



Views on race and class: Black and White Louisianans see discrimination and racial progress very differently

Louisiana attitudes trending in economically populist direction, but most remain skeptical about government's role in relief

The fourth in a series of five reports from the 2021 Louisiana Survey, a project of the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs

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About the Louisiana Survey

The *2021 Louisiana Survey* is the nineteenth in an annual series sponsored by the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs at Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication.

The mission of the *Louisiana Survey* is to establish benchmarks as well as to capture change in residents' assessments of state government services. The survey is further dedicated to tracking public opinion on the contemporary policy issues that face the state. Each iteration of the *Louisiana Survey* contains core items designed to serve as barometers of public sentiment, including assessments of whether the state is heading in the right direction or wrong direction, perceptions about the most important problems facing the state, as well as evaluations of public revenue sources and spending priorities.

In the *2021 Louisiana Survey*, this core is supplemented by measures of experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic; support for paid family leave requirements, extending broadband access, expansion of early childhood education programs, and an increase to the gasoline tax; as well as beliefs about race and socio-economic class.

As part of an effort to ensure that the *Louisiana Survey* fulfills its public service mission, the research team solicited input about topics for the survey from members of the government and policy community across the political spectrum. Additionally, the research team drew upon expertise in public policy and polling from Louisiana State University faculty. These advisors provided invaluable insight into the design of the questionnaire and in identifying the contemporary policy questions that could most benefit from an understanding of the public's views. While we are indebted to them for their time and contributions, they bear no responsibility for final decisions on the questionnaire, analysis, and interpretation presented in this report or any mistakes therein.

We especially thank the Reilly Family Foundation for their generous support and vision in helping to create the *Louisiana Survey*.

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Summary

This is the fourth of five reports from the *2021 Louisiana Survey*, a project of the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs at Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication. This report contains results from questions asking Louisiana residents' opinions about race and socio-economic class as well as government services to support the less fortunate. Following are the topline findings.

- The survey asks about the extent of racial discrimination in six different situations: In hiring, pay, and promotions at work; in stores and restaurants; when applying for a loan or mortgage; in dealing with the police; when voting in elections; and when seeking medical treatment. A majority (55%) of the state's residents believe Black people are treated less fairly than White people in dealing with the police. In the remaining five situations, however, most do not believe Black people are treated less fairly.
- Perceptions of discrimination differ considerably between White respondents and Black respondents to the survey. With the exception of encounters with the police, the majority of White respondents say White people and Black people are treated equally across all of these situations. In contrast, the majority of Black respondents say that Black people are treated less fairly than White people in each of these six situations.
- Approximately half (52%) of state residents say the country needs to continue making changes for racial equality, and 44% either say the country has made the changes needed (20%) or say the country has gone too far in making changes on rights for Black people (22%).
- Black Louisiana residents overwhelmingly believe (84%) that the country needs to make further changes to achieve equal rights. Far fewer White Louisianans (39%) feel the country needs further change to achieve equality of rights. In fact, a majority of White residents of the state (56%) believe either that the country has already made the necessary changes for equal rights (26%) or that the country has gone too far in making changes on rights for Black people (30%). Over the last four years, the latter share has grown 11 percentage-points.
- Overall, 45% of Louisiana residents think being White helps someone's chances of getting ahead, and 46% say being Black hurts a person's chances. White residents of Louisiana tend to think race plays little, if any, role in a person's chances of getting ahead. Nearly half (47%) say being White makes no difference, and about a third (35%) say being Black neither helps nor hurts someone's chances of getting ahead.
- In contrast, White Louisianans think someone's socio-economic class plays a big role in advancement. Seventy-nine percent (79%) say being rich helps, and 78% also thinks being poor hurts, including 58% who say it hurts a lot. When it comes to the role of wealth in shaping someone's chances of getting ahead, attitudes of Black Louisianans are similar to those of White Louisianans. Large majorities think being rich helps (77%) and being poor hurts (78%). Unlike White residents, however, Black residents of Louisiana also think race plays an important role.

- Approximately two-thirds (66%) of Louisiana residents think the economic system in America unfairly favors the wealthy, an eight percentage-point increase since 2016. A majority (55%) of state residents now believe being poor has more to do with circumstances beyond someone's own control than with lack of effort, a 12 percentage-point increase over the past five years. Both increases are concentrated among state residents with higher household incomes.
- Louisiana residents are divided almost evenly between those who favor a smaller government providing fewer services (48%) and those favoring a larger government providing more services (45%). Democrats overwhelmingly favor a larger government and more services (79%), while Republicans just as overwhelmingly favor smaller government with fewer services (77%).
- Most residents do not think the government should provide more assistance to people in need – 33% say it is already providing enough and 20% say it is providing too much. Only 41% want the government to provide more assistance to people in need.
- Seventy-eight percent (78%) approve of the state's 2016 expansion of Medicaid, including majorities among both Democrats (96%) and Republicans (54%). Similarly, most (76%) approve of last year's expansion of unemployment insurance benefits, including majorities among Democrats (94%) and Republicans (62%).

Views on Race and Class in Louisiana

White Louisianans say there is less racial discrimination than Black Louisianans

The *2021 Louisiana Survey* includes a series of questions asking participants about the extent of racial discrimination in six different situations, such as interacting with police or applying for a loan (see Figure 1 for a list of these situations). Participants indicated whether they thought Black people are treated less fairly than White people, White people are treated less fairly than Black people, or both are treated equally in each situation.

A majority (55%) of the state's residents believe Black people are treated less fairly than White people in dealing with the police. In the remaining five situations, however, most do not believe Black people are treated less fairly. Majorities believe both Black people and White people are treated equally in stores and restaurants (54%), when voting

in elections (61%), and when seeking medical treatment (55%). In the remaining two situations – in hiring, pay, and promotions as well as when applying for a loan or mortgage – at work, the public as a whole splits more evenly between those who think Black people are treated less fairly than White people and those who say both are treated equally.

Perceptions of discrimination differ considerably between White respondents and Black respondents to the survey. With the exception of encounters with the police, the majority of White respondents say White people and Black people are treated equally across all situations (Figure 2). In the case of hiring, pay, and promotions at work, approximately one in ten White respondents say White people are treated less fairly than Black people.

