

CLT10 National  
Award Winners

*vs.*

PSAT/NMSQT  
Semifinalists

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*A Comparison*

# Comparing CLT10 National Award Winners to PSAT/NMSQT Semifinalists

Classic Learning Test (CLT)

2023-10-25

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## 1. Key Facts

1. Both CLT10 National Award winners and National Merit Scholarship semifinalists comprise about 1% of their respective student populations.
2. CLT10 National Award winners are at the top of a more competitive student population than National Merit Scholarship semifinalists.
3. The concordance relationship between the CLT10 and the PSAT shows that 10th grade CLT10 National Award winners score at or above the 99th PSAT/NMSQT percentile of *both* 10th grade *and* 11th grade PSAT/NMSQT norm groups.

## 2. The CLT10 National Award

Every year, the Classic Learning Test (CLT) awards the top 50 CLT10 test takers in the country with the CLT10 National Award. Due to tied scores, it is possible for more than 50 students to be awarded in a given year. To qualify, students must take the test in the 10th grade. In the 2022-2023 academic year, 5131 10th grade students took the CLT10 and 50 won the award, corresponding to 0.98% of all qualifying test takers. We expect this percentage to decrease significantly as the annual number of test takers increases because the CLT10 National Awards are not based on a set cut score but rather a constant number of top scores. As the number of test takers increases, the number of scores at the high end of the scale will also increase. Assuming that the proportion of each score stays constant, this means that a fewer percentage of all test takers will win the award. Moreover, we expect a significant increase in the number of test takers given the trends shown in Figure 1 and Table 1. Table 1 and Figure 1 show both the number of unique students and the total number of tests taken per academic year since many students take the CLT10 multiple times.

Table 1: Number of CLT10 Test Takers by Academic Year

Academic Year	All Tests	Unique Students
2022-2023	10957	10221
2021-2022	9164	8278
2020-2021	7839	7144
2019-2020	7326	6587
2018-2019	6143	5693
2017-2018	3403	3403
2016-2017	95	95

