

# The Supreme Court and Affirmative Action: A Survey of College Presidents

A study by *Inside Higher Ed*  
and Hanover Research



Inside  
Higher  
Ed



Lumina<sup>™</sup>  
FOUNDATION

# EVERYONE DESERVES REAL OPPORTUNITY



**Unfortunately, opportunity isn't equal.**

At Lumina Foundation, we're committed to removing the barriers that keep today's Black, Hispanic and Latino, and Native American students from the education and lives they seek.

**Learn more about Lumina's commitment to equity:**  
***[www.luminafoundation.org/racialequity](http://www.luminafoundation.org/racialequity)***



[luminafoundation.org](http://luminafoundation.org)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction and Methodology..... 4

Key Findings ..... 5

Supreme Court’s Decision on Affirmative Action ..... 7

The Court’s Decision and Race in America..... 7

Minority Student Admissions ..... 8

Maintenance of Current Level of Diversity..... 8

Changes in Admissions Policies..... 9

Admission of More Transfer Students ..... 10

Financial Aid Awarded on Race or Ethnicity ..... 11

Admission for All Students in Top 10 Percent of Class ..... 12

Effects of Essay Questions or Interviews..... 13

Harvard and UNC-Chapel Hill Defense ..... 14

Proper Planning..... 14

Detailed Tables..... 15

About Inside *Inside Higher Ed* and Hanover Research..... 19

# INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

*Inside Higher Ed* has partnered with Hanover Research to survey college presidents about their views in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling on consideration of race in admissions.

The survey was administered online in August and September 2023 using the Qualtrics platform. Hanover sent surveys to 2,645 presidents and chancellors and received 136 fully or partially completed surveys, for a response rate of 5 percent.

The margin of error is 8.19 percent. Conclusions drawn from a small sample size (n<20) should be interpreted with caution.

All Institutions, by Sector					Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	For-profit*	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Associate	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
Total sample size	136	71	64	1	18	21	32	32	32

*Note: An asterisk (\*) indicates that data are not reported for these groups due to small sample*



# KEY FINDINGS

- More than two-thirds of presidents oppose the recent Supreme Court decision on affirmative action. Further, nearly half of presidents strongly oppose the decision (46 percent). Only 17 percent somewhat or strongly support the decision.
- Just 7 percent of presidents think the decision will result in changes in their institution's admissions policies. Of these few presidents, more than half indicate that their institution is prepared for those changes (60 percent). Presidents from private nonprofit institutions (14 percent) are significantly more likely than those from public institutions (1 percent) to indicate that the decision will result in changes in their institution's admissions policies.
- More than half of presidents believe the decision will result in fewer minority students being admitted to competitive institutions than in the past. However, presidents largely feel as though their institution will maintain its current level of diversity under the decision (86 percent). Very few feel that their institution will not maintain its current level of diversity (4 percent).
- The majority of presidents indicate that their institution is not considering a plan to admit significantly more transfer students as part of a response to the decision. Very few presidents report that they are considering such a plan (4 percent).
- Very few presidents are very or extremely optimistic about essay questions or interviews being able to help institutions achieve diversity in the new legal environment (7 percent). Most presidents are either slightly (32 percent) or moderately (40 percent) optimistic about this solution. More than one in five (21 percent) are not at all optimistic about this solution.
- More than half of presidents indicate that their institution does not have financial aid that they have, until now, awarded based on race or ethnicity. Slightly more than a third (37 percent) indicate that their institution does have this type of financial aid. Of these presidents, about half do not anticipate ending their program (54 percent), and more than one-quarter are unsure whether they will end their program (28 percent). Presidents from private nonprofit institutions (47 percent) are significantly more likely than those from public institutions (28 percent) to say their institution has financial aid that they have, until now, awarded based on race or ethnicity.

