

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE STUDY

LSU | Manship School of
Mass Communication



Large Gaps between Whites and Blacks on Views of Race, Law Enforcement and Recent Protests



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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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About the Community Resilience Study

Louisiana, and the Baton Rouge metropolitan area in particular, endured a series of tumultuous events in the summer of 2016, including the shooting of Alton Sterling by Baton Rouge police officers, protests in response to this shooting, the murders of law enforcement officers Montrell Jackson, Brad Garafola and Matthew Gerald, and unprecedented flooding.

To better understand how residents of Louisiana have reacted to these events and the profound social issues they raise, theanship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University commissioned the Community Resilience Study. The study consists of a survey administered to a statewide sample of adult Louisiana residents as well as a sample of residents in the metro Baton Rouge area: East Baton Rouge Parish, Ascension Parish and Livingston Parish.

This report, the first from the Community Resilience Study, focuses on attitudes about race, the protests and policing in Louisiana.

Overview

Opinions and perceptions of race issues in Louisiana are starkly divided along racial lines. The *2017 Manship School Community Resilience Study*, a project of Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication, shows that:

- Race relations have worsened in the eyes of both whites and black in the state, but especially so for blacks. The share of whites who say race relations are getting worse rose from 19 percent to 32 percent between 2014 and 2017, while the share among blacks rose from 22 percent to 39 percent.
- White residents of Louisiana are more than twice as likely as black residents to have at least a fair amount of confidence in local police to treat blacks and whites equally (73 percent vs. 29 percent). About half of blacks have very little confidence in police to treat blacks and whites equally. Similarly, 75 percent of whites but just 37 percent of blacks have a great deal or fair amount of confidence in police to not use excessive force. Four in ten black residents of the state have very little confidence in police to not use excessive force.
- Similar gaps in views between whites and blacks appear in evaluations of police use of physical force during the protests in Baton Rouge last year. Forty percent of whites statewide believe the police used the right amount of force during the protests, 23 percent believed police should have used more force, and only 16 percent believe they should have used less force. Most blacks (69 percent) say police should have used less force during the protests.
- Eighty-six percent of black Louisiana residents say that the country needs to continue making changes to give blacks equal rights with whites. Yet, about half (48 percent) also say they do not think the country will ever make these changes. In contrast, just 36 percent of whites think the country needs to continue making changes, and most of these individuals think the changes will eventually be made. Furthermore, 37 percent of whites think the country has already made the changes needed to give blacks equal rights with whites, and another 19 percent say the country has gone too far in making changes on rights for blacks.
- Generally, opinion in Louisiana leans toward more government effort to reduce racial differences in society – especially in reducing differences in criminal justice and income, but less so when it comes to reducing racial segregation in public schools. In each case, however, the aggregate opinion is largely driven by the high level of support among blacks.

The *2017 Manship School Community Resilience Study* was administered over the telephone from January 8 to February 6, 2017, to both landline and cell phone respondents. The project consists of a representative sample of 1,079 adult Louisiana residents, including a representative sample of 361 adult residents of the metro Baton Rouge area (including East Baton Rouge Parish, Ascension Parish and Livingston Parish). The total sample has a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points. The metro Baton Rouge sample has an overall margin of error of +/- 5.2 percentage points.

Growing Share Says Race Relations in Louisiana are Getting Worse

About a third of Louisiana residents (34 percent) say race relations in the state are getting worse. In 2014, when this question was first included on the annual *Louisiana Survey*, 20 percent said relations were getting worse (figure 1). However, most of this increase occurred between the 2014 and 2015 surveys, with much less change since then.

Race relations have worsened in the eyes of both whites and black in the state, but especially so for blacks. The share of whites who say race relations are getting worse rose from 19 percent to 32 percent between 2014 and 2017, while the share among blacks rose from 22 percent to 39 percent. Today, blacks are more likely than whites to say relations are getting worse.

