

Race relations survey

Overview and summary

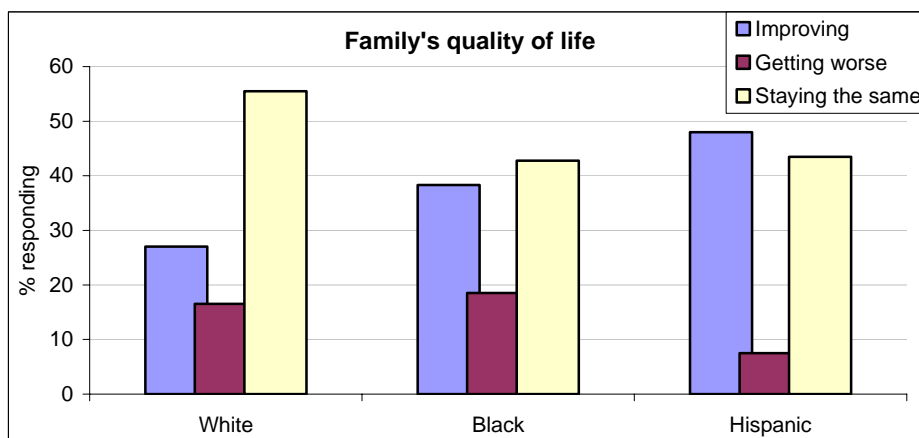
In southeastern Wisconsin, our capacity to be competitive in a global economy depends on our ability to guarantee the workforce, infrastructure, and quality of life that will attract and retain businesses and their workers. This holistic view of economic development highlights the importance of planning and management in many arenas: education, transportation, water resources, health, housing, taxation, telecommunications, energy, justice, and workforce development, to name a few. But sometimes, when we plan for our future as a region, there is an “elephant in the room” – a topic policymakers are not comfortable talking about.

That topic is race relations. Poor race relations can be barriers to prosperity. Poor communication about race and ethnicity can impede progress. That is why we surveyed 1,000 white, African-American, and Latino citizens of southeastern Wisconsin: to measure our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors about the white, black, and Latino populations among us. This special section reports on the findings.

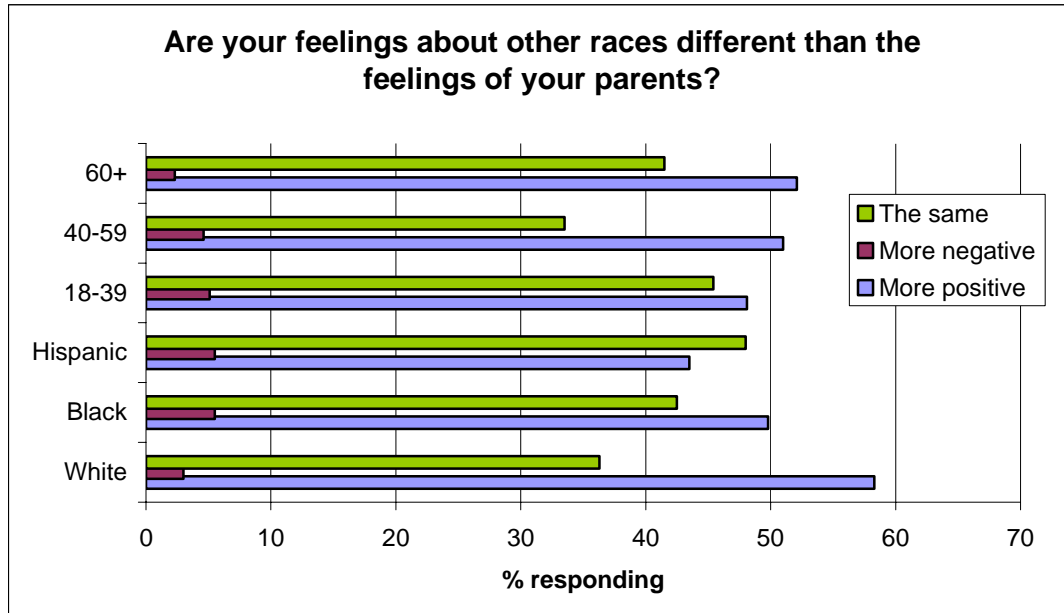
The survey found that we face a clear challenge. Today, race relations in southeastern Wisconsin are generally perceived as not good and not changing for the better. This feeling is fed partly by distrust, especially an uncertainty about whites’ motives by people of color. And most people feel that our region lacks the leadership needed to improve the race relations climate.

