

Are “White People” Morally Deviant?

Research Report: PADS-004 | May 30, 2023

Research Question

For decades in the US, and particularly in the last few years, journalists and intellectuals have suggested that “white people” are socially or morally deviant. Time magazine, for example, published the claim that white supremacy is the “foundational principle” of culture in the U.S., preventing non-whites from having “perfect hair, perfect clothes, perfect grades...[or regarded as a] perfect employee and colleague.” In 2020, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture claimed “rational thinking” and “hard work” are white supremacist ideals that oppress non-whites. In a recent opinion editorial, Savala Nolan, the Executive Director of the Center for Social Justice at UC Berkeley School of Law, said “white people...disappoint me. They frustrate me. They make me sad.” Meanwhile, books describing the immorality of white people, such as *Caste*, *How to be an Anti-Racist*, and *White Fragility* have all soared to the top of the New York Times Bestseller List. Given these strong opinions, in this report we ask: what does the public really think about the (apparent) immorality of white people?

Methodology

Data Source

- Political Accuracy and Divisions Study (“PADS,” collected August 2022 - October 2022)

Data Quality Control

- All participants in this dataset passed attention, response time, fraud, duplication, and bot checks.

Participants

- 3014 adults in the United States (51.2% Female)
- Average Age = 44.39 years (SD = 17.41 years)
- 46.4% White; 32.2% Hispanic; 21.2% Black

Measures

- Views on White Immorality: Respondents were asked their degree of agreement (or disagreement) with the following statements:
 - Prior to the arrival of the European settlers, Native American/Indigenous tribes lived in peace and harmony.
 - Racial minorities in the US have no hope for success because of racism.
 - White people have more to be ashamed of than other racial groups.

Summary of Findings

- About 6 in 10 Americans believe (at least somewhat) that Native Americans lived in peace and harmony until Europeans arrived. Survey participants identifying as Black, those identifying as “very liberal,” those with some college education, and those under the age of 25 (“GenZ”) were most likely to agree (see Figs. 1-4).
- About 4 in 10 Americans believe (at least somewhat) that racial minorities in the U.S. have no hope for success because of racism. Survey participants identifying as “very liberal,” those identifying as Black, those with a high school diploma and those under the age of 25 (“GenZ”) were most likely to agree (see Figs. 5-8).
- About a third of Americans believe (at least somewhat) that white people have more to be ashamed of than other racial groups. Survey participants identifying as Black, those identifying as “very liberal,” those with some college education, and those under the age of 25 (“GenZ”) were most likely to agree (see Figs. 9-12).

Take-Home Messages

- In our sample of the public, we found a substantial amount of agreement that “white people” are less moral and more shameful than other racial categories. However, pluralities within each category only “slightly agreed” with each statement.
- It is important to keep in mind that peoples’ attitudes may reflect social pressures and not their genuine beliefs. Attitudes often serve as signals to others, for purposes of social approval/status.
- Have an interpretation of these data? Share it here: research@skeptic.com

