

# META-ANALYSIS OF RECENT POLLING DATA ON THE IMPACT OF RACISM ON AMERICAN SOCIETY TODAY

January 28, 2016

- I. Analysis of Recent Polling Data on Racism in America
- II. Polling Analysis Conclusion by Dr. Gail C. Christopher

Compiled by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in conjunction  
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# I. Polling Meta-Analysis

## A Time for Optimism

This analysis of recent public opinion polling confirms that racism remains a fact of life in the United States. Yet a majority of Americans of all races want to keep working to eradicate racism and are optimistic that one day it will no longer preoccupy our national consciousness. A sharp upward trend among whites acknowledging that racism remains a problem today clearly raises hope for new approaches, such as the Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation (TRHT) process launched by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in conjunction with a broad coalition of social justice, academic, corporate, civic, entertainment and religious leaders.

“The white shift in opinion on racism is a very significant development,” says Jonathan Kaufman, chair of the Northeastern University School of Journalism, which is a TRHT partner. “Look at the issues that have dominated the news — Ferguson, police treatment of African Americans, immigration, treatment of Muslims, the Black Lives Matter movement. In years past, like the 1960s and 1970s, those issues angered many whites and fed a white backlash. The feeling is very different today. It feels like whites are recognizing the pain and injustices that many people of color are talking about. They may not know or agree on the solutions, but they want to find a way to address them. It can be the start of finding comprehensive solutions that improve life outcomes for people of color.”

Racism has been a constant in America since the first settlers set foot on this land and declared it their own, disrespecting and expunging the rights of Native Americans who had lived here for centuries before their arrival. When Africans were brought to Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619 to harvest tobacco and later cotton, it furthered a system of racial hierarchy that forced them into slavery. The belief in a hierarchy of human value has persisted through abolition, the Civil War, Jim Crow, internment of Japanese Americans, Civil Rights Movement, immigration debates and even the election of the first black president of the United States. Clearly, the question of racism and its consequences is one of the most confounding issues that Americans have faced not just for decades, but through centuries.

For this analysis, 2015 polling data\* was reviewed from CNN/Kaiser Family Foundation; PBS NewsHour and Marist College’s Institute for Public Opinion; The New York Times/CBS; The Wall Street Journal/NBC News; The Pew Research Center and Gallup. Not all of the polls ask the same questions or ask them in the same way, but there are enough similarities that make it possible to draw significant conclusions on how the nation feels about racism. These trends were found:

- A majority of Americans believe more needs to be done to eliminate racism. In a poll last year, 53 percent of whites said more changes needed to be made to give blacks equal rights with whites. That was up from just 39 percent a year earlier. Among Hispanics, 70 percent say more change is

needed up from 54 percent a year earlier. Eighty-six percent of blacks agreed with that assessment a year ago.

- There is a growing consensus that the criminal justice system is unfair to blacks. Last year, 44 percent of whites said the criminal justice system was biased against African Americans, a sharp increase for whites over time. In 1995, only 15 percent of whites said the criminal system was biased against blacks. And in 2000, 32 percent of whites said it was biased.
- Many Americans are pessimistic about the state of race relations, more than at any time in the last 20 years. The killings of scores of unarmed people of color by police and regular citizens may be driving these perceptions.
- Despite the pessimism, white and Hispanic Americans historically have been more optimistic than blacks that racism in this country would one day be eliminated. In 2015, Gallup reported 59 percent of whites, 64 percent of Hispanics and 43 percent of blacks said a solution would be worked out to make racism a thing of the past.
- In the wake of the South Carolina church shootings, support mobilized around the controversial issue of removing the Confederate flag from public buildings and places. Polling showed support for removing the flag by nearly every demographic — race, gender, political party and region.
- When it comes to jobs, housing and education, most Americans think blacks and whites are treated equally. Three quarters of Hispanics and whites say that while half or fewer of blacks think they are treated equally.
- Though troubled about race relations generally, Americans overwhelmingly feel relations are very good in their individual communities. This could be a product of the significant number of segregated neighborhoods in the country.
- Latino attitudes on many matters of race more closely mirror whites than African Americans. There are exceptions, such as the fairness of the criminal justice system.
- There is an appetite for a national dialogue on racism and surprisingly many Americans say they are personally comfortable having interracial conversations about race.

In doing research for this report, it was striking how optimistic Hispanics are about their future and current situations. Furthermore, in these polls Latinos consistently downplay racism and highlight the opportunities they have, perhaps contrasting life in the U.S. with their native countries. Still, it is a fascinating dichotomy with blacks and, of course, a much different historical lens.

In an extensive poll on Latino attitudes completed by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in 2014, their satisfaction in the areas of education, commerce, housing and health care was extremely high. Yet, there was concern about unequal treatment by local police, border patrol, and other law enforcement. Sixty-eight percent of Latinos worried that authorities would use excessive force against Latinos; only 26 percent believe authorities treat Latinos fairly most of the time; 18 percent have Latino friends or family who were victims of police brutality; and 59 percent said there are things they would change about their local police.

In the public opinion polling, there is little data on Asian-American attitudes toward racism. The dearth of information is troubling — even to Asian Americans. Asian-American experts are quick to point out that despite high income and education levels, there are elements within their diverse community who face extreme poverty and discrimination. One issue that comes up in polling is affirmative action in college admission and whether access for Asian Americans is imperiled by expanding opportunity for blacks and Latinos. Clearly, Asian-American views should more routinely be a part of polling on racial perspectives.

The opinions of American Indians and Alaska Natives on racism, policy and social issues are also largely unknown because their viewpoints are rarely, if ever, the subject of comprehensive public opinion polling. It is yet another injustice against the First People, as their views are discounted and they continue to be subjected to the country's racial hierarchy. One of the biggest misconceptions is that the public frequently views American Indians as a single culture when their views vary among the 566 federally-recognized tribes. Moving forward, their voices, too, must become part of the nation's transformation on race.

### **A Brief Shining Moment**

Optimism reigned after the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th president of the United States. While many a political commentator argued it was much too soon to declare an end to racial animus in this country, there was broad agreement that the nation had achieved a significant milestone in electing its first black president, secure in the knowledge that minority votes alone could never have delivered the presidency. In fact, Obama won the presidency with 43 percent of the white vote in 2008, the second highest percentage for a Democrat since Jimmy Carter. He received 67 percent of the Hispanic vote, which was a major development. Hispanics had voted 2 to 1 for Hillary Clinton in the primaries. His election buoyed prospects for progress on race. Not only had a black man been elected to the highest office in the land, it seemed an important corner had been turned.

Before the election, African Americans and Hispanics had generally held slightly more negative views on race relations in the U.S. than whites. For about three years after Obama was elected, according to the Wall Street Journal/NBC pollsters, a majority of the three demographic groups viewed race relations as very or fairly good. In January 2009, the poll showed 79 percent of whites, 76 percent of Hispanics and 64 percent of blacks viewed race relations as very or fairly good. A year later, it was 72 percent, 68 percent and 66 percent. In November 2011, 75 percent of whites, 62 percent of Hispanics and 57 percent of blacks still felt race relations were very good or fairly good.

But in February 2012, an unarmed black teenager, wearing a hoodie sweatshirt, was shot and killed returning home from the store with a bag of Skittles. Trayvon Martin, 17, was shot by George Zimmerman, a Hispanic neighborhood watchman, who said he followed the teenager because he didn't seem to belong in the Sanford, Florida, neighborhood, and his style of dress was threatening. After trying to elude Zimmerman, Martin confronted him and, in the ensuing struggle, he was fatally shot.

Suddenly, racism was back at the top of the nation's consciousness. Not since the O.J. Simpson arrest in 1994 had views among the races been so fractured. And Zimmerman's acquittal in July 2013 marked the deepest divide since that time. An almost rapid-fire series of police shootings and subsequent protests gave rise to the #BlackLivesMatter movement and fueled a frustration over the lack of progress against racism in this country.

To be blunt, views on racial progress have taken a step back. In the latest Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll, 26 percent of African Americans, 33 percent of whites and 38 percent of Hispanics view race relations as very or fairly good. One could speculate that among factors driving the numbers are disappointment with and outright backlash toward President Obama, concern and disgust with police shootings of unarmed people of color or simply fear about the future.

Regardless, the change is real and today people want to see something done about it.

