



**Office of Strategic Research**  
**The Impact of ACT Superscoring in Mississippi**

The Office of Strategic Research analyzed state-level ACT data used by the Office of State Student Financial Aid to study the impact of superscoring across Mississippi. The data includes more than 150,000 students attending a Mississippi public or private high school who took the ACT between February 2012 and November 2019.

**What is ACT Superscoring?**

ACT Superscoring takes the highest ACT subject test score (English, reading, math, and science) across all administrations, and recalculates a composite score based on the highest subtest scores.

TEST DATE	ENGLISH	MATH	READING	SCIENCE	COMPOSITE
FEBRUARY	17	18	19	21	19
APRIL	19	19	20	22	20
JUNE	19	18	22	22	20
SUPERSCORE	19	19	22	22	21

\* Reflects highest subtest score—across all administrations—used in superscore composite calculation. In this example the student did not earn higher than a 20 composite score on individual exams, but earned a 21 composite score from superscoring.

**Who benefits from ACT Superscoring?**

Students who have the opportunity to take the ACT multiple times benefit the most from ACT superscoring. Mississippi data reflects the following benefits from taking the ACT multiple times:

	NUMBER OF ACT TESTS PER STUDENT					
	1x	2x	3x	4x*	5x	6+x
HIGHEST COMPOSITE	16.7	18.8	20.3	21.6	22.8	23.2
SUPERSCORE COMPOSITE	16.7	19.2	21.0	22.4	23.7	24.3
CHANGE (INCREASE)	0	0.4	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.1

\*ACT will give four fee waivers beginning September 2020.

*ACT Activity by Ethnicity and Gender* - Of the students who take the ACT two times, the distribution by ethnicity is reasonably even among African-American (45.9%) and White (43.0%) students. However, that distribution shifts as students take the ACT multiple times. Of the students who take the ACT five times, White (62.9%) students outnumber African-American (27.9%) students by a 2:1 ratio.

GENDER	ETHNICITY	NUMBER OF TESTS					
		1X	% of 1X	2X	% of 2X	3X	% of 3X
FEMALE	BLACK	10,847	18.4%	9,110	24.9%	6,600	25.9%
	WHITE	9,014	15.3%	7,933	21.6%	6,677	26.2%
	OTHER	2,335	4.0%	1,363	3.7%	1,016	4.0%
	UNKNOWN	3,162	5.4%	580	1.6%	225	0.9%
	TOTAL	25,358	43.1%	18,986	51.8%	14,518	57.0%
MALE	BLACK	12,862	21.9%	7,594	20.7%	4,274	16.8%
	WHITE	12,289	20.9%	7,763	21.2%	5,452	21.4%
	OTHER	2,913	5.0%	1,301	3.5%	747	2.9%
	UNKNOWN	3,405	5.8%	672	1.8%	250	1.0%
	TOTAL	31,469	53.5%	17,330	47.3%	10,723	42.1%
UNKNOWN	BLACK	18	0.0%	105	0.3%	80	0.3%
	WHITE	9	0.0%	79	0.2%	74	0.3%
	OTHER	2	0.0%	10	0.0%	8	0.0%
	UNKNOWN	1,940	3.3%	147	0.4%	54	0.2%
	TOTAL	1,969	3.3%	341	0.9%	216	0.8%
TOTAL	BLACK	23,727	40.4%	16,809	45.9%	10,954	43.0%
	WHITE	21,312	36.2%	15,775	43.0%	12,203	47.9%
	OTHER	5,250	8.9%	2,674	7.3%	1,771	7.0%
	UNKNOWN	8,507	14.5%	1,399	3.8%	529	2.1%
	TOTAL	58,796	100.0%	36,657	100.0%	25,457	100.0%

