

# **Increasing SAT and ACT participation rates across the US**

# Agenda:

- Background
- Objective
- Study on participation rates for:
  - SAT
  - ACT
- Conclusion

# Background

- SAT and ACT are both standardized tests covering the same basic subjects
- Optional for college admissions, but can increase chances of being awarded merit scholarships
- Created and administered by different test providers.
- In 2016, SAT released a new format which brings SAT and ACT even closer.

# Objective

# **OBJECTIVE of Study:**

Increase both SAT and ACT participation rates across the United States

## **METHOD:**

- Explore trends in participation rates
- Identify correlated factors

## **OUTCOMES:**

- Identify opportunities for investment
- Propose focus areas based on correlated factors

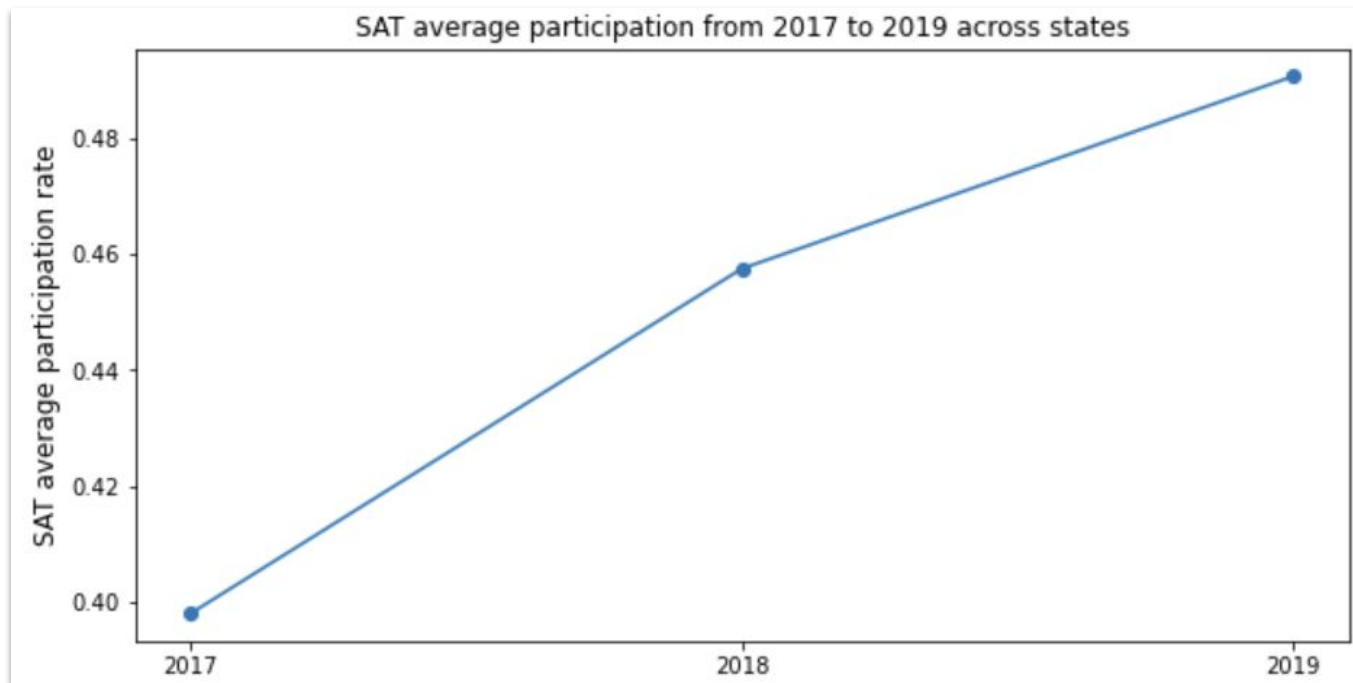
Increasing participation rates for:

**SAT**

# Overview

- SAT participation rates have been growing
- The number of states having full SAT participation increases through the years
- Underlying factors for the growth:
  - Redesigned SAT format
  - Reduced costs for studying SAT

