HATTAWAY COMMUNICATIONS

Lumina™ FOUNDATION

Communicating About Racial Equity

NATIONAL SURVEY INSIGHTS

UPDATED JANUARY 2020

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Overview

This report outlines insights from a national opinion and message-testing survey about opportunity and racial equity in America, conducted by Hattaway Communications and Lumina Foundation. This survey builds on in-depth research with Lumina grantees, educators, policymakers, and business leaders about racial equity in post-secondary education to provide the perspective of those who are not necessarily thinking about racial equity on a daily basis. The results allow us to better understand the constituents that policymakers represent, the customers that business leaders serve, and the communities that educators work in.

This survey sought to:

Explore how people across the country understand the word "equity"—whether they understand it in social justice terms, what ideas they associate with it, and its relative importance in their lives.

Test how effectively a narrative about Lumina's approach increases understanding of racial equity and its importance, helps people see the benefits of this approach, and motivates people to get involved with equity efforts.

Clarify perceptions of different racial identifiers.

The survey results point to prospective audiences—people whose thinking about equal opportunity shifts after reading messages about racial equity in higher education. They also suggest effective message frames shown to motivate new audiences while continuing to inspire and engage supportive audiences. Finally, they provide insight into the specific language that people are comfortable with when talking about race.

Survey Approach

Hattaway Communications fielded a nationally representative survey of 3,099 Americans between September 24 and October 14, 2019. The survey included oversamples in California, Virginia, Indiana, and Texas—states in which Lumina has ongoing work.

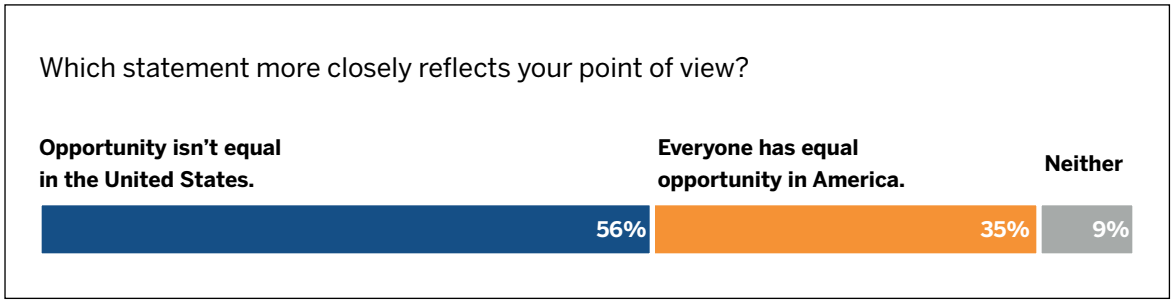
The survey assessed respondents' information sharing habits, individual action, and collective action behaviors to identify "influencers," or those who take personal action or have an outsized voice in their community. The survey also identified "thought leaders," or people who engage in formal thought leadership in their field. This methodology identified both influencers and thought leaders from across the political spectrum.

APPENDIX

Learn about state-specific insights starting on page 30.

Is Opportunity Equal? Resolving the Ambivalence of Persuadables

To support racially equitable policies and practices, audiences first have to believe that not everyone in America has equal opportunity to succeed.



APPENDIX

Learn about the breakdown of responses by race/ethnicity, political affiliation, and geography on page 15.

While divided, responses to the question of whether opportunity is equal also point to audiences we can persuade to support racial equity. Many people are ambivalent—that is, they hold competing views—about the idea of equal opportunity. For instance, they may agree with both of the following statements:

"Success in America depends on where you are born."

"If you work hard, you can succeed in America."

Ambivalence makes people feel unsettled: People who hold these competing views tend to either avoid engaging with them, or seek out ways to resolve them. Effective communications about racial equity should help audiences navigate this uncertainty by activating the frame we want them to agree with (that opportunity isn't equal), using familiar language, and drawing connections to stories of real people.

As Lumina seeks to bring new people to the table to promote racial equity in education after high school, the survey identifies people who may not be strong advocates or activists for racial equity right now, but who show the potential to shift. The survey pointed to several persuadable audiences—that is, those who read the message and then either changed their mind about opportunity being equal, or more strongly asserted that opportunity isn't equal:

MODERATES | **SOMEWHAT CONSERVATIVES** | **EQUITY ROOKIES***

More on these persuadable audiences on pages 16-18.

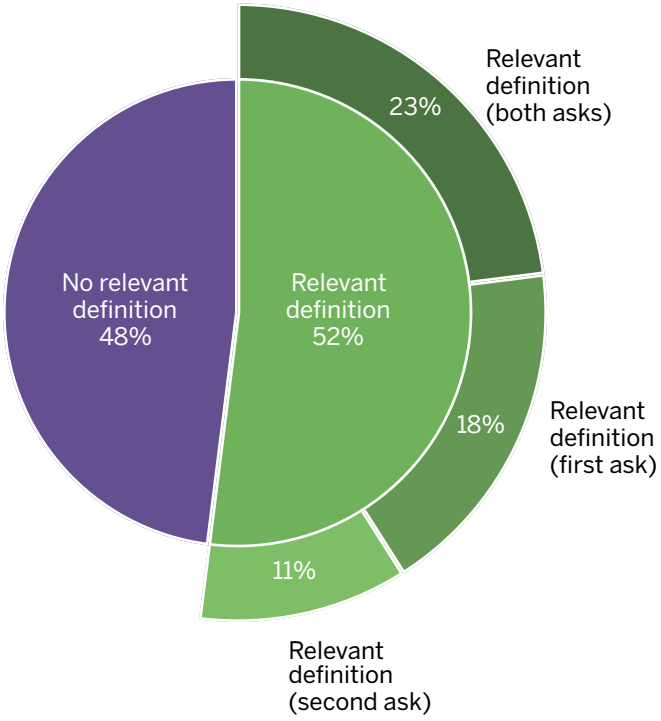
Persuadable audiences are more likely to agree that opportunity isn't equal in America after hearing the message. This points to a message that 1) invites those who default to an "opportunity is equal" frame to consider a different perspective, 2) increases support among those who already agree that opportunity isn't equal, and 3) compels those who shifted to "neither" to stop and think about what they believe.

Familiarity with and Importance of Racial Equity

Americans are relatively new to talking about equity, particularly in the context of social justice. While organizations working in social justice commonly use the term "equity," Americans overall do not necessarily share a common understanding of what it means.

At the start of the survey, respondents were asked two questions: "What comes to mind when you think about the word 'equity'?" and then, "What other concepts come to mind when you think about the word 'equity'?" When given these two opportunities to define equity, 52% of respondents offered some sort of social justice response, such as "equality" or "fairness." The other 48% offered other definitions, such as "home equity" and "money," or said they didn't know.

What comes to mind when you think about the word "equity"?

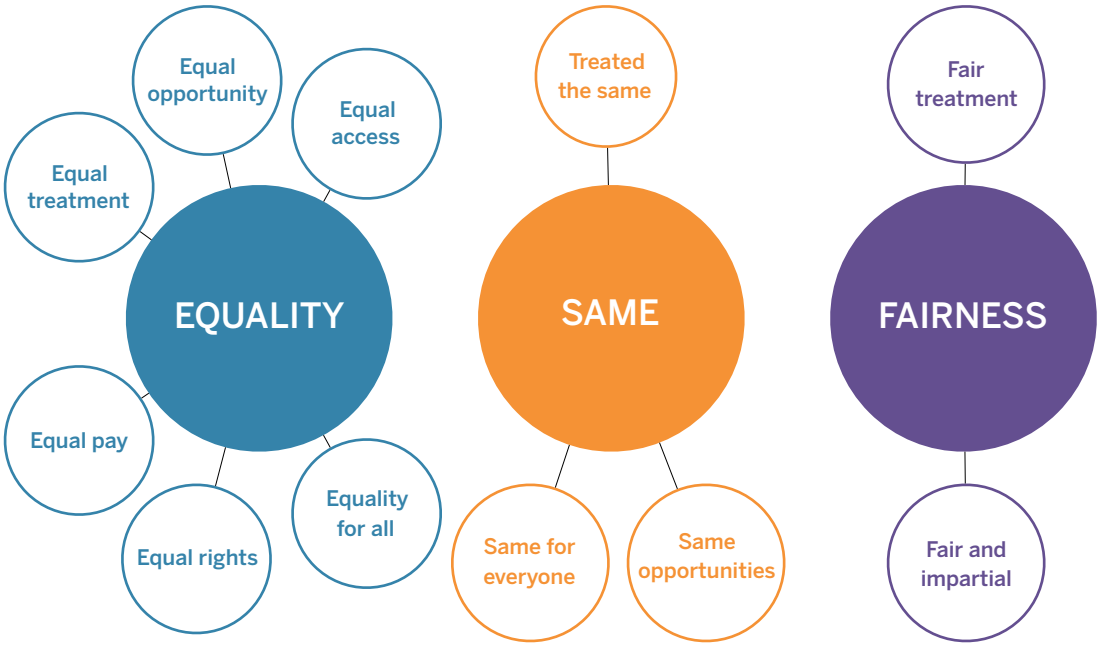


APPENDIX

Learn about the breakdown of responses by race/ethnicity and political affiliation on pages 20-22.

The range of open-ended responses points to a lack of shared, consistent language to talk about equity. For the 52% of people who defined "equity" in social justice language, most used common concepts of "equality," "fairness," and "for all." Others defined equity in terms of "opportunity" and "treatment." Other, less common responses included those that noted specific groups, particularly racial or gender groups, or outcomes, such as equal rights or equal pay.

What comes to mind when you think about the word "equity"?
Most common relevant words and phrases



APPENDIX

Learn about the demographic breakdown of audiences who are familiar with the concept of equity on page 19.

People need to understand equity in order to care about it and take action, but there are people who say they know and care about racial equity, but aren't able to provide a relevant definition. They may be missing the language to talk about it, don't have it top of mind, or feel social pressure to say they are familiar with an idea they don't fully understand.

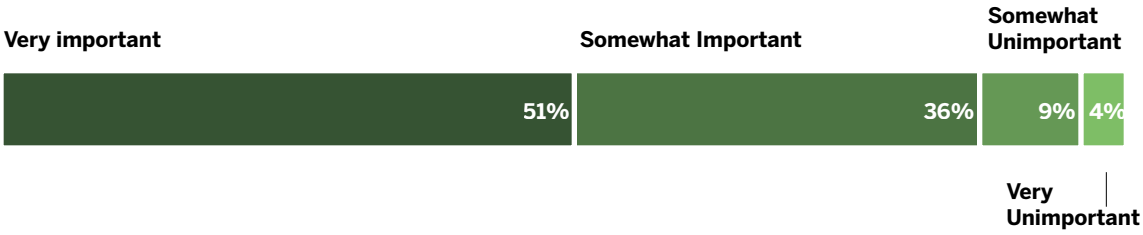
Are you familiar with the concept of equity as it applies to the experiences and treatment of people of different races and ethnicities in America?

How often do you think about issues of racial equity?

**Of those familiar with the concept of equity*

How important are issues of racial equity to you?

**Of those familiar with the concept of equity*



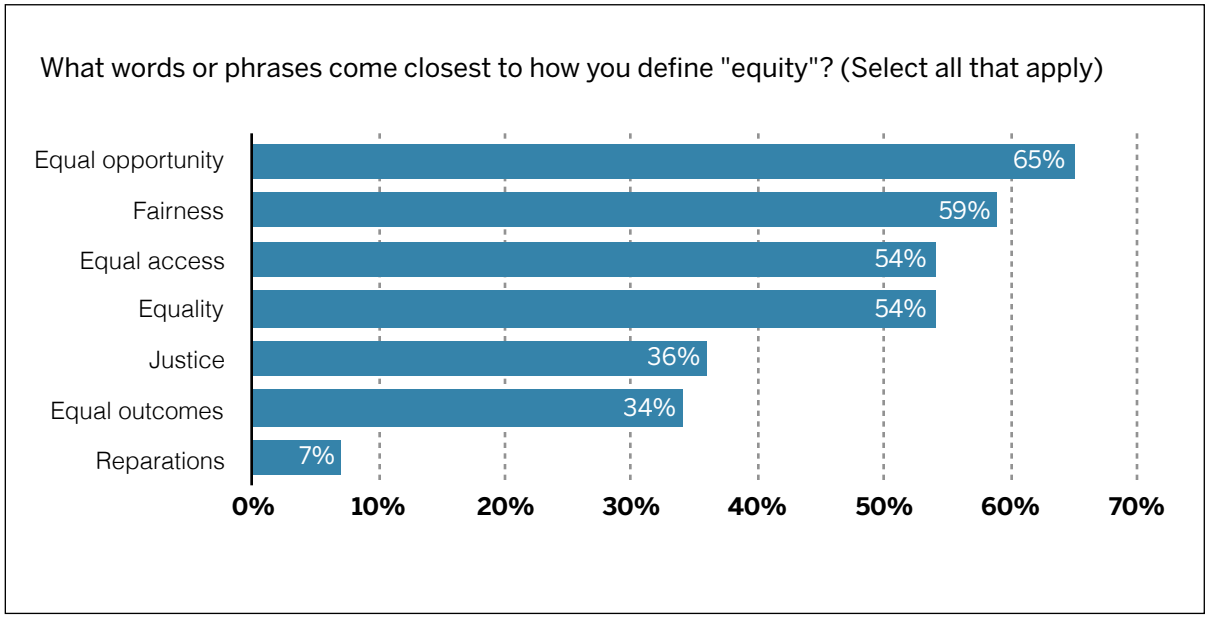
APPENDIX

Learn about the breakdown of responses by race/ethnicity and political affiliation on pages 23-25.

People across the political spectrum are familiar with racial equity and believe that issues of racial equity are important. People who identify as liberal are more likely to report thinking regularly about issues of racial equity. However, conservatives and moderates still believe equity is important, even if they report thinking about it less often.

Although the majority of people who identify as "somewhat conservative" are familiar with racial equity, they are more likely to consider issues of racial equity "somewhat unimportant" than people with other political affiliations. Messages about racial equity, however, led to an increase in how important they consider it. This signals that although people who identify as somewhat conservative may be more ambivalent about the importance of racial equity, the right messaging could convince them to support racial equity initiatives.

After reading the message, people were still likely to define equity using familiar language of "opportunity," "fairness," and "equality." Respondents were less likely to define equity using language that is more common within social justice organizations, such as "justice," even after being introduced to that language in the message.



Framing Equity Through Real Opportunity

The first thing you say about a topic influences the perceptions, judgments, and emotional responses that follow. Framing a topic effectively means using familiar language that is true to your values—and also reflects values and beliefs your audiences already hold.

A complete definition of equity requires understanding equitable **opportunity**, equitable **actions**, and equitable **outcomes**. People naturally think of racial equity in terms of fair access to opportunities, but equity is about more than just access. People are less likely to consider racial equity in other terms, such as fair resources and support, or fair outcomes across different populations. Messages about racial equity should consistently reinforce all three.

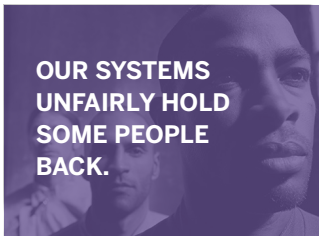
To craft messages, you can draw on the language people are already using. In the survey, the most common ideas and language people used to describe equity were "equality," "fairness," and "everyone." Effective messages can combine this familiar language with the appropriate context.

A RACIAL EQUITY FRAME:
REAL OPPORTUNITY WITH REAL OUTCOMES FOR ALL

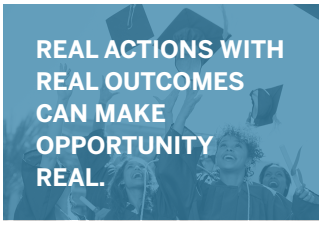
This framework articulates the core concepts that make up Lumina's understanding of racial equity in a way that will motivate your core audiences and invite new audiences to the table. You can use it as a North Star for communications—core ideas to convey in your language, images, and stories.

No matter where you come from, what you look like, or how much money your family has, everyone should have what they need to learn, grow, and thrive. People across audiences relate to this values statement. "Opportunity" here is defined as having what you need to make opportunity real in your life in tangible ways.

Opportunity depends on who you are and where you come from. This statement is evocative but not controversial, and confronts the "bootstraps" meta-narrative that, as long as you work hard, you can succeed in America.



Policies, practices, and beliefs—rooted in history and still affecting people today—keep many Black, Native American, and Hispanic people from the education and skills they need. Specific, tangible examples that expose hidden barriers that unfairly affect individual lives make complicated, systems-level concepts real for people.



We can remove barriers for students to right the wrongs and achieve just and fair outcomes for all. Audiences agree that the support and resources that benefit the Black, Native, and Hispanic communities who have been left behind can also make our systems work more fairly for everyone.

Annotated Tested Messages

Respondents saw a series of messages about education in America and were asked to share how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Respondents also shared specific words and phrases that they agreed with or that were important to them, as well as the words and phrases that confused or concerned them.

Our systems for education and training after high school should provide quality learning opportunities for everybody, whether you're black, brown, or white.