GENDER	ETHNICITY	NUMBER OF TESTS					
		4X	% of 4X	5X	% of 5X	6+X	% of 6+X
FEMALE	BLACK	3,197	21.7%	1,292	18.0%	1,176	15.6%
	WHITE	4,683	31.8%	2,722	38.0%	2,919	38.7%
	OTHER	644	4.4%	323	4.5%	427	5.7%
	UNKNOWN	153	1.0%	57	0.8%	104	1.4%
	TOTAL	8,677	58.9%	4,394	61.4%	4,626	61.3%
MALE	BLACK	1,971	13.4%	697	9.7%	667	8.8%
	WHITE	3,436	23.3%	1,758	24.6%	1,799	23.8%
	OTHER	453	3.1%	197	2.8%	331	4.4%
	UNKNOWN	126	0.9%	70	1.0%	92	1.2%
	TOTAL	5,986	40.6%	2,722	38.0%	2,889	38.3%
UNKNOWN	BLACK	18	0.1%	6	0.1%	7	0.1%
	WHITE	36	0.2%	20	0.3%	16	0.2%
	OTHER	3	0.0%	3	0.0%	5	0.1%
	UNKNOWN	20	0.1%	13	0.2%	3	0.0%
	TOTAL	77	0.5%	42	0.6%	31	0.4%
TOTAL	BLACK	5,186	35.2%	1,995	27.9%	1,850	24.5%
	WHITE	8,155	55.3%	4,500	62.9%	4,734	62.7%
	OTHER	1,100	7.5%	523	7.3%	763	10.1%
	UNKNOWN	299	2.0%	140	2.0%	199	2.6%
	TOTAL	14,740	100.0%	7,158	100.0%	7,546	100.0%

*Superscoring Changes by Ethnicity and Gender* - Mississippi ACT data suggests composite scores improve as students take the test multiple times. Students who take the ACT twice generally experience a half-point (+0.45) increase in their superscored composite score. Students who take the ACT five times generally experience a one point (+0.97) increase in their superscored composite score.

GENDER	ETHNICITY	NUMBER OF TESTS								
		1X			2X			3X		
		HIGHEST	SUPER	CHANGE	HIGHEST	SUPER	CHANGE	HIGHEST	SUPER	CHANGE
FEMALE	BLACK	15.31	15.31	0.00	16.84	17.30	0.46	17.91	18.61	0.70
	WHITE	18.56	18.56	0.00	20.75	21.21	0.46	22.20	22.90	0.70
	OTHER	17.27	17.27	0.00	19.53	19.96	0.43	21.21	21.93	0.72
	UNKNOWN	16.82	16.82	0.00	18.99	19.42	0.43	20.60	21.31	0.71
	TOTAL	16.83	16.83	0.00	18.73	19.19	0.46	20.15	20.86	0.71
MALE	BLACK	14.93	14.93	0.00	16.48	16.93	0.45	17.62	18.31	0.69
	WHITE	18.19	18.19	0.00	20.90	21.34	0.44	22.51	23.17	0.66
	OTHER	17.14	17.14	0.00	19.98	20.44	0.46	21.46	22.14	0.68
	UNKNOWN	16.62	16.62	0.00	19.07	19.49	0.42	20.75	21.36	0.61
	TOTAL	16.58	16.58	0.00	18.82	19.27	0.45	20.45	21.12	0.67
UNKNOWN	BLACK	15.39	15.39	0.00	15.70	16.18	0.48	16.36	16.96	0.60
	WHITE	17.78	17.78	0.00	19.41	19.86	0.45	22.47	23.24	0.77
	OTHER	14.00	14.00	0.00	17.30	17.70	0.40	22.88	23.63	0.75
	UNKNOWN	16.05	16.05	0.00	19.20	19.60	0.40	21.63	22.31	0.68
	TOTAL	16.05	16.05	0.00	18.11	18.55	0.44	20.01	20.70	0.69
TOTAL	BLACK	15.10	15.10	0.00	16.67	17.13	0.46	17.78	18.48	0.70
	WHITE	17.20	17.20	0.00	19.74	20.18	0.44	21.32	22.03	0.71
	OTHER	18.35	18.35	0.00	20.82	21.27	0.45	22.34	23.03	0.69
	UNKNOWN	16.56	16.56	0.00	19.05	19.48	0.43	20.78	21.44	0.66
	TOTAL	16.67	16.67	0.00	18.77	19.22	0.45	20.28	20.97	0.69

