

The Black Public Image Impact Study

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The recent racist portrayal of President and First Lady Obama is only the latest in the long, long campaign of contemptuous public imaging of Black people to keep discriminatory policies in place that hurt the quality of all aspects of American Black life.

Albert Memmi wrote that *Racism is the generalized and final assigning of values to the real or imaginary differences, to the accuser's benefit and at its victims' expense, to justify the former's own privileges or aggression.*ⁱ Racism is an attack upon all of us and the goal of fostering a beloved community of equal citizens.

The *Black Public Image Impact* study (2026) survey was created by the author and reviewed by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) from which the survey instrument received exemption status. This qualitative study ascertained how persons who self-identify as Black, African American, or as People of Color describe how they felt impacted by negative public image portrayals of them. The questionnaire consisted of several qualitative questions and was distributed amongst members of a university community located in Northeastern United States.

Note that most questions allowed respondents to indicate multiple answers per question, either via free response or multiple choice. This means that the total number of responses per question often exceeds the total number of respondents. For example, if a respondent indicated that negative media portrayals of Black Americans made them feel “sad” and “angry,” both of those feelings would be counted in the total tally of responses.

The sample size of the survey respondents was small. The interpretive meanings of words like “angry,” “sad,” and “upset” are subjective to the respondent and reader. More qualitative

research is needed to further describe and understand the feelings and coping strategies of members of minority groups when exposed to negative public images of Black people and people of color. The majority of the survey respondents (n=26) completed the survey online. The remaining survey participants (n=11) were interviewed by the author, who wrote down the respondents' verbatim responses. The author was keenly aware of the guidelines (Moschella, 2008)ⁱⁱ and cautions (Campbell-Reed, 2019)ⁱⁱⁱ while conducting and engaging in such research practices.

The survey was completed by (N=37) respondents across different age groups, gender identities, sexual orientations, racial identities, religious affiliations, occupations, and geographical residences.

Most of the respondents (68%) were aged 45 and older; and (32%) were under the age of 45. The survey was completed by an even split of male-identifying and female-identifying respondents, with one respondent identifying as genderqueer. The majority of respondents identified as heterosexual (89%), with the remaining percentage of respondents divided evenly among those identifying as bisexual or queer.

Respondents identified as Black or African American (84%); 11% identified as Asian American, 3% as American Indian, and 3% as biracial (Black or African American and Hispanic).

Respondents also overwhelmingly identified as Protestant Christian (84%), with 5% identifying as Agnostic, 3% as Atheist, 3% as Catholic, and 5% as irreligious or preferring not to disclose.

The occupational categories represented by respondents were most significant in higher education (59%), followed by 30% in other services (religious, civic, personal, food), and 3% in business; 5% of respondents were retired. Finally, most respondents reported geographical residence in an urban (92%) rather than rural (8%) setting.

In response to one of the survey questions, “*When I am exposed to a negative portrayal of Black Americans, it makes me feel?*” there were several feeling responses, with the majority indicating that they felt “angry.”

Notes

ⁱ Alber Memmi. Racism. p.180.

ⁱⁱ Mary C. Moschella. Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction, p.4.

ⁱⁱⁱ Eileen R. Campbell-Reed, The Power and Danger of a Single Case Study in Practical Theological Research. In: Conundrums in Practical Theology. Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J., Editor. The Wiley Blackwell Reader in Practical Theology, p 35-39.

Sources

Campbell-Reed, Eileen R. The Power and Danger of a Single Case Study in Practical Theological Research. In: Conundrums in Practical Theology. Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J., Editor. The Wiley Blackwell Reader in Practical Theology. Hoboken, NJ, John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2019. Pp 33-59. DOI: https://doi-org.yale.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/9789004324244_004

Memmi, Albert. Racism. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Moschella, Mary C. Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction. Cleveland, Ohio, The Pilgrim Press, 2008.

Black Public Image Impact
Interview/Questionnaire Tables & Charts
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January 17, 2026

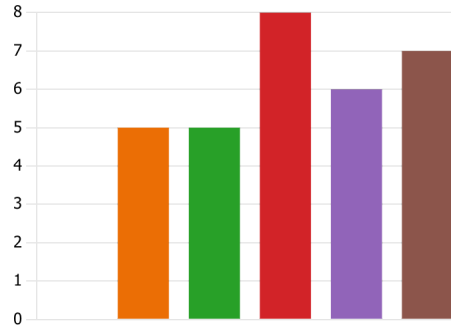
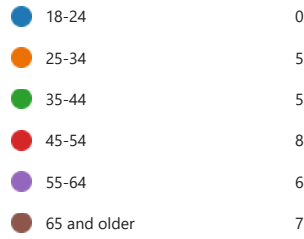
Black Public Image Impact Interview/Questionnaire

31 Responses

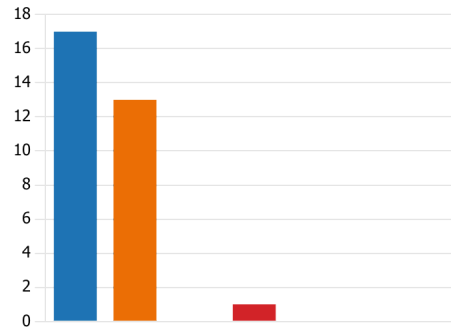
25:27 Average time to complete

Active Status

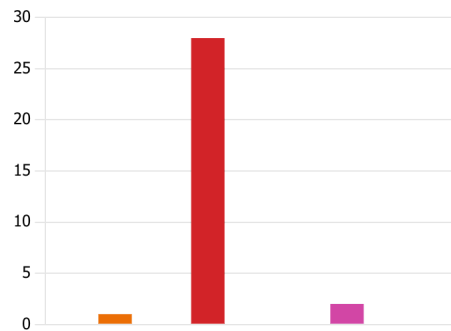
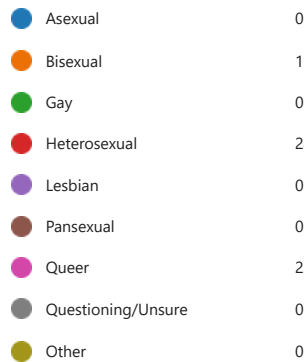
1. Age:



2. Gender (if you prefer to self-describe, please do so in the "Other" category):

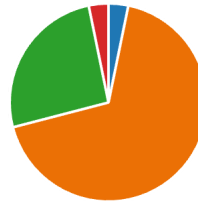


3. Sexual orientation (if you prefer to self-describe, please do so in the "Other" category):



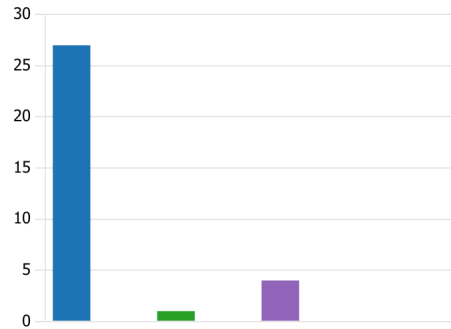
4. Occupation Category (select the one that best describes your occupation):

● Business	1
● Higher Education	21
● Other Services (Religious, Civic, ...	8
● Retired	1



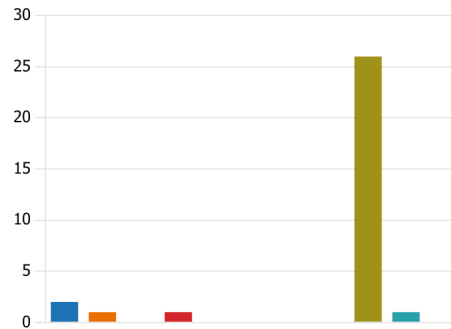
5. Racial Identity

● Black or African American	27
● White	0
● American Indian	1
● Alaska Native	0
● Asian	4
● Native Hawaiian	0
● Other Pacific Islander	0
● Other	0



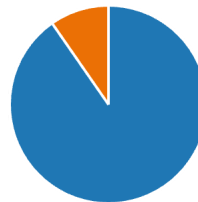
6. Religious Affiliation

● Agnostic	2
● Atheist	1
● Buddhist	0
● Catholic	1
● Hindu	0
● Jewish	0
● Muslim	0
● Orthodox Christian	0
● Protestant Christian	26
● Not religious / prefer not to say	1
● Other	0



7. Geographical Residence:

● Urban	28
● Rural	3

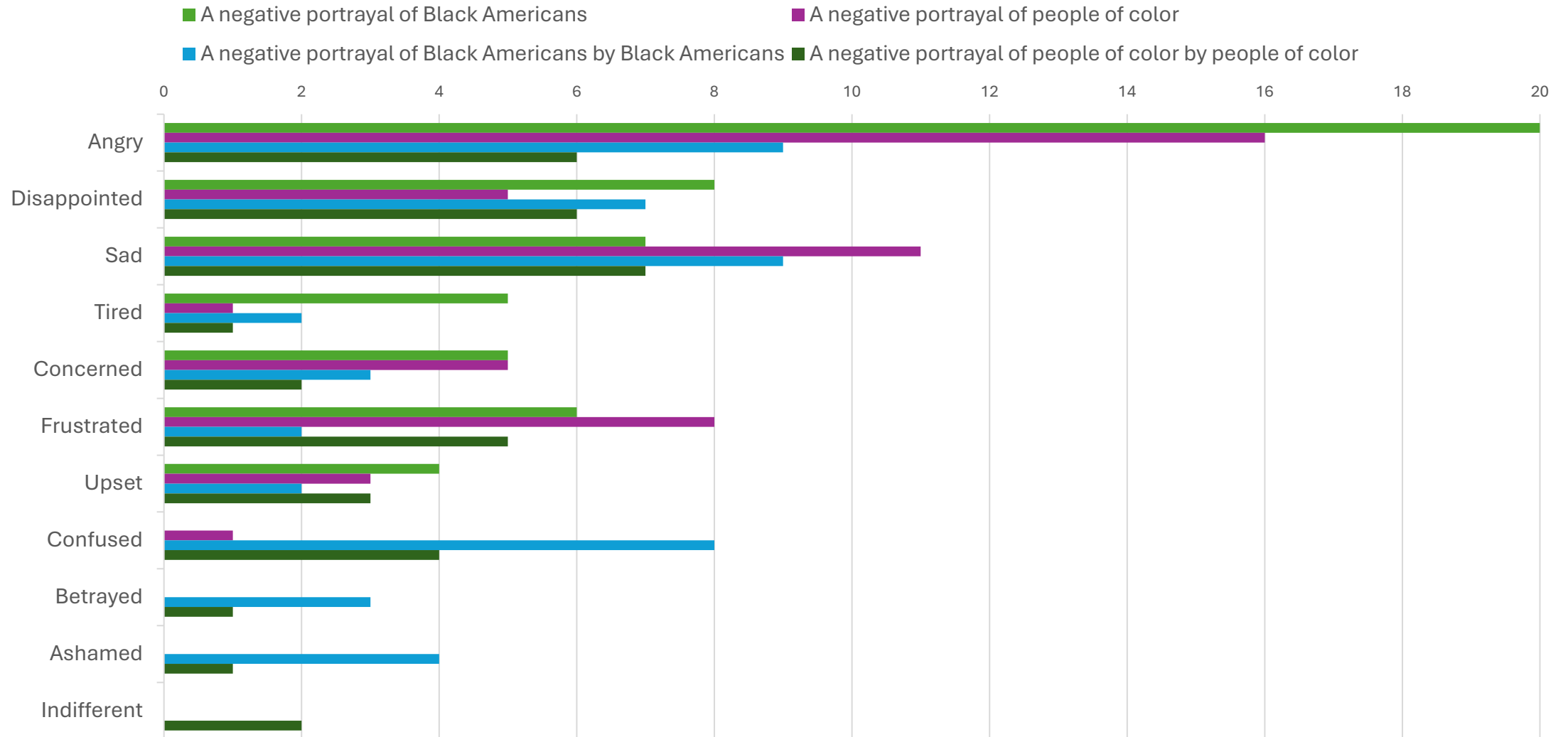


Questions 8-11: Table

When I am exposed to (x), I feel...	A negative portrayal of Black Americans	A negative portrayal of people of color	A negative portrayal of Black Americans by Black Americans	A negative portrayal of people of color by people of color
Angry	20	16	9	6
Disappointed	8	5	7	6
Sad	7	11	9	7
Tired	5	1	2	1
Concerned	5	5	3	2
Frustrated	6	8	2	5
Upset	4	3	2	3
Confused	0	1	8	4
Betrayed	0	0	3	1
Ashamed	0	0	4	1
Indifferent	0	0	0	2