Respondents largely agreed with this framing message, whether or not "black, brown, or white" was capitalized. In keeping with the findings of Demos' race-class narrative, liberals and conservatives alike see themselves reflected in this statement.

No matter where you come from, what you look like, or how much money your family has, you should be able to work toward a degree, certificate, or credential that opens doors to new learning opportunities and personal growth.

This shared goals statement performed well across political affiliation and race.

A long history of exclusion, oppression, and racism has created unfair outcomes in education and the workplace for Black, Native, and Latino communities. Unfortunately, many policies, practices, and beliefs continue to hold back people of color today.

This was the most contentious message tested. Self-identified liberals and Black, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino respondents were most likely to agree, while conservatives were more likely to disagree.

To reach those audiences while staying true to your values, replace these terms with specific, tangible examples of what exclusion, oppression, and racism look like for students today.

We can change systems to make education work better for everyone by providing support and resources that are responsive to unique backgrounds and life experiences; making education more affordable; holding colleges and universities accountable for achieving just and fair outcomes for students; and fostering welcoming, healthy, and safe learning environments.

This shared goals statement performed well across political affiliation and race.

Everyone benefits from diverse learning communities in which people with different learning styles, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and life experiences share ideas and learn from each other.

Audiences strongly agree with these descriptions of solutions and benefits.

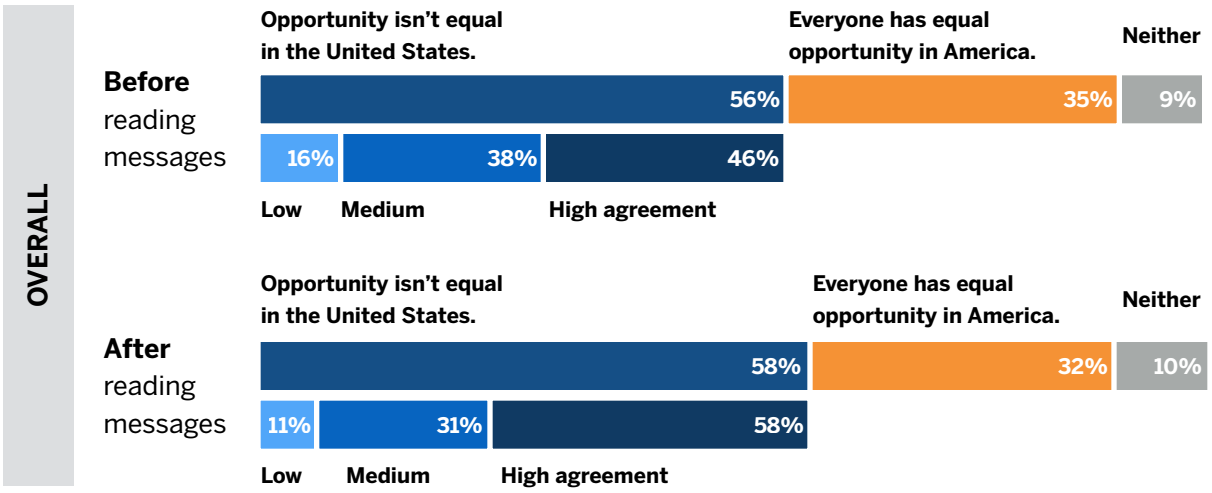
We can open doors for people to participate in an education that equips students to meet the demands of a rapidly changing labor market, engage more fully in their communities, and live meaningful and productive lives.

Audiences strongly agree with these descriptions of solutions and benefits.

When Black, Native, and Latino communities thrive in work and in life, we create a more just and fair world for all.

Across demographics, and for people who don't already have language for equity, "just and fair" invites slightly stronger agreement than "racial and economic justice," likely because of its simpler, more familiar language.

After reading messages, people who already agreed that opportunity isn't equal felt much more strongly about that belief. The tested messages maintained support or and strengthened the existing support of Lumina's core audiences.

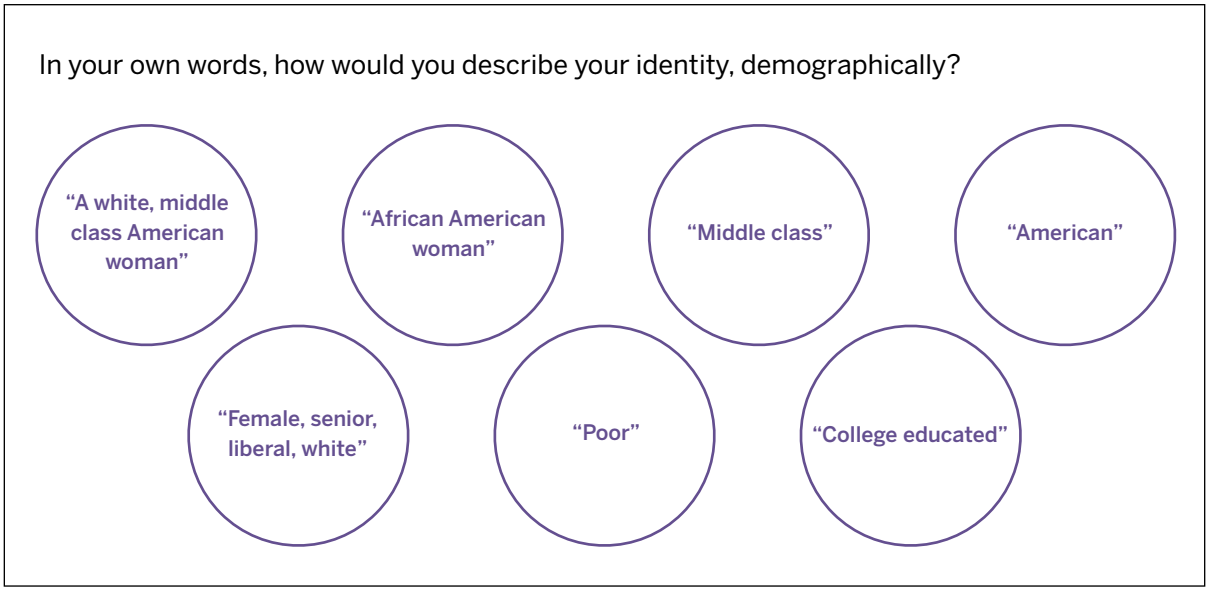


Understanding Preferred Identity Labels

Americans and organizations working on issues of race face an ever-changing menu of identifiers and lack consistent language. Responses to questions about language used to identify race and identity in the United States demonstrate Americans' complex views of personal identity. Findings from this survey show disagreement about which identifiers feel most appropriate to describe which people. That said, people tended not to have strong preferences. These findings point to the need to be as specific about racial identity as possible in any given instance, and to carefully consider your audience.

The survey gave respondents the option to define their demographic identity themselves before selecting from a list, and many people offered descriptions that went beyond race. Race and gender were the most common responses, followed by age, region of the country, and political or religious beliefs.

Many white people described their identity as more than just "white," offering fairly extensive qualifiers. Beyond "white male" and "white female," additional descriptions tended toward socioeconomic. Respondents who typed in "African American" or "Black" were more likely to only offer that, or to include a briefer description than their white peers.



Many non-white respondents—people who Lumina might consider "people of color"—don't describe themselves in that way. The term "person of color" is most warmly adopted by younger respondents, liberal respondents, and Black and Asian respondents. Notably, fewer than half of Hispanic/Latino respondents, or American Indian/Alaska Natives, describe themselves in that way.

African American respondents expressed a slight preference for "African American" when given the option between that and "Black." Similarly, in an aggregate of all races, people preferred "African American" over "Black," but most stated no preference.

In message testing, some respondents saw a version that included the phrase "black, brown, or white," while others saw a version that included "Black, Brown, or White." Neither Black nor white people expressed negative sentiments toward either option.

Of African American respondents who said the term "does not matter" and *also* offered their own open-ended description of their identity, most still described themselves as "Black," "African American," or "Black or African American." African Americans seem open to using these terms interchangeably, but most respondents tended to self-identify as "Black."

Most non-Hispanic/Latino respondents have no preference with respect to the identifiers "Latino" and "Hispanic;" however, Hispanic/Latino people clearly prefer "Hispanic."

Of Hispanic/Latino respondents who said the term "does not matter" and *also* offered their own open-ended description of their identity, half described themselves as Hispanic, one quarter described themselves as Latino, and another quarter used a specific country of origin.

When asked their preference of identifiers for Native Americans, most people chose "Native American," including people who identified as American Indian or Alaska Natives.

Most people don't have strong preferences about identifiers used to describe white people. For those across all races who indicated a preference, the preference was for "White" over "white," when presented with the two words juxtaposed.

APPENDIX

Learn about the breakdown of responses on pages 26-29.

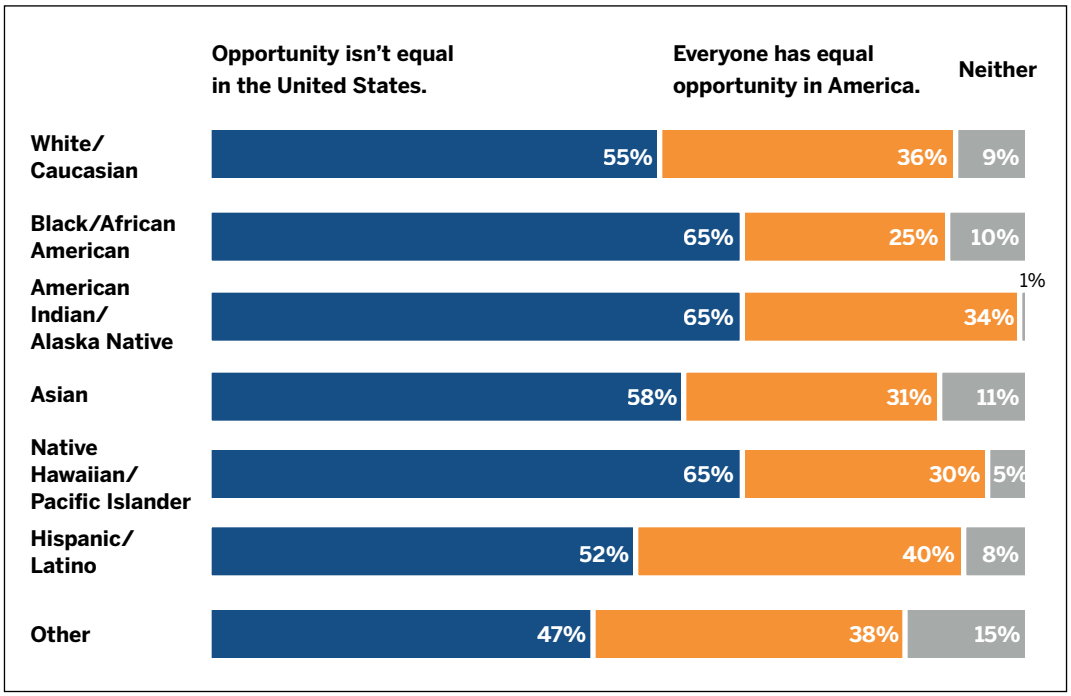
Appendix

Which statement more closely reflects your point of view?

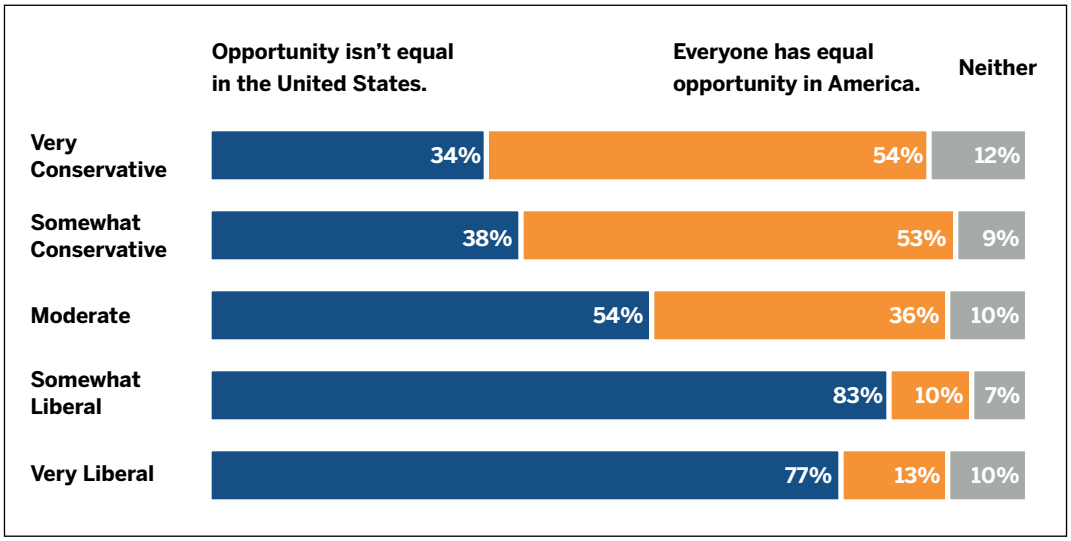
INSIGHT

See page 4

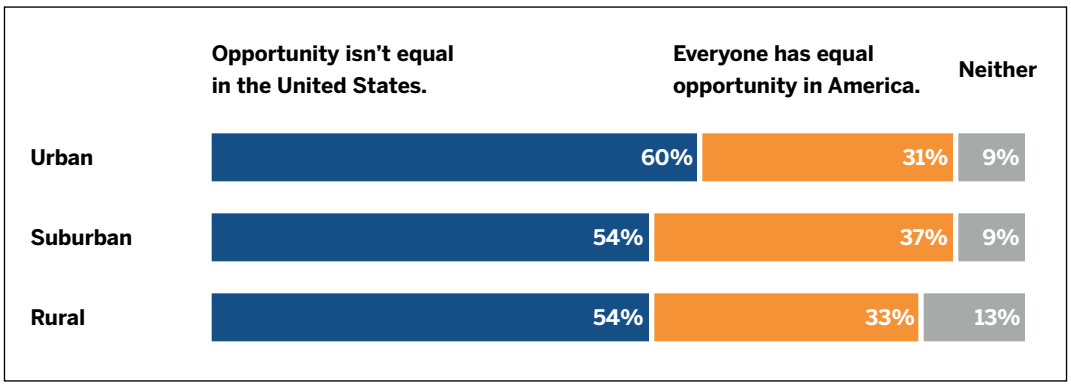
RACE/ETHNICITY



POLITICAL AFFILIATION



GEOGRAPHY



Persuadable Audience: Moderates

INSIGHT

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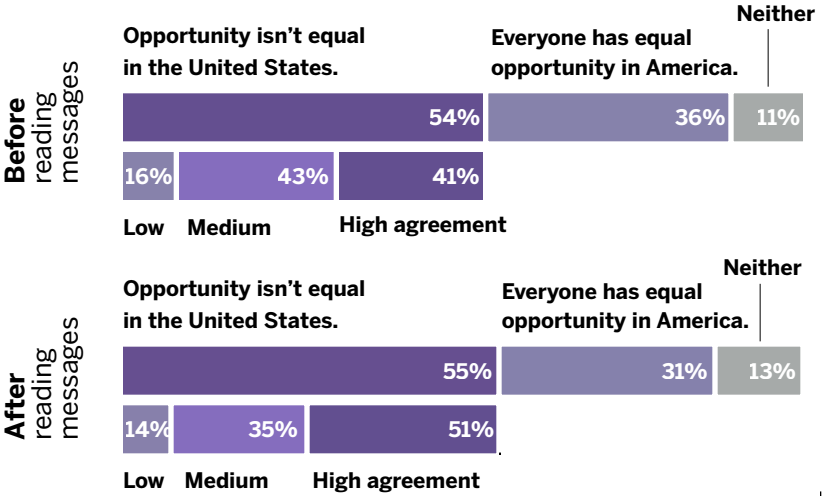
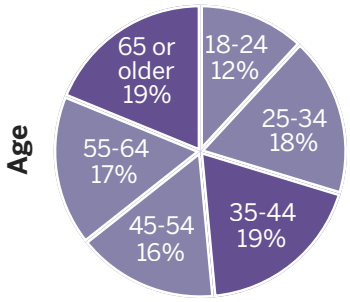
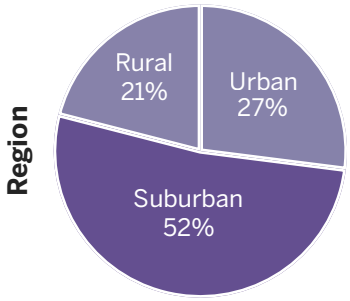
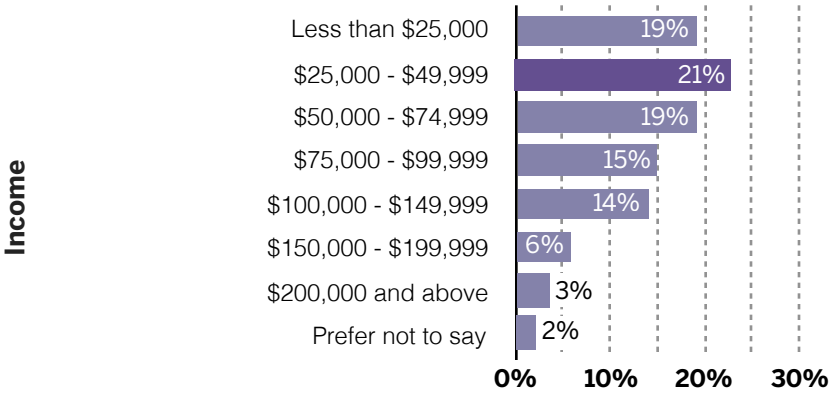
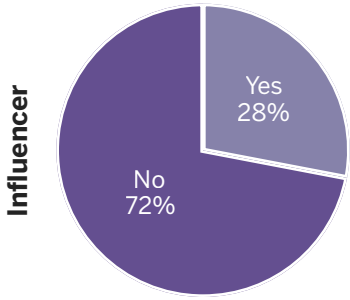
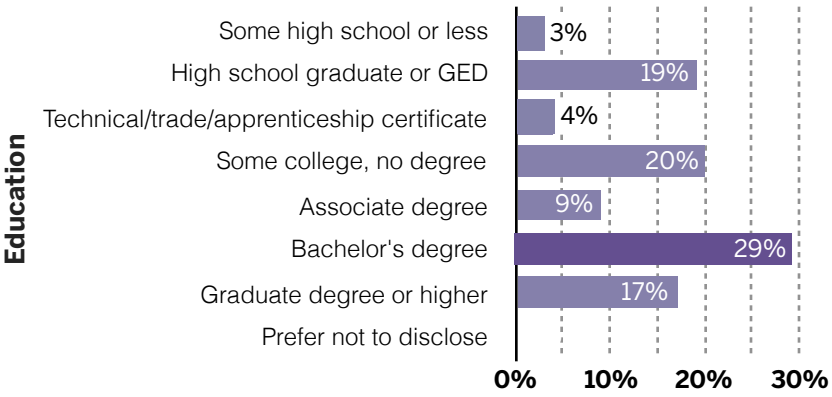


