



# Economic Inequality and Race Relations

Detroiters share perceptions of inequality

## FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:

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## **Detroiters' Perceptions of Economic Inequality and Race Relations**

### **Overview**

Detroiters – regardless of their income level – share perceptions of serious economic inequality in the region. Half of Detroit residents say income differences across the region are too large, and a large majority believes that recent investments in Detroit primarily benefit the wealthy over the poor. Detroiters are more divided, however, on the question of government's responsibility for reducing income inequality.

Detroiters – regardless of their race or income level – offer more upbeat assessments of race relations in their own communities than they do for the nation as a whole.

These findings come from the Winter 2017 Detroit Metropolitan Area Communities Study, a representative survey of 444 Detroiters.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Interviews were self-administered and conducted online as well as using paper and pencil between March and June 2017. Respondents were recruited via mail and email from the list of 714 adults who responded to the Fall 2016 wave of the DMACS survey. The margin of sampling error for a random sample survey of this size is 4.7 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The data have been weighted using a raking procedure by age, education, sex, and race to match Census estimates for the City of Detroit.

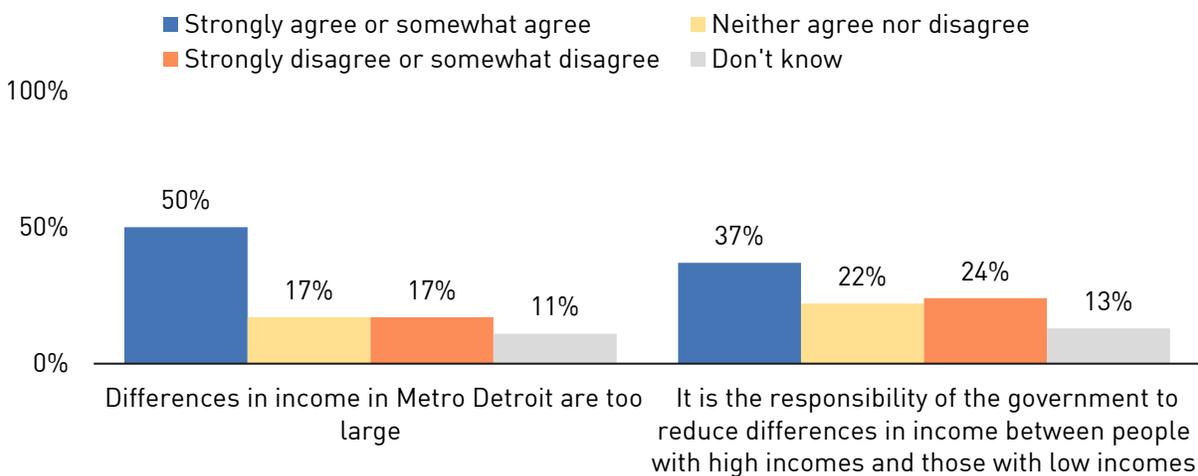
## Key Findings

### Half of all Detroiters feel economic inequality in the Metro area is too large, but fewer believe it is the government’s job to solve the problem

By a nearly three-to-one margin, Detroiters are more likely to agree (50%) than disagree (17%) that “differences in income in the metro Detroit area are too large.” Almost two in ten neither agree nor disagree (17%) while one in ten don’t know (11%), as shown in [Figure 1](#).

Detroiters are more divided regarding whether it is “the responsibility of the government to reduce differences in income between those with high incomes and those with low incomes” (37% agree, 24% disagree). Over a third does not express an opinion on this question, either saying they don’t know (13%) or neither agree nor disagree (22%).

Figure 1: Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.



These views vary based on race and income, as shown in [Figures 2 and 3](#).

- White residents are more likely than Black residents to perceive income inequality as a problem in the Metro area and are more likely to want government to solve it.
- Detroiters with higher levels of education and household income are equally or more likely than those on the lower end of the socioeconomic scale to see inequality as a problem – but they are more divided on government’s role in addressing it.

