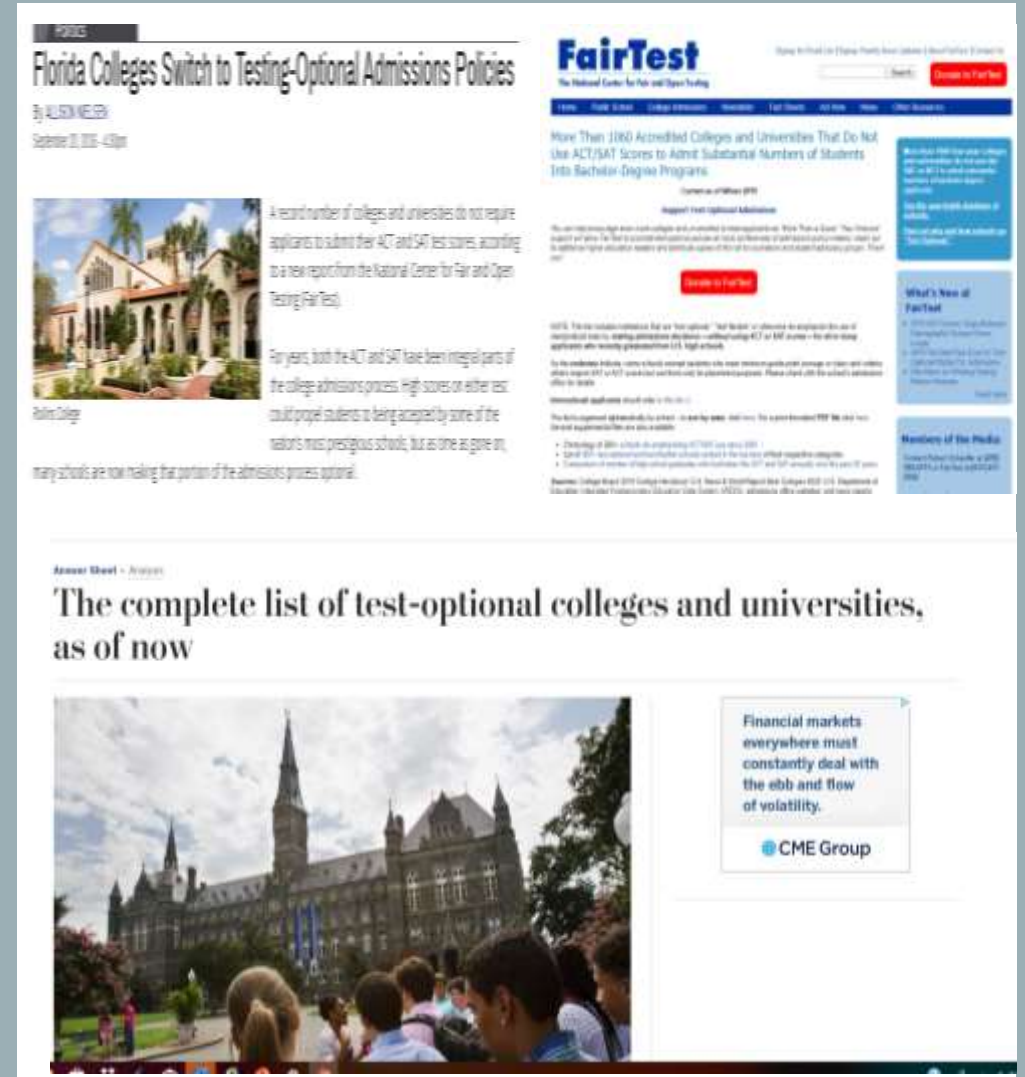


GENERAL APTITUDE TESTS
SAT AND ACT: EXPANDING SCOPE IN
HIGHER EDUCATION

Preety Bhogal

PROBLEM STATEMENT

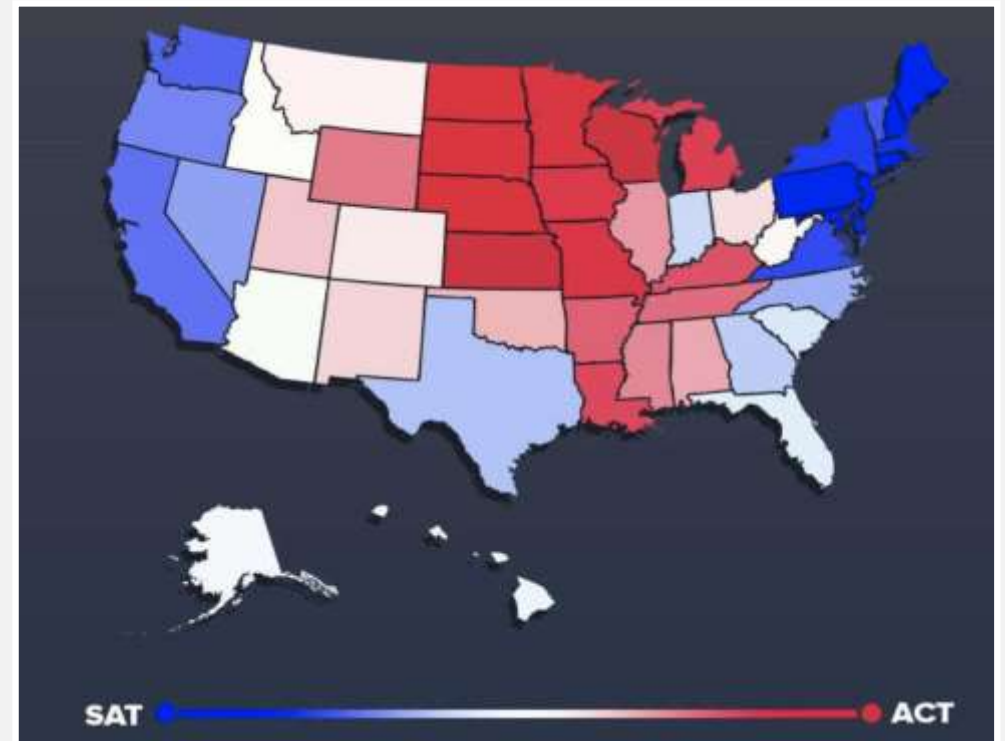
- According to recent statistics produced by National Center for Fair and Open Testing (Fair Test) – a non-profit civil society group – more than a 1,000 four-year colleges and universities in the US have discontinued the practise of mandatory SAT or ACT scores for student admissions.
- Given this increasing trend against standardised exams, **what measures should be taken to increase the total participation of high school students in ACT or SAT exams?**