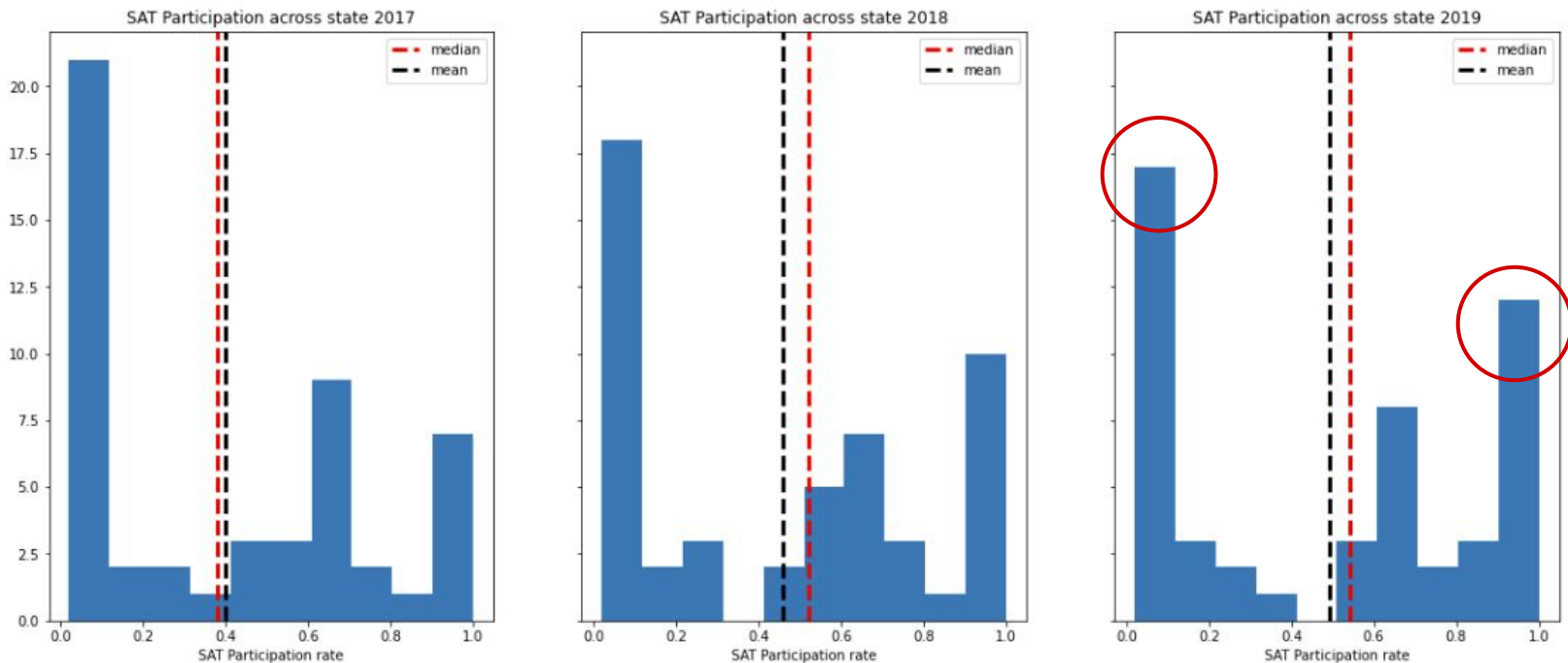
# SAT participation rate growth



- \* Average participation is increasing as the year passes
- \* Growth rate from 2018 to 2019 slowed down compared to the growth rate from 2017 to 2018.

