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NORC
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The Associated Press-NORC
Center for Public Affairs Research

CHANGING ATTITUDES ABOUT RACIAL INEQUALITY

Attitudes toward race relations are liberalizing, with increasing support for government assistance to black Americans. A collaborative analysis by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and the General Social Survey (GSS) staff using the 2018 General Social Survey shows that more Americans than ever (52 percent) say the government spends too little on improving the conditions of blacks and that more say the government should try to make up for past discrimination (28 percent). These increases occurred across ages and racial groups and among Democrats, independents, and Republicans.

Americans overall are also now more likely to attribute inequalities between blacks and whites to discrimination (up from 33 percent in 2014 to 45 percent in 2018) and lack of access to education (up from 42 percent in 2014 to 50 percent in 2018) and are less likely to attribute them to a lack of motivation or will among blacks (down from 45 percent in 2014 to 36 percent in 2018). White Democrats show some of the largest shifts in attitudes.

Still, few favor affirmative action for blacks to make up for past discrimination. Just 23 percent support preferential hiring and promotion, though this represents an increase compared to 2014 (18 percent). More than half (57 percent) also agree that blacks should work their way up without special favors, but this is down from 68 percent in 2014 and at an all-time low. This shift occurred across racial groups and among Democrats, independents, and Republicans, but it was particularly large among white Democrats.

Attitudes have also hardened against racist speech. More Americans now say they would disapprove of allowing a racist professor to teach at a college or



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Three Things To Know

From the 2018 General Social Survey
Among American adults:

- 1) Fifty-two percent – an all-time high – say the country spends too little on improving the conditions of black Americans.
- 2) Compared to 2014, more Americans now say racial differences are due to discrimination (up from 33 percent to 45 percent), and fewer say it is due to lack of will or motivation (down from 45 percent to 36 percent).
- 3) Disapproval of racist speech increased in recent years, with more saying a racist professor should not be allowed to teach at a university (up from 51 percent in 2014 to 56 percent in 2018) and a racist book should be removed from their local library (up from 35 percent in 2016 to 39 percent in 2018).

university (up from 51 percent in 2014 to 56 percent in 2018) or would support the removal of a racist book from the bookshelves of their local public library (up from 35 percent in 2016 to 39 percent in 2018).

Additionally, the share of Americans saying it is ever okay for a police officer to strike a male citizen has reached an all-time low of 61 percent.

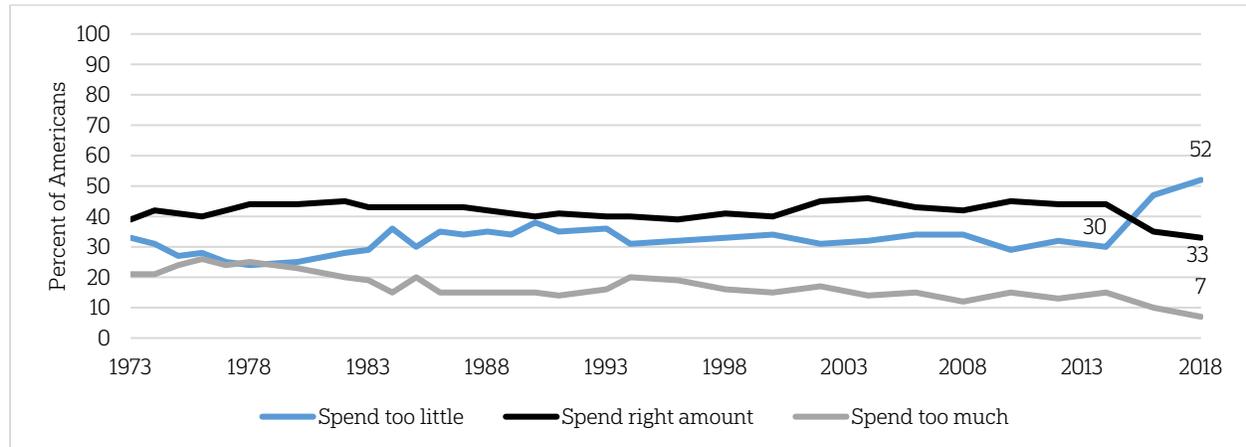
Additional key findings from the report:

- An all-time high of 52 percent say the country spends too little on improving the conditions of blacks, while an all-time low of just 7 percent say the country spends too much.
- Those under age 50 are more likely to say the government spends too little improving the conditions of blacks, but support for more spending has increased across all age groups since 2014.
- Seventy-nine percent of blacks compared to 45 percent of whites say the country spends too little on improving conditions. However, the share of whites who say the country should spend more increased dramatically since 2014.
- Support for spending more on improving the conditions of blacks increased among Democrats, independents, and Republicans since 2014.
- Compared to 2014, white Democrats are now more likely to attribute racial differences to discrimination (up from 45 percent to 59 percent) and lack of education (up from 54 percent to 66 percent).
- Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say blacks should not receive special treatment (72 percent vs. 44 percent), but the share of both parties saying so declined since 2014.
- Disapproval of racist speech increased in recent years, with swings concentrated among those with a college degree. Since 2014, among those with a college degree support for banning a racist professor jumped from 45 percent to 54 percent; for removing a racist book from the library from 25 percent to 35 percent; and for banning a racist speaker from 30 percent to 38 percent.

SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE TO BLACKS HAS REACHED ALL-TIME HIGHS.

In recent years, there has been a sharp increase in the share of Americans who say the country spends too little on improving the conditions of blacks. That number increased from 30 percent in 2014 to 52 percent in 2018, reaching an all-time high. The share saying the country spends too much decreased to an all-time low of just 7 percent.

