

# **No one likes the SAT. It's still the fairest thing about admissions.**

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The 33 hedge fund managers, Hollywood actresses, CEOs and other well-connected parents indicted this month didn't just allegedly commit fraud or pay bribes to get their kids into elite schools. Authorities say they also hired ringers or "tutors" to increase their children's scores on the SAT and ACT standardized tests that colleges use to make admissions decisions. [Some](#) have [responded](#) to the scandal by arguing that it proves standardized testing is useless at best and deeply unfair at worst, concluding that it should be eliminated once and for all. "You know, what we should think about doing is just scrapping the whole thing," one California assemblyman [told his local CBS station](#).

It's true that any system can be gamed if you're willing to cheat, and students from wealthier backgrounds do have some advantages over others. But eliminating or watering down the SAT wouldn't solve this problem; in fact, it would make it worse — by removing the one relatively objective admissions criterion that can both prevent fraud and increase social mobility by helping all high school students find the best college opportunities they can.

Higher test scores definitely help students get into higher-ranked institutions. We [published an article last year](#) in the Journal of Intelligence showing that simply listing U.S. colleges and universities by their average SAT and ACT scores essentially reproduces the influential rankings [produced by U.S. News](#) and other organizations, despite the fact that many of these rankings place little emphasis on test scores. ([U.S. News puts 92 percent](#) of the weight on other factors, for example.)

It has become a mantra in some quarters to assert that [standardized tests measure wealth more than intellectual ability](#) or academic potential, but this is not actually the case. These tests clearly assess verbal and mathematical skills, which a century of psychological science shows are not mere reflections of upbringing. Research has [consistently found](#) that ability tests like the SAT and the ACT are strongly predictive of success in college and beyond, even after accounting for a student's socioeconomic status.