

# **Policy Transparency and College Enrollment: Did the Texas Top 10% Law Broaden Access to the Public Flagships?**

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# Policy Context

- 1996: affirmative action was banned by the *Hopwood* decision (effective fall 1997).
- 1997: H.B. 588 establishes the top-10% program (effective fall 1998).
- 2007: For the second consecutive legislative session, the Texas legislature considered and scuttled a bill to cap the number of students granted automatic admission at 50 percent. Rural legislators opposed.
- 2008: 81% of the University of Texas at Austin's entering class automatically qualified for admission. (41% in 1997).
- 2009: TX State Senate approved a bill to cap admissions at 60% of the incoming class. House has not voted.

# Research Questions

- Did the Top-10% policy broaden the set of high schools sending applicants and enrollees to UT and TAMU?
- Did the representation of high schools in rural areas, small towns, and mid-size cities increase?
- Did the representation of high poverty and high minority high schools increase?
- Did the policy broaden the representation of certain regions of Texas?
- Did the policy affect the persistence of remaining a sender school?

# Data

- UT:
  - Individual-level applicant data for the years 1990 to 2003 that have been compiled by the Texas Higher Education Opportunity Project (THEOP, [www.theop.princeton.edu](http://www.theop.princeton.edu)) – collapsed to the high school level.
  - UT-Austin Office of Admissions Research (OAR) for the years 1996 to 2007. Number of applicants and enrollees for Texas public high schools that sent one or more enrollees to UT.
- TAMU:
  - Individual-level applicant data for the years 1992 to 2002 that have been compiled by THEOP.
- Datasets merged with the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data (CCD) -- includes location, enrollment, racial composition, and share of students receiving free- or reduced price lunch.
- The analysis sample excludes private and alternative high schools, as well as public high schools that lacked a senior.
- 1,379 unique high school campuses.

# Definitions

- The CCD identifies the “urbanicity” of high schools in eight categories. We reduce this categorization into four types:
  - “Urban” = Within the city limits of the principal city of a large urban area (Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, El Paso, Houston, or San Antonio).
  - “Suburban” = Within the urban area of these large cities, but not within the city limits.
  - “Rural” = Rural area outside of a Metro or Micropolitan Statistical Area.
  - “Town or Midsize City” = Any area not otherwise captured above, including midsize cities and towns.
- We further re-categorize any high school that lies within a 20-mile radius of the center of the large cities as “Suburban”.
- We hold the high school’s urban/suburban/rural/other designation fixed over-time, using it’s most recent value.

# Definitions (Continued)

- High school's percent underrepresented minority (URM = black + Hispanic) and percent receiving Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL) have been averaged for 1990-2006.
- Texas regions defined by the Texas Comptroller – collapsed into five regions: Alamo (including San Antonio), Capital (including Austin), Gulf Coast (including Houston), Metroplex (including Dallas), and the other nine regions combined.