Source: Various newspaper articles

DATA TRENDS: PARTICIPATION RATE

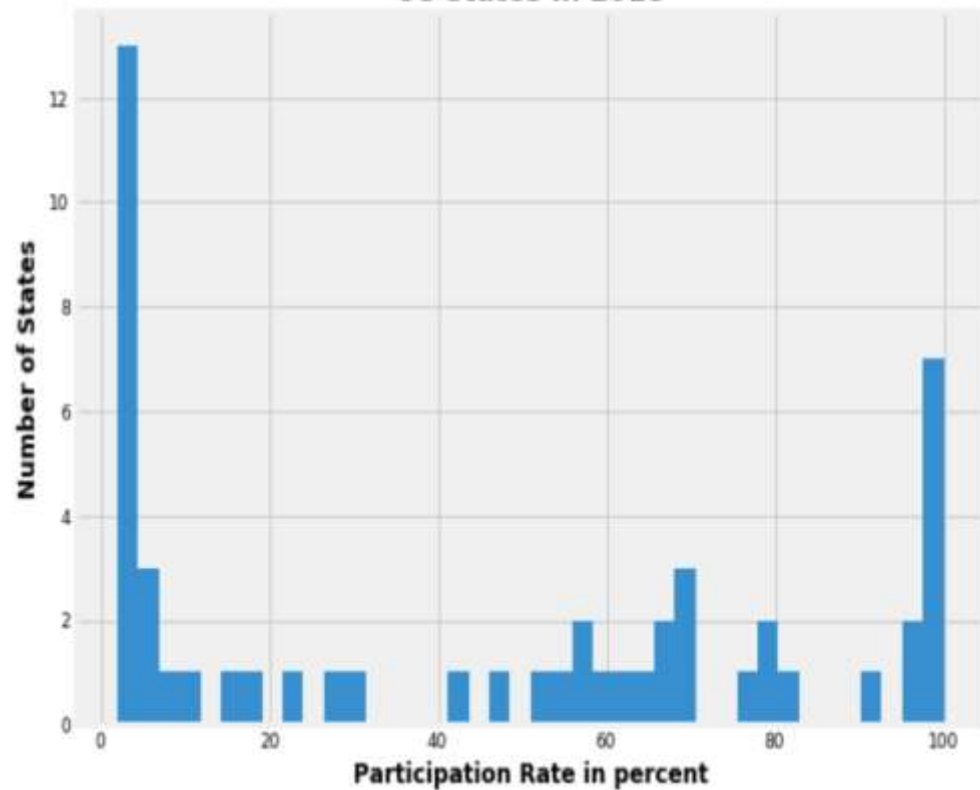
- Participation rates vary across states depending upon whether states have made SAT or ACT mandatory for high school graduation. Rates vary from 100 % to 3 %.
- Out of the total 51 states, 18 States have made ACT compulsory.
- 11 states prefer SAT over ACT.
- 2 states have allowed students to choose between the two exams. Both tests are not compulsory in any state.
- However, 24 states have made SAT or ACT optional for high school students and do not require these tests for high school graduation.



