NBER WORKING PAPER SERIES

PERCEPTIONS OF RACIAL GAPS, THEIR CAUSES, AND WAYS TO REDUCE THEM

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Working Paper 29245
http://www.nber.org/papers/w29245

NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH
1050 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138
September 2021, Revised July 2024

This paper was close to completion when our dear friend, colleague, and mentor, Alberto passed away unexpectedly. It was heartbreaking to keep working on it without him, and we hope that the paper has turned out the way he imagined it. We are indebted to Marcella Alsan, Peter Q. Blair, Romaine Campbell, Ellora Derenoncourt, Ray Fisman, Ilyana Kuziemko, Trevon Logan, and Ebonya Washington for feedback and comments. We thank Beatrice Ferrario, Daniele Goffi, Alfonso Merendino, and Petra Oreskovic for outstanding research assistance. This RCT was registered in the American Economic Association Registry for randomized control trials under trial number AEARCTR-0003988. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Bureau of Economic Research.

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JEL No. D31,D72,H23,H24,H41,J15,P16

ABSTRACT

This paper studies how beliefs about racial inequalities and their causes vary and shape support for race-targeted and redistribution policies among Black and white Americans, including both adults and teenagers. We collect original large-scale survey data to provide new evidence on perceptions, attitudes, and policy views on racial issues and study the causal impact of information on policy views. We highlight significant heterogeneity along racial and partisan lines in perceived racial gaps in income and mobility. Yet, the biggest discrepancies are in how people explain the existence of these gaps, i.e., their perceived causes. White Democratic and Black respondents are much more likely to attribute racial inequities to systemic factors, such as ad- verse past and present circumstances, and want to act on them with race-targeted and general redistribution policies. White Republicans are more likely to attribute racial gaps to individual-based factors, such as individual effort or actions. These views are already deeply entrenched in teenagers, based on their race and their parents' political affiliation. A policy decomposition shows that the perceived causes of racial inequities are the strongest predictors of support for race-targeted or redistribution policies, a finding confirmed by the experimental results.

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A online appendix is available at http://www.nber.org/data-appendix/w29245

1 Introduction

In the United States, median Black household income is around 60% of the median white household income. A Black man's life expectancy is on average 4.5 years shorter than that of a white man; a Black woman's life expectancy is three years shorter than that of a white woman. The share of Black Americans who live below the poverty line is more than twice that of white Americans. Black homeownership rates are just above half of white homeownership rates. These glaring racial gaps are by no means recent or unexposed, yet the public debate ebbs and flows with very little agreement on the sources of these problems and what should be done about them. Are many people simply unaware of the disparate opportunities and outcomes between Black and white Americans? Or do people see the same reality but explain its existence very differently? Perhaps people disagree on whether anything should be done at all. Or is it that people agree that policy action is needed but disagree on whether broad income-targeted redistribution or race-targeted interventions should be prioritized?

In this paper, we study how beliefs about racial inequalities and their causes vary and how they shape support for race-targeted and redistribution policies among Black and white Americans, including teenagers and adults. To better understand the design of our study and our results, Figure 1 shows a visual conceptual framework. The boxes at the top of the figure represent two types of policies: race-targeted policies that explicitly condition on race (e.g., preferential admissions to college or reparations paid to the descendants of enslaved people) and general redistribution policies that condition on income but not specifically on race (e.g., transfers to lower-income households or progressive taxation). On the latter, because African Americans have on average significantly lower income than white people in the US, redistribution could be perceived to benefit them more. The latter link relates to the longstanding undercurrent of racial attitudes in shaping support for redistribution (Gilens, 1995, 1996).

Views on race-targeted and redistribution policies can be shaped by people's perceived racial inequalities. Two important measures are racial gaps in income and racial gaps in social mobility, with the former being a measure of (in)equality in outcomes and the latter capturing (in)equality of opportunity. There are many other forms of inequalities related to the labor market, the education system, the criminal justice system, and a range of other settings such as credit access or health care. We call them "proximate causes" in the figure because they are also channels through which racial gaps in income and mobility are perpetuated. At the bottom of the figure are "fundamental causes" that shape all the above inequalities and which are of two types. To the left are individual-based factors, such as individual actions and efforts; to the right are systemic causes, which encompass systemic racism, institutional settings, and historical factors such as enslavement.

In principle, people could hold different beliefs about all the factors and inequalities repre-

sented in the figure. These beliefs in turn shape support for race-targeted and redistribution policies. For instance, consider someone who believes that racial inequalities, although substantial, are fundamentally the result of individual choices. This person might support less policy action to help Black people in the US (the path going through the dashed arrows) than someone who believes these gaps are due to systemic factors, outside of any individual's control (the path represented by the solid arrows).

Our first contribution is to provide new large-scale evidence from a sample of non-Hispanic Black and white Americans on all the perceptions, attitudes, and policy views represented in Figure 1. Specifically, we design a detailed questionnaire asking respondents what they know about racial inequalities, what they believe causes them, and what, if anything, they think should be done to reduce them. We do not focus only on racial gaps in mobility or income but dive into the full array of proximate and fundamental causes. We thereby document perceptions of racial gaps along many dimensions. We also explore a range of different race-targeted and redistribution policies. Our samples are representative along the dimensions of income, age, and gender within race groups, but Black respondents are intentionally oversampled and represent half of all respondents. The data further spans the period from 2019 to 2023, which allows us to also note some trends in beliefs and attitudes over this period across different groups. Such comprehensive data is currently lacking, and we hope that it can be used by future researchers too.

Our second contribution is to provide this type of evidence for very young individuals aged 13 to 17. The youth survey contains similar, though sometimes simplified, questions that explore the beliefs of teenagers from various families. These questions also cover the elements represented in Figure 1. Thanks to these comprehensive datasets for both adults and teenagers, we can study how beliefs about racial issues vary along racial and partisan lines and determine which beliefs are most predictive of policy views.

Our third contribution is to study the causal impact of information on policy views. We use three video treatments, each offering a distinct type of information. The first video focuses on the causes of racial gaps, specifically explaining the concept of systemic racism and its consequences. The second video highlights the current income gap between Black and white Americans and its evolution over the last 50 years. The third video shows the differences in intergenerational mobility between white and Black children in the US.

Given that our new large-scale data is a key contribution of our paper, one may justifiably wonder about its quality. Specifically, can we trust respondents' self-reported beliefs and views to reflect their true ones? We show that self-reported views on race-targeted and redistribution policies are significantly correlated with real-stakes behaviors such as signing petitions to be sent to the government or donating to causes that are in line with the policy views expressed. This confirms the findings of a growing body of research highlighting that survey-elicited attitudes are correlated with real-world behaviors in many settings (see the

review in Stantcheva, 2023; as well as the key results in Epper et al., 2020, Tannenbaum et al., 2022, Funk, 2016, and Hainmueller et al., 2015). Furthermore, to ensure that the data is of high quality and the survey results are credible and robust, we employ many techniques described in Section 2.3.

Our main findings can be summarized as follows. First, we highlight significant heterogeneity across racial and partisan lines in the perceived gaps in income and opportunities of Black and white Americans, and especially in the perceived proximate and fundamental causes of these gaps. Similarly, we underscore substantial disagreements related to policy support across partisan and racial groups.

Furthermore, the perceptions and attitudes of the average white respondent obscure a large heterogeneity by political affiliation. Along many dimensions, white Democratic respondents are more aligned with Black Democratic respondents than with white Republicans. Black and white Democratic respondents are much more likely to attribute persistent racial gaps to enslavement, longstanding discrimination, and racism, and want to reduce them through income-targeted redistribution and race-targeted policies. White Republican respondents tend to view racial inequalities primarily as the result of a lack of effort or individual decisions, and to support less intervention to reduce them. Thus, there are groups that fail to recognize the extent of racial inequalities and inequities, and this tends to be highly correlated with political leaning.

Second, we document that these racial and partisan gaps are already prevalent among teenagers. In particular, teenagers' views imply substantial partisan gaps in line with their parents' political affiliation. In some cases, their views are even more polarized across political lines than those of their parents. These findings suggest that the conflicts about race-targeted policies and redistribution are likely to continue far into the future.

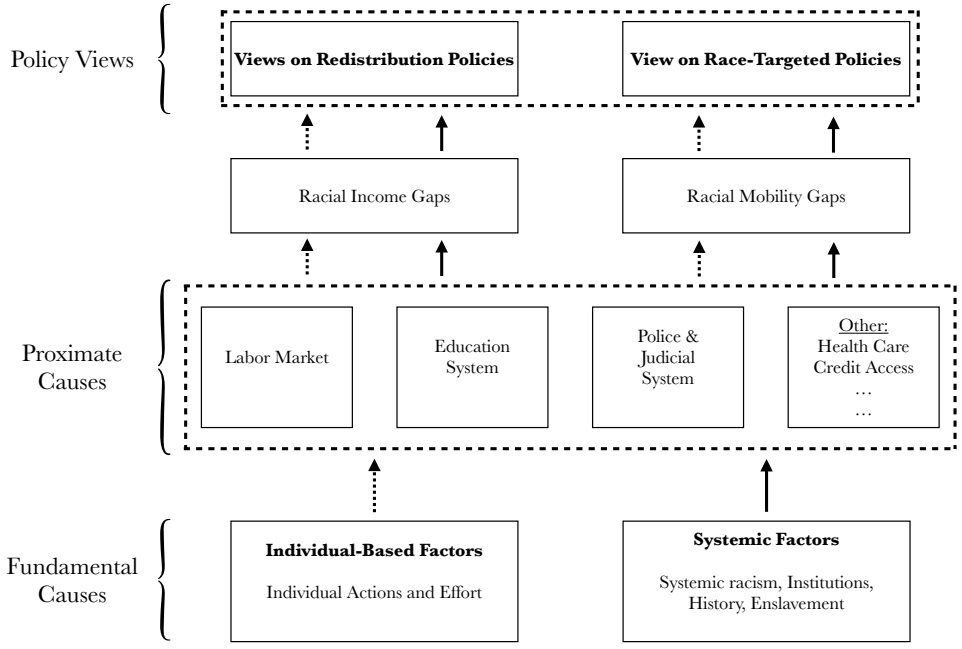
Our third finding is that beliefs about the proximate and fundamental causes of racial gaps are the most important predictors of policy views. We show this in three ways. First, the largest disagreements between respondents are about the causes of racial gaps rather than their magnitudes. In a nutshell, the largest polarization, especially along political lines, is in the beliefs represented by the bottom rows of Figure 1. Second, if we predict a respondent's policy views based on the array of beliefs measured, perceived causes have the highest predictive power. Relatedly, the racial and political gaps in policy support are best predicted by divergences in how adults and teenagers assess the causes of racial gaps. Third, the experimental part of our study confirms these correlational findings: showing people information on the differences in earnings and opportunities between Black and white people has effects on their perceived racial income and mobility gaps but does not move policy views. On the contrary, explaining some of the causes and consequences of systemic racism makes respondents more supportive of race-targeted and redistribution policies.

Our findings suggest that merely presenting information on the unequal circumstances and

opportunities does not alter people's initial beliefs about the reasons for these inequalities. Information on racial disparities fails to shift the narratives that respondents hold. Significant racial gaps exist across various economic and social dimensions, and while many people are somewhat aware of these gaps, they diverge in their opinions on the causes and, consequently, on the appropriate methods or even the necessity to address these disparities. Reflecting on the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1, these results confirm that even if respondents recognize the same racial income and mobility gaps, their policy perspectives differ based on whether they attribute these disparities to individual-level factors (as indicated by the path through the dashed arrows) or to systemic factors (as indicated by the path through the solid arrows).

However, the perceptions that are simultaneously most polarized and most predictive of policy views – namely, the perceived causes – are also the hardest ones to change for some groups. This is also reflected in the time patterns of attitudes and beliefs between 2019 and 2023. Although there is some increased awareness among white respondents about racial disparities right after the George Floyd murder, these views tend to revert back to their baseline quickly among Republican and, to a lesser extent, Independent respondents.

FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Our three contributions highlighted above add to several strands of the literature, which we highlight in turn.

Related to our first contribution, we advance the literature studying people's perceptions of racial gaps in income and mobility. Kraus et al. (2017) document an "unfounded optimism" about Black people's economic circumstances, a pattern we find in our sample mainly among white Republicans (see also Kraus et al., 2019 and Onyeador et al., 2021). Like us, Davidai and Walker (2021) find that respondents tend to overestimate the mobility of Black children in the US. We also show that Black respondents, and particularly Black teenagers, are overoptimistic about the mobility of white children.

The political science literature has long emphasized profound political divisions between Black and white voters in the United States on a range of policy issues (Gilens, 2009; Hurwitz and Peffley, 2010; Tesler, 2012; Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Kinder and Winter, 2001; Kam and Burge, 2019). We uncover a stark racial gap in policy support, especially for race-targeted policies, and show that this divide already exists among teenagers.

Furthermore, our study belongs to a growing body of work on political sectarianism (Finkel et al., 2020), highlighting the alignment of political leaning and racial issues (Mason, 2018; Haney-López, 2014). Sides et al. (2019) studies how racial and ethnic identities affected the 2016 Presidential election and how that election exacerbated racial divisions. Our findings show large partisan gaps among adults and teenagers in racial attitudes and race-targeted policies.

Related to our second contribution, we also extend the literature on teenagers' psychology and belief formation. Our detailed and tailored survey of teenage respondents allows us to compare their attitudes to those of adults. Psychologists consider childhood and adolescence to be "highly impressionable years" (Krosnick and Alwin, 1989). Social learning models of prejudice (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew et al., 1982; Sears, 1988; Katz, 1991) posit that individuals learn prevailing beliefs and attitudes about members of other racial groups from significant figures, such as parents, perhaps even before their own cognition has been developed. Parental attitudes are also reflected in the development of conservative versus liberal ideologies during childhood (Block and Block, 2006; Fraley et al., 2012; Perry et al., 2022; Tyler and Iyengar, 2023). Our data corroborate this: teens with parents of a given political affiliation answer in ways similar to the adults with the same affiliation.

Related to our third contribution, we add to three strands of the literature. First, we confirm the deep link between racial issues and support for redistribution in the United States and show that it exists across a wide range of policies and even among teenagers. Previous works show that racial attitudes are some of the key reasons for opposition to welfare among white people (Gilens, 1995, 1996) and that, more generally, ethnic fractionalization is correlated with lower social spending across countries (Alesina and Glaeser, 2004). Explanations for this phenomenon range from "racial group loyalty" (Luttmer, 2001), the "anti-solidarity

effect" that leads voters to oppose transfers to racial groups viewed as "undeserving" (Fong and Luttmer, 2009, 2011), the "policy bundle effect" that leads voters to support a party more aligned with their views on racial issues, even if the party is also anti-redistribution (Lee and Roemer, 2006; Lee et al., 2006), and "parochial altruism," a form of altruism bounded by perceptions of common group membership or shared experience (Fowler and Kam, 2007). In all these theories, when racial or ethnic minorities comprise a significant proportion of the poor, as is the case for the US, members of the majority group are predicted to be less supportive of redistributive policies.

The second strand highlights the enduring and key role of racism – especially "symbolic racism" (Kinder and Sears, 1981; McConahay and Hough Jr., 1976; Sears and Kinder, 1971) or "racial resentment" (Kinder and Sanders, 1996) in contrast to "Jim Crow" racism – for support for redistributive and race-targeted policies (Sears and Henry, 2003; Henry and Sears, 2009; Rabinowitz et al., 2009; Ditonto et al., 2013). Racial attitudes have been shown to influence views on policies such as harsh criminal justice policies, the same ones that produce and perpetuate racial disparities (Hetey and Eberhardt, 2014). Krysan (2000) offers a review of the research on the sources of attitudes toward policies intended to benefit African Americans. Kinder and Sanders (1996) show that racial resentment measures predict attitudes toward race-related policies among white people, while subsequent works also show how it relates to electoral decision-making and candidate evaluation (Tuch and Hughes, 2011; Kam and Kinder, 2012; Kinder and Dale-Riddle, 2012; Enders and Scott, 2018). Our survey includes several questions from the racial resentment array as part of our perceived fundamental causes of racial gaps. We can thus provide information on how white and Black adults and teenagers feel along this dimension and highlight its strong link to support for both redistribution and race-targeted policies. Our findings are in line with the work of Kam and Burge (2018) and Kam and Burge (2019) and extend these results to teenagers. The former paper shows that for both white and Black Americans, racial resentment correlates with individualism, negative views towards Black people, and the belief that discrimination is not a problem. The latter correlates it with support for race-related policies.[1]

The third strand of literature is characterized by a small yet expanding collection of studies that explore the impact of information about racial disparities on perceptions and attitudes. Specifically focusing on the labor market, Haaland and Roth (2021) highlight significant partisan differences in perceptions of discrimination against Black applicants in hiring processes. These gaps in perception are not mitigated by experimental information detailing the extent of discrimination. Bonam et al. (2019) assigned participants randomly to listen to a segment of an interview with a historian discussing the role of racially discriminatory housing policies (racial "redlining") in the formation of Black American ghettos. This led to

[1]Frymer and Grumbach (2021) show that union membership not only reduces racial resentment but also increases support for race-targeted policies.

a greater acknowledgment among respondents of structural racism in contemporary society. Callaghan et al. (2021) demonstrate that to reduce misperceptions, data-driven interventions are more effective than narrative approaches. Onyeador et al. (2020) presented information to white Americans about the ongoing racial disparities, which resulted in smaller overestimations of the progress made toward racial economic equality from 1963 to 2016. Instead of altering overestimations of current racial economic equality, participants exposed to information about disparities perceived the past as more equitable than those who were not. Our treatments systematically explore the significance of information about racial gaps versus their causes and investigate their causal impact on policy views, not only on racial attitudes.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the survey, data collection, and sample. Section 3 analyzes adults' and teenagers' perceptions of racial income and mobility gaps and their causes. Section 4 focuses on policy views and the factors that predict them. Section 5 presents the experimental results, and Section 6 provides concluding remarks.

