

**How State Population Diversity Affects American Opinions Toward Black American
Financial Initiatives**

Jason Routsis

1005813489

POL419

Professor Ariga

November 4, 2022

Introduction.

Since the 2016 Presidential Election, conversations in the United States about race relations and the need to re-examine the United States' history have grown in proportion. Examples of this new discourse are shown in the growing publications questioning American history. One notable example is the *New York Times* publication "the 1619 Project," which highlighted alternative depictions of American history, emphasizing the long history of slavery and the forgotten contributions of African Americans.¹ Other forms of race-related discourse are found in new political movements such as "Black Lives Matter" and "STOP AAPI Hate." Black Lives Matter grew after the unlawful police shooting of an unarmed 18-year-old in 2014 and the unlawful killing of George Floyd in 2020.² STOP AAPI Hate was created in response to the growing Asian hate crimes that occurred in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.³ The visible growth in racial discourse brought new conversations about race in the United States to the average citizen, ultimately addressing racial tensions and supporting minority communities affected by systematic historical racism. However, citizen response to this new discourse and re-imagined views of American history was not always in favour of the change.

From the beginning, the reception of new racial discourse in the United States was heavily divided. In 2016, survey data revealed that 35% of white Republican voters strongly opposed the Black Lives Matter Movement, while Democrat and Independent voters were somewhat in favour, with 35% and 31% among white voters.⁴ Additionally, in 2020, the survey data revealed that after George Floyd's murder, Republicans did not change their opinions of on whether the United States has provided enough racial equity to African Americans. The data stated that roughly 55% of Republicans believe the United States has "been about right" in providing racial equity, and roughly 26% of Republicans believe the United States has "gone too far," which is only about 1% different than what was found in 2019.⁵ On the contrary, Democrats' support for more racial equality grew by 12%, with 78% of Democrats believing the United States should do more to account for racial inequality.⁶

Despite efforts to change racial discourse and create new progressive movements for minority communities in the United States, Democrats and Republicans continued to grow apart in their views. Data supports that Americans are developing more interest in changing existing racial tensions, but there will always be that percentage of America firmly against this change. Therefore, researching and analyzing what leads to Americans forming strong opinions against

¹ "The 1619 Project," *The New York Times*, August 14, 2019, sec. Magazine, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>.

² Travis Mitchell, "Amid National Reckoning, Americans Divided on Whether Increased Focus on Race Will Lead to Major Policy Change," *Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project* (blog), October 6, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/10/06/amid-national-reckoning-americans-divided-on-whether-increased-focus-on-race-will-lead-to-major-policy-change/>; "The Global Impact of George Floyd: How Black Lives Matter Protests Shaped Movements around the World," accessed November 10, 2022, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/george-floyd-black-lives-matter-impact/>.

³ "FBI Data: Pa. Hate Crimes Hit 14-Year High in 2020," *WHYY* (blog), accessed November 10, 2022, <https://whyy.org/articles/fbi-data-pa-hate-crimes-hit-14-year-high-in-2020/>.

⁴ Juliana Menasce Horowitz and Gretchen Livingston, "How Americans View the Black Lives Matter Movement," *Pew Research Center* (blog), accessed November 10, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/08/how-americans-view-the-black-lives-matter-movement/>.

⁵ Mitchell, "Amid National Reckoning, Americans Divided on Whether Increased Focus on Race Will Lead to Major Policy Change."

⁶ Mitchell.

racial equality and programs that help communities hurt by long-existing American systems is worth our efforts. Additionally, this research may help politicians, movement leaders, and journalists understand how they can help better inform Americans who are not in favour of a cultural change.

This paper will attempt to provide more context to racial discourse by creating and analyzing a causal theory that focuses on how diversity among state populations influences Americans' opinions. Research data used to support this paper is from the political science journal *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, which receives data from the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research College of Social Science (IPPSR) from "The Correlates of State Policy Project."⁷

Causal Theory.

