

How do opinions vary by race?



The project surveyed 300 people in Dallas County and 200 people in surrounding counties that include Lowndes, Perry, Greene, Choctaw, Macon, Sumter, Wilcox, Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Crenshaw, Hale, Marengo, Pickens, Pike and Russell. MICKEY WELSH/ADVERTISER

New study reveals topics of division, agreement

Hadley Hitson
Montgomery Advertiser
USA TODAY NETWORK

Alabama carries a deep history of racial violence and division, especially in Selma and other places that were central to the Civil Rights Movement.

More than 56 years ago, John Lewis and hundreds of peaceful protesters marched for Black voting rights only to be met with brutal police attacks on the other side of the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Today, Selma and surrounding areas still face problems of racial division, only in much different ways.

The Black Belt Community Foundation and the Selma Center for Non-violence, Truth and Reconciliation have partnered on a project to provide “racial healing” in these areas. They recently published a study examining the divisions and commonalities of

Issues of Division

- Causes of violence in the community
- Race relations and the Black Lives Matter movement
- COVID’s impact

Issues of Commonality

- Distrust of local government
- Racially segregated schools
- Living wages

public opinion among racial groups in Dallas County and surrounding areas.

The lead researchers, who represent the National Conference of Black Political Scientists, were Sekou Franklin, Camille Burge and Princess

Williams.

They surveyed 300 people in Dallas County and 200 people in surrounding counties that include Lowndes, Perry, Greene, Choctaw, Macon, Sumter, Wilcox, Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Crenshaw, Hale, Marengo, Pickens, Pike and Russell.

Here are the topics that racial groups were most divided on and those where they found common ground.

Division: Causes of violence in the community

Dallas County’s crime rate is higher than the U.S. average, and this year, Selma has seen more homicides than it did in 2020 or 2019.

When it comes to the root cause of

See **OPINIONS**, Page 2A

ALDOT offers holiday travel tips

What to know before you hit the road

Miranda Prescott
Gadsden Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

Going to be traveling for the holiday season? Not sure what route to take or what the roads will look like? Just wanting to see if it’s worth going out in the traffic to pick up last minute gifts?

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), along with partner Drive Safe Alabama, has shared this list of helpful resources and advice for any holiday traveling you need to do.

Plan for traffic

AAA estimates 100 million people will be on the roads for the holidays this year. That would be a 28% increase from last year’s travel, nearing “record volumes” after the decrease in travel because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Because of this, ALDOT recommends that Alabama drivers “plan ahead, allow extra time to reach your destination, and drive alert without distractions.”

Motorists can use the ALGO Traffic app on their phone to see traffic and road conditions in Alabama at any time.

Expect fewer lane closures

ALDOT announced that they also plan to limit road work and lane closures during the holiday travel season for the safety of workers involved.

The agency will also halt temporary lane closures from Dec. 24 at 6 a.m. to Dec. 26 at 11:59 p.m., and again from Dec. 31 at 6 a.m. to Jan. 2 at 11:59 p.m.

Seat belts and sobriety

ALDOT also emphasized general driving tips. The biggest piece of advice: Make sure you wear a seat belt while in a vehicle.

“Give the gift of safe driving to your passengers and others on the road this holiday season,” said Allison Green,

See **TRAVEL**, Page 2A

Adams students enjoy Disney World, without leaving school

Teachers create ‘Mickey Day’ to cheer children

Miranda Prescott
Gadsden Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

Students at Oscar Adams Elementary School were greeted with a winter surprise from their teachers on Dec. 13. They learned they would be traveling to Walt Disney World for the day — in their own school.

Linda Franklin, a second-grade teacher and organizer of the day, trans-

formed the school’s gymnasium into a miniature version of the famed theme park in what the school called “Mickey Day,” which allowed students to experience Disney magic from their own classroom.

“Last year, I had a student who did not speak any English and I wanted to do something neat and inspiring to him,” Franklin said. “It started as a second-grade makeover day and it just grew into a whole school activity. We just had so many people interested in participating, and it just grew into this.”

See **MICKEY DAY**, Page 3A



Princesses greeted students of Oscar Adams Elementary School on their “Mickey Day” of fun on Dec. 13.

MIRANDA PRESCOTT/
USA TODAY NETWORK

Groups seek probe of Alabama use of virus funds for prisons

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MONTGOMERY, Ala. – Nearly two dozen organizations have sent a letter asking the U.S. House Financial Services Committee to investigate Alabama’s plan to use \$400 million in coronavirus pandemic relief funds to build two super-size prisons.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Alabama, The Sentencing Project and others signed on to a letter arguing that prison construction is an improper use of COVID-19 relief dollars from the American Rescue Plan. It asks Chairwoman Rep. Maxine Waters to hold hearings on the matter.

“Directing COVID relief funds to a massive prison construction plan that long predates the pandemic is an absurd and inappropriate use of (American Rescue Plan) funds,” the organizations wrote.

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey signed legislation in October to tap \$400 million of the state’s money from the federal plan to help build two super-size prisons. The Republican governor at the time called the construction plan “a major step forward” for the prison system, which faces various federal court orders and a lawsuit from the U.S. Department of Justice.

“Building more prisons is a gross misuse of funds that were sent to help the people of Alabama, not punish them.”

JaTaune Bosby
ACLU of Alabama

The Alabama prison construction proposal calls for three new prisons – one north of Montgomery in Elmore County with at least 4,000 beds and enhanced space for medical and mental health care needs; another prison with at least 4,000 beds in south Alabama’s Escambia County and to replace the current women’s prison in Elmore – as well as renovations to existing facilities. Many existing facilities would close.

Republican legislative leaders and Ivey have said they are confident that they can use the pandemic money for prison construction because the American Rescue Plan, in addition to authorizing the dollars for economic and health care programs, says states can use the money to replace revenue lost during the pandemic to strengthen support for vital public services and help retain jobs.

But the opposed organizations argued that was not the intent of the money.

“Building more prisons is a gross misuse of funds that were sent to help the people of Alabama, not punish them,” said JaTaune Bosby, executive director of ACLU of Alabama, in a statement.

Bosby added that, “There seems to be no urgency from elected officials to provide relief to the people incarcerated in their facilities.”

The U.S. Department of Justice has sued Alabama over a prison system “riddled with prisoner-on-prisoner and guard-on-prisoner violence.” The Justice Department noted in an earlier report that dilapidated facilities were a contributing factor to the unconstitutional conditions but wrote “new facilities alone will not resolve” the matter because of culture, management deficiencies, corruption and violence.

The department updated its complaint this year, saying conditions in Alabama prisons have not improved since the federal government warned of unconstitutional conditions earlier and that male inmates continue to live in deadly and dangerous conditions.

