

EQUAL JUSTICE SOCIETY

Lawyers' Committee
for **CIVIL RIGHTS**
of the San Francisco Bay Area



Survey Findings on Racial Discrimination and Affirmative Action in California

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Description of Methods

- Interview dates: Feb. 13-27, 2006
- 800 interviews from a random sample of voters in California, margin of error +/- 3.5%
- Oversamples of 150 Latino voters, 150 Asian voters, and 150 African-American voters
- Party Breakdown: 42% Democrat, 32% Republican, 18% Independent.
- Racial Breakdown: 63% White, 18% Latino/a, 6% African-American, 8% Asian.

Key Findings


- Voters recognize that racial discrimination is real and continues today in California. Discrimination is most widely perceived in the areas of criminal justice, employment, and housing.
- There is consensus across racial groups that government must play an active role in guaranteeing equal opportunity. Californians acknowledge discrimination as a real problem that won't go away by itself.
- Voters of all races perceive African Americans and Latinos as suffering the most from discrimination, followed by Native Americans and Asians.
- While about one third of whites perceive some reverse discrimination against whites, like other groups they believe there is far more discrimination against people of color.
- White women are more aware of racial discrimination and more supportive of government action to address it than white men.

Key Findings

- “Equal opportunity” is a much more appealing label than “affirmative action” for programs that address racial discrimination in both higher education and the workplace. This term strengthens support among all voters, but is particularly potent for whites and swing voters, especially white women.
- Voters do not have a clear sense of what Proposition 209 did. Most do not see it as having significantly increased or decreased racial discrimination.
- Despite their wide range of different perceptions and experiences, California voters share core values centered on equal opportunity and fairness. They believe diversity is good for California’s future. Across all racial group, voters support public action to address discrimination and ensure that everyone in California has an equal opportunity to succeed.

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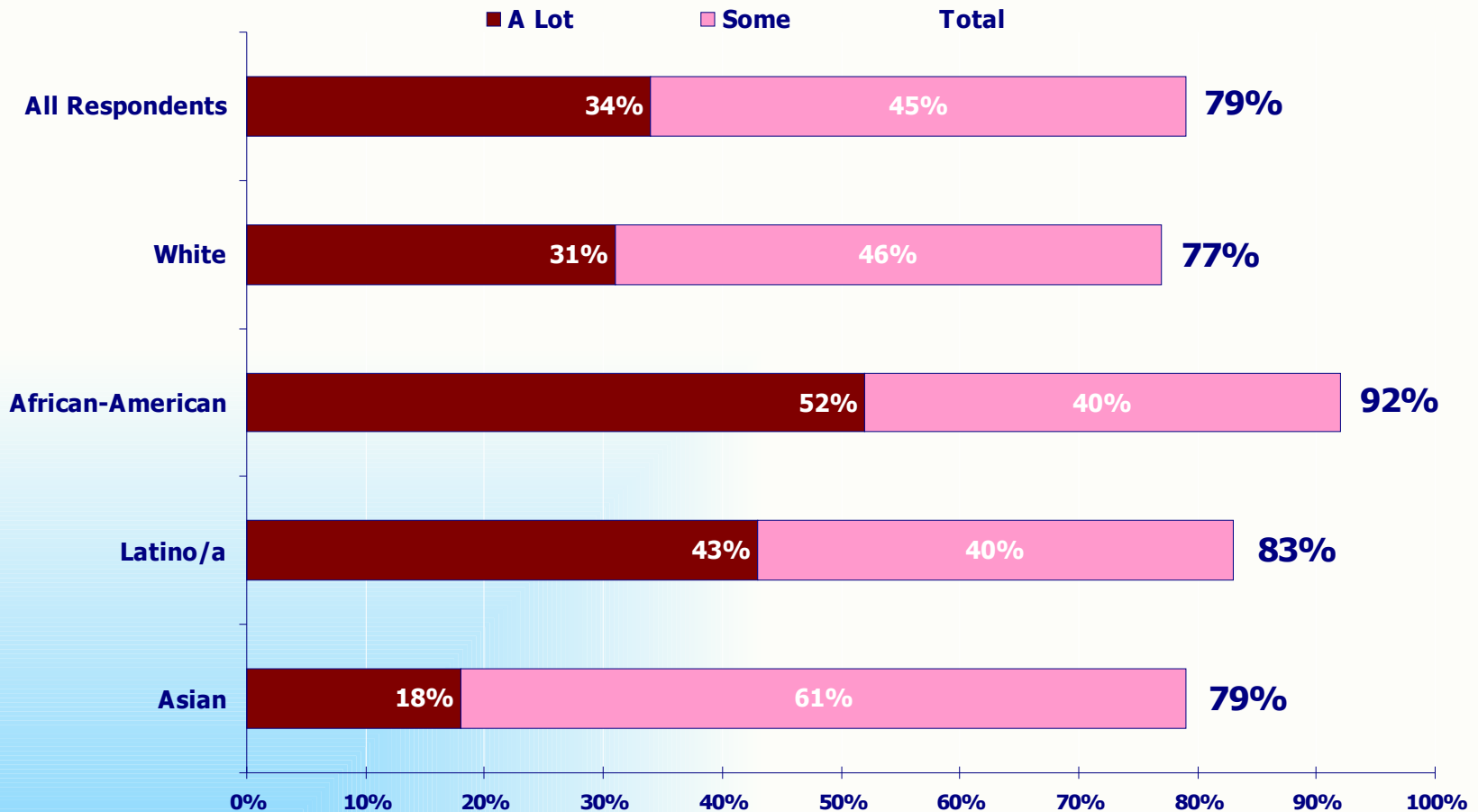
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Framing Race and Affirmative Action: Perceptions of Discrimination

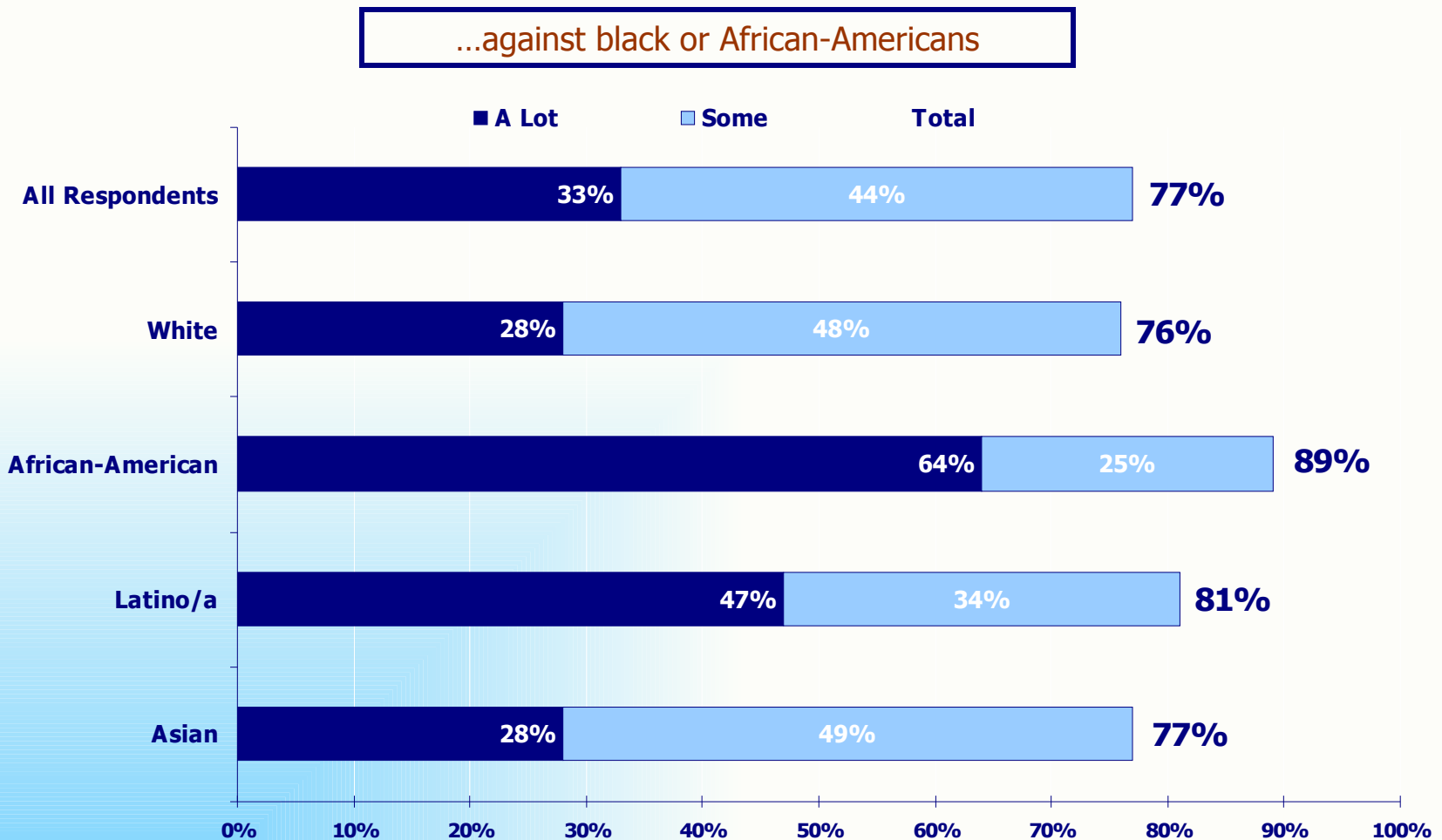
Huge majorities of all racial groups believe there is a lot or some racial discrimination in California today.