Perceptions of race relations are largely similar when comparing the Louisiana sample to results from a [national sample recently surveyed about race relations in the nation by the Pew research Center](#) (figure 2). However, the gap between blacks and whites in the share who think race

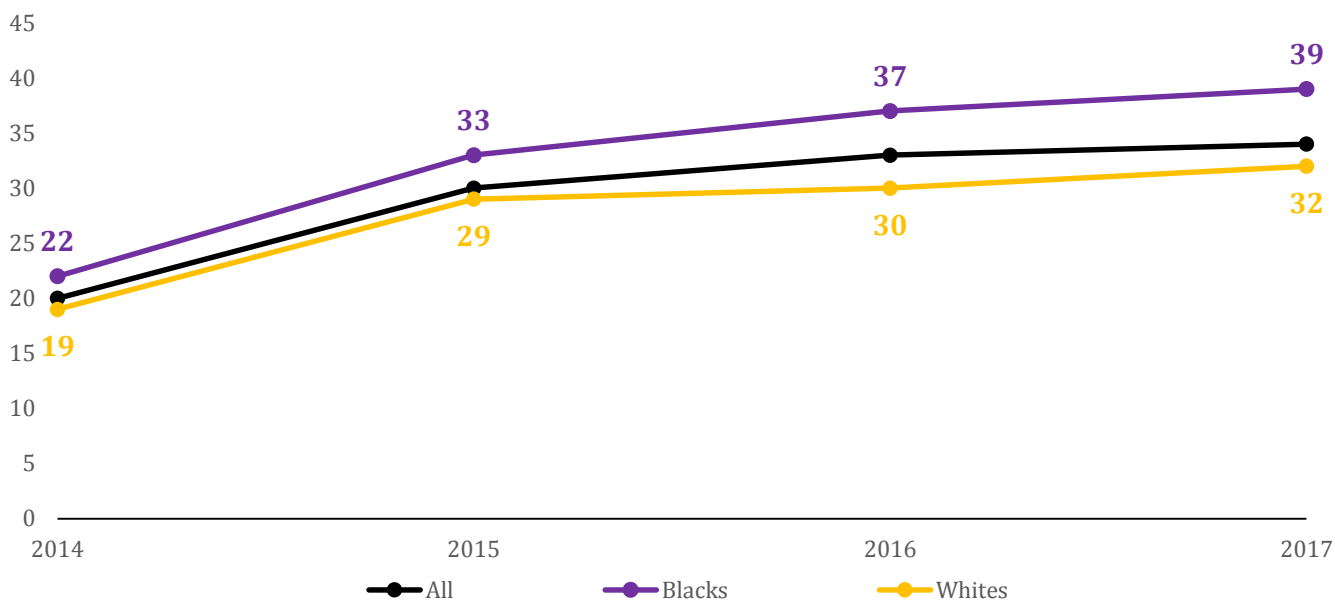
relations are getting worse is larger in the metro Baton Rouge area than in the state, or the country, as a whole.

Racial Divisions in Views of Police and Protestors

White and black residents of Louisiana have very different views about whether law enforcement treats races equally and avoids excessive force. Indeed, white residents of Louisiana are more than twice as likely as black residents to have at least a fair amount of confidence in local police to treat blacks and whites equally (73 percent vs. 29 percent). About half of blacks have very little confidence in police to treat blacks and whites equally (figure 3). Similarly, 75 percent of whites but just 37 percent of blacks have a great deal or fair amount of confidence in police to not use excessive force. Four in ten black residents of the state have very little confidence in police to not use excessive force. Despite the tumultuous events surrounding law enforcement in the state last year, these attitudes are essentially unchanged since 2015

Figure 1: Widening Racial Gap in Belief that Race Relations in Louisiana are Getting Worse