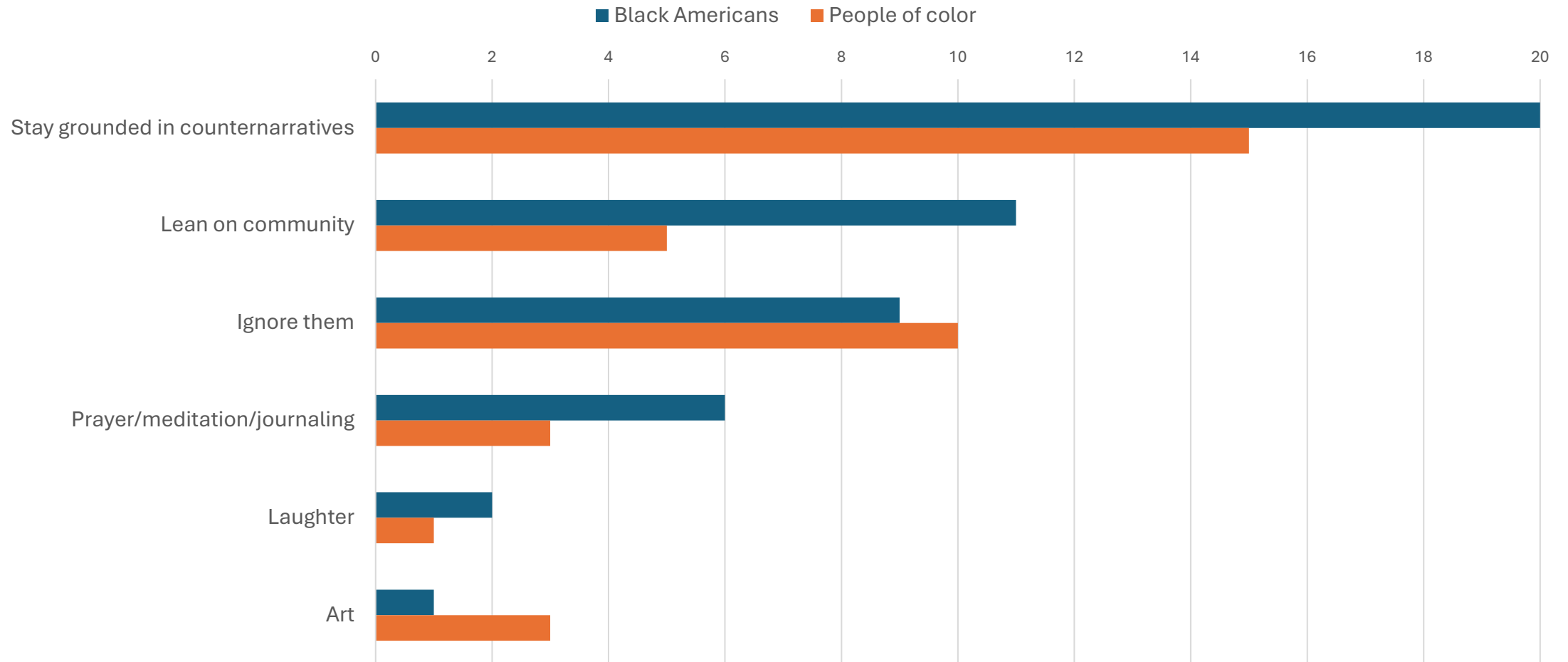
Questions 8-11: Chart

When I am exposed to (x), I feel...



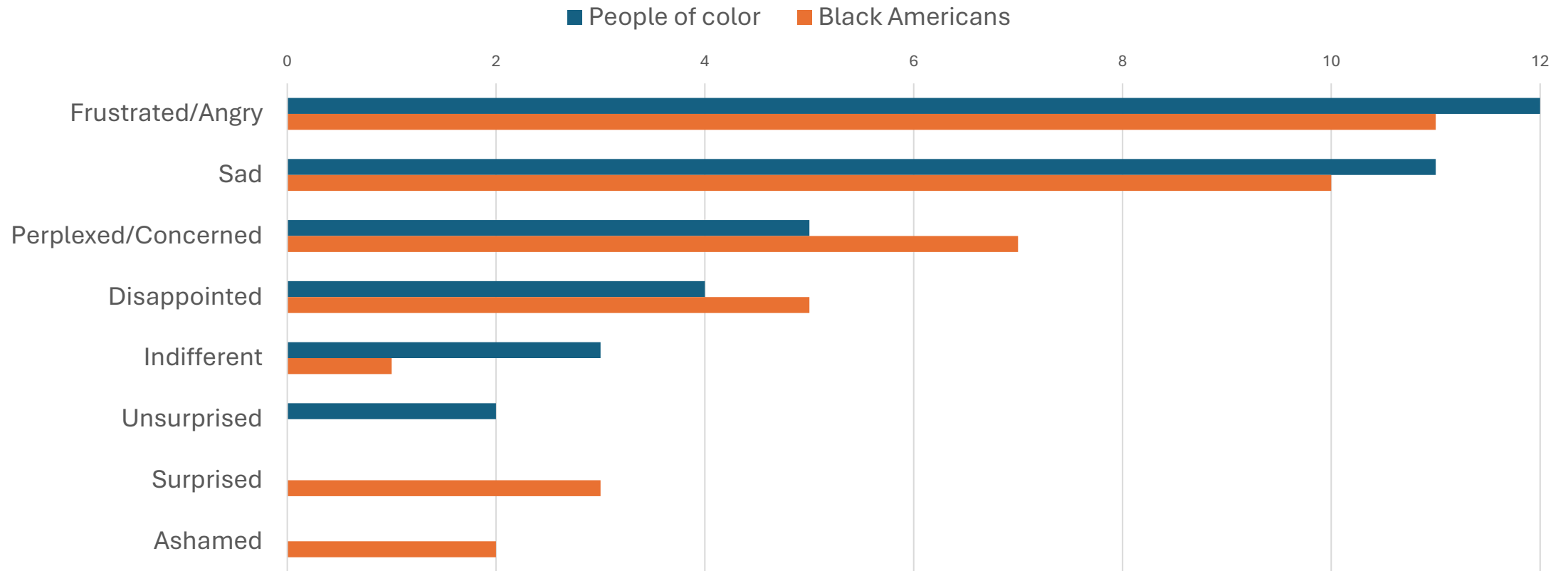
Questions 12-13

How do you cope with feelings provoked by negative portrayals of...