This analysis seeks to answer what independent factors dominate an individual's opinion to be against more racial equality or programs created to assist minorities. More specifically, this paper will look at the case of African Americans and the willingness of Americans to support Black communities. States that have more diversity expose its citizens to different cultures. More exposure to different cultures increases an individual's tolerance and acceptance in most cases. Thus, a significant metric to consider when understanding racial discourse is the population distribution of the United States. We want to analyze how Americans' opinions change when presented with more diversity. Measuring diversity can be noted where the African American population is more prominent compared to states where the African American population is not. Therefore, the independent variable for this analysis is the percentage of African Americans that live in a chosen state. Additionally, the focus of this paper is to understand Americans' opinions further when presented with a position to aid racial inequality or programs that help Black communities. Therefore, it makes sense that this research's dependent variable would be Americans' willingness to help bring racial equity to Black communities.

Hypothesis.

The theory behind this paper's research has now been defined, but the variables presented need to be operationalized before we can apply them. The percentage of African American citizens per state will act as our way of measuring the independent variable. For the dependent variable, we will use the percentage of Americans against spending more aid to help Black communities per state.

With the variables operationalized, we can now derive this paper's hypothesis. Considering the political landscape in 2022, where racial tensions are still as present as in 2020, this paper will infer that the relationship between the dependent and independent variables will result in a negative outcome. Thus, states with a higher percentage of African American citizens will have a smaller percentage of citizens who are not in favour of financially aiding Black communities.

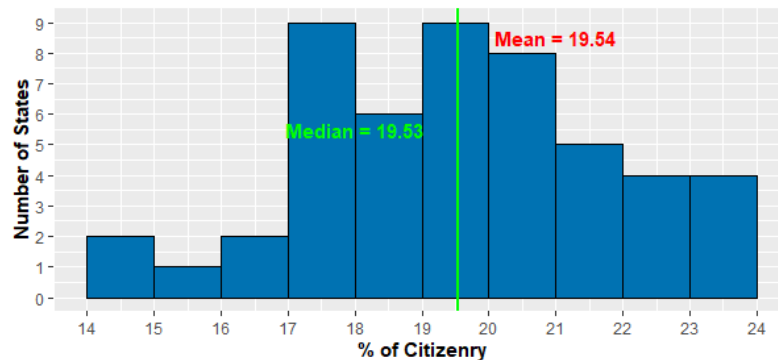
Dependent and Independent Variables.

The data used in this analysis is taken from the IPPSR's data set "The Correlates of State Policy Project," using the variables "percentBlack" and "anti_race" as our dependent and

⁷ Matt Grossmann, Marty P. Jordan, and Joshua McCrain, "The Correlates of State Policy and the Structure of State Panel Data," *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (2021): 430–50, <https://doi.org/10.1017/spq.2021.17>.

independent variables.⁸ Moving forward, this paper will use DV for our dependent variable and IV for our independent variable. Each variable is taken from its respective survey. The DV is from a general social survey that asked individuals about their spending preference for financial assistance to Black communities. Our variable consists of individuals who responded that we are spending “too much” on Black communities. The IV is taken from U.S. Census data that refers to an individual’s race and state.

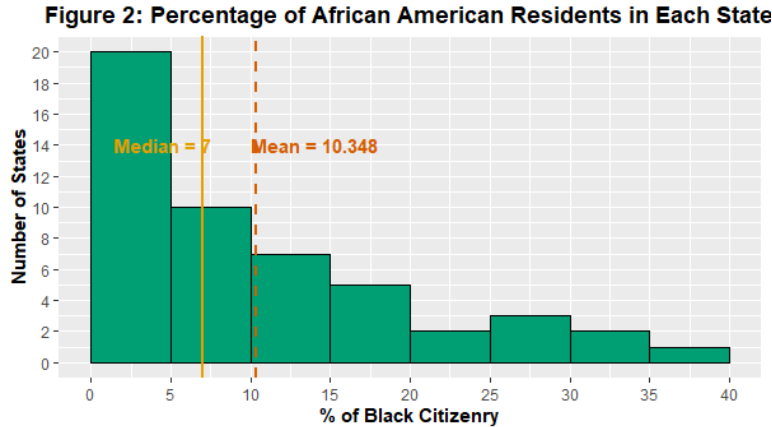
Figure 1: Estimated Proportion of Citizenry, Who Believe We Are Spending ‘Too Much’ On Assistance to Black Communities



