

Americans' trust in law enforcement, desire to protect law and order on the rise

New USA Today/Ipsos poll shows shift in views of George Floyd's death ahead of the trial of Derek Chauvin; however, deep partisan and racial divisions remain

Topline Findings

Washington, DC, March 4, 2021

Ahead of the trial of Derek Chauvin, the police officer charged with the murder of George Floyd, and the one year anniversary of the death of Breonna Taylor, a new USA Today/Ipsos poll shows shifting views among the American public when it comes to trust in law enforcement and Black Lives Matter, the right to protest, and the circumstances around Floyd's death last May. In comparison to a USA Today/Ipsos <u>poll</u> from last June, which was conducted as <u>protests</u> unfolded outside of the White House, Americans now are much less wedded to protecting the right to protest, perhaps indicating that the events at the U.S. Capitol on January 6th may still be fresh in people's minds. Furthermore, trust in law enforcement and police unions has grown, while trust in Black Lives Matter has declined. Finally, when it comes to the circumstances surrounding the death of George Floyd, fewer characterize it as murder, while more are simply unsure. In spite of this, a majority of Americans hope Chauvin is convicted.

Detailed findings:

- 1. As more Americans now wish to preserve law and order over the right to protest, Americans are more trusting of law enforcement, less trusting of Black Lives Matter, and continue to support fully funding police departments.
 - Half (49%) of Americans believe law and order is the most important thing to ensure, even if it means limiting peaceful protests, while 31% feel the right to protest is the most important thing to ensure. In June, in the midst of protests across the country, the American public was evenly split (45% preserve law and order vs. 44% right to protest).
 - Sixty-nine percent of Americans trust local police and law enforcement to promote justice and equal treatment for people of all races (up from 56%), and 52% feel the same about police unions (up from 40%).
 - At the same time, trust in Black Lives Matter has dropped 10 percentage points (now at 50%, down from 60%).
- 2. As we are more removed from the protests that took place over the summer, the public's views are a bit less crystallized than they were last year. Now, more Americans are unsure about various issues related to racial injustice and civil unrest.
 - For example, now, far fewer Americans personally believe George Floyd was murdered (36%) compared to last summer (60%). Though slightly more believe it was an accident (8%, up from 3%), much of this shift has been to respondents saying they don't know. Currently, 17% say they don't know how to characterize Floyd's death, up from 4% in June.
 - Similarly, one in five Americans are unsure about whether it is more important to protect law and order or the right to protest, up eight percentage points from June.
 - More than one-third (36%) say they have either heard nothing at all or are unsure about the trial of Derek Chauvin for his role in the death of George Floyd.

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- 3. In the past year, significantly more Americans feel race relations in this country have worsened rather than improved. In addition, there are significant racial and partisan divisions on issues ranging from defunding the police, to equitable treatment of Black Americans, to trust in law enforcement.
 - March 13 marks one year since the death of Breonna Taylor. In the past year, nearly half of Americans (47%) feel race relations have neither improved nor worsened.
 - However, the number of people saying race relations have worsened is nearly four times the number saying improved (40% and 13%, respectively). This gap is particularly wide for Black Americans: 54% say race relations have worsened in the past year, while 10% believe they have improved.
 - In general, there continue to be significant differences of opinion on issues related to
 policing and racial equality, as we also saw in the June survey. For example, there is a
 more than 50-point difference between Democrats and Republicans on the belief that
 incidents of police misconduct against Black Americans reflect systemic racism in law
 enforcement (74% of Democrats agree vs. 20% of Republicans). There is a nearly 40point difference between white and Black Americans on whether George Floyd was
 murdered (64% of Black Americans agree vs. 28% of white Americans). These
 differences extend to nearly every question in the survey.
- 4. A bare majority supports reforming the police, but there is little support for the "defund the police" movement. Furthermore, when forced to choose, more Americans wish to fully fund the budget for police in their community.
 - Overall, 51% of Americans support reforming the police, while 19% oppose. Though white and Black Americans aren't too far apart on this (51% and 59% support, respectively), there is a sizeable gap between Democrats (73% support) and Republicans (33%).
 - Though the concept of reforming the police is a net positive, "defund the police" is not. Fewer than one in five (18%) support the movement to "defund the police." Across all demographic groups, support is highest among Democrats – but even they are primarily opposed (34% support, 39% oppose).
 - Support for abolishing, or eliminating, the police is even lower: 11%.
 - Nearly three in five support fully funding the budget for police in their community, when given the choice between that and redirecting a portion of the police budget for social services (57% vs. 43%). This is similar to views expressed in an Ipsos poll conducted last August (53% fully fund, 47% redirect).