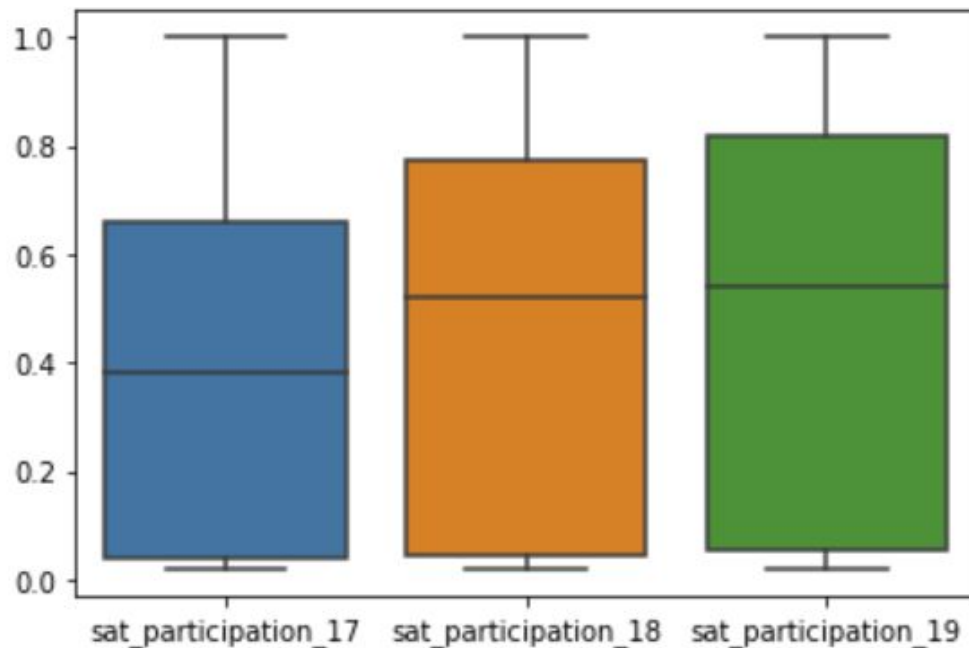


# The number of states having higher SAT participation rates



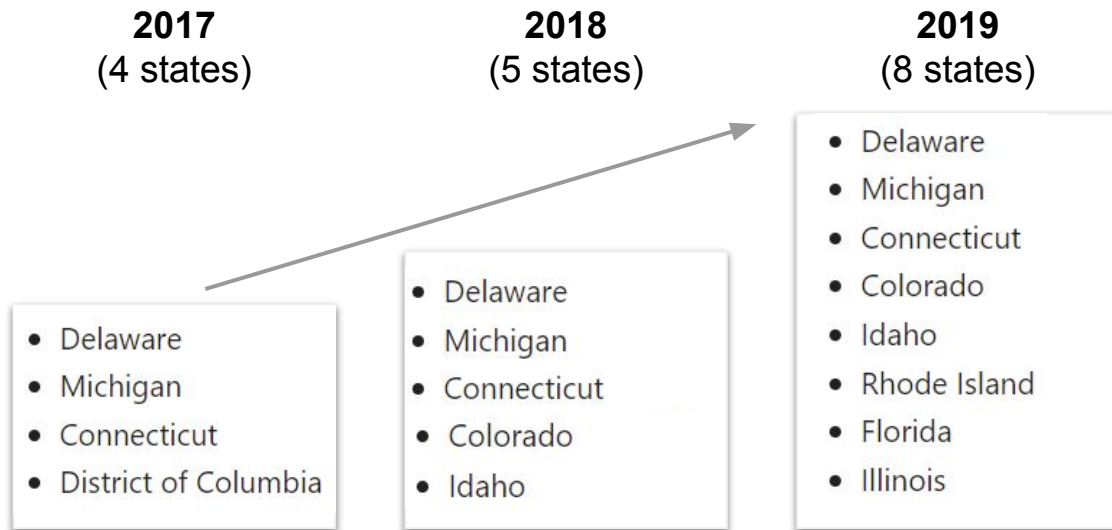
- There is an obvious increase in the number of states having (80%-100%) SAT participation rate
- Likewise, an obvious drop in the number of states having 0% to 10% SAT participation rate