Looking directly at the data for our DV, we can interpret its contents shown in Figure 1. In Figure 1, the data is distributed across the range of fourteen to twenty-four on the x-axis, signifying the percentage of the citizenry, and a range of one to ten across the y-axis, representing the number of states observed. Figure 1 notes that the average percentage of Americans that believe we are spending “too much” on assistance to Black communities is roughly 19.54%. The median of Figure 1 is 19.53%, which is very similar to the mean. Since both the mean and median are almost quantitatively the same value, we can infer that the distribution is evenly spread across the x-axis. Moreover, the DV’s average reveals that sharing the opinion that we are spending “too much” on assistance to Black communities is not popular, as less than a fourth of Americans share this opinion. This small percentage of citizenry follows previous related studies that revealed that about 26% of Republicans believe the U.S. has “gone to far” in providing racial equity.⁹

⁸ Grossmann, Jordan, and McCrain.

⁹ Mitchell, “Amid National Reckoning, Americans Divided on Whether Increased Focus on Race Will Lead to Major Policy Change.”



We will now transition our analysis to the IV shown in Figure 2. In Figure 2, the IV is distributed across an x-axis ranging from zero to thirty-eight, signifying the percentage of the Black citizenry, and a y-axis ranging from zero to eight, representing the number of states observed. The data displayed in Figure 2 shows a distribution heavily skewed to the right of the x-axis. Figure 2's skew is expected since African Americans comprise less than 50% of the U.S. population.¹⁰ Additionally, the listed values in Figure 2 show that the IV possesses a mean of roughly 10.3% and a median of 7%. Again, since the distribution is heavily skewed to the right toward zero, a smaller median value makes sense for our data. Moreover, our IV, “percentBlack,” should have a small mean value because most states generally do not share a large population of African American residents. According to census data, in 2021, roughly 13.6% of the United States population identified as Black or African American, which is very close to the mean of the data.¹¹

Interpretation of the Bivariate Regression.

After explaining the content and significant aspects of our DV and IV, this paper will begin analyzing our variable's bivariate regression. To begin, the visualization of this paper's bivariate regression is found in Figure 3, and the quantitative analysis of each variable is listed in Table 1. Figure 3 presents the data's regression with a scatter plot where each point signifies a state. Each state is labelled by its two-letter abbreviation (i.e., New York is “NY” and Oklahoma is “OK”). Figure 3 shows the calculated bivariate regression by the red dotted line that stretches horizontally across the x-axis. Looking at the distribution and the regression angle, we can infer that the relationship between our DV and IV alone is negative. As states increase their percentage of Black citizens, the percentage of citizens who believe we are spending “too much” on assistance to Black communities decreases. On the contrary, as states decrease in their percentage of Black citizens, the percentage of citizens who believe we are spending “too much” on assistance to Black communities increases.

¹⁰ “U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States,” accessed November 11, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI225221>.

¹¹ “U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts.”

