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Winthrop Poll Southern Focus Survey Reveals Black and White Divide

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Winthrop Poll Southern Focus Survey Reveals Black and White Divide

January 24, 2019

HIGHLIGHTS

- More than half of African Americans in the region report that they have been discriminated against in the last year because of their race or ethnicity, while 18% of whites report such discrimination.
- Nearly identical numbers of whites and blacks in the South, 30% and 28% respectively, feel that America should preserve its "white European heritage."

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – New data released from December's **Winthrop Poll Southern Focus Survey** of 11 southern states show that while attitudes of white and African-American Southerners on racial issues show some congruence, deep divides still exist.

What the poll uncovers is that whites and blacks have very different experiences living in the South. More than half of African Americans in the region report that they have been discriminated against in the last year because of their race or ethnicity, while 18% of whites report such discrimination.

Nearly identical numbers of whites and blacks in the South, 30% and 28% respectively, feel that America should preserve its "white European heritage."

According to poll director, **Professor Scott Huffmon**, "We're not sure what resulted in this common outlook; it could be something as simple as the realization that we sprung from the colonies of a European power. We do know, however, that the phrase "white European heritage" clearly held distinct meaning for some. Nearly half of those who viewed the Confederate Flag favorably agreed with the preservation of white European heritage."

In **two examples of changing attitudes**, black and white Southerners generally agreed that people of different races should be allowed to live wherever they please and marry whomever they please, as well as believe that all races should be treated equally.

Differences arose when asking whether whites or racial minorities were "under attack in this country." Thirty-eight percent of whites and 11% of blacks agreed that whites were under attack while 51% of whites and 89% of blacks agreed that racial minorities were under attack. Among respondents who view the **Confederate Flag** favorably, 48% agreed that whites are under attack while 42% reported the same for racial minorities.

According to Huffmon, "Confederate Flag supporters in the South are notably more likely than others to view whites as the victims in today's political environment."

African Americans and whites in the South are nearly **mirror images of each other** when asked what holds blacks back in today's society. Over half of African American respondents said that **racial discrimination** is the main reason blacks can't get ahead, while over half of whites said that African Americans are **responsible for their own condition**. Once Again, Confederate Flag supporters showed a stronger trend, with 16% blaming racial discrimination and 72% saying black people who can't get ahead are responsible for their own condition.

Also released for the first time are the results of a **survey based experiment**. Half of the respondents were asked whether they believed that whites in America have "privileges" that non-whites do not have, while the other half were asked if they believed that non-whites in America experience "barriers."

Among those who heard the "privilege" version, 92% of blacks, 50% of whites, and only 36% of Confederate Flag supporters believed whites have privilege. However, among those asked about non-whites facing "barriers," those agreeing among whites and Confederate Flag supporters increased by about 20 points over the "privilege" wording while slightly fewer African Americans agreed.

Huffmon noted, "This is a **classic 'framing effect'**. Whether differences are attributed to one group having 'privilege' or the other group facing 'barriers,' the end result is the same; however, by changing the way we talk about a situation, we see that attitudes can shift. Market researchers have known this for decades. People may recall decades ago the upcharge for paying with a credit card at a gas station came to be called a 'cash discount' and suddenly people were much more accepting. Same result, different frame."

The **Southern respondents** contacted for this poll reside in: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. The sample size does not allow for breakdowns by individual states.

Previous results in December released dealt with the concept of Christian nationalism, Confederate monuments and the flag, the cause of the Civil War, race relations, the economy and opportunity. **New Results begin at Table 17.**

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METHODOLOGY

For this latest Winthrop Poll, callers surveyed 969 residents in 11 Southern states by landline and cell phones between Nov. 10-20 and Nov. 26-Dec. 2. See full methodology statement for a note on the odd array of dates. The Southern states are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Results which use all respondents have a margin of error of approximately +/- 3.15 at the 95% confidence level. Subgroups have higher margins of error. Margins of error are based on weighted sample size.

[CLICK HERE FOR FULL METHODOLOGY STATEMENT.](#)

POLL FUNDING AND CONTACT INFORMATION

The Winthrop Poll is funded by Winthrop University. For additional information, or to set up an interview with Poll Director **Scott Huffmon**, please contact **Judy Longshaw** at longshawj@winthrop.edu or 803-323-2404 (office) or 803-984-0586 (cell).

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