2 Survey Design, Data Collection, and Sample

2.1 Data Collection and Sample

We sampled respondents who identify as "European American/White" and "African American/Black." We are thus excluding, among others, respondents who identify as Black Hispanic, white Hispanic, or mixed race. We will use the terms "Black respondents" and "white respondents" for brevity. We ran an "adult survey" of respondents aged 18 to 69 and a "youth survey" on respondents aged 13 to 17.

Data collection. We ran the adult survey in three waves: i) the first wave of 5,004 respondents from April 16 to July 4, 2019; ii) the second wave of 3,396 respondents from June 5 to June 29, 2020; and iii) the third wave of 3,003 respondents from July 4 to June 26, 2023. We will consistently control for the survey wave to filter out potential time-varying changes in perceptions. The total sample contains 11,403 respondents, out of which approximately 50% are Black and 50% white. Respondents who completed wave 3 were recontacted after a week for a shorter follow-up survey. 883 respondents completed the follow-up from July 12 to August 7, 2023, for a recontact rate of 29.4%. The median times for completing the first, second, and third waves were 31, 26, and 27 minutes. The median completion time for the follow-up survey was 10 minutes. The survey duration distribution is shown in Figure A-1.

We ran the youth survey between May 22 and July 23, 2020. That sample contains 2,005 respondents aged 13 to 17 and is also evenly split between Black and white respondents.

The median completion time for the youth survey was 25 minutes (see the survey duration distribution in Figure A-1e).

Recruiting and rewarding respondents. The surveys were distributed by the commercial survey company *Bilendi* through its mailing lists and dashboards.[2] Respondents are recruited through various marketing channels and, once they have agreed to be recruited for surveys, receive regular email links and can find surveys on a dashboard. There are multiple advantages to such samples. First, respondents are rewarded with survey "points," which they can redeem for a variety of rewards, including hotel points, frequent flyer miles, cash, or shopper rewards. This variety of rewards ensures that the commercial survey company is able to recruit diverse respondents, including those with higher incomes, who might not be interested in small cash incentives but might care about some of the other perks. Second, these respondents usually partake in short market product surveys and are not regular social sciences survey takers. This means that they represent a fresh sample when it comes to thinking about the issues covered in our survey. Third, as shown in Stantcheva (2023), the pools of respondents available to this commercial survey company are quite representative of the overall US population. They do tend to skew somewhat more educated, urban, younger, and white than the overall population. As with any survey method, it is very difficult to reach the very low-income or the very high-income, but there is a good representativity for a broad middle range of the income distribution.

Avoiding selection. Importantly, to avoid selection based on the identity of the surveyor or the topic, respondents were only told the length of the questionnaire and that it would be an academic research survey destined solely for research purposes, but they were not told the topic or the names of the surveyors. They were assured that they were completely anonymous and that there was no way for us to ever link their responses to their identity.

Quota sampling. Respondents are sampled using quota sampling. We imposed quotas on age, gender, and income for Black and white respondents separately. Geographically, we targeted respondents living in urban areas and ensured that we sampled enough respondents from the Northeast, Midwest, South, and West. We somewhat under-sampled Black respondents from the South to allow for more Black respondents from the other regions. Our sample contains respondents from 233 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) across the US. Our rationale for targeting urban areas is that 87% of US Black residents live in urban areas. This is likely without much loss of generality overall, since most pools of respondents are in urban MSAs.

[2]Formerly known as *Respondi*.

Sample representativity. Tables 1 and 2 show the characteristics of the sample in each wave compared with those of the overall US population and the urban US population, which is the more relevant comparison group. The sample is by construction representative of the urban US population along the quota dimensions of age, gender, and income groups. In addition, the sample is also broadly representative on non-targeted dimensions such as the share of respondents who are married and those who are employed or unemployed. Overall, respondents are more likely to have completed high school and have at least a four-year college degree than the average adult. In the teenager sample, we are slightly skewed toward older Black teenagers, as 13 and 14-year-olds were particularly hard to reach. We also have more middle- to high-income teenagers compared to low-income ones.

Attrition. Table A-1 shows that around 23% of respondents who start the survey do not complete it. African American respondents, and respondents who are younger, lower-income, and without a college degree, are less likely to complete the survey, but the differences are not substantive. Most importantly, there are no significant differences in completion rates between Democrats and Republicans, and being assigned to a treatment branch does not predict the likelihood of completing the survey in wave 3, which we use to study treatment effects.

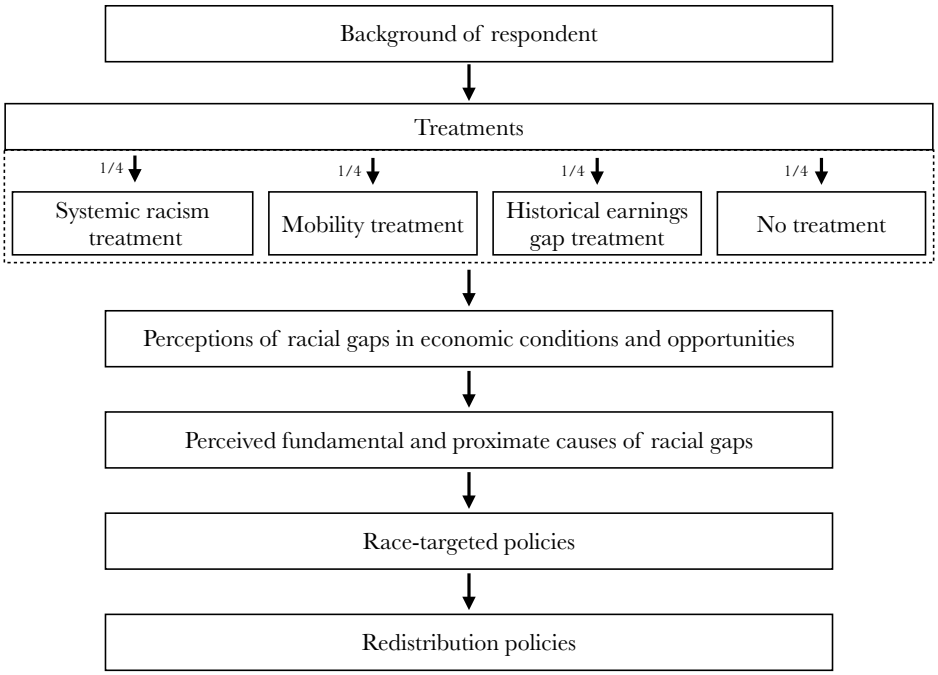
2.2 The Survey

The complete questionnaires are in Appendix Sections A-6 and A-7, with a link that leads to the web interface of the survey (Appendix Section A-8). The adult and youth surveys have the same structure, illustrated in Figure 2. The youth survey is shorter to avoid loss of focus. Questions are simplified, e.g., relying more on qualitative than on quantitative questions and using easier-to-understand wording. Teenagers were also given the option to answer that they "do not know" more often. We now provide information on the blocks composing the survey and the core elements.

Background socioeconomic questions. All respondents were first asked about their race and ethnicity, followed by a series of questions about their demographics and socioeconomic backgrounds, such as gender, income, education, employment status, ZIP code, marital and family status, and political leanings. We also queried them about their primary source of news and their overall media and social media consumption.

In the youth survey, 1,300 respondents were reached through their parents, and 700 were contacted directly. In the former case, parents answered the questions about household income, their educational attainment, their own political affiliation, and their ZIP code before handing over the survey to their children. Teenagers were asked about their gender, age, race,

Figure 2: Survey Structure



city, and ZIP code in either case. We then elicited their family income, using a qualitative question asking them to rank their family on a scale from very poor to very rich and a quantitative one asking about the total income of their parents. We also asked whether their parents had graduated from college, what their parents' jobs are, whether they go to a private or public school, what their main source of news is, and how much time they spend on social media.[3]

Our main measure of political affiliation is identification with a party: Democrat, Republican, or Independent. Teenage respondents will be classified as belonging to Democratic, Republican, or Independent families depending on their parents' political affiliation. We collected this information in two ways. First, whenever possible, we asked the parents directly (when parents started the survey). Second, we also asked the teenagers about their parents' political affiliation. To do so, we first asked whether they knew what the Republican and Democratic parties were and, if the response was affirmative (in 84% of the cases), we went on to ask if they thought their parents considered themselves Republicans, Democrats, or Independents. To classify the respondents, we prioritized the answer provided by the parents

[3]We have high confidence that the teens actually take the survey and provide extensive robustness checks and verification analysis in Appendix Section A-4.

when available and otherwise used the response of the teenager.[4] Overall, teenagers' answers about their parents' political affiliation appear to be very accurate. In 92% of the cases in which both the parents and the teenagers responded (41% of teenagers), responses were aligned. Only 17% of teenagers who knew the difference between parties said that they did not know their parents' political affiliation.[5] Overall, information on the parents' political affiliation is missing for only around 15% of teenagers. With some abuse of terminology, we will use the terms "Republican" or "Democratic teenagers" as a shortcut for teenagers "in Republican" or "in Democratic families."

Experimental video treatments. At this point in the survey, randomly chosen subsamples of respondents were shown one of three video treatments, described in more detail in Section 5.1. One explains to respondents some of the origins and consequences of systemic racism (see the screenshots in Figure 3). The other provides information on the differences in intergenerational mobility between Black and white children (see the screenshots in Figure 4). The third treatment shows the evolution of the earnings gap between Black and white people from the 1970s until today (see the screenshots in Figure 5).

Perceptions of racial gaps in income and mobility. In this block, respondents are asked about their knowledge and perceptions of differences in intergenerational mobility, income levels, and the evolution of incomes over time among Black and white people in the US.

Perceptions of the proximate causes of racial gaps. We also ask respondents about their perceptions of Black-white differences in the proximate causes illustrated in Figures 7 and 8, including in the education system (e.g., different school quality for Black and white children), labor market (e.g., discrimination at work), interactions with the judicial and policy systems, and other areas such as the housing market. Many of the questions are asked about both Black and white people, in a randomized order to be able to benchmark perceptions of one racial group against the other. The questions given to teenagers were very similar but often simplified.

Perceived fundamental causes of racial gaps. In this block, we ask respondents to what extent they attribute racial gaps to past slavery and discrimination, to current enduring racism or discrimination, or to individual choices. Some of these questions are used in the

[4] We do not ask about parents' political leanings separately. However, very few families have parents with mixed Democratic and Republican affiliations. Data from the American Family Survey from 2020 shows that only 3.6% of married couples are politically "mixed" Republican/Democrats (`https://ifstudies.org/blog/marriages-between-democrats-and-republicans-are-extremely-rare`). Pew Research Center found similar results in 2016, where only 3% of both Clinton and Trump supporters said that their spouse would vote for the opposite candidate (`https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2016/10/18/most-trump-clinton-backers-say-spouses-share-their-vote-preferences/`).

[5] Most of the mismatched answers are when parents are Independent, but the teenager believes they are Democrats or Republicans. Only 0.5% wrongly considered their parents to be Democrats when they are, in fact, Republicans, or vice versa.

literature to capture racial resentment (Kinder and Sanders, 1996). Specifically, respondents are asked whether they agree with the following two statements: *"It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if Black people would only try harder, they could be just as well off as white people"* and *"Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Black people to work their way out of the lower class."*

Race-targeted policies. Respondents are next asked about their views on various policies to reduce racial gaps, namely whether the government should try to reduce inequalities in opportunities for Black and white children; whether Black people should be given preference in hiring and promotion or college admissions; whether they believe that more changes are needed to give Black Americans equal rights with white people; and whether they think that the US should pay reparations *"as a way to make up for the harm caused by slavery and other forms of racial discrimination.*"

General redistribution policies. In this block, we ask respondents about their views on redistribution policies, namely whether the government should try to reduce inequality in opportunities for children from poor and rich families and income inequality between rich and poor people. We also ask to what extent high-income, middle-class, or low-income households pay their fair share in taxes and whether respondents support higher spending on a range of programs (e.g., helping low-income families, improving schools and overall conditions in poor neighborhoods, and providing decent housing and health insurance).

Feedback and perceived bias. The survey ends by asking respondents whether they felt it was biased and inviting them to provide open-ended feedback.

2.3 Data Quality

We perform several checks to ensure the quality of our responses, described in Appendix Section A-3. First, we included attention screening questions in each survey. To screen out bots and very careless respondents, we include one basic inattention question at the start of the survey and automatically redirect out of the survey respondents who fail it. We also include two more subtle attention traps later on in the survey. Our analysis sample drops the fastest and slowest 2% of respondents and those who fail the two more subtle attention traps.

Second, we checked whether rewarding accurate responses to knowledge questions (i.e., questions that have a correct objective answer) related to gaps in income and mobility changes respondents' answers. This serves two purposes: ensuring that responses are not careless and testing for motivated reasoning, whereby respondents might provide inaccurate answers to align with their other beliefs. Table A-2 shows that incentives had no significant effect on responses.

Third, we added two sets of real-stakes questions to check whether self-reported views correlated with actual behaviors. The first real-stakes question tells respondents that they are automatically enrolled in a lottery for $1,000 and that they can choose to donate some or none of that gain to one or more of three charitable organizations. They have to commit to their donation before they know whether they are the winners of the lottery (this technique allows us to consider larger sums of money). The three organizations are: Feeding America, The Salvation Army, and Black Lives Matter. The second real-stakes question asks respondents to sign one or both of two petitions to be sent to Congress. The first petition was designed to capture respondents' views on race-targeted policies and asked the government to *"take immediate and decisive policy action to address the persistent economic disparities between white and Black Americans."* The second petition was designed to capture support for more redistribution, asking for higher taxes on high-income families to provide more transfers to low-income families. Table 3 shows that respondents who support more race-targeted policies are also more likely to donate to Black Lives Matter and to sign the petition asking the government to address racial inequalities. They are also more likely to perceive systemic factors as the root causes of racial gaps and to think racial inequalities are larger. Respondents who support more redistribution policies are more likely to sign the petition asking for higher taxes on the rich to help poor families.

Furthermore, we address the issue of social desirability bias in Appendix Section A-3.3. It might be that respondents answer some sensitive questions in a biased way because they do not want to appear racist. We first perform a list experiment on the statement *"If black people would only try harder, they could be just as well-off as white people."* Table A-3 shows that there is no detected social desirability bias among white respondents. Interestingly, there is some level of social desirability bias among Black respondents who are more likely to agree with that statement in the list experiment than in the survey. We then also rephrase the question to ask about what "others" think. This has been shown to reduce social desirability bias and be correlated with respondents' own beliefs (Galesic et al., 2018). Specifically, we incentivize respondents to guess how many other respondents agreed with the statement *"Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Black people to work their way out of the lower class."* Table A-4 shows that, on average, respondents perfectly predict how many others agree with this statement.

We also test for survey fatigue in Appendix Section A-3.4, leveraging the fact that we randomized the order of blocks of the survey, as explained in Appendix Section A-6. Although for the "Redistribution Policies" block, respondents tend to go a little faster when those questions are asked later in the survey, the difference is very small relative to the length of these blocks. Furthermore, we do not detect more careless answer patterns (answering extreme values) in questions that (randomly) come later in the survey.

Importantly, we included questions from high-quality existing surveys, such as the GSS

2022 (Davern et al., 2024) and YouGov (2018), so that we can compare the responses in our survey to them. We went and gathered the response by race to these questions from these past surveys. Table A-6 shows that our responses are very well-aligned with the ones from those other surveys, for both white and Black respondents.

Finally, we perform some additional quality checks as follows. For some questions, we ask about the outcomes of Black and white people separately (instead of asking about the gap). To ensure that we do not prime respondents with the order of our questions, we randomize the order in which we ask about the outcomes of Black and white people. Table A-7 shows that although there is some significant effect of asking in a specific order, the magnitudes are very small and economically insignificant. Furthermore, we report in Table A-8 the share of respondents who thought the survey was either left- or right-wing biased. These two shares are 14% and 9%, respectively, with some variation across racial and political groups. Overall, these numbers suggest that few respondents considered the survey biased and that this was relatively balanced between left- and right-wing bias. We discuss the implications of perceiving the survey as biased in Section 5.3.

3 Perceptions of Racial Gaps and Their Causes

In this section, we describe respondents' perceptions of the incomes and mobility of Black and white people in the US and their beliefs about their proximate and fundamental causes, following the organizing framework of Figure 1. The key takeaways are that, although there are differences in perceptions about racial income and mobility gaps, the largest heterogeneity is in their perceived proximate and fundamental causes. Often, partisan gaps in the perceived causes are larger than racial gaps; Black and white Democratic respondents tend to be more aligned in their views than white Democrats and Republicans. Thus, white Republican respondents especially are much more likely to believe in the importance of individual-based factors in explaining racial gaps, while Black and white Democratic respondents emphasize the weight of systemic factors over individual-based ones.