## Despair and Hope

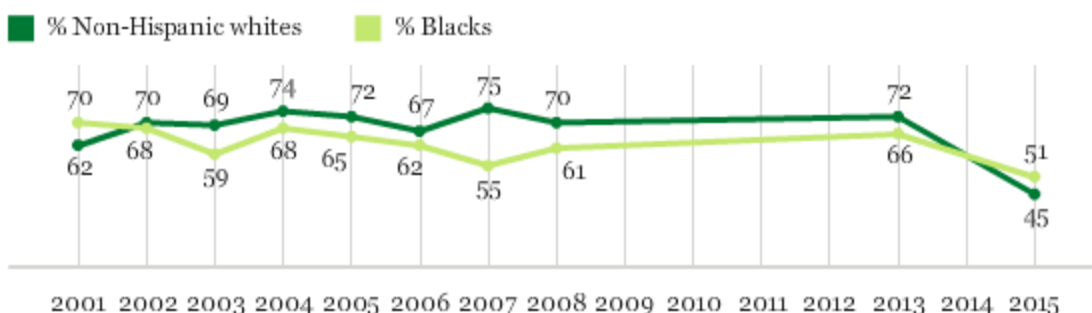
Many Americans are distraught about the state of race relations. Interestingly, the disappointment among whites seems deeper. There were steeper drops in their outlook than for African Americans or Hispanics. Optimism was the highest immediately after the election of Barack Obama. In the 2015 Gallup Poll, 51 percent of blacks and 45 percent of whites said race relations were very good or fairly good. In 2008, Gallup reported 61 percent of blacks and 70 percent of whites felt race relations were good or very good. That optimism has obviously waned.

### **Gallup poll on race relations**

Would you say relations between (whites and blacks) are very good, somewhat good, somewhat bad, or very bad?

[Source: Gallup](#)

Percentage who say "very good" or "somewhat good"

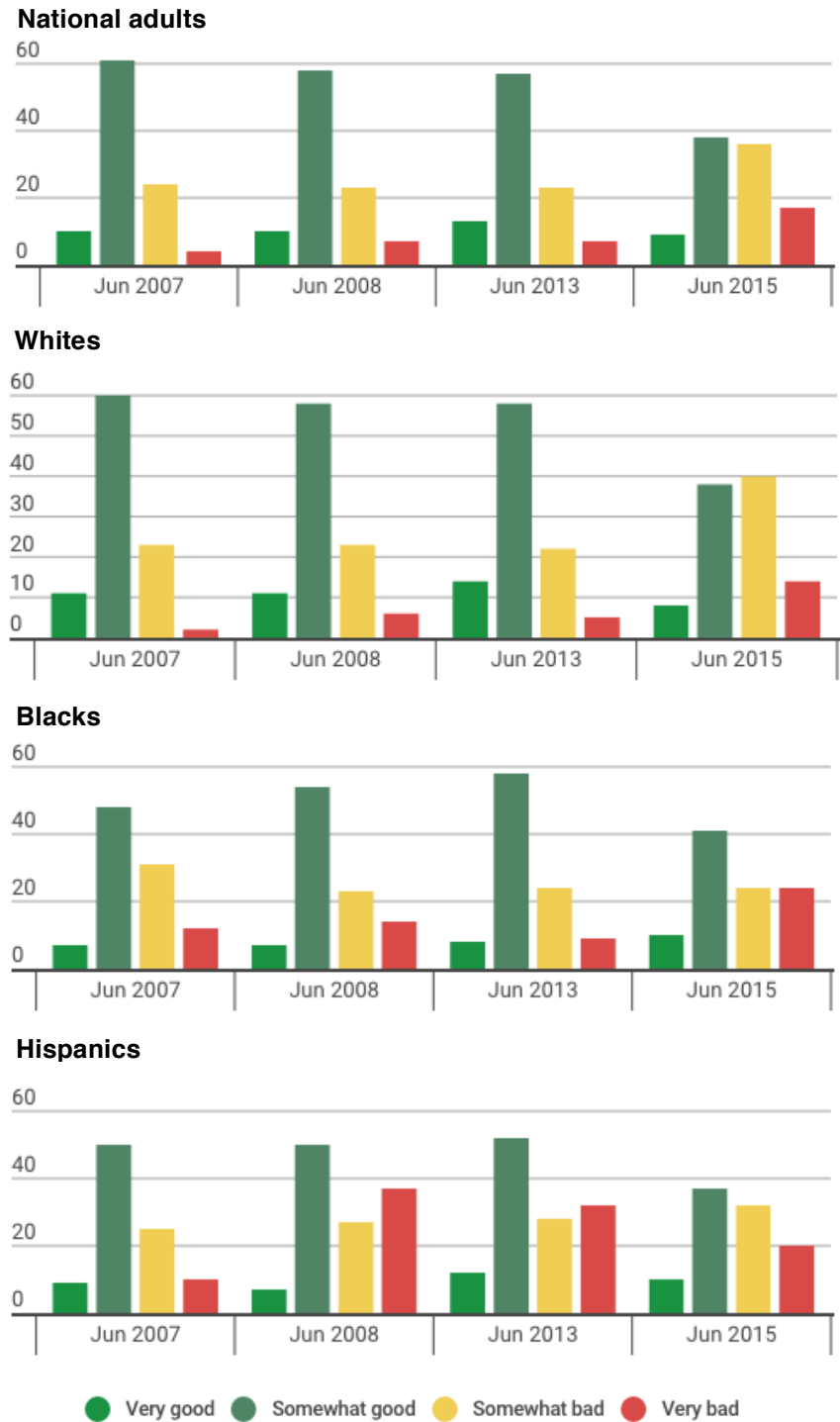


These charts show more longitudinal differences between whites, blacks and Hispanics on the good or bad question. All three subgroups think race relations are worse.

Gallup poll on race relations

Would you say relations between (whites and blacks) are very good, somewhat good, somewhat bad, or very bad?

Source: Gallup

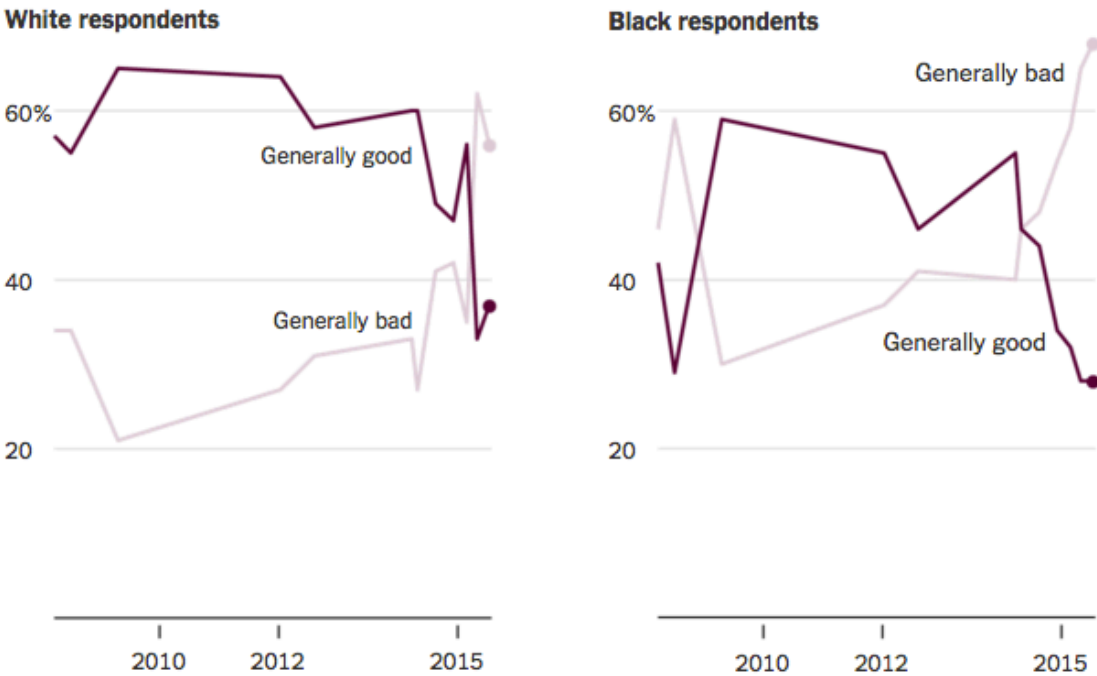


The New York Times/CBS poll asks the same question with similar results.

