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DS 3001 EDA Lab

General Social Survey EDA Lab

Reasoning Behind Choosing Data:

I was interested in selecting data related to a current issue so I navigated to the ["Key Trends"](#)

section under "Civil Liberties, Difference & Discrimination," where I found data on attitudes

toward affirmative action. This topic is especially relevant given the U.S. Supreme Court's June

2023 decision to end affirmative action in college admissions. In several of my classes and

extracurricular activities focused on minorities and immigration in the U.S., we have discussed

the historical intent behind affirmative action, its effectiveness, and the potential consequences of

eliminating it. These conversations have highlighted the complexity of the issue, with arguments

on both sides, as some view affirmative action as a necessary tool to address systemic

inequalities, while others criticize it as unfair or ineffective.

The data I selected from the GSS specifically examines the racial breakdown of those who

oppose affirmative action. While the categories are somewhat limited (Black, White, and Other)

I was interested in exploring how opposition varies across different racial groups. Understanding

these patterns can provide insight into broader societal attitudes and how different communities

perceive policies aimed at addressing racial inequality. Additionally, analyzing this data in the

context of historical trends could help illustrate how public opinion has shifted over time,

particularly in response to major political and legal decisions.

Numeric Summaries:

Table 1: Average Opposition Percentage by Race

Race	Percentage
Black	23.4%
Other	29.4%
White	27.2%

Table 2: Years with the Highest Opposition per Race

Race	Year	Percentage
Black	2014	32.8%
Other	2004	36.5%
White	2016	30.6%

Table 3: Years with the Lowest Opposition per Race

Race	Year	Percentage
Black	1994	15.0%
Other	2000	20.4%
White	1998	22.6%

Visualizations:

Figure 1: Trend of Opposition to Affirmative Action by Race (1990s - 2022) Line Graph
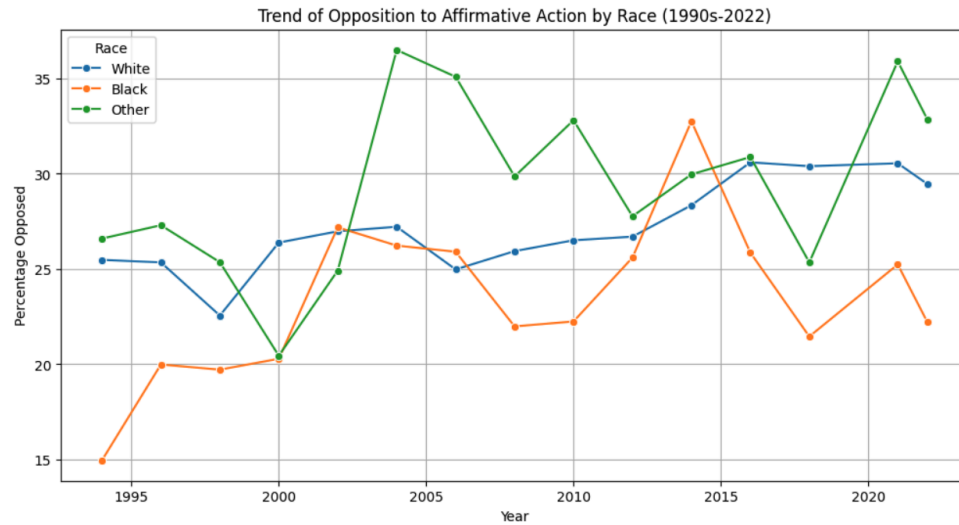

