

Study: Blacks, Hispanics say Zimmerman arrested earlier if victim White

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Blacks and Hispanics are more likely than whites to believe that George Zimmerman would have been arrested immediately had he shot a white person, according to a newly published study.

Blacks are more likely than both Hispanics and whites to believe race was a factor in the shooting of Trayvon Martin, a black teenager. And blacks also are more likely than whites to follow the court case closely. Hispanics are less likely than all groups to follow the case closely.

These are among the conclusions found in the study published in the [*Journal of Crime and Justice*](#) just as the [criminal case](#) against Zimmerman begins.

University of Central Florida associate professor Kareem Jordan and Penn State professor Shaun L. Gabbidon conducted the study with data from a 2012 USA Today/Gallup Poll. They analyzed the data to address three questions: Did you perceive that race played a role in the shooting? Had the victim been white, do you perceive the suspect would have been arrested sooner? And how closely will you be following the case?

"The study shows that the racial divide in public opinion is alive and well," Jordan said. "Blacks continue to feel the greatest sense of criminal injustice, followed by Hispanics and whites. But in certain instances, the views of blacks and Hispanics can be different. Some things we found we anticipated, but others were a bit surprising."

Jordan studies crime and race—specifically the African-American community's perception of race in the [juvenile justice system](#). He began this particular study in April 2012, two months after Zimmerman shot Trayvon Martin, a black teenager, and before Zimmerman was arrested.

Zimmerman is accused of fatally shooting 17-year-old Martin while Zimmerman was patrolling a Sanford neighborhood as a member of his neighborhood watch. Zimmerman was not immediately arrested, and protests followed. The case has drawn international media attention, and courthouse grounds have been crowded with news trucks as jury selection continues.

"Blacks believe there is racial injustice at the hands of the criminal justice system based on centuries of history," Jordan said. "This is a reason why some blacks are suspicious of situations that involve crime and justice. In this case, blacks immediately viewed the shooting as further evidence of ongoing racial injustice."

Unlike some previous studies examining crime and race, Hispanics didn't overwhelmingly perceive that race played a role in the shooting. Their perceptions were more in line with whites.

As for why [Hispanics](#) differed when past studies have indicated they tend to align more with perceptions of blacks, Jordan wasn't sure.

"It certainly is an area ripe for more research," Jordan said. "The current immigration crisis may add to the perception of criminal injustice. Over time, that may lead to a decreased sense of procedural justice. If this happens, it is likely that Hispanic perceptions on killings such as Martin's will become closer to the views of blacks. Only time will tell."

According to the data, the more educated respondents, regardless of their ethnicity, perceived that race played a role in the [shooting](#) and

subsequent arrest. Wealthier respondents were less likely to believe that race was involved at all.

Provided by University of Central Florida

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