**Attitudes on race relations**

Do you think race relations in the United States are generally good or bad?

[Source: The New York Times/CBS](#)

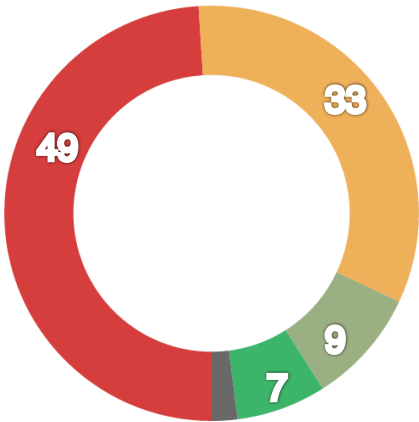


The CNN/Kaiser Foundation Family poll offers a great snapshot about the enormity of the race issue. It showed that 82 percent of adults thought racism was a big problem or somewhat a problem in 2015.

**How big of a problem is racism in our society today?**

- A big problem
- Somewhat of a problem
- A small problem
- Not a problem at all
- Don't know/refused

[Source: CNN/Kaiser Family Foundation](#)



On the question of whether there was a big problem, the CNN/Kaiser poll showed the change in perception over the years was stark.

**Percentage of Americans who say racism is a “big problem”:**

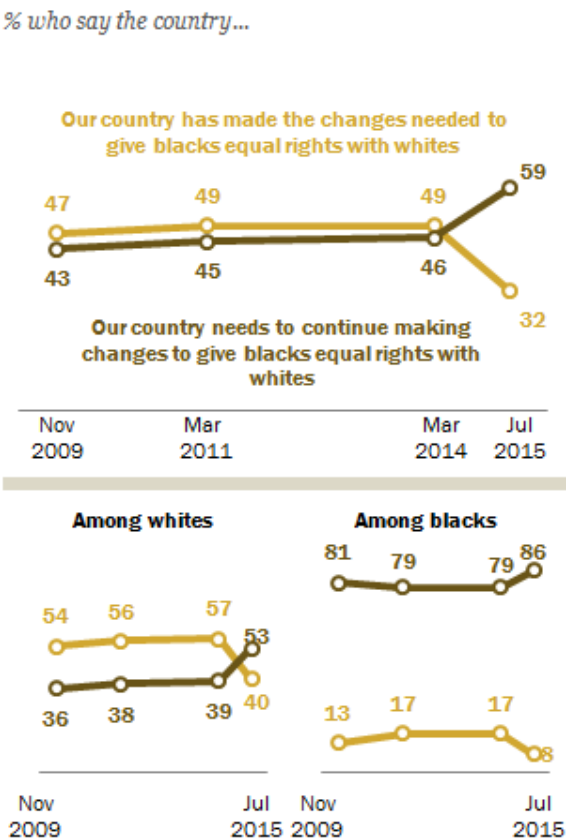


In the 2015 PEW poll, 73 percent of African Americans, 58 percent of Hispanics and 44 percent of whites said racism was a big problem. That number for whites was up 17 points since 2010, indicating growing acknowledgment there is an issue. Nearly 6 in 10 Americans feel more needs to be done to achieve racial equity, 59 percent to 32 percent. In March 2014, it was 46 to 49. PEW says the shift on this point is broad, across race, region and political party. A majority of whites, 53 percent, now say more needs to be done to achieve racial equity. In 2014, just 39 percent felt that way. A whopping 86 percent of blacks and 70 percent of Hispanics say more needs to be done. The change in Hispanic perceptions was a 16-point jump. Among Republicans, who by a simple majority feel enough change has occurred, there was a 15 point increase in the number of who said more needs to be done. Clearly, Americans of all races want movement on the issue of racism.

The following chart from Pew further breaks down these numbers.

**Majority says nation needs to make changes to give blacks equal rights**

[Source: Pew Research Center](#)





## Rising shares say more needs to be done on racial equality, but racial, partisan divides remain

[Source: Pew Research](#)

*% who say U.S. \_\_\_\_\_ to give blacks equal rights with whites*

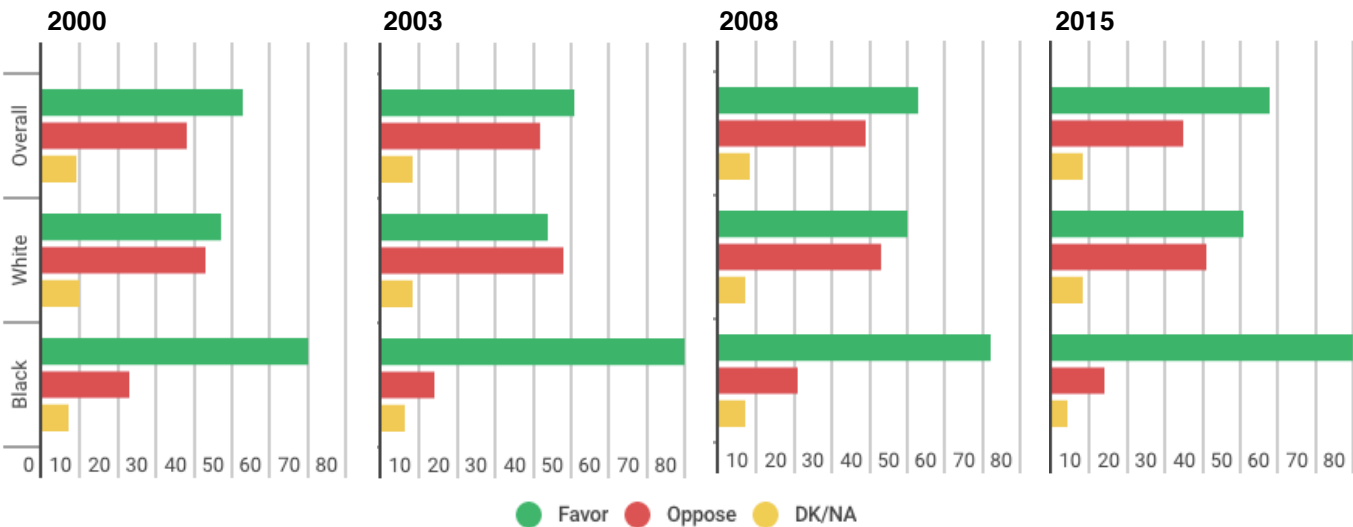
	2014		2015		Change in 'Continue making changes'
	Has made necessary changes	Needs to continue making changes	Has made necessary changes	Needs to continue making changes	
	%	%	%	%	%
Total	49	46	32	59	+13
White	57	39	40	53	+14
Black	17	79	8	86	+7
Hispanic	43	54	21	70	+16
18-29	48	49	30	63	+14
30-49	51	45	33	58	+13
50-64	50	45	32	61	+16
65+	46	49	33	56	+7
College grad+	48	48	32	60	+12
Some college	54	42	34	58	+16
HS or less	46	49	30	60	+11
Republican	69	27	51	42	+15
Conserv Rep	75	22	56	38	+16
Mod/Lib Rep	57	40	42	50	+10
Independent	53	42	34	55	+13
Democrat	30	67	18	78	+11
Cons/Mod Dem	34	63	21	73	+10
Liberal Dem	25	73	11	87	+14

More evidence that many Americans want to address racial disparities: The New York Times asked whether special efforts needed to be made to address past discrimination. A simple majority of whites now joined blacks in saying yes.

**Making up for the past**

In order to make up for past discrimination, do you favor or oppose programs which make special efforts to help minorities get ahead?

