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The “Woke” Generation? Millennial Attitudes on Race in the US

A summary of key findings from the first-of-its-kind bimonthly survey of racially and ethnically diverse young adults

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<http://www.genforwardsurvey.com/>

genFORWARD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- i. **About GenForward**
- ii. **Key Findings**

- I. **Introduction**
- II. **Race Today**
 - i. **Donald Trump and Race in America**
 - ii. **Racial Order**
 - 1. **Economic Power**
 - 2. **Political Power**
 - 3. **Perceptions of Discrimination**
 - iii. **Black Lives Matter vs. the Alt-Right**
- III. **Perceptions of Whiteness**
- IV. **Racial Identity & Collaboration**
- V. **Racial Resentment**
- VI. **Creating Change**
 - i. **Public Policy and Change**
- VII. **Conclusion**

- VIII. **Survey Methodology**

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About GenForward

> *The Survey*

The GenForward Survey is the first of its kind—a nationally representative survey of over 1,750 young adults ages 18-34 conducted bimonthly that pays special attention to how race and ethnicity influence how young adults or Millennials experience and think about the world. Given the importance of race and ethnicity for shaping the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of young people, we believe researchers make a mistake when they present data on young adults in a manner that assumes a monolithic Millennial generation and young adult vote.

Millennials now represent the largest generation of Americans, and they are by far the most racially and ethnically [diverse generation](#)¹ in the country. About 19 percent of Millennials identify as Latino or Hispanic, 13 percent as Black or African American, and 6 percent as Asian American. Thus, to fully understand how young adults think about elections and politicians, issues such as terrorism or gun violence, as well as their economic futures and race relations, we apply an intersectional lens and pay attention to characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

In this report, we present GenForward survey data collected between August 31 and September 16, 2017. We provide an extensive look at how Millennials think about race, the racial order, and racism in society in the age of Trump.

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¹ Hyperlinks are used throughout this report as citations. Click on the linked text to view and learn more about each citation.

Key Findings

- **The Racism Problem.** Millennials of all racial backgrounds list racism as one of the three most important problems in America.
- **President Trump a Racist.** Majorities of Millennials of color believe the president is a racist, but white Millennials are split on the issue.
- **President of Rich and White.** We find widespread agreement among Millennials across race and ethnicity that Donald Trump is most sympathetic to rich people and white people.
- **Racial Order.** Millennials believe African Americans experience the most racial discrimination in American society but also have the second-most political power behind whites. Whites are cited as having the most economic and political power overall.
- **Racial Coalitions.** Overwhelming majorities of Millennials across racial groups believe people of color face common challenges and could be political allies. While 84% of whites believe that whites and people of color could be political allies, barely a majority of Latinxs and less than a majority of African Americans and Asian Americans agree with the possibility of political alliances between whites and people of color.
- **Discrimination against Whites a big problem.** Nearly half (48%) of white Millennials believe that discrimination against whites has become as big a problem as discrimination against Blacks and other minorities, while only about a quarter of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinxs share this view.
- **Black Lives Matter.** A majority of African Americans (56%) and plurality of Asian Americans (43%) have a favorable opinion of Black Lives Matter, but only 27% of Latinxs and 19% of whites share this view.
- **Confederate Symbols.** A majority of Millennials of color believe the Confederate flag is a symbol of racism and support removing Confederate statues and symbols from public places. In contrast, a majority of whites (55%) see the Confederate flag as a symbol of Southern pride and oppose removing Confederate statues and symbols (62%).
- **Racial Progress.** Millennials of color cite organizing in communities as the most effective way to create racial change. White millennials cite community service and volunteering as the most effective strategy. No group of Millennials cite voting in federal elections as a top strategy for creating racial progress.

I. Introduction

Discussions surrounding issues of race have seemingly reached a fever pitch after eight years of the country's [first black president](#), the rhetoric and election of [Donald Trump](#), the persistence of highly publicized incidents of [police violence](#) against African Americans, and the demonstration of white nationalist sentiment and terror in [Charlottesville](#), Virginia. It is against this backdrop and in light of these events that we were particularly interested in understanding which issues Millennials consider the most important problems facing America and what they consider the state of race relations and racial power to be today.

The influence of Millennial voices and the continuing importance of race is exemplified by youth-led grassroots movements across the country that have focused the nation's attention on the existence (and persistence) of racial inequities and racism in domains like [education](#), [immigration](#), and [criminal justice](#). Perhaps most prominently, issues of blatant racism in policing and the killing of African Americans by law enforcement, championed by Millennial activists in the Black Lives Matter movement, 29-year-old NFL player Colin Kaepernick, and others, have received nationwide debate in the media and by top-ranking officials, including President Trump.

This GenForward report presents Millennials' views on race in the United States. The findings² presented in the pages that follow offer one of the richest portraits of what Millennials think about the state of race in America, the distribution of power across racial groups, their perceptions of their own racial identities, the role of whiteness in society, and how to best address issues of race in politics and society. As the most diverse generation in American history, Millennials are at the forefront of the country's shifting racial landscape and are active participants in the national discourse on race.

What do young adults think about race in modern American society? Our findings flesh out the strong and diverse opinions of Millennials by providing important and largely unavailable data on this question. We heed Juan Perea's warning of falling into "the black/white binary paradigm of race"³ and pay particular attention to variation in

² The findings presented in this report are a selection drawn from our full survey, the results of which can be found in our topline document online.

³ See "The Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race" by Juan F. Perea in *The Latino/a Condition: A Critical Reader*, edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefanic (1998).

opinion across different racial and ethnic groups. We invite scholars, journalists, policymakers, and activists to use these data in a similar spirit to better understand the opinions of Millennials as well as identify methods and opportunities for addressing racial issues.

II. Race Today

When asked about the most important issues facing the country, Millennials of all racial backgrounds cite racism as one of their top-three concerns, though there is substantial variation between groups. Importantly, African Americans are the only group where *a majority* of respondents cited racism as one of their top concerns. A plurality of African American Millennials list health care (30%) and police brutality (25%) as their second and third most cited issue.

As is evident in Table 1, approximately a third of Latinx (33%) and Asian American (32%) Millennials list racism as their second-most cited concern, behind immigration and healthcare, respectively. White Millennials prioritize racism to a somewhat lower degree (26%), though it still ranks among their top three. For whites, racism falls behind health care and climate change and ranks third alongside terrorism and homeland security.

This focus on racism, however, represents a shift from [July 2017](#), particularly among white and Asian American Millennials. Likely due to race-centered demonstrations in Charlottesville and elsewhere, significantly more young people in every racial category report racism as one of the top three issues in September than July. In July, only African Americans (35%) and Latinxs (27%) listed racism as a top-three concern.

Table 1. The Three Most Important Problems, by Race and Ethnicity⁴

	African American	Asian American	Latinx	White
Most cited problem	Racism (52%)	Health Care (45%)	Immigration (39%)	Health Care (39%)
Second most cited problem	Health Care (30%)	Racism (32%)	Racism (33%)	Environment and Climate Change (27%)
Third most cited problem	Police Brutality (25%)	Education (25%)	Health Care (29%)	Racism / Terrorism and Homeland Security (26%)
N=	503	258	505	510

In addition to asking about the most important issues, we also asked specifically about the significance of racism as a problem in the United States today. As represented in Figure 1, we find that large majorities of African American (82%), Asian American (71%), Latinx (74%), and, to a lesser extent, white (60%) Millennials think racism remains a major problem in our society. While majorities across racial groups agree that racism is a major problem, it is important to note the 22-point difference in the opinions of African American and white Millennials.

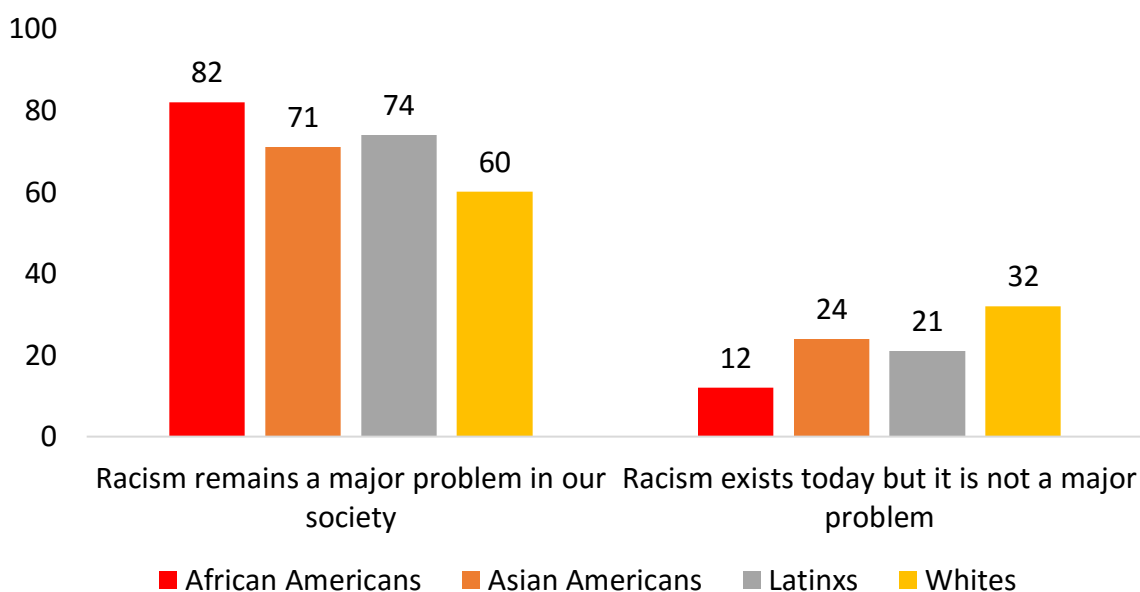
At the other end of the spectrum, 32% of white young adults say that racism exists today but is not a major problem, compared to 24% of Asian Americans, 21% of Latinxs, and 12% of African Americans. So, while Millennials of all races believe racism is a

⁴ Question: What do you think are the three most important problems facing this country today? Respondents (N = 1,816) select three from a list of 22 issues (see the topline). The percentage of respondents listing each issue as one of the three most important problems is listed in parentheses.

problem, whites are more likely to say that racism is not a major problem compared to Millennials of color, especially African Americans.

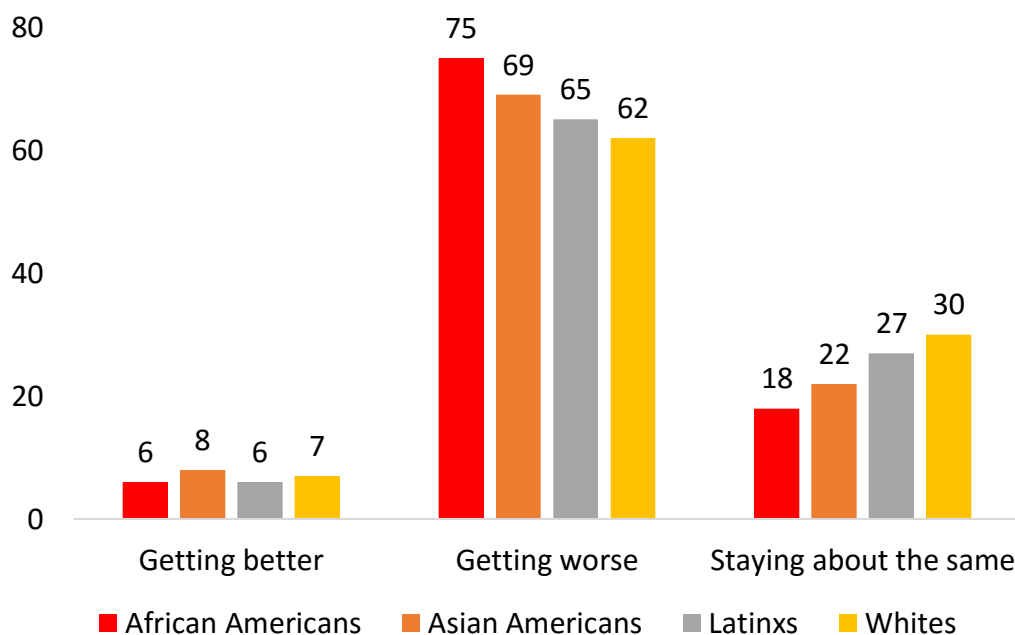
This renewed focus on racism is not necessarily unique to Millennials. According to a recent [survey by Pew Research Center](#), the number of Americans in the general population who believe racism continues to be a major problem but not necessarily one of the top three most important problems has also increased in recent years, particularly among Democrats.

Figure 1. Perceptions of Racism as a Major Problem in the United States



Most Millennials also believe that race relations in the United States have gotten worse in the past year, as Figure 2 shows, though important differences once again emerge between groups. For example, while 75% of African American respondents believe that race relations are getting worse, approximately two-thirds of white respondents (62%) hold the same view. What's more, whites (30%) and Latinxs (27%) were the groups most likely to say race relations are staying about the same, compared to somewhat smaller percentages of Asian Americans (22%) and African Americans (18%). Very few Millennials of any racial or ethnic group report that race relations have gotten better.