Ivey’s office did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Child abuse charge dismissed against Alabama Shakes drummer

FROM WIRE REPORTS

A child abuse charge has been dismissed against the drummer for Grammy Award-winning rock band Alabama Shakes, his lawyer said Friday.

Court records show a Limestone County, Alabama, judge on Thursday dismissed the charge against Steven William Johnson, 36. Johnson had been arrested in March after being indicted on charges of abuse of a child.

“Steve Johnson maintained his innocence the entire time. He had to wait for his day in court like so many people do. Thankfully, these charges have been dismissed,” his attorney Nick Lough told The Associated Press.

The March indictment listed no particulars about the allegation beyond the criminal statute definition of child abuse. The charges related to a “spanking incident,” according to his attorney.

“It was a spanking incident and nothing more, and it resulted in a criminal indictment. The charge of child abuse has been dismissed,” Lough said.

Opinions

Continued from Page 1A

violence in Dallas County, Black respondents tended to point to systemic factors like poverty (41.4%) and a lack of community resources (13.5%), while white respondents were more likely to identify individual elements like laziness (43.4%), no family support (10.8%), and hopelessness (12%).

When asked whether the city or county should focus resources on crime prevention or on punishing crime, there was also a gap in opinion, based on race. 46% of Black respondents and 41% of white respondents said prevention.

“Blacks were more supportive of prevention strategies. But there was enough support among whites to build commonality around preventative strategies,” head researcher Franklin said.

Commonality: Distrust of local government

A feeling of distrust in local government and political leaders abounded in a majority of respondents, regardless of race.

Among respondents, 65% of both Black and white residents “believe they cannot trust government officials to do what is right,” and over 80% of both groups agree or somewhat agree that “political leaders neglect the interests of people who live in rural areas.”

A majority of people also say that they don’t feel like they have a voice in local government.

Franklin said this point of commonality shows an opportunity for people to come together in support of “good government” reforms, or efforts to increase inclusion and public engagement with local government.

Division: Race relations and the Black Lives Matter movement

Race relations are an especially polarizing topic, with Black people being much more likely to believe that they are treated worse in any given area than white people.

“Blacks and whites have fundamentally different perceptions about the treatment of Blacks and validity of racism. There are even minor, though noticeable differences, in how the racial groups view the treatment of Blacks when they are shopping and voting,” the study reads.

There was also contrast in each cohort’s feelings toward Black Lives Matter: 87% of Black respondents said they support the movement, compared to 40% of white respondents. In Selma and Dallas County, specifically, just 26%



Martin Luther King, Jr., center, and others stand at the head of the group on Turn Back Tuesday in Selma, Ala. in 1965. ALABAMA LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

of white respondents said they support BLM.

Commonality: Racially segregated schools

Across all counties and races, most people surveyed said schools in their areas are segregated today.

55% of white respondents and 59% of Black respondents said they strongly or somewhat agree with the statement “Schools in my area are racially segregated.”

The study does not include an explanation of how or why, but the Black Belt Community Foundation and the Selma Center recognize segregation as a persisting problem they aim to resolve.

Division: COVID’s impact

Rural Alabama, particularly the Black Belt, was hit hard with COVID-19. By the end of June 2020, a quarter of all COVID-related deaths had been Black Belt residents, though the area only housed about 11% of the state’s population at the time.

The survey asked respondents why they think COVID has disproportionately impacted Black people, and there were disparities in why they believe that’s the case.

A majority of Black respondents said the major reasons were due to their work in high-risk industries, lack of health care, or it was “beyond their control.” Among white respondents, 31% or fewer agreed that these were major reasons why Black people experienced higher COVID infection rates.

Commonality: Living wages

Franklin said one of the most shocking findings from the study was a vast support across racial groups for increasing city and county employees wages to

About the study

The expressed goal of the Black Belt Community Foundation and the Selma Center in publishing this study was to address the deficit research on Southern, rural communities and challenge assumptions about race. The initiative is sponsored by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

The central component of the study, named the Dallas County Area Study, is a 500-person telephone and online survey administered by New South Research in December 2020.

New South Research conducted a random sample of Blacks and Whites in the requested counties, including an oversample of Blacks. Each participant was offered a \$5 amazon e-gift card to complete the survey. The completed survey is comprised 156 Whites, 341 Blacks, and 3 individuals of mixed race. The survey contained 299 women and 201 men.

Input sessions and meetings generated a 43-question survey that was co-produced by academicians and community advocates. The survey and input sessions were approved by Middle Tennessee State University’s Institutional Review Board.

The study measures racial differences using bivariate cross-tabulations. It highlights the results that are statistically significant, and statistical significance indicates that a finding is not due to chance.

meet a living wage.

When asked how much they “would support or oppose a city or county policy that required the city to pay a living wage to all city employees,” a majority of both groups said they either strongly supported or somewhat supported it.

A living wage is the theoretical income level it would take an individual or family to pay for necessities. This number varies by state and family size, but the estimated living wage for a single adult in Alabama ranges from \$11 to \$13.77 an hour.

“Although African-Americans definitely supported living wages and those kinds of things much more than whites, even among whites, there’s considerable support there to possibly build bridges between the groups,” Franklin said.

Ultimately, he said doesn’t think most people have an accurate perception of rural Alabama, and this study is one step toward changing that.

Hadley Hitson covers the rural South for the Montgomery Advertiser and Report for America. She can be reached at hhitson@gannett.com.

Travel

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Drive Safe Alabama coordinator with ALDOT. “Safe driving begins with making sure everyone in your vehicle wears a seat belt.”

In 2020, 60% of those killed in car accidents were not wearing seat belts at the time of the crash, she said. Staying strapped in is the “easiest and most effective way to reduce injuries and save lives during a crash,” according to ALDOT.

And one more reminder from ALDOT: Stay sober if you’re going to be behind the wheel. “Alcohol impairs thinking, reasoning and muscle coordination,” the agency reports.

To learn more about the ALDOT and its mission to keep drivers safe, visit the agency website at www.dot.state.al.us.

Police investigating fatal shooting

Kirsten Fiscus
Montgomery Advertiser
USA TODAY NETWORK

Montgomery police have launched a Homicide Investigation following the death of Cornelius Hall, 29, of Montgomery.

Montgomery police Capt. Saba Coleman said officers and fire medics responded to the 2200 block of West Woodley Square on Sunday about 6:15 p.m. on a report of a shooting.

Hall, suffering a life-threatening gunshot wound, was found at the scene and taken to a hospital for treatment. He was pronounced dead at the hospital, Coleman said.

No arrests have been made in the case and it remains under investigation, Coleman said.