Yet in spite of that challenge, the survey found clear signs that we have made progress on race relations. Some of those signs:

- Families across our region are more likely to report that their lives are improving rather than getting worse. Moreover, this is truer of people of color than it is of whites.



- Younger people report far more positive attitudes about people of other races than older people do – largely because of personal experience. The majority of people in our region reports having more positive feelings about people of other races than their parents did or do. This is especially true of whites.



- Improved race relations are almost universally perceived throughout southeastern Wisconsin as very important to the future of our region. And there is more of a sense of urgency about race than in the past.

In 1991... 74% said race relations are very important	In 2006... 82% said race relations are very important
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- Both whites and people of color report being comfortable conversing with each other, working with each other, and being close friends with one another and report having done so. And the vast majority report being comfortable with interracial dating and families.

% responding YES ...with a person of a different race

	conversation	working relationship	close friend	lived with	dated	married or adopted
White						
Have you ever...	98	88.5	74.5	17	18.5	0
Are you comfortable...	92.5	93	93.5	77	72.5	77.5
Black						
Have you ever...	99.5	97	87.5	38.5	44.5	11.5
Are you comfortable...	86.5	89.5	87.5	82.5	81.5	78.5
Hispanic						
Have you ever...	92	91	87	47	56	29
Are you comfortable...	86	91	86	77	78	78
18-39						
Have you ever...	97	92.7	86	34.3	44.4	9.6
Are you comfortable...	89.7	92.8	89.7	83.5	82.5	80.4
40-59						
Have you ever...	97.6	95.3	85.3	37.4	40.3	12.8
Are you comfortable...	91.9	92.5	91.4	86.6	83.3	82.8
60+						
Have you ever...	97.1	85.7	68.6	16.2	14.3	6.7
Are you comfortable...	83.9	87.5	86.6	58.9	57.1	65.2

- Most whites, blacks and Latinos say they generally trust each of the other ethnic groups. More than four-fifths of whites said they trust blacks and Latinos while smaller percentages – but still a majority – of blacks and Latinos said they trust whites.

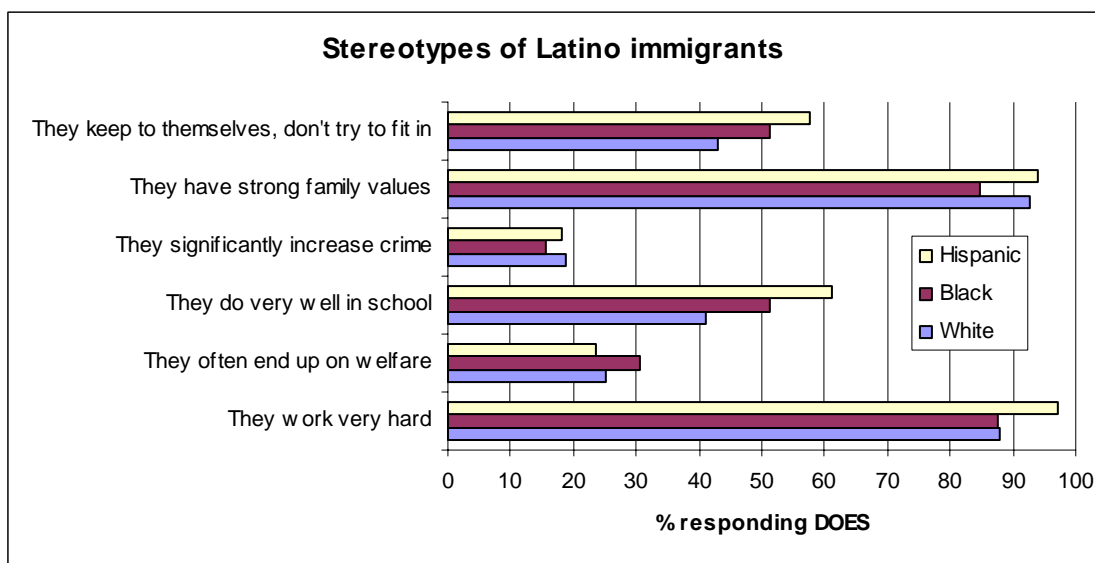
Based on your own personal experiences, would you say that in general you can trust...		Yes	No	Sometimes
White respondents	...black people?	81	2.5	12
	...Hispanic people?	83	2.5	11
Black respondents	...white people?	52.5	18	26.5
	...Hispanic people?	73.5	5.5	14
Hispanic respondents	...white people?	61	17	21
	...black people?	71	13	13