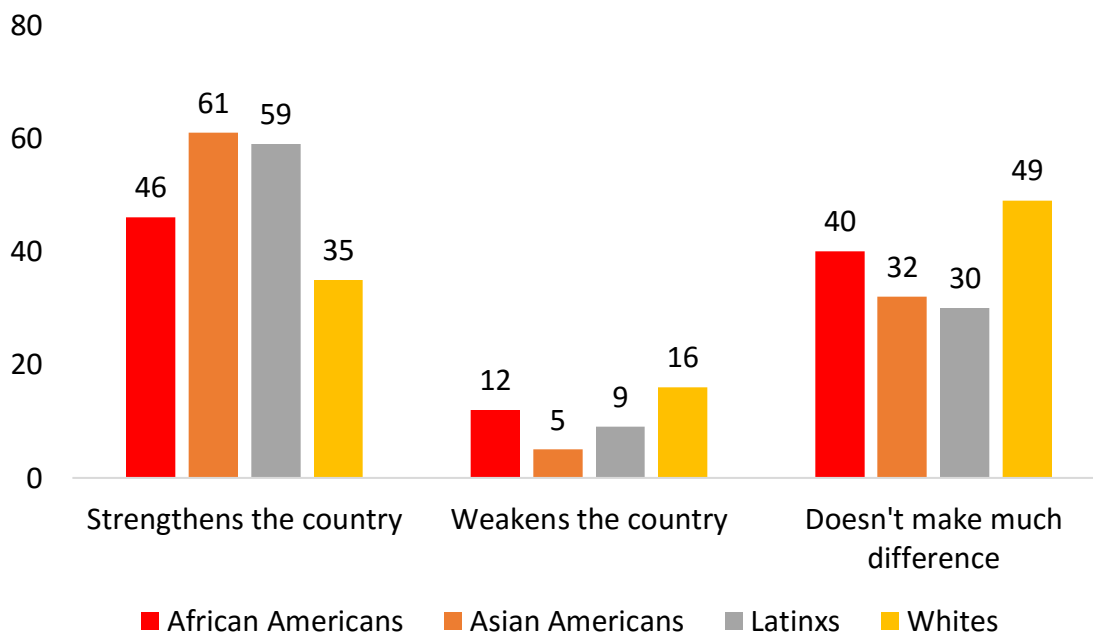
Figure 2. Since last year, do you think race relations in the United States are getting better, getting worse or staying about the same?



Worsening race relations may be cause for concern given that the U.S. Census [projects](#) that people of color will become the numerical majority in the United States by 2044. Whites, for the first time in recorded history, will cease being the numerical majority and will instead become the minority.

When asked about this demographic projection, Millennials express large differences in how they believe this population shift will impact the country. Figure 3 shows that nearly half of whites (49%) say that this coming change doesn't make much difference, while a bare plurality of African Americans (46%) and a majority of Asian Americans (61%) and Latinxs (59%) say that the projected demographic change strengthens the country.

Figure 3. As you may know, Hispanics/Latinos, Blacks, Asians, and other minorities are expected to make up more than half the U.S. population by the middle of this century. Do you think this increase in minority populations...



Donald Trump and Race in America

A number of pundits have suggested that part of the reason Donald Trump is president is the [anxiety many whites feel](#) about the impending demographic changes mentioned above. To gauge Millennials’ perspective of the President’s position when it comes to issues of race, we asked respondents a number of questions directly related to race in the age of Trump.

First, we asked the young adults in our sample to identify the emotion they continue to feel most strongly related to the presidency of Donald Trump. The most cited emotion across all racial groups is **disgust**.

Table 2 indicates that, a plurality of African Americans (30%), Asian Americans (25%), Latinxs (22%), and whites (16%) cite “disgust” as the strongest emotion they feel. The second most cited emotion for Asian Americans (16%), whites (15%), and African Americans (13%) is embarrassed. Latinxs, however, express “fearful” as their second most cited emotion, likely reflecting concerns over immigration sparked by the Trump administration’s rhetoric and proposals to implement restrictive immigration measures.

While Millennials of color all report negative emotions (disgusted, fearful, embarrassed) among their top three most cited responses, white Millennials stand out as the only group to include a positive emotion in their top three. Whites not only identify “hopeful” as their third most-cited emotion, but the percentage of respondents (14%) is also relatively equivalent to those who express embarrassment (second at 15%) or disgust (first at 16%).

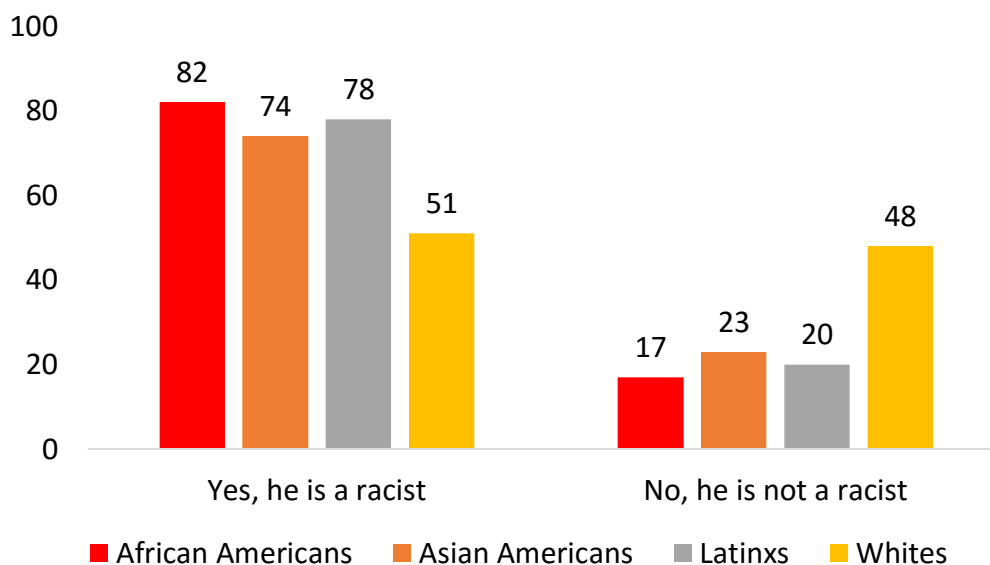
Table 2. President Trump has been in office for over six months. When you think about his presidency, what emotion best represents the strongest emotion you continue to feel since the election?

	African American	Asian American	Latinx	White
Most cited emotion	Disgusted (30%)	Disgusted (25%)	Disgusted (22%)	Disgusted (16%)
Second most cited emotion	Embarrassed (13%)	Embarrassed (16%)	Fearful (15%)	Embarrassed (15%)
Third most cited emotion	Fearful (12%)	Fearful (11%)	Embarrassed (14%)	Hopeful (14%)
<i>N</i> =	503	258	505	510

Donald Trump’s equivocating [comments](#) on white nationalists have led to [questioning](#) about his personal views on race. We asked Millennials whether they considered Donald Trump a racist.

As Figure 4 shows, while large majorities of African American (82%), Latinx (78%), and Asian American (74%) Millennials believe Trump is a racist, white Millennials are more evenly divided with 51% believing he is a racist and 48% saying he is not.

Figure 4. Do you believe Donald Trump is a racist or is not a racist?



Given their views on whether Trump is a racist, we were interested in learning which groups Millennials believe Trump is most sympathetic to. As shown in Table 3, Millennials, independent of race and ethnic identity, believe that the groups Donald Trump is most sympathetic to are rich people and white people. Rich people are the most cited and white people are the second most cited groups by all Millennials.

Opinions diverge substantially when listing the third group, however. African Americans (29%), Asian Americans (29%), and Latinxs (23%) believe Trump is sympathetic to white nationalists and the alt-right. White Millennials (25%) do not share this opinion and instead list “all Americans” as their third most cited group to which President Trump is sympathetic.

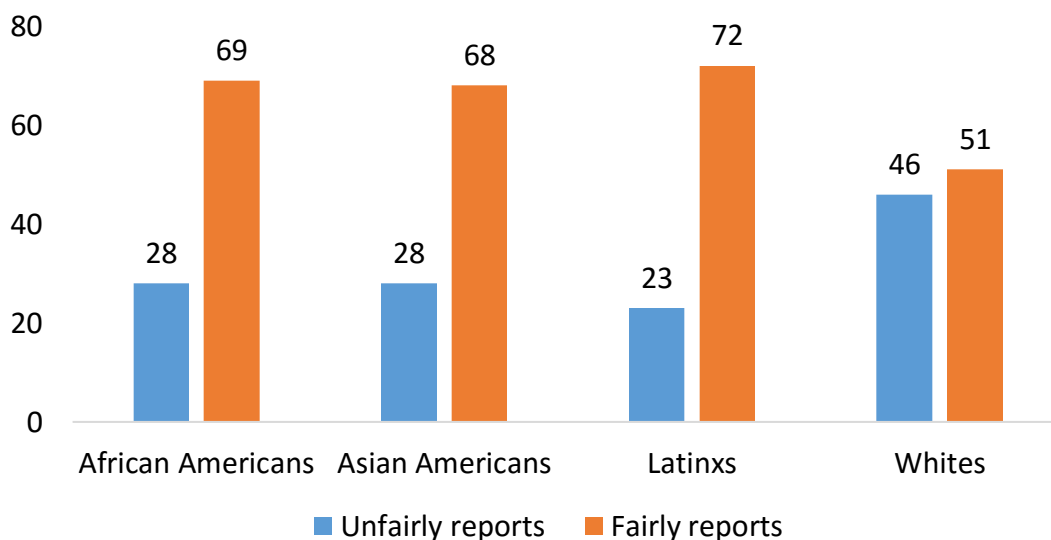
This is an important difference that reflects divergent understandings and feelings of representation. While some young whites see Trump as primarily sympathetic to the rich and the white, others view him as sympathetic to the needs of all Americans. Many Millennials of color, in contrast, view Donald Trump as supportive of extremist groups who advocate for a white ethnostate—a position that directly threatens their place and security in American society.

Table 3. Which of the following groups do you believe Donald Trump is most sympathetic to?

	African American	Asian American	Latinx	White
Most cited group	Rich people (66%)	Rich people (69%)	Rich people (62%)	Rich people (56%)
Second most cited group	White people (46%)	White people (54%)	White people (46%)	White people (34%)
Third most cited group	White Nationalists and the Alt-Right (29%)	White Nationalists and the Alt-Right (29%)	White Nationalists and the Alt-Right / The Republican Party (23%)	All Americans (25%)
<i>N</i> =	503	258	505	510

Divergent evaluations of Trump and his sympathies may explain the group differences on whether Millennials believe media coverage of Trump is fair and appropriate, expressed in Figure 5. More than two-thirds of African Americans (69%), Asian Americans (68%), and Latinxs (72%) say that the media coverage of President Trump has been fair. Whites, however, are more evenly divided about whether media reports have been fair. A slim majority of whites (51%) say the media coverage of Donald Trump’s comments are fair, while 46% say media reports are unfair and overblown.

Figure 5. Perceptions of Whether Media Coverage and Reporting of Donald Trump is Fair



Racial Order

Beyond paying attention to individual racial attitudes and perceptions of Trump, we were also interested in how Millennials believe power is distributed among racial and ethnic groups; what some call the racial order. Like scholars such as Claire Kim⁵, we believe there are multiple dimensions to the racial order. To assess these dimensions, we asked Millennials their perceptions about who has power and in what arenas. More specifically, young adults were asked to rank each of the four racial groups—African Americans, Latinxs, Asian Americans and whites—based on the amount of discrimination against them and their levels of economic and political power. The most consistent orderings across groups are displayed in Table 4.⁶ Interestingly, there was a consistency in evaluations of racial power across dimensions by young adults from different racial and ethnic groups that should be noted.

⁵ See *Bitter Fruit: The Politics of Black-Korean Conflict in New York City*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press (2003).

⁶ Group-specific results can be found in the corresponding topline document for this survey on our website.

Economic Power: In terms of economic power, significant majorities of respondents across racial and ethnic groups rank whites as holding the most economic power in society. Asian Americans are considered the second most economically powerful group while African Americans and Latinxs are considered to have the least economic power. Indeed, a plurality of Millennials of all racial backgrounds place African Americans and Latinxs as either 3rd or 4th in the overall ranking on economic power.

Political Power: We observe a somewhat different pattern when we shift our focus from economic to political power. Whites remain at the top of the hierarchy; large majorities of each racial group see whites as having the most political power, as they did for economic power.

In contrast to perceptions of economic power where African Americans placed at or near the bottom of the hierarchy, however, African Americans were thought to be the second-ranked group in evaluations of political power. Asian Americans are ranked as the least politically powerful despite being ranked second in economic power.

Discrimination: A majority of Millennials say that African Americans and Latinxs are the groups most discriminated against in our society today, with African Americans selected by Millennials of all races as the single-most discriminated against group. Latinxs rank second as the most discriminated against group, followed by Asian Americans as third, and whites as fourth.

Table 4. Millennial Perceptions of Racial Order in Political Power, Economic Power, and Discrimination in the US

	Political Power	Economic Power	Discrimination
1st - Most	Whites	Whites	African Americans
2nd	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinx
3rd	Latinxs	African Americans/ Latinxs	Asian Americans
4th - Least	Asian Americans	African Americans/ Latinxs	Whites

The American racial hierarchy has received a fair amount of attention by social scientists but relatively little scholarship has examined how people themselves conceive of the racial order. Our data shines a spotlight on how Millennials believe racial order and power is distributed across racial and ethnic groups on a variety of dimensions, including economics, politics, and discrimination. Across these different dimensions, Millennials largely perceive a racial hierarchy that places whites at the top and African Americans at the bottom, with Latinxs and Asians occupying the spaces in between.

