

# National Merit Semifinalist Cutoffs:

## *Class of 2020*

The disruption caused by the change to the new PSAT in 2015 finally seems to have played out, and Compass expects fewer large changes for the class of 2020 (the October 2018 PSAT/NMSQT). Based on historical analysis, the best estimate for the “Most Likely” cutoff is almost always the prior year’s cutoff. That estimate is only correct, though, less than one-third of the time. It’s more appropriate to look at the “Estimated Ranges,” since Semifinalist cutoffs can move up or down each year. Last year, scores were relatively stable. Forty-five states had cutoffs within 1 point of the prior year’s cutoffs. Only Rhode Island saw a change of more than 2 points.

It is likely that more states will see increases than decreases this year. Yet again, the number of PSAT-takers scoring in the 1400-1520 range hit a new high. The Commended level is likely to stay at 212 or move up a point.

### 11th Graders in 1400–1520 Total Score Range

	Percent	Number	Commended
Class of 2018	3.64%	64,875	211
Class of 2019	3.85%	67,514	212
Class of 2020	4.08%	69,956	212*

\*Compass Estimate

We believe that the high-water mark will continue to be 223 this year, but there is a possibility that one or more states will move to 224. There is no chance that any state will move to 225. This means that students who score at 224 and above—no matter their state or region—will qualify as Semifinalists. At the lower end of the scale, we will know more in April when the Commended level becomes known. For this and all of our National Merit Scholarship Program updates, please see [compassprep.com/national-merit](https://compassprep.com/national-merit).

Students looking to advance in the competition received an early holiday gift from National Merit Scholarship Corporation when it announced that ACT and SAT scores would both be accepted as confirming scores. This means that students can choose the best testing path without having to worry that it might leave them unable to qualify as Finalists. We hope to provide additional details as deadlines approach. For most students, the deadlines won’t approach quickly enough. Semifinalists in the class of 2020 will be notified via their high schools in September of 2019.

### Questions? Contact:

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STATE	Class of 2020		Class of 2019	Class of 2018	Class of 2017	Typical # of Semifinalists
	Estimated Range	Most Likely	Actual	Actual	Actual	
Alabama	214–218	216	216	216	215	225
Alaska	213–218	215	215	217	213	40
Arizona	218–222	220	220	220	219	300
Arkansas	212–216	214	214	215	213	140
California	221–224	223	223	222	221	2050
Colorado	218–222	221	221	220	218	245
Connecticut	220–223	222	222	221	220	185
Delaware	219–223	222	222	221	218	45
District of Columbia	222–224	223	223	223	222	50
Florida	217–221	219	219	219	217	810
Georgia	218–222	220	220	220	219	460
Hawaii	217–221	220	220	220	217	65
Idaho	213–216	214	214	216	214	85
Illinois	219–223	221	221	221	219	735
Indiana	217–221	219	219	219	217	335
Iowa	214–218	216	216	216	215	170
Kansas	216–220	218	218	219	217	155
Kentucky	215–219	218	218	217	215	215
Louisiana	215–219	217	217	216	214	210
Maine	214–218	217	217	215	214	75
Maryland	221–224	223	223	222	221	315
Massachusetts	221–224	223	223	222	222	345
Michigan	217–221	219	219	219	216	565
Minnesota	218–222	220	220	220	219	300
Mississippi	212–217	215	215	213	212	135
Missouri	215–219	217	217	217	216	335
Montana	211–216	214	214	214	210	50
Nebraska	214–218	216	216	215	215	100
Nevada	215–219	218	218	217	214	100
New Hampshire	217–221	219	219	217	216	75
New Jersey	222–224	223	223	223	222	520
New Mexico	213–217	215	215	215	213	90
New York	219–223	221	221	221	219	1010
North Carolina	218–222	220	220	219	218	440
North Dakota	211–214	212	212	211	209	30
Ohio	217–221	219	219	219	217	615
Oklahoma	213–217	215	215	216	213	185
Oregon	219–223	221	221	220	219	180
Pennsylvania	218–222	220	220	219	218	680
Rhode Island	216–221	220	220	216	217	55
South Carolina	215–218	216	216	217	215	200
South Dakota	211–216	215	215	215	209	45
Tennessee	217–221	219	219	218	218	325
Texas	219–223	221	221	221	220	1340
Utah	213–217	215	215	216	215	155
Vermont	215–218	216	216	217	215	40
Virginia	220–223	222	222	222	221	390
Washington	220–223	222	222	222	220	330
West Virginia	211–214	212	212	211	209	75
Wisconsin	214–218	216	216	217	215	330
Wyoming	211–214	212	212	213	209	25
Territories	211–214	212	212	211	209	Combined
Outside US	222–224	223	223	223	222	285
<b>COMMENDED</b>	<b>211-214</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>209</b>	