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Figure 1

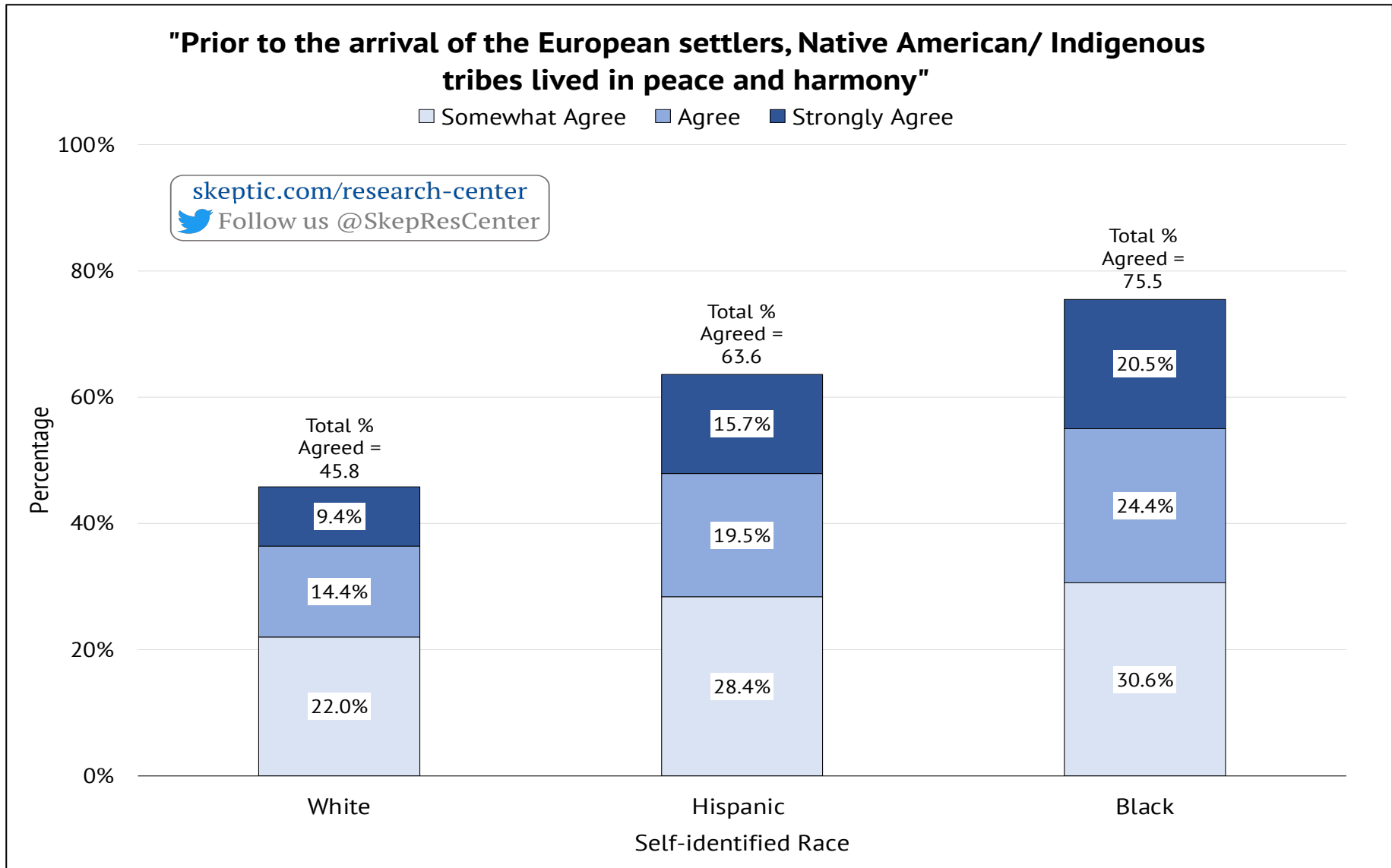


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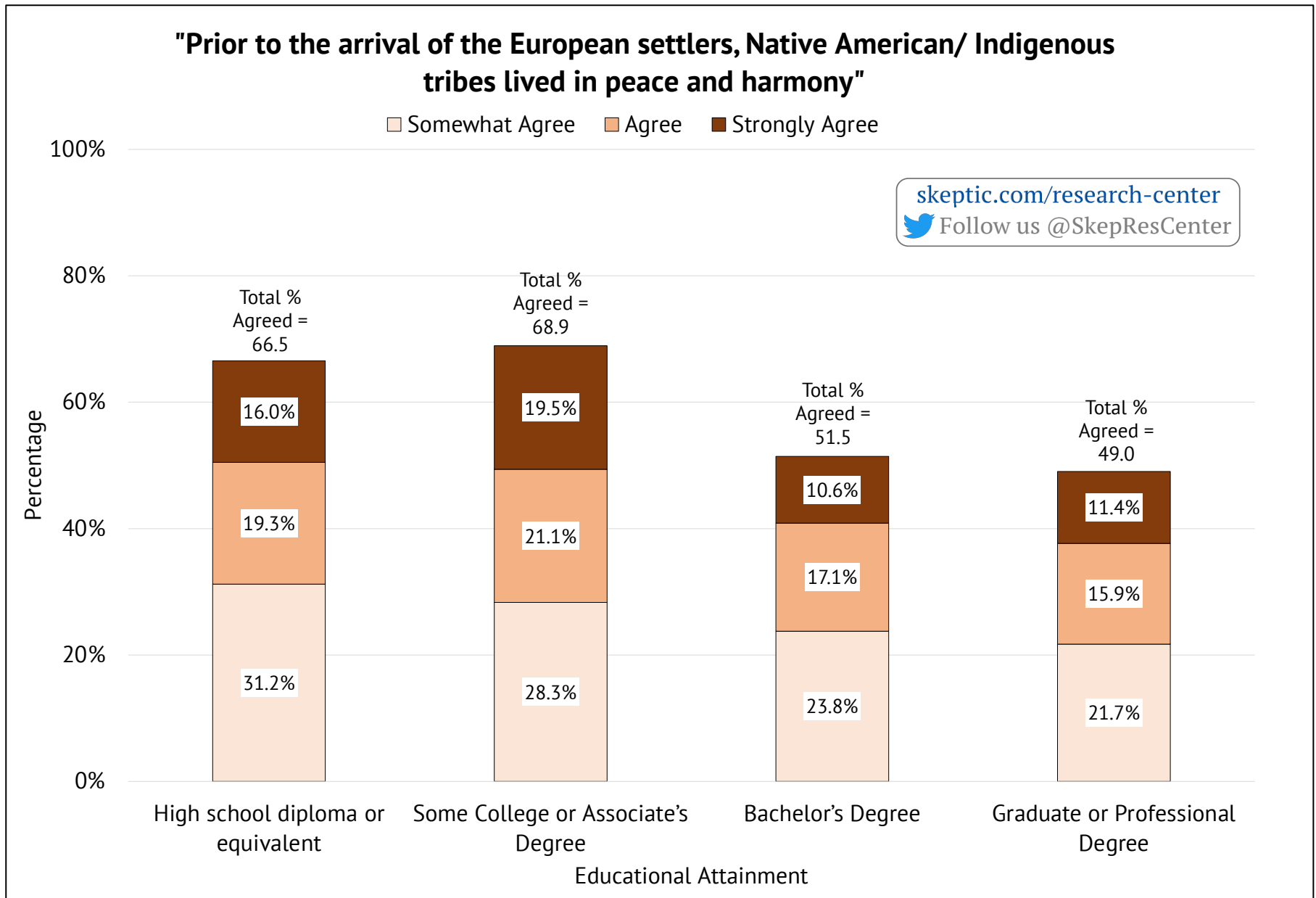