## KEY FINDINGS (cont.)

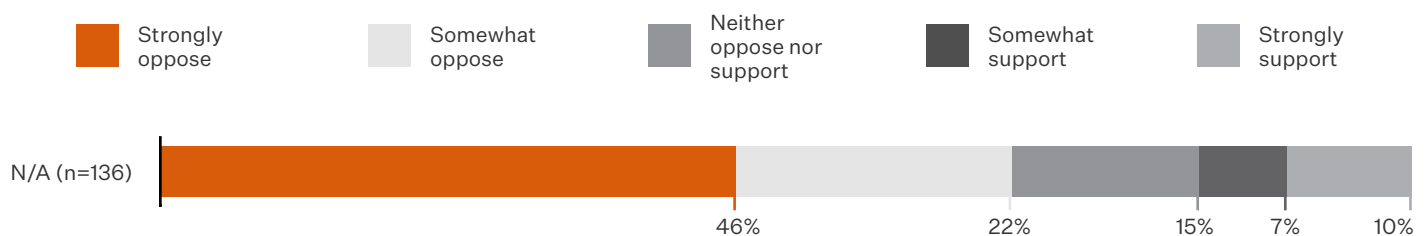
- Presidents are split on whether they would favor their state adopting a program to admit all students to public institutions who are in the top 10 percent of their high school classes in the state. About a third of presidents would favor this (35 percent), and more than one quarter (29 percent) would not. One in five campus leaders (21 percent) report that their state already has such a plan. Presidents from the South (27 percent) and West (44 percent) are significantly more likely than those in the Midwest (8 percent) and Northeast (8 percent) to report that their state already has a percentage plan.
- Presidents are almost evenly split on whether they believe Harvard University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill offered a good defense of affirmative action in the recent Supreme Court case. One third (33 percent) believe that these universities offered a good defense of affirmative action and 30 percent believe they did not.
- Fewer than one-third of respondents (30 percent) agree that the Supreme Court decision reflects a realistic sense of race in the U.S. today. More than half of respondents disagree with this statement (57 percent). Presidents from the South (41 percent) are significantly more likely than those in the Midwest (17 percent) to agree that the decision reflects a realistic sense of race in the U.S. today.

# SUPREME COURT'S DECISION ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

More than two-thirds of presidents oppose the recent Supreme Court decision on affirmative action (68 percent). Only 17 percent somewhat or strongly support the decision.

Presidents in the Northeast (64 percent) and the West (52 percent) are significantly more likely than those in the South (27 percent) to strongly oppose the recent Supreme Court decision on affirmative action.

## To what extent do you oppose or support the recent Supreme Court decision on affirmative action?

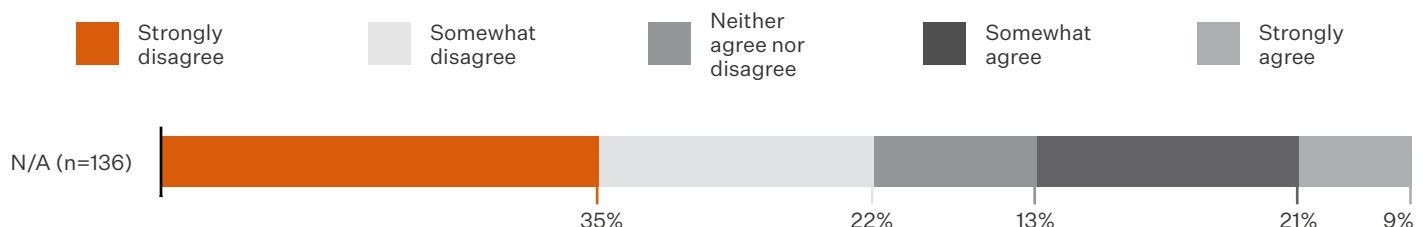


## THE COURT'S DECISION AND RACE IN AMERICA

Fewer than one-third of respondents (30 percent) agree that the court's decision reflects a realistic sense of race in the U.S. today. More than half of respondents disagree with this statement (57 percent).

Presidents from the South (41 percent) are significantly more likely than those in the Midwest (17 percent) to agree that the decision reflects a realistic sense of race in the U.S. today.

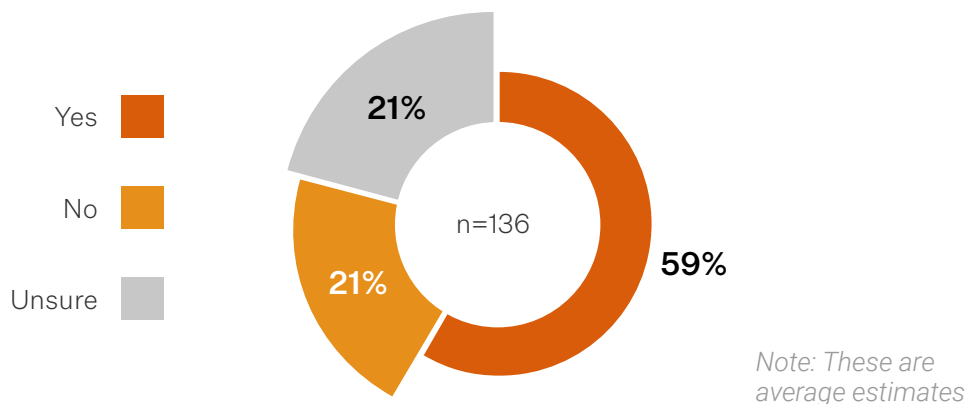
## Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statement: The Supreme Court decision reflects a realistic sense of race in the U.S. today.