All figures are based on the control groups (which did not see any video) from all survey waves, pooled together. We compare and contrast views across racial groups and political party affiliations. For the latter dimension, the comparison is essentially between white Democrats and white Republicans, because the share of Black Republicans is small: 7.7% of Black adult respondents say they are Republican, and 5.7% of the Black teenagers in our sample live in Republican families. Appendix Section A-5.1 reproduces all figures, also including statistics for Independent respondents and splitting Black respondents by political leaning. In Appendix Section A-5.2, we show the results by education and income levels, both interacted with the respondents' race.

In Figures 6 through 11, Panel A shows the results from the adult survey; Panel B shows

those from the youth survey. In each panel, the left sub-figures focus on racial gaps and depict the shares of Black and white respondents that satisfy the condition listed on the left vertical axis with its associated 90% confidence interval. The right vertical axis lists the coefficients and standard errors on the indicator for being Black (relative to the omitted category of being white) of a regression of the outcome on the left on an indicator for being Black, and the full array of individual characteristics (political affiliation, gender, age group, income group, education, state fixed effects, and survey wave indicators); we call these "partial correlations." The right set of sub-figures repeats this same analysis for white Democrats and white Republicans. The numbers on the right vertical axis are the coefficients on being a white Democrat (where the omitted category is the indicator for being a white Republican). In Table A-12, we formally test for the significance of the differences in views and perceptions between teens and adults.

3.1 Perceived Income Inequality and Social Mobility

We start with the perceptions of racial income and mobility gaps, in the second row of Figure 1. Figure 6 shows some of these perceptions.

Adult survey. In the adult survey, many respondents (81%) correctly understand that a white person in the US on average earns more than a Black person. But few understand that the Black-white earnings gap has not decreased significantly since the 1970s. Black respondents and Democratic respondents have more accurate perceptions along these dimensions.

Respondents are overoptimistic about social mobility overall, but especially overestimate the chances of Black children moving up the social ladder. Although they do understand that mobility is lower among Black children than among white ones, the magnitudes are incorrect. On average, respondents believe that 44% of Black children from the bottom quintile will make it to at least the third quintile, whereas the actual share is 25%. They also believe that 57% of white children will make this advancement, whereas the reality is 46%.

There are wider partisan gaps in the perceptions of mobility of Black children than white children. White Republican respondents are more overoptimistic than white Democratic respondents about the mobility of Black children. Both Black and white respondents are strongly overoptimistic about the mobility of Black children, but only Black respondents tend to starkly overestimate the mobility of white children. Put differently, Black respondents overestimate overall mobility more, but especially for white children, while white respondents are relatively accurate about the mobility of white children and strongly overestimate Black children's mobility.

Youth survey. Among teenagers, there are also racial and partisan gaps in perceptions. For perceived income inequality, these gaps are substantially larger than for adults. Black teenagers are significantly more likely to think that a white person earns more than a Black person in the US and that the white-Black earnings gap has not decreased. Teenagers from Democratic families are also much more likely to believe so. The larger partisan gap appears to mainly be driven by teenagers from Republican families having on average more right-leaning perceptions than their parents along many dimensions.

Panel B of Figure 6 shows that, on average, teenagers are aware that white children are more likely than Black children to move up the social ladder. The share of teenagers who believe that the chances of Black children born in low-income families to grow up to be among the rich or very rich families are at least "fairly high" is less than half of the share that believe this for white children (16% versus 39%).[6] However, this hides a stark heterogeneity between white and Black teenagers. White teenagers perceive the chances of Black and white children to be somewhat different (respectively, at 13% and 23%). Black teenagers do not differ much from white teenagers in their perceived chances for Black children, but they are strikingly more optimistic about white children's opportunities.

3.2 Perceived Causes of Racial Gaps

We next turn to the perceived proximate and fundamental causes of racial gaps, represented by the two bottom rows in Figure 1.

Perceived proximate causes. Figures 7 and 8 show that there are substantial racial and partisan gaps in all perceived inequalities – in the labor market, the education system, the judicial and police system, and other areas. These gaps are present for both adults and teenagers. Black respondents are more likely to perceive larger inequalities, such as that white people get more job offers, that Black people are more discriminated against at work, or that Black children attend worse quality schools than white children.

Republican respondents are significantly less likely to believe in such inequalities. Among white respondents, the share of Democrats who think that Black people are often discriminated against in any of the settings we ask about is consistently around twice that among Republicans. In fact, around 75% of white Republican respondents believe that a white person is less likely to be admitted to a college or university program or hired, while an *"equally or less qualified Black person"* will be admitted or hired.[7] Partisan gaps are also very pronounced among teenagers, sometimes more so than among adults.

[6] Since teenagers were asked a qualitative question, we cannot easily compare their answers to those in the adult survey (which are quantitative) or to reality.

[7] The answer to the college admission question does not seem to differ significantly based on whether the respondent has children or not (see Table A-19).

Perceived fundamental causes. Figure 9 shows large differences between Black and white respondents in the perceived fundamental causes of racial gaps (the bottom row in Figure 1). White respondents, especially Republican ones, are much more likely to believe in the importance of individual-based factors than systemic factors in explaining racial gaps.

Thus, Black respondents are less likely than white ones to believe that lack of effort is the root cause of poverty overall (44% believe so) or of poverty for Black people specifically (37% believe so). Less than a quarter of Black respondents believe that Black people could be *"just as well off as white people"* if only they tried harder, and 72% believe that *"generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Black people to work their way out of the lower class."* White respondents are more likely to attribute being poor to low effort, especially for Black people, or to think that Black people could be as well off as white people. Only around half of them attribute today's racial gaps to past slavery and discrimination. Fifty percent of white respondents, contrasted with 81% of Black respondents, think racism is a serious problem in the US today.[8]

A possible explanation for these gaps is that white and Black people learn about racism differently, as a large body of literature shows. While white people primarily rely on formal education and mass media, which often misrepresent racism (Adams et al., 2008; Behnken and Smithers, 2015; Lopez et al., 1998), Black people also learn through direct experience (Del Toro et al., 2019) and exposure to family and community members (Anyiwo et al., 2018; Bañales et al., 2020;Hughes et al., 2006). These different learning paths lead to varying views on racism, as shown by Nelson et al. (2013), who find that knowledge gaps about US racial history explain differences in acknowledging systemic racism.

Partisan differences in the perceptions of what drives inequalities in outcomes and opportunities are stark. White Democrats are much less likely to believe that Black people or people overall are poor because of a lack of effort and that Black people could be as well off as white people with more effort. They are more likely to say that past slavery is why Black people are economically worse off today.

These racial and partisan patterns also hold for teenagers (see Panel B of Figure 9). Teenagers from white families are less likely than those from Black families to believe in systemic reasons for racial inequalities today; the same holds for those from white Republican families as compared to white Democratic families. It appears that parents' beliefs about individual responsibility, the role of effort, and race, which are at the core of the partisan divide, have already been absorbed – and even amplified – by their teen children.

An interesting pattern for teenagers relates to the role of effort versus luck. Many more teenagers than adults believe that lack of effort is the reason people in general are poor, and

[8]These findings echo the literature in social psychology and political science that shows that people are in general more prone to blame Black Americans for their hardships (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2019; Lei and Bodenhausen, 2017).

this share is equally high (at close to 70%) among Black and white teenagers. However, only 38% of Black teenagers, compared to 58% of white ones, believe that lack of effort is the main reason Black people specifically are poor.

Racial resentment. Two of the questions we use to measure perceived fundamental causes are part of the measures of "racial resentment" (Kinder and Sanders, 1996). We selected these two over the others because they relate specifically to the causes of racial gaps. However, our two selected questions correlate closely with the remaining ones, which are supposed to capture a dimension of fundamental attitude on race. Figure A-14 shows the answers to the remaining racial resentment questions and the array of four questions used to measure racial sympathy (Chudy, 2021, 2023). As can be expected given the large racial and partisan gaps in perceived fundamental causes, there are large gaps in racial resentment across these groups as well. For instance, 62% of white Republican respondents and 34% of white Democratic respondents believe that *"Irish, Italian, and Jewish ethnicities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Black people should do the same without any special favors."* Only one-quarter of white Republicans, compared to 67% of white Democrats, believe that *"over the past few years, Black people have gotten less than they deserve."* Interestingly, measures of racial sympathy show much smaller differences between Black and white respondents, although they still exhibit substantial partisan gaps.

Overall, partisan gaps in the perceived *causes* of racial inequities are much larger than partisan gaps in the perceived racial income or mobility gaps. Furthermore, Black respondents and white Democrats are relatively aligned in their views; the gap between white Democrats and Republicans is consistently more prominent than the gap between white Democrats and Black respondents. Left-leaning respondents emphasize the importance of systemic factors for racial gaps, while right-leaning ones highlight individual-based factors, including individual effort.

A possible explanation for these gaps is that white and Black people learn about racism differently, as a large body of literature shows. While white people primarily rely on formal education and mass media, which often misrepresent racism (Adams et al., 2008; Behnken and Smithers, 2015; Lopez et al., 1998), Black people also learn through direct experience (Del Toro et al., 2019) and exposure to family and community members (Anyiwo et al., 2018; Bañales et al., 2020;Hughes et al., 2006). These different learning paths lead to varying views on racism, as shown by Nelson et al. (2013), who find that knowledge gaps about US racial history explain differences in acknowledging systemic racism.

4 Views on Race-targeted and Redistribution Policies

This section focuses on support for the two types of policies described in the introduction and in the first row of Figure 1, namely race-targeted policies and income-targeted redistribution policies. The former directly condition on race. The latter do not explicitly depend on race but can indirectly shape racial gaps, given the income inequalities between Black and white people. We start with several descriptive statistics on policy views. We then decompose policy views into their determinants and explore what attitudes can account for the partisan and racial gaps in policy views that we observe. To further identify patterns in support for these different policies, we use a clustering algorithm that identifies the groups of answers that tend to appear together and defines "profiles" of respondents based on these groups in Appendix Section A-5.7.

4.1 Description of Policy Views

Support for race-targeted policies in the adult survey. Panel A of Figure 10 summarizes adult respondents' views on race-targeted policies. Racial and partisan gaps are particularly large here. But there are important nuances between different types of policies, depending on where they lie on the spectrum from equalizing outcomes to equalizing opportunities.

First, an overwhelming majority of Black and white Democratic respondents believe that "*more changes are needed*" to give Black people equal rights, while less than a third of white Republican respondents do. Yet, there is no explicit agreement on how the government should do this specifically. Interventions to reduce unequal opportunities between Black and white children generate a lot of support across racial and political affiliation groups. Specific policies include fair housing laws against racial discrimination or job training and career development resources for underrepresented racial groups.

But direct interventions to foster equality of outcomes, such as preferential hiring or college admission for Black students, are favored by only around a quarter of white respondents, regardless of political affiliation. It appears as if white respondents are supportive *in principle* of interventions to reduce racial gaps and that target children specifically but are more ambivalent about policies that may affect them directly in college or the labor market.[9] Notably, Black respondents are pretty divided too, with just about half supporting these direct types of interventions.[10]

[9] Table A-19 shows that support for preferential hiring or college admissions is not strongly correlated with whether the respondent has children.

[10] In fact, Ashok et al. (2015) find that African-Americans are one of the only groups (together with the elderly) for which support for redistribution has declined over time in the US and map this to a decline in their support for race-targeted aid. The authors suggest that this is puzzling, given that the economic catch-up of Black people had stalled over that period.

Support is also quite mixed and with a substantial partisan gap for police reform and community policing to address racial bias. Finally, there is a huge racial gap in support for reparations, with a low share that favor them among white respondents (34%) and a large share that do among Black respondents (80%).

Support for race-targeted policies in the youth survey. Panel B of Figure 10 depicts views on race-targeted policies in the youth survey. The patterns are somewhat different in the youth survey. Overall, white teenagers are less supportive of most policies than white adults. For instance, white teenagers are more strongly opposed than white adults to preferential college admissions, perhaps because they fear being directly affected by it. There are smaller partisan gaps on these issues than among adults. Black and white teenagers are very divided in their support for reparations, and there is much less of a partisan gap than for adults.

Support for redistribution in the adult survey. Regarding redistribution policies, summarized in Figure 11, partisan gaps are much larger than racial gaps. Partisan gaps are smaller for in-kind redistribution policies (e.g., spending on schools, health care, or housing) than for policies providing direct income support or trying to reduce income differences.

Black respondents are systematically more supportive of redistribution than white respondents overall, but this is almost entirely driven by the lower support among white Republicans. Black and white Democratic respondents have essentially the same levels of support for redistribution.

Support for redistribution in the youth survey. For teenagers, there are generally larger racial and partisan gaps related to redistribution. But teenagers overall appear to be less pro-redistribution than their parents. This is especially true for teenagers from white Republican families.

Policy views indices. To summarize policy views for the rest of this section, we create two indices. The *Support for race-targeted policies* index is increasing in support for the array of race-targeted policies just discussed above from Figure 10. The *Support for redistribution policies* index is increasing in support for the general income-targeted policies from Figure 11 and decreasing in the view that upper-income people pay too much in taxes. We created these indices by performing a principal component analysis (PCA). This multivariate statistical method extracts the information from several variables observed on the same subjects, in this case, the race-targeted and the general redistribution policies, into fewer variables called principal components. For every set of variables, we use as an index the first principal component, which is the linear combination of the original variables that maximally explains the variances of all the variables.

4.2 Decomposing Policy Views

Which underlying perceptions and beliefs are most strongly correlated with policy views on general redistribution and race-targeted policies?

To answer this question, we use a random forest algorithm (Breiman, 2001; Schonlau and Zou, 2020) to rank variables by their explanatory importance in predicting the outcome of interest. The variable's importance is given by the *mean decrease in impurity* across all trees in the forest, a measure of how much a variable reduces the distance between the predicted and actual outcomes.[11] The score of the most important variable is normalized to 1, with all other variables assigned scores indicating their importance relative to the most important one.

Figure 12 depicts the resulting variable importance plot. The factors most strongly correlated with support for race-targeted policies are those pertaining to the perceived fundamental causes of racial gaps, i.e., the beliefs that past discrimination and enslavement still have adverse consequences for Black people today and that racism and discrimination are serious issues. Then come perceptions of proximate causes, such as discrimination in the judicial system, labor market, and other settings. Perceived racial income gaps rank lower in importance. Note also that race and political affiliation have similar importance – although race ranks a little higher– for race-targeted policy views.

For redistribution policy views, it is again factors related to the fundamental and proximate causes that are most important. The link between racial issues and support for redistribution is arguably further amplified by strong misperceptions about how much Black people in the US benefit from redistribution. Table A-14 shows that respondents tend to think that more than half of SNAP, Medicaid, and welfare recipients are Black, when the reality was between 16% and 25% at the time of the survey for these three programs.

Decomposing racial and partisan gaps in policy views. Figure 13 performs Gelbach decompositions (Gelbach, 2016) of the racial and partisan gaps in support for race-targeted and redistribution policies. The goal is to understand what share of the racial and partisan gaps in support are explained by each of the factors. These shares are represented by the bars in the chart. The unexplained portion corresponds to the percentage of these gaps that

[11] More precisely, the random forest algorithm begins by partitioning the original dataset into training and test samples. Each decision tree in the forest is then grown using a randomly selected subset of the training sample through bootstrapping. For each tree, a random subset of features (i.e., variables) is chosen for determining each split, which helps reduce the model's variance. Next, each observation is passed through all the decision trees. This process allows us to compute the variable's *impurity*, which measures the difference between the predicted and actual outcomes at each node of every tree. Each variable's importance is then given by the *mean decrease in impurity*, which is calculated by summing the improvements in the objective function (RMSE) for each variable based on the splitting criterion over all internal nodes of a tree and across all trees in the forest. Variables that frequently lead to significant reductions in impurity are classified as more important, as they are the most effective in predicting the outcome.

remains even after controlling for these mechanisms.[12]

We find that the same variables that had the highest explanatory power in predicting policy views described above also best explain the partisan and racial gaps. These are perceived proximate and fundamental causes. Thus, lower support for race-targeted policies among white respondents compared to Black respondents can be traced to weaker beliefs in the role played by generations of slavery and discrimination (21% of the racial gap) as well as current racism (12%). An additional 20% of the racial gap is accounted for by not perceiving discrimination in the labor market. Perceived racial income gaps account for only 8% of the racial gap.

The partisan gap is also mainly explained by white Republicans not believing that racial gaps are caused by systemic causes, with the same variables as above playing the most important role. Nevertheless, around 40% of the racial and 30% of the partisan gap on race-targeted policies remain unexplained, suggesting that there are additional concerns, ideologies, or beliefs that drive them.

On redistribution policy, a similar pattern emerges. The main difference to race-targeted policies is that these factors can now explain the entire racial gap in views on redistribution policy.[13] We are thus much better able to capture the variation in preferences for redistribution policies between Black and white respondents – which is small to start with – than the variation in their race-targeted policy views. On the other hand, 12% of the partisan gap on redistribution remains unexplained. This could be because there are many other factors unrelated to racial issues that shape views on redistribution and that diverge across party lines (see Stantcheva, 2021).[14]

In Figure 14, the decomposition of policy views highlights the same essential factors and overall similar patterns for teens.

Type classification. We also perform a classification analysis, which consists of identifying "types" of respondents by their answers. This clustering algorithm and results are presented in Appendix Section A-5.7.