GENDER	ETHNICITY	NUMBER OF TESTS								
		4X			5X			6+X		
		HIGHEST	SUPER	CHANGE	HIGHEST	SUPER	CHANGE	HIGHEST	SUPER	CHANGE
FEMALE	BLACK	18.88	19.72	0.84	19.51	20.46	0.95	19.63	20.66	1.03
	WHITE	23.20	24.04	0.84	23.96	24.93	0.97	24.42	25.49	1.07
	OTHER	22.42	23.26	0.84	23.86	24.90	1.04	23.37	24.36	0.99
	UNKNOWN	21.01	21.70	0.69	22.74	23.79	1.05	23.01	24.10	1.09
	TOTAL	21.51	22.34	0.83	22.63	23.60	0.97	23.07	24.12	1.05
MALE	BLACK	18.21	19.01	0.80	18.95	19.88	0.93	19.12	20.16	1.04
	WHITE	23.47	24.25	0.78	24.48	25.45	0.97	25.00	26.06	1.06
	OTHER	22.93	23.70	0.77	24.09	25.09	1.00	24.30	25.27	0.97
	UNKNOWN	21.10	21.82	0.72	23.10	24.03	0.93	22.74	23.65	0.91
	TOTAL	21.64	22.43	0.79	23.00	23.96	0.96	23.49	24.53	1.04
UNKNOWN	BLACK	17.00	17.94	0.94	21.17	22.00	0.83	18.57	19.14	0.57
	WHITE	20.14	20.92	0.78	23.85	24.75	0.90	26.25	27.13	0.88
	OTHER	24.00	24.67	0.67	18.33	18.67	0.34	26.20	27.80	1.60
	UNKNOWN	24.10	24.95	0.85	24.08	25.00	0.92	21.00	22.00	1.00
	TOTAL	20.58	21.42	0.84	23.14	24.00	0.86	24.00	24.94	0.94
TOTAL	BLACK	18.62	19.44	0.82	19.32	20.27	0.95	19.45	20.47	1.02
	WHITE	22.63	23.44	0.81	23.91	24.94	1.03	23.79	24.77	0.98
	OTHER	21.25	21.97	0.72	24.16	25.13	0.97	24.64	25.71	1.07
	UNKNOWN	23.3	24.11	0.81	23.04	24.02	0.98	22.85	23.86	1.01
	TOTAL	21.56	22.38	0.82	22.77	23.74	0.97	23.24	24.28	1.04

*Superscoring by High School* – The impact of superscoring will vary by high school but will be directly linked to the number of tests per student.

