

# NEWS

Connecticut Department of Education

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Commissioner



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## Connecticut's Class of 2008 Exceeds National Average on SAT Writing Test Participation Is Third Highest in Nation

HARTFORD – Connecticut's 2008 public school graduates again had strong performance on the SAT writing test – 18 points above the national average — an increase of three percentage points, while their scores in reading and math improved slightly. The state's 76 percent participation rate among public school students was third highest in the nation.

"The SAT is an important measure of secondary school achievement, and Connecticut students, overall, continue to perform well compared to the nation," said Commissioner Mark K. McQuillan in releasing Connecticut's scores. "Our strong participation rate demonstrates a growing number of students with aspirations for college; and even with one of the highest participation rates in the nation, our scores meet or exceed national averages. We are encouraged by the solid gains made by Hispanic students in recent years. However, there is more work to be done to improve the performance of thousands of low-income, minority students in order to help prepare them for success after they graduate from high school and go on to higher education and careers in the Connecticut economy."

Approximately 88 percent of all test takers in Connecticut are from public high schools. Seven percent of test takers are from private religiously affiliated high schools and five percent are from private independent high schools. The focus of this report is primarily on the performance of public school test-takers.

### Highlights:

- The number of public school SAT test-takers in Connecticut decreased by 1.8 percent, compared to a 1.4 percent decrease nationwide;
- Connecticut's SAT test-takers were 53 percent female and 47 percent male;
- Hispanic, white and Asian students all showed increases in their average mathematics and writing scores while black students continue to struggle across the three tests;
- Hispanic students taking the test in Connecticut increased by 12.4 percent compared to a nationwide increase of 11.2 percent;
- **Connecticut's average in Math increased by three points in the past year to 507**, although remaining 3 points below the national public school average score of 510 in math;
- **Connecticut's average of 503 on the Critical Reading section** (formerly called verbal) **increased by one point** and now exceeds the national public school average by six points. The national average declined by a point to 497 this year.
- This was the third year that the SAT included a writing component and **Connecticut's 2008 public school students scored, on average, 506—an increase of three points, which is 18 points above the national average** (488) for public school students, which has not changed from the 2007 average.

Governor M. Jodi Rell said, “Our goal is to have Connecticut’s students lead the nation in academic achievement. The 2008 SAT scores tell us that significant numbers of our students are performing at high levels compared with the nation. Connecticut must compete in the global economy which means we must have a skilled, educated citizenry. We must work to prepare our students – all of our students — for success on the college campus and in the world.”

The SAT is a standardized test that The College Board administers nationally. It is one of two national tests that most colleges use in their admissions process. The SAT tests students in reading, math and, beginning with the class of 2006, writing. The test results are reported on a scale of 200 to 800. The SAT is administered seven times per year. The results reported by the College Board include only the most recent test results for the class of 2007.

All scores in this news release are based on public school students. Department releases prior to 2006 reported data for all Connecticut students. The national SAT press release of The College Board is based upon the results of all students. Recent comprehensive reporting of the results of public school students by The College Board has made this change possible.

### **Statewide Performance and Participation**

Since the populations of students tested may not be comparable, it is inappropriate to use the SAT or any single assessment to compare states’ scores. SAT participation rates may differ from state to state because 1) states have different percentages of graduates who plan to attend college; 2) students in other states take a different college entrance test; and 3) the community colleges in a state may not require the SAT for admission.

**Participation:** Roughly 28,620 public school students in Connecticut took the SAT. The College Board estimates that Connecticut’s public school participation rate is **76 percent**. This places Connecticut **third** behind **Maine** and **New York**. Nationally, an estimated **39 percent** of the 2008 public high school graduates took the SAT. Many college-bound students in other states, particularly those in the Midwest, take the ACT Assessment, (See Tables 5 and 6.)

Table 1 compares the average SAT scores of Connecticut public school graduates for reading and math from 1996 to 2008, and writing scores from 2006 when this section of the test was added.