Source: College Eraptor Website (2019)

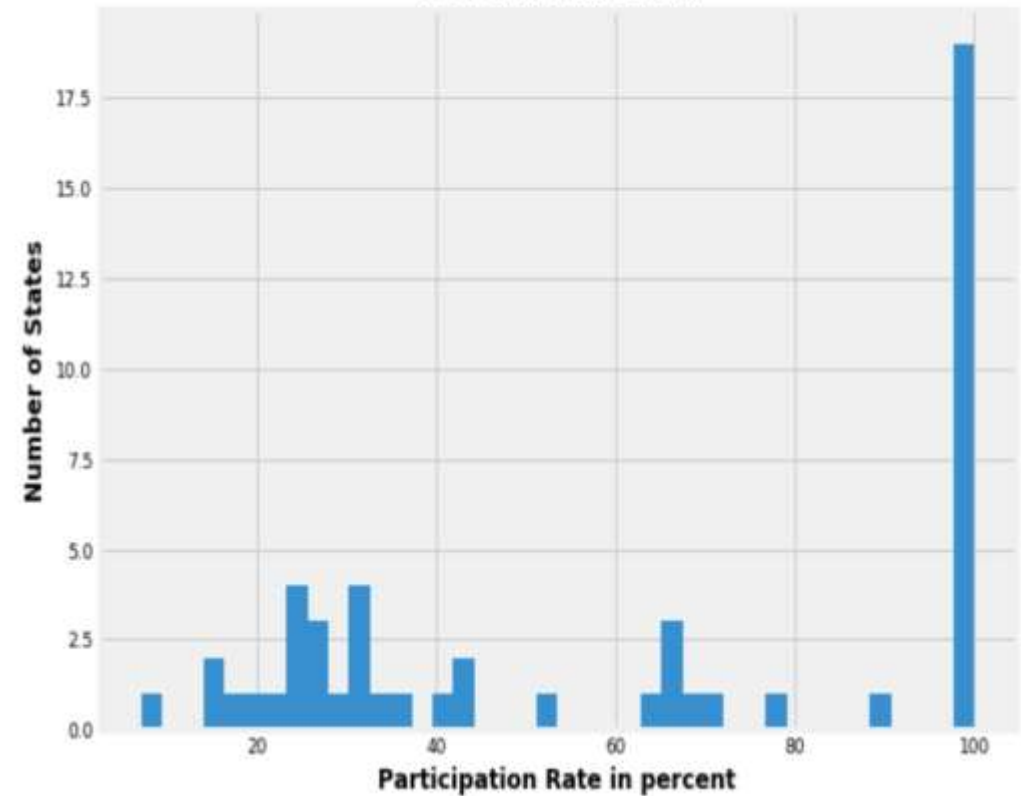
DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPATION RATES FOR SAT AND ACT (2017-18)

