

Diversity in the U.S.: Americans Getting Along, but Divisions Remain

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In a report called "What It Means To Be American," two think tanks [surveyed Americans](#) on their attitudes toward their fellow citizens. While the results suggest that people embrace the idea of diversity, they also show a country that is sensitive to religious and ethnic divisions—particularly when beliefs are broken down along party lines.

The Brookings Institution and the Public Religion Research Institute released [the report](#) on Tuesday as part of the sea of assessments and retrospectives accompanying the 10-year anniversary of 9/11.

About 9-in-10 respondents said that the country was founded on the idea of religious freedom and that all religious books should be treated with respect. More than 8-in-10 said they have favorable opinions of African-Americans, Hispanics, Catholics and Jews. Smaller majorities said they feel favorably about Mormons (67%) and Muslims (58%).

But the sentiments were more complicated when demographics come into play: left-leaners and Millennials are, predictably, more comfortable with non-whites. While 65% of Democrats have favorable views of Muslims, for example, 47% of Republicans do. More than 50% of young Americans say they speak with African-Americans on a daily basis, while 25% of seniors do.

Many people see themselves as the primary targets of prejudice. When asked whether discrimination against minorities is a critical issue, 17% of whites agree, compared to 42% of Hispanics and 53% of African-Americans. Meanwhile, 51% of whites say that discrimination against them is as big of a problem as discrimination against minorities, and those numbers rise to above 60% among Republicans and Tea Partiers.

"If conservatives and Republicans disagree sharply with liberals and Democrats on matters of taxing and spending, they also differ substantially on ... the implications of racial, religious and ethnic diversity," the report reads. "Ten years after September 11, 2001, we seem far less united as a nation." In other words, politicians have plenty of racial angst on which to capitalize.

Here are some other highlights from the report:

- In terms of security, the researchers found that 53% of Americans feel they are more safe from terrorism than they were 10 years ago, while 77% believe Americans have less personal freedom—often reflected, for example, in controversy over airport security.
- Americans with no religious affiliation remain unpopular . When asked about atheists, 49% of Democrats said they have favorable views while 38% of Republicans do.
- Mitt Romney and Jon Huntsman might be interested in the fact that more than 40% of Americans say they do not consider Mormonism a Christian religion.
- 83% of Americans say that people who call themselves Christians and commit acts of violence in the name of religion are "not really" Christians. When posed

the same hypothetical in terms of Muslims, 48% says that they're "not really" followers of Islam.

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