Figure 2: Differences in income in Metro Detroit are too large

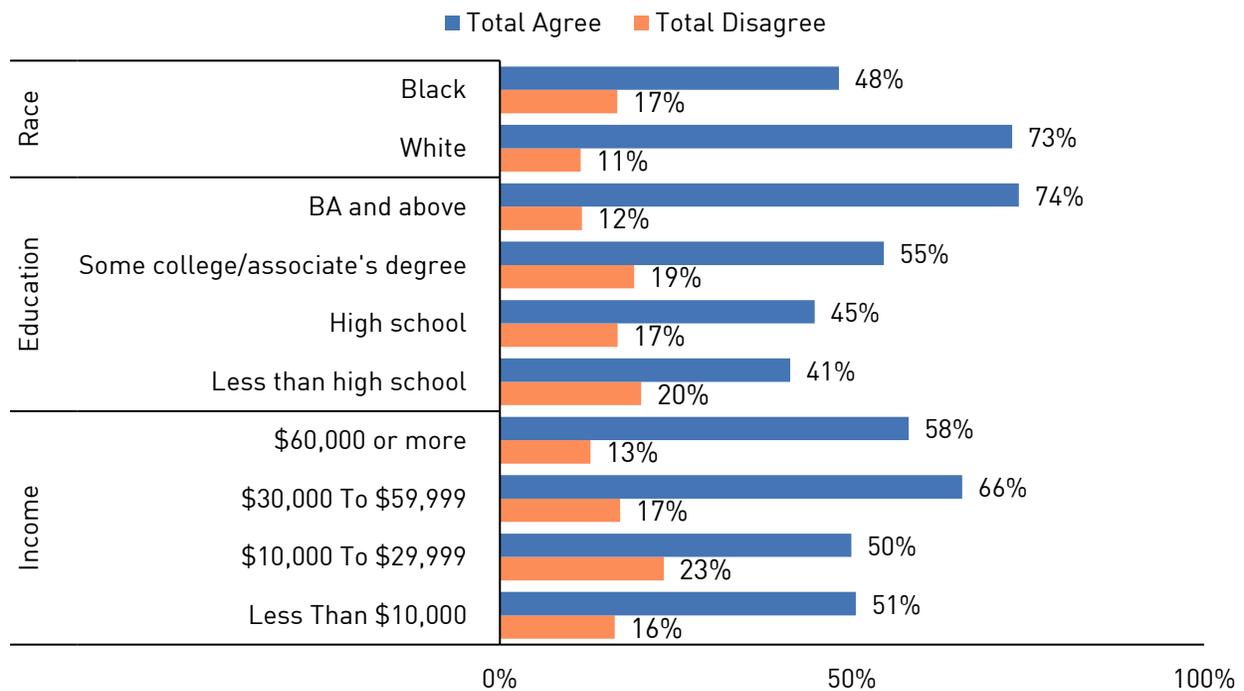
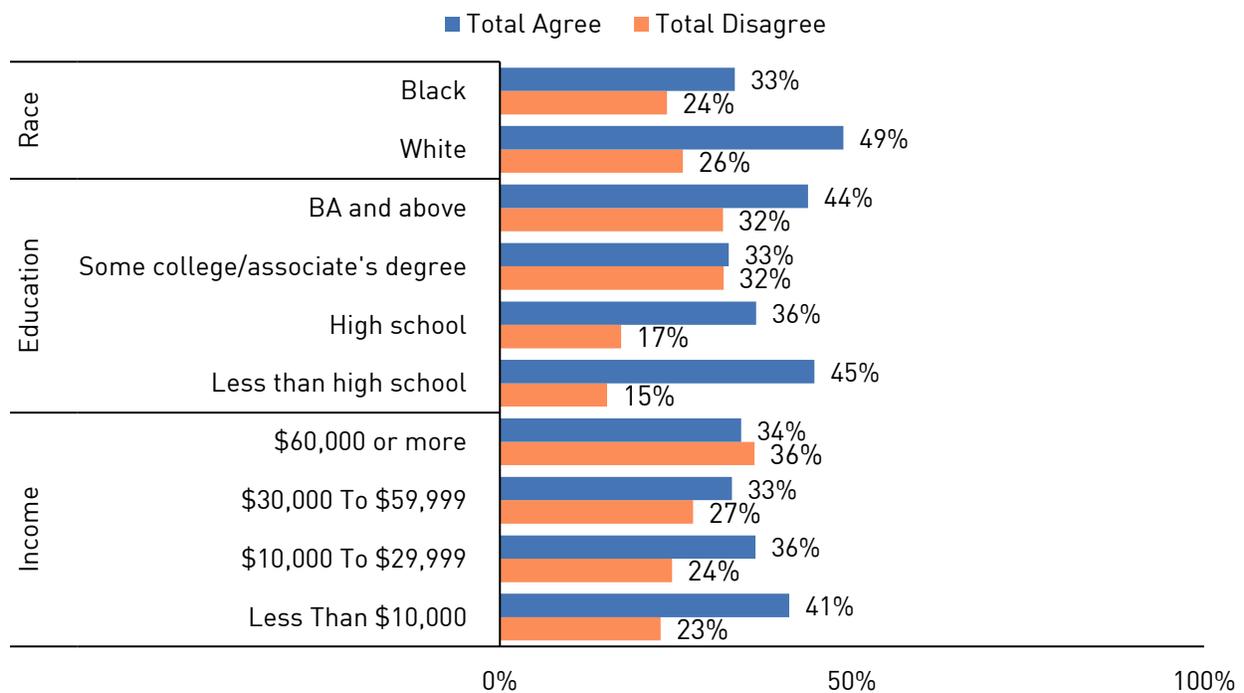