## Increase in 75th percentile for SAT participation rates



- The 75th percentile SAT participation rate rises significantly from 0.66 in 2017 to 0.82 in 2019

# The number of states having full SAT participation (100%)



- States with 100% SAT participation increases over the years.
- Colorado switched from having 100% ACT participation rate to 100% SAT participation rate

# The underlying factors for the growth in SAT participation

- Redesigned SAT format
  - SAT more aligned with Common Core standards in English and Math
- Reduced costs for studying SAT



Free personalized  
test prep



Fee waivers

+

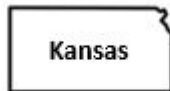


Free 2 SAT tests

# Recommendations

Three areas to target

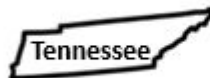
1. Target poorer states with “No fees and All free” slogan



2. Target states with neither 100% participation rates



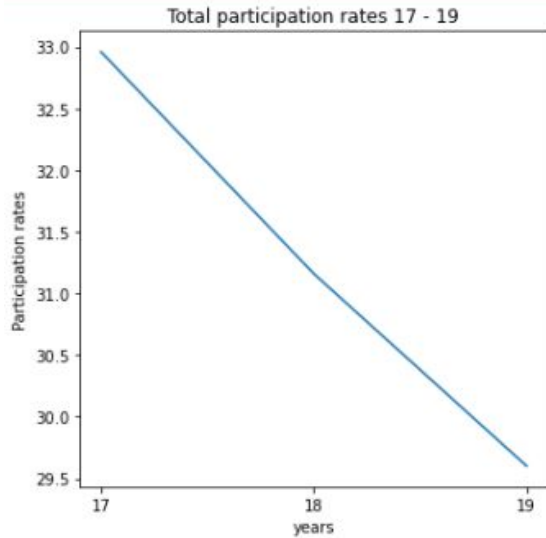
3. Market the redesigned format and replicate Colorado strategy



Increasing participation rates for:

**ACT**

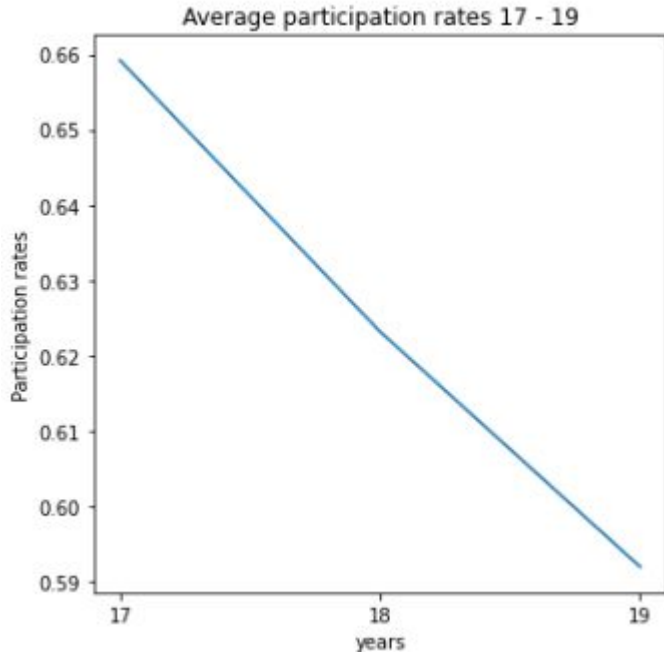
# Participation rates



- Overall decrease in participation
- Declining use of ACT

Fig: Total participation in US 2017 to 2019

# Participation rates

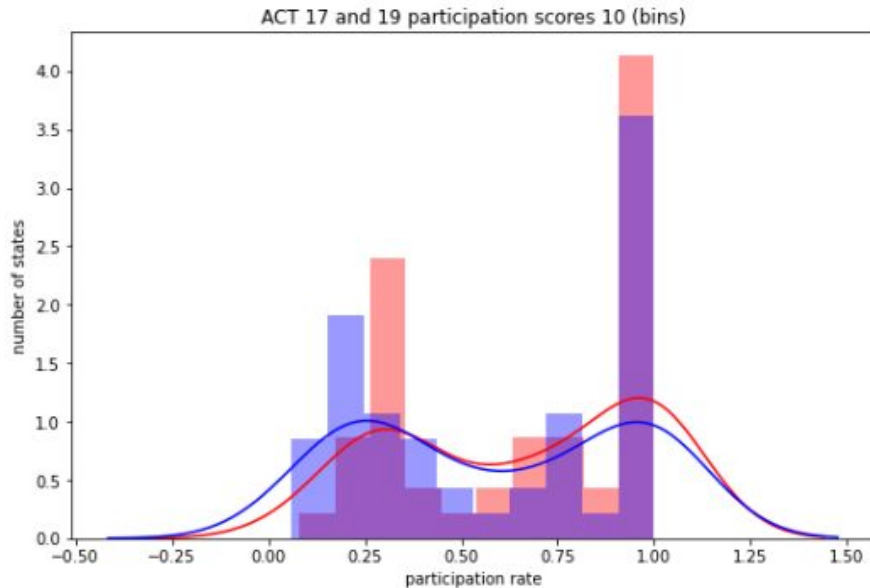


- Decrease in average state participation
- Declining use of ACT

Fig: State average participation in US  
2017 to 2019



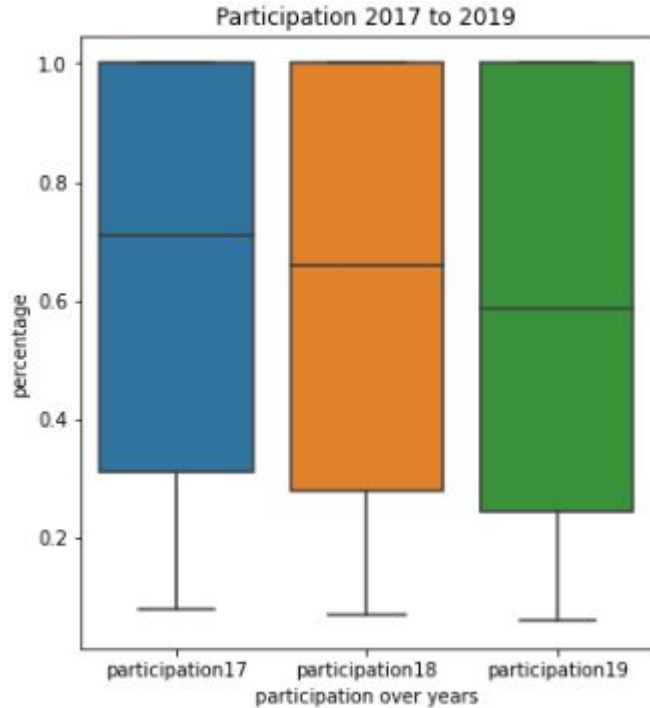
# Participation rates



- Increasing left skew
- Decrease in state participation
- Declining use of ACT

Fig: State average participation in US  
2017 and 2019