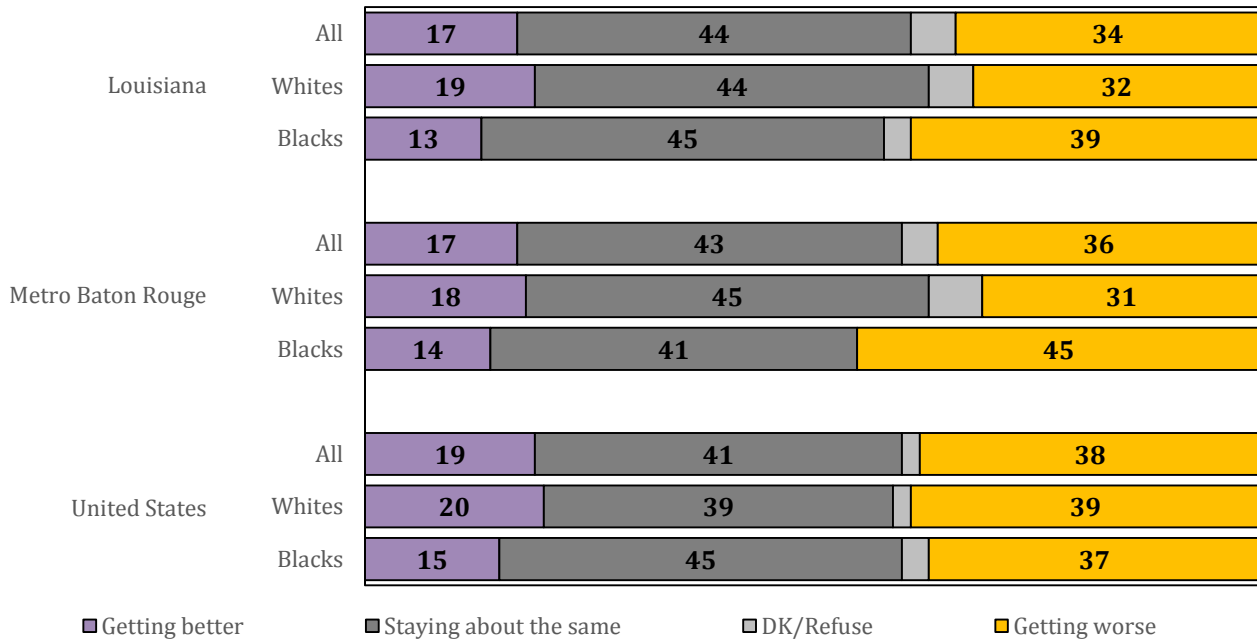
Percent who say race relations in the state are getting worse



SOURCE: 2014 - 2016 Louisiana Survey and Manship School Community Resilience Study

Figure 2: Larger Gap in Metro Baton Rouge Between How Whites and Blacks See Progress of Race Relations

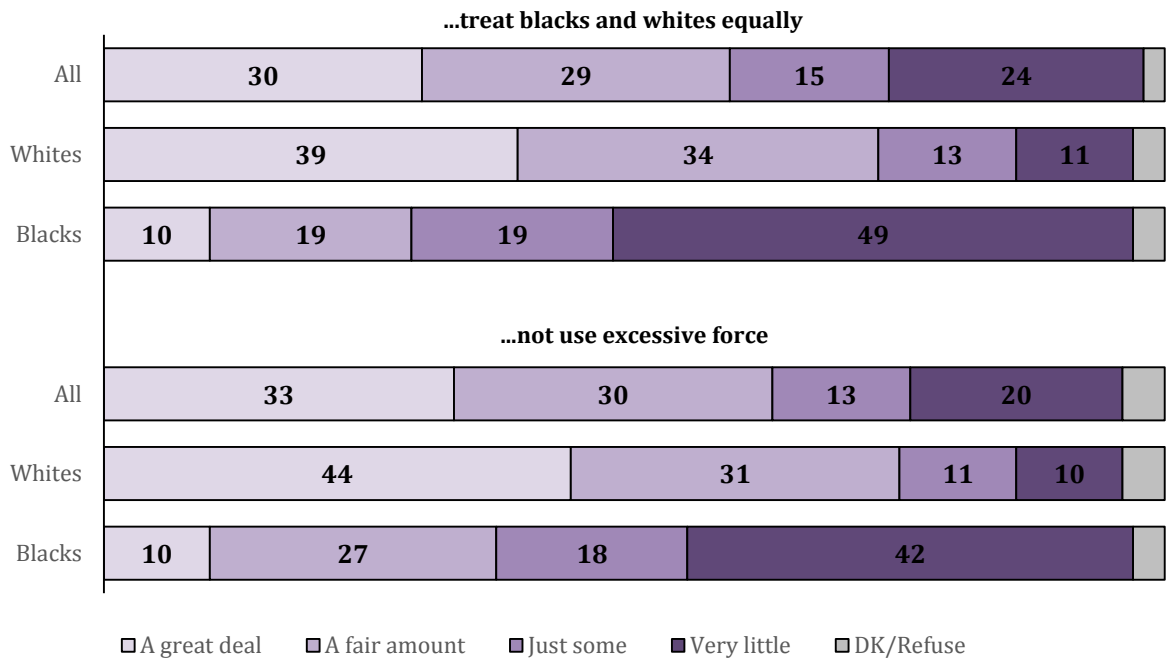
Percent saying race relations are _____



SOURCE: *Manship School Community Resilience Study; Pew Research Center*

Figure 3: Blacks Have Less Confidence in Police

Percent who say they have a great deal, a fair amount, just some or very little confidence in police to...