## MINORITY STUDENT ADMISSIONS

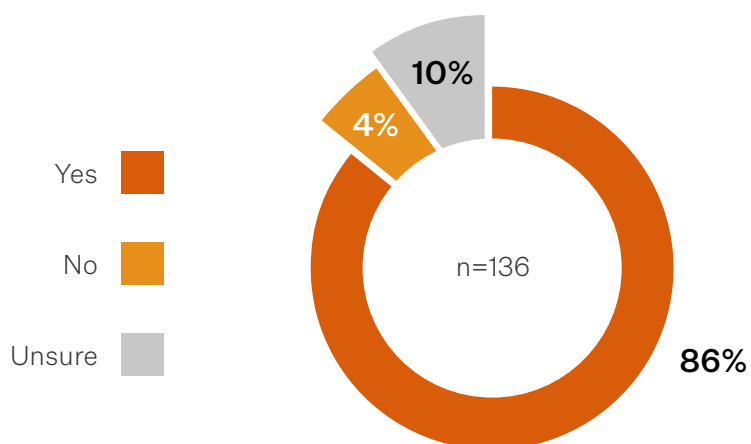
More than half of presidents believe the court's decision will result in fewer minority students being admitted to competitive institutions than in the past. In addition, 21 percent do not believe the decision will result in this and another 21 percent are unsure.

**Do you believe the decision will result in fewer minority students being admitted to competitive institutions than in the past?**



## MAINTENANCE OF CURRENT LEVEL OF DIVERSITY

Presidents largely feel as though their institution will maintain its current level of diversity under the decision. Very few feel that their institution will not maintain its current level of diversity (4 percent).



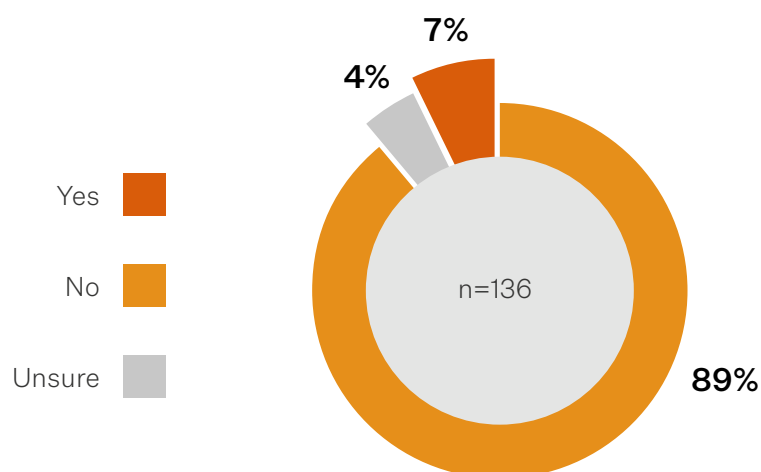


# CHANGES IN ADMISSIONS POLICIES

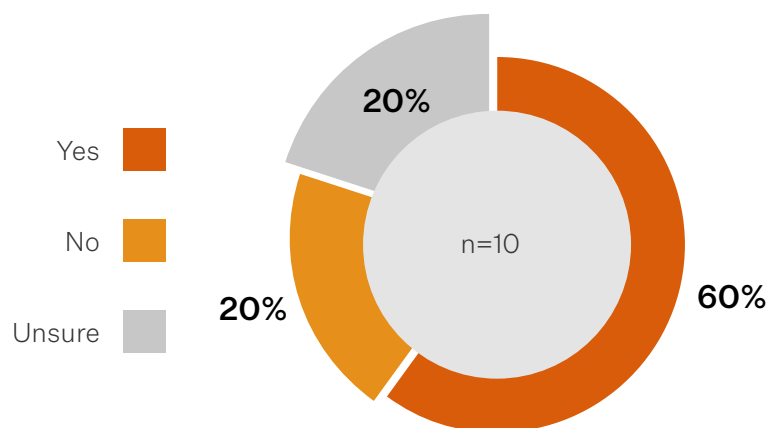
Most presidents do not think that the court's decision will result in changes in their institution's admissions policies. Just 7 percent report that the decision will result in changes in their institution's admissions policies. Of these few presidents, more than half indicate that their institution is prepared for those changes (60 percent).

Presidents from private nonprofit institutions (14 percent) are significantly more likely than those from public institutions (1 percent) to indicate that the decision will result in changes in their institution's admissions policies.