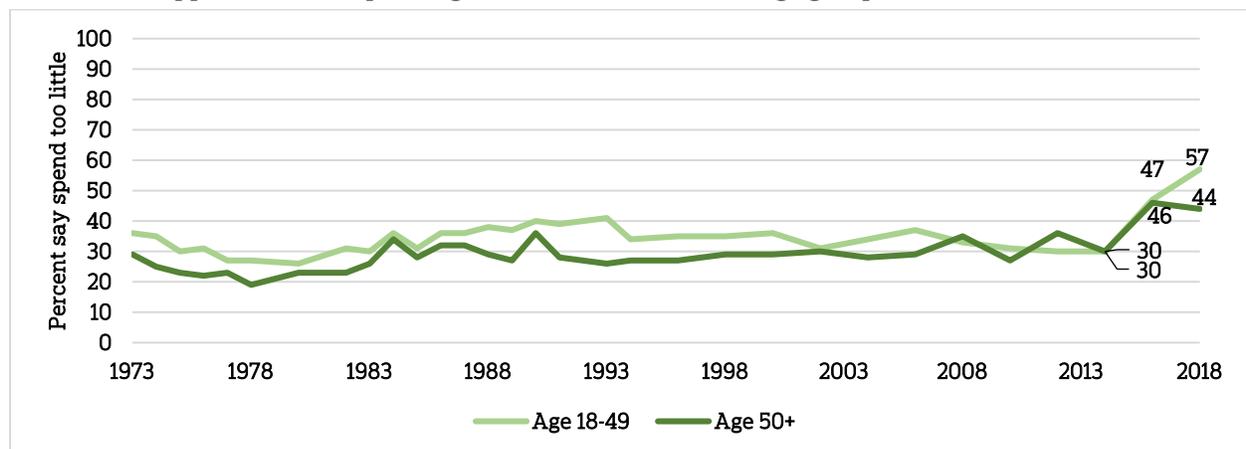
Support for more government spending on improving the conditions of blacks reaches an all-time high.



Question: We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount. First...are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on (ITEM)? Improving the conditions of Blacks
Source: GSS, the latest survey conducted April 12-November 10, 2018.

Differences emerge by age, with those age 18-49 (57 percent) more likely to support increased spending compared to those age 50 and older (45 percent). Support for more spending increased for both age groups from 2014 to 2016, but it continued to increase for those under 50, while leveling off for those 50 and older.

Those under age 50 are more likely to say the government spends too little improving the conditions of blacks, but support for more spending has increased across all age groups since 2014.

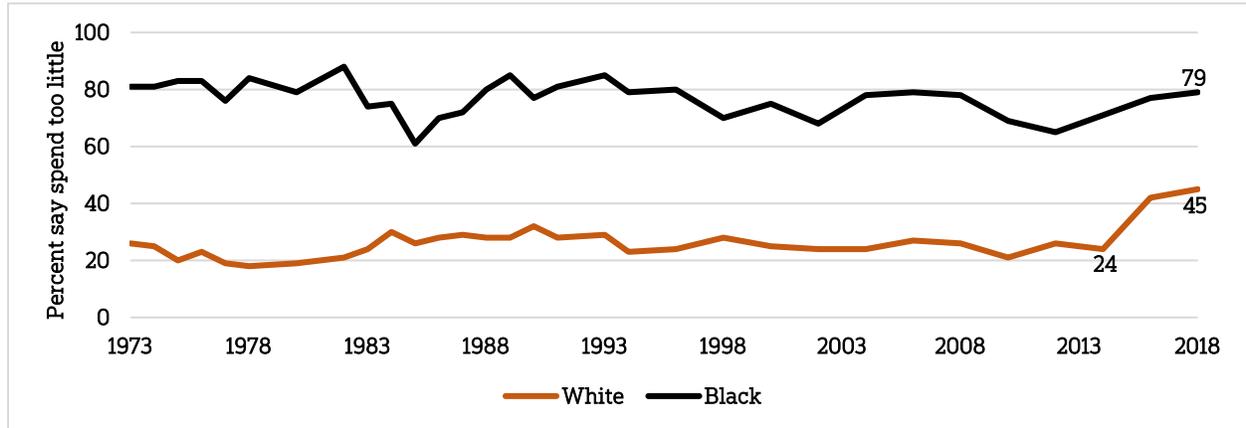


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Source: GSS, the latest survey conducted April 12-November 10, 2018.

Blacks are particularly likely to say that the country should spend more. Seventy-nine percent of blacks compared to 45 percent of whites say the country spends too little. However, the share of whites who say the country should spend more increased sharply since 2014.

Blacks are more likely to say the government spends too little improving conditions, but support for more spending is climbing across both groups.

