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Post-Affirmative Action, Views on Admissions Differ by Race

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STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Two in three Americans say the Supreme Court's decision is "mostly a good thing"
- Black adults are split on whether the decision is good (52%) or bad (48%)

- 48% of Black prospective students say it impacts which schools they apply to

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A Gallup Center on Black Voices survey finds that about two in three Americans (68%) say the Supreme Court’s June 2023 ruling to end the use of race and ethnicity in university admission decisions is “mostly a good thing.”

Black Americans are divided in their assessment of the decision, while majorities of Asian, White and Hispanic adults view the ruling mostly positively.

Americans' Views Differ by Race/Ethnicity on U.S. Supreme Court's Decision to Ban Race in College Admission Decisions

Overall, do you think the Supreme Court’s ruling to end the use of race/ethnicity in admission decisions for colleges and universities was mostly a good thing or mostly a bad thing?

	U.S. adults	Asian adults	Black adults	Hispanic adults	White adults
Mostly a good thing	68	63	52	68	72
Mostly a bad thing	32	38	48	32	28

The court’s decision in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* ended race-conscious admissions programs at colleges in the U.S., reversing decisions by the court that had permitted the practice in the past. Previous Gallup polling found similar majorities of Americans, around 70%, had consistently favored colleges deciding admissions solely on merit rather than considering a student’s racial or ethnic background.

Black Adults Most Likely to View the Decision's Impacts Negatively

Students currently applying to colleges are the first cohort in decades to apply without race being a possible consideration in any college's admission decisions.

Although Black adults are divided on the appropriateness of the ruling, they are much more inclined to think it will have a negative than a positive (or no) impact on higher education, generally, and for members of their own racial group. About half of Black adults say the ruling will negatively impact higher education in the U.S. (50%) and the ability of applicants of their own race to attend college (52%). However, 33% of Black adults view the decision as a positive development, saying it will positively impact higher education, while 27% say it will make it easier for Black applicants. The rest view it as one that will not bear any consequences, with 17% saying it will not impact higher education and 22% saying it will make no difference to future Black college applicants.

In contrast, pluralities of Asian and White adults believe the decision will positively impact higher education in the U.S. Both groups are most likely to say the decision will make "no difference" for applicants of their own race to attend college.

Hispanic adults are most likely to view the decision as positive for higher education in the U.S. but are mixed evenly in terms of the impact on applicants of their own race.

Americans' Views on the Impact of the Supreme Court's Decision on Higher Education, by Race/Ethnicity

Overall, what impact do you think the Supreme Court's decision ending the use of race or ethnicity in college and university admissions will have on higher education in the United States?

	Asian adults	Black adults	Hispanic adults	White adults
% Mostly/Slightly positive impact	48	33	45	47
% No impact at all	14	17	22	23
% Mostly/Slightly negative impact	38	50	32	30

Americans' Perceptions of How the Decision Will Impact Applicants of Their Own Race, by Race/Ethnicity

As a result of this decision, do you think it will be easier or harder for applicants of your race/ethnicity to attend college or university?

	Asian adults	Black adults	Hispanic adults	White adults
% Much/Slightly easier	31	27	33	36
% No difference	46	22	33	55
% Much/Slightly harder	23	52	34	9

Oct. 25-Nov. 9, 2023

All racial and ethnic groups are most inclined to think the decision will result in less, rather than more, diversity on college campuses. Black (49%) and Asian (57%) adults are most likely to believe this.

Americans' Perceptions of the Decision's Impact on Diversity of College Campuses, by Race/Ethnicity

As a result of this decision, do you think college campuses will be more diverse or less diverse?

	Asian adults	Black adults	Hispanic adults	White adults
% Much/Slightly more diverse	16	29	33	24
% No difference	27	22	30	39
% Much/Slightly less diverse	57	49	36	37

The Ruling Impacts Many Prospective Students’ Decisions

The 2023 Lumina Foundation-Gallup State of Higher Education study found that, among non-college graduates aged 18 to 59 who report having considered pursuing a bachelor’s degree in the past two years, nearly half of Black adults in this group (48%) say the ruling will have “a great deal” or “a fair amount” of impact on their decision about which colleges they might apply to.

The court’s ruling has a slightly smaller impact on the application decisions of Hispanic (43%) and White adults (39%) who have recently considered a degree. But the ruling weighs particularly on Asian adults in this group, of whom about three in four (73%) say the ruling will impact which colleges they apply to.

Among Prospective Students, Asian and Black Adults Most Likely to Say the Decision Will Impact College Applications

How much will the Supreme Court ruling [in *Students for Fair Admissions*] impact your decision about which colleges you might apply to?

	Asian adults	Black adults	Hispanic adults	White adults
% A great deal/fair amount	73	48	43	39

Oct. 9-Nov. 16, 2023

Among those who report they have considered pursuing a bachelor's degree in the past two years

Bottom Line

The Supreme Court decision comes at a precarious time for Black Americans considering pursuing higher education, as Black enrollment has been on the decline for more than a decade and Black students are more likely than other students to be juggling competing priorities that hamper their ability to complete a degree.

The ruling, which the public views favorably and aligns with prior views on using race as a factor in college admissions, is now settled law. As the first cohort of students to apply to a post-affirmative action higher education system, the ruling has altered the calculus of those currently considering pursuing a degree -- including three in four Asian prospective students and half of Black prospective students.

While the ruling affects certain racial or ethnic groups of prospective students more than others, some applicants may feel empowered to apply to more selective schools, while others may be less likely to apply to such institutions.

Although the ruling receives fairly wide public support, predictions about the specific impact of the decision draw mixed responses across racial lines, underlining the uncertainty experienced by universities and students alike as they prepare for the next school year.

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SURVEY METHODS



These results are based on a Gallup web study completed by 12,443 U.S. adults, aged 18 and older, Oct. 25-Nov. 9, 2023. The survey was conducted in English. Individuals without internet access were not covered by this study. The Gallup Panel recruited 6,385 respondents for the study and supplemented them with 6,058 respondents from a third-party sample provider.

The Gallup Panel is a probability-based panel of U.S. adults whom Gallup selects using address-based sampling methods and random-digit-dial phone interviews that cover landlines and cellphones. Demographic targets were specified for the third-party sample provider to improve representativeness of the sample. Gallup uses a multi-stage weighting process to ensure samples are demographically representative of the U.S. adult population, using the most recent Current Population Survey figures; this process includes weighting Black, Hispanic and White respondents separately for each sample source before combining the sample.

For results based on this sample, the maximum margin of sampling error, which takes into account the design effect from weighting, is ± 1.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error for subgroups are higher. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

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