SOURCE: *Manship School Community Resilience Study*

when the same questions appeared on the *Louisiana Survey*.

Responses in the metro Baton Rouge sample are similar to the statewide sample. Two thirds of whites have at least a fair amount of confidence in police to treat blacks and whites equally, but 74 percent of blacks have just some or very little confidence. When it comes to avoiding the use of excessive force, 73 percent of whites in metro Baton Rouge have a great deal or fair amount of confidence in police, while 60 percent of blacks have just some or very little confidence.

Similar gaps in views between whites and blacks appear in evaluations of police use of physical force during the protests in Baton Rouge last year. Forty percent of whites statewide believe the police used the right amount of force during the protests, 23 percent believed police should have used more force, and only 16 percent believe they should have used less force. Most blacks (69 percent) say police should have used less force during the protests.

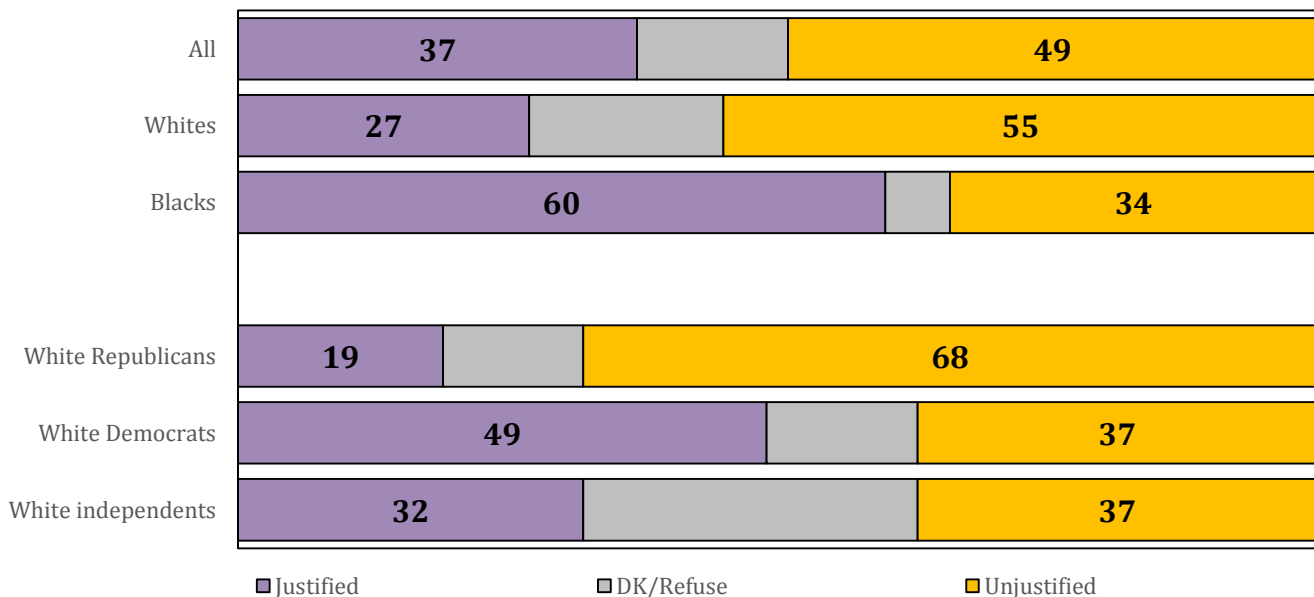
Residents of the Baton Rouge metro area are more critical of the amount of force used by police during last year’s protests in the city than

the state as a whole: 42 percent in the metro area say the police should have used less force vs. 33 percent statewide. This geographic difference is largely driven by opinion among blacks. Not only do blacks make up a larger share of the metro area’s population than the state’s population, but blacks in the metro area are also especially likely (80 percent) to say police should have used less force than blacks statewide.