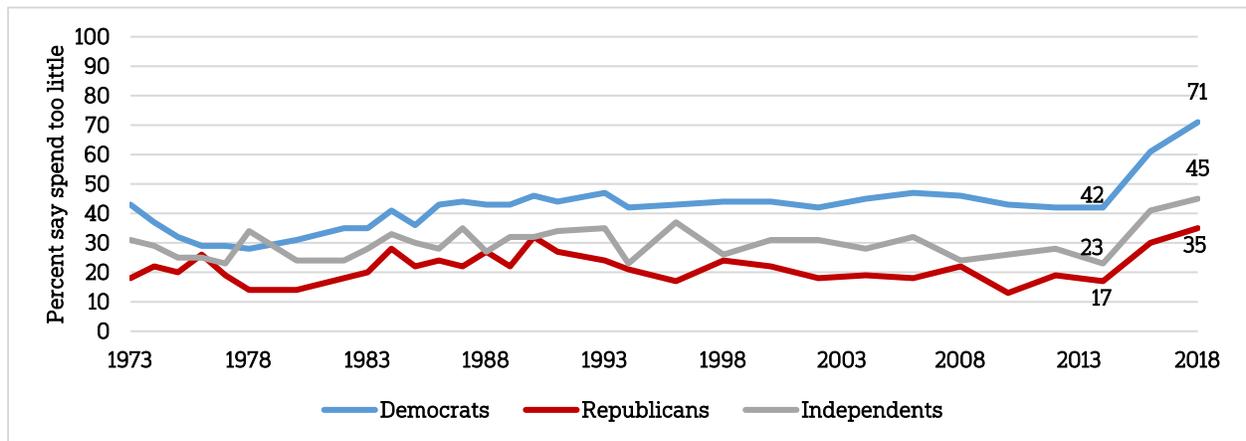


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Source: GSS, the latest survey conducted April 12-November 10, 2018.

Democrats are more likely than Republicans or independents to say the country is spending too little to improve conditions for blacks, but the share increased for all three groups since 2014, reaching all-time highs. The increase was largest among Democrats.

Less than half of independents and Republicans say the government should spend more on improving conditions for blacks, but rates have increased across all parties in recent years.



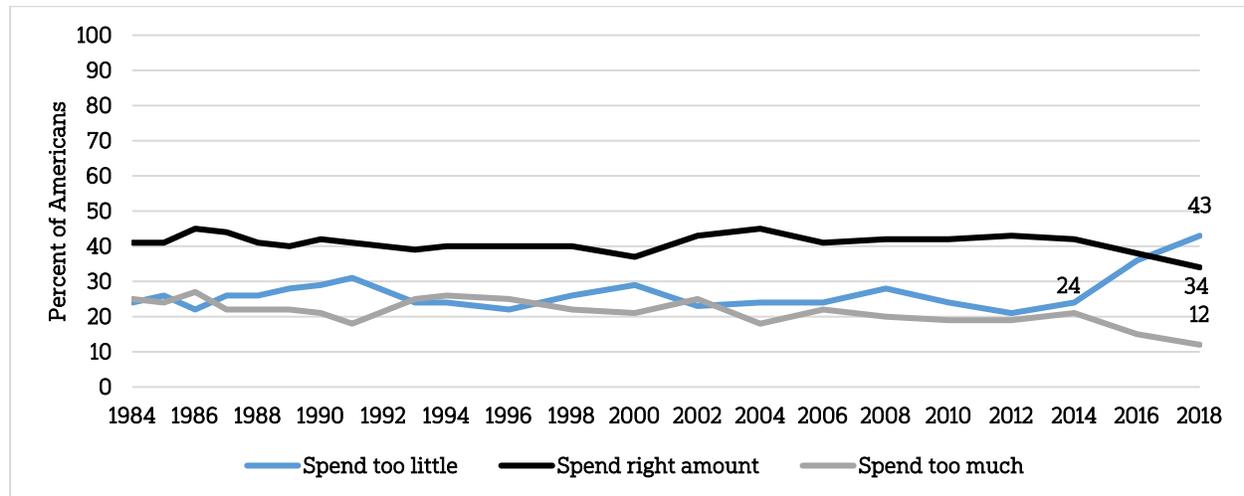
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Source: GSS, the latest survey conducted April 12-November 10, 2018.

Much of that large spike among Democrats is a result of major shifts among white Democrats. Since 2014, the share of white Democrats who say the government spends too little on improving the conditions of blacks increased from 36 percent to 65 percent. But it also increased among white Republicans, jumping from 14 percent to 33 percent.

Phrasing the question slightly differently, there was also a sharp increase in the number saying the country spends too little on *assistance* to blacks. That number increased from 24 percent in 2014 to 43 percent in 2018, another all-time high. The number saying the country spends too much declined from 21 percent to 12 percent, an all-time low.

With large increases in recent years, Americans now most often say the government spends too little on assistance to blacks.



Question: We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount. First...are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on (ITEM)? Assistance to blacks