These are the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between March 1-2, 2021. For this survey, a sample of 1,165 adults age 18+ from the continental U.S., Alaska, and Hawaii was interviewed online in English. The poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.3 percentage points for all respondents.

For full results, please refer to the following annotated questionnaire:

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Full Annotated Questionnaire

1. Which of the following statements comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?

	3/1-2, 2021 (N=1,165)	6/8-9, 2020 (N=1,113)
Law and order is the most important thing to ensure, even if it means limiting peaceful protests.	49%	45%
The right to protest is the most important thing to ensure, even if it means there are some incidents of violence.	31%	44%
Don't know	20%	12%

	Total	White (N=788)	Black (N=178)	Democrats (N=598)	Republicans (N=374)	Independents (N=135)
Law and order is the most important thing to ensure, even if it means limiting peaceful protests.	49%	52%	31%	38%	63%	53%
The right to protest is the most important thing to ensure, even if it means there are some incidents of violence.	31%	28%	47%	45%	20%	19%
Don't know	20%	19%	22%	17%	17%	28%





2. How much do you trust the following, if at all, to promote justice and equal treatment for people of all races? **President Joe Biden was previously asked as Joe Biden*

Total Trust Summary

	3/1-2, 2021	6/8-9, 2020
U.S. military	77%	72%
Local police and law enforcement	69%	56%
President Joe Biden	58%	51%
Police unions	52%	40%
Black Lives Matter	50%	60%

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
U.S. military	77%	82%	71%	70%	88%	74%
Local police and law enforcement	69%	77%	42%	57%	84%	69%
President Joe Biden	58%	52%	74%	89%	28%	48%
Police unions	52%	58%	37%	44%	68%	48%
Black Lives Matter	50%	42%	75%	77%	22%	39%

a. Black Lives Matter

	3/1-2, 2021	6/8-9, 2020
Trust a great deal	24%	31%
Trust a little	26%	29%
Distrust a little	14%	14%
Distrust a great deal	27%	20%
Don't know	10%	7%
Trust (Net)	50%	60%
Distrust (Net)	41%	34%

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Trust a great deal	24%	18%	48%	43%	7%	12%
Trust a little	26%	24%	27%	34%	15%	27%
Distrust a little	14%	14%	12%	10%	17%	19%
Distrust a great deal	27%	32%	9%	7%	53%	30%
Don't know	10%	12%	4%	6%	8%	13%
Trust (Net)	50%	42%	75%	77%	22%	39%
Distrust (Net)	41%	46%	21%	17%	70%	48%

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b. Local police and law enforcement

	3/1-2, 2021	6/8-9, 2020
Trust a great deal	35%	25%
Trust a little	34%	32%
Distrust a little	14%	22%
Distrust a great deal	13%	17%
Don't know	4%	4%
Trust (Net)	69%	56%
Distrust (Net)	27%	39%

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Trust a great deal	35%	42%	14%	23%	54%	26%
Trust a little	34%	35%	28%	33%	30%	44%
Distrust a little	14%	12%	24%	20%	9%	16%
Distrust a great deal	13%	8%	29%	21%	4%	11%
Don't know	4%	3%	5%	3%	3%	4%
Trust (Net)	69%	77%	42%	57%	84%	69%
Distrust (Net)	27%	20%	53%	40%	13%	27%

c. Police unions

	3/1-2, 2021	6/8-9, 2020
Trust a great deal	16%	11%
Trust a little	36%	29%
Distrust a little	20%	26%
Distrust a great deal	15%	25%
Don't know	13%	9%
Trust (Net)	52%	40%
Distrust (Net)	35%	51%