The algorithm classifies respondents into three profiles: respondents who believe that

[12]More precisely, the full partisan or racial gap is equal to the coefficient on the indicators for being "White" and "Republican" in a regression of policy views on all background characteristics, but excluding the variables used in the random forest. The unexplained portion corresponds to the coefficient on these indicators in a regression of policy views on all variables. The shares are expressed as a percent of the total racial or partisan gaps.

[13]The coefficient on the indicator for being "White" turns mildly positive after controlling for all these factors, although it is negative when they are excluded.

[14]Note that if we perform the partisan decomposition only on white Democrats and white Republicans (left panels of Figure A-15), the patterns are similar because white respondents drive the partisan gap to start with. Suppose we instead focus on Black Democrats and white Democrats (right panels of Figure A-15) and decompose the racial gap. In that case, the results look very different because Black Democrats' and white Democrats' views are relatively aligned (see Figures A-6 and A-7).

racial inequalities are not a serious problem and oppose redistribution (Profile I), respondents who favor redistribution but do not put much weight either way on race-related issues (Profile II), and respondents who are very focused on racial inequalities but do not have clear-cut views on redistribution (Profile III).

As we would expect, these profiles are very correlated with race and political affiliation (see Figure A-16). We find that the majority of Black respondents (51%) belong to Profile III, with only 21% and 28% of them belonging to Profile I and II, respectively. On the contrary, 63% of Republican respondents belong to Profile I, and only 9% and 28% of them are aligned with Profile II and III, respectively. White Democrats are relatively evenly split between the three profiles. We also find that other characteristics such as education, gender, age, or income are not as predictive of or differentiated along these dimensions (see Figure A-17).

5 Experimental Effects of Information on Systemic Racism

In the experimental part of the survey, we show respondents three treatments. These treatments are of two different types. The first, designed by act.tv, a media company, explains some of the proximate and fundamental causes of racial gaps by discussing the origins and consequences of systemic racism. The other two, designed by us, provide information about the racial gaps in earnings and mobility in the US but do not address the sources of these disparities. In a nutshell, these two treatments attempt to exogenously shift the perceptions of mobility and income gaps represented in the second row of Figure 1, without providing any information on the proximate or fundamental causes in the rows below. We focused on these two pieces of information because they are conceptually important, being measures of (in)equality in outcomes for the former and (in)equality of opportunity for the latter. Below, we present the experimental results and discuss how to interpret them through the lens of existing models.

5.1 The Experimental Treatments

The systemic racism treatment: explaining some of the causes of the racial gap. Our first treatment is a 3-minute long video, used both in the adult and youth surveys. Its goal is to define systemic racism in simple terms and highlight its proximate and fundamental causes and consequences for racial inequality.

Screenshots from this video are shown in Figure 3. The animation starts by presenting a white child living in a wealthy, majority-white neighborhood and a Black child living in a poorer, majority-Black neighborhood (Panel A). The video explains (Panels B and C) that Black children are more likely to attend disadvantaged schools, be in crowded classes, have

less well-paid teachers, and have less access to tutors or extracurricular activities (variables that our framework would classify under proximate causes). It then goes on to introduce the concept of systemic racism, taking a historical perspective. It tells respondents about the much worse opportunities for the grandparents of the Black child. They faced redlining and segregation that prevented them from owning a house, attending college, and building wealth (Panel D). Wealth – or rather the lack of it – is then passed on from generation to generation and ultimately leads to very different opportunities for today's children (Panel E). The video also emphasizes that, even if the Black child ultimately attends the same college as the white child and gets excellent grades (Panel F), they still get fewer job offers, another proximate cause (Panel G). It also explains that implicit racism can be one of the reasons why the unemployment rate is higher among Black people, even if they have a college degree (Panel H). Note that the treatment does not address the issue of enslavement because it focuses on some of the many hurdles to racial equality in more recent history.

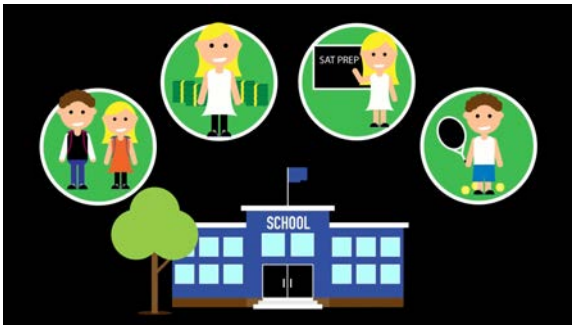
Mobility treatment. The second video shows respondents the differences in mobility of children from Black and white families and is 2-minutes long (see the screenshots in Figure 4). To make the treatments comparable in their style, the animation starts by presenting a white and a Black child, both coming from poor families (Panel A). The two kids wonder about their chances of becoming rich when they grow up and worry about the racial differences in mobility (Panels B and C). To make the information easy to understand and intuitive, the video uses ladders with rungs representing the quintiles of the income distributions of parents and children. It starts with the mobility for white children (Panel D) and then shows the mobility for Black children (Panel E). It ends with a screen showing both (see Panel F).

Historical earnings gap treatment. The third video, shown in Figure 5, tells respondents about the evolution of the earnings gap between Black and white people since the 1970s and is less than 1-minute long. It starts by showing two friends, one Black and the other white (Panel A). Although they both work in similar jobs, the Black person earns less than his white friend (Panel B). With an animated graph, the video presents the average difference in earnings between a Black and a white person in the 1970s and today, by using simple language such as "for every dollar earned by a white person," a Black person "on average earned 63 cents" (Panels C and D). It shows that, although earnings have increased in absolute levels over the last 50 years (Panel E), the racial earnings gap has not been closed (Panel F).

Figure 3: Systemic Racism Treatment

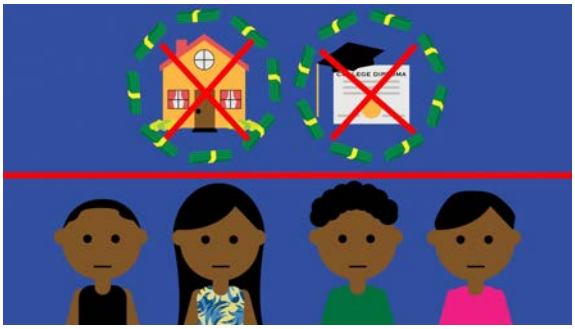
(A)

(B)



(C)

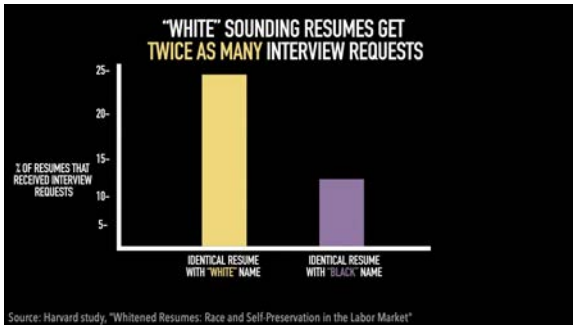
(D)



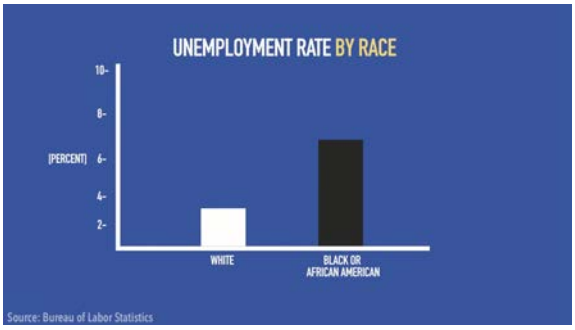
(E)

(F)

(G)



(H)



Notes: Video created by `https://www.act.tv`.

FIGURE 4: MOBILITY TREATMENT

(A)

(B)

(C)

(D)

(E)

(F)

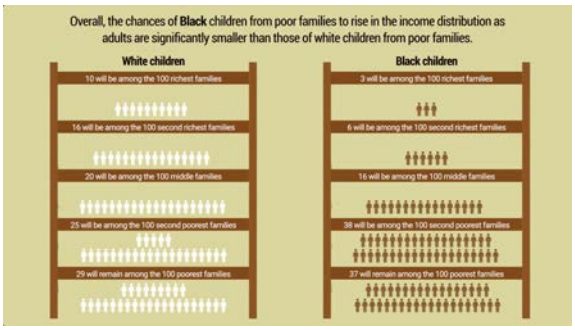
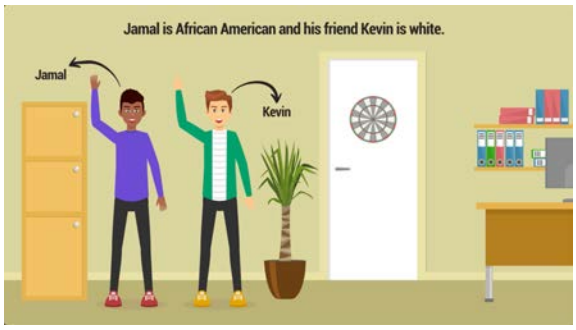


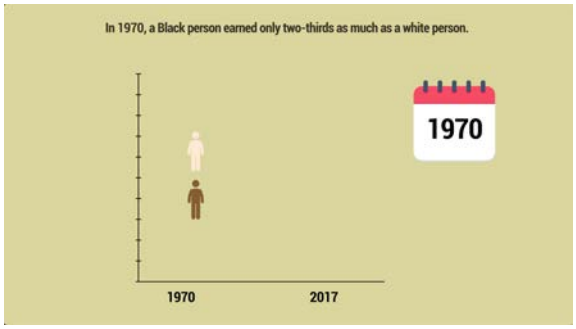
FIGURE 5: HISTORICAL EARNINGS GAP TREATMENT

(A)

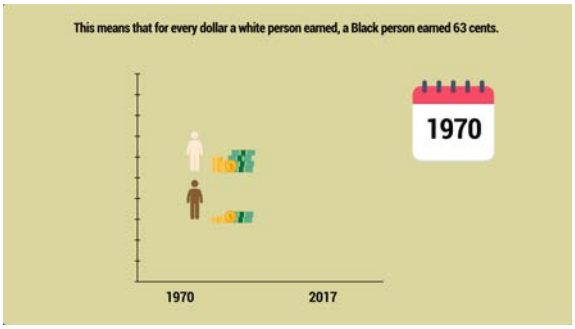


(B)

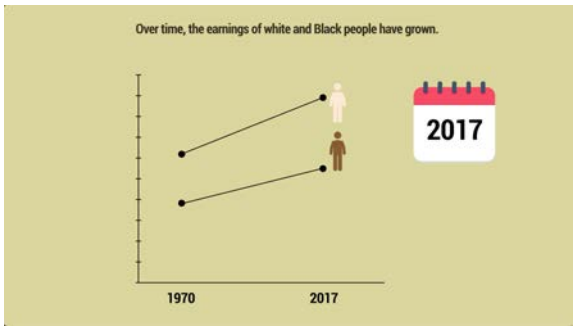
(C)



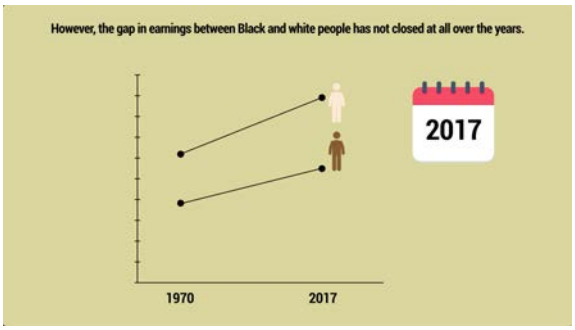
(D)



(E)



(F)



5.2 Experimental Results

To explore the treatment effects, we create four additional indices, using the methodology described in Section 4.1 to complement the *Support for race-targeted policies* and *Support for redistribution policies* indices already discussed. The *Perceived racial gaps in mobility* index is increasing in the perceived upward mobility of white children and decreasing in the perceived upward mobility of Black children. The *Perceived racial income inequality* index is increasing in the belief that white people earn more than Black people and that the difference in their earnings has not decreased in recent years. The *Perceived fundamental causes* index increases the more the respondent attributes racial gaps to systemic causes rather than individual factors. Specifically, it aggregates the variables from Figure 9. The *Perceived proximate causes* index is larger for respondents who believe there are larger inequalities in the proximate causes. It is thus increasing in the belief that white people get more job offers, that Black children attend worse quality schools than white children, and that Black people are often discriminated against in all the settings listed in Figures 7 and 8.

Treatment effects in the adult sample. Table 4 summarizes the effects of all three treatments on perceptions and policy views. In each panel, we report treatment effects based on two separate specifications. The first row ("Treatment") shows the overall treatment effect; the next two rows show the effects of the treatment on Black and white respondents separately ("T × White" and "T × Black"). In Appendix Section A-5.9, we show the treatment effects on the individual variables included in our indices (Tables A-28 to A-30).[15]

The mobility treatment has significant positive effects on the perceived racial gaps in mobility (column 3, Panel C of Table 4). The historical earnings gap treatment has significantly positive effects on perceived racial income inequality (column 4, Panel D of Table 4). However, neither of these two information treatments changes respondents' perceived proximate or fundamental causes for these gaps. Because they only shift the perceived inequality and opportunities without changing the perceived causes, these treatments do not significantly impact support for either race-targeted or redistribution policies (see columns 5 and 6 in Table 4). This finding is consistent with the correlational results in the previous section.

On the contrary, the systemic racism treatment has significant effects on perceived economic racial income inequality, perceived gaps in mobility, and perceived proximate and fundamental causes (columns 1 through 4, Panel A of Table 4), generally much stronger and

[15]Table A-36 provides the treatment effects of the mobility and historical earnings gap treatments in wave 1 and of the systemic racism treatment in wave 2. Appendix Section A-5.12 shows the treatment effects corrected for multiple hypothesis testing. The treatment effects discussed as significant here remain robust to this correction. Some of the treatment effect heterogeneity by race and political leaning presented below becomes marginally insignificant and we point this out specifically. Appendix Section A-5.8 shows the treatment effects using indices constructed as average z-scores of the underlying variables, instead of principal component indices. The results are very similar.

more significant on white respondents. The treatment, on average, increases support for both race-targeted and redistribution policies (columns 5 and 6, Panel A of Table 4). The average treatment effect on race-targeted policy views equals 21% of the racial gap; the impact on redistribution policies is equal to 36% of the racial gap. Yet the effects are heterogeneous, with larger magnitudes among white respondents. The effect among white respondents equals 30% of the racial gap for race-targeted policies and 47% of the gap for redistribution policies.

Treatment effects in the youth survey. Teenagers were only shown the systemic racism video. Table 5 shows that the treatment significantly changes their perceived fundamental and proximate causes of racial gaps and their perceptions of racial gaps in income and mobility. The treatment also significantly increases support for race-targeted and redistribution policies. The effects are equivalent to, respectively, 11% and 37% of the racial gap in support. The effects are somewhat stronger among Black teenagers, especially regarding support for race-targeted policies.[16]

Interpretation of the treatment effects. The insignificant effects of the mobility treatment and the historical earnings gap treatment on attitudes and policy views – despite significant effects on perceived income inequality and mobility – suggest that simply showing how unequal circumstances and opportunities are does not move people's priors on *why* they are unequal. Such information on racial gaps does not change the narrative that respondents have in mind. These treatments to some extent mirror what is happening in the world: although there are clearly big racial gaps along many economic and social dimensions, and although many people are – at least to some extent – aware of them, they disagree on their causes and, hence, on the way or even the need to resolve them.

The systemic racism treatment instead gets at some of the proximate and fundamental causes of racial gaps. It explains why many factors that are outside the control of Black Americans have contributed to creating racial inequities. That treatment has much stronger effects on support for race-targeted as well as redistribution policies. It appears that shifting views about the proximate and fundamental causes of racial gaps is an important necessary condition to generate policy support. Shifting views on racial gaps in incomes and mobility (which this treatment does as well as the other ones) is not sufficient.

Thinking back to the conceptual framework in Figure 1, these findings confirm that, even if respondents had the same perceptions of racial income and mobility gaps, their policy views are different depending on whether they attribute these to more individual-based factors (the path going through the dashed arrows) or if they attribute them to systemic ones (the path going through the solid arrows).

[16]Tables A-33 to A-35 provide the treatment effects on the individual variables composing the indices. The multiple-hypothesis-testing corrected p-values are in Table A-38.

These experimental results bolster the previously described patterns. Section 3 showed some differences in perceptions of economic circumstances but also emphasized that the biggest differences lie in beliefs about their causes. Similarly, the decomposition of policy views in Section 4.2 showed that the perceived causes of inequalities, rather than the perceived existence or magnitudes of these inequalities, are most strongly correlated with policy views.

Overall, the beliefs that are simultaneously most polarized and most predictive of policy views – namely perceived causes – are also the hardest ones to move.

Heterogeneity by pre-treatment beliefs. In wave 3, we elicited respondents' perceived gaps in mobility and income and proximate and fundamental causes before the treatment as well as after. As expected, given the previously presented results, the share of respondents that already knows the information provided by the treatments is highest among Black respondents, followed by white Democratic respondents, and then white Republican ones (see Table A-40). Controlling for the pre-treatment beliefs, our treatment effects are essentially unchanged (see Table A-41). Furthermore, if we interact the treatment indicators with an indicator for being more aware of a particular dimension, we see that the treatment effects are either entirely concentrated among or larger for respondents who were less aware pre-treatment (see Table A-42), as can be expected.