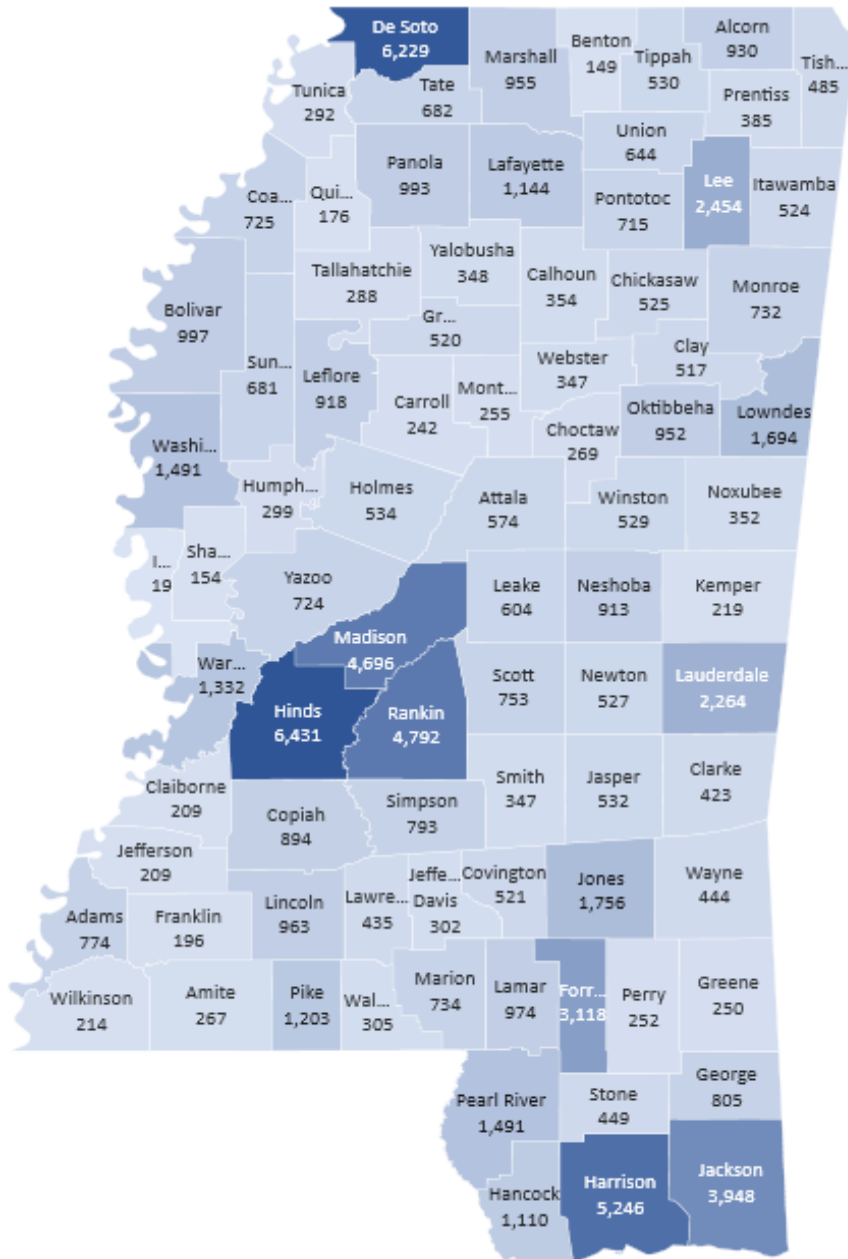
Sorted in Alphabetical Order

HIGH SCHOOL	STUDENTS	ACT TESTS	TESTS PER STUDENT	HIGH SCHOOL	STUDENTS	ACT TESTS	TESTS PER STUDENT
BAY HIGH SCHOOL	138	306	2.2	MOSS POINT HIGH SCHOOL	143	280	2.0
BILOXI HIGH SCHOOL	453	950	2.1	MURRAH HIGH SCHOOL	342	743	2.2
BRANDON HIGH SCHOOL	417	999	2.4	NATCHEZ HIGH SCHOOL	214	373	1.7
BROOKHAVEN HIGH SCHOOL	184	367	2.0	NESHOBA CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL	224	473	2.1
CALEDONIA HIGH SCHOOL	145	307	2.1	NEW ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL	135	272	2.0
CANTON HIGH SCHOOL	209	461	2.2	NEW HOPE HIGH SCHOOL	195	415	2.1
CARTHAGE HIGH SCHOOL	137	272	2.0	NEWTON COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL	130	273	2.1
CENTER HILL HIGH SCHOOL	252	577	2.3	NORTH PIKE HIGH SCHOOL	188	393	2.1
CLARKSDALE HIGH SCHOOL	160	299	1.9	NORTHEAST HIGH SCHOOL	154	335	2.2
CLEVELAND CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL	137	232	1.7	NORTHEAST JONES HIGH SCHOOL	185	340	1.8
CLINTON HIGH SCHOOL	375	930	2.5	NORTHWEST RANKIN HIGH SCHOOL	418	1,026	2.5
COLUMBUS HIGH SCHOOL	245	477	1.9	OAK GROVE HIGH SCHOOL	433	1,098	2.5
CORINTH HIGH SCHOOL	148	341	2.3	OCEAN SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL	460	1,129	2.5
D IBERVILLE HIGH SCHOOL	309	685	2.2	OLIVE BRANCH HIGH SCHOOL	272	583	2.1
DESOTO CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL	447	1,056	2.4	OSCAR H WINGFIELD HIGH SCHOOL	165	260	1.6
EAST CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL	175	413	2.4	OXFORD HIGH SCHOOL	333	809	2.4