In some cases, the signs of progress stand out in sharp contrast to the findings of a similar survey conducted 15 years ago. For example, in 1991, 54% said race relations are getting worse. In 2006, it was 24%. Fifteen years ago, 74% said race relations were very important; now it is 82%. And in 1991, 33% of whites and 43% of blacks approved of interracial marriage. Today, almost 80% of both those groups are comfortable with a close friend being in an interracial family.

Some other key findings:

Perceptions

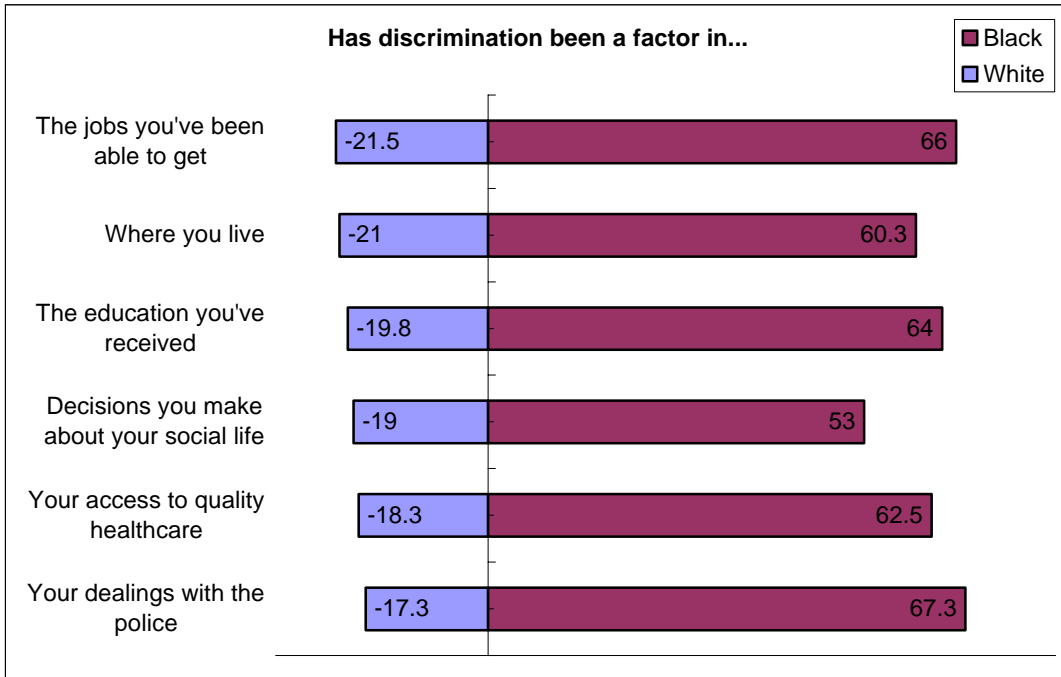
- Education – Two-thirds of citizens in our region, regardless of race and ethnicity, believe that ethnic diversity is an important ingredient in education. Just 3% perceived that going to school with children of other races worsens the schooling experience.
- Other agreements – Most people of all three ethnic groups strongly believe that racism is taught, that race relations need to be addressed, and that blacks want to be part of American culture.
- Important racial gaps – About half of people of color strongly agree that segregation and discrimination are big problems in our region; whites, although they tend to agree, are much less likely to feel strongly about it. Blacks tend to agree there should be reparations for slavery whereas Latinos disagree, and the vast majority of whites disagree strongly.
- Immigration – All groups generally perceive Latino immigrants as hard working people with strong family values – and as valuable contributors to the economy. Relatively few people perceive immigrants as likely to increase crime or end up on welfare.



