

WHY NOT 1000?

The graduate admissions process is frequently characterized by tight schedules and insufficient staffing. In order to expedite the process, some graduate schools and departments set an arbitrary cut point for GRE General Test scores. Applicants whose scores fall below this cut point are given little or no consideration in the admissions process. The graphs below illustrate why it is inadvisable to routinely disregard applicants whose combined verbal and quantitative scores fall below 1000.

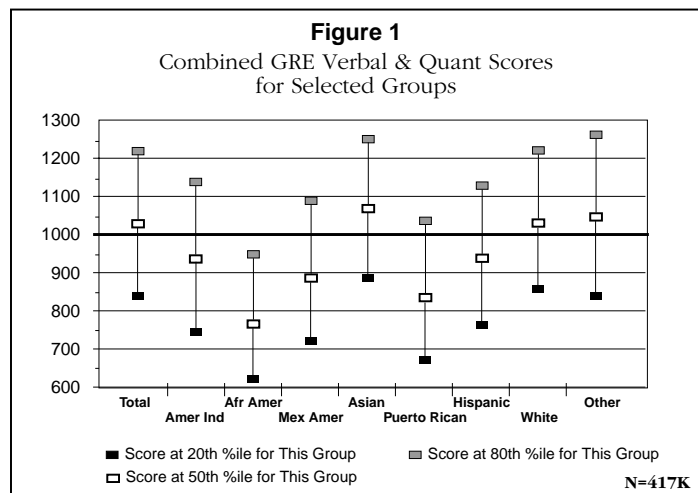
A Look at the Data

The database of GRE examinees from the 1993-94 testing year (N = 417K) shows that the effect of adhering to a particular cut score policy can lead to systematically discounting

1000. Fully 86 percent of African American examinees have combined scores that fall below 1000, as do 76 percent of Puerto Rican examinees. In the Mexican American subgroup, 69 percent of examinees score below the 1000 cut point, as do 61 percent of American Indian and Hispanic examinees. In only three examinee subgroups — those that describe themselves as White, Asian American, or Other — does a cut point policy of 1000 discount less than half of the population. Approximately 45 percent of White examinees, 43 percent of Other examinees, and 38 percent of Asian American examinees fall below the combined verbal and quantitative score of 1000.

Figure 2 illustrates combined verbal and quantitative performance for the total group, citizenship, and gender groups. Forty-six percent of the total GRE examinee population during 1993-94 fell below 1000. Data on citizenship indicate that a larger percentage of U.S. citizens (48 percent) than non-U.S. citizens (39 percent) fall below 1000. Where gender is concerned, 55 percent of females had a combined score of less than 1000, while only 35 percent of males did.

These data are striking in that they clearly illustrate the fact that large numbers of prospective graduate students in a variety of subgroups are adversely affected



large numbers of students in various subgroups. Figure 1, shown above, presents the percent of ethnic subgroup members in particular who are disadvantaged by a combined verbal and quantitative cut point of

by a cut score policy such as that depicted here. Many of these examinees may have acceptable, even commendable, scores in an area considered important for success in a particular graduate program (such as verbal

reasoning), but their scores in the other area (such as quantitative reasoning), which may be less related to success in that program, may be keeping them out of consideration.

The Role of GRE Scores in the Admissions Process

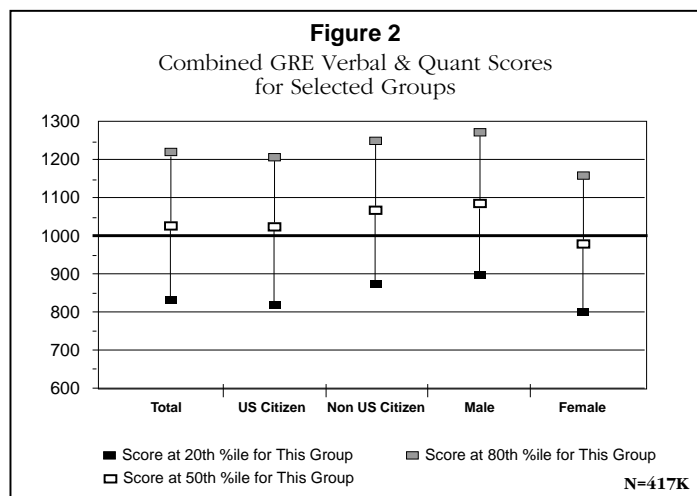
The data presented here serve to underscore the importance of appropriately using GRE scores in the admissions process. GRE scores are a valuable component of the graduate application package. *Combined with other information*, they can provide admissions officers with important information about the skills and abilities of their applicants.

GRE scores should never be used as the sole criterion by which applicants to graduate programs are denied admission. The GRE Board has developed guidelines for the appropriate use of GRE test scores. These guidelines are widely disseminated to institutional score users, as well as to GRE examinees. The guidelines are intended to facilitate the admissions process and to

protect students from unfair decisions that may result from inappropriate uses of GRE scores. For a copy of the guidelines, please send a request via e-mail to gre-info@ets.org.

Coming Up

In the next issue of *DataViews*, we will be addressing the question “Who Gets the Fellowship?”. We will look at the impact of using GRE scores as the sole criterion for awarding fellowships. To suggest a topic for a future issue of *DataViews*, write to us at the e-mail address listed above.



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