

1990 Rochester Area Racial Attitude Survey

Preface

In the spring of 1990, a Community Racial Attitude Survey was mailed to a random sample of Olmsted County households. Of the 1500 surveys, responses were received from 403 individuals, at a 95% confidence interval. In effect, if the survey were to be repeated, 95 out of 100 responses would fall within plus or minus 4.9% of the answers received in this survey.

To ensure that sound, scientific practices were used in developing and conducting the survey, professionals from SNG Research of Rochester were consulted. Also consulted were University of Minnesota professors Dr. Michael Paige and Dr. John Taborn, who are nationally recognized experts in multicultural research and education.

The objective of the study was to confirm or deny the existence of prejudice and racism in Olmsted County. The questionnaire was developed to present typical stereotypes that have been ascribed to members of specific ethnic groups and to collect demographic information about the population.

The random mailing yielded a fairly representative sampling of the population of Olmsted County. Demographic characteristics of survey respondents were similar to demographic characteristics of Olmsted County residents. Survey respondents tended to be

- Mostly white—95% of the respondents were white, which is very close to the ethnic make-up of the county
- More female than male—57% to 43%
- Parents—74% had children
- Young to middle-aged—slightly more than half were between the ages of 25 and 44
- Well-educated—98% held high school degrees or higher and 43% held post-secondary degrees
- Employed—about 75% worked outside the home
- Limited in their exposure to people of color—11% to 31% worked with minorities on a daily basis
- Limited in close friendships with people of color—54% had no close friends in an ethnic group different than their own
- Relatively long-term Rochester residents—73% lived in Rochester 10 years or longer
- Members of faith communities—43% stated they attended a church or synagogue weekly and 22% stated they attended a house of worship two or three times a month.

The **purpose of the survey** was to provide a springboard from which to develop an action plan. Such a plan would address strategies that the community could use to create awareness of racial problems in Rochester and to increase a desire within the community to address them.

A copy of the questionnaire follows. Responses have been rounded to the nearest whole number. When no answer was given to a question, the response was not listed. The graphs depict those

responses that confirm the existence of prejudice or racism. Since some of the statements represented blatant stereotypes, neutral responses were regarded as more negative than positive.

Survey Statements and Responses

Numbers listed are percentages of respondents answering Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neither Agree Nor Disagree (N), Agree (A), or Strongly Agree (A).

People in the following groups are “naturally” more violent than whites.

		SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	Jews	52	24	22	1	1
2.	Blacks	48	22	19	9	2
3.	Southeast Asians	48	21	21	7	2
4.	Hispanic Americans	47	22	23	6	1
5.	Native American Indians	49	23	21	5	2

Whites generally perform better in school because of natural abilities compared to:

		SD	D	N	A	SA
6.	Jews	52	29	17	1	1
7.	Blacks	49	27	17	6	1
8.	Southeast Asians	49	28	16	6	1
9.	Hispanic Americans	48	27	18	6	1
10.	Native American Indians	48	26	18	7	1

People in the following groups maintain their property as well as whites do:

		SD	D	N	A	SA
11.	Jews	4	3	19	42	31
12.	Blacks	8	17	25	26	23
13.	Southeast Asians	13	27	22	16	20
14.	Hispanic Americans	7	18	30	21	23
15.	Native American Indians	9	21	27	20	22

I think it is OK for whites to go on social dates with people in the following groups:

		SD	D	N	A	SA
16.	Jews	2	4	17	48	35
17.	Blacks	6	12	18	31	32
18.	Southeast Asians	5	11	20	32	32
19.	Hispanic Americans	3	9	21	35	32
20.	Native American Indians	2	8	21	37	32

I think it is OK for whites to marry members of the following groups:

		SD	D	N	A	SA
21.	Jews	2	8	21	37	32
22.	Blacks	10	19	21	22	28
23.	Southeast Asians	8	14	25	24	28
24.	Hispanic Americans	5	12	25	28	29
25.	Native American Indians	5	11	29	31	29

People in the following groups tend to work for a living rather than live off welfare:

		SD	D	N	A	SA
26.	Whites	2	3	29	47	18
27.	Jews	1	3	27	44	22
28.	Blacks	3	15	37	29	14
29.	Southeast Asians	6	13	37	27	15
30.	Hispanic Americans	3	12	42	27	15
31.	Native American Indians	6	14	40	24	14