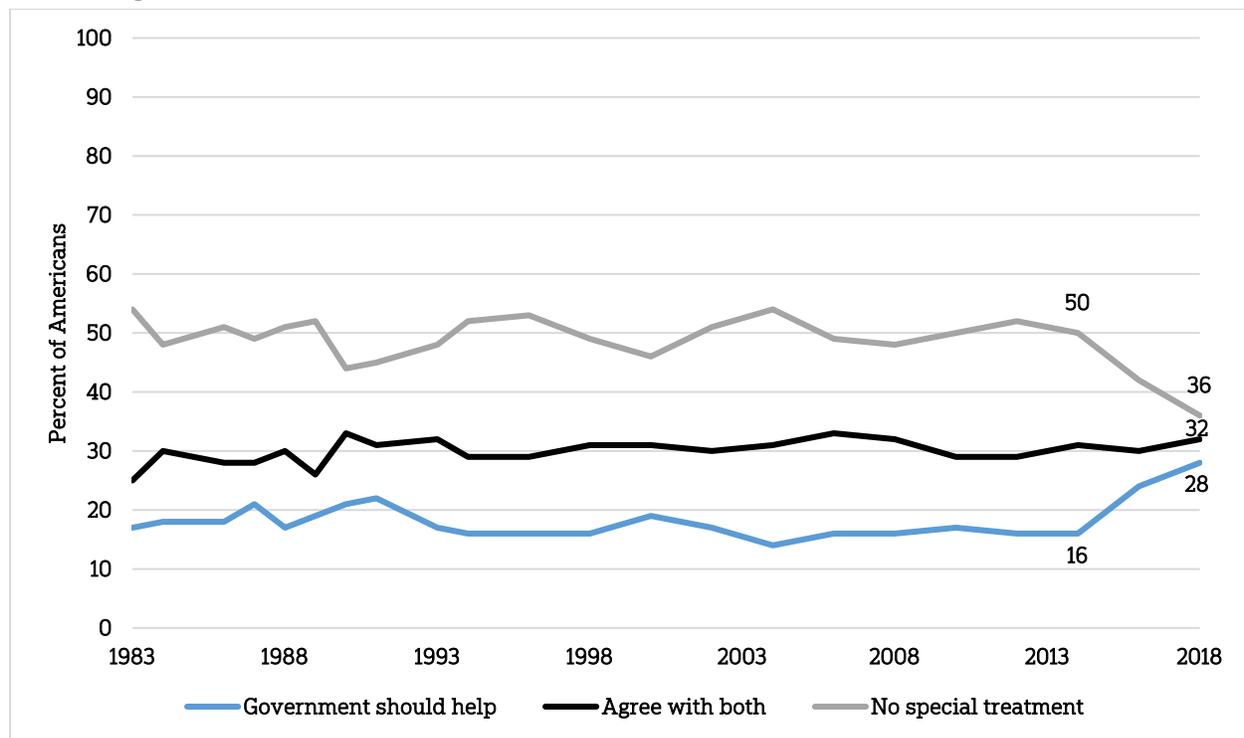
Source: GSS, the latest survey conducted April 12–November 10, 2018.

Again, blacks are more likely than whites to say the country spends too little, though whites are trending upwards on that measure. Among Democrats, relative to 2014, white Democrats experienced a large shift in spending preferences for assistance to blacks (up from 23 percent to 59 percent), though there has also been an increase among black Democrats (up from 61 percent to 78 percent).

Finally, the percentage saying the government has a special obligation to improve the living standards of blacks to make up for past discrimination jumped from 16 percent in 2014 to 28 percent in 2018. More still say the government has no special obligation, but that proportion declined since 2014 (down from 50 percent to 36 percent). These are, respectively, the highest and lowest percentages since 1983.

Again, we see especially large gains among white Democrats. The share of white Democrats who say the government should help increased from 17 percent in 2014 to 40 percent in 2018. Increases also occurred among black Democrats (up from 45 percent to 58 percent). Similarly, we see a decrease in the number of white Republicans who say blacks should not receive special treatment from the government (down from 73 percent to 62 percent).

While more continue to say the government should not give special treatment to blacks to make up for past discrimination, the proportion who do is at an all-time low, with support for government help at an all-time high.



Question: Some people think that (Blacks/African-Americans) have been discriminated against for so long that the government has a special obligation to help improve their living standards. Others believe that the government should not be giving special treatment to (Blacks/African-Americans). Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you made up your mind on this?

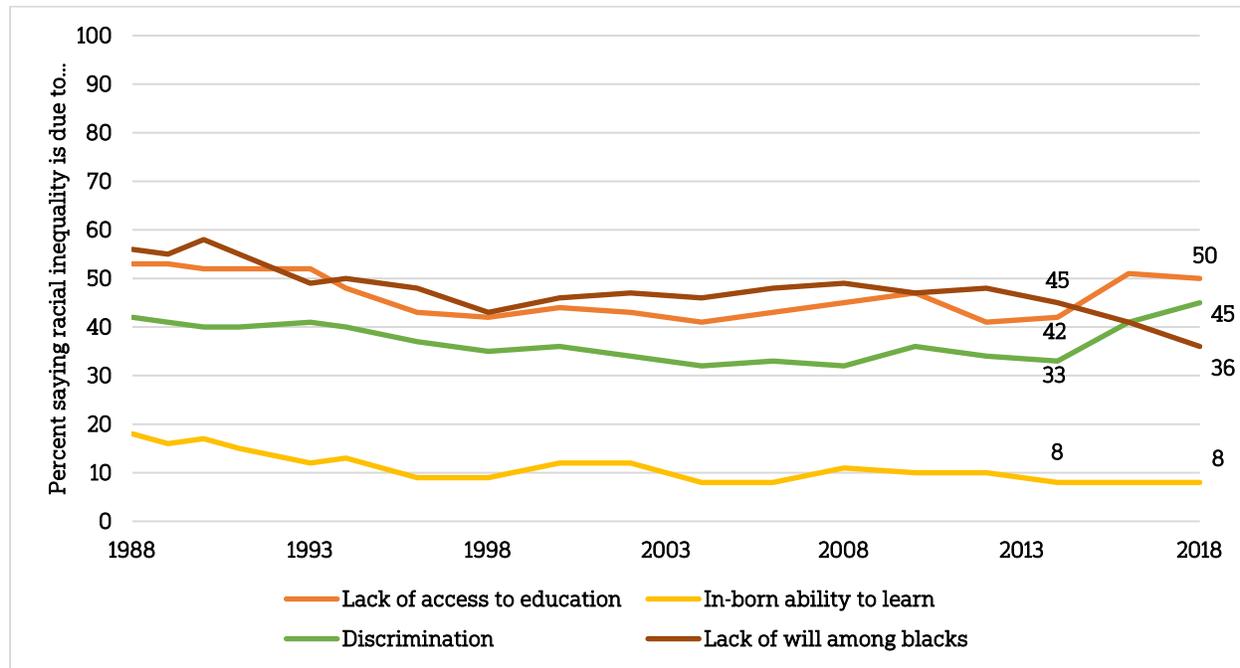
Source: GSS, the latest survey conducted April 12-November 10, 2018.