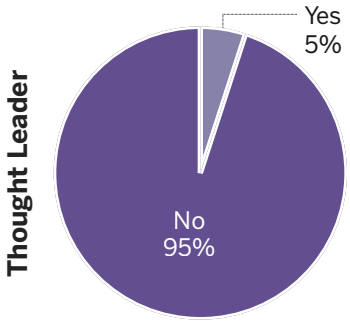


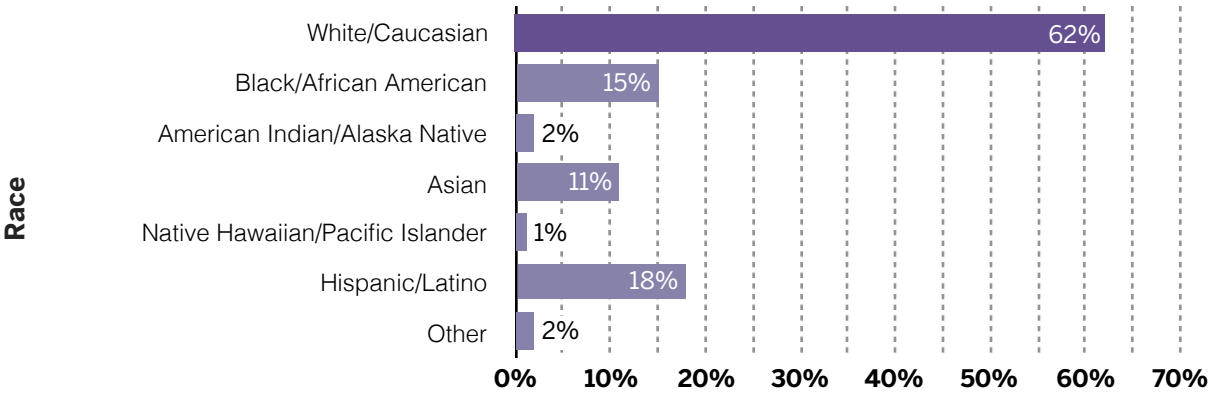




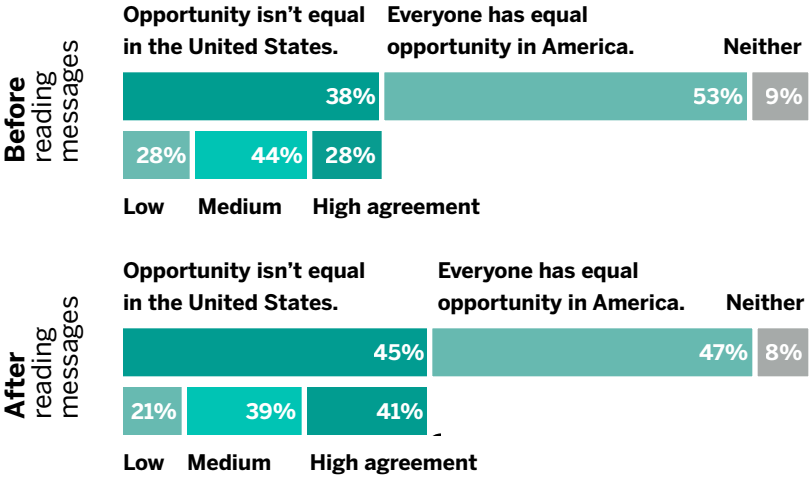


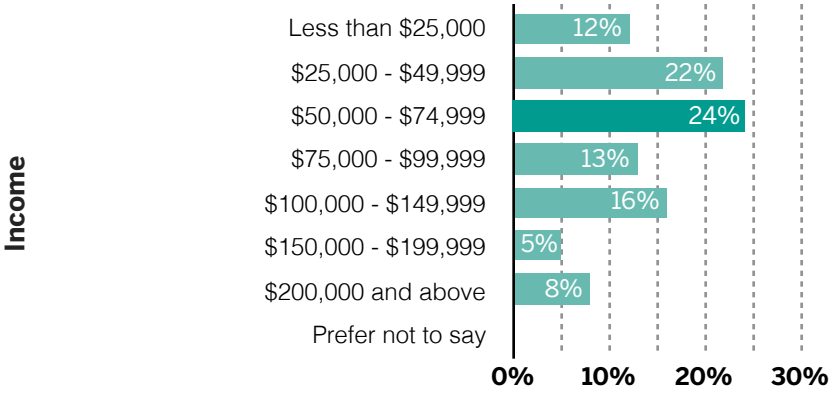


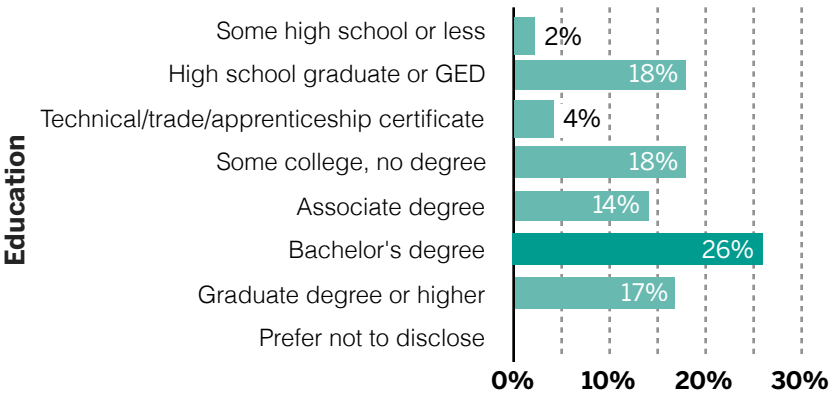


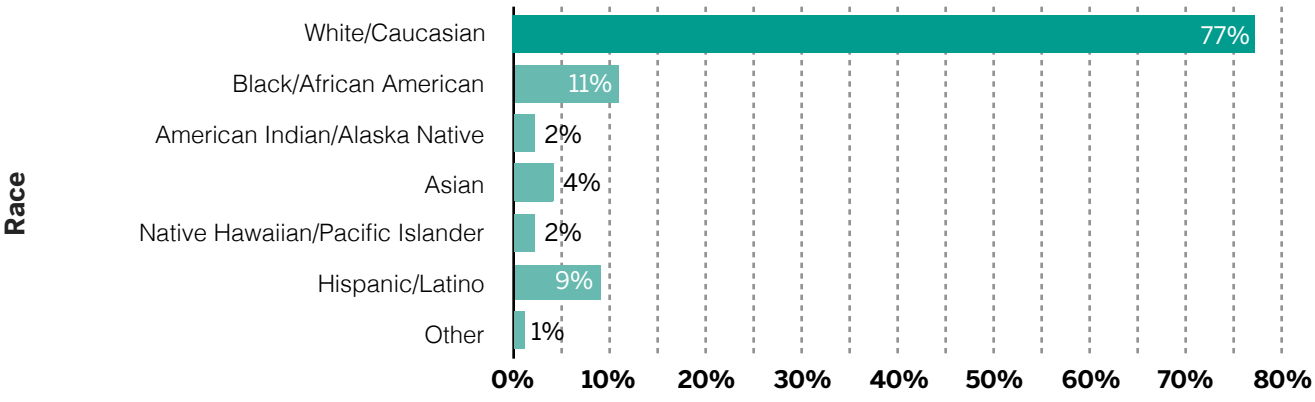


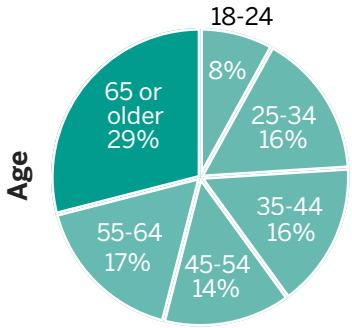
Persuadable Audience: Somewhat Conservatives

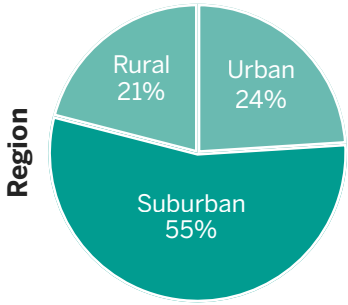


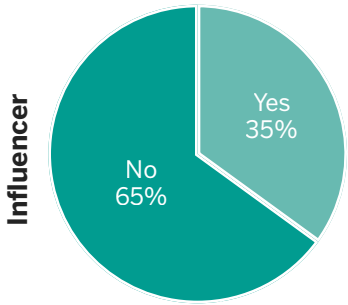


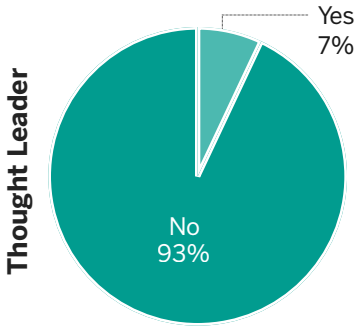












INSIGHT

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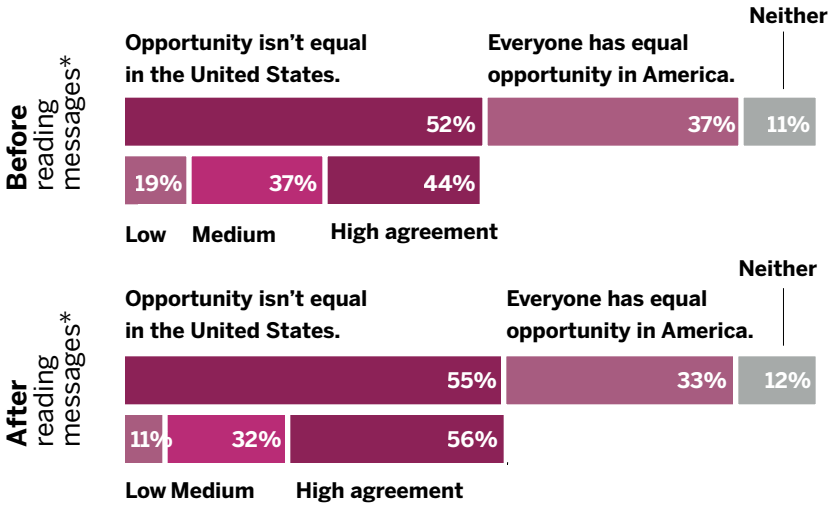
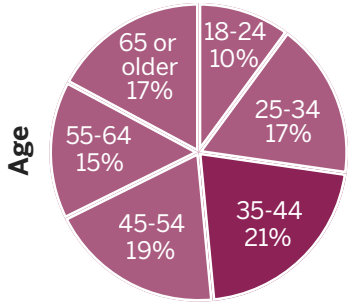
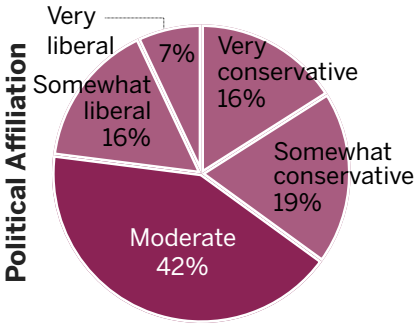
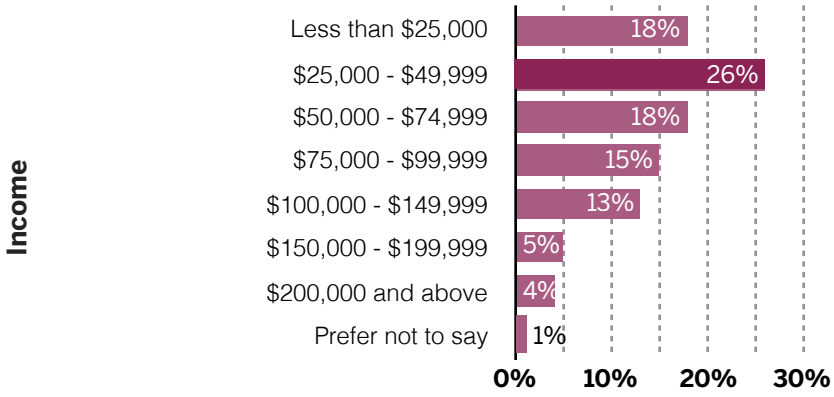
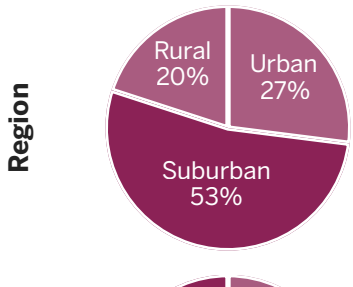
Persuadable Audience: Equity Rookies*

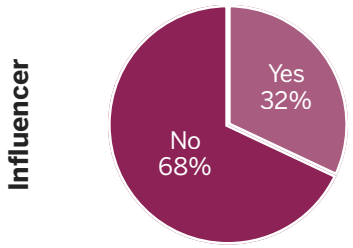


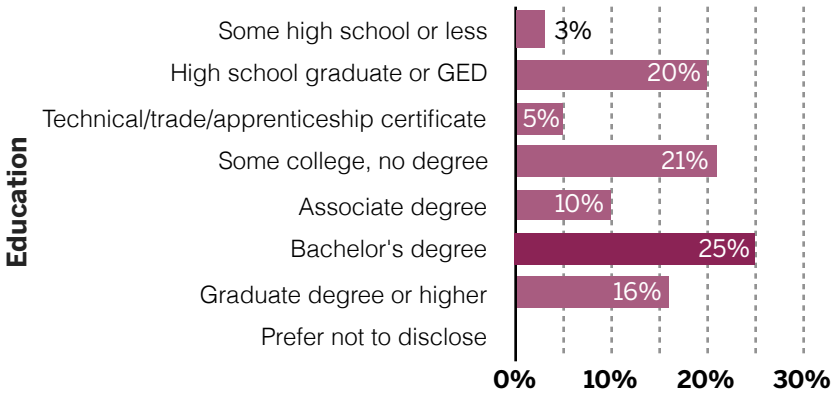


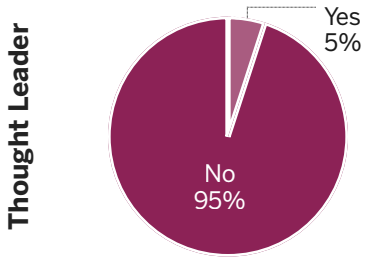


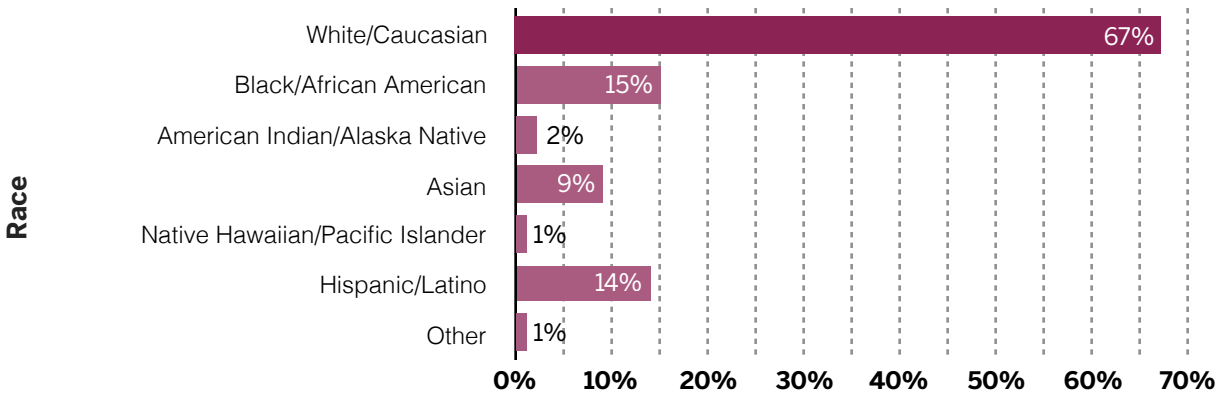












INSIGHT

See pages 4-5

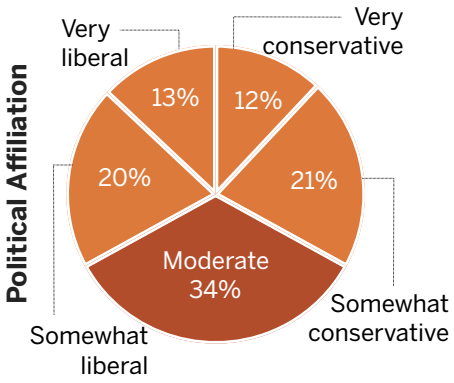
* Respondents who did not provide a relevant definition of equity