Some important differences stand out, however, particularly around political power. African Americans, for example, rank second in perceptions of political power among Millennials of all racial backgrounds. Given how much emphasis has been placed on black/white politics in national discourse, it follows that perceptions of the political power of racial groups focuses on whites and African Americans. The presence of other groups, such as Latinxs and Asian Americans, however, is growing in both the political sphere and public consciousness. How perceptions of these groups across the different dimensions presented here shift over time is an interesting project for scholars, journalists and all observers of American politics and society.

Black Lives Matter vs. the Alt-Right

Despite increasing racial diversity in politics and public consciousness, the existence and perpetuation of anti-black racism and white supremacy are central to racial politics

in America. Blackness, as some commentators have [written](#), is the fulcrum or the essential component of white supremacy. In this section, we present Millennial opinions on perhaps two of the most talked about political forces in American politics today – the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement or the Movement for Black Lives and the growing public visibility of white nationalist groups.

As Figures 6 and 7 demonstrate, what Millennials think of these groups and their contributions to politics varies by race. It is important to note that overall Millennials are *much more likely* to say that BLM has good ideas and should be a major part of the political discussion than the alt-right. That said, white Millennials are the group least likely to say that the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has a lot of good ideas (19%) and most likely to say that BLM are racists and totally invalid (23%). Thus, more white Millennials view BLM as racists than groups with good ideas. Young whites are also substantially more likely to say that BLM are nothing but racists compared with Asian Americans (11%), Latinxs (10%), and African Americans (5%).

African American Millennials are the only group where a majority (56%) thinks that BLM have a lot of good ideas and should be part of the political discussion. A significant plurality of Asian Americans (43%) also agrees with this statement, with a smaller percentage of Latinxs (27%) indicating their support for this view.

Interestingly, for no racial or ethnic group of Millennials does a majority say the alt-right are racists and totally invalid. Instead, while pluralities of African Americans (43%) and Asian Americans (43%) consider the alt-right to be nothing but racists and totally invalid, the most common response for Latinxs (40%) and white (43%) Millennials is “I just don’t know enough to say,” suggesting that the “alt-right” terminology may not be widely known among Millennials or respondents in these groups are reluctant to take a public position on the alt-right.

Despite many whites and Latinxs reporting not to know what the alt-right is, all groups – including whites – still rate the alt-right as racists at much higher rates than they rate BLM as racists. Moreover, larger percentages of all groups think BLM has a lot good ideas than think the alt-right right has good ideas that should be part of the political discussion.

Figure 6. Given what you know about the Black Lives Matter Movement, would you say...

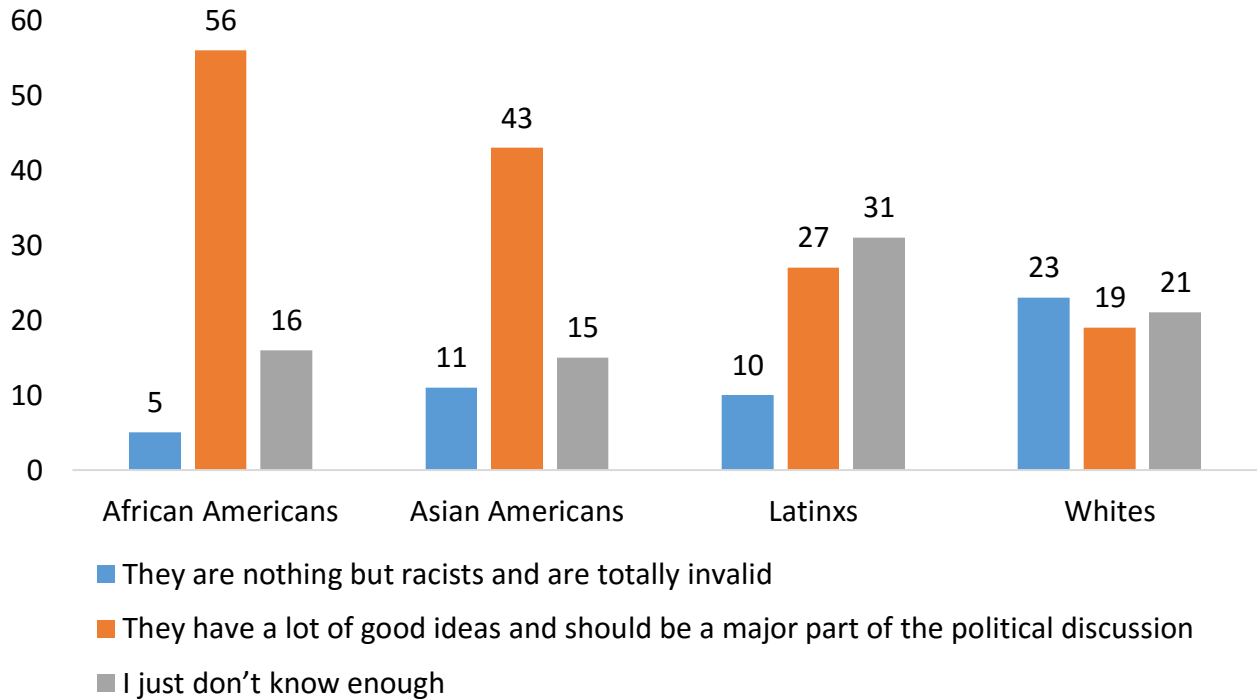
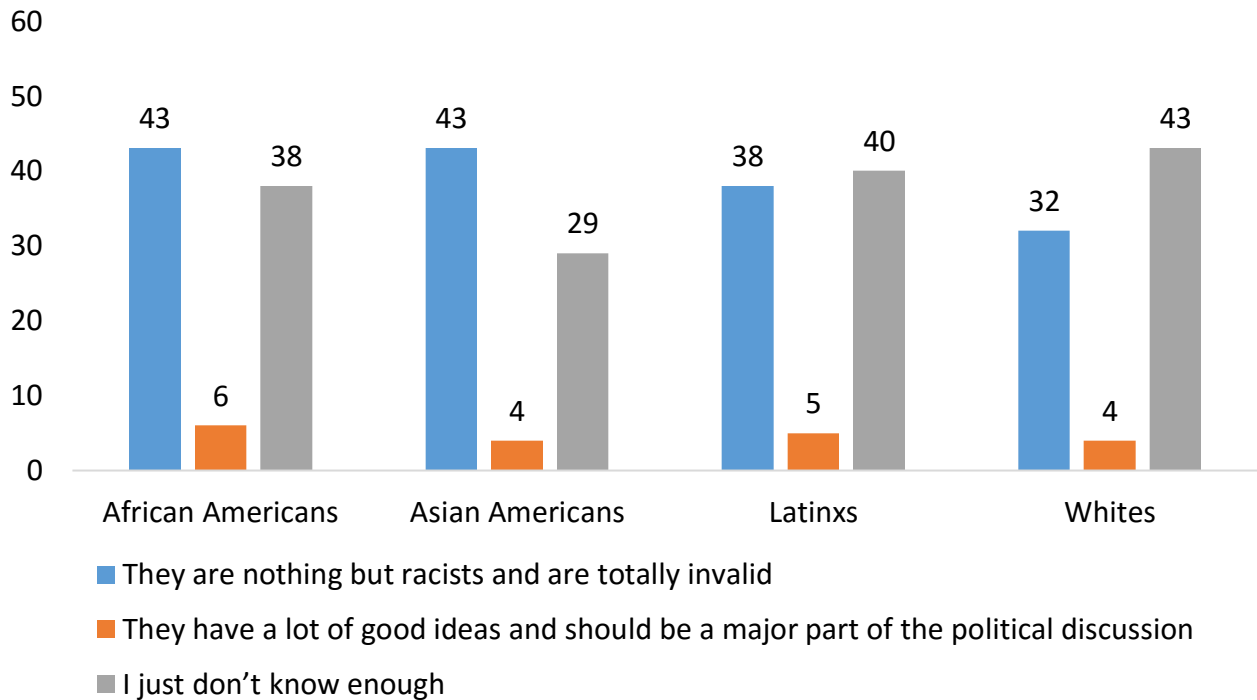
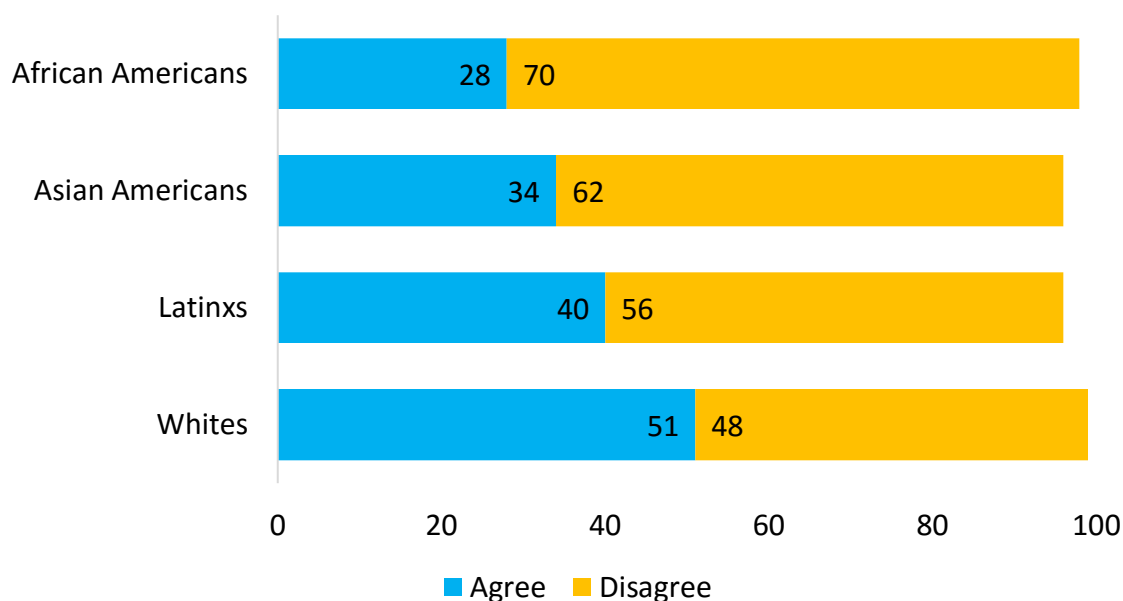


Figure 7. Given what you know about the alt-right movement, would you say...



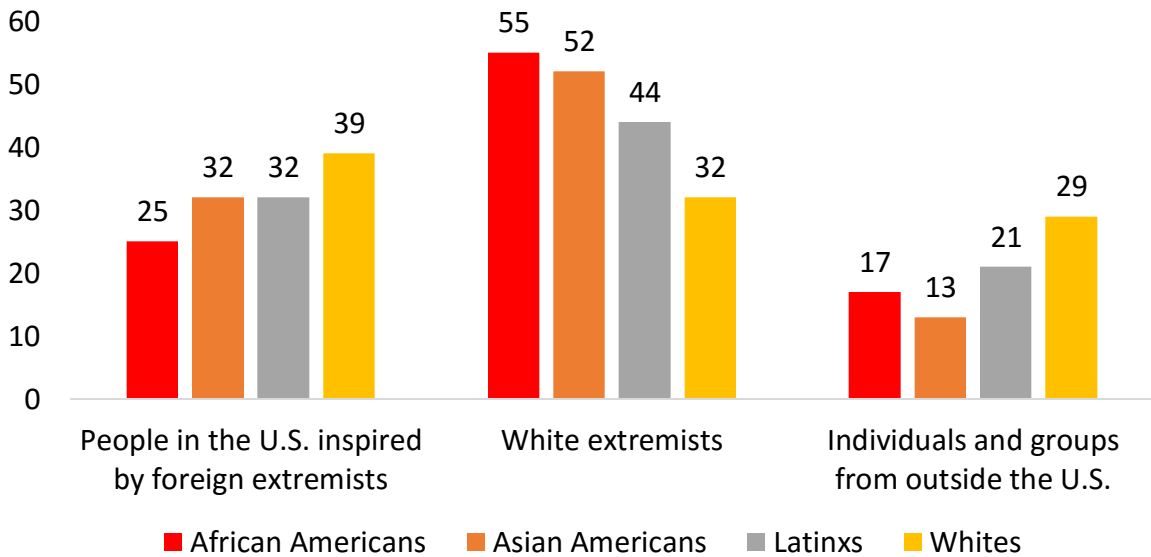
When asked to compare white nationalist groups with groups that comprise the BLM movement, as in Figure 8, white Millennials again stand out as the only group where a majority, albeit a slim majority (51%), agrees that the two entities are not very different from one another. African Americans, on the other hand, soundly disagree (70%) with the idea that white nationalists are not very different from the BLM movement. Majorities of Asian Americans (62%) and Latinxs (56%) also reject the equivalence of these groups.

Figure 8. White nationalist groups are not very different from groups that comprise the Black Lives Matter Movement.



We also asked respondents which threat facing people in the United States is most concerning to them, shown in Figure 9. A plurality of whites (39%) say that they are most concerned about terrorist threats from people in the U.S. inspired by foreign extremists. Whites are also more likely than people of color to say that individuals and groups from outside the U.S. are the terrorist threat that most concerns them. A majority of African Americans (55%), Asian Americans (52%), and a plurality of Latinxs (44%), however, say that white extremists pose the greatest terrorist threat compared to 32% of whites who share this view.

Figure 9. When thinking about different threats facing people in the United States, which of the following are you most concerned about?