FLORENCE HIGH SCHOOL	188	362	1.9	PASCAGOULA HIGH SCHOOL	265	549	2.1
FOREST HILL HIGH SCHOOL	244	470	1.9	PASS CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL	147	322	2.2
FORREST COUNTY A H S	143	281	2.0	PEARL HIGH SCHOOL	294	673	2.3
GAUTIER HIGH SCHOOL	210	424	2.0	PEARL RIVER CENTRAL HIGH SCH	262	562	2.1
GENTRY HIGH SCHOOL	163	341	2.1	PETAL HIGH SCHOOL	309	634	2.1
GEORGE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL	301	653	2.2	PICAYUNE MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL	219	457	2.1
GERMANTOWN HIGH SCHOOL	300	876	2.9	PONTOTOC HIGH SCHOOL	205	373	1.8
GREENE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL	142	263	1.9	POPLARVILLE HIGH SCHOOL	160	300	1.9
GREENVILLE-WESTON HS-GHS	347	575	1.7	PROVINE HIGH SCHOOL	269	421	1.6
GREENWOOD SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL	162	362	2.2	PURVIS HIGH SCHOOL	141	303	2.1
GRENADA HIGH SCHOOL	241	454	1.9	QUITMAN HIGH SCHOOL	132	276	2.1
GULFPORT HIGH SCHOOL	386	746	1.9	RAYMOND HIGH SCHOOL	148	294	2.0
HANCOCK HIGH SCHOOL	306	681	2.2	RICHLAND ATTENDANCE CENTER	142	286	2.0
HARRISON CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL	405	718	1.8	RIDGELAND HIGH SCHOOL	257	587	2.3
HATTIESBURG HIGH SCHOOL BLAIR	237	525	2.2	ROBERT M CALLAWAY HIGH SCHOOL	253	453	1.8
HERNANDO HIGH SCHOOL	300	688	2.3	SAINT MARTIN HIGH SCHOOL	307	732	2.4
HORN LAKE HIGH SCHOOL	325	695	2.1	SALTILLO HIGH SCHOOL	238	509	2.1
ITAWAMBA CO AGR HIGH SCHOOL	136	230	1.7	SHANNON HIGH SCHOOL	136	204	1.5
JACKSON PREPARATORY SCHOOL	148	510	3.4	SOUTH JONES HIGH SCHOOL	193	365	1.9