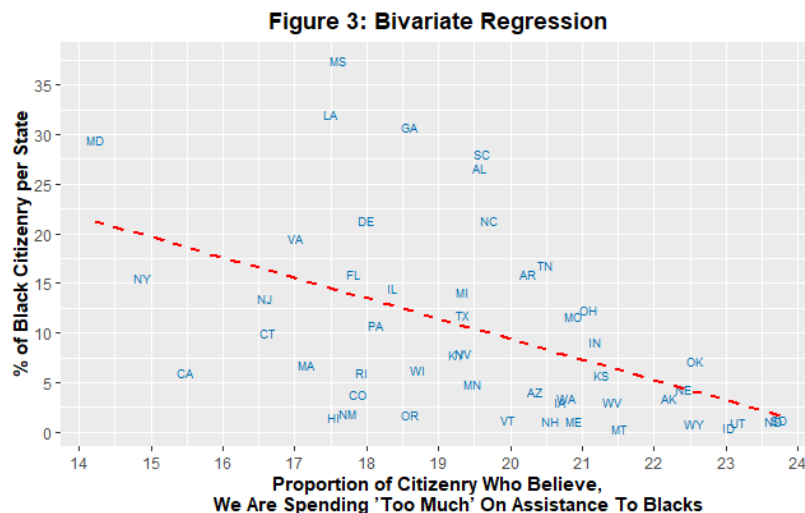


Table 1 shows that for the bivariate regression, the IV resulted in a coefficient value of -0.1116 and an intercept of 20.692. Additionally, the R^2 value of the bivariate regression was roughly 0.23. Comparing these results to its visualization in Figure 3, we can see the negative slope of the regression line, which follows the negative coefficient value listed in Table 1. Furthermore, we can point out that the regression line does not match most of the current data, explaining why the R^2 value is so small at 0.23. In general, the slope of this regression is rather significant, considering the range of the data. This is because the overall spread of the data is consolidated near the linear regression line; however, a significant number of states are far from the regression line.

Looking at state trends within Figure 3., the states with the least number of individuals who believe we are spending “too much” on assistance to Black communities are Maryland (MD), New York (NY), and California (CA). This trend is expected as NY and CA have diverse populations, and MD shares a high percentage of Black citizens. Additionally, historically these states are noted as very democratic. Each voted in favour of democratic presidential candidates in the last eight presidential elections.¹²

Another notable trend is shown by states with the highest percentage of Black citizens. In Figure 3, these states are Louisiana (LS), Mississippi (MS), and Georgia (GA), all of which share a Black population above 30%. These states share the highest amount of Black citizens. However, they do not follow our hypothesis that states with the highest percentage of Black citizens will have the smallest number of citizens who believe we are spending “too much” on assistance to Black communities. Perhaps more factors must be considered to ensure our data is statistically and substantively significant. This divide in our data will be accounted for with the addition of control variables.

¹² “Presidential Voting Trends in New York,” Ballotpedia, accessed November 11, 2022, https://ballotpedia.org/Presidential_voting_trends_in_New_York; “Presidential Voting Trends in California,” Ballotpedia, accessed November 11, 2022, https://ballotpedia.org/Presidential_voting_trends_in_California; “Presidential Voting Trends in Maryland,” Ballotpedia, accessed November 11, 2022, https://ballotpedia.org/Presidential_voting_trends_in_Maryland.

Control Variables.

This paper will now describe control variables used to increase the validity of our data which may account for the variance displayed in Figure 3. As stated above, the bivariate regression displayed data with a clear negative correlation, but neglected factors may influence our data. The first significant factor that may influence our data is citizen ideology. This paper has already mentioned in its introduction that Democrats and Republicans share a clear divide on race, meaning ideology will likely influence how citizens feel about financially supporting Black communities. The second significant factor is the state's distribution, which is how much a state's population lives in rural communities. It is common for cities to be the most diverse part of a state. Following our assumption about state diversity, it would make sense that the least diverse portion of a state would be the rural parts far from a state's major cities. Therefore, states with a large percentage of rural citizens are more likely to believe we are spending "too much" on assistance to Black communities. Finally, the last significant factor is how much of the population is not white. Similar to our hypothesis about African American citizens, we assume that non-white citizens will be against the notion that we are spending "too much" on assistance to Black communities, and states with fewer non-white citizens will be more likely to believe we are spending "too much" on assistance to Black communities. Although the variable "non-white" does include Black citizens, this variable is less specific on racial category while still accounting for the average opinion of non-white Americans.

Interpretation of the Multiple Linear Regression.