## Will the decision result in changes in your institution's admissions policies?



## Is your institution prepared for those changes?

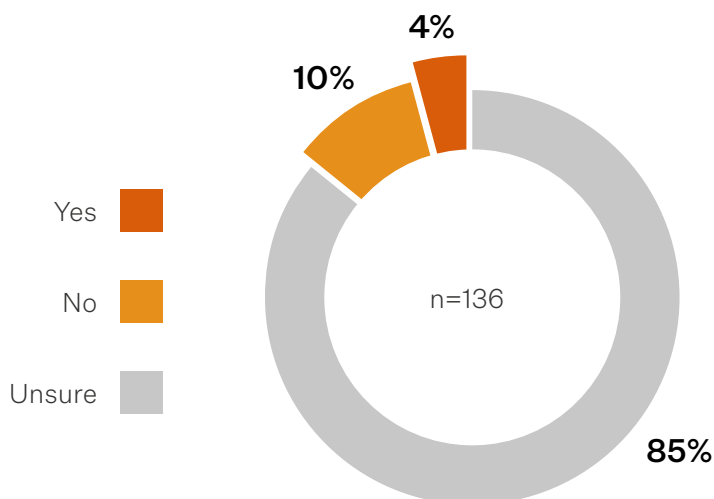


*Note: Only respondents who indicate that the decision will result in changes in their institution's admissions policies saw the question at the bottom.*