Figure 3: It is the responsibility of government to reduce differences in income between people with high incomes and those with low incomes



Detroiters tend to believe groups with greater existing privilege are benefiting most from Detroit's resurgence, though compared to Fall 2016 slightly more see the benefits as equally shared

As [Figure 4](#) illustrates, when asked who they think benefits more from recent investments in the Midtown and Downtown areas, Detroiters are more likely to say:

- Wealthier people (70%) as compared to poorer people (2%) or both equally (15%);
- White people (47%) as compared to Black people (2%) or both equally (28%);
- City residents living closer to downtown (45%) as compared to those living in neighborhoods further out (14%) or both equally (24%);
- Those who live elsewhere in Metro Detroit – Wayne, Macomb, Oakland and Washtenaw counties (38%) as compared to those living in the city (20%) or both groups equally (24%); and
- People who recently moved to Detroit (37%) as compared to longtime residents (10%) or both equally (30%).

This is quite similar to the results of the Fall 2016 DMACS survey, though in several categories, Detroiters are slightly more likely in early 2017 than they were in Fall 2016 to say the benefits of Detroit's resurgence are shared across groups.

In particular, we find:

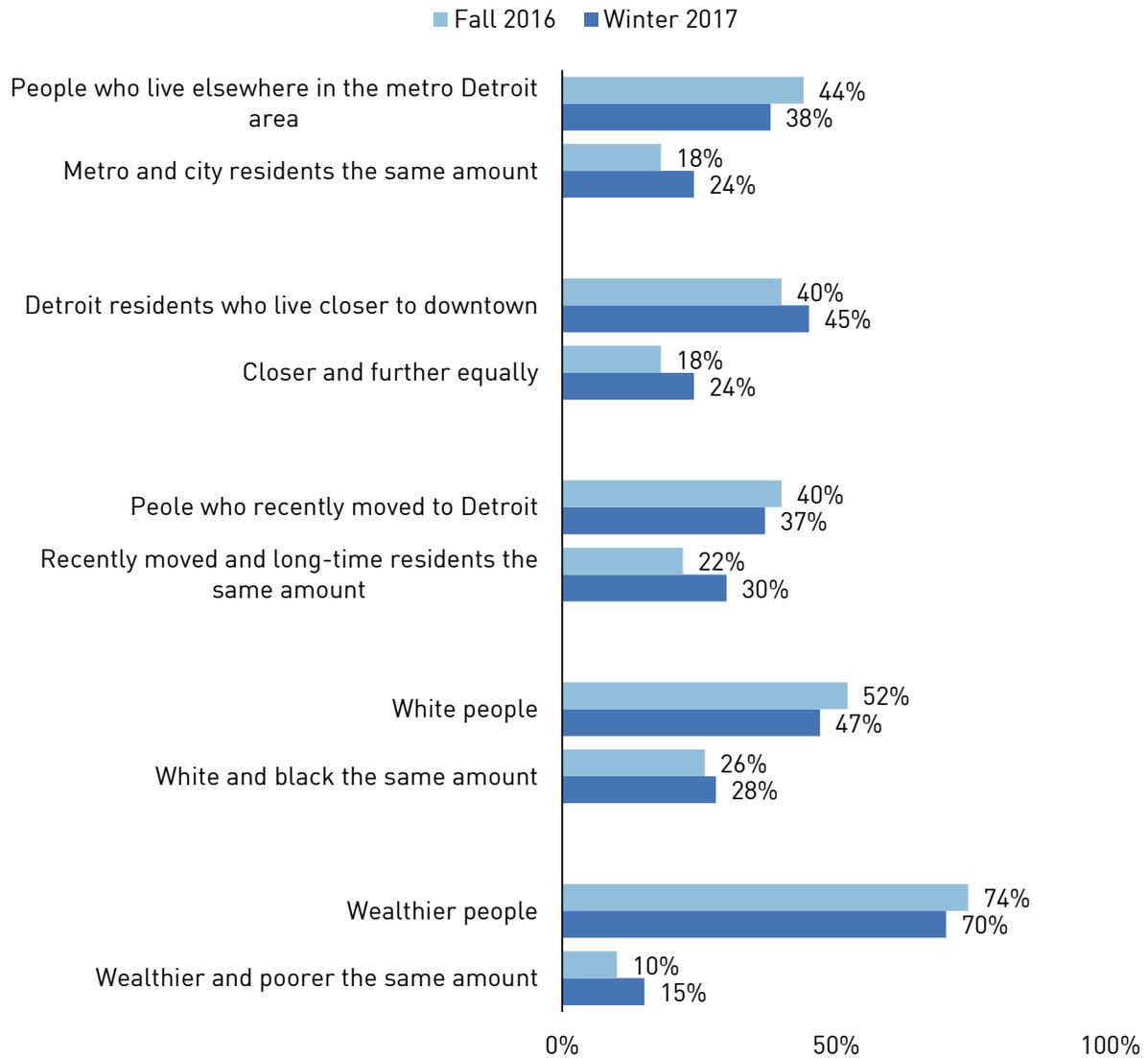
- An eight percentage-point increase in those saying new and longtime residents benefit the same amount;
- A six-point increase in those saying City residents and those elsewhere in the metro area benefit equally; and
- A six-point increase in those saying residents near and further from downtown benefit equally;