With control variables now accounted for, we can transition our focus to understanding our data's multiple linear regression model, as shown in Table 1. Table 1 mentions both regressions, each with its standard error and R^2 values. We can compare each model by observing how the IV's coefficient and R^2 values change. As previously stated, the bivariate regression produced a negative coefficient of -0.112 for the IV "percentBlack" and an R^2 value of 0.23. With the addition of new control variables, the results for the multiple linear regression sought to decrease variance and increase the statistical significance of our data. The multiple linear regression's additions cause the IV to increase its coefficient value from -0.112 to -0.102 and the R^2 value to increase from 0.23 to 0.75. Adding control variables to our data analysis slightly weakened our regression slope and significantly improved our model's variance. Accounting for possible bias reduced our IV's influence but increased our data's significance and accuracy.

To properly determine the validity of our data's results, this paper will examine our data's statistical and substantive significance. Table 1 features descriptive labels that distinguish varying "p" values levels. These p values are indicators for the standard error of our data, which is another way of visualizing statistical significance. As noted at the bottom of Table 1, there are three possible p values ($p < 0.001 = ***$, $p < 0.01 = **$, $p < 0.05 = *$). Each p-value signifies a different confidence interval, 99.9%, 99%, and 95%. Assuming our data is from a large sample and represents a normal distribution, the desired confidence level needed to achieve statistical significance is 95%. Looking back at our multiple regression values in Table 1, we can see that every variable possesses some variation of a p-value. For example, our IV "percentBlack" has a p-value less than 0.001, which means that it is significant at the 99.9% confidence interval. However,

under our current assumptions about our distribution, a variable that exudes confidence at a larger interval also possesses confidence for every smaller interval. Thus, our IV is confident at the 99.9% interval, so it is also confident at the 95% interval. Another example is found in the confounding variable "nonwhite," which possesses a p-value less than 0.05. Similar to our IV, "nonwhite" is statistically significant, but its highest significance is at the 95% confidence interval. Extending this logic to the rest of our data, we can conclude that all variables are statistically significant at the 95% interval because each variable possesses a variation of the p-value.

Table 1: Multiple Linear Regression

	Bivariate Regression	Multiple Linear Regression
(Intercept)	20.6920 *** [19.8566, 21.5275]	23.5534 *** [21.9540, 25.1528]
percentBlack	-0.1116 *** [-0.1709, -0.0522]	-0.1017 *** [-0.1423, -0.0612]
citizen_ideology		-0.0689 *** [-0.0918, -0.0461]
percentPopRural		0.0406 ** [0.0123, 0.0688]
nonwhite		-0.0340 * [-0.0636, -0.0045]
N	50	50
R2	0.2290	0.7523
*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.		

The only remaining aspect to determine is the substantive significance of our data. Although statistical significance is a good metric for determining our data's precision, it does not account for what exists in the physical world. That being said, the original motivation for this research paper was to investigate how a state population's diversity affected citizens' opinions regarding racial equity or programs created to assist minorities in general. This paper chose to examine how the percentage of Black citizens in a state affects the opinions of its citizens. Looking at Table 1 can see that the IV holds the largest coefficient value of -0.102, while the next most noteworthy coefficient is "citizen_ideology" with -0.0689. Although the IV is the largest, we can not take this as proof that our data is substantive. Instead, we must consider what variable is most influential outside the data. In Figure 3, we can see that neither citizen ideology nor dominant rural states are clearly shown in the graph. Small Democratic states Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, and Massachusetts all exist on the right side of the regression, which is higher in citizens who believe we are spending "too much" on assistance to Black communities. Presenting states in order of their state diversity results in a significant deviation from previous assumptions about state

culture, further proving the significance of the data's IV. However, when calculating the standardized coefficients of each variable, "citizen_ideology" trumps the IV with a larger value. The standardized coefficient of "citizen_ideology" is -0.478 and the IV's is -0.436, meaning "citizen_ideology" has more influence. Thus, the IV does possess significant influence in the data but is not as substantively significant when paired with other variables.

Discussion.

We need to consider reverse causality in our causal theory to make clear conclusions. Reverse causality between the IV and DV would imply that the DV can influence the DV. This paper would suggest that the percentage of citizens who believe we are spending "too much" on assistance to Black communities influences the percentage of African Americans living in a state. This proposed relationship is not entirely unlikely; however, other factors have significantly more influence on which states hold the largest percentage of African American citizens. African American may choose to avoid living in states with a large portion of individuals who believe we are spending "too much" on assistance to Black communities, as this sort of opinion could be perceived as a negative opinion toward their race. However, other factors such as financial flexibility, how safe a state is, and historical bias might have more significant impact on where African Americans choose to live.