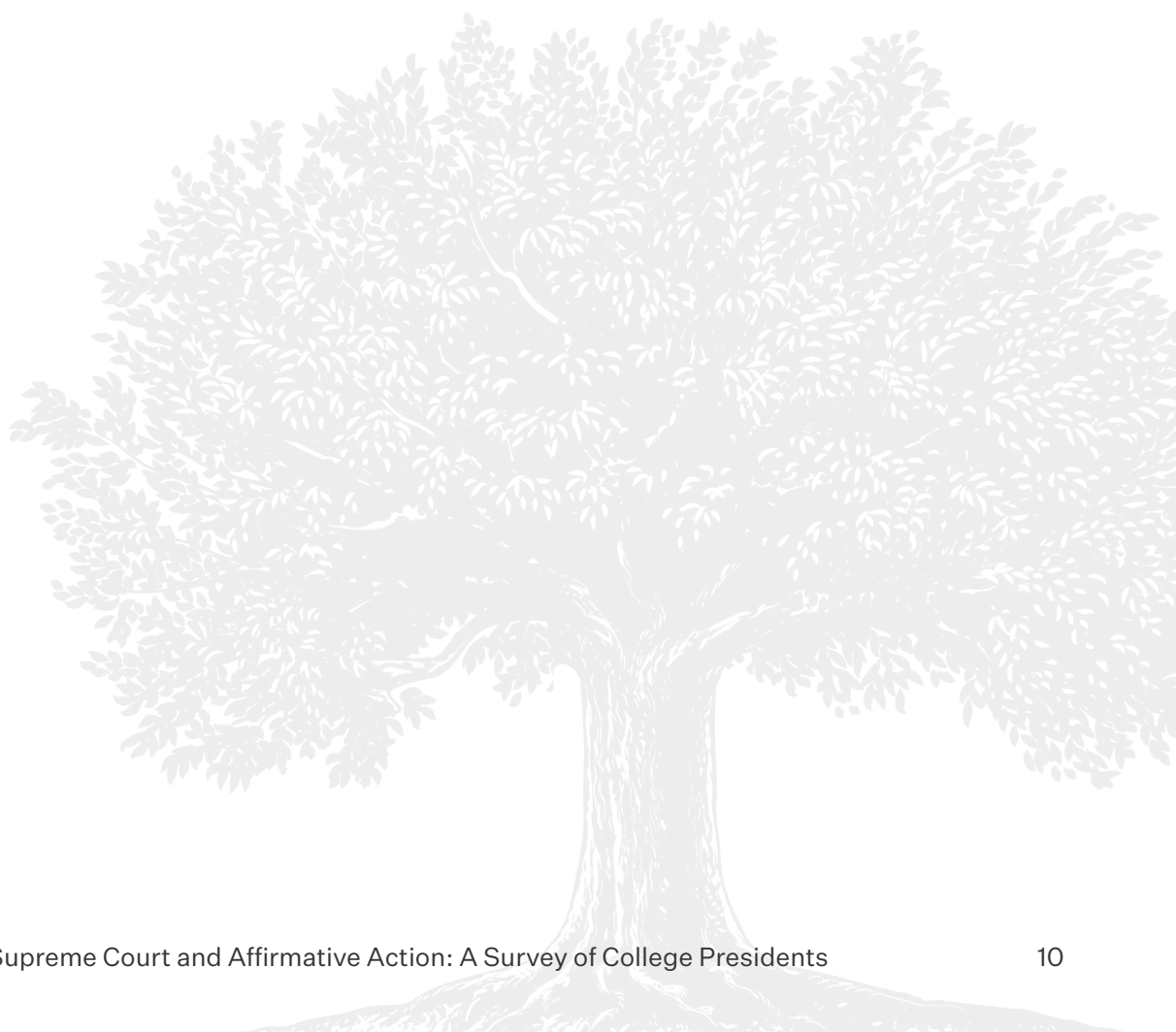
# ADMISSION OF MORE TRANSFER STUDENTS

Most presidents indicate that their institution is not considering a plan to admit significantly more transfer students as part of a response to the decision. Very few presidents report that they are considering such a plan (4 percent).

**Is your institution considering a plan to admit significantly more transfer students as part of a response to the decision?**



*Note: These are average estimates*



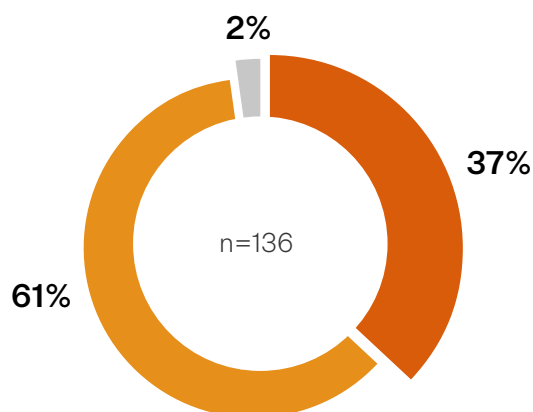
# FINANCIAL AID AWARDED ON RACE OR ETHNICITY

More than half of presidents indicate that their institution does not have financial aid that they have, until now, awarded based on race or ethnicity. Slightly more than a third (37 percent) indicate that their institution does have this type of financial aid. Of these presidents, about half do not anticipate ending their program (54 percent), and more than one-quarter are unsure whether they will end their program (28 percent).

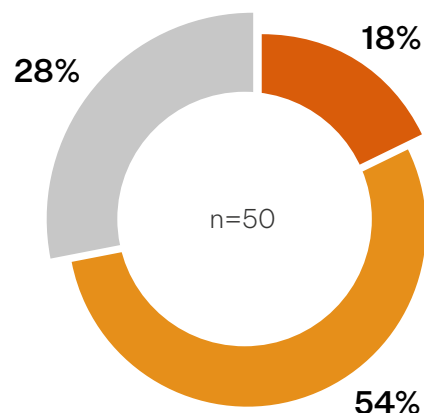
Presidents from private nonprofit institutions (47 percent) and from the Midwest (50 percent) are significantly more likely than presidents from public institutions (28 percent) and from the West (22 percent) to indicate that their institution has financial aid that they have, until now, awarded based on race or ethnicity.

Yes No Unsure

**Does your institution have any financial aid that you have, until now, awarded based on race or ethnicity?**



**Do you anticipate ending your program?**



*Note: Only respondents who indicate that the decision will result in changes in their institution's admissions policies saw the question on the right.*

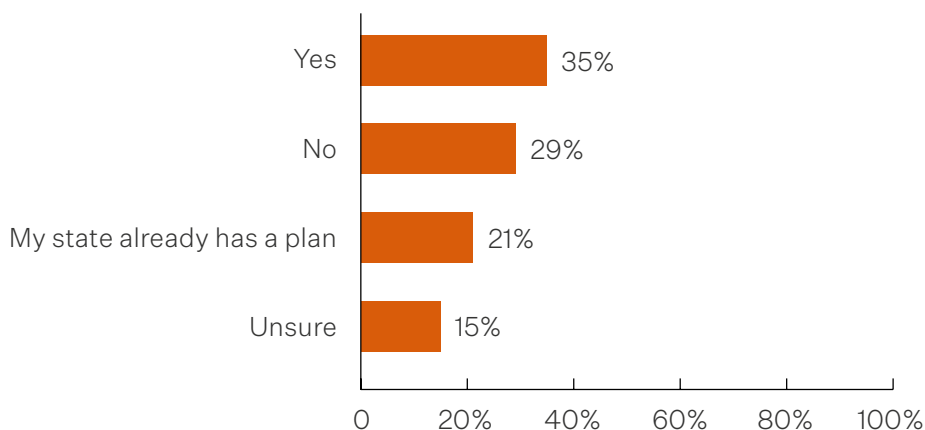
# ADMISSION FOR ALL STUDENTS IN TOP 10 PERCENT OF CLASS

Presidents are split on whether they would favor their state adopting a program to admit all students to public institutions who are in the top 10 percent of their high school classes in the state. Specifically, about one-third of presidents would favor this (35 percent), and about three in 10 (29 percent) would not. Additionally, nearly a quarter of presidents report that their state already has such a plan (21 percent).