How much ethnic or racial discrimination do you think there is in California today -- a lot, some, a little, or none at all?



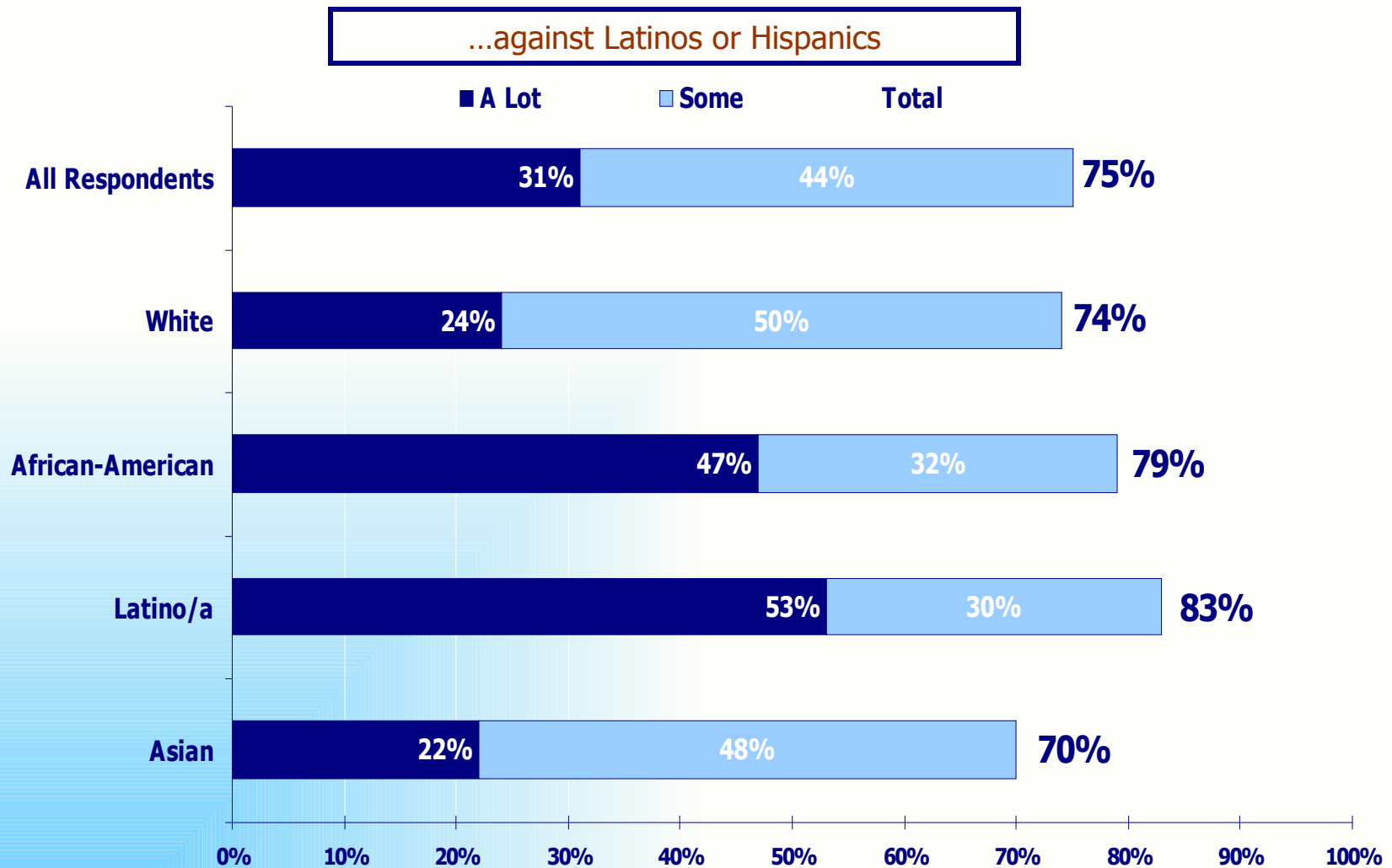
All groups recognize significant discrimination against African Americans.

Now I am going to read some groups in California. For each one tell me how much discrimination you think there is in California against that group – a lot, some, a little, or none at all?



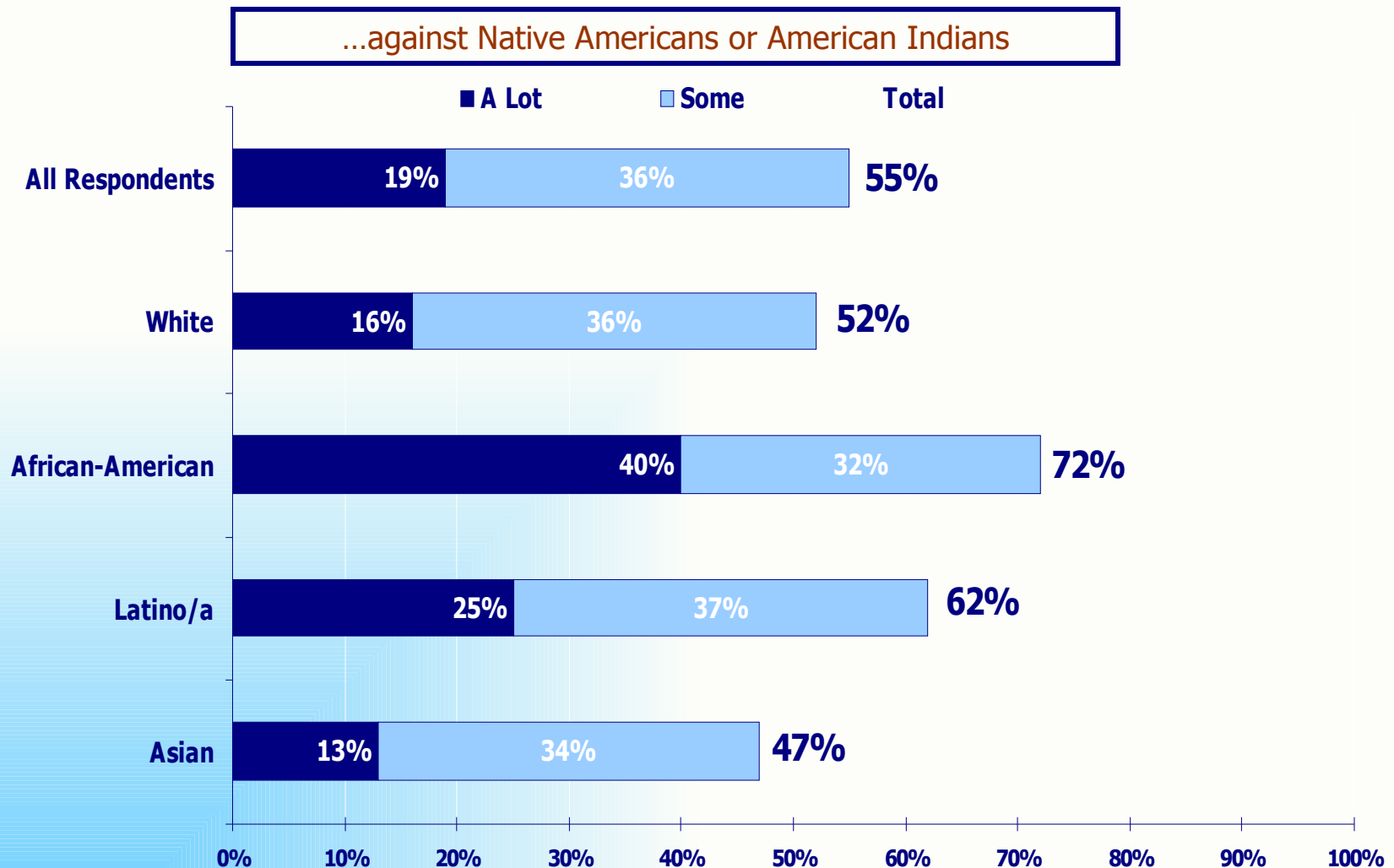
All groups agree that Latinos face discrimination in California.

Now I am going to read some groups in California. For each one tell me how much discrimination you think there is in California against that group – a lot, some, a little, or none at all?



