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**National Latino Opinion Leaders Survey**

**Latino Opinion Leaders on Race. Criminal Justice and the Census**

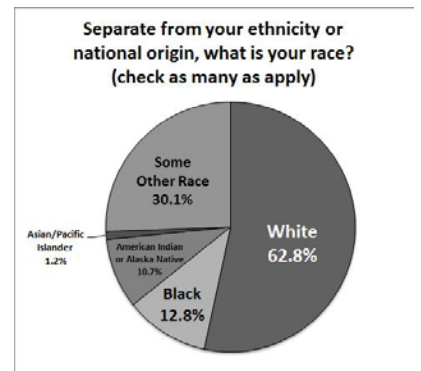
The NiLP Latino Policy & Politics Report (April 19, 2015)  
*This is part 4 of a 5-part series on the results of this survey*

Two interrelated issues --- race relations and the criminal justice system --- are currently high on the public agenda but not major subjects of Latino policy discussions. Connected to these is the current Census Bureau proposal to change the way they collect race and Hispanic data for the 2020 Census. The Latino opinion leaders were asked to provide their views on some aspects of these policy areas,

These findings are from the results of the National Latino Opinion Leaders Survey conducted by the National Institute for Latino Policy (NiLP) over the Internet during the period April 6-13, 2015. It is a survey of 345 of the subscribers to *The NiLP Latino Policy & Politics Report*. The responses to this poll were all anonymous.

**Race.** Following the Census Bureau's approach, the Latino opinion leaders were asked to identify which racial category to which they belong, by selecting as many categories as they wished. Almost two-thirds (63 percent) self-identified as White, This is followed by 30 percent who identified as "some other race" besides the Census categories, followed by 13 percent Black, 11 percent American Indian and 1 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. These included persons who identified with one as well as with two or more racial categories.

However, breaking down their racial choices in more detail reveals a more complex categorization. Those Latino opinion leaders who identified only as White are lower at 51 percent. This is followed by 8 percent who described themselves as mixed or mulatto, 7 percent only as Black, 6 percent only as American Indian or indigenous, 5 percent only as Latino or Hispanic, 2 percent only by their national-origin, 1 percent as only Afro-Latino, 11 percent as two or more races, and 2 percent as "some other race." Only 0.3 percent stated they are unsure while 6 percent refused to answer. Some of those refusing to answer this question also added their disagreement with the idea of racially categorizing Latinos. Those identifying with racial categories outside the established Census races made up 18 percent of the total.



**Separate from your ethnicity or national origin,  
what is your race? (check as many as apply)  
(Detailed tabulation)**

<b>White only</b>	<b>51.3%</b>
<b>Mulatto/Mixed only</b>	<b>8.4%</b>
<b>Black/African-American only</b>	<b>6.7%</b>
<b>American Indian/Indigenous only</b>	<b>6.1%</b>
<b>Latino/Hispanic only</b>	<b>4.9%</b>
<b>National-origin only</b>	<b>2.0%</b>
<b>Afro-Latino only</b>	<b>0.9%</b>
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander only</b>	<b>0.6%</b>
<b>Some other race</b>	<b>1.7%</b>
<b>Two or more races</b>	<b>10.7%</b>
<b>Unsure</b>	<b>0.3%</b>
<b>Refused/NA</b>	<b>6.4%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: NiLP National Latino Opinion Leaders Survey - April 6-13, 2015

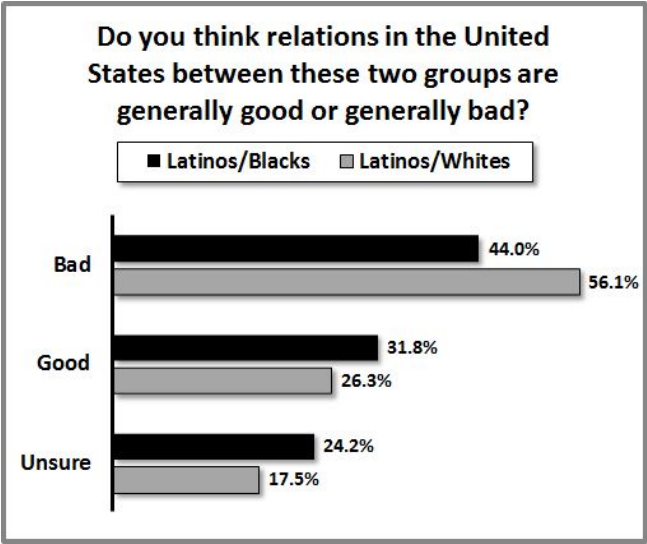
Asked how they would characterize Latinos along general racial and ethnic lines, two-thirds of the Latino opinion leaders (66 percent) feel that Latinos are primarily an ethnic/national origin group, compared to only 6 percent who see it primarily as a racial group. A quarter (25 percent) think Latinos are a combination racial and ethnic/national origin group.

