



CBS NEWS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL
For release: April 3, 2008
6:30 PM EDT

RACE RELATIONS AND POLITICS
March 28-April 2, 2008

RACE RELATIONS IN AMERICA

Nearly 40 years after the assassination of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis, Americans take a more positive view of race relations than they have for nearly twenty years. Just over half of Americans think race relations in this country are generally good now, while 36% think they are bad.

VIEWS OF RACE RELATIONS IN U.S.

Table with 6 columns: View, Now, 2/2000, 6/1997, 5/1992, 5/1990. Rows: Generally good, Generally bad.

Views of race relations in this poll reached a low in 1992, just after riots erupted in Los Angeles in reaction to the acquittal of police accused of beating Rodney King.

But there continues to be a racial divide, with African-Americans more negative about the state of race relations than whites are. Just 42% of blacks think race relations are generally good now, while a similar proportion, 46%, think they are bad. Whites are more likely to view race relations favorably.

VIEWS OF RACE RELATIONS IN U.S.

Table with 7 columns: View, Now, Blacks 2/2000, Blacks 6/1997, Whites Now, Whites 2/2000, Whites 6/1997. Rows: Generally good, Generally bad.

Black perceptions have improved since 2000, while the perceptions of whites are unchanged since then. In 1997, majorities of both blacks and whites thought they were bad.

The presence of an African-American candidate, one who is leading in delegates and total vote, may have helped improve black perceptions. But voters are not in agreement as to whether Barack Obama's campaign for the presidency has brought blacks and whites together. 30% think his campaign has brought the two races together, but 22% think it has pushed them farther apart.

Black voters' views on this question are extremely positive: 59% think his campaign has brought the races together. Whites offer mixed views.

HAS OBAMA'S CAMPAIGN ...?

(Asked of registered voters)

	All	Blacks	Whites
Brought races together	30%	59%	26%
Pushed them apart	22	5	24
No effect	42	24	45

In comparison, few voters think Clinton's campaign has brought blacks and whites together, and 20% think her campaign has pushed the two races further apart. Those who think her campaign has pushed the races apart tend to be Obama supporters.

HAVE THEIR CAMPAIGNS...?

(Among registered voters)

	Obama	Clinton
Brought races together	30%	7%
Pushed them apart	22	20
No effect	42	69

THE CANDIDATES' IMPACT ON RACE RELATIONS

Looking ahead, voters don't expect either Hillary Clinton or John McCain to have much impact on race relations if either were elected president. However, voters do think Barack Obama would - 34% think he would make race relations better. But one in five thinks his impact would be negative.

IF CANDIDATE IS ELECTED, RACE RELATIONS WOULD GET...?

(Asked of registered voters)

	Better	Worse	Same
Barack Obama	34%	21	42
Hillary Clinton	16%	11	70
John McCain	4%	11	82

By a large margin, African American voters think Obama would improve race relations, but views of whites are more mixed -- 31% think as president Obama would improve relations between the races, but 24% think race relations would become worse.

IF OBAMA IS ELECTED, RACE RELATIONS WOULD GET...?

(Asked of registered voters)

	All	Blacks	Whites
Better	34%	59%	31%
Worse	21	4	24
Same	42	33	42

THE REV. WRIGHT AND OBAMA'S SPEECH ON RACE RELATIONS

Most voters have heard or read about the controversy over statements made by Barack Obama's pastor, Rev. Jeremiah Wright. Most have also heard or read about Obama's speech on race relations. While the impact of the Wright issue on views of Obama is negative, the impact of Obama's speech on race in this poll is positive, and has perhaps offset some of the negative impact of the Wright issue.

36% in this poll say that Wright's statements have caused them to have a less favorable view of Obama, up from 30% who said that just over two weeks ago.

DID WRIGHT'S STATEMENTS CHANGE YOUR VIEW OF OBAMA?

(Among voters who have heard about statements)

	Now	3/18/2008
Made more favorable	1%	2%
Made less favorable	36	30
No difference	62	65

It is primarily white voters who say their views of Obama have become worse as a result of Wright's statements; most blacks say that had no effect on their opinion of the candidate. But even 58% of whites say those statements did not affect their views.

DID WRIGHT'S STATEMENTS CHANGE YOUR VIEW OF OBAMA?

(Among voters who have heard about statements)

	Blacks	Whites
Made more favorable	2%	0%
Made less favorable	4	41
No difference	92	58

But by two to one, voters say Obama's speech on race in America has made their view of him more favorable.

DID OBAMA'S RACE SPEECH CHANGE YOUR VIEW OF HIM?

(Among voters who have heard about speech)

Made more favorable	26%
Made less favorable	13
No difference	59

Both black and white voters responded more favorably than unfavorably to Obama's speech on race, although again most said the speech had no impact on their views of Obama.

