

# Poll: LI blacks prefer integrated housing

February 29, 2012 by OLIVIA WINSLOW / [olivia.winslow@newsday.com](mailto:olivia.winslow@newsday.com)

Most African-Americans on [Long Island](#) would prefer to live in an integrated neighborhood, with more than two-thirds favoring a community with a 50-50 split between blacks and whites, according to a new poll and report out this week.

That preference "is in contrast to the popular notion that African-Americans self-segregate, because they prefer to live in all-black communities," said the Housing and Neighborhood Preferences of African Americans on [Long Island](#) report by the [Syosset](#)-based fair housing advocacy group ERASE Racism.

"This raises the question of why a majority of black Long [Islanders](#) live in segregated communities," the report said.

Elaine Gross, president of Education, Research, Advocacy & Support to Eliminate Racism, known as ERASE Racism, said the poll of blacks' attitudes attempted to address the perception that blacks want to live among blacks. "We try to chip away at that by asking blacks themselves to answer," she said.

Gross highlighted the report's call for more aggressive action by lawmakers to dismantle barriers to fair housing. "An example of that is when they say, 'We're building this affordable housing . . . for people who already live in the town.' If the town is overwhelmingly white, that's another way of blocking access to that housing" for blacks, she said.

The telephone poll of 305 blacks was conducted last year, from June 28 to July 24, by researchers at the [Stony Brook University](#) Center for Survey Research. The margin of error is 5.6 percentage points overall.

Among its findings:

69 percent said they would prefer to live in an integrated community where 50 percent of their neighbors were black and 50 percent white.

52 percent said they were "somewhat" or "very likely" to leave Long Island in five years.

22 percent said that either they or a member of their family has been steered away from a mostly white neighborhood by a real estate agent.

"This report explodes another rationalization for racism," said Lawrence Levy, executive dean of the National Center for Suburban Studies at [Hofstra University](#). "I've heard this myth floated to justify segregation and all its ills by essentially blaming the victims of racial steering, redlining and other ills that come with forcing one people to live apart from others." The ERASE Racism report was "roughly

similar" to national studies, said John R. Logan, a sociology professor at Brown University and a former Stony Brook professor. "Whites prefer to be a clear majority in their neighborhood, maybe 60 [percent] or 70 percent, and African-Americans and Latinos prefer to be a large majority, like 40 [percent] to 50 percent in their neighborhood," he said.

Logan said 2010 census data showed Long Island was the 12th most segregated metro area -- out of 100 of the largest metro areas -- in the nation. "What is true about Long Island is over a very long time period, it's been quite highly segregated between blacks and whites, and that level of segregation is decreasing very slowly, more slowly than the national average," he said.

**Breakdown of the racial composition of neighborhoods preferred by blacks on Long Island:**

**69%** Said they preferred neighborhoods with an equal balance of blacks and whites

**8%** Said they preferred a neighborhood that was 90% black, 10% white

**5%** Said they preferred a neighborhood that was 75% black, 25% white

**1%** Said they preferred a neighborhood that is 100% black

*Source: Housing and Neighborhood Preferences of African Americans on Long Island, 2012 survey research report from ERASE Racism*