

# The Race Issue in Cuba: A Perspective

*Cubabarómetro*  
Havana, Cuba

The following results are from a face-to-face, opinion poll conducted in the capital of Cuba, Havana, in September and October of 2008. The survey's questions were designed to elicit people's opinions on the country's racial issues. It is important for *Cubabarómetro* to understand what perceptions Cuban people have of themselves in today's milieu. For obvious reasons, *Cubabarómetro* is limited in its ability to carry out a methodologically scientific study to this end. Nevertheless, we feel it is important to persist in our desire to provide information about Cuban's diverse tendencies and criteria.

## NUMBER OF PEOPLE SURVEYED: 425

Distribution: 256 men (60.23%) and 19 women (39.77%). These are subdivided into 180 whites (42.36%), 138 mestizos (32.47%), and 107 blacks (25.17%). By age, the group is composed of 109 people younger than 25 (25.64%), 216 who are between 26-50 (50.83%), and 100 who are older than 50 (23.53%).

Table 1: Opinion concerning the race who most resides in makeshift shelters and housing

Whites	%	Mestizos	%	Blacks	%	Don't know	%	Total %
6	1.41	55	12.9	336	79.1	28	6.59	425
								100

Table 2: Opinion concerning the race of those who most live in better neighborhoods

Whites	%	Mestizos	%	Blacks	%	Don't know	%	Total %
378	88.9	14	3.29	16	3.76	17	4.00	425
								100

Table 3: Opinion concerning the possibility of a black person being elected President after the current government leaves office.

YES	%	NO	%	DON'T KNOW	%
30	7.06	343	80.7	52	12.2

Table 4: Opinion concerning who holds positions with the best economic opportunities

Whites	%	Mestizos	%	Blacks	%	Don't know	%	Total %
369	86.8	22	5.18	5	1.18	29	6.82	425
								100

Table 5: Opinion about which race is most represented in film and television programs

Whites	%	Mestizos	%	Blacks	%	Don't know	%	Total %
347	81.6	47	11.1	9	2.12	22	5.18	425
								100

Table 6: Opinion concerning who the police most frequently harass in public places

Whites	%	Mestizos	%	Blacks	%	Don't know	%	Total %
5	1.18	23	5.41	352	82.8	45	10.6	425
								100

Table 7: Opinion concerning which race predominates in the prison population

Whites	%	Mestizos	%	Blacks	%	Don't know	%	Total %
5	1.18	23	5.41	352	82.8	45	10.6	425
								100

Table 8: Opinion concerning the race of people who most frequently commit crimes

Whites	%	Mestizos	%	Blacks	%	Don't know	%	Total %
5	1.18	23	5.41	345	81.2	52	12.2	425
								100

Our study reveals that significant social differences are attributed to particular races or skin colors. Blacks are most often considered and pointed out as the most discriminated group. A large percentage of our surveyed group believes it is whites who live in the best neighborhoods, have the best jobs, and have the most media presence. In addition, they see no possibility of a black person being elected president. They perceive blacks as living in marginal neighborhoods, having the least well-paid jobs, being harassed by the police for no reason, representing the majority of the prison population, and committing the most crimes.

The results also reveal that white people see the current racial reality as normal and that mestizos behave in a way that distances them from blacks and situates them closer to whites, while blacks have come to have a negative view of themselves.

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## CONCLUSION

The Cuban nation continues to suffer from a serious race problem, even after a supposed half century of social equality and racism having been eliminated by decree. This scourge, with its grave implications for an important sector of the population, reflects a failure of an official policy that obviates Cuba's racially mixed population and the backward state in Cuba of what has been achieved universally in the struggle for civil rights. We must change course in this situation by finding real solutions, the first one being the implementation of a legal framework that guarantees the acknowledgement and protection of the rights of all citizens.

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