DID OBAMA'S RACE SPEECH CHANGE YOUR VIEW OF HIM?

(Among voters who have heard about speech)

	Blacks	Whites
Made more favorable	36%	25%
Made less favorable	3	15
No difference	59	58

Unfavorable views of Obama rose in the immediate aftermath of the Wright controversy. Now, the percentage that has an unfavorable opinion of him is nearly the same as it was before that happened. Among registered voters, now 43% are favorable and 24% are unfavorable; in February, 45% were favorable and 23% were unfavorable.

RACE RELATIONS AT HOME

Views of race relations in Americans' own communities have always been positive, and much better than perceptions about race in America, and this poll is no exception. Majorities of both whites and blacks say they are generally good (although whites offer a more positive assessment than do blacks on this measure as well). Even in 1992, when overall views of race relations were predominantly negative, most Americans felt that race relations in their communities were good.

VIEWS OF RACE RELATIONS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

	Now	2/2000	6/1997	5/1992
Generally good	77%	79%	72%	75%
Generally bad	18	17	23	20

VIEWS OF RACE RELATIONS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

	Blacks	Whites
Generally good	64%	78%
Generally bad	29	17

This poll was conducted among a random sample of 1,368 adults nationwide interviewed by telephone March 28-April 2, 2008. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher. The poll included 1,163 interviews with whites (margin of error +/- 3 points), 124 interviews with blacks (margin of error +/-9 points) and 111 interviews with black voters (margin of error +/- 9 points).

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q1-23 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q24 Do you think race relations in the United States are generally good or generally bad?

	** TOTAL RESPONDENTS **			
	Total	Whites	Blacks	Feb00a
	%	%	%	%
Good	55	57	42	52
Bad	36	34	46	38
Don't know/No answer	9	9	12	10

q25 Do you think race relations in your community are generally good or generally bad?

Good	77	78	64	79
Bad	18	17	29	17
Don't know/No answer	5	5	7	4

q26-44 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q45 If Hillary Clinton is elected President, do you think race relations in the United States will get better, get worse, or stay about the same?

	** REGISTERED VOTERS **		
Better	16	14	19
Worse	11	11	9
Same	70	73	66
DK/NA	3	2	6

q46-51 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q52 If Barack Obama is elected President, do you think race relations in the United States will get better, get worse, or stay about the same?

Better	34	31	59
Worse	21	24	4
Same	42	42	33
DK/NA	3	3	3

q53-58 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q59 If John McCain is elected President, do you think race relations in the United States will get better, get worse, or stay about the same?

Better	4	4	5
Worse	11	7	30
Same	82	86	58
DK/NA	3	3	7

q60 Has Barack Obama's campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination brought blacks and whites closer together, or has it pushed them further apart or hasn't it had much effect one way or the other?

	** REGISTERED VOTERS **		
	Total	Whites	Blacks
	%	%	%
Closer together	30	26	59
Further apart	22	24	5
No effect	42	45	24
DK/NA	6	5	12

q61 Has Hillary Clinton's campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination brought blacks and whites closer together, or has it pushed them further apart or hasn't it had much effect one way or the other?

Closer together	7	6	12
Further apart	20	18	26
No effect	69	72	49
DK/NA	4	4	13

q62 How much have you heard or read about the controversy over statements made by Dr. Jeremiah Wright, who has been Barack Obama's minister, -- a lot, some, not much or nothing at all?

				Mar08a
A lot	48	47	53	25
Some	30	31	28	33
Not much	9	11	3	20
Nothing at all	13	11	15	22
DK/NA	0	0	1	0

q63 Have Rev. Wright's statements affected your opinion of Barack Obama?
IF YES, ASK: Do they make you feel more favorable or less favorable towards Barack Obama?

	** VOTERS WHO HAVE HEARD ABOUT REV. WRIGHT'S STATEMENTS **			
Yes, more	1	0	2	2
Yes, less	36	41	4	30
No difference	62	58	92	65
DK/NA	1	1	2	3

q64 How much have you heard or read about Barack Obama's speech on race relations - a lot, some, not much or nothing at all?

	** REGISTERED VOTERS **		
A lot	29	26	47
Some	36	37	35
Not much	21	22	14
Nothing at all (Vol.)	14	15	3
DK/NA	0	0	1

q65 Has Barack Obama's speech affected your opinion of him?
IF YES, ASK: Do you feel more favorable or less favorable towards Barack Obama?

** VOTERS WHO HAVE HEARD OBAMA'S SPEECH **

	Total	Whites	Blacks
	%	%	%
Yes, more favorable	26	25	36
Yes, less favorable	13	15	3
No difference	59	58	59
DK/NA	2	3	2

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	1368	
Total Whites	1163	1073
Total Blacks	124	156