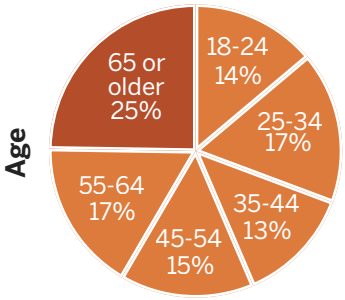
Audience: Familiar with Racial Equity*

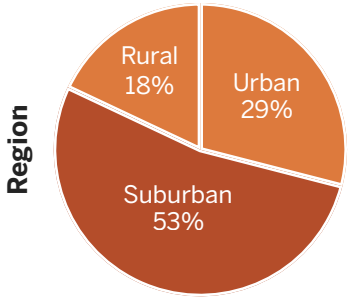
INSIGHT

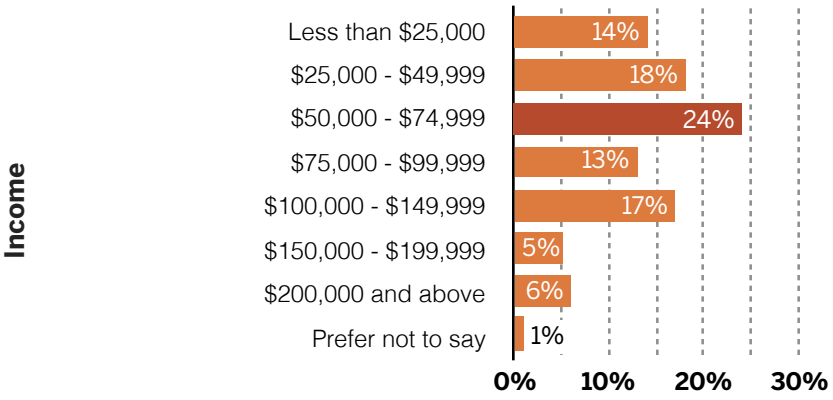
See pages 5-6

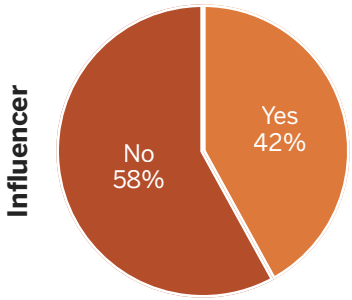
* Respondents who provided a relevant definition of equity

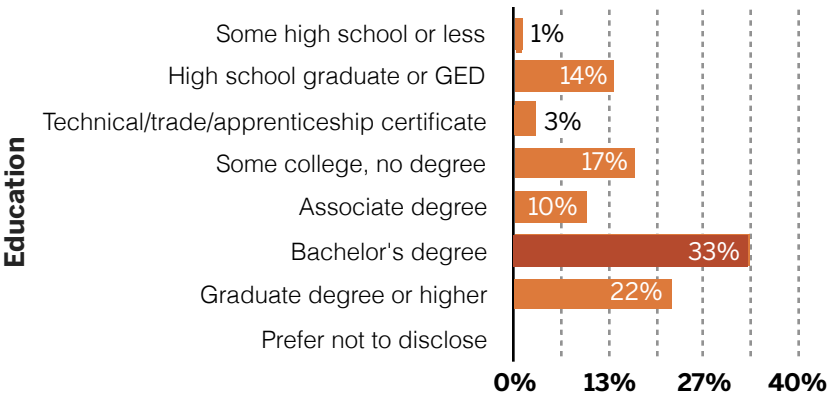


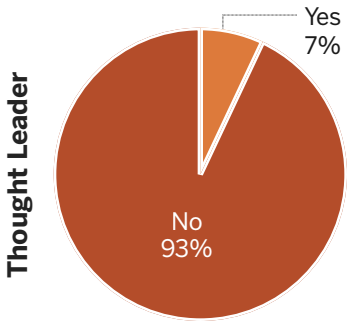


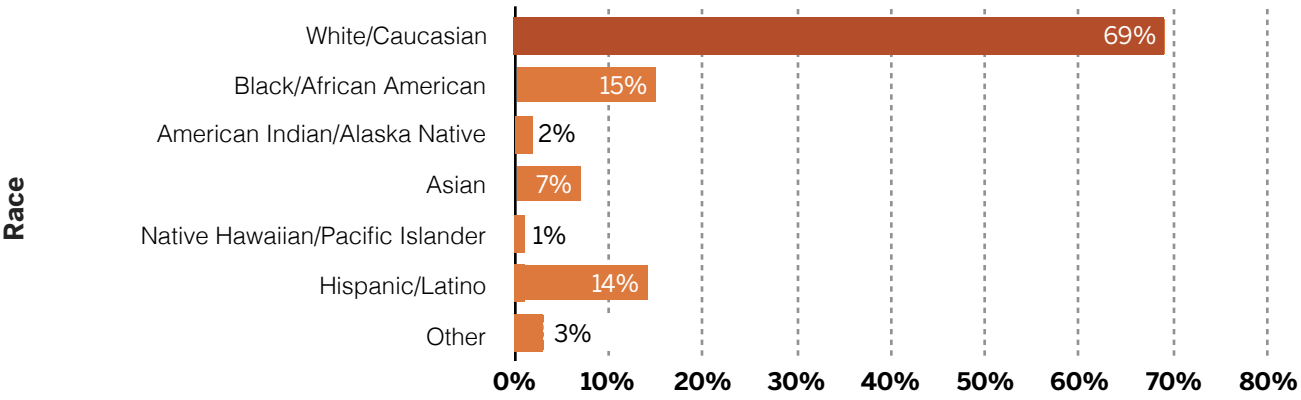








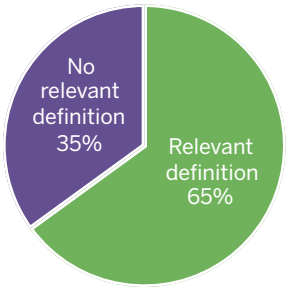




What comes to mind when you think about the word "equity"?
Most common relevant words and phrases

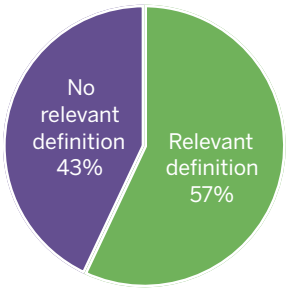
POLITICAL AFFILIATION

Very Liberal



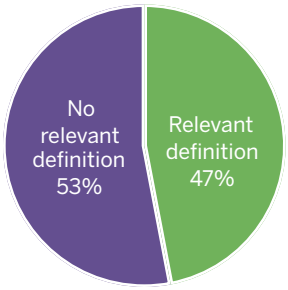
1. EQUAL	"equal opportunity" "equal rights" "equal pay"
2. FAIRNESS	"fairness for all"
3. VALUE	"value of property"

Somewhat Liberal



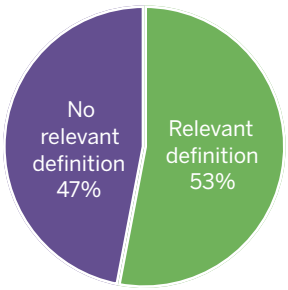
1. EQUAL	"equal opportunity" "equal rights" "equal pay" "equal treatment"
2. MONEY	"investment" "money earned"
3. FAIRNESS	

Moderate



1. MONEY	"finances" "home" "investment"
2. EQUAL	"equal opportunities" "equal rights"
3. VALUE	"value built up" "value of something"

Somewhat Conservative



1. MONEY	"assets" "investment" "home"
2. EQUAL	"equal opportunities" "equal rights"
3. VALUE	"value of something"

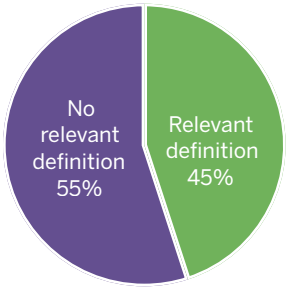
INSIGHT

See pages 5-6

continued on next page

POLITICAL AFFILIATION

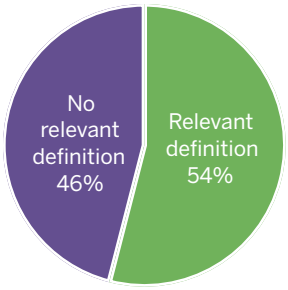
Very Conservative



1. **MONEY** "investment"
2. **EQUAL** "equal rights"
3. **VALUE** "value of something"

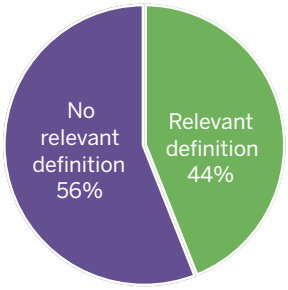
RACE/ETHNICITY

American Indian/Alaska Native



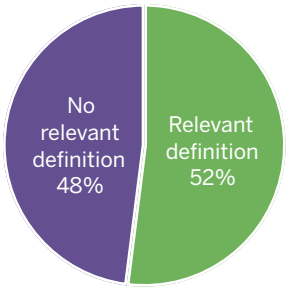
1. **EQUAL**
2. **MONEY**
3. **FAIRNESS**

Asian



1. **MONEY**
2. **EQUAL**
3. **FAIRNESS**

Black

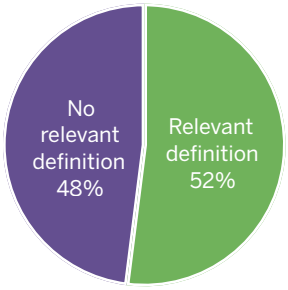


1. **MONEY**
2. **EQUAL**
3. **VALUE**

continued on next page

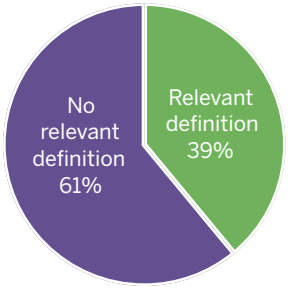
RACE/ETHNICITY

Hispanic/Latino



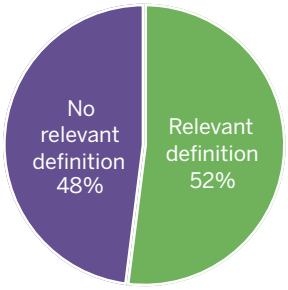
1. MONEY
2. EQUAL
3. FAIR

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander



1. MONEY
2. FAIR
3. INVESTMENT

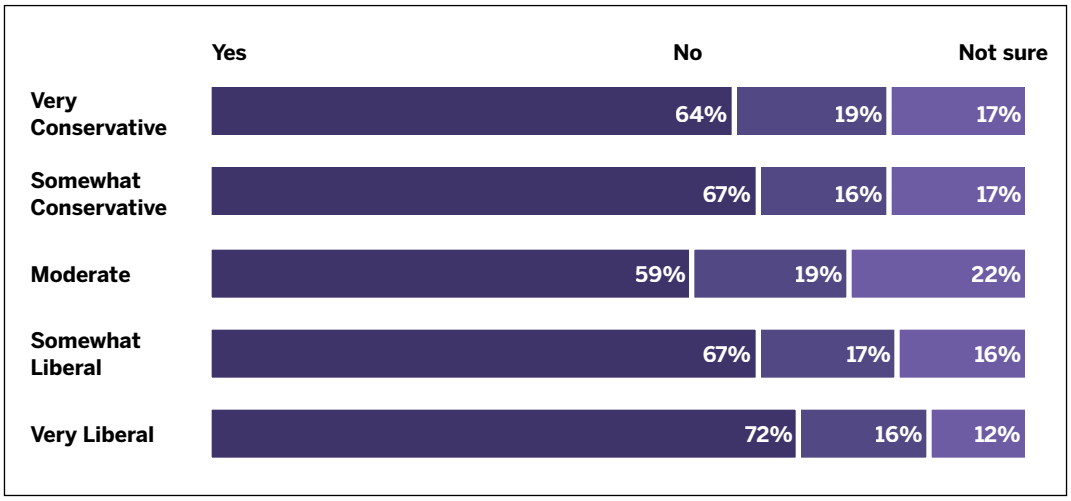
White/Caucasian



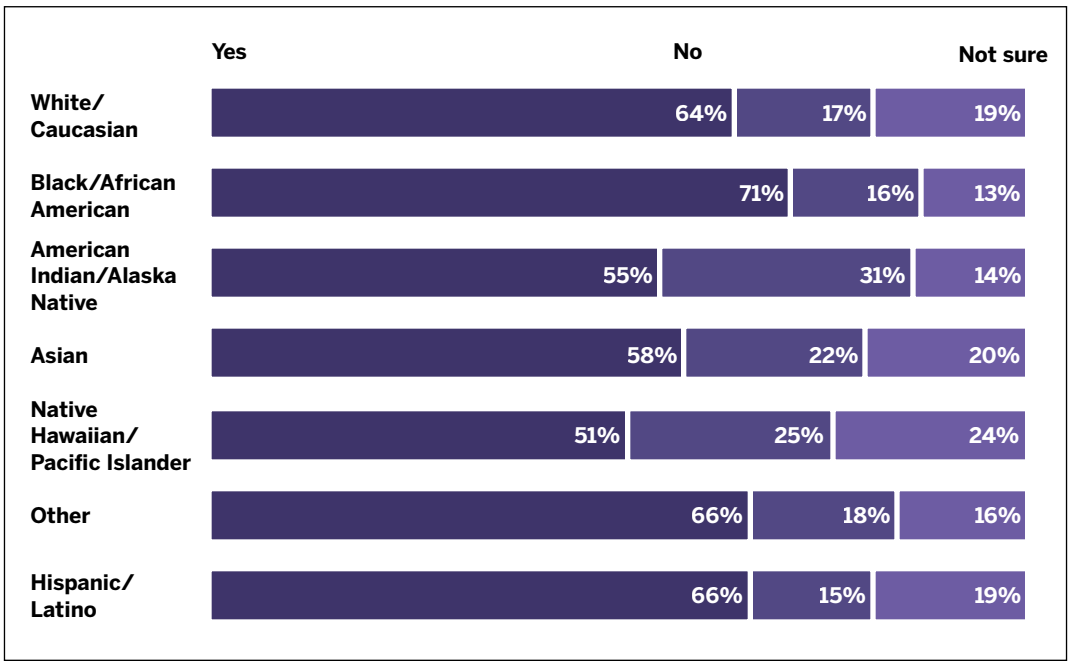
1. EQUAL
2. MONEY
3. VALUE

"Are you familiar with the concept of equity as it applies to the experiences and treatment of people of different races and ethnicities in America?"