Histogram of SAT Participation Rate in US states in 2018



Source: Author

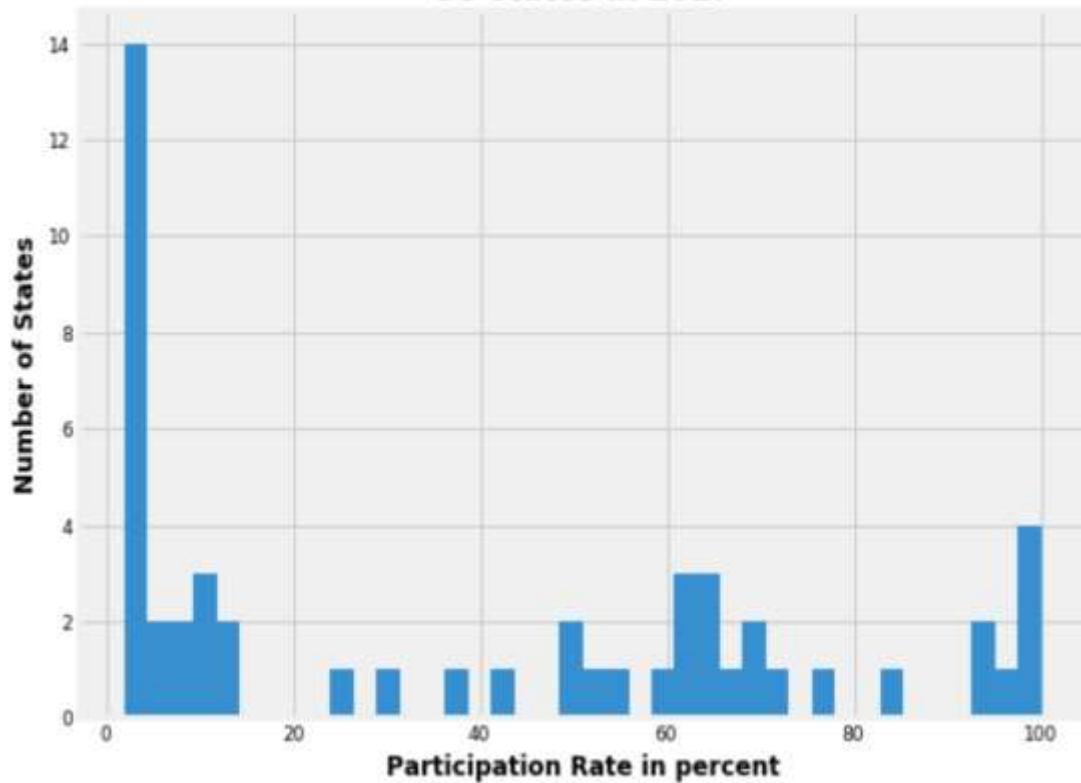
Histogram of ACT Participation Rate in US states in 2018



Source: Author

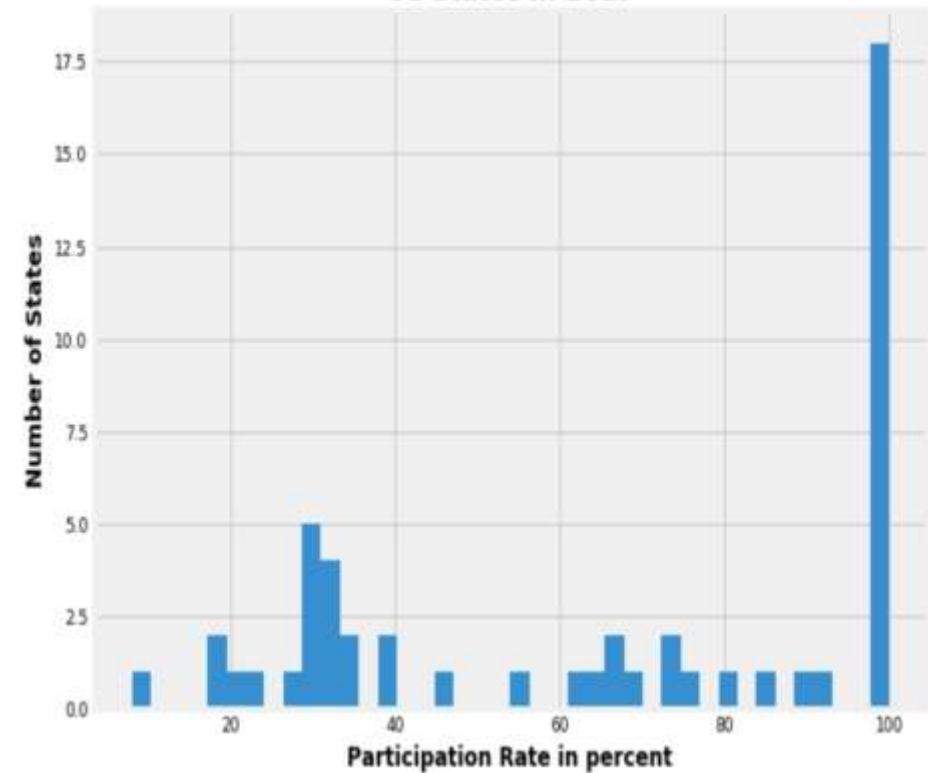
DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPATION RATES FOR SAT AND ACT (2017-18)