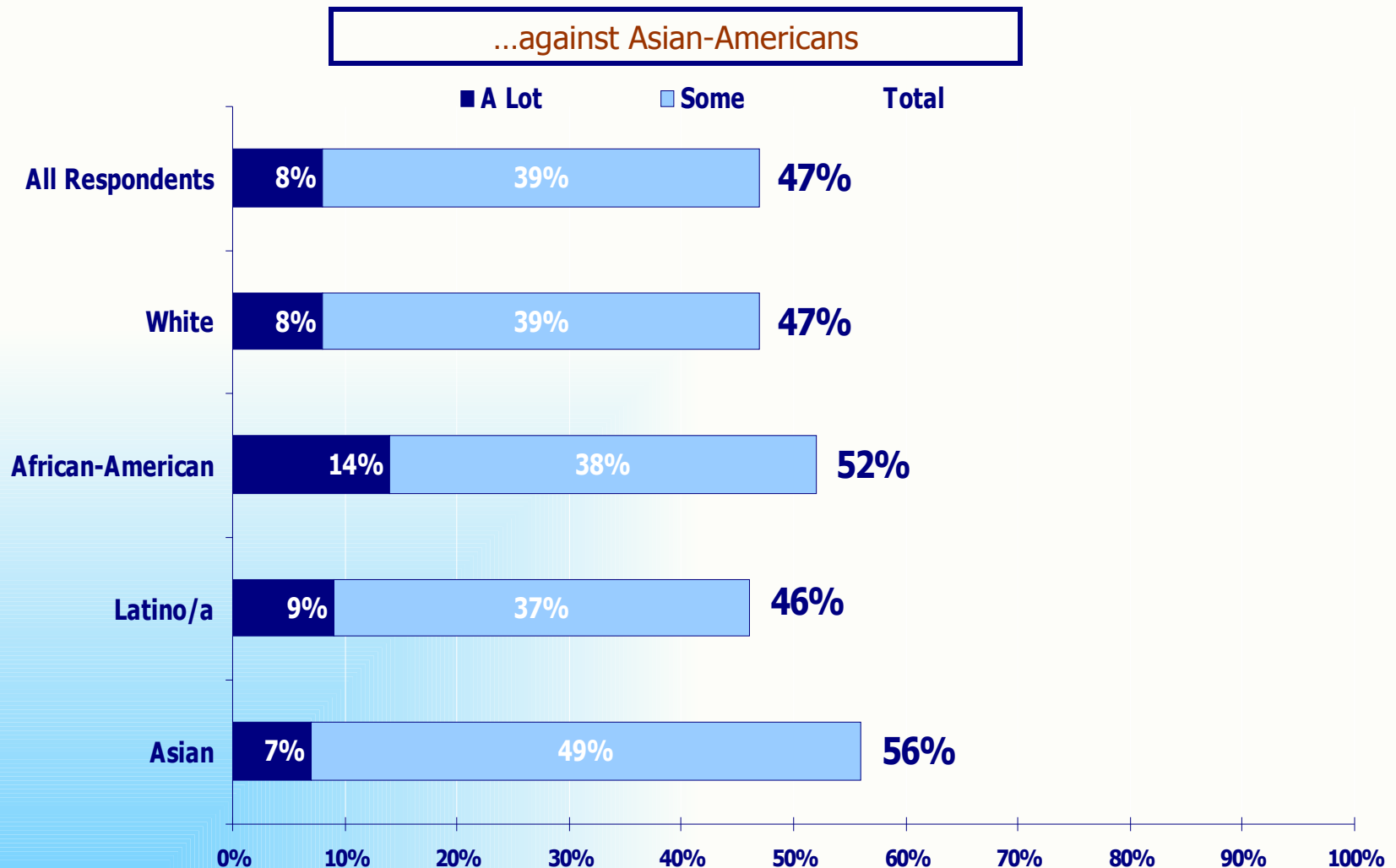
African-Americans are most likely to recognize discrimination against Native Americans.

Now I am going to read some groups in California. For each one tell me how much discrimination you think there is in California against that group – a lot, some, a little, or none at all?



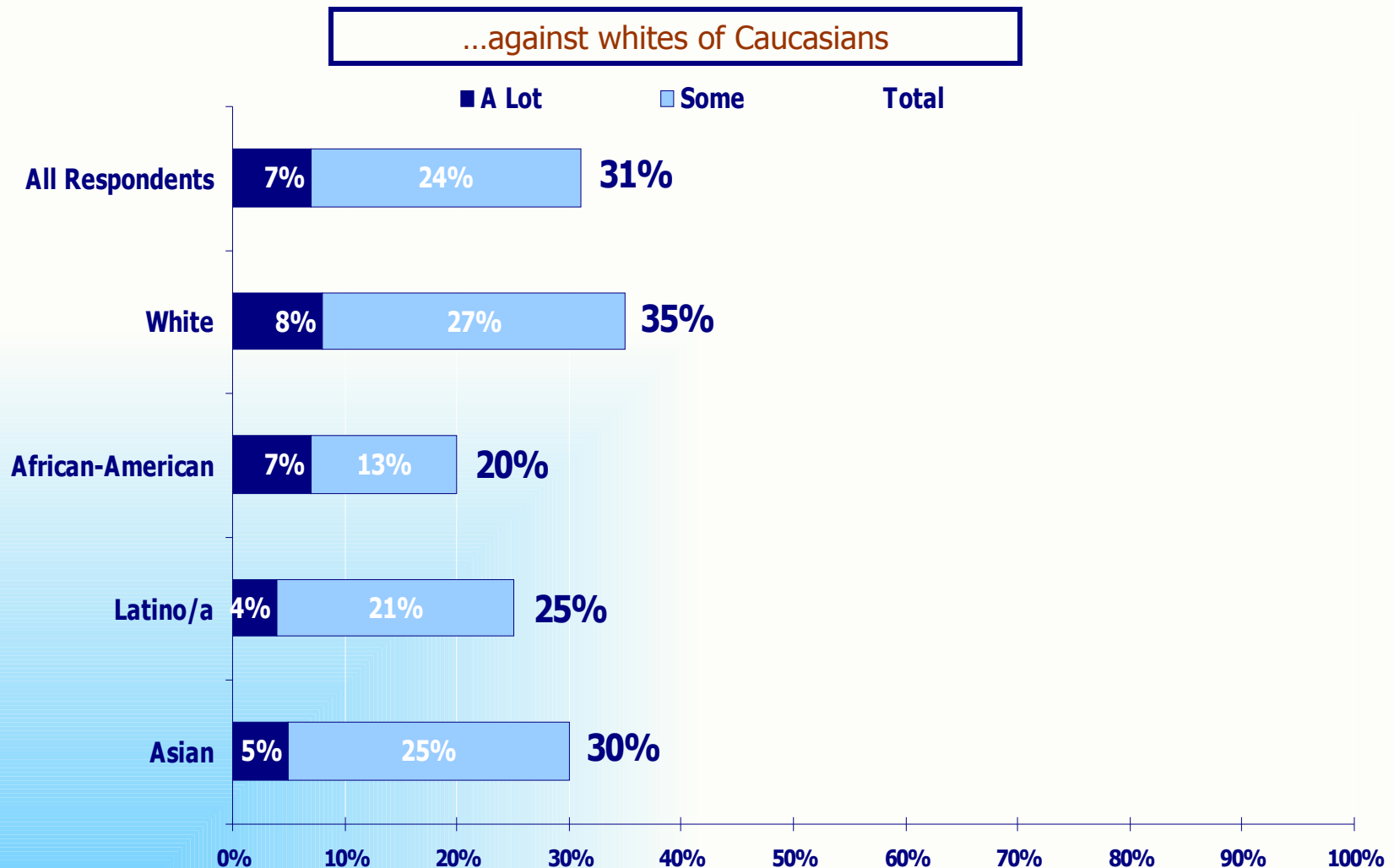
Interestingly, Asians are only slightly more likely than other groups to think that Asians face discrimination.

Now I am going to read some groups in California. For each one tell me how much discrimination you think there is in California against that group – a lot, some, a little, or none at all?



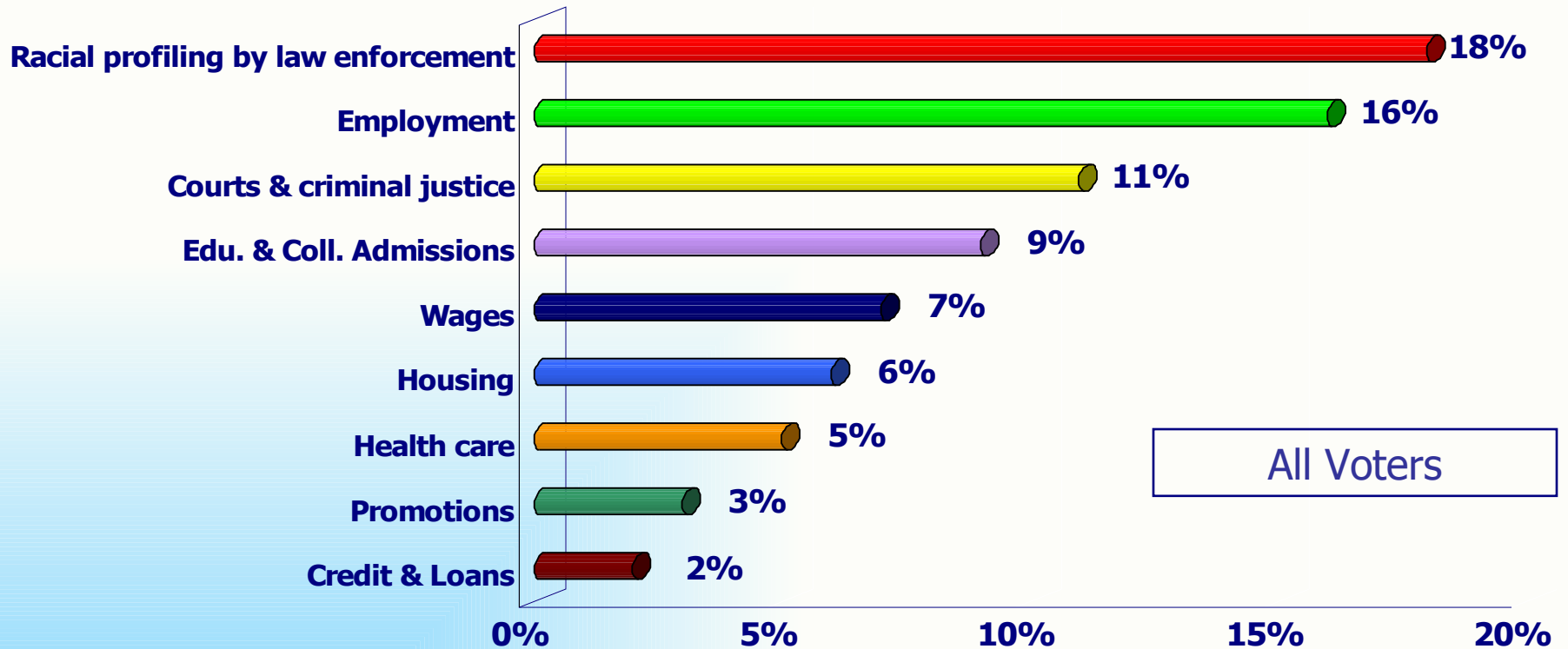
Only a minority of all groups, including about one third of all whites, believe whites face discrimination.