POLITICAL AFFILIATION



RACE/ETHNICITY

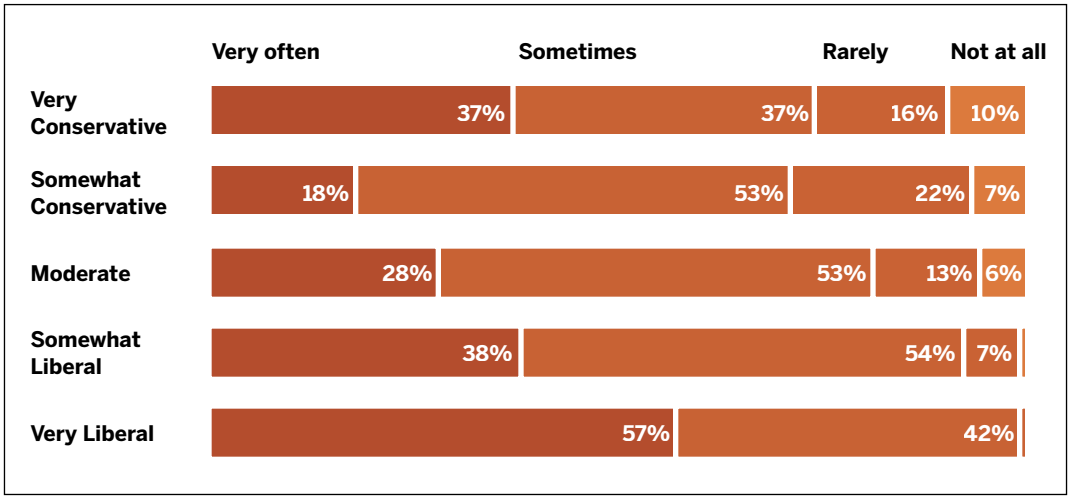


INSIGHT

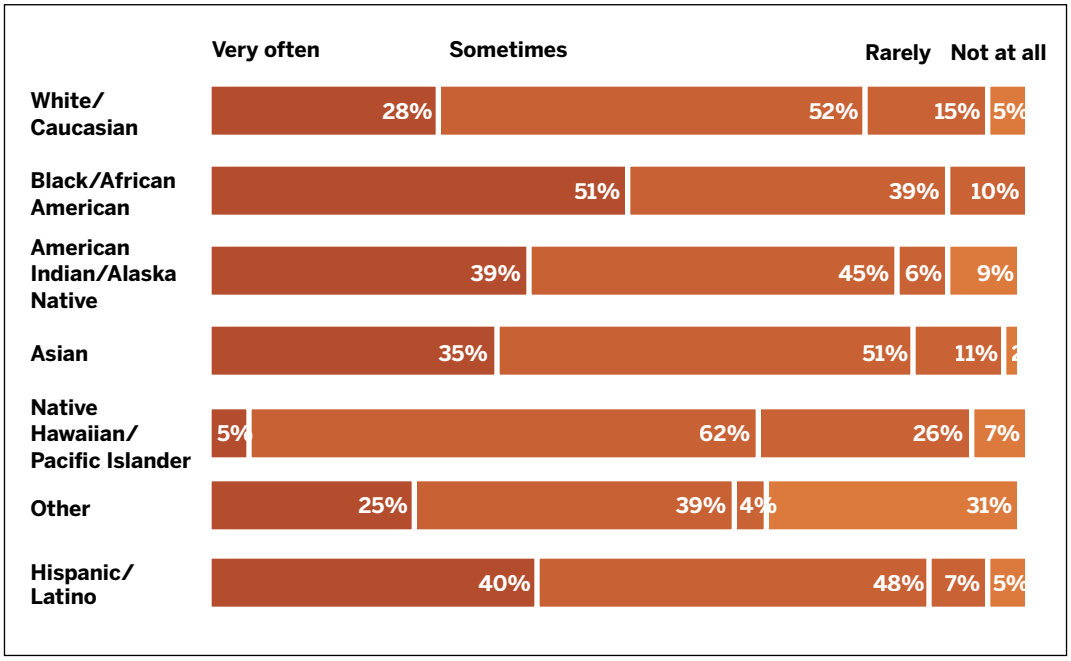
See page 7

"How often do you think about issues of racial equity?"

POLITICAL AFFILIATION



RACE/ETHNICITY

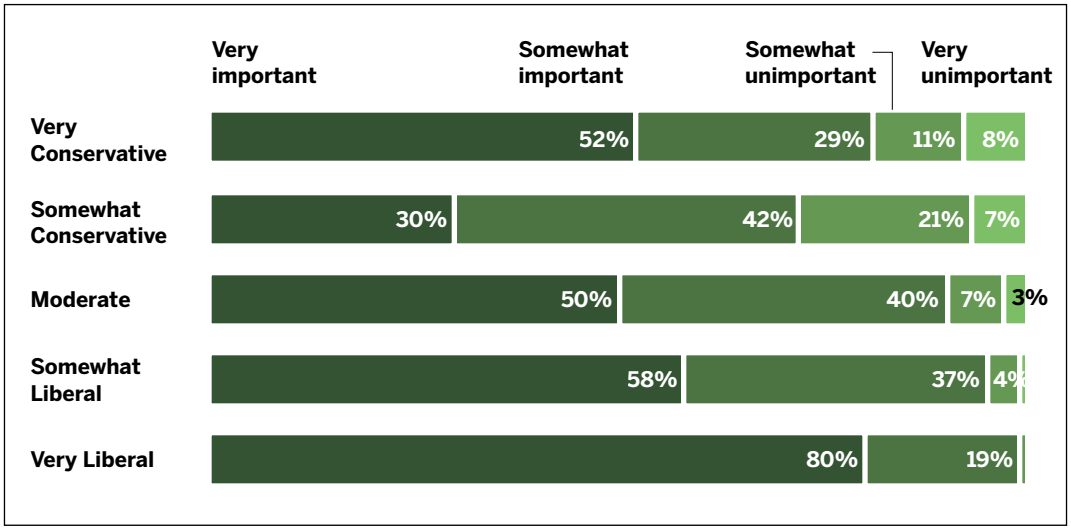


INSIGHT

See page 7

"How important are issues of racial equity to you?"

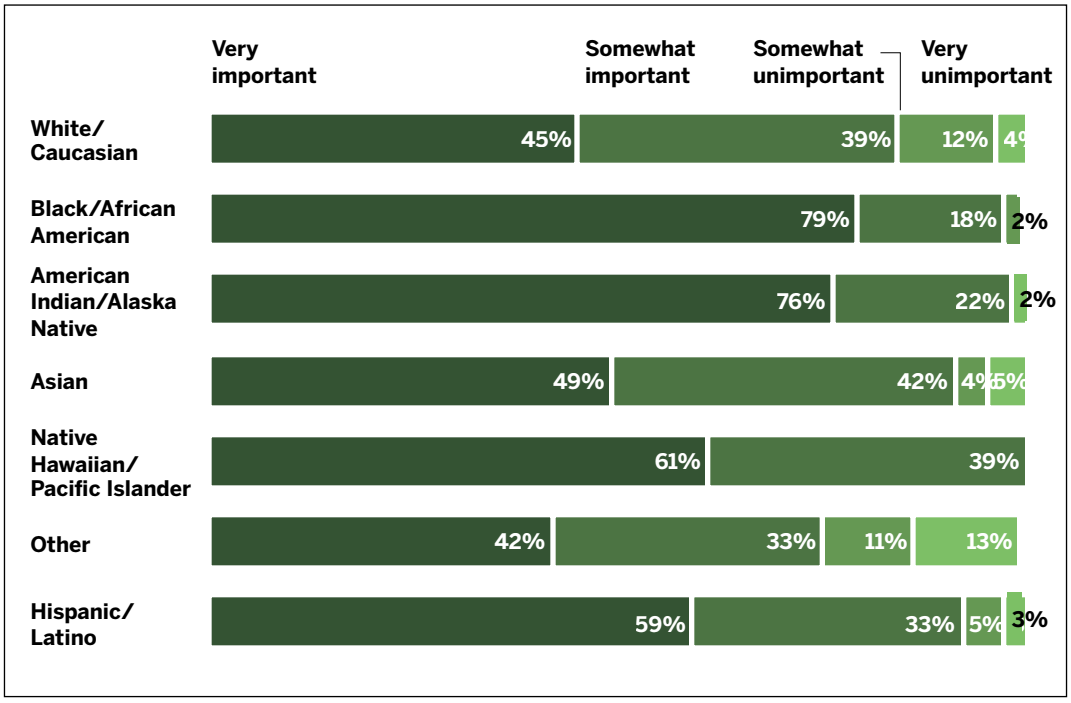
POLITICAL AFFILIATION



INSIGHT

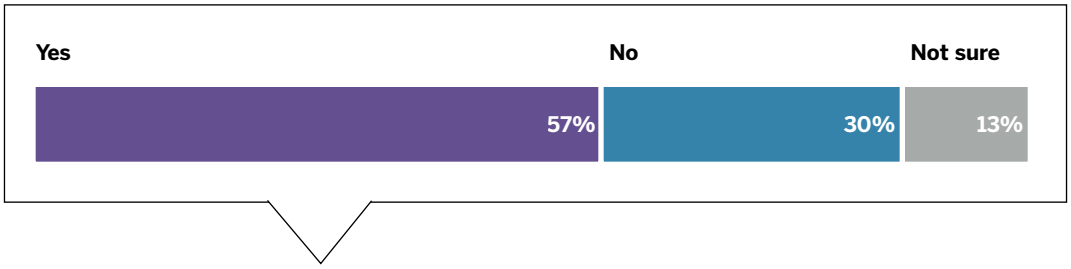
See page 7

RACE/ETHNICITY

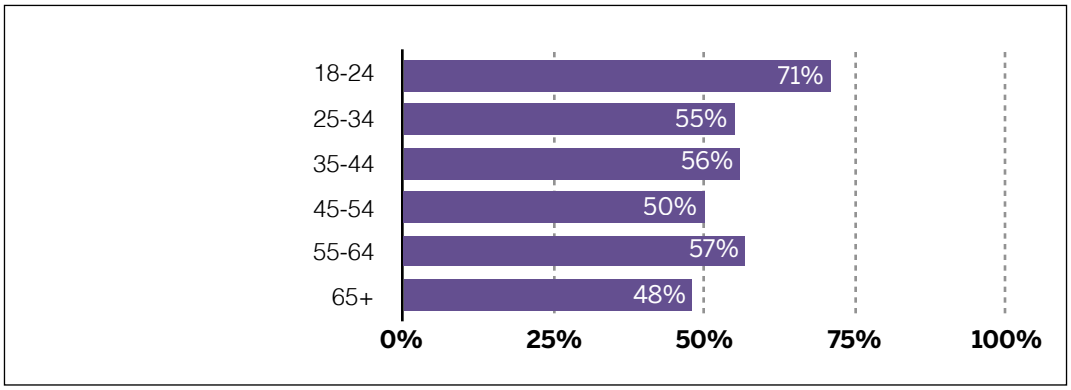


"Does the phrase 'person of color' describe you?"

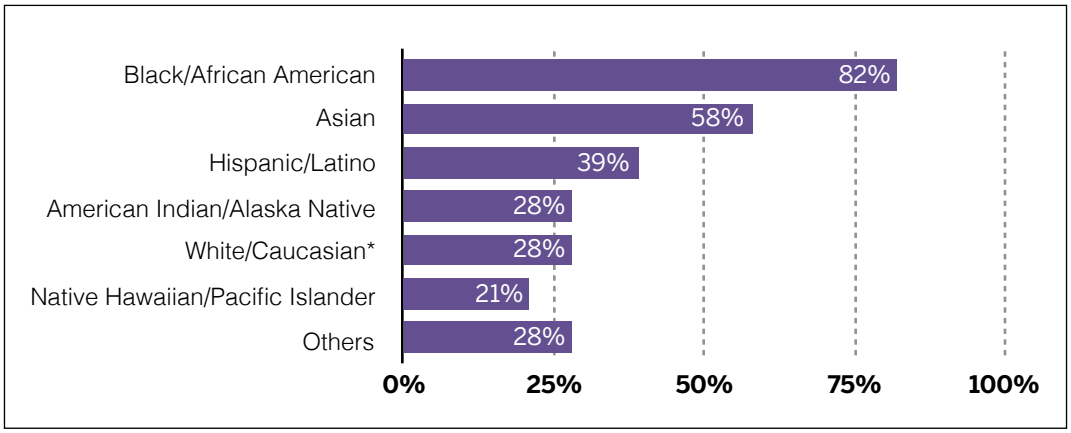
OVERALL



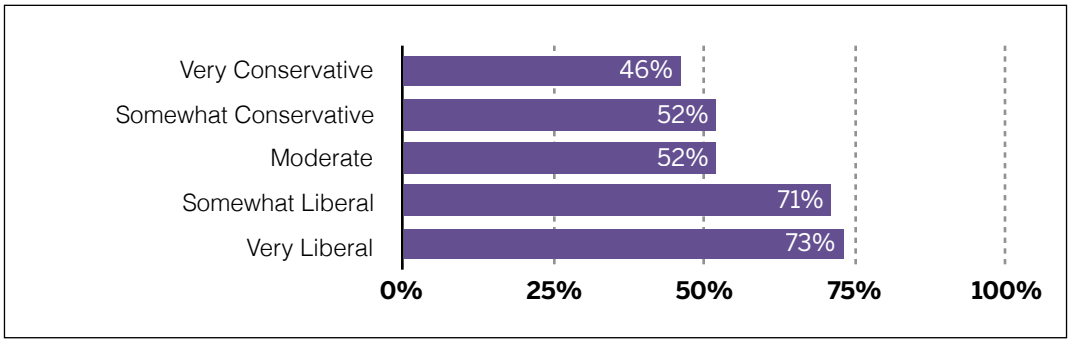
AGE



RACE



POLITICAL AFFILIATION

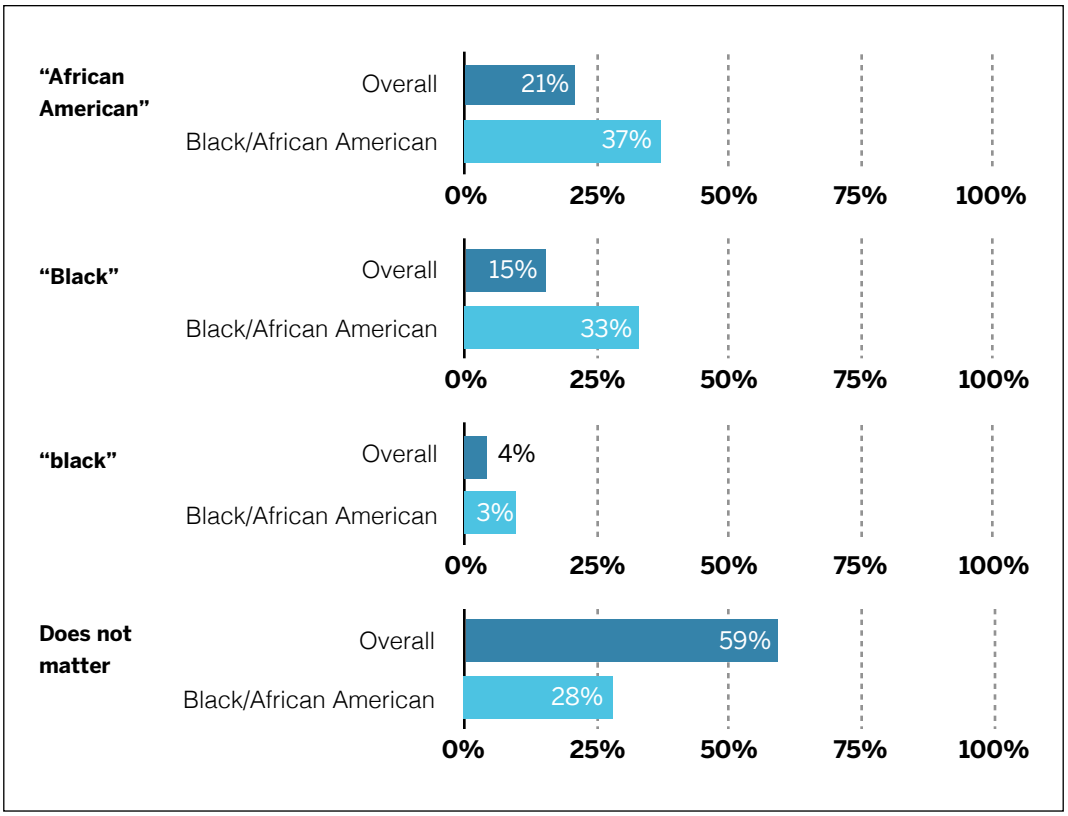


INSIGHT

See page 13

* Of those who provided demographic data other than just "White/Caucasian." Respondents had the option to select multiple races or ethnicities.

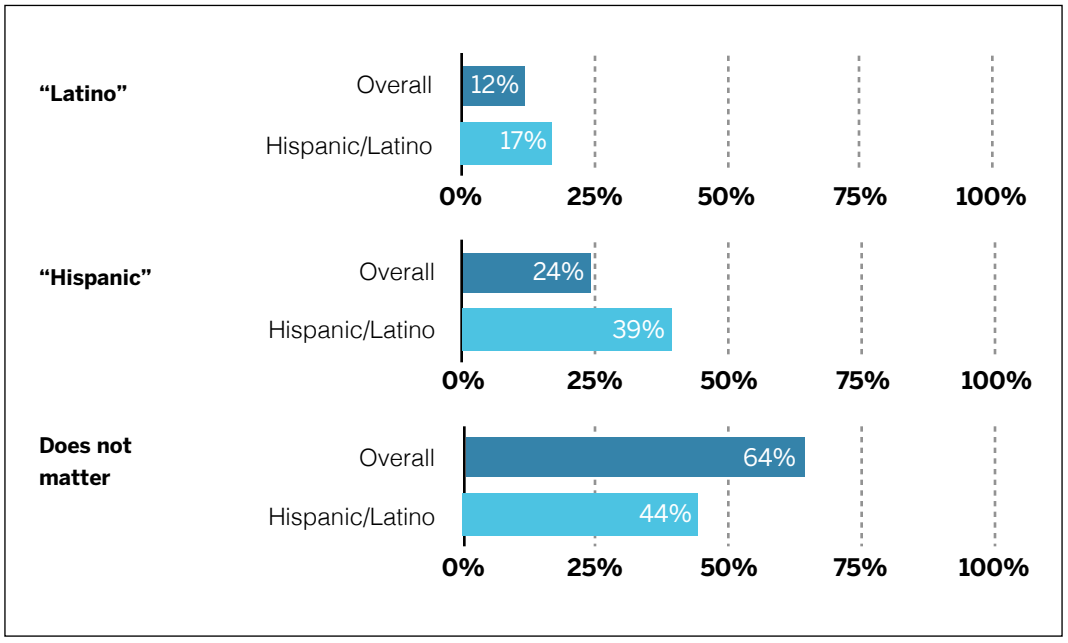
"Which term do you prefer—'African American,' 'Black,' 'black,' or does it not matter to you either way?"