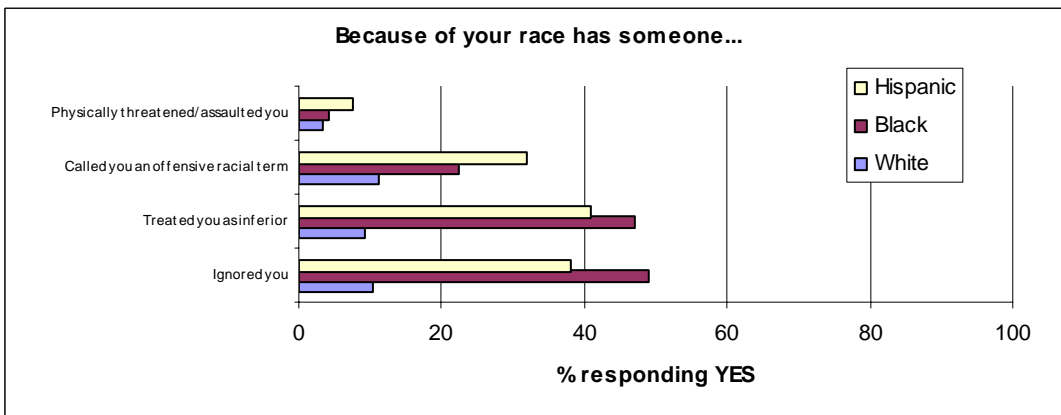
Experiences

The way people experience race in our region varies dramatically. For the most part, it depends on whether you are white or not. For example:

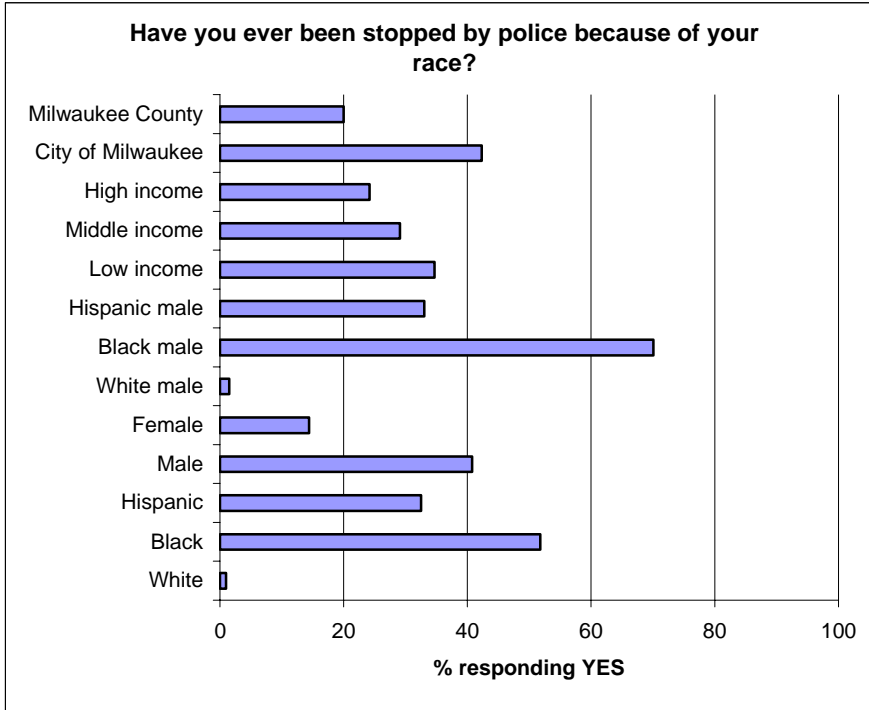
- Discrimination – About one-third of blacks – but only about 5% of whites – believe race has been a major factor in their education, jobs, health care and residential choices. Among Hispanics, about 20% considered race to have been a major factor.