The percentages saying wealthy and poor benefit equally, and white and black residents benefit equally are also slightly higher in the more recent survey.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Given the short amount of time elapsed between surveys it is possible that some portion of the change, particularly the drop in "don't know" responses, is driven by a phenomenon known as "panel conditioning," in which participation in an earlier survey can influence responses to a later one.

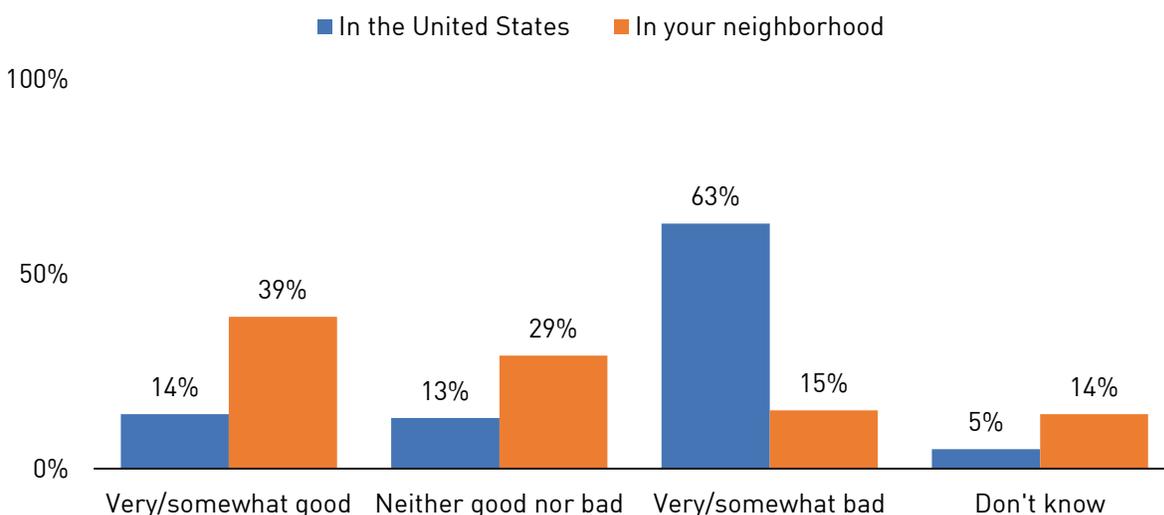
Figure 4: Over the past several years, significant new investments have been made by foundations, government and private companies in the Downtown and Midtown areas of Detroit. We would like to know which of the following groups you think are benefiting more from the investments being made in Downtown and Midtown Detroit.



## Detroiters have a much more positive view of race relations in their own neighborhoods than in the US as a whole

As shown in [Figure 5](#), most Detroiters (63%) say race relations in the US are either very bad or somewhat bad and just 14 percent say they are somewhat or very good. In contrast, only 15 percent of Detroiters describe race relations in their own neighborhoods as bad, while 39 percent think they are good. On the neighborhood level, many do not have strong opinions; nearly half are either neutral (29%) or say they don't know (14%).

Figure 5: Do you think race relations in the United States/your neighborhood are:



These perceptions do not vary much by race but do vary by income.

- When asked about race relations in the United States as a whole, 15 percent of black residents assessed them as “good,” similar to the 11 percent found among whites. The percentage of Detroiters saying that race relations in their neighborhood are “good” is the same, 39 percent, for blacks and whites.
- Those with household incomes over \$60,000 are more positive about race relations in their neighborhood (53% “good”) than are those at the lowest income levels (34% “good”).

## Acknowledgements

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