# Comptroller's 13 Regions of Texas



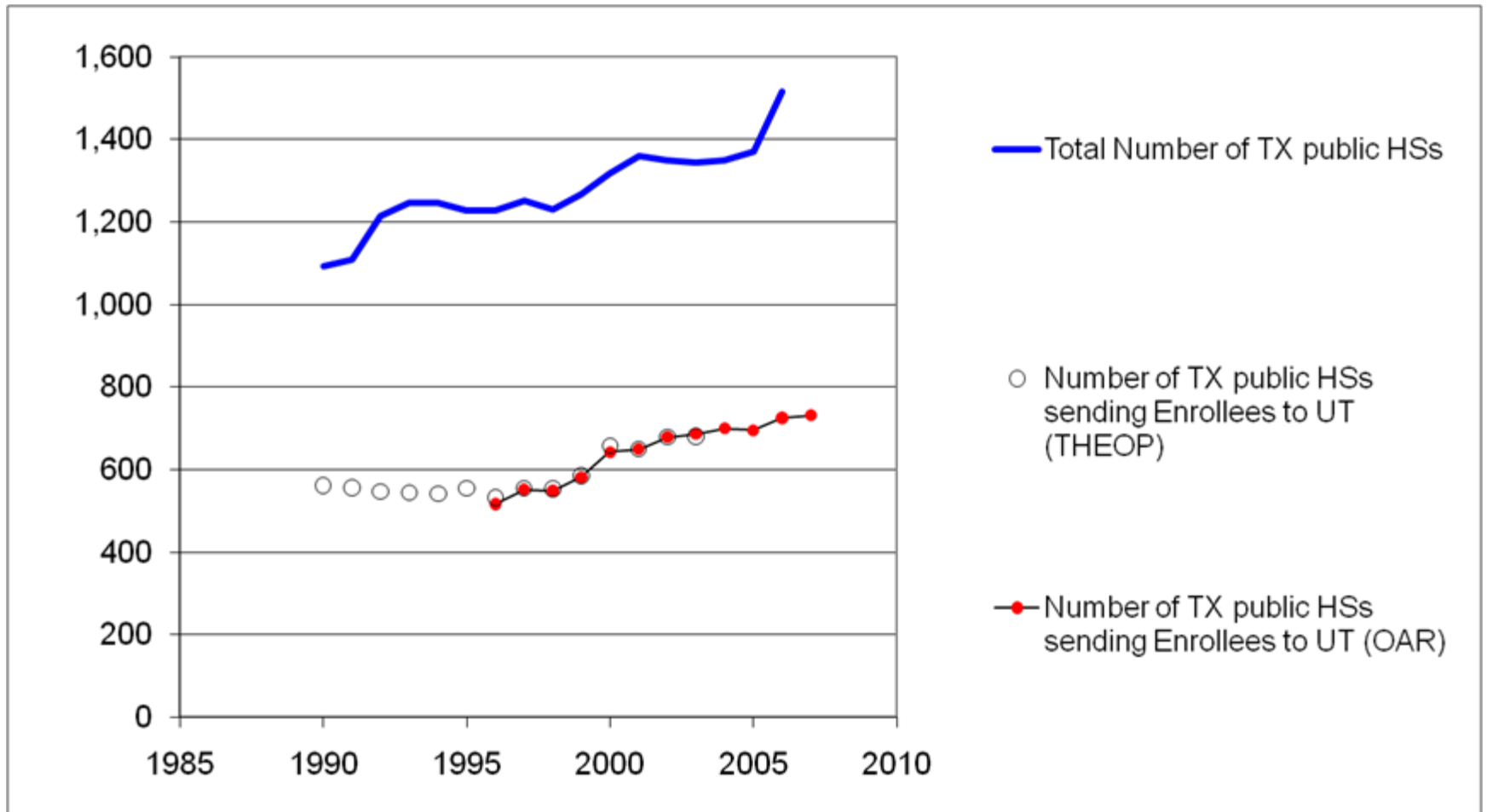


# Methodology

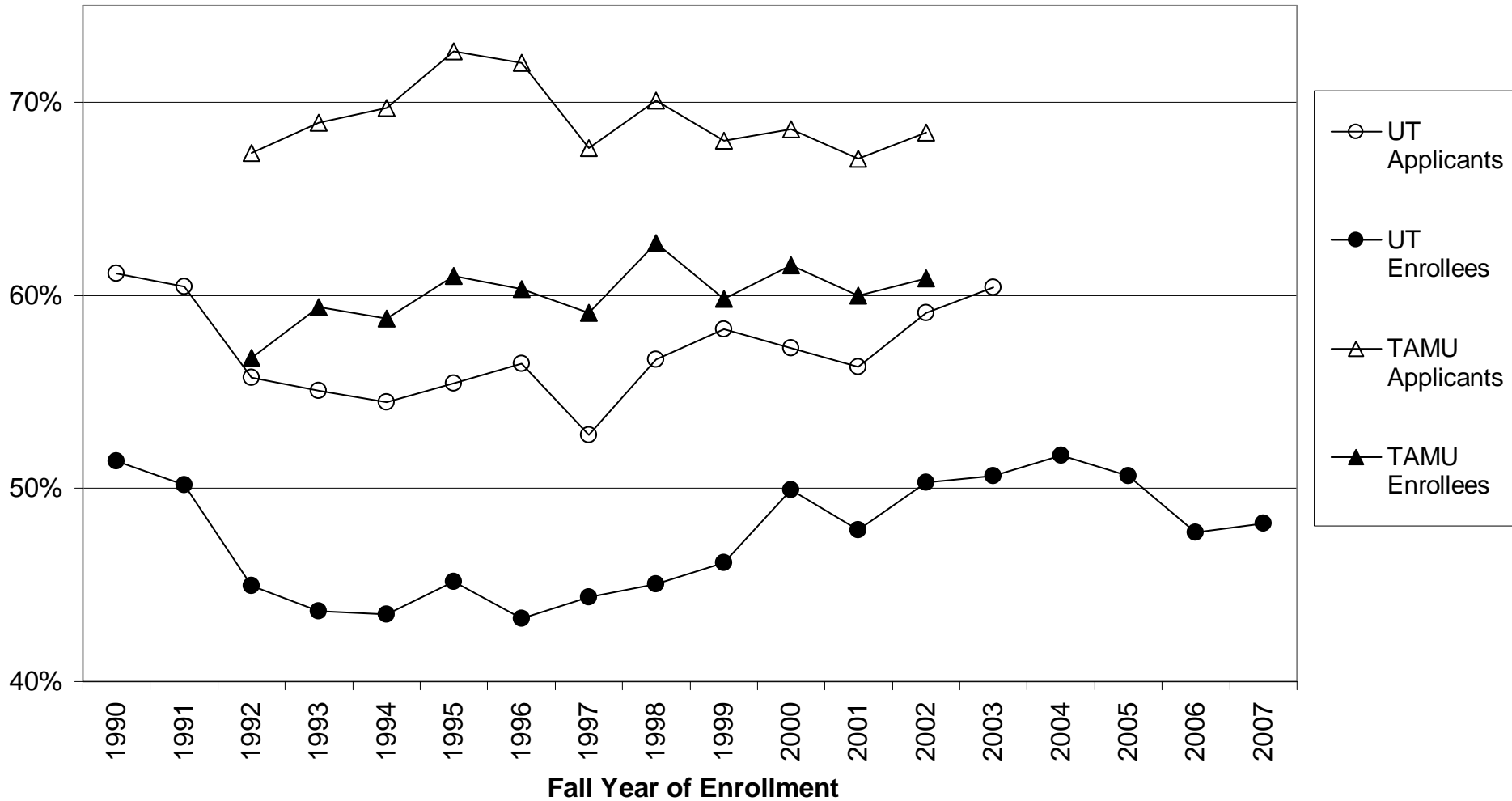
- Concentration measured by Gini index
- Under/Over-representation measured by the ratio (or the difference) between the share of UT enrollees coming from type-X high schools of and the share of high school graduates from type-X high schools.
- 1996 to 2007 change in the share of the high school's students enrolled at UT regressed on the high school's characteristics.
- Duration model predicting the hazard of a high school ceasing being a sender of enrollees to UT as a function of the high school's characteristics.