In contrast, the majority of Black respondents say that Black people are treated less fairly than White people in each of these six situations.

Figure 1: Most do not believe Black people face discrimination in many situations

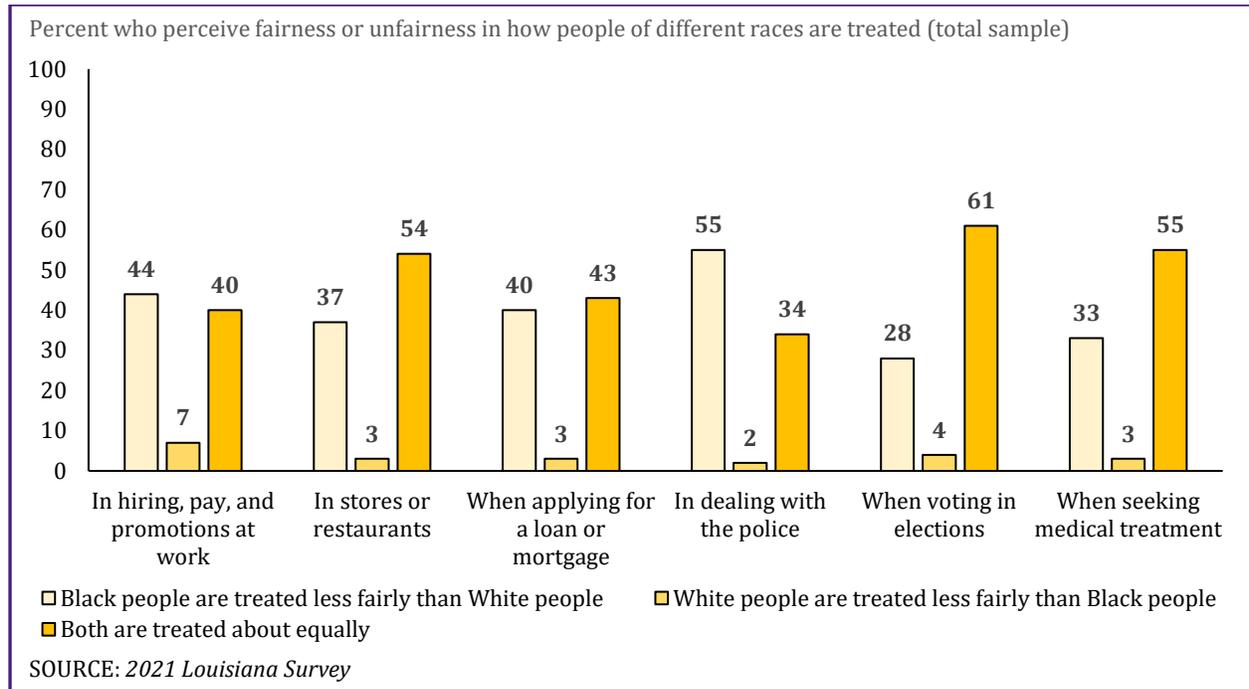


Figure 2: The majority of White Louisianans say races treated equally in most situations

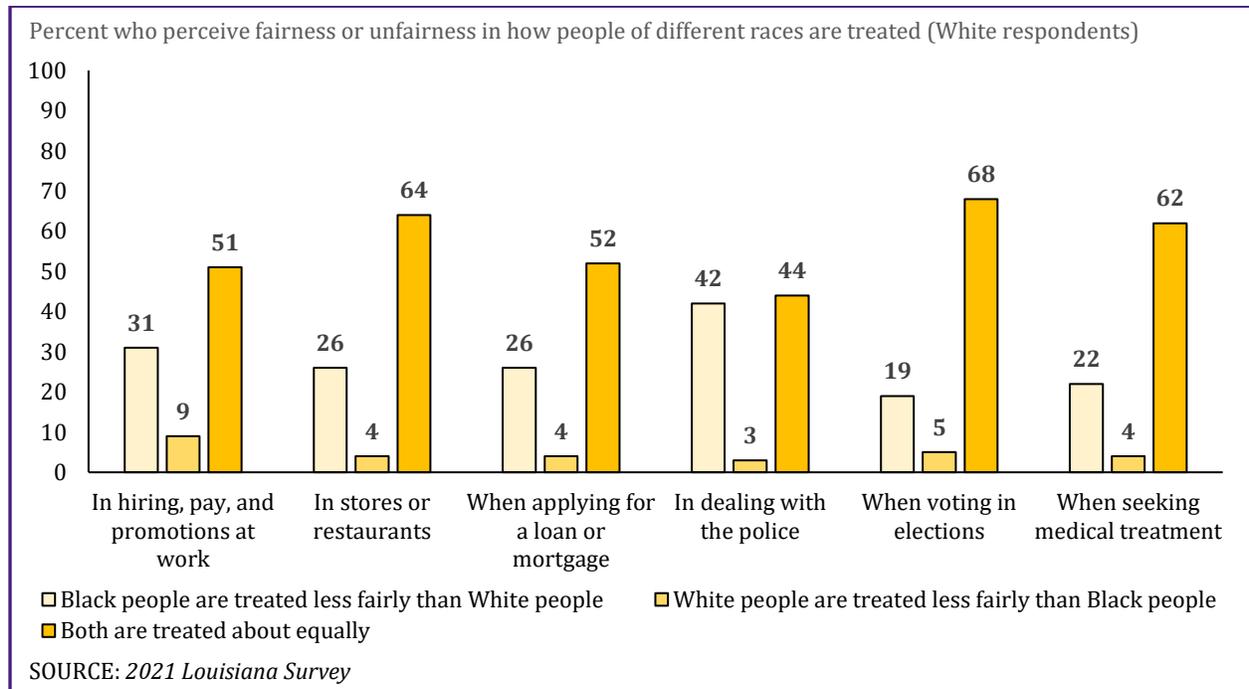
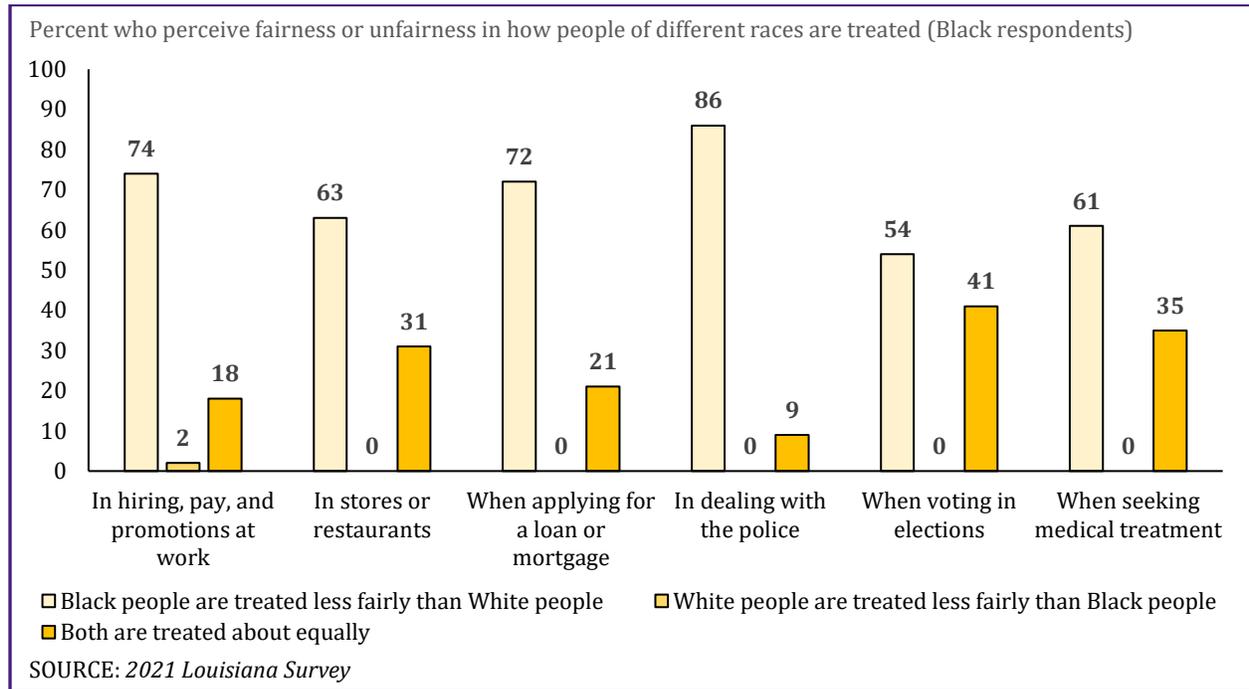


