Despite modest improvements in public opinion, Americans have a bleak outlook toward race relations in the United States. A majority of Americans approve of how Joe Biden is handling the issue and many are hopeful that race relations will improve for future generations. About two-thirds of Americans support reforming policies and procedures regarding the current use of force by police.

- 42% of Americans say race relations in the United States are worse than they were a year ago. Yet, this is the lowest proportion with this view since this question was first asked in 2015. 39% believe they are about the same, and 17% report race relations are better. The proportion who perceive improved race relations is at its highest and is up from 9% in August of 2017.

- White Americans (45%) are more likely than Black Americans (34%) to think race relations have deteriorated. 49% of Blacks say the situation has remained the same, and for most, the status quo is a bad thing.

- 69% of residents think race relations in their local communities have stayed the same. This includes 35% of residents who say this is a good thing and 29% who report it is a bad thing. Overall, 14% of residents believe race relations have gotten better, and 12% say they have gotten worse locally. 70% of Black residents say the situation has remained the same, including 41% who say that is a bad thing. This contrasts with 38% of whites who say the lack of change is a good thing.

- A majority of Americans (57%) think race relations for future generations will be better than they are now. 23% say they will be worse, and 15% report they will be about the same.

35% of Americans expect race relations under President Joe Biden to get better, 34% expect the situation to stay about the same, and 28% expect it to get worse. In 2017, 52% thought race relations would get worse under Trump. 26% thought racial tensions would ease, and 18% said they would remain about the same. Blacks (49%) and Latinos (44%) are more optimistic about a positive impact on this issue from Biden than whites (31%).

“In the short run, people of color believe that there’s a chance, under Biden, for Americans to make progress on race relations unlike the greater pessimism felt during the Trump years,” says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist Poll. “In the long run, most people, regardless of race, think the nation will get a handle on the issue for future generations.”
Americans divide (49% agree to 48% disagree) about whether or not they agree with President Biden’s characterization of white supremacy as the country’s “most lethal terrorist threat to the homeland today.” 84% of Democrats agree while 88% of Republicans disagree. A majority of independents (54%) also disagree with Biden. Black Americans (79%) are nearly twice as likely as whites (41%) to agree.

Overall, a majority of Americans (51%) approve of how Biden is handling race relations. 40% disapprove. Partisan allegiances are intact with 50% of independents saying they approve of Biden’s approach on the issue. While whites divide (47% approve to 43% disapprove), 66% of Blacks and 60% of Latinos approve of how Biden is handling the issue.

Biden receives a similar approval rating on the economy (51%). Biden’s strongest policy area, though, remains his handling of the coronavirus pandemic. 66% of Americans approve of how Biden is handling the situation. Biden’s score on his response to the pandemic has steadily increased since he took office.

President Biden’s overall job approval rating stands at 53% among Americans, similar to the 54% rating he received last month. Biden’s approval rating includes 26% who strongly approve of his job performance. 41% of residents, including 30% who strongly do so, disapprove.

**Other Findings**

**Victims of Discrimination & Discussions of Race**

69% of Americans say they have rarely or never personally experienced discrimination or inequality because of their race or ethnicity. The racial divide is apparent. 84% of whites have rarely or never experienced discrimination while 61% of Blacks have often (25%) or sometimes (36%) encountered racial discrimination.

67% of residents often or sometimes discuss race with friends or family. 33% do so rarely or never. Most Americans (87%) are very comfortable (47%) or comfortable (40%) discussing race relations. Though, Blacks (62%) are more likely than whites (46%) to express a high degree of comfort talking about race.

**The Derek Chauvin Verdict & Police Reform**

More than three in four Americans agree with the murder conviction of Derek Chauvin, the former police officer who killed George Floyd in Minneapolis. 15% say it was the wrong decision, and 8% are unsure. With the exception of Republican women (50%) and those who supported Trump in the 2020 election (49%), at least a majority of all demographic groups say the decision was the correct one. Notable proportions of Trump supporters and Republican women are unsure.

While a majority of Americans (53%) think the police in their community treat people of color the same as white people, 32% say people of color are treated more harshly. This is an increase since 2015 when a similar question was asked. At that time, 25% thought people of color were treated more harshly than anyone else. Only 5% say people of color are treated less harshly by the police. Black Americans (61%) are more than twice as likely as whites (25%) to perceive harder treatment of people of color at the hands of police. 39% of Latinos share this view.

About two-thirds of Americans (67%) think current policies guiding the use of force by police should be reformed. 28% do not think these procedures should be changed. 92% of Democrats, 66% of independents, and 33% of the GOP support reform. A majority of Republicans (58%) do not. Blacks (89%) are more likely than whites (62%) and Latinos (68%) to favor reformating the use of force by police.
Most Americans (90%) think police officers wearing body cameras does more good than harm. Only 7% say they do more harm than good.

Views of Local Police

More than seven in ten Americans have a great deal or fair amount of confidence in their local police to keep them safe (78%), protect them from violent crime (77%), or to gain the trust of local residents (72%).

White Americans and Latinos are more likely than Black Americans to say police officers in their community keep them safe and protect them from violent crime. Still, at least six in ten Black Americans have the same perception as whites and Latinos. A majority of Black residents (53%), though, have just some or very little confidence in local police to gain the trust of residents in their community. 77% of whites and Latinos have a great deal or good amount of confidence in local law enforcement to do so.

The Coronavirus Pandemic

59% of Americans (adults over the age of 18 years) report they have already received a coronavirus vaccine. That is, they have been either fully vaccinated (51%) or have received a first dose and are awaiting a second shot (8%). The proportion who say they have been vaccinated has only notched up from 57% in April. 14% of Americans plan to receive the vaccine while 24% say they will not be vaccinated if a vaccine becomes available to them. Republicans (41%), especially Republican men (44%), and Trump supporters (43%) drive the proportion of residents who say they will not get vaccinated.

Most residents (84%) think it is a good idea to provide doses of the coronavirus vaccines to other countries that need them. 12% say it is a bad idea.

49% of residents nationally say they wear a mask most places even if it’s not required. 42% wear a mask in public when it’s required, and 9% say they generally do not wear a mask. All Democrats report wearing a mask either in most places, even if not required (75%), or in public when required (25%). Among Republicans,
55% wear a mask when required in public. 24% wear a face covering in most places, even if not required. 21% of the GOP generally do not wear a mask.