Campus leaders of private nonprofit institutions (39 percent) are significantly likelier than those from public institutions (21 percent) to not favor their state adopting a program to admit all students to public institutions who are in the top 10 percent of their high school classes in the state.

Presidents from the South (27 percent) and West (44 percent) are significantly more likely than those in the Midwest and Northeast (8 percent each) to report that their state already has such a plan.

## **Would you favor your state adopting a program to admit all students to public institutions who are in the top 10 percent of their high school classes in the state? (n=136)**



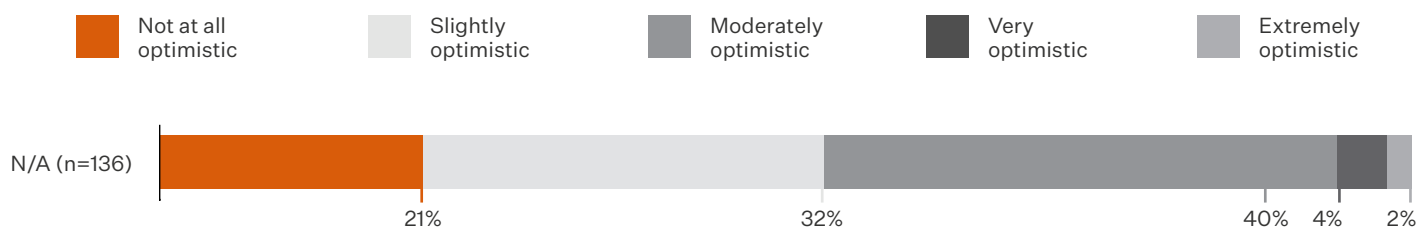


# EFFECTS OF ESSAY QUESTIONS OR INTERVIEWS

Very few presidents (7 percent) are very or extremely optimistic about essay questions or interviews being able to help institutions achieve diversity in the new legal environment. Most presidents are either slightly (32 percent) or moderately (40 percent) optimistic about this solution. Nearly one-quarter are not at all optimistic about this solution (21 percent).

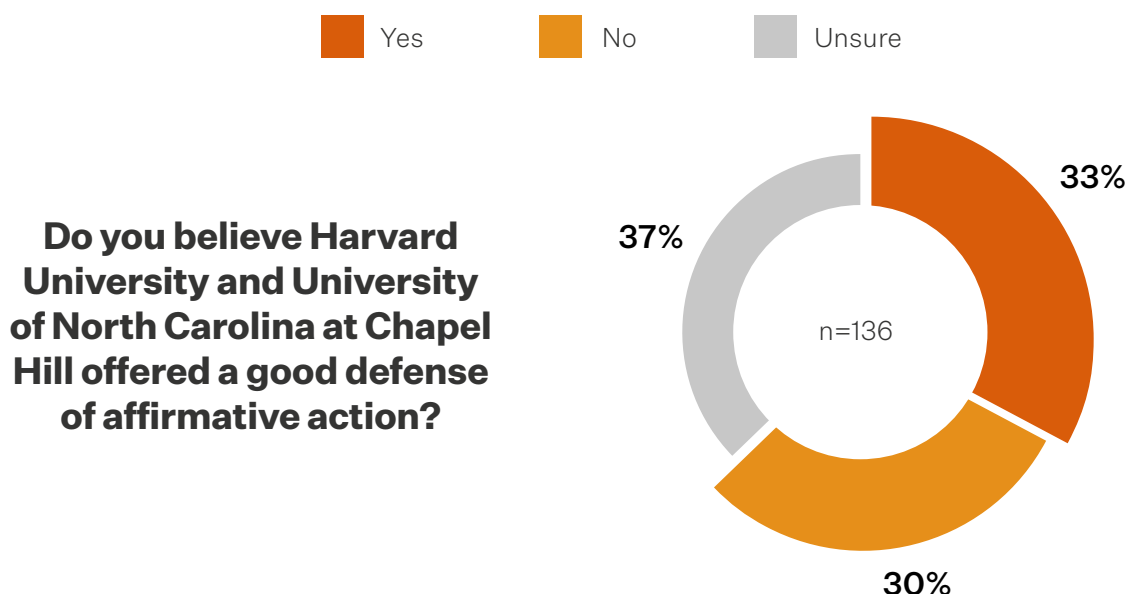
Presidents from public institutions (31 percent) are significantly more likely than those from private nonprofit institutions (11 percent) to be not at all optimistic about this solution.