JACOB J MCCLAIN HIGH SCHOOL	207	355	1.7	SOUTH PANOLA HIGH SCHOOL	289	563	1.9
JIM HILL SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL	267	516	1.9	SOUTHAVEN HIGH SCHOOL	445	880	2.0
KOSCIUSKO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL	151	322	2.1	STARKVILLE HIGH SCHOOL	347	757	2.2
LAFAYETTE HIGH SCHOOL	195	342	1.8	STONE HIGH SCHOOL	177	317	1.8
LAKE CORMORANT HIGH SCHOOL	225	438	1.9	SUMRALL HIGH SCHOOL	139	325	2.3
LANIER HIGH SCHOOL	136	220	1.6	TERRY HIGH SCHOOL	307	741	2.4
LAUREL HIGH SCHOOL	209	499	2.4	TISHOMINGO CO HIGH SCHOOL	151	297	2.0
LAWRENCE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL	147	307	2.1	TUPELO HIGH SCHOOL	488	1,038	2.1
LEWISBURG HIGH SCHOOL	258	674	2.6	VANCLEAVE HIGH SCHOOL	172	407	2.4
LONG BEACH SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL	234	495	2.1	VICKSBURG HIGH SCHOOL	254	442	1.7
LOUISVILLE HIGH SCHOOL	132	268	2.0	WARREN CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL	306	631	2.1
MADISON CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL	480	1,376	2.9	WAYNE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL	234	433	1.9
MCCOMB HIGH SCHOOL	165	312	1.9	WEST HARRISON HIGH SCHOOL	268	550	2.1
MENDENHALL HIGH SCHOOL	156	290	1.9	WEST JONES JR-SR HIGH SCHOOL	219	432	2.0
MERIDIAN HIGH SCHOOL	339	669	2.0	WEST LAUDERDALE HIGH SCHOOL	164	418	2.5
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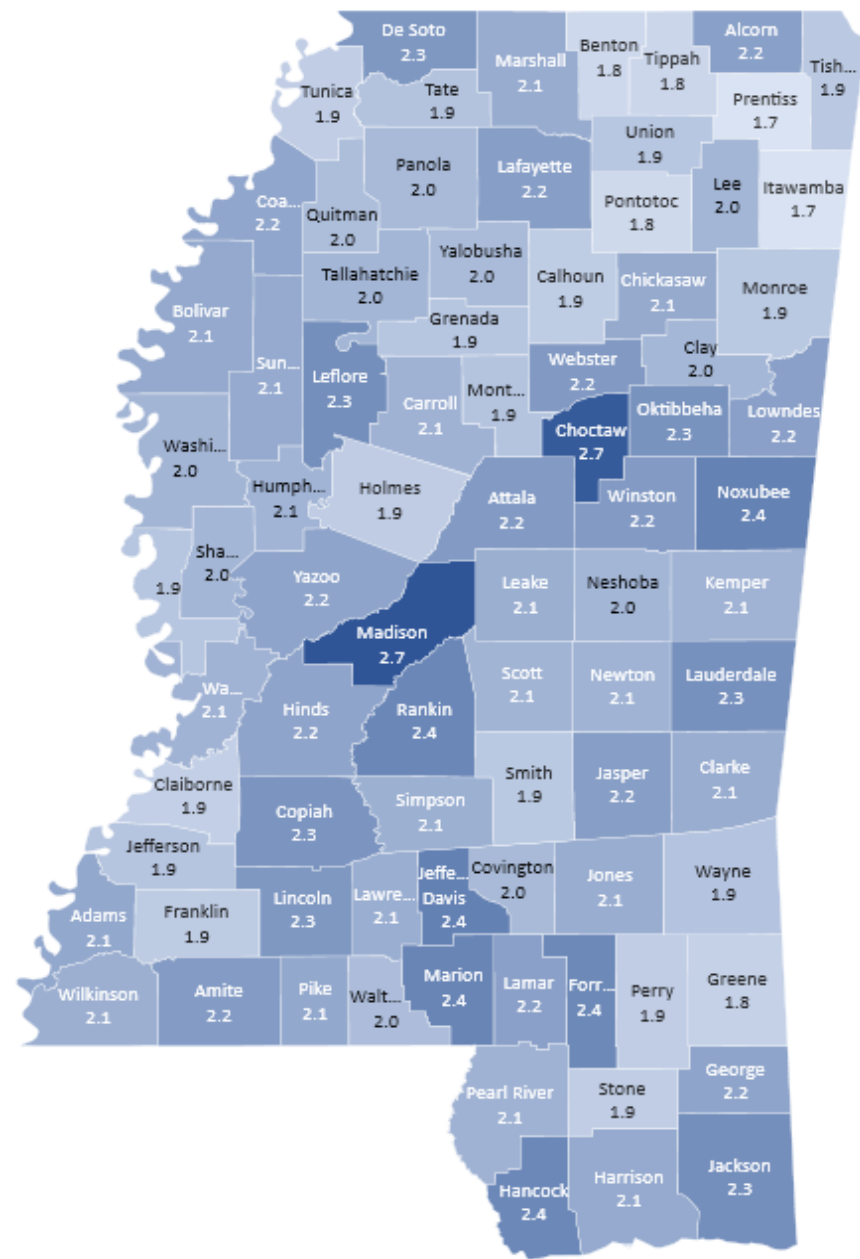
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**Average Number of Tests<sup>1</sup>**