Questions 14-15

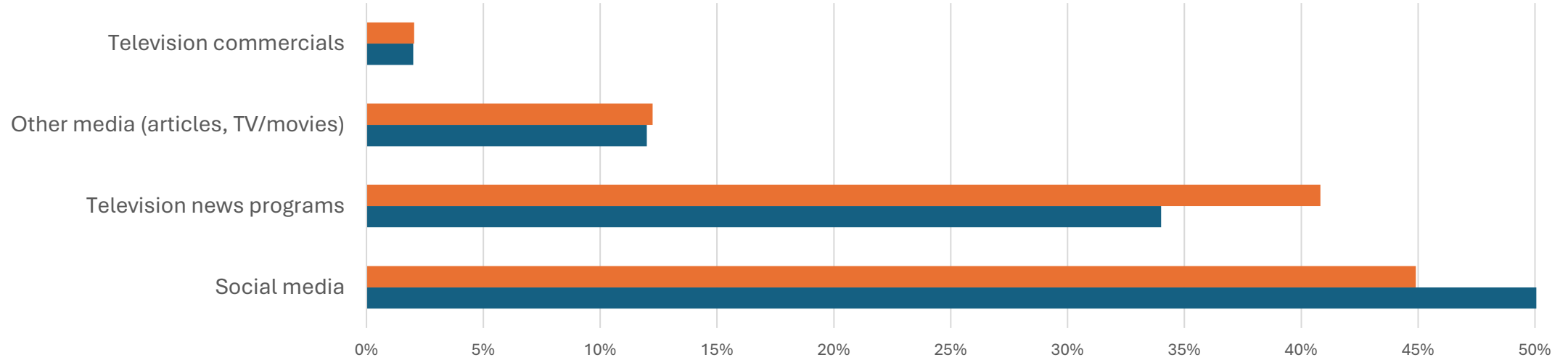
How do you feel when (x) don't seem to understand the painful racial experiences of Black Americans?



Question 16-17

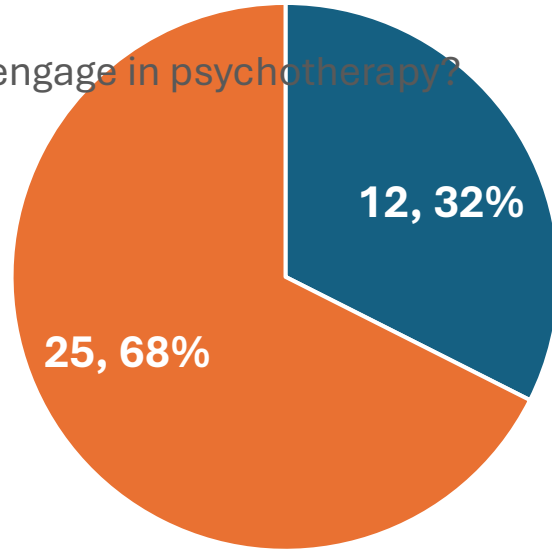
Which medium most exposes you to negative portrayals of...

■ People of Color ■ Black Americans



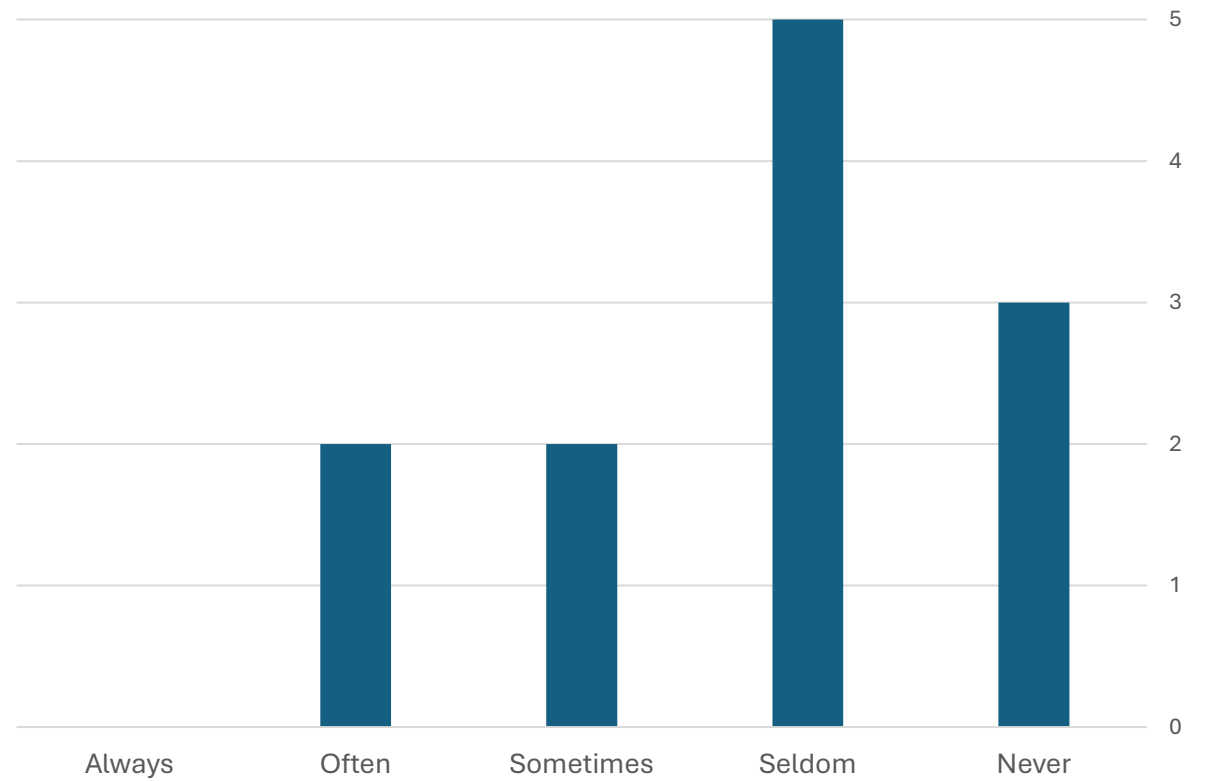
Questions 18-19

Do you engage in psychotherapy?