# Prior Literature: Increasing Number of High Schools Sending Enrollees to UT

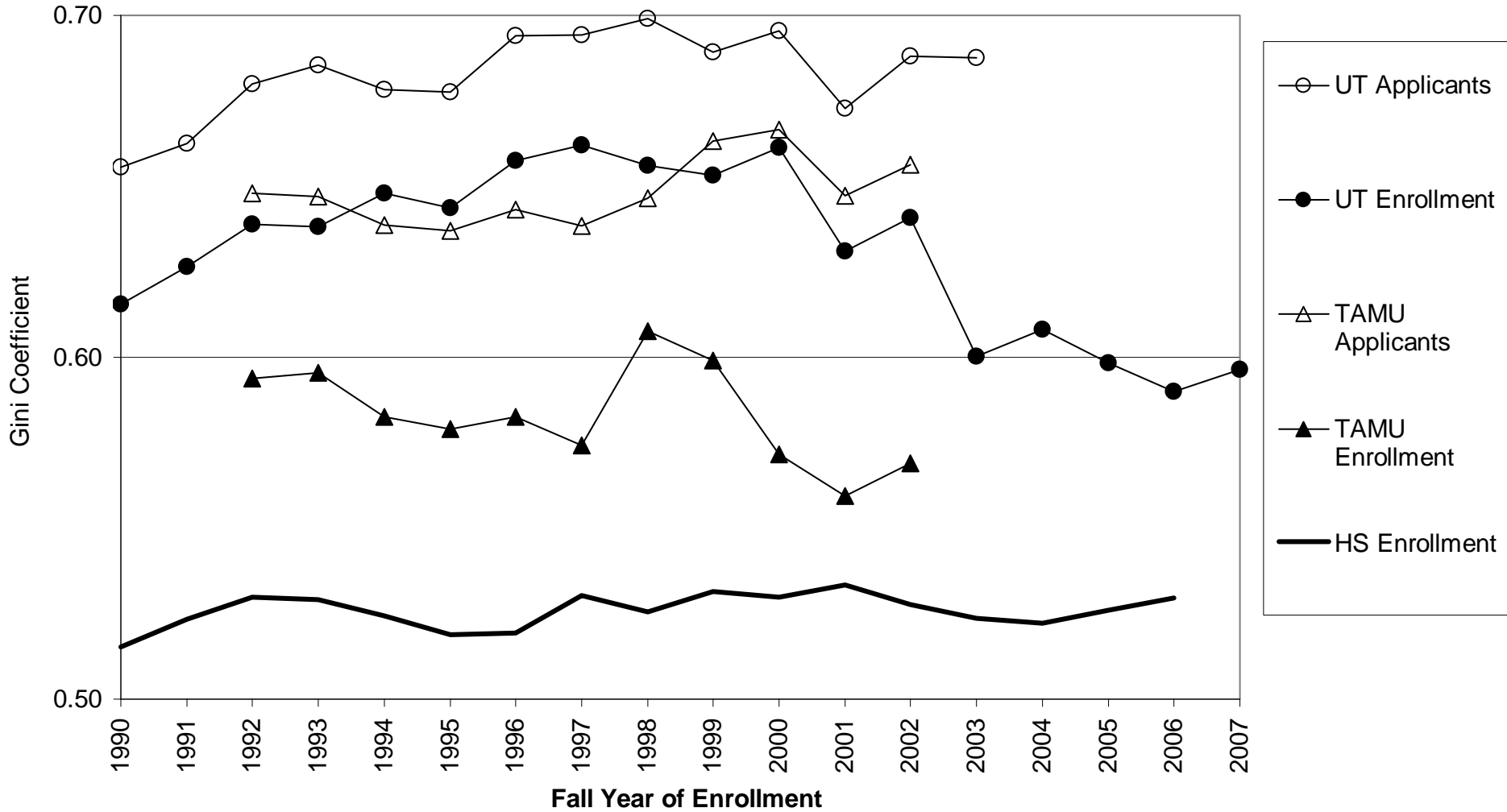
(Montejano, 2001; Saenz, 2007; UT-OAR, 2008)