**Do you consider Latinos or Hispanics to be  
primarily a racial or ethnic/national origin  
group, or something else?**

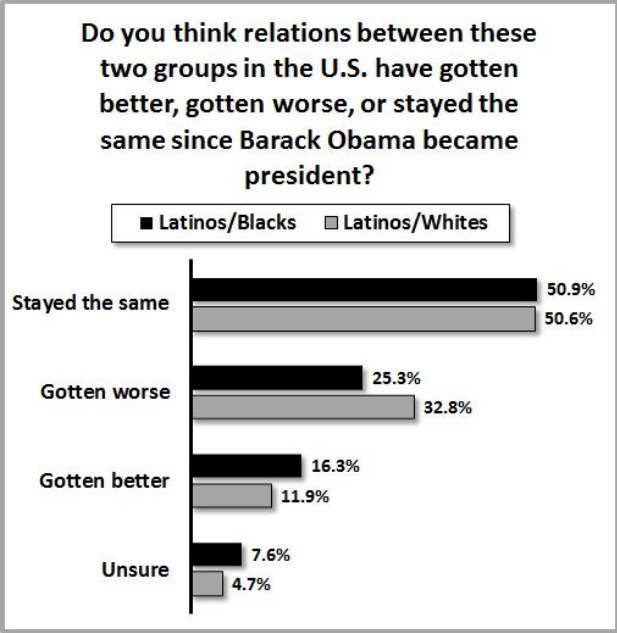
<b>A Racial Group</b>	<b>6.1</b>
<b>An Ethnic/National Origin Group</b>	<b>66.1</b>
<b>Both</b>	<b>25.1</b>
<b>Unsure</b>	<b>2.8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: NiLP National Latino Opinion Leaders Survey - April 6-13, 2015

**Race Relations.** When the issue of race relations in the United States is usually explored, it is mostly in Black-White terms, leaving Latinos largely out of the discussion. To address this problem, the Latino opinion leaders were asked to assess Latino relations with non-Latino Whites and Blacks. They described these relations with both groups as being primarily bad (56 percent felt this way about relations with Whites, and 44 percent of Blacks). However, the Latino opinion leaders feel that Latino-Black relations are better than Latino-White relations.



Since Obama became President, they felt that relations between these groups has not changed much, but more thought that Latino-White relations have gotten worse, while Latino-Black relations has gotten better over this period. While there was no significant difference in their assessment of Latino-Black relations along racial lines, among those Latino opinion leaders who identified as Black, 42 percent felt that Latino-White relations were good compared to only 24 percent of those identifying as White and 24 percent as some other race.



**Criminal Justice.** Most of the Latino opinion leaders (87 percent) feel that the criminal justice system in the United States is racially based, favoring non-Latino Whites. Only 3 percent feel it treats all groups equally and less than 1 percent that it favors non-Latino Blacks.

**In general, do you think that the country's criminal justice system treats Latinos and non-Latino Whites equally, or does it favor non-Latino Whites over Latinos?**

Treats equally	3.2
Favors non-Latino Whites	87.0
Favors non-Latino Blacks	0.6
Depends	7.2
Unsure	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: NILP National Latino Opinion Leaders Survey - April 6-13, 2015

Based on the racial self-identification of the Latino opinion leaders, it is surprising among those identifying as Black that is the highest percentage (19 percent) feeling that the criminal justice system treats everyone equally. This is in comparison to less than 1 percent of Whites and none of those identifying as some other race.