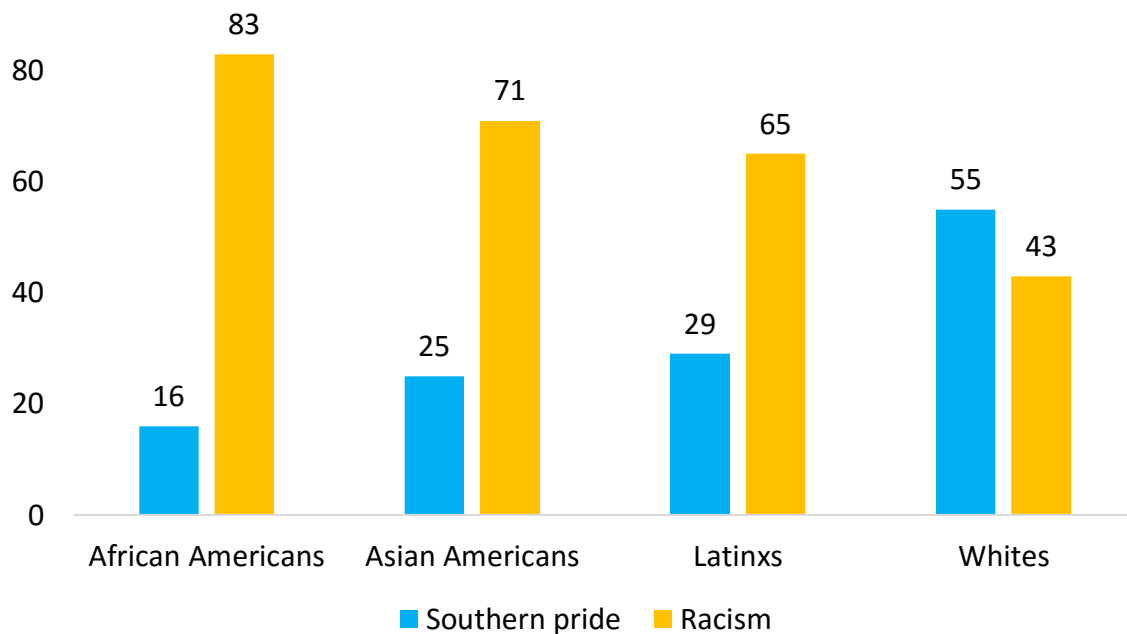


Asking questions about white nationalist groups and the Black Lives Matter movement as well as perceived threats facing people in the U.S. are one way of exploring perceived progress and setbacks in the struggle for racial equality. In order to gain a richer understanding of Millennials’ thoughts on race and specifically whiteness, we asked a series of questions on attitudes toward Confederate symbols.

The first of these questions focused on the Confederate flag as can be seen in Figure 10. Overwhelming majorities of African American (83%), Asian American (71%), and Latinx (65%) Millennials consider the Confederate flag primarily a symbol of racism and not Southern pride, as some [commentators have opined](#).

In contrast, a majority of white Millennials (55%) see the Confederate flag as a symbol of Southern pride, marking a large disconnect from Millennials of color – especially African Americans. This significant difference in opinion is likely borne out of the separate lived experiences and histories of racism pursued under the cover of southern heritage that different groups have encountered. The difference is also reflected in reactions to events like Charlottesville and the proposed removal of Confederate statues in the South.

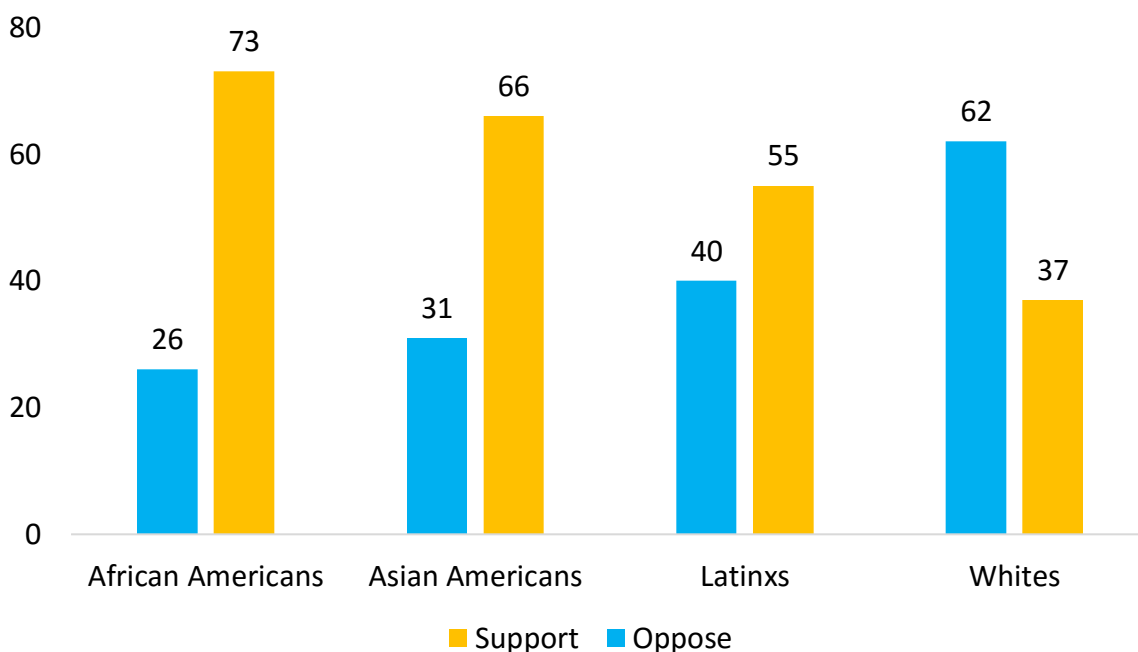
Figure 10. Do you personally see the Confederate flag more as a symbol of Southern pride or more as a symbol of racism?



Indeed, when asked specifically about the removal of Confederate statues and symbols from public spaces, as in Figure 11, white Millennials are the only group where a majority of respondents (62%) oppose the removal of Confederate symbols.

On the other hand, large majorities of African American (73%) and Asian American (66%) respondents support the removal of Confederate symbols. A majority of Latinx (55%) respondents also support the removal of Confederate statues, though the level of support is substantially lower than African Americans and Asian Americans.

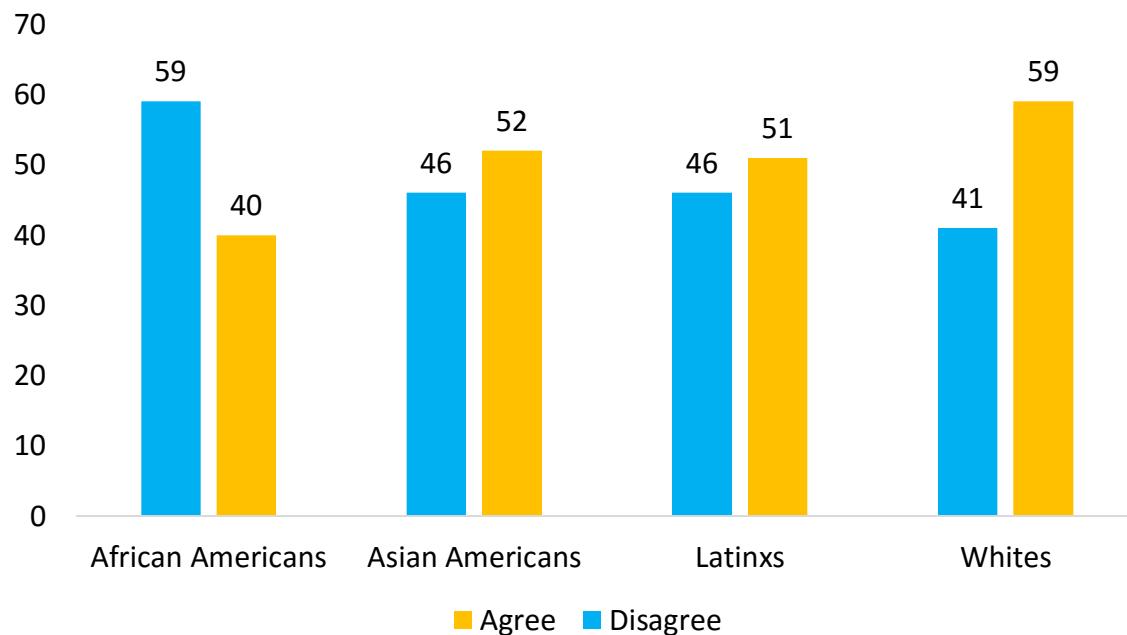
Figure 11. Do you support or oppose efforts to remove Confederate statues and symbols from public places such as government buildings and parks?



A different pattern emerges when respondents were asked whether all groups should be entitled to hold parades and demonstrations, a pillar of free speech and expression, even if they represent causes like Nazism and white supremacy which are most often associated with historical violence and hate speech.

As can be seen in Figure 12, white Millennials are the group with the largest majority (59%) agreeing that all groups, even those espousing views such as Nazism and white supremacy, should be entitled to hold parades and demonstrations. Smaller majorities of Latinx (51%) and Asian Americans (52%) also agree. African American Millennials (40%) were the least likely to agree that all groups, regardless of their cause, should be able to hold parades and demonstrations.

Figure 12. All groups should be entitled to hold parades and demonstrations, even if they represent causes most Americans oppose, such as communism, Nazis, or white supremacy.



III. Perceptions of Whiteness

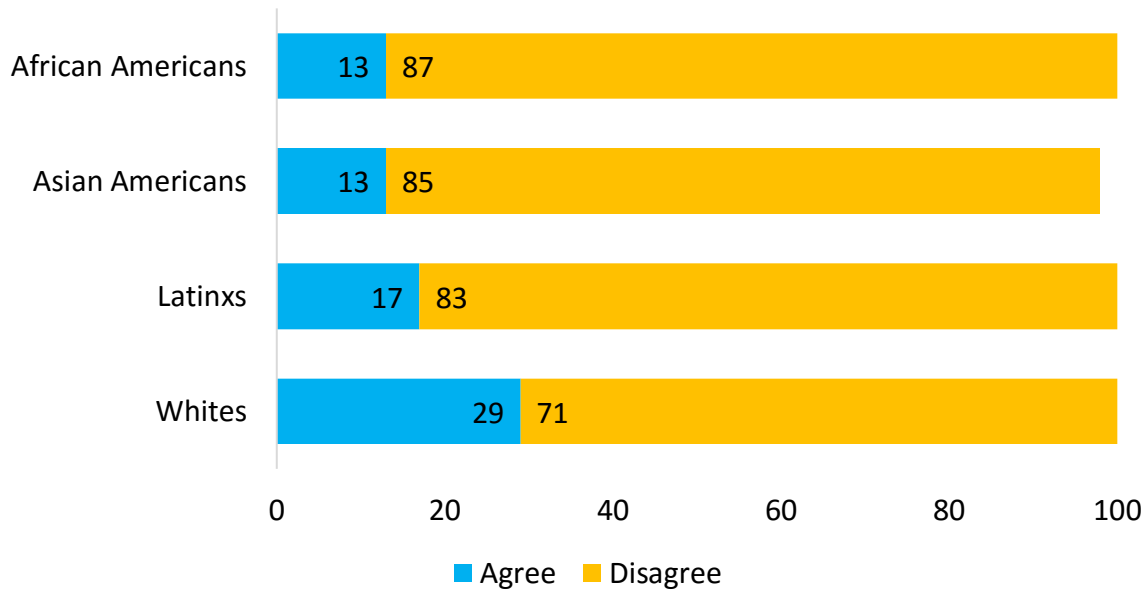
The election of Donald Trump and changing demographics in the United States have sparked newfound interest in the social conditions and status of white Americans, particularly compared to and in competition with other racial and ethnic groups. Thus, we asked a series of questions to study how Millennials assessed the condition of whites.

Perhaps not surprisingly, white Millennials are more likely than Millennials of color to believe that they are having trouble in areas of work and education because of minorities. But majorities of Millennials across all racial and ethnic groups, including white Millennials, disagree that white people are having trouble finding jobs and getting into college because of minorities.

As shown in Figure 13, significant majorities of African American (87%), Asian American (85%), Latinx (83%), and, to a somewhat lesser degree, white (71%)

Millennials disagreed with the statement “white people are having trouble finding jobs because minorities are taking their jobs.”

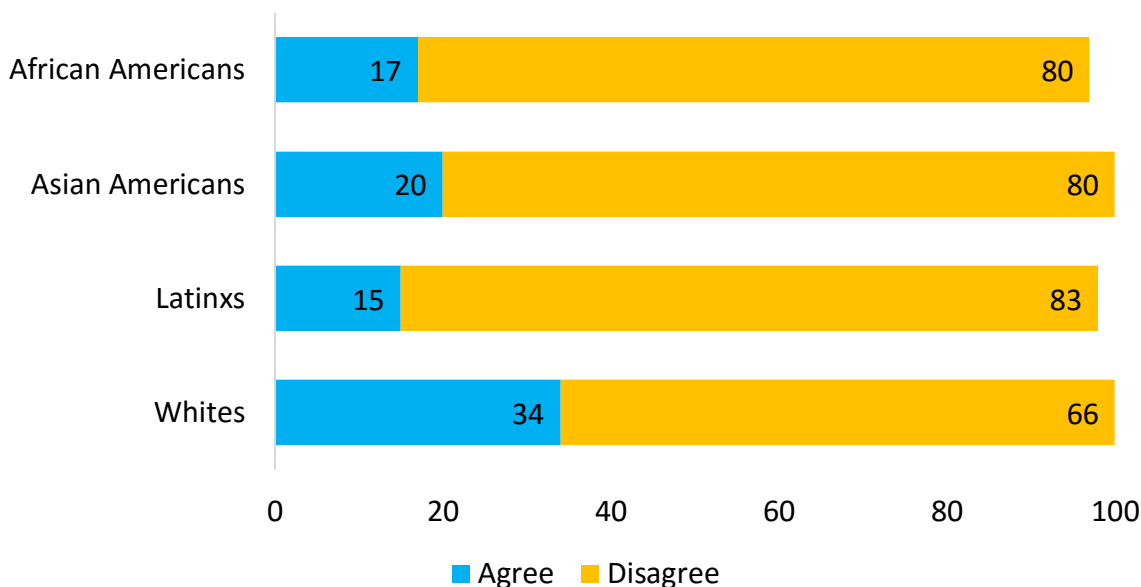
Figure 13. White people are having trouble finding jobs because minorities are taking their jobs.



