

The Opportunity Survey

Understanding the Roots of
Attitudes on Inequality



The **Opportunity** Agenda

Moving Hearts, Minds, and Policy for Lasting Change

Introduction

Opportunity is a deeply held value at the core of the American ethos. The belief that our nation can and should be a place where everyone has a fair chance to achieve his or her full potential is widely shared. But many believe the ideal of opportunity is in jeopardy and are willing to take steps to defend it.

In 2014, The Opportunity Agenda commissioned a groundbreaking nationwide survey to examine what the U.S. public thinks about opportunity in America and to measure public support for policies that expand opportunity across a range of issues, including jobs, education, criminal justice reform, immigration, and housing. Additionally, the research sought to gain a deeper understanding of the multiple factors that influence attitudes on inequality, contribute to an individual's worldview, and predict people's willingness to take action on issues they care about. Together, the survey's findings offer critical insights for social justice leaders and organizations seeking to move hearts, minds, and policy.

Methodology

Administered by Langer Research Associates, the Opportunity Survey was conducted between February 4 and March 10, 2014, among a random national sample of 2,055 respondents. The survey oversampled very low-income adults (those living below 50 percent of the federal poverty line), African American men, and Asian Americans—groups whose voices are frequently overlooked in opinion polling. And it includes a special analysis of the views of the rising American electorate—millennials, people of color, and unmarried women—who have increasingly greater sway in elections. Respondents whose first language is Spanish had the option to take the survey in that language. The research also includes a cluster analysis that identifies the demographic characteristics, personal experience, values, and core beliefs that predict support for social justice policies and motivate people to action.

Findings

- The survey's findings paint a rich picture of a nation yearning for greater opportunity and increasingly interested in fundamental social change toward that end. Findings include:



- A whopping nine in 10 Americans see discrimination against one or more groups as a serious problem, and over 60 percent believe inequality of opportunity is unacceptable.
- A majority of Americans now have direct experience with discrimination; six in 10 say that they have personally experienced unequal treatment based on race, ethnicity, economic status, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or accent.
- Those who have experienced discrimination are more likely to view inequitable treatment as a serious problem in our country and are more willing to take action to improve opportunities for various groups.
- The vast majority of Americans are open to major change. Seventy-one percent believe that trying new ways of doing things, rather than maintaining tradition, is more important.

Inside you'll find:

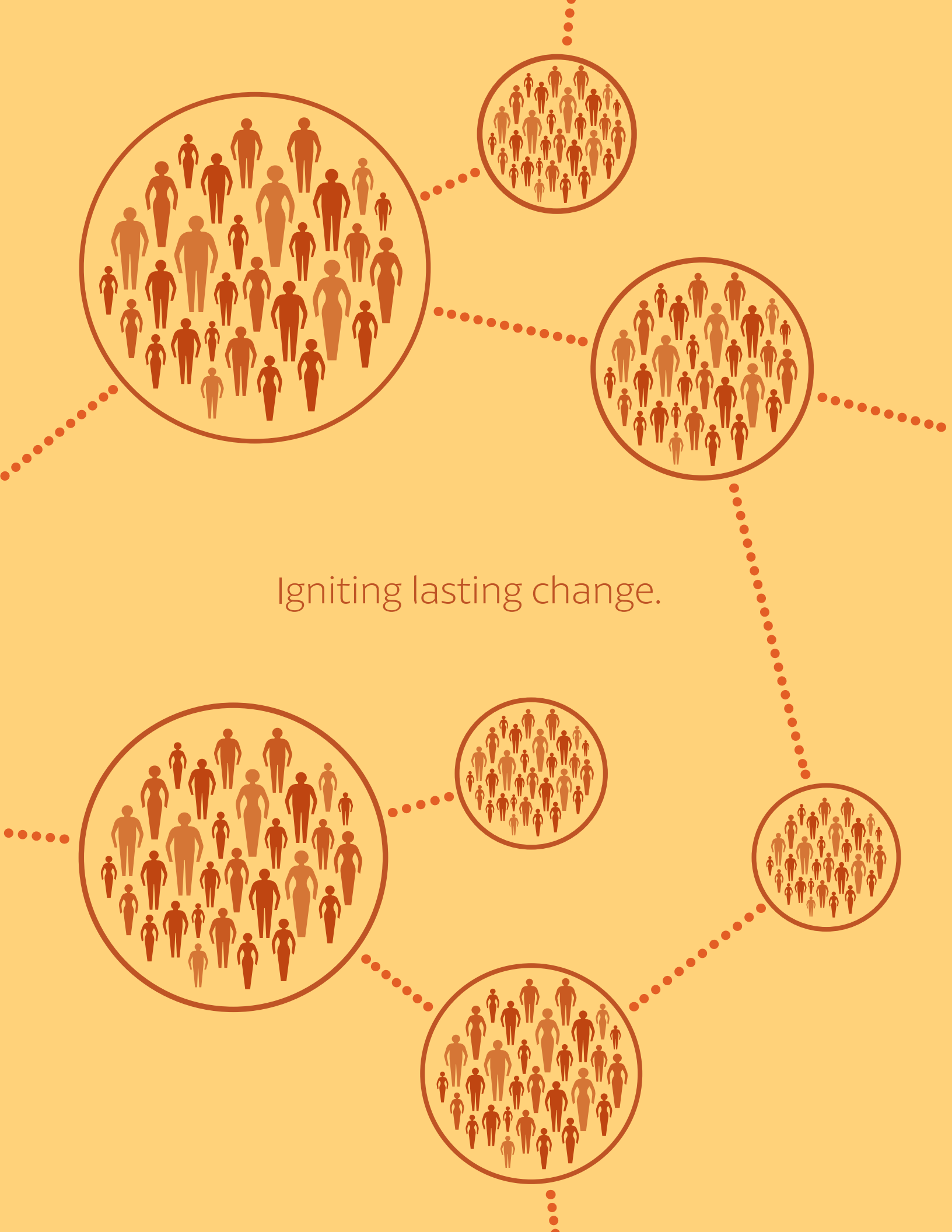
- Profiles of those most likely to be activated
- Details about how support for social justice issues is related to attitudes, personal experiences, and values
- Insight into views on poverty, housing, criminal justice, immigration, public institutions, and more

- There is a robust pattern of cross-issue support for opportunity-expanding solutions, indicating the potential for broad coalitions and voting blocs that transcend specific policy debates.
- Particular life experiences and values predict willingness to take action on behalf of groups or on specific issues. These include frequency of contact with members of other groups, the perceived seriousness of unequal treatment, a sense of personal and group efficacy, and personal experience of unfair treatment based on group identity.

Implications

Every couple of generations, national values, demographic change, attitudes, and experiences converge to create the potential for transformative social change. Taken together, this survey's findings indicate a profound public openness to addressing the challenges that perpetuate inequality.

In an era of increasing social activism on issues ranging from fair wages to racial profiling to immigration to LGBT equality, the Opportunity Survey offers critical information and analysis to those pursuing social justice across our nation. Its findings offer new insights for engaging vast new audiences while activating the base of existing supporters.



Igniting lasting change.