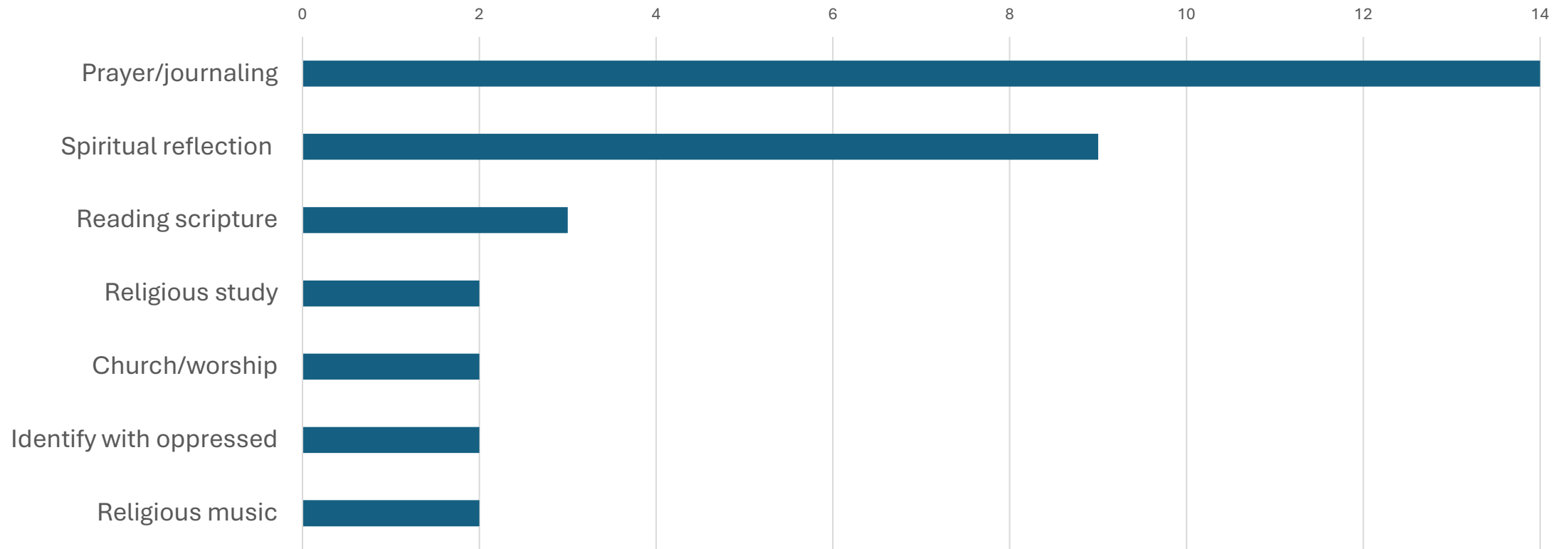
■ Yes ■ No

How frequently do you address in counseling/psychotherapy your feelings provoked by your exposure to negative portrayals of Black Americans?



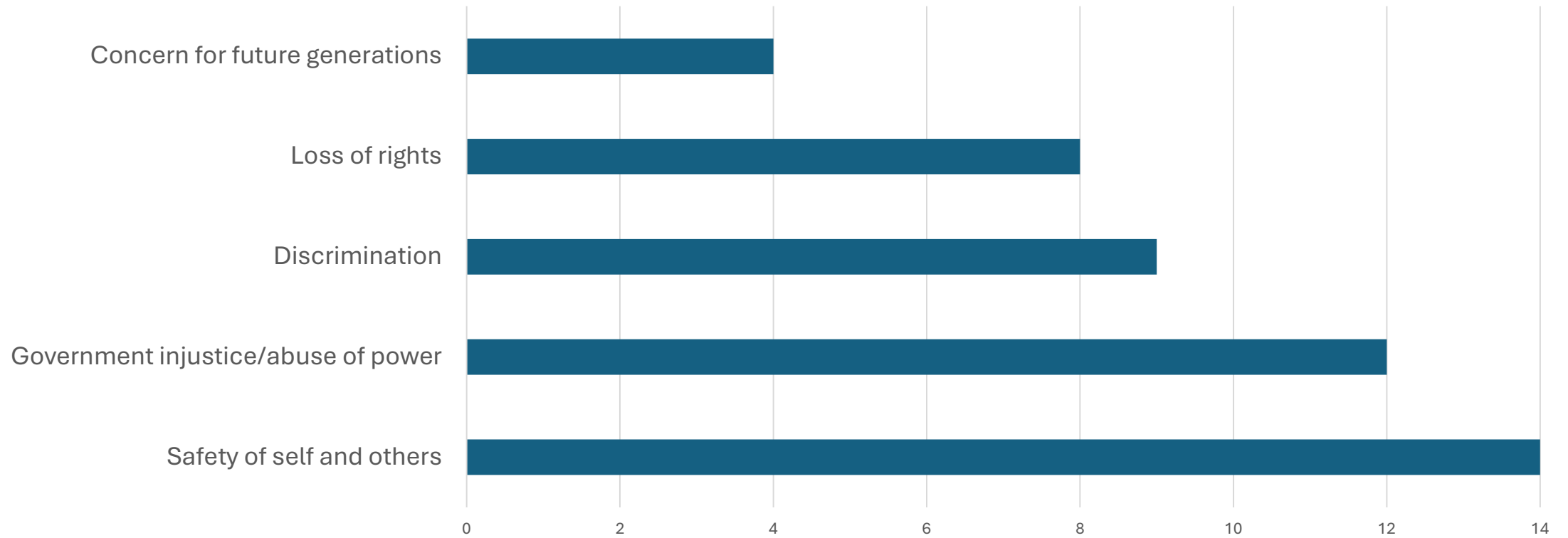
Question 22

Please briefly describe if you have a religious or spiritual way of addressing your feelings provoked by negative portrayals of Black Americans.



