

White people think racism is getting worse —

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THE WASHINGTON POST

How do Americans think about the role of race in our country's daily life? News reports, social media and uncomfortable dinner conversations often point to one conclusion: They disagree. Many white Americans believe the United States has entered a post-racial phase; many black Americans believe race is as salient an issue as ever.

Recent polling identifies one area, though, where black and white Americans show remarkable convergence: They believe race relations have gotten worse. Asked in a Washington Post-ABC News poll released this past week whether race relations in the United States are generally good or generally bad, 72 percent of black respondents said "bad." So did 63 percent of whites. A recent New York Times-CBS News poll had similar results.

But this purported agreement obscures the fact that black and white Americans see issues related to race very differently. Just one week after the widely publicized fatal police shootings of black men in Louisiana and Minnesota — and days after a gunman killed five police officers in Dallas — 75 percent of blacks surveyed by the Times and CBS reported thinking po-

lice are more likely to use deadly force against a black civilian than a white civilian. Only 36 percent of whites agreed.

Our recent research suggests yet another way black and white Americans see race differently: Whites now think bias against white people is more of a problem than bias against black people.

We asked 417 black and white respondents to assess how big a problem anti-black bias was in America in each decade from the 1950s to the present. We then asked them the same questions about anti-white bias — the extent to which they felt that racism against whites has changed since the 1950s.

Black and white Americans thought anti-black bias had decreased over the decades. Whites saw that decline as steeper and more dramatic than blacks did, but the general impressions of the trend were similar for both races.

When asked about anti-white bias, though, black and white respondents differed significantly in their views. Black respondents identified virtually no anti-white bias in any decade. White respondents agreed that anti-white bias was not a problem in the 1950s but reported that bias against whites started climbing in the 1960s and 1970s before rising sharply in the past 30 years.

When asked about the

present-day United States, a striking difference emerged. Our average white respondent believed at the time of our survey in 2011 that anti-white bias was an even bigger problem than anti-black bias.

This perception is fascinating, as it stands in stark contrast to data on almost any outcome that has been assessed. From life expectancy to school discipline to mortgage rejection to police use of force, outcomes for white Americans tend to be — in the aggregate — better than outcomes for black Americans, often substantially so. (While a disturbing uptick in the mortality rate among middle-aged whites has received a great deal of recent media attention, it is worth noting that even after this increase, the rate remains considerably lower than that of blacks.)

Reports on our research have occasionally prompted bizarre emails and phone calls of thanks from individuals grateful for our shining a light on anti-white bias — messages that we have always been surprised to receive, given the actual nature of our data. (A sample email: "The purpose of my email is to acknowledge the facts surrounding your recent findings. I am in agreement with the research because I personally have experienced racism and bigotry toward myself as a white

against white people

person and I have been a target of racism and bigotry myself.") Our findings do not indicate a verifiable surge in anti-whiteness in recent years or identify a new victimization of white Americans. Rather, our research reveals a heightened perception among whites that they are increasingly the primary victims of bias in America — a perception that statistics say is wrong.

But in the years since our study, whites' identification with victim status — a view of themselves as the most persecuted group — has become even more apparent. Look at the reports about white nationalist groups that support the presidential run of Donald Trump, a candidate who has pledged to "make America great again" — presumably a reference to earlier eras when white Americans believe they were not yet targets of discrimination. This perceived victimhood may also undergird the bristling response of those who counter Black Lives Matter protests against police brutality by asserting vocally that "all lives matter," as though acknowledgment of the travails of one segment of society necessarily leaves less sympathy for the others.

Our research also suggests that among whites, there's a lingering view that the American Dream is a "fixed pie," such that the advancement of one group of citizens must come at the expense of all the other groups. Whites told us they see things as a zero-sum game: Any improvements for black Americans, they believe, are likely to come at a direct cost to whites. Black respondents in our surveys, meanwhile, report believing that outcomes for blacks can improve without affecting outcomes for white Americans.