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Trust a great deal	16%	19%	6%	12%	23%	13%
Trust a little	36%	39%	31%	32%	44%	35%
Distrust a little	20%	19%	24%	25%	14%	27%
Distrust a great deal	15%	10%	27%	24%	6%	12%
Don't know	13%	13%	13%	7%	13%	13%
Trust (Net)	52%	58%	37%	44%	68%	48%
Distrust (Net)	35%	29%	51%	49%	20%	39%

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d. U.S. military

	3/1-2, 2021	6/8-9, 2020
Trust a great deal	47%	40%
Trust a little	30%	31%
Distrust a little	10%	15%
Distrust a great deal	7%	7%
Don't know	6%	7%
Trust (Net)	77%	72%
Distrust (Net)	17%	22%

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Trust a great deal	47%	53%	35%	37%	61%	41%
Trust a little	30%	29%	36%	33%	26%	32%
Distrust a little	10%	9%	12%	15%	5%	8%
Distrust a great deal	7%	5%	9%	11%	2%	10%
Don't know	6%	4%	8%	4%	5%	8%
Trust (Net)	77%	82%	71%	70%	88%	74%
Distrust (Net)	17%	14%	21%	26%	7%	18%

e. President Joe Biden (previously asked as Joe Biden)

	3/1-2, 2021	6/8-9, 2020
Trust a great deal	32%	23%
Trust a little	26%	29%
Distrust a little	11%	14%
Distrust a great deal	25%	24%
Don't know	7%	10%
Trust (Net)	58%	51%
Distrust (Net)	35%	39%

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Trust a great deal	32%	29%	45%	57%	12%	18%
Trust a little	26%	23%	29%	32%	16%	30%
Distrust a little	11%	11%	10%	5%	18%	12%
Distrust a great deal	25%	30%	5%	4%	49%	30%
Don't know	7%	7%	11%	2%	5%	11%
Trust (Net)	58%	52%	74%	89%	28%	48%
Distrust (Net)	35%	42%	15%	9%	67%	41%

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3. Do you approve or disapprove of President Biden's handling of racial equity issues?

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Strongly approve	24%	19%	36%	46%	5%	10%
Somewhat approve	18%	17%	24%	29%	10%	11%
Neither approve nor disapprove	21%	21%	23%	15%	23%	35%
Somewhat disapprove	8%	9%	6%	3%	14%	7%
Strongly disapprove	18%	22%	3%	1%	39%	23%
Don't know	10%	12%	8%	5%	10%	13%
Approve (Net)	42%	36%	60%	75%	15%	21%
Disapprove (Net)	26%	31%	9%	4%	53%	30%

4. What is your personal view on the circumstances around the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis?

	3/1-2, 2021	6/8-9, 2020
It was murder	36%	60%
It was negligence on part of the officer	30%	28%
It was an accident	8%	3%
The police officer did nothing wrong	6%	2%
Something else	3%	2%
Don't know	17%	4%

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
It was murder	36%	28%	64%	55%	18%	28%
It was negligence on part of the officer	30%	33%	16%	30%	34%	26%
It was an accident	8%	8%	7%	4%	12%	10%
The police officer did nothing wrong	6%	7%	4%	1%	12%	5%
Something else	3%	4%	*	1%	6%	7%
Don't know	17%	19%	9%	8%	19%	25%





5. How much have you seen, heard, or read specifically about the trial of Derek Chauvin for his role in the death of George Floyd?

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
A lot	13%	10%	21%	17%	9%	11%
Some	21%	19%	24%	27%	19%	11%
A little	30%	30%	25%	29%	34%	29%
Nothing at all	26%	30%	22%	19%	27%	37%
Don't know	11%	11%	8%	7%	10%	12%
A lot/Some/A little (Net)	64%	58%	70%	74%	62%	51%

6. **[Asked if Q5 = A lot, Some OR A little]** What do you hope is the end result of the Derek Chauvin trial?

	Total (N=772)	White (N=497)	Black (N=131)	Democrats (N=449)	Republicans (N=232)	Independents (N=72)
He is convicted	60%	54%	76%	74%	43%	50%
He is acquitted	15%	15%	13%	8%	25%	12%
Don't know	26%	31%	11%	19%	32%	38%

7. March 13, 2021, marks one year since the death of Breonna Taylor. In the past year, do you believe that race relations have improved or worsened?