There is also a significant racial gap in opinions about whether the protests in Baton Rouge were justified or unjustified. Overall, opinion in the state is divided with 37 percent saying the protests were justified and 49 percent saying unjustified (figure 4). However, a majority of whites (55 percent) say the protests were unjustified while a majority of blacks (60 percent) say they were justified. Among whites, opinion divides starkly along partisan lines. White Democrats are eight percentage more likely to say the protests were justified than to say they were unjustified, and white Republicans are 51 percentage points more likely to say they were unjustified than to say they were justified. Indeed, the partisan gap among whites is roughly

Figure 4: Large Gaps by Race and Party in Opinions about Whether Protests Justified

Percent saying race protests in Baton Rouge following the Alton Sterling shooting were _____



SOURCE: *Manship School Community Resilience Study*

the same size as the racial gap in opinion for the whole sample.

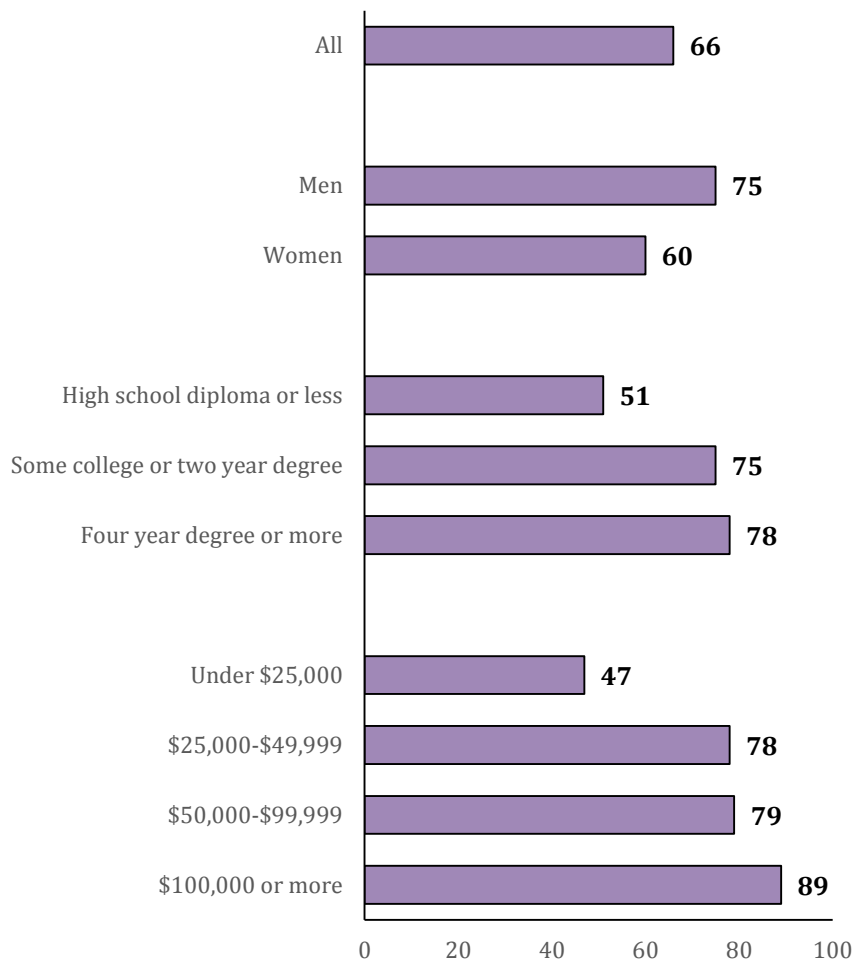
A larger share of residents in metro Baton Rouge say the protests were justified (47 percent) than residents elsewhere in the state (35 percent). The regional difference is particularly pronounced among whites: 37 percent of whites in the metro Baton Rouge area say the protests were justified, but only 26 percent of whites elsewhere in the state think so.

Two-thirds of Blacks Say They Personally Experienced Racial Discrimination

Two thirds of blacks in Louisiana (66 percent) say they personally experienced discrimination or were treated unfairly because of their race or ethnicity. Majorities among all social and demographic subgroups of blacks say they have experienced discrimination, but these reports are especially pronounced among men, those with at least some college and higher household incomes (figure 5).