**In general, do you think that the country's criminal justice system treats Latinos and non-Latino Whites equally, or does it favor non-Latino Whites over Latinos?**

	Racial Self-Identification				Total
	White	Black	Other Race	Refused /NA	
Treats equally	0.6%	19.2%	0.0%	4.5%	2.4%
Favors non-Latino Whites	88.7%	76.9%	89.6%	86.4%	87.7%
Favors non-Latino Blacks	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%	0.3%
Depends	8.5%	0.0%	7.5%	4.5%	7.2%
Unsure	2.3%	3.8%	1.5%	4.5%	2.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

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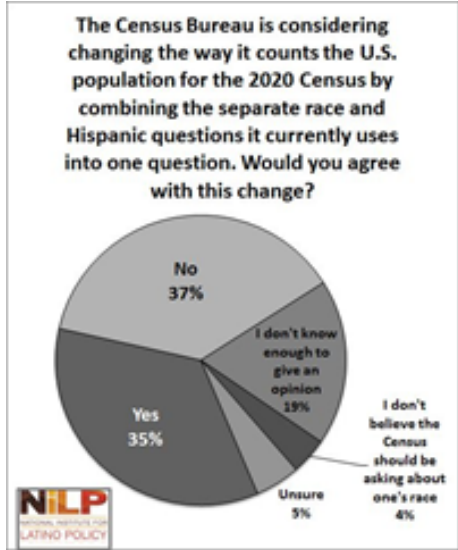
In terms of police-community relations, a large majority (72 percent) of the Latino opinion leaders find that their local police is to different degrees prejudiced against Latinos. Over a quarter of them (27 percent) believe that most of their local police is prejudiced in this way. This feeling of anti-Latino prejudice is felt regardless of the Latino opinion leaders' racial self-identification, but felt most intensively by those identifying racially as White and less by those identifying as Black, which is somewhat counter-intuitive.

**In general, how many police officers in the area where you live do you feel are prejudiced against Latinos?**

	Racial Self-Identification				Total
	White	Black	Other Race	Refused /NA	
Most of them	31.6%	15.4%	25.4%	9.1%	27.1%
Some of them	44.1%	42.3%	49.3%	45.5%	45.2%
Only a few of them	9.6%	19.2%	10.4%	22.7%	11.6%
Almost none of them	4.0%	11.5%	4.5%	9.1%	5.1%
Unsure	10.7%	11.5%	10.4%	13.6%	11.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: NILP National Latino Opinion Leaders Survey - April 6-13, 2015

**Census.** The Latino opinion leaders were asked: The Census Bureau is considering changing the way it counts the U.S. population for the 2020 Census by combining the separate race and



Hispanic questions it currently uses into one question. Would you agree with this change? While a plurality opposed this change (38 percent), a close 35 percent support it, with 19 percent stating they did not know enough about it to give an opinion. There is, therefore, no consensus on this Census issue, indicating the need for further community education on the issues involved in the proposed changes in how the Census Bureau plans to collect racial and Hispanic data in the 2020 Census. With only 4 percent feeling that the Census Bureau should not be collecting such racial and ethnic data, there is a near consensus that the Bureau should be doing so.

There were, however, some racial differences in response to this question by the Latino opinion leaders. While pluralities of Whites (44 percent) and those identifying as some other race (40 percent)

oppose combining the race and Hispanic questions into one, the largest percentage of those identifying racially as Black (42 percent) favor combining the questions into one. This last finding is surprising since the groups raising serious questions about valuable racial information that would be lost by combining these questions representing Afro-Latinos. Further surprising is that two-thirds (67 percent) of those identifying specifically as Afro-Latino support combining the questions.

The Census Bureau is considering changing the way it counts the U.S. population for the 2020 Census by combining the separate race and Hispanic questions it currently uses into one question. Would you agree with this change?

	Racial Self-Identification				Total
	White	Black	Other Race	Refused /NA	
Yes	29.5%	42.3%	33.8%	38.1%	32.3%
No	43.8%	23.1%	40.0%	23.8%	39.6%
I don't know enough to give an opinion	18.2%	23.1%	18.5%	28.6%	19.4%
Unsure	4.0%	11.5%	6.2%	4.8%	5.2%
I don't believe the Census should be asking about one's race	4.5%	0.0%	1.5%	4.8%	3.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: NILP National Latino Opinion Leaders Survey - April 6-13, 2015

Support for the combined question was strongest among those Latino opinion leaders who considered Latinos to be primarily a racial group (55 percent in support) or partially racial (40 percent). The largest percentage (44 percent) of those who consider Latinos to be primarily an ethnic or national -origin group opposed this proposal.