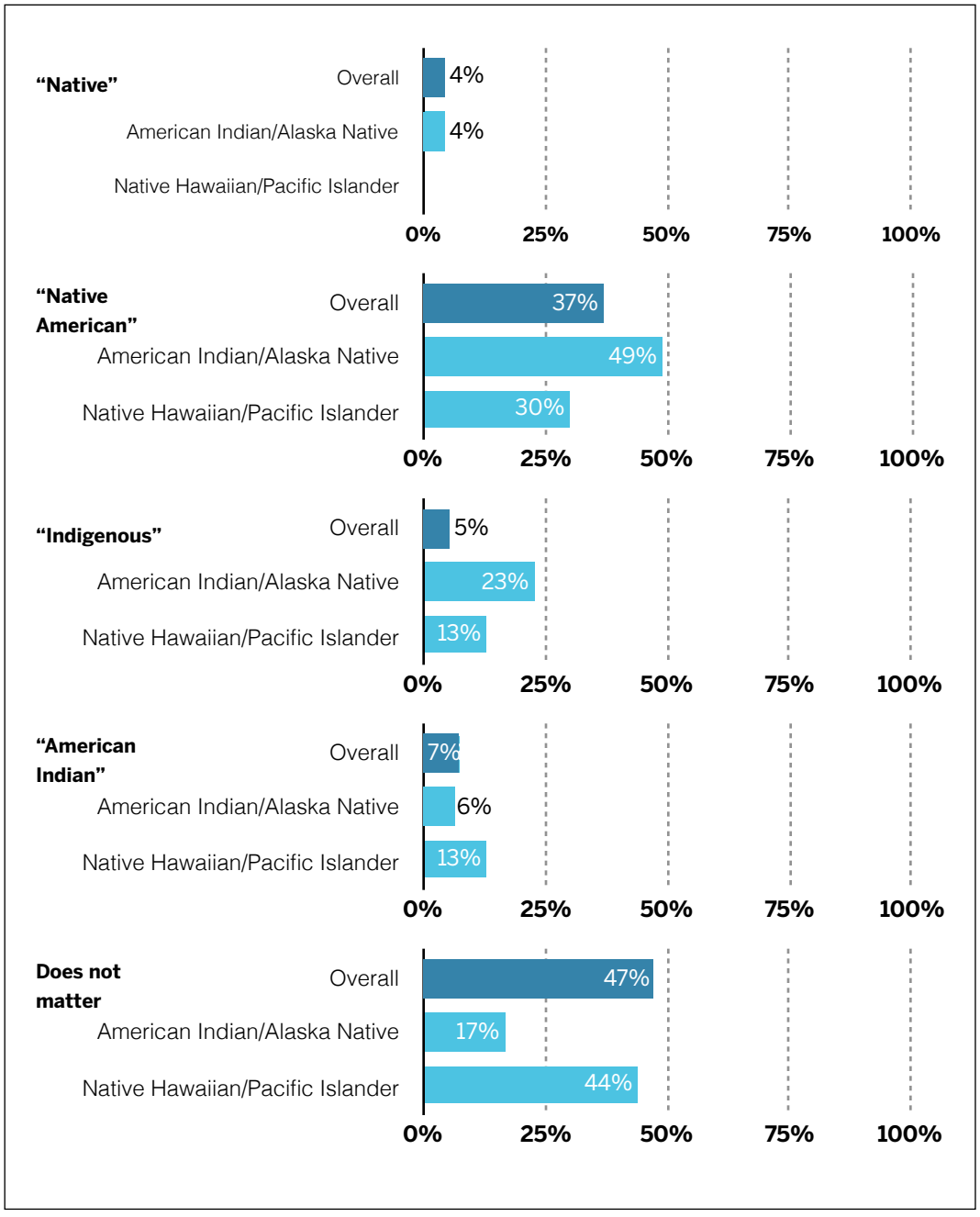
INSIGHT

See page 13

"Which term do you prefer—'Latino' or 'Hispanic,' or does it not matter to you either way?"



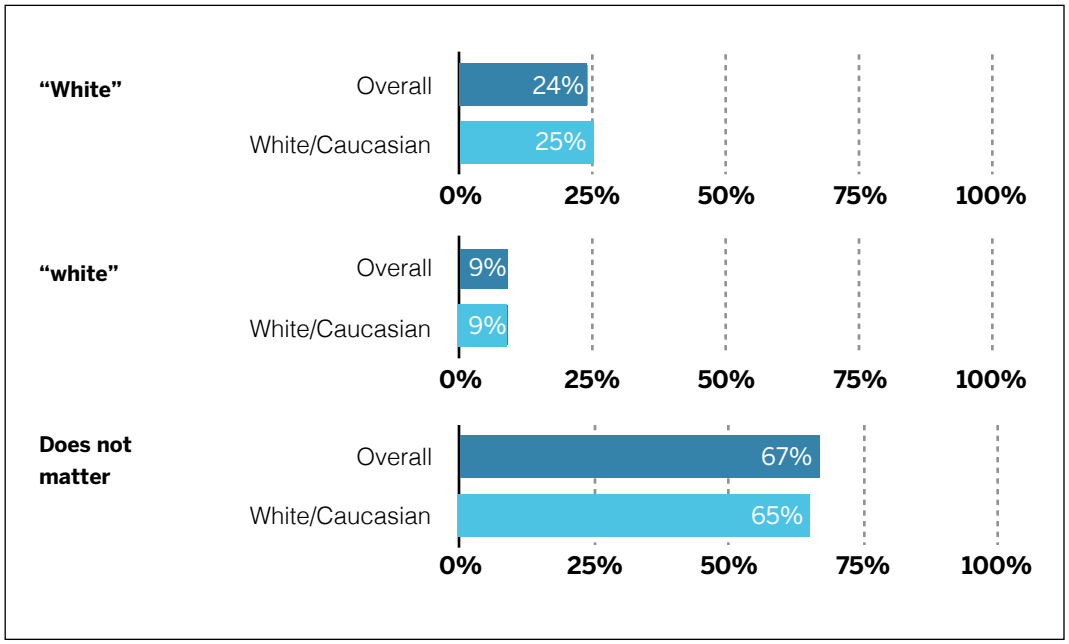
"Which term do you prefer—'Native' or 'Native American' or 'Indigenous' or 'American Indian,' or does it not matter to you either way?"



INSIGHT

See page 13

"Which term do you prefer—'White,' or 'white,' or does it not matter either way?"



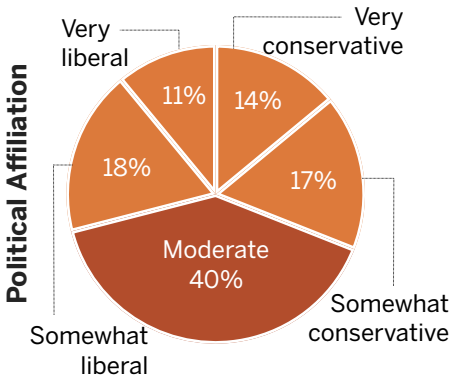
INSIGHT

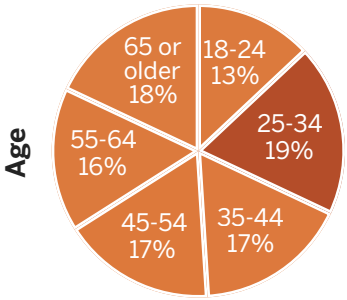
See page 13

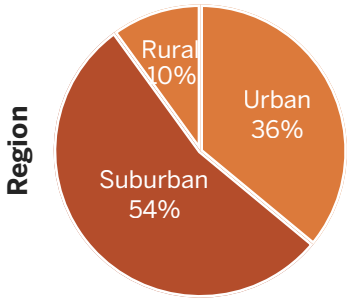
State-Level Demographic Breakdown

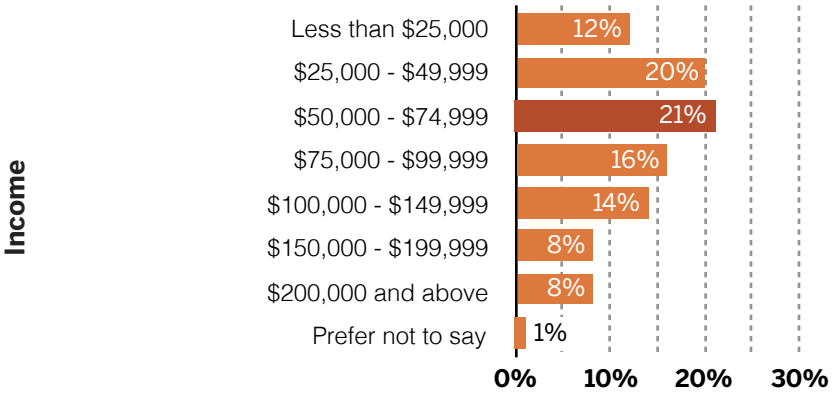
These state-level data and insights show meaningful differences between state-level data and national findings.

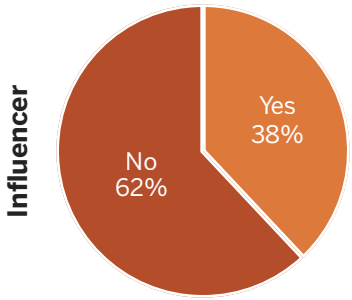
California

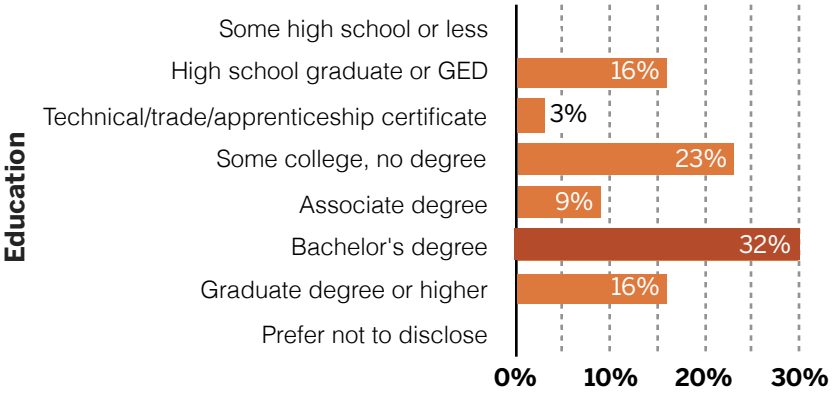

Political Affiliation
Very liberal
Very conservative
11%
14%
18%
17%
Moderate 40%
Somewhat liberal
Somewhat conservative

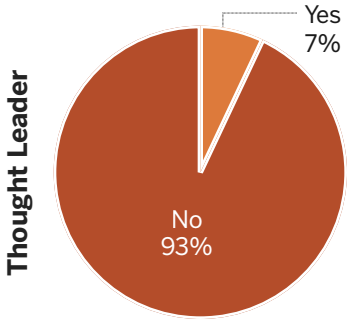

Age
65 or older 18%
18-24 13%
25-34 19%
55-64 16%
45-54 17%
35-44 17%

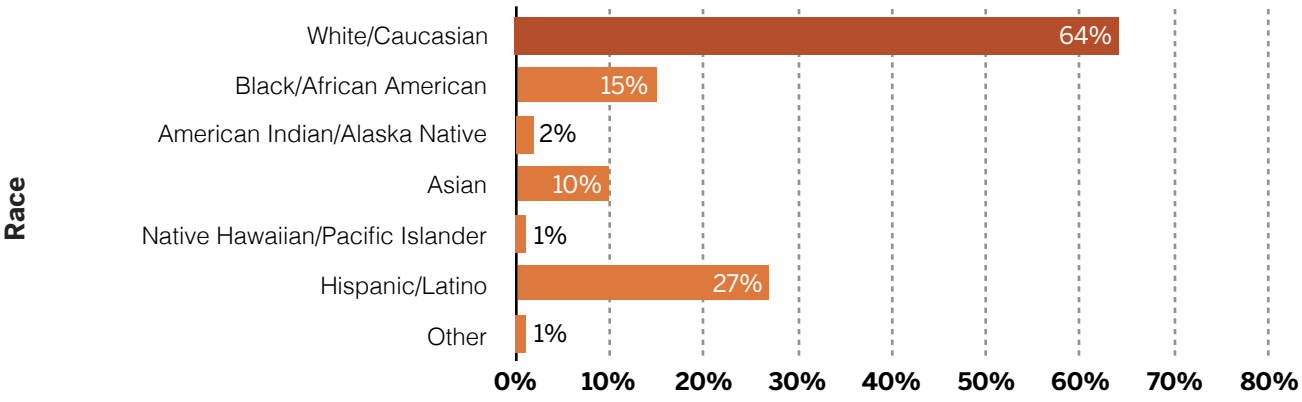

Region
Rural 10%
Urban 36%
Suburban 54%


Income
Less than $25,000 12%
$25,000 - $49,999 20%
$50,000 - $74,999 21%
$75,000 - $99,999 16%
$100,000 - $149,999 14%
$150,000 - $199,999 8%
$200,000 and above 8%
Prefer not to say 1%
0% 10% 20% 30%


Influencer
Yes 38%
No 62%


Education
Some high school or less
High school graduate or GED 16%
Technical/trade/apprenticeship certificate 3%
Some college, no degree 23%
Associate degree 9%
Bachelor's degree 32%
Graduate degree or higher 16%
Prefer not to disclose
0% 10% 20% 30%


Thought Leader
Yes 7%
No 93%

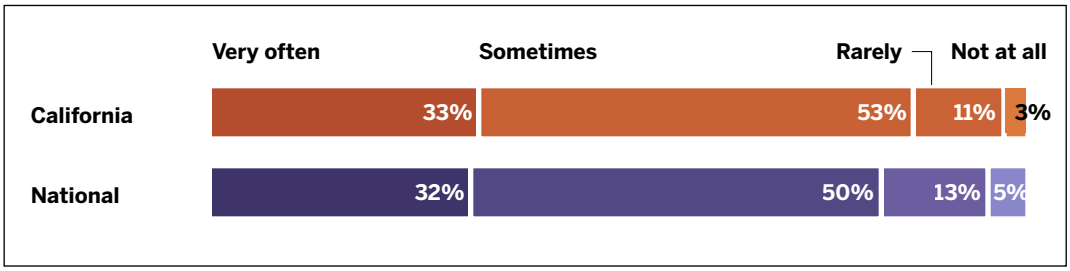

Race
White/Caucasian 64%
Black/African American 15%
American Indian/Alaska Native 2%
Asian 10%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 1%
Hispanic/Latino 27%
Other 1%
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%

California

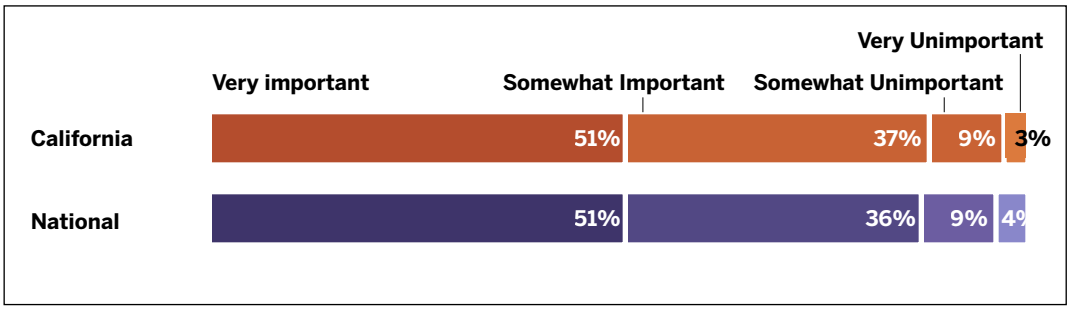
Californians generally have around the same level of familiarity, thoughtfulness, and vested interest in equity as Americans nationwide.

"Are you familiar with the concept of equity as it applies to the experiences and treatment of people of different races and ethnicities in America?"