**Number of Tests Per Student<sup>2</sup>**

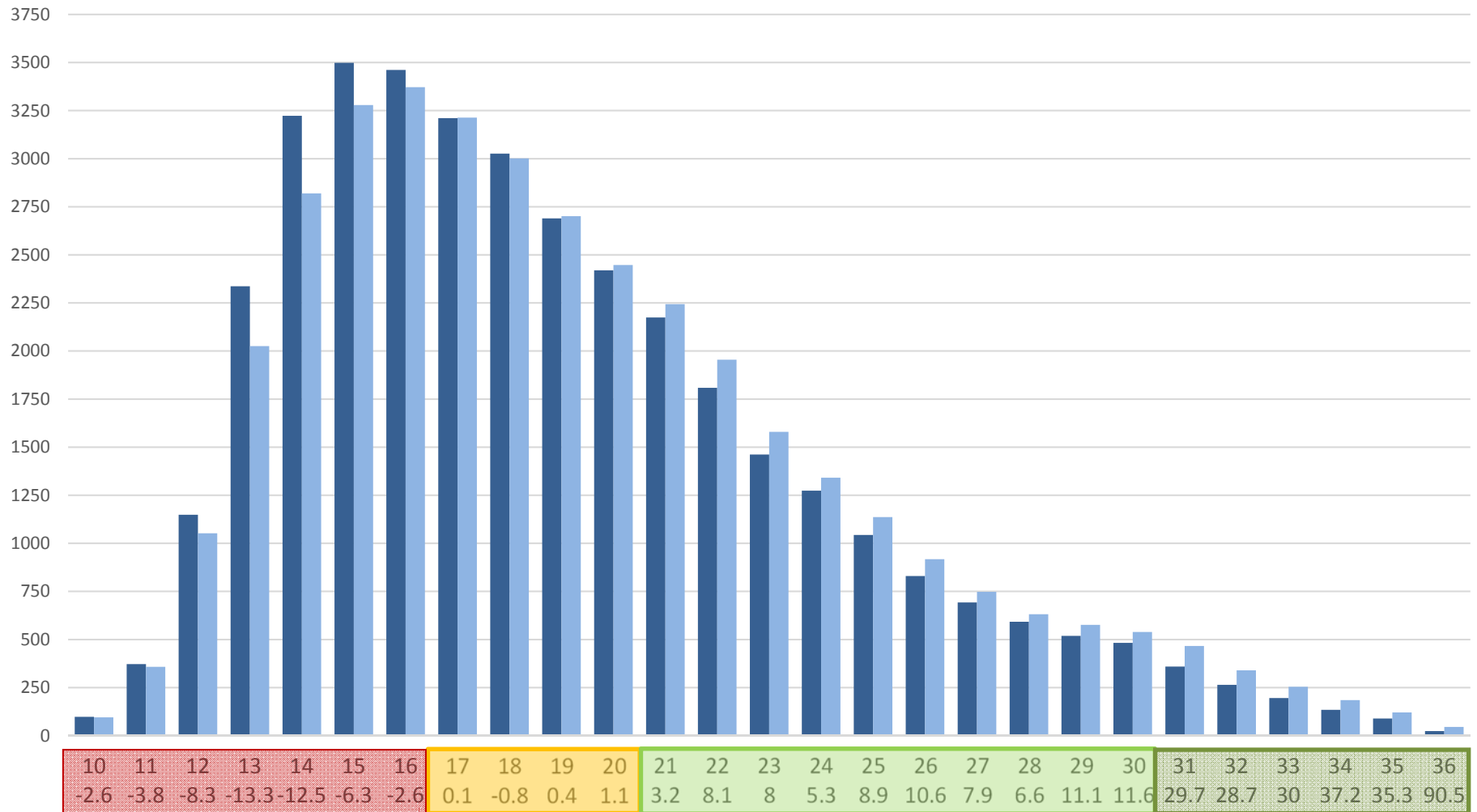


<sup>1</sup> Average number of tests per county from February 2012 through November 2019.