Now I am going to read some groups in California. For each one tell me how much discrimination you think there is in California against that group – a lot, some, a little, or none at all?



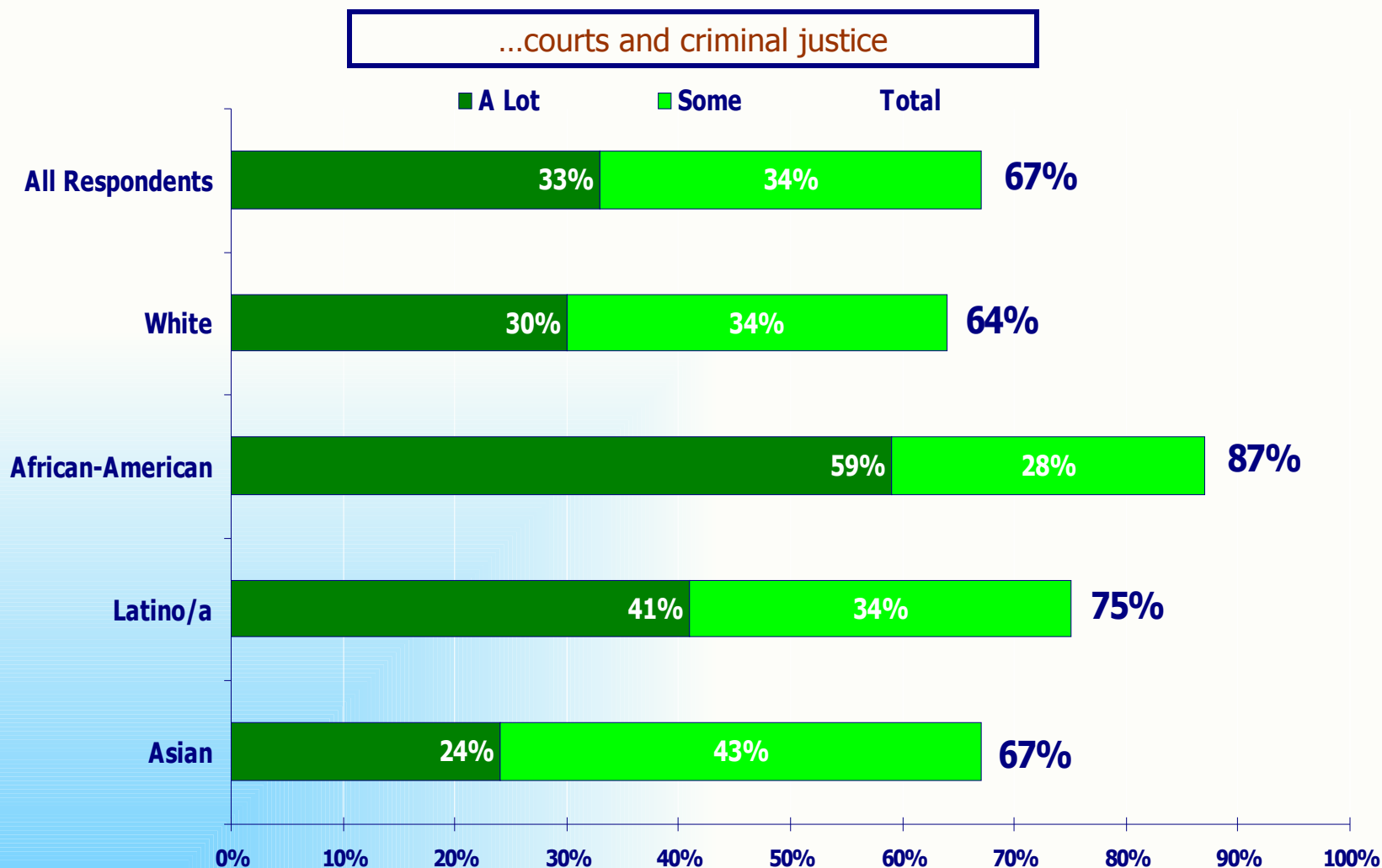
Voters name racial profiling, employment, and criminal justice as the top three areas where discrimination exists.

And when you think about discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities, what is the area that most comes to mind?



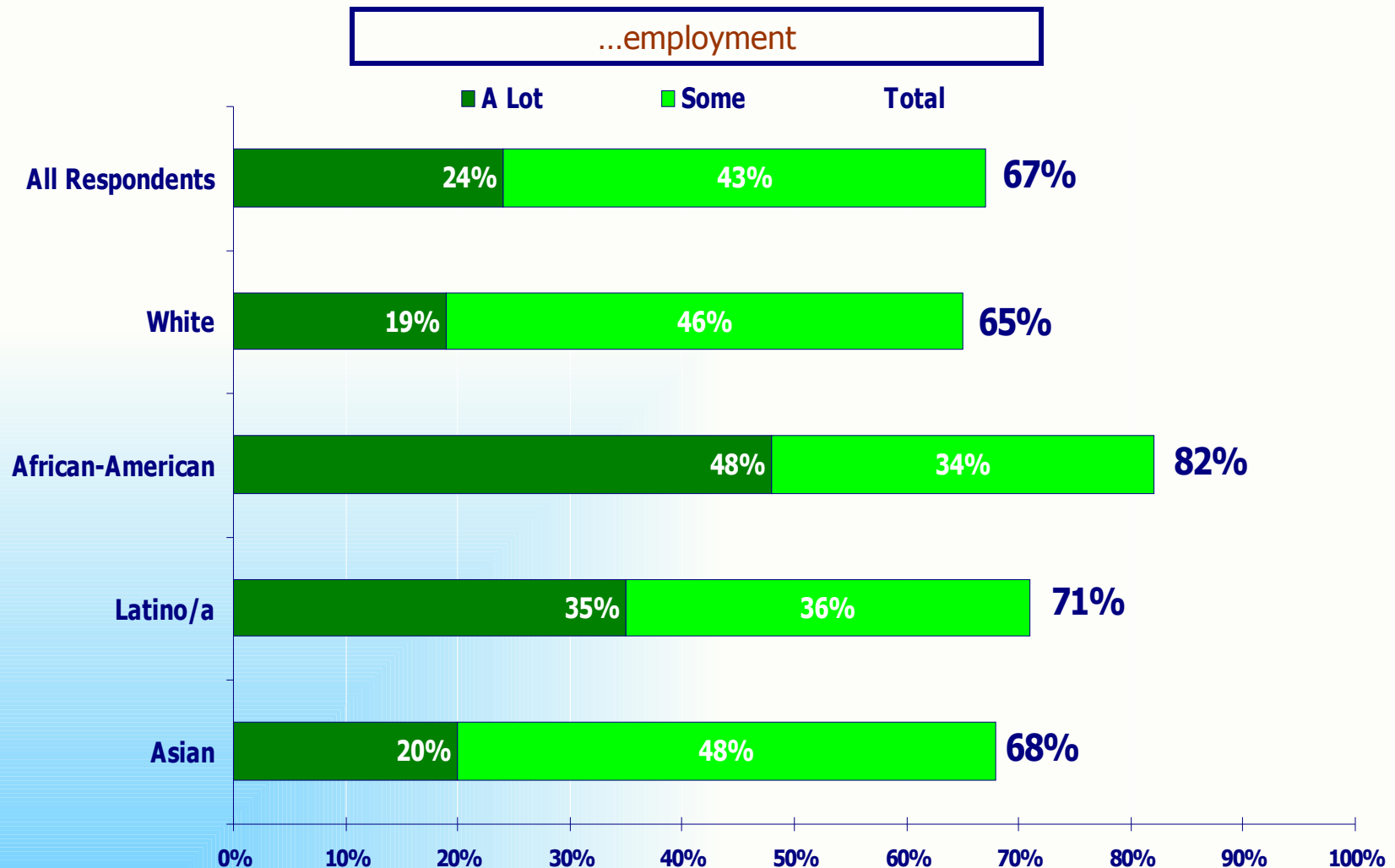
While African-Americans and Latinos are the most likely to recognize discrimination in the justice system, a majority of all groups see discrimination there.

Now I am going to read you a list of areas and for each I want you to tell me how much discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities you think there is in California – a lot, some, a little, or none at all.