Contact Montgomery Advertiser reporter Kirsten Fiscus at 334-318-1798 or KFiscus@gannett.com. Follow her on Twitter @KDFiscus

CORRECTION

A photo caption on page 1A of Saturday, Dec. 18’s edition incorrectly identified Ashleigh Hornsby’s JROTC affiliation. She is a member of Lanier’s JROTC.

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Mickey Day

Continued from Page 1A

School Principal Tomasina Smitherman said that it was presented as a schoolwide idea because of how theme oriented the second-grade classes are. “They do all kinds of themed days for their students, such as Starbucks Day,” she added.

Teachers decorated doors and bulletin boards with their favorite Disney characters to get their students into the spirit of the day.

Students were given Mickey or Minnie ears to wear around the gym as they took pictures with the famous mice, a pirate from the Pirates of the Caribbean and Santa Claus himself.

The kids also met with several Disney princesses, courtesy of the Gadsden City High School Titan Danceline and Jacksonville State University’s chapter of the Alpha Omicron Pi sorority. Even Elsa from Disney’s “Frozen” made an appearance to sing “Let it Go” with all of the kids.

“We have been able to participate in some virtual rides on the computer, so the students got to see what it would feel like to be on a roller coaster,” Franklin said. “We also had a train that the students would actually be able to get on and ride around the school just as a fun experience.”

She said they chose to let the kids experience Disney World in this way because many of their students either come from different countries and have never heard of the park, or they would likely never get to experience it for themselves.

“We really enjoy giving our students the opportunity to experience things they may not get to,” Franklin added. “I tried to think of things that they would not necessarily get to experience.”

Smitherman said the day wasn’t just magical for students, but also for the faculty and staff.

“Sometimes we take for granted those moments that make our time as educators worth it,” she said. “To see our students smile and continue to talk about what happened on Monday makes it all worth it.”

Franklin thanked several sponsors who helped with the event, including a \$250 donation from the Rainbow City Publix and a donation of 30 pizzas from Little Caesar’s. She also extended gratitude to all the volunteers, school staff



Students of Oscar Adams Elementary School enjoying “Mickey Day” in their own version of Walt Disney World. PHOTOS BY MIRANDA PRESCOTT/THE GADSDEN TIMES



Elsa from Disney’s “Frozen” sings her song “Let it Go” for the students.

members and Smitherman for helping put on the event.

She said two special sponsors from Colorado, Stacey True and Cindy Mues, set up a GoFundMe to help raise the money they needed to stage the event and set up the various artwork seen within the gym.

“They don’t even know us, yet they took the time to set up their fundraiser and to do all of this,” she said, “We’re extremely grateful for them.”

Franklin said the big takeaway she hopes students have is that they see just how much their teachers and staff love and care about them.

“We really do love them and we want them to be able to have experiences to draw from so that they can relate to other people’s experiences in a way,” she said. “Any opportunity we can take to really give them an experience, we really try to do that.”

Hearing set on bid to dismiss suit over Confederate memorial

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TUSKEGEE, Ala. – A hearing is set for early next year on a bid by a Confederate heritage group to dismiss a lawsuit over the land where a rebel monument stands in the middle of mostly black Tuskegee, Alabama.

Court records show Macon County Circuit Judge Steven Perryman has scheduled a session for Feb. 3 on the dispute.

The Tuskegee chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy is opposing a lawsuit filed earlier this year that could lead to the removal of a Confederate monument that’s stood in the heart of Tuskegee for 115 years.

A lawsuit filed by the county and Tuskegee residents argues the county wrongfully gave land to the Confederate group for the statue in 1906. A decision in favor of the county could lead to removal of the monument, which has been the subject of on-and-off opposition for decades.

But the United Daughters of the Confederacy says it owns the square legally, and an attorney for the group says members want the monument to remain. An order from the judge said he will consider the group’s request to throw out the lawsuit during the hearing in February.

The monument was erected in Tuskegee at a time when groups all over the South were erecting Civil War memorials to honor rebel troops and portray the cause of the slave-holding Confederacy as noble. Hundreds of



A Confederate monument in Tuskegee, Ala., is shown with its base wrapped in tarps in 2020. KIM CHANDLER/AP FILE

rebel monuments have been taken down in recent years as they came to be seen as symbols of racial oppression against Black people.

Former Mayor Johnny Ford, now a Tuskegee City Council member, used a saw to damage the statue

in July in hopes it would topple over, but it didn’t and the county subsequently filed suit. The United Daughters of the Confederacy has since spent several thousand dollars on repairs, its lawyer said.

Carol Skelton, Ph.D. Licensed Psychologist

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Soaring inflation hits low-income shoppers

Report: Consumer prices jumped 6.8% this year

Anne D’Innocenzio
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK – Emarilis Velazquez is paying higher prices on everything from food to clothing.

Her monthly grocery bill has ballooned from \$650 to almost \$850 in recent months. To save money, she looks for less expensive cuts of meat and has switched to a cheaper detergent. She also clips coupons and shops for her kids’ clothing at thrift stores instead of Children’s Place.

For the holidays, she’s scaling back on gifts. She plans to spend \$600 on her three young children instead of \$1,000, and she won’t be buying any gifts for relatives.

“It’s stressful,” said the 33-year-old stay-at-home mother from Boardman, Ohio, whose husband earns \$30,000 a year making pallets for stores. “You want to give it all to your kids, even though (Christmas) is about family. They still expect things. It is hard that you can’t give them what they ask for.”

Retailers may be forecasting record-breaking sales for the holiday shopping season, but low-income customers are struggling as they bear the brunt of the highest inflation in 39 years.

The government’s report last week that consumer prices jumped 6.8% over the past year showed that some of the largest cost spikes have been for such necessities as food, energy, housing, autos and clothing.

Overall, rising prices are changing shopping habits for many Americans. For some, they’re a mere inconvenience, pushing them to delay building a deck



Retailers overall are expecting record-breaking sales for the holiday shopping season, but low-income customers are struggling as they bear the brunt of the highest inflation in 39 years. DARRON CUMMINGS/AP FILE

on their house amid higher lumber prices. But for lower-income households with little or no cash cushions, they’re making harder choices such as whether they can put food on the table or if they’ll have to drastically scale back on holiday presents for their children – or forgo them completely.

“Inflation is devastating the pocket-books of low-income households,” said C. Britt Beemer, chairman of the America’s Research Group, estimating that low-income households are cutting back their holiday buying by 20% from a year ago. “They are going to have to decide what they are going to buy and what they’re going to eat.”

Even some retailers that built their businesses around the allure of ultra-low prices have begun boosting them. Dollar Tree – the last true dollar store – is increasing its prices to \$1.25 for a majority of its products because of higher

costs of goods and freight. Velazquez says that 25 cents extra per item adds up, and the increase will force her to scale back on impulse buying there.