Persistence. An important question is whether the effects of our treatments are short-lived or whether they persist. To test for persistence, we conducted a follow-up survey one week after the wave 3 survey. Table 6 shows, for different perceptions and policy views, the treatment effects for respondents in the original survey who also took the follow-up survey (in odd-numbered columns) and in the follow-up survey (in even-numbered columns). Overall, we see a clear persistence of treatment effects. Nevertheless, we do not take this to mean that views about the causes of racial gaps or policy views are easy to shift. It is very likely these effects attenuate over time for some groups, as was the case after the George Floyd murder, which we discuss below.

5.3 Partisan treatment effects and trends in attitudes

We now turn to heterogeneity in treatment effects by political leaning, considering the systemic racism treatment, which has clear effects on policy views. Table 7 shows that partisan effects might have changed between 2020 and 2023.

Treatment effects on white Democrats and Independent respondents. In 2020, the treatment had significantly positive effects on white Democratic respondents' perceived

causes, racial income gaps, and policy views.[17] This is no longer the case in 2023. On the contrary, in 2023, it is mainly white Independent respondents who are affected by the treatment.

To put these treatment effects into perspective, consider the evolution of views on these issues between 2019 and 2023, depicted in Figure 15. Some of our survey data collection happened shortly after George Floyd's murder on May 25, 2020. Among Black respondents, views are relatively stable from 2019 to 2023.

Among white Democratic respondents, there is a clear uptick in the *Perceived proximate causes* and *Support for race-targeted policies* indices. There is also an increase over time in the share of respondents who believe that the reasons Black people are poor are enslavement and discrimination and the share that are in favor of paying reparations. Furthermore, the overall levels of these variables are higher in 2023 relative to 2019. Thus, along these dimensions, white Democrats were not only more supportive than Independents or Republicans in 2019, but they also became more supportive over time. This could explain why it becomes harder to shift their views in 2023 with our treatments, given the growing baseline support. Among white Republicans, there is a sharp increase in the belief that racial gaps are due to past enslavement and discrimination and in support for race-targeted policies right after the George Floyd murder. But the effects dampen by the end of June and have returned to their 2019 levels by 2023.

Treatment effects on white Republican respondents. In general, Republican respondents do not exhibit any treatment effect. In fact, in 2020, effects are almost perverse, with almost all negative coefficients on the indices. The explanations provided seem to "backfire" for white right-wing respondents and, instead of closing the partisan gap, deepen it.[18] In 2023, the effects are all positive, some of them are significant, although no longer so when corrected for multiple hypothesis testing.

Could these treatment effects for white Republican respondents –the backlash in 2020 and low impacts in 2023– be due to them perceiving it as biased? The systemic racism treatment

[17] The effect of the treatment on support for race-targeted policies turns marginally insignificant when correcting for multiple hypothesis testing.

[18] Other work has underscored how the "dominant" group can feel threatened in their self-and collective image if they perceive themselves as perpetuating injustice (Brown and Craig, 2020, and Unzueta and Lowery, 2008). Onyeador et al. (2021) find that reading about structural racism does not lead people to adjust their overestimates of current racial economic equality, but instead to assess the past as less inequitable. They explain this as respondents trying to avoid the thought that current racial equality is unjust. The new information introduced by the systemic racism treatment can create cognitive dissonance (Akerlof and Dickens, 1982) between deeply held beliefs about fairness and equality of opportunity and the reality of the causes of racial gaps (see also Mullainathan and Washington, 2009). This also relates to motivated beliefs, whereby respondents have a functional benefit of holding the views they do. For instance, respondents on the right of the political spectrum may hold on to the belief that society is ultimately just and that everyone who works hard has a shot at success (Kunda, 1990; Landau et al., 2015; Bénabou and Tirole, 2016).

makes white Republican respondents more likely to perceive the survey as biased: 40% of white Republicans who saw the treatment versus 23% of those in the control group perceived the survey as being left-wing biased. Table A-43 replicates our main table, excluding all respondents who said that they thought the survey was left-wing biased. In 2020, the effects on white Republicans become more positive, although they remain insignificant. But in 2023, they become strongly and significantly positive. Note that, for white Independent respondents as well, the effects are strengthened in both years: they turn significantly positive in 2020 and become even larger for 2023. For white Democratic respondents, effects are only mildly strengthened.

Partisan effects in the youth survey. For teenagers, we run into power issues when considering heterogeneous treatment effects by race and political affiliation. But we can nevertheless offer some suggestive evidence (see Panel B in Table 5). After the treatment, both Democratic and Republican white teenagers become more likely to perceive higher racial income gaps, although the effect on white Republican ones is not robust to the multiple hypothesis testing correction. Teenagers from Independent and Democratic white families are more likely to perceive higher racial gaps in the proximate causes as well. Overall, policy views are mostly affected among teenagers from white Independent families.

6 Conclusion

This paper leverages new large-scale survey and experimental data on Black and white teenagers and adults in the US. It highlights that, while people have disparate perceptions about the magnitudes of racial gaps in economic conditions and opportunities, the biggest divergences are in how they explain the existence of these gaps. Furthermore, the responses of an average white respondent obscure substantial heterogeneity by political affiliation. Black and white Democratic respondents tend to perceive larger racial gaps and attribute their existence to systemic factors rather than individual-based ones. They are more likely to want to intervene directly through race-targeted policies and indirectly through income-targeted redistribution policies. Strikingly, racial and partisan gaps in views and attitudes are already well-established among teenagers, in line with their parents' race and political affiliation.

People's beliefs about how racial gaps can be explained are also more predictive of their policy views than their perceptions of the prevalence or magnitudes of racial inequities. This finding is confirmed by the experimental results. Yet beliefs about the causes of racial gaps are not easy to shift. Clearly, the extent to which respondents are exposed to racial inequities, either directly or indirectly, varies tremendously. The causes of racial gaps are, however, likely even harder for people to directly observe or see. People's views are thus likely to heavily depend on their own knowledge (e.g., of history or politics), sources of news, longstanding

narratives, and racial attitudes. Many of these factors vary by political affiliation, as well as by race.

Our work carries several policy implications. First, voter attitudes on race may be quite different from those of the overall (voting and nonvoting) population. For instance, as Section 4 showed, younger respondents and Black respondents are more supportive of race-targeted policies yet less likely to vote, in part because of costly and unjustified restrictions that act as substantial barriers to voting.[19] Lowering restrictions to voting for these groups could bring about lasting policy change. Second, our results suggest that, absent more policy action, disagreements along racial and partisan lines will persist into the future because they are already entrenched in the younger generations. Third, our findings highlight the type of information that is needed to shift policy views, namely, information regarding the sources of systemic and institutional racism. On the contrary, simply providing information about the existence and magnitude of racial gaps in income and mobility alone seems unlikely to generate a change in policy views.

This paper follows in the footsteps of an already abundant and rich literature in sociology, political science, and economics by bringing in new data based on customized and targeted surveys. But it barely scratches the surface of people's complex perceptions and attitudes on race and points to the importance of narratives about the causes of racial gaps in shaping attitudes toward policies. There are also other stark racial inequities in the US and other racial groups that we did not include here. Future work leveraging these survey and experimental methods could dig much deeper into what shapes these narratives in the first place. There is also much more to do to discover what type of information or intervention can successfully shift entrenched attitudes.

[19] As shown by Cascio and Washington (2014), when some restrictions were relaxed historically, policies implemented changed drastically.

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Table 1: Summary Statistics for the Adult Sample

	Black Population						White Population					
	US (1)	Urban (2)	Wave 1 (3)	Wave 2 (4)	Wave 3 (5)	Follow-Up (6)	US (7)	Urban (8)	Wave 1 (9)	Wave 2 (10)	Wave 3 (11)	Follow-Up (12)
Male	0.46	0.46	0.45	0.46	0.47	0.50	0.50	0.49	0.42	0.50	0.50	0.57
18-29 years old	0.27	0.27	0.30	0.28	0.25	0.19	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.23	0.21	0.10
30-39 years old	0.20	0.21	0.22	0.21	0.23	0.24	0.18	0.19	0.20	0.20	0.21	0.17
40-49 years old	0.18	0.18	0.17	0.18	0.20	0.23	0.17	0.17	0.19	0.19	0.20	0.21
50-59 years old	0.18	0.18	0.16	0.18	0.17	0.18	0.20	0.20	0.18	0.20	0.20	0.26
60-69 years old	0.17	0.16	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.16	0.23	0.22	0.22	0.19	0.20	0.26
$0-$19,999	0.21	0.20	0.24	0.24	0.18	0.18	0.10	0.09	0.10	0.09	0.09	0.10
$20,000-$39,999	0.21	0.20	0.24	0.22	0.19	0.17	0.13	0.12	0.16	0.12	0.12	0.14
$40,000-$69,999	0.23	0.23	0.26	0.23	0.25	0.26	0.19	0.19	0.24	0.20	0.18	0.23
$70,000-$109,999	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.12	0.19	0.19	0.22	0.21	0.23	0.18	0.21	0.19
$110,000+	0.18	0.19	0.09	0.19	0.20	0.21	0.36	0.39	0.27	0.41	0.41	0.34
Northeast	0.16	0.17	0.17	0.22	0.18	0.16	0.19	0.20	0.23	0.23	0.24	0.25
Midwest	0.17	0.18	0.21	0.22	0.22	0.25	0.26	0.24	0.25	0.24	0.24	0.22
South	0.59	0.56	0.51	0.44	0.47	0.48	0.35	0.35	0.36	0.30	0.33	0.33
West	0.09	0.09	0.11	0.12	0.12	0.11	0.20	0.21	0.16	0.23	0.19	0.20
Democrat	0.53	0.54	0.71	0.70	0.63	0.63	0.24	0.25	0.38	0.36	0.39	0.35
Republican	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.09	0.11	0.10	0.33	0.31	0.35	0.40	0.35	0.39
Independent	0.38	0.37	0.24	0.21	0.26	0.28	0.37	0.38	0.27	0.24	0.26	0.25
4-year college or more	0.25	0.26	0.34	0.40	0.29	0.26	0.39	0.42	0.56	0.62	0.45	0.43
High school or less	0.44	0.42	0.23	0.23	0.33	0.30	0.32	0.29	0.14	0.16	0.23	0.22
Employed	0.66	0.67	0.61	0.62	0.70	0.71	0.72	0.73	0.65	0.69	0.69	0.69
Self-employed	0.04	0.04	0.07	0.09	0.06	0.06	0.08	0.07	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.07
Unemployed	0.04	0.04	0.10	0.10	0.08	0.09	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.04
Married	0.32	0.33	0.27		0.29	0.29	0.58	0.57	0.54		0.48	0.49
Sample size			2,496	1,698	1,501	439			2,508	1,698	1,502	444

Notes: The table shows characteristics of the US population that is Black (column 1), Black and urban (column 2), white (column 7), and white and urban (column 8). Data come from the 2019 Current Population Survey (Flood et al., 2020); data on political affiliation is from the 2019 Political Survey (Pew Research Center, 2019). Columns 3 to 6 report the characteristics of the Black respondents in our sample for all survey waves; columns 9 to 12 report the characteristics of the white respondents. See Appendix Section A-1.3 for details.

Table 2: Summary Statistics for the Teenager Sample

	Black Population			White Population		
	Pop (1)	Urban (2)	Sample (3)	Pop (4)	Urban (5)	Sample (6)
Male	0.51	0.50	0.50	0.52	0.51	0.50
13 years old	0.19	0.19	0.15	0.19	0.19	0.19
14 years old	0.19	0.19	0.18	0.19	0.19	0.20
15 years old	0.19	0.19	0.21	0.20	0.20	0.19
16 years old	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.21	0.21	0.20
17 years old	0.20	0.20	0.23	0.21	0.21	0.22
Share for which parents reported income			0.43			0.87
Parental income						
$0-$19,999	0.20	0.19	0.12	0.08	0.07	0.03
$20,000-$39,999	0.23	0.22	0.19	0.10	0.08	0.13
$40,000-$69,999	0.23	0.23	0.30	0.17	0.16	0.23
$70,000-$109,999	0.15	0.16	0.21	0.22	0.22	0.25
$110,000+	0.19	0.21	0.19	0.44	0.48	0.36
Northeast	0.16	0.17	0.19	0.18	0.20	0.24
Midwest	0.19	0.20	0.17	0.29	0.27	0.25
South	0.58	0.55	0.52	0.34	0.33	0.31
West	0.07	0.08	0.12	0.19	0.20	0.21
Democratic parents			0.54			0.33
Republican parents			0.06			0.37
Independent parents			0.15			0.25
Missing information			0.26			0.05
Sample size			1,005			1,000

Notes: The table shows characteristics of the US population aged 13 to 17 and that is Black (column 1), Black and urban (column 2), white (column 4), and white and urban (column 5). Data come from the 2019 Current Population Survey (Flood et al., 2020). Columns 3 and 6 report the characteristics of the Black and white teenage respondents in our sample. See Appendix Section A-1.3 for details.

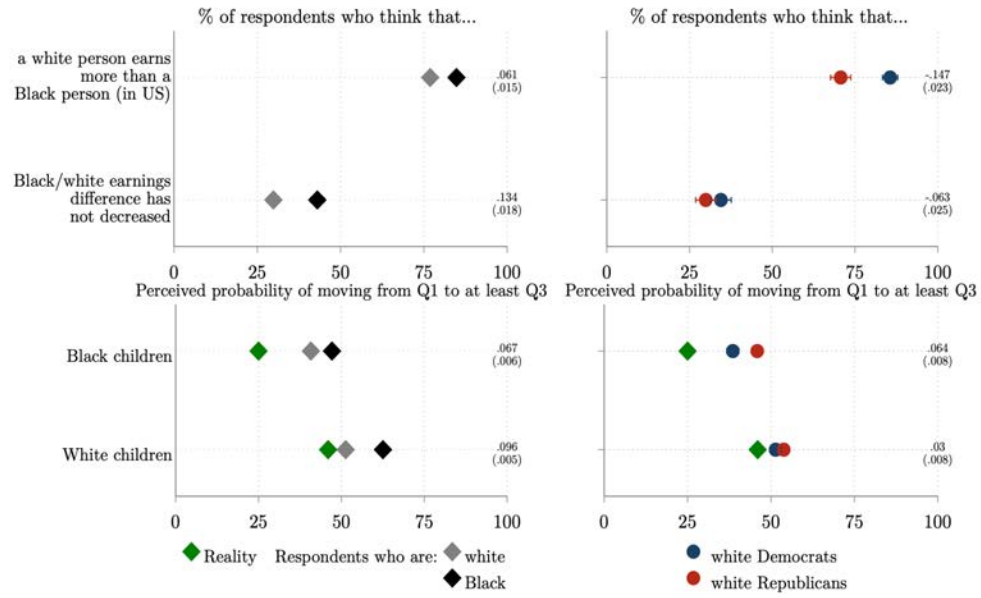
Table 3: Real-Stakes Questions

		Support Petition	
	Donation to Black Lives Matter	Address Black/white disparities	Tax rich to help poor families
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A: Descriptive Statistics (control group only)			
Mean	104.95	0.79	0.82
Black mean	99.81	0.89	0.85
White mean	110.02	0.70	0.80
Black Democrat mean	117.50	0.91	0.90
Black Republican mean	80.00	0.86	0.83
White Democrat mean	157.06	0.86	0.91
White Republican mean	68.31	0.56	0.71
Observations	723	723	723
Panel B: Partial Correlation			
Support for Race-Targeted Policies	16.02***	0.08***	0.05***
	(2.96)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Support for Redistribution Policies	-6.99***	0.01	0.03***
	(2.35)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Perceived Fundamental Causes	-0.76	0.03***	0.02**
	(3.10)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Perceived Proximate Causes	4.50**	0.01**	0.00
	(1.89)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Perceived Racial Income Inequaliy	4.28	0.01	0.00
	(3.20)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Perceived Racial Gaps in Mobility	-7.94	-0.01	-0.00
	(5.14)	(0.01)	(0.01)
White Dem	30.82***	0.03**	0.08***
	(8.98)	(0.02)	(0.02)
White Rep	-13.83	-0.09***	-0.02
	(10.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Observations	2849	2852	2852
R^2	0.102	0.352	0.246