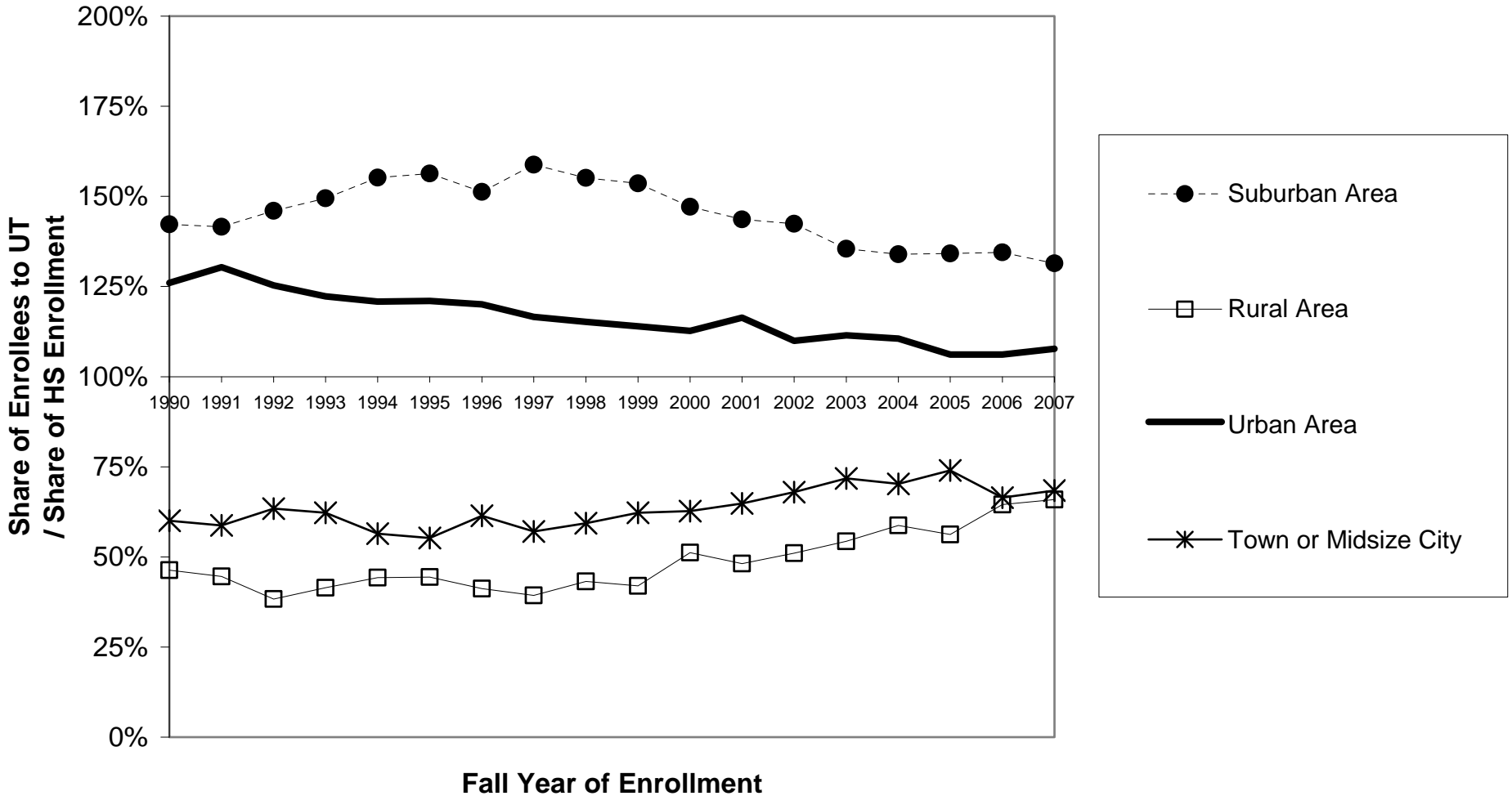
**Figure 1:**  
**Share of Texas Public High Schools**  
**Sending at Least One Applicant / Enrollee to UT-Austin or Texas A&M**