MORE AMERICANS NOW ATTRIBUTE RACIAL DISPARITIES TO DISCRIMINATION AND LACK OF ACCESS TO EDUCATION THAN MOTIVATION AMONG BLACKS.

There are persistent racial disparities in income, jobs, housing, and education in the United States.¹ Americans increasingly say these inequalities are caused by discrimination or a lack of opportunities for education for blacks, while fewer say they are a result of a lack of motivation or will power. In 2014, 33 percent of respondents said that racial differences were due to discrimination; in 2018, 45 percent of respondents say so, an all-time high. Fifty percent say racial differences are due to blacks having less chance for the education that would help them rise out of poverty, up from 42 percent in 2014. The number saying racial differences are due to lack of motivation among blacks decreased from 45 percent in 2014 to 36 percent, an all-time low. Just 8 percent say racial differences are due to less inborn ability to learn.

¹ <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/scfindex.htm>

Discrimination and lack of access to education are cited as the main causes of racial gaps in income, housing, jobs, and education.



Questions: On the average (Blacks/African-Americans) have worse jobs, income, and housing than white people. Do you think these differences are...

Mainly due to discrimination?

Because most (Blacks/African-Americans) have less in-born ability to learn?

Because most (Blacks/African-Americans) don't have the chance for education that it takes to rise out of poverty?

Because most (Blacks/African-Americans) just don't have the motivation or will power to pull themselves up out of poverty?

Source: GSS, the latest survey conducted April 12-November 10, 2018.

Differences emerge by political affiliation. More Democrats than Republicans say differences are due to discrimination (61 percent vs. 26 percent) or lack of access to education (61 percent vs. 39 percent). Republicans, on the other hand, are more likely to blame racial gaps on lack of motivation among black people (42 percent vs 29 percent).

Compared to 2014, more Democrats attribute inequality to discrimination (up from 46 percent to 61 percent) and lack of access to education (up from 51 percent to 61 percent), while fewer attribute it to a lack of motivation (down from 38 percent to 29 percent). More Republicans also attribute it to discrimination (up from 20 percent to 26 percent), and fewer attribute it to a lack of motivation (down from 53 percent to 42 percent).

Differences also emerge along racial lines. Compared to whites, blacks are more likely to agree that differences are due to discrimination (64 percent vs. 38 percent). Hispanics are more likely than whites to say a lack of motivation is a cause (42 percent vs. 33 percent). Both white and Hispanic respondents are trending lower on the motivation explanation though, with decreases from 42 percent to 33 percent and from 56 percent to 42 percent, respectively, in recent years.

While whites overall are less likely to attribute racial inequality to a lack of motivation than in the past, white Democrats are increasingly saying discrimination (up from 45 percent in 2014 to 59 percent in 2018) and lack of access to education (up from 54 percent to 66 percent) are causes of racial inequality.

Education level also affects the perceived cause of racial gaps. Americans with a college degree are more likely than those with a high school degree (56 percent vs. 48 percent) to say lack of access to education is the cause.

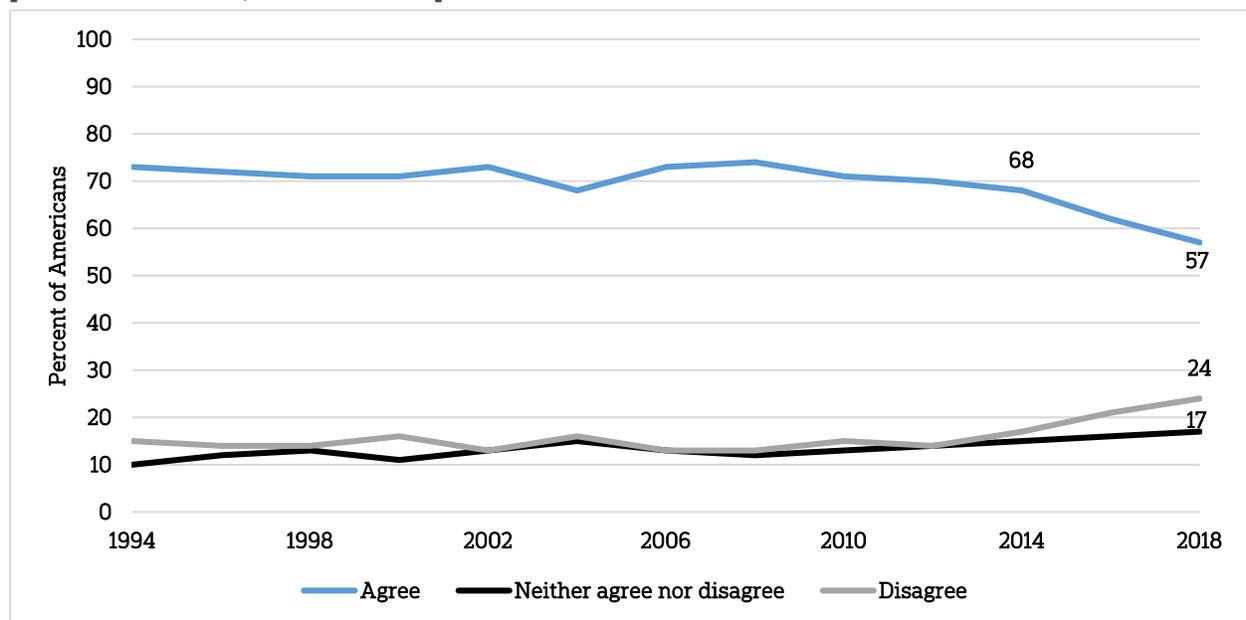
FEW SUPPORT AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS TO HELP OVERCOME PAST DISCRIMINATION.