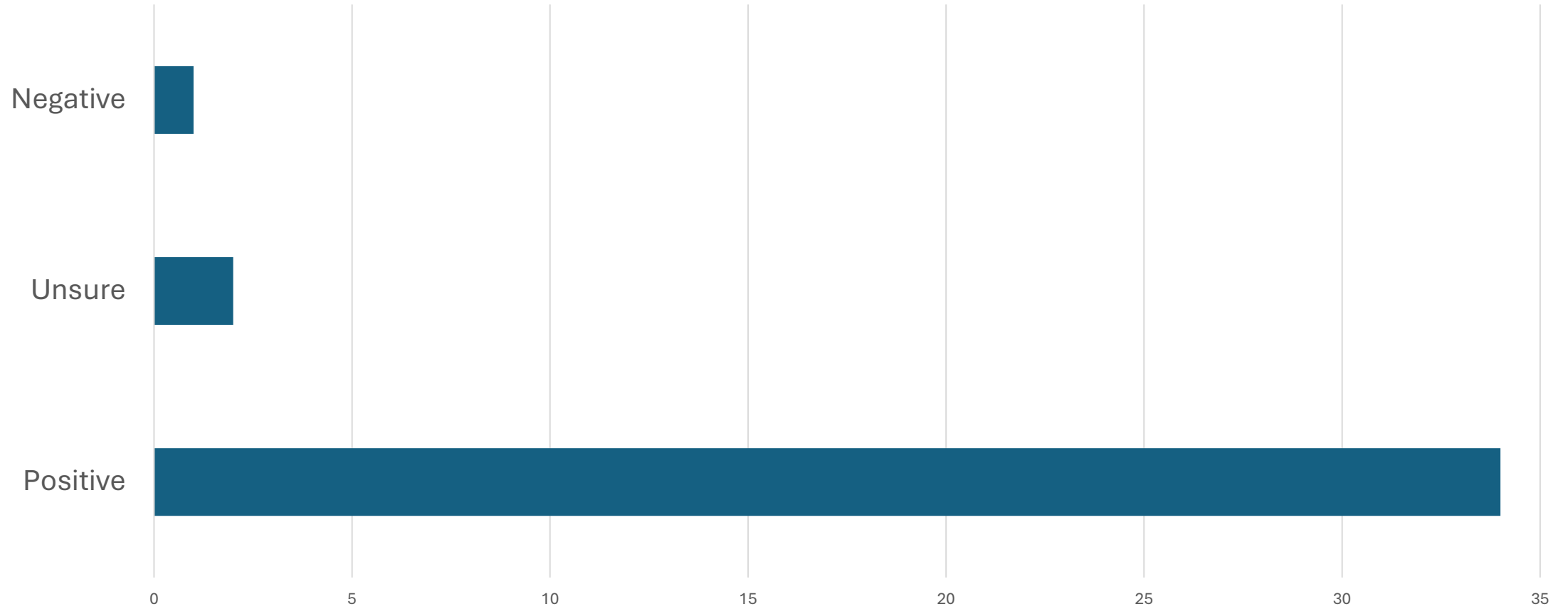
Question 24

What fears do you have, if any, as a Black American/person of color living in the United States?



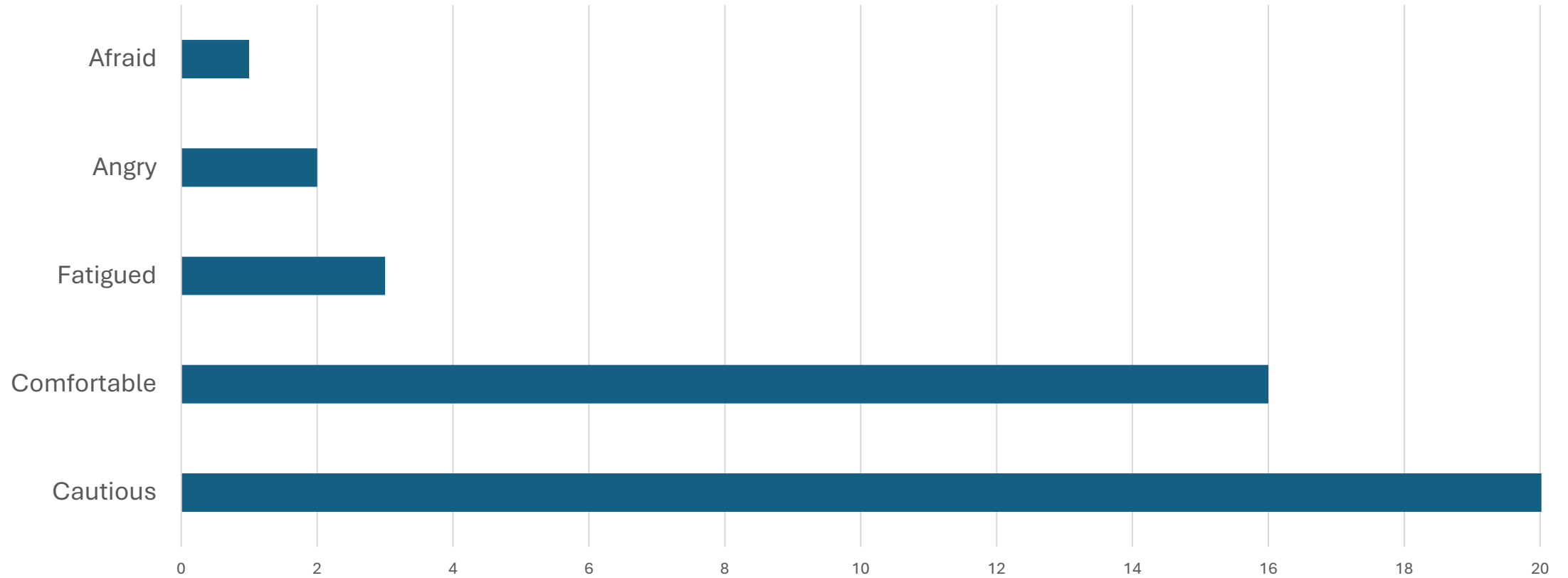
Question 26

In general, how do you feel about yourself?