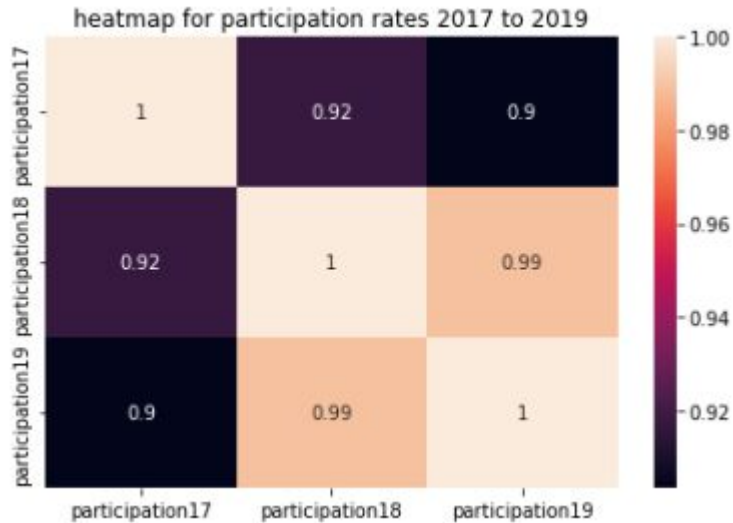
# Participation rates



- Decreasing 50th percentile
- Decreasing 25th percentile

Fig: State participation in US 2017 to 2019

# Participation rates



- Positive correlation of participation value yearly
- Participation value from past years relate to later years

Fig: Correlation between participation 2017 to 2019

1 means closely related, -1 means not related

# Participation-score relationship

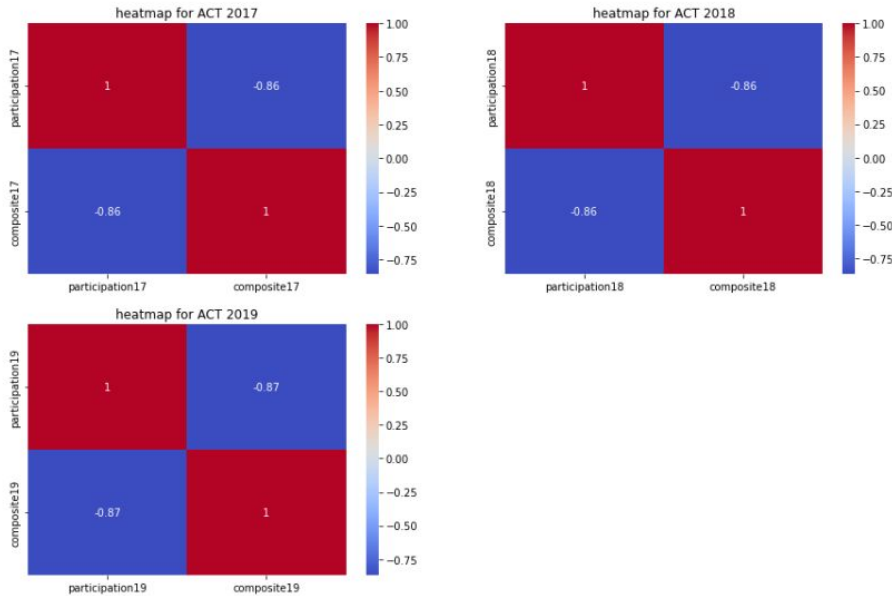


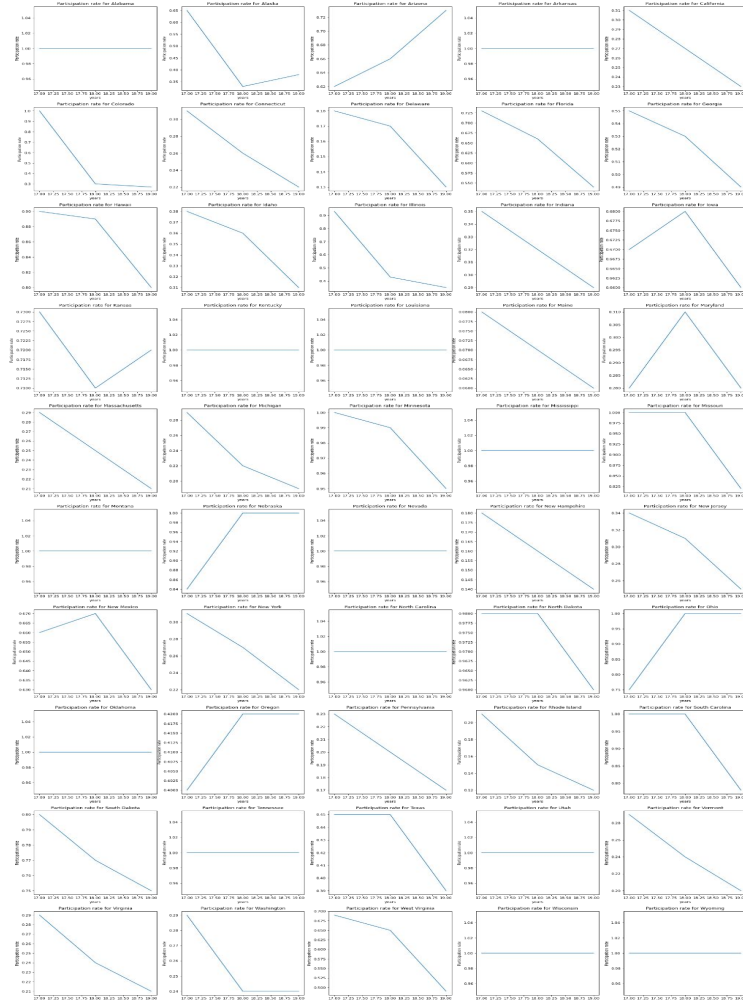
Fig: Correlation between participation and scores 2017 to 2019