Such discrepancies are not new. A decade ago, psychologist Richard Eibach and colleagues demonstrated that one source of divergent perceptions of racial progress is that black and white Americans tend to focus on different reference points. Black Americans typically see less progress toward racial equality because they compare the present day with an ideal, yet unrealized society. White Americans perceive more progress because they compare the present with the past.

What is the basis for the persistence of beliefs about anti-white bias? For some whites, the changing — and increasingly less

white — demographics of the United States may feel existentially threatening. Indeed, research points to people's pervasive fear that they will end up on the bottom of the status pile — a fear called "last place aversion." That may further increase opposition to the gains of other groups: If "they" are moving up in the world, "we" must be moving down. Such fears might be particularly pronounced for a group, like white Americans, that has always been at the top of the racial hierarchy and therefore has the furthest to fall.

Black and white Americans may agree that race relations are approaching a new nadir, but this is just about the only race-related issue on which they see eye to eye. Major fault lines run through that apparent common ground. In calls to end anti-black racism, some see an effort to allow everyone to pursue the American Dream. But others see a threat and a reason to resist.

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Voting

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federal contests, which could lessen the downward pressure on turnout he found looking at San Francisco elections.

Ranked-choice voting is touted as a path to uncovering the hidden consensus behind a plurality, yet it is no guarantee of a true majority.

Proponents of ranked-choice voting often point to recent contests for the Blaine House, which have featured as many as six candidates splitting the vote, as races that would have seen different results if voters had the option to

rank candidates.

Since 1974, only two governors in Maine have won the support of more than 50 percent of voters, including Gov. Paul LePage, who was elected and re-elected with 38 percent and 48 percent of the vote, respectively.

"They aren't accountable to broad interests within the public," Bailey said. "This would ensure majority rule and that no candidate [who is] opposed by a majority of voters wins."

Even under ranked-choice voting, it's possible for candidates still to win without a majority of all votes cast.

Here's why.

When votes are redistributed during an instant

runoff, ballots can be tossed out or exhausted if voters mistakenly rank more than one candidate, say, as their second choice or if they do not rank all candidates.

Political scientists Craig Burnett and Vladimir Kogan sought to find out how exhausted ballots might affect the outcomes of elections in which ranked-choice voting was used and whether it can lead to candidates still winning with less than a majority.

In a 2015 study, the political scientists from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and Ohio State University found that in four local elections in California that em-

ployed ranked-choice voting, none produced a winner who captured a majority of all votes cast. They found that high rates of ballot exhaustion — ranging from 9.6 percent in a 2010 election in San Leandro to 27 percent in a 2011 contest in San Francisco — led candidates to win on average with 45 percent of the total vote.

"IRV need not, and frequently does not, produce a winner who wins a majority — rather than a plurality — of all votes cast," Burnett and Kogan wrote.

Portland, the only city in Maine that uses ranked-choice voting, saw a similar result in its 2011 mayoral election. In that election, 19,728 votes were cast

for 15 candidates, plus some write-ins. Over the course of 14 instant runoffs, 3,494 ballots were exhausted and Michael Brennan emerged in the final runoff as the winner with 9,061 votes, or 46 percent of all votes cast.

The 2015 mayoral election, however, had a much different outcome. With a slimmed down candidate pool of only three candidates, Ethan Strimling emerged victorious in the first round with 9,163 votes, or 51 percent of all votes cast.

It's not uncommon for a winner to be crowned in the first round in a ranked-choice contest. Since 2004, there have been 107 elections in the

San Francisco Bay Area decided with ranked-choice voting; 68 were won in the first round, according to Bailey.

Here's the rub. Only 11 cities across the U.S., including Portland, have used ranked-choice voting to elect candidates to local office since 2002, according to FairVote, a nonprofit that advocates for the model.

What research there is on ranked-choice voting is hampered by limited data. The findings that voter turnout goes down and that voter error leads to high rates of discarded ballots could fade over time as voters adjust to the new voting system, McDaniel said.

