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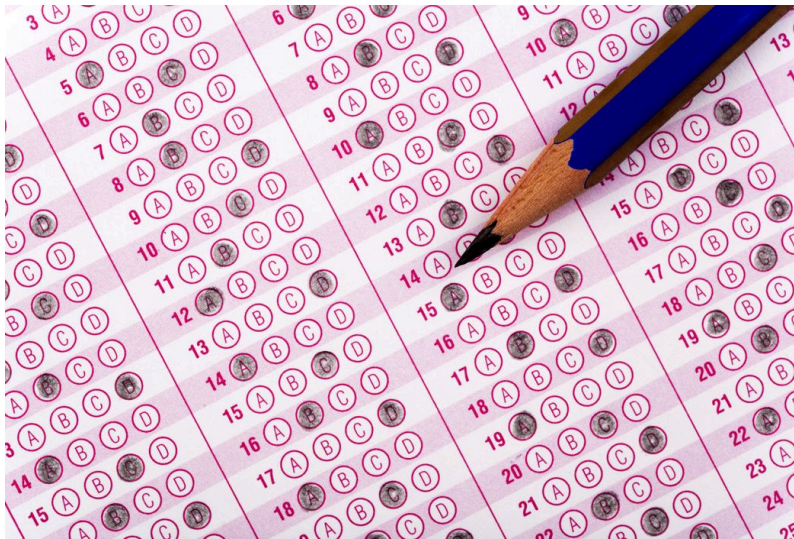
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# ACT Scores Fell for Class of 2023, Sixth Consecutive Decline

The decline suggests not enough is being done to prepare students for college and their careers, ACT CEO says

By [Joseph Pisani](#) [Follow](#)

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Some colleges have made standardized tests optional for applicants. PHOTO: ISTOCK

The average score on the ACT dropped to a new 30-year low, indicating fewer high-school seniors are ready for college, the organization behind the college admissions test said.

Test takers had an average score of 19.5 out of 36 in 2023, down 0.3 points from 2022, according to ACT. It is the sixth consecutive year of declines, ACT said, and the second straight year the average score dropped below 20 since 1991.

The test, along with the SAT, has long been used by colleges and universities to help judge whether they will accept applicants. Students submit the scores along with their applications.

“The hard truth is that we are not doing enough to ensure that graduates are truly ready for postsecondary success in college and career,” Janet Godwin, chief executive of ACT, said in a statement.

ACT says the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated unpreparedness for college. Students in the class of 2023 were in their first year of high school during the start of the pandemic, when schools nationwide switched to online learning.

Schools and education advocates have raised concerns about the use of standardized testing, saying the income of a student’s family could influence their test scores. Some colleges, including Ivy league schools, stopped taking standardized tests during the pandemic and have continued to make them optional. Harvard University, for example, said applicants don’t have to submit ACT or SAT scores through 2026.

About 1.4 million high-school seniors took the ACT in 2023, up slightly from the year before, but still down from the more than two million who took it in 2017, according to ACT.

Scores for the class of 2023 were down across all the subjects its test covers, ACT said. They fell 0.3 points for math, reading and science. They were down 0.4 points for English.



Harvard University isn't requiring applicants to submit ACT or SAT scores through 2026. PHOTO: BRIAN SNYDER/REUTERS

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