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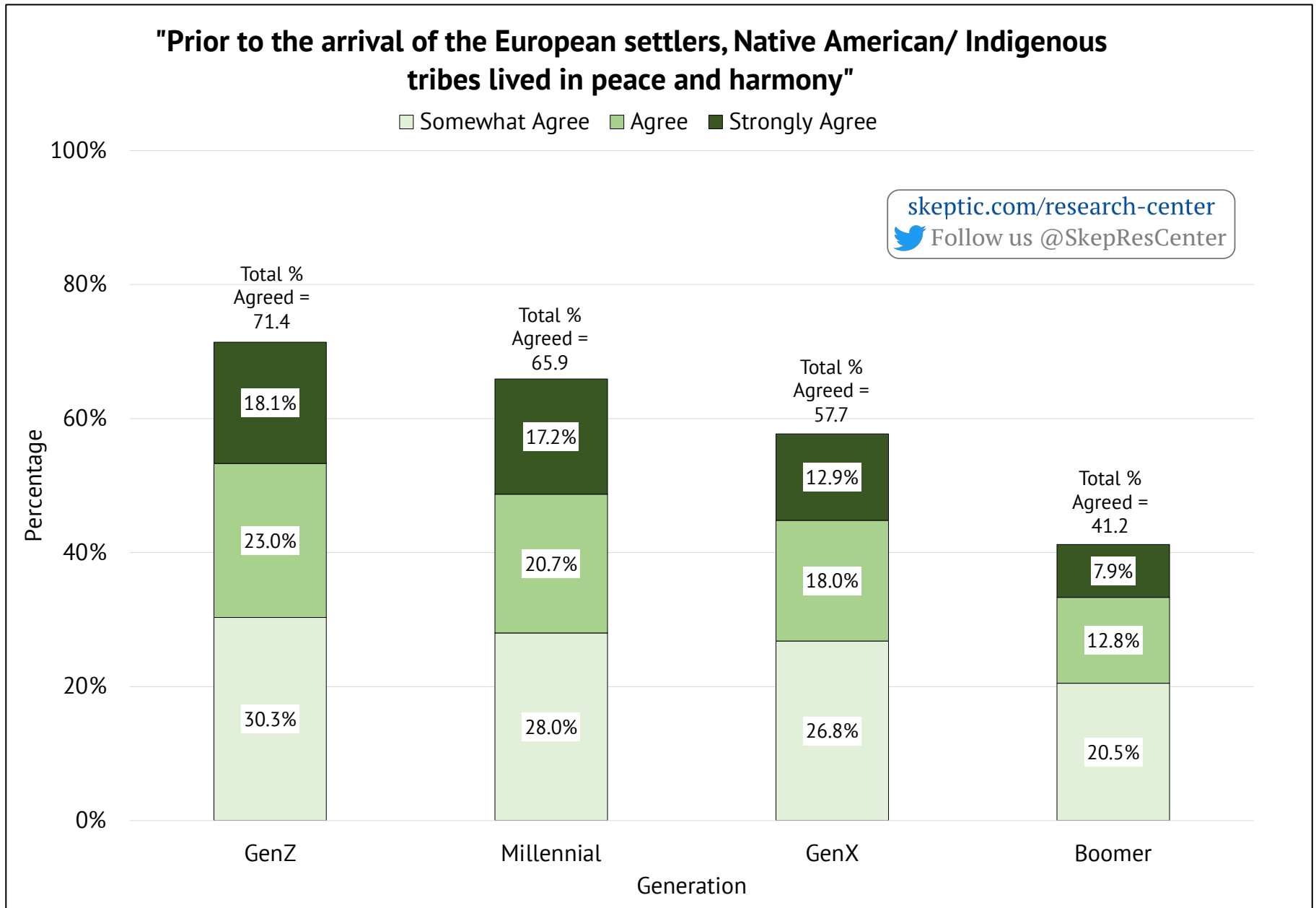


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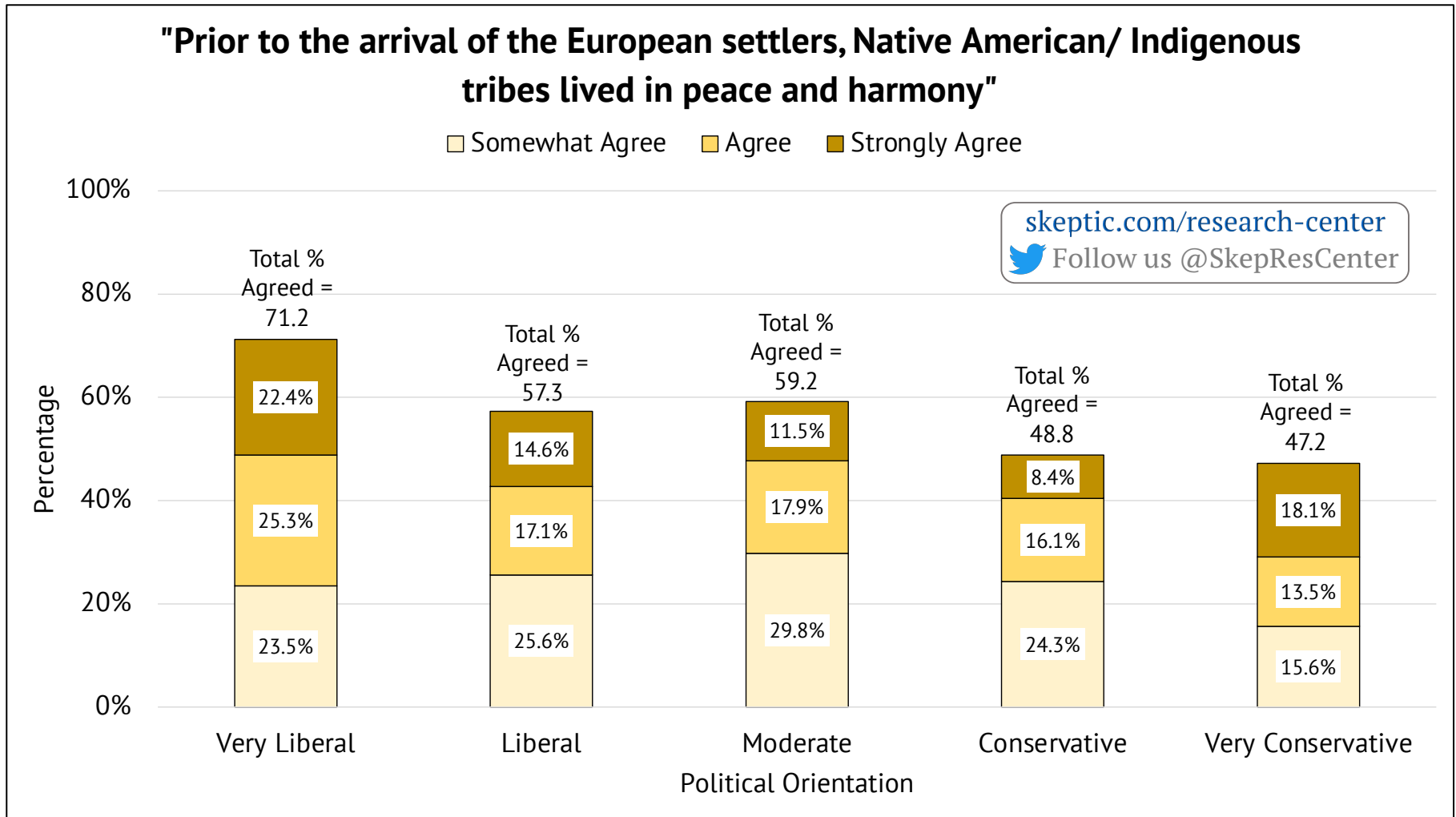