Figure 5: Two-thirds of Blacks in Louisiana Say They Personally Experienced Racial Discrimination

Percent of blacks saying they have personally experienced discrimination due to their race



NOTE: Percent is just among blacks.
SOURCE: *Manship School Community Resilience Study*

Majority of Blacks Think Country Needs Further Changes to Achieve Equal Rights; Most Whites Do Not

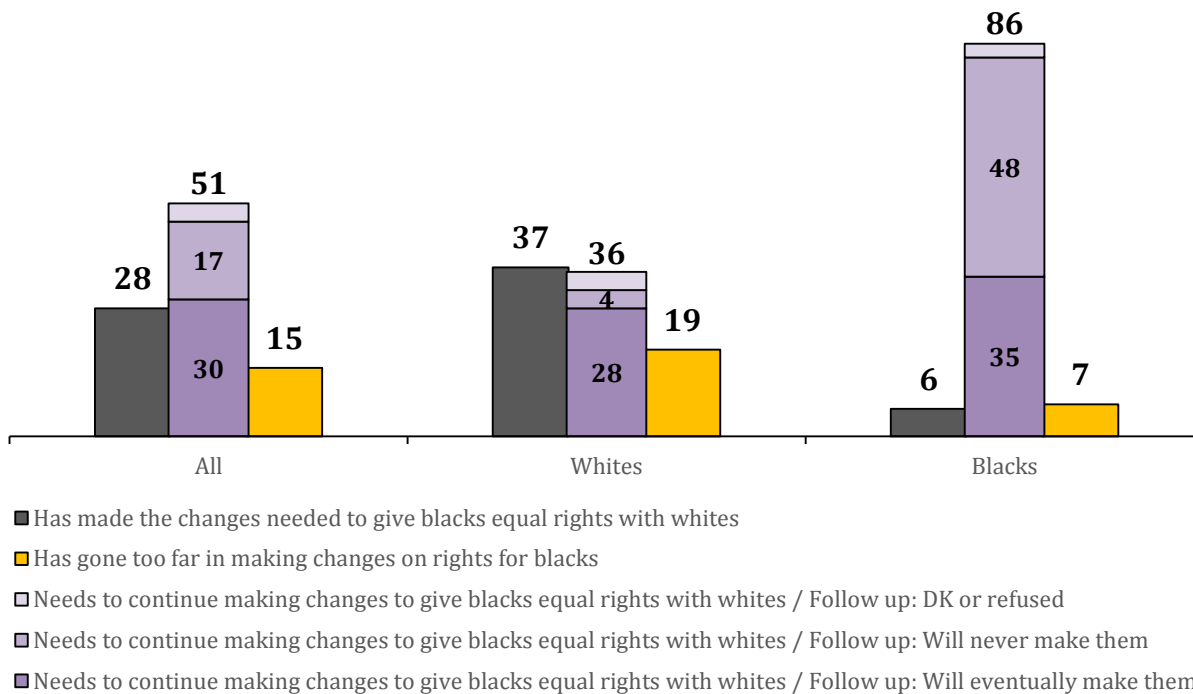
Louisiana is split on the progress made toward equal rights in the United States. Roughly half (51 percent) say the country needs to continue making changes to give blacks equal rights with whites, and 43 percent either say the country has made the changes needed to give blacks equal rights or say the country has gone too far in

making changes on rights for blacks. The split cuts largely on racial and partisan lines.

Black Louisiana residents are more likely than whites to say further changes are needed, but they are also more pessimistic about whether those changes will ever be achieved. Altogether, 86 percent of black Louisiana residents say that the country needs to continue making changes to give blacks equal rights with whites. Yet, about half (48 percent) also say they do not think the country will ever make these changes (figure 6).

Figure 6: Large Gaps by Race on Progress Country Has Made for Equal Rights

Percent who say the country _____



NOTE: Numbers above bars are responses to an initial question which statement comes closest to respondent's own views. Numbers within the purple bars are the percent of the total sample who answered that they thought the country will eventually or will never make the changes needed to give blacks equal rights when asked a follow up.

SOURCE: *Manship School Community Resilience Study*

Thirty five percent of blacks say these changes will eventually be made.

In contrast, just 36 percent of whites think the country needs to continue making changes, and most of these individuals think the changes will eventually be made. Furthermore, 37 percent of whites think the country has already made the changes needed to give blacks equal rights with whites, and another 19 percent say the country has gone too far in making changes on rights for blacks.

Once again there is a large partisan gap among whites. A plurality of white Republicans (44 percent) say the country has made the changes needed for equal rights, and approximately one-quarter (24 percent) say the country has gone too far in making changes for equal rights. Just 26 percent think further change is needed to give blacks equal rights with whites. Two-thirds of white Democrats (67 percent) say the country

needs to continue making changes for equal rights, but only nine percent think the country will ever make these changes.