[Source: The New York Times/CBS](#)

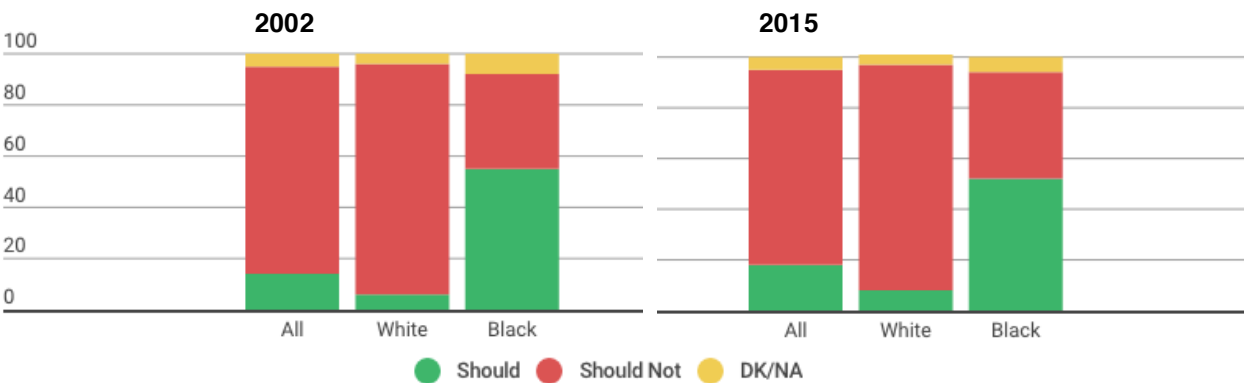


But, notably, that does not include reparations for slavery.

**Making up for the past**

As a way to make up for the harm caused by slavery, do you think the government should or should not make cash payments to black Americans who are descendants of slaves?

[Source: CNN/Kaiser Family Foundation](#)



White Americans have always been more optimistic that the race problem in this country would one day be resolved. That remains true today. According to the 2015 Gallup Poll, for over the last decade, whites have by nearly 60-40 margins said they believed a solution would be worked out on race rather than it being a problem in perpetuity.

That sunny outlook was tested by the racial divisions over the O.J. Simpson verdict. After Simpson's acquittal in 1995, only 29 percent of whites thought race issues would be worked out and 68 percent felt they would persist always. Last year, 58% of whites, 64% of Hispanics and 43% of blacks thought race issues would be worked out. As far as blacks go, they have generally been in the low 40s when asked this question. They were most optimistic after the March on Washington with a stunning 70 percent in 1963.

## Optimism for the future

Do you think that relations between blacks and whites will always be a problem for the United States, or that a solution will eventually be worked out?

[Source: Gallup](#)

	Always a problem	Eventually worked out	No opinion
<b>National adults</b>			
Dec. 1963	42	55	3
Oct. 1995	68	29	3
June 2008	38	58	3
June 2015	41	58	1
<b>Whites</b>			
Dec. 1963	44	53	3
Oct. 1995	68	29	3
June 2008	37	59	4
June 2015	39	59	2
<b>Blacks</b>			
Dec. 1963	26	70	4
Oct. 1995	64	33	3
June 2008	49	50	2
June 2015	56	43	1
<b>Hispanics</b>			
June 2004*	42	53	5
June 2008	38	58	3
June 2015	35	64	1

*\*earliest available*

There is not much data about racial perspectives by region, but polling on the removal of the Confederate flag in the wake of the Charleston, S.C., church shootings did reveal some regional information. The PEW poll showed support for removing the flag by nearly every demographic — race, gender, political party and region. Given the symbolic potency of the flag, that is remarkable. Fifty-six percent of whites thought removal was the correct decision; 76 percent of blacks did and 52 percent of Hispanics agreed. Republicans slightly favored keeping the flag, according to PEW, but all regions of the country supported removal. These results show that even on the toughest of racial questions, significant movement is possible.

## Democrats, independents say right decision to remove flag; GOP divided

The percentage who say South Carolina's decision to take the Confederate flag down from statehouse grounds, broken down by demographics.

[Source: Pew Research Center](#)

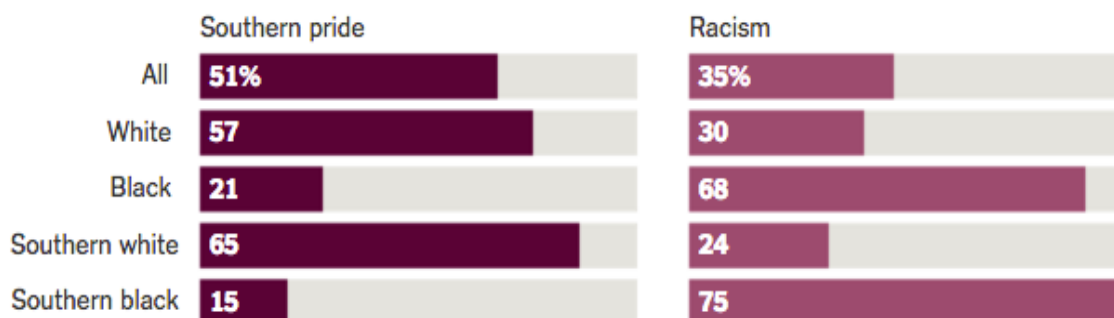
	Right decision	Wrong decision	DK
	%	%	%
Total	57	34	9=100
White	56	38	6=100
Black	76	12	11=100
Hispanic	52	28	19=100
18-29	51	40	9=100
30-49	60	31	9=100
50-64	57	34	9=100
65+	59	31	9=100
College grad+	76	19	5=100
Some college	58	36	6=100
HS or less	44	42	14=100
Republican	43	49	8=100
Conserv Rep	42	48	9=100
Mod/Lib Rep	43	52	6=100
Independent	53	37	10=100
Democrat	74	19	7=100
Cons/Mod Dem	67	26	8=100
Liberal Dem	86	9	5=100
Northeast	65	26	9=100
Midwest	53	40	8=100
South	54	38	8=100
West	61	27	13=100

The New York Times focused on the symbolic message that the flag represented.

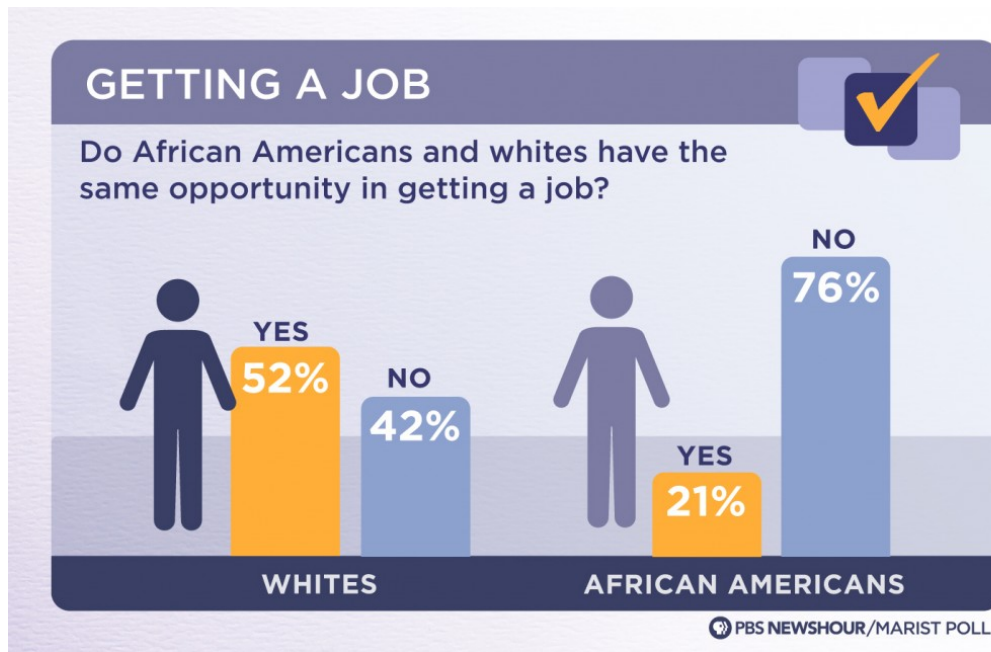
## Pride or racism?

Do you see the Confederate flag more as a symbol of Southern pride or of racism?

[Source: The New York Times/CBS](#)



When it comes to jobs, housing and education, a majority of whites think blacks and whites are treated equally. But blacks overwhelmingly think they are treated unfairly in these endeavors. Here is a sample of opinion from the [PBS/Marist poll](#):



On whether African Americans get equal justice:



The Gallup poll has even more extensive data on these questions, framed slightly differently. Here is Gallup on the questions of access to jobs, housing and education broken down for whites, blacks and Hispanics:

## Jobs

In general, do you think that blacks have as good a chance as whites in your community to get any kind of job for which they are qualified, or don't you think they have as good a chance?

