

LSAT Scores of Economics Majors: The 2008-2009 Class Update

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Abstract: Using 1994-1995 and 2002-2003 data, Nieswiadomy (1998, 2006) found that economics majors scored well on the LSAT. These results are frequently posted on university web sites by Economics and other departments. This note, which updates the prior studies using current 2007-2008 data for the 2008-2009 class of students entering law school, finds that Economics majors still perform at or near the top of all majors taking the test. Economics majors (LSAT score of 157.4) are tied for first (with Philosophy) of the 12 largest disciplines (those with more than 1,900 students entering law school). Economics is tied for second (with Philosophy/Religion (157.4)) behind Physics/Math (160.0) in a set of 29 discipline groupings that are created to yield at least 450 students with similar majors.

Key words: LSAT scores, economics majors, law school

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Using 1994-1995 and 2002-2003 data, Nieswiadomy (1998, 2006) found that Economics majors scored well on the LSAT. In this article, utilizing current data for the 2007-2008 test takers entering law school in 2008-2009, I investigate whether Economics majors still perform at or near the top of all majors taking the test.

The LSAT score plays a pivotal role for entrance into most law schools. The test is scaled from a low of 120 to a high of 180. The Law School Admission Council's (LSAC) web site (<http://officialguide.lsac.org>) gives statistics on the acceptance rates into various law schools based on the undergraduate GPA and the LSAT score. The top nationally ranked law schools require extremely high LSAT scores. For example, a student with a LSAT score of 175 would be in the 75th percentile of students admitted to Harvard Law School, whereas the student with a 160 would be in the 75th percentile among all students in the nation.

The test scores of students who applied to at least one American Bar Association-approved law school are compiled by the LSAC (2009). Only the first major provided by the applicants is listed. The number of test takers has decreased significantly in the past five years from 99,504 in 2002-2003 to 83,371 in 2007-2008. Approximately 162 majors are now categorized (compared to 120 majors in 1994-1995 and 151 in 2002-2003) by the LSAC. However, many of the majors are really subdisciplines and have very few students taking the test. Thus the 2007-2008 data are summarized in two ways, in a similar fashion to the previous Nieswiadomy (1998, 2006) studies. First, disciplines are ranked by the average LSAT scores of those disciplines with over 1,900 applicants. Second, to analyze all 162 disciplines, 29 groups of

similar disciplines are created to generate groups of at least 450 students with similar majors, and then these groups are ranked.

In Table 1, the average LSAT scores of disciplines with more than 1,900 students are shown. The results are very similar to the previous results. Economics majors are tied for first (157.4) with Philosophy among these 12 largest disciplines. More Philosophy majors are taking the test, so much so that Philosophy now ranks in the top 12 in terms of number of majors taking the LSAT. In 1998-1999, 1,491 students took the test. By 2004-2005, 2,404 students took the test. By 2007-2008, the number had declined to 2,184. Although there has been a recent decline in Philosophy majors taking the LSAT, as has occurred for all majors, the overall increase in Philosophy majors taking the LSAT has been quite remarkable. Although there is not statistical evidence presented in this study, it can be speculated that more Philosophy majors are taking the LSAT because news of their success on the exam has spread. Engineering places third (156.2). As before, the most popular major for law school, Political Science, ranks (153.0) near the average score for all students of 152.8. And as before, Criminal Justice ranks last (145.5).

In Table 2, all students taking the test and applying for admission are divided into disciplines (or groups of disciplines) to construct 29 categories containing at least 450 students. The results are similar to previous results. The top three majors have remained the same, with Economics placing in a tie for second (with Philosophy/Religion (157.4)) behind Physics/Math (160.0) in a group of 29 disciplines.

The 2007-2008 data for the class of 2008-2009 clearly indicate that Economics majors perform well on the LSAT. As was noted in the previous studies, caution should be used in advising students. Economics majors (in fact, all majors) are a self-selected group. It is not

possible to differentiate the effect of the student's unobservable characteristics from the effect of the economics coursework because the data are provided only in summary form from the Law School Admission Council. Also, because standard deviations by majors are not provided by the LSAC, no multiple comparisons of means can be made. Nonetheless, Economics faculty should continue to have some modicum of pride in the continued success of Economics majors on the LSAT.

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TABLE 1. Average 2007-2008 LSAT Scores

| Rank | Major field | Average score | No. of students |
|------|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Economics | 157.4 | 3,047 |
| 1 | Philosophy | 157.4 | 2,184 |
| 3 | Engineering | 156.2 | 2,197 |
| 4 | History | 155.9 | 4,166 |
| 5 | English | 154.7 | 5,120 |
| 6 | Finance | 153.4 | 2,267 |
| 7 | Political Science | 153.0 | 14,964 |
| 8 | Psychology | 152.5 | 4,355 |
| 9 | Sociology | 150.7 | 1,902 |
| 10 | Communications | 150.5 | 2,230 |
| 11 | Business Administration | 149.1 | 1,971 |
| 12 | Criminal Justice | 145.5 | 3,306 |

Note: For major fields with at least 1,900 students taking the exam.

TABLE 2. Average 2007-2008 LSAT Scores

| Rank | Major field | Average score | No. of students |
|------|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Physics/Math | 160.0 | 577 |
| 2 | Economics | 157.4 | 3,047 |
| 3 | Philosophy/Theology | 157.4 | 2,581 |
| 4 | International Relations | 156.5 | 1,520 |
| 5 | Engineering | 156.2 | 2,197 |
| 6 | Government /Service | 156.1 | 578 |
| 7 | Chemistry | 156.1 | 632 |
| 8 | History | 155.9 | 4,169 |
| 9 | Interdisciplinary Studies | 155.5 | 652 |
| 10 | Foreign Languages | 155.3 | 1,084 |
| 11 | English | 155.2 | 5,899 |
| 12 | Biology/Natural Sciences | 154.8 | 2,201 |
| 13 | Arts | 154.2 | 1,438 |
| 14 | Computer Science | 154.0 | 682 |
| 15 | Finance | 153.4 | 2,267 |
| 16 | Political Science | 153.1 | 15,181 |
| 17 | Psychology | 152.5 | 4,355 |
| 18 | Liberal Arts | 152.4 | 3,892 |
| 19 | Anthropology/Geography | 152.2 | 808 |
| 20 | Accounting | 151.7 | 1,439 |
| 21 | Journalism | 151.5 | 3,408 |
| 22 | Sociology/Social Work | 151.2 | 3,123 |
| 23 | Marketing | 150.8 | 1,574 |
| 24 | Business Management | 149.7 | 4,629 |
| 25 | Education | 149.4 | 484 |
| 26 | Business Administration | 149.1 | 1,984 |
| 27 | Health Professions | 148.4 | 703 |
| 28 | Prelaw | 148.3 | 1,078 |
| 29 | Criminal Justice | 146.0 | 4,016 |

Note: Grouped by major field with at least 450 students taking exam.