We find similar patterns – though perhaps a more striking contrast between white Millennials and Millennials of color – when considering attitudes toward whites’ opportunities in higher education.

As Figure 14 shows, relatively few Millennials of all races believe that white people are having difficulty getting into the college of their choice because minority applicants are taking their spots. Whites, however, reported considerably higher levels of agreement with the idea that minorities are taking their spots in college with over a third (34%) agreeing with the statement compared with African Americans (17%), Asian Americans (20%), and Latinxs (15%).

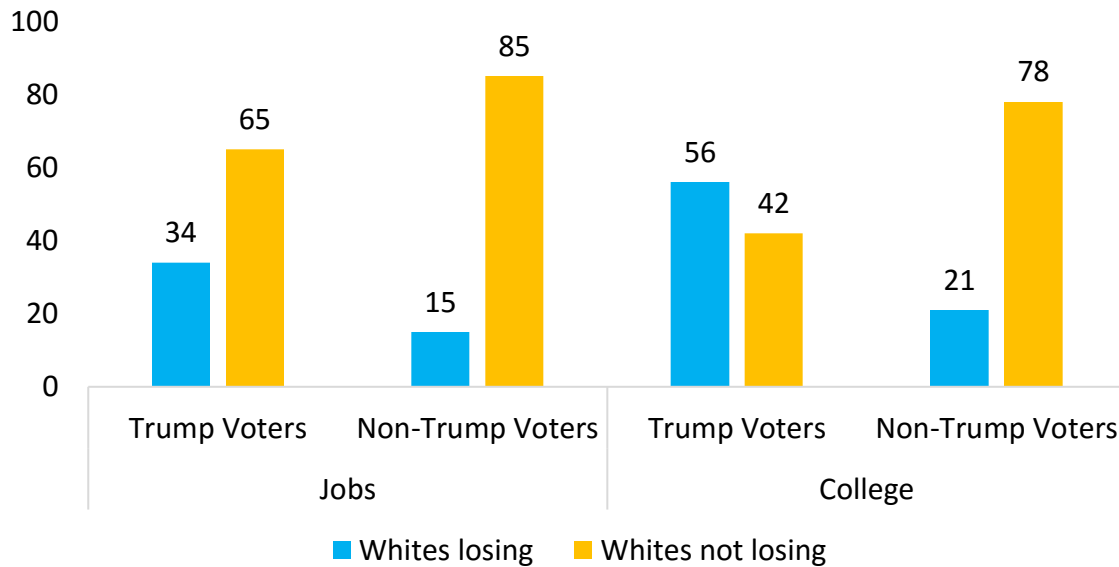
Figure 14. White people are having trouble getting into the college they prefer because minorities are taking their spots.



The percentages of respondents who do believe that whites are losing their spots in work and college are higher when comparing Millennials who voted for Trump and those who did not, adding further evidence that anxiety on the status of whites in a diverse society contributed to electoral support for Trump.

Indeed, as is shown in Figure 15, among Millennials who voted for Trump, a majority (56%) agrees that whites are not gaining admission in the colleges they prefer because they are unfairly losing their spots to minorities. And while Trump voters fail to reach majority agreement on the question of job competition, over a third of respondents agree that minorities are taking jobs from whites; this is a higher percentage than Millennials overall (22%).

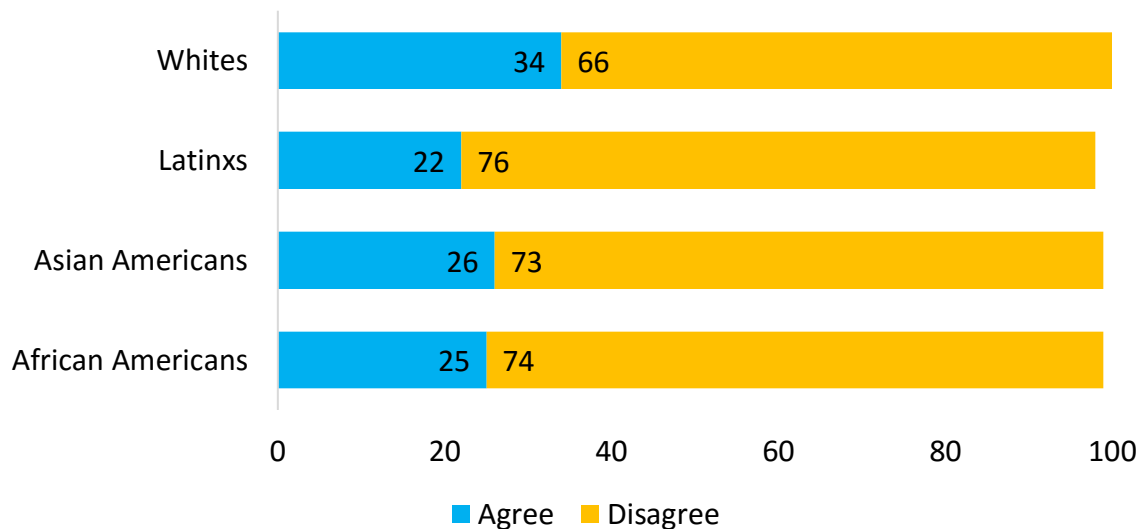
Figure 15. Trump vs. Non-Trump Voters on Whether Whites are Losing Their Spots to Minorities



Similar patterns emerge on the issue of losing economic ground in Figure 16. When asked whether whites are economically losing ground to other racial and ethnic groups, white Millennials are the mostly likely to agree (34%) that is the case.

We should point out, however, that majorities of African American (74%), Asian American (73%), Latinx (76%), and even white (66%) Millennials, disagree that whites are economically losing ground compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Maybe somewhat surprisingly, about a quarter of Millennials of color agree that whites are economically losing ground, through no fault of their own, to other racial and ethnic groups.

Figure 16. Do you agree or disagree that, through no fault of their own, whites are economically losing ground today compared to other racial and ethnic groups?

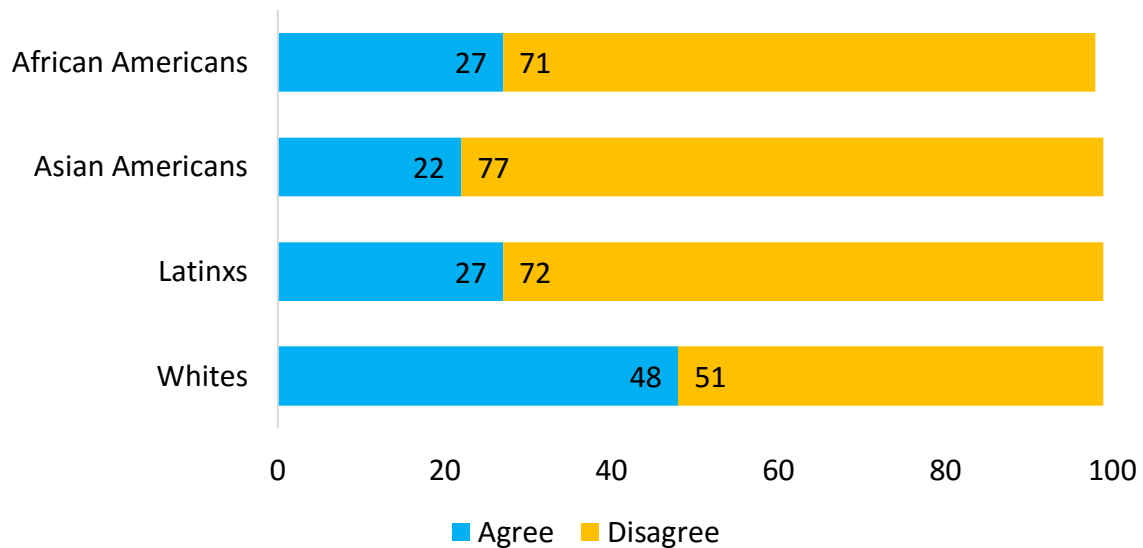


In line with their previous evaluations of the status of white people in the economy and the classroom, we also asked about the levels of discrimination whites experience, as shown in Figure 17. A majority of white Millennials disagree (51%) that discrimination against whites has become as big a problem as discrimination against blacks and other minority groups.

We should note, however, this is not an overwhelming majority and that 48% of white Millennials agree that discrimination against whites has become as big a problem as discrimination against blacks and other minorities. Indeed, in the original disaggregated format of the question⁷, the most common response among whites is “somewhat agree” (32%) that discrimination against whites has become a big problem. In contrast, strong majorities of African Americans, Asian Americans and Latinxs somewhat or strongly disagree with strongly disagree being the most cited answer for Millennials of color.

⁷ See the corresponding toplines document of this survey on our website for full, disaggregated results.

Figure 17. Do you agree or disagree that discrimination against whites has become as big a problem as discrimination against blacks and other minorities?

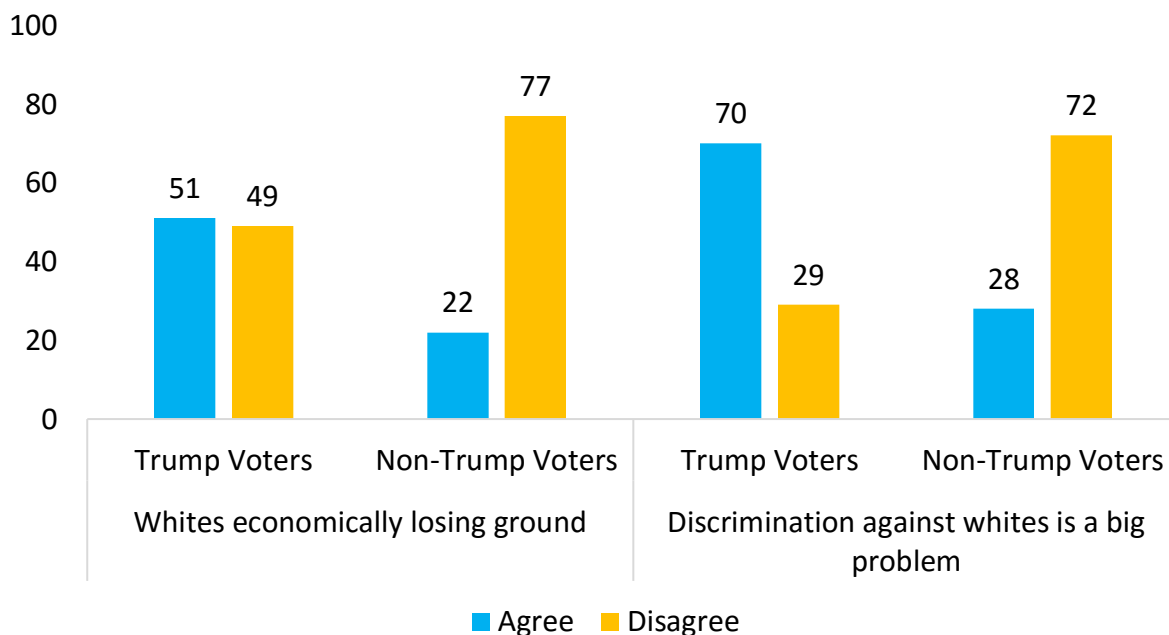


Comparing the responses on the economic status and discrimination of whites between Millennials who voted for Trump and those who did not reveals a split in attitudes among Millennial voters (Figure 18).

Among Millennials who voted for Trump, a bare majority (51%) agree that whites are economically losing ground, though the percentage that disagrees is almost equivalent (49%). Non-Trump voters, on the other hand, overwhelmingly disagree (77%).

The contrast in opinions between Trump voters and non-Trump voters is even more stark on the topic of discrimination against whites. A large majority of Millennials who voted for Trump (70%) agree that discrimination against whites has become as big of a problem as discrimination against minorities. The responses among non-Trump voters are virtually flipped; 72% of non-Trump voters disagree that discrimination against whites is a big problem.

Figure 18. Trump vs. Non-Trump Voters on Whether Whites are Economically Losing Ground and Discrimination Against Whites is a Big Problem.