I think it would be OK if a member of my family brought a member of the following groups home to dinner:

		SD	D	N	A	SA
32.	Whites	0	1	8	44	47
33.	Jews	0	2	10	43	43
34.	Blacks	3	3	13	40	40
35.	Southeast Asians	4	5	12	39	39
36.	Hispanic Americans	1	4	13	40	39
37.	Native American Indians	1	3	14	40	40

I think it is important to have goals or quotas for hiring and promoting people in the following groups:

		SD	D	N	A	SA
38.	Whites	19	15	27	23	13
39.	Jews	19	15	27	24	12
40.	Blacks	18	15	27	25	12
41.	Southeast Asians	18	16	27	25	12
42.	Hispanic Americans	18	16	27	25	12
43.	Native American Indians	18	16	27	25	12

44. I would feel most comfortable living in a neighborhood that was composed of:

No Whites	0	Mostly Whites.....	40
Few Whites	1	All Whites	8
Half Whites	7	Doesn't Matter	44

45. I would feel most comfortable living in a neighborhood that was composed of:

No Jews.....	3	Mostly Jews	1
Few Jews.....	13	All Jews.....	1
Half Jews.....	3	Doesn't Matter	79

46. I would feel most comfortable living in a neighborhood that was composed of:

No Blacks.....	8	Mostly Blacks	0
Few Blacks.....	34	All Blacks.....	0
Half Blacks.....	7	Doesn't Matter	50

47. I would feel most comfortable living in a neighborhood that was composed of:

No SE Asians	17	Mostly SE Asians.....	1
Few SE Asians	32	All SE Asians.....	0
Half SE Asians.....	4	Doest Matter.....	46

48. I would feel most comfortable living in a neighborhood that was composed of:

No Hispanics.....	7	Mostly Hispanics	1
Few Hispanics.....	34	All Hispanics.....	0
Half Hispanics.....	6	Doesn't Matter	52

49. I would feel most comfortable living in a neighborhood that was composed of:

No American Indians7	Mostly American Indians.....1
Few American Indians29	All American Indians0
Half American Indians6	Doesn't Matter55

50. If I had a choice, I would work with:

No Whites0	Mostly Whites25
Few Whites1	All Whites4
Half Whites3	Doesn't Matter65

51. If I had a choice, I would work with:

No Jews4	Mostly Jews7
Few Jews13	All Jews0
Half Jews1	Doesn't Matter65

52. If I had a choice, I would work with:

No Blacks5	Mostly Blacks0
Few Blacks21	All Blacks0
Half Blacks2	Doesn't Matter71

53. If I had a choice, I would work with:

No SE Asians9	Mostly SE Asians0
Few SE Asians21	All SE Asians0
Half SE Asians2	Doesn't Matter66

54. If I had a choice, I would work with:

No Hispanics3	Mostly Hispanics1
Few Hispanics22	All Hispanics1
Half Hispanics1	Doesn't Matter71

55. If I had a choice, I would work with:

No American Indians3	Mostly American Indians.....1
Few American Indians20	All American Indians0
Half American Indians2	Doesn't Matter72

Conclusions

Prejudice: By far the smallest amount of prejudice was expressed toward the white and Jewish groups. For some statements, there were a significant number of neutral responses. Among Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Southeast Asians, no one group stood out as receiving more prejudice than another.

Temperament and Intelligence: People of color are not generally thought of as being “naturally” more violent or less intelligent than whites, although one fourth to one fifth of the respondents were neutral on these two questions.

Maintaining Property: A considerable number of respondents felt that people in some ethnic groups do not maintain their property as well as whites, the highest percentage being the 40% ascribing this stereotype to Southeast Asians.

Marriage: Respondents were almost evenly divided in their attitude toward interracial marriages, ranging in comfort level from 50- 69%, depending on the group involved. From 21-29% remained neutral.

Dating: Respondents felt slightly more comfortable with interracial dating, with 63-69% agreeing and 17-21% remaining neutral.

Socializing: Three fourths or more of the respondents felt it was OK to bring members of other ethnic groups home for dinner.

Employment: A large number of people, 29-40%, were uncertain whether members of all groups, including whites, tend to work for a living. Jews were thought most likely to be employed, with 66% agreeing. Native Americans were thought to be least likely to work for a living, with 38% believing this group tends to be unemployed.