Figure 3: The majority of Black Louisianans say Black people treated less fairly than White people



Black and White Louisiana residents disagree on country's progress toward equal rights

Louisianans split on the progress made toward equal rights for Black people and White people in the United States.

Approximately half (52%) of state residents say the country needs to continue making changes for racial equality, and 44% either say the country has made the changes needed (20%) or say the country has gone too far in making changes on rights for Black people (22%).

There has been a shift in the latter two responses since this question appeared in a 2017 survey of Louisiana. Fewer Louisianans now say the country has made the necessary changes (from 28% to 20%) and more now say the country has gone too far in making changes to secure rights for Black people (from 15% to 22%). The share who believe the country still needs to make progress has essentially remained the same (from 51% to 52%).

Like the 2017 survey, the *2021 Louisiana Survey* includes a follow up question for any participant who says the country needs to continue making changes. This question asks these participants whether they believe the country will eventually make the changes necessary for equal rights between Black people and White people or the country will

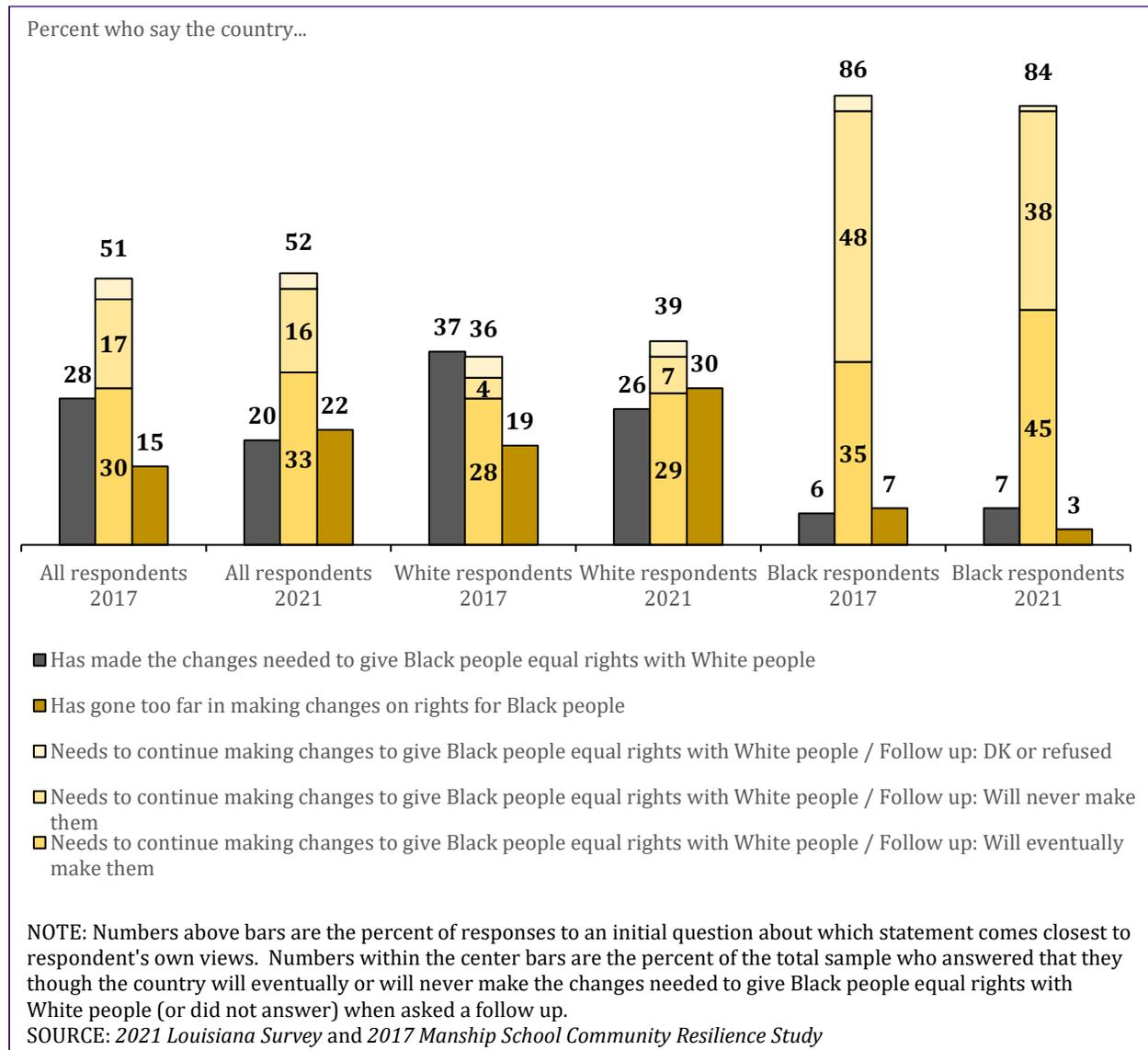
never make them. On balance, Louisiana residents who believe the country needs to make further change also believe it will eventually do so.