[Source: Gallup](#)

	As good a chance	Do not	No opinion
<b>National adults</b>			
March 1963	43	n/a	n/a
Oct. 1995	71	25	4
June 2008	71	27	2
June 2015	66	33	1
<b>Whites</b>			
March 1963	46	n/a	n/a
Oct. 1995	75	21	4
June 2008	77	21	3
June 2015	72	27	1
<b>Blacks</b>			
March 1963	24	n/a	n/a
Oct. 1995	64	33	3
June 2008	43	56	1
June 2015	36	63	1
<b>Hispanics</b>			
June 2004*	69	29	2
June 2008	68	32	1
June 2015	69	30	1

*\*earliest available*

## Housing

Again, in general, do you think that blacks have as good a chance as whites in your community to get any housing they can afford, or don't you think they have as good a chance?

[Source: Gallup](#)

	As good a chance	Do not	No opinion
<b>National adults</b>			
Dec. 1989	68	26	6
Jan. 1997	83	13	4
June 2008	78	20	2
June 2015	77	23	**
<b>Whites</b>			
Dec. 1989	71	23	6
Jan. 1997	86	10	4
June 2008	85	13	2
June 2015	84	16	**
<b>Blacks</b>			
Dec. 1989	51	45	5
Jan. 1997	58	40	2
June 2008	52	47	2
June 2015	48	52	**
<b>Hispanics</b>			
June 2004*	74	24	2
June 2008	69	28	3
June 2015	72	27	1

*\*earliest available*

## Education

In general, do you think that black children have as good a chance as white children in your community to get a good education, or don't you think they have as good a chance? [Source: Gallup](#)

	As good a chance	Do not	No opinion		As good a chance	Do Not	No opinion
<b>National adults</b>				<b>Whites</b>			
Aug. 1962	83	7	10	Aug. 1962	81	19	**
Sept. 1999	82	15	3	Sept. 1999	86	12	2
June 2008	75	23	1	June 2008	80	19	1
June 2015	76	24	**	June 2015	81	19	**
<b>Blacks</b>				<b>Hispanics</b>			
Aug. 1962	53	41	6	June 2004*	77	21	2
Sept. 1999	56	39	5	June 2008	74	25	1
June 2008	49	49	2	June 2015	78	22	**
June 2015	52	47	**				

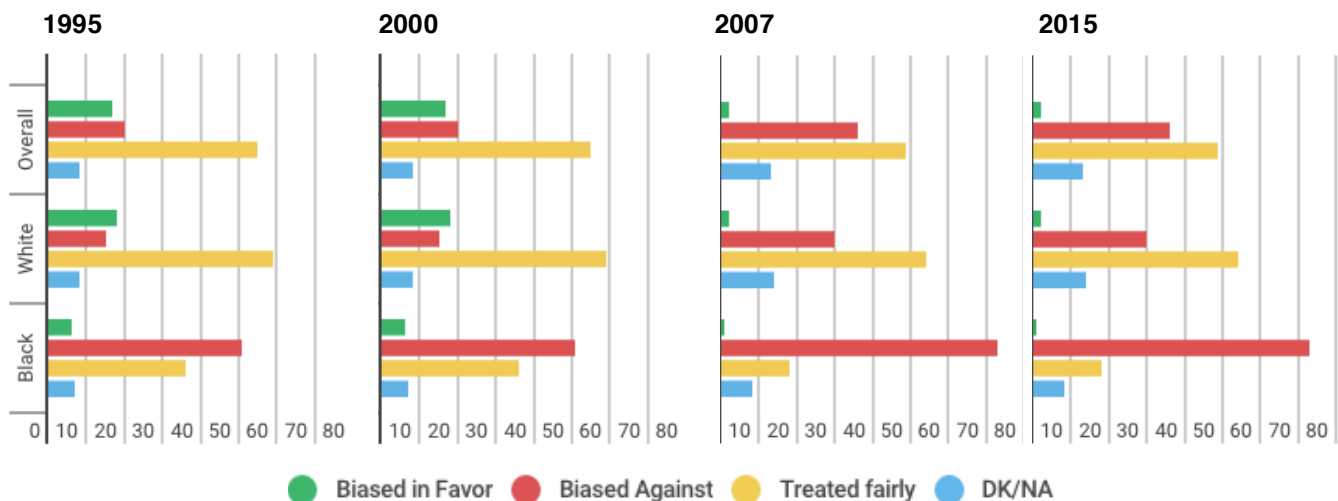
\*earliest available

The one area where significant change is happening is on the question of whether the criminal justice system is fair. According to the New York Times/CBS News poll in 1995, only 15 percent of whites but 51 percent of blacks said the system was biased against blacks. By 2000, 32 percent of whites and 76 percent of blacks said it was biased. And by 2015, 44 percent of whites and 77 percent of blacks said the criminal justice system was biased against African Americans.

## Views on criminal justice

In general, do you think the criminal justice system in the United States is biased in favor of blacks, or is it biased against blacks, or does it generally give blacks fair treatment?

[Source: The New York Times/CBS](#)

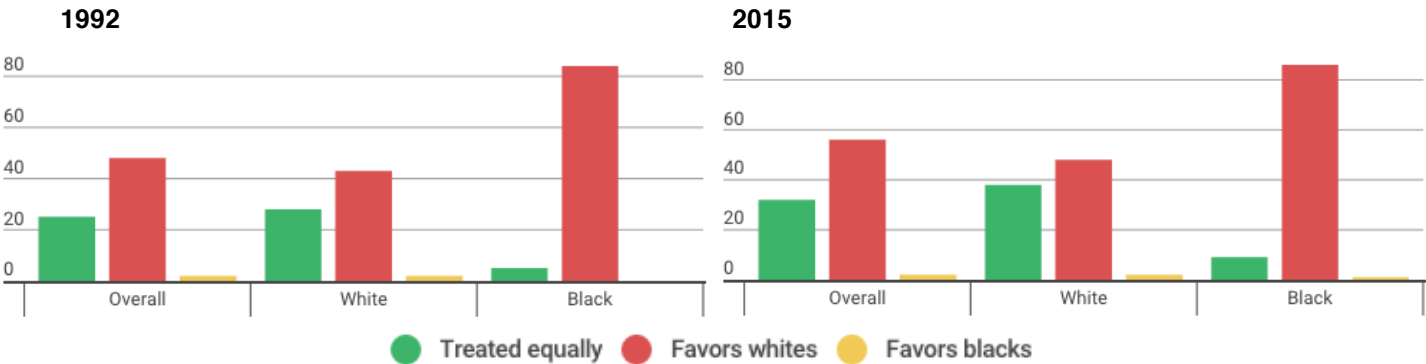


CNN’s findings showed a similar trend on whether blacks and whites are treated fairly by the system.

Who is treated more fairly?

In general, do you think that the country’s criminal justice system treats whites and blacks equally or does it favor whites over blacks?

Source: CNN/Kaiser Family Foundation

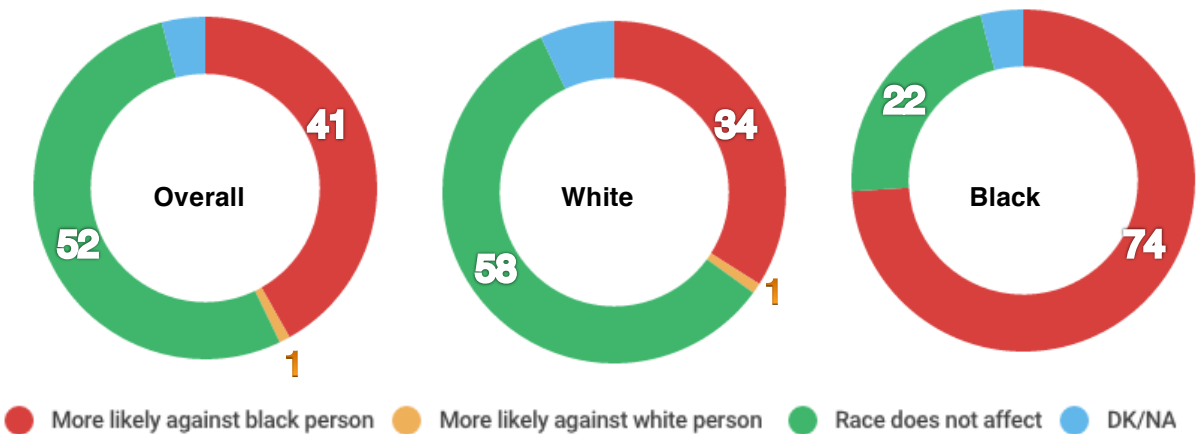


The Times/CBS poll also found that views of police were different for blacks and whites. A sizeable minority (41 percent) of Americans think the police are more apt to use deadly force against a black person. The figure jumps to 74 percent among blacks.