Table 1 Year of Graduation	Average SAT Scores		
	Critical Reading	Mathematics	Writing
1996	503	499	.
1997	505	503	.
1998	504	503	.
1999	504	503	.
2000	501	503	.
2001	502	503	.
2002	502	503	.
2003	504	508	.
2004	508	508	.
2005	510	512	.
2006	505	510	504
2007	502	504	503
2008	503	507	506

**Student Characteristics:** According to the College Board, nationally, 54.4 percent of examinees reported being female as compared to 53.4% in Connecticut. There was a 1.4 percentage point decrease nationally and a 2.9 percentage point decrease in Connecticut. The percentage of minority SAT test takers in Connecticut was 30.6, more than 18 percentage points less than what examinees reported nationally.

This trend is similar in the percentage of students who reported a first language other than English. Nationally, 28.6 percent of the 2008 examinees reported a first language other than English, while only 23.7 percent of Connecticut’s test takers reported having a first language other than English. More than 53 percent of Connecticut’s examinees reported having at least one parent with at least an associate’s degree or higher as compared to 57.3 percent nationally.

## Performance Gaps

The performance gaps between minority and non-minority students persist. Table 2 compares the reading and math performance of white graduates who took the SAT to their black, Hispanic and Asian counterparts from 1996 to 2008. Writing scores are provided since 2006 when the writing test was initiated.

Table 2 Year of Graduation	Critical Reading				Mathematics				Writing			
	Black	Asian	Hispanic	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	White
1996	412	497	435	521	397	556	429	517	.	.	.	.
1997	416	496	443	524	402	544	437	521	.	.	.	.
1998	416	503	436	524	406	550	437	522	.	.	.	.
1999	417	507	437	524	398	556	433	524	.	.	.	.
2000	417	506	432	523	403	556	430	525	.	.	.	.
2001	416	502	442	523	402	550	439	525	.	.	.	.
2002	410	498	434	521	399	556	430	523	.	.	.	.
2003	416	504	438	523	403	549	434	528	.	.	.	.
2004	415	503	444	524	405	549	441	523	.	.	.	.
2005	417	513	447	528	408	561	445	529	.	.	.	.
2006	418	522	445	523	404	567	441	530	416	526	442	522
2007	416	515	439	522	405	560	434	525	416	522	439	523
2008	409	513	442	524	396	562	437	531	410	523	442	528

- The 2008 Critical Reading averages for white and Asian graduates were 524 and 513, respectively with a 2 point decline for Asian students from 2007. The average reading score of 442 for Hispanic students was up 3 points from 2007 and 7 points above the average in 1996. The average reading score of 409 for black students was down 5 points from last year.
- The average SAT math scores were highest for Asian graduates at 562, followed by 531 for white, 437 for Hispanic and 396 for black graduates. Only black students showed any decrease in average scores.
- The average writing scores in 2008 were 523 for Asian, 528 for white, 442 for Hispanic and 410 for black graduates.

“The gaps in performance among racial groups are reflected in the 2008 SAT scores. While there are gains, the gaps between white students and black and Hispanic students continue to challenge us,” Commissioner McQuillan said. “I am deeply concerned that the performance of black students has not improved. We need to find better ways to prepare our black and Hispanic students for college and new ways to engage them in learning. This begins with guaranteed access to the PSAT, better preparatory courses for the SAT and a new look at how high schools are structured to meet the needs of all students.”

## Gender Subgroup Performance

The performance gaps between males and females continue with females excelling in writing and males in math; males hold a slight edge in reading. Table 3 compares the reading and math performance of male and female graduates who took the SAT from 1996 to 2008. Writing scores are reported from 2006 when this test was added to the SAT.