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Significantly improved	3%	2%	4%	3%	3%	1%
Slightly improved	10%	11%	6%	11%	12%	5%
Neither improved nor worsened	47%	51%	36%	43%	45%	63%
Slightly worsened	22%	20%	26%	25%	21%	17%
Significantly worsened	18%	16%	28%	18%	20%	15%
Improved (Net)	13%	13%	10%	15%	14%	6%
Worsened (Net)	40%	35%	54%	42%	41%	31%

8. Do you support or oppose reforming the police?

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Strongly support	25%	23%	38%	46%	7%	17%
Somewhat support	26%	28%	22%	27%	26%	26%
Neither support nor oppose	29%	28%	27%	19%	31%	44%
Somewhat oppose	9%	10%	6%	5%	16%	7%
Strongly oppose	10%	11%	7%	3%	20%	7%
Support (Net)	51%	51%	59%	73%	33%	42%
Oppose (Net)	19%	21%	14%	8%	36%	14%

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9. Do you support or oppose the movement known as "defund the police?"

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Strongly support	8%	5%	17%	16%	1%	4%
Somewhat support	10%	8%	11%	18%	3%	4%
Neither support nor oppose	24%	19%	35%	27%	12%	33%
Somewhat oppose	14%	14%	16%	16%	13%	14%
Strongly oppose	43%	53%	21%	23%	71%	46%
Support (Net)	18%	14%	28%	34%	4%	8%
Oppose (Net)	58%	67%	37%	39%	84%	59%

10. Do you support or oppose abolishing, or eliminating, the police?

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Strongly support	5%	4%	10%	9%	2%	2%
Somewhat support	7%	5%	13%	11%	3%	3%
Neither support nor oppose	21%	14%	26%	22%	9%	36%
Somewhat oppose	11%	9%	22%	16%	8%	4%
Strongly oppose	56%	68%	29%	42%	78%	55%
Support (Net)	11%	9%	22%	20%	5%	5%
Oppose (Net)	67%	77%	51%	58%	85%	60%

11. Which of the following proposals do you support, even if neither is exactly right? (*Trended with* NPR/Ipsos Poll)

	3/1-2, 2021	8/20-21, 2020
Fully fund the budget for police in your community at the same level is it now.	57%	53%
Take a portion of the budget for police in your community and redirect those funds to social services.	43%	47%





	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Fully fund the budget for police in your community at the same level is it now.	57%	65%	37%	33%	84%	62%
Take a portion of the budget for police in your community and redirect those funds to social services.	43%	35%	63%	67%	16%	38%

12. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Total Agree Summary							
	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents	
Incidents of police misconduct against Black Americans reflect isolated incidents by a few officers.	52%	56%	42%	41%	67%	48%	
Incidents of police misconduct against Black Americans reflect systemic racism in law enforcement.	46%	40%	69%	74%	20%	36%	
Across different racial/ethnic groups, there are equal opportunities for jobs.	38%	43%	25%	25%	55%	36%	
My thoughts about racial injustice have changed over the past year.	37%	33%	43%	49%	29%	26%	
Police treat Black Americans fairly.	32%	37%	23%	19%	51%	23%	
Black Americans receive the COVID-19 vaccine at the same rate as any other American.	32%	35%	24%	27%	43%	24%	

Total Agree Summary

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	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Strongly agree	12%	14%	9%	8%	21%	5%
Somewhat agree	20%	22%	14%	12%	31%	18%
Neither agree nor disagree	23%	23%	27%	18%	25%	33%
Somewhat disagree	21%	21%	16%	29%	14%	14%
Strongly disagree	19%	14%	32%	33%	5%	17%
Don't know	5%	5%	2%	1%	4%	13%
Agree (Net)	32%	37%	23%	19%	51%	23%
Disagree (Net)	40%	36%	48%	62%	19%	31%

b. Black Americans receive the COVID-19 vaccine at the same rate as any other American.

