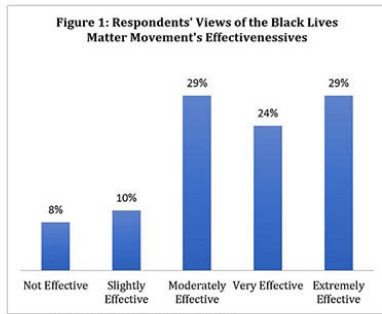


Poll finds most African-Americans view Black Lives Matter as an effective movement

20 October 2017, by Hilary Hurd Anyaso



Source: CSDD Black Lives Matter Survey
Question 12: In general, to what extent do you believe the Black Lives Matter movement is effective?

Credit: Northwestern University

News about the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) breaks daily—"Can Black Lives Matter Win in the Age of Trump?" "Black Lives Matter Movement Cannot Be Sued, U.S. Judge Rules," "Black Lives Matter Sign Is Repeatedly Vandalized."

But how do African-Americans really feel about the grassroots [movement](#)?

According to a new poll by Northwestern University's Center for the Study of Diversity and Democracy (CSDD), 81 percent of respondents see the Black Lives Matter movement as effective across multiple spheres of advocacy, rating the movement as at least "moderately effective," "very effective" or "extremely effective."

The movement is seen as most effective at protecting voting rights (68 percent), improving race relations (67 percent) and challenging police brutality (63 percent). More than 50 percent of the survey's respondents also saw BLM as effective advocates for gender equality (61 percent), economic opportunities (59 percent) and LGBTQ rights (56 percent) in the African-American community.

While the respondents to the survey see the Black Lives Matter movement as effective in general and across multiple issue areas, there are two trends in the data that suggest that they also see room for improvement. First, a large majority believes that the movement should focus its efforts on two issue areas—challenging police brutality and racial profiling (49 percent) and improving race relations (25 percent)—over all other issues.

"What I take away from the CSDD survey is that African-Americans are really positive about the Black Lives Matter movement, and they believe that it has been effective at raising important issues that challenge the wellbeing of the African-American community," said Alvin Tillery, associate professor of political science and director of the CSDD at Northwestern. "At the same time, the respondents' desire for a more structured movement with top-down leadership suggests that many in the community believe it is time to scale up Black Lives Matter."

A majority of the respondents, 64 percent, believe that the Black Lives Matter movement would be more effective with a centralized leadership structure under one national leader. And Tillery said respondents had some very clear ideas about whom they want to lead a national Black Lives Matter movement—with the majority choosing Colin Kaepernick, the former San Francisco 49ers quarterback.

"Kaepernick's popularity is not surprising in light of the fact that President Trump's criticism of the "Take A Knee" protests that he started in the NFL has thrown him into the national spotlight in recent weeks," Tillery said. "Moreover, many of the other activists featured on the list, which include some of the founders of BLM, have explicitly rejected the notion that they aim to play a national leadership role.

"Perhaps this is why 20 percent of the respondents

believe that someone other than the activists that frequently appear in media accounts should lead the Black Lives Matter movement," he said.

The poll also points to other realities that could pose long-term dilemmas for the Black Lives Matter movement, including low visibility at the local level and low participation rates.

While a large majority of the respondents (69 percent) said that they were aware of BLM activities in their home state, most reported that the movement was largely inactive in their own backyards.

In addition, respondents report low participation rates on three activities—protests, organizing and fundraising—that have traditionally been important indicators of success for social movements. Fifty-nine percent of respondents have never participated in a BLM protest and an additional 13 percent have done so only rarely. Social media action is the only movement activity where a majority of [respondents](#) to the CSDD survey (64 percent) have positive participation numbers.

"The most important finding in the survey is that African-Americans are not taking part in protests, organizing meetings and fundraising activities related to BLM in their local environments in anywhere near the rate that most had assumed," Tillery said. "These numbers provide an impetus and an opportunity for BLM activists and the nonprofits and politicians that support their work to take stock of what is happening and course correct."

More information: For more information about the poll methodology, see www.polisci.northwestern.edu/research/

Provided by Northwestern University

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