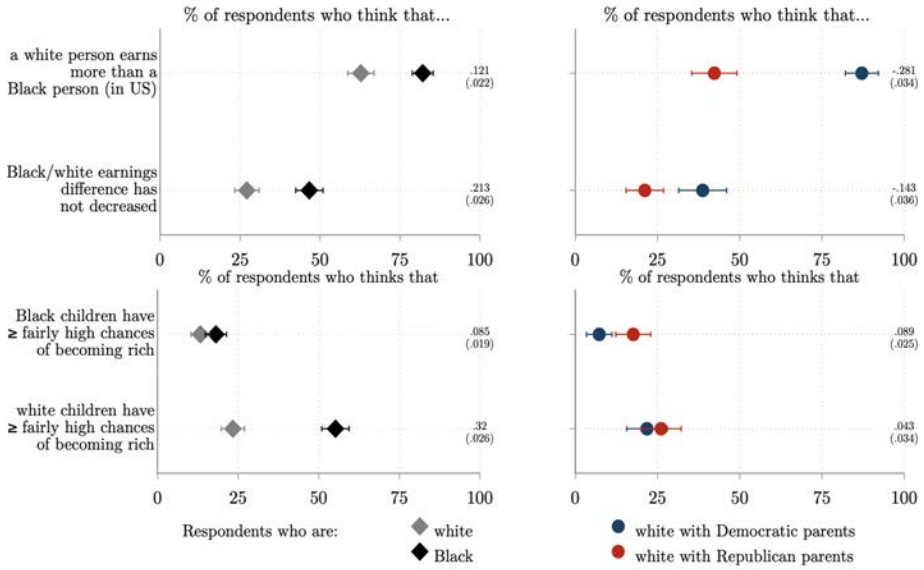
Note: The dependent variables in column 1 is a continuous variable defined in Appendix Section A-2.2. The dependent variables in columns 2 and 3 are indicator variables defined in Appendix Section A-2.2. Results using only respondents from wave 3. Panel A reports the mean of the dependent variables for respondents who saw no treatment video ("Mean"), and separately for Black ("Black mean") and white respondents ("White mean"), and for Black Democrats ("Black Democrat mean"), Black Republicans ("Black Republican mean"), white Democrats ("White Democrat mean"), and white Republicans ("White Republicans mean"). All regressions include controls for gender, age group, race, income group, political affiliation, education, state fixed effects, indicator variable for survey wave, and indicator variables for all treatments. Only some of these coefficients are reported due to space constraints. Panel B shows the coefficients of six indices as defined in Appendix Section A-2.3, and the coefficients on being a white Democrat and being a white Republican. Omitted category is being Black. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Figure 6: Perceived Racial Income Inequality and Gaps in Mobility

(a) Adult Survey



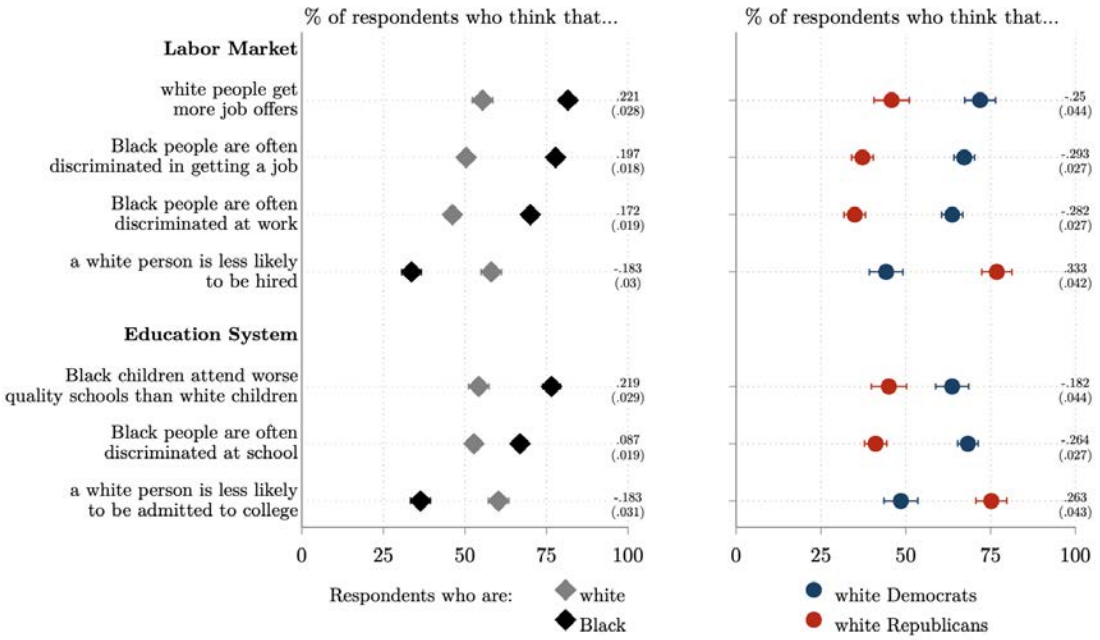
(b) Youth Survey



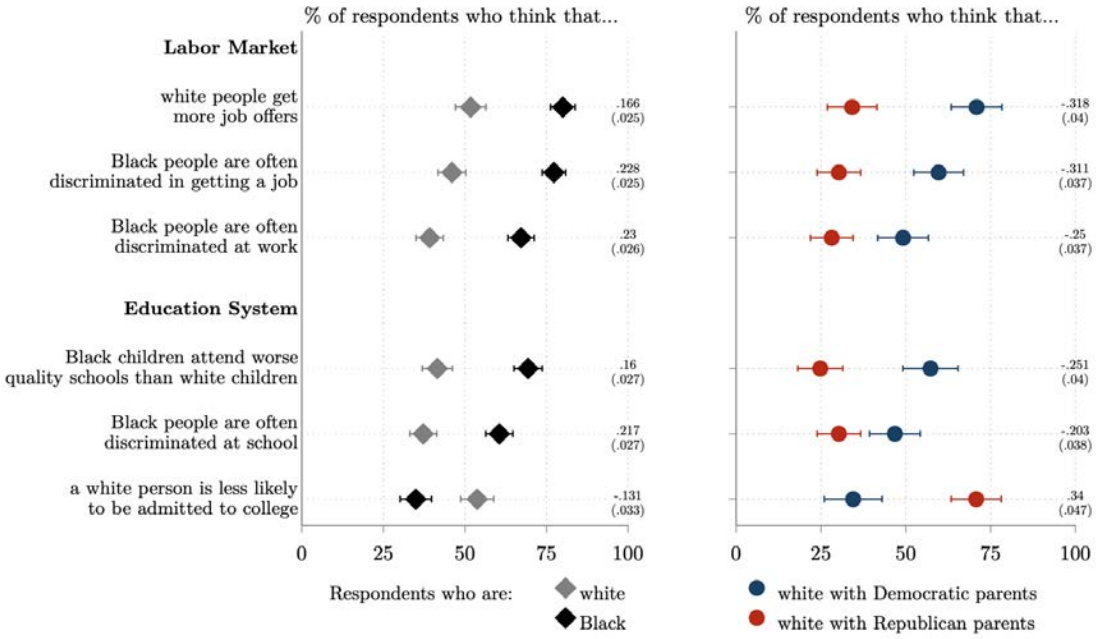
Notes: Panel A shows the results from all waves of the adult survey; Panel B shows those from the youth survey. In each panel, the left sub-figures focus on racial gaps and depict the share of respondents that satisfy the condition listed on the left vertical axis with its associated 90% confidence interval, for Black and white respondents in the sample. The right vertical axis lists the coefficients and standard errors on the indicator for being Black (relative to the omitted category of being white) of a regression of the outcome on the left on an indicator for being Black, and the full array of individual characteristics (political affiliation (or parents' political affiliation in the teen sample), gender, age group, income group (or parents' income group for the teen sample), education, state fixed effects, survey wave indicators). The right set of sub-figures repeats this same analysis for white Democrats and white Republicans. The numbers on the right vertical axis are the coefficient on being a white Democrat (where the omitted category is the indicator for being a white Republican) on the same controls as in the left panel. Only respondents who were not assigned to any of the video treatments are included. Standard errors in parentheses. In Panel A, the lower sub-figures show the perceived probability of Black and white children born in the lowest quintile of the national income distribution moving to at least the third quintile, against the true value ("Reality"). The data sources on actual mobility are described in Appendix Section A-1.1.

Figure 7: Perceived Proximate Causes of Racial Gaps (Part 1)

(a) Adult Survey



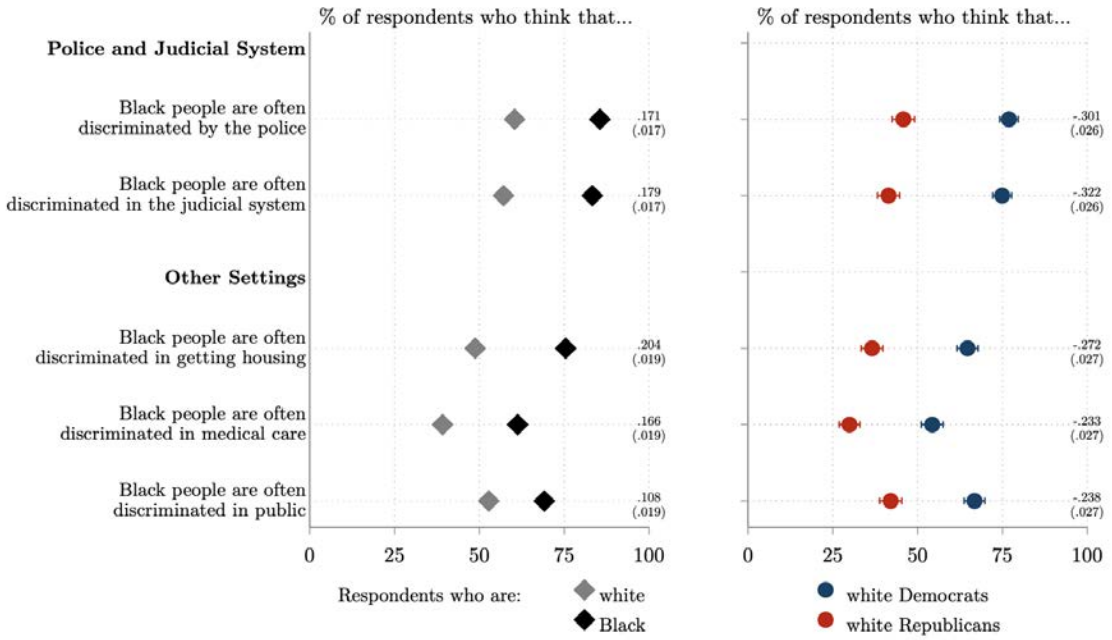
(b) Youth Survey



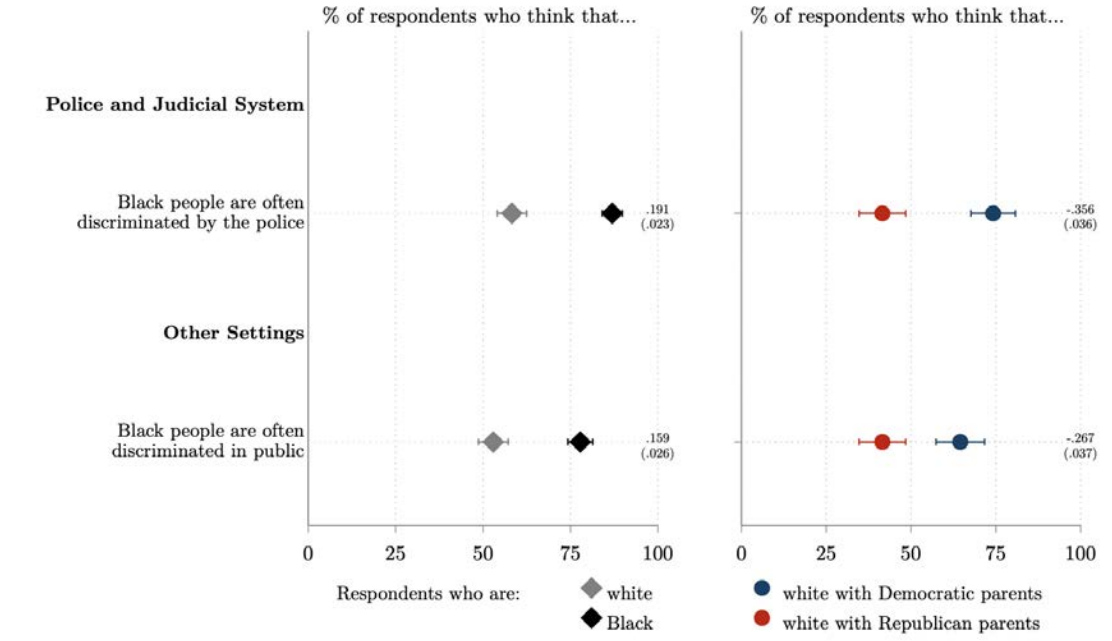
Notes: See notes to Figure 6. Questions on belief that "white people get more job offers," belief that "a white person is less likely to be hired," belief that "Black children attend worse quality schools," and belief that "a white person is less likely to be admitted to college" were only asked in wave 2 and 3.

Figure 8: Perceived Proximate Causes of Racial Gaps (Part 2)

(a) Adult Survey



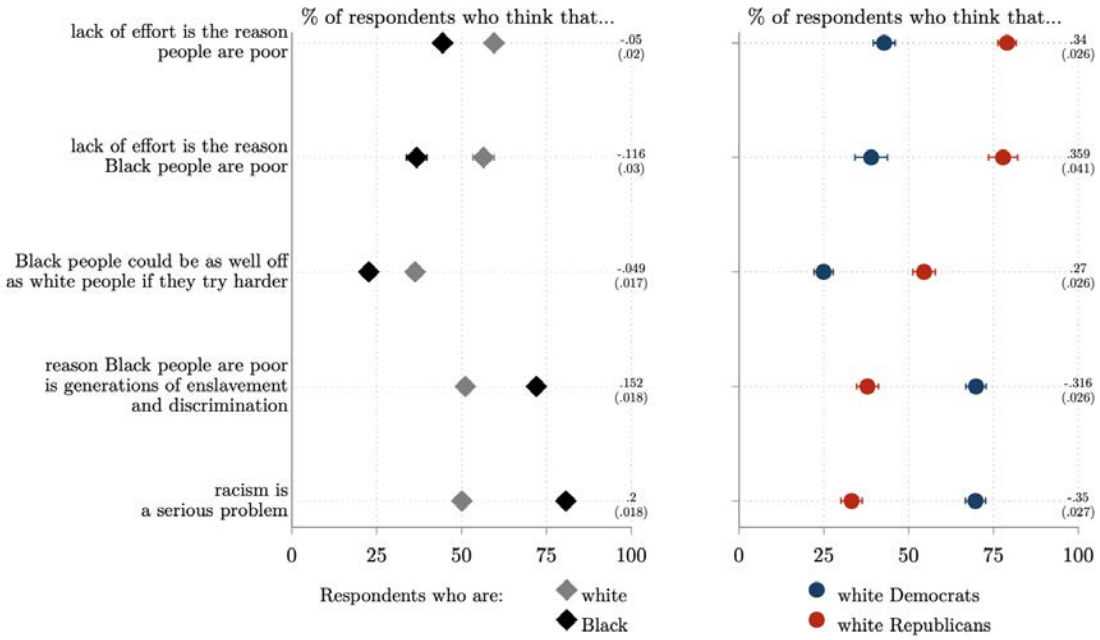
(b) Youth Survey



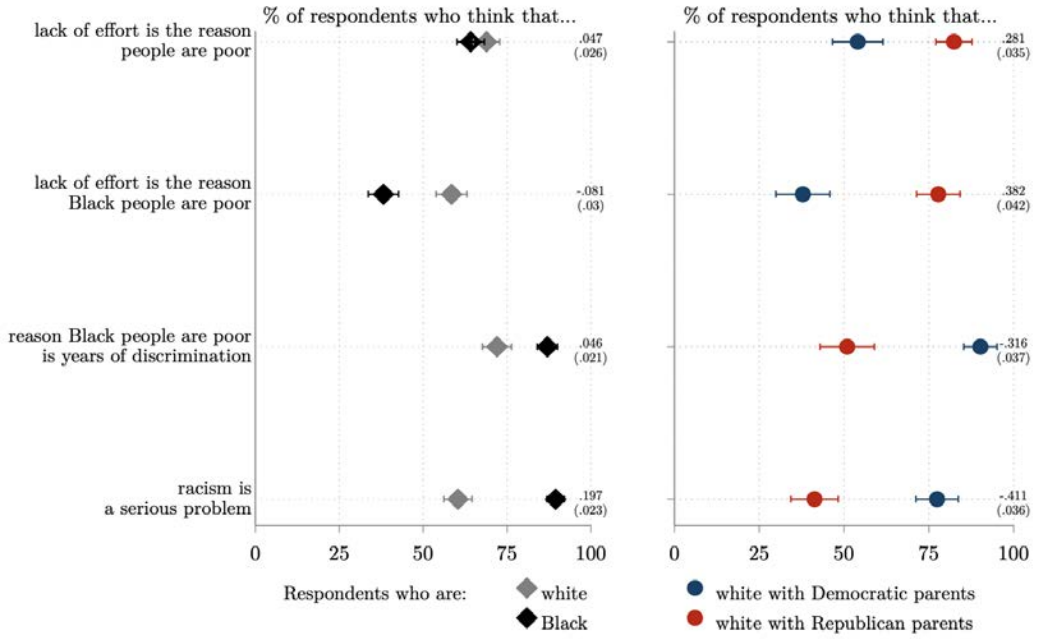
Notes: See notes to Figure 6.

