

U.S. race relations improve, yet problems persist

By Chaka Ferguson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — A majority of Americans support affirmative action, believe race relations have improved since the civil rights movement and approve of interracial marriage, according to a new poll.

Still, 49 percent of blacks said they had experienced some form of discrimination in the month preceding the poll and 62 percent believe they are treated somewhat or very unfairly.

"The good news is there is a sense of optimism in the respondents to the poll. There is a real sense that America has changed for the better," said Wade Henderson, executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.

However, Henderson said, the poll also "shows there is a gulf, not only in perception, but in reality" when it comes to differing views on discrimination.

The Gallup Organization poll, commissioned by the

AARP and the LCCR, was released to coincide with next month's 50th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that declared school segregation unconstitutional. It will appear Friday in the May-June issue of AARP The Magazine.

Gallup said it is the organization's most comprehensive survey on race relations.

In the poll of adults 18 and older, nearly 90 percent of whites, 73 percent of blacks and 78 percent of Hispanics said civil rights for blacks had somewhat or greatly improved. Seventy-five percent of whites, 69 percent of blacks and 68 percent of Hispanics said civil rights for Hispanics had somewhat or greatly improved.

Americans of different races are increasingly comfortable living together: 78 percent of blacks, 61 percent of Hispanics and 57 percent of whites said they prefer to live in a mixed neighborhood.

Fifty-seven percent of Americans support affirma-

tive action, a finding that Henderson called a pleasant surprise. "Americans in a general manner accept the equitable principle that, for every wrong, there is a remedy," he said.

Sixty-three percent, however, said that "race relations will always be a problem in the U.S."

According to Census Bureau projections, whites, now about 69 percent of the population, will drop to 50.1 percent by 2050. More than a quarter of those surveyed said that will be a good thing. Fifty-six percent said it will not matter, and 13 percent said it will be a bad thing.

Tyrone Miller, a 47-year-old black man from the Bronx, suggested that behavior has changed, but some attitudes have not.

"Minorities are pulling the American economy, so if you really want to make money and get ahead, it's not profitable to be racist," said Miller, a security manager. "But that doesn't mean you'll

be invited to that person's home."

Among other findings:
• 73 percent of Americans approve of interracial marriage. In a 1958 Gallup poll, when the

question was posed only to whites, just 4 percent supported mixed marriages.
• 21 percent of whites said they have been a victim of reverse discrimina-

tion.

• 56 percent of whites, 38 percent of Hispanics and 21 percent of blacks said all or most of the civil rights movement's goals had been achieved.

Help for Alzheimer's caregivers

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Increasing age is the greatest risk factor for Alzheimer's.

"One in 10 individuals older than 65 and nearly half older than 85 years are affected," said Grayson.

The Alzheimer's Association recently launched a national campaign targeted at the nation's 77 million baby boomers. By 2030, when the entire baby boom generation is over 65, the number of Americans with Alzheimer's is projected to increase 70 percent. The campaign urges baby boomers and all Americans to "Maintain Your Brain." There is evidence that changes in lifestyle and health habits such as those that help the heart. Exercising, eating properly, controlling weight, cholesterol and blood pressure may also benefit the brain.

"Alzheimer's disease can be diagnosed with 90 percent accuracy," said Grayson. "Most people with Alzheimer's disease will live an average of eight years and up to as many as 20 years from the onset of symptoms. The Alzheimer's Association strongly encourages early diagnosis to enhance the benefits of treatment and allow the person to participate in planning and decision-making. Early diagnosis can also help rule out other causes for the symptoms."

"Family members usually notice symptoms first and should immediately report their observations to the family physician. Some of the warning signs include

memory loss, difficulty performing familiar tasks, problems with language, disorientation, changes in moods or behavior, loss of initiative and poor judgment. If a doctor diagnoses Alzheimer's early effective care and treatment options exist and can improve the quality of life for individuals with the disease and their caregivers."

Most people with Alzheimer's and related disorders live at home and are cared for by their families, usually spouses or adult children.

Suzanne Bach set out to assist the families of caregivers of Alzheimer's victims. She started Shining Stars Adult Day Respite. It's a non-profit organization that provides temporary relief for the caregiver and activities and friendships for care receivers. Bach says the structure her organization offers is good for a person with dementia.

"While at the service they watch news but we avoid war stories," said Bach. "We focus on more spiritual stuff, good news and things that other seniors are doing. We do simple Bible studies, they play games and form teams and cheer for one another. People of all faith attend the day care. We have men and women Jewish and Christian."

According to Bach taking care of a person with Alzheimer's can become taxing. "No one can tend to a person with Alzheimer's alone without some outside help," she said. "It's too demanding."

"When a caregiver does

everything on their own eventually the task becomes too much for them and they place the parent into a nursing home. The care receiver's dependency on the caregiver has to be modified. A care receiver needs to see they're other people in the world they can trust."

For more information call the Alzheimer's Association Western Carolina Chapter offers a 24-hour helpline at 1-800-888-6671.

Shining Stars Day Respite is held at St. Gabriel Catholic Church on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. and Sardis Presbyterian Church Tuesdays and Thursdays 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. For information call (704) 376-4135

Pointed end of medical treatment no laughing matter

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who was preparing to give him a shot, ran outside and swung a branch at the pursuing nurse until he passed out. He could remember none of this when he came to a few minutes later.

In general, the medical profession is not terribly sympathetic to aichmophobia.

Said Keith Lamb, a volunteer emergency medical technician in Columbus, Ohio, who is himself needle-phobic, "I find that most medical people don't give a damn. And that is the biggest problem. People just don't recognize it and they don't care."

Look at it from the doctor's point of view. Squeamishness about needles, if taken seriously, can get in the way of a lot of good medicine that depends on a quick jab: immunizations against disease, blood transfusions, anesthesia administration before surgery, insulin delivery (for diabetics), pain-free dental procedures. That simple, short, inexpensive sliver of steel is the linchpin of a lot of commonplace health care. While there is probably a touch of aichmophobia in all humans, most of us tough it out, look the other way or think of something else when we get shots, and we get through it without a lot of fuss.

True aichmophobes, however, don't have that option. Their aversion is entirely involuntary, and there is an actual physiological reaction to the sight or mention of a needle.

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In a time when people were standing up for their rights, it's a good thing some decided to take a seat.



Share your story.
Contribute to Voices of Civil Rights.

AARP and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights are working together to collect firsthand accounts of the Civil Rights Movement. Voices of Civil Rights will not only preserve these stories for generations to come, but will also serve as a memorial to those who lived through the era. The project will commemorate the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* in May 2004. From activists to observers, individual testimonies are crucial in documenting this important time in our nation's history. The stories gathered will be kept in a historical archive, housed on the Voices of Civil Rights Web site and may also appear in other media outlets. To participate visit www.voicesofcivilrights.org or send your 500-word account to Voices of Civil Rights, 601 E St. NW, Washington, DC 20049.

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