Table 3 Year of Graduation	Critical Reading		Mathematics		Writing	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1996	505	501	518	484	.	.
1997	507	503	520	488	.	.
1998	509	501	522	488	.	.
1999	506	503	521	488	.	.
2000	502	500	519	488	.	.
2001	507	498	522	488	.	.
2002	502	501	520	488	.	.
2003	510	499	527	491	.	.
2004	513	503	529	490	.	.
2005	514	507	529	497	.	.
2006	506	504	528	494	497	510
2007	504	500	523	489	497	508
2008	506	500	526	491	500	512

- Although the male average score in reading of 506 was 6 points higher than that of females, both averages were below the 1998 average.
- The male average score in math of 526 and the female average score of 491 were both above their 1998 averages. The 35-point gap between males and females increased by one point since 1998.
- Females outscored males by an average of 12 points in writing. Both male and female students from Connecticut public schools outscored their peers nationally.

## Students scoring 600 and above on at least one test

Approximately one-third (33.79%) of all Connecticut public school test takers scored 600 or above on at least one test. This represents nearly 9,700 public school graduates.

**Table 4**

**SAT Reasoning Test Test-Takers by Type of High School**

Type of High School	Number	Pct	Male	Female	Reading	Mathematics	Writing
Public	28,620	83	47	53	503	507	506
Religiously Affiliated	3,155	9	55	45	526	527	529
Independent	2,622	8	54	46	590	600	595

School districts will be releasing individual high school scores in the coming weeks.

Attached are additional charts on Connecticut's 2008 SAT performance.

<b>Table 5</b>							
<b>Connecticut Public Schools</b>		<b>2008 SAT Administration</b>			<b>2007 SAT Administration</b>		
<b>Year of Graduation</b>	<b>Participation Rate 2008</b>	<b>Critical Reading</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Critical Reading</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Writing</b>
Maine	100	463	462	456	460	460	452
New York	79	484	503	475	486	503	475
Connecticut	76	503	507	506	502	504	503
Massachusetts	76	507	520	505	505	516	501
New Jersey	71	492	514	493	490	509	489
New Hampshire	69	513	516	502	511	512	501
Georgia	64	486	490	477	489	491	478
Pennsylvania	64	490	500	478	488	498	477
Vermont	63	521	523	507	516	518	507
Virginia	63	508	510	496	507	509	494

Tables 5 and 6 demonstrate Connecticut's high participation rate of students from "public schools" (above) and from "all schools" (below) relative to other states' participation rates.

<b>Table 6</b>							
<b>Connecticut All Schools</b>		<b>2008 SAT Administration</b>			<b>2007 SAT Administration</b>		
<b>Year of Graduation</b>	<b>Participation Rate 2008</b>	<b>Critical Reading</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Critical Reading</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Writing</b>
Maine	87	469	466	461	466	465	457
District of Columbia	84	470	455	465	478	462	471
New York	84	488	504	481	491	505	482
Connecticut	83	509	513	513	510	512	511
Massachusetts	83	514	525	513	513	522	511
New Jersey	76	495	513	496	495	510	494
New Hampshire	74	521	523	511	521	521	512
Pennsylvania	71	494	501	483	493	499	482
Delaware	70	499	498	490	497	496	486
Georgia	70	491	493	482	494	495	483