Despite the inflation pressures – as well as supply chain disruptions and the new COVID-19 omicron variant – the National Retail Federation says this year’s holiday shopping season appears to be on track to exceed its sales growth forecast of between 8.5% and 10.5%.

According to a poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, about three-quarters of Americans say they will be giving gifts to celebrate the winter holidays this year. But the rising costs have not gone unnoticed. About 6 in 10 Americans say holiday gift prices are higher than usual, while only 2 in 10 say they are not. Roughly 2 in 10 say they did not purchase gifts recently.

Moderna: Boosters effective on omicron

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Moderna said Monday that a booster dose of its COVID-19 vaccine should offer protection against the rapidly spreading omicron variant.

Moderna said lab tests showed the half-dose booster shot increased by 37 times the level of so-called neutralizing antibodies able to fight omicron.

And a full-dose booster was even stronger, triggering an 83-fold jump in antibody levels, although with an increase in the usual side effects, the company said. While half-dose shots are being used for most Moderna boosters, a full-dose third shot has been recommended for people with weakened immune systems.

Moderna announced the preliminary laboratory data in a news release and it hasn’t yet undergone scientific review. But testing by the U.S. National Institutes of Health, announced last week by Dr. Anthony Fauci, found a similar jump.

Pfizer’s testing likewise found its COVID-19 vaccine triggered a similarly big jump in omicron-fighting antibodies. The vaccines made by Pfizer and by Moderna, both made with mRNA technology, are used by many countries around the world to fight the coronavirus.

Together, the available evidence backs health authorities’ increasing pleas for people to get their boosters as soon as they’re eligible.

Antibody levels predict how well a vaccine may prevent infection with the coronavirus but they are just one layer of the immune system’s defenses.

Price of Alzheimer’s drug cut in half

Tom Murphy
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Biogen is slashing the price of its Alzheimer’s treatment in half months after it debuted to widespread criticism for an initial cost that could reach \$56,000 annually.

The drugmaker said Monday that it will cut the wholesale acquisition cost of the drug by about 50% next month. That means the annual cost for a person of average weight will amount to \$28,200.

The actual amount that person would pay will depend on factors like insurance coverage.

Biogen CEO Michel Vounatsos said in a prepared statement that too many patients were not being offered the drug due to “financial considerations,” and their disease had progressed beyond the point where Aduhelm could help.

Aduhelm is the first in a line of new drugs that promise to do what no other Alzheimer’s treatment has managed: slow the progress of the fatal brain-destroying disease, rather than just managing its symptoms.

The drug received FDA approval in June, and the agency later said it was appropriate for patients with mild symptoms or early-stage Alzheimer’s.

But Aduhelm’s debut has been slowed by concerns over the price and research behind the drug. Some insur-



Biogen said Monday that it will cut the wholesale acquisition cost of Aduhelm by about 50% next month. STEVEN SENNE/AP FILE

ers have balked at paying for the drug, while medical centers across the country have been either slow to decide on using the drug or said they weren’t planning to prescribe it for now.

Doctors have said concerns over the price were compounded by costs patients also would face for regular testing and scans needed to monitor their progress on Aduhelm.

Biogen said in June that it would not raise its price on the drug for four years, and the company often touted its financial assistance programs for patients.

RBC Capital Markets analyst Brian Abrahams said he was not surprised by

Biogen’s price cut. He said in a research note that the move was probably necessary and should “give Aduhelm its best opportunity for success.”

The initial price was a key factor behind planned premium hikes for Medicare, the federal government’s coverage program for people ages 65 and older and for the disabled.

Last month, Medicare announced one of the largest increases ever in its “Part B” monthly premium for outpatient care. It said it would raise the premium nearly \$22, from \$148.50 currently to \$170.10 starting in January.

The agency said about half of that hike was due to the need for a contingency fund to cover Aduhelm. Medicare is expected to be one main payers for the drug.

Aduhelm clears brain plaque thought to play a role in Alzheimer’s disease, and U.S. regulators gave their approval based on study results showing the drug seemed likely to benefit patients. But they’ve asked for more research.

Biogen, which developed Aduhelm with Japan’s Eisai Co., said last week the company expects to screen the first patients for their next study in May. Researchers will aim to enroll about 1,300 people with early-stage Alzheimer’s and expects to complete the research about four years after the study begins.

Israel plans to ban travel to US, Canada

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM – Israeli ministers on Monday agreed to ban travel to the United States, Canada and eight other countries amid the rapid, global spread of the omicron variant.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett’s office announced the decision following a Cabinet vote.

The rare move to red-list the U.S. comes amid rising coronavirus infections in Israel and marks a change to pandemic practices between the two nations. The U.S. will join a growing list of other destinations to which Israelis are barred from traveling, and from which returning travelers must remain in quarantine.

A parliamentary committee is expected to give the measure final approval. Once authorized, the travel ban will take effect at midnight Wednesday.

Foreign nationals are not allowed to enter, and all Israelis arriving from overseas are required to quarantine – including people who are vaccinated.

Other countries that were approved to be added to the travel ban starting Wednesday are Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Morocco, Portugal, Switzerland and Turkey.

NATION & WORLD WATCH FROM WIRE REPORTS

Maryland governor tests positive for coronavirus, feels fine

ANNAPOLIS, Md. – Maryland’s governor announced Monday that he has tested positive for the coronavirus, but is feeling fine at the moment. Gov. Larry Hogan tweeted that he received a positive rapid test Monday. Hogan, a cancer survivor, said he has been vaccinated and has had a booster shot. “As the Omicron variant becomes dominant, I want to urge you to get vaccinated or get your booster shot as soon as possible,” Hogan tweeted. Hogan said Sunday on “Fox News Sunday” that he is not planning to issue any new lockdown orders.

Authorities: 7 bodies, including 3 kids, found in Minnesota home

Seven people, including four adults and three children, were found dead inside a northwestern Minnesota home in what authorities have called a “tragic loss.” The Moorhead Police Department said in a statement Sunday the causes of deaths were still under investigation and that the bodies had been taken to the Ramsey County Medical Examiner’s Office for autopsies. Family members were checking on the house Saturday when they discovered the bodies, the department said. Police said there were no signs of violence or forced entry.

23 injured when cable pedestrian bridge collapses in Mexico

MEXICO CITY – A pedestrian suspension bridge collapsed Sunday in southern Mexico, dumping a group heading to a Christmas party into a ravine and sending 23 people to the hospital, authorities said. The civil defense office in the Pacific coast state of Oaxaca said people from the town of Santos Reyes Nopala were walking over the bridge to get to a party when the structure failed. The injured included 12 adults and 11 children. Many were taken to a hospital in the nearby beach resort of Puerto Escondido.

