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## **MAJORITY OF SOUTHERNERS BELIEVE DISCUSSIONS OF RACE ARE IMPORTANT BUT MAJOR DIVISIONS ON KEY ISSUES, SURVEY FINDS**

*Insights revealed on hot-button issues such as systemic racism, critical race theory, police reform, poverty, voting rights*

**NEW ORLEANS** (Nov. 4, 2021) — The 2021 annual survey from E Pluribus Unum (EPU) reveals warning signs of a growing divide and renewed complacency on racial attitudes. After progress acknowledging systemic racism and underlying barriers to opportunity following the conversations sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd, attitudes are reverting to pre-pandemic levels showcasing a growing racial divide. The recent survey finds major divides by race on a range of issues, including attitudes on Critical Race Theory, COVID-19, the causes of poverty, whether systemic racism exists, voting rights, police reform and more. The survey, conducted in October 2021, by GBAO Strategies included 1,800 participants (600 Black respondents, Latino respondents, and white respondents each) and tracked attitudes on race, class, and equity, as well as pertinent national issues and policies in the South. This is the fifth survey in a deep-dive series by EPU focused on the American South, the first of which was released in 2019.

“It’s encouraging to know that majorities across racial lines agree that it’s important to discuss issues of race, but it’s critical to maintain these discussions as we see red flags,” said **Mitch Landrieu, Founder and President of E Pluribus Unum**. “When the intensity and public discussion about race and systemic racism decreases, we are noticing negative attitudes increase back to 2019 levels. It’s proof positive that these discussions must be sustained to make true progress.”

### **Survey Highlights**

- **Attitudes on Race:** Strong majorities of all races agreed that "it's important to discuss issues of race with other people" versus shying away from it.
  - At the same time, a growing number of white adults say we focus on race and racial issues “too much”.
  - Indicating a growing divide, Black and Hispanic respondents were more intense in their beliefs that systemic racism *is* a major problem while white respondents are now more likely to say they do *not* believe this.

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- **Poverty:** Across racial categories, the majority of women believe that a lack of opportunity in communities can lead to poverty, versus a result of poor life choices.
- **Critical Race Theory (CRT):** There is overwhelming confusion on the definition of Critical Race Theory, let alone if and how it should be addressed in schools.
  - In an open-ended question, the most common terms used to define CRT by white Southerners were negative and even pejorative.
  - However, the majority of Southerners support “teachers having the freedom to teach the honest, complete facts about historical topics like slavery and civil rights without being censored by politicians.”
- **Police Reform:** 79% of Black and 53% of Latino respondents feel that not enough has been done by lawmakers to address the killing of unarmed people of color by police. However, the majority of white adults are satisfied that enough has been done.
- **Voting Rights:** Expanded early voting is supported strongly across races.

A comprehensive analysis of the E Pluribus Unum’s 2021 Survey of the South is available at [www.unumfund.org/survey-of-the-south-october-2021/](http://www.unumfund.org/survey-of-the-south-october-2021/).

GBAO conducted a survey of 1,800 white, Black, and Latino adults in the South via landlines, cellphones, online panel, and text-to-web from October 6-15, 2021. Respondents were given the option of taking the survey in English or Spanish. The margin of error for each racial group is +/- 4.0 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

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### **About E Pluribus Unum**

Founded by former New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu in 2018, E Pluribus Unum (EPU) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization whose mission is to build a more just, equitable, and inclusive South, uprooting the barriers that have long divided the region by race and class. Incubated at Emerson Collective, EPU is focused on changing the divisive narratives that perpetuate systemic and interpersonal racism, cultivating and empowering courageous leaders who are advancing racial equity, and championing transformative policy change. Learn more at [www.unumfund.org](http://www.unumfund.org).