Few Americans support preference in hiring and promotion for blacks to make up for past discrimination, though support is increasing. In 2018, 23 percent support affirmative action programs, up from 18 percent in 2014. Democrats are four times more likely to support preferential hiring and promotion programs than Republicans (36 percent vs. 9 percent), and Democrats have increased support from 25 percent to 36 percent from 2014 to 2018.

Differences also emerge along racial lines. Black respondents are much more likely than white respondents to support affirmative action (41 percent vs. 17 percent).

Most Americans say blacks should not receive special treatment to help them overcome past prejudice. Overall, 57 percent agree that blacks should work their way up without special treatment like other minorities have in the past, compared to 24 percent who disagree and 17 percent who neither agree nor disagree. But the number who say they should not receive special treatment declined since 2014 (68 percent), marking an all-time low.

Fifty-seven percent of Americans agree that blacks should not receive special treatment to make up for past discrimination, but that still represents an all-time low.



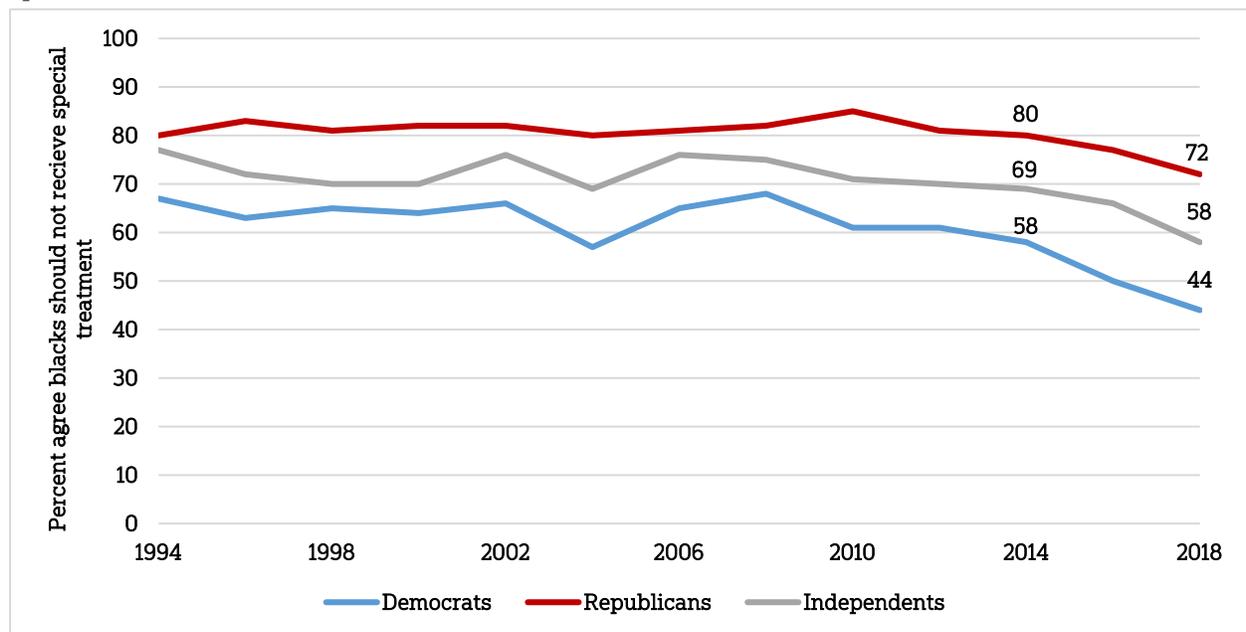
Question: Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with the following statement: Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without special favors.
Source: GSS, the latest survey conducted April 12-November 10, 2018.

Those with a high school education are more likely than those with a college degree to say blacks should work their way up without special favors (64 percent vs. 46 percent). Those with a college degree, however, have become less likely to say blacks should not get special treatment: in 2014, 60 percent said so, compared to 46 percent in 2018.

Looking at differences among whites based on education, those with a high school degree are more likely than those with a college degree to agree that blacks should not get special favors (70 percent vs. 49 percent). Since 2014, however, the share who say they should not get special treatment has declined among whites with a high school degree (down from 76 percent to 70 percent), but it has declined more among whites with a college degree (down from 63 percent to 49 percent).

Differences and trends emerge by party. Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say blacks should not receive special treatment (72 percent vs. 44 percent), with independents falling in the middle (58 percent). But the share of Republicans saying so declined since 2014 (80 percent). Democrats have also become more liberal on the issue, declining from 58 percent in 2014 to 44 percent in 2018.

The number of Democrats, Republicans, and independents who agree that blacks should not receive special treatment declined since 2014.



Question: Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with the following statement: Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without special favors.

Source: GSS, the latest survey conducted April 12–November 10, 2018.

Sixty-one percent of whites overall say blacks should not receive special treatment, but this represents a decline compared to 2014 (72 percent). While it has declined among whites of both parties, it declined more among white Democrats (down from 61 percent to 41 percent) than white Republicans (down from 81 percent to 74 percent).

