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Rochester Residents Increasingly Likely to Acknowledge Racism, According to New Poll

Monroe County residents are more likely to acknowledge racism in our community today than they were 10 years ago, according to a new [Siena College Research Institute](#) poll commissioned by [Rochester Area Community Foundation](#) and the [Democrat and Chronicle](#). Three-quarters of respondents said they would embrace initiatives to reduce racism's impact.

This is the fourth triennial survey by the three partners. The Community Foundation initiated the poll series in 2012 after [ACT Rochester](#), a Community Foundation affiliate, documented severe racial and ethnic disparities that were holding back our community's progress. The poll informs the Community Foundation's efforts to stimulate a more equitable community.

The December 2021 poll found that:

- Four in five Monroe County residents aged 18-34 (81%) believe minorities who live here, including African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians, experience racial or ethnic discrimination. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of all poll respondents agree, compared to 63% in 2012.
- Of those who said yes, more now believe this discrimination happens often (42%, compared to 33% in 2012).
- Seven in 10 (71%) poll respondents said racial or ethnic discrimination is a very significant (28%) or somewhat significant (43%) problem in Monroe County. In 2012, less than half agreed (13% and 34%, respectively).
- Whites, African Americans, and Hispanics overwhelmingly agree (85%, 89%, and 79%, respectively) that African Americans are the minority group "most often discriminated against in Monroe County."
- Nearly half of Black (45%) and over a third of Hispanic (35%) respondents said they could think of an occasion in the last few months when they were treated unfairly because of their race, ethnicity, or some other personal characteristic. Only 15% of Whites reported the same.
- More than half of poll respondents (52%) believe there is a widening gap between Black and White people in their standard of living, compared to 47% in the 2018 poll. Respondents who felt the gap had narrowed fell from 45% in 2018 to just 31% in the new poll.

Discrimination is associated most often with job or retail settings:

- Respondents who reported personal discrimination were most likely to say that happened at their place of work (40%) or in a store (36% — down from 46% in 2018).
- Seven in 10 (70%) poll respondents strongly or somewhat agree that “no matter what we like to believe about ourselves, too often minorities are treated differently than Whites in stores or in other regular business type settings.”
- While half of Monroe County residents (50%) believe that minorities “have as good a chance as Whites in their community to get any kind of job for which they are qualified,” that response rate declined from 66% in 2012. Those who disagree rose to 44% from 31% in 2012.

“Monroe County residents increasingly recognize the impact of discrimination on their neighbors,” said Jennifer Leonard, president and CEO of the Community Foundation. “The poll shows that they are now more aware and, possibly as a result, support efforts to redress historic inequities.”

Among those efforts, at least three-quarters of poll respondents said they would support:

- Establishing new schools with specialized curricula that would be open to both suburban and urban students (75%), a concept promoted by the Great Schools for All initiative.
- A plan to create more affordable housing in the suburbs (76%).
- A jobs program that would encourage employers to hire those in poverty (82%).
- Ensuring local minority-owned businesses have access to more loans (76%).

A clear majority of poll respondents supported the following proposals, which included teaching students the local history of racism:

- Directing funding to benefit “neighborhoods that house groups that have been adversely affected by discriminatory policies” (68%). This is a goal of local efforts, such as that of the [North Star Coalition](#), to promote an inclusive recovery.
- Increasing instruction in public schools on the history of discrimination in Monroe County (65%), an effort currently advanced by the [PathStone Foundation](#).
- More diverse neighborhoods in Monroe County (58%, up from 53% in 2018).

Local awareness of institutional and structural racism has grown thanks to efforts like the [RASE Commission](#) and the [Urban League’s Interrupt Racism](#), which encompasses the former Racial Equity and Justice Initiative.

Half of poll respondents (51%) strongly or somewhat agreed with this position: “Some have said that one reason many people, especially many people of color, cannot break free from poverty is that the deck is stacked against them, that is, there are public policies, and practices in the marketplace, that advantage White people and disadvantage people of color.”

The “strongly agree” group has risen from 16% to 25% since 2015.

Poll findings also confirmed concerns about local problems like violence, public education, and unequal treatment for people of color by the courts and police.

Complete survey results are available [here](#).



Now celebrating 50 years, Rochester Area Community Foundation empowers charitable donors and community partners to strengthen our region through philanthropy. Its current grantmaking goals are *creating a more equitable community* and *strengthening the vitality of our region*. As the largest grantmaking foundation in our region, the Community Foundation distributed \$34 million last year in over 6,000 grants made possible by more than 1,400 funds created by individuals, families, businesses, and other organizations in greater Rochester.

For more information about racial and ethnic disparities in greater Rochester, please see the Community Foundation's [website](#) or that of its affiliate, ACT Rochester, for the [2017](#) and [2020](#) reports *Hard Facts: Race and Ethnicity in the Nine-County Greater Rochester Area*.

This poll was conducted December 12-16, 2021, and on January 3, 2022, with 707 Monroe County, NY residents. The margin of error is +/-4.7%. Reflecting the county population, 35% of respondents lived within the City of Rochester. Respondents were 69% White, 13% African American/Black, and 8% Hispanic/Latino. Other demographic factors included gender, religion, age, and income. A PDF of the survey crosstabs is attached.