Myanmar court postpones latest Suu Kyi verdict to Dec. 27

BANGKOK – A Myanmar court on Monday postponed to Dec. 27 the issuing of verdicts in the latest of a series of cases against the country’s ousted leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, a legal official knowledgeable about the case said. The postponed verdict from the court in the capital, Naypyitaw, is for the second among multiple cases brought against the 76-year-old. No reason was given for the postponement, according to a legal official. She is accused of importing and possessing walkie-talkies without following official procedures.

Crises carve into Biden’s reputation

Manchin won’t fall in line, pandemic rages on



Susan Page
Washington Bureau Chief
USA TODAY

Forget those lofty, early comparisons of Joe Biden to FDR. While COVID-19 is on the rise and the heart of his domestic agenda is in peril, Biden risks the apt comparison being to Jimmy Carter.

That is, a president respected as honorable and well-meaning but one who even some supporters fear is not quite up to the job, especially when buffeted by events beyond his control. Biden faces deepening fractures in his Democratic Party as forbidding midterm elections loom.

Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin dealt a body blow – perhaps a fatal one – to the Build Back Better bill, the sweeping measure that is stuffed with the president’s ambitions on climate change, the social safety net and taxes. “I’ve tried everything humanly possible; I can’t get there,” he said on “Fox News Sunday.” “This is a no.”

The West Virginia senator then blasted a statement to reporters that seemed to slam the door closed: “I cannot vote to move forward on this mammoth piece of legislation.”

The White House fired back with language rarely used against someone leaders think could be won back. Press secretary Jen Psaki questioned Manchin’s integrity, saying his words “represent a sudden and inexplicable reversal in his position, and a breach of his commitments to the President and the Senator’s colleagues in the House and Senate.”

In a Senate divided 50-50 between two sharply polarized parties, the loss of even a single Democratic vote means it is all but impossible to envision how the bill could pass.

On top of the apparent collapse of his domestic agenda, the president is struggling to deal with the spread of the coronavirus. The COVID-19 crisis did more



On top of the apparent collapse of his domestic agenda, President Joe Biden is struggling to deal with the spread of the coronavirus. MANDEL NGAN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

than any other issue to propel Biden’s election, and getting it under control has been the driving issue on which his presidency is judged. A year ago, as president-elect, he predicted that by this Christmas, the country would be back nearly to normal. In March, he said July 4 would “begin to mark our independence from this virus.”

Now, moves toward normalcy are in retreat.

A new wave of infections from the omicron variant of the coronavirus prompted colleges to close campuses, Broadway to cancel shows, sports teams to reschedule games, employers to slow the return to in-person workplaces – and Americans to reconsider plans to gather over the holidays with family members they may not have seen since the start of the pandemic almost two years ago.

Francis Collins, the departing director of the National Institutes of Health, told NPR the United States could see 1 million COVID-19 cases a day. “I know

people are tired of this,” Collins said. “But the virus is not tired of us.”

Biden has time to recover. President Bill Clinton rebuilt his political standing and won a second term even after watching his priority health care overhaul collapse and his party lose control of the House and Senate during his first two years in office.

But Carter was crushed in his 1980 reelection bid after a presidency marked by spiraling oil prices and the Iranian hostage crisis.

What worries even Democratic partisans is that the demise of the Build Back Better bill after months of negotiation undercuts what Biden described as one of his big assets: his deep knowledge of Congress and ability to get major legislation passed.

Manchin’s reluctance to support the size of the package and its climate provisions frustrated Democrats, but he hardly kept his objections a secret.

Biden’s ambitions have been too big for his congressional majorities, at least

so far. When Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in 1933, Democrats held huge majorities in Congress – 313 seats in the House and 59 in the Senate. Lyndon Johnson, another transformative president, had 295 Democrats in the House and a filibuster-proof 68 in the Senate in 1965.

Under Biden, the Senate is evenly split, though Democrats are in control because Vice President Kamala Harris would cast tiebreaking votes. In the House, Democrats hold the narrowest of edges over Republicans, 221-213.

Despite having no votes to spare, Democrats were fracturing Sunday.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., accused Manchin of not having the “guts” to take on powerful special interests, and he said Democrats should bring the bill up for a vote anyway. “Let him vote no in front of the whole world,” Sanders said on CNN’s “State of the Union.”

But he didn’t suggest there was any doubt about what the outcome of that vote would be.

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Alabama sees slight decline in infant mortality

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MONTGOMERY – Alabama has tied its lowest infant mortality rate, matching a mark set in 2018, but remained significantly above the national rate for babies dying before their first birthday.

Alabama’s infant mortality rate was 7.0 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2020, compared to a provisional national rate of 5.5 per 1,000, the Alabama Department of Public Health said in a news release.

The 2020 numbers continued longstanding racial disparities.

The infant mortality rate in 2020 remained twice as high for Black infants, at 10.9, compared to 5.2 for white infants.

“The death of any infant is tragic. Alabama must continue our commitment to prevent infant deaths by promoting evidence-based initiatives to address this persistent need,” Dr. Scott Harris, state health officer, said in a statement.

State numbers also showed a disparity by access to private insurance, a reflection of economic status. Mothers who had private insurance accounted for 45% of all births and 26% of infant deaths. While mothers

on Medicaid accounted for 50% of all births but 65% of infant deaths.

The state numbers reflected 404 Alabama infants who died before reaching their first birthday. A drop from 7.7 in 2019 was not statistically significant, the department said.

State health officials said the top three causes of infant death were: disorders related to short gestation and low birth weight; congenital malformations and chromosomal abnormalities; and sudden infant death syndrome.

Memorial planned for space exploration workers

WAAY-TV

HUNTSVILLE – A \$1.5 million memorial is being planned to honor more than 20,000 people who have worked with NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center in north Alabama, assisting in U.S. space exploration.

The Madison County Commission recently gave

\$50,000 toward the project, which is being organized by the NASA/Marshall Retirees Association and would recognize both government workers and contractors, WAAY-TV reported.

The memorial would be located at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center, which is operated by the state and serves as a visitor center for Marshall. Located at Redstone Arsenal, the NASA center was home to some of the earliest efforts to develop U.S. rockets and played a key role in the Apollo lunar program.

Today, Marshall is working on projects including management of the Space Launch System, NASA’s new heavy-lift rocket.

The chair of the county commission, Dale Strong, presented a check to assist with the memorial at a luncheon of the retiree group.

“This memorial will forever recognize these space explorers and serve as an inspiration for generations to follow in their footsteps and take us back to the Moon, Mars and points beyond,” said Strong.

The group plans to open the memorial in 2023, said Rick Chappell, president of the association. As part of the memorial, the group is developing an online database of the names and accomplishments of each Marshall and contract employee. A kiosk near the memorial would let people look them up.