Affirmative Action: About one third of the respondents opposed and another one third of the respondents agreed with using goals and quotas for hiring and promoting members of any ethnic group. None of the six ethnic groups stood out as being more in need of workplace affirmative action than others.

Neighborhoods: Rochester residents showed considerable prejudice in regard to housing. 36-49% of the respondents preferred to live in neighborhoods where there were few or no Blacks, Southeast Asians, Hispanics, or Native Americans.

Workplace: People were less concerned about the ethnic background of their fellow workers than with the ethnic background of their neighbors. About one fourth of the respondents preferred to work with few or no people of color, while 65-79% said it didn't matter.

Adult Friendships: 54% of the adults responding did not have close friends from another ethnic or racial group.

Youth Friendships: Cross-cultural friendships seem more prevalent among youth. Of the 74% of respondents who had children, two thirds of the children had friends from another ethnic or racial group.

Summary of Contents

Forty-five percent of the Community Racial Attitude Survey respondents stated that they were concerned about the increasing number of minorities living in the Rochester area.

Written comments included both positive and negative concerns, from wanting to improve the environment for people of color to a significant amount of fear, misinformation, and discomfort

The following are selected comments from the survey:

Support for Diversity:

- It's a pleasure to finally see diversity of faces and colors in people on the street. We have a lot to gain from our broadening base in population.
- I have friends of every color, size, and educational background. They have enhanced my life and the lives of my children.
- I think the minorities know by looking around that they are not really welcomed here, unless they are upper-income...that is our loss. We're missing the richness of cultures and the joys of acceptance.
- Culture clash, hopefully community education will help both cultures to integrate more harmoniously.
- If all persons were taught to be proud of ourselves, the rest would follow.
- Sharing cultures, different customs, knowing other languages, breaking down barriers, enriches us all. We must recognize one another as humankind and unite in brotherly love, not ignoring the color of other people's skin, but treating them as brothers.
- A great deal of racial prejudice stems from the way you are raised by your parents. We need to reach not only the children, but the parents as well... I will contribute to the Rochester Area Foundation in support of your efforts.
- Keep up your efforts to make Rochester even a better and fairer place to live! Thank you.

Stated Causes of Prejudice

- Racial prejudice is based on fear and ignorance, mostly..."
- I believe that much of the racial tension is caused by our not wanting to let these other people in, by not giving them a chance—because they are a minority and stereotyping

them as ignorant, violent, and unwilling because of the situations we have put them in by not giving them a fair shake.

- It appears that racial tensions are increasing in America. I feel this is mainly due to racial ‘clustering’ and subsequent lack of understanding of other groups on how these ‘clusters’ operate and what they believe, etc. A sort of suspicion arises because of lack of understanding.