The pattern of responses to these questions among the total sample, which represents Louisiana adults as a whole, masks enormous differences between Black and White residents of the state. Figure 4 shows responses for the total sample and by race in both surveys.

Black Louisiana residents overwhelmingly believe (84%) that the country needs to make further changes to achieve equal rights, as was the case in 2017. However, Black Louisianans are somewhat more optimistic today than four years ago. In 2017, 35% felt the country will eventually make the changes necessary for equality and 48% felt the country would never make them. Today, 45% believe the country will make the changes, and 38% believe it will not.

Far fewer White Louisianans (39%) feel the country needs further change to achieve equality of rights. In fact, a majority of White residents of the state believe either that the country has already made the necessary changes for equal rights (26%) or that the country has gone too far in making changes on rights for Black people (30%). Over the last four years, the share of White Louisianans who believe the latter has grown 11 percentage points.

Figure 4: Black residents and White residents of Louisiana have different assessments of need for change to ensure equal rights



More respondents think economic class matters for success than race

The 2021 Louisiana Survey includes four questions asking participants whether they thought various demographic characteristics help or hurt a person's chances of getting ahead. The four characteristics included being White, being Black, being rich, and being poor.

Figure 5 shows the responses for the total sample. Overall, 45% of Louisiana residents think being White helps someone's chances of getting ahead, 11% say it hurts, and 38% say it makes no difference. Forty-six percent (46%) say being Black hurts a person's chances of getting ahead, 16% say it helps, and 30% say it makes no difference.

When shifting to class, the shares who think being rich helps and being poor hurts are much larger than from race. Seventy-nine percent (79%) say being rich helps, including 70% who say it helps a lot, and 78% say being poor hurts, including 61% who say it hurts a lot.

White residents of Louisiana tend to think race plays little, if any, role in a person's chances of getting ahead (Figure 6). Nearly half (47%) say being White makes no

difference, and about a third (35%) say being Black neither helps nor hurts someone's chances of getting ahead. Only about a third (34%) think being White advantages someone's socio-economic chances. A similar share (37%) think being Black negatively affects one's chances for socio-economic advancement. Nearly one-in-five (18%) White residents of Louisiana say being Black helps someone get ahead. In contrast, White Louisianans think someone's socio-economic class plays a big role in advancement. Seventy-nine percent (79%) say being rich helps, including 68% who say it helps a lot. A large majority (78%) also thinks being poor hurts, including 58% who say it hurts a lot.

When it comes to the role of wealth in shaping someone's chances of getting ahead, attitudes of Black Louisianans are similar to those of White Louisianans (Figure 7). Large majorities think being rich helps (77%) and being poor hurts (78%). If anything, Black residents of the state are more likely to say that being poor hurts a lot (70%).

Unlike White residents, however, Black residents of Louisiana also think race plays an important role. Sixty percent (60%) say being White helps someone's chances of getting ahead, including 52% who say it helps a lot. Two-thirds (67%) say being Black hurts someone's chances of getting ahead.

Figure 5: Views of whether race and socio-economic class help or hurt someone’s chances of getting ahead, total sample