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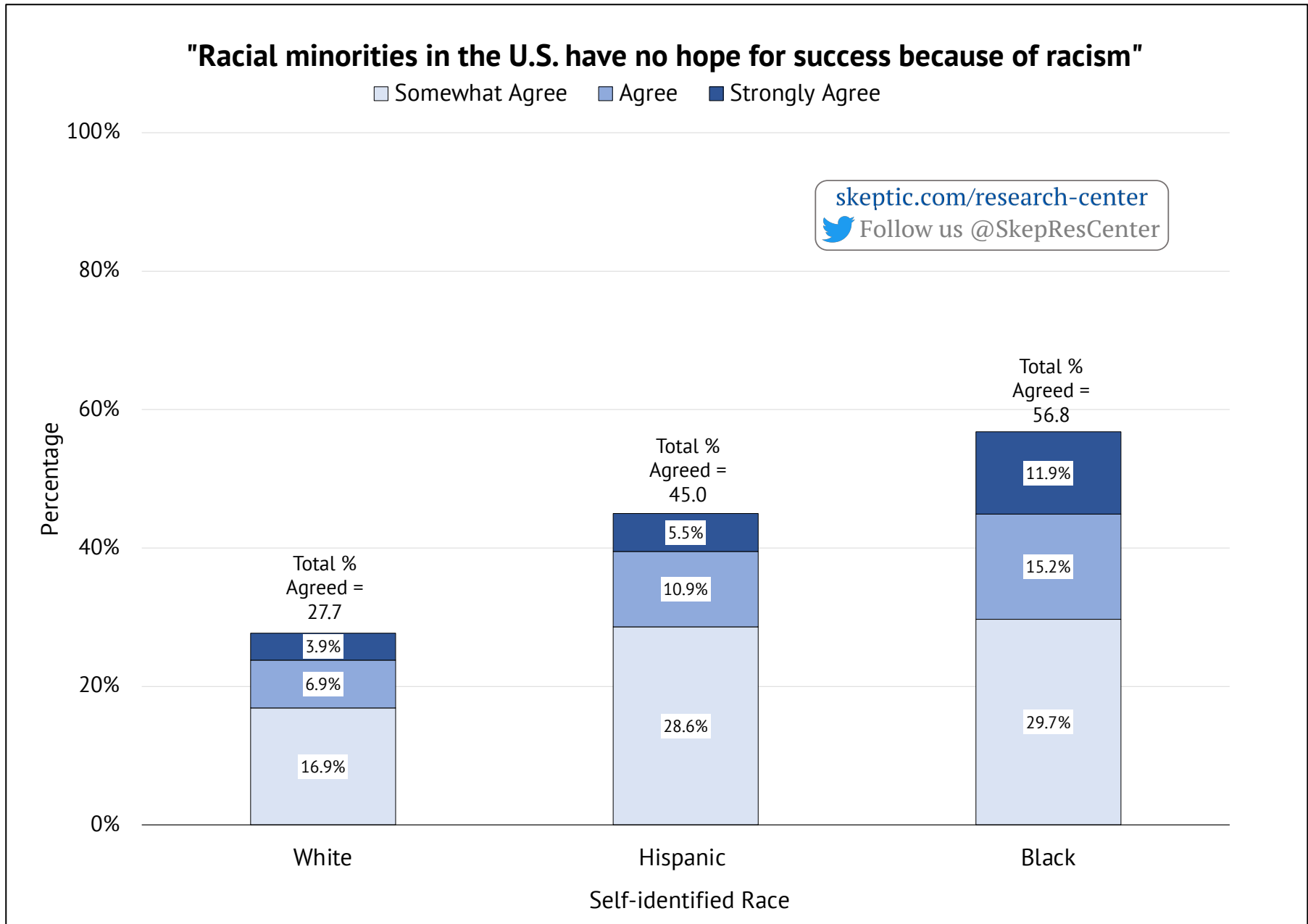


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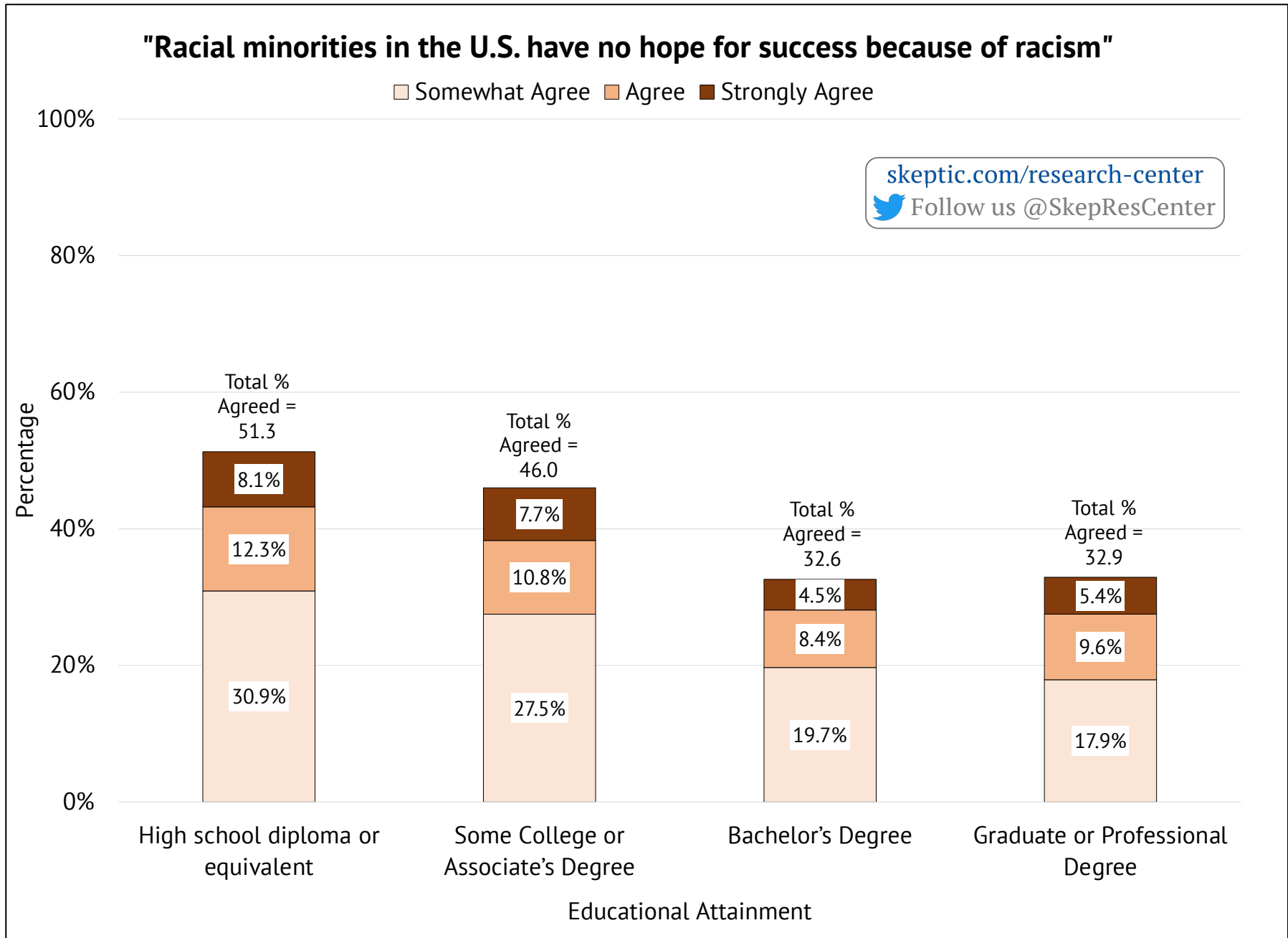