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Strongly agree	17%	20%	11%	12%	25%	14%
Somewhat agree	15%	15%	13%	15%	18%	11%
Neither agree nor disagree	26%	25%	27%	22%	26%	34%
Somewhat disagree	15%	15%	17%	19%	13%	16%
Strongly disagree	14%	12%	25%	24%	5%	7%
Don't know	12%	14%	7%	7%	14%	19%
Agree (Net)	32%	35%	24%	27%	43%	24%
Disagree (Net)	29%	27%	42%	44%	18%	23%

c. My thoughts about racial injustice have changed over the past year.

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Strongly agree	11%	9%	15%	15%	7%	11%
Somewhat agree	26%	24%	28%	34%	22%	15%
Neither agree nor disagree	32%	33%	25%	27%	32%	39%
Somewhat disagree	13%	14%	15%	13%	15%	12%
Strongly disagree	14%	15%	16%	10%	19%	14%
Don't know	4%	4%	2%	1%	5%	10%
Agree (Net)	37%	33%	43%	49%	29%	26%
Disagree (Net)	27%	29%	30%	23%	34%	25%





	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Strongly agree	18%	20%	12%	10%	28%	21%
Somewhat agree	20%	23%	13%	16%	27%	15%
Neither agree nor disagree	22%	20%	28%	19%	21%	30%
Somewhat disagree	21%	21%	20%	29%	16%	10%
Strongly disagree	14%	11%	23%	25%	3%	14%
Don't know	4%	5%	5%	1%	4%	10%
Agree (Net)	38%	43%	25%	25%	55%	36%
Disagree (Net)	35%	32%	42%	54%	19%	24%

d. Across different racial/ethnic groups, there are equal opportunities for jobs.

e. Incidents of police misconduct against Black Americans reflect systemic racism in law enforcement.

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Strongly agree	22%	15%	48%	41%	5%	13%
Somewhat agree	24%	25%	21%	32%	15%	22%
Neither agree nor disagree	21%	21%	19%	13%	25%	24%
Somewhat disagree	12%	14%	6%	8%	17%	17%
Strongly disagree	15%	18%	5%	4%	31%	14%
Don't know	5%	6%	1%	1%	7%	9%
Agree (Net)	46%	40%	69%	74%	20%	36%
Disagree (Net)	28%	33%	11%	12%	49%	32%

f. Incidents of police misconduct against Black Americans reflect isolated incidents by a few officers.

	Total	White	Black	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Strongly agree	21%	24%	10%	13%	34%	17%
Somewhat agree	31%	32%	32%	29%	33%	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	20%	19%	18%	16%	20%	30%
Somewhat disagree	15%	13%	17%	24%	8%	6%
Strongly disagree	10%	8%	21%	18%	3%	7%
Don't know	4%	4%	2%	1%	3%	9%
Agree (Net)	52%	56%	42%	41%	67%	48%
Disagree (Net)	25%	21%	37%	42%	10%	13%





About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between March 1-2, 2021 on behalf of USA Today. For this survey, a sample of 1,165 adults age 18+ from the continental U.S., Alaska, and Hawaii was interviewed online in English. The sample includes 788 white Americans, 178 Black Americans, 598 Democrats, 374 Republicans, and 135 Independents.

The sample was randomly drawn from <u>lpsos' online panel</u>, partner online panel sources, and <u>"river"</u> <u>sampling</u> and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. Ipsos uses fixed sample targets, unique to each study, in drawing a sample. After a sample has been obtained from the lpsos panel, lpsos calibrates respondent characteristics to be representative of the U.S. Population using standard procedures such as raking-ratio adjustments. The source of these population targets is U.S. Census 2018 American Community Survey data. The sample drawn for this study reflects fixed sample targets on demographics. Posthoc weights were made to the population characteristics on gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, and education.

Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online non-probability polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error and measurement error. Where figures do not sum to 100, this is due to the effects of rounding. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.3 percentage points for all respondents. Ipsos calculates a design effect (DEFF) for each study based on the variation of the weights, following the formula of Kish (1965). This study had a credibility interval=+/-4.8 percentage points).

The poll also has a credibility interval of plus or minus 4.0 percentage points for white Americans, plus or minus 8.4 percentage points for Black Americans, plus or minus 4.6 percentage points for Democrats, plus or minus 5.8 percentage points for Republicans, and plus or minus 9.6 percentage points for Independents.

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