

How big & how small can the set of all subset-sums be for a set of size n .

1. $\{2^0, 2^1, \dots, 2^{n-1}\}$ has all 2^n subset-sums. This is of course max.
2. $\{1, \dots, n\}$ has $\frac{n(n+1)}{2} + 1$ subset-sums. Lance proved that this is min.

Are there any other subsets of $\{1, \dots, n\}$ that have $\frac{n(n+1)}{2} + 1$ subset-sums?

Stupid Answer Yes, take $\{x, 2x, \dots, nx\}$.

$(\exists A)[A \neq \{x, \dots, nx\}]$ that has $\frac{n(n+1)}{2}$ subset-sums?

$n = 3$: $\{a, b, a + b\}$. sums $\{0, a, b, a + b, 2a + b, a + 2b, 2a + 2b\}$. 7 of them.

For $n \geq 4$ we will show that the answer is NO.

Suppose a set $A = \{a_1 < \dots < a_n\}$ has $\frac{n(n+1)}{2} + 1$ subsetsums. Now add a larger number b to the set. Suppose the new set has $\frac{(n+1)(n+2)}{2} + 1$ subsetsums.

$\frac{n(n+1)}{2} + 1$ of them are all the subsetsums of the A with b added to them. So, we can have at most $n + 1$ other subsetsums that do not contain b . Since the subsets $\emptyset, \{a_1\}, \{a_2\}, \{a_3\}, \dots, \{a_n\}$ are $n + 1$ subsetsums which are less than b , there must be no other subsetsums. This implies that b is the smallest number greater than a_n which is a subsetsum of A . This also implies that if $A \cup \{b\}$ has minimal subsetsums, then so does A . So, we only need to find all the 4-element sets that have 11 subsetsums.

We know that any candidate set will look like $\{a, b, a + b, 2a + b\}$ where $a < b$

That set will have the following 11 subsetsums:

0

a

b

$a + b$

$2a + b$

$3a + b$

$2a + 2b$

$3a + 2b$

$4a + 2b$

$3a + 3b$

$4a + 3b$

as well as $a + 2b$

So, $a + 2b$ must equal one of the above numbers. The only possibility is $3a + b$. So, $a + 2b = 3a + b$, which implies $b = 2a$. So, our set had to be $\{a, 2a, 3a, 4a\}$.