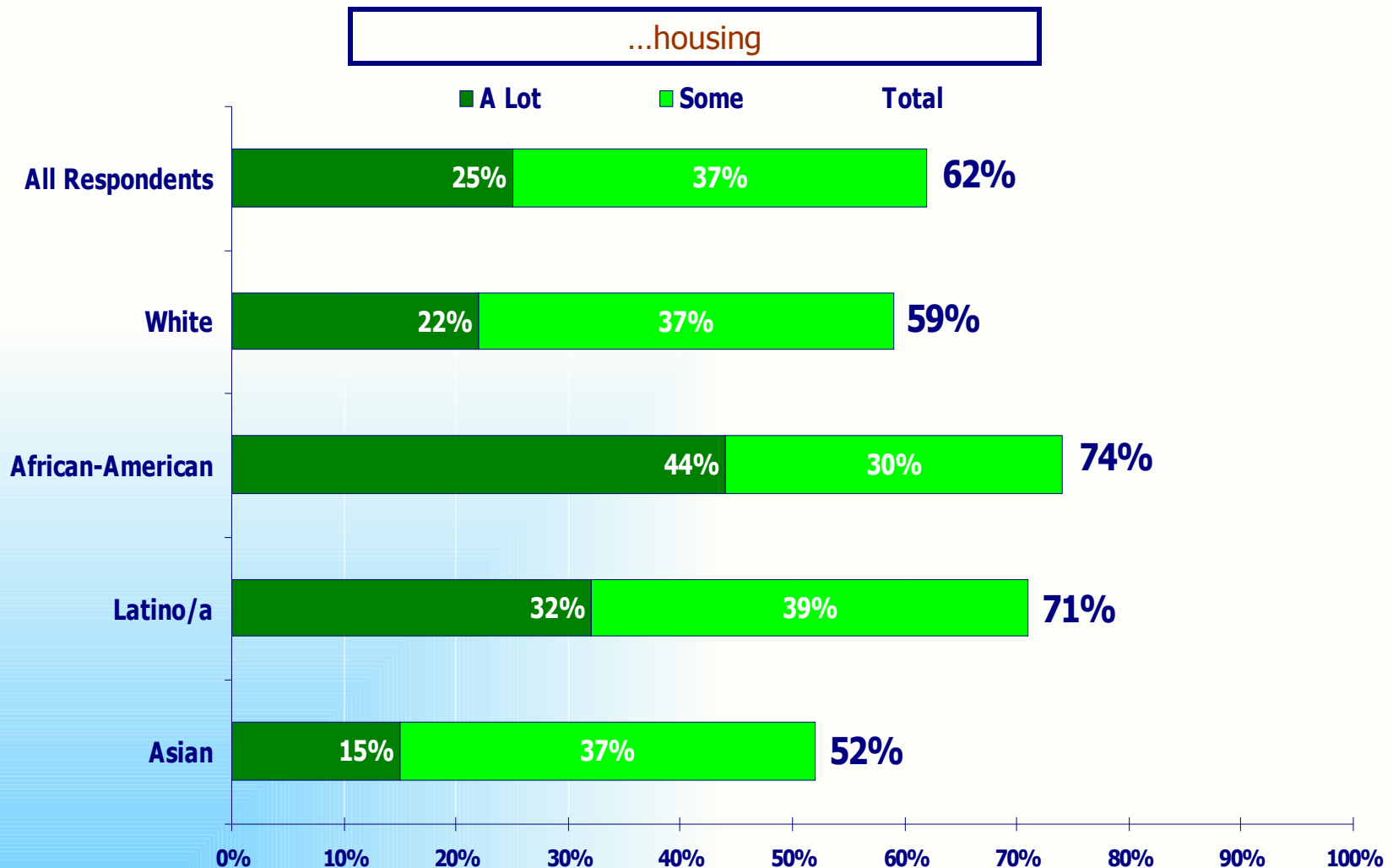
All groups also see discrimination in employment, but African Americans and Latinos most intensely.

Now I am going to read you a list of areas and for each I want you to tell me how much discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities you think there is in California – a lot, some, a little, or none at all.




Majorities of all groups also see racial discrimination in housing.

Now I am going to read you a list of areas and for each I want you to tell me how much discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities you think there is in California – a lot, some, a little, or none at all.



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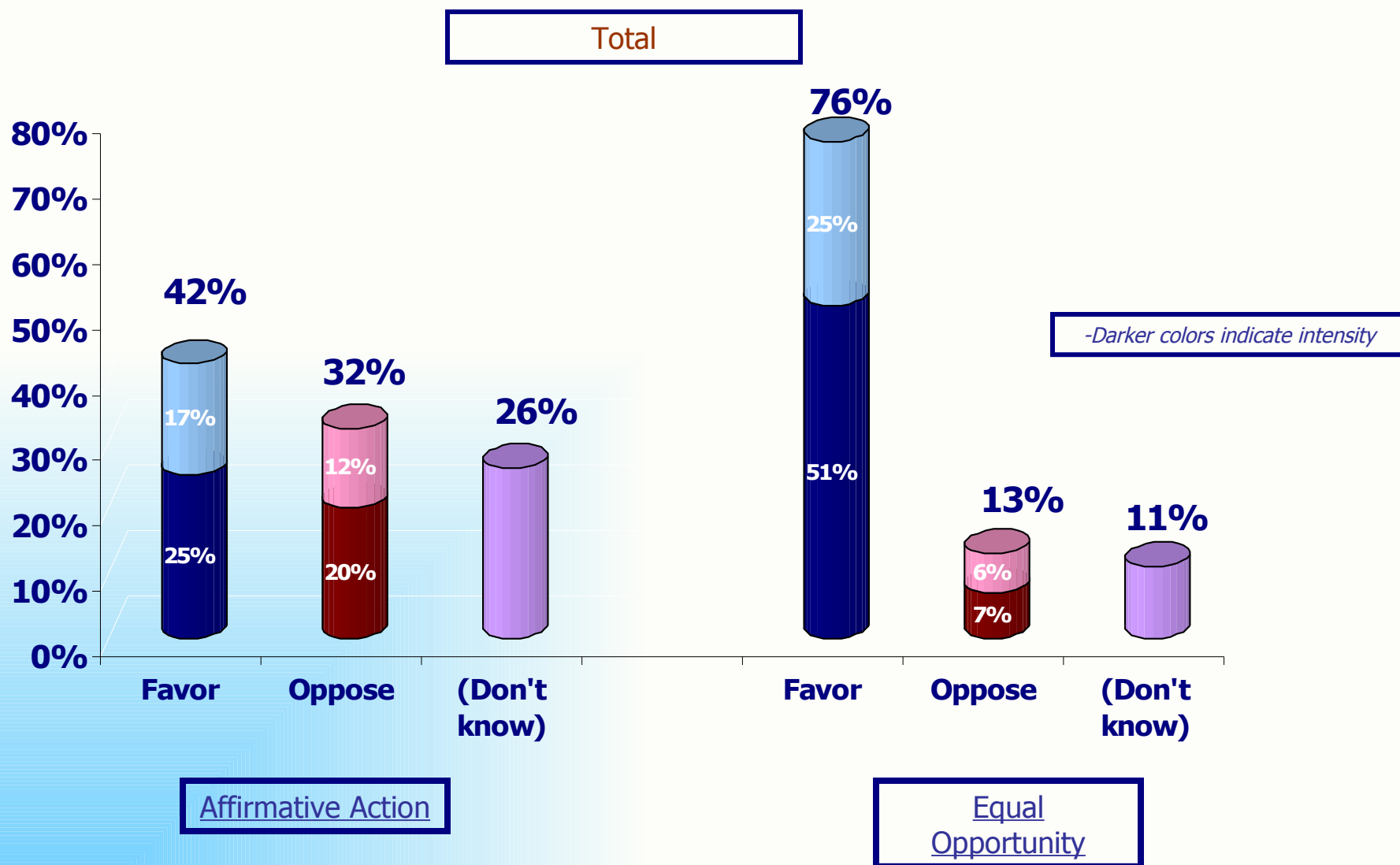
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Framing Race and Affirmative Action: Affirmative Action and Proposition 209