Histogram of SAT Participation Rate in US states in 2017



Source: Author

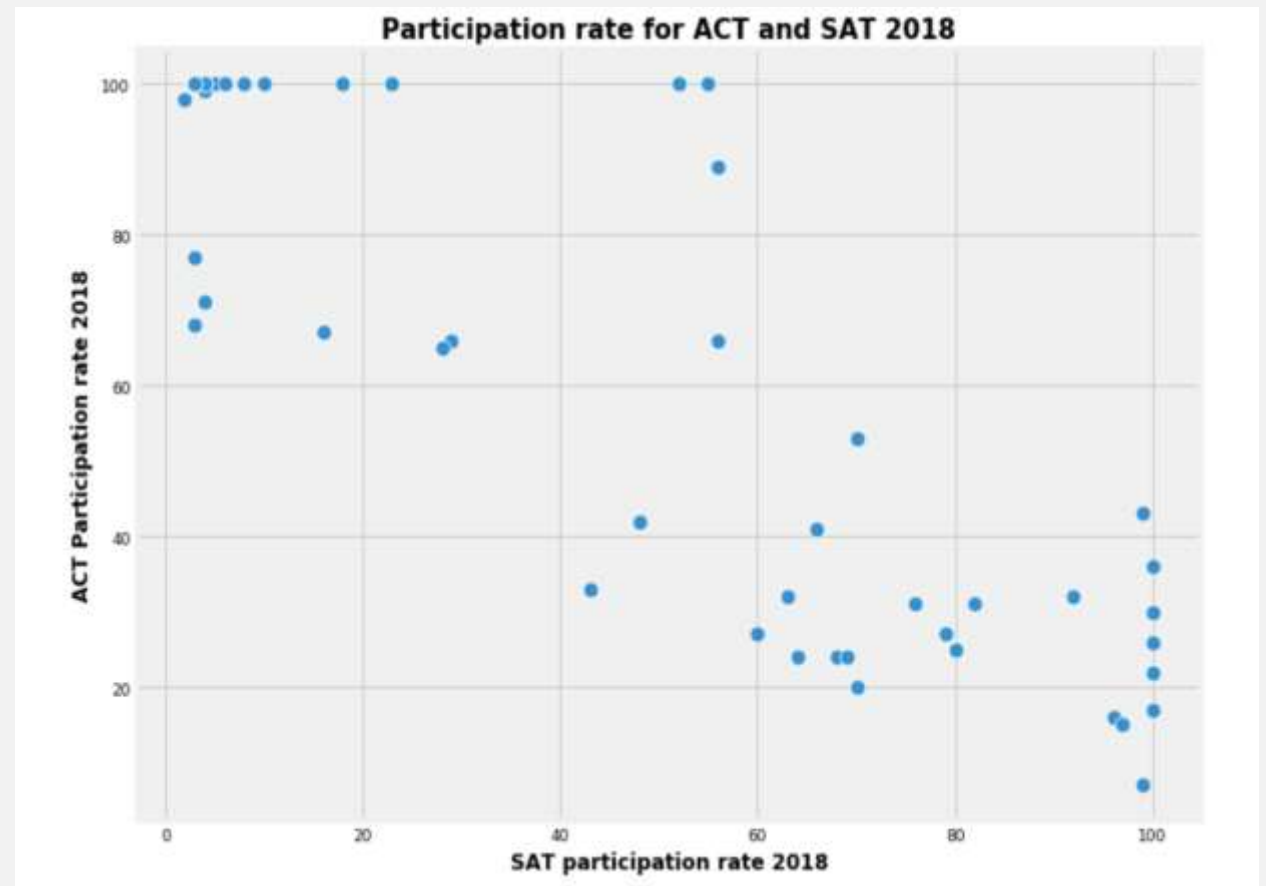
Histogram of ACT Participation Rate in US states in 2017