The database already includes the names of some 22,000 current and former members of the Marshall workforce. The association is encouraging all contractor employees to add their names as well to ensure the legacy of all who have worked on the program, Chappell said.



Due to the holiday, our office hours and obituary placement times may vary.

Please contact us at 334-264-3733 or mgmobits@gannett.com for further details.

Obituaries

TODAY’S OBITUARIES AND DEATH NOTICES				
Name	Age	Town, State	Death Date	Arrangements
*Cook Jr., William Jesse	83	Montgomery	15-Dec	Ridouts Prattville Chapel
*Kircus, Dorothy C.	47	-	17-Dec	Leak Memory Chapel
*Maxwell, Clara	76	Montgomery	15-Dec	Leak Memory
*McDonald, Claude	--	Montgomery	16-Dec	Phillips-Riley Funeral Home
*Shufford, Willie Bill	71	Louisville	15-Dec	Peace Mortuary & Funeral Services
* Additional information in display obituaries				
<i>Obituaries appear in print and online at www.montgomeryadvertiser.com/obituaries</i>				

William Jesse Cook Jr.

MONTGOMERY - Dr. William Jesse Cook, Jr. of Montgomery went to be with the Lord, surrounded by his loving family, on December 15, 2021. Dr. Cook was a member of Trinity Church for over 18 years.

Dr. Cook was born in Calhoun County and raised in Piedmont, Alabama. He would meet his wife Judy and graduate from nearby Jacksonville State University before leaving Alabama to enter military service. He served in the Army as a Regular Army officer stationed in Fort Benning, Georgia prior to his assignment as a company commander in an air mobile division. Dr. Cook would receive an honorable discharge from the Army at the rank of 1st Lieutenant before returning to Alabama to pursue advanced degrees at Auburn University.

Dr. Cook served as a minister at Auburn Church of Christ while finishing his graduate and doctoral studies. He and his family would later move to Montgomery following Dr. Cook’s appointment as Assistant Vice President of Auburn University at Montgomery to help plan, build and pursue accreditation for the recently announced AUM campus.

He would go on to found his own company in Montgomery focused on strategic planning for school administrators. Dr. Cook and his associates for The Colonial Group, which would later be known as The Cambrian Group, have worked with more than 1,500 school systems since the company’s creation in 1977. Dr. Cook published more than a dozen books during that span, including a definitive work in the field titled: “Strategic Planning for America’s Schools”, which remains a graduate-level standard in curriculum for many schools throughout the country. In addition, his syndicated radio program titled “Bill Cook Comments” aired across 200 radio stations in the southeast during the 1970s. Dr. Cook continued to publish an updated format of his commentaries through 2021.

Dr. Cook was an enthusiastic supporter of Auburn University, an advocate of education, devoted husband and devout Christian. He published a number of books outside of education to focus on various topics of religion and theology. He served as an Elder at Trinity Presbyterian Church for nearly two decades where he continued to teach, study and grow through his Sunday classes.

Dr. Cook is survived by his daughters: Vonda Cook McLain (Tom), Jennifer Cook Pace (Jeff) of Wellington, Florida, and Jill Cook Bryan (Chris); five grandchildren—William Thomas McLain (Ashley), Samuel Wallace McLain, Ashley Hugh Pace, Wallace McGehee Bryan, and Christopher Hinton Bryan, Jr., and great-grandson, Thomas Edward McLain. He was preceded in death by his wife of 59 years, Judy Wallace Cook, his parents, Genevieve Putnam and William Jesse Cook, Sr., and his brother Donald Cook.

Visitation will be held on Wednesday, December 22 at 10:00 AM at Trinity Presbyterian Church, with a memorial service at 11:00 AM. A private graveside service will be held in Piedmont, Alabama.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be sent to Trinity Presbyterian Church, 1728 South Hull Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36104 or Montgomery Christian School, 3265 McGehee Road, Montgomery, Alabama 36111.



Dorothy C. Kircus

Dorothy C. Kircus (Ms. Dot) departed this life on December 17, 2021.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 47 years, Howard Kircus.

She leaves to cherish her memory daughter Sheryl Lent and her husband Ridge; grandchildren Sonya Reep, Robert Broom (Bridgit), Elizabeth Wallace (Jon) and Justin Lent; great-grandchildren Madison Reep, Josh Everett, Robbie and Sarah Broom, Tate and Stella Wallace.

She was a member of Eastern Hill Baptist Church and worked at the nursery and day care at the church for numerous years. Her greatest love and joy in life was when she was caring for children.

Staff at Chapman’s Healthcare Center was her second family giving her love, comfort and tender care for the past 11 years. Even though her last years were marred by the ravages of dementia, she was never defined by it. She continued to touch peoples lives and will be missed by many.

A family gathering for Ms. Dot will be held Wednesday, December 22, 2021 from 10:00 AM to 10:45 AM at Leak Memory Chapel, 945 Lincoln Rd. Montgomery, AL. Following the family gathering will be a graveside service at 11:00 AM at Greenwood Serenity Memorial Gardens with Rev. Steve Scarborough as officiant

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to one’s favorite charity or the St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital.

Fond memories and expressions of sympathy may be shared at www.Leak-MC.com for the Kircus family.

Willie Bill Shufford

LOUISVILLE - Mr. Willie Bill Shufford, Jr. 71 a resident of Louisville, KY formally of Tallassee, AL transitioned on Wednesday, December 15, 2021. Graveside Services will be held on Wednesday December 22, 2021 at 11:00 A.M. from the Rehoboth Baptist Church Cemetery with Pastor William Griffin, officiating.

Peace Mortuary
3048 Dorchester Drive
Montgomery, AL 36116
(334) 356-7162



Claude McDonald

MONTGOMERY - McDonald, Mr. Claude, A resident of Montgomery, AL departed this life on December 16, 2021. Graveside services will be held on Wednesday, December 22, 2021 at 12:00Noon from Golden Gate Cemetery, Old Selma Road, Pastor James A. Buckles, officiating. Mr. McDonald will lie in state on Tuesday, December 21, 2021 from 12-6PM at Phillips-Riley Funeral Home.

PHILLIPS-RILEY FUNERAL
MONTGOMERY, AL 36108
334-263-0477

Clara Maxwell

MONTGOMERY - Clara Jean Maxwell originally of Mobile, Alabama passed away at her residence surrounded by family and friends. She leaves to cherish her memories her loving husband of 55 years Harry Maxwell ; Son Michael Maxwell (Gini); Daughters Donna Billingsley and Theresa Maxwell. Grandchildren Brandon Baker (Melodie), Isobel Segrest, James Orcutt, Gabrielle Orcutt, Dawson Maxwell, Rylie Grace Maxwell and great granddaughter Anna Baker. She was preceded in death by grandsons William Orcutt and Colton Maxwell. A Memorial Service will be held at St Bede Catholic Church with date to be announced later.