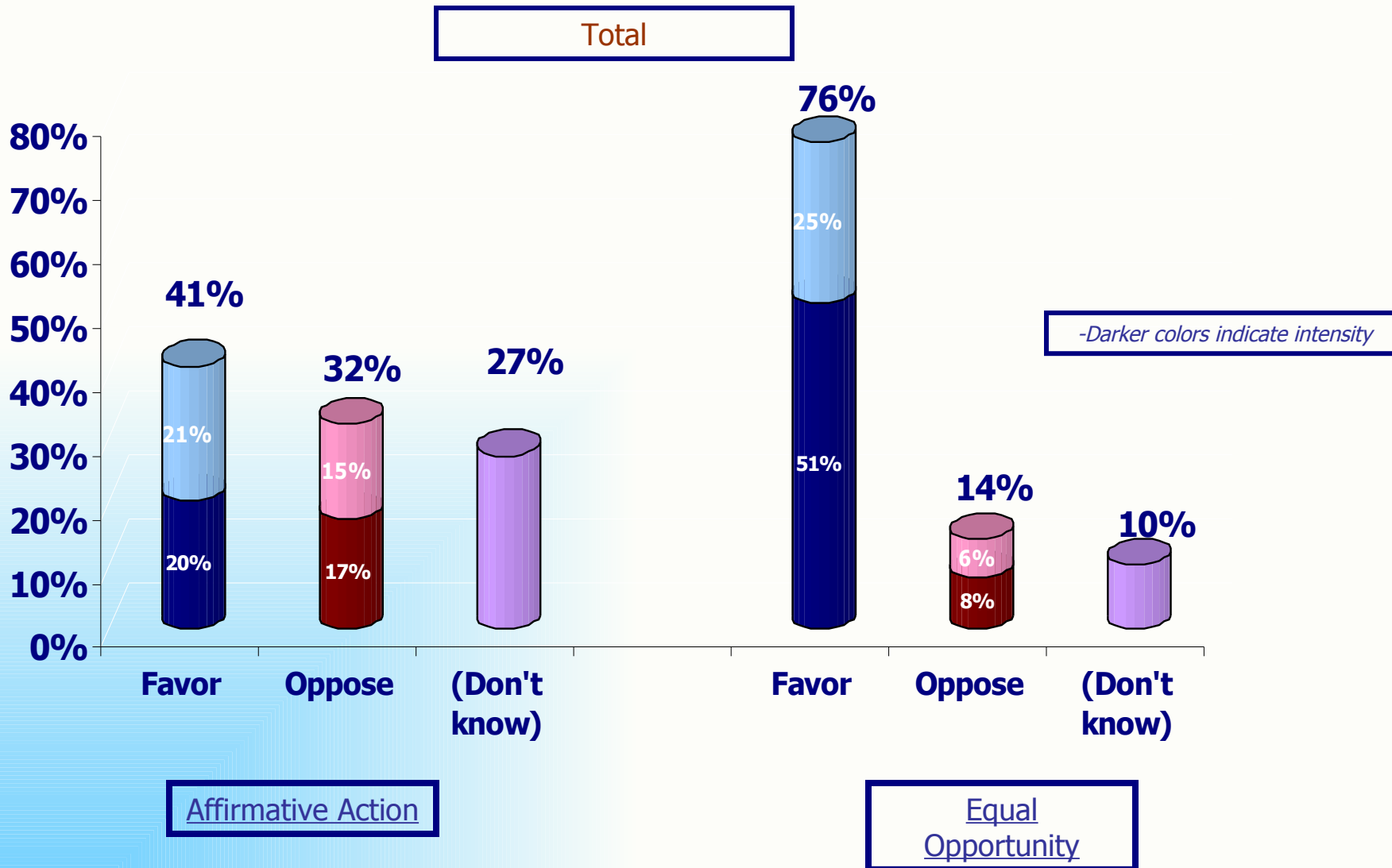
For higher education, voters widely favor “equal opportunity programs” over “affirmative action programs”—with more voters strongly supporting it than the total support for “affirmative action programs.”

Do you favor or oppose [affirmative action/equal opportunity] programs in higher education, or aren't you sure?




The numbers for all voters on "affirmative action programs" and "equal opportunity programs" in the work place mirror the results for higher education.

Do you favor or oppose [affirmative action/equal opportunity] programs in the work place, or aren't you sure?



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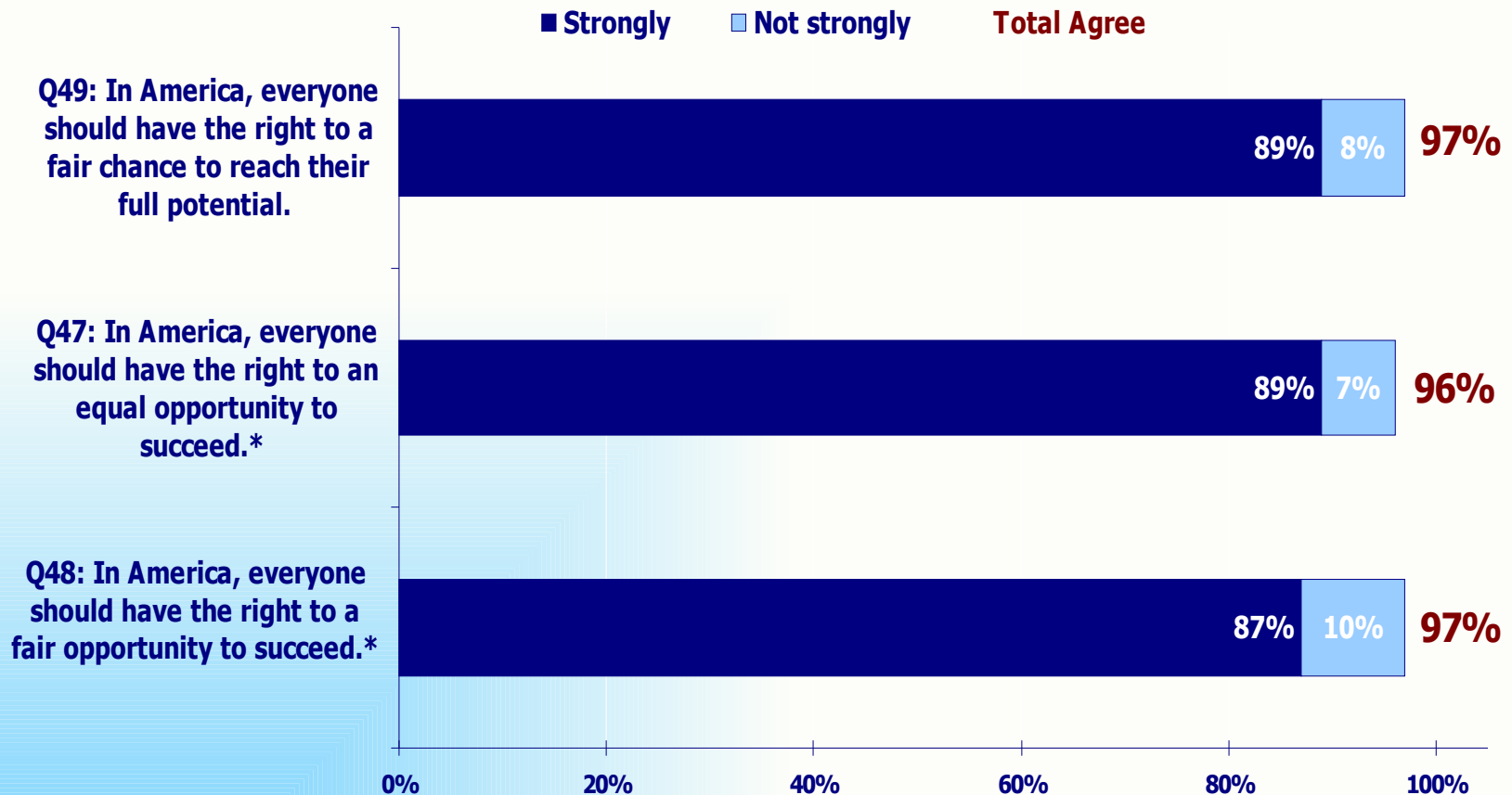
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Framing Race and Affirmative Action: Core Beliefs

California voters unanimously share a core belief that everyone should have a fair and equal opportunity to succeed.


Now I am going to read you some statements and I want you to tell me if you agree or disagree with each statement. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Is that strongly or not so strongly?



*-Asked of half the sample

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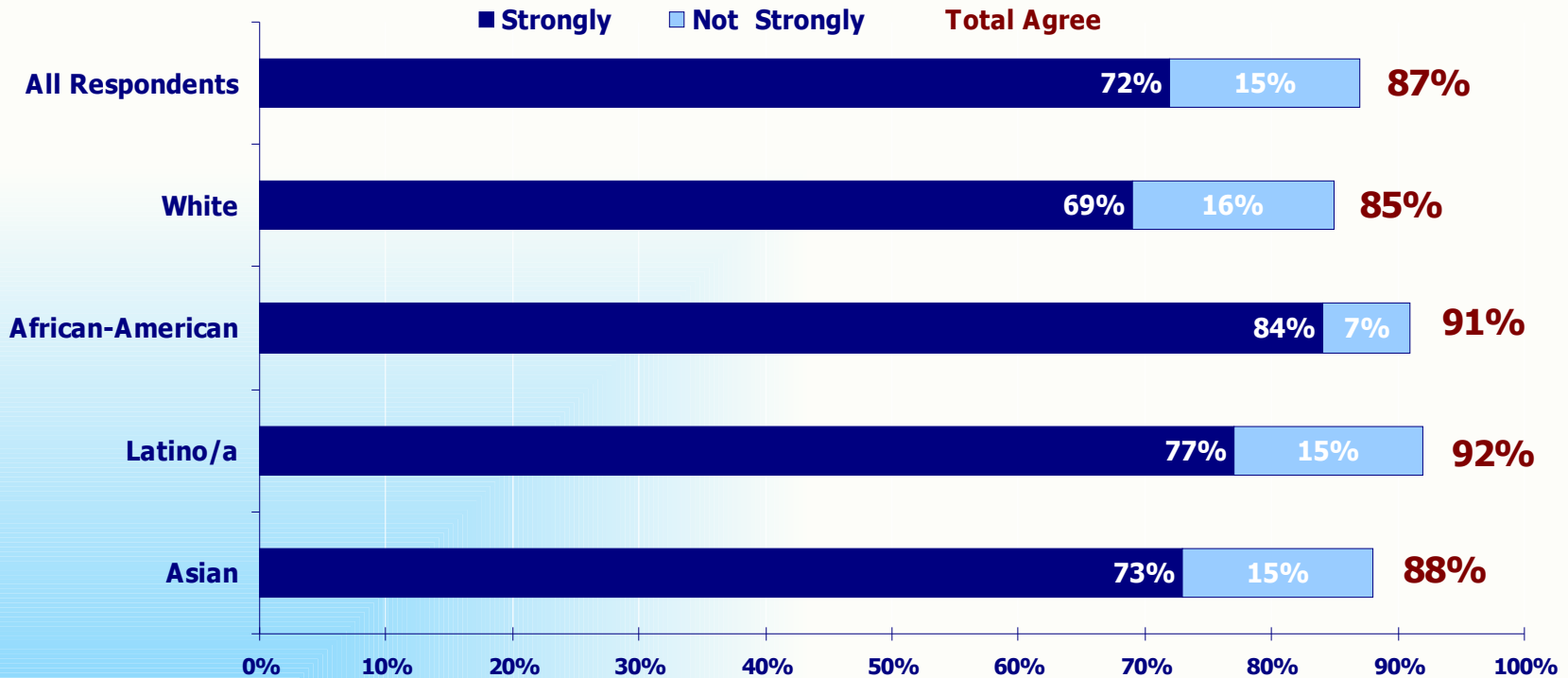