Source: Author

DATA TRENDS: CORRELATIONS

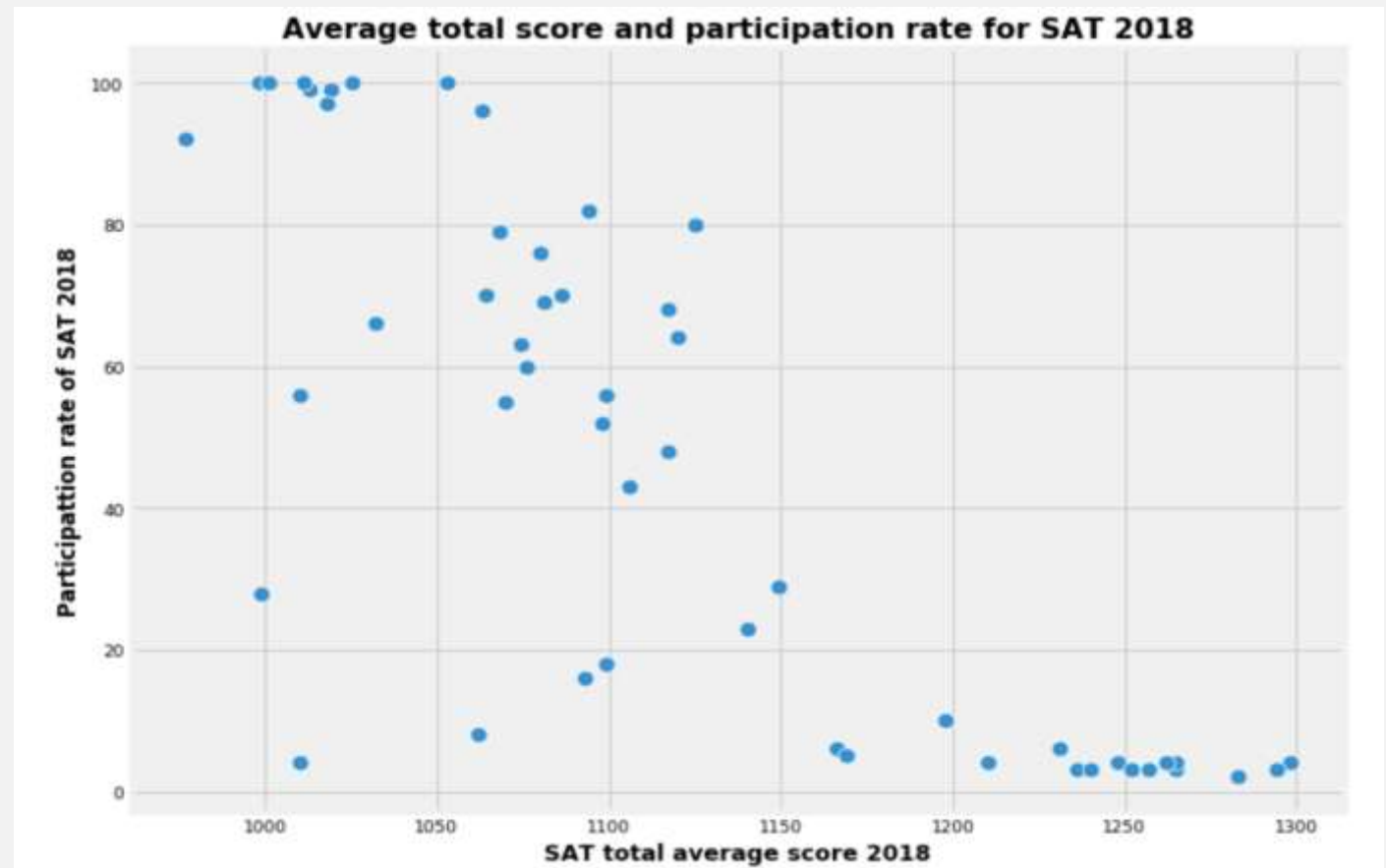
- There is a **negative correlation** between **participation rates** in SAT and ACT exams.