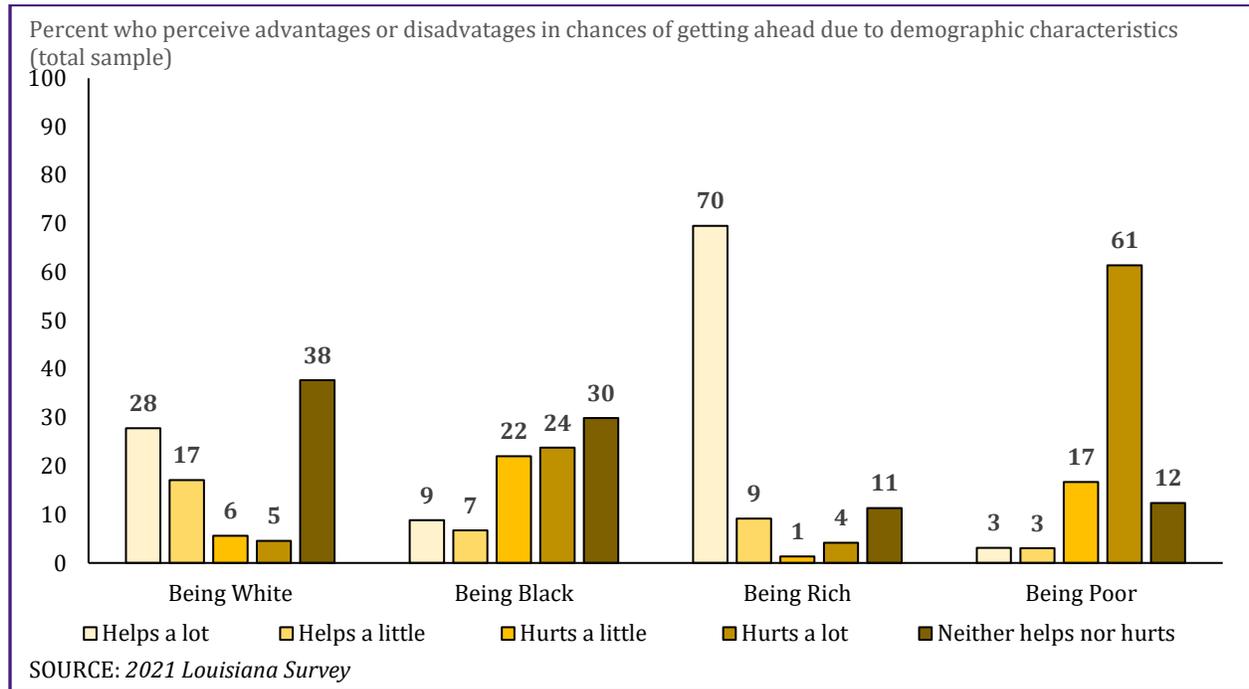


Figure 6: Views of whether race and socio-economic class help or hurt someone’s chances of getting ahead, White respondents only

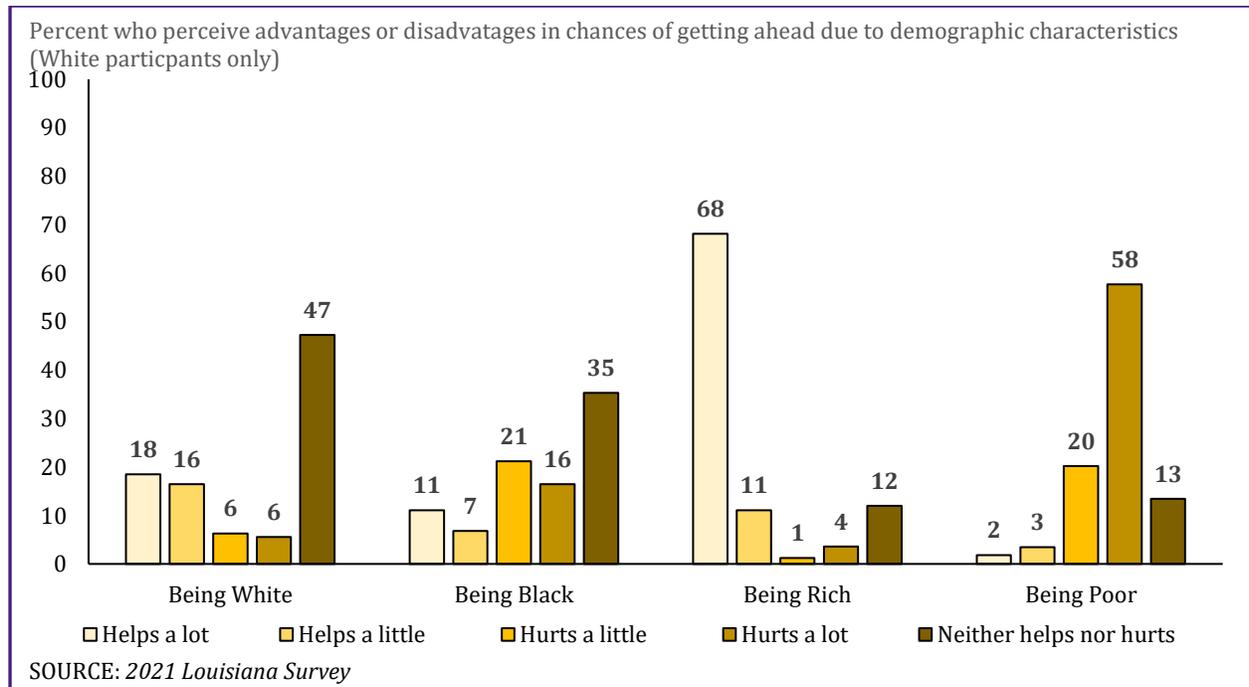
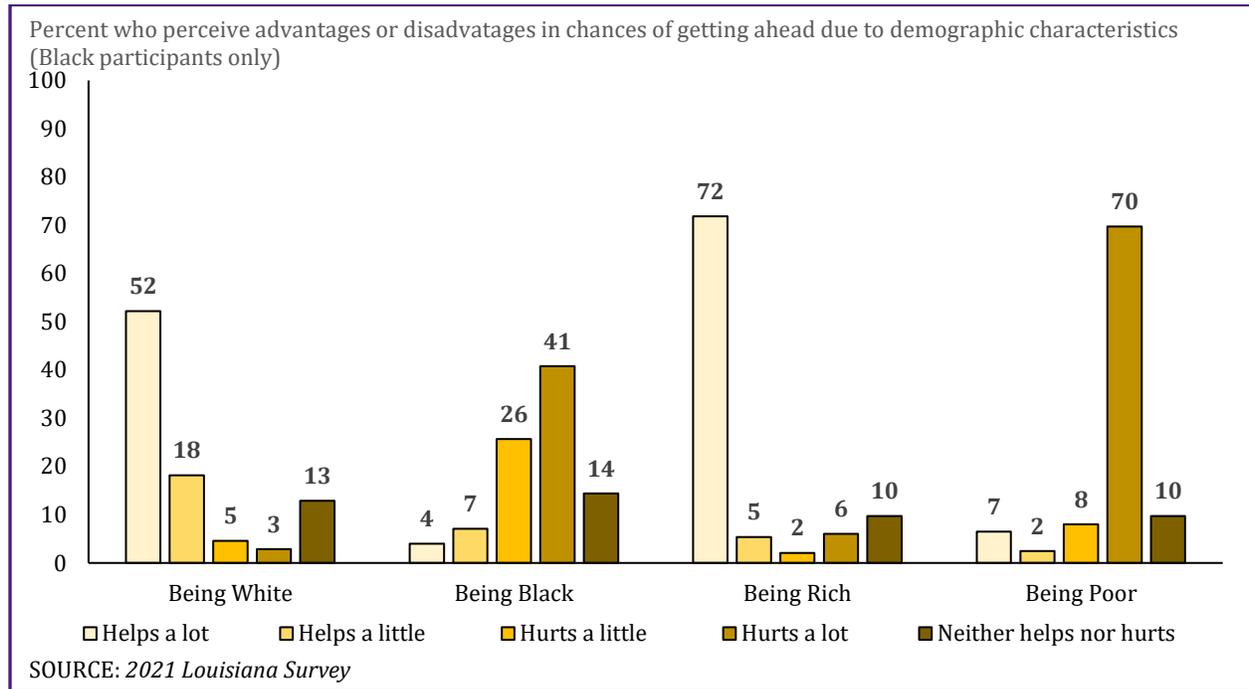


Figure 7: Views of whether race and socio-economic class help or hurt someone’s chances of getting ahead, Black respondents only



Louisiana attitudes trending in economically populist direction...