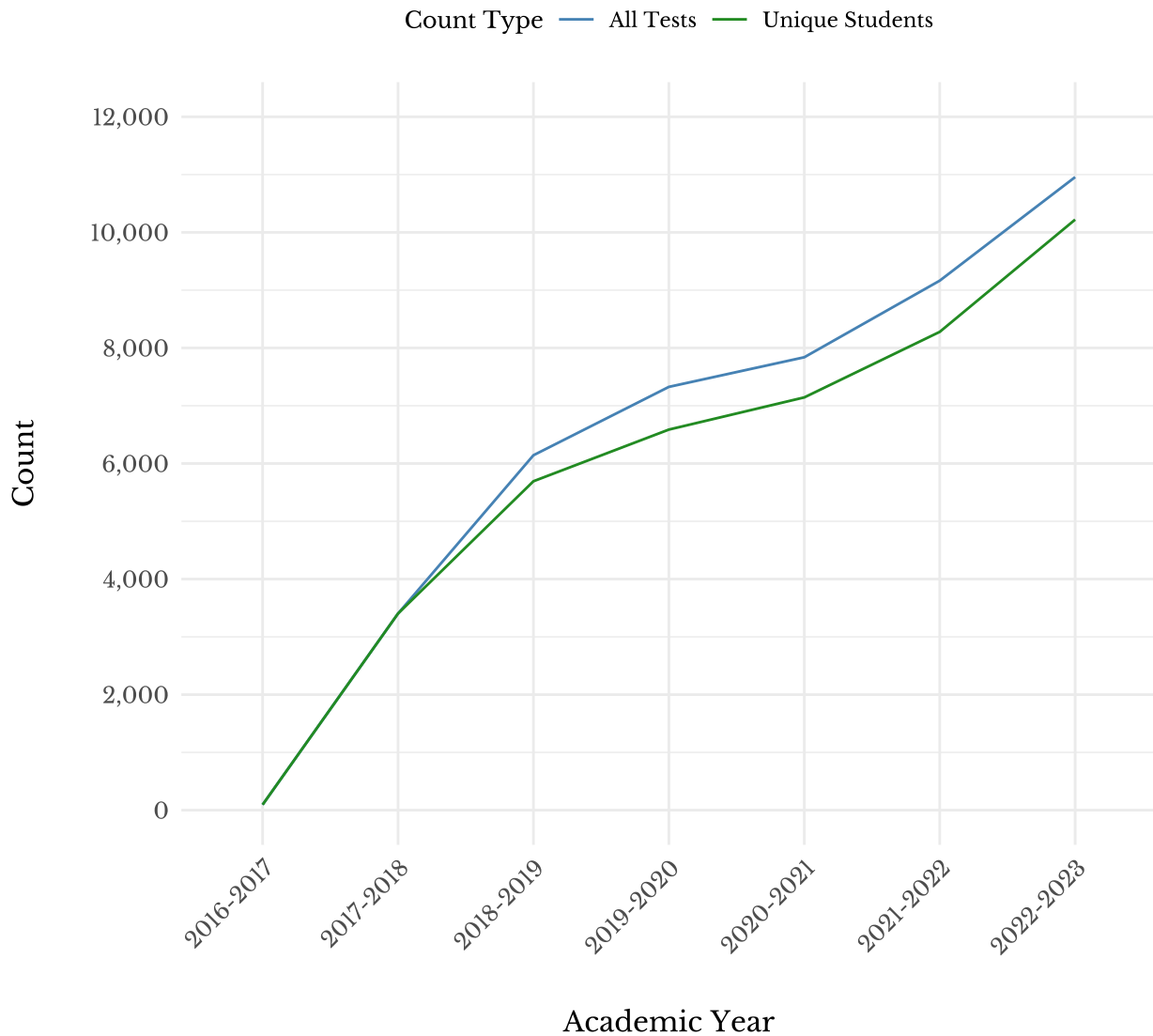


Figure 1: Number of CLT10 Test Takers by Academic Year

### 3. The National Merit Scholarship Program

The National Merit Scholarships are awarded to the program finalists as the result of a two-year process<sup>[1]</sup>. To become candidates for the 2024 National Merit Scholarships, participants were required to take the PSAT/NMSQT in 11th grade, which corresponded to the October 2022 administration. In the 2022 cohort, it was anticipated that more than 16,000 students would advance to become semifinalists. According to the College Board’s 2022-2023 SAT Suite of Assessments Annual Report<sup>[2]</sup>, 1,486,999 11th grade students took the PSAT in the last academic year. This means that about 1.08% of all PSAT/NMSQT test takers would become semifinalists, which is slightly higher than the percentage of the CLT10 National Award winners.

## 4. Score Comparisons

It is important to note that the two groups of test takers compete in very different populations. Approximately 40% of CLT10 test takers are homeschoolers. In contrast, most PSAT/NMSQT test takers are public school students. A study we conducted in 2022 showed that the average CLT10 score of homeschoolers is 4 points higher than the average CLT10 score of public school students, which is a difference of 0.24 standard deviations. This means that the CLT10 National Award winners are at the top of a higher scoring population. For more direct comparisons of CLT10 National Award winners to National Merit Scholarship semifinalists, we can use the CLT10-PSAT concordance table developed by the CLT <sup>[3]</sup>. The average predicted PSAT score of the 2022-2023 CLT10 National Award winners is 1480, which is at the 99th percentile of the PSAT/NMSQT *11th grade user norm group*, above the 99th percentile of the *11th grade national norm group*, and above the 99th percentiles of both the 10th grade user and national norm groups<sup>[4]</sup>. This means that *CLT10 National Award winners score at the top 0%-1% of PSAT/NMSQT test takers who are one grade above them.*