- Negative correlation
- Scores not related to participation
- Scores is not the reason for poor participation

# State Participation

- Decreased participation :32
  - Increased participation : 4
  - No change: 14
- 
- Drastic change
  - Colorado, 1 to 0.27
  - Illinois, 0.93 to 0.35
  - made standardized test optional

Fig: Participation rate for individual states



# ACT recommendations

- Focus resources on states with high participation
- States (>70% participation rate), 2019:
  - Hawaii (0.8)
  - Kansas (0.72)
  - Minnesota (0.95)
  - Missouri (0.82)
  - South Dakota (0.75)
  - South Carolina (0.78)
  - North Dakota (0.96)

# ACT suggestions

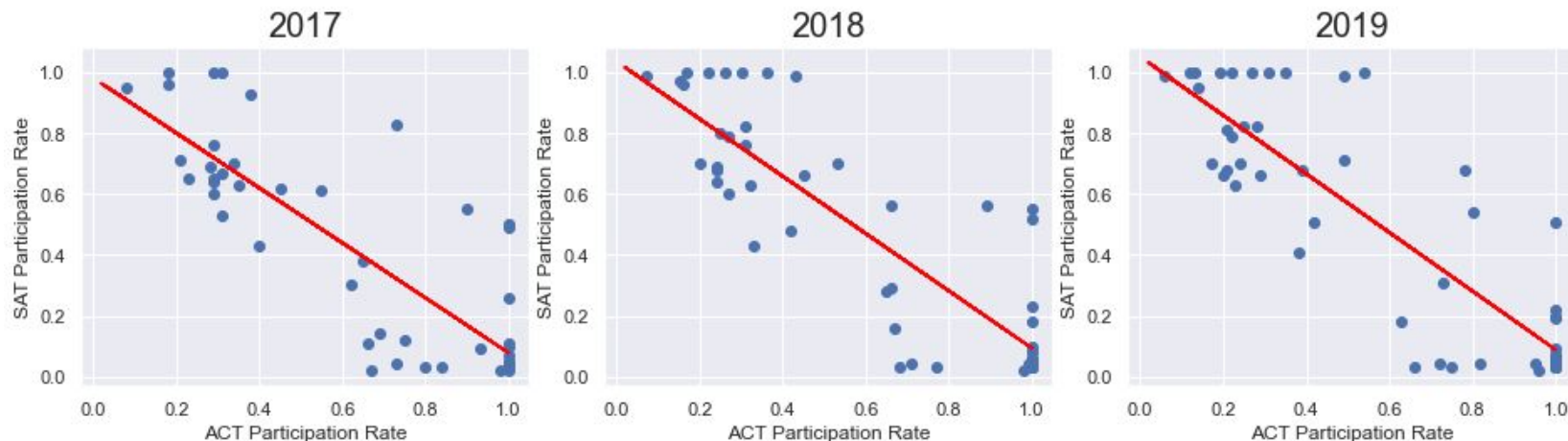
- Associate desired jobs with ACT
- Associate top university courses with ACT
- Create a 'ACT' identity
- Create a cult of followers
- Work with credit companies; credit packages
- Work with legislators and politicians
- Work with religious/community leaders
- Work with universities