Figure 2: Distribution of Opposition to Affirmative Action by Race Histogram

Figure 3: Average Opposition to Affirmative Action by Race (1990s-2022) Bar Chart
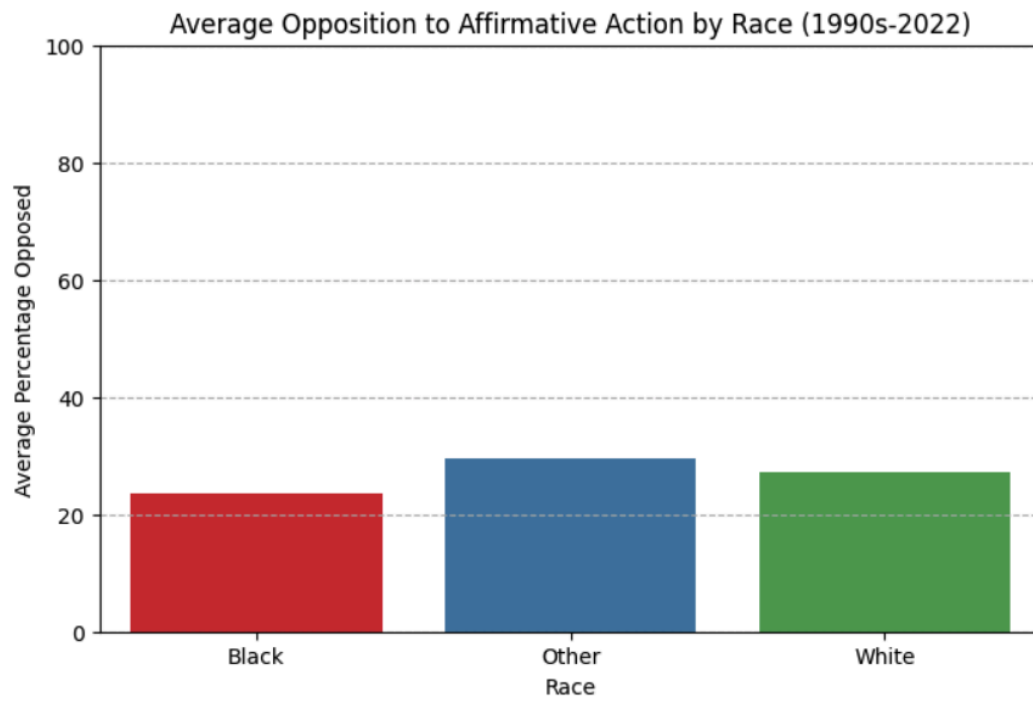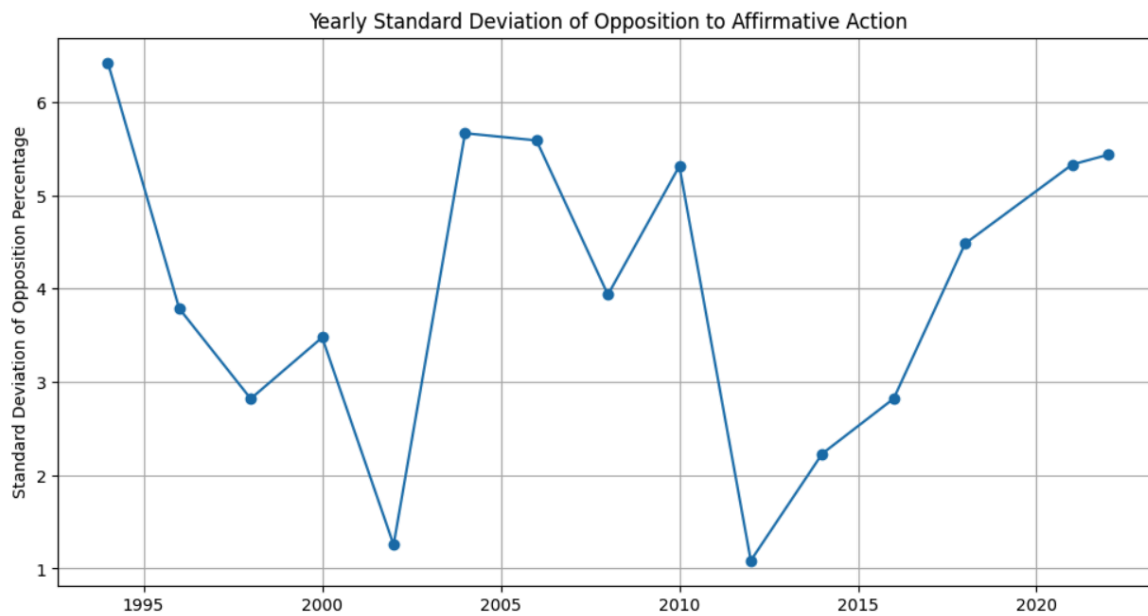

Figure 4: Yearly Standard Deviation of Opposition to Affirmative Action Line Graph

Findings:

Average Opposition by Race

The bar chart and histogram (Figure 2 and Figure 3) and Table 1 highlight that, on average, opposition is highest among individuals classified as "Other" (29.4%), followed by White respondents (27.2%) and Black respondents (23.4%). While the differences are not extreme, they indicate that opposition to affirmative action is consistently lowest among Black respondents and highest among the "Other" category. One interesting pattern is how much higher the "Other" category appears across multiple analyses. The findings raise questions about which racial and ethnic groups fall under "Other" and what factors might drive this stronger opposition.

Trends Over Time

The line graph (Figure 1) shows how opposition percentages fluctuated between the early 1990s and 2022. The highest peaks for opposition occurred in different years for each group: Black respondents' opposition peaked at 32.8% in 2014, White respondents' opposition reached 30.6% in 2016, and other respondents' show the highest opposition percentage, recorded as 36.5% in 2004. Conversely, the lowest opposition percentages occurred in different years as well, with Black respondents reaching their lowest (15.0%) in 1994, White respondents in 1998 (22.6%), and the "Other" category in 2000 (20.4%).

One possible explanation for the high and variable opposition among the "Other" category is the role of immigration. Some second-generation immigrants, particularly those whose families arrived in the U.S. during the 1980s and have since built successful lives, sometimes perceive affirmative action as granting unfair advantages to others. This sentiment has been noted in some

Asian American communities, where the model minority myth plays a role in shaping perspectives on education and meritocracy. The idea that success should come solely through individual effort, rather than policy interventions, may contribute to higher opposition rates among certain groups classified as "Other."

Key Takeaways

The findings from this analysis reveal several patterns regarding opposition to affirmative action, such as the consistent higher opposition among individuals in the "Other" racial category, which not only shows the highest average opposition percentage but also exhibits the most dramatic fluctuations over time. This suggests that attitudes within this group are more variable and could be influenced by different factors than those affecting Black and White respondents. Another significant insight comes from the standard deviation, which highlights how racial polarization in opposition levels has varied across years (Figure 4). Certain time periods showed higher standard deviations, indicating greater differences in attitudes between racial groups, whereas years with lower standard deviations suggest a more uniform opposition across all groups.

One major area for further study is the disaggregation of the "Other" category, as breaking this group down into more specific racial and ethnic subcategories could offer a clearer understanding of which communities exhibit the strongest opposition and why. Additionally, examining generational differences could provide more context on how opposition varies between first-generation immigrants, second-generation immigrants, and later generations, particularly in relation to their lived experiences and perceptions of affirmative action policies.