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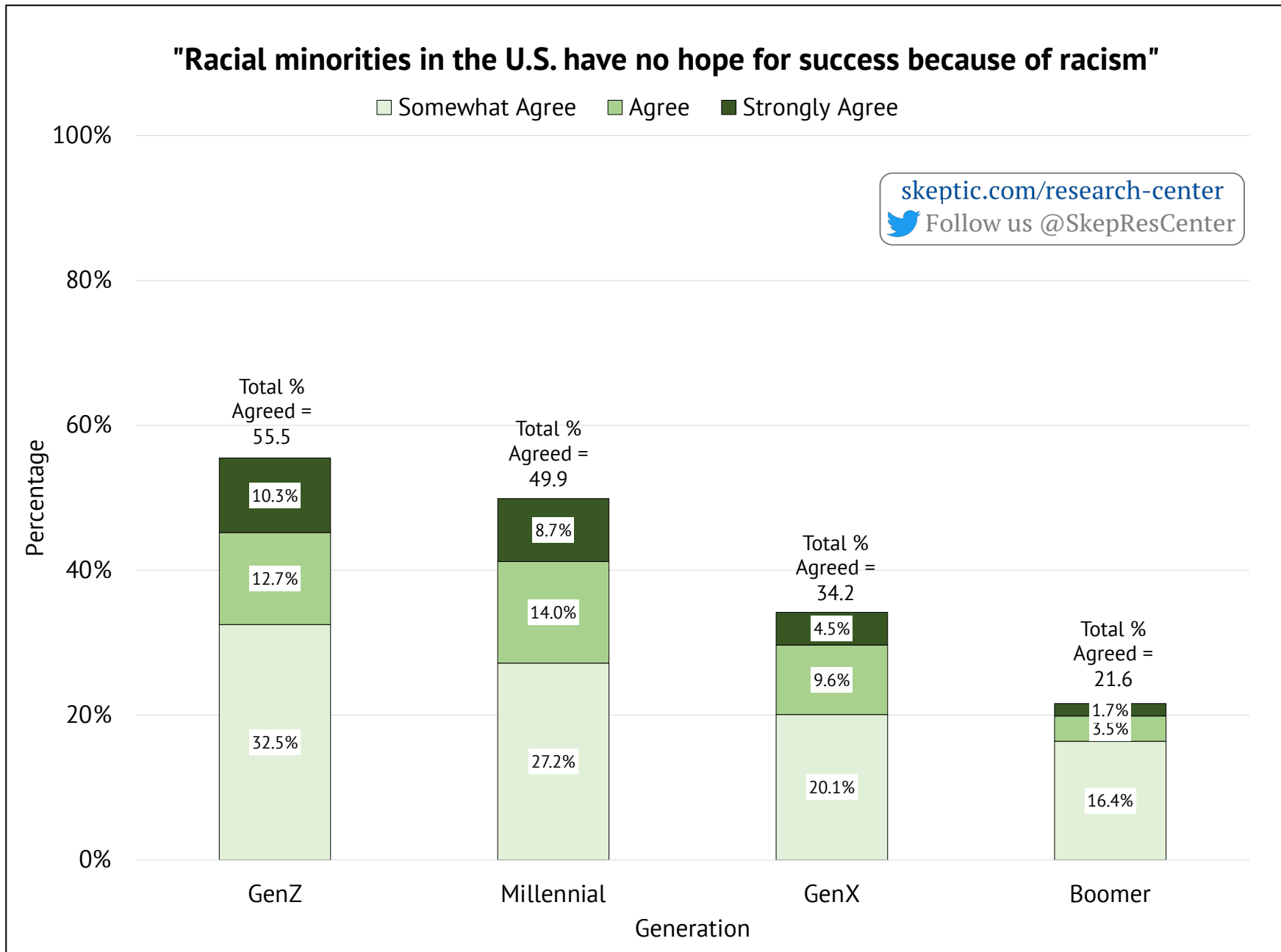