## **Some institutions hope that essay questions or interviews will help them achieve diversity in the new legal environment. How optimistic are you about this solution?**



# HARVARD AND UNC-CHAPEL HILL DEFENSE

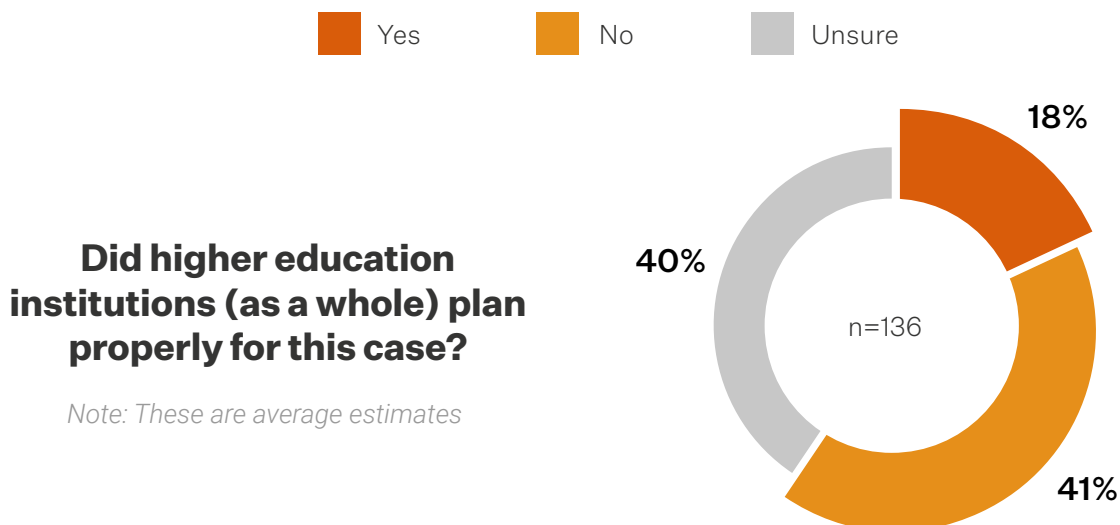
Presidents are almost evenly split on whether they believe Harvard University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill offered a good defense of affirmative action before the Supreme Court. One third (33 percent) believe these universities offered a good defense of affirmative action and 30 percent believe they did not. More than one-third of presidents are unsure (37 percent).



## PROPER PLANNING

Fewer than half of presidents indicate that higher education institutions as a whole planned properly for this case. Just 18 percent think that they did plan properly for this case, and 40 percent are unsure.

Presidents of institutions in the Northeast (42 percent) are significantly more likely than those from the Midwest (11 percent), South (11 percent), and West (7 percent) to indicate that higher education institutions planned properly for this case.



### Which of the following best describes your primary role at your institution?

	All Institutions, by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% President	87	82	94	50	95	91	88	100
% Chancellor	9	14	3	39	5	6	6	0
% President emeritus	4	4	3	11	0	3	6	0
% None of the above	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

### To what extent do you oppose or support the recent Supreme Court decision on affirmative action?

	All Institutions, by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% Strongly Oppose	46	46	44	50	48	44	44	44
% Somewhat Oppose	22	23	22	22	24	22	22	22
% Neither Oppose nor Support	15	20	11	22	14	22	13	9
% Somewhat Support	7	8	6	6	10	9	9	3
% Strongly Support	10	3	17	0	5	3	13	22

### Do you believe the decision will result in fewer minority students being admitted to competitive institutions than in the past?

	All Institutions, by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% Yes	59	61	56	56	52	69	59	53
% No	21	21	20	28	24	16	19	22
% Unsure	21	18	23	17	24	16	22	25

### Will the decision result in changes in your institution's admissions policies?

	All Institutions, by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% Yes	7	1	14	6	0	0	6	22
% No	89	96	81	94	95	97	88	75
% Unsure	4	3	5	0	5	3	6	3

### Is your institution prepared for those changes?

	All Institutions, by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% Yes	60	0	67	0	0	0	100	57
% No	20	0	22	0	0	0	0	29
% Unsure	20	100	11	100	0	0	0	14

### Do you feel your institution will maintain its current level of diversity under the decision?

	All Institutions, by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% Yes	86	90	81	94	90	88	84	78
% No	4	3	6	0	5	3	3	9
% Unsure	10	7	13	6	5	9	13	13

### Is your institution considering a plan to admit significantly more transfer students as part of a response to the decision?