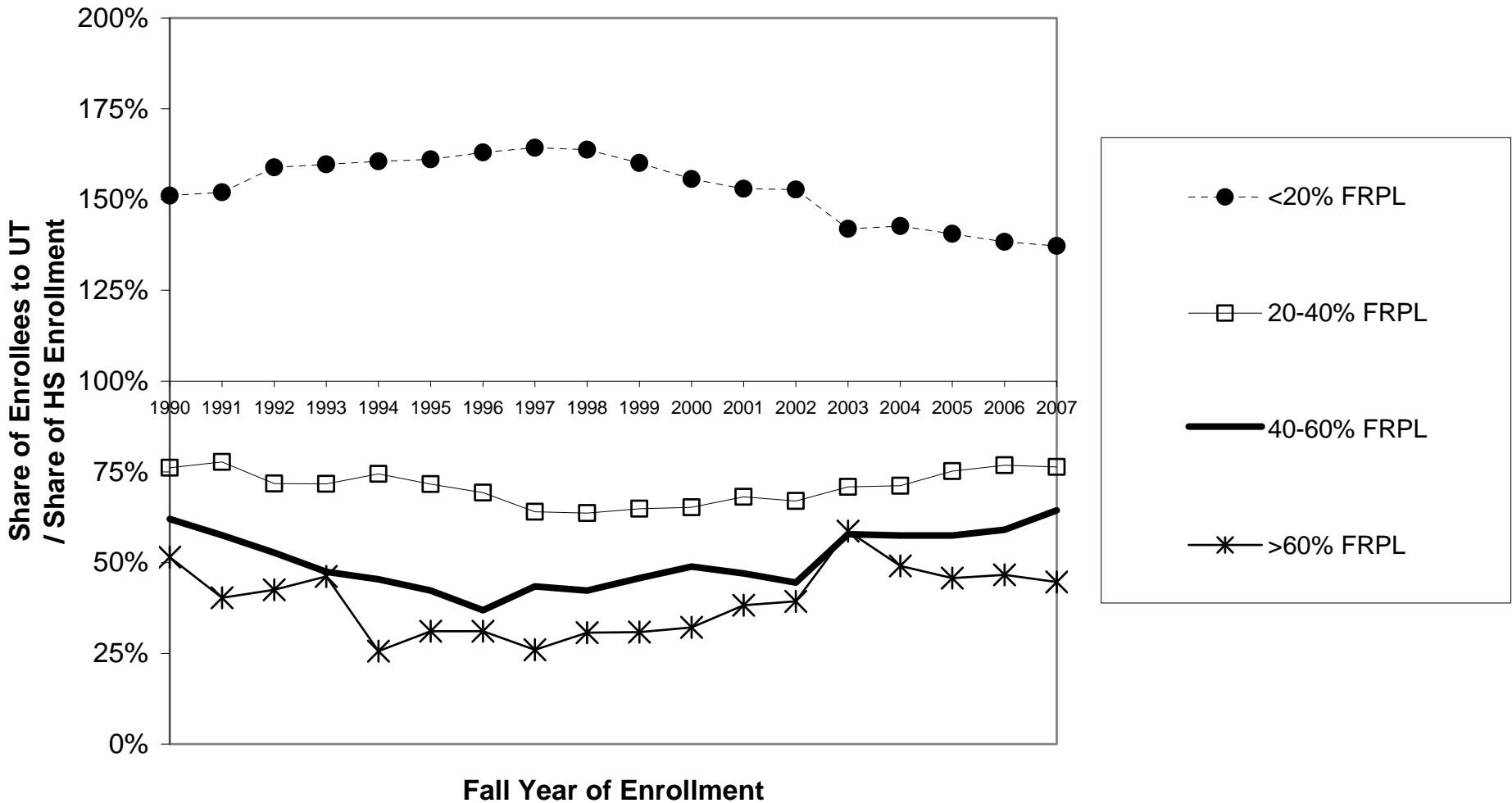
**Figure 2:  
 Concentration of HS Enrollment and UT and TAMU Applicants and Enrollees  
 Coming from Particular Texas Public High Schools**