TOLERANCE FOR RACIST SPEECH HAS SHIFTED IN RECENT YEARS, PARTICULARLY AMONG THOSE WITH COLLEGE DEGREES.

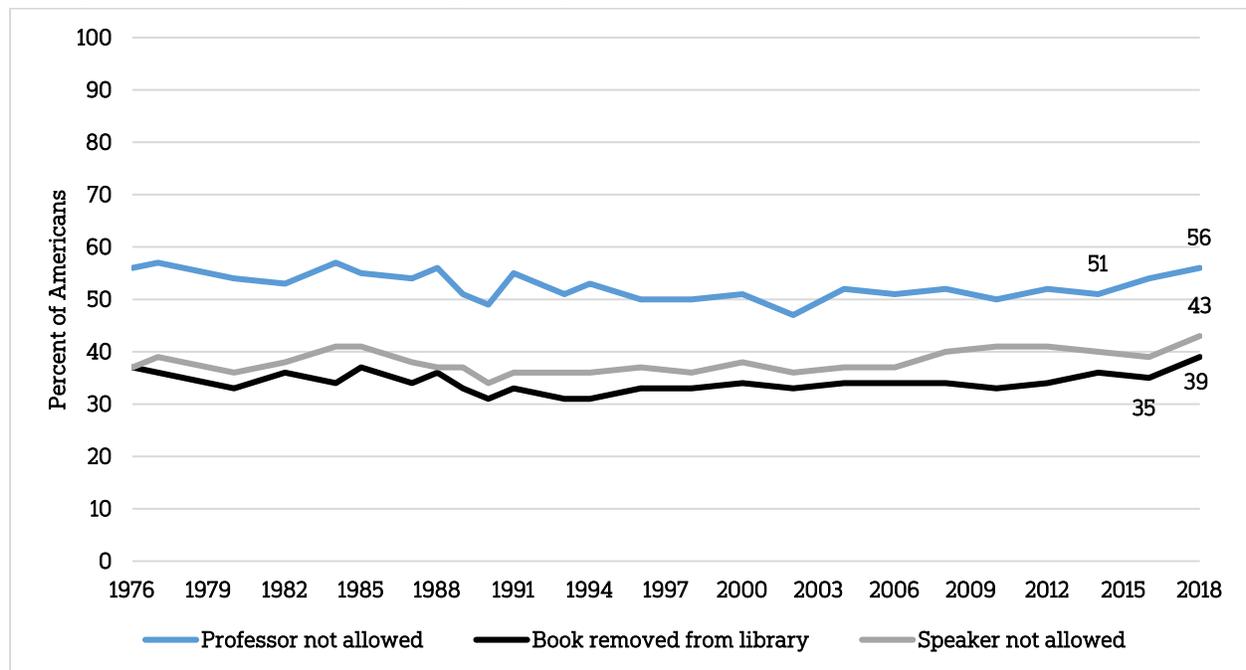
In recent years, debates about offensive speech and political correctness have unfolded in political elections, college campuses, and the public discourse. In the context of that climate, there has been an increase in the number of Americans who express disapproval of racist professors, books, and speakers in their communities and support keeping them out of their universities, libraries, and communities.

In 2018, 56 percent say that a racist professor—one who says blacks are genetically inferior—should be prevented from teaching at a college or university, an increase from 51 percent in 2014. Overall, this represents a 9-point increase from the lowest point in the series (47 percent in 2002) and is close to the high point of 57 percent in 1984.

Similarly, there has been an increase in the number who say a book written by a racist author should be removed from their public library. In 2016, 35 percent said it should be removed, but that number increased to 39 percent in 2018, reaching its highest point since the question was first asked in 1975. However, attitudes on this issue have been fairly flat over the last four decades, with a low point of 31 percent saying it should be removed.

Forty-three percent of Americans also say a racist should not be allowed to make a speech in their community. This is the highest for any point since the question was first asked in 1975 but does not represent a significant increase compared to 2016 (39 percent).

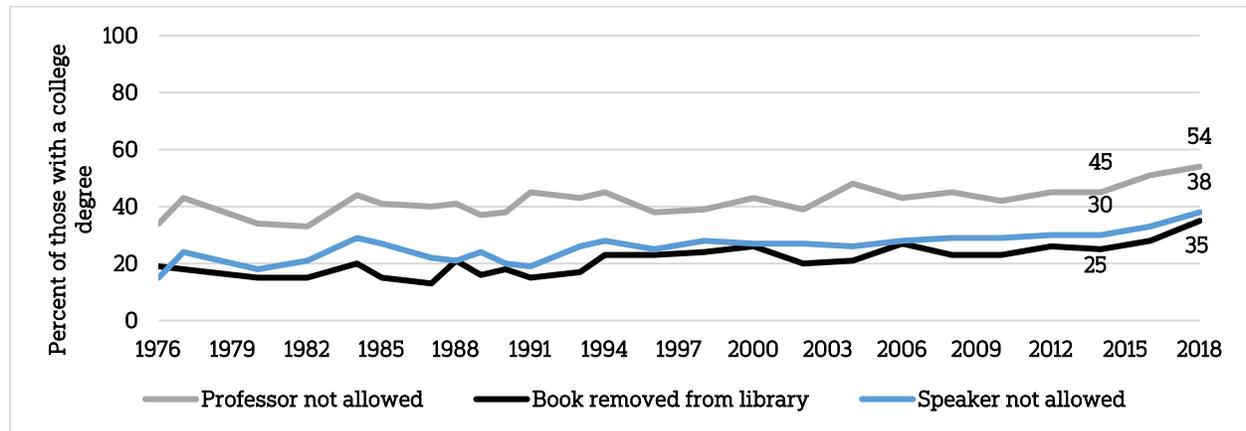
Disapproval for allowing a racist professor to teach, a racist speaker to speak, or a racist book to be on library bookshelves increased in the past few years.