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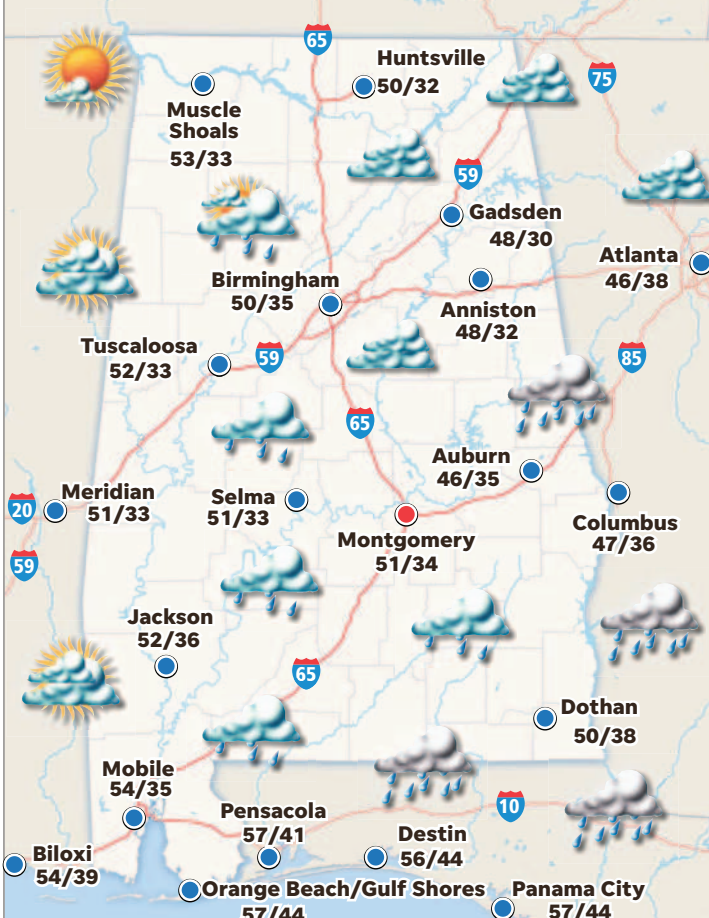
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Weather on the Web:
montgomeryadvertiser.com

Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
							
51°	34°	59° 30°	60° 39°	73° 57°	75° 57°	74° 56°	76° 57°
A little morning rain; cloudy	Partly cloudy	Warmer with plenty of sunshine	Mostly sunny	Partly sunny and pleasantly warm	Warm with partial sunshine	Mild with partial sunshine	Partly sunny and very warm

Regional Weather Today

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



City	High/Low
Huntsville	50/32
Muscle Shoals	53/33
Gadsden	48/30
Atlanta	46/38
Birmingham	50/35
Anniston	48/32
Tuscaloosa	52/33
Auburn	46/35
Montgomery	51/34
Columbus	47/36
Meridian	51/33
Selma	51/33
Jackson	52/36
Dothan	50/38
Mobile	54/35
Pensacola	57/41
Destin	56/44
Orange Beach/Gulf Shores	57/44
Panama City	57/44
Biloxi	54/39

Almanac

Monday through 4 p.m.

Temperature

High	51°
Low	37°
Normal high	61°
Normal low	38°
Record high	78° (1978)
Record low	14° (1901)

Precipitation

24 hrs. ending 4 p.m. Mon.	0.00
Month to date	3.66
Year to date	55.36
Normal year to date	49.28
Humidity 4 p.m. Mon.	61

Rivers and lakes (in feet)

Station	Flood Stage	7 a.m. Monday	24-Hour Change
Montgomery	35	24.44	+1.25
Selma	45	23.34	+3.06
Claiborne Dam (U)	35	35.32	-0.19
Claiborne Dam (L)	42	21.95	+4.88
Jordan	252	251.47	-0.14
Martin	490	480.65	-0.15
Miller's Ferry (U)	80	80.48	+0.07
Miller's Ferry (L)	66	43.04	+4.13
Mitchell	312	311.37	-0.23

Lakes Jordan and Martin

A little rain in the morning; otherwise, cloudy today. Wind from the north at 4-8 knots. Waters mostly smooth. Visibility less than 3 miles at times.

Tides today (in feet)





City	High	Hgts	Low	Hgts
Pensacola	11:33 p.m.	1.4	10:28 a.m.	-0.6
Mobile	12:06 a.m.	1.5	11:38 a.m.	-0.6
Panama City	10:18 p.m.	1.3	8:50 a.m.	-0.5

Beach forecast

Wind from the north-northwest at 8-16 mph today. Seas 2-4 feet. Visibility clear. Wind from the north-northwest at 8-16 mph tonight. Seas 2-4 feet. Rather cloudy.

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather.com** ©2021

Sun and Moon

Last	New	First	Full
			
Dec. 26	Jan. 2	Jan. 9	Jan. 17

Sunset today: 4:45 p.m.
Sunrise Wed.: 6:43 a.m.
Moonrise: 6:56 p.m.
Moonset: 8:50 a.m.

RealFeel Temp

The patented AccuWeather.com RealFeel Temperature® is an exclusive index that combines the effects of temperature, wind, sunshine intensity, cloudiness, precipitation, pressure and elevation on the human body.

Today		
41°	47°	47°
8 am	Noon	4 pm

Tomorrow		
38°	57°	57°
8 am	Noon	4 pm

UV index

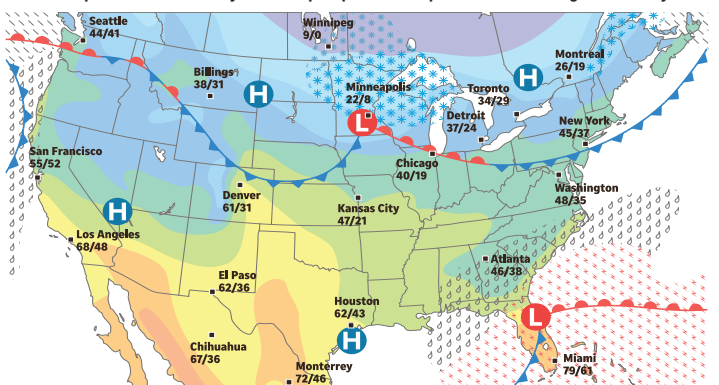
Shown are the highest values of each hour.

0-2, low; 3-5, moderate; 6-7, high 8-10, very high; 11+ extreme		
1	1	1
10 am	Noon	2 pm

Values indicate the exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays.

