

Polling Results on the Coverage of Race in the News Media 50 years post-Kerner Commission

Timed to the 50th anniversary of the Kerner Commission Report which documented the failings of the news media as a determinant to the civil unrest in 1967 in Detroit, Newark, and elsewhere there is an ongoing dialogue on the current state of the media environment.

As a way to contribute some salient information to the discussion Quadrant Strategies conducted a study between February 17th to February 22nd, 2018, at the request of the Ford Foundation focused on the perceptions about the coverage of race in the news media. The poll was fielded among 3000 American general population respondents, representative to census data. The margins of error for the sub-audiences we looked at are set forth in the chart below.

Audience		Sample size	Margin of Error
Total		3000	+/- 1.79%
Race	White Americans	1852	+/-2.28%
	African Americans	361	+/- 5.16%
	Hispanic Americans	482	+/- 4.46%
	Asian Americans	189	+/- 7.13%
Age	Younger Millennials (18-24)	503	+/- 4.37%
	Older Millennials (25-34)	485	+/- 4.45%
	Gen Y (35-54)	1081	+/- 2.98%
	Boomers (55+)	931	+/- 3.21%

The findings are summarized in the memo that follows.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1. A majority of people of all races think greater diversity among reporters and editors would improve the news.** At least two thirds of each racial minority tested believe this, as do half of White Americans.

<i>Which of the following is closer to your view? Showing % strongly + somewhat agree</i>	White Americans	African Americans	Hispanic Americans	Asian Americans
Hiring more racial minorities in the news media as reporters and editors would improve the quality of the news.	50%	71%	71%	67%

- 2. About half of the population believes the media portrays race relations as worse than they actually are.** White Americans are most likely to feel this way (59%), while only 37% of African Americans agree.

<i>Thinking about the state of relations among the different races in the US, do you think the media:</i>	Total	White Americans	African Americans

Makes relations among the races seem worse than they are	54%	59%	37%
Portrays relations among the races mostly accurately	30%	30%	37%
Makes relations among the races seem better than they are	16%	11%	26%

3. People of all races agree that African Americans are more negatively portrayed in the media than in reality. 62% of African Americans think this, as do about half of Hispanic, Asian, and White Americans.

<i>Do you think the media portrays African Americans more positively, more negatively, or about the same as reality?</i>	White Americans	African Americans	Hispanic Americans	Asian Americans
More positively than the reality	18%	13%	18%	12%
About the same as the reality	36%	25%	32%	38%
More negatively than the reality	46%	62%	50%	50%

White Americans are almost three times as likely as African or Asian Americans to believe that they (whites) are portrayed more negatively in the media than the reality. On the flip side, nearly half of minorities (with African Americans in particular at 59%) think that White Americans are more positively portrayed in the media than the reality.

<i>Do you think the media portrays White Americans more positively, more negatively, or about the same as reality?</i>	White Americans	African Americans	Hispanic Americans	Asian Americans
More positively than the reality	26%	59%	48%	45%
About the same as the reality	44%	30%	35%	44%
More negatively than the reality	30%	11%	17%	11%

4. More than 7 in 10 agree that fake news is a serious issue – and this is consistent across sub-audiences.

<i>Thinking about "fake news" (inaccurate news stories meant to deliberately misinform people), which is closer to your view?</i>	White Americans	African Americans	Hispanic Americans	Asian Americans
Fake news is a large problem that is having a substantial impact on our society.	76%	72%	76%	79%
Fake news is not so serious a problem.	24%	28%	24%	21%

5. People of all races are generally feeling less optimistic about where America is headed.

<i>Which of the following is closer to your view? Showing % strongly + somewhat agree</i>	White Americans	African Americans	Hispanic Americans	Asian Americans

I feel optimistic about the way things are going in America.	45%	41%	45%	54%
--	-----	-----	-----	-----

6. While most people read the news daily (67%), the starkest differences are by age.

Younger millennials are at the lower end of the spectrum (42%), while Boomers are at the higher end, at 82%.

<i>About how often do you read, watch, or listen to the news?</i>	Total	Younger Millennials (18-24)	Older Millennials (25-34)	Gen X (35-54)	Boomers (55+)
At least once a day	67%	42%	58%	68%	82%
1-3 times per week	22%	38%	27%	20%	13%
1-3 times per month	3%	7%	4%	4%	1%
Rarely	6%	10%	8%	6%	4%
Never	2%	3%	3%	2%	1%