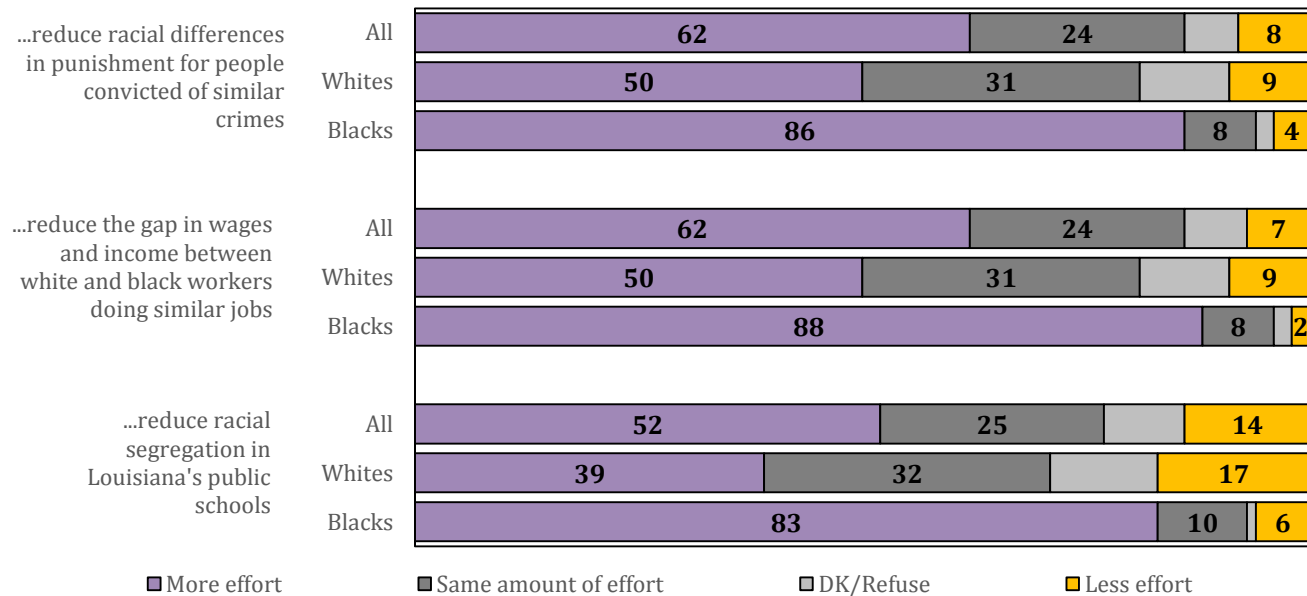
Public Support for Government Efforts to Reduce Racial Disparities Mostly Driven By Black Opinion

Generally, opinion in Louisiana leans toward more government effort to reduce racial differences in society – especially in reducing differences in criminal justice and income, but less so when it comes to reducing racial segregation in public schools. In each case, however, the aggregate opinion is largely driven by the high level of support among blacks.

Sixty two percent of state residents say the government should do more to reduce racial differences in punishment for people convicted of similar crimes (figure 7). Half of whites in the

Figure 7: Blacks are More Supportive of Government Effort Aimed at Reducing Racial Disparities

Percent saying government should make more effort, less effort, or the same amount of effort to...



SOURCE: *Manship School Community Resilience Study*

state say the government should do more, while 86 percent of blacks say so. The pattern is essentially the same for opinions about whether the government should do more to reduce the gap in wages and income between white and black workers doing similar jobs.

When it comes to doing more to reduce racial segregation in schools, black opinion looks the same as in the other two policy areas. However, white opinion is significantly less supportive of more government effort. Thirty nine percent of whites say the government should do more to

reduce racial segregation in Louisiana’s public schools.

In all three policy areas, the split in white opinion is strongly related to partisanship with white Democrats expressing higher levels of support for more government effort to reduce racial inequalities. The partisan gap among whites is largest when it comes to reducing segregation in schools.

Survey Methodology

The data in this report were collected from a randomly selected sample of adult (18 years or older) residents of Louisiana via telephone interviews conducted from January 8 through February 6, 2017. The project includes live-interviewer surveys of 418 respondents contacted via landline telephone and 661 respondents contacted via cell phone, for a total sample of 1,079 respondents. This total statewide sample includes an oversample of 361 residents of East Baton Rouge Parish, Ascension Parish and Livingston Parish. The oversample includes 108 landline interviews and 252 cell phone interviews. The two-part sampling strategy enables representative claims about the state population and Baton Rouge metro area residents when survey weights are applied, as they are in all the numbers cited above. The design of the landline samples ensures representation of both listed and unlisted numbers by use of random digit dialing. The cell phone samples is randomly drawn from known, available phone number banks dedicated to wireless service.