<sup>2</sup> The average Mississippi high school student takes the ACT 2.2 times.

## ACT Composite Distribution for Highest and Superscore Composite Scores

■ HIGH    ■ SUPER



ACT Composite Score and Percent Change

This chart illustrates the impact of superscoring composite scores by individual ACT score. The figures suggest superscoring will result in an upward shift of scores, starting at 21 and gradually increasing as scores increase.

## How does ACT Superscoring impact financial aid?

*MESG (Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant)* – Students are eligible for MESG after earning a high school cumulative grade point average of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale and score a minimum of 29 on the ACT. The following table suggests about 456 additional students will be eligible for MESG from superscoring:

HIGHEST	SUPERSCORE	GY2017	GY2018	GY2019	GY2020	AVERAGE
25	29	0	0	2	0	0.5
26	29	13	10	13	5	10.3
	30	1	1	0	0	0.5
27	29	77	109	116	78	95.0
	30	10	14	15	3	10.5
	31	0	2	1	0	0.8
28	29	253	267	275	189	246.0
	30	71	98	101	70	85.0
	31	3	12	10	6	7.8
	32	0	1	0	0	0.3
TOTALS		428	514	533	351	456.5

If we assume 70 percent of those 456 students remain in state, the annual average drops to 319 students. The annual award for MESG is \$2,500 per year. This indicates these 319 students will cost an additional \$797,500 per year.

Note: These figures do not account for the 3.5 high school GPA requirement.

*HELP (Higher Education Legislative Plan)* – Students are eligible for HELP after earning a high school cumulative grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale and score a minimum of 20 on the ACT. The following table suggests about 1,157 additional students will be eligible for HELP from superscoring:

HIGHEST	SUPERSCORE	GY2017	GY2018	GY2019	GY2020	AVERAGE
17	20	5	11	6	3	6.3
	21	0	1	1	0	0.5
18	20	191	179	160	109	159.8
	21	5	8	9	5	6.8
	22	1	0	1	0	0.5
19	20	798	878	873	695	811.0
	21	185	166	199	103	163.3
	22	6	10	11	8	8.8
	23	0	1	1	0	0.5
TOTALS		1,191	1,254	1,261	923	1,157.3

If we assume 90 percent of those 1,157 students remain in state, the annual average drops to 1,041 students. HELP pays full-tuition which typically costs \$8,500 per year for students attending universities and \$3,000 per year for students attending community colleges. This indicates these 1,041 students at the \$3,000 per year community college rate would cost an additional \$3.1 million per year.

Note: These figures do not account for the 2.5 high school GPA requirement.



## What are some policy implications for ACT Superscoring?

- Greater disparities in average ACT scores between regional and research institutions. Data suggest students with higher ACT composite scores will generally take the ACT more often and benefit from higher superscoring. These students are more likely to enroll in research institutions.
- Greater disparities in average ACT scores between African-American and other ethnic groups. Data suggest African-American students are less likely to take the ACT more than three times putting those students at a disadvantage when compared to students from other ethnic groups who are more likely to take the ACT more than three times. These disparities will extend into financial aid and other programs and services using the ACT composite score.
- If current financial aid requirements are left unchanged, more students will become eligible for scholarships and financial aid. This includes state aid programs such as MESH and HELP, including institutional financial aid programs. These additional students will require more financial aid dollars.
- Fewer students will be required to take intermediate courses as data suggest there will be fewer ACT composite scores below 21. Many students who were required to take an intermediate course will now be able to bypass those courses with superscoring.
- Research from ACT suggests the superscoring option will be a better predictor of college success for high school students as the superscored composite provides a better overall indicator of academic ability.



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