"How often do you think about issues of racial equity?"
(Of those who are familiar with racial equity)



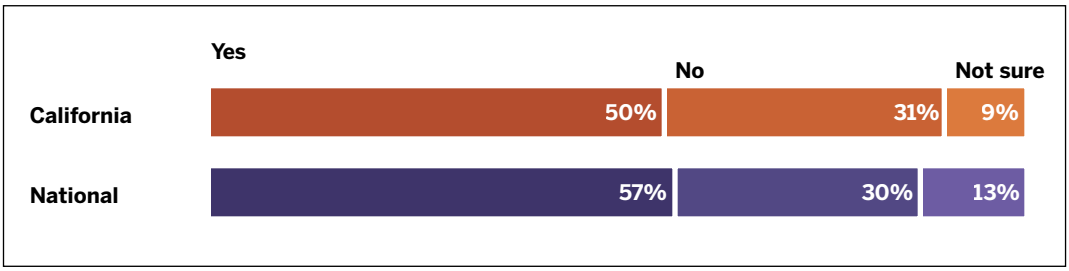
"How important are issues of racial equity to you?"
(Of those who are familiar with racial equity)



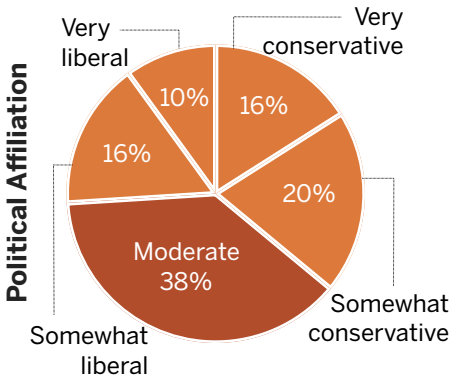
California

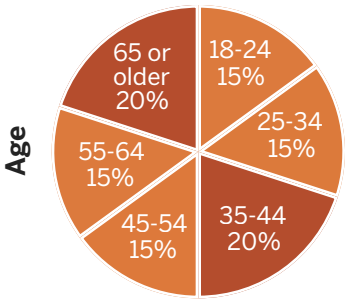
Californians were less likely to identify as a "person of color."

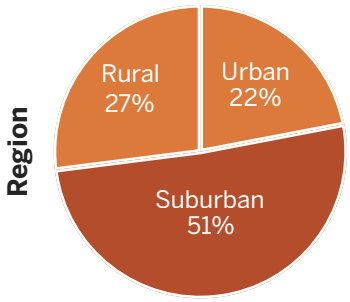
"Does the phrase 'person of color' describe you?"*

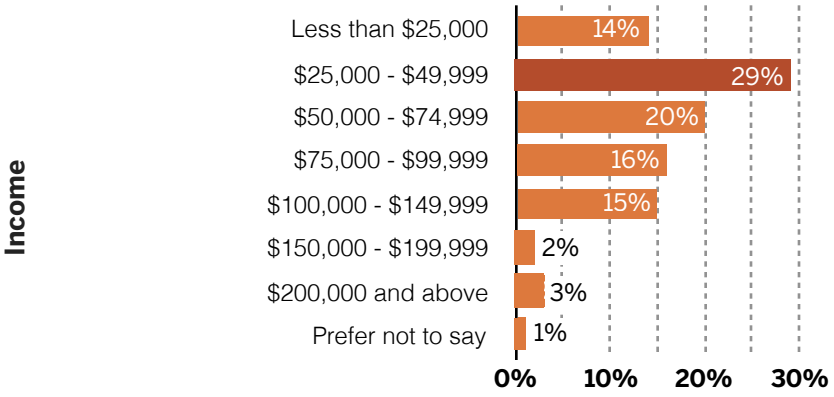


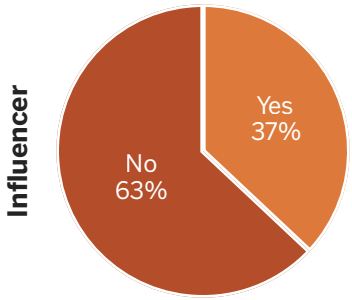
Indiana

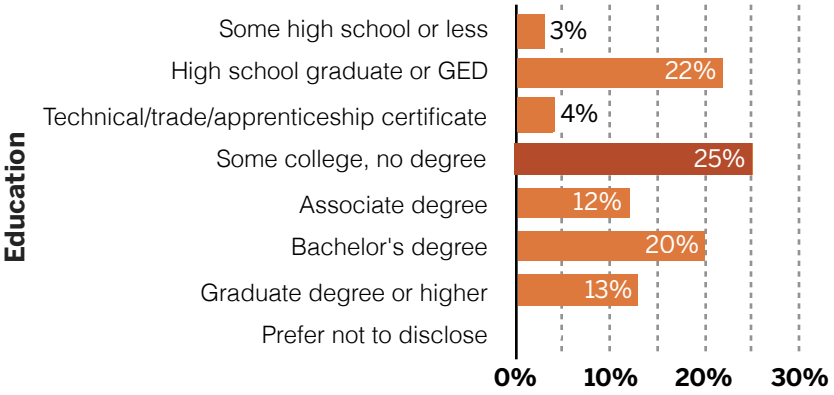

Political Affiliation
Very liberal
Very conservative
10%
16%
16%
20%
Moderate 38%
Somewhat liberal
Somewhat conservative

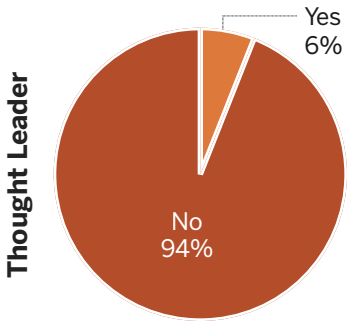

Age
65 or older 20%
18-24 15%
25-34 15%
55-64 15%
45-54 15%
35-44 20%

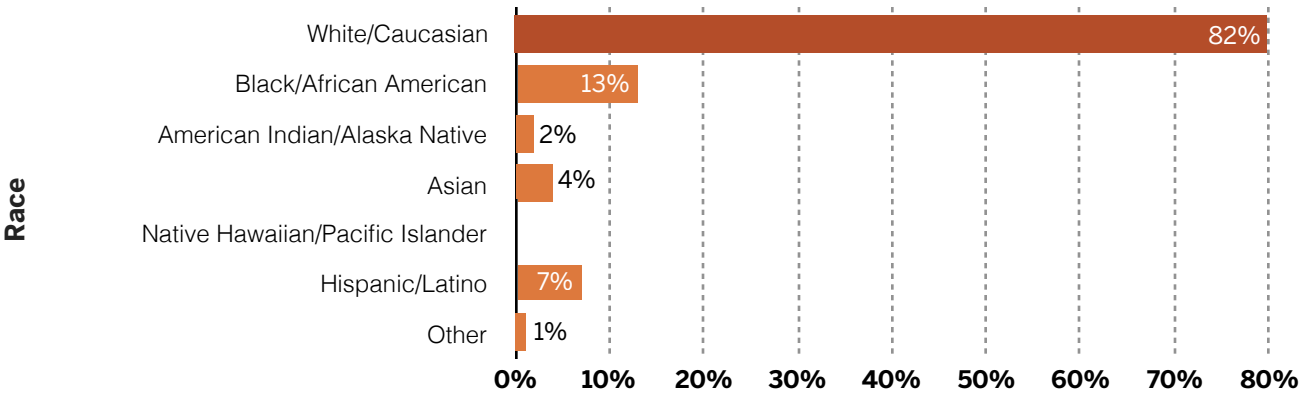

Region
Rural 27%
Urban 22%
Suburban 51%


Income
Less than $25,000 14%
$25,000 - $49,999 29%
$50,000 - $74,999 20%
$75,000 - $99,999 16%
$100,000 - $149,999 15%
$150,000 - $199,999 2%
$200,000 and above 3%
Prefer not to say 1%
0% 10% 20% 30%


Influencer
Yes 37%
No 63%


Education
Some high school or less 3%
High school graduate or GED 22%
Technical/trade/apprenticeship certificate 4%
Some college, no degree 25%
Associate degree 12%
Bachelor's degree 20%
Graduate degree or higher 13%
Prefer not to disclose
0% 10% 20% 30%

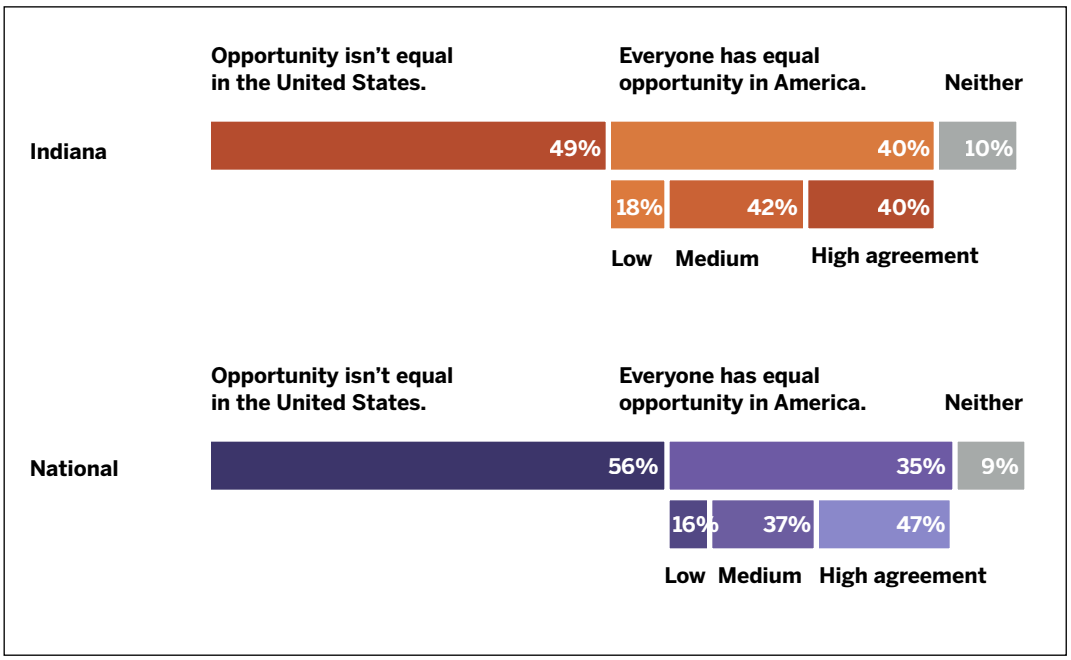

Thought Leader
Yes 6%
No 94%


Race
White/Caucasian 82%
Black/African American 13%
American Indian/Alaska Native 2%
Asian 4%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
Hispanic/Latino 7%
Other 1%
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%

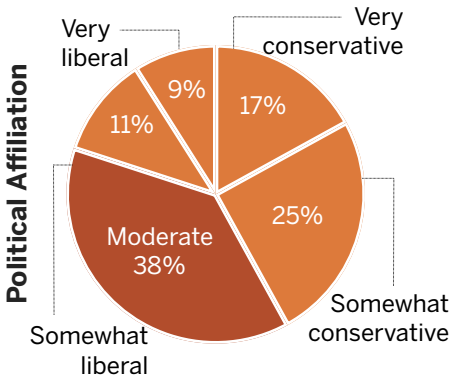
Indiana

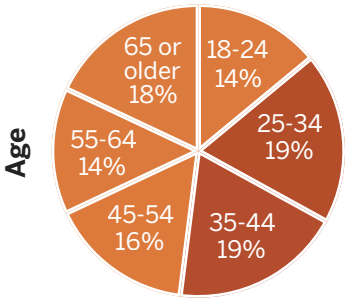
People in Indiana are slightly more likely to believe that everyone has equal opportunity in America, but hold that belief less strongly than the average American.

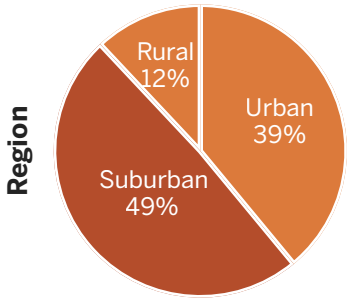
"Which statement more closely reflects your point of view?"

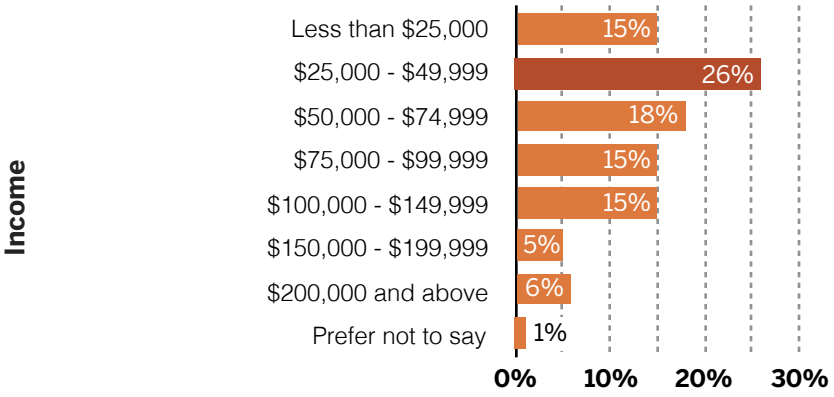


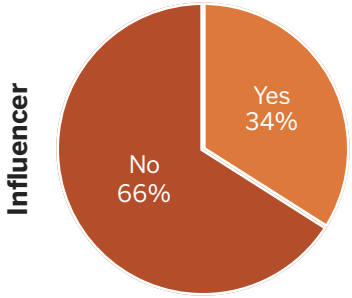
Texas

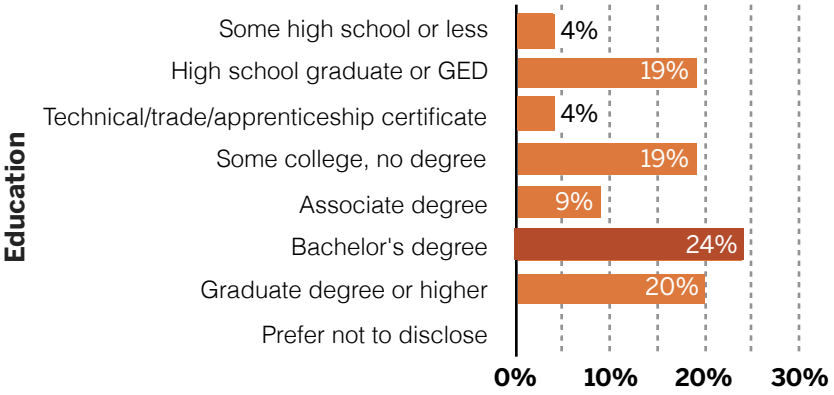

Political Affiliation
Very liberal
9%
Very conservative
17%
11%
Moderate 38%
25%
Somewhat liberal
Somewhat conservative

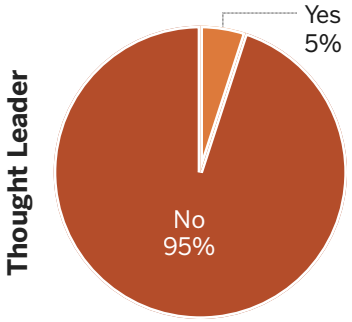

Age
65 or older 18%
18-24 14%
25-34 19%
55-64 14%
45-54 16%
35-44 19%

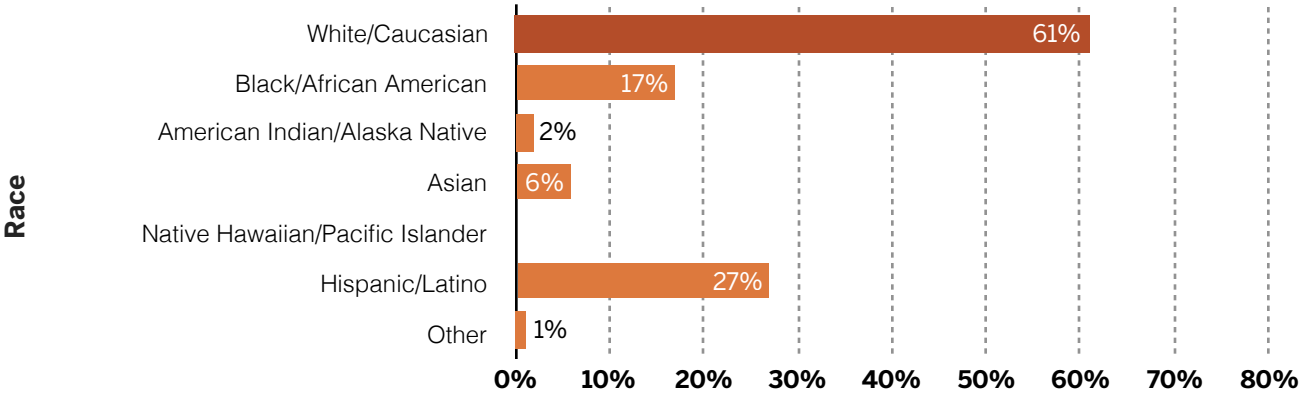

Region
Rural 12%
Urban 39%
Suburban 49%


Income
Less than $25,000 15%
$25,000 - $49,999 26%
$50,000 - $74,999 18%
$75,000 - $99,999 15%
$100,000 - $149,999 15%
$150,000 - $199,999 5%
$200,000 and above 6%
Prefer not to say 1%
0% 10% 20% 30%


