

# AOW #2.1 Due: Friday, 11-09-2018

- Mark your confusion.
- Share the article with family/discuss it with friends. What are others' viewpoints on this topic/info?
- **Purposefully annotate the article** (2-3 mature, thoughtful responses per page to what the author is saying MINIMUM).
- Come Friday prepared to discuss and compose a one-page reflection.

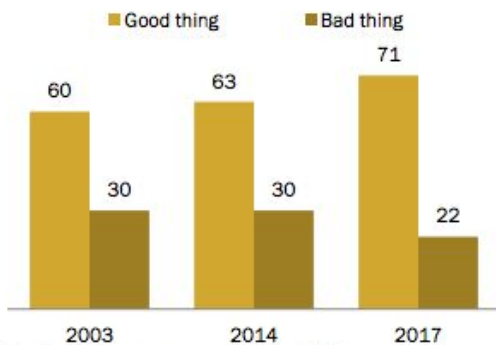
## How Americans Feel About Affirmative Action in Higher Education

by Courtney Rozen for *NPR: Education*, November 1, 2018

The [Harvard trial](#) wraps up on Friday. And for the last three weeks, the group Students for Fair Admissions has argued that the Ivy League school discriminates against its Asian-American applicants.

### Growing share views affirmative action programs positively

% who say affirmative action programs designed to increase the number of black and minority students on college campuses are a ...



Note: Don't know responses not shown. CB71.  
Source: Survey conducted Aug. 15-21, 2017.

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In a court filing, [conservative advocates](#) called Harvard's [race-sensitive admissions process](#) "racially and ethnically discriminatory." On the other hand, the school's new president [wrote](#) that the process helps Harvard "achieve a diverse student body."

Affirmative action has [historically](#) been the engine of diversity in higher education. But what do Americans think of affirmative action? It depends on how you ask the question.

60 percent of adult Americans surveyed by Gallup in 2016 said they generally favor affirmative action programs for racial minorities. But, 70 percent said they believe college applicants should be judged solely on [merit](#), and that racial and ethnic background should not be considered (even if it means that fewer minority students are admitted). The findings suggest that Americans broadly support the idea of affirmative action, but oppose preferential treatment for minorities in college admissions.

It's likely that conclusion hasn't changed since 2016, said Frank Newport, editor-in-chief of Gallup. Gallup asked Americans about affirmative action in previous years and received similar replies each time, Newport said.

The public's opinion differs from the position of more than a dozen [elite colleges](#) who signed a [friend-of-the-court brief](#) in favor of Harvard.

One of those schools was Brown University. Christina Paxson, the college's president, said taking race out of the admissions equation would make it difficult for competitive schools to enroll a racially diverse class, she said.



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"It's sort of trying to get to an outcome with one hand tied behind your back," Paxson said. "It doesn't work very well."

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Here's a few takeaways from past polls on how Americans view affirmative action:

- About half of Republicans (and people who lean Republican) believe affirmative action programs designed to increase racial diversity "are a good thing," according to a [2017 Pew Research Center poll](#).
- 84 percent of Democrats (and Democratic leaners) view affirmative action positively, according to Pew.
- Non-white Americans are more likely to support affirmative action than white Americans, according to a [2016 report from the American Enterprise Institute](#), a conservative [think tank](#).

It's not unusual for Americans to support a policy in general, but disagree when it comes to the specific application of that policy, Newport said.

Harvard's admissions process, for example, can be "hard for anybody to understand," he said. Like other highly-selective universities, Harvard uses a holistic admissions process, which is evaluating a candidate's life experience and background in addition to grades and test scores.

Brown University also uses a holistic admissions strategy. Paxson said it can be difficult for her admissions team to pick from a pool of applicants with strong grades, test scores, essays and recommendations. Adding in holistic admissions factors — like military service, hometown, first-generation status and race — allows Brown to create communities where "you have people who are different from each other," Paxson said.



Peter Wood, president of the National Association of Scholars, said the words "affirmative action" may have two different meanings for people surveyed.

Some may see it as "an attempt to achieve racial fairness" for people from historically-oppressed groups, while others may view it as "gross unfairness" and help for people who "have never been subject to any significant amount of racial animus."

"We should be weighing people as individual with no taint of racial discrimination in any form, either positive or negative," Wood said. (They're backing Students for Fair Admissions in its lawsuit.)

## Response Options:

- How would you explain the belief that "taking race out of the admissions equation would make it difficult for competitive schools to enroll a racially diverse class?"
- What statistics or facts surprised you? Why?
- What is the ultimate goal of affirmative action in higher education? Why do universities desire "diverse student populations?"
- Do you believe in "positive racial discrimination?"
- What is the political cartoon trying to demonstrate? What do you think of it?