- Personal relations – Many people of all races – roughly 10% of whites, 40% of Latinos and 50% of blacks – report having been ignored and treated as inferior because of their race. But the number having experienced physical threats because of their race dropped to about 4% for whites and blacks and 8% for Latinos.



- Police dealings – The biggest single racial gap found on the survey related to dealings with police. Just 1% of whites feel they have ever been stopped by police because of their race, while half of blacks (including the vast majority of black males) and a third of Hispanics feel they have.



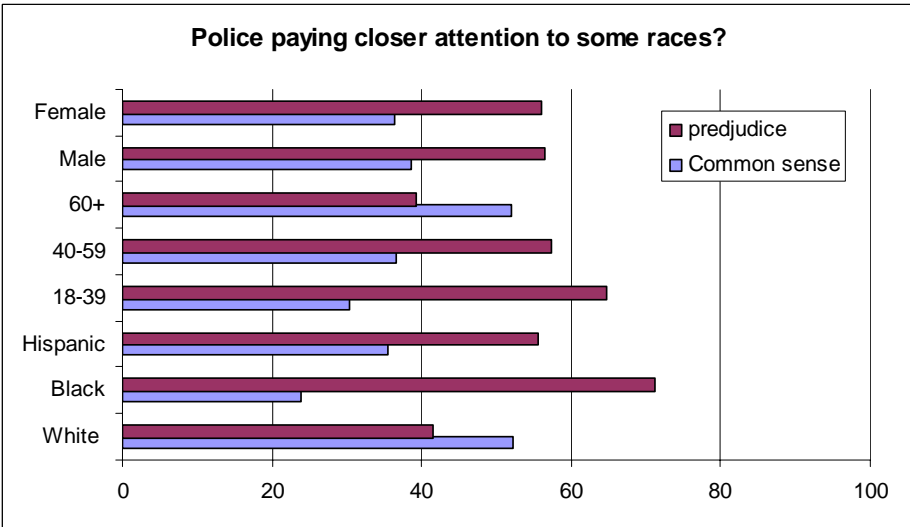
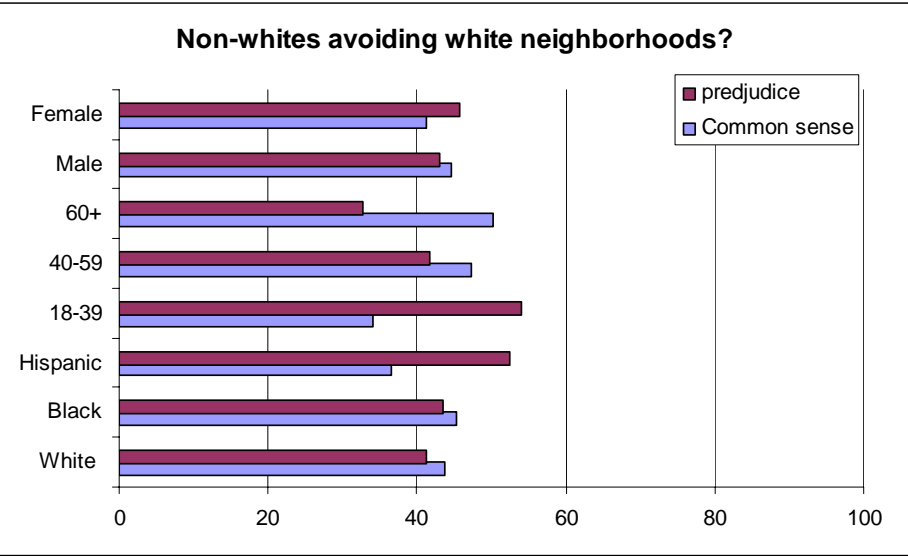
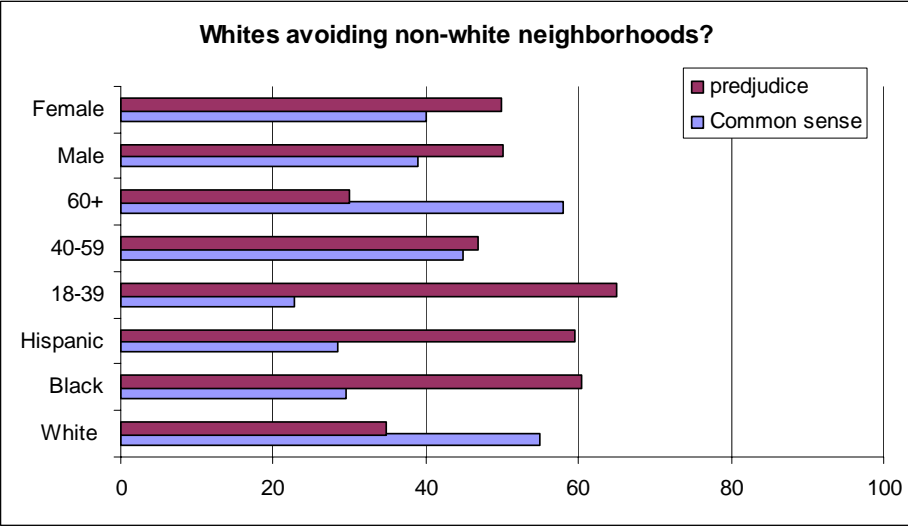
Attitudes