Figure 9: Perceived Fundamental Causes of Racial Gaps

(a) Adult Survey



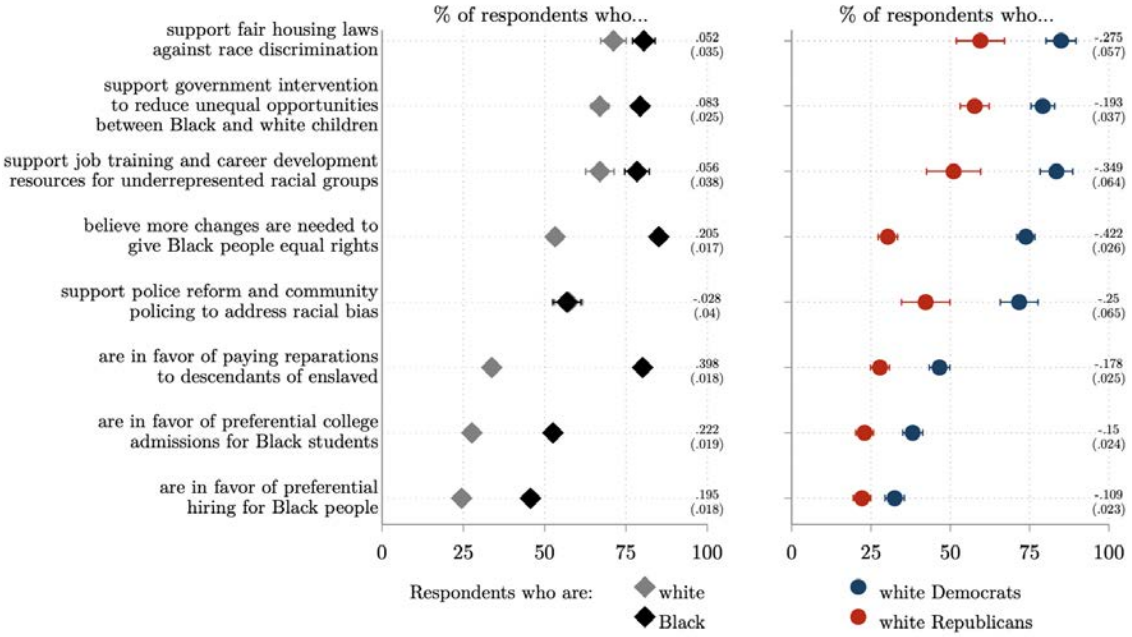
(b) Youth Survey



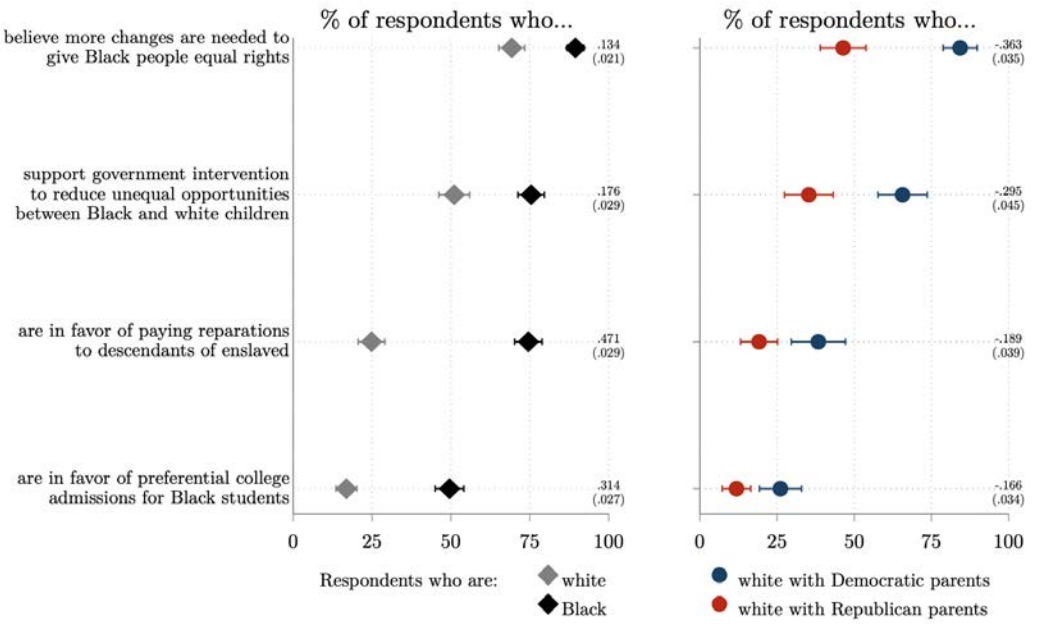
Notes: See notes to Figure 6. Question on belief that "lack of effort is the reason Black people are poor" was only asked in wave 2 and 3.

Figure 10: Support for Race-Targeted Policies

(a) Adult Survey



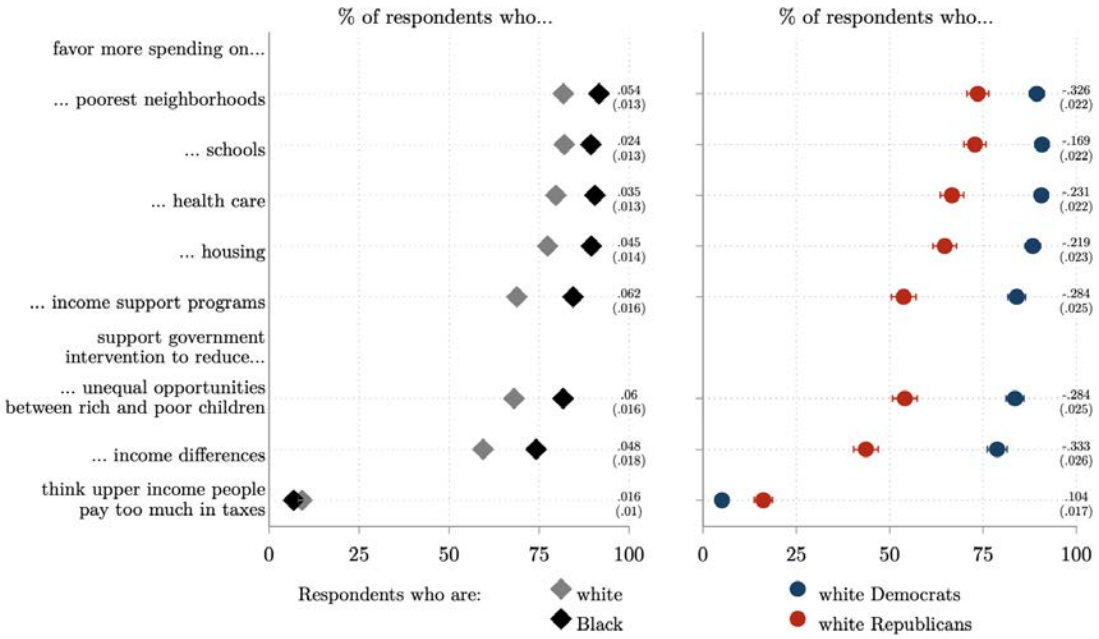
(b) Youth Survey



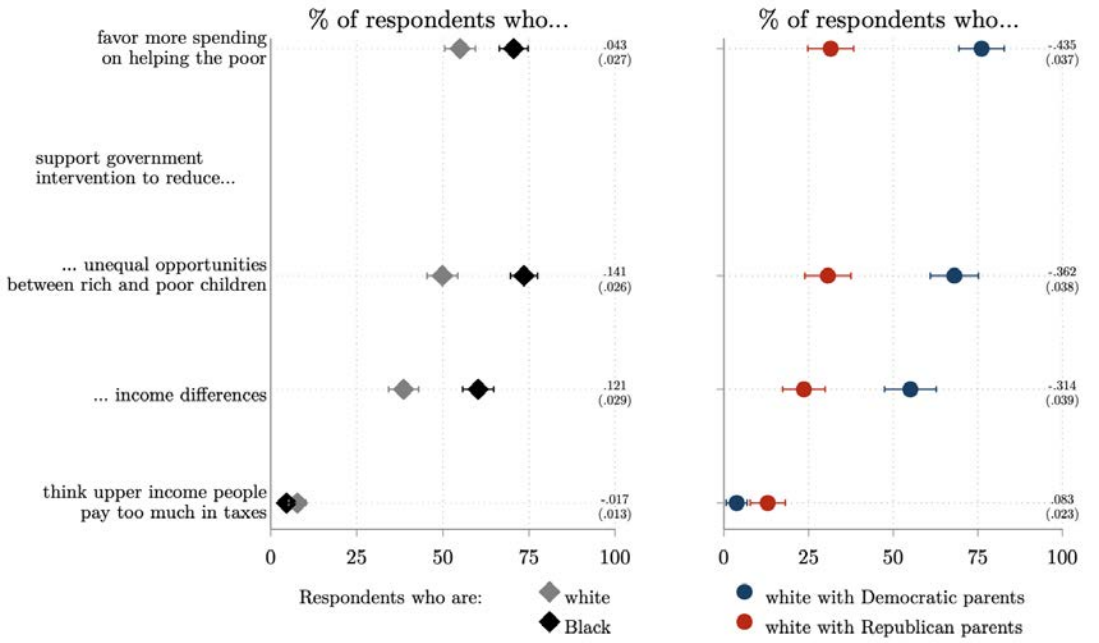
Notes: See notes to Figure 6. Questions on "support for police reform and community policing to address racial bias," "support for fair housing laws against race discrimination," and "support for job training and career development resources for underrepresented racial groups" were only asked in wave 3.

Figure 11: Support for Redistribution Policies

(a) Adult Survey



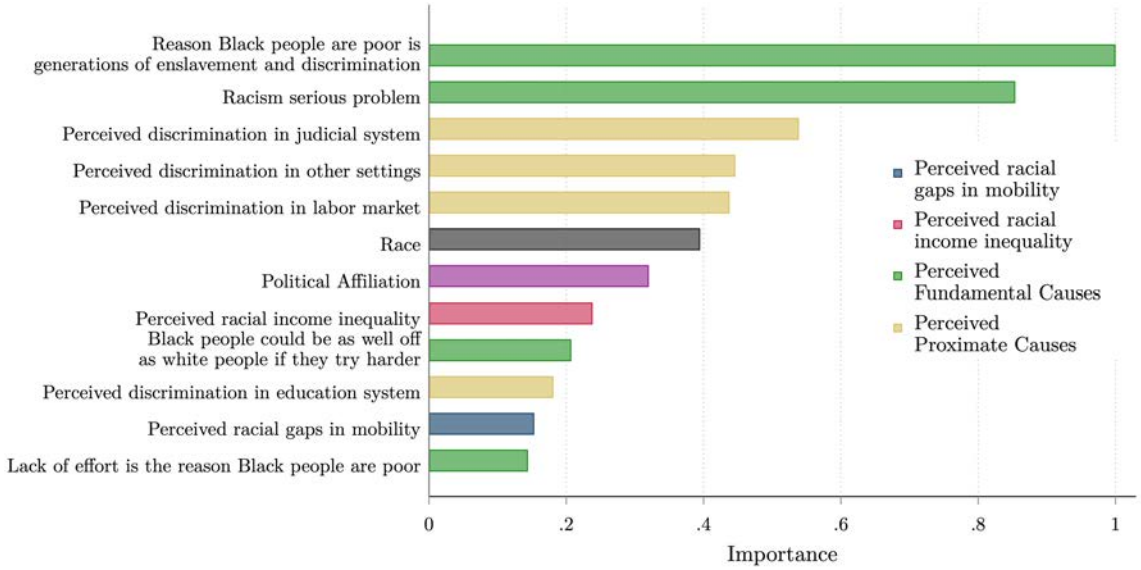
(b) Youth Survey



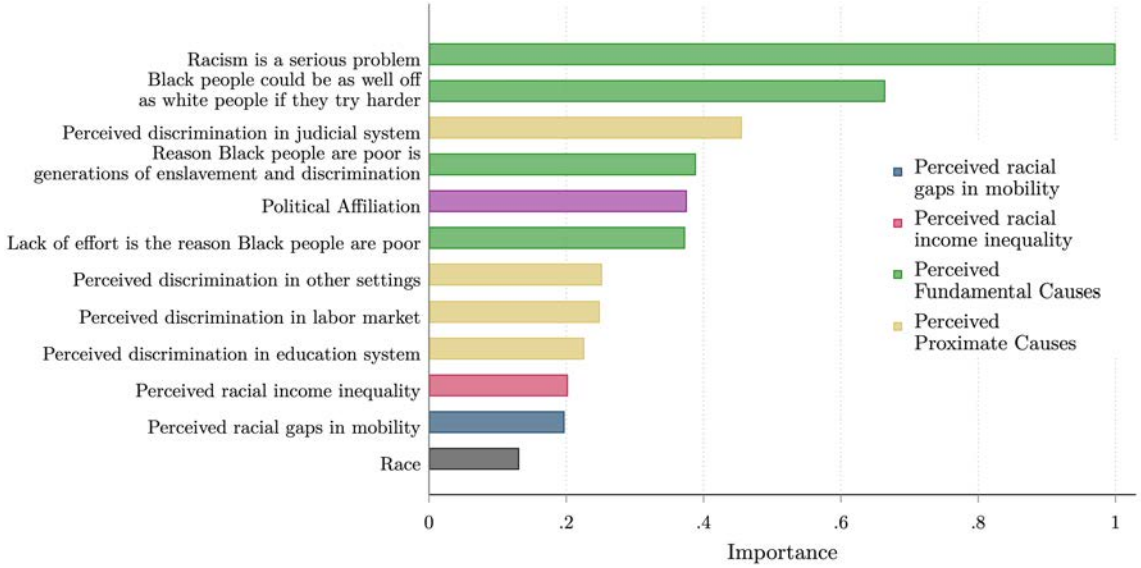
Notes: See notes to Figure 6.

Figure 12: Variable Importance Plot Using Random Forest Algorithm

(a) Race-Targeted Policies

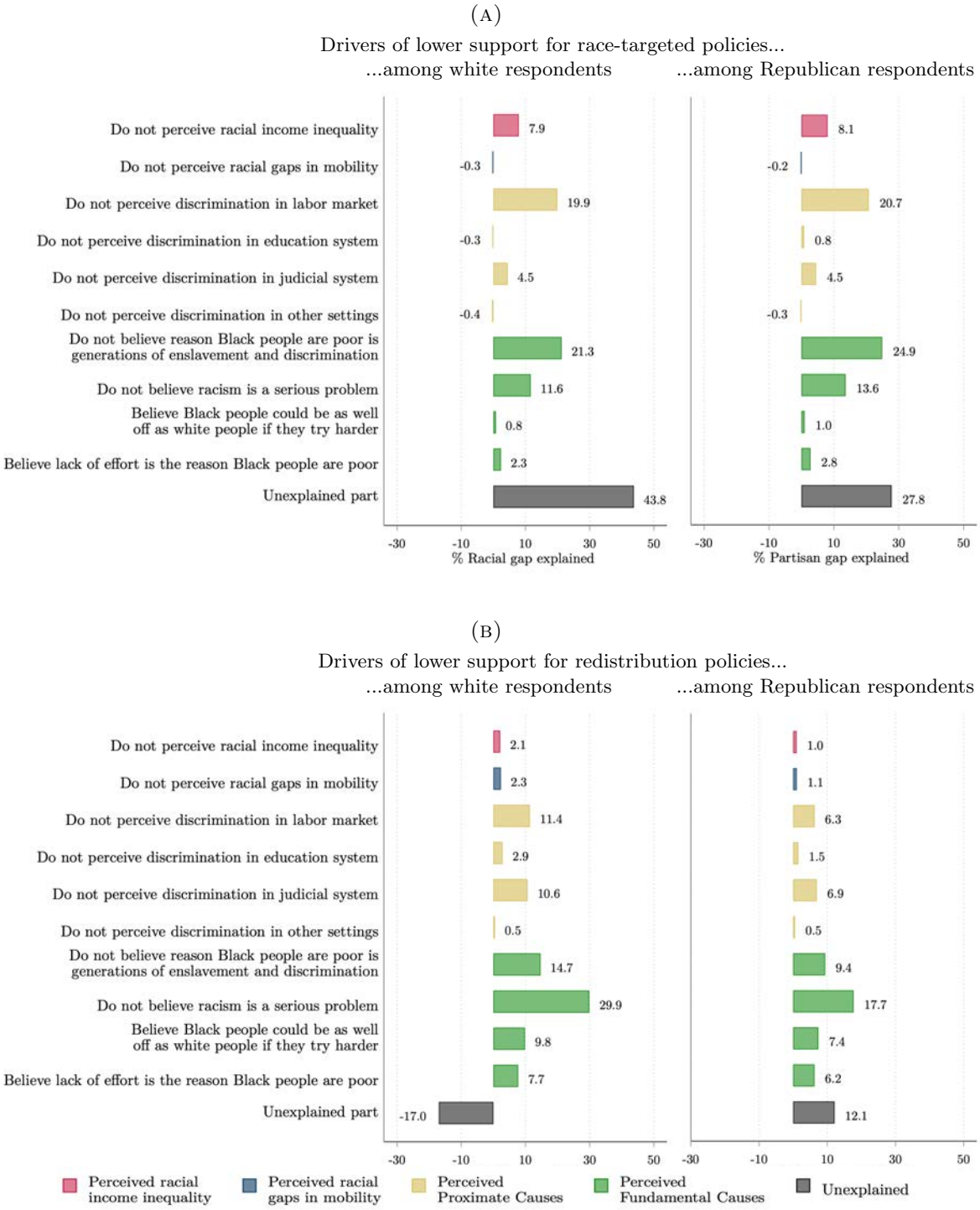


(b) Redistribution Policies



Notes: The figure displays the ranking of variables by importance based on their explanatory power for the value of the *Support for race-targeted policies* index (Panel A) and for the value of the *Support for redistribution policies* index (Panel B). Note that also other variables are considered as controls but their importance score is not displayed (namely, gender, age, income, college and an indicator for survey waves). The importance ranking is obtained using a random forest approach. We depict the *Mean Decrease in Impurity*, which is derived by summing the improvements in the objective function (RMSE) for each variable, given in the splitting criterion over all internal nodes of a tree and across all trees in the forest, normalized by that of the variable with the highest importance. More specifically, we grow 1000 trees with a training sample (40% of all observations). For each tree, we do a bagging (i.e., using only a random subset of observations to reduce over-fitting). The remaining observations for each tree constitute our out-of-bag samples. After growing each tree, we pass along the out-of-bag samples down the tree, and at each split of the tree, the improvement in RMSE is recorded and attributed to the variable used for the split. The R^2 in the test set measures the deviation of the predicted value (obtained using the model fitted in the training set) from its observed value in the sample. For the *Support for race-targeted policies* index, (Panel A) the R^2 in the training set is 0.924 and it is 0.604 in the test set. For the *Support for redistribution policies* index (Panel B), the R^2 in the training set is 0.897 and it is 0.327 in the test set. Only respondents who were not assigned to any of the video treatments are included. Independent respondents are not included. Results are obtained using respondents from all waves.

