

## Race, Ethics, and Culture: New National Survey of US Adults

**Client:** Advanced Studies in Culture Foundation  
**Fielding:** January 14-19, 2021  
**Audience:** US General Population: n=1,015

Respondents were selected from among those who have volunteered to participate in online surveys and were then screened in the survey based on quotas and survey audience definition. The data (approximately 1,000 respondents) were gathered across multiple, large online survey panels that included a cross-section of the US population.

To ensure representation of a wide variety of demographic groups, we established quotas by age, gender, region, race/ethnicity and education based on U.S. Census data for people aged 18 and older.

In a hypothetical case of a probability sample size of 1,000, the margin of error would be +/- 3.1% at the 95% confidence level. It should be noted that all sample surveys are subject to multiple sources of error, some known and some unknown, which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate. These includes some of the following types of error: sampling, coverage, nonresponse, question wording/placement, response options, interviewer (in phone-based surveys), and post-survey weighting. The margin of error should be used as a directional guide because of these types of error and to account for online panel self-selection.

A survey of American adults demonstrates the interconnectivity of race, ethics, and culture in how we define our collective path as a society. Key findings are as follows:

- Asked “In a few words, how would you describe yourself? Who are you?”, 58% of Americans use personal attributes. Only 21% use their job/profession, 12% use their age, 11% gender, and 3% their racial identity to describe themselves.
- Most (71%) Americans say their “ethics and morals come from within myself and what I know to be right and wrong”, compared to 29% who say their “ethics and morals are guided by something outside of and larger than myself.”
- A majority (57%) of Americans describe “public confidence in civic institutions” as declining.
- Only 28% trust their state government, 19% trust the federal government, and 22% trust broadcast media outlets.

- Half (49%) of the country believes having “shared ethics and values” is one of the top three most important characteristics of a “a healthy and well-functioning society.”
- A majority (55%) of Americans say we are declining in efforts aimed at “instilling a strong moral and ethical code in our youth.”
  - 61% among Whites
  - 46% among Blacks
  - 44% among Asians
  - 41% among Hispanics
- Most (58%) believe the focus of our nation’s public policy should be on “equality of opportunity”, 9% say the focus should be on “equality of outcomes”, and 34% are not sure.
- Give 100 points to allocate across a list of factors, the top two rated most important aspects of our society by race are as follows:
  - Whites choose “governments chosen by the people” (average of 19.6 allocated points) and “personal liberty” (average 18.7 points).
  - Blacks choose “racial equality in life” (average 22.7 points) and “equality before the law” (average 17.8 points)
- A plurality (44%) believe we are doing poor or failing in “racial equality” and 42% say we are doing poor or failing at “equality before the law.”

*For questions about the survey results, please contact Gerard Robinson ([robinson@advancedstudiesinculture.org](mailto:robinson@advancedstudiesinculture.org)), vice president for education at the Advanced Studies in Culture Foundation, or Maury Giles ([mgiles@heartandmindstrategies.com](mailto:mgiles@heartandmindstrategies.com)), chief growth officer at Heart+Mind Strategies.*