; that is, they evaluate essays not by adding up (or taking off) points for organization, development, sentence structure, vocabulary, etc., but by judging the overall impression created by all of the elements of writing working together in an essay. "In that way, readers are able to evaluate very different types of essays with equal fairness," Montoya said. "Any essay that effectively blends insightful development, a smooth progression of ideas, and the skillful use of language will score very well, regardless of the approach the writer takes."

For more information on the new SAT, visit www.collegeboard.com/newsatpress.

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