- Personal control – Most people of all ethnic groups feel they have control over their own everyday decisions. However, those surveyed believe whites have more control over their lives than Hispanics or blacks do. This suggests a gap between perception and reality.

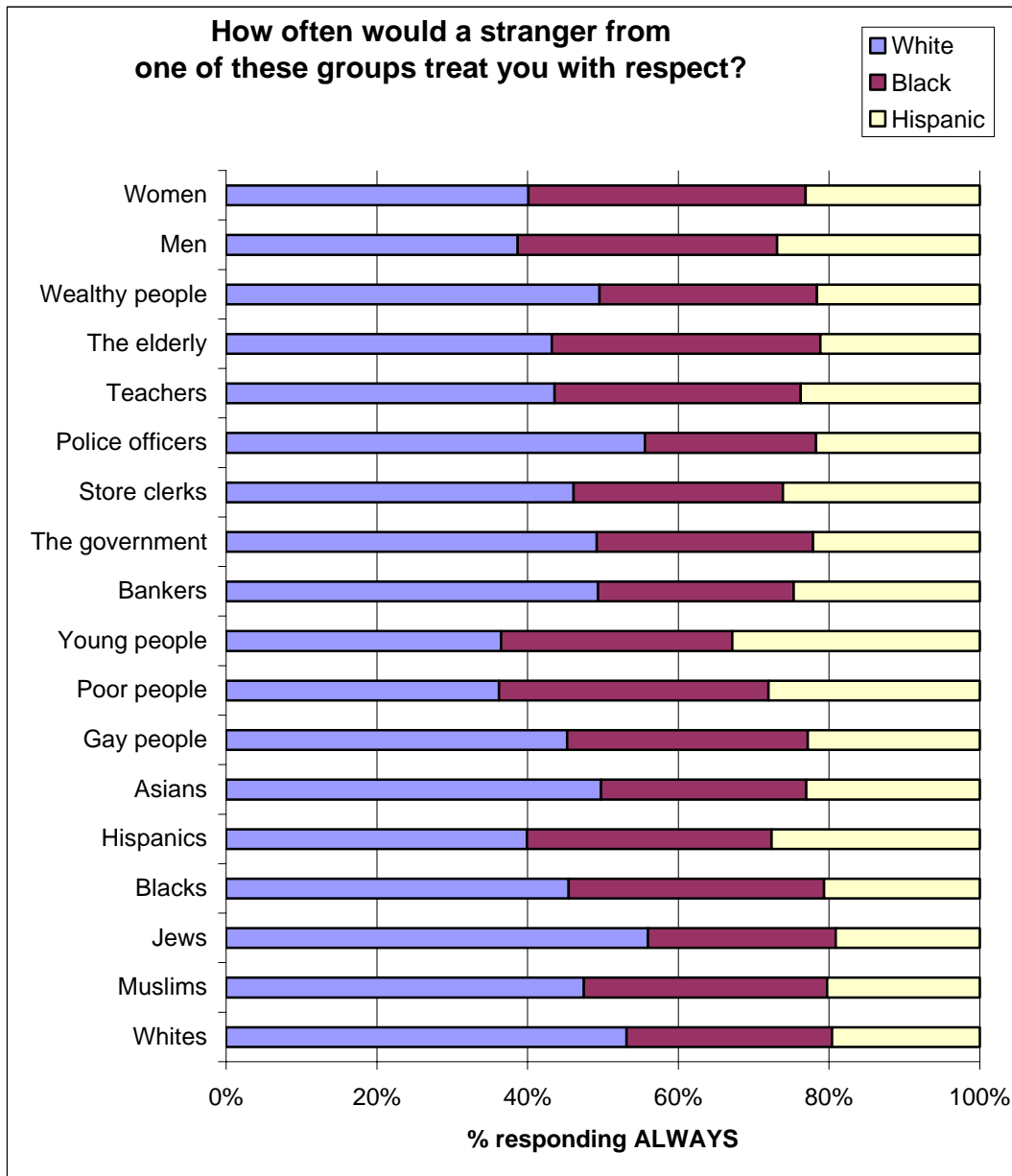
<p>Blacks have a great deal of control over everyday decisions</p> <p>32% of whites agree</p> <p>19.3% of blacks agree 15% of Hispanics agree</p> <p>...but 52.3% of blacks agree they personally have a great deal of control over everyday decisions</p>
<p>Whites have a great deal of control over everyday decisions</p> <p>42.8% of whites agree</p> <p>60.5% of blacks agree 48.8% of Hispanics agree</p>