Pot

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from renewable sources by 2020. Currently, however, only 18 percent of its electricity comes from renewable sources. The rest is generated from coal and natural gas.

On-site generation systems, such as rooftop solar arrays, and community-scale energy projects cannot produce enough electricity to meet marijuana growers' energy needs. As a result, the marijuana industry is indirectly increasing Colorado's reliance on fossil fuel.

Legalization provides some energy benefits. For example, it allows indoor cultivators to connect to existing electricity grids instead of relying on carbon-intensive gasoline and diesel generators. However, these benefits are swamped by the industry's fast-growing electricity requirements.

Experts estimate that nationwide, indoor marijuana cultivation accounts for nearly 15 million metric tons of carbon emissions annually — more than the annual energy-related emissions of South Dakota, Delaware, Rhode Island and Vermont, or the District of Columbia. Public utility commissioners across the nation are discussing strategies for managing power demand from indoor pot growers.

Legalize and regulate

When states legalize marijuana cultivation, they establish detailed regulatory and licensing schemes governing who may sell, possess and cultivate the plant, where they may do so, and how much they must pay for li-



A budded marijuana plant is ready for trimming at the Botanacare marijuana store in Northglenn, Colorado, in 2013. REUTERS | FILE

censes. Policymakers should also seize this opportunity to enact rules governing the industry's climate and energy impacts.

Since indoor growers consume such enormous amounts of electricity, policymakers should start by requiring indoor cultivators to consume only carbon-free energy sources or to pay a carbon fee until such measures can be implemented.

Boulder, Colorado is addressing this issue by implementing city and county licensing schemes that require indoor marijuana cultivators to use energy monitoring technology and routinely report their energy use. Growers must

offset their energy use by utilizing 100 percent renewable energy, purchasing renewable energy credits, or paying a carbon fee. However, few other states or localities have followed Boulder's lead.

Oregon has established a task force to study energy and water use for marijuana production. The group is scheduled to report its findings to the state legislature later this summer. Preliminary indications are that the task force will call on growers to follow energy best practices, but it is unclear whether it will recommend making this policy mandatory or merely a suggestion.

States that do not have

enough renewable energy generation to meet the industry's electricity demands, such as in Colorado, should take a two-pronged approach. First, they should require indoor growers to pay escalating carbon fees based on their electricity consumption. These funds should be used to support development of more efficient technology and climate-friendly electricity facilities.

Second, legislators should also require an exponential increase in the percentage of energy consumed by indoor growers from renewable energy sources via on site generation — such as rooftop solar — or community re-

newable energy facilities. This two-pronged approach would ensure growers do not become complacent just paying the fee.

The best time to address impacts of this magnitude is before they occur, not after a major industry is already established. Marijuana production is rapidly developing into an extremely lucrative industry that can afford to manage its impacts on the environment.

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Cianchette

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speakers of the house — with firmly prescribed periods depending on the office held. In extraordinary occasions the honor was extended for other mournful events, such as the peacetime loss of service-members. For example, the flag was flown at half-staff in 1963 following the USS Thresher sinking during the Kennedy administration and the Challenger space shuttle explosion in 1986.

Today, the stars and stripes fly at half-staff when NATO allies such as France and Belgium are attacked by ISIS terrorists. But when other NATO allies such as Turkey are attacked by the same group — nothing. With the killings of officers in Dallas and Baton Rouge, flags are lowered. But in 2014, when two minority NYPD officers were murdered as retribution for Michael Brown's death — nothing. Does anyone else think the honor of the symbol may be losing its meaning, from overuse and inconsistency?

Symbols only have meaning to the extent they are honored. When it comes to lowering the flag, that means ensuring it is lowered only for extraordinary occasions of national mourning. When it comes to party platforms, it means respecting the concerns expressed by those who share your ideals. But in both cases, as with most everything in life, it comes down to actions.

Those always speak more clearly than symbols and more loudly than words.

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