Influencer
Yes 34%
No 66%


Education
Some high school or less 4%
High school graduate or GED 19%
Technical/trade/apprenticeship certificate 4%
Some college, no degree 19%
Associate degree 9%
Bachelor's degree 24%
Graduate degree or higher 20%
Prefer not to disclose
0% 10% 20% 30%

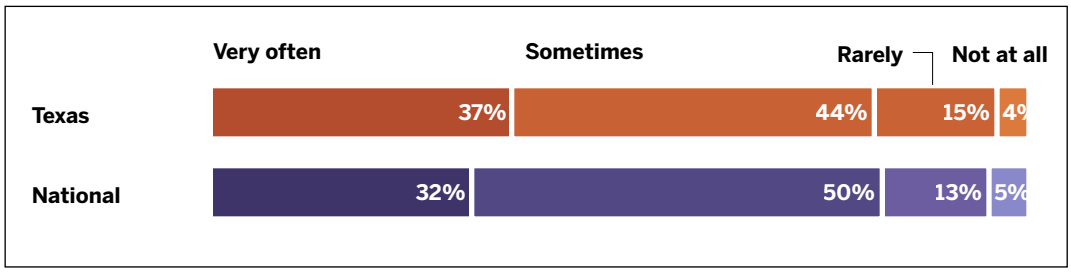

Thought Leader
Yes 5%
No 95%


Race
White/Caucasian 61%
Black/African American 17%
American Indian/Alaska Native 2%
Asian 6%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
Hispanic/Latino 27%
Other 1%
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%

Texas

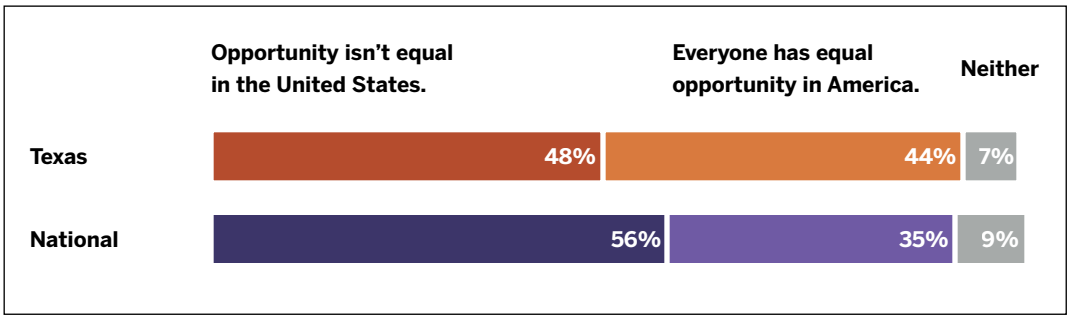
Texans are thinking about issues of racial equity more often than the average American.

"How often do you think about issues of racial equity?"
(Of those who are familiar with racial equity)



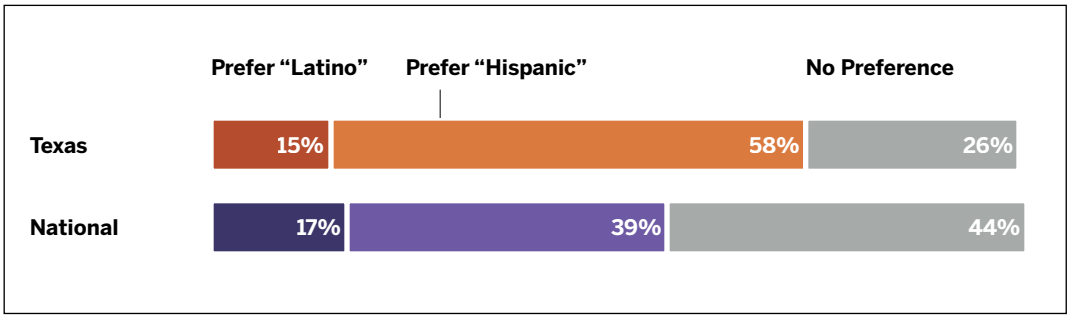
When compared to the rest of America, more Texans believe that "Everyone has equal opportunity in America" than "Opportunity isn't equal in the United States."

"Which statement more closely reflects your point of view?"



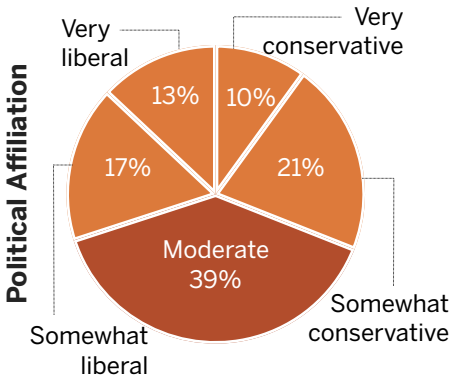
The Hispanic/Latino population in Texas were more likely to prefer "Hispanic" than "Latino" when compared to the national population.

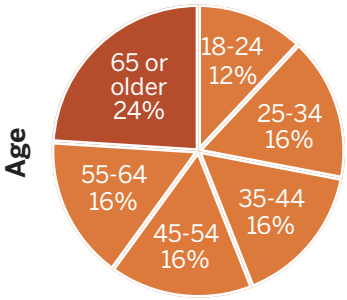
"Which term do you prefer—'Latino' or 'Hispanic,' or does it not matter to you either way?"

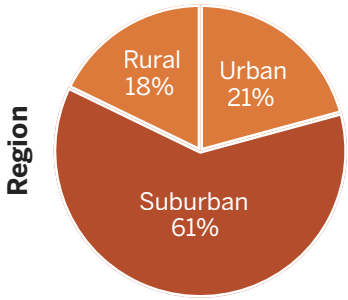


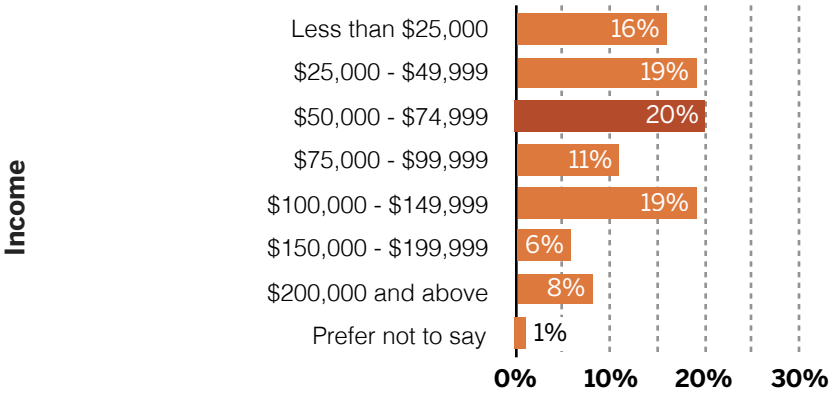
*Data only shows statistics for those who reported that they are "Hispanic/Latino"

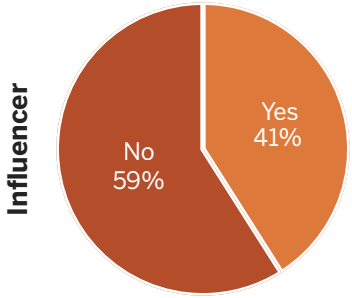
Virginia

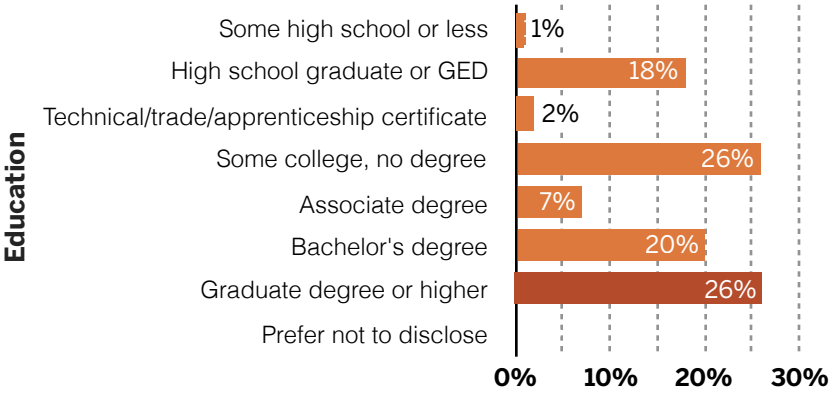

Political Affiliation
Very liberal
13%
Very conservative
10%
17%
21%
Moderate 39%
Somewhat liberal
Somewhat conservative

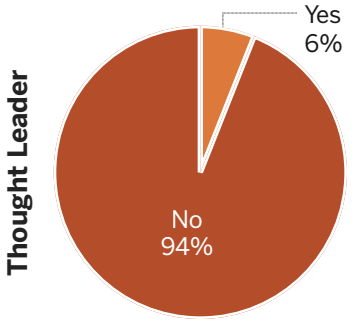

Age
65 or older 24%
18-24 12%
25-34 16%
55-64 16%
35-44 16%
45-54 16%

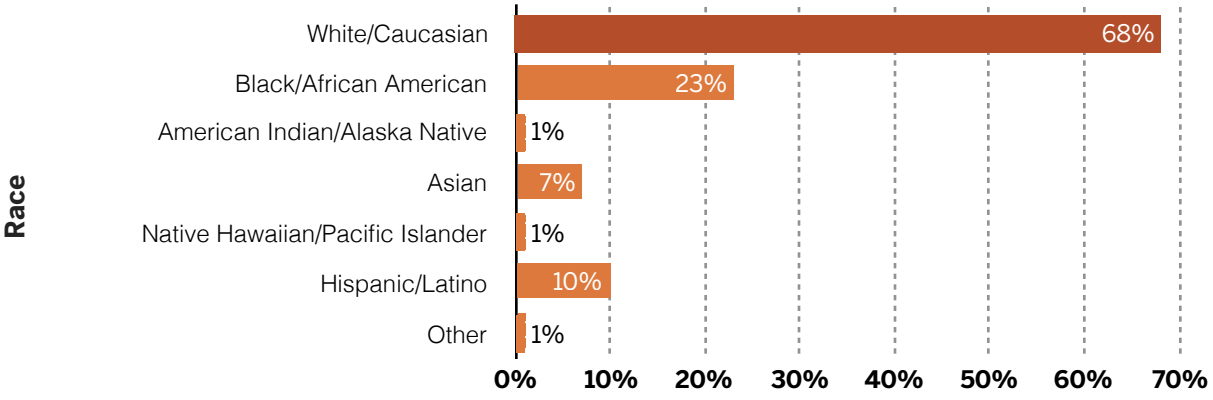

Region
Rural 18%
Urban 21%
Suburban 61%


Income
Less than $25,000 16%
$25,000 - $49,999 19%
$50,000 - $74,999 20%
$75,000 - $99,999 11%
$100,000 - $149,999 19%
$150,000 - $199,999 6%
$200,000 and above 8%
Prefer not to say 1%
0%
10%
20%
30%


Influencer
Yes 41%
No 59%


Education
Some high school or less 1%
High school graduate or GED 18%
Technical/trade/apprenticeship certificate 2%
Some college, no degree 26%
Associate degree 7%
Bachelor's degree 20%
Graduate degree or higher 26%
Prefer not to disclose
0%
10%
20%
30%

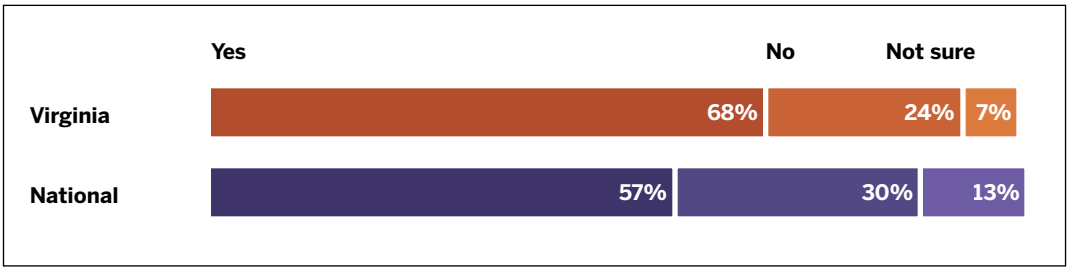

Thought Leader
Yes 6%
No 94%


Race
White/Caucasian 68%
Black/African American 23%
American Indian/Alaska Native 1%
Asian 7%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 1%
Hispanic/Latino 10%
Other 1%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%

Virginia

Virginians are more likely than the average American to identify as a "person of color."

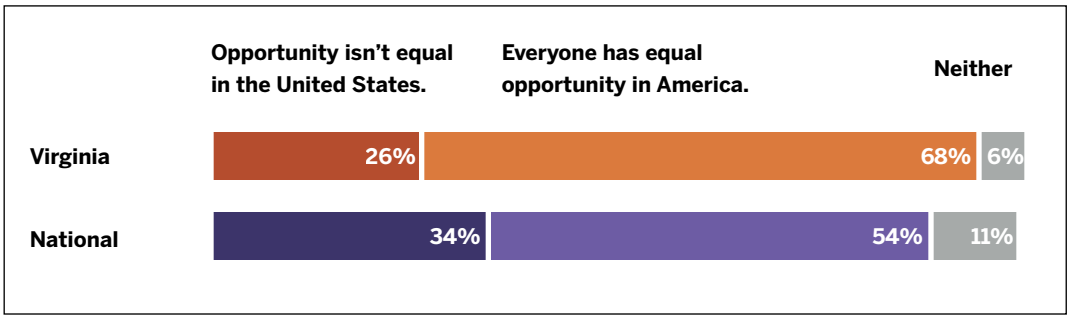
"Does the phrase 'person of color' describe you?"



* Data only pertains to respondents who provided demographic data other than "White/ Caucasian"

Conservatives in Virginia are more likely to believe that "everyone has equal opportunity in America" and believe it strongly.

"Which statement more closely reflects your point of view?"

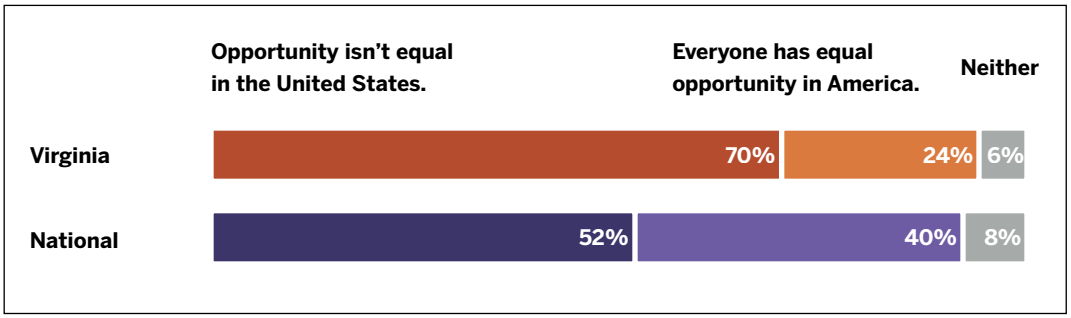


* Data only pertains to people who identify as "Very Conservative"

Virginia

Compared to the national survey, more Hispanic/Latino respondents in Virginia believe that "Opportunity isn't equal in the United States."

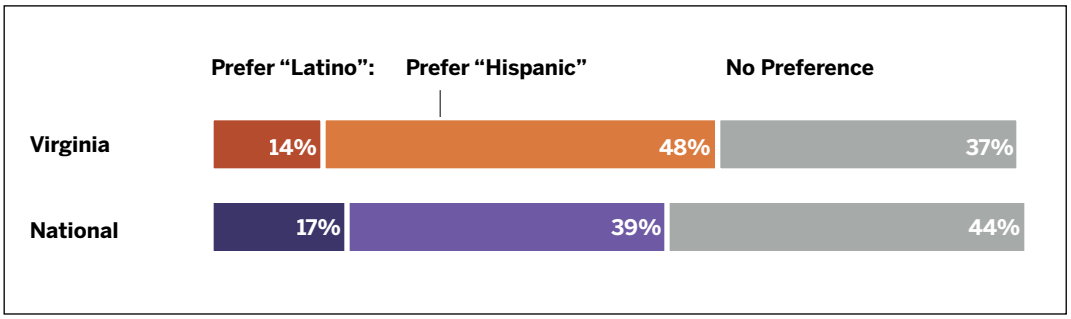
"Which statement more closely reflects your point of view?"



*Data only pertains to people who identify as "Hispanic/Latino"

The Hispanic/Latino population in Virginia were more likely to prefer "Hispanic" than "Latino" when compared to the national population.

"Which term do you prefer—'Latino' or 'Hispanic,' or does it not matter to you either way?"



*Data only pertains to people who identify as "Hispanic/Latino"

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