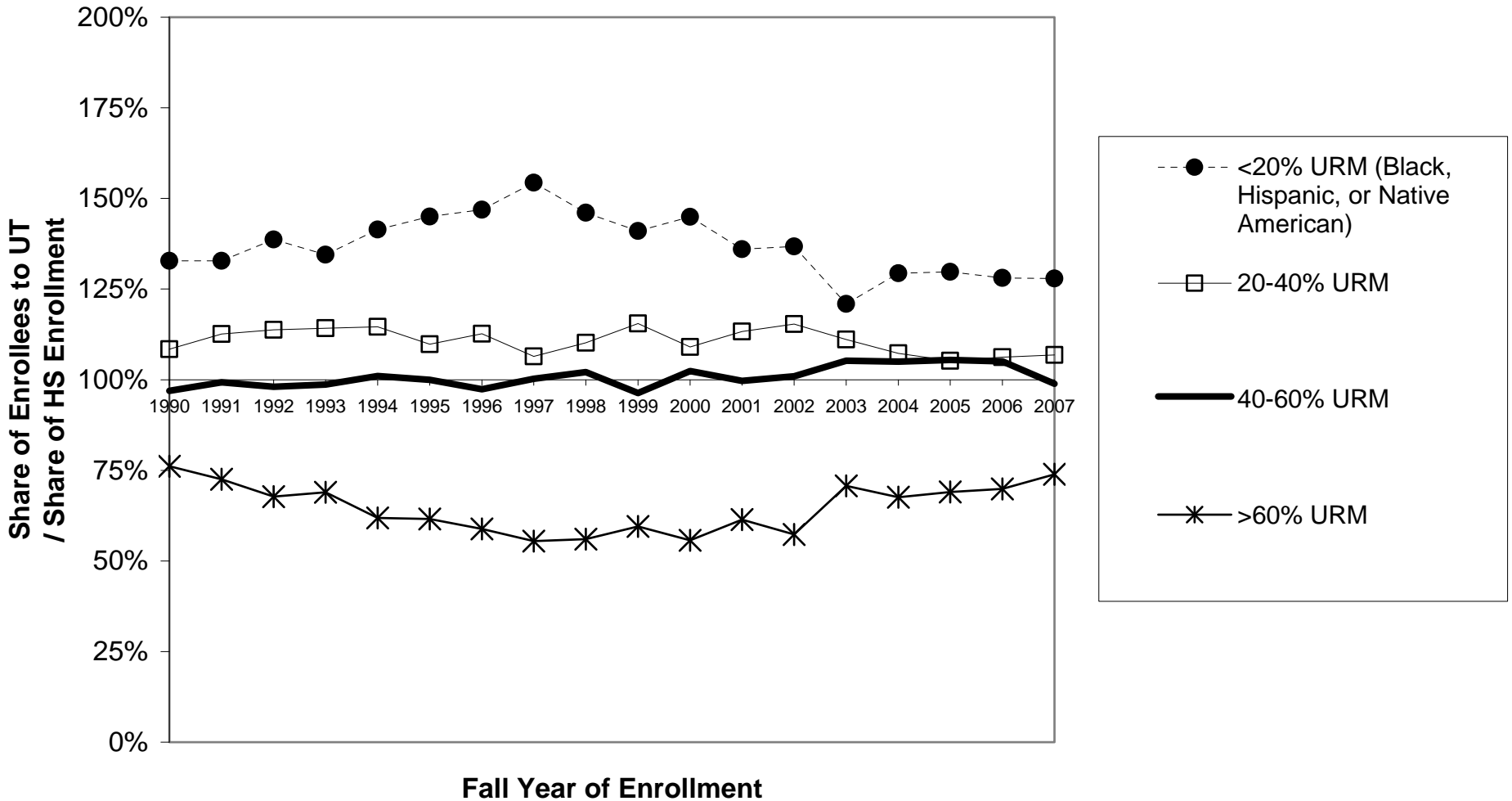
**Figure 3:  
Over/Underrepresentation Among Enrollees at UT,  
by High School's Urbanicity**