Approximately two-thirds (66%) of Louisiana residents think the economic system in America unfairly favors the wealthy. This marks an increase from 2016, the last time this question appeared in the *Louisiana Survey* (Figure 8). The question asks participants whether the economic system in the country unfairly favors the wealthy or it is generally fair to most Americans. This shift is concentrated among Louisiana residents with higher household incomes.

A similar patterns appears in a question asking which is more often to blame if a person is poor – lack of effort on his or her own part or circumstances beyond his or her control. A majority (55%) of state residents now believe being poor has more to do with circumstances beyond someone’s own control than with lack of effort. This is a 12 percentage-point increase over the past five years (Figure 9). Again, this shift is concentrated among higher earning households who appear to be more sympathetic to the poor than in 2016.

Figure 8: More state residents think the economic system unfairly favors the wealthy than in 2016

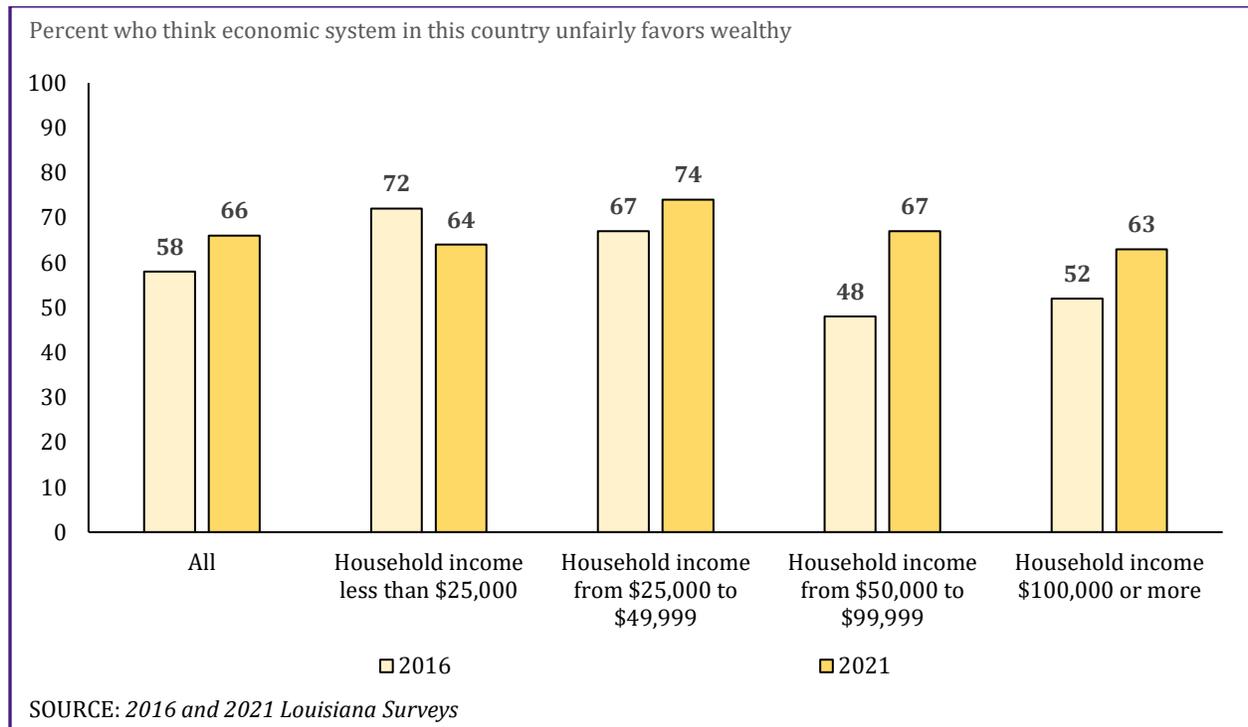
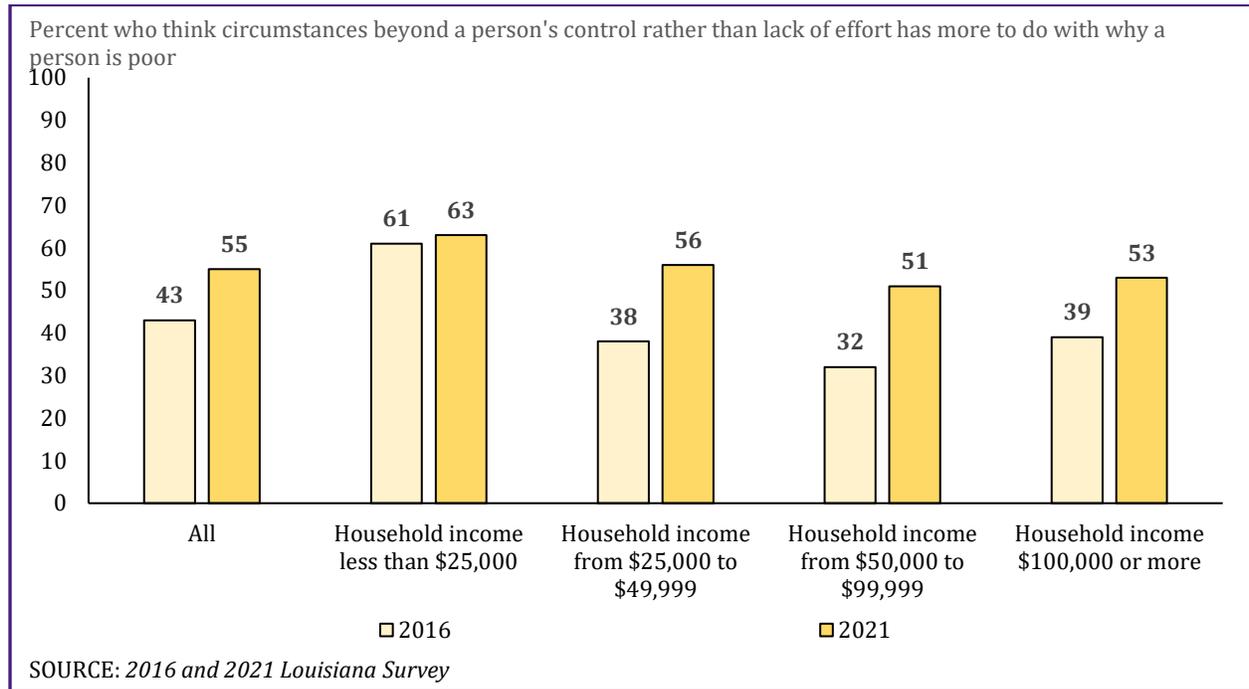