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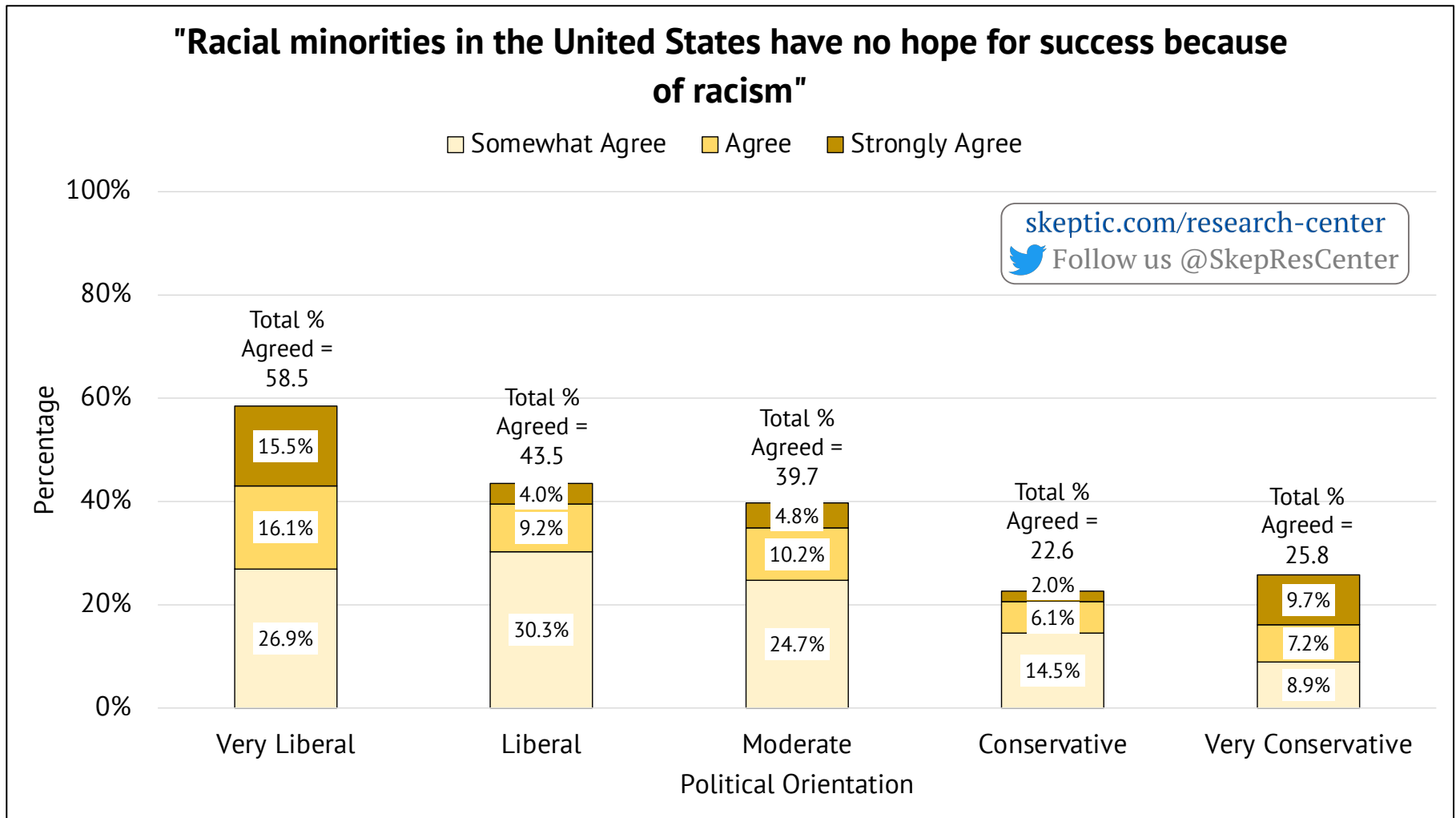


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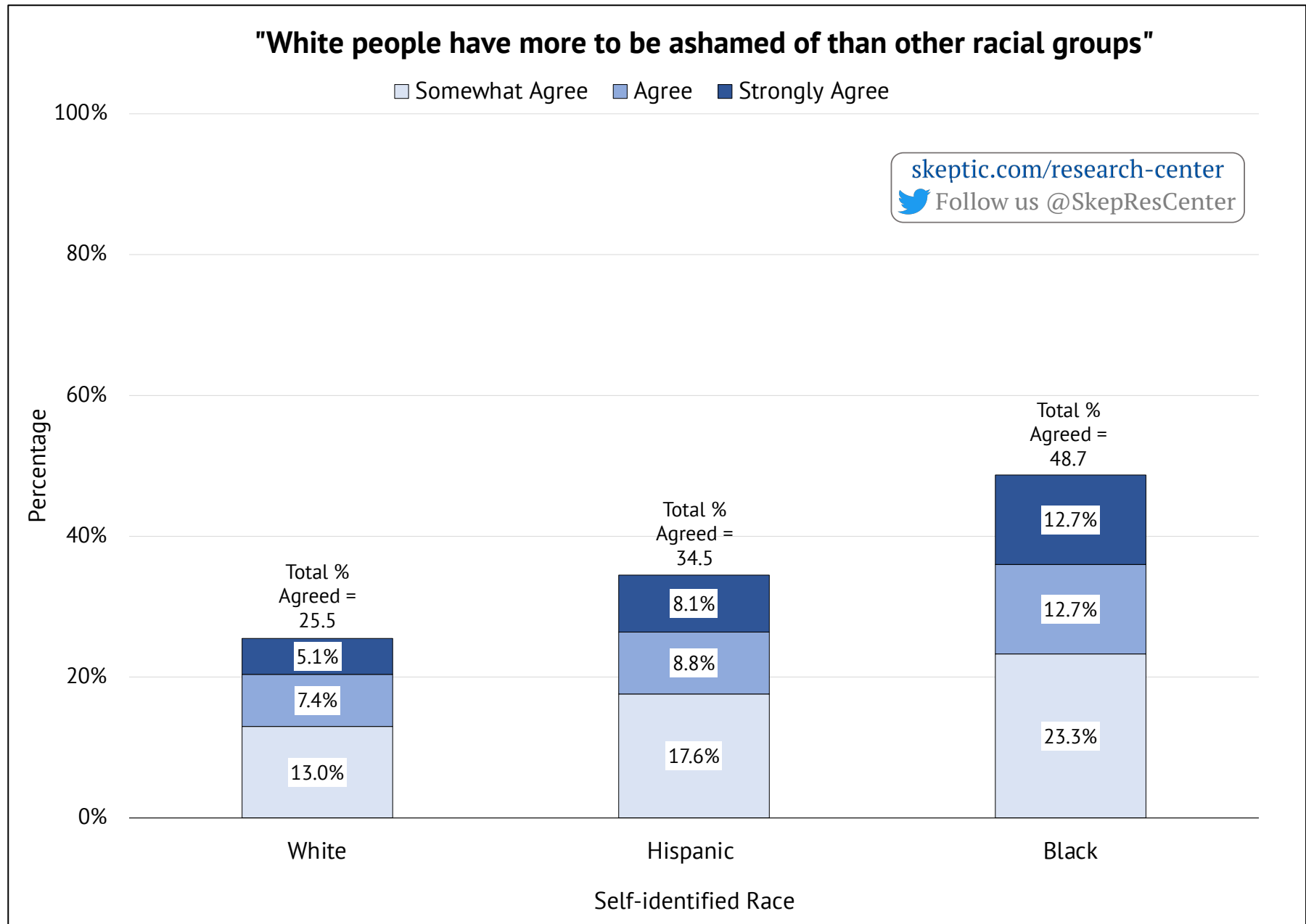