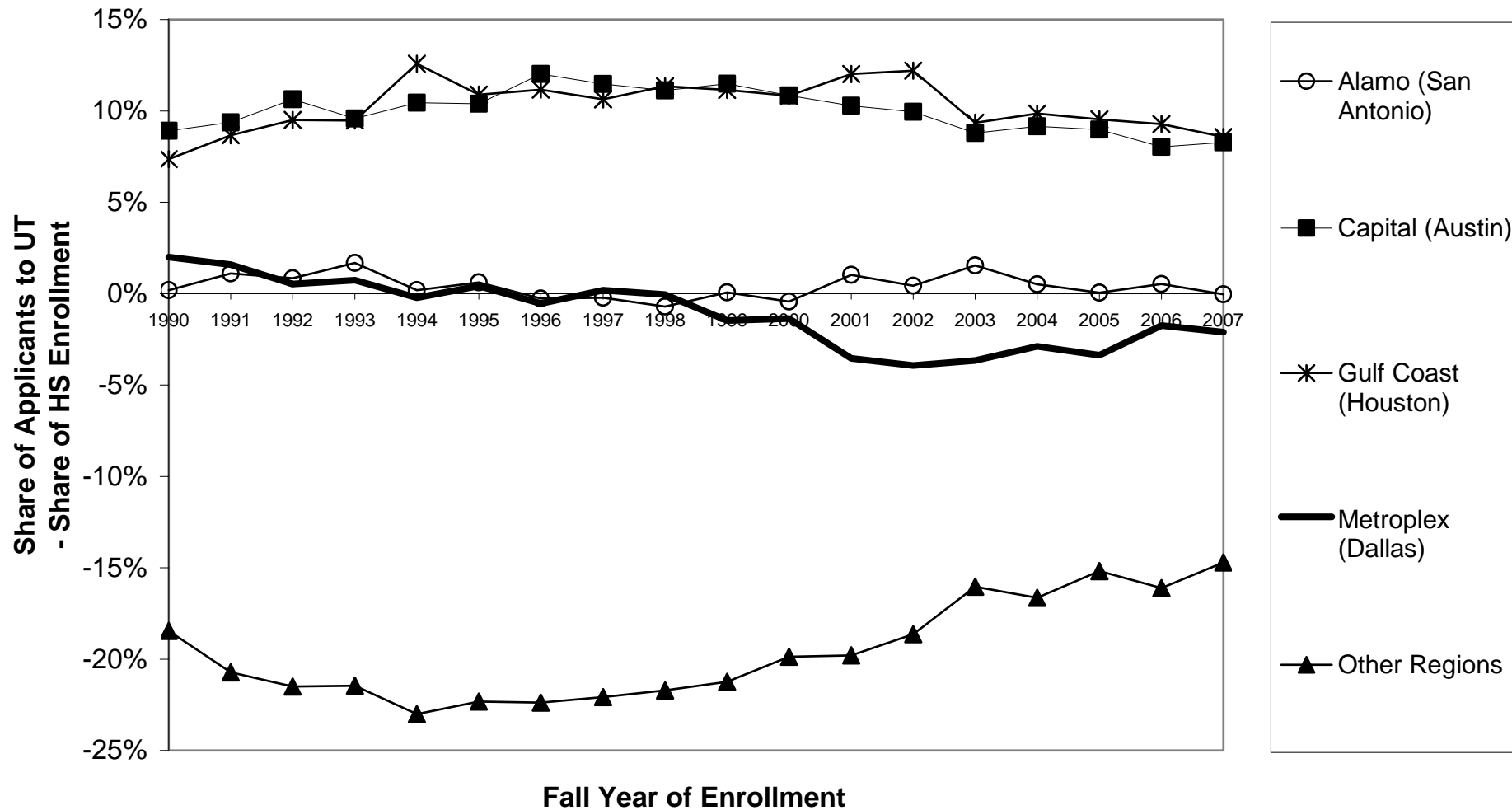
**Figure 4:  
Over/Underrepresentation Among Enrollees at UT,  
by High School's Poverty**