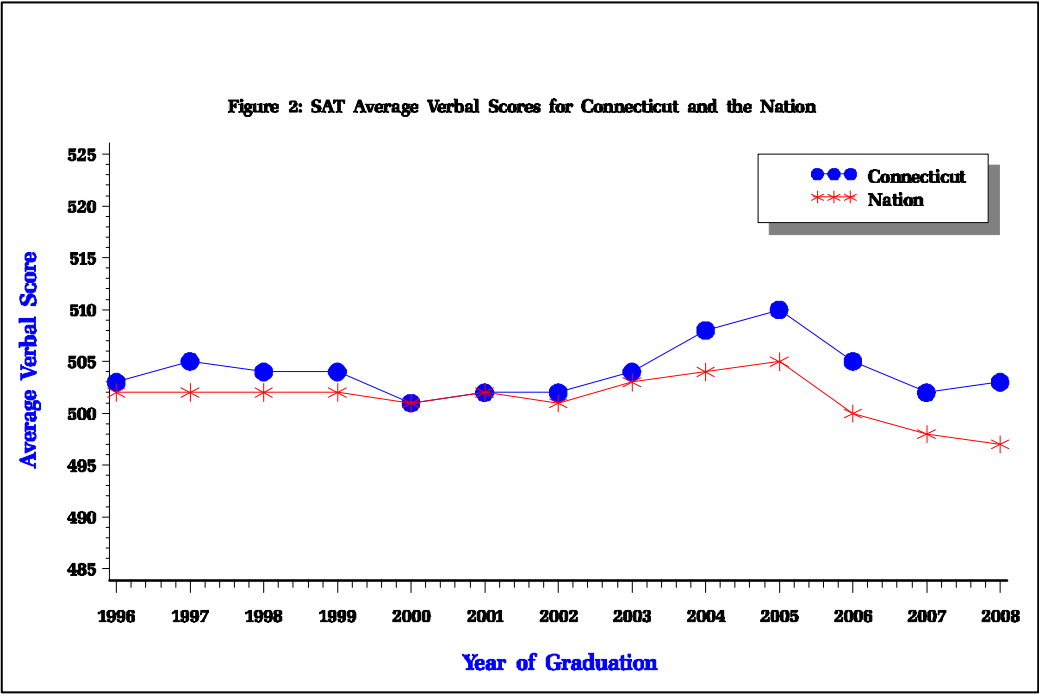
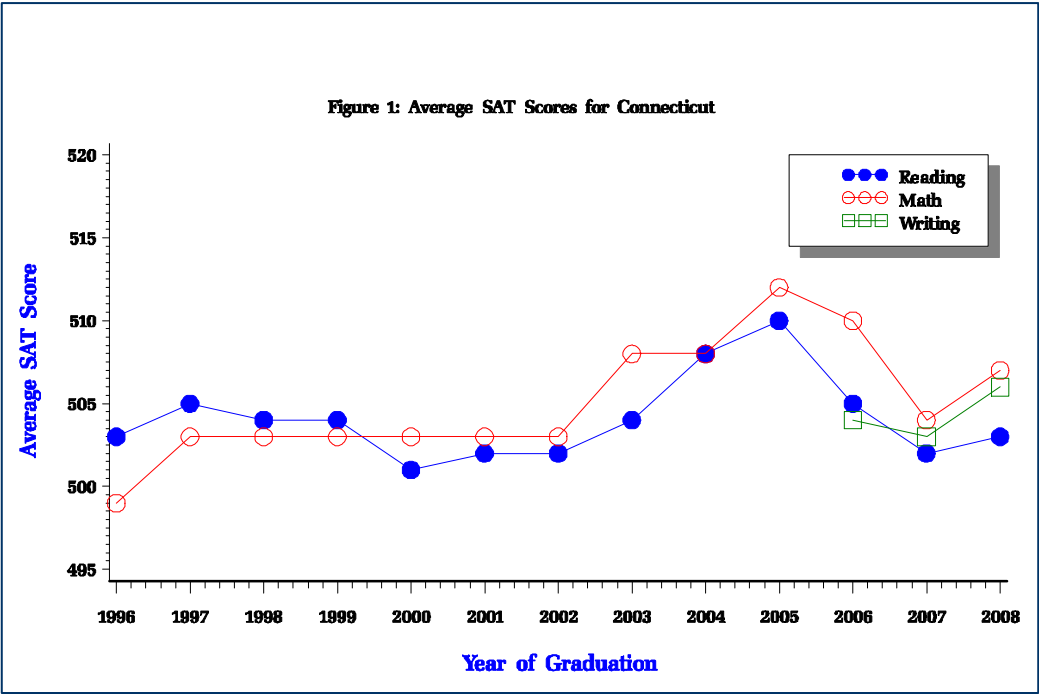


Figure 3: SAT Average Math Scores for Connecticut and the Nation