Figure 9: More people think being poor results from circumstances beyond control than in 2016



... But most remain skeptical about government's role in relief

Louisiana residents are divided almost evenly between those who favor a smaller government providing fewer services (48%) and those favoring a larger government providing more services (45%). These shares are essentially the same as when the *Louisiana Survey* last asked this question in 2015 (49% and 45%, respectively). The chief divide in opinion stems from partisanship. Democrats overwhelmingly favor a larger government and more services (79%), while Republicans just as overwhelmingly favor smaller government with fewer services (77%).

The 2021 *Louisiana Survey* also asked participants about the amount of assistance that the government provides to people in need – specifically, whether the government should provide more assistance, less assistance, or is already providing the right amount of assistance. Most residents do not think the government should provide more assistance to people in need – 33% say it is

already providing enough and 20% say it is providing too much. Only 41% want the government to provide more assistance to people in need.

Again, political party plays a key role in opinion. Two-thirds (66%) of Democrats want the government to provide more assistance. Most Republicans (80%) do not, but they split evenly between those who say the government provides the right amount (40%) and those who say it provides too much assistance (40%).

Despite a general reticence when it comes to government services and assistance, Louisiana residents as a whole approve of specific recent policies to help those in need. Seventy-eight percent (78%) approve of the state's 2016 expansion of the Medicaid program. Majorities among both Democrats (96%) and Republicans (54%) approve of Medicaid expansion. Similarly, a majority (76%) of state residents approve of last year's expansion of unemployment insurance benefits. Again, the benefit has bipartisan approval – 94% among Democrats and 62% among Republicans.

Survey Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted among a statewide sample of 781 adults (18 years of age or older) living in Louisiana. The survey was conducted by interviewers at Louisiana State University's Public Policy Research Lab. The sample includes 154 respondents interviewed via landline telephone and 627 respondents interviewed on a cellphone, including 476 who do not have a landline telephone.

Approximately four-fifths of the sample (82 percent) was stratified across parishes proportionally to their adult population ensuring geographic representation across the state. The remaining 18 percent of the sample was drawn statewide. For both the parish and statewide samples, the design of the landline samples ensures representation of both listed and unlisted numbers by use of random digit dialing. Similarly, the cell phone samples are randomly drawn from known, available phone number banks dedicated to wireless service. Both samples, landline and cellphone, were provided by Marketing Systems Group.

The combined landline and cell phone sample is weighted using an iterative procedure that matches race, education, household income, gender, and age to known profiles for the adult population of Louisiana found in the Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2019 one-year estimates. Weighting cannot eliminate every source of nonresponse bias. However, proper administration of random sampling combined with accepted weighting techniques has a strong record of yielding unbiased results.

The sample has an overall margin of error of +/- 6.4 percentage points. The margin of error includes adjustment due to the weighting procedure. The design effect due to weighting is 1.4 percentage points; that is, the margin of error is 1.4 percentage points larger than it would be for a simple random sample of this size without weighting.

In addition to sampling error, as accounted for through the margin of error, readers should recognize that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls. As often as possible, the *Louisiana Survey* follows the wording of relevant questions repeatedly used by reputable public opinion research institutions and projects, such as the Pew Research Center, Gallup Inc., and the American National Election Studies.

Interviews for this survey were conducted from January 4 to March 1, 2021. However, 80% of interviews occurred from February 1 to March 1, 2021.

The *2021 Louisiana Survey* has a response rate of four percent. This response rate is the percentage of eligible residential households or personal cell phones in the sample for which an interview is completed. The rate is calculated using the American Association for Public Opinion Research's method for Response Rate 3 as published in their Standard Definitions. Response rates for

telephones have been on decline for several decades and frequently fall in the single digits even among the very best survey research organizations.

Louisiana State University's Public Policy Research Lab, a division of the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, designed the survey questionnaire and sampling strategy, computed the survey weights, and conducted all statistical analysis.

Question Wording and Toplines

Unless otherwise indicated, results are for the total sample. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

[ORDER OF Q54 THROUGH 59 RANDMOIZED]

Q54. [ORDER OF FIRST TWO RESPONSE OPTIONS RANDOMIZED IN QUESTION WORDING AND RESPONSE LIST]

In general in our country these days, would you say that Black people are treated less fairly than White people, White people are treated less fairly than Black people, or both are treated about equally in hiring, pay, and promotions at work?

Black people are treated less fairly than White people	44
White people are treated less fairly than Black people	7
Both are treated about equally	40
Don't know/Refused [VOLUNTEERED].....	8

Q55. [ORDER OF FIRST TWO RESPONSE OPTIONS RANDOMIZED IN QUESTION WORDING AND RESPONSE LIST]

In general in our country these days, would you say that Black people are treated less fairly than White people, White people are treated less fairly than Black people, or both are treated about equally in stores or restaurants?