**Figure 5:  
Over/Underrepresentation Among Enrollees at UT,  
by High School's Minority Student Share**



**Figure 6:  
Over/Underrepresentation Among Enrollees to UT,  
by High School's Region**

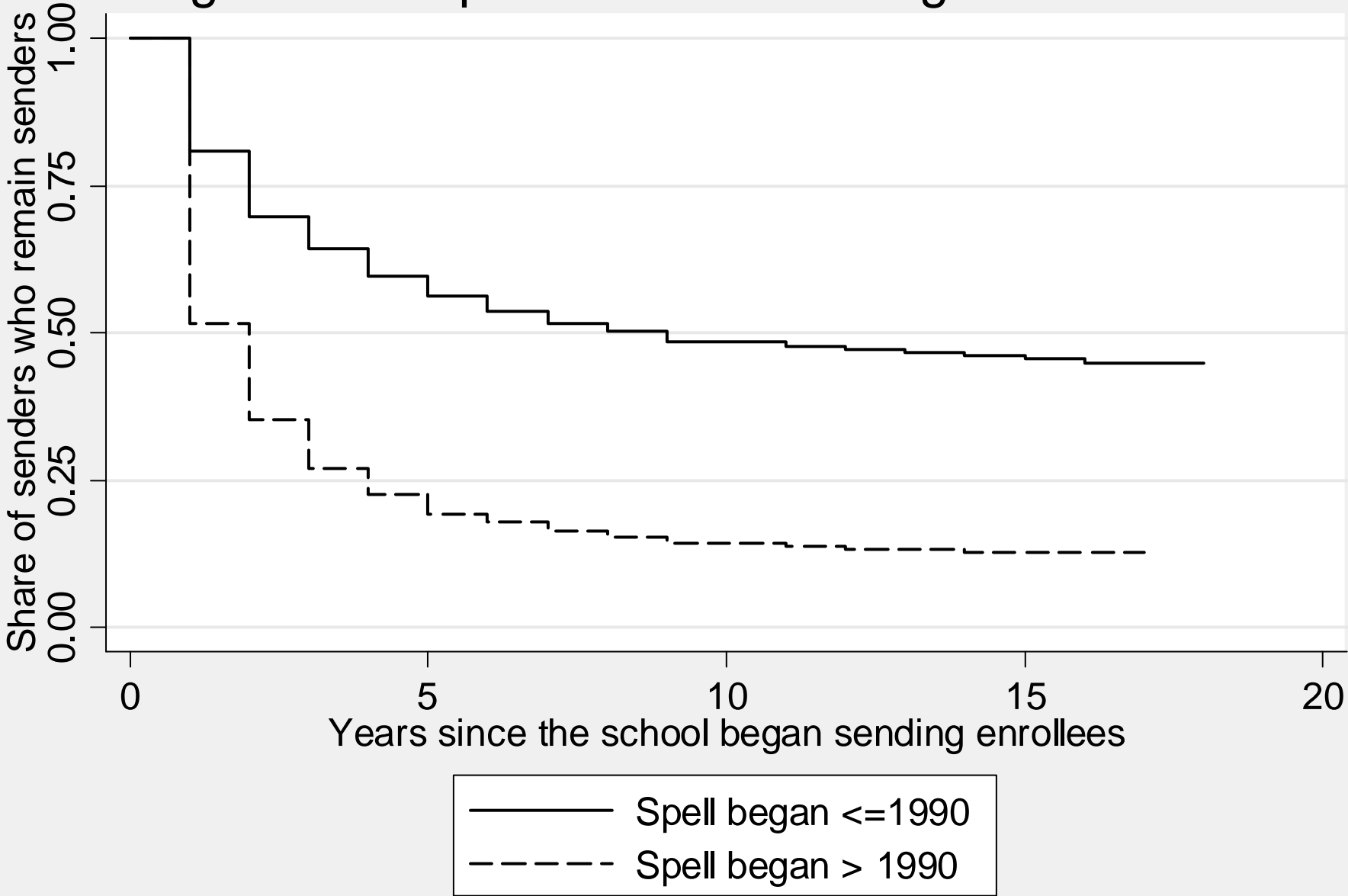




**Table 1: 1996 to 2007 Change in the Share of the High School's Students Enrolling at UT-Austin**

Urbanicity				
If in suburban area			-0.12%	0.76% **
If in rural area			1.02% ***	1.48% ***
If in town or mid-sized city			0.78% **	0.65% *
Percent of students who were black, Hispanic, or Native American			-0.96% *	1.07% *
Percent of students receiving Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch			5.49% ***	2.55% ***
Region				
If in Capital region (Austin)			-3.30% ***	-2.90% ***
If in Gulf Coast region (Houston)			-0.78% *	-0.46%
If in Metroplex region (Dallas)			-0.06%	0.33%
If in other region (excl. Alamo, Capital, Gulf Coast, Metroplex)			0.48%	0.14%
Constant			-0.93% ***	-1.60% ***
			-0.38%	-2.28% ***
Observations			1143	1143
R-Squared			3.5%	8.9%
			12.4%	19.5%

Figure 7:  
High schools' persistence in sending enrollees to UT



**Table 2: Survival Analysis: Years that a High School Remains a Sender of Enrollees to UT-Austin**

	All "Spells"		"Spells" beginning after 1990	
Number of enrollees in prior year			0.534***	0.533***
12th grade enrollment	0.094***	0.115***	0.182***	0.183***
Located in suburban area	0.540***	0.525***	0.504***	0.473***
Located in rural area	0.896	0.918	0.864	0.883
Located in town or mid-sized city	0.898	0.857	0.796	0.769
Percent of URM students	0.791***	0.766***	0.805***	0.783***
Percent of FRPL students	1.513***	1.535***	1.422***	1.463***
Located in Alamo region (San Antonio)	0.678**	0.690**	0.757*	0.755*
Located in Capital region (Austin)	0.215***	0.237***	0.338***	0.326***
Located in Gulf Coast region (Houston)	0.704**	0.728**	0.709**	0.726**
Located in Metroplex region (Dallas)	1.281**	1.285**	1.221*	1.251**
Hopwood (1997)		0.825*		0.971
H.B. 588 Years (1998+)		0.447***		0.578***
Spell Began in 1990	0.674***	0.385***		
Constant	0.127***	0.215***	0.206***	0.272***

# Conclusions

- Strong effects on increasing representation of high schools that traditionally sent few enrollees.
- Transparency matters!
- Effects may be increasing over time as high schools begin to have a sending tradition.