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Framing Race and Affirmative Action: Consensus Views

Nearly all voters, including 85% of whites, believe the government should play an active role in guaranteeing equal opportunity.

Now I am going to read you some statements and I want you to tell me if you agree or disagree with each statement. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Is that strongly or not so strongly?

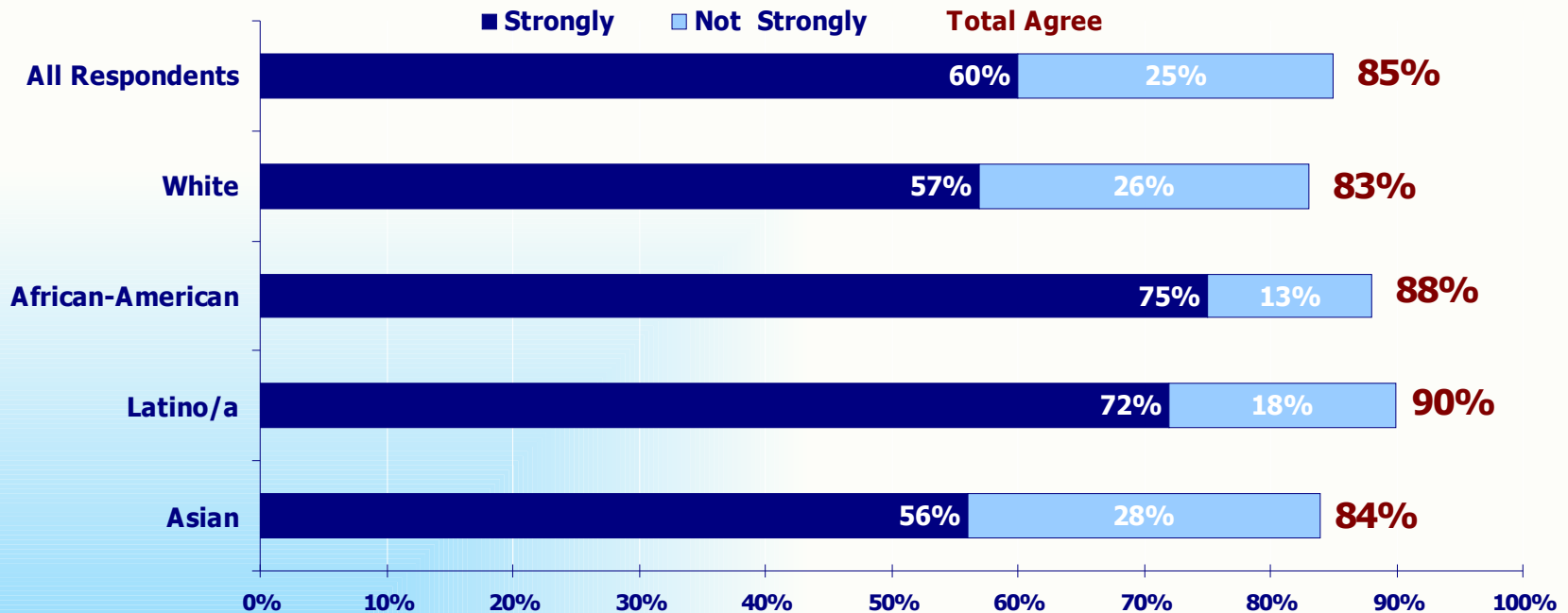
Q50: The government should work to guarantee that everyone in California has an equal opportunity to succeed.



Nearly all voters, including 83% of whites, believe the government has a responsibility to ensure equal opportunity and that we cannot depend on the market place.

Now I am going to read you some statements and I want you to tell me if you agree or disagree with each statement. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Is that strongly or not so strongly?

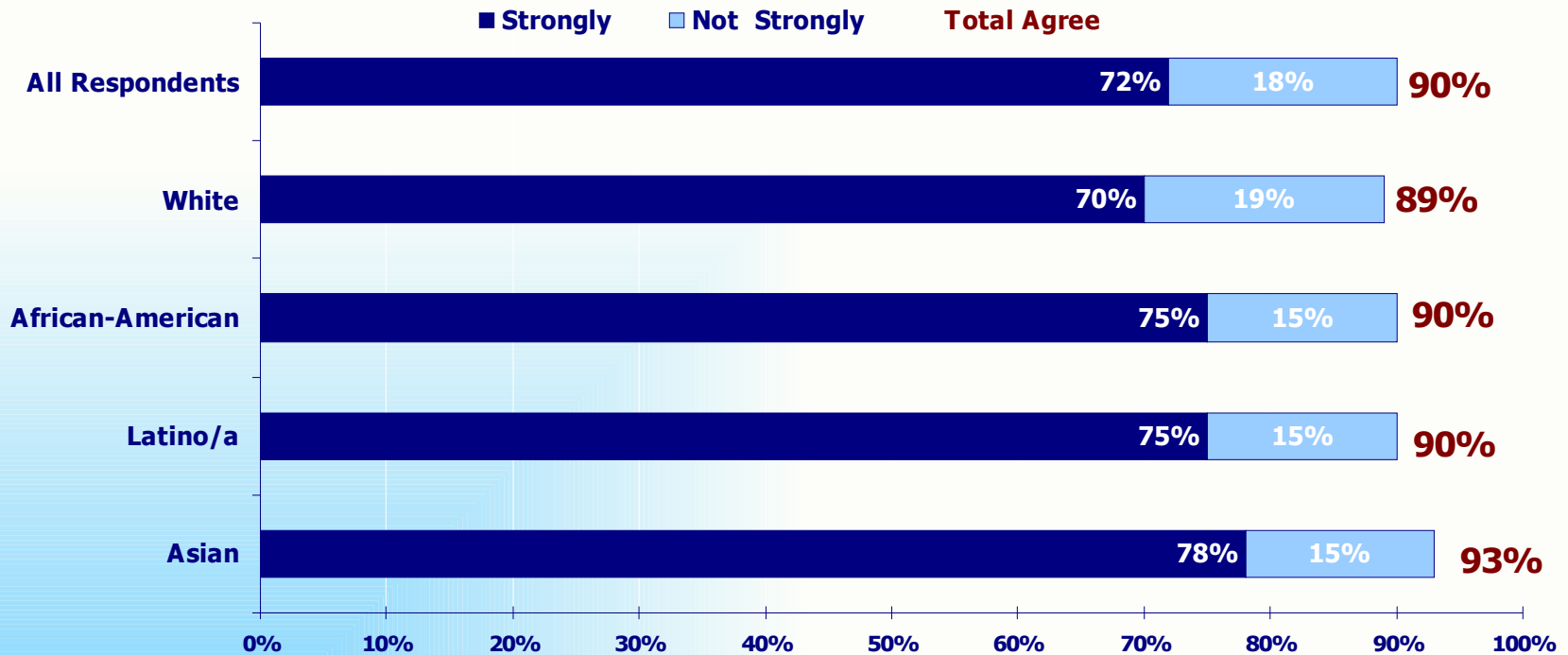
Q53: We cannot just depend on the marketplace to solve the problem of racial and ethnic inequality, government has a responsibility to make sure people are treated fairly and everyone has equal access to opportunity.



Nearly all racial groups believe at identical levels that diversity has economic benefits for California.

Now I am going to read you some statements and I want you to tell me if you agree or disagree with each statement. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Is that strongly or not so strongly?

