

# Hispanics are worse off than whites under certain university admission policies

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Changes to college admission policies in Texas have been detrimental to Hispanics, according to Dr. Angel Harris and Dr. Maria Tienda from Princeton University in the US. Their work shows that despite popular claims that the "top 10 percent law" has restored diversity to Texas' flagship universities, His-panics are more disadvantaged relative to whites under this policy. The top 10 percent law guarantees admission for students who graduate in the top 10 percent of their high school class. Their calculations also show that affirmative action or the use of racial quotas for college admissions remains the most efficient policy to diversify college campuses, even in highly segregated states like Texas. The study is published online in Springer's journal *Race and Social Problems*.

Hispanics are the largest and fastest growing segment of Texas' population. Recent changes to college [admission](#) policies in Texas were intended to increase college access to a wide spectrum of Texas' population by attracting the very best [students](#) of every high school to the state's flagship universities. Harris and Tienda examine the consequences of changes in [college enrollment](#) for Hispanics after affirmative action was abandoned for the top 10 percent law.

Harris and Tienda compared how application, admission and enrollment rates for both Hispanics and whites changed under the three admission regimes – affirmative action, the no policy period and the top 10 percent regime. They analyzed administrative data on the number of applicants and the number of students admitted to, and enrolled in, the two most

selective public institutions in Texas – the University of Texas at Austin (UT) and Texas A&M University (TAMU) – as well as data from the Texas Education Agency about high schools.

They found that the application rates of [Hispanics](#) to the Texas flagship universities fell after affirmative action was banned, resulting in an annual decrease in Hispanic applicants of up to 309 at UT, and nearly 500 at TAMU. Furthermore, application rates for Hispanic students at both institutions reached its lowest point under the top 10 percent regime.

"Our results have profound implications that transcend admission regimes," Harris and Tienda concluded. "Our results indicate that it is more helpful to direct attention away from the seemingly irresolvable differences about race or class-rank preferences, and instead encourage greater numbers of students to actually apply for admission. Cultivating college-going cultures at under-resourced high schools is a potential high-impact, relatively low cost, short-term strategy to raise Hispanic [college](#) application rates."

**More information:** Harris AL & Tienda M (2012). Hispanics in higher education and the Texas top 10 percent law. *Race and Social Problems*; [DOI 10.1007/s12552-012-9065-7](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-012-9065-7)

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