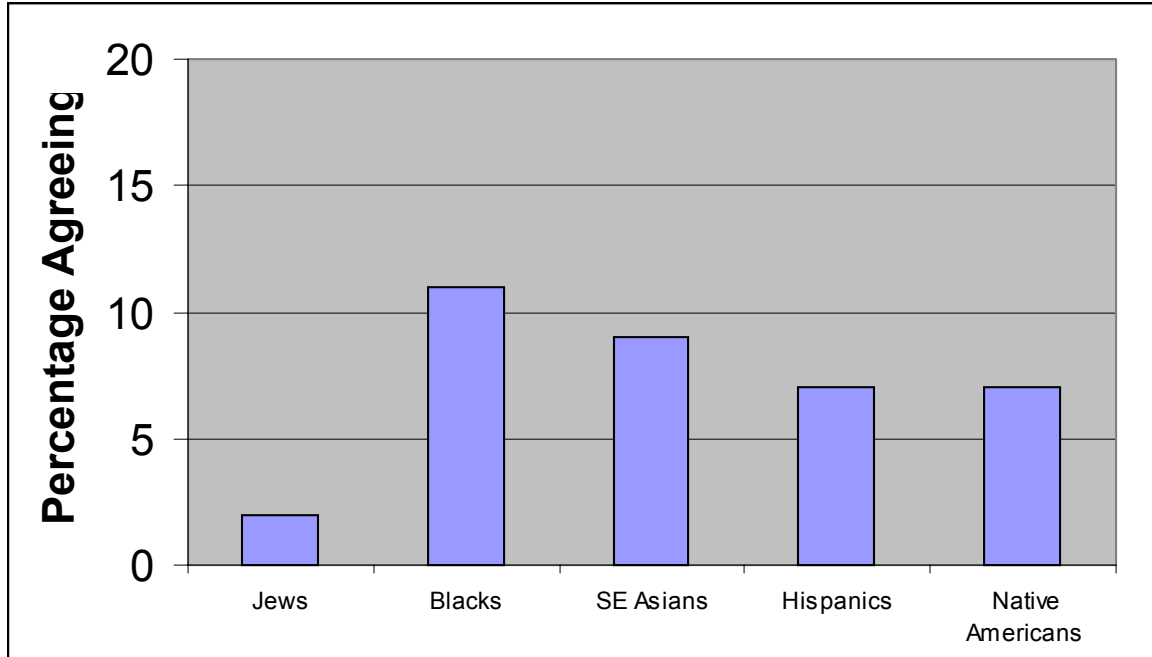
Negative Comments

The negative comments expressed a variety of fears and feelings of resentment about some people getting something for nothing and not being responsible in matters of housing maintenance. The negative comments indicated topics which needed dialogue and informational programming. Examples:

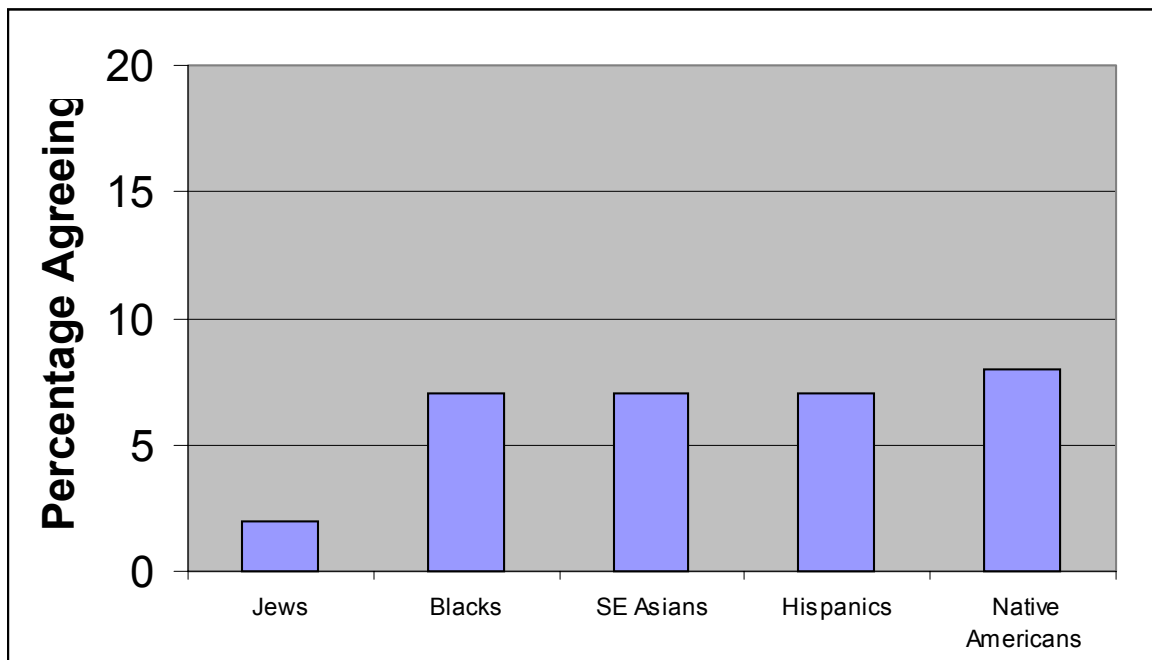
- It just doesn’t feel safe here any more.
- It seems that the white race is becoming the minority. Our children have to pay into our government even with part-time jobs and trying to get an education where ‘some people’ can live six to seven years in the United States without paying any taxes.