# Conclusion



# SAT and ACT participation rates are inversely correlated

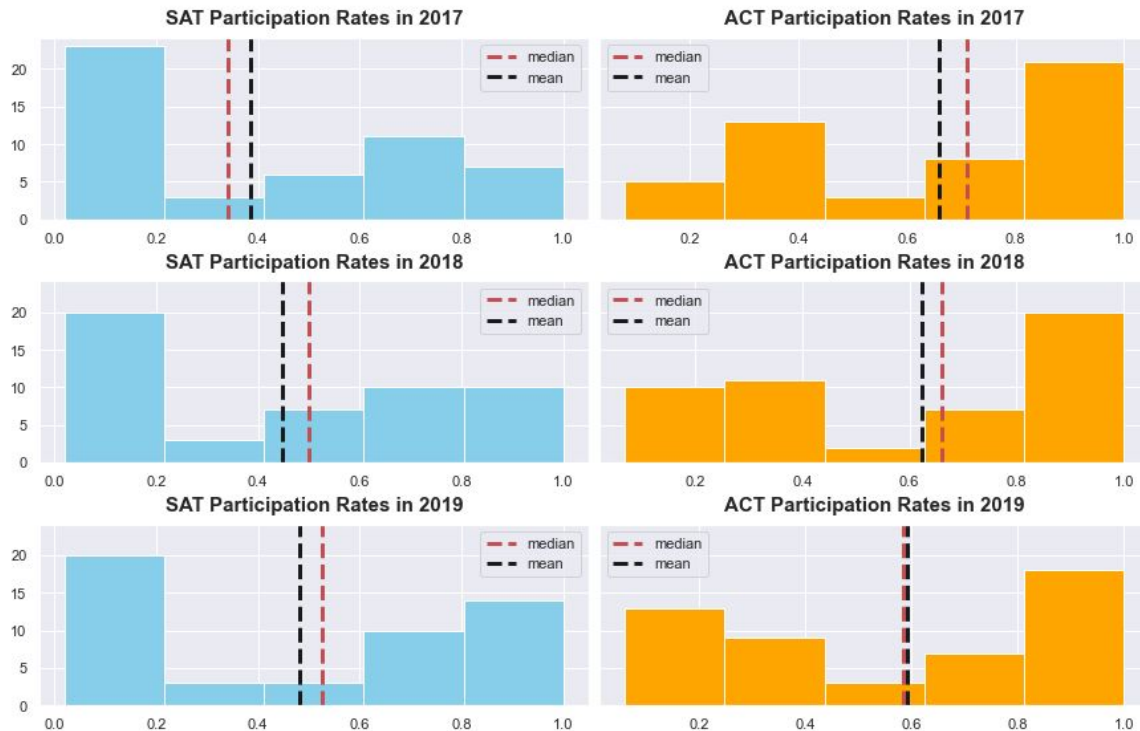
Correlation between SAT & ACT Yearly Participation Rates



Participation rates can be driven by state legislation: Some states make it mandatory to take either one of two tests.

# Distribution of SAT and ACT participation rates mirror each other

Distribution of SAT & ACT Yearly Participation Rates by State



- SAT participation rates have been lower than ACT, but there has been an uptrend for SAT rates
- Conversely, frequency of states with high ACT participation rates are higher. However, participation rates have been trending downwards

# Recommendations

Both test providers can collaborate to divide and conquer focus areas and reduce competition from each other

## Opportunities:

- Florida: rich state with average participation rate. Ok to market both tests aggressively
- Alaska also has below average participation rates for both ACT and SAT. More feasibility studies recommended before investing.
- Combine resources to combine both tests into one standardized test