

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

To mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kerner Commission Report, the Ford Foundation is looking at the public perception of the news media today. The Kerner Report was tasked with determining the factors that led to civil unrest in 1967 in Detroit, Newark, and elsewhere. One factor identified was the lack of adequate representation among the people assigning, reporting, and editing the media coverage.

Quadrant Strategies conducted a study between February 17<sup>th</sup> to February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, at the request of the Ford Foundation, to determine the perceptions about the news media coverage of race. The poll was fielded among 3000 American respondents from the general population, 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
<b>Total</b>		<b>3000</b>	<b>+/- 1.79%</b>
<b>Race</b>	White Americans	1852	+/-2.28%
	African Americans	361	+/- 5.16%
	Hispanic Americans	482	+/- 4.46%
	Asian Americans	189	+/- 7.13%
<b>Age</b>	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>	<b>White Americans</b>	<b>African Americans</b>	<b>Hispanic Americans</b>	<b>Asian Americans</b>
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%

- **The perception that African Americans are more negatively portrayed is consistently held across ages as well,** especially with younger millennials.

<i>Do you think the media portrays African Americans more positively, more negatively, or about the same as reality?</i>	Younger Millennials (18-24)	Older Millennials (25-34)	Gen X (35-54)	Boomers (55+)
More positively than the reality	15%	16%	18%	18%
About the same as the reality	27%	36%	34%	36%
More negatively than the reality	59%	48%	48%	46%

**4. Nearly half of Hispanic Americans (45%) and African Americans (48%) believe that Hispanic Americans are portrayed more negatively than the reality,** whereas Asian and White Americans believe Hispanic Americans are portrayed accurately.

<i>Do you think the media portrays Hispanic or Latino 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	15%	14%	16%	10%
About the same as the reality	43%	38%	39%	46%
More negatively than the reality	42%	48%	45%	44%

- **Younger millennials believe that Hispanic Americans are more negatively portrayed in the media than in reality.** Older demographics are split as to whether the portrayals are more negative than or the same as reality.

<i>Do you think the media portrays <b>Hispanic or Latino Americans</b> more positively, more negatively, or about the same as reality?</i>	<b>Younger Millennials (18-24)</b>	<b>Older Millennials (25-34)</b>	<b>Gen X (35-54)</b>	<b>Boomers (55+)</b>
More positively than the reality	13%	14%	14%	16%
About the same as the reality	34%	43%	44%	43%
More negatively than the reality	53%	43%	42%	41%

**5. Across races, most people, including Asian Americans themselves, think that Asian Americans are accurately portrayed by the media.** This is also consistent across ages.

<i>Do you think the media portrays <b>Asian Americans</b> more positively, more negatively, or about the same as reality?</i>	<b>White Americans</b>	<b>African Americans</b>	<b>Hispanic Americans</b>	<b>Asian Americans</b>
More positively than the reality	10%	20%	14%	18%
About the same as the reality	71%	64%	68%	65%
More negatively than the reality	19%	16%	18%	17%

<i>Do you think the media portrays <b>Asian Americans</b> more positively, more negatively, or about the same as reality?</i>	<b>Younger Millennials (18-24)</b>	<b>Older Millennials (25-34)</b>	<b>Gen X (35-54)</b>	<b>Boomers (55+)</b>
More positively than the reality	15%	19%	11%	10%
About the same as the reality	68%	64%	70%	71%
More negatively than the reality	17%	17%	19%	19%

6. **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%

- **Younger demographics were also more likely to think that White Americans are portrayed more positively than the reality.**

<i>Do you think the media portrays White Americans more positively, more negatively, or about the same as reality?</i>	Younger Millennials (18-24)	Older Millennials (25-34)	Gen X (35-54)	Boomers (55+)
More positively than the reality	49%	47%	33%	25%
About the same as the reality	31%	35%	42%	46%
More negatively than the reality	20%	18%	25%	30%

7. **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%

8. **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%

9. **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>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Younger Millennials (18-24)</b>	<b>Older Millennials (25-34)</b>	<b>Gen X (35-54)</b>	<b>Boomers (55+)</b>
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%