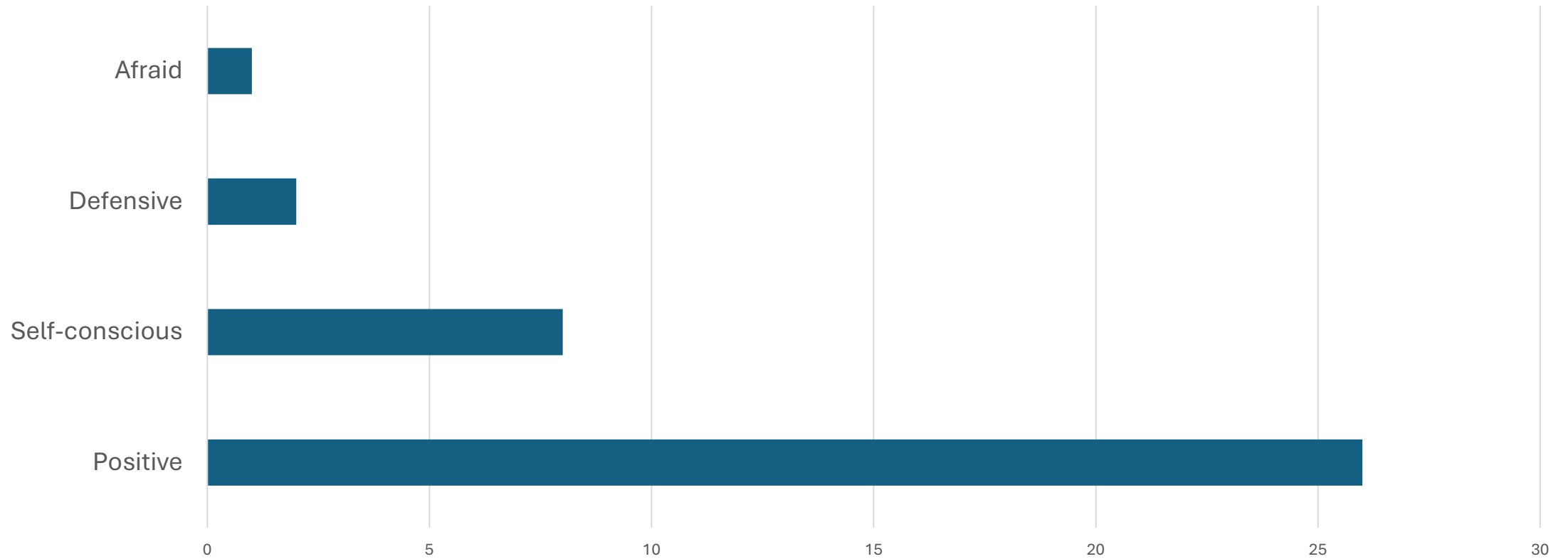
Question 27

In general, how do you feel when you are around white people?



Question 28

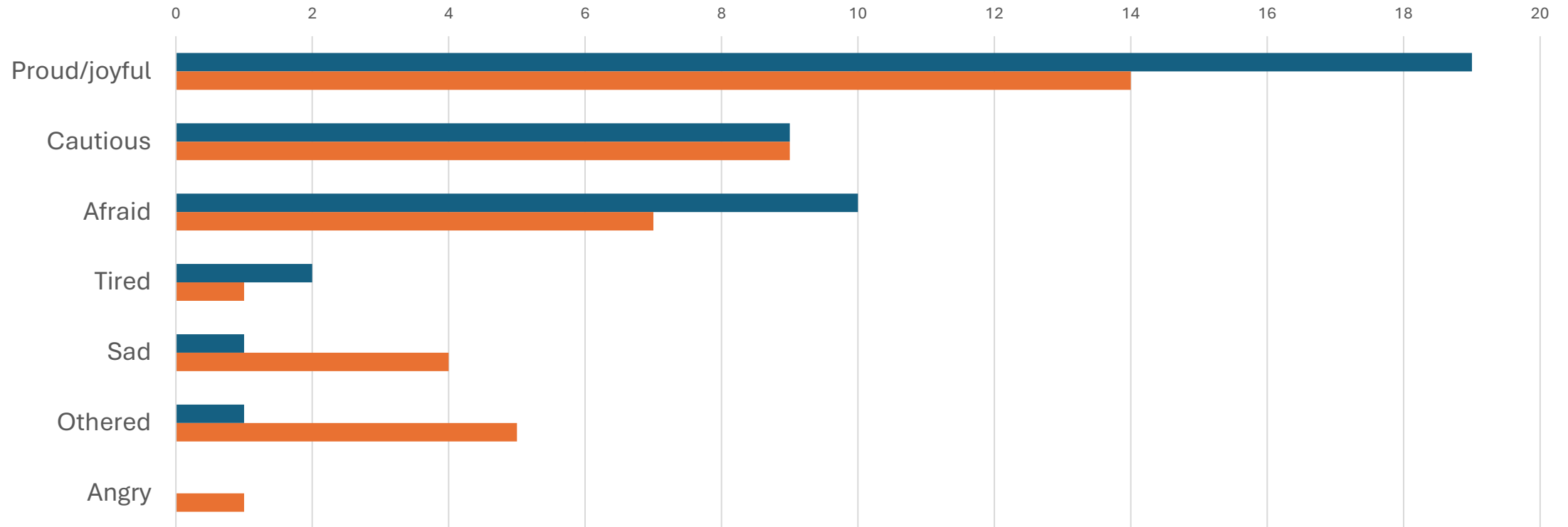
In general, how do you feel about yourself when you are around white people?