<p>...but 55.8% of whites agree they personally have a great deal of control over everyday decisions</p>	
<p>Hispanics have a great deal of control over everyday decisions</p>	
<p>32.5% of whites agree</p>	<p>18.5% of blacks agree 15% of Hispanics agree</p>
<p>...but 47.5% of Hispanics agree they personally have a great deal of control over everyday decisions</p>	

- Common sense or prejudice? – There is a racial gap in what constitutes prejudice. Most whites view racial profiling by police and avoidance of driving through non-white neighborhoods as common sense. Most people of color perceive those decisions as prejudice.



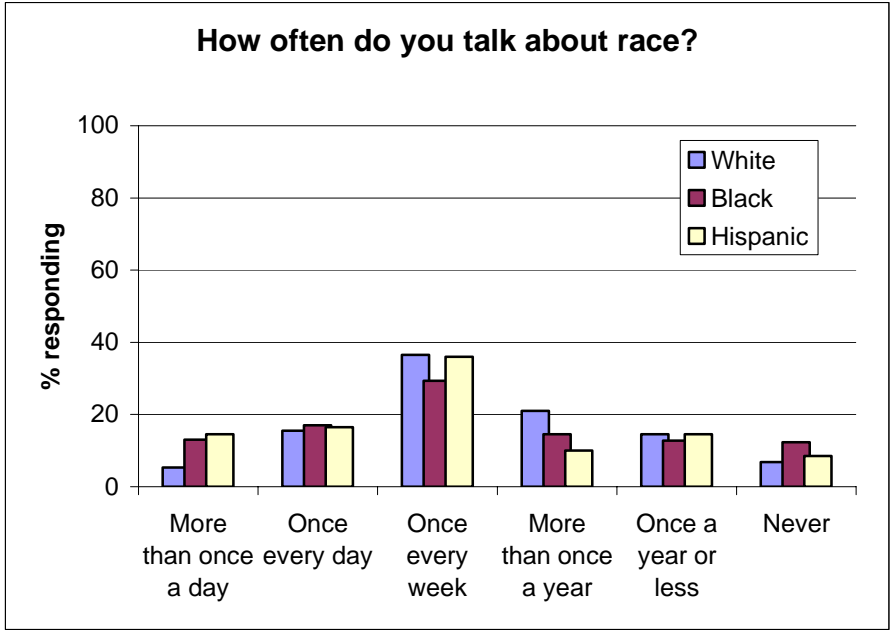
- Respect – Whites and Latinos are more likely than African Americans to anticipate that they will be treated with respect. For example, more than half of whites and Latinos – but just one-fourth of blacks – said bankers always treat them with respect. Most whites and about half of Latinos said police officers always respect them; for blacks, it was 24%.