The Census Bureau is considering changing the way it counts the U.S. population for the 2020 Census by combining the separate race and Hispanic questions it currently uses into one question. Would you agree with this change?

	Do you consider Latinos or Hispanics to be Total				Total
	A Racial Group	An Ethnic/ National Origin Group	Both	Unsure	
Yes	55.0%	31.5%	39.5%	33.3%	35.0%
No	20.0%	43.5%	29.6%	22.2%	38.0%
I don't know enough to give an opinion	20.0%	17.1%	18.5%	44.4%	18.4%
I don't believe the Census should be asking about one's race	0.0%	4.2%	3.7%	0.0%	3.7%
Unsure	5.0%	3.7%	8.6%	0.0%	4.9%

Source: NILP National Latino Opinion Leaders Survey - April 6-13, 2015

**Discussion**

The role of race in the Latino community goes beyond Black and White, and may move, because of this, in unexpected ways. The racial self-identification of the Latino opinion leaders points to this complexity, especially in the varied forms that race takes for this group of leaders. Although they identify racially in the majority as White, this represents the primary identification of only half of this group. The other half consists of various combinations of other racial terms some of which are not technically racial.

Situating Latinos within the country's race relations, the Latino opinion leaders believe that Latino relations with non-Latino Blacks and Whites are generally bad. While they see Latino relations with Whites especially bad, they are more positive on Latino relations with Blacks. This provides some support for the basis of Latino-Black coalition-building as a strategy.

A major focus of public debate these days concerns the racial biases of the criminal justice system in the United States. This discussion has been conducted in largely Black-White terms leaving Latinos out for the most part or referred to marginally as part of a more generalized minority or other racialized umbrella term. The Latino opinion leaders echo non-Latino Black concerns with the racial bias of this system, which they see as favoring non-Latino Whites. What is unexpected in these findings is that it is those Latino opinion leaders who identify racially as Black rather than White who feel the criminal justice system is less based.

Finally, the largest percentage of Latino opinion leaders oppose the Census Bureau's proposal to combine the race and Hispanic questions into one for the 2020 Census, although our results indicate that their relations to this is very mixed. In racial terms, those Latino opinion leaders identifying as Black tended to be more supportive of the recommendation to combine the questions, as did those who considered Latinos to be primarily a racial rather than an ethnic group. This is surprising since it has been Afro-Latino organizations that have been the most skeptical of the combining of the questions in public discussions of this issue. These findings point to the need for greater discussion and debate on this issue as the 2017 deadline approaches for the Census Bureau to propose any changes in the 2020 Census to the U.S. Congress.

**Methodology**

This is based on respondents from the influential online national information network of the National Institute for Latino Policy that represents a broad cross-section of Latino opinion

leaders throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. These are made up of elected officials, government officials, heads of community-based organizations and national advocacy groups, religious leaders, business leaders, academics and others. Through our National Latino Opinion Leaders Survey, we poll this group from time to time on important issues facing the Latino community given this stratum's important role in Latino agenda-setting and framing.

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While the polling that is being conducted on Latino issues by the media and polling organizations is of the broader community, this more select group of opinion leaders has a unique place from which to view these questions within our community. While not a scientifically generated sample of Latino elites, we expect this survey will result in useful insights on the main issues facing the Latino community in New York City today. While the findings of this survey are not generalizable to the community as a whole, they represent the views of an influential set of opinion leaders within this community who help set the framework for its issues and priorities. These findings should be seen more as a heuristic device as one might take the results of a focus group.

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***The NiLP Latino Policy & Politics Report** is an online information service provided by the National Institute for Latino Policy (NiLP), edited by Angelo Falcón. For further information, visit [www.latinopolicy.org](http://www.latinopolicy.org) or contact [editor@latinopolicy.org](mailto:editor@latinopolicy.org).*