Views on police shootings

In general, do you think the police in most communities are more likely to use deadly force against a black person, or more likely to use it against a white person, or don’t you think race affects police use of deadly force?

Source: The New York Times/CBS





“There have been a number of high profile deaths of blacks by police in recent months, and 38 percent of the public thinks the number of unarmed black people killed by police has increased in the past year; 64 percent of blacks concur,” CBS News reported in its story on the poll. “While 3 in 4 Americans, and 82 percent of whites, say their local police make them feel mostly safe, some blacks have a different view. Fewer — 58 percent — say the police make them feel safe, and 37 percent say the police make them anxious.”

## Overall views on police

How would you describe your feelings about the police in your community? Would you say they make you feel mostly safe or mostly anxious?

[Source: The New York Times/CBS](#)



Gallup as well found significant changes among whites on the question of bias against blacks in the criminal justice system. Overall, 47 percent of Americans said yes there was bias and 52 percent said no. Among whites, 42 percent said there was bias, up 17 percent from just two years earlier. Blacks saw it 74 percent to 26 percent and Hispanics came in at 42 percent to 52 percent, about where they have been for half a decade. In 2015, whites moved closer to Hispanics in their view about the unfairness of the system for African Americans.

## Views on the justice system

Do you think the American justice system is biased against black people?

[Source: Gallup](#)

	Yes	No	No opinion		Yes	No	No opinion
<b>National adults</b>				<b>Whites</b>			
April 1993	37	56	7	April 1993	33	60	7
June 2008	38	59	3	June 2008	32	66	2
July 2013	33	61	6	July 2013	25	69	5
June 2015	47	52	1	June 2015	42	57	1
<b>Blacks</b>				<b>Hispanics</b>			
April 1993	68	21	11	June 2008*	42	51	7
June 2008	67	27	6	July 2013	40	52	8
July 2013	68	26	6	June 2015	42	54	1
June 2015	74	26	1	<i>*earliest available</i>			

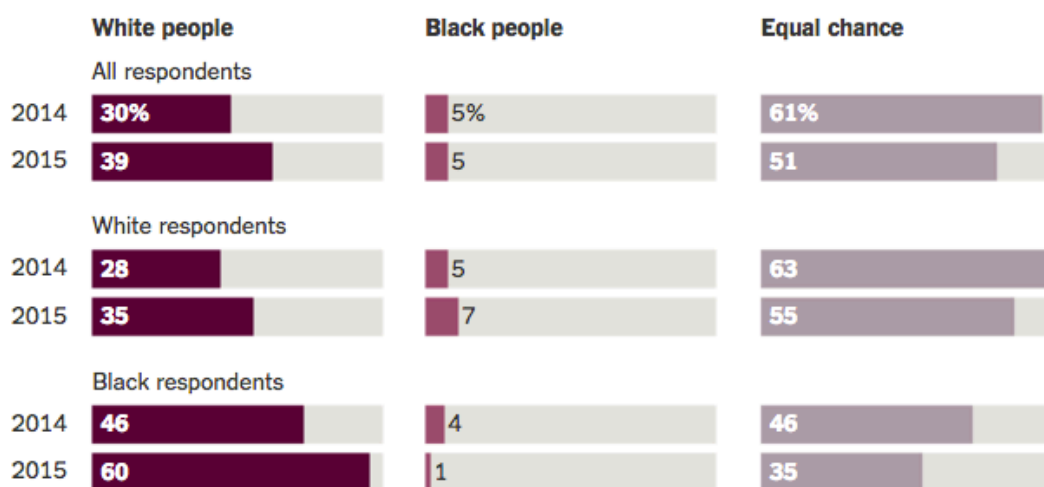
Clearly, blacks feel disadvantaged by racism in society. They feel that whites have a better chance of getting ahead than they do. In the New York Times/CBS News poll, blacks by nearly 2 to 1 think whites have the advantage.

Interestingly, during Obama's time as president, whites have registered in the low 60s when asked if they agreed that whites and blacks have an equal shot at getting ahead in this country. There was a period in 2014, however, when nearly half of blacks thought that was true as well.

## A racial disadvantage

Who do you think has a better chance of getting ahead in today's society?

[Source: The New York Times/CBS](#)



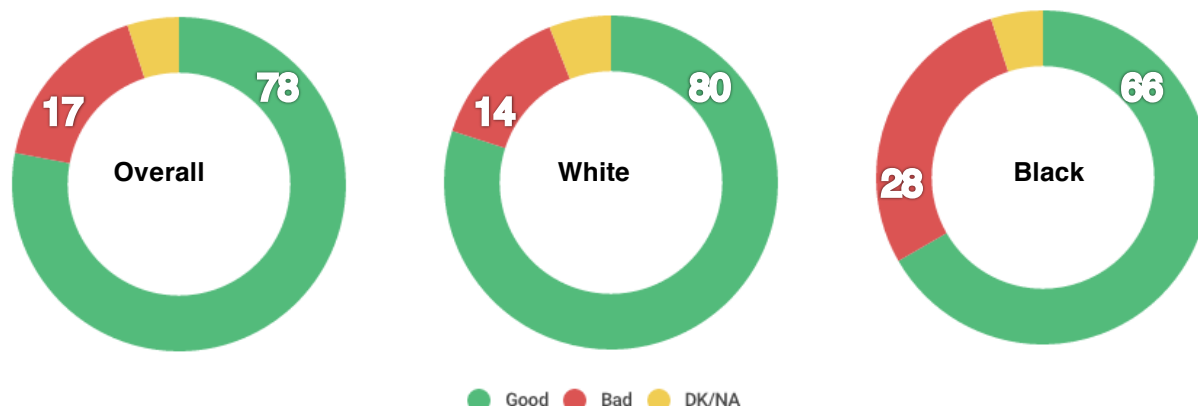
## Seeds for Progress

Ironically, despite the anguish about overall race relations, when it comes to their own communities, both blacks and whites reported that race relations are good. This finding brings to mind polling that shows respondents, for example, having great disdain for the job that Congress is doing, but give their member of Congress high marks for effectiveness. This positive assessment of their own communities could also be a function of segregated neighborhoods, and therefore no strain exists between races. In any case, it is a consistent and stark departure from general notions about race and equal opportunity.

## Community unity

Do you think race relations in your community are generally good or generally bad?

Source: CBS News poll of 1,122 adults nationwide, conducted Dec. 6-9, 2014



It is important to focus a little more on Latino attitudes. On many matters of race, Hispanic views more closely mirror those of whites than those of African Americans. This is evident on the question of bias in employment, education and housing, for example. That does not hold true in matters of criminal justice, however.

Their views hew more toward suspicion and criticism about the fairness of police and courts. That was reinforced after the verdict in the George Zimmerman murder trial. Zimmerman was acquitted on July 13, 2013, of fatally shooting Trayvon Martin. This is worthy of note since Zimmerman is Hispanic and Martin was black.

### Hispanic attitudes

As you may know, a jury recently found George Zimmerman not guilty of second-degree murder or manslaughter in the death of Trayvon Martin. From what you know about the case, do you think the decision was right or wrong?

Source: Gallup poll conducted July 16-21, 2013

	Right	Wrong	DK/NA
National adults	43	40	17
Whites	54	30	17
Blacks	7	85	8
Hispanics	25	51	24

In the 2015 Gallup poll, when asked if they thought race would always be a problem or would get worked out, Hispanics by a 64 percent to 35 percent margin said it would get worked out. The same pattern held when asked if blacks were treated the same as whites when it came to employment (69 percent said yes versus 30 percent no); education (78 percent to 22 percent) and housing (72 percent to 27 percent).

Given the growing presence of Hispanics in American society, they will have a lot to say about race and racism going forward. For one thing polling needs to more broadly reflect Hispanics, Asian and Native American views in every measurement on these issues. Race has never been purely a black/white issue.

For Hispanics, Native Americans, Arab Americans and Asian Americans, the outcomes of debates on immigration and affirmative action, respectively, could dramatically affect their views about racism in years to come. But data tells us they are more ready than blacks to envision a society where racism is much less a factor in success or opportunity.