Black people are treated less fairly than White people	37
White people are treated less fairly than Black people	3
Both are treated about equally	54
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	8

Q56. [ORDER OF FIRST TWO RESPONSE OPTIONS RANDOMIZED IN QUESTION WORDING AND RESPONSE LIST]

In general in our country these days, would you say that Black people are treated less fairly than White people, White people are treated less fairly than Black people, or both are treated about equally when applying for a loan or mortgage?

Black people are treated less fairly than White people	40
White people are treated less fairly than Black people	3
Both are treated about equally	43
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	14

Q57. [ORDER OF FIRST TWO RESPONSE OPTIONS RANDOMIZED IN QUESTION WORDING AND RESPONSE LIST]

In general in our country these days, would you say that Black people are treated less fairly than White people, White people are treated less fairly than Black people, or both are treated about equally in dealing with the police?

Black people are treated less fairly than White people	55
White people are treated less fairly than Black people	2
Both are treated about equally	34
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	9

Q58. [ORDER OF FIRST TWO RESPONSE OPTIONS RANDOMIZED IN QUESTION WORDING AND RESPONSE LIST]

In general in our country these days, would you say that Black people are treated less fairly than White people, White people are treated less fairly than Black people, or both are treated about equally when voting in elections?

Black people are treated less fairly than White people	28
White people are treated less fairly than Black people	4
Both are treated about equally	61
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	7

Q59. [ORDER OF FIRST TWO RESPONSE OPTIONS RANDOMIZED IN QUESTION WORDING AND RESPONSE LIST]

In general in our country these days, would you say that Black people are treated less fairly than White people, White people are treated less fairly than Black people, or both are treated about equally when seeking medical treatment?

Black people are treated less fairly than White people	33
White people are treated less fairly than Black people	3
Both are treated about equally	55
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	10

Q60. [ORDER OF STATEMENTS RANDOMIZED]

Which of these three statements comes closer to your own views -- even if none is exactly right?

Country has made the changes needed to give blacks equal rights with Whites.....	20
Country needs to continue making changes to give blacks equal rights with Whites	52
Country has gone too far in making changes on rights for blacks	22
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	5

Q61. [ASKED IF Q60 IS ‘Country needs to continue making changes’]

Do you think our country will eventually make the changes needed to give blacks equal rights, or do you think the country will never make those changes?

Will eventually make them	64
Will never make them	22
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	5

Q62.

Overall, how does being White affect people's ability to get ahead in our country these days?

Helps a lot	28
Helps a little	17
Hurts a little	6
Hurts a lot	5
Neither helps not hurts	38
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	7

Q63.

Overall, how does being black affect people's ability to get ahead in our country these days?

Helps a lot	9
Helps a little	7
Hurts a little	22
Hurts a lot	24
Neither helps not hurts	30
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	9

Q64.

Overall, how does being rich affect people's ability to get ahead in our country these days?

Helps a lot	70
Helps a little	9
Hurts a little	1
Hurts a lot	4
Neither helps not hurts	11
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	4

Q65.

Overall, how does being poor affect people's ability to get ahead in our country these days?

Helps a lot	3
Helps a little	3
Hurts a little	17
Hurts a lot	61
Neither helps not hurts	12
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	3

Q66. [ORDER OF STATEMENTS RANDOMIZED]

Which of these three statements comes closer to your own views -- even if none is exactly right?

The economic system in this country unfairly favors the wealthy	66
The economic system in this country is generally fair to most Americans.....	31
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	3

Q67. [ORDER OF STATEMENTS RANDOMIZED IN QUESTION AND RESPONSE LIST]

In your opinion, which is generally more often to blame if a person is poor? Lack of effort on his or her own part, or circumstances beyond his or her control?

Lack of effort.....	33
Circumstances beyond control	55
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	12

Q68. [ORDER OF STATEMENTS RANDOMIZED IN QUESTION AND RESPONSE LIST]

If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller government providing fewer services or a larger government providing more services?

Smaller government and fewer services.....	48
Larger government and more services	45
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	8

Q69. [ORDER OF FIRST TWO STATEMENTS RANDOMIZED]

Thinking about the assistance government provides to people in need. Do you think the government...

Should provide more assistance.....	41
Should provide less assistance.....	20
Is providing about the right amount of assistance	33
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	6

Q70.

As you may know, Medicaid is a program to provide health coverage mostly to low-income individuals. A few years ago, Louisiana expanded its Medicaid program to provide health care coverage to more people. Do you approve or disapprove of the state expanding its Medicaid program?

Approve	78
Disapprove	18
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	4

Q71A. [ASKED IF Q70 IS ‘Approve’]

Do you approve strongly or not so strongly?

Strongly	79
Not so strongly.....	20
Don’t know/Refused [VOL.]	1

Q71B. [ASKED IF Q70 IS ‘Disapprove’]

Do you disapprove strongly or not so strongly?

Strongly	65
Not so strongly.....	34
Don’t know/Refused [VOL.]	1

Q72.

As you may know, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, commonly known as welfare, is a program to provide money to low-income individuals. Do you approve or disapprove of the state expanding this program?

Approve	53
Disapprove	42
Don’t know/Refused [VOL.]	5

Q73A. [ASKED IF Q72 IS ‘Approve’]

Do you approve strongly or not so strongly?

Strongly	72
Not so strongly.....	26
Don’t know/Refused [VOL.]	2

Q73B. [ASKED IF Q72 IS ‘Disapprove’]

Do you disapprove strongly or not so strongly?

Strongly	63
Not so strongly.....	35
Don’t know/Refused [VOL.]	1

Q74.

As you may know, Unemployment Insurance is a program to provide money to people who are laid off from work. Last year, Louisiana expanded its unemployment insurance program to provide benefits to more people. Do you approve or disapprove of the state expanding this program?

Approve	76
Disapprove	20
Don’t know/Refused [VOL.]	3

Q75A. [ASKED IF Q74 IS 'Approve']

Do you approve strongly or not so strongly?

Strongly	78
Not so strongly.....	22
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	0

Q75B. [ASKED IF Q74 IS 'Disapprove']

Do you disapprove strongly or not so strongly?

Strongly	72
Not so strongly.....	27
Don't know/Refused [VOL.]	1