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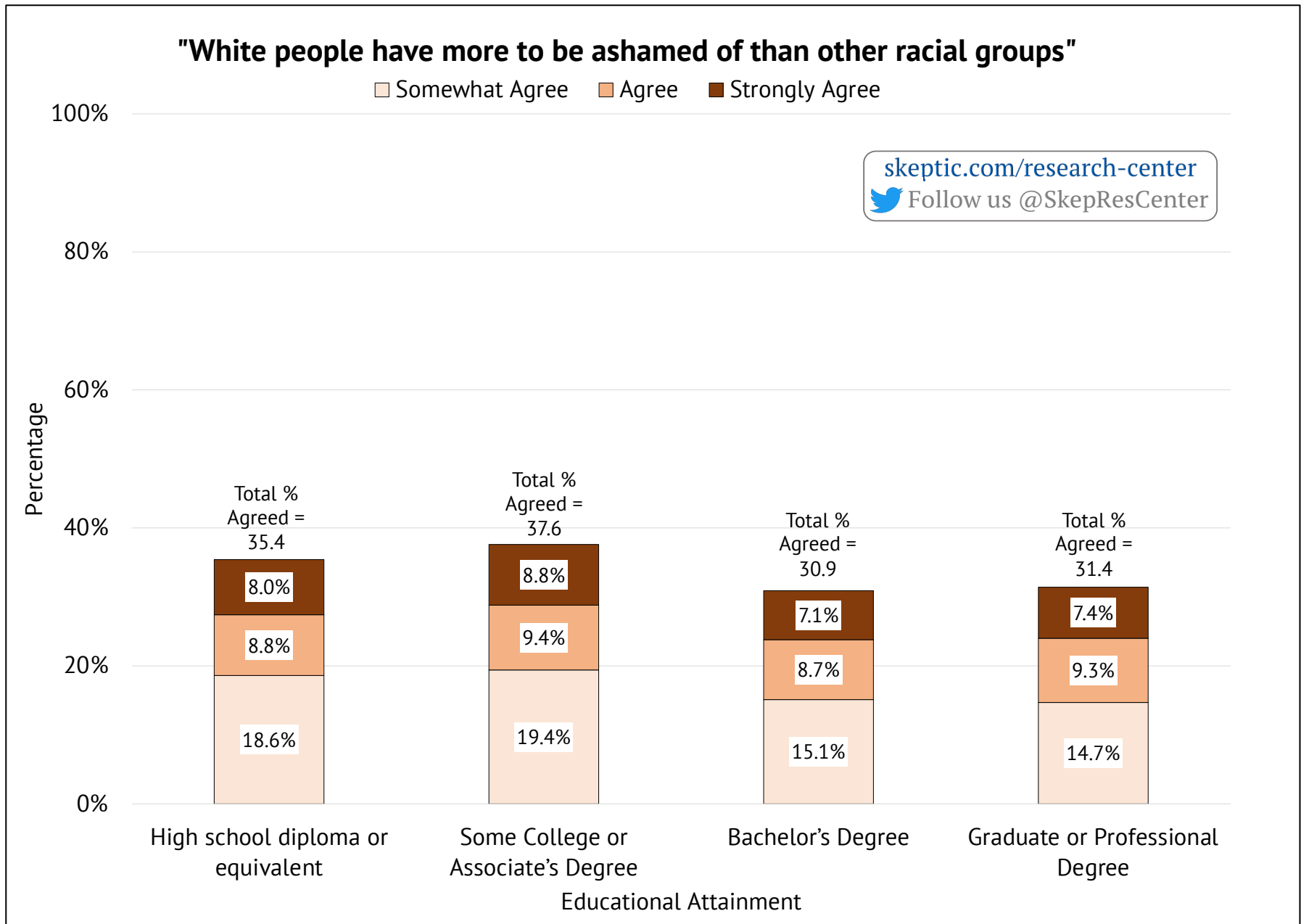