**Time for Solutions**

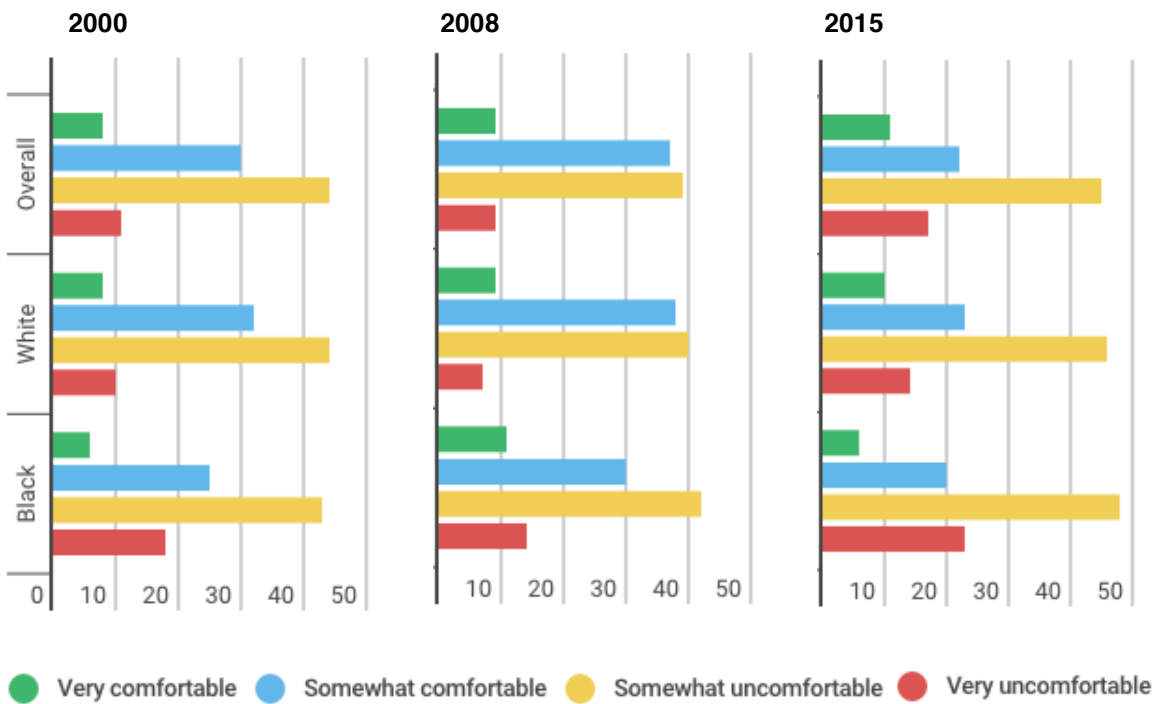
Going forward, the question is can we craft solutions in a way that makes a difference on the role of race in American society? Polling data indicate there is reason for optimism.

When the New York Times asked respondents whether Americans, in general, were comfortable or uncomfortable having an interracial discussion about race, a significant percentage said uncomfortable.

**Talking about race**

How comfortable do you think most people feel when they have conversations about race with someone of another race — very comfortable, somewhat comfortable somewhat uncomfortable or very uncomfortable?

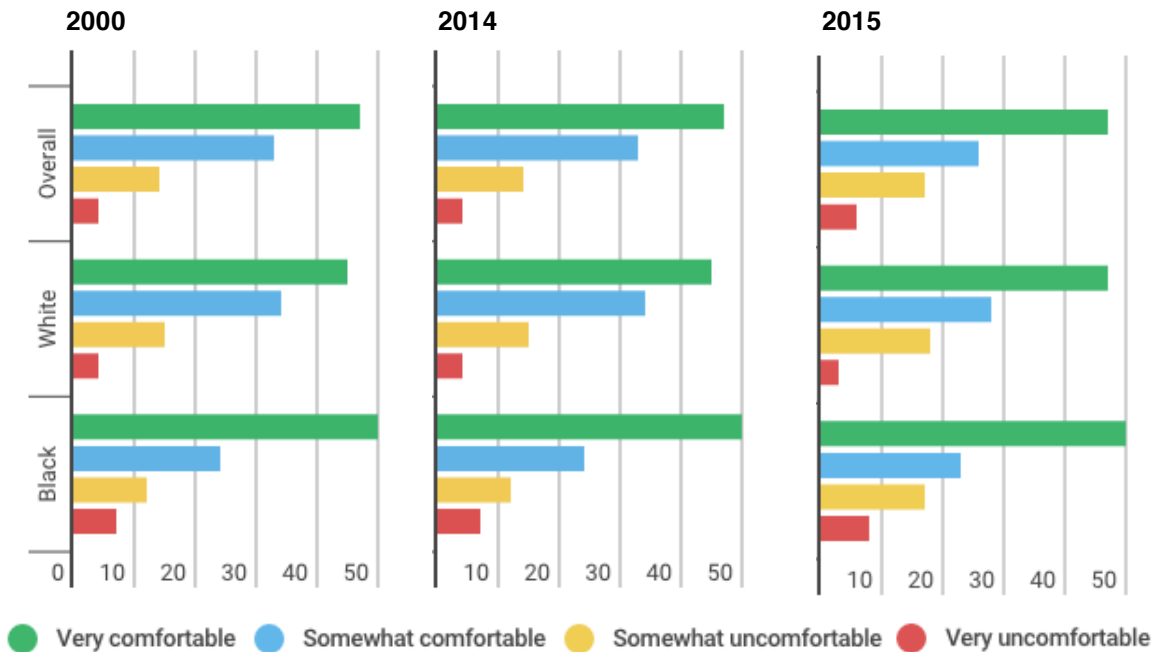
[Source: The New York Times/CBS](#)



But documented within that same poll is real opportunity. When asked whether they themselves would be uncomfortable doing so, they overwhelmingly said no.

Talking about race

What about you? How comfortable do you personally feel when you have a conversation about race with someone of another race — very comfortable, somewhat comfortable, somewhat uncomfortable or very uncomfortable? [Source: The New York Times/CBS](#)

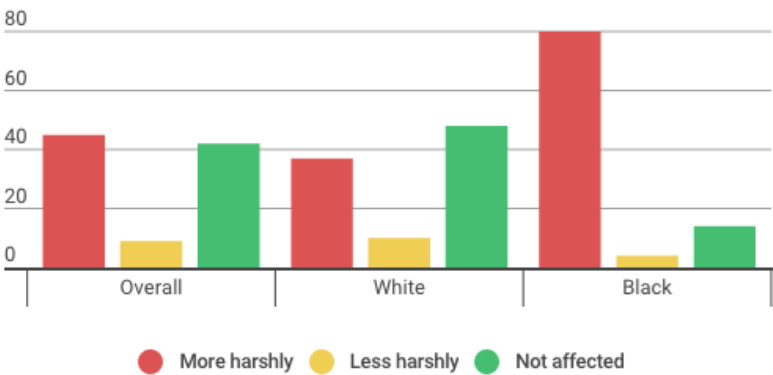


There is significant agreement that more needs to be done to put blacks and whites on more equal footing in this country and make up for past racial discrimination, though reparations and government handouts get rejected. Just what those measures are could be a basis for consideration.

Finally, underscoring the question of racism, in some ways, are the perceptions of President Obama. Surely, he is a symbol of hope for racial healing in the future, but there remain some strong negative opinions of the president that seem influenced by racism. In one of the most interesting findings in The New York Times/CBS poll, respondents were asked whether President Obama has been treated more harshly because of

Views of President Obama

In general, do you think most Americans have judged Barack Obama more harshly because he's black, less harshly because he's black, or has his being black not affected how most Americans have judged Barack Obama? [Source: The New York Times/CBS](#)



his race. Nearly a third of whites and four-fifths of blacks believe he has been.

It is an astonishing finding. The idea of a post-racial society seems distant, even unimaginable, if the most powerful man in the world can still be weighed down by conscious and unconscious bias.