	All Institutions, by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% Yes	4	4	5	11	0	3	0	9
% No	85	86	84	83	81	91	91	78
% Unsure	10	10	11	6	19	6	9	13

### Does your institution have any financial aid that you have, until now, awarded based on race or ethnicity?

	All Institutions, by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% Yes	37	28	47	39	19	28	44	50
% No	61	69	52	56	76	72	56	47
% Unsure	2	3	2	6	5	0	0	3

### Do you anticipate ending your program?

	All Institutions, by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% Yes	18	15	20	14	25	11	14	25
% No	54	50	57	29	75	56	50	63
% Unsure	28	35	23	57	0	33	36	13



**Would you favor your state adopting a program to admit all students to public institutions who are in the top 10 percent of their high school classes in the state?**

	All Institutions, by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% Yes	35	42	27	56	33	41	28	25
% No	29	21	39	17	24	22	31	47
% My state already has a plan	21	24	17	22	29	22	22	13
% Unsure	15	13	17	6	14	16	19	16

**Do you believe Harvard University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill offered a good defense of affirmative action?**

	All Institutions, by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% Yes	33	28	39	44	24	22	44	34
% No	30	28	33	28	29	28	28	38
% Unsure	37	44	28	28	48	50	28	28

**Did higher education institutions (as a whole) plan properly for this case?**

	All Institutions, by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% Yes	18	13	25	28	5	9	41	9
% No	41	51	30	50	52	50	28	31
% Unsure	40	37	45	22	43	41	31	59

**Some institutions hope that essay questions or interviews will help them achieve diversity in the new legal environment. How optimistic are you about this solution?**

	All Institutions, by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% Not at All Optimistic	21	31	11	39	19	34	9	13
% Slightly Optimistic	32	28	36	22	29	31	38	34
% Moderately Optimistic	40	35	45	39	52	22	44	47
% Very Optimistic	4	4	5	0	0	9	6	3
% Extremely Optimistic	2	1	3	0	0	3	3	3

**Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statement:  
The Supreme Court decision reflects a realistic sense of race in the U.S. today.**

	All Institutions, by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% Strongly Disagree	35	34	36	44	33	28	38	34
% Somewhat Disagree	22	21	23	17	24	22	25	22
% Neither Agree nor Disagree	13	18	8	17	19	19	3	13
% Somewhat Agree	21	20	22	22	19	19	25	19
% Strongly Agree	9	7	11	0	5	13	9	13

**With which of the following gender identities do you most identify?**

	All Institutions, by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% Male	56	48	64	61	43	44	81	47
% Female	38	46	28	39	52	47	19	38
% Non-binary/Gender non-conforming	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	3
% Not listed/Prefer to self-describe (specify, if desired):	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
% Prefer not to respond	6	6	6	0	5	9	0	13

**With which of the following categories do you identify? Please select all that apply.**

	All Institutions, by Sector			Public			Private Nonprofit	
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	Doctoral	Master's/ Bacc.	Assoc.	Doctoral/ Master's	Bacc.
% White	70	66	73	67	62	69	84	63
% Black or African American	18	20	16	17	29	16	9	22
% Asian	4	4	3	6	5	6	0	0
% American Indian or Alaskan Native	3	6	0	11	0	3	0	0
% Hispanic or Latin(o/a/x)	2	4	0	6	5	3	3	3
% Middle Eastern or North African	1	1	0	0	5	0	0	0
% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
% Not listed/Prefer to self-describe (specify, if desired):	1	1	0	0	0	3	0	0
% Prefer not to respond	7	4	9	0	0	9	3	16

## About *Inside Higher Ed*

*Inside Higher Ed* is the leading digital media company serving the higher education space. Since our founding in 2004, we have become the go-to online source for higher education news, analysis, resources and services. Our mission is to serve all of higher education — individuals, institutions, corporations and non-profits — so they can do their jobs better, transforming their lives and those of the students they serve. We are proud to have earned the trust and loyalty of our 3.2 million monthly readers by speaking as a fiercely independent voice, providing thoughtful, substantive analysis on the pressing issues facing higher education today.

Learn more about *Inside Higher Ed* at [www.insidehighered.com](http://www.insidehighered.com).

## About Hanover Research

Founded in 2003, Hanover Research is a global research and analytics firm that delivers market intelligence through a unique, fixed-fee model to more than 1,200 clients. Headquartered in Arlington, Va., Hanover employs high-caliber market researchers, analysts, and account executives to provide a service that is revolutionary in its combination of flexibility and affordability. Hanover was named a Top 50 Market Research Firm by the American Marketing Association in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018, and has also been twice named a Washington Business Journal Fastest Growing Company.

To learn more about Hanover Research, visit [www.hanoverresearch.com](http://www.hanoverresearch.com).



**Inside  
Higher  
Ed**

Copyright © 2023. All rights reserved.