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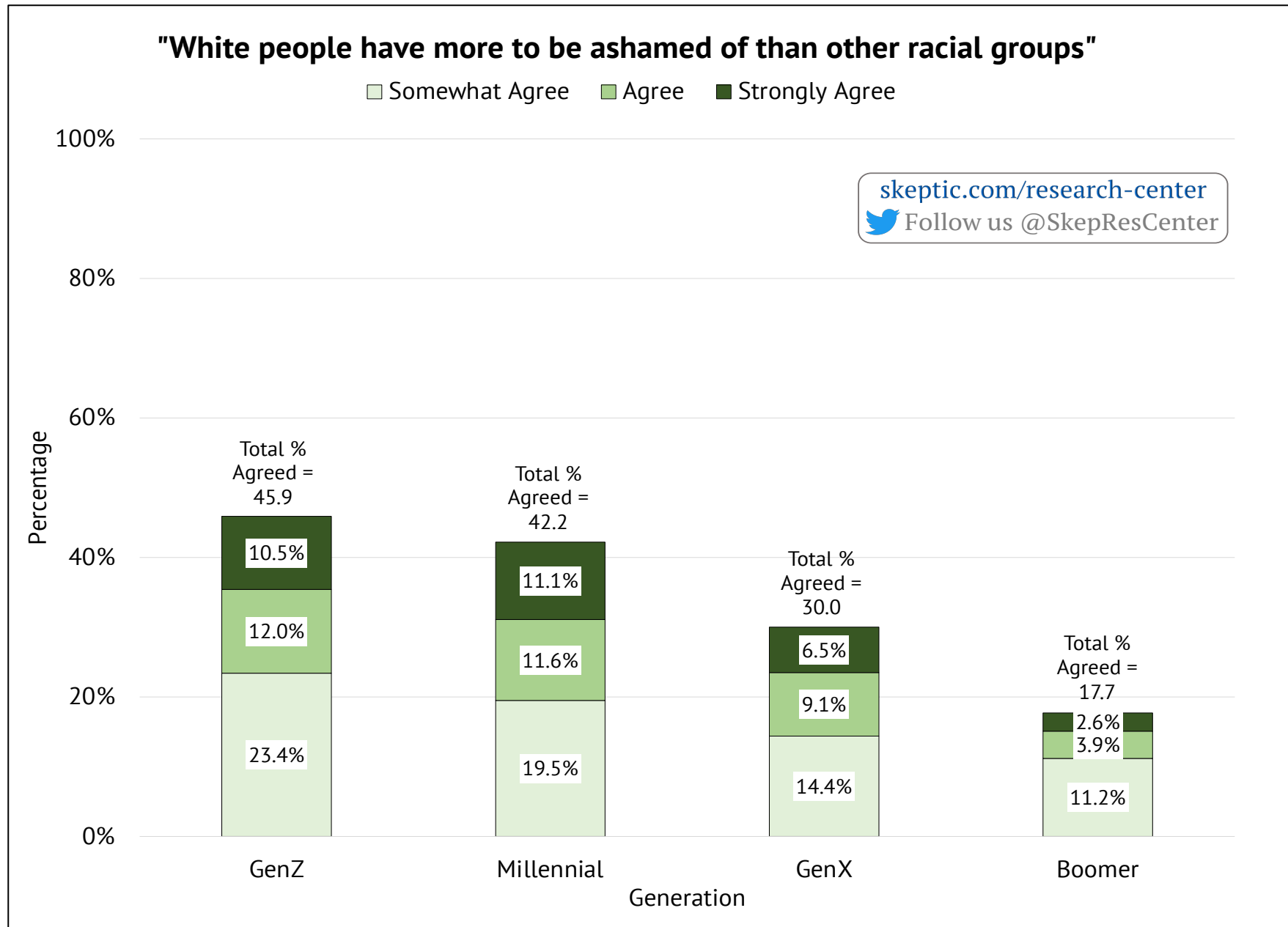
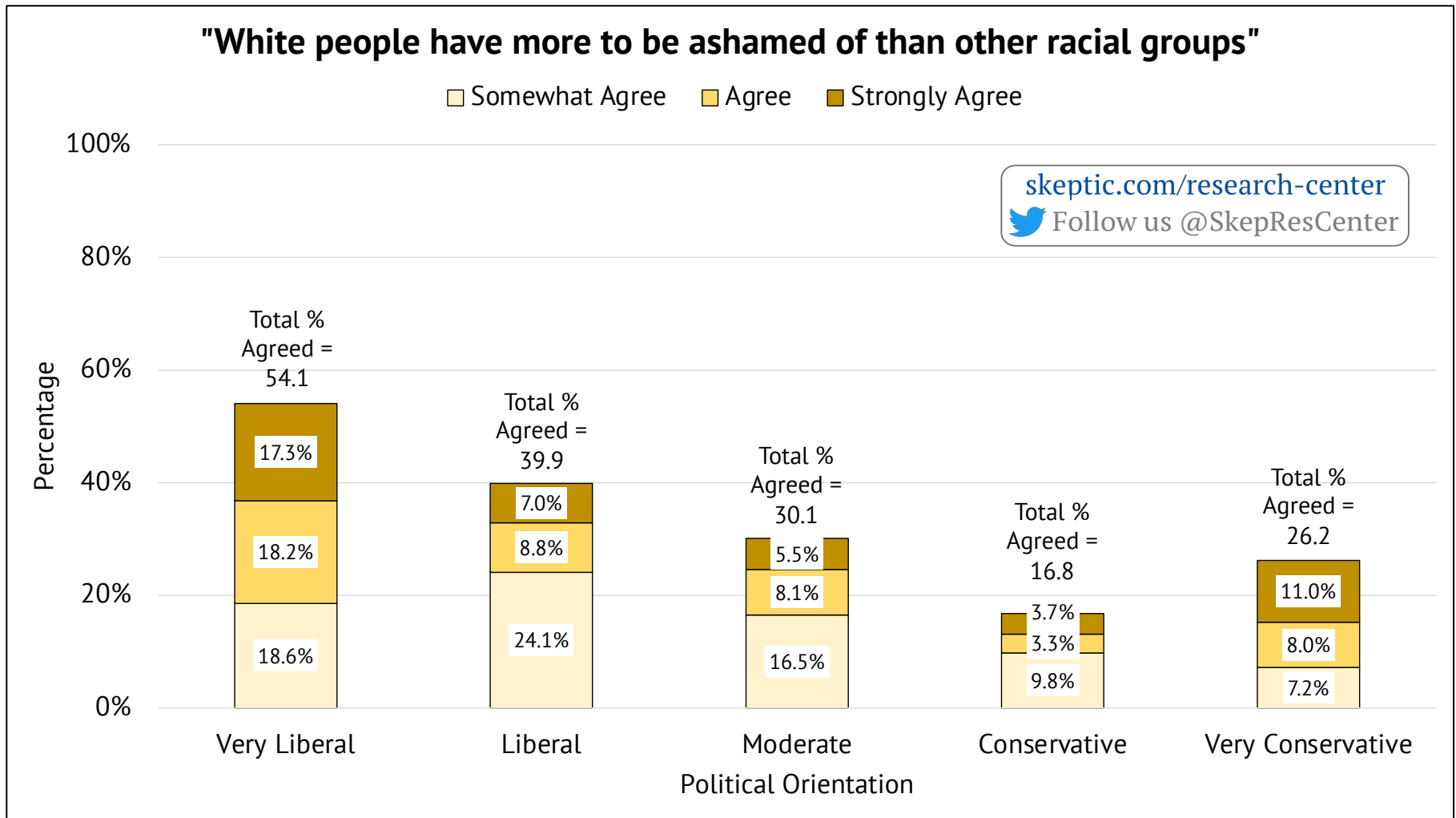


Figure 12



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