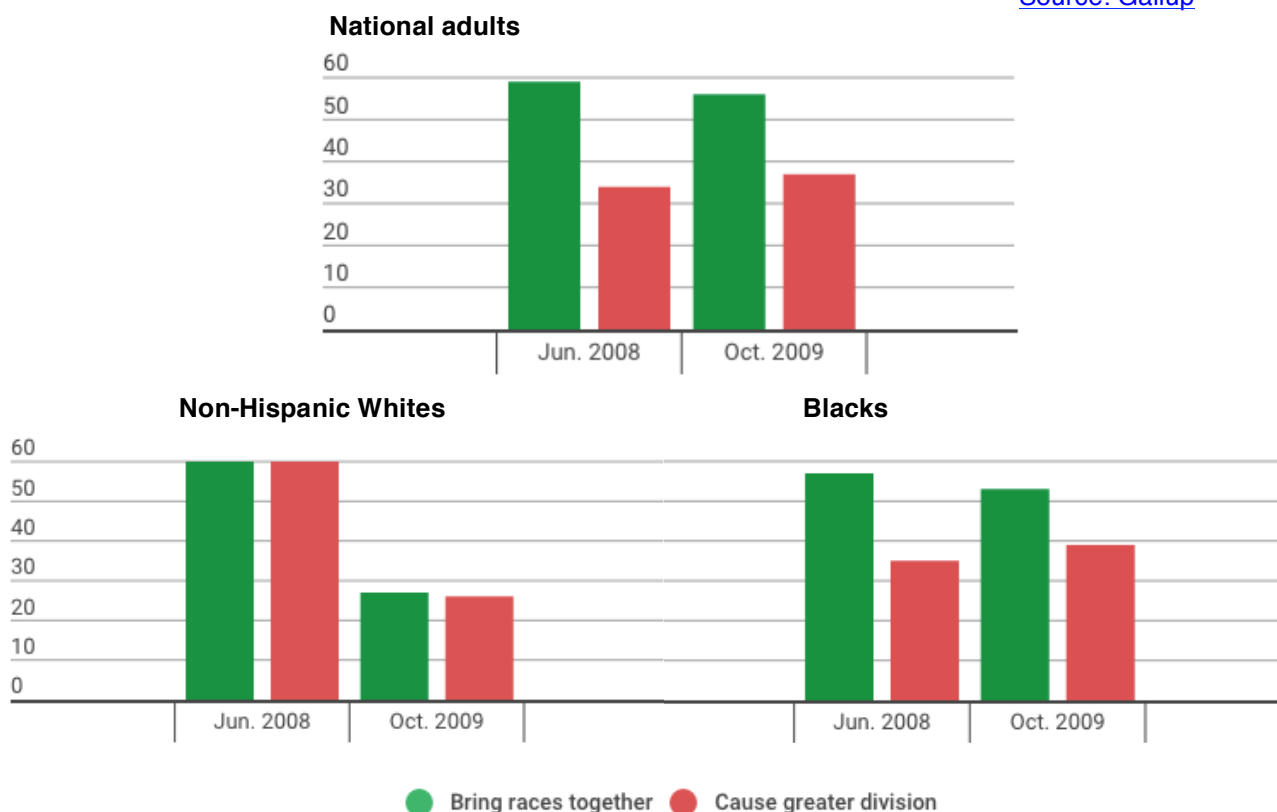
Still, there are fresh opportunities to find common ground for efforts to eliminate the blight of racism on the face of America. It will take people of good will and openness to make real progress. Americans desire an honest approach about racism and real healing. Furthermore, the solutions must include all people of color harmed by racial discrimination, including American Indian/Alaska Natives, Latinos, African Americans, Arab Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. The objective must be not only to end racial bias, but establish meaningful changes in policies and institutions to create positive futures for their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. The changes must reflect honoring and respecting everyone and providing equitable opportunities for all.

This snapshot of opinion after Obama's election is reason enough to hope.

### Gallup poll on race relations

As you may know, some U.S. leaders have called for an open national dialogue on race. If blacks and whites honestly expressed their true feelings about race relations, do you think this would do more to bring the races together or cause greater racial division?

[Source: Gallup](#)



## II. Polling Data Conclusion

**By Dr. Gail C. Christopher**  
**Senior Advisor and Vice President for TRHT,**  
**W.K. Kellogg Foundation**

The polling data demonstrates a palpable desire for a positive change in how we view one another and how we shape our society to reflect the inherent value of all people. We have carried the burden and the weight of the mythology of a hierarchy of human value, allowing it to weigh our country down for centuries. It's as if the voices of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are saying, "No more!" We must jettison that belief and move forward with the truth of our equal value as part of the human family.

It's of paramount significance that the poll analysis has found that a majority of whites acknowledge that racism still exists, and that it creates bias in structures such as the criminal justice system. How important is our Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation (TRHT) process? When former Mississippi Gov. William Winter came to a December 2015 TRHT planning meeting at the U.S. Institute of Peace, the 92-year-old said that in his lifetime, he's been criticized often for coming to Washington, DC and meeting with policymakers and elected officials. But he said that our gathering was the "most important meeting" he'd ever attended in Washington. That reflects the significance of what we are trying to accomplish with the TRHT.

Most of the children born today are children of color. Creating an environment that allows them to realize their full potential has to be the most important thing this country can do – in addition to preserving the planet and not being subjected to terrorism.

The public opinion polling tells us that there is a readiness on the part of this country to find innovative ways to improve the outcomes for our children. For some of our partners, like the business community, there's certainly a self-interest - an economic and business case to be made for racial equity. Moreover, people are appalled at the injustices they are seeing. Modern technology, such as cell phones, is recording examples of disregard for humanity that is offensive to the better nature of so many people, regardless of their race, ethnicity or economic status.

It's clear that these recordings are exposing abuse that would not otherwise be believed. People need a context for the brutality that is historic in nature. You cannot maintain a false hierarchy of human value without brutality. That brutality was there in the genocide of Native Americans, the cruel and inhumane system of enslavement and in the exclusionary approach to immigration.

It's interesting that the polling indicates that people aren't as concerned about racism in their own communities as they are for the nation at large. But that reflects the persistence of residential and economic segregation in our communities. If you look and think just like your neighbors, there is less

likelihood of racial tension with them. In America, we have found ways to insulate ourselves from one another. We live in enclaves and as a result, we don't usually have a problem with our next-door neighbor. But that too may be changing. A new directive from HUD will require communities to affirmatively further fair housing – part of the original Fair Housing Act – and that will help to propel more regional, city-wide and jurisdiction-wide actions towards truly integrating our communities.

I'm heartened that the polls show the nation is ready for a new approach to address racism. But I must emphasize that the TRHT process is far more than a national conversation about race. While dialogue is encouraged, if that's the only action, it minimizes the broader, comprehensive work that needs to be done. There's a tendency to think that if we talk about these things, they get better. When people call for a conversation, there's a tendency to minimize the depth of the requirement for fostering a healing environment. I'm heartened by the fact that scores of people are ready for progress and understand it will take hard work. We must be committed, and willing to offer the necessary caring, wisdom and courage to succeed.

There have to be assumptions of bias because that's who we are as a country. We have to build unconscious bias work into our training processes for our professionals – particularly those who make life and death decisions. No law enforcement officer should carry a weapon without training in unconscious bias. Every hospital, police department and school, every workplace, should mitigate the expression of these innate biases.

Has our nation ever even imagined an America that has honestly faced its divided legacy and united behind creating equitable opportunities for all to succeed regardless of their race or economic status?

Today's changing demographics coupled with recent exposures of violent inequities are now driving public opinion towards a tipping point on the need to address racism. Until we invest the human and financial resources for the protracted work required to unearth and undo the embedded belief in the hierarchy of human value, our democratic ideals cannot be fully realized.

Until we decide to end the prolonged reign of American apartheid, we cannot hope to move forward as a people and a nation.

\*The CNN/Kaiser poll of 1,951 adults was conducted Aug. 25-Oct. 3, 2015; the PBS/Marist poll of 1,252 adults was conducted Sept. 10-15, 2015; The New York Times/CBS poll surveyed 1,205 adults July 14-19, 2015; The Wall Street Journal/NBC poll of 1,000 adults was conducted Dec. 6-9, 2015; The Pew poll of 2,002 adults was conducted July 14-20, 2015; and the Gallup Historical Trends Survey is part of its Social Series, where 12 different topics are surveyed for a month annually. The most recent Minority Rights and Relations survey was conducted June 15-July 10, 2015. The poll typically surveys 1,000 adults but this poll oversamples blacks and Hispanics for a significantly larger survey.