

Features and Information

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LSAT Scores of Economics Majors

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Students often ask economics department advisers about the advantages of majoring in economics. The usual reply is that an economics major provides several benefits, such as the ability to earn higher salaries, to analyze interesting problems, and to be flexible enough to adapt to the dynamic economy in which we live. Economics also provides a good foundation for several graduate degrees. Because many economics majors go on to law school each year, it would be useful to know if they are well prepared. However, no published reports of Law School Admission Test (LSAT) scores exist by major. I collected data for 1991–1992 and 1994–1995 on the LSAT scores of various majors to address this question. I found that economics majors performed at or near the top of all majors taking the test.

DATA

The data for my study came from applicants to at least one American Bar Association-approved law school. (Only students who apply to law school list their major. Students who do not apply to law school do not give a major because of the fee charged for processing the data assembly section.) Only the first major provided by the applicant is recorded. In June 1991, the LSAT was rescaled from a low of 10 and a high of 48 to a low of 120 and a high of 180. Only students who took the test after 1991 were included in the data. Because some students take the test years before applying to law school, the number of applicants to law schools may exceed the number of test scores in this study. Also, the number of

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applicants has been declining during the past five years. I analyzed two years of data to determine if any wide swings were apparent in the rankings of various majors. The number of test scores reported in this study is higher in 1994–95 than in 1991–92 because 1991–92 was the first year of the new test. Many applicants used the old test scores in 1991–92.

Approximately 120 majors are categorized by the Law School Admissions Council (1996). However, many of the majors are really subdisciplines and have only a handful of students taking the test. For example, only one astronomy major applied to law school in 1991–92. Thus, I summarized the data in two ways. First, I ranked disciplines by the average LSAT scores of those disciplines with over 2,000 test takers in 1991–92 and in 1994–95. Second, I ranked the disciplines by the average LSAT scores of those disciplines with more than 400 test takers in 1991–92 and in 1994–95.

RESULTS

The average LSAT scores of disciplines with more than 2,000 students who applied for 1991–92 or 1994–95 law school admission are shown in Table 1. Economics majors ranked first among these majors in both years! The most popular major for law school, political science, ranked at or below the average scores of 151.6 (1994–95) and 151.9 (1991–92) for all students. Criminology (which includes criminal justice) ranked last.

All students taking the test and applying for admission were divided into disciplines (or groups of disciplines) to build categories containing at least 400 students (Table 2). Economics placed third behind physics/math and philosophy/religion in a group of 29 disciplines in both years.

TABLE 1
Average LSAT Scores for 14 Majors with More than 2,000 Students Taking the Exam

1994–95 rank	Major	Average score	Number of students	1991–92 rank	Average score	Number of students
1	Economics	155.3	2,916	1	155.7	4,157
2	History	154.0	5,819	3	154.4	5,080
3	English	153.7	6,324	4	153.9	5,698
4	Engineering	152.7	2,656	2	154.7	2,536
5	Journalism/foreign language	152.5	2,002	7	152.3	2,042
6	Finance	152.2	2,009	5	153.1	2,756
7	Psychology	151.9	3,977	8	152.0	3,522
8	Accounting	151.8	2,340	6	152.6	2,855
9	Political science	151.6	15,388	9	151.8	13,628
10	Communication/arts	150.7	3,898	10	150.8	3,909
11	Management	149.4	2,735	11	149.9	3,294
12	Sociology/social work	149.3	3,129	13	149.2	2,550
13	Bus. administration	148.6	2,111	12	149.6	2,454
14	Criminology	145.8	3,960	14	145.9	2,928

TABLE 2
Average LSAT Scores for 29 Majors with over 400 Students Taking the Exam

1994-95 rank	Major	Average score	Number of students	1991-92 rank	Average score	Number of students
1	Physics/math	157.6	689	1	157.2	624
2	Philosophy/religion	156.0	1,884	2	155.9	1,547
3	Economics	155.3	2,916	3	155.7	4,157
4	International relations	155.1	1,546	4	154.9	1,213
5	Chemistry	154.5	893	7	154.7	601
6	Government/service	154.4	812	8	154.4	702
7	Anthropology/geography	154.1	898	4	155.1	708
8	History	154.0	5,819	9	154.4	5,080
9	English	153.7	6,324	10	153.9	5,698
10	Biology	153.6	1,858	12	153.5	1,519
11	Other social science	153.2	2,609	11	153.9	742
12	Engineering	152.7	2,656	6	154.7	2,536
13	Foreign languages	152.5	2,002	16	152.3	2,042
14	Finance	152.2	2,009	13	153.1	2,756
15	Computer science	152.2	468	17	152.2	500
16	Psychology	151.9	3,977	18	152.0	3,522
17	Accounting	151.8	2,340	14	152.6	2,855
18	Political science	151.6	15,388	19	151.8	13,628
19	Communication/arts	150.7	3,898	20	150.8	3,909
20	Marketing/real estate	150.0	1,826	21	150.4	2,245
21	Liberal arts	149.8	1,148	24	149.5	1,032
22	Management	149.4	2,735	22	149.9	3,294
23	Sociology/social work	149.3	3,129	25	149.2	2,550
24	Bus. administration	148.6	2,111	23	149.6	2,454
25	Health profession	148.6	984	27	148.5	1,105
26	Education	148.2	823	26	148.7	815
27	No major given	147.6	5,289	30	145.5	3,225
28	Prelaw	147.3	1,076	28	147.9	712
29	Criminology	145.8	3,960	29	145.9	2,928
	Weighted mean	151.6	82,067		151.9	75,620

CONCLUSION

The data clearly indicate that economics majors perform well on the LSAT. However, caution should be used in advising students. Economics majors (in fact, all majors) are self-selected. Thus, I could not determine the separate impact of the student's unobservable characteristics from the impact of the economics curriculum. The data are provided only in summary form by the Law School Admissions Council. Furthermore, because standard deviations by majors are not available, no multiple comparisons of means can be made. Nonetheless, economics professors still should feel pride in the success of their majors on the LSAT.

REFERENCE

Law School Admissions Council. 1996. Data Services Group. Newtown, Penn.