Figure 13: Gelbach Decomposition of the Racial and Partisan Gaps in Policy Views in the Adult Survey



Notes: The figure reports the Gelbach decompositions of the racial and partisan gap in support for race-targeted policies (Panel A) and support for redistribution policies (Panel B), following Gelbach (2016). Each bar indicates the share of the partisan gap explained by each of the factors, as explained in Section 4.2. Only respondents who were not assigned to any of the video treatments are included. Independent respondents are not included. Results using respondents from all waves.

Figure 14: Gelbach Decomposition of the Racial and Partisan Gaps in Policy Views in the Youth Survey

Notes: This figure is based on the youth survey. See the notes to Figure 13.

Table 4: Treatment Effects

	Perceived Fundamental Causes (1)	Perceived Proximate Causes (2)	Perceived Racial Gaps in Mobility (3)	Perceived Racial Income Inequality (4)	Support for Race-Targeted Policies (5)	Support for Redistribution Policies (6)
Panel A: Descriptive Statistics (control group only)						
Mean	-0.04	-0.10	-0.06	-0.11	0.01	0.01
Black mean	0.45	0.80	0.00	0.17	0.69	0.46
White mean	-0.52	-0.99	-0.12	-0.39	-0.66	-0.43
Black Democrat mean	0.54	0.86	-0.00	0.20	0.90	0.65
Black Republican mean	0.05	0.38	0.13	0.09	-0.15	-0.42
White Democrat mean	0.33	0.07	-0.07	0.11	0.40	0.39
White Republican mean	-1.44	-2.01	-0.22	-0.86	-1.68	-1.22
Observations	723	722	723	722	722	721
Panel B: Treatment Effects - Systemic Racism						
Treatment - Systemic Racism	0.25***	0.44***	0.14***	0.23***	0.28***	0.32***
	(0.08)	(0.13)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.11)
T x Black	0.18*	0.42**	0.12*	0.25**	0.15	0.22
	(0.10)	(0.16)	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.12)	(0.15)
T x White	0.31***	0.46***	0.15***	0.21**	0.40***	0.42***
	(0.11)	(0.18)	(0.05)	(0.09)	(0.13)	(0.15)
Observations	2600	2601	2605	2602	2594	2600
R^2	0.283	0.265	0.039	0.165	0.313	0.172
Panel C: Treatment Effects - Mobility						
Treatment - Mobility	0.05	0.19	0.12***	0.03	0.10	0.15
	(0.08)	(0.12)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.11)
T x Black	0.10	0.38**	0.11**	0.05	0.26**	0.32**
	(0.10)	(0.16)	(0.06)	(0.09)	(0.12)	(0.14)
T x White	0.01	0.01	0.13***	0.02	-0.05	-0.01
	(0.10)	(0.16)	(0.04)	(0.08)	(0.13)	(0.16)
Observations	2645	2648	2651	2648	2641	2646
R^2	0.289	0.265	0.043	0.172	0.317	0.170
Panel D: Treatment Effects - Historical Earnings Gap						
Treatment - Hist Earnings Gap	0.10	0.06	0.05	0.37***	0.03	0.02
	(0.07)	(0.12)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.11)
T x Black	0.21**	0.12	0.04	0.38***	0.18*	0.20
	(0.09)	(0.15)	(0.05)	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.13)
T x White	0.00	0.01	0.06	0.37***	-0.12	-0.15
	(0.10)	(0.17)	(0.05)	(0.09)	(0.12)	(0.14)
Observations	2730	2733	2737	2735	2725	2734
R^2	0.269	0.255	0.039	0.169	0.302	0.163

Note: All dependent variables are indices defined in Appendix Section A-2.3. Results using only respondents from wave 3. Regressions in all panels include controls for gender, age group, race, income group, political affiliation, education, state fixed effects, and indicator variables for all treatments. Coefficients are not reported due to space constraints. Panel A reports the mean of the dependent variables for respondents who saw no treatment video ("Mean"), and separately for Black ("Black mean") and white respondents ("White mean"), and for Black Democrats ("Black Democrat mean"), Black Republicans ("Black Republican mean"), white Democrats ("White Democrat mean"), and white Republicans ("White Republican mean"). Panel B shows the treatment effects of the systemic racism treatment, Panel C shows the treatment effects of the mobility treatment, Panel D shows the treatment effects of the historical earnings gap treatment. All panels report the coefficients from two different specifications, whose only difference is given by the interaction of the treatment effects. The first row shows the treatment effects of the video ("Treatment") relative to the omitted category (no video). The following two rows show the treatment effects of the video interacted with the respondent's race ("T × Black" and "T × White"). Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 5: Treatment Effects in the Youth Survey

	Perceived Fundamental Causes (1)	Perceived Proximate Causes (2)	Perceived Racial Gaps in Mobility (3)	Perceived Racial Income Inequality (4)	Support for Race-Targeted Policies (5)	Support for Redistribution Policies (6)
Panel A: Descriptive Statistics (control group only)						
Mean	-0.14	-0.29	-0.07	-0.17	-0.12	-0.13
Black mean	0.28	0.55	0.07	0.16	0.74	0.30
White mean	-0.62	-1.11	-0.22	-0.50	-0.96	-0.48
Black Dem family mean	0.42	0.75	0.10	0.29	0.73	0.50
Black Rep family mean	-0.35	-0.28	-0.06	-0.25	0.18	-0.29
White Dem family mean	0.20	-0.43	-0.10	0.07	-0.33	0.43
White Rep family mean	-1.54	-1.83	-0.35	-0.94	-1.56	-1.36
Observations	526	620	751	751	405	491
Panel B: Treatment Effects - Systemic Racism						
Treatment - Systemic Racism	0.34***	0.66***	0.17***	0.28***	0.19**	0.29***
	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.09)
T x Black	0.37***	0.69***	0.26***	0.35***	0.20**	0.32***
	(0.09)	(0.13)	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.10)
T x White	0.30**	0.63***	0.09**	0.22***	0.19	0.27**
	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.04)	(0.08)	(0.13)	(0.13)
T x White Dem Family	0.20	0.89***	0.14**	0.31**	0.16	0.23
	(0.16)	(0.24)	(0.07)	(0.13)	(0.23)	(0.16)
T x White Rep Family	0.23	0.41	-0.01	0.22*	0.03	0.13
	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.06)	(0.13)	(0.21)	(0.23)
T x White Ind Family	0.41*	0.69**	0.11	0.11	0.49*	0.69**
	(0.25)	(0.28)	(0.07)	(0.15)	(0.25)	(0.28)
Observations	1118	1320	1715	1715	882	1164
R^2	0.307	0.300	0.118	0.190	0.459	0.277

Note: All dependent variables are indices defined in Appendix Section A-2.3. Regressions include controls for gender, age group, race, parents' income group, parents' political affiliation, state fixed effects, and indicator variables for all treatments. Coefficients are not reported due to space constraints. Panel A reports the mean of the dependent variables for respondents who saw no treatment video ("Mean"), and separately for Black ("Black mean") and white respondents ("White mean"), and for Black with Democratic parents ("Black Dem family mean"), Black with Republican parents ("Black Rep family mean"), white with Democratic parents ("White Dem family mean"), and white with Republican parents ("White Rep family mean"). Panel B reports the coefficients from three different specifications, whose only difference is given by the interaction of the treatment effects. The first row shows the treatment effects of the systemic racism treatment ("Treatment") relative to the omitted category (no video). The following two rows show the treatment effects of the video interacted with the respondent's race ("T × Black" and "T × White"). The last two rows show the treatment effects on white respondents interacted with their parents' political affiliation ("T × White Dem Family," "T × White Rep Family," and"T × White Ind Family"). Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 6: Persistence of the Treatment Effects

	Perceived Fundamental Causes		Perceived Proximate Causes		Perceived Racial Gaps in Mobility		Perceived Racial Income Inequality		Support for Race-Targeted Policies		Support for Redistribution Policies	
	Original Survey Respondents who took Follow-Up	Follow-Up Survey	Original Survey Respondents who took Follow-Up	Follow-Up Survey	Original Survey Respondents who took Follow-Up	Follow-Up Survey	Original Survey Respondents who took Follow-Up	Follow-Up Survey	Original Survey Respondents who took Follow-Up	Follow-Up Survey	Original Survey Respondents who took Follow-Up	Follow-Up Survey
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Panel A: Treatment Effects - Systemic Racism												
Treatment - Systemic Racism	0.29**	0.24	0.45**	0.51**	0.09	0.09	0.32**	0.36***	0.57***	0.33*	0.63***	0.32
	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.20)	(0.21)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.22)	(0.21)
Observations	809	808	811	811	811	811	809	811	808	808	810	809
R^2	0.331	0.337	0.300	0.282	0.086	0.075	0.229	0.229	0.372	0.374	0.258	0.245
Panel B: Treatment Effects - Mobility												
Treatment - Mobility	0.07	0.00	0.17	0.22	-0.01	0.16**	0.13	0.09	0.17	0.14	0.35	0.14
	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.23)	(0.21)
Observations	803	803	806	806	806	806	804	806	804	805	805	804
R^2	0.344	0.352	0.316	0.298	0.073	0.106	0.231	0.233	0.374	0.399	0.252	0.244
Panel C: Treatment Effects - Historical Earnings Gap												
Treatment - Hist Earnings Gap	0.17	0.18	0.32*	0.34*	0.06	0.18**	0.53***	0.62***	0.35**	0.22	0.44**	0.28
	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.20)	(0.20)
Observations	826	826	829	829	829	829	827	829	826	826	828	827
R^2	0.319	0.322	0.291	0.277	0.083	0.094	0.230	0.240	0.362	0.376	0.249	0.248

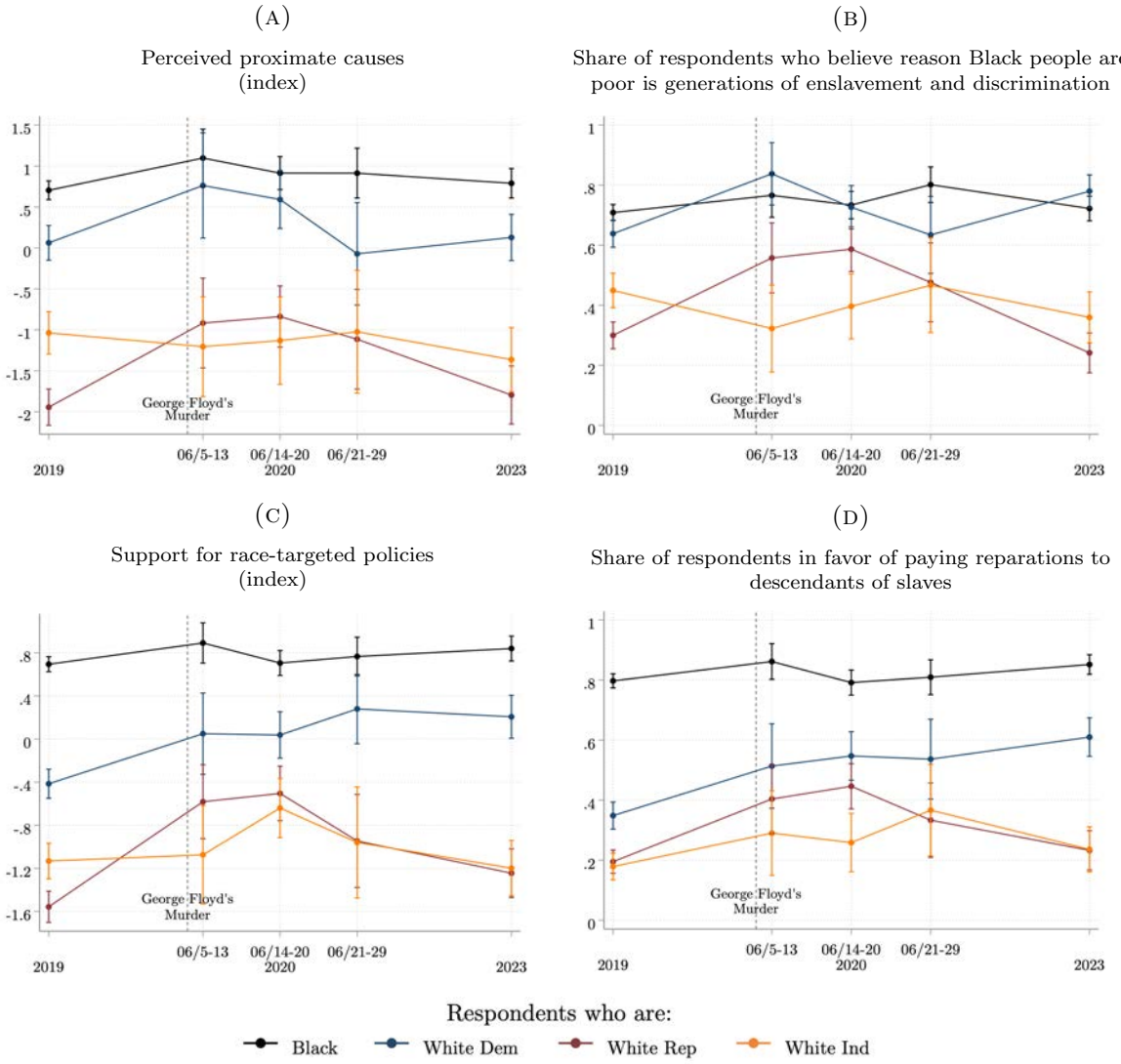
Note: All dependent variables are indices defined in Appendix Section A-2.3. See notes to Table 4. Results using only respondents who completed the follow-up survey. Not dropping fastest and slowest 2% respondents. For every outcome, we report the treatment effects on the answers provided in the original survey and the follow-up survey. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 7: Treatment Effects by Political Affiliation - 2020 vs 2023

	Perceived Fundamental Causes (1)	Perceived Proximate Causes (2)	Perceived Racial Gaps in Mobility (3)	Perceived Racial Income Inequality (4)	Support for Race-Targeted Policies (5)	Support for Redistribution Policies (6)
Panel A: Treatment Effects - Systemic Racism - 2023 Sample						
T x White Dem	0.27*	0.22	0.24***	0.20	0.10	0.21
	(0.15)	(0.26)	(0.09)	(0.14)	(0.17)	(0.19)
T x White Rep	0.39**	0.46	0.03	0.06	0.46*	0.49*
	(0.18)	(0.31)	(0.09)	(0.15)	(0.23)	(0.26)
T x White Ind	0.27	0.80**	0.19**	0.39**	0.71***	0.60**
	(0.21)	(0.32)	(0.09)	(0.16)	(0.25)	(0.28)
Observations	2600	2601	2605	2602	2594	2600
R^2	0.283	0.266	0.041	0.166	0.315	0.173
Panel B: Treatment Effects - Systemic Racism - 2020 Sample						
T x White Dem	0.42***	0.54*	0.09	0.23**	0.32**	0.37**
	(0.15)	(0.30)	(0.06)	(0.11)	(0.14)	(0.17)
T x White Rep	-0.02	-0.46*	0.10	-0.06	-0.26*	-0.37*
	(0.15)	(0.28)	(0.06)	(0.12)	(0.15)	(0.21)
T x White Ind	0.39*	0.90**	0.01	0.12	0.33	0.36
	(0.21)	(0.40)	(0.06)	(0.15)	(0.20)	(0.24)
Observations	2158	1355	2994	2837	2681	2980
R^2	0.286	0.249	0.033	0.134	0.264	0.172

Note: All dependent variables are indices defined in Appendix Section A-2.3. Regressions in all panels include controls for gender, age group, race, income group, political affiliation, education, state fixed effects, and indicator variables for all treatments. Coefficients are not reported due to space constraints. Both Panels show the treatment effects of the systemic racism treatment; Panel A uses only respondents from wave 3, Panel B only from wave 2. Both Panels show the treatment effects of the video on white respondents interacted with their political affiliation ("T × White Dem," "T × White Rep," and "T × White Ind"). Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Figure 15: Time Trends



Notes: The figure reports the share of respondents that satisfy the condition listed in the heading of the subfigure at five different points in time: 2019, between June 5 and June 13 2020, between June 14 and June 20 2020, between June 21 and June 29 2020, and 2023. The murder of George Floyd happened on May 25, 2020. The 90% confidence interval is reported for point in time. We only include respondents who were not assigned to any of the video treatments.