Question 29

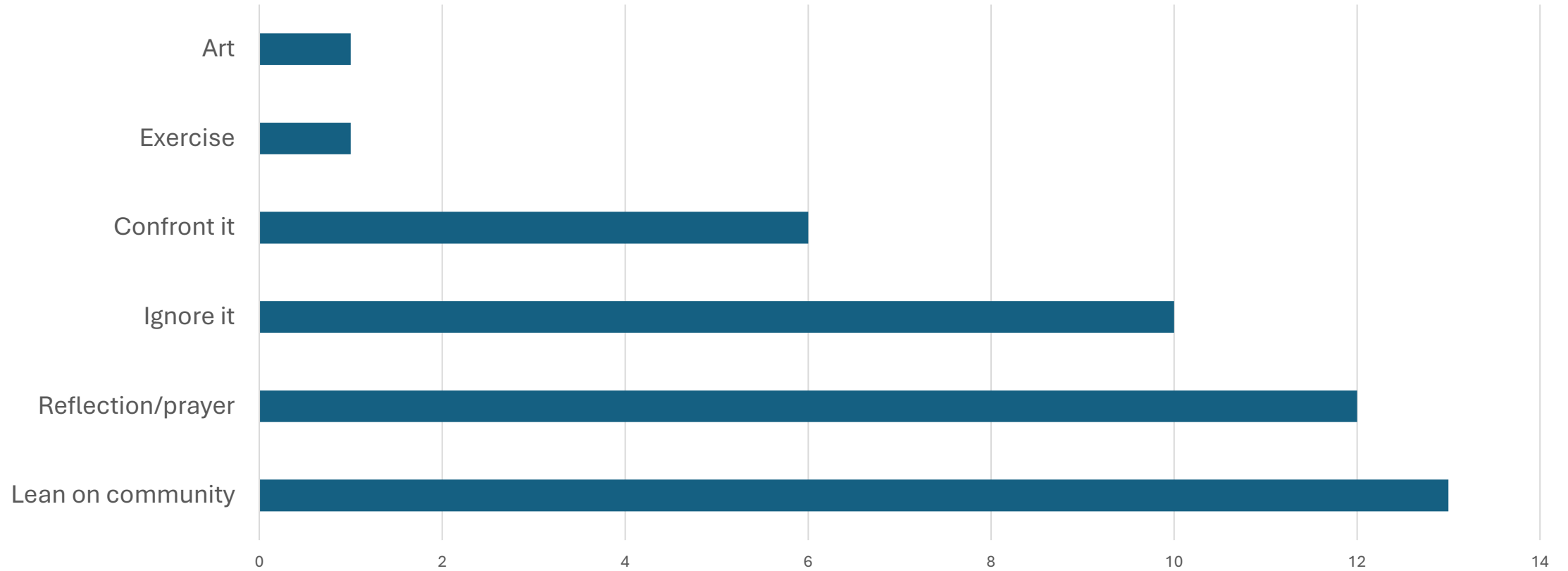
How do you feel about...

■ Being a Black American in the US ■ Being a person of color in the US



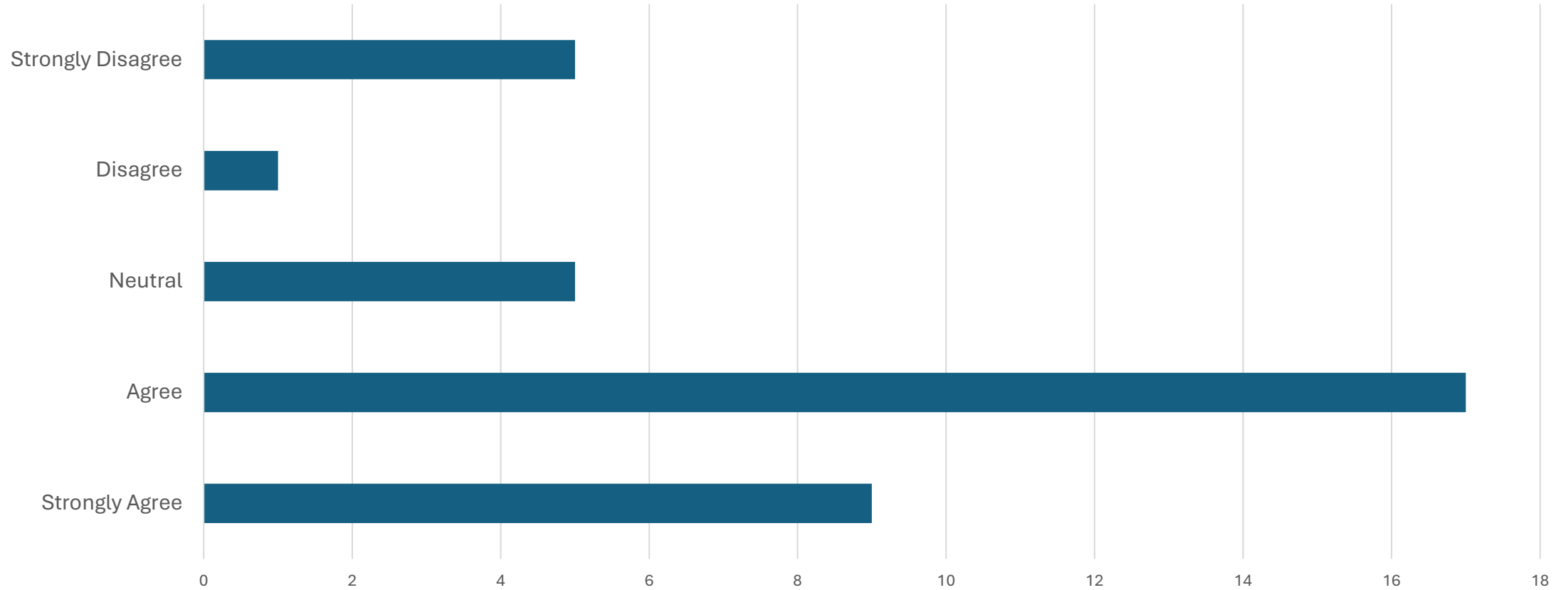
Question 31

Generally, how do you deal/cope with your personal experience of racism?



Question 32

Please indicate to what extent you, as an African American or person of color living in the United States, agree that you have hope as described by your capacity, imagination, belief and means by which to achieve a goal



Question 33

Given your opinion of how images of African Americans or people of color are portrayed, please briefly describe what gives you and sustains your hope.

