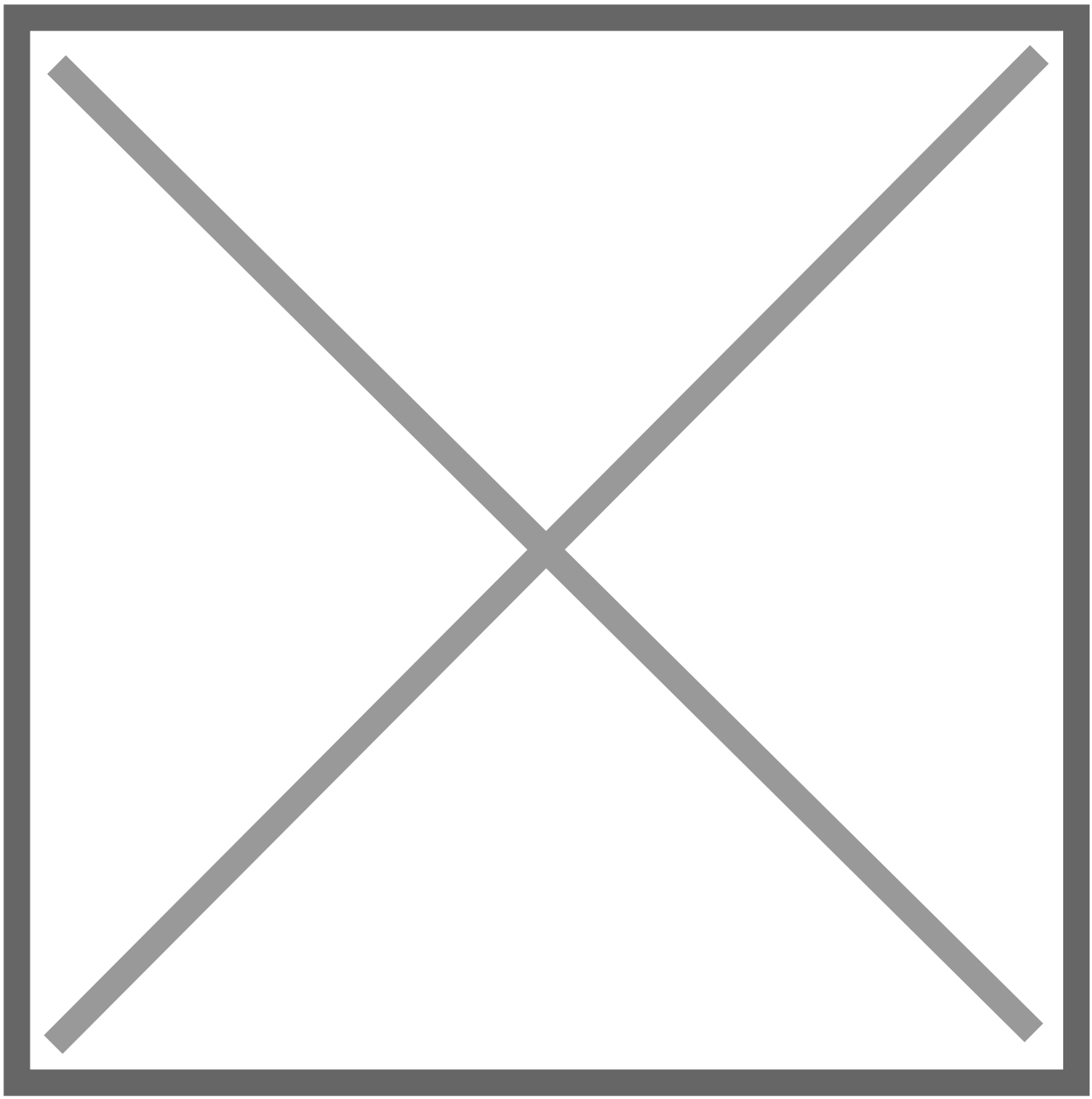
News



People in Raeford, N.C., pray after viewing the body of George Floyd June 6, 2020. Demonstrations continue after a white police officer in Minnesota was caught on a bystander's video May 25 pressing his knee into the neck of George Floyd, an African American, who was later pronounced dead at a hospital. (OSV News/Reuters/Jonathan Drake)

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A new report indicates that 60% of adult Catholics in the U.S. believe racism exists within their local community, with about 4 in 10 (39%) saying they have experienced racial discrimination generally.