The response rate is 19.1 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 telephone surveys have declined for several decades and frequently fall in the single digits even among the very best survey research organizations. The response rate for this survey is within the typical range for reputable live-interviewer telephone survey firms.

The combined landline and cell phone sample for the statewide 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 2015 one-year estimates. The sample is also weighted for population density by parish. An identical approach is used to weight the metro Baton Rouge sample using population profiles of the three sampled parishes. 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 statewide sample has an overall margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points. The metro Baton Rouge sample has an overall margin of error of +/- 5.2 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, as accounted for in 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.

Louisiana State University's Public Policy Research Lab, a division of the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, conducted the telephone interviews and computed the survey weights.

Question Wording & Toplines

NOTE: Unless otherwise indicated, results are for the total sample. Not all respondents were asked each question, and questions asked to a subset of respondents are labelled accordingly. For these questions, percentages are for only those respondents who were asked the particular question. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Q1.

We would like to ask you about race relations in the state. Do you think race relations in Louisiana are getting better, getting worse or staying about the same?

	Louisiana	Metro Baton Rouge
Better	17	17
Worse	34	36
Same	44	43
Don't know / Refused (Volunteered)	4	4

Q2.

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

	Louisiana	Metro Baton Rouge
Our country has made the changes needed to give blacks equal rights with whites	28	30
Our country needs to continue making changes to give blacks equal rights with whites	51	53
Our country has gone too far in making changes on rights for blacks	15	11
Don't know / Refused (Vol.)	6	6

Q3. [ASKED ONLY IF Q2 IS 'Our country needs to continue making changes to give blacks equal rights with whites']

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?

	Louisiana	Metro Baton Rouge
Will eventually make them	59	57
Will never make them	34	36
Don't know / Refused (Vol.)	7	7

Q4.

Thinking about your own experience, have you ever personally experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly because of your race or ethnicity, or not?

	Louisiana	Metro Baton Rouge
Yes	46	48
No	53	51
Don't know / Refused (Vol.)	1	2

Q5. [ASKED TO APPROXIMATELY HALF OF RESPONDENTS, RANDOMLY SELECTED]

Should government make more effort, less effort, or the same amount of effort to reduce racial segregation in Louisiana's public schools?

	Louisiana	Metro Baton Rouge
More	52	55
Less	14	15
Same	25	22
Don't know / Refused (Vol.)	9	7

Q6.

Should government make more effort, less effort, or the same amount of effort to reduce racial differences in punishment for people convicted of similar crimes?

	Louisiana	Metro Baton Rouge
More	62	63
Less	8	8
Same	24	22
Don't know / Refused (Vol.)	6	7

Q7.

Should government make more effort, less effort, or the same amount of effort to reduce the gap in wages and income between white and black workers doing similar jobs?

	Louisiana	Metro Baton Rouge
More	62	63
Less	7	8
Same	24	20
Don't know / Refused (Vol.)	8	9

Q8.

Now we would like to ask you a few questions about police. How much confidence do you have in police to not use excessive force?

	Louisiana	Metro Baton Rouge
A great deal	33	29
A fair amount	30	29
Just some	13	14
Very little	20	26
Don't know / Refused (Vol.)	4	3

Q9.

How much confidence do you have in police to treat blacks and whites equally?

	Louisiana	Metro Baton Rouge
A great deal	30	25
A fair amount	29	27
Just some	15	18
Very little	24	28
Don't know / Refused (Vol.)	3	3

Q10.

Thinking about events in Baton Rouge last summer, in your opinion, were the protests in Baton Rouge following the Alton Sterling shooting justified or were they unjustified?

	Louisiana	Metro Baton Rouge
Justified	37	47
Unjustified	49	42
Don't know / Refused (Vol.)	14	11

Q11.

During the Baton Rouge protests, do you think police used the right amount of physical force when interacting with protesters, should they have used more force, or should they have used less force?

	Louisiana	Metro Baton Rouge
Used right amount of force	32	37
Should have used more force	17	10
Should have used less force	33	42
Don't know / Refused (Vol.)	18	11