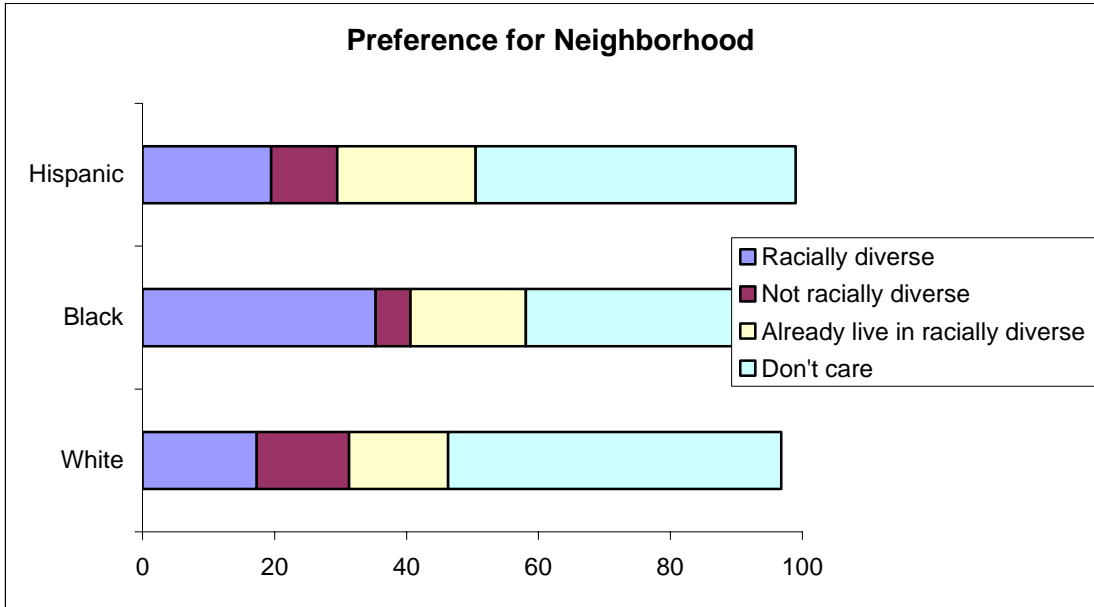
- Hope – Hispanics are generally more hopeful than blacks or whites. They are considerably more likely to say their lives are improving and that race relations are good and getting better.

Behavior

- Discussing race – Blacks and Hispanics are twice as likely as whites to talk about race more than once a day. About a third of all ethnic groups talk about race once a week.



- Self-segregation – The vast majority of all ethnic groups say they prefer to live in a racially mixed neighborhood or have no preference. Even so, less than one fifth of blacks and whites report they are in fact living in racially diverse neighborhoods.



- Making connections – Virtually all citizens of the region have had cross-racial conversations, and nearly all have had a close working relationship with people of other races. In addition, 75% of whites report having had a close friend who is a person of color, and nearly 90% of people of color have had white friends. However, fewer than 20% of whites have dated, lived with, married or adopted a person of color. About half of African Americans, and most Latinos, have had those kinds of intimate relationships with whites.

Solutions

What has to happen to improve race relations in southeastern Wisconsin? That was the final survey question, and some of the responses varied from provocative to inflammatory:

- “A miracle”
- “Civil War”
- “Whites would have to leave Wisconsin”
- “Don't let any more immigrants in”
- “Blacks need to stop blaming people for their problems and do something about them.”
- “Whites need to challenge other whites with relation to their prejudice.”

Most people, however, gave an answer that suggested optimism that race relations can be improved. Most responses indicated acceptance of personal responsibility for improved race relations. And the vast majority of the responses called for personal actions rather than a passive change in attitude.

Typical responses:

- “We need to sit down and learn about each other, instead of stereotyping each other.”
- “People need to learn how to discuss race. There is a fear about talking about it and saying the wrong thing.”