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Publics Around the World Say Governments Should Act to Prevent Racial Discrimination

Most Countries See Progress in Racial Equality; Some Do Not

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CONTACT: Steven Kull, Director of WorldPublicOpinion.org, +1-202-232-7500

Very large majorities around the world say people of different races and ethnicities should be treated equally. In nearly all countries surveyed, large majorities agree that governments should take action to prevent racial discrimination and in most of them majorities think they need to do more.

In 15 out of 16 countries surveyed, large majorities say that employers should not be allowed to discriminate based on race or ethnicity and that it is the government's responsibility to stop this from happening.

In 11 of the 16 countries, most believe treatment of different races has grown more equal over the course of their lifetime, but in five countries this is not the case.

These are some of the findings from a poll of 14,896 people in the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa conducted by WorldPublicOpinion.org, a collaborative research project involving research centers from around the world and managed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland. Interviews were conducted in 16 countries representing 58 percent of the world's population: Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, France, Great Britain, India, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, the Palestinian territories, Russia, South Korea, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United States.

WorldPublicOpinion.org has released the poll in advance of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21). This year also marks the 60th anniversary of the UN General Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which declares that all are entitled to the same rights and freedoms, regardless of race, language, religion, sex or other status.

Majorities in all 16 nations consider it important for "people of different races and ethnicities to be treated equally." In 13 countries, majorities say this is "very important." On average, 90 percent say that treating people of different races and ethnicities equally is important, with 69 percent saying it is very important.

Majorities around the world also agree that governments should act to ensure that minorities are treated equally. On average, 79 percent agree that the government "should make an effort to

prevent discrimination based on a person's race or ethnicity," while just 12 percent feel that the government should not be involved.

Only in India does less than half of the public (46%) favor government action. Seventeen percent oppose such action while large numbers are uncertain.

In 10 of the 16 nations polled, the most common view is that governments should do more than it is to prevent racial and ethnic discrimination. On average across all nations polled, 54 percent say the government should do more, while 22 percent feel it is already doing enough. Just 5 percent volunteer that their government already does too much.

In 11 of the 16 nations polled, majorities say that over the course of their lifetime people of different races and ethnicities have come to be treated more equally. On average, 59 percent say people of different races and ethnicities are treated more equally than in the past, including 20 percent who say much more equally. Only 19 percent believe people are treated less equally than before and 14 percent say there has been no real change.

The United States and Indonesia have the largest majorities (82% in both) saying that racial and ethnic majorities enjoy greater equality than in the past, followed by Britain (79%), China (78%), and Iran (76%). The United States (42%), Britain (39%), and China (34%) have the largest percentages saying such minorities are treated "much more equally."

Palestinians are the one public that does not perceive such progress. A majority of Palestinians (54%) say people of different races and ethnicities are now treated less equally than in the past while only 27 percent say they get better treatment.

Views are mixed about whether minorities are treated more equally in four countries: Nigeria (43% more equal, 45% less equal, 10% no change) and three former Soviet states, Ukraine (36% more equal, 11% less, 38% no change), Azerbaijan (39% more, 19% less, 31% no change) and Russia (more 37%, less 20%, no change 25%).

Steven Kull, director of WorldPublicOpinion.org, said "While there is near-unanimity around the world that people of different races should be treated equally, perceptions vary across countries on whether racial equality is being realized."

Majorities in 15 out of 16 nations agree that employers do not have the right to discriminate. Asked whether employers should be allowed to "refuse to hire a qualified person because of the person's race or ethnicity," on average three out of four (75%) say employers should not be able to base hiring decisions on race, while just 19 percent believe they should.

For more information on findings and methods visit: www.WorldPublicOpinion.org.