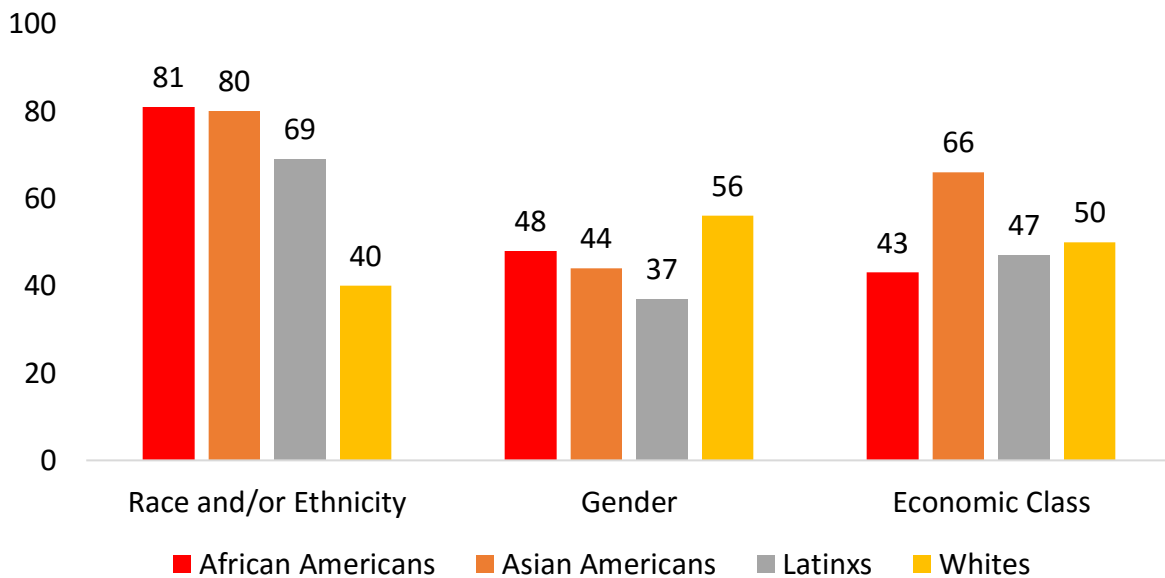
IV. Racial Identity & Collaboration

Despite the enduring qualities of racial hierarchy and the importance of racial considerations in American politics, race is only one of many characteristics that structure Americans’ identities. Within the structural bounds of American politics and society, however, individuals can prioritize some identities over others and circumstances and institutions typically emphasize certain identities. Thus, which identities individuals choose to highlight can shift depending on context and a number of other factors. Given the fluidity of identity and fluctuations in identity salience, we examine what young people prioritize when thinking about how they identify.

Specifically, we asked young adults to share their top three choices for the most important identities that impact their life. The results, presented in Figure 19, demonstrate that race and/or ethnicity, economic class, and gender are the identities that Millennials believe are most important in defining the lived experience.

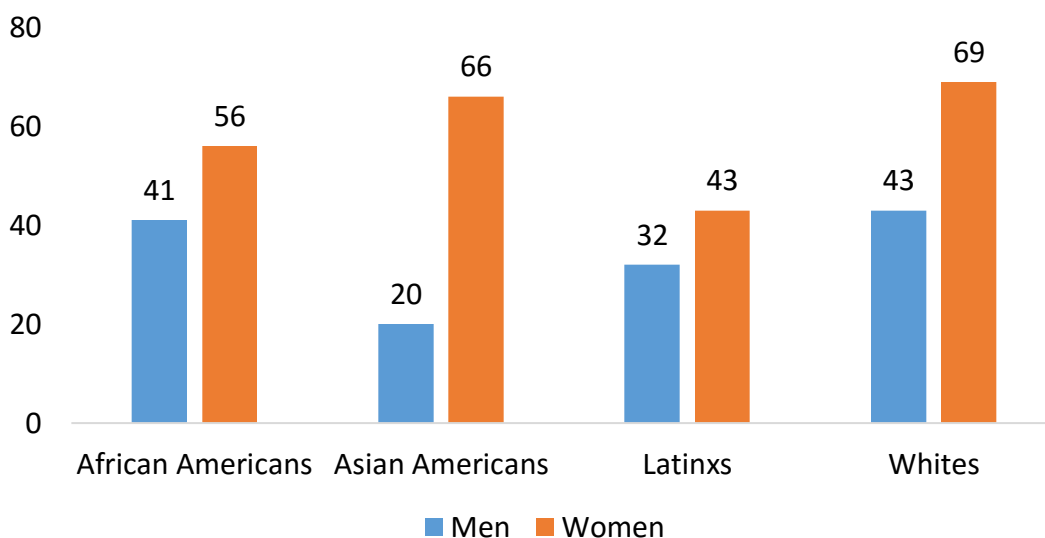
A vast majority of Millennials of color say that their race and/or ethnicity is one of their top three identities. African Americans (81%), Asian Americans (80%), and Latinxs (69%) say race and/or ethnicity is the most important identity that shapes their lived experience, while white Millennials ranked race/ethnicity third (40%), suggesting significant variation in the perceived centrality of race across different groups.

Figure 19. When thinking about identities that most impact your life, please choose the top three most important in terms of defining your lived experience.



Gender was the most cited identity for whites (56%). Among all Millennials, 61% of young women cited gender as the most important identity compared to 39% of young men, signaling an important and consequential divide between Millennials that identify as men and women and to varying degrees across different racial and ethnic groups. Gender was the second most cited among African Americans (48%). Economic class is the second most cited identity for Asian Americans (66%), Latinxs (47%), and whites (50%), and the third for African Americans (43%).

Figure 20. Percentage of men and women that choose gender as one of their top-three identities that define their lived experience

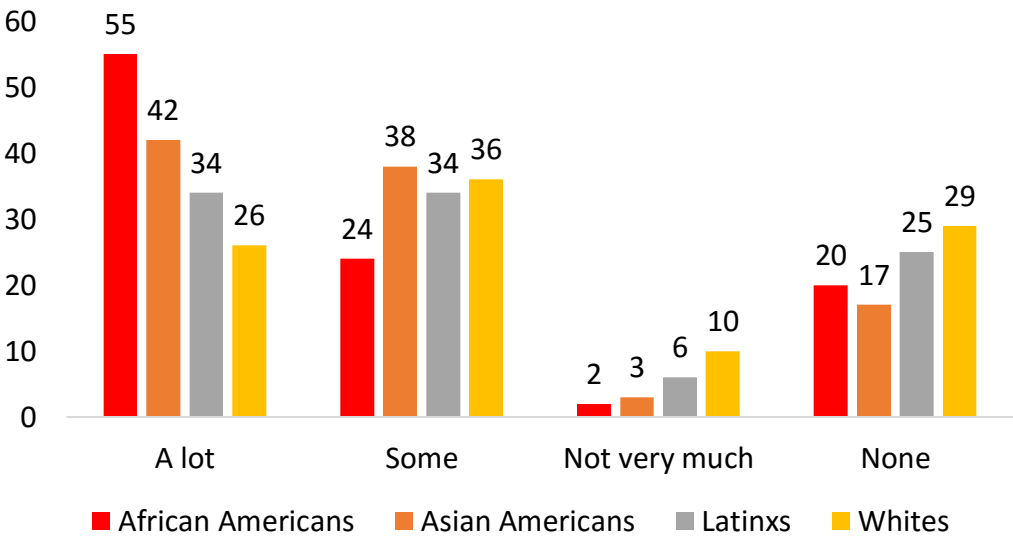


Interestingly, over a third of whites (35%) say that American nationality is one of their most important identities, compared to 22% of Asian Americans, 21% of Latinxs, and 16% of African Americans.

We also measured respondents' feelings about identity through a question assessing to what degree an individual feels their fate is linked to others in their racial/ethnic group.⁸ Figure 21 shows that African Americans (55%) report the highest level of linked fate, while 42% of Asian Americans, 34% of Latinxs, and 26% of whites claim they have "a lot" of linked fate with their racial group. Whites are the group most likely to say they have no linked fate, with 29% saying they have none compared to 25% of Latinxs, 20% of African Americans, and 17% of Asian Americans.

⁸ See Michael Dawson's *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (1994).

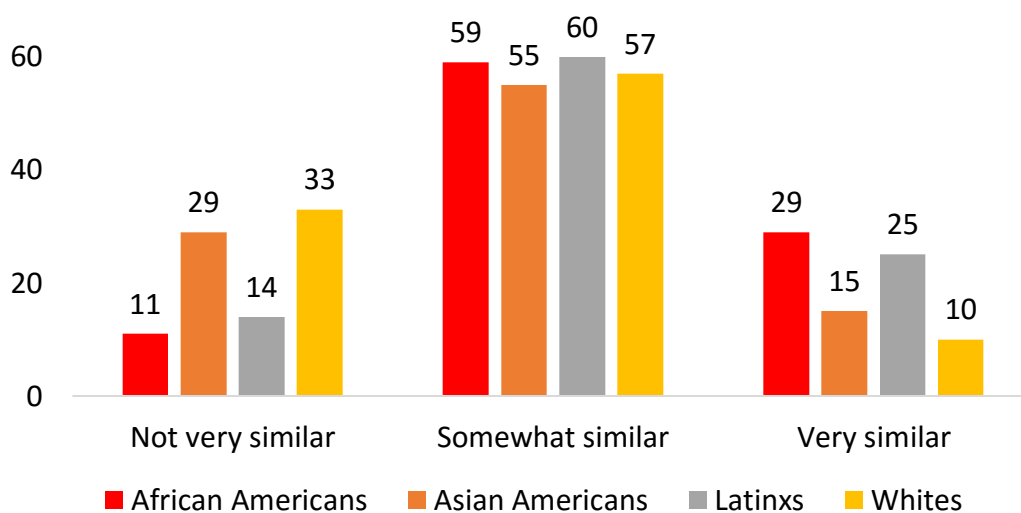
Figure 21. Do you think what happens to your racial group in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life? If so, will it affect you a lot, some, or not very much?



While there is variation in the extent to which Millennials view their fates are linked with other members of their racial groups, majorities of respondents of all racial backgrounds say they believe members of their own racial group are at least “somewhat” similar culturally.

Figure 22 indicates that 59% of African Americans, 55% of Asian Americans, 60% of Latinxs, and 57% of whites say members of their racial group are “somewhat similar” culturally. Twenty-nine percent of African Americans and 25% of Latinxs say their racial group is very similar culturally, which reflect higher percentages than Asian Americans and whites. Whites (33%) and Asian Americans (29%) are considerably more likely to say they are “not very similar” than Millennials of other racial backgrounds.

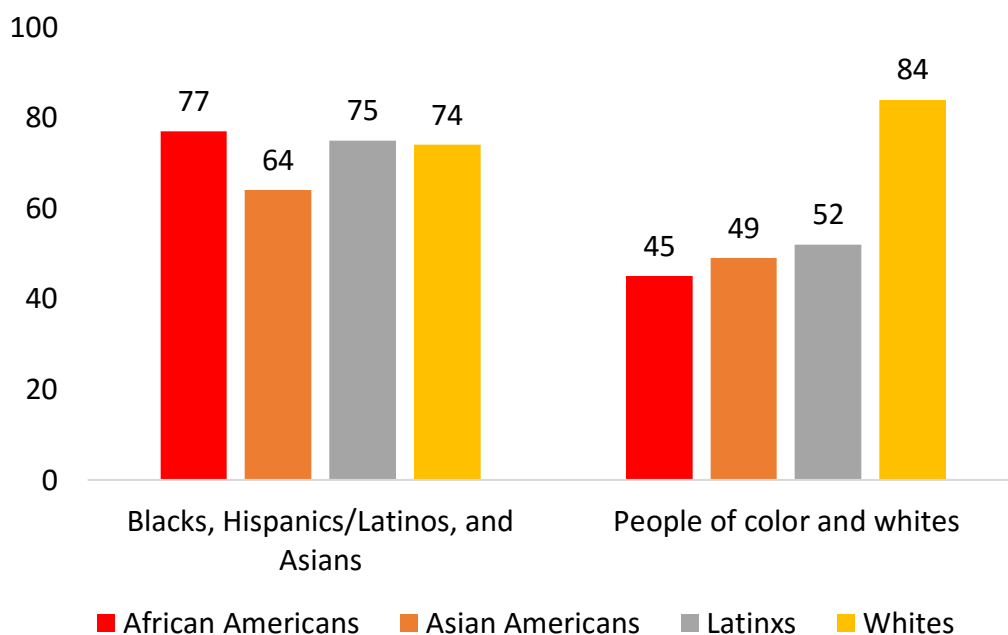
Figure 22. Do you think that you and other members of your racial group are culturally very similar, somewhat similar, or not very similar?



Continuing the theme of similarities and to gauge Millennials’ views on potential political coalitions, we asked respondents whether they believe different racial and ethnic groups face common challenges that could lead to political alliances. Respondents were randomly chosen to answer one of two questions; either whether Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Asians could be political allies or whether people of color and whites could be political allies. The responses suggest that majorities of all racial groups believe Blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, and Asians face common enough challenges that they could be political allies.

We find substantially different responses, however, when respondents were asked about potential alliances between people of color and whites (Figure 23). Almost half of African Americans (45%) and Asian Americans (49%), and a majority of Latinxs (52%) say people of color and whites face common challenges and could be allies. While these percentages are certainly non-trivial, they are much lower—and less than a majority for African Americans and Asian Americans—than what white Millennials report. Among white Millennials 84% believe that people of color and whites share common problems and can be political allies. Millennials of color are much less likely to believe their challenges are common to the challenges facing whites and are less likely to say people of color can be political allies with whites.

