

Perception Vs Experience In Racial Discrimination

Perceptions of racial discrimination differ widely between the races – but at least in some areas, actual discrimination seems to be less prevalent than many suspect.

A plurality of blacks, but only a minority of whites, believe that taxi drivers, sales clerks and the police discriminate against blacks. But when asked about their own experiences, the numbers drop and the gap between the races narrows substantially.

For example, 42 percent of blacks believe taxi drivers avoid picking up blacks; only 19 percent of whites agree. But fewer blacks – 18 percent (still a high number, about one in six) say they've personally been refused a cab ride. So have eight percent of whites.

	Do taxi drivers avoid picking up blacks?		Have you been refused by a taxi driver?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
All	22%	35	All	9% 77
Whites	19	35	Whites	8 78
Blacks	42	31	Blacks	18 71

Similarly, two-thirds of blacks, but only a quarter of whites, think shopkeepers or sales clerks in expensive stores tend to make blacks feel unwelcome. But that 41-point gap in perceived prejudice drops to a 13-point gap between whites and blacks who've personally experienced such prejudice.

A much larger gap exists between the ages – among all respondents, blacks and whites alike, 45 percent of those aged 18 to 34 say they've been discriminated against by sales clerks. Among those over 65 this falls to 17 percent.

	Do sales clerks in expensive stores make blacks feel unwelcome?		Have they ever made you feel unwelcome?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
All	31%	48	All	36% 64
Whites	25	53	Whites	34 65
Blacks	66	26	Blacks	47 53

This poll was done in support of a 20/20 report, airing at 10 p.m. Eastern time Thursday, in which some prominent black men relate their experiences with racism.

POLICE – On the roads, three-quarters of blacks believe the police are more likely to pull over black drivers for minor infractions; only one-third of whites think that's so. But in terms of actual experience, blacks and whites report being pulled over for minor violations at essentially the same rate.

There are differences in factors other than race. Men say they are pulled over more than women do; younger drivers more than ones over age 65, and people with higher incomes more than those with lower incomes.

	Are police more likely to pull over black drivers?			Have the police ever pulled you over?	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
All	39%	43	All	54%	45
Whites	33	47	Whites	55	45
Blacks	75	18	Blacks	53	46

CRIME – Most blacks and whites alike reject the suggestion that blacks are more likely to commit crimes. About the same number in both races, 17 or 18 percent, think that is the case. Sixty-four percent of whites think the likelihood is the same regardless of race; 43 percent of blacks agree.

The difference is in the "less likely" category – 32 percent of blacks say blacks are less likely to commit crimes, as are nine percent of whites.

FEAR – There's little difference between the races in race-based fear of a stranger. The poll asked respondents to imagine they were alone on a street and a man they didn't know was walking their way. Would they be more likely to feel afraid if it were a black man or a white man?

Among whites, 10 percent said they'd be more likely to be afraid if it were a black man walking toward them. But among blacks, about the same share – 11 percent – said the same. Nine percent of blacks, and one percent of whites, would be more apt to fear a white man. In both groups very large majorities said race wouldn't come into it.

Finally, a plurality of whites feel that blacks exaggerate the amount of discrimination they experience, while a majority of blacks think that's not the case. In any case, almost all respondents, regardless of their race, agree that discrimination against blacks by taxi drivers, police and sales clerks would be unjustified.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News survey was conducted by telephone Jan. 26-Feb.1, 2000, among a random national sample of 1,097 adults, including an oversample of 177 blacks. The results have a three-point error margin for the full sample and 7.5 points for blacks. Fieldwork by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Dalia Sussman.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:

<http://www.abcnews.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html>

1. If you've ever hailed a cab, have you ever had a taxi driver refuse to pick you up, or not?

		Yes	No	Haven't hailed	No opin.
2/1/00	All	9	77	13	1
	Whites	8	78	14	1
	Blacks	18	71	11	1

2. Have the police ever pulled you over for a minor traffic infraction, or not?

		Yes	No	No opin.
2/1/00	All	54	45	1
	Whites	55	45	*
	Blacks	53	46	1

3. Have shopkeepers or sales clerks in an expensive store ever made you feel unwelcome, or not?

		Yes	No	No opin.
2/1/00	All	36	64	1
	Whites	34	65	1
	Blacks	47	53	*

4. Generally speaking, is it your impression that many taxi drivers in big cities try to avoid picking up blacks as passengers, or do you think they pick up blacks as often as anyone else?

		Avoid	Do Not Avoid	No opin.
2/1/00	All	22	35	43
	Whites	19	35	46
	Blacks	42	31	27

5. Is it your impression that the police are more likely to pull over black drivers for minor traffic infractions, or not?

		Yes	No	No opin.
2/1/00	All	39	43	18
	Whites	33	47	20
	Blacks	75	18	7

6. Is it your impression that the shopkeepers or sales clerks in expensive stores tend to make blacks feel unwelcome, or not?

		Yes	No	No opin.
2/1/00	All	31	48	20
	Whites	25	53	22
	Blacks	66	26	9

7. Do you think blacks are more likely than people of other races to commit crimes, less likely, or what?

More Less Same No opin.

2/1/00	All	18	13	61	9
	Whites	18	9	64	9
	Blacks	17	32	43	8

8a. Would it be justified or unjustified if a taxi driver tries to avoid picking up blacks?

		Justified	Unjustified	No opin.
2/1/00	All	6	89	5
	Whites	7	89	4
	Blacks	5	88	6

8b. Would it be justified or unjustified if the police are more likely to pull over black drivers?

		Justified	Unjustified	No opin.
2/1/00	All	4	91	4
	Whites	4	92	4
	Blacks	9	89	3

8c. Would it be justified or unjustified if shopkeepers make blacks feel unwelcome?

		Justified	Unjustified	No opin.
2/1/00	All	2	95	3
	Whites	2	95	3
	Blacks	4	92	4

9. In general, do you feel that blacks do or do not tend to exaggerate the amount of discrimination they experience?

		Do	Do Not	No opin.
2/1/00	All	45	36	19
	Whites	47	32	20
	Blacks	31	58	10

10. Say you're alone on the street and you see a man you don't know walking in your direction. Honestly assessing your feelings, do you think you'd be more likely to feel afraid if it's a black man, or a white man, or doesn't race come into it?

		Black Man	White Man	Race Doesn't Come into it	No opin.
2/1/00	All	10	2	81	7
	Whites	10	1	83	6
	Blacks	11	9	73	7