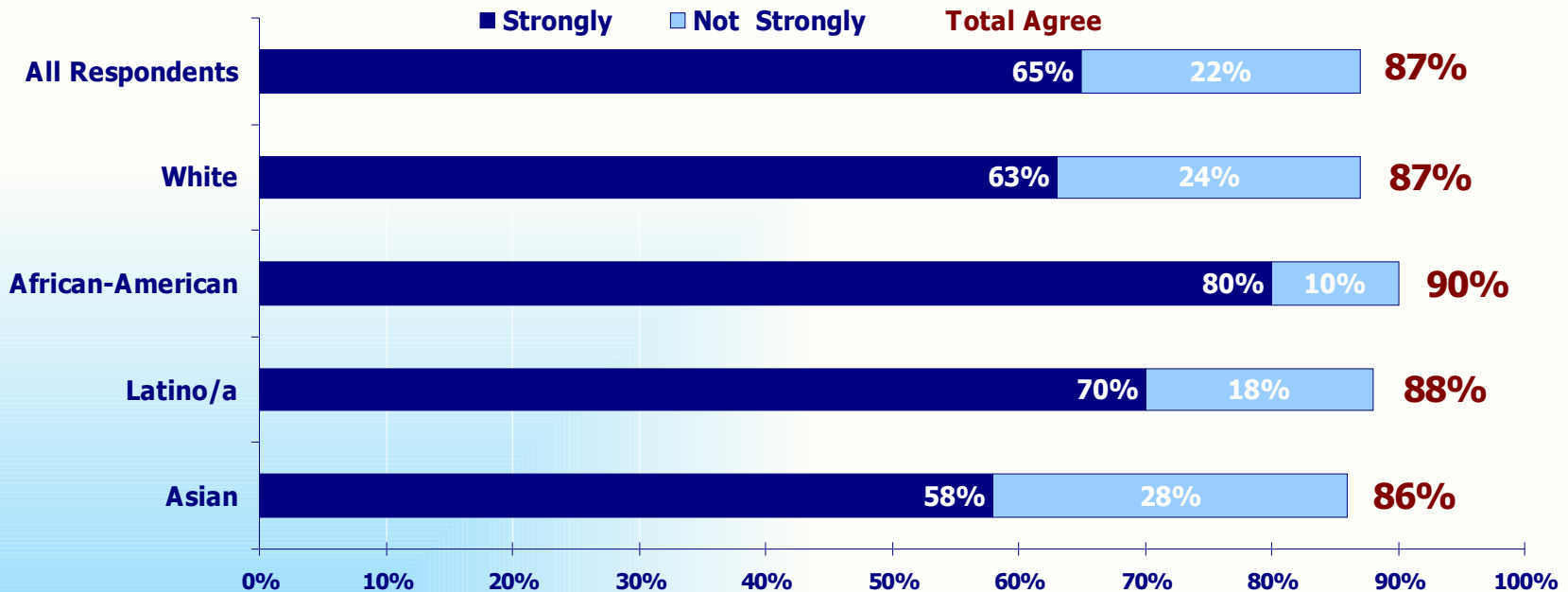
Q64: Diversity is good for California's economic future.



Nearly all voters, including 87% of whites, believe we cannot pretend racial inequality doesn't exist.

Now I am going to read you some statements and I want you to tell me if you agree or disagree with each statement. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Is that strongly or not so strongly?

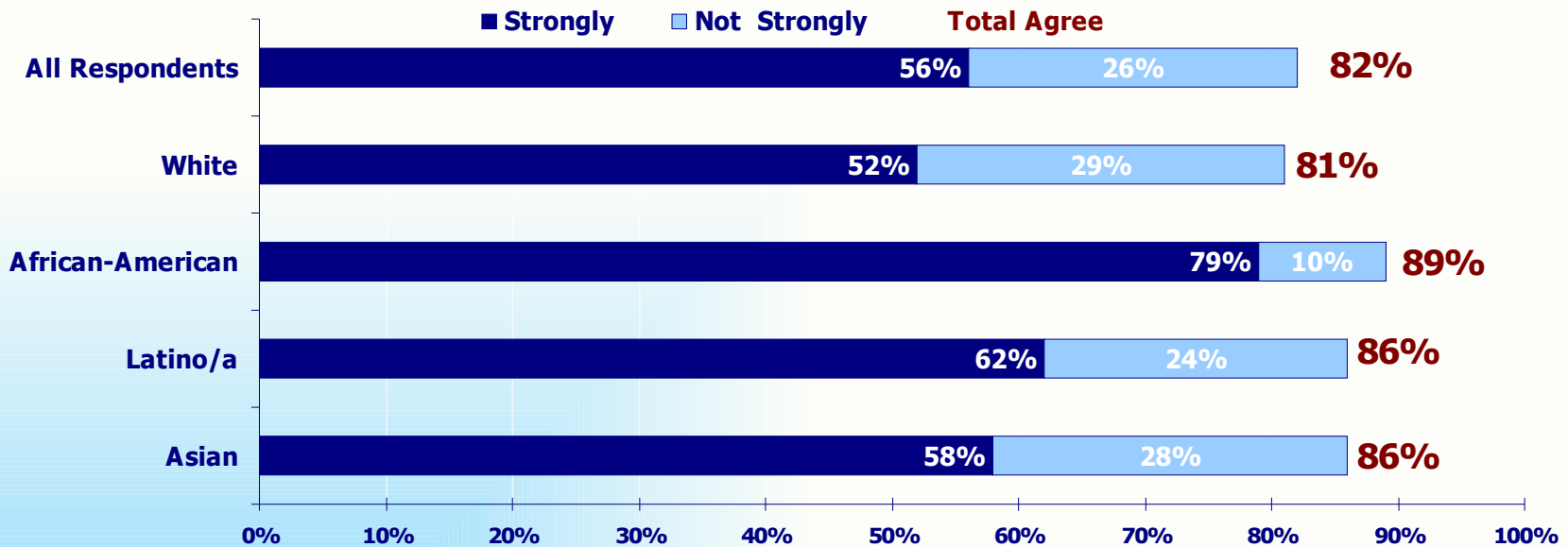
Q62: We cannot wish racial and ethnic inequality away or pretend it doesn't exist.



Eight of ten voters believe the government has a responsibility to address the legacy and consequences of discrimination.


Now I am going to read you some statements and I want you to tell me if you agree or disagree with each statement. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Is that strongly or not so strongly?

Q54: Government has a responsibility to address the legacy and consequences of racial discrimination.



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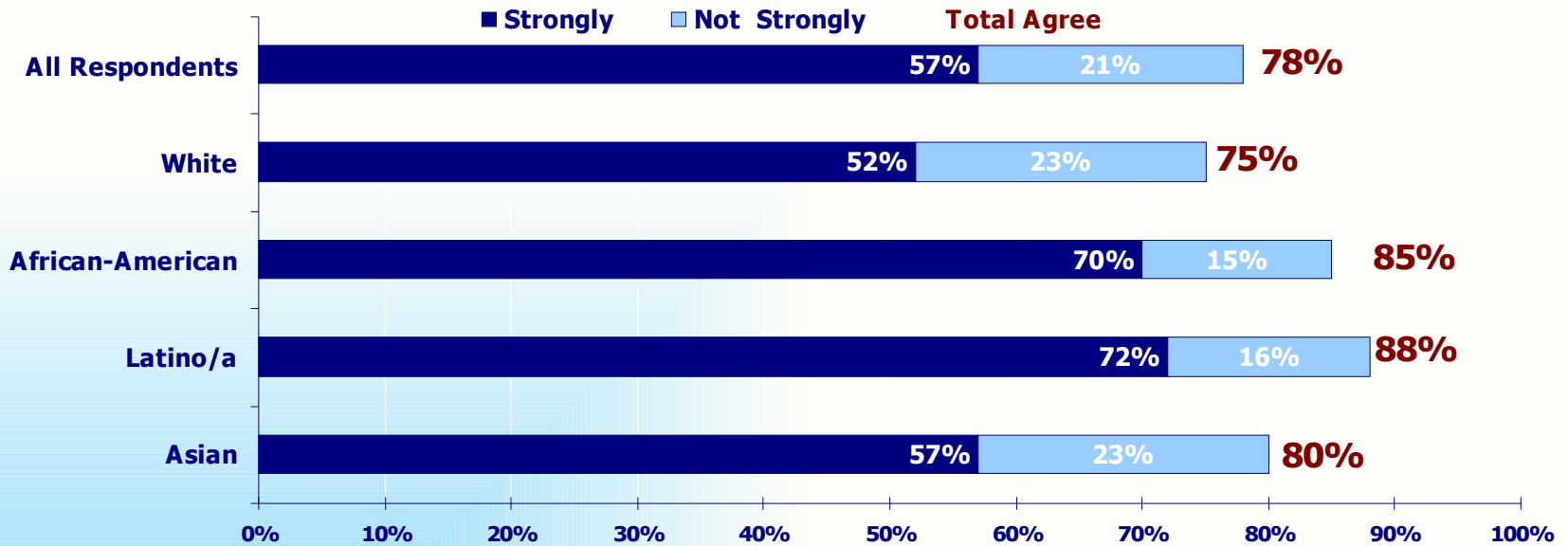
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Framing Race and Affirmative Action: Moderately Strong Beliefs

Over three-quarters of voters want California to lead the nation in innovative policies to address inequality.

Now I am going to read you some statements and I want you to tell me if you agree or disagree with each statement. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Is that strongly or not so strongly?

Q63: California should lead the nation in innovative policies to address racial and ethnic inequality and provide access to opportunity for all.



Most voters, including three-quarters of whites, think businesses should be allowed to take action to ensure diversity.

Now I am going to read you some statements and I want you to tell me if you agree or disagree with each statement. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Is that strongly or not so strongly?

Q76: Businesses should be allowed to take actions to ensure that their workforce is diverse.