That figure was higher among Black Catholics (66%), Hispanic Catholics (54%) and Asian Catholics (54%).

In addition, 10% of Catholics polled said they have experienced racial discrimination within their parish community, and 11% within Catholic education.

Black Catholics are also more likely to experience racial discrimination within their parish and in Catholic education, according to the report.

The findings were released Oct. 26 in "Experiences of Race, Diversity, and Racism: A National Survey of Adult Catholics."

The report, published by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, was funded by the Sisters of Charity Ministry Foundation in Cincinnati; the Jesuits USA East Province in New York; the Sisters of the Precious Blood in Dayton, Ohio; the Baltimore-based National Black Catholic Congress; and individual CARA donors.

CARA researchers Mark M. Gray and Ali Mumbach conducted the national survey between May 15 and June 30 among 2,401 self-identified Catholics.

Gray told OSV News that one key takeaway from the report was the impact of faith formation on the issue of racism, which Catholic teaching denounces as a sin and incompatible with God-given human dignity.

"It does appear that the more formation you've had as an adult, you probably have a better understanding of the Church's teachings, and that's showing up in the results here," he said.

CARA partnered with enterprise software survey firm Qualtrics, which used its opt-in sampling panels for the study.

The data was statistically adjusted to ensure the sample of adult Catholics aligned with recent estimates from the General Social Survey, one of the most widely used for social science research on the American public.

The online survey was available in both English and Spanish.

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Most (53%) of the adult Catholics described themselves as non-Hispanic white, with 38% Hispanic or Latino. Another 5% of the respondents were African American, Black, African or Afro-Caribbean, while 3% identified themselves as Asian, Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian. American Indian, Native American, Native Alaskan or Indigenous participants represented 1% of the survey pool.

Survey respondents were evenly split between male and female, with their ages most typically between 45 and 29. Generation X (born 1962 to 1981) accounted for 39% of the survey participants.

The survey's typical respondent fell between ages 45-49, and most (88%) had become Catholics by the time they were teenagers. The majority (81%) reported attending a parish near their home.

Gray said the data showed respondents were "least likely to experience racism" in parishes, compared to other social contexts.

He pointed to the survey's question on racism in several institutions, which found that U.S. adult Catholics tend to see racism as an issue — either "a great deal" or "a lot" — for police
(36%), government (35%), housing (34%) and business (31%).

Among Hispanic Catholics, government (44%) was viewed as a significant context for racism, while Black Catholics (54%) viewed racism as a key issue regarding the police.

"Black Catholics also are especially likely to see racism as being this kind of an issue for business (49%), housing (45%), and education (41%)," said the report.

Most of the survey's respondents agreed with statements derived from Church documents addressing racism. Almost three quarters (74%) affirmed racism is sinful; 74% concurred racism can take the form of a sin of omission, where injustice is left unchallenged; and 67% supported tackling "policies and institutional barriers" to eradicate racism.

Yet awareness of pastoral letters and other documents by the U.S. Catholic bishops on racism remains incomplete, with roughly half of respondents saying they were "very" or "somewhat" aware of a given document, and the other half saying they were "not at all" or "not very aware."

At the same time, said the report, "Black Catholics are generally more likely than others to be 'very aware' of many Church letters, statements, or documents."

Just about one third (28%) of adult Catholics said they had heard preaching
on racism in a parish homily over the past year. That number was higher for Black (43%) and Latino (34%) Catholics.

Close to half of adult Catholics (49%) said they would like to hear more at their parishes about Church teaching on racism.

The report found that 47% of U.S. adult Catholics — and 57% of Black Catholics — feel that canonizing Black, brown and Indigenous faithful is important.

At the same time, the report found that most respondents (46%) considered racism a social rather than religious (16%) issue. Another 30% viewed it as a political problem and 24% considered it economic in nature. Thirty-two percent said racism was "all of the above" and 8% said none of those options applied. Asian Catholics

(45%) were more likely than others to view racism as a political issue, said the report.

Racism (38%), along with healthcare (38%), ranked behind other issues described as "among the most important" by respondents, behind inflation and the cost of living (73%); unemployment (45%), poverty, hunger and homelessness (43%); immigration (41%); and fuel and oil prices (39%).