Figure 23. Percentage of respondents from each group who say racial groups share common problems and can be political allies



V. Racial Resentment

To better understand the racial attitudes of Millennials and the role anti-black feelings play in shaping attitudes, we look at two measures that comprise a portion of the “racial resentment” scale.⁹ Racial resentment stands in contrast to traditional understandings of racism, which are often explicit in nature and has been shown to influence a number of different attitudes.¹⁰ Racial resentment, instead, reflects a racialized belief system that Blacks no longer face discrimination, and thus assumes that most of the difficulties they encounter result from having a poor work ethic. Blacks are therefore thought to be undeserving of “special” treatment like government benefits.¹¹

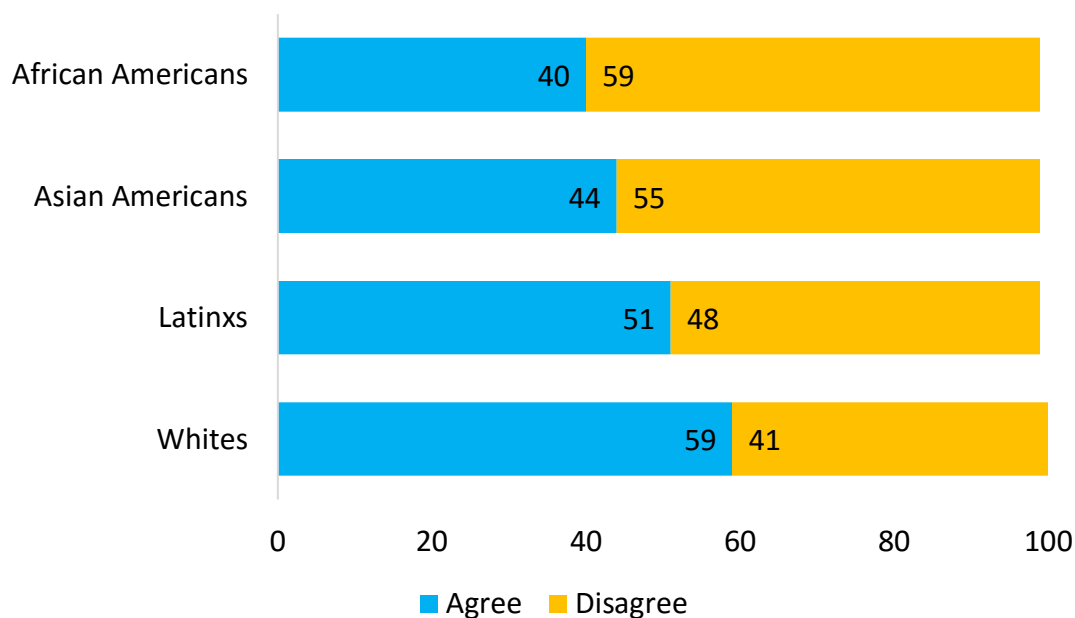
⁹ While the racial resentment scale most often used by academics is comprised of four measures, we use an abridged version of the scale similar to the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) that only includes two measures.

¹⁰ See Tesler 2016.

¹¹ See Kinder and Sanders 1996 for an overview.

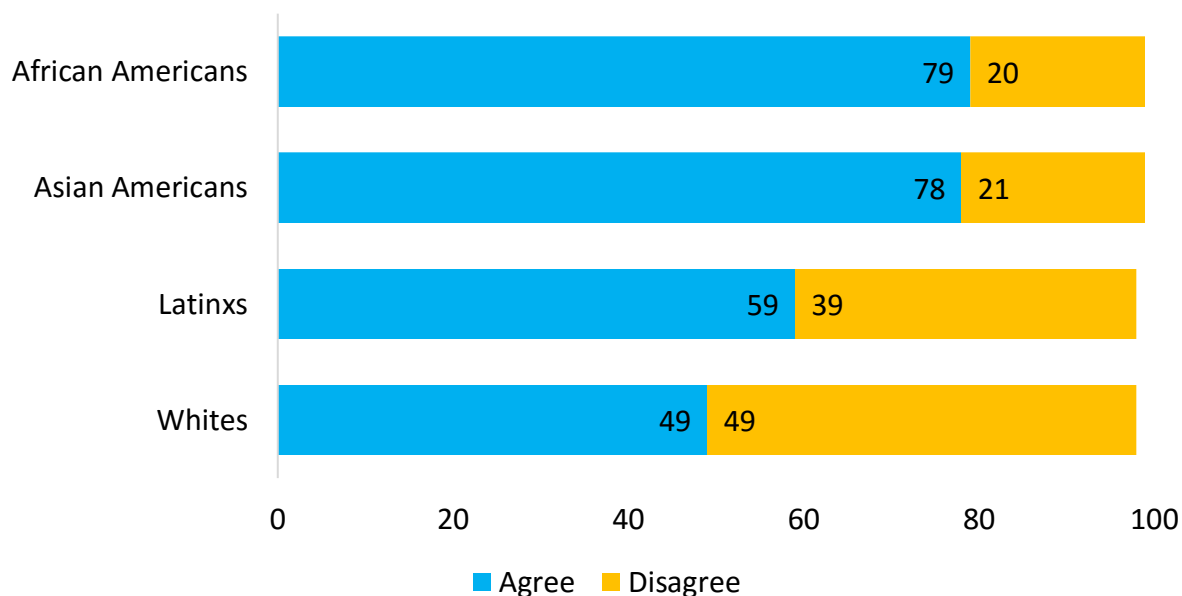
The first measure in the scale asks respondents if they agree or disagree with the statement “Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.” We find that a majority of white (59%) and Latinx (51%) respondents agree with the statement as illustrated in Figure 24. In contrast, majorities of African American (59%) and Asian American (55%) Millennials disagree with the statement.

Figure 24. Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.



The second question asks respondents to indicate whether they agree or disagree with the statement that “generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Blacks to work their way out of the lower class.” As is evident in Figure 25, overwhelming majorities of African Americans (79%) and Asian Americans (78%) Millennials and a smaller majority of Latinx Millennials (59%) agree with the statement. White Millennials are evenly split between agree (49%) and disagree (49%).

Figure 25. Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Blacks to work their way out of the lower class.



These results largely mirror the findings of scholars who focus on how racial resentment shapes attitudes; whites are the most likely to express answers to these questions that can be perceived and coded as racially resentful. Latinxs and Asian Americans, on the other hand, are less racially resentful and African Americans are the least of all.

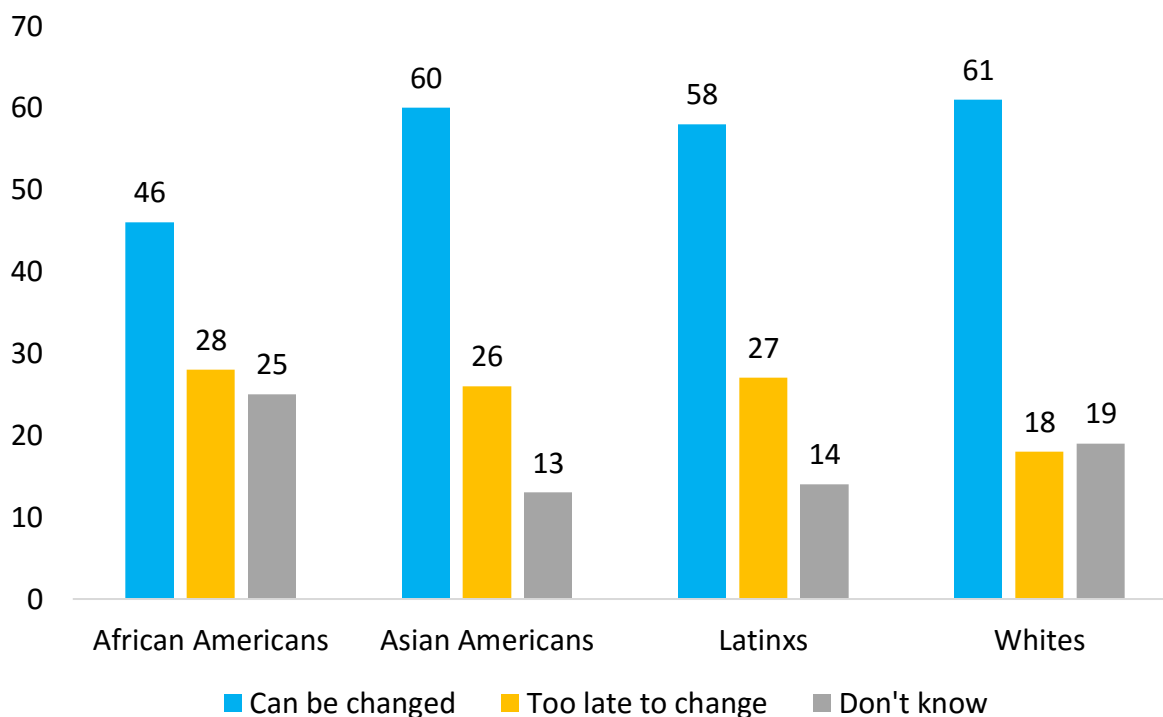
V. Creating Change

Given the seemingly intractable nature of racial divides in the United States, we were particularly interested in Millennials' thoughts on whether adults can come together to create change around issues of race. We also probed what they thought were the best approaches to create such change. Despite exhibiting stark differences in opinion on issues across racial and ethnic groups, significant numbers of Millennials across all

racial and ethnic backgrounds in our study are optimistic that attitudes about members of other races can be changed.

Healthy majorities of white (61%), Asian American (60%), and Latinx (58%) Millennials say that the racial attitudes of adults can be changed, as evident in Figure 26. A plurality of African Americans (46%) also believe that attitudes can be changed, though the percentage is lower than that for other racial groups and fails to cross the fifty percent threshold.

Figure 26. Do you think the attitudes adults have about members of other races can be changed, or is it usually too late to change the racial attitudes of adults?



There is also some agreement on the best strategy to achieve racial progress in the United States, particularly around the importance of communities, though there is also important variation by race, as illustrated in Table 5.

Organizing in communities is the top cited strategy to make racial progress by African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinxs. Community organizing is the second cited strategy for white Millennials after community service and volunteering. While Asian

Americans also listed community service and volunteering in their top two strategies, the second most cited strategy among Latinx respondents was non-violent protest. For African Americans, revolution was listed as the second-best way to make racial progress, after community organizing.

African American Millennials were also the least likely to list voting as a strategy for making racial progress compared to other racial groups. This finding is especially interesting after recent increases in voter turnout among young people, particularly among African American Millennials who ushered in the country’s first African American president, Barack Obama. Given their seeming disdain for voting, combined with their stated preference for revolution, this suggests a deep frustration among African American Millennials with traditional methods of redress in politics.

Asian Americans, Latinxs, and whites all include voting in state and local elections in their top-three strategies for making racial progress. Interestingly, however, no group lists voting in *federal* elections as a preferred strategy for change. Instead, Millennials prefer a focus on local politics, beginning with their immediate communities and then moving up to the local and state level.

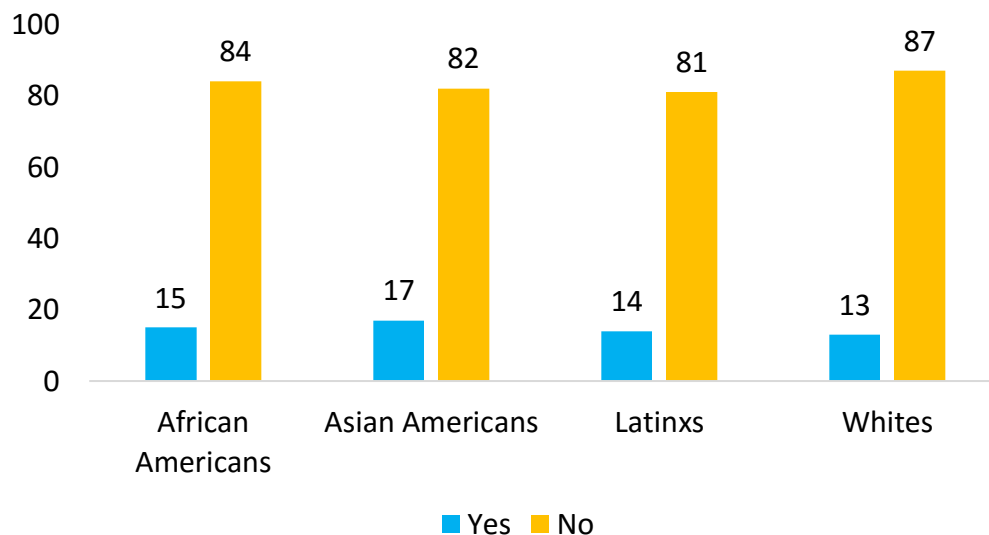
Table 5. In your opinion, what is the best way to make racial progress in the United States?

	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinx	Whites
First most cited	Organizing in Communities (16%)	Organizing in Communities (20%)	Organizing in Communities (20%)	Community Service & Volunteering (22%)
Second most cited	Revolution (14%)	Community Service & Volunteering (17%)	Non-violent Protests (16%)	Organizing in Communities (20%)
Third most cited	Community Service & Volunteering (14%)	Voting in State and Local Elections (12%)	Voting in State and Local Elections (12%)	Voting in State and Local Elections (11%)
N=	503	258	505	510

Despite expressing preferences for local political involvement, most Millennials have not attended a political event, rally, or protest, since the election in November 2016 (Figure 27). This is true even for Latinx respondents, who listed non-violent protests as their second most cited strategy for creating racial progress. Indeed, over eighty percent of Millennials of all races stated that they have not participated in an organized political event since November.