Source: Author

DATA TRENDS: CORRELATIONS

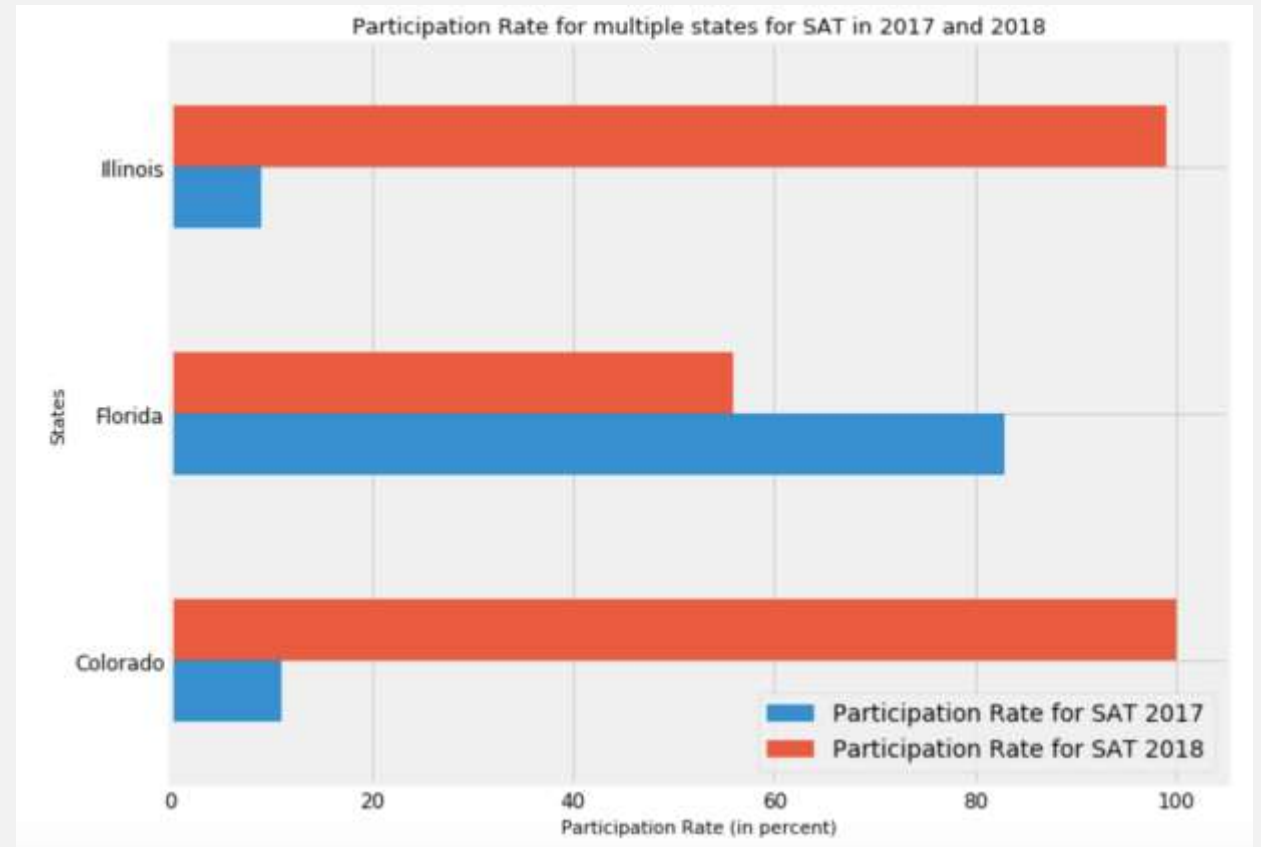
- There is also a **negative correlation** between **participation rate** and **average scores**.



Source: Author

CASE STUDIES : COLORADO

- SAT participation rates jumped by 89 percentage points between 2017 and 2018. Why?
- Change in State Policy – Mandatory SAT
- SAT closely aligned with school curriculum
- Recognised across the US
- Access to additional resources for test preparation



Source: Author

CASE STUDIES: ILLINOIS AND FLORIDA

ILLINOIS

- Between 2017 and 2018, SAT participation rates increased by 90 percentage points. Why?
- Change in State Policy– Mandatory SAT
- Alignment/Resources for preparation/Recognition
- College Board: Advanced Placement Cells/ PSAT Merit Scholarships

• FLORIDA

- Between 2017 and 2018, both SAT and ACT participation rates fell by 27 and 10 percentage points respectively.
- Only state to show a net decrease in both. Why?
- Florida rejects the replacement of Florida State Assessments (FSA) with ACT or SAT
- More Colleges and Universities making ACT and SAT optional.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Participation rates depend heavily on state policies.
- The trend across colleges and universities for making SAT and ACT optional hurts participation rates.
- College Board and ACT must realign exams to better suit the individual needs of the state. Alignment with state curriculum is the most important factor in policy change across states.
- Both SAT and ACT have to address the issue of accommodation of social, gender, economic and ethnic differences into their test scores.