Graphs

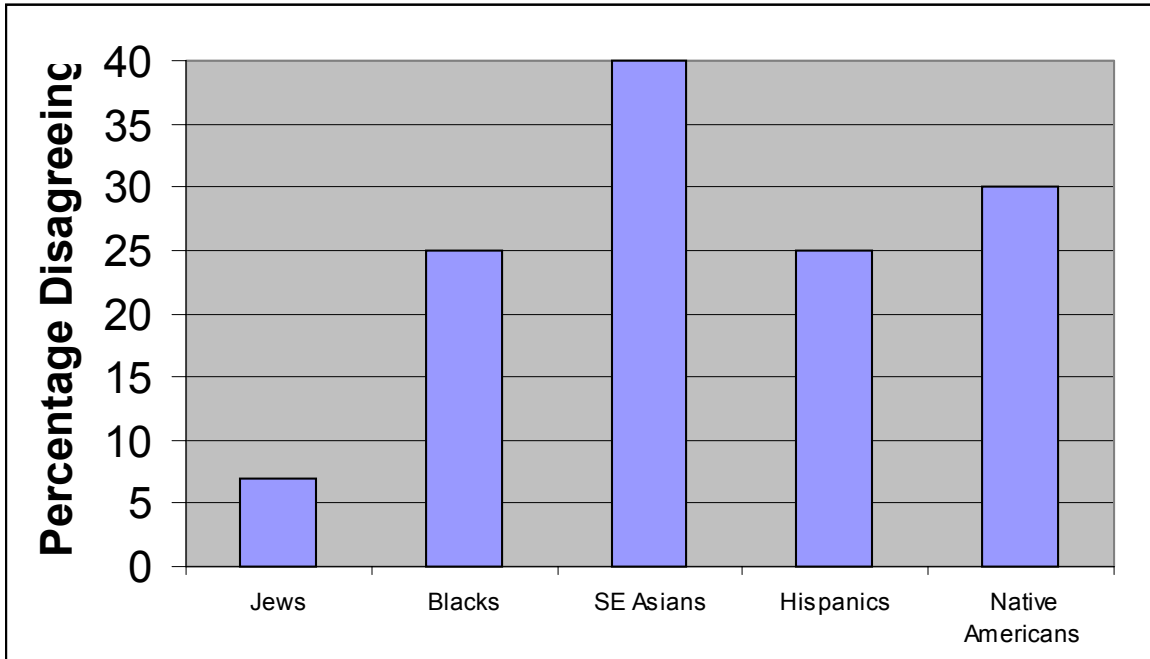
Members of the following groups are more violent than whites.



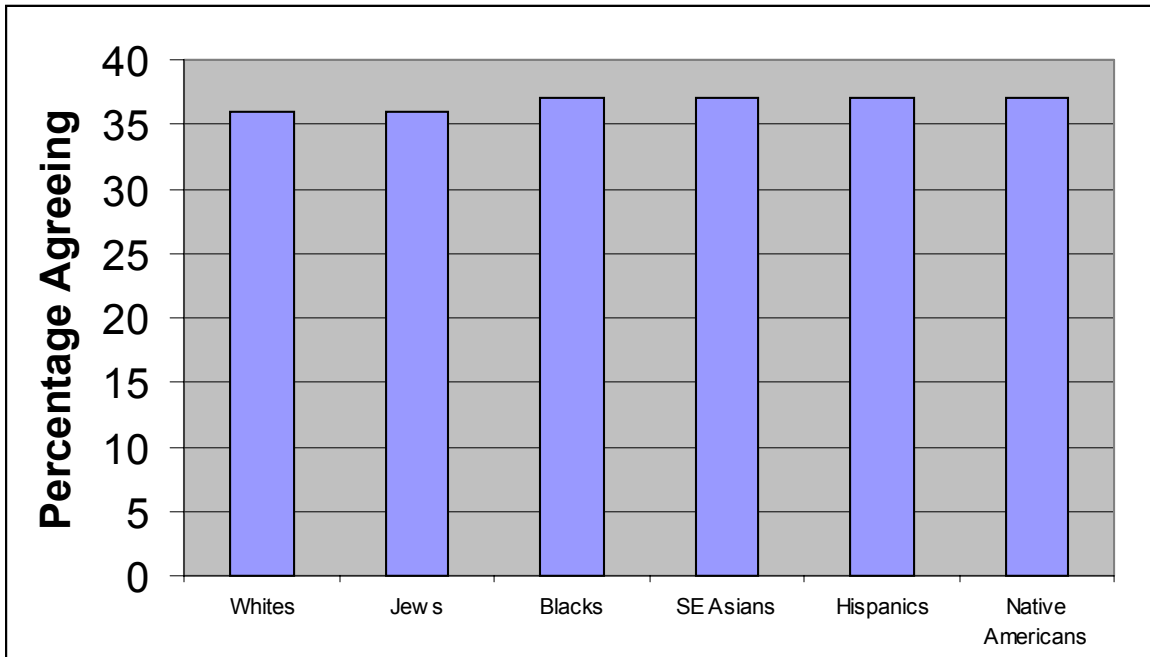
Whites do better in school than members of the following groups:



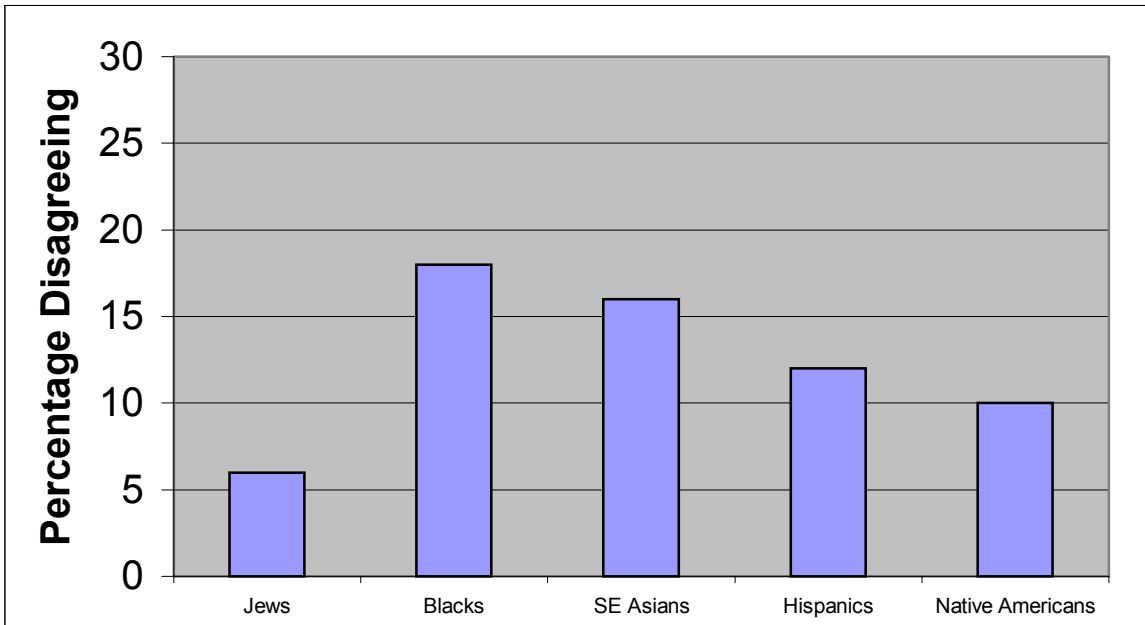
Members of the following groups maintain their property as well as whites.:



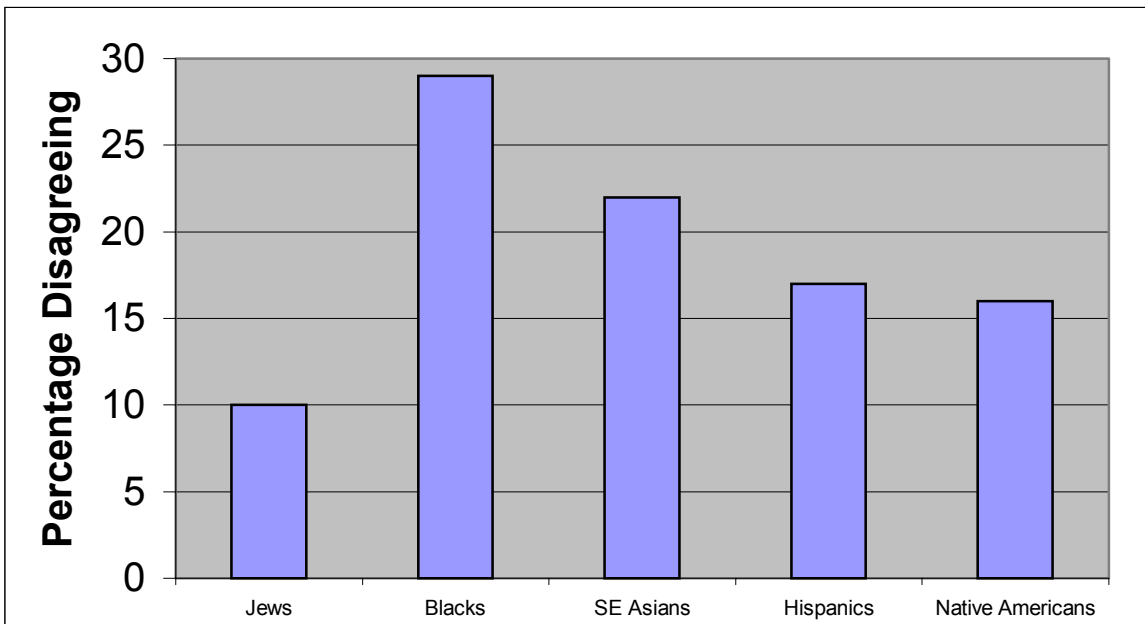
Affirmative action is important for members of these groups:



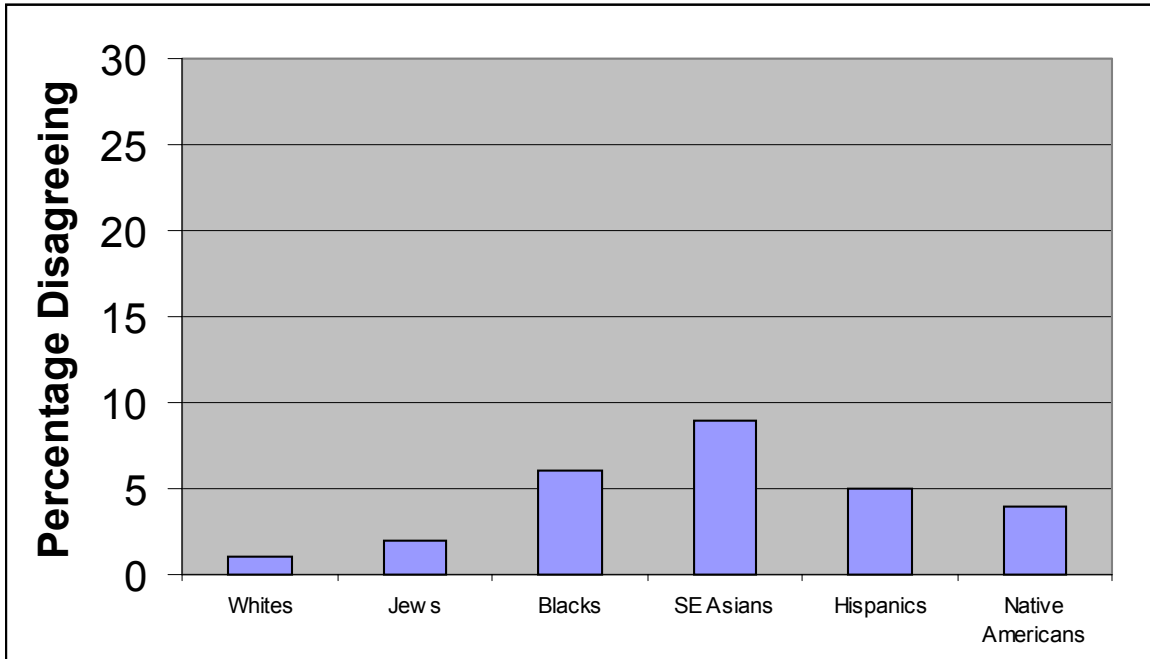
It's OK for whites to date members of the following groups:



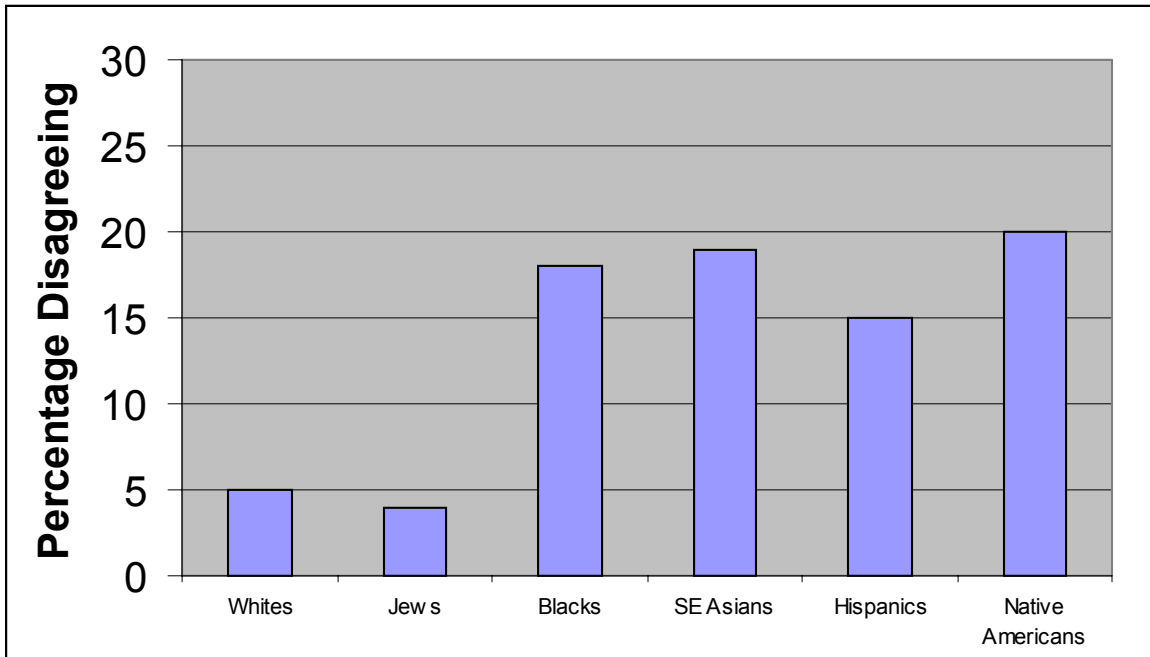
It's OK for whites to marry members of the following groups:



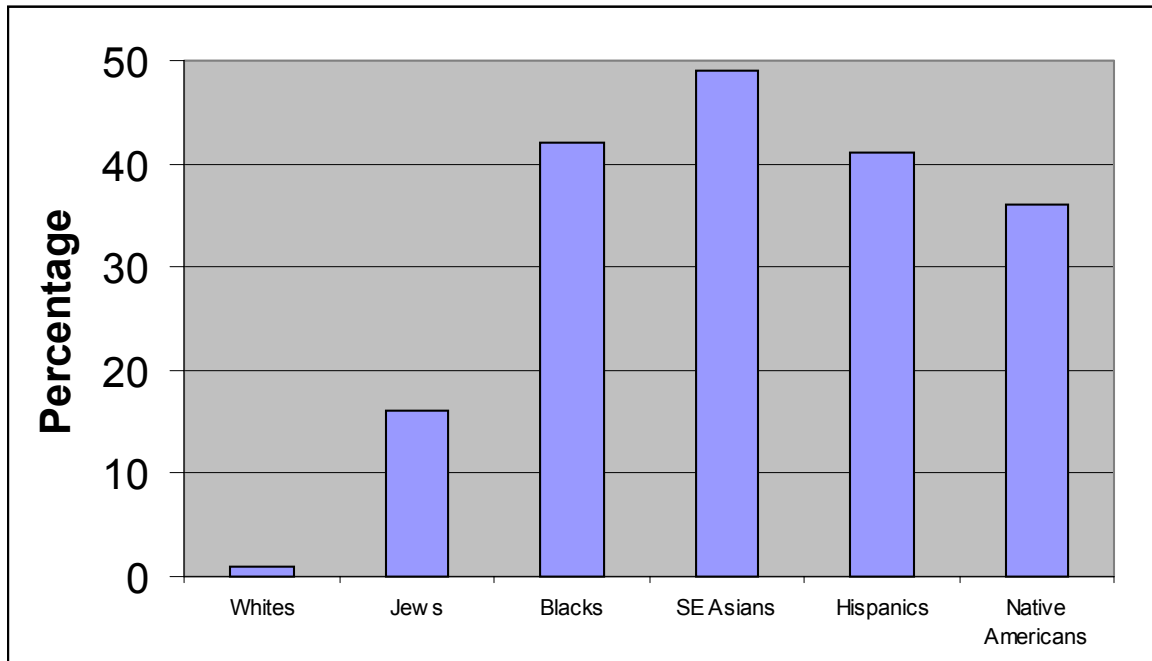
It's OK to bring members of these groups home to dinner:



Members of these groups tend to work for a living:



Most comfortable living in a neighborhood with no or few...



I would choose to work with no or few...