One characteristic of this paper's data that may affect the external application of its findings is that the data used to calculate its findings are all from 2010. The data referenced from the ISPPR are all from 2010, meaning citizens answering questions were not exposed to the cultural changes following the 2016 or 2020 presidential elections. However, the papers would suggest variables tested in 2010 are long-existing factors like the distribution of minority groups across the United States and the population density of states, all of which have not significantly changed in the last 12 years. One factor that may affect the results is the ideological influence on our data. As mentioned in a 2020 study, there was no significant change among republican voters in their views on racial equality.¹³ However, in United States politics today, fractures in belief among members of the Republican party are more common than in 2020. Thus, using the data from 2010 does possess significant limitations when connecting this paper's findings to the racial discourse in 2022. Still, the paper's findings may prove useful as a possible lens for approaching why racial tensions exist in states.

Summarising this paper's findings, the causal theory proposed does exist empirically, but the validity of its findings is limited when applied to the real world. The causal relationship created between the percentage of African Americans in a state and the percentage of citizenry who believe we are spending "too much" in assistance to Black communities does produce the intended negative relationship, but when compared with other variables like citizen ideology, its influence is not as substantial. Additionally, a significant limitation of this paper's findings was the outdated aspect of the data. Still, when applying these results to the real world, if combined with more recent data it offers significant data for understanding racial discourse in the United States.

¹³ Mitchell, "Amid National Reckoning, Americans Divided on Whether Increased Focus on Race Will Lead to Major Policy Change."

For external use, this data offers an alternative lens for answering why there is a divide in opinion between Democrats and Republicans regarding racial discourse. Scholars and political advisors might explore how to bridge the racial standards gap between diverse and non-diverse communities. Moreover, it might highlight the importance of unifying states on racial discourse as the United States will only continue to grow its minority populations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ballotpedia. “Presidential Voting Trends in California.” Accessed November 11, 2022.
https://ballotpedia.org/Presidential_voting_trends_in_California.

Ballotpedia. “Presidential Voting Trends in Maryland.” Accessed November 11, 2022.
https://ballotpedia.org/Presidential_voting_trends_in_Maryland.

Ballotpedia. “Presidential Voting Trends in New York.” Accessed November 11, 2022.
https://ballotpedia.org/Presidential_voting_trends_in_New_York.

Grossmann, Matt, Marty P. Jordan, and Joshua McCrain. “The Correlates of State Policy and the Structure of State Panel Data.” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (2021): 430–50. <https://doi.org/10.1017/spq.2021.17>.

Horowitz, Juliana Menasce, and Gretchen Livingston. “How Americans View the Black Lives Matter Movement.” *Pew Research Center* (blog). Accessed November 10, 2022.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/08/how-americans-view-the-black-lives-matter-movement/>.

Mitchell, Travis. “Amid National Reckoning, Americans Divided on Whether Increased Focus on Race Will Lead to Major Policy Change.” *Pew Research Center’s Social & Demographic Trends Project* (blog), October 6, 2020.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/10/06/amid-national-reckoning-americans-divided-on-whether-increased-focus-on-race-will-lead-to-major-policy-change/>.

“The Global Impact of George Floyd: How Black Lives Matter Protests Shaped Movements around the World.” Accessed November 10, 2022.
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/george-floyd-black-lives-matter-impact/>.

The New York Times. “The 1619 Project.” August 14, 2019, sec. Magazine.
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>,
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>.

“U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States.” Accessed November 11, 2022.
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI225221>.

WHYY. "FBI Data: Pa. Hate Crimes Hit 14-Year High in 2020." Accessed November 10, 2022.
<https://whyy.org/articles/fbi-data-pa-hate-crimes-hit-14-year-high-in-2020/>.