Questions: Or consider a person who believes that Blacks are genetically inferior...
 Should such a person be allowed to teach in a college or university, or not?
 If some people in your community suggested that a book he wrote which said Blacks are inferior should be taken out of your public library, would you favor removing this book, or not?
 If such a person wanted to make a speech in your community claiming that Blacks are inferior, should he be allowed to speak, or not?
 Source: GSS, the latest survey conducted April 12-November 10, 2018.

Opinion on these issues has shifted considerably among those with college degrees since 2014. Support among college graduates for banning a racist professor increased from 45 percent to 54 percent. The number wanting to remove the racist book increased from 25 percent to 35 percent. And 38 percent want to prevent the racist speaker from speaking, up from 30 percent. The attitude shifts among those with lower educational attainment were smaller.

Compared to 2014, more college graduates now say a racist professor, speaker, or book should not be allowed a platform or should be removed from the shelves.



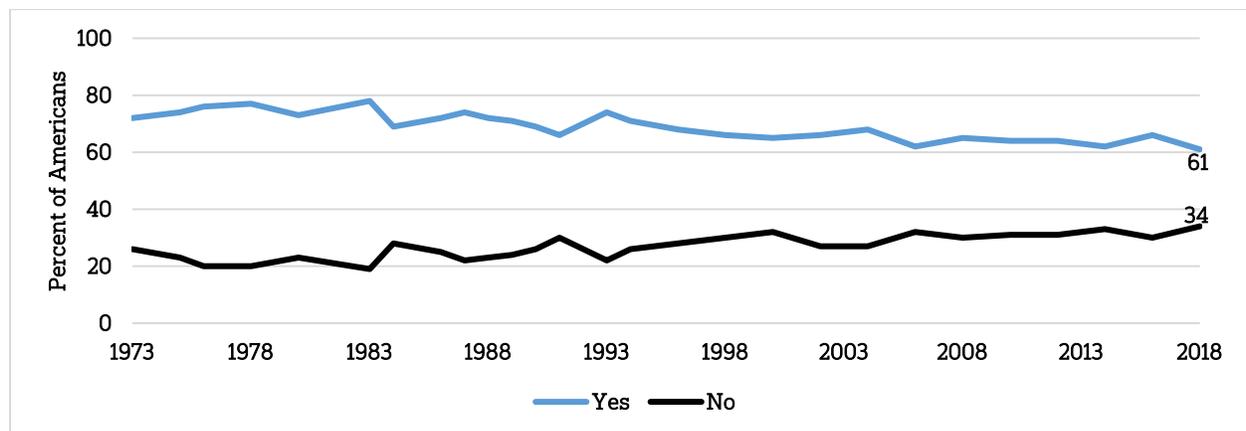
Questions: Or consider a person who believes that Blacks are genetically inferior... Should such a person be allowed to teach in a college or university, or not? If some people in your community suggested that a book he wrote which said Blacks are inferior should be taken out of your public library, would you favor removing this book, or not? If such a person wanted to make a speech in your community claiming that Blacks are inferior, should he be allowed to speak, or not?
 Source: GSS, the latest survey conducted April 12-November 10, 2018.

Differences also emerge along racial lines. More Hispanics than whites say a racist speaker should be prevented from speaking (55 percent vs. 38 percent). Blacks are more likely than whites to say such a book should be removed (47 percent vs. 35 percent), but there has been an increase in the number of whites supporting removal since 2014 (up from 29 percent to 35 percent).

TOLERANCE FOR POLICE VIOLENCE HAS DECREASED, WITH DIFFERENCES ALONG EDUCATIONAL AND PARTY LINES.

The number of Americans who say it is okay to for a police officer to hit a male citizen for any reason declined from 66 percent in 2016 to 61 percent in 2018. This represents the lowest level of support for such action since the question was first asked in 1973.

Fewer Americans than ever say it is okay for a police officer to strike a male citizen under any circumstance.



Question: Are there any situations you can imagine in which you would approve of a policeman striking an adult male citizen?
 Source: GSS, the latest survey conducted April 12-November 10, 2018.

Sharp differences emerge along education and partisan lines. Those with a college degree (70 percent) are more likely than those with a high school degree (61 percent) to say there are situations where it is okay. Rates have declined since 2016 for those with a college degree (down from 80 percent to 70 percent).

Republicans (76 percent) are more likely than Democrats (54 percent) or independents (53 percent) to say it is okay. The number of Democrats who say it is okay declined from 61 percent to 54 percent since 2016, but no significant shifts occurred within the other parties.

METHODOLOGY

GSS DESCRIPTION:

The GSS is administered by NORC at the University of Chicago, primarily using in-person interviewing. The GSS started in 1972 and completed its 32nd round in 2018. For the last 40 years, the GSS has been monitoring societal change and the growing complexity of American society. The GSS is the largest project funded by the Sociology Program of the National Science Foundation. The typical sample size was 1,500 prior to 1994, but increased to 2,700-3,000 until 2008 and decreased to 2,000-2,500 for the most recent surveys. Resulting margins of error are between +/- 3.1 for the smaller sample sizes and +/- 2.2 percentage points for the larger sample sizes at the 95 percent confidence level. The GSS 1972-2018 Cumulative File was utilized to produce the statistics presented.

LINK:

<http://gss.norc.org/>