National Weather Today

Noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.



Cold front **Warm front** **Stationary front** **Showers** **T-storms** **Rain** **Flurries** **Snow** **Ice**

City	Today			Tomorrow		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Atlantic City	44	43	pc	49	32	c
Baltimore	47	31	pc	48	25	pc
Boston	44	34	pc	42	28	r
Charlotte, SC	51	43	r	59	37	c
Charlotte	48	33	r	59	27	pc
Chattanooga	51	33	c	53	28	s
Chicago	40	19	pc	33	26	s
Cincinnati	46	26	s	38	24	s
Cleveland	42	29	pc	31	23	pc
Columbia, SC	44	36	r	60	31	pc
Columbus, OH	42	27	s	35	21	s
Dallas	62	40	s	65	47	pc
Denver	61	31	s	62	33	pc
Des Moines	40	17	s	42	29	s
Detroit	37	24	pc	31	22	r
Hartford	44	26	pc	43	25	r
Honolulu	79	68	c	78	68	sh
Houston	62	43	s	71	55	s
Indianapolis	44	23	s	36	26	s
Jackson, MS	52	34	s	61	34	s
Jacksonville	58	43	r	62	38	pc

City	Today			Tomorrow		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Knoxville	50	33	c	49	25	s
Las Vegas	58	40	pc	59	47	c
Los Angeles	68	48	c	62	55	c
Louisville	49	29	s	43	27	s
Miami Beach	79	61	t	76	57	s
Milwaukee	39	18	c	31	27	s
Minneapolis	22	8	sn	30	23	pc
Nashville	53	31	pc	46	27	s
New York City	45	37	s	47	32	c
Norfolk, VA	48	43	c	52	32	c
Oklahoma City	61	28	s	59	37	pc
Orlando	75	53	t	67	47	pc
Philadelphia	46	35	pc	48	30	pc
Phoenix	70	48	c	71	54	c
Providence	46	31	pc	45	28	r
Raleigh	45	35	r	54	27	c
St. Louis	50	24	s	42	31	s
San Francisco	55	52	r	58	51	r
Seattle	44	41	c	49	38	sh
Tampa	72	58	t	68	51	pc
Wash., DC	48	35	pc	50	28	pc



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Opinions

Continued from Page 1A

violence in Dallas County, Black respondents tended to point to systemic factors like poverty (41.4%) and a lack of community resources (13.5%), while white respondents were more likely to identify individual elements like laziness (43.4%), no family support (10.8%), and hopelessness (12%).

When asked whether the city or county should focus resources on crime prevention or on punishing crime, there was also a gap in opinion, based on race. 46% of Black respondents and 41% of white respondents said prevention.

"Blacks were more supportive of prevention strategies. But there was enough support among whites to build commonality around preventative strategies," head researcher Franklin said.

Commonality: Distrust of local government

A feeling of distrust in local government and political leaders abounded in a majority of respondents, regardless of race.

Among respondents, 65% of both Black and white residents "believe they cannot trust government officials to do what is right," and over 80% of both groups agree or somewhat agree that "political leaders neglect the interests of people who live in rural areas."

A majority of people also say that they don't feel like they have a voice in local government.

Franklin said this point of commonality shows an opportunity for people to come together in support of "good government" reforms, or efforts to increase inclusion and public engagement with local government.

Division: Race relations and the Black Lives Matter movement

Race relations are an especially polarizing topic, with Black people being much more likely to believe that they are treated worse in any given area than white people.

"Blacks and whites have fundamentally different perceptions about the treatment of Blacks and validity of racism. There are even minor, though noticeable differences, in how the racial groups view the treatment of Blacks when they are shopping and voting," the study reads.

There was also contrast in each cohort's feelings toward Black Lives Matter: 87% of Black respondents said they support the movement, compared to 40% of white respondents. In Selma and Dallas County, specifically, just 26%



Martin Luther King, Jr., center, and others stand at the head of the group on Turn Back Tuesday in Selma, Ala. in 1965. ALABAMA LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

of white respondents said they support BLM.

Commonality: Racially segregated schools

Across all counties and races, most people surveyed said schools in their areas are segregated today.

55% of white respondents and 59% of Black respondents said they strongly or somewhat agree with the statement "Schools in my area are racially segregated."

The study does not include an explanation of how or why, but the Black Belt Community Foundation and the Selma Center recognize segregation as a persisting problem they aim to resolve.

Division: COVID's impact

Rural Alabama, particularly the Black Belt, was hit hard with COVID-19. By the end of June 2020, a quarter of all COVID-related deaths had been Black Belt residents, though the area only housed about 11% of the state's population at the time.

The survey asked respondents why they think COVID has disproportionately impacted Black people, and there were disparities in why they believe that's the case.

A majority of Black respondents said the major reasons were due to their work in high-risk industries, lack of health care, or it was "beyond their control." Among white respondents, 31% or fewer agreed that these were major reasons why Black people experienced higher COVID infection rates.

Commonality: Living wages

Franklin said one of the most shocking findings from the study was a vast support across racial groups for increasing city and county employees wages to

About the study

The expressed goal of the Black Belt Community Foundation and the Selma Center in publishing this study was to address the deficit research on Southern, rural communities and challenge assumptions about race. The initiative is sponsored by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

The central component of the study, named the Dallas County Area Study, is a 500-person telephone and online survey administered by New South Research in December 2020.

New South Research conducted a random sample of Blacks and Whites in the requested counties, including an oversample of Blacks. Each participant was offered a \$5 amazon e-gift card to complete the survey. The completed survey is comprised 156 Whites, 341 Blacks, and 3 individuals of mixed race. The survey contained 299 women and 201 men.

Input sessions and meetings generated a 43-question survey that was co-produced by academicians and community advocates. The survey and input sessions were approved by Middle Tennessee State University's Institutional Review Board.

The study measures racial differences using bivariate cross-tabulations. It highlights the results that are statistically significant, and statistical significance indicates that a finding is not due to chance.

meet a living wage.

When asked how much they "would support or oppose a city or county policy that required the city to pay a living wage to all city employees," a majority of both groups said they either strongly supported or somewhat supported it.

A living wage is the theoretical income level it would take an individual or family to pay for necessities. This number varies by state and family size, but the estimated living wage for a single adult in Alabama ranges from \$11 to \$13.77 an hour.

"Although African-Americans definitely supported living wages and those kinds of things much more than whites, even among whites, there's considerable support there to possibly build bridges between the groups," Franklin said.

Ultimately, he said doesn't think most people have an accurate perception of rural Alabama, and this study is one step toward changing that.

Hadley Hitson covers the rural South for the Montgomery Advertiser and Report for America. She can be reached at hhitson@gannett.com.