Millennials' lack of protest attendance is not unique, however. In fact, over eighty percent of all adults have not attended a protest or rally since the election of Donald Trump.¹²

Figure 27. Since the November presidential election, have you attended a political event, rally or organized protest, or have you not attended any of these types of events since then?

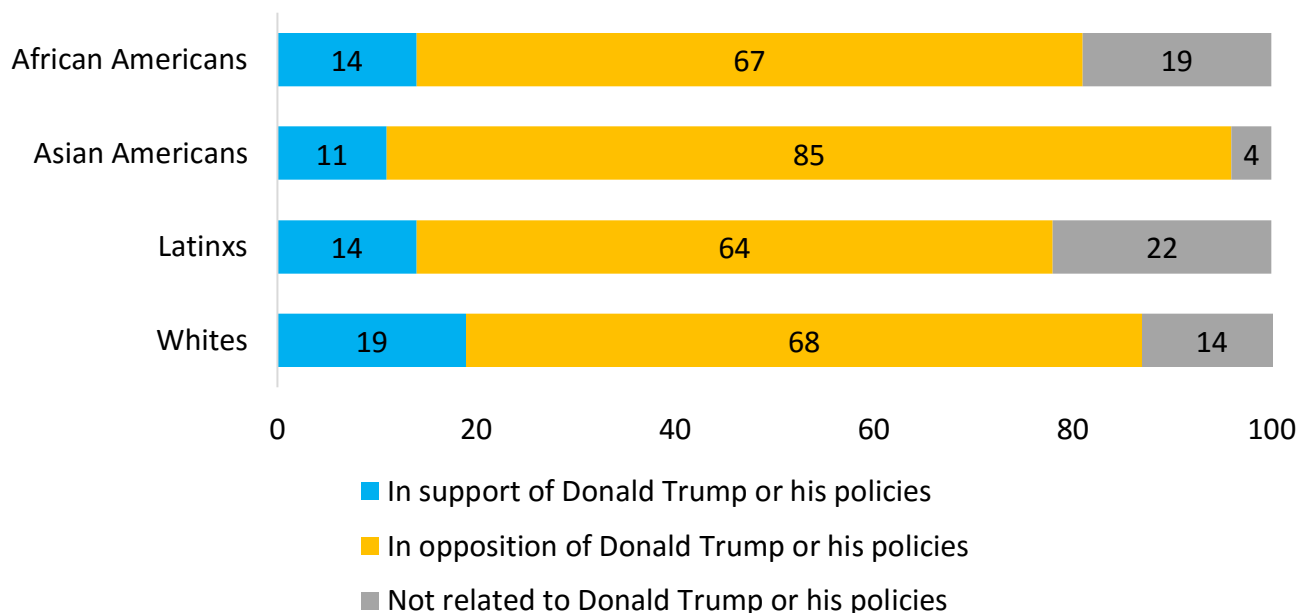


Of the less than twenty percent of Millennials who have attended a political event, rally, or protest, however, the overwhelming majority stated that the event they attended was in opposition to Donald Trump and his policies. This is higher than the general population (67%) by over thirteen percentage points.¹³ As can be seen in Figure 28, Latinx (22%) and African American (19%) respondents were more likely to attend events that were not explicitly related to Donald Trump than Asian American (4%) and white (14%) respondents.

¹² Pew Research Center Summer 2017 Toplines ([link](#))

¹³ Pew Research Center July 2017 Report ([link](#))

Figure 28. Would you say the protest you attended since the 2016 election has been in support of Donald Trump or his policies, in opposition to Donald Trump or his policies, or not related to Donald Trump or his policies?



Public Policy and Change

Beyond organizing and voting, we were interested in how respondents feel about government policies meant to improve the social and economic conditions of both African Americans and Latinxs in the United States. To assess these attitudes, we randomly assigned respondents to answer one of two questions: Should the government make special effort to improve the social and economic position of African Americans or should they help themselves? The second version of this question focused on Latinos and asked: Should the government make special effort to improve the social and economic position of Hispanics/Latinos or should they help themselves? There were important differences in responses both across racial groups as well as by whether the perceived target group for help was African American or Latinx.

Pluralities of Millennials of color support the government making special efforts to improve the conditions of both African Americans and Latinxs. When African Americans are the beneficiary group (Figure 29), support is highest among African

American (46%) Millennials, followed by much lower support for such effort from Latinxs (29%), and Asian Americans (24%).

When Latinxs are the beneficiary group (Figure 30), Latinx (45%) Millennials exhibit the most support for government efforts, followed by African Americans (40%), and Asian Americans (31%). We should note that when Latinxs are the beneficiary group, more Millennials indicate they have not thought much about such possible policies.

An additional difference worth noting is that the percentages of people who say the government should help improve conditions is relatively consistent whether the target group is African American Americans or Latinxs with the exception of Latinxs, who are approximately 16 percentage points more likely to say the government should help when they are the target beneficiaries.

In contrast to the support for government intervention registered by pluralities of Millennials of color, a plurality of white Millennials (24%) say that African Americans should help themselves. Interestingly, when Latinxs are the beneficiary group, as in Figure 30, pluralities of white Millennials (31%) indicate that they “haven’t thought much about it.” White Millennials who have thought about it are evenly split between supporting government efforts aimed at Latinxs and saying that Latinxs should help themselves. It is only when African Americans are the target for assistance from the government that white Millennials make “help themselves” the more cited response.

Figure 29. Should the government make special effort to improve the social and economic position of African Americans or should they help themselves?

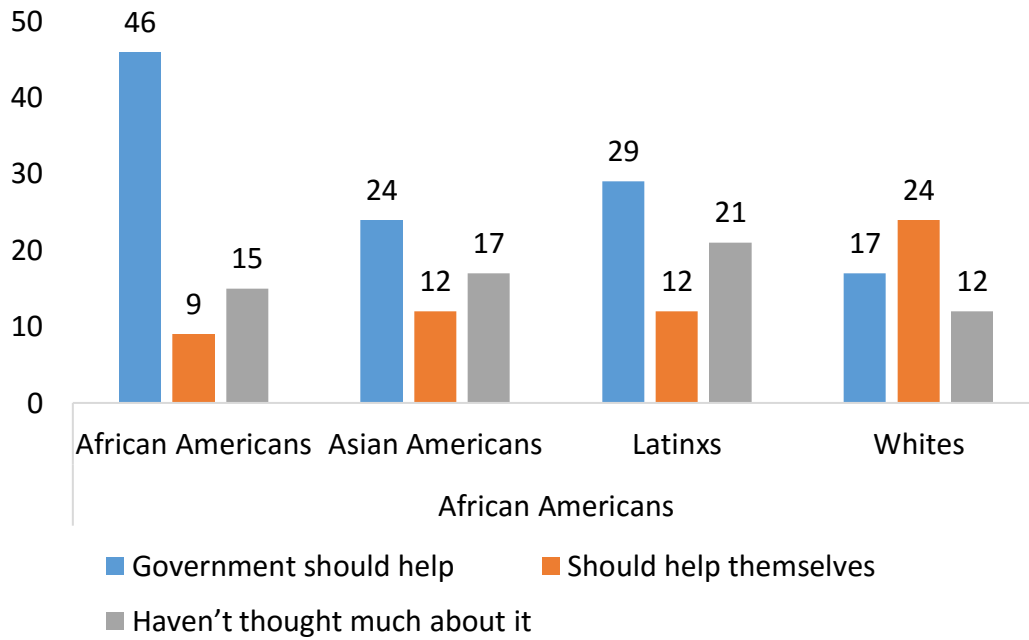
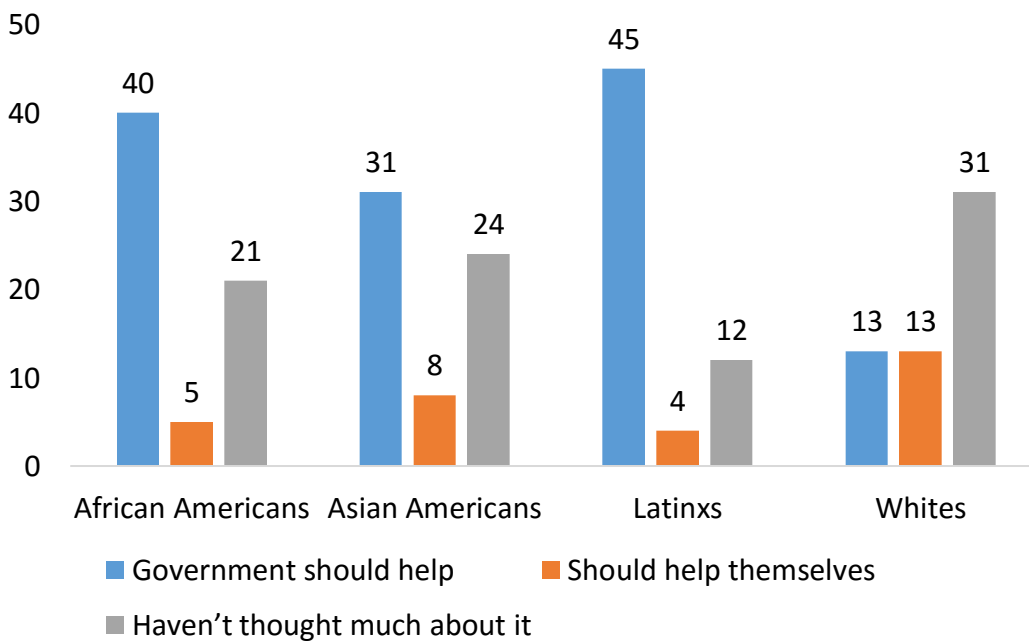


Figure 30. Should the government make special effort to improve the social and economic position of Hispanics/Latinos or should they help themselves?



VI. Conclusion

In the preceding pages of this report, we have provided a unique overview of what Millennials think about racial identity, race relations, and racial politics in America. This includes an in-depth look at their evaluations of Donald Trump, their thoughts on racial hierarchy, power, and anti-black racism in the United States, their ideas about whiteness and its role in society, their preferred strategies for creating racial progress, and the role of government in improving the conditions of marginalized groups.

As we noted at the outset, Millennials are ushering in a new era of American society, one that is the most racially and ethnically diverse in history as well as one defined by youth-led social movements aimed at raising awareness and rectifying issues of injustice. The attitudes of Millennials reflect how this generation's diversity will shape views on race in the years to come and our survey clearly outlines how whites are quickly becoming the outlier group in this generation. No longer the baseline, norm, or default, white Millennials often, though not always, find themselves at odds with their peers of color. It will be important for activists, politicians and journalists to take note of the brewing political conflicts that exist among different groups of Millennials.

VII. Survey Methodology

The GenForward survey is a project of Professor Cathy J. Cohen at the University of Chicago. Interviews for this survey were conducted with a representative sample from GenForwardSM, a nationally representative survey panel of adults ages 18-34 recruited and administered by NORC at the University of Chicago and funded by grants to the University of Chicago from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

A total of 1,816 interviews were conducted between August 31 and September 16, 2017 with adults ages 18-34 representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia, including completed interviews with 503 African American young adults, 258 Asian American young adults, 505 Latinx young adults, 510 white young adults, and 40 young adults with other racial and ethnic backgrounds. The survey was offered in English and Spanish and via telephone and web modes.

The GenForward survey was built from two sample sources: Sixty-five percent of the completed interviews are sourced from NORC's AmeriSpeak® Panel. AmeriSpeak is a probability-based panel that also uses address-based sample but sourced from the NORC National Frame with enhanced sample coverage. During the initial recruitment phase of the AmeriSpeak panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face).

Thirty-five percent of the completed interviews are sourced from the Black Youth Project (BYP) panel of young adults recruited by NORC. The BYP sample is from a probability-based household panel that uses an address-based sample from a registered voter database of the entire U.S. Households were selected using stratified random sampling to support over-sampling of households with African Americans, Latino/as, and Asian Americans ages 18-34. NORC contacted sampled households by U.S. mail and by telephone, inviting them to register and participate in public opinion surveys twice a month. Panelists on both the BYP and AmeriSpeak panels are invited to register for the panel via the web or by telephone to participate in public opinion surveys.

Of the 1,816 completed interviews in the GenForward June survey, 94 percent were completed by web and 6 percent by telephone. The survey completion rate is 27 percent. The weighted household panel recruitment rate is 22.1 percent and the weighted household panel retention rate is 89.5 percent, for a cumulative AAPOR

Response Rate 3 of 5.3 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.8 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. Among subgroups, the margin of sampling error at the 95 percent confidence level is +/- 5.46 percentage points for African Americans, +/- 8.81 percentage points for Asian Americans, +/- 6.96 percentage points for Latino/as, and +/- 5.84 percentage points for whites.

To encourage cooperation, respondents were offered incentives for completing the survey that ranged from the cash-equivalent of \$3 to the cash-equivalent of \$10.

The interviews from the two probability-based sample sources were combined for statistical weighting and analysis. The combined panel samples provide sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings. The statistical weights incorporate the appropriate probability of selection for the BYP and AmeriSpeak samples, nonresponse adjustments, and also, raking ratio adjustments to population benchmarks for 18-34-year-old adults. A post stratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any non-coverage or under- and over-sampling resulting from the study-specific sample design. The post stratification process was done separately for each racial/ethnic group and involved the following variables: age, gender, education, and census region. The weighted data, which reflect the U.S. population of adults ages 18-34, and the 18-34-year-